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THE OLD TESTAMENT TEXT

I

We shall examine here the first stages in the history of the transmission of the Old Testament text over a period of approximately 500 years, starting with *c.* 300 B.C. For the preceding phases in the history of the text woefully little historical evidence is available, and none of it is contemporary. Any account of the development of the text prior to *c.* 300 B.C., i.e. in the Persian period, not to mention the periods of the Babylonian Exile or of the First Temple, must perforce rely upon conjecture and, at best, upon deductions and analogies derived from later literature and later manuscripts.

The beginning of what may properly be called the history of the Old Testament text roughly coincides with the final phases of the canonisation of the Old Testament books, a subject which has been discussed in the preceding section. During the period under review, the Jewish scribes and sages decided on, and carried out, the minute fixation of the consonantal text of the scriptures in the original Hebrew tongue.

Concurrently, the Old Testament books were translated into other Semitic languages—Aramaic and Syriac—and also into non-Semitic languages—Greek, and subsequently Latin. This intense activity of editing and revising resulted, at the end of this period (first half of the third century A.D.), in the first comprehensive scholarly enterprise, Origen's *Hexapla*.[1] In its six columns Origen presented a synoptic view of the then current Hebrew text of the Old Testament and its Greek translations: (1) The Hebrew Old Testament in Hebrew letters; (2) this same text transcribed in Greek letters; (3–6) the Greek versions of Aquila, Symmachus, the Septuagint and Theodotion.[2]

The work of the Jewish scribes affected, as we have said, only the Hebrew consonantal text. To the best of our present knowledge, no fully fledged system of recording vowels in Hebrew had yet been invented, with the exception of the use of some consonants as *matres lectionis*, i.e. as indicators of a few basic long vowel values. The pronunciation of Hebrew words, as it was current in that period, can, however, in some cases be ascertained by means of retroversion from their rendering in translations, and in some instances from their transcription into the vocalised Greek or Latin alphabets.

The absence of vowels meant that many a Hebrew consonant group could be differently pronounced, and from this resulted the fact that a variety of meanings could be attached to one and the same word in the original. When ultimately vowels were introduced into the Hebrew text of the Bible, these pronunciation variants sometimes became the bases of *variae lectiones*.

The lack of any system of interpunctuation in written Hebrew at that time was another factor which gave rise to different interpretations of many passages. These diverging interpretations may also in the end turn up as variants in versions which are based on fully interpunctuated manuscripts.

The full establishing of these features of the text which are complementary to the basic Hebrew consonantal text, namely the vowel system(s), interpunctuation, and the subdivision of the text into paragraphs (*s'dārīm* and *pārāšōṯ*), was carried out by the various schools of Massoretes, vocalisers and interpunctuators who flourished in the last

[1] Cf. v, 14.

[2] For a short presentation of the salient characteristics of these versions, cf. B. J. Roberts in *Cambridge History of the Bible*, Vol. 2, ed. G. W. H. Lampe, pp. 13–26.

quarter of the first millennium A.D. These late aspects of the textual transmission of the Bible do not come within the orbit of our present exposition.[1]

II

There is probably no other extant text, ancient or modern, which is witnessed to by so many diverse types of sources, and the history of which is so difficult to elucidate as that of the text of the Old Testament. The task of the scholar who endeavours to trace the antecedents of the text as we know it today is further complicated by the fact that he is concerned with sacred literature, every word of which is considered to be divinely inspired and therefore infallible. However, having been handed down by human agents for more than two millennia, the text of the scriptures suffered from the shortcomings of man. It became faulty to a greater or less degree and even at times distorted. It must therefore be subjected to scholarly critical analysis like any other ancient literary document.

The Old Testament books were handed down, as has been said, not only in their original Hebrew or, in some passages, Aramaic tongue, but also in a variety of translations into Semitic and non-Semitic languages. All these textual traditions, as we know them today, differ from one another. What is more, even the witnesses to one tradition, in the original language or in a translation, often diverge from one another. As a result, the scholar who takes a synoptic view of all the sources at his disposal is confronted with a bewildering plethora of *variae lectiones* in the extant versions of the Old Testament books. This fact obviously does not become apparent in the common editions of the Old Testament, in Hebrew or in translation, which are in everyday use. However, it should be borne in mind that the printed editions represent the end of a long chain of textual development and of editorial activities which were aimed at unifying the sacred texts. These late editions can in no way be taken to exhibit faithfully the autographs of the biblical authors. In fact not one single verse of this ancient literature has come to us in an original manuscript, written by a biblical author or by a contemporary of his, or even by a scribe who lived immediately after the time of the author. Even the very earliest manuscripts at our disposal, in Hebrew or in any translation language,

[1] On this subject cf. B. J. Roberts, *op. cit.* pp. 1–26.

are removed by hundreds of years from the date of origin of the literature recorded in them.

Even a cursory perusal of the sources available immediately reveals that not one tradition and not one manuscript is without fault. Each and every one patently exhibits errors which crept into it during the long period of its transmission, in the oral stage, when written by hand, and even, though to a lesser degree, when handed down in the form of printed books.

It should, however, be stressed that these errors and textual divergences between the versions materially affect the intrinsic message only in relatively few instances. Nevertheless this may occur. Some examples of variants significant from a theological or ideo-historical angle may in fact be found. In most instances the differences are of a linguistic or a grammatical nature, which resulted either from the unpremeditated impact of the linguistic peculiarities of successive generations of copyists, or from their intentional attempts to adjust the wording of scripture to changing concepts of linguistic and stylistic norms.

The above remarks do not, however, absolve us from accounting for the fact that the further back the textual tradition of the Old Testament is followed, i.e. the older the biblical manuscripts perused, and the more ancient the records which come to the knowledge of scholars, the wider is the over-all range of textual divergence between them. The existing variants, therefore, cannot be simply explained as having arisen solely from the cumulative effect of imperfect copying and recopying of the text over many centuries. The very earliest biblical manuscripts known—and in this respect the biblical scrolls from Qumrân[1] are of decisive importance—exhibit practically all types of variants found in later witnesses. This fact indicates that variation as such in the textual transmission cannot be laid exclusively at the door of careless scribes, or of sometimes unscrupulous, and sometimes well-meaning, emendators and revisers. One has to consider the possibility, as scholars have indeed done, that individual variants, and also groups or even types of variants, which have been preserved in the ancient versions, both in Hebrew and in translations, may derive from divergent pristine textual traditions. That these divergent traditions are today represented in the extant witnesses only in what amount to haphazard

[1] See below, pp. 182–7.

remains, can be explained as resulting from the endeavour of later generations to establish for each version one officially acclaimed standard text. After the establishment of such an official standard, new copies would have been based from the very start on the *textus receptus*. In the course of time, earlier non-standard manuscripts would also have been emended to conform to it. In the ensuing process of unification, which was inspired both by religious-dogmatic and scholarly motives, divergent texts almost automatically went out of circulation, or were more or less systematically suppressed. After a given period in the history of the text, a period which differs from version to version, all manuscripts of a version can be reduced to a very restricted number of prototypes. In some instances, as is the case with the Massoretic and the Samaritan Hebrew texts, all manuscripts conform to one basic text form. In other words, the later the witnesses which are reviewed, the more pronounced their conformity, and the fewer their divergences, both in number and type.

The scholar whose interest lies in tracing the history of the text cannot rely upon the end products, but must turn for information to the earliest sources available. In doing so he is faced with an *embarras de richesse* of variant and often conflicting readings even in the most ancient witnesses to the text. It now becomes his task not only to sketch the lines of these developments, but also to attempt the reconstitution of the original wording, or wordings, of the text. He will sift the available evidence, and discard from the outset obvious faults and errors. He will try to establish manuscript families, as far as this is possible. All manuscripts which can be affiliated with each other will then be considered as one composite witness to a reading found in them. Any decision with regard to the importance of a reading cannot be based merely on counting manuscripts. They have to be assessed and their intrinsic value taken into account. At the apex of this long and complicated process of collation and critical analysis, the investigator may carefully conclude that with the available evidence no 'first' text form can be established. Or else, more optimistically, he may attempt to reconstitute the presumed pristine texts of each of the major versions individually. It then still remains to be debated whether these proto-texts of the extant versions can be reduced to one common stem, or whether, at least in part, they must be considered to represent intrinsically independent textual traditions. Even if by retracing the

steps of textual development we may be able to arrive at the *Ur-text* of this version or that, the question still remains open whether we shall ever be able to recover the *ipsissima verba* of a biblical author.

III

In pursuing the chain of development of the Old Testament text, we may discern four distinct main stages in its transmission between its initial inception at a time varying from book to book, and its form in the days of Origen.

The initial stage, that of the not provable but highly probable oral phase of the biblical literature, lies outside the scope of our present investigation, since by its very nature it precedes written documentation. It should, however, be pointed out that originally oral variations may ultimately turn up as textual variants between duplicate texts within the Old Testament. Such instances are found in two versions of one and the same psalm embedded in a book of the Former Prophets and Psalms (e.g. 2 Sam. 22 = Ps. 18), in Chronicles and Psalms (e.g. 1 Chron. 16: 8–36 = Ps. 105: 1–15; 96: 1–13; 106: 1, 47–8), or in the Book of Psalms itself (e.g. Ps. 31: 2–4*b* = 71: 1–3; 60: 7–14 = 108: 8–14).[1] Again, we meet with two or even three presentations of a piece of biblical literature in parallel passages in the Former and Latter Prophets (2 Kings 18: 13—20: 19 = Isa. 36: 1—38: 22 = 2 Chron. 32: 1–20; 2 Kings 25: 1–22 = Jer. 39: 1–10 = 52: 4–27; 2 Kings 25: 27–30 = Jer. 52: 31–4). To some extent also quotations from an earlier book in a later one may exhibit textual variants. However, in these cases literary licence and a possible tendency towards intentional variation or rephrasing on the part of the writer who is borrowing may lie at the root of the present divergences.

