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Greek or Hebrew?

Augustine and Jerome on Biblical Translation

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ABSTRACT

This article elucidates the main topic in the discussion between Augustine and Jerome about biblical translation, by focusing on their views about the language of the source text of translation. According to the historical study of translation, translators at the time of Cicero were allowed to show their creativity, since they presupposed the reader's ability to compare the Greek text with the Latin translation. Cicero, accordingly, chose free translation as his own principle. Augustine expected the readers of the Bible to compare the source text with the translation, claiming that the source text should be the Greek Bible, namely, the LXX. However, Augustine preferred literal translation, for he estimated the reader's comprehension of the source text to be low. Jerome, on the other hand, anticipated the readers at a high level, so that he basically adopted free translation as a translation method of any kind of literary work, including the Bible. Moreover, since Jerome accepted the Hebrew text as the original text, rejecting the authority of the LXX, he recommended the non-Hebrew readers ask the Hebrews to examine the accuracy of his translation. In addition, as Augustine and Jerome have different attitudes towards translation, they also have different views on the ideological state of the LXX: Augustine allowed the LXX to be a free translation, while Jerome strictly demanded it to be a literal translation, even though their own translation theories are opposite, respectively.

1. Introduction

The difference of the understanding of the 'Old Testament' between Augustine and Jerome is usually considered to lie in their theological interpretation of the origin of the LXX:¹ Augustine inherited Philo's and his followers' understanding of the divine origin of the LXX, and regarded it to be more

¹ See, for example, W. Schwarz, *Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation: Some Reformation Controversies and their Background* (Cambridge, 1970), 17-44; Martin Hengel, 'Die Septuaginta als "christliche Schriftensammlung"', ihre Vorgeschichte und das Problem ihres Kanons', in Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer (eds), *Die Septuaginta zwischen Judentum und Christentum*, WUNT 72 (Tübingen, 1994), 182-284; Mogens Müller, *The First Bible of the Church: A Plea for the Septuagint*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 206 (Sheffield, 1996), 68-97.

legitimate than the Hebrew text. Since the LXX translators were inspired by the Holy Spirit, says Augustine, the prophecy reflected in the original text was updated during the translation. On the other hand, Jerome, following the ‘historical’ accounts recorded in the *Letter of Aristeas* and Josephus’ works, indicates that the text of the LXX was unreliable, for the translators intentionally had made a different translation from the original text. Accordingly, Jerome rejects the authority of the LXX which had been widely accepted in the Church, and claims the necessity of going back to the ‘Hebrew truth’ (*Hebraica veritas*).

This explanation is still reasonable, but we can more simply explain the difference between the two by focusing on their views about the language of the source text of translation. Why did Augustine adhere especially to the Greek text, not to the Hebrew original, as a source text of the Old Testament? Why did Jerome never give up claiming the importance of the Hebrew text over Greek text, when he translated the Old Testament? In order to answer these questions, we first examine the history of translation theory which originated with Cicero, and then apply the ‘principle of comparison’ between the source text and the translation to both Augustine’s and Jerome’s attitudes towards biblical translation.

2. Cicero and translation in Latin literature

In the history of Latin literature, Cicero is the first person who genuinely discusses translation.² Cicero is a theorist of translation as well as a practitioner who actually translated various genres of Greek literature, including didactic epics (Aratus’ *Phaenomena*), philosophical dialogues (Plato’s *Timaeus* and *Protagoras*), and orations (Aeschines’ *Against Ctesiphon* and Demosthenes’ *On the Crown*). For him, making a translation is not only the way to know the content of Greek literature, but also the way to get a good command of Latin by imitating the rhetoric of Greek literature.³ Accordingly, Cicero translated Greek orations as if the orators originally delivered them in Latin. This attitude

² On Cicero as a translator, see, for example, Georges Cuendet, ‘Cicéron et Saint Jérôme traducteurs’, *RÉL* 11 (1933), 380-400; Siobhán McElduff, *Roman Theories of Translation: Surpassing the Source*, Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies 14 (London, 2013), 96-121. Even before the time of Cicero, translation played an important role in the history of Latin literature. Indeed, Cuendet claims that the history of Latin literature begins with translation. For example, Livius Andronicus, who was originally a Greek slave, but came to be regarded as the first Latin writer, translated the *Odyssey* as well as some tragedies and comedies, which became the first epic and the first dramatic works in the history of Latin literature. In other words, Latin literature originated with the translations of Greek literature by a Greek translator.

