Textual Criticism of the Old Testament

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To restore the original text of ancient documents, such as the OT Scriptures, is the task of textual criticism. The critic must know both the tendencies of scribes and the history and character of the sources bearing witness to the documents. No one source perfectly preserves the original text of the OT, and in cases of disagreement the critic must decide on the original reading in the light of all the sources and his knowledge about them. The two principal types of sources for the text of the OT are MSS directly descended from the original Hebrew text and ancient versions directly influenced by these MSS.

I. The Hebrew Manuscripts

Just as the great variety of English Bibles reflects the philosophies and abilities of the translators, so also the variants in the ancient MSS reflect the philosophies and abilities of the scribes who produced them. The scribes were further influenced in their attitudes toward the transmission of the text by their own time and place in history. Similar differences characterize the sources of information that are available to modern textual scholarship.

A. From the Time of Composition to c. 400 B.C.

No extant MS of the Hebrew Bible can be confidently dated before 400 B.C. by the disciplines of paleography, archaeology, or nuclear physics. Therefore, scribal practices before this time must be inferred from evidence within the Bible itself and from known scribal practices in the ancient Near East at the time the OT books were being written. These two sources suggest that scribes at this time sought both to preserve and to revise the text.

1. *Tendency to preserve the text*. The very fact that the Hebrew Scriptures persistently survived the most deleterious conditions throughout its long history demonstrates that indefatigable scribes insisted on its preservation. The OT books were copied by hand for generations on highly perishable papyrus and animal skins in the relatively damp, hostile climate of Palestine in contrast to the dry climate of Egypt, so favorable to the preservation of these materials. Moreover, the prospects for their survival were uncertain in a land that served as a bridge for armies in unceasing contention between the continents of Africa and Asia—a land whose people were the object of plunderers in their early history and of captors in their later history. That no other writings, such as the Book of Yashar or the Diaries of the Kings, survive from this period shows the determination of the scribes to preserve the OT books. But the worst foes of Hebrew Scripture were the very heirs of its treasures, because they sought to kill many of its authors (cf. Matt 23:35) and destroy their works (cf. Jer 36). One must assume, however, that from the first the OT Scriptures captured the hearts, minds, and loyalties of some in Israel who at risk to themselves kept them safe. Such people must have insisted on the accurate transmission of the text even as those of similar persuasion insist on it today.

In addition, both the Bible itself (cf. Deut 31:9 ff.; Josh 24:25, 26; 1 Sam 10:25) and the literature of the ancient Near East show that at the time of its earliest composition a psychology of canonicity existed (see THE CANON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT). This psychology must have fostered a concern for the care and accuracy in the transmission of the sacred writings. For example, a treaty of the Hittite international suzerainty treaties parallel to Yahweh's covenant with Israel at Sinai contains this explicit threat: "Whoever changes but one word of this tablet, may the weather god … and the thousand gods of this tablet root that man's descendants out of the land of Hatti." Likewise one of the Sefire Steles (c. 750 B.C.) reads, "Whoever … says, 'I will efface some of its words,' … may the gods throw over that man and his house and all in it." Again, at the conclusion of the famous Code of Hammurabi imprecations are hurled against those who would try to alter the Law. And Moses insisted that Israel "observe all these laws with care" (Deut 31:12). Undoubtedly this psychology coupled with a fear for God in the heart of the scribes who did their work in connection with the ark inhibited them from multiplying variants of the texts.

Moreover, scribal practices throughout the ancient Near East reflect a conservative attitude. As Albright noted, "The prolonged and intimate study of the many scores of thousands of pertinent documents from the ancient Near East proves that sacred and profane documents were copied with greater care than is true of scribal copying in Graeco-Roman times." To verify this statement one need only consider the care with which the Pyramid texts, the Coffin Texts, and the Book of the Dead were copied, even though they were never intended to be seen by other human eyes. Kitchen has called attention to the colophon of one text dated c. 1400 B.C., in which a scribe boasted, "[The book] is completed from its beginning to its end, having been copied, revised, compared, and verified sign by sign."

2. *Tendency to revise the text*. The statement, however, that the scribe quoted by Kitchen claimed to have "revised" the text indicates a contrary concept and practice on the part of some scribes. Apparently they also aimed to teach the people by

disseminating an understandable text. They undoubtedly revised the script and orthography according to the literary conventions of the times. Then too, they apparently changed linguistic features of the text. By the science of comparative Semitic grammar we can with reasonable confidence reconstruct the form of Hebrew grammar before the Amarna Period (c. 1 350 B.C.). If these reconstructions are correct, we must infer that the Masoretes preserved a form of Hebrew grammar from a later period—e.g., after final short vowels were dropped. On the other hand, Gerleman demonstrated that the Chronicler used a modernized text of the Pentateuch, and Kropat demonstrated that the Chronicler's Hebrew is later than that of Samuel-Kings.

Since, as will be argued below, the Masoretes were not innovators of Hebrew grammar, it seems plausible to assume that after 1350 B.C., probably in one major step, earlier linguistic forms were revised in conformity with the current grammar. But this change had little effect on the consonantal text. Such revisions are consistent with known practices. Albright said, "A principle which must never be lost sight of in dealing with documents of the ancient Near East is that instead of leaving obvious archaisms in spelling and grammar, the scribes generally revised ancient literary and other documents periodically. This practice was followed with particular regularity by cuneiform scribes." Kitchen has produced evidence showing that also in Egypt texts were revised to conform to later forms of the language. What influence inspired writers at the temple may have had on the revision of the text is difficult to decide. Moreover, as stated above, the Chronicler used a modernized form of the Pentateuch.

