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## INTRODUCTION

While the oneness and uniqueness of God are generally accepted (affirmation 1) and have been sufficiently demonstrated in **Handout 1**, the trinity of God (affirmation 2), as understood in Christianity, has been challenged by other world religions (e.g., Judaism and Islam) and proponents of non-Trinitarianism. This requires a biblical demonstration. The idea of plurality within God does not contradict the biblical description of God’s oneness and uniqueness. It helps make sense of all that Scripture reveals about God. This divine plurality, as presented in the Bible, indicates that God is a **triunity** of persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—three persons united as the one and only true God.

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## THE PLURALITY OF GOD: GOD IS TRIUNE

**2 The Triunity of God:** There are three united persons of God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Bible affirms that God is a **united plurality** of *three* persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—within his oneness and uniqueness, which is called his **triunity**. The term “Trinity” is simply a contracted form of the compound word “triunity,” composed of the prefix “tri-,” meaning “three,” and the noun “unity.” While God is one and only one God, he is not a single, solitary, isolated being. In other words, as Trinity, God is not a monopersonal being (i.e., only the Father) but a **tripersonal** being.

**2a.1** God’s titles, אֱלֹהִים (*’ēlōhīm*) and אֲדֹנָי (*’ădōnāy*), are grammatically *plural* in number, but take verbs and are referred to with pronouns that are *singular* in number, indicative of a united plurality (e.g., Gen 1:1, 31; 15:2; Deut 10:17; Ps 35:23; 38:15).

**2a.2** In Gen 1:26–28, there is a juxtaposition of *singular* and *plural* references to God (i.e., names, verbs, pronouns, etc.), which suggests that God is a united plurality.<sup>1</sup> See **Table 1** below.

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<sup>1</sup> Some interpreters suggest that the plurals in Gen 1:26 refer to God the Father and the heavenly angels surrounding his throne. However, it would be very unusual for God to speak to the angels in this way. Do they share the same “image” and “likeness” with God? This is not stated anywhere in Scripture. Do angels have the ability to create? Once again, God is the only creator mentioned in Scripture. Angels do not even have that ability to procreate (Matt 22:30). The text states that it was God who did the work of creating humanity, with no mention of angels in Gen 1 and 2. This seems to be a forced and baseless interpretation aimed at avoiding the most straightforward reading of the text.

Others have suggested that the plurals in Gen 1:26 refer only to the Father and the Son, excluding the Holy Spirit. This is also a strange interpretation because the Holy Spirit is explicitly mentioned as an active participant in the work of creation in Gen 1:2, called רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים (*rūah ’ēlōhīm*), which means “the Spirit of God.” The Son is not mentioned at all in this passage, although he may be implied in the use of the verb אָמַר (*’āmar*), meaning “to speak,” in the creation narrative (e.g., Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 29). The psalmist explicitly states that God created through his “word” (דְּבַר [dāḇār]) and his “breath” or “Spirit” (רוּחַ) in Ps 33:6. Jesus is ὁ λόγος (*ho lógos*), or “the Word,” who “was with God” “in the beginning” and “was God” (John 1:1), and through whom God created the heavens and the earth. “All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3 ESV). Based upon this textual data, the plurals in Gen 1:26 reference the Father, the Son, *and* the Holy Spirit.

**Table 1. Plural and Singular References to God in Gen 1:26–28.**

	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Singular</b>
<b>Gen 1:26</b>	Then <b>God</b>	→ <i>said</i> ,
	<b>“Let us make</b> man in <b>our</b>	→ <i>image</i> ,
	after <b>our</b>	→ <i>likeness</i> . And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”
<b>Gen 1:27</b>	So <b>God</b>	→ <i>created man in his own image, in the image</i>
	of <b>God</b>	→ <i>he created him; male and female he created them.</i>
<b>Gen 1:28</b>	And <b>God</b>	→ <i>blessed them.</i>
	And <b>God</b>	→ <i>said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”</i>

\*ESV. **Bold** indicates a plural form, and *italics* indicate a singular form.

