

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE TEXTUAL BASIS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

One is led to believe that two distinct types of modern translation of the Hebrew Bible exist: scholarly translations included in critical commentaries, and translations prepared for believing communities, Christian and Jewish. In practice, however, the two types of translation are now rather similar in outlook and their features need to be scrutinized.

Scholarly translations included in most critical commentaries are eclectic, that is, their point of departure is MT, but they also draw much on all other textual sources and include emendations when the known textual sources do not yield a satisfactory reading. In a way, these translations present critical editions of the Hebrew Bible, since they reflect the critical selection process of the available textual evidence. These translations claim to reflect the *Urtext* of the biblical books, even if this term is usually not used explicitly in the description of the translation. The only difference between these translations and a critical edition of the texts in the original languages is that they are worded in a modern language and usually lack a critical apparatus defending the text-critical choices.

The publication of these eclectic scholarly translations reflects a remarkable development. While there is virtually no existing reconstruction of the *Urtext* of the complete Bible in Hebrew (although the original text of several individual books and chapters has been reconstructed),<sup>1</sup> such reconstructions do exist in translation. These

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<sup>1</sup> The following studies (arranged chronologically) present a partial or complete reconstruction of (parts of) biblical books: J. Meinhold, *Die Jesajaerzählungen Jesaja 36–39* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1898); N. Peters, *Beiträge zur Text- und Literarkritik sowie zur Erklärung der Bücher Samuel* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1899) 558–62 (1 Sam 16:1–19:18); C. H. Cornill, *Die metrischen Stücke des Buches Jeremia* (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1901); F. Giesebrecht, *Jeremias Metrik am Texte dargestellt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1905); D. H. Müller, *Komposition und Strophenbau* (Alte und Neue Beiträge, XIV Jahresbericht der Isr.-Theol. Lehranstalt in Wien; Vienna: Hölder, 1907); P. Haupt, "Critical Notes on Esther," *Old Testament and Semitic Studies in Memory of W. R. Harper* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1908) II.194–204; J. Begrich, *Der Psalm des Hiskia* (FRLANT 25;

translations, such as included in the volumes of the *International Critical Commentary* (ICC) and the *Biblischer Kommentar* (BK) delete, add, transpose or correct words or verses in MT on the basis of the LXX or a Qumran text, and present a reconstructed text which often differs greatly from MT. These reconstructions have not been suggested in the languages of the Bible, Hebrew and Aramaic, probably because scholars feel that they lack the criteria or tools for creating such reconstructions in the original languages. As a result, scholars are more daring in translated tools, even though in actual fact the two enterprises are equally daring. It is probably the distance between the original languages of the Bible and the familiar European language that facilitates an enterprise in translation that is not attempted in the original languages. In a way this is strange, since only a very small number of problems are avoided when the reconstruction is presented in translation; most of the difficulties concerning the reconstruction of the *Urtext* also have to be faced in European languages.

A second type of translation is intended for believing communities. We focus on the theoretical background of such translations.

From the outset, translations intended for faith communities are distinct from the translations included in critical commentaries. Scholarly translations cater to the academic community and as such are entitled to be vague or to omit difficult words in the middle of the text; they also permit themselves to be daring in their reconstruction of the original text. They allow themselves to use different typefaces or colors to indicate different layers of composition or transmission, etc. All these elements are foreign to translations produced for believing communities,

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Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926); C. C. Torrey, "The Archetype of Psalms 14 and 53," *JBL* 46 (1927) 186–92; K. Budde, "Psalm 14 und 53," *JBL* 47 (1928) 160–83; P. Ruben, *Recensio und Restitutio* (London: A. Probsthain, 1936); F. X. Wutz, *Systematische Wege von der Septuaginta zum hebräischen Urtext* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1937); W. F. Albright, "The Psalm of Habakkuk," in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy* (ed. H. H. Rowley; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1950) 1–18; F. M. Cross, Jr. and D. N. Freedman, *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1950; 2d ed.: Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975); *idem*, "The Song of Miriam," *JNES* 14 (1955) 237–50; F. M. Cross, Jr., "A Royal Song of Thanksgiving II Samuel 22 = Psalm 18," *JBL* 72 (1953) 15–34; L. A. F. Le Mat, *Textual Criticism and Exegesis of Psalm XXXVI* (Studia Theol. Rheno-Traiectina 3; Utrecht: Kemink, 1957); M. Naor, "Exodus 1–15, A Reconstruction," in *Sefer S. Yeivin* (ed. S. Abramsky; Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1970) 242–82 (Heb.); P. D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 46–86; B. Mazar, "hgbwrym 'sr ldwyd," 'z ldwyd (Heb.; Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1964) 248–67 = *Canaan and Israel* (Heb.; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1974) 183–207; A. Gelston, "Isaiah 52:13–53:12: An Eclectic Text and a Supplementary Note on the Hebrew Manuscript Kennicott 96," *JSS* 35 (1990) 187–211; P. G. Borbone, *Il libro del profeta Osea, Edizione critica del testo ebraico* (Quaderni di Henoch 2; Torino: Silvio Zamorani, 1987 [1990]).

as these are intended for use in a confessional environment or by the general public.

