

# John Owen and the Traditional Protestant View of the Hebrew Old Testament

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In 1948, John Bowman wrote an article for the *Evangelical Quarterly* entitled, “A Forgotten Controversy.”<sup>1</sup> The controversy concerned the doctrine of Scripture, at first between Protestants and Catholics, then between Protestants, Cappellus and the Buxdorfs, father and son, and later, between John Owen and Brian Walton. It is forgotten today because the traditional Protestant view of Scripture has been discarded, completely by critical scholars and partially by evangelical scholars. Charles Briggs, writing in the late 1800’s, triumphantly stated that the traditional Protestant view is now universally abandoned.<sup>2</sup>

It is not difficult to see why John Owen and his Protestant allies erred in particulars, such as: the Hebrew vowel points and accent marks as written predate the Masoretes, at least to the time of Ezra if not Moses; that the Rabbis and Jerome also thought the vowel points and accent marks as written went back to Ezra or Moses; Hebrew always used the Aramaic script, never the

older script; Hebrew is the oldest language, the language that God spoke to Adam. Moreover, Owen and others often used a strident tone, further alienating his opponents, then and now. History has not been kind to John Owen and his fellow Protestants.

But even forgotten controversies deserve another hearing from time to time. Owen and his colleagues were brilliant linguists as well as master theologians. That alone suggests the need for another look. Although they stumbled in details, Owen and his colleagues were correct on the core issues: the preservation of the Scriptures, the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, and the dangers of a textual criticism that creates its own text.

### **A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE CONTROVERSY AND THE TRADITIONAL PROTESTANT CONSENSUS**

One of the distinctive doctrines of the Reformation was its teaching on Scripture. Protestants taught that Scripture was the sole authority for Christian faith and practice. The Catholic Church, by contrast, taught that the Church was the final authority for Christian faith and practice and that the Church was the final interpreter of Scripture. The Protestant doctrine threatened the Catholic Church at its very core.

An essential aspect of the Protestant doctrine of Scripture was the preservation of God's word. The Westminster Confession, like all other Protestant confessions, teaches: "The Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as, in all controversies in religion, the church is finally to appeal unto them."<sup>3</sup> The integrity and authenticity of God's word must be sure for the Protestant doctrine to prevail. If God's word has been corrupted throughout the centuries, if its meaning and words have been altered over the ages, then the Protestant doctrine fails.

The Catholic Church soon grasped this. The counter-reformation charged that variant readings in the Greek New Testament and Hebrew Old Testament rendered their meaning uncertain. The Hebrew Old Testament contained later Jewish additions, particularly the vowel points and accent marks. The Vulgate, the Catholic Church maintained, predated the Masoretic additions, and should, therefore, have precedence to the Hebrew Old Testament.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the problem of variant readings should not be

left to Protestants or scholars, whatever their talents. An authoritative body, indeed, a magisterium, must determine authentic Scripture: its canonicity and its integrity. The Council of Trent decreed the Vulgate as the “authentic” Scripture for faith, life, and controversy.<sup>5</sup> The Protestants, to be sure, countered this claim, asserting the primacy of the Greek New Testament and Hebrew Old Testament over the Vulgate and the purity and integrity of God’s word. The battle lines were set, but not for long.

### ***Buxtorf v. Cappellus***

A Jewish scholar, with probably little or no concern for the controversy, Elias Levita, published *Massoreth Ha-Massoreth* (1538) claiming that the *written* vowel points and accent marks of the Masoretic Text were added after the Talmud (yet, he thought the Masoretic tradition preserved the *reading* of Moses and Ezra).<sup>6</sup> The Catholics claimed victory. The Protestants, under the pressure of Levita’s work, responded with perhaps their best Hebrew scholar of the late 1500’s and early 1600’s, Johannes Buxtorf, the Master of the Rabbis. He challenged Levita’s arguments, claiming that Rabbinic authorities taught that the vowel points and accent marks as written were coeval with Moses or with Ezra.

Buxtorf’s positions, however, were challenged by an unexpected source, a Huguenot Protestant from the French school at Saumur, Louis Cappellus. Cappellus agreed with Levita that the vowels points and accents marks *as written* were added recently. As for the vowels and accents *as spoken* in the synagogue for centuries, all agreed—Levita, Buxtorf, and Cappellus—that they were the authentic vowels and accents preserved from the time of Ezra or earlier.<sup>7</sup> Hence, they were of divine authority. The variant readings were the result of scribal “slips of the pen” or “in matters of no moment.” Cappellus, however, later abandoned this view based on the differences between the ancient versions and the Masoretic Text and became convinced that the Hebrew Old Testament had undergone significant corruption and change, not just in the vowels and accents, but even in the consonants themselves.<sup>8</sup> He now emended the Masoretic Text by the ancient versions. He even conjectured emendations without the versions based on his principle, “where the sense flows better.”<sup>9</sup> Later critical scholars, therefore, laud Cappellus as the first modern textual critic.<sup>10</sup>

The Protestants were horrified. Cappellus’s view, if accepted, would destroy

the Protestant doctrine of Scripture and make the Old Testament a malleable text in the hands and minds of the critics. Johannes Buxtorf's son, Johannes Buxtorf II, and other traditional Protestants challenged Cappellus.

### ***Owen v. Walton***

Meanwhile in England, Brian Walton with the help of many traditional Protestants published a Polyglot Bible that unexpectedly renewed the controversy, this time between Walton and John Owen. Owen had concerns that the Polyglot might "impair the truth of the other assertions about the entire preservation of the word as given out by God in the copies that yet remain with us."<sup>11</sup> They disagreed over five issues.

First, they disagreed about the vowel points as written. Owen believed that they were written at least from the time of Ezra; Walton believed that the Masoretes invented them centuries after the time of Christ. Walton, of course, was correct. But Walton, like Owen, believed that the text "was never arbitrary but the same before and after the punctuation [was written]" and that the vowels and accents (as spoken) were coeval with the consonants.<sup>12</sup> Second, they disagreed about the Ketib/Qere readings. Owen believed that they dated to Ezra; Walton to pre- and post-Talmudic times.<sup>13</sup> Third, they disagreed about the use of ancient versions to correct the Masoretic tradition. Owen used the ancient versions only to aid in interpretation;<sup>14</sup> Walton also used them to correct scribal errors in the Masoretic Text.<sup>15</sup> Fourth, they disagreed about the use of Grotius's conjectures in an appendix to the Polyglot. For Owen, this was too close to Cappellus. Walton defended his use of Grotius since he was a "miracle of our times," "an incomparably learned man."<sup>16</sup> Fifth, they disagreed over the quantity of variant readings. Owen thought that Walton multiplied variants needlessly, thus bringing doubt to the preservation of God's word.<sup>17</sup> Walton claimed that Owen exaggerated the problem, since the important variant readings could be reduced to a page or two.<sup>18</sup> Walton sought to be exhaustive by including Ketib/Qere and Ben Asher/Ben Naphtali readings.

