

**“Wordriht”: The Right of Translation
in *Genesis B* and *Exodus***

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies,

University of Manitoba,

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

By

Diana Patzer

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**"Wordriht": The Right of Translation
in *Genesis B* and *Exodus***

BY

Diana Patzer

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of
Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree**

Of

Master of Arts

Diana Patzer © 2005

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Abstract

My thesis argues that the poetic (re-)interpretation and (re-)creation of the Bible and patristic literature in the Old English vernacular by poets is not only a *right*, but a *duty*. By examining the translation theories and practices of Jerome, Augustine, Alfred and his helpers, and Ælfric, I establish their right(s) of translation. I then address several potentially heterodox changes the poets of *Genesis B* and *Exodus* make to the word and sense of their biblical and patristic source-texts, and argue that they make these changes not only to guide the reader with their respective pens to an appropriate interpretation, but to teach the reader how to forge his own interpretive path and steer his way through the *machina* of the text. I would argue that *Genesis B* and *Exodus*, and texts like them, are an interpretive challenge to the reader himself from God, one that allows him to turn, paradoxically, to God even as he bows his head to a page fraught with a seeming heterodoxy.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank...

se þe me lærde—my advisor, Dr. Robert Emmett Finnegan, who his “wordhord onleac” and poured forth “þa boclican lare”. From you “ic geseah and gehyrde mycel wisdom”, and with your help I, too, read “bec, ða þe nidbeðyrfesta sien eallum monnum to witanne”. Thank you for the Old English, and for providing me with “seo cæg ðe ðæra boca andgit unlicð”.

Dr. David Watt, who did “gladly teche”, and Dr. Egil Grislis, a “servus verbi Dei”.

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And, of course, my parents.

earc sceal þy mare. (*Genesis A* 1313b)

þæt is syndrig cynn.
Symle bið þy heardra þe hit hreoh wæter,
swearte sæstreamas, swiðor beatað. (*Genesis A* 1324b-1326)

Him on hoh beleac heofonrices weard
merhuses muð mundum sinum,
sigora waldend and segnade
earce innan agenum spedum
nergend user. (*Genesis A* 1363-1367b)

þam æt niehstan wæs nan to gedale
nymþe heo wæs ahafen on þa hean lyft. (*Genesis A* 1400-1401)

heofon þider becom (*Exodus* 46b)

Hu þearf mannes sunu maran treowe? (*Exodus* 426)

Hwa is þæt ðe cunne
orðonc clene nymðe ece god? (*Christ and Satan* 17b-18)

Ge sind wilcuman! (*Christ and Satan* 616a)

In the darkness something was happening at last. A voice had begun to sing. It was very far away and Digory found it hard to decide from what direction it was coming. Sometimes it seemed to come from all directions at once. Sometimes he almost thought it was coming out of the earth beneath them. Its lower notes were deep enough to be the voice of the earth herself. There were no words. There was hardly even a tune. But it was, beyond comparison, the most beautiful noise he had ever heard. It was so beautiful he could hardly bear it.... Then two wonders happened at the same moment. One was that the voice was suddenly joined by other voices; more voices than you could possibly count. They were in harmony with it, but far higher up the scale: cold, tingling, silvery voices. The second wonder was that the blackness overhead, all at once, was blazing with stars. They didn't come out gently one by one, as they do on a summer evening. One moment there had been nothing but darkness; next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leaped out—single stars, constellations, and planets, brighter and bigger than any in our world. There were no clouds. The new stars and the new voices began at exactly the same time. If you had seen and heard it, as Digory did, you would have felt quite certain that it was the stars themselves which were singing, and that it was the First Voice, the deep one, which had made them appear and made them sing.
--C.S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*

