

# 1 John 5:7 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[INDEX FOR ALL VERSES ON 1 JOHN](#)

- [1 John 5:1](#)
- [1 John 5:2](#)
- [1 John 5:3](#)
- [1 John 5:4](#)
- [1 John 5:5](#)
- [1 John 5:6](#)
- [1 John 5:7](#)
- [1 John 5:8](#)
- [1 John 5:9](#)
- [1 John 5:10](#)
- [1 John 5:11](#)
- [1 John 5:12](#)
- [1 John 5:13](#)
- [1 John 5:14](#)
- [1 John 5:15](#)
- [1 John 5:16](#)
- [1 John 5:17](#)
- [1 John 5:18](#)
- [1 John 5:19](#)
- [1 John 5:20](#)
- [1 John 5:21](#)

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN  
Click chart to enlarge  
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
Another Overview Chart - [1 John - Charles Swindoll](#)

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			
From Talk Thru the Bible			

## STUDY GUIDE

### 1 JOHN 5

What is this? On the photograph of the Observation Worksheet for this chapter you will find handwritten 5W/H questions (Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?) on each verse to help you either personally study or lead a discussion on this chapter. The questions are generally very simple and are stated in such a way as to stimulate you to observe the text to discern the answer. As a reminder, given the truth that your ultimate Teacher is the Holy Spirit, begin your time with God with prayer such as Psalm 119:12+

"Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes." (you can vary it with similar prayers - Ps 119:18, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171, etc) The questions are generally highlighted in yellow and the answers in green. Some questions have no answers and are left to your observations and the illuminating/teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some qualifying thoughts - (1) Use "As is" - these are handwritten and will include mistakes I made, etc. (2) They may not be the best question for a given verse and my guess is that on some verses you will think of a far superior 5W/H question and/or many other questions.

Dr Howard Hendricks once gave an assignment to his seminary students to list as many observations as they could from Acts 1:8. He said "So far they've come up with more than 600 different ones! Imagine what fun you could have with 600 observations on this passage. Would you like to see Scripture with eyes like that?" (P. 63 [Living by the Book](#) - borrow) With practice you can! And needless to say, you will likely make many more observations and related questions than I recorded on the pages below and in fact I pray that the Spirit would indeed lead you to discover a veritable treasure chest of observations and questions! In Jesus' Name. Amen

Why am I doing this? **Mortimer Adler** among others helped me develop a questioning mindset as I read, seeking to read actively rather than passively. Over the years I have discovered that as I have practiced reading with a 5W/H questioning mindset, it has yielded more accurate interpretation and the good fruit of meditation. In other words, consciously interacting with the inspired Holy Word of God and the illuminating Holy Spirit has honed my ability to meditate on the Scripture, and my prayer is that this tool will have the same impact in your spiritual life. The benefits of meditation are literally priceless in regard to their value in this life and in the life to come (cf discipline yourself for godliness in 1Ti 4:8+.) For some of the benefits - see Joshua 1:8+ and Psalm 1:2-3+. It will take diligence and mental effort to develop an "inductive" ([especially an "observational"](#)), interrogative mindset as you read God's Word, but it bears repeating that the benefits in this life and the rewards in the next will make it more than worth the effort you invest! Dear Christian reader let me encourage you to strongly consider learning the skills of [inductive Bible study](#) and spending the rest of your life practicing them on the Scriptures and living them out in your daily walk with Christ.

Although Mortimer Adler's advice is from a secular perspective, his words are worth pondering...

*Strictly, all reading is active. What we call passive is simply less active. Reading is better or worse according as it is more or less active. And one reader is better than another in proportion as he is capable of a greater range of activity in reading.* (Adler's classic book [How to Read a Book is free online](#))

[John Piper](#) adds that "Insight or understanding is the product of intensive, headache-producing meditation on two or three verses and how they fit together. This kind of reflection and rumination is provoked by asking questions of the text. And you cannot do it if you hurry. Therefore, we must resist the deceptive urge to carve notches in our bibliographic gun. Take two hours to ask ten questions of Galatians 2:20+ and you will gain one hundred times the insight you would have attained by reading thirty pages of the New Testament or any other book. Slow down. Query. Ponder. Chew.... (John Dewey rightly said) "People only truly think when they are confronted with a problem. Without some kind of dilemma to stimulate thought, behavior becomes habitual rather than thoughtful."

