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Raising the ghost of Arius : Erasmus, the Johannine comma and religious difference in early modern Europe

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RAISING THE GHOST OF ARIUS

*Erasmus,
the Johannine Comma
and Religious Difference in Early Modern Europe*

PROEFSCHRIFT
TER VERKRIJGING VAN
DE GRAAD VAN DOCTOR AAN DE UNIVERSITEIT LEIDEN,
OP GEZAG VAN DE RECTOR MAGNIFICUS PROF. MR. P. F. VAN DER HEIJDEN,
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I know not a Passage in all the New Testament so contested as this.

Edward Calamy, 1719

It is rather a danger to religion, than an advantage, to make it now lean upon a bruised reed. There cannot be better service done to the truth, than to purge it of things spurious.

Isaac Newton, 1690

To use a weak argument in behalf of a good cause, can only tend to infuse a suspicion of the cause itself into the minds of all who see the weakness of the argument. Such a procedure is scarcely a remove short of pious fraud.

Richard Porson, 1790

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASD. *Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi*. Amsterdam: North Holland/Elsevier, 1969-2008; Leiden: Brill, 2009-.

ASD VI.8. *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum, 1-2 Cor.* Ed. Miekske L. van Poll-van de Lisdonk. Amsterdam: North Holland/Elsevier, 2003.

ASD IX.2. *Apologia respondens ad ea quae Iacobus Lopis Stunica taxaverat in prima duntaxat Novi Testamenti æditione*. Ed. Henk Jan de Jonge. Amsterdam: North Holland, 1983.

ASD IX.4. *Apologia qua respondet duabus invectivis Eduardi Lei; Responsio ad annotationes Eduardi Lei; Manifesta Mendacia*. Ed. Erika Rummel. *Responsio ad disputationem cuiusdam Phimostomi de divortio*. Ed. Edwin Rabbie. Amsterdam: North Holland/Elsevier, 2003.

CCCM. *Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis*. 217 vols. Turnhout: Brepols, 1971-2006.

CCSL. *Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina*. 128 vols. Turnhout: Brepols, 1953-2008.

CE. *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*. Ed. Peter G. Bietenholz and Thomas B. Deutscher. 3 vols. Toronto: Toronto UP, 1985-1987.

Correspondence. The Correspondence of Erasmus, trans. R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thompson, annotat. Wallace K. Ferguson and Peter G. Bietenholz. 11 vols. Toronto: Toronto UP, 1974-1994.

CSEL. *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*. 96 vols. Vienna: Tempsky, 1866-.

CW. *Collected Works of Erasmus*. Toronto: Toronto UP, 1974-.

DNB. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. 60 vols. Oxford: OUP, 2004.

GA. Gregory-Aland manuscript numbers, given according to Aland *et al.*, 1994.

Glossa ordinaria. Bibliorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria iam ante quidem à Strabo Fulgensi collecta. 6 vols. Venice: Giunta, 1603.

Hansard. The Parliamentary Debates, ed. Thomas Curson Hansard. London: Hansard, 1803-.

LB. Erasmus, Opera Omnia. Ed. J. Le Clerc. 10 vols. Leiden: Van der Aa, 1703-1706.

New Grove. The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2nd ed. 29 vols. London: MacMillan, 2001.

Omnia Opera. Erasmus, Omnia Opera. 9 vols. Basel: Froben, 1538-1540.

Opus Epist. Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami. Ed. Percy S. Allen, H. M. Allen and H. W. Garrod. 11 vols. Oxford: OUP, 1906-1947.

PG. Patrologiæ cursus completus. Series Græca. Ed. Jacques-Paul Migne. 161 vols. Paris: Seu Petit-Montrouge, 1857-1866.

PL. Patrologiæ cursus completus. Series Latina. Ed. Jacques-Paul Migne. 221 vols. Paris: Garnier, 1844-1905.

Text und Textwert. Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments. Ed. Kurt Aland *et al.* Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987-.

WA. Martin Luther, Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Weimar: Böhlau, 1883-. I *Werke* (58 vols), 1883-1983; II *Tischreden* (6 vols), 1912-1921; III *Die deutsche Bibel* (12 vols), 1906-1961; IV *Briefe* (18 vols), 1930-1985.

Abbreviations for musical sources are given as in the *Répertoire international des sources musicales* (*RISM*).

The following textual sigla are also used:

| | |
|-----|---|
| C | <i>corrector</i> (C1, C2, C3...) |
| L | <i>lectio varia</i> (<i>in margine</i>); an L reading always substitutes for a T reading |
| S | reading in a supplemental part of a manuscript |
| T | text reading |
| * | <i>prima manus</i> |
| ** | <i>secunda manus</i> |
| [] | numbers given in brackets after a biblical citation refer to a <i>Teststelle</i> and <i>Lesart</i> assigned by <i>Text und Textwert</i> |

Unless otherwise stated, biblical citations in English are quoted from the New Revised Standard Version. All other translations, except where specifically noted, are my own.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The germ of this study was planted some time ago when I read the curious work *Tractatus aliquot Christianæ religionis* (1583) by Jan Sommer, a minor Transylvanian Reformer. Only a couple of copies of this book survive, including one in the Lambeth Palace Library, given to John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, by no one less than John Dee. It was Sommer's intention to show that several Christian doctrines had been stolen holus-bolus from Plato; amongst these was the notion of the Trinity. My curiosity about Sommer's claims led me into the heart of the Socinian debates and the question of the Johannine comma.

My heartfelt thanks go to all those who kindly gave their assistance and advice while I pursued these questions: Peter Auer, Warrick Brewer, Jeremy Catto, Massimo Ceresa, Marita von Cieminski, Patrick Collinson, Craig D'Alton, Don Fries, Royston Gustavson, Martin Heide, Leofranc Holford-Strevens, Bruce Krajewski, Barbara Crostini Lappin, Dorothy Lee, Andrew McKenzie-McHarg, Vivian Nutton, Douglas Parker, Leigh Penman, Jac Perrin, Julian Reid, Chris Ross, Erika Rummel, Mark Statham, Steven Van Impe, Timothy Wengert and Piotr Wilczek. Thanks to the Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance (Université François-Rabelais de Tours), Le STUDIUM (CNRS Orléans) and the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven for their support while I was writing this study. Thanks also go to a number of libraries which kindly allowed me access to their collections or provided copies: the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge; the Library of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge; the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge; the University Library, Cambridge; the Library of Trinity College, Dublin; the Bibliothek des Evangelischen Ministeriums, Erfurt; the National Archives, Kew; the Universiteitsbibliotheek, Leuven; the British Library, London; the Lambeth Palace Library, London; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the Library of Corpus Christi College, Oxford; the Library of Magdalene College, Oxford; the Library of New College, Oxford; the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris; the Library of the Lutheran Theological Seminary,

Philadelphia; the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel; the Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, Wrocław; and the Zentralbibliothek, Zürich.

And of course thanks to my family, near and far, who have patiently kept hold of one end of the string while I set off into the labyrinth in search of monsters.

Brussels, *in festo S. Ambrosii*, 2010.

INTRODUCTION

1. *The birth of the Trinity*

Perhaps the most characteristic of Christian doctrines is that of the Holy Trinity, one godhead in three persons: Father, incarnate Son and Holy Spirit. This doctrine developed out of various attempts to understand the relationships between God; Jesus, whom the Christian Scriptures designate as “Son of God;” and the Holy Spirit, whom the Scriptures sometimes describe as sent by God, at other times as given by Christ; and all this within the context of an expressly monotheistic system of belief. I say this doctrine “was developed” since it is not expressed unambiguously in the Christian Scriptures. True, it may be *implied* from several episodes in the New Testament, such as the baptism of Christ: “And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased’” (Mk 1:10-11, cf. Ps 2:7). But some objected that this meant that Jesus was adopted by God as his Son at his baptism. At the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus commissioned his disciples: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19). But objectors pointed out that this does not necessarily mean that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one, or even equal. When Paul bids “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit” be with the church at Corinth (2 Cor 13:13), it is easy to assume from a post-Nicene perspective that he is referring to the Trinity, but from Paul’s perspective this cannot necessarily be assumed. Objectors might ask on the basis of Paul’s formulation: “Is Jesus not God? Is the Holy Spirit not God? Did Paul not know what he was talking about?” The existence in the early church of widely varying conclusions over the theological implications of these passages is ample evidence that they are not at all self-evident, despite what we might think from a post-Nicene perspective. Nevertheless, on the basis of such passages, the doctrine of the Trinity eventually

crystallised through a vigorous and often acrimonious process of discussion and debate as the early church attempted to make sense of the witness of Scripture and the tradition of its interpretation, handed down from one generation of believers to the next.

But the way people made sense of these texts and traditions varied quite widely.¹ Among early Christian authors, some defended the doctrine of the Trinity against those who had a different understanding of Jesus' nature. Those who maintained a belief in the consubstantial Trinity described those who did not as "heretics," that is, those who adhere to a *hæresis*, a certain choice in the way of thinking. For example, in the Gospels Jesus is given a number of titles from the Hebrew Scriptures, and the way these titles were understood had an effect on the way particular groups understood Jesus' mission and nature. At Mt 27:42, Mk 15:32, Jn 1:49 and Jn 12:13, Jesus is called "King of Israel." And in the canonical Gospels and Acts, Jesus is called "Son of God" more than two dozen times. These titles are related, since "Son of God" is a royal title given to those who represent God, like David or Solomon (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7). Did these titles mean then merely that Jesus' followers hoped that he would become king of a free Israel in the future? Or did this title imply that Jesus was also God? Some "heretics" answered this latter question in the negative, maintaining that Jesus was a human, albeit one through whom God had chosen specially to proclaim his power. The belief that Jesus was merely human was maintained by groups such as the Ebionites, an early Jewish-Christian sect. By contrast, other groups insisted that Jesus was in some sense one with God. This position is maintained strongly in the theologically sophisticated Fourth Gospel and in the Johannine Epistles, in which Jesus is identified as the Word who was in the beginning with God (Jn 1:1). According to the Fourth Gospel, Jesus claimed that he and the Father are one (Jn 10:30). Yet even this statement does not have to imply that Jesus was equal to the Father in every respect. Some early Christian thinkers, notably Arius, suggested that Jesus was essentially subordinate to the Father. Others described Jesus as co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. This latter understanding of Jesus' nature necessarily had implications for the way the Spirit was understood. Dominant strands in Christianity agreed that all three persons of the Trinity are

¹ The notion of a monolithic and originary Christian orthodoxy from which "heretical" groups fell away was first challenged by Bauer, 1934/1971. Bauer's thesis has been modified in several ways, but his essential point remains valid; further, see Harrington, 1980; and Ehrman, 1993.

entirely equal in essence and power. At the First Council of Nicaea (325) and the Council of Constantinople (381), the eternal equality of the Father and the Son was enshrined as dogma: “And [I believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.”² (While the equality of the Holy Spirit to the other two persons is not stated explicitly in the Nicene formulation, it is more or less implicit.) Belief in the equality of the Father and the Son was thus normative for orthodox Christian belief. Deviations such as Adoptionism (espoused by Artemon, Theodotus and the Ebionites) and Subordinationism (Origen, Arius and many others) were rejected. Such ideas were considered by the orthodox to injure the dignity of Jesus as the Christ, the anointed one of God. For orthodox apologists like Athanasius, they also raised the suspicion of idolatry. For if Jesus was created, then to worship him would mean worshiping the creation rather than the creator. Moreover, if Jesus was merely a creature, he could have no power to save us. Raising a creature to the status of the divine also endangered the strict monotheism that followed from Christianity’s Jewish origins. Arius’ understanding of Jesus as ontically separate from God was also considered problematic for the understanding of Jesus’ role as mediator; for to separate Jesus from God would suggest that God is too lofty, or too idle, to take an interest in our salvation. Moreover, if Jesus was appointed as our Saviour, then he was created for us, rather than we for God.³ Many heterodox ideas were espoused during the Middle Ages, yet with the virtually universal acceptance of the Nicene formulation of the Trinity, the arch-heresy of Arius disappeared—with a few isolated exceptions—for the best part of a thousand years.

The most explicit expression of the doctrine of the consubstantial Trinity in the New Testament is apparently found in a neatly balanced pair of verses in the fifth chapter of the first letter of John: “⁷For there are three that witness *in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one.* ⁸*And there are three that witness on earth, the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood, and these three are unto one*” (ἵνα τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσι. ⁸καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ,

² Text of the respective versions given in Denzinger, 2001, 62-64, §§ 125-126 (Nicaea); 83-85, § 150 (Constantinople).

³ Wiles, 1996, 7-8.

τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν; 1 Jn 5:7-8, following the reading in Stephanus' *editio regia* of 1550, the ultimate basis of the *textus receptus*).⁴ But as we shall see, the textual history of this pair of verses is not uncontroversial. To begin with, the entire passage from “in heaven” (ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ) in verse 7 to “on earth” (ἐν τῇ γῇ) in verse 8 does not occur in any of the earliest Greek manuscripts. These words missing from the Greek text, given above in italics, are known as the “Johannine comma” or *Comma Iohanneum*. (*Comma* here signifies not a mark of punctuation, but a sentence or clause.)⁵ The first extant manuscripts of the Latin bible to contain the Johannine comma—a fragment in Munich and a palimpsest in León—date from the seventh century. The comma is not found frequently in Latin bibles until the ninth century, and is lacking from many Latin bibles more recent than that. Moreover, the readings in these early Latin bibles are inconsistent and unstable, suggesting that the comma relied upon less firm textual support than the verses that surround it. Yet as long as the Orthodox world remained virtually separate from the Catholic West, and

⁴ The *textus receptus* of the New Testament is that form of the Greek text which became generally accepted after it had been printed, with little variation, in the editions of Erasmus, Robert Estienne (Stephanus), and Beza. It was based on only a limited number of relatively late manuscripts of the Byzantine text type. In the nineteenth century it was superseded in critical editions by another text type, based on a selection of much earlier manuscripts; this is often called the Egyptian or Alexandrian text. The term *textus receptus* derives from the preface to the second edition printed by the Elzeviers at Leiden in 1633, in which Daniel Heinsius wrote (2*v): “Textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum, in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damus.” See Metzger and Ehrman, 2005, 149-152. On Heinsius' authorship of this preface, see de Jonge, 1971. Although Heinsius was the first to apply the phrase *textus receptus* to the New Testament, the phraseology was already in use to designate a form of text recognised by professionals in a particular field, such as law; see for example Dumoulin, 1625, 1:31: “Et hæc veritas, quam nuper Canonist. quidam Volzius inuertere nisus est, corrumpendo antiquum per quadringentos annos receptum textum [...]”

⁵ The first appearance of the term *comma Iohanneum* occurs in a description of Bebel's 1524 edition of the Greek New Testament, in Masch, 1778-1790, 1:199: “Textus græcus ex Erasmica tertia est exscriptus, hinc comma Iohanneum hic exhibetur [...]” Cf. also Masch, 1778-1790, 1:198, 247, 248. At first the term was a little vague, as is evident from the description of Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg, ms Solger 8° 1, a twelfth-century manuscript of the Latin Vulgate, in Murr, 1786-1791, 1:412; here the word *comma* actually refers not to the disputed words, but to the genuine words of 1 Jn 5:7: “Dictum Iohanneum de tribus in cælo testibus I. Ioh. V. v. 7. in nostro Codice non in margine, sed in textu ipso, integrum, sequens comma uero de tribus in terra testibus in margine scriptum est.”

as long as knowledge of Greek in the West remained relatively rare, this textual difference raised only occasional comment.

In 1516, Erasmus of Rotterdam, the greatest textual scholar of his day, published an edition of the New Testament with a new Latin translation and a parallel Greek text to justify his choices.⁶ Since the Johannine comma was absent from all the Greek manuscripts he consulted, Erasmus did not include it in his edition. He was immediately censured for this decision by a number of humanists and clerics, notably the Englishman Edward Lee and the Spaniard Diego Lopez de Zúñiga (Stunica). Erasmus defended his choice by pointing out that he was merely following the evidence of the Greek manuscripts he had inspected. But Lee argued that since the comma is the most explicit formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament, its omission could hardly be interpreted as a neutral editorial decision. Lee went further and accused Erasmus of trying to promote the long-dormant error of Arius, a charge that had no basis in fact, and one that Erasmus was naturally keen to shake off.⁷ In the midst of this acrimonious debate, Erasmus was presented with a Greek manuscript from England which contained the disputed passage as part of its body text. On the strength of this one textual witness, Erasmus included the comma in his next edition of the New Testament, in the hope of removing any further grounds of criticism, but he signalled clearly in the accompanying annotations on the passage that he believed this “British codex” to have been altered to conform more closely to the Vulgate. The cognitive dissonance of Erasmus’ decision—his inclusion of the comma within the text, and his simultaneous questioning of its textual legitimacy in the annotation—has prompted vigorous debate ever since.⁸ And as we shall see, Erasmus’ decision became the crux on which a number of wide-ranging social debates in early modern Europe depended.

⁶ De Jonge, 1984b, argues that Erasmus’ primary intention was not so much the publication of a Greek text of the New Testament as a reliable translation in contemporary and humanistic—that is, more classical—Latin, a language better fitted to serve as a vehicle to convey the *philosophia Christi*. On the date of the Latin translation, see Brown, 1984; de Jonge 1988a, 1988b.

⁷ On the course of this debate, see Coogan, 1992, esp. 101-113 on the comma.

⁸ The classic exposition of the theory of cognitive dissonance is Festinger, 1957; see Cooper, 2007, for a critique.

2. *The comma as crux*

While I was still in the early stages of this project, a friend asked me bluntly: “Why do you even care if the comma belongs in the text?” “Because it is the bible,” I remember replying, perhaps a little sanctimoniously, “and what is in the bible matters.” The importance of the bible for believers goes without saying. But even those who consider Scripture as merely historically interesting (or even as irrelevant trash) cannot escape its influence. Worldwide, biblical fundamentalism is alive and well in Christianity, Islam and Judaism. In its more benign forms it might induce people to climb Mt Ararat in search of Noah’s Ark. In more advanced cases it may lead people to lobby governments to prevent the teaching of evolution in schools, or to influence policy in other ways. In terminal cases it might lead millions to believe that it is more virtuous to spread an incurable disease than wear a condom, or that it is a thing pleasing to God to declare a crusade or a jihad, to enter a foreign country and murder the innocent. The reliability of the Scriptural record and its interpretation are thus as relevant now as they have ever been. And as we shall see, the authenticity of the Johannine comma has been one of the focal points of this debate for a long time. The resurgence of fundamentalism worldwide, but especially in Evangelical circles in the Anglophone world, has resuscitated the debate over the comma, an issue which scholars a generation ago considered dead and buried. As a result of the historical misrepresentations of many fundamentalists, the divide between scholarly consensus and lay belief is steadily growing; in a poll taken recently on the website [puritanboard.com](http://www.puritanboard.com), nearly half of the respondents replied that they believe the comma to be a genuine part of Scripture.⁹ Those who defend the comma now have a very particular agenda: to bring academic biblical studies into disrepute as a way to justify their adherence to the *textus receptus* and the Authorised version; and to promote a conservative moral order based on a literalist reading of Scripture.

⁹ <http://www.puritanboard.com/f63/johannine-comma-37481/>, accessed 6 March 2010. Support for the comma is also to be found amongst official bodies; the 2006 *Report of the Religion and Morals Committee of the Free Church of Scotland*, 17, complains about the omission of the comma from the English Standard Version; www.fpchurch.org.uk/ReligionMorals/2006Report.pdf.

There are also scientific reasons why it is time to revisit this topic. Firstly, the most detailed extended examinations of the early development of the comma were published at least sixty years ago. Since that time, better critical editions of most of the Fathers and many mediaeval writers have been made available in the *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* and *Corpus Christianorum*, replacing the critically inadequate editions available to that point, such as those reprinted in Migne's *Patrologia*. These critical developments have had a significant impact on the accuracy and reliability of judgments on the textual development of the Johannine comma. The intensive study of patristic and mediaeval texts over the past century has led to the discovery of new texts and the reassignment of many texts of dubious authorship; both developments have had a serious impact on our understanding of the development of the comma. The study of the surviving manuscripts of the New Testament has also advanced to an extraordinary degree over the past century, due most recently to the intensive work done at the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung at the University of Münster. The publication of the Institut's series *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments* and the gradual appearance of the *Editio critica maior* of the New Testament, which builds on the data collected for *Text und Textwert*, have permitted the identification of relationships between manuscripts with a degree of accuracy never before possible. The work of the Vetus Latina-Institut at Beuron has brought advances of a similar magnitude in our understanding of the early history of the Latin versions of the New Testament text. In short, the critical tools we now possess to assess this question from a scientific perspective have never been more powerful.

Accordingly, the first chapter of this study presents the evidence for the textual authenticity of the comma, and uses the evidence of its earliest attested forms to suggest how it arose. This is not intended as an attack on Christian theology. Whatever their opinion of this evidence, mainstream Western Christian theologians now maintain that the doctrine of the Trinity need not stand or fall on the authenticity of the comma. Indeed, the Eastern churches have historically managed quite well without the comma—at least they did until the sixteenth century, when they too became drawn into the critical debate following Erasmus' omission of the comma from his text, and began to include the comma in their creeds and their lectionaries. But critics have not always been so comfortable. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the debate over the status of the comma was not simply a matter of a few words here or there. The

importance placed on Scripture by the Protestant Reformation meant that questions of textual integrity took on great importance, especially where matters of core doctrine are involved. From the sixteenth century, the debate over this particular text took on wider social meaning as it was drawn into larger discussions about Antitrinitarianism.

Antitrinitarianism is invariably associated with its most famous ancient proponent, Arius. In his important monograph on Arius (1987), Rowan Williams showed how troublesome the concept of Arianism is in late antiquity; it is scarcely less difficult to define in the early modern period, but for the moment it is enough to equate it with a questioning of the traditional Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, though it was also used as a portmanteau term for heterodoxy of almost any form. From the mid-sixteenth century until the late seventeenth, Antitrinitarianism was a particularly hot issue in Poland and Germany, as controversialists associated with the Socinian church published tracts intended to put an axe to the root of Christianity: the doctrine of the Trinity. The persecution and final expulsion of the Socinians from Poland saw many end up in England during the Civil War, and in the Netherlands. Many English churchmen, both Anglican and Puritan, feared that Socinianism would promote a laxity of doctrine which would lead inexorably to a chic liberalism and even worse. John Edwards (1695) asserted that “in the very *Socinian* Doctrine it self there seems to be an *Atheistick* Tang.”¹⁰ Socinianism was also interpreted as a threat to the unity of a nation recently reunited under a Protestant flag. William Sherlock, dean of St Paul’s London in 1693, warned that “*these Disputes about the Trinity make sport for Papists.*” Should they continue, he admonished, “we shall certainly be conquered by *France.*”¹¹ On the other hand, many Unitarians (the historical descendants of the Socinians) resented the fact that they were still liable to punishment—or at least stigmatisation and social disadvantage—on account of their beliefs. This sense of disenfranchisement was felt by many other minority religious groups in Great Britain, most notably Roman Catholics. When Unitarians began to use the philological advances won by pious critics like John Mills to advance their own doctrinal angle, the worst fears of conservative commentators seemed to be realised.

