

The Latinity of the Douay-Rheims Bible – A Case Study on Verbs from the Apocalypse¹

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Abstract

The major objective of the paper is to determine whether the source text influences the lexical choices of the target text. This will be done on the basis of the examination of verbs used in two contemporaneous translations of the *Book of Revelation* into Early Modern English. The first text comes from the rendition of the Bible prepared in the French city of Reims and the town of Douai (The New Testament was first released in 1582, the Old Testament appeared in two volumes in 1609 and 1610), and the second one from the King James Bible (published in 1611). The latter was translated from the original languages of the scripture, which were Hebrew and Greek, while the main source text of the former was the Latin Vulgate. The results of my research, which covers more than 1500 pairs of verbs, show that the translators of the Douay-Rheims Bible tended to use verbs of Romance provenance more often than the authors of the King James Bible. Because the two translations were executed within a short span of time, this difference cannot be ascribed to language change, thus testifying to the influence of the source text upon the vocabulary of rendition.

Keywords: the Douay-Rheims Bible, the King James Bible, English translations of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, verbs

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Abstrakt

Najważniejszym celem artykułu jest ustalenie czy tekst oryginalny wpływa na dobór słownictwa w jego tłumaczeniu. Będzie to sprawdzone na podstawie analizy czasowników użytych w dwóch angielskich tłumaczeniach *Apokalipsy św. Jana*, sporządzonych w okresie wczesnonowożytnym. Pierwszy tekst pochodzi z tłumaczenia Biblii przygotowanego we francuskich miastach Reims i Douai (Nowy Testament został wydany w 1582 roku, Stary ukazał się w dwóch tomach w 1609 i 1610), a drugie tłumaczenie jest częścią Biblii Króla Jakuba, wydanej w 1611 roku. Wersja Króla Jakuba tłumaczona była z oryginalnych języków Biblii, jakimi są hebrajski i grecki, podczas gdy głównym źródłem dla autorów Biblii Douay-Rheims była łacińska Wulgata. Wyniki mojego badania, które objęło ponad 1500 par czasowników ukazały, że tłumacze wersji Douay-Rheims mieli tendencję do wybierania czasowników pochodzenia romańskiego częściej niż autorzy Biblii Króla Jakuba. Ponieważ różnica wieku obu tłumaczeń nie jest duża, dobór słów nie może wynikać ze zmian językowych, ale oznacza, że tekst oryginalny wpłynął na tłumaczenie.

Słowa kluczowe: Biblia Douay-Rheims, Biblia Króla Jakuba, Przekłady Biblii na język angielski, Apokalipsa św. Jana, czasowniki

1. Introduction

The *Apocalypse*,² also called the *Book of Revelation* is the last book of the New Testament. It was originally written in Greek, most probably in the last quarter of the 1st century AD. Despite the fact that the Apocalypse “appears to be a collection of separate units composed by unknown authors” (*Encyclopedia Britannica Online*), the text itself provides an account that it was written by one person, “the servant” of Jesus, named John. However, the text does not mention that John – the purported author, and John the Apostle are the same person. The Apocalypse contains an extensive number of symbols, visions and allegories, especially in connection with future events (*Encyclopedia Britannica Online*). In this paper, I will examine verbs from the two English translations of the *Book of Revela-*

² It comes from the Greek word ἀποκαλύπτειν (*apokalyptein*), which means *to uncover, disclose* (Oxford English Dictionary).

tion. The analysed texts represent contemporaneous renditions of the Bible, which were executed in the Early Modern English period. The objective of this study is to determine whether the original text influences the lexical choices in its rendition.

2. The Source Texts

The Douay-Rheims Bible (henceforth DR(V)) was the work of a group of English Roman Catholics, who fled to France during the period of religious unrest in the 16th century (Daniell 2003, 358). Their New Testament appeared in 1582 in the city of Reims (then spelled Rheims), whereas the Old Testament was released in two volumes in 1609/10 (Campbell 2010, 30–31). The printing of the Old Testament took place in Douai (then spelled Douay). The choice of the Latin Vulgate (henceforth VLG) as the major source text for the translation contributed to the abundance of Latinisms, which were often difficult to understand (Greenslade 1963, 162). The Protestant versions of the English Bible that appeared at that time were translated from Hebrew and Greek, which were the original languages of the Bible. The King James Bible (henceforth KJ(V)) was one of such renditions. KJV was the effect of a conference convened by King James VI of Scotland and I of England, as he wanted to establish a certain degree of religious unity in his two kingdoms (Norton 2005, 5). Scholars who were responsible for translating the part of the New Testament which included the *Apocalypse* were affiliated at the University of Oxford (Campbell 2010, 53). The KJV was printed in 1611 by Robert Barker, who was the king's printer (Greenslade 1963, 166).