It goes without saying that in using the term oral tradition we do not exclude the transmission of some biblical books or parts of them in manuscript form even at this stage. The question rather is one of the relative preponderance of the two vehicles of transmission of literary material, the oral and the written. For this reason it is completely unwarranted even to attempt, with the means currently available, to delineate what cannot be known—namely the process of transition from the stage of mainly oral tradition to that of preponderantly

[1] On this theme cf. also pp. 185 ff.

written transmission. In all likelihood the process was gradual, with the weight progressively shifting from the former to the latter. Without aiming at precision, in view of the foregoing remarks, it may be said that the period of the Babylonian Exile after the destruction of the First Temple, i.e. the middle of the sixth century B.C., could be taken as a rough dividing line. The definite shift of emphasis from oral to written transmission of the biblical books would thus have become clearly apparent during the period of the Return, i.e. at the end of the sixth and in the fifth century B.C., in what, from a wider historical viewpoint, may be termed the Persian period. These considerations indicate, as will be further shown, that in attempting an elucidation of the history of the text we cannot concern ourselves exclusively with literary issues, but have to look out also for social and political phenomena whose impacts made themselves felt in its development.

The preponderance of written transmission of Old Testament books after the return from the Exile still does not make this second phase of development a ready subject for textual study in the strict sense of the term, since it is not yet represented by manuscript evidence. Any conclusions with regard to the history of text at that time lack a documentary basis. They are grounded solely on inference from subsequent phases of development and on theoretical considerations rooted in other fields of biblical research and transferred from them to the study of the text. Textual study proper commences in the next stage with the appearance of accessible manuscripts of Old Testament books.

The third phase begins, according to the present state of our knowledge, in the early third century B.C. For several reasons this phase must be considered the pivot around which any investigation into the history of the Bible text turns. At this stage, the written transmission of biblical literature finally and, to all intents and purposes, completely replaced oral tradition. With this transition went the gradual formal sanctification of the books which were accepted as scripture, culminating at the end of this phase, i.e. by the turn of the eras, in the establishment of the complete and closed Old Testament Canon. The very fact that an attempt was made to compile a definite codex of the sacred lore of the community shows that those who undertook it sensed that a period in the history of Israel and of its literature had come to a close, and that a new era of basically different literary standards and norms had begun. In instigating the canonisation of those books, they

intended to ensure the faithful preservation of the spiritual heritage of preceding generations. At the same time they purported to draw a definite line between this acknowledged body of written sacred literature and contemporary non-sacred books on the one hand, and on the other hand between it and the emerging new type of rabbinic literature which was to be only orally transmitted. Again, as has been shown in the section on the Canon, we are concerned with a gradual process, of which many aspects still cannot be adequately examined for lack of reliable evidence. Yet it would appear that the progressive demarcation of the books accepted as scripture over against all other writings extant at that period was a prerequisite for the ensuing preoccupation with the exact wording which aimed at guaranteeing an unimpaired textual transmission. No such tendency is apparent in the preceding phase. It seems that only with the emerging concept of a clearly circumscribed canon of inspired literature could there develop this concern for the exact preservation of its wording. We have no reason to suppose that much heed was paid to the text of non-sanctified writings, nor does the traceable textual history of writings of this kind, such as Ecclesiasticus, substantiate such an assumption. Since they had no claim to have been conceived under divine inspiration, variants in their transmitted wordings were regarded as of no consequence.

IV

The internal Jewish trends outlined above were intensified by another set of factors. In the period under review, Israel was drawn into the orbit of hellenistic culture, which heavily influenced contemporary Jewish culture. The resulting contact with the Greek world of letters had a decisive impact on the transmission of the Old Testament. Jewish scribes emulated Greek scribal techniques and terminology, and adopted their insistence on exactitude in handing down written records and literary works.[1]

This development occurred at an opportune moment in the history of the Old Testament text, when its translation into other languages was first undertaken. The demand for a translation of the Hebrew scriptures into Aramaic probably arose during the Babylonian Exile or immediately after the return of the exiles to Palestine, i.e. in the

[1] Cf. S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1950), pp. 3–46.

Persian period. Aramaic being the *lingua franca* of the time, it was adopted by many Jews in their intercourse with the non-Jewish world. Being a Semitic language, closely related to Hebrew, it eventually achieved the status of a sister tongue to Hebrew even in the internal life of the Jewish people, especially in the Babylonian Diaspora, but also in Palestine. At first, the translation of the scriptures into Aramaic was most probably sporadic and undirected. It was left to the individual communities to tend to the needs of their members by providing a vehicle which would make the message of the sacred writings understandable also to those whose command of the mother tongue had become insufficient for this purpose. Lacking authorised supervision, the resulting translation often assumed the form of a somewhat free paraphrase of the original, rather than of an accurate rendering into the translator's language. But even when a word-by-word translation was attempted, divergence from the Hebrew *Vorlage* was inevitable. Translation from one language into another always produces inaccuracies since there is no exact correspondence between the vocabulary and the syntax of the two, even if they belong to the same language family. Moreover, the probably divergent first renderings of the Hebrew scriptures into Aramaic were based on originals which may well have differed among themselves to a smaller or larger degree, for reasons set out above.

The same considerations apply with additional force to the translation of the Old Testament books into Greek, a non-Semitic language. This translation was required, for reasons similar to those mentioned above, by Jews living within the sphere of hellenistic culture, whether in Ptolemaic Egypt, where the Jewish community of Alexandria was the focal point, or in Palestine. Tradition maintains that in this case official non-Jewish agents also showed interest in rendering the Old Testament into Greek, and instigated a properly supervised scholarly translation. This tradition will be further discussed subsequently. The pseudepigraphic *Letter of Aristeas* credits King Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246 B.C.) with having inaugurated the translation of the Pentateuch into Greek by seventy sages. As a result of their concerted effort, the Septuagint, commonly designated LXX, was in the Pentateuch less open to the uncontrolled impact of translators' idiosyncrasies. It contains indeed fewer deviations from the Hebrew text here than in the renderings of the other books. But it is still open to discussion whether

this reputedly official undertaking is to be considered the first attempt at translating the Old Testament or parts of it into Greek and to have provided the impetus to further ventures of the same kind, or whether it should rather be viewed as an event which crowned a long series of previous diffuse attempts with a standardised version.

The first wave of translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into other languages, Semitic and non-Semitic, perforce resulted in the creation of variants and types of variants in the then extant witnesses to the text. The ensuing embarrassing textual diversity of the versions of the sacred books soon called for the application of the methods of textual analysis and textual criticism to remedy this deficiency. As stated above, the ground for this new approach had been laid by the conjunction of scholarly norms borrowed from the Greeks with the care for the accurate transmission of the inspired literature which had developed within Judaism. This attitude towards the text characterises the fourth period of its history.

V

We have already indicated that the fourth phase in the textual history of the Old Testament may be reckoned to extend from the end of the last century B.C. to the beginning of the third century A.D. It is marked by a vigorous process of textual standardisation which affected practically all versions. In order to include within this time-span the activities of Jewish and Samaritan scribes who applied themselves to the stabilisation of the Hebrew text, and of Christian, and to some extent also of Jewish, scribes and scholars who dealt with the Greek Bible, the upper and lower limits have been chosen with some latitude. The dates could be lowered by half a century or so at both ends as far as the Hebrew text is concerned. Also in this phase we have to take into account the impact of socio-political events on the history of the text, especially the emergence of Christianity and the destruction of the Second Temple in A.D. 70. The finalisation of the rift between the Synagogue and the Church which was incomparably more important and decisive than any preceding clash of the main stream of Judaism with deviating movements, and the insistence of both Jews and Christians on basing the cardinal tenets of their conflicting beliefs on the sacred scriptures, necessitated the clear definition of the text on which these claims were grounded. Further, the destruction of the

Second Temple seriously impaired the social cohesion of Jewry which had previously ensured some unity of the text, or at least had prevented its dissolution into innumerable streamlets of textual tradition. The renewed dispersion of Jews over a large geographical area, the disruption of existing socio-religious centres and the creation of new pivotal agencies with the possible resulting diversification of the biblical textual traditions, required counteraction. The propagation of one, universally recognised text form was considered indispensable for ensuring the continuity of the national unity. Rabbinic literature, Hebrew fragments of the Old Testament from after A.D. 70 such as those from Wadi Murabba'at and Massada,[1] and some subsidiary evidence from the ancient versions, witness to the emergence of a Hebrew *textus receptus*, the prototype of the Massoretic text which was finally established almost a millennium later.

Correspondence between the developments of the Hebrew and non-Hebrew versions terminates somewhere at the end of the first century A.D. By then the division between them is in fact no longer a division along linguistic lines, but reflects the schism between the Synagogue and the Church and their different attitudes to the text. The process of textual unification referred to above affected not only the rabbinic Hebrew Bible and the Samaritan Hebrew Pentateuch but also seems to be observable in the Jewish Aramaic translations of the Old Testament books, especially in the Targum Onkelos to the Pentateuch. As against this, if we may judge by Origen's enterprise, and by some preceding Greek evidence from Qumrân, Christian scholars were indeed also bent on editing, and probably on stabilising, the various extant Greek translations, but apparently did not attempt to weld them into one solely acceptable textual tradition. This interpretation of the available evidence is borne out by the subsequent fate of the Greek Bible which after Origen's time was also subjected to recurrent revisions which in practice sometimes amount to new translations. This state of affairs brought about the renewed efforts of Jerome some two centuries later to provide the Church with a new Latin version, the Vulgate, based on the then extant form of the *hebraica veritas*.[2] The Vulgate was intended to supersede the Old Latin version then in use, itself derived from the Greek and therefore presenting in many cases readings which deviated considerably from the current Hebrew text. True, there is

[1] See below, pp. 182–6. [2] See v, 16 in the present volume.

no comparable evidence on hand for the Jewish-Hebrew text in the period under review. At the beginning of the second century manuscript Hebrew evidence comes abruptly to an end, and the text remains unattested for some seven centuries until the appearance of the earliest medieval Hebrew manuscripts. However, the basic similarity between the Hebrew textual traditions at the two extreme points of this timespan, which is not impaired by the persistence of individual variants or even the emergence of new ones, bears out the above statement that after the first century A.D. one single Hebrew text type gained the upper hand and that deviant types practically went out of circulation.

