Biblical Prefaces

Jerome (c. AD 347–420)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

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Chronicles

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE OF SAINT JEROME TO THE BOOK OF PARALIPOMENON

If the version of the Seventy translators is pure and has remained as it was rendered by them into Greek, you have urged me on superfluously, my Cromatius, most holy and most learned of bishops, that I translated the Hebrew scrolls into Latin words. For what has formerly won the ears of men and strengthened the faith of those being born to the Church was indeed proper to be approved by our silence. Now, in fact, when different versions are held by a variety of regions, and this genuine and ancient translation is corrupted and violated, you have considered our opinion, either to judge which of the many is the true one, or to put together new work with old work, and shutting off to the Jews, as it is said, ”a horn to pierce the eyes. The region of Alexandria and Egypt praises in their Seventy the authority of Hesychius; the region from Constantinople to Antioch approves the version of Lucian the Martyr; in the middle, between these provinces, the people of Palestine read the books which, having been labored over by Origen, Eusebius and Pamphilius published. And all the world contends among them with this threefold variety.

And Origen certainly not only put together the texts of four editions, writing the words in a single row so that one regularly differing may be compared to others agreeing among themselves, but what is more audacious, into the edition of the Seventy he mixed the edition of Theodotion, marking with asterisks those things which were missing, and placing virgules by those things which are seen to be superfulous. If, therefore, it was allowed to others not to hold what they once accepted, and after the seventy chambers, which are considered without a single author, individual chambers were opened, and thus is read in the churches what the Seventy did not know, why do my (fellow) Latins not accept me, who thus put together the new with the inviolate old edition so that I might make my work acceptable to the Hebrews and, what is greater than these, to the authors, the Apostles? I have recently written a book, ”On the best kind of translating,” showing these things in the Gospel, and others similar to these, to be found in the books of the Hebrews: ”Out of Egypt I called my son,” and ”For he will be called

a Nazarene," and "They will look on him whom they have pierced," and that of the Apostle, "Things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, and had not arisen in the heart of man, which God has prepared for those loving Him.

The Apostles and Evangelists were certainly acquainted with (the version of) the Seventy interpreters, but from where (were) they (supposed) to say these things which are not in the Seventy? Christ our God, author of both Testaments, says in the Gospel according to John, "He who believes in me, as Scripture has said, Rivers of living water will flow from his belly. Certainly, whatever is witnessed by the Savior to be written, is written. Where is it written? The Seventy don't have it; the Church ignores the apocrypha; thus the turning back to the Hebrew (books), from which the Lord spoke and and the disciples took forth texts. In peace I will say these things of the ancients, and I respond only to my detractors, who bite me with dogs' teeth, slandering me in public, speaking at corners, the same (being) both accusers and defenders, when approving for others what they reprove me for, as though virtue and error were not in conflict, but change with the author. I have recalled another edition of the Seventy translators corrected from the Greek to have been distributed by us, and me not to need to be considered their enemy, which things I always explain in the gatherings of the brothers. And what is now Dabreiamin, that is, Words of the Days, I have translated.

I have therefore made the foreignness of the meanings clearer, and have separated lines into members, so that the inextribcable spaces and forest of names, which are confused through the error of the scribes, are, as Hismenius says, "themselves singing to me and mine," even if the ears of others are deaf.

END OF THE PROLOGUE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode. Kevin introduced the text as follows: This prologue gives us an interesting view into the history of St Jerome's translation work, and some very important information about the Septuagint in the world of his day. It appears that in addition to Origen's Hexaplaric text, and the other well-known Septuagintal texts, he had done a corrected Latin version of the Septuagint, which unfortunately is entirely lost to us. One of the interesting things in this prologue is the mention of Jerome separating "lines into members" (per versuum cola). That is, he has separated the members, the individual words, with spaces, which was then rarely done, but so common now that we don't even notice it.

The name "Paralipomenon" means, "things left over." The book was called this because it included things not mentioned in Kings. I can remember being fascinated as a child by the exotic mystery of that name, Paralipomenon, like incense, silk, and the Faith itself, being something from the ancient world, in contrast to the much more prosaic Chronicles, a boring, uninteresting name to be found at the

top of the local paper, and more redolent of the supermarket and gas station. But enough about me! Enjoy the continuing saga of the feisty St Jerome!

Daniel

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE OF JEROME TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL The churches of the Lord Savior do not read the Prophet Daniel according to the Seventy interpreters, using (instead) the edition of Theodotion, and I don't know why this happened. For whether because the language is Chaldean and differs in certain properties from our speech, (or) the Seventy interpreters were not willing to keep the same lines in the translation, or the book was edited under their name by some unknown other who did not sufficiently know the Chaldean language, or not knowing anything else which was the cause, I can affirm this one thing, that it often differs from the truth and with proper judgment is repudiated. Indeed, it is known most of Daniel and some of Ezra were written in Hebrew letters but the Chaldean language, and one pericope of Jeremiah, and also Job to have much in common with the Arabic language.

When I was a very young man, after the reading and flowery rhetoric of Quintilian and Cicero, when I had opened myself to the drudgery of this language and with much effort and much time I with difficulty had begun to pronounce the breathy and buzzing words, as though walking in a crypt to see a little light from above, I finally dashed myself against Daniel, and I was affected by such weariness that, sunken in desperation, I wanted to despise all (my) old work. Indeed, a Hebrew was encouraging me, and he was often repeating to me by his language "Persistent work conquers all," as in me (?) I saw an amateur among them, I began again to be a student of Chaldean. And so I might confess the truth, to the present day I am better able to read and understand than to pronounce the Chaldean language.

Therefore, I have shown these things to you as a difficulty of Daniel, which among the Hebrews has neither the history of Susanna, nor the hymn of the three young men, nor the fables of Bel and the dragon, which we, because they are spread throughout the whole world, have appended by banishing and placing them after the spit (or "obelus"), so we will not be seen among the unlearned to have cut off a large part of the scroll. I heard a certain one of the teachers of the Jews, when he derided the history of Susanna and said it to have been forged by an unknown Greek, to propose that which Africanus also proposed to Origen, these etymologies

to come down from the Greek language: ”to split” from ”mastich” and ”to saw” from ”oak” (απο του σχινου σχισαι και απο του πρινου πρισαι). On which subject we are able to give this understanding to those of our own (language), as we might, for example say it to have said of the oak tree (ilice), ”you will perish there (illico)” or of the mastic tree (lentisco), ”May the angel crush you like a lentil bean (lentem)” or ”You will not perish slowly (lente)” or ”Pliant (lentus), that is, flexible, you are led to death” or anything which fits the name of the tree.

Then he jested for there to have been so much leisure time for the three young men, that in the furnace of raging fires they played with (poetic) meter, and called in order all the elements to the praise of God. Or what miracle or Divine inspiration is it, either a dragon having been killed by a lump of tar or the tricks of the priests of Bel having been discovered, which things are better accomplished by the wisdom of a clever man rather than by the prophetic Spirit? When indeed he came to Habakkuk and had read (of him) having been carried off from Judea to Chaldea carrying a dish, he requested an example where we might have read in all the Old Testament any one of the saints to have flown with a heavy body and in a short time to have passed over so great a space of lands. To which, when one of us rather a little too quick to speaking had brought Ezekiel into the discussion (lit. ”middle”) and said him to have been moved from Chaldea to Judea, he derided the man and from the same scroll proved Ezekiel to have seen himself moved in the Spirit. Finally also our Apostle, namely as an erudite man and one who had learned the Law from the Hebrews, was also not daring to affirm himself taken away in the body, but was to have said ”Whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know, God knows.

By these and arguments of such kinds he exposed (or ”accused”) the apocryphal fables in the book of the Church.

Concerning which subject, leaving the judgment to the decision of the reader, I warn him Daniel is not to be found in the Prophets among the Hebrews, but among those which they titled the Hagiographa. Since indeed all of Scripture is divided by them into three parts, into the Law, into the Prophets, (and) into the Hagiographa, that is, into five and eight and eleven books, which is not (necessary) to explain at this time. And to those things of this prophet, or rather against this book, which Porphyry accused, the witnesses are Methodius, Eusebius, (and) Apollinaris, who, responding to his madness with many thousands of verses, I do not know whether they are satisfying to the interested reader. For which reason I entreat you, O Paula and Eustochium, pour out prayers for me to the Lord, so that as long as I am in this little body, I might write something pleasing to you, useful to the Church, (and) worthy to posterity. I am indeed not greatly moved by the judgments of the present, which on either side are in error either by love or by hate.

END OF THE PROLOGUE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode. Kevin introduces his translation as follows: This prologue by St Jerome is a little odd to translate, as it's dealing in part with some wordplay in both Greek and Latin. I've placed the original words in parentheses, as I've done in others of the prologue translations, but they're especially necessary here. I get the distinct impression that St Jerome is actually showing us a sense of humor, or is at the very least recalling some funny sayings from a past teacher. There is also the fascinating and rather bittersweet retrospective on his learning Chaldean, which we call Aramaic these days. Another interesting part is his mention of the Hebrew Scriptures being divided into three parts: the Law with five books, the Prophets with eight books, and the Hagiographa with eleven books, for a total of twenty-four books. And though he doesn't name the books included in those numbers here, the scheme is close enough to that which he presented in his "Helmeted Introduction" to Kings (22 books there, as opposed to 24 here), to determine these are the books for each category: Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Twelve; Hagiographa: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Chronicles, Ezra/Nehemiah, Esther, and somewhere in there Ruth and Lamentations, which in the "Helmeted Introduction" are attached to Judges and Jeremiah respectively, presumably to make the total number of books fit the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet: twenty-two. So, we have at least that evidence of what was the canon of at least some Jews in Palestine in the late fourth and early fifth centuries A.D. Enjoy!