Finally, the many differences between synoptic portions of the OT strongly suggest that the priests entrusted with the responsibility of teaching the Bible felt free to revise the text (cf. 1 Sam 22 Ps 18; 2 Kings 18:13-20:19 Isa 36-39; 2 Kings 24:18-25:30 Jer 52; Isa 2:2-4 Micah 4:1-3; Ps 14 53; 40:14-18 70; 57:8-12 108:2-6; 60:7-14 108:7-14; 96 1 Chronicles 16:23-33; 16:34-36; and the parallels between Sam-Kings and Chron). Scribal errors such as dittography (unintentional repetition of a letter or syllable), haplography (omission of a letter or syllable that should be repeated, sometimes because of homoioteleuton and homoiarcton—similar ending and similar beginning respectively), confusion of letters, and the like occurred even in the best MSS in all stages of their transmission.

B. From c. 400 B.C to c. A.D. 70

The same tensions happily labeled by Talmon as centrifugal and centripetal manifest themselves in the extant MSS and versions between the time of the completion of the canon (c. 400 B.C.) and the final standardization of the text (c. A.D. 70-100).

1. *Tendency to preserve the text*. The presence of a text type among the DSS (c. 200 B.C. to A.D. 100) identical with the one preserved by the Masoretes, whose earliest extant MS dates to c. A.D. 900, gives testimony to the unbelievable achievement of some scribes in faithfully preserving the text. Of course, this text must have been in existence before the time of the DSS, and its many archaic forms in contrast to other text types give strong reason to believe that it was transmitted in a circle of scribes dedicated to the preservation of the original text. Moreover, M. Martin's studies show that the DSS reveal a conservative scribal tendency to follow the exemplar both in text

and in form. According to Rabbinic tradition, the scribes attempted to correct the text. Thus the Talmud (Ned. 37b-38a) informs us of five words of the Hebrew text at that time that were to be read without the *waw* conjunctive, of six words that are to be read but had been dropped from the text, and of five words written but that should be cancelled. Again, the following critical additions of the scribes preserved in the extant text handed down from the Masoretes evidence a desire to preserve an accurate text: (1) the fifteen extraordinary marks that either condemn the Hebrew letters so marked as spurious or else simply draw attention to some peculiar textual feature; (2) the suspended letters found in four passages may indicate intentional scribal change or scribal error due to a faulty distinction of laryngals; (3) the nine inverted *nuns* apparently marking verses thought to have been transposed, though Kahle suggested the *nun* is an abbreviation of "pointed."

2. *Tendency to revise the text.* On the other hand, the Sopherim, called by Ginsburg "the authorized revisers of the text," some time after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity altered the script from its angular paleo-Hebrew form to the square Aramaic form, aided the division of words—a practice carefully observed in the Hebrew inscriptions from the first half of the first millennium—by distinguishing five final letter forms and aided the reading of a text by continually inserting consonantal vowels called *mattes lectionis*.

More significantly, some liberal-minded scribes altered the text for both philological and theological reasons. Thus, they modernized the text by replacing archaic Hebrew forms and constructions with forms and constructions of a later Hebrew linguistic tradition. They also smoothed out the text by replacing rare constructions with more frequently occurring constructions and they supplemented and clarified the text by the insertion of additions and the interpolation of glosses from parallel passages. In addition, they substituted euphemisms for vulgarities, altered the names of false gods, removed the harsh phrase "curse God," and safe-guarded the sacred divine name by failing to pronounce the tetragrammaton (*YHWH* [*Yahweh*]) and occasionally by substituting other forms in the consonantal text.

As a result of this liberal tendency, three distinct recensions and one mixed text type emerged during this period (c. 400 B.C. to c. A.D. 70). The three text types already known from the LXX, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the text preserved by the Masoretes—the *textus receptus*—were corroborated by the finds at Qumran. Here the Hebrew text lying behind the Greek translation, the Jewish text type adopted and adapted by the Samaritans for their sectarian purposes, and the *textus receptus* are all represented. Following the lead of Albright, who argued from the forms of place names and proper names in LXX and in the received text that these text types originated in Egypt and Babylon respectively, Cross championed the theory of three local recensions. The Samaritan recension, he reasoned, must belong to Palestine if for no other reason than that it exists exclusively in the paleo-Hebrew script. Goshen-Gottstein, et al., however, rejected the notion that we must assume that textual variation depends on geographical separation.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Gesenius demonstrated that the numerous agreements between LXX and the Samaritan Pentateuch in secondary readings can be explained only by assuming that both texts had a common ancestor.

His view has now |been confirmed and clarified by two later independent studies. Cross demonstrated that 4QSama preserves a text much closer to the text of Samuel used by the author of the book of Chronicles than to the traditional text of Samuel surviving in the Masorah. In a separate study, Gerleman concluded, "It is a fact which has not received due attention that the latter [the genealogies and the lists of names in 1 Chron 1-9] show greater resemblance to the Samaritan Pentateuch than to the Massoretic."

Since the Samaritan sectarian recension did not originate until 110 B.C., as Purvis has demonstrated, it seems reasonable to suppose that the common ancestor to which both LXX and Samar. go back existed in Palestine at the time of the Chronicler (c. 400 B.C.).