In recent decades, the two types of translation have become almost indistinguishable and often share the same principles. Translations meant for faith communities now often follow the principles of scholarly translations. There are two types of such modern translation and our attention here is directed to the second:

1. A small group of modern translations claim to faithfully represent one of the standard texts of the Bible. The majority represent MT, but some translate the Vulgate (in the case of several Catholic translations),<sup>2</sup> the Peshitta,<sup>3</sup> or the LXX.<sup>4</sup>

2. The majority of the modern translations represent the biblical witnesses eclectically. As with the translations included in critical commentaries, they are mainly based on MT, but when the translators felt that MT could not be maintained, they included readings from one of the ancient translations, mainly the LXX, and in recent years also from the Qumran scrolls. Translations intended for believing communities usually present fewer non-Masoretic readings than scholarly translations, but the principles are identical, and it is the principles that count. These translations also contain a few emendations (conjectures). The decisions behind the inclusion of non-Masoretic readings reflect a scholarly decision procedure in the areas of textual criticism and exegesis. However, the reader is only rarely told how and why such decisions were made.

Most translators receive little guidance in text-critical decisions.<sup>5</sup> Reliance on one of the critical editions of the Hebrew Bible is of little

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<sup>2</sup> E.g., *The Old Testament, Newly Translated from the Latin Vulgate*, by Msgr. Ronald A. Knox (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1949; New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954).

<sup>3</sup> G. M. Lamsa, *The Holy Bible from Ancient Eastern Manuscripts Containing the Old and New Testaments Translated from the Peshitta, The Authorized Bible of the Church of the East* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1933).

<sup>4</sup> Several confessional translations of the LXX are being prepared for the Eastern European churches for whom the LXX has a sacred status. For scholarly translations of the LXX, see those listed in S. P. Brock et al., *A Classified Bibliography of the Septuagint* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973) and Dogniez, *Bibliography*.

<sup>5</sup> Some guidance is given by the series *Helps for Translators*, such as in D. J. Clark and N. Mundhenk, *A Translator's Handbook on the Books of Obadiah and Micah* (London/New York/Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1982); D. J. Clark and H. A. Hatton, *A Translator's Handbook on the Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989). See <http://www.logos.com/products> on this series of 21 volumes. Some volumes focus more on the options provided by the different English translations, and only rarely resort to the ancient versions. Other volumes resort much to the ancient texts, e.g. R. L. Omanson and Ph. A. Noss, *A Handbook on the Book of Esther—The Hebrew and Greek Texts* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997).

help, for the main edition used, *BHS*, mentions preferable readings in the apparatus rather than in the text, and in such an impractical and subjective way that they cannot guide the translator. *BHQ* is more practical for the user, and may create a unified, even ecumenical approach, but its unavoidable subjectivity is equally problematical as *BHS* (see chapter 18\*). Besides, presently the preferred readings of *BHQ*, prepared under the aegis of the UBS, are not meant to be guide new translation projects sponsored by the UBS.

The case of the New Testament is distinctly different. The decision-making process was much easier for the translation of this corpus than for the Hebrew Bible, since in the last few centuries a tradition has developed to translate the New Testament from existing critical editions of the Greek text. Thus the *Revised Version* (1881–1885) was based on the edition of Westcott and Hort,<sup>6</sup> Moffatt's translation<sup>7</sup> used the edition of H. von Soden, and the RSV<sup>8</sup> was based on the 17th edition of Nestle's critical reconstruction of the text. Moreover, a special edition was prepared by Aland and others to meet the needs of the translators.<sup>9</sup> This volume provides: (1) a critical apparatus restricted for the most part to variant readings significant for translators or necessary for the establishing of the text; (2) an indication of the relative degree of certainty for each reading adopted in the text; and (3) a full citation of representative evidence for each reading selected.<sup>10</sup>

In the area of the Hebrew Bible, however, there is little guidance for textual decisions. The rich and learned volumes of the UBS provide some guidance,<sup>11</sup> but they are of only limited practical help for translators (they are more valuable for textual critics). Indeed, Scanlin reports of the difficulties experienced by translators in using the vast amount of information contained in these volumes.<sup>12</sup> These volumes cover only a very limited number of textual variations, viz., details in which modern translations differ from MT. But translators need guidance regarding *all*

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<sup>6</sup> B. T. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Cambridge: University Press, 1881; London/New York: Macmillan, 1898).

<sup>7</sup> J. Moffatt, *The Bible, A New Translation* (New York/London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1922, 1924–1925).

<sup>8</sup> *The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version* (London: Collins, 1952).

<sup>9</sup> K. Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1966).

<sup>10</sup> This edition is accompanied by B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (3d ed.; London/New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), intended to further assist the translators.

<sup>11</sup> HOTTP and Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*.

<sup>12</sup> H. P. Scanlin, "The Presuppositions of HOTTP and the Translator," *BT* 43 (1992) 101–16.

the differences among the ancient textual witnesses, necessitating a much wider coverage in the handbooks.