Esther

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE TO ESTHER The Book of Esther stands corrupted by various translators. Which (book) I, lifting up from the archives of the Hebrews, have translated more accurately word for word. The common edition drags the book by knotted ropes of words hither and yon, adding to it things which may have been said or heard at any time. This is as is usual with instruction by schools, when a subject has been taken up, to figure out from the words which someone could have used, which one either suffered injury, or which one caused injury (to the text). And you, O Paula and Eustochium, since you have both studied to enter the libraries of the Hebrews and also have approved of the battles of the interpreters, holding the Hebrew Book of Esther, look through each word of our translation, so you may be able to understand me also to augmented nothing by adding, but rather with faithful witness to have translated, just as it is found in the Hebrew, the Hebrew history into the Latin language. We are not affected by the praises of men, nor are we afraid of (their) slanders. For to be pleasing to God we do not inwardly fear those caring for the minas of men, ”for God has scattered the bones of those desiring to be pleasing to men” (Ps 52.6), and according to the Apostle, those like this are ”not able to be servants of Christ” (Gal 1.10).

END OF THE PROLOGUE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode. Kevin introduces his translation as follows: St Jerome has little to say in this prologue about his actual work, except that the ”common edition,” presumably the or an Old Latin version, of the Book of Esther was a mess, and he resorted to the Hebrew text of his day. In this respect, his translation is a valuable version representing a literal translation of a Hebrew text found in Palestine in the late fourth century. He unfortunately doesn’t describe in this letter the messy situation of the additions to Esther found in the Septuagint version, which he included en masse at the end of his version, with short notes indicating where they belonged in his translation. These additions can be found in various editions of the apocrypha, but they’re best read in the version in the NRSV, which is a full

translation of the Septuagint text, not just of the additions, and includes them all in their places, not in a bunch at the end. Anyhow, enjoy! UPDATE: Thanks once again to the very much appreciated help of Michael Gilleland of Laudator Temporis Acti, I've fixed a sentence (now the second one in the first paragraph) that gave me trouble.

Ezekiel

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE TO THE PROPHET EZEKIEL The Prophet Ezekiel was led captive with Joachin king of Judah to Babylon, and he prophesied there to those who were captives with him, to those repenting that they had willingly handed over the prophecy of Jeremiah to enemies, and yet saw the city Jerusalem to stand, which he had predicted would fall. And in his thirtieth year of age, and in the fifth year of the captivity, he began to speak to his fellow captives. And at the same time, though later, this one in Chaldea and Jeremiah in Judea prophesied. His style is neither greatly eloquent nor excessively rustic, but properly proportioned between both. And he was a priest, as also was Jeremiah, the beginning and ending of the book being wrapped in great obscurities. But also the common edition of him does not differ much from the Hebrew one. Because of that I greatly wonder what was the cause, that when we have the same translators in all the books, in some they translated the same things, in others, different things. Therefore, read this also according to our translation because, by being written in words with spaces, it gives a clearer meaning to readers. And if my friends also mock this, say to them that no one restrains them from writing. But I do not respect him who follows them, which is more clearly said in Greek, as they are called insult-swallowers (φαγολοιδοροι).

END OF THE PROLOGUE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode. Kevin introduces his translation as follows: There's not much to say about this prologue, as it's pretty straightforward. Near the end, St Jerome sarcastically calls his detractors "friends." And there's Greek in this one, too! Enjoy!

Ezra v2

[Translated by Mark DelCogliano]

The Prologue of Eusebius Hieronymus on the Book of Ezra
Whether it is more difficult to do what you ask or to say no, I have still not decided. For, on the one hand, it is impossible to refuse you when you are requesting something of significance. But, on the other hand, the weight of the burden imposed presses down upon my neck so hard that it would be necessary to lighten it before rushing into it thus encumbered. In addition to this, there is the hostility of my detractors. They think everything I write ought to be refuted and rip apart in public what they read in private, even though their conscience accuses them. They do this to such an extent that I am compelled to cry out and say, ”Lord, free my soul from wicked lips and from the deceitful tongue!” For three years now you have been continually writing and rewriting to me, asking that I translate the book of Ezra for you from Hebrew, making your request as if you did not already have Greek and Latin editions, or as if everyone would not immediately spit upon whatever I translate. As someone said, ”To strive in vain and not to seek anything in your weariness except hatred is the pinnacle of insanity.”

And so, I beseech you, my most dear Domnio and Rogatianus: do not make the book known to the public and be content to read it privately. Do not toss food to those who disdain it and thus avoid the snobbery of those who know only how to judge others but not how to do anything themselves. But if there are some of the brothers who are not displeased with my work, you may give them the master-copy. Advise them to copy the Hebrew names, of which there is a great abundance in this book, with distinct spaces between them. For it will be of no benefit to have corrected the book unless the corrections are diligently preserved by the copyists.

No one ought to be bothered by the fact that my edition consists of only one book, nor ought anyone take delight in the dreams found in the apocryphal third and fourth books. For among the Hebrews the texts of Ezra and Nehemiah comprise a single book, and those texts which are not used by them and are not concerned with the twenty-four elders ought to be rejected outright. But if anyone should oppose you on the basis of the Septuagint translation (whose very variety of texts

indicates that its copies are corrupt and damaged, nor can it by any means be claimed that what is diverse is true), have him take a look at the gospels. There are many passages in them which are said to be from the Old Testament but which are not found in the Septuagint translation. Examples include: ”He shall be called a Nazarene,” ”Out of Egypt I have called my son,” ”They shall look upon him whom they have pierced,” and many others that I shall reserve for a more extensive work. And so, have him attempt to locate where these passages are written in the Septuagint. When he cannot locate them, you should read aloud from the editions I recently did, which are continually denigrated by the tongues of those who have nothing good to say.

Though I intend to keep things brief, what I am about to say by way of introduction certainly makes the most sense. In my version I translated whatever was not contained in the Greek version or was there in a variant form. What translator do they butcher with their criticism? Let them ask the Hebrews and judge the fidelity of my translation on the basis of their authority. It is quite a different matter, if with eyes shut (as the saying goes), they want to speak ill of me and not follow the example of the Greeks in their application to study and goodwill. When the Gospel of Christ was already shining brightly, after they had read the Septuagint translators, the Greeks attentively read the Jewish and Ebonite translators of the old Law, that is, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. Through the labors of Origen in his Hexapla, the Greeks caused these three to be used for ecclesiastical purposes. How much more ought speakers of Latin be grateful for having discovered that Greece in her exultation borrows something from herself!

First of all, it is very expensive and infinitely difficult to procure possession of all the versions. Secondly, even those who own them but are ignorant of the Hebrew language will make all the more mistakes, being unable to determine which reading out of the many is more correct. In fact this is what happened recently among the Greeks to a certain one of their wisest men. The result was that in some instances he disregarded the sense of Scripture and followed the mistake of some translator. However, as I have at least a little bit of knowledge about the Hebrew language and am not at all without facility in Latin, I am better able than others to make decisions and render things as I myself understand them in our language. And so, even though the serpent hisses ”and victorious Sinon is scattering firebrands,” with the help of Christ my voice shall never be silenced; even with a severed tongue I shall manage to stammer out something. Those who want to read my edition should do so; those who do not should put it aside. If they pick apart the writing, if they find fault with the letters, by your charity I shall be more provoked to apply myself to study than be discouraged by their detraction and hatred.

1 Translated by Mark DelCogliano from B. Fischer, et al., eds., Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem, 4 ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 638-639.

Jerome's preface to his translation of Ezra was written c. 394 to Domnio, a Roman presbyter (see Jerome, Eps. 47.3 and 50), and Rogatianus, of whom nothing is known. 2 Jerome generally speaks in the first person singular ("I, me"). He exceptionally uses the first person plural ("we, us"), which instances are nevertheless rendered in the first person singular for the sake of consistency. These exceptions are, however, footnoted. 3 Lit. "we write." 4 Ps 119:2. 5 Lit. "whatever is translated by us." 6 Sallust, Iug. 3. 7 Lit. "the book edited by us." 8 There were several different books which circulated in antiquity under the name of Ezra (or Esdras). The books which the RSV calls Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book in Hebrew, called Ezra. The division of the original Ezra into two books was a later development. The Latin and Greek traditions, however, each have four Ezra books, called Esdras A-D (Greek) and I-IV Esdras (Latin). The RSV Ezra corresponds to Esdras B and I Esdras, while RSV Nehemiah to Esdras C and II Esdras. Jerome's Ezra contained both I and II Esdras in a single book, in imitation of the Hebrew. Esdras A and III Esdras corresponds to what the RSV calls 1 Esdras; it sequentially consists of (1) 2 Chronicles 35:1-36:23 (summarized), (2) Ezra 1:1-4:24, (3), additions, (4) Ezra 5:1-10:44, and (5) Nehemiah 7:38-9:12. The RSV's 2 Esdras, which is an apocryphal apocalypse from the Christian period, corresponds to Esdras D and IV Esdras. Jerome here explicitly denies canonicity to III and IV Esdras.

9 Jerome's project of translating the scriptures from the Hebrew was continually challenged by those who appealed to the authority of the Septuagint as the basis for deciding questions of canonicity. Jerome is here attempting to convince his readers to follow the Hebrew tradition by undercutting the reliability of the Septuagint text in two ways: (1) its variety, and (2) its lack of Old Testament passages quoted as such in the New Testament. 10 Mt 2:23; cf. Jg 13:5. 11 Mt 2:15; cf. Hos 11:1. 12 Jn 19:37; cf. Zech 12:10. 13 Lit. "we shall reserve." 14 Lit. "the editions we recently did." 15 N.b. Jerome is about to defend his methodology. 16 I.e. whatever in the Greek text varied from the Hebrew text. 17 I.e. the Greeks were not content with the older Septuagint translation, but produced newer translations from the Hebrew original in the manner of the Septuagint translators. Latin speakers should be inspired by their scholarly example.

