

# Revelation 1:8 – An Example of How a Printing Error Became a “Received Text”

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Individuals can still be found today who defend the proposition that the “Received Text” of the Greek NT is closer to the original wording of the NT as originally written than texts informed by modern methods and materials. In fact, one can even find individuals who will defend the proposition that one particular edition of the Received Text represents perfectly the exact wording of the original text of the NT. In such cases, it is almost always the eclectic edition of the Greek text created by the King James Translators from 1604-1611 that is defended as a verbally perfect representation of the original autographs. Kohlenberger noted the composite nature of this text in his lecture at the SBL commemoration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the KJV, “It is safe to say that, given their resources, the KJV translators worked from an eclectic text. Certainly they did not exclusively follow any one text. Nor did they, as some noncritical writers claim, limit their choices to what could be found in the texts that would later be called the *Textus Receptus* (TR).”<sup>1</sup> As Trobisch noted in a similar vein when describing the Greek text of the KJV NT, “Obviously, the translators of the KJV had created their own eclectic Greek text, a text that followed neither a specific manuscript nor a specific printed edition.”<sup>2</sup> This text was printed for the first time in 1881, by F. H. A. Scrivener, as a companion volume to the Revised Version of 1881. Despite the amazing amount of scholarly data that renders such claims impossible, it is still not uncommon to find individuals claiming that the Scrivener text is the exact wording of the autographs. The most ironic element of this claim is that they typically claim to believe the TR is the “preserved” Word of God in Greek, and that the KJV (and only the KJV) is the “preserved” Word of God in English. But of course the word “preserved” presumes a prior existence. The Greek text behind the KJV NT didn’t exist until, well, the KJV. And it didn’t exist in print until 1881. As Scrivener notes in the preface to his text (which is sadly removed from most modern editions of the TR that seem to want to hide the origins of the text), explaining the reason for editing and publishing it, “The publication of an edition formed on this plan appeared to be all the more desirable, inasmuch as the Authorized Version was not a translation of any one Greek text then in existence, and no Greek text intended to reproduce in any way the original of the Authorized Version has ever been printed.”<sup>3</sup>

But the phrase “Received Text” or TR is often used to refer not just to Scrivener’s text, but to basically any edition of the Greek NT which is influenced by the edition of Erasmus in 1516. Erasmus was the first to publish a printed Greek text, and thus no edition of the “Received Text” or the “Textus Receptus”

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<sup>1</sup> Kohlenberger, John, “The Textual Sources of the King James Bible” pg. 51 in *Translation that Openeth the Window*. David Burke, ed. The work is primarily a compilation of lectures delivered at the Society of Biblical Literature symposium in 2003 honoring the 400 year anniversary of the KJV.

<sup>2</sup> Trobisch, David, pg. 228, “The KJV and Text Criticism,” in, “*The King James Version at 400*” (eds. Burke, Kutasko, and Towner), pg. 227-234.

<sup>3</sup> Scrivener, “*The New Testament in the Original Greek According to the Text Followed in the Authorised Version Together with the Variations Adopted in the Revised Version*,” pg. vii.

existed until Erasmus in 1516. It is rather common knowledge that mistakes made in the first edition of Erasmus' NT in 1516 came to be perpetuated for several hundred years. Contrary to claims that the Received Text was the text in use for a millennium or more, the Received Text was in fact only dominant for a few hundred years, basically from 1516 until Lachmann and Tregellas began publishing Greek texts based on actual Greek manuscripts (instead of just working from the printed text of Erasmus, as previous editors had done) in 1831, 1844, and 1872. Some scholars will note that it was not until 1881 that the Textus Receptus was "dethroned," but the foundations for this overthrow were in fact set up far prior to that time, and in any case it was a "throne" only held for a few hundred years. What needs to be demonstrated for those claiming verbal perfection for any edition of the TR is how easy and common it was for simple errors to be perpetuated throughout the various editions of the TR. We will take a simple test case, and show the progression.

In the book of Revelation, it is well known that Erasmus had only one Greek manuscript to use when compiling his Greek/Latin diglot.<sup>4</sup> He borrowed this manuscript from his friend Reuchlin for the work. What is not as commonly known is that the manuscript he had is what is known as a "commentary manuscript." That is, it is technically not a copy of Revelation, but a commentary on Revelation by Andreas of Caesarea. Andreas wrote this commentary in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The copy Erasmus had was penned in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This commentary quotes the text of Revelation throughout the text, but this at times makes it almost impossible to tell where the text of the commentary ends and the text of the biblical writer begins. Thus, Erasmus, often found it hard to ascertain the text of Revelation (this is all the more so, since he was looking for a form of the text which would match the Latin Vulgate he was using as a guide). This manuscript today is known in the Gregory-Aland numbering System as "Miniscule 2814."

In Revelation 1:8, Erasmus (or perhaps his printer Froben or whatever assistants may have been aiding in the setting of the type) made a simple error of omission. Any modern English translation will read something like the ESV, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty*" (Rev. 1:8 ESV). The KJV however, following the Erasmian form of the text, reads rather, "*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord \_\_\_\_, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*" (Rev. 1:8 KJV). Note that the KJV has omitted the "God" from this text. This is all the more significant as this was a commonly used proof-text in early Christian authors to assert the deity of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> Yet the KJV has removed this important witness to the deity of Jesus. Why? Because the mistake of Erasmus was perpetuated in each of the TR editions. Let us look briefly at how this mistake took place.