We now turn to the theoretical aspects of the textual background of modern translations of the Hebrew Bible meant for faith communities. The studies written in this area pointed out the numerous differences among the various translations. Rüger, Albrektson, Scanlin, McKane, Locher, and many others described these differences as deriving from the different text-critical background of the translations.<sup>13</sup> Among other things, Scanlin noted how certain modern translations frequently deviated from MT, especially in 1 Samuel, where MT is often corrupt. Other scholars simply listed the differences among the textual witnesses that could result in different modern translations, and not knowing which translation to prefer, they raised their hands in despair.<sup>14</sup>

There is, however, one principle that almost all translators have in common, the theoretical background of which has, to the best of my knowledge, not been established. It is more or less axiomatic in modern

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<sup>13</sup> H. P. Rüger, "Was übersetzen Wir?—Fragen zur Textbasis, die sich aus der Traditions- und Kanonsgechichte ergeben," in *Die Übersetzung der Bibel—Aufgabe der Theologie, Stuttgarter Symposion 1984* (ed. J. Gnilka and H. P. Rüger; Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, 1985) 57–64; B. Albrektson, "Vom Übersetzen des Alten Testaments," in *Glaube und Gerechtigkeit. Rafael Gyllenberg in Memoriam* (Helsinki Vammala: Suomen Eksegeettisen Seuran, 1983) 5–18; Scanlin, "HOTTP" (see n. 12 above); W. McKane, "Textual and Philological Notes on the Book of Proverbs with Special Reference to the New English Bible," *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society 1971–1972*, 24 (1974) 76–90; C. Locher, "Der Psalter der 'Einheitsübersetzung' und die Textkritik, I," *Bib* 58 (1977) 313–41; *ibid.*, II, 59 (1978) 49–79. For brief discussions of the problems involved, see: G. C. Aalders, "Some Aspects of Bible Translation Concerning the Old Testament," *BT* 4 (1953) 97–102; *idem*, "Translator or Textual Critic?" *BT* 7 (1956) 15–16; W. A. Irwin, "Textual Criticism and Old Testament Translation," *BT* 5 (1954) 54–8; R. Sollamo, "The Source Text for the [Finnish] Translation of the Old Testament," *BT* 37 (1986) 319–22. The most thorough study in this area is S. Daley, *The Textual Basis of English Translations of the Hebrew Bible*, unpubl. Pd.D. diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, forthcoming.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, A. Schenker, "Was übersetzen Wir?—Fragen zur Textbasis, die sich aus der Textkritik ergeben," in *Übersetzung der Bibel* (see n. 13), 65–80. Schenker discusses in detail the pericope of the freeing of the slaves in Jeremiah 34 in the MT and LXX and analyzes the theological differences between the two texts. E. Ulrich, "Double Literary Editions of Biblical Narratives and Reflections on Determining the Form to be Translated," in *idem*, *DSS*, 34–50 presents the reader with evidence of the availability in ancient times of various parallel forms of the Hebrew Bible, which the author names here "double literary editions." The following examples are presented of such double editions: the two versions of the story of David and Goliath, juxtaposed in MT, the two different versions of 1 Samuel 1–2 now presented in the MT and LXX, the MT version of Exodus and that of the SP and 4QpaleoExod<sup>m</sup>, and the short and long editions of Jeremiah. On pp. 111–16, Ulrich presents "Reflections on determining which form of the biblical text to translate" on the basis of this textual evidence. The author claims that the parallel versions were produced in Hebrew by the Jewish community prior to the emergence of Christianity, and in the wake of this "Bible translators are faced with a question: how do we go about selecting the form of the text that should be translated?"

translation enterprises that the translation be eclectic; that is, that MT should be followed in principle, but occasionally abandoned. At the same time, the modern translations show that there is no agreement in matters of detail, as it is impossible to define when MT should be abandoned, and which variants or emendations should be adopted in the translation.

The textual eclecticism and subjectivity in the translation of the Hebrew Bible is ubiquitous.<sup>15</sup> The principles behind this approach have been described by several scholars and translators who expressed a view on the theoretical aspects of the translation procedure. Among them, Nida is one of the most prominent representatives:<sup>16</sup>

... in the case of the OT most translators no longer follow the Masoretic Text (the standard Hebrew text) blindly, for the Qumran evidence has clearly shown the diversity of traditions lying behind the LXX. It is important to note that translators are increasingly willing to indicate the diversities of textual evidence. In some circles this change has seemed to represent an intellectual revolution.

In the preface to the New International Version (NIV), the principles are phrased as follows:<sup>17</sup>

For the Old Testament the standard Hebrew text, the Masoretic Text as published in the latest editions of *Biblia Hebraica*, was used throughout ... The translators also consulted the most important early versions--the Septuagint; Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion ... Readings from these versions were occasionally followed where the Masoretic Text seemed doubtful and where accepted principles of textual criticism showed that one or more of these textual witnesses appeared to provide the correct readings. Such instances are footnoted.

In the *Introduction to the Old Testament* of the REB, the translation enterprise is described as follows (pp. xv–xvii):

Despite the care used in the copying of the Massoretic Text, it contains errors, in the correction of which there are witnesses to be heard ... Hebrew texts which are outside the Massoretic tradition: the Samaritan text and the Dead Sea Scrolls ... the ancient versions ... archaeological discoveries ... the study of the cognate Semitic languages.

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<sup>15</sup> To mention just a few translations: JB = *The Jerusalem Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970); RSV; NRSV; NAB; NEB; REB; *La Sainte Bible, traduite en français sous la direction de l'École biblique de Jérusalem* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1956); *Die Heilige Schrift, Altes und Neues Testament* (Bonn, 1966); *Einheitsübersetzung der Heiligen Schrift* (Stuttgart: Katholische Bibelanstalt, 1974).