**2a.3** There are several instances of a *plurality* of divine persons in the Bible.

(a) Some passages use plural verbs and pronouns for God (e.g., Gen 1:26, 27; 3:22; 11:7; Isa 6:8).<sup>2</sup>

(b) Other passages feature one person called “God” or “the LORD/Lord” who is distinguished from another person also called “God” or “the LORD/Lord” (e.g., Pss. 45:6, 7 [cf. Heb 1:8, 9]; 110:1 [cf. Matt 22:43–46; Mark 12:36, 37; Luke 20:42–44; Acts 2:34, 35; Heb 2:8]; Isa 9:1–7; 42:1; 53:10).

(c) רוח אֱלֹהִים (*rūah’ēlōhīm*) and אֱלֹהִים are mentioned together in Gen 1:2 as both being involved in the divine work of creation.

(d) יְהוָה (YHWH) and “the Angel<sup>3</sup> of יְהוָה” are distinct from one another but unitedly divine. The Angel of יְהוָה, though distinct from יְהוָה, is also identified as אֱלֹהִים/יְהוָה (e.g., Gen 16:7–14, esp. v. 13; 22:11; 31:11, 13; 32:24, 28, 30; Hos 12:3–5; Exod 3:2–18; 13:21 [cf. 14:19, 20, 24]; 23:20–23; 33:11; Judg 2:1–5; 6:11–25; 13:13–22; Isa 63:7–14; cf. Ps 110:1). The Angel of יְהוָה is אֱלֹהִים/יְהוָה, yet distinct from אֱלֹהִים/יְהוָה (e.g., Gen 22:1, 2, 11–18; Num 22:22–38; Josh 5:13–6:2 [cf. Exod 3:5]).<sup>4</sup>

(e) There are several Binitarian passages in which two distinct (yet united) persons are mentioned (e.g., Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 8:4–6; 2 Cor 1:2–3; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1, 3; 2 Thess 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Phlm 3; 1 Pet 1:3).

**2a.4** God is praised in a threefold way—“holy, holy, holy”—by the heavenly host (Isa 6:3).

**2.5** The Aaronic blessing upon Israel of God’s name יְהוָה is threefold (Num 6:22–27).

<sup>2</sup> See **Excursus on 2a.3a: Pluralis Majestaticus.**

<sup>3</sup> מַלְאָךְ (*mal’āk*) simply means “messenger” and does not specify the kind of messenger—whether a human (e.g., Isa 37:9; Hag 1:13; Mal 2:7; 3:1 [cf. Matt 11:10]; Luke 7:24; 9:52; Jas 2:25), angelic, or divine (as in the case of “the Angel of יְהוָה”).

<sup>4</sup> Augustus H. Strong points out, “(a) The angel of Jehovah identifies himself with Jehovah; (b) he is identified with Jehovah by others; (c) he accepts worship due only to God. ... [I]t seems in the Old Testament, with hardly more than a single exception, to designate the pre-incarnate Logos, whose manifestations in angelic or human form foreshadowed his final coming in the flesh” (*The Doctrine of God*, vol. 1 of *Systematic Theology: A Compendium and Commonplace-book Designed for the Use of Theological Students*, rev. and enl. ed., 3 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Judson, 1907), 234).

**2.6** The theophany of יהוה<sup>5</sup> witnessed by Abraham near the oaks of Mamre manifested in the form of “three men,” whom he calls אֲדֹנָי (*ādōnāi*) or “my Lord,” which is singular in number (Gen 18:1–3 NKJV).<sup>5</sup>

**2.7** Some passages express a personal “threeness” in God, linking together three distinct (yet united) persons distinguished by distinct names/titles (e.g., Isa 42:1; 48:16; 61:1–3; 63:7–16).

