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TEXT AND CANON: CONCEPTS AND METHOD*

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STUDY of text and canon of the OT has taken on new life and direction over the past twenty-five years, and especially in the last ten. Concept and method for study of text and canon have changed rather dramatically in that time. Manuscript discoveries have contributed to rephrasing of old questions as well as to discovery of new questions. We are now far enough into the history of modern biblical criticism that we are able, with or without the tools of the sociology of knowledge, to see with some clarity why earlier generations of biblical students asked certain questions and viewed the evidence in certain lights, but failed to ask other questions, nor saw even the evidence they already had in ways we now have of looking at it. To make such an observation is not to belittle the work of our predecessors; it is rather to try to account for what is happening to us now. We are in quite a new day in both fields, and I have suggested that they might each be grouped with other biblical disciplines rather than together.¹ I would like instead to argue now that they still belong together in certain aspects of biblical study, and in fact, study of one throws considerable light on the other in ways perhaps not thought of when they were paired in introductory handbooks or lectures as perhaps the most boring class or chapter to endure. Scholarship, in order to meet its own needs, had made of textual criticism a first stage of literary criticism; and had made of study of canon a final stage of literary criticism. Text criticism was either something to settle before getting on with the important business of original source, provenance and shape of a passage or was used to reflect the latter; and study of canon was viewed as the last stage in a literary history of how the larger literary units of the Bible (discreet books thereof) got together in a given order.²

*The Presidential Address delivered 19 November 1978, at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, held at the Marriott Hotel, New Orleans, LA.

¹See James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972) ix.

²See James A. Sanders, "The Canon of Scripture," forthcoming in *Compendia Rerum Judaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum, Section II: Oral and Literary Tradition in Judaism and Christianity* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum).

I

The very ground of concept in OT text criticism, the history of transmission of the text, has recently had to be rewritten,³ and this has been due in large measure to new viewpoints gained from study of the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls, of provenance from Qumran south to Masada. The first stage of revision of OT text history due to the scrolls came in the mid-fifties with the work of Moshe Greenberg, who argued convincingly from study of the early publications of biblical texts among the scrolls, that a process of stabilization of biblical texts took place with increasing intensity between the first centuries BCE and CE, a process largely complete by the beginning of the second century CE.⁴ The work of M. Goshen-Gottstein, S. Talmon, F. M. Cross and D. Barthélemy on the same and other texts supported the thesis.⁵ But it received its greatest boost in 1963 from the work of Barthélemy on the Greek Dodecapropheton, *Les Devanciers d'Aquila*: the more or less literalist translations of Theodotion and Aquila had apparently had antecedents in a process extending back into the first century BCE.⁶ The gathering data suggested to Cross a theory of three text families.⁷ One was now able to range the newly discovered biblical texts on a spectrum from fluid to fixed, placing the earliest Qumran fragments at one end and the biblical texts from Murrabat, Hever and Masada at the other. Whether there were three basic local families of texts or there were numerous types of texts,⁸ it became quite clear that up to and including most of the Herodian period the text of the Hebrew-Aramaic Bible was relatively fluid.

Running parallel to and congruous with study of the text in this same period was study of ancient biblical interpretation. Making many of the same observations as the text critics but studying all the various texts available from the scrolls as well as many known previously, some students of biblical interpretation formulated new questions and a new sub-discipline which has

³Dominique Barthélemy, "Text, Hebrew, history of," *IDBSup* (1976) 878-84. This article was translated and somewhat abbreviated from the requested French first draft which has now appeared in D. Barthélemy, *Etudes d'histoire du texte de l'Ancien Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978) 341-64.

⁴M. Greenberg, "The Stabilization of the Text of the Hebrew Bible, Reviewed in the Light of the Biblical Materials from the Judean Desert," *JAOS* 76 (1956) 157-67, reprinted in S. Z. Leiman, ed., *The Canon and Massorah of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: KTAV, 1974) 298-326.

⁵The pertinent essays by these four scholars are conveniently published together in *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text* (ed. F. M. Cross and S. Talmon; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1975).

⁶D. Barthélemy, *Les Devanciers d'Aquila* (Leiden: Brill, 1963).

⁷First expounded by Cross in "The History of the Biblical Text in the Light of Discoveries in the Judaean Desert," *HTR* 57 (1964) 281-99, included in *Qumran*; see also the other essays by Cross in *Qumran*, especially the new one, "The Evolution of a Theory of Local Texts," 306-20.

⁸For a viable alternative to Cross's theory, see the incisive new essay by S. Talmon in *Qumran*, 321-400; see also the "central stream" theory of M. Goshen-Gottstein expounded in the Isaiah sample edition (below, nn. 12 and 42).

come to be called comparative midrash.⁹ One of the basic interests of the new students of biblical interpretation in the period was in how the biblical text was adapted to the needs of the context in which it was cited. Observations about the text's adaptability matched what text critics at the same time were calling the text's fluidity. They, too, noticed that the biblical text where it surfaced in documents of biblical interpretation appeared to become more standard, as it were, in literature datable to the end of the period in question. By contrast, interpretive literature from earlier in the period seemed free to remold or reshape a biblical text in light of the need for which it was cited, not only in allusions to a text but even in citation of the text. The common body of relatively new observations between the two disciplines, OT text criticism and comparative midrash, was growing. Study of the one in some ways involved study of the other and a few scholars saw how each discipline needed the other.¹⁰

The next development came about as almost a single-handed achievement. In 1967 Goshen-Gottstein published a pivotal study in which he argued that the medieval manuscripts collated by Kennicott and de Rossi, and so often cited by text critics to support textual emendations, were essentially derivative of the massoretic tradition, often times reflecting late ancient and medieval midrashic interpretations of scripture, and had little value for reconstructing pre-massoretic text forms.¹¹ The challenge of Goshen-Gottstein's essay was directed at the very concept of text criticism as understood in biblical criticism until recently.

II

It might be well here to signal the rather radical shift in concept which has taken place in OT text criticism in the twenty years just past, before turning to look at the two major projects currently active in the discipline. It has long been agreed that the task of text criticism is "to establish the text." This means that it is the province of text criticism to determine the best readings of texts

⁹The bibliography is already quite extensive: see M. Miller, "Targum, Midrash, and the Use of the OT in the NT," *JSJ* 2 (1971) 29–82, as well as his more recent and more general article, "Midrash," in the *IDBSup* (1976) 593–97. It is generally agreed that there was a new departure in study of midrash with the work of Renée Bloch, especially her article "Midrash," *SDB* 5 (1957) 1263–80.

¹⁰See the new essay by D. Barthélemy in *Etudes*, 365–81 titled, "Problématique et tâches de la critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament." This essay evolved directly out of our work together for ten years on the United Bible Society's Hebrew Old Testament Text Project. I agree with his statement of the issues: in fact, the present paper in a manner presupposed what Barthélemy there says and attempts to go back behind the issues to the reasons one must state the problematic in that way. It is my pleasant duty to express my profound gratitude to Fr. Barthélemy for reading the manuscript of the present essay in first draft form and for his very helpful suggestions in doing so. Indeed, I owe the idea of the topic of the address to a suggestion from him during our session in Freudenstadt in August 1977.

¹¹M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, "Hebrew Biblical Manuscripts: Their History and Their Place in the HUBP Edition," *Bib* 48 (1967) 243–90.

and versions of the Bible, whether OT or NT, from which translators render the text into current receptor languages. Such may still be said to be the task of text criticism. In the case of the OT the almost universal practice has been to use a basic single text such as that of Jacob ben Hayyim, Leningradensis (L), or now Aleppensis (A). In the case of the NT the common practice since the eighteenth century has been to establish an eclectic text for printed editions. In the case of the OT the apparatus of a critical edition has had the purpose of considering and evaluating ancient variants in texts and versions and proposing emendations even where variants did not exist. In the case of the NT the apparatus of a critical edition has had the purpose of defending the reading chosen in the eclectic text above, and also offering conjectures proposed by modern scholars. *BHK*, which most students of the OT still use, stands as the great exemplar of this understanding of text criticism.

