



The History of the Bible Session 13: Topic 3.2 Analyzing the Copies

Study by
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Overview of Session

- 3.2 Analyzing all these copies: How do we get back to the words originally written in these documents?
 - 3.2.1 Some history of the process called Textual Criticism
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 - 3.2.3 The results of their work: printed Greek and Hebrew texts
 - 3.2.4 How does this work impact your study of the Bible?

Detailed Study

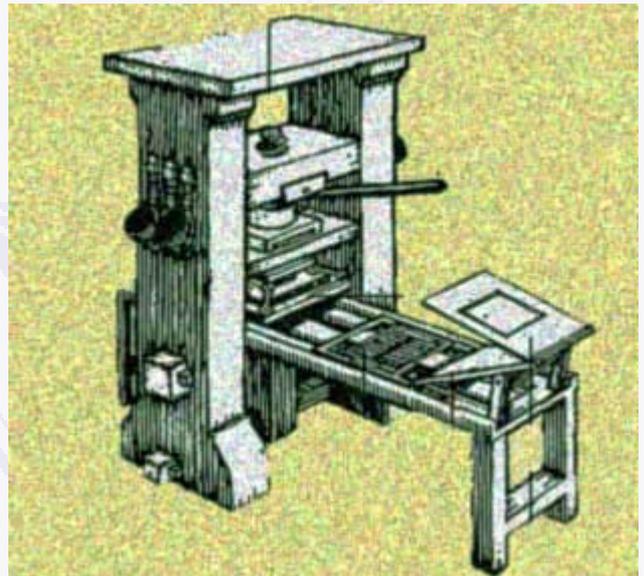
3.2 Analyzing all these copies: How do we get back to the words originally written in these documents?

3.2.1 Some history of the process called Textual Criticism

The beginnings of Textual Criticism as a formal discipline lie outside the study of the Bible. On the European continent the study of folk literature, in England the study of Shakespeare's writings -- these and others areas became the foundation for textual criticism in the modern era. Analysis of different manuscripts of the writings of individuals, to be sure, had been practiced for a long time, many centuries before the modern era. But never with the carefully developed procedures etc. for analysis as is true in the modern period. The history of the transmission of the Vulgate clearly illustrates this.

The dramatic expansion of this discipline is connected to two dynamics.

First, the invention of the printing press created impetus for producing a printed Greek text of the New Testament in the early 1500s. This meant that some hand copied manuscript or collection of manuscripts of the Greek New Testament had to be examined in order to determine the wording of the Greek text for printing purposes. In the early 1500s, many European scholars were feverishly working to be the first one to publish a Greek New Testament. The one who succeeded was the Dutch scholar Erasmus, who published the first Greek New Testament in 1516. This volume and subsequent editions came to be called the *Textus Receptus*.



While in England Erasmus began the systematic examination of manuscripts of the New Testament to prepare for a new edition and Latin translation. This edition was published by Froben of Basel in 1516 and was the basis of most of the scientific study of the Bible during the Reformation period (see Bible Text, II., 2, § 1). He published a critical edition of the Greek New Testament in 1516 - *Novum Instrumentum omne, diligenter ab Erasmo Rot. Recognitum et Emendatum*. This edition included a Latin translation and annotations. It used recently rediscovered additional manuscripts. In the second edition the more familiar term *Testamentum* was used instead of *Instrumentum*. But it was the third edition that was used

by the translators of the King James Version of the Bible. The text later became known as the *Textus Receptus*. The first and second editions' text did not include the passage (1 John 5:7-8) that has come to be known as the *Comma Johanneum*. This appears to be a basis of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, but it is, most likely, a forgery. The Roman Catholic Church decreed that the *Comma Johanneum* was open to dispute (June 2, 1927), and it is rarely, if ever, included in modern translations. Erasmus published three other editions - in 1522, 1527 and 1535. Erasmus dedicated his work to Pope Leo X as a patron of learning, and he regarded this work as his chief service to the cause of Christianity. Immediately afterwards he began the publication of his *Paraphrases of the New Testament*, a popular presentation of the contents of the several books. These, like all of his writings, were published in Latin, but were quickly translated into other languages, with his encouragement. [Wikipedia, "Erasmus"]

