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The Typology of Literalism
in ancient biblical translations

Foreword

The piece of research which is here published was carried out to a large extent in Göttingen. In presenting it to the Academy it is only proper to express thanks to the Academy for the help, encouragement and support it has given, especially through a financial subvention which enabled me to carry out the work. Thanks are due in particular to Professor W. Zimmerli for the care, the kindness and the hospitality he has shown; and also to the Septuaginta-Unternehmen for the provision of a room, books and facilities, and for the support and encouragement of its Director, Dr. Robert Hanhart. Thanks are due also to the Board of the Faculty of Theology, Oxford University, for assistance with the costs of travel and preparation.

<div align="right">J. B.</div>

I.

It is our custom, when talking about translations, to work with the simple pair of opposed categories "literal" and "free". A free translation, people usually think, gives an impression of the general purport or meaning of a text, without concerning itself too much for individual details; a literal translation, it is felt, concerns itself for details as well as giving the general meaning, or indeed it may concern itself with details to such a degree that it gives a false impression of the meaning as a whole. Thus literal translations are often described as being "word for word": they give, it is implied, a rendering of each discrete element but fail to give an adequate picture of the sense of the whole. On the whole our modern cultural preference is for a fairly free translation. A word for word translation is favoured only for very limited purposes, for example for the use of beginners in a language, who may need a key which will enable them to follow the exact wording of the original. For the general appreciation of documents or of literature we feel that we need a fairly free translation; and yet freedom must be tempered by moderation and by accuracy, for we do not want a translation that is so free that it begins to misrepresent the sense of the original.

The same pair of categories is used to classify the various ancient translations of the Bible. The LXX Qohelet, for instance, is regarded as extremely literal, while it is customary to consider the Greek Job and Proverbs as free. The translations of some other books, such as the Pentateuch, are thought, rather vaguely, to lie somewhere between the two extremes and in this sense are perhaps "moderate" or "central". The Old Latin version of the New Testament is described by B. Fischer as "often painfully literal".[1] Further, a version of any book is not necessarily consistent throughout: while generally literal, it may at certain points quite suddenly take a leap into what appears to be a very free mode of rendering. Of the Syriac New Testament, Brock writes that "the Old Syriac will on occasion completely restructure the sentence it is translating, and at times this has produced what can only be described as a free paraphrase".[2] "Paraphrase" is indeed a term often used of the more drastically free translations: it implies a fairly drastic rewriting, in which a very general impression of the whole is given but little or no contact is maintained with the exact wording and ductus of the original. "Paraphrase" has to our

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[1] In B.M.Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (Oxford, 1977), p. 323; cf. the review of this work by the present writer in *Journal of Theological Studies* xxx (1979).

[2] Metzger, ibid., p. 89.

ears a slightly pejorative ring, just as "word for word" has in the opposite direction.

These classifications, however, are very rough and impressionistic. People feel that they know, almost unconsciously, that such and such a rendering is free or is literal, but they seldom formulate exact criteria or precise reasons for their opinion. No calculus for the measurement of the degree of literality appears to exist, or if it exists it is not popularly known. This article will seek among other things to analyse more precisely what can be meant by "literal" and "free" in the context of ancient biblical translation, especially from Hebrew into Greek; and it will thus hope to suggest a more precise, but also necessarily more complicated, scheme of analysis than is provided by the current and traditional distinction with its simple two-term contrast between "literal" and "free".

For—and this is my principal argument—there are different ways of being literal and of being free, so that a translation can be literal and free at the same time but in different modes or on different levels. In Greek translations from Hebrew this is not uncommon. Let us take a preliminary example:

Prov. 11.7a MT: בְּמוֹת אָדָם רָשָׁע תֹּאבַד תִּקְוָה

LXX: τελευτήσαντος ἀνδρὸς δικαίου οὐκ ὄλλυται ἐλπίς

The Proverbs translation would commonly be designated as free much more than as literal, and from a certain point of view the Greek rendering is indeed free. As against the Hebrew a sort of double negative has been introduced: the Hebrew tells us that "when an evil man dies, hope perishes", while the Greek says that "when a righteous man dies, hope does not perish". Where Hebrew has רשע "evil", the Greek has the opposite, δίκαιος "righteous", but a negative οὐκ is then added, which restores the general balance of the sentence. Thus one can justly say that the translator has taken considerable liberties, and in that sense his version is "free". Yet it is equally obvious that in other respects he has been quite "literal": there is a more or less one-for-one representation of elements of the Hebrew by elements of the Greek, thus:

במות ~ τελευτήσαντος; אדם ~ ἀνδρός; תאבד ~ ὄλλυται; תקוה ~ ἐλπίς

and each of these is a fairly standard equivalence which can be found repeated many times. Thus within certain limits the translator has been both literal and free at the same time. The simple conceptual distinction between literal and free is not sufficiently flexible to formulate the more complicated set of relations which obtain in many actual texts.

There is another reason why we should not rest content with the traditional vocabulary of "literal" and "free": many ancient translators of the Bible seem not to have had any clear or definite policy for a literal or a free rendering of the text, and this is true particularly of many of the earlier strata of biblical

translation, as represented in the earlier books of the LXX. Rather than follow a definite policy, translators often seem to have worked in an *ad hoc* manner and at any particular point to have opted for a literal or a free rendering, whichever seemed to work out according to the character of the original text and its immediate context. Even among translators who have given us a statement of their policy—and Jerome is of course the outstanding example— there may be wide discrepancies between the policy as stated in theory and the practice as observed in detail. But, as many examples in this survey will show, the tendency of many early translators was not to be consistently literal or consistently free, but to combine the two approaches in a quite inconsequential way. It is, on the whole, late in the development of ancient biblical translation that trends favouring a more rigorous and consequent approach emerge: in the Greek Old Testament Aquila, in the Syriac New Testament the Harclean, both strongly literal, while in the Latin Bible, Jerome, though in theory favouring literalism for the special case of scripture alone, introduced the classical philosophy of translation not *verbum e verbo* but *sensus de sensu*.

This leads us on to a further reason why we should not be content with our traditional contrast between "free" and "literal": as this study may show, truly "free" translation, in the sense in which this might be understood by the modern literary public, scarcely existed in the world of the LXX, or indeed of much of ancient biblical translation in general. The modern "free" ideal, the idea that one should take a complete sentence or even a longer complex, picture to oneself the meaning of this entirety, and then restate this in a new language in words having no necessary detailed links with the words of the original, then scarcely existed. A sophisticated study of the LXX, at least in many books, rather than dealing with the contrast between free and literal, has to concern itself much of the time with variations within a basically literal approach: different kinds of literality, diverse levels of literal connection, and various kinds of departure from the literal. For this reason the idea of literality, rather than the idea of free translation, can properly form our base line of definition. It is the various *kinds* of literalism that we seek to analyse and define: for each of them "free" means that which is opposite to this particular literalism. Moreover, once ancient biblical translation had commenced, many of its currents ran, at least for some centuries, in the direction of an increasing literalism: if the early, often improvised and carefree, translations were defective, then the way to improve upon this was to be more accurate, and the way to accuracy led through literality. But literality was not a complete novelty. The "freer" books had already used the literalist methods in considerable measure: what literalism did was to seek to use these methods more consistently. For all these reasons it seems good to take literalism as the aim of our study. Its methods are to be analysed and defined. Freedom in translation is not a tangible method, so suitably to be grasped and comprehended.

Thus, though the concept of freedom in translating will always be there as a contrast, for the modern reader it is literalism rather than freedom that requires explanation and understanding. We have to begin by removing or at least holding in abeyance any prejudices we may have against literalism. For most of us in the modern world the choice between a free translation, which gives the sense of a passage as a whole, and a literal translation, which tries to give some representation of the details and forms of the original, has only to be put in these terms for us to decide in favour of the free procedure. This may well be our point of view, but the ancient biblical translators, or at least those among them who inclined towards literalism, had a quite different series of problems that concerned them. One of our purposes therefore is to trace the motives and the rationale of the literalist trend in ancient biblical translation; and to do this is to recognize that the ancient biblical translator could be inspired in his procedures by motives quite different from those that we respect in the modern world, motives however which within their limits were perfectly rational.

The point is well illustrated from Aquila, whose translation of the Old Testament into Greek was in many ways the culmination of the literalist trend. By methods which are well known, and will be mentioned again in the course of the present work, Aquila sought to represent in Greek all sorts of formal and semantic features belonging to the Hebrew words and valid of them not only in the passages being translated but also elsewhere, or valid only through a sort of etymology and not through the actual semantic function in context. As a result Aquila has had a bad press from modern scholars, and the textbooks are liberally sprinkled with terms like "absurd". The modern theoretician of translation, Eugene A. Nida, uses the term "absurd literalism" and, speaking of a modern literalist version, goes on to say that "The results are lamentable, for the attempt to be literal in the form of the message has resulted in grievous distortions of the message itself". Immediately after this he gives his estimate of Aquila: "A famous literal translation of the Old Testament was the work of Aquila . . . who composed barbarous Greek in an attempt to be faithful to the Hebrew original". [1] Among LXX specialists Swete summed the matter up in similar words: "Enough has been said to shew the absurdity of Aquila's method when it is regarded from the standpoint of the modern translator". [2] Indeed, from the standpoint of the modern translator this may well be right, though even there it is not so obvious as it seemed to Swete and later to Nida; for one has only to consider the influence and acclaim gained in certain quarters by F. Rosenzweig and M. Buber's translation into German, [3] and more recently by that of A. Chouraqui into French, [4] both of which have distinct

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[1]) E. A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating* (Leiden, 1964), p. 23.

[2]) H. B. Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge, 1900), p. 41.

[3]) F. Rosenzweig and M. Buber, *Die Schrift*.

[4]) La *Bible* traduite et présentée par André Chouraqui (Paris, 1976).

affinities with Aquila's methods, to see that these methods may be quite successful. But of course our present question is not to see Aquila or anyone else "from the standpoint of the modern translator", but to understand what was the standpoint of the ancient translator himself. We shall seek therefore to disengage the intelligible reasons and forces which favoured literalism in translating.

The confusion of standards in dealing with this matter is well seen in the first few pages of a well-known grammar of the LXX, where H. St J. Thackeray prints a table classifying the books of the LXX into different groups "from the point of view of style". [1]) One of his groups, the third, was designated by him as "literal or unintelligent versions". As Mrs Sollamo has pointed out, [2]) Thackeray classified the books according to two or three different parameters, perhaps four, but then compressed these into one series of distinctions. Some of his classifications depend on the standard of the Greek (Koine, Atticistic), some on the quality of the use of it (indifferent, literary), some on the relation between the original and the rendering (translations, literal versions, paraphrases, free renderings), and some on the apparent intellectual skill of the procedure (unintelligent versions). Now a literal version is by no means the same thing as an unintelligent version, and no doubt Thackeray knew this perfectly well, but if so his classification was a very unsatisfactory one. Indeed, it is usually held that Aquila, though a quite extreme literalist, was also a very intelligent man with a good command of Greek. It is important therefore that we disengage the identification of the methods of literal translation from judgements about other aspects of the style and methods of those who have practised it.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to explore the logic of literalism and examine the various ways in which literal and free translation may be opposed to one another and may also be combined with one another. The actual examples are taken mainly from the translations of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, to some extent also into Aramaic. Here and there illustrations are given from the New Testament, whether from those parts of the Greek New Testament which may be supposed to have been translated at some earlier stage from Hebrew or Aramaic, or from the later translations from the Greek into other languages.

The material quoted for discussion is usually cited from standard editions, and in particular material from the LXX is cited as printed in Rahlfs' standard two-volume edition. Here and there it might be possible to dispute the interpretation of this or that example on grounds of text or philology. This however does not make much difference to the question. We are not seeking to prove a position about one text or another, we are seeking to discover a typology of the entire subject. In many cases, therefore, if one example cited

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[1]) H. St. J. Thackeray, *A Grammar of the Old Testament in Greek* (1909), p. 13.

[2]) R. Sollamo, "Some 'Improper' Prepositions . . . in the Septuagint and Early Koine Greek", *Vetus Testamentum* xxv (1975), 775.

proves to be uncertain or subject to a different interpretation, it only means that that example has to be moved to another classification; in its place, however, yet another example can, in most cases easily, be furnished. If one were to attempt to state a definitive proportion between the various sorts of literalism, of course, it would be necessary to prove each individual case on the basis of its evidence; but the present paper does not attempt to go so far.

II.

If the above may stand as a general prolegomenon to our task, we must now pass on to a discussion of certain conditions that affect all attempts to identify whether, and how far, any translated passage is a literal rendering of the original or not.

Most obviously, any decision about the literal or non-literal quality of a translated phrase depends upon the question of the *Vorlage*, the character of the original text that lay before the translator. If we start with a Greek text and set it against the Hebrew of MT, we may discern substantial differences, to such a degree that the rendering seems very far from literal. There may, however, have been in existence a different Hebrew text, and in some circumstances, if the translation was made from that other text, it turns out to have been much more literal than at first sight appeared. For instance:

Is. 40.6 MT: קוֹל אֹמֵר קְרָא וְאָמַר מָה אֶקְרָא

LXX: φωνὴ λέγοντος Βόησον· καὶ εἶπα Τί βοήσω;

If one considers only these two texts, one might well regard the LXX rendering εἶπα "I said" (where the MT has the third person) as a good example of the free and careless work typical of the Greek Isaiah. The translator might have seen the ואמר of the original and said to himself "Whatever the text says, from my point of view this must have been the verb indicating Isaiah's reply, and this being so I shall translate it as 'and I said'". And this reasoning is still possible. But we now have the 1 QIsA with its reading ואומרה; and if we suppose that this was the form that lay before the translator, then of course he was not using his judgement freely at this point at all: however he behaved elsewhere, at this point he was following the text precisely and translating literally.