In *BHK* there are two apparatus, the first signals interesting variants in ancient MSS which are not considered superior to the L text. The second signals variants *and* modern scholarly conjectures which the editor considers more or less preferable to the reading in L. *BHS* differs to no great degree even though it (a) has combined these two into one apparatus, and (b) has eliminated some of the rather private and particular conjectures of scholars of the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The really significant difference between *BHK* and *BHS* is in the apparatus keyed to the massora magna added in the bottom margin of *BHS* as well as in the massora parva in the lateral margins. All of this is the work of Gérard Weil to which we shall return later.

The essay of Goshen-Gottstein addressed itself to the practice exemplified and most effectively propagated in *BHK*—and not greatly changed in *BHS*—that of citing a medieval Jewish manuscript to support an emendation arrived at by scholarly conjecture based on scholarly disciplines outside the province of text criticism. Because one could felicitously point to one or more manuscripts collated in Kennicott or de Rossi, or lesser known sources, to support a reading that had actually been arrived at by other means altogether, such as philology, form-criticism, poetic analysis (or simply what the ancient author in his right mind ought surely to have said), it was felt that scientific confirmation had been offered from another quarter, the medieval MSS. It was this practice on which Goshen-Gottstein shone a rather harsh and revealing light.

The light of Goshen-Gottstein's essay shed its broad beams on the larger concept and practice of text criticism, that of the abuse of text criticism for purposes of rewriting the Bible. The scholars cited above, and a few others, were arriving at the same observations as Goshen-Gottstein, but it was he who provided the clear voice of the time. Text criticism was being called upon to do tasks outside its competence to do, nor was it doing well the job it should do: it is a considerably more limited discipline than indicated in practice and capable of being far more precise than most work in it had to that point indicated.

This is the position taken now by the two current, active OT text critical projects: The Hebrew University Bible Project and the United Bible Societies Hebrew Old Testament Text Critical Project.¹² The former is the older of the two and was given impetus by the accessibility after 1948 of the Tiberian MS recovered from the burning of the synagogue in Aleppo, a magnificent facsimile edition of which was recently published by Magnes Press.¹³ The recovery of Aleppensis was only an initial impetus. The discovery of the Judean scrolls and the newer attitudes mentioned above caused the launching of the project which has to its credit not only the beautiful facsimile edition of photographs of A just noted, but also the some nine volumes of the annual *Textus* founded as a forum for the newer work being done as a result of the new finds, as well as sample editions based on the text of Isaiah of what Goshen-Gottstein and Talmon hope to do in a fully critical edition (with four [five?] separate apparatus) of the Hebrew Bible using Aleppensis as text.¹⁴

The younger of the two projects is that of the UBS committee. This committee was established by Eugene Nida for the same purpose for which the companion NT committee had been formed and from which we now have a fourth edition of the UBS Greek New Testament in preparation.¹⁵ The OT committee began its work in 1969 and has just completed in August its tenth annual session. The scope of its work is less ambitious than that of the HUBP: its principal *raison d'être* is to offer help to the scores of translation committees sponsored by or affiliated with the UBS. But, nonetheless, to do such a task well the UBS committee has had to work just as much in depth on the questions of concepts and method of text criticism, as their colleagues in Jerusalem. The younger committee has benefited considerably from the published work of the members of the HUBP, whether in *Textus* or elsewhere, but it has consistently done its own work forging its own concepts and method in the light of the new developments. To its credit are three volumes of preliminary and interim reports of decisions taken on specific passages. After completion of that preliminary series, it will, under the direction of Barthélemy, embark upon publication of five volumes of in-depth discussion of all the major aspects of text criticism, as a scholarly and scientific discipline today as well as detailed reports of the data considered and evaluated in

¹²The HUBP is explained in the introduction to M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, *The Book of Isaiah, Sample Edition with Introduction* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1965) 11–45 and 1–מב. The UBS-HOTTP is explained in the introductions to Vols. 1–3 of the *Preliminary and Interim Report on the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project* (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1973–77); see also the essay by D. Barthélemy cited above in n. 10.

¹³*The Aleppo Codex* (ed. M. H. Goshen-Gottstein; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1976).

¹⁴*Textus* is published irregularly by Magnes Press. In addition to the sample edition of Isaiah noted above in n. 12, see also M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, ed., *The Book of Isaiah, Parts One and Two* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975) which extends the “sample” and includes Isa 1–22:10 (almost).

¹⁵The first edition of *The Greek New Testament* (ed. K. Aland, M. Black, B. M. Metzger and A. Wikgren) appeared in 1966 (Stuttgart: Württemberg Bible Society). The fourth edition will include corrections and modifications in versional evidence and in citations of the Fathers. A fifth edition envisioning new problems to be noted in the apparatus is in prospect.

arriving at its decisions. It plans eventually to publish a successor to *BHK* and *BHS* using L and Weil's work on the massorae but constructing a totally new apparatus otherwise.

The two projects agree completely on three basic concepts in OT text criticism: (a) limitation of its work to textual options actually extant in ancient texts and versions with the concomitant elimination of modern scholarly conjectures from consideration in text criticism; (b) a four-stage history of the transmission of the Hebrew text; and (c) a revised and renewed appreciation of the process of stabilization of the text begun in the first century which culminated in the work of the Tiberian Massorettes. Each of the three areas is very important to understanding what is going on currently in OT text criticism. I shall attempt to signal the importance of each before noting less important areas of disagreement between them. I shall discuss the massoretic phenomenon and its historical antecedents and background, and finally focus on the second period of the history of text transmission and some basic concepts necessary to understand the data available from that period. It is at this last point especially that one must relate basic concepts of text and canon: each illumines the other.

III

The new appreciation of the limits of text criticism goes hand in hand with the need for the discipline to be considerably more thorough and precise in its work. Here the HUBP is very clear. This point perhaps characterizes its purpose and goals better than the others. An apparatus should note only the genuine variants in ancient texts, versions and citations, and it should be arranged in such a way as to exhibit the genuine variants in the several categories of ancient literature in which they appear. The apparatus should be as neutral as possible and as thorough and as precise as possible. The importance here of working with facsimile and microform publications is stressed. For not only the expert but even a good beginning student who has access to the actual manuscripts, in one form or another, is able to make significant corrections in the apparatus of both *BHK* and *BHS*. John Wevers's report in Göttingen last year on the unreliability of the apparatus in *BHS* to LXX Deuteronomy came as no surprise to critics who work with the manuscripts themselves. HUBP, as can be seen in the facsimile editions of Isaiah already published, plans to be as exhaustive as possible in reporting variants in ancient texts, versions and citations; and it plans to group the variants according to the ancient literature where found. The apparatus of *Biblia Hebraica* is not only often inaccurate in terms of what is there but cites only what it deems necessary and does so in such a way as to confuse evaluation of the sources cited. HUBP will consciously refrain from specific evaluation but will provide clear information as to the provenance *and type* of provenance of the ancient variant. The UBS project agrees in concept with this procedure but will, in its final scholarly publications, show how

significant variants were evaluated in the terms of the problems treated. HUBP will rest its case simply in the format of the four apparatus projected.

Our base of agreement here is so strong that I shall not elaborate this point further, except to stress the need now to have available, on as wide a base as possible, photographic facsimiles, in one form or another, of the actual ancient manuscripts. This is the reason, in part, that we have founded in Claremont the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center for Preservation and Research. Through the remarkable vision of Elizabeth Hay Bechtel, and her dedication to preservation of ancient manuscripts by photography, especially by microfilm, we plan there eventually to collect and make available, on as wide a base as possible, microforms of all manuscripts pertinent to biblical study, not only actual biblical texts but those texts from the Bronze Age to the close of antiquity necessary for full biblical study. This is admittedly ambitious, and we recognize that; but we hope that with the cooperation of similar centers in this country and in Europe, and of our blue ribbon Board of Advisors, we will be able to amass an internationally visible and significant collection.

The importance of working on the ancient mss themselves need not be belabored. And yet I wish I had the time to tell what I have learned personally in the past year by simply being able now to compare the facsimile editions of L and A, thanks to the Maqor and Magnes Presses, the Israeli government and to Goshen-Gottstein. Working on them, and on similar documents, underscores the point that critical editions of texts are filtered through the interests and questions of the editor, no matter how scrupulous or ingenious he or she may have been. If one's work gives rise to new questions one must have the original to turn to, to seek the answers; and turning to them gives rise to more questions. Goshen-Gottstein, Weil and others had written many important things about A; but it was not until I opened the new facsimile edition of A a year ago that I was able to formulate hundreds of questions the ms itself gives rise to.

