# **Aristeas and Septuagint Origins**

A Review of Recent Studies

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Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the English Revised Version (1885), the King James Version, or are David Gooding's own translations or paraphrases.

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## Aristeas and Septuagint Origins

I

In recent years a great deal of work, much of it very valuable, has been done on the so-called Letter of Aristeas, both in extensive studies of the Letter as a whole for its own sake, and in more restricted investigations of the comparatively few paragraphs that purport to relate the origin of the Septuagint, and incidentally refer to pre-Septuagintal translations. Most studies have upheld the common view that Aristeas' story of LXX origins is part of a work of propaganda aimed at glorifying the Jews, their Law, their high priest, their holy city and country, their temple and scholarly sages; that the details of the story are more romance than history; and that, contrary to what the Letter says, the translation of the Law arose out of the practical needs of Greek-speaking Jews, and not from the policy of Ptolemy's library.<sup>1</sup>

Yet even those who share this view, still disagree as to how many of the details in the story may be accepted as basically true in themselves, and how many are sheer inventions. What is more, there remains wide disagreement on the still more fundamental question, as to how some of the relevant sentences and crucial words should be translated, and how they are to be interpreted within their immediate and wider contexts. It is, therefore, the purpose of this present article to compare the findings of some of the more recent studies, to attempt to assess them and to offer a few slender contributions en passant.

II

There are two passages in Aristeas which have been taken by some to refer to Greek translations of the Law earlier than the LXX.

The first (para. 30) says: τοῦ νόμου τῶν Ιουδαίων βιβλία σὺν ἐτέροις τισὶν ἀπολείπει τυγχάνει γὰρ Εβραικοῖς γράμμασι καὶ φωνῇ λεγόμενα, ἀμελέστερον δὲ, καὶ ούχ ὡς ὑπάρχει, σεσήμανται, καθὼς ὑπὸ τῶν είδότων προσαναφέρεται προναίας γὰρ βασιλικῆς ού τέτευχε.

The questions arise (i) what is it that has been somewhat carelessly done, i.e. what does  $\sigma \epsilon \sigma \eta \mu \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \iota$  mean? and (ii) what are the books that are said to have suffered this fate, whatever it is? Are they carelessly transmitted Hebrew texts, or carelessly made Greek translations?

In the end everything will depend on the meaning of σεσήμανται. If it cannot mean 'translated', or even 'interpreted', but only 'written', there is an end of the argument. But if it could mean, at least in some contexts, 'interpreted', or 'rendered', it would not be fair to say as Zuntz does,² that since the first (half of the sentence) states that the Law is couched in Hebrew letters and language, the second cannot contain information about any versions but because

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Exceptions are E. J. Bickerman, *A. Marx Jubilee Volume*, New York, 1950, pp. 156–7 and B. H. Stricker, 'De brief van Aristeas. De hellenistische codificaties der praehelleense godsdiensten'. *Verhandelingen der koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, afd. Letterkunde*, Nieuwe Reeks, Deel LXII, No. 4, Amsterdam 1956. The latter is answered by R. Hanhart, *VT* XII (1962), pp. 139–63.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 'Aristeas Studies II: Aristeas on the Translation of the Torah'. *JSS*, April 1959, p. 117. Hereafter references to Zuntz are to this article.

of the grammatical structure of the sentence is bound to refer, likewise, to the Hebrew Law. Zuntz's contention is only true if  $\sigma\epsilon\sigma\eta\mu\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\iota$  means 'written' or 'copied out'; in which case the first half of the sentence says that the Law is written in Hebrew, and the second half, still referring to the Hebrew text of the Law, says it has been carelessly written out. But if  $\sigma\epsilon\sigma\eta\mu\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\iota$  could mean anything like 'translated', then, obviously, the second half of the sentence, while still referring to the grammatical subject, 'the books of the Law', would be giving information on the quality of their translation into Greek, and so about the inaccuracy of the Greek versions.

Because of this it is worthwhile examining a supporting argument, which is frequently brought in by those who argue that the reference is to carelessly made Greek translations. In their estimation carelessly written *Hebrew* texts are out of the question.

M. Hadas,<sup>3</sup> who in his translation (p. 111) renders σεσήμανται 'have been committed to writing', nevertheless in his commentary says:

The entire sentence seems intentionally ambiguous. The important question for the history of the Greek translation of the Bible, is whether the existing books referred to are carelessly-transmitted Hebrew texts or carelessly-made earlier translations. It seems unnatural for the king to be interested in the state of the Hebrew text . . .

P. Kahle, repeating his earlier views, in the second edition of the Cairo Genizah<sup>4</sup> says,

The words 'rather carelessly' (ἀμελέστερον) can only be taken as referring to earlier translations, for one can hardly suppose that Demetrius was interested in any form of the Hebrew of the Pentateuch, nor could be suggest that the Hebrew copies had been made carelessly.

And in a footnote aimed at refuting E. J. Bickerman, who did hold that Demetrius was referring to the original text of the Law, Kahle enlarges the argument: '. . . the whole letter tends to show the royal sympathy for the Greek *translation*, not for the Hebrew *original*, which after all was imported from Palestine'. Subsequently S. Jellicoe<sup>5</sup> has repeated the argument: 'It can hardly be, as Kahle rightly observes, that the state of the *Hebrew* text is here the subject of criticism . . .'.

Now this contention that Demetrius would not be interested in the state of the Hebrew text, might carry some conviction if Aristeas' story could be accepted as true: if Aristeas were a Greek as he purports to be; if Demetrius were in fact Ptolemy Philadelphus' librarian, and if the translation were made on his initiative. Then it might, perhaps, be thought a little remarkable that the Greek librarian should be interested in the state of the text of the Hebrew books which he wanted to get translated. Even so, one could reasonably argue that a librarian who habitually examined the textual accuracy of all the Greek works that he collected, might be expected by force of habit to ask himself questions about the textual accuracy of the Hebrew copies of the Law, before he had a translation done. But all this reasoning is in fact needless.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Aristeas to Philocrates, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1951.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Blackwell, Oxford, 1959, p. 213.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> 'Aristeas, Philo and the Septuagint Vorlage.' JTS, October 1961, p. 267.