3. Methodology

The results of the investigation that are presented in this paper are a part of a more thorough analysis of verbs from the two renditions of the *Apocalypse*. Constructing the database that was necessary for conducting the research started by finding the English texts of the *Book of Revelation* that I wanted to analyse. Both versions come from the website *biblesofthepast.com*.³ The exemplified passages provided in Section 4 came from these

³ Unfortunately, the website is no longer available. It was very precious, due to the fact that unlike many similar sites, this one offered full texts of various English Bibles provided exactly

versions, and were taken from the first editions of the Rheims New Testament (1582) and KJV (1611). The corresponding verses from the two versions were juxtaposed, which made it possible to look at both translations of the *Apocalypse* at the same time. Such a presentation helped me fulfil my first task, which was finding all the verbs from the two texts: all passages were carefully scrutinised, to make sure that every verb was identified. I decided not to take into consideration forms of the verb *to be*, modals and auxiliaries because of their abundance and their predominantly grammatical rather than lexical functions. As a result, I composed pairs of corresponding items. In total, there are 1503 pairs,⁴ but they were divided into several different types.

The pairs that belong to the first type consist of verbs whose counterparts in the other text are also individual verbs. There are almost 1400 pairs of this type, so this group is the biggest one, but it can be further subdivided. The majority of pairs belonging to this type are made up of identical verbs, e.g. *have – have*, or *see – see*.⁵ However, pairs in which the two corresponding items are different were also found, like *adore – worship*, or *possess – have*. This group is the major focus of this paper, and it will be referred to as a group of heterogeneous pairs.⁶ In total, there are 239 pairs of this type, which in comparison to the total number of pairs, makes this group relatively small. It is, however, interesting enough to examine them thoroughly in this paper. Apart from the pairs that have already been mentioned, we also have verbs whose counterparts are verb phrases. The pair *reign – have kingdom* can be provided as an example. There are also some cases, in which the counterparts of verb phrases are e.g. noun phrases. The pair *they that sail – all the company in ships* may serve as an example. There are also verbs which for various reasons do not have counterparts at all.⁷

as they were originally written, e.g. with the original spelling retained. Despite the fact that the website was removed, the digitised versions of the original texts of the Bibles are still easily available on the Internet. The Rheims New Testament can be found at: <http://www.saintsbooks.net/books/The%20Douai-Rheims%20Bible%20-%20Original%20-%20New%20Testament.pdf>, whereas the KJV can be downloaded from: http://originalbibles.com/PDF_Downloads/KJV1611.pdf.

⁴ The data concerning the total number of pairs take into consideration each pair counted as many times as it occurs in the texts.

⁵ It often happened that in both versions I found the same verb, but in different forms, e.g. *saw – hath seen*. Such differences were not taken into consideration.

⁶ As opposed to the homogeneous pairs, like the exemplified *have – have*, or *see – see*.

⁷ Verse 2:3 might serve as an example:

a. (DRV) and *thou hast patience*, and *hast borne for my name*, and *hast not fainted*.

b. (KJV) And *hast borne*, and *hast patience*, and *for my Names sake **hast laboured***, and *hast not fainted*.

In the next step, the etymology of all the relevant items was checked in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. It turned out that the analysed verbs are of the following provenance: English, i.e. native, Latin, French of various kinds (e.g. Old French, Norman-French, or Anglo-French) and Old Norse. Very few verbs are of Germanic origin other than English, or Old Norse, like Middle Low German, or Middle Dutch. Due to the fact that French is one of the descendants of Latin, in this paper, verbs of French or Latin origin are commonly treated as items of Romance provenance. As a result of determining the etymology, it was possible to conduct some statistics, and the most relevant ones for this paper will be presented in Section 4. I also looked into the source texts of the two English versions of the Apocalypse. It helped me check how the original texts influenced the renditions. The version of the VLG comes from the website <http://www.sacredbible.org/vulgate1914/version.htm>.