<sup>16</sup> E. A. Nida, "Theories of Translation," *ABD* 6 (New York: Abingdon, 1992) 514.

<sup>17</sup> *The Holy Bible, New International Version; Containing the Old Testament and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).

Albrektson makes similar remarks on the preparation of the Swedish translation:<sup>18</sup>

... Masoretic text. This is, on the whole, a good text ... this text is in many places corrupt; it can and must be corrected. This may be done by means of other Hebrew texts, especially the Dead Sea scrolls ... Corrections may also be made with the aid of the ancient translations ... and sometimes it may even be necessary to resort to conjectural emendation of the text. According to the principles of the new translation, we should use all the resources of modern textual criticism, and this ... is the first time that this has been done in a Swedish version of the Old Testament.

The same scholar also compared the approaches used by the different translations:<sup>19</sup>

... if one tries to summarize the principles stated in these different translations, it is rather difficult to discover any important differences or clear contrasts between them. If one tries to listen to the manner in which these common principles are stated, there is a definite difference in accent and emphasis. And if one examines how these principles have been put into practice, the difference becomes greater still ... even if there is substantial agreement as to the principles to be followed in the choice of the textual basis of the translation, the practice may vary a great deal.

Common to most scholars and translators, thus, is the feeling that MT should be the base text for any translation, but that often other readings should be preferred (or in the words of Albrektson, that MT should be corrected). A preference for the Qumran texts is voiced by several scholars and translators, although probably only the NAB has used the evidence of the scrolls extensively. Albrektson<sup>20</sup> and Payne,<sup>21</sup> among others, noticed much use of the LXX in the NAB and JB by on the basis of the description in the preface and of the notes appended to the NAB. Greenspoon systematically studied the use of the LXX in the various translations.<sup>22</sup> Gordon reviewed the inclusion in some modern

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<sup>18</sup> B. Albrektson, "The Swedish Old Testament Translation Project: Principles and Problems," in *Theory and Practice of Translation, Nobel Symposium 39, Stockholm 1976* (ed. L. Gråhs et al.; Bern: P. Lang, 1978) 151–64. The quote is from p. 152.

<sup>19</sup> B. Albrektson, "Textual Criticism and the Textual Basis of a Translation of the Old Testament," *BT* 26 (1975) 314–24. The quote is from p. 318.

<sup>20</sup> Albrektson, "Textual Criticism," 317.

<sup>21</sup> D. F. Payne, "Old Testament Textual Criticism—Its Principles and Practice Apropos of Recent English Versions," *TynBul* 25 (1974) 99–112.

<sup>22</sup> L. Greenspoon, "It's All Greek to Me: The Septuagint in Modern English Versions of the Bible," in Cox, *VII Congress*, 1–21.

translations of elements from the Targumim.<sup>23</sup> When non-Masoretic elements are adopted by a translation, that translation takes the form of a true critical edition, because in such instances the MT readings, sometimes mentioned in an apparatus of notes, have been replaced by other readings. Thus, the NEB and REB notes contain such remarks as “Heb. adds,” “verses . . . are probably misplaced,” “so some MSS,” “Heb. omits,” “probable reading,” etc. In the NAB and NEB, the non-Masoretic readings that have been accepted in the translation have been recorded in valuable monographs,<sup>24</sup> which are a good source for learning about the text-critical approach of these translations. Among other things, the notes in the NEB show that this translation often accepted details from the ancient versions that were probably never found in their Hebrew *Vorlage*, but were exponents of their translation technique in such grammatical categories as number, person, pronouns, and prepositions.<sup>25</sup>

If the faith communities pay so much tribute to modern critical scholarship, this approach should be appreciated, in spite of the subjectivity and eclecticism involved. Thus, modern translations produced for faith communities do not differ much from scholarly translations included in commentary series. Exactly the same principles are invoked, and often the same scholars are involved. Modern translations for faith communities have necessarily often become reconstructions of an *Urtext*. The main difference between these translations and their scholarly counterparts is probably that the latter are more daring, but this is merely a matter of quantity, not of principle. The principles involved in the text-critical decisions behind the modern translations were spelled out well by HOTTP, in a way that would be acceptable to most scholars.

In spite of the obvious advantages of a critical procedure in the creation of translations, this approach is problematical:

1. The main problem is the eclecticism itself, which some people regard as arrogance and which involves the subjective selection of

<sup>23</sup> R. P. Gordon, “The Citation of the Targums in Recent English Bible Translations (RSV, JB, NEB),” *JJS* 26 (1975) 50–60.

<sup>24</sup> Brockington, *Hebrew Text; Textual Notes on the New American Bible* (St. Anthony’s Guild; Patterson, N.J. [n.d.]).