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Introduction

In his introduction to *The Guest-Hall of Eden: Four Essays on the Design of Old English Poetry*, Alvin A. Lee writes that “the extant Old English poetic corpus has as its major function in Anglo-Saxon England the re-creation, in poetic terms, of the biblical vision of human life” (6). The poems of the Junius Manuscript—*Genesis A*, *Genesis B*, *Exodus*, *Daniel*, and *Christ and Satan*—are a “poetic Bible,” highlighting the continual pattern of the fall(s) and regeneration(s) of mankind, and re-creating for their Anglo-Saxon audience select scriptural events from the Creation to the Ascension. Far from being unoriginal, word-for-word translations of their respective biblical books, however, the poems of Junius 11 contain many “re-arrangements, interpolations, expansions, and omissions” (Heatt 243). The Anglo-Saxon poets render into poetry from prose choice passages from the Bible, and do so in their native Old English tongue, thus asserting that their vernacular language can give expression to the words and themes of sacred Christian literature. What licence do they have to translate the sacred Book from the sacred languages into vulgar Old English, to presume to put into poetry that which was once prose, to reshape and edit their sacred source? I intend to examine the right and authority of translation in Anglo-Saxon England generally, and in relation to two of the poems in the Junius Manuscript, *Genesis B* and *Exodus*, specifically. Through an investigation of the Anglo-Saxon theoretical justification for translation, and the function of the changes the Anglo-Saxon poets make to their biblical source-texts, I suggest that not only are the poetic (re-)interpretation and (re-)creation of the Bible and patristic literature in the vernacular by poets a right, they are a *duty*.

The Junius poems, both singly and together, “form an imaginative unity that parallels the literary shape of the Bible” and create “an Anglo-Saxon concept of the Bible as the living Word of God, still working through the compositions of poets like Caedmon and Cynewulf” (Lee 81-82). The Junius poets create a “poetic Bible” of sorts, but also push their pens beyond the margins of their biblical and patristic source-texts. The poets of *Genesis B* and *Exodus* have no control over the outcome of the biblical stories they recreate for their audience: Adam and Eve must fall, and Pharaoh and his army must drown in the Red Sea. The poets can, however, control *how* their stories unfold. In *Genesis B*, the poet has made changes to the “bare-bones” biblical source-text(s) that are overt, unparalleled, and heterodox: it is not Satan but another devil that tempts *both* Adam and Eve; Adam is tempted before Eve is; the poet changes the nature of Eve’s temptation. The changes to the narrative of *Exodus* are not as pronounced as those in *Genesis B*; the poet instead “recasts” the diction and syntax of the poem, creating an Exodus that is more overtly typological and Christological than that in the Bible: the Israelites “sail” across the desert in the ship of the church; they are “baptized” in the Red Sea; Pharaoh and his kin and kind perish in a type of the Last Judgment. In *Genesis B* and *Exodus*, the poets have employed two essentially different ways of “translating” or “re-writing” their biblical source-text, making these two poems, more than any of the others in the Junius manuscript, excellent companion pieces. In *Genesis B* the poet alters the *word*, the narrative of the poem; in *Exodus* the layers of typological meaning that the poet adds change the *sense* of the poem. By creating, recreating, and transforming their material, the poets, in effect, “rewrite” the Bible.

The first chapter of this thesis will outline the translation theories and practices of Jerome, Augustine, Alfred, and Ælfric. I intend to draw from Jerome's prefaces to his translations and revisions of various biblical books, as well as some of his epistles. I will then turn to Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*, Alfred's prefaces to his translations of Gregory's *Pastoral Care* and *Dialogues*, Augustine's *Soliloquies*, and Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, and Ælfric's prefaces to his *Homilies*, *On the Old and New Testament*, *Lives of the Saints*, *Grammar*, and *Genesis*. I thus posit the fundamental question: by whose authority do these poets translate? The second and third chapters will focus on *Genesis B* and *Exodus*, respectively: I will address the significance of and reasons for the changes the poets make to their source-texts and the importance these alterations have in relation to the discussion of translation theories and practices. I intend to show that a poetic (re-)interpretation and (re-)creation, even a potentially heterodox one, is the right *and* duty of the poets—and all Christian readers.