4. The Study

4.1 Verbs in the Book of Revelation of the Douay-Rheims and King James Bible

Before a closer look is taken at heterogeneous pairs of individual verbs, it is reasonable to first consider the statistical data which relate to all the analysed items. The percentages of verbs which are of different provenance and occur both in the *Book of Revelation* of the DRV and KJV are presented in Tables 1 and 2 below respectively.

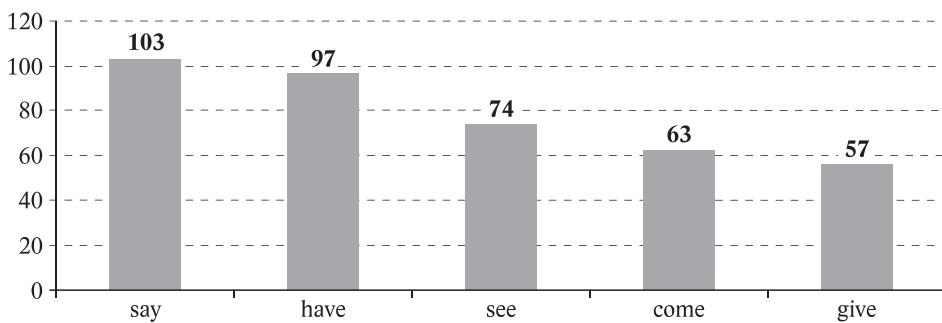
Table 1. The percentages of verbs in the DRV.

Origin	Tokens	Lemmata
English (native)	76%	51%
Romance	21%	44%
Other	3%	5%

Table 2. The percentages of verbs in the KJV.

Origin	Tokens	Lemmata
English (native)	77%	54%
Romance	19%	41%
Other	4%	5%

The data presented in the columns entitled *tokens* take into consideration all the verbs and all their individual occurrences in the two analysed versions of the *Apocalypse*. The columns named *lemmata* also concern each verb, but this time they are counted only once, regardless of the actual number of occurrences. It is visible that the differences in the etymological distribution of verbs in the two translations are not huge, but verbs of native English origin in the KJ version of the *Apocalypse* slightly outnumber native items in the DR version of the same book. In turn, the DR version of the *Book of Revelation* has slightly more verbs of Romance provenance than the other text. However, these differences do not appear very significant. Bearing in mind the fact that two contemporaneous renditions of the same book of the Holy Scripture were analysed, such results should be expected. What also transpires from these tables is a huge gap between verbs of native provenance, and those which are of Romance and other origin, especially if we consider the *tokens* columns. The frequency data given in Charts 1 and 2 provide a more detailed account of the occurrences of the analysed items.

**Chart 1.** Five most frequent verbs in the *Book of Revelation* of the DRV.

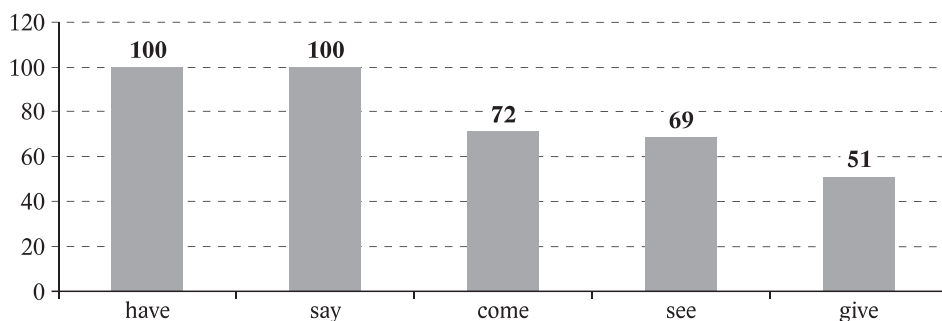


Chart 2. Five most frequent verbs in the *Book of Revelation* of the KJV.

Not surprisingly, in both translations the five most frequent verbs coincide. All the verbs presented in the charts above are of native origin. In both translations the first most common verb of provenance other than English takes up the twelfth place.⁸ Interestingly, both relevant verbs appear 24 times. The only difference is that in the DRV, the verb is *adore*, which is of Romance origin, whereas in the KJV it is *cast*, which originated in Old Norse. This verb comes second on the list of items of non-native provenance in the DRV. Charts 3 and 4 below present five most frequent verbs of non-native provenance that occur in the analysed versions of the Apocalypse.