<sup>25</sup> Gen 48:20 MT בך  
 read “בכב with Sept.” (ἐν ὑμῖν)  
 Isa 20:2 MT ביד  
 read “אֵל with Sept.” (πρός)  
 Isa 25:2 MT בעיר  
 read “ערים with Sept.” (πόλεις)  
 Isa 32:1 MT ולשרים  
 read “ושרים with Sept.” (καὶ ἄρχοντες)

readings found in the ancient translations and the Qumran manuscripts. Not everyone may be aware of the subjective nature of reconstructing Hebrew readings from the translations, and even more so, of the evaluation of textual readings. What is meant by evaluation is the comparison of readings, of MT and the other sources, with the intention of determining the single most appropriate reading in the context, or the original reading, or the reading from which all others developed.<sup>26</sup>

This subjectivity is so pervasive that well-based solutions seem to be impossible. In spite of the remarks in the introduction to HOTTTP, there are probably no established rules of internal evaluation (on the basis of the biblical context), and most external evidence (relating to the nature and age of the translations and manuscripts) is irrelevant. The rules of evaluation to be used, mainly that of the *lectio difficilior*, have the appearance of objectivity, but they are often impractical and their employment is subjective. In the textual criticism of the New Testament the situation is easier, it seems, since in that area arguments based on external evidence are valid, and hence established critical editions of the New Testament have included variant readings in the critical text itself. The situation is probably also easier in New Testament textual criticism as the textual evidence is more extensive and a shorter interval separated the time of the autographs from our earliest textual evidence. The range of textual variation is probably also much narrower in the case of the New Testament than in that of the Hebrew Bible.

Subjectivity in textual evaluation seems to be in order since the whole translation enterprise is subjective. When we determine the meanings of words and the relation between words and sentences do we not also invoke subjective judgments? But the latter kind of subjectivity is acceptable, since it is a necessary part of the translation procedure. At the same time, subjectivity regarding textual decisions is not a necessary part of the translation procedure, since one may always turn to an alternative approach, viz., to use a single source as the basis for a translation.

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<sup>26</sup> A lengthy discussion was devoted to this aspect in *TCHB*, chapter 6, summarized as follows (pp. 309–10):

The upshot of this analysis, then, is that to some extent textual evaluation cannot be bound by any fixed rules. It is an art in the full sense of the word, a faculty which can be developed, guided by intuition based on wide experience. It is the art of defining the problems and finding arguments for and against the originality of readings . . . Needless to say, one will often suggest solutions which differ completely from the one suggested on the previous day . . . Therefore, it is the choice of the contextually most appropriate reading that is the main task of the textual critic . . . This procedure is as subjective as subjective can be. Common sense is the main guide, although abstract rules are often also helpful. In modern times, scholars are often reluctant to admit the subjective nature of textual evaluation, so that an attempt is often made, conscious or unconscious, to create a level of artificial objectivity by the frequent application of abstract rules.

As a result of this subjective approach towards translating, each community will have a different textual base, and hence a different Bible. Some of these Bibles will be very different from the known ones.<sup>27</sup> These discrepancies usually pertain to small details, but some large details are also involved. Thus against all other translations, the NRSV includes a complete section from 4QSam<sup>a</sup> at the end of 1 Samuel 10 explaining the background of the siege of Jabesh Gilead by Nahash the Ammonite. By the same token, there is no reason why one of the other modern translations should not represent the shorter text of the LXX of Jeremiah and of the Qumran manuscripts 4QJer<sup>b,d</sup>, which present a somewhat different picture of the book from MT. There is also no reason why the translation of certain biblical episodes should not be expanded or shortened in accord with the text of the LXX or a Qumran scroll. For example, the story of David and Goliath is much shorter and probably more original in the LXX than in MT. And why not base the translation of the chronology of Kings on that of the LXX? Several scholars believe that the LXX or the so-called A Text of Esther is more authentic than MT, and by a similar reasoning one of these texts could be included in a modern translation of Esther. In the present generation, translators, and the textual critics behind them, have not yet dared to take these steps, but such decisions may be made in the future since many scholars believe that in these matters the LXX reflects an earlier text.

At this point, it is in order to dwell on the legitimacy of eclecticism in the case of the translations of the Hebrew Bible. While in scholarly translations eclecticism is an accepted practice, in confessional translations this approach is problematical because of the added public responsibility of such translations. Although the eclecticism of modern Bible translations has often been discussed,<sup>28</sup> its legitimacy has rarely been analyzed, as far as I know, with reference to translation enterprises within a Church context.

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<sup>27</sup> Over the centuries, Christian communities became accustomed to using different translations, and therefore they continue to be open to the reality of such differences. Since the public is used to the availability of translations in different languages and different styles within a single language, differences based on textual data are just another level of discrepancy. The fact that the biblical text differs in these translations probably disturbs the reader less than it should do from a scholarly point of view.

<sup>28</sup> See J. Barr, "After Five Years: A Retrospect on Two Major Translations of the Bible," *HeyJ* 15 (1974) 381–405; B. Ljungberg et al., *Att översätta Gamla testamentet—Texter, kommentarer, riktlinjer* (Statens offentliga utredningar 1974:33; Stockholm: Betänkande av 1971 ars bibelkommitté för Gamla testamentet, 1974); Payne, "Old Testament Textual Criticism," 99–112; B. Albrektson, "Textual Criticism"; idem, "The Swedish Old Testament Translation Project"; K. R. Crim, "Versions, English," *IDBSup*, 933–8; A. Schenker, "Was übersetzen Wir?"; H. P. Rüger, "Was übersetzen Wir?"; and the discussions cited in these studies and in notes 14 ff. above.

