

# I John 5:7 and the Trinitarian Formula: A Plea for Truth over Tradition

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Debate has occasionally swirled in conservative circles over I John 5:7-8 and the difference between the KJV/NKJV and essentially all other modern English versions of the passage. It has for years been a kind of storm center for the “KJV Only” debate. In fact, some advocates of a KJVO position consider it a passage that clearly shows the superiority of the KJV over most modern versions. While there are a few other textual variants that are longer (i.e., John 7:53-8:11 and Mark 16:9-20), there are probably none generally considered more theologically significant, and there are almost certainly none more famous. The controversy arises because of the following textual difference; in I John 5:7-8, the TR/KJV/NKJV reads,

*For there are three that bear record (ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες )  
in heaven, (ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ,)  
the Father (ὁ πατήρ,)  
the Word (ὁ λόγος,)  
and the Holy Ghost (καὶ τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα):  
and these three are one (καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσι.)  
and there are three that bear witness (καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες)  
in earth (ἐν τῇ γῆ,)  
the spirit, and the water, and the blood (τὸ Πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα·)  
and these three agree in one. (καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν.)*

But the seven clauses (starting with “in heaven” and ending with “in earth”) of the central section are not present in the NA28/UBS5, or any other modern English versions, so that the text instead reads,

*for there are three who bear witness (ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες)  
the spirit, and the water, and the blood, (τὸ Πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα·)  
and these three agree in one. (καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν.)*

The longer form of the passage is known as the *Comma Johanneum*, (*comma* meaning phrase/s, *Johanneum* meaning relating to John) or the Trinitarian Formula. A few things should be kept in mind from the outset. Whether the passage is original or not, biblical Trinitarianism is still intact. In other words, the Trinity is still true, is still in the Bible, and is historically still part of the core of orthodoxy. Every orthodox Christian believes firmly in the Trinity, and most of them do not use a KJV, and do not have this verse. History abounds with creeds and confessions with robust statements of Trinitarian faith that were composed by, and agreed to, by people who don’t use the KJV, and who did not have this verse in their Bibles. The editors and translators of all modern versions<sup>1</sup> believe in the Trinity and would love to have this verse in their versions, if they thought it were authentic. In other words, there is no grand conspiracy to “cut the Trinity out of the Bible” or any such thing, and there never has been. The question at issue is not in any way shape or form, “Is God a Triune Being?” The question at issue is; “Did John speak

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<sup>1</sup> With the clear exception of the NWT, and possibly the “Queen James” version, and the forthcoming “Humanist Bible,” all of which would deeply stretch the definition of “Christian” Bibles, or of “translations” at all.

of the Trinity here, at this passage, in these words, or not?” What is the manuscript evidence for or against the extra clauses? More to the point, did John write these clauses under inspiration, or didn’t he, and should we consider them part of inspired Scripture? To answer this question, we will look first at the external and then the internal evidence.

### External Evidence

Remember that external evidence refers to the actual physical materials, their date, character, location, and contents. I have again placed the external evidence in a chart form, so that we can see each part of it and how it relates to each other part. The data is combined from the standard sources and apparatuses,<sup>2</sup> as well as the images available at the CSNTM and INTF websites.<sup>3</sup> The Greek, Versional, and Patristic evidence for the shorter reading is on the left side of the chart. I have again bolded and underlined the Greek columns, as I believe that the Greek support should carry the most weight, as every textual critic I know also does. Note that I have used an extremely small font for the later miniscules (especially those from the 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries, which are the most numerous), in order to still place them on the chart without it becoming multiple pages long. On the right side of the chart is the Greek, Versional, and Patristic evidence for the longer reading.

Note that the right side of the chart is in two parts; those witnesses that have the longer reading in a form *different* than the KJV/TR, and then further right, in darker grey, those witnesses that have the longer reading in the TR/KJV form. This is an incredibly important distinction that needs to be made and is routinely skipped over by those advocating any kind of a perfect KJV or perfect TR. I don’t know of a single KJV or TR advocate who would allow us to re-write the passage into a different form, even if the vast majority of the support for the longer reading actually supports a different form. Thus, the external evidence in the middle section of the chart actually witnesses against the TR /KJV reading. Nonetheless, we will consider and walk thorough all of the data. Note also that a “v.r.” after a witnesses refers to the fact that the reading of that witness is a marginal addition (“variant reading”) in the margin of the witness, where the reading of the text itself then has a “text” after it. We will now walk through each of the witnesses in more detail.

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<sup>2</sup> See NA 28, pg. 725; UBS 5 pg. 793-794; *Biblia Sacra* pg. 1,878; *Text Und Textwert*, Vol. 1 pg 1-15; *ECM* part 1 pg. 350, part 2 pg. 91-91;

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.csntm.org> and [http://egora.uni-muenster.de/intf/index\\_en.shtml](http://egora.uni-muenster.de/intf/index_en.shtml) primarily <http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/manuscript-workspace>.

**I John 5:7**  
- The External Evidence -

| DATE | Shorter Reading  |   |   | Longer Reading            |  |                     |                   |                   |
|------|--|---|---|---------------------------|--|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|      |  |   |   | Non-KJV/TR Forms          |  |                     | KJV/TR Form       |                   |
|      | Greek Manuscripts  | Versional   | Patristic   | Greek                     | Vers<br>(Lat Only)                                       | Pat                 | Greek             | Vers/<br>Pat      |
| 1    |  |   |   |                           |  |                     |                   |                   |
| 2    |  |   |   |                           |  |                     |                   |                   |
| 3    |  | Cop <sup>sah</sup> ;<br>Cop <sup>fay</sup> ;<br>Syr <sup>c</sup>          | Clem <sup>lat</sup><br>Rebap.<br>(Orig <sup>lat</sup> ) |                           |  |                     |                   |                   |
| 4    | 01, 03   | Cop <sup>mid</sup>  | Amb.<br>(Ps-Cyp.)                                       |                           |  | Prisc.<br>Ps-Vigil. |                   |                   |
| 5    | 02, 048  | Geo;Vg <sup>mss</sup><br>Arm <sup>(1300+)</sup><br>Syr <sup>P(300+)</sup> | Aug.<br>Quod.<br>(Cyril)                                |                           |  | Spec.<br>Varim.     |                   | Vit. ?            |
| 6    | 0296   | Eth (200+)  | Fac.  |                           |  | Fulg.               |                   |                   |
| 7    |  | Syr <sup>h</sup>  |   |                           | It <sup>i</sup> ; It <sup>q</sup> ;<br>vg <sup>mss</sup> |                     |                   | vg <sup>mss</sup> |
| 8    |  |   | (Jon. Dam.)   |                           |  |                     |                   |                   |
| 9    | 018, 020, 025, 049, 0142,<br>1424, 1862, 1895, 2464,   | Slav;<br>Cop <sup>bo</sup> ;<br>It <sup>ar</sup>                          |   |                           |  |                     |                   |                   |
| 10   | 044, 056, 82, 93, 175, 181, 221 <sup>text</sup> , 307, 326, 398, 450,<br>454, 456, 457, 602, 605, 619, 627, 832, 920, 1066,<br>1175, 1720, 1739, 1829, 1836, 1837, 1841, 1845,<br>1851, 1871, 1874, 1875, 1880, 1891, 2125, 2147,  |   |   |                           |  |                     | 221 <sup>vr</sup> |                   |
| 11   | 35, 36, 2, 42, 43, 81, 104, 131, 133, 142, 177 <sup>text</sup> , 250, 302, 325,<br>312, 314, 424, 436, 451, 458, 459, 462, 464, 465, 466, 491,<br>506, 517, 547, 606, 607, 617, 623, 624, 635, 638, 639, 641,<br>699, 796, 901, 910, 919, 945, 1162, 1243, 1244, 1270, 1311,<br>1384, 1521, 1668, 1724, 1730, 1735, 1738, 1828, 1835, 1838,<br>1846, 1847, 1849, 1854, 1870, 1888, 2138, 2191, 2344, 2475,<br>2587, 2723, 2746,  |   |   | 177 <sup>vr</sup>         |  |                     |                   |                   |
| 12   | 3, 38, 1, 57, 88 <sup>text</sup> , 94, 97, 103, 105, 110, 180, 203, 226, 256, 319, 321,<br>323, 330, 337, 365, 431, 440, 442, 452, 618, 620, 622, 625, 632, 637,<br>656, 720, 876, 917, 922, 927, 1058, 1115, 1127, 1241, 1245, 1315,<br>1319, 1359, 1360, 1448, 1490, 1505, 1573, 1611, 1646, 1673, 1718,<br>1737, 1740, 1743, 1752, 1754, 1850, 1853, 1863, 1867, 1868, 1872,<br>1885, 1889, 1893, 1894, 1897, 2127, 2143, 2186, 2194, 2289, 2298,<br>2401, 2412, 2541, 2625, 2712, 2718, 2736, 2805   |   |   | 88 <sup>vr</sup>          |  |                     |                   |                   |
| 13   | 4, 5, 6, 51, 204, 206, 172, 141, 218, 234, 263, 327, 328, 378, 383, 384, 390, 460,<br>468, 469, 479, 483, 496, 592, 601, 614, 643, 665, 757, 912, 914, 915, 941, 999,<br>1069, 1070, 1072, 1094, 1103, 1107, 1149, 1161, 1242, 1251, 1292, 1297, 1352,<br>1398, 1400, 1404, 1456, 1501, 1509, 1523, 1563, 1594, 1595, 1597, 1609, 1642,<br>1719, 1722, 1727, 1728, 1731, 1736, 1758, 1780, 1827, 1839, 1842, 1843, 1852,<br>1855, 1857, 1858, 1860, 1864, 1865, 1873, 2180, 2374, 2400, 2404, 2423, 2483,<br>2502, 2558, 2627, 2696,   |   |   |                           |  |                     |                   |                   |
| 14   | 18, 62, 76, 189, 201, 209, 216, 223, 254, 308, 363, 367, 386, 393, 394, 404, 421,<br>425, 429 <sup>text</sup> , 453, 489, 498, 582, 603, 604, 608, 621, 628, 630, 633, 634, 680, 743,<br>794, 808, 824, 913, 921, 928, 935, 959, 986, 996, 1022, 1040, 1067, 1075, 1099,<br>1100, 1102, 1106, 1248, 1249, 1354, 1390, 1409, 1482, 1495, 1503, 1524, 1548,<br>1598, 1599, 1610, 1618, 1619, 1622, 1637, 1643, 1661, 1678, 1717, 1723, 1725,<br>1726, 1732, 1733, 1741, 1742, 1744, 1746, 1747, 1753, 1761, 1762, 1765, 1769,<br>1831, 1832, 1856, 1859, 1866, 1877, 1881, 1882, 1886, 1890, 1892, 1899, 1902,<br>2080, 2085, 2086, 2197, 2200, 2261, 2279, 2356, 2431, 2466, 2484, 2492, 2494,<br>2508, 2511, 2527, 2626, 2675, 2705, 2716, 2774, 2777, |   |   | 629,<br>429 <sup>vr</sup> |  |                     |                   |                   |
| 15   | 69, 102, 149, 205, 322, 368, 385, 400, 432, 444, 467,<br>615, 616, 631, 636 <sup>text</sup> , 664, 801, 1003, 1105, 1247,<br>1250, 1367, 1405, 1508, 1626, 1628, 1636, 1649,<br>1656, 1729, 1745, 1750, 1751, 1757, 1763, 1767,<br>1830, 1876, 1896, 2131, 2221, 2288, 2352, 2495,<br>2523, 2554, 2652, 2653, 2691, 2704,  |   |   | 636 <sup>vr</sup>         |  |                     |                   |                   |
| 16   | 90, 296, 522, 1702, 1704, 1749, 1768, 1840, 1844,<br>1861, 2130, 2218, 2255, 2378, 2501, 2516, 2544,   |   |   | 918,<br>61                |  |                     |                   | vg <sup>cl</sup>  |
| 17   | 1101, 1721, 1748, 1869, 1903, 2243, 2674, 2776   |   |   |                           |  |                     | 2473              |                   |
| 18   | 1104   |   |   |                           |  |                     | 2318              |                   |
| 19   |  | Vg <sup>ww</sup> ; Vg <sup>st</sup>                                       |   |                           |  |                     |                   |                   |

## The longer Reading – Versional Evidence

The longer reading is evidenced among the ancient versions only in the Latin language. The longer reading appears in some Old Latin and in some Latin Vulgate manuscripts. But it appears distributed in several different forms. I will not spell out every one of those forms, (there are a large number of other forms when minor variants are taken into account).<sup>4</sup> The most common forms in which it appears, in roughly chronological order, are as follows, (my own rather woodenly literal translations follow each, so you can see the Latin structure);

| Form 1  |   |
|---|---|
| <i>“Quoniam tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in terra; spiritus et aqua et sanguis et tres sunt, qui testimonium dicunt in caelo, pater, <u>filius</u> et spiritus, et hi tres unum sunt <u>in Christo Iesu</u>”</i> | “Thus three there are, who testimony give in earth; spirit, and water, and blood. And three there are, who testimony assert in heaven; Father, <u>Son</u> , and Spirit, and these three one are <u>in Christ Jesus.</u> ” |

This form (form 1) is found in some Old Latin Manuscripts, and some Vulgate manuscripts (mss). Note the obvious absence of articles in this and the later examples. I will come back to this later. Note that the triad has “Son” instead of “Word.” Note also the inclusion in this form of the extra phrase, “in Christ Jesus.” Note, even more significantly that the order of the two triads is reversed, starting with earth, and then giving the heavenly witnesses. Note finally that while the KJV/TR has the phrases “these three are one” and “These three agree in one” this passage only has that phrase once.

| Form 2  |   |
|---|---|
| <i>“Quoniam tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus et aqua et sanguis et tres sunt, qui testimonium dicunt in caelo, pater, <u>verbum</u> et spiritus, et hi tres unum sunt <u>in Christo Iesu</u>”</i> | “Thus three there are, who testimony give on earth; Spirit, and water, and blood. And three there are, who testimony assert in heaven; Father, <u>Word</u> , and Holy Spirit, and these three one are <u>in Christ Jesus.</u> ” |

This form is the same as form 1, but has “Word” instead of “Son” in the second triad. It is much more common.

| Form 3   |   |
|--|---|
| <i>“Quoniam tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus et aqua et sanguis et tres sunt, qui testimonium dicunt in caelo, pater, <u>verbum</u> et spiritus, et hi tres unum sunt”</i> | “Thus three there are, who testimony give on earth; Spirit, and Water, and Blood. And three there are, who testimony assert in heaven; Father, <u>Word</u> , and Holy Spirit, and these three one are.” |

This form is found in some Old Latin manuscripts, and many of the manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate. This is also similar to the form (though often with greater variation from the TR) found in

<sup>4</sup> See the textual apparatus in Wordsworth-White, “*Nouum Testamentum Domini Nostri Jesu Christi Latine*” (2<sup>nd</sup> ed) Vol. 3, pg. 373-374 for the details of the different forms and the Latin manuscript support for each.



Priscillian in 385, in the quotation by Speculum, and Pseudo-Augustine from the 5<sup>th</sup> century, and Fulgentius in 527. Again, note the absence of the articles. And note the reversed order of the triads here as well, and the absence of the first “these three are one” statement of unity.

| Form 4   |  |
|--|--|
| <i>Quoniam tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in terra,<br/>spiritus et aqua et sanguis<br/>et hi tres unum sunt in Christo Iesu<br/>et tres sunt,<br/>qui testimonium dicunt in caelo,<br/>pater, verbum et spiritus,<br/>et hi tres unum sunt –</i> | “Thus three there are, who testimony give on earth;<br>Spirit, and water, and blood:<br>and <u>these three are one in Christ Jesus.</u><br>And there are three<br>who testimony assert in heaven;<br>Father, Word and Spirit,<br>and <u>these three one are.</u> ” |

This form is found in many manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate. Again, note the absence of the articles, the addition of the extra phrase, the reversed order. But note that this form now adds for the first time the first statement of unity, so that both statements are now present. But note that they are identical statements in Latin. “These three are one.” Thus, whatever is being asserted about the first triad, is also being asserted about the second.

| Form 5   |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Quoniam tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in caelo:<br/>Pater, Verbum et Spiritus Sanctus;<br/>et hi tres unum sunt.<br/>Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra:<br/>Spiritus, et aqua, et sanguis;<br/>et hi tres unum sunt.</i> | Thus there are three who testimony give in heaven;<br>Father, Word, and Holy Spirit;<br><u>And these three one are.</u><br>And three there are who testimony give on earth;<br>Spirit, and water, and blood;<br><u>And these three one are.</u> |

Finally, we have form 5, which it appears we have evidence of only after the 7<sup>th</sup> century, but which became the common form of the Latin Vulgate. This form is essentially the TR/KJV form of the reading, though note the several differences in the translation from the TR/KJV. There are not “three who bear record,” but, “three who testimony give” because instead of the Greek substantive participle the Latin has both a noun and a verb. Note also the absence of articles with each member of both triads. Note finally the phrases of the KJV in verse 7 and verse 8, “these three are one,” and “these three agree in one” are exactly the same in the Latin, rather than different, so that whatever is being asserted about the first triad is also being asserted about the second. This is the form which had become the standard form in the time of Erasmus. It was the form printed in the Clementine edition of the Vulgate in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, and was the form that was dogmatized by the RCC at the council of Trent, and at its later decision specifically dogmatizing the comma, which we will explain below.

### The Longer Reading – Greek Evidence

There are 552 extant Greek manuscripts that contain parts or all of the General Epistles. A little over 500 of them contain I John. Of those that contain this section of I John, here is the external data for the longer reading. All of the Greek support for the longer reading is very, very, late, as you can see in the chart. Minor, late, and seemingly irrelevant as it may be (from a text-critical perspective), there is nonetheless a difference in the readings of the Greek manuscripts here, so we must seek to explain the rise of the variant. One of the difficulties of KJV-only presentations though is that it will lump all of the Greek manuscripts together, and not explain the diversity of witness present in those manuscripts (this is a common inadequacy of their treatment of most textual variants). At best they usually say something like “these manuscripts have the KJV reading, *with variation.*” But that is not looking closely at the

evidence. God’s Word is worthy of more than a cursory glance intended to superficially bolster a presupposition that one already holds—e specially when we then refuse to allow that presupposition to be challenged with basic facts. Thus, we will examine the evidence for the longer reading in more detail. Fortunately, there is so little of it that it won’t take very long.

First up is Miniscule 221.<sup>5</sup> It is our earliest Greek evidence for the longer reading. The manuscript was copied in the 10th century. But the longer reading doesn’t occur in the text that was copied then. The text, as it was copied in the 10th century, has the shorter reading. However, someone came along later and added a marginal note to the text. The marginal note does contain the longer reading. When does the marginal note date to? Who wrote it? Why? What was his source for adding it? We can’t say for sure yet. All we can say for sure is that it dates sometime after the writing of the manuscript itself in the 10th century. (After all, no one writes a marginal note before the text has been written which creates the existence of a margin!) Whatever support the marginal note provides for the longer reading, just inches away there is even older support for the shorter reading. I suspect the marginal note was written much later by someone who had an actual copy of a printed text in front of them (as I’ll suggest later), but we can’t say for sure yet. The marginal note has the exact Greek text of the longer reading as found in the TR. The marginal note thus reads,

| Marginal addition of Miniscule 221  |   |
|---|---|
| ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ,<br>ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα·<br>καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσιν.<br>καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῆ,<br>τὸ Πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα·<br>καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν. | “For there are three who testify in heaven;<br>the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit:<br>and these three are one.<br>And there are three who testify on the earth;<br>the Spirit, and the water, and the blood;<br>and these three agree in one.” |

Next up is Miniscule 177.<sup>6</sup> Miniscule 177 was copied in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The text of Ms. 177 has the shorter reading. But a much later scribe has added a marginal note that includes the longer reading. However, the longer reading he includes does not have the articles with each member of the first triad. It reads,

| Marginal Addition of Miniscule 177  |   |
|---|---|
| ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν οὐρανῷ’<br>__πατήρ, __λόγος, καὶ __πνεῦμα ἅγιον,<br>καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν.<br>καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῆ<br>τὸ Πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα·<br>καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν. | “For there are three who testify in heaven;<br>__Father, __Word, and __Holy Spirit,<br>and these three are one.<br>And there are three who testify in earth,<br>The spirit, and the water, and the blood,<br>And these three agree in one.” |

Next up is Miniscule 88. Miniscule 88 was copied in the 12th century. It has the shorter reading in the text. However, a later scribe appears to have thought that the text in the manuscript was missing something, so he has written a marginal note to correct the text. The marginal note reads,

<sup>5</sup> Note that I have not been able to access an actual image of this manuscript, only transcripts. Thus, I can’t comment on the hand or date of the marginal addition.

<sup>6</sup> (See excellent hi-res photos of this page, and the entire manuscript, at <http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/manuscript-workspace?docID=30177&pageID=1610>.)

### Marginal Addition of Miniscule 88

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>έν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, <u>καὶ</u> ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα·<br/>καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσιν.<br/>καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῆ<br/>τὸ Πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα·<br/>καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν.</p> | <p>"In heaven, <u>the</u> Father, <u>and</u> <u>the</u> Word, and <u>the</u> Holy Spirit;<br/>and these three are one.<br/>And there are three who testify on the earth.<br/>The spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one."</p> |
|---|---|

Note that this marginal note has the article in both triads, but adds a "καὶ" (and), before, "the Word," apparently because the scribe desired a better balance between the two triads. When was this marginal note written? By whom? We can say for sure that it was written after the 12<sup>th</sup> century. But note that the marginal note is in a different (later) hand, with a different (later) ink, suggesting a corrector much later than the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, paleographers have typically dated the note to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> Here's an image of the folio of Miniscule 88, with the comma added in a marginal addition on the right hand side.



Next up is miniscule 629. Miniscule 629 was copied in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It has incorporated the longer reading in its actual text. Interestingly enough, it is a bilingual manuscript. It has Greek in the right-hand column, and Latin in the left-hand column. It has the longer reading in both the Latin and the Greek text. Its Greek text thus reads,

### Miniscule 629

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες <u>ἀπο</u> του ουρανοου, <u>πατήρ</u>, <u>λόγος</u>, καὶ <u>Πνεῦμα</u> αγιον· καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς <u>εἰς το</u> ἓν εἰσι.<br/>καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες <u>ἐπι</u> της γης, τὸ Πνεῦμα, <u>το</u> ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα· [_____]</p> | <p>For there are three who testify <u>from</u> heaven;<br/><u>Father</u>, <u>Word</u>, and <u>Spirit Holy</u>;<br/>And these three <u>agree in one</u>.<br/>And there are three who testify <u>upon the earth</u>;<br/>The Spirit, <u>the</u> water, and the blood [<u>Omitted clause</u>].</p> |
|--|---|

<sup>7</sup> See Metzger, "Text of the New Testament" pg. 101.

Note several things that I have underlined in its text. Miniscule 629 has several differences from the KJV/TR, even just in this brief section of text (and many, many, other differences outside this passage). It omits the article from each member of the first triad of the verse, and the conjunction “and” from before “Word” of the first triad and “water” of the second triad (I suspect the scribe did this to find maintain better balance between the triads, which now each have conjunctions only on the last member of each triad). It swaps the order of “Holy Spirit,” to “Spirit Holy” (which makes little difference in meaning in Greek, but can change emphasis), and adds the prepositional phrase “εις το” to the phrase “and these three are one,” so that it now reads the same as what would be the final clause (which it completely omits). It also changes the prepositions in the phrases “on the earth” and “in heaven” from “εν,” to “απο,” and from “εν” to “επι.” This is changing both the preposition, and the case of its object, from a dative to a genitive, and from “on” to “from,” and from “on” to “upon.” It also completely omits the final phrase “καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν” (“and these three agree in one”). The manuscript is well known for often rearranging the Greek text into the Latin word order, and dividing the lines and syllables of the Greek text according to the Latin. It often produces random readings found in no other manuscript because the scribe translates his Latin text into Greek. Here is an image of I John 5:7 in Miniscule 629. Note the bilingual nature of the manuscript, with the rather clearly written Latin on the left, and the somewhat scribbled Greek on the right.



Next up is Miniscule 429. Miniscule 429 was copied in the 14th century. Miniscule 429 has the shorter reading in the actual text. However, a later scribe has added the longer reading in a marginal note. In the margin, the note reads,

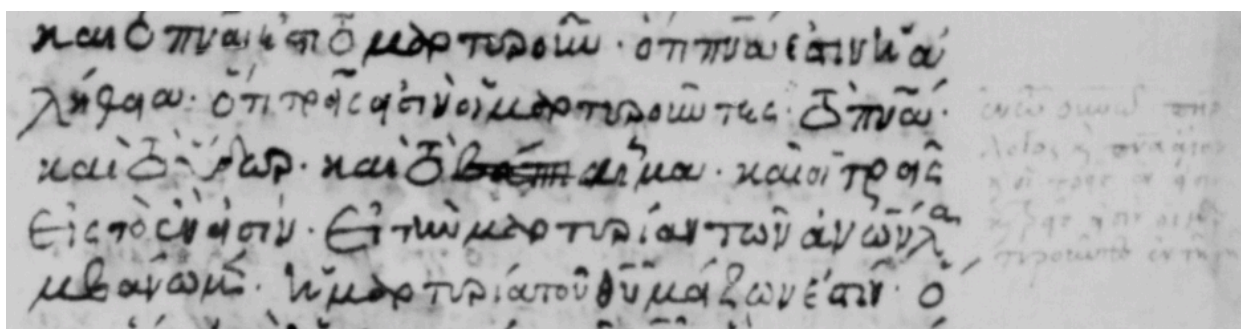
| Miniscule 429 Marginal addition   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ,<br/>           __πατήρ, __λόγος, καὶ __Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα·<br/>           καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσιν.<br/>           καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῆ,<br/>           τὸ Πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα·<br/>           καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν.</p> | <p>“There are three who testify in heaven;<br/>           __Father, __Word, and __Holy Spirit,<br/>           and these three are one.<br/>           And there are three who testify in the earth,<br/>           the spirit, and the water, and the blood;<br/>           and these three agree in one.”</p> |

Note that I have highlighted the fact that the scribe who added the comma in this marginal note has *not* included the article with each member of the first triad, but *has* included the article with each member of the second triad. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, whoever copied the text copied it from a manuscript that had the shorter reading. However, a scribe came along later and thought that they had left something out, and that scribe added the longer reading. Who was he? When did he write? What source did he add the longer ending from? It is hard to say for sure. All we know is that his marginal note came after the original writing of the manuscript in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Next up is Miniscule 636.<sup>8</sup> Miniscule 636 was copied in the 15th century. It has the shorter reading in the text as it was originally written. But a later scribe, (we know it is a later scribe, because, again, it is a different hand, writing with a different ink), thought that the text as it was written in the 15th century must have left something out. So this later scribe added the longer reading in a marginal note. The text thus has the shorter reading, but the marginal addition adds the note as follows;

| Marginal Addition of Miniscule 636   |   |
|--|---|
| <p>έν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ἡ πατήρ, ἡ λόγος, καὶ ἡ πνευμα ἁγιον·<br/>καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσι.<br/>καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῆ,<br/>ἡ Πνεῦμα, καὶ ἡ ὕδωρ, καὶ ἡ αἷμα·<br/>καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν.</p> | <p>“in heaven, __Father, __Word, and __Holy Spirit,<br/>and these three are one.<br/>And there are three who testify in earth;<br/>__spirit, __water, and __blood,<br/>and these three agree in one.”</p> |

Note that he does not have the article with any of the members of the first triad, and also does not have the article with any of the members of the second triad. Here is Ms 636 pg 74, leaf 1530;



Note the marginal addition on the right hand side. (The shorter reading is present in the text.) And note how much lighter the ink is in the marginal note. Ancient inks, as they age on parchment, typically get darker with time. We can thus get a very rough estimate of age, before we even engage the common paleographical data, simply by noting how much lighter the ink of the addition is.

Next up is Miniscule 918.<sup>9</sup> Miniscule 918 was copied in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is rather difficult to suggest that it bears any weight in telling us which reading is original, since it comes from about the same time our printed Greek testaments begin to be distributed. Nonetheless, we will look at it. It contains the longer reading, in the text. The longer reading reads as follows in Miniscule 918,

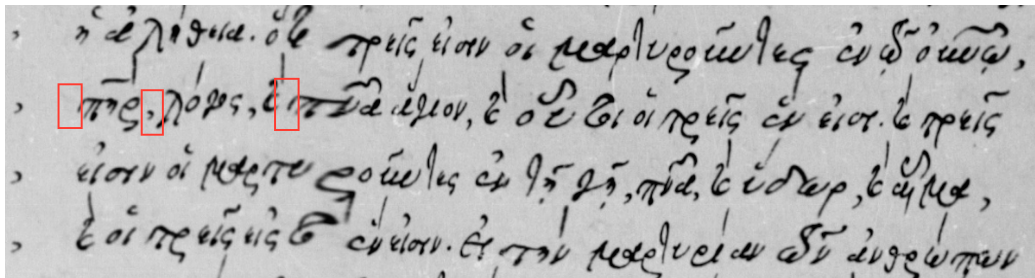
<sup>8</sup> See images of the entire ms 636 at <http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/manuscript-workspace?docID=30636&pageID=1530>.

<sup>9</sup> See images of ms 918 at <http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/manuscript-workspace?docID=30918&pageID=7720>.

Miniscule 918

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>“ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ,<br/>         __πατήρ, __λόγος, καὶ __πνεῦμα ἅγιον·<br/>         καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσι.<br/>         καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῆ,<br/>         τὸ Πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα,<br/>         καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν.”</p> | <p>“For there are three that testify in heaven,<br/>         __Father, __Word, and __Holy Ghost:<br/>         and these three are one.<br/>         And there are three that testify in earth,<br/>         the Spirit, and the water, and the blood:<br/>         and these three agree in one.”</p> |
|--|---|

Here is an image of the passage in miniscule 918,



Note that it *does not* have the article with any member of the first triad (the absence highlighted with red squares), but *has* the article with each member of the second. It also has a very odd *nomina sacra* form, and is the sloppiest Greek handwriting I have ever seen.

Next up is Miniscule 61.<sup>10</sup> Miniscule 61 was copied in the 16th century. Erasmus noted that when he examined it, it was *recens*, or just recently penned. It is usually dated rather precisely to 1520. Once again, a handwritten manuscript from the same time period that printed Greek texts were appearing has a text-critical weight of zero, but nonetheless, we will examine it. It has the longer reading in the text, but it doesn't have the exact TR / KJV form. It reads,

Miniscule 61

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ,<br/>         __πατήρ, __λόγος, καὶ __Ἄγιον Πνεῦμα·<br/>         καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσι.<br/>         καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῆ,<br/>         __Πνεῦμα, καὶ __ὑδωρ, καὶ __αἷμα· [_____]</p> | <p>“And there are three who testify in heaven;<br/>         __Father, __Word, and __Holy Spirit,<br/>         and these three are one.<br/>         And there are three who testify on earth;<br/>         Spirit, water, and blood. [Omitted Clause]<br/>         If we receive the testimony of men...”</p> |
|--|---|

Note that I have highlighted that it does not contain the article with the first triad, does not include the article with the second triad, and does not include the final clause “καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν,” (and these three agree in one).

Last, (and most definitely least), we have the text of miniscules 2318 and 2473. Why do I say least? Because these miniscules were copied in the 17th and 18th centuries. While the printing press had made handwritten copying obsolete, technological advances usually allow for a window of time before more ancient methodologies completely disappear. For example, when 3.5 in. floppies were invented, there were still people whose livelihood depended on making 5 in. floppies. When CD-Roms came around, people were still making 3.5 floppies for awhile. While the printing press had made hand copying obsolete, some still made their livelihood making hand written copies, and so a few manuscripts

<sup>10</sup> See ms 61 at <http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/manuscript-workspace?docID=30061&pageID=8790>.



continued to be produced. Manuscripts from such a late period have zero weight for telling us about the original text of the NT though, because they are most likely using a source text which is a printed Greek text. In fact, these two manuscripts are so late, they were both copied after the KJV was translated, so they could even conceivably be translations into Greek from the KJV! (Obviously, they are not, but you get my point.) This is why any manuscript after the 16th century has a text-critical weight of zero. If you don't believe this is so, then just take your NIV down to the local copy shop and make a few thousand copies of it. What ever weight you would give to 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts as representing the original text, your copies of the NIV will now have an equal weight, or one greater by thousands. I point this out to say this: the very first (and the only) times that the exact reading of the KJV/TR is found in the *text* of any extant Greek manuscript are instances which post-date the KJV itself. They read,

ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα· καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσιν. καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῆ, τὸ Πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα· καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν.