18 I.e. the Greek versions which differ from each other. 19 Lit. "as we have." 20 Lit. "we are better able." 21 I.e. about the correct reading from among the variants. 22 Lit. "as we ourselves understand." 23 Vergil, Aen. 2.329 This text was translated and placed in the public domain by Mark DelCogliano, 2004. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely.

Ezra

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE OF EUSEBIUS HIERONYMUS TO THE BOOK OF EZRA

Whether it may be more difficult to do or not to do what you have requested, I have not yet established. For it is also not my desire to refuse your commands, and the greatness of weight imposed thus press upon the neck, so that before a falling under the bundle, there might rather be a lightening (of the load). The efforts of the envious agree with this, who consider all that I write reproof, with conscience occasionally fighting against them, publicly tearing apart what they read secretly, to such a degree that I am compelled to cry out and to say: ”O Lord, free my soul from crooked lips and a false tongue” (Ps 119.2). It is the third year that you always write and write again, that I might translate the book of Ezra for you from Hebrew, as though you do not have the Greek and Latin scrolls, or whatever it is which is translated by us might not be something immediately spat upon by all. As a certain person says, ”For to strive without effort, and not to seek anything by wearying except hatred, is extreme insanity” (Sallust, Jugurtha 3). Therefore, I implore you, my dearest Domnius and Rogatian, that, keeping the reading private, you will not bring the book forth into the public, nor throw food to the fastidious, and you will avoid the pride of them who know only (how) to judge others, and themselves (know how) to do nothing. And if there are any of the brothers whom we do not displease, give the text to them, admonishing that they transcribe the Hebrew names, of which there is a great abundance in this book, separately and with intermediate spaces. For it will profit nothing to correct the book, without diligence being preserved in the correction of the copiers.

Neither should it disturb anyone that the book edited by us is one, nor should they be delighted by the dreams of the third and fourth books (which are) of the apocrypha, both because among the Hebrews the discourses of Ezra and Nehemiah are confined to one scroll, and those things which are not found among them, nor are of the twenty-four elders, are for throwing away. And if anyone sets the (version of the) Seventy interpreters before you, the variety of the texts of which shows them torn and perverted, nor indeed can it be asserted truth is diverse, send him to the

Gospels, in which are set down many things as though from the Old Testament, things which are not found among the Seventy interpreters, like this: ”He will be called a Nazarene,” and ”From Egypt I have called my son,” and ”They will look on him whom they have pierced” and many other things which we are saving for a more extensive work, and ask of him where they might be written, and when he has not been able to reveal (where), you must read from these texts which recently were edited by us, daily pierced by the tongues of the slanderous.

But so that I might come to a shortcut, certainly what I will introduce is the most reasonable. I have given, in what is translated by me, anything that is not found in the Greek or is found otherwise (than there). Which interpreter do they mangle? They may ask the Hebrews and their authors, whether they accept or reject the sense of my translation. Furthermore, it is another thing if, as is said, with eyes closed they want to slander me and not imitate the study and goodwill of the Greeks, who, after the Seventy translators, with the Gospel of Christ now shining, they both attentively read the Jewish and Ebionite interpreters of the Old Law, namely Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, and have also dedicated (them) to the churches, through the labor of Origen in the Hexapla. How much more should Latins be grateful, having understood that the joy of Greece is to borrow anything from itself (?). For firstly, it is of great expense and of infinite difficulty to be able to have all of the texts; then also, those who have (them) and are ignorant of the Hebrew words will err more, not knowing which ones of the many will have said the truth. Which thing also happened recently to a certain very wise man among the Greeks, so that occasionally leaving the sense of the Scriptures, the error of some particular translator was followed.

And we, who at least have a little knowledge of the Hebrew tongue, and our Latin does not lack style in any way, are both better able than others to judge, and to express those things of them which we understand in our language. Therefore, even if a serpent hisses, ”and the victor Sinon throws burning torches,” with Christ helping, my speech will never be silenced, for (even my) severed tongue will stutter (something). Those who will, may read; those who won’t, may throw away. They may scatter (? the writings; they may slander the letters. Much more by your love will I be provoked toward study, rather than be deterred by their detraction and hatred.

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Genesis

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE OF SAINT JEROME THE PRESBYTER ON THE PENTATEUCH I have received the desired letters of my Desiderius, who in a foretelling of things to happen has obtained with Daniel a certain name [see Vulgate Daniel 9.23: quia vir desideriorum es tu, ”for you are a man of desires”], beseeching that I might hand over to our hearers a translation of the Pentateuch in the Latin tongue from the Hebrew words. Certainly a dangerous work, open to the barkings of detractors, who accuse me of insult to the Seventy to prepare a new interpretation from the old ones, thus approving ability (or ”genius”) like wine. As has very often been testified by me, I, for my part, am able to offer a portion in the Tabernacle of God, without the riches (or ”abilities”) of one being damaged by the poverties of others.

But that I may have dared, the effort of Origen provoked me, who mixed the translation of Theodotion to the ancient edition, with asterisk and obelus, that is, star and spit, a work distinguishing everything, while he either makes to shine those things which were previously lacking, or he slays and pierces through everything superfluous. And especially by the authority of the Evangelists and the Apostles, in which we read many things from the Old Testament which are not found in our books, as it is (with): ”Out of Egypt I have called My Son,” and ”For He shall be called a Nazarene,” and ”They will look on Him Whom they have pierced,” and ”Rivers of living waters shall flow from his belly,” and ”Things which no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has arisen in the heart of man, which God has prepared for those loving Him,” and many others which are desiring a proper context (or ”book” [Jerome uses a Greek word here: συνταγμα]).

Therefore let us ask them where these are written, and when they are unable to say, we may produce them from the Hebrew books. The first witness is in Hosea, the second in Isaiah, the third in Zechariah, the fourth in Proverbs, the fifth is also in Isaiah, of which many are ignorant, the follies of apocrypha being followed, preferring Iberian dirges to authentic books. The cause of the error is not for me to explain. The Jews say it was done wisely in deliberation, so Ptolemy, the worshipper of one god, might not yet discover a double divinity with the Hebrews;

he made them (do so) chiefly for this reason, because he was seen to fall into the dogma of Plato. Accordingly, wherever anything sacred in Scripture is witnessed of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, they are either translated otherwise, or they have passed over all in silence, so they might both satisfy the king, and might not divulge the secret of the Faith.

And I don't know who was the first author to construct with his lying the seventy cells in Alexandria, into which were divided those who wrote, with Aristeas the champion [another Greek word: υπερασπιστης] of the same Ptolemy, and many after the time of Josephus having reported no such thing, but rather (for them) to have gathered in groups, writing in one basilica, (and) not to have prophesied. For it is one thing to be a seer, another to be an interpreter. In that one the Spirit predicts things to come; in this one by his learning and abundance of words he translates those things he has understood. Unless Tullius (Cicero) is understood to have translated, by inspiration of the spirit of rhetoric, the Economics of Xenophon, the Protagoras of Plato, and the For Ctesiphon by Demosthenes. Or the Holy Spirit wove together the witnesses of these books one way through the Seventy interpreters and another way through the Apostles, so that what they passed over in silence, what was written by these was invented [? - obscure].

Therefore, what? We condemn the ancients? By no means! But after those earlier in the House of God, we work at what we can. They are interpreted before the coming of Christ and what they didn't know, they tranlated in ambiguous (or "uncertain") sentences. We write after His Passion and Resurrection, not so much prophecy as history. For in the one are told what things were heard, in the other what were seen. What we understand better, we also translate better. Hear, therefore, O rival; listen, O detractor! I do not condemn, I do not censure the Seventy, but I confidently prefer the Apostles to all of them. Christ speaks to me through their mouth, who I read were placed before the prophets among the Spiritual gifts, among which interpreters hold almost the last place. Why are you tortured by spite? Why do you incite ignorant souls against me? If anywhere in the translation I have been seen by you to err, ask the Hebrews. Consult the teachers of the many different cities. What theirs have of Christ, yours do not have. It is another matter if they have afterward removed the testimonies used by the Apostles against them, and the Latin copies are more correct than the Greek, (and) the Greek than the Hebrew! Truth is against these enviers.

Now I pray you, dearest Desiderius, so that in such a great work which you have made me undertake and take up a beginning from Genesis, you might help in (your) prayers, how I might, by the same Spirit by Whom the books were written, be able to translate them into Latin words. END OF THE PROLOGUE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published online and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public

domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode. Kevin introduced the text as follows: I've decided to translate next all the prologues contained in the Vulgate, which were written by Jerome except for the Prologue to Paul's Letters, apparently. I have previously translated Jerome's Prologue to the Gospels, which included a discussion of the Eusebian canon table system used in the Gospels, in the earliest of my web pages. This translation of the Prologue to the Pentateuch is just a first draft, of course. Once I've finished all the prologues, I'll probably have a better grasp on some of the peculiarities of Jerome's language and be able to fix some of these renderings which I wasn't so sure of here. So, this isn't written in stone, obviously, but I also beg the reader's indulgence, now and in the future, for any peculiarities, particularly if you're familiar with the Latin versions.