³ Cicero’s understanding of translation as a practice of rhetoric is later succeeded by Pliny the Younger. In his *Ep.* 7.9.2-3, Pliny recommends the readers not only to translate Greek orations into Latin, but also Latin orations into Greek for rhetorical practice.

of a translator who tries to compete with the author of the original text is later called 'rivalry' (*aemulatio*) by Quintilian.⁴ Moreover, in *On the Best Kind of Orators* 5.14, Cicero establishes the dichotomy between free and literal translation, preferring the former:

That is to say I translated the most famous orations of the two most eloquent Attic orators, Aeschines and Demosthenes, orations which they delivered against each other. And I did not translate them as an interpreter, but as an orator, keeping the same ideas and the forms, or as one might say, the 'figures' of thought, but in language which conforms to our usage. And in so doing, I did not hold it necessary to render word for word, but I preserved the general style and force of the language. For I did not think I ought to count them out to the reader like coins, but I ought to pay them by weight, as it were.⁵

According to Cicero, literal translation is the way of 'counting out words like coins' (*adnumerare*) to give the same number of Latin words as original Greek words, whereas free translation is the way of 'paying words by weight' (*appendere*) to provide the same meaning as a whole sentence, even if the number of the words of the translation differs from that of the source text. In other words, Cicero, not as a mere translator but as an orator, made free translation, so that he rivaled the Greek author of the source text.

According to the historical study of translation, there is one more reason why Cicero adopted free translation: Cicero did not have to give consideration to the difference between the source text and the translation, since educated people in Rome could read and understand Greek by themselves.⁶ Roman intellectuals who read Cicero's translation did not always need to learn the content of the source texts. While knowing the content, they found delight in reading Cicero's artfully prepared translation as a metatext.⁷ Since the readers could access the

⁴ See Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 10.5.5 (Donald A. Russell [ed.], *Quintilian: The Orator's Education* 4, LCL 127 [Cambridge, Mass., 2014], 358): *Neque ego paraphrasin esse interpretationem tantum volo, sed circa eosdem sensus certamen atque aemulationem.*

⁵ Cicero, *De optimo genere oratorum* 5.14 (Harry M. Hubbell [ed.], *Cicero: De Inventione; De Optimo Genere Oratorum; Topica*, LCL 386 [Cambridge, Mass., 1976], 365): *Converti enim ex Atticis duorum eloquentissimorum nobilissimas orationes inter seque contrarias, Aeschini et Demostheni; nec converti ut interpres, sed ut orator, sententiis isdem et earum formis tamquam figuris, verbis adnostram consuetudinem aptis. In quibus non verbum pro verbo necesse habui reddere, sed genus omne verborum vimque servavi. Non enim ea me adnumerare lectori putavi oportere, sed tamquam appendere.*

⁶ Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (3rd ed.; London, 2002), 48-51; Benjamin G. Wright III, 'Access to the Source: Cicero, Ben Sira, The Septuagint and Their Audiences', *JSJ* 34 (2003), 1-27, esp. 8-9; Theo A.W. van der Louw, *Transformations in the Septuagint: Towards an Interaction of Septuagint Studies and Translation Studies*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology 47 (Leuven, 2007), 35-46; Jeremy Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications* (2nd ed.; New York, 2008 [2001]), 20.

⁷ Astrid Seele, *Römische Übersetzer, Nöte, Freiheiten, Absichten: Verfahren des literarischen Übersetzens in der griechisch-römischen Antike* (Darmstadt, 1995), 10-1.

source texts and also did not need literal translations, the translators were exempted from responsibility to reproduce the expression of the source texts with fidelity, and could fully display their art of rhetoric, deviating from the source texts.

