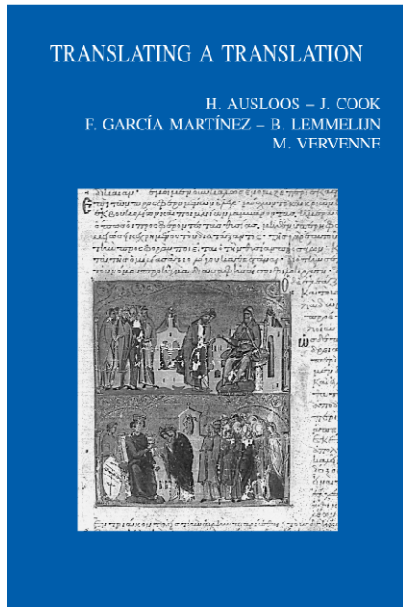


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*Translating a Translation: The LXX and Its Modern Translations in the Context of Early Judaism*

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In December 2006 a large group of experts in LXX and translation studies participated in the Specialists' Symposium on the Septuagint Translation in Leuven. The major impetus for the symposium was the completion or near completion of three modern translations of the LXX: *La Bible d'Alexandrie* (BA), *Septuaginta Deutsch* (LXX.D), and the *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS). The proceedings of the symposium were edited by Hans Ausloos, Johann Cook, Florentino García Martínez, Bénédicte Lemmelijn, and M. Vervenne in a handsome volume *Translating a Translation*.

The volume consists of five parts: an "Introductory Methodological Section" is followed by contributions by each of the three translation projects (BA, LXX.D, NETS); the book closes with a section titled "Other Septuagint Perspectives." Indexes for the authors cited as well as for references to biblical and other ancient literature are provided.

The book begins with Johann Cook's "Translating the Septuagint: Some Methodological Considerations" (9–33). Cook provides a lucid yet comprehensive introduction to the Letter (or "Book") of Aristeas, concluding that the document sought to vindicate the usage of the LXX as a free-standing replacement of the Hebrew Bible. After this, Cook assesses the translational models adopted by the three projects. BA aims at translating the

Greek text as the reader would have understood it, that is, without reference to the Hebrew parent text. NETS follows the “interlinear model” (A. Pietersma), consulting the Hebrew text as an “arbiter of meaning” of the Greek text. LXX.D comes closer to NETS in this respect, but Cook maintains that insofar as LXX.D (or some of its translators) prefers Rahlfs’s pocket edition as the text to be translated (rather than the Göttingen LXX, if available), it is “primarily interested in the reception of the Septuagint” (24).

“Translation Technique as a Method” (35–41), by Raija Sollamo, clarifies the usage of the term “translation technique” as both describing the *object* (characterization of the ways of translating) and the *method* of the study of the syntax of a translation. Sollamo provides a very compact introduction to the principles of the method. The relevance of this discussion to the modern translations becomes clear in remarks on the theology/ideology of the LXX; translation technique helps one to assess which features in the translation are “philology or linguistics, not theology” (41).

The importance of a detailed analysis of the LXX as a translation is demonstrated in the “Rendering Love: Hapax Legomena and the Characterisation of the Translation Technique of the Septuagint of Song of Songs” (43–61), by Hans Ausloos and Bénédicte Lemmelijn. The Greek translator of Canticles is often characterized as “slavish,” but the authors contest this view, observing that frequently the translator attempted to produce a meaningful text whether he knew the Hebrew *hapax legomenon* or not.

Gilles Dorival opens the second part of the book with “‘La Bible d’Alexandrie’, Which Changes?” (65–78). The main part of the essay provides an interesting documentation of the enormous scholarly work in and around BA. Moreover, Dorival briefly assesses the major external changes that have taken place in LXX studies during the BA project, providing a very handy selective list of useful LXX literature published during the last thirty years. This makes the essay very beneficial not only to specialists but to newcomers to the field as well.

The following two papers in the BA section illustrate the broad spectrum of background work involved in the project. Katrin Hauspie provides an illustrative description of the church fathers, especially Theodoret of Cyrus, interpretations of Ezek 1 (“Ezek 1—Approach by Theodoret of Cyr: Notes on Ezekiel’s Vision of the Throne-Chariot” [79–87]). The BA is interested primarily in the reception of the LXX, and the fathers are consulted in this respect. Hauspie concludes: “Theodoret wants to elucidate and clarify the text, and he does, but it is his interpretation” (87). It becomes evident to the reader that the fathers’ main concern was the *theological* interpretation of the vivid and complex vision in Ezek 1. Thus the reader is inclined to ask how their interpretations actually help

the linguistic efforts of the modern translators. Unfortunately, this topic is not treated by Hauspie.