*"Asking questions is the key to understanding."*

--Jonathan Edwards

That said, below are the [5W/H questions](#) for each verse in this chapter (click page to enlarge). This is not neatly typed but is handwritten and was used for leading a class discussion on this chapter, so you are welcome to use it in this "as is" condition...

--	--

## 1 John 5:7 For there are three that testify:

**KJV** 1 John 5:7-8 - For there are three that bear record ***in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*** 8 And there are three that bear witness ***in earth***.

Almost all authorities agree that the text in ***bold italics*** above in the KJV is not in the original Greek and for that reason those words are not found in most modern translation (ESV, NAS, ESV, NIV) [See discussion below on so-called "Johannine Comma"](#)

On a separate note related to translation, if you use the older version of the **NAS** (1977), be aware that the new version (1995) shifts the first clause of verse 8 (*For there are three that bear witness*) to verse 7. The clause that was present in the 1977 version (*And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth*) is in turn shifted to the end of verse 6 in the 1995 NAS.

BGT 1 John 5:7 τρεεις ο μαρτυρο ντες,

NET 1 John 5:7 For there are three that testify,

CSB 1 John 5:7 For there are three that testify:

ESV 1 John 5:7 For there are three that testify:

NIV 1 John 5:7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

NLT 1 John 5:7 So we have these three witnesses--

NRS 1 John 5:7 There are three that testify:

NJB 1 John 5:7 So there are three witnesses,

NAB 1 John 5:7 So there are three that testify,

YLT 1 John 5:7 because three are who are testifying in the heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these -- the three -- are one;

MIT 1 John 5:7 There are three certifiers:

GWN 1 John 5:7 There are three witnesses:

BBE 1 John 5:8 There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood: and all three are in agreement.

RSV 1 John 5:8 There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree.

NKJ 1 John 5:7 For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.

ASV 1 John 5:8 For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one.

**Greek** - hoti treis eisin (3PPAI) hoi marturountes (PAP)

- **bear**: 1Jn 5:10,11 John 8:13,14
- [1 John 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 17:6; "On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.

Deuteronomy 19:15 "A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.

John 8:17-18 "Even in your law it has been written, that the testimony of two men is true.<sup>18</sup> "I am He who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."

1 Timothy 5:19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

## THE TRIFECTA TESTIMONY

**For (hoti)** is a **term of explanation**, which always begs the question of what is the writer explaining? In this case it is not completely clear. For example, [Westcott](#) says "This clause appears to give the reason for the main proposition in 1Jn 5:5-note, that '**Jesus is the Son of God**,' a truth briefly expressed and affirmed by His full Name, '**Jesus Christ**;' (in 1Jn 5:6-note) [A E Brooke](#) offers a somewhat similar thought that this **term of explanation** explains why the "witness to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is trustworthy. It fulfils the conditions of legally valid witness, as laid down in Dt. 19:15."

**There are three that testify** ([martureo](#) - present tense) - John has only mentioned one witness up to this point, declaring that '**It is the Spirit Who testifies**' in 1Jn 5:6+. He had stated that Jesus came by water and blood, but did not refer to them as witnesses at that time. These **three** witnesses are specifically named in the next verse (1Jn 5:8+). **Testify** is in the present tense signifying that all **three** witnesses continue to testify to the truth of Jesus Christ. Vine says "the present continuous tense indicates the permanency of the witness." In other words, the present tense indicates that **the water** and **the blood** continue to bear witness concerning the

Jesus Christ "whenever the historical facts concerning His baptism and death are read or proclaimed." (Hiebert)

**Three that testify** - Who are the three that testify or give witness? "the Spirit and the water and the blood" as recorded in 1Jn 5:8. To what do they testify? In context they testify to the truths concerning Jesus Christ which John has just recorded...

