

than an exegetical suggestion or philosophical notion.

Still the work of the textual critic is important. One must remember that all exegesis is built on the assumption that there is a correct text...and that we have a reasonably sound idea as to what it is.

E. Old Testament Translations

1. Greek translations

a. The Septuagint (LXX)

(1) History. The best known historical claim for the LXX is given in the Letter of Aristeas, presumably in the second century BC although the letter claims to be somewhat older. In this we learn how Philadelphus (Ptolemy III, d. 246, of Egypt) agreed with his librarian, Demetrius Phalerus, that they should have a good translation copy of the Torah in the Alexandria library. Accordingly the high priest at Jerusalem, Eleazar, sent 72 scholars who completed the work in 72 days. They worked in groups and compared results...finding unanimity in their work and so the assumption was that it was correct. Their real work is certainly behind this tradition and LXX scholars find the Pentateuch shows great care while some other aspects of the LXX look as if our second year Hebrew class had done the work...although our class might have made a more professional appearing job of it.

Aristeas limits himself to the law and his concepts are given at face value by Josephus. Philo presents a varying view and the church fathers seem to have expanded Aristeas' concept to the whole of the Old Testament. Consequently the letter has come to be understood in a legendary form and is not treated as authoritative by many modern scholars. It probably grows from some realistic historical circumstance, that much seems certain, but we are not likely to discover what that circumstance was.

From the time of Aristeas until late in the 2nd century AD, the history of the LXX is not so clear. That it became the Old Testament used by the church is apparent and it was on the strength of the understanding of the LXX that the New Testament church conceived of itself as the on-going people of God. Apparently, from the need that