History of the Received Text

In Defense of I John 5:7

Study Pak 11B

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"Irresponsible translators left out this testimony in the Greek Codices."
~~ Jerome in his Prologue to the Canonical Epistles as quoted by Erasmus (340-420 A.D.) ~~

"The text is so glaring a proof of a doctrine of the Trinity, that the enemies of it have done all they can to weaken its authority and have pushed hard to extirpate it from a place in the sacred writings."

~~ John Gill, *Body of Divinity,* Volume I, p. 194, (1795) ~~

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

On I John 5:7 the Old Scofield Reference Bible marginal notes read, "It is generally agreed that v. 7 has _____, and _____ _____."

The Jehovah's Witness Watchtower magazine says of I John 5:7, "Another reference that speaks of the three together is found in some older Bible translations at I John 5:7. Scholars acknowledge however, that these words were not originally in the Bible but _____."
Many serious students of the Word of God are shocked to find Jehovah's Witnesses at their door quoting the marginal notes of the Old Scofield Reference Bible but it is a common occurrence. Young Christians often have their faith weakened when they hear that I John 5:7 doesn't really belong in the Bible that they have been taught is the Word of God.

The serious Bible student consulting numerous commentaries by well-known authors, finds a challenge when it comes to I John 5:7. Cultists, modernists and naturalistic textual critics dispute the authenticity of I John 5:7, but they are not alone. Bible scholars known to be evangelical, known to hold to a "conservative" doctrine of inspiration, known to normally oppose modernism, also challenge the authenticity of I John 5:7.

The disputed verse I John 5:7 reads, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." This verse is often called the Johannine Comma.

However the issue is not as simple as the many critics of I John 5:7 claim. It is interesting how many people reject I John 5:7 in the name of scholarship, - yet their own scholarship is so shallow that they are unaware of the arguments for I John 5:7

II. THE DOCTRINAL IMPORTANCE OF I JOHN 5:7

I John 5:7 is called "_____."
It is certainly possible to prove the Trinity from many other passages of Scripture, but cultists and modernists have found ways to twist the other passages. No one can find a way to twist I John 5:7. The Jehovah's Witnesses were quick to embrace Westcott and Hort's abandonment of I John 5:7. Cultists and modernists rejoice in declaring that it has been proven that I John 5:7 is not really part of Scripture. Many doctrinal conservatives, evangelicals, fundamentalists (and even independent Baptists) unknowingly give them aid and comfort by repeating this assertion.

In the name of scholarship many unthinkingly quoted the opinions of "authorities "who reject I John 5:7. But rejecting a passage _____ under the concept of the _____ is no minor step. Surely it must involve more than quoting a few scholars. Modernists and unbelievers are uncomfortable with any Bible that contains this verse. Bible believers should be uncomfortable with any version that omits this verse.

III. THE CONSERVATIVE ATTACKS ON I JOHN 5:7

On I John 5:7, Adam Clarke writes, "It is likely that this verse is not genuine. It is wanting in every manuscript one excepted."

The Jamieson, Fausett and Brown one volume commentary on the Bible claims that the Johannine Comma is spurious because it lacks "two or three witnesses."

J. Vernon McGee approvingly quotes A.T. Robertson as saying that this verse is not in "the better manuscripts". He further adds, "Evidently some scribe put what we have as verse in the margin and then later on another scribe came along and thought it was to be included in the text."

Amo Gaebelein wrote, "The seventh verse has no business in our Bibles, it must be stricken out. It is an interpolation and all the historical evidences are against it.

Kenneth S. Wuest writes, "There is general agreement among textual critics that the contents of this verse are spurious and do not belong to the original text."

B.H. Carroll wrote, "Let us take out of the King James Version all the 7th verse and the words 'in earth' of the 8th verse. They are unquestionably an interpolation. They do not appear in any of the ancient manuscripts and our standard version leaves them out.

Craig S. Keener writes, "The Trinitarian formula found in the KJV of I John 5:7 is orthodox but not part of the text."

In the Liberty Bible Commentary, edited by Jerry Falwell, it reads, "The rest of verse 7 and the first nine words of verse 8 are not original and are not to be considered as part of

the Word of God (refer to the marginal notes in any reference Bible)."

Warren Wiersbe writes, "Most scholars agree that I John 5:7 of the Authorized Version does not belong in the letter, but omitting it does not affect the teaching at all."

