

A Defense of 1 John 5:7

WOL, <https://www.wayoflife.org/reports/a-defense-of-1-john.php> , September 12, 2017

Excerpted from the book *THE BIBLE VERSION QUESTION-ANSWER DATABASE* (https://www.wayoflife.org/publications/books/bible_version_q_a.php) available at www.wayoflife.org .

1 John 5:7-8 in the King James Bible reads: “For there are three that bear record in heaven, THE FATHER, THE WORD, AND THE HOLY GHOST: AND THESE THREE ARE ONE. AND THERE ARE THREE THAT BEAR WITNESS IN EARTH, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one”.

The capitalized words, called the *Johannine Comma*, are omitted in the modern Greek texts and English versions. (The term “comma” described “a group of words isolated as a single group”).

It would seem, in fact, that modern textual critics despise the traditional Trinitarian statement in 1 John 5:7-8 more than any other passage in the Received Text.

Bruce Metzger called it “spurious” (*The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, p. 101). Kurt and Barbara Aland had no doubt that it is inauthentic, speaking of “the impossibility of its being at all related to the original form of the text of 1 John” (*The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions*, p. 311). This is typical of how 1 John 5:7 is treated by textual critics.

Beginning with the publication of the English Revised Version of 1881, the *Johannine Comma* has been omitted from practically every modern English translation, including the ASV, RSV, NASV, NIV, TEV, Living Bible, the Message, New Living Translation, the CEV, and the Holman Christian Standard Bible.

ANSWER:

This is one of the most important verses in the Bible on the doctrine of the Trinity and one of the most important witnesses to the full Deity of Jesus Christ; and for the following reasons I am convinced that 1 John 5:7 as it stands in the Greek Received Text and the King James Bible is divinely inspired Scripture.

We must not be overawed by textual scholars. They do not possess secret knowledge nor do they have secret wisdom. I do not want to speak disrespectfully, for I do not despise learning (though I do despise the thing that David Otis Fuller called “scholarolatry”). but it is true nonetheless that they are only men and not gods. The very fact that they almost never mention the fundamental issue of faith (Hebrews 11:6) or the promise of divine preservation or the Spirit of God in the context of these matters is most fearfully telling.

Consider, first, **THE THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT**. “The strength of forgery or interpolation is similarity and not uniqueness. The Trinitarian formula, ‘Father, Word, and Holy Spirit’ is unique not only for John but for all NT writers. The usual formula, ‘Father, Son, and Holy Spirit’ would have been assuredly used by a forger. [Incidentally, this argument is an antidote for rationalists who repudiate the authenticity of the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter. Peter uses a unique spelling for his name (*Sumeon*), which is also the first word of the Epistle, to demonstrate his mark of authorship. What forger would pass three dollar bills? Only the authority, the government, would attempt such a unique action].” (Dr. Thomas Strouse, *A Critique of D.A. Carson’s The King James Version Debate*, 1980).

Another consideration is **THE GRAMMATICAL ARGUMENT**. “The omission of the Johannine Comma leaves much to be desired grammatically. The words ‘Spirit,’ ‘water’ and ‘blood’ are all neuters, yet they are treated as masculine in verse 8. This is strange if the Johannine Comma is omitted, but it can be accounted for if it is retained; the masculine nouns ‘Father’ and ‘word’ in

verse 7 regulate the gender in the succeeding verse due to the power of attraction principle. The argument that the 'Spirit' is personalized and therefore masculine is offset by verse 6 which is definitely referring to the personal Holy Spirit yet using the neuter gender. [I. H. Marshall is a current voice for this argument: 'It is striking that although Spirit, water, and blood are all neuter nouns in Greek, they are introduced by a clause expressed in the masculine plural ... Here in 1 John he clearly regards the Spirit as personal, and this leads to the personification of the water and the blood' *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1978), p. 237n]. Moreover, the words 'that one' (*to hen*) in verse 8 have no antecedent if verse 7 is omitted, [Marshall calls this construction 'unparalleled,' p. 237] whereas if verse 7 is retained, then the antecedent is 'these three are one' (*to hen*)" (Strouse, *A Critique of D.A. Carson's The King James Version Debate*).

The grammatical argument has been treated lightly by modern textual critics, but its importance was understood by GREGORY NAZIANZUS (Oration XXXII: Fifth Theological Oration: "On the Holy Spirit", A.D. 390; see Michael Maynard, *A History of the Debate over 1 John 5:7-8*), FREDERIC NOLAN (*An Inquiry into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate or Received Text of the New Testament*, 1815), ROBERT DABNEY ("The Doctrinal Various Readings of the New Testament Greek", 1891), THOMAS MIDDLETON (*The Doctrine of the Greek article: applied to the criticism and illustration of the New Testament*, 1833), MATTHEW HENRY (Commentary on the Whole Bible, 1706), EDWARD F. HILLS (*The King James Bible Defended: a Space-age Defense of the Historic Christian Faith*, 1956), LOUIS GAUSSEN (*The Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*, 1934), to name a few. I take my stand with these men.

Consider, too, ***THE ARGUMENT FROM THE PURPOSE OF JOHN'S WRITINGS AND OF THE NATURE OF THOSE TIMES.***

"Regarding the issue at hand, such a distinct literary/historical coherence fully supports the inclusion of the *Johannine Comma*. The resounding theme of the Gospel of John is the divinity of Jesus Christ. Such is summed up in John 10:30, when Jesus says, 'I and my Father are one.' This same theme is prevalent in the Epistle, being concisely and clearly stated in 5:7-8. The Comma truly bears coherence with the message of John's Gospel in this sense. It serves as an occasion to introduce the doctrine of the Trinity as the original readers prepared to study the attached Gospel. Although Christ's divinity is inferred throughout the epistle, one is not confronted with such succinct declaration as is conveyed in the Comma. If this passage is omitted, it seems that the theme of John's Gospel would lack a proper introduction.

"It is interesting to note that one of the earliest allusions to the *Johannine Comma* in church history is promulgated in connection to the thematic statement made by the Lord in John 10:30. [The fact that this allusion was made less than two centuries after the completion of the New Testament serves as convincing external evidence for the authenticity of the *Johannine Comma*]. Cyprian writes around A.D. 250, 'The Lord says "I and the Father are one" and likewise it is written of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, "And these three are one".' [*The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Church Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), 5:423]. The theological teaching of the Comma most definitely bears coherence with the overriding theme of John's Gospel. There is no reason to believe that the verse is not genuine in this sense, for it serves as a proper prelude to the theme of the Gospel which, historically speaking, most likely accompanied the Epistle as it was sent out to its original audience.

"The heresy of Gnosticism is also of notable importance with regard to the historical context surrounding the *Johannine Comma*. This 'unethical intellectualism' had begun to make inroads among churches in John's day; its influence would continue to grow up until the second century when it gave pure Christianity a giant struggle. [Robertson, 6:200] Generally speaking, Gnosticism can be described as a variety of syncretic religious movements in the early period of church history that sought to answer the question, 'What must I do to be saved?' The Gnostic answer was that a person must possess a secret knowledge. Proponents of Gnosticism claimed to possess a superior knowledge and so were called Gnostics]. One of the major tenets of Gnosticism was the essential evil of matter; the physical body, in other words, was viewed as evil. According to this line of thought, Jesus Christ could not have been fully God and fully man, for this would have required him to possess an evil physical body.

