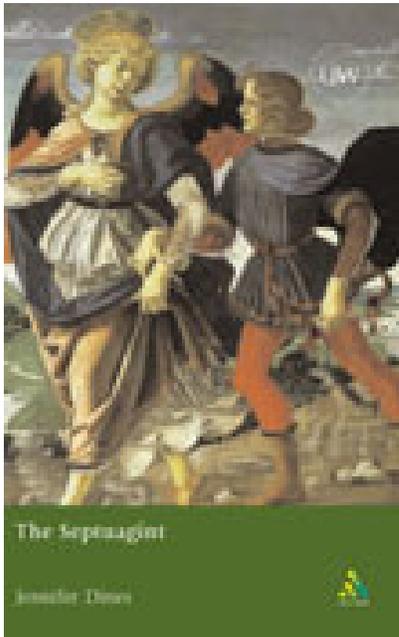


RBL 06/2005



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The Septuagint

London: T&T Clark, 2004. Pp. xvii + 196. Cloth.
\$29.95. ISBN 056708464.

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This small but handy manual for an extremely complex topic, originally slotted for a place in Sheffield/Continuum's recently defunct Guides to the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha but now part of T&T Clark/Continuum's Understanding the Bible and Its World series, is the third introduction to the Septuagint to appear in English in just four years after a nearly century-long hiatus. The others are Natalio Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context* (trans. W. G. E. Watson, 2000; henceforth FM), and Karen Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (2000; henceforth J-S). That these works have heavily influenced Dines is apparent from her 110 citations of them (72 for FM; 38 for J-S). At the end of her preface Dines prepares the reader for this (xi).

Dines begins by defining her topic: chapter 1 (twenty-five pages) is entitled "What Is 'the Septuagint'?" The opening sentence in her first subheading is entertainingly alliterative (an aid to students' memory?): "The term 'Septuagint' is surprisingly slippery" (1). Here she covers the scope of the term in the ancient and modern worlds, Jewish and Christian manuscripts, and finally printed editions. Her short section on early Christian versions discusses only the Coptic and Old Latin; others are shunted off by means of her "Further Reading" section at the close of this (and every other) chapter. Likely this technique, regularly employed throughout the work (often via her intratextual references to FM and

J-S), helps keep the book's size manageable. After a brief discussion of canon, the order of books, and apocryphal works, one arrives at the meat of the chapter, Dines's presentation of individual LXX books. This extends for over ten pages (13–24), quite sizeable for this little text. Here she deals with current scholarship by frequently summarizing debates. For example, regarding the Psalms she writes:

Some scholars think that the “historical” expansions [additional or augmented superscriptions] are subsequent to the original translation. On the whole, the translator follows his source-text closely. The translation is thought by some to have influenced later Hebraizing translations and revisions in other books. Some scholars, however, demonstrate that the translation is less literalistic than often thought and that it contains many interpretational elements as well as stylistic devices that reveal a sophisticated rather than a mechanical approach to translation. (19)

The reader is struck with how uneven these presentations of individual books are. Some are substantial (Genesis, Proverbs, Sirach), while others get significantly less press (Judith, Tobit, Ezekiel). Furthermore, in those of lengthier scope citation of sources is very mixed: in the discussion of the Psalms partially quoted above no specific references to modern scholarship are given, yet in her coverage of Isaiah, a presentation of about the same size as the Psalms one, Seeligmann is referenced four times, while Bogaert, Harl, Dorival and Munich, and J-S are all cited once each (22). Dines's closing words of the first chapter reveal her philosophy of studying the LXX and alert the reader to where the text is going. The LXX is “a vast, diverse corpus of religious texts in Greek. Just how difficult it is to discern within this corpus the authentic features of the first translations will become evident as we proceed” (24).