Although they differed, they actually agreed on the core issues. Both agreed that God had preserved the Scriptures without essential defect, rejecting the Catholic and Cappellian views of Scriptural corruption.<sup>19</sup> Both agreed that the transcribers of Scripture and not the biblical authors were the source of errors in the Masoretic Text and were "in matters of no moment."<sup>20</sup> Both

agreed that the vowel points and accents in the Masoretic Text reflected the inspired text of Ezra.<sup>21</sup> Both rejected Cappellus's use of conjecture in correcting the Masoretic tradition.<sup>22</sup> In fact, Owen complimented Walton's Polyglot and his introduction (*Prolegomena*) time and time again, holding the work in "much esteem"<sup>23</sup> and praising "the usefulness of the work."<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Owen believed that Walton was much closer to his and not Cappellus's views.<sup>25</sup>

The dispute between Owen and Walton was, in some ways, regrettable. Although Owen admired Walton's work, he feared that it would be misinterpreted and abused by atheists, papists, and anti-Scripturalists.<sup>26</sup> Owen was particularly concerned with Grotius's conjectures and emendations in the appendix of Walton's Polyglot. While Walton rejected Cappellus's conjectures and methods, his inclusion of Grotius's conjectures seemed inconsistent and problematic. This made Owen suspicious of Walton. Walton, for his part, took Owen's fears personally and treated Owen's concerns, some legitimate, with contempt. In the end, they could agree that God had preserved His word "by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, and are therefore authentic." The controversy then was *not* ultimately between Owen and Walton, but between Cappellus and the traditional Protestants, including Owen and Walton.<sup>27</sup>

### ***A Brief Consensus***

Finally, the dispute concluded with the last Protestant symbol of the era: the Helvetic Consensus Formula.<sup>28</sup> Writing in 1675, John Henry Heidegger with the assistance of Lucas Gernler and Francis Turretin produced the Formula to refute the teachings of the Saumur School, particularly Amyraut's view of hypothetical universalism, de la Place's view of the mediate imputation of Adam's sin, and Cappellus's views of the inspiration and integrity of Scripture.<sup>29</sup> Combined with the earlier confessions, the Helvetic Consensus Formula represents the final statement of the traditional Protestant doctrine of Scripture. The three canons of the Formula on the Scriptures affirm the preservation of the Scriptures and the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures in the first two canons, and condemn the text-critical method of Cappellus in the third canon.

The consensus did not last long, perhaps fifty to a hundred years. The 1700's would still find defenders of the traditional Protestant view, like the

great Hebrew scholar from the Baptist community, John Gill. Later in the 1700's James Robertson at Edinburgh and Olaus Gerard Tychsen in Germany performed rear-guard action for the traditional Protestant view, but it was now a lost cause.<sup>30</sup> Ironically, the traditional Protestant view—at least the divine origin of the vowel points, accents, and a textual correction limited to copyist mistakes—thrives now only in orthodox and traditional Judaism. Cappellus had won the day.

The Scriptures were now regarded as corrupted, obscure and, to many, out of date. A human criticism of Scripture now replaced the Catholic magisterium and the Protestant doctrine of Scripture.<sup>31</sup> This criticism with its promised “assured results” operated on two levels: a lower criticism to reconstruct the Biblical text to a putative earlier form, and a higher criticism to discover the original sources and influences behind the text. Of course, the influences and philosophies behind these criticisms were purely naturalistic and hostile to the inspiration of Scripture.<sup>32</sup> The idea that the Scripture were “immediately inspired of God” or that it was “kept pure in all ages” was now viewed as pre-critical and pre-scientific thinking, the romantic notions of well-meaning, but misguided believers, desperate to hold on to their faith.

### ***A Lasting Impact***

These criticisms have impacted Evangelicals. Many evangelicals have also discarded the traditional Protestant view of textual criticism that corrects only scribal slips of the pen and that resists emending the text based on the ancient versions or conjectures. Moreover, most evangelicals have abandoned the traditional Protestant belief in the divine authority of the vowel points and accents. Conservative Evangelicals and Protestants now often take a “medium course” on the vowel points and accents, as William Henry Green proposed, “The points are not inspired, but they are substantially correct ... The points form what may be called a traditional commentary upon the text, conscientiously noted down by learned scholars under circumstance peculiarly favorable for a correct understanding of it. They are most important help, which ought not to be slighted; and though they may be departed from in case of evident necessity, they should be adhered to unless there are very good reasons for not doing so.”<sup>33</sup> Recently and similarly, E. Ray Clendenen and David K. Stabnow declared the vowel points and accent marks non-canonical: “The Tiberian system was a method of putting in writing what has

been passed down for generations as an oral tradition. Thus the marks (vowel points and accents marks) are not canonical, but they are indicative of how the best Hebrew scholars of the day understood the venerable oral tradition and the semantic structure of the verse.”<sup>34</sup> Later, they also suggest that some of the consonants may be non-canonical as well: “Again, like the cantillation marks, the superscriptions [of the Psalms] may not be canonical.”<sup>35</sup> Evangelicals jettisoned important elements in the traditional Protestant doctrine of Scripture. We are all Cappellian now.

### **AFFIRMING THE TRADITIONAL PROTESTANT CONSENSUS**

Although critical scholarship abandoned the traditional Protestant view of Scripture completely, and evangelical scholarship abandoned it in particulars, the traditional Protestants were correct in their core assertions, especially in three areas.

#### ***The Preservation of God’s Word***

First, they were correct concerning the preservation of God’s word. The Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament are the most commonly attested documents from the ancient world. There are over 6,000 Masoretic manuscripts along with about 200 manuscripts from Qumran and many translations in other languages from earlier Hebrew manuscripts.<sup>36</sup> There are over 5,000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, about 8,000 Vulgate manuscripts, and 1,000s of manuscripts of other ancient languages.<sup>37</sup> Nothing comes close to the Bible. The 17<sup>th</sup> century Protestants had no idea of these statistics since most manuscripts were discovered later. And more will undoubtedly come. But they did not need these numbers, since they knew that God’s word abides forever (Isa 40:8; 1 Pet 1:24-25).

