One of the most noteworthy developments in the field of Old Testament studies has been the acknowledgment of the importance of the Near Eastern setting of the Old Testament, as over against the old Wellhausen view of Israel as an isolated people. Nowhere is this development more pertinent than in the study of the sapiential or wisdom books: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.

The recognition of many Near Eastern parallels to Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes from very ancient sources calls for a reexamination of the later Greek parallels adduced for Proverbs, and more especially for Ecclesiastes. Although a final degree of unanimity may never prevail over critical opinions, nonetheless it may be safe to say that many of the motifs, even in Ecclesiastes, were anticipated in ancient Near Eastern texts and need not be ascribed to later Greek sources.

One area, however, where Greek ideas and expressions have exercised a very patent and unmistakeable influence on the sapiential books is that of the Greek translations of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. A number of studies on these and other books have been undertaken which, presupposing that the translators had a Hebrew text basically similar to the Masoretic Text, have compared the differences between M and LXX and have then formed conclusions as to the attitudes of the translator which may have led to these differences.

Septuagintal Studies.

The comparison of the Septuagint with the Massoretic Text, however, is fraught with difficulties. There is first of all the lack of a definitive critical edition. Max Margolis recognized this problem and sought to do something about it: he worked for twenty years to produce a critical edition of the Greek version of Joshua. Today, thanks to the recovery of early texts of the LXX in the papyri and the manuscripts from Qumran, we are in a better position to reconstruct the parent LXX text. Among those from Qumran are: leather fragments of Leviticus and of Numbers, papyrus fragments of Leviticus, and a manuscript of the Minor Prophets which represents a “lost” recension of the Septuagint—the old Greek version of the third-second centuries B.C. In addition to the Greek manuscripts we also have Hebrew manuscripts from Qumran such as portions from Exodus, Deuteronomy, and especially from Samuel which represent a text tradition closer to the LXX than to the MT, although not always consistently so.

The new texts of Samuel, especially 4 QSaMa which presents portions of the text of at least two-thirds of the chapters in I and II Samuel, show that Wellhausen and Driver were entirely wrong in considering the LXX translation as so free as often to be a paraphrase of its Hebrew prototype; actually its fidelity to the Hebrew prototype is much greater than has often been assumed. We now know that in the fragments so far described from the Pentateuch and the former Prophets (Joshua-Judges-Samuel-Kings) the Greek translators were almost slavish in their literalism (though they seldom pushed it to the point of absurdity, as later done by Aquila).

Some scholars, notably Harry Orlinsky, have been less enthusiastic, to put it mildly, about a Septuagint-type Vorlage and have warned against over-enthusiasm in this regard when this results from an uncritical use of Kittel’s apparatus. Orlinsky claims that the Hebrew text used by the Septuagint translators and the Massoretic Text are “two recensions of one original text tradition” and explains
the differences between the two as amplifications of the Jewish transcribers of the text rather than as amplifications of the translators into Greek.

The questions that must be asked, then, when the Septuagint differs from the Masoretic Text are: 1) Are the differences due to a radically different Vorlage which has been literally translated? 2) Are they due to a cultural and theological bias of the translator? 3) Are they due simply to stylistic factors? Each text must be examined individually and even then a clear-cut decision may not be possible.

Furthermore, the presupposition of a difference between Hebraic and Greek thinking and expressions may lead to a biased selection of the evidence, as Orlinsky demonstrates in his reviews of some of the comparative studies of the Septuagint and the Masoretic Text. (Cl. also James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, 1961, who criticizes Thorleif Boman's *Das hebratische Denken im Vergleich mit dem Griechischen*, 1954.)

Having issued these caveats we may nonetheless profit from an examination of some of the studies that have been attempted, at the same time conscious that many of the problems have not been made explicit by the authors.

The Book of Job.

Orlinsky sets forth for us the problem of the Septuagint Job as follows:

The Septuagint text of Job frequently lacks single stichoi and verses of the MT; and even groups of as many as 6 and 7 cannot be attributed to the theological bias of the translator. Although, as Orlinsky pointed out, this approach was not new—it had been used by Bickell in 1862 and Dhoron in 1926—it nonetheless inspired a number of other articles, and studies.

Among these was a monograph by Donald Gard, also of Princeton, entitled *The Exegetical Method of the Greek Translator of the Book of Job*. 1952. In this work, Gard collects differences and categorizes them as follows: I. THEOLOGICAL TONING DOWN: arrogance of man before God avoided; removal of the name of God when its retention would detract from the perfect character of God; uses of prepositions to tone down ideas offensive to the Greek translator. II. ANTI-ANTHROPOMORPHISMS: the removal of references to parts of the human body or their functions; references to God as conforming to human behaviour removed; the removal of references to "Sons of God" and to human emotions or mental processes as applied to God. III. DETRACTION FROM THE PERFECT CHARACTER OF GOD AVOIDED: descriptions of God which are avoided or changed (e.g. as those which would portray God as acting arbitrarily); portrayals of God as the agent of destruction or the persecutor of man avoided or changed by the translator.