The quick-witted reader will observe, however, that even the Qumran evidence does not absolutely settle the matter. Another hypothesis could be offered. It is possible to think that the Greek translator had before him the reading ואמר as in our MT and translated it freely on the lines suggested above, and that the Qumran scribe, working quite independently of him, followed the same "free" reasoning in transmitting his Hebrew text as the Greek translator followed in rendering into Greek. I do not myself think this to be likely; but it cannot be denied that it is possible. The example introduces us

to an essential methodological point, which will recur again and again in our investigation: the question of literalism in translation is seldom or never absolutely provable by the mere juxtaposing of two texts, say one in Hebrew and a rendering of it in Greek. The decision and the assessment of the evidence is not settled by the mere existence of the two texts: it depends on a semantic judgement, the setting forth of a semantic path which may reasonably be taken to have led from the one text to the other. Since we have no direct evidence of the mental processes of the translators, except perhaps (as with the case of St Jerome) where they have also left commentaries on these very texts or other notes on their work, there is a certain subjective and hypothetical element in all discussion of our question. This can, however, be held in check and kept within reasonable bounds so long as the investigator does not seek to decide on the basis of individual cases taken alone, but forms his judgement on the basis of extensive experience of the languages involved, both that of the original and that of the version, and of the modes of interrelation between them.

However, in spite of the caution that has just been expressed, it remains the general probability that, where there are textual variations, one of which provides a direct and fairly literal path from the original to the translated text, while the other can only be a free, indirect or dubiously related connection, the direct path does result from literal translation. Take for instance the question on what day God finished his work of creation (Gen. 2.2). There exist variant texts such as the following:

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MT: ביום השביעי

Sam.: ביום הששי

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LXX: ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἕκτῃ (so Syriac also).

While it is conceivable, and theoretically possible, that the LXX here had a *Vorlage* agreeing with MT, and that it translated freely, converting the seventh day of the original into the sixth day for exegetical reasons, and that the Samaritan Hebrew quite independently did exactly the same thing for the same or similar reasons, the probability is very high that the *Vorlage* of LXX was in fact semantically identical with that of the Samaritan in this respect and that the Greek version said "the sixth day" because that was an exact and literal representation of the text he was translating. The evidence in favour of this is that the earlier chapters of Genesis in Greek show rather little evidence of the sort of free rewriting that would be implied if it were the case that the Greek had quite freely substituted "sixth" for the "seventh" of his original.[1])

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[1]) For a recent discussion of this example see B. Albrektson in *The Bible Translator* xxvi (1975), 319. He says: "I do not think anyone could tell for certain which is the original text; the principle of *lectio difficilior* would seem to favour the MT, though this is of course not a conclusive argument". This is, in any case, a different question from that which I am discussing: my question is not what was the *original* Hebrew text, but by what process the LXX text was arrived at.

In fact, wherever there is a Hebrew text that (subject to a proper under-
standing of the translation technique followed) shows substantial semantic
agreement with the Greek rendering, the probability is that the Greek has
resulted from fairly literal translation of that text. The modern discovery of
variant Hebrew texts has thus on the whole increased the incidence of literal
translation as perceived by modern scholars. For example, Ex. 1.1 tells of the
children of Israel who came into Egypt "with Jacob", while the LXX has the
additional "their father"—ἅμα Ιακωβ τῷ πατρὶ αὐτῶν—and the same addition
is now found in the Qumran fragment 4 QExᵃ: אביהם.[1]) At II Sam. 24.17 we
have such texts as the following:

MT: וְאָנֹכִי הֶעֱוֵיתִי וְאֵלֶּה הַצֹּאן מֶה עָשׂוּ

cf. I Chr. 21.17: וְהָרֵעַ הֲרֵעוֹתִי וְאֵלֶּה הַצֹּאן מֶה עָשׂוּ

LXX: καὶ ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν ἐκακοποίησα, καὶ οὗτοι τὰ πρόβατα τί
ἐποίησαν;

4 QSamᵃ: [וא]נכי הרעה הרעתי ואלה ה[. . .]

Before the Qumran evidence emerged, one might have imagined that the ὁ
ποιμήν of LXX was a free addition made from the context or from memories
of the Chronicles passage, but the Qumran passage makes it very likely that
this was exact and literal translation of the *Vorlage*.[2]) Thus, in general, where
new evidence has become available it has on the whole increased our con-
viction that, at least in many books, the LXX worked fairly literally and
elements in their rendering stand for something that was actually there, rather
than being free invention or fancy.

The same point can often be observed in the text of Ben Sira, where (unlike
the MT of the Bible) we often have Hebrew variants semantically grossly
diverse from one another. When this is so, we may see that one of these
Hebrew variants is in very close agreement with the Greek. When this is so, it
is highly likely that the Greek is in fact a quite literal translation of *this*
Hebrew text, rather than a free rendering of one of the other texts. Thus at
10.25a:

A   עבד משכיל חורים יעבדוהו

B   עבד משכיל חביב כנפש

it is extremely probable that the Greek rendering

οἰκέτῃ σοφῷ ἐλεύθεροι λειτουργήσουσιν

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[1]) F. M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumrân* (London, 1958), p. 137n. This work
contains numerous examples to the same effect.

[2]) Cross, ibid., p. 141n.

is a quite exact translation of A, and not a free rendering of B. Yet the translations of this book were not always literal, so far as we can see, and a good example of an excellent free rendering is at 5.1:

<div dir="rtl">ואל תאמר יש לאל ידי</div>

καὶ μὴ εἴπῃς Αὐτάρκη μοί ἐστιν.

Or was the last Hebrew word read as די "enough" (cf. Aquila ἀρκετός Dt. 25.2)? If so, it was rather literal after all.

Clearly, a literal rendering must show a fairly close verbal correspondence with a *Vorlage* extant or reconstructible. Equally, however, a rendering, to be usefully classified as a "free" rendering, must have *some* recognizable semantic path that leads from the *Vorlage* to the rendering. If the distance between the known or reconstructible Hebrew text becomes *so* great that no semantic relationship at all can be seen between them, it then ceases to be useful to regard the versional text as a "free rendering". In such a case one must suppose one or the other of two possibilities: either that the translation was made from a Hebrew text totally different from that known to us (in which case the rendering may have been quite literal, but we have no means of knowing this); or else the Greek (or other versional) text is not in any strict sense translated from the Hebrew at all: in that case it may be an original Greek composition of the translator, a reminiscence of some other scriptural passage, a quotation of a non-biblical Greek proverb, or something of the kind. For instance, at Prov. 1.12 the first half-verse

<div dir="rtl">נִבְלָעֵם כִּשְׁאוֹל חַיִּים</div>

is quite literally translated with

καταπίωμεν δὲ αὐτὸν ὥσπερ ᾅδης ζῶντα

but the second half-verse

<div dir="rtl">וּתְמִימִים כְּיוֹרְדֵי בוֹר</div>

has in Greek the counterpart

καὶ ἄρωμεν αὐτοῦ τὴν μνήμην ἐκ γῆς.

It seems impossible to see any semantic path between this Hebrew and the Greek, and we do better to assume either free composition in Greek or (less likely) a totally different and otherwise unevidenced Hebrew text. Unless there is *some* formal/semantic link between *Vorlage* and rendering, the versional phrase cannot usefully count as either literal or free translation: it cannot count as translation at all.

Thus if, as is sometimes the case, there is a variety of texts on the Hebrew side and also a variety on the Greek side, and indeed even if this variety is not

obvious, it can turn out to be no simple task to decide whether a particular rendering is literal or not. For the scholar has not only to pair a reading in one language with a reading in another, he has also to see what these readings then *meant* and he has to discern the semantic path that led from the one to the other; and the literalism depends not on the text in itself but on the way in which the text was seen, read, and analysed for grammar and meaning by the translators. As an example I may cite my own previous investigation[1]) of Gen. 49.6, where we have

MT: בקהלם אל תחד כבדי

and LXX: καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ συστάσει αὐτῶν μὴ ἐρίσαι [var. ἐρείσαι] τὰ ἥπατά μου

A first look at the texts leaves it quite uncertain which Greek text pairs with which Hebrew text (the Samaritan has אל יחר כבודי) and it is far from obvious whether the rendering is in any way literal at all. Only through a fairly circuitous argument can it be shown (if my conclusions are right) that the Hebrew was read as אל תחר כבדי and this was taken to be a form of תחרה "vie, contend, quarrel". If this is seen and accepted, however, it at once becomes clear that the rendering is, in respect at least of this sole word, a fairly literal one. This, however, is not to be known until a quite complicated course of discussion and investigation has been carried out.

This brings us to yet another complication of the entire question, namely the problem of whether we distinguish between "correct" renderings and "errors", wild guesses and the like. It is easy enough to compare the qualities of a literal and a non-literal rendering, both of which represent correct understandings of the phrase translated; but it becomes more difficult when we add the further consideration of renderings which, whether literal or free, seem to be thoroughly mistaken understandings of the original. Here, it seems, we may have to make what seems to be an unequal judgement. If a rendering is both "free" and also seriously mistaken, there is not much we can do with it: unless there is *some* literal element in it, some element linking it with the formal character of the original, or some general semantic rightness about it, we cannot usefully classify it, it is not in essence different from a wild guess. There may indeed have been a rationale behind it, but we can no longer penetrate to that rationale or appreciate it usefully. A literal translation, on the other hand, may be "wrong", it may give an erroneous semantic impression of the whole— and indeed very many literal translations do exactly that, and this fact is the fundamental criticism which should be and is directed against literalism in translation. Nevertheless even in its errors we can often grasp how and why a literal translation has been produced; we can usefully discuss it and it can be included in the same classification as "correct" renderings.

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[1]) In *Journal of Semitic Studies* xix (1974), 198–215.

It seems therefore that we end up with three types:

(a) "free" renderings which state more or less correctly the general purport of the original text

(b) literal renderings which also give an adequate semantic rendering of the original

(c) literal renderings which, while their semantic indication is far from being an adequate indication of the meaning of the original, nevertheless show a close and understandable relation to the form of the original.

The typology of literalism, then, is not severely affected by the question whether a literal rendering is "correct" or not. The "correctness" of translation must reside in its semantic quality; but the techniques of literalism, as we shall see, depend in part on their relation to the form and the formal relations of the original, and then semantic adequacy is not the main point of them. They can thus be to some extent disengaged from the question of semantic adequacy, while this can never be done with a "free" translation.

This point is important, because it brings us back to a matter that has already been mentioned, namely the preference in our modern culture for a rather "free" rendering and a certain low evaluation of literal translation. That preference is predicated upon an assumption that in much of ancient biblical translation was lacking, namely the assumption that the translator knew the basic meaning of the text in the first place. Because this is *ex hypothesi* known to him, there then arises the problem of how he should express this meaning in the versional language. Modern discussions of translation technique generally assume that the basic meaning of the original text is known to the translator, or is knowable indirectly through the mediation of scholarly experts, dictionaries and reference books. Putting it in another way, if the contrast between free and literal translation, as conceptualized in modern culture, implies a favouring of the free as against the literal, this is done because it is *assumed* that the basic semantic value of the words is known. The preference for free translation presupposes that free translation is something different from wild and ignorant guessing at the meaning. A modern man of letters, translating (let us say) Dante for the modern public, may opt for a free technique of translating, but he would be offended if it was supposed that he did this because he did not know the meanings of the actual words of Dante's Italian. In this sense free translation is a literary embellishment, perhaps an essential one, but one superimposed upon a previously existing certainty of basic underlying linguistic understanding.

In ancient biblical translation it is often the opposite: one of the main factors that determine the behaviour of translators is the sheer obscurity of certain phrases and their own lack of certainty about the meaning of elements in the text. Thus the fact that books like Job and Proverbs have often been noted for the "free" style of their Greek version can rightly be connected with

the fact that these books are near to the edge of the biblical canon and less central to the structure of religious doctrine. But, if this is true on one side, it is equally proper to note that in these books the Hebrew diction itself was often very obscure, and that some fair proportion of the freest renderings seems to coincide with very obscure phrases of the original.

But here we find an important paradox. In what I have just said I started from the fact of free translation and suggested that it often had its basis in the deep difficulty or obscurity of the original. But this same starting-point, a deep obscurity in the original, may serve as generating force for both of the two supposedly contrary tendencies in translation. If a text is really difficult and obscure to the translator, he may opt for free translation, making a general estimate of the total meaning, or simply guessing at it, and ignoring the details; but he may also do the opposite, and decide to give a precise impression in Greek of the detailed form of the Hebrew, leaving it to his readers to work out, if they can, what the general purport of this may be. What is more, the translator may combine the two, providing a rendering based on a precise relation to the Hebrew at certain points and therefore in these aspects literal, and filling in the rest with guesswork or very general interpretation. Thus, in the circumstances of ancient biblical translation, freedom and literality are not totally contradictory tendencies: they may be employed together and by the same translator, even in the same passage, and the same antecedent cause, i.e. intrinsic obscurity of the original, leads to both.

It would be wrong to suggest, however, that literal translation is to be found only where the original is intrinsically obscure. This is not the case. Once literal techniques are worked out, they tend to spread and find their way into every kind of locution. Nor do I suggest that the obscurity of the text is the generating cause of all literalism, for it is not. It remains the case that obscure texts are particularly interesting for study of the interplay of literal and free translation, since, as has just been argued, the intrinsic obscurity of the text can easily lead to both.

In order to understand this and its implications, we have to consider a further question. It is commonly said that every translation is also an interpretation. In the context of ancient biblical translation, this remark is a highly misleading truism. Interpretation of the content is not a necessary element of a translation, and large areas in biblical translation resisted the temptation to provide interpretation of content. There are enormous differences in the degree to which a translator interprets, and the degree to which he interprets or does not interpret lies to some extent within his control. The difference of degree is much more important than the supposition that all translation is interpretation. Or, perhaps, we may better say that the process of translation may involve two quite different sorts of interpretation, which are so different as hardly to deserve to be called by the same name.

The first is a sort of basic syntactic/semantic comprehension of the meaning of the text: if you have a piece of writing in Hebrew which you cannot understand at all you cannot translate it. To take the example which I have used elsewhere, the mere sequence of Hebrew letters אכלה cannot be translated into Greek.[1]) The reader has to decide in favour of a semantic interpretation, which may be as "she has eaten" or as "I will destroy" or other possibilities; until he does this, he cannot read the text as Hebrew, much less translate it into Greek. This kind of decision can indeed be called "interpretation", but it is a very basic and low-level kind of interpretation: it is a minimal location and identification of likely semantic values for the Hebrew lexemes. This is a linguistic interpretation which carries the reader from the graphic sequence to a semantic/syntactic intelligibility (and, as I have argued, only thereafter to the possibility of reading the text aloud, assuming that the text is unpointed, as it always was in the world of ancient translation).