More manuscripts, of course, means more variant readings, but the Protestant doctrine rightfully emphasized the quality of the manuscripts, not the quantity, in their creeds.<sup>38</sup> God’s word was “kept pure in all ages.”<sup>39</sup> The Protestants, therefore, often referred to the Masoretic tradition as “the autographs.”<sup>40</sup> The manuscripts of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Protestants certainly indicate a pure word of God, but later manuscripts show an even purer text. For the New Testament, Vaticanus, with copyist errors noted, virtually reproduces the New Testament as given by the Apostles. The same could be said for the other famous uncials and papyri manuscripts. For the Old Testament, the

two great Masoretic manuscripts, unknown to the 17<sup>th</sup> century Protestants, have come to light: Aleppo and Leningrad. Although missing parts due to anti-Jewish riots in 1948, Aleppo, the most important Masoretic manuscript, was produced by the greatest Masorete, Aaron ben Asher. Leningrad, a complete Old Testament manuscript, was carefully corrected to conform to Aleppo. Aleppo, with its missing parts supplied through Leningrad, is the Bible in Israel today, and it will be Israel's Bible until the Lord returns—it should also be the Old Testament for Protestants until the Lord returns. The only possible changes will be if new sections of Aleppo resurface as they have in the past.<sup>41</sup> The Aleppo and Leningrad codices accurately reflect the divinely inspired Hebrew text of Ezra.

Such is, at least, the claim of Aaron ben Asher. He asserted that the Prophets, the Sopherim (Scribes), with Ezra and the wise men (of the Great Synagogue) originated the vowel points and accentual system.<sup>42</sup> This does *not* mean that they created the *written* symbols for the vowels and accents, but that they established the *oral* tradition that the written vowels and accents would later represent. And he was not alone. Owen quotes a Rabbi Bechai who says, “The points within the letter of the book of Moses are of such a nature as is the breath within the human body.”<sup>43</sup> And Elias Levita states, “And thus it is said in the Mishnah, ‘Moses received the law from Sinai, and he handed it down to Joshua, and Joshua [handed it down] to the elders, and the elders [handed it down] to the prophets, and the prophets handed it down to the men of the great synagogue.’ And this is the meaning of the word **סֹפְרִים** in question; since it was transmitted to sages, from mouth to mouth, till the time of Ezra and his associates, and by them again to the Masoretic Sages of Tiberias, who wrote it down, and called it Massorah.”<sup>44</sup> Eben Ezra, the medieval rabbinic commentator, therefore, stated the orthodox and traditional Jewish opinion, “Any interpretation which is not in accordance with the arrangement of the accents, thou shalt not consent to it, nor listen to it.”<sup>45</sup> Jewish tradition and opinion are unanimous.

But this is more than Jewish tradition or opinion. History also confirms this. The Old Testament quoted in the Babylonian Talmud conforms closely to the Masoretic tradition of Tiberias, as does earlier Rabbinic literature.<sup>46</sup> About a hundred years before the Talmud, Jerome, a *Christian* scholar, largely reproduces the Masoretic tradition in his Vulgate.<sup>47</sup> The same is true concerning the earlier Peshitta and Aramaic Targums.<sup>48</sup> All

texts found at Masada (about AD 73) reflect the consonantal Masoretic Text.<sup>49</sup> Most biblical texts at Qumran follow the consonantal Masoretic Text.<sup>50</sup> One of the Isaiah Scroll from Qumran is virtually an exact copy of the consonantal Masoretic Text. The Greek revisions to the Septuagint are corrected to the Masoretic Text instead of the original Septuagint. The Samaritan Pentateuch, minus its theological changes and interpretive expansions, follows the Masoretic Text. Even the Septuagint (280 BC), in the Pentateuch and in other places, often reflects the Masoretic Text. History, time and again, confirms that the Masoretic Text is the dominant and authoritative tradition for the Old Testament.<sup>51</sup>

The New Testament also follows the Masoretic Text frequently, though it follows the Septuagint as well since Greek was the language for gentile Christians. The Masoretic tradition was the Old Testament text of first century Judaism, including of Jesus and his disciples.

And Jesus and the writers of the New Testament clearly believed that the Old Testament was kept pure in their age. They never hinted at a corrupted or uncertain text. Jesus taught that not even “a jot or tittle could fail,” “that Scripture could not be broken,” “that Scripture had to be fulfilled.” Moreover, Jesus in the account of Lazarus and the rich man describes the authenticity of Old Testament of his day, “But Abraham said, They *have* Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them” (Luke 16:29). Jesus is not talking about a corrupted version of Moses and the Prophets. They *have* Moses and the Prophets, pure and entire. Similarly, in the Gospel of John 5:46-47, Jesus states, “For he [Moses] wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words.” To Jesus, the words of Moses that he quoted were as authentic as his own words. Again, they *had* Moses’s writings. The same may be said for Paul, who referred to the Old Testament as “the oracles of God” (Rom 3:2), *entrusted* to the Jews in the past and still the oracles of God to Paul in his time. Finally, Peter stated, “we *have* a more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet 1:19), thereby claiming that his generation possessed in the Old Testament a more sure word than hearing God’s voice directly from heaven. They were not talking about the Scriptures theoretically or about the original autographs, but they were talking about the Scriptures of their day. To Jesus and the apostles, the original autographs and the Scriptures of their day were the same.<sup>52</sup>

History and most importantly the New Testament have vindicated the

Protestant doctrine of the preservation of God's word. The past clearly confirms the Masoretic tradition.

And the present confirms it as well. The Masoretic Text is the basis of the Old Testament for modern Judaism and modern Christian Bibles, liberal or conservative, Catholic or Protestant. Although Charles Briggs looked forward to the day when the Masoretic Text would be discarded—"It [textual criticism] will do even more for the Old Testament so soon as the old superstitious reverence for the Masoretic tradition and servitude to the Jews has been laid aside by Christians scholars"<sup>53</sup>—the Masoretic Text today is stronger than ever. It is, and will be, the Old Testament. The verdict of history is clear, and the future of the Masoretic Text is certain.<sup>54</sup>

### ***Verbal Inspiration of the Old Testament***

Secondly, the Protestants were correct in their doctrine of verbal inspiration. Paul's statement of the Old Testament as the "oracles of God" (Rom 3:2; and also Stephen's statement in Acts 7:38) and similar statements throughout Scripture (1 Cor 2:13; 1 Thess 2:13) established the Protestant doctrine of verbal inspiration. Of course, all confessions of 17<sup>th</sup> century Protestantism teach this, though none as explicitly as the Helvetic Consensus Formula that states that the Bible is inspired, "not only in its matter, but in its words." The general ideas, thoughts, or overall teaching of Scripture—that is, "its matter"—are certainly inspired, but so also the language or words of Scripture are inspired.

