

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION AND ITS TEXTUAL PRINCIPLES IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS

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To appraise critically the *New International Version* (NIV) and its textual principles, especially in the book of Psalms, it is necessary to describe briefly its process of translation. In 1965 the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT) "that would eventually be granted final oversight over the published text of the resulting translation"¹ was formed. This committee is autonomous, self-perpetuating,² and restricted to fifteen members³ who subscribe to the ETS doctrinal basis or "some other comparable statement."⁴ In 1968 Edwin H. Palmer, a Christian Reformed Church pastor and theologian, was appointed executive secretary of the CBT, and a four-tiered system of subcommittees was formed. The CBT mandated that "those engaged in the work of translation shall not only possess the necessary requirements of scholarship, but they shall also look upon their labor as a sacred trust, honoring the Bible as the inspired Word of God."⁵ The first stage of translation of a given book was accomplished by two to four scholars. Copies of these translations were then distributed to several so-called Intermediate Editorial Committees (IEC), which usually consisted of five scholars, each with the assignment to improve the translation with special attention to exegetical matters. These copies in turn were distributed to one of several so-called General Editorial Committees (GEC), usually composed of seven scholars, to improve the translation with special attention to theology and style. Finally, on the fourth and final level, the translations were handed over to the CBT, which further refined them and which had final authority over the text. In each committee a simple majority decided the text. It is important to note here that all the committees were engaged in textual criticism.

I. THE NIV'S PRINCIPLES OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM

The CBT prepared two statements pertaining to its principles of textual criticism: a *Translator's Manual*, adopted in 1968, and its statement

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¹ R. Youngblood, "The New International Version Was Published in 1978—This Is the Story of Why, and How," *The Standard* (November 1988) 16.

² *Constitution of Committee on Bible Translation*, Article I, Section 2.

³ *Ibid.*, III, 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 3.

⁵ Position Paper of CBT, 1967.

in the preface of the *NIV*. The *Translator's Manual* says of the *NIV's* aim:

1. At every point the translation shall be faithful to the Word of God as represented by the most accurate text of the original languages of Scripture.
2. The translation shall reflect clearly the unity and harmony of the Spirit-inspired writings.

Of its principles regarding the text the *Manual* directs:

Translators shall employ the best published texts of the Hebrew and Greek with significant variants noted in the draft notes even though they may not necessarily be in the final printed product. Important text variations which are not adopted in the body of the work should be noted in the margin for consideration of higher committees.

In general the approach to textual matters should be restrained. The Massoretic O. T. text is not to be followed absolutely if a Septuagint or other reading is quite likely correct. All departures from the M. T. are to be noted by the translators in the margin.⁶

In the preface to the *NIV* we read:

For the Old Testament the standard Hebrew text, the Masoretic Text as published in the latest editions of *Biblia Hebraica*, was used throughout. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain material bearing on an earlier stage of the Hebrew text. They were consulted, as were the Samaritan Pentateuch and the ancient scribal traditions relating to textual changes. Sometimes a variant Hebrew reading in the margin of the Masoretic Text was followed instead of the text itself. Such instances, being variants within the Masoretic tradition, are not specified by footnotes. In rare cases, words in the consonantal text were divided differently from the way they appear in the Masoretic Text. Footnotes indicate this. The translators also consulted the more important early versions—the Septuagint; Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion; the Vulgate; the Syriac Peshitta; the Targums; and for the Psalms the *Juxta Hebraica* of Jerome. Readings from these versions were occasionally followed where the Masoretic Text seemed doubtful and where accepted principles of textual criticism showed that one or more of these textual witnesses appeared to provide the correct reading. Such instances are footnoted. Sometimes vowel letters and vowel signs did not, in the judgment of the translators, represent the correct vowels for the original consonantal text. Accordingly some words were read with a different set of vowels. These instances are usually not indicated by footnotes.