Cross has labeled this text for the Pentateuch and Samuel "the Old Palestinian recension." This Old Palestinian recension was brought to Egypt during the fifth century B.C., if we may trust the indications of its place names, and was further vulgarized in the course of transmission before it became the base of LXX (c. 200 B.C.). It survived in Palestine with lesser revision and became the basis for the Samaritan Pentateuch c. 110 B.C.

From this history of the text, one can conclude that when the Samar. and the LXX agree against the received text, they bear witness to this Old Palestinian recension. Normally, therefore, the Samaritan Pentateuch shares an original reading with LXX. But it must be borne in mind that the Old Palestinian recension from which both descended was itself revised by scholarly reworkings and modernizations.

The archaic and stable Babylonian text, possibly surviving in Babylon from the time of the Exile, was possibly reintroduced into Palestine at the time the Jews returned to Palestine after the autonomous Jewish State was achieved by the Maccabees. But the evidence for this is not conclusive.

The confusion of text types in Palestine at this time is reflected in the citations from the OT in the NT, the Apocrypha, and the rabbinic traditions. The NT shares readings with the received text, Samar., LXX, Targ. Onkelos, Sirach, Testimonia, Florilegium, and Theod.

In addition to rabbinic traditions about the textual emendations of the scribes cited above, other rabbinic tradition tells of the need for "book correctors" in Jerusalem attached to the temple and even of divergent readings in Pentateuchal scrolls kept in the temple archives. Moreover, collations made from the Codex Severus and preserved by medieval rabbis show variants from the *textus receptus* in the scroll taken to Rome by Titus in A.D. 70. Talmon concluded, "The latest manuscripts from Qumran which give evidence to the local history of the Bible text in the crucial period, the last decades before the destruction of the Temple, do not present the slightest indication that even an incipient *textus receptus* did emerge there, or that the very notion of a model recension even was conceived by the Covenanters." Whether the identical conclusion is valid for the Jewish community centered in the temple is less certain.

C. From c. A.D. 70 to A.D. 1000

1. *Standardization of the text* On the other hand, the rabbinic testimony reflects a movement away from a plurality of recensions toward a stabilization of the text. Indeed, the seven rules of biblical hermeneutics, compiled by Hillel the Elder at the time of

Herod, demanded an inviolable, sacrosanct, authoritative text. Moreover, Justin's complaint against Trypho the Jew that the rabbis had altered the venerable LXX to remove an essential arm from the Christian propaganda also demonstrates that the rabbis desired an authoritative text.

A recension of the Greek OT (R) found at Nahal Hever dated by its editor, D. Barthelemy, from A.D. 70 to A.D. 100 confirms Justin's complaint. Barthelemy demonstrated that this is the rabbinic text Justin used for purposes of debate with the Jews. He showed the recensional character of the text by noting that all the modifications of the traditional Greek text are explained by a concern to model it more exactly after the Hebrew text that ultimately crystallized into what came to be known as Masoretic. He also noted that alongside hundreds of variants of this type, in a certain number of readings the recension departed from both LXX and the *textus receptus*, and suggested that in these instances the Hebrew text on which the recension is based differed from the received Hebrew text.

If C.H. Roberts is correct, however, in dating this scroll 50 B.C. to A.D. 50, we may have to view R as part of the fluid stage of the text.

In any case, rabbinic testimony, once again combined with other empirical data from the DSS, bears witness to the existence of an official text with binding authority from a time shortly after the destruction of the temple. With regard to Halakic discussions from this time, N. Sarna noted that exegetical comments and hermeneutical principles enunciated by Zechariah b. ha-Kazzav, Nahum of Gimzo, R. Akiva, and R. Ishmael all presuppose that in this period a single stabilized text attained unimpeachable authority and hegemony over all others. The dominance of the Masoretic-type text is amply attested by the Hebrew biblical scrolls and fragments discovered at Masada (A.D. 66-73), at Wadi Marabbacat, and at Nahal Hever (c. A.D. 132-135), because all of those are practically identical with the received text. These scrolls, though exhibiting few substantial variants, to a large extent lack even the minor variants found in the great recensions of the Greek OT attributed to Aq. (c. A.D. 120), Symm. (c. A.D. 180) and Theod. (c. A.D. 180), which were attempts to bring the Greek translation of the Bible closer to the accepted text during the second century A.D. Their variants as well as those found in later rabbinic literature, in the Targums, and in Jerome do not represent a living tradition but are either survivals predating the official recension or secondary corruptions after its acceptance. In effect, the combined evidence essentially supports de Lagarde's study of the last century that all the Hebrew medieval MSS were descended from a single master scroll that could be dated no earlier than the first century of the Christian era.

By at least A.D. 100, then, the rabbis had settled on the conservative and superbly disciplined recension that possibly had its provenance in Babylonia. Its adoption as the official text in effect destroyed all variant lines of tradition in established Judaism. Probably the need to stabilize Judaism by strong adherence to the law after the fall of Jerusalem spurred these efforts.

In the course, then, of the first century A.D., the scribal mentality changed from one of preserving and clarifying the text to one of preserving and standardizing the text. The text established was not, as Kahle theorized, the beginning of an attempt to standardize the text that finally became fixed only in the time of Maimonides (12th century A.D.) after a long and bitter struggle among the rabbinical schools.

It cannot be overemphasized that this official text is archaic. Numerous grammatical forms not attested in later Hebrew are now attested in the Ugaritic texts (c. 1400 B.C.). If the text is a later creation, we may well ask why the Alexandrian translators understood these same forms so imperfectly.