The second chapter, “Origins: Facts and Fictions,” is considerably shorter (twelve pages). For its size the discussion of the *Letter of Aristeas* is dense and generally thorough. More surprising here is the lengthy presentation of Aristobulus and his relationship with *Aristeas*. This takes up nearly half the chapter and stands in striking contrast to J-S, a work of 331 pages (less indices), where Aristobulus is nowhere to be found, and FM, likewise of considerable size (367 pages less indices), where our character is relegated to a single footnote (40 n. 21). Evidently Dines feels that the academic ink spilled on this matter has not been given the attention it should in LXX introductions. Her summary of scholarly positions is good and her criticisms even better: she voices skepticism that Aristobulus wrote for the king and his court; the identification of the Ptolemy involved as Philometor, “though likely, is not certain”; all our knowledge of Aristobulus is based on merely five extracts from later writers “whose reliability is not always to be trusted” (37–38). However, the “consensus” presentation of the date of *Aristeas* is skimpy. There is a

sharp disparity here with Dines's other summaries of academic controversy (with dissenting views at least epitomized), and fulfilling the promise of "discussions on dating" (28) at the chapter's end could be seriously improved. This is all the more surprising given her later related admission, "perhaps we have, after all, overestimated the antiquity of LXX Pentateuch" (50).

In pithy chapter 3, "Origins: Questions and Issues," Dines reviews the four arguments for a third-century B.C.E. date for the Pentateuch but spends more time on whether the translation was a Greek or Jewish initiative. Like most scholars, she opts for the latter position and believes its origin is to be found in the Egyptian *proseuche*. As for the Prophets and Writings, while gratefully acknowledging Dorival's chronological sketch, Dines declares it "in fact needs careful checking. . . . Clarifying this rather chaotic situation and establishing agreed criteria for dating is an urgent task" (45). The remaining portion of chapter 3 is under the rubric "The Septuagint as a Whole: Theories and Questions." In this particularly rich part of the book Dines articulates a number of choice criticisms of modern views on the LXX's origin. Of those looking for a liturgical basis, she asks, if only portions of the Torah were read in synagogue rituals, "why would the whole Pentateuch have been translated" at considerable expense? She takes to task Thackeray's lectionary theory as retrojecting rabbinic and Philonic evidence centuries back in time (48). Her most valuable contribution in this chapter is her criticism of the recent Pietersma-Wright interlinear model of LXX parentage. While Dines carefully distinguishes this theory from that of Cameron Boyd-Taylor, who posits a "metaphrase" paradigm, she sees both as having similar faults: their common assumption of the priority of the Hebrew text is questionable, since the circumstances of bilingualism and third-century B.C.E. Jewish attitudes toward the study of scripture in Hebrew and Greek are unknown. She chides Pietersma-Wright for assuming that the translators' Hebrew text is essentially the MT that has come down to us and infers that the situation postulated for the interlinear model fits better in Aquila's time than at the LXX's birth. As for Boyd-Taylor's drawing on Egyptian school papyri of Homer for support, she points out that the analogy is inexact, since "the Homeric 'metaphrases' operate within the same language," whereas LXX genesis deals with full translation from one language to another (53–54). Building on the work of Frank Austermann and Trevor Evans, Dines examines texts in Amos and Genesis that show the LXX translators employed stylistic flourishes in their work. "If this aesthetic quality turns out to be a widespread phenomenon, it will make it unlikely that the translations were intended only to give access to the Hebrew text" (54–57). The chapter closes with a nearly full page exposition of Dines's eclectic view of LXX origins.

"The Status of the Septuagint: from Philo to Jerome" is the fourth chapter. In this short section (seventeen pages) the continuing development of the LXX myth is chronicled,

with special attention given to the salient vocabulary of Philo's discussion in his *Life of Moses* (nearly half the chapter), while Josephus, rabbinic literature, and the church fathers receive less space. Dines's observation that Philo's use of *enecheo* may be a double entendre is especially memorable, but her note at the same paragraph's end "cf. below, 2.40" might be made clearer by reminding the reader she is still referring to *Moses*, given all the intervening citations (69). "Later" would be less perplexing than "below" here.