From these sources, validated and elaborated upon by my own involvement in the IEC, the GEC, and the CBT, the following principles can be deduced.

1. *Committees decide the text.* Instead of setting forth principles of textual criticism such as those enunciated by E. Würthwein,⁷ the artistic nature of textual criticism was tacitly recognized and it was left to the

⁶ *Translator's Manual*, 1968.

⁷ E. Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1973) 116–117.

translator to bring to the task his own understanding of "accepted principles of textual criticism" that would lead to establishing the "best text," "the correct reading," "the most accurate reading." Through argumentation in committees it was hoped that the best text would emerge. Instructively, "significant" variants were handed up through the committee process so that "higher committees" could "retaste" the textual decisions of lower ones and decide the text autonomously. Most brought to the task those principles found in Würthwein, as will be validated.

2. *Be restrained.* The CBT did not elaborate what it meant by "restrained" in the *Manual*. Once again, the subjectivity of textual criticism was implicitly recognized. Let me, if you will, clarify the term from experience.

First, it entailed an acceptance of Würthwein's first principle: When "MT and all other witnesses preserve a text which is unobjectionable, which makes sense, and has been preserved without a variant . . . we may naturally assume that the original text has been preserved by the tradition, and that it should be accepted implicitly." He comments: "It may seem strange that this point requires statement here, because it seems so obvious. But any one acquainted with the history of Old Testament scholarship will not consider it unnecessary." I know of no exceptions to this rule.

Second, it also entailed Würthwein's second principle that when "MT preserves a reading which is either probably or certainly original, while the variants supported by the other witnesses are secondary (misreadings, misunderstandings, intentional or unconscious corrections); here MT is to be followed." Here is one, the first of many examples of this rule in the book of Psalms, that could be mentioned. In Ps 1:5 the LXX *en boulei* may mean "in the council" and represent *ba^cāšat* instead of MT *ba^cādat* because *boule* frequently represents *ēšā*, which according to Von Roland Bergmeier⁸ means in postexilic Hebrew "council," and never elsewhere *ēdā*. But the notion that a "council of the righteous" will decide the fate of the wicked, while it may be appropriate among the Essenes, is not appropriate for the OT. To adopt this text and interpretation, I submit, would not be a "restrained" approach.

Third, it also entailed Würthwein's third principle that when the "MT and other written witnesses support different but apparently equally possible or plausible readings, none of which is either clearly or even probably secondary, generally MT would be given preference here as a matter of basic principle." The NIV's respect for the MT, especially its consonants, can be seen in the instruction "all departures from the M.T. are to be noted by translators in the margin" and in the statement that deviations from the MT "are footnoted." For example, in Ps 49:13 the MT has *bal-yālîn*, "he does not endure," but the LXX (48:13) has *ou synēken*, "he does not understand," probably representing a Hebrew *Vorlage* *lô^c/bal yābîn*,

⁸ Von Roland Bergmeier, "Zum Ausdruck *št rš^cym* in Ps 1:1; Hi 10:3; 21:16 und 22:18," ZAW 79 (1967) 229-232.

the same as in 49:20 (Hebrew 49:21; LXX 48:21), where MT also reads *lô⁹ yābîn*. On the one hand, one could decide the text in favor of the LXX by noting that refrains are frequently repeated in Hebrew poetry for emphasis and by arguing that after the introduction in 49:1-4, the refrain "he does not understand" was repeated in the middle and end verses to emphasize the Psalm's teaching that the rich man does not understand. On the other hand, one could argue in favor of the MT by contending that the poet intended by the slight variation to teach both that the rich man does not endure and also that he does not understand. The NIV text (but see its footnote) opted for the MT. This principle was much more applicable to the MT's consonants than to its vocalization (see principle no. 4 below).

