THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR
SEPTUAGINT AND COGNATE STUDIES

BY

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At the kind invitation of Prof. van der Woude, the secretary of the Editorial Board of JSJ, I have the privilege of introducing the recently founded International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies (IOSCS) to the readers of JSJ and describing its purpose, activities and goals in the field of Septuagint studies.

In the fall of 1968 Dean Sidney Jellicoe and C. T. Fritsch met with Prof. Harry M. Orlinsky in New York "to discuss the formation of a group of scholars who were particularly interested and active in the study of the Septuagint and related texts. It was decided to form an International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies... It was agreed further that an Executive Committee be set up, consisting of scholars the world over" 1).

As a result of this meeting IOSCS was organized on Dec. 19, 1968 at the annual meeting of SBL, held in Berkely, California. Orlinsky was elected president, Fritsch, secretary and treasurer, and Jellicoe, editor. The following executive committee was then appointed by the president: the above mentioned officers, plus Père D. Barthélemy (Albertinum, Switzerland), the Reverend Principal Matthew Black (St. Andrews), and Drs. Robert Hanhart (Göttingen), Robert A. Kraft (Univ. of Pennsylvania), John H. P. Reumann (Philadelphia), John W. Wevers (Toronto), and Joseph Ziegler (emeritus, Würzburg). Subsequently Dr. (Mrs.) Suzanne Daniel (Jerusalem) and Prof. I. Soisalon-Soininen (Helsinki) were added to this group. The organizational meeting also elected Professor Henry S. Gehman (emeritus, Princeton Theological Seminary) as honorary president of IOSCS.

Since that time IOSCS has met in conjunction with SBL at Toronto (Nov., 1969), New York (Oct., 1970), and in August, 1971 we were invited to meet as a special section with the VIIth Congress of the

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The purpose of IOSCS is threefold: to cultivate genuine interest in the Septuagint for its own sake, to foster research in the Septuagint and related fields, and to serve as a means of coordination and communication among scholars working in the general area.

The Septuagint is the outstanding literary achievement of Alexandrian Judaism and served as the Bible of the Jews of the Diaspora and the Scriptures of the Christian Church in East and West. It also was the archetype for the translations of the Old Testament into the vernacular languages of the expanding Church, with the exception of the Syriac and Vulgate, although these did not escape its influence. It was the version almost consistently quoted by the New Testament writers, as well as by the patristic writers of the early Church. Yet the Septuagint has been relegated to a position of secondary importance in biblical studies. Its use in the commentaries has been mainly limited to the reconstruction and elucidation of the Hebrew text in a way that is often insufficiently informed and uncritical. Little attempt has been made to explore the background and meaning of the Greek text for its own sake, or as A. Deissmann put it, “to interpret the Greek Old Testament as the Greek Bible” 1).

Then, too, Septuagint scholars have pursued their studies in comparative isolation, often ignored by scholars of both Testaments. The results of their scholarly endeavors are scattered in the pages of biblical journals or buried in obscure places. Professorships in Septuagint studies, which would provide regular teaching and continuous consultation with other biblical scholars, do not exist, and theological curricula are sadly devoid of Septuagint courses 2).

Happily a new plateau has been reached in LXX studies with the inauguration of IOSCS. The membership of the organization includes the names of most scholars throughout the world who are working in the area of Septuagint and cognate studies. The Bulletin, which appears annually under the able editorship of Dean Jellicoe, includes a survey of scholarly contributions and projects in this area of research. It is hoped that scholars will continue to inform Dean Jellicoe (Bishop’s University, Lennoxville, Quebec, Canada) of their work in the