Aristeas' story is fictitious as most scholars agree. The author is not a Greek but a Jew; he was not present in Philadelphus' court when Demetrius is supposed to have made his suggestion; Demetrius was not Philadelphus' librarian, anyway. It is obvious, then, that though the author has accurately copied the style of court memoranda for the sake of verisimilitude, he has made Demetrius say whatever he wanted him to say, and in the process has occasionally made him speak more like a Jew than a Greek. It is pointless to complain that it is unnatural for Demetrius to be interested in the Hebrew text; perhaps it is unnatural, but it is equally unnatural for the 'Aristeas' of the story, a supposed Greek, constantly to express sentiments and adopt attitudes natural only in a Jew (see Hadas, op. cit., p. 5 f.). The unnaturalness is no ground for trying to change the plain sense of what is said; it is merely an indication of the true source of the sentiments.

Moreover, Aristeas makes Demetrius explain where he got his information from on this point; 'It is reported by those who know'—Jewish experts, obviously. And it is not altogether implausible for Aristeas to imply that, when Demetrius decided to get a translation of the Hebrew Law, he applied to the Alexandrian Jewish experts, who informed him that some Hebrew manuscripts were carelessly written, and that he had better apply to Jerusalem for a reliable copy.

#### III

With the charge of 'unnaturalness' removed, the whole case turns on the meaning of σεσήμανται. Disagreement here is wide and continued. L. Mendelssohn <sup>6</sup> translated it 'perscriptae'; R. Marcus<sup>7</sup> says

The exact meaning of  $\sigma \epsilon \sigma \eta \mu \alpha \nu \tau \alpha \iota$  in Arist., . . . is a matter of dispute. Some scholars take it to mean 'interpreted' and think it refers to previous Greek translations of the Pentateuch, cf. Z. Frankel, *Vorstudien Zu der Septuaginta*, 1841, p. 61, note k. It seems clear from the context, however, that it refers to Hebrew MSS of the Pentateuch which have been carelessly copied from an original scroll (presumably kept in the Temple at Jerusalem).

E. J. Bickerman<sup>8</sup> takes it to mean *notare*, mark with writing, and claims that Aristobulus uses the term in the same meaning 'note down'. Diels suggested that it referred to incorrect vocalisation and Thackeray<sup>9</sup> thought his suggestion ingenious. Nonetheless Thackeray put 'interpreted' in his text, meaning it to refer to an earlier translation, though he allowed the possibility that it meant merely 'committed to writing'. H. G. Meecham<sup>10</sup> follows Frankel (see above) with 'interpreted' meaning 'translated'; Hadas<sup>11</sup> renders it 'committed to writing' but adds a footnote '*sesēmantai* more regularly means "interpreted" i.e. translated'. In a review of Hadas, H. M. Orlinsky<sup>12</sup> reminds us that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Aristeae quae fertur ad Philocratem epistulae initium. Dorpat, 1897, p. 35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Loeb, Josephus, *Antiquities*, vol. VII, p. 21 note c.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Op. cit., p. 156, n. 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The Letter of Aristeas, SPCK, London, 1917, p. 29 n. 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> The Letter of Aristeas, Manchester, 1935, p. 201.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Crozer Quarterly, April 1952, p. 205.

Herzog (apud F. X. Wutz, *Die Transkriptionem von der Septuaginta bis Zu Hieronymus*, Part I (1925), pp. 128ff.) stated that already the Letter of Aristeas provided support for Wutz's Greek transcription theory in that *sesēmantai* = 'transkribiert . . . in griechische Buchstaben'.

## Orlinsky then continues,

In my review of Wutz's Systematische Wege, etc. (*JBL*, 57 (1938), 216) I wrote that a careful study of the use of  $s\bar{e}meio\bar{o}^{13}$  in the Letter (as also in Josephus etc.) proves conclusively that it means simply 'make marginal notes, interpret, annotate' etc.

On the other hand Kahle <sup>14</sup> in his translation puts, 'have been carelessly interpreted (άμελέστερον σεσήμανται), but in his comments he has, 'The words άμελέστερον δὲ... σεσήμανται, 'rather carelessly written', are not clear . . .' It is thus not certain what he believes sesēmantai actually means, though later he makes it clear how he thinks its meaning should be interpreted: 'The words 'rather carelessly" (άμελέστερον) can only be taken as referring to earlier translations', and again 'σεσήμανται, is certainly not copied. . .'.<sup>15</sup>

In this welter of disagreement it is most helpful to have Zuntz's full and, in the present writer's opinion, completely convincing summary of the evidence, both linguistic and contextual, that  $\sigma\epsilon\sigma\eta\mu\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\iota$  means simply 'written'. He points out (pp. 117–9) that in the context the 'careless treatment' is said to have been suffered because the books 'have not benefited from royal care'. The normal 'royal care' given to books entering the library was the establishment of an exact, pure text; the opposite of such careful treatment is not careless translation, but careless writing out. On the linguistic side the decisive piece of evidence is the use made of  $\sigma\eta\mu\alpha\iota\nu\omega$  by Aristobulus in a fragment preserved by Eusebius, Praep. Evang. XIII 12 (para. 7 MRAS, but 12 in the older editions). One cannot do better than quote Zuntz's comment:

In his endeavour to demonstrate that the Greeks got their best thoughts from Moses he has just quoted the prooemium of Aratus—with a thoroughgoing alteration of the original text, putting throughout "God" in the place of "Zeus". <sup>16</sup> In dealing with so well-known a text Aristobulus deemed best to confess to his interference. This he did by assuming the pose of rational criticism. "The poem clearly refers to God, whose power permeates the universe," so he argues, "hence I have written as required, eliminating the poetical (fiction) Zeus":  $\kappa\alpha\theta\dot{\omega}\varsigma$  δὲ δεῖ  $\sigma$ εσημάγκαμεν, περιαιροῦντες τὸν διὰ τῶν ποιημάτων Δία. Περιαιρεῖν is a technical term (Latin inducere) of Alexandrian scholars denoting the bracketing of spurious matter. And  $\sigma$ ημαίνειν is here used for the conscientious writing of a text by a critic—as in Aristeas.