¹⁰ Edwards, 1695, 64.

¹¹ Sherlock, 1693, 23.

From the sixteenth century to the nineteenth, the status of the comma was thus an issue on which any educated person could be expected to have an opinion, and tempers ran high on both sides. According to Isaac Newton, the comma was “in everybody’s mouth.”¹² For Jean-Pierre Paulin Martin (1887), this was “a burning question, one of those by which one can sometimes judge a man’s mettle.”¹³ With the spread of Enlightenment ideals in the eighteenth century, traditional Christian doctrine, including the Nicene formulation of the Trinity, came increasingly under the spotlight. These issues reached a particular head when Edward Gibbon dismissed the Johannine comma as an interpolation in his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1781). Gibbon was refuted vigorously by the clergyman George Travis, who in turn received an unwelcome reply from the philologists Richard Porson and Herbert Marsh. The work of these men can be seen as the culmination of Erasmus’ attempt to historicise Christianity, to understand it in its historical, literary and linguistic context. But ever since Erasmus’ time, fears had been voiced that tampering with the text of Scripture would lead to a scepticism and disbelief which could only undermine doctrine and faith more generally. Literary and theological journals were deluged with essays attacking or defending the comma with varying degrees of competence, from the fatuous to the vertiginously erudite. The heat that this debate managed to generate is difficult to appreciate until one begins to leaf through the smart journals like the *Gentleman’s Magazine* and *The Eclectic Review* from the 1780s through to the 1830s. The textual status of the Johannine comma, minutely dissected by dozens of learned critics and untold thousands of lay commentators, took on the proportions of a cultural phenomenon. And the mythology surrounding Erasmus’ inclusion of the comma in the third edition of his Greek text became a weapon that could be deployed in interdenominational polemic—and invariably was. The tens of thousands of pages devoted to this issue on the internet show that this is still an issue of abiding interest.

¹² Newton, 1785, 5:504.

¹³ Martin, 1887, 98: “[...] nous savons que c’est là une question brûlante, une de ces questions sur lesquelles on juge quelquefois des tendances d’un homme.”

3. Erasmus' role in the dispute

Throughout this entire story, Erasmus remains a central player, for he more than anyone else is seen as responsible not only for including the comma in a form of the Greek text which would dominate the scene from the early sixteenth to the late nineteenth centuries (what would become known as the *textus receptus*), but also for calling the authenticity of the comma into question. Over time, the story of his decision to include the comma was altered in the telling, in a centuries-long game of “telephone.” Some variants in this narrative seem innocuous enough, but they often conceal further motives. According to a popular legend still recounted widely, Erasmus promised to reinstate the comma if a single Greek manuscript could be found to support the reading, challenging his adversary Edward Lee to produce such a manuscript. When such a manuscript *was* produced, Erasmus is alleged to have honoured his promise by including the comma in the third edition (1522).¹⁴ This myth, however appealing, suggests misleading conclusions about Erasmus' character and his editorial process. More significantly, it implies that he ultimately came to be convinced of the authenticity of the comma. In 1980, Henk Jan de Jonge roasted this old chestnut, showing decisively that there is no evidence that Erasmus ever made such a promise, which seems rather to have grown from a careless misreading of Erasmus' published reply to Lee. However, like all good stories which are not true but which really ought to be, the myth of Erasmus' promise to Lee refuses to go away. Despite the efforts of scholars like de Jonge, the myth continues to be cited in scholarly and popular literature on biblical criticism.¹⁵ It is ironic that Erasmus' attempt to arrive at a

¹⁴ See de Jonge, 1980, 381-389; ASD IX.2:12, 259; Rummel, 1986, 132-133; Goldhill, 2002, 14-59.

¹⁵ De Jonge, 1980, 381-382, cites many nineteenth- and twentieth century authorities who cite the myth. Metzger, 1964b, 101, cited the legend, but at the suggestion of de Jonge, he corrected the error in a supplementary note to the revised edition (1992), 291. It was also corrected in the third edition of Reynolds and Wilson, 1991, 280. Amongst academic writers, the legend is still cited by Greenlee, 1985, 45 (from Metzger 1964b); Marshall, 1994, 236 (“Erasmus had to keep his word in his third edition (1522), although he protested forcibly; subsequently, he again omitted the words”); O'Neill, 1995, 91; Shillington, 2002, 157; Ehrman, 2005, 81-82; Curley, 2007, 320; Bietenholz, 2008, 34-35. The myth still circulates widely in popular publications, such as White, 1995, 61; McCrae, 2002, 134; Barber, 2006, 48-49 (from Metzger 1964b); Knight, 2009, 159. Standish and Standish, 2006, 122-123, even

more accurate reading of one text should have spawned such a variety of inaccurate readings of his own writings.

4. The aims of the present study

The disputes over the comma have been examined before, notably by August Bludau, Henk Jan de Jonge, Robert Coogan and Joseph M. Levine, who nevertheless remarked: “The long story of the Johannine comma between Erasmus and Gibbon remains to be told.”¹⁶ Besides making some modest steps towards addressing this desideratum, we shall also try to do something a little different. Firstly, we shall suggest a new explanation for the textual development of the comma, partly through the application of linguistic theory; secondly, we shall investigate the production of the Codex Montfortianus, the Greek manuscript from which Erasmus took his reading of the Johannine comma, suggesting a number of new conclusions based on a fresh examination of the manuscript; thirdly, we shall explain how Erasmus came to examine this manuscript; fourthly, we shall examine the creation of a mythology surrounding Erasmus’ inclusion of the comma within his text; and finally, we shall see how this mythology was deployed in interdenominational disputes throughout the early modern period and into our own times. In the process we shall see that the disputed authenticity of the Johannine comma has over time acted as the focal point for many of the anxieties caused by the pressures of religious difference, whether in early modern Europe or postmodern America.

purport that the mythical promise was made by Tyndale; in defence of the comma, they make a number of inaccurate or misleading comments: “[...] it must be admitted that numerous Greek manuscripts do not contain it, although it is to be found in the Latin Vulgate, a version of the Scripture to which most true Protestants give little credence.”

¹⁶ Levine, 1999, 157.

CHAPTER ONE

1. *In the beginning was ...*

Ever since the publication of Erasmus' New Testament, those who have commented on the authenticity of the Johannine comma—and there have been many—have argued one of two positions. One party maintains that the comma is a spurious addition to the Latin versions with no right to be included in the Greek text, or anywhere else; they reason that its absence from the overwhelming majority of Greek manuscripts, from the Old Syriac, the Philoxenian Syriac, the several Arabic versions, the Coptic (Memphitic), Ethiopic, Sahidic, Armenian and Slavonic versions, from all the earliest Latin manuscripts of the New Testament, from the works of the Greek Fathers and the earliest Latin Fathers, and its instability in later Latin texts, all argues against its authenticity. On the other hand, those who defend the authenticity of the comma argue that its presence in two Greek manuscripts predating the third edition of Erasmus' New Testament; the fact that the comma is quoted by some of the later Latin Fathers; its appearance in many later manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate; and its preservation in the *textus receptus* all goes to show that divine providence has preserved this verse as an unambiguous witness to the consubstantial Trinity. Many of those who support the authenticity of the comma argue that its omission creates an unacceptable solecism in the grammar of the passage. Edward F. Hills, the most learned of modern defenders of the comma, concluded: "it is not impossible that the *Johannine comma* was one of those few true readings of the Latin Vulgate not occurring in the Traditional Greek Text but incorporated into the Textus Receptus under the guiding providence of God. In these rare instances God called upon the usage of the Latin-speaking Church to correct the usage of the Greek speaking Church."¹

¹ Hills, 1984, 213.

The first thing we must do then is to examine the fifth chapter of the first Letter of John as a means to understanding more clearly those arguments for the authenticity of the comma that rely on grammar and context. We shall then examine the occurrence of the comma in the various ancient versions, and quotations of the comma in the works of the early Fathers. On the basis of the wide variety of textual variants and the patterns of its citation, we shall also suggest a slightly novel explanation for the way in which the comma developed. We shall then examine the ways in which the comma was received by various mediaeval authors, and became part of the Roman liturgy. Finally, we shall look at the evidence of the Greek manuscripts from the late middle ages.

2. Determining the place of the comma in 1 John 5 from grammar and context

One argument frequently made to support the authenticity of the comma is the so-called “argument from grammar,” often associated with Frederick Nolan (1815), Louis Gaussen (1840) and Robert Dabney (1890), and still promoted by “King James Only” advocates such as Peter S. Ruckman (1973), Jack A. Moorman (1988) and Michael Maynard (1995). Nolan believed that the comma was an integral part of the Greek text, but had been removed by Eusebius out of a secret inclination to Arianism. To support this hypothesis he argued that while the masculine participle μαρτυροῦντες (“those bearing witness”) in verse 7 requires at least one masculine referent, the neuter nouns πνεῦμα (spirit), ὕδωρ (water) and αἷμα (blood) in verse 8 cannot serve as referents without creating a grammatical problem. This apparent solecism, he argued, disappears if the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are made the referent of the participle, thus proving that a reference to the Trinity must have been an original and integral part of the text.²

Let us examine the context of the passage (1 Jn 5:1-12) to see if these claims can be sustained. This is a notoriously obscure and elliptical passage, marked by abrupt shifts of topic, by sentences that change direction half way through (*anacolouthon*), by qualification of previous utterances (*correctio*) as well as by elements (water, spirit, blood) that could refer to a number of different

² Nolan, 1815, 257-260; Dabney, 1890-1897, 1:377-379.

things.³ Clearly the author is referring to debates, issues, images and stories within the Johannine community of which we are only dimly aware. As a consequence, this passage has failed to find a universally accepted interpretation.⁴

Yet the one question that does arise persistently throughout the passage is that of testimony and its reliability: how can we believe the claim that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ? (The two terms “Son of God” and “Christ” here seem virtually synonymous, as in Jn 20:31.) One way to navigate through the interpretive possibilities offered by this passage is thus to follow the thread of the question: “What testimony do we require to become convinced of the salvific claim that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ?” This was a crucial issue for the Johannine community, one of the differences that caused the community to split. Judging from what the author (or authors) of the Johannine Epistles wrote, former members of the community had denied the full humanity of Jesus Christ (1 Jn 2:19, 2:22, 4:2-3; 2 Jn 7; 2 Jn 9).⁵ It has long been suggested that these secessionists espoused a belief something like that which Irenaeus attributes to Cerinthus (c. 100): that Jesus and “the Christ”—a divine emanation, or “aeon” in the language later used by the Gnostics—were two different beings. Unable to accept the suggestion that God could suffer and die, the proto-Gnostic Cerinthus taught that the Christ had entered Jesus at his baptism, and departed before his death (Irenaeus, *Adv. hær.* 1.26.1). Alternatively, the secessionists perhaps held a docetic position like that refuted by Ignatius in his letters to the churches in Smyrna and Tralles. It may also be that the thought of the secessionists was even less clearly articulated than either of these positions; the Epistles simply do not permit a detailed or firm reconstruction of the secessionists’ beliefs.⁶ By contrast, the author of the Epistle argues that belief in the claim that Jesus really died

³ The diversity of interpretation is chronicled by Meehan, 1986.

⁴ My interpretation engages particularly with those put forward by Westcott, 1892; Brooke, 1912; Dodd, 1946; Schneider, 1961; Schnackenberg, 1975; Brown, 1982, 591; Lieu, 1991, 47-49; Klauck, 1991, 282-317; Vogler, 1993, 157-170, and Harris, 2003, 195-196.

⁵ By contrast, Perkins, 1979, xxi-xxiii, Lieu, 1991, 13-14, and Painter, 2008, 88-94, suggest that the representation of the position of the secessionists is perhaps not so much a reflection of the historical situation as a rhetorical ploy designed to win the assent of the reader/listener.

⁶ Brown, 1982, 55-68, 766-771; Lieu, 1991, 14-15; Kruse, 2000, 20-27; Harris, 2003, 102. Lieu, 2008, 9-10: “Whether Christology was the overt cause of conflict and would have been identified as such by the other side is less certain since the letter never [10] reveals what they did claim, although it is widely supposed that it was so.”

(apparently *contra* a docetistic position) and was truly the Son of God (apparently *contra* a position like that espoused by Cerinthus) will make us children of God (cf. Jn 1:12), full of love for our fellows (*contra* the secessionists), willing to obey God's commands and able to conquer the world.

But in order to judge the veracity of any contentious and serious claim, one needs to examine witnesses. As the Law stipulates (Deut 17:6, 19:15), one witness is not sufficient to decide a serious legal question. Two witnesses are required; better yet, three. In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus refers to this principle when he argued that the Pharisees ought to accept the testimony he gave about himself, since it was corroborated by the testimony of the Father (Jn 8:17). In 1 Jn 5:5-9, the author seems to imagine a forensic context in which the claim that Jesus is the Son of God is weighed against the testimony of witnesses. But where to find such witnesses? The author of the Epistle draws the testimony to be examined from traditions transmitted in the Johannine community.⁷ Here the author of the Epistle finds a number of views that expressly and consciously give testimony to Jesus's status as Son of God.

Working with the imagery of testimony and witnesses, the Swiss reformer Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575) suggested that the author of the Epistle wants to draw us temporarily into a kind of courtroom drama:

Just as in a case brought before the court, he calls witnesses. He had asserted the absolute truth of the claim that Jesus is the Christ, an assertion which was in turn being denied by many. It was Moses' wish that matters in doubt should be decided by two or three witnesses: "Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained" [Deut 19:15]. Therefore, in order to try this contested matter and to put the testimony of the water, blood and Spirit into some kind of definite order, he calls three witnesses, namely the water, the blood and the Spirit. He speaks of these as if they were persons, although they were not. The figure of *prosopopæia* helps provide them with words. Now indeed, if witnesses do not agree, their testimony is worthless. Accordingly, it was not rash of him to add, "These three are one," that is, the depositions or testimony of

⁷ Lieu, 2008, 8: "[...] 1 John nowhere appeals to or assumes knowledge of the [Fourth] Gospel [...]; rather each writing is, largely independently, reworking common or shared traditions."

all of them agree, and yield the same result. In German, we render this figure of speech still more precisely: *Die Zeugen sind eins*.⁸

We shall use Bullinger's insightful comments as the starting-point for an exploration of the passage. The key terms in 1 Jn 5:1-12 are *witnesses* (μαρτυροῦντες) and *testimony* (μαρτυρία), words that draw the reader into an imaginary tribunal in which the reliability of evidence in favour of the claim under examination—that “Jesus is the Son of God”—is being judged.⁹ As Bullinger notes, the author of the Epistle introduces this evidence to the reader through the rhetorical figure of *prosopopœia*, a common technique in forensic rhetoric, in which inanimate objects or historical figures are “personified” to provide evidence in the case (e.g. Cicero, *Pro Cælio* 35-36).¹⁰

The first evidence adduced is the Johannine tradition that when Jesus died, blood and water came out of his side, a tradition attested by Jn 19:34-35. These twin “witnesses” of blood and water refute the claims of those former members of the Johannine community who had denied Jesus’ full humanity. Jesus did not come to us as the Son of God by merging with the Christ at his baptism (“through water”), as some had suggested, but “came to us” as a full human being who was born (the “water” could conceivably also refer to the

⁸ Bullinger, 1549, 103: “Veluti in foro res agatur producit testes. Dixerat omnino uerum esse quod Iesus sit Christus. Id porro negabatur à multis. At Moses uoluit ut res dubiæ discernentur duorum aut trium contestatione. Nam in ore (inquit) duorum aut trium stabit omne uerbum. Probaturus ergo rem dubiam Ioannes & in certum ordinem compositurus testimonia aquæ, sanguinis & spiritus, tres producit testes, aquam inquam, sanguinem & spiritum. De ijs loquens tanquam personæ sint quæ re uera personæ non erant. Subest itaque uerbis prosopopœia. Iam uero si testes non consentiant uanum est testimonium. Proinde non temere subiunxit, Et hi treis unum sunt, id est, omnium suffragia siue testimonia consentiunt & in idem recidunt. Germani exactius id schematis ita reddimus, *Die zügen sind eins*.”

⁹ The presence of legal language and imagery throughout the Epistle supports the contention that 1 Jn 5:5-9 presents an imaginary trial scene. Other examples of forensic diction in this Epistle include ἀφίημι (1:9); Jesus as παράκλητος (2:1; see Klauck, 1991, 102-105); αἰσχυνθῶμεν (2:28); καταγινώσκω (3:20), and the repeated references to testimony and its reliability (1:1-3, 4:12). Watson, 1989a, has analysed 1 Jn 2:12-14 in terms of Greco-Roman rhetoric. See also Watson, 1989b, 1989c; Klauck, 1990; Watson, 1993; Bennema, 2002, 215-242; Harris, 2003, 63, 111, 145; Bass, 2008, 76-78.

¹⁰ On *prosopopœia*, see Lausberg, 1960, 411-413, §§ 826-829. Verse 8 is also described as a *prosopopœia* by Giustiniani, 1621, 231.

waters of birth), who suffered and died, whose death was a central factor in his salvific role.

But the author of the Epistle suggests that his readers might require more evidence before being able to assent confidently to the claim that Jesus was the Son of God. The author of the Epistle therefore looks once more to the Johannine tradition. According to one of the stories in this tradition, again attested in the Fourth Gospel (Jn 1:32-34, 5:37), the Father testified to Jesus' status as his Son when he was baptised. John the Baptist in turn testified to the significance of this event, which led him to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. The divine affirmation of Jesus' Sonship at the baptism is probably the "witness of God" referred to in 1 Jn 5:9-10.¹¹ We can have confidence in the truth of this assertion because God's Spirit is the truth, a common identification in the Johannine tradition (cf. Jn 4:23-24, 14:17, 15:26, 16:13). There is also a possible resonance with the tradition of the emphatically true testimony of the man—whatever his identity, real or fictional—who witnessed the blood and water issue from Jesus' corpse, and whose testimony to this effect was given in order to inspire belief (Jn 19:34-35, 20:31).¹² The twin testimony of the water and the blood on one hand, and that of the truthful Spirit of God—or perhaps of the truthful witness to the crucifixion—on the other, thus provides us with all the evidence we need to accept the salvific claim that Jesus is the Son of God, and thus to "possess" that saving knowledge as πίστις, conviction, belief or faith (1 Jn 5:4, 5:10).

It is worth noting that the word πίστις in verse 4 occurs only here in the Johannine writings (excluding Revelation).¹³ Besides any religious signification, the word also has a number of forensic meanings which come to the fore here: legal evidence; the technique of producing such evidence convincingly; and a state of mind produced by accepting evidence thus tendered (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1354-1356).¹⁴ This variety of meanings is hinted at in verse 10: ὁ πιστεύων is the person who has been convinced by the evidence of the witnesses (πίστις as μαρτυρία) as marshalled in the legal argumentation (πίστις) of the author of the Epistle.

¹¹ Klauck, 1991, 293-294.

¹² Lieu, 2008, 214.

¹³ Klauck, 1991, 289.

¹⁴ Grimaldi, 1957; Lienhard, 1966; Campbell, 1994.

A number of disagreements in the interpretation of this passage arise from the fact that the word ὅτι is being used in a number of different ways in these few sentences.¹⁵ It is clear that the ὅτι introducing verse 7 (ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ...) is not epexegetical, but serves to signal the fact that there are now three witnesses to Jesus' status as Son of God, as the law demands; here ὅτι therefore means "thus" or "and so." More controversially, the ὅτι introducing verse 11b (ὅτι ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεός) is usually interpreted as picking up the αὐτή in verse 11a ("And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" [New American Standard Bible]). But such a reading is for several reasons unsatisfactory, for it glosses over the fact that in verses 9 and 10, the testimony of God is said to consist in an affirmation of Jesus' status as the Son of God, not a declaration that God has given us eternal life in his Son. To take ὅτι in 11b as epexegetical would imply that God is suddenly giving a second testimony that has nothing to do with the testimony proffered by the Spirit, the water and the blood in verse 8. The gift of eternal life mentioned in verse 11b is the *result* of a belief in Jesus' status as Son of God, not the *content* of the divine testimony. So the ὅτι in verse 11b is again best understood as meaning "thus" or "and so." The word αὐτή in verse 11a thus does not signal that a summary is forthcoming (as in the NASB and many other translations), but serves to summarise the evidence that has just been presented. In fact, the phrase αὐτή ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία could even function as a formal iteration signalling that all the evidence required to make the case has now been presented, just as Greek forensic orators write the word μαρτυρία (or μαρτυρίαί) when witnesses are giving their depositions (e.g. Demosthenes, *Against Aphobus* 27.8; *Against Aristogiton* 25.58; *Against Ontenor* 30.9, 31.4; Andocides, *On the Mysteries* 1.112).

A "forensic" interpretation of this passage like that suggested by Bullinger might yield a translation like the following:

¹⁵ On the ambiguity of the word ὅτι, see Blaß, Debrunner and Rehkopf, 1979, § 470.1.

[*Defining the question at issue: Is Jesus the Son of God? The importance and consequences of belief (πίστις) in the truth of this claim.*]

¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God; and “Everyone who loves the parent loves the child.”¹⁶ ²By this we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For the love of God is this: that we obey his commandments. And his commandments do not weigh us down [cf. Mt 11:30], ⁴for [ὅτι] whoever is a child of God conquers the world! And *this* is the conquering power that has conquered the world: our belief [πίστις]. ⁵Who is it that conquers the world but the person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

[*Three pieces of evidence are brought forward to bear witness to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. The first two pieces of evidence, water and blood, are presented as if by a human; the second piece of testimony is brought by God’s Spirit, who is truth itself.*]

[*The first witness:*] ⁶“He is the one who came by water and blood: Jesus Christ. Not by the water only, but by the water and the blood.”

[*The Spirit of God testifies:*] The Spirit too [καὶ] gives testimony, and [ὅτι] the Spirit is the truth. [*The comma is usually inserted here as verse 7.*] ⁸Thus [ὅτι] there are three giving evidence: the Spirit, and the water and the blood, and these three are in agreement. ⁹If we accept human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; and [ὅτι] this is the testimony of God: that [ὅτι] he has borne witness to [Jesus as] his Son [cf. Jn 1:32-34].

[*The implications of accepting or rejecting the three pieces of evidence brought by the two witnesses*]

¹⁰(The person who believes [ὁ πιστεύων] in [Jesus’ status as] the Son of God possesses the testimony in his heart. The person who does not

¹⁶ This sentence has the appearance of being a proverb; according to Aristotle (*Rhetoric* I.15.14), an appeal to proverbial wisdom is an acceptable form of legal evidence.

believe God has made him a liar by not believing the testimony God has given about [Jesus' status as] his Son [cf. 1 Jn 2:22-23].)