“The seeds of the Gnostic heresy seem to be before John’s mind in his first epistle; nine times he gives tests for knowing truth in conjunction with the verb ginosko (to know). [1 John 2:3, 5; 3:16, 19, 24; 4:2,6, 13; 5:2] This being said, the *Johannine Comma* would have constituted an integral component of the case the Apostle made against the false teachings of the Gnostics, especially with regard to the nature of Christ. Robertson notes that John’s Gospel was written to prove the deity of Christ, assuming his humanity, while 1 John was written to prove the humanity of Christ, assuming his deity. [Robertson, 6:201] He goes on to say, ‘Certainly both ideas appear in both books.’ If these notions are true, then the Comma is important to John’s polemic. Jesus Christ, the human Son of God, is the eternal, living Word (cf. John 1:1). The Word, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, bears witness to ‘he that came by water and blood,’ even Jesus Christ (1 John 5:6). This assertion would have flown right into the face of Gnosticism” (Jesse M. Boyd, “And These Three Are One: A Case for the Authenticity of 1 John 5:7-8”, 1999, <http://www.ovrlnd.com/Bible/casefor1john57.html>).

Another consideration is ***THE ARGUMENT FROM THE GREEK MANUSCRIPT RECORD***. D.A. Carson, probably following Bruce Metzger’s *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (3rd edition corrected, 1975), claims there are only four MSS containing the Johannine Comma. In fact, the UBS 4th Greek N.T. lists 8 manuscripts that contain the comma, four in the text (61, 629, 2318, 918) and four in the margin (88, 221, 429, 636).

When considering the Greek manuscript evidence for or against the *Johannine Comma*, it is important to understand that there are only five manuscripts dating from the 2nd to the 7th century that even contain the fifth chapter of 1 John (Michael Maynard, *A History of the Debate over 1 John 5:7-8*, Tempe, AZ: Comma Publications, 1995). None of the papyrus contains this portion of Scripture.

Further, it is important to understand that some Greek manuscripts cited by editors in the 16th and 17th centuries are no longer extant. The Complutensian Bible, produced by several Catholic scholars, was based on Greek manuscripts obtained from the Vatican library and elsewhere. They included 1 John 5:7 on the authority of “ancient codices” that were in their possession. Further, Robert Stephens, who produced several editions of the Greek Received Text, obtained ancient Greek manuscripts from the Royal Library at Paris. He refused to allow even one letter that was not supported by what he considered to be the best Greek manuscripts. When he compared these manuscripts to the Complutensian, he found that they agreed. In the margin of the 3rd edition of his Greek N.T. he said seven of the 15 or 16 Greek manuscripts in his possession contained the *Johannine Comma*. Theodore Beza borrowed these manuscripts from Robert Stephens’ son Henry and further testified that 1 John 5:7 is found in “some ancient manuscripts of Stephens”.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, both the Catholic and the Reformation editors were convinced of the authenticity of 1 John 5:7 based on the Greek manuscript evidence that was before them.

It is probable that some of this evidence has been lost. Consider the following important statements:

“Erasmus, in his Notes on the place, owns that the Spanish Edition took it from a Vatican MS, and Father Amelote, in his Notes on his own Version of the Greek Testament, affirms, that he had seen this verse in the most ancient copy of the Vatican Library. The learned *Author of the Enquiry into the Authority of the Complutensian Edition of the New Testament* [Richard Smalbroke], in a letter to Dr. Bentley, from these and many other arguments, proves it to be little less than certain, that the controverted passage 1 Joh. v.7 was found in the ancient Vatican MS, so particularly recommended by Pope Leo to the Editors at Complutum” (Leonard Twells, *A Critical Examination of the Late New Text and Version of the New Testament*, 1731, II, p. 128).

“Can we peruse the account which is given of the labours of Laurentius Valla [he collated the Latin against the Greek in the 15th century], of the Complutensian Editors of the Old and New Testaments, of Robert Stephens, the Parisain printer, and of Theodore Beza, without believing, that they found this passage in several valuable Greek manuscripts? All those learned and honourable men could not surely have combined to assert, in the face of the Christian world, that they had examined and collated manuscripts which contained this verse. Where would be our candour and charity, if we should suppose them capable of such an intentional and deliberate falsification of the Scriptures,

and of doing this in concert? Would not this be to rob them of their honest and well-earned reputation, for learning and worth, for probity and honour, and to stigmatize them as cheats and impostors? It is supposed, that those Greek manuscripts which were used by the first editors of the New Testament, have been lost by being neglected, or destroyed after they had been used for this purpose. The manuscripts which were used by the Complutensian Editors, under the direction of Cardinal Ximenes, it is said, were never returned to the library of the Vatican, but are either lost, or lie concealed in some of the libraries in Spain. The manuscripts which were borrowed by Robert Stephens, from the Royal Library at Paris, have never found their way back thither, or at least, they are not now, it is said, in that Library. ... Though, however, it could be proved, that there did not exist at this hour, a single Greek manuscript which exhibited the verse in question, yet still the testimonies of their former existence, which have been produced, should overbalance, it is conceived, in the view of every unprejudiced mind, any unfavourable presumption arising from this circumstance” (Robert Jack, *Remarks on the Authenticity of 1 John v. 7*).

Consider, too, ***THE ARGUMENT FROM THE GREEK LECTIONARIES AND PRINTED BIBLES***. It is a fascinating fact that though the majority of extant Greek manuscripts do not contain 1 John 5:7, many of the lectionaries of the Greek Orthodox Church do contain it, as do the printed Greek Bibles. The lectionaries are Scripture passages organized to be read in the churches.

The printed lectionaries in the Greek Orthodox Church since the 16th century have often included 1 John 5:7. This is an important fact, because it is not reasonable to believe that the Greek Orthodox Church would “correct” its own text from Latin.

1 John 5:7 was in the *Apostolos* or *Collection of Lessons* (**5th century**), “read in the Greek Church, out of the Apostolical Epistles, and printed at Venice, An. 1602. *Velut ab Antiquis seculis recepta Lectio*, says Selden de Synedriis, l.2, c.4. Art. 4. This Lectionary is as old as the fifth century. Vide Millii Prol. 1054, and Mr. Martin’s *Dissertation*, Part I. c. 13” (Leonard Twells, *A Critical Examination of the Late New Text and Version of the New Testament*, 1731, II, p. 129).

1 John 5:7 was in the lectionary *Ordo Romanus* (**A.D. 730**) (Twells, II, p. 133). The Trinitarian text was to be read between Easter and Whitsuntide, “as we learn from Durandus, a writer of the fourteenth century, in his *Rationale of Divine Offices*”.

The Greek Orthodox Church’s printed New Testaments, both ancient and modern, contain 1 John 5:7. Again, it not possible to believe that they would include this on the basis of anything other than evidence from Greek. Being keepers of the Greek language, they would despise the Latin.