Gospels

Jerome, Letter to Pope Damasus: Preface to the Gospels

PREFACE TO THE GOSPELS
BEGINNING OF THE PREFACE FOR THE GOSPELS OF SAINT JEROME THE PRESBYTER To the blessed Pope Damasus, from Jerome,

You urge me to make a new work from the old, and that I might sit as a kind of judge over the versions of Scripture dispersed throughout the whole world, and that I might resolve which among such vary, and which of these they may be which truly agree with the Greek. Pious work, yet perilous presumption, to change the old and aging language of the world , to carry it back to infancy, for to judge others is to invite judging by all of them. Is there indeed any learned or unlearned man, who when he picks up the volume in his hand, and takes a single taste of it, and sees what he will have read to differ, might not instantly raise his voice, calling me a forger, proclaiming me now to be a sacrilegious man, that I might dare to add, to change, or to correct anything in the old books? Against such infamy I am consoled by two causes: that it is you, who are the highest priest, who so orders, and truth is not to be what might vary, as even now I am vindicated by the witness of slanderers. If indeed faith is administered by the Latin version, they might respond by which, for they are nearly as many as the books!

If, however, truth is to be a seeking among many, why do we not now return to the Greek originals to correct those mistakes which either through faulty translators were set forth, or through confident but unskilled were wrongly revised, or through sleeping scribes either were added or were changed? Certainly, I do not discuss the Old Testament, which came from the Seventy Elders in the Greek language, changing in three steps until it arrived with us . Nor do I seek what Aquila, or what Symmachus may think, or why Theodotion may walk the middle of the road between old and new. This may be the true translation which the Apostles have approved. I now speak of the New Testament, which is undoubtedly Greek, except the Apostle Matthew, who had first set forth the Gospel of Christ in Hebrew letters in Judea. This (Testament) certainly differs in our language, and is led in the way of different streams; it is necessary to seek the single fountainhead. I pass over

those books which are called by the name of Lucian and Hesychius, for which a few men wrongly claim authority, who anyway were not allowed to revise either in the Old Instrument after the Seventy Translators, or to pour out revisions in the New; with the Scriptures previously translated into the languages of many nations, the additions may now be shown to be false.

Therefore, this present little preface promises only the four Gospels, the order of which is Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, revised in comparison with only old Greek books. They do not disagree with many familiar Latin readings, as we have kept our pen in control, but only those in which the sense will have been seen to have changed (from the Greek) are corrected; the rest remain as they have been.

We have also copied the lists which Eusebius the bishop of Caesarea, following Ammonius of Alexandria, set out in ten numbers, as they are had in the Greek, so that if any may then wish through diligence to make known what in the Gospels may be either the same, or similar, or singular, he may learn their differences. This is great, since indeed error has sunk into our books; while concerning the same thing, one Evangelist has said more, into another they have added because they thought it inferior; or while another has differently expressed the same sense, whichever one of the four he had read first, he will revise the other to the version he values most. Whence it happened how in our time that all have been mixed; in Mark are many things of Luke, and even of Matthew; turned backwards in Matthew are many things of John and of Mark, yet in the remaining others, they are found to be correct. When, therefore, you will have read the lists which are attached below, the confusion of errors is removed, and you will know all the similar passages, and the singular ones, wherever you may turn to. In the first list, the four agree, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; in the second, three, Matthew, Mark, John; in the third, three, Matthew, Luke, John; in the fourth, three, Matthew, Mark, John; in the fifth, two, Matthew, Luke; in the sixth, two, Matthew, Mark; in the seventh, two, Matthew, John; in the eighth, two, Luke, Mark;

in the ninth, two, Luke, John; in the tenth some peculiar ones are given which the others don’t have. Separately in the Gospels are numbered sections of unequal length, beginning with one and increasing to the end of the books. This is written before the passage in black, and it has under it a red number, which shows to which of the ten (lists) to proceed, with the first number to be sought in the list. Therefore, when the book is open, for example, if you will wish to know of this or that chapter in which list they may be, you will immediately be shown by the lower number. Returning to the beginning (of the book) in which the different lists are brought together, and immediately finding the same lists by the title in front, by that same number which you had sought in the Evangelist, which you will find marked in the inscription, you may also view other similar passages, the numbers of which you may note there. And when you know them, you will return to the single volumes,

and immediately finding the number which you will have noted before, you will learn the places in which either the same things or similar things were said.

I wish that in Christ you may be well, and that you will remember me, most blessed Pope. END OF THE PREFACE FOR THE GOSPELS OF SAINT JEROME THE PRESBYTER

Isaiah

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE OF JEROME TO THE PROPHET ISAIAH No one, when he will have seen the Prophets to be written in verses, would think them to be bound in meter among the Hebrews, and to have anything in common with the Psalms or the works of Solomon. But what is customary to be used in Demosthenes and Cicero, as they are written in words with divisions, who certainly wrote prose and not in verses, we also, providing ease of reading, have divided a new translation with a new kind of writing. And first, knowing of Isaiah what is presented in his speech, certainly as a man noble and of urbane elegance he does not have anything of rusticity mixed into (his) speech. For this reason it happens that in comparison with others the translation was not able to preserve the flower of his speech. And then adding this, that it is being spoken not only by a prophet, but by an evangelist. For thus all the mysteries of Christ and the Church are pursued to clarity, so that you would not think them to be prophesied of the future, but they covered the history of things past. For this reason I suppose the Seventy interpreters to have been unwilling at that that time to set forth clearly for the gentiles the sacraments of their faith, not throwing holy things to dogs or pearls to swine, which things, when you will have read this edition, you will note were hidden by them.

Nor am I unaware of how much work it is to understand the Prophets, or for anyone not to be easily able to judge from the translation, unless he will have before understood those things which he will have read, and we to suffer from the bites of many, who, being goaded by jealousy, what they are not able to follow, they despise. Therefore, knowing and being wise, I place my hand in the fire, and nevertheless I pray this for the scornful readers: that just as the Greeks after the Seventy translators read Aquila and Symmachus and Theodotion, either for study of their doctrines or so that they better understand the Seventy through their collation, that these are deemed worthy to have at least one translator after the earlier ones. Reading first and afterward despising, they are seen not to condemn by judgment, but rather by the ignorant presumption of hatred.

And Isaiah prophesied in Jerusalem and Judea when the ten tribes had not yet been led into captivity, and the oracle covered both kingdoms, now together, now separately. And while he sometimes looks at present history, and indicated the return of the people to Judea after the Babylonian captivity, yet is all his concern for the calling of the nations and for the coming of Christ. Who, how much the more you love, O Paula and Eustochium, the more strive for him, so that for the present disparagement, by which the envious incessantly tear me into pieces, the same One may restore a reward to me in the future, Who knows me to have exerted myself in the learning of foreign languages: the Jews might not jump all day on the errors of the Scriptures in His Church. END OF THE PROLOGUE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode.

Kevin introduces his translation as follows: St Jerome’s preface here to Isaiah is very interesting for its mention of the way in which he wrote it out: with spaces between the words. While this is natural for us, it was not the way writing was done in those days. The addition of the spaces was also mentioned in his prologue to Chronicles, where it was especially necessary to keep separate all the many Hebrew names in transliteration, which Latins and Greeks were always mixing up, not knowing Hebrew. His mention of the prophecies of Isaiah covering ”all the mysteries of Christ and the Church” is entirely intriguing, and it would be nice to have had more on that subject, but here we are. Enjoy!

Jeremiah

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE OF JEROME TO THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH The Prophet Jeremiah, for whom this prologue is written, was seen among the Hebrews to be certainly more rustic in style than Isaiah and Hosea and certain other prophets, but equal in meanings, which the same Spirit obviously prophesied. Furthermore, his simplicity of speech happened from the place in which he was born. For he was from Anathoth, which is up to today a village three miles distant from Jerusalem, a priest from priests and sanctified in his mother's womb, dedicating with her virginity a man of the Gospel to the Church of Christ. This boy began to prophesy the captivity of the city and Judea both not only by the Spirit, but also with eyes of flesh. The Assyrians had already transferred the ten tribes of Israel, and now colonies of gentiles had taken possession of their lands. For this reason he prophesied only in Judah and Benjamin, and he lamented the ruins of his city in a fourfold alphabet, which we have presented in the measure of the meter and in verses. Besides this, the order of visions, which is entirely confused among the Greeks and Latins, we have corrected to the original truth. And the Book of Baruch, his scribe, which is neither read nor found among the Hebrews, we have omitted, standing ready, because of these things, for all the curses from the jealous, to whom it is necessary for me to respond through a separate short work. And I suffer because you think this. Otherwise, for the benefit of the wicked, it was more proper to set a limit for their rage by my silence, rather than any new things written to provoke daily the insanity of the envious.

END OF THE PROLOGUE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode. Kevin introduces his translation as follows: A couple of notes on this prologue by St Jerome to Jeremiah are in order. He mentions that Jeremiah "lamented the ruins of his city in fourfold alphabet," civitatis suae ruinas quadruplici plaxit alfabeto. This is a reference to the acrostic first four chapters of Lamentations, in which each verse begins with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, thus "in a fourfold alphabet." Another perhaps puzzling reference just after

that is to his presenting the book ”in the measure of the meter and in verses.” This refers to his breaking the verses into separate lines based upon metrical measurements, probably according to the Hebrew, and written with separation of verses and words. Basically think of the way that poetry is printed today, in short lines that take no notice of the width of the page, and that’s what he’s describing. If I find a picture of one of the early Vulgate manuscripts reflecting this, I’ll post it. St Jerome also mentions a confusion of the order of the visions in Jeremiah as known among the Greeks and Latins. This refers to the very different (and probably original) arrangment of the prophecies as found in the Septuagint and is supported by a Dead Sea Scroll fragment, so we know that there were Hebrew manuscripts with this order, which Jerome did not. Anyhow, in the meantime, enjoy yet another prologue. There aren’t many left now! Once I’ve done all of them, I’ll go back through to edit them and then post them all on a single page, with notes and such.