Chapter One

Many and various are the languages of man and God; this is why translation exists. The Bible—the authoritative, inspired, and sacred book of Christianity—contains “faith statements about God: his acts in history, his will for people, and his purpose for all of creation” (Arichea 54). Through fallen eyes man must read in fallen languages the Bible, a book of “salvation instructions” for man (cf. II Tim. 3: 15-17). The Scriptures must be translated and interpreted properly in order to be understood, and thus, proper translation and interpretation are matters of spiritual life and death; we must read the right words in order to write the right things on the “fleshy tables of [our] heart[s]” (II Cor. 3:3). But reading is not enough; we as readers must *understand* the plain and difficult passages, the metaphors, the *deus ex Scriptural machina*. In this chapter I will briefly examine the Biblical origins of translation and interpretation and their importance to the early church. I will analyze Jerome and Augustine’s theoretical justification(s) for translation and interpretation, respectively, as well as the right and authority of translation according to the Anglo-Saxon translators Ælfric and Alfred, and determine by what or whose authority they translate.

Creation itself begins with a W/word, the “act of immediate calling into being whereby God had literally ‘spoken the world’” (Steiner 58). God speaks (Gen. 1:3), and light appears: the void is translated in a verbal creation textually recorded. Man, too, is spoken into being; he, like God, has the ability to speak, to translate thought into word, but his words are “made, not begotten” (Dawson 129). Brian Stock notes that Augustine “believed that reading and writing were among the labours imposed on the first couple as a result of their disobedience in the garden...Before the fall, there was no need of such

cumbersome instruments of communication...[After the fall, humans needed] the linguistic and grammatical skills that enabled them to understand the Bible” (15-16)¹. The Fall “had been, among many other things, a fall from direct knowledge into indirect knowledge through signs” (P.Brown 261). Pre-fallen man names the birds and the beasts (Gen. 2:19-20)², but post-fallen man attempts to “make us a name” (Gen. 11:4), and the tower of Babel is built. Babel was a “second Fall...an assault on heaven” (Steiner 59, 67); man stretches his hand to the fruit and his brick to the heavens and in return must figure out “how far language [must] be stretched” (Macquarie 29) in order to re-establish a dialogue with the Divine³. Confusion ensues, and scattered tongues and pens must (re)write for themselves a common and shared past. The Bible is the product of this endeavor; it is, in Jeffrey’s words, the “foundation text which gives rise to a whole world of books” (preface xiii). Man must build with this book a hermeneutic tower that leads to a shared salvation.

While Christianity is more than just the sum of its texts, it is also very much a textual and written religion. Christianity placed an extraordinary premium on verbal formulation; speech constituted one of its basic metaphors, and it framed itself around written texts...Jesus taught in words, especially in parable...[and the Gospels are] rewritings, or recreations, of the text of the life of Jesus [...]. Early Christianity was...always a matter of

¹Stock cites Augustine’s *De Div. Quaes.*, q.52; *De Gen. Ad Litt.* 8.17, 8.18, 8.27, 9.2, 11.33; *De Gen. C. Man.* 2.4.5 as examples. Brian Stock’s *Augustine the Reader* presents Augustine as a “convert to reading,” who linked “his spiritual progress to his ability to read and interpret biblical texts” (53).

²Steiner writes: “The vulgate of Eden contained...a divine syntax—powers of statement and designation analogous to God’s own diction, in which the mere naming of a thing was the necessary and sufficient cause of its leap into reality” (58).

³ “[T]he very need for translation” writes Steiner, “was like the mark of Cain...all languages share in a common myopia; none can articulate the whole truth of God or give its speakers a key to the meaning of existence...[T]he Tower is...an assault on Heaven...but it is also a vast Jacob’s ladder of stone...on which man would ascend towards his Creator” (62, 67).

teaching, of interpretation, of definition. (A. Cameron 19, 31-32)⁴

Christ's spoken Aramaic is turned into a Greek text by the apostles, and he himself translates and interprets the Old Testament Hebrew for them (Matt. 13:36; Luke 24:26-7, 44-7). His repeated "But I say unto you" (Mark 9:13 and elsewhere) demonstrates that he is here to fulfill and correct the interpretations and translations of yore. "Christians," notes L. Sanneh, "are unique in abandoning the original language of Jesus and instead adopting Greek in its *Koine* and Latin in its *vulgar* as the central media of the church [...]. [T]ranslation...[is] built into the very fabric of Christianity" (Sanneh 1)⁵. The translation of the Bible into many other languages also necessitates a textual and interpretive Christian community. Christianity

appropriat[ed] the Hebrew scriptures and present[ed itself] as the legitimised heir to Judaism [...]. In many cases...[Old Testament] narratives and even ethical teachings actually seemed to contradict those of the New Testament. The need to interpret texts was thus not an incidental phenomenon of the new religion, but a response to a problem that was essential to its foundation and subsequent development. In this sense...critical theory was what Christianity was all about. (Prickett 4-5)