The New Scofield Reference Bible has a footnote on I John 5:7 that reads, "It is generally agreed that this verse has no manuscript authority and has been inserted. “The New King James Version has a footnote on I John 5:7 that reads, "The Nu-Text and M-Text omit the words from in heaven (verse 7) through on earth (verse 8). Only four or five late Greek manuscripts contain these words."

IV. HOW I JOHN 5:7 GOT INTO THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS

The Textus Receptus is the Greek text from which the King James Bible is primarily translated. This is the text that the Protestant Reformation was based upon and from which all the great Protestant translations were made. The Sixteenth Century scholar Erasmus compiled this text based upon his study of the Traditional Greek Text and the Traditional Latin Text. These were the Bibles being used by God's people throughout Europe.

In his first edition of the Textus Receptus, Erasmus omitted the Johannine Comma. There was an outcry of protest from Bible students. Most Bible students used the Latin Bible which contained this verse. It had been used, quoted and commented on for centuries. Under pressure, Erasmus agreed to include the verse if one Greek manuscript could be produced which included the verse.

A Greek manuscript (now known as 61 and kept at Trinity College in Dublin) was presented which included I John 5:7. True to his word, Erasmus added the verse in his third edition of the Textus Receptus. The King James Bible translators were the greatest Hebrew, Greek and Latin scholars in England. There was no shortage of manuscripts available to them but they chose to accept the Third Edition of the Textus Receptus, including I John 5:7.

It is important to note that many commentators act as if I John 5:7 was a marginal note introduced by mistake into the Bible in the Sixteenth Century and that modern scholars in their great wisdom can now correct the mistake. It is important to realize that this verse had been in the Bibles used by God's people for centuries and it was the acceptance of this verse by God's people, the priesthood of believers, that caused this verse to be placed in the Textus Receptus.

Edward F. Hills comments on this process, "But whatever may have been the immediate cause, still, in the last analysis it was not trickery which was responsible for the inclusion of the Johannine Comma in the Textus Receptus but the usage of the Latin-speaking Church. It was this usage which made men feel that this reading ought to be included in

the Greek text and eager to keep it there after its inclusion had been accomplished. Back of this usage, we may well believe, was the guiding providence of God."

~~ Believing Bible Study, p. 211 ~~

V. THE TRADITIONAL TEXT

There are many sources for determining the identity of the New Testament text. These include _____ and 2,209 Greek lectionaries. Dean John Burgon compiled over _____ of the New Testament scriptures from the early centuries of Christianity. There are many other early Bibles in the Old Latin, the Syriac, Coptic and Ethiopian languages.

The overwhelming number of these manuscripts, quotations, lectionaries and ancient language Bibles are in basic agreement with each other. Well over 90 percent of the Greek manuscripts are in agreement with each other. An overwhelming majority of the quotations agree with this text. This was the common text for people who read Greek. Because the vast majority of Greek texts are of this type, it is called the Majority Text. Because it was normally accepted by believers, it is called the Traditional Text. Because it was preserved in the Greek speaking and writing Byzantine Empire, it is sometimes called the Byzantine Text. Because it was the text accepted by the priesthood of believers, it is sometimes called the Common Text (reflecting the common faith that unites believers - Jude 3). Because it was received by the vast majority of orthodox believers and churches, it is called the Received Text.

From the beginning, there were texts available which differed from the Traditional Text. These texts almost always omitted words and even whole sentences - sometimes thousands of them. Sometimes this was thought to be the result of _____ _____. Sometimes it was clear that texts were _____ _____Teachers like Marcion and Origen simply left out words, phrases and sentences that were inconvenient to their theology. These texts were routinely rejected by believers who were familiar with the whole text.

There are no ancient copies of the Traditional Text. As the Bible was faithfully read and studied, copies _____ and new ones had to be made. The only copies that survived the centuries were those _____ and placed in storage or in libraries. As a result, the oldest manuscripts available are those that were rejected by the priesthood of believers for general use.