Jerome’s notes to the additions to Esther

[by Kevin P. Edgecomb] I mentioned the Additions to the Book of Esther in the post Jerome’s Prologue to Esther, above (well, below, actually). These additions are usually found in translations of the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonicals, and are designated as follows, with citations for the the Hebrew text of Esther interspersed where it occurs in italics: Addition A: Vulgate 11.2-12.6 Hebrew 1.1-2.18 Addition B: Vulgate 13.1-7 Hebrew 3.14-4.17 Addition C: Vulgate 13.8-18; 14.1-19 Addition D: Vulgate 15.4-19 (often renumbered in other versions as 15.1-16; Vulgate 15.1-3 is not generally translated in such collections) Hebrew 5.3-8.12 Addition E: Vulgate 16.1-24 Hebrew 8.13-10.3 Addition F: Vulgate 10.4-13; 11.1 In the Septuagint, the text is essentially as described above, with the additions interspersed with the rest of the book (see the NRSV Apocrypha Esther for this in translation). But St Jerome, in his new Latin edition of Esther, moved all the additions to the end of the book. And since it was the Vulgate Bible which was the first one to have both chapter and verse numbers, we’re stuck with the peculiar numbering due to that dislocation. One of the interesting things I noticed in looking at these is that there are a few notes that St Jerome had written in these Addition chapters. I’m translating them and posting them here just for fun. I use the Addition A-F convention noted above to show the placement of the notes.

Before Addition A: This was also the beginning in the common edition, which is found neither in the Hebrew nor among any other translations. After Addition A: Up to here is the proem. Before Addition B: These which follow are set in the place where it is written in the scroll ”and they plundered their goods” or ”their substance,” which we find only in the common edition. After Addition B: Up to here is the text of the letter. Before C: These which follow I have found written after the place where it is read ”and hurrying, Mordechai did everything which Esther had commanded him,” yet they are not found in the Hebrew and are not found inside any other translations. Before 15.1: These also I found added to the common edition. Before D: And also these too, which are below. Before E: The text of the letter of King Artaxerxes, which he sent on behalf of the Jews to all the provinces

of his kingdom, which also is not itself found in the Hebrew scroll. Before F: Those things which are found in the Hebrew I have expressed with complete accuracy. And these things which follow I have found written in the common edition in which are contained the language and letters of the Greeks, and sometimes after the end of the book this chapter is found, which, according to our custom, we annotate with an obelus, that is, a spit.

Something that might not be immediately obvious is that the section "Before F" just above is actually a tripartite note. First, it comprises a conclusion to St Jerome's translation of the Hebrew Book of Esther: "Those things which are found in the Hebrew I have expressed with complete accuracy." Second is an introduction to all the additions, which by his arrangement follow just after this point: "And these things which follow I have found written in the common edition in which are contained the language and letters of the Greeks." And third comes the introduction to the immediately following chapter, which is the conclusion of the book in the Septuagint: "and sometimes after the end of the book this chapter is found, which, according to our custom, we annotate with an obelus, that is, a spit." This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode.

Job

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE OF SAINT JEROME TO THE BOOK OF JOB I am forced, through each of the books of Divine Scripture, to respond to the slander of adversaries who accuse my translation of rebuking the Seventy translators, not as though among the Greeks Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion had also translated either word for word, or meaning for meaning, or by mixing both together, also a kind of translation of equal proportion, and also Origen had divided all the scrolls of the Old Instrument with obeli and asterisks which, either added by him or taken from Theodotion, he added to the ancient translation, proving what was added to have been lacking. Therefore my detractors should learn to accept in full what they have accepted in part, or to erase my translation along with their asterisks. For it should not be, that those who they accepted to have omitted many things may not be acknowledged to have certainly erred in some things, especially in Job, in which if you will have removed those things which are added under the asterisks, the greater part will be cut off. And this is only among the Greeks. Otherwise, among the Latins, before their translation which we recently edited under asterisks and obeli, almost seven hundred or eight hundred verses are (missing), so that the book, shortened and cut up and eaten away, shows its deformity publicly to readers.

And this translation follows no translator of the ancients, but will rather convey from the speech itself (which is) Hebrew and Arabic and sometimes Syrian, now words, now meanings, now both together. For even among the Hebrews the whole book is considered oblique and slippery and what the Greek rhetors call figuratively arranged (εσχηματισμενος), and while one thing is said, it does another, as if you would hold tightly an eel or a little murena fish, when you press harder, then the sooner it escapes. I remember I paid not a little money toward understanding of this scroll, for an instructor from Lydda who among the Hebrews was thought to have first rank, with whose teaching I know not whether I accomplished anything; this one thing I know: for me not to have been able to translate anything that I didn’t know before.

Therefore, from the beginning to the words of Job, among the Hebrews the speech is prose. Next, from the words of Job in which he says, ”May the day perish in which I was born, and the night in which it was said: A man is conceived,” to that place, where it is written before the end of the scroll: ”Therefore I accuse myself and make repentance in dust and ashes,” the verses are in hexameter, running in dactyl and spondee and, according to the idiom of the language, also accepting numerous other (poetic) feet not of the same (number of) syllables, but of the same intervals. Sometimes also, by breaking the law of (poetic metrical) numbers, the rhythm itself is found sweet and ringing, which is understood better by prosodists than by a simple reader. And from the verse mentioned above to the end of the book, the small section that remains continues with prose speech. If that seems unbelievable to anyone, namely that among the Hebrews there are meters, and either the Psalter or the Lamentation of Jermiah or almost all the songs of the Scriptures are to be understood in the manner of our Flaccus and the Greek Pindar and Alkaios and Sappho, let him read Philo, Josephus, Origen, and Eusebius of Caesarea, and by their testimony he will prove me to speak the truth.

For which reason, let my dogs therefore hear me to have labored at this scroll, not as rebuking the ancient translation, but rather so those things in it which are either obscure or missing or certainly corrupted by the error of scribes may be made more clear by our translation, who have both learned Hebrew speech in part, and also in Latin, almost from our cradle we were worn out (?) among grammarians and rhetors and philosophers. But if among the Greeks, after the edition of the Seventy, with the Gospel of Christ shining, the Jew Aquila, and Symmachus and Theodotion, judaizing heretics, are accepted, who have hidden many mysteries of the Savior by sly translation, and yet are found in the Hexapla among the churches and are explained by men of the Church, how much more should I, a Christian of Christian parents and bearing the standard of the cross on my forehead, whose study was to recover the missing, to correct the corrupted, and to open the sacraments of the Church with pure and faithful speech, not be rejected by either disdainful or by malicious readers? Let whoever will to keep the old books, either written on purple skins with gold and silver, or in uncial letters, as they commonly say, loads of writing rather than books, while they leave to me and mine to have poor little leaves and not such beautiful books as correct ones. Each edition, the Seventy according to the Greeks and mine according to the Hebrews, was translated into Latin by my labor. May each one choose what he will, and prove himself studious rather than malevolent.

END OF THE PROLOGUE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode. Kevin adds: The third paragraph includes some information on metric poetry which is probably pretty obscure to most readers, as the language of

metric poetry, indeed the composition of such poetry itself, is no longer so common. If anyone is puzzled by the language of ”dactyl” and ”spondee” and ”feet,” see the very helpful article on Dactylic Hexameter on Wikipedia. Also, in the beginning of the last paragraph, St Jerome refers to ”my dogs.” He is not describing pets, but referring rather insultingly to his detractors, who he elsewhere describes as ”barking” and so on.

Joshua

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PREFACE OF SAINT JEROME TO THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

Having finally finished with the Pentateuch of Moses, as though freed for a great advantage, we set (our) hand to Jesus son of Nave, who the Hebrews call Joshua ben Nun, that is, Joshua son of Nun, and to the book of Judges, which they call Sopthim, to Ruth also and Esther, which they extol by the same names. And I admonish the reader, that he, being careful with Scripture, might preserve the forest of Hebrew names and (their) separations divided into parts, so that our work and his effort might not be wasted. And that in the first place, which I often testify, let him know me not to coin the new in rebuke of the old, as though my friends are accused, but rather to offer, for my part, to men of my language, those things of ours which still delight, like the copies of the Hexapla for the Greeks, which require great expense and work, so they might have our edition, and anywhere the readings of the ancient scrolls are doubtful, comparing this this to them, they might find what they seek, especially when among the Latins there are as many versions as there are books, and everyone has, according to his own judgment, either added or subtracted whatever seemed right to him, and he indeed may not have been able to be certain what differed.

From which may scorpion cease to rise against me with bow-like wound, and poisoned tongue desist from slandering a holy work, either accepting, if it has pleased, or condemning, if it has displeased, and remember these verses: ”Your mouth has abounded in malice, and your tongue constructed deceits; sitting, you have spoken against your brother, and against the son of your mother imposed a scandal. These things you have done and I was quiet; you wrongly thought that I might be like you: I will accuse you and stand before your face” [Psalm 49.19-21]. For what advantage is it to the listener for us to sweat at work and to work at criticizing others, for Jews to lament that the opportunity has been taken away from them for falsely accusing and insulting Christians, and for men of the Church to despise, indeed to tear apart, that from which enemies are tortured. If only what is old in the interpretation pleases them, which things are also not displeasing to me, and they think of

receiving nothing further, why are they reading or not reading those things which are either added or cut out by the asterisks and obeli? For what reason have the churches accepted the translation of Daniel by Theodotion? Why are Origen and Eusebius Pamphilou admired for having treated entire editions similarly? Or what foolishness was it, after they had spoken true things, to set forth things which are false?

