CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE COMPOSITION OF 1 SAMUEL 16–18 IN LIGHT OF THE SEPTUAGINT

In 1 Samuel 16–18—the story of the encounter of David and Goliath and its aftermath—the LXX differs greatly from MT,\(^1\) lacking 39 of the 88 verses of these chapters.\(^2\) Previous discussions of these verses by Wellhausen, Peters (see n. 2), Stoebe, and McCarter\(^3\) focused on the larger minuses of the LXX, thus neglecting three other aspects of the LXX without which that translation cannot be evaluated well:

1. In addition to the large minuses, the LXX lacks 24 shorter elements in these chapters, ranging from one to five words (see appendix A).

2. The LXX reflects several variants (see appendix B).

3. The LXX contains 17 pluses, ranging from single words to complete sentences (see appendix C).

1. Approaches to the origin of the short version

The opinions expressed about the origin of the LXX’s short version of 1 Samuel 16–18 can be divided into two groups. Some scholars ascribed the divergences between the two texts to the Greek translator, who omitted, they claimed, 44 percent of the text because of exegetical

\(^1\) The oldest attestation of the short text of the LXX is in Hippolytus’ *Sermo* (2d century CE) in its omission of 1 Sam 17:55–58. See the edition of G. Garitte, *Traité d’Hippolyte sur David et Goliath etc.* (CSOC 263–264, Scriptores Iberici, t. 15–16; Louvain 1965). The earliest witness of the long form of MT is 1Q7, published by D. Barthélemy in *DJD* I. This fragment contains 1 Sam 18:17–18 lacking in the LXX.

\(^2\) The following verses are lacking in the OG: 17:12–31, 41, 48b, 50, 55–58; 18:1–6a, 10–11, 12b, 17–19, 21b, 29b–30. These amount to 44 percent of the verses of MT of these chapters. We should note that whereas the OG contained in manuscripts B etc., omits these verses, manuscripts A, etc., include a translation, which has been recognized as Hexaplaric; see R. Peters, *Beiträge zur Text- und Literarkritik sowie zur Erklärung der Bücher Samuel* (Freiburg im Breisgau 1899) 37–38; Wellhausen, *Samuel*, 104; Driver, *Samuel*, 140; B. Johnson, *Die hexaplarische Rezension des 1 Samuelbuches der Septuaginta* (STL 22; Lund 1963) 118–123. See further n. 2 in the original article.

motives, namely, to create a smoother story by omitting conflicting details. These scholars focused on the large minuses, usually disregarding the pluses of the translation, and if they did discuss the pluses (as did Barthélemy, for example), they also regarded them as exegetical. According to the other, diametrically opposed view, the LXX was based on a short Hebrew text which did not contain the so-called minuses of the LXX. This shorter Hebrew text was usually considered to reflect an earlier stage of the literary development of the story, one which preceded MT.

It seems that no solid arguments for any one view have so far been presented. Those scholars who suggested that the translator abridged MT were probably influenced by the lack of supporting evidence for the alternative explanation. Writing before the discovery of the Qumran scrolls, they were unaware of Hebrew texts which departed as much from MT as would the reconstructed short Vorlage of the LXX. They therefore assumed that the shorter text was produced by the Greek translator. The alternative view, likewise, was based mainly on intuition and a negative judgment concerning the abridgment theory; some of its exponents stressed that the translator was not likely to omit such large sections and that he therefore probably found a short Hebrew text in front of him.

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6 It is probably unrealistic to assume that some of the large minuses were due to the translator, while others were already in his Hebrew parent text.