Within the Church, this eclecticism was imported from scholarship, long ago for the Protestant churches, and in 1943 also for Catholicism: The papal encyclical "*Divino Afflante Spiritu: Encyclical of Pope Pius XII on Promoting Biblical Studies, Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of Providentissimus Deus, September 30, 1943*" does allow for the correction of errors, while it is vague on eclecticism. Since this encyclical is central also to some of the following remarks, the relevant passages are quoted verbatim.<sup>29</sup>

2. Beyond the text-critical discussions of details, scholars and translators have struggled, since the publication of HOTTP, with the question of which text form should be translated. HOTTP presents a lucid discussion of this issue, referring to various "stages" in the development of the Hebrew text, and it concludes that translations ought

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<sup>29</sup> 17. The great importance which should be attached to this kind of criticism [i.e., textual criticism] was aptly pointed out by Augustine, when among the precepts he recommended to the student of the Sacred Books, he put in the first place the care to possess a corrected text. "The correction of the codices"—so says the most distinguished Doctor of the Church—"should first of all engage the attention of those who wish to know the Divine Scripture so that the uncorrected may give place to the corrected." [*De doctr. christ.* ii, 21; *PL* 34, col. 40.] In the present day indeed this art, which is called textual criticism and which is used with great and praiseworthy results in the editions of profane writings, is also quite rightly employed in the case of the Sacred Books, because of that very reverence which is due to the Divine Oracles. For its very purpose is to insure that *the sacred text be restored, as perfectly as possible, be purified from corruptions due to the carelessness of the copyists and be freed, as far as may be done, from glosses and omissions, from the interchange and repetition of words and from all other kinds of mistakes* (my italics, E. T.), which are wont to make their way into writings handed down through many centuries.

18. It is scarcely necessary to observe that this criticism, which some fifty years ago not a few made use of quite arbitrarily and often in such wise that one would say they did so to introduce into the sacred text their own preconceived ideas, today has rules so firmly established and secure, that it has become a most valuable aid to the purer and more accurate editing of the sacred text and that any abuse can easily be discovered. Nor is it necessary here to call to mind—since it is doubtless familiar and evident to all students of Sacred Scripture—to what extent namely the Church has held in honor these studies in textual criticism from the earliest centuries down even to the present day.

19. Today, therefore, since this branch of science has attained to such high perfection, it is the honorable, though not always easy, task of students of the Bible to procure by every means that as soon as possible may be duly published by Catholics editions of the Sacred Books and of ancient versions, brought out in accordance with these standards, which, that is to say, unite the greatest reverence for the sacred text with an exact observance of all the rules of criticism. And let all know that this prolonged labor is not only necessary for the right understanding of the divinely-given writings, but also is urgently demanded by that piety by which it behooves us to be grateful to the God of all providence, Who from the throne of His majesty has sent these books as so many paternal letters to His own children. Quoted from *The Papal Encyclicals 1939–1958* (ed. C. Carlen IHM; n.p.: McGrath, 1981) 65–79 (here 69–70, on "The Importance of Textual Criticism"). This encyclical was brought to my attention by J. Scott, who also referred me to J. A. Fitzmyer's discussion of its content: *The Biblical Commission's Document from 1993: "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church"* (*SubBi* 18; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1995).

to be based not on the absolute *Urtext* of the Bible (stage 1), but on the reconstructed base of all known textual evidence (stage 2).<sup>30</sup> The implication of these views is that when departing from MT, Bible translations should have leaned towards the LXX prior to 1947, being the best available non-Masoretic text, and since that time towards both the LXX and the Qumran scrolls.<sup>31</sup> Subsequent translations will differ yet again if a new manuscript find is made in the Judean Desert or elsewhere.

However, it seems that a Bible translation enterprise should not be involved in everlasting scholarly discussions of the theoretical basis of the translation such as we have seen in recent years. There simply are no answers to the theoretical questions regarding the original text(s) posed by HOTTP and others. Furthermore, it is questionable whether religious communities should look up to scholarship for answers if, according to most scholars, there are no answers. Every generation of scholars will have different views concerning which text or texts should be translated and which stage in the development of the Hebrew Bible should be aimed at.

3. Most modern translations have been prepared for use within the Church, rendering it appropriate to dwell on the approach towards the Bible within faith communities. Christianity accepts various forms of Holy Scripture, in the original languages and in translation. When presenting the *Hebrew* form of the Bible, Christianity has traditionally

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<sup>30</sup> This policy was criticized by Scanlin, "HOTTP," 104–5 (see n. 12 above): "What text do we translate? Is the primary focus of interest the *Urtext* or a later canonical form of the text? B. Albrektson, one of the first outspoken critics of the policy of HOTTP regarding emendation, ascribes little normative value to a stage 2, the earliest attested text, or 3, the proto-Masoretic text."

