

# Christ's Use of Targums

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## Introduction

In the time of the building of the Second Temple, the enemies to this construction project wrote a letter of complaint to Ahasuerus. Apparently this Persian document was written with Aramaic script and “interpreted” (*methurgam*) in the Syrian tongue (Ez. 4:7). The interpretation was a *Targum* from the verb *tirgam* (תִּרְגַּם).<sup>1</sup> This biblical foundation gives the precedent for the interpretive translation of a document to be called a *Targum*. Historically, the Jews referred to the Aramaic portions of Genesis, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezra as *Targums*, and later rabbis developed the Babylonian Targum, interpreting the *Tanak* or Old Testament (OT) Scriptures. The writers of the New Testament (NT), along with the Lord Jesus Christ, employed the practice of interpreting/translating the *Tanak* in their citations of the OT. These biblical NT interpretations, or *Targums*,<sup>2</sup> were inspired (II Tim. 3:16). One may note the instances of “targuming” in both the Gospels and the Book of Acts (cf. the many NT citations of the OT).<sup>3</sup> Knowledge of this biblical practice of employing the *Targum* helps the serious Bible student understand the bibliology of Christ and the NT writers. Although the prevailing view concerning the Lord’s use of the OT is that He quoted from the *Septuagint* (*LXX*), this essay will demonstrate Scripturally the irrefutable position that the Hebrew OT text was preserved intact in Christ’s day, that Christ and the Apostles cited from the preserved Hebrew text and consequently did not use the *LXX* as their OT source, and that Christ and Apostles did employ inspired targuming as their contribution to the NT text.

## Synagogue Practice

James affirmed that the *Torah* was the text by which preaching was done on every Sabbath in every town of Judea, and elsewhere, in the synagogue (Acts 15:21). Therefore, synagogues, distributed over a widespread geographical area, functioned as the first century training center for Jewish understanding of the *Torah* on their religious

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<sup>1</sup>The actual *Pual* participle is *methurgam* (מִתְרַגַּם).

<sup>2</sup>Several commentators affirm Christ’s employment of the Targum, including Geldenhuis who states “As far as we know, He read in Hebrew and translated into Aramaic, the common spoken language at that time...G. Dalman finds reflections of the traditional Aramaic paraphrase (*Targum*) in the present passage in Luke [4:18 ff.]” Norval Geldenhuis, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ, Co., 1979), p. 167. Cf. also Robert H. Stein, *The New American Commentary, Luke* (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1992), p. 155; Craig A. Evans, *New International Biblical Commentary, Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publ., 1990), p. 73; and William Manson, *The Moffatt New Testament Commentary, The Gospel of Luke* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 1955), p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>Gleason Archer and Gregory Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 167 pp.

day (cf. Acts 13:27). The early Christians regularly frequented the synagogues (Acts 6:9; 9:2, 20; 13:5, 14, 43; 17:2; 21:26) because the synagogue leaders afforded them the opportunity to give a “*word of exhortation*”<sup>4</sup> (Acts 13:15). Paul’s word of exhortation was a summary interpretation of many passages from the Law (*Torah*) and Prophets (*Nebiim*) and the Writings (*Kethubim*), pointing the Jews to Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of these Messianic Scriptures (cf. vv. 17-37). The Gentile Luke gave elaborate detail of a typical Sabbath synagogue service involving the Lord Jesus Christ (Lk. 4:16-21).<sup>5</sup> 1) The reader stood, received the scroll, and opened it (vv. 16-17). 2) The reader read the OT Scripture and then gave his “running” interpretation or *Targum* of the passage at hand (vv. 17b-19). 3) The reader rolled up the scroll, handed it back, and sat down (v. 20). 4) The reader preached his sermon or “*word of exhortation*” (cf. 21 ff.). This synopsis of these aforementioned biblical texts reveals foundation knowledge about the NT Christians’ practice of employing the OT Scriptures in the synagogue.

