

TURRETIN ON VERSIONS

Second Topic

Tenth Question: The Purity of the Sources

Have the original texts of the Old and New Testaments come down to us pure and uncorrupted? We affirm against the papists.

1. This question lies between us and the papists who speak against the purity of the sources for the purpose of establishing more easily the authority of their Vulgate version and leading us away to the tribunal of the church.
2. By the original texts, we do not mean the autographs written by the hand of Moses, of the prophets and of the apostles, which certainly do not now exist. We mean their apographs which are so called because they set forth to us the word of God in the very words of those who wrote under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
3. The question is not Are the sources so pure that no fault has crept into the many sacred manuscripts, either through the waste of time, the carelessness of copyists or the malice of Jews or heretics? For this is acknowledged on both sides and the various readings which Beza and Robert Stephanus have carefully observed in the Greek (and the Jews in the Hebrew) clearly prove it. Rather the question is have the original texts (or the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts) been so corrupted either by copyists through carelessness (or by the Jews and heretics through malice) that they can no longer be regarded as the judge of controversies and the rule to which all versions must be applied? The papists affirm, we deny it.

Eleventh Question: The Authentic Version

Are the Hebrew version of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New the only authentic versions? We affirm against the papists.

1. Of the versions of the Scriptures; some are prototypes or archetypes ("original" and "primary") which the authors themselves used. Others are ektypes (or "secondary"), namely versions flowing from them into other languages. All admit that the Hebrew of the Old and the Greek of the New Testament are the original and primitive. But we and the papists dispute whether each is authentic, of itself deserving faith and authority and the standard to which all the versions are to be applied.
2. Some of the papists may be more favorable to the sources, asserting their purity (as we have already seen), ascribing authenticity to them as a consequence of purity and maintaining that all the versions and even the Vulgate ought to be referred to and can be corrected by them.... Yet many more are hostile to them, holding that there is no certainty in the Hebrew text, that we should not refer to the sources in controversies of faith, nor correct the Vulgate version by them.... This opinion arose from a decree of the Council of Trent Session 4, which says that "the Latin Vulgate should be held as authentic in the public reading, disputations, preaching, and expositions, so that no should dare to reject it under any pretext".... If it ought to be considered authentic, so that none would dare to reject it under any pretext, is it not put on an equality with the sources themselves; yea, even exalted above them? And even if it varies from the sources, it is not be corrected by them, but they rather corrected by it. Hence Mariana complains that after this promulgation of the Council of Trent, "the Greek and Hebrew fell at one blow." Our opinion is that the Hebrew of the Old and the Greek of the New Testament have always been and still are the only authentic versions by which all controversies of faith and religion (and all versions) ought to be approved and tested.
5. Finally, authenticity may be regarded in two ways: either materially as to the things announced or formally as to the words and mode of annunciation. We do not speak here of authenticity in

the former sense for we do not deny this to versions when they agree with the sources, but only in the latter which belongs to the sources alone.

6. The reasons are: (1) because the sources alone are inspired of God both as to the things and words (2 Tim. 3:16); hence they alone can be authentic. For whatever the men of God wrote, they wrote under the influence of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21), who, to keep them from error, dictated not only the matter but also the words, which cannot be said of any version. (2) They are the standard and rule to which all the versions should be applied, just as the copy (ektype) should answer to the pattern (archetype) and the stream be distinguished from its source.

Thirteenth Question: Versions

Are versions necessary, and what ought to be their use and authority in the church?

12. Although the versions are not authentic formally and as to the mode of enunciation, yet they ought nevertheless to be used in the church because if they are accurate and agree with the sources, they are always authentic materially and as to the thing expressed.

13. Hence we gather what the authority of the versions is. Although their utility is great for the instruction of believers, yet no version either can or ought to put on an equality with the original, much less preferred to it. (1) For no version has anything important which the Hebrew or Greek source does not have more fully, since in the sources not only the matter and sentences, but even the very words were directly dictated by the Holy Spirit. (2) It is one thing to be an interpreter, quite another to be a prophet, as Jerome says. The prophet as God inspired (*theopneustos*) cannot err, but the interpreter as a man lacks no human quality since he is always liable to err. (3) All versions are the streams; the original text is the fountain whence they flow. The latter is the rule, the former the thing ruled, having only human authority.

14. Nevertheless all authority must not be denied to versions. Here we must carefully distinguish a twofold divine authority: one of things, the other of words. The former relates to the substance of doctrine which constitutes the internal form of the Scriptures. The latter relates to the accident of writing, the external and accidental form. The source has both, being God-inspired (*theopneustos*) both as to the words and things; but versions have only the first, being expressed in human and not in divine words.

15. Hence it follows that the versions as such are not authentic and canonical in themselves (because made by human labor and talent). Therefore, under this relation, they may be exposed to errors and admit of corrections, but nevertheless are authentic as to the doctrine they contain (which is divine and infallible). Thus they do not, as such, formally support divine faith as to the words, but materially as to the substance of the doctrine contained in them.

18. Conformity to the original is different from equality. Any version (provided it is faithful) is indeed conformable to the original because the same doctrine as to substance is set forth there. But it is not on that account equal to it because it is only a human and not a divine method of setting it forth.

19. Although any version made by fallible men cannot be considered divine and infallible with respect to terms, yet it can well be considered such with respect to the thing, since if faithfully expresses the divine truth of the sources even as the word which the minister preaches does not cease to be divine and infallible and to establish our faith, although it may be expressed by him in human words. Thus faith depends not on the authority of the interpreter or minister, but is built upon the truth and authenticity of the things contained in the versions.

20. If a version could contain the pure word of God in divine words, no correction could take place. For the sources neither can nor ought to be corrected because they are God-inspired (*theopneustoi*) in things as well as in words. But because it sets forth to us in human words the word of God, it follows that it can admit of correction, not with regard to the doctrine itself (which still remains the same), but with regard to the terms which especially in difficult and

obscure passages can be differently rendered by different persons according to the measure of the gift of Christ.