For the Hebrew Old Testament, however, a complication arises. The autographs were written with consonants, the vowels and accents being assumed. If God left only the consonants and not the vowels and accents, then God's word becomes uncertain, subject to human addition and error.<sup>55</sup> Happily, the issue is not in doubt. God vouchsafed the Old Testament in Hebrew to the Jewish people, as the Helvetic Consensus Formula says, "in particular the Hebrew original of the Old Testament, which we have received and to this day do retain as handed down by the Jewish Church, unto whom formerly 'were committed the oracles of God' (Rom 3:2), is, not only in its consonants, but in its vowels—either the vowel points themselves, or at least the power of the points."<sup>56</sup> Jesus confirms this by stating, "that not one jot or tittle shall pass away from the Old Testament until all is fulfilled." However that passage is interpreted, it implies that God's word is preserved

and inspired to the smallest details. The vowels and accents, to be sure, are anything but details. The vowels breathe life into the consonants to form words. The accents group words to establish the meaning of sentences. Paul teaches that the Old Testament Scriptures were *words* directly breathed out of the mouth of God (2 Tim 3:16), not mere *consonants* left to the reader's predilections and abilities.<sup>57</sup> In short, the vowels and accents are essential to the words of the Old Testament; and therefore, they are essential to the doctrine of verbal inspiration of traditional Protestantism and Judaism.<sup>58</sup>

We would do well to keep in mind that the same tradition that preserves the consonants also preserves the vowel points and accent marks. It is one tradition. If the vowels and accents are not regarded as representing the inspired text, why should the consonants be regarded as representing the inspired text? A middle course will not do. Most of the same arguments used against receiving the vowels and accents as inspired—particularly, the alternate readings of the ancient versions—can be used against the inspiration of the consonants as well. Moreover, the Dead Sea Scrolls furnish more consonantal variation from the Masoretic tradition. The Masoretic tradition must stand or fall as one. Traditional Protestantism and Judaism, therefore, accepted the entire Masoretic tradition, not just the consonants, as “the Lydian stone,” or touchstone by which all other ancient translations should be tested and corrected, as the ancient revisers of the Septuagint did.<sup>59</sup> Consistency demands this.

### ***The Dangers of Textual Criticism that Creates its Own Text***

Finally, the Protestants were correct in warning about the dangers of a textual criticism that created its own text. They recognized variant readings between the ancient versions and the Masoretic tradition and even variant readings within the Masoretic tradition. As “the Lydian stone,” the Masoretic tradition reigned supreme over the ancient versions. The variant readings of ancient versions represented interpretations of or deviations from the Masoretic tradition. The variant readings within the Masoretic tradition were usually “slips of the pen” that could be safely corrected since the Masoretes noted unique spellings in the Masora. The Protestants would be delighted with Aaron Dotan's edition of the Masoretic Text since he corrects the obvious spelling lapses, but presents the text according to the tradition, not according to his own opinion and understanding.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, Dotan lists those

corrections in an appendix so that all can judge the spelling corrections for themselves. As for other variant readings, the purest Masoretic Text should be followed: Aleppo where it exists, Leningrad where Aleppo is missing.<sup>61</sup> In the rare case of a missing word, such as, 1 Samuel 13:1, no emendation should be made. Perhaps a footnote would be appropriate for possible readings of the ancient versions, but the text should not be emended. The Masoretic text should be preserved as is. Creating a new text is unnecessary.

Most critical and evangelical scholars, though accepting the Masoretic tradition in general, dissent from the traditional Protestant view. They emend the consonants of the Masoretic tradition to the ancient versions or other Hebrew texts, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls or Samaritan Pentateuch, when scholars regard those versions or texts as an earlier or better form of the Hebrew text.<sup>62</sup> They view the vowels as “less ancient and reliable than the consonants;”<sup>63</sup> and therefore, emend the vowels without footnote in modern translations. The accents, regarded as less reliable than the vowels, are frequently emended or ignored in modern translations or interpretations. Conjectural emendations are accepted: “Occasionally it is evident,” says Bruce Metzger, “that the text has suffered in transmission and that none of the versions provides a satisfactory restoration. Here we can only follow the best judgment of competent scholars as to the most probable reconstruction of the original text.”<sup>64</sup> Cappellus could not ask for more.<sup>65</sup>

Liberal translations, therefore, transform the Masoretic Text into a text of their liking. The *Revised Standard Version* (RSV), for example, frequently emends the Masoretic Text by the ancient versions (Gen 4:8; Deut 32:8; 1 Sam 14:41), by the Dead Sea Scrolls (Isa 14:30; 15:9; 45:2), by conjecture (Ps 2:11; some conjectures are not even noted [Amos 6:12 and 2 Sam 8:12]), or by re-ordering verses (22:1-4 to 1, 3a, 4, 2, 3b). Jack Lewis estimates that the RSV departs from the Masoretic Text “as many as six hundred times.”<sup>66</sup> This number, however, is certainly higher, probably in the thousands, since Lewis does not include departures from the accents. The RSV does not note or indicate such departures. The *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) continues this tradition, remaking the Masoretic Text into its own theological image. In addition to the myriads of emendations, conjectures, and verse restructurings, the NRSV purged the male-oriented language of the Bible because of modern sensitivities.<sup>67</sup> Other liberal translations closely follow the lead of the RSV and the NRSV in remaking the Masoretic Text, such as the

Catholic translations, *The American Bible* (with the approval of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) and the *New Jerusalem Bible*. Perhaps the most liberal translations are the *New English Bible* and the *Revised English Bible*. These Bibles consistently mutilate the Masoretic Text. For example, in the *New English Bible*, Zech 3:1-10 now follows 4:14, 4:1ff follows 2:13, 4:4-10 follows 3:10, and 13:7-9 follows 11:17. T. H. Brown claims that over 136 verses are reordered.<sup>68</sup> Today, there are feminist, Marxist, homosexual readings and translations of the Bible, as for example, *The Queen James Bible*.

