1. The Question

After the problematisation of the MT induced by the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) and their early manuscripts, we cannot “longer posit MT at the center of our textual thinking”; rather, we have to devote more attention to the Hebrew “Vorlage” of the LXX. “We should not (any longer) presume that the OG of any particular book was translated from the Masoretic form of that book”. The fact is that the text form of the Vorlage is much older than that of MT.

The well known “textual variety” in the biblical DSS testifies to the extended textual variability of the text of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament during ancient times. The textual history shows a gradual phase of stabilisation. This stabilisation may be caused both by text-internal reasons (such as corrections of obvious mistakes) and, more so, by text-external reasons (such as the need for a unique text for the purpose of theological dialogue and defence against heresies). The stabilisation of the Greek text is visible in the context of quotations of the Old Testament (OT) in the New Testament (NT). The Hebrew text became more solid much later for inner-Jewish theological reasons and because of

---

3 LXX in its earliest form as “Old Greek” has—undoubtedly—preserved a very early stage of the text in the mode of translation. But E. Tov has instructed us about the splitting of text traditions, as obviously extant in the Greek manuscripts in the DSS (OG: 7Q-papLXXEx, 4QLXXLevb, 4QpapLXXLevb and 4QLXXNum) and 8HevXIigr (Proto-Theodotion; kaige).
its dissociation from the Christian Bible in the time of the Masoretes from the 6th until the 9th centuries C.E.  

Against this background, the heuristic hypothesis of the present paper is as follows: After the Greek text became fixed in the first centuries C.E. and in the time the MT became fixed, the intentional interventions into the text of the Bible came to an end. After that time the only opportunity to introduce Bible-hermeneutical ideas into the text consisted of changing the order of the biblical books (over-all composition). We will start the survey by pointing out that the big codices of Alexandria in the 4th and 5th centuries C.E. are examples of interpretation by composition.

Since the LXX text-line shows “textual variety”, E. Ulrich rightly asks: “It is instructive, if perhaps unfair, to ask the question again this way: which witness presents an earlier or more original text, the second- and first-century B.C.E. Qumran manuscripts, or the fourth- and fifth-century C.E. Vaticanus and Alexandrinus, or the medieval minuscules?” The codices A, B, and S are actually not congruent at all, so that an exhaustive comparison of the texts would be necessary.

This is in fact our actual issue. It is striking that in Alexandria in the 4th century C.E. three Greek Bibles (OT and NT) were prepared in a very short timeframe. The texts of these Bibles are very close, since they originate possibly from the same Greek textual source. Scholars have certainly worked off the variants of the codices from a text-critical perspective. This is not our aim today. Our task, instead, is trying to understand whether and to what extent these three Greek Bibles may differ in the arrangement of the books which are included in the codices. It is also evident, furthermore, that such compositional differences also extend to the NT. In this regard, I intend to demonstrate that the arrangement of the biblical books is not arbitrary; it rather reflects a specific system, which is what I am going to focus on here.

To my surprise, this question seems to be new and very unusual, since there is no hint of it in the history of research in this field. The three codices are normally not issues of exegetical or of patristic research. Therefore, I think that the time has come to study the diverging arrangement of the biblical books.

---