This observation underscores also the absolute need for the scholarly community to reform itself and revise its attitudes about dissemination of photographs of new finds. I thoroughly agree with my colleague James Robinson, in his address in San Francisco last year, and with Noel Freedman (also a member of the board of trustees of our center in Claremont), who has written in a similar vein in a *Biblical Archaeologist* editorial.¹⁶ We must no longer permit ourselves, for whatever refined reasons, to withhold publication at least of microfilms of new finds. When one thinks of the great minds deprived of working on texts discovered since World War II, who have since

¹⁶See *BA* 40 (1977) 94-97. See esp. p. 97: "Therefore I propose that newly discovered inscriptions and documents be presented in a suitable format—namely, photographs, hand-copies, and preliminary transcriptions as soon after discovery as is physically feasible." We heartily concur and offer the services of the ABM Center in Claremont to scholars for that purpose.

died, never to be able to share their observations about the texts, withholding of publication of at least photographic reproductions becomes morally questionable.

A final point needs to be made about the focus of text criticism and the limitations of the discipline. Conjectures about what might have been the original text have no place in textual apparatus and only a limited value in a final stage of text critical method. Conjectures about a non-extant Urtext of any biblical passage have their place elsewhere in biblical study—form criticism, philology, perhaps archaeology, the general domain of “higher criticism”—but not in text criticism *in sensu stricto*. The one area of function of such higher critical method in the work of text criticism is at the final stage, *if* very pragmatically the text critic must come up with a relative evaluation of which ancient reading he or she would recommend to translators. But even there the text critic should be constrained to enter into discussions of literary form of the original, or even philology or geography, only after all the other work is done and only in the most circumspect way using only the most widely accepted observations out of those other fields. This is an area of difference between the groups in Jerusalem and in Freudenstadt: the HUBP apparently will not enter this realm at all! But, then, they are not related to a translation project. We in the UBS project have to do so because our basic mandate, when all our other work is said and done, is to provide finally some kind of *Hinweis für die Übersetzer*; but we do so only in constraint and circumspection, usually insisting that the other options be left open if the text critical work properly speaking indicated so.

IV

The work of OT text criticism centers primarily in the second phase of the four-stage history of the Hebrew text. The third and fourth phases receive due attention where need be and in perspective; but the first phase is left to the other disciplines of biblical research. The four phases are: (1) that of the Urtext; (2) the accepted texts; (3) the received text; and (4) the Massoretic Text. This is the second area of basic agreement between Jerusalem and Freudenstadt. While Goshen-Gottstein published his historical schema a short while before we began our own work, we started from scratch, as it were, and arrived at almost an identical view of the history of text transmission.¹⁷

Reconstruction of the Urtext entails most of the biblical critical disciplines developed up to about 1960; for biblical criticism since its inception in the seventeenth century has been primarily interested in reconstructing biblical points originally scored. This is especially the case with philology and form

¹⁷See the introduction to the Isaiah sample edition (above n. 12) bottom of 12 to 18, and S. Talmon, “The Old Testament Text,” *The Cambridge History of the Bible, Volume 1* (ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970) 164–70 (= *Qumran*, 8–12); see also J. Sanders, “Text Criticism and the NJV Torah,” *JAR* 39 (1971) 193–97. Talmon’s four periods are only apparently different from ours: they actually fit into the same basic scheme.

criticism as they have been generally practiced, but also to a great extent with source criticism, tradition criticism and even to some significant degree with redaction criticism. Certainly all those disciplines are properly concerned with what text critics now call the first period. The fact that biblical criticism for some 200 years has mainly been concerned with the most primitive aspects of biblical study—the so-called *ipsissima verba* of authors at the first stages of the Bible's formation and development—interests students today of canonical criticism, as we have tried to state elsewhere in other contexts.¹⁸ Since the late 1950s a few scholars, in increasing numbers, have been turning their attention also to the *Nachleben* of biblical passages and the fact that the nature of canonical literature lies in its adaptability as well as its stability, and certainly as much in the later resignification of biblical images, traditions and textual passages as in their most primitive meanings.

When one turns toward use of a biblical tradition within the Bible, interest is roused by the function of the tradition in the new context and the modes whereby the tradition was conveyed to and applied to the later biblical contexts.¹⁹ And those modes are evident even in the first repetition or copying of a literary unit which later ended up in the Bible. We do not have biblical autographs. Everything we have went through the experience of the need of an early community, Jewish or Christian, to hear or see again what had been heard or seen by the parents or ancestors of that community. There is no early biblical manuscript of which I am aware no matter how "accurate" we may conjecture it to be, or faithful to its *Vorlage*, that does not have some trace in it of its having been adapted to the needs of the community from which we, by archaeology or happenstance, receive it. Such observations are relative and pertain not to method in text criticism, but to the concepts on which method is based. All versions are to some extent relevant to the communities for which translated: it was because the Bible was believed relevant that it was translated. Much of the so-called Septuagint is midrashic or targumic.²⁰ But even biblical Hebrew texts are to some extent, greater or less, adapted to the needs of the communities for which they were copied. Again I stress that these are relative observations. Their pertinence for text criticism lies in the fact that the earlier the date of biblical manuscripts the greater variety there are in text types and text characteristics.

One of the salient observations we have to make about the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls is that though they are approximately a thousand years

¹⁸In "Adaptable for Life: The Nature and Function of Canon," *Magnalia Dei* (ed. F. M. Cross et al., Garden City: Doubleday, 1976) 531–60; and see n. 2 above.

¹⁹See, e.g., P. Ackroyd, "Original Text and Canonical Text" *USQR* 32 (1977) 166–73.

²⁰Cf., e.g. I. L. Seeligmann, *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah* (Leiden: Brill, 1948), and more recently the work of D. W. Gooding, e.g., his *Relics of Ancient Exegesis: A Study of the Miscellanies in 3 Reigns 2* (SOTSMS 4; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1976); cf. R. P. Gordon, "The Second Septuagint Account of Jeroboam: History or Midrash?" *VT* 25 (1975) 368–93; and P. M. Bogaert, "Les Rapports du judaïsme avec l'histoire de la Septante et ses revisions," *Tradition Orale et Ecrite* (ed. L. Dequeker; Brussels: Institutum Judaicum, 1975) 175–224.

older than the Hebrew Bible manuscripts we had had before (except the Nash Papyrus?), they have by no means displaced the great massoretic mss from the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries. The older the biblical manuscripts are, the more fluidity they seem to exhibit in actual text. Hence, the period from which we actually have the oldest handscrips is characterized by the textual fluidity of the Period of the Accepted Texts (Period II in the historical schema arrived at independently by both projects). The standardization process which took place in the first centuries BCE and CE was apparently so pervasive and complete for Hebrew texts of the Bible, that variants in biblical mss, and even in rabbinic citations after the event, drop dramatically to the point of underscoring this prime characteristic of the Second Period. The manuscripts deriving from the Second Period, that of relative textual fluidity, may possibly have readings superior to anything in any Tiberian manuscript: that judgment has to be made ad hoc in each case and cannot be prejudiced by observations dealing with basic concepts, such as historical schema. The matter of method in text criticism has come to the fore quite dramatically in part because of the new sense of how fluid the text of the Bible was in the Second Period, that of the earliest mss. And it is largely because of having to develop those methods to a fine point that we have now to be very careful in using work in text criticism since the seventeenth century.