During the Nineteenth Century, the unusual view was advanced that God's Word had been preserved _____ that had been previously rejected. It was suggested that the priesthood of believers had been _____ and that their Bibles had been translated from deficient manuscripts. According to this view, only a handful of scholars could now tell the Christian world what the true text of Scripture was. The most influential of these scholars were B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort. These men produced a Greek text based upon the previously rejected minority of manuscripts. Their work was

hailed as great scholarship. The cults and naturalistic and modernistic Christians immediately accepted their work. After all it is much easier to teach heresy if certain words and phrases are removed from Scripture. For example, it is much easier to deny the Trinity if I John 5:7 is removed from the Bible.

Both Westcott and Hort were accepted members of the Church of England. Neither was considered part of the evangelical segment (low church) of the Church of England. Each man had a son who would later write a biography of his life. Both sons claimed that their fathers privately rejected Church of England doctrine and practiced spiritualism.

Surprisingly, these men and their works were also warmly received by many evangelical and doctrinally conservative teachers, denominations and Christian organizations. In over one hundred years, hundreds of English translations have been produced based upon their textual work. None of these translations have been able to replace the English translation based upon the Traditional Text - the King James Bible. Few of these new translations acknowledge I John 5:7 as part of Scripture.

Even though the premise for the works of Westcott and Hort is easily and simply refuted, many evangelicals cling to it in the name of scholarship. It is hard to imagine that God would allow the priesthood of believers to be deceived about the true text of Scripture for centuries, but would reveal it to Westcott and Hort. At best, Westcott and Hort were non-evangelical traditionalists in the Anglo-Catholic wing (high church) of the Church of England. At worst, they were practitioners of the occult publicly pretending to be Christian preachers.

VI. THE CONCEPT OF THE COMMON FAITH: THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS

There is little controversy over the accurate text of the Old Testament. The transmission of the Old Testament text was committed to the priests of Israel and Levites (Deut. 31:24-26, 17:18, Proverbs 25:1, Romans 3:2). These Old Testament priests and their later descendants have been widely praised for their very careful and accurate copying techniques. This praise has come not only from Jews and Christians, but also from secular linguistic scholars. The Holy Spirit preserved the Old Testament text by guiding the priests to gather the parts of the Old Testament into one canon and to maintain the purity of the Old Testament texts.

"The New Testament was given to a different type of priesthood. All New Testament believers are priests (I Peter 2:1-7). No secular or ecclesiastical organization is in charge of preserving the New Testament Scriptures. Routinely scholars recognize that the New Testament canon was established _____ _____. When the canon is discussed, it is recognized that the Holy Spirit guided individual believers and that their common consent established the canon of the New Testament. Hills applies this principle of the priesthood of believers as it relates to the subject of the transmission of the New Testament text, 'Just as the divine glories of the New Testament are brighter far than the

glories of the Old Testament, so the manner in which God has preserved the New Testament text is far more wonderful than the manner in which He preserved the Old Testament text. God preserved the Old Testament text by means of something physical and external, namely, the Aaronic priesthood. God has preserved the New Testament text by means of something inward and spiritual, namely, the universal priesthood of believers. Hence the preservation of the New Testament text is not due to the decisions of any ecclesiastical organization or council or committee. All such attempts to deal with the New Testament text are bound to fail. God has preserved the New Testament text in the New Testament way which is free from any traces of Old Testament bondage, namely, through the guidance of _____ operating _____ and gradually leading them, by common consent, to reject false readings and to preserve the true. By this God-guided usage of believers the true New Testament text has been preserved and is now found in the Textus Receptus, and in he King James Bible and other faithful translations of the Textus Receptus.'"

~~ Believing Bible Study, p. 35 ~~

The concept of the universal priesthood of believers (not just professing Christians) influences your attitude toward the Biblical text. Those who believe that the text of Scripture is to be determined _____ _____ criticize Erasmus for responding to the faith of God's people about I John 5:7. Those who accept the universal priesthood of believers find something providential in the acceptance of I John 5:7 by the average Christian throughout the centuries

VII. THE LATIN BIBLE AND THE RECEIVED TEXT

Most of the Christians in the early centuries did not read Greek. As a result, the Old Latin Bibles were very important. A traditional or majority Latin text developed out of the use of these Bibles. The Traditional Latin Text includes at least ten passages that are found in only a few Greek manuscripts. I John 5:7 is one of those passages. During this time, more Bible believing Christians were reading the Scriptures _____ _____. Many teachers believed God was using both the Traditional Greek Text and the Traditional Latin Text to preserve the true words of Scripture. All of _____ _____.