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<sup>4</sup> Erasmus himself explained this, though he claimed much higher importance for the manuscript than it warranted. See Brown, Andrew, ASD VI-4, pg. 3-6.

<sup>5</sup> In a study of the *Andreas Commentary*, Constantinou notes, "Because of its powerful potential in Christological debates, this particular verse was among the most popular citations of Revelation by the Fathers. The Apocalypse was cited far less frequently than other New Testament books because of its unusual content. However, this verse was among the most popular especially in dogmatic works defending the divinity of Christ. For example, Origen cited this verse to prove that Christ was with the Father in the beginning and shares the glory of the Father. "And that you may understand that the omnipotence of Father and Son is one and the same, as God and the Lord are one and the same with the Father, listen to the manner in which John speaks in the Apocalypse: 'Thus saith the Lord God, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.' For who else was 'He who is to come' than Christ?" ... It was in this context that Gregory the Theologian cited this verse as part of a string of verses supporting the divinity of the Son

Every Greek manuscript of Revelation in existence reads, “Saith the Lord God.”<sup>6</sup> Herman Hoskier, (who, incidentally, strongly opposed the textual theories of Westcott and Hort, though he would never have claimed perfection for the TR as some do today), spent 30 years collating all of the Greek manuscripts of Revelation known in his day. Note that while there are 5,839 extant Greek NT manuscripts, only a few are copies of a complete New Testament. Thus, there are some books which have more manuscript attestation than others. There are some 363 manuscripts which contain part or all of Revelation, but many of these don’t have the first page, where this verse is located, or don’t have the section with this passage. Hoskier examined all of the manuscripts of Revelation which do have this passage. He lists the following manuscripts (using his own numbering system) which have the longer reading (that is, the modern ESV reading);<sup>7</sup> κ, C, A, B, P, 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 58, 59, 61, 62-63, 64, 67, 69, 70, 72, 73, 74, 75, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 132, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 142, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160/1, 162/3, 164/5, 166, 167, 169, 170, 172, 174, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 184, 188, 190, 191, 192, 193, 201, 202, 204, 206, 207, 208, 210, 211, 212, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223/4, 226, 227/8/9/30, 233, 236, 240, 241, 242, 244, 245, 246, 250, 251. There is a slightly different word order in 200, and 84, (which still contains the whole phrase), but it doesn’t affect translation, and still translates as, “saith the Lord God.” According to the eminent collator Hoskier, there is not a single Greek manuscript that omits “God.” And this stands true even today.<sup>8</sup>

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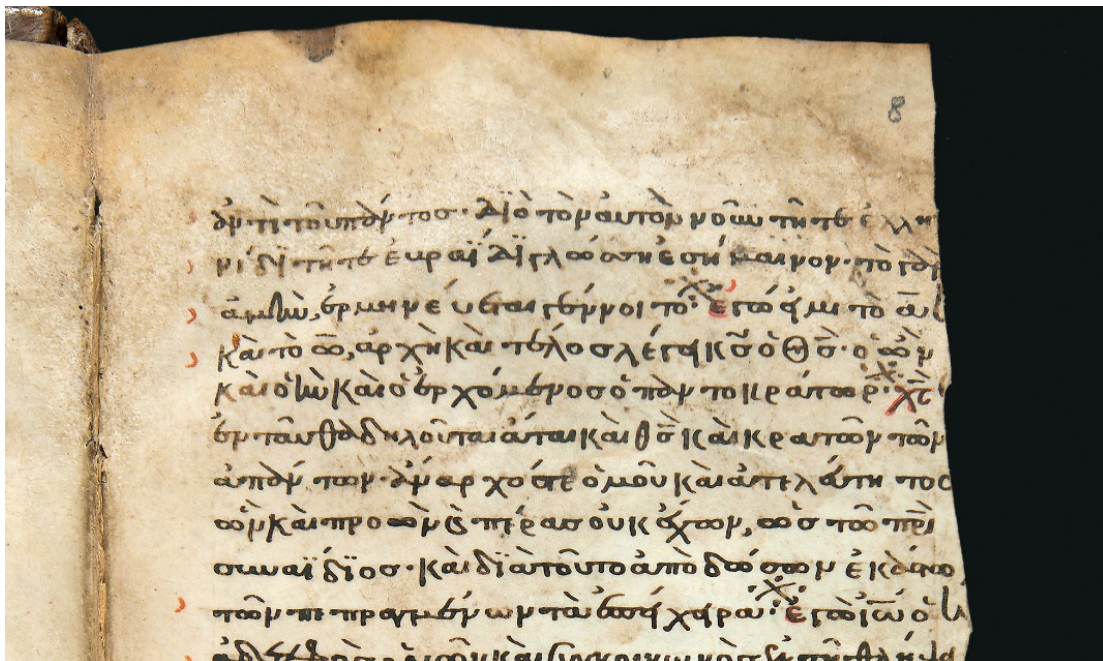
against the Arian heresy (Or. 29.17).” (*Andrew Of Caesarea And The Apocalypse In The Ancient Church Of The East: Studies And Translation* Part 2, pg. 21-22, fn. 89). Though of course, its primary potential here lies in its reference to preexistence, rather than John’s use of the word, “God.”