**2.8** There are numerous triadic passages of the New Testament in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are mentioned together (e.g., Matt 3:16, 17; 12:18, 28; 28:19, 20;<sup>6</sup> Mark 1:10, 11; Luke 3:21, 22; 4:18; 10:21; 11:13; 24:49, 50; John 1:33, 34; 3:34; 4:23; 14:16, 25, 26; 15:26; 16:7–11, 13–15; 20:21, 22; Acts 1:4–8; 2:32, 33, 38; 4:8, 24, 25; 5:30–32; 7:55; 10:38; 11:16, 17; 20:21–23, 28; Rom 1:1–4; 5:1–5; 7:4–6; 8:1–3, 9, 16, 17; 14:17, 18; 15:12, 13, 15, 16, 30; 1 Cor 2:1–5, 10–15; 6:11; 12:3, 4–6; 2 Cor 1:21, 22; 3:3; 13:14; Gal 3:11–14; 4:4–6; Eph 1:3,<sup>7</sup> 4–14, 17; 2:17–19, 20–22; 3:14–17; 4:4–6, 30–32; 5:18–20; Phil 3:3; Col 1:6–8; 1 Thess 1:3–5; 2 Thess 2:13, 14; Titus 3:4–7; Heb 2:3, 4; 3:1–7; 9:14; 10:12–15, 29; 1 Pet 1:2, 3–11; 1 John 3:23–4:3, 13; 5:6–9;<sup>8</sup> Jude 20, 21; Rev 1:4, 5; 9, 10; 14:12, 13; 19:10; 22:1, 17, 18). In his research on Trinitarian ordering patterns in the New Testament, Rodrick K. Durst identifies “seventy-five triadic order passages” in which all three persons of the Trinity are mentioned within a range of one to five verses.<sup>9</sup> There are far more such passages if this limitation is ignored (e.g., Eph 1:4–14<sup>10</sup>; Rev 14:6–13). For Durst, “the quantity of divine triadic instances is so profound and in such a diversity of orders that it constitutes a qualitative matrix of Trinitarian consciousness. Trinity is how the New Testament authors inadvertently thought and viewed reality.”<sup>11</sup>

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## THE TRINITY IN THE THREE ANGELS’ MESSAGES

The three angels’ messages in Rev 14:6–12 together for the united end-time message to be shared by God’s end-time remnant with the whole world as a final warning before the second advent of Christ. As such, the proclamation of these messages has been adopted as the primary mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. One of its cofounders, Ellen G. White, writes,

“In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of

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<sup>5</sup> The three men are seemingly referred to as יהוה (e.g., Gen 18:9, 10, 13–15, 16–21). Interestingly, יהוה remained present with Abraham, even after the three men departed (Gen 18:22, 23).

<sup>6</sup> If Christ commissioned his disciples in Matt 28:19, 20 to baptize people in the singular name of God (i.e., יהוה) that properly belongs to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, then it follows that they were to instruct baptismal candidates before and after their baptisms about the triadic nature of God in the three persons, who share that single divine name.

<sup>7</sup> Some might object to Eph 1:3 being considered a triadic passage because the noun πνεῦμα [*pneūma*] or “Spirit” is not used. However, the adjectival form of πνεῦμα—πνευματικός [*pneumatikós*] or “spiritual”—is employed. New Testament scholar Gordon D. Fee comments, “This is an almost exclusively Pauline word in the NT, occurring 24 of 26 times in his letters. ... [T]he word functions primarily as an adjective for the Spirit, referring to *that which belongs to, or pertains to, the Spirit*. ... In fact, there is not a single instance in Paul where this word refers to the human ‘spirit’ and has to do with ‘spiritual life,’ as this word is most often understood in modern English. For Paul it is an adjective that primarily refers to the Spirit of God, even when the contrasts are to ‘earthly’ bodies and ‘material support’” (*God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994], 28, 29, 32; emphasis original). In other words, as the adjective θεῖος (*theĩos*) or “divine” references the noun θεός or “God,” so the adjective πνευματικός or “spiritual” references the noun πνεῦμα for the Holy Spirit. Thus, πνευματικός in Eph 1:3 directly points to the person of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>8</sup> See **Excursus on 2a.7: The Comma Johanneum (1 John 5:7, 8)**.