Fourth, the principle of approaching the text with "restraint," however, did not rule out conjecture altogether. For example, in 51:17 (Hebrew 51:19), although all texts and versions read *zibhê ʿēlōhîm rūaḥ nišbārâ*, "sacrifice(s) to God is a broken spirit," the NIV suggests in a note that the text be repointed and read *zibhî ʿēlōhîm rūaḥ nišbārâ*, "My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit," because the rest of the Psalm is in the "I-Thou" form even as in the parallel, "A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise," and because the plural subject with a singular predicate nominative of the received text is unlikely. In 73:4, although all texts and versions read *lēmôtām*, "with reference to their death," the NIV text (but see footnote) redivides the word into *lāmô tām*, connecting *lāmô*, "to them," with 73:4a and *tām*, "whole," with 73:4b with the resulting literalistic translation "[There are no struggles] to them; [their bodies are] whole [and fat]" = "They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong." Conjectures of this sort, however, are rare and mostly involve the MT's vocalization and word divisions (see principle no. 4 below).

Let me take this opportunity to caution anyone against reconstructing the NIV's *Vorlage* without bringing to the task the same degree of sophistication concerning Hebrew grammar as that of the translators. For example, it may appear that in 3:8b by rendering the perfective *kî-hikkîṭâ*, "surely strike" (cf. LXX *hoti sy epataxas*, "you have smitten"; Vg *percussisti*, "you strike"), the NIV emended the perfective to an imperative form in order to conform with the parallels *qûmâ. . . ḥôšîʿenî*, "Arise! . . . Save!" In fact, however, it was interpreted as a precative perfect.⁹ The NIV also seems often to emend pronouns. Rather, recognizing that shift of persons is perfectly acceptable in Hebrew style but not in English style, the translators smoothed out the disagreements, usually not indicating them in footnotes.¹⁰

⁹ B. K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989) 30.5.4.

¹⁰ James Lindenberger pointed out to the writer changes from third to first person in the recently published inscription (c. ninth century) from Tell Fekheriyeh (A. Abou Assaf, P. Bordreuil and A. R. Millard, *La statue de Tell Fekheriyeh et son inscription bilingue assyro-araméenne* [Recherche sur les civilisations, Cahier 7; Paris: A.D.P.F., 1982]. Lindenberger adds: "An index of the stylistic freedom with which such shifts are made is the fact that the first

3. *Treat neutrally ketib-qere readings.* The NIV's impartiality toward *ketib-qere* is reflected in its statement that variants of this sort "are not specified by footnotes." Nevertheless in 100:3, where the NIV adopts *qere* *lô ʾānaḥnû*, "we are his," rather than *ketib* *lô ʾānaḥnû*, presumably because it is better Hebrew and forms a better parallel with "we are his people, the sheep of his pasture," it represents *ketib* in the footnote: "not we ourselves." The note may be due to the familiarity of the passage or to uncertainty as to which reading to prefer.

4. *Be more restrained with the MT's consonants than with its pointing.* That most of the translators were less restrained in emending the MT's vocalization than its consonants is reflected in the statement that when "some words were read with a different set of vowels . . . these instances are usually not indicated by footnotes." This happened relatively often. For example, the vocalization of the MT in 2:7, "I will declare the decree. The Lord . . .," is changed to "I will declare the decree of the Lord."

5. *Do not follow the MT slavishly.* Translators mostly followed the instruction: "The Massoretic O.T. text is not to be followed absolutely if a Septuagint or other reading is quite likely correct." The footnotes in the NIV bear this out. This principle is the same as Würthwein's rule that when "the text of the MT is doubtful or impossible on linguistic or contextual grounds, while other witnesses offer a satisfactory reading . . . if evidence for the originality of the latter is available, and especially if the reading of the MT is demonstrably a corruption of it, then the text of MT should certainly be corrected by it."¹¹ In 145:5, having emended the MT *wēdibrê*, "and words of," by QL, presumably *yēdabbērû*, "they will speak" (cf. LXX *lalēsousin*), NIV reads: "They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works," instead of the MT: "I will meditate on the glorious splendor of your majesty and on your wonderful works." In 144:2 "peoples" (Hebrew *ʿammîm*) of Aquila, Syr, Tg, and QL was preferred over *ʿammî*, "my people," of the MT and the LXX.¹²

