

**A.J. Brown (ed.)**

*Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami. VI-4 Novum Testamentum ab Erasmo Recognitum, IV Epistolae Apostolicae et Apocalypsis Iohannis* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). 698 pp. ISBN 9789004202153.

The appearance of the *New Instrument* (later changed to *Testament*) of Erasmus of Rotterdam by Froben in Basel before Easter of 1516, in which a Latin version purified by Erasmus stands next to the entire Greek New Testament, marks the beginning of modern Biblical scholarship. Erasmus' edition was dedicated to and warmly received by Pope Leo X. Erasmus' new accompanying Latin version, not intended to replace the Latin Vulgate in public usage or theological discourse, but designed for private study, was used by educated Catholics for instruction and edification. A famous defense of Erasmus' New Testament was penned by St. Thomas More, and, according to Edward Surtz, St. John Fisher used it as his primary version of the New Testament in public lectures, disputations, sermons, and exegesis.

Erasmus' text, revised four times over the next two decades, was the first printed Greek New Testament ever to be published. In addition to the achievement of making widely available the published Greek text, Erasmus' new Latin translation marked a radical departure from the medieval Vulgate of which St. Jerome (d. 419) had been the original editor-in-chief. Erasmus' Greek text laid the foundation for the *Textus Receptus*, which has had an enduring influence. His parallel Greek text and accompanying Latin translation formed the basis of sixteenth-century German and English vernacular translations of the New Testament, by Martin Luther and William Tyndale respectively (Tyndale's version was later adapted by the translators of the Authorized Version, or "King James" of 1611). After Protestantism was introduced into Germany and England in the 1520's and 30's, these particular vernacular translations of Erasmus' text were incorporated into the public liturgies of Protestant churches. Thus contrary to the original purposes of Erasmus' endeavor, vernacular translations of his Greek/Latin text were used liturgically. Inadvertently and unbeknownst to Erasmus, a translation of his New Testament text formed and edified the souls of German and English Protestant Christians for centuries to come.

In this volume Andrew J. Brown of London has presented Erasmus' Greek and Latin New Testament text (1 Timothy–Apocalypse) in two parallel columns, above a critical apparatus showing the variants of the five folio editions (1516–1535). The accompanying commentary by Brown analyses the printed and manuscript sources, and assesses the accuracy and also the defects of Erasmus' text-critical work. An extended introduction includes new information and dis-

cussion regarding the codex Montfortianus and the famous passage about the “three heavenly witnesses” (1John 5:8).

The Introduction is divided into two parts: pp. 1–26 which summarizes the portion of Erasmus’ Greek and Latin New Testament contained in this volume; and pp. 27–111, an excursus on Codex 61 (Montfortianus) and 1John 5:7–8. In the principal introduction, the Greek manuscripts used by Erasmus for his 1516 edition are discussed. Here we learn that where his codices 2815 and 2817 agreed with each other, they generally produce the text found in most other New Testament manuscripts of the Byzantine period. In some passages, however, Erasmus’ reliance on one or other of these manuscripts led him to adopt poorly attested readings which found their way into the *Textus Receptus*. In the Apocalypse, Erasmus’ sole Greek manuscript was codex 2814 borrowed from Reuchlin. Erasmus was mistaken about the age of this manuscript, assuming it to be more than a thousand years old. In any case he was forced to reconstruct the Greek text of many passages that contained errors, and he did so based on the late Latin Vulgate readings available to him. However, he did not always inform his readers of this procedure in the Annotations, which led to the mistaken assumption among his readers that his edition was supported throughout by Greek manuscript authority. In truth many of his readings in the Apocalypse had little or no attestation in Greek manuscripts, yet some of them became established in the *Textus Receptus*, receiving the status of divinely inspired scripture.

Brown offers an example of this procedure based on Apoc. 1:11 and discusses the reasons why Erasmus’ work fell short of the ideal to which he aspired: namely, he had an imperfect knowledge of Greek and he depended on a late form of the Latin Vulgate text, which meant that his retranslations into Greek merely reproduced the errors that had been introduced by medieval scribes. At the same time, many of Erasmus’ textual choices were successful. Within the limits of the knowledge available to him, he attempted to bring his Greek text closer to the wording of the original author.

Brown discusses Erasmus’ use of the Complutensian Polyglot, concluding that Erasmus believed that his retranslations of the Greek text of the Apocalypse were substantially correct. Yet in at least fifty passages, listed on pp. 21–22, Erasmus retranslated passages in the Apocalypse that have little or no manuscript support, yet were retained by the *Textus Receptus*. In each case, it is virtually certain that these Greek retranslations were made by Erasmus from a late form of the Latin Vulgate and have no support from Greek manuscripts earlier than the sixteenth century.

The second part of the Introduction is an 84 page essay on Codex 61 (Montfortianus) and 1John 5,7–8. I will begin by saying that modern New Testament