27. 15. 11.
M. R. L.
ei Iudaei. Nobis non licet
interficere quenquam. Ut
sermo Iesu impleret, quem
dixit significans, quae mor-
te esset moriturus. Intro-
iuit ergo iterum in prae-
torium Pilatus, & vocavit
Iesum, & dicit ei, Tu es
ille Rex Iudaeorum? Res-
pondit Iesus, A te accip-
so tu hoc dicis, an alij di-
xerunt tibi de me? Respon-
dit Pilatus, Num ego Iu-
daeus sum? Gens tua &
Pontifices tradiderunt te
mihi? Quid fecisti? Respon-
dit Iesus, Regnum meum non
est ex hoc mundo. Si ex

αὐτῶ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι. καὶ ἐκ ἕξουσι ἀ-
ποκτεῖναι ἐδίδα. ἵνα ὁ λόγος ᾧ Ἰη-
σοῦ πληρωθῆ, ὅτι εἶπε, σημαίνων,
ὅτι οὗτο ἔσθαι ἡμετέραν ἀποθέτησιν.
ἠεὶ ἔλθεις ἐμῶ ἐπὶ τὸ πραιτώριον πρὸς
λαὸν ὁ πῖλατος ἐ ἰφωτιστὶ τὸ ἰησοῦ,
καὶ ἔπειν αὐτῶ, σου ἢ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆ
Ἰουδαίας; ἀπεκρίθη ὁ ἰησοῦς, ἀφ' ἰου-
δαίου τῆτο λέγεις, ἢ ἄλλοι σοι εἶπον
αὐτῶ ἡμεῖς; ἀπεκρίθη ὁ πῖλατος, μή
τι ἔγω Ἰουδαῖος εἰμὶ; τὸ ἕθνος τὸ το-
κῆν οἱ ἄρχιερεῖς παρεδωκῶ σοι.
μοί. τί ἰποίησας; ἀπεκρίθη ὁ ἰησοῦς,
ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ ἐκ ἐστὶ ἐκ οὐρανοῦ

Copy of Erasmus' text with the Vulgate in the left column and his Greek text in the right column. Erasmus represents the beginning of the so-called "Textus Receptus," the received text.

This printed Greek text and subsequent editions became the basis for translating the New Testament in the various European languages for the next two hundred years. This to the slim extent that those translations consulted an original language text, rather than depending exclusively on the Vulgate as the foundational text for translation.

Second, the emergence of biblical archaeology in the eighteen hundreds gradually began uncovering more and more manuscript fragments and occasionally virtually complete texts of the New Testament. These copies went further back in time than the few manuscripts that Erasmus had used to produce his printed Greek text. As more and more texts of the Bible were discovered, biblical scholars began noticing increasing variations of wording from the text of the Textus Receptus. The discovery of Codex Alexandrinus in the early 1800s became a catalyst for much of this, since it was a fifth century copy of virtually the entire text of the New Testament. The manuscripts used in the Textus Receptus only went back to the middle ages. So here was a Greek text reaching back centuries farther than anything connected to the Textus Receptus. And, most importantly, it contained numerous differences in wording from that of the Textus Receptus. Increasingly, biblical scholars became alarmed about the trust worthiness of the Greek text that lay underneath the translations in the Textus Receptus.



Over the past 150 years, we have moved from having access to barely a dozen very late and very inferior Greek manuscripts of the New Testament to over 5,300 manuscripts. Many of these manuscripts move to within four centuries of the original writings of the documents of the New Testaments, and, in a few instances, manuscript fragments move to with a century of the compositional date. Many of these manuscripts are very high quality, as well as being dated very early. Add to this, the discovery of ancient translations in Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Georgian and other languages. This pushes the available texts of the New Testament in translation form back to within a few centuries of the original writing dates. Complementing this still growing mountain of evidence are the lectionaries written in Greek that quote large portions of the New Testament. Additionally are the Church Fathers, especially those who wrote in Greek, and who also quote from the Greek text of the New Testament being used in their writing.

