



Alison G. Salvesen and Timothy Michael Law, eds.

The Oxford Handbook of the Septuagint

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This volume on the Septuagint is a welcome addition to the authoritative Oxford Handbook Series. Its fifty chapters give proof that the term *Septuagint* is much wider than what is generally perceived. It touches on numerous other disciplines such as New Testament and early Christianity, patristics, lexicography, papyrology, Judaism, translation studies, and many more. Further, as Cameron Boyd-Taylor says in his article, research on the Septuagint has also drawn scholars from other disciplines such as corpus linguistics, statistics, and cognitive linguistics, enabled by the digital humanities (29).

This voluminous book is divided into seven sections or parts. In the first section, “First Things,” we find “What Is the Septuagint?,” by Cameron Boyd-Taylor (ch. 1); “The History of Septuagint Studies: Early Modern Western Europe,” by Scott Mandelbrote (ch. 2); and “The History of Septuagint Studies: Editions of the Septuagint,” by Felix Albrecht (ch. 3). In this chapter Albrecht gives valuable information on the different editions of the Septuagint. He says that Karl Lachmann (1793–1851) was the first to develop the idea of searching for the original text (*Urtext*). Because of this new approach, diplomatic texts were steadily replaced by critical texts (58).

The second section, called “The Context of the Septuagint,” consists of eight chapters: “The Social and Historical Setting of the Septuagint: Palestine and the Diaspora,” by James K. Aitken (ch. 4); “The Social and Historical Setting of the Septuagint: Hellenistic and Roman Egypt,” by Livia Capponi (ch. 5); “The Nature of Septuagint Greek: Language and Lexicography,” by Trevor V.

Evans (ch. 6); “Theology in the Septuagint?,” by Mogens Müller (ch. 7); and “The *Letter of Aristeas*,” by Dries De Crom (ch. 8). In “Manuscripts, Papyri, and Epigraphy: Papyri and Epigraphy Relating to the Septuagint” (ch. 9), Theophilys Michael P. Theophilos provides a survey of the most important papyrological and epigraphic evidence of the LXX. In the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, many papyri were discovered, and this gave much impetus to the field of papyrology. Theophilos then discusses the most important papyri finds relating to the LXX. Related to this theme, Theophilos also discusses LXX inscriptions. He highlights the need for a full catalog of extant LXX inscriptions. There are also many unpublished papyri that require attention. In conclusion Theophilos raises a question that still needs to be answered: What criteria does one apply to determine whether a LXX papyrus is “Jewish” or “Christian” (141)? The next chapter is “Manuscripts, Papyri, and Epigraphy: Manuscripts of the Septuagint from Uncials to Minuscules,” by Luciano Bossina (ch. 10), and the following chapter is “Translation Technique” (ch. 11), where Hans Ausloos discusses the translation technique of the translators of the Septuagint. Ausloos says that, though the classic distinction between a “literal” and a “free” rendering makes sense, one should be careful in making this distinction, and one should also incorporate a third concept: “faithfulness” (167). Ausloos then uses quantitative and qualitative criteria to determine different types of literalness or freedom that were used by the translators of the Septuagint. I think that one should be careful not to characterize the translation of a whole book as either literal or free, since all translations have sentences that can be regarded as literal translations and sentences that can be regarded as free translations. That is in line with what Barr states about a translation being simultaneously literal and free, as Ausloos indicates (168). I therefore think that one should rather place a translation somewhere on a horizontal line between “literalness” on one end and “freedom” on the other end. All translations lie somewhere on this line. Note that this is a horizontal line, not a diagonal line, because the one translation is not necessarily “better” or “higher up on the diagonal line” than the other translation. It depends on the purpose of the translation and the needs of the person who consults the translation. Ausloos illustrates his arguments with practical examples from the text. He also highlights some very good points that one should bear in mind when one wants to characterize the translation technique of the translators of the Septuagint. He says, for example, that we do not know what text the translator used and that the translators also worked with a nonvocalized text (175). In chapter 12 Dirk Büchner also devotes a section on the translation technique of the translators of the Pentateuch in the Septuagint (184–89). Büchner says that the translators of the Pentateuch “worked in creative ways with little rigidity” and adds that they did so “in a manner that has been described by Barr as improvised and carefree, ad hoc, combining literal and free approaches without a definite policy” (184).