Evangelicals also emend the text by the ancient versions, by the Dead Sea Scrolls, by conjecture, and by changing words from one verse to another verse, but they do it more conservatively than the liberals. According to Clendenen and Stabnow, the Septuagint corrects the Masoretic Text 277 times in the ESV, 257 times in the HCSB, 53 times in the NASB, 226 times in the NIV, which compares to 569 times in the NRSV.<sup>69</sup> The Dead Sea Scrolls correct the Masoretic Text 18 times in the ESV, 29 times in the HCSB, 14 times in the NASB, 30 times in the NIV, which compares to 72 times in the NRSV.<sup>70</sup> Editors emend the text by conjecture 26 times in the ESV, 21 times in the HCSB, 16 times in the NIV, which compares to 301 times in the NRSV.<sup>71</sup> Clendenen and Stabnow's statistics would greatly increase if changes in the vowel points and accents were included. The ESV and HCSB place the last words in Psalm 48:1 into verse two. The ESV begins day one of creation in Genesis 1:3, instead of Genesis 1:1 according to the Masoretic Text (also see Exod 20:11). The ESV, NIV, and NASB95 improperly begin a new sentence or paragraph at the end of Numbers 26:4 to put the last words as part of verse five. Whereas the liberal translations emend the text thousands of times; the evangelicals emend hundreds of times.

The liberal translations are more extreme in their emendations than the evangelical translations, to be sure, but they influence evangelical translations. The flaw of the ESV, for example, is its reliance on the RSV. Worst of all, the gender-neutral direction has infected many evangelical translations, particularly, the later editions of the NIV. The most damaging influence on evangelical translations comes from the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS),<sup>72</sup> the modern critical text of the Masoretic tradition. The BHS changes the Masoretic Text repeatedly according to the tastes of its editors. Its arrangement of words and sentences, especially in poetical sections, has profoundly influenced translations and interpretations of evangelicals (and liberals).

The bottom line is that liberal and evangelical translators often change the Masoretic text to create their own text. Each translation committee forms its own magisterium. This is what concerned Owen and the Protestants. Perhaps, Owen's fears were not so misplaced after all.

## **CONCLUSION**

Although Owen and all other 17<sup>th</sup> century scholars erred in details, and although modern scholars believe that Cappellus and later critical scholars overturned the traditional Protestant doctrine of Scripture, Owen and his fellow traditional Protestants were right concerning the core issues of the debate: the preservation of the Scriptures, the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, and the dangers of a textual criticism that creates its own text. These three issues were essential for the Protestant view of Scripture in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They should be essential for the Protestant view of Scripture today.

## **APPENDIXES**

### **I. The Westminster Confession of Faith and The Helvetic Consensus Formula: On the Scriptures.**

#### ***A. The Westminster Confession of Faith 1647***

Section eight stresses the importance of the Biblical languages (Hebrew and Greek), in being inspired and preserved, in being the final authority of any controversy, and in being necessary to translate the word of God into the languages of the nations.

8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old) and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to the nations) being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them. But, because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in

all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner; and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope.

### ***B. The Helvetic Consensus Formula 1675***

The first canon of the Formula affirms the preservation of Scripture.

1. God, the Supreme Judge, not only took care to have His word, which is the “power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16), committed to writing by Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles, but has also watched and cherished it with paternal care ever since it was written up to the present time, so that it could not be corrupted by craft of Satan or fraud of man. Therefore, the Church justly ascribes it to His singular grace and goodness that she has, and will have to the end of the world, a “sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet 1:19) and “Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim 3:15), from which, though heaven and earth perish, “one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass” (Matt 5:18).

The second canon of the Formula affirms the verbal inspiration of the Scripture.

2. But, in particular the Hebrew original of the Old Testament, which we have received and to this day do retain as handed down by the Jewish Church, unto whom formerly “were committed the oracles of God” (Rom 3:2), is, not only in its consonants, but in its vowels – either the vowel points themselves, or at least the power of the points – not only in its matter, but in its words, inspired of God, thus forming together with the original of the New Testament, the sole and complete rule for our faith and life; and to its standard, as to a Lydian stone, all extant versions, oriental and occidental, ought to be applied, and wherever they differ, be conformed.

The third canon of the Formula condemns the text-critical method of Cappellus.

3. Therefore, we can by no means approve the opinion of those who declare that the *text* which the Hebrew original exhibits was determined by man’s will alone, and do not scruple at all to remodel a Hebrew reading which they consider unsuitable, and amend it from the Greek Versions of the LXX and others, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and Chaldee Targums, or even from other sources, yea, sometimes from their own reason alone; and furthermore, they do not acknowledge any other reading to be genuine except that which can be educed by the critical power of the human judgment from the collation of editions with each other and with various readings of the Hebrew original

itself – which, they maintain, has been corrupted in various ways; and finally, they affirm that besides the Hebrew edition of the present time, there are in the text of the ancient interpreters which differ from our Hebrew context other Hebrew originals, since these versions are also indicative of ancient Hebrew originals differing from each other. Thus they bring the foundation of our faith and its inviolable authority into perilous hazard.

**II. CHART FOR THE DEPARTURES OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS FROM THE MASORETIC TRADITION**

The following chart is from E. Ray Clendenen and David K. Stabnow, *HCSB, Navigating the Horizons in Bible Translations*, 166-167. The numbers represent how many times the translations depart from the Masoretic tradition and follow an ancient version or emend the text by conjecture. The asterisks mark those translations that do not indicate emendations, but Clendenen and Stabnow believe that the NLT emends the Masoretic tradition at least 13 times and the NASB at least 5 times (167), though these numbers for the NLT and NASB are “by no means an exhaustive list” (Ibid).

The numbers of this chart are actually much lower than the actual numbers since translations are not always consistent in marking departures from the Masoretic tradition especially if the departure concerns slight changes to the consonants or any changes to the vowel points or accent marks. In fact, the accents are frequently ignored in modern translations. If every departure from the Masoretic tradition were carefully noted, these numbers, especially the emendations, would be significantly higher.