Because the scribal mentality from now on sought merely to conserve the text, no further developments of any significance occurred in the transmission of the biblical consonantal text.

2. The activity of the Masoretes

a. *In conserving the consonants.* Between c. A.D. 600 and 1000 schools consisting of families of Jewish scholars arose in Babylon, Palestine, and Tiberias to safeguard the consonantal text and to represent symbolically the vowels and liturgical cantillations, which until that time had only orally accompanied the text, by adding diacritical notations to the text. These scholars are known as Masoretes or Massoretes, possibly from the postbiblical root *msr* "to hand down." In their endeavor to conserve the consonantal text, they hedged it in by placing observations regarding the external form of the text in the margins. In the side margins they used abbreviations (*Masorah parsum*), in the top and bottom margins they gave more detailed and continuous explanations (*Masorah magnum*), and at the end provided alphabetical classification of the whole Masoretic material (*Masorah finalis*). In addition to these annotations made directly in the text, they compiled separate manuals called *Ochlah we-Ochlah*. When the MSS they inherited differed, they preserved the variants by inserting one reading in the text called *Kethib* and the other in the margin called *Qere*. Alternative readings may also be indicated in the margin by *sebtr*, an Aramaic word meaning "supposed."

b. *In conserving the vocalization.* Owing largely to the work by Kahle on scrolls found in the Cairo Genizah, it is now clear that the medieval codices of the Hebrew Bible as well as the printed editions of it preserve the forms of the symbols invented by the Masoretes at Tiberias between c. A.D. 800 and 900, which in turn grew out of an earlier Palestinian system. The earlier simple supralinear and the later complex system of annotations developed in the Babylonian centers did not survive.

Ever since Maimonides supported the ben Asher tradition against Saadiah b. Joseph Gaon, who favored the b. Naphtali tradition, it has been agreed that a true Masoretic Bible must follow b. Asher.

Barr has brought together conclusive evidence that the Masoretes did not invent the vowels but preserved a firm tradition of vocalization. Allowing for peculiar interpretative techniques, Aq. supports this vocalization and can cite rare words in forms close to the MT. Similarly, Jerome supports the same tradition. Most impressive here is the contrast between Jerome's version of the Psalms based first on LXX and then on the Hebrew. In many instances LXX preserves the same consonantal text as MT, but differs in the matter of vocalization; e.g., Ps 102:24 f. (101). In these instances Jerome in his *data Hebraeos* reads with MT against LXX. (The erratic and intrinsically improbable vocalizations of the Hebrew in LXX show that it was the Alexandrian Jews who did not possess a fixed tradition of vocalization but proposed an interpretation for the consonants.)

The following Talmudic passage further proves Barr's contention that the Masoretes were preservers and not innovators: "It is written: for Joab and all Israel remained there until he had cut off every male in Edom" (1 Kings 11:16). "When Joab came before David, the latter said to him: Why have you acted thus? He replied: Because it is written: Thou shalt blot out the males [*zekar*] of Amalek (Deut 25:19). Said David: But WE read, the remembrance [*zeker*] of Amalek. He replied: I was taught to say zekar. He [Joab] then went to his teacher and asked: How did you teach me to read? He replied: *Zekar*. Thereupon Joab drew his sword and threatened to kill him. Why do you do this? asked the teacher. He replied: Because it is written: Cursed be he that does the work of the law negligently." This makes clear that a reader of the ancient biblical text received his vocalization from a teacher.

Furthermore, philological considerations certify the thesis. The very fact that the Masoretic grammar admirably fits the framework of comparative Semitic grammar proves the credibility of the work of the Masoretes. Bergstrasser made this point when Kahle first announced his theory that the Masoretes were innovators. The innovators, Bergstrasser argued, must in that case have read Brockelmann's smaller comparative grammar (1903-13), for how else could they have come up with a grammar reconcilable with use in a comparative reconstruction

Occasional anomalous forms sometimes supported in ancient cognate texts unknown to the Masoretes put the case beyond doubt. A case in point is *torma-h* "treachery," an anomaly whose pattern fits an Akkadian parallel according to Dossin. In this connection Morag demonstrated that many forms that look bizarre are genuine and reflect ancient phonological, morphonemic, and morphological features of Hebrew. Finally, the MT maintains dialectical differences such as those between Hosea, Job, and Ruth. On the other hand, the internal evidence suggests that some dialectical differences have been smoothed over, such as the leveling of the second masculine singular pronominal suffix and that corrections were made in the vocalization to adjust to errors in the consonantal text; cf. Psalm 18:11 and 2 Samuel 22:12. These changes in the vocalization probably occurred at a time when the text was more fluid than after it became established c. 70 A.D.

D. From c. A.D. 1000 to the Present

R. Salomon b. Isamel, c. A.D. 1330, adopted the Christian numeration of chapters and placed the numerals in the margin of the Hebrew Bible in order to facilitate reference to a passage in controversy. Although the chapter divisions largely correspond with the Masoretic divisions, they nevertheless contradict these divisions in others.

