mainly in making its meaning explicit by introducing some analytical language into the message we want to transmit. But our technique may mar the Bible's analogical language and make it less therapeutic. Once we recognize that our explanations appeal to the left part of our readers' brains whilst the evangelists wanted their audiences to change, rather than to know, we have to ask ourselves whether our transpositions are dynamic and equivalent enough. I believe that we should revise the Good News Bibles to make them more dynamic and more equivalent, to give them a better chance to let the language of change speak.

I am often asked: "Why do you think the Bible is so important?" My first answer so far has been: "Because of the experience of many generations of Jews and Christians, that it works for their good!" But I may now add a less pragmatic remark: "Because it is for the healing of the nations".

RAIJA SOLLAMO

THE SOURCE TEXT FOR THE TRANSLATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT[1]

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The Finnish Committee for Bible Translation started its work in 1973, and produced an Interim Report in 1975. This article, which is partly based on this report, describes the principles followed by the Finnish committee in assessing the value of the standard Hebrew text of the Old Testament, known as the Masoretic Text (MT). It also illustrates these principles, with special reference to the Book of Joshua, with which the committee was concerned at the time this article was written.

There are two textual difficulties which often affect the Old Testament much more than the New.

The first is the length of time which separates the original writing of the Old Testament from the final Masoretic Text. At its greatest, this period extends to about two thousand years. In spite of this, we have for most of the Old Testament only one text form, namely MT. Besides MT, we can only make use of translations, which seem to be based on a text form partially diverging from MT.

The second difficulty is that the language of the Old Testament is no longer perfectly known; for instance, the meaning of many uncommon words remains obscure. There are in MT many places which are extremely problematical to translate, either because our philological knowledge is unsatisfactory or because the texts as it stands is unintelligible, supposedly because of one or more mistakes made during repeated copying. Two examples may be quoted among others.

Gen 4.8 wayyō'mer qayin 'el-hebel 'āḥīw / wayyᵉhī bihyōtām baśśādeh "and Cain said to Abel his brother/ and it happened, when they were in the field . . ."

Suggested correction: / add with Sam LXX Pesh Vulg *nēlᵉkā baśśādeh* "let us go to the field", cf. Targ JJII. The Finnish translation adds Cain's words to Abel,

[1] This article is a revised version of a paper read at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in March 1985.

following the Samaritan Pentateuch and LXX. Without this addition the translation would be unintelligible.

Is 9.2 hirbītā haggōy lō' higdaltā haśśimhāh ("you have multiplied the nation, you have not increased the joy"). Suggested correction: *hirbītā haggīlāh higdaltā haśśimhāh* ("you have multiplied the joy, you have increased the delight").

The Finnish translators have accepted the correction suggested by the editor, even though it has no support either in Hebrew manuscripts or in ancient translations. The present Church Bible translated "You multiply the nation, you give it great joy", but the new translation proposes: "You multiply the joy, you give great delight."

In general, however, we try to avoid corrections which have no support either in manuscripts or in ancient translations. This holds true in particular with regard to the Minor Prophets, since in these books MT is full of difficulties, and many conjectures have been made in an attempt to resolve them.

In theory it is appropriate to divide the textual history of the Hebrew Old Testament into four stages[2]:

1 The oldest written texts (e.g. individual Psalms and prophetic oracles).
2 Finally complied and edited texts (e.g. the Book of Psalms, the prophetic books).
3 The consonantal text approved by Jewish scholars after 70 A.D.
4 The Masoretic Text with vocalisation and punctuation.

Formerly, MT, representing the fourth stage of the textual history, was usually taken as the source text for the translation. This principle, which at first seems quite clear, is in reality often of merely theoretical value. Different translations, all supposedly based on MT, often understand it in different ways[3]. The aim nowadays is therefore to use the second stage as the source text for the translation. There is no reason to aim for the first stage, because then literary criticism would be needed, the Bible would have to be broken up into pieces, and even so we should reach only a totally hypothetical source text. Even the reconstruction of the second stage is full of difficulties, and it will never succeed perfectly. Under these circumstances, all we can do in practice is to translate MT (stage 4) wherever it is firm, and there is no real reason to suppose that it contains mistakes. On most occasions, MT does give a satisfactory text. Now and then mistakes occur in the vocalisation, but a meaningful translation can be based on the consonantal text. The use of the consonantal text implies going back from the fourth stage to the third, which then becomes the source text for translation.

Often, however, it is generally agreed that the consonantal text is not intelligible either. In these cases the ancient translations can be consulted, as the following examples illustrate.

Josh 12.23 melek-gōyīm[b] *l*[e]*gilgāl*[c] ("the king of the nations of Gilgal")

[b] LXX* Geei [c] LXX* tēs Galilaias *(= laggālīl* in Hebrew). Rahlfs: basilea Goim tēs Galilaias.

[2] See HOTTP vii-viii.

[3] B. Albrektson, "Textual Criticism and the textual basis of a translation of the Old Testament"; TBT 26 (1975) 314-324.