[*Conclusion of the depositions*] ¹¹This is the testimony.

[*Statement of the consequences of accepting the witness*] So [ὅτι] God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever possesses the Son possesses life; whoever does not possess the Son of God does not possess life.

In a forensic interpretation of this passage, we see that the twin testimonies of blood and water, and the divine testimony of the Spirit, are personified as witnesses appearing before the tribunal of our belief. It is thus not at all strange that they should be qualified by a masculine plural participle, even if the words themselves are grammatically neuter. It is a simple case of *constructio ad sensum*.¹⁷ As Erasmus remarks in his *Annotationes*: “The Apostle pays more regard to the sense than to the words, and for three witnesses, as if they were three people, he substitutes three things: Spirit, water and blood. You use the same construction if you say: ‘The building is a witness to the kind of builder you are.’”¹⁸

Dabney understood the unusual phrase εἰς τὸ ἓν εἶναι in verse 8 (“are unto one” seems a better translation than simply “are one”) as a reference to the consubstantial unity of the persons of the Trinity, and thus declared the entire passage “unintelligible” when the comma was omitted.¹⁹ However, this phrase means simply that the evidence of the water, blood and the Spirit is directed towards the same end (proving Christ’s status as Son of God), that it is unanimous, and thus legally compelling. It is the author’s concern to test the veracity of the claim made by the earlier Christian tradition that Jesus is the Son of God. A sudden declaration of the ontic unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit would be strangely out of place, and would disturb the logical flow of the

¹⁷ On *constructio ad sensum*, see Blaß, Debrunner and Rehkopf, 1979, § 134, esp. § 134.1.

¹⁸ Erasmus, 1535b, 771; there is a complete transcription and translation of Erasmus’ annotations on the Johannine comma below in Appendix II.

¹⁹ Klauck, 1991, 293, contrasts this phrase with εἰς ἓν, without the article, in Jn 11:52 and 17:23. Further on this Hebraism in New Testament Greek, see Blaß, Debrunner and Rehkopf, 1979, § 145, where it is noted that εἰς with accusative can stand for the subject predicate. See also Löfsted, 1936, 205.

quasi-legal argument the author of the Epistle is trying to make. Moreover, the later doctrine of the Trinity does not square very well with the theology of 1 John which, according to Judith Lieu, “does not reflect theologically on the relationship between [the Father and the Son]. Moreover, the spirit is not part of this relationship between Father and Son; the spirit is God’s spirit and God’s gift to believers, but [...] the concept is still a fluid one (3:24-4:6). [...] The ‘spirit’ was for [the author of 1 John], perhaps, no less (or no more) material and no less a symbol for a deeper truth than were ‘water’ and ‘blood’; each was a way of expressing the means of experiencing a relationship with God, and each was grounded in the reality of the sending of the Son of God, and in his death.”²⁰ The author’s line of argument thus makes perfect sense without the comma, and is in fact disturbed by its intrusion. The “argument from grammar” can therefore be dismissed as irrelevant.²¹

²⁰ Lieu, 2008, 215.

²¹ Nolan’s “argument from grammar” contains further deficiencies. For example, he writes that “the reading of the Greek Vulgate [...] is not to be tolerated; the reading of the Latin Vulgate [...] is grammatically correct.” This point is a red herring. The Latin versions translate the participle μαρτυροῦντες with a relative clause (*qui testimonium dant/ testimonium dicunt/ testificantur*) because it would not have occurred to a native Latin speaker to translate the substantival participle in the Greek text as *tres sunt testantes*. Moreover, *spiritus* is masculine, so the three earthly witnesses as a group are construed as grammatically masculine. Nolan’s claim that the Latin is more correct than the Greek is thus irrelevant. Finally, it is clear that Nolan, 1815, 259, employs doctrine rather than philology as the yardstick for determining the correct reading of disputed passages, defending the *textus receptus*’ Trinitarian reading θεός at 1 Tim 3:16, where the better manuscripts read ὁ or ὃς, a reading which could potentially lead to an Adoptionist position. Likewise, Dabney argues that the “seducers” against whom the author of the Epistle inveighs were those (such as Ebionites, Cerinthians and Nicolaitans) who “vitiated the doctrine of the Trinity”. However, there *was* no fully articulated doctrine of the Trinity to be vitiated when the Johannine Epistles were written. But once Dabney had imagined this doctrine under threat, he naturally concluded that John wrote the comma to defend it. Apart from the dubious grammatical authority of their arguments, the position of Nolan and Dabney takes Eusebius’ model of orthodoxy and heresy at face value, but the inadequacy and bias of this view was indicated by Bauer.

3. Before the comma: the early Latin Fathers and the Scriptural witness to the Trinity

Given the fact that the comma is best attested in the Latin tradition, we ought to investigate its authority in that tradition first. But we must also bear in mind that the Latin tradition is not monolithic. Until the ninth century we find Latin writers quoting the context of 1 Jn 5:6-8 but omitting the comma, suggesting that it was still absent from the Latin text with which those particular authors were familiar.²²

As we have already noted, the early Fathers developed the doctrine of the Trinity to make sense of the relationship between God, Jesus and the Spirit as described in Scripture. Perhaps the most pressing issue was to define the nature of the relationship between Jesus and God. For example, on the basis of Jesus' statement that "the Father and I are one" (Jn 10:30), the Fathers professed the unity of the Father and the Son—although there was no full agreement on what that unity actually involved. Amongst the earliest Latin Fathers to cite Jn 10:30 to demonstrate the unity of Father and Son are Tertullian (c. 160-c. 220) in *Adversus Praxean* VIII.4; XX.1; XXII.10, 12; XXIV.4; XXV.1; Cyprian of Carthage († 258) in *De ecclesiae catholicae unitate* 6; *Epist.* 69.5; Novatian († after 251) in *De Trinitate* 13, 15, 27; and then of the post-Nicene Fathers, Marius Victorinus († after 362) in *Adversus Arium* IA.8, 9, 13, 29; III.17; IV.10; in *De generatione divini verbi* 1; and in *Commentarium in Ephes.* II.5.2; and ps.-Eusebius Vercellensis († c. 370) in *De Trinitate* III, IV and VII.

The Fathers also found certain other phrases in the Scriptures that seem to hint at the mystery of the Trinity more obliquely. In *Adversus Praxean*, Tertullian enumerated a number of passages in the Hebrew bible and the Christian Scriptures in which he saw some hint of the relationship between God and Jesus, or even evidence of the Trinity. He comments on these passages especially in chapters XII (Gen 1:26-27, 3:22; Jn 1:1, 1:3), XIII (Gen 19:24; Ps 44:7-8, 81:1, 81:6, 109:1 [all Vg]; Is 45:14-15, 53:1; Jn 1:1; Rom 1:7, 9:5) and XVI (Gen 11:7-

²² When Pope Eusebius (309/310) wrote to the bishops of Gaul (Eusebius, *History* V.1-4; *PL* 7:1103-1104) he quoted a large chunk of 1 Jn but left out the comma. The same may be observed in ps.-Cyprian, *De rebaptismate* xv (*PL* 3:1200), in an early treatise on the Trinity attributed (not definitively) to Ambrose (*PL* 17:517) and in Pope Leo's letter to Flavian of Constantinople (*Epist.* 28; *PL* 62:506), cited below. A good review of the evidence of the Latin Fathers is found in Brooke, 1912, 155-164, from whom I draw several points.

8, 19:24; Ps 8:6; Mt 28:18; Jn 1:1-3, 1:14, 3:35, 5:22). Clearly Tertullian's Trinitarian reading of the Hebrew Bible is one which Jewish readers would not find acceptable; however, his arguments were picked up and repeated by numerous Christian readers. Besides the other passages already mentioned, Tertullian saw the doctrine of the Christian Trinity reflected in the conclusion of 1 Jn 5:8: "and these three are [unto] one." The Trinitarian possibilities suggested by the equation of *tres* and *unum* are quite clear; in its combination of the linguistic elements *plural subject* + *unum* + *esse*, the phrase also recalls the prize Trinitarian text Jn 10:30.²³ Moreover, Tertullian perhaps felt that the Trinitarian resonances of this 1 Jn 5:8 were strengthened by the *Leitmotif* of 1 John: Jesus' salvific status as Son of God. Accordingly, in *Adversus Praxean* XXV.1, Tertullian interpreted the phrase *tres unum sunt*—for the first time in Christian exegesis—as a proof text for the consubstantial Trinity: "Thus the connexion of the Father to the Son, and of the Son to the Paraclete, creates three [persons] coherent [but distinct] one from the other. These three are one thing [*qui tres unum sunt*], not one person [*unus*], as it is said: 'the Father and I are one,' [Jn 10:30], [which refers] to the unity of their substance, not to their numerical singularity."²⁴

Tertullian's interpretation of this passage was followed by ps.-Eusebius Vercellensis: "And consequently in the one godhead they are one, but in the names of the persons they are three; therefore the three are one, or the one are three."²⁵ Many of those who use the phrase in this Trinitarian signification cite it in the form *tres unum sunt*, a direct translation of the Greek: Tertullian (*Adversus Praxean* XXV.1), Cyprian of Carthage (*De ecclesiæ catholicæ unitate* 6), ps.-Eusebius Vercellensis (*De Trinitate* I, II, VII), Phoebadius Aginnensis († after 392) (*Contra Arianos* 27), Victricius of Rouen († c. 407) (*De laude sanctorum* 4), Potamius of Lisbon († after 357) (*Epistula ad Athanasium*; *Epistula de substantia Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti*), Augustine (*Contra Maximinum* II) and Johannes Maxentius (*Responsio contra Acephalos* 5). There is also a little evidence that the

²³ On *unum* as predicate of a plural or multiple subject, see Kaulen, 1904, 163-164, § 57, with references to Jn 10:30, 17:21; 1 Jn 5:7-8.

²⁴ Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* XXV.1, CCL 2:1195 (cf. CSEL 47:267; PL 2:188): "Ita connexus Patris in Filio et Filii in Paraclete tres efficit cohærentes, alterum ex altero. Qui tres unum sunt, non unus, quomodo dictum est: *Ego et pater unum sumus*, ad substantiæ unitatem, non ad numeri singularitatem." Further, see Bludau, 1920.

²⁵ Ps.-Eusebius Vercellensis, *De Trinitate* I, CCL 9:15: "Ac per hoc in deitate una unum sunt et in nominibus personarum tres sunt, unde tres unum sunt siue unum sunt tres."

verse was interpreted in this way by the Greek Fathers, such as in the spurious *Disputation of Athanasius against Arius at the Council of Nicaea*, in which the Trinitarian formulation used in the liturgy of baptism is associated with the phrase “and these three are one.”²⁶ We also find Origen applying 1 Jn 5:8 to the Trinity, significantly in the context of an allegorical reading of Ps 122:2 (LXX): “The servants to their lords, the Father and the Son, are the spirit and the body; and the maidservant to the mistress, the Holy Spirit, is the soul. Our Lord God is these three things, for the ‘three are one.’”²⁷ Some later Latin writers employ the phrase with a deliberate lack of grammatical agreement of number or gender, a kind of *catagoresis* or *synesis* apparently intended to reflect the paradox of the doctrine. Thus we find Marius Victorinus, Augustine and Isidore of Seville citing the phrase in the form *tria unum*.²⁸ We also find Augustine and Quodvultdeus citing this phrase in the more explicitly theologised form *hæc tria unus deus* [est].²⁹

²⁶ Ps.-Athanasius, *Disputatio contra Arium* 44.18, PG 28:500: “Τί δὲ καὶ τὸ τῆς ἀφέσεως τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν παρεκτικόν, καὶ ζωοποιόν, καὶ ἁγιαστικὸν λουτρόν, οὐ χωρὶς οὐδεὶς ὄψεται τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, οὐκ ἐν τῇ τρισμακαρίᾳ ὀνομασίᾳ δίδοται τοῖς πιστοῖς; Πρὸς δὲ τούτοις πᾶσιν Ἰωάννης φάσκει· «Καὶ οἱ τρεῖς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν.»”

²⁷ Origen, *Selecta in Psalmos*, Ps. CXXII.2, PG 12:1633: “Δοῦλοι κυρίων Πατρὸς καὶ Υἱοῦ πνεῦμα καὶ σῶμα· παιδίσκη δὲ κυρίας τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἡ ψυχὴ. Τὰ δὲ τρία Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν ἐστίν· οἱ γὰρ τρεῖς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν.” This passage is mentioned by Porson, 1795, 234, who was doubtful that this could be interpreted as a reference to the comma: “The critical chemistry that could extract the doctrine of the Trinity from this place, must have been exquisitely refining.”

²⁸ Marius Victorinus, *Adversus Arium* IA.13, CSEL 83:72: “Duo ergo et isti, ex alio alius, ex Filio Spiritus sanctus, secuti ex deo Filius, et conrationaliter et Spiritus sanctus ex Patre. Quod omnia tria unum [...]” *Adversus Arium* IB.56, CSEL 83:154: “Quoniam autem unum duo, omnia simul exsistunt in cōnitione, simul exsistente vita in patre, in qua est et sanctus spiritus, secundum exsistentiam, quoniam tria unum erant et semper sunt.” *Adversus Arium* III.18, CSEL 83:223: “Quod cum ita sit, si deus et Christus unum, cum Christus et spiritus unum, iure tria unum, vi et substantia.” See also Marius Victorinus, *Adversus Arium* IV.25-26; *De generatione divini Verbi*; *Commentarii in Epistulas Pauli* (ad Phil 2:1); Augustine, *De beata vita* 4, CCSL 29:84; *De civitate Dei* V.11, CCSL 47:141; *De Trinitate* IV.21, CCSL 50:202; *De natura et origine animæ* II.3.5, CSEL 60:339; Isidore of Seville, *De differentiis rerum* 11, PL 83:71-72; Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermo* 3.8, in Bernard, 1957-1977, 4:217; Florus Lugdunensis, *Dicta Gregorii Nazianzeni, excerptum* 36.II, ad Ep. ad Hebræos pertinens, CCCM 193B:75.

²⁹ Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus* xxv.47, CCSL 46:171 (cf. PL 40:343): “[...] æqualitatem Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti, et ipsius Trinitatis unitatem, quomodo sint hæc tria unus Deus [...]” This passage is cited by Hrabanus Maurus, *De ecclesiastica disciplina* I, PL 112:1212. See also Quodvultdeus (formerly attributed to Augustine), *De cantico novo et de*

It should be emphasised that none of these authors cite the comma, merely a Trinitarian interpretation of 1 Jn 5:8.

Once the Trinitarian interpretation of the phrase *tres unum sunt* in 1 Jn 5:8 had established itself, the three witnesses of the Spirit, the water and the blood were ripe for allegorical interpretation as types of the three persons of the Trinity. The beginnings of this process of allegoresis may be seen in Cyprian's plea for the unity in the Church: "The Lord says 'I and the Father are one' [Jn 10:30]; and again, it is written of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost: 'And these three are one' [1 Jn 5:8]. Is there anyone who believes that this unity, deriving from the firmness of the divine and cohering with the celestial mysteries, can be sundered in the church and separated through a divorce of conflicting wills?"³⁰ Cyprian's wording does not provide any evidence that the comma was part of the biblical text with which he was familiar. Rather, it seems that he merely understood the phrase *tres unum sunt* (1 Jn 5:8) to refer obscurely to the Trinity, as Tertullian had done before him.

Going further than this minimalist interpretation, Walter Thiele (1959) suggested that this passage gives evidence that the comma was already present in the text known to Cyprian. Most modern scholars before Thiele had argued that Cyprian's invocation of *Pater, Filius, Spiritus Sanctus* rather than *Pater, Verbum, Spiritus Sanctus*—the form usually encountered in the comma—suggests that he did not know the comma, but Thiele showed that several Fathers (ps.-Augustine, Eugenius of Carthage, Cassiodorus) also cite the comma with *Filius*, as does the León palimpsest, the Theodulfian recension and the Vulgate ms Dijon, Bibl. munic. 9bis. Furthermore, Thiele pointed out that the comma was one of a

reditu ad caelestem patriam ac viae periculis, sermo ad catechumenos 7, CCSL 60:389 (cf. PL 40:684): "Si ergo semper Deus Pater, semper Deus Filius; quia nec ille aliquando non Pater, nec iste aliquando non Filius. Non enim ut Pater generaret Filium, minuit se ipsum: sed ita genuit de se alterum qualem se, ut totus maneret in se. Spiritus autem sanctus non praecedit unde procedit, sed integer de integro, nec minuit eum procedendo, nec auget hærendo. Et hæc tria unus Deus, de quo propheta dicit: Tu es Deus solus magnus [Ps 85:10 Vg]." See also Augustine, *Epist.* 170, CSEL 44:625.

³⁰ Cyprian of Carthage, *De catholicæ ecclesiæ unitate* 6, CSEL 3:254 (cf. PL 4:503-504): "Dicit Dominus: *Ego et* [504] *Pater unum sumus* [Jn 10:30], et iterum de Patre et Filio et Spiritu sancto scriptum est: *Et tres* [PL: *Et hi tres*] *unum sunt*. Et quisquam credit hanc unitatem de diuina firmitate uenientem, sacramentis caelestibus coherentem, scindi in ecclesia posse et uoluntatum conlidentium diuortio separari?" Further, see Bludau, 1920.

number of interpolations in the Catholic Epistles found in a type of text quite close to that used in North Africa (Jas 1:1, 2:16, 2:25, 4:1; 1 Pt 1:16, 1:19, 2:23, 3:22, 5:4, 5:14; 1 Jn 2:5, 2:17, 2:26, 5:7-8, 5:9, 5:20; 2 Jn 11; Jud 11), which often draw their material from parallel passages elsewhere in the New Testament. Several of these interpolations are of a dogmatic nature (1 Pt 1:19, 3:22; 1 Jn 5:9, 20). Traces of this text-type are found in the works of Augustine (1 Pt 3:1-7, 3:22, 5:4; 1 Jn 2:5, 17, 26) and the anonymous author of the *Speculum "Audi Israhel"* (Jas 2:16, 4:1; 1 Pt 5:4; 1 Jn 5:20; 2 Jn 11). It is also represented in the Spanish Vulgate manuscripts of the families Σ (the edition of Isidore of Seville) and Δ (North Spanish, seventh century?) (Jas 1:1, 1 Pt 1:16). Traces of some of these interpolations in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (1 Pt 2:23) as well as in the early Sahidic (1 Jn 2:17) and Armenian (1 Pt 5:14) versions led Thiele to suggest that these interpolations, including the Johannine comma, may derive from a very early form of the Greek text.³¹

However, Thiele's hypothesis rests on the assumptions that all the interpolations entered this text-type simultaneously from a Greek original, and that all were present uniformly in all exemplars of this text-type. These assumptions cannot necessarily be made. Moreover, Thiele's hypothesis does not adequately explain the absence of the comma from the works of the Greek Fathers or from other Latin writers before Priscillian, notably Augustine, who seems to have been familiar with this text-type. With the greatest of respect to Thiele, I am not convinced by his explanation of why Facundus (see below) should have mentioned Cyprian as one of those who provided a Trinitarian interpretation of the phrase *tres unum sunt*. Nor does his hypothesis explain why the author of *De rebaptismate*—someone close to Cyprian in space and time, using a very similar biblical text—should also have cited 1 Jn 5:8 without the heavenly witnesses. While Thiele was certainly correct to draw attention to the presence of a complex of interpolations present in this North African text-type (as far as it can be reconstructed), the passage from Cyprian does not seem to allow us to conclude anything more definite than the fact that he interpreted the phrase *tres unum sunt* in a Trinitarian sense, just like many others before and after him. But whether or not Thiele's hypothesis about Cyprian is correct, it should

³¹ Wachtel, 1995, 317, notes that Thiele's hypothesis has found little support in the subsequent literature.

be emphasised that he has never maintained that the comma was anything but an interpolation.