The other type of interpretation lies on a higher level: it begins only after these basic linguistic elements have been identified. These being known, it now asks a whole series of further questions. In distinction from the series that concerned the first kind of "interpretation", these are matters of content, of reference, or of theological exegesis. Given that Num. 24.17 tells us that a star will come forth from Jacob (an intelligible statement, known only because the first kind of "interpretation" of the graphic text has taken place), what is the actual or theological entity to which the passage refers? The translator *may* answer by putting into his translated text an interpretation, let us say "the King Messiah", but he does not *have to* do so. This sort of question really belongs not to translation but to comment: it is not *necessarily* part of the translation process. Commentators and exegetes will have to ask these same questions in Hebrew itself, i.e. even if the text is never translated at all. It is perfectly possible that a translation into Greek will also include an implied opinion on these exegetical questions but there is not the slightest necessity that this should be so. The translator, while he is bound to carry out the first kind of semantic interpretation and cannot act at all without it, is free to choose how far he enters into questions concerning the second kind of interpretation. He may quite well be aware of these questions but, for the purpose of his work as translator, he can leave them aside if he wishes: he can simply say "a star shall come forth from Jacob", in Greek as it was in Hebrew.

It is true that the mere fact of putting the meaning of a text into another language can force upon the translator the making of certain decisions. The two linguistic systems with which he is working are non-congruent: where

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[1]) See my articles "Vocalization and the Analysis of Hebrew among the Ancient Translators", *Vetus Testamentum* Supplements xvi (1967), 1–11; "The Nature of Linguistic Evidence in the Text of the Bible", in H. H. Paper (ed.), *Language and Texts: the Nature of Linguistic Evidence* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1975), 35–57; "Reading a Script without Vowels", in W. Haas (ed.), *Writing without Letters* (Mont Follick series, vol. 4, Manchester, 1976), 71–100.

there is one form in Hebrew, it may require a choice between two or three forms in Greek; and where there are several forms in Hebrew it may seem that no comparable difference is available in Greek. For Hebrew שָׁנָה, for instance, a translator had to choose between ἔτος and ἐνιαυτός, on the basis of the semantic/syntactic split between these two terms in Greek. Hebrew קרא could mean either "call" or "read", but a translator would probably wish to express one meaning or the other in his version. Latin translations from the Greek, having the word ἄγγελος in their original text, often had to discriminate between *angelus* and *nuntius*, the difference being decided according as the text referred to an angelic being (as we call it) or a human messenger. Such splits were easily negotiated according to the context and the function as indicated by the context. They arise from the nature of the build-up of the lexical stock in the two languages; they are not normally or necessarily questions concerning the exegetical, legal or theological content of the texts. A translator is bound in some degree to be an "interpreter" on this level; but he is not at all bound by the nature of his task to be an interpreter in the sense of an elucidator of the content. This sort of interpretation is caused by the lack of "fit" between the two languages concerned; it is distributed according to these lexical incongruencies, and not according to the difficulties of content which call for exegetical interpretation.

The point of this for our purpose is as follows: far from it being the case that every translation is also necessarily an interpretation, there could be points in some ancient translations of the Bible where one of the main motives was, if we may put it paradoxically, to avoid interpreting. This was often the case with literal renderings. The concern of the translator was not to take the exegetical decisions but to pass on to his readers, in Greek, Latin or whatever it might be, the semantic raw material upon which a decision might later be built. The more the complications of possible interpretation, the more numerous the layers of meaning that might be discerned, and the more obscure the basic language of the original, the more a translator might withdraw from the task of interpreting.

In that case the translator, faced with interesting or puzzling phenomena in the original, adopts the policy of passing them on, so far as he can, to the reader. He proposes, therefore, not to interpret farther than he is forced to interpret. He therefore *imitates* or *represents* features of the original wording, in so far as he can, and makes them visible in the versional language. He reproduces in the versional language features similar or analogous to features of the original text and its ramifications within its own language. This is central to the imitative technique of translation, which is one of the main manifestations of literalism in the biblical versions.

Thus the idea that all translation is interpretation might have some validity if it applied only to free translation, for a free translator is bound to a much

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greater extent to show what he himself thinks to be the meaning of the text. But, as Flashar noted long ago,[1]) where a translator is literal it is commonly not possible to know what he had in mind as the correct interpretation of the passage. For example: at Gen. 6.14 the Hebrew is:

קִנִּים תַּעֲשֶׂה אֶת־הַתֵּבָה

Now קִנִּים in normal Hebrew means "nests". But what did it mean when it was applied to the building of the ark? The matter is still a subject of controversy today.[2]) Perhaps—this is the traditional interpretation—it meant "rooms, cells, compartments" in the great ship. But the LXX translator did not enter into the question at all. He wrote "nests", exactly as in the normal Hebrew sense of the word. Now νοσσιά in Greek could hardly mean a compartment of a ship, even if that was the sense of the Hebrew original. But the translator simply ignores the question. Perhaps he thought it meant compartments, perhaps he did not; we have no means of knowing. His rendering

νοσσιὰς ποιήσεις τὴν κιβωτόν

simply reproduces the contours of the Hebrew without asking the interpretative question.

Here is an illustration that belongs to a more extreme literalism. The Hebrew particle בִּי, understood to mean "please", was so recognized and rendered by the translators of the Pentateuch: thus δέομαι, δεόμεθα throughout (Gen. 43.20, 44.18, Ex. 4.10,13, Num. 12.11, and also Jos. 7.7(8)). But the more literal translators of Judges, Samuel and Kings write ἐν ἐμοί (Jud. 6.15, 13.8, I Sam. 1.26, I Kings 3.17, 26)—"absurdly", says BDB (p. 106b). Now ἐν ἐμοί is certainly semantically misleading and does not provide us with a meaning "please": what it says is "in me". But this does not mean that these translators did not understand that the meaning was "please"—perhaps they did, perhaps they did not; all we can tell is that their rendering does not give us the answer. What they are saying to their readers is: "there is a word here the form of which is identical to that of the common Hebrew expression 'in me'". How far they realized that this expression, though homonymic, must have entirely different semantic content, the translation does not inform us. Literalism of this kind does not reveal the translator's basic understanding of the meaning.

There are further general remarks that follow from these, but they may usefully be left to come up in the course of the more detailed analysis following.

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[1]) Flashar in *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* xxxii (1912) 94f.; cf. Rabin, *Textus* vi (1968), 23f.

[2]) See recently E. Ullendorff in *Vetus Testamentum* iv (1954) 95f. = *Is Biblical Hebrew a Language?* (Wiesbaden, 1977), pp. 48f.

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Already however we have begun to see that the distinction between literal and free is subtle and complicated. Neither of these terms is an absolute: one can say that a particular rendering of a text is more literal, or less literal, than another rendering of that same text, but there is no absolute and hard and fast standard of the literal. We shall now go on to distinguish different ways in which a translation may be more or less literal.

III.

The following appear to be distinguishable modes of difference between a more literal and a less literal rendering of a Hebrew text:

1. The division into elements or segments, and the sequence in which these elements are represented.

2. The quantitative addition or subtraction of elements.

3. Consistency or non-consistency in the rendering, i.e. the degree to which a particular versional term is used for all (or most) cases of a particular term of the original.

4. Accuracy and level of semantic information, especially in cases of metaphor and idiom.

5. Coded "etymological" indication of formal/semantic relationships obtaining in the vocabulary of the original language.

6. Level of text and level of analysis.

1. *Division into elements or segments*. This is doubtless the aspect that has been most commonly identified as the essential differentiating characteristic which divides between literal and free translations. "Translations can be either free, or literal; the former treat the phrase or sentence as the unit to be translated, the latter the individual word."[1] I shall seek to show that this is not by any means the only procedural basis of ancient literalism, and that it had other principles which were at least in part independent of this one. Nevertheless this aspect remains extremely important and deserves considerable discussion.

A simple illustration is furnished by the treatment of Hebrew temporal expressions, which in Hebrew have בּ followed by infinitive plus noun or suffix.[2] Less literal approaches can alter the entire phrase into the sort of

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[1] L. Forster, *Aspects of Translation* (London, 1958), pp. 11f., cited by S. P. Brock, "The Phenomenon of the Septuagint", *Oudtestamentische Studiën* xvii (1972), 16.

[2] See I. Soisalon-Soininen, *Die Infinitive in der Septuaginta* (Helsinki, 1965), pp. 80–93.

form typical of a temporal expression in Greek. So for instance:

Dt. 32.8 MT: בְּהַנְחֵל עֶלְיוֹן גּוֹיִם

LXX: ὅτε διεμέριζεν ὁ ὕψιστος ἔθνη

II Sam. 8.3 = I Chr. 18.3 MT: בְּלֶכְתּוֹ

LXX: πορευομένου αὐτοῦ

A more literal approach preserves in Greek a word for "in" and an infinitive:

Lev. 22.16 MT: בְּאָכְלָם אֶת־קָדְשֵׁיהֶם

LXX: ἐν τῷ ἐσθίειν αὐτοὺς τὰ ἅγια αὐτῶν

The main effect of the more literal rendering is that it produces a Greek sentence substantially more like the syntax of the Hebrew sentence. Of course it is not possible to produce a perfect mirror of the Hebrew syntax: for instance, the subject "they" is an accusative in Greek, while in Hebrew it is in a relationship more like a possessive relation; but the translator does not trouble about this. His sentence lays out the elements in a way in which each segment has fairly recognizable relation to the Hebrew segment that it renders.

The choice between these two modes of handling the Hebrew temporal phrase provides a good illustration for the distribution of literalism. In the books commonly considered "free", like Proverbs or Job, we sometimes find passages that have a considerable concentration of such phrases, like the narrative about creation in Prov. 8.22ff., the lament of Job for his earlier years in Job 29, and the speech of the Lord about creation in Job 38. In Prov. 8 a quite long run of such phrases is rendered with ἡνίκα, ὅτε, ὡς etc., and none at all with ἐν τῷ + infinitive (note however that a series of "before" phrases immediately previously are rendered with πρὸ τοῦ + infinitive, vv. 24–5;[1]) but this does not seem to be a strictly literalist phenomenon, the Hebrew being expressions like בְּטֶרֶם, בְּאֵין). In Job 29 again we have clauses with ὅτε repeatedly (vv. 3–7). Job 38 has a clause of free type like ὅτε ἐγενήθησαν ἄστρα (v. 7), cf. also v. 8, and yet its first temporal phrase (v. 4) is literal in this respect: ἐν τῷ θεμελιοῦν με τὴν γῆν. We need not go further into the details, which have been excellently stated by Soisalon-Soininen. For us the example functions merely as a first and simple illustration of the interplay of more literal and less literal approaches.

In all cases of this kind, the feasibility of the more literal course is dependent on the possibilities available in the versional language.[2]) The more literal

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[1]) This usage was rendered the more natural in the LXX by the fact that the older πρίν is extremely little used, with very few occurrences except in Isaiah and Sirach.

[2]) This aspect is heavily stressed in B. M. Metzger, op. cit.; cf. the writer's review of this work, cited above, p. 5 n. 1.

renderings just discussed were feasible because Greek had already a construction with ἐν τῷ + infinitive; in Ptolemaic papyri, according to Soisalon-Soininen,[1]) this already had temporal function, and the examples translated from Hebrew fitted into this matrix. In another language this might have been impossible, or possible only at the cost of creating an intolerable barbarism. For "when the Lord turned back the captivity of Zion", it is tolerable n Greek to say, with close following of the Hebrew construction:

Ps. 125(126).1: ἐν τῷ ἐπιστρέψαι κύριον τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν Σιων

but the Latin, working from that same Greek, and producing

in convertendo Dominum captivitatem Sion,

is surely pressing against the ultimate limits of acceptability in Latin.[2])

The more literal of these examples well illustrate the notion that the literal translator works "word by word". This is however not so clear and unambiguous an expression as might at first sight appear. What does the literal translator actually do? Does he really translate each single component separately, paying no attention to the meaning of the environing words? Though this might seem so at first sight, further thought indicates that it cannot be so. There are two sides to the process of translation, which we may call the input side and the expression side.[3]) The input is the translator's recognition of the meanings of the original. The expression is the way in which he expresses this recognition in the versional language. It is not probable that even the literal translator understood the material only word by word, except where the text was so obscure that no more synthetic understanding was possible. Generally speaking, it is not possible in any text, in any language, to make even basic identifications of words without some attention to their context, which is the sole resource available to select between the multiple possible values of the signs. Particularly was this the case in the unpointed text of ancient Hebrew, if the translator in fact worked from the written text without a tradition of pronunciation to fill it out. Simply seeing the form בזה, he could not tell which word or words were there: only consultation of the context could inform him whether this was the preposition ב + זה or the verb בזה or some other form. The same was the case even where the complication of unpointed text as against tradition of pronunciation was not present, as in translating from Greek into Latin.

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[1]) Soisalon-Soininen, ibid., p. 81.

[2]) Similarly Ps. 9.4 *in convertendo inimicum meum retrorsum*, where the Greek is ἐν τῷ ἀποστραφῆναι τὸν ἐχθρόν μου εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω and the Hebrew בְּשׁוּב־אוֹיְבַי אָחוֹר; or again Ps. 142(141).4 *in deficiendo ex me spiritum meum*; in the *iuxta Hebraeos* Jerome moves over to a more natural Latin expression: *cum anxius in me fuerit spiritus meus.*

[3]) I have used these terms already, in reference to modern English translations of the Bible, in the *Heythrop Journal* xv (1974), 381 ff.

