

Sunday, February 26, 2023—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
Lesson 196 The AV 1611: Producing A Proper Perspective on the Preface (Translation Sections)

Introduction

- After assessing the Primary Contents of the 1611 in Lessons [190](#), [191](#), and [192](#), we began a systematic study of the Preface under the title “Producing A Proper Perspective on the Preface” in Lesson 193. Thus far we have considered the following with respect to the Preface.
 - [Lesson 193](#)—Access, Structure, & Style
 - [Lesson 194](#)—Calumniation (Slander Sections)
 - [Lesson 195](#)—Praise of the Holy Scriptures & Translation Necessary
- Today, in Lesson 196, we will continue this study by looking at the following two subsections related to the topic translation.
 - The Translation of the Old Testament Out of the Hebrew into Greek
 - Translation Out of Hebrew and Greek into Latin

The Translation of the Old Testament Out of the Hebrew into Greek

Modern Spelling Transcription	Modern Form Edited by Rhodes & Lupas
¶(7) While God would be known only in <i>Jacob</i> , and have his Name great in <i>Israel</i> , and in none other place, while the dew lay on <i>Gideon's</i> fleece only, and all the earth besides was dry; then for one and the same people, which spake all of them the language of <i>Canaan</i> , that is, <i>Hebrew</i> , one and the same original in <i>Hebrew</i> was sufficient. But, when the fulness of time drew near, that the Sun of righteousness, the Son of God should come into the world, whom God ordained to be a reconciliation through faith in his blood, not of the <i>Jew</i> only, but also of the <i>Greek</i> , yea, of all them that were scattered abroad; then lo, it pleased the Lord to stir up the spirit of a Greek Prince (<i>Greek</i> for descent and language) even of <i>Ptolemy Philadelph</i> King of <i>Egypt</i> , to procure the translating of the Book of God out of Hebrew into Greek. This is the translation of the Seventy Interpreters, commonly so called, which prepared the way for our Saviour among the Gentiles by written preaching, as Saint <i>John</i> Baptist did among the <i>Jews</i> by vocal. For the <i>Grecians</i> being desirous of learning, were not wont to suffer books of worth to lie moulding in Kings' libraries,	¶(7) “When God was to be known exclusively in Jacob, and his name praised only in Israel and nowhere else; when the dew lay only on Gideon’s fleece, and all the ground around it was dry (Judges 6.37); in those days it was sufficient for the Scriptures to be in Hebrew, because all the people spoke the language of Canaan, namely Hebrew. But then the fullness of time drew near, when the Sun of righteousness, the Son of God should come into the world. God appointed him to be a reconciliation through faith in his blood, not only for the Jew, but also for the Greek, and for all peoples throughout the world. At that time it pleased the Lord to inspire the Greek Prince Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt (a Greek by ancestry and language), to commission the translation of the book of God out of Hebrew into Greek. This is the Septuagint, as the translation of the Seventy Interpreters is commonly called, which prepared the way for our Savior among the Gentiles by a written form of preaching, just as St. John Baptist did among the Jews by an oral form. For the Greeks, with their love of learning, were not willing to let valuable books lie collecting

but had many of their servants, ready scribes, to copy them out, and so they were dispersed and made common. Again, the *Greek* tongue was well known and made familiar to most inhabitants in *Asia*, by reason of the conquest that there the *Grecians* had made, as also by the Colonies, which thither they had sent. For the same causes also it was well understood in many places of *Europe*, yea, and of *Africa* too. Therefore the word of God being set forth in *Greek*, becometh hereby like a candle set upon a candlestick, which giveth light to all that are in the house, or like a proclamation sounded forth in the market place, which most men presently take knowledge of; and therefore that language was fittest to contain the Scriptures, both for the first Preachers of the Gospel to appeal unto for witness, and for the learners also of those times to make search and trial by. It is certain, that that Translation was not so sound and so perfect, but it needed in many places correction; and who had been so sufficient for this work as the Apostles or Apostolic men? Yet it seemed good to the holy Ghost and to them, to take that which they found, (the same being for the greatest part true and sufficient) rather than making a new, in that new world and green age of the Church, to expose themselves to many exceptions and cavillations, as though they made a Translations to serve their own turn, and therefore bearing a witness to themselves, their witness not to be regarded. This may be supposed to be some cause, why the Translation of the *Seventy* was allowed to pass for current. Notwithstanding, though it was commended generally, yet it did not fully content the learned, no not of the Jews. For not long after *Christ*, *Aquila* fell in hand with a new Translation, and after him *Theodotion*, and after him *Symmachus*; yea, there was a fifth and a sixth edition, the Authors whereof were not known. These with the *Seventy* made up the *Hexapla* and were worthily and to great purpose compiled together by *Origen*. Howbeit the Edition of the *Seventy* went away with the credit, and therefore not only was placed in the midst by *Origen* (for the worth and excellency thereof above the rest, as *Epiphanius* gathered) but also was used by the *Greek* fathers for the ground and foundation of their Commentaries. Yea, *Epiphanius* above named doeth attribute so much unto it, that he holdeth the Authors thereof not only for Interpreters, but also