Part 3, “The Corpus of the Septuagint,” is the longest section and consists of fifteen chapters. Each chapter deals with a book that forms part of the Septuagint. Some of the books are grouped together in a single chapter, such as the Pentateuch, the books of the Kings, and the Twelve Minor Prophets. The following chapters are to be found in this section: “The Pentateuch,” by Dirk Büchner (ch. 12);

“Joshua and Judges,” by Natalio Fernández Marcos (ch. 13); “The Books of Samuel,” by Anneli Aejmelaesus (ch. 14); “The Books of Kings,” by Tuuka Kauhanen, Andrés Piquer Otero, Timo Tekoniemi, and Pablo A. Torijano (ch. 15); “Chronicles/Paralipomena,” by Laurence Vianès (ch. 16); “Isaiah,” by Rodrigo F. De Sousa (ch. 17); “Jeremiah and Baruch,” by Matthieu Richelle (ch. 18); “Ezekiel,” by Katrin Hauspie (ch. 19); “Daniel, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon: Old Greek and Theodotion,” by Olivier Munnich (ch. 20); “The Twelve Minor Prophets,” by Cécile Dogniez (ch. 21); “Megillot (Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther),” by Robert J. V. Hiebert (ch. 22); “The Psalter,” by Staffan Olofsson (ch. 23); “Proverbs,” by Lorenzo Cuppi (ch. 24); “The Book of Job,” by Maria Gorea (ch. 25); “Deuterocanonical and Apocryphal Books,” by Alison G. Salvese (ch. 26).

The approach to these Old Testament books differs from chapter to chapter. Sometimes the focus is on the translation technique, while at other times it falls on textual criticism, the text-historical developments of the Greek text, different editions of the book, the relationship with other books in the Septuagint, the date and provenance of the books, the characteristics of the books, the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the book, literary criticism, reception history, or authorship of the translation. The different approaches to the various books are justifiable, since they reflect the different questions relevant to the books.

I do find the sections that deal with the present state of research regarding the relevant books, the directions for future research, and the suggested readings that can be found in most of the chapters quite helpful and insightful.

The last chapter, “Deuterocanonical and Apocryphal Books,” by Alison G. Salvese (ch. 26), in this section has short discussions on each of these deuterocanonical books. It also has an interesting section on Origen and Julianus Africanus’s discussion on the “historicity of the story of Susanna in the Church’s book of Daniel” (386). According to Africanus, this book was inauthentic since it was not translated from Hebrew, and therefore it should be regarded as an inauthentic Greek composition. Origen counters this view and argues that this book was given to the church for its edification. Other criteria were also used for a book’s inclusion in the canon, such as whether it was normative for doctrine and public reading.

Part 4 is entitled “The Septuagint in Its Jewish Context,” and that says it all. I am therefore not surprised to see that the first two chapters deal with Philo. The first is called “Philo and the Septuagint,” by Sarah J. K. Pearce (ch. 27). Philo is, *inter alia*, well-known to us for his allegorical interpretation of the Scripture and the influence he had on Christian exegesis. The next chapter is “Josephus and the Septuagint,” by Tessa Rajak (ch. 28). Rajak that “Josephus’s refashioning of the LXX served to refashion Jewish identity” (431). The next chapter is “The Scrolls from the Judean Desert and the Septuagint,” by Eugene Ulrich (ch. 29). The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls had an impact on many different fields of study. It also shed more light on our understanding of the

Septuagint. Several fragmentary scrolls of the Septuagint were discovered in the Judean Desert, and these manuscripts are about four centuries older than the oldest extant LXX codices. In this chapter Ulrich sheds more light on these manuscripts. The other chapters in this section are “Kaige and ‘Theodotion,’” by Siegfried Kreuzer (ch. 30); “Aquila,” by Giuseppe Veltri with Alison G. Salvesen (ch. 31); “Symmachus,” by Michaël N. van der Meer (ch. 32); “Quinta, Sexta, and Septima,” (ch. 33) and “The Samaritan Pentateuch in Greek” (ch. 34), both by Bradley John Marsh Jr.; “The Constantinople Pentateuch and Medieval Jewish Use of Greek Biblical Texts,” by Julia G. Krivoruchko (ch. 35).

