Thank you for inviting me to address this symposium. Professor Konstantinou in his invitation asked me to speak about the Book of Psalms. Since I am joint editor of the Greek-to-English translation project A New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS) and was responsible for the Book of Psalms in that project, the intent is no doubt that I speak today more particularly about translating the Psalms. Thus what I propose to do is to give you an insider’s view of what was propaedeutic to the start of our translation project per se. I must warn you at the outset that it is not impossible that the questions I raise outnumber the answers I give. In any case the best I can do is to tell you about the questions we raised and the answers we gave to them. Whether the conclusions we reached and the decisions we made were the right ones I will leave for you to determine. Moreover, I strongly believe that right and wrong in translating are judged best by the goal one sets for oneself.

I have grouped what I would like to say about translating the Septuagint Psalms under four simple questions: 1. From what language? 2. From what book? 3. From what Text, and 4. How to translate?

First then, from what language? Though at a Symposium like this my first question may seem a rather dumb one—seeing that the answer is obviously: “From the Greek, of course,” on second thought the answer may not be quite so simple, and the way it is answered may have important implications for one’s translating into a modern language. It is certainly not open to question that the Septuagint Psalter we have is a translation from a Hebrew original. Since that is the case, a further question then presents itself: What role, if any, is to be assigned to that Hebrew original? Could it simply be

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1A. Pietersma, A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under that Title: The Psalms, Oxford University Press, New York/Oxford, 2000
ignored in the same way that the Greek original might be ignored when an English translation of a Modern Greek novel is translated into a third language? To be sure, reading the original Greek might uncover certain interesting nuggets lost in the English translation. But then again, the English translation might have added some interesting minutiae to the original. That is to say, translation perforce adds to and subtracts from the original. Put another way, I am really asking what sort of translation the Greek Psalter is perceived to be: a translation that stands completely on its own two feet and one for which no recourse need be had to the Hebrew original for essential linguistic information? Or is it, on the contrary, a translation that often fails to stand on its own two feet, and one for which, having recourse to the Hebrew in order to wrest some sense from or to seek an explanation for the Greek, is mandatory? If it is the former, namely what might be called a replacement translation, i.e. one that takes the place of the original, a dubbed cinema production, there would seem to be no reason whatsoever to invoke the original Hebrew, and so one might decide with Charles Thomson (1808) to translate all of the Septuagint as though it were an original composition. If, on the other hand, it is deemed to be a translation that can better be described, in building-construction terms, as a lean-to rather than a free standing edifice, a kind of interlinear translation rather than a replacement translation, or yet again one like subtitles on a television screen, one may decide that the original should be made to play some kind of role when one translates the translation into a third language. What precise role the original then plays may be more or less explicit. In other words, the exact role the original is assigned to play may vary widely from one modern translation to another.

Let me delineate a few of such variations. One may go no farther than to decide with a fairly recent Orthodox translation into English by the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Boston (hereafter called the Boston translation) that the Greek Psalms be translated in a King Jamesian style, because it is thought to add solemnity and beauty and is moreover “a more ancient and purer form of the language” (19), and further to

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make a special effort to preserve what is called “the distinctly Hebraic idiom” (17). Or again one may decide with another recent Orthodox translation into English⁴, by José de Vinck and Leonidas Contos, that the Greek Psalms are poetry and one should therefore make an attempt “to write in a style that is harmonious, almost musical” (IX). Such decisions, it seems to me, do full justice to the linguistic register of the Hebrew text, but I cannot help but wonder whether they accord quite as well with the register of the Septuagint in its Hellenistic context. In anticipation of what I will touch on later, one might describe the decision to use lofty, literary, musical language as being expressive of target-orientedness and the wish to retain distinctly Hebraic idiom as indicative of source-orientedness.