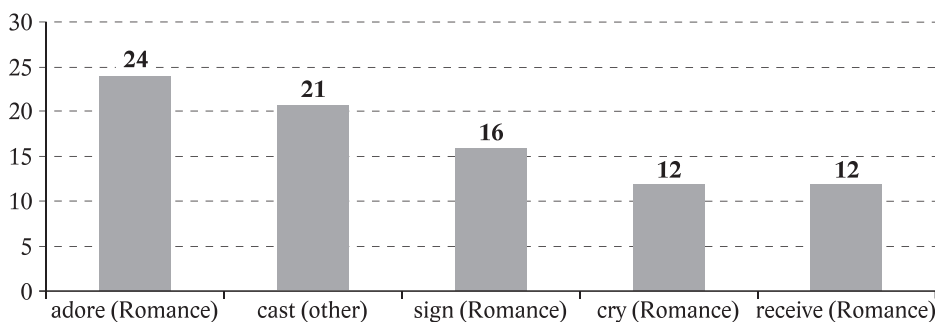


Chart 3. Five most frequent verbs of provenances other than native in the *Book of Revelation* of the DRV.

⁸ The list of eleven most frequent verbs in the *Book of Revelation* of the DRV is the following: say (103), have (97), see (74), come (63), give (57), make (50), hear (46), sit (36), write (30), open (27), do (25). In the KJV, the list is fairly similar: have (100), say (100), come (72), see (69), give (51), hear (46), sit (35), write (31), make (30), open (26), fall (25).

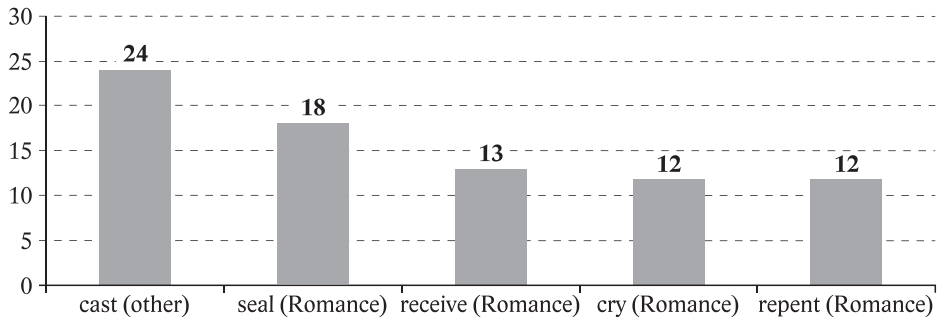


Chart 4. Five most frequent verbs of provenances other than native in the *Book of Revelation* of the KJV.

What transpires from Chart 4 is that in the KJV, the verb *adore* is not present. Interestingly, this verb, although so frequent in the DR version, is impossible to find not only on the list of five most common verbs of non-native provenance in the *Book of Revelation* of the KJV, but also generally: on the list of all the verbs that appear in this rendition of the *Apocalypse*. The reasons behind this absence, which will be presented in Section 4.2. Charts 1 and 2 when compared with Charts 3 and 4, account for the huge gap between the percentages of verbs of native origin and the remaining verbs. The numbers of occurrences of the most common verbs whose provenance is other than English are much smaller than of most common verbs which originated in the Old English period.

4.2 Pairs of heterogeneous verbs

As was mentioned in Section 3, there are 239 pairs of individual verbs where the two elements of the pair do not coincide. Separate analyses focusing on these verbs were conducted and their results seem quite interesting. They are presented in Tables 3 and 4:

Table 3. Verbs in the *Book of Revelation* of the DRV which belong to the group of heterogeneous pairs.

Origin	Tokens	Lemmata	Tokens per pair
English (native)	45%	49%	41%
Romance	50%	43%	52%
Other	5%	8%	7%

Table 4. Verbs in the *Book of Revelation* of the KJV which belong to the group of heterogeneous pairs.