Part 5, “The Septuagint as Christian Scripture” deals with the reception of the LXX as Christian Scripture. David Lincicum’s “Citations in the New Testament” (ch. 36) argues that, since New Testament authors often cited the Greek Bible, it played an important role in the Christian reception of the Septuagint. Lincicum focuses on the interrelationship between the New Testament and the LXX. He agrees that one cannot claim that the LXX is the exclusive source from which the New Testament words and concepts were drawn, but it did contribute to them. He even calls the Septuagint “the ‘encyclopaedia’ of early Christian literature and theology” (526). He also gives us a brief survey of New Testament citations. In this section he highlights the book of Revelation as being saturated with Old Testament allusions. Though it is clear that the author of this last book of the New Testament worked with Greek texts of the Old Testament, Lincicum concedes that one should accept the possibility that the author also drew on the Hebrew textual tradition. Lincicum succeeds in proving that one has to look at the Septuagint to understand some of the words or concepts in the New Testament. The other chapters in this section are “The Proto-Lucianic and Antiochian Text,” by Tuukka Kauhanen (ch. 37); “Origen’s Hexapla,” by Peter J. Gentry (ch. 38); “The Use of the Septuagint in the Liturgy and Lectionary of the Greek Orthodox Church,” by John A. L. Lee (ch. 39); and “Reception of the Septuagint among Greek Christian Writers,” by Reinhart Ceulemans (ch. 40). Ceulemans states that, although the LXX is a Jewish text in origin, it played a tremendous role in the first fifteen centuries of Greek Christianity. Ceulemans claims that the LXX would not be known if it were not for its Christian reception. The last chapter in this section is “The Septuagint in the Latin World,” by Michael Graves (ch. 41).

Part 6, “The Septuagint in Translation,” includes “The Vetus Latina (Old Latin),” by Pierre-Maurice Bogaert (ch. 42); “Armenian, Georgian, and Church Slavonic Versions,” by Pablo A. Torijano (ch. 43); “The Syrohexapla,” by Marketta Liljeström (ch. 44); “Coptic, Arabic, and Ethiopic Versions,” by Andrés Piquer Otero (ch. 45); and “Modern Translations of the Septuagint,” by Eberhard Bons (ch. 46).

Finally, part 7, “Conversations,” includes “Textual Criticism,” by Bénédicte Lemmelijn (ch. 47); “New Testament,” by J. Ross Wagner (ch. 48); and “Christian Theology,” by John Barton (ch. 49). In this chapter Barton argues that, while Protestant theologians regard the term *Old Testament* as referring to the Hebrew Bible, Orthodox churches regard the LXX as the canonical text of the Old

Testament. He then says that these contrasting approaches could lead to irreconcilable theological clashes. He gives interesting examples to prove his point. Barton refers to Joachim Schaper, who argued that the translators of the LXX introduced more eschatological ideas into the biblical text (732). Barton then uses Ps 1:5 as an example. The Hebrew text says that the ungodly “will not stand in the judgment,” and Barton interprets this as a reference to a court situation where the ungodly will not be “adjudged to be in the right.” However, the LXX uses the Greek word ἀναστήσονται for “stand,” and this word may open up the possibility for this verse to be used as a reference to the resurrection. Barton also refers to the well-known example regarding the Greek word παρθένος in Isa 7:9 (as a translation for the Hebrew word עלמה) in discussions regarding the virgin birth. Barton rightly points out the important role that the LXX played in the development of Christian theology. Barton also raises interesting questions if one did “canonize” the LXX. There is, for example, no “stable text” (as he calls it) such as we have for the Hebrew Bible. He also discusses the question whether it would be possible to accept the canonicity of both the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek text of the LXX.

The concluding chapter is quite different but quite apt, since it is on “Illustrated Manuscripts of the Septuagint” (ch. 50). Maja Kominko shows in this chapter how diverse the function of these images in the Septuagint are. The pictures can illustrate the story, or elaborate on it, or they can embellish it with information from extrabiblical sources.

This is an excellent book not only for theologians, but for seasoned scholars in many different fields of study, since research on the Septuagint touches on so many disciplines. Each and every chapter in this book reflects high-quality research. This volume is a welcome addition to the Oxford Handbook series!