### Case Study: Lk. 4:18

#### The Phenomenon

Luke’s record of the practice of the Lord Jesus Christ in the synagogue is instructive for the serious Bible student. The Scripture Luke recorded generally cites Isa. 61:1-2a and one clause of Isa. 58:6d (g). Several observations are in order concerning the Scriptural phenomenon (see Chart # 1). 1) Luke gave the reference of the OT text and stated that this Scripture (Isa. 61:1-2a) was written (cf. Lk. 4:4). The perfect tense of his verb “*is written*” (*gegraptai*) indicates that the Hebrew had been written (by Isaiah) and was still intact in Christ’s day. 2) The actual words Luke inscribed obviously were not the exact equivalent words of the Hebrew text, or any text for that matter. By comparing the *Masoretic* Hebrew text (MT), the Greek translation (*LXX*), the Critical Text (CT), and the *Textus Receptus* (TR), several truths come to light. a) Concerning agreement, the MT, *LXX*, CT and TR basically agree<sup>6</sup> in clauses 61:1a, b, c, e, f, and 61:2a. b) Concerning differences the MT, TR and *LXX* agree against the CT for clause d,<sup>7</sup> and the TR and CT agree against the MT and *LXX* in adding clause g (Isa. 58:6d). Furthermore, the TR, *LXX* and CT extend the concept of clause f, deviating from the original Hebrew text. It should be obvious then, that no translation quoted *verbatim* the Hebrew text.

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<sup>4</sup>This invitation to preach a sermon, called the “*word of exhortation*” (*tou logou tes parakleseos*), allowed the Christian to expound upon the particular passage read from the law and prophets (Acts 13:15-16). The Book of Hebrews is the classic example of Paul’s inscripturated “*word of exhortation*” (cf. Heb. 13:22).

<sup>5</sup>Luke’s Gentile status is affirmed by his testimony (Acts 1:19) and Paul’s statement (cf. Col. 4:11 with 4:12-14), and is significant because both he and his recipient Theophilus needed the details of Jewish practices delineated.

<sup>6</sup>For the infinitive “*to preach good tidings*” (Isa. 61:1c) the TR translated with the present infinitive *euangelizesthai* instead of the *LXX*’s translation of the *aorist* infinitive *euangelisasthai*.

<sup>7</sup>Since the CT omits the Greek for “*to heal the brokenhearted,*” perhaps this is an indication that the post-first century *LXX* cited the TR.

Since the Hebrew text had been preserved, word perfect, according to Luke's own testimony (*gegraptai*), the *LXX*, TR, and CT are renderings which add and/or subtract words in their respective translation of the preserved words of Isa. 61:1-2a. For instance, the TR, *LXX*, and CT all add an unusual twist to the Hebrew clause f, changing the concept and word "bound" (*'asuriym*) to "blind" (*tuphlois*). It becomes obvious that the post-Hebrew writers did not directly quote the Hebrew text but paraphrased or even targumed the OT Scriptures. How then, does one understand and explain the following summary of salient points of this phenomenon?

1. The Hebrew text was preserved intact in the scroll from which Christ read.
2. Luke recorded what Christ said, not read, since He added clause g ("to set at liberty them that are bruised").
3. Christ did not quote *verbatim* either from the Hebrew text or the *LXX*.

### The Explanations

#### VIEW ONE: Christ and the Apostles Used the *LXX*

The prevailing view, which has a degree of antiquity,<sup>8</sup> denies that the Hebrew text was intact in Christ's day, but rather affirms that He quoted from the *LXX*, since that was His and the early Christians' Scriptures. For instance, Stewart Custer asseverates that "Luke (and Stephen [Acts 7:42]) always quote from the Septuagint."<sup>9</sup> A more recent work continues the claim of this popular mantra, stating,

The Septuagint (*LXX*) was the Bible for the Greek-speaking world. The Septuagint, which was the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT for the Greek speaking Jews of the *Diasopra* or Dispersion, was certainly different from the Masoretic text we use today...Why did Christ use the Septuagint? Why did our Savior not launch a crusade against the false Septuagint?...Yet, Paul used the Septuagint. Matthew used the Septuagint.<sup>10</sup>

The argument goes accordingly, that since the early Christians, including Christ, employed the *LXX* as their OT Scriptures, and although it is universally accepted that the veracity of the *LXX* is questionable in many places, it follows that this precedent allows for modern Christians to accept as and even call all modern translations, regardless of omissions and additions, "the word of God."

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<sup>8</sup>For instance, the KJV translators held, wrongly, that the *LXX* was the early OT Bible for the first century Christians. "The Translators to the Reader," *The Holy Bible, 1611 Edition, King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publ., 1982), p. iv. They apparently accepted early Septuagint tradition which includes the historical testimonies of the Letter of Aristeas, Philo, and Josephus, *et al.* Those that defend the KJV as the supreme English translation do not necessarily defend the practices or theology of the translators.

<sup>9</sup>Stewart Custer, *Witness to Christ, A Commentary on Acts* (Greenville: BJU Press, 2000), p. 95.

<sup>10</sup>Michael D. Sproul, *God's Word Preserved: A Defense of Historic Separatist Definitions and Beliefs* (Tempe, AZ: Whetstone Precepts Press), pp. 96-97.