In Aristobulus, then, it is abundantly clear that  $\sigma\eta\mu\alpha$ iv $\omega$  not mean 'translate', but simply 'write'. But it should be emphasized that, while  $\sigma\eta\mu\alpha$ iv $\omega$  means simply 'to write', the process of 'writing' involved for Aristobulus, not faithful copying of the original, but deliberate

<sup>13</sup> Sic.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Op. cit., pp. 212-3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Op. cit., p. 213 n. 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Older editions print texts in which Aratus' own term, Zeus, has been restored.

change of vocabulary in order to make the author say what Aristobulus 'knew' he meant, or ought to have meant. Now the fact that an ancient critic could in the name of careful writing take such liberties with a text, certainly casts light on the phenomena that we see in many LXX manuscripts and particularly the widespread change of vocabulary that is found in the so-called Lucianic recension. These changes, whatever the motive behind them, are not necessarily evidence of the survival and admixture of early, independent translations. They can just as well be accounted for as the result of a careful 'writing' out of the LXX. Since, however,  $\sigma \eta \mu \alpha i \nu \omega$  means 'write' and not 'translate', Aristeas 30 is referring to *Hebrew manuscripts* and not Greek translations.

But before we go on to consider the implications of this, we ought briefly to examine another interpretation of Aristeas 30 and 31, that has been proposed more recently by S. Jellicoe.<sup>17</sup> He takes άμελέστερον σεσήμανται to refer to the corruptions, intentional and unintentional, which had come into the text between the time of the original translation and that at which the author of Aristeas was writing. There are two parts to his supporting argument and for convenience of reference I number them.

- 1. This surely is the force of άμελέστερον δὲ, καὶ ούχ ὡς ὑπάρχει, σεσήμανται her carelessly rendered (i.e. in the course of transmission) and not at all, according to the verdict of those who are well informed on the matter, as it (i.e. the Hebrew text) actually is.
- 2. Such a meaning seems to be demanded by the sentence which follows: "It is fitting, moreover, that these (books) should subsist in the form in which they were accurately rendered under your patronage—δέον δέ έστι καὶ ταῦθ' ὑπάρχειν παρά σοι διηκριβωμένα (not, as Hadas, op. cit., p. 111, "that these books, too, in an emended form should be given a place in your library. . .") for the reason that this legislation is highly philosophical and uncontaminated, as being divine' (para. 31). Here the accuracy and authenticity of the *original* translation are emphasised-not a revision in the time of Aristeas, the repetition of ὑπάρχειν both stressing the abiding authority of the translation and constituting a plea for its permanent retention.

This new interpretation seems to conflict so violently both with the straightforward meaning of the Greek and with the whole weight of the context, that it is difficult to feel sure that one is interpreting Jellicoe's suggestion fairly. It would be easier, for instance, if the new translation he offers in place of Hadas's, could be taken to mean: 'It is necessary that, once these books have been accurately rendered under your patronage, they shall remain in that form'; in other words, if the sentence could be construed as advice against allowing errors to creep into the manuscripts once the translation, which is being proposed, but has not yet been started, has been done. But such does not seem to be Jellicoe's intended meaning. The aorist 'were accurately rendered'—suggests that the translation had been done some years before Demetrius' present memorandum. And, in (1), Jellicoe explicitly says that the corruptions, of which Demetrius complains, were corruptions which had come into the Greek text in between the time of the original translation and that at which the author of Aristeas was writing. Since, then, the author represents himself as contemporary with Demetrius and present in court

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> *JTS*, October 1961, p. 267.

when Demetrius made his original suggestion (para. 10), Jellicoe's interpretation does make Demetrius say that a Greek translation had already been made some years before—long enough for corruptions to have crept into the text—and that it was made under royal patronage; but that, because of the subsequent corruptions, steps must now be taken, not to revise the translation, but to restore its original accuracy.

But if that were Aristeas' meaning, how does he make Demetrius say in paragraph 11, that the Hebrew books still needed to be translated? And if a translation had been previously made under royal patronage, why was it still wanting in the royal library as paragraphs 10 and 30 state? And again, if the translation had been made under royal patronage, there must have been an official library copy. How did it happen that within the king's lifetime this copy became so corrupt? And what sense will then attach to the reason given in paragraph 30 for this corruption: 'they (the books of the Law) have not enjoyed royal care'?

Perhaps Jellicoe would take refuge in the plea that Aristeas has forgotten to speak everywhere consistently with the supposed date of his story. Undoubtedly Aristeas has in places been inconsistent as Zuntz has so fully demonstrated;<sup>18</sup> but it is impossible to think that he has been so inconsistent within such a small space, the more so since, in writing historical fiction, he was free to make his story hang together.

But Jellicoe's interpretation is impossible from the point of view of language as well. To say nothing more, his aorist—were . . . rendered—gives a wrong twist to the perfect διηκριβωμένα, and his translation completely overlooks the significance of the καὶ in the phrase δέον δέ έστι καὶ ταῦθ' ὑπάρχειν, these books  $too^{19}$  . . . Demetrius, in order to complete the library, is proposing the same treatment for the books still missing, as had been given to the books already collected. But if one puts the καὶ into Jellicoe's translation, one makes Demetrius say that the Hebrew law, as well as all the other books already in the library, will in future need to be preserved from corruptions.

## IV

But Jellicoe is not alone in holding a view which can only be justified by charging Aristeas with blatant self-contradiction within the space of a few sentences. Zuntz, who has so convincingly shown that  $\sigma\epsilon\sigma\eta\mu\alpha\nu\tau\iota\alpha$  in paragraph 30 means 'written' and that it must grammatically refer, not to any Greek translation, but to the Hebrew manuscripts, nevertheless makes it a major plank in his case against Aristeas that this reference to imperfect Hebrew manuscripts was a 'smart' move to create the right atmosphere, which very soon involved Aristeas in a story that was not only incredible but also inconsistent. In the present writer's opinion these allegations are unfair and unnecessary; and because they are unfair they tend to weaken, rather than strengthen, Zuntz's otherwise splendid case against founding great theories of LXX origins on this passage of Aristeas. It will, therefore, be worth while examining these allegations in detail.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Op. cit. See also 'Aristeas Studies I: "The Seven Banquets".' JSS, January 1959, pp. 21–36.

<sup>19</sup> Hadas is completely right.