Cécile Dogniez analyzes “Some Similarities between the Septuagint and the Targum of Zechariah” (89–102), concluding that text-historical dependence between these two witnesses cannot be established, but agreements between them “may well be due to a common source of exegetical traditions” (102). The paper provides an interesting, detailed study on an important and certainly not well-discussed topic. Nevertheless, the reader finds slight methodological (or at least terminological) ambiguity in the final analysis (99–101). Discussing the LXX of Zech 2:6 (MT 2:10) Dogniez maintains that instead of כּ in the MT, the “translator reads a ׀ that he renders by ἐκ and, in a way, offers in the verse a converse translation” (99). But if the translator actually read ׀, the rendering ἐκ can hardly be called a “converse translation.” Reading about “the same interpretation of the Hebrew text” (100) in the LXX and Targum, the reader expects that these interpretations are naturally *different from* some other interpretations or the plain meaning of the Hebrew text. This, however, is left unexplained.

The third part of the book begins with Martin Karrer’s “Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D). Characteristics of the German Translation Project” (105–18). Karrer describes the following aspects of LXX.D: the priority of the Greek source text; the use of the best available editions; the combination of translation and research; the techniques adopted by the translators; the intended readers; and LXX.D as compared to other modern LXX translations. An interesting detail is that in the LXX.D “the differences between the Hebrew source text and the Greek translation ... are marked in italics” (117). One only wonders if it is appropriate to speak about “the Hebrew source text” (i.e., the actual *Vorlage* of the translation) if “the Hebrew text in this case is defined as the Masoretic text” (117). This is surely only a matter of terminological ambiguity.

The methodological points made by Karrer are demonstrated in “Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D)—Issues and Challenges: Ps 95 MT/94 LXX as a Test Case” (119–31), by Wolfgang Kraus. Kraus explains that the overall principle of LXX.D, “Auf Augenhöhe mit dem Text” (H. Utzschneider), means that all the aspects of the text of the LXX are taken seriously: the texts are Greek literature, but they are (mostly) translation literature, and they have an effective history that may explain how the later readers understood it. Kraus addresses especially the validity of the “interlinear model” in understanding the LXX of the Psalms. By means of a comparison of Ps 95/94 in the MT and the LXX, he concludes that the LXX produces “more than a one-on-one translation that has an ancillary role” (128). This has to be checked book by book in the LXX.

Eberhard Bons's "Translating and Annotating Ps 72LXX" (133–49) demonstrates the importance of detailed analysis of the relationship of the LXX and MT for all septuagintal studies. A valuable observation is that, regarding a commentary or notes in a modern translation, a mere list of deviations between the Greek and Hebrew texts rarely benefits the reader; many categories of divergences are interwoven, and the commentator's task is to bring the reader to the essentials of those divergences.

Heinz-Josef Fabry's article "The Lord over Mighty Waters" (151–65) presents the concept history of the phrase of the title and compares the cosmological data in Nah 1 and Hab 3. The first part of the essay combines philological and historical background work with a detailed and refined exegetical concept analysis. Fabry brings the reader to the very essence of historical-critical scholarship. The latter part, however, raises some critical remarks. Fabry writes about "the MT original" (158) of the translator of Nahum (and Hab [160]). The reader gets the impression that this is not only a terminological issue, since Fabry actually explains the differences between the Hebrew and Greek texts a priori as "corrections or mistakes" (158) of the translator. The problems resulting from this presupposition are seen especially in the treatment of Hab 3:5 (162), where the possibility of a different *Vorlage* behind the Greek *πεδῖλοις* "sandals" is not considered (Tov and Polak, *The Revised CATSS Hebrew/Greek Parallel Text*, 2004, suggest *פְּרִיטָה* "sandal-thong" instead of the MT *רֶשֶׁת* "pestilence"—a metathesis of *šīn* and *rêš* and a confusion of *pê* and *kāp*). The same presupposition may lead the exegete or modern translator to overemphasize the LXX translator's role and explain the divergences too hastily as theological/ideological changes. There is perhaps this kind of tendency in Fabry's "Theological Conclusions" (164).

Albert Pietersma opens part 4 of the book with "Translating a Translation: With Examples from the Greek Psalter" (169–82). Pietersma gives a highly interesting retrospective view on the principles and products of the NETS project. The project aimed at translating the most original *form* and *meaning* of the text. Accordingly, the text to be translated was the best available critical edition, and "the principle of 'the [Hebrew] source text as arbiter of meaning'" (178) was adopted. Pietersma compares Brenton's (1844) and Thomson's (1808) translations of Ps 67:11–17 (MT 68:11–17) and defines them as translations of the text "as produced" and "as received" (179–81). Pietersma acknowledges the merits of both, while stating that NETS inclines toward "a formal correspondence/equivalence translation." "NETS does not resort to a literal mode" except "when the character of the Greek source text is best served thereby. ... [I]diomatic Greek should be translated into idiomatic English but non-idiomatic Greek into non-idiomatic English" (181).