So sensitive to the obvious conclusion that the aforementioned view holds a weak bibliography, Archer and Chirichigno have responded in detail with an attempt to quell such a conclusion in a qualifying manner.<sup>11</sup> They have the unenviable task of articulating the apologetic against liberals who deny inerrancy and question the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture, while at the same time defending evangelicals (and a growing number of fundamentalists)<sup>12</sup> who hold to the inspiration, but not to the verbal, plenary preservation, of Scripture. Archer and Chirichigno want to say, yes, liberals are wrong, who want to use the argument that since the Hebrew OT and *LXX* do not agree, the doctrine of inerrancy and therefore inspiration is compromised. However, they also want to say that evangelicals are orthodox who argue, that since the Hebrew and *LXX* do not agree, there is no compromising of the doctrine of preservation, and that all translations are really the word of God.

Archer and Chirichigno employ three arguments, one historical, one “biblical,” and one practical, to justify their bibliography with respect to the *LXX*: 1) “The missionary outreach of the evangelists and apostles of the early church,” 2) “Matthew and Hebrews often quote from the OT in a non-*LXX* [but Greek] form,” and 3) “That inexact quotations imply a low view of the Bible is really without foundation.”<sup>13</sup> These arguments not only “beg the question” but prompt biblical refutation.

#### *The Missionary Outreach Bible*

Accordingly, the consensus of most scholarship assumes that the *LXX* was available to and had the veritable character for Christ and the apostles to use as their OT Scriptures. This consensus is faulty because of two important Bible truths. First of all, the Bible plainly demonstrates that the Lord Jesus Christ used the Hebrew OT for His Scripture and that He never used the *LXX*. Secondly, the Lord and the apostles did not need to utilize the *LXX* for the evangelism of the Jews and Gentiles and consequently did not.

Expanding on the second point as it relates to the current heading, the biblical evidence needed to argue for Christ and the apostles’ evangelistic use of the *LXX* is wanting. Supposedly, the Alexandrian hellenization was so great that the Jews ceased using the Hebrew Scriptures in the first century. Instead, according to this theory, they replaced their Hebrew *Tanak* with the *LXX*. This unbiblical presupposition is easily refuted with Scripture. 1) There is no question that Hebrew was a known and read language of the first century since Pilate required the title on the cross to be written in three known and read languages of the Greco-Roman world—“*Hebrew and Greek and Latin*” (Jn. 19:20).<sup>14</sup> 2) The Apostle Paul, in his great apologetic speech, spoke to the Jews in Jerusalem “*in the Hebrew tongue*” (Acts 21:40 ff.). 3) The Lord Jesus Christ spoke both Hebrew (“*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*”) and Aramaic (“*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*”) from the Cross, as the Gospels of Matthew and Mark testify (Mt. 27:46 and Mk. 15:34, respectively). 4) The Lord also spoke to Paul “*in the Hebrew tongue*” at

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<sup>11</sup>Archer and Chirichigno, pp. ix-x.

<sup>12</sup>The biblical doctrine of preservation is *not* one of the so-called fundamentals, and therefore fundamentalists must look askance at this truth.

<sup>13</sup>Archer and Chirichigno, pp. ix-x.

<sup>14</sup>The Lord Jesus Christ did die for the sins of all mankind--Jew, Greek and Roman (cf. Rom. 5:6-8; Jn. 3:16).

the time of his conversion (Acts 26:14). Several pertinent biblical facts emerge: Christ and the apostles were multilingual, the Jews could read Hebrew, and the Jews could understand spoken Hebrew. Therefore, as the Scriptures state “*for Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day*” (Acts 15:21), there is no biblical reason to assume that any language other than Hebrew was the language of the Jews in Jerusalem in the first century. In a word, the Jews throughout Judea read the Hebrew *Tanak* every Sabbath in their respective synagogues.

Since the Jews of first century Palestine knew how to read and speak Hebrew, the Lord and the apostles did not need to use the *LXX* for evangelistic purposes toward the Jews. For instance, the initial ministry of Christ was to the Jews in Galilee and Judaea (Jn. 1:19-4:3). He sent His Jewish apostles to the Jews to declare to them that their Jewish King was on hand (Mt. 10:2-6). When He ministered to the Jews, there was no exegetical necessity that He had to use the *LXX*, and not use the Hebrew *Tanak*. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to the Jews citing the OT book of Joel, but not using the *LXX* (cf. Acts 2:14-36). When the Lord Jesus Christ ministered to the Syrophenician Greek woman, He did not use the Hebrew *Tanak* or the *LXX*, but His own inspired words in Greek (Mk. 7:26-30). For the Gentiles in Jerusalem on Pentecost, and who did not know Hebrew,<sup>15</sup> the Spirit of God guided the apostles “to speak with other tongues” (Acts 2:4), and eliminated the need to use the *LXX*. The apostles instructed the new converts, from both the Jews and the Gentiles, in “the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42). This teaching was not from the *Tanak* or the *LXX*, but from Christ’s earthly teaching ministry which He taught in Greek to His disciples (cf. Lk. 1:1-4; Acts 1:1). It should be apparent from Scripture that Christ and the early Christians did not have the necessity to evangelize Jews or Gentiles with the *LXX*, and in fact they did not.