If we confine ourselves strictly to the context, it still seems strange that Demetrius should assert the poor quality of the Jerusalem text. One may test an alternative interpretation. Could he be referring to Hebrew texts kept by the Alexandrian Jews? This interpretation runs counter to conclusions previously drawn; even so, it is not beyond possibility that the writer could here be discounting an assumption followed in other parts—and this understanding would be far less improbable on historical grounds. And yet it is, unless I am greatly mistaken, excluded by the wording of this very passage (Zuntz, p. 119)

This contention, that Demetrius is asserting the poor quality of the Jerusalem text, is the first part of the argument by which Zuntz convicts Aristeas of inconsistency. The second part is the claim that the text that arrives from Jerusalem is, according to Aristeas, the only manuscript of the Law in existence, and therefore any idea of 'careless writing' is here completely out of the question (p. 120). First, then, we should observe that Demetrius nowhere asserts the poor quality of the Jerusalem text. All he says is: 'the books of the Law of the Jews ... have been written somewhat carelessly' (para. 30). He does not specify any particular copies; but he does suggest meeting this difficulty (and several others simultaneously) by sending for elders from Jerusalem, who, in the outcome, do bring with them a very special copy of the Law. Now it is perfectly natural for Demetrius to speak vaguely as he does without specifying particular copies. Suppose the early English translators of the OT had explained the difficulties confronting them to the general public thus: 'the OT is written in Hebrew characters and language; moreover it has been copied out rather carelessly; we must therefore get rabbis from Jerusalem to help us'. No-one would have supposed that they were referring to the Jerusalem text in particular; or that, on the other hand, they were being deliberately vague about which manuscripts they meant, because they did not really know what they were talking about.<sup>20</sup> People might, in fact, have been excused, if they had taken it for granted that, whereas Hebrew manuscripts in general were poor, Jerusalem was likely to have the best text available.

So we must next examine those 'conclusions previously drawn' which make Zuntz think that Demetrius is complaining about the Jerusalem text, although he does not specify it. They are drawn from the wording of paragraph 3 (not 4–5 as Zuntz has inadvertently put):

who (i.e. the High Priest) possesses the greatest usefulness for his countrymen, those with him and those in other places, for the translation (? interpretation) of the divine Law, because of its having been written with them on leather in Hebrew characters.

Zuntz, after commenting on the apparent lacuna in the text and deciding that the 'with them' refers to the inhabitants of Judaea or Jerusalem, continues:

Even so, these fragmentary words yield two important hints. It is stated as a fact of special significance that 'with them' the Torah was written 'in Hebrew characters'; secondly, this text is supposed to exist there, in Jerusalem, and only there-the wording of this sentence

 $<sup>^{20}</sup>$  'It is only too clear that the writer had no concrete tradition to follow, nor any idea of the real problems facing the real originators of the Septuagint . . .', Zuntz, p. 122.

unambiguously implies this, quite apart from the fact that this assumption is indispensable to the story as a whole (p. 114).

Here one is bound to protest that neither of the last two statements is true. The assumption that the text of the Law exists nowhere outside Jerusalem, is not indispensable to the story as a whole, but only to Zuntz's own interpretation, as we shall presently see. And to say that the sentence unambigously implies that the text of the Law exists only in Jerusalem, when in fact the sentence is patient of other interpretations, is plainly an exaggeration. To start with, the sentence does not say that the High Priest is the only one who can translate the Law, but simply that he possesses very great (or possibly, the greatest) usefulness in this respect. Secondly, while Zuntz agrees with L. Cohn in supposing there is a lacuna in the text, his interpretation assumes that the διὰ τό clause is somehow explaining the unique *advantage* that the high priest has—the Judaeans have the Law written down, nobody else has a written copy. Now for a Jew to say such a thing, even under Aristeas' Gentile mask, would be an outrageous misrepresentation of the facts in the eyes of the many Jews for whom he was writing his propaganda. But had he wished to say so unambiguously he must have said simply 'because with them it has been written down'. The fact that he adds 'on leather in Hebrew characters' opens the possibility that the intended contrast is not between a written text in Jerusalem and an oral tradition elsewhere, but between a text written, in Jerusalem on leather in Hebrew characters, and in Alexandria on papyrus in Greek. The contrast, of course, would not be fair; the Alexandrian synagogue, too, would have copies of the Law written on leather in Hebrew characters,<sup>21</sup> as well as Greek papyrus copies. But it would be no more unfair than Zuntz's interpretation which infers that Alexandria had no copies at all.

Thirdly, it is possible without any over-stretching, to construe the sentence in another, different way, so that it states quite straightforwardly the true facts of the case without any misrepresentation. On this view,

- 1. One does not need to suppose any lacuna in the text, but would, in fact, insist that the 'with them' (παρ' αὐτοῖς) is to be taken to refer, in accordance with strict grammar, to the natural antecedent, 'his countrymen, those with him *and* those in other places.' In other words 'with them' does not refer solely to the inhabitants of Judaea or Jerusalem, and intend a contrast between them and other Jews elsewhere. Aristeas is speaking as a Greek; when he says 'them' he is thinking of *Jews*, all Jews everywhere, as he explicitly says, 'those with the High Priest in Jerusalem and those in other places'.
- 2. One would then interpret the διὰ τό clause as expressing, not the unique *advantage* of Jerusalem Jews, but the common *difficulty* of Jews everywhere: their Law is written in Hebrew. Now no average Jew reads or speaks Hebrew, and therefore their Law has to be interpreted and translated for them. Even the Jews with the high priest in Jerusalem will need translation, for they speak not Hebrew, but Aramaic; while Jews in Alexandria speak Greek.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Cf. *Sopherim* 1-3 which requires copies of the Law to be written on leather scrolls; and for the early use of leather for writing purposes in Egypt, see BA, VI, 1943, pp. 74 – 5).

3. One would then suppose a slight ellipse in thought: the high priest possesses very great usefulness for his fellow-countrymen, both those with him and those in other places, for the translation of the Law: (and it needs translation) because with them it is written on leather in Hebrew characters. The naturalness of this ellipse can be illustrated by an imaginary modern counterpart. A Muslim, interested in the Catholic religion and explaining why he visited the Pope, might quite naturally express himself thus: the Pope possesses the greatest usefulness for his fellow Catholics, both those with him in Italy and those in every other country, for the interpretation of the Mass; for with them the Mass is written in Latin. The inference would be that the Mass, being written in Latin, needs interpretation for Catholics in Italy who speak Italian and not Latin, as well as for Catholics elsewhere.

The general merit, then, of this interpretation is that it fits exactly the historical facts as we know them, whereas the Jews of Alexandria for whom Aristeas was really writing, and who every Sabbath day saw in their synagogue a copy of the Law on leather in Hebrew characters, would not readily read into Aristeas' words what Zuntz does, namely, that there were no written copies of the Law outside Jerusalem. At least, it would be understandable if they did not find the sentence *unambigously* to mean that.

Nevertheless Zuntz has a stronger point when he comments on paragraphs 9–11 (p. 114).