<sup>6</sup> The INTF lists 251 continuous text Greek manuscripts which are extant that contain Revelation 1:8, from the 5<sup>th</sup> century and later, and none apparently show an omission of the phrase. They list, using now the modern GA numbers, (there are 7 papyri extant for Revelation, P18, P24, P43, P47, P85, P98, P115, but none that contain the first section of the book), Majuscules 01, 02, 04, 046, 056, 0250, 0272; Miniscules 18, 22, 35, 42, 61, 69, 82, 88, 91, 93, 104, 141, 149, 172, 175, 177, 203, 205, 218, 250, 254, 256, 296, 314, 325, 336, 337, 339, 365, 367, 368, 386, 424, 432, 452, 456, 459, 467, 468, 469, 498, 506, 517, 522, 582, 616, 617, 620, 627, 628, 632, 664, 680, 699, 743, 757, 792, 808, 824, 829, 911, 919, 920, 922, 935, 986, 1006, 1064, 1072, 1075, 1094, 1248, 1328, 1384, 1424, 1503, 1551, 1597, 1611, 1617, 1626, 1637, 1685, 1704, 1719, 1728, 1732, 1733, 1734, 1740, 1745, 1746, 1751, 1760, 1768, 1771, 1773, 1775, 1776, 1777, 1780, 1795, 1828, 1835, 1849, 1852, 1854, 1859, 1862, 1864, 1865, 1876, 1888, 1903, 1943, 1948, 1955, 1957, 1991, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2031, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2083, 2084, 2138, 2186, 2196, 2200, 2201, 2254, 2256, 2258, 2286, 2302, 2305, 2323, 2329, 2344, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2402, 2403, 2428, 2429, 2431, 2334, 2436, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2554, 2582, 2594, 2595, 2625, 2626, 2638, 2656, 2667, 2669, 2672, 2681, 2716, 2723, 2743, 2759, 2794, 2814, 2821, 2843, 2845, 2846, 2886, 2891, 2909, 2917, 2918, 2919, 2920, 2921, 2922, 2923, 2926.

<sup>7</sup> Hoskier, Herman, *Concerning The Text of the Apocalypse*, Vol. 2. Pg. 36.

<sup>8</sup> His full collation of the manuscripts known in his day has not been shown wrong by the continued collations of those same manuscripts or the discoveries of the few manuscripts found since his time. Thus, for example, Tischendorf, the

Interestingly, in this case, even the copy of Andreas' commentary from which Erasmus created his Greek text has the "God" in it. And when we examine the text of the manuscript in conjunction with the first printed edition of Erasmus, the cause of the error becomes obvious. The eighth folio of miniscule 2814, recto, is shown below,<sup>9</sup>

