

Ut sementem feceris, ita metes.¹

The Latin Vulgate in the Middle Ages



Jerome's new translation was not liked by everyone. People often preferred the Latin they were used to. Some, including Augustine of Hippo, at least at first, thought Jerome had introduced errors through his dynamic equivalence methods – not that Augustine would have used that term, of course. His return to the Hebrew rather than the Greek translation (known as the Septuagint) was too much for some Christians. The Septuagint had acquired a special status. The New Testament writers themselves quoted from it and many people had lost sight of the fact that it was a translation, regarding it as *the* Old Testament.

Nowadays when any book is published the author generally checks proofs of the book before it is printed and then of course many copies are published at once. Copies are deposited at various national libraries and there can be no doubt as to what is actually in the book. If anyone wants to check it is a simple matter to consult a printed copy of the book. In Jerome's day and for many centuries afterwards this was not the case. Books had to be copied by hand. It was a long time before Jerome's work was generally accepted and during this period both the Vulgate and the Old Latin Bibles circulated alongside one another. By the fifth century Gaul (modern France) had accepted the Vulgate but in Britain and in North Africa the Older Latin version was still in use. However, the continuous use of both versions side by side in an environment where hand copying was needed led to a sort of cross contamination as scribes selected their personal preferred readings of various texts, making alterations accordingly. As copies were passed around and recopied new layers of changes and differences increased the problem. By the eighth century the Vulgate was in use throughout Western Europe but if any one of the copies could have been put side by side with Jerome's original the many differences would have been apparent.

Read the illustrated article beginning on p.8 of this magazine:

<https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.tbsbibles.org/resource/collection/01C074CC-748F-4C67-86AC-A9926A25241A/Issue%20579%20-%20April%202007%20from%20web.pdf>

You need only read as far as p.12 for this exercise.

How many different translations of the Psalms did Jerome make?

What did Cassiodorus, Alcuin of York, Theodolph of Orleans and later a group of Paris scholars do in relation to the Latin Vulgate?

¹ What you sow, that you will reap.