For example, the MT at Job 12:16 reads: "With him is strength and sound counsel; He that erreth and he that leadeth into error are his." Gard concludes that the translator objected to the implication that one who led into error was also God's, for the LXX has: "With him is might and strength; He hath understanding and knowledge," and does not have the "offensive" second line. The MT at 11:5 reads: "But oh that God would speak and open his lips with thee!" The LXX lacks the anthropomorphic phrase of the second stich, and reads simply: "But how would the Lord speak to thee?"

In the MT of Job 16:13-4, Job describes God's violent treatment of him:

- His archers compass me round about;
- He cleaveth through my reins and doth not spare;
- He poureth out my gall upon the ground;
- He breaketh me with breach upon breach;
- He runneth upon me like a warrior.

The LXX removes God from the picture as the one who inflicts these evils upon Job, and makes the subject an indefinite plural:

- They surround me with lances;
- Having thrown into my kidneys (and) not sparing,
- They poured out my gall upon the ground; etc.

Gard concludes:

The examination of the evidence shows that the translator, a representative of the Hellenistic-Jewish circles, in working on the Hebrew text of Job used a Vorlage which was close to that of M. Thus it was seen that the logical reason for the changes which the translator made in rendering this Vorlage into Greek is that he followed a method of exegesis which is governed by a theological approach.

Orlinsky, on the other hand, in his reviews (of Gard's work in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1954, pp. 251-3; and of Charles T. Fritsch's *The Anti-Anthropomorphisms of the Greek Pentateuch*, 1945, in the *Crasser Quarterly*, 1944, pp. 156-160) and in his series of "Studies in the Septuagint of the Books of Job," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 1957, 1958, and 1959, has been quite critical of these studies. Orlinsky points out that an anti-anthropomorphic revision cannot be assumed throughout; e.g. God's "face" is translated literally three times out of six in Job. Other differences he ascribes to stylistic factors and not to any theological bias. (See also two studies by Orlinsky's students in *HUCA*, 1957: "The Septuagint of Isaiah 36-39 in Relation to that of LXX, 1906-66" by Marshall Hurwitz, and "The Treatment of Anthropomorphisms and Anthropopathisms in the Septuagint of Psalms," by Arthur Soffer.)

The Book of Proverbs.

Like the Book of Job, Proverbs is classified with those renditions which employ paraphrases and free renderings.

The Greek Book of Proverbs includes maxims and illustrations derived from extraneous sources, and metrical considerations sometimes outweigh in the translator's mind faithfulness to his original.17 Gilis Gerleman of Lund has provided us with a study of the Septuagint Proverbs in his article, "The Septuagint Proverbs as a Hellenistic Document," in *Oudtestamentische Studien*, VIII, 1950, pp. 15-25, and in his book, *Studies in the Septuagint. III, Proverbs*, 1950. He finds that the Greek translator has effected a transformation both in style and in content. In the first category are the changes from the synonymous parallelism of the Hebrew into an antithetical parallelism in the Greek to avoid the "monotony of thought" that the former represented to one steeped in Greek style. For example, the MT in Proverbs 17:21 reads: "He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow, and the father of a fool hath no joy." The
LXX has: “A father rejoices not over an uninstructed son, but a wise son gladdens his mother.” Another stylistic variation is the replacement of a Hebrew metaphor. For example, the MT in 10:7 reads: “the memory of the wicked shall rot.” The LXX reads: “the memory of the wicked is extinguished.”

With respect to content, Gerleman notes a tendency to “elucidate and strengthen the religious and ethical bias” of the proverbs. For example the MT 19:22 simply has: “a poor man is better than a liar.” The LXX amplifies this to: “A poor man who is righteous is better than a rich liar.” Gerleman points out that the industriousness maxim of the Hebrew maxims bears little resemblance to the attitude incessantly combated, and despised by the Stoic: that of the fool, with all his substantial cares and troubles, his esteem of wealth, of industriousness as a way to success, his interest in social intercourse, good manners, etc. With this in mind it is interesting to note the transformation of Proverbs 14:23 which reads in the MT: “In all labour there is profit, but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.” In the LXX this becomes: “With every one who is worried there is abundance, but the contented and unsuspicious to distress shall be in want.”

There is evidently a chiasmus here which means that only the poor will be free from sorrows, where as those who have abundance will also have anxieties.

Gerleman also believes that the differences between the MT and the LXX do not arise from a difference Vorlage, but that they arise from stylistic and “theological” factors. (cf. IL. Seeligmann’s reconstruction of Proverbs 11:16, where the MT has two stichoi and the LXX four. Seeligmann considers that the latter arose as a midrashic expansion of the former by the translator. “Indications of Editorial Alteration and Adaptation in the Massoretic Text and the Septuagint,” Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 11 (April, 1961), pp. 219-9)

The Book of Ecclesiastes.

