

mind of the divine writer, I do not see that we have any evidence on which to feel any certainty that this is the case.

LETTER 3
1977

THE HEBREW AND GREEK TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE

Regarding the question you raised, I would point out first of all that the Greek New Testament has been preserved with remarkable accuracy, and that the differences between its manuscripts are not a fraction as great as those between the Septuagint (LXX) manuscripts. The majority of LXX manuscripts contain many serious errors. Although on the whole the LXX is a splendid witness to the general integrity of the Hebrew Old Testament and at places gives us valuable help towards its interpretation, yet its errors, whether due to the translators themselves or to their copyists, are such that I would say definitely that there is no reason to believe that the Holy Spirit prefers the LXX to the Massoretic Text (MT). Doubtless there are a few places where the LXX has correctly preserved the original, but I believe these are very few in number.

The care taken in copying manuscripts of the LXX was nowhere near as great as the care taken in copying manuscripts of the Hebrew. Examples of this, for instance, can be seen in the way the Hebrew *Tibni* appears as *Thamni* in the LXX, and *Omri* (Heb.) as *Zambri* (LXX) in III Regnorum (1 Kings) 16:21-22.

The text of the LXX is far from being uniform in quality. Whereas the Pentateuch translation closely follows the MT, the same cannot be said of the rest of the Old Testament books. A