And from where in the New Testament are they able to prove the received testimonies, which are not supported in the books of the Old (Testament)? Thus, we say, I may be seen to be not altogether quiet to accusers.

Otherwise, after the falling asleep of Paula, whose life is an example of virtue, and these books, which I was not able to deny to Eustochium the virgin of Christ, we have decided ”while spirit yet rules these limbs” to incline to the explanation of the Prophets, and to resume, in a kind of return home, a work long unfinished, especially when the admirable and holy man Pammachius demands the same in letters, and we, hurrying on to the homeland, need to pass by the deadly songs of the sirens with deaf ear. END OF THE PROLOGUE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode. Kevin introduced the text as follows: This one was tough because of some quite peculiar sentences, which I think I’ve pretty much figured out now. I don’t think there’s any English translation of this one around, certainly not one in my possession, so I didn’t have one as a ”cheat sheet” when I got stuck, which is good for my Latin, but not for my schedule.... Many thanks especially to Michael Gilleland (of Laudator Temporis Acti fame!) for puzzling over a certain ambiguous scriptura with me! UPDATE: I’ve changed a couple of sentences with Michael Gilleland’s input. Several formerly questionable renderings are now resolved. Huzzah!

Judith v2

St. Jerome, The Preface on the Book of Judith: English translation [Translated by Andrew S. Jacobs]

THE PREFACE OF JEROME ON THE BOOK OF JUDITH

Among the Jews, the book of Judith is considered among the apocrypha; its warrant for affirming those [apocryphal texts] which have come into dispute is deemed less than sufficient. Moreover, since it was written in the Chaldean language, it is counted among the historical books. But since the Nicene Council is considered to have counted this book among the number of sacred Scriptures, I have acquiesced to your request (or should I say demand!): and, my other work set aside, from which I was forcibly restrained, I have given a single night's work , translating according to sense rather than verbatim. I have hacked away at the excessively error-ridden panoply of the many codices; I conveyed in Latin only what I could find expressed coherently in the Chaldean words. Receive the widow Judith, example of chastity, and with triumphant praise acclaim her with eternal public celebration. For not only for women, but even for men, she has been given as a model by the one who rewards her chastity, who has ascribed to her such virtue that she conquered the unconquered among humanity, and surmounted the insurmountable.

Footnotes

Judith

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE TO JUDITH Among the Hebrews the Book of Judith is found among the Hagiographa, the authority of which toward confirming those which have come into contention is judged less appropriate. Yet having been written in Chaldean words, it is counted among the histories. But because this book is found by the Nicene Council to have been counted among the number of the Sacred Scriptures, I have acquiesced to your request, indeed a demand, and works having been set aside from which I was forcibly curtailed, I have given to this (book) one short night's work translating more sense from sense than word from word. I have removed the extremely faulty variety of the many books; only those which I was able to find in the Chaldean words with understanding intact did I express in Latin ones. Receive the widow Judith, an example of chastity, and declare triumphal honor with perpetual praises for her. For this one, imitable not only for women, but also for men, has the Rewarder of her chastity given, Who has granted such strength, that she conquered the one unconquered by all men, she surpassed the insurpassable.

END OF THE PROLOGUE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode. Kevin introduces his translation as follows: In this preface, too, St Jerome makes mention of the authority of the Church, in this case literally the famous First Ecumenical Council of Nicea, as declaring Judith among the books of Holy Scripture. In fact, he also mentions that "among the Hebrews" the book was considered as among the "Hagiographa," some would say a somewhat flexible term, which in the previous prologue (to Tobias), he certainly seems to have equated with the Scriptures. If this is the case, then at one point in history, in the late 4th century, Judith was considered by at least some Jews in Palestine to have been Scripture. He does, however, in that very first sentence note that even though it is considered an "accepted" book, this is considered to have no bearing on the status of other books. Interesting. Enjoy!

Psalms (70)

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PREFACE OF EUSEBIUS HIERONYMUS TO THE BOOK OF PSALMS Not long ago while located in Rome, I emended the Psalter, and had corrected it, though cursorily, for the most part according to the (version of the) Seventy interpreters. Because you see it again, O Paula and Eustochium, corrupted by the error of the scribes, and the more ancient error to prevail rather than the new emendation, you urge that I work the land like some kind of field already ploughed, and uproot with sideways furrows the thorns being reborn, saying it is proper that what so frequently sprouts badly is just as frequently cut down. For this reason I remind by my usual preface, both you for whom this mighty work exerts itself, and those who would have copies of such, that those things to have been diligently emended might be transcribed with care and diligence. Each may himself note either a horizontal line or a radiant sign, that is, either an obelus or an asterisk, and wherever he sees a preceding virgule, from there to the two points which we have marked in, he knows more is to be found in the (version of the) Seventy interpreters; and where he has looked at the image of a star, he will have recognized an addition from the Hebrew scrolls, likewise up to the two points, only according to the edition of Theodotion who did not differ from the Seventy interpreters in simplicity of speech. I, knowing me to have done this for you and for each studious person, do not doubt there will be many who, either envious or arrogant, ”prefer to be seen to condemn the brilliant rather than to learn,” and to drink from a turbulent river much rather than from an entirely pure spring.

END OF THE PREFACE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode. Kevin introduces his translation as follows: St Jerome did two separate translations of the Psalms. One was simply a revision of the popular Old Latin psalms (which are still used in some older rites, most notably the Ambrosian, I recall), with reference to the Greek Psalms version in the Hexapla. This is the prologue to that edition of the Psalms. The other version, based directly on the Hebrew Psalms, will follow separately.

Psalms (Hebrew)

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF ANOTHER PREFACE OF THE SAME Eusebius Hieronymus to his Sophronius, health! I know some to think the Psalter to be divided into five books, as though wherever among the (version of the) Seventy interpreters is written γενοιτο γενοιτο, that is, ”may it be, may it be,” for which in Hebrew is said ”amen amen,” is the end of the books. And we, the authority of the Hebrews being followed, and especially of the Apostles, who always in the New Testament name the Book of Psalms, have asserted one volume. We also testify of all the authors who are set down in the titles of their psalms, namely of David, and of Asaph, and of Jeduthun, of the Sons of Korah, of Heman the Ezraite, of Moses, and of Solomon, and of the rest, which Ezra compiled into one volume. For if amen, for which Aquila translated ”trustworthy” (πεπιστωμενος), is only placed at the end of books and not sometimes wither at the beginning or at the end of either words or sentences, then both the Savior never said in the Gospel, ”Amen, amen, I say to you,” and the letters of Paul (never) contained it in the middle work, also Moses, and Jeremiah, and others in this way had many books, who in the middle of their books frequently interposed amen, as also the number of twenty-two Hebrew books and the mystery of the same number will be changed. For also its Hebrew title, Sephar Thallim, which is interpreted ”Scroll of Hymns,” agreeing with the Apostolic authority, shows not many books, but one volume.

Therefore, because recently, when disputing with a Hebrew, you produced certain testimonies about the Lord Savior from the Psalms, and he, wishing to outmaneuver you, asserted throughout nearly every one of the words that it is not found thus in Hebrew, so that you were opposed to the (version of the) Seventy interpreters, you most zealously demanded that, after Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion, I translated a new edition in Latin speech. For you said yourself to be greatly confused by the variety of interpreters, so that you are inclined by love to be content with either my translation or my judgment. For this reason, having been compelled by you, to whom I am unable to deny even those things I cannot do, I again handed myself over to the barkings of detractors, and I preferred you to question my strengths rather than my willingness in friendship. Certainly I will speak confidently and I will cite many witnesses of this work, knowing me in this matter to have changed

nothing of the truth of the Hebrew. Therefore, wherever my edition has differed from the old ones, ask any of the Hebrews, and you will clearly see me to be torn in pieces by those striving after error, who ”prefer to be seen to condemn the brilliant rather than to learn,” most perverse men. For when they always desire new delicacies, and their gullets, like the seas, do not suffice, why in only study of the Scriptures are they content with an old flavor? I do not say this so that I might bite my predecessors, nor have I considered slandering any translation of those which I very diligently corrected, (and) formerly gave to men of my language; but that it is one thing to read the Psalms in the churches of those believing in Christ, another thing to answer the Jews who accuse every word.

But if, as you proffer, you will have translated by little work into Greek, Opposing the Ridiculers (αντιφιλονεικων τοις διασυρουσιν), and you will have made the most learned men witnesses to my ignorance, I will say to you that (saying) of Horace, ”You do not carry wood into a forest.” Except that I have this solace, if in the common work I know both praise and slander to be common to me and you. I desire you to be well in the Lord Jesus, and to remember me. END OF THE PREFACE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode. Kevin introduces his translation as follows: This is the preface St Jerome wrote to accompany his translation of the Psalms from the Hebrew. He apparently wasn’t too entirely sure of his success in this, as seems to be implied at a couple of points in this letter, which shows St Jerome to have had both a humble and a humorous streak which hasn’t been entirely evident in the other prefaces. I think it helps to put those into a better light, as well. Most interesting is what he says about this translation’s origins, as specifically designed to reflect the Hebrew for the sake of apologetics, while other translations have their place in being read in the churches. Of course, it’s the other version of the Psalms, based on the LXX, which were so popular and so ubiquitous before the modern craze of translating from Hebrew came along. St Jerome is explicit in that he wouldn’t have had a problem with that. Enjoy!