The third period in the history of OT text transmission is called the Period of the Received Text. It is not improper to use the singular "text" here, as the stabilization that had begun in the first century BCE seems by 100 CE to have been essentially complete. As Goshen-Gottstein puts it, only "a thin trickle continues" of non-*proto-massoretic* texts.²¹ The salient observation here is the amazing uniformity of consonantal text form in the biblical manuscripts dating from the end of the first century CE through the Second Jewish Revolt. In contrast to texts datable before 70 they are almost consistently *proto-massoretic*. The biblical texts from Murabba^cat, Hever, Mishmar, Se³elim and Masada present minimal variants against the great massoretic manuscripts of the fourth period. The process of stabilization which had begun in the first century with the cessation of scribal changes of the sort called *tiqqunê soferim*, as indicated in the work of Barthélemy,²² or of the sort brilliantly studied recently by Talmon,²³ in the Qumran manuscripts, was essentially complete by the end of the first century CE. Barthélemy's work on the Dodecapropheton has shown some of the process by which the standardization took place leading to the Greek texts of Theodotion and Aquila.²⁴ As Goshen-Gottstein puts it, ". . . the period of the Destruction of the Temple—that is, the last third of the 1st century CE and the first third of the

²¹See the first Isaiah sample edition (above n. 12) 17.

²²D. Barthélemy, "Les Tiququnê soferim et la critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament," VTSup 9 (1963) 285–304; reprinted in *Etudes*, 91–110.

²³In his new essay in *Qumran*, 321–400.

²⁴See above n. 6.

2nd century—is the main dividing line in the textual history. . . .”²⁵ We shall return to further observations about the phenomenon of stabilization after consideration of the Fourth Period of text transmission and the massoretic phenomenon.

V

The third area of basic and fundamental agreement in concept between the Jerusalem and Freudenstadt projects is appreciation of the process of standardization of text form which finally culminated in the work of the Massorettes. There is an interesting difference between us in the value attached to the massorae parva (mp) and magna (mm). While the HUBP dutifully records the corrected mp and mm of A in the proper margins, no coordinating apparatus is provided for the massora.²⁶ By contrast, the UBS committee makes careful and judicious use of the massora wherever it is pertinent. The great contribution of *BHS* is in Weil’s work connected with it. After the facsimile edition of L was published a few years ago I offered a reward to any student who could discover in the massora parva (mp) of *BHK* any discrepancy between the mp in the lateral margins of L and *BHK*.²⁷ Even beginning students of the Hebrew Bible often observe how blurred the mp seems in recent printings of *BHK*; but 99 per cent of them can tell you that their teachers never refer to the mp any more than they refer to the massoretic *te^camin*. The point in these observations is that throughout the history of *BHK* in the first two-thirds of this century few western scholars were interested in the massorae of Hebrew mss, even of L, those Aron Dothan calls “keepers of the flame” and Harry Orlinsky calls “Massorettes of our time.”²⁸ As every historian knows, in those periods when there is little interest in a form of literature, that literature has a chance of being copied accurately, that is, no one attempts to make it relevant to the needs of those periods. So through most of the history of *BHK*, editions 1 to 3, the mp in Kittel is printed quite accurately, from the margins of L. If one wants to know what is in the mp of L one for the most part has but to check the lateral margins of *BHK* (in contrast to *BHS*). A few like Paul Kahle and his students, among them Weil, now of the University of Nancy II, were interested in the massorae. If one compares the mp as it appears in *BHS* with the mp of any ancient MT ms one will find many differences. It is basically the mp of L, but Weil is, in fact, a latter-day Massorete! He has considerably edited the various entries of mp in

²⁵In the first Isaiah sample edition (see above n. 12) 15.

²⁶Ibid, 20–21.

²⁷See Weil’s own comment in *BHS*, xiii.

²⁸Such as S. Baer, S. Frensdorff, C. D. Ginsburg, and Paul Kahle. See Dothan’s prolegomenon to the KTAV (1975) reprint of C. D. Ginsburg’s *Massorah*, xix; and Orlinsky’s prolegomenon cited below in n. 32. See as well the proof by Dothan that neither Moses nor Aaron ben Asher was a Karaite in *Ben Asher’s Creed* (SBLMasS 3; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977).

L in the light of other mp entries and of the mm of L, and of his own study of the discrepancies between the two and the text itself.²⁹

Weil well points out that there was no canon of the Massora. In fact he has proved that the massora in L was added by a hand (Samuel ben Jacob) later than that of the basic consonantal text. Traditions contributing to the great massorae, especially of L, extended considerably back into massoretic history; but as C. D. Ginsburg frequently reminded S. Baer and H. L. Strack, there was never a process of standardization of the massora as there had been earlier of the consonantal text. There are no two massorae that are the same. Hence Weil composed the mp for the lateral margins of *BHS* in the best and finest tradition of the Massoretes themselves. He did his own basic work in order to render the mp of L in *BHS* really usable.³⁰ It has a few errors in it,³¹ but it is essentially a rich source of information for anyone who will take the little amount of time necessary to learn how to read it. It makes the massora available to students less expert than those who could use Solomon Frensdorff or Christian Ginsburg.³²

By contrast, as Weil makes clear in the introduction of volume one of his *Massorah Gedolah* (*MG*), the lists he provides there are essentially the mm lists provided in L in the top and bottom margins of the ms.³³ Here his restraint is clear: he omits from the lists only the obvious repetitions, and he does that only because the printed mode employed to publish the lists and key them to the mp makes exact duplication of all the lists costly and useless. No one can fault him in this. Volume one of *MG* is a rich mine of information much more accessible to most students of the Bible than ever before, simply because of the mode of keying the lists to the mp in *BHS*. Weil has corrected the errors of the scribe of the mm in L, but made, so far as I have been able to detect, very few of his own. Volume II of Weil's *MG* will compare the massoretic marginal commentaries in L with other great manuscripts such as others from Cairo and the Aleppo ms and provide a paleographic and philological commentary on the mm lists. As noted above there was no canon of massora, and volume two will explore and study the differences among the massorae themselves.

²⁹Cf. G. Weil, *Initiation à la Massorah* (Leiden: Brill, 1964); *BHS*, xiii–xviii, and *Massorah Gedolah* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1971) xiii–xxvii.

³⁰See G. Weil, "La nouvelle édition de la massorah gedolah selon le manuscrit B 19a de Leningrad," *Note e Testi* (Firenze: Olschki, 1972) 302–40.

³¹See, e.g., Lam 3:20, where the mp *qere* should read *wētā-shôah*.

³²See S. Frensdorff, *Das Buch Ochlah wochlah (Massorah)* (Hannover: Hahn, 1864) and *Die Massora Magna, I. Massoretisches Wörterbuch* (Hannover and Leipzig, 1876; KTAV reprint with prolegomenon by G. Weil, 1968); C. D. Ginsburg, *The Massorah* (London, 1880–1905; KTAV reprint 1975) and *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (London, 1897; KTAV reprint with prolegomenon by H. Orlinsky, 1966). Orlinsky observes that the rise of archaeology pushed out the classical approach to the study of the text of the Bible but that discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has helped restore it. While we disagree with Norman Snaith in *Textus 2* (1962) 10, that Ginsburg's herculean labors are largely a monument of wasted effort, his *Massorah* is indeed difficult to use; Barthélemy calls it "le cocktail de Ginsburg" (in a private note). And Frensdorff's work was but a beginning of what he had wanted to do.

³³See above n. 29.

Volume three will analyze and study the divergences between the mp and mm, and between the massora and the consonantal text. Volume four will discuss the Final Massora (mf) and will include a general introduction and history of the massora.

The debt which we owe Weil for this work is considerable. He has by his mode of presentation and publication made study of the massora available to all students: and he has focused attention on a heritage of biblical study which only a few have heretofore carefully studied. It brings us to appreciation of the real contribution of the Massoretes to textual study. It is often said in the introductions and handbooks that their great contribution was in the system of vocalization which they appended to the consonantal text of the Hebrew Bible. As great as that contribution was, and as great as the contribution of the *te^camim* to understanding how the Massoretes inherited their reading of the text, these pale beside the outstanding fact that the massorae parva and magna stand on all sides of the text, right margin, left margin, top margin and bottom margin, as sentinels to guard the particularities of the text. They provide not only a fence around the Torah, they constitute an army guarding the integrity of the text. Our appreciation of this fact simply must increase to the point of realizing our immense debt to the whole tradition which began at the end of Period Two and increased through Period Three culminating in the massorae in the great Tiberian mss.