This is the KJV /TR reading we know so well. These two manuscripts contain the exact text of the TR. It is in fact the very first time that we have evidence of the exact text of the TR in the actual text of a Greek manuscript. Every instance of the longer reading found in the body of the text prior to these *differs* from the KJV/TR form. The only other place we get the exact form of the KJV/TR in a Greek witness is in the *marginal addition* of miniscule 221.

### The Longer Reading – Patristic Support

The Patristic support for the longer reading is found in a brief mention in a work of the heretic Priscillian;<sup>11</sup> Psuedo-Vigilius;<sup>12</sup> Speculum;<sup>13</sup> Varimadum;<sup>14</sup> Fulgentius;<sup>15</sup> Victor of Vita (Vitensius);<sup>16</sup> Fuldensis;<sup>17</sup> and Cassiodorus.<sup>18</sup> All of these witnesses have three things in common;

1. They are all Latin Fathers using a Latin translation of the New Testament from one particular, limited, geographic locale. They all originate from the Spanish Latin locale. None of them are Greek fathers quoting a Greek text. There is no Greek Patristic version of the comma until the 12<sup>th</sup> century Lateran council.
2. None of them writes prior to the Trinitarian controversy that was taken up at Nicaea in 325. All of them write in the later half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century or later. This is after Nicaea had so firmly (and rightly) stamped a clearly articulated Trinitarian theology upon the church that it was seen everywhere—behind every Scriptural bush so to speak.
3. Not one of them has the longer ending in the KJV/TR form. Apart from Victor of Vita, each of the patristic witnesses that has the longer reading has it in one of the Latin forms 1-4 spelled out above, or with even greater variation from those forms. This is because they are using the Latin texts which we have already alluded to. This is also true of later fathers not included in the chart. The only exception, and thus the closest one comes to the TR /KJV form is, Vitensius. I

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<sup>11</sup> *Liber Apologetics*, late 4<sup>th</sup> century. Since the comma fits the modalism of Priscillian so well, some have suggested that he created it. In any case, there is no evidence for it in any language prior to his quotation. He has it in Latin form 1 shared above.

<sup>12</sup> *De Trinitate*, Circa 400

<sup>13</sup> *Liber de divinis Scripturis sive Speculum*, a 5<sup>th</sup> century work falsely attributed to Augustine.

<sup>14</sup> *Contra Varimadum*, sometimes falsely attributed to Augustine, circa 450.

<sup>15</sup> *Responsio Contra Arianos*, and *De Trinitate*, 527

<sup>16</sup> *Historia Persecutionis Africanae Provinciae*, 484

<sup>17</sup> *Prologue to the Catholic Epistles*, Falseley attributed to Jerome, Circa 450.

<sup>18</sup> In *Epistolam S. Joannis Ad Parthos*, 583



included it on the right side of the chart, despite its differences from the TR, to be gracious. He at least has the right order of the triads!

Again, note that all of the patristic support for the longer reading comes from *Latin* Fathers quoting from *Latin* texts. There is simply not any early patristic support for the longer reading from the Greek Fathers (or at all until the 12<sup>th</sup> century Lateran council). Furthermore, even among the meager patristic support found among the Latin Fathers for the longer reading, *none* of them have it in the TR/KJV form. They have it in a diversity of forms, like the Latin manuscripts which we have already examined.

## The Shorter Reading

### The Shorter Reading – Patristic Support

The patristic support for the shorter reading is almost unanimous. Apart from the few later Latin Fathers we saw earlier, every single time an early Father quoted the text of I John 5, he quoted the shorter reading. Clement of Alexandria,<sup>19</sup> Ambrose,<sup>20</sup> Augustine,<sup>21</sup> Leo,<sup>22</sup> and Gregory the Great,<sup>23</sup> are particularly notable examples, as they each write in a detailed way about the Trinity, and several quote this very passage. Yet none of them quotes the longer reading; they know only the shorter form. Augustine writes his famous work on the Trinity, *De Trinitate*, and quotes the shorter reading, but doesn't quote the longer reading there in any way. If these authors knew of this longer addition, it seems incredibly odd that they don't mention it, even in their defense of the Trinity.

This silence expands beyond just those witnesses that we have included in the chart. Those witnesses on the left side of the chart are Fathers who directly quote the passage, and quote it in its shorter form. We could also add the many early patristic writers who discuss the Trinity,<sup>24</sup> and yet never mention this passage. If this passage had been written by John, it would be by far the clearest and most direct passage on the Trinity anywhere in the Bible. It is simply impossible that these men who intended to set forth the Bible's teaching on the Trinity would not have even mentioned it if they had the longer reading.

This is even more striking during the Arian controversy at the end of the third and beginning of the fourth century.<sup>25</sup> A young preacher named Arius had arisen who had begun to preach that there was a time when Jesus did not exist. He had been a disciple of Lucian of Antioch, to whom he attributed the genesis of his ideas. He began to teach that the Son of God was not eternal. He had no problem speaking

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<sup>19</sup> Whose comments on the first epistle of John in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century seem to know only the shorter reading, and who seems to engage in early Trinitarian speculation.

<sup>20</sup> Ambrose cites the passage 4 times, always with the shorter reading.

<sup>21</sup> *Contra Maximinum*, 2.22.3, where he decidedly quotes the shorter reading, and extrapolates from it an allegorical interpretation of the Trinity. *De Civitate Dei* 5.11 has occasionally been cited by KJVO advocates as Augustine quoting the comma, but it is not a citation of a biblical text, does not contain any citation formula, and is Augustine's own Trinitarian reflection, in the same language that became the form of the comma, which was derived from his aforementioned Trinitarian interpretation of the shorter reading. He could have become aware of the Priscillian form of text, but it is unlikely given its limited locale to that time. In either case, he doesn't give the passage as a citation of a scripture text, and likely reflects its wording due to the same historical linguistic trajectories that caused its rise. See below.

<sup>22</sup> *Epistle to Flavianus*, read at Chalcedon in 451.

<sup>23</sup> Mid 4<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>24</sup> For example, see "Trinitarian" discussion of a sort in Tertullian, Origen, Hilary, and many others. But see appendix A for qualifications.

<sup>25</sup> See Schaff, "*History of the Christian Church*" vol. 3, pg. 616-697, for details.

highly of Jesus, and even worshiping him. But he believed that Christ was merely the very best of all God's created beings. He was adamant that the transcendent God could not have had contact with creation without some intermediary who was considerably less than very God of very God. He thus denied any Godhead of equals. His views became so widespread that a major controversy erupted throughout the empire. He even created songs that would be sung in some churches, claiming that "there was a time when he [Jesus] was not." Faithful pastors all over the world were fighting against his ideas even while many others were "buying into" his new views and still others were seeking a way for everyone to get along.

Understand that Christianity had largely been illegal and heavily persecuted (especially under Domitian) until the edict of Milan in 313. Many of these pastors had lived in hiding, unable to effectively communicate with each other. After the edict of toleration, Christianity was no longer illegal (at least for a short time). So, for the first time in history, they could meet publically *en masse* to discuss such issues, without fear of reprisal. At the council of Nicaea in 325 AD, 318 pastors<sup>26</sup> (each bringing 1-2 deacons with them) met together to discuss the question of Arianism and a few other divisive issues. Pastors were invited from both East and West, so that the meeting would represent every part of the world. These pastors had been through a veritable hell for their firm belief in Jesus. Many had been imprisoned multiple times. Many of them had been tortured for their faith. Several had limbs missing which had been removed during torture because they would not recant their faith in Christ. When they came together, limping in with their broken bodies to discuss Arius and his views, you can imagine that passions ran high. Every weapon in their arsenal was brought to bear. Every Scripture they could come up with was used. Every argument that could be thought of was presented.

At the fore of the discussion was the Trinitarian Godhead. The pastors contended that Jesus had always existed. That he was eternal. That he was equal with the Father. They contended against Arius that Jesus was "*homoousios*" or "of the same substance or same essence" as the Father. One young deacon in particular shared Scripture with passion in defense of the Trinity. His name was Athanasius. He made the case for historic Christianity—biblical Trinitarianism.<sup>27</sup> A representative presented the views of Arius. Then, the pastors voted. Only one, a good friend of Arius, voted that Arius and his views were acceptable. Every other pastor present, and the wide swath of Christianity which they represented, voted that Arius was a heretic and his views were heretical. After the council, many of these pastors continued to write against Arius and his (still popular) views. Athanasius soon became a pastor and spent the rest of his life defending (and being persecuted for defending) the historic theology of the incarnation, the eternity of Jesus, and the Trinitarian shape of the Godhead.

What is important to note is the place of the longer reading of I John 5:7 in this debate. If John had written the longer reading, then it is by far the most clear, direct statement of the Trinity anywhere in the Bible. There is not a single passage of Scripture that could have been more important to this debate. Because this council represented Christians from every part of the evangelized world, if the passage had appeared as part of the Bible at any point, in any manuscript, anywhere in the world, in any language, it would have been brought to this debate. If these pastors had the longer reading anywhere in any Bible, then wielding the other passages which they mention so fervently is the equivalent of bringing a knife to a gunfight. The *Johannine Comma* would have been a cannon that would silence all Arian opposition in a single fatal shot. There are literally thousands of pages of writings from this debate which we still have access to. It is probably the single greatest doctrinal controversy the church has ever faced.<sup>28</sup> Yet in all of the pre-Nicene<sup>29</sup> and Nicene<sup>30</sup> discussion of the Trinity, (and we have literally thousands of pages of such

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<sup>26</sup> The traditional figure, the exact attendance specifics are disputed.

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix A for a brief survey of this discussion previous to Nicea.

<sup>28</sup> In fact, Arianism has never really gone away. It is still with us today. It is still present in groups like the JW's. (They are typically utterly ignorant of the source of their views.)

<sup>29</sup> See ANF, volumes 1-10.

<sup>30</sup> See portions of the NPNF first set, volumes 1-14; and portions of the NPNF second set, volumes 1-14.

discussion),<sup>31</sup> no one quotes the longer reading of I John 5:7-8. *Not even one time.* And there is no manuscript evidence anywhere in any language for the comma prior to this point. While we usually think of an “argument from silence” as being weak, when arguing *for* silence (i.e., the nonexistence of a text at this stage) the silence becomes the most powerful argument that can be made. And this silence, at this juncture in history, is in fact deafeningly loud. There is only one reasonable explanation for this silence. They did not quote the comma for a very simple reason – they did not have it in their Bibles. It had not yet been created. It simply did not yet exist.

### The Shorter Reading – Versional Support

Remember that the versions are typically considered *secondary* support for or against a reading. They are an indirect witness to Greek manuscripts which we no longer have. The translators are translating from Greek manuscripts into other languages. Since translation can be a difficult endeavor, their data is sometimes ambiguous, and we don’t know if they are translating reading *a* or reading *b*. However, when it comes to the inclusion/exclusion of a longer section of text like this, the data is much less ambiguous. The manuscripts they are translating from either have the longer reading, or they don’t. There is really nothing ambiguous about that. We saw earlier that the longer ending is found in some of the Old Latin manuscripts, and some of the Latin Vulgate manuscripts from the West. But here is what needs to be noted in terms of the evidence for the shorter reading. All of the Latin manuscripts until the 7<sup>th</sup> century, both Old Latin and Latin Vulgate, have the shorter reading. The longer forms we detailed earlier don’t appear until then. And further, as noted above, when the longer reading does appear, it is found in a great variety of different forms, and isn’t normally found in anything like the KJV form until much later. Most modern printed editions of the Vulgate (The Wadsworth-White, etc.) have the shorter reading, being based on the older Latin manuscripts. This variety of reading would seem to directly cancel out the Latin evidence for the longer reading. What basis is there for saying, “I like this late reading in Latin. But I don’t like that earlier one in Latin.” The only possible answer of course is simply, “This one agrees with the KJV,” which makes appeal to the Latin as “support” for the reading rather disingenuous.

But what about the translations into language other than Latin? When we come to the ancient translations of the NT into other languages, we find an almost unanimous agreement that is almost never found among the versions. A variety of different translators in a variety of different locales in a variety of different times can produce almost any number of different variants. Typically almost any variant that we know of can be found witnessed across the early versions. Not so in this case. Apart from the Latin witnesses which we have looked at already, the ancient versions are unanimous in having the shorter

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<sup>31</sup> See especially the many works of Athanasius (e.g., *Deposition of Arius, Council of Nicaea, Statement of Faith, Defense of the Nicene Council, Arian History, Against the Arians*, etc.), who in particular often makes much of the titles of Jesus and specifically makes much of the title, “Word,” which becomes his favorite title to use of Christ as member of the Divine Triad. See also points where he refutes the Arian notion that the Word could be not a part of the Godhead. His opponents argued that since John 1:14 says the Word was made flesh that this title is an earthly description of the earthly Jesus, and that 1:1 calling him “God” is only a metaphorical usage. Athanasius refutes such notions – but how better to refute them than with a passage, by the same author, that describes the Word alongside the Father and Spirit, asserting their unity, as a *heavenly* witness? Athanasius bore a deep love for the Word, and the Trinitarian conception of God. He would write, “For thus we confess God to be one through the Triad, and we say that it is much more religious than the godhead of the heretics with its many kinds, and many parts, to entertain a belief of the One Godhead in a Triad” (*Discourse II Against the Arians*, chapter 25). If he had known of I John 5:7, and its description of the “The Father, and the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these there are one,” which sounds almost like his own language, he not only could never have failed to quote it, he would have shouted it from the housetops, and it would have been his most well-worn battle weapon.

reading in I John 5:7-8. The Sahidic and Fayumic Coptic translations<sup>43</sup> in Egypt in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century translate the shorter reading. So does the Curetonian Syriac from the same century. What about the Middle Egyptian Coptic translation made in the 4<sup>th</sup> century? Only the shorter reading. What about the Georgian translation in the next century? Only the shorter reading. What about the Armenian translation? We have hundreds of witnesses to the passage in manuscripts of this 5<sup>th</sup> century translation. (There are over 1300 Armenian manuscripts in total, but not all are complete New Testaments.)<sup>44</sup> You guessed it—every single Armenian manuscript prior to the KJV translates the shorter ending.

Next comes the Syriac Peshitta. This was the version which was translated in Antioch in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century, and which became, after the Old Syriac,<sup>45</sup> the standard Bible of the Christians in Antioch.<sup>46</sup> We have several hundred manuscripts of the Peshitta today. Every single one of them has the shorter reading.<sup>47</sup> The Christians in Antioch knew nothing of the longer reading. Ever. I saw a video<sup>48</sup> recently where KJVO advocate Sam Gipp was explaining to a student that God's "one true Bible" was preserved in Antioch (because Antioch is good when it is mentioned in the Bible), and that all corruption came from Alexandria (because Alexandria is bad in the Bible). To say nothing of the deeply flawed kind of logic behind that sort of reasoning (which is built on the logical fallacy of origins, and even the fallacy as usually applied would be stronger), it is simply ignorant of history, and must suppress basic historical facts to try to make the fictional presentation sound logical.

Some of the worst heresies the church ever saw came out of Antioch.<sup>49</sup> Some of the greatest Christians of all time came from Alexandria,<sup>50</sup> and vice versa. That kind of simplistic "guilt by association" is reductionistic and invalid at several levels. Sam states in the video that "the vast majority<sup>51</sup> read with what is known as the TR." His contention that the majority read with the TR is deeply mistaken at many levels. But I couldn't help laughing when Sam went on to give the student an example of the corruption that had come in Alexandria. He used I John 5:7 as his prime example, and said that the manuscripts in

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<sup>43</sup> See Metzger, "*The Early Versions*" pg. 99-152.

<sup>44</sup> See Metzger, "*The Early Versions*" pg. 153-181.

<sup>45</sup> The Old Syriac, of which the Peshitta is a revision, was written before the Syriac-speaking church had accepted the general epistles and Revelation as part of the canon. Because Syriac-speaking Christianity had not yet included the general epistles into the canon at that point, the general epistles are not part of the Old Syriac Bibles, and there is no witness to either reading of I John 5:7 at all in them. (Metzger, "*The Early Versions*" pg. 44.)

<sup>46</sup> See Metzger, "*The Early Versions*" pg. 4, and pg. 48-62.

<sup>47</sup> Note that there was a 15<sup>th</sup> century *printed* edition of the Syriac where the editor (Tremellius) placed a translation of I John 5:7 from Latin into the margin of the text, but this was a translation from Latin, into the margin of a printed text. No Syriac *manuscript*, or any kind of Syriac text prior to the 15<sup>th</sup> century has ever been found with the longer reading. (C.F. Metzger, "*The Early Versions*" pg. 53)

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIOUN6GJlJI>

<sup>49</sup> For example, *Arianism* (Christ is a created being, there is no trinity), developed by Arius as an outflow of the views of Lucian of Antioch; *Apollinarianism* (Christ wasn't fully human – only his body was human – his soul was not) by Apollinarius bishop of Antioch; *Nestorianism* (Christ and the Son of God were two separate persons, united like Siamese twins) by Nestorius, monk of Antioch, (if it truly came from the Bishop it is named for), etc.

<sup>50</sup> Apollon, Alexander, Athanasius, Cyril, etc. In fact, when most of the empire swung to a lower Christology in the days of Constantius, the Alexandrian population was among the most consistent and passionate defenders of the full divinity of Jesus.

<sup>51</sup> Of the "5,909 Greek manuscripts" he says – his number is mistaken, and I have no idea where he got it. It would appear that he made it up off the top of his head. The official count of the INTF, who is the official "counter," who publishes the standard Greek manuscript list, known as the "*Kurzgefasste Liste der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments*" or "K-list" for short, when added to the handful of manuscripts still awaiting a catalogue number, is currently 5,839.

Antioch had the comma, but that the “evil” scribes in Alexandria didn’t believe in the Trinity, and so they intentionally took the comma out to try to take the doctrine of the Trinity out of the Bible. (I won’t comment here on his deep misunderstanding of scribal corruption) I don’t know what else to say – he is apparently just making stuff up, and creating a historical narrative the way he wished it would have happened. But he must do so against all of the facts of history.<sup>52</sup> Every single manuscript of the “Antiochene” school (if one wants to use that kind of language) has the shorter reading, without the comma. The Byzantine manuscripts have the shorter reading. We will see when we look at the Greek evidence that every Greek manuscript from any age and any place has the shorter reading, with a meager handful of late manuscripts which are influenced by the Latin excepted. The Bible that was the standard Bible used by Christians in Antioch for centuries does not have the comma in it. Period.

Gipp makes the same kind of error when he writes elsewhere, “The new versions are only supported by about five of the over 5,000 manuscripts of Bible text. Critics of the Bible claim that these manuscripts are better than those used by the translators of the Authorized Version. This is not so.”<sup>53</sup> Claims like this are common among KJVO advocates. If you have followed any of the previous posts about textual criticism, you know that his statement is utterly untrue in any way shape or form. Modern versions are based on the modern Greek texts like NA28 and UBS5, which take into account the entirety of the manuscript tradition. For example, around 500 manuscripts are listed in their “consistently cited witnesses” appendix.<sup>54</sup> These include basically every manuscript from the first millennium. And they

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<sup>52</sup> For example, note that the anti-trinitarian Arius attributed his views to those of Lucian of *Antioch*. On the other hand, the great defender of Trinitarianism against Arius was Athanasius of *Alexandria*. “Alexandrian” scribes were not trying to remove the Trinity while “Antioch” fought for it – if anything, exactly the opposite was the case. See Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* vol. 3, pg. 616-697, who explains, “But in general, Arianism was much more akin to the spirit of the Antiochian school than to that of the Alexandrian. Arius himself traced his doctrine to Lucian of Antioch, who advocated the heretical views of Paul of Samosata on the Trinity, and was for a time excommunicated, and died a martyr under Maximinus.” (pg. 620). Gipp (or someone influencing him) is literally just making history up as he wishes it happened. Unfortunately, I have seen the same reductionist dichotomy used in a variety of KJVO/TRO argumentation.

<sup>53</sup> Gipp, Sam, “The Bible Answer Book” at (<http://samgipp.com/answerbook/?page=06.htm>).

<sup>54</sup> NA 28 pages 792-819; UBS 5 pages 12-29. The manuscripts actually reflected represent a much greater number, and really, every manuscript is considered, they just choose to usually lump the majority of late Byzantine witnesses under the single heading “M” for majority. The consistently cited witnesses are those which are always cited in the apparatus, every place they read. This list is essentially every single manuscript from the first millennium. These are the manuscripts the text typically follows. It is true that they typically prefer earlier witnesses to the later witnesses of the second millennium, despite their higher numbers. But even these later manuscripts are considered as well. Claiming that a modern Greek text is based on only five manuscripts is utter nonsense. I suspect it has its root in a basic problem of most KJVO advocates. They have not had a true textual scholar since Burgon. (Actually, Burgon was a Majority text advocate, and an outstanding textual critic, who would deeply oppose a TRO or KJVO position. But that matters little to them.). Thus, rather than do any original work with primary sources, they are forced to go back to Burgon’s “ancient” work and act like it refutes modern day textual critics. In Burgon’s day, only 2 papyri, 7 uncials, and around 2,000 miniscules were known. Today, we have 131 papyri, 323 uncials, and almost 3 times as many miniscule manuscripts. Hort and Westcott had relied almost exclusively on 5 Uncial manuscripts, which were the oldest known manuscripts by almost a full millennium. Burgon opposed a revision of the NT on the basis of so little evidence. In that day, I probably would have agreed. Nonetheless, W&H rightly predicted that these few early manuscripts were more likely to reflect the text of the original NT than the many manuscripts from the second millennium. Today, we have discovered almost 100 manuscripts older than any Burgon knew, which largely vindicate the approach of Hort and Westcott, as well as hundreds of additional manuscripts which are also older than



consider all of the later manuscripts as well (with the “M” siglum), though they do typically prefer witnesses from the first millennium when these disagree with the later witnesses. They still list readings of the later manuscripts in the apparatus. But I guess maybe if one can’t count well, 5 might seem to be the same as 500. Modern Greek texts do at times follow a “minority” reading in their text, when the evidence for it is very early and strongly supported by internal evidence, but even there they note the majority reading in the apparatus. Gipp’s statement is simply mistaken. A simple glance at the chart above shows the absurdity of such a statement. If he knew nothing about any text but I John 5:7, he should still know his statement is false. And the thing is, I am fairly certain that he is aware of the paucity of evidence for a text like I John 5:7, as you can see it being explained to him on video.<sup>55</sup>

That show was done almost 20 years ago, so some of the data Dan presents is a little outdated, but it was directly explained to Gipp that I John 5:7 is not in the majority of manuscripts, many years before he produced the video above. When the paucity of the evidence is explained to him, Gipp responds by claiming that the comma is found in the Diatesseron(!). As we’ve seen in previous posts, the Diatesseron is a harmony of the four gospels.<sup>56</sup> It doesn’t have any of the text of I John in it, let alone the longer reading of I John 5:7. Forgive me for saying it, but it would appear that he is either displaying a deep ignorance of the issue, or a deep dishonesty about it. In light of a text like I John 5:7, and what has already been explained to him about it, his statement in the video above about I John 5:7 being part of the Antiochene text, which was removed by Alexandrian bias, is not only wrong, it has at least the *prima facie* appearance of being the intentional spreading of what he directly knows to be falsehood. I don’t know what to do with that. You can make of it what you will.

Any argument that wants to say, “I use the Bible of Antioch” or that wants to in any way build a connection between the KJV and Antioch and say, “that is why I’m KJVO”, is either invalid from the starting point, or must remove the comma from their Bibles. It would actually have to make hundreds of changes to the KJV, since the Syriac versions very often unanimously have readings different than the KJV,<sup>57</sup> which would mean the KJV would have to be changed in many places if that evidence were even remotely valid support for the position. Of course no KJVO advocate will do that, because (despite what I have been told several times by good friends) no one who holds a KJVO position really does so because of any “Syriac evidence.” Someone who holds that position rather does so precisely because they are

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those on which the TR was based. Modern Greek texts take advantage of all of these manuscripts. KJVO advocates, typically ignorant of any textual work done in the last 100 years, continue to repeat Burgon’s numbers as though his work had just rolled off the press. Burgon himself would never say today the things he said then, and would staunchly oppose a KJVO or TRO position. He was in fact apparently in the process of producing his own edition of the NT, which would correct the errors of the TR in some 1,500 places. He only completed Matt. 1-14, and corrected the KJV/TR in 150 places. Had he finished it, it would have been the first printed “Majority text.” It is to my mind tragic that he did not. Either way, it just has to stop. Burgon himself would be heartbroken at the way his name and his writings and his arguments are so commonly misused and misrepresented by KJVO and TRO advocates.

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMHumjNDy54&index=22&list=PL5641953C984053E0> or in the transcript here

[https://jashow.org/wiki/index.php/Why\\_Was\\_1\\_John\\_5:7\\_Not\\_In\\_Any\\_Bible\\_Manuscripts\\_Until\\_the\\_16th\\_Century](https://jashow.org/wiki/index.php/Why_Was_1_John_5:7_Not_In_Any_Bible_Manuscripts_Until_the_16th_Century)

<sup>56</sup> UBS 5 page 44-46; Metzger “The Early Versions” pg. 10-39.

<sup>57</sup> If anyone wants it, I could compile a partial list of places where the “Bible of Antioch” (i.e., the unanimous testimony of the Syriac versions) disagrees with the KJV. To take one example, note that none of the Syriac manuscripts contain the *Pericope Adulterae* of John 7:53-8:11, they all have the shorter reading which picks up with what we call 8:12 right after what we call 7:52. It is nothing short of astounding when KJVO advocates try to argue that this story is original because God preserved it in the “true line” of Antioch – when none of the manuscripts from Antioch ever had it! See Metzger, “*The Early Versions*” pg. 48.

completely ignorant of the evidence, or, because what they actually believe deep down is that God supernaturally moved the KJV translators to recreate the exact text of Scripture perfectly, so that all manuscript evidence is utterly irrelevant to their position. In addition to those mentioned above, we could go on and talk about the early Ethiopic translation (6<sup>th</sup> century), or the Slavonic, or the Boharic versions (9<sup>th</sup> century) – they all have the shorter reading, at different times, in different locations all over the world. No manuscript of any ancient translation of Scripture (apart from some of the Latin ones) prior to the 1500's has ever been found that has the longer reading in it. *Period*. It is a phenomenon unique to the Latin language, and to a handful of Greek manuscripts that were clearly influenced by Latin.

### The Shorter Reading – Greek Support

We have examined the Greek support for the longer reading in great detail. There is a much greater amount of data to cover for the shorter reading, but we will be able to do this in a very brief amount of space. While there are a few other textual variants in other parts of the passage, all of the witnesses on the left side of the chart are uniform in one respect – they all have the text in its shorter form, and do not contain the longer reading in any form whatsoever. They uniformly have the text of I John with the reading, “*For there are three who bear witness, the spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one.*” Our most important witnesses are those which come from the first millennium. Most textual critics believe that witnesses from the first millennium should be given a much greater weight than later witnesses from the second millennium. This just makes good historical sense. Of course, within that first millennium, all other factors being equal, the earlier a witness is, (and thus the closer the witness is to the original autographs), the more weight it has. Manuscripts that are almost a full millennium closer to the autographs are most likely to reflect the original text. Our Greek witnesses from the first millennium come from several different geographical locales. From the first 6 centuries, we have five such witnesses – Majuscules 01, 03, 02, 048, and 0296. These early witnesses would carry the greatest weight, regardless of the reading of the later miniscules, and they all have the shorter reading. But we have even more. Still prior to the tenth century, we can add majuscules 018, 020, 025, 049, 0142, and miniscules 1424, 1862, 1895, 2464. I wouldn't usually spell out each of the later miniscules, as they carry much less weight than the early papyri and early majuscules. But in this particular textual problem, there is near perfect conformity among all the manuscripts, such that we could almost say that we don't have a textual variant here. Thus we can also add the other later Alexandrian and Western manuscripts, as well as the Byzantine manuscripts, which are the large chunk of manuscripts from mostly the 10<sup>th</sup> century + in Byzantium. Thus we add, in chronological order, the miniscules:

044, 056, 82, 93, 175, 181, 221text, 307, 326, 398, 450, 454, 456, 457, 602, 605, 619, 627, 832, 920, 1066, 1175, 1720, 1739, 1829, 1836, 1837, 1841, 1845, 1851, 1871, 1874, 1875, 1880, 1891, 2125, 2147, 35, 36, 2, 42, 43, 81, 104, 131, 133, 142, 177text, 250, 302, 325, 312, 314, 424, 436, 451, 458, 459, 462, 464, 465, 466, 491, 506, 517, 547, 606, 607, 617, 623, 624, 635, 638, 639, 641, 699, 796, 901, 910, 919, 945, 1162, 1243, 1244, 1270, 1311, 1384, 1521, 1668, 1724, 1730, 1735, 1738, 1828, 1835, 1838, 1846, 1847, 1849, 1854, 1870, 1888, 2138, 2191, 2344, 2475, 2587, 2723, 2746, 3, 38, 1, 57, 88text, 94, 97, 103, 105, 110, 180, 203, 226, 256, 319, 321, 323, 330, 337, 365, 431, 440, 442, 452, 618, 620, 622, 625, 632, 637, 656, 720, 876, 917, 922, 927, 1058, 1115, 1127, 1241, 1245, 1315, 1319, 1359, 1360, 1448, 1490, 1505, 1573, 1611, 1646, 1673, 1718, 1737, 1740, 1743, 1752, 1754, 1850, 1853, 1863, 1867, 1868, 1872, 1885, 1889, 1893, 1894, 1897, 2127, 2143, 2186, 2194, 2289, 2298, 2401, 2412, 2541, 2625, 2712, 2718, 2736, 2805, 4, 5, 6, 51, 204, 206, 172, 141, 218, 234, 263, 327, 328, 378, 383, 384, 390, 460, 468, 469, 479, 483, 496, 592, 601, 614, 643, 665, 757, 912, 914, 915, 941, 999, 1069, 1070, 1072, 1094, 1103, 1107, 1149, 1161, 1242, 1251, 1292, 1297, 1352, 1398, 1400, 1404, 1456, 1501, 1509, 1523, 1563, 1594, 1595, 1597, 1609, 1642, 1719, 1722, 1727, 1728, 1731, 1736, 1758, 1780, 1827, 1839, 1842, 1843, 1852, 1855, 1857, 1858, 1860, 1864, 1865, 1873, 2180, 2374, 2400, 2404, 2423, 2483, 2502, 2558, 2627, 2696, 18, 62, 76, 189, 201, 209, 216, 223, 254, 308, 363, 367, 386, 393, 394, 404, 421, 425, 429text, 453, 489, 498, 582, 603, 604, 608, 621, 628, 630, 633, 634, 680, 743, 794, 808, 824, 913, 921, 928, 935, 959, 986, 996, 1022, 1040, 1067, 1075, 1099, 1100, 1102, 1106, 1248, 1249, 1354, 1390, 1409, 1482, 1495, 1503,



1524, 1548, 1598, 1599, 1610, 1618, 1619, 1622, 1637, 1643, 1661, 1678, 1717, 1723, 1725, 1726, 1732, 1733, 1741, 1742, 1744, 1746, 1747, 1753, 1761, 1762, 1765, 1769, 1831, 1832, 1856, 1859, 1866, 1877, 1881, 1882, 1886, 1890, 1892, 1899, 1902, 2080, 2085, 2086, 2197, 2200, 2261, 2279, 2356, 2431, 2466, 2484, 2492, 2494, 2508, 2511, 2527, 2626, 2675, 2705, 2716, 2774, 2777, 69, 102, 149, 205, 322, 368, 385, 400, 432, 444, 467, 615, 616, 631, 636text, 664, 801, 1003, 1105, 1247, 1250, 1367, 1405, 1508, 1626, 1628, 1636, 1649, 1656, 1729, 1745, 1750, 1751, 1757, 1763, 1767, 1830, 1876, 1896, 2131, 2221, 2288, 2352, 2495, 2523, 2554, 2652, 2653, 2691, 2704, 90, 296, 522, 1702, 1704, 1749, 1768, 1840, 1844, 1861, 2130, 2218, 2255, 2378, 2501, 2516, 2544, 1101, 1721, 1748, 1869, 1903, 2243, 2674, 2776, 1104.