<sup>9</sup> Rodrick K. Durst, *Reordering the Trinity: Six Movements of God in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2015), 68.

<sup>10</sup> In this Pauline benedictory doxology, Paul praised the Father for electing and predestining us in Christ (Eph 1:4–6), the Son for our redemption through his blood (vv. 7–12), and the Holy Spirit for sealing us as a first installment of our future inheritance (vv. 13, 14). Each section concludes with a doxology that is nearly the same in formulation that ties the three sections together as one: εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης ... αὐτοῦ (*eis épainon dóxēs ... autoũ*) or “to the praise of his glory” (v. 6), εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ (*eis épainon dóxēs autoũ*) or “to the praise of his glory” (v. 12), and εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ (*eis épainon tēs dóxēs autoũ*) or “to the praise of his glory” (v. 14).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 66; emphasis original.

God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.”<sup>12</sup>

These messages contain the major tenets of faith for Seventh-day Adventists: (a) the eternal gospel and righteousness by faith (Rev 14:6, 10, 12); (b) the perpetuity and immutability of God’s moral law (v. 12); the six-day creation and seventh-day Sabbath (vv. 7, 9, 11); (c) the heavenly sanctuary and the pre-advent, investigative judgment (v. 7), health (vv. 7 [cf. 1 Cor 10:31], 8, 10); (d) the papal antichrist, apostate Protestantism in the United States, and their false doctrines (vv. 8, 9, 11); (e) soul sleep and resurrection (v. 13); (f) the eradication of sin (vv. 10, 11); (g) the Spirit of prophecy (vv. 12, 13; cf. 12:17; 19:10); (h) human sexuality, marriage, and family (v. 8); (i) the great commission and the priesthood of all believers (v. 6); (j) the importance of religious liberty (vv. 8, 9, 11); (k) post-tribulationism (v. 12); etc.

However, many do not realize that the doctrine of the Trinity is also embedded in these messages of the three angels. First, it is interesting that, in Rev 14:6–12, *three* angels bear *three* messages that compose *one* end-time warning for the world. Second, Rev 14:6–12 is a triadic passage in the New Testament, meaning all three persons of the Trinity. The Father is referenced in the first, second, and third angels’ messages with the term θεός (*theós*) or “God” (vv. 7, 10, 12). The Son is mentioned in the third angel’s message with the terms ἀρνίον (*arníon*) or “Lamb,” Ἰησοῦς (*Iēsoûs*) or “Jesus,” and κύριος (*kýrios*) or “Lord” (vv. 10, 12, 13). The Holy Spirit, called τὸ πνεῦμα (*tò pneûma*) or “the Spirit” in v. 13, speaks a benediction following the three angels’ messages. Therefore, one could argue that rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity is inadvertently a rejection of part of the three angels’ messages.<sup>13</sup>

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## EXCURSUS ON 2A.3A

### *Pluralis Majestaticus*

Some biblical scholars and non-Trinitarians argue that the plurality of God’s titles אֱלֹהִים (*’ēlōhîm*) and אֲדֹנָי (*’ādōnāy*), as well as texts where God refers to himself using first-person plural pronouns (e.g., Gen 1:26–28; 3:22; 11:7; Isa 6:8), are simply examples of *pluralis majestaticus* or “the plural of majesty.”<sup>14</sup> This linguistic phenomenon, often called the “royal plural,” occurs when a monarch speaks of him-/herself in the first-person plural; “we,” “us,” and “our” merely serve to convey honor and majesty, not numerical plurality. For instance, Queen Victoria (1819–1901), who ruled the United Kingdom from 1837 to 1901, is quoted as saying, “We are not amused,” after hearing a joke.<sup>15</sup> Another example can be seen in the Cordillera of the Andes Boundary Case, when Edward VII (1841–1910; r. 1901–1910), king of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions and emperor of India, arbitrated a boundary dispute between Argentina and Chile. In the adjudication, the king wrote, “Now, WE, EDWARD, by the grace of God, King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India, etc., etc., have arrived at the following decisions upon the questions in dispute, which have been referred to *Our* arbitration.”<sup>16</sup>

Concerning this objection, Robert Morey writes,

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<sup>12</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1885–1909), 9:19.

