

# Textus Receptus

The term **Textus Receptus** is Latin meaning "Received Text". It comes from the preface to the second edition of a [Greek New Testament](#) published by the brothers Elzevir in 1633. In this preface the Elzevirs wrote, *Textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum: in quo nihil immutatum corruptum damus* "What you have here, is the text which is now received in which we give nothing changed or corrupted." <sup>[1]</sup> From this statement comes the term Textus Receptus or TR, which today is commonly applied to all editions of the printed Greek NT before the Elzevir's, beginning with Dutch humanist [Desiderius Erasmus](#) (1496-1536) and his first published edition in 1516.

## Background

Erasmus was the author of five published editions from 1516 to 1535. His consolidated Greek text was based on only seven minuscule manuscripts of the Byzantine text type that he had access to in Basel at the time, and he relied mainly on two of these - both dating from the twelfth century. <sup>[2]</sup>

Although many point to obvious limitations and certain short-comings in Erasmus' first Greek text, later editors used it as their starting point, making minor revisions as needed based on additional Greek manuscript evidence.

Robert Estienne (known as Stephanus) (1503-1559) edited and printed four editions from 1546 to 1551. His third edition of 1550 was the first to have a critical apparatus, with references to the Complutensian Polyglot and fifteen additional Greek manuscripts. The fourth edition of 1551 had the same Greek text as the third, but is especially noteworthy for its division of the NT books into chapters and verses, a system still in use today. <sup>[3]</sup>

[Theodore Beza](#) (1519-1605) published four independent editions from 1565 to 1604. His text was essentially a reprinting of Stephanus' third edition (1550) with minor changes.

The third edition of Stephanus (1550) became the standard form of the Greek NT text in England and that of the Elzevirs (1633) on the continent. <sup>[4]</sup> The Stephanus 1550 text as given in Beza's edition of 1598 was the main source for translators of the 1611 King James Version of the Bible.

## Scrivener's Textus Receptus (1881)

The Scrivener 1881 text was produced by Frederick Henry Ambrose Scrivener in an attempt to reconstruct the Greek text underlying the King James or Authorized Version of 1611. <sup>[5]</sup>

The KJV translators never published the Greek text from which they worked, so Scrivener attempted to reverse-engineer the text by examining the various texts that would have been available to them. Scrivener merely matched various readings (primarily the Beza and Stephanus texts) to fit the English used by the KJV translators. Thus the Scrivener text properly belongs to the family of Textus Receptus.

In several places, the 1611 KJV translators apparently depended upon readings from the Latin Vulgate

for which there was no supporting Greek text and in these cases Scrivener followed the closest Greek reading possible. Therefore Scrivener's text does not quite perfectly conform to the KJV text, although it is perhaps the closest that could have been done without having to rely on Latin readings lacking Greek manuscript authority.

This Scrivener 1881 text is supposedly identical to the 1894 edition which was published posthumously and has been reprinted by the Trinitarian Bible Society. There is no single Greek manuscript that represents the Textus Receptus, for the more than 30 varieties of the Textus Receptus were all eclectic texts formed by incorporating variant readings.