dust in royal libraries. They had their servants, many of whom were competent scribes, make copies of them so that they could be widely circulated. Further, the Greek language was widely known and familiar to most of the peoples of Asia because of the Greek conquests and the colonies they established. For the same reasons it was widely understood in many areas of Europe and also of Africa. Thus the word of God in Greek translation became like a candle set on a candlestick, giving light to everyone in the house, or like a proclamation broadcast in the market-place, soon heard by everyone. Therefore this language was most appropriate for the Scriptures, both for the first preachers of the Gospel to appeal to as a witness, and also for the learners in those days to use for study and reference. It is true that this translation was not done so well or so perfectly that it did not need to be corrected in many places. And who would have been as apt for this work as the Apostles and their colleagues? Yet it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and also to them to take what they found, (since it was mostly true and adequate) rather than by making a new translation in that new world and green age of the Church, to expose themselves to many objections and quibblings such as having made a translation to serve their own purpose, so that by bearing witness to themselves their word could be discounted. This may partly explain why the Septuagint was accepted as authoritative. And yet, although it was accepted generally, it did not satisfy scholars completely, particularly among the Jews. For not long after Christ, a new translation was undertaken by Aquila, and after him by Theodotion, and then Symmachus, and there was a fifth translation, and a sixth, the authors of which are unknown. These together with the Septuagint made up the Hexapla, a valuable and most useful work compiled by Origen. But the Septuagint gained acceptance, and therefore was not only given central position by Origen (for its value and superiority over the rest, as Epiphanius infers), but also was used by the Greek fathers as the basis for their commentaries. Epiphanius even attributes so much authority to it that he regards its authors not just as translators, but also in a sense as prophets. And when the Emperor Justinian exhorted his Jewish subjects to use the Septuagint, he cites as his reason that "they were, as it were, enlightened