1Jn 5:1+ "Jesus is the Christ" (Or as rendered in 1Jn 5:1HCSB "Jesus is the Messiah")

1Jn 5:5+ "Jesus is the Son of God."

1Jn 5:6+ "This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ"

**Three** (5140)(**treis**) is the cardinal number three.

**Treis** - 69x in 62v translated Usage: fifty-three\*(1), thirty(1), three(66), twenty-three\*(1).- Mt 12:40; 13:33; 15:32; 17:4; 18:16, 20; 26:61; 27:40, 63; Mark 8:2, 31; 9:5, 31; 10:34; 14:58; 15:29; Luke 1:56; 2:46; 4:25; 9:33; 10:36; 11:5; 12:52; 13:7, 21; John 2:6, 19f; 21:11; Acts 5:7; 7:20; 9:9; 10:19; 11:11; 17:2; 19:8; 20:3; 25:1; 28:7, 11f, 15, 17; 1Cor 10:8; 13:13; 14:27, 29; 2Cor 13:1; Gal 1:18; 1 Tim 5:19; Heb 10:28; Jas 5:17; 1 John 5:7f; Rev 6:6; 8:13; 9:18; 11:9, 11; 16:13, 19; 21:13

**Why does John mention three "witnesses"?** While one cannot be dogmatic it would be reasonable to follow the pattern presented for human witnesses as described by Moses in Deuteronomy "A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed." (Dt 19:15) A number of other Scriptural passages describe the number of witnesses required to validate a particular point - Deut 17:6; Mt 18:16; Jn 8:17; 2Cor 13:1; 1Ti 5:19. (See related comments on Three witnesses).

**Brooke** adds that "The stress laid by the order upon **three**' emphasises this thought of the fulness of the number of the witnesses, and the consequent certainty of that which they affirm. The faith in Jesus as 'the Christ, the Son of God' is reasonable according to the ordinary laws of belief." ([1 John 5 Commentary - ICC NT Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon** - "A priest was always ordained by sacrificial blood, cleansing water, and oil that spoke of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. So Jesus also had these three witnesses to His priestly ministry."

**Craig Keener** on **three that testify** - Ancient sale documents sometimes included the signatures of several witnesses attesting a sale, and the Old Testament and later Jewish courts always required a minimum of two dependable witnesses (Dt 17:6; 19:15). John cites three witnesses whose reliability could not be in dispute. (The Trinitarian formula found in the KJV of 1Jn 5:7 is orthodox but not part of the text. It appears in only three manuscripts—of the twelfth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—out of the thousands available, placed there by scribes who knew it from the Latin Vulgate, which took it from an early marginal note based on a popular early interpretation of the text. The KJV includes it only because that translation was based on a recension dependent on the third edition of Erasmus's Greek text; Erasmus included the verse to fulfill a wager, protested it in a note and withdrew it in subsequent editions of the text.) (See [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament - Page 714](#))

---

**Testify** (3140)(**martureo** from **martus/martys** = witness = one who has information or knowledge of something and can bring to light or confirm something. English = **martyr**) in its most basic sense refers to a legal witness. Thus the verb **martureo** means to be a witness, to testify, to give evidence, to give testimony, to bear record, to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something. The words testified related to fact, not opinion, as in a courtroom setting.

To confirm or attest something on the basis of personal knowledge or belief. To make a "declaration of ascertainable facts based on firsthand knowledge or experience" (Friberg). To bear witness (Ro 10:2). To confirm. To be a witness. All of the uses of **martureo** in the Gospel of John fall into this category of meaning.

To affirm in a supportive manner. To testify favorably. To speak well of or give a good report (Of Jesus in Lk 4:22). To approve. A description of those who are approved (as here in Hebrews 11:2). Good reputation (Qualification of men who were to serve widows = Acts 6:3, Description of the Gentile Cornelius = Acts 10:22; Acts 22:12).