A *lamed* in the mp, keyed by the Massoretes to a word in the line indicated, stands like a soldier to remind the next scribe that the word in question must be copied precisely as written or corrected in the *Vorlage*. The text critic who takes the massorae seriously and pursues each case far enough soon realizes that there was often good reason for them. The word in question with a *lamed* in mp is a *hapax* in the detailed form in the text. There is no other quite like it anywhere else in the Bible and it must be guarded in its particularity; it must retain its peculiarity and not be assimilated to another form of the word more common in the Bible or elsewhere. In the Psalter the mp in Weil's *BHS* has a *yod-alef* in each case beside each hallelujah at the end of a psalm. That means that the next scribe had better not start or complete any other psalms with hallelujah than those so marked.³⁴ This may well illustrate the point someone once made that "not a jot or a tittle shall pass away. . . ."

Pursuit of such cases will usually result in the observation that some other ms tradition may have had more or fewer hallelujahs—as indeed is the case in the Qumran Psalter and in the LXX—and that the massoretic tradition insists that the next scribe not be seduced by such variant texts or traditions. Often one can find in the LXX or the Syriac a variant which the massora warns the next scribe to be cautious not to emulate. Not infrequently the scrolls will indicate the kind of text the massora wants to insulate the standardized

³⁴This incidentally is Weil's own mp. Note the inexact notation at Ps 135:3; there are, in fact, only ten massoretic psalms in L that begin with *hallelu-jah*.

massoretic text against, sometimes a later midrash or a targum reading will indicate the kind of reading guarded against. In many cases, of course, we simply do not know what specific problem scribes might have faced, but herein is the invaluable aid of the massora to the text critic. Even the beginning student trained to see the circellus over a word or phrase in the MT notes how often they appear precisely over words emended in the apparatus of *BHK* or *BHS*!

One day last year in a class in Deutero-Isaiah I noticed, while a student was translating Isaiah 43, that there was a *gimmel* in the *mp* keyed to the expression *am zu* in v 21, "this people." I had never before noticed the *gimmel*. Of course, it means that the expression *am zu* appears three times in the Bible and the next scribe had best watch carefully that he not put four into the Bible, or indeed omit one of the three. I thought to myself: I do not have a massora magna here to see the full list of where the three occurrences are, but I know where one of them is myself. And while the student continued to recite I turned to Exodus 15 and began to compare the text there with the one in Isaiah 43. Not only did I note that the other two occurrences are precisely in Ex 15:13 and 16, but I began to see, as I had never seen before, that the pericope in Isaiah 43:16–21 was a beautiful contemporizing midrash done by the prophet of the exile on the great Song of the Sea. The prophet was resignifying the great anthem of the liturgy of redemption in the exodus tradition for his people in his day. He was claiming in good midrashic fashion that God was doing for *am zu* another mighty act in their day comparable to the one the people sang about in celebration of the exodus. When the student had finished his laborious translation I gave a lecture on Isaiah's mode of midrash in Isaiah 43 on the Song of the Sea, a lecture I had only that moment perceived—all due to the fact that the Massoretes put a *gimmel* in the margin of the Isaiah text.³⁵ The lists in the *mm* fill out the knowledge of the text as a whole which the *mp* instigates and signals. The integrity of the text is safeguarded. Why?

What lies back not only of the massorae parva and magna but also of the lists of numbers of letters, words, verses, *sedarim*, *parashot*, *petuhot* and *setumot* provided in some MT MSS at the ends of the several books, as well as at the ends of the several sections of some MSS of the Hebrew Bible? What lies behind all this madness for scrupulous count of words in the massoretic tradition? One of the reasons few modern scholars since the eighteenth century have been interested in the massora is that it seems to run counter to their own interests. Modern scholarship's great interest in the Urtexts of the Bible, in what this or that great thinker-contributor of the Bible actually said, has meant that most of us over the past 200 years have been doing what the Massoretes themselves feared most: we have been changing the text because

³⁵B. W. Anderson ("Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah," *Israel's Prophetic Heritage* [ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson; New York: Harper, 1962] 177–95) notes Exodus 15 in passing, parenthetically on p. 183, but fails to see how Isa 43:16–21 is a poetic midrash on Exodus 15.

of our knowledge of other matters. For instance, our tendency has been to assimilate 2 Samuel 22 and Psalm 18 in our attempts to get back of both to an Urtext:³⁶ the apparatus in *BHK* and *BHS* attest to the tendency. Because of the criteria we bring to bear upon these texts in search of their common origin, we choose a word or phrase in the one or the other, according to the best lights we have from philology, form criticism, poetic analysis, archaic speech, archaeology, geography, extra-biblical literature, etc., in order to reconstruct a semblance of what might have been the original. The apparatus in each case tends to homogenize the two into one psalm. Translators then use the apparatus and try to present both in Samuel and in the Psalter the same psalm.

It is precisely this result that would have horrified the Massoretes—no matter our noble motivation. In antiquity a scribe might assimilate two such passages out of an innocent but intimate knowledge of the one while copying the other. Today we apparently do so out of an innocent but intimate knowledge of what we think an early form of such a poem ought to have been like. The result is much the same. Before we ask the obvious question why the Massoretes were so intent on preserving the integrity of each individual text, nay each individual verse, word and letter in place, let us first ask why we moderns like to press back to some supposed original.

Such questions almost invariably open up into the question of authority as it is framed and posed by any given generation. The attempts of the secularized mind to devalue the question of authority require perhaps the greatest skill of the sociologist of knowledge; but it is perhaps an attempt to evade looking at what the so-called secular scholar really holds dear. The modern period since the Enlightenment has apparently been as interested in the *ipsissima verba* of the origin of a biblical text as the Massoretes were interested in the *ipsissima verba* of the *received* text. One of the reasons that Johann Salomo Semler's attempt to devalue the concept of canon in the eighteenth century to a kind of final stage in a literary-historical process was so successful was that he was willing to shift ground in precisely the question of authority. He and his Enlightenment colleagues needed what Semler did to continue their then exciting work viewing the whole process of formation of the Bible in one literary historical light from beginning to end.³⁷ Once they had reduced the question of canonization of the Bible to study of lists of books and councils where big decisions would have been made, they had the question of authority reduced to what the historian could cope with. The bottom end of the canonical process could then be bracketed so that focus could continue on the earliest (and hence really authoritative?) biblical forms and content.

³⁶F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry* (SBLDS 21; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975).

³⁷See Childs's Sprunt lectures "Canon and Criticism" of 1972 as yet unpublished; J. A. Sanders, "Adaptable for Life"; "Biblical Criticism and the Bible as Canon," *USQR* 32 (1977) 157–65, esp. 160–64; and "The Canon of Scripture" (above n. 2).

A part of this attitude emerges in our use of the words "secondary" and "spurious." To call a passage in Amos or Paul secondary is to diminish its importance in some measure. We tend to think of it as less important, for our purposes—whatever the purposes might be—than passages we call "genuine." Notice the choice of words. It might be one thing to call a passage genuine with regard to reconstructing as historians what we think Amos might actually have said; but it is quite another matter to leave the impression with students that what is "secondary" has no authority otherwise. And yet that is what has been taught, innocently or otherwise, in most seminaries and departments of religion. Until recently even the historian found it less interesting to give so-called "spurious" passages their just value. This attitude is fortunately being corrected in many ways. Yet still, the legacy of Enlightenment biblical scholarship includes a fairly clear system of values: one of these is that the most primitive is the most authentic.³⁸ Among the students of Albright there was a tendency to revalue much of what the liberals had called secondary and to view as authentic or primary much that had earlier been devalued. But that tendency only underscored the basic view that the first or earliest was best. There is a clear line between our modern attitude toward secondary passages and our attitude toward the massora: we have tended to ignore both in our concern for the most primitive values in the text. The basic Enlightenment tenet that "nothing is spurious to the scholar" has not always been observed.