Augustine (354-430) discusses 1 Jn 5:8 in his late tract against the Arian Maximinus. He begins by pointing out that although spirit, water and blood are essentially different, John nevertheless says that they are one. This apparent contradiction should alert us to the fact that these three things are *sacraments*, that is, things that point away from their natural essence towards something different. Augustine interpreted the spirit as the breath that left Jesus when he died, along with the water and blood that issued from his side. Each of these things, he reasons, has a different essence; they are therefore not merely one thing. Augustine suggests that these things could be interpreted allegorically as references to the three persons of the Trinity: "About them it might very truly be said: 'these are three witnesses, and the three are one.'" Augustine works out these associations more closely, suggesting that "spirit" of 1 Jn 5:8 signifies the Father, since "God is spirit" (Jn 4:24); "blood" signifies the Son, the Word who became flesh; and "water" signifies the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised to give to those who are thirsty (Jn 7:39). The testimony of the Father and the Son is manifest in Jesus' statement (Jn 8:18), "I testify on my own behalf, and the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf." Although the Spirit is not expressly mentioned here, the Spirit is never understood to be separate from the Father and the Son, so all three persons of the Trinity may justly be said to bear witness to Jesus. Indeed, Jesus says elsewhere: "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf" (Jn 15:26). These three then, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are rightly described as three witnesses, though of course they remain of one substance. Augustine continues the allegory by noting that the body of Christ, from which the spirit, water and blood (that is, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) issue, is none other than the church which preaches the Trinity and its unitive nature. This church was commissioned through words that issued from Jesus' body, commanding it to baptize all nations, "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). Augustine's exegesis of 1 Jn 5:8 thus shows his fascination with the possibilities of Trinitarian allegoresis of that verse, but also shows that the comma was not present in the biblical text with which he was familiar. If it were, his attempt to draw allegorical meanings out of verse 8 would have been pointless. It is also worth noting that Augustine expressly states that other interpretations of this passage are possible, and should

even be encouraged as long as they do not compromise the doctrine of the Trinity by confounding or separating the three divine persons, denying their existence or suggesting that they have three distinct substances.³²

³² Augustine, *Contra Maximinum* II.22.3, PL 42:794-795: “Sane falli te nolo in Epistola Joannis apostoli, ubi ait *Tres sunt testes; spiritus, et aqua, et sanguis; et tres unum sunt*, ne forte dicas spiritum et aquam et sanguinem diversas esse substantias, et tamen dictum esse, *tres unum sunt*; propter hoc admonui, ne fallaris. Hæc enim sacramenta sunt, in quibus non quid sint, sed quid ostendant semper attenditur: quoniam signa sunt rerum, aliud existentia, et aliud significantia. Si ergo illa, quæ his significantur, intelligantur, ipsa inveniuntur unius esse substantiæ. [795] Tanquam si dicamus, ‘petra et aqua unum sunt,’ volentes per petram significare Christum, per aquam, Spiritum sanctum, quis dubitat petram et aquam diversas esse naturas? Sed quia Christus et Spiritus sanctus unius sunt ejusdemque naturæ, ideo cum dicitur ‘petra et aqua unum sunt,’ ex ea parte recte accipi potest, qua istæ duæ res, quarum est diversa natura, aliarum quoque signa sunt rerum, quarum est una natura. Tria itaque novimus de corpore Domini exisse, cum penderet in ligno: primo, spiritum; unde scriptum est, *Et inclinato capite tradidit spiritum*; deinde, quando latus ejus lancea perforatum est, sanguinem et aquam [Jn 19:30, 34]. Quæ tria, si per se ipsa intueamur, diversas habent singula quæque substantias; ac per hoc non sunt unum. Si vero ea, quæ his significata sunt, velimus inquirere, non absurde occurrit ipsa Trinitas, qui unus, solus, verus, summus est Deus, Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, de quibus verissime dici potuit, *Tres sunt testes, et tres unum sunt*: ut nomine spiritus significatum accipiamus Deum Patrem: de ipso quippe adorando loquebatur Dominus, ubi ait, *Spiritus est Deus* [Jn 4:24]; nomine autem sanguinis, Filium: quia *Verbum caro factum est* [Jn 1:14]; et nomine aquæ Spiritum sanctum: cum enim de aqua loqueretur Jesus, quam daturus erat sitientibus, ait evangelista, *Hoc autem dixit de Spiritu, quem accepturi erant credentes in eum* [Jn 7:39]. Testes vero esse Patrem et Filium et Spiritum sanctum, quis Evangelio credit, et dubitat, dicente Filio, *Ego sum qui testimonium perhibeo de me: et testimonium perhibet de me, qui misit me, Pater* [Jn 8:18]? Ubi etsi non est commemoratus Spiritus sanctus, non tamen intelligitur separatus. Sed nec de ipso alibi tacuit, eumque testem satis aperteque monstravit. Nam cum illum promitteret, ait: *Ipse testimonium perhibebit de me* [Jn 15:26]. *Hi sunt tres testes: et tres unum sunt* [1 Jn 5:8], quia unius substantiæ sunt. Quod autem signa quibus significati sunt, de corpore Domini exierunt, figuraverunt Ecclesiam prædicantem Trinitatis unam eandemque naturam: quoniam hi tres qui trino modo significati sunt, unum sunt; Ecclesia vero eos prædicans, corpus est Christi. Si ergo tres res quibus significati sunt, ex corpore Domini exierunt: sicut ex corpore Domini sonuit, ut baptizarentur gentes *in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti* [Mt 28:19]: ‘*in nomine*,’ non ‘*in nominibus*.’ *Hi enim tres unum sunt*, et hi tres unus est Deus. Si quo autem alio modo tanti sacramenti ista profunditas, quæ in Epistola Joannis legitur, exponi et intelligi potest secundum catholicam fidem, quæ nec confundit nec separat Trinitatem, nec abnuit tres personas, nec diversas credit esse substantias, nulla ratione respuendum est. Quod enim ad exercendas mentes fidelium in Scripturis sanctis obscure

Fleeting references to 1 Jn 5:8 in Augustine's *Tractate on the Gospel of John* and *City of God* also attest to the fact that the comma was not in the scriptural text with which Augustine was familiar. Nevertheless, they do show that he was alive to the allegorical possibilities of 1 Jn 5:8.³³ The obvious pleasure that Augustine takes in this interpretation should not obscure the fact that he wrote these words in the early fifth century, when the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity had already been articulated. Consequently, he makes all kinds of assumptions—such as the notion that the Spirit is understood to be present when the Father and the Son are mentioned—which may not have seemed obvious two or three hundred years earlier.

Before leaving Augustine we should note two points. Firstly, in 1934 Norbert Fickermann drew attention to a note in a twelfth-century manuscript of the Regensburg *Epistolæ rhetoricæ*, which makes the following claims: “St Jerome argued that that verbal repetition [*replicatio*] in the [first] Epistle of John—‘And there are three that bear witness, the Father, the Word and the Spirit’—was established as certain. By contrast, St Augustine prescribed that it should be removed, on the basis of the Apostle’s meaning and the authority of the Greek.”³⁴ Given the relatively recent date of this text (eleventh century), its erroneous attribution of the *Prologue to the Catholic Epistles* to Jerome, and the fact that the statement about Augustine seems not to reflect anything in the Father’s extant

ponitur, gratulandum est, si multis modis, non tamen insipienter exponitur.” See also Künstle, 1905a, 7; Bludau, 1919b. I have altered Migne’s punctuation slightly to make the sense clearer.

³³ Augustine, *Tractatus in Ioannis evangelium* XXXVI.10, CCSL 36:330 (cf. PL 35:1669): “Vis habere bonam causam? Habeto duos vel tres testes, patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum.” Augustine, *De civitate Dei* V.11.1, CCSL 47:141: “Deus itaque summus et uerus cum Verbo suo et Spiritu sancto, quæ tria unum sunt [...]” Commentary in Künstle, 1905a, 8. Augustine, *De Trinitate* IV.20, CCSL 50:199: “Sicut ergo pater genuit, filius genitus est; ita pater misit, filius missus est. Sed quemadmodum qui genuit et qui genitus est, ita et qui misit et qui missus est unum sunt quia pater et filius unum sunt; ita etiam spiritus sanctus unum cum eis est quia hæc tria unum sunt.”

³⁴ Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek clm 14596, cit. Fickermann, 1934, 350: “Replicationem illam in epistola Iohannis: et tres sunt qui testimonium dant, pater et verbum et spiritus beatus Hieronimus ratam esse astruit; beatus vero Augustinus ex apostoli sententia et ex grece linguæ auctoritate demendam esse prescribit.” Thiele, 1959, 71-72, takes this statement as possible evidence that Augustine suppressed the comma in his text, evidence he sees in the occurrence of the readings *Filius* and *Spiritus Sanctus* in Augustine’s *Contra Maximinum*; we addressed Thiele’s hypothesis above.

works, it is difficult to know how much confidence to place in this assertion. Probably not much. Secondly, it has often been claimed that Augustine cited the comma in a work called *Speculum*, but this claim is based on a confusion between two treatises called *Speculum*, sometimes found together in the same manuscripts, only one of which—*Speculum “Quis ignorat”*, the one that does *not* contain the comma—was written by the great African Father.³⁵

Further evidence that the comma arose in an allegorical interpretation of 1 Jn 5:8 may be found in the *Book of the forms of spiritual interpretation* by Augustine’s younger contemporary Eucherius of Lyon (380-449). Eucherius explains to his son that various things, such as numbers, can be found mystically in Scripture; the number one, for example, refers to the unity of God; two refers to the two dispensations; and three refers to the Trinity, “as in the letter of John.”

³⁵ The presence of the comma in the *Speculum*, first publicised in two letters published by Nicholas (later cardinal) Wiseman in 1832 and 1833 (repr. in Wiseman, 1853, 1:5-70), has caused some confusion, since there are two treatises of this name attributed to Augustine, both of which are included in Wehrich’s edition in CSEL 12: the *Speculum “Quis ignorat”* and the *Speculum “Audi Israhel”*. Only the first of these—preserved in Munich, BSB clm 14513 (ninth century); Chartres ms 33 (ninth century); Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek ms 137 (tenth century); Vatican, BAV cod. Pal. 198 (tenth or eleventh century); Paris, BnF ms. lat. 2473 (thirteenth century)—is actually by Augustine. (When Erasmus came to include the *Speculum “Quis ignorat”* in his edition of Augustine’s works, printed by Froben in 1528, he even called the authenticity of that work into question.) The *Speculum “Audi Israhel”*—preserved in Rome, Biblioteca della Basilica di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, ms 58 (codex Sessorianus, eighth or ninth century); Paris, BnF ms lat. 6400G (codex Floriacensis, fourth to seventh century, also known as ms h, Beuron 55, fragmentary); Avranches ms 87 (ninth century); Paris BnF ms lat. 15082 (twelfth century); Paris, BnF ms. lat. 2977A (eleventh or twelfth century); Paris, BnF ms nouv. acq. 256 (twelfth century); and in abridged versions in Paris, BnF ms lat. 4/4² (codex Aniciensis), formerly in Le Puy-en-Velay; and Paris, BnF ms lat. 9380 (ninth century), 338-346—contains a selection of scriptural passages organised under a number of doctrinal heads. There are a number of reasons to doubt that this work was compiled by Augustine: it uses a different biblical text from that found in Augustine’s other works; it quotes from the ps.-Pauline Epistle to the Laodiceans, which Augustine rejected; and it employs the Western order of the Gospels (Matthew, John, Luke, Mark), which Augustine likewise avoided. Further, see Wehrich, 1881; Wehrich’s introduction to CSEL 12; and Sanday, 1890, who question some of Wiseman’s claims. In any case, the text of the comma cited in the *Speculum “Audi Israhel”*, CSEL 12:325-326, reads: “*Spiritus est qui testimonium reddit, quia spiritus est ueritas. Item illic: Tres sunt qui testimonium dicunt in cælo, pater, uerbum et spiritus, et hii tres unum sunt.*” The transmission is not consistent in the mss; Avranches 87, Paris 15082 and Paris 2977A read: “*Spiritus est qui dicit in cælo pater uerbum et spiritus et hii tres unum sunt.*”

The Migne edition cites 1 Jn 5:7-8 at this point, leading many commentators in the past to assume that the comma formed part of the biblical text known to Eucherius. But the critical edition of Eucherius' works (ed. Wotke, 1884) gives merely the words *tria sunt quæ testimonium perhibent: aqua sanguis spiritus*, a more plausible reading that reflects the neuter plural *tria* found in two extant bibles of the ninth and tenth centuries (Madrid, Complutense ms 31 and León, Archivio catedralicio ms 6).³⁶ Further evidence is found in the first book of Eucherius' *Instructiones*, which contains a section called *On rather difficult questions in the New Testament*. One of the questions Eucherius raises here is the meaning of the water, blood and spirit mentioned in the letter of John. "Here many people," he says, "through a mystical interpretation understand the Trinity itself; since it is perfect, it bears testimony to Christ." It is not certain who these "many people" might be, for the set of correspondences given by Eucherius (water = Father, blood = Christ, spirit = Holy Spirit) differs from that given by Augustine and subsequently by Facundus, bishop of Hermiane (spirit = Father, blood = Son, water = Holy Spirit).³⁷

In his *Defence of the Three Chapters* (546-551), Facundus, like Augustine, was to argue that the spirit, water and blood testifying on earth correspond

³⁶ Eucherius, *Liber formularum spiritalis intelligentiæ* IX (*De numeris*), ed. Wotke, CSEL 31:59: "Sane his nominibus absolutis numeros quoque breuiter digeramur, quos mystica exemplorum ratio inter sacros celebriores efficit. I. hic numerus ad unitatem Deitatis refertur [...]. II. ad duo testamenta [...]. III. ad trinitatem; in Ioannis epistola: *tria sunt quæ testimonium perhibent: aqua sanguis spiritus*." The text in PL 50:770 reads: "III. Ad Trinitatem; in Joannis Epistola: *Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus sanctus, et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus, aqua et sanguis*." This reading does not appear in Wotke's apparatus. Further on Eucherius, see Bludau, 1927.

³⁷ Eucherius, *Instructiones* I (*De quæstionibus difficilioribus Novi Testamenti*), CSEL 31:137-138: "Item Iohannes in epistula sua ponit: *tria sunt quæ testimonium perhibent, aqua, sanguis, et spiritus*; quid in hoc indicatur? [...] Plures tamen hic ipsam interpretatione mystica intelligunt Trinitatem, eo quod perfecta ipsa perhibeat testimonium Christo: aqua patrem indicans, quia ipse de se dicit: *me derelinquerunt fontem aquæ uiuæ*, sanguine Christum demonstrans, utique per passionis cruorem, spiritu uero sanctum spiritum manifestans. Hæc autem tria de Christo testimonium ita perhibent ipso in euangelio loquente: *ego sum qui testimonium perhibeo de me, et testimonium perhibuit de me qui misit me pater*, et item: *cum autem uenerit paraclitus quem ego mittam uobis, spiritum ueritatis, qui a patre procedit ille testimonium perhibet de me*. perhibet ergo testimonium pater, cum dicit: *hic est filius meus dilectus*, filius, cum dicit: *ego et pater unum sumus*, spiritus sanctus, cum de eo dicitur: *et uidit spiritum dei descendantem sicut columbam uenientem super se*."

respectively to Father, Holy Spirit and Son in heaven. In interpreting 1 Jn 5:8 allegorically, Facundus explicitly follows Cyprian.³⁸ We gather from Facundus' account that there was some dispute over the interpretation of verse 8, a disagreement related to the ongoing difficulties in articulating a doctrine of the Trinity that might be held universally. It is not entirely clear whether the scriptural text with which Facundus was familiar contained the comma—the fact that he refers specifically to “the apostle John speaking of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” suggests that it probably was—but it is clear that by Facundus' day, well over a century after Augustine wrote against Maximinus, the Trinitarian allegoresis of 1 Jn 5:8 was well established, at least in Spain and North

³⁸ Facundus Hermianensis, *Pro defensione trium capitulorum concilii Chalcedonensis libri duodecim ad Justinianum imperatorem* I.3.8-13, CCSL 90:12-13 (cf. PL 67:535-536): “Tres tamen sunt Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, ex quibus unus recte dicitur Dominus Iesus Christus. Nam et Iohannes apostolus in epistula sua de Patre et Filio et Spiritu sancto sic dicit: *Tres sunt qui testimonium dicunt in terra, spiritus, aqua, et sanguis, et hi tres unum sunt*. In spiritu significans Patrem, sicut Dominus mulieri Samaritanæ secundum ipsius Iohannis euangelium loquitur, dicens: *Crede mihi, quia ueniet hora quando neque in monte hoc, neque in [13] Hierosolymis adorabitis Patrem. Vos adoratis quod nescitis, nos adoramus quod scimus; quia salus ex Iudeis est. Sed uenit hora, et nunc est, quando ueri adoratores adorabunt Patrem in spiritu et ueritate; nam et Pater tales quærit qui adorent eum. Spiritus est Deus, et eos qui adorant eum, in spiritu et ueritate oportet adorare [Jn 4:21]*. In aqua uero Spiritum sanctum significans, sicut in eodem suo euangelio exponit Domini uerba dicentis: *Si quis sitit, ueniat ad me, et bibat. Qui credit in me, sicut dicit scriptura, flumina de uentre eius fluent aquæ uiuæ*. Vbi subsecutus adiecit: *hoc autem dixit de Spiritu, quem accepturi erant credentes in eum. Nondum enim erat Spiritus datus, quia Iesus nondum fuerat glorificatus [Jn 7:37-39]*. In sanguine uero Filium significans, quoniam ipse ex sancta Trinitate communicauit carni et sanguini. Non ergo ait Iohannes apostolus loquens de Patre et Filio et Spiritu sancto, tres sunt personæ quæ testificantur in terra, spiritus, aqua et sanguis, et hi tres unum sunt, sed hoc potius ait: *Tres sunt qui testificantur in terra, spiritus, aqua et sanguis, et hi tres unum sunt*. Quid ergo pro Iohanne respondent apostolo? Qui sunt hi tres, qui in terra testificari, et qui unum esse dicuntur? Num dii? Num patres? Num filii, aut spiritus sancti? Non utique, sed hi tres, Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus sanctus sunt, tamen et si non inuenitur unum nomen, quod de omnibus communiter masculino genere prædicetur, sicut communiter de illis personæ prædicantur genere feminino. Aut si forsitan ipsi qui de uerbo contendunt, in eo quod dixit: *Tres sunt qui testificantur in terra, spiritus, aqua et sanguis, et hi tres unum sunt*, Trinitatem quæ unus Deus est, nolunt intellegi, secundum ipsa uerba quæ posuit pro apostolo Iohanne respondeant: Numquid hi tres, qui in terra testificari et qui unum esse dicuntur, possunt spiritus, aut aquæ, uel sanguines dici?” Facundus seems here to skirt quite close to heterodoxy; the opening sentence in this passage in particular sounds like an echo of Priscillian's Panchristism.

Africa.

It would be wrong to pass over the early Latin Fathers—Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Eucherius—without mentioning that defenders of the comma, from the sixteenth century to the present day, claim that the form of Scripture familiar to all these Fathers contained the comma. However, this assertion is based on a failure to make two basic distinctions.

First is the failure to distinguish between two issues: 1) Did the particular Father in question believe in the Trinity? 2) Did the biblical text with which this Father was familiar contain the comma? To give an affirmative answer to the first question does *not* mean that we must give the same answer to the second. But even to say that the earliest Fathers believed in the Trinity requires qualification: each one of these Fathers believed in the Trinity as it was understood and formulated in his own time. The fact that Origen's understanding of the Trinity could be considered acceptable during his lifetime and subsequently judged as heretical is sufficient evidence of the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity was still in a process of flux and development.

Second is the failure to distinguish between two further issues: 1) Did the biblical text with which the Father in question was familiar contain the comma? 2) Did a particular Father interpret the phrase *tres unum sunt* (or the entirety of 1 Jn 5:8) as some kind of reference to the Trinity? Again, to answer the second question in the affirmative does *not* imply an affirmative answer to the first.

4. Priscillian, early creeds, and the origins of the comma in textual combination

The emergence of established Christological and Trinitarian positions was attended by the formulation of a number of formal doctrinal statements: professions of faith, creeds and catechisms. One step in the construction of formal doctrinal statements was the collection of a coherent series of short credal statements (what we will call *symbola* here for want of a more precise term), which served as building blocks from which more complex articulations (whether doctrinal *regulæ fidei* or liturgical creeds) could be built. Such *symbola* probably arose first in “private creeds,” confessional statements made spontaneously in response to particular situations.³⁹ There is evidence that the phrase “[these]

³⁹ On the formation of creeds, see Kelly, 1972; Westra, 2002.

three are one” in one of its various forms—[*hæc*] *tria* (or [*hi*] *tres*) *unum sunt* (or *unus* [*est*] *deus*)—was used from an early period as a *symbolum* professing belief in the Trinity. For example, Victricius of Rouen († c. 407) writes in his work *De laude sanctorum*: “We confess God the Father, we confess God the Son, we confess God the Holy Spirit. We confess that the three are one.”⁴⁰

It is in another such a profession of faith—the *Liber apologeticus* (c. 380) of Priscillian, a Spanish bishop executed in 385 on charges of sorcery and heresy—that we first find the comma cited unambiguously. Priscillian, whose works were suppressed at the first Council of Braga and only rediscovered in 1885, cites the comma not merely as evidence of the unity of God, but also to support his notion of “Panchristism.” This position, anathematised by bishop Pastor of Palencia and the Council of Braga, is a species of Unitarianism that rejects any attempt to distinguish the persons of the Trinity, identifying Christ as the one true God.⁴¹

The form in which Priscillian cites the comma is as follows: *Tria sunt quæ testimonium dicunt in terra: aqua caro et sanguis; et hæc tria in unum sunt. Et tria sunt quæ testimonium dicunt in cælo: Pater, Verbum et Spiritus, et hæc tria unum sunt in Christo Iesu.*⁴² Several features of Priscillian’s reading of the comma deserve notice. Firstly, he places the heavenly witnesses *after* the earthly witnesses; this uncertainty is a feature of the manuscript transmission for the next thousand years. Secondly, Priscillian says that the heavenly witnesses “are one in Christ Jesus.” Thirdly, Priscillian uses the neuter forms *hæc tria* instead of the masculine *hi tres* one would expect in a direct translation from the Greek. Finally, Priscillian lists the three earthly witnesses as water, *flesh* and blood, a variant found in no extant Greek bible, but in the writings of some Latin Fathers and a handful of

⁴⁰ Victricius Rotomagensis, *De laude sanctorum* 4, CCSL 64, 74: “Confitemur Deum Patrem, confitemur Deum Filium, confitemur Sanctum Spiritum Deum. Confitemur quia tres unum sunt.”

⁴¹ A convenient survey of Priscillian’s life and thought is Chadwick, 1976. For the text of the *Symbolum Toletanum I* (400) and the *Libellus in modum symboli* (447) of bishop Pastor, see Denzinger, 2001, 95-98, §§ 188-209; for the letter *Quam laudabiliter* to bishop Turribius of Astorga (447), see Denzinger, 2001, 132-134, §§ 283-286; for the *Anathemas of the Council of Braga* (574), see Denzinger, 2001, 208-210, §§ 451-464.

⁴² Priscillian, *Liber apologeticus*, ed. Schepss, CSEL 18:6.

Latin bibles copied as late as the thirteenth century.⁴³

Since Priscillian was the first author to cite the comma, Karl Künstle (1905) suggested that he had invented it and inserted it in the biblical text. This suggestion was immediately challenged by Adolf Jülicher (1905). Joseph Denk (1906) likewise argued that Priscillian's citations of Scripture reflect a "very early, extremely interesting and faithful form of the *Itala*," and pointed out that he himself had not found any other instance of deliberate falsification of Scripture in Priscillian's work. Moreover, Denk suggested that if Jerome had suspected Priscillian of inventing the passage, he certainly would have unmasked and denounced such an outrageous forgery.⁴⁴ (However plausible Denk's suggestion may appear, arguments *ex silentio* do not compel assent. Indeed, Jerome also fails to mention the unusual variant "water, flesh and blood" in Priscillian's reading of verse 8, which—although it is represented in some later Spanish manuscripts—would certainly have merited a comment from Jerome if he were familiar with Priscillian's text.) Ernest-Charles Babut (1909) concurred with Denk, and added that the comma is to be found in several orthodox works of the fifth century, which would hardly be expected if it were the invention of a man condemned as a heretic. All these factors suggested to Babut that the comma was already to be found in the bibles of Priscillian's orthodox opponents as well as in his own.⁴⁵ Whatever the truth of the matter, the rediscovery of Priscillian's work, coinciding with the beginnings of interest in the textual history of the Vulgate by Berger (1893) and the editors of the Oxford critical text of the Vulgate (1889-1954), led to the more general suggestion that the comma may have first arisen in Spain rather than in North Africa, as had hitherto been suspected.

Priscillian's use of neuter plural forms (*hæc tria*) to refer to the divine persons instead of the masculine plural forms (*hi tres*) we might naturally expect from the Greek original of 1 Jn 5:8 (οἱ τρεῖς) is noteworthy. It has been suggested that this grammatical peculiarity was consonant with Priscillian's modalistic

⁴³ Künstle, 1905a, 8-9, 12-15; Künstle, 1905b, 60-61; Thiele, 1966, 363; Brown, 1982, 781-782; Strecker, 1989, 281; Strecker, 1996, 189. The sources reading *caro* are Madrid, Complutense ms 31; Dublin, Trinity College ms 52; Paris, BnF ms lat. 315; Vienna, ÖNB ms 1190²; *Contra Varimadum* I.5; Beatus and Eterius, *Contra Elipandum* I.26; ps.-John II, *Epist. ad Valerium*.