6. *Reject lectio faciliior.* By "accepted principles of textual criticism" the CBT probably had in mind as foremost: "Of two readings the one which best explains the development of the other is to be preferred."¹³ In practice the rule of preferring the reading that is more difficult from the viewpoint of language and subject matter (*lectio difficilior*) was not much used because often a text, especially in the MT, is too difficult. In 19:4 the

change of persons in the Fekheriyeh text does not take place at exactly the same point in the Akkadian and Aramaic versions."

¹¹ Würthwein, *Text* 116.

¹² The writer is assuming that *ʿammîm* in many medieval Hebrew MSS is a secondary correction, perhaps assisted by Ps 18:48.

¹³ Würthwein, *Text* 116 sub (b) (ii).

NIV follows the LXX, the Vg and the Syr, "their voice," representing Hebrew *qôlām*, rather than the MT *qawwām*, "their line" (cf. *NIV* footnote), because "voice" makes a better parallel with "words" and because an original *qwl̄m* could have easily been corrupted into *qwm* by haplography, a common error in the MT. In 73:7 the *NIV* follows the Syr (cf. the LXX *hē adikia autōn*) and reads *ʿāwōnāmō*, "their iniquity," instead of the MT *ʿênēmō*, "their eyes," and interprets *mēheleb*, "from fat" (cf. the Syr "from grease"), as a metonymy for "from their fat(tened hearts)" (= stubbornness; cf. 17:10; 119:7), achieving, from the viewpoint of the context and Hebrew grammar, the better sense "from their callous hearts comes iniquity" than "their eyes stand out from fatness" (cf. *NIV* footnote). The MT probably arose from the ease of reading *waw* as *yod* and from the necessity to facilitate sense with the difficult figure involving "fat."

7. *Harmonize texts involving ambiguity.* In order to achieve its aim, "the translation shall reflect clearly the unity and harmony of the Spirit-inspired writings," the *NIV* employed the principle of harmonizing texts in cases of equally possible readings. For example, in 2:9 the *NIV* rejects the MT *tērōʿēm*, "you shall break," in favor of the LXX *poimaneis*, the Vg *reges*, Jerome *pascēs* = *tirʿēm*, "you shall shepherd/destroy"—even though the MT is the more unusual reading and probably constitutes a better parallel with *tēnappēšēm*, "you shall shatter"—because *tirʿēm* is found in Rev 12:5; 19:15 and a case can be made for it.¹⁴

8. *Declare some readings non liquet* ("unsolved"). Although not stated in the *Manual* or the *NIV* preface, in cases when the MT and other witnesses fail to provide a reading that is linguistically or contextually probable or even possible and a conjecture seemed too uncertain, the translators rendered the reading as best they could but noted in the footnote that the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain (cf. 58:9).

II. CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF PRINCIPLES

I will now appraise the principles in the order presented above.

1. *Regarding principle no. 1.* I can testify to the wisdom of the first principle from experience. Often I had to change my mind about the text in light of the argumentation. In fact, sometimes having voted with the minority, upon reflection I later realized that the majority were right. Of course I would not be worth my salt if sometimes I did not continue to disagree with the majority, as in the case of 2:9 cited above.

On the other hand, I question the wisdom of allowing "higher" committees to override the work of "lower" ones by a simple majority. "Higher" in this context means "in authority," as in government, not "in competence," as in education. Sometimes a text was overruled. Moreover, it

¹⁴ Cf. S. L. Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980) 9–20.

was extremely helpful when full data supporting a decision was passed up to the higher committees. This should have been done more consistently.