Prickett goes on to note that Christianity has "always been at least dimly conscious of, and correspondingly uneasy about, its own distance from its sacred writings...it has *always* needed a theory of reading" (79). Distance from one's sacred writings suggests

⁴ Cameron also writes that "[a]t no point that we can now recapture was there a "first Christianity" distinct from its verbal expression...As Christ "was" the Word, so Christianity *was* its discourse or discourses" (32).

⁵ Sanneh also notes the paradoxical "contention by Christians that God's eternal counsels are compatible with ordinary, everyday speech", that "religious language...belong[s] to the ordinary commonplace world of men and women...The Christian attitude to religious language places right at the heart of things the idea that people, especially ordinary people, should understand" (1-2).

distance from God, and in order to bridge this distance God must be translated and interpreted; God must speak, among other languages, Latin and Old English.

The “translatability of Christianity” (Sanneh 3) does not, however, allow translation a free rein as she gallops through the Scriptures. Translation is a potentially dangerous activity; many potential theological “mistranslations” lie just around the corner—with serious theological consequences. The divine message may be changed; the will of God may be altered with the swish of a pen: one wrong word is a matter of life or death. There is always a fear that translation leads one away from the original text, to “one further remove from the immediate moment of the *logos*” (Steiner 239)⁶, or that, as Dante discovers in Paradise, some things cannot be translated, put into words⁷. H.F.D. Sparks notes in Volume One of the *Cambridge History of the Bible* that Jerome “[o]ccasionally...points out the doctrinal implications of a textual variant: the two words *neque filius*, for example, read by some texts at Matt. 24:36, are (says Jerome) a godsend to Arians because they attribute ignorance to the Son” (528). Many early texts also stress the evils of translating: the “*Megillath Taanith (Roll of Fasting)*...records the belief that three days of utter darkness fell on the world when the Law was translated into Greek” (qtd. in Steiner 239), and the “*Masseketh Sopherim (Tractate of the Scribes)*...[states that] ‘Five elders wrote the Law in Greek for King Tolmai (Ptolemy); and that day was a hard day for Israel, like the day on which Israel made the golden calf’” (qtd. in Nida *Science* 2). James Barr forwards the fascinating thought that

⁶ Translation is especially problematic when religion and salvation are involved: “So far as speech is divine and numinous, so far as it encloses revelation, active transmission either into the vulgate or across the barrier of languages is dubious or frankly evil” (Steiner 239).

⁷ “How weak are words, and how unfit to frame / My concept—which lags after what was shown / So far, ‘twould flatter it to call it lame!” (XXXIII 121-23). (*The Divine Comedy*. Trans. Dorothy L. Sayers and B. Reynolds. London: Penguin Books, 1962).

the existence of scripture...brought Jesus to his clash with the Jewish leaders of his time and thus to his death. The conflict between scripture and the existing Jewish interpretations of it, and the dialectic between it and Jesus' own religious ideas and ideas of himself, brought about the deep and tragic conflicts between Jesus and the leaders of his people, which in turn brought him to rejection and death, and brought mankind to salvation. (11)

Translation and interpretation are therefore a paradox: murderous instruments and salvific vehicles at the same time. They are problematic acts, but necessary ones: God must reach people and people must understand, in the vernacular, how to reach God. "No man," writes Steiner of the *translatio* of Christ's message, "must be kept from salvation by mere barriers of language" (245).⁸ To ensure that all people can reach God, man must "stretch language", translate—and try to avoid creating another Babel. Translation and interpretation are always "reinterpretation, both of the original and of the intervening body of commentary" (Steiner 249).