The story of the printing of the Hebrew Bible has been superbly summarized by Sarna, whose account is closely followed here. The story begins with a poor edition of the Psalms produced in 1477 most probably in Bologna. The edition of the Bologna Pentateuch in 1482 set the pattern for many future editions culminating in the Bomberg rabbinic Bibles of the next century. A little later the great firm of Joshua Solomon Soncino was founded in a small town in the duchy of Milan. Attracting Abraham b. Hayyim from Bologna, they produced the first complete Bible, the Soncino Bible of 1488 with vowels and accents. Gershom Soncino in 1495 produced an improved and small pocket edition. It was this edition Martin Luther used to translate the Bible into German.

About 1511 Daniel Bomberg, a Christian merchant of Amsterdam, established a printing office in Venice and produced the first Great Rabbinic Bible in 1516-17. In connection with Jacob b. Hayyim ibn Adonijah, he produced the second Great Rabbinic Bible of 1524-25, which became the standard Masoretic text for the next 400 years and is frequently referred to as the ben Hayyim text.

Buxtorf in 1618-19 printed at Basel his four-volume rabbinic Bible in which the text was influenced by the traditions of the Sephardim (the occidental branch of European Jews early settling in Spain and Portugal), and not dominated by the Ashkenazai (the Eastern European Yiddish-speaking Jews), as were all previous editions printed under Jewish auspices. The text became the basis for J.H. Michaelis's critical edition in 1720.

S. Baer, supported by Franz Delitzsch, produced single volumes of the Hebrew Bible between 1869-95 in rigid conformity with rules established from the Masorah rather than on the basis of MSS.C.D. Ginsburg (in the British and Foreign Bible Society edition of 1911-26) notes that various Masorah traditions disagreed with the text and with each other, and so he paid more attention to the MSS than to the Masorah or ben Hayyim.

With the third edition of Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (1936), P. Kahle began the new approach of getting behind the ben Hayyim text to the Ben Asher text by basing the work on the Leningrad MSS B 19A (L), "the oldest dated MS of the complete Hebrew Bible" and related directly to the Ben Asher Codex. Unfortunately its critical apparatus swarms with errors of commission and omission, as Orlinsky put it. A new edition, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, also based on MSL is now appearing in fascicles. In addition to making minor changes, the editors, K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, inform the reader that the contributors "have exercised considerable restraint in conjectures." This welcome restraint, in marked contrast to the earlier editions of Kittel's Bible, shows that, as the result of the discovery of the DSS, scholars have learned a new appreciation for the credibility of the received text. Unfortunately the apparatus followed by *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* continues to swarm with errors of omission and commission and cannot be depended on.

In 1928 N.H. Snaith edited a text based on British Museum's Or. Ms 1616-18, a codex close to the tradition found in the 1720 Michaelis Bible. The text, though compiled from completely different sources, is very close to that of Kahle. This shows that the Ben Asher text is found in both the Leningrad MS and in the Sephardic MSS not corrected by a second hand to the ben Hayyim tradition. The same type of text will be used in the Hebrew University Bible Project based on the Aleppo Codex known to belong to the family of ben Asher and which has been hidden and so preserved from "correction."

II. Ancient Versions

A. The Septuagint

1. *Name, origin, date.* The version most important for textual criticism is the Greek one, described in its most ancient MSS "according to the LXX" (written in full: *Interpretatio septuaginta vivorum or seniorum*—i.e., "translation of the seventy elders"). This version

probably owes its name to the story recounted in the pseudonymous *Letter of Aristeas*, according to which seventy-two scholars summoned from Jerusalem by Ptolemy Philadelphus (295-47 B.C.) rendered in seventy-two days a perfect Greek translation of the Pentateuch. Christian writers credited the translation of the entire Hebrew Bible to these seventy-two interpreters.

Although many details of the story are fictitious, it is widely accepted that the translation of the Law was made in the time of Philadelphus. Contrary to the story, however, it is concluded that LXX arose out of the needs of the Alexandrian Jews and was done by various literary Greeks at Alexandria on a text type already present in Egypt. According to the general consensus, the Prophets were translated before the end of the third century B.C. and some, if not all, of the Hagiographa by 132 B.C., because the prologue to the Greek Ben-Sirach refers to an already-existing version of "the Law, Prophets, and the other writings." Scholars agree that a complete version of the Bible existed at least at the beginning of the first century A.D.

2. *The question of a proto-LXX*. Proceeding from his studies of the Samaritan Pentateuch Targums, P. Kahle brought a new model to the study of the history of textual transmission. Instead of thinking of a standard original from which variants developed, Kahle imposed a schema of many independent texts at the beginning that were later officially standardized for theological reasons. While his model is accurate in the case of the Targums and sometimes late in the history of a text's transmission, it has worked mischief when applied universally to the beginnings of other texts. According to Kahle, a great number of independent Greek translations existed for all the books, and LXX as we know it now was a creation of the church. The modern consensus, however, is returning to Lagarde's view that all Greek MSS go back to one text tradition. This return is due largely to the independent studies by Margolis on Joshua and Montgomery on Daniel, as well as to the new realization that recensional activity during the first two Christian centuries introduced many variants into the Greek tradition and that this gave an illusion that all these variants could not go back to the one original.

Lagarde argued that all extant MSS of the Old Greek translations, as well as all the MSS of translations made directly or indirectly from LXX, go back to the three recensions mentioned by Jerome; namely, the Egyptian, Palestinian, and Syrian produced by Hesychius, Origen, and Lucian respectively during the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era. These three recensions in turn go back to the original Greek translation. Furthermore, he argued, it is possible to identify the Septuagintal MSS as belonging to one or the other recensions with the aid of patristic citations and some of the daughter versions. It therefore follows that a critic of the Greek text must evaluate any given reading in the light of its recension and its properties and date.