⁴⁴ Denk, 1906.

⁴⁵ Babut, 1909, Appendix IV.3; Brooke, 1912, 160.

understanding of the persons of the Trinity.⁴⁶ However, we have seen enough examples of identical or similar phrases being used by orthodox expositors to realise that this conclusion is not warranted.

More interestingly, Priscillian's reading of verse 7 contains the phrase *in Christo Iesu*. The complete phrase *unum sunt in Christo Iesu* is derived ultimately from Gal 3:28 (ὁμοῖς εἰς ἐστὲν ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), and was clearly attracted to the end of 1 Jn 5:8 by the fact that they share the words *unum sunt*. The phrase *unum sunt in Christo* [*Iesu*] subsequently occurs as a Trinitarian *symbolum* in two large-scale creeds. The first is the *Reply to Pope Damasus*, written in or before 384 (the year of Damasus' death) by Priscillian or one of his followers.⁴⁷ The second is the *Expositio fidei chatolice*, an orthodox creed written probably in Spain in the fifth or sixth century, in which this *symbolum* occurs as part of the wording of the Johannine comma.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Brown, 1982, 781-782, 786; Strecker, 1996, 189.

⁴⁷ *Ad Damasum papam*, cit. Künstle, 1905b, 59: "Pater deus, filius deus et spiritus sanctus deus. Hæc unum sunt in Christo Iesu. Tres itaque formæ, sed una potestas." Künstle, 1905b, 67, contrasts this with the orthodox formulation in the creed *Clemens Trinitas est una divinitas*, also known as the "creed of St Augustine" (Southern France, fifth/sixth century; text given in Denzinger, 2001, 49-50, § 73-74). Although *Clemens Trinitas* does not contain the comma in its classical form, it contains the phrase *tres unum sunt* (here with the status of a *symbolum*) with an enumeration of the persons of the Trinity, creating an oddly ungrammatical sentence (*Itaque Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus, et tres unum sunt*). In combination, these two elements are clearly moving towards the Johannine comma in its classical formulation. See also the *Canons of the Second Council of Braga*, PL 84:582: "LV. Quid in altari offerri oporteat. Non oportet aliquid aliud in sanctuario offerri præter panem et vinum et aquam, quæ in typo Christi benedicuntur, quia dum in cruce penderet de corpore eius sanguis effluxit et aqua. Hæc tria unum sunt in Christo Iesu, hæc hostia et oblatio Dei in odorem suavitatis." This document, which was subsequently absorbed into the *Decretum Gratiani*, first appears in the forged ps.-Isidorean collection, put together in the ninth century; it is consequently difficult to know whether the formulation genuinely reflects the thought of the late fifth century. In any case it is fascinating that this phraseology occurs in combination with the three elements of *flesh*, blood and water, which are found in Priscillian's citation of 1 Jn 5:8. It is possible that the inclusion of this phrase in the *Canons* was suggested by the common interpretation of 1 Jn 5:6 as a reference to the sacraments.

⁴⁸ *Expositio fidei chatolice*, in Caspari, 1883, XIV, 305: "[...] pater est ingenitus, filius uero sine initio genitus a patre est, spiritus autem sanctus processit [procedit Caspari] a patre et accipit de filio sicut euangelista testatur, quia scriptum est: *Tres sunt qui dicunt testimonium in cælo: pater, uerbum et spiritus, et hæc tria unum sunt in Christo Iesu*. Non tamen dixit: *unus est in*

An examination of all the known citations of 1 Jn 5:7-8 in the works of the Latin Fathers, as well as of the readings in early manuscripts of the Latin New Testament, suggested that the variants were created through the variable convergence of three separate elements, attracted by the shared phrase *VNVM SVNT*; this phrase acted as the “switch” at which a given Father or scribe moved from one verbal formulation to another. It is suggested that the phenomenon that brought about such textual combination is related to “code switching,” a psycholinguistic phenomenon observed in conversations between bilingual conversants, when the uttering of a word or phrase occurring in both languages causes a transition from one language to another.⁴⁹

The first stage in the formulation of the comma was the simple translation of the Greek text of 1 Jn 5:8 (ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες: τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν) into Latin: *Quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant, Spiritus [et] aqua et sanguis, et tres VNVM SVNT*. This translation of verse 8 is attested by Leo the Great and Codex Amiatinus. The existence of Trinitarian allegoresis of this verse before the formulation of the comma is demonstrated by the fact that some early writers (e.g. Facundus and Haymo) give the spatial marker *in terra* in verse 8 but do not yet cite the comma.

The “core” of the comma was then created by substituting the three persons of the Trinity for the water, spirit and blood enumerated in verse 8, and

Christo Iesu.” The *Expositio* is preserved in Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana ms I 101 sup., the same eighth-century manuscript that contains the Muratorian Canon. The date and provenance of the *Expositio* are disputed. Caspari, 1883, 304-308, the first editor of the document, suggested that it was written in Africa around the fifth or sixth century. Morin, 1899, 101-102, suggested less convincingly that it was written by Isaac Judaeus in the time of Pope Damasus (372). A more convincing explanation was offered by Künstle, 1905b, 89-99, who suggested that it was written in Spain in the fifth or sixth century against the position of Priscillian. In support of his contention that the *Expositio* is Spanish, Künstle noted that the same manuscript contains a *Fides Athanasii*, which is identical with the eighth chapter of the *De Trinitate* of ps.-Vigilius, and that the whole collection of documents in this manuscript is a suite of tracts belonging to the anti-Priscillianist movement. He concluded that Isaac cannot have written the *Expositio*, since he lived before the *comma Johanneum* is first attested, though this argument seems a little circular. Further on Morin’s hypotheses, see Lunn-Rockliffe, 2007, 33-62. It should be noted that the reading of the comma in Priscillian and in the *Expositio* is very similar to that later found in the biblical manuscripts Madrid, Complutense ms 31 and León, Archivo catedralicio ms 6.

⁴⁹ On code switching, see for example Auer, 2002.

by inserting the spatial marker *in cælo* to distinguish the two sets of witnesses. This reading can be seen in its simplest form in manuscripts such as the ninth-century ms Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana ms B vi (Codex Vallicellanus): *Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus, aqua et sanguis, et tres VNVM SVNT; sicut tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo, pater, uerbum, et spiritus sanctus, et tres VNVM SVNT.*

Subsequently, one or both of the *symbola* “[*hæc*] *tria* (or [*hi*] *tres*) VNVM SVNT (or *unus* [*est*] *deus*)” and “VNVM SVNT in Christo [*Iesu*]” were attracted to the “core” of the comma. The phrase VNVM SVNT, shared by the Scriptural text and the two *symbola*, acted as the switch at which verse 7 or 8 could deviate into the *symbola*. When this switch occurred in verse 8—as testified by Ambrose, *De Spiritu sancto* III.10 (*Quia tres sunt testes, spiritus, aqua et sanguis, et hi tres VNVM SVNT in Christo Iesu*)—it served to explain that the testimony of the three earthly witnesses is focussed on establishing Christ’s status as son of God. This switch could happen where the author was unaware of the comma (as we see in Ambrose), or in conjunction with the comma, such as in the *Testimonia diuinæ Scripturæ*, a seventh-century work formerly attributed to Isidore of Seville.⁵⁰ The switch could also occur at the analogous position in the “core” form of the comma, as seen in Priscillian and the *Expositio fidei chatolice*. In Priscillian and the *Expositio*, the neuter forms *hæc tria*, borrowed from the *symbolum*, have even crept back into the “core,” supplanting the original masculine forms *hi tres*.

The fact that the form of the comma cited by Priscillian and the author of the *Expositio fidei chatolice* is identical shows how heterodox thinkers could use the same *symbola* as the orthodox party as the basis of very different systems of belief. The credal formulation *unum sunt in Christo Iesu* could be used by the author of the *Expositio fidei chatolice* to express the orthodox belief that the Spirit, water and blood testify unanimously to Christ as the Son of God. The same *symbolum* could be used by Priscillian or the Panchristian author of the *Reply to Pope Damasus* to show that the three persons of the Trinity are one God, and that this one God is Jesus Christ.

Other variants in verse 8—*aqua caro et sanguis* (Priscillian) and *tres in*

⁵⁰ Ps.-Isidore, *Testimonia diuinæ scripturæ*, CCSL 108:57: “IN EPISTULA IOHANNIS: Quoniam tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in terra spiritus, aqua et sanguis; et hi tres unum sunt in Xristo Iesu; et tres sunt, qui testimonium dicunt in cælo pater, uerbum et spiritus; et hi tres unum sunt.”

nobis sunt (Ps.-Athanasius, *Contra Varimadus*)—seem to have entered the Latin textual tradition through lateral contamination, independently of the process outlined above, and possibly as the result of doctrinal interference.

This foregoing hypothesis—that the comma arose through the attraction of the two *symbola* to the “core” of the comma—seems to explain why the first references to the Johannine comma are to be found in formal confessions of faith, the natural environment of *symbola*: the *Liber apologeticus* of Priscillian, the *Expositio fidei chatolice*, and the *Liber fidei catholicæ*, an explanation of Catholic theology presented by bishop Eugenius of Carthage to the Arian king Hunneric in 484.⁵¹

A snapshot of his process in motion is provided by the *Complexiones* of Cassiodorus (c. 490-c. 583), who combines a variant of the *symbolum* “*hi tres unus est Deus*”—also found in Augustine’s *Against Maximinus* II.22.3—with the allegorical notion that the witness of the three persons of the Trinity directly parallels the witness of the earthly witnesses. While Cassiodorus does not provide the comma in its classic form, he provides something more interesting: a chance to see the constituent parts of the comma in the process of convergence.⁵²

Further evidence for this hypothesis is provided by the writings of Alcuin (c. 735-804), Charlemagne and Leo III, all written within a few years of each other. In his treatise on the Trinity, Alcuin provides an exegesis of the *symbolum* “*hæc tria unum*”. The result looks like an embryonic version of the Johannine comma: “And these three things [*sc.* the persons of the Trinity] are one [*hæc tria unum*], and truly one; and this one is three. However, there are not three Fathers,

⁵¹ Recorded by Victor Vitensis, *Historia persecutionis Africanæ provinciae*, ed. Petschenig, CSEL 7:60 (cf. PL 58:227-228): “Et ut adhuc luce clarius unus diuinitatis esse cum patre et filio spiritum sanctum doceamus, Iohannis euangelistæ testimonio conprobatur. Ait namque: *tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent* [*v.l.*: dant] *in cælo, pater, uerbum et spiritus sanctus, et hi tres unum sunt*. Numquod ait: ‘tres in differentiæ qualitate seiuncti aut quibuslibet diuersitatum gradibus longo separationis interuallo diuisi?’ sed *tres*, inquit, *unum sunt*.” Further, see Bludau, 1919a.

⁵² Cassiodorus, *Complexiones canonice epistularum septem*, PL 70:1372-1373: “*Omnis qui credit quia Jesus est Christus, ex Deo natus est, et reliqua. Qui Deum Jesum credit, ex Deo Patre natus est, iste sine dubitatione fidelis* [1373] *est; et qui diligit genitorem, amat et eum qui ex eo natus est Christus. Sic autem diligimus eum, cum mandata ejus facimus, quæ justis mentibus gravia non videntur; sed potius vincunt sæculum, quando in illum credunt qui condidit mundum. Cui rei testificantur in terra tria mysteria: aqua, sanguis et spiritus, quæ in passione Domini leguntur impleta: in cælo autem Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus sanctus; et hi tres unus est Deus.*” Further, see Bludau, 1927.

three Sons or three Holy Spirits; but three persons, one Father, one Son, one Holy Spirit. And these three [*hi tres*], namely the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are one [*unum sunt*] in nature, omnipotence and eternity.”⁵³ One of the tasks with which Charlemagne entrusted Alcuin was the recension of the Vulgate, a task completed in 801. Codex Vallicellanus shows that Alcuin’s recension contained the Johannine comma.⁵⁴ In a letter written by Charlemagne to Leo III in 809, the emperor cites a commentary on the Creed by Jerome—a work now lost, or perhaps even misattributed—in which a particularly dissonant form of the *symbolum* is cited: “these three things is one God” (*hæc tria unus Deus est*).⁵⁵ The same year, Frankish monks in Jerusalem were being persecuted for reciting the Nicene Creed with the *filioque*. In response, Leo issued a general letter to all the Western churches containing a profession of faith containing a summary of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, the first doctrinal statement from Rome to formulate the classic Catholic position. In this creed we find the

⁵³ Alcuin, *De fide sanctæ et individuae trinitatis* I.11, PL 101:19-20: “Pater solus Pater, [20] et Filius solus Filius, et Spiritus sanctus solus [est] Spiritus sanctus. Et Pater hoc habet proprium, quod ex omnibus quæ sunt, solus est qui ab alio non est: ac per hoc solus est in paternitatis persona, non [solus] in deitatis essentia. Unigenitus vero Filius Dei hoc habet proprium, quod ex solo, id est, Patre consubstantialiter et coessentialiter solus genitus est; et in hoc est personæ suæ proprietas. Spiritus sanctus itaque hoc habet proprium, quod ex Patre et Filio æqualiter procedit; et est amborum Spiritus, ejusdemque substantiæ et æternitatis cum Patre et Filio. Sed hæc tria vere etiam tria sunt, ineffabiliterque tria, et essentialiter tria, habentia proprietates suas. Et hæc tria unum, et vere unum; et hoc unum tres, sed non tres Patres, nec tres Filii, nec tres Spiritus sancti; sed tres personæ, unus Pater, unus Filius, unus Spiritus sanctus. Et hi tres, id est, Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus sanctus, unum sunt in natura, omnipotentia, et æternitate.” See also the *Invocatio ad ss. trinitatem, et fidei symbolum ejusdem* constituting book III of the same treatise, PL 101:57: “Et hæc tria unus Deus, et unus Deus hæc tria; idem Deus et Dominus [ms Sanct-Germ.: Et hæc tria unus Deus et unus Dominus; hæc tria idem Deus et Dominus] vera et sempiterna Trinitas in personis, vera et sempiterna unitas in substantia, quia una est substantia Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus sanctus.”

⁵⁴ Westcott, 1892, 206; Berger, 1893, xvi.

⁵⁵ Carolus Magnus, *Epist. XIX, ad Leonem III papam*, PL 98:928: “Hieronymus quoque de hac ipsa Spiritus sancti processione in Symboli expositione inter cætera sic ait: Spiritus qui a Patre et Filio procedit, Patri Filioque coæternus et per omnia coæqualis est. Hæc est sancta trinitas, id est, Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus sanctus, una est deitas et potentia, una et essentia, id est, Pater qui genuit, Filiusque genitus, et Spiritus sanctus qui ex Patre Filioque procedit. Hæc tria unus Deus est.”

symbolum cited by Charlemagne, *hæc tria unus Deus*.⁵⁶

5. The uneven reception of the comma in the Latin middle ages

Such is the early evidence for the comma, which suggests that it was not taken for granted or even uniformly well known for the first six or seven hundred years after the first Epistle of John was written. Pope Leo's *Tomus ad Flavianum* (449) cites the fifth chapter of John's epistle, but omits the comma. Fascinatingly, Leo's gloss on verse 8 contains both *symbola*, *quæ tria unum sunt* and *in Christo Iesu* (though this latter phrase is also omitted in some manuscripts).⁵⁷ The

⁵⁶ Pope Leo III, *Epistola XV, seu symbolum orthodoxæ fidei Leonis papæ*, PL 102:1031: "Et hæc tria unus Deus. Hæc tria idem Deus et Dominus, vera et sempiterna trinitas in personis, vera et sempiterna unitas in substantia, quia una est substantia Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus." Haußleiter, 1920, 37-38. We also find the credal phrase *hæc tria unus deus* in other Frankish sources, suggesting more strongly that it had enjoyed a particular popularity as a credal phrase in the Frankish territories: Ratramnus Corbeiensis, *Contra Græcorum opposita romanam ecclesiam infamantium* (written 868) III.3, PL 121, 281-283 (paraphrasing Augustine, *Sermo 52 [De verbis Evangelii Matthæi 3:13-17]* 10.23, PL 38, 364): "Non est enim illa Trinitas, quæ est summa et immobilis essentia, id est Deus, memoria, intelligentia, dilectio, ut hæc tria sint Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, tanquam Pater memoria, Filius intelligentia, et Spiritus sanctus dilectio; sed solus Pater hæc tria sit, et Filius similiter hæc tria, Spiritus quoque sanctus hæc tria pariter [...]. Nec enim quemadmodum imago Trinitatis hujus habet illa tria, id est memoriam, intelligentiam, dilectionem, et propterea in una persona Trinitas est, non quod unus homo sit trinitas, sed quod in uno homine sint illa tria; ita est in illa summa Trinitate: sed tres personæ sunt Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, sed hæc tria unus Deus, et propterea Trinitas unus Deus." Guibert of Nogent (c. 1055-1124), *Historia quæ dicitur gesta dei per francos* I.2, PL 121, 688 (*Græcorum erronea doctrina*): "Si enim, ex Filii Dei præcepto, in Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti nomine baptizandum est [Mt 28:19], et hoc idcirco quia hæc tria unus Deus est: quidquid in his tribus asseritur minus alterutro, Deus profecto non est." Gaufridus Clarævallensis (c. 1114/20-1188), *Contra capitula Gilberti Pictaviensis episcopi. De capitulo secundo*, PL 185, 608: "Ibi enim unitas vere est Trinitas, et Trinitas vere est unitas. Tunc perfecte cognoscemus, quod modo salubriter credimus. Neque enim aliter animadvertere merebimur, nisi nunc, quæ vera sunt, fateamur, hoc est, veram, coæternam, incommutabilem, distinctam personis et inseparabilem Trinitatem, replentem omnia simul substantiali virtute sua. Unum simplex, trinumque: *hæc tria unum, et hoc unum tres: sed non tres Patres, nec tres Filii nec tres Spiritus sancti* [Alcuin, *De fide sanctæ et individue trinitatis* I.11]. Tres unum, et unum tres confiteor. Hæc tria unus Deus, et unus Deus hæc tria [Alcuin, *De fide* III]."

⁵⁷ Leo the Great, *Tomus ad Flavianum* [Epist. 28], in Bindley 1899, 203; Cavallera, 1936, 371:

commentary on the Catholic Epistles by Bede (672/3-735) shows no trace of the comma, and only the faintest hint of a Trinitarian interpretation of verse 8. Interestingly, it seems that Bede was aware of the textual variant *in nobis hæc unum sunt* in verse 8, which he explains by means of a citation from Ambrose's *De Spiritu sancto*.⁵⁸ In his homily on the Epistle for the first Sunday after Easter (1 Jn

“Hic est, qui venit per aquam et sanguinem, Iesus Christus; non in aqua solum, sed in aqua et sanguine. Et spiritus est, qui testificatur, quoniam Spiritus est veritas. Quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant, Spiritus aqua et sanguis, et tres unum sunt. Spiritus utique sanctificationis et sanguis redemptionis et aqua baptismatis, quæ tria unum sunt et individua manent nihilque eorum a sui connexione seiungitur: quia catholica ecclesia hac fide vivit, hac proficit, ut in Christo Iesu nec sine vera divinitate humanitas nec sine vera credatur [om. Bindley] humanitate divinitas.”

⁵⁸ Bede, *Super epistolas catholicas expositio*, ad 1 Jn 5:7-8, CCSL 121:321-322, ll. 84-111 (cf. PL 93:114): *“Quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant, spiritus et aqua et sanguis. Spiritus dedit testimonium quoniam Iesus est ueritas quando super baptizatum descendit [Mt 3:16]. Si enim uerus Dei filius non esset, nequaquam in eum tanta manifestatione spiritus sanctus ueniret. Aqua etiam et sanguis dedere testimonium quoniam Iesus est ueritas quando de latere eius in cruce mortui manarunt [Jn 19:34], quod nullatenus fieri posset, si ueram carnis naturam non haberet. Sed et hoc quod ante passionem cum oraret factus est sudor eius sicut guttæ sanguinis decurrentis in terram [Lk 22:44] ueritati carnis assumptæ testimonium dat. Nec reticendum quod in hoc quoque sanguis et aqua testimonium illi dederunt quod de latere mortui uiuaciter effluerunt, quod erat contra naturam corporum atque ob id mysteriis aptum et testimonio ueritatis fuit congruum uidelicet insinuans quia et ipsum domini corpus melius post mortem esset uiucturum resuscitatum in gloria et ipsa mors illius nobis uitam donaret. Hoc quoque quod sudor eius instar guttarum sanguinis decurrebat in terram testimonium perhibebat illi sacrosancto mysterio quod ecclesiam totum per orbem suo sanguine lauaret. Tres sunt ergo qui testimonium perhibent ueritati, et tres, inquit, unum sunt. Individua namque hæc manent nihilque eorum a sui conexione seiungitur, quia nec sine uera diuinitate humanitas nec sine uera credenda est humanitate diuinitas. Sed et in nobis hæc unum sunt non naturæ eiusdem substantia sed eiusdem operatione [322] mysterii. Nam, sicut beatus Ambrosius ait: Spiritus mentem renouat, aqua proficit ad lauacrum, sanguis spectat ad pretium. Spiritus enim nos per adoptionem filios Dei fecit, sacri fontis unda nos abluit, sanguis domini nos redemit. Alterum igitur inuisibile, alterum uisibile testimonium sacramento consequitur spiritali [Ambrose, De Spiritu sancto; CSEL 79:179].”* Jenkins, 1942, pointed out that the following manuscripts of Bede's commentary give the reading *Quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant: spiritus et aqua et sanguis*: Oxford, Bodleian ms 849 (dated 818); Oxford, Bodleian ms Laud misc. 442 (ninth century); Oxford, Oriel College ms 34 (tenth century); Oxford, Jesus College ms 69 (eleventh century); Oxford, Jesus College ms 70 (twelfth century). Two slightly later manuscripts show traces that the comma is starting to circulate (although they do not quote verse 7), since they give the reading “[...] dant in terra: spiritus [...]”: Oxford, Bodleian ms Laud misc. 78 (twelfth century); Oxford, Lincoln College ms D. Lat. 31 (twelfth or thirteenth century). Jenkins next

5:4-12), Hrabanus Maurus (c. 780-856), archbishop of Mainz, likewise moves systematically through the passage in question but does not include the comma, a circumstance that suggests strongly that it was not in his lectionary. Like Bede (one of his principal sources), Hrabanus only hints at a Trinitarian reading of verse 8.⁵⁹ The immediate context of the passage in 1 Jn is cited no less than four times by another Frankish bishop, Hincmar of Reims (806-882), who likewise fails to include the comma in every instance, even in the midst of his vigorous defence of the Trinity against the propositions of Gottschalk.⁶⁰ More definite traces of the allegorical interpretation are to be found in a sermon on the same lectionary reading by Hrabanus' contemporary Haymo, bishop of Halberstadt († 853). Although the comma was apparently absent from the lectionary Haymo was using, he does imply that the three persons of the Trinity are "signified mystically" by the Scriptural verse, a conclusion he apparently reached through his reading of Eucherius. Interestingly, Haymo also says that the water, blood and spirit testify *on earth*, thus providing evidence of the uneven entry of the markers

draws attention to the relevant passage as it appears in Oxford, Balliol College ms 177 (dated tentatively to the end of the twelfth century), 83r: "[...] qui eum uel deum uel hominem esse uerum denegant. *Quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant in celo pater uerbum et spiritus sanctus. Et hii tres sunt [sic].* Pater dedit testimonium deitatis quando dixit *Hic est filius meus dilectus* [Mt 3:17]. Ipse filius dedit testimonium qui in monte transfiguratus potentiam diuinitatis et speciem eterne beatitudinis ostendit [Mt 17:2]. Spiritus sanctus dedit qui [quando?] super baptizatum in specie columbe requieuit [Lk 3:22] uel quando ad inuocationem nominis xpi corda credencium impleuit. *Et hii tres unum sunt una uidelicet substantia et unius deitatis essencia. Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra spiritus aqua et sanguis.* Spiritus dedit testimonium quoniam ihs est ueritas quando super baptizatum descendit. Si enim non uerus [...]." Jenkins' comments were followed up by Laistner, 1942, who noted that this reading does not occur in two further manuscripts of Bede (Karlsruhe, mss Aug. xliii and cliii, both ninth century), and that both these manuscripts also lack the words *in terra*. Jenkins and Laistner were apparently unaware that the words "*pater dedit...impleuit*" in the Balliol manuscript are interpolated from the *Glossa ordinaria*, 1603, VI:1414, perhaps by way of the *Speculum speculationum* of Alexander Neckam, who attributed this part of the *Glossa* to Bede. The words "*Spiritus...descendit*" are perhaps based on Neckam's explication: "Spiritus ergo Sanctus in terra dedit testimonium Christo super humanitate, et in conceptione quia de ipso conceptus est, et in descensu super ipsum quando baptizatus est, et tercio quando ab ipso ductus est in desertum." See Neckam, 1988, 73, 78.