<p>for Prophets in some respect; and <i>Justinian</i> the Emperor enjoining the <i>Jews</i> his subjects to use especially the Translation of the <i>Seventy</i>, rendreth this reason thereof, because they were as it were enlightened with prophetic grace. Yet for all that, as the <i>Egyptians</i> are said of the Prophet to be men and not God, and their horses flesh and not spirit; so it is evident, (and <i>Saint Jerome</i> affirmeth as much) that the <i>Seventy</i> were Interpreters, they were not Prophets; they did many things well, as learned men; but yet as men they stumbled and fell, one while through oversight, another while through ignorance, yea, sometimes they may be noted to add to the Original, and sometimes to take from it; which made the Apostles to leave them many times, when they left the <i>Hebrew</i>, and to deliver the sense thereof according to the truth of the word, as the spirit gave them utterance. This may suffice touching the Greek Translations of the Old Testament.</p>	<p>with the gift of prophecy.” And yet, as the prophet said that “the Egyptians are human, and not God; their horses are flesh, and not spirit” (Isaiah 31.3), so it is evident (and <i>Saint Jerome</i> affirms as much) that the <i>Seventy</i> were translators. They were not prophets. They did many things well as scholarly men, but as men they stumbled and fell. Sometimes it was through oversight, sometimes through ignorance; sometimes they added to the original, and sometimes they omitted from it. When they left the <i>Hebrew</i>, accordingly, many times the Apostles departed from them in order to convey the true meaning of the word as the Spirit gave them ability. This may suffice with regard to the Greek translations of the Old Testament.” (Rhodes & Lupas, 72-73)</p>
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- After addressing the necessity of the translation in the previous subsection, in paragraph seven (§7) Smith turns his attention to a historic example of translation by discussing the Greek translation of the Old Testament otherwise known as the Septuagint or LXX. In doing so, Smith recounts a bit of Biblical history and explains its impact upon Biblical languages and translation(s). According to Smith, when God was dealing with Israel in the Old Testament, it was sufficient for his word to be in Hebrew only.
 - “While God would be known only in *Jacob*, and have his Name great in *Israel*, and in none other place, while the dew lay on *Gideon's* fleece only, and all the earth besides was dry; then for one and the same people, which spake all of them the language of *Canaan*, that is, *Hebrew*, one and the same original in *Hebrew* was sufficient.”
- However, when “the fulness of time drew near” that “the son of God should come into the world,” it pleased God to have His word translated out of Hebrew into Greek.
 - “But, when the fulness of time drew near, that the Sun of righteousness, the Son of God should come into the world, whom God ordained to be a reconciliation through faith in his blood, not of the *Jew* only, but also of the *Greek*, yea, of all them that were scattered abroad; then lo, it pleased the Lord to stir up the spirit of a Greek Prince (*Greek* for descent and language) even of *Ptolemy Philadelph* King of *Egypt*, to procure the translating of the Book of God out of Hebrew into Greek.”
- The translation that Smith is mentioning is known as “the translation of the Seventy Interpreters” or the LXX (the number 70 in Roman numerals). The reason this was done is because the Greek language had been spread throughout the ancient world via the conquests of Alexander the Great. Smith briefly recounts this history as follows:

- “This is the translation of the Seventy Interpreters, commonly so called, which prepared the way for our Saviour among the Gentiles by written preaching, as Saint *John* Baptist did among the *Jews* by vocal. For the *Grecians* being desirous of learning, were not wont to suffer books of worth to lie moulding in Kings' libraries, but had many of their servants, ready scribes, to copy them out, and so they were dispersed and made common. Again, the *Greek* tongue was well known and made familiar to most inhabitants in *Asia*, by reason of the conquest that there the *Grecians* had made, as also by the Colonies, which thither they had sent. For the same causes also it was well understood in many places of *Europe*, yea, and of *Africa* too. Therefore the word of God being set forth in *Greek*, becometh hereby like a candle set upon a candlestick, which giveth light to all that are in the house, or like a proclamation sounded forth in the market place, which most men presently take knowledge of; and therefore that language was fittest to contain the Scriptures, both for the first Preachers of the Gospel to appeal unto for witness, and for the learners also of those times to make search and trial by.”
- While Smith states that the LXX was utilized by “the first Preachers of the Gospel to appeal unto for witness” and for “the learners also of those times to make search and trial by” he notes in the next line that it was not “perfect.”
 - “It is certain, that that Translation was not so sound and so perfect, but it needed in many places correction; and who had been so sufficient for this work as the Apostles or Apostolic men?”
- This constitutes the next occurrence of “perfect” in the Preface. Here the OED (Oxford English Dictionary) is exceedingly helpful in that it cites this line from the Preface as a word usage example for adjective definition 6.b., “Accurate, correct; spec. (of a copy, representation, etc.) accurately reproducing or reflecting the original; †(of a notion, thought, record, etc.) exactly corresponding to the facts (*obsolete*).”

b. Accurate, correct; *spec.* (of a copy, representation, etc.) accurately reproducing or reflecting the original; †(of a notion, thought, record, etc.) exactly corresponding to the facts (*obsolete*). Thesaurus »

1523 in J. B. Paul *Accts. Treasurer Scotl.* (1903) V. 218 For perfitte noumer of thare cariage hors to be send in bill to the secretaire.

1541 T. ELYOT *Image of Gouvernance* Pref. sig. aii^v In this boke was expressed of gouernance so perfit an ymage.

1574 W. BOURNE *Regim. for Sea* (1577) xvii. 46 The perfit houre and minute of the chaunges of the Moone.

1576 T. DIGGES in L. Digges *Prognostication* (rev. ed.) (title) A perfit description of the caelestiall orbes.

1611 M. SMITH in *Bible* (King James) Transl. Pref. 4 That Translation was not so sound and so perfect, but that it needed in many places correction.