Another consideration is ***THE ARGUMENT FROM THE LATIN MANUSCRIPT RECORD***. The majority of Latin New Testament manuscripts from the past 900 years contain 1 John 5:7. Further, some of the most ancient also contain it. “It is not true, that the most ancient Latin MSS. Of the New Testament want the celebrated passage of 1 John 5:7. For the Bible of Charlemagne revised and corrected by the learned Alcuin, has that text by the confession of our adversaries, and they have not been able to produce an older MS. Where it is missing. The only pretended one of this sort, is Mabillon’s Lectionary, which after all is not strictly a MS. of the New Testament, nor written in Latin but in a mixed language, called Teutonick-French, or Gallo-Teutonick” (Twells, II, p. 153).

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE WRITINGS OF ANCIENT CHURCH LEADERS. Following are some quotations that refer to the *Johannine Comma* from church writings dating to the first eight centuries of the church age:

Tertullian (c. 200 A.D.). -- “The connection of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Comforter, makes an unity of these three, one with another, which three are one,--not one person; in like manner as it is said, I and my Father are one, to denote the unity of substance, and not the singularity of number” (*Against Praxeas*, II, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*). “We find, therefore, that about A.D. 200, not much more than an hundred years after this Epistle was written, Tertullian refers to the verse in question, to prove that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one in essence; a satisfactory evidence, that this doctrine, though asserted by some in our time, to be a dangerous novelty, was really the acknowledged faith of Christians in those early times” (Robert Jack, *Remarks on the Authenticity of 1 John v. 7*).

Cyprian of Carthage (c. 250 A.D.). -- “The Lord says ‘I and the Father are one’ and likewise it is written of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ‘And these three are one’” (*De Unitate Ecclesiae*, [On The Unity of the Church], *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Church Fathers Down to A.D.325*). Here Cyprian quotes from John 10:30 and 1 John 5:7. Nowhere else in Scripture do we find the words “and these three are one”. “It is true that Facundus, a 6th-century African bishop, interpreted Cyprian as referring to the following verse, but, as Scrivener (1883) remarks, it is ‘surely safer and more candid’ to admit that Cyprian read the Johannine comma in his New Testament manuscript ‘than to resort to the explanation of Facundus’” (Edward Hills, p. 210). Leonard Twells adds, “This noble testimony invincibly proves, that the passage now under debate, was in approved copies of the third century” (*A Critical Examination of the Late New Text and Version of the New Testament*, 1731, II, p. 134).

Athanasius (c. 350 A.D.). quotes 1 John 5:7 at least three times in his works (R.E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible*, Epistles of John, 1982, p. 782). “Among the works of Athanasius which are generally allowed to be genuine, is a Synopsis of this Epistle. In his summary of the fifth chapter, he seems plainly to refer to this verse, when he says, ‘The Apostle here teaches, the unity of the Son with the Father’ [Du Pin, Art. “Athanasius”, London Edition, vol. 8, p. 34]. But it would be difficult to find any place in this chapter where this unity is taught, save in the seventh verse” (Jack, *Remarks on the Authenticity of 1 John v. 7*).

Priscillian (380 A.D.), who was beheaded in 385 by Emperor Maximus on the charge of heresy, quoted 1 John 5:7. “As John says ‘and there are three which give testimony on earth, the water, the flesh the blood, and these three are in one, and there are three which give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one in Christ Jesus’” (*Liber Apologeticus*).

Idacius Clarus (380 A.D.), Priscillian’s principal adversary and accuser, also cited 1 John 5:7 (Hills, p. 210).

Jerome (382 A.D.). -- Jerome not only believed that the *Johannine Comma* was Scripture but he testified that “irresponsible translators left out this testimony in the Greek codices” (*Prologue to the Canonical Epistles*; quoted from Strouse, *A Critique of D.A. Carson’s “The King James Version Debate”*). Jerome said further in his Prologue: “...these Epistles I have restored to their proper order; which, if arranged agreeably to the original text, and faithfully interpreted in Latin diction, would neither cause perplexity to the readers, nor would the various readings contradict themselves, especially in that place where we read the unity of the Trinity laid down in the Epistle of John. In this I found translators (or copyists) widely deviating from the truth; who set down in their own edition the names only of the three witnesses, that is, the Water, Blood, and Spirit; but omit the testimony of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; by which, above all places, the Divinity of the father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is proved to be one” (*Prologue to the Canonical Epistles*; quoted from Ben David, *Three Letters Addressed to the Editor of The Quarterly Review, in which is Demonstrated the Genuineness of The Three Heavenly Witnesses--I John v. 7*, London, 1825).

Theodorus (4th century) -- In “A treatise on one God in the Trinity, from the Epistle of John the Evangelist” he stated that John, in his Epistle, presents God as a Trinity (Ben David, “Three Letters Addressed to the Editor of *The Quarterly Review*, in which is Demonstrated the Genuineness of The Three Heavenly Witnesses--I John v. 7”, London, 1825). Ben David observes: “This is a remarkable testimony, as it implies the existence and notoriety of the verse about the middle of the fourth century”.

Gregory of Nazanzus (4th century) -- “What about John then, when in his Catholic Epistle he says that there are Three that bear witness, the Spirit and the Water and the Blood? Do you think he is talking nonsense? First, because he has ventured to reckon under one numeral things which are not consubstantial, though you say this ought to be done only in the case of things which are consubstantial. For who would assert that these are consubstantial? Secondly, because he had not been consistent in the way he has happened upon his terms; for after using Three in the masculine gender he adds three words which are neuter, contrary to the definitions and laws which you and your grammarians have laid down. For what is the difference between putting a masculine Three first, and then adding One and One and One in the neuter, or after a masculine One and One and One to use the Three not in the masculine but in the neuter, which you yourself disclaim in the case of Dei-

ty?” (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*). “Metzger claims that ‘the passage is quoted by none of the Greek Fathers.’ Such a bold assertion is also misleading because Gregory of Nazanzius (a Greek Church Father from the fourth century), although not directly quoting the passage, specifically alludes to the passage and objects to the grammatical structure if the Comma is omitted (Metzger, on the other hand, would have one to believe that the Greek Church Fathers knew nothing of the passage)” (Jesse Boyd, “And These Three Are One: A Case for the Authenticity of 1 John 5:7-8”, 1999, <http://www.ovrlnd.com/Bible/casefor1john57.html>).

Eucherius of Lyons (434 A.D). -- “... in a tract, called *Formulae Spiritualis Intelligentiae*, c. 11, para. 3, 4. sets down both the seventh and eighth verses of the fifth chapter of St. John’s first epistle, in the same order as our printed editions have them, precluding thereby the common cavil, that the seventh verse is only a mystical explication of the eighth” (Twells, II, p. 135).

Vigilius Tapsensis (484 A.D). -- “... twice in his books concerning the Trinity, printed among the Works of Athanasius (viz. Book first, and seventh) and also in his Tract against Varimadus the Arian, under the name of Idacius Clarus, cites 1 John 5:7” (Twells, II, p. 135).

Victor Vitensis (484 A.D). -- “... contemporary with Vigilius, writes the *History of the Vandalic Persecution*, in which he sets down a Confession of Faith, which Eugenius Bishop of Carthage, and the orthodox bishops of Africa, offered to King Hunnerick, a favourer of the Arians, who called upon those bishops to justify the catholic doctrine of the Trinity. In this Confession, presented Anno 484, among other places of Scripture, they defended the orthodox clause from 1 John 5:7, giving thereby the highest attestation, that they believed it to be genuine. Nor did the Arians, that we can find, object to it. So that the contending parties of those days seem to have agreed in reputed that passage authentic” (Twells, II, pp. 135, 136).