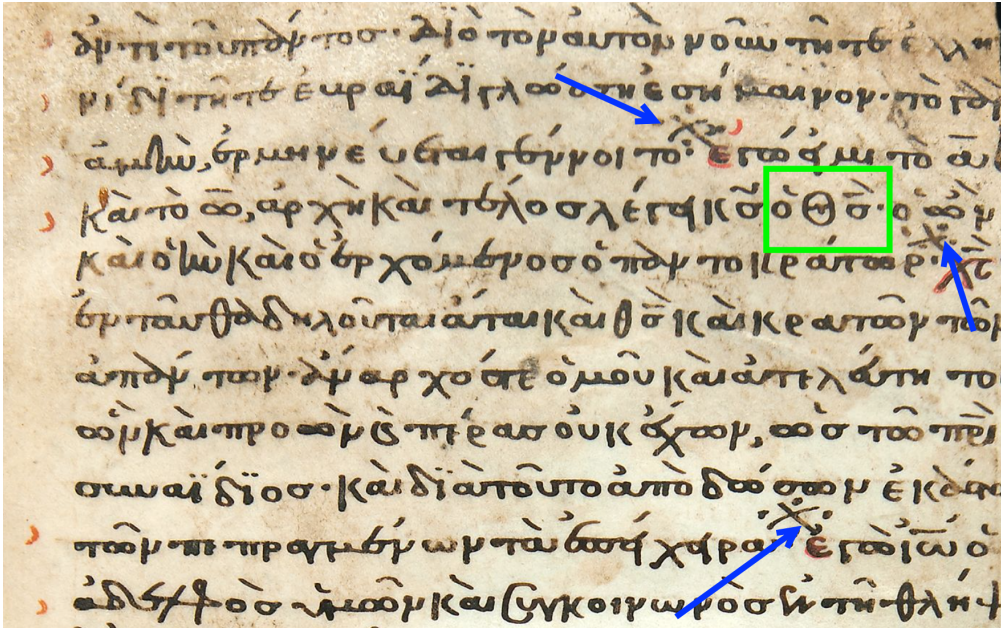


Note that the right hand section of the page is missing. Note also that someone (presumably Erasmus and Froben) has used a system of red chalk markings to try to keep track of what section of the manuscript is the text of the Revelation and what section is the commentary of Andreas. It would appear an earlier scribe had marked this with a simple X at the beginning and ending of each section of biblical text, above the line, but Erasmus also took red chalk and marked over the first letter at the beginning and ending of the biblical quotation. Revelation 1:8 is present in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> line down, set off by the X and traced red letters. Notice in the 4<sup>th</sup> line down the phrase, *λεγει Κυριος ο Θεος*, or "saith the Lord God." It is written using the abbreviated *nomina sacra*, thus it appears as, *λεγι [saith] Κο [the Lord] ο Θσ [God]*, with the abbreviated *ει* symbol "I" and various accent marks that I cannot reproduce in electronic print). Here it is with the phrase for "God" (*ο θσ*) highlighted in green and arrows pointing to the beginning and end of the biblical text,

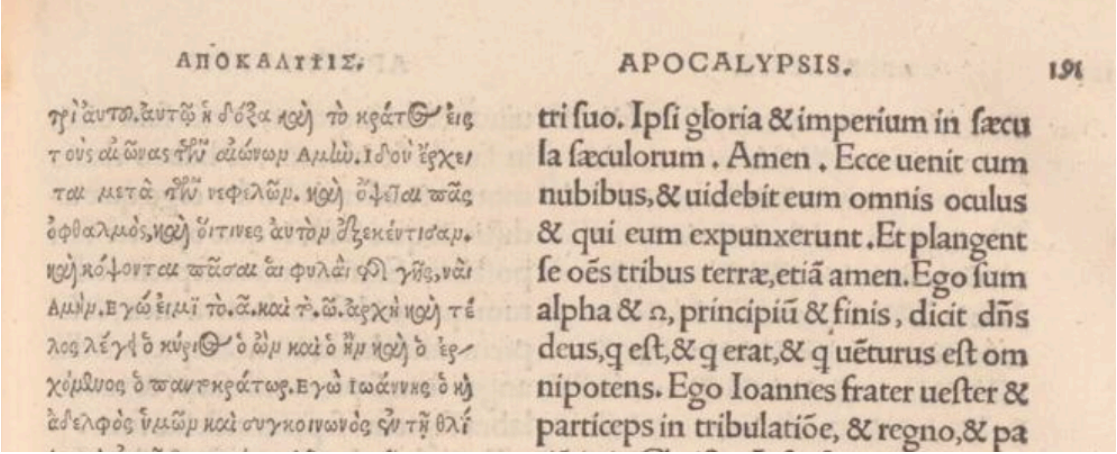
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NA 28 and UBS5 contain no note in the textual apparatus here. This is because a textual variant is a difference of reading between manuscripts, and this is rather a difference between all manuscripts in unison and some early printed texts like the TR. It is not technically even a textual variant. The CNNTS lists it only because they lists both manuscripts and texts, and their apparatus shows that the TR omits the phrase, but still has no manuscript support for it. Brown does seem to imply that some copies of printed Greek texts that were made by hand after the 16<sup>th</sup> century do contain it, though these can only be called "manuscripts" in the sense of being handwritten.

<sup>9</sup> The full manuscript is available for viewing at the website of the library which holds it, [http://digital.bib-bvb.de/R/YK2CRT8MQ8BJG7UV49KBFCUPYBYVH56YCM1B3B7NLSQAXU9BPS-02783?func=collection-result&collection\\_id=2642](http://digital.bib-bvb.de/R/YK2CRT8MQ8BJG7UV49KBFCUPYBYVH56YCM1B3B7NLSQAXU9BPS-02783?func=collection-result&collection_id=2642)



It is quite clear that Erasmus did not intend to remove the phrase shown in the green square (“God”). When he and Froben worked together to print his first edition in 1516, they set the Greek text on one side, and a revised edition of the Latin Vulgate on the other side. The main purpose of the work was the revision of the Latin Vulgate, and the Greek text was included to substantiate the new Latin text. But in the Latin text, Erasmus did not make the mistake. Thus, in Erasmus’ own Latin text, printed in the column beside the Greek text, one sees the full phrase, (with the abbreviated form for “Lord,” *Dñs*), including the “God” as “*dicit dñs deus,*” or “saith the Lord God.”<sup>10</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Erasmus, *Novum Instrumentum*, 1516, pg. 191. Viewable at the CSNTM website here [http://images.csntm.org/PublishedWorks/Erasmus\\_1516/Erasmus1516\\_0261a.jpg](http://images.csntm.org/PublishedWorks/Erasmus_1516/Erasmus1516_0261a.jpg) See the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> lines down in the right column for the Latin phrase, and the 7<sup>th</sup> line down in the Greek column on the left for its omission, with the Greek reading simply λεγει ο κυριος [with the final -ος written with the common abbreviation used also in the first line], or “saith the Lord,” with the “θεος” or “God” accidentally left off.