Our translation group has accepted the LXX reading and translated "the king of Goiim in Galilee". This correction is also accepted by Barthélemy and many commentators, including Noth, Soggin, Steuernagel, and Gray, and appears in most modern translations including TEV, Einheitsübersetzung, and Die Gute Nachricht. The Norwegians translate "the king of the nations in Galilee", and NEB has "the king of Gaiam-in-Galilee". TOB goes its own way in rendering "the king of Goiim near Gilgal" (le roi de Goïm, près de Guilgal). "The nations of Gilgal" does not make any sense to modern interpreters, since Gilgal was a very small city, and far away from the other places mentioned in the list of the kings. Several commentators, including Noth, Soggin, Gray, and Simons, consider that this Goiim must be identified with *Ḥaroshet-ha-Goiim* mentioned in Josh 4.13,16. The expression *gᵉlīl haggōyīm* ("Galilee of the nations") in Is 9.1 (Hebrew 8.23) is also noteworthy in this connection.

Josh 15.28 bᵉ'ēr sheba' ūbizyōtyāh ("Beersheba and Biziothiah"). Suggested correction: *ūbᵉnōtēhā* ("and its villages") for *ūbizyōtyāh*. LXX: Bersabee kai hai kōnai autōn kai hai epauleis autōn (nearly without variants).

The Hebrew text underlying LXX probably read *bᵉ'ēr sheba' ūbᵉnōtēhen wᵉhatsrēhen* ("Beersheba and their villages and hamlets"), see Josh 15.45,47. Neh 11.27 strongly supports the correction *bᵉ'ēr sheba' ūbᵉnōtēhā* ("Beersheba and its villages").

We have also accepted this, as do several commentators (Barthélemy, Soggin, Noth) and other modern translations (NEB, Einheitsübersetzung and Die Gute Nachricht). TEV, TOB and the new Norwegian version have Biziothiah or its equivalent, but no place of this name is known.

Josh 15.59 ūma'arāt ūbēt-'anōt wᵉ'elteqon 'ārīm shēsh wᵉḥatsrēhen (". . . and Maarath, Beth-anoth, and El-tekon: six cities and their hamlets"). LXX adds Thekō kai Ephratha (hautē estin Baithleem) kai Phagōr kai Aitan (-am A) kai Koulon kai Tatam(i) kai eōrēs (Eōbēs B) kai Karem kai Gallim (Galem B) kai Baithēr (cf. bittir; LXX BO Thethēr) kai Manochō, poleis hendeka kai hai kōmai autōn (homoeoteleuton; *wᵉhatsrēhen* "and their hamlets"). Leaving aside the question of the right form of the proper names, we would argue only that this list must be included in the source text for modern translators, since it was probably part of the original text at the second stage, but afterwards dropped out because of homoeoteleuton [the scribe's eye jumping from the first *ḥatsrēhen* to the second]. Here the Finnish translation group agrees with HOTTP, Barthélemy, Noth, Soggin, and with NEB, Die Gute Nachricht, Einheitsübersetzung, and disagrees with TEV, TOB and the new Norwegian translation. By accepting this correction we get an elegant list of twelve territories with their towns in Judah.

Where MT has a gloss or a possible interpolation without any counterpart in LXX, we have usually taken MT as the source text, if the gloss or interpolation is intelligible. An example is found in Josh 20.4-6. These verses are lacking in LXX, and have all the appearance of an interpretative interpolation, but we have included them in our translation. Other examples are Josh 1.2; 1.15; 2.15. The use of MT in these cases as the source text illustrates the careful attitude of our committee and its great respect for MT.

If the ancient translations do not give any help, it is at times possible to determine in other ways how the text should be corrected, as for example in the case of Is 9.2 discussed above.

By the use of these methods we hope to reach the second stage in the history of the text. We also apply these methods in translating stages three and four, in cases where MT, or at least its consonantal text, is faultless.

However, there remain a number of cases where no reliable conclusion can be reached, and where the translation has to be made in accordance with the earlier translation tradition. There are many examples of this in the Old Testament of the existing Finnish Church Bible. The present committee thinks that at several points it can offer better argued proposals for a new translation than the previous committee.

Occasionally it is necessary to use a footnote to show that the textual basis or the translation is uncertain, and to give alternatives. It is, however, our policy to use notes only in important cases. For example, in Isaiah, there are a total of 69 notes giving alternative readings or alternative translations.

A different kind of problem is that of deciding whether to translate the thought which the Old Testament text conveyed at the time it was written, or a later interpretation, especially one found in the New Testament.

Since the committee is translating the Bible for official church use, it has to aim for the golden mean, and decide each problem on its merits, depending on the context. Heb 2.4 is a good illustration. The Hebrew text is *wᵉtsaddīa be'emūnātō yiḥyeh* "the righteous one in/with his faithfulness will live", which in the New Testament, via LXX, is read *ho dikaios ek pisteōs zēsetai* (literally, "the righteous one from faith will live", Rom 1.17 and Gal 3.11) and ho dikalos mou ek pisteōs zēsetai ("my righteous one from faith will live". Heb 10.38). Hab 2.4 means that the righteous ones, that is, people who live in Judah, will survive the approaching catastrophe by being faithful, or because they are faithful, to God. The main thing in this message which the prophet received from God, is that the righteous ones will survive. Paul gives the clause quite a different interpretation, in that his main emphasis lies on the phrase "from faith". By stressing the importance of faith, he in fact gives every word of the clause a meaning different from that attested in the Hebrew of Habbakuk. The Finnish translators prefer, for the Old Testament, a rendering slightly different from the usual renderings in all three New Testament passages: in Habbakuk, we use a noun meaning "faithfulness", but in the New Testament, a noun meaning "faith". Otherwise, this clause has the same wording in both Testaments.