#### *The Early Christians used Greek OT Sources for their ‘Bible’*

The essence of this argument is that Christ and the apostles used other OT Greek sources since their respective “quotes” from the *Tanak* deviated from both the Hebrew and *LXX*. This position is based on the fallible premise of the first argument and rejects the biblical teaching that the Hebrew text is preserved intact and that the Lord and early Christians employed targuming on the Scriptures. Therefore Archer and Chirichigno must posit the inane sentiment that there was a pre-Hebrew Bible which has evidence of existence in the deviant readings of the *LXX*. They state, “it should also be observed that, at least in some cases, those Greek renderings (whether *LXX* or not) point to a variant reading in the original form of the text that is better than the one that has come down to us in the standard Hebrew Bible.”<sup>16</sup> The world of Christian scholarship has not only accepted the liberal position of the mythical “Q” document of Higher Criticism, but also the mythical original Hebrew “proto-Masoretic” text represented in the mythical original Greek “proto-*LXX*” text.

By all accounts the original *LXX* text is unknown. Thackeray states,

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<sup>15</sup>The Ethiopian treasurer apparently knew Hebrew since he came to Jerusalem “to worship” the Jews’ God (Acts 8:26 ff.). As he read the Hebrew *Nabiim* and needed help with the interpretation of Isa. 53:7-8, the Lord sent Philip to “targum” the passage for him.

<sup>16</sup>Archer and Chirichigno, p. ix.

The main value of the LXX is its witness to an older Hebrew text than our own. But before we can reconstruct this Hebrew text we need to have a pure Greek text before us, and this we are at present far from possessing...the original text has yet to be recovered...Not a verse is without its array of variant readings.<sup>17</sup>

Ewert adds more to this agnosticism concerning the “original” text of the LXX, saying, “it is very difficult today always to know exactly which readings were present in the LXX originally.”<sup>18</sup> This position clearly denies that there is either a preserved Hebrew original or a OT Greek “original,” and consequently requires reconstruction of both texts through the so-called science of Lower Criticism. The only assurance that the Christian world has, according to this position, is that some day textual scholars will restore the original OT text along with the original NT text, because the Lord has not promised to preserve either, nor in fact has preserved either.

### *Inexact Quotations of the LXX*

This view maintains that the NT writers “quoted” the LXX, in some cases exactly, and in other cases inexactly, and thus promotes that inexactitude, with regard to words, is part and parcel of the bibliology of Christ and the apostles. Belief in the NT writers’ use of the LXX is foundational for the promotion of 1) the science of textual criticism, 2) the various Greek editions (Critical and Eclectic text), 3) the multiple English versions, and 4) this belief culminates in the unbiblical Totality of Manuscripts position. Therefore, the argument goes, God has preserved His word (thought, concept, doctrine), but not His Words (although compare Ps. 12:6-7; Mt. 4:4; 5:18; 24:35; and Jn. 12:48). Shaylor defines this position stating, “This preservation exists in the totality of the ancient language manuscripts of that revelation.”<sup>19</sup> He goes on to allude to Harding’s input, saying “Michael Harding in chapter 9 illustrates how ancient translations can be helpful. He points out how the Septuagint can help in harmonizing a seeming discrepancy in Scripture. His conclusion recognizes a problem but expresses the faith of one who believes that God has preserved His Word in the totality ancient MSS...”<sup>20</sup> Even though the totality of manuscripts has many variant and opposed readings<sup>21</sup> in the original languages and resultant translations, this should not be a reason for the Christian to give pause. Shaylor confidently concludes that, in spite of the inexactitude of words, believers should have great assurance in God’s preservation, stating “When we use a faithful conservative translation such as the King James Version, New King James Version, the New American Standard Version, or another version of demonstrated accuracy we can

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<sup>17</sup>H. St. J. Thackeray, “Septuagint,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Volume IV (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ., 1939), pp. 2724-2725.

<sup>18</sup>David Ewert, *From Ancient Tablets to Modern Translations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House), p. 110.

<sup>19</sup>James B. Williams and Randolph Shaylor, eds. *God’s Word in our Hands, The Bible Preserved for Us* (Greenville: Ambassador Emerald International), p. xxi.