Unlike the challenge with the ancient Hebrew and Greek texts of the Old Testament where very few manuscripts go back to within a few centuries of the original date of writing, scholars in New Testament Textual

Criticism face the huge challenge of sifting through literally thousands and thousands of ancient manuscripts as they attempt to get at the most likely reading of the original writing of the New Testament documents. A systematic method of evaluating all this evidence becomes essential.

Thus the sources of manuscripts for comparing the text of the New Testament are as follows:

Greek texts:

- Greek manuscript copies of all or a part of the text of the New Testament
- Lectionaries that quote various passages of the Greek New Testament

Ancient Translations of the New Testament

Church Fathers that quote various passages of the Greek New Testament

From these sources, scholars carefully compare the wording of the Greek text of the New Testament in order to determine the most likely original wording of the text. It is a painstaking process that is very labor intensive. And it follows very precise guidelines that have been developed over the past two hundred years.

3.2.2 A glance at how the experts do it

The essence of this procedure is first to compare **external evidence**, that is, available manuscripts for the scripture text. Then **internal evidence**, i.e., patterns of scribal writing showing up inside the Greek text, is analyzed. When a variety of alternative “readings” of a word, phrase etc. shows up in a scripture passage, then both the external and internal evidence are compared in order to draw a conclusion regarding “the most likely original reading” of the Greek text.

The possible readings are evaluated **externally** by (1) how early the manuscript support is for each reading, by (2) widely geographical regions the readings existed in, and by (3) which text family or tradition they belong to. The earlier a certain reading is, the more widely distributed it is geographically, and the more text types it can be found in, the stronger is the evidence supporting a certain reading of the text.

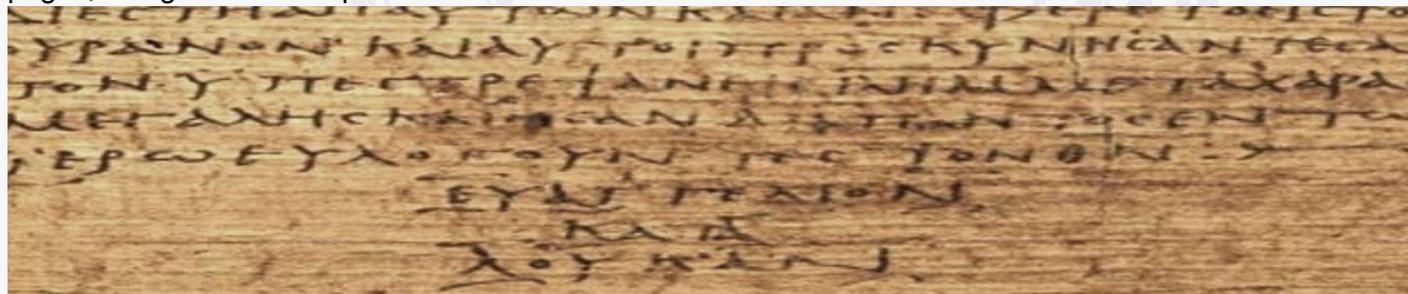
Internally, two areas of evaluation are use: (1) what the scribes probably did when copying the New Testament (Transcriptional Probabilities), and (2) what the author most likely wrote himself (Intrinsic Probabilities).

For a more detailed explanation see my “EVALUATION OF VARIOUS READINGS ACCORDING TO THE THEORY OF RATIONAL ECLECTICISM” in Supplementary Helps in Greek 202 at cranfordville.com in the Academic Section (in pdf file format). It is summarized by the following chart:

<p>EVALUATION OF EXTERNAL EVIDENCE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Date. 2. Geographical Distribution. 3. Textual Relationships. <p>Summary of the External Evidence</p>	<p>EVALUATION OF THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transcriptional Probabilities, i.e. what scribes likely did when copying the N.T. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Shorter/Longer Reading. (2) Reading Different from Parallel. (3) More Difficult Reading. (4) Reading Which Best Explains Origin of Other(s). 2. Intrinsic Probabilities, i.e. what the author himself likely wrote. <p>Summary of Internal Evidence</p>
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In the UBS 4th revised edition of the Greek New Testament, the critical apparatus applies this procedure and then rates the reading used for the text with a grading system. An “A” represents the highest level of confidence and a “D” the lowest level of confidence. The descending scale of certainty reflects a balancing of weight among the possible readings so that one cannot be as certain about which one of the readings was the original. The alternative readings, called variant readings, have less evidence supporting them.