I John 5:7 is routinely found in the Old Latin Bibles. It is also found in a few Greek manuscripts. As Edward Hills writes, "In these rare instances, God called upon the usage of the Latin-speaking Church to correct the usage of the Greek speaking Church."

~~ *Believing Bible Study*, p. 214 ~~

Erasmus believed that the Latin Vulgate was _____ but that the original scriptures could be recovered from the _____.

Erasmus was determined to provide a text which would be purchased by the general public. Erasmus was both a Greek and Latin scholar. Influenced by the long standing independent churches and the new Protestant reformers, people everywhere were rejecting Catholicism. People _____ _____. There was a great need for a new Greek text. Erasmus remained in the Catholic Church but he had little respect for its hierarchy and doctrine. His many books clearly reflected a respect for the historic faith of the believers.

Erasmus believed that the true text of Scripture could be determined from a diligent comparison of the Traditional Greek texts and the Traditional Latin texts. This was also the position of the later King James translators.

Erasmus was influenced by the common Christian tradition. When he consented to include I John 5:7 in his third edition of the Textus Receptus, he was reflecting the common idea that _____ _____.

VIII. DISCOVERING THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT: BURGON'S SEVEN NOTES OF TRUTH

The changes made popular by Westcott and Hort did not go unchallenged. Dean John William Burgon, one of the greatest (some would say the greatest) Greek scholars of the Nineteenth Century, wrote and spoke extensively challenging Westcott and Hort. He thoroughly refuted the basis for their Greek text. He also opposed their sense of final authority.

Hort claimed that the final determining factor in deciding which reading of a particular verse to accept was its "_____" (Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, p. 27). In other words, the final authority was simply how _____. They now exercised the authority that _____ _____.

There was no room for I John 5:7 in Hort's Bible. According to his son, he wrote (in a private letter), "It could be gotten rid of ... "(Riplinger, *New Age Bible Versions*, p. 380). This was not based upon textual argument, but upon his feeling that the verse didn't "ring true." Burgon felt that this was much too _____. It was clearly contrary to the priesthood of the believer and the sole authority of Scripture.

Burgon devised his now well known seven "Notes of Truth." There were seven objective tests for determining the authenticity of a reading of Scripture. The seven Notes of Truth are:

1. The antiquity of the reading.
2. The number of witnesses to the reading.

3. The variety of types of readings.
4. The respectability (weight) of the witnesses.
5. The continuity (unbroken tradition of acceptance) of the passage.
6. The context of the entire passage.
7. Internal considerations (or reasonableness) of the passage.

These tests can be applied to I John 5:7.

A. Antiquity.

Those who claim that I John 5:7 is spurious because it was unknown before a Fifteenth Century Greek manuscript simply haven't done their research.
The verse is found in an Old Syriac manuscript from around A.D. 170. It is found in an Old Latin manuscript from around A.D. 200. According to Gaussen (in his classic book on inspiration, *Theopneustia*), it is quoted or referred to by several Latin church fathers in the Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Centuries. It was quoted in the Second Century by Tatian, by Tertullian around A.D. 200, and Cyprian around A.D. 250. It was quoted by Athanasius in A.D. 350 and by both Priscillian and Idacius Clams in A.D. 385.

The verse is found in copies of the Latin Vulgate from the Fifth Century (Gaussen reminds his readers that these manuscripts predate most Greek manuscripts).

In A.D. 415, the verse was included in the resolutions of the Council of Carthage. In 484 A.D., the King of the Vandals demanded that the Bishops of North Africa prove the doctrine of the Trinity. He was an Arian. He denied the Trinity and considered the bishops all heretics. Four hundred bishops signed a Confession of Faith that included a defense of the Trinity. This defense quoted I John 5:7 and discussed it at length. I John 5:7 was quoted by Cassiodorus in Italy in 480 A.D.

Other quotations or references include Vadmarium A. D. 380, Cassian A. D. 435, Jerome A. D. 450, Vigilius A. D. 484, Victor-Vita A. D. 489, and Fulgenitus A. D. 533. It was also quoted in a document called Liber Apologeticus in A. D. 350.

B. The Consent of Witnesses.

I John 5:7 is found in a few Greek texts. While this is only a small percentage of the Greek texts, the passage is found in the vast majority of Latin Bibles. It is legitimate to carefully study this passage because of the discrepancy between the Greek texts and the Latin texts but it is not legitimate to say that the verse is only found in one or two texts. Including the Latin texts, it is found in thousands of manuscripts.