In the context, however, of the scene narrated in 9–11, the king's sudden move, not suggested by Demetrius or anyone else, is understandable only if it is taken for granted that 'the laws of the Jews' are to be found only in 'the land of the Jews'. The inference is borne out by Demetrius' saying (11) that 'in Judaea' people use a special kind of writing: this would be pointless, were it not understood that there only the coveted book exists.

But if the king's sudden move is examined more carefully in its context, Zuntz's point disappears. The king's suggestion to write to the high priest comes in reply to Demetrius' complaint, that it was useless obtaining a copy of the Laws and copying it out in the normal way for the library. Demetrius himself could have obtained a copy; as the king pointed out, he had all the necessary means to do it with. The difficulty was that the Law was written in a very peculiar language and would have to be translated. 'All right,' says the king in effect, 'let us write to the High Priest and get a translation.' The king's suggestion implies, not that Jerusalem is the only place where one can get a copy of the Law, but that only there can one get a proper translation. And in so saying the king is expressing a sentiment to which many Alexandrian Jews would have assented.

If, then, the difficulty was that copies of the Law were available only in Jerusalem, Demetrius would not have troubled to mention it to the king. Was he not used to sending to Athens for official texts of the Greek classics? But if Demetrius' difficulty is supposed to have been, as Zuntz suggests, that there was only one copy of the Law in existence, must he not have said so in his reply to the king? The simple fact is that neither here nor elsewhere does Demetrius ask for 'the Law', or for a copy of it, but only for translators (see paras. 11, 32, 39). He obviously anticipated no difficulty in getting a good copy.

And further to emphasise that the difficulty is one of language, Aristeas makes Demetrius stress the difference between Aramaic and Hebrew. 'In the Jews' country they use a peculiar script . . . They are supposed to use Syrian (Aramaic), but that is not the case, for theirs is another dialect' (11). These words surely re-echo the frustration of many an Aramaic-speaking Jew on examining a copy of the Law and hearing it read.<sup>22</sup> Josephus in his paraphrase of Aristeas expands the point: 'though their (the books of the Law) script seemed to be similar to the peculiar Syrian (Aramaic) writing and their language to sound like the other, it was, as it happened, of a distinct type'.<sup>23</sup> This many Aramaic-speaking Jews must have discovered to their disappointment, though at the same time it must have increased their patriotic admiration for the experts in their nation who could read the 'real' Hebrew. While, therefore, it is very natural for Aristeas, as a Jew, to make Demetrius present the difficulty as one of language, and stress the fact that Hebrew is not Aramaic, it would be quite unnatural for him to make Demetrius imply that Jerusalem was the only place where copies of the Law existed.

Zuntz, admittedly, has a strong point when he calls attention to Demetrius' expression that 'in Judaea' people use a special kind of writing, and argues that this would be pointless, were it not understood that there only the coveted book exists (pp. 114–5). It is, perhaps, the more obvious way to fill out Demetrius' train of thought: translation is required, because in Judaea they use a special script; and the Law is to be found only in Judaea. But it is not the only way. One could just as easily complete his thought thus: translation is required, because in Judaea they use a special script; and copies of the Jews' Law, wherever found, are naturally written in the language of the Jews' country of origin.<sup>24</sup>

But Zuntz is hardly being fair to Aristeas when he argues: "And so Ptolemy gives orders to write to the High Priest . . . . What does he want from him? A copy of the "laws of the Jews"? "Interpretation of its strange letters? A translation? The pompous last words of this section leave the reader in the dark. This much only is clear: he who wants the "Laws of the Jews" must apply to Jerusalem. (p. 116)

Admittedly Ptolemy himself does not say explicitly what is the exact purpose of writing to the High Priest; but the sequence is: Demetrius says 'Translation ( $\grave{\epsilon} \rho \mu \eta \nu \epsilon \acute{\alpha}$ ) is needed'. Ptolemy replies 'Well, let us write to the High Priest'. Can there be any doubt what Ptolemy was after? Or if there can be, the matter is settled by the fact that Aristeas, who after all is the author both of Demetrius' and Ptolemy's remarks, has already told us a few lines earlier (para. 3) why he himself gladly offered to go on this embassy to the high priest: the high priest possessed the greatest usefulness . . . for the translation of the Law. We are not left in the dark; Aristeas has stated the purpose of the embassy as explicitly as anyone could wish.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Cf. modern Greeks, if they try to read the classics without knowing ancient Greek.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Ant. XII, 15

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> And this interpretation finds, perhaps, some support in the reading of all the MSS, 'in the land of the Jews', not 'in Judaea'. Zuntz regards the MSS reading as a fault; but the phrase is natural, if Demetrius meant 'in the land where Jews come from'.

We are now free to return to the crucial passage, paragraphs 30–32, and in particular to the words, 'the books of the Law . . . have been somewhat carelessly written'. So far we have argued against Zuntz's plea that the reference is to the Jerusalem text, to the one and only manuscript in existence. We have suggested that the more natural interpretation is to understand it as a reference to Hebrew texts in general and in particular to Hebrew texts available in Alexandria. But Zuntz is not to be disposed of so easily. He has considered the latter view, which he admits would be far less improbable (than his 'Jerusalem' view) on historical grounds, but he rejects it for two reasons which must now be faced.

1) And yet it (the view that Demetrius is referring to Hebrew texts kept by Alexandrian Jews) is, unless I am greatly mistaken, excluded by the wording of this very passage. If the books were supposed to be available in Alexandria, why does not Demetrius say so? How could he say that they are 'wanting'? The observation that they were of inferior quality, because unimproved by 'royal care', applied to every single book he acquired; it did not cause them to be 'absent' from the library. Not even Aristeas would suppose Demetrius to describe an Alexandrian copy of, say, Homer or Euripides to be 'absent' because it had not been edited by the scholars of the Museion. (p. 119 f.)

Once again, one must protest that this is being unfair to Aristeas. 'Wanting' in paragraph 30 (the books of the Law are wanting) must surely mean the same as 'wanting' in the previous sentence (the books that are wanting for the completion of the library). It has nothing to do with the geographical location of the desired books—wanting in Alexandria, existent only in Jerusalem—it simply means that they are not yet in the library. Secondly, Demetrius does not say that the books of the Law are wanting because unimproved by 'royal care'. The reasons for their absence, explicit and implicit in his memorandum, are:

- 1) They are written in a strange language and strange characters;
- 2) the text is of poor quality because of careless copying; (It has been carelessly copied because it has not benefited from royal care.)
- 3) the contents are divine and very well worth having; but it would require holy men to edit them for the public;
- 4) in addition to being holy, the men would have to be expert exponents of the Law:
- 5) and not one expert, but a whole body of experts would be needed.