Some representative types of ancient copies of the Greek New Testament are shown on the following pages, along with brief explanations:

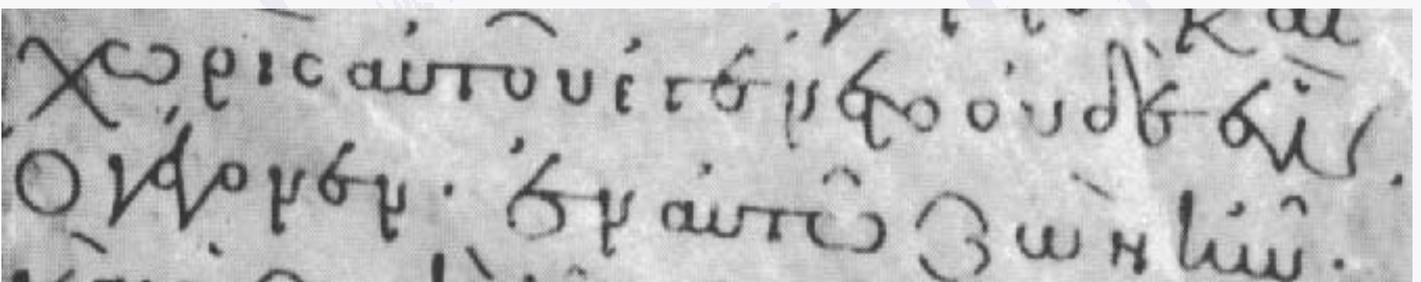




This manuscript is Papyrus 66 that dates from about 200 AD. The all caps Greek writing was done on papyrus, the most common writing material of that time. P66 contains most of the Gospel of John.

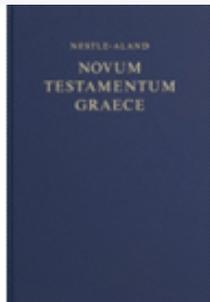


This manuscript is Uncial Sinaiticus (01) that dates during the fourth century AD. It was written on parchment, the material that became common after Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. It contains virtually all of the New Testament



This is a minuscule manuscript and illustrates a later “script” style (hand writing) of writing that developed toward the end of the ancient period. It became the dominant way of writing Greek and thus most all the later manuscripts of the Greek New Testament are written in this style of writing. Previously Greek had been “printed” using only capital letters, as can be seen from the two above manuscripts written on papyrus and parchment.

3.2.3 The results of their work: printed Greek and Hebrew texts



For students of the Greek New Testament, the two most commonly used printed Greek texts of the New Testament are *The United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* fourth revised edition and the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* 27th edition. Both provide a “critical apparatus” at the bottom of each page that lists the major manuscripts supporting the possible alternative readings. The Logos Bible Software site has a helpful explanation of these features for both the Greek New Testament and the Hebrew Old Testament. For the instructions and examples that I use with the Greek 202 students when they begin practicing the procedure



see my “EVALUATION OF VARIOUS READINGS ACCORDING TO THE THEORY OF RATIONAL ECLECTICISM” in Supplementary Helps in Greek 202 at cranfordville.com in the Academic Section (in pdf file format). For another very helpful summation of the history of Text Criticism, see Ronald J. Gordan’s Comparing Translations.

From these two illustrations below of the UBS text and then the Nestle-Aland Greek texts you can see something of what they look like. I have indicated by label and highlighting the Greek text, then the Critical Apparatus and also the cross references to other verses in each one.