That is to say, all of our Greek manuscripts that have this passage (around 500), apart from the small handful of late exceptions which we noted earlier, uniformly have the shorter reading. The Greek manuscripts are unanimous in their reading of the text here, except for five exceptionally late manuscripts (14<sup>th</sup> century and later) and the marginal notes in five others (which notes are all almost certainly later than the 14<sup>th</sup> century). Further, those 10 late manuscripts which do have the longer reading have variation even among themselves about the reading. Of only ten manuscripts which have the longer reading in the text or in the margin, the reading is found in *six different forms*. It is hard to describe how convincing that kind of data should be to anyone who cares at all about evidence, to anyone who believes God preserved His word instead of magically “restoring” it in 1611, or to anyone who cares about truth at all.

### Summary of External Evidence and a Plea for Integrity

But the main reason I wanted to deal with this text is not to convince anyone that the *comma* was not written by John. I think that is obvious, even before we get to the internal data, but that is not my intent. I raised this passage because I want you to understand the utter lack of integrity involved in claiming that the KJV is supported by “the best manuscripts,” or by “the Byzantine manuscripts,” or by “the majority of manuscripts.” These are the most common arguments I hear for why someone is KJV only, not only from men with a penchant for dishonesty, but by almost all KJV advocates. They usually say something like “all of the manuscripts agree exactly with the KJV, and there is perfect agreement between them, except for a handful (really only two, and we hate those two), so we go with the KJV, because that is going with the ‘preserved’ word of God.” But this kind of statement is nothing more than a made up fiction. As we have seen, there is not perfect verbal agreement between any two manuscripts of any substantial size. All of them contain textual variants. All of them (except for a handful of small fragments) are different at points from the TR and the KJV. There is not a single Greek New Testament manuscript in existence that contains all of the readings of the TR. *Not one. Not even close.* The TR on which the KJV is based is an eclectic, critical text, initially compiled by Erasmus from seven relatively late Greek miniscules, later revised with slightly more manuscripts, revised again by Stephanus and Beza, and finally revised again in the minds of the KJV translators, whose choices between those texts were later reconstructed by Scrivener. It’s true that as some points the TR aligns with the Majority text. But this is utterly irrelevant to an argument suggesting the superiority of the TR, because it’s also true that *every* Greek text in existence aligns with the Majority text over 90% of the time. For a “majority” to be any kind of a valid argument in favor of the TR, the TR would have to have majority support in *every* variant passage. Yet quite the opposite is the case. The TR is very often a minority text (and sometimes a text with no Greek support whatsoever). But it is on all accounts a *late* text. In at least one passage, you have now been shown the evidence that reveals such KJVO statements to be utterly false.

This passage is only one of many such “minority” passages in the TR, due to each edition of the TR being simply a new revision of the text of Erasmus, which was itself not well sourced from a manuscript perspective, at least by today’s standards. Maurice Robinson has written in the preface of his “*The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform*” about the relation of the majority of Greek Manuscripts and how they often diverge from the TR. He says, “Early printed Textus Receptus (or ‘Received Text’) editions closely resemble the Byzantine Textform but often diverge from it in significant

readings. Such editions primarily derive from the limited selection of a small number of late manuscripts, as utilized by Erasmus, Ximenes, or their immediate historical successors. The Overall text of these early printed editions differs from the Byzantine Textform in over 1800 instances, generally due to the inclusion of weakly supported non-Byzantine readings. Since the Receptus form of text does not provide an accurate reproduction of the common Greek manuscript tradition, the present edition strives to rectify that situation by presenting the readings of the Byzantine Textform in a more precise manner.”<sup>58</sup>

If you choose never to change your position, that’s fine. But please, hold and present your position with integrity. Don’t ever tell anyone that the “majority of manuscripts” have anything to do with why you hold your position. Don’t ever tell anyone that the Byzantine manuscripts have anything to do with why you hold your position. Don’t ever tell anyone that the “best” manuscripts have anything to do with your position. And have the integrity not to sit silently by the wayside when other KJV advocates put forth those arguments as support. If those arguments were relevant at all, then you are bound to follow that evidence when it disagrees with the KJV. This is one of many, many, texts where such evidence disagrees. Anyone who looks at this evidence and is unwilling to say “the KJV is wrong at I John 5:7” can never with integrity tell someone that they hold a KJVO or TRO position because of the Byzantine text, the “Antioch school,” or “the majority of the manuscripts.” That would simply be dishonest. Jesus is not honored by dishonesty. It is one thing to be ignorant. I suspect most who make those statements are simply ignorant. Ignorance is forgivable. But it is another thing to know the data, and continue to make statements which are patently false. That is not honoring to Jesus. It is not integrity. If you refuse to say the KJV is in error here, that’s fine. But I implore you, please don’t lie to yourself or to others about the reasons why. Don’t pretend it is because of the majority of manuscripts. Don’t pretend it’s because of the Byzantine text. Don’t pretend it is because you follow the “Bible of Antioch.” Don’t pretend it is because of *any* of the manuscript evidence. That would be lying to yourself and others. The exact KJV reading is in fact supported prior to the KJV only by a marginal addition in one late manuscript from the second millennium. And that manuscript disagrees with the KJV within just a paragraph or two from I John 5:7, and in hundreds of other places. God is honored by integrity. He is most honored by us when we are most honest with ourselves and others. Whatever position you hold, do so with integrity.

Let me give you an example to illustrate what I mean. Imagine you are a Judge hearing a difficult and complex case. I know this could never happen exactly this way legally, but just go with me. There has been a multiple homicide. Several people are dead. To complicate matters, it appears that there were several different men who committed the murders. To make matters worse, each man died as a result of a bullet fired from the same gun. A lawyer, (we’ll call him Bob) is defending one of the men (we’ll call him defendant A), who he is trying to prove innocent of killing one of the homicide victims whose murder he has been charged with. But Bob is also the same lawyer who is the prosecuting attorney who is trying to convict Defendant B of homicide on the charge of murdering one of the other victims. (I know, not quite what you would see on Law and Order, but just hang with me.) Bob makes his case against defendant B using three clear lines of evidence. He demands that defendant B be found guilty of homicide for three reasons. 1. – Multiple witnesses saw him fire the lethal shot; 2. - His fingerprints have been found on the weapon; 3. GSR from the shot was found all over his sleeve. It’s an open and shut case. The lawyer wants him convicted. The evidence is clear. You condemn the man to the death penalty.

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<sup>58</sup> Robinson, Maurice, “*The New Testament*” (preface), pg. i., footnote 1; See also De Jonge, “*Novum Instrumentum*” pg. 408-409, who, ironically, is Erasmus’ biggest living fan, and one of the world’s leading Erasmus scholars, and is defending him. But he defends him not by ignoring that the TR is so often a minority, but by pointing out that since the Latin text was his primary goal, Erasmus shouldn’t be faulted for creating a poor Greek text; C.F. Combs, “*Erasmus and the Textus Receptus*,” pg. 45-48; Metzger, “*The Text of the New Testament*” pg. 93-118; Rummel, “*Erasmus Annotations*” pg. 35-88, et al for further sources explaining that the TR is not in any way a majority text.

Then, you move to the part of the case involving defendant A. The prosecuting attorney makes a case using three lines of evidence. He produces the weapon, which has on it the fingerprints of defendant A. Then, he brings eyewitness forward who saw defendant A pull the trigger and commit the murder. Finally, he points out that GSR from the shot was found on defendant A's sleeve. Ironically, he produces the exact same weapon you just used to convict defendant B. Even more ironically, he produces exactly the same eyewitnesses that you used as grounds to convict defendant B. Same courtroom. Same convoluted case. What kind of judge are you? You have moved to condemn defendant B on account of these three clear lines of evidence. These same lines of evidence now condemn defendant A. There's just one problem – defendant A is a friend of yours, and you want him to go free. Perhaps you could move that it all be stricken from the record in both cases. Fair enough. But say they move to strike it completely, and you object, demanding that the evidence stand as sufficient to convict defendant B, but demanding just as loudly that it not be seen as sufficient evidence to convict defendant A. At that point, you no longer are demonstrating an impartial and fair treatment of the evidence. You could perhaps even be accused of schizophrenia. At the least, I would suggest that you are not demonstrating integrity. You simply cannot be called a just judge.

This is what I mean when I implore you each to have integrity in your position about the KJV. If you tell yourself (or others) that the manuscript data is support for your position, and then refuse to follow the manuscripts at any place where they manifestly and indubitably speak against your position, that is simply not honest. If you tell yourself (or others) that an oversimplified dichotomy between the “Antiochene text” and the “Alexandrian text” is somehow support for your position, but then refuse to follow that support the moment it disagrees with your position, that is not integrity. If you tell yourself that the “Byzantine text” is why you hold your position, but then reject that text anywhere it disagrees with the KJV, that is nothing short of deception. Hold whatever position you choose, but please do so with integrity. Don't write bibliology curriculum or FB articles or blogs that invoke those lines of evidence if at the end of the day you definitively reject those lines of evidence at every place where they don't support your position. Jesus is truth Incarnate. He deserves honesty from us. I think we should do our best to demonstrate it, both in what we believe, and in why. Be honest. Be just. Be fair. Be truthful.

## Internal Evidence

### Intrinsic Probability

The external evidence is definitive, before we even look at the internal evidence. Nonetheless, minor though it is, we do have a textual variant. We have examined the external data. Now we will bring internal considerations to bear on the data. Remember that internal evidence has to do with which reading the author and scribe is more likely to have written. We deal first with intrinsic probability – what John is most likely to have written.

### Vocabulary and Theology

It is certainly possible that an author may use a word or a construction in a certain place that he never uses elsewhere. All authors do this at times. Thus, it is often not possible to draw certain conclusions when speaking of the vocabulary of an author. Examining vocabulary in internal evidence of readings is dealing more in probabilities than in certainties, and that needs to be remembered. Nonetheless, an examination of Johannine vocabulary,<sup>59</sup> syntactical patterns, and theology, does reveal

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<sup>59</sup> Note that while most studies on Johannine theology take the Apocalypse as being written by a different John than the author of the gospel and letters, and thus don't include the Revelation in discussion of John's vocabulary and theology, I lean towards the position that the same John authored all four works, and thus consider the data from each. Note also that I build the “vocabulary base” from the TR for

that the longer reading is very much unlike John's normal way of speaking. Could it be the only place he ever spoke in such a way? Perhaps. Is it likely to have been so? Of course not. So let's examine some of the vocabulary of the passage and John's usage of it.

### ***The vocabulary of Johannine Witness***

The word translated "Bear record" in I John 5:6-8 is a significant one. The language of "witness" is very common in John, and is a regular part of his vocabulary (used 47 times by John).<sup>60</sup> It has the basic idea of "testimony" either as a signature as a witness, a reporting of an event, or, with judicial connotations, to one called to witness in a legal sense (BDAG). Because martyrs were "testifying" to the gospel by their death, they also came to be known as "witnesses." In fact, our English word, "martyr" comes from this word. John uses the word regularly, but note some patterns from what might be called a Johannine "theology of witness."

1. *John precludes Jesus from witnessing to Himself, except where special conditions are met.* In John 5:31-39, John presents Jesus as making it clear that if He bears witnesses to himself, His witness is not true. If John at any point presents Jesus as witnessing to Himself, he has allowed a *prima facie* example of Jesus lying. His high Christology would not likely allow this. In certain conditions, the appeal to Jewish jurisprudence can be flipped around, and so Jesus can bear witness to Himself. But in such a case, John is careful to clarify that an exception is at play, in order to "get Jesus off the hook" so to speak. Thus, in John 8, John presents Jesus explaining the "flipped around jurisprudence" at play, explaining that in such a case, He can witness to Himself. The fact that he presents such qualification there reveals that he can sense the tension inherent in the suggestion of Jesus bearing witness to Himself. But in I John 5:7, Jesus (the Word) bears witness to Himself, and there is no qualification or explanation given. Just read those two texts together, and sense the contradiction they would cause; "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: (1Jo 5:7 KJV)," but, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. (John 5:31 KJV)." There is no qualifying explanation given. The jurisprudence here is not flipped around. Allowance is not made here for an exception. Thus, if John had written the passage, he would have created a serious difficulty or contradiction for his readers which he not only doesn't resolve; he doesn't seem to even notice it. Why? Because he didn't write the comma.
2. *John Presents the Spirit as an earthly witness.* In John's presentation of the "farewell discourse" of Jesus, Jesus presents the longest, most sustained, and most lofty presentation of pneumatology in all of his writings. In fact, it is probably the most lofty presentation of "Spirit theology" in the whole Bible. Presenting the Spirit as the "Comforter" (John 13:31-16:33), Jesus explains to his disciples (much to their disappointment) that he will soon depart the earth (at least bodily). But in his stead he will send the Spirit (John 14:16-17; 25-26). When this Spirit comes to earth (i.e., manifest his earthly presence more fully at Pentecost and beyond), his ministry will be to testify to Jesus, and to empower the disciples to do the same. Jesus thus presents the Spirit's witness to him as being a distinctly earthly witness, not a heavenly one. He says, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me... (John 15:26)." Note that even more explicitly in the KJV of I John 5:6, the Spirit is a distinctly earthly witness. In verse 8, the Spirit is distinctly an earthly witness. In the shorter reading, the Spirit is identified as witnessing "on earth." This is consistent with how John speaks of the Spirit's witness in every other place in his writings. For John, the Spirit is the primary witness on Earth to Jesus. But in the longer reading, the scribe who has accidentally imported the "in heaven" which created the "In

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arguments sake, not because I consider it inerrant. Only minor changes would result from building the vocabulary from the NA28.

<sup>60</sup> Jn. 1:7-8, 15, 32, 34; 2:25; 3:11, 26, 28, 32; 4:39, 44; 5:31-33, 36-37, 39; 7:7; 8:13-14, 18; 10:25; 12:17; 13:21; 15:26-27; 18:23, 37; 19:35; 21:24; I Jn. 1:2; 4:14; 5:6-10; 3 Jn. 1:3, 6, 12; Rev. 1:2; 22:16, 20

Heaven” / “On earth” structure of the longer reading, has unwittingly involved the Spirit in the activity of witnessing both from earth (which is Johannine), and from heaven (which is decidedly not Johannine). How could John create such a contradiction? The answer is of course, that he didn’t, because he didn’t write the comma.

3. *John’s entire point is undermined by the comma.* John’s usage of this language probably builds from the use of Jewish jurisprudence presented in OT texts like Deut. 17:6; 19:15. This usage was upheld by Jesus (Matt. 18:16), and Paul (2 Cor. 13:1). Some have gone so far as to suggest that there is in John a fully developed “Cosmic Trial Motif” of which this witness language is a part.<sup>61</sup> That may go too far, but understand that either way, the whole point of this particular element of jurisprudence is that a greater number of credible congruent witnesses equals a greater strength of testimony.<sup>62</sup> John does this kind of “stacking up” of witness for example in John 5:19-47. The second part of this long discourse adduces a series of witnesses,<sup>63</sup> which combined corroborate the claims of Jesus to be equal with God: John the Baptist (5:33-35); the works of Jesus (5:36); the Father (5:37); the Scriptures (5:39); and Moses (5:46). John employs the same usage in I John 5:6-11.<sup>64</sup> This being the case, the shorter reading is John, consistent with his usage elsewhere, showing that there are multiple witnesses to Jesus, that these witnesses are separate but in agreement, and thus, that there is greater strength to the testimony. But the language of the longer ending (specifically the latter part, “these three are one”) would actually work directly against John’s point. If one professes three witnesses (as the Persons of the Trinity), but then asserts that these three are in fact only one, (“these three are one”), he is reducing rather than increasing the number of witnesses, and thus weakening rather than strengthening the testimony being adduced. The “these three agree in one” of the shorter reading is part of a good Johannine theology of witness. The “these three are one” of the longer reading, while an orthodox expression of Trinitarianism, is language that would work directly against John’s normal use of witness language, and directly against his clear intention for such language in this very passage. John simply did not write this language here. He did not write the comma.

### *The Vocabulary of Johannine Christology*

Much more relevant than the language of “Witness” in John is the language he uses of each member of the Trinity. “Word” (λογος) is common language in John,<sup>65</sup> almost always used of speech or discourse (and thus, almost never of Christ). However, “Son,”<sup>66</sup> which is essentially shorthand for “Son of God,”<sup>67</sup> is clearly John’s most common designation for Jesus. Occasionally he also uses, usually on Jesus’ own lips, “Son of Man.”<sup>68</sup> These are his normal designations, and the normal way he refers to Jesus. In fact, in all of John’s writings, John only uses “Word” of Christ in three passages, always at some of the most intense moments in his corpus; John 1:1, 14; - where he introduces in the prologue the preexistent Christ as the Creative “λογος” who was made flesh; I John 1:1 - where he uses that same language to

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<sup>61</sup> See Kostenberger, *“Theology of John’s Gospel and Letters”* pg. 454-456.

<sup>62</sup> I find it somewhat ironic that such a principle is ignored by those who accept the extremely late (thus not truly credible) minority witnesses to this text’s authenticity, when this text then builds on the principle of multiple credible witnesses increasing the strength of testimony.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, pg. 209.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, notes that 10 of the 12 usages of “Witness” language in I John occur in this passage.

<sup>65</sup> Jn. 2:22; 4:37, 39, 41, 50; 5:24, 38; 6:60; 7:36, 40; 8:31, 37, 43, 51-52, 55; 10:19, 35; 12:38, 48; 14:23-24; 15:3, 20, 25; 17:6, 14, 17, 20; 18:9, 32; 19:8, 13; 21:23:1, 10; 1 Jn. 2:5, 7, 14; 3:18; 3 Jn. 1:10; Rev. 1:2-3, 9; 3:8, 10; 6:9; 12:11; 19:9; 20:4; 21:5; 22:6-7, 9-10, 18-19

<sup>66</sup> John 1:18, 49; 3:16, 17; 3:35, 36; 5:19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26; 6:40, 62; 8:35, 36; 14:13; 17:1; I John 1:3, 7; 2:22, 23, 24; 4:9, 10, 14, 5:9, 10, 11, 12; 2 John 1:9

<sup>67</sup> 1:34, 49; 3:18; 5:25; 6:69; 9:35; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 19:7; 20:31; I John 3:8; 23; 4:15; 5:5, 10, 12, 13, 20; 2 John 1:3; Rev. 2:18

<sup>68</sup> John 1:51; 3:13, 14; 5:27; 6:27, 53; 8:28; 12:23, 34; 13:31; Rev. 1:13; 14:14

introduce Christ in his epistle, with the same overtones of preexistence and Creation, and; Rev. 19:13 where he climaxes his corpus of writings (and, unwittingly, the Christian canon), by designating the Christ who consummates human history as the eternal “Word” from God. These are “exceptional moments” that represent some of the highest points of John’s literary productions, and are fitting places to break into the highest Christology that John ever uses.

The point is that “Word” is not at all the normal way that John refers to Jesus, and when he does use it, it is at major climactic moments in his writing, not as the kind of “aside” that it would serve as in I John 5:7. Further, never elsewhere does he refer to Jesus as “Word” in an explicitly Trinitarian context (John 1:1 would be a binitarian statement, since there is not direct mention of the Spirit until much later in the gospel, and in either case doesn’t present God as Father). In such contexts, he always refers to Jesus as “Son” (see references above) to spell out the Trinitarian connection between Father and Son. John’s Trinitarian moments present Christ as the Son of the Father, not the Word from God. These considerations don’t make it impossible that John could use that designation here (since he does occasionally use it elsewhere) but it does make it much less likely.

### ***The Vocabulary of Johannine Pneumatology***

John’s usual designation for the third person of the Trinity is simply “Spirit”<sup>69</sup> or “Comforter.”<sup>70</sup> When John does use an adjective or noun modifier to describe the Spirit, he consistently follows the same linguistic pattern in his language. He always, without fail, places the descriptive modifier *after* the noun.<sup>71</sup> He only ever uses the adjective “Holy” of the Spirit four times - John 1:33; 7:39 (this is a predicate use of the adjective, which is something else altogether, but still has the adjective after the noun); 14:26; 20:22.<sup>72</sup> Among all of John’s uses of “Spirit”, he very rarely adds the modifier “holy.” But when he does add “holy,” or a modifier of any kind, he always consistently follows the same syntactical pattern, placing the modifier *after* the noun. Thus, he doesn’t use “Holy Spirit” in I John at all, and the actual phrase of I John 5:7, “The Holy Spirit,” with the adjective *before* the noun, never occurs in John’s writings. *Ever. Anywhere.* John speaks of the Spirit often, and pneumatology is an especially strong theme of his. But I John 5:7 is linguistically unlike how he speaks of the Spirit in every other place.

In fact, this particular phrase (placing the adjective before the noun) almost never occurs anywhere in the NT at all, with a small handful of exceptions in Luke; (Luke 12:10-12; Acts 1:8; 2:33, 38; 9:31; 10:45; 15:28; 16:6), and twice in Paul; (I Cor. 6:19; II Cor. 13:14). In over 385 uses of “Spirit” in the NT, most as a reference to the Holy Spirit, and over 80 uses of some form of the actual phrase, “The Holy Spirit” in the NT, in 15 different books, by 7 different authors, this exact phrase is found only in the above mentioned handful of Lukan passages and two very rare uses by Paul.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Jn. 1:32-33; Jn. 3:6, 8, 34; Jn. 4:24; Jn. 6:63; Jn. 7:39; Jn. 14:17, 26; Jn. 15:26; Jn. 16:13; Jn. 19:30; Jn. 20:22; 1 Jn. 4:2, 6; 1 Jn. 5:6-8; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; Rev. 3:6, 13, 22; Rev. 11:11; Rev. 14:13; Rev. 19:10; Rev. 22:17

<sup>70</sup> John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7

<sup>71</sup> Thus, using a noun, “The Spirit of Truth” (always in the second attributive position); τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας (Joh 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1Jo 4:6 SCR). Or “The Spirit of God” τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ (1Jo 4:2 SCR). Or, using an adjective, “The Spirit of Life” πνεῦμα ζωῆς (Rev 11:11 SCR).

<sup>72</sup> He uses the adjective “holy” in the first attributive position twice, the second position once, and the predicate position once. Thus, “Spirit Holy/The Spirit Holy” Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ (Joh 1:33 SCR); Πνεῦμα Ἁγίου (Joh 20:22 SCR); ἦν Πνεῦμα Ἁγίου (Joh 7:39 SCR) (this is the predicate position – i.e., “The Spirit is holy”); τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἁγίου (Joh 14:26 SCR) (this is the second attributive position).

<sup>73</sup> For examples of the normal order, see Mat. 1:18, 20; 3:11; 12:32; 28:19; Mark 1:8; 3:29; 12:26; 13:11; Luke 1:15, 35, 35, 41 67; 2:25, 26; 3:16; 3:22; 4:1; 11:13; John 1:33; 7:39; 14:26; 20:22; Acts 1:2, 5, 16; 2:4, 33; 38; 4:8, 31; 5:3; 5:32; 6:3; 6:5; 7:51, 55; 8:15; 8:17, 18, 19; 9:17; 10:44, 47; 11:5, 16, 24; 13:2, 4, 9, 52; 15:8; 19:2; 16:6; 20:23; 20:28; 21:11; 28:25; Rom. 5:5; 9:1; 14:17; 15:13, 16; I Cor. 2:13; 12:3; 2 Cor.



The placement of the adjective before the noun in the phrase “the Holy Spirit” could almost be called a distinctly Lukan idiom, which his good friend and longtime traveling companion Paul has on two rare occasions imitated. It is certainly not Johannine, and if John wrote I John 5:7, he is using a phrase incredibly rare for him, and a word order for this phrase which he never uses anywhere else in his writings, and which almost no one but Luke ever uses anywhere in the NT.

### *The vocabulary of Johannine Trinitarianism*

“These three are one” – While John uses the word τρεῖς (three) 15 times (present passage excluded), he most often uses it in reference to a number of days. He does use it in reference to the three-fold witness in verse 8. But he never uses the word as a description of the Godhead. While John is certainly “Trinitarian” in that he sees Father, Son, and Spirit as God,<sup>74</sup> the “these three” as a reference to the triune Godhead is simply not part of John’s normal language. And to say, “these three are one” is unlike anything else said anywhere in the NT. It would be the most natural, most sophisticated, and most clear way to describe the Godhead, if John had such language in his toolbox. So, if he was aware of it, why would he only use it at this one place? Why no where else? Why is this the first and only expression of such explicitly articulated “Triune” language? Further, if this language appears early in John’s writings, then why is it not picked up again in his later epistles, or his gospel, or especially, in his final Revelation? John regularly picks up these themes and language from his earlier writings. If John wrote the comma, he has stated some of the most profound theology in the history of God’s revelation. How could we explain the fact that he neglects to pick up and repeat this language anywhere else, at any time? The truth is, there is simply no way that John could yet use this language, because it is the clear (and excellent) articulation, not of John, but of the later church.

The Trinity of course has been eternally existent, but God did not immediately reveal his triune nature to his people. This revelation developed slowly throughout the giving of the canon. Most especially, it was revealed in the historical events of the Incarnation and Pentecost. These historical events showed God to be a triune being of three equal but distinct persons. The church would continue to develop how they articulated this truth. They did not develop the Trinity, for the Godhead is eternal, but they did develop the language that we use to express that Godhead. They did develop in their articulation.<sup>75</sup> The point is, on any account, the language of I John 5:7 is the language of the articulation of the later church. It is not the language of John, and it would be anachronistic to find it on his lips. John didn’t use this language, and John didn’t write the comma.

### **Transcriptional Probability**

#### *The TR reading as original*

While intrinsic probability has to do with which reading the biblical author is most likely to have written, transcriptional probability has to do with which reading a scribe is most likely to have produced. Thus, we come at the internal evidence from separate angles, which provide a kind of check and balance, often with one strand of evidence opposing the other. When both approaches point in the same direction, the internal evidence speaks quite strongly. Remember that the basic dictum is to *accept as original the reading that best explains the rise of the others*. We examined the external data to discover what variant forms the passage appears in. We examine internal considerations to interpret that data by beginning with each form as the original one, and asking how we could make sense of each of the readings that we find in the external data. When we have identified the original form of the text, then we should be able to explain at least generally how each of the variant forms came about. While a comprehensive treatment

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6:6; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; I Thess. 1:5, 6; 4:8; 2 Tim. 1:14; Titus 3:5; Heb. 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8; 10:15; I Pet 1:12; 2 Peter 1:21

<sup>74</sup> See “*Father, Son, and Spirit: The Trinity and John’s Gospel*” by Kostenberger for a thorough presentation of John’s Trinitarian thought.

<sup>75</sup> See Appendix A for a brief outline of this development.



would take every different form and begin with it as ostensibly original, that would multiply the length of this paper in manifold ways. Also, there are really only two forms being proposed; the longer reading in the TR form and the shorter reading followed by the NA 28 and all other Greek texts.

We begin by presuming the longer reading of the TR to be authentic, and then ask what sense that makes of the external data. To be gracious, I want us to first examine just the data from the far right side of the chart, which is all of the Greek support for the TR reading. (We will pretend for the moment that we don't have any of the data on the left side of the chart). John writes the longer reading sometime in the first century, and then scribes begin to make copies of it. But we must fast forward a full millennium to find the first scribe who makes such a copy of the reading. It is the scribe who produced miniscule 221 in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. He makes a mistake, and accidentally omits the longer reading, and puts the shorter version in his text. But then, someone comes along later, and notices his mistake. So they copy the correct reading from the TR into the margin of his text. When does this happen? We cannot say for sure. All we know is that it is after he produces the manuscript in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. This later corrector makes an accurate copy of the phrases found in the TR. It is a good thing too. As we will see, he is the first and only scribe in all of history prior to the KJV who is able to copy the original text in the TR form without making mistakes. If the TR form is original, then the actual original text written by John is never preserved anywhere else in the Greek witnesses prior to the KJV except in his marginal note. We might wonder if he is inspired by God to write that note? Only, if he is, he was only inspired for this one verse, since much of the rest of miniscule 221 does not agree with the TR.

Consider what this means. Miniscule 221 is the only Greek manuscript that has the exact TR reading prior to the creation of the TR, and the TR reading is in the margin, not the text. If one wants to say, "That's it – that's the one place God's perfect words were preserved" think through what it means. Even if we were to ignore all of the other evidence; even if we were to pretend that we didn't have any other manuscripts of I John, this one single manuscript would still tell the story. If we had only this one manuscript, and we wanted to know what John wrote, we would have to say that we have one reading in the margin, and a different one in the text. Since the text is undoubtedly older than the margin, it is just as likely that the text is correct and the margin mistaken. At the very best, even if this were our only manuscript, and if we ignored every single witness which doesn't have the TR form prior to Erasmus, we would still have a textual variant, and could say no more for the TR reading than just a simple 50/50 possibility. The most natural thing to say, even if this manuscript were our only evidence, would be that the TR reading looks suspiciously like a later addition. It is, after all, an additional note added in the margin.

But we do have two other manuscripts. So we jump ahead to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and two scribes make a copy of their text (2473, and 2318), and produce in the text the exactly correct reading of the original, presuming that for now to be the TR form. Of course, they are writing hundreds of years after Erasmus produced his text, and writing even after the KJV is translated, so it is impossible to give them any weight as representing the original. I might pencil into the margin of my Bible, "I, the Apostle John, write that Tim Berg is the one person specially elected by God to receive all of God's blessings. Every soul should give all their belongings to him." If I wrote in the margin of two Bibles, I now have essentially as much right to claim that my words are the original of I John as these two manuscripts do. They come after the printing press, after Erasmus, and after the KJV. If their testimony has any weight at all in representing the original text, that weight is essentially equal to my new marginal notes. But we could perhaps cling to these two manuscripts in a special way. They are, after all, in a TR = the originals scenario, the only Greek manuscripts in existence that have preserved in their text the actual words of I John in their original language. Only, since they come so late, using the word, "preserved" seems a very, very, strange word to describe that kind of a position, and means that the KJV doesn't "preserve" their reading; they "preserve" its reading, making it the inspired autograph in which God first spoke.

But there are more manuscripts than just those in the dark grey section of the chart. So we consider also the manuscripts from the center of the chart (the Non-TR forms of the longer reading). We imagine the scribes copying the manuscripts in Greek, having before them the TR reading. Once again, we

are forced to shoot forward in time a full millennium after John, since none of them writes prior to that. (apparently every scribe from the first millennium was exceptionally error-prone). We look over the shoulders of 8 scribes as they copy out the TR reading. Strangely enough, even though they are copying a small portion of text, only 25 words long, every single one of them is going to prove themselves unable to copy these 25 consecutive words without making numerous mistakes.