The ”Helmeted” introduction to Kings

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE OF SAINT JEROME TO THE BOOK OF KINGS

There are twenty-two letters among the Hebrews, as is also witnessed by the language of the Syrians and Chaldeans, which is for the most part similar to the Hebrew; for these twenty-two elements also have the same sound, but different characters. The Samaritans still write the Pentateuch of Moses in the same number of letters, only they differ in shapes and points (or ”endings” apicibus). And Ezra, the scribe and doctor of the Law, after the capture of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple under Zerubbabel, is certain to have found (or ”invented” repperisse) other letters, which we now use, when up to that time the characters of the Samaritans and the Hebrews were the same. In the book of Numbers this same total is also mystically shown by the census of the Levites and the priests. And we find in certain Greek scrolls to this day the four-lettered Name of God written in the ancient letters. But also the thirty-sixth Psalm, and the one hundred tenth, and the one hundred eleventh, and the one hundred eighteenth, and the one hundred forty-fourth, although written in different meter, are nevertheless woven with an alphabet of the same number. And in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and his prayer, also at the end of the Proverbs of Solomon from that place in which he says ”Who can find a strong woman? are counted the same alphabet or sections. Furthermore, five of the letters among them are double: chaph, mem, nun, phe, sade.

For they write with these one way at the beginning and in the middle of words, another at the end. From which also five are considered double books by most: Samuel, Malachim, Dabreiamin, Ezra, Jeremiah with Cinoth, that is, his Lamentantion. Therefore, just as there are twenty-two elements, by which we write in Hebrew all that we say, and the human voice is understood by their beginnings (or ”parts” initiis), thus twenty-two scrolls are counted, by which letters and writings a just man is instructed in the doctrine of God, as though in tender infancy and still nursing.

The first book is called among them Bresith, which we call Genesis; the second, Hellesmoth, which is named Exodus; the third, Vaiecra, that is Leviticus; the fourth Vaiedabber, which we call Numbers; the fifth, Addebarim, which is designated Deuteronomy. These are the five books of Moses, which they appropropriately call Thorat, that is, the Law. The second order is made of the Prophets, and begins with Jesus son of Nave, which is called among them Joshua benNum. Then they append Sopthim, that is the book of Judges; and they attach Ruth to the same, because the history narrated happened in the days of the Judges. Samuel follows third, which we call First and Second Kingdoms. Fourth is Malachim, that is Kings, which book contains Third and Fourth Kingdoms; and it is much better to say Malachim, that is Kings, rather than Malachoth, that is Kingdoms, for it does not describe the kingdoms of many nations, but only that of the Israelite people which contains twelve tribes. Fifth is Isaiah, sixth Jeremiah, seventh Ezekiel, eighth the book of the Twelve Prophets, which is called Thareasra among them.

The third order holds the Hagiographa, and begins with Job, the first book, the second by David, which is also one book of Psalms comprising five sections. The third is Solomon, having three books: Proverbs, which they call Parables, that is Masaloth, and Ecclesiastes, that is Accoeleth, and The Song of Songs, which they denote with the title Sirassirim. Sixth is Daniel, seventh Dabreiamin, that is Words of the Days, which we may call more clearly a chronicle (Gk here: χρονικον) of all of Divine history, which book is written among us as First and Second Paralipomenon; eighth is Ezra, which is also in the same manner among Greeks and Latins divided into two books; ninth is Esther. And thus there are likewise twenty-two books in the Old (Testament), that is five of Moses, eight of the Prophets, nine of the Hagiographa. Although some may write Ruth and Cinoth among the Hagiographa, and think of counting these books among their number, and then by this to have twenty-four books of the Old Law, which the Apocalypse of John introduces with the number of twenty-four elders worshipping the Lamb and offering their crowns, prostrated on their faces, and crying out with unwearying voice: ”Holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty, Who was and Who is, and Who will be.”

This prologue to the Scriptures may be appropriate as a helmeted introduction to all the books which we turn from Hebrew into Latin, so we may be able to know whatever is outside of these is set aside among the apocrypha. Therefore, Wisdom, which is commonly ascribed to Solomon, and the book of Jesus son of Sirach, and Judith and Tobias, and The Shepherd are not in the canon. I have found the First Book of the Maccabees (is) Hebrew, the Second is Greek, which may also be proven by their styles.

While these things may be so, I implore you, reader, that you might not consider my work a rebuke of the ancients. Each one offers to the Tabernacle of God what he is able. Some offer gold and silver and precious stones; others, linen and purple,

scarlet and blue. It will go well with us, if we offer the skins and hair of goats. For the Apostle still judges our more contemptible parts more necessary. From which both the whole of the beauty of the Tabernacle and each individual kind, a distinction of the present and future Church, is covered with skins and goat-hair coverings, and the heat of the sun and the harmful rain are kept off by those things which are of lesser value. Therefore, first read my Samuel and Kings; mine, I say, mine. For whatever we have learned and know by often translating and carefully correcting is ours. And when you come to understand what you did not know before, either consider me a translator, if you are grateful, or a paraphraser, if ungrateful, although I am truly not at all aware of anything of the Hebrew to have been changed by me. Certainly, if you are incredulous, read the Greek and Latin books and compare (them) with these little works, and wherever you will see among them to differ, ask any one of the Hebrews, in whom you might place better faith, and if he confirms us, I think that you will not consider him a diviner, as he has similarly divined in the very same place with me.

But I also ask you, handmaidens of Christ, who have anointed the head of your reclining Lord with the most precious myrrh of faith, who have in no way sought the Savior in the tomb, for whom Christ has now ascended to the Father, that you might oppose the shields of your prayers against the barking dogs which rage against me with rabid mouth and go around the city, and in it they are considered educated if slandering others. I, knowing my humility, will always remember these sentences: ”I will guard my ways, so I will not offend with my tongue; I have placed a guard on my mouth, while the sinner stands against me; I was mute, and humiliated, and silent because of good things.” END OF THE PROLOGUE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode.

Kevin introduced the text as follows: This is a translation of Jerome’s well-known ”helmeted introduction” (galeatum principium) to Kings (that is 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings) which is usually considered the most useful of his Old Testament introductions. It’s certainly the longest. Along with the usual defense against critics, Jerome includes an interesting arrangement of what he considers the canonical books of the Old Testament, which are 22 in number, just like the Hebrew alphabet. He mentions the tripartite arrangement of books in the Hebrew Bible as current among the Jews of his day, the earliest unambiguous description of this arrangement, including the actual names of the books in each category. I’ll revisit this one later and include some notes on the Hebrew words mentioned here and how the pronunciation, preserved perhaps imperfectly through the Latin manuscript tradition, differs from today’s typical Hebrew pronunciation. For now, though, I’m focusing on just getting all the prefaces translated in at least a first draft.

Enjoy!

The books of Solomon

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE OF JEROME TO THE BOOKS OF SOLOMON Jerome to Bishops Cromatius and Heliodorus. May the letter join those joined in priesthood. Indeed, a sheet may not divide those who the love of Christ has connected. You request commentaries on Hosea, Amos, Zechariah, and Malachi. I wrote, even if it cost through ill-health. You have sent the solace of expenses, by our scribes and copyist having been sustained, so that our genius exerts itself most strongly for you. And behold, from every side a diverse crowd of those demanding, as though it is equal for me either to work for you with others hungering, or I might be subject to anyone besides you in matters of giving and receiving. And so, with a long sickness broken, I have not kept inwardly silent this year and been mute with you. I have dedicated to your names the work of three days, namely the translation of the three scrolls of Solomon: Masloth, which are Parables in Hebrew, called in the common edition Proverbs; Coeleth, which in Greek is Ecclesiastes, in Latin we could say Preacher; (and) Sirassirim, which is translated into our language Song of Songs.

Also included is the book of the model of virtue (παναρετος) Jesus son of Sirach, and another falsely ascribed work (ψευδεπιγραφος) which is titled Wisdom of Solomon. The former of these I have also found in Hebrew, titled not Ecclesiasticus as among the Latins, but Parables, to which were joined Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs, as though it made of equal worth the likeness not only of the number of the books of Solomon, but also the kind of subjects. The second was never among the Hebrews, the very style of which reeks of Greek eloquence. And some of the ancient scribes affirm this one is of Philo Judaeus. Therefore, just as the Church also reads the books of Judith, Tobias, and the Maccabees, but does not receive them among the the canonical Scriptures, so also one may read these two scrolls for the strengthening of the people, (but) not for confirming the authority of ecclesiastical dogmas.

If anyone is truly more pleased by the edition of the Seventy interpreters, he has it already corrected by us. For it is not as though we build the new so that we destroy the old. And yes, when one will have read most carefully, he will know our things to be more understood, which haven’t soured by having been poured into a third

vessel, but have rather preserved their flavor by having been entrusted to a new container immediately from the press. END OF THE PROLOGUE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode. Kevin introduces his translation as follows:

Here St Jerome gives us not only more information about his work habits (he translated Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs in three days), but also a bit more on his understanding of the apocrypha. He implicitly defines the canon of Scriptures as those books used ”for confirming the authority of eccelsiastical dogmas,” and excludes the apocrypha from that category. Granted, the majority of the apocrypha are not useful for this, but then neither, admittedly, are a number of canonical works. It’s an argument or position against the apocrypha that we have yet to find the origins of. And although St Jerome here states that the apocrypha that he names are not ”canonical Scriptures,” we know that he recognized the authority of the Council of Nicea in advancing Judith as canonical. So, St Jerome’s equivocation on the matter reveals a more subtle understanding, in which he considers the apocrypha good ”for the strengthening of the people.” Anyhow, perhaps St Jerome will have more to say on the subject in some of the upcoming prologues. We’ll see. One fun thing he mentions in this prologue is the marginal tradition that Philo Judaeus of Alexandria was the author of Wisdom of Solomon, something also found in the Canon Muratorianus, and various other places, though not often. Enjoy!