**Wayne Detzler** notes that... In ancient Greek literature the bearing of witness was related to the confirmation of an event. One bore witness to support the truth of an event. The term was connected to the verb *merimnao* (that which requires the agreement of many minds). As many minds were brought to bear on a subject, the truth was established. Later on a witness was seen as presenting valid legal evidence. Plato insisted that such evidence must be given freely, without coercion. In the writings of the Stoics, this word came to mean evidence for certain beliefs and convictions. Thus the root of religious testimony was planted. (New Testament Words in Today's Language)

**MARTUREO USES BY JOHN** - Jn. 1:7; Jn. 1:8; Jn. 1:15; Jn. 1:32; Jn. 1:34; Jn. 2:25; Jn. 3:11; Jn. 3:26; Jn. 3:28; Jn. 3:32; Jn. 4:39; Jn. 4:44; Jn. 5:31; Jn. 5:32; Jn. 5:33; Jn. 5:36; Jn. 5:37; Jn. 5:39; Jn. 7:7; Jn. 8:13; Jn. 8:14; Jn. 8:18; Jn. 10:25; Jn. 12:17; Jn. 13:21; Jn. 15:26; Jn. 15:27; Jn. 18:23; Jn. 18:37; Jn. 19:35; Jn. 21:24; 1 Jn. 1:2; 1 Jn. 4:14; 1 Jn. 5:6; 1 Jn. 5:7; 1 Jn. 5:9; 1 Jn. 5:10; 3 Jn. 1:3; 3 Jn. 1:6; 3 Jn. 1:12; Rev. 1:2; Rev. 22:16; Rev. 22:18; Rev. 22:20

---

### Norman Geisler - [When Critics Ask](#)

1 JOHN 5:7—Why is this verse on the Trinity missing in many modern translations?

**PROBLEM:** John declares that “there are three who bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one” (KJV). This is the clearest statement on the Trinity in the Bible. However, most modern translations omit this verse. Why?

**SOLUTION:** The reason is very simple. This verse has virtually no support among the early Greek manuscripts, though it is found in Latin manuscripts. Its appearance in late Greek manuscripts is based on the fact that Erasmus was placed under ecclesiastical pressure to include it in his Greek NT of 1522, having omitted it in his two earlier editions of 1516 and 1519 because he could not find any Greek manuscripts which contained it.

Its inclusion in the Latin Bible probably results from a scribe incorporating a marginal comment (gloss) into the text as he copied the manuscript of 1 John. But including it in the text violates almost every rule of textual criticism. Even the NKJV, which generally retains the longer readings and disputed passages (see Mark 16:9ff and John 7:53–8:11), comments in the margin that this is “a passage found in only four or five very late Greek mss.”

---

### Norman Geisler - [When Cultists Ask](#)

1 JOHN 5:7—Does the absence of this verse in modern translations prove that the doctrine of the Trinity is not true?

**MISINTERPRETATION:** In the King James Version text, 1 John 5:7 declares that “there are three who bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.” This is the clearest statement on the Trinity in the Bible. However, most modern translations omit this verse. The Jehovah’s Witnesses cite the lack of manuscript evidence for this verse as a proof that the doctrine of the Trinity is unbiblical (Reasoning from the Scriptures, 1989, 422–23).

**CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION:** It is true that this verse has virtually no support among the early Greek manuscripts, though it is found in Latin manuscripts. Its appearance in late Greek manuscripts is based on the fact that Erasmus was placed under ecclesiastical pressure to include it in his Greek New Testament of 1522, having omitted it in his two earlier editions of 1516 and 1519 because he could not find any Greek manuscripts which contained it.

Its inclusion in the Latin Bible probably results from a scribe incorporating a marginal comment (gloss) into the text as he copied the manuscript of 1 John. But including it in the text violates almost every rule of textual criticism. Even the New King James Version, which generally retains the longer readings and disputed passages (see Mark 16:9–20 and John 7:53–8:11), comments in the margin that this is “a passage found in only four or five very late Greek mss.”

Simply because this one verse has no manuscript support does not mean the doctrine of the Trinity is not true. Numerous other passages that have undeniable places in Scripture manuscript support establish that (1) there is only one true God; (2) there are three persons who are God, and (3) there is three-in-oneness within the Godhead. See comments on Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 28:18–20; 2 Corinthians 13:14.