VI

At this point of our investigation we have to turn our attention to the history of biblical textual research as it has developed since the rediscovery of the Samaritan Hebrew Pentateuch by Pietro della Valle in 1616. The Samaritan text was made available to scholars shortly afterwards when Morinus first printed it in 1632 alongside the other versions in the Paris Polyglot. Its many deviations from the Massoretic text, later estimated at about six thousand, were soon observed. It was further established that approximately one third of these *variae lectiones* could be traced also in the Septuagint. This concurrence enhanced the doubts which had been raised concerning the veracity of the Massoretic text. It was maintained that, having been revised by the rabbis after the destruction of the Temple, in the first half of the second century A.D., it did not represent the *ipsissima verba* of the divinely inspired message, but a faulty text, resulting from *incuria librariorum* or from wilful malicious tampering with it on the part of the Jews. As against this it was claimed that the Septuagint had never been subjected to such interference, and therefore represented the biblical text in its pre-revision stage. If it was not altogether a true image of the pristine form of the divine word, it certainly came closer to it than any other version. The alignment of the Hebrew Samaritan version with the Greek in so many instances seemed to strengthen the position of the defenders of its accuracy. True, the history of the Samaritan community remained to a large extent shrouded in mystery, but its seclusion throughout more than a millennium appeared to imply that its version of the Pentateuch had been safeguarded from the impact of the biased Jewish

revision. It was therefore accepted as a true reflection of the Hebrew Pentateuch as that had been extant before the rabbis exerted their influence on it.

It hardly needs stressing that the discussion at that time, and into the eighteenth century, arose almost exclusively from theological considerations and not from detached scholarly observation. Textual criticism was employed in order to prove the claim that the Greek Bible adopted by the Church was the only true manifestation of the divine message. Accordingly, the Hebrew text of the Synagogue was relegated to an inferior status. The Reformation had, however, instigated a counter movement. Its reliance on the Hebrew text accorded the latter a new place of honour in biblical studies. It was indeed agreed that the Massoretic text exhibited a text form which had been fixed and codified by numerous successive generations of Jewish scribes and sages, and that it bore the imprint of their redactional activities. But, it was argued, this very preoccupation of those early scholars with the accurate preservation of the text, and the uninterrupted supervision of its transmission, had saved it from the corroding impact of insufficiently controlled copying which had been the lot of the other versions. Collations of the available Hebrew manuscripts which were prepared at the end of the eighteenth century by Kennicott and de Rossi, and which superseded all previous endeavours, proved their basic identity.[1] The rich crop of individual variants which were recorded in the apparatus of these works at first sight appeared to disprove the compactness and stability of the Hebrew text. However, closer scrutiny more and more strengthened the conviction that almost all of them can and should be classified as intentional or unintentional secondary scribal alterations. In any case, they could not offset the clear impression that the consonantal text of practically all Massoretic manuscripts showed no deviation of any consequence. All exhibited a tradition which was identical to the smallest *minutiae*, even in recording anomalous phenomena such as the *puncta extraordinaria*, and the unconventional spelling or pronunciation of certain words. The lesson to be drawn from Kennicott's, de Rossi's and other such collations was summarised at the end of the eighteenth century by E. F. C. Rosen-

[1] M. H. Goshen-Gottstein has recently provided us with new insights into the phase of research into the history of the Massoretic text which is briefly discussed here. See his 'Hebrew Biblical Manuscripts', *Biblica*, XLVIII (1967), 249–77.

mueller as follows: 'This whole range of variants...leads moreover to the simple recognition that all surviving codices are relatively late in relation to the *originals*...they all represent *one recension*, all stem from one *source*...'[1] It is imperative to underline Rosenmueller's reference to *originals* (in the plural), and his conclusion that all medieval Hebrew manuscripts derive from one single recension, i.e. a revised text source. They are therefore to be regarded as one composite witness. Moreover, they can in no way be viewed, without further analysis, as a faithful reflection of the original Hebrew text. Their collation can only help us to reconstitute or recapture the prototype of the Massoretic recension, not the pristine Hebrew Bible.

This line of argument by which the extant *variae lectiones* in Massoretic manuscripts were shown to be of secondary origin was further elaborated in the early nineteenth century to include also the Samaritan Pentateuch text. In his dissertation *De Pentateuchi Samaritani Origine* (1815), W. Gesenius subjected this version for the first time to a proper textual analysis, leaving aside theological considerations. After collecting and categorising the variant readings in the Samaritan, comparing them whenever possible with parallel readings in other non-Massoretic sources, he concluded that in the overwhelming majority of cases these variants resulted from a Samaritan revision of the same basic text exhibited by the Massoretic text, and therefore cannot be considered to present evidence for an original independent text tradition. Even the concurrence of the Samaritan in so many instances with the Septuagint could not affect this conclusion. Gesenius' successors did not materially add to his findings, but only put in sharper relief the dependence of the Samaritan Version on the Massoretic text, and thus further diminished the former's text-critical value. Z. Frankel defined the Samaritan as a faulty recension full of mistakes and scribal redactions, based on the Massoretic text,[2] a view subscribed to by S. Kohn in numerous publications, and summed up by him as follows:

> The Samaritan and the Massoretic text are not two divergent copies of one book, but the Samaritan is related to the Massoretic text in the way that a new edition, carefully revised, is related to an older one; it not only improves on it in content—though in this instance it is mainly the opposite of improvement—but it is also modernised in regard to language and orthography.[1]

[1] E. F. C. Rosenmueller, *Handbuch der biblischen Kritik und Exegese*, I (Göttingen, 1797), p. 244; quoted by E. Preuschen, *ZAW*, IX (1889), 303. (Translation by the editors.)

[2] Z. Frankel, *Ueber den Einfluss der palaestinischen Exegese auf die alexandrinische Hermeneutik* (Leipzig, 1851), p. 242.

Rosenmueller's well-balanced 'one-recension' theory which, it is to be noted, he had applied to the Massoretic text only, was pushed into the background by the more sweeping 'archetype theory' propounded by P. de Lagarde about a century ago. In Lagarde's formulation all Hebrew manuscripts derived from one single exemplar, not one recension. This hypothetical manuscript admittedly did not faithfully mirror the original text, but patently contained numerous deviations from it which had been faithfully transmitted and preserved in all extant manuscripts: 'The result is that our Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament all go back to one single exemplar, and have even faithfully reproduced as corrections the correcting of its scribal errors and taken over its fortuitous imperfections.'[2] It was tacitly assumed or even expressly conceded, e.g. by J. G. Sommer, that that unique proto-Massoretic manuscript either derived directly from the Temple or else was based upon a copy of the complete Canon which had been kept there before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, although it achieved its final form only somewhat later.[3]

Lagarde widened the scope of his investigation by applying a similar method to the Greek tradition. He argued that all the available Greek manuscripts could be reduced to the three basic local recensions of Origen, Hesiod and Lucian, from which scholars could trace their way back to the original Septuagint. Taken as a whole the Greek tradition represented a textual family which differed from the Massoretic text. Although it must be viewed as an unsatisfactory translation of the original, this tradition can be employed, by way of comparison, to go behind the archetype which underlies the Hebrew manuscripts: 'We could only penetrate behind this archetype of the Massoretic text by conjecture, were it not for the fact that the Greek version of the Old Testament opens up the possibility of making use of at least a poor translation of a manuscript belonging to a different family.'[4]

[1] S. Kohn, 'Samaritikon und Septuaginta', *MGWJ*, XXXVIII (1895), 60. (Translation by the editors.)

[2] P. de Lagarde, *Anmerkungen zur griechischen Uebersetzung der Proverbien* (Leipzig, 1863), p. 2. (Translation by the editors.)

[3] J. G. Sommer, *Biblische Abhandlungen* (Bonn, 1846), p. 79; further: J. Olshausen, *Die Psalmen* (Braunschweig, 1853), pp. 15–17.

[4] P. de Lagarde, *ibid.* n. 18. (Translation by the editors.)

The various manifestations of the Old Testament text could, according to this theory, be likened to the branches of a tree, all of which had grown from one stem in diverse stages of bifurcation. There remained little doubt that an analysis and comparison of the main versions, chiefly of the Massoretic text and the reconstituted Septuagint buttressed by the Hebrew Samaritan Pentateuch version, would lead scholars to the very *Ur-text* common to all. The Greek tradition was deemed especially valuable for the purpose of purging the Old Testament of anti-Christian falsifications which allegedly had been introduced into the Massoretic text by the rabbis. This consideration, more theological than textual, fixed the *terminus non ante quem* of the reputed Jewish *Ur-exemplar*. It could not precede the emergence of Christianity, indeed not the first centuries A.D., since one had to allow some time for the Jewish–Christian controversy to develop.[1] The final fixation of the proto-Massoretic text was soon connected with the members of the Sanhedrin of Jamnia that flourished in the days of the Emperor Hadrian (first half of the second century A.D.), and especially with Rabbi Aqiba, probably the most prominent rabbi of the early Christian era. In some such formulation Lagarde's *Ur-text* theory, which was incorrectly considered an elaboration of Rosenmueller's 'one recension' theory, carried the day. Scholars differed in their opinions as to how the basic Massoretic text had been established—whether a deliberate choice had been made by some official Jewish body (Olshausen), or whether, rather haphazardly, a readily available manuscript had been made the basis of the standard text (Noeldeke).[2] But they concurred on the basic issue—the presupposed existence of an archetype. The situation was succinctly summarised at the end of the nineteenth century by F. Buhl:

> Of the style and manner in which this authorized text was constructed we unfortunately know nothing definitely. This much only is plain, that the very conception of such an authorized form of text implies the existence of a definite standard manuscript, which was pronounced the only allowable one. In so far, the relatively recent but already widespread theory, that all extant manuscripts point back to one single archetype, is decidedly correct.[3]

[1] For a summary of Lagarde's views see A. Rahlfs, *P. de Lagardes wissenschaftliches Lebenswerk* (Göttingen, 1928), pp. 75–82.