Tobit

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE TO TOBIAS Jerome to the Bishops in the Lord Cromatius and Heliodorus, health! I do not cease to wonder at the constancy of your demanding. For you demand that I bring a book written in Chaldean words into Latin writing, indeed the book of Tobias, which the Hebrews exclude from the catalogue of Divine Scriptures, being mindful of those things which they have titled Hagiographa. I have done enough for your desire, yet not by my study. For the studies of the Hebrews rebuke us and find fault with us, to translate this for the ears of Latins contrary to their canon. But it is better to be judging the opinion of the Pharisees to displease and to be subject to the commands of bishops. I have persisted as I have been able, and because the language of the Chaldeans is close to Hebrew speech, finding a speaker very skilled in both languages, I took to the work of one day, and whatever he expressed to me in Hebrew words, this, with a summoned scribe, I have set forth in Latin words. I will be paid the price of this work by your prayers, when, by your grace, I will have learned what you request to have been completed by me was worthy.

END OF THE PROLOGUE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode. Kevin introduces his translation as follows: This is the first of St Jerome’s Vulgate prologues for one of the apocrypha that I’ve done. It’s very interesting, if one pays attention to his reasoning in this prologue, it being actually a letter which accompanied his translation of Tobias to the Bishops Cromatius and Heliodorus. St Jerome is often considered or claimed to be vehemently opposed to the apocrypha, especially in antapocryphal Protestant circles. But we find in this letter that this is only half of the picture. While the apocrypha were not included in the Hebrew Bible, and St Jerome respects the Hebrew studies on this matter, he explcitly states here that the decisions of Christian bishops are more important. Something like this has been the response to critics of the ”apocrypha,” ”deuterocanonicals,” or whatever you want to call them, throughout the ages: they are included in the canon because that has been, is, and always will be the practice of

the Church. It's good to see this from St Jerome, and we'll see a similar thing in his Prologue to Judith, coming up next. Enjoy!

Twelve minor prophets

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE OF THE TWELVE PROPHETS The order of the Twelve Prophets is not the same among the Hebrews as it is among us. For which reason, according to how it is read there, they are also arranged here. Hosea is composed of short clauses and speaking as though by aphorisms. Joel is clear in the beginning, more obscure at the end. And they each have their individual properties up to Malachi, who the Hebrews name Ezra the scribe and teacher of the Law. And because it is too long to speak of all these things now, I would only you were warned this, O Paula and Eustochium: the book of the Twelve Prophets to be one; and Hosea a contemporary (συνχρονος) of Isaiah; (and) Malachi in fact to have been of the times of Haggai and Zechariah. And those (books) in which the time is not set down in the title, under those kings which they were to have prophesied under, they also prophesied after those which have titles.

END OF THE PROLOGUE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode. Kevin introduces his translation as follows: This is St Jerome's prologue to the Twelve Prophets, or Twelve Minor Prophets as they're often called, because these books are shorter relative to the books of the Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. It's a very short prologue, but there are two items of interest in it. One is that St Jerome mentions that "the Hebrews" of his day considered Malachi to be Ezra. I don't think I'd ever read that before, so it was a pleasant surprise. The other interesting thing is that St Jerome considered the Twelve Prophets to be chronologically arranged (which I do too, great, somewhat curmudgeonly minds thinking alike), and that the books which don't include dating indications can be dated after those who do. And now, I think my introduction to the prologue has now come to more words than are actually in it, so with no further ado, here it is. Enjoy!

Vulgate preface to Paul's letters

[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE TO THE LETTERS OF PAUL THE APOSTLE First is asked, for what reason after the Gospels, which are a supplement of the Law and in which are collected for us examples and precepts of living abundantly, the Apostle wanted to send these letters to individual churches. And it was seen to have been for this reason, that, as is known, he strengthened the firstborn of the Church from new arising heresies, so that he cut off present and arising errors and also afterward excluded future questions by the example of the Prophets, who after the publishing of the Law of Moses, in which were collected all the commandments of God, nevertheless still by its revived teaching the people always restrained (their) sins, and because of the example in the books they indeed also left a memorial for us. Then is asked, for what reason did he not write more than ten letters to churches. For there are ten with that one which is called "To the Hebrews," for the remaining four are sent particularly to disciples. So that he showed the New not to differ from the Old Testament, and himself not to do (anything) against the Law of Moses, he arranged his letters (according) to the number of the first Ten Words (decalogi) of the commandments, as many precepts as that one ordered those freed from Pharaoh, the same number this one taught those purchased from servitude of the devil and idolatry. And also the most learned men have handed down (the tradition of) the two stone tablets to have been a figure of the two Testaments.

Truly, some have contended the letter which is written to the Hebrews not to be of Paul because it is not titled with his name, and because of the distance of language and style, but rather either of Barnabas according to Tertullian, or of Luke according to some others, or in fact of Clement the disciple of the Apostles and ordained Bishop of the Roman Church after the apostles. To which one should respond: if, accordingly, it cannot be of Paul because it does not have his name, therefore it cannot be of anyone because it is titled with no name. But if that is absurd, it is better to be believing it of him who shines with such eloquence of his teaching. But because among the churches of the Hebrews he was considered, with a false suspicion, as a destroyer of the Law, he was willing, with name unspoken, to render account of the figures of the Law and the truth of Christ, so hatred of (his)

boldly displayed name would not exclude the usefulness of the reading. It is truly not a wonder, if he is seen more eloquent in his own (language), that is in Hebrew, rather than in a foreign one, that is in Greek, in which language the other letters are written.

It certainly disturbs some that for some reason the letter to the Romans is placed first, when reason reveals it not written first. For this is shown by him to have written travelling to Jerusalem, when he was exhorting the Corinthians and others before now by letters, as they collected the ministry which was carried with him. For which reason some want all the epistles to be understood arranged thus: that the first is set down which was sent later, (and) that through each letter by steps he came to the more perfect. For the majority of the Romans were so ignorant, that they did not understand themselves to be saved by the grace of God and not by their merits, and on account of this duo, the people struggled among themselves. Therefore, he asserted them to need to be strengthened, recalling the former vices of the gentiles (lit. "of gentileness"; gentilitatis). And now he says the gift of knowledge to be granted to the Corinthians, for he does not so much rebuke all, as he censures how they did not rebuke the sinners, as he says, "It is heard that there is fornication among you," and again, "You are gathered together with my spirit to deliver such a one to Satan. In the second (letter) they are truly praised and are admonished to advance more and more. Now the Galatians show no other crimes except they had most fervently believed in false apostles.

The Ephesians are truly worthy of no rebuke but much praise, because they kept the Apostolic Faith. And the Philippians are much more greatly praised, who were not willing even to hear false apostles. And the Colossians were of such a kind that, when they had not been bodily seen by the Apostle, they were considered worthy of this praise: "And if in the body I am absent, I am with you in the Spirit, rejoicing and seeing your order. The Thessalonians were yet honored with all praise, to the extent that not only did they keep the unshaken faith of the Truth, but were indeed found standing together in the persecution of members. Truly something must be said of the Hebrews, of whom the Thessalonians, who are so highly praised, are said to have been imitators, as he says: "And you, brothers, have become imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea, for you have also suffered the same from your own countrymen as they have from the Judeans. Among them he also recalls the same Hebrews, saying, "For you both had compassion for the prisoners and you also received with joy the plundering of your goods, knowing yourselves to have a greater and lasting substance."

END OF THE PROLOGUE This text was translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb, Berkeley, California, 2006, published here and released by him into the public domain. All material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely. Greek text is rendered using unicode. Kevin introduces his translation as follows: I have a few articles

to look up regarding the authorship of this letter, so I'll end up posting more on that at a later date. Essentially, there are three contenders: St Jerome, the British heretic Pelagius, and some unknown author. Since patristic scholarship in the early part of the twentieth century had an unfortunate tendency to pin the names of heretics to many various works not otherwise demonstrably theirs or even heretical, I don't, at this point, consider Pelagius a likely candidate, but rather a faddish suggestion given rather too much attention. These days some idiot would likely suggest St Mary Magdalene. Also, having just worked through seventeen authentic prologues of St Jerome, it is definite that this prologue to Paul's letters are from someone else, judging by the style and even the vocabulary. It's not as rambling as St Jerome's own letters, which are constructed in a much more oral manner (likely because he was actually simply dictating to a scribe most of the time), and certain words of the vocabulary require meanings that are later than the more classical, antiquarian usage of St Jerome. So I opt for an unknown author. Nevertheless, it is a very interesting preface, especially his description of why the letters of Paul are arranged as they are: they are addressed to progressively more accomplished Christians, and apparently in reverse chronological order. How interesting!

I hope everyone has enjoyed my translation of these Vulgate prefaces. I certainly enjoyed the discovery involved in learning what they say, having not read most of them before, and the definite education in Latin they provide. I hope they're found to be useful. This is the last preface included in Weber's Biblia Sacra Vulgata, Fourth Edition, which means this first stage of my translation of the Vulgate Prefaces is done with this. Now that I have them all finished in a first draft, I'll be editing them for consistency, style, etc, and post them all on a single web page. So if anyone wants to use them in a convenient form, with notes and such things, just wait about a week or so. In the meantime, I'll post links to the blog posts with all the prefaces, which I'm rather surprised to have finished in only three weeks, even with some breaks. Enjoy!

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.

Note from the source file. 329 This text was translated and placed in the public domain by Mark DelCogliano, 2004.