One might imagine that the literal translator, seeing τοῦ πατρός in the Greek, automatically rendered it as *patris* without thinking about the syntactic environment at all. But this he could not do, for, until he knew the syntactic environment of the noun, he could not know into which case he had to put the Latin semantic equivalent, i.e. some form of the noun *pater*.[1]) If the environment showed that the Greek noun was object of a form of "hear", the Latin would probably require *patrem* as object of *audio*; if it was part of a genitive absolute, it would require an ablative, if the phrase was one that would go into an ablative absolute in Latin; since many Greek genitive absolutes would not translate straightforwardly into Latin ablative absolutes because of the restricted participle forms available in Latin as compared with Greek, in many circumstances the Greek noun would have to be represented by a nominative *pater* in Latin—and so on. Thus the translator was commonly not able to make his basic diagnosis of meaning word for word. Even the literalist had to work by the context, as the freer translator did. But—and this is the difference – having made his judgements, with the context taken into account at least to some degree, he then proceeded to *express* the results in a manner that as far as possible gave representation to each word or element as a separate unit of meaning for the purpose of translation. Thus we must not insult the literalist translator by imputing to him a crudely particularistic reading technique: this may have been so at times but it was not necessarily so and at many points we can be sure that it was not in fact so. Word-for-word expression did not necessarily exhaust the literal translator's appreciation of the meaning of the text: rather, it was his *choice* that he should express himself so in the versional language. It is therefore not necessarily true that the literal translator was stupid or unintelligent, as has often been implied.

The literalistic segmentation of texts becomes particularly noticeable when we consider idiomatic expressions. According to a classic definition, an idiom is an expression the meaning of which is different from the sum of the meanings of its parts. For example, the meaning of the French phrase "j'ai ramassé une banane" (= "I have failed in my examination") cannot be attained by adding together the senses of its parts "I have collected" and "a banana". Moreover, and this is another side of the term *idiom*, an idiom is commonly peculiar to one language, so that the assembly of equivalent elements in another language would not have the same meaning: "I collected a banana" in English has no sense relatable to that of the French phrase. Clearly, then, the segmentation of an idiomatic expression into separate renderings of its component parts could be semantically disastrous.

An interesting example which might come under this heading is that which (put literally into English) speaks of "breaking the staff of bread". Sir. 48.2

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[1]) I use this argument also in my review of Metzger, op. cit., in *Journal of Theological Studies* xxx (1979).

gives an excellent and simple free rendering when it says:

Hebr.: וישבר להם מטה לחם

LXX: ὃς ἐπήγαγεν ἐπ' αὐτοὺς λιμόν

Similarly Lev. 26.26 provides a free rendering:

MT: בְּשִׁבְרִי לָכֶם מַטֵּה־לֶחֶם

LXX: ἐν τῷ θλῖψαι ὑμᾶς σιτοδείᾳ ἄρτων

Contrast with these the more literal approaches of:

Ps. 104(105).16: πᾶν στήριγμα ἄρτου συνέτριψεν

Ezk. 4.16 (cf. 5.16, 14.13): ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ συντρίβω στήριγμα ἄρτου ἐν Ιερουσαλημ

This is a good case where the free rendering provides an excellent representation of the total sense without distortion. Note in the Leviticus passage how the same translator is simultaneously literal and free: in the rendering of the temporal phrase he follows the more literal course with ἐν τῷ + infinitive, but in the total semantic expression of the phrase he takes the freer direction.

In both cases, probably, the sense of the idiom is fully appreciated: the literal translators knew perfectly well that the phrase meant that God or his servants would cause the deprivation of foodstuffs to the people. With another notable idiom, however, the situation is different: I speak of the phrase כרת ברית, perhaps the most striking of all idioms in biblical Hebrew.[1]) The LXX rendering for this, almost throughout, is διατιθέναι διαθήκην: that is to say, all the translators, including the quite literal ones, refrained from attempts to segment the idiom into its component parts by rendering the verb with a Greek word for "cut". All of them give a verb in Greek that means "enter into", "will", "dispose", "initiate" or the like. We cannot tell, indeed, of the most literalist sections within the LXX, such as Qohelet, because they do not use our phrase in any case. It is, so far as I know, only Aquila, in this respect carrying literalism to its extreme, who so segments this phrase as to give to each element the sense normal to it when outside this idiom, producing the barbarous κόψω ... συνθήκην, e.g. Jer. 31.31(38.31). It is interesting to remember that a Greek calque of the Hebrew phrase might theoretically have been worked out on the basis of ὅρκια τέμνειν "to make a treaty based on oath", especially since this ancient idiom is supposed to be a parallel to the Hebrew one and to have emerged from the same circle of ideas; but no one seems to have thought of this.[2]) In this instance—apart from Aquila—the

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[1]) On the idiom character of this expression, see my "Some Semantic Notes on the Covenant", in *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie* (Zimmerli Festschrift: Göttingen, 1977), pp. 23–38, especially pp. 27ff.

[2]) τέμνω is in fact rare in biblical Greek, with only a handful of cases in the LXX and none in the New Testament.

need for a semantically adequate expression seems to have been felt strongly enough to overcome the literalist inclinations of all ancient Greek translators.

An example of a different kind is the construction with מִי יִתֵּן, literally "who will give?" but used as the normal mechanism meaning "would that (such and such were the case)". This differs from the idiom כרת ברית in that both the freer and the more literal renderings make quite good sense:

> Deut. 28.67: "would that it were evening . . . etc."
>
> πῶς ἂν γένοιτο ἑσπέρα . . . πῶς ἂν γένοιτο πρωί;
>
> Num. 11.29: τίς δῴη πάντα τὸν λαὸν κυρίου προφήτας
>
> Job 14.13: εἰ γὰρ ὄφελον ἐν ᾅδῃ με ἐφύλαξας
>
> 19.23: τίς γὰρ ἂν δῴη γραφῆναι τὰ ῥήματά μου
>
> Ps. 14(13).7 = 53(52).7: τίς δώσει ἐκ Σιων τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ Ισραηλ

Note that the freely translated Job includes both types.

Similarly, phrases meaning "each", with איש . . . רעהו, איש . . . איש, אשה . . . רעותה, etc.:

Free: Gen 15.10: ἔθηκεν αὐτὰ ἀντιπρόσωπα ἀλλήλοις (איש בתרו לקראת רעהו)

Ezek. 37.7: καὶ προσήγαγε τὰ ὀστᾶ ἑκάτερον πρὸς τὴν ἁρμονίαν αὐτοῦ (עֶצֶם אֶל־עַצְמוֹ)

More literal:

> Lev. 15.2: ἀνδρὶ ἀνδρί, ᾧ ἐὰν γένηται ῥύσις ἐκ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ
>
> I Chron. 16.3: καὶ διεμέρισεν παντὶ ἀνδρὶ Ισραηλ ἀπὸ ἀνδρὸς καὶ ἕως γυναικὸς τῷ ἀνδρὶ ἄρτον ἕνα.

On the whole, many LXX renderings use the "freer" terms like ἕκαστος "each", ἀλλήλοις "to one another" and so on, rather than the literal approach with locutions like "man man", "woman . . . neighbour". If the literal approach is taken, the result is clumsy and unnatural Greek, but in many cases not wholly unintelligible. Of the two literal cases cited here, Lev. 15.2 is a good deal more intelligible than I Chron. 16.3, where τῷ ἀνδρί (= "to each") is confusing when it comes immediately after ἀπὸ ἀνδρός, itself part of another phrase taken literally but actually meaning "both men and women".

It is hardly necessary to remark that literal translations of important theological phrases can have very serious effects upon a religious tradition. The most obvious instance, even if no original text is extant, is the expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου of the Gospels, which (according to many interpreters) provided renderings of the two component parts of an Aramaic expression, when the meaning of that expression as a whole was something substantially different.

The division of the text into elements or segments, commonly at the word level rather than the phrase level, is then a normal feature of the more literal style in translating. Along with this went the very general reproduction of the sequence of elements, the word order, of the original. In the LXX this is so pervasive that one has to think of it as the product of naturalness and inertia rather than of literalist tendency. Verbs come at the beginning of sentences in the Hebrew manner; genitives come after the nouns they qualify; πᾶς "all" comes before the noun, adjectives follow, and so on. There are, indeed, numerous exceptions, but these exceptions do not alter the prevailing impression given by the whole. More frequent use of variations in order which agree with the variety of Greek usage but depart from the Hebrew sequence is probably one of the main aspects in which the "freer" books like Proverbs and Job are really free: a few examples at random include τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ὀφθαλμῶν (Prov. 5.21), μου ἡ ἐλπίς (Job 30.15). The following of the Hebrew word order— not strictly but in large measure—is probably to be attributed to habit and the quest for an easy technique rather than to any literalist policy. Thus, probably quite unconsciously, it provided the foundation upon which the later more strict literalism might build, for the following of the word order of the original in itself did much to set in the foreground the segmentation of the elements. The New Testament on the other hand, for all its Semitic atmosphere, has much less of this Hebraic sequence, even in the books which may well have a Hebrew/Aramaic text underlying them, and much greater conformity to the normal Greek patterns.

For the more extreme literalism, however, segmentation of the text does not stop at the word level: it sometimes goes on to give representation in translation, that is, semantic representation, to elements that lie below the word level, either to parts of words or to morphemes which have only grammatical or word-formational function in the original. This form of literalism is best known from Aquila, and the most familiar case of a rendering that gives lexical function to an element having only grammatical function in reality is his well-known translation of the object particle אֶת with σύν "with", "with" being the sense of the same particle (or, more correctly, a homophonous particle) which does have a lexical function.

Here are some instances of literalism through segmentation below word level in Aquila:

Ex. 32.25: MT לְשִׁמְצָה: actual meaning probably "for derision"; LXX ἐπίχαρμα with same meaning (LSJ correctly "object of malignant joy", though without LXX references), cf. Sir. 6.4, 18.31, 42.11. Aquila εἰς ὄνομα ῥύπου, i.e. analysing as if from שֵׁם "name" + צָאָה "filth".

Is. 18.1: MT צִלְצַל: meaning usually understood to be "whirring" (of wings): LXX πλοῖα "ships" (regarded by some as the true meaning); Aquila σκιὰ σκιά, i.e. analysing as the common word צֵל "shadow", twice repeated.

Ps. 16.1: MT מִכְתָּם "michtam", a prosodic or musical term; Aquila τοῦ ταπει-
νόφρονος καὶ ἁπλοῦ, i.e. analysing as מך + תם.

Literalism of this sort was, in principle, disastrously ruinous to the meaning
of the text. Aquila's σύν, as in ἔκτισεν ὁ θεὸς σὺν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ σὺν τὴν γῆν,
where the original means "he created heaven and earth", is devastating to
the normal Greek reader. One cannot attribute semantic value to sub-semantic
graphic sequences and parts of words without serious consequences. Never-
theless this approach was not as fatal as it would at first sight seem likely,
mainly because it was not applied too often. If every word had been split
into its (supposed) component parts and semantically interpreted accordingly,
the text would have become a total chaos. Just occasionally, by incredible
good luck, the method produced quite a happy result, as in Ex. 32.25 cited
above: "for a name of filth" is not too far from the sense of the original anyway.
Sometimes it did not matter much, because the original was scarcely intel-
ligible: the sense of מִכְתָּם was scarcely known, and still is so, so that the
literalist segmentation into two words did not make havoc of a straightforward
term. Thus the attribution of semantic function to portions of words and
non-semantic elements was not as mischievous as it sounds. Moreover, in some
cases where Hebrew forms were split by literalizing translators into two
semantic elements, there was some justification in that the Hebrew text had
already created such a graphic split. It is so, for instance, at Jer. 46.20, where
Aquila translated as if there were two elements: καλὴ καὶ κεκαλλιωμένη. Though
it is hardly to be doubted that this is a single, if complex, Hebrew form, many
manuscripts (including Leningrad B 19 a) write with a hyphen, יְפֵה־פִיָּה, as if
there were two words here. The same is the case with the famous example at
Deut. 33.2, which will be quoted shortly.

Literalism of this sort was semantically destructive because it transgressed
the basic functioning conditions of the Hebrew language: שמצה was not
composed of forms from the roots שם and צוא, מכתם was not composed of
forms from the roots מכך and תמם. Nevertheless the approach described had
one piece of firm rootage in the actual functioning of the language, namely
in the proper names. Unlike most Hebrew terms, many proper names were
compound expressions, which could be correctly understood if they were split
into their component morphemes. This being so, it was an easy step to go
farther and split into component morphemes (or allegedly component mor-
phemes) terms which were not so built up at all. This is in fact common in the
exegesis of proper names and unusual terms. The unusual word תלפיות figures
in B. Ber. 30a in an interpretation where it is understood as the "hill" (תל)
to which all "mouths" (פיות) turn.[1] The obscure term connected with the
"scapegoat", עזאזל, may similarly have been understood as κεκραταιωμένος
= עז and ἀπερχόμενος = אזל though there is doubt about the exact reading of

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[1] See my *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1968), p. 45.

Aquila here (Lev. 16.8).[1]) This word is at least somewhat similar to a personal name, and some think that it was one in fact.

Moreover, there was one well-known precedent for this sort of analysis, in that the word MT צַלְמָוֶת (18 times in Hebrew) was rendered as σκιὰ θανάτου by Greek translators in various parts of the Bible—one in the rather careless Isaiah, one in the more literal Jeremiah, four in the quite literal Psalter, and two or so in the "free" Job. If in fact, as many scholars think, this word was of the root צלם, the example shows how widespread the segmentation of a Hebrew form into two Hebrew words taken as if they were compounded could be. Such an instance was long anterior to the more systematic literalism of Aquila.[2])

An important and also instructive example is the segmentation of the obscure and archaic form אֵשְׁדָּת at Deut. 33.2. There is some doubt whether this form was written as one word or as two: the Leningrad manuscript has it as one word but the Qere reads it as two. Philologically, though the true explanation may remain uncertain, it is hardly to be doubted that this is one word and of the root אשד. The LXX rendered freely with ἄγγελοι; a mere guess? (Or did it grasp at the slight similarity of the form to something from שַׂר "prince", so rendered once or twice in Daniel?) Other versions take the two parts of the word separately, giving the elements "fire" and "law", related in one way or another. We can be certain that דָּת in this sense, a late term of Persian origin, was not in the text of Deuteronomy. Here are some of the versions for comparison:

MT: לָמוֹ (Q אֵשׁ דָּת) אֵשְׁדָּת מִימִינוֹ)

LXX: ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ ἄγγελοι μετ' αὐτοῦ

Aq.: πῦρ δόγμα αὐτοῖς   Sym.: πυρινὸς νόμος

Vulg.: *in dextera eius ignea lex*

Targ. Onk.: כתב ימיניה מגו אישתא אוריתא ויהב לנא

"his right hand wrote the *law* from the midst of the *fire* and gave (it) to us"

In the Targum the segmentation below word level is used to provide the basic semantic elements "law" and "fire", which are then built up by massive quantitative amplifications, a procedure that will be discussed later in this article. Suffice it here to say that the segmentation follows a literalist tendency, while the quantitative amplification is anti-literal. Aquila, Symmachus and the Vulgate show a more literal approach here. But, as indicated above, we

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[1]) See F. Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt*, i. 194 n.