Margolis supported Lagarde's theory by comparing MSS of the Greek text of Joshua with its hundreds of proper names. He gathered his MSS from all corners of the earth, together with the secondary versions (such as the Old Latin, Syriac, Sahidic, Bohairic, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Armenian) and all the earlier patristic writers (such as Justin, Origen, Eusebius, and Theodoret). He concluded from his collation that the sum of the witnesses yields four principal recensions: the Palestinian (P)—i.e. the Eusebian

edition of LXX column in Origen's Hexapla and Tetrapla; a recension used in Constantinople and Asia Minor (C); the Syrian or Antiochian (S); and the Egyptian (E).

Montgomery, working independently and on another type of book altogether, found the facts and interpretation in Joshua to hold true by and large in the case of Daniel also.

Then too, Barthelemy concluded that his recension of the Greek text found at Nahal Hever dated c. A.D. 70-100 had LXX as its base and therefore contradicted Kahle's thesis of an essentially Christian diffusion of LXX.

Orlinsky refuted in detail the works of Sperber, Kahle's pupil, who is the only one who tried to support Kahle's thesis with detailed evidence. He concluded, "All talk of an independent and equally original Greek translation is without foundation."

Not surprisingly, then, the two great modern editions of LXX are based on Lagarde's model, but their approach in presenting the texts differs. The Cambridge LXX, containing the Pentateuch and the historical books, presents the text of Codex B or *Vaticanus* (fifth century A.D.) because it exhibits the relatively purest and most original Septuagintal text. Its gaps are filled in from A or *Alexandrinus* (fifth century A.D.) and S or Sinaiticus (fourth century A.D.). It includes an immense critical apparatus based on the collations of the uncials and a large number of cursives and uses data from the daughter versions together with the quotations of Philo, Josephus, and the church fathers. The Gottingen LXX, which does not include the Pentateuch and historical books, provides a restored original text, though it generally comes back to B as the best source; it includes a vast critical apparatus in which the sources are grouped in accordance with Lagarde's principles for reconstructing the text as far as possible into families.

3. *Character of LXX*. Swete concluded that the majority of the translators learned Hebrew in Egypt from imperfectly instructed teachers and Barr concluded that these translators invented vowels for the unpointed text. Translations of individual books vary, however, with the background and skill of each translator. Except in passages such as Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 32, 33, the Pentateuch is on the whole a close and serviceable translation of a smoothed Hebrew recension. The Psalter is tolerably well done, though Ervin concluded that the theology of Hellenistic Judaism left its mark on it. About Isaiah, Seeligman concluded, "The great majority of the inconsistencies here discussed must be imputed to the translator's unconstrained and carefree working method, and to a conscious preference for the introduction of variations." He added, "We shall not, however, do the translator any injustice by not rating his knowledge of grammar and syntax very highly." Regarding Hosea, Nyberg found that "it is overly composed of gross misunderstandings, unfortunate readings and superficial lexical definitions which often are simply forced into conformity to similar Aramaic cognates. Helplessness and arbitrary choice are the characteristic traits of this interpretation."

Albrektson said of Lamentations: "LXX, then, is not a good translation in this book. But this does not mean that it is not valuable for textual criticism. On the contrary, its literal character often allows us to establish with tolerable certainty the underlying Hebrew text. It is clearly based on a text which was in all essentials identical with the consonants of the MT; indeed the passages where it may have contained a variant are notably few." Gerleman said of Job that the translator interprets the text as well as he

can and, with the help of his imagination, attempts to give an intelligible meaning to the original, which he does not understand. He added that the many deviations between the Hebrew and the Greek translations of Job are not the result of an essential difference between the original of LXX and our Hebrew text. They have come about in the course of translation when the translator has not mastered the difficulties of the original. Swete concluded, "The reader of the Septuagint must expect to find a large number of actual blunders, due in part perhaps to a faulty archetype, but chiefly to the misreading or misunderstanding of the archetype by the translators. Letters or clauses have often been transposed; omissions occur which may be explained by homoioteleuton; still more frequently the translation has suffered through an insufficient knowledge of Hebrew or a failure to grasp the sense of the context." In the case of Jeremiah, the text represented by LXX deviates so considerably from the MT as to assume the character of a separate edition. The LXX of Samuel, parts of Kings, and Ezekiel is of special value because the text preserved by the Masoretes of these books suffered more than usual from corrupting influences. Shenkel concluded that the Old Greek preserves the original chronology from Omri to Jehu.

4. *Recensions of LXX*. From his studies in Samuel-Kings, Cross concluded that the original LXX was revised no later than the first century B.C. toward a Hebrew text found in the Chronicler, some Qumran MSS, quotations of Josephus, the Greek minuscles boc2e2, and in the sixth column of Origen's Hexapla, which is not Theodotionic but also Proto-Lucianic. This so-called Proto-Lucianic recension was then revised by a *kai ge* revision in favor of the Proto-Masoretic text. The third revision came in the second century A.D. by Aq. and Symm., who revised the *kai ge* recension toward the Rabbinic Masoretic text. Barthelemy, on the other hand, contended that this Proto-Lucianic text is the original LXX and thus envisions only two subsequent revisions. But G. Howard contended that both these lack definitive proof.