[2] Th. Noeldeke, *Alttestamentliche Literatur*, I (Leipzig, 1868), pp. 22–5.

[3] F. Buhl, *Canon and Text of the Old Testament*. Translated by J. Macpherson (Edinburgh, 1892), p. 256.

Buhl subscribed to the idea that this standard text was officially proclaimed, and soon pushed its way

> in a remarkably short time wherever the Pharisaic influence extended. On the other hand, the equally widespread theory that this primitive codex obtained this position by mere arbitrary choice, or by the manuscripts of the several books that by chance were at hand being bound together into one standard Bible, is by no means certain.[1]

But he was less sure than Lagarde that we can reach back behind this archetype by comparing the Hebrew version with the extant Greek. It is important, he says,

> to determine the exact relation between the Massoretic text and the Archetypal texts of Aquila, Symmachus, and Jerome. In a remarkable way the Hebrew manuscripts, which were certainly derived from the most diverse regions, seem to form a unity over against those translators, because the variations present in these are only extremely seldom repeated in any one manuscript. Evidently the rigid stability of form which resulted from the labours of the Massoretes called into being new standard texts, on which the manuscripts are directly dependent, which, however, were themselves collateral with the manuscripts used by those translators.[1]

VII

The validity of some of Lagarde's arguments was questioned already in his lifetime. Within thirty years after the inception of the *Ur-text* theory the onslaught on it from various quarters forced its adherents to modify their rigid position, and ultimately resulted in the conception of new rival hypotheses. P. E. Kahle drew attention to Hebrew manuscripts from the Cairo Geniza stemming from the end of the first and the beginning of the second millennium A.D. which exhibited variants in the secondary phenomena of the Hebrew text (vocalisation, punctuation, etc.). These derived from different Massoretic systems, and seemed to indicate that the Hebrew tradition was less solidified than Lagarde had assumed.[2] But since these manuscripts were much too late, and their variants did not really affect the consonantal text, their evidence could not be adduced to disqualify the *Ur-text* hypothesis.

[1] Buhl, *ibid.*

[2] P. Kahle's work of a lifetime is summarised in his *The Cairo Geniza*. The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy 1941 (London, 1947; 2nd ed. Oxford, 1959).

More decisive were the strictures raised by V. Aptowitzer. His collection of biblical quotations in rabbinic literature, a field which had not been explored at all by earlier scholars, brought to light a wealth of variant Hebrew readings, which were sometimes reflected also in one or another of the versions.[1] In spite of attempts to diminish the value of this evidence, by explaining the variations as arising from quotation by heart, or from intentional alteration of the original on the part of the quoting authors, it stands to reason that it severely undermines the theory of a single Jewish *Ur-text*. It would be hard to explain the persistence of variants in rabbinic literature, even when these occur merely in quotations, if indeed the text of that one manuscript had ousted all others since the days of Rabbi Aqiba.

The very existence of variant quotations in rabbinic writings and in their exegetical comments, particularly in Midrash literature, which mirror a text that deviates from the Massoretic text, dealt a severe blow not only to the *Ur-text* hypothesis, but also to the less rigorous 'one recension' theory. Rival theories were now put forward. All of these set out to account for the co-existence of divergent text traditions of the Old Testament in the pre-Christian rabbinic and the early Christian period, in Hebrew as well as in Aramaic, in Greek and possibly also in Latin translations, as are exemplified in: (*a*) divergent textual traditions exhibited in quotations in rabbinical literature; (*b*) parallel Aramaic translations of the Pentateuch, which indeed stem from a period later than the one under discussion here, but most probably derive from pre-Origenic prototypes, namely Targum Onkelos which possibly originated in Babylonia, and certainly was redacted there, Pseudo-Jonathan, of Palestinian origin, and a third Aramaic version which until recently had been known only from excerpts, and therefore had been named the Fragment Targum, but now has been proved to represent in fact a fully fledged Jerusalem Aramaic translation;[2] and

[1] V. Aptowitzer, *Das Schriftwort in der rabbinischen Literatur: Prolegomena. Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse*, Band 153, Abhandlung VI (Vienna, 1906). The 'Prolegomenon' was followed by a detailed investigation into quotations from the Former Prophets in rabbinic literature, published in four separate instalments. Cf. further I. Abrahams, 'Rabbinical Aids to Exegesis' in *Essays on Some Biblical Questions of the Day*. By Members of the University of Cambridge (London, 1909), pp. 172 ff.

[2] See A. Diez Macho, 'The recently discovered Palestinian targum: its antiquity and relationship with the other targums', *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, VII, Congress Volume Oxford 1959 (Leiden, 1960), 222–45.

(*c*) the propagation of diverse Greek translations exhibited in an almost codified form in the parallel columns of the *Hexapla*, and sometimes preserved in the form of variant-quotations from the Old Testament in the Apocrypha, the New Testament and the writings of the early Church Fathers, and also in Jewish hellenistic literature, especially in the works of Flavius Josephus.

The most extreme of the new theories was that of the 'vulgar texts' proposed by Paul Kahle which may be considered the very opposite of Lagarde's *Ur-text* hypothesis, and with some qualifications also of the 'one recension' theory. As stated, both these hypotheses take for granted that all extant versions of the Old Testament books, and also most of the intra-versional textual variants, can in the last analysis be reduced, at least in theory if not always in practice, to one common text base which was the only acclaimed, or possibly even the only extant, text form of the Old Testament at the beginning of the Christian era. Though differing as to the characterisation of the 'archetype' as a 'recension' or as a single manuscript, neither of these two hypotheses seems to have taken into consideration the antecedents of the presupposed archetype. It would, in fact, appear that in both the respective archetype was believed to have represented the very first text form of the Old Testament books, not preceded by any divergent predecessors. In other words, all present divergences in the extant versions must be considered to have arisen after the archetype had been established and had been officially accepted. The archetype is viewed, as it were, as a riverhead running off into numerous rivulets, all of which, however, can be retraced to the original source.

Now, it may be said that Kahle would be prepared to subscribe to such a description of the issue as far as the latter part of the simile is concerned, namely the diversification of the Old Testament text tradition in the post-Jamnia period. He would also agree that many variants in the diverse versions are of a secondary nature, resulting from intentional or accidental scribal alterations. But on the other hand he would maintain that on the whole the more important witnesses to the Old Testament text, such as the primary Hebrew Massoretic and Samaritan versions, and the basic Greek and Aramaic translations, represent in essence text forms which preceded Lagarde's model-codex or Rosenmueller's arch-recension. The 'vulgar texts' school does not consider the archetype to be the riverhead, but rather the confluence

of preceding varying text traditions. These pristine traditions were unified to a considerable degree by the endeavour of generations of tradents within the Jewish, Samaritan and Christian communities who established the (proto)-Massoretic *textus receptus*, the Samaritan consolidated version of the Pentateuch and the Septuagint respectively. But they never fully succeeded in completely suppressing older and purer, i.e. non-revised, 'vulgar' texts within their own official tradition, which was determined by linguistic peculiarities and religious dogma, nor could they ever establish one common archetype of the Old Testament books.[1]

It is the great merit of Kahle that he attempted to push the inquiry into the history of the text in all its ramifications beyond the *terminus non ante quem* which his predecessors had tacitly or explicitly considered as the starting point for their investigations, namely the end of the Second Commonwealth or the beginning of the period after the destruction in A.D. 70. In his understanding of the matter, the then already extant *textus receptus* of each single version marked the apex of a long chain of development in the course of which divergent text-traditions had been progressively abolished. The creation of the Septuagint as portrayed in the pseudepigraphical *Letter of Aristeas*, the compact Aramaic Targums, the Massoretic text and the Samaritan Version are the crowning events in a process of textual unification which had been set on foot by the needs of socio-religious-organisations: the Synagogue, the Samaritan community and the Church.

Without, to the best of my knowledge, stating so explicitly, Kahle in fact applied to the research into the history of the Old Testament text ideas and principles which concurrently emerged in the study of biblical stylistics and literature. Quite correctly, he considered textual history as a phenomenon of a socio-religious kind and endeavoured to map out its place in actual communal life, i.e. to establish, in Gunkel's terminology, its 'Sitz im Leben'.

It follows that in many instances an ancient variant, or a Bible quotation which differs from the authoritative texts, exhibits a *wirkliche Variante*, i.e. a true variant which is a remnant of a pristine text-tradition that had escaped the levelling influence of the official redactions. Inter-version variants may have resulted from the fact that the

[1] Similar ideas had been already presented *in statu nascendi* by A. Geiger. See e.g. his remarks on the Samaritan text in: *Nachgelassene Schriften*, IV (Berlin, 1876), 67.

individual versions finally crystallised at different stages of the textual transmission of the Old Testament. Variant quotations survived predominantly in texts which did not come under the scrutiny of the official revisers. They should be considered sediments of 'vulgar', i.e. popular traditions that had been in use before the introduction of each respective *textus receptus*.