3. Jerome's translation theory

Jerome practically inherited Cicero's translation theory. Accepting the dichotomy between free and literal translation, Jerome appreciated the tradition of literal translation in the history of biblical translation, but basically adopted free translation as his own theory. In terms of Jerome's translation theory, the following sentence in his *Epistle 57*, entitled *On the Best Method of Translating*, has received considerable attention: 'I myself not only admit, but freely proclaim that in translating from the Greek – except in the case of the Holy Scriptures, where even the word order is a mystery – I render sense for sense and not word for word'.⁸ Based on this statement, many scholars believe that Jerome translated literary works other than the Bible freely, including the works of some Greek Church Fathers, whereas he translated the Bible word for word.⁹

According to Adam Kamesar, however, we should not take this statement to mean that Jerome translated the Bible word for word, but rather that Jerome simply explained the method of literal translation to have been traditionally accepted for biblical translation, as in the case of Aquila and the Old Latin versions.¹⁰ Certainly Jerome occasionally takes a flexible approach, for example, claiming that he produced a translation of the *Book of Job*, 'in which sometimes

⁸ Jerome, *Ep. 57.5.2* (CSEL 54, ed. Isidor Hilberg [Wien, 1910], 508): *Ego enim non solum fateor, sed libera voce profiteor me in interpretatione Graecorum absque scripturis sanctis, ubi et verborum ordo mysterium est, non verbum e verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu...* English translation is cited from *LNPF Second Series VI* (New York, 1893), 113. On the details about Jerome's *Ep. 57*, see, for example, Gerard J.M. Bartelink, 'Quelques observations sur la lettre LVII de S. Jérôme', *RBen* 86 (1976), 296-306; *id.*, *Hieronymus, Liber de Optimo Genere Interpretandi (Epistula 57): Ein Kommentar*, Mnemosyne Supplements 61 (Leiden, 1980); Michel Banniard, 'Jérôme et l'*elegantia* d'après le *De optimo genere interpretandi*', in Yves-Marie Duval (ed.), *Jérôme entre l'occident et l'orient: XVI^e centenaire du départ de saint Jérôme de Rome et de son installation à Bethléem. Actes du Colloque de Chantilly (septembre 1986)* (Paris, 1988), 305-22.

⁹ G. Cuendet, 'Cicéron et Saint Jérôme' (1933), 383; J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (London, 1975), 203; Daniel Weissbort and Astradur Eysteinnsson (eds), *Translation – Theory and Practice: A Historical Reader* (Oxford, 2006), 28-9.

¹⁰ Adam Kamesar, 'Jerome', in James C. Paget and Joachim Schaper (eds), *The New Cambridge History of the Bible 1* (Cambridge, 2013), 653-75, esp. 669. On the history and techniques of literal translation, see Sebastian Brock, 'Aspects of Translation Technique in Antiquity', *GRBS* 20 (1979), 69-87; James Barr, 'The Typology of Literalism in Ancient Biblical Translations', *Mitteilungen des Septuaginta-Unternehmens* 15 (1979), 279-325.

words, sometimes sense, and at other times both echo simultaneously'.¹¹ However, elsewhere he declares that he translated the Bible according to the sense, without always persisting in the word order (*Ep.* 112.19; *Ep.* 106.3, 29, 30, 54, 55).¹² In other words, Jerome basically adopted free translation as his own theory when he translated not only the literary works other than the Bible, but also the Bible, without excluding the cases in which literal translation is needed.¹³

Following Kamesar's opinion, I would like to suggest one more thing: As in the case of Cicero, Jerome attached importance to free translation, for he anticipated that the readers would compare his translation with the source text. Jerome wrote *On the Best Method of Translating* in order to justify his position, for his opponents accused him of the mistranslation of Epiphanius of Salamis's letter addressed to John of Jerusalem.¹⁴ Since this letter was famous for the discussion about Origen's orthodoxy and for its stylistic elegance, many friends of Jerome, such as Eusebius of Cremona, wanted to read it. Eusebius, who had no full command of Greek, asked Jerome to translate the letter and to summarize it for easy understanding. Although Jerome once tried to refuse the request due to busyness, he reluctantly accepted it and made a rough translation