But the evidence in the Minor Prophets is more conclusive. Here R (redactor editor) shows a systematic revision of the Old Greek to the Proto-MT as explained above, and Barthelemy has given proof that his recension lies at the base of Justin's citations and the three great recensions of the second century. Aquila, the student of R. Aqiba, produced an extremely literal work necessary for the exegetical principles of Aqiba. Symm. sacrificed literalness for the sake of the Greek idiom. In the case of Daniel, Theodotion's version superseded the original translation in the ordinary MSS and editions of LXX.

In the third and fourth centuries the recensions of Hesychius, Origen, and Lucian appeared. Of these, the most influential on later copies of LXX was Origen's fifth column of his Hexapla, a text consistently corrected to the Hebrew *textus receptus* and therefore most corrupt.

In the light of this history, Lagarde is perfectly correct in saying that, other things being equal, the Greek reading deviating from MT should be regarded as the original LXX.

The Lucianic recension is important because in its passion for fullness, which encouraged the accumulation of doublets, it embodies readings not found in other MSS of LXX. In the case of Samuel and Kings it presupposes a Hebrew original, self-

evidently superior to the existing MT. Whether it is the original LXX or based on the MSS still remains undecided.

B. The Aramaic Targums.

Less serviceable than LXX for textual studies are the Aramaic Targums (derived from the Aramaic word *targum* meaning "translation") both because they were standardized only later in their history and because they contain aggadic (nonlegal or narrative) and paraphrastic material, obviate anthropomorphisms, explain figurative language, and modernize geographical names.

1. *Origin of the Targums.* During the Persian period the majority of the Jews began to use Aramaic in addition to Hebrew, and as a result it became the custom to interpret in the synagogue the reading of the Hebrew Bible with Targums after every verse of the Pentateuch and after every third verse of the prophets. The rabbis forbade the use of written Targums, at least for the Pentateuch, for the Sabbath worship service, but permitted the preparation and use of them by individuals for private study and school instruction. There are indications both in the rabbinic literature and in the Targums themselves that they were committed to writing at least by the first century A.D.

2. *Targums to the Pentateuch*

a. *Targum Onkelos.* Because the Babylonian Talmud (Meg. 3a) attributes the official Targum of the Pentateuch to Onkelos in a text obviously parallel to a related account in the Jerusalem Talmud attributing the Greek translation to Aq. (note the phonetic similarity in the two names), A.E. Silverstone, along with many others, arrived at the conclusion that Onkelos and Aquila are one and the same, but the Babylonian applied to the official Aramaic version the tradition in Palestine regarding Aquila's Greek translation. On the other hand, we should note that on the basis of the mixture of Western and Eastern Aramaic in Onkelos, some of the most competent Aramaists believe it originated in Palestine while its final redaction took place in Babylonia. Then too, its halakhic and aggadic content betray the Palestinian school of Aqiba of the second century A.D. Possibly, then, Aquila had a hand in its Palestinian base after which it was imported to Babylonia where it was revised in the third century A.D.

Like Aquila's Greek recension, the Hebrew text lying behind the Aramaic is the one that ousted all rival recensions. While it aims to conform the Targum as closely as possible to this base, it misses the mark through the paraphrastic influences on all Targums.

b. *Palestinian Pentateuch Targums.* After the destruction of the cultural centers of Judea in the first and second revolts against Rome, the centers of Jewish life shifted to Galilee. Here Targums in the Galilean dialect evolved, but it is widely agreed that they contain much earlier material. The recently discovered *Codex Neofiti I* is the oldest complete MS of this tradition and according to its editor, Diez Macho, belongs to the first or second century A.D.

Targum Yerushalmi I, mistakenly ascribed to Jonathan and therefore known as Targum Jonathan (b. Uzziel) or pseudo-Jonathan but more correctly called Targum Erez Israel by earlier Jews, lacks only fifteen verses. It aggravates the distinctive traits of the paraphrastic translation. Its early base was revised not later than the seventh century.

Targum Yerushalmi II, also called Fragmentary Targum, contains c. 850 verses, preserving fragmentary portions of the Pentateuch. It is not clear how these fragments came together.

The Cenizah Fragments edited by Kahle date from between the seventh and ninth centuries A.D., represent various recensions, and contain both older and younger materials.

3. *Targums to the Prophets*

a. *Targum Jonathan*. The history of this Targum is like that of Targum Onkelos: it originated early in Palestine, was later revised in Babylonia, and was then recognized as being of ancient authority. According to the Babylonian Talmud, it was written by Jonathan b. Uzziel who is named as Hillel's most prominent pupil in the first century B.C. A conspicuous affinity between Targum Jonathan and Targum Onkelos has led some to conclude that Targum Jonathan influenced Onkelos. The usual rules of Targumic interpretation are observed, but the renderings in the latter Prophets are more paraphrastic on the whole than in the former Prophets.

b. *Targum Yerushalmi to the Prophets*. This work is known mainly from citations in Rashi and David Kimchi. Codex Reuchlinianus, written in 1105 A.D., in the form of eighty extracts, belongs to a later period, when the Babylonian Talmud began to exert an influence on Palestinian literature.