VIII

It hardly needs stating that by virtue of its being the very antithesis to the *Ur-text* and the *Ur-recension* theses, Kahle's theory of 'vulgar texts and *textus receptus*' was from the outset rejected by the followers of Lagarde and Rosenmueller. But scholars who were inclined to embrace the new idea also called for the correction of some of its constituent elements. They fully recognised a diversity of the textual traditions of the Old Testament as already existing in the very first stages of its manuscriptal transmission—the point on which Kahle had based his arguments—and they accepted his attempt to account for this diversity by trying to retrace the steps of the textual development before the emergence of a standard text. It was nevertheless considered imperative to smooth out some features of his theory which had justifiably evoked criticism. Kahle had brought into clear focus the natural, uncontrolled transmission of the 'vulgar' traditions, thus freeing them from the rigidity of a conception which supposes the *Ur-text* or the *Ur-recension* to be scholarly creations. Yet he postulated that very same 'academic' setting for the Massoretic *textus receptus*. His presentation of the process by which this model text came about suffers from all the misconceptions which led the *Ur-text* thesis to postulate an abstract scholastic procedure—a procedure for which there is little evidence that it corresponded with socio-historical realities. His assumption that the *textus receptus* should be viewed as resulting from the concerted efforts of a rabbinic academy, especially that of Jamnia, and that its exclusive status was achieved by what amounts to a wholesale *auto-da-fé* of all diverging manuscripts, is neither substantiated by any historical evidence nor plausible. The emergence of the *textus receptus* should be conceived of as a protracted process which culminated in its *post factum* acclamation in the first or at the latest in the second century A.D., as has been stated previously.

Some of the opposition to the *Vulgärtexte* theory, when not attributable to dogmatic rather than rational, scholarly motives, probably has its roots in the reluctance of scholars to accept the bewildering 'disorderliness' implied by that thesis in place of the much more systematic theory of an *Ur-text*. But its impact on the issue under review was soon felt. As normally in scholarly discussion and evaluation, some novel intermediate theories were produced which, by way of synthesis, combined salient features of the opposing schools. It may be said that basically, the attempt was made to bring some method into the madness of the uncontrolled vulgar texts, and at the same time little was needed to square Kahle's *textus receptus* with Lagarde's Hebrew *Ur-text* or Rosenmueller's *Ur-recension*, all of which in fact were considered to be mirrored with some deviations in the present Massoretic text.

We shall consider here two propositions which purport to take into account the diversity of the actual textual traditions from the very moment at which they become known to us in manuscript form or in quotations in early post-biblical Jewish and Christian literature, and to avoid at the same time the disturbing diffuseness of the vulgar texts if seen as pristine independent traditions.

Setting out from Kahle's premises, and probing into the antecedents of the various text forms in which the Old Testament is extant, in Hebrew as well as in translations, and especially in Greek, A. Sperber attempted to reduce all versions in their variations to two basic textual traditions: one is supposedly derived from Judah and is represented most clearly by the Massoretic text; the other stems from Ephraim, and is best recognised in the Samaritan Hebrew Pentateuch. Both have their offshoots in the major Greek textual families, in manuscripts A and B.[1] The admitted initial dichotomy of the biblical text-tradition, carried back by Sperber's hypothesis into pre-exilic times, is fundamentally opposed to the 'one *Ur-recension*' and the 'one *Ur-text*' theories. The difference between one textual tradition and two is qualitative, and not merely quantitative. On the other hand Sperber invalidated to a high degree the originality of the 'vulgar texts', which Kahle had assumed, by presenting them as derivations from a preceding

[1] Sperber's criticism of the archetype theory may be found in his *Septuagintaprobleme* (Stuttgart, 1929). For a presentation of his own views see 'New Testament and Septuagint', *JBL*, LIX (1940), 193–293.

pristine textual tradition which diverged from the prototype of the present Massoretic text. Sperber further introduced into the discussion the idea of 'local traditions' which figures prominently in the most recent theory, yet to be described, perceiving in the Samaritan not merely the product of a late dissident Jewish group, but rather the best-preserved representative of a North-Israelite (namely Ephraimite) text type, and in the Massoretic text its South-Israelite (Judaean) counterpart.

In the same manner as Kahle had applied, as was suggested, Gunkel's exclusively literary concept of the 'Sitz im Leben' to the sphere of biblical textual history, so Sperber appears to have transferred to the study of the text the notion of a geographical dichotomy of the pentateuchal literature inherent in the sigla J and E which, according to some views, are taken to represent the Judaean–Jahwistic and the Ephraimite–Elohistic traditions respectively. At the same time he abandoned the evaluation of the diverse text types which is concomitant with Kahle's very terminology, 'vulgar texts' versus *textus receptus*, and repaired to a purely descriptive division of the extant representatives of the text.

S. Liebermann,[1] on the other hand, took up the qualitative differentiation between the witnesses to the text, applying it, however, not to 'textual traditions', but to types of manuscripts which were extant in the crucial period of the last one or two centuries B.C. and the first one or two centuries A.D. His division between manuscripts as 'base' (φαυλότερα), 'popular' (*vulgate* or κοινότερα) and 'excellent' (ἠκριβωμένα) also has some 'local' affiliations, since the first were supposedly unworthy copies found mainly in the hands of uneducated villagers, the second class was widely used in cities for study purposes, even in schools and rabbinic academies, whereas only the third type had binding force and was meticulously transmitted by the learned sages of Jerusalem. It goes without saying that only the latter group can be taken to represent faithfully the pristine text of scripture, whereas the others must be judged inferior, their variants being in the nature of secondary deviations. Here Lieberman, without stating so expressly, obviously presupposes the existence of some basic text of exclusive validity which is best mirrored in the manuscripts.

It is important, again in reference to later theories pertaining to the

[1] Cf. *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine.*

history of the text which are yet to be discussed, to put in relief Liebermann's threefold division of biblical manuscripts at the end of the Second Temple period, and the assumption that the three types were anchored and transmitted in different localities. One may also detect in his system a sociological dimension in so far as the above types are affiliated with different strata of Jewish society: illiterate or semi-illiterate country people on the one hand, and 'academicians' on the other hand, with an intermediate, less precisely delineated group including city dwellers of all kinds.

IX

At this stage of our investigation we turn to the presentation of some issues which have caused novel developments in the theories about the history of the text.

It was said above that the third phase in the early history of the text, which coincides approximately with the hellenistic and the early Roman period, i.e. the last three centuries B.C., must be considered crucial for our investigation. The final and complete transition from oral tradition to written transmission, the gradual canonisation of the books which were deemed holy, the emerging processes of translation of the Hebrew Bible into other languages, and the impact of hellenistic literary norms and techniques, make this stage the very centre of our inquiry.

To the above considerations must be added one other factor which looms very large in contemporary research into the issue under review. It necessitates, in fact, a reopening of the discussion on the history of the text, and a re-evaluation of theories which had been formed at the end of the nineteenth and in the first half of the twentieth century. We refer to the collection of manuscripts and fragments from the Judaean Desert, also known by the misnomer 'The Dead Sea Scrolls', which include numerous scrolls and thousands of fragments of biblical books. Since 1947 when the new finds were first reported, an incessant stream of discoveries, so far only published in part, illuminates that phase in the history of the text.

The above documents are of two groups, quite disparate from the standpoint both of chronology and of their sociological provenance. One group hails from Qumrân which is situated some five miles south of Jericho and two miles west of the shores of the Dead Sea. It precedes

the destruction of the Second Temple (A.D. 70)—so important an event for the textual history of the Old Testament—and derives from the dissident Jewish sect of the 'New Covenant'.[1] The other consists of scattered manuscript finds from the region to the south of Qumrân, Wadi Murabba'at (halfway between Jericho and 'Ein Gedi), Naḥal Ze'elim and Massada, and exhibits the textual tradition of what has been styled by G. F. Moore 'normative' Judaism.

The latter fragments, which date from the Bar-Kochba revolt (middle of the second century A.D.), do not shed much light on our problem because they provide evidence for only some sections of a few Old Testament books, and because they present a text which had already been almost wholly adjusted to the prevailing *textus receptus*.[2] These documents therefore do not bear on the phase of textual development at present under review. The biblical manuscripts from Qumrân, on the other hand, some of which are dated by scholars in the third and many in the second and first centuries B.C., have added a new dimension to the criticism of the biblical text and to the study of its history, both in the original Hebrew and in the earliest ancient versions, especially in Greek.[3] Some of these manuscripts are quite extensive. Thus in the case of the First Isaiah Scroll (1QIs^a), we have a virtually complete copy of the biblical book. This, like many other manuscripts from Qumrân, precedes the oldest extant manuscripts of any part of the Old Testament in the Hebrew Massoretic tradition by more than a millennium, and those in Greek or any other translation by several centuries. They are thus of unsurpassed importance for an investigation into the third phase of the history of the text, and into the processes of its transmission.

The new material often helps in elucidating the genesis and the history of individual variants in which one or more of the ancient versions differ from the Massoretic text. They also open up new possibilities for the recovery, or the reconstruction, of the factors which underlie textual variation. The sifting of these cases, their

[1] The reader will find a valuable summary of the literature and the ideology of this group in F. M. Cross, jun., *The Ancient Library of Qumrân* (revised edition, New York, 1961).

[2] See Y. Yadin, *The Finds from the Bar Kokhbah Period in the Cave of Letters* (Jerusalem, 1963).

[3] See D. Barthélemy, O.P., 'Les Devanciers d'Aquila', *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, X (Leiden, 1963).

classification, and a statistical assessment of the frequency of their appearance, may make possible the systematic presentation of the processes which can be proved empirically to have been conducive to the emergence of *variae lectiones*. The pertinent information gained from these first-hand sources, because of their scope and their primacy, should enable scholars to improve on previous attempts along these lines.

Prior to the discovery of the Qumrân Scrolls, observations on the skill and the peculiarities of the ancient copyists of the text could be inferred only from the analysis of variants which are found in medieval Hebrew manuscripts, or had to be abstracted from deviating translations in the ancient versions. With the pre-Christian Hebrew Scrolls from Qumrân at our disposal, we are now in a position to verify principles established by inference, and to put them to a practical test. The Scrolls afford us a completely new insight into ancient scribal craft and give us an unparalleled visual impression of the physical appearance of the manuscripts in which the biblical *variae lectiones* arose. We can now observe at close range, so to say *in situ*, scribal techniques of the Second Temple period which left their impression on the text in subsequent stages of its history. We can perceive the conditions which were the breeding ground of the variants that crop up in the extant witnesses to the text of the Old Testament.