We note first the three manuscripts which have the longer reading in the text. To do this, we move forward in time to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. We examine the scribe of miniscule 629 in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. His goal is mostly to produce a good manuscript of the Latin Vulgate. He divides the lines of his manuscript according to the Latin column, and makes the Greek text match up to the Latin Vulgate. He repeatedly writes the Greek words of his manuscript in the Latin word order, even when it makes for bad Greek. He produces in his manuscript many unique readings that are clearly the result of translating from Latin into Greek, which seems to be what he does elsewhere. He thus produces what is often the only Greek manuscript in existence which agrees with the reading of the Latin Vulgate.<sup>76</sup>

It is almost certain that he is actually translating the Latin vulgate into Greek at I John 5:7, but since we are assuming the TR form original here, we will give him the benefit of the doubt at I John 5:7. We will say that he has a manuscript in front of him which represents the original, and presume that to be the TR form. He copies out the text of I John 5:7. But strangely, he makes a variety of mistakes. He accidentally skips the article. But not just once; he accidentally skips it when it comes before every member of the first triad. He accidentally skips the “and” before “word.” And he accidentally skips the “and” before “water” of the second triad. He accidentally swaps the order of “Holy Spirit,” to “Spirit Holy.” But the next thing is really strange; He accidentally adds the prepositional phrase “εις το” to the phrase “and these three are one,” so that it now reads the same as the final clause found in verse 8 “and these three agree in one.” Then, when he gets to verse 8, he totally skips that whole phrase altogether and leaves, “καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν” (“and these three agree in one”) out of his manuscript altogether! He changes the prepositions in the phrases “on the earth” and “in heaven” from “εν,” to “απο,” and from “εν” to “επι.” This is changing both the prepositions, and the case of their object, from a dative to a genitive, and from “on” to “from,” and from “on” to “upon.” If we assume he has the TR form in front of him, his many mistakes are utterly impossible to figure out. They simply are not possible as “mistakes,” and there is no reason whatsoever for them, if he is copying from a manuscript which has the TR reading. Oh well, we’ll move on.

We jump ahead to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and look over the shoulders of the scribe producing miniscule 918. Erasmus is alive, and may have already produced his text. But we are being gracious, so we will assume that this text isn’t influenced by him, and that he is in fact copying the original words of John from a supposedly TR form that represents the exact original words. He copies the manuscript we know as miniscule 918. But the strangest thing happens. The scribe copying the manuscript accidentally skips over the article before “Father.” Oh well, everyone makes mistakes and skips a word here and there. He copies the word “Father” all right, so I guess he has his bearings again. Only, he then accidentally skips over the very next word, which is the article before “Word.” Wow. Oh well, he gets his bearings again and copies the word, “Word” correctly. But then, he accidentally skips the very next word after “word,” which is the article before, “Holy Ghost.” Wow. In copying out these 25 words, he makes a mistake every other word for six words in a row. But he makes exactly the same mistake each time, in a pattern, omitting the article. We just can’t make sense of it. But, oh well, we’ll move on.

So, we move over to watch a scribe named Froy (or Roy) copy out miniscule 61. We even know when. The copy is made in 1520. We will presume in this scenario that the TR form is original, and thus that he is copying out that form. As we watch over his shoulder, we see he has the same dyslexia that afflicted the scribe of miniscule 918. He can’t seem to get two words in a row right. He accidentally skips the article before each of the members of the first triad. But then, when he gets to verse 8, he strangely completely skips the phrase, “καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν,” (and these three agree in one). It’s weird. We

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<sup>76</sup> See Brown, pg 12-13 of intro to *Opera Omnia Ordinis Sexti; Tomus Tertius.*

are turning to this guy as one of only five scribes in all of history who managed to accurately copy the actual words of the original, and adducing him as support for the comma, and saying he “got it right,” but in just these two verses he can’t seem to do a very good job, and his mistakes make no sense whatsoever. His repeated mistakes with the article especially make no sense. Oh well.

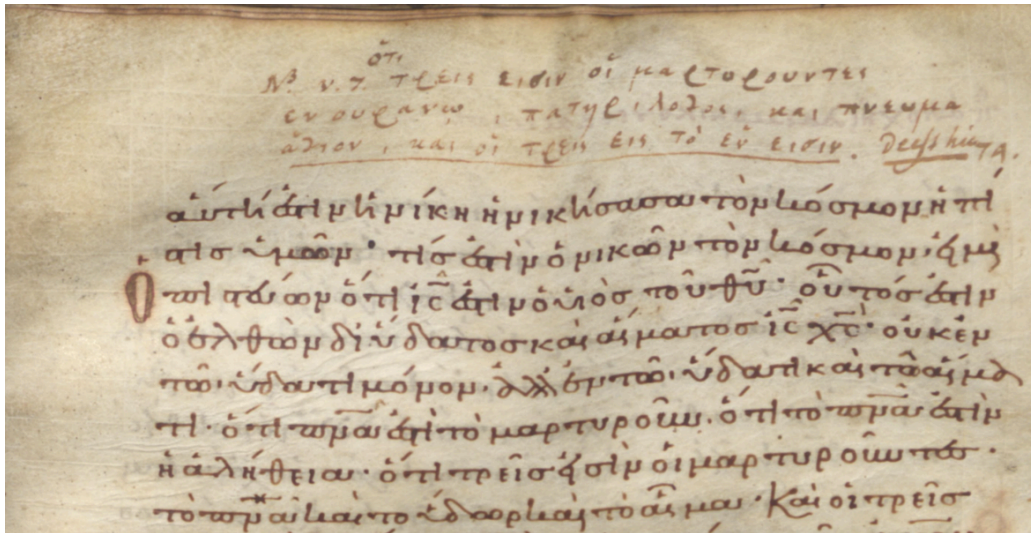
That was all of the manuscripts which either have the longer reading in the TR form, or which have it in the actual text, in any form. If that was all of the data we had, I would conclude definitively that the longer reading wasn’t original. There is far too much variation even in the very few late places that it does show up.

But there are more manuscripts which have the longer reading. There are five manuscripts that don’t have the longer reading in the text, but have added it in the margin. These are miniscules 177, 88, 429, and 636. Since we are assuming the TR reading correct here, we have trouble explaining why all five scribes make the exact same mistake. They all skip exactly the same 25 words, and create the shorter reading in the text. That is odd to say the least. One might almost be tempted to think that they make this uniform mistake because the exemplar they are copying from had the shorter reading. But, fortunately, some later scribes come along and help us out. They make an addition in the margin of the text. We presume they have the TR reading before them, (since it’s the original in this scenario). Strangely enough, the scribes producing these marginal notes are also incapable of copying out 25 consecutive words without making numerous mistakes. Every single one of them makes mistakes, most of them repeatedly, in copying this brief portion of text.

The later scribe correcting miniscule 177 accidentally drops the article, but not once, like an accident, but in a clear pattern, from each member of the first triad. The later scribe correcting miniscule 88 adds the conjunction “καί” so that both triads now have better balance. The later scribe correcting miniscule 429, like 177, omits the article, but not once, like an accident, but rather from each member of the first triad, in a pattern. The later scribe of 636 (who in this case is very possibly the original scribe writing in the 15<sup>th</sup> century) omits the article, but not once, and not even just from the first triad. He omits the article 6 times, from each member of the first triad, and from each member of the second triad. This is so odd as to be nonsensical. If these scribes have before them the TR reading, then they make all kinds of utterly nonsense mistakes in copying the text, for no explainable reason whatsoever.

The truth is, all of these differences are not examples of Greek scribes making mistakes in the copying of a Greek text identical to the TR. Such a claim is tantamount to nonsense. Rather, the differences among the Greek witnesses are exactly what we would expect to find if every single one of the Greek witnesses to the comma was a translation from Latin. Compare the variety of forms the comma is found in in Latin, and you will see that these differences are simply different scribes translating the Latin texts into Greek. We will note below several reasons we are confident that every one of these Greek witnesses to the comma is actually a translation of the comma from Latin or an insertion from the Erasmus translation of the Latin.

But, we also must ask when such marginal notes came about. If they are in the same hand and ink as the original text, we might assume them to be a correction by the original hand, which carries equal text-critical value as the original manuscript, whenever it dates. If the manuscript was very early, even a correction by a later hand would still be early enough to carry some text-critical value as a separate witness (although still less so than the original hand). But in this case, the manuscripts of the longer reading are so late as to carry little value anyway, and a later corrector simply carries little text-critical weight. But even with the manuscripts containing these marginal notes being so late, we still must ask, *when* were these marginal corrections added, and what was the source? We cannot say for sure in some cases, at least not with any specificity, except that they are later than the text beside which they are found. But in one of the manuscripts at least, we can say when, and that gives us a good indication to suggest when the other marginal notes were added as well. Miniscule 177 does allow us to suggest a date for such marginal additions of the comma, and to speak with some certainty about the date of at least one of them. I shared a link to the manuscript above. Let me include here an excerpt from the folio which contains I John 5:7,



Note the fact that this manuscript is from the 11<sup>th</sup> century. But a later scribe has added the longer reading (in a form different from the KJV/TR) at a later time. When does he do this, and what was his source for adding it? We can tell from looking closely at his note. His notes says, "N. [note] V. [verse] 7. "In heaven, father, word, and Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three who testify on the earth." He explicitly states that what has been "left out" is verse 7, and adds it as he sees fit. *But verse divisions for the NT were not invented until Stephanus in his 1555 edition of the Greek New Testament.* They were then included in common Latin printed texts. That tells us directly that this is not an early scribe adding a verse from an ancient manuscript that got left out on accident – this is a scribe in the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (or later!) who has a *printed* edition of the New Testament (very Likely a Latin one) which dates *after* 1555, and which contains verse divisions - otherwise, he wouldn't know to call it "verse 7!" The chance that such later marginal notes, in the margin of already late manuscripts, could be correcting the text to conform to the original reading is little more than wishful thinking, which runs directly contrary to every piece of historical evidence that we have available today.

If we were to look only at the data from the right side of the chart, and totally ignore the data on the left side of the chart, we would still inescapably conclude that the longer reading was not original. But the data on the right side of the chart makes up less than 2% of the total data available, and we have had to ignore all of that data to grasp at the straw of the longer reading being original, and we are still left concluding that the longer reading is a late addition. Now, let's factor the data from the left side of the chart in. Presuming the longer reading original, we have seen that five late scribes made a mistake and accidentally omitted the entire longer reading. Hard to imagine, especially since we have to this point pretended that we only know about 10 manuscripts written by 10 scribes, and thus, half of them have mistakenly skipped verse 7. That doesn't give us a lot of confidence in verse 7. But now, we look to the witnesses that textual critics rely on most—the data from the first millennium. From the first 6 centuries, we have five such witnesses – Majuscules 01, 03, 02, 048, and 0296. These early witnesses would carry the greatest weight, regardless of the reading of the later miniscules, and they all have the shorter reading. But we have even more. Still prior to the tenth century, we can add majuscules 018, 020, 025, 049, 0142, and miniscules 1424, 1862, 1895, 2464. Now, we must assume that every single one of the scribes of every single one of the manuscripts from the first millennium has made exactly the same mistake. Really hard to imagine. But then we add in all of the manuscripts on the right side of the chart, and things get really impossible. If the longer reading is original, how could every single scribe who copied every single manuscript that we have before the 14<sup>th</sup> century have made exactly the same mistake, and omitted exactly the same clauses? Remember also that this would have been one of the most important verses in the canon. This is simply nonsense.

Perhaps one could suggest that the many later miniscules from after the 10<sup>th</sup> century are essentially multiple copies of the same local original. Thus, they are not really hundreds of instances of a

scribe making a mistake in the copying of his manuscript, but are rather multiple copies of a local original “text type” that has made that mistake, and it just gets multiplied. Something along those lines is in fact quite likely. And any one who refuses to follow the majority of manuscripts on the left side of the chart must say that that is what happened. But here is the thing - the moment you say, “I think that happened” (which every KJVO advocate who claims verse 7 to be original must say), you have acknowledged the basic gist of the Hort and Westcott theory. Contrary to the misinformed opinion of many KJVO advocates, the details of their suggested historical reconstructions are not the essence of their theory.<sup>77</sup> Those details are what KJVO advocates often argue at length against today. But this is exceptionally odd, since, frankly, no scholar alive today would agree with all of those details. There isn’t anybody today who agrees with every part of “the Hort and Westcott theory.” But the basic point which they made, which is generally acknowledged by all textual critics, is that multiple witnesses could copy a bad reading, and thus, witnesses should be weighed, not just counted.<sup>78</sup> In this passage, every KJV advocate must not only acknowledge that basic point, but must appeal to it in the Greek manuscripts of I John 5:7, or cut I John 5:7 out of their Bibles. Anyone arguing for the authenticity of I John 5:7 can do so only by directly agreeing with the basic gist of the Hort and Westcott theory. The difference between them and a textual critic is that a textual scholar can reason as to *how* a manuscript may be weighed. They have a system, which is built upon the evidence. A KJVO advocate has no such system, no such evidence, and no way to make a case for the authenticity of the comma on the basis of evidence. Thus he follows the majority when it agrees with the KJV, but must reject the majority the moment it disagrees with the KJV. Which of course means that any appeal to “the majority” lends zero credence to a KJVO position, and is revealed, ultimately, to be utterly irrelevant to him and his position.

In either case, a claim that the many later manuscripts from Byzantium are only multiple copies of a singular local original can be made about the many manuscripts from about the 9<sup>th</sup> century on. But such a claim absolutely cannot be said about all of the Greek evidence prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. These manuscripts are being copied at different times, in different locations of the world, by scribes with different proclivities. They represent different “text-types” if one wants to use the older language, and in fact, would provide what is known as complete “genealogical solidarity” among the text types, meaning that all of the different “text families” have exactly the same reading. That is almost unheard of in a textual variant, and makes it almost impossible that the longer reading could represent the original reading. My point is that it doesn’t matter what textual theory you hold to. Every single one of them must say that I John 5:7 is not original. Any position which says I John 5:7 is original must do so against the unanimous consent of the Greek manuscripts, and against any kind of textual theory that chooses to consider evidence. The case for the authenticity of the comma has only one true leg upon which it could stand – God supernaturally inspired the KJV translators to infallibly recreate the text of Scripture, and thus they should be trusted against every ounce of evidence, even though they themselves repeatedly claimed to be fallible people creating a fallible work.

But further, consider all of the versional evidence. If the longer reading is original, then whatever magical influence could have allowed the true reading to completely disappear from practically every Greek manuscript we have should not have been able to affect the ancient translations into other languages. Thus, the ancient translations should all have the longer reading. Perhaps one could say there was some corruption in the Greek manuscripts, which influenced the versions. What one would expect then is a “mixed” set of witnesses from the versional support. This mixture, which we often find in textual

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<sup>77</sup> Strangely, KJVO advocates often attempt to show that a Lucian recension didn’t happen (they have no proof that it didn’t) and then act like they have directly disproved (by their superior scholarship) everything WH said. This is odd, since WH directly explained that it didn’t matter if a Lucian recension ever took place or not. This was one hypothetical possibility. There were just showing that the majority of manuscripts should not be blindly followed as having stronger weight, since they could all be copying a bad reading, which is exactly what a KJVO advocate must say here.

<sup>78</sup> See pages 40-46 of “*The New Testament in the Original Greek.*” Hort and Westcott, 1882.

variants, would be somewhat ambiguous. Are the witnesses mixed because one reading is original, or because the other is? Hard to say in such a case. But what could not be accounted for in any way if the longer reading is original is the total and complete absence of the true reading from all of the versional data except the Latin. Yet this is precisely what we find. None of the early versions, in any language, has any form of the longer reading. That is simply not possible if the longer reading is original. It is clear evidence that the reading originated in Latin, and could be found only there until it was translated into Greek in the second millennium.

The patristic support tells the same story. If the TR reading were original, then we would expect to find the passage quoted in that form by the Fathers regularly. But the longer reading of any kind is totally absent from every single patristic writer, except for a few that were writing in Latin. Among patristic writers spanning the centuries, in all parts of the world, in several different languages, the longer form only appears in a handful of Latin Fathers. If the longer reading is original, this doesn't make any sense at all.

But this is further borne out when we note that the actual TR form is totally absent from even the Latin patristic writers that have some form of the longer ending, with the possible exception of Vitensius in the 5<sup>th</sup> century (and his witness still isn't technically the TR form, since the phrase "*et hi tres unum sunt*" is the same in both the phrase in verse 7 and verse 8). There are a handful of quotations of the longer reading in the Latin patristic literature that correspond to one of the forms the passage is found in in the Latin Manuscripts. But, again, they are always found in a non-TR form.

Frankly, there is no possible way to make sense of the external data or the internal data from intrinsic or transcriptional probability if the TR reading is original. Every part of the data must be completely ignored. What must be concluded in such a case is that the true reading was lost from history, was not "preserved" in any sense, and was rather miraculously "restored" when Erasmus included it, on the basis of almost exclusively Latin support. But since he didn't include it in his first two editions, and protested it in each of his later editions, he can hardly be pointed to as the inspired "instrument of God's restoration." Rather, this title can only belong to the KJV translators. If the KJV translation of I John 5:7 is in any way the Word of God, then every ounce of the data must be categorically rejected, and the only possible explanation is that the KJV translators were supernaturally inspired by God to recreate a text that no one ever had in any language before Erasmus, except in Latin. We must then say that no one had the perfect word of God in any language at any time until 1611. No one who holds that the TR/KJV form of the passage is the original has any right to claim that they believe in "preservation." They simply do not believe in any kind of preservation. They are forced by the data to believe in the magical "restoration" of a previously lost text. Certainly, at the least, they do not have any right to ever appeal with integrity to the original languages as support for their position. They must instead reject all of the witnesses of the original languages as corrupt.

### *The shorter reading as original*

Presuming the TR reading to have been the original one leaves us with only nonsense, and pushes us into a corner where only one position is possible - God supernaturally inspired the KJV translators to recreate the original text, which was never found in perfect form anywhere, at any time, in any language, until 1611. But what if we switch things around? What if we presume the shorter reading to have been the original one? Could we make sense of the data then, and thus have some support for our position other than believing the KJV translators inspired? Let's see.

All of the data on the left side of the chart is easily explainable in this scenario. Every Greek witness on the left side of the chart is simply copying the original form of the text. Since the original form doesn't have the longer reading, every accurate copy doesn't have the longer reading. Amazingly simple. Every patristic witness on the left side of the chart is simply quoting the original text. Every ancient translation on the left side of the chart is simply translating the text they have, which is an accurate copy of the original. Suggesting the shorter reading as original makes perfect sense of every ounce of the data.



In fact, apart from a bias which must maintain the perfection of the KJV, it would be the only conceivable way to even think about the data.

## Conclusion

Thus, to conclude this examination of the longer reading of I John 5:7, it is obvious that every strand of the data arrives firmly and independently at the conclusion that the shorter reading is undoubtedly the original one. The external data is definitive. If we only knew the versional witnesses, we would be able to tell that the longer reading occurs only in Latin, and only later than the shorter reading. In light of the additional versional witnesses, which unanimously testify to the shorter reading, the versional data is conclusive. The patristic data tells the same story. The longer reading is known only among Latin fathers, and only after Nicaea, never before. When we look at the Greek manuscripts, the data is overwhelmingly on the side of the shorter reading, with the shorter reading supported not only by every early witness, but by essentially every witness from any time and place.

Examining the internal evidence only further confirms what we could already conclude. In terms of intrinsic probability, the language of the comma is not at all Johannine, disturbs the context of the passage, works against John's point, and is historically anachronistic. In terms of transcriptional probability, the great variety of the forms of the passage (6 different forms among only 10 manuscripts that have it) would alone show it to clearly be an addition. The fact that exactly half of these witnesses have the comma as a marginal addition would by itself explain that it was an "addition" to the original text. The extremely late nature of these witnesses would make the reading irrelevant in terms of establishing the original text of the NT. But the fact that all of even these few late witnesses show clear evidence of being translations from Latin only seals the deal. Thus, the three separate strands of evidence combine and intertwine to become a three-fold cord not easily broken. John simply did not write the longer reading of I John 5:7. Anyone who values truth over tradition must come to this conclusion. Period.

## Where The Longer Reading Came From

But what about the right side of the chart? Several different forms of the comma do become common, even if it is only in Latin that this happens. Then, in the second millennium, we do have a few Greek witnesses, disparate though they may be, that have some form of the longer reading. How does this scenario explain those witnesses? In other words, where did the KJV reading actually come from, and how did it make its way into the KJV? Let me suggest a very plausible scenario. I would never say, "It happened exactly this way." This is only a suggested possibility. But almost all of the external data, (Greek, versional, patristic) and all of the internal data (transcriptional and intrinsic) have already spoken clearly and loudly in favor of the shorter reading being original. We are perfectly justified in ruling conclusively on that mountain of evidence. But if we can provide a plausible scenario that would explain the few disparate parts (the right side of the chart), then we can "tie up the loose ends" so to speak, and every single witness can be accounted for, and we can make sense of every single element in our chart.

## The Comma Was Born As A Patristic Reflection on Verse Eight

Cyprian, writing in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, in "*De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate*" or "*On the Unity of the Church*" writes, "The Lord says, 'I and the Father are one;' and again it is written of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, 'And these three are one.' And does anyone believe that this unity which thus comes from the Divine strength and coheres in celestial sacraments, can be divided in the Church, and can



be separated by the parting asunder of opposing wills? He who does not hold this unity does not hold God's law, does not hold the faith of the Father and Son, does not hold life and salvation."<sup>79</sup>

Notice that Cyprian is making a case for the unity of the divine persons being a teaching that comes from "The Divine strength" yet does not quote the longer reading. Rather, the only "quotation" from I John 5 is the phrase from verse 8, "and these three are one." If he had the longer reading, in an attempt to make his case, it is unthinkable that he wouldn't quote the longer reading. What he does do is quote the shorter reading, but he interprets it allegorically as a reference to the Trinity. He has understood the "spirit and water and blood" to be allegorically referring to the three members of the Trinity. It is easy to see how he has made this leap. Jesus had said in John 10, "I and the Father are one." And Cyprian can see the Trinity in such a statement. (Technically, this is a binitarian statement.) But Cyprian can also see John using the phrase, "these three are one" which sounds so much the same as Jesus' statement about the Father. This sounds exactly like what one might say about the Trinity, and after all, spirit+water+blood = three witnesses, just like there are three members of the Trinity. Simple. In an age when allegorical interpretation is abundant and common, it is an easy step to see spirit, water, and blood as allegorical references to the members of the Trinity (after all, the Spirit is directly mentioned, and if one adds two other entities to the Spirit, what else could they be talking about?)

But notice that he has slightly misread the text. He writes, "Dicit Dominus: *Ego et Pater unum sumus. Et iterum de patre et filio et spiritu sancto scriptum est: Et tres unum sunt.*"<sup>80</sup> He has read, "*Et tres unum sunt,*" where all the Latin manuscripts read, "*Et hi tres unum sunt.*" In fact, as we saw earlier, that is the reading of the Latin manuscripts both in verse 8 and the later addition which has become our verse 7. Without the pronoun, the phrase could be mistaken to have the sense, "the three are a unity," or, in the witness context, "the three are in agreement." Note also that his reference to the Trinity is the common form in the Western church, "the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Not, Father, *Word*, and Holy Ghost. Cyprian saw a clear statement of the unity of the Father and Son in John 10:30. And he was eager to find one that supported the Trinity he held so dear, so he saw a statement of the unity of the members of the Trinity in the Latin translation of John's statement in I John 5:8, "and these three are one." His interpretation of the passage (the shorter reading of I John 5:7, interpreted as a reference to the Trinity) became immensely popular. It may even have become the major interpretation of the passage in church of that day. It would be an easy jump for an interpreter to make, and even interpreters today, who do not accept the longer reading, sometimes interpret verse 8 in this way, as a reference to the Trinity.

### **The Early Church Promoted This Trinitarian Reflection On The Shorter Reading**

Many other patristic writers either follow Cyprian's interpretation, or make a similar jump themselves, with minor differences in how they interpret parts of the shorter reading. These authors are sometimes cited as support for the longer reading, but only by those who have not read them closely (or who have intentionally misrepresented them). In each case, they are quoting only the shorter reading, but interpreting verse 8 as a reference to the Trinity. Again, it is an easy jump to make. Augustine provides a prime example of the kind of allegorical interpretation which allowed the shorter reading to be a reference to the Trinity, thus we quote him at length as but one example. He writes,

"(1 *Joann. v. 7, 8*) *Tres sunt testes; spiritus, et aqua, et sanguis; et tres unum sunt.* I would not have thee mistake that place in the epistle of John the apostle where he saith, "There are three witnesses: the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three are one." Lest haply thou say that the Spirit and the water and the blood are diverse substances, and yet it is said, "the three are one:" for this cause I have admonished thee, that thou mistake not the matter. For these are mystical expressions, in which the point always to be considered is, not what the actual things are, but what they denote as signs: since they are signs of things, and what they are in their essence is one thing, what they are in their signification another.

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<sup>79</sup> ANF, Schaff, vol. 5, pg. 423.

<sup>80</sup> See a critical edition of the Latin text at; <https://archive.org/details/librdecatholic00krabgoog> pg. 15.

If then we understand the things signified, we do find these things to be of one substance. Thus, if we should say, the rock and the water are one, meaning by the Rock, Christ; by the water, the Holy Ghost: who doubts that rock and water are two different substances? Yet because Christ and the Holy Spirit are of one and the same nature, therefore when one says, the rock and the water are one, this can be rightly taken in this behalf, that these two things of which the nature is diverse, are signs of other things of which the nature is one. Three things then we know to have issued from the Body of the Lord when He hung upon the tree: first, the spirit: of which it is written, "And He bowed the head and gave up the spirit:" then, as His side was pierced by the spear, "blood and water." Which three things if we look at as they are in themselves, they are in substance several and distinct, and therefore they are not one. But if we will inquire into the things signified by these, there not unreasonably comes into our thoughts the Trinity itself, which is the One, Only, True, Supreme God, Father and Son and Holy Ghost, of whom it could most truly be said, "There are Three Witnesses, and the Three are One:" so that by the term *Spirit* we should understand God the Father to be signified; as indeed it was concerning the worshipping of Him that the Lord was speaking, when He said, "God is a Spirit:" by the term, *blood*, the Son; because "the Word was made flesh:" and by the term *water*, the Holy Ghost; as, when Jesus spake of the water which He would give to them that thirst, the evangelist saith, "But this said He of the Spirit which they that believed on Him were to receive." Moreover, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are "Witnesses," who that believes the Gospel can doubt, when the Son saith, "I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me, He beareth witness of me." Where, though the Holy Ghost is not mentioned, yet He is not to be thought separated from them. Howbeit neither concerning the Spirit hath He kept silence elsewhere, and that He too is a witness hath been sufficiently and openly shown. For in promising Him He said, "He shall bear witness of me." These are the "Three Witnesses," and the Three are One, because of one substance. But whereas, the signs by which they were signified came forth from the Body of the Lord, herein they figured the Church preaching the Trinity, that it hath one and the same nature: since these Three in threefold manner signified are One, and the Church that preacheth them is the Body of Christ. In this manner then the three things by which they are signified came out from the Body of the Lord: like as from the Body of the Lord sounded forth the command to "baptize the nations in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." "In the name:" not, In the names: for "these Three are One," and One God is these Three. And if in any other way this depth of mystery which we read in John's epistle can be expounded and understood agreeably with the Catholic faith, which neither confounds nor divides the Trinity, neither believes the substances diverse nor denies that the persons are three, it is on no account to be rejected. For whenever in Holy Scriptures in order to exercise the minds of the faithful any thing is put darkly, it is to be joyfully welcomed if it can be in many ways but not unwisely expounded."

Note that Augustine also omits the pronoun *hi* (these) in his quotation of the shorter reading, which makes the statement less likely to mean, "these three agree" and more likely to be interpreted, "These three are one." Like Cyprian and others, this statement seems to him to express unity of Essence. His own predilection for Trinitarian expression of the unity of essence of the Divine persons did the rest for him.

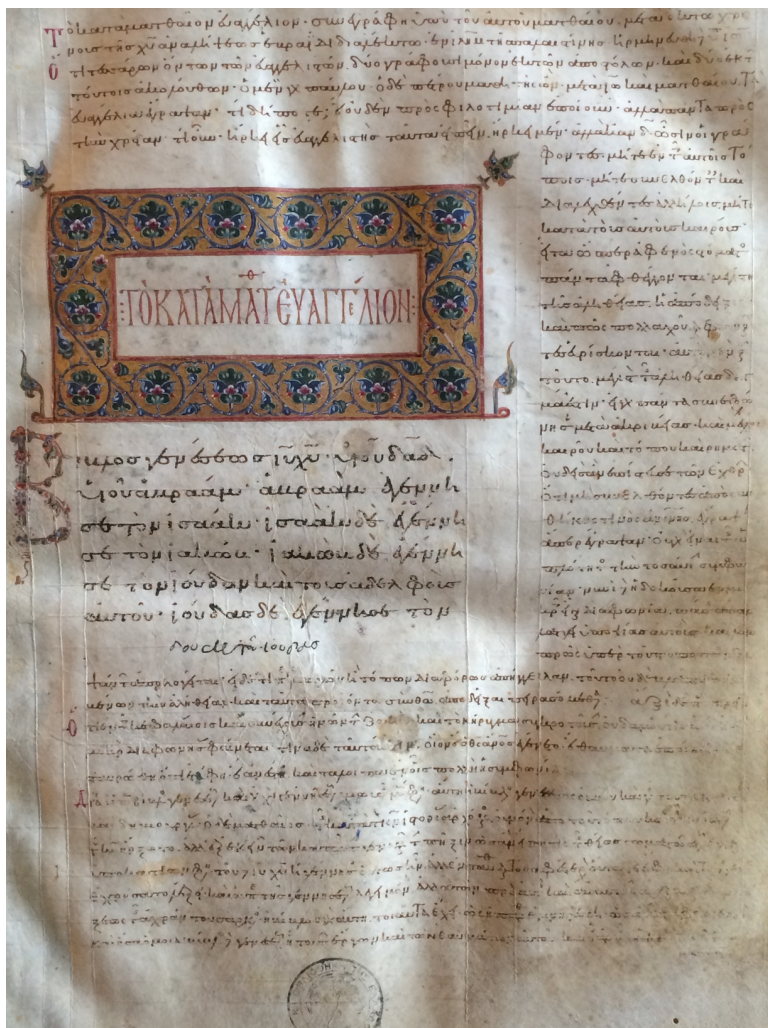
### **This Reflection Gained A Glossary Status, And Slipped Into The Text**

When scribes copied out the text of scripture, they always created a "margin" or a blank border around the text. Oftentimes they then made use of that border. But they could make use of that border in several different ways. These ways are known under the umbrella term "glosses." They had several different purposes. As we've looked at the data above, we have seen several examples of a later scribe

who uses the border to “correct” the reading of the manuscript. This is where a scribe is saying, “I think the scribe who wrote this manuscript accidentally left something out. Here is what the text should have said.” Or, in one or two cases, the marginal note that contains the longer reading may be what is called a “variant reading,” or v.r. This is where the scribe producing the manuscript knows of two different readings, but isn’t sure which is original, so he writes one in the text, and another in the margin. Yes, footnotes that some would claim “cast doubt on the Bible” (if one wants to use that extremely pejorative language), existed thousands of years before modern versions, and are a basic part of half of the only 10 manuscripts that have the longer reading.

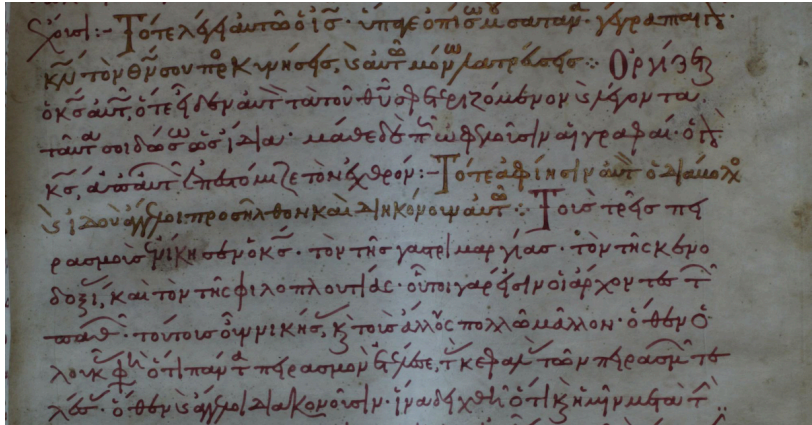
But there was another common use of the margin. It was often used as a place to write commentary on the text of Scripture. Some scribes produced their own commentary on Scripture. (Let’s be honest – each of us who preach do this all the time while in the pulpit.) Many other scribes would take the comments of a well-known patristic author from their own or a previous generation, and they would write that commentary in the margins of the manuscript. In fact, sometimes, scribes would write commentary, not only in the margin, but in the flow of the text. They might differentiate the text and their own commentary by writing the text in capital letters, and the commentary in lowercase. Or they might write the text in one color of ink, and the commentary in another.