UBS 4th rev ed **ΚΑΤΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ** **Jn 1:1-5**

Text **The Word Became Flesh**

1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.^a **2** οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.^b **3** πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν.^c ὃ γέγονεν^d **4** ἐν¹ αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν², καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων. **5** καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.^e

Critical Apparatus

¹ 3-4 {B} οὐδὲ ἓν. ὃ γέγονεν ἐν Φ^{75c} C (D οὐδὲν for οὐδὲ ἓν) L W^{supp} 050* 0141*^{vid} (0141^c omit ὃ γέγονεν) it^b vg^{ww}. st syr^c. (pal) cop^{sa} Heracleon^{acc.} to Origen Ptolemy^{Flora} Ptolemy and Valentinians^{acc.} to Irenaeus Theophilus Irenaeus^{lat.} arm Clement Naassenes and Perateni^{acc.} to Hippolytus Hippolytus Heraclides and mss^{acc.} to Origen Origen Letter of Hymenaeus Alexander Eusebius^{15/19} Arians^{acc.} to Epiphanius Athanasius Marcellus Meletius Cyril-Jerusalem (Apollinaris) Gregory-Nyssa Eunomius Didymus^{dub} 2/3 Macarius/Symeon Epiphanius^{6/10} Heretics^{acc.} to Chrysostom Cyril Hesychius^{2/5} Theodoret^{3/5}; Tertullian Cyprian Novatian Victorinus-Rome Ambrosiaster Hilary Ariani^{acc.} to Ambrose Ambrose^{6/7} Chromatius many people^{acc.} to Jerome Jerome^{12/18} Augustine // οὐδὲ ἓν. ὃ γέγονεν: ἐν 28 205 1241 1524^{vid} 1858 11016 // οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν. ἐν \aleph^2 Θ Ψ 050^c f¹³ (1 1071 οὐδὲν for οὐδὲ ἓν) 33 180 565 579 597 700 892 1006 1010 1243 1292 1342 1424 1505 Byz [E F G H] Lect vg^{cl} syr^p. h cop^{bo} arm eth geo slav Adamantius Alexander^{mss} Eusebius^{4/19} Didymus^{dub} 1/3 Ps-Ignatius Epiphanius^{4/10} Chrysostom Theodore Marcus-Eremita Paul-Emesa Hesychius^{3/5} Theodoret^{2/5} (John-Damascus); Egyptians^{acc.} to Ambrose Ambrose^{1/7} Jerome^{6/18} // οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν ἐν (without dots) (Φ^{66} \aleph^* οὐδὲν for οὐδὲ ἓν) Φ^{75} A B Δ 1253

² 4 {A} ἦν $\Phi^{66,75}$ A¹ B C L Δ Θ Ψ 050 0141 0234 f¹ f¹³ 28 33 180 205 565 579 597 700 892 1006 1010 1071 1241 1243 1292 1342 1424 1505 Byz [E F G H] Lect vg syr^p. h, pal cop^{bo} arm geo slav Diatessaron^{arm} Irenaeus^{lat} mss Clement^{rom} Theodotus Clement^{3/5} Origen^{gr.} lat 1/2 Eusebius Didymus^{dub} Macarius/Symeon Epiphanius Chrysostom Cyril Hesychius Theodoret; Victorinus-Rome^{1/5} Jerome Augustine^{12/22} // ἔστιν \aleph^2 D it^a. aur. b. c. e. f. ff². q vg^{mss} syr^c. cop^{sa} eth Diatessaron^{syr} Ptolemy^{acc.} to Irenaeus Valentinians^{acc.} to Irenaeus Irenaeus^{lat} Naassenes and Perateni^{acc.} to Hippolytus Clement mss^{acc.} to Origen Origen^{lat} 1/2; Cyprian Victorinus-Rome^{4/5} Ambrosiaster Hilary Ambrose Gaudentius Augustine^{10/22} // omit W^{supp}