In Western tradition, especially Protestant tradition, Septuagint (and New Testament) Greek was long regarded as a special, sanctified variety of Greek, which teemed with words and constructions taken over from Hebrew. Accordingly Greek words were often assigned meanings unattested in and at variance with extant Greek literature of the Hellenistic period. Brenton’s translation of the Septuagint⁵ (1844) has its share of such items, and a handy whipping boy remains the Greek-English lexicon of Liddell-Scott-Jones (1940), which features many Septuagint meanings attested exclusively in translation Greek. The result has been that often in Septuagint research the Greek of the Septuagint is effectively eclipsed, because it is read through the eyes of the Hebrew. Though the approach of superimposing the Hebrew on the Greek and thus failing to take the Greek seriously is on the wane, it is far from dead. Hence the question I posed: from what language? Do we take the Greek seriously or do we, deliberately or inadvertently, read it as though it were the original Hebrew? NETS decided to take the Greek seriously in its historical context and has delineated a number of procedures to ensure that it is taken seriously. Its basic rule of operation is that the Greek of the

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Septuagint is bona fide Hellenistic Greek, until proven otherwise. That having been stated, it is fair to say that NETS translators often quickly determine that there is much in the Greek corpus that did not belong to the living, spoken and written, language but should instead be labeled and treated as translationese Greek.

In sum then, just because one elects to translate the Septuagint rather than the Masoretic Hebrew text, it by no means follows that the Hebrew original does not play any role when one translates the Greek into a third language.

On to my second question: From what book? Here I completely restrict myself to the Psalms. Again the answer seems more obvious than it perhaps is. As we all know the Masoretic Psalter has 150 psalms while the Septuagint Psalter counts 151. Similarly, associated with the Psalms is often a collection of Odes. So in the edition of Alfred Rahlfs a collection of fourteen odes is included in his Psalms. Furthermore, the numeration of the psalms in the two Psalters varies at a number of points due to differences in division. Needless to say, when one undertakes to translate the Septuagint Psalter one must decide what to include in what one translates, and how to label what one includes. Considerable discrepancy exists in both western-Protestant and Orthodox traditions of my acquaintance.

I will again draw on several fairly recent Orthodox translations into English and the Thomson and Brenton translations in Protestant tradition. I begin with the former. The Lazarus Moore edition of 1966 has all 151 psalms, gives only the Septuagint numbers and divides in accordance with the Septuagint, but appends no Odes. The Boston translation of 1987 has all 151 psalms, though it does not number the last one, gives only the Septuagint numbers, follows the Septuagint division of individual psalms, and adds nine odes, the first nine of Rahlfs’s Psalms. Versification is dispensed with. Moore’s translation is condemned inter alia for not including the Nine Odes since, as the Boston translation asserts, “they should be in every Orthodox Psalter.” The de Vinck-Contos translation of 1993 fails to include Ps 151 as well as the

7 Lazarus Moore, The Holy Psalter from the Septuagint, Madras (India), 1966
8 Op. cit. 15
nine odes, gives both Septuagint and Hebrew numbers but drops all versification as well as all superscriptions; the versification because it is deemed distracting in devotional use of the psalms and the superscriptions because they are said to be generally incomprehensible.\(^9\) Lastly, Pss 9 (MT 9 and 10), 113 (MT 114 and 115), 114+115 (MT 116) are divided according to Hebrew rather than Septuagint tradition.\(^{10}\)

As for Thomson and Brenton, Thomson includes all 151 psalms but numbers and divides them in accordance with the Hebrew tradition, and no odes of any kind are appended. Brenton too translates all 151 psalms, does not number the last one, retains the Septuagint psalm divisions but in the relevant psalms uses the versification of the Hebrew.\(^{11}\) Where psalm numbers differ in LXX and MT he provides both. Like Thomson, Brenton excludes all odes.

It is clear that here, as well as in the case of the first question I posed, decisions need to be made when one undertakes to translate the so-called Septuagint. NETS decided to respect the total number of psalms in the Greek Psalter (151), their division as well as their individual numbering and versification, but in recognition of the fact that the Greek psalms in the west commonly play second fiddle to the canonical Hebrew, NETS supplies the Hebrew numbers in parentheses. This is the more important since NETS is intended to be used synoptically with the New Revised Standard Version. Rahlfs’s fourteen Odes are excluded, not because of canonical considerations but simply because NETS does not aim to translate any given ecclesiastical Septuagint but the Septuagint as to its retrievable original form. Thus the interest is for the historically earliest text. Since the Odes as literary unit have no pre-Christian integrity and since, of the Old Testament odes, all but the Prayer of Manasses appear in any case in their native setting, only the Prayer of Manasses has been added. NETS therefore is based on the principle of the critical text, and as such also reaches where deemed possible beyond Rahlfs’s Psalmo cum Odis.