C. Variety of Evidence.

I John 5:7 is widely quoted. It is found in official statements of church councils,

in a limited number of Greek manuscripts, and in many Latin manuscripts. It is found in both North Africa and Europe. The reading is not limited to a group, sect or geographic area.

D. The Respect of the Witnesses.

The readings of I John 5:7 are not limited to quotations by obscure unknown writers or isolated texts. It was used by well-known leaders like Cyprian, Tertullian, Jerome and Athanasius. It was so widely used in the Latin speaking church that it was commonly accepted as Scripture. It is completely wrong to compare I John 5:7 to disputed readings of Scripture that have been rejected because they have only isolated support.

E. Unbroken Tradition

References can be found to I John 5:7 from the Second Century forward. Again, these references are not isolated but are in the Bibles being used by the majority of Bible believers.

In 1120, the Waldenses quoted I John 5:7 in their _____:

> "We must believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of Heaven and earth, for which God is one Trinity, as it is written in the law, 'Hear 0 Israel the Lord thy God is one,' and Isaiah 'I am the Lord and there is none else, neither is there any God besides me' and St. Paul, in the fourth of the Ephesians: 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. '_____,' There are three that bear witness in heaven; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one."'

F. Context.

Grammatically, I John 5:8 makes no sense without verse 7. In verse eight, the word three is in the masculine in the Greek language. The previous three nouns spirit, water and blood are all neuter. The rules of Greek grammar make it impossible (and nonsensical) for the word three to refer to spirit, water and blood. "Three" clearly refers to the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost of verse 7. In 1828, Bishop Middleton of Cambridge wrote an eighteen page article entitled *The Doctrine of the Greek Article*. He makes it clear how the wording of verse 8 demands the wording of verse 7 to precede it. Without the Johannine Comma, the passage _____.

G. Internal Considerations.

By this test, Burgon meant asking if the proposed reading was on the subject being discussed in the passage and if the doctrine taught was consistent with the rest of Scripture. The subject was the Deity of Christ. What could be more

relevant than a clear statement about the Trinity. What could be more consistent with the Biblical doctrine of Scripture than this statement: "For there are three

that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

Those that accept I John 5:7 as genuine have more scholarly arguments on their side than those who simply reject it without studying the issues involved.

IX. THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

A. Edward Gibbon, in his famous *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire (Vol.* 2, pp. 575-576), alleges that I John 5:7 was a forgery imposed upon the Bible by the African segment of the Catholic Church:

> "Even the Scriptures themselves were profaned by their rash and sacrilegious hands. The memorable text, which asserts the unity of the THREE who bear witness in heaven, is condemned by the universal silence of the orthodox fathers, ancient versions, and authentic manuscripts. It was first alleged by the Catholic bishops whom Hunneric summoned to the conference of Carthage. An allegorical interpretation, in the form, perhaps, of a marginal note, invaded the text of the Latin Bibles, which were renewed and corrected in a dark period of ten centuries. After the invention of printing, the editors of the Greek testament yielded to their own prejudices, or those of the times, and the pious fraud which was embraced with equal zeal at Rome and at Geneva has been infinitely multiplied in every country and every language of modern Europe."

His arguments are quoted today as if they were great illustrations of scholarship. But Gibbon was anti-Christian and anti-Trinitarian. His books are full of prejudiced attacks on Christianity. Are his historical arguments valid?

B. "Modern critics refer to "the Trinitarian forger: who first inserted I John 5:7. But they cannot name him or provide a single historical reference to him.

I John 5:7 is often quoted by "Church Fathers."

1. Around 250 A.D., Cyprian wrote:

   "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." *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Vol. 5,* p. 423

2. Gregory of Nazanius (Fourth Century) writes:

"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 Deity?"
~~ *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers,* Volume 7, pp. 323-324 ~~

3. A list of quotations of I John 5:7 by church fathers, councils and old manuscripts:

200 - Tertullian
250 - Cyprian
318 - Athanasius
350 - Idacius Clams
380 - Priscillian
385 - Gregory of Nazanius
390 - Jerome
450 - Contra Varimadum
450 - Latin mss. m
485 - Council of Carthage
485 - Victor of Vi tens is
500 - Latin mss. r
527 - Fulgentius
570 - Cassiodoms
636 - Isidore of Seville
650 - Codex Pal Legionensus
700 - Jaqub of Edessa
735 - mss. used by Venerable Bede
850 - Codex Ulmensis

4. Opponents of I John 5:7 are quick to list most of these quotes as spurious. However, their circular reasoning is obvious. I John 5:7 is not genuine because it is not quoted by the church fathers. Quotations by the church fathers are spurious because I John 5:7 is not genuine. Some "scholars" are just desperate to believe that I John 5:7 is not in the Bible.