Origin	Tokens	Lemmata	Tokens per pair
English (native)	55%	53%	51%
Romance	36%	38%	42%
Other	9%	9%	7%

In comparison to Tables 1 and 2, Tables 3 and 4 have one more column. The data that classify as *tokens per pair* concern each verb that belongs to the relevant group of pairs, but it is taken as many times as it occurs in different pairs. For example, the verb *proceed* in the DRV appears twice as the equivalent of the verb *go*, and twice as the equivalent of the verb *issue*. In effect, *proceed* is counted four times in the *tokens*, once in *lemmata*, and twice in *tokens per pair*, because it is found in two different pairs. What clearly transpires from the presented data is the fact that the results differ significantly from the ones presented in Tables 1 and 2. The data shown in Table 3 indicate that in the DRV verbs of Romance origin are used more often than those which are natively English. However, in the *lemmata* column, there is a visible difference in favour of verbs of native origin. It could be said that in the analysed group of pairs, there are more verbs of native origin, but verbs of Romance origin occur more often. When it comes to the data presented in Table 4, it might be concluded that in each column there is a visible difference in favour of native English verbs. It tells us that the differences in the etymological distribution between the two analysed translations are surprisingly huge, especially if we contrast them with the data presented in Tables 1 and 2. It might suggest that the translators of the DRV could be influenced by the Latin text of the Vulgate. Example (1) presents instances of two pairs of corresponding English verbs, together with their Latin equivalents from the VLG:

(1)

13:12

a. (DRV) And al the povver of the former beast he did in his sight: and he made the earth and the inhabitants therein, to **adore** the first beast, vvwhose vvound of death **was cured**.

b. (KJV) And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein, to **worship** the first beast, whose deadly wound **was healed**.

c. (VLG) Et potestatem prioris bestiae omnem faciebat in conspectu eius: et fecit terram, et habitantes in ea, **adorare** bestiam primam, cuius **curata est** plaga mortis.

In example (1), the DRV has the verb *adore*, whereas its equivalent in the KJV is *worship*. This heterogeneous pair is the most frequent, and it occurs 24 times in total. The remaining contexts are: 3:9, 4:10, 5:14, 7:11, 9:20, 11:1, 11:16, 13:4 (x2), 13:8, 13:15, 14:7, 14:9, 14:11, 15:4, 16:2, 19:4, 19:10 (x2), 19:20, 20:4, 22:8, 22:9. The verb *worship* is of native provenance and appears only in the KJ version of the Apocalypse, instead of *adore*, which is of Romance origin and which appears only in the *Book of Revelation* of the DRV. In the same passage, we have the pair *cure* – *heal*, which occurs 3 times in total. The two remaining contexts are: 13:3, 22:2. Again, the verb *cure* is of Romance origin, whereas *heal* is of native provenance. Three more examples of pairs in which the DR items are of Romance origin, and their equivalents are natively English, are shown below.

(2)

10:1

a. (DRV) And I savv an other Angel, strong, **descending** from heauen, clothed vvith a cloude, and a raine-bovv on his head, and his face vvas as the sunne, and his feete as a piller of fire.

b. (KJV) And I saw another mighty Angel **come down** from heauen, clothed with a cloud, and a rainebow was vpon his head, and his face was as it were the Sunne, and his feet as pillars of fire.

c. (VLG) Et vidi alium Angelum fortem **descendentem** de caelo amictum nube, et iris in capite eius, et facies eius erat ut sol, et pedes eius tamquam columnæ ignis:

(3)

10:9

a. (DRV) And I vvent to the Angel, saying vnto him, that he should giue me the booke. And he said to me, Take the booke, and **deuoure** it: and it shal make thy belly to be bitter, but in thy mouth it shal be svveete as it vvere honie.

b. (KJV) And I went vnto the Angel, and said vnto him, Giue me the little booke. And he sayd vnto me, Take it, and **eat it vp**, and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall bee in thy mouth sweete as hony.

c. (VLG) Et abii ad angelum, dicens ei, ut daret mihi librum. Et dixit mihi: Accipe librum, et **devora** illum: et faciet amaricari ventrem tuum, sed in ore tuo erit dulce tamquam mel.

(4)

21:23

- a. (DRV) And the citee needeth not sunne nor moone, to shine in it. for the glorie of God **hath illuminated** it, and the Lambe is the lampe thereof.
- b. (KJV) And the citee had no need of the Sunne, neither of the Moone to shine in it: for the glory of God **did lighten** it, and the Lambe is the light thereof.
- c. (VLG) Et civitas non eget sole, neque luna ut luceant in ea. nam claritas Dei **illuminavit** eam, et lucerna eius est Agnus.