VII

The answer to the question why the Massoretes were so intent on preserving the integrity of the text down to the least detail lies in a careful study of what happened in the history of the transmission of the text during the course of the Second Period, that of relative textual fluidity, from the Persian Period till late in the first century CE. In 1961 an essay appeared in our journal titled, "Matthew Twists the Scriptures."³⁹ The author expressed the consternation of many excellent OT and NT scholars of the period over how the NT seems to "distort" the OT texts it cites. But the same can be said of nearly all Jewish and Christian literature in the NT period. While there was a certain measure of respect for the constraints inherent in the text,⁴⁰ the hermeneutics of the Second Period were quite different from those which characterize use of scripture after the first century. The remarkable thing in

³⁸This is seen especially in the work of philologists, and in bold relief in that of Mitchell Dahood; cf. James Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the OT* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968) for a critique of the position. See also the discussion of the two sides of the issue, as well as of what the expression "original meaning" may itself connote, in J. F. A. Sawyer, "The 'Original Meaning of the Text' and other Legitimate Subjects for Semantic Description," in *Questions disputées d'Ancien Testament* (ed. C. Brekelmans; Gembloux: Duculot, 1974) 63–70; the debate by Dahood and Barr is resumed in the same volume, 11–62.

³⁹S. V. McCasland in *JBL* 80 (1961) 143–48.

⁴⁰Merrill Miller's apt phrase in a paper, as yet unpublished, titled "Directions in the Study of Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity."

the NT is the high respect for the text of the LXX in the Epistle to the Hebrews, not the other way round. The so-called Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha and all sectarian literature clearly datable to the pre-70 CE period may all be seen in the same light with regard to their attitude to biblical texts. I include in the category of sectarian also the so-called proto-rabbinic literature of the period: the great problem is, as Jacob Neusner has brilliantly shown, that there is very little there that can be dated early enough in the form received to include it in the Second Period.⁴¹ Most ancient rabbinic literature, on the contrary, is a prime example of the attitude toward and use of scripture in the Third Period, that of the basically stabilized text after 70 CE.⁴²

Whether it was a matter of copying an actual biblical text, citing a biblical text for comment, rewriting a whole segment of the biblical story as in the case of Chronicles, the targumin, Jubilees or the Genesis Apocryphon, the inherent constraints of the text were balanced over against another factor which was apparently equally important—the utter conviction of the time in the immediate relevance of scripture. What they perceived God was doing in their time had as great a bearing on their thinking as the text which reported what God had done in earlier times. They knew how to identify God's dealings with them because they had scripture, but most of that scripture had not yet become "sacred text." The colophonic character of the prohibitions stated in Deuteronomy against adding to or subtracting from the text of that book was still far from the same as the utter taboo later to arise when the concept of sacred text became the dominant concept. The period bracketed by the fall of the first temple and the fall of the second, from the sixth century BCE to the end of the first CE, precisely from the time of Deuteronomy to the time of Rabbi Meir and the beginnings of the oral codification of the Mishnah, was marked by a co-existence of two distinct ideas about the Word of God, the idea of the living word of God ever dynamically new and fresh, and the idea of traditions which were becoming stabilized into certain forms but were generation after generation in need of being adapted to and heard afresh in new historical contexts.

Traditionally the spirit of prophecy ended sometime between the time of Ezra and the men of the Great Synagogue, and the time of the Era of the Contracts, that is, the time of the Seleucids.⁴³ Such efforts to account for the

⁴¹Much of what Neusner has written would illustrate the point: it is clearly stated in his *Development of a Legend: Studies on the Traditions Concerning Yohanan ben Zakkai* (Leiden: Brill, 1970). See also *The Redaction and Formulation of the Order of Purities in Mishnah and Tosefta*, vol. 21 of *A History of the Mishnaic Law of Purities* (Leiden: Brill, 1977).

⁴²M. Goshen-Gottstein uses the metaphor of "central current" for the proto-massoretic text before 70, "with rivulets flowing side by side with it." After the destruction of the temple "the rivulets that flow by its side are almost dried up. . . but a thin trickle continues. . . ." See Isaiah sample edition (above n. 12) 17. Robert A. Kraft finds a parallel phenomenon in Greek Jewish scriptures: "As a rule tendencies to tamper with the texts would tend to date from relatively early times. . . ." See his "Christian Transmission of Greek Jewish Scriptures," in *Paganisme, Judaïsme, Christianisme, Mélange offerts à Marcel Simon* (Paris: Boccard, 1978) 225.

⁴³Cf. G. Weil, "La nouvelle édition" (above n. 30) 329.

shift of which we speak in understanding the very concept of the Word of God testify to the ambiguity of attitude held toward scripture in the period. Barthélemy has shown that the phenomenon of the cessation of scribal changes in the early first century CE, those called *tiqqunê soferîm*, was a stage in the development of the shift in basic concept of scripture in the period.⁴⁴ This is surely correct. Talmon has capably shown that other kinds of scribal activity, actually adding to the biblical text poetic doxologies and other types of biblical literary forms, extended down to approximately the same time frame.⁴⁵ Talmon remarks that such scribes considered themselves to be contributing to the biblical process. All of this scribal activity came to a halt sometime in the first century CE. The shift from understanding scripture as sacred story to sacred text⁴⁶ was long and gradual; but it took place precisely in what in text criticism we call Period Two, that of the accepted texts. And we say texts for the time precisely because of the pluralistic character of the texts in the period before the standardization process took place.

I have called these different understandings of the nature of scripture a question of the ontology of canon.⁴⁷ It was apparently not until the first century BCE that the concept of the verbal inspiration of scripture either arose or began to take hold in Jewish thinking. Prior to that time there had been various mantic or shamanistic concepts of inspiration of tradition and early scriptures, such as attributed to the words of a dying patriarch (the very form of the book of Deuteronomy [and hence the Torah?]); but the concepts of verbal, and soon thereafter literal, inspiration did not become operative for the function of scripture in Judaism until the first century BCE, and that at about the time of the cessation of the two kinds of scribal activity in changes and alterations in the texts of which Barthélemy and Talmon speak in the first century BCE. Phenomenologically, this new view of inspiration was linked to the concurrent conviction of the demise of prophecy. Even so, the older attitudes still held on and did not completely die out until the final period of textual standardization after 70 CE. Those attitudes were in point of fact the salient and characteristic ones of the Second Period, that of fluidity and flexibility. For them as seen in Qumran and Christian literature, for example, the greater piety was expressed in moderately reshaping the text within the limits of their view of textual constraints in the light of the greater conviction of what God was doing in their time.

Once the concept of verbal inspiration arose, those adhering to it needed a whole new set of hermeneutic axioms and techniques to render the stable text adaptable to new situations. And it was those very proto-rabbinic circles in which the scribal activity of alteration of text ceased in the first century that the first efforts were made in developing the new rules of the game. And one

⁴⁴See above n. 22.

⁴⁵See above n. 23.

⁴⁶See above n. 40.

⁴⁷In "Biblical Criticism and the Bible as Canon," see above n. 37.

can see some of the new techniques coming to play to a limited extent in Qumran commentaries (most of which came late in the history of the sect) and in the NT. But it was in the proto-rabbinic denominations and groups that the so-called seven hermeneutic rules of Hillel were developed supposedly by the end of the first century BCE. These were extended and developed considerably by the end of the first century CE into the 13 rules of Ishmael and finally into the traditional 32 rules by the time of Judah ha-Nasi in the second century CE.

Such rules could not have arisen and would not have done so except that the very ontology of scripture had changed from sacred story to sacred text as well as the fundamental understanding of its inspiration or authority. What happened and why?

VIII

The answer to these questions lies in an understanding of Torah. Increasingly in the exilic and post-exilic periods Torah came to have a very special meaning and a very special function in Judaism. There is a manner of speaking in which one may say that Torah was Judaism and Judaism was Torah.⁴⁸ The very concept of Torah shifted from that of being the story of God's dealings with the world and with his people Israel (with legal suggestions included within it as to how the people should shape their society and their lives) to being a quite stable and discreet body of literature. But the function of Torah remained the same as it had been in its process of literary formation, the source of the believers' knowledge of who they were and what they should do with their lives. What changed was a shift from highly adaptable living traditions, such as those to which the early biblical writers themselves referred in whatever manner and mode they needed to do so, to a highly stable body of literature. If, however, the function was to remain the same then methods had to be developed to render the stable adaptable, to make it relevant to ever-changing situations, and that at a time when Judaism was becoming more and more pluralistic due to the fact of dispersion and the fact of Jewish communities facing widely differing problems according to where and when they lived.⁴⁹

If nothing now was to be added to or subtracted from the text of Torah—in that colophonic sense to which we referred in looking at Deuteronomy—how could the old Bronze Age and Iron Age legal systems be made relevant to all the new problems? We sophisticated children of the Enlightenment know that those legal systems embedded within the Torah Story were actually already adapted much earlier from the Codes of Hammurabi and of Shamshi Addad of Eshnunah, and from the Hittite legal system. But how were our

⁴⁸See *Torah and Canon*, 52; and J. Sanders, "Torah," *IDBSup*, 909–11. See also J. Neusner, *First-Century Judaism in Crisis. Yohanan ben Zakkai and the Renaissance of Torah* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975).