For example, here is a Greek manuscript of Matthew with commentary written all around the text. Notice the 7 lines of the first part of the text of Matthew, but surrounded on top, right, and bottom, by scribal commentary;



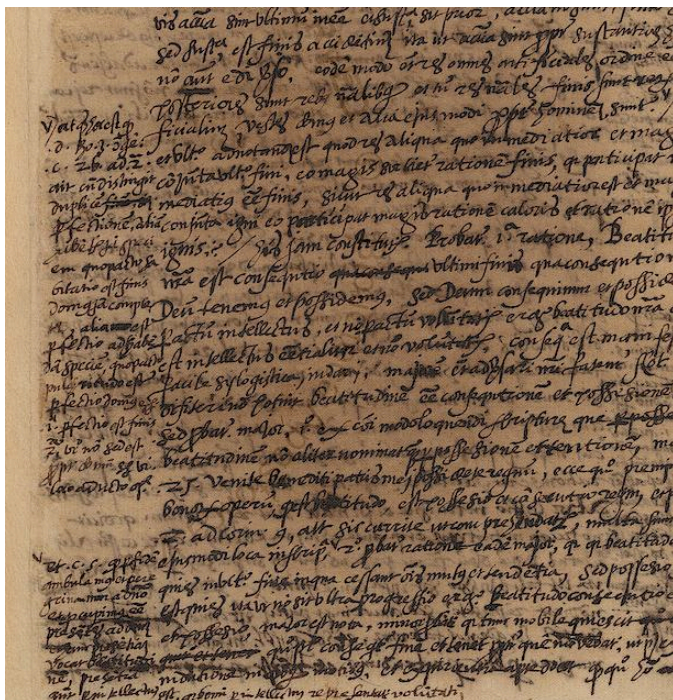


But again, sometimes a scribe wrote commentary in line with the text. For example, here is one example of where the scribe wrote the commentary within the text, but using two different colors of ink (gold for the text of scripture; red for the text of his comments);



Do you see his half line of commentary, then line and a half of text; then three and a half lines of commentary, then line and a half of text, etc.? What if a scribe writing a manuscript like this accidentally used the wrong color pen, and wrote his comment with the color used for the scripture text? Or what if the colors simply became indistinguishable over time? If you didn't look really close, you might go to make a copy of this manuscript later, and think you were copying out the text, but actually be copying out the commentary.

Or, if you're a scribe who goes to copy the text, you might see a marginal note, but you aren't sure what the note means. Remember, the margins could serve multiple purposes. They could include commentary, variant readings, or corrections. You see a note in the margin, but you don't know - Is this marginal note a comment on the text? Is it a variant reading? Is it a correction, where the scribe before you was saying, "This goes in the text, I just accidentally skipped it when I was writing." It could be any one of the three. You would have no way to know for sure. And the scribes of the Greek manuscripts are known for being much more careful in making clear what is text and what is margin. Of course, in early Latin works, this can be quite a bit messier;



This is likely one of several reasons why the so called “Western text” (which is where most of the Latin manuscripts would fall) has so many wild additions to it not found in the other text-types. For example, did you know that if we added all of the textual expansions inserted into the Western manuscripts to the text of the Bible, the text of the book of Acts would grow by over 10% from what’s our Bibles? Scribes of the Latin manuscripts accidentally included glosses or inserted expansions into the text *all the time*. If a scribe does this, and someone copies his manuscript, we now have two manuscripts which have a reading that was originally just a marginal gloss. If two scribes each make copies of their texts, then we have six witnesses that have the reading. And so on, and so on.

We only find the longer reading in the Latin manuscripts until the second millennium, but the earliest forms of it all have the two triads in the opposite order of that found in the TR, and this is especially significant in reconstructing the rise of the variant. The earliest variant of the passage in Latin is actually the rare addition of the phrase, “in earth” to the shorter reading. Thus we have one early Latin manuscript which reads, “Thus three there are, who testimony give in earth; spirit, and water, and blood. and these three are one.” Until somewhere around 600 AD, the triads are found with the “earthly” witness before the “heavenly” witnesses. This is precisely what we would expect to find if the longer reading were originally a marginal gloss providing an interpretation of the shorter reading as allegorically representing the Trinity. In fact, if the comment was written within the text using the “two-color ink” method shown above, the reading and its comment would look like this;

“Thus there are three, who testimony give on earth; Spirit, and water, and blood: and these three are one. And there are three, who testimony give in heaven; Father, Word and Spirit, and these three one are. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.”

Which is, in fact, exactly the Latin, “Form 4” we noted above which became so common. If a manuscript had such a comment within the text, it would be almost impossible for it not to slip into the text at some point by a later scribe copying the text. Even if this form never occurred in a two-color-ink manuscript, the marginal interpretation of the shorter reading would still be placed in the margin right after the phrase, “these three are one.” If that comment was accidentally inserted, it would again yield the exact form shown above, the form evidenced early in the Latin manuscripts. One can see clearly what could have happened, and the mistake that led to a Trinitarian interpretive gloss accidentally slipping in to the text of some Latin manuscripts, and being copied from there.

Notice, there is no malice here. There is no “conspiracy” to remove things from the Bible or add things to it. There is no intentional change of the text by heretical parties. Such conspiracy theories are the fantasy playground of modern skeptics, and TRO/KJVO advocates seem to regularly adopt their claims of malicious alteration without question. But what we actually have is just good scribes, who want to make a good copy of the Scriptures they revere, but who happen to have this one thing in common with you and I; they are fallen people and they make mistakes. The fallen state and lack of perfection of every human being has been called the single most empirically verifiable element of all of theology. No one can truly deny their own ability to regularly make mistakes. If you’ve ever met a single other human being in your life, then you know others are just as prone as you are. The fallen state and propensity of these scribes to make such mistakes is something that you inherently know to be true. One might claim, “but I believe God supernaturally protected the scribes from such mistakes.” But the existence of every single variant form of the passage found among the Latin and Greek manuscripts (to say nothing of every single textual variant in every single manuscript we possess) is empirically verifiable proof that God did not magically prevent such scribal errors. In fact, if one holds the KJV/TR correct in this passage, he is forced to admit that 99% of the Greek manuscripts of this passage represent such scribal error in one form or another, and that the vast majority of these scribes did not have some “Divine Insurance policy” which ensured their text was perfect, which makes such an objection rather self-refuting.

Is it possible that scribes writing commentary on the text of the shorter reading of I John 5:7-8 might put the allegorical interpretation of Cryprian, Augustine, or themselves, in the margins of some of their manuscripts? It is almost certain that they did at points. Is it then possible that a scribe might then copy a Latin manuscript that had a comment in the margin, and might accidentally think that what was intended as a comment to interpret the text was actually supposed to be part of the original text? Are you kidding? It would be almost impossible if this *didn't* happen at some points in the transmission of the text. It probably happened at many different points in the transmission of the Latin text. (Which is why the longer reading appears in several different forms in the Latin tradition.) But it is easily detectable to anyone who both looks at the evidence, and actually cares what it reveals. Because Latin scribes were most prone to such errors, the variant occurs in the Latin tradition. Because the variant was never part of the original text of I John, it is found only in the Latin tradition.

Does this mean the text of the NT cannot be found today? That it is so corrupted by scribal error that it is completely irrecoverable? Of course not. Look again through the chart of external data. God has given us a wealth of historical data, and it is frankly overwhelming. There is no doubt about the wording of the original text here. In fact, amazingly, the vast majority of the text of the NT is not affected at all by textual variation or scribal error. And in the vast majority of places even where the text is affected, we have such an incredible amount of data available that even the most skeptical scholars, with a serious bias against the Bible, have to admit that we can reconstruct the text of the NT with virtual certainty in all but a few hundred places. All of the debate between textual critics is about these few hundred places.

There are several ways to approach such data. One can come to a text like this one as many modern skeptics do, and say, "We have no idea what the original said." But to make this claim, they must ignore every ounce of the actual historical data. Every piece of external data in the chart above refutes the skeptic and says that we know exactly what the wording of the original autographs was here. Their position only works by completely ignoring the data. Or, one can come with a bias that says, "The KJV can never be wrong." But to make this claim, one must again ignore every ounce of the historical data. If our attitude is "all of the data must be rejected and ignored – it is all corrupt" and the basis for saying this is that no reading could ever be correct that is not the reading of the KJV, then our foundation is the same as the skeptic. We have abandoned all of the data, and condemned all of the evidence. Our argument is no longer "look at the evidence." It is now, "be just like me, and reject all of the evidence like I do, and just choose to believe wishfully that God supernaturally recreated perfectly in 1611 the text which had for all ages previous, in every language, been lost." Belief in this magical recreation in 1611 must then become the sole and only grounds for trusting the Word of God.

The other way to approach the data is to actually believe in preservation; to believe that God's words have never been completely lost, and did not need magically restored in 1611. This approach looks at the wealth of data above and says, "I know exactly what the wording of the originals was here. I know exactly what John wrote. I know exactly what God said." While the first two approaches demand a wholesale rejection of the historical data, this position is reasonable, verifiable, and evidential. It doesn't ignore the data – it trusts it. This is the approach which I believe most honors God.

### **The Comma becomes a Vulgar Reading**

Now that we can see how the variant arose, we must ask, how did it become the common reading of the Latin church? The Latin Vulgate became the standard Bible of the western church for almost a full millennium. It became common to claim that God had in fact originally written the Bible in Latin. In 1401 a statute was passed that made it illegal to read even a scrap of the Bible in any language but Latin, punishable by burning at the stake.<sup>81</sup> When Gutenberg invented printing, an edition of the Latin Vulgate was the first work to come off his press in 1456. In fact, over 100 different editions of the Latin Bible were printed before the first Greek New Testament was printed in 1514. The Latin text, in various forms,

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<sup>81</sup> Daniel, David, introduction to "*The New Testament 1526 edition Facsimile*" by William Tyndale. No page numbers.



was literally everywhere. It was the common Bible of the established church at the time of Erasmus. And most editions of this Bible contained the longer reading of I John 5:7. St. Thomas Aquinas had declared the text authentic, despite its complete absence from the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium of the Greek tradition.

This attitude toward the Vulgate, and the authenticity of the comma, came to a fuller expression at the Council of Trent in 1545. Among the many grievous errors of that council, they asserted that “Moreover, the same sacred and holy Synod,— considering that no small utility may accrue to the Church of God, if it be made known which out of all the Latin editions, now in circulation, of the sacred books, is to be held as authentic,—ordains and declares, that the said old and vulgate edition, which, by the lengthened usage of so many ages, has been approved of in the Church, be, in public lectures, disputations, sermons and expositions, held as authentic; and that no one is to dare, or presume to reject it under any pretext whatever.” Ironically, if one were to replace “Latin” with “English,” and “Vulgate” with “Authorized” in that statement, it would sound disturbingly like many KJVO statements of faith. In either case, it is quite evident that by the time Erasmus set out to write a new translation of the Latin text, the comma had become rather universally accepted, and especially so in Roman Catholicism. In 1897, the “Sacred Congregation of the Inquisition in Rome” issued a declaration (confirmed by Pope Leo XIII) that one could not call into question the authenticity of the comma.<sup>82</sup>

### The Comma gets translated into Greek, and put into Erasmus’ text against his better judgment

#### The Comma as a Translation from Latin

When we examine the few late manuscripts that do have some form of the longer reading, it is immediately clear that every one of them represents a translation into Greek from a Latin form of the longer reading. Consider several of the lines of evidence we have already pointed out that make this plain. First, in terms of date, the reading appears only in Latin until the marginal addition of 221 is written (probably after Erasmus). This alone would give us grounds to say, “Oh, this is clearly an addition from Latin.” But secondly, that five of the only 10 manuscripts that contain the longer reading have it as a *marginal addition* makes it more likely to be a translation from another language, and since it only occurs in Latin texts and quotations, from Latin it must have come. Thirdly, we note that in a case like the diglot ms 629, with the Latin text just inches away, in a manuscript well known for being a translation from Latin, this move is undeniable. Fourthly, we are immediately struck by the great variety among these 10 manuscripts. Even though this section of text is only 25 words long, in the 10 manuscripts that have it in some form, it appears in 6 different forms. If these manuscripts represented scribes copying a Greek text, there should be much greater (actually, in a case like this, perfect) uniformity. However, since the longer reading in each of these manuscripts represents a translation into Greek from Latin, then of course, since translation is never a perfect science, each scribe translates the Latin text slightly differently, and translates slightly different Latin texts. Thus, slightly different forms of the Greek text is exactly what we would expect, and it is exactly what we see.

But there is a further point along these lines that must be noted, which I haven’t mentioned to this point. If one goes back and looks through each of the Greek forms of the longer reading found in the

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<sup>82</sup> Brown, “*The Epistles of John*” pg. 780. As Brown (a Roman Catholic) explains, Roman Catholics today have found ways to “get around” both Trent and the Inquisition declaration, as well as the constitutions of Oxford. It would be something of an embarrassment to have the Church officially declare original a text which historically they all must admit wasn’t written by John, so it is now suggested that Trent can be complied with by any form of the Latin, and the Inquisition is taken to be affirming only that the comma is Catholic Scripture, not that it was actually written by John, which all must now admit that it was not. Thus, most editions of the Vulgate (and most “Rome-approved” translations from Greek) do not include the comma today, as noted in the chart above with the Vg<sup>st</sup> and Vg<sup>ww</sup> sigla. Others do, and thus the comma may still be regarded as Roman Catholic Scripture, while being acknowledged as not originally written by John.

Greek manuscripts, the thing that will most immediately strike one is the difference in the way the manuscripts have treated the Greek article. They handle the article in a great variety of ways, yet strangely, ways that don't appear accidental. Thus, they usually aren't omitting or adding the article from just one of the nouns, but rather they seem to follow clearly intelligent patterns. Some have the article with each member of the first triad but not the second. Some have it with each member of the second triad but not the first. Some don't have the article with any member of either triad, and some have the article with each member of each triad. If these manuscripts represented scribes copying a Greek text, then this would be a bewildering state of affairs. But the facts of the case are much more simple and straightforward. The truth is, there is no article in the Latin language. Latin doesn't have a definite or indefinite article. The language simply lacks this feature.<sup>83</sup> This is why, in each of the Latin forms I presented above, I did not include the article in my literal translations – because Latin doesn't have it. This is demonstrably why there is such variance in how the article appears in each of the Greek manuscripts we looked at before. These manuscripts undeniably represent scribes translating the Latin texts into Greek. Thus, each of them faces an interpretive choice with every noun they come across – should I include the article with this noun, or not? Both are possible as a Greek translation of Latin. This is, of course, reflective of how the translator interprets the text. The reason there is such divergence in the presence/absence of the article in the Greek manuscripts that have the longer reading, is because the manuscripts that have the longer reading are all translations into Greek from Latin, which doesn't have the article. The facts could not be more clear.

#### Erasmus' Text – A Revision of the Vulgate

Like the Greek manuscripts noted above, the form of the Greek text of the comma in Erasmus is his own translation of his Latin text into Greek. To grasp the place of the comma in Erasmus, the nature of the New Testament of Erasmus must be understood against its historical backdrop. In the first centuries of the Church, a large variety of translations of the Bible into Latin had been made. One father complained that it seemed like everyone who knew any Latin had produced his own translation, and most were very poorly done. Jerome was commissioned in 382 to correct this situation, and so compared as many of the *Vetis Latina* (Old Latin) translations as he could, and produced by closer attention to the original Greek and Hebrew a new translation of the whole Bible. Latin soon became the common language of Christianity in the Western world, and Jerome's Bible became the only Bible that was used. Thus, it came to be called the *versio vulgata*, or "vulgate" meaning, the version commonly used. For the next 1000 years, this was to be the Bible of Christianity in the Western world. Discussion took place with this translation in hand. Theology was formed from it. Education came to be based on it. Very few people were educated in Greek, even among the scholars of the day. The scholarly language of the day was Latin. The Latin text had the historical and ecclesiastical tradition of over 1,000 years use. But there was a negative effect to this longstanding tradition of use. The original language texts faded into the background for most of Christianity. They had "the Bible in their hands" and so had no reason to go back to the Greek and Hebrew. For most of Christianity, the Vulgate was considered on par with the original autographs, as an inspired translation. (A similar attitude had developed toward the LXX in the first centuries of the church).

But several factors combined to change the world in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. First, the Turks invaded Byzantium, and as a result, study of Greek, and reading of the Greek classical writers and Greek patristic writers in their original tongue was scattered all across Europe. Add to this the fact that the printing press was invented by Gutenberg that same year, 1453, making it possible to create thousands of copies of a written work in the time it previously took to create one, and it is easy to see that the world was at a pivotal point of change. A system of "New Learning" began in Italy and swept across

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<sup>83</sup> See Allen and Greenough, "New Latin Grammar," which has been the standard Latin Grammar for over 100 years, page 18.

the world. This cultural movement was known as “Humanism,”<sup>84</sup> and it dominated the historical period known as the Renaissance. The revival of learning which it brought hammered the final nail into the coffin of the illiteracy brought about by the Dark Ages. The great cry of this movement was “*Ad Fontes*” or “Back to the sources.” Rummel notes that, “this movement was driven by admiration for the accomplishments of antiquity and a desire to emulate them.”<sup>85</sup> This fuel would contact the spark of the Reformation, and the world would never be the same. In such a climate, it was inevitable that scholars would no longer be satisfied with a translation of the Bible in the stead of its original tongue. But tradition never dies easily, and movements of reform rarely begin and end in a day. This would be a slow process of over 100 years.

Enter Erasmus. He was a scholar of the highest rank. He entered the monastery at 16 years of age, and his own learning blossomed. But he took constant criticism for studying pagan authors, when the conservatives felt this a dangerous road. In his thirties, he decided to devote himself entirely to the study and spread of sacred literature.<sup>86</sup> He was ordained as a Catholic Priest in 1492.<sup>87</sup> He was emphatically a part of the new humanism, and he was on a sort of mission to educate the world. He came across the works of Lorenzo Valla, who had written a series of “annotations” on the Latin vulgate text, in which he had suggested that the Latin text needed correction. Erasmus published a copy of Valla’s work in 1505, but felt that Valla’s work had not done all that it could, and thus Erasmus found the inspiration for his own text, the most prodigious project of his life, which would become the *magnum opus* which he bequeathed to the world.<sup>88</sup>

He began the work by imitating that of Valla, and simply writing ‘*Annotations*’ which brought out textual variants in the Latin manuscripts he had studied, and made philological comments upon them. Most likely, he only intended to publish these notes. However, his collection of variants made him realize that printing a list of annotations was not enough. He decided to print a whole new text, a revision of the Latin text of the Vulgate. Thus, from 1511-1514, he accomplished an entirely new revision of the Latin Vulgate.<sup>89</sup> Originally, he planned to print only his Latin text with the annotations. But he was well aware that suggesting corrections to the Bible considered to be “inspired” by so many would meet with great resistance. He had no idea how much. His decision to revise the vulgate, and the text which he created, became the single greatest controversy of his entire life, and in no passage was this more so than in I John 5:7.

Erasmus was convinced that the Latin translation current in his day had been corrupted through minor scribal alterations, (he refers occasionally to “sleepy scribes” who corrupted the text), and was not as close to the translation that had been done by Jerome originally. Plus, he thought himself to have a better grasp of Latin style and syntax, and able to produce a smoother and more accurate Latin translation (he was, frankly, probably right about this). Erasmus published his revision in 1516, and the moment he did, the common Latin Bible of the Catholic church was being inherently challenged.<sup>90</sup> There

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<sup>84</sup> This historical movement is not in any way related to the modern theological “humanism” which has to do with the elevation of man as having all the answers within himself, typically an atheistic rejection of God, etc. The only thing they have in common is the homonymous title.

<sup>85</sup> Rummel, “*Erasmus*” pg. 20.

<sup>86</sup> Rummel, “*Erasmus’ Annotations on the New Testament*” pg. 3.

<sup>87</sup> Rummel, “*Erasmus’ Annotations on the New Testament*” pg. 7.

<sup>88</sup> His “Praise of Folly” is sometimes considered his most significant work, but in terms of biblical scholarship his NT was a landmark of the millennium. See Bainton, “Erasmus of Christendom” pg. 133.

<sup>89</sup> De Jonge, “*The Date and Purpose of Erasmus’s Castigatio Novi Testamenti*,” pg. 102.

<sup>90</sup> His “*Letter to Dorp*” responds to much of this criticism, translated in CWE vol. 71, pg. 1-30, and also available in “*The Erasmus Reader*” pg. 169-194. It reads like a manifesto against the same attitudes that the KJVO advocate advances. When others said, “don’t change the Bible we’ve always used,” he maintained that the text they are using is very late, and not that of Jerome originally endorsed by the Church, which he intends to restore. When they said, “It’s dangerous to learn Greek,” he points out that

were a variety of types of improvements which Erasmus' Latin translation made to the late Vulgate. For one thing, he felt that the linguistic style of the Vulgate was poor, pedantic, and outdated. He was convinced he knew Latin better, and could produce a better Latin translation. Most of the changes he made to the Vulgate were along these stylistic lines. But he also felt that modern vulgate had strayed far from what the original Greek had contained, and thus in many places he corrected the common Latin text with the original Greek text. It was especially at these points that he received criticism.

He knew that his revisions of the Latin could be more substantiated by appeal to the original language if he printed a Greek text, and so he included the Greek text with the Latin. This was the impetus that compelled him to produce his Greek text. He writes himself, "But I have translated [into Latin] the whole New Testament after comparison with the Greek copies, and so have added ["added" – meaning clearly as a secondary element] the Greek on the facing pages, so that anyone may easily compare it. I have appended separate annotations in which, partly by argument and partly by the authority of the early Fathers, I show that my emendations [to the current Latin translation] are not haphazard alterations, for fear that my changes might not carry conviction and in the hope of preserving the corrected text from further damage."<sup>91</sup> Thus, the editions of Erasmus' Greek text were all published as diglots,<sup>92</sup> with the Greek text printed parallel to the Latin text.

Because his work was a Latin revision of a Latin text, in some places, he felt that the Vulgate text was more likely to be original than the Greek manuscripts, and so translated the Latin into Greek. Thus, he occasionally retained readings found only in Latin and not in Greek. Again, it was never Erasmus' primary intention to publish a Greek text.<sup>93</sup> He published his edition of the Greek NT only in order to defend his own *Latin* text, which he intended to set forth as a more accurate revision of the current Latin Vulgate. He provided the Greek text only to substantiate his own revision. He himself noted, "There are several passages in my Annotations where I prefer the accepted Latin reading to that which we find in the Greek manuscripts today."<sup>94</sup> And also stated that "...in fact in not a few places I prefer the Latin translation to the reading in the Greek."<sup>95</sup> Erasmus was still a good Roman Catholic, whose goal was to produce a better Latin text, not a good Greek one. His procedure clearly influenced a variety of the readings he put into his text.

But while Erasmus was a Roman Catholic, committed to the authority of the Latin text, he was also a humanist, with a desire to spread learning across the west. This caused something of an internal conflict within him. He sought to revive the learning of the original tongues of Scripture, and he constantly encouraged the study of the Scriptures in the original languages. This was quite an unpopular thing to say in his day. But he went even further than recommending the study of the original languages. He often

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God wrote it in Greek originally, and the Fathers used Greek. He explains that it is a mistake to think the sky is falling because of textual variants in the Latin, and further explains that textual variants like the ones he raises do not mean the Bible was ever in error, only scribes making accidental errors. He finally asserts that no textual variants affect doctrine, noting that none of them, "affect the genuineness of our Christian faith."

<sup>91</sup> Erasmus, "*Letter to Dorp*" EP 337:885, translated in CWE vol. 71, pg. 29.

<sup>92</sup> Diglot meaning, "two languages." The one exception to this is a 1521 edition published by a printer (Gerbellius) without Erasmus's knowledge, and against his express wishes. It contained the text of his second edition (lacking, for example, the *Comma Johanneum*), but printed in a handy small folio, with only the Greek text. De Jonge has shown that Erasmus was not happy about this publication, as it was never really his primary intent to publish a Greek text.

<sup>93</sup> See De Jonge, "*Novum Testamentum*" pg. 395-413, for a lengthy defense of this now obvious fact. De Jonge examines the repeated statements of Erasmus to this effect, as well as his titles (which all clearly refer to the Latin NT), and his repeatedly stated intentions. See also, Jan, "*Beyond What Is Written*" pg. 13-22, 27-28, 67, et al. and, in conclusion, pg. 333.

<sup>94</sup> Erasmus, "*Apology against Latomus*" LB IX 88D, translated in CWE vol. 71, pg. 53.

<sup>95</sup> Erasmus, "*Correspondence*," as translated by Jan, pg. 19.

suggests that the original languages should be used to correct the common Vulgate. But Erasmus could detect clear places where the Vulgate was divergent from the form of the Greek manuscripts he knew, and thus from the form of the Greek original. So he occasionally was brave enough to correct the Vulgate text to conform to the Greek original.

One of the places where Erasmus sought to correct the common Latin Vulgate by the Greek texts was in the reading of the *Johannine Comma*. The comma was not part of the Greek manuscript tradition, even in the very limited way that Erasmus knew it. Further, based on the clear patristic and versional evidence, Erasmus could clearly tell that the comma was not originally written by John, but was the addition of a later Latin scribe.

Thus, when he printed his edition of the Latin text, with the Greek text beside it, he did not include the comma. He printed the shorter reading. In his first edition, in 1516,<sup>96</sup> Erasmus prints the shorter reading in both the Greek and Latin text. He explains why in his annotation on the passage,<sup>97</sup> writing, “*in graeco codice tantu hoc reperio de testimonio triplici, or “I find that in the Greek manuscripts this is only a three-fold witness”* (meaning, the 6-fold witness of the longer reading is not in the Greek manuscripts that he has found). And then he quotes the shorter reading, without the comma, as being the original one. The second edition in 1519 likewise prints the shorter reading,<sup>98</sup> and presents the same brief comment that the comma is not original.<sup>99</sup>

After the printing of his text without the comma, Erasmus discovered that he had opened quite a can of worms.<sup>100</sup> It might not be too much to say that the omission of the comma was among the greatest causes of derision and attack Erasmus ever faced. Stunica and Lee both wrote detailed attacks upon Erasmus for having omitted the comma. Stunica had been the primary editor for the Complutensian polyglot, which, while printed in 1514, was finally published in 1520-22. He had added a detailed note on the comma. The Latin text is on the right side, the Greek text of the comma in the polyglot is Stunica’s own translation into Greek from Latin, and it has the comma in a form never found in any Greek manuscripts. It has the text on the Greek side as,

“οτι τρεις εισιν οι μαρθροντες εν το ουρανω, ο πατηρ και ο λογος και το αγιον πνευμα, και οι τρεις εις το εν εισι. Και τρεις εισιν οι μαρθροντες επι της γης, το πνευμα και το υδωρ και το αιμα.

Note the change of the prepositional phrase to επι της γης or “upon the earth” instead of the TR “εν της γης.” Perhaps one would ask, “What was their source? Maybe they had Greek manuscripts that had the comma, in a different form, that we don’t have today?” While we don’t know exactly what Greek manuscripts the editors of the polyglot may have had access to, we actually *can* say what their source was for the inclusion of the comma. They refer to St. Thomas Aquinas as the authority on which they have included it. They then note some of its variant forms, but they are noting the variant forms it is found in *Latin manuscripts*, which makes it clear that their source for the Greek text on the left is their own translation into Greek of the Latin text. They include the Latin text they have landed at on the right side of the page, and translate it into Greek on the left side of the page. But the editors (primarily Stunica) go even further than that, directly admitting, “*Sed hoc in veritas exemplaribus non habentur*” or “but it is true

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<sup>96</sup> Erasmus “*Novum Instrumentum*” 1516. To see the text itself, without the *Comma* of I John 5:7 included, see *Novum Instrumentum*, 1516 pg. 183.

[http://images.csntm.org/PublishedWorks/Erasmus\\_1516/Erasmus1516\\_0257a.jpg](http://images.csntm.org/PublishedWorks/Erasmus_1516/Erasmus1516_0257a.jpg)

<sup>97</sup> Erasmus, *Annotationes*, 1516, pg. 618. See image at

[http://images.csntm.org/PublishedWorks/Erasmus\\_1516/Erasmus1516\\_0475b.jpg](http://images.csntm.org/PublishedWorks/Erasmus_1516/Erasmus1516_0475b.jpg)

<sup>98</sup> Erasmus, *Novum Testamentum*, 1519, pg. 522-523,

<sup>99</sup> Erasmus, *Annotationes*, explaining that the Greek manuscripts don’t have the comma, and that he doesn’t think it original, pg 539

<sup>100</sup> Rummel, “*Erasmus’ Annotations*” pg. 131-134.

that we do not have any copies of it [meaning in the Greek manuscripts].” But then, the very next thing they do is start calling names. So they pronounce, “*sed dicitur esse appositum ab hereticis arrianis ad pervertendum intellectum sanum auctoritatis premissae de unitate essentiae trium personarum.*” Or, “but anyone who says that it has been added is an Arian heretic who is trying to deteriorate the authority of the unity of the essence of the three persons.” While the comma didn’t figure at all in the original Arian controversy, patristic authors continued to write against Arianism for the next thousand years, and Latin scholars as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century had begun to appeal to the comma in the Latin Vulgate as support against Arianism. They end their note by again invoking the authority, not of any Greek manuscript, but of St. Thomas Aquinas.