	ESV	HCSB	NASB	NIV	NLT	NRSV
<b>LXX cited</b>	326	761	68	317	340	576
<b>LXX Pref</b>	277	257	53	226	240	569
<b>DSS cited</b>	30	121	16	43	32	75
<b>DSS Pref</b>	18	29	14	30	27	72
<b>Sam cited</b>	13	69	0	20	15	20
<b>Sam pref</b>	7	14	0	16	13	20
<b>Emen</b>	26	21	*	16	*	301

- 1 John Bowman, "A Forgotten Controversy," *Evangelical Quarterly*, 20 (1948): 46-68. For other accounts of this controversy, see Richard Muller, "The Debate over the Vowel Points and the Crisis in Orthodox Hermeneutics," in *After Calvin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 146-155. Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol 2: Holy Scripture (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 396-416. Stephen G. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies* (Lieden: Brill, 1996), 203-239. F. F. Bruce, *Tradition Old and New* (Exeter Devon: Paternoster, 1970), 159-162. Dominique Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text of the Old Testament* (trans. Sarah Lind; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 13-36.
- 2 Charles A. Briggs, *Whither?* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889), 282. Frants Buhl similarly stated that the orthodox Protestant view has been abandoned and that the critical views of Jean Morin and Louis Cappellus are now "universally adopted." Frants Buhl, "Bible Texts" in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (12 Vols.; New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1908), 2:94.
- 3 *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms* (Lawrenceville, GA: Christian Education & Publications), 7 (1.8). See the appendix for the text of this section.
- 4 Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies*, 206. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (rev. David S. Schaff; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), 2:82-83.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 Christian D. Ginsberg, *Massoreth Ha-Massoreth of Elias Levita* (1867; rpt. New York: KTAV, 1968), 89, 102-103, 129, 133-134, 137.
- 7 Bowman, "A Forgotten Controversy," 54. Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin*, 151. Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation*, 2:408. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vol 4, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984), 346-347.
- 8 Bowman, "A Forgotten Controversy," 54. Muller, *After Calvin*, 151.
- 9 Brian Walton, *The Considerator Considered* (London: Roycroft, 1659), 95. This principle invites abuse. Barthélemy, though not rejecting conjecture, decries its frequent abuse. Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text of the Old Testament*, 93-94.
- 10 Bowman, "A Forgotten Controversy," 54. Buhl summarized Cappellus's view, "This view [of Cappellus], instead of deriving the existing text from a gathering of inspired men in Ezra's time, assigns it to a much later date and quite different men, and, instead of absolute completeness, claims for it only a relative one with a higher value than other forms of the text." Buhl, "Bible Texts," 94.
- 11 John Owen, "On the Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text of the Scripture," *The Works of John Owen* (16 vols.; ed., William H. Goold; Great Britain: Banner of Truth, 1988), 16:351.
- 12 Walton, *The Considerator Considered*, 11. The accents being coeval with the consonants does not imply that Ezra was chanting the accents as the Masoretes did centuries later, but that Ezra and the Masoretes grouped words consistent with the accents in the Masoretic Text.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 108-109.
- 14 Owen, "On the Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text of the Scripture," 419.
- 15 Walton, *The Considerator Considered*, 56.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 114.
- 17 Owen, "On the Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text of the Scripture," 351-352.
- 18 Walton, *The Considerator Considered*, 120-121.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 11, 14, 43. Bowman, "A Forgotten Controversy," 59.
- 22 Walton, *The Considerator Considered*, 95.
- 23 Owen, "On the Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text of the Scripture," 348.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 349, 351, 374.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 351.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 348.
- 27 Later scholars, virtually without exception, have excoriated Owen for his criticism of Walton. Briggs states, "John Owen, honored as a preacher and dogmatic writer, but certainly no exegete, had spun a theory of inspiration after the *a priori* scholastic method, and with it did battle against the great Polyglot. It was a Quixotic attempt, and resulted in ridiculous failure. His dogma is crushed as a shell in the grasp of a giant." Charles A. Briggs, *Biblical Study* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883), 146. Thomas Chalmers, as quoted by William Goold, the editor of Owen's works, regarded Owen's warning about the dangers of Walton's work as "illiterate" and "the outrageous violence of the Puritan." Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, 16:345. Stanley

Gundry claimed that Owen “left the field of battle undeniably vanquished.” Stanley N. Gundry, “John Owen on Authority and Scripture,” in *Inerrancy and the Church* (ed., John D. Hannah; Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 209. Even B. B. Warfield, an admirer of Owen, deemed his work against Walton, “ill-considered.” B. B. Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, Vol 6 *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work* (1931; rpt. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991), 278n17. William Goold’s view of Owen’s efforts is more positive, but concedes that Owen erred in particulars. Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, 16:345-347.

<sup>28</sup> See the appendix for the text of the first three canons.

<sup>29</sup> Charles Briggs admired the Saumur school with its “freer type of theology” and “more liberal type of Calvinism.” To Briggs, the reaction of Owen, Heidegger, Turretin and others to the Saumur school straitened “the formal principle of Protestantism and its vital power destroyed by the erection of dogmatic barriers against biblical criticism.” Briggs, *Biblical Study*, 142-146.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 147-148, 151, 156; Bowman, “A Forgotten Controversy,” 62-63; Muller, *Post-Reformation*, 413. Briggs states, “So far as the Old Testament is concerned the theory of Buxtorf, Heidegger, Turretin, Voetius, Owen, and the Zurich Consensus, as to the vowel points and accents, has been so utterly disproved that no biblical scholar of the present day would venture to defend them.” Briggs, *Biblical Study*, 156.

<sup>31</sup> “Recent criticisms have been very great in the departments of the text and the literature of the Bible. These have been reorganized as branches of science, with exact methods and well-defined principles, which lead to definite and reliable results ... The authority of the Masoretic Text of the Old Testament has been undermined; but critics the world over are laboring to secure a better text of the Old Testament; and they will succeed in a reasonable time.” Briggs, *Whither?*, 282.

<sup>32</sup> For the current presuppositions of the dominant theory of textual criticism, see Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text of the Old Testament*, 84ff. In particular, textual criticism cannot determine what the original text of Moses and the Prophets was (This can only be determined, if at all, by higher critical methods.), but textual criticism can go back only to “the earliest attested text” that existed “behind all ancient variations.” These ancient variations happened after canonization (*ibid.*, 87-88). Moreover, the scribes or redactors made many intentional modifications, theological and exegetical, to the text (*ibid.*, 91).

<sup>33</sup> William Henry Green, *General Introduction to the Old Testament: The Text* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899), 73-74.

<sup>34</sup> E. Ray Clendenen and David K. Stabnow, *HCSB: Navigating the Horizons in Bible Translation* (Nashville: B&H 2012), 123.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>36</sup> Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 23. Tov states that the Dead Sea Scrolls has 190 biblical scrolls (*ibid.*, 103). The manuscripts of translations of the Masoretic or pre-Masoretic Text number in the thousands.