There is nothing specifically sectarian in the external appearance of the Qumrân Scrolls, in the scribal customs to which their copyists adhered, or in the majority of the deviant readings found in them. The impression of dissent that goes with the biblical Scrolls from Qumrân derives from the secession of their scribes from normative Judaism, and has no roots in the manuscripts as such. That is to say, it must be attributed to the socio-historical processes which engulfed these Scrolls, but in no way to their textual or manuscript character. Genetically the biblical texts from Qumrân are 'Jewish'. They became 'sectarian' in their subsequent history.

What makes the evidence of the Scrolls especially valuable is the fact that they present not just a horizontal cross-section of one stabilised version, such as is the Massoretic *textus receptus*. Because of their diversity, the kaleidoscope of the textual traditions exhibited in them, their concurrence here with one, here with another of the known versions, or again in other cases their exclusive textual individuality,

the biblical manuscripts found at Qumrân, in their totality, present in a nutshell, as it were, the intricate and variegated problems of the Hebrew text and versions. The concentration of processes which obtain in the history of the text in a comparatively small corpus of manuscripts, small in comparison with the bulk of Hebrew (Massoretic and Samaritan), Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, Latin, etc., manuscripts which have to be sifted, collated and compared in the course of the critical work on the text—a corpus which moreover is relatively homogeneous with respect to time and provenance—make the Qumrân Scrolls an ideal subject for a study of these processes. Although the results gained from an analysis of the Qumrân material cannot be applied without qualification to the wider field of comparative research into the Massoretic text and the versions, we may derive from them certain working hypotheses which have then to be verified by application to the wider problem.

Thus the situation at Qumrân reflects on a basic issue in Old Testament textual research, namely the debated problem of the very establishment of a Hebrew *textus receptus*. The coexistence of diverse text-types in the numerically, geographically and temporally restricted Covenanters' community, the fact that some or most of the conflicting manuscripts had very probably been copied in the Qumrân scriptorium and that no obvious attempts at the suppression of divergent manuscripts or of individual variants can be discovered in that voluminous literature, proves beyond doubt that the very notion of an exclusive *textus receptus* had not yet taken root at Qumrân.

We have no reason to doubt that this 'liberal' attitude towards divergent textual traditions of the Old Testament prevailed also in 'normative' Jewish circles of the second and first centuries B.C. According to rabbinic testimony, even the model codices that were kept in the Temple precincts—the *'ăzārāh*—not only exhibited divergent readings, but represented conflicting text-types.[1] Phenomenologically speaking, the situation that prevailed in the *'ăzārāh* of the Temple may be compared, though with qualifications, with the one that obtained in the scriptorium at Qumrân. The difference consists in the fact that in the end the Temple codices were collated, probably in the first century A.D. and, what is more important, that rabbinic Judaism ultimately

[1] See S. Talmon, 'The Three Scrolls of the Law that were Found in the Temple Court', *Textus* (*Annual of the Hebrew University Bible Project*), II (1962), 14–27.

established a model text and strove to banish deviant manuscripts from circulation. But at this stage the comparability of Jewish 'normative' with Qumrân practice breaks down. The active life-span of the Covenanters' community ends some time in the first century B.C., although sporadic attempts at restoration have repercussions in the first and possibly into the second century A.D. However, even the latest manuscripts from Qumrân which provide evidence of the local history of the text in the crucial period, the last decades before the destruction of the Temple, do not give the slightest indication that even an incipient *textus receptus* emerged there, or that the very notion of a model recension was ever conceived by the Covenanters.

The coexistence of varying text forms of the Old Testament, and the absence of any noticeable attempt at establishing one universally recognised recension of binding force, must have confronted the Qumrân scribes with the problem of what attitude to take towards these conflicting textual traditions, which had not yet been assessed and evaluated. The individual scribe could solve this problem by adhering faithfully to the manuscript which he had chosen, or had been assigned, as the *Vorlage* for his own copy. In a reasonable number of instances he could perpetuate parallel readings which he found in other manuscripts that were at his disposal, by noting them in the margins or between the lines of his own copy, or sometimes by integrating them in his text-base, in which case he would create a double reading.[1] Now these devices, which were a common stock-in-trade of the ancient Bible scribes regardless of their socio-religious affiliations, are mere practical expedients that may work fairly well, up to a certain point, for the individual copyist, but cannot satisfactorily solve the problem of the community's disposition towards divergent, but equally well-documented, readings. In manuscripts which are intended for public use, critical annotations must be kept to a practical minimum. In fact, even these relatively few marginal entries will tend to disappear at subsequent copyings by sheer routine omission, unless they are absorbed into the text proper. Even where authoritative guidance is absent we may find a spontaneous tendency towards the simplification and the stabilisation of the textual traditions of scripture and other hallowed books. This process cannot be expected to culminate in

[1] See S. Talmon, 'Double Readings in the Massoretic Text', *Textus*, I (1960), 144–84.

complete unification but it will effectively circumscribe the scope, and reduce the number, of textual types which are allowed a continued existence until, if ever, conscious official redactional activities set in.

The impending gradual disappearance of variant readings, which on objective grounds could not be declared to be intrinsically inferior to those which happened to have taken root in the predominant textual traditions, may well have been viewed with misgivings by those concerned with the preservation of scripture. The practical advantage of acquiring a fairly standardised text-type for communal-cultic purposes was offset by an understandable apprehension for the—to all intents and purposes—irrecoverable loss of valid and venerated textual traditions of the biblical books, which perforce would result from the process outlined above. Contradictory as it may sound, such *pro* and *ante* deliberations seem to have produced diverse manuscript and non-manuscript techniques of variant preservation which helped to balance the scale which was tipped in favour of the text-tradition(s) that became increasingly predominant, to the exclusion and practically complete suppression of less favoured *variae lectiones*.

Here again, a comparison with attitudes and techniques that were current in other communities is in order. In rabbinic circles, the prevalence of such trends of thought may have been responsible for the perceptible latitude in the employment of the text in scholarly discussion which conspicuously contrasts with the unceasing efforts to establish an exclusive *textus receptus* for public worship and for official text-transmission. Whereas deviant readings were banned from the books which were earmarked for these latter categories, they were readily accepted and used as bases for midrashic exposition.[1] At times it appears that such an officially discarded variant was not employed merely as a convenient peg upon which to hang a midrash that was to hand, but rather that the midrash in question was constructed on a variant that had been barred from the *textus receptus*, in order to give it a non-manuscript lease of life. This supposition especially applies to the specific type of the '*al tiqrē*' midrash in which an established reading is suspended as it were, and another reading becomes the point of departure for an ensuing midrashic comment, by means of the introductory formula: 'do not read...but rather read...'. A famous case

[1] See S. Talmon, 'Aspects of the Textual Transmission of the Bible in the Light of Qumrân Manuscripts', *Textus*, IV (1964), 125–35.

in point is the *'al tiqrē'* midrash (Bab. Tal. Berakot 64*a*) which hinges on reading in Isa. 54: 13 *bōnayik* = 'thy builders', instead of *bānayik* = 'thy sons' (cf. τέκνα; Targum *bānāk*), a variant which now has turned up in 1QIs[a] as an emended reading *b[ō]naykī*. Similarly the midrash 'do not read (the flesh of) his arm but (the flesh of) his offspring' (Bab. Tal. Shab. 33*a*) can be anchored in the different text traditions of Isa. 9: 19. Here the Massoretic text (= 1QIs[a]) reading: 'they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm' = *zᵉr(ō)'ō* is abandoned for the variant reading *zar'ō* = 'his offspring' which underlies the Aramaic paraphrastic rendering: 'they shall plunder everyone the goods of his neighbour', and Symmachus' τοῦ πλησίον αὐτοῦ. Both readings were apparently conflated in the main stream of the Septuagint tradition: τοῦ βραχίονος τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ.

We do not mean that every extant *'al tiqrē'* midrash can be shown to have arisen from an already identifiable textual variant. This certainly is not the case. *Variae lectiones* which supposedly triggered off the emergence of many midrashim of this type have been lost for us together with the (suppressed) manuscripts which exhibited them. Moreover, this specific type of midrash progressively degenerated. The *'al tiqrē'* formula was then often employed even when the midrash in question could not be related to an actually extant reading, though this had originally been by definition a *sine qua non* requirement. Ultimately it became a mere exegetical *Spielelement*.[1] Conversely, the introductory formula of a genuine *'al tiqrē'* midrash was often dropped, so that now the same exposition is sometimes preserved both with and without that formula.

In a majority of cases the textual variations involved are of the simplest and most common types: interchange of graphically similar letters or of auricularly close consonants; haplography or dittography; continuous writing of separate words or division of one word into two; *plene* or defective spelling (as in the cases adduced above); metathesis; differences of vocalisation, sometimes entailing a change of verb conjugations. Some cases of more complicated textual phenomena do not materially affect the over-all impression.

The ambivalence of the request for a generally recognised standard

[1] See I. L. Seeligmann, 'Voraussetzungen der Midraschexegese', *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, 1. Congress Volume Copenhagen, 1953 (Leiden, 1953), 150–81, and III, 8 in the present volume.

text of scripture, and the concomitant apprehension over the resulting loss of possibly valuable readings, may have produced yet another technique of variant preservation in the early Church. The recording of different text-traditions in the parallel columns of Origen's *Hexapla* was a way out of this dilemma. On the one hand it ensured the continued preservation of probably widely accepted text forms. On the other hand, with the help of a system of critical symbols by which omissions or additions in the Greek in comparison with the Hebrew text could be indicated, the basis for the establishment of an officially acknowledged and critically guaranteed text was created. In this case, as also in the case of the rabbinic *'al tiqrē'* formula, the critical symbols were subsequently not properly recorded in copies made of or from Origen's work. This may have resulted simply from scribal carelessness. However, in view of our foregoing remarks it is reasonable to surmise that this apparently merely technical deficiency was helped along, so to say, by the postulated disinterestedness of the Church in the centuries after Origen in establishing one exclusive, binding text-tradition of scripture.