¹¹ Jerome, *Praef. in Job (Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem)*, ed. Robert Weber and Roger Gryson [5th ed.; Stuttgart, 2007], 731): *Haec autem translatio ... nunc verba, nunc sensus, nunc simul utrumque resonabit.*

¹² Indeed, Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible contains many verses which do not always reflect the wording of the original text. Some scholars simply explain this phenomenon as mistranslation caused by Jerome's insufficient competence or ignorance in Hebrew (e.g. Pierre Nautin); others explicate that Jerome deliberately deviated from the Hebrew text so that he introduced some midrashic interpretations taught by his Jewish teachers (e.g. Benjamin Kedar-Kopfstein). On this subject, see Pierre Nautin, 'Hieronymus', in *TRE* 15 (Berlin, 1986), 304-15; Benjamin Kedar-Kopfstein, 'Jewish Traditions in the Writings of Jerome', in D.R.G. Beattie and M.J. McNamara (eds), *The Aramaic Bible: Targums in their Historical Context*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 166 (Sheffield, 1994), 420-30; Michael Graves, *Jerome's Hebrew Philology: A Study Based on his Commentary on Jeremiah*, VCS 90 (Leiden, 2007), 1-12.

¹³ William Adler has a different opinion: Jerome's statement to prefer free translation has nothing to do with his own theory, but actually was his deliberate pretense in order to avoid criticism for mistranslation. Therefore, Jerome's true position is, according to Adler, literal translation. See William Adler, 'Ad Verbum or Ad Sensum: The Christianization of a Latin Translation Formula in the Fourth Century', in John C. Reeves and John Kampen (eds), *Pursuing the Text: Studies in Honor of Ben Zion Wacholder on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 184 (Sheffield, 1994), 321-48, esp. 336-40. Indeed, Jerome sometimes states that he translated biblical books literally; for example, in the preface of Esther. However, Jerome's statement in *On the Best Method of Translating* needs to be read in light of other statements in which he declares to have translated the Bible according to the sense. Moreover, as explained in note 12, Jerome frequently deviated from the word-for-word method of biblical translation, and took a more flexible approach. On this subject, see W. Schwarz, *Principles and Problems* (1955), 35; Stefan Rebenich, *Jerome, The Early Church Fathers* (London, 2002), 101.

¹⁴ On the Origenist controversy between Epiphanius of Salamis and John of Jerusalem and on their relationship with Jerome, see S. Rebenich, *Jerome* (2002), 41-51.

on condition that Eusebius would keep it private. However, someone, who was called a ‘fake monk’ by Jerome, stole the translation from Eusebius’ study, and gave it to one of Jerome’s opponents to boot. The opponent harshly criticized Jerome for too much deviation from the wording of the original letter. In response, Jerome wrote *On the Best Method of Translating* to offer a counterargument, by citing the works of famous translators who adopted free translation as their principle.

As shown from these circumstances, the opponents obviously compared Jerome’s translation with its source text when they criticized him. Furthermore, the fact that Jerome tried to decline the request of translation due to lack of sufficient time to polish the translation naturally leads us to think that Jerome expected the readers to compare his translation with the source text. It is true that in Western Christianity in the fourth and the fifth century, Greek, which was used as a language of church for a long time, was giving way to Latin both in name and in reality,¹⁵ but there were a certain number of educated people who still could understand Greek and read translated texts while comparing the source texts, as in the time of Cicero. Hereafter, I call the attitude by which the readers read the translation while comparing the source text, a ‘principle of comparison’.