<sup>20</sup>Williams and Shaylor, p. 414.

<sup>21</sup>Schnaiter affirms that “all translations (even poor ones) are the Word of God and deserve respect.” Sam Schnaiter and Ron Tagliapietra, *Bible Preservation and the Providence of God* (Philadelphia: Xlibris Corp., 2002), p. 319.

trust our Bible as the Word of God. We can be confident that we have God's Word in our hands."<sup>22</sup>

## VIEW TWO: Christ and the Apostles Targumed the Preserved Hebrew Text

In order for the Biblicist to combat almost two *millennia* of historical tradition, the believer must rely solely upon the Scriptures.<sup>23</sup> There is no question that View One has antiquity as its "proof" for veracity. Of course, all that antiquity really proves is that both truth and error go back to the beginning. Scripture, and Scripture alone, is the source for and measurement of all inscripturated truth (I Cor. 2:13) because it is truth (Jn. 17:17). The arguments for the veracity of View Two follow the Scriptural teaching that the Hebrew text was preserved, that Christ did not look to the *LXX* as his OT Bible since the original preserved Hebrew text was available, and that both Christ and the apostles targumed the OT Hebrew text.

### *The Preserved Hebrew Text*

When Satan tempted the Lord Jesus Christ, He submitted Himself to the written words of God<sup>24</sup> by saying, "*It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*" (Mt. 4:4). The expression "*It is written*" (*gegraptai*) is in the perfect tense indicating past action with continuing results.<sup>25</sup> In effect, the Lord said that this Hebrew verse to which He alluded (Dt. 8:3), and obviously

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<sup>22</sup>Williams and Shaylor, p. 422.

<sup>23</sup>*Vide* Thomas M. Strouse, "Scholarly Myths Perpetuated on Rejecting the Masoretic Text of the Old Testament," *Emmanuel Baptist Theological Journal* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 37-61.

<sup>24</sup>This action harmonizes with Ps. 138:2, which states, "*I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*" Nevertheless, the NIV editor makes the following inane and inaccurate statement on this verse: "The Hebrew at the end of the verse is unclear in its syntax and thus difficult to translate. It can be translated the way the KJV has it, or it can be rendered as it is in the NIV. Since either rendering is possible...we chose ours on theological grounds. It is inconceivable that God would exalt His Word above His name which, in Hebrew usage, represents one's very person and character. The KJV choice is actually saying that God has exalted His Word above His very own person, essence, and character ("name"). **This is theologically inconceivable**" (bold mine). Ken Barker, *Accuracy Defined and Illustrated* (Colorado Springs: International Bible Society, 1995), p. 48. Contrary to Dr. Barker's sentiments, the Hebrew is quite elementary even for first year Hebrew students, the KJV gives the only possible formal equivalent translation, and the Lord Jesus Christ did indeed submit Himself to the written Hebrew text preserved in His lifetime.

<sup>25</sup>"This common introductory formula [it is written] to OT quotations seems to be used to emphasize that **the written word still exists** [bold mine]. It implies a present and binding authority." Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Greek Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 2000), p. 248. *Vide* also Blass, F., and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. R. W. Funk, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 175; and William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1993), p. 219. The majority of the 67 NT occurrences of *gegraptai* refer to OT passages still intact in the days of Christ and the apostles.

the Hebrew Book of Deuteronomy and consequently the Hebrew Pentateuch, had been written (by Moses the Hebrew) and was still written to His very day. The Lord Jesus Christ had the preserved words of the Hebrew OT available to Him just as He had promised (cf. Dt. 4:2; 12:32; 17:18-20; 29:1,29; 30:11-14 [*vide* Rom. 10:6-8]; 31:9-13, 24-27; Josh. 1:7-8; Ps. 12:6-7; 119:111, 152, 160).

The Lord taught that the jots and tittles<sup>26</sup> of the Hebrew OT would be preserved, stating, *“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled”* (Mt. 5:18). He believed that the very consonants and the very vowels of the OT Hebrew words of prophecies (and of course all the other words of Scripture) were preserved perfectly intact in His day and would continue until final fulfillment (cf. Jn. 12:48).<sup>27</sup> Since the Greek OT (*LXX*) does not have jots and tittles, He was not referring to this inferior translation, which does have a questionable background and character.