\(^{10}\) Since LXX 146 and 147 are read separately, de Vinck-Contos still end up with 151 psalms.
The third question I propose to ask, namely that of the text to be translated, poses perhaps more serious problems than either of the first two, though in principle much remains the same. Once one has decided to translate the Greek—whatever role one may assign to the Hebrew original in certain detail—a further problem presents itself: What Greek text should one translate, (a) a diplomatic text, for example, the best manuscript available, whether or not such a manuscript ever played a directly ecclesiastical role (one might think here of one of the great uncials Alexandrinus, Sinaiticus or Vaticanus), (b) a diplomatic text hallowed by ecclesiastical usage, often called the textus receptus, and based on a good exemplar of that text circulating within a given church establishment (one might pick here a given manuscript of the so-called Lucianic or Byzantine text in the Psalter), (c) a critically reconstructed ecclesiastical text, that is to say, a text based on a wide variety of exemplars of such an ecclesiastical text (for example, a text based on a study of all the so-called Lucianic manuscripts in the Psalter), or (d) the historically oldest retrievable text, that is the text reconstructed from all extant witnesses, by the best of text-critical principles and procedures (for instance, the Göttingen Septuaginta)?

The four options I have delineated can perhaps be folded into two: (a) a diplomatic edition based on a single textual witness, on the one hand, and (b) a critically reconstructed text based on all witnesses, on the other.

I draw again on the various translations/editions I have mentioned above. The oldest of these, Thomson (1808) and Brenton (1844) are indirectly based on a single Septuagint manuscript, namely Vaticanus 1209, better known as MS Vaticanus or B of the fourth century AD. To the extent that the popular Sixtine edition of 1587 was based on MS B, to that extent one can speak of MS B as a textus receptus of sorts. To the extent that MS B, though in most books of the Septuagint highly regarded by textual scholars, is a single manuscript among hundreds of others, it is but a single witness to the Septuagint text. Thus both Thomson and Brenton represent essentially diplomatic editions of the Septuagint text.

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11 Thus internally LXXPs 9 is versed 1-20, 1-18; LXXPs 113 1-8, (115) 1-18; LXXPss 114 and 115 are versed as a unit, as are LXXPss 146 and 147, but the numbering of the psalms themselves follows the Septuagint.
Of the three Orthodox translations that I have mentioned, Moore’s does not explicitly say what text has been used, though it was certainly one belonging to the so-called Lucianic camp. The Boston translation mentions explicitly the Moscow Edition of 1821. The Moscow Edition in broad terms represents the Byzantine text tradition, which in the Psalter can be found primarily in the so-called L or Lucianic text group, of which there are hundreds of exemplars, so many that by comparison other textual groups have nearly been eclipsed in transmission history. De Vinck and Contos do not state on what Greek text their translation is based, but it is in any case again the Byzantine text tradition. To what extent the Moscow Edition of 1821 is a critical edition of the Byzantine text, depends on just how broad its manuscript base is. Dr. Seppo Sipila, however, reports that the edition is essentially a reprint of Friedrich Grabe’s 1709 edition of MS Alexandrinus.

For the best published critical edition of the original, or historically earliest, Greek Psalter we have to turn to Alfred Rahlfs’s Psalmi cum Odis, which first appeared in 1931. Even though Rahlfs’s edition is not based on a direct examination of all the extant textual data, it is nevertheless informed by the critical principle. Rahlfs navigates among the variant readings and makes decisions as to which one, in his judgment, constitutes the Old Greek or Septuagint text. That reading then becomes his lemma, to which all variants are collated. Though Rahlfs’s is a critical edition, he nevertheless retained in his lemma certain elements which, though judged to be suspect as to their originality, have very ancient attestation. The best example is probably Ps 13.3 where eight lines of text deriving from Rom 3.13-18 are kept as lemma but placed within square brackets to mark them as being secondary. I note as an interesting aside that it is here the so-called L text, or Byzantine tradition, that lacks the additional lines, and thus represents the old Septuagint text.

Since NETS aims to be based on the oldest retrievable text-form, in Psalms it began with the critical edition of Rahlfs and where possible pushed beyond it on the basis of further evidence.

