

Conference Speakers

Albert Pietersma

Professor of Septuagint Studies and Hellenistic Greek (emeritus), University of Toronto.

Paper Title and Abstract:

“Translation and Commentary: Retrospect and Prospect”

Seeing that A New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS) has now appeared (2007), a retrospective description would seem in order, the more since this translation stands in the context of many others into modern languages, all together testifying to the greatest renewal of interest in the Septuagint in modern times. Conceived as two-staged interpretive undertaking, NETS is the first stage. This paper will therefore describe NETS in retrospect and anticipate the commentary series to follow, namely, the Society of Biblical Literature Commentary on the Septuagint (SBLCS). Basic to both is the so-called interlinear paradigm, which by now has had a reception history of its own. While translation into modern languages provides maximum access to the text for a wide spectrum of students of biblical literature, commentary aims to elucidate the meaning of that literature. Retrospect and prospect will thus be shown to be two sides of the same coin.

Benjamin G. Wright

Professor, Department of Religion Studies, Lehigh University.

Paper Title and Abstract:

“Moving Beyond Translating a Translation:

Reflections on A New English Translation of the Septuagint”

Every translation is grounded in some historical moment, every translation is intended to fit a niche in its target culture, and every translation has an observable relationship to its source text. This is true for both the Septuagint and A New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS). As work on NETS progressed, the interconnectedness of these three elements became more and more apparent, and that relationship played an increasingly explicit role in how I conceived of NETS within the larger field of Septuagint Studies. In this paper, I argue that awareness of and attention to this interconnectedness enables scholars who are primarily engaged in translating a translation to move from the task of translating to addressing important historical questions about the nature, origins and context of the Septuagint, particularly with respect to the claims made in the Letter of Aristeas.

Jan Joosten

Professor of Old Testament Exegesis, Faculty of Protestant Theology, Université Marc Bloch, Strasbourg, France.

Paper Title and Abstract:

“Translating the Untranslatable: Hebrew Idioms and Word Play in Greek Rendering”

Because languages are incompatible, perfect translation is impossible. The Septuagint, however, appears to embody a belief that, even if perfection is out of reach, adequate translation is feasible. The historical background of this belief has not been established to general satisfaction. In the present paper, a number of features will be investigated that posed a particular challenge to the translators. Some expressions are harder to render into a different language than others. The focus will be on idiomatic expressions, such as ‘to fill the hand’ meaning ‘to ordain’ and on etymological play on proper names, as in ‘he called her Eve (*ḥawwâ*)’ because she is the mother

of all that lives (*hay*)'. Different ways of dealing with each of these types can be identified. The research throws an interesting light on the general approach of the Septuagint translators, particularly in regard to the 'untranslatable' aspect of the Hebrew text.

Wolfgang Kraus

*Professor and Chair of New Testament Studies, Universität des Saarlandes,
Saarbrücken, Germany.*

Paper Title and Abstract:

*“The Role of the Septuagint in the New Testament:
Amos 9.11f and Habakkuk 2:3f as Test Cases”*

For most of the New Testament authors, the Septuagint was the Bible they used. Many times they quoted this version of the Jewish Scriptures to support their line of argumentation. They did not only quote, however, but sometimes also made slight alterations in order to fit the quoted texts better into the argument. Two key texts are Amos 9.11f und Habakkuk 2.3f. The first is cited in Acts 15 and the second in Romans 1.17, Galatians 3.11 and Hebrews 10.37f. In this paper, I will investigate the textual traditions that stand behind the quotations and the aims of the respective authors in using these particular quotations the way they do.

Alison G. Salvesen

*University Research Lecturer, Oriental Institute, University of Oxford;
Fellow in Jewish Bible Versions, Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies.*

Paper Title and Abstract:

“A Well-Watered Garden (Isaiah 58:11): Investigating the Influence of the Septuagint”

Over twenty years ago Marguerite Harl spoke of two possible ways of studying the LXX both “upstream” (*amont*) and “downstream” (*aval*), meaning that one could look either at the relationship of the Old Greek and its revisions to a posited Hebrew exemplar, or at the reception of the Septuagint in its own right by later generations who had no contact with the Hebrew text. Recent translations of the LXX into modern languages have utilised and publicised both these approaches. It may now be time to consolidate research and translation activities in areas “irrigated” by the tradition of the LXX, namely the daughter versions and their exegetical traditions in the non-western churches, many of whose adherents now live in Europe, North America and Australia. This paper will attempt to summarize what has already been achieved in these areas, and suggest directions for future researchers and translators.

Cameron Boyd-Taylor

Research Associate, Greek Bible in Byzantine Judaism Project, University of Cambridge.