4. The Principle of comparison in translation

4.1. Augustine’s attitude towards biblical translation

How is this ‘principle of comparison’ between the source text and its translation applied to biblical translation? In order to examine this matter, the discussion in the correspondence between Augustine and Jerome serves as a useful reference.¹⁶ Before studying their correspondence, let us look at the overview of Augustine’s position. In his *On Christian Doctrine* 2.13.19, Augustine

¹⁵ Maura K. Lafferty, ‘Translating Faith from Greek to Latin: *Romanitas* and *Christianitas* in Late Fourth-Century Rome and Milan’, *JECS* 11 (2003), 21–62, esp. 35–62; Alan Cameron, ‘The Latin Revival of the Fourth Century’, in Warren Treadgold (ed.), *Renaissances before the Renaissance* (Stanford, 1984), 42–58, 182–84.

¹⁶ On the correspondence between Augustine and Jerome, see, for example, Donatien De Bruyne, ‘La correspondance échangée entre Augustin et Jérôme’, *ZNW* 31 (1932), 233–48; Robert J. O’Connell, ‘When Saintly Fathers Feuded: The Correspondence between Augustine and Jerome’, *Thought* 54 (1979), 344–64; Carolinne White, *The Correspondence (394–419) between Jerome and Augustine of Hippo*, *Studies in Bible and Early Christianity* 23 (Lewiston, New York, 1990); Ralph Hennings, *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Augustinus und Hieronymus und ihr Streit um den Kanon des Alten Testaments und die Auslegung von Gal. 2, 11–14*, *VCS* 21 (Leiden, 1993); Alfons Fürst, ‘Hieronymus und Augustinus’, in Cornelius Mayer (ed.), *Augustinus-Lexikon* 3, Fasc. 1/2 (Basel, 2004), 317–36; repr. in *id.*, *Von Origenes und Hieronymus zu Augustinus: Studien zur antiken Theologiegeschichte*, *Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte* 115 (Berlin, 2011), 337–58.

claims that the readers of the Bible need to possess multiple literal translations, so that they could use them to correct the freedom or the errors of other translators, who in their translations had chosen to follow the sense quite as much as the words.¹⁷ Here we clearly find that Augustine also shares the principle of comparison between the source text and the translation. However, contrary to Cicero and Jerome, Augustine preferred literal translation, because he considered that literal translation was more useful than free translation when readers of translation referred to the source text. In other words, Augustine did not expect to have readers who were so highly educated that they could appreciate or even enjoy both the source text and the freely-translated text, but readers who only could compare the source text and the literally-translated text word for word.

In his letter addressed to Jerome (*Ep.* 71.4), Augustine declares his own view about biblical translation:

To be honest, I would prefer you to translate the canonical books of Scripture for us from the Greek text which is known as the LXX. I feel that many problems would arise if your translation began to be read regularly in many churches, because the Latin churches would be out of step with the Greek ones, especially as anyone who puts forward objections will easily be proved wrong when the Greek text is produced, for Greek is a language almost universally known. If, however, someone were to object to some unusual expression in the version translated from the Hebrew and were to allege that it is wrong, it would be almost impossible to get hold of the Hebrew texts to use in defense of the point to which he objected. But even if it were possible, who would allow so many Latin and Greek authorities to be condemned? In addition, if Hebrew scholars were consulted, they might give a different answer and so you might appear indispensable as the only one who could prove them wrong.¹⁸

¹⁷ See Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 2.13.19 (CChr.SL 32, ed. Joseph Martin [Turnhout, 1962], 44-5): *Sed quoniam et, quae sit ipsa sententia, quam plures interpretes pro sua quisque facultate atque iudicio conantur eloqui, non apparet, nisi in ea lingua inspiciatur, quam interpretantur; et plerumque a sensu auctoris devius aberrat interpres, si non sit doctissimus. Aut linguarum illarum, ex quibus in latinam scriptura pervenit, petenda cognitio est aut habendae interpretationes eorum, qui se verbis nimis obstrinxerunt; non quia sufficiunt, sed ut ex eis libertas vel error dirigatur aliorum, qui non magis verba quam sententias interpretando sequi maluerunt.*