⁵⁹ Hrabanus Maurus, *Homilia XVII*, PL 110:174-175.

⁶⁰ Hincmar, *De prædestinatione Dei* xxxv, PL 125:376; *De una et non trina deitate* x, PL 125:555; *Explanatio in ferculum Salomonis*, PL 125:821; *Epist.* x, PL 126:75.

in caelo—in terra used to distinguish the heavenly and earthly witnesses.⁶¹

The fact that some writers show no knowledge of the comma centuries after others quote it as a matter of course is matched by its sporadic appearance in Latin bibles. It is missing from the earliest dated Latin bible, Codex Fuldensis, written between 541 and 546 and corrected upon its completion by Victor, bishop of Capua (Fulda, Hochschul- und Landesbibliothek ms Bonifatius 1, Gregory Aland ms F, praeconational text). It is absent from several important manuscripts of a later date, such as codex Amiatinus (Florence, Bib. Medicea-Laurenziana ms Amiatino 1; GA ms A, recension of Cassiodorus, copied in England some time between 688 and 716);⁶² the Lectionary of Luxeuil (Paris, BnF ms lat. 9427; seventh or eighth century, Hispano-Frankish recension); Codex Harleianus (London, British Library, ms Harley 1772; eighth century); the Book of Armagh (Dublin, Trinity College ms 52; c. 807); and Codex Sangermanensis (St Petersburg, Publichnaya Bibliotheka ms gr. 20).⁶³ The earliest surviving fragments of Latin bibles to contain the comma date from the seventh century.⁶⁴ In 1886, J. P. Martin published the results of his examination

⁶¹ Haymo of Halberstadt, *Homilia* LXXX, PL 118:488: “*Spiritus est qui testificatur, quoniam Christus est veritas. Spiritus enim sanctus, per quem nobis in baptismo omnium datur remissio peccatorum, nos per adoptionem filios Dei facit: quos ipse Dominus in morte crucis et suo sanguine redemit, et per gratiam ejusdem sancti Spiritus, quem in baptismo suscepimus, verae fidei lumen et agnitionis Dei recepimus, unde salutem consequi debemus aeternam. Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, aqua, et sanguis, et spiritus. Quidam hic sanctam Trinitatem mystice significatam intelligunt, quae Christo testimonium perhibuit. In aqua Patrem significari intelligunt, quia ipse de se dicit: Me dereliquerunt fontem aquae vivae [Jer 2:13]. In sanguine, ipsum Christum, qui pro salute mundi suum sanguinem fudit. In spiritu, eundem Spiritum sanctum. Haec sancta Trinitas Christo testimonium ita perhibet, ipso per Evangelium loquente: Ego sum qui testimonium perhibeo de meipso, et testimonium perhibet de me, qui misit me Pater. Et cum venerit paracletus, quem ego mittam vobis a Patre meo, Spiritum veritatis, ille testimonium perhibebit de me [Jn 8:15]. Et hi tres unum sunt, id est Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus. Unum in natura, unum in divina substantia, coaequales in omnibus, et coeternales per omnia, in nullo dissimiles.*” It is possible that the phrase *in terra* was later introduced into Haymo’s text in the process of transmission, as was the case with Eucherius’ text, but in the absence of a critical edition of Haymo’s works it is difficult to be sure.

⁶² Tischendorf, 1850, 391.

⁶³ Mabillon, 1697, 446; Griesbach, 1785-1793, 1:377; Künstle, 1905a, 4-5; Gwynn, 1913, 308.

⁶⁴ The following list of readings of the Johannine comma in the earliest Latin bibles draws together the information presented by Ebert, 1825-1827, 1:186; Knittel, 1829, 98-101; Ziegler, 1876, 8; Beer and Jiménez, 1888, 5-8, 16-18; Berger, 1893, 27, 64, 73, 83, 103-111, 121, 128,

141-143; Westcott, 1892, 202-209; Scrivener, 1893; Wordsworth, 1911, 572; Brooke, 1912, 156-162; Wordsworth, White and Sparks, 1889-1954, 3.2 [publ. 1949]:373-374. Munich, BSB Clm 6436 (Fris. 236), 24r (the Freising fragments, reconstructed by Ziegler, 1876, 8, 56, abbreviations resolved) (seventh century): “*Quoniam* tr[es sunt qui testificantur] in terra. *spiritus* et aqua et sa[nguis; et tres sunt qui tes]tificantur in cælo p[a]ter e[t verbum et spiritus sanctus et hi] tres unum sunt.” León, Archivio catedralico ms 15 (the León palimpsest, a biblical text written in seventh century over sixth-century text of Visigothic law code; the words in brackets are supplied by Berger, 1893, 10, where the original is unclear; abbreviations are resolved): “[Et spiritus est testi]monium [quia spiritus est ueritas. *Quoniam*] tres sunt qui t[estimonium dant in terra] spiritus et [aqua et sanguis et tres sunt] qui tes[timonium dicunt in cælo, pa]ter [et uerbum et spiritus sanctus et hi tres unum] sunt [in Christo Ihesu].” Madrid, Biblioteca Universidad Complutense ms 31 (ninth century) [*Compl. 1*]: “Quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terris, aqua sanguis et caro [*in margine*: uel spiritus], et tria hec unum sunt; et tria sunt que testimonium dicunt in celo, Pater Verbum et Spiritus et hec tria unum sunt in Christo Ihesu.” Compare this with the reading given by Priscillian. León, Archivio catedralicio ms 6 (c. 920): “Quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra spiritus et aqua et sanguis et tria hæc unum sunt; et tria sunt qui [*sic*] testimonium dicunt in cælo Pater Verbum et Spiritus et hii tres unum sunt in Christo Ihesu.” A coherent group is represented by the readings in Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional ms Vitr. 13-1 (Codex Toletanus) (mid-tenth century) [*Tol.*]; La Cava de’ Tirreni, Biblioteca della Badia, ms memb. 1 (Codex Cavensis) (Spain [Asturias?], after 850) [*Cav.*]; León, Biblioteca Capitular y Archivo de la Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, ms 2 (Codex Gothicus Legionensis) (dated 960) [*Leg. 2*]; Madrid, Museo arqueológico nacional ms 485 (Codex Oscensis) (twelfth century) [*Osc.*]; Madrid, Biblioteca Complutense mss 32 (tenth to twelfth centuries) [*Compl. 2*]; Madrid, Biblioteca Complutense ms 34 (twelfth century) [*Compl. 3*]; Codex Demidovianus (lost, though known through Matthaei’s collation, published 1782-1789) (thirteenth century) [*Dem.*]; and Paris, BnF ms lat. 321 [321]. Berger, 1893, 27, creates the following synthetic reading from this group (I have added orthographical variants from *Cav.*): “Quia [*Compl. 3*: *Quoniam*] tres sunt qui testimonium dant [*Tol.*: dicunt] in terra Spiritus et [om. *Osc.*, *Compl. 3*, 321, *Dem.*] aqua et sanguis et hi[i] [om. *Dem.*] tres unum [*Cav.*: hunum] sunt in Christo Ihesu [in...Ihesu om. *Dem.*]. Et [om. *Tol.*, *Compl. 2*; 321: Quia] tres sunt [om. *Compl. 3*] qui testimonium dicunt [*Compl. 2*, 321, *Dem.*: dant] in cælo Pater uerbum et [om. 321] Spiritus [*Osc.*, *Compl. 2*, *Compl. 3*, 321: Spiritus Sanctus] et hi[i] tres unum [*Cav.*: hunum] sunt.” Bern, Bürgerbibliothek ms A. 9 (tenth century): “*Quoniam* tres sunt qui testimonium dant [*add. sec. manus*: in terra] spiritus aqua et sanguis et tres unum sunt [*add. sec. manus*: Et tres sunt qui testimonium dicunt in cælo Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus et hii tres unum sunt].” Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana ms B vi (Codex Vallicellanus) (ninth century, representing the recension of Alcuin, completed in 801): “*Quoniam* tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus, aqua, et sanguis, et tres unum sunt; sicut tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo, pater, uerbum, et spiritus sanctus; et tres unum sunt.” Paris BnF mss lat. 4/4² (ninth or tenth century, Puy-en-Velay) (Codex Aniciensis), addition in near-contemporary hand (note *caro* in verse 8): “*Quoniam* tres sunt

qui testimonium dant in cælo Pater Verbum et Spiritus et tres unum sunt; et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra sanguis aqua et caro. Si testimonium [...].” Paris BnF ms lat. 2328 (codex Lemovicensis) (eighth or ninth century, Limoges): “Quia tres sunt qui testimonium dicunt in terra spiritus aqua et sanguis et hi tres unum sunt; et tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent Verbum et Spiritus et tres unum sunt in Christo Ihesu”; note the curious omission of the Father and the marker *in cælo* from the celestial witnesses. Paris, BnF ms lat. 315 (twelfth or thirteenth century) recalls the Spanish recension; note that both sets of witnesses are placed on the earth: “Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, caro aqua et sanguis; et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra Pater Verbum et S. S. et hi tres unum sunt.” Paris, BnF ms lat. 11532 and 11533 (written during the reign of Lothaire II [835-869] at Corbie, copied from another manuscript dated 809; contains many Old Latin readings; formerly in the library of Saint-Germain): “Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant [*add. sec. manus: in terra*] spiritus aqua et sanguis, et tres unum sunt; et tres sunt qui [*sup. ras.: de cælo*] testificantur [*add. sec. manus: testimonium dicunt in cælo*], Pater Verbum et Spiritus et tres unum sunt.” The reading *testificantur* is found in Cassiodorus, and possibly in the Freising fragments, though that reading is dependent on Ziegler’s reconstruction. Vienna, ÖNB ms 1190 (early eleventh century; possibly from abbey of St Vaast, Arras), has only verse 8 in the text; a second near-contemporary hand has added: “Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent in terra, aqua sanguis et caro, et tres in nobis sunt. Et tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent in cælo, Pater Verbum et Spiritus, et hi tres unum sunt.” This addition is virtually identical to that found in the ps.-Athanasian treatise *Contra Varimadum*, especially with the peculiar reading *tres in nobis sunt*; it also recalls the reading in Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine ms 7, which however gives the heavenly witnesses first: “Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo, Pater Verbum et Spiritus; et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, caro sanguis et aqua, et hi tres in nobis unum sunt.” A group of mss from Sankt Gallen have virtually the same reading: Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek ms 907 (eighth century, written by Winitharius), which served as model for British Library ms Add. 11852 (copied by Hartmut, 841-872); this ms in turn served as model for Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek ms 83 (copied by Hartmut and his workshop, probably from the British Library ms); virtually identical readings are to be found in Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek mss 1 and 7: “Quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant, spiritus et [om. SG 72, Einsiedeln 1, Einsiedeln 7] aqua et sanguis, et tres unum sunt; sicut in celo tres sunt, Pater Verbum et Spiritus, et tres unum sunt.” Related to these is Wolfenbüttel, HAB cod. Guelf. 99 Weissenburgensis, 117v (an eighth century ms of Augustine): “[...] et Spiritus est veritas. Quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant, spiritus et aqua et sanguis, et tres unum sunt: sicut et in cœlum [*sic*] tres sunt, pater verbum et spiritus, et tres unum sunt.” Two manuscripts of the Bobbio-Milan school have related readings: firstly, Geneva, Bibliothèque publique et universitaire ms 1 (tenth or eleventh century), given to the chapter of St Peter’s by Bishop Frederic (1031-1073): “Quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant spiritus et aqua et sanguis, et tres unum sunt; et tres testimonium perhibent in cælo, Pater Verbum et Spiritus, et tres unum sunt.” The reading in Paris, BnF ms lat. 104 is related, but generally a little fuller: “Quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus, aqua et sanguis et, tres unum sunt; et tres sunt qui

of 258 Latin bibles written between the ninth and the fourteenth centuries and now housed in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Martin noted a consistent pattern: the further back he went, the less frequently the comma was attested.⁶⁵

testimonium perhibent in cælo, Pater Verbum et Spiritus Sanctus, et tres unum sunt.” Paris, BnF ms lat. 9380 (“Mesmes Bible”, Theodulfian recension) (Orléans, 830/835): “Quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus aqua et sanguis, et tres unum sunt; et tres sunt qui testimonium dicunt in celo, Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus et hi tres unum sunt.” Knittel, 1827, 98-101, collated the readings of the comma in twenty-four Latin bibles at Wolfenbüttel, all (except for Weissenbergensis 99) dating from after the ninth century. The variety of the readings displays the textual instability of the comma. In three of the manuscripts the comma has been added above or below the line, or in the margin. Ten manuscripts place the three heavenly witnesses after the three earthly witnesses. One bible at Wolfenbüttel clearly shows how glosses—and even glosses on glosses—entered the text: “Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus, et hi tres unum sunt. Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus, aqua, et sanguis. Quidam habent hic ‘Et tres unum sunt,’ sed non est in glossis. Si testimonium hominis [...].” Fifteen bibles at Wolfenbüttel lack the words “et hi tres unum sunt” in verse 8; in two mss these words are erased; one ms has these words added in the margin. One ms (written in 1315 by Sigfried Vitulus in the monastery of Erbach, Würzburg) has “Filius” instead of “Verbum” in verse 7. Thiele, 1966, posited the existence of three separate readings in the Old Latin versions: K (extrapolated from Cyprian), C (Priscillian) and T (biblical text-type before final establishment of the Vulgate). He contrasted with the version that eventually became relatively standard in the Vulgate (V), which he considers not to have contained the comma in its original form. Thiele’s reconstructed readings are: K: “(7) quia tres testimonium perhibent (8) spiritus et aqua et sanguis et isti tres in unum sunt [] pater et filius et spiritus sanctus et tres unum sunt.” C: “(7) quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dicunt in terra (8) spiritus aqua et sanguis et hi[i] tres unum sunt in Christo Iesu et tres sunt qui testimonium dicunt in cælo pater verbum et spiritus et hi[i] tres unum sunt.” T: “(7) quia tres sunt qui testificantur in terra (8) spiritus et aqua et sanguis et tres sunt qui testificantur in cælo pater et filius et spiritus sanctus et hi[i] tres unum sunt.” V: “(7) quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant spiritus et aqua et sanguis (8) et tres unum sunt.” We have already reviewed some of the difficulties attending Thiele’s hypothesis that Cyprian knew the comma. For these reasons, Thiele’s form K rests on contested foundations; cf. Wachtel, 1995, 317.

⁶⁵ Martin, 1886, V:148-152; Ayuso, 1947, 100-101. The results of Martin’s study are as follows:

The results of a similar study into further manuscript holdings in Germany, Spain, France, Italy and Switzerland by Teófilo Ayuso Marazuela were published in 1947/1948.⁶⁶ As both scholars pointed out, such studies have certain limits, most obviously the fact that they can go back no further than the earliest extant manuscripts and fragments. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that the comma was found in the text of at least *some* Latin bibles in the fourth century, as we shall see.

The most convincing explanation for the occurrence of the comma in some early Latin bibles is that a gloss recording some version of the comma, formed from a combination of the allegorical interpretation of verse 8 and the two *symbola*, was written in the margin of a particular Latin bible, next to 1 Jn 5:8, possibly already formalised in some kind of credal statement. As Frances Young has pointed out, “creed-like statements and confessions must in practice have provided the hermeneutical key to the public reading of scripture.”⁶⁷ The gloss

| Century | Total of mss | nº | Nº of mss containing the comma | Nº of mss without the comma | % of mss containing the comma per century |
|---------|-----------------|----|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| IX | 10 | | 3 | 7 | 30 |
| X | 4 | | 1 | 3 | 75 |
| XI | 5 | | 2 | 3 | 60 |
| XII | 15 | | 13 | 2 | 87 |
| XIII | 118 | | 113 | 5 | 96 |
| XIV | 106 | | 105 | 1 | 99 |

⁶⁶ The results of Ayuso’s study may be summarised as follows; Ayuso, 1947, 102-108:

| Century | Total of mss | nº | Nº of mss containing the comma | Nº of mss without the comma | % of mss containing the comma per century |
|---------|-----------------|----|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| VI | 1 | | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| VII | 3 | | 2 | 1 | 67 |
| VIII | 1 | | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| IX | 6 | | 2 | 4 | 33 |
| X | 13 | | 9 | 4 | 69 |
| XI | 16 | | 14 | 2 | 88 |
| XII | 8 | | 6 | 2 | 75 |
| XIII | 16 | | 16 | 0 | 100 |
| XIV | 3 | | 3 | 0 | 100 |

⁶⁷ Young, 1997, 18.

was then evidently absorbed into the text when a later scribe copying this manuscript mistakenly believed that it was a correction in his parent manuscript rather than an extraneous addition.

An understanding of how this may have happened is provided by some of the earliest citations of the comma, found in the *De Trinitate* attributed (erroneously) to Athanasius.⁶⁸ The form of the comma cited in *De Trinitate* is as follows: *Tres sunt qui testimonium dicunt in cælo: Pater et Verbum et Spiritus, et in Christo Iesu unum sunt.*⁶⁹ This reading is quite close to that given by Priscillian, but differs in two significant details. Firstly, where Priscillian has *et tria sunt*, the author of *De Trinitate* has *tres sunt*. Secondly, the author of *De Trinitate* omits the phrase *et hæc tria unum sunt*; this latter textual difference thus occurs at the “switch,” thus underlining the importance of this element in the formation of the

⁶⁸ Despite the attribution, it is clear that Athanasius had no hand in the composition of this work. Instead, it has been attributed variously by Chiffet (1664) to Vigilius of Thapsus († c. 490); and by Künstle (1905) to the Spanish bishop Idacius Clarus (fl. c. 380), an opponent and accuser of Priscillian, as we learn from Isidore of Seville. Morin (1898) pointed out that his work appears to be a composite of shorter works by a number of different hands. For the first three books Morin at first suggested an attribution to bishop Eusebius of Vercelli († c. 370), and then suggested Gregory of Elvira as a possible author. Saltet (1906) suggested a connexion with the Luciferians, but his hypotheses were questioned by Simonetti (1949). The last three books are now generally considered of uncertain authorship. See Ficker, 1897, 55-57; Dattrino, 1976, 10-12 (assessment of evidence for the authorship of Eusebius Vercellensis), 118 (on the comma); and Brown, 1982, 782. Whoever wrote this treatise, the estimate made by Lieu, 2008, 215, that “Such expansion of the text can be traced back to the early third century, and perhaps earlier,” seems to push back a little too far.

⁶⁹ Ps.-Athanasius/ps.-Eusebius Vercellensis, *De Trinitate* I, CCSL 9:14 (cf. PL 62:243): “[...] Ergo quamuis in superioribus exemplis scripturarum tacita sint nomina personarum, tamen unitum nomen diuinitatis per omnia est in his demonstratum sicut et in hoc argumento ueritatis, in quo nomina personarum euidenter sunt ostensa et unitum nomen naturale cluse est declaratum, dicente Iohanne euangelista in epistula sua: *Tres sunt, qui testimonium dicunt in cælo, pater et uerbum et spiritus, et in Christo Iesu unum sunt*, non tamen unus est, quia non est eorum una persona.” Ps.-Athanasius/ps.-Eusebius Vercellensis, *De Trinitate* I, CCSL 9:19 (cf. PL 62:246): “Iam audisti superius euangelistam Iohannem in epistula sua tam absolute testantem: *Tres sunt, qui testimonium dicunt in cælo, pater et uerbum et spiritus, et in Christo Iesu unum sunt.*” Ps.-Athanasius, *De Trinitate* X, CCSL 9:145 (cf. PL 62:297): “Vnde et Iohannes in epistula sua ait: *Tres sunt qui testimonium dicunt in cælo, pater, uerbum et spiritus: et in Christo Iesu unum sunt*; non tamen unus est, quia non est eorum una persona.” This section from book X appears to be a simple borrowing from the first section cited from book I.

comma in all its variants. The author of *De Trinitate*, like Priscillian, moreover claims to be quoting the words of John, which suggests that both authors had actually seen the words in a biblical manuscript.

Another early work containing the comma is *Against Varimadus*. This treatise has been attributed—with varying degrees of plausibility—to Augustine (by Cassiodorus), Athanasius (by Bede), Vigilius of Thapsus and Idacius Clarus; more recently, Schwank (1961) has attributed the work to an uncertain author active in Africa around 445-480.⁷⁰ The author of *Against Varimadus* claims to be quoting the comma from John's Epistle "to the Parthians." The reading given here diverges from that given by Priscillian and the author of *De Trinitate* to an extent sufficient to preclude the suggestion that they were all citing from the same codex. This implies one of two explanations. The first possibility is that all the codices went back to a common original, apparently separated by at least one generation of copies. This hypothesis would probably push the entry of the comma into the text of the Old Latin to the mid-fourth century at the latest. The other possibility is that the comma was inserted into the body of the text more than once, and independently, with the scribe in each case confecting a version of the comma from verbal formulations of the allegorical interpretation of verse 8, and from one or both of the *symbola*.