4. *Targums to the Hagiographa*. In general, though these contain older materials, they did not originate until a later period. Written at different times by different authors, they never enjoyed official recognition.

a. *Job and Psalms*. According to the Babylonian Talmud (Shab. 115a) a Targum of Job existed in the first century A.D., but it cannot be identified with the one now extant. Both it and the Psalms aim at giving a fairly faithful rendering of the Hebrew text and their brief aggadic additions can easily be separated. Moreover, each contains an unusually high number of variants in vowels and consonants from MT, and numbers of these also occur in the Pesh. and LXX. Both emphasize the law of God and its study, and the future life and its retribution. Both allude to situations in the Roman Empire after its division and before the fall of Rome.

b. *Proverbs*. This work is unique because about one third of its verses agree with the Pesh. against the Hebrew original. The relationship is not clear.

c. *Five Scrolls*. Zunz characterized these as "a Midrashic paraphrase, exceedingly loose and free in character; containing legends, fables, allusions to Jewish history, and many

fanciful additions." The exception is the text of Targum Esther in the Antwerp Polyglot, which is a literal translation. The text of the London Polyglot is essentially the same but with many aggadic additions. Targum Shenei is yet a third Targum to Esther and is regarded as an amalgam from other Targums and Midrashim.

d. *Chronicles*. Its author made use of both the Palestinian Targum and Targum Jonathan.

C. The Old Latin and Latin Vulgate

1. *The Old Latin*. The existence of early Latin translations called *Vetus Latina* or Old Latin (OL) is known not from any complete ancient MS, but from Latin Bible MSS exhibiting a pre-Vulgate text, from the lower texts of palimpsests, from quotations by Latin church fathers, and from marginal annotations on the Vulgate. Scholars dispute whether these reflect one original or several independent translations. Possibly it was a Jewish translation, because Jewish catacombs in Rome from the first century A.D. bear verses in Latin translated from the Hebrew Bible. In the main, however, it was based on LXX.

2. *The Latin Vulgate*. Recognizing the need for a uniform and reliable Latin Bible, Pope Damasus commissioned Jerome (A.D. 345-420) to produce such a work. At first Jerome revised the existing Latin texts of the NT and Psalms in the light of Hebrew and Greek originals. Some, however, deny that this *Psalterium Romanum* belongs to Jerome. Dissatisfied with this approach, he decided, they say, to prepare an entirely fresh Latin translation from the "original truth of the Hebrew text," the *Hebraica veritas*. After he settled down in Bethlehem, however, he apparently first produced a translation based on the Hexapla, which still serves as the text of Psalms in the Vulgate. In addition to this so-called *Gallican Psalter*, other extant books based on the Hexapla include Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. The other books of the Vulgate, however, were rendered directly from the Hebrew.

D. The Syriac Peshitta

The origin of the Pesh. (which means "simple, straightforward, direct") is uncertain. Some traditions assign the work to the time of Solomon, but Christian tradition ascribes it apparently to the king of Adiabene, who, having been converted to Judaism in the first century A.D., sent scholars to Palestine to translate the Bible into Syriac. Most scholars now agree that it originated in Edessa, that the Pentateuch was begun in the first century A.D., and that the entire Bible was completed by the end of the fourth century A.D. However, conflicting data suggest either that its authorship was Christian with Jewish help, or Jewish with later Christian revisions.

Although the Pesh. preserves a close conformity to the Hebrew text, it is currently believed to have been translated from LXX, especially from the Hexapla. In style, the translation of the Pentateuch, Isaiah, the Minor Prophets, and partly the Psalms, shows the influence of LXX; Ezekiel and Proverbs are in close agreement with the corresponding Jewish Targums; Job is literal, Ruth is midrashic, and Chronicles is partly midrashic and of a late period.

In the fifth century A.D., theological differences divided the Syrian Christians into the Nestorians and Jacobites. Each group then proceeded to formulate its own Pesh. text based on previous versions, with the result that today there are the Western and Eastern forms of the Pesh.

Important to the autonomous Septuagintal studies is the translation (in 617) by Paul, the bishop of Tella, based on Origen's Hexapla. It is important because, like the Armenian version, it preserved the signs of the fifth column of Origen's Hexapla and noted the works of Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus in the margin.
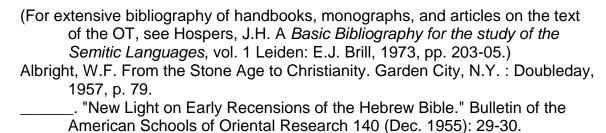
III. Canons of Textual Criticism

In the light of this varied history, it is not surprising that a strictly prescribed method of OT textual criticism has never been worked out. There are, however, basic rules that help place the criticism of the OT text on firm basis in order to avoid arbitrariness and subjectivity.

1. Where the Hebrew MSS and ancient versions agree, it may be assumed that the original reading has been preserved.

2. Where Hebrew MSS and ancient versions differ among themselves, one should choose either the more difficult reading (*lectio difficilior*) from the point of view of language and subject matter or the reading that most readily makes the development of the other reading(s) intelligible. To make this choice, one should be fully knowledgeable of the history and character of the recensions discussed above. Moreover, these criteria should be understood as complementing one another so that one may arrive at a reasonable and worthy text, for a "more difficult reading" does not mean a "meaningless and corrupt reading."

3. Where Hebrew MSS and ancient versions offer good and sensible readings and a superior reading cannot be demonstrated on the basis of the above two rules, one should, as a matter of first principle, allow MT to stand.

4. Where Hebrew MSS and ancient versions differ and none offers a passable sense, one may attempt a conjecture concerning the true reading—a conjecture that must be validated by demonstrating the process of the textual corruption from the original to the existing text-forms. Such conjectures, however, can never be used to validate the interpretation of the whole passage in that they will have been made on the basis of an expectation derived from the whole.

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