Eugenius at the Council of Carthage (485 A.D). -- “...and in order that we may teach until now, more clearly than light, that the Holy Spirit is now one divinity with the Father and the Son. It is proved by the evangelist John, for he says, ‘there are three which bear testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one’” (Victor of Vitensis, *Historia persecutionis Africanae*, quoted from Michael Maynard, *A History of the Debate over 1 John 5:7-8*, p. 43). We will see say more about the significance of this quotation.

Fulgentius Ruspensis (507 A.D). -- “... another orthodox writer of the same country, cites the controverted words in three several places of his Works. Which further evinces, that the Arians about Hunneric, had not been able to disprove that text. For if they had, no writer for the Catholic side of the question, would have dared to use a baffled testimony, whilst the memory of that defeat was yet recent” (Twells, II, p. 136).

Cassiodorius (550 A.D). -- “... a patrician of Rome, a person remarkable for zealously recommending the choice of ancient and correct copies of the Bible to the monks under his direction, for their constant use, copies purged from error by collation with the Greek text; and that, in doubtful places, they should consult two or three ancient and correct books. So affectionately concerned was he for the purity of the sacred text, that whilst he left the correcting of other books to his Notaries, he would trust no hand but his own in reforming the Bible. Further, he himself declares, that he wrote his *Treatise of Orthography*, purposely to promote the faithful transcribing of the Scripture. It must therefore be of considerable importance, in the present dispute, to know that the reading of his copy, 1 John 5:7. And of all his Tracts, none was so likely to satisfy our curiosity as that entitled *Complexiones*, which were short and running notes, on the apostolical epistles and Acts, and the Revelation. ... But Cassiodorius’s *Complexiones* were given up for lost, among other treasures of ancient literature, when, soon after the learned and judicious Mr. Martin had ended his labours upon this subject, that piece was unexpectedly found in the Library of Verona, and published at Florence by Scipio Maffei [Francesco Scipione Maffei (1675-1755)], An. 1721. And from thence we have all the satisfaction we can desire, that the contested passage was in Cassiodorius’s copy. For in his comment on 1 John 5:1 and following verses, he concludes with these words: *Testificantur in Terra tria Mystera, Aqua, Sanguis, & Spiritus: quae in Passione Domini leguntur completa: in Caelo autem Pater, & Filius, & Spiritus Sanctus, & hi tres unus est Deus.* [The three mysteries testify (bear witness) on earth, the water, blood and the spirit, which are read in full in the passion of (our) Lord: likewise, in heaven, the Father, and Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three, one is God].

After which he proceeds to cite and explain the ninth verse of that chapter” (Twells, II, pp. 136, 137).

Maximus, a Greek writer (645 A.D.), author of the *Disputes in the Council of Nice* (among the works of Athanasius) cites therein 1 John 5:7 (Twells, II, p. 129).

Isidore Mercator (785 A.D.). “is supposed to have forged the Decretal Epistles published by him. In the first of Pope Hyginus, 1 John 5:7,8 are cited, though the present order of them is inverted, as it was probably in Cassiodorius’s copy also. The spurious character of these epistles no way hurts their authority, for the contested text being in the copies of those times” (Twells, II, p. 137).

Ambrosius Authpertus (8th century), “of the same age, wrote a commentary upon the Revelations yet extant, in which the words of 1 John 5:7 are brought in as explicatory of Revelation 1:5” (Twells, II, p. 138).

In the *Glossa Ordinaria* of **Walafrid Strabo (9th century)**, “a work universally approved, we see the passages of the three Witnesses in Heaven, both in the text and the commentary” (Twells, II, p. 138).

“Lastly, we find no one Latin writer complaining of this passage (which appears to have been extant in many copies from the fifth century inclusive) as an interpolation, which is a very good negative evidence, that no just objection could be made to its genuineness. The Preface of Jerome blames some translators for omitting it, but till the days of Erasmus, the insertion of it was never deemed a fault” (Twells, II, p. 138).

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE. As we have seen, Eugenius, spokesman for the African bishops at the Council of Carthage (485 A.D.), quoted 1 John 5:7 in defense of the deity of Jesus Christ against the Arians. The bishops, numbering three to four hundred, were from Mauritania, Sardinia, Corsica, and the Balearick Isles, and they stood in defense of the Trinity. They “pawned their lives as well as reputation, for the verity of that disputed passage” (Twells, II, p. 147). Eugenius said: “...and in order that we may teach until now, more clearly than light, that the Holy Spirit is now one divinity with the Father and the Son. It is proved by the evangelist John, for he says, ‘there are three which bear testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one’” In spite of claims to the contrary by those who oppose the *Johannine Comma*, the fact that 1 John 5:7 was quoted at the fifth century Council of Carthage is a nearly irrefutable argument in favor of its apostolic authenticity. “Charles Butler, in *Horae Biblicae* [Part II, *A Short Historical Outline of the Disputes Respecting the Authenticity of the Verse of the Three Heavenly Witnesses of 1 John*, 1807], offered an interesting 12-point rebuttal to the opposers of the *Comma*. Such is a lengthy treatise and will not be employed word for word but adequately summarized. Butler pointed out that the Catholic Bishops were summoned to a conference where they most certainly expected the tenets of their faith to be attacked by the Arians (the Arians denied the deity of Jesus Christ). Therefore, they would have been very careful about what they included in their proposed confession, seeing as all power was in the hands of their angry Arian adversaries. The bishops included the *Johannine Comma* as a first line of defense for their confession of Christ’s deity. If the Arians could have argued what present-day opposers of the verse say (the *Comma* was is no Greek copy and in only a few Latin copies), what would the bishops have replied? If we are to believe that they were unable to hold out one Greek copy, no ancient Latin copy, and no ancient father where the verse could be found, **THE ARIANS COULD HAVE RIGHTLY ACCUSED THEM ON THE SPOT OF FOLLOWING A SPURIOUS PASSAGE AND BEING GUILTY OF PALPABLE FALSEHOOD.** It is almost certain that these bishops would not have exposed themselves to such immediate and indelible infamy. They volunteered to include the *Comma* in their confession despite the existence of many long treatises that had been written by the ancient defenders of the Trinity in which the verse had not been mentioned. Such treatises would have served as ample evidence, but the bishops cited 1 John 5:7-8 instead. Obviously, they had no fear that any claim of spuriousness could be legitimately dashed upon them. If the verse were attacked, the bishops could have produced Greek copies, ancient Latin copies, and ancient fathers in its defense. The *Comma*, however, was not attacked by the Arians and the Catholic bishops (302 of them) were exiled to different parts of Africa, exposed to the insults of their enemies, and carefully deprived of all temporal and spiritual comforts of life. It is ludicrous to think that these men could undergo such

persecution and suffering for their belief of the deity of Jesus Christ only to insert a spurious verse into God's Word as their first line of defense. **THE AFRICAN BISHOPS MUST HAVE HAD WEIGHTY TESTIMONY TO THE *COMMA* IN THEIR MANUSCRIPTS. AS A RESULT, THEY WERE ABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY EMPLOY THE PASSAGE AS THEY DEFENDED THEIR FAITH BEFORE THE ARIAN ACCUSERS"** (Jesse Boyd, *And These Three Are One: A Case for the Authenticity of 1 John 5:7-8 Rooted in Biblical Exegesis*, 1999).