Note the common abbreviation for the letters -ος used at the end of the κυριος (“Lord,” no longer written as a *nomin sacrum*).<sup>11</sup> When printers set type, they pulled pieces of type from a box with two basic compartments. The top or “upper case” had the capital letters, and the bottom or “lower case” had the regular letters. Presumably the blocks for abbreviations were contained in the upper case. When they set the type for the word, “Lord” (*kurios*), they probably made a mental note that the word ended in a sigma (σ/ς), and that the next word started with an omicron (ο). Reaching for the abbreviation block apparently caused a slight distraction.<sup>12</sup> Thus, when the person setting the type returned their eye to the manuscript, their eye apparently accidentally jumped to the sigma at the end of “Θσ,” (God) and so they picked up the next sentence with the “ο ων” (who/which is). Thus, they accidentally omitted “God” from the text, and destroyed a common proof-text for the deity of Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

All of the Greek manuscripts had the “God” in them, including even the one Erasmus used to compile his text. Further, even the Latin Vulgate (from which Erasmus corrected his text on occasion) has the “God” in it, reading, “*dicit Dominus Deus,*” or “saith the Lord God.”<sup>14</sup> Even the comprehensive Wadsworth and White edition of the Latin text with apparatus, which includes information from more Latin manuscripts than any other, shows that every known Latin manuscript has the “God” in it.<sup>15</sup> All the patristic citations of the passage (noted above) have the “God” present. All known Versional evidence has the “God.” The support for the full phrase is literally unanimous, across all Greek manuscripts, all the early versions, and all the patristic data. There is actually no textual variant here at all. Erasmus made a simple mistake. Had it been an intentional choice, and had he been intending to alter the text, he would have altered the Latin text as well. Further, he would have defended his alteration from the Latin Vulgate in his annotations, which he does whenever he makes a textual alteration. But while we find him commenting on the importance of the phrase “first and the last,” that is his only notation on verse 8.<sup>16</sup> In other words, the omission of “God” here from the Greek column of his text was simply a mistake. But as so often happened in that age, such mistakes got perpetuated rather than corrected. In fact, in this case, they got compounded.

When Erasmus later revised his text for the other editions, he typically didn’t have even the manuscripts he had initially borrowed while at Basil to compile his first edition, and for the book of

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<sup>11</sup> Note Oikonomides, Al. N, “*Abbreviations in Greek Inscriptions, Papyri, Manuscripts, and Early Printed Books,*” pg. 201, though he doesn’t seem to list the exact abbreviation, unless the printer is employing the almost identical abbreviation for σο or σα, which Oikonomides does list. In any case, that the symbol is being used to abbreviate “οσ” is clear from the use of the same symbol in the first line.

<sup>12</sup> This distraction would be all the more likely to occur, since the symbol abbreviating, “ος” is very similar to the Θ in the manuscript.

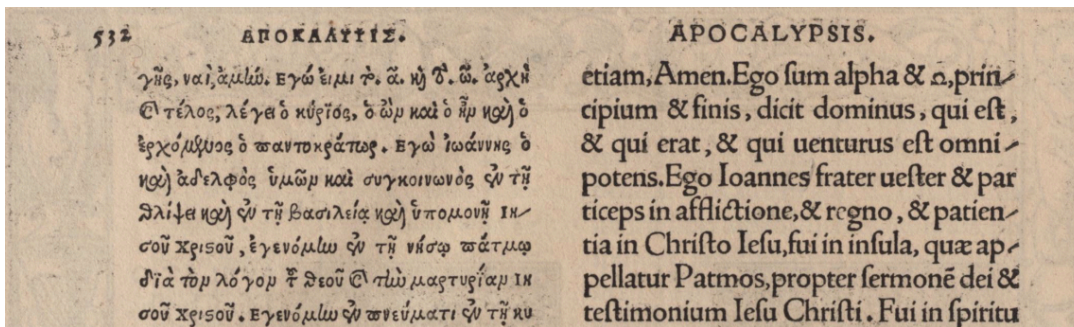
<sup>13</sup> While I had written the bulk of this paper before purchasing the expensive ASD volume by Brown, I was pleased to discover that he had likewise suggested a simple printer’s error, which, as he notes, “remained in the *Textus Receptus.*” (Brown, ASD VI-4, comment on Rev. 1:8).

<sup>14</sup> *Biblia Sacra Vulgata* pg. 1882.

<sup>15</sup> J. Wadsworth, and H. J. White, “*Novum Testamentum Domini Nostri,*” Oxford, 1889-1954. Vol. 3, pg. 424.

<sup>16</sup> Erasmus, *Novum Instrumentum*, 1516, pg., 671.

Revelation, he never consulted any other manuscripts from which to correct his text for the later editions of 1519, 1522, 1527, and 1535.<sup>17</sup> He relied on the Aldine edition of the Greek text to make corrections, unaware that it had in fact reprinted his own Greek text,<sup>18</sup> which had the unfortunate result that he later thought some of the readings of his initial text to have had Greek support, not realizing that in some cases the “support” was simply his own text, reprinting his own errors. Assuming his text to have been the text of the Greek manuscripts, he failed to realize that in some cases his errors had created a new text, which he then mistakenly thought to be a supported one.<sup>19</sup> This is one such case. Thus, in his later revisions of the Greek and Latin text, he assumes he must have had some evidence from the Greek manuscripts for omitting the “God” from the Greek text. So he still leaves it out. But since he presumes there to be Greek support for it, he now corrects his Latin text to match his earlier Greek text, removing the “*Deus*” or “God” from it. Note his second edition of 1519,<sup>20</sup>