The phrase 'because they have not benefited by royal care' is meant to explain, not the absence of the books, but the poor quality of their text. Their absence from the library is accounted for by the *combination of difficulties*, 1–5. Difficulty no. 2, with the reason given for it, was true of Greek works as well; but by itself it would not have kept Greek works out of the library, for Demetrius could have coped with that difficulty, even if it meant sending to Athens for official copies. All the other difficulties were peculiar to the Hebrew Law, and they would have effectively caused these books to be absent from the library hitherto, even though there were copies enough in Alexandria.

## 2) This argument Zuntz regards as decisive.

What is more, and in my view decisive, is the conclusion Demetrius derives from his premiss. If he really meant that Alexandrian copies of the Torah were not good enough for his library, then his point in suggesting applying to Jerusalem must be to get a better copy from there. In fact, however, a manuscript to be obtained from there is, strangely enough, not even mentioned. He suggests the dispatch, from Jerusalem, of seventy-two worthy men, outstanding in character and well versed in their Law. Are they to correct the faulty Alexandrian manuscripts? That is not what he says, not what actually happens afterwards. Eleazar, in his reply to Ptolemy, states (46) that he is dispatching the seventy-two 'with the law', ἔχοντας τὸν νόμον. The impression is confirmed that the only place from which it can be had is Jerusalem; indeed, that there is only one manuscript of it in existence; the one which Eleazar is sending for 'copying' (μεταγραφή 46 and 47). And the uniqueness of this manuscript is powerfully stressed in the elaborate and fairy-tale-like description of the reception, in Alexandria, of this wonderful book, written in golden letters (χρυσογραφία τοῖς Ιουδαικοῖς γράμμασιν) on marvellous parchment (175–9). (p. 120).

These arguments seem, to say the least, a trifle difficult to follow. The point at issue, after all, is whether, in complaining that the books of the Law had been written carelessly, Demetrius was talking of Alexandrian copies or of the Jerusalem text. Put more directly Zuntz's arguments seem to be:

- 1) If Demetrius were complaining about the Alexandrian manuscripts, he would have asked Eleazar for a better copy. Instead he asks for elders and makes no mention of a manuscript. Therefore he must have been complaining about the Jerusalem text.<sup>25</sup>
- 2) Had his complaints been referring to the Alexandrian texts, his point in asking for elders would have been to get them to correct the faulty Alexandrian manuscripts. This was not his point. His point was to get the elders to bring on loan from Jerusalem the only copy of the Law in existence, the Jerusalem copy. This can be deduced from what he says and from what actually happened. And from the 'conclusion' one can deduce what he meant in his 'premiss': he was there complaining, not about Alexandrian texts, but about the unique Jerusalem text.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Here the whole argument turns on the observation that Demetrius *makes no request* for a copy of the Law; for if a request for a copy of the Law from Jerusalem were so much as implicit inter alia in his request for elders, then his request would show that it was not Jerusalem, but Alexandrian, copies that he was complaining about.

So then he did not want a manuscript from Jerusalem, he wanted elders. What for? To translate the Heb. Law, obviously; but since they were not asked to bring a copy from Jerusalem, they must have been expected to translate local Alexandrian copies. And since, ex hypothesi, Demetrius has complained about the poor quality of the Jerusalem text, we must assume that the Alexandrian text is all right; for as Zuntz observes no mention is made of correcting faulty Alexandrian manuscripts.

The Librarian's proposition then runs: 'the books of the law are wanting because they are spoken in Hebrew, and the Jerusalem copies have been somewhat carelessly copied out. I suggest we send to Jerusalem and get seventy-two elders to translate the local Alexandrian copies'.

This of course is absurd; but its absurdity springs from insisting that the request for elders means elders only and does not include a (better) copy of the Law. But one cannot understand a copy of the Law as included in his request without thereby making it evident that his complaints were against Alexandrian copies.

Immediately we must observe that argument (2) completely invalidates argument (1). If he did request, by implication, the Jerusalem copy of the Law, it is no longer of any significance to say 'In fact, however, a manuscript to be obtained from there is strangely enough not even mentioned'.

But further, if it was the Jerusalem text that he complained of in the premiss, then we reach the absurd contradiction, that he made *that* premiss the ground for suggesting, as a cure, sending for the very Jerusalem text he had just complained of. Zuntz, of course, sees the contradiction and proceeds to charge Aristeas with inconsistency. But Aristeas is surely hard done by. One cannot fairly maintain at one and the same time that,

- 1) the conclusion logically shows what was the intention of the premiss; and
- 2) the conclusion so contradicts the premiss as to make it evident that the author, by the time he reached his conclusion, has conveniently 'dropped' his premiss.

Next we may question whether the story of the reception of the Jerusalem scrolls in Alexandria, for all its fairy-tale character, is really intended to create the impression that these scrolls were the only manuscript of the Law in existence. Elsewhere (46, 123–127, 318) the high priest makes a tremendous fuss about his reluctance to let the *translators* go; he begs Ptolemy to send them back as soon as the work is done, and further enlists the aid of Andreas and Aristeas to make certain that they return. But there is no sign of reluctance at letting go 'the only copy of the law in the world', nor is there a single request for the return of this 'unique' copy; in fact Aristeas does not trouble to tell us what happened to it. For all that, this Jerusalem copy is obviously meant to be a superb copy of the Law, and we may agree with Zuntz that 'any idea of careless writing and lack of scholarly treatment is here completely out of the question'. But with a sudden turn of argument Zuntz, whose words I have just quoted adds 'whether we think of the Jerusalem text or for that matter of an Alexandrian one' (p. 120). And so it seems that in order to establish his charge of inconsistency against Aristeas, Zuntz argues:

- 1) Demetrius must have been complaining about the Jerusalem text, for there were not any texts in Alexandria; there was only one copy in the world, the marvellous Jerusalem scroll. It was inconsistent for him to complain about that copy.
- 2) Even if there were a copy in Alexandria, the same grand story would have been told about it, as about this unique copy from Jerusalem. Therefore it was inconsistent for Demetrius to complain about any imperfect Hebrew manuscripts, Jerusalem copies or Alexandrian copies.

