

Glossary of Terms Relevant to Textual Criticism

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Textual Criticism or Lower Criticism is the study of a literary work to establish the original text. In biblical studies, it refers specifically to the discipline of analyzing, collating, and comparing all the witnesses to the text of Scripture with a view to identifying the precise wording of the original biblical writings. It is a welcome discipline to those who affirm the verbal inspiration of Scripture.

Key Terms

Autographa

- The actual document written by the inspired author's own hand or by his secretary (amanuensis). Compare 1 Cor. 16:21 and Rom. 16:22.

Corrupt

- To alter from the original or correct form of the text. In this sphere of usage it does **not** have moral or pejorative connotation; it simply refers to a reading at variance with the original.

Edition

- A printed (published) form of the text (applicable both to original language texts or versions).

Majority Text

- The largest number of witnesses that agree on any given reading. It would be possible for a given manuscript to be sometimes in the majority and sometimes in the minority.

Manuscript

- The actual document of the copied text. It could be complete or incomplete, on papyrus or parchment, written in uncial or minuscule, etc.

Received Text (Textus Receptus)

- In 1516, Erasmus published the first edition of the Greek NT with just a few late manuscripts to collate. Later editions were based on similar manuscripts. The translators of the KJV used Erasmus' text, the Complutensian Polyglot (published 1520), Stephanus' text, and Beza's text. The 1598 edition of Beza and the last two editions of Stephanus were the chief sources. The Elzivir brothers of the Netherlands published several editions of the Greek NT essentially the same as that of Erasmus, Beza, and Stephanus. In the Latin introduction to the 1633 edition, Elzivir stated that this text was "the text received by all." This expression "textus receptus" was later applied to the Stephanus' text of 1550.

Text families or recensions

- One way of grouping manuscripts together that share certain affinities.

Variant Reading

- The particular part of the text (word, phrase, paragraph, etc.) that differs between manuscripts. The variants are either intentional or unintentional. Again any reading at variance with the original is said to be corrupt.

Version

- A translation of a text.

Witnesses to the Text

- Manuscripts, ancient versions, patristic evidence.