Thus, his new mistake at this point not only leaves a Greek text in his left column which has never been found in any Greek manuscripts, his own arrogance in presuming himself correct causes him to create a Latin text in his right column which has never been found in any Latin manuscript! Had he actually had any Greek evidence (instead of just assuming that his initial text had been correct), he would have noted it in his annotation. But his annotation on verse 8, even in his final edition of 1535, still refers only to the importance of the phrase “first and the last,” with no note whatsoever about an intentional change to the text here.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Brown, ASD VI-4, pg. 7, who also notes, “After the completion of his first edition, Erasmus did not make use of additional manuscripts to amend his text of the Apocalypse...” (Brown, ASD VI-4, pg. 11).

<sup>18</sup> Krans notes, “It seems that Erasmus never realized that the text of the New Testament in the Aldine edition is derived from his own first edition.” (Krans, Jan, “*Beyond What is Written: Erasmus and Beza as Conjectural Critics*” pg. 57 f.n. 16.) Brown explains, “Unfortunately, he made the mistake of believing that the 1518 Aldine Bible was a wholly independent work, having a different manuscript basis, whereas the Aldine was in most respects a copy of his own edition and contained relatively few readings that were taken from additional manuscripts.” (ASD VI-4, pg. 12).

<sup>19</sup> See Jan Krans work for numerous examples of this mistake on Erasmus’ part, e.g. Pg. 60-61.

<sup>20</sup> Erasmus, *Novvum Testamentum*, 1519 pg. 532, viewable here, [http://archive.thulb.uni-jena.de/hisbest/rsc/viewer/HisBest\\_derivate\\_00000207/BE\\_0236\\_0652.tif](http://archive.thulb.uni-jena.de/hisbest/rsc/viewer/HisBest_derivate_00000207/BE_0236_0652.tif) the relevant portion is the second line down in both columns.

<sup>21</sup> Erasmus, “*Annotationes*” vol. 2., 1535, pg. 777.

Unfortunately, someone reading his text would now mistakenly assume that he had both Greek and Latin support for omitting “God” when he in fact had neither (in fact, since he notates no changes, the unwary reader would assume him to have had unanimous support from the whole of both Greek and Latin manuscripts, when precisely the opposite was the case). As Brown explains, “If Erasmus had taken steps to obtain more copies of additional Greek manuscripts of the Apocalypse, or had made a more systematic comparison with the Complutensian Polyglot for his 1527-1535 editions, he would have been in a position to correct almost every passage where his Greek text had previously been translated from the Vulgate. Because he did not do so, and because his Annotations did not reveal how he had reconstructed the text of those passages, it was mistakenly assumed that his edition was supported throughout by Greek manuscript authority, including those passages which rested solely on conjecture or retranslation from a Latin source. Consequently, in the Apocalypse, many readings which had little or no attestation from Greek manuscripts became established in the *Textus Receptus*, and forms of wording which Erasmus himself originated were mistakenly accepted as authentic and given the status of divinely inspired scripture.”<sup>22</sup>

This is, sadly, exactly what happened with Stephanus and Beza at this point (and many others). They left the mistake of Erasmus in the text, perhaps not even fully realizing it was a mistake. Stephanus notes with an asterisk the “ο θεος” (“God”) that has been left out, listing Greek manuscripts that have the “God,” but apparently desiring to leave Erasmus’ mistake corrected only in the margin, (or perhaps even assuming, like Erasmus had, that there had been some Greek support behind the mistake, though he clearly doesn’t know of any, and doesn’t list any).<sup>23</sup> This was a common editorial practice. He lists no manuscripts to support the omission, because he knows of none. Beza makes no mention of the difference, printing in his Greek column the Greek text of Erasmus, in his center column his Latin translation of Erasmus’ text (which thus both don’t have the “God”) and then in his right column the Latin Vulgate, which does have it.<sup>24</sup> He also may have thought Erasmus to have had some Greek manuscript support, but he clearly doesn’t know of any, and does not provide any in his notes. He thus perpetuates the mistake of Erasmus. In 1675, Bishop John Fell printed his little noticed Greek text proposing to collect variants from 100 Greek manuscripts.<sup>25</sup> He seems to note<sup>26</sup> in the lower apparatus of pg. 608 that none of the Greek manuscripts omit the phrase, but he retains the text of Erasmus in his text, only noting differences in the apparatus. In 1707, John Mill’s volume was more widely used and seems to have added even more information from his collation of data from presumably the same 100 Greek manuscripts.<sup>27</sup> He also leaves the text in Stephanus’

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<sup>22</sup> Brown, ASD VI-4, pg. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Stephanus, *Novum Testamentum* 1550, pg. 174.

<sup>24</sup> Beza, *Novum Testamentum* 1598, pg. 525.

<sup>25</sup> Fell, John, 1675. *Novi Testamenti Libri Omnes. Accesserunt Parallela Scripturæ Loca, necnon variantes Lectiones ex plus 100 MSS. Codicibus et antiquis versionibus collectæ* [All of the Books of the New Testament, Augmented by Parallel Scripture References, and by a collection of the various Readings from more than 100 Codex Manuscripts and from the ancient versions]. *Oxonii, e Theatro Sheldoniano* 1675.