¹⁸ Augustine, *Ep.* 71.4 (= *Ep.* 104.4 in Jerome's edition) (Alfons Fürst [ed.], *Augustinus-Hieronymus: Epistulae Mutuae-Briefwechsel* 1, *Fontes Christiani* 41 [Turnhout, 2002], 162-4): *Ego sane mallet Graecas potius canonicas te nobis interpretari scripturas, quae septuaginta interpretum perhibentur. Perdurum erit enim, si tua interpretatio per multas ecclesias frequentius coeperit lectitari, quod a Graecis ecclesiis Latinae ecclesiae dissonabunt, maxime quia facile contradictor convincitur Graeco prolato libro, id est linguae notissimae. Quisquis autem in eo quod ex Hebraeo translatus est aliquo insolito permotus fuerit et falsi crimen intenderit, vix aut numquam ad Hebraea testimonia pervenitur, quibus defendatur obiectum. Quod si etiam perventum fuerit, tot Latinas et Graecas auctoritates damnari quis ferat? Huc accedit quia etiam consulti Hebraei possunt aliud respondere, ut tu solus necessarius videaris, qui etiam ipsos possis convincere...* All English translations of the correspondence between Augustine and Jerome follow, with some modifications, C. White, *The Correspondence* (1990).

Here Augustine criticizes Jerome for translating the Bible from the Hebrew text, and asks him to produce a new translation according to the LXX. One of the reasons why Augustine did so is that this Greek translation was regarded as more authoritative than the Hebrew original in the Church. In his *On Christian Doctrine* 2.15.22, Augustine explains his understanding of the origin of the LXX as follows: Although the seventy elders translated the Bible while being secluded in isolated cells, their translations of all the books of the Bible, which each of the elders made separately, agreed with each other, since the Holy Spirit descended on the elders to make them not only translators, but also prophets.¹⁹ Based on this miraculous origin, Augustine attributed more authority to the LXX than to the Hebrew text.²⁰

In addition to this theological reason, we should consider one more reason based on the discussion about the principle of comparison: Augustine needed a translation not from Hebrew but from Greek, so that he could compare it with the source text. Readers have to read and understand at least two languages in order to compare the source text and the translation. Someone in the fourth or fifth century who read a Latin translation might have also read Greek, but perhaps no one (or few people) in the Church could read Hebrew better than Jerome at that time ('it would be almost impossible to get hold of the Hebrew texts ... you might appear indispensable as the only one...'). In other words, Augustine wanted the source language of the Bible to be Greek to prevent a monopoly by the ones who could read Hebrew, like Jerome, in the realm of biblical translation, and to keep the principle of comparison open to the public.

Indeed, in the same letter, Augustine highly evaluates Jerome's 'translation' of the New Testament, based on the fact that Jerome translated it from Greek, not because he translated it from the original text (Augustine misunderstood that Jerome translated the New Testament as well as the Old Testament, but actually Jerome only revised the Old Latin versions of the New Testament):

Nevertheless we give thanks to God in no small measure for your work in translating the Gospels from the Greek; when we compared it with the Greek Scriptures we found hardly anything to object to in the whole work. And if anyone were to persist in his

¹⁹ See Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 2.15.22 (CChr.SL 32, 47-8): *Et latinis quibuslibet emendandis graeci adhibeantur, in quibus Septuaginta interpretum, quod ad vetus testamentum attinet, excellit auctoritas; qui iam per omnes peritiores ecclesias tanta praesentia sancti spiritus interpretati esse dicuntur, ut os unum tot hominum fuerit. Qui si, ut fertur, multique non indigni fide praedicant, singuli cellis etiam singulis separati cum interpretati essent, nihil in alicuius eorum codice inventum est, quod non iisdem verbis eodemque verborum ordine inveniretur in ceteris. Quis huic auctoritati conferre aliquid nedum praeferre audeat? Si autem contulerunt, ut una omnium communi tractatu iudicioque vox fieret, ne sic quidem quemquam unum hominem qualibet peritia ad emendandum tot seniorum doctorumque consensum aspirare oportet aut decet.*