Saint Jerome, *doctor maximus in interpretandis scripturis*, devotes much time and space in both his prefaces to his works and his letters articulating how and why he translates a variety of biblical books. The necessity and dangers of translation chart for him a dangerous course throughout the fourth century, and he raises his pen in defense again and again against those who thunder forth criticisms of him, his translations, and his bold revisions of the sacred word. "Questions of translation technique and details connected with the 'mechanics' of translation," notes Sparks, "obviously occupied Jerome's mind continuously" (522). Jerome does not take his "right to translate" for

⁸ God's scattering of tongues at Babel is not "an irreparable finality...As the Fall may be understood to contain the coming of the Redeemer, so the scattering of tongues at Babel has in it...the return to linguistic unity, the movement towards and beyond Pentecost" (Steiner 244).

granted, however, and strewn about his prefaces and letters are his justifications for translating *sanctae scripturae*. His statements about the principles of translation “almost always occur in polemical situations, when defending his translations and the method of which he has made use in them, against his enemies, who often accused him of falsifying the original” (D.Brown 104).

Jerome himself was particularly qualified to be a translator. He had “innate flair for languages”, and was a *vir trilinguis*, competent in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and had a passing acquaintance with Aramaic/Chaldaic and Syriac (Sparks 517). He was an avid collector of books, and a “great scholar, who knew that the Hebrew text was the original one” (D.Brown 22, 60). His persistent “belief in the correctness and authenticity of...the *Hebraica veritas*...in the face of considerable criticism[] is a memorial to his scholarly integrity and resolute convictions” (55). Perhaps most importantly, Jerome issued many “translations, commentaries, scholarly studies and compilations” (Kelly 141, 143), and would thus be able to translate and interpret a variety of biblical and patrological works correctly, having been well schooled in Christian texts.

In 383, Jerome was commissioned to revise the four gospels by Pope Damasus; in the first sentence of his *Praefatio in Quatuor Evangelia*, he explains why he must do so: “Novum opus facere me cogis ex veteri, ut post exemplaria Scripturarum toto orbe dispersa, quasi quidam arbiter sedeam; et quia inter se variant, quae sint illa quae cum Graeca consentiant veritate, decernam” (PL 29.557). He realizes the seriousness and dangers of his task (“Pius labor, sed periculosa praesumptio” [PL 29.557]), and knows that he may be reviled for having the audacity to “addere, mutare, corrigere” the sacred books (PL 29.557). He “bears the unpopularity” of this charge for two reasons:

quod et tu, qui summus Sacerdos es, fieri jubes: et verum non esse quod variat, etiam maledicorum testimonio comprobatur. Si enim Latinis exemplaribus fides est adhibenda, respondeant, quibus: tot enim sunt exemplaria pene quot codices. Sin autem veritas est quaerenda de pluribus: cur non ad Graecam originem revertentes, ea quae vel a vitiosis interpretibus male edica, vel a praesumptoribus imperitis emendata perversius, vel a librariis dormitantibus addita sunt, aut mutata, corrigimus? (*PL 29. 558-59*)

The true translation is the one that has apostolic approval; because our language is marked by discrepancies, we must go back to the “fountainhead” text (*PL 29.559*)⁹.

Jerome does, however, mention that “ita calamo temperavimus, ut his tantum quae sensum videbantur nutare, correctis, reliqua manere pateremur ut fuerant” (*PL 29.559*).

Jerome realizes that the Gospel manuscripts as they stand are steeped in error, and that he will have to go back to the Greek, the “fountainhead”, in order to make a clean translation. Scribal errors and incompetent translators; omissions, additions, and discrepancies: these have increased the distance between God’s Word and God’s people, the Truth and the text. A corrupt text is *why* Jerome translates, but the sanction of Damasus and the fact that we must pin our faith to the Latin texts (*PL 29.558-59*) give Jerome the *right* to translate. Heretical interpretations may snake their way around the translation of one word (*neque filius*, for example)¹⁰, and it is Jerome’s duty as a scholarly soldier of Christ to ensure the texts people “put their faith” in are correct and orthodox ones.