<sup>26</sup> I say, “seems to,” because the PDF copy I have is rather difficult to make out, especially in the center of the relevant note in the lower apparatus. The note appears to be the final two lines of the apparatus entry for that page.

<sup>27</sup> Note that some say he only employed 80 Manuscripts.



form without the “God” (which is still Erasmus’ form; and he most often doesn’t correct Erasmus in his actual text, though there are exceptions), but in the footnote, he notes that the “ο θεος,” has been omitted. He repeats the manuscript evidence that Stephanus had mentioned which had it, and adds to this a variety of other manuscripts which all have it. In addition, he points out that all the versional evidence he knows has it (Vulgate, Syriac, Arabic, etc.). He does not list any witnesses that omit the “God” and apparently does not know of any manuscripts in Greek (or in any language) that would support it. But he sadly only makes this correction in his footnote, rather than the text.<sup>28</sup>

The text remained uncorrected until Tregelles, in 1844, chose to edit a Greek text of Revelation from the actual manuscripts, rather than just reprinting the errors of Erasmus as so many others had done from 1516-1843. Tregelles was a passionate believer and a strong conservative with an unshakable orthodoxy and a deep love for the Bible. He opposed liberalism and rationalism at every turn. He was driven by his love for the Bible as the Word of God to be as precise as possible in setting forth its text, removing errors made in the Erasmian age. As he noted when explaining the importance of textual criticism, “It behooves those who value the revelation of God in his word, both for their own sakes and on account of others, to be really grounded in biblical study: that which is merely superficial will not suffice; it would only be enough to enable the sharpness of the edge of skeptical objections to be felt, causing, perhaps, serious injury, without giving the ability needed to turn the weapon aside: while, on the other hand, fundamental acquaintance with the subject, may, through God’s grace, enable us so to hold fast the Scripture as a revelation of objective truth, as to be a safeguard both to ourselves and to others. The truth of God is as a rock assailed by waves; each in succession may seem to overwhelm it, but the force of each is in measure spent on that which has preceded it, and modified by that which follows. Each wave may make wild havoc amongst the detached pebbles at its base, while the rock itself is unmoved and uninjured. It is as thus knowing our grounds of certainty, that we have to maintain the Scripture as God’s revealed truth. Some have, indeed, looked at critical studies [that is, textual criticism] as though they were a comparatively unimportant part of biblical learning. This must have arisen from not seeing the connection between things which are essentially conjoined. These studies contain the elements of that which has to be used practically for the most important purposes. They are the basis on which the visible edifice must rest. The more we rightly regard Holy Scripture as the charter of that inheritance to which we look forward, and which we know as given at the price of the Saviour’s blood, the more we shall be able to estimate the importance of TEXTUAL CRITICISM, by which we know, on grounds of ascertained certainty, the actual *words* and *sentences* of that charter in the true statement of its privileges, and in the terms in which the Holy Ghost gave it.”<sup>29</sup> Driven by his love for Scripture, he thus printed the text, now including the phrase accidentally omitted by Erasmus (and also correcting numerous other mistakes of Erasmus).<sup>30</sup> Modern Greek texts and modern English translations from them have followed his example in rejecting the mistakes of Erasmus to prefer a form of the text based on actual Greek manuscripts.

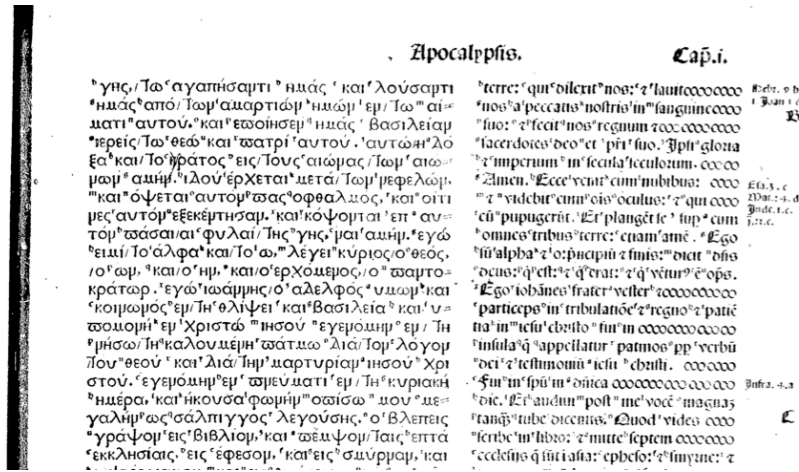
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<sup>28</sup> Mill, *John Novum Testamentum*, 1707, pg. 766.

<sup>29</sup> Tregelles, Samuel P. from his preface to “*An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament with Remarks on its Revision upon Critical Principles*” pg. vii-viii.

<sup>30</sup> See Tregelles, Samuel P. “*The Book of Revelation in Greek, Edited from Ancient Authorities, with a New English Version and Various Readings.*” 1844, London.