⁴⁹See above n. 18, and also J. Sanders, "Hermeneutics of True and False Prophecy," in *Canon and Authority* (ed. G. Coats and B. Long; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 21–41.

friends in the post-exilic age to manage if they could not adopt legal systems much closer to their own needs (whether homegrown Jewish laws or the best of their neighbors) right into the text of the Torah as their ancestors had done? As long as Persia was the dominant political and cultural force surrounding them, the problem was not too bad.⁵⁰ But once Judaism faced the hellenistic challenge something had to be done, for here was truly the first really serious threat to the suppositions on which Jewish existence rested—no matter what denomination to which one might adhere or how eschatologically oriented or not, one's immediate identity group might be. On the one hand the text of Torah had become stable to a large degree, at least to the point that no major alterations could be made; while on the other hand cultural clash was at every hand.

Torah, which had precisely become Torah because its central traditions had given life in the earlier challenge of the discontinuity of the old cultic and cultural symbols in the Babylonian destruction of temple and city, was still the source of life for Judaism. It had done it before, it could do it again even though the literary form of Torah had become basically stable. But how? The first answer came in the form of *torah she-bē-^cal peh*. God had given Moses more laws on Sinai than were contained in the scrolls Ezra brought with him from Babylon to Jerusalem. These had been passed down generation to generation from Moses to Joshua to the prophets to the sages, and could now be called on to continue to render Torah relevant to on-going life situations. Those new situations had pointed up two shortcomings of a literarily stable Torah in pentateuchal form: (a) there were not only new problems in no way addressed in the laws in Torah, but (b) it was becoming more and more evident that there were an increasing number of laws in written Torah apparently no longer relevant to the new situations. *Mirabile dictu*, the Oral Law contained all kinds of relevancies to meet the first apparent shortcoming of stabilized Torah.

But what about the other shortcoming? What to do about all the old laws apparently out-dated? Were they simply to lie there unused? Here was where the laws of written Torah had their continuing part to play. Where they were clearly applicable, fine and good. But those that were in danger of falling out of usage also needed attention. And here is where the shift from *peshat* exegesis of laws to other forms of interpretation began to take place. If the obvious syntax of a passage did not render relevant value of an ancient law, then maybe a value needed could be found, not in the plain sense of the verse in question, but in focusing on key words within it. Once this process started, literary context became less and less a restraint inherent in the text: and single words needed could be drawn from verses in different literary contexts.

This process meant not only a moderate diminishing authority attached to the syntax of the ancient text but the ability of the new interpreter to make a

⁵⁰E. Bickerman and M. Smith, *The Ancient History of Western Civilization* (New York: Harper, 1976) 113–45; M. Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University, 1971) 57–81.

new literary context where needed. One could take a verse out of one context and put it with another out of another and thus create an entirely new literary context. This was undoubtedly done at first by the ancient and continuing literary technique of word-tallying or *Stichwörter*. This came to be called *gezerah shavah*, after *qal va-homer* perhaps the most basic of the seven hermeneutic rules of Hillel, and the rule most seriously developed by Aquiba. Clearly once this mode of biblical interpretation was accepted, and ancient syntax and integral literary context were devalued to that extent, there were nearly infinite possibilities of rendering legal Torah relevant to new problems whenever and wherever they might arise.

These two means of assuring the relevance of Torah as law guaranteed the survival of Judaism, and of Torah itself. A third way of handling the problem is exemplified in the NT, which exhibits an attitude toward Torah already clearly manifest in some Jewish eschatological circles, to view the Torah *story* as of continuing value (Rom 7:12), but to view the Torah *laws* as abrogated.⁵¹ A fourth way of handling the situation was at Qumran in its open-ended attitude toward the canon: to include in its canon whatever was needed to meet the new situations as they perceived them.⁵² Witness the canonical dimension of the Temple Scroll, as viewed by Yigael Yadin. This scroll might well be called Tritonomos or Tritonomy.⁵³ Here were the laws Qumran apparently needed in its self-understanding as the True Israel of its day with a special mission of preparedness for the eschaton. A fifth mode of dealing with the problem was allegory, a spiritualizing hermeneutic which permitted, if need be, a total revaluation of apparently outmoded passages.

In the Judaism which would close its canon by the end of the Second Period of text transmission, that is, by the end of the period of intense standardization of text and the close-off of normal textual adaptation, in that Judaism, new hermeneutic techniques had been developed for rendering the old stable text adaptable to whatever situation might arise. For them sacred story had yielded to sacred text almost completely. The fact that the Torah itself was basically a story and not basically a legal code was for them no longer in focus. It was now basically sacred text. The ontology of scripture had shifted. And in the process of that shift one can see how scripture interpretation presupposed aspects of the shift. Scripture began to be viewed, Merrill Miller points out, as oracle, sign and riddle, as well as story.⁵⁴ If one reads a passage of scripture as though it were an oracle, one reads it entirely differently from when one views it as a story. Each word of an oracle or a riddle is assumed to have significance whether one understands it right away

⁵¹See J. Sanders, "Torah and Paul," *God's Christ and His People* (Nils Dahl Festschrift) (ed. W. Meeks and J. Jervell; Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977) 132-40.

⁵²See J. Sanders, "The Qumran Psalms Scroll (11QPs^a) Reviewed," *On Language, Culture and Religion in Honor of Eugene Nida* (ed. M. Black and W. Smalley; The Hague: Mouton, 1974) 79-99; and see D. Barthélemy, "Text, Hebrew, history of," (above n. 3) 880.

⁵³Y. Yadin, *Megilat ha-Miqdash* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1978) 1.295-307.

⁵⁴See above n. 40.

or not. One needed now a *raz* or *kleis*, some key, to unlock its meaning. Mystery enters in in new ways and the meaning God intends for one's time may depend on external factors such as a denominational secret tradition.⁵⁵

Even so, it was all in the realm of hermeneutics; and hermeneutics depends in part on one's view of the text being rendered relevant. No wonder then that once the new views of verbal inspiration, and soon thereafter literal inspiration, took hold, one could entertain the idea of a closed canon. It already contained all the possibilities ever needed to give value to the communities as they needed it, wherever they might be. As Sundberg has correctly pointed out, the Christian communities, which split off from Judaism definitely in 70 CE, did not benefit from closure of canon but could carry on with the older attitudes and the larger OT canon for considerably longer.⁵⁶ Christians had already fallen heir to the thinking about Torah of denominations other than the pharisaic-rabbinic anyway.⁵⁷ For them it was basically a story about what God had done in the past with promise of what he would do in future and not basically a set of laws in the first place. But no group or denomination was insulated from the others, and some of the basic concepts in the shift of ontology of scripture became common to all groups. Among these was the new view of verbal inspiration. This gradually took hold also in Christianity so that one sees an increasing difference between how the NT writers adapted scripture and how patristic writers rendered it relevant to their times. The idea was there to stay, and it manifested itself in how texts of scripture were copied and treated and read thereafter.

IX

Those sentinels standing in the lateral margins of massoretic manuscripts thus have a long pre-history. The whole concept of massora developed directly out of the shift in ontology of scripture which took place in the Second Period of text transmission, with accelerated pace after 70 CE. No matter whether one thinks the right text was selected in the late Second Period to be the standard text,⁵⁸ we can only be grateful to the Rabbis, the proto-Massorettes and finally the Massorettes themselves for so zealously guarding the particularities, peculiarities and anomalies in the text as received in the process. They have preserved for us a pluralistic text that has remarkably

⁵⁵The MT of Daniel, in contrast to that of the LXX and even Theodotion Daniel, presents enigmatic readings which perhaps are due to the writer's desire to be less than clear to the general reader but convey a sense of reality through mystery to an in-group. Some passages seem to be of the character of riddle or oracle and purposely written so. Ezekiel was probably not written in this way, but much of the text lends itself to oracle-type interpretation.