Paper Title and Abstract:

“Lost in Translation: Greek Lexicography and the Septuagint”

A translation corpus such as the Septuagint presents lexicography with something of a dilemma. On the one hand, it represents an attempt to communicate meaning in the target language. Yet, on the other hand, the product is seldom a straightforward instance of performance in that language. Rather, it suffers interference from the source language--forms and structures occur that are seldom if ever encountered in utterances originally composed in the target language. Within Septuagint Studies the issue of interference has been brought into sharpened focus by the recent translation projects, and there is a growing consensus that the existing Greek lexica deal inadequately with it. Drawing on the experience of *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*,

my paper will discuss how this situation might be rectified in future lexica.

Leonard J. Greenspoon

Klutznick Chair in Jewish Civilization; Professor of Classical and Near Eastern Studies and Theology, Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska.

Paper Title and Abstract:

“At the Beginning: The Septuagint as Jewish Bible Translation”

It is widely recognized, of course, that the Septuagint was the first formal Jewish translation of Scripture. But what does that mean in terms of the subsequent history of Jewish versions of the Hebrew Bible? In previous generations, two of the greatest Jewish Septuagint scholars, also involved in significant modern Bible translations, dealt with this topic: Max L. Margolis and Harry M. Orlinsky. Although they differed in many respects, both understood the Jewish translators responsible for the Septuagint as providing an essentially literal rendering of their Hebrew Vorlage (whether = Masoretic Text [as with Margolis] or not [so Orlinsky]). Contemporary understandings of the principles exhibited by various Septuagint translators call into question the assumptions shared by Margolis and Orlinsky, and call out for a new synthesis of the Septuagint as the first in a rich and varied tradition of Jewish Bible translating. It is this that I will present.

August H. Konkell

President and Old Testament Professor, Providence College and Theological Seminary, Otterburne, Manitoba.

Paper Title and Abstract:

“The Elihu Speeches in the Greek Translation of Job”

Elihu has often been viewed negatively in the book of Job. Past interpreters of this bent include Gregory the Great (seventh century), who characterizes him as haughty, and Martin Luther (1483-1546), who calls him an empty gasbag. More recently, Edwin Good (*In Turns of Tempest: A Reading of Job*) describes Elihu as a pompous intensive bore and an opaque thinker with pretentious language that is often quite unintelligible. The Greek translator of Job is known for abbreviating the book, especially in the speeches of Elihu. The result is a significant transformation of these speeches and their function, which is this paper's focus. In the Hebrew text, Elihu attempts to be an advocate for Job, even while condemning him for his unrepentant attitude. Elihu's points of advocacy are lost in the Greek translation, indicating that the Greek translator did not understand Job in the way that the Hebrew author did.

Christopher S. Morrissey

Assistant Professor of Medieval Latin Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Redeemer Pacific College, Trinity Western University.

Paper Title and Abstract:

“‘On the mount Yahweh was seen’: Greek and Latin Hermeneutics of Genesis 22”

In Abraham's Curse, Bruce Chilton argues that in Genesis 22:14, “the Septuagint's Greek renders the Hebrew text” correctly (i.e., “with Yahweh as the subject of the verb”), whereas English translations like the King James Version prefer to imply that the ram is the verbal subject. Chilton contends, “This is a case of translators caring more about doctrine than wording, and attempting to legislate what the Bible can say.” While preserving the value of Chilton's textual exegesis (“Contextually, God is the subject: Yahweh ‘was seen’ on Moriah, liberating

Isaac by means of divine intervention”), this paper nevertheless compares the Septuagint’s translation with the various Vulgate Latin translations in order to conclude that Chilton’s polemics do not appreciate the rich polysemy of the passage. More than one translation is required in order to appreciate all the significations being deployed in the treatment of “seeing” in Genesis 1:14.

Melvin K. H. Peters

Professor of Religion, Department of Religion, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

Paper Title and Abstract:

“Translating a Translation: Some Final Reflections on the Production of the New English Translation of Greek Deuteronomy”

In the introduction to the published version of Deuteronomy in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, only a representative sampling of the problems encountered was presented. In this paper, I will amplify and augment the evidence presented in the introduction with a discussion of some specific examples of textual variation between the received text of the Hebrew Bible and the critical Greek text of the Goettingen Septuaginta. In the process, the persistent question regarding the primacy of the Hebrew text behind the Septuagint in relation to the printed text of the St. Petersburg codex will be revisited. The so-called “poetic” portions of Deuteronomy will receive primary attention.

Peter Flint

Canada Research Chair of the Dead Sea Scrolls; Co-director, Dead Sea Scrolls Institute; Professor of Religious Studies, Trinity Western University.

Paper Title:

“The Priestly Benediction in the Septuagint of Numbers and Other Ancient Texts”

Dirk Büchner

Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Trinity Western University.