[2]) On the ramifications of this word, see my remarks in *Questions disputées d'Ancien Testament* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium xxxiii, Louvain, 1974) pp. 50–55.

cannot use this example too certainly, since we do not know whether the translators had before them a text in which אשדת was graphically already divided into two words or not. The mere fact that they translated it *as if* it was two words is, of course, no absolute evidence that the graphic division of the word had already taken place.

Enough has been said to illustrate the various tendencies which emphasize the segmentation of the text down to and below the level of the word. The last examples given have demonstrated one of the central paradoxes of the whole matter, namely that literalism, when it segments word for word and element for element, when it insists on going farther and segmenting below the word level (or attributing semantic value to elements below the lexical level), actually becomes a *free* mode of translation. Portions of words, which should be non-semantic, are given semantic values; others are given semantic values which they have, but have only in other contexts. Literal translation, when pressed so far, becomes a mode of free translation.

To sum up, then, segmentation of the text into individual word-elements (and still more, *a fortiori*, segmentation below the level of the word) is a characteristic aspect of literalism in translation. Some of the forms it takes have been illustrated above. Some have thought that it is the basic and underlying form of all literalism. In what follows we shall look at some other manifestations of literalism, consider their connection with this one, and ask whether they are subsidiary phenomena to be ranged under this one or separate and partly independent aspects of literalism.

2. *The quantitative addition or subtraction of elements.* A translation may amplify the text it is translating, adding to it considerable amounts of new material. In some Aramaic Targums this tendency is very marked. For instance, in Targum Jonathan Hannah the mother of Samuel in her well-known prayer inserts an extensive excursus in which she refers by name to future world-rulers like Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar. At Lev. 1.1, where the Hebrew has a short sentence saying that the Lord called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, Neofiti has a long passage on how Moses had completed the construction of the tent. He then thought: I did not ascend Sinai, whose consecration is for but one hour, until it was spoken to me from before the Lord; it is just that I should not enter the tent of meeting, whose consecration is eternal, until it is spoken from before the Lord. Then (v. 2) the Lord spoke to him, saying ...[1])

Expansions of this sort make a version less literal. Literally, we say, these elements are not there in the original. Conversely, if there is something in the original text which is left without representation in the translation, this also means that the version is not literal. Quantitative divergence from the original in either direction means loss of literality. A literal translation will express

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[1]) This is an abbreviation of the actual passage in the text.

only the linguistic elements that are present in the original, and will express all of them. The measure for this is of course semantic: there is no way in which a Greek text can be merely quantitatively equivalent to a Hebrew text, except that it expresses *meanings* that stand for the meanings of each element in the Hebrew.

When large additions are made, these can sometimes be regarded as free composition. The version is then a mixture of two things: it is in part a translation of the original, in part free writing, meditation, commentary, midrash and the like. When this is so we may find that the version combines the literal and the free: where it is actually translating the original text it may be quite literal, but the additional material is free. As Rabin puts it, when writing of the "interpretative Targumim", "they are literal where they translate, and do not translate where they are not literal".[1]

And certainly if material is pure free composition, having no base in the original text, we hardly need to concern ourselves with it. The speech of Job's wife in the Greek Job 2.9a–e presumably had no Hebrew *Vorlage* and the question of literality does not arise. The same is true of the occasional added phrases or sentences of the Greek Proverbs. Conversely, the Greek Job seems to have simply omitted phrases, half-lines and whole verses from time to time, e.g. 10.4b; these elements were "literally" there, but the version ignored them.

Often, however, versions which add considerable amounts of new matter also include within it a quite literal treatment of the actual words of the text. We saw an example just above where we considered Deut. 33.2. The Targum identified in the Hebrew text four meaningful elements: "from his right hand", "fire", "law" and "to them (him?)". These are fairly literally represented in his version, so that he could be said to have translated each word; but the context is formed through the new matter, the words like "he wrote", "from the midst of" and "he gave". Hannah's remarks about Sennacherib and others usually end up by including a fairly literal rendering of the Hebrew words, now enclosed in this new context. Thus expansions are often not *mere* additions, they are exegetical provisions of context. Even the Neofiti expansion at Lev. 1.1, mentioned above, can be regarded as an explanation of the meaning of the text: it tells us *why* nothing more happened until the Lord spoke to Moses. Thus the Targumist could feel that he is only setting out in explicit expression what is already implicit as the meaning of the text. Returning again to Deut. 33.2, if the text gives us the four elements, "fire", "law" and so on, and the previous verse has shown that the subject is God, who comes from Mount Sinai, then it may seem obvious that here again it is God who is using his right hand to write the law from the midst of the fire and give it to Israel: seen this way, the rendering seems almost literal.

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[1] Ch. Rabin, "The Translation Process and the Character of the Septuagint", in *Textus* vi (1968), 18 n. 64.

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in 2013.

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Anyway, in the world of the Aramaic Targums there was a considerable tendency to amplify and expand in this way. If Targum Onkelos gained a reputation for being more literal, it was only in that it did not go so far in expansion as some other Targums. There were, perhaps, two reasons why the powerful amplificatory tendency was acceptable in the Hebrew and Aramaic-speaking Jewish world. Firstly, the expansionism of the Targums was made tolerable because the Hebrew text itself was also there in the same community; and even if not all could understand it, or understand it well, it remained present as a measuring-standard and as the acknowledged source of ultimate authority. The expansions of the Targum were thus easily to be recognized as such. Secondly, the amplifications of the Targum did not become a notorious battleground between Jews and Christians, as happened with the quantitative differences between the Greek Old Testament and its Hebrew original. The pressure of competing religions, both seeking to interpret the same authoritative scripture, was of course one main factor favouring quantitative literalism in translation.

In the Greek world the opposite situation prevailed. The amount of amplificatory matter added to the Greek text, whether by Jews or (later) by Christians, was very slight. One must suppose that the Greek translators had a different view of the scope of their task from that which the Aramaic Targumists held. Words added by Christians on the basis of their own doctrine, like the words ἀπὸ τοῦ ξύλου "from the tree" after "the Lord reigned" in Ps. 96(95).10, were very few. But the attention given to quantitative equalization between the Hebrew and the Greek texts was very great. Such quantitative adjustment was the aim of Origen's Hexapla much more than semantic accuracy; and the literalism of a translator like Aquila seems to have been concerned to ensure that every single element of the Hebrew text, as far as was at all possible, should have its corresponding registration in the Greek.

Literalism, when measured as against quantitative addition or subtraction of elements, seems to be basically a different thing from literalism defined through the division of the text into segments.[1]) It is therefore not surprising if a version can be non-literal in the sense that it admits large expansions but literal in the sense that, where it is translating essential words, it segments them very narrowly.

3. *Consistency or non-consistency in the rendering.* It is usually considered to be a mark of literalism in a translation if the same word is used every time a given word in the original appears. The freer style of translation makes a

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[1]) This can be relevant for historical questions. It is sometimes thought that, because Aquila is known to be a very literal translation, and Targum Onkelos has the reputation of being literal in comparison with other Targums, this forms an argument in favour of the identity of Aquila and Onkelos as persons. But the literalism of Aquila is, it would seem, a quite different sort of literalism from that which can justly be predicated of Targum Onkelos.

point of not doing this. "We have not felt obliged", write the translators of the New Testament in the New English Bible, "to make an effort to render the same Greek word everywhere by the same English word".[1] The idea of literalism as "word for word" translation fits well with the use of constant and stereotyped equivalents. Yet here again we must at once say that this is in principle something different from the other kinds of literalism that have been mentioned. For instance, the kind of literalism which segments the text element by element and represents each in turn in the version can still continue, at least in theory, even if the rendering of each word may be varied at different points within the same book or passage. For instance, we have seen that the Leviticus translator at 15.2, dealing with the Hebrew idiom איש איש "each", segmented with two nouns in Greek, ἀνδρὶ ἀνδρί, but elsewhere he uses again and again for the same idiom the different Greek words ἄνθρωπος ἄνθρωπος (17.3, 22.18 etc). He was literal about this particular segmentation but he was not literal about using one sole and stereotyped rendering for איש.

It may be, of course, that the Leviticus translator had a specific reason for saying ἀνδρὶ ἀνδρί, when at other places he wrote ἄνθρωπος ἄνθρωπος and the like. Perhaps he considered that 15.2 was specially concerned with *males* as distinct from human beings and that therefore ἀνήρ must be used here. The force of this consideration is indeed far from being absolutely decisive: we have already quoted I Chron. 16.3, where the translator writes παντὶ ἀνδρὶ Ισραηλ (לכל איש ישראל) although the context makes it quite clear that women are included as well as men. But this is the whole point. Special semantic considerations at a particular point may make a translator wish to vary from the equivalence that he normally uses. But if he is a literalist of this kind of literalism, i.e. if he binds himself to a policy of total stereotyping, so that for any word of the original one particular word invariably corresponds, then he has abandoned the right to make this sort of variation.

Consistency in the use of vocabulary equivalences is not in itself a sign of literalism. Sometimes translators achieved a high degree of consistency, not because they were particularly trying to do so, but because a particular word was the really natural one in their language and could be used repeatedly without strain. It is indeed a mark of the character of the LXX, and part of the peculiar heritage that it has bequeathed to posterity, that many key words of the Hebrew Bible received from it a remarkably constant rendering in Greek,

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[1] *New English Bible*: the New Testament (Oxford and Cambridge, 1970), p. vii. The statement quoted is an understatement to the point of being disingenuous. The NEB renderings in fact vary from place to place to a degree neither explained nor justified by the remarks offered. No one would have expected the NEB to render any Greek word "everywhere" by the same English word. The appeal made, in the following sentence, to "the wholesome practice of King James's men" is at the least extremely naive, for the proportions of variety used by the King James version and the New English Bible are wildly disparate.

a constancy which was by no means confined to the more deliberately literal books but is found throughout many different strata.[1]) Out of nearly 300 cases of the Hebrew ברית, every example but one is rendered with διαθήκη in the LXX. Out of all cases of עולם, a very high percentage is rendered with αἰών or αἰώνιος. Of the verb אהב "love", a very high percentage of occurrences in all books of the Bible are rendered in the LXX with ἀγαπᾶν.[2]) Thus for many terms the Greek translators, whether rightly or wrongly, thought a standard or normal equivalence to be adequate: even when they depart from it, it is not usually because peculiarities of the context made the usual word seem inadequate at this point. More often it is rather plain inconsequence or carelessness.

It seems then that many Hebrew terms could be translated with the same Greek term in every case without any serious strain on intelligibility and without dependence on the drastic methods of strict literalism. Some may consider that such constancy in the use of terms is stylistically bad because of the loss of variety in diction that results. This point will be mentioned briefly again below;[3]) but it does not seem to have troubled the earlier biblical translators very much. A modern rather free translation like the New English Bible New Testament appeals in justification of its many variations in rendering to the fact that "a word in one language is seldom the exact equivalent of a word in a different language".[4]) This is true but has nothing to do with large numbers of the terminological variations introduced by this translation. Variations like "was famished", "felt hungry", "was hungry" (all for Greek ἐπείνασεν(αν): NEB at Matt. 4.2, 12.1, 12.3 (25.35 etc.) respectively) are surely only stylistic and represent the aesthetic-stylistic views of the translators; they have no deep semantic value and have nothing to do with the absence of exact fit between Greek words and English words. The question of stylistic variety, e.g. between ἀποθνῄσκειν and τελευτᾶν, ὁδός and τρίβος, will be further mentioned shortly. For the present we simply reiterate that a fairly considerable degree of constancy in vocabulary use was a mark of many ancient translations, and there is little sign that this produced a great deal of strain most of the time.

What was serious was if a word was deeply polysemic, like פַּעַם, which has three quite distinct departments of meaning (a) "sole of the foot" (b) "time,

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[1]) A paper on this subject, entitled "Variety and Constancy in Vocabulary Use in Ancient Biblical Translations", has been read by the writer at the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies meeting in Göttingen, August 1977, and also delivered as one of the Grinfield Lectures in Oxford, 8 May 1978. It will be published in due course.

[2]) A paper entitled "The Vocabulary of Love in the Greek Bible" by the writer has been delivered as one of the Grinfield Lectures in Oxford and will be published in due course.

[3]) Fuller treatment will be found in the writer's paper "Variety and Constancy" (note 1 above).

[4]) *New English Bible*, New Testament introduction, ibid.

occasion" (as in *Mal*, *fois*), (c) "anvil"; or if it is used in an idiom, so that its meaning within the idiom was sharply different from its meaning in other contexts. Only extremely rarely can a rendering cover both ranges of meaning, and it is not very desirable that it should. The question of idiom has already been discussed under another heading. In many cases the literalism that comes from word-by-word segmentation cannot be distinguished from the literalism that comes from constancy in use of the same equivalence; and yet there is in principle a difference. A literalist may have segmented an idiom and given each part the sense it has outside the idiom, without necessarily using the same equivalence that he uses elsewhere. This seems to be the case with Aquila's barbarous κόπτω συνθήκην, already cited above: for, if the ascriptions are to be relied on, Aquila did not in fact use κόπτω as his sole and perpetual rendering of כרת: at Jer. 34 (41).18, for example, he uses διαιρεῖν in translating this verb. At least in cases of this kind, the literalism in rendering of the idiom seems to come from segmentation rather than from zeal to have the same equivalence in all cases at all costs. Similarly, with פעם translators seem simply to recognize the polysemy of the word and use one rendering, like καιρός (or an expression like ἑπτάκις) where the sense is "time" and another, like πούς, where it is "the sole of the foot".