⁵⁶A. C. Sundberg, Jr., *Old Testament of the Early Church* (HTS 20; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1964).

⁵⁷J. Sanders, "Torah and Christ," *Int* 29 (1975) 372-90.

⁵⁸See S. Talmon, "The Three Scrolls of the Law that were Found in the Temple Court," *Textus* 2 (1962) 14-27. Talmon's article is reprinted in Leiman, *The Canon and Masorah* 455-68. The essay by M. Greenberg (above n. 4) is pertinent here as well.

resisted assimilations and homogenization of readings.⁵⁹ What we, in our sophistication, might call contradictions and discrepancies were, for them, latent possibilities for meaning at some future time which they themselves might not yet have discerned. After all, texts full of oracles and riddles implanted there by God himself by verbal inspiration no one generation could possibly understand. Let future generations have a chance. Parallel to appreciation of the work of the Massoretes and the earlier standardization of the Hebrew text of the Bible is renewed appreciation of the integrity of the LXX. Note that the NEB and the new TOB offer two Esthers, the LXX Esther in its full Greek form as well as Esther in its Hebrew form. Whatever one may decide about the original Esther, from a very early date there were extant side by side two Esthers each having its own integrity. Here was another form of pluralism by which we may benefit never mind the discrepancies between them. The same may be said, perhaps, of the LXX texts of Samuel, Jeremiah, Proverbs and Ezekiel 40–48.

The craze of the Massoretes for textual *ipsissima verba* and *ipsissimae litterae* can now be seen for what it was. They had their own reasons for preserving the integrity of the text, but we may have ours for appreciating now their labors. They have richly enhanced the pluralism of the Bible by their care for the text and by their preserving the multiple possibilities thereof not only in the massora but also in the *ketiv-qerē*, *sebīr*, *ḥillufīm*, *te^camim* and *tiqqunē sopherīm* traditions. And it is in part the (limited) pluralism of the Bible, rather than its obvious unities, which canonical criticism also celebrates.⁶⁰ Though we have benefited by the apparent madness of the Massoretes, beyond even our current ability perhaps to evaluate it, theirs was not a scholarly craze for simple scrupulosity or scientific accuracy. Theirs was a faith in an ontology of scripture (did not some say Torah was even pre-existent?⁶¹) which meant there was always more there than any one person or any one generation could fully understand. We may not be able to share the faith. But can we deny the insight? Are we not ourselves far enough into the history of Enlightenment study of scripture to see for ourselves that scholars, too, are subject to the *Zeitgeist* of their times? And are we not a little wiser because of the sociology of knowledge to know that none of us, no school of

⁵⁹Inrequently this is not the case: cf., e.g., Jer 49:19 and 50:44 where some Massoretes seem to have done what we tend to do—assimilate a *yē^cōdennu* to *yō^cīdenni*. See the list at the end of the Ben Hayyim Bible. A study needs to be made of oriental ketivs. See the notes by D. Barthélemy in the eventual full technical report forthcoming from the UBS HOTTP Committee.

⁶⁰See *Torah and Canon*, 116–21, and “Adaptable for Life.” The diversity or pluralism in textual tradition is preserved in many ways by the several massoretic marginal traditions. When the limit of function of such traditions was reached then hermeneutics stepped in to continue the work: e.g., the step from notation of a *ḥilluf* to use of *’al tiqrē’* as a hermeneutic technique is very slight indeed. (On the *qere-ketiv* traditions indicating ancient variants, see H. Orlinsky, “The Origin of the Kethib-Qere System: A New Approach,” VTSup 7 [1959] 184–92.)

⁶¹As in ²*Abot Nathan* 31; see Judah Goldin, ed., *The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan* (Yale Judaica Series 10; New Haven/London: Yale University/Oxford University, 1955) 126; *b. Ned.* 39b; etc.

us, nor any one generation of us is ever likely to have all the answers? Once we realize that we have hardly asked all the questions, we may be able to see Enlightenment study of the Bible as a part, a remarkable part to be sure, but indeed a part of a much longer history of study of scripture. The questions we most often put to scripture about its most primitive and original meanings have been asked before and they will be asked again. But they are not the only ones to ask. Perhaps when we can gain an attitude of seeing ourselves in a line that goes back much further and deeper than 200 years, the eighteenth century may not have to be seen as the watershed of discontinuity in Bible study it has sometimes been seen to be.⁶² Such a view requires a bit more humility than we have sometimes been wont to practice.

Perhaps one of the gifts we of the SBL might celebrate in our centennial anniversary beginning next year would be the lines of continuity, wherever they might lie, between ourselves and our early antecedents. Let's face it: we now know that we did not have the elephant by the tail starting in the eighteenth century. Neither has any other period of biblical study. Practicing honesty, humility and a sense of humor⁶³ about our own limitations in Bible scholarship might permit us to see ourselves more clearly as beneficiaries of a very long line of students of these texts, and even to see the texts in newer lights than we today can perceive.

Such a stance might permit us to hear clearly and evaluate soberly the increasing clamor of indictments against biblical criticism, for the good uses of which this Society was founded and continues to exist. Whether we agree, or not, that historical and literary criticism have locked the Bible into the past or are bankrupt or corrupt or have eclipsed biblical narrative, we in this society especially must hear the indictments for what they are really worth.⁶⁴ Perhaps we have in part shifted our faint faith from the substance of our study to the methods we use. Perhaps we have permitted the method to become an end in itself. Perhaps we have unwittingly subscribed to a hermeneutic of primitivism where only the most original of anything has been worthy of really serious attention. Perhaps we have placed faith in history or even archaeology and expected them to bear burdens they were never meant to bear. Or, perhaps, we are guilty of none of the above.

Perhaps revival of a pluralistic sense of canon and of a deep appreciation of the pluralistic texts which have been entrusted to us from many generations, and of their functions through the ages in the believing communities which have passed them on, may allow us to perceive a more limited and yet greater value of the tools of biblical criticism developed and honed over the past three centuries. Study of text and canon today focuses increasing attention upon the intra-biblical hermeneutics at every stage in biblical antiquity—how the biblical authors and thinkers themselves

⁶²Cf. H. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University, 1974).

⁶³J. Sanders, "Hermeneutics," *IDBSup*, 407.

⁶⁴See J. Sanders, "Biblical Criticism and the Bible as Canon" (above n. 37).

contemporized and adapted and reshaped the traditions they received and how those traditions functioned for them when called upon. The earliest biblical literature we have, to the latest, made points by citing or alluding to earlier traditions, whether the peculiar traditions of the community or the international wisdom of the laws, myths, legends and proverbs of many peoples. How did Israel adapt what she received? How did Israel and the church crack open once more, each time, the shell of the old, tried and true, and make it live and derive value from it to speak to a new situation, a new problem?

We have now the tools to work on the unrecorded hermeneutics which fill the Bible from beginning to end. How did Israel and the early church from problem to problem and from time to time, passing through the five culture eras, from the Bronze Age to the hellenistic-Roman, adapt what she received? How did she depolytheize, monotheize, Yahwize and Israelete, or Christianize, the wisdom received from the past, whether homegrown tradition or international wisdom? *How* did they do it? The answers are lying there awaiting valid sober uses of biblical literary and historical criticism to recover them. How did Israel and the church find the value needed in a tradition without absolutizing the cultural trappings in which they were received, and without being bound by the cultural mores and givens of the past? The Bible is a veritable textbook of unrecorded hermeneutics, of the way in their time our predecessors, the biblical tradents themselves, did what it is we ourselves struggle to do.

To view our biblical antecedents as radically different from or inferior to us in this regard is to practice a kind of latter-day arrogance and hubris without warrant which cuts us off from them and impoverishes us. To deny the trappings of their insights is not to be better than they. It may but deafen us to the genius they enjoyed. We have set the Enlightenment up as a sort of humanistic resurrection experience back of which we sometimes feel we cannot go and before which there is perhaps not very much to learn. I suggest that the block is illusory, dependent upon a kind of triumphalism which we can ill afford to entertain.

We are heirs of a very long line of tradents and not necessarily more worthy of the traditions than they.