

NOTE 3: ANCIENT VERSIONS

In interpreting any part of the Bible, it is useful to consult early translations (generally called "versions"). The earliest of these is the Septuagint (often represented by *LXX*), a translation into Greek in the second century before Christ. Another very important version is the Vulgate, translated from Hebrew into Latin by Jerome about A.D. 400.

Another ancient version of value is the so-called Targums. These are translations into the Aramaic language, made by Jews in the early centuries of the Christian era. It is probable that they were preserved orally for a long time before being written down, and that they originated from oral translations given in the synagogue after the Hebrew was read, as most of the Jews then spoke Aramaic rather than Hebrew. Since the desire was not simply to translate but also to interpret, the Targums are generally not an exact translation. Yet they give valuable help, particularly in connection with the use of rare words. They are of special interest for understanding early Jewish exegesis. Thus the Targum of Isaiah 52:13 begins with a reference to "my servant the Messiah."

Other translations were made by Christians into Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic. There are fragments of two manuscripts representing a very early translation into Syriac, but most of the Syriac manuscripts contain the so-called Peshitto, which most scholars now consider as having been made at about A.D. 400.

NOTE 4: THE UNITY OF ISAIAH

In recent years it has been widely taught that this portion of Isaiah was not written by Isaiah but by an unknown prophet who lived shortly before the end of the Exile. This claim rests on three types of argument: historical, literary, and theological. The historical argument is based on the fact that the section assumes exile as already present; Jerusalem as already destroyed; the Babylonians, rather than the Assyrians, as the oppressing nation; and it even refers to Cyrus by name. As pointed out on pages 18 to 22, the general facts of exile were amply familiar