<sup>13</sup> Also, fascinating is the triadic nature of two passages about the end-time remnant in the book of Revelation that are important for Seventh-day Adventist theology. The Father and the Son are referenced in Rev 12:17 where the apostle John wrote about “the commandments of God” and “the testimony of Jesus” (ESV). In the correlating passage of Rev 19:10, where “the testimony of Jesus” is identified as “the Spirit of prophecy” (NIV), all three persons of the Trinity are mentioned, including the Father in the exclamation of the angel, “Worship God!” (NIV).

<sup>14</sup> Or *pluralis maiestatis*.

<sup>15</sup> The factuality of this story is disputed.

<sup>16</sup> “The Cordillera of the Andes Boundary Case,” in vol. 9 of *Reports of International Arbitral Awards*, 34 vols. (n.p.: United Nations, 2006–2022), 37, [https://legal.un.org/riaa/cases/vol\\_IX/37-49.pdf](https://legal.un.org/riaa/cases/vol_IX/37-49.pdf); emphasis supplied.

“During the nineteenth century debates between Unitarians and Trinitarians, the principle of *pluralis majesticus* was revealed to be a hoax popularized by the famous Jewish scholar Gensenius. It became clear that he used it as a *ruse de guerre* against Christianity. The fundamental error resided in the attempt to take a modern monarchical idiosyncrasy and read it back into an ancient text when such an idiosyncrasy was unknown at that time. Richard Davies in 1891 pointed out, ‘Indeed, this royal style is unknown in Scripture.’ What is astounding is that, one hundred years later, the anti-Trinitarians are still using this hoax to dodge the significance of the use of plural pronouns in reference to God. They seem to be totally ignorant of the fact that it is a recent grammatical invention and, thus, cannot be read back into ancient times or texts.”<sup>17</sup>

Supporting Morey’s conclusions, the research of Old Testament scholar Jiří Moskala reached the same findings: “In the biblical records, there is no evidence that any Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Judean, or other ancient ruler would speak in this way! In other words, this rhetorical interpretation cannot be imposed on these divine ‘We’ texts, because there is no indication that such a rhetorical style was used in biblical times.”<sup>18</sup>

Thus, to read these passages as cases of *pluralis majesticus* is to commit the fallacy of anachronism. It is more faithful to the historical-cultural context of these passages to interpret the instances of plural titles and pronouns for God as examples of “**the plural of fullness**”—indicative of God speaking within himself, having a conversation among the divine persons of the Trinity. Moskala writes,

“Our fresh investigation of the divine plural expressions ... leads to a surprising conclusion. God speaks about Himself as ‘We,’ and this expression points to a **plural of fellowship or community within the Godhead**. This plurality is a ‘plurality of Persons.’ God communicates within Himself; He is in a dialogue within the Godhead. ... The biblical monotheistic belief does not think about God in terms of His solitude or His singleness but presents Him as ‘We,’ or in fellowship within the Godhead. God created humanity in His image; He made humans in fellowship with each other, particularly husband and wife in a close intimate relationship, because He is fellowship, He is in relationship within Himself. This divine plural of fellowship suggests plurality of persons and points to the unity in His nature. This intra-divine fellowship of one God within plurality is a unique characteristic of our God. God is in communication within Himself and with His creation. We can build a personal relationship with this God of relationships and interactions.”<sup>19</sup>

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## EXCURSUS ON 2A.8

### The *Comma Johanneum* (1 John 5:7, 8)

In debates about the doctrine of the Trinity in the Bible, the textual variant called the *Comma Johanneum* (*CJ*) in 1 John 5:7–8 is controversial because it is absent from many early extant Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. However, it is included in the *Textus Receptus* (*TR*), which forms the basis for the KJV and some other translations. What is the *CJ*? Is it genuinely apostolic and a useful passage for defining the doctrine of the Trinity? Below is 1 John 5:7–8 from the NKJV with the *CJ* italicized.