## JOHANNINE COMMA

### QUESTION - [What is the Comma Johanneum \(1 John 5:7-8\)? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**ANSWER** - The *Comma Johanneum*, also known as the *Comma Johannine*, is a textual variant in regards to 1 John 5:7-8. The word *comma* simply means “short clause,” and *Johanneum* means “pertaining to John.” Without the “comma,” 1 John 5:7-8 reads, “For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.” With the “comma,” 1 John 5:7-8 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.” If the *Comma Johanneum* was originally part of 1 John 5:7-8, it would be the clearest and most direct reference to the Trinity in the entire Bible.

However, it is highly unlikely that the *Comma Johanneum* was originally a part of 1 John. None of the oldest Greek manuscripts of 1 John contain the comma, and none of the very early church fathers include it when quoting or referencing 1 John 5:7-8. The

presence of the *Comma Johanneum* in Greek manuscripts is actually quite rare until the 15th century A.D. It is primarily found in Latin manuscripts. While some of the Latin manuscripts containing the *Comma Johanneum* are ancient, the *Comma Johanneum* did *not* appear in the original Latin Vulgate written by Jerome.

In the 16th century, when Desiderius Erasmus was compiling what became known as the Textus Receptus, he did not include the *Comma Johanneum* in the 1st or 2nd editions. Due to intense pressure from the Catholic Church and others who wanted it included because of its support for trinitarianism, Erasmus included the *Comma Johanneum* in later editions of the Textus Receptus. His decision resulted in the *Comma Johanneum* being included in the King James Version of the Bible and later in the New King James Version. None of the modern Greek texts (UBS 4, [Nestle-Aland 27](#), Majority Text) contain the *Comma Johanneum*. Of all the modern English translations, only the New King James Version and Modern English Version include the *Comma Johanneum*.

While it would be convenient for there to be an explicit statement confirming the Trinity in the Bible, it is highly unlikely that the *Comma Johanneum* was originally a part of 1 John. Some ancient scribe, either intentionally or accidentally added it to a Latin manuscript, and then that addition was copied thousands upon thousands of times. This eventually resulted in the *Comma Johanneum* appearing in the vast majority of Latin manuscripts. Whatever the scribe's motives, it is absolutely wrong to add to God's Word. While what the *Comma Johanneum* says is true, it is not a God-breathed statement and does not belong in the Bible. The doctrine of the Trinity is taught and implied in many other biblical passages. If God thought an explicit mention of the Trinity was necessary, He Himself would have made sure it was in His Word.

---

**William MacDonald** adds that "It always disturbs some devout Christians to learn that parts of verses 7, 8, as found in the KJV and NKJV, are actually found in only a handful of Greek manuscripts of the NT. But this does not at all affect the truth of the inspiration of the Scriptures. Some people think it is important to retain the words because they mention the three Persons of the Trinity. However, the truth of the Trinity does not depend on this passage alone, but is found in many other portions of the Scriptures... Having stated in the previous verses the Person and work of Christ, John now goes on to state the trustworthiness of our belief in Him." (BORROW [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

---

**Hiebert** explains that "The statement in verse 7 (**KJV**) concerning the three heavenly witnesses [*in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*], commonly known as the **Johannine Comma**, is an expansion of the Greek text upon the basis of the Latin and is devoid of any reliable textual support as a true part of the original. Hodges and Farstad in the edition of The Greek New Testament According To The Majority Text, generally supportive of the Textus Receptus, rightly omit verse 7 entirely. Erasmus did not find the words in any of the Greek texts upon which he based his first two editions of his Greek New Testament, but in the third edition, in a spirit of compromise, he reluctantly included them in his text. Accordingly they were contained in the Textus Receptus upon which the translators of the King James Version based their English rendering. Because verse 7 in the King James Version is not an authentic part of the Greek text, it is here not given any interpretative treatment.