We seem to be able to discern three main types of technique intended to counterbalance the impact of standardisation which affected the textual transmission of the Old Testament in all its ramifications in various degrees of intensity and at various stages of its development:

(1) Internal manuscript notation of variant readings, either in the text-base, leading to the emergence of double-readings, or else in the margins, as exhibited, e.g., in the Qumrân Scrolls and probably also in some *qerē* readings in the Massoretic text.[1]

(2) The preservation of variant readings in parallel text-traditions. In its earliest form this technique may be observed in the retention of *variae lectiones* in parallel passages in the Former Prophets and Chronicles, etc., and from it may have been derived the basic idea which underlies Origen's *Hexapla*.

(3) Extra-manuscript preservation of variants in midrashic-homiletic exegesis.

X

The situation which obtains at Qumrân holds out one more possibility of comparison in respect of another aspect of the history of the text.

[1] See the chapter by B. J. Roberts (vol. 2, pp. 1–10).

In conformity with a basic characteristic of Second Commonwealth Judaism, the Covenanters' religious concepts were Bible-centred. Their original literary creations, such as the War-Scroll, the *Hōdayōt*, the Sectarian Manual, and the Zadokite Documents, swarm with verbatim Bible quotations, paraphrases and allusions. Their most fundamental beliefs and practices reflect the attempt to recapture, and typologically to re-live, biblical Judaism. This scriptural piety produced the *pēšer* technique,[1] so indicative of the Covenanters' system of Bible hermeneutics, by the aid of which biblical history was actualised, and made existentially meaningful. In this unceasing process of quotation, interpretation and adaptation, the text at Qumrân was exposed to a fate which is comparable to that which the *hebraica veritas* experienced on a wider scale in rabbinic Judaism and in the orbit of Jewish and Christian communities that had recourse to translations of the Hebrew original. The deliberate insertion of textual alterations into scripture for various reasons of style and dogma, the uncontrolled infiltration of haphazard changes due to linguistic peculiarities of copyists or to their characteristic concepts and ideas, which may be observed in the wider transmission of the text, have their counterparts in the 'Qumrân Bible'. The study of these phenomena at Qumrân is again facilitated by the comparative compactness of the material and by the decidedly more pronounced manner in which they are manifest. We thus encounter in the Qumrân writings developments of biblical text-transmission which may be considered prototypes of phenomena that emerge concurrently and subsequently in the text-history of the Old Testament in Jewish and Christian tradition, albeit in less concentrated form, and at different grades of variation.

That the sum total of the biblical documents from Qumrân may be seen to present the issue of the 'Massoretic text and the versions' in miniature, derives further support from one more characteristic of that material. The Qumrân manuscripts exhibit, as already stated, a basic homogeneity with regard to time and provenance. There are no grounds to doubt that these manuscripts were written in Palestine, and that a great majority, if not all, were copied at Qumrân. It may also be considered as established that, with the exception of some odd items, the bulk of the manuscripts in the Qumrân library was copied within a span of not much more than three hundred years, approxi-

[1] On the *pēšer*, cf. also pp. 225 ff.

mately from the beginning of the third century B.C. to the middle of the first century A.D. In view of these circumstances, the marked diversity of textual traditions which can be observed in these scrolls presumably derives from the temporal and/or geographical heterogeneity of the *Vorlagen* from which the Qumrân manuscripts, or some of them, were copied. Thus, in addition to the horizontal cross-section view of the text at Qumrân during the last phases of the Second Commonwealth period, this material also affords a vertical cross-section view of the transmission of the text, which reflects different chronological layers, geographical areas and social strata. These circumstances further enhance the similarity of the problems relating to the text at Qumrân with those appertaining to the wider issue of the relations of the Massoretic text and the versions and, therefore, give rise to new definitions of their historical development.

XI

Before presenting in detail the impact of the Judaean Desert Scrolls on existing theories of the text-history of the Old Testament and their importance for the formation of new theories, it may be useful to summarise the main conclusions which can be drawn from the material published up to the present.

(1) Different books of the Old Testament differ in their textual history and furnish different sets of problems. Restraint should therefore be exercised in subjecting textual processes observed in one book to an analysis which is based on the analogy of issues which obtain in another book. In the last resort, the textual development of almost each individual book must be viewed separately. Thus we can observe in the Hebrew tradition of the Pentateuch at Qumrân the same relative textual compactness, and the same relative sparseness of variant readings, which have already been pointed out in the Septuagint Pentateuch. On the other hand the extant copies of the book of Isaiah, and above all the complete First Isaiah Scroll (1QIs^a), present us with a veritable crop of *variae lectiones*. It has moreover become quite clear that, e.g., the book of Samuel and the book of Jeremiah were current at the time in clearly discernible deviant Hebrew text-traditions. All this goes to show that the text of these and similar books was still in a state of flux. Only a careful synopsis of the results achieved by a detailed analysis

of the individual books may ultimately lead to more general conclusions with regard to the over-all history of the Old Testament text.

(2) The Hebrew scrolls from Qumrân prove beyond doubt the actual existence of variant readings in the biblical books of the hellenistic and Roman periods which until their discovery had been beyond the scope of textual research proper. They have added a kaleidoscopic wealth of individual readings for practically all books of the Old Testament, represented in the Qumrân library whether by substantial manuscript finds or sometimes even by only small fragments. Some of these *variae lectiones* are to be found also in:

(*a*) the textual traditions of the main versions, in Hebrew or in translation;

(*b*) quotations in post-biblical writings (Apocrypha, early Christian, hellenistic-Jewish and rabbinic literature); and even

(*c*) medieval Hebrew manuscripts.

In view of the arguments presented earlier, we may assume a genetic relationship between Qumrân variants and identical or similar readings found in the first two sets of the above witnesses which precede the final stabilisation of the Hebrew text. As against this it is probable that the comparatively rare congruence of *variae lectiones* in the third group, i.e. in medieval Hebrew manuscripts or in medieval Jewish commentaries with Qumrân readings, is merely accidental. In most instances the similarity seems to have been caused by the equal but independent impact of the same scribal habits on widely separated sets of manuscripts.

(3) All the extant major versions of the Old Testament, as we know them today, are already represented in Qumrân manuscripts, not only in individual readings, but also in the form of prototypes of their textual traditions. This observation applies principally to the Hebrew Massoretic and the Samaritan (Pentateuch) versions, and to the Septuagint. But manifold affinities with the Aramaic Targums, the Syriac Peshitta, and in rare cases even with Jerome's comparatively late Vulgate (end of fourth century A.D.) can also be observed. It is self-evident that this circumstance will weigh heavily in the appreciation of the individual development of these sources and of their common history.

XII

In view of the foregoing presentation of the manuscript finds from Qumrân, it can hardly cause surprise that these discoveries required a reopening of the inquiry into the history of the Old Testament. The resulting scholarly discussion of this issue, and not a mere comparative textual research into the diverse versions, brought about a renewed confrontation of the rival theories of Rosenmueller in Lagarde's version of it, and of Kahle. On the one hand it was claimed with full justification that the presence of the prototype of the Massoretic text among the Qumrân manuscript finds, e.g. in fragments of the Pentateuch or the Second Isaiah Scroll (1QIs^b) and others, proved the existence of an early precursor of the *textus receptus* at a time which considerably preceded the date presupposed by the followers of the *Ur-recension* and the *Ur-text* schools. On the other hand it was argued that the 'vulgar texts' theory is fully vindicated by the host of textual variants and also of clearly discernible different textual traditions in the bulk of the Qumrân material. The stalemate that resulted from the *pro* and *contra* arguments which could now be buttressed by tangible evidence, unlike the situation which obtained in the stage of the discussion referred to above, again became the point of departure for the conception of a novel theory.

The foundations for a new interpretation of the available material were laid by W. F. Albright.[1] His ideas were soon embraced by a group of predominantly American scholars, and were further developed and succinctly summarised by F. M. Cross:

> Any reconstruction of the biblical text before the establishment of the traditional text in the first century A.D. must comprehend this evidence: the plurality of text-types, the limited number of distinct textual families, and the homogeneity of each of these textual families over several centuries of time. We are required by these data . . . to recognize the existence of *local texts* which developed in the main centers of Jewish life in the Persian and hellenistic age.[2]

[1] W. F. Albright, 'New Light on Early Recensions of the Hebrew Bible', *BASOR*, 140 (1955), 27–33.

[2] F. M. Cross, jun., 'The Contribution of the Qumrân Discoveries to the Study of the Biblical Text', *IEJ*, XVI (1966), 85. The author's preceding studies of this problem are listed in the notes to that article.

After at first accepting Albright's terminology, Cross is to be commended for subsequently introducing a significant change of terms into the system advocated by Albright who had referred to 'local recensions'. Says Cross:

> Against Albright, we should argue, however, that the local textual families in question are not properly called 'recensions'. They are the product of natural growth or development in the process of scribal transmission, not of conscious or controlled textual recension.[1]

These considerations are in line with the arguments presented above, and disclose a welcome recognition of the fallacy of the concept of a 'scholastic-academy recension', a concept which haunted practically all preceding theories about the history of the text. However, notwithstanding this difference, the 'local recensions' theory in its 'local texts' variation absorbed some prominent features of its predecessors which it built into its own system, as will be shown. The following quotation summarises the basic concepts of the new school:

> Three textual families appear to have developed slowly between the fifth and first centuries B.C., in Palestine, in Egypt, and in a third locality, presumably Babylon. The Palestinian family is characterized by conflation, glosses, synoptic additions and other evidence of intense scribal activity, and can be defined as 'expansionistic'. The Egyptian text-type is often but not always a full text. In the Pentateuch, for example, it has not suffered the extensive synoptic additions which mark the late Palestinian text, but is not so short or pristine as the third or Babylonian family. The Egyptian and Palestinian families are closely related. Early exemplars of the Palestinian text in the Former Prophets, and pentateuchal texts which reflect an early stage of the Palestinian tradition, so nearly merge with the Egyptian, that we are warranted in describing the Egyptian text-type as a branch of the Old Palestinian family. The Babylonian text-type when extant is a short text. Thus far it is only known in the Pentateuch and Former Prophets. In the Pentateuch it is a conservative, often pristine text, which shows relatively little expansion, and a few traces of revision and modernising. In the books of Samuel, on the contrary, it is a poor text, marked by extensive haplography and corruption.[2]

An analysis of the above quotation discloses the dependence of the 'local texts' theory on its predecessors. It may be described as a new synthesis, arrived at by sifting the major contentions of earlier views,

[1] *Ibid.* note 21. [2] *Ibid.* p. 86.