“<sup>7</sup> For there are three that bear witness [about Jesus Christ] *in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.* <sup>8</sup> *And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.*”

What follows is the *CJ* in Greek.

“<sup>7</sup> ... εν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, [+ και] ὁ λόγος, και τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα· <sup>8</sup> και οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσιν και τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῆ, ...”

Here is an example of how modern versions of the Bible that exclude the *CJ* read in English and Greek.

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Morey, *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: World, 1996), 95; emphasis original.

<sup>18</sup> Jiří Moskala, “Toward Trinitarian Thinking in the Hebrew Scriptures” *JATS* 21.1–2 (2010): 252.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 273; emphasis original.

“7 For there are three that testify [about Jesus Christ]: <sup>8</sup> the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree” (ESV).

“7 ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, <sup>8</sup> τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν.”

So, is this textual variant authentic, meaning genuinely written by the apostle John, or was it a later addition, by accident or otherwise? Below is the textual evidence for the *CJ*.

- In the Arabic, Armenian, Slavonic (i.e., Slavic), and Syriac versions, no extant manuscript has been found that dates earlier than the 1500s.<sup>20</sup>
- In the Coptic and Ethiopic versions, the variant is entirely absent from all extant manuscripts.<sup>21</sup>
- These are the extant Latin manuscripts that contain the variant: *Codex Fuldensis* (F), dated to AD 546 (in the prologue, not in the main text); *Frisingensia Fragmenta* (r) or (q), dated between the fifth and seventh centuries (in the margin); *León palimpsest* (l) Beuron 6, dated to the seventh century (in the main text); *Codex Wizanburgensis*, dated to the eighth century (in the main text); *Codex Speculum* (m), dated to the ninth century; *Codex Cavensis* C, dated to the ninth century (in the main text); *Codex Ulmensis* U or σU, dated to the ninth century (in the main text); *Codex Complutensis I* (C), dated to AD 927 (in the main text); *Codex Theodulphianus*, dated between the eighth and ninth centuries (in the main text); *Codex Sangallensis* 907, dated between the eighth and ninth centuries (in the main text); *Codex Lemovicensis*-32 (L) dated to the ninth century (in the main text); *Codex Vercellensis*, dated to the ninth century (in the main text); *Codex Gothicus Legionensis*, dated to AD 960 (in the main text); and *Codex Toletanus*, dated to the tenth century (in the main text).
- These are the extant Greek manuscripts that contain the variant: 177 (*BSB Cod. grace. 211*), dated to the eleventh century (in the margin, which dates to the sixteenth century or later); 88 (*Codex Regis*), dated to between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries (in the margin, which dates to the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries); 429 (*Codex Guelferbytanus* or *Wolfenbüttel*), dated to c. the fourteenth century (in the margin, which dates to the sixteenth century); 629 (*Codex Ottobonianus* 298), dated between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries (in the main text); 61 (*Codex Montfortianus* or *Britannicus*), dated c. 1520 (in the main text); 636, dated to the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries (in the margin, which dates to the sixteenth century); 918 (*Codex Escorialensis* Σ.I.5), dated to the sixteenth century (in the main text); *Codex Ravianus* or *Berolinensis*, dated to the sixteenth century (in the main text); 2473, dated to the seventeenth century (in the main text); and 2318, dated to the eighteenth century (in the main text). The variant is also present in 221, dated to c. tenth century; however, it is in the margin, which some date to the nineteenth century (although there is some debate).
- These are the extant Greek manuscripts without the variant.
  - Dated before the 700s: 01, 03, 02, 048, and 0296.
  - Dated between the 700s and 800s: 018, 020, 025, 049, 0142, 1424, 1862, 1895, and 2464.
  - Assigned to the 900s: 044, 056, 82, 93, 175, 181, 221, 307, 326, 398, 450, 454, 456, 457, 602, 605, 619, 627, 832, 920, 1066, 1175, 1720, 1739, 1829, 1836, 1837, 1841, 1845, 1851, 1871, 1874, 1875, 1880, 1891, 2125, and 2147.
  - Assigned to the 1000s: 35, 36, 2, 42, 43, 81, 104, 131, 133, 142, 177, 250, 302, 325, 312, 314, 424, 436, 451, 458, 459, 462, 464, 465, 466, 491, 506, 517, 547, 606, 607, 617, 623, 624, 635, 638, 639, 641, 699, 796, 901, 910, 919, 945, 1162, 1243, 1244, 1270, 1311, 1384, 1521, 1668, 1724, 1730,