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12 Interestingly, Rahlfs’s critical edition is viewed as vindicating the best of Orthodox printed texts (14).
13 Private communication dated 11-11-01.
In concluding this section of my paper, I would like to raise one further point. There lies beyond the four options I have sketched of diplomatic texts, on the one hand, and critically reconstructed texts, on the other, a further option. That is to say, not only can one reach beyond the ecclesiastical Greek text to the most accurately reconstituted original Greek text, i.e. in principle the text as it left the hands of the first translators, but one can also do what for example the Revised Standard Version (RSV) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) have done, namely, to reconstruct and then translate a kind of Ur-Text, based on the Masoretic Text (MT), the Septuagint (LXX), the Peshitta, the Samaritan Pentateuch, evidence from Qumran, and whatever else can be found. This might be labeled in the first instance the text-historical quest. From a historical perspective, one seeks to do here precisely what one does in reconstructing the Old Greek text, or the most pristine form of the Septuagint. Theoretically this is the aim of all text-criticism, even though at a practical level such an aim can only be substantially realized under two essential preconditions: (a) that the number of total witnesses be deemed large enough, and (b) that the extant witnesses be deemed a fair cross section of all witnesses. What one seeks to do in such an undertaking is to recover the text with the greatest degree of historical priority. But whether historical priority translates automatically into higher ecclesiastical authority is, it seems to me, a further and separate question. Differently put one might ask, Can the Bible simply be equated with the historically oldest text? Yet again, does “the oldest” ipso facto mean “the most authoritative”? Is the term “bible” perchance used in two quite distinct senses? I am afraid I do not have a ready answer.

Finally my fourth question: How to translate? That question, like my earlier ones is in no way intended to be prescriptive, but again aims to be descriptive of what NETS decided to do. The simple and basic answer to my fourth question is: It all depends on what one seeks to accomplish. But that then leads to a sub-set of questions and answers.

I begin with the question of intended audience or reading public. (a) Does one want to have the translation play a primarily institutional role and thus give it a liturgical tone or pitch? (b) Does one want to address especially the pew and thus seek to make one’s translation as understandable as possible to the common worshiper? (c) Does one
want to address chiefly the biblically well-educated constituency and consequently give it a more academic and scholarly register?\textsuperscript{14} NETS decided to aim primarily at the reading public identified in the third group, namely, the reasonably well-educated constituency. The reason for this is not to exclude anyone from reading and using NETS, but our perception that in a context where the Septuagint is not held to be canonical it is most probably this constituency that has a more than passing interest in non-canonical biblical literature. That perception and determination in turn leads to others.

In light of the audience NETS has decided especially to address, one can then raise the question of what Gideon Toury\textsuperscript{15} and others speak of as target-oriented translating versus source-oriented translating. As Toury sees it, the seventies of the past century were marked by “extreme source-orientedness” and in his words the “preoccupation was mainly with the source text and with the proclaimed protection of its ‘legitimate rights’.” \textsuperscript{16} This source-orientedness is then distinguished from target-orientedness, though there is no suggestion that the two are in any way mutually exclusive. Yet the terms I find very helpful and see them as corresponding to what Sebastian Brock\textsuperscript{17} as early as 1972 described as the difference between, on the one hand, translations that bring the reader to the text and, on the other hand, translations that bring the text to the reader, and applied this distinction to Greek biblical translation from Hebrew. NETS has consciously opted for substantial source-orientedness, or in Brock’s terms for bringing the reader to the text rather than the reverse. And that in the present translational climate no doubt calls for some explanation. The explanation is not that NETS for some reason believes that source-oriented translating is scientifically superior to target-oriented translating, but instead NETS consciously chose this mode because it perceives its own source text, namely, the translated Septuagint to be such a text in large

\textsuperscript{14} For an elaboration of these options see E. A. Nida and C. R. Taber, \textit{The Theory and Practice of Translation}. Brill, Leiden, 1982 p. 31.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond}. John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 1995.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. p.24
\textsuperscript{17} See, e.g., his “The Phenomenon of the Septuagint,” \textit{OTS} 17 (1972) p. 17.
part. That is to say, source-orientedness is what characterizes the Greek translation of the Hebrew.\textsuperscript{18}

