

Sektion II/1

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O Thou That Tellest Good Tidings to Zion: Can a Rashi Variant be Antisemitic?

Charles Jennens' divergences from traditionally named sources of *Messiah's* libretto, the *King James Version* of the bible and *The Book of Common Prayer* have caused considerable stir in recent years, leading many people to believe the oratorio's text was written out of base, anti-Judaistic or even triumphalistic motives, rejoicing in the misfortunes of the Jews and specifically in the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE.

Marybeth Hauffe's textual analysis of the aria, "O Thou That Tellest Good Tidings to Zion" challenges the aforesaid indictment, showing the text to be in agreement with Jewish bible translation and commentary for over 2000 years.

The same agreement can be proved for all Numbers of *Messiah*: All textual divergences, except changes in grammatical person, are witnessed by the texts of the Peshitta and the *Codex Alexandrinus*, resulting in a text that is surprisingly modern, and reflecting therein, eighteenth-century English scholarship at its very best, much of which was carried out by non-Juring divines. Jennens' acquaintance with their state-of-the-art textual-critical study of the bible, as well as his own philological interests can be attested by the holdings in his library reconstructed in 2007 by Tassilo Erhardt.

The thesis is evidenced entirely within the library's parameters. There is no need to bring in outside, hitherto unknown sources, such as Hammond or Chandler. Jennens owned nearly 300 original-language texts in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, and Aramaic. These texts are listed in the library's (auction) catalogue; editions are available to everyone via the Internet.

Ms. Hauffe hypothesizes that Jennens, following the lead of Richard Bentley, John Mill and John Grabe, weighted variants found in the Peshitta and *Codex Alexandrinus* above their corresponding texts in the *King James Version* and *The Book of Common Prayer*. Moreover, in choosing to use these variants, he also diverged from the *Textus Receptus*, making *Messiah* one of the very first examples of modern textual criticism. Her results put to rest all suspicions regarding Charles Jennens' intentions.