2. *Regarding principle no. 2.* Essentially, I endorse the principle of restraint. A translation is not the proper genre for testing out new ideas; they belong in the learned journals. I suggest that normally a new interpretation of a passage should not be preferred over the traditional until it has been tested and proven for at least a decade or more. For example, it seems that the *NIV* accepted too quickly a conjecture proposed for Prov 26:23. That verse reports: "Burning lips and an evil mind (*lēb*) are *ksp sygy*m poured out over earthenware," where the MT has *kesep sigīm* "silver (of?) dross." Some decades ago H. L. Ginsberg proposed reading *kpspg(y)m*, "like glaze," citing Ugaritic *spsg*, a word not attested in Hebrew. The tradition, he argued, that eventuated in the MT was influenced by the close association of *ksp* and *sygy*m in several other passages (Isa 1:22, Ezek 22:18, and above all Prov 25:4) and so reduplicated and revocalized the phrase. The *NIV*, following the conjecture, reads: "Like a coating of glaze over earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart." But the conjecture has now been questioned on the basis of external evidence by M. Dietrich, O. Loretz and J. Sanmartin.¹⁵

On the other hand, I also suggest that in cases of equally possible readings, modern textual critics need to work with the possibility of more than one original text.¹⁶ For example, in Ps 1:3 *wēkōl ʾāšer-yaʿāšeh yašliah*, "and whatever he does shall prosper," although attested in all texts and versions, is probably a gloss. Nevertheless I would retain it as a viable alternative "original text."

3. *Regarding principle no. 3.* I unequivocally support the opinion that *ketib-qere* should be treated indifferently.

4. *Regarding principle no. 4.* While agreeing that the MT's consonants were more conservatively preserved than its vocalization, I think that the *NIV* could have been more restrained with regard to the MT vocalization and that variations from its accents and vowels should have been represented by footnotes. I will first defend its vowels, relying heavily upon studies by James Barr,¹⁷ and then its accents.¹⁸

On the labors that culminated in the Tiberian MSS, consider a Talmudic passage that evinces concern for accuracy:

It is written: "For Joab and all Israel remained there until he had cut of every male in Edom [1 Kgs 11:16]." When Joab came before David, David said to him, "Why have you acted thus?" He replied, "Because it is written,

¹⁵ M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartin, "Die angebliche ug.-he. Parallel *spsg/sps(j)g(jm)*," *UF* 8 (1976) 37-40. For a similar case involving 2 Sam 1:21 see M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980) 231.

¹⁶ B. Waltke, "Goals of Textual Criticism," *WTJ* 51 (1989).

¹⁷ J. Barr, *Comparative Semitic Grammar and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968) 207-222.

¹⁸ This discussion is lifted from Waltke and O'Connor, *Introduction* 1.6.2-3.

"Thou shalt blot out the males [*zēkār*] of Amalek [Deut 25:19]." David said, "But *we* read, 'the remembrance [*zēker*, with MT] of Amalek.'" He replied, "I was taught to say *zēkār*." He [Joab] then went to his teacher and asked, "How did you teach me to read?" He replied, "*zēkār*." Thereupon Joab drew his sword and threatened to kill him. "Why are you doing that?" asked the teacher. He replied, "Because it is written, 'Cursed be he that does the work of the Law negligently.'" ¹⁹

A complex body of evidence indicates that the MT could not, in any serious or systematic way, represent a reconstruction or faking of the data. The first clue that the Masoretes and their predecessors were preservers and not innovators lies in the history of Hebrew. By the time of the Qumran community, Biblical Hebrew was no longer a spoken language; Mishnaic Hebrew and Aramaic were the vernaculars of Palestine. The scribes were dealing with linguistic material they understood well but could use with no more spontaneity than we can speak the English of the Tudor-Stuart period.