- In this case Myles Smith is clearly intending to say that the LXX was not “perfect” in the sense of being “accurate” and “correct” because it required “correction.” Put another way, the LXX was deficient in that it was not “accurately reproducing or reflecting the original” or “exactly corresponding to the facts.” This is a different meaning of “perfect” than what we saw in the first two occurrences in the Preface where the absolute sense (1.b.) was used. Therefore, it is not difficult to observe that Myles Smith employed different senses of the word “perfect” when he authored the Preface. This should not be surprising given that the text of the AV does the same thing. Please also note that this use of “perfect” is explicitly marked “obsolete” by the OED.

This corresponds to the “obsolete” use of “exact” in paragraph four of the Epistle Dedicatory. Please see our discussion of the Epistle Dedicatory in [Lesson 191](#) for more information.

- Despite imperfections, Smith explains why God allowed use of the LXX in the early church as follows:
 - “Yet it seemed good to the holy Ghost and to them, to take that which they found, (the same being for the greatest part true and sufficient) rather than making a new, in that new world and green age of the Church, to expose themselves to many exceptions and cavillations, as though they made a Translation to serve their own turn, and therefore bearing a witness to themselves, their witness not to be regarded. This may be supposed to be some cause, why the Translation of the *Seventy* was allowed to pass for current.”
- Basically, God allowed use of the LXX, despite its shortcomings, because He did not want the early church to suffer derision on the charge that they created their own Bible, according to Smith. That said, the “learned” were not fully content with the LXX which led to a series of revisions chronicled by Smith.
 - “Notwithstanding, though it was commended generally, yet it did not fully content the learned, no not of the Jews. For not long after *Christ, Aquila* fell in hand with a new Translation, and after him *Theodotion*, and after him *Symmachus*; yea, there was a fifth and a sixth edition, the Authors whereof were not known. These with the *Seventy* made up the *Hexapla* and were worthily and to great purpose compiled together by *Origen*. Howbeit the Edition of the *Seventy* went away with the credit, and therefore not only was placed in the midst by *Origen* (for the worth and excellency thereof above the rest, as *Epiphanius* gathered) but also was used by the *Greek* fathers for the ground and foundation of their Commentaries. Yea, *Epiphanius* above named doeth attribute so much unto it, that he holdeth the Authors thereof not only for Interpreters, but also for Prophets in some respect; and *Justinian* the Emperor enjoining the *Jews* his subjects to use especially the Translation of the *Seventy*, rendreth this reason thereof, because they were as it were enlightened with prophetic grace.”
- Smith closes the subsection by noting the “Seventy” who created the LXX were not “Prophets” but “Interpreters” who were subject to error. As such, Smith notes the types of errors that can be found within the Septuagint. Moreover, the Apostles many times followed the Hebrew text when they found it more accurate than the LXX.
 - “Yet for all that, as the *Egyptians* are said of the Prophet to be men and not God, and their horses flesh and not spirit; so it is evident, (and Saint *Jerome* affirmeth as much) that the *Seventy* were Interpreters, they were not Prophets; they did many things well, as learned men; but yet as men they stumbled and fell, one while through oversight, another while through ignorance, yea, sometimes they may be noted to add to the Original, and sometimes to take from it; which made the Apostles to leave them many times, when they left the *Hebrew*, and to deliver the sense thereof according to the truth of the word, as the spirit gave them utterance. This may suffice touching the Greek Translations of the Old Testament.”

- Smith’s discussion of the LXX as existing before the time of Christ, in the Preface to the 1611, is interesting given that many King James Only advocates deny its existence altogether or call it a myth. For example, Dr. Peter Ruckman devotes an entire chapter of *The Handbook of Manuscript Evidence* to a discussion of the “Mythological LXX” Meanwhile, some within mainstream Evangelical scholarship view every quotation of the Old Testament in the New Testament by Christ and the Apostles as proof of a BC Septuagint. History bears out that at some point a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek was conducted. Whether this occurred before the time of Christ remains an open question in my mind. David Daniels of Chick Publications authored an interesting book on this subject matter titled *Did Jesus Use the Septuagint?* In this volume Daniels argues that extra verses from Romans 3 are inserted into Psalm 14 in the LXX thereby proving that whoever created the Septuagint had a copy of the book of Romans in front of them and accidentally included too many verses from Romans 3 in Psalm 14. This of course would mean that the LXX could not have been written before the time of Christ since the book of Romans did not yet exist. I covered this controversy in my video titled, [6\) The Word For All Ages: Did Jesus Read From the Septuagint in Luke 4?](#)
- Wherever one falls on the debate regarding the LXX, it is clear that Myles Smith believed in a BC Septuagint when he penned the Preface to the AV 1611.