Again, the Lord Jesus Christ alluded to the three-fold division of the Hebrew OT, which division the *LXX* does not follow, when He affirmed, *“These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me”* (Lk. 24:44; cf. v. 27; also Acts 26:22). The law (*Torah*), the prophets (*Nebiim*), and the writings (*Kethubim* [of which Psalms was first]) made up the Hebrew OT and is called the *Tanak*. He elaborated on His use of the Hebrew OT when the Lord identified the Pharisees’ persecution of the prophets with their murderous Jewish ancestors, saying, *“From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation”* (Lk. 11:51). He surveyed the whole scope of the Hebrew OT, using the examples of the murder of the righteous Abel from the first book (Genesis 4:8) to the murder of the righteous Zacharias from the last book (II Chronicles 24:20-22).

The Lord claimed that the Hebrew text was intact in His day, that the jot and tittles were intact in His day, and alluded to the three-fold division of the *Tanak*. This ample biblical evidence has not been and can not be overturned by textual scholars, since they reject biblical revelation. Christ absolutely did allude to the Hebrew text, and did not allude to the *LXX*, throughout His whole ministry.

The Scriptures state clearly the means by which the Hebrew text was preserved: *“What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God”* (Rom.

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<sup>26</sup>“The word ‘tittle’ (*keraiia*), both in English and Greek, refers to the Hebrew vowel *chireq*, which is the dot.” Thomas M. Strouse, “Luke 16:17—One Tittle,” *Emmanuel Baptist Theological Journal* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 9. *Keraia* may encompass the inspired and preserved Hebrew accents (*te`amiym*) that permeate the prosody and psalmody sections of the whole *Tanak* and assist in the cantillation of the Hebrew text (cf. Ex. 15:1 ff.; Judg. 5:1 ff.). For instance, the Lord described the Book of Deuteronomy as a “*song*” (*shir*) to be sung perpetually (Dt. 31:19, 22, and 30). To sing words, one needs notes; presumably the accents were the equivalent to musical notes for the purpose of Israel singing the whole *Tanak* (cf. I Chron. 25:1-3).

<sup>27</sup>The prophesied events could not be perfectly fulfilled if the prophecies themselves were not perfectly preserved for one to match the minute details of the prophecy with the minute details of the fulfillment (cf. Isa. 34:16).



3:1-2).<sup>28</sup> The Lord blessed His chosen people, the Jews, in many ways, including using them to preserve the inspired jots and tittles of the Hebrew words of the Tanak (cf. Rom. 9:3-5). With Christ's first advent (cf. Mk. 1:1), He gave the privilege and responsibility for the preservation of the inspired OT Hebrew words and the canonical NT Greek words to His assembly (Mt. 16:18). The mandate for preservation comes from the words of the Great Commission: "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen*" (Mt. 28:19-20). The root word behind "observe" is *terein*, which has both lexical and contextual meanings of "to keep," "to reserve," "to watch," or "to preserve" (cf. Jude 1:1; Rev. 3:10 [2x]). The Lord commanded exclusively that His assemblies had the responsibility of evangelizing the nations (apparently with translations) as they preserved the Hebrew OT<sup>29</sup> and Greek NT words. Paul declared that the Ephesian church was "*the pillar and ground of the truth*" (I Tim. 3:15), and this assembly had in its midst the Jew named Apollos who was "*mighty in the (Hebrew OT) scriptures*" (Acts 18:24). Therefore, the Ephesian church was representative of the Lord's assemblies which had the wherewithal to preserve both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures for perpetuity (cf. Eph. 1:1 and Rev. 2:1 ff.).<sup>30</sup>

#### *The Non-Use of the LXX*

The greatest challenge for those promoting Christ's use of the *LXX* is overcoming the biblical passages which declare His exclusive use of the Hebrew text. Since the Lord had the preserved Hebrew text, and since He could speak and read Hebrew, He had no necessity to use the *LXX*, whether it was in existence or not in the first century.

Other challenges to those who must disprove Christ's non-use of the *LXX* include the history, character and known errors of the *LXX*. Concerning its history, several questions arise immediately from the letter of Aristeas. These questions include when was it originally translated, by how many Jewish elders, and how much of the OT? Thackeray critically admits that the date of the *LXX* ranges from the fourth century BC to the second century BC, that the number of Jewish translators were seventy (*LXX*) or seventy-two (*LXXII*), and that the translation may have only included the Pentateuch. He states, "Yet it has long been recognized that much of it is unhistorical, in particular

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<sup>28</sup>*Vide* also "*This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us*" (Acts 7:38).

<sup>29</sup>The Lord's candlesticks recognized and received the preserved Hebrew text which came through the Masoretes, and thus honored the so-called "Masoretic Hebrew" text. These Masoretic Jews did not invent anything, including a vowel system since they were familiar with the *Qere* (marginal) readings, but merely passed on the preserved text. These AD six century Masoretes are not venerated any more than the AD seventeenth century King of England named James, but the Lord's churches identify these texts accordingly as "Bible."