Some of the later ancient students of Scripture are careful enough with the Biblical text to preserve signs that they were dealing with a text close to the MT. Aquila (c. A.D. 120) writes a barbaric Greek that reflects the Hebrew as closely as possible. In this farrago he often supplies Hebrew words and forms in a vocalization close to that of the MT (except for the segholates); even rare words are given in forms close to those of the MT.

Jerome (346–420) is another careful student of the Hebrew text of his own time, not out of the pious textual conservatism of Aquila but rather out of philological zeal: "Almost from the very cradle," he tells us, "I have spent my time among grammarians and rhetoricians and philosophers."²⁰ Jerome's work, most of it carried out after he learned Hebrew, supports the MT. Most impressive here is the contrast between Jerome's earlier version of the Psalter, based on the LXX, and the later one, based on the Hebrew. Often the LXX represents the same consonantal text as the MT but not the same vocalization.

Consider Ps 102:24–25a. The consonants of MT are: *bdrk khw* [*qere khy*] *nh / qsr ymy: mr ly*. At Ps 101:24 the LXX reads: "He replied to him in the way of his force: The fewness of my days report to me." Jerome renders this verse in the Gallican Psalter as follows: "Respondit ei in via virtutis suae: Paucitatem dierum meorum nuntia mihi." These two versions reflect a Hebrew text like this one, taking the last two words of the first line as a construct chain: *bēderek kōhō ʿanā[ʾ] / qōser yāmāy ʿēmōr ʿēlāy*. In his later Psalter, *Juxta Hebraeos*, Jerome renders: "Adfixiti via fortitudinem meam / abbreviat dies meos / Dicam Deus meus. . . ." ("He broke my strength on the way, / he cut short my days. / I said, My God. . .") This version corresponds to the MT: *badderek kōhī ʿinnā / qīṣṣar yāmāy / ʿōmar ʿēlī*. The LXX text differs from the MT in (1) reading

¹⁹ See b. B. Bat. 21a–b; cf. Barr, *Comparative Philology* 213–214.

²⁰ Quoted in H. F. D. Sparks, "Jerome as Biblical Scholar," in *Cambridge History of the Bible* (ed. Ackroyd and Evans), 1. 526.

‘*nh* (*qal*), “to answer,” rather than ‘*nh* (*piel*), “to humble”; (2) taking *bdrk khy/w* as a construct; (3) the vocalization of *qsr*, ‘*mr* and ‘*ly*; and (4) the division of the poetic lines. Our point here is not that the MT and Jerome are correct, though they probably are (cf. *NIV*), but that they agree. The erratic and often improbable LXX vocalization of the MT suggests that it was the Alexandrian Jews who did not possess an entirely fixed or reliable tradition of vocalization.

In addition to ancient evidence for the general validity of the MT there is modern evidence, both systematic and incidental. On the whole the grammar of the MT admirably fits the framework of Semitic philology, and this fact certifies the work of the Masoretes. When in the 1930s Paul Kahle announced his theory that the Masoretes made massive innovations, Gotthelf Bergsträsser sarcastically observed that they must have read Carl Brockelmann’s comparative Semitic grammar to have come up with forms so thoroughly in line with historical reconstructions.²¹

Further, there are numerous individual patterns of deviation within the MT that reflect ancient phonological and morphological features of Hebrew known from other sources, and numerous isolated oddities in the MT have been confirmed by materials unearthed only in this century. The MT has nearly always the form *kēmōš* (Chemosh), in agreement with the bulk of extra-Biblical (mostly onomastic) evidence from the Iron Age, but the *ketib* of Jer 48:7 has *kmyš* (*kēmīš*), apparently agreeing with the Ebla texts, which know this god as Kamish.²²

Bo Johnson in his study of the Hebrew verbal system as it is preserved in the MT came to favor the text’s reliability.