<sup>31</sup> Many of the translators' preferences based on the ancient translations are questionable. Thus, most of the readings referring to small details in grammatical categories accepted by the NEB and recorded by Brockington, *Hebrew Text* (see n. 24 above), refer to grammatical deviations of the translators and not to scribal corruptions. A more substantial example is found in 1 Sam 1:23 where MT reads "May the Lord bring His word to fulfillment," and where the reading of the LXX and 4QSam<sup>a</sup> ("May the Lord bring your resolve to fulfillment") has been adopted by the NAB and NRSV. This preference pertains to a reading that seems to be equally as good as that of MT, and accordingly both readings could have been original. In v 9 MT "Hannah stood up after she had eaten and drunk at Shilo," the NAB omitted "and drunk" with codex B of the LXX ("after one such meal at Shiloh") and added "and presented herself before the Lord" with the same translation. Again, this is a choice based on literary judgment. Two verses later, in Hannah's prayer, Hannah promises that "I will give him to the Lord for as long as he lives," followed in the translation by "neither wine nor liquor shall he drink . . ." with the LXX. These and numerous other deviations from MT in the NAB are based on literary judgments of variant readings. These judgments are not incorrect, but they are based on subjective literary judgments beyond the argument of textual corruption.

accepted MT, certainly since the Reformation. Moreover, several Protestant theologians of the seventeenth century accepted the sanctity of the vowel points, which by implication involved acceptance of the precise form of the consonants of MT. Accordingly, the translations of Tyndale, Coverdale, and the Geneva Bible were based on MT; so was the translation by Luther, and the King James Version (KJV), based on the Rabbinic Bible. At the time of these translations, the Vulgate and LXX were revered by the Catholic Church,<sup>32</sup> but for the purpose of translation these two versions, rightly, were not mixed with MT.

In modern times, however, the approach of translators has changed with the development of the critical approach, a better understanding of the LXX and the other versions, better insights into the issue of the original text(s) of the Bible, and now also with the discovery of the Qumran texts.<sup>33</sup> While, in the past, MT formed the basis for translations in accord with the approach of Protestant scholarship, modern Bible translations follow the views developed in the scholarly world. These views are considered more advanced, probably on the basis of an intuitive understanding that the reconstruction of an *Urtext* brings the readers closer to the original form(s) of Scripture. This modern approach of eclecticism and of determining the stage to be translated is not based on any intrinsic religious dogmas, but simply looks to the achievements of scholarship in the hope scholars can reconstruct the original form of the Hebrew Bible. What is problematical with this approach is the notion that scholars can provide such answers. In fact, experience has taught us that with the increase in analysis of textual witnesses, expressing a view on the original text becomes more difficult.<sup>34</sup>

4. Christian theology could turn to the sound argument that Christianity is not bound by MT. This point was very strongly made by M. Müller who argued that the final form of MT was fixed after the beginning of Christianity and should therefore not be used in a Church

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<sup>32</sup> In modern times, however, the degree of authenticity of the Vulgate was toned down in paragraphs 20–21 of the mentioned encyclical (see n. 29 above).

<sup>33</sup> These developments were summarized as follows by H. G. Grether, "Versions, Modern Era," *ABD* (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6.848: "When the OT has been translated from Hebrew (and Aramaic), the text used in the modern period has nearly always been the Masoretic Text (MT), but with a significant development that resulted, in many cases, in modifications of the MT as the text base used for translation. There became available critical printed editions of the text, with alternative manuscript and versional readings in the margin. These alternative readings were sometimes adopted for translation . . . *Biblia Hebraica* . . . Many of these variants have been used by Bible translators since they appeared."

<sup>34</sup> In my own thinking, I shifted to a position of what may be called a sequence of original texts rather than a single original text. See my study "Place of Masoretic Text."

environment.<sup>35</sup> According to this view, the Greek Old Testament text used in the New Testament, close to that of the uncials of the LXX (although in fact this Greek form was often closer to MT than those uncials), remains the determining form of Scripture.<sup>36</sup> The first-century Old Testament basis of the New Testament in Greek should therefore be used for our current Bible translations.<sup>37</sup> However, this attempt will prove to be unproductive, because that Greek text is no longer obtainable and because more than one text was current at the time.<sup>38</sup>

Having reviewed the difficulties involved in choosing the textual basis for modern Bible translations, we note again that the main problem is the scholarly principle of eclecticism, which was applied only relatively recently in Bible translations and which has no doctrinal background in ancient Christianity.<sup>39</sup> It is suggested here that a return be made to the period before eclecticism was practiced in the creation of Bible translations. If MT is chosen as the basis for a translation, it should be followed consistently. Likewise, if the Vulgate or LXX be chosen, those sources, too, should be followed consistently. The choice of such a non-eclectic procedure should probably be considered to reflect a cautious and conservative approach. It is not impossible that at this stage the editors of HOTTIP will agree with this approach for the simple reason that, rather paradoxically, after all the efforts invested in the text-critical comparison, usually MT is preferred.<sup>40</sup>

We therefore suggest returning to the principles of the first biblical translations that were based on MT, such as the KJV. In modern times, such translations can be improved greatly. We can actually look to a modern model such as the NJPST, which consistently follows MT. It

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<sup>35</sup> M. Müller, *The First Bible of the Church: A Plea for the Septuagint* (JSOTSup 206; Copenhagen International Seminar 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

<sup>36</sup> See R. Hanhart, "Die Bedeutung der Septuaginta-Forschung für die Theologie," *Theologische Existenz Heute* 140 (1967) 38–64; idem, "Die Bedeutung der Septuaginta in neutestamentlicher Zeit," *ZTK* 81 (1984) 395–416.

<sup>37</sup> It is unclear whether Müller is suggesting that the practical implications of his own views be followed, namely that future translations of the Old Testament be based on the LXX rather than MT. Note Müller's formulations on pp. 7, 143–4.