C. The Council of Carthage.

In 485 A.D., a council of Catholic Bishops met in Carthage (North Africa). Their purpose was to defend the doctrine of the Trinity against the Arians. Their spokesman, Eugenius wrote:

> " ... 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 _____, for he says, 'There are three which bear testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one."

Over 400 bishops unanimously approved a statement that included I John 5:7.

Jesse Boyd summarizes an article written in 1817 by Charles Butler about this conference and I John 5:7:

> "Charles 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 _____ 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 _____ _____. If the Arians could have argued what present-day opposers of the verse say (The *Comma* was in 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 I John 5:7-8 instead. Obviously, _____ _____ 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 Mans 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."

~~ *And These Three Are One,* p. 9 ~~

X. IS I JOHN 5:7 REALLY MISSING IN ALL OF THOSE GREEK MANUSCRIPTS?

Many critics of I John 5:7 confidently announce that it is missing in almost all old Greek manuscripts. But how many old Greek manuscripts of I John have they seen? Frances Turretin, who personally examined more ancient manuscripts than modern critics of I John 5:7 have, confidently asserted:

> "Not I John 5:7, for although some formerly called it into question and heretics now do, _____, as Sixus Senensis acknowledges:)They have been the words of _____ _____, and contained in all the Greek copies from the very times of the apostles *(Bibliotheca Sancta, 1575)."*
>
> ~~ *Institutes,* Volume I, p. 115 ~~

Turretin was not a modern King James fanatic. He was a French speaking theologian writing in 1696.

Famed scholar, John Gill also gave a strong statement about the number of Greek manuscripts which contained I John 5:7 (61, 88, 221, 429, 636, 918, 2118, 629), *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament,* pp. 617-618.

Perhaps, the "scholars" don't have as thorough information about the Greek manuscripts as they would like to think.

XI. MANY GREAT SCHOLARS HAVE FAITH IN I JOHN 5:7

John Calvin carefully studied the work of Erasmus and concluded that I John 5:7 was genuine (*Believing Bible Study*, p. 203). The noted language scholar, Theodore Beza (1519-1605), carefully studied I John 5:7 and concluded, "_____ _____" (*Believing Bible Study*, p. 205). Early German Bibles included I John 5:7. Martin Luther did not include it in his New Testament, but soon after his death it was included in the official German Lutheran Bible. The _____ _____. John Wesley included it in his English New Testament.

I John 5:7 appeared in every standard translation of the English Bible until the English Revised Version of 1881 omitted it. I John 5:7 was included in the Wycliffe Bible in

1380, the Tyndale Bible of 1535, the Matthews Bible of 1537, the Taverner Bible of 1539, the Great Bible of 1539, the Geneva New Testament of 1557, the Bishop's Bible of 1568 and the King James Bible of 1611.

Many scholarly defenses of I John 5:7 have been written. Gaussen, Burgon, Middleton and Hills have already been mentioned. In 1815, Frederick Nolan wrote, *An Inquiry into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate or Received Text of the New Testament.* He included a clear defense of I John 5:7.

Robert L. Dabney (1891) wrote a defense of I John 5:7 in which he said:

> *"First*, if it be made, the masculine article, numeral, and particle ... are made to agree directly with three neuters - an insuperable and very bald grammatical difficulty. But if the disputed words are allowed to stand, they agree directly with two masculines and one neuter noun ... where, according to a well known rule of syntax, the masculines among the group control the gender over a neuter connected with them ...
>
> *Second,* if the excision is made, the eighth verse coming next to the sixth, gives us a very bald and awkward, and apparently meaningless, repetition of the Spirit's witness twice in immediate succession.
>
> *Third,* if the excision is made, then the proposition at the end of the eighth verse, (and these three agree in one), contains an unintelligible reference ... 'And these three agree to that (aforesaid) One,' ... What is that aforesaid unity to which these three agree? If the seventh verse is exscinded, there is none ... _____ _____, and all is clear: the three earthly witnesses testify to that aforementioned unity which the Father, Word, and Spirit constitute."
>
> ~~ *Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney,* p. 378 ~~

It is amazing how little those who claim scholarship as the grounds for rejecting I John 5:7 know of the available scholarship on the subject.