²⁰ Augustine gives the similar but more sophisticated explanation also in *De civitate Dei* 18.43.

support of false readings of the old version, he would easily be convinced or confuted if the manuscripts were produced and a comparison made.²¹

Here Augustine confesses that he actually compared Jerome's 'translation' with the Greek text, and claims that the supporters of the Old Latin versions would easily be refuted by comparing them with the Greek text. All of these comparisons were made possible because the source text was written in Greek and the principle of comparison functioned well. If Augustine had always been particular about translation from the original text, he would have evaluated Jerome's translation of the Old Testament based on the Hebrew text. However, as we have seen above, Augustine consistently claims that the LXX must be the source text of the Old Testament, because firstly it is an inspired text by the Holy Spirit, and secondly it is written in Greek.

Augustine, however, did not apply his translation theory to the LXX translators. As we have seen, Augustine certainly considered literal translation to be appropriate for his own attitude, but at the same time he so highly evaluated the authority of the LXX that he had no choice but to accept the free translation found in the LXX.²² In other words, he has an inconsistent attitude towards his own principle of translation and towards that of the LXX translators.

4.2. Jerome's response to Augustine's criticism

To this criticism of Augustine, how did Jerome respond? Jerome advocated the supremacy of the Hebrew original, which he called 'Hebrew truth' (*Hebraica veritas*), and did not consider the LXX to be authoritative, for it is unreliable as a translation.²³ However, as Augustine criticized, the readers of Jerome's

²¹ Augustine, *Ep.* 71.6 (= *Ep.* 104.6 in Jerome's edition) (*Augustinus-Hieronymus* 1 [2002], ed. A. Fürst, 164-6): *Proinde non parvas deo gratias agimus de opere tuo, quod evangelium ex Graeco interpretatus es, quia et paene in omnibus nulla offensio est, cum scripturam Graecam contulerimus. Unde si quisquam veteri falsitati contentiosus favet, prolatis collatisque codicibus vel docetur facillime vel refellitur.*

²² See Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 2.15.22 (CChr.SL 32, 48): *Quamobrem etiamsi aliquid aliter in hebraeis exemplaribus invenitur, quam isti posuerunt, cedendum esse arbitror divinae dispensationi, quae per eos facta est, ut libri quos gens Iudaea ceteris populis vel religione vel invidia proderere nolebat, credituris per dominum gentibus ministra regis Ptolemaei potestate tanto ante proderentur. Itaque fieri potest, ut sic illi interpretati sint, quemadmodum congruere gentibus ille, qui eos agebat et qui unum os omnibus fecerat, spiritus sanctus iudicavit.*

²³ Teppai Kato, 'Jerome's Understanding of Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament', *VC* 67 (2013), 289-315, esp. 308-12. Jerome refused to regard the LXX as an authoritative text according to the following two reasons: First, the LXX was unreliable because the translators deliberately distorted the original text to adapt their concept of divinity to that of Ptolemy. Second, although, according to the Christian perspective, the importance of the Old Testament derived from the fact that the advent of Christ was predicted in it, the LXX translators had no chance to know this mechanism, and translated the Old Testament before the advent of Christ, not knowing what would happen in the future. Jerome's evaluation of the LXX is also argued by Sarah Kamin, 'The Theological Significance of the *Hebraica Veritas* in Jerome's Thought', in Michael Fishbane

translation cannot refer to the source text on account of the fact that it is in Hebrew. In his letter addressed to Augustine (*Ep.* 112.20), Jerome successfully solves this difficult problem as follows:

As to the question of what method one should follow in interpreting the Holy Scriptures, this is dealt with in the book which I wrote entitled, *The Best Method of Translating*, as well as in all the short prefaces which I wrote for each divine book and added to my edition; I think that the serious reader should be referred to these. And if, as you say, you approve of my revision of the New Testament, the reason you give for your approval being that there are many people with a knowledge of Greek who can judge my work, then you ought to believe that my work on the Old Testament is equally authentic, for in it I did not include my own ideas but only translated the divine texts as I found them in the Hebrew. If you do not believe me, ask the Hebrews!²⁴