Dirk Büchner demonstrates the goal of the NETS project to capture the most original meaning of the LXX translator in "You Shall Not Give of Your Seed to Serve an *Archon*":

Lev 18,21 in the Septuagint” (183–96). By examining the possibilities of understanding the *archon* in Lev 18:21 either as a deity, King Ptolemy, an Alexandrian cultic figure, or a local Jewish leader, Büchner concludes that, whatever the choice, the translator tried to communicate the passage to his local Alexandrian readers as well as to represent the meaning of the Hebrew. (One could point out that whenever the translator represents the Hebrew—well or badly—he *is* “communicating”!) The essay gives a good example of the importance of meticulous historical background work to the understanding of the LXX as a translation.

Cameron Boyd-Taylor asks “Who’s Afraid of *Verlegenheitsübersetzungen*?” (197–210). (The German word in the title means obscure or unintelligible renderings in the LXX.) The author makes two points on unintelligibility in the LXX: many unintelligibilities are solved by examining them in relation to the parent text; and the source of unintelligibility is often found in the very translation strategy. In fact, unintelligibility is a clue to the meaning of the LXX as an act of communication. “Communication is but one of a number of possible aims,” the others being “linguistic, textual, literary and ideological considerations.” Therefore, “we should not always expect translators to mean what they have translated” (202). The translation happens in a network of social relations that modify the expectations of the translator. Boyd-Taylor maintains that the “interlinear model” is the best way to conceptualize the role of these expectations in the production of the LXX. Boyd-Taylor provides valuable and novel insights to the background theory of LXX scholarship.

The fifth and final part begins with “Agreement between LXX and Peshitta versus MT in Ezekiel: Some Important Examples” (213–27), by Harry F. van Rooy. The article contains a handy introduction to the textual history of the Peshitta of Ezekiel. Van Rooy finds a handful of cases in Ezek 1–5 in which the Hebrew text should be emended on the grounds of the readings of the LXX and the Peshitta. A little more illustrative presentation of the numerous text-critical examples could have benefited the reader more. The present writer is not illiterate in Syriac, but he believes that even a specialist in the language has to frequently consult a lexicon to follow the discussion, since English equivalents for even the less-familiar Syriac words are not provided.

Very interesting and valuable insights are provided in “It’s All Greek: The Septuagint and Recent Developments in Translation Studies” (229–50), by Jacobus A. Naudé. The reader receives information on translation studies as a discipline and developments in different approaches in the field. The focus is no longer exclusively Eurocentric, but “Western researchers must move beyond Western parochialism and become more receptive to facets of translation that are revealed in international practices and histories of

translation” (240). Naudé examines the implications of these developments for the translation of sacred texts as well as for Septuagint scholarship in general.

Andres Piquer, Pablo Torijano, and Julio Treballe Barrera have prepared “Septuagint Versions, Greek Recensions and Hebrew Editions: The Text-Critical Evaluation of the Old Latin, Armenian and Georgian Versions in *III–IV Regnorum*” (251–81). The authors are preparing a polyglot synoptic edition of 1–2 Kings (3–4 Kingdoms) as a preliminary work for critical editions of the LXX of these books (as well as of the Hebrew text of 2 Kings for the Oxford Hebrew Bible Project by Piquer). The synoptic examination of the textual data has revealed the multiplicity of both the Hebrew “editions” and revisions or recensions of the Greek translation and its secondary versions. In this extremely complicated textual situation, the pre-Lucianic readings are of great importance, especially in the so-called *καίγε* sections. In some cases the Lucianic manuscript group has lost the old reading, but it is preserved in some secondary version, most notably in the OL or Georgian. The emphasis given to the Georgian version by the authors is a very interesting new aspect. The authors remind the modern translators of the LXX of the important ancient traditions of interpretation and translation beyond the limits of the Greek-speaking world.

The honor of ending the volume is given to Natalio Fernández Marcos, who introduces “A New Spanish Translation of the Septuagint” (283–91). The approach of the project, as compared to the other modern translations, is closest to LXX.D, since “[t]he Septuagint ... was a literary work conceived to replace the Hebrew Bible, not an ancillary instrument ... to read the Hebrew” (289).

The outward appearance of the volume is of the same very high quality as previous books in BETL, with significantly few printing errors.