## VI

But having 'established' glaring inconsistency in Aristeas by these arguments, Zuntz then examines in the light of this inconsistency, what Demetrius did actually say was his purpose in sending for the elders, and finds in it a *double entendre* designedly ambiguous, in order to cover up the contradictions inherent in his story. He was trying to represent the work of translation as if it were a work of the normal Alexandrian critical procedure of collecting and collating manuscripts, and establishing a correct text. He was therefore obliged to devise an

excuse for dragging in the Alexandrian procedure for establishing exact (άκριβῆ) texts by collating (άντιβάλλειν) different copies; which he does by smartly introducing his passing reference to imperfect manuscripts. Thereafter, to quote Zuntz,

Continuing in the terminology of Alexandrian scholarship, he (Demetrius) proposes (32) that the exact wording ( $\tau$ ò ἀκριβές) is to be reached by the 'examining' of—here the identification threatens to break down. For, after all, what is to be compared is not as in scholarly work, various manuscripts, but various translations of one text set forth by various elders. But Aristeas endeavours to keep up appearances. Leaving the reader to trace his ingenuity in every detail we may single out but one. If he intended unequivocally here to have the task of translation proposed, why does he not say so unequivocally? In fact, this concept is kept entirely outside this whole section-until the very end. And there, this is telling, Demetrius is not made to say: "thus we shall obtain an exact translation", but  $\tau$ ò κατὰ τὴν ἑρμηνείαν ἀκριβές [. . .] As it [this paraphrastic clause] stands, it involves the *double-entendre* "what is exact according to" either "(scholarly) interpretation" or "translation". (p. 121–122)

Now it is quite clear that Aristeas has deliberately used the terms of textual criticism to describe the work of translation; but it is seriously to be doubted that he has done so from the motives which Zuntz imputes to him. Let us examine the alleged motives in detail.

1) The fact is clear enough that Aristeas makes no attempt at keeping up appearances that the work was textual criticism. At the very point where according to Zuntz 'the identification threatened to break down', and Aristeas had to strain ingenuity to keep up appearances (at the very point, indeed, where Zuntz breaks off his quotation of the text) Aristeas is making Demetrius say that they should examine  $\tau \delta$  σύμφωνον έκ τῶν πλειόνων. The reader does not have to search around suspiciously to discover that the πλειόνων are not manuscripts after all, but men; Demetrius is openly referring to elders, and is explaining the purpose of having such a large number, 'so that we may examine wherein the majority agree and thus obtain accuracy is the interpretation' (i.e. translation). There is no attempt here to lead the reader to think that a collation of manuscripts is being made. In fact Demetrius' suggestion ('the conclusion' as Zuntz calls it) does not so much as mention manuscripts. Aristeas then was not trying to keep up false appearances.

Nor is there any attempt anywhere else to create or maintain the impression that the elders were doing textual criticism. The manuscripts that they bring from Jerusalem are marvellously made and written; and though we may not believe with Zuntz (now gone to the other extreme, which makes all textual criticism impossible) that these manuscripts are the only copy of the Law in existence, the manuscripts are obviously meant to contain the authoritative text: textual criticism is plainly unnecessary.

When the work of translation is finally related (para. 302), Aristeas says 'And they proceeded to carry it out, making all details harmonise among themselves by the collations (ἀντιβολαῖς)'. Zuntz comments:

Αντιβάλλειν, as noted above, is the technical term for the 'collating' of manuscripts. The 'imperfect manuscripts' have been out of view for a long time; what is 'collated' is the views of

the elders; and they themselves collate them; to Demetrius falls the lot of acting as a secretary. (p. 122)

It is only fair to add that, if by 'imperfect manuscripts' Zuntz refers to the remark about carelessly written Hebrew manuscripts (30), those manuscripts fell out of view at once; they are not mentioned thereafter in the rest of Demetrius' speech, nor anywhere else after paragraph 30. But if by 'imperfect manuscripts' Zuntz wishes to infer that by paragraph 302, Aristeas has dropped the earlier, subtly introduced, *impression* that the elders were collating 'imperfect manuscripts', and now frankly admits that it was translators' views and not manuscripts that were being collated, it is only fair to repeat that Aristeas made it clear right from the start (para. 33) that it was the elders' views that were to be collated and has nowhere ever talked of collating manuscripts, though he has both in 30–32 and again in 302 deliberately used the terms of textual criticism and collation to describe the collating of the elders' views.

- 2) As for the double-entendre which is supposed to lurk in the paraphrastic τὸ κατὰ τὴν  $\dot{\epsilon}$ ρμηνείαν άκριβές, we may first doubt whether this neuter,  $\dot{\tau}$ ο . . . άκριβές is any more sinister than the neuter used in the previous phrase: ὅπως τὸ σύμφωνον έκ τῶν πλειόνων έξετάσαντες καὶ λαβόντες τὸ κατὰ τὴν ἐρμηνείαν άκριβές. The two phrases show a like construction. And then we may notice that the ambiguity is not in the paraphrase, but in the term ἐρμηνεία, which can mean both (scholarly) interpretation and translation (as Zuntz himself points out, p. 112, and makes evident in his translation, p. 122). When Zuntz asks 'If he intended unequivocally here to have the task of translation proposed, why does he not say so unequivocally', we may quote Zuntz in reply: 'Where the noun (for "Translation") was required, even Greek usage reduced him to the simple ἐρμηνεία (3, 11, 32, 120, 301, 308)' (p. 112). The noun ἐρμηνεία was the only noun available for 'translation' and grammatically it fitted his participial construction. To remove all ambiguity and say 'translation', not 'interpretation', he would have to have used a compound verb, which would not have suited the structure of his sentence. In other words, he would have to have gone out of his way to remove from the phrase any idea of interpretation, when it doubtless suited his meaning better (though not for the reason Zuntz alleges; see below) to leave the idea 'interpretation' mingling with 'translation'.
- 3) But when Zuntz complains 'In fact, this concept (i.e. the concept of translation) is kept entirely outside this whole section—until the very end', this is most unfair. Demetrius' proposal to the king naturally comes last in the memorandum. The long preamble has been necessary to explain the many difficulties and to prepare the way for his extreme proposal of fetching seventy-two elders from Jerusalem. It was moreover a matter already decided (para. 11) that there should be a translation, and that a letter should be sent to the high priest about it. What was not decided then, and what therefore forms the new proposal now, is what the high priest shall be asked to do by way of meeting the need. Naturally enough, when Demetrius does come, at the end of his memorandum, to make his proposal, prominence is given, not to the suggestion that a translation should be made, but to the method of producing it. Even so, the desired ἐρμηνεία finds mention in the same sentence as the rest of the proposal,

so that it cannot fairly be said to have been deliberately 'kept entirely outside this whole section—until the end', unless one is prepared to say that the proposal to send for elders to do the  $\dot{\epsilon}\rho\mu\eta\nu\epsilon(\alpha)$  has likewise been kept entirely outside this whole section-until the end.