<sup>37</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 36, 76.

<sup>38</sup> Chad Van Dixhoorn believes that the Westminster Confession’s teaching on the preservation of the biblical texts “are more a comment on the survival rates of manuscripts than on textual exactitude.” Chad Van Dixhoorn, *Confessing the Faith* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2014), 23. The Westminster Confession, however, refers to the textual accuracy of the texts, not simply “the survival rates of manuscripts.” What good are the quantity of manuscripts if their quality is defective? Yet, the quantity of manuscripts is important as well since they all reflect one apostolic archetype (in contrast to Gnostic Gospels which show a non-apostolic archetype) and show the accuracy and purity of the Scriptures in thousands of manuscripts.

<sup>39</sup> The Protestants distinguished between variant readings and corruptions. Variant readings were usually seen as unintentional scribal errors; corruptions were viewed as intentional modifications to the text. They admitted variant readings in the texts, but denied that the text had been corrupted (or at least not universally corrupted). Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (3 vols.; trans. George M. Giger; ed. James T. Dennison, Jr.; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1992), 1:111; Walton, *The Considerator Considered*, 14, 292. The question was not whether there were variant readings, as all admitted them. “Rather the question,” states Turretin, “is have the original texts (or the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts) been so corrupted either by copyists through carelessness (or by the Jews and heretics through malice) that they can no longer be regarded as the judge of controversies and the rule to which all the version must be applied? The papists affirm, we deny.” Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:106.

<sup>40</sup> Walton, *The Considerator Considered*, 14.

<sup>41</sup> Yosef Ofer, “The History and Authority of the Aleppo Codex,” in *Jerusalem Crown: The Bible of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Companion Volume* (ed., Mordecai Glazer; Jerusalem: Karger Family Fund and N. Ben-Zvi Printing, 2002), 30.

- <sup>42</sup> Aaron ben Asher, *Dikdukei Ha-Te'amim* (ed., Baer and Strack; Leipzig, 1879) xvi, 1.
- <sup>43</sup> John Owen, *Biblical Theology* (trans., Stephen P. Westcott; Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1661, 1994), 503.
- <sup>44</sup> Ginsburg, *Massoreth Ha-Massoreth of Elias Levita*, 102-103. Levita quotes Mishnah *Pirke Avoth* 1:1.
- <sup>45</sup> As quoted in James D. Price, *The Syntax of Masoretic Accents in the Hebrew Bible* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 9.
- <sup>46</sup> Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 25, 28. For the Rabbinic sources, see Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 5711-1950), 20-27.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 25, 28.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* Tov also states, "The early origins of the מ [Masoretic Text or tradition] can also be inferred indirectly from the Qumran texts written in the paleo-Hebrew script. Since almost all paleo-Hebrew texts found in Qumran reflect the מ, they provide information about מ from a period preceding its attestation in Masoretic manuscripts. . . The antiquity of this tradition is also indicated by the use of scribal dots as word dividers in the paleo-Hebrew text from Qumran." *Ibid.*, 28.
- <sup>51</sup> Tov summarizes his opinion about the first period of the development of מ until AD 70, "There existed a relatively large number of differences between the members of the מ group in matters of content and orthography, but the differences in content were usually limited to single words and phrases." *Ibid.*, 30. Because of the accuracy and dominance of the Masoretic tradition in ancient times, Tov surmises that the temple authorities produced and transmitted the Masoretic tradition, "Since מ contains a carefully transmitted text, which is well-documented in a large number of copies, and since it is reflected in the rabbinic literature as well as in the Targumim and many of the Greek translations, it may be surmised that it originated in the spiritual and authoritative center of Judaism (that of the Pharisees?), possibly even in the temple circles. It was probably the temple scribes who were entrusted with the copying and preserving of מ. Though this assumption cannot be proven, it is supported by the fact that the temple employed correctors who scrutinized certain scrolls on its behalf. The fact that all the texts found at Masada (dating until 73 CE) reflect מ is also important." *Ibid.*, 28. Lieberman summarizes the Rabbinic opinion of the importance of the Temple Text, "Although it appears from the earlier rabbinic sources that only one authoritative book was deposited in the (archives of) the Temple, it does not follow that other copies were not to be found there. It means only that this book was the standard copy par excellence, the book, as the Rabbis tell us, from which the Scroll of the king was corrected under the supervision of the High Court. A special college of book readers (correctors of scrolls) who drew their fees from the Temple funds, checked the text of the book of the Temple. This is probably the only genuine text which was legally authorized for the public service . . . The copies of the temple were the "most accurate," the most exact books, but the *vulgata* [common texts of the people] continued to exist as the standard texts of the public." Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 22-23. The Septuagint (on the whole, though in places it represents a higher *vulgata*), the Samaritan Pentateuch, and many of the Dead Sea Scrolls represent a lower *vulgata* text (that is, generally accurate texts with interpretive or targumic expansions). The Rabbinic quotations, Targumim, Vulgate, and some of the Dead Sea Scrolls represent a higher *vulgata* text (that is, a more accurate text than the lower *vulgata* texts with less expansions, except for the Targumim which is interpretive or expansive by design). The Masoretic text, particularly the Aleppo and Leningrad codices, are temple texts (that is, the most accurate and authoritative text). Josephus may have claimed to have received the Temple texts from Titus after the destruction of the Temple. "Again, when at last Jerusalem was on the point of being carried by assault, Titus Caesar repeatedly urged me to take whatever I would from the wreck of my country, stating that I had his permission . . . I also received by his gracious favor a gift of sacred books." Josephus, *The Life* (trans., H. St. J. Thackeray, Vol 1; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926) §418 (75), 152-153.
- <sup>52</sup> Some Church Fathers held the same view as Christ and the Apostles that the Hebrew text of their day was equivalent to the Hebrew originals. Sidney Jellicoe states, "But he [Origen] made the initial error, as did Jerome after him, of supposing that the Hebrew current in his day was the original text—the *Hebraica veritas* as Jerome calls it." Sidney Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1968, reprint 1989), 102. If the New Testament's witness is accepted and if the Hebrew Old Testament later became corrupted, then that corruption must have occurred during or after apostolic times. This is most unlikely. Tov says, "When the early witnesses of מ are compared with the consonantal framework of this manuscript dating from 1009 [Leningrad], one realizes how close they are to medieval sources . . . The combined evidence shows that the consonantal framework of מ did not change much in the course of more than one thousand years." Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 30. Later, Tov describes the period

of AD 70 to the eighth century as a time, “characterized by a relatively large degree of textual consistency [in  $\mathfrak{M}$ ].” *Ibid.*, 33.