One can say . . . that the objections against the reliability of the Masoretic text could be important in individual cases, but they do not bring the verbal system as such into question. Even if a closer investigation indicates that the text has undergone certain developments or general editing, the verbal system as such—as it has been preserved in the Masoretic text and to be sure in its vocalized form—could not seriously be called into question.²³

The evidence shows that the language of the MT represents the grammar of the Hebrew used during the Biblical period. My stand toward the vocalization of MT is not skepticism but cautious confidence.

So important is the accentuation of Hebrew grammar for understanding that medieval Jewish sources paid more attention to it than to establishing the correct pronunciation of words.²⁴ The accent signs in the MT, like the vowels, also preserve a tradition. The Talmud mentions “the stops of the *tē‘āmim*,” which were learned as a normal part of learning

²¹ Barr, *Comparative Philology* 217; cf. C. Rabin, “Hebrew,” *Current Trends in Linguistics*. Vol. 6: *Linguistics in South West Asia and North Africa* (ed. T. A. Sebeok et al.; The Hague: Mouton, 1970) 306.

²² See G. Pettinato, *The Archives of Ebla* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981) 245, 291–292.

²³ B. Johnson, *Hebräisches Perfekt und Imperfekt mit vorangehendem we* (Lund: Gleerup, 1979) 23.

²⁴ E. J. Revell, “Biblical Punctuation and Chant in the Second Temple Period,” *JSJ* 7 (1976) 181.

the text.²⁵ According to S. Morag some punctuation signs were added to the text before vowel signs were,²⁶ and E. J. Revell suggests that the punctuation was the first feature after the consonantal text to become stabilized in the Jewish Biblical tradition.²⁷ Revell found the oldest evidence for the Hebrew accent system in the spacing of R (a second-century-B.C. Greek text bridging the LXX to the proto-MT), which corresponds almost exactly with the accents in the Hebrew Bible.²⁸ Nevertheless, Morag's striking study of the reading traditions of the Yemenite Jewish community also reopens the question of the validity of the Masoretic system of pauses in intoning the text.²⁹ The variety of pronunciations among various Jewish communities signals that caution must be used in absolutizing any one accentual system, though the extreme neglect of traditional philology is not justified. At present it is best to consider the accents as an early and relatively reliable witness to a correct interpretation of the text.

5. *Regarding principle no. 5.* Unless one is a Masoretic fundamentalist, there is every reason to adopt this principle.

6. *Regarding principle no. 6.* I find the principle of rejecting the *lectio faciliior* reading to be the most important canon of textual criticism. I also find the rule of accepting the *lectio difficilior* very useful when combined with the notion that it is also a satisfying reading.

7. *Regarding principle no. 7.* While I treasure the unity of Scripture, in my judgment it should not be an aim in translation. Even worse are those translations that aim, perhaps unconsciously, to pit Scripture against Scripture. Rather, I suggest that the Scriptures should be allowed to breathe on their own by following other accepted canons of textual criticism, and then they will give forth the fragrance of both their diversity and unity. If the *NIV* had not consciously aimed to "reflect clearly the unity and harmony of the Spirit-inspired writings," the LXX of Ps 2:9 would probably not have been followed. Fortunately, readings of this sort are rare.

8. *Regarding principle no. 8.* I endorse the principle that in the case of an unresolved reading translators should give it their best shot but note in the footnote that the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. This procedure is fair both to the text and the audience. With reference to the text, it is honest; with reference to the audience, it offers them something better than nothing or than that they could privately infer.

²⁵ I. Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah* (Masoretic Studies 5; ed. E. J. Revell; Chico: Scholars, 1980) 157-160.

²⁶ S. Morag cited by Revell, "Punctuation" 181.

²⁷ Revell, "Punctuation" 181.

²⁸ There are also important data from Qumran; see E. J. Revell, "The Oldest Evidence for the Hebrew Accent System," *BJRL* 54 (1971-72) 214-222.

²⁹ S. Morag, "Pronunciations of Hebrew," *EncJud*, 13. 112-145; cf. Barr, *Comparative Philology* 217.