4) But if Aristeas, contrary to the charges brought against him, everywhere advertises so openly that the 'collating' done by the translators was a 'collating' of their views and not of manuscripts, can the passing reference to carelessly written copies of the Law (30) be explained as anything else than a smart, but irrelevant, remark, designed to create the 'atmosphere' of Alexandrian scholarly procedure? And is the fact that Demetrius in his proposal nowhere so much as mentions manuscripts, good or bad, attributable to anything else than Aristeas' wish now conveniently to 'forget' that he had three sentences earlier mentioned imperfect manuscripts? Our answer will depend in part on how much we think was involved in the process that Aristeas describes as άμελέστερον δὲ, καὶ ούχ ὡς ὑπάρχει, σεσήμανται. If this process covered nothing more than ordinary scribal errors, we shall have to say that in Demetrius' application to Jerusalem the smaller request for an error-free, authoritative text was implicit in the larger request for official interpreters. But the process may have involved more. As we have seen (p. 7), when Aristobulus carefully wrote (σημαίνω)Aratus' prologue, it involved, not so much accurate copying of Aratus' original text, but a substituting, here and there, of different vocabulary to make Aratus say what Aristobulus 'knew' he meant. Such 'writing' involves 'interpretation'. It is not, perhaps, too much to say that similar, well-intentioned, 'writing' lies behind some of the variants in the different Hebrew textual traditions; not all Hebrew scribes in those early days worked according to Masoretic principles, as Qumran has plainly showed us.<sup>26</sup> If then Demetrius is referring to some such process 'carelessly done', when he complains about copies of the Hebrew law, it is even more natural that he should ask, not for an exact manuscript, but for elders to give the exact interpretation; for if accuracy in writing out a manuscript meant to Aristeas, not merely copying exactly what you saw in the text, but giving what you 'knew' to be the accurate 'meaning' of what you saw, how much more would 'interpretation' be involved, when it came to translating the Hebrew into Greek. And that ability to interpret the exact meaning of the Law was of greater importance to Aristeas than the ability to express the meaning in Greek, we may judge from the way he everywhere advertises the elders' ethical wisdom and theological knowledge, and scarce says anything about their linguistic ability. All seventytwo were experts in their law-but, apparently, they did not have a sub-committee of nontheologians to advise them on matters of style.

Aristeas, then, has certainly exploited the double meaning of  $\epsilon \rho \mu \eta \nu \epsilon (\alpha)$  to the full; or, at least, he has emphasised the exegetical and interpretative element in it far more the translation element. But he has done so, not because, in ignorance of what was involved in translation, he tried to describe it as if it were Alexandrian textual criticism, but because, to his mind, interpretation was the biggest and most important element in translation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> "Skehan points out that the St. Mark's manuscript illustrates the effect of an 'exegetical process' in the transmission of the text; that is, the scribe who copied a manuscript was at the same time an interpreter, who felt free to expand and modify the text in order to bring out what he believed to be its meaning". M. Burrows, *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London, 1958, p. 147. Cf. also *VT Supplement*, Vol. IV, pp. 151–3.

And anyway this ability to interpret the Law was far more to Aristeas' purpose than linguistic ability. To have seventy-two men from Jerusalem so proficient in Greek that they could translate Hebrew into Greek, was of no particular propaganda value to Jews living in Alexandria. But to have a translation that must be right, and must represent exactly what the Law meant, because it was made by seventy-two experts in the interpretation of the Law, straight from Jerusalem and with the confidence of the high priest, would be a great comfort for Jews who were disturbed by rumours and reports that not all Hebrew MSS agreed. According to F. M. Cross,<sup>27</sup> Cave 4 at Qumran has produced not only at least three sharply defined textual traditions, but among them one tradition that is far nearer to the text type underlying the Septuagint than to the proto-Masoretic Text.<sup>28</sup> Now it is altogether likely that knowledgeable Jews in Alexandria would be aware, if only vaguely, that their Hebrew text, and in consequence, their LXX translation derived from it, differed from Hebrew texts elsewhere. While then, we are not obliged to believe Aristeas' wonderful story of LXX origins, we can readily accept his reference to carelessly written Hebrew manuscripts as reflecting the true state of affairs, of which he himself was aware; and we can understand why he should create a story of LXX origins that would not only glorify the Law and the wisdom of its translators in comparison with Greek literature and sages, but would also incidentally assure Alexandrian Jewry that their Hebrew text, and the Greek translation made from it, were true representatives of the Law; they came direct from the high priest in Jerusalem with his authority and blessing.

#### VII

On page 4 we noticed that there were two crucial passages in Aristeas that have been taken by some to refer to Greek translations of the Law earlier than the LXX. So far we have discussed the first. The second can be dealt with far more quickly. It comes in paragraph 314, where Demetrius explains why the wonderful contents of the Law had not been mentioned by historians and poets before. He knows, so he assures Ptolemy, of two men who did attempt it, but were stopped by God. The first, Theopompus, was smitten, when he was μέλλων τινὰ τῶν προηρμηνευμένων έπισφαλέστερον έκ τοῦ νόμου προσιστορεῖν. Jellicoe 29 has well presented the case for taking the adverb έπισφαλέστερον with προσιστορεῖν and not with προηρμηνευμένων; in other words, he shows that Demetrius is not complaining about the imperfections of previous translations, but about Theopompus for rashly trying to quote from them. Nevertheless it still leaves Demetrius asserting that previous translations had been made. What then is the historical value of this assertion? Very little or none! Zuntz has brilliantly demonstrated its worthlessness by tracing this piece of propaganda to its source in the fiction of Jewish tradition, and then setting it side by side with other completely contradictory fictions in the same tradition (pp. 123-5). The case for translations of the Law earlier than the LXX must rest on evidence other than Aristeas'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> The Ancient Library of Qumran, Duckworth, London, 1958, p. 135f.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> See also W. F. Albright, BASOR, December 1955, p. 27f.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> *JTS*, October 1961, 267–8.

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