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE ASSEMBLY GATHERED BY CHARLEMAGNE. "About the close of the eighth century, the Emperor Charlemagne assembled all the learned men that were to be found in that age, and placed Alciunus, an Englishman of great erudition, at their head; instructing them to revise the manuscripts of the Bible then in use, to settle the text, and to rectify the errors which had crept into it, through the haste or the ignorance of transcribers. To affect this great purpose, he furnished them with every manuscript that could be procured throughout his very extensive dominions. **IN THEIR *CORRECTORIUM*, THE RESULT OF THEIR UNITED LABOURS, WHICH WAS PRESENTED IN PUBLIC TO THE EMPEROR, BY ALCIUNUS, THE TESTIMONY OF THE THREE (HEAVENLY) WITNESSES IS READ WITHOUT THE SMALLEST IMPEACHMENT OF ITS AUTHENTICITY.** This very volume Baronius affirms to have been extant at Rome in his lifetime,* in the library of the Abbey of Vaux-Celles; and he styles it 'a treasure of inestimable value.' [* He was born in or about A.D. 1538, and died in A.D. 1607. Du Pin confirms this account of Baronius, v. vi. p. 122. Travis p. 24]. It cannot be supposed, that these divines, assembled under the auspices of a prince zealous for the restoration of learning, would attempt to settle the text of the New Testament, without referring to the Greek original; especially since we know, that there were, at that time, persons eminently skilled in the Greek language. **THEY MUST HAVE HAD ACCESS TO PERUSE MANUSCRIPTS WHICH HAVE LONG SINCE PERISHED; AND THEIR RESEARCHES MIGHT IN ALL PROBABILITY EXTEND EVEN TO THE AGE OF THE APOSTLES.** Here, then, is evidence, that this verse has been acknowledged as a part of Scripture, during more than a thousand years" (Robert Jack, *Remarks on the Authenticity of 1 John v. 7*).

THE ARGUMENT FROM ITS PRESERVATION AMONG BIBLE BELIEVERS. The Lord Jesus Christ indicated that His Words would be preserved through the process of the Great Commission, as the Scriptures were received, kept, taught, and transmitted to the next generation by Bible-believing churches (Matt. 28:18-20). This is guaranteed by the Christ's power and His continual presence among the churches. When we look at church history in this light, the issue of 1 John 5:7 becomes plainer. Consider the versional evidence in favor of this verse:

1 John 5:7 is found in some of the **Syriac** manuscripts, though not the majority (*The New Testament Translated from the Syriac Peshito Version*, James Murdock, 1852, note on 1 John 5:7). 1 John 5:7 was printed in Gutbier's *Lexicon Syriacum concerdatntiale omnes N.T. Syriaci* (1664); it is obvious, therefore, that Gutbier found this important verse in Syriac manuscripts with which he was familiar. It was also printed by E. Hutter in 1599 in the Syriac portion of his polyglot (e-mail from Michael Maynard, May 11, 2005).

1 John 5:7 was in the **old Latin** that was used by Bible believers in Europe. Dr. Frederick Nolan (1784-1864) spent 28 years tracing the history of the European Italic or Old Latin version and in 1815 published his findings in *An Inquiry into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate or Received Text of the New Testament, in which the Greek manuscripts are newly classed, the integrity of the Authorised Text vindicated, and the various readings traced to their origin*. Nolan believed that the old Latin got its name Italic from the churches in northern Italy that remained separated from Rome and that this text was maintained by separatist Waldensian believers. He concluded that 1 John 5:7 "was adopted in the version which prevailed in the Latin Church, previously to the introduction of the modern Vulgate" (Nolan, *Integrity of the Greek Vulgate*, pp. xvii, xviii).

1 John 5:7 was in the **Latin "vulgate"** that had a wide influence throughout the Dark Ages. The Catholic Church used it, but so did many non-Catholic believers. Bruce Metzger observes that the oldest manuscript of the Jerome vulgate, Codex Fuldensis (A.D. 546), does not include the Johannine Comma; but this fact is overwhelmed by other evidence. For one, we have seen that Jerome himself believed 1 John 5:7 was genuine Scripture and testified that heretics had removed it

from some manuscripts. Second, 1 John 5:7 is found in the vast majority of extant Latin manuscripts, 49 out of every 50, according to Scrivener. Third, 1 John 5:7 is found in many of the most ancient Latin manuscripts, such as Ulmensis (c. 850) and Toletanus (988). The *Johannine Comma* is found “in twenty-nine of the fairest, oldest, and most correct of extant Vulgate manuscripts” (Maynard, *A History of the Debate over 1 John 5:7-8*, p. 343).

1 John 5:7 was in the **Romaunt or Occitan** New Testaments used by the Waldenses dating back to the 12th century. This was the language of the troubadours and men of letters in the Dark Ages. It was the predecessor of French and Italian. The Romaunt Bibles were small and plain, designed for missionary work. “This version was widely spread in the south of France, and in the cities of Lombardy. It was in common use among the Waldenses of Piedmont, and it was no small part, doubtless, of the testimony borne to truth by these mountaineers to preserve and circulate it” (J. Wylie, *History of Protestantism*, vol. 1, chapter 7, “The Waldenses”). I examined the copy of the Romaunt New Testament located at the Cambridge University Library in April 2005, but it does not have the Epistles of John. The following is from Justin Savino, May 11, 2005: “The Zurich codex I have that is similar to the Dublin a Grenoble (or so I am told) does have 1 John 5:7. The direct quote is “Car trey son que donan testimoni al cel lo payre e lo filh e lo sant spirit e aquesti trey son un”. Translated, “but three are there that five testimony in heaven the father and the son and the holy spirit and these three are one”.

1 John 5:7 was in the **Tepl**, which is an old German translation used by Waldenses from the 14th through the 15 centuries. Comba, who wrote a history of the Waldenses, said the Tepl was a Waldensian translation (Comba, *Waldenses of Italy*, pp. 190-192). Comba sites two authorities, Ludwig Keller and Hermann Haupt, for this information. Comba also states that the Tepl was based on old Latin manuscripts rather than the Jerome vulgate. The Tepl’s size identifies it with the small Bibles carried by the Waldensian evangelists on their dangerous journeys across Europe.

1 John 5:7 was in the old **French** translations. A translation of the whole Bible in **French** first appeared in the 13th century, and “a much used version of the whole Bible was published in 1487 by Jean de Rely” (Norlie, *The Translated Bible*, p. 52).

1 John 5:7 was in the old **German** translations, which first appeared in the 13th and 14th centuries. A complete German Bible appeared before the invention of printing (Norlie, p. 53). There were at least 12 different editions of the Bible into German before the discovery of America in 1492. The first printed German Bible appeared in 1466 (Price, *The Ancestry of Our English Bible*, 1934, p. 243). These were Latin-based versions.