The note of Stunica gives us a window into the controversy of the day surrounding the comma. It was apparently well known that there was no Greek support for the clause, but everyone implicitly trusted the authority of the great medieval theologians who had already pronounced directly upon its authenticity. Further, it didn’t bother most people that there was no Greek support, because most scholars of the day were deeply distrustful of going back to the original languages to begin with. They felt that they had a perfect translation in Latin, the “preserved word of God” in the official language of the Church, and no one should be questioning that translation on the basis of the original languages. Erasmus faced repeated resistance for his ideas of improving the Latin with Greek. And because of the history of the church’s struggle with the Arian heresy, no one wanted to say that this beautiful and orthodox verse which so clearly stated the unity of essence of the three persons of the Godhead was not authentic. In fact, more than that, to suggest that it was not authentic was to be immediately labeled a heretic, even if one did still believe in the Trinity. This is precisely the charge that Stunica and Lee brought against Erasmus when he didn’t include the comma in his first two editions of the Greek NT. Erasmus explained that it wasn’t in any Greek manuscripts. In fact, in a written correspondence, Erasmus later asked Stunica directly if he had ever come across a Greek manuscript which contained the comma, and Stunica admitted that he had not. He admitted that he had translated the Latin Vulgate into Greek to produce a Greek text which did contain the comma. The polyglot with Stunica’s note can be seen here;

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| <p>Sanctus thomas in expositione secunde decretalis de fide catholica tractans istius passum contra abbatem Joachim vs Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in celo. pater: verbum: et spiritus sanctus: dicit ad litteram verba sequentia. Et ad insinuandam unitatem trium personarum subditur et hii tres unum sunt. Quod quidem dicitur propter essentiae unitatem. Sed hoc Joachim pernerse trahere volens ad unitatem charitatis et consensus inducebat consequentem auctoritatem. Hic subditur ibidem: et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra. scilicet spiritus: aqua: et sanguis. Et in quibusdam libris additur: et hii tres unum sunt. Sed hoc in veris exemplaribus non habetur: sed dicitur esse appositum ab hereticis arrianis ad pervertendum intellectum sanum auctoritatis premissae de unitate essentiae trium personarum. Hec beatus thomas ubi supra.</p> | <p>Ἡ Πίστις ἡμῶν. Τίς ἐστὶν ὁ μικρὸν τοῦ κόσμου εἰμὴ ὁ πιστεύωμ' ὅτι ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ ἐλωὼμ' δι' ἕλατος καὶ αἵματος ἰησοῦς ὁ χριστός. οὐκ ἐμ' τῶ ἕλατι μόνον, ἀλλ' ἐμ' τῶ ἕλατι καὶ αἵματι. καὶ τοῦ ἁμύμα ἐστὶν τοῦ μαρτυροῦμ' ὅτι τοῦ ἁμύμα ἐστὶν ἡ ἀλήθεια. ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐμ' τῶ οὐρανώ, ὁ πατήρ καὶ ὁ λόγος καὶ τὸ ἅγιον ἁμύμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἐμ' εἰσὶ. καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὸ ἁμύμα καὶ τὸ ἕ</p> | <p>fides nostra. Quis est at' q' vicit mundu nisi qui credit qm' iesus est filius dei: Hic est qui venit per aquam et sanguinem iesus xps. Non in aqua solum: sed in aqua et sanguine. Et spiritus est qui testificatur quoniam xps est veritas. Qui tres sunt qui testimonium dant in celo: pater: verbum: et spiritus sanctus: et hi tres unum sunt. Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra: spiritus: aqua</p> |
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Erasmus had been somewhat forced into a corner by the pressure of the Catholic Church, in which he was still a priest, and to whose authority he was still bound (though he occasionally bent those borders some). Thus, in 1522, Erasmus now prints the comma in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of his Greek and Latin text of the NT. It had been common in the past to suggest that Erasmus only included it because he had made a rash promise that he would include it if a single Greek manuscript was found which had the



comma in it. De Jonge has shown at length that there is no evidence that Erasmus ever made such a promise, and that while this may be so, there is no evidence that demands it.<sup>101</sup>

Rather, Erasmus included the comma because he knew his NT would be continually rejected as Arian and as heretical if he didn't. (In his words, he said there would be, "occasion for slander" if he left it out.) Erasmus, as a humanist, sought to revive learning in the world at large. He sought to expand knowledge. His revision of the Latin text was a primary way he did this. But in light of the accusations against him, Erasmus knew that he could not accomplish his goals if his NT was universally blacklisted, and it became increasingly clear that if he didn't include the comma, his NT would be so blacklisted. He knew the wisdom of picking one's battles. De Jonge concludes, "The goal of Erasmus' undertaking to imbue all Europe with a clear and simple gospel threatened to fail if Erasmus himself were tinged with any suspicion of unorthodoxy. For the sake of his ideal, Erasmus chose to avoid any occasion for slander rather than persist in philological accuracy and thus condemning himself to impotence. That was the reason why Erasmus included the *Comma Johanneum* even though he remained convinced that it did not belong to the original text of I John."<sup>102</sup>

In his previous annotations, Erasmus had written only a brief paragraph explaining why he didn't think the comma was original. Now, having been socially pressured to insert the comma into his text against his will, he expands that paragraph into a three page long explanation of why he is convinced that the comma was not written by John.<sup>103</sup>

Interestingly, he makes the same basic case we have made above. He points out that it was not quoted during the Arian controversy, which is unthinkable if they had had it. He points out that it was used only by later patristic writers against Arianism, but that they were using as a spear what had been "stitched together" by scribes, which is his common way of speaking of scribal alteration. He notes that the earliest fathers don't have it, and that it occurs only in Latin. He notes that it is not the reading of the Greek manuscripts, though he does note two exceptions. He says that he has seen it in a marginal note in one Greek manuscript that he had once perused (but which he apparently no longer had access to.) But he explains that this marginal note was written in a hand that is "*recens*," or recent. This is likely the manuscript we now know as Minuscule 88. He also notes that it has been found in the text of the codex Montfortianus, (what he calls Britannicus) or what we now know as minuscule 61.

It had been common in the past to say that Erasmus thought that minuscule 61 was a forgery written expressly to get him to put the comma into his Greek NT. It is almost certainly true that the manuscript was just such a forgery, and scholars are fairly universally agreed today that this is the actual origin of minuscule 61. But it should be noted that Erasmus does not actually say this in his note. He only writes that the manuscript is "*recens*" or "recent." It has been dated to about 1520, so "recent" is a fairly accurate description by Erasmus. He is clear that he thought the manuscript had simply translated the Latin Vulgate into Greek, and he didn't think it carried any weight in preserving an original reading, but there is no indication that he realized it was a forgery written expressly for the purpose of confounding him. Perhaps he did. Scholars are generally agreed that it was, but he himself does not say that he suspected this.<sup>104</sup>

Interestingly though, Erasmus does not print the Greek text as it is found in the Greek sources that he had. A glance at minuscule 61 will show the differences from Erasmus' reading. Erasmus knows the reading is simply a translation of the Latin text, but he doesn't think the scribe did a very good job with the translation, and, as usual, thought his own grasp of Latin and Greek superior. So what Erasmus prints in his Greek text is not the text as he finds it in his sparse Greek witnesses. And it is not the text even

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<sup>101</sup> See De Jonge, "Erasmus and the Comma Johanneum."

<sup>102</sup> De Jonge, "*Erasmus and the Comma Johanneum*" pg. 385. See also the list of references De Jonge provides to note 32.

<sup>103</sup> Erasmus, *Novum Testamentum*, 1522. Text, with the comma now added, pg. 522; Annotation explaining that it is not original, *Annotationes* pg 616-618.

<sup>104</sup> See De Jong, "*Erasmus and the Comma*" for details, pg. 386-389.

directly translated from the Vulgate. Rather, he takes the stylistic revision he has made to the Latin Vulgate, and translates his own revision back into Greek. This is the TR form of the Johannine Comma, created by Erasmus, as a translation into Greek of his own revision of the Latin reading that he knew and repeatedly explained wasn't an original reading.

It should be noted that, as part of his defense, he explains that he had asked Bombasius to send him a transcript of Vaticanus, the one truly ancient manuscript which was known but not fully appreciated in his day. It was known that Vaticanus was old, but it wasn't recognized yet just how old. Bombasius thus consulted the ancient manuscript in the Vatican library for him. On June 18, 1521, Bombasius sent Erasmus a letter which contained a transcription of Vaticanus from I John 4:1-3 and 5:7-11, containing of course the shorter reading.<sup>105</sup> While Erasmus generally thought that Vaticanus had less value because he (wrongly) regarded it as influenced by the later form of the Vulgate, when the rubber really hit the road, and his reputation was on the line, he appealed to its age in order to point out that the comma was not ancient, and not original. Erasmus has been credited with being the first textual scholar to seek to use Vaticanus, and the manuscript came to the attention of textual scholars, and began to influence textual criticism, primarily because of his use of it. Claims that Westcott and Hort are somehow responsible for Vaticanus and its impact are simply unfounded and unhistorical. It came to light and common use in textual criticism because of Erasmus, the father of the critical text which lay behind the KJV. Vaticanus is certainly not without its errors, but it is a far better representative of the original Greek NT than the miniscules Erasmus employed for most of his NT. Had Erasmus made more use of it, the KJV would likely be almost identical to the ESV, and no one would have ever suggested major textual changes to it. Erasmus repeats his annotation ardently defending the shorter reading in his 1527 edition,<sup>106</sup> and again in his 1535 edition.<sup>107</sup> He took any occasion possible to explain that the comma was not authentic.

However, Erasmus was aware of a fundamental point acknowledged by all evangelical textual critics today, but strangely missed by most who advocate for the comma. He was aware that in terms of theology, it doesn't matter. He claimed that textual variants like I John 5:7 don't affect theology, and should not be grounds for division. Doctrine simply isn't built from a single text. It is built from the Bible as a whole. When the Catholic critics attacked his revision of the vulgate, and his annotations pointing out textual variants (I John 5:7 being the preeminent example), claiming that they rendered scripture unsure, and amounted to claiming errors in the Bible, he responded in his *Letter to Dorp*, "You think it wrong to weaken in any way the hold of something accepted by the agreement of so many centuries and so many synods." He then points out that when all the Greek copies and all the early patristic evidence agree together against the late Vulgate, it must surely be the Vulgate that is in error. "Again, when you say that one should not depart from a text that enjoys the approval of so many councils, you write like one of our ordinary divines, who habitually attribute anything that has slipped somehow into current usage to the authority of the Church." And, "There are men who do not like to see a text corrected, for it may look as though there were something they did not know. It is they who try to stop me with their authority of imaginary synods; they who build up this great threat to the Christian faith; they who cry 'the church is in danger' (and no doubt support her with their own shoulders, which would be better employed in propping a dung-cart) and spread suchlike rumors among the ignorant and superstitious mob...I see nothing here that much affects the genuineness of the Christian faith. If it were essential to the faith, that would be all the more reason for working hard at it. Nor can there be any danger that everybody will forthwith abandon Christ if the news happens to get out that some passage has been found in Scripture

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<sup>105</sup> De Jonge, Pg. 389.

<sup>106</sup> Erasmus, *Novum Testamentum*, 1527. Text, pg. 507; Annotations explaining that it is not original, *Annoationes* pg. 695-698. Has the text in the Latin Vulgate, his Latin revision, and his Greek translation of it, with the article on both triads.

[http://www.e-rara.ch/bau\\_1/content/pageview/839045](http://www.e-rara.ch/bau_1/content/pageview/839045)

<sup>107</sup> Erasmus, *Novum Testamentum*, 1535. Text, with the comma, pg. 337; Annotation contending against the comma, *Annoationes*, pg. 768-771.

which an ignorant or sleepy scribe has miscopied or some unknown translator has rendered inadequately. There are other reasons to fear this, of which I prudently say nothing here. How much more truly Christian would it be to have done with quarrelling and for each man to cheerfully to offer what he can to the common stock and to accept with goodwill what is offered, so that at the same time you learn in humility what you do not know and teach others ungrudgingly what you do know!"<sup>108</sup> He ends his annotation on I John 5:7 with much the same tone as that letter, pointing out that the variant doesn't affect doctrine, writing, "But to return to the business of the reading: from our remarks it is clear that the Greek and Latin manuscripts are at variance with each other, and in my opinion there is no danger in accepting either reading."<sup>109</sup> I John 5:7 is easily the most "theologically significant" textual variant in the entire Bible. It is the "test case" for most advocating for the KJV/TR. But Erasmus, like all modern textual critics since him, recognized that it does not affect doctrine one way or the other. So he puts it in his text, against his will, but writes a note ardently arguing that it was not written by John. He died a few months later, still quite convinced that John did not write the longer reading, and still arguing against its authenticity. Unfortunately, after his death, most people followed what he had reluctantly put in the body of his text, instead of the explanation he had put in the footnote to it.

### The Comma Gets Repeated In Stephanus, And Beza, Who Both Explain That It Is Not Original

*Robertus Stephanus* published four editions of the Greek New Testament, each of which for the most part simply copies Erasmus with slight modifications. He thus caves to the same peer pressure as Erasmus and includes the longer reading of I John 5:7 in his text. Like Erasmus, he probably mostly was concerned about the Latin text. His 1551 edition, the first to include verse divisions, printed the Latin Vulgate in one column, the Latin edition of Erasmus in the next column, and the Greek text of Erasmus, with minor alterations, in the final column.<sup>110</sup> Like Erasmus, he provides a marginal note about I John 5:7 noting that it is not original. In the "apparatus" in the left hand margin, he lists the sigla, δ, ε, ζ, θ, ι, α, and ϛ, which are his symbols for miniscules 5, 6, 7, 8 (in the old number system), 38, 2298, and 398. He is noting that none of the Greek manuscripts which he knows have the longer reading that he has included in the text.<sup>111</sup> He does not list any manuscripts which actually have the longer reading. He reprints it only because it was in the text of Erasmus, and probably because like Erasmus, he didn't want to be considered an Arian heretic. In the right hand margin is a note explaining that the comma is not original, and that if it were original, the "these three are one" would have been used against Arianism during the Trinitarian controversies.<sup>112</sup>

*Theodore Beza*, in his 1598 edition of the NT, which became perhaps the primary source which the KJV translators uses, included the longer ending<sup>113</sup> as Erasmus and Stephanus had done before him, almost certainly for exactly the same reasons. Like Erasmus and Stephanus, he prints the Latin vulgate text on the right hand column, Erasmus' revision of the vulgate in the center column,<sup>114</sup> and his Greek text in the left hand column. His text thus reads,

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<sup>108</sup> Letter to Dorp, CWE vol. 71,

<sup>109</sup> Erasmus, *Annotationes*, 1535, pg. 771.

<sup>110</sup> The 1550 edition can be viewed in its entirety at (<http://www.bibles-online.net/1550/>).

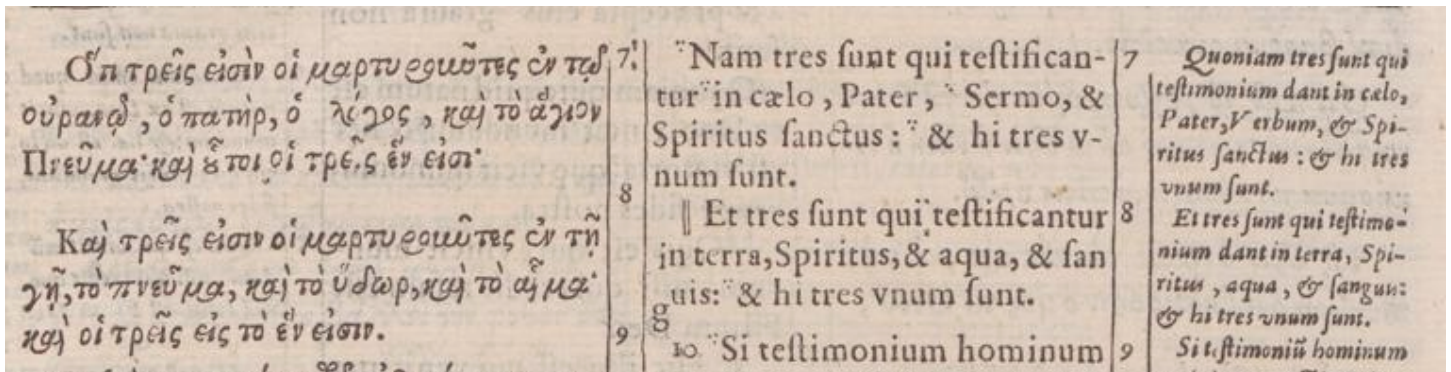
<sup>111</sup> He apparently never had access to miniscule 61, and never refers to it in his apparatus.

<sup>112</sup> Stephanus, *Novum Testamentum*, page 167. He writes, "*hoc dictum in qui busdam Codicibus MSS tis detie dicits. sine quidam putant tempore Arianismi dem sim este in = tre sim. Sed hoc falsim codici vetusti timi an qui sinim.*"

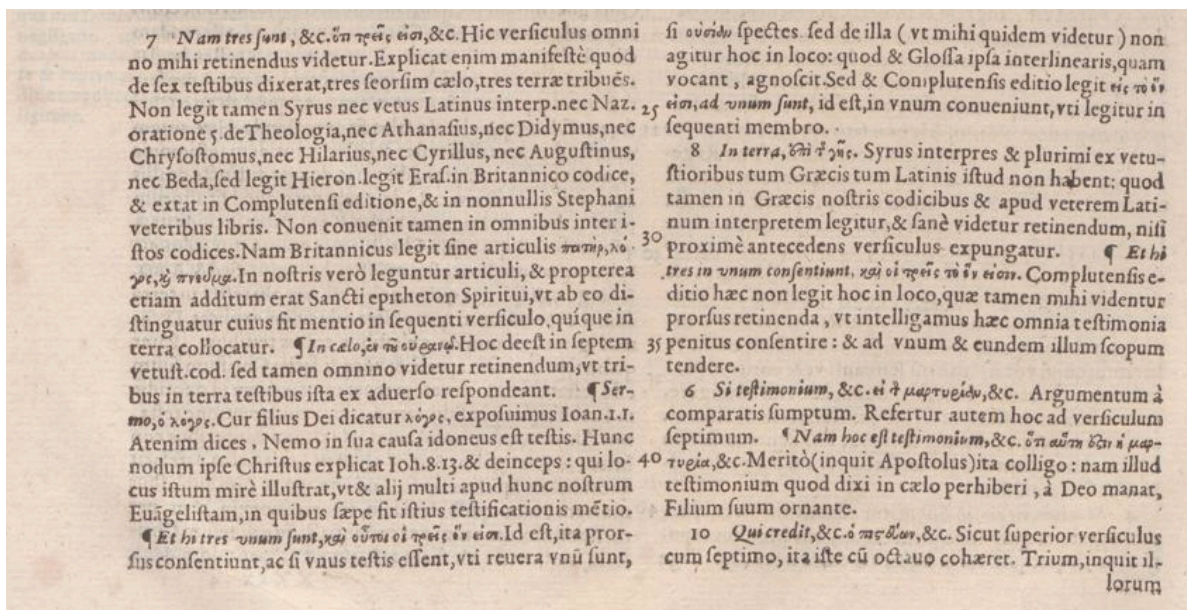
<sup>113</sup> Beza, *Novum Testamentum*, 1598, pg. 506.

<sup>114</sup> Note that he repeats Erasmus' revision of the Vulgate from "*Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium*" (there are three who bear record) to "*Nam tres sunt testificantur*" (for there are three witnesses) and has exchanged "Verbum" for "Sermo," all of which are minor stylistic changes to make for smoother Latin.





Like Erasmus and Stephanus, while deferring to the tradition of the established church by including the longer reading on the basis of the Vulgate, he writes a detailed footnote explaining that the longer reading was not written by John. His note reads in full,



He opens his note by stating, “This verse it seems to me should be entirely held back.”<sup>115</sup> He explains that there is no contextual reason for a six-fold witness instead of a three-fold one, then presents a long list of Versional and patristic sources which show that the longer reading is not genuine. He explains that it is not present in the Syriac version, and not in the Old Latin, and notes that the longer reading is, “Not in Gregory Nazianus, (*oratio de theologica*), not in Athanasius, not in Didymus, not in Chrysostom, not in Hilary, not in Cyril, not in Augustine, not in Bede, but is found only in the Vulgate.” He points out that Erasmus included it solely on the basis of the Britannicus codex (what we now call minuscule 61), that it was found in the Complutensian polyglot, and [he thought] in a few manuscripts known to Stephanus.<sup>116</sup> But then he points to the fact that since Erasmus created his own translation of

<sup>115</sup> There is some ambiguity in the use of the word, “*retinendus*” which could be rendered, “retained” or “held back.” But the context of the rest of his note, arguing against the comma, makes his meaning crystal clear.

<sup>116</sup> Beza has been repeatedly critiqued for being dishonest here, but he actually has simply misread Stephanus. He apparently mistakenly thought that any manuscripts which Stephanus knew but did not list in his apparatus must have supported the reading in the text. But this is not how a “negative apparatus” like that in Stephanus works. The editor is actually listing every manuscript which he knew of which reads at I John 5:7, (the ones he doesn’t list are not omitted because they have the longer reading –

the Latin comma, these “*Non conuenit tamen in omnibus inter istos*” or “don’t agree even among themselves,” and points as an example to the fact that miniscule 61, as we have seen, doesn’t have the articles with the nouns Father, Word, and Spirit, and that it puts “Spirit” and “holy” in the wrong order. He thinks Erasmus’ translation of the Latin is a better one than the Britannicus codex or the Polyglot, so that is the one he includes in his text, even though he is still quite convinced by the evidence that the shorter reading is the original one.

Of course, one may always believe that an element of magic was at work that Erasmus, Stephanus, and Beza just couldn’t resist. If one is committed *a priori* to the KJV being without error, then they could conclude, as perhaps the most credentialed TR advocate I know has, that, “In other words, it is not impossible that the *Johannine comma* was one of those few true readings of the Latin Vulgate not occurring in the Traditional Greek Text but incorporated into the Textus Receptus under the guiding providence of God. In these rare instances God called upon the usage of the Latin-speaking Church to correct the usage of the Greek speaking Church.”<sup>117</sup> But one wonders why this guiding providence was absent from Erasmus’ first two editions, and didn’t kick in until his 3<sup>rd</sup> edition? Or why this guiding providence extended only to its inclusion in the text, but didn’t prevent these editors from writing annotations which explained that it was inauthentic? More importantly, why didn’t this guiding providence manage to make these editors *always* agree with the KJV? The Greek texts of each of these editors disagrees with the KJV in hundreds of other minor places. Since the KJV becomes the standard for all forms of such a position, these must then be places where this guiding providence simply failed to accomplish its stated purpose. This “guiding providence,” if it exists in such a way, is then decidedly error-prone. One is tempted to conclude that this “guiding providence” looks less like the work of a sovereign God, and more like a seriously unhistorical, illogical, almost anti-intellectual bias which is being promoted to rescue the KJV from basic facts which evidence it to be in error. To believe in such a “guiding providence” is to believe that God supernaturally re-inspired the KJV as advanced revelation, and yet at the same time to be unwilling to admit that belief out loud.

### It gets translated by the KJV translators

The KJV translators of course include the longer reading into the English of the KJV. They should not be faulted for this. All of the Greek texts which the KJV translators had access to had the longer reading, since they were essentially just repeating Erasmus here. The translators may have had access to Erasmus’ 3<sup>rd</sup> edition and Stephanus’ 1550 edition, and they certainly had before them Beza’s 1598.<sup>118</sup> The translators either didn’t read the annotations of these texts (which all explained that the comma is not original), or chose to ignore the notes and translate the text knowing it was unoriginal. This isn’t “dishonest” anymore than it was “dishonest” of Erasmus, Stephanus, and Beza to print the reading in their text, knowing John didn’t write it. It was a political move. Likely, the KJV translators didn’t want to involve themselves in the controversy that had consumed Erasmus’s own career, and so followed his lead in simply caving to social pressure. In light of the growing controversy surrounding the comma, their translation could have been “blacklisted” if they didn’t include it, and that simply wouldn’t be worth it. One wishes they had written a marginal note to explain that it wasn’t written by John,<sup>119</sup> or at least had put the verse into italics so the reader would clearly know that the text came from the vulgate. The

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they are omitted because they don’t have I John at all), and is noting that all of them which he knows have the shorter reading. A multitude of places where Beza misunderstood the apparatus of Stephanus has been noted by modern textual scholars (See Jan Krans, “*Beyond What is Written*” pg. 241-246).

<sup>117</sup> Hills, “The King James Version Defended”. No page numbers in the PDF version.

<sup>118</sup> John Bois, KJV translator, refers to Beza’s 1598 version repeatedly in the notes which he took during the translation, which we still have today.

<sup>119</sup> Though they had been expressly forbidden to include such textual notes by the rules given them by King James, they do occasionally make exceptions and break the rule, and one wishes they had done so here and prevented the controversy that has exploded from TRO and KJVO advocates.

comma had a history in English already, as Wycliffe had translated it into English from the Vulgate. It had also been included in Tyndale, since he translated Erasmus' 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, but he had in his second edition placed the verse in brackets to explain that it wasn't original.<sup>120</sup> Other English revisions of Tyndale had simply copied his text of the comma, but they had allowed the brackets to fall off. By a strange misfortune, the KJV translators take none of these measures, and so untold numbers of KJV advocates have taken the inclusion of the verse as a test of orthodoxy, usually claiming that modern translations under some devilish bias "cut the verse out of the Bible" when in fact, as we have seen, they are simply refusing to add to the word of God in English a verse that indubitably was not written by John.

### **As The Manuscript Data Grows, It Gets Soundly Rejected By All**

While the history of English translations had unfortunately begun with translating the vulgate, and had continued with translating the comma which came into the Greek texts only from the Vulgate, the history of the printed Greek texts was decidedly different, being more concerned with Greek manuscripts. Thus Erasmus initially didn't include it, and then when he did reluctantly put it in, noted that it was not the reading of Greek manuscripts. Editors after him followed his lead in still including it, but noting that it had never been part of the Greek manuscript tradition. Stephanus and Beza did this prior to the KJV. In 1707, based on over 5 times the amount of Greek manuscript data available to those editors, Mill did the same. He printed the longer reading in his Greek text,<sup>121</sup> but noted in the apparatus the now overwhelming evidence against it. He then wrote a 10 page note examining the now conclusive Greek manuscript and Versional and patristic evidence that it was not original,<sup>122</sup> and had never been part of the Greek manuscript tradition.<sup>123</sup> As with many of the mistakes made by Erasmus, he reprinted Erasmus' mistake in the text, and only explained in the footnote that the comma was not original. A similar procedure was followed by Wettstein (1752), and Griesbach (1796) in their editions, who print the comma in the text, as they do almost all of Erasmus' errors, but then explain in the footnotes that the text was never part of the Greek tradition, and is not original.

In 1831, all of that changed. While editors previous had for the most part simply reprinted Erasmus' text, and simply noted in the margins where there were errors in it, in 1831 Karl Lachman made the decisive break. Scholars had known since Erasmus in 1516 that the comma was not original, but they had included it out of deference first to the Vulgate and then to the great Erasmus. But Lachman was willing to let the manuscript discoveries and advances in textual criticism reshape not just the marginal notes, but the text itself. Since it had been clear since the publication of the first NT in Greek that

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<sup>120</sup> Brown records this, but fails to note that Tyndale didn't do this until the 1534 edition. I have a facsimile copy of the 1526 edition, and there are no brackets in that edition. Tyndale wrote an exposition of I John in 1531, in which he printed his English text of 1526, and then comments verse-by-verse on each part of it. Interestingly, he prints his 1526 text, which still has the longer reading, but completely skips over the comma in his exposition, as though it were no part of the text (Tyndale, "Expositions" pg. 209-210). It is likely that he had by this point already concluded it not original, thus, when he reprinted his NT in 1534, he placed brackets around the text to show that it was likely not original, a practice many modern translations follow in textually dubious passages.

<sup>121</sup> Mill, *Novum Testamentum*, 1707, pg. 739.

<sup>122</sup> Mill, *Novum Testamentum*, 1707, pg. 739-749.

<sup>123</sup> If I've understood him correctly, he concludes by noting that rather than rational thought, it has been only emotion and desire to appease the authorities that has argued for the verse, stating, "Verum de Pericope hac vexatissima plus satis. Quae in utramque partem cum ad minuendam, tum ad firmandam Commatis hujus authenticallata hactenus sunt rationum momenta, sedula perpendimus. Utra pars praeponderet, eruditis judicandum relinquimus. Mihi, fateor, (meliora, si quid melius certiusque dederet longior dies, discere parato) argumentis ad auctoritatem huic Versiculo concilianda modo adductis tantum roboris inesse videtur, ut eum nullo modo de loco suo movendum esse censeam." Mill, *Novum Testamentum*, 1707, Pg. 749.



the comma was not part of the Greek manuscripts, he printed the shorter reading in the text, explaining briefly the manuscript support against it. Shortly thereafter, Tischendorf multiplied the manuscript data three-fold in his day, and in his text also printed the shorter reading. Thus the English revisions of Tyndale (of which the KJV was but one more) and the Greek editions of the NT had taken two entirely different tracks historically speaking. The KJV had been revised, but they were only revising the English translation, they were not primarily revising the Greek text which stood behind it. The Greek texts continued to be revised on the basis of continually growing manuscript data and the better articulation of textual critical principles.

In 1881, these two divergent streams would meet. In 1881, a revision of the KJV was completed that would revise not only the English, but the original language texts behind it. Taking advantage of the scholarship of Hort and Westcott, who were themselves mostly just repeating the work of Tischendorf, Tregellas, and Lachman, while standing in the footsteps of Erasmus, Stephanus, and Beza, the Greek text was revised to a form much more likely to represent the original wording of the NT.<sup>124</sup>

Hort and Westcott corrected many of the errors of Erasmus in their work. They also made some of their own. Modern editors have corrected many of the errors of both, while certainly still making some of their own. But modern Greek texts are undoubtedly closer to the wording of the original texts than either of their predecessors, and English translations today, translating from the NA28 or UBS5, while imperfect, are closer to the originals than their predecessors, and should in any case not be derided in this passage for continuing a legacy begun with Erasmus almost 100 years prior to the KJV. Today, there are a variety of approaches to textual criticism, and they should be each distinguished from each other, but if we can be allowed to paint with a very broad brush, they fall into two basic camps. Majority text advocates, and reasoned eclecticism.

Obviously, I John 5:7 is omitted by every edition of any form of the "Majority text." Thus, Robinson omits it, and explains that it never was in any way part of the Byzantine manuscript tradition. Pickering, another majority text advocate, omits it, and notes that it is found in the text of less than 1% of the manuscripts, and notes that the only one which has a form close enough to the TR to have been support for it (629) is too far different, and is obviously a translation of the Latin. He concludes, "The shorter reading makes excellent sense. [Those who make 'the three heavenly witnesses' a litmus test for orthodoxy are either ignorant or perverse (or both).]" It is likewise omitted from every "reasoned eclectic" text. It is included only in Greek texts which have retained Erasmus' translation of the passage from the Latin Vulgate, or for historical reasons have reprinted some form of the "Textus Receptus" rather than printing the actual readings of the Greek manuscripts.

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<sup>124</sup> The RV didn't entirely follow the Greek text of Hort and Westcott, though it was influenced by it. The actual Greek text of the Revision of 1881 was printed as, "*The Greek Testament With The Readings Adopted By The Revisers Of The Authorised Version*" by Edwin Palmer in 1882, Oxford. I don't have an exact count, but it would appear to diverge from the WH in several hundred places, where the translation committee did not find the arguments of WH persuasive. In fact, the RV only followed WH readings against the readings of previous texts (Mill 1707, Lachmann 1831, Tregellas 1857, Tischendorf 1869) in sixty-four places (Epp, Forward to "*The Greek New Testament*" pg. xii). The WH text was eventually translated into English in 1904 as "*The Twentieth Century New Testament*" and contrary to an abundance of mistaken KJVO literature which claims all versions other than the KJV to be from the WH text, this is actually the only English translation I know of ever to translate directly from the WH text. Unfortunately, Hort and Westcott had an undue preference for Vaticanus, and so their text, and the revision, often followed those manuscripts in places where they perhaps should not have. But editing a Greek text is always an imperfect endeavor, as is translating one, as is revising a translation. More detrimental to the RV, the English was not only not an improvement on the KJV; it was rather pedantic and unacceptable. The historical value of the work was its willingness to revise not just the English text, but the Greek text behind it.

## Conclusion

We have surveyed the data extensively to show that the comma is not original, and we have further traced its history to show how it arose in the Latin tradition, how Erasmus reluctantly bridged that Latin tradition into his Greek text, and how that mistake ultimately ended up in the translation of the KJV. But I am well aware that for many, such data simply doesn't matter. There is a psychological and emotional attachment to the translation in their own tongue which they are convinced is infallible, and they feel that any attack on any reading in this translation is somehow an attack upon the Word of God. They will hear nothing of correcting this infallible translation with the original Greek. Their attitude is not new, and is, ironically, exactly the force Erasmus had resisted to produce the text which they now defend. All that has changed is the referent. History repeats itself. Thus, it seems fitting to conclude with a statement of Erasmus against his detractors. While he wasn't speaking just of the comma, he was defending his first edition, and the many passages where he felt the Greek text should correct the common Latin Vulgate. He explains that the Latin text can be easily corrupted, but that the Greek manuscripts had a resiliency to them that makes it more difficult for the Greek manuscripts to be corrupted. While there were some passages where he made exceptions, he was one of the first in almost 1000 years to sound the cry that we should return to the original tongues. Since I John 5:7 is the prime example in his work of such a passage, his words are deeply applicable. Since the KJV of I John 5:7 is essentially a translation into English of Erasmus' own translation of his revised Latin text into Greek, his words should be heard all the more forcefully. These words, sounding out almost 100 years prior to the KJV, from the man who created the form of the comma now found in the KJV, should be closely and deeply heard by all who would defend that comma.