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<sup>20</sup> See Rodrigo Galiza and John W. Reeve, “The Johannine *Comma* (1 John 5:7–8): The Status of its Textual History and Theological Usage in English, Greek, and Latin,” *AUSS* 56.1 (2018): 76.

<sup>21</sup> See *ibid.*

1735, 1738, 1828, 1835, 1838, 1846, 1847, 1849, 1854, 1870, 1888, 2138, 2191, 2344, 2475, 2587, 2723, and 2746.

- Assigned to the 1100s: 3, 38, 1, 57, 88, 94, 97, 103, 105, 110, 180, 203, 226, 256, 319, 321, 323, 330, 337, 365, 431, 440, 442, 452, 618, 620, 622, 625, 632, 637, 656, 720, 876, 917, 922, 927, 1058, 1115, 1127, 1241, 1245, 1315, 1319, 1359, 1360, 1448, 1490, 1505, 1573, 1611, 1646, 1673, 1718, 1737, 1740, 1743, 1752, 1754, 1850, 1853, 1863, 1867, 1868, 1872, 1885, 1889, 1893, 1894, 1897, 2127, 2143, 2186, 2194, 2289, 2298, 2401, 2412, 2541, 2625, 2712, 2718, 2736, and 2805.
- Assigned to the 1200s: 4, 5, 6, 51, 204, 206, 172, 141, 218, 234, 263, 327, 328, 378, 383, 384, 390, 460, 468, 469, 479, 483, 496, 592, 601, 614, 643, 665, 757, 912, 914, 915, 941, 999, 1069, 1070, 1072, 1094, 1103, 1107, 1149, 1161, 1242, 1251, 1292, 1297, 1352, 1398, 1400, 1404, 1456, 1501, 1509, 1523, 1563, 1594, 1595, 1597, 1609, 1642, 1719, 1722, 1727, 1728, 1731, 1736, 1758, 1780, 1827, 1839, 1842, 1843, 1852, 1855, 1857, 1858, 1860, 1864, 1865, 1873, 2180, 2374, 2400, 2404, 2423, 2483, 2502, 2558, 2627, and 2696.
- Assigned to the 1300s: 18, 62, 76, 189, 201, 209, 216, 223, 254, 308, 363, 367, 386, 393, 394, 404, 421, 425, 429, 453, 489, 498, 582, 603, 604, 608, 621, 628, 630, 633, 634, 680, 743, 794, 808, 824, 913, 921, 928, 935, 959, 986, 996, 1022, 1040, 1067, 1075, 1099, 1100, 1102, 1106, 1248, 1249, 1354, 1390, 1409, 1482, 1495, 1503, 1524, 1548, 1598, 1599, 1610, 1618, 1619, 1622, 1637, 1643, 1661, 1678, 1717, 1723, 1725, 1726, 1732, 1733, 1741, 1742, 1744, 1746, 1747, 1753, 1761, 1762, 1765, 1769, 1831, 1832, 1856, 1859, 1866, 1877, 1881, 1882, 1886, 1890, 1892, 1899, 1902, 2080, 2085, 2086, 2197, 2200, 2261, 2279, 2356, 2431, 2466, 2484, 2492, 2494, 2508, 2511, 2527, 2626, 2675, 2705, 2716, 2774, and 2777.
- Assigned to the 1400s: 69, 102, 149, 205, 322, 368, 385, 400, 432, 444, 467, 615, 616, 631, 636, 664, 801, 1003, 1105, 1247, 1250, 1367, 1405, 1508, 1626, 1628, 1636, 1649, 1656, 1729, 1745, 1750, 1751, 1757, 1763, 1767, 1830, 1876, 1896, 2131, 2221, 2288, 2352, 2495, 2523, 2554, 2652, 2653, 2691, and 2704.
- Assigned to the 1500s or later: 90, 296, 522, 1702, 1704, 1749, 1768, 1840, 1844, 1861, 2130, 2218, 2255, 2378, 2501, 2516, 2544, 1101, 1721, 1748, 1869, 1903, 2243, 2674, 2776, 2473, and 1104.