Though longer than the previous chapter, the next one, "Textual Developments to the Fifth Century CE" (twenty-five pages), is likewise written mainly with the student rather than LXX colleagues in mind. Here Dines covers well the *kaige* revision (she, like Barthélemy and Gentry, prefers this to "recension"); "the Three," Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion (handling the last first); as well as lesser-known Jewish versions (the "Quinta," "the Hebrew," "the Syrian," which often receive just a sentence or less in J-S) and the Christian recensions. Notable are the following: her discussion of Origen's Hexapla (95–103); her concise description of the characteristics of the Lucianic text-type (104); and the circular reasoning often found in trying to establish the character of "Theodotion" (81–87).

Chapter 6, "Language and Style," will draw the attention of LXX savants even more than chapter 3. After an up-to-date overview of Septuagint specialists' evolving view of Koine Greek, Dines jumps feet first into the overriding philosophical difference among LXX scholars: how they view the translation's primary purpose, as a vehicle to the underlying Hebrew text or a total replacement of it. J-S discuss this almost in passing in the context only of LXX lexicography (their 260–61), but Dines appropriately elevates the issue to a higher plane, for she is aware that this is a potentially divisive factor in modern Septuagint studies. Representing the group who believes the LXX was read in antiquity largely on its own, R. Timothy McLay can speak of current academic "bias against the O[ld] G[reek] because it is a translation," even going so far as to compare the other camp to "those who regard the King James version as the only trustworthy English translation" (*The Use of the Septuagint in New Testament Research* [2003], 114, 109). Dines is not nearly so outspoken. Rather, she uses the French *Bible d'Alexandrie* and the North American NETS to embody the above-mentioned division. While herself a member of the French translation team (working on Amos) and thus in the same camp as McLay, she is not so prejudiced as to miss her own side's shortcomings, which she specifies on page 116; on the next page she reviews her earlier criticisms of the Pietersma-Wright school that lie behind the opposing group's philosophy. Dines's discussion of this dichotomy in LXX studies naturally leads to the next material in her book, that most current of buzzwords in Septuagint jargon, "translation technique." At the beginning of her eleven-page essay on this expression Dines delineates three problems with the term itself, its implications, and

how it is employed. First, “technique” is a modern word that “suggests something consciously chosen and systematic. It is unlikely that the early translators worked like this; their method is likely to have been *ad hoc*, experimental, not always consistent, as they grappled with the challenges . . . of a task for which there were at first no models.” Secondly, the increasingly scientific use of the term in association with computer-generated evidence can engender “too restricted a picture,” especially when context is downplayed and small textual samples are employed. Finally, she drives home the point, commonly emphasized throughout her book, that

we do not know for certain the exact nature of either the original translation or the original source-text. . . . Where there are no divergences [between our current LXX and the MT] this [assumption of similar text] may be safe, but as soon as there are discrepancies, the question arises whether the translator had a different reading in his source-text, whether he made a mistake, or whether he had some reason for making a deliberate change. . . . The use of the MT as default is unavoidable, but risky, given the plurality of forms in which Hebrew texts circulated at least till the end of the first century CE. (118–19)

On the matter of dynamically equivalent versus formally equivalent translations, Dines suggests envisaging a sliding scale “running from extremely literal to extremely free renderings, with many intermediate stages and combinations on which . . . even parts of translations can be located” (121). She finds the concept of translation technique important for identifying individual translators but cautions that one hallmark of such identification—consistency—may well be indicative of a reviser or editor. For the second time in the book (also the second time she has any extended presentation employing Hebrew and Greek), Dines brings up translators’ style. Her point here is to explore the “translators’ education and attitude to their cultural milieu” and how context influenced their renderings (122–24). She closes this chapter with discussions of deliberate versus accidental change, the role of community in textual alterations, and a plea for balance in all branches of LXX study.