Matthew Henry, noted Puritan Bible Commentator, addressed the passage well when he wrote:

> "1. We are stopped in our course by the contest there is about the genuineness of vs. 7. It is alleged that many old Greek manuscripts have it not. We shall not here enter into the controversy. It can scarcely be supposed that, when the apostle is representing the Christian's faith in overcoming the world, and the foundation it relies upon in adhering to Jesus Christ, he should omit the supreme testimony that attended him (vs. 9). Upon our present reading here, is a noble enumeration _____ _____ and testimonies supporting the truth of the Lord Jesus.

2. The apostle, having told us that the Spirit that bears witness to Christ is truth, shows us that he is so, by assuring us that he is in heaven, vs. 7.

   a. Here is a trinity of heavenly witnesses, such as have testified and vouched to the world the authority of the Lord Jesus in his claims. The first that occurs in order is *the Father;* he set his seal to the commission of the Lord Christ all the while he was here. The second witness is the Word, a mysterious name. He must bear witness to the human nature, or to the man Christ Jesus. The third witness is the Holy Ghost. True and faithful must he be to whom the Spirit of holiness sets his seal. These are witnesses in heaven; and they bear record from heaven; and they are one.

   b. To these there is opposed, though with them joined, a trinity of witnesses on earth, vs. 8. Of these witnesses the first is the *spirit*. The regeneration or renovation of souls is a testimony to the Savior. It is a testimony on earth, because it continues with the church here. To this Spirit belong not only the regeneration and conversion of the church, but its progressive sanctification, victory over the world. The second is the *water*. This was before considered as a means of salvation, now as a testimony to the Savior himself, and intimates his purity and purifying power. And so it seems to comprehend the testimony of John's baptism, who bore witness of him and to the purity of his own doctrine, by which souls are purified and washed. The baptism that he has appointed for the initiation of his disciples. The third witness is the blood; this he shed, and this was our ransom. This testifies for Jesus Christ; in that it demonstrated unspeakable love to us; and none will deceive those whom they entirely love. In that it lays obligation on his disciples to suffer and die for him. This shows that neither he nor his kingdom is of this world. These are signified and sealed in the institution of his own supper. Such are the witnesses on earth. These three witnesses *agree in one,* in one and the same thing among themselves."

~~ *The Matthew Henry Commentary,* p. 1961 ~~

John Gill, in his famous *Body of Divinity,* writes a three page defense of I John 5:7 (pp. 194-196 in Volume 1).

Frances Turretin, in his famous and influential *Institutes of Elenctic Theology,* writes:

"IX. Third, it may be proved from I John 5:7 where three are expressly mentioned who are said to be one: 'for there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.' Three witnesses are brought forward not as qualities, but persons for as the Father is a person, so also

is the Word and the Spirit who are placed in the same order and degree. Witnesses, not human or angelic, who utter a divine testimony (vs. 10) are opposed thereby to a human and created witness. Still they so distinctly testify that they are one not only in consent and will but in essence, that they are called 'one' (John 10:30). To no purpose do the adversaries (in order to avoid this dart) endeavor to weaken confidence in this passage, as if it were interpolated because it is wanting in various Greek manuscripts, is not found in the Syriac and Arabic versions and is omitted by various fathers. For the _____ _____, which retain the text, _____ _____. Jerome, in his prologue to the Canonical Epistles *(Prologus Septern Epistolarum Canonicarum* [PL 29.870-74]), remarks that it existed in the Greek manuscripts, and Erasmus confesses that it was extant in the Codex Britannicus. The most approved editions (that of Complutensis, Antwerp, Arias Monanus, Robert Stephen's and Walton), which are founded upon _____ _____ have it. Hence, if in some it is wanting, this must be attributed either _____ _____(as Jerome acknowledges) or of _____ whose sacrilegious hands evidently tampered with the Scriptures. In addition, the connection of the text itself and the series of the apostle's discourse demand it. For there would be no sense to the following words ("and there are three that bear witness in earth") unless there were supposed to be three preceding witnesses testifying in heaven with whom a comparison could be made of the witnesses in earth."