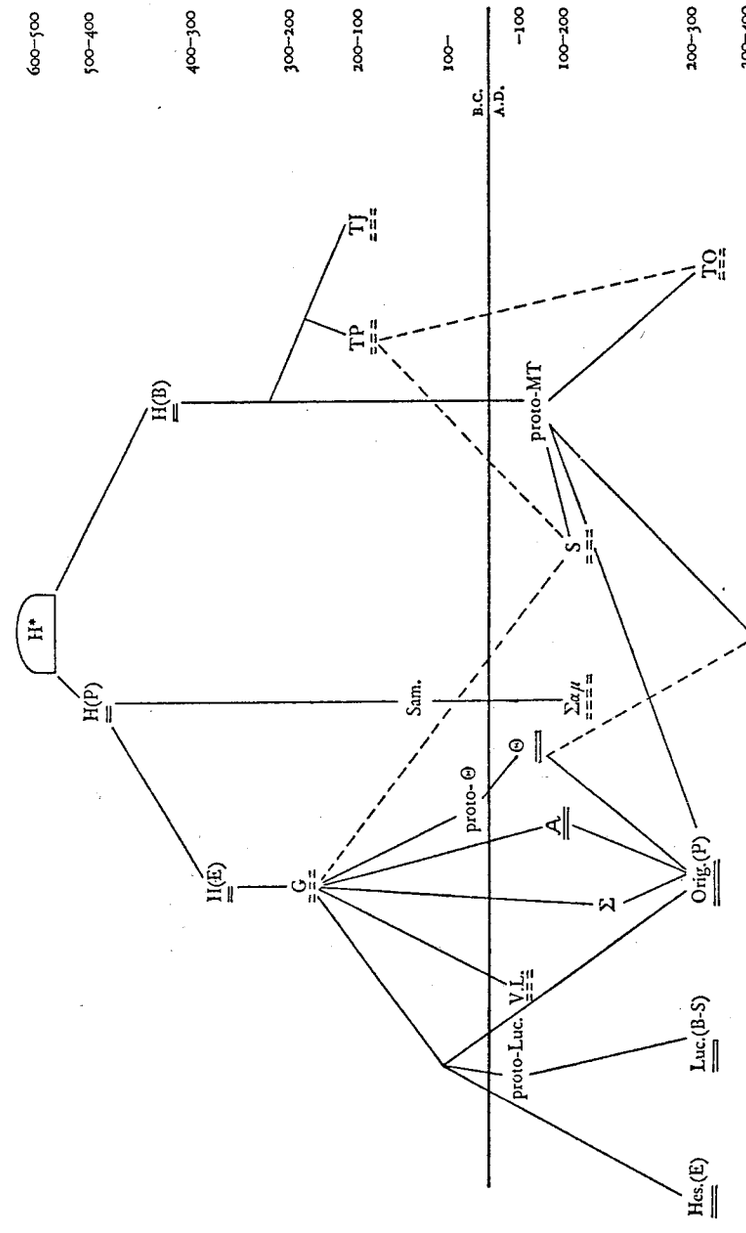

Fig. 1. The history of the Bible text before Origen on the basis of the local recensions theory

discarding some items and maintaining others, and subsequently welding them into a novel structure. It is interesting to remark that although initially the conceivers of the 'local recensions/texts' theory seemed to view themselves as being in line with the basic ideas of the Lagarde–Rosenmueller school, in later presentations of it no reference is made to the *Ur-text/Ur-recension* theory. The very concept of solidified textual traditions, however, whatever term may be applied to characterise them, is apparently tacitly accepted. Further, the assumption of *three* 'local recensions' or 'traditions' is not intrinsically opposed to the 'one recension/manuscript' theory. Of the presupposed three textual recensions or families, in fact only one, namely the Palestinian, has some claim to having been presented by the proponents of the 'three local texts' school as an independent, fairly clearly circumscribed entity, recognisable by specific textual peculiarities. The so-called 'Egyptian' text-type is regarded as derived from the Palestinian, and is presumed to have broken off from it at some time in the early fourth century to begin its independent development. The definition of the third family is not too clear either and its locale can be defined only as being 'presumably Babylon'. This text also obviously originated in Palestine, but had come into final form in Babylon in the sixth century. It is assumed that it had developed there during the interval between the fifth and the second centuries B.C., was reintroduced into Palestine some time after the Maccabean period, and by the end of the first century A.D. had established itself as the dominant or standard Jewish text.[1] Without stating it explicitly, the 'local texts' theory appears to presuppose the existence of an *Ur-text* in Palestine at some time before the Babylonian Exile from which the two major types, the Babylonian and the Palestinian, and the latter's derivative, the Egyptian, emerged at later stages in the post-exilic period. It appears that as a result of the now available material, which is several hundred years older than the material on which scholars of the 'pre-Qumrân' generations could base their arguments, the date of the implied *Ur-text* is also pushed back by some centuries.

In a way, the new theory in its major aspects also resembles Sperber's parallel-transmission system. Both assume different locales for the emergence of the different traditions: here post-exilic Palestine and Babylon; there pre-exilic North and South Palestine. Again we are

[1] *Ibid.* p. 91.

transported into the realm of purely hypothetical statements, arrived at by deductions and reconstructions which lack any material, i.e. manuscript, basis.

The very idea of 'local' texts underlies not only Sperber's 'two traditions' theory, but also the system of 'three manuscript types' elaborated by Lieberman, who had not only already posited a tripartition of the biblical textual tradition, but had also affiliated the diverse manuscript types with different types of localities, though in Palestine. One further point is to be noted, namely that the differentiation in value between a standard/received and a vulgar text, introduced into the discussion by Kahle, had been taken up with significant variations in Lieberman's distinction between 'inferior local school texts', 'Jerusalem vulgar manuscripts', and the 'most exact copies of the temple'. Such a value judgement is now applied again by Cross to characterise his three local families: the Palestinian text is conflate and expansionistic, the Egyptian is presented as a predominantly full text, and the Babylonian, in the main, as a short pristine tradition. The shortcomings of this characterisation become apparent when it is applied in detail to the textual tradition of different biblical books in the families thus distinguished. It then transpires that, as if refusing to submit to the scholar's natural quest for order, in the books of Samuel, for example, the Babylonian, somewhat unexpectedly, 'is a poor text, marked by extensive haplography and corruptions'.

One cannot help suspecting that the proposed tripartition of the Old Testament text tradition into a Palestinian, a Babylonian and an Egyptian family in some way echoes the widely accepted three-pronged transmission of the New Testament text in Palestinian, Antiochian (Syrian) and Egyptian versions. Though in itself such a transfer of theories is certainly permissible and could be constructive, it remains doubtful whether in the present case it can be justified in view of the differing attitudes which the Synagogue and the Church took towards the text transmission of their holy scriptures. It has been pointed out above that whereas the former strove gradually to abolish deviant readings and text-types, the latter, possibly because of its heterogeneous composition, attempted to accommodate the diverse traditions that had emerged in the main daughter churches. An unqualified application of a theory which arises from an investigation into the history of the New Testament text to the history of the Old Testament text perforce

results in a distortion of the issue and in yet-to-be-proved, or unprovable, hypotheses.

Summing up, we may say that in spite of its appeal the 'three local texts' theory cannot really explain satisfactorily the 'plurality of text-types' at the end of the pre-Christian era. It could indeed account for the 'limited number of distinct textual families' extant at that time. But one is inclined to attribute this feature of the text transmission to two factors: (*a*) historical vicissitudes which caused other textual families to disappear; (*b*) the necessary socio-religious conditions for the preservation of a text-tradition, namely its acceptance by a sociologically integrated and definable body. It is this latter aspect of the problem which safeguarded the preservation of the (proto-)Massoretic text which ultimately became the standard text of the Synagogue, the Samaritan Hebrew Pentateuch version which gained authoritative status in the Samaritan community, the Greek Bible that was hallowed by the Church, and the diverse textual traditions saved for us by the Judaean Desert Covenanters in a form from before standardisation. This tradition complex should be viewed as representing the remains of a yet more variegated transmission of the Old Testament books. Contradictory as it may sound, one is almost inclined to say that the question to be answered with regard to the history of the Old Testament text does not arise from the extant 'plurality of text-types' but rather from the disappearance of other and more numerous textual traditions.

These considerations do not necessarily call for an unqualified acceptance of Kahle's theory of a '*textus receptus* and vulgar texts' which, as already stated, suffers from the over-emphasis put on presupposed but unsubstantiated conscious, official redaction processes. All we can say is that from the very first stage of manuscript transmission of the Old Testament text the material which is available to us witnesses to a wide variety of textual traditions which seemingly mirror fairly exactly the state of affairs which obtained in the pre-manuscript state of transmission. In other words, the extant evidence imposes on us the conclusion that from the very first stage of its manuscript transmission, the Old Testament text was known in a variety of traditions which differed from each other to a greater or less degree. As a result of undirected, and possibly in part also of controlled, processes of elimination, the majority of these variations

went out of use. The remaining traditions achieved by and by the status of a *textus receptus* within the socio-religious communities which perpetuated them. These standardised texts were preserved for us in the major versions of the Hebrew Bible and its translations.