Joshua

Jerome (c. AD 347–420)

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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

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