Where words are polysemic, even literal translators seem often to yield to the polysemy, at least in major cases. Where פַּעַם means "time" Aquila seems to use κάθοδος, a word used also occasionally in parts of the LXX. At Is. 41.7, which is the only place with the sense "anvil", he writes κάθοδος again, though the context is clearly of one hammering with tools. It seems therefore that he is here imposing the dominant meaning, expressed by him with his κάθοδος, upon an unusual passage and meaning. But it is hard to say he did this out of the doctrinaire insistence that all cases of פעם must be rendered with κάθοδος, for where the meaning is "sole of the foot" he seems to have translated with πούς, if the attribution at Ps. 58(57).11 can be trusted.

Another case: one might have thought it would be safe enough to render all cases of אִשָּׁה with γυνή; but there is of course the idiom literally "woman to her neighbour", used even of inanimate objects of feminine gender like wings, the curtains of the tabernacle and the like. A determined literalist, zealous to ensure that for every אִשָּׁה a γυνή must be written, might have tried a phrase like γυνή πρὸς τὴν πλησίον αὐτῆς. But, if we can be sure of the texts at Ezek. 1.9 (the only place where Aquila is recorded)[1] what he wrote here was the quite unliteral ἑτέρα τῆς ἑτέρας.

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[1] Field ad loc. attributes this reading to both Theodotion and Aquila. Ziegler in the larger Göttingen edition mentions only Theodotion, and if this is correct then my example is not valid for Aquila. But the reading is supported by the manuscript 62, which is rich in Aquila readings (see Ziegler, p. 35). In any case I am encouraged by the evidence in several places that Aquila used ἕκαστος for the similar masculine construction with אִישׁ, e.g. Job 1.4, 41.9, Is. 47.15, Ezek. 32.10.

In fact, then, some common renderings are somewhat literalistic in this sense but only rather loosely so. A good example is the rendering of דָּבָר. As is well known, this is usually understood as "word" but in many contexts it comes closer to "matter, affair". Moreover, in negative sentences it becomes part of the negative expression "nothing", in such cases almost ceasing to be a lexical element with semantic content and coming to have more of a grammatical function. A free rendering for דבר in this context would be οὐδέν, and that is sometimes found. But the dominant renderings for דבר are words for "word", and both λόγος and ῥῆμα are common, the former being about twice as common as the latter. In II Kings 20 we have the account of Hezekiah's words to the king of Babylon and Isaiah's response when he heard about the matter. The passage contains three "nothing" sentences all with a negative followed by דבר. They are:

> v. 13: οὐκ ἦν λόγος ὃν οὐκ ἔδειξεν αὐτοῖς
>
> v. 15: οὐκ ἦν ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ μου ὃ οὐκ ἔδειξα αὐτοῖς
>
> v. 17: οὐχ ὑπολειφθήσεται ῥῆμα

Cf. also the cognate passage in Is. 39, which uses οὐθέν, οὐδέν in the first and third places, and (like II Kings) no word at all in the second.

Both λόγος and ῥῆμα count as somewhat literal renderings, and the omission in the second passage is more free and semantically more correct. Yet it is hard to ascribe the literalism to the determination to use the same word in all places, since patently the translator is not so determined: within the space of a few lines he uses two different renderings of the same common term, both of them literalistic in the same fashion, and between them he uses a free rendering.

Another question which is part of this matter is the identification of homonyms. When we speak of the use of one Greek word to translate all examples of one Hebrew word, we still have to define what is meant by "one word". To us it is evident that כֹּחַ (Lev. 11.30), a small reptile, is not "the same word as" the familiar כֹּחַ "strength". In our dictionaries they are marked as different words, having different entries and being distinguished with a number, I and II, where necessary. To ancient linguists this was not always so plain. Some of the strange renderings of the LXX can probably be understood as homonym mistakes. The Greek word, standard as rendering for a certain Hebrew word, is applied also to another word, which in form is more or less alike but is in fact a quite different word and thus semantically quite unrelated. For the common term גאל, conventionally rendered in English as "redeem", a common rendering was ἀγχιστεύω, deriving apparently from the sense "be next of kin", etc. At Neh. 7.64 we read that certain persons had no genealogical documentation and therefore:

MT: וַיְגֹאֲלוּ מִן הַכְּהֻנָּה

LXX: ἠγχιστεύθησαν ἀπὸ τῆς ἱερατείας

So also II Esdras 2.62.[1]) Now the Hebrew verb here is not our I גאל "redeem" but our II גאל "defile; reject as polluted", a late variant spelling of the more familiar געל. The version certainly does not give anything like a true semantic impression of the text. It is possible that the rendering derives from a policy of unwavering constancy. More probable, perhaps, is the judgement that it is a mere mistake, that the sense normally applied to גאל in the Pentateuch and Ruth has simply been applied to this case, ignoring the semantic chaos that it brought about.

We are now in a position to attempt a survey of the various possible positions on the scale between free and literal in respect of constancy in the use of equivalents. We can perhaps distinguish three or four different tendencies.

Firstly, in the older strata of the LXX there was little conscious striving to use constant equivalences, and a fair amount of variation in vocabulary use is found. Nevertheless it turned out that many Hebrew expressions received the same rendering in a very high proportion of their occurrences. It may be reasonably surmised that this was the result of practical considerations rather than of any doctrinaire preference for the same rendering throughout. This sort of constancy could arise, for instance, from the use of a primitive sort of word-list; it could arise also, if the hypothesis put forward by a number of scholars should be correct, from the practice of taking the books earlier translated (especially the Pentateuch) as a sort of quarry for lexical guidance for later translators.[2]) Constancy of this kind, not being a result of deliberate policy, coexisted with considerable variation, either in that occasional variations occurred in the rendering of words that commonly had a constant rendering, or in that, while some words normally enjoyed a constant rendering, others never had a constant rendering and always underwent considerable variation.

Secondly, a later stratum of the LXX shows an increasing desire for accuracy, which it was thought would be attained through increased regularity in the equivalences used. Where this became sufficiently deliberate, we can begin to speak of *stereotyping*. Later books translated, and revisions of older translations, often moved in this direction.[3]) Where this is consistently followed, we find a high degree of regularity: for a given Hebrew phenomenon, a regular Greek stereotype will be found. This may in itself however not be more than a regularizing and systematizing standardization of the equivalences to

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[1]) II Esdras is among the books classified as "literal or unintelligent versions" by Thackeray, loc. cit. p. 13.

[2]) This view has been recently reasserted by P. Walters, *The Text of the Septuagint: its Corruptions and their Emendation* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 150 ff.; and on this work in general see the writer's review in *Vetus Testamentum* 25 (1975) 247–54.m I reain uncertain whether there is really strong evidence for this theory that the Pentateuch served as a sort of lexicon for the later translators.

[3]) See recently for instance E. Tov, *The Septuagint Translation of Jeremiah and Baruch* (Harvard Semitic Monographs, no. 8; Missoula, Montana, 1976), especially pp. 55–68.

be used. It may produce a wooden and unimaginative version, lacking in variety and interest, but the renderings themselves may still be chosen as optimum representatives in Greek of the basic meaning of the expressions concerned. For instance, from among Tov's examples,[1]) the older stratum of Jeremiah rendered הוֹציא with both ἐκφέρω and ἐξάγω, while the reviser (according to his theory) used only the one stereotype ἐξάγω. This stereotype may reduce sensitivity to contexts and nuances but it could not be said that it grossly or drastically obscures the meaning for a Greek reader.

By the use of these methods it is possible to produce a very rigid and standardized relationship between the words of the original and those of the version, and some ancient biblical translations achieved this, if "achieve" is the right word to use. The Harclean Syriac and the Syro-Hexaplar version may be particularly mentioned. But for the rigidity of their use of equivalences, modern scholars would have had much greater difficulty in reading back from the Syriac text to the Greek original which they presuppose. It remains more of a question how far, even in literal versions of this kind, the prospect that the original users would want to read back to the original was entertained. To permit the possibility of read-back to the original, a yet farther step in literalism is required. A one-to-one relationship in both directions has to be established. Not only, given (say) a Hebrew expression, must there be a single stereotype which will stand for that expression in Greek, but also, given a Greek expression, there must be a single Hebrew expression from which alone it can have derived.

These theoretical remarks are of importance when we consider a third possibility, the option which we may call the *imitative* style of translation and which is relevant above all for Aquila. Here translation is conceived not so much as a statement in Greek of the *sense* of the Hebrew: rather, or at least in addition, it is a guide in Greek to the *form* of the Hebrew; yet, since the translation is in Greek, the clues it furnishes to the form of the original are clues communicated through the forms and the semantics of the Greek words used. Katz (later Walters) expresses this view of Aquila vigorously: "He sees it to be his task once and for all to choose a Greek equivalent for each Hebrew word . . . He is concerned solely with the several words as such and not at all with the context which alone yields meaning to its components. To him the Hebrew text represents a mosaic which must be left unchanged, except for the replacement of its Hebrew 'stones' by Greek ones. The result may neither be Greek nor make sense; but to those in the know, those who have Hebrew . . . it calls to mind the Hebrew original with all its *minutiae*."[2])

Now I believe this theory of Aquila's work to be at least partly correct but it cannot as yet be discussed in full because the part in which it is most fully justified is another of our kinds of literalism, which has still to be expounded. At this point we have to consider it only from the aspect of constancy in the

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[1]) Tov, ibid., p. 65.   [2]) In *Vetus Testamentum* viii (1958), p. 272.

use of equivalences. From this point of view it seems uncertain whether Aquila was so extreme a literalist as has commonly been believed. It is true that some spectacular cases of stereotyping can be cited from his work: for instance the use (apparently without exception)[1]) of ὁρᾶν for ראה and the ugly coinage ὁραματίζειν for חזה, both meaning "see"—and analogous forms for nouns derived from both. When this happens Aquila provides means of read-back for the users of his version: anyone seeing ὁραματίζειν may know that the Hebrew had a form of חזה.

What is not so often noticed about Aquila is that there are very many words and expressions for which he does not apply this degree of constancy. There is indeed some difficulty in assessing the evidence, because some of the words ascribed to Aquila in the sources may have come from other translators, and in addition we have reports that he produced two different editions, the renditions of the one often differing from those of the other. Sometimes scholars have used the principle of Aquila's extreme regularity to rule out as erroneous evidence that ascribes particular words to him. But, unless our evidence is massively erroneous, it must be clear that with many words Aquila did *not* follow a very extreme stereotyping policy. His famous rendering κεφάλαιον for ראשית in Gen. 1.1, in place of LXX ἀρχή, is not universal in his version: ἀρχή for ראשית, ראשון etc. is not infrequent. βακτηρία stands for מטה and משענת; ῥάβδος for מטה, שבט and מקל; σκῆπτρον for שבט and מקל. Moreover, where one form in Hebrew could have two distinct meanings, Aquila expressed these—in many important cases—with different words in Greek. The verb גלה has two sharply distinct senses, "uncover, reveal" and "go into exile". A translator who regarded the Hebrew words as atomic context-free entities would naturally have given one translation for all instances of גלה, ignoring the inevitable destruction of sense in Greek. Not so Aquila: where it meant "uncover" he wrote ἀποκαλύπτω, and where it meant "go into exile" he wrote ἀποικίζω, just as other translators, including the LXX, had done. Many other similar examples can be given. If the main mass of our evidence is reliable, Aquila did not press the stereotyping tendency very far and on very many words did not achieve a one-to-one relationship between Hebrew and Greek, in either direction. It is probably the failure to distinguish adequately between the various kinds of literalism that has led Aquila, who in certain other respects is an extreme literalizer, to be regarded as one who pressed consistency in renderings to its extreme. In fact it may well be that some of the revisers who worked on later strata of the LXX pushed consistency in renderings farther than he did.

The fourth possibility, in relation to constancy in the use of equivalents, is a positive preference for variety. The use of varying renderings for a given

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[1]) For present purposes I accept the argument of Reider-Turner, *An Index to Aquila* (Leiden, 1966), p. 174, which eliminates as erroneous the evidence that there were exceptions to this.

term of the original is a classic aspect of freer translation. It may mean the fairly delicate choice of a rendering to fit the subtle nuance of a particular passage (presumably the NEB translators thought there was some reason for saying that Jesus "was famished" rather than "was hungry", though the point escapes me); or it may mean that, though no discernible difference of meaning is intended, words are varied for the sake of variety. Indeed, in some cases in the LXX it is probably wrong to speak of a "preference" for variety at all, for we cannot be sure if there was a volitional aspect in this: the fact that a translator in rendering a given word uses a different rendering from that which he has used somewhere before does not necessarily mean that he *intended* any variety or that he noticed the matter at all.

For the use of variety in rendering it is customary to point to the books commonly classified as more "free", like Proverbs and Job. And good examples can easily be found. At Prov. 30.19 we have four "ways"—the way of the eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the sea, the way of a man with a maid. All four are דֶּרֶךְ in Hebrew; but in the Greek Proverbs we have ἴχνη with the eagle, ὁδοί with the snake, τρίβοι with the ship, and ὁδοί again with the man. (The Vulgate, by contrast, went back to *via* for all four!). Yet the Proverbs, like so many ancient translations, were far from consistent followers of any principle in these matters. Free translation, in the sense of liberty to choose a variety of renderings for any one term of the original, is not always used in order to avoid repetition and produce stylistic variety in the product. Hebrew proverbial sentences often have two words in parallel: among words for "road, path" we find ארח/דרך, דרך/דרך, or נתיבה/ארח. In the Greek Proverbs there are no less than *seven* places in which this variety of the Hebrew diction is obliterated in the Greek, which uses ὁδός twice or τρίβος twice.[1]) Freedom to vary the choice of renderings was not the same thing as the pursuit of stylistic variety in the product, and indeed could be the negation of it. The fact that the "free" books like Proverbs contain substantial "literal" elements as well fits in once again at this point.

It was with St Jerome that a methodical and schooled perception of the advantages of a somewhat freer translation method came to be felt in ancient biblical translation; in the Old Testament he had a certain precedent in workers like Symmachus. He had a classical education and knew of Cicero's experience in translating into Latin the works of Greek philosophers; he quoted Cicero as saying he had translated "not as an interpreter (he means a dragoman or workaday business interpreter) but as an orator": *non pro verbo necesse habui reddere, sed genus omnium verborum vimque servavi*. And Jerome stated that his own translation policy was *non verbum e verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu*—except, he said, in the case of Holy Scripture, where even the word order was a *mysterium*. But, though Jerome in his biblical translation

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[1]) Prov. 2.8, 13, 20; 3.6; 4.14, 18–19; 12.28.

was a good deal more literal than Jerome in his translation of other works, in comparison with the Old Latin and much earlier biblical translation he stood for freedom rather than for literality.