⁹ “Hoc certe cum in nostro sermone discordat, et diversos rivulorum tramites ducit: uno de fonte quaerendum est” (*PL 29.559*).

¹⁰ Avril Cameron notes that the “history of Christianity could literally depend on one word, as happened at the first ecumenical council at Nicaea in A.D. 325” (21). She footnotes “homooousios” (consubstantial) as the problematic word.

Jerome's Gospels, however, were "greeted with the howl of indignation he had predicted" (Kelly 89); he defends himself in *Epistola XXVII (ad eamdem Marcellam)*:

Non adeo me hebetis fuisse cordis, et tam crassae rusticitatis... ut aliquid de Dominicis verbis, aut corrigendum putaverim, aut non divinitus inspiratum; sed Latinorum codicum vitiositatem, quae ex diversitate librorum omnium comprobatur, ad Graecam originem, unde et ipsi translata non denegant, voluisse revocare. Quibus si displicet fontis unda purissimi, coenosos rivulos bibant. (*PL* 22.431)

A corrupt text is a dangerously dirty text: "the most ancient books lose their authority in transmission" (D. Brown 36). A book as important as the Bible needs to be copied cleanly, for a single word can be a "godsend to Arians." H.F.D. Sparks mentions that only Jerome's "revision of the gospels was at all widely accepted during his lifetime. It had been commissioned by the pope, and this conferred on it a certain official status" (520)¹¹. If the Bible is to serve as an inspired guide for Christians, it must, like an "[a]dministrative and legal document[]...convey to the reader the exact meaning of the original" (Brock 73).

Jerome's other translations do not have the blessing of a pope to protect them, and Jerome frequently uses the prefaces to his translations to defend them, and his right to translate. He has a right to translate, he insists, because the sacred texts are corrupt. Once he creates a clean translation, "ne Judaei de falsitate Scripturarum Ecclesiis ejus diutius insultarent" (*Praefatio in Librum Isaiae [PL 28.827]*). In his *Praefatio in Pentateuchum*, Jerome notes that "maximeque quae evangelistarum et apostolorum

¹¹ Sparks also notes that this acceptance may have been due to the fact that Jerome's gospels were a revised edition of the Old Latin texts, and not a fresh translation (520).

auctoritas promulgavit: in quibus multa de Veteri Testamento legimus, quae in nostris codicibus non habentur” (PL 28.179-80). Jerome has rescued Job: “beatum Job qui adhuc apud Latinos jacebat in stercore, et vermibus scatebat errorum integrum immaculatumque gaudete” (29.64). His version is “magis...intelligi”, for it has “statim de prelo purissimae commendata testae” (*Praefatio in Libros Salomonis* [PL 28.1308]).

Asterisks are sprinkled throughout Origen’s translation of Job, and Jerome’s detractors

[n]eque...fieri potest, ut quos plura intermisisse perspexerint, non eosdem etiam in quibusdam errasse fateantur, praecipue in Job: cui si ea quae subasteriscis addita sunt, subtraxeris, pars maxima voluminis detruncabitur... ut decurtatus et laceratus corrosusque liber, foeditatem sui publice legentibus praebeat. (*Praefatio in Librum Job* [PL 28.1139])

In his *Praefatio in Daniele Prophetam*, Jerome writes that “multum a veritate discordet, et recto iudicio repudiatus sit” (PL 28.1357). Again and again Jerome writes of the corruptness of the biblical texts in use throughout Christendom: the omissions, incompleteness, alterations, discrepancies, disorder. It is his prerogative to translate, to alter, to complete: man cannot stretch his language, his hand, to God, with a corrupt text. His comments suggest that those who do not want a “clean” text, who are content with the corrupt versions floating about Christendom, are in the wrong—they are the unorthodox ones, not he. A corrupt text is a falsification of the sacred word, and the sacred page must regain its truth-value; this can be done through an accurate translation.

