In 1904, R. R. Ottley wrote:

Supposing that a fair classical scholar, accustomed to read the New Testament in Greek, bethought himself of turning to the Septuagint, it is probable that he would meet with some disappointment (assuming him to be no Hebraist). He would expect to be approaching a step nearer to the original than while confining himself to the English Version; but he might be sorely puzzled by what he found. Let him open at Isaiah’s famous twenty-eighth chapter: why are the “drunkards” of Ephraim transformed into “hirelings”? the fat “valley” into a “hill”? whence comes “rest to the land”? and, passing over verse 8, why has “precept” become “affliction,” while “line” wears the guise of “hope”?¹

In the paragraphs that follow, Ottley goes on to generally bemoan the lack of annotated editions of the Septuagintal versions of the Old Testament books, such as had been available for classical texts for many years. Unfortunately, the intervening over ninety years since Ottley wrote have not produced an organized or systematic approach to this problem. There have, of course, been many large strides forward in the study of the LXX, but the LXX remains valuable to most scholars primarily as a witness to its Vorlage, and not as a document in and of itself. This aspect of Septuagintal studies is, most certainly, an important one for the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, but does little to help us understand the Septuagintal documents as documents in their own right—documents translated and used within communities which, most likely, had little or no access to the Hebrew and Aramaic originals. It is probable that a lack of regard for this specific factor has prevented or forestalled systematic treatments of the LXX texts in the manner that Ottley encouraged.

Much work has been done, however, that recognizes the specificity—the unique and individual historical and linguistic setting—of the LXX texts. Perhaps because of its special importance for early Christianity and other groups within early Judaism, such as the Qumran community (see other chapters in this volume), the book of Isaiah has benefited from a large proportion of that work.

This paper will examine past scholarship on elements of LXX Isaiah that has recognized its specificity as a document in and of itself (and not simply as a witness to its Vorlage), as well as exploring some further elements in the text of LXX Isaiah which seem to us to merit attention from such a perspective. These selective surveys are not meant to be exhaustive. Their major purpose is to highlight some of the studies from which we have drawn our inspiration, and whose lead we hope to encourage others to follow, especially in terms of writing commentaries on the various books of the LXX.

**PAST WORK ON LXX ISAIAH AS A HELLENISTIC DOCUMENT**

The basic premise of the approach in this paper is, simply stated, that the LXX is a Hellenistic document, intended for a thoroughly Hellenistic audience. The primary, if not only, linguistic ability of this audience would have been in Greek. As a result, the book cannot be studied simply in the light of its Semitic-language Vorlage, whether known or unknown, because the only group of people in the ancient world capable of such an understanding would, arguably, have been the translators themselves.\(^2\) This is not, of course, to suggest that there were not many in the ancient world who had facility in more than one language, including possibly Hebrew and/or Aramaic, but simply to recognize that the single most important reason for undertaking such an arduous and thankless task as this translation was that the target audience did not have facility with the original language of the translated document. Even a scholar and

\(^2\) A. Van der Kooij ("The Old Greek of Isaiah in Relation to the Qumran Texts of Isaiah: Some General Comments," in G. J. Brooke and B. Lindars [eds.], *Septuagint, Scrolls and Cognate Writings: Papers Presented to the International Symposium on the Septuagint and Its relations to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Writings (Manchester, 1990)* [SBLSCS 33; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992] 209) suggests that the significance of the relationship between LXX Isaiah and 1QIsaa "lies not so much in their being the earliest witnesses to the text of Isaiah, but more in particular in their being kindred pieces of Jewish literature in the hellenistic era."