4. *The accuracy and the level of semantic information.* A term x in a certain language has a certain range of meaning. In translating it into another language, a term y is used which has a wider range of meaning, or a narrower range of meaning. In either case we may say that y is at best only a rough or a free rendering: "literally" or "actually" x means less, or means more. Literality in this case means the correct estimate of the semantic range of the term being translated.

Take a famous case, surely the most famous case in all the history of biblical translation: the παρθένος of Is. 7.14. An עַלְמָה will conceive and have a child. The LXX rendered with παρθένος. Contrary to what is often said, this was not a mistranslation: for, in writing παρθένος, they did not mean "virgin", they meant "young girl", a perfectly well-known sense of the word.[1]) But what they *intended* was not quite enough: for they had used a word which, while perfectly appropriate in itself for what they meant, also had another department of meaning, the sense "virgin"; and that latter was its more specific sense as against other words in the general "young woman" field, and it was also the sense generally meant when παρθένος was used in the Greek of the Bible. It therefore became possible to say, as the Christians later said, that this text spoke of a virgin birth. The word, though perfectly adequate so long as no misunderstanding arose, was not sufficiently exact: it permitted and even encouraged precisions which were unwarranted by the semantics of עַלְמָה. To avoid possible misunderstandings one should seek a rendering which will fit more exactly the semantic range of the Hebrew word, in other words which will be more literal in this sense of the word.

If there is, then, a literality which consists in an accurate rendering of the semantic value of the words of the original, this sort of literality has a different logical behaviour from other types that we have examined. This is particularly so in the following respect: in many sorts of literality the literal is one extreme, and the free is the opposite extreme; but in this type the literal is at the centre, and derivations from it in either direction are "inexact", "inaccurate", "rough" or "free".

The implications of this are noticeable with metaphorical expressions. We may begin with an easy illustration from the English versions:

Ps. 95.1 MT: נָרִיעָה לְצוּר יִשְׁעֵנוּ

Prayer Book version: let us heartily rejoice in the *strength* of our salvation

AV: let us make a joyful noise to the *rock* of our salvation

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[1]) The sense was no more specifically the sense "virgin" than in I Macc. 1.26: ἐστέναξαν ἄρχοντες καὶ πρεσβύτεροι, παρθένοι καὶ νεανίσκοι ἠσθένησαν.

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In a case like this we say that the AV is "literally" correct: the meaning of the Hebrew word is "rock" and not "strength". But, of course, as the other side would express it, the "real" meaning here is not "rock": the Psalmist is not telling us to worship a rock, but to worship God, who is *like* a rock in respect of his strength. There are thus two levels to be considered, the literal meaning of the word as a normal linguistic unit, and the more ultimate significance, the quality or reality that is actually being spoken about. The result is paradoxical: literal translation preserves the metaphor, free translation renders the further significance of the metaphor but destroys the actual metaphor itself. The reader of the Prayer Book version as quoted above no longer knows that the text is a metaphor based on the word "rock".

Another simple example: Jacob in his blessing describes Reuben as:

Gen. 49.3 MT: רֵאשִׁית אוֹנִי

LXX: ἀρχὴ τέκνων μου

According to a probable interpretation,[1]) the phrase in itself says "the first (product) of my manly vigour"; the actuality to which it refers, however, is the fact that Reuben was the first of Jacob's children. The LXX rendering, by going straight to the reference, loses the metaphor.

Similar, but more complex, cases arise with the exegesis of passages considered theologically important. Consider for example:

Num. 24.17 MT: דָּרַךְ כּוֹכָב מִיַּעֲקֹב וְקָם שֵׁבֶט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל

LXX: ἀνατελεῖ ἄστρον ἐξ Ιακωβ καὶ ἀναστήσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ Ισραηλ

Tg. Onk.: יקום מלכא מיעקב ויתרבא משיחא מישראל

No one doubts that כוכב means "star" and שבט means "sceptre"; but the reference, that of which the passage speaks, is not a literal star or sceptre. Non-literal translations may offer not the linguistic semantic value of the words but the exegetical-theological value of the reference. The Targum thus gives "king" and "anointed one", completely losing the original wording. The LXX keeps the original wording for the first noun but, inconsistently, departs from it for the second.[2])

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[1]) It is also possible to hold that the semantic value of און is "sorrow": so Aq. κεφάλαιον λύπης μου, Sym. ἀρχὴ ὀδύνης. Vulg. *principium doloris mei*. This does not however make any difference to the effectiveness of our example: if the LXX *took* the word as "strength", then *for them* it was a relation between the literal value "strength" (= the metaphor) and the actual reference "children".

[2]) For ἄνθρωπος here cf. 24.7, where for MT יִזַּל־מַיִם מִדָּלְיָו LXX writes ἐξελεύσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτοῦ. This takes the Hebrew expression as metaphorical; but, if he means that the "man" would be the Messiah, the Greek expression was still more limited and less explicit than that of Onkelos at v. 17.

An even more complete gulf between the two modes of translation is shown by the following instance:

Ex. 23.19 MT: לֹא־תְבַשֵּׁל גְּדִי בַּחֲלֵב אִמּוֹ

LXX: οὐχ ἑψήσεις ἄρνα ἐν γάλακτι μητρὸς αὐτοῦ

Tg. Onk.: לא תיכלון בסר בחלב

(i.e. "you shall not eat meat in milk")

From the point of view of linguistic-semantic accuracy, the LXX version is quite literal (ἀρήν is really a lamb rather than a kid, but that is a smallish point; Symmachus corrected this with ἔριφος later). The Targum rendering on the other hand departs almost entirely from the semantics of the original words. What it presents is the halachic-exegetical resultant effect of the passage. There is no quantitative expansion on the part of the Targum here, and the syntactic matrix of the original is more or less retained ("thou shalt not + verb + object + in milk") but no trace is left of the original meanings of the individual words.

The much-discussed question of the elimination of anthropomorphic expressions can perhaps be considered in the same way. Where the Hebrew of Is. 6.5 says "My eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts", the Targum Jonathan writes "the glory of the Shekinah of the King of Ages, the Lord of Hosts, have mine eyes seen". The rather anthropomorphic expression of the original is treated in rather the same way as if it was a metaphorical expression, the actual state referred to by which is expressed by the Targum. The LXX on the other hand gives a rendering which in this respect is entirely literal:

τὸν βασιλέα κύριον σαβαωθ εἶδον τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς μου.

There were, then, in ancient translations a large number of renderings which deviated, sometimes a little and sometimes very far, from the actual meanings of the original text. Some of these were occasioned by methodically recurring problems, such as metaphor, anthropomorphism and exegetical interpretation; others were the result of carelessness or the sense that an approximate rendering was just as good as an exact one. Some, like the παρθένος of Is. 7.14, were perfectly accurate renderings in themselves but could easily be misread because they did not explicitly exclude another possibility. For all of these problems a more literal kind of translation seemed to offer a solution: write down in the versional language words that give a correct semantic impression of the text as it stands, no more and no less. With this kind of literalism, if it goes no farther than that, the modern reader may find a good deal of sympathy.

Moreover, it is easy to see how these considerations may have generated the desire for constancy in rendering which we discussed above. How is one to

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determine what is the right semantic value for any term? One obvious way is to give it the same value as it has in other contexts than the one now being translated. If צור means "rock" everywhere else, why should it be translated as "strength" at Ps. 95.1?—or, similarly, why should it be translated as θεός about eighteen times in the LXX (a cluster in Deut. 32 and the rest scattered mainly in the Psalms)? Is not the obvious course that it should be rendered with a word for "rock" in all cases, whether metaphorical, messianic, or otherwise obscure? Is it not sensible that, since παρθένος is mainly used in the strict sense "virgin" and therefore translating בתולה, it should be kept exclusively to that function, while νεᾶνις or some other word should be standardized as the invariable term where the original has עלמה?

Such may have been the reasoning, and in itself it was not a bad argument. In certain respects the more rigorously literal translations were able to improve upon semantic inaccuracies of the earlier versions. Nevertheless semantic accuracy was in a sense the Achilles heel of ancient literalism. Improvement in semantic accuracy was attainable, but was attainable only by a moderate and flexible approach aimed at securing the maximum semantic agreement with the Hebrew text. In particular, the aim of semantic accuracy, important as it may have been in promoting a move towards greater literalism, conflicted with many of the other means which ancient literalism adopted and cherished — its word-for-word segmentation, its search for constancy in renderings for any given word, its "etymological" representation of linkages and relations existing within the language of the original text. All of these literalistic mechanisms finally fall prey to the criticism that they produce renderings that do not *mean* what the original meant.

To conclude, two historical notes. Firstly, it is in the sense of the above remarks that I interpret the famous statement of the translator of Ben Sira in his prologue (vv. 22 ff.). When he wrote:

οὐ γὰρ ἰσοδυναμεῖ αὐτὰ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς Ἑβραϊστὶ λεγόμενα καὶ ὅταν μεταχθῇ εἰς ἑτέραν γλῶσσαν

he was not expressing the quite modern idea of an unbridgeable conceptual gulf between the Hebrew and the Greek languages. He was observing—as we can still observe today—that the Greek text he had written was often semantically not very close to his Hebrew original. Observing this, he goes on to remark that this is not confined to his own product, but the same semantic inaccuracy can be found throughout the Law, the Prophets and the other writings in Greek. Far from stating, as one of his interpreters has understood it, that "literal translation from Hebrew into Greek is impossible",[1] he was voicing that dissatisfaction with the performance of Greek translation from Hebrew which was to lead to the movement for increasing literalism. His

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[1] J. H. A. Hart, in his edition, *Ecclesiasticus* (Cambridge, 1909), p. 267.

own product had been a thorough mixture of free and literal techniques, and no reader could doubt that, if at any point he came close to expressing what the Hebrew had said, it was where he was being literal rather than where he was being free.[1]

Secondly, it is sometimes thought that Aquila's version through its literalism confuted certain Christian misunderstandings and thus helped to defend the Hebrew text against misinterpretation. This is largely an illusion. If the LXX contained ambiguous terms which could have given rise to Christian mis-interpretations, Aquila's version was equally full of words which could have been exploited had Christians been quick enough to do so. In the very first words of his Bible, ἐν κεφαλαίῳ representing בראשית, he had a phrase of which the Christians could have said that it showed that Christ, as the head or κεφαλή of creation, had been involved in the creation of the world, just as ἀνακεφα-λαιοῦσθαι is used of him in the New Testament. The Jews could have got out of this only by saying, No, the text did not *mean* κεφάλαιον or anything of the sort, it meant "in the beginning". If such misunderstandings did not happen, this was not because the Aquila version had guarded against them, it was for other social reasons. And even in the most famous case of all, the use of νεᾶνις to replace παρθένος at Is. 7.14, one may question whether Aquila had made a watertight case: for it seems that here, as in so many places, he did not achieve the constancy of equivalences that he is supposed to have achieved. At Deut. 22.28 there is an ascription to Aquila of the rendering νεᾶνις, where however the Hebrew was בְּתוּלָה (LXX παρθένος). Since this was definitely a virgin, Christians could have argued that Aquila's νεᾶνις at Is. 7.14 was a virgin too. Moreover, at Gen. 24.43 Aquila had used the "etymological" rendering ἀπόκρυφος for עַלְמָה, which showed how little concerned he was to provide equal semantic accuracy throughout. To these "etymological" ren-derings, however, we must now turn.

5. Coded "etymological" indication of formal/semantic relationships obtaining in the vocabulary of the original language.

As has been already mentioned, extreme literalism in translation from the Hebrew Bible into Greek began, perhaps unconsciously, to accept a new motivation and pursue what I have called the imitative style of translation. Where this was far enough advanced, translation began to be not a statement in Greek of the *sense* of the Hebrew but rather, or at least also, a guide in Greek to the *form* of the Hebrew or a reflection of that form. Phenomena of this kind are familiar from the text-books and need be mentioned only briefly here. The most advanced examples come from Aquila but in fact the technique is found in a number of the more literal revisers of sections of the Greek Bible;

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[1] Cf. Brock, loc. cit., p. 22. This does not deny that at places he had felicitous free renderings, such as the ones quoted above, pp. 13,24.

indeed—and this has not been so often noticed—it is found in various parts of the LXX which in other respects are not very literal at all.

Occasionally it was possible to use a Greek word having a similarity to the Hebrew word rendered: thus the very rare form λίς "lion" was pressed into service where the Hebrew had לַיִשׁ (Job 4.11). At least this meant the right thing; translators were very lucky when this could be achieved. If αὐλών for אֵלוֹן is motivated in the same way, it seems not to have the same effect, since אלון is a tree and αὐλών is a hollow or glen; perhaps, however, Aquila thought this to be the meaning of the Hebrew, for there is a long run of evidence that words we consider to be terms for plants were considered to be fields, valleys, gardens etc.[1]) Occasionally it has been suggested that some common words in the LXX, notably ἀγαπᾶν for אהב and (κατα-)σκηνόω for שכן, were similarly motivated, but this seems very doubtful to me.

In any case direct imitation of the Hebrew forms by use of a Greek word that seemed similar was only a very limited aspect of ancient translation, and it was used mainly on very rare or obscure words. It may be added, however, that this procedure may have had its basis in a more general theory, namely the idea that all languages share some common elements, at least to the extent that in any language a few words will crop up that will have an almost exact kinship in form and meaning with words in some other language. The idea could be supported by the story of the Tower of Babel. The Rabbis explained occasional biblical words as identical with a Greek word. Jerome, treating of סֶמֶל "sign" or "idol", informs us that it is a Latin word, taken from the same source as *similitudo* and *simulacrum*. This is of interest in that it shows that this aspect of ancient literalism, devoted as it was to the forms and details of the Hebrew text, was universalist enough to admit contacts with other languages. But the matter is a small one and affects only a small part of the subject.