The extant manuscript evidence strongly suggests that the variant of the *CJ* is not genuinely apostolic. Daniel B. Wallace comments, "Indeed, the reading appears in *no Greek witness of any kind* (either manuscript, patristic, or Greek translation of some other version) *until AD 1215* (in a Greek translation of the Acts of the Lateran Council, a work originally written in Latin)."<sup>22</sup> This means that the *CJ* should not be considered a part of Scripture. As such, it is not helpful in attempts to demonstrate biblically the validity of the doctrine of the Trinity.

So, how did the *CJ* make it into some versions of the Bible? What is the origin of this variant? In their research, Rodrigo Galiza and John W. Reeve conclude,

"Our assessment is that, even though the language of the *comma* has been found useful for doctrinal purposes (teaching), as by Tertullian and Cyprian, the evidence strongly suggests that the words of the full *comma* originated in Latin. If so, they could have never been a part of the original Greek of 1 John. Furthermore, it looks as if the *comma* may well have been created as a theological argument, later finding its way into the text of 1 John. Therefore, it would seem tautological to use words of a theological argument, later than the text itself, as a theological prooftext. Not only was the *comma* probably created as a theological argument, but it has been used to argue for a variety of conceptualizations of the Godhead, including modalism, as we have

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<sup>22</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, "The Textual Problem in 1 John 5:7-8" (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996): 262; emphasis original.

demonstrated. As both tautological and ambiguous, it seems logical to refrain from using the *comma* in debates on the doctrine of the Trinity.”<sup>23</sup>

Some may be bothered by the fact that inauthentic words have been added to the Bible. However, this should not cause us to doubt the trustworthiness of Scripture. On this point, the following comment from White is helpful.

“Some look to us gravely and say, ‘Don’t you think there might have been some mistake in the copyist or in the translators?’ This is all probable, and the mind that is so narrow that it will hesitate and stumble over this possibility or probability would be just as ready to stumble over the mysteries of the Inspired Word, because their feeble minds cannot see through the purposes of God. Yes, they would just as easily stumble over plain facts that the common mind will accept, and discern the Divine, and to which God’s utterance is plain and beautiful, full of marrow and fatness. All the mistakes will not cause trouble to one soul, or cause any feet to stumble, that would not manufacture difficulties from the plainest revealed truth.”<sup>24</sup>

*Revised 2025/08/08*

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<sup>23</sup> Galiza and Reeve, “The Johannine *Comma*,” 88, 89. See the whole article for more a detailed history of the *Comma Johanneum*.

<sup>24</sup> White, *Selected Messages*, 3 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 1:16.