<sup>38</sup> Naturally, this claim would be in direct disagreement with the views held by Jerome, who advocated the use of the Hebrew Bible (to which Müller reacted: "Jerome's reversion to *Hebraica Veritas* rests on an untenable premise" [ibid., p. 143]).

<sup>39</sup> The case of the New Testament eclectic translations is different since the editions of the New Testament are eclectic. When an accepted New Testament text was created by Erasmus in 1516–1519, it was eclectic, and accordingly the whole tradition of the New Testament text and translations has remained eclectic. On the whole, it seems that the principle of eclecticism has been imported from the world of the New Testament to that of the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, this conservative approach of HOTTIP is criticized by Barr in his review of Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle* in *JTS* 37 (1986) 445–50.

should not go unnoticed, however, that it is precisely this non-eclecticism in NJPST (and of its predecessor, NJV) that has drawn much criticism.<sup>41</sup> Obviously there are many problems in producing a modern translation that follows MT only, and at times unconventional solutions would have to be found to enable the inclusion in the text of details that are unintelligible or even corrupt.<sup>42</sup> It is precisely these aspects that have induced modern translators to opt for eclecticism.<sup>43</sup> But we have seen that the dangers of this eclecticism seem to be greater than presenting a diplomatic translation of MT. The modern public is probably sophisticated enough to accept occasional notes in the translation such as “meaning of Hebrew uncertain” and this inelegant solution is preferable to the subjective eclecticism imported from the world of scholarship.

Our scholarly experience tells us to believe in complicated textual developments, textual variety, different stages of an original text, etc. We even suggest the production of scholarly editions in which all these texts are juxtaposed.<sup>44</sup> However, the more the ancient sources are unraveled and analyzed, the more we realize the limitations of our speculations about the nature of the biblical text.<sup>45</sup> Because of all these uncertainties, it

<sup>41</sup> E.g., J. A. Sanders, “Text Criticism and the NJV Torah,” *JAAR* 39 (1971) 193–7, esp. 195–6.

<sup>42</sup> Producing a translation that follows only MT is problematic on a practical level. The implications of this adherence to the “traditional Hebrew text” in the various Jewish American Bible versions were discussed in detail by H. P. Scanlin, “. . . According to the Traditional Hebrew Text as a Translation Principle in *Tanakh*,” in *I Must Speak to You Plainly: Essays in Honor of Robert G. Bratcher* (ed. R. L. Omanson; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000) 23–37. In NJPST’s adherence to MT, some unusual techniques were used to overcome this problem, such as the use of ellipsis yielding an artificial text, which appears to resemble MT, but is in fact far removed from it (e.g. Gen 4:8). Furthermore, in his description of the first *JPS* translation, H. L. Ginsberg described the policy of the Torah committee as:

. . . where we have been convinced that the text is corrupt, we have made do with the received text if it was at all possible to squeeze out of it a meaning not too far removed from what we thought might have been the sense of the original reading; and in some of the more hopeless cases -- and there are quite a few of them -- we have added a note to the effect that the Hebrew is obscure. (“The Story of the Jewish Publication Society’s New Translation of the Torah,” *BT* 14 [1963] 106–13; the quote is from pp. 110–11).

The procedure described is in a way unfair to the reader, for it implies that the translators maneuvered the English language in order to make some sense of a passage that, according to their scholarly opinion, did not make sense. The NJPST is more cautious in its approach, for it goes as far as admitting that occasionally the text is corrupt. In such cases, the reading is described as “meaning of Heb. uncertain,” explained as follows on p. xxv as “where the translation represents the best that the committee could achieve with an elusive or difficult text. In some cases the text may be unintelligible because of corruption.”

<sup>43</sup> Admittedly, scholars can allow themselves the luxury of defending an abstract view, since they do not have to face an audience, as do the translators of the UBS and NJPST. At the same time, unconventional solutions can be devised to satisfy those audiences as well.

<sup>44</sup> See Tov, “Place of the Masoretic Text” and chapter 18\*, § 4.

<sup>45</sup> This cautious approach is supported by an observation by Scanlin, “Traditional Hebrew Text” (see n. 43 above): “Surprisingly, 19th century Old Testament critics, whose

seems that the public deserves a diplomatic translation of a single text, be it MT, the LXX, or the Vulgate.

Eclecticism, the major feature characterizing all modern translations, has entered the world of confessional translations through the back door, coming from the academic world. This approach created subjective translations that are often indefensible; it has also involved the Church in scholarly discussions regarding the original form of the biblical text, discussions in which scholars themselves have no answers. In due course, reasoning along these lines could give rise to translations that are completely different from MT. It is therefore suggested that a systematic and consistent translation be made of either the MT, Vulgate, LXX, or any complete Hebrew scroll from the Judean Desert. If the resulting translation of MT or the LXX is sometimes awkward, vague, or even erroneous (with corrective notes provided), C. Rabin<sup>46</sup> has taught us that the public has a high level of tolerance for unusual translations of Scripture.

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names are virtually synonymous with emendation and reconstruction of the *Urtext*, were themselves cautious when dealing with the question of the textual basis of Old Testament translation.”

<sup>46</sup> C. Rabin, “The Translation Process and the Character of the Septuagint,” *Textus* 6 (1968) 1–26, esp. 9–10.