Of course, if someone were printing a Greek text and was *not* influenced by the mistake of Erasmus, we would expect their text to contain the phrase. And we have an excellent example of just such a circumstance. The Complutensian Polyglot edited by Stunica (among others) was printed in 1514. It was, technically, printed before Erasmus, though its publication was delayed until 1522. Thus, its Greek text lacks the Erasmian mistakes of the TR editions.<sup>31</sup> And of course, it has the phrase present both in the Greek and Latin columns,<sup>32</sup>



When Tyndale and other English translators translated the text for the space of some 300 years, they almost always<sup>33</sup> translated from printed texts influenced by Erasmus rather than from actual Greek manuscripts (which is why in places like this such errors can go unnoticed for a long time). Thus entered into the early English Bibles a form of the text that had never existed in any manuscript in any language at any time prior. When the KJV was created from 1604-1611, it was created as a revision of the 1602 Bishop’s Bible, making it essentially just one more of the revisions of Tyndale to have appeared. It almost always draws its particular readings (in a sort of conglomerate composite) from the variety of English translations that had appeared prior to it. The KJV translators essentially retained the reading of the Geneva Bible here,<sup>34</sup> and thus perpetuated in the KJV a form of the text that has never existed in any manuscript, in any language. It is simply an error of omission, repeatedly perpetuated.

<sup>31</sup> Thus, for example, it doesn’t have Acts 8:37, which Erasmus inserted from the Latin Vulgate. It doesn’t have Matt. 6:13, which Erasmus inserted. It does have the comma Johanne in I John 5:7, but it has a marginal note which makes it clear that the passage is Stunica’s own insertion from the Vulgate, and the text provides an excellent example of their differences of translation, and the polyglot translates the Latin Vulgate differently than Erasmus did when he inserted the comma as his translation into Greek of the Latin Vulgate text.

<sup>32</sup> Note the 10<sup>th</sup> line down in the Greek text on the left, and the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> lines down in the Latin text. Images of the Polyglot are available at, [http://www.cspmt.org/pdf/printed\\_editions/Complutensian%20Polyglot%201520.pdf](http://www.cspmt.org/pdf/printed_editions/Complutensian%20Polyglot%201520.pdf)

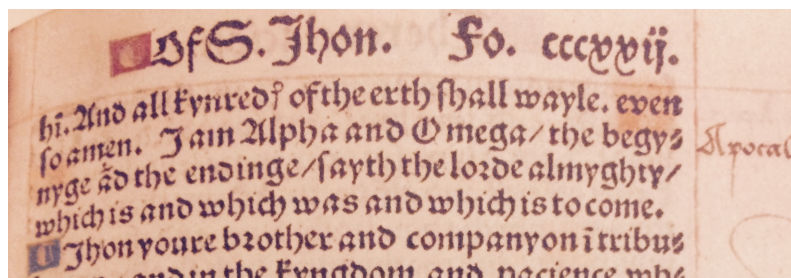
<sup>33</sup> The notable exception would be the Wycliffite Bibles of course, which, translating from the Latin Vulgate, were not influenced by the error of Erasmus here, and thus read, “*seith the Lord God*” which is the reading of all the Latin and (incidentally) all of the Greek manuscripts here.

<sup>34</sup> They typically preserve the reading of the 1602 Bishop’s Bible they were commissioned to revise, but in this case they disagreed with a translation issue there. Tyndale, Coverdale, and the Bishop’s Bible also are missing the phrase,

This instance provides an excellent example of how common it was for even a simple printer's error to become a "received text," and should remove any presumption of infallibility for the *Textus Receptus*. To claim at this point that any edition of the Textus Receptus is the verbally perfect Word of God, or to claim that the KJV is the only verbally perfect Word of God, is, at this point, to demand that the true text of the Bible was lost from the second century on until 1516, when God supernaturally moved Erasmus to make a mistake (without even the knowledge of Erasmus!) which would then restore the true text of the NT that had been lost. One may choose to ascribe supernatural working to the mistake of Erasmus if they choose, but no one can honestly call that mistake the "preservation" of the Biblical text. Every one of the Greek manuscripts listed above was a Bible known and used and revered by a community of believers. We must believe that they had the Word of God. They didn't need to wait for Erasmus to make a mistake before they could have it. One may certainly choose to believe the KJV/TR verbally perfect, but examples like this one (and numerous others) show that no honest use of words can refer to such a perfect KJV or TR as the "preserved" Word of God, leaving the suggestion that this form of the text existed prior to the KJV. The Textus Receptus didn't exist until Erasmus in 1516, and the precise eclectic form of it used by the KJV translators didn't exist until they created it. Neither can rightly be called a "preserved" text in any exclusive sense. The very meaning of the word "preserved" precludes its usage in such a case, and, frankly, that just isn't how words work.

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"God" but have moved the "almighty" to a different spot, modifying Lord. Thus Tyndale's, *"I am Alpha and Omega the beginning and the ending sayth the Lorde almighty which is and which was and which is to come."* Or, since I love photos, Tyndale's text is printed below, from the photo facsimile printed by Daniell,



The KJV translators have instead preferred the translation of Geneva here, *"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, Which is, and Which was, and Which is to come, euen the Almightye."*