Translation Out of Hebrew and Greek into Latin

Modern Spelling Transcription	Modern Form Edited by Rhodes & Lupas
¶8) There were also within a few hundred years after CHRIST, translations many into the Latin tongue: for this tongue also was very fit to convey the Law and the Gospel by, because in those times very many Countries of the West, yea of the South, East and North, spake or understood Latin, being made Provinces to the <i>Romans</i> . But now the Latin Translations were too many to be all good, for they were infinite (<i>Latini Interprets nullo modo numerari possunt</i> , saith S. Augustine.). Again they were not out of the <i>Hebrew</i> fountain (we speak of the <i>Latin</i> Translations of the Old Testament) but out of the <i>Greek</i> stream, therefore the Greek being not altogether clear, the <i>Latin</i> derived from it must needs be muddy. This moved S. <i>Jerome</i> a most learned father, and the best linguist without controversy, of his age, or of any that went before him, to undertake the translating of the Old Testament, out of the very fountain with that evidence of great learning, judgment, industry, and faithfulness, that he had forever bound the Church unto him, in a debt of special remembrance and thankfulness.	¶8) “Within a few hundred years after Christ many translations were made into the Latin language. This language was also a very appropriate medium for the Law and the Gospel, because in those times very many countries of the West, as well as of the South, East and North, spoke or understood Latin, since they had become Roman provinces. But there were too many Latin translations for all of them to be good (Augustine describes them as innumerable). Further, the translations of the Old Testament were not made from the Hebrew source but out of the Greek stream, and as the Greek was not altogether clear, the Latin derived from it was inevitably even muddier. This prompted St. Jerome, a scholarly Father and undoubtedly the best linguist of his age, or of any that were before him, to undertake a translation of the Old Testament from the sources themselves. This he accomplished with such evidence of great learning, judgment, industry, and faithfulness, that he has forever bound the Church to him in a debt of special remembrance and thankfulness.” (Rhodes & Lupas, 73)

- After addressing the Septuagint (LXX) or Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament in the previous subsection, here in subsection seven paragraph eight (¶8), Myles Smith addresses the utility of the early Latin translations of the Hebrew and Greek.

- “There were also within a few hundred years after CHRIST, translations many into the Latin tongue: for this tongue also was very fit to convey the Law and the Gospel by, because in those times very many Countries of the West, yea of the South, East and North, spake or understood Latin, being made Provinces to the *Romans*.”
- Next, Smith speaks of both the proliferation of Latin translations and their lack of cohesion to one another. Smith attributes the varied nature of these Latin translations to the fact that they were not all drawn “out of the Hebrew fountain . . . but out the Greek stream”. Therefore, the translations derived from this Greek stream that was “not altogether clear” resulted in the “muddy” Latin translations.
 - “But now the Latin Translations were too many to be all good, for they were infinite (*Latini Interprets nullo modo numerari possunt*, saith *S. Augustine*). Again they were not out of the *Hebrew* fountain (we speak of the *Latin* Translations of the Old Testament) but out of the *Greek* stream, therefore the Greek being not altogether clear, the *Latin* derived from it must needs be muddy.”
- Therefore, it fell to Jerome the “best linguist” of his age to rectify the situation and translate the Latin afresh directly out of the Hebrew “fountain.”
 - “This moved S. Jerome a most learned father, and the best linguist without controversy, of his age, or of any that went before him, to undertake the translating of the Old Testament, out of the very fountain with that evidence of great learning, judgment, industry, and faithfulness, that he had forever bound the Church unto him, in a debt of special remembrance and thankfulness.”

Works Cited

Rhodes, Errol F. and Liana Lupas. *The Translators to the Reader: The Original Preface of the King James Version of 1611 Revisited*. New York, NY: American Bible Society, 1997.