The pair presented in example (2) *descend – come down* appears five times in total. The remaining contexts are 3:12, 12:12, 20:1, 21:2. The pair *devour – eat* from example (3) occurs three times. The two remaining occurrences are found twice in the same verse 10:10, very close to the exemplified passage. Finally, the pair from example (4) appears twice in the whole *Apocalypse*. The remaining context is to be found in 18:1. As just shown, all the exemplified verbs from the DR version of the *Book of Revelation* derive from the Latin verbs which appear in the passages from the VLG and correspond to the relevant English items. It might suggest that the authors of the DRV were indeed influenced by the content of the Latin text and decided to translate the Latin terms using words which originated from these particular Latin items.

However, there are also some instances in which the KJ version of the Book of Revelation has a verb that is of Romance provenance but its DR equivalent is of native origin. Such case is presented in example (5):

(5)

11:12

- a. (DRV) And they heard a loud voice from heauen saying to them, **Come vp** hither. And they **vvent vp** into heauen in a cloude: and their enemies savv them.
- b. (KJV) And they heard a great voyce from heauen, saying vnto them, **Come vp** hither. And they **ascended vp** to heauen in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them.
- c. (VLG) Et audierunt vocem magnam de cælo, dicentem eis: **Ascendite** huc. Et **ascenderunt** in cælum in nube: et viderunt illos inimici eorum.

(5) offers an example of the only occurrence of a pair *go up – ascend*.⁹ As shown, the authors of the DRV decided to write *went vp* here, despite the fact that they had *ascenderunt* in the VLG. The anglicised form of this Latin verb is provided in the corresponding passage of the KJV. There is also one homogeneous pair here, namely *come – come*. In the corresponding Latin verse, there are two different forms of the same verb in the two places, whereas both English translations have two different items for conveying the meaning of the repeated Latin verb. The choice of two different verbs by the English translators of both versions of the Bible was probably made in order to avoid repetition, but the major objective for providing this set of corresponding verses was to show that the authors of the DRV did not always decide to choose the verb that derives from the item appearing in the source Latin passage. There are some more examples of the same type, but the numbers of occurrences are small.

Apart from examples in which two corresponding English verbs are of different origins, there are also heterogeneous pairs whose items derive from the same group of languages. Example (6) illustrates a case in which the two synonymous English verbs are of Romance provenance:

(6)

7:6

- a. (DRV) Of the tribe of Aser, twelue thousand **signed**. Of the tribe of Nephthali, twelue thousand **signed**. Of the tribe of Manasses, twelue thousand **signed**.
- b. (KJV) Of the tribe of Aser **were sealed** twelue thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthali **were sealed** twelue thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses **were sealed** twelue thousand.
- c. (VLG) Ex tribu Aser duodecim millia **signati**: Ex tribu Nephthali duodecim millia **signati**: Ex tribu Manasse duodecim millia **signati**:

The set *sign – seal* is the second most common heterogeneous pair, and appears 16 times in total. The remaining contexts are shown in 7:3, 7:4 (x2), 7:5 (x3), 7:7 (x3), 7:8 (x3), 10:4. This group of corresponding verses illustrates that two different items of the same origin may correspond to each other, but, more importantly, it also presents another instance in which the authors of the DRV could be influenced by the content of

⁹ There is also one instance of a pair *ascend – go up* in the *Apocalypse*. It occurs in 20:8/9, i.e. in the DRV it is in verse 8, in the KJV in verse 9. In the VLG, the corresponding verb is *ascendere* and occurs in verse 8. It is another case of the type exemplified in (1)-(4).

the Latin text. The verb *sign* that they decided to use comes from the Latin verb *signare*, whose form is presented three times in the passage under scrutiny.

5. Conclusion

As was mentioned in Section 1, the major objective of this paper was to determine whether the source text influences the lexical choices in its rendition. The results of this investigation show that the analysed English rendition based on the Latin source has more items of Romance origin than the text which was translated from Greek. Although the statistical data concerning all the verbs do not hint precisely at the apparent Latinity of the DRV, the figures that relate only to the verbs which belong to the group of heterogeneous pairs indicate that the Latinity of the analysed Catholic translation can be justified. The verbs which originated in Latin are more frequent in the *Apocalypse* in the DRV than in the KJV. The examples of corresponding passages presented in Section 4 suggest that the authors of the DRV could be inspired by the VLG, but as was also shown, the KJV also has verbs of Romance provenance whose DR equivalents are natively English. However, the number of such instances is relatively small, so all in all, it might be concluded that the translators of the DRV could be suggested by the content of the VLG. This issue is still investigated and some further analysis needs to be conducted in order to verify the validity of this claim and to see in what other aspects the DRV resembles the VLG.

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