<sup>30</sup>Contrary to Sproul's assertion that there was no "secret Alpine trail" of believers who copied manuscripts in languages they did not know (Hebrew [?]), the Bible predicts, by virtue of Christ's mandate, that NT assemblies would have capable Hebrew and Greek scholars for this biblically required task. *Vide* Sproul, p. 264.

the professed date and nationality of the writer...yet the story is not wholly to be rejected, though it is difficult to disentangle truth from fiction.”<sup>31</sup>

The character of the *LXX* is suspect as well. The current *LXX*<sup>32</sup> contains the Apocrypha intermingled with the canonical books of the Tanak. Furthermore the *LXX* scrambles the Hebrew text at places especially in the Psalms (e.g., 9 and 10 are a single Psalm), and in Jeremiah (vv. 46-51 come after v. 25:13).

The *LXX* is rife with errors, omissions and transcriptional gaffes. For instance, the *LXX* adds 586 years to the time from Adam to the Flood in Gen. 5. There is hardly a page in the *LXX* where errors do not abound. This author records several alleged errors in the Masoretic text “corrected” by the *LXX* (Ps. 2:9; Ps. 145; Amos 5:26).<sup>33</sup> A recent discovery by this same author recognized that the translators of the Book of Daniel apparently misread the *resh* in Meltzar’s name as a *daleth*, and translated it as “[A]melsad.” Another discovery involves the effort of the *LXX* “to smooth out”<sup>34</sup> the change of person in Hosea 2:6. The Lord addressed Israel with the second person suffix (“*thy way*”) and then employed the third person “*she shall seek.*” The *LXX* uses the third person throughout this verse. Unger frankly adds these comments about portions of the *LXX* concerning its questionable veracity: “The Psalms, on the other hand, and the Book of Isaiah show obvious signs of incompetence...In the latter part of Jeremiah, the Greek...is ‘unintelligibly literal.’ The Book of Daniel is mere Midrashic paraphrase.”<sup>35</sup>

Granting for a moment the unproved assumption that there was a complete *LXX* prior to Christ’s ministry, one must still prove that the Lord Jesus Christ, who indeed did have the preserved Hebrew text (Mt. 4:4), would have any inclination, in precept or practice, to use a questionable translation in a secondary language to minister NT revelation to Jew or Gentile.

### *Christ Targumed*

The Scripture demands that the interpreter of it understands the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ did indeed *Targum* many of the OT texts to which He referred. In the Case Study of Luke 4:18, several lines of argumentation for this proposition are set forth.

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<sup>31</sup>Thackeray, p. 2724; also pp. 2722-2723 and 2725 ff.

<sup>32</sup>If there was an original *LXX*, it is not presently extant. The current *LXX* is a compilation of Origen’s *Hexapla*, which includes his revision of the *LXX*, along with the Greek renderings of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. See Ewert, pp. 105-110.

<sup>33</sup>Kent Brandenburg, Editor, *Thou Shalt Keep Them* (El Sobrante, CA: Pillar and Ground Publ., 2003), p. 155.

<sup>34</sup>According to the tenets of Textual Criticism, the so-called difficult reading is preferred. Therefore, any efforts to smooth out a difficult reading must be considered late and consequently inferior. But the popular theory of OT Text Criticism holds that the *LXX* predates the Masoretic Text. As one can see with this representative example, modern OT text scholarship is encumbered with inconsistencies and faulty rationale. Furthermore, the *LXX* is a translation; why should a translation correct the original language text? Is this not another example of Ruckmanism reversed?

<sup>35</sup>Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), p. 1147.

First, Luke's use of the perfect verb *gegraptai* ("it is written")<sup>36</sup> refers to the original inspired Scripture which has continuing results in written form; i.e., the preserved, inspired original of Isaiah 61:1-2a and 58:6d. When Luke stated "*it is written*" and then records Christ's *Targum*, he is not teaching that the Lord's *Targum* was written, but the original is intact from which Christ built His *Targum*. This would be analogous to someone saying, "you know that verse in John's Gospel that says that God loved the world and sent His son and whoever believes in Him won't perish—oh, yes, that is John 3:16." The allusion to the intact written words of Jn. 3:16 does not diminish the reality of the intact words of the verse.