Despite the perceived novelty of his undertaking, Jerome reminds his audience that others have translated before him. He writes in his *Praefatio in Pentateuchum* that “Origenis me studium provocavit, qui editioni antiquae translationem Theodotionis

miscuit” and “maximeque quae evangelistarum et apostolorum auctoritas promulgavit” (PL 28.179). He often mentions the biblical translations of Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion (*Pref.Lib.Job* [PL 28.1138]; *Pref.Lib. Isaiae* [PL 28.827]; *Pref.Comm.Ecc.* [23.1062]), and notes that Origin marks the Old Testament books with obeli and asterisks (*Pref.Lib.Job* [PL 28.1139]). Hilary the Confessor, “qui Homilias in Job, et in Psalmos tractatus plurimos in Latinum vertit e Graeco, nec assedit litterae dormitanti, et putida rusticorum interpretatione se torsit: sed quasi captivos sensus in suam linguam, victoris jure transposuit” (*Epistola LVII* [PL 22.572]). He writes that “Ecclesiae viris, cum Septuaginta interpretes, et Evangelistae atque Apostoli idem in sacris voluminibus fecerint” (*Ep. LVII* [PL 22.572]). Pope Damasus himself had requested of Jerome a translation of the Gospels (*Pref.Quat.Evan.* [PL 29.558]). Lesser men than Jerome have picked up their pens, have translated for many reasons in many different ways: why should he not have the authority to do so also?

Translation may also reveal mysteries of the faith once hidden, illuminate the obscure. Jerome notes that the translators of the Septuagint “cum illi Ptolemaeo regi Alexandriae mystica quaeque in Scripturis sanctis prodere noluerint, et maxime ea quae Christi adventum pollicebantur: ne viderentur Judaei et alterum Deum colere: quos ille Platonis sectator magni idcirco faciebat, quia unum Deum colere dicerentur” (*Pref.Heb.Quaest.Gen* [PL 23.985]). He also mentions this story in his *Praefatio in Pentateuchum*, writing that “Denique ubicunque sacratum aliquid Scriptura testatur de Patre et Filio et Spiritu sancto, aut aliter interpretati sunt, aut omnino tacuerunt; ut et regi satisfacerent et arcanum fidei non vulgarent” (PL 28.181). But apart from those who rightfully conceal the mysteries of the faith from the ignorant, there are “haeretici...qui

multa mysteria Salvatoris subdola interpretatione celarunt” (*Pref.Lib.Job* [PL 28.1142]).

Does not Jerome, who “vexillum crucis in mea fronte portans”, have a right to “omissa repetere, depravata corrigere et sacramenta Ecclesiae puro ac fideli aperire sermone” (*Pref.Lib.Job* [PL 28.1142])?

Jerome’s “right to translate”, however, does not make his job any easier. In his “helmeted” (“galeatum”) *Praefatio in Libros Samuel et Malachim*, he begs Paula and Eustochium to “contra latrantes canes, qui adversus me rabido ore desaeviunt” (PL 28.604). In the same preface he states that he has “[p]osui ori meo custodiam” (PL 28.604), but later growls that “excetre sibilet...nunquam meum, juvante Christo, silebit eloquium: etiam praecisa lingua balbutiet” (*Pref.Ezram* [PL 28.1474]). Translation is an arduous task: it is difficult to preserve the flavor of the text, to find the right words to convey the meaning (PL 27.223). There are tensions between a literal and a free translation: “Si ad verbum interpretor, absurde resonat: si ob necessitatem aliquid in ordine vel in sermone mutavero, ab interpretis videbor officio recessisse” (*Pref.Chron.Euse.* [PL 27.223]). Translating is sometimes like trying to hold an eel in your hands, and “quanto fortius presseris, tanto citius elabitur” (*Praef.Lib.Job* [PL 28.1140]). Men even may prefer dangerous ancient error to new truth (*Praef.Lib.Job* [PL 29.63]; *Praef.Lib.Psalm* [PL 29.123]), as a letter Jerome received from Augustine demonstrates:

Nam quidem frater noster Episcopus, cum lectitari instituisset in Ecclesia cui praeest, interpretationem tuam, movit quiddam longe aliter abs te positum apud Jonam Prophetam, quam erat omnium sensibus memoriaeque inveteratum, et tot aetatum successionebus decantatum. Factus est tantus tumultus in plebe, maxime