Psalms (Hebrew)

Jerome (c. AD 347–420)

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[Translated by Kevin P. Edgecomb] BEGINNING OF ANOTHER PREFACE OF THE SAME Eusebius Hieronymus to his Sophronius, health! I know some to think the Psalter to be divided into five books, as though wherever among the (version of the) Seventy interpreters is written γενοιτο γενοιτο, that is, ”may it be, may it be,” for which in Hebrew is said ”amen amen,” is the end of the books. And we, the authority of the Hebrews being followed, and especially of the Apostles, who always in the New Testament name the Book of Psalms, have asserted one volume. We also testify of all the authors who are set down in the titles of their psalms, namely of David, and of Asaph, and of Jeduthun, of the Sons of Korah, of Heman the Ezraite, of Moses, and of Solomon, and of the rest, which Ezra compiled into one volume. For if amen, for which Aquila translated ”trustworthy” (πεπιστωμενος), is only placed at the end of books and not sometimes wither at the beginning or at the end of either words or sentences, then both the Savior never said in the Gospel, ”Amen, amen, I say to you,” and the letters of Paul (never) contained it in the middle work, also Moses, and Jeremiah, and others in this way had many books, who in the middle of their books frequently interposed amen, as also the number of twenty-two Hebrew books and the mystery of the same number will be changed. For also its Hebrew title, Sephar Thallim, which is interpreted ”Scroll of Hymns,” agreeing with the Apostolic authority, shows not many books, but one volume.

Therefore, because recently, when disputing with a Hebrew, you produced certain testimonies about the Lord Savior from the Psalms, and he, wishing to outmaneuver you, asserted throughout nearly every one of the words that it is not found thus in Hebrew, so that you were opposed to the (version of the) Seventy interpreters, you most zealously demanded that, after Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion, I translated a new edition in Latin speech. For you said yourself to be greatly confused by the variety of interpreters, so that you are inclined by love to be content with either my translation or my judgment. For this reason, having been compelled by you, to whom I am unable to deny even those things I cannot do, I again handed myself over to the barkings of detractors, and I preferred you to question my strengths rather than my willingness in friendship. Certainly I will speak confidently and I will cite many witnesses of this work, knowing me in this matter to have changed

nothing of the truth of the Hebrew. Therefore, wherever my edition has differed from the old ones, ask any of the Hebrews, and you will clearly see me to be torn in pieces by those striving after error, who ”prefer to be seen to condemn the brilliant rather than to learn,” most perverse men. For when they always desire new delicacies, and their gullets, like the seas, do not suffice, why in only study of the Scriptures are they content with an old flavor? I do not say this so that I might bite my predecessors, nor have I considered slandering any translation of those which I very diligently corrected, (and) formerly gave to men of my language; but that it is one thing to read the Psalms in the churches of those believing in Christ, another thing to answer the Jews who accuse every word.

But if, as you proffer, you will have translated by little work into Greek, Opposing the Ridiculers (αντιφιλονεικων τοις διασυρουσιν), and you will have made the most learned men witnesses to my ignorance, I will say to you that (saying) of Horace, ”You do not carry wood into a forest.” Except that I have this solace, if in the common work I know both praise and slander to be common to me and you. I desire you to be well in the Lord Jesus, and to remember me. END OF THE PREFACE

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