“Do you intend to overlook all this and follow your own copy, though it was perhaps corrupted by a scribe? For no one asserts that there is any falsehood in Holy Scripture (which you also have suggested), nor has the whole question on which Jerome came to grips with Augustine anything at all to do with the matter. But one thing the facts cry out, and it can be clear, as they say, even to a blind man, that often through the translator's clumsiness or inattention the Greek has been wrongly rendered; often the true and genuine reading has been corrupted by ignorant scribes who are half-taught and half-asleep. *Which man encourages falsehood more, he who corrects and restores these passages, or he who would rather see an error added than removed?* For it is of the nature of textual corruption that one error should generate another. And the changes I make are usually such as affect the overtones rather than the sense itself; though often the overtones convey a great part of the meaning. But not seldom the text has gone astray entirely. And whenever this happens, where, I ask you, do Augustine and Ambrose and Hilary and Jerome take refuge if not in the Greek original? This is approved also by the decrees of the church; and yet you shuffle and try to reject it or rather to worm your way out of it by splitting hairs. You say that in their day the Greek copies were more correct than the Latin ones, but that now it is the opposite, and we cannot trust the text of men who have separated from the Roman church. [He then proceeds to explain that just because the Greek church separated from the Roman Catholic, doesn't make the Greek manuscripts less accurate than the late Latin, and that further, none of the textual variants shows signs of being an intentional alteration.] Had somebody falsified the Greek texts as long ago as that? Who has ever detected falsification in the Greek texts in even one passage? And finally, what could be their motive, since they do not defend their particular tenants from this source? Besides which, that in every department of learning the Greek copies have always been more accurate than ours is admitted by no less than Cicero, who is elsewhere so unfair to the Greeks. For the difference between the

letters, the accents, and the actual difficulty of writing all mean that they are less easily corrupted and that any corruption is more easily mended.”<sup>125</sup>

## Appendix A - The Chronological Development Of Trinitarian Articulation

We are very often guilty of reading the NT with a serious anachronism, and we have a great tendency to see the fully orbed systematic theology of today’s church in the pages of Scripture, when in fact, historically, the scriptural data rather formed the seeds which took root in the early church, and out of which that full-orbed theology grew. To take a minor example, assuming readers here to be premillennial like myself and pre-tribulationist, you would surely be able to draw out a chronological “chart” of the order of end time events. You would be able to combine Daniel 9, Matthew 24-25, and Revelation 6-18 in an ingenious way, and show how each part of the biblical data supports some part of the chart. But what you can’t do is show the chart anywhere in Scripture. And the reason you can’t show it is not just because the NT authors didn’t include illustrations in their works. You can’t show it, because not a single NT author would have been able to draw that chart. It is the attempt of the later church to piece together the biblical data in a coherent way. This doesn’t mean the data isn’t there. It doesn’t mean such charts are not biblical. It doesn’t mean they are wrong. But such an articulation of eschatology is the product of putting things together which are present in the Bible, but not fully systematized within the Bible’s pages.

This is the nature of systematic theology (what is commonly called “doctrine,” to use another title). We accept the Bible as our final authority. We derive our theology from it. But the Bible only gives us the puzzle pieces – it doesn’t always tell us how to put them together. The history of the church is in part the history of God’s people looking more and more closely at the data in the biblical texts, and attempting to articulate what is there more and more clearly. We put the pieces together, and ask how they fit best with each other. As with most puzzle pieces, we usually find a whole bunch of ways they don’t go together before we say, “that’s it.” In fact, historically, someone putting the pieces together very badly has most often been the impetus that moved us to give more attention to where each piece should fit (for example, in the Christological and Pelagian controversies of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries).

In one sense I’m hesitant to use an analogy from something as trivial as eschatology to lead into something as weighty as the development of Trinitarian thought, but one simply must understand the historical development of the theology of God’s people if he is to show respect for the NT as God gave it. In some hermeneutics classes this is called “the principle of progressive revelation.” Whatever one calls it, to truly hear how the gospel began to work out in the history of the church, one must gain some sense of its historical progression. One line of this basic progression can be briefly traced as follows.

In the old covenant, the basic creed of God’s people was the *Shema*. The simple and profound statement of Deut. 6:4 was the core of Israelite belief for a millennium and a half. (שְׁמַעִי שְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ) (יהוהוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ) “The Lord our God is one Lord.” You can still see it printed all over Israel, and hear orthodox and ultraorthodox Jews praying it everyday there. Devout Jews recited the *Shema* three times a day. Monotheism (the belief that there is only one God) became the core of their belief system. They knew well the consequences of violating that creed. At every point in their history, when they had violated that creed, and had added gods to Yahweh, the result had been divine disfavor, and more pointedly, captivity. In fact, one might even say that God’s great work in the OT was to instill monotheism into the hearts of

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<sup>125</sup> Erasmus, “*Letter to Dorp*,” translated in CWE vol. 71, pg. 25-26. Emphasis mine.

his people.<sup>126</sup> But all such failures ceased after the Babylonian captivity. Never again did Israel go after other gods. Never again did they add other gods. They had, so to speak, finally learned their lesson.

Then, through the mystery of the incarnation, Jesus showed up. At first, he seemed to make only modest claims, and it seemed he was the greatest of prophets (see the early sections of each of the synoptic gospels). But especially towards the last few weeks of His life, Jesus was saying things and doing things that no prophet could ever get away with. He was rewriting Sabbath law. He was raising the dead. He was applying divine titles to Himself. He was describing Himself with divine attributes. He was performing works only God could perform. It was making everybody uncomfortable. There could be no mistaking it – Jesus was claiming to be and do for Israel what only *Yahweh* could ever be and do. Jesus affirmed *Yahweh* as Father repeatedly, but claimed to have some unique relationship with God as His unique Son, and in fact claimed to be His equal! There was no mistaking it – this was utter blasphemy. This was an all-out attack on the Jewish monotheism that had so long characterized the Jewish nation. This was a flat-out rejection of the *Shema*, the most basic creed of Judaism. This could not be tolerated. It was, in fact, what ultimately brought about the crucifixion. While the Roman courts tried Jesus on the charge of political insurrection, he was in fact guilty of no such thing. They brought such charges against Him only because the Jewish leaders had laid such charges upon him, and demanded his life in return. But these Jewish leaders had already held court to condemn Jesus. And they had tried him not on the charge of insurrection – they had charged him on the count of blasphemy. He was making himself equal with God, and that was a denial of the *Shema* that formed the core of their faith. And so, on the charge of denying the *Shema* and making himself equal with God, Jesus was executed. And everything would have stopped there. Jesus would have gone down in history as one more of the many Messianic claimants who had come along in Israel's history. Rome would have seen him as one more failed political revolutionary. Judaism would have seen him as one more failed messianic claimant, who once again had failed to overthrow Rome. And the disciples who had followed him would have regarded him as a Lord lost; an amazing Rabbi; a great prophet who had followed in the footsteps of John the Baptist, to be remembered as a hero for sure, but to be, at the end of the day, only remembered.

But then the most amazing event in all of human history took place. The most unprecedented thing of all. The thing nobody could have expected (despite the repeated predictions of Jesus about it). God raised Jesus from the dead, and He appeared bodily to the disciples. Repeatedly. And not just in a resuscitation of the normal human body (like in the case of Lazarus and others, who would die again), but a full transformation into a truly glorified body. There was no category for this! Jewish eschatology looked for a cooperate resurrection at the end of times. When Jesus had spoken before of His resurrection, the disciples had assumed that He meant the corporate resurrection that Judaism had always expected at the end. They could not conceive of an individual resurrection prior to that time. But here He was, and He was alive! The resurrection of Jesus was at once the death of previous expectations, and the birth of Christianity itself.

The resurrection changed everything. It vindicated Christ's claims in a way that could never again be denied or hidden. God had placed the ultimate stamp of approval upon him. He was no mere prophet. He was the unique Son of the Father, vindicated by God himself through the resurrection. Thus, the disciples had now to reckon with multiple beliefs that seemed contradictory. They could never abandon their Jewish monotheism. They knew in the core of their beings that there was only one God. They knew this God as Father, and Jesus had taught them even to approach Him as *Abba* Father, a closer relationship than any Jew could have imagined to the transcendent God of their fathers. But now they also knew, in an experiential, unforgettable, and empirically verifiable way, that Jesus was Himself God, in every way equal with *Yahweh*, and yet somehow as distinct from Him as a son is from a father. And their love and

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<sup>126</sup> There are hints within the OT of distinction within God's Being, which Christianity would later draw out: e.g., *Yahweh* addressing *Yahweh* in Psalm 110, used repeatedly in the NT. C.f., Psalm 45:6-7; Is. 63:8-14, et. al. But these were at best hints, not directly Trinitarian teaching.

passion and devotion to this Jesus had been forever sealed, and they would go to the grave rather than deny Him. They knew then that;

There is only one God.  
The Father is this God.  
But Jesus is also God.  
Yet they are not each other.

Add to this the events of Pentecost, and the sayings of Jesus about the Spirit, especially in his final week (John 14-15), and they were perhaps prepared to say even that the Holy Spirit was God. (See for example Acts 5:3-4, though such confessions are very rare in the NT itself.)<sup>127</sup> Jesus had radically altered their understanding of monotheism – He had every right to alter it more. Thus, there was an inherent and inescapable tension in the early apostolic theology. And they had no way to reconcile these apparently contradictory propositions.

There is only one God.  
The Father is God.  
Jesus is God.  
The Holy Spirit is God.  
Yet, somehow, paradoxically, they are not each other.

In addition, Jesus had left his disciples with a kernel that the church would spend the rest of its earthly life unpacking. In His final charge to the disciples (Matt. 28:19-20), he had commanded them to spread across the world the glorious message of His death and resurrection and the kingdom life it inaugurates. They were to turn the whole world into disciples like themselves who would follow this same Jesus in every way. But when initiating a disciple, they were to do it in a particular way. They were to baptize these new converts, and it was likely that no one could miss the visual significance of the immersion via agent they had learned from John. The gospel story would be openly declared in each practice of this ordinance. But Jesus didn't just want the rite performed – he wanted it performed according to a certain formula. He commanded them to fulfill his final and great commission by baptizing converts in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. No Jew could hear the phrase, "The Name" and fail to hear a reference to the Divine Name, the Tetragrammaton revealed to Moses in the bush (Ex. 3:14). And this Name is now, and always had been, singular. It is most emphatically "The" name. But Jesus has commanded them to baptize in a single Name, the Divine Name they have venerated their entire lives, which, paradoxically, now refers to not one, but three persons; Father, Son, and Spirit.

Thus, with every new convert, this singular-Divine-Name-containing-three-Divine-Persons would impress itself more and more deeply upon the church. As the Spirit continued to guide, Trinitarian theology found its roots in the commission given by Jesus, and in the ordinance that the church continued to practice. The church would be forever learning more deeply, and articulating more clearly, the theology they had already received in full at their baptism. Jesus gave them the kernel, and in the early church, that kernel began to be unpacked. But there is no denying that this process was slow at first, and there is no doubt that there would be occasional missteps along the way. There was an inescapable tension between the propositions of one God (unity), and yet the inclusion of three persons (diversity).

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<sup>127</sup> Letham suggests that the NT contains an "explicit Binitarianism, and an implicit Trinitarianism." (*The Holy Trinity* pg. 52-68). While NT Christology inherently confesses Christ as God, it is reticent to directly address the Spirit as such, with rare exceptions. This Binitarianism is not at all a denial of Trinitarianism, but it is to acknowledge that the impact of the incarnation was more quickly and more easily felt than that of Pentecost.

They would eventually think long, hard, and deeply about these seemingly contradictory propositions. Paul in particular, after his painful conversion to and baptism from the religious sect he was originally sure had denied the monotheistic core of his scriptures, would contemplate these ideas at length, and would grow comfortable ascribing equality of work and worth to each of these three distinct persons. For example, He reaches one of the points of highest Christology in the NT in I Cor. 8:4-6. The context is the paganism of Corinth and how God's people should respond (8-10). Paul, as a typical Jew, answers with the standard Jewish categories from the *Shema*. There is only one God; the answer of God's people to paganism is and always has been monotheism and its necessary implications. This is what their daily prayer and long history has taught them, and so this is how Paul responds. He echoes the creed in his heart, "there is none other God but one." The *Shema* had asserted "the Lord our God is one," where *Lord* and *God* refer to the same being. But Paul radically reshapes the *Shema*, and writes, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." He has, amazingly, found Jesus in the *Shema*; not only not contradictory to, but contained within, the core expression of Jewish monotheism. Paul sees Jesus, distinct from the Father, but sharing in the Divine Name, and participating in the One Divine Being. Likewise, in Phil. 2:9-11, he takes a text from the LXX which is a strong expression of Jewish monotheism in the OT. Is. 45:22-25, Yahweh asserts that he and he alone is God, and that every knee will bow and every tongue confess Him as Lord (Yahweh). But Paul, amazingly, says that Jesus is given "the name" (a reference to the Tetragrammaton) and that one day Isaiah's prophecy will be fulfilled, by the whole world bowing the knee to Jesus, and confessing Him as Yahweh! Paul has radically reshaped monotheism into a sort of binitarian faith. When Paul was baptized in the Name of Father, Son, and Spirit, his whole world was reshaped. In his writings, he seems comfortable using triadic structures that are some of the clearest "Trinitarian" thought in the NT, ascribing equal worth and work to Father, Son, and Spirit.<sup>128</sup> But while Paul seems comfortable asserting that Jesus and the Father share in the Divine identity, and even comfortable placing the Spirit alongside them with equal work and worth, he seems nowhere to try to work out the relations between those persons.

John seems to take things to a slightly higher level, and to begin to wrestle with the relations of these persons to one another. He seems to especially dwell on the words of Jesus in his "farewell discourse" and its implications for the nature of God. He takes pneumatology to a higher level than in any other place in the Bible in John 14-17. Kostenberger quotes Plantinga, noting, "Among all the New Testament documents the Fourth Gospel provides not only the most raw material for the church doctrine of the Trinity, but also the most highly developed patterns of reflection on this material – particularly, patterns that show evidence of pressure to account somehow for the distinct personhood and divinity of Father, Son, and Spirit without compromising the unity of God."<sup>129</sup> Letham quotes Barrett, noting, "More than any other writer he [John] lays the foundation for a doctrine of a co-equal trinity."<sup>130</sup> This is primarily seen in the two "sendings" that John records and reflects on. The Father sends the Son, and the Father and the Son send the Spirit. But sending is not a reflexive action. No one can "send" themselves. Thus, this points to Father, Son, and Spirit, as being distinct *persons* in some way. Further, John focuses on the Divine "Name" repeatedly,<sup>131</sup> and likely drew from the baptismal formula the same significance that Paul and others had. But John leaves the problem implied but not solved. The paradox remains, for God is one, the Father, Son, and Spirit are God, but they are not each other.

Such apparent paradoxes as this, such radical changes in Jewish thought, such a total rethinking of the Person of God in light of the Resurrection of Jesus and the events of Pentecost would have to

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<sup>128</sup> I Cor. 2:1-5, 9-16; 3:11-17; 6:11; 12:4-6; II Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:4-10; 3:14-17; 5:18-20; 6:10-11; Gal. 4:4-6; Rom. 1:1-4; 5:1,5; 7:4-6; 8:1-3, et. al.

<sup>129</sup> Kostenberger and Swain, "Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity in John's Gospel," pg. 19.

<sup>130</sup> Letham, "The Holy Trinity" pg. 71.

<sup>131</sup> E.g., John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; 12:28; John 15:21; 17:6, 26; I John 2:12; 5:13; Rev. 2:3, 13; 3:12; 14:1; 15:4; 19:12, 13; 16; 22:4;



ultimately be a collective thing. The followers of Jesus would have to figure such conflicts out, but they would have to figure them out together. Such apparent problems could only be resolved by discussion, debate, and a mutual call to look at the scriptures and listen for the guidance of the Spirit, to articulate clearly in systematized confession what was written powerfully in divine revelation.

While Paul and John (and to a lesser degree a few other NT authors) begin to reflect on God as triune, they fall just short of articulating God as one being, comprising three Persons who share equally in one essence. The speculation, study, deep thought, and discussion and debate needed to truly work out these *prima facie* conflicting propositions had in a way been set aside for a time. The NT church had all of a sudden to deal with the much more pressing concern which was staring them down at the moment. And this concern was not theological and speculative – it was social and ethnic. In this fast-paced journey of following Jesus as Messiah, God had made it clear that Gentiles were now to be included in people of God (Acts 10, et. al.). There would be many (like the Judaizers) who would deeply oppose such a move. Ultimately, the church would realize that Gentiles were to be included equally without adopting the Jewish “boundary markers” (circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws) that were the foundation of Jewish identity as people of Yahweh. There would be constant division, as some felt this was to abandon faithfulness to the law, and such abandonment had always brought God’s judgment. There would be tension, as some felt that the liberty of salvation by grace meant the abandonment of all ethical laws. The NT is in fact the story of the early Christians working out this difficulty in particular. The passionate message that the death and resurrection of Jesus implied the universal invitation of all peoples into a gracious covenant with God became the burning passion of Paul’s life. But we see that the Church worked the details out, over time, with much back-and-forth struggle, with debate, discussion, and a council (Acts 15) that would allow more than one apostolic and scriptural voice to have a say. As the story of the NT is written, a pattern is laid for the church that will ever walk in the steps of those first followers of Jesus.

Jesus had bodily left the disciples, but He had not left them alone. He had left his Spirit, and that Spirit, as promised, would guide them into truth, and help the church to figure out how everything worked together. When the apostles themselves died, there was a need for reliance upon that Spirit, and a growing reverence for the writings that they had left behind them (what one friend has called, “an emerging canon consciousness”). As the “Gentile inclusion” issue settled down, and was (mostly) dealt with in a definitive way, there would again be wrestlings with the as-yet unresolved tensions inherent in the unity/diversity of the Godhead. But again, Jesus had not left the church alone. And as the writings of the apostles came to be seen as the authoritative way in which God had spoken, the church came to realize that God had left them in the Scriptures all that they needed to deal with every difficulty they would ever face. Thus, Trinitarian reflection would continue, in the apostolic and post apostolic times. God is a unity; but this unity is paradoxically comprised of three distinct persons.

As with all such propositions, like a top that has been stuck, there is a process of “wobbling” side to side until a true equilibrium is reached, and a balance found. Things begin to swing towards one side, then another, and then back again, and etc. Thus, we are not surprised to find in the early church a tendency to lean toward one proposition or the other. Some leaned towards unity, and were in danger of eradicating the distinction between the Divine Persons which Jesus had revealed. This is Modalism. Modalism is the idea that there is really only one person in the Godhead, he just sometimes manifest himself in three different ways, sometimes as Father, sometimes as Son, sometimes as Spirit. One person, who wears three hats. He wore one hat at creation, donned a different one at the incarnation, and tried out a different one at Pentecost. He’s only one person, but with three different functions.

On the other hand, some leaned towards diversity, and were in danger of denying the unity which monotheism demanded (tri-theism). If one says there are three distinct beings, without the tension of unity, he becomes a tri-theist (believing in three different Gods). In a more subtle form of tri-theism, if one says that there are three beings, but they are not equal (Jesus is subordinate to God), he becomes a subordinationalist. This is the idea that there are three distinct persons, who all have a *similar* nature, but not the *same* nature. To claim that there are three persons who have a similar essence, but not the same essence, is still to deny the Triune God. But the borders of this understanding took time to develop.

Initially, the early church would still be largely binitarian in shape. Justin Martyr in the early second century would affirm the unity of God, while affirming the eternity of the Son, but would lean towards the idea that the persons were not equals. Like the NT authors, he would make much of the baptismal formula in Matt. 28:19. Ignatius would likewise assert the eternity of the Son. Theophilus of Antioch would be the first to use the term, "trias" (triad) for God in the second century. He saw in the first three days of creation a type of the "trinity of God, and his Word, and his Wisdom." Irenaeus develops Trinitarian reflection to an even greater level. He strenuously opposed the Gnosticism attacking the church in his day (similar to the "proto-gnostic elements that John had battled). While Valentinus urged that Christ was created, Irenaeus responded that Christ was eternal. When Marcian claimed that Jesus was an entirely different God than the God of the OT (and a higher God, since the OT God was harsh and evil), Irenaeus asserted the unity of the Father and the Son. He dwells at length on the baptism of Jesus, where Jesus is baptized, the Father speaks, and Spirit descends upon him. He feels this affirms that God is a triad. He likewise picks up Paul's preference for triadic structures. He stresses God's oneness, but affirms a triad.

Tertullian in the late second century, and early third, writes "against Praxeus." Praxeus had emphasized the unity of the Godhead, but saw Father, Son, and Spirit as identical, not distinct. This is known as modalism. There is only one God; he just expresses Himself in three different ways. Tertullian will have none of it. He refutes Praxeus by pointing to the "rule of Faith" or, what Christians have always believed. There is only one God, but this God has a Son, and they both send a Spirit. He writes one of the earliest confessions of Christian faith, asserting that Christians are those that believe in "the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit." He states that the catholic faith is that God's unity is a trinity. (He is the first to actually use the word, "trinity," of the three Persons of the Godhead) The three persons are three, but one, and of one substance. Tertullian coins much of the vocabulary which will be used in the subsequent Trinitarian discussion, at least in the Latin speaking churches. The theological use of words like, Trinity, person, and substance come from his pen. He asserts that believing in three distinct persons does not destroy the unity of the Godhead. He deals at great length on John 10:30, showing that the Father and Son are two, yet one. He unfortunately uses several "illustrations" of the Trinity which yield a sort of subordinationalism, but he should not be faulted for not having the Trinitarian sophistication of a later age.

In the middle of the third Century, Origen takes the discussion even further. He writes at great length on the Trinity in his systematic theology, "On first Principles," where he attacks modalism, adoptionism, and Docetism. He repeatedly asserts, "There was not a time when he was not," to underscore the eternity of the Son. This language would grow in importance when Arius would challenge it. However, he leaned towards a sort of subordinationalism, saying that the Father was greater than the Son.

At this point we reach the period of the Arian controversy in the beginning of the fourth century, which we have detailed above. While the occasion of the question was a Christological one, the implications were deeply Trinitarian, and would be inherently felt as such. In response to the Arian controversy, the church would finally and fully articulate the Trinity in a way that precluded tendencies to subordinationalism, or modalism. Just as the "crisis" of Gentile inclusion had thrust the church into a discussion they would not have foreseen or chosen, the "crisis" of Arius and his teaching (explained above) had thrust the church into a discussion that had in many ways begun long ago, but had never really reached a sense of finality. This is not to say that there was not "Trinitarian" thought previous to the Nicene discussion. In some ways, there had been such thought since Jesus gave His final commission. But never had the borders of this theology been fully hammered out. Never had a true balance of unity/diversity in the Godhead been clearly articulated. While Jesus had left the church with all the puzzle pieces, the picture had not been fully put together in a way that would allow them to say of orthodoxy, "that is in the picture," while saying of Arius and his extreme position, "that is not in the picture." The building blocks were all there, but the fences had not yet been built. Trinitarianism existed. But a full and clear articulation of it did not. Thus, the Nicene discussion took place, Arius was rejected as

a heretic, and the church emerged from the struggle with a much more clearly articulated theology. They were not in any way “inventing” new theology. But they were seeking to articulate for the first time what the fences around their theology looked like. Nicaea would not be the end of this discussion—the creed that is normally as the Nicene creed would actually be produced in Constantinople in 381, over 50 years of grueling controversy later. This Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed of 381 presents the Trinity as we know it. One God; three persons. “These three are one.” Overemphasize either unity, or diversity, at the expense of the other, and you end up with heresy.

The history of the early Trinitarian struggles were a back-and-forth wobbling that finally allowed them to realize the need to affirm the tension inherent in the Triune Unity, and to articulate that as the God who eternally exists as three persons (*hypostasis*) who all eternally share in one essence (*ousia*). One can easily see the same heretical leanings that the loss of this tension causes even today. Just think through any one of the numerous illustrations and analogies used commonly by preachers today, and you will realize that they are in fact teaching heresy.

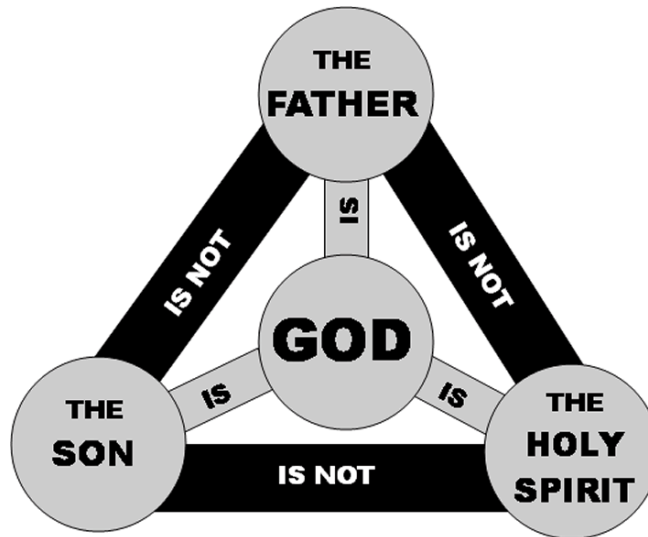
For example, sometimes one will suggest that “the trinity is like 3-in-one-shampoo. Sometimes the shampoo functions as body wash, sometimes as shampoo, and sometimes as conditioner.” But this is rank modalism. There is only one element there – it simply functions in three different ways at different times. This is to say that the members of the Trinity are just God wearing different hats. Sometimes one will say that “the Trinity is like water, which is sometimes ice, sometimes steam, and sometimes liquid.” But this is rank modalism again. The same H<sub>2</sub>O cannot *at the same time* be each manifestation. And each is only a different form of the same element. This is not our Triune God. He doesn’t trade hats – He is eternally three persons who eternally share one essence. Sometimes one says “he is like an egg, having yolk, white, and shell.” But this is rank tri-theism. God does not have parts, and he cannot be divided. Further, an egg yolk is an entirely different nature than a shell. Its not like the Father is part of God, and the Son is part of God, and the Holy Spirit is part of God. He is not a pie-chart that can be divided into three sections. Sometimes one will say, “God is like a man, who is a husband, a father, and a son.” But this is rank modalism again. There is only one person, who wears three different hats, not three separate consciousnesses. Sometimes one will say, “just like we are one person but have a body, soul, and Spirit, God is one person who has a body (Jesus) soul (Father?) and Spirit (spirit).” But there is only one conscious person. This is modalism. But also, the soul is not the same nature as the body, which is tritheism. The only way to be truly Trinitarian is to reject all such heretical analogies, and affirm with the Nicea-Constantinopolitan creed, with its Christological core, that,

*“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.*

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.*

*And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.”*

The only real way to illustrate this is by a representation that maintains the unresolved tension between unity and diversity. Thus,



The amazing God that has eternally existed as One God in three persons who share one essence is the truly amazing and mysterious element of the Christian truth. He is a Trinity in Unity, a Unity in Trinity, and He must be known and worshiped as such.

For this essay, the point of all this is, the language of I John 5:7 is an orthodox expression of Trinitarianism, but it is the language of the fuller articulation of the later church. It is not the language John ever used or ever would have used to express Trinitarian thought. Such language is fully in accordance with what John did teach, but it represents hundred of years of later reflection on that teaching. It is the language of theological synthesis, and such synthesis is simply not possible until all the puzzle pieces are present and even then it takes much time to put the pieces together. I John 5:7 is decidedly post-NT language. It is unlike anything else found in the NT. Why? Because, historically, and chronologically, it postdates the NT by several hundred years. John simply didn't write it.

## Appendix B – The Questionable Use Of Sources And Arguments Defending The Comma

There are a variety of different KJV resources which attempt to defend the comma. One internet author acts as though the 10 manuscripts we have dealt with above all somehow exactly support the KJV, and does this odd grammatical gymnastic to suggest authenticity, but completely ignores all of the textual data which doesn't support the comma, and has the audacity to then write, "No passage could have greater textual proof of its authenticity than the Comma, and this seems to illustrate a plan of God to inform people of faith when manuscript support is minimal due to satan's [sic] work." How the comma can on the one hand have the greatest textual proof of its authenticity of any passage in the Bible, and yet have an admitted "minimal manuscript support" is beyond me. But I guess one can blame it all on the devil, and that makes it all make sense. <http://www.kjvtextualtechnology.com/a--1-john-5--authenticity-of-the-johannine-comma.php>

I won't deal with the large number of such websites, books, and internet articles (though I have included several in the bibliography.) However, I did find one website which had done better than most in defending the comma. A site like *KJV Today* (<http://www.kjvtoday.com/home/the-father-the-word-and-the-holy-ghost-in-1-john-57#TOC-Greek-fathers>) attempts to make a case for the comma using several lines of evidence. Theirs is by far the best defense I have seen of the comma. I had originally

interacted with some of their comments in the body of the essay, but realized that it could get us so off track that I decided to simply move all such discussion to an appendix. This is not a thorough review of the article (though I would be happy to write a thorough review if someone finds their article the sole support to which they cling). These are rather random thoughts which I had originally included in the essay, since some on the page might want to point to that article as support for the Comma, and the casual reader, who doesn't check things out, might not immediately discern the flawed arguments being used there. Having removed these thoughts from the article for the sake of space, I thought it worth mentioning in an appendix at least. The thoughts are in no particular order.

First, the article includes several additional witnesses from Latin fathers, but they often translate that Father (saying something like "translation provided by KJV Today") with *the exact* KJV text. But that is to ignore the actual Latin text which they have printed, and make it sound like a KJV quote, when it actually differs from the KJV. For example, they quote Victor Vitensis (from the Late 5<sup>th</sup> century). His is the only patristic quote that would come close to being in the KJV form. Thus, I graciously included it in the chart above as support for the KJV TR form (with a "?" to denote that there are still differences). But it is not exactly the same form. Yet watch what the KJV today site does. They quote Vitensus as "*Ait namque: Tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent in caelo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus sanctus, et his tres unum sunt.*" This would literally be translated, "For he says, "Therefore there are three witnesses who give testimony in heaven; Father, Word, and Holy Spirit; and these three are one." This would add the noun to the TR form. Vitensus also has the verbally identical phrase "These three are one" in verse seven and eight, not the different phrases found in the TR/KJV. Thus, asserting the same thing about both triads. But the KJV today website "translates" Vitensus by simply reprinting the exact KJV text of I John 5:7, which makes it sound like Vitensus quoted the exact text of the KJV/TR reading, which of course he did not. The KJV text is not a translation of that text. It is a literal translation of Erasmus' Greek text, which is in turn a theologically improved, interpretive translation of that Latin text, as found in the Vulgate.

Further, note how they handle some of the witnesses they adduce. Chrysostom is quoted as support for the comma. The author writes, "Chrysostom is not speaking about the Trinity in the context. He is merely saying that a good number of witnesses (none of which are mentioned at 1 John 5:7-8) testify concerning the ineffable nature of God. Thus it is interesting that Chrysostom would give weight to his argument by using the formula of having three witnesses below and three witnesses above ("above" is to be understood as "heaven", as he previously stated, "ἀλλ' ἀνέβην εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ("But I went up to heaven [figuratively]"). Since the Comma was already cited in the Latin Church during Chrysostom's time, it is far more candid to suppose that a learned teacher such as Chrysostom knew of the Comma and was alluding to its formula than to suppose that he formulated it by his own imagination."

Here is Chrysostom's passage in full,

"TODAY I HAD INTENDED to complete my discussion on the topic on which I spoke to you a few days ago; I wished to present you with even clearer proof that God's nature is more than our minds can grasp. Last Sunday I spoke on this at great length *and I brought forward as my witnesses Isaiah, David, and Paul*. For it was Isaiah who exclaimed: "Who shall declare his generation?" David knew God was beyond his comprehension and so he gave thanks to him and said: "I will praise you for you are fearfully magnified: wonderful are your works". And again it was David who said: "The knowledge of you is to wonderful for me, a height to which my mind cannot attain". Paul did not search and pry into God's very essence, but only into his providence; I should say rather that he looked only on the small portion of divine providence which God had made manifest when he called the gentiles. And Paul saw this small part as a vast and incomprehensible sea when he exclaimed: "O the depth of the riches and of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways!" (2) *These three witnesses gave us proof enough*, but I was not satisfied with prophets nor did I settle for apostles. I mounted to the heavens and gave you as proof the chorus of *angels* as they sang: "Glory to God in the

highest, and on earth peace, good will among men". Again, you heard the *Seraphim* as they shuddered and cried out in astonishment: "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is filled with his glory". And I gave you also the *cherubim* who exclaimed: "Blessed be his glory in his dwelling". (3) *So there were three witnesses on earth and three in Heaven who made it clear that God's glory cannot be approached.* For the rest, the proof was beyond dispute; there was great applause, the audience warmed with enthusiasm, you assembly came aflame. I did rejoice at this, yet my joy was not because praise was coming to me but because glory was coming to my Master. For that applause and praise showed the love you have for God in your souls. If a servant loves his master and hears someone speak in praise of that master, his heart comes aflame with a love for him who speaks. This is because the servant loves his master. You acted just that way when I spoke: by the abundance of your applause you showed clearly your abundant love for the Master."