Dines divides her final chapter, “The Use of the Septuagint: From the Beginnings to the Present Day,” into four sections. The first deals with interpreting differences between the LXX and MT. After considering three approaches—isolated verses, complete books, and broad themes—she recommends a system of checks and balances “to show that there is no one ‘theology’ of the LXX, any more than there is one of the Hebrew Bible; rather, there is an interplay of different ‘voices’, some more and some less distinct” (132). She again highlights the possible role of the community in inner-Septuagintal interpretation. The second and third sections of this chapter move on to the reception history of the LXX first among Jews, then among Christians. She reminds the reader that “the contribution

made by the LXX to the history of biblical interpretation” is one “which is still much underexploited and undervalued” (135). On the Jewish side Dines includes discussions of Demetrius the historian, Eupolemus, the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, Philo, and Josephus. After giving some examples of the LXX’s influence in New Testament interpretation, she has a larger section on patristic use of the Septuagint and, building on the call of FM, lists three reasons why the “gargantuan task” of producing critical editions of the church fathers is so vital to LXX studies (149). She ends the book with five pages on the flourishing nature of modern Septuagint scholarship.

It is a fine art to write at the same time for students just starting their study of a topic and for colleagues who have made the subject their life’s work. How has Dines fared on this score? Generally quite well, but some improvements could be made. Will students just beginning LXX inquiry know about the Oniad temple at Leontopolis so as to understand her references on pages 22 and 32? Will they grasp that the French *parti pris* means “bias, prejudice” (70)? Well over twenty times the imperative “see [something later]” is employed to signal upcoming material. Will students find this helpful or be exasperated by this constant command to skip over large sections of text? The terms “pluses” and “minuses” need explaining for the uninitiated (131). In order to do this, as well as handle a few terms conspicuous by their absence (e.g., calque, Old Greek), our author might consider creating a small glossary such as FM and J-S have. The presentation of the apocrypha as part of the LXX early on (12–13, 18–19) but then its appearance as external to the LXX later (138–9) stands a good chance of confusing students.

The first edition of a book covering such wide ground is bound to have minor errors, and this work is no exception: Professor Feldman’s first name is Louis, not Martin (164, 184); the double possessive “edition . . . of Karen Jobes’s” needs simplification (xi); “some . . . thinks that Hebrew syntax” requires attention (112); Greek being the language of “the western Empire” should be corrected (89); the Pietersma 2000a reference on page 49 should be 2000b; closing parens are lacking on pages 3 (bottom) and 42 (top); italics are missing for Philo’s named work (14). Carthage is mentioned four times in LXX Isaiah 23, not just in verse 10 (22). Can a “blunder” be “deliberate” (32)? “-Aramaic” might be tacked on to her “Daniel must be later than its Hebrew original” (46). On page 92, “most of” should be added to “what has survived” because of the Cairo Genizah finds. Would not using the terms “assonance, alliteration, anaphora” strengthen Dines’s case for deliberate style on pages 55–57?

In spite of these few slips, this enjoyable introduction by a highly qualified and well-balanced LXX scholar will fill a need. The work contains three handy indices and a seventeen-page bibliography, and for use as a textbook it has the added attraction of the Hebrew and Greek always being transliterated (and usually translated), with only a few

highly technical discussions of actual texts (55–57, 123). Thus the book will not overwhelm the Greekless student with minutiae, and it will serve not only as an introductory guide for Septuagint courses proper, but due to its small size it can easily be used as a secondary text in courses on Hellenistic Judaism, New Testament/Christian origins, and the early church where the professor wants to cover the LXX as merely one component of the course. Because of its up-to-date assessments of a variety of scholarly matters, it will likely make its way onto reading lists for comprehensive graduate exams too. The colorful painting from the fifteenth-century Italian Andrea del Verrocchio of the angel with Tobias graces the cover.