A late ninth-century Latin manuscript of Acts, the Catholic Epistles and Revelation (Paris, BnF ms lat. 13174) gives valuable evidence of the way in which a text could be contaminated with foreign material through such arbitrary scribal intervention. The body text of 1 Jn in this manuscript does not contain the comma, but an early reader decided to note it in the margin. But which version of the text was he to give? On one of the flyleaves of the manuscript (139v), the scribe records four variants of the comma: first, a reading from ps.-Augustine's *Speculum* "*Audi Israhel*"; second, a reading which he also attributes to Augustine, but which in fact resembles the reading found in the Freising fragments and

⁷⁰ Ps.-Athanasius/ps.-Vigilius Thapsensis, *Contra Varimadum* I.5, CCSL 90:20-21 (cf. PL 62:359): "Et Iohannes euangelista ait: *In principio erat uerbum, et uerbum erat apud deum, et deus erat uerbum*. Item ipse ad parthos: *tres sunt*, inquit, *qui testimonium perhibent in terra: aqua, sanguis, et caro, et tres in nobis sunt; et tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent in caelo: pater, uerbum, et spiritus, et hi tres unum sunt*. Nos itaque in natura deitatis, quia unum sunt pater et filius, nec patrem credimus aliquo tempore praecessisse, ut maior sit filio, nec filium postea natum esse, ut deitas patris minoraretur in filio." On the authorship of this work, see Schwank, 1961; Brown, 1982, 782.

Cassiodorus; a third from ps.-Athanasius' *De Trinitate*; and a fourth from Fulgentius' *Against the Arians*. The scribe was quite aware that this verse posed a textual problem. In the event he rejected these four possibilities in favour of a fifth, which conforms closely to that found in the Theodulphian recension, which he duly inserted into the margin of the text.⁷¹ Scribal intervention of this sort was apparently the means by which the comma entered the biblical text. Generous critics like Westcott suggested that this happened "without any signs of bad faith."⁷² Less generous critics argue that the comma was deliberately "helped" into the text in the struggles against heresies such as Sabellianism, Arianism and Adoptionism.

There is some evidence for this latter suggestion. From the late fourth century, early orthodox apologists cited the comma as evidence in their struggles against various heresies. We have already noted the appearance of the comma in the ps.-Athanasian *De Trinitate*. Fulgentius of Ruspe (c. 462/467-c. 527/533) used the comma vigorously and consistently against Sabellians and Arians. Fulgentius was well aware of the tradition of interpretation surrounding this passage, citing for example the *Tomus ad Flavium* by pope Leo the Great.⁷³ A

⁷¹ Paris, BnF, ms lat. 13174 (late ninth century), 139v, cit. Berger, 1896, 104 (checked against original): "[A]UG[USTINUS]: Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dicunt in terra, spiritus aqua et sanguis, et hi tres unum sunt in Christo Ihesu; et tres sunt qui testimonium dicunt in cælo, Pater Verbum et Spiritus, et hi tres unum sunt. ITEM: Hi sunt qui testificantur in cælo, Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, et hi tres unum sunt [cf. CCSL 90, 164]. ATHANASIUS: Tres sunt qui testimonium dicunt in cælo, Pater et Verbum et Spiritus, et in Christo Ihesu unum sunt. FULGENTIUS: Tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent in cælo, Pater Verbum et Spiritus, et tres unum sunt." The reading given in the text of the Epistle (38r) is: "Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant, spiritus aqua et sanguis, et tres unum sunt." A second near-contemporary hand has added "in terra" above the line after "dant," and the following words in the margin: "Et tres sunt qui testimonium dicunt in cælo, Pater Verbum et Spiritus sanctus, et hi tres unum [sunt]."

⁷² Westcott, 1892, 202.

⁷³ Fulgentius Ruspensis, *Dicta regis Trasamundi et contra ea responsiones*, CCSL 91:93 (cf. PL 65:221-224): "In Patre ergo et Filio et Spiritu sancto unitatem substantiæ accipimus, personas confundere non audemus. Beatus enim Iohannes apostolus testatur, dicens: *Tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent in cælo, Pater, Verbum et Spiritus; et tres unum sunt*. Quod etiam beatissimus martyr Cyprianus, in epistula de unitate Ecclesiae confitetur, dicens: *Qui pacem Christi et concordiam rumpit, aduersus Christum facit; qui alibi præter Ecclesiam colligit, Christi Ecclesiam spargit*. Atque ut unam Ecclesiam unius dei esse monstraret, hæc confestim testimonia de scripturis inseruit: *Dicit Dominus: Ego et Pater unum sumus. Et iterum: De Patre et*

treatise *In defence of the Catholic faith* (incorrectly attributed to Fulgentius of Ruspe) cites the comma, and in the following unique form: *Tres sunt in cælo qui testimonium reddunt: Pater, Verbum et Spiritus; et tres unum sunt.*⁷⁴ The comma is also cited in a letter written in 790 by the orthodox Spanish bishops Eterius and Beatus to defend the orthodox teaching on the Trinity.⁷⁵ The ninth-century Spanish bible known as “Codex Cavensis” (La Cava de’ Tirreni, Biblioteca della Badia, ms memb. 1), has a note in the margin next to verse 7, indicating the doctrinal weight given to the comma in the fight against heresy: “Let Arius and the others listen to this!” (*Audiat hoc Arrius et ceteri*).⁷⁶ We note that all these

Filio et Spiritu sancto scriptum est: Et tres unum sunt.” See also Fulgentius Ruspensis, *Liber de trinitate ad Felicem* 4.2-3, CCSL 91:636-637 (cf. PL 65:500): “En habes in breui alium esse Patrem, alium Filium, alium Spiritum sanctum; alium et alium in persona, non aliud et aliud in natura. Et idcirco, *Ego*, inquit, *et Pater unum sumus* [Jn 10:30]. *Vnum*, ad naturam referre nos docet; *sumus*, ad personas. Similiter et illud: *Tres sunt*, inquit, *qui testimonium dicunt in cælo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus, et hi tres unum sunt*. Audiat Sabellius *sumus*, audiat *tres*, et credat esse tres personas, et non sacrilego corde blasphemet, dicendo ipsum sibi esse Patrem, ipsum sibi Filium, ipsum sibi Spiritum sanctum; tamquam modo quodam seipsum gignat, aut modo quodam a seipso ipse procedat; cum hoc etiam in naturis creatis minime inuenire possit, ut aliquid seipsum gignere ualeat. Audiat [637] scilicet et Arius *unum*, et non differentis Filium dicat esse naturæ, cum natura diuersa unum dici nequeat. Filius itaque clamat: *Ego et Pater unum sumus*, et: *Qui me uidet, uidet et Patrem* [Jn 14:9]. Et apostolus de eo: *Qui cum in forma Dei, inquit, esset, non rapinam arbitratus est esse se æqualem Deo* [Phil 2:6], et *Propterea*, inquit in euangelio, *quærebant Iudæi Iesum interficere, quia non solum soluebat sabbatum, sed et patrem suum dicebat Deum, æqualem se faciens Deo* [Jn 5:18]. Et Arius blasphemo spiritu contradicit: *Non sunt unum, non sunt æquales, quia ipse Filius de se dicit: Pater maior me est* [Jn 14:28]; et *missum sese sæpe numero a Patre testatur*. O infelix error pestiferaque doctrina, ignorans dispensationem hominis ob salutem generis humani temporaliter factam! [3] Rogo, secundum quid maior est Pater Filio?” See also Fulgentius Ruspensis, *Contra Fabianum*, frag. 21, CCSL 91:797 (cf. PL 65:777): “Beatus uero Iohannes apostolus euidenter ait: *Et tres unum sunt*; quod de Patre et Filio et Spiritu sancto dictum, sicut superius cum rationem flagitares ostendimus.”

⁷⁴ Ps.-Fulgentius, *Pro fide catholica, adversus Pintam episcopum Arianum* VIII (“Testimonia de Trinitate”), CCSL 90:250 (cf. PL 65:715).

⁷⁵ Eterius and/or Beatus, *Epist. I.26 to Elipandum*, CCCM 59:18 (cf. PL 96:909): “Et Spiritus est, qui testificatur, quoniam Christus est ueritas, quia tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in terris: aqua et sanguis et caro. Et tria hæc unum sunt. Et tres sunt, qui testimonium dicunt in cælo: Pater, Verbum et Spiritus. Et hæc tria unum sunt in Christo Ihesu.”

⁷⁶ Thiele, 1966, 21*; Wachtel, 1995, 316. This could be a loose quotation of Fulgentius, *De Trinitate ad Felicem* IV.1, cited above. Ziegler, 1876, 6, 149, points out that Cavensis contains a

witnesses came from Spain and North Africa, which lends further evidence to the suggestion that the comma arose in these areas.

Yet it also seems that the apparent utility of the comma in fighting heresy and its increasingly frequent occurrence in Latin bibles led some to forge documents to bolster its claim to authenticity. Serious doubts attend the authenticity of a document claimed as the most important early witnesses to the authenticity of the comma: the prologue to the Catholic Epistles (incipit: *Non ita ordo est apud Græcos*) ascribed to Jerome (c. 340-420). The earliest extant source of this prologue is Codex Fuldensis. The author of the prologue complains that the lack of uniformity between the various Latin versions of Scripture led to confusion; the biggest single problem with these Latin versions, he contends, was the fact that they omitted the comma:

If the letters were also rendered faithfully by translators into Latin just as their authors composed them, they would not cause the reader confusion, nor would the differences between their wording give rise to contradictions, nor would the various phrases contradict each other, especially in that place where we read the clause about the unity of the Trinity in the first letter of John. Indeed, it has come to our notice that in this letter some unfaithful translators have gone far astray from the truth of the faith, for in their edition they provide just the words for three [witnesses]—namely water, blood and spirit—and omit the testimony of the Father, the Word and the Spirit, by which the Catholic faith is especially strengthened, and proof is tendered of the single substance of divinity possessed by Father, Son and Holy Spirit.⁷⁷

number of anti-Arian marginalia, including one in the margin of 1 Jn 5:4: “Et Arrius eum prædicat creaturam.”

⁷⁷ Ps.-Jerome, *Prologue to the Catholic Epistles*, in Wordsworth, White and Sparks, 1889-1954, 3.2:230-231 (cf. *PL* 29:825-831): “Quae si, ut ab eis digestae sunt, ita quoque ab interpretibus fideliter in Latinum eloquium uerterentur, nec ambiguitatem legentibus facerent, nec sermonum sese uarietas impugnaret: illo præcipue loco ubi de unitate Trinitatis in prima [231] Iohannis epistula positum legimus. In qua etiam ab infidelibus translatoribus multum erratum esse fidei ueritate conperimus: trium tantummodo uocabula, hoc est, aquae, sanguinis, et spiritus, in ipsa sua editione ponentes; et Patris, Verbi, ac Spiritus testimonium omittentes; in quo maxime et fides catholica roboratur, et Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti una diuinitatis substantia conprobatur.” Further on this preface, see Berger, 1904, 11-12, suggests that the author may have read Cassiodorus’ *Institutiones*, written in 544, just two years before Fuldensis was copied. However, I suggest that the degree of textual corruption in the text of the prologue

This prologue would be compelling evidence that Jerome considered the comma to be genuine if the text of John's Epistle in Codex Fuldensis also contained the comma—but it does not.⁷⁸ We are thus forced either to accept that the preface gives a true picture of the situation, and that the biblical text transmitted in Fuldensis is unreliable—a conclusion which might in turn raise fresh questions about the authenticity of the preface; alternatively, we must reject the prologue as spurious and accept that the comma was not an original part of the Vulgate.⁷⁹

But even if this prologue was not written by Jerome, it is clear that Jerome was aware of the Trinitarian allegoresis of 1 Jn 5:8, to which he refers in a sermon preached at Bethlehem in 401. Nevertheless, the way in which Jerome cites the surrounding context gives no indication that he was familiar with the comma in the form it has come down to us. Moreover, Jerome suggests that the attendant speculations about the nature of the Trinity—Joseph Denk suggested that he may have had the followers of Priscillian in mind—were controversial, dangerous and presumptuous, tantamount to the speculations of an earthenware vessel on the nature of the potter who fashioned it.⁸⁰

as it stands in Fuldensis argues against such a close connexion. Künstle, 1905, 27-28, also found Berger's suggestion unlikely, and instead attributed the preface to Peregrinus. Chapman, 1908, 262-267, refuted Künstle's attribution to Peregrinus, pointing out that the Spanish sources containing the preface all share certain textual corruptions not evident in copies from elsewhere, which one would not expect if the work had been composed in Spain.

⁷⁸ Ranke, 1868, XXIV; Bludau, 1921, provides a full review of the question.

⁷⁹ The preface is listed as spurious by Berger, 1904, 66, who notes the manuscripts in which it is found. Martin, 1887, 218, and Bludau, 1905a, 27-28, suggested that the preface was written by Peregrinus; this suggestion was questioned by Chapman, 1908, 266-267, and Bludau, 1921, 132-135. On Jerome's role in the revision of the Gospels in the Vulgate, see Fischer, 1975, 29.

⁸⁰ Jerome, *Tractatum in psalmos series altera, de Psalmo 91*, CCSL 78, 424-429: "Relatum est mihi, fratres, quia inter se quidam fratres disputando quæssissent, quomodo Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus et tres et unum sunt. Videtis ex quæstione, quam periculosa sit disputatio: lutum et vas fictile de creatore disputat, et ad rationem suæ naturæ non potest pervenire; et curiose quærit scire de mysterio Trinitatis, quod angeli in cælo scire non possunt." This section of Jerome's commentary constitutes the incipit of Augustine's *Sermo de sancta trinitate*, PL 39:2173 (Appendix, *Sermo* 232), as noted by Fischer, 2007, 119. Denk, 1906, asserted that this passage shows Jerome as "den klassischen Zeugen für die Existenz des *Comma Johanneum* in der spanischen Bibel des 4. Jahr., der es (gleichviel ob mit der Lesart *tres* oder *tria*) nicht für schriftwidrig hielt, trotzdem er es von seiner Bibelrevision ausschloß." But this evidence is not at all compelling. As Denk himself admits, the passage Jerome himself provides to demonstrate the three persons of the Trinity is Mt 28:19, not the Johannine comma.

Another document forged to prove the authenticity of the comma is a decretal ascribed to Pope Hyginus (c. 138-140), which appears in the collection put together at Metz in the mid-ninth century by a group of scholars known as “Isidorus Mercator.” Another of the forged decretals in the collection is the famous *Donation of Constantine*, exposed by Lorenzo Valla, which also contains an allusion to the comma, with two credal phrases tacked on the end (*pater deus, filius deus, et spiritus sanctus deus, et tres in unum sunt in Iesu Christo Iesu* [in *Christo Iesu D*], *tres itaque formæ sed una potestas*).⁸¹ It seems that the relevant passage in the decretal of ps.-Hyginus is based on one of two other pseudonymous writings: ps.-Athanasius’ *Against Varimadus*, or a letter claiming to have been addressed by Pope John II to bishop Valerius, but in fact cobbled together from materials taken from *Against Varimadus*.⁸²

The treatise *Against Varimadus* also seems to have had some influence outside the Latin world. In the *Explanation of the holy mysteries*, a meditation on the liturgy of St James, Jacob of Edessa († 708) writes that the soul, the body and the reason are cleansed by three holy things: water, blood and Spirit, and further by the Father, Son and Spirit. The human soul, body and reason correspond to the Father, Son and Spirit respectively, and we thus reflect the Trinity within us. Baumstark suggested that Jacob absorbed this notion from one of the Latin New Testament readings, and points to the text-type represented by Codex Toletanus as a possible source. Yet Jacob’s argument that the divine Trinity exists “within us” suggests rather that he was relying on *Against Varimadus* I.5 or something quite like it.⁸³

⁸¹ Williams, 1964, 453; Thiele, 1966, 362.

⁸² Ps.-Hyginus, *De fide et reliquis causis*, included in *Isidori Mercatoris collectio decretalium*, PL 130:109; Thiele, 1966, 365: “Et Dominus in Evangelio ait: *Ego et Pater unum sumus*; et iterum: *Qui me videt, videt et Patrem* [...] Et Joannes evangelista ait: *In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum*; et iterum ipse ad Parthos: *Tres sunt, inquit, qui testimonium perhibent in terra: aqua, sanguis et caro* [Rome, BAV ms lat. 630; *spiritus* Paris, BnF mss 3852, 9629], *tres in nobis sunt*; et *tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent in cælo: Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus, et hi tres unum sunt*. Nos itaque in natura divinitatis, quia unum sunt, Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus sanctus, nec Patrem aliquo tempore credimus præcessisse, ut major sit Filio, nec Filium postea natum esse ut divinitate Patris minoretur.” The letter of ps.-John II to Valerius is in PL 66:27-28.

⁸³ Baumstark, 1902; Künstle, 1905, 3-4.

6. The high middle ages

Given the increasing frequency with which the comma occurs in Latin bibles from the eleventh century onwards, it is not surprising to find it quoted by mediaeval writers such as Peter Damian (c. 1007-1072),⁸⁴ Rupert of Deutz (c. 1070-1129/1130),⁸⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux (c. 1090-1153),⁸⁶ Peter Lombard (c. 1095-1160),⁸⁷ Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179),⁸⁸ Petrus Cellensis (1115-1183),⁸⁹ Baldwin of Canterbury († 1190),⁹⁰ Guillaume of Saint-Jacques de Liège (twelfth century),⁹¹ Peter Abelard (1079-1142),⁹² Alexander of Ashby (c. 1150-c. 1208),⁹³ Bonaventure (1217/1218-1274),⁹⁴ Guillaume Durand (1237-1296),⁹⁵

⁸⁴ Petrus Damiani, *Epist.* X, in Damiani, 1983-1993, 4.1:132.

⁸⁵ Rupertus Tuitiensis, *De gloria et honore filii hominis super Matthæum* III, PL 169:731; *De sancta trinitate et operibus eius* XXXVI (*De operibus Spiritus Sancti* III), CCCM 24:1907, 1910, 1924: “Igitur sicut tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra ut in communionem ecclesiæ recipiamur sic tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo ut in regnum cælorum introeamus. Tres isti testes sunt pater et uerbum et spiritus sanctus.”

⁸⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sententiæ* I.1, in Bernard, 1957-1977, 6,2:7. The *Glossa ordinaria*, 1603, VI:1414, cites Bernard as suggesting that the three infernal worms of Is 66 likewise bear witness: “His qui in cælo sunt datur testimonium beatitudinis, his qui in terra, iustificationis, his qui in inferno sunt, damnationis. Primum testimonium est gloriæ, secundum gratiæ, tertium iræ.”

⁸⁷ Petrus Lombardus, *Sententiæ* I.2.5.3.1, PL 192:528, 590.

⁸⁸ Hildegard von Bingen, *Scivias* III.7.8, CCCM 43:470.

⁸⁹ Petrus Cellensis, *Tractatus de tabernaculo* I.7, PL 202:1079.

⁹⁰ Balduinus de Forda (Balduinus Cantuariensis), *De commendatione fidei* 66, CCCM 99:402; *Tractatus de sacramento altaris*, CCCM 99:413, 416.

⁹¹ Guillaume de Saint-Jacques de Liège, *De benedictione Dei* 26, in Haring, 1972, 168.

⁹² Petrus Abælardus, *Theologia christiana*, CCCM 12:271 (possibly drawing on Facundus, *Pro defensione trium capitulorum* I.3); *Theologia “Summi boni”*, CCCM 13:160.

⁹³ Alexander of Ashby, *Meditatio* IX, CCCM 188:442.

⁹⁴ Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaemeron* II.1, in Bonaventure, 1934, 113-114: “Intellectus enim noster per fidem illuminatus clamat ter *Sanctus* in confessione trium et tantum semel dicit: *Dominus deus*. Notitia enim dei est in cognitione trium personarum cum essentiæ unitate unde Ioan.: *Tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in cælo*. Intellectus ergo noster seraphico lumine et incendio per fidem clamat ter *Sanctus* et alter respondet: *Sanctus Sanctus Sanctus*. [...] Non enim cognoscitur incarnatio nisi præcognita discretione personarum. Sabellius enim, personas non distinguens, habet necesse sentire patrem incarnatum et passum. Nec trinitas cognoscitur sine [114] incarnatione quia etiam *tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra*, scilicet *spiritus*, hoc est deitas, *aqua*, hoc est caro, *sanguis*, hoc est anima; si autem Trinitatem vis cognoscere sine

Franciscus of Marchia (1285/1290-after 1343),⁹⁶ Thomas of Cobham (+ c. 1333/1336)⁹⁷ and William of Ockham (c. 1290/1300-c. 1349/1350).⁹⁸ The welter of interpretations given to the comma was first collected and analysed by Alexander Neckam (or Nequam, 1157-1217) in his *Speculum secularium*.⁹⁹

The comma became firmly entrenched in the Roman liturgy through the reflections of pope Innocent III (Lottario dei Conti di Segni, 1160/1161-1216). In his *Sermo XXX*, preached on All Saints' day, Innocent took as his text the vision of Isaiah (Is 6:1-3): "[...] I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.'" Like Augustine (*Contra Faustum* XII.48), Isidore of Seville (*Etymologies* VII.5) and Rupert of Deutz (*De divinis officiis* XI), Innocent interprets the two seraphim as the Old and the New Testaments; of these two, the New speaks plainly where the Old speaks obscurely. For example, where the Old Testament says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," the New Testament declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Where the Old Testament says, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts," the New Testament proclaims, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." Innocent considered that both these texts proclaiming the Trinity were particularly fitting

incarnatione, tunc non vis habere testimonium *in terra* sed tantum *in caelo*. Nunc autem utrobique est testimonium." See also *Collationes* II.2, 1934, 118; and *Sermo de Trinitate* (*sermo* 27), in Bonaventure, 1993, 360-364.

⁹⁵ Guillelmus Duranti, *Rationale diuinarum officiorum* IV.25.17, CCCM 140:368: "Dicens uero: 'Patrem,' incipit personas distinguere, de quibus Ysaïas: *Quis appendit tribus digitis molem terre?* [Is 40:12], et alibi: *Seraphim clamat Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus* [Is 6:3]; et Dominus: *Baptizate omnes gentes in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti* [Mt 28:19]; et Iohannes: *Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in celo, Pater, Verbum et Spiritus* [1 Jn 5:7]. Pater est prima, non tempore sed auctoritate, in Trinitate persona."

⁹⁶ Franciscus de Marchia, *Commentarius in IV libros Sententiarum*, in Franciscus de Marchia, 2003, 559.

⁹⁷ Thomas of Cobham, *Sermones*, CCCM 82A:14.

⁹⁸ Guillelmus de Ockham, *Scriptum in librum primum Sententiarum*, in William of Ockham, 1967-1979, 2:359; 4:228.