~~ p. 268 ~~

Famed commentator, Matthew Poole writes about this passage:

" An express testimony of the triune Deity, by whatsoever carelessness or ill design left out of some copies, but sufficiently demonstrated _____ _____ to belong to the sacred text ... "

~~ *Poole's Commentary,* Volume III, p. 940 ~~

Church of England theologian Beveridge wrote (1840):

"Though this place of Scripture (I John, v. 7) be not extant in many ancient manuscripts, not indeed in many ancient translations, yet in the days of Arius, the grand opposer of this truth, about three hundred and thirty years after Christ, it was never so much as questioned, and many of the ancient fathers quote it. Which plainly shows that it was then received as canonical Scripture, and _____."

~~ *The Doctrine of the Church of England Consonant to Scripture,* Reason and Fathers, Volume I, p. 86 ~~

He was joined, in his defense of I John 5:7, by many Church of England bishops and professors in the 1800's. Their work was summarized in 1883, in the book *The Three Witnesses*, by Reverend H.T. Armfield. He was responding to the omission of I John 5:7 in the new English Revised Version.

XII. CONCLUSION

As Michael Maynard has written (in response to the note in the Old Scofield Bible), "A marginal note with more justice in the treatment would be, a few late Greek manuscripts, at least four Old Latin manuscripts, over eight Church Fathers (including Cyprian who died A.D. 258), four Syriac editions, Slavic and Armenian manuscripts, over 600 distinct editions of the Textus Receptus from 1522 to 1881, 18 pre-Lutheran

Bibles, and thousands of Vulgate manuscripts read ... Further of those Greek manuscripts which do omit this verse, 97% are late manuscripts, dated from the 10th Century and later."

~~ *A History of the Debate Over I John 5:7-8*, p. 247 ~~

As Athanasius says *(Disputation with Arius):* "And in addition to all these things, John says, 'And the three are one.'"

In 1822, David Harrower defended I John 5:7 in a series of 24 sermons. They were later published as *A Defense of the Trinitarian System.* In sermon I, he wrote:

> "Much has been said and written in the Christian world on this interesting passage. The opposers of the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity, have labored to make it appear, that it is spurious - the insertion of an uninspired pen. They do not, however, undertake to inform us, when this text was added to the Holy Scriptures, nor what particular person, or number of persons, committed the forgery. To impress the public mind with the idea, that the words under consideration have been interpolated, is certainly very important for Anti-Trinitarians; for, if the divinity of this passage is admitted, the doctrine of a Trinity of persons in God, is at once established. It must be expected, therefore, that every argument which is calculated to shake its sacred authority, will be eagerly seized by them and improved to their own advantage."

In his fourth sermon, he sums up the whole debate over I John 5:7:

> "No part of the Sacred Oracles, may be consistently deemed unnecessary.'Every word of God, is pure;' and, it should neither be added to, nor diminished. Infinite wisdom best knows, what is necessary to the perfection of Scripture, and what is not. If one half of the Bible were annihilated, in the other, every gospel truth would have ample support; nevertheless, the loss would be incalculable. There is no reason, therefore, in being any less engaged to defend I John 5:7, than if the doctrine of the Trinity depended on its single authority. The Christian church, is under indispensable obligation to contend for every verse and word, in the book

> of God. As the text in view contains a doctrine of vital importance in the divine system, we ought never to relinquish it, without plenary evidence of its spuriousness.
>
> From what has been said on this subject, we must be convinced, the text in debate is an irresistible proof of *three* Persons in *one* God.
>
> There is no other text in the Sacred volume, in which, the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, is so expressly declared. In this single passage, the sense of *many* others, is condensed, and expressed with peculiar happiness and energy. We need not be surprised, therefore, that Anti-Trinitarians have been so industrious to sink its authority."

Bible believers had no reason to forge I John 5:7. Christ deniers had an absolute necessity to remove it. Even the Arians never accused the orthodox of tampering with the text to prove their doctrines. That charge had to wait for Gibbon, Westcott and Hort, Charles T. Russell, militant Moslems, and a number of modern independent Baptist colleges and seminaries.

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