1 John 5:7 was in the **Spanish** Bibles, beginning with the one printed in Valencia in 1478 by Bonifacio Ferrer (M’Crie, *History of the Reformation in Spain*, p. 191).

It is probable that 1 John 5:7 was in the **Bohemian or Czech** Bible printed by the Brethren in 1488.

1 John 5:7 stood uncontested in **English** Bibles for 500 years. The first English New Testament, completed by John Wycliffe and his co-laborers in 1380, contained this verse. The *Johannine Comma* was in the Tyndale New Testament of 1526, the Coverdale of 1535, the Matthew’s of 1537, the Great Bible of 1539, the Geneva of 1557, the Bishops of 1568, and the King James Bible of 1611. The first English Bible of any importance to remove the verse was the Revised Version of 1881 and the first English Bible which had any chance of superseding the KJV to remove 1 John 5:7 was the New International Version of 1973 and this version has still not taken over the sales of the King James Bible. From the time of the British Empire to the present, English has been a prominent world language. It is the international language in these modern times, the language of commerce, aviation, and science. The witness of the English Bible, therefore, has great significance.

Thus we see that the Trinitarian statement of 1 John 5:7 comes down to us by the hands of Bible believers and churches that held the apostolic faith at great cost through the Dark Ages, through the Protestant Reformation, up to our very day. In light of Matthew 28:19-20, this is a strong witness to its apostolic authenticity.

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE NATURE OF TRUE CHRISTIANITY. Some textual critics believe the *Johannine Comma* entered the manuscript record accidentally from a marginal note, but I

do not consider this likely. It is much more likely that one of two things has occurred in regard to the *Johannine Comma*. Either it was removed by heretics or it was added by “orthodox” Christians. In light of the Bible’s teaching, which of these is more probable? The Bible teaches us that true believers are zealous for the words of God. They receive God’s Word (Jn. 17:8; 1 Thess. 2:13), keep it (Jn. 14:23; 17:6), hide it in their hearts (Ps. 119:11), proclaim it (2 Tim. 4:2), and contend for it (Jude 3). They keep it without spot (1 Tim. 6:14), referring to the smallest details. They have a “jots and tittles” attitude toward it (Mat. 5:18). They are taught to pass it along to the next generation in its completeness (Mat. 28:20; 2 Tim. 2:2). Heretics, on the other hand, have no fear of God’s Word and are willing to corrupt it (2 Cor. 2:17). Thus, the possibility that true Bible believers added anything to the apostolic Scriptures is less than slim, while the possibility that heretics attacked the Scriptures is a certainty.

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THOSE TIMES. The following is excerpted from Robert Lewis Dabney, “The Doctrinal Various Readings of the New Testament Greek”, *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*, Vol. 1, 1891, p. 350-390). This first appeared in the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, April 1871: “We must also consider the time and circumstances in which the passage was written. John tells his spiritual children that his object is to warn them against seducers (2.26), whose heresy was a denial of the proper Sonship and incarnation (4.2) of Jesus Christ. We know that these heretics were Corinthians and Nicolaitanes. Irenaeus and other early writers tell us that they all vitiated the doctrine of the Trinity. Cerinthus taught that Jesus was not miraculously born of a virgin, and that the Word, Christ, was not truly and eternally divine, but a sort of angelic ‘Aion’ associated with the natural man Jesus up to his crucifixion. The Nicolaitanes denied that the ‘Aion’ Christ had a real body, and ascribed to him only a phantasmal body and blood. It is against these errors that John is fortifying his ‘children’ and this is the very point of the disputed 7th verse. If it stands, then the whole passage is framed to exclude both heresies. In verse 7 he refutes the Corinthian by declaring the unity of Father, Word and Spirit, and with the strictest accuracy employing the neuter HEN EISIN to fix the point which Cerinthus denied--the unity of the Three Persons in One common substance. He then refutes the Nicolaitanes by declaring the proper humanity of Jesus, and the actual shedding, and application by the Spirit, of that water and blood of which he testifies as an eyewitness in the Gospel.

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE SILENCE OF 1500 YEARS OF CHURCH HISTORY. “It is an observation, we apprehend, of considerable importance, on this part of the subject, that till we descend to modern times, no objection was ever advanced against the authenticity of the verse in question. Jerome complains of the omission of it by unfaithful translators; and declares, that the best Greek manuscripts of his time contained it; for he appeals, as we have seen, in behalf of his version, to the authority of these manuscripts. Jerome died A.D. 420, and ever since his days, the verse has not only maintained its place in the Scriptures, but has been uniformly quoted and referred to, by writers of the first eminence for learning and integrity, in every succeeding age. If we should suppose for a moment, that it is spurious, is it not wonderful that this was never discovered till modern times? Is it not wonderful, that during the period of one thousand four hundred years, which intervened between the days of Praxeas and the age of Erasmus, not a single author can be mentioned who ever charged this verse with being an interpolation or forgery. Had it been, in any of those ages, even suspected to be spurious, would its adversaries, especially the Arians, have been merely silent when it was produced against them? Would they not have exclaimed aloud against those who quoted it? Would they not have filled the Christian world with invectives against them, for their falsehood and impiety, in thus attempting to corrupt the Word of God? That the Arians in those times never pretended to deny the authenticity of the verse in question, is a phenomenon which should be accounted for by those who contend that it is spurious” (Robert Jack, *Remarks on the Authenticity of 1 John*).

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE FACT THAT IT WAS HERETICS AND UNBELIEVERS WHO WERE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE CALL FOR THE REMOVAL OF 1 JOHN 5:7 IN THE 17TH TO THE 19TH CENTURIES. We have seen that there was no serious challenge to the authenticity of 1 John 5:7 throughout the church age until the 19th century, but who was it in the 19th century that was calling so loudly for its removal from the Bible? It was theological modernists and Unitarians who were at the forefront of the call for the removal of “God” from 1 Timothy 3:16

and the *Johannine Comma* from 1 John 5:7. Does this not speak loudly in favor of these passages? We have documented this history in our 477-page book *For Love of the Bible: The Battle for the King James Version and the Received Text from 1800 to Present*. We have documented this even more extensively in *The Modern Bible Version's Hall of Shame*.

Terence Brown, the former editorial secretary of the Trinitarian Bible Society of London, England, made this observation: "The last century has witnessed a steady drift away from the deity of Christ and towards 'unitarianism'. It is not surprising that scholars who have been caught up in this tide of unbelief should welcome the support of these unreliable documents" (Brown, *God Was Manifest in the Flesh*, Trinitarian Bible Society, nd).

One of the first to attack 1 John 5:7 was an Arian named Sandius, in 1670.

The next attack came from the pen of Roman Catholic priest Richard Simon in the book *Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament (Critical History of the Old Testament)*, published in 1678. Simon was a forerunner of German higher criticism, denying that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch.

Another attack upon 1 John 5:7 came from the pen of the famous historian Edward Gibbon (1737-94) in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776, 1788). He argued that Christians added the Trinitarian statement and other things to the New Testament centuries after it was first written. Gibbon was a skeptic after the fashion of Voltaire and did not believe in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures.

A reply was given to Gibbon's charges by George Travis, Archdeacon of Chester, who published *Letters to Edward Gibbon, Esq., author of the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire; in defence of the authenticity of the seventh verse of the fifth chapter of the First Epistle of St. John*. (Chester, 1784; other editions were published in 1785 and 1794).