Not only is there absolutely no mention of the Trinity (which the article conceded), there is no mention of John, or his letter, or a formula from him, or anything he had written. The passage is utterly unrelated to the issue. If Chrysostom were echoing the formula of John (as the article suggest), by having the Angels as "three witnesses," he would in fact be asserting the deity of the angelic host, which is of course heresy, something he was not particularly prone to. No one could read the passage from Chrysostom and think it in any way supported the KJV reading. Such a suggestion is only possible because they quote one small phrase from him, ripped from its context, and invested with a meaning which John could not have intended.

Further, note how they handle the Greek Fathers. As we noted in the essay, there is no Greek patristic support for the comma until the 12<sup>th</sup> century. But note that they try to counter this objection by citing several Greek fathers as support for the longer reading. They cite Athanasius, Origin, and Chrysostom. But what they do with these Fathers is frankly laughable. (I literally laughed out loud when I read it.) In each case, the Greek father they are citing is clearly quoting the *shorter reading*, and the longer reading is not present in any way shape or form. The father quotes the phrase in verse 8 "and these three agree in one" in the context of speaking about the Trinity (due to a Trinitarian interpretation of the passage that became popular as we saw above). Not one of these fathers, which they list as "Citations of the Comma by Greek theologians" is in any way a quote of the comma. Their treatment of Athanasius is a great example. They state,

"Athanasius' quote, "Καὶ οἱ τρεῖς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν", is not an exact quotation of "καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσιν" of the Comma in verse 7; but it is neither an exact quotation of "καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἐν εἰσιν" in verse 8. More likely than not, Athanasius' quote is from the Comma because the quote captures all the essential elements of the sense of the Comma." [Underlines added]

Do you see what they did there? Look closely at their quote from Athanasius. He uses the phrase which would literally be translated "and these three the one are." This is a clear reference to the phrase of the shorter reading in verse 8, which is idiomatically rendered, "and these three agree in one." He just accidentally skipped the one minor preposition "εἰς" (into/in). But they want to act like what he *really* meant to do was quote from a portion of the longer reading of verse 7 (and thus, bear witness to the entirety of the longer reading). Only, if that were true, he not only accidentally skipped the plural pronoun "οὗτοι" he also accidentally *added* the article "το," which would be a nonsense addition to the phrase in verse 7! And even without all that silliness, he simply doesn't quote any of the longer reading here. They are quite literally saying, "There is no actual evidence here that he had the longer reading. But he did make a tiny mistake in quoting from the shorter reading here. And yes, it is true that even his mistake is still more like the shorter reading than it is like even a brief part of the longer reading (by two words!). But we have decided to take his mistake (of accidently skipping a single minor preposition) as



clear evidence that he had the entirety of the longer reading, and pretend that his skipping a single word is actually clear evidence that he had the additional 26 words of the longer reading, even though he didn't quote one word from them." How exactly one is supposed to argue with that kind of brilliant logic, I do not know. Their other examples fare no better. Note also the incredible assertions of the article about Athanasius,

"As to why Athanasius did not quote the Comma elsewhere in his writings, we can ask the same question of why Athanasius did not quote Matthew 28:19 in some of his most pro-Trinitarian writings such as *The Deposition of Arius*, *Apologia Contra Arianos* and the *Four Discourses Against the Arians*. Matthew 28:19 provides the second most clearest [sic] declaration of the Trinity after the Comma, yet Athanasius thought it sufficient to use other scriptures to support his views on the Trinity. It is easy to see that Athanasius was not necessarily interested in establishing the Trinity per se, but rather the consubstantial unity of the Father and the Son. Other texts were more appropriate for this goal. It was the later Latin Fathers who, influenced by Neo-Platonic thought, sought to formulate the relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost in a neatly arranged Trinity. These Latin Fathers are the ones who benefited from quoting the Comma, and thus did so."

The misrepresentation of Athanasius is palatable.<sup>138</sup> They are trying to explain away the inexplicable silence of Athanasius and others of the Comma in the Nicene debates, and are wanting the reader to think that the Arian debate didn't really have anything to do with the Trinity, and thus wouldn't have been mentioned, and wanting the reader to specifically think that Athanasius wasn't trying to defend the Trinity, and directly asserting that he doesn't quote Matt. 28:19. They have in one broad swoop misunderstood or misrepresented Nicaea, misrepresented Athanasius, and been quite deceptive in their use of sources. Athanasius does use the text, describing their defense of the historic faith on in his circular letter.<sup>139</sup> Further, as to the fact that Athanasius doesn't quote Matt. 28:19 in each Trinitarian work, note that the passage doesn't appear frequently in several of these works, because they are mostly his expositions of the passages the Arians are using. The Arians obviously aren't mentioning Matt. 28:19 a lot, so he doesn't at length comment on it. But note especially that the article explicitly mentions his work "*Four Discourses Against the Arians*" and directly states that he didn't use Matt. 28:19 in that work. Clearly, they haven't read it closely, as he references the text in that work on pg. 341, and again on pg. 446.

But further, in the very first lines of his summary of the Council of Nicaea, Athanasius presents that council as having defended the faith they had, "received in the Holy Laver" meaning their baptism with its Trinitarian formula from Matt. 28:19. He then asserts that faith as being the common one, defended by the council, restating the Nicene Creed and affirming, "believing each of these to be and to exist, the Father truly Father, and the Son truly Son, and the Holy Ghost truly Holy Ghost, as also our Lord, sending forth His disciples for the preaching, said, "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" Concerning Whom [the singular Name in three persons] we confidently affirm that so we hold, and so we have held aforetime, and we maintain this faith unto the death, anathematizing every godless heresy."<sup>140</sup> When Athanasius summarized the Nicene discussion, he presented the Trinity to be the heart of it, and he presented Matt. 28:19 as his first and foremost presentation of the historic Trinitarian faith.

But finally, even if one could say that somehow the KJV Today article authors simply misread many of Athanasius' other works, their claim that Athanasius didn't use Matt. 28:19 in regards to the Trinity is refuted, even in the section of Athanasius which they quote in their very own article. They translate a section of "*Against the Arians*" as follows, "But also, is not that sin-remitting, life-giving and sanctifying washing [baptism], without which, no one shall see the kingdom of heaven, given to the faithful in the Thrice-Blessed Name? In addition to all these, John affirms, 'and these three are one.'" The

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<sup>138</sup> I will refer here to page numbers of the easily accessible ANF vol. 4 of selected works of Athanasius.

<sup>139</sup> ANF vol. 4. Pg. 93.

<sup>140</sup> ANF volume 4 Pg. 74.

first section, is, of course, Athanasius substantiating the Trinity by using the “Three persons in one name” given in the commission of Matt. 28:19, and the allegorical interpretation of the shorter reading of I John 5:7. In this is in the section which they quote from him, just before they claim he didn’t use that passage. Athanasius, if he could see from heaven, would be deeply saddened by people so misusing his name.

But we should also point out some of the internal evidence proposed by the “KJV Today” website. Under their section on internal evidence, they write, “The use of term, ‘the Word’ in the phrase, ‘the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost (ο πατηρ ο λογος και το αγιον πνευμα)’ is uniquely Johannine (as in John 1:1, 1:14, 1 John 1:1, Revelation 19:13).”

I’m not sure what to say. The phrase is not at all unique to John, being found in; Matt. 5:37; Matt. 28:15; Mk. 4:15; Lk. 4:32, 36; Lk. 5:15; Lk. 7:17; Lk. 8:11; Acts 6:5, 7; Acts 11:22; Acts 13:26, 49; Acts 17:13; Acts 19:20; Rom. 9:6, 9; 1 Co. 1:18; 1 Co. 2:4; 1 Co. 14:36; 1 Co. 15:54; 2 Co. 1:18; 2 Co. 10:10; Col. 3:16; Col. 4:6; 1 Thess. 1:8; 2 Thess. 3:1; 1 Tim. 1:15; 1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Tim. 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:9, 11, 17; Tit. 2:5; Tit. 3:8; Heb. 4:2, 12-13; Heb. 5:11; and Heb. 7:28. It is found in John (15 times), roughly as often as it is found in Luke’s writings, and certainly far less than in the rest of the NT corpus. It is found in the patristic literature (I wont list the occurrences here). To say it is “uniquely Johannine” is simple nonsense. Although, in the author’s defense, he may simply not know what the words, “unique” or “Johannine” mean, so perhaps he could be forgiven. More accurately, he could have said, “This is a very common phrase, not at all distinctly Johannine, but which John often employs. He almost never uses it of Christ, but he seems to have uniquely, on very rare occasions, turned it into a Christological title in a handful of other passages.” But then, that wouldn’t have sounded very helpful to his point, and in fact would have argued directly against it, so why bother with a tiny little thing called accuracy?

He goes on;

“Not only that, among the various Latin manuscripts and Church father citations, there is not a single instance of the formula appearing as anything other than ‘the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost’. This is significant if you realize that there are textual variants concerning the three witnesses on earth (some Latin witnesses replace ‘Spirit’ with ‘flesh’). If the Comma were a Trinitarian fabrication, it is amazing to see such uniformity of the vocabulary among the thousands of Latin manuscripts, as well as Church father citations. Since the Trinitarian disputes concerned the divinity of the incarnate Word, namely the Son Jesus Christ, and the consubstantial unity of the Father and Son, Trinitarians would have received greater mileage if they had fabricated a verse upholding the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Yet we never see such a fabrication, which leads to the likelihood that the Comma is original to John’s epistle.”

He is in fact pointing out an important fact, though from the wrong angle. He is trying to say that if there were perfect uniformity in the Latin witnesses, that would be an argument for it being original, despite the uniformity of Greek witnesses against it. That’s actually not how internal evidence works, and especially not in versional evidence. However, he is getting at something important implicitly, because when we find a *lack* of uniformity in quotation, that is an argument that it is not original, and a strong one. The problem is that he thinks the evidence is uniform (and directly says as much), but doesn’t know what he’s talking about. We have already looked at the Latin evidence. The triad *does* appear as “father Son and Holy Spirit” in a number of Latin Vulgate manuscripts<sup>141</sup> and patristic citations, which, as he points out, would be a strong indicator that it is not original. There is also, as we have noted, a great degree of other variety among the Latin witnesses, with the comma appearing in several dozen different forms, due to its not being an original text copied, but a marginal gloss evolving and growing. His statements serve to show not only his ignorance of (or dishonesty with) the external data, but it points out that the diversity of forms found in the Latin manuscripts is a strong internal argument against the authenticity of the comma, which we have explained above.

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<sup>141</sup> For a brief list of witnesses which have “Son,” see the textual apparatus in Wordsworth-White, “*Nouum Testamentum Domini Nostri Jesu Christi Latine*” (2<sup>nd</sup> ed) Vol. 3, 1889, pg. 373.

Further, the use of the word “Son” was one of the strongest arguments the Arians had (if Christ was a son, he was born, if he was born he had a beginning), and the title “Word” was one of the strongest arguments the orthodox had (because of the use of the title in John 1:1, read literally any work by Athanasius for examples). To suggest that “Trinitarians would have received greater mileage if they had fabricated a verse upholding the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost” is in fact to flip Nicaea on its head, or perhaps, to reveal either a deep misunderstanding of the primary sources, or a very dishonest use of them. And besides all that, he thinks that if the comma is not original, it must have been a “fabrication.” But that is surely to miss the point. No one would claim that someone intentionally *fabricated* a reading and maliciously inserted it into Scripture. Scribal addition isn’t *intentional* simply because it is *present*. As we have seen above, there is no malice in the addition; simply an honest scribal mistake. It is not a “fabrication.” It is a Trinitarian “interpretation” which accidentally made its way into the text.

The article proceeds to give several internal arguments for authenticity based on Grammar. They are extremely one sided. For example, they suggest that the comma must be genuine because a masculine participle couldn’t introduce three neuter nouns, as it would when the comma is absent, since it would require masculine nouns. They refer to Gregory of Nazianus as support for their first objection, but then only quote Robert Dabney. Gregory was not speaking at all about the longer reading, and didn’t know anything about it. He is commenting on verse 8 of a text which has the shorter reading. But the portion of text he is commenting on is the same in the TR as it is in any modern text.

They further explain this grammatical objection with a quotation from Robert Dabney. However, their citation doesn’t list a specific work of Dabney, only his *Opera Omnia*, and doesn’t list a page number. It appears to come from volume 1 of “*Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney*,” 377-382. Dabney was generally speaking a defender of the Traditional text, and he, like Burgon, opposed the revision of Wescott and Hort. But he wasn’t demanding that the comma was authentic. He writes, “All the critics vote against it [the comma]. But let us see whether the case is as clear as they would have it. When we raise this inquiry, let it be understood that we do not undertake the hopeless task of satisfying the biblical critics of its certain genuineness. Neither do we absolutely assert its genuineness, but we present the arguments in favor of its claim for the purpose of showing that they do carry a good degree of probability, and that even in this extreme case, the recent critics are not so infallible as they pretend to be. Our object is to keep it an open question, and to preserve that amount of probability which appears fairly to attach to the common reading.” (Dabney, *Discussions of RL Dabney*, pg. 377). He then marshals a variety of internal evidence (which is itself much more cogently argued than any raised in the KJV Today article) that might make it possible that the comma could have been authentic. But he is not demanding that it is authentic, only suggesting that it could be. The article seems to suggest that he would ardently defend the comma on grammatical grounds. But this is the same Dabney who wrote in his systematic theology, chapter 13, “The Trinity,” that, “The much litigated passage in 1 John 5:7, is certainly of too doubtful genuineness to be advanced, polemically, against the adversaries of the Trinity; however, we may believe that the tenour of its teaching is agreeable to that of the Scriptures elsewhere.” Meaning that while the theology of the comma is orthodox, it is almost universally regarded as not authentic.

Dabney’s own grammatical argument is much better nuanced than the KJV article’s argument, (though still seriously misguided – I will interact with his work if someone desires). Further, I suspect they didn’t quote him at length because in the same paragraph he corrects the KJV, claiming it has obscured the meaning. He writes, “The insuperable awkwardness of this chasm in the meaning is obscured in the authorized English version, ‘and these three agree in one.’ Let a version be given which shall do fair justice to the force of the definite article here, as established by the Greek idiom and of the whole construction, thus: ‘and these three agree to that (aforesaid) One,’ the argument appears.” His translation is probably a better translation of the TR than the KJV at this point. The KJV Today article didn’t seem to want to point that out. Dabney acknowledges that there is almost no Greek support for the comma, and that it is found only among Latin patristic witnesses, and thus concludes, “This, then, seems to be the sum of the matter. As to 1 John V. 7, the Latin Church stands opposed to the Greek.” He certainly

thought it possible that the Latin Church had it correct, but he was not demanding such, and certainly didn't believe in a perfect TR or perfect KJV.

The thing is, there is no rule in Greek grammar which would demand the shorter reading is inauthentic. And just think through what it would mean if there were. Even in the TR, one of the nouns (spirit) which follows the masculine participle "who bear witness" in verse 7 is neuter. The KJV Today article's argument would invalidate the longer reading as found in the TR of verse 7. But beyond that, the article is arguing that the shorter reading "there are three who bear witness; spirit, water, and blood" could not have been written by John, because he would be introducing neuter nouns with a masculine participle – but in the TR, in the *very next verse*, that is precisely what John does, since verse 8 contains the exact same grammatical construction, "There are three who bear witness (Masculine construction) in earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood (Three Neuter nouns)." The TR is introducing three neuter nouns with a masculine participle, which he claims is such a grammatical anomaly that John couldn't have written it. Strange that he doesn't argue that John couldn't have written the TR of verse 8!

Thomas Strouse mentioned the same idea in the video with Gipp linked to above in defense of I John 5:7. He mentioned I.H. Marshall and seemed to be suggesting that Marshall would agree with him, but that is to seriously misrepresent Marshall. Marshall's commentary says nothing of the sort. He is a far better scholar than to suggest such a foolish thing. What Strouse is referring to is a statement by Marshall about the striking grammar of verse 8, which reads the same in the TR and NA 28. He is not referring to the shorter reading being an anomaly – he doesn't comment on the shorter vs. longer reading in the text of the commentary at all. He is commenting on the phrase in verse 8, which is the same in both texts, and all he says is that it is "striking."<sup>142</sup> Strange of Strouse to miss this basic point.<sup>143</sup> If the shorter reading is such a grammatical anomaly that John couldn't have written it, then verse 8 must be cut out of the KJV. To demand that the shorter reading isn't authentic on the basis of unusual grammar, but then not explain that verse 8, in every Greek text, has the same unusual grammar, is the worst kind of "double standard."

But I think we can swipe aside all of their internal arguments for authenticity based on grammar rather easily, and with a single swipe, without having to explain all of the other details. The fact is, as you can see on the left side of the chart, hundreds of Greek scribes copied the text with the shorter reading. None of them saw any kind of grammatical problems with the shorter reading. Scribes are notorious for correcting what they perceive to be grammatical errors in their exemplar. Almost every single scribe of almost every one of our manuscripts does it at some points (even the manuscript used as our background photo, in the very page uses as a background to this page). Yet none of these scribes felt the need to make any changes to the shorter reading to correct its grammar. Many of them probably had at least a basic sense of Greek syntax. The absence of any correction by them means that a charge that the grammar of the shorter reading makes it inauthentic is simply untrue and unsubstantiated. I suspect that the author

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<sup>142</sup> Marshall, NICNT, page 237, n. 20.

<sup>143</sup> Strouse makes the same point as a case for the comma in "*The Lord God Hath Spoken*" pg. 20, without mentioning Marshall. But since he has already shown his acquaintance with Marshall's comment, which is in Marshall's commentary on the text of verse 8, he is well aware that the supposed "grammatical difficulty" is present in the TR in exactly the same way as in the NA28, making it an utterly moot point. That is simply not honest scholarship. He further cites Cyprian and other "early church fathers" as support, which we have seen to be a bogus claim. He finally asserts as a final "fact" that "The Holy Spirit has preserved it in Christendom's two best known versions, the Vulgate and the AV, in spite of continuing effort by liberal and heretical scholarship to remove it." To say nothing of the fact that not a single scholar who I know who is writing against the comma is either a liberal or a heretic, (I certainly am not open to his *ad hominem* charge), follow his logic; He obviously doesn't believe every thing in the Vulgate is the preserved word of God, which makes his mention of it utterly moot (an argument as substantial as the emperor's clothes). Thus, his point is, "we know this text is the preserved word of God, because it is found in the KJV, and anyone who tries to remove it can be labeled a heretic and a liberal." For someone who claims not to believe the KJV translators were inspired, that is, strangely, exactly what he is asserting.

of the article (or anyone echoing its argument) doesn't have a better grasp of Greek than the combined knowledge of the 500 or so scribes who copied the manuscripts on the left side of the chart.

I might mention also the article's multiple arguments about Johannine patterns (preference for referring to the Trinity; listing the Father as witness, etc.). Each of them reveals a misunderstanding of how internal evidence works. If John never does something anywhere but here, and the "here" is textually suspect, that can be an argument from internal evidence against a reading. But that John does something in other places is no argument that he must have done it here. Does John sometimes mention a sort of Trinitarian theology? Yes. Does that mean that you need to rewrite every verse in your Bible penned by John and say, "John often mentions Trinity, so this verse must somehow mention Trinity too?" Of course not. That John makes a reference to the Godhead in some places is not even remotely an argument that he must have done so in this place. That is simply not how internal evidence works.

Further, John's common Trinitarian language is, if anything, an argument against the comma. As we have spelled out above, John certainly has a penchant for "Trinitarian thought" so to speak. Yet nowhere else in John does he use language like, "ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα." That exact formula is found nowhere in any of John's writings. Certainly the phrase, "οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσιν," is never found anywhere else in John at all, let alone in reference to the Trinity. The slightly different phrase in verse 8 is obviously Johannine, but it is clearly not Trinitarian (unless one takes spirit and water and blood as an allegorical reference to the Trinity). Does John have a commonly expressed sort of "trinitarianism?" Yes. And the comma is decidedly not it. The closest John comes to the kind of language found in the comma is his binitarian statement in John 10:30, "I and my Father are one." If the comma is authentic, it is John using lexical and syntactical constructions he has never used elsewhere, to articulate theologically a unity of the essence of the three persons, which he never directly expresses anywhere else in his writings. Everything about the language, structure, and grammar of the comma is decidedly not "Johannine."

Take another example from the article. The article suggests as one argument, "The Johannine appeal to the witness of the Father." The article says, "As our Lord Jesus often appealed to the witness of the Father as the highest authority, without such reference to the Father as one of the witnesses of Jesus Christ, the passage in 1 John 5 is theologically hollow and deficient." Listen to what he just said. A witness to Jesus that doesn't include reference to the Father is "theologically hollow and deficient." Really? Is it really true that if the Bible uses this "witness" language to bear record to Jesus, without reference to the Father, it is open to this accusation? In John 1:7, 8, 15, 32, 34, John uses the same "witness" language of John the Baptist as witness to Jesus. He doesn't include the Father as witness. He uses the same language to describe the Samaritan woman's witness to Jesus in John 4:39, with no Father. In John 12:17, the people bear witness of Jesus; same language, no Father. John lists himself as a witness in 19:35 and 21:24. Same language; no Father. I have concluded based on the internal argument used in this article that the Apostle John is "theologically hollow and deficient," and repeatedly so. Or, conversely, that perhaps the author of the article may be. You can decide for yourself which you think is more likely.

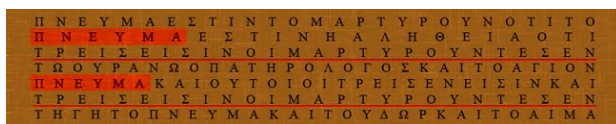
As noted in the essay above, the article is typical of almost all KJVO treatment's in that it skims over the Greek witnesses that do have the longer reading, and lumps them all together saying that they all have the KJV reading, "with variation." But as we saw when we looked closely, that is not being fair with the data. Only the margin of miniscule 221 has the reading in the KJV form prior to the KJV. Each of the other witnesses translated the Latin text differently. Of course, if they were to let the reader look closely, that would become apparent, so they skim over it and lump it all together. Doesn't it seem odd that in an article arguing that only these 10 manuscripts have "got it right" of the 500, when there is detailed examination of so many other factors, they wouldn't want to look closely at the only manuscripts that ever "got it right?" If that doesn't strike you as exceedingly odd upon reading the article, it should have.

Further, Miniscule 635 is listed in the article as having the longer reading in the margin. The problem is that they are using the older Tischendorf number to make it seem like an additional manuscript. The GA Miniscule 635 was copied in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and the text of miniscule 635 has the shorter reading, and there is no marginal note in that manuscript at this passage. Miniscule 635 does not

in any way bear witness to the longer reading. However, in some older works, (and modern works which occasionally use the older numbers – e.g., Metzger pg. 715) what is now known in the GA numbering system as Miniscule 177, which we have just looked at above, was known under the Tischendorf number 635. The KJV today article authors have either misunderstood the modern GA numbering system, and are just not being very careful with the data (again strange, since these special manuscripts are the only ones that “got it right”), or they have dishonestly included the same manuscript under both numbers (177 and 635), so that it seems like they have extra support for the comma. I am not sure which.

As a final note, it is hard not to say something about thier suggestion that the longer reading was originally part of the text, but might have been omitted by Homeoteleuton. Homeoteleuton is the scribal error of omission than can take place when multiple lines of a text start or end with the same word, and thus, a scribe making copies might skip intervening lines on accident. The website presents a rearrangement of the letters of the passage and writes,

“The text is arranged in a manner that is typically seen in papyri. Even if the words on an actual papyrus were not arranged exactly in the same positions on the papyrus as in this hypothetical arrangement, the relative positions of the words would still be similar. Consider how the phrase "τρεῖς ἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν" appears twice identically, separated by two lines, and how the word "πνεῦμα" is located above that phrase in both instances at the left-hand side of the papyrus (the phrase is underlined):”



(Image from KJV Today at <http://www.kjvtoday.com/home/the-father-the-word-and-the-holy-ghost-in-1-john-57#TOC-Evidence-of-errors-by-parablepses>)

Follow them closely. They are claiming that if a manuscript had the text in this form, then perhaps a scribe could have seen the word “*pneuma*” starting the second line, and then accidentally skipped to the “*pneuma*” starting three lines down from the one he mean to copy, thus omitting most of the longer reading, thus explaining why it doesn’t appear in Greek manuscripts for the first several centuries. I must give the authors bonus points for incredible ingenuity. I cannot imagine the creativity it took to come up with an idea like that. The suggestion is utterly laughable. Look closely at the image they have created. This is *not* a picture of a manuscript, nor could any manuscript ever look like that. This is their fictional reconstruction, strategically designed to make the impossible sound plausible. Notice all of the spaces between the letters? Notice how they have individually put a huge variety of different spacing between each letter? They had to do this so that they have the freedom to move the words wherever they want them, in order to get the word “*pneuma*” to be at the beginning of both the second and the fifth line. You can even see the variety of spacing, just in the different sizes which their reconstruction gives to exactly the same word, *pneuma*, highlighted in red twice. It’s exactly the same word, and would have been written by the same scribe in the same way. But they have had to space it (and every individual letter) differently, to get their fiction to work.

But not only is there no manuscript now in existence that arranges the text that way, there never could have been one. Even with spacing between the words, as found in the later minuscules, if one used normal consistent spacing, or any variety of spacing found in any extant manuscript, no manuscript size could give him those results. But even so, such spacing is not found in any Greek manuscripts of the New Testament for the first several centuries. Every single manuscripts of the New Testament from the first several centuries (which is the “silent period” the article is trying to cover with their made up example) writes the text *scripta continua*. That is, not only with no spaces between the letters of a word – there are



not even spaces between the words themselves! Their fictional reconstruction is not even remotely possible, and they surely know it. But they have the audacity to write of their reconstruction, “The text is arranged in a manner that is typically seen in papyri.” That is nothing short of a boldfaced lie. There is not a single papyri in existence which arranges the text that way. There is not a single majuscule or miniscule parchment that arranges the text that way. The text has never been arranged that way except in their imaginative reconstruction. There is simply no way to write that sentence with honesty, and most of that paragraph is simply being blatantly deceitful. It would not be honest to even use the word “possible” instead of “typically.” They are asserting what they surely know to be a direct falsehood, and apparently trying to use a falsehood to convince unwary readers that there is some reason to believe the comma authentic apart from saying that God supernaturally inspired the KJV translators to reconstruct the text of the NT. I for one grow tired of such authors, and such blatantly dishonest assertions.

Hopefully, those brief comments on their article will cause the reader to be wary, and to think virtuously. We have always a responsibility when we read articles, books, etc. to “prove all things.” May we each be mindful that we cannot with intellectual virtue accept or reject the conclusions of an author apart from examining the value of his argument. We never have the right to say, “I like his position, so I accept his conclusion.” Or, conversely, “I disagree with his position, so I reject his conclusion.” To accept or reject the conclusions of an author or preacher while skipping over their argumentation for why they hold them is to short-circuit the intellectual process that God has called us each to. We must rather understand, evaluate, and accept or reject the arguments which one presents to support their conclusion, and then draw conclusions that are supportable. It is here that all true discourse and learning which would honor Jesus with the mind must take place.

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skeptic says, (or KJV advocate supposes to be the case were there no inspired TR), “we have no idea what the NT originally said,” they can read a single volume which will show them that that is actually only true in a few hundred places, and in most of those it is fairly clear, and most of them are not at all as major as some like to pretend. 2 variants contain 12 whole verses. A few dozen concern 1-2 whole verses. The remaining few hundred significant variants concern a phrase/ short phrases or a single word.

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Westcott, Brooke Foss, *“The Epistles of St. John: The Greek Text with notes”* reprinted by Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1966.

Westcott, Brooke Foss, and Hort, Fenton John Anthony. *“The New Testament in the Original Greek: Introduction and Appendix.”* Harper and Brothers, New York, 1882. Republished by Forgotten Books in 2012. The intro with which WH presented their text, and the basic theory that underlined it. While no scholars today would accept every point of the theory (like the clearly prejudiced attitude towards B and ⚪, the belief in a “neutral text” etc.), and no one would accept every reading from their text, it still has great historical value. While textual criticism had been practiced



regularly since Erasmus, the generally acknowledged father of the discipline, this was essentially the first clear elucidation of the textual critical principles that stood behind the work of Erasmus and all those who came after him. The author's basic contention that witnesses should be weighed, not counted, still stands for essentially every textual critic. Their particular suggestions about the value of internal and external evidence are a little more controversial, but all textual critics (including Burgon) accepted their basic divisions; Burgon then and MT advocates today just disagree about how much weight internal evidence should be given, and how precisely to assign "weight" to manuscripts.

## Journal Articles

- Combs, William W. "Erasmus and the *Textus Receptus*" *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 1 (Spring 1996) pg. 35-53.
- De Jonge, Henk Jan. "Erasmus and the *Comma Johanneum*." *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*. 1980, pg. 381-389. De Jonge corrects the common but mistaken notion that Erasmus included the comma in his 3<sup>rd</sup> edition in order to fulfill a rashly made promise. Shows at length that there is not real evidence that Erasmus ever made such a promise, and that he rather included the comma out of a social motivation to protect himself against the charge of heresy, though he never thought the comma original, as he himself said repeatedly.
- De Jonge, Henk Jan. "Novum Testamentum A Nobis Versum: The Essence of Erasmus' Edition of the New Testament" *Journal of Theological Studies* 35 (1984) pg. 394-413. Exceptional article. De Jonge has been called the world's leading Erasmus scholar, and he seeks here to rescue Erasmus, so to speak, from the common charges laid against him. He describes some of the derogatory claims sometimes made about the Greek NT of Erasmus (that it was based on a handful of recent, inferior manuscripts; that it often corrects itself to align to the Latin text, even when doing so against all known Greek support both of his day and ours; that it contains hundreds of printing errors due to the hasty nature of his work; and that in Revelation, the only manuscript he had access to was embedded in a commentary of Andreas, and thus, often, Andreas words have slipped into the TR having no manuscript support in any language). He allows that they are in fact true claims. However, these deficiencies in Erasmus' Greek text are not reflective of the great scholar himself. Rather, De Jonge raises and argues at length a point far too commonly ignored in such critiques of Erasmus - A Greek NT was not the primary intent of his work, and was something of a provisional, secondary, accident. Since it was not his aim to produce a good Greek text, but merely provide any Greek text which would substantiate his Latin translation, he should be judged by what he actually intended to accomplish; not by what he didn't. The Greek text which he printed was of little import, and was not his primary concern. Any form whatsoever of the Greek text would have done, and the Greek text he included was simply what was possible for a sort of "rush job." Latin was the point. He concludes by stating, "My claim can be summed up in one sentence; In judging the Greek text in Erasmus' editions of the New Testament, one should realize from the start that it was not intended as a textual edition in its own right, but served to give the reader of the Latin version, which was the main point, the opportunity to find out whether the translation was supported by the Greek. In one of the forwards to *Novum Instrumentum*, Erasmus warned, 'Let no one, like an unreasonable guest, demand a dinner instead of a light luncheon. We state clearly what we have undertaken. Let no one desire of us what is beyond this purpose.'"
- De Jonge, Henk Jan. "The Date and Purpose of Erasmus's *Casitgatio Novi Testamenti: A Note on the Origins of the Novum Instrumentum*." Dealing with the multiple conflicting statements by Erasmus and his contemporaries about when Erasmus first began to work on his new translation of the NT into Latin, he concludes that the work had actually begun as early as 1511, and that for apologetic reasons Erasmus later claimed that it was a brief thought just prior to its printing. However, as generally accepted, and as more pertinent to this essay, the idea to include the Greek text, and thus his work of correcting Greek manuscripts to that end, did not commence until August 1514, after

his arrival in Basel. His work on constructing a critical Greek text was, as has commonly been asserted, something of a rush job, and an after thought ancillary to his main purpose.

Wallace, Daniel B. "*The Comma Johanneum and Cyprian*" Bible.org, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

<https://bible.org/article/comma-johanneum-and-cyprian>. Corrects the occasional contention of some KJVO advocates that Cyprian (or pseudo-Cyprian) quoted the comma in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

Wallace, Daniel B. "*The Textual Problem in I John 5:7-8*" Bible.org, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

<https://bible.org/article/textual-problem-1-john-57-8>. While somewhat dated, this is still a good treatment of the textual issue as a whole.