Paper Title and Abstract:

“The Interpretation of the Septuagint: Between Isomorphism and Exegesis”

Current Septuagint research appears to reflect one of two perspectives on this ancient translation of the Jewish Scriptures. The first posits a kind of linguistic isomorphism that gives rise to a translation marked by a curious syntactical dependence on its source text, and that provides much of the information that can be gleaned about this text. The second perspective focuses on the fair amount of data that suggests that translators were interpreting the text in line with prevailing cultural and religious ideas. From this latter vantage point, the translation at its inception moves one step away from linguistic isomorphism towards becoming a freestanding theological text in its own right. This paper will, on the basis of evidence from the Septuagint of Leviticus, suggest how one might refine current theory on the relationship between the linguistic and theological purposes of the translators.

Larry J. Perkins

Professor of New Testament Studies, Trinity Western University, GSTS / ACTS.

Paper Title and Abstract:

“‘Glory’ in Greek Exodus: Lexical Choice in Translation as a Theological Device”

Translating Greek Exodus into a modern language requires investigation of the ancient translator’s methodology. While such research involves many diverse issues, of particular interest is the way the translator may have shaped the text intentionally to influence readers theologically. This paper explores one possible set of lexical choices that the translator of Greek Exodus may have made to accomplish this purpose. Evaluating the translator’s use of the lexeme *doxa* and its cognates demonstrates his desire to emphasize Yahweh’s special renown in his contest with Pharaoh and his relationship with Israel. As people witness Yahweh’s acts, he accrues ‘glory’ to himself. Repeated use of this terminology in contexts of theophany and rehearsals of these experiences emphasize Yahweh’s indisputable power and essential uniqueness. The present investigation culminates in the conclusion that the translator did use lexical choice as a device to influence readers theologically.

Robert J. V. Hiebert

Professor of Old Testament Studies, Trinity Western University, GSTS / ACTS;

Director, Septuagint Institute.

Paper Title and Abstract:

“Postpartum Reflections on Translating the Septuagint of Genesis”

Involvement in the NETS project has proven to be an interesting, enlightening and challenging experience. Not only has it afforded me the opportunity to do a detailed comparison of the Hebrew and Greek texts of Genesis, it has also caused me to consider carefully the linguistic and semantic issues that are pertinent to the process of translation. In this paper I shall discuss some of the factors that I have come to regard as significant in terms of a methodology of translation for a project such as this, based both on my own experience as a translator and in the light of other recent publications on the Septuagint of Genesis.

Graduate Student Speakers

Jason Hess

Regent College, Vancouver, Master of Theology Program.

Paper Title and Abstract:

“The Old Greek of Isaiah 27:2-5 as Compared to the Masoretic Text:

A Linguistic and Contextual Study”

At least since Isac Seeligmann’s religio-historical analysis of the Old Greek translation of Isaiah, many scholars have described this version of that prophetic book as relatively “free” and significantly colored by the cultural milieu of its time. In keeping with this depiction, more recent literature has also proposed instances of translational “actualization” whereby the differences between the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Old Greek appear to reflect specific historical events and/or persons, e.g., Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his Hellenization project. Chapter 27, which differs significantly from its probable *Vorlage*, may have been understood that way by the Greek translator’s readers. There are, however, other possible ways to account for the textual discrepancies, and various options will be considered in this paper.

John D. Barry

Trinity Western University, Master of Arts in Biblical Studies Program.

Paper Title and Abstract:

“Will the Servant ‘See Light’?: A Reexamination of the Controversial phōs Variant in Isaiah 53:11”

It will be argued that the “he will see light” variant (*phōs* and *ʾôr*) in Isaiah 53:11 is the most probable Urtext based on the structure of the poetic canticle in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. One may wish to argue that this is the less likely reading because of the internal “canons” of textual criticism. Although these “canons” do rule out “light” as the Urtext of Isaiah 53:11, the “canons” do not hold true in this instance because authorial skill and clarity must be taken into account. It seems completely improbable that a poet of such skill would be so negligent as to leave out a direct object necessary to make the rhythmic parallelism in the poem function. The argument that will be presented, and the Dead Sea Scrolls support of the Septuagint variant, demonstrates that Septuagint Isaiah was faithful to its Vorlage in more instances than may be expected.

Abi T. Ngunga

University of Aberdeen, School of Divinity, Religious Studies and Philosophy, Ph.D. Program.

Paper Title and Abstract:

“Identifying Intertextuality in the Septuagint Translation(s): Isa 63:9 as a Case Study”

A glance at *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS) reveals that there is a need to look beyond a consideration of individual texts. This paper takes the Septuagint of Isaiah 63:9 as a case study to demonstrate, by means of an intertextual reading of the passage, the compositional unity within this Greek version of Isaiah and its relationship to the Septuagint Pentateuch. In my presentation I will suggest that those who have produced NETS and other modern translations should likewise consider embarking on a project that would provide readers with an approach or a strategy to elucidate these kinds of textual and thematic connections.

Brian Butcher

Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Ph.D. Program.

Paper Title:

“Comparing Septuagint Translations Used in Eastern Churches with NETS”