As Toury has argued, interference from the parent text (in this case from the original Hebrew) is what one expects to find in translations, and in recognition of that likelihood he has formulated what he terms the law of interference, which runs as follows: "in translation, phenomena pertaining to the make-up of the source text tend to be transferred to the target text".\textsuperscript{19} Since he insists that interference is a kind of default, the chief question to be answered is not whether interference has occurred in the process of translating but what kind of interference has occurred, and how much of it. Toury distinguishes two kinds of transfer: (a) negative transfer, i.e. deviations from normal, codified practices of the target system—in our case Hellenistic Greek—, for example, patent Hebraisms that find no parallel in Greek usage, and (b) positive transfer, i.e. greater likelihood of selecting features which do exist in the target language and are used in any case, for example, what H. St. John Thackeray,\textsuperscript{20} following J. H. Moulton, referred to as over-working; good Greek but often abused by overuse. NETS perceives the Septuagint to be a text characterized by both positive and negative transfer. And it is that perception of NETS that is directly related to the kind of reading-public it primarily seeks to address. For had it decided primarily to address the pew, it would have made its translation not only as English as possible, whether or not the Greek was fully Greek, but it would also have catered deliberately to common, possibly vernacular speech. In other words, it would have down-played the cultural difference between translations and non-translations. Furthermore, it would have felt duty bound to make good sense of the translated Greek, no matter what conundra might present themselves in the text to be translated. If, on the other hand, NETS had decided to aim at liturgical use in the ecclesia, it would have aimed more at what the Boston translation calls “solemnity and beauty” and to achieve which “many of the compromises and inconsistencies in style of

the more recent translations” have been avoided. But since NETS decided to focus primarily on a biblically well-educated reading public, it felt justified in taking a more source-oriented translation approach. That is to say, it decided to do its best not only to communicate what the Greek seems to say, but also make a serious effort to convey how the Greek says what it says. In other words, the assumption is made that the reading public targeted by NETS has an interest not only in the contents of the Septuagint but also in its linguistic packaging. Furthermore, although NETS’s theoretical stance is that Septuagint Greek is living Greek until proven otherwise, it is also recognized that, in practical terms, its Greek is often translationese instead. NETS therefore seeks to translate standard Greek into standard English and non-standard Greek in less than smooth and idiomatic English. In other words, when the Greek is perceived to be normal Hellenistic Greek, it aims at normal English; when the Greek is deemed abnormal Greek, NETS lapses into a more literal mode. The goal is therefore to mirror as best possible the quality of the source language (Greek) in the target language (English). I suppose, in theological terms, NETS is quite content that the message of the Septuagint be presented in a form at times as lowly as that in which the messiah is said to have come. More concretely, let me cite one of the principles from the published prospectus for the IOSCS commentary series,

The principle of linguistic parsimony, which is understood to mean that, as a general rule, no words or constructions of translation-Greek shall be considered normal Greek, unless attested in non-translation writings.

Granted the goals of NETS cannot totally be achieved, it is nonetheless important to formulate an ideal.

In closing I would like to elaborate briefly on an issue I have broached a number of times before, namely, that of original Greek text, or the constitutive character of the

Septuagint, in distinction from its reception history, or its history of interpretation. Just as in strictly textual terms the original form of the text is to be kept distinct from subsequent forms of that text, so the meaning of the original text must be kept distinct from what later interpreters took that text to mean. This of course does not mean that original meaning is of a higher ontological order than subsequent meaning, any more than that the original form of the text is of a higher ontological order than subsequent forms. Rather it is a question of historical (and logical) priority versus what came later, a question of stage one in distinction from stage two, three etc. To understand and appreciate the import of later meaning presupposes that one has delineated what the text meant to begin with. Thus NETS aims to reflect what the LXX meant when it was produced, not what it may have meant at some subsequent point in time. It is this distinction, as I see it, that underlies James Barr's argumentation in his book *The Semantics of Biblical Language* and which he more explicitly states in his response to David Hill's criticism of his book. Barr there writes,

> He [Hill] does not make the obvious and necessary distinction between two sets of mental processes, those of the translators themselves, whose decisions about meaning were reached from the Hebrew text, and those of later readers, most of whom did not know the original . . . ”

The two questions are, of course, related; yet quite distinct. A quick example may illustrate. LXXPs 1.5 reads: "Therefore the impious will not rise up in judgment" (NETS). The Greek verb for "rise up" is ἀνείβω, often used in the NT and elsewhere for resurrection from the dead. Does that then mean that Ps 1.5 is speaking about resurrection from the dead? Some interpreters have alleged that it does. But there is good reason to believe that the Greek translator had no such thing in mind. Therefore, the most one can

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say is that the Greek translator created the potential for such an interpretation. Potential, however, is one thing, realization another.

What I have attempted to emphasize in my paper is that before one begins a process as complicated as translating a translation into a modern language, a whole set of questions needs to be asked and answered, and these questions and answers are very much interrelated and interdependent. If translating is an act of *hybris*, then translating a translation is surely an act of *hybris again*. 