Here, Jerome asks the readers to believe his translation of the Old Testament, if they are satisfied with that of the New Testament. How can they believe that his translation from Hebrew is correct, without knowing any single word of Hebrew? Jerome answers: Ask the Hebrews!²⁵ Just as Cicero did, Jerome chose free translation to be his own theory, depending on the reader's reading comprehension of the source texts. When the source texts are written in Hebrew, only the Hebrews can compare the source text and the translation. Accordingly, Jerome claims that those who cannot understand Hebrew should ask the Hebrews so that they can maintain the principle of comparison.

However, as in the case of Augustine, Jerome did not apply his translation theory to the LXX translators. He basically considered free translation to be suitable for his own attitude, whereas in terms of the LXX he accepted only the verses which were literally translated to be worth reading. For example, when both an Old Testament quotation in the New Testament and the LXX disagree with the Hebrew text, Jerome regarded the quotation as a free translation of the Hebrew text, while he rejected the LXX as mistranslation.²⁶

and Emanuel Tov (eds), *Sha'arei Talmon: Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon* (Winona Lake, 1991), 243-53; repr. in *ead.*, *Jews and Christians Interpret the Bible* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem, 2008 [1991]), vii-xx.

²⁴ Jerome, *Ep.* 112.20 (= *Ep.* 75.20 in Augustine's edition) (*Augustinus-Hieronymus* 1 [2002], ed. A. Fürst, 224): *Quod autem genus interpretationis in scripturis sanctis sequendum sit, liber quem scripsi "De optimo genere interpretandi" et omnes praefatiunculae divinorum voluminum, quas editioni nostrae praeposuimus, explicant, ad illasque prudentem lectorem remittendum puto. Et si me, ut dicis, in novi testamenti emendatione suscipis exponisque causam cur suscipias, quia plurimi linguae Graecae habentes scientiam de meo possent opere iudicare, eandem integritatem debueras etiam in veteri credere testamento, quod non nostra confinximus, sed ut apud Hebraeos invenimus, divina transtulimus. Sicubi dubitas, Hebraeos interroga!*

²⁵ For a similar appeal to the 'Hebrews', see, for example, *Praef. in Ps.* (iuxta Hebraeos); *Praef. in Sam. et Reg.* (= *Prologus Galeatus*); *Praef. in Ezra*; *Praef. in Pent.* All of these prefaces are included in *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, ed. R. Weber and R. Gryson (5th ed.; Stuttgart, 2007).

²⁶ T. Kato, 'Jerome's Understanding' (2013), 300-8.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study has reached the following results: Accepting Cicero's opinion, Jerome basically attached importance to free translation, and expected the readers of his translation to read the source text for comparison. Based on his famous statement, some have considered that Jerome tried to translate literary works freely, but only the Bible word for word. However, he actually accepted that free translation could serve as a translation method of any kind of literary work, including the Bible. Augustine, on the other hand, shared the principle of comparison between the source texts and the translation, but preferred literal translation, so that the readers could compare word for word, since he estimated the reader's comprehension of the source texts to be low. Accordingly, for Augustine, the source text of the Old Testament must be the LXX, which was not only inspired by the Holy Spirit but was also written in Greek. Jerome, however, rejected the authority of the LXX, and adopted the Hebrew text as the original. In addition, he recommended that readers of his translation ask the Hebrews, who had advanced comprehension in Hebrew, about the accuracy of his translation. In other words, both Augustine and Jerome share the idea of the principle of comparison, while the former preferred literal translation for the readers at a low level, and the latter chose free translation for the readers at a high level. Moreover, Augustine allowed the LXX to be a free translation, even though his own translation theory is completely opposite. Jerome, on the other hand, strictly demanded the LXX be literal, whereas he adopted free translation as his own method.²⁷

²⁷ I would like to thank Prof. Adam Kamesar (Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati) for his teaching and encouragement. My gratitude also goes to Will Dilbeck and Sam Fuhrman for their close reading of the earlier versions of this paper.