Second, the Lord Jesus Christ did not quote *verbatim* the Masoretic Hebrew text or any known text for that matter in Lk. 4:18-19. He did not quote Isa. 61:1f ("And the opening of the prison to them that are bound") because He rendered it "*and the recovering of sight to the blind*" (v. 18). Even though His citation was in agreement with the *LXX* at this point, it is certain that He was not quoting the *LXX*. The Lord added clause g ("to set at liberty them that are bruised" [*Targum* of Isa. 58:6]) which is not found in either the MT or *LXX* at this point. Furthermore, He used a different infinitive than that of the *LXX* in clause c (*LXX*: *euangelisasthai* vs. TR: *euangelisesthai*). And it is certain that the CT did not quote the *LXX* since it omits clause d ("he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted"), which clause occurs in the *LXX* and TR.

Third, Christ's expanded and inspired interpretation of Isa. 61:1-2a not only becomes part of the canonical Scripture, but is also an object lesson in bibliological interpretation, enhancing one's understanding of the Lord's eschatology. Dispensationally, He divided up Isaiah's prophecy of the coming of the Lord into the first coming and the second coming (cf. Lk. 4:21). The Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled the prophecy of Isa. 61:1-2a with His first advent, and will fulfill Isa. 61:2b with His second advent in connection with the conclusion of "*the day of vengeance*" (Isa. 61:2b; cf. 34:8; 35:4; 63:4). Christ's employment of targuming OT Hebrew texts gave further complementation to the interpretation of these texts and additional contribution to the whole of Christian theology.

## Summary of the Two Views

As the student of Scripture juxtaposes View One with View Two, it is biblically clear that View One has no biblical merit, and that View Two has full scriptural support and full harmony with bibliological truth (see Chart # 2). View One must argue that the Lord did not promise to preserve His words intact for future generations, and that in fact He did not preserve them. Next, View One must argue that the Greek OT *LXX* had the history, character and purity to be the source from which the Son of God would draw his OT quotes. Then View One must demonstrate, unambiguously, that the Lord and the Apostles employed the *LXX* to evangelize Jews or Gentiles. Next, this view must completely ignore the expression *gegraptai* ("it is written"). Then View One must use the expression "quote" to mean "loose citation," since there is really very little direct,

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<sup>36</sup>This perfect verb form of *grapho* occurs 67 times in the NT. Its occurrences range from Mt. 2:5 to Rev. 17:8 and among six biblical authors, namely Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul and Peter. In each case the verb denotes the preservation of something written, unless of course the verb is negated (see Rev. 13:8).

verbatim quoting practiced by Christ or the Apostles. Then this position must rationalize this extremely weak bibliology of our Lord by stating that since the Savior had such a low view of His Bible the Christian may have that same low view. This view then propagates the blasphemous notion that all texts, manuscripts and translations make up the on-going, evolving word of God, which culmination for completion is hampered only by newer archaeological finds and the latest theories in Text Criticism.<sup>37</sup>

View Two, which teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles targumed the OT, builds its biblical defense on the interpretation of many Scriptures. The Lord believed the OT words were preserved (Ps. 12:6-7; Mt. 4:4) including the Hebrew jots and tittles (Mt. 5:18), and referred to the three-fold division of the *Tanak* (Lk. 11:51 and 24:44). He and the Apostles never used the *LXX* to evangelize Jews or Gentiles, but instead employed the Hebrew text for Jews and the Greek NT words for Gentiles (Mk. 7:26-30; Acts 2:42). In targuming the Hebrew OT, they expanded God's NT revelation to include not only His NT doctrine but this divinely-complemented OT explanation within the text of the NT Scriptures.

### Conclusion

The prevailing consensus of biblical scholarship maintains that Christ and the Apostles quoted from the *LXX* as their OT Scriptures. These scholars must insist upon this untenable assumption to justify their biblically weak position on the Hebrew and Greek texts and their subsequent translations. The Bible refutes this ancient and popular false notion. Instead, Christ and the Apostles had the preserved Hebrew words intact in their possession and preached from them. In addition, they expanded the text of Scripture by giving their inspired *Targums* of various OT Hebrew passages. These *Targums* were recorded by the writers of Scripture in the Gospels, Acts and the Epistles. This interpretation of the biblical phenomenon denies that the Lord used an inferior translation such as the *LXX* for His OT Bible, and instead posits that He utilized the preserved Hebrew text and expanded on it with inspired *Targums*. This high view of bibliology requires Christians of all centuries and languages to recognize that God preserved His Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words in the original languages and that these preserved words must be the foundation for all bibliological truth, including all translational efforts of Scripture. “*Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged*” (Rom 3:4).

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<sup>37</sup>“God preserved His Word in the abundance of manuscripts...However, textual variation from geographic distribution and multiplicity of manuscripts, hence textual criticism, is THE observable method God has used to ensure the accuracy and permanency of His Word,” Sproule, p. 298.