At this juncture Greek classical scholar Richard Porson (1759-1808) of Cambridge entered the fray on the side of unbelief. In 1790 he published *Letters to Mr. Archdeacon Travis, in answer to his defence of the three heavenly witnesses, 1 John v.7*. It is instructive to understand that Porson was a skeptic in regard to the Trinity (Lynn Winters, *Our Judaic-Christian Heritage*, section III, chapter 3). Porson was also a great lover of liquor, saying, "I would sooner drink ink than not drink at all".

The Unitarians loved the critical Greek text from the days of German modernists Johann Semler (1725-91) and Johann Griesbach (1745-1812) onward.

Semler himself published an attack upon 1 John 5:7 entitled, *Historical and Critical Collections, relative to what are called the proof passages in dogmatic theology*, Vol. I. on 1 John v. 7.

Prominent Unitarian leader Joseph Priestly attempted to publish a new English version based on the Greek text of Griesbach, and the project was well advanced when the manuscript was destroyed in a fire in 1791. Priestly's successor, Thomas Belsham, continued to make this project his primary objective.

When the Unitarian Book Society was formed, one of its main objects was the translation of a new English version based on the Griesbach critical text. In 1808, instead of making its own translation, it published an "improved" edition of the 1796 translation by William Newcome of Ireland "chiefly because it followed Griesbach's text" (Earl Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism in Transylvania, England, and America*, 1952, p. 339; see also P. Marion Simms, *The Bible in America*, pp. 255-258). The complete title was "The New Testament, an improved version upon the basis of Archbishop Newcome's new translation with a corrected text and notes critical and explanatory". It was published in London by Richard Taylor & Co., in 1808 and the following year in America by William Wells of Boston. This publication "drew the fire of the orthodox by omitting as late interpolations several passages traditionally cited as pillars of Trinitarian doctrine" (Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism*, p. 339), such as "God" in 1 Tim. 3:16 and the Trinitarian statement in 1 John 5:7.

Officials at Harvard College in 1809 published an American edition of Griesbach's critical Greek N.T., because its text criticism was "a most powerful weapon to be used against the supporters of verbal inspiration" (Theodore Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, p. 2). This was about the time that

Harvard capitulated to Unitarianism. Thus, the enemies of Biblical inspiration understood in that day that modern textual criticism weakens key doctrines and undermines the authority of the Bible.

The Universalist Abner Kneeland published a New Testament in Greek and English in 1823. The Greek was Griesbach's and the English was a revised edition of Belsham's. Kneeland was the minister of the First Independent Church of Christ, called Universalist, in Philadelphia. Kneeland later became a deist.

The Unitarian John Gorham Palfrey published an English New Testament in 1828 based on Griesbach's Greek. His work appeared anonymously.

In 1869 the American Unitarian Association of Boston published *The New Testament, translated from the Greek text of Tischendorf*, edited by George R. Noyes.

In 1902 the Jehovah's Witness Watchtower Bible & Tract Society began publishing the *Emphatic Diaglott* by B.F. Wilson. This private interlinear was first published in 1865 and was based on the Griesbach critical Greek New Testament and "the various readings of the Vatican Manuscript, No. 1209 in the Vatican Library". Wilson was affiliated with the Disciples of Christ, which held the heresy of baptismal regeneration, and was also associated with a cult called the "Restitution Church of God". The Jehovah's Witnesses have printed several hundred thousand copies of the *Emphatic Diaglott*.

Many of the foundational modern textual critics were Unitarians or theological modernists who denied the deity of Jesus Christ, including Johann Semler (1725-91), Edward Harwood (1729-94), Johann Griesbach (1745-1812), George Vance Smith (1816-1902), Ezra Abbot (1819-1884), Joseph Henry Thayer (1828-1901), William Sanday (1843-1920), Caspar Gregory (1846-1917), and Henry Vedder (1853-1935).

In the 17th to 19th centuries the lines were clearly drawn, and those who believed the Bible and stood for evangelical Bible doctrine were on the side of 1 John 5:7, while those who were heretical in doctrine and/or agnostic in faith that were aligned against it. There were exceptions, but this was definitely the rule.

The battle was only lost in the 20th century when "Christianity" was dramatically weakened by the onslaught of end-time heresy and compromise.

WHY DID ERASMUS ADD THE JOHANNINE COMMA TO HIS 3RD EDITION GREEK NEW TESTAMENT? There are two popular myths regarding Erasmus and 1 John 5:7 that are parroted by modernists, evangelicals, and even fundamentalists today who defend the modern versions against the KJV.

The first myth is that Erasmus promised to insert the verse if a Greek manuscript were produced. This is stated as follows by Bruce Metzger: "Erasmus promised that he would insert *the Comma Johanneum*, as it is called, in future editions if a single Greek manuscript could be found that contained the passage. At length such a copy was found--or made to order" (Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 1st and 2nd editions).

The second myth is that Erasmus challenged Edward Lee to find a Greek manuscript that included 1 John 5:7. This originated with Erika Rummel in 1986 in her book *Erasmus' Annotations* and was repeated by James White in 1995 (*The Truth about the KJV-Only Controversy*).

In *A History of the Debate over 1 John 5:7,8*, Michael Maynard records that H.J. de Jonge, the Dean of the Faculty of Theology at Rijksuniversiteit (Leiden, Netherlands), has refuted both myths. de Jonge, a recognized specialist in Erasmian studies, refuted the myth of a promise in 1980, stating that Metzger's view on Erasmus' promise "has no foundation in Erasmus' work. Consequently it is highly improbable that he included the difficult passage because he considered himself bound by any such promise". He has also refuted the new myth of a challenge (which Rummel devised in reaction to the burial of the promise myth). In a letter of June 13, 1995, to Maynard, de Jonge wrote:

I have checked again Erasmus' words quoted by Erika Rummel and her comments on them in her book *Erasmus' Annotations*. This is what Erasmus writes [on] in his *Liber tertius quo respondet ...*

Ed. Lei: Erasmus first records that Lee had reproached him with neglect of the MSS. of 1 John because Er. (according to Lee) had consulted only one MS. Erasmus replies that he had certainly not used only one ms., but many copies, first in England, then in Brabant, and finally at Basle. He cannot accept, therefore, Lee's reproach of negligence and impiety.

'Is it negligence and impiety, if I did not consult manuscripts which were simply not within my reach? I have at least assembled whatever I could assemble. Let Lee produce a Greek MS. which contains what my edition does not contain and let him show that that manuscript was within my reach. Only then can he reproach me with negligence in sacred matters.'

From this passage you can see that Erasmus does not challenge Lee to produce a manuscript etc. What Erasmus argues is that Lee may only reproach Erasmus with negligence of MSS if he demonstrates that Erasmus could have consulted any MS. in which the *Comma Johanneum* figured. Erasmus does not at all ask for a MS. containing the *Comma Johanneum*. He denies Lee the right to call him negligent and impious if the latter does not prove that Erasmus neglected a manuscript to which he had access.