- <sup>53</sup> Briggs, *Biblical Study*, 162.
- <sup>54</sup> Bowman, “A Forgotten Controversy,” 67-68. For the modern Israeli perspective, see Mordecai Glatzer ed., *Jerusalem Crown: The Bible of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Companion Volume* (Jerusalem: Karger Family Fund and N. Ben-Zvi Printing, 2002).
- <sup>55</sup> Briggs presses this point in rejecting the inspiration of the Scriptures, “But can their [Buxtorf, Heidegger, Turretin, Voetius, Owen, and the Zurich Consensus] theory of *Verbal* inspiration stand without these supports [the vowel points and accents]? Looking at the doctrine of inspiration from the point of view of textual criticism, we see at once that there can be no inspiration of the *written letters* or *uttered sounds* of our present Hebrew text, for these are transliterations of the originals which have been lost, and the sounds are uncertain, and while there is a general correspondence of these letters and sounds so that they give us essentially the original, they do not give us exactly the original. The inspiration must therefore lie back of the *written letters* and the *uttered sounds* and be sought in that which is common to the old characters and the new, the utterance of the voice and the constructions of the pen, namely, in the concepts, the sense and meaning that they convey.” The emphasis is Brigg’s. Briggs, *Biblical Study*, 156-157.
- <sup>56</sup> Notice that the Formula claims to have received the Hebrew original of the Old Testament. The Formula, much like the other creeds of traditional Protestantism, regarded their manuscripts as equivalent or virtually equivalent to the originals manuscripts. “By the original texts,” writes Turretin, “we do not mean the autographs written by the hand of Moses, of the Prophets and of the apostles, which certainly do not now exist. We mean their apographs which are so called because they set forth to us the word of God in the *very words* of those who wrote under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit.” Emphasis mine. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:106.
- <sup>57</sup> Cappellus rejected the elder Buxtorf’s claim that without the vowels and accents the Masoretic tradition could be distorted like wax. Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text of the Old Testament*, 16. The distortion of the accents, vowels, and consonants of the *New English Bible* and others vindicates Buxtorf. Regarding the antiquity of the reading tradition of  $\mathfrak{M}$ , Tov states, “On the other hand, since the biblical texts probably developed in a linear way, one from the other, it is not impossible that some form of a unified reading tradition nevertheless existed, which was adapted time and again to the various attestations of the biblical text ... Nevertheless, the group of  $\mathfrak{M}$  (that is, Hebrew medieval manuscripts and such versions as the Targumim, Aquila, and Theodotion) is rather uniform, even though one should note such instances as Jer 7:3, 7. A single reading tradition for  $\mathfrak{M}$  is also reflected in the practices of *Qere* and *‘al tiqre*.” Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 41-42.
- <sup>58</sup> “Suffer us briefly to say that we have always thought the truer and safer way to keep the authenticity of the original text safe and sound against the cavils of all profane persons and heretics whatever and to put the principle of faith upon a sure and immovable basis, is that which holds the points to be of divine origin, whether they are referred to Moses or to Ezra (the head of the great Synagogue). Therefore, the adversaries err who wish to impugn the authority of the Hebrew manuscript from the newness of the points.” Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:116.
- <sup>59</sup> Tov mentions the *kaige*-Theodotion, Aquila, Symmachus, and the fifth column of the Hexapla as revisions of the Septuagint conformed to the Masoretic Text. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 25. Also see Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study*, 74-133.
- <sup>60</sup> Aaron Ben Moses Ben-Asher, *Torah Nebiim u-Ketubim Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia* (ed., Aaron Dotan; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994).
- <sup>61</sup> The traditional Protestants used the Hebrew text of Jacob Ben Hayyim ibn Adonijah and others since they did not have Aleppo or Leningrad.
- <sup>62</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *New Revised Standard Version*, in *The Complete Parallel Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), To the Reader, xvi.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>65</sup> Writing against Cappellus, Turretin said, “If we are not bound to the present reading of the Hebrew text and the true reading is to be derived partly from a collation of ancient versions, partly from our own judgment and conjectural faculty (so that there shall be no other canon of authoritative reading than that which seems to us to be the fitter sense), the establishment of the authoritative reading will be the work of the human will and reason, not of the Holy Spirit. Human reason will be placed in the citadel and be held as the rule and principle of faith with the Socinians.” Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1:120.

- <sup>66</sup> Jack P. Lewis, *The English Bible/From KJV to NIV* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 110
- <sup>67</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, Robert C. Dentan, and Walter Harrelson, *The Making of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 55, 57, 73-84. This diktat came from the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, the sponsors of the RSV and NRSV, "in eliminating masculine-oriented language relating to people, so far as this could be done without distorting passages that reflect the historical situation of ancient patriarchal culture and society." *Ibid.*, 57. Of course, this inevitably distorts the Scriptures by making biblical personalities speak anachronistically, even politically correct, like a modern English or Feminist Studies professor. This, of course, is the Left politicizing the Masoretic Text and biblical translation. Metzger also writes, "During the almost half a century since the publication of the RSV, many in the churches have become sensitive to the danger of linguistic sexism arising from the inherent bias of the English language towards the masculine gender, a bias that in the case of the Bible has often restricted or obscured the meaning of the original text." Metzger, *The New Revised Standard Bible*, To the Reader, xvii.
- <sup>68</sup> T. H. Brown, "The New English Bible – 1970," *Bible League Quarterly* 281 (April-June 1970): 294. For more examples of the New English Bible and other modern liberal translations reconfiguring the Masoretic text, see Dominique Barthélemy et. al., *Preliminary and Interim Report on the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project* (Vols. 1-5; New York: United Bible Society, 1979-1980).
- <sup>69</sup> Clendenen and Stabnow, *HCSB: Navigating the Horizons in Bible Translation*, 166. See the second section of the appendix for a chart of these statistics.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 167. According to Clendenen and Stabnow, *HCSB: Navigating the Horizons in Bible Translation*, the NASB does not indicate its emendations. *Ibid.*, 169n.2.
- <sup>72</sup> K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, eds., *Torah Nebiim u-Ketubim Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. "Textum masoreticum curavit" H. P. Rieger, "Massoram elaboravit G. E. Weil." (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, (1967-1977, 1997).