---

**Daniel Akin** - **Bertrand Russell** lived from 1872-1970. He was one of the major atheistic philosophers of the 20th century. He authored more than 100 books, wrote a 3-volume autobiography and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. One of his most well known books was **Why I Am Not A Christian** (1927). In it he argued that all organized religions are the residue of the barbaric past that dwindled to mere hypocritical superstitions that have no basis in reality. On one occasion Russell was asked what he would say to God if he found himself standing before God. His answer: "*I should reproach Him for not giving us enough evidence.*" I strongly suspect that Bertrand Russell's problem with God had to do more with his personal morality than the evidence. A serial adulterer, Russell attempted to justify his adulterous escapades in a book entitled *Marriage and Morals* (1929). He argued that humans are not naturally monogamous and so we should not expect they will be (**ED: THE DECEPTION OF DEPRAVITY THAT RESULTS FROM WORSHIPING AT THE IDOL OF SELF!**). Still, taking Russell at his word, I would take it that he must have never read, or at least read carefully, 1 John 5:6-12. Here the apostle John, an eyewitness of our Lord's life, passion and resurrection brings to the witness stand no less than 6 reliable witnesses who make the case that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. Verses 6-12 come together around the theme of witness or testimony, with some form of the Greek word *martus* appearing 9 times. John believes there is more than enough evidence to prove that Jesus is the Son of God who provides eternal life to all who believe in Him.

---

**Howard Marshall** another respected authority on First John writes "This form of wording appears in no reputable modern version of the Bible as the actual text; most editions adopt the same practice as in the NIV of relegating the extra words to a footnote, while some (such as the RSV and NEB) totally ignore them. The words in fact occur in none of the Greek manuscripts of 1 John, except for a few late and worthless ones, and are not quoted by any early church writers, not even by those who would have joyfully seized upon this clear biblical testimony to the Trinity in their attacks on heretics; they probably owe their origin to some scribe who wrote them in the margin of his copy of 1 John; later they were erroneously regarded as part of the text. Beyond any shadow of doubt the

wording of the NIV text represents what John actually wrote." (borrow [The Epistles of John in The New International Commentary on the New Testament](#) page 236)

---

**Bruce M. Metzger** summarizes the overwhelming evidence against the authenticity of *Comma Johanne*:

The passage is absent from every known Greek manuscript except eight [all of which date from the Middle Ages], and these contain the passage in what appears to be a translation from a late recension of the Latin Vulgate. Four of the eight manuscripts contain the passage as a variant reading written in the margin as a later addition to the manuscript.

The passage is quoted by none of the Greek Fathers, who, had they known it, would most certainly have employed it in the Trinitarian controversies (Sabellian and Arian). Its first appearance in Greek is in a Greek version of the (Latin) Acts of the Lateran Council in 1215.

The passage is absent from the manuscripts of all ancient versions ... except the Latin; and it is not found (a) in the Old Latin in its early form ... or in the Vulgate (b) as issued by Jerome ... or (c) as revised by Alcuin [in the ninth century].

The earliest instance of the passage being quoted as a part of the actual text of the Epistle is in a fourth century Latin treatise entitled *Liber Apologeticus* ... attributed either to the Spanish heretic Priscillian (died about 385) or to his follower Bishop Instantius.... In the fifth century the gloss was quoted by Latin Fathers in North Africa and Italy as part of the text of the Epistle, and from the sixth century onwards it is found more and more frequently in manuscripts of the Old Latin and of the Vulgate. (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, second edition [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2002], 647–48) (borrow [A textual commentary on the Greek New Testament](#) page 714)

---

**F. F. Bruce** explains how *Comma Johanne* found its way into English Bibles:

When [the Dutch Christian humanist scholar and contemporary of Luther Desiderius] Erasmus prepared his printed edition of the Greek Testament, he rightly left those words out, but was attacked for this by people who felt that the passage was a valuable proof-text for the doctrine of the Trinity. He replied (rather incautiously) that if he could be shown any Greek manuscript which contained the words, he would include them in his next edition. Unfortunately, a Greek manuscript not more than some twenty years old was produced in which the words appeared: they had been translated into Greek from Latin. Of course, the fact that the only Greek manuscript exhibiting the words belonged to the sixteenth century was in itself an argument against their authenticity, but Erasmus had given his promise, and so in his 1522 edition he included the passage. (borrow [History of the Bible in English](#) page 140)

---