More important is the attempt to mark features of the Hebrew form by somewhat analogous forms in the Greek, even though the Greek form in itself was not at all similar to the Hebrew. Thus ἔρεισμα καὶ ἐρεισμός (Is. 3.1) seeks to represent the relations between משען ומשענה; νότονδε marks the suffix in הַנֶּגְבָּה; and the remarkable (and syntactically very disturbing) ἐγώ εἰμι signals to the reader that the Hebrew here used the longer form אנכי and not the shorter אני (marked by ἐγώ alone). In a sentence like Jud. 5.3 (B text) ἐγώ εἰμι ᾄσομαι "I will sing", the εἰμι is there purely as a code marker, signalling to the reader that the pronoun is אנכי and not אני. All these are well known phenomena.

Equally well known are the "etymological" phenomena. יצהר "oil" was translated as στιλπνότης because it appeared to "come from" צהר, which

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[1]) See my article "Seeing the Wood for the Trees? An Enigmatic Ancient Translation" in Journal of Semitic Studies 13 (1968) 11–20.

means "glisten" and could be rendered as, or thought of as, στίλβω.[1]) Since עָצְמָה, though meaning "strength", can be thought to derive from עצם "bone", it finds a translation as ὀστέωσις; being also longer than the word for "bone", ὀστέον, the rendering also reflects the fact that Hebrew עצמה is longer than עצם. For the verb ערף "break the neck" the rendering τενοντοῦν is coined, to indicate the inner-Hebrew derivation from עֹרֶף "neck", rendered as τένων. Though בראשית meant "beginning", κεφάλαιον—which did not mean "beginning" in Greek—was used because it displayed the essential fact that the Hebrew word came from ראש "head".

This sort of literalism is well enough known and only some remarks need be made about it. The sort of devotion to the forms and patterns of an original language implied by it was such that it was not likely to become much developed except among Jews. Incidentally, it is often thought that these remarkable word-formations and usages were so bad as Greek that they could be intelligible only to those who also knew Hebrew, but it seems to me quite uncertain that this was so. The evidence seems to be to the contrary and to suggest that versions using this sort of rendering were much used by people who could not understand Hebrew, or only very little: either they were given explanations at particularly obscure points, or these points simply remained unintelligible.

Though the basic data of this sort of literalism has long been known and commented on, a deep analysis of its methods has not always been provided. Though often called "etymological", the method has little to do with real etymology. Its basic datum consists of the similarity in form between one word and another in Hebrew. Sometimes this means actual derivation, sometimes it does not. Formal relations existing in Hebrew are signalled in the version through the establishment of formal relations in Greek also. But— and this is the fatal step—the signalling of these relations in Greek has semantic consequences other than those that obtained in the Hebrew original. ὀστέον and ὀστέωσις both mean something about "bone" in Greek, but עָצְמָה, though similar to עֶצֶם "bone" in Hebrew, did not mean "bone" or anything about bone. The rendering of ראשית as κεφάλαιον establishes in Greek a relation with κεφαλή but obscures the fact that ראשית meant "beginning". The famous rendering of the direct object particle את with σύν establishes the formal fact

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[1]) Translators, whether literal or free, sometimes based their renderings on meanings of post-biblical Hebrew or even Aramaic; this one depends on the post-biblical sense of הצהיר (Jastrow, p. 1265a; Sir. 43.3). Paradoxically, the Greek rendering at Sir. 43.3 ἐν μεσημβρίᾳ αὐτοῦ "in its noon", is arrived at by going back to the *biblical* sense of צׇהֳרִים "noon", when the correct sense should be "in its shining". The most striking instance of an Aramaic meaning is Ps. 60.10 = 108.10 סיר רחצי "my wash-basin", rendered as λέβης τῆς ἐλπίδος μου. Broadly speaking, the use of meanings from the wrong period or from Aramaic affects the issue of literalism and freedom in principle, but cases are not so frequent as to make it a very important factor.

that there is here a particle את, homographous with the other particle את
meaning "with": but the signalling of this fact can be done only by introducing
into the Greek text the semantic content of this latter particle, which is
thoroughly distorting to the syntax of the Greek.

The full deployment of the "etymological" technique involved two other
factors, both of which have partially come to our notice in another context:
firstly, the existence of homonyms and the problem of distinguishing between
them, and, secondly, the segmenting of words below the word level. Thus, of
the forms with the root (as we would call it) בר, ברר, a form in Ps. 18.27 means
perhaps "be pure", one in Ps. 65.14 means "corn", one in Is. 1.25 means
"lye, potash" (בֹּר); but in Aquila all of these are classed under the one meaning
"chosen, select" (ἐκλεκτός) and this, the sense of the dominant term, is imposed
upon them all. In certain cases, then, homonymic terms were classed as one
and given the sense of a dominant term. In this case the dominant sense is that
of the rather rare and late ברר in the sense "choose, select".

What is striking is that this mode of classing together terms which by our
grammar are not the same term is not new with Aquila; indeed it is found in
some—not always particularly literalistic—books of the LXX. With this
same sequence B–R, ἐκλεκτός is found to translate בריא (of cattle, Gen. 41.2)
and the rare word בְּרֹמִים at Ezek. 27.24 (גְּנְזֵי בְּרֹמִים "variegated cloth"). Another
well-known precedent in the LXX was the word παραπικραίνω and cognates.
The dominant meaning was here taken from מר, מרר "bitter", but it was used
for מרד "rebel" (Ezek. 2.3; or did the Ezekiel translator simply read this as
מרר? It is hard to tell), commonly for מרה "rebel", and in one familiar passage
for the place-name Meriba (Ps. 95.8). Our consonantal idea of the root did not
come into the matter: the various daleths and mems made no difference, and
if words began with B-R or M-R they could be classed together and identified
semantically.

Even the "free" Proverbs can use an etymological rendering, and use it
with high constancy too. An interesting example is the rare word תַּחְבֻּלוֹת,
found only five times in Proverbs and once in Job. The Job example had no
rendering in the original LXX, and Prov. 20.18 is also omitted from the
Greek. But all four of the remaining examples (Prov. 1.5, 11.14, 12.5, 24.6)
are rendered with κυβερνᾶν, κυβέρνησις. This was an etymology probably
founded on the cognate חֹבֵל understood as "steersman, captain", found thrice
in Ezek. 27. This is interesting, firstly because it shows that the "free"
Proverbs can work in this way, secondly because many modern scholars accept
roughly the same etymology of this word and, if this is right, it shows that an
ancient etymology can sometimes reflect the right meaning. I myself find this
etymology hard to believe, as a matter of pure philology: such nautically-
derived terms seem rare in Israel, and parallels like "learn the ropes, know the
ropes" (cf. McKane, *Proverbs*, 1970, pp. 265f.) seem to me both English and

modern. Thus, though the Greek translation comes near to some modern scholarly opinion, I judge it to be a translator's etymological device rather than a plain statement of the real meaning. Ben Sira also has the word, but the Greek here avoids the nautical derivation. The etymology was the stock-in-trade of several translators, being used by Symmachus at Job 37.12 and Theodotion at Prov. 20.18. Aquila also follows the nautical understanding of the word; his ἐν οἰακώσεσι at Job 37.12 probably also means "in steerings".

To sum up, then, the "etymological" style of translation, classifying together a group of Hebrew words that have some common formal element and assigning to them all the semantic value of one dominant member, was not new with the advanced literalists like Aquila: the LXX used it from time to time and it explains some of the characteristic renderings which run through the moderate as well as the more literal books. Like other literalistic styles, this one also could be perfectly well mingled with quite free translation techniques.

And indeed this was the secret of it. The "etymological" approach, consistently and universally adopted, would have totally obscured the semantic shape of the Bible and made it quite unintelligible. In fact no one employed it except selectively. It was applied to certain favourite words where its results appealed to the translator. Even Aquila used it far less regularly than has been supposed on the basis of the text-book descriptions of his method. These descriptions, rightly wishing to make clear the idiosyncrasies of Aquila and to throw into high relief the peculiar characteristics of his work, have picked out these etymological eccentricities and made long lists of them. But very large areas of the vocabulary were not thus treated by Aquila. Whether he realised it or not, the principles of translation which he followed work only if they are used not consistently, but only occasionally. His failure to use his principles rigidly was the reason for his continuing intelligibility and therefore for his lasting popularity.

6. *Level of text and level of analysis.* Though literal and free appear at first sight to be contraries, we have seen that there are many ways in which the two can be combined. One way is through possible variations in the conception of what was the actual text to be translated. Literalism can be characterized as having very close relations with the verbal form of the original text. But what, for an ancient translator, was the decisive form of the text? He could have access to the text in either or both of two ways: either through the written and unpointed text (commonly called "consonantal", though not very accurately), or through a combination of that written text with the existing tradition of pronunciation of it. The written text left open more possibilities than the pronounced text. A written form could often be any of several different words, while the same form pronounced could be only one or two. A literalism that insisted strictly on the *written* form could thus give more *freedom* of choice

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to the interpreter or translator.[1]) Both the segmentation of forms below the word level, and the "etymological" understanding of them, which we have examined above, make best sense if we suppose that for these purposes the vocalization could be ignored. The rendering of מכתם as if it were two words from the roots מכך and תמם is easier to understand if one supposes that the analysis was done straight from the written consonantal text. The assimilation to one another of different words like בַּר and בֹּר, both rendered as ἐκλεκτός, similarly implies that for these words the vocalization, which makes them into "different words", was ignored. These forms of literalism thus implied within themselves a principle which itself tended in a freer direction. It is thus not so surprising that a translator like Aquila normally takes words in a sense agreeing with the MT (which here means the complete MT, the MT as known vocalized) and yet also gives himself freedom to render in a mode that ignores its directions.

Another possibility is that the translator analyses his text lexically, deriving from it elements which are taken rather literally, but put together in a syntactic ensemble which is entirely free. Examples of this can be found in the Greek Proverbs:

Prov. 11.3 MT: תֻּמַּת יְשָׁרִים תַּנְחֵם

unpointed: תמת ישרים תנחם

LXX: ἀποθανὼν δίκαιος ἔλιπεν μετάμελον

From the text the basic lexical elements have been identified: תמת contains "die", ישרים "righteous", and תנחם has been taken in two different ways and translated twice. The first way is to see it as a form from הִנִּיחַ, hence "leave" (καταλείπω is used for this a number of times, e.g. Ex. 16.23 f.); secondly it is seen as the noun תַּנְחוּם. These lexical elements are thus taken fairly literally and rendered with common or easily understandable equivalences. But the syntactic structure of the Greek sentence is a quite free composition of the translator. The same sort of distribution between free and literal is found in:

Prov. 17.3 MT: מַצְרֵף לַכֶּסֶף וְכוּר לַזָּהָב

LXX: ὥσπερ δοκιμάζεται ἐν καμίνῳ ἄργυρος καὶ χρυσός

IV.

It remains to conclude this study with a short resumé of the picture that has been built up. It has been shown, I think, that "literal" and "free" are not clear and simple terms in the world of ancient biblical translation. There are numerous ways in which a version could be both at the same time. It could

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[1]) See already *Vetus Testamentum* Supplements xvi (1967) 6–9.

be literal, by one of the ways in which one may be literal, while by another of
the ways it was simultaneously free. Ancient biblical translations are seldom
pure exponents of either the literal or the free mode of operation: generally
speaking, they are compromises, in which different proportions of the literal
and the free are to be found.

It might be possible to devise a scheme by which the various different modes
of literality might be formally designated and marked. If this were done one
could then go through any particular book in a Greek or other version and
give for each verse a percentage notation or something similar, quantifying the
degree of literality on each of several levels. It might then be possible to
produce a more systematic and final assessment of the degree of freedom or
literality to be found in a book, especially a somewhat puzzling and contra-
dictory book like the Greek Proverbs. But this present study has stopped short
of making this further attempt. Our main purpose has been to make a clearer
analysis of what it is to be literal, to expose the logic of how literalism
works.

At the beginning we spoke of the rationale of literalism, and of the pos-
sibility of uncovering the various factors that brought it about. The following
aspects may be recapitulated:

Firstly, some of the practices which led in a literal direction may well have
been generated by the practical problems of translating. It may seem con-
venient to analyse on a word-for-word basis. It saves trouble if the same
equivalence is used again and again for any single word of the original.
Devices like primitive word-lists would encourage this. Many early translators
were probably not sophisticated interpreters but practical linguistic trans-
lators. They were not literalists in any ideological sense but they often used
simple means of working which were taken over, generalized and made more
consequent, by more literalist successors.

Secondly, the movement towards literalism was fostered by the drive to
achieve greater accuracy. Early translations, though often readable, seemed to
have unaccountable variations and unevennesses in them. This came to be
felt especially when the text of the Bible became a battleground of contention
between competing religions and sects.

Thirdly, the conception of inspired scripture encouraged a more literalist
approach. If God had inspired scripture, he had inspired not only its general
meaning but its detail. Even the smallest element was there for some reason.
A translation which wanted to pass on to readers the full data needed for
religious life had therefore to give full representation to such elements.

Fourthly, there was the conception of multiple meaning. A text might not
mean only one thing; it could have several levels of meaning. But a free
translation is almost bound to commit itself to one meaning rather than
another, and thus to exclude the others. A literal translation, by contrast,
seeks to bring the reader to the actual form of the original, from which

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departure can then be taken in the voyage of search for authoritative meanings.

Fifthly, among Jews in the Greek world the authority and prestige of the Greek version began in the course of time to be challenged by the deepening conviction that real authority lay in the Hebrew. Under this influence we see the growing use of methods which seek to imitate features of the form of the Hebrew original.

All these forces favoured the development of more literalist policies in biblical translation. The more extreme among them produced phenomena which are, when isolated, quite startling and alienating in their effects: yet these were often only an extension of features which had been used, less frequently and more sporadically, by earlier and less literal translators.

What spoiled literalist translation, in spite of the understandability of its original motives and rationale, was its deep failure to give a correct *semantic* impression of the meaning of the original. Techniques intended to protect the correctness of meaning and to reproduce the form of the original quickly became semantically distorting; in this respect literal translation, pushed far enough, joined hands with extreme freedom in translating. What saved the literalists was the fact that they did not push their principles too far. They were *often* able to correct erroneous meanings and improve the impression of the form of the original; if they had been more consistent and pressed their policies farther, they would have destroyed even this advantage. In the end literalism had no solution to the problem: the solution had to be *semantic*, in correct representation of meanings, and not *formal*, in exact following of the formal patterns of the original. But the perception of this was slow to come.