^a 1 SP: WH ^b 2 P: NIV ^c 3 NO C: (TR) AD NA^m M RSV TEV Seg FC NIV VP Lu NJB^m TOB REB NRSV^m // as text: RSV^m REV^m Seg^m FC^m Lu^m REB^m // ^d C: TR AD NA^m M RSV TEV Seg FC NIV VP LU NJB^m TOB REB NRSV^m // as text: RSV^m TEV^m Seg^m FC^m Lu^m REB^m ^e 5 NO P: TOB

References
 1-2 Jn 17.5; 1 Jn 1.1-2 1 ὁ λόγος Re 19.13 3 Wsd 9.1; Jn 1.10; 1 Cor 8.6; Col 1.16-17; He 1.2 4 ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν Jn 5.26 5 Jn 3.19

that one can work through in order to gain a feel for doing this kind of work.

3.2.4 How does this work impact your study of the Bible?

At least two areas of consequence will be seen for the reader of the English Bible. **First**, Bible translation means that the translators have to have a Greek New Testament in hand as the starting point for translation. You can't "translate" without a source text to translate. In today's world of Bible translation, this means the use of the most reliable Greek text possible, since the goal is to translate into English the most likely wording of the original text of the New Testament documents. Textual criticism is the procedure for establishing that Greek text as far as is humanly possible.

The consequence of this will also mean that sometimes when different English translations have significantly different wording in passages, they are working from different Greek texts of the New Testament. This will particularly be true when comparing the King James Version to an English translation produced in the second half of the twentieth century onward. Also the New King James Version and the 1979 Revised King James Version will use a sometimes radically different Greek text than the other English translations.

Another impact will be seen in the more recent English translations in their footnote system. For example, the *New Revised Standard Version* has a footnote in the middle of 1:18. The printed translation reads: "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son,^{e/F5} who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known." Footnote ^{e/F5} then reads: "Other ancient authorities read *It is an only Son, God, or It is the only Son.*" What this difference in translation means is that the manuscripts of this verse in John differ on their wording of the text. The weight of evidence is not decisive one direction or the other. The translators of the NRSV concluded on one reading of the Greek text and then gave their English translation based on that understanding. But they are being honest with us readers by inserting a footnote to suggest how the English translation would differ if the one of the two other possible readings of the Greek text were adopted.

Bibliography: How do I learn more about this?

Online:

Textual Criticism:

James R. Adair, Jr. "Old and New in Textual Criticism: Similarities, Differences, and Prospects for Cooperation":

<http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/vol01/Adair1996.html>

Lengthy article written for the SBL seminar presentation by a former student of mine comparing similarities and differences between OT and NT Textual Criticism.

Wikipedia, "Textual Criticism":

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_Criticism

General article on the practice of copying ancient manuscripts of all kinds of literature, including the OT, the NT, and classical writings.

Tony Seid, Interpreting Ancient Manuscripts:

http://www.earlham.edu/~seidti/iam/interp_mss.html

Very helpful web site on Textual Criticism with numerous graphics illustrating manuscripts and procedures.

New Testament Textual Criticism:

New Testament Gateway, "Textual Criticism":

<http://ntgateway.com/resource/textcrit.htm>

The Encyclopedia of New Testament Textual Criticism:

<http://www.skypoint.com/~waltzmn/>

Wikipedia, "Uncial":

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uncials>

Lorin Cranford, "Learning Textual Criticism," cranfordville.com:

<http://cranfordville.com/g202TxtCritStdy.html#Wk1>

Section of fourth semester Greek studies, Greek 202, designed to introduce the practice of textual criticism to students of biblical koine Greek.

Old Testament Textual Criticism:

Old Testament Textual Criticism:

<http://www.skypoint.com/~waltzmn/OTCrit.html>

Hebrew Old Testament, "Textual Criticism":

<http://www.bible-researcher.com/links08.html>

August Meek, "The Old Testament," *Catholic Encyclopedia*:

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14526a.htm>

Article traces the manuscript transmission of the text of the Old Testament.

Bruce K. Waltke, "Aims of OT Textual Criticism," *Westminster Theological Journal* 51.1 (Spring 1989): 93-108:

http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_textual_waltke.html

Article discusses what OT Textual Criticism hopes to accomplish by comparing various objectives over the modern era.

