

**GENERAL INTRODUCTION  
TO THE OLD TESTAMENT:  
THE TEXT**

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General Introduction to the Old Testament: The Text by William Henry Green

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION  
TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE TEXT

BY

WILLIAM HENRY GREEN, D.D., LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF ORIENTAL AND OLD TESTAMENT LITERATURE IN PRINCETON  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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## PREFACE

The subject of the Canon of the Old Testament was discussed in a previous volume. The history of its formation was traced, the determining principle of its collection was considered, and the books contained in it were identified. One who is entering upon the study of these books will further desire to inquire into the character and condition of their text. The first thing to engage attention is the language in which the Old Testament was originally written, in its relation to other forms of human speech, and its special adaptation to be the vehicle of this preliminary revelation. The history of Hebrew as a living language will bring to light diversities of usage in different styles of composition and in different periods of time; and it is a matter of interest and importance to inquire whether any facts ascertained tend to discredit the genuineness of the books of Moses in whole or in part. And the history of its study since Hebrew ceased to be spoken will show what reason there is to believe that it is correctly understood by modern scholars. The changes which have taken place in its written characters naturally suggest the inquiry whether they have in any way proved detrimental to the accuracy with which the text has been preserved, or have injuriously affected its interpretation. And in particular the origin and authority of the vowel points must be investigated in order to ascertain whether they

can be confidently relied upon as a trustworthy guide to the meaning of the sacred text.

The question then arises, how has this original text of the Old Testament been transmitted to us, and what guarantee is there of the fidelity and care with which this has been done? This leads to the consideration of manuscripts, their various classes, the oversight extended over them, the rigid rules prescribed for their transcription, their age, their wide dispersion and general character. The Old Testament was besides early translated into various languages, and these ancient versions still exist. It is important to know something of the character and history of these versions, that some judgment may be formed of the value of the testimony which they render respecting the primitive text. Manuscripts, Versions, the quotations of Scriptural passages in early writers, and their statements about them, including that vast body of critical annotations known as the Massora, comprise the apparatus available for tracing the history of the text from age to age during the long interval which has elapsed from the time of the sacred writers to the present day. They constitute likewise the material for what is technically called textual criticism, the object of which is to ascertain with the utmost possible precision the exact words of the sacred penmen, as determined by a minute and painstaking examination of all external authorities.

PRINCETON, N. J.,  
November 1, 1899.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## THE TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

### I.

	PAGE
ITS EXTERNAL FORM . . . . .	1

Written mainly in Hebrew, a few sections in Aramaean, 1.

### II.

THE SEMITIC FAMILY OF LANGUAGES . . . . .	2
---	---

Early attempts to discover the primitive language, 2; wrong methods, 3; eight families, three groups, isolating, agglutinative, inflective, 4; unity approximated, if not demonstrated, Indo-European and Semitic families differ as to external or internal flexion, 5; constitution of roots, alphabets, 6; trilateral roots, derivative forms, 7; comparative richness in inflections, number of branches, fluctuating or stationary, 8; respective character of races, adaptation to the Old Testament revelation, 9; pictorial or reflective, 10; definite or indefinite, 11; fitted for preliminary revelation, different names, 12; home of the Semitic family, principal branches, 13; their mutual relation, 14.

### III.

THE HEBREW LANGUAGE . . . . .	15
-------------------------------	----

Derivation of the name, 16; Hebrew, Israel, Jew, Grecian, Hebrew language, 17; dialects or provincialisms, 18; prose and poetry, 19; Arabisms, Aramaisms, prophetic style, 20; periods, 21; deterioration, objection to the antiquity of the Pentateuch answered, 22-24; alleged Aramaic forms and words of late date in the document P, 25,