In short, Rummel's interpretation is simply wrong. The passage she quotes has nothing to do with a challenge. Also, she cuts the quotation short, so that the real sense of the passage becomes unrecognizable. She is absolutely not justified in speaking of a challenge in this case or in the case of any other passage on the subject (emphasis in original) (de Jonge, cited from Maynard, p. 383).

Jeffrey Khoo observes further: "Yale professor Roland Bainton, another Erasmian expert, agrees with de Jonge, furnishing proof from Erasmus' own writing that Erasmus' inclusion of 1 John 5:7f was not due to a so-called 'promise' but the fact that he believed 'the verse was in the Vulgate and must therefore have been in the Greek text used by Jerome'" (Jeffrey Khoo, *Kept Pure in All Ages*, 2001, p. 88).

Edward F. Hills, who had a doctorate in textual criticism from Harvard, testifies: "...it was not trickery that was responsible for the inclusion of the *Johannine Comma* in the Textus Receptus, but the usage of the Latin speaking Church" (Hills, *The King James Version Defended*).

In the 3rd edition of *The Text of the New Testament* Bruce Metzger corrected his false assertion about Erasmus as follows: "What is said on p. 101 above about Erasmus' promise to include the *Comma Johanneum* if one Greek manuscript were found that contained it, and his subsequent suspicion that MS 61 was written expressly to force him to do so, needs to be corrected in the light of the research of H. J. DeJonge, a specialist in Erasmian studies who finds no explicit evidence that supports this frequently made assertion" (Metzger, *The Text of The New Testament*, 3rd edition, p. 291, footnote 2). The problem is that this myth continues to be paraded as truth by modern version defenders.

WHY DID THIS TRINITARIAN TESTIMONY DROP OUT OF MOST EXTANT GREEK MANUSCRIPTS? The omission in the Greek manuscripts was probably brought about by the heresy of Sabellianism or Arianism.

Dr. Hills argued that the omission arose during the Sabellian controversy. "In the second place, it must be remembered that during the 2nd and 3rd centuries (between 220 and 270, according to Harnack), the heresy which orthodox Christians were called upon to combat was not Arianism (since this error had not yet arisen) but Sabellianism (so named after Sabellius, one of its principal promoters), according to which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were one in the sense that they were identical. Those that advocated this heretical view were called Patripassians (Father-sufferers), because they believed that God the Father, being identical with Christ, suffered and died upon the cross, and Monarchians, because they claimed to uphold the Monarchy (sole-government) of God. It is possible, therefore, that the Sabellian heresy brought the *Johannine comma* into disfavor with orthodox Christians. The statement, these three are one, no doubt seemed to them to teach the Sabellian view that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were identical. And if during the course of the controversy manuscripts were discovered which had lost this reading in the accidental manner described above, it is easy to see how the orthodox party would consider these mutilated manuscripts to represent the true text and regard the *Johannine comma* as a heretical addition. In the Greek-speaking East especially the *comma* would be unanimously rejected, for here the struggle

against Sabellianism was particularly severe. Thus it was not impossible that during the 3rd century amid the stress and strain of the Sabellian controversy, the *Johannine comma* lost its place in the Greek text but was preserved in the Latin texts of Africa and Spain, where the influence of Sabellianism was probably not so great” (Edward Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, pp. 212, 213).

It is also possible that the Arians corrupted this passage of Scripture. “It is well known, that the Arians are expressly accused by many of the Latin fathers, of having corrupted the Scriptures, of expunging passages, and of strangely mutilating them, during the time that they were in power. [This was particularly objected to them by Hilary of Poitiers, Hilary the deacon, Ambrose, and Salvianus]. Socrates, Greek ecclesiastical historian who flourished in the fifth century, directly accuses them, of having garbled this very Epistle; for the purpose of separating, between the Divinity and humanity of Christ. ... When we consider further, that Arianism became for a season the reigning religion, especially in the East, where it obtained much more than in the West, may we not in this way be able to account, in some measure, for the silence of the Greek fathers with respect to this verse? The Western Church never became so generally Arian, as the Eastern; of course it might be expected, that the verse was more likely to be found in the writings of Latin, than of Greek fathers; and accordingly we perceive that this is the case” (Robert Jack, *Remarks on the Authenticity of 1 John v. 7*).

CONCLUDING POINT: THERE IS A STRANGE HYPOCRISY TO THE CLAIM BY TEXTUAL CRITICS THAT 1 JOHN 5:7 HAS SLIGHT TEXTUAL AUTHORITY. Whereas the Received Text does contain a few readings that have small support in the Greek manuscripts (but are represented broadly in the Latin), the Critical Greek Text contains HUNDREDS of readings that have small support in both the Greek and the Latin manuscripts! One of the principles of Westcott and Hort was this: “A few documents are not, by reason of their paucity, appreciably less likely to be right than a multitude opposed to them” (Introduction to the Westcott-Hort Greek New Testament, 1881, p. 45).

The United Bible Societies Greek New Testament, the latest edition of the Westcott-Hort text, repeatedly questions and omits verses with far less textual authority than the Trinitarian statement of 1 John 5:7. Most of the significant omissions are made on the authority of Aleph and B (sometimes both together; sometimes one standing alone), and a bare handful of similar manuscripts and versions.

For example, the word “fasting” is removed from Mark 9:29 in the Westcott-Hort text, the Nestles’ text, the UBS text, and all of the modern versions on the “authority” of its omission in Aleph, B, two minuscules (0274, 2427), one Old Latin, and the Georgian version.

The entire last 12 verses of the Gospel of Mark are omitted are seriously questioned on the “authority” of only three Greek manuscripts, Aleph, B, and the minuscule 304 (plus some slight witness by versions that were influenced by the Alexandrian Text).

The UBS text puts Matthew 21:44 in brackets on the “authority” of only one uncial (the terribly unreliable D), one minuscule, plus 7 Old Latin and one Syriac manuscripts. This is flimsy textual authority, to say the least.

Sometimes, in fact, the modern textual critics don’t have even this much “authority” for their changes. 104 times in the book of Matthew, the 3rd edition of the UBS Greek N.T. prints a reading that either is “found in no manuscript (34 times) or is found in only one Greek manuscript of the more than 5,300 existing” (Wilbur Pickering, *Some Relevant Considerations for New Testament Textual Criticism*).

I, for one, believe the apostle John wrote the Trinitarian statement in 1 John 5:7 under divine inspiration.

A recommended resource for further study is Michael Maynard, *A History of the Debate over 1 John 5:7-8: a tracing of the longevity of the Comma Johanneum, with evaluations of arguments against its authenticity* (Tempe, AZ: Comma Publications, 1995).

The above is excerpted from the book *THE BIBLE VERSION QUESTION-ANSWER DATABASE*. ISBN 1-58318-088-5. This book provides diligently-researched, in-depth answers to more than 80 of important questions on this topic. A vast number of myths are exposed, such as the myth that Erasmus promised to add 1 John 5:7 to his Greek New Testament if even one manuscript could be produced, the myth that the differences between the Greek texts and versions are slight and insignificant, the myth that there are no doctrines affected by the changes in the modern versions, and the myth that the King James translators said that all versions are equally the Word of God. It also includes reviews of several of the popular modern versions, including the Living Bible, New Living Bible, Today's English Version, New International Version, New American Standard Version, The Message, and the Holman Christian Standard Bible. 423 pages.

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