The Greek translation of Qoheleth is so literal that it was suggested by Graetz in 1871 that this might be the work of Aquila. Aquila was a convert from Christianity to Judaism, who lived in the reign of Hadrian (117-138) and who produced a slavishly literal translation of the Old Testament which was intended to set aside the interpretation of the LXX, in so far as the latter appeared to support the claims of Christianity. However, our Greek Qoheleth does not coincide with the portions of Aquila’s translation which were recovered from the Cairo Geniza in 1887. In any case, because of the literalness of the rendition, one would not expect rich comparisons on the one hand, yet one would expect that the comparisons that could be made would have firmer support, on the other hand.

Georg Bertram has provided us with such a study in his “Hebraischer und griechischer Qohelet, ein Beitrag zur Theologie der hellenistischen Bibel,” in the Zeitschrift für die Altestamentliche Wissenschaft, 64 (1952), pp. 26-49. His comparisons and conclusions are as follows: The keyword in M which is “breath of wind” (hebel) becomes “vanity” (mataiotai) in the LXX; that is, a concrete term is replaced by a moral-religious concept. In M one is concerned with the burden or the need to lengthen his life, to create and to earn something. In the LXX the physical burden has been replaced by a psychological burden of sin and unrest of soul. The special burden which God has placed on man as man is in the MT the curse lying on man as formulated in Genesis 3:17; in the LXX this burden becomes the tormenting of oneself with the quest for the meaning of life. The complaint against the transitoriness and senselessness of human striving in the MT is replaced with the accusation against the vanity and willfulness of the human spirit in the LXX.

The phrase rūt ruah, “chasing after wind,” occurs seven times (1:14; 2:11, 17, 26, 4:4; 6:9) and is regularly rendered in the LXX prooestaxis pneumatōs, “waywardness (lit. deliberate choice) of spirit.” In 3:10, the difficult Hebrew word ha’inyan “to afflict with,” or “to occupy with sore labor,” is rendered by the Greek perispaô which means “to draw in different ways,” “to distract.”

On the whole, however, the impression which one receives in actually comparing the two texts side by side is that these variations are few and far between and seem like scant material with which to erect such an elaborate hypothesis. Bertram himself admits: “Der Übersetzer geht unbefangen an seine Arbeit heran und hat keine andere Absicht als die der philologischen Genauigkeit.” “The translator goes about his business without bias and has no interest other than that of philological exactness.” Indeed the translator in places renders idioms quite literally so as to lose the meaning of the original. For example the phrases la’ sot tob and ra’ah tob in 3:12, 13 which mean “to be happy” and “to enjoy happiness” are translated quite literally: “to do good” and “to see good,” poiein agathon and idē agathon. In 5:12 the Hebrew phrase ra’ah holah, literally “sick evil,” which means a “grievous evil,” is rendered arróstia, an “infirmity.” Most of the variations then between the MT and the LXX of Qoheleth are very slight, and are not even due to any pronounced stylistic patterns, much less to any discernible theological bias. They are simply the inevitable discrepancies of a translation.

Conclusion.

There has been a whole new reaction against the former widespread tendency to regard the Massoretic Text as hopelessly corrupt and to make restorations at will on the basis of the Septuagint. The Dead Sea Scrolls have shown that the Massoretic Tradition represents a very ancient and stable tradition. Albright remarked in 1955:

“The greatest textual surprise of the Qumran finds has probably been the fact that most of the scrolls and fragments present a consonantal text which is virtually indistinguishable from the text of corresponding passages in our Massoretic Bible.”

This conviction of the basic trustworthiness of the MT has resulted, on the one hand, in a phenomenon such as Gordis’ commentary on Ecclesiastes in which one hand, in a phenomenon such as Gordis’ commentary on Ecclesiastes in which the differences not on the basis of a different Vorlage, but on the hypothesis of stylistic, theological, and other controlling factors. Others who are not so ready to assume the virtual identity of the Septuagint Vorlage with the MT, nonetheless acknowledge its usefulness. Seeligmann says: “. . . already in the above examples of the Hellenization of transliterations we could not refrain from relying on the Massoretic text as a starting point, and it is clear that in investigating the revisions which occurred in the Septuagint, as well as in any attempt to restore the original reading of this translation, a comparison with the Massoretic text may often prove enlightening.”

On the other hand as already noted above the Dead Sea Scrolls have also given us texts which may belong to a “recension” closer to the LXX than the MT and which indicate that the LXX of the book of Samuel and of others are literal translations of the Hebrew Vorlagen which we now possess. These claims have been strenuously criticized by Professor Olinsky, however. Moreover further studies on the Hagiographa manuscripts from Qumran are necessary before any final conclusions regarding the Sapiential Septuagint can be made.
We note in closing that the Qoheleth fragment from Qumran described by Mittenburg in BASOR, October, 1954, pp. 20-28, gives the coup de grace to Ginsberg's Aramaic theory for the origin of Qoheleth and shows that Qoheleth may have reached canonical status by 150 B.C.}

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FOOTNOTES

3. As is well known, Wellhausen drew his basic scheme of religious and institutional development from Wilhelm West Newton, Mass.

17. See also the table of the different readings of the MT, the LXX, and the Peshitt in Robert Goodl, "Koheleth—his Own World? (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1951), 130 f., and passim.