⁹⁹ Neckam, 1988, 73-84.

to the celebration of the feast of All Saints.¹⁰⁰ As a result of Innocent's association of these passages, they were combined—according to tradition, by Innocent himself—as a responsory and versicle, which appear in many late mediaeval chant books as the eighth responsory at matins for any Sunday of the year. Some liturgical books set this pair of texts only for Sundays in summer, or for specific feasts, such as All Saints, Epiphany, Trinity, the first Sunday after Pentecost, and for commemorations of the Old Testament figures Tobias and Judith.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Innocent III, *Sermo XXX*, PL 217, 587-589: “*Duo seraphim clamabant alter ad alterum, et dicebant: Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus exercituum, plena est omnis terra gloria* [Is 6:3]. Duo seraphim, quorum alter clamabat ad alterum, duo sunt testamenta, quorum alterum convenit alteri. Nam rota continetur in medio rotæ [Ezek 1:16], et duo cherubim sese respiciunt versis vultibus in propitiatorium [Ex 25:20]. Vnde utrumque testamentum consimiliter incipit illud: *In principio creavit Deus cælum et terram* [Gen 1:1]; Istud: [588] *In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum* [Jn 1:1] Quod enim in illo minus aperte scribitur, in isto magis aperte narratur. In illo scribitur: *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus exercituum*; in isto narratur: *Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo: Pater, Verbum et Spiritus sanctus: et hi tres unum sunt*. Præter unitatis igitur et trinitatis mysterium, quod evidenter et excellenter hæc verba commendant, etiam hodiernæ solemnitati plene simul ac [589] plane conveniunt.”

¹⁰¹ Chant books containing the Matins responsory *Duo seraphim* (compiled from Cantus database); in every case, the versicle *Tres sunt* is only given once, following the first occurrence of *Duo seraphim*: CH-Fco 2, 49r (Dominicæ per annum, mode I; *Ÿ Tres sunt*, 49r); 133r (Dominicæ in æstate); 147r (De Tobia); 148v (De Judith). D-Ma 12^o Cmm 1, 54v (Dominicæ per annum, mode I, *Ÿ Tres sunt*, 54v); 133v (Dominicæ in æstate); 145r (De Tobia); 146v (De Judith). D-Mbs Clm 4303, 119r (Dominicæ per annum; text only in rubric, chant given in additamenta on 262v, *Ÿ Tres sunt*, 262v). D-Mbs Clm 4305, 189v (Omnium sanctorum, *Ÿ Tres sunt*, 190r). D-Mbs Clm 4306, 107r (De Trinitate; *Ÿ Tres sunt*, 107r), 232r (Omnium sanctorum). E-SA 6, 150r (De Trinitate, mode I; *Ÿ Tres sunt*, 150r) H-Bu lat. 118, 111v (Dominicæ per annum; *Ÿ Tres sunt*, 112r); H-Bu lat. 119, 63v (De regum); 106r (De Judith). HR-Hf Cod. D, 7r (Dominicæ per annum, mode I; *Ÿ Tres sunt*, 7r) HR-Hf Cod. F, 110v (Dominica prima post Pentecosten, *Ÿ Tres sunt*, 111r); 175r (De Tobia); 181v (De Judith). I-Ac 693, 38r (Dominicæ per annum, mode I; *Ÿ Tres sunt*, 38r); 165r (Dominicæ in æstate). I-Ac 694, 58r (Dominicæ per annum, mode I; *Ÿ Tres sunt*, 58r); 180r (Dominicæ in æstate); 228r (De Tobia). I-Ad 5, 99r (Dominicæ per annum, mode I; *Ÿ Tres sunt*, 100r); 319r (De Judith); I-Nn vi. E. 20, 53v (Dominicæ per annum, mode I; *Ÿ Tres sunt*, 53v); 174v (Dominicæ in æstate); 204r (De Tobia), 207r (De Judith). I-Rvat lat. 8737, 27v (Dominicæ per annum, mode I; *Ÿ Tres sunt*, 27v); 143v (Dominicæ in æstate); 163v (De Tobia); 166r (De Judith). US-Cn 24, 70r (Dominicæ per annum, mode I; *Ÿ Tres sunt*, 70r); 136v

Through the regular singing of this text in the liturgy, the comma thus became even more firmly enshrined in the cultural memory of the Roman church.

The Acts of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) contain an interesting detail of some relevance to the transmission of the comma. The first book of the Council's Acts deals with matters of doctrine, beginning with the condemnation of certain criticisms of the lost treatise *On the unity or essence of the Trinity* (*De unitate seu essentia Trinitatis*) by Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135-1202). Joachim had accused Peter Lombard (*Sententiae* I.1, dist. 5) of introducing a fourth element to the Trinity, an essence shared by all three persons (*communis essentia*), which is not ingenerated, generated or proceeding. Joachim had suggested rather that we ought to think of the Trinity in terms of a collectivity of three separate beings. His argument ran as follows: Jesus had prayed that his followers—that is, the church—might be one, just as he and the Father are one (Jn 17:22). It is clear that the members of the church are not one thing, but still may be thought of as one in the sense of belonging to a collectivity. Likewise, when John says that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit testifying in heaven are one, he is clearly not attributing to them a unity of essence, since the following verse asserts that the Spirit, the water and the blood are also one, and this latter assertion can only refer to an agreement of testimony rather than a unity of essence.¹⁰² Joachim's

(Dominicae in æstate); 152r (De Tobia); 153v (De Judith). See also Van Dyck and Walker, 1960, 142, 233, 375.

¹⁰² The text of the Lateran Council's decision is in Denzinger, 2001, 359-362, §§ 803-808, esp. 803: "Ad hanc autem suam sententiam adstruendam illud potissimum verbum inducit, quod Christus de fidelibus inquit in Evangelio: *Volo, pater, ut sint unum in nobis, sicut et nos unus sumus, ut sint consummati in unum*. Non enim, ut ait, fideles Christi sunt unum, id est quædam una res, quæ communis sit omnibus, sed hoc modo sunt unum, id est una Ecclesia, propter catholicæ fidei unitatem, et tandem unum regnum, propter unionem indissolubilis caritatis, quemadmodum in canonica Ioannis Apostoli epistola legitur: *Quia tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in cælo, Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus: et hi tres unum sunt*, statimque subiungitur: *Et tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in terra: Spiritus, aqua et sanguis: et hi tres unum sunt*, sicut in quibusdam codicibus invenitur." Joachim's position on the comma has certain similarities to that of Ambrosius Autpertus (+ 784), who said that since the three that bear witness in heaven are one, so their testimony must also be one; see his *Expositio in Apocalypsin*, CCCM 27:42-43: "De quo et subditur: QVI EST TESTIS FIDELIS, PRIMOGENITVS MORTVORVM, ET PRINCEPS REGVM TERRÆ. Ea locutionis regula, quam supra præmisimus, solus hoc [43] loco Filius testis uocatur fidelis, cum et Pater et Spiritus Sanctus simul testimonium fidele perhibeant de ipsis, sicut scriptum est: *Tres sunt qui testimonium dicunt de cælo, Pater et Verbum et Spiritus Sanctus, et hi*

suggestion that the Trinity is merely a collectivity rather than an indissoluble union of three eternally consubstantial persons earned him the Council's condemnation.

But for our purposes, a more interesting detail is the Council's concession that the Johannine comma is only to be found "in certain codices" (*in quibusdam codicibus invenitur*). A similar acknowledgment had been made centuries before by Paschasius Radbertus (c. 790-860), who noted that the comma was only to be found in those codices with a more correct text—in other words, those into which the comma had been inserted by later correctors.¹⁰⁴ Guillaume of Saint-Thierry (c. 1085-1148) had also shown a remarkably historical view of the textual status of the comma, and of the language of Christianity in a broader sense:

Let us run through the entire course of the canonical Scriptures, both the Old and the New Testaments. As far as the word "Trinity" is concerned, nowhere do we read that God is a Trinity; nowhere is any mention even found that there are three—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—except in the Epistle of John, where it is said: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." But even this verse is not found in the old translation [*i.e.* earlier forms of the Latin Vulgate] [...]. All the Scriptures declare that God is one. But nowhere is any proclamation that there subsist three persons in the godhead, nowhere is there any explanation of the relationship between them, nowhere the famous term *homoousios* to describe their consubstantiality, or even the term "simple substance," nowhere anything else, or anything like it. But when heresies began to grow up in the church, these words and others were invented to oppose novelties of expression and belief, although without changing the ancient understanding or corrupting the canonical Scriptures.¹⁰⁵

tres unum sunt. Sciendum autem, quia sicut hi tres unum sunt, sic horum testimonium unum esse cognoscitur, quamquam alterius testimonio alter insinuetur." Ambrosius cites the comma again, CCCM 27:182. See also Garin, 2008, 1:25-26.

¹⁰⁴ Paschasius Radbertus, *Expositio in Psalmum XLIV*, CCCM 94:47: "Sic itaque ait [Iohannes] apostolus quod *tres sint in terris qui testimonium dant pro his mysticis muneribus Spiritus aqua et sanguis*. Et sicut in emendatioribus codicibus inuenitur etiam: *Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælis uidelicet Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus et hi tres unum sunt*."

¹⁰⁵ Guillaume de Saint-Thierry, *Aenigma fidei* 28-29, in Guillaume de Saint-Thierry, 1959, 116-118: "Percurramus omnem seriem canonicarum Scripturarum, tam Veteris quam Novi

Guillaume's comments on the historical contingencies of the development of doctrine and theological language prefigure Erasmus' position to a surprising degree. For Guillaume, there are certain things which the Scripture *means*, but does not actually *say*. His own comments, while apparently provocative, were thus quite orthodox: "I mean these comments," he clarifies, "solely in regard to the *name* and the *number* of the Trinity, not in the way it is *meant* or to be understood." For Guillaume, there is a disjuncture between Scripture and doctrine, between written documents and belief. But he is also firm that this historical, contingent view of religion need not threaten faith, which remains a mystery.

Thomas Aquinas (1224/1227-1274) made use of the comma on a number of occasions.¹⁰⁶ For example, in the *Summa theologiæ* Ia.30.2, Thomas uses the comma to demonstrate that the Trinity contains three persons: no more and no fewer.¹⁰⁷ Thomas acknowledged that the comma poses a textual problem, but his position is quite different from that of Guillaume of Saint-Thierry. (In fact

Testamenti; nusquam quantum ad nomen Trinitatis, Trinitas Deus legitur; nusquam saltem tres esse, Patrem et Filium, et Spiritum sanctum, invenitur nisi in Epistola Iohannis, ubi dicitur: *Tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent in celo, Pater, Verbum et Spiritus sanctus; et hi tres unum sunt. Quod et ipsum in antiqua translatione non habetur.* [29] De nomine tamen tantum et numero hoc dico, non de sensu seu intellectu Trinitatis. Sicut enim iam dictum est, Deum Patrem et Deum Filium et Deum Spiritum sanctum, omnes ille Scripture clamant unum esse Deum. Nusquam uero ibi predicantur in divinitate tres persone, nusquam relative earum predicatio; nusquam famosum illud *omoousion* nomen consubstantialitatis, vel saltem nomen simplicis substantie, nusquam ad [*pro ad, lege aliud*] aliquid et si qua sunt his similia. Sed cum ceperunt in ecclesia hereses oriri, contra novitatem et verborum et sensuum ceperunt hec et huiusmodi verba seu nomina in causa fidei inveniri; sine immutatione tamen sensuum antiquorum, et corruptione canonicarum Scripturarum. Propter quod etiam in idipsum auctoritatis ac reverentie nomina ipsa apud omnes fideles assumpta sunt in quo sunt ab antiquo nomina Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti; et cetera antiqua nomina omnia rerum earum, quarum signa et hec et illa sunt. In nominibus enim divinis seu [118] verbis quibuslibet, quibus aliquid dicitur de Deo, non tam signa ipsa nominum uel verborum attendenda sunt, quam id quod per signa ipsa designatur. Instabat enim tempus cribrande catholice fidei ut purgaretur; exercende, ut probaretur."

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *In I Sententiarum*, dist. 24, quæst. 1, art. 2; *Quæstiones disputatæ de potentia*, quæst. 9, art. 4, arg. 1; quæst. 9, art. 5, sed contra 1; quæst. 9, art. 9, sed contra 1; *Summa contra Gentiles* IV.15.1, IV.18.6; *Summæ theologiæ prima pars*, quæst. 29, art. 4, arg. 2; quæst. 29, art. 4, arg. 2; quæst. 36, art. 1, sed contra 1.

¹⁰⁷ Augrain, 1998, 88.

Aquinas himself seems to become entangled in these textual problems, claiming for example in *Summa theologiae* Ia.29.4 that Augustine had cited the comma in his *De Trinitate*, apparently confusing Augustine with Peter Lombard, *Sentences* 1.25.)¹⁰⁸ In his remarks on the Lateran Council's condemnation of Joachim's proposition, Aquinas defends the canonicity of the comma. For him, the comma testifies to the united witness given by all three persons of the Trinity to Jesus' status as Son of God: by the Father at the baptism and the transfiguration of Christ; by Jesus himself through his teaching and his miracles; and by the Spirit when he appeared at the baptism and at Pentecost. "But to introduce the unity of the three persons, [John] adds: 'And these three are one.' This is indeed said because of the unity of their essence." According to Aquinas, Joachim's interpretation of the unity of the heavenly witnesses as one of love and testimony rather than one of essence was a perversion of its true sense. Aquinas goes on to suggest that the clause "and these three are one" at the end of verse 8—which can only refer to a unity of testimony rather than one of essence—was *added* by Arians in order to cast suspicion on the parallel phrase in verse 7, in order to lead the reader to suspect that the testimony of the three heavenly witnesses was likewise one of testimony rather than of essence. "In the true copies this is not found," Aquinas concludes. For Aquinas it was clear that Joachim had fallen into the error of the Arians, and had therefore rightly been condemned by the Council.¹⁰⁹ In Aquinas' comments we see that variations in the reading of the

¹⁰⁸ Aquinas, 1964-1981, VI.56-57; Meehan, 1986, 8.

¹⁰⁹ Aquinas, 1881, 3:450-451 (*In decretalem I expositio ad archidiaconum Tridentinum*): "Inducebat [Ioachim] etiam ad suae opinionis assertionem, quod dicitur I Ioan. ult., viii: *Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in caelo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus sanctus*. Pater quidem cum dixit: *Hic est filius meus dilectus*, et hoc in baptismo, ut dicitur Matth. III [17]; et in transfiguratione, ut habetur Matth. XVII. Filius vero dedit testimonium fidei christianae per doctrinam et miracula. Unde dicit, Ioan. VIII, 18: *Ego sum qui testimonium perhibeo de me ipso, et testimonium perhibet de me, qui misit me Pater*; Spiritus sanctus testimonium perhibuit in specie columbae super Christum apparens in baptismo, et per adventum suum in discipulos Christi. Et ad insinuandam unitatem trium personarum, subditur: *Et hi tres unum sunt*; quod quidem dicitur propter essentiae unitatem. Sed hoc Ioachim perverse trahere volens ad unitatem charitatis et consensus, inducebat consequentem auctoritatem. Nam subditur ibidem 8: *Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, scilicet spiritus, et aqua et sanguis*. In quibusdam libris attenditur: *Et hi tres unum* [451] *sunt*. Sed hoc in veris exemplaribus non habetur, sed in quibusdam libris dicitur esse appositum ab haereticis Arianis ad pervertendum intellectum sanum auctoritatis praemissae de unitate essentiali trium personarum. Similiter etiam Ariani utebantur illa

comma in Latin bibles—attributable to textual interference to the end of verse 8 caused by the presence of the credal formulation *hæc tria unum*—had led Aquinas to a conclusion which was philologically incorrect, even if consistent with his doctrinal position. As far as I am aware, Aquinas was the first person to suggest that the presence of the clause “and these three are one” in verse 8 was due to its *addition* by Arians. Most of those who have sought to explain the absence of the comma from the Greek text and the other translations through textual interference usually argue that the comma was *erased* by the Arians. Nevertheless, it is significant that Aquinas should have conjured the ghost of Arius to explain the variants in the textual record. On the strength of Aquinas’ authority, the clause “and these three are one” was subsequently omitted from verse 8 in many manuscripts of the Vulgate, and the phrase “these three are one” in verse 7 interpreted as referring unambiguously to the unity of the divine essence in the three persons of the Trinity, an interpretation evident for example in that of the influential commentator Nicolaus de Lyra.¹¹⁰

7. Greek manuscript evidence for the comma

As noted already, the evidence for the comma in Greek manuscripts predating the fourteenth century is negative. Philip Payne and Paul Canart showed recently that original text-critical annotations in the margins of Codex Vaticanus (Rome, BAV ms Vat. gr. 1209 = Gregory-Aland [GA] 03 or B) indicate the scribe’s knowledge of textual difficulties or variants at some 765 points. The presence of three horizontal dots next to the word τρεῖς εἰς in 1 Jn 5:8 shows that the scribe was aware of the existence of a variant (or variants) at this point. Without access to the other manuscripts seen by the scribe, it would be rash to suggest the nature

auctoritate: *Ut sint unum in nobis, sicut et nos unum sumus*, ad ostendendum quod Pater et Filius non sunt unum, nisi secundum consensum amoris, sicut et nos, ut patet per Augustinum et Hilarium, qui dicunt hunc fuisse perversum sensum Arianorum. Unde manifestum est quod Ioachim in errorem Arianorum incidit, licet non pertinaciter, quia ipse scripta sua apostolicæ sedis iudicio subiecit, ut infra dicetur, et ideo consequenter ponitur determinatio Concilii pro veritate.”

¹¹⁰ Nicolaus de Lyra, in *Glossa ordinaria*, 1603, VI:1414: “Et hi tres vnum sunt. *in essentia, & sic vnus Deus super omnia gloriosus.*”

of any such variants.¹¹¹ It is in any case more likely that the scribe had encountered variants recorded in extant Greek manuscripts (the omission of εἶσιν in GA 0296, 323, 945, 1241, 1243 and 1739; or the variant μαρτυροῦσιν in GA 044, 254, 1523, 1524, 1844 and 1852, also attested by Cyril) than the comma, which is unattested until the fourteenth century, and even then under Latin influence.¹¹²

One of the issues discussed at the Fourth Lateran Council was a rapprochement between the Roman and Byzantine churches; as part of this process, the Acts of the Council were translated into Greek. The section in which Joachim's propositions are condemned is the first documented occurrence of the comma in Greek.¹¹³ The comma was also cited by two Byzantine writers in the context of the debate with the Latin church: Emmanuel Calecas (+ 1410) and Joseph Bryennius (c. 1350-c. 1431/38). Calecas, whose sympathy for the Roman Catholic church went as far as joining the Franciscans, cited 1 Jn 5:7 as one of a number of New Testament texts that show that the Father and the Son are invariably accompanied by the Spirit.¹¹⁴ Bryennius by contrast, a strident

¹¹¹ Payne and Canart, 2000, 112-113.

¹¹² The discoveries of Payne and Canart have been claimed by defenders of the comma as decisive proof of its antiquity: <http://sites.google.com/site/kjvtoday/home/translation-issues/the-father-the-word-and-the-holy-ghost-in-1-john-57>, accessed 18 September 2010. This anonymous article is littered with errors of fact and reasoning, and should not be used as a guide to the scholarly consensus on the comma.

¹¹³ The passage from the Greek translation of the *Acta* is given in Martin, 1717, 138; Martin, 1722, 170; Horne, 1821, 4:505; Seiler, 1835, 616: ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, λόγος, καὶ πνεῦμα ἅγιον, καὶ τοῦτοι [*sc.* οὗτοι] οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσιν. This reading resembles that in Codex Montfortianus (except for the omission of τῷ before οὐρανῷ and the insertion of the article ὁ, which apparently does duty for all three persons) so closely that we might suspect that the scribe of Montfortianus had consulted this document. There is a fifteenth-century Greek ms of the *Acta* of the Lateran Council in the Bodleian Library, but it is one of the Codices Barocciani, brought from Venice and given to the University in 1629 by Lord Pembroke (Cod. Barocc. 71, 84-87); see Coxe, 1853, 114.

¹¹⁴ Emmanuel Calecas, *De fide et principiis catholicæ fidei*, in Combefis, 1672, 2:219C; repr. in PG 152:516B: “Ἀλλὰ μὴν τὰ ῥητὰ τῆς γραφῆς τῷ Πατρὶ καὶ τῷ Υἱῷ τρίτον τῇ τάξει συναριθμοῦσι τὸ Πνεῦμα. Φησὶ γὰρ ὁ Χριστός, «Πορευθέντες εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἅπαντα [Mk 16:15],» «μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος [Mt 28:19].» Καὶ ὁ εὐαγγελιστὴς Ἰωάννης, «Τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, ὁ Πατήρ, ὁ Λόγος καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον [1 Jn 5:7].» Καὶ πάλιν, «Ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ Παράκλητος, ὃν ἐγὼ πέμψω ὑμῖν, τὸ Πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὃ παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται, ἐκεῖνος μαρτυρήσει

opponent of union with Rome, translated the comma as he found in the Latin Vulgate, including two of its divergances from the Greek text: the reading “for Christ is the truth” in 1 Jn 5:6, and the omission of the concluding clause of 1 Jn 5:8.¹¹⁵

The first Greek bible to contain the comma was copied in 1362-1363 by a certain brother Bartholomew of the monastery of St John on the Mount of Olives (now Rome, BAV cod. Ottob. gr. 298, GA 629^{ap}). Bartholomew gives the Greek and Latin texts in parallel columns, accommodating the Greek in many unusual ways to the Latin.¹¹⁶ Cardinal Basil Bessarion (c. 1403-1472) added the comma in Latin to the margin of his bible (now Venice, Biblioteca Marciana ms. gr. Z. 10 (394) (GA 209), indicating that he was aware of the discrepancy between the Latin and the Greek text: ἐν τῷ λατίνῳ· *sicuti tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo: pater, verbum et spiritus sanctus*.¹¹⁷ The next Greek manuscript containing the comma can be dated securely to the first two decades of the sixteenth century; this is the text used by Erasmus (Dublin, Trinity College ms gr. 30 = GA 61^{eapr}), a manuscript we will examine in considerable detail.

Another two sixteenth-century Greek manuscripts contain the comma in the text, but both take their readings from printed editions: Madrid, Escorial ms Σ. I. 5. (GA 918^{apK+}) gives the comma precisely as it occurs in Erasmus’ 1522 edition; while Berlin, Staatsbibliothek ms gr. fol. 1. 2 (Tischendorf ω 110, “Codex

περὶ ἐμοῦ [Jn 15:26].» Cf. Porson, 1790, 236 (with incorrect reference); Seiler, 1835, 617; Riggenbach, 1928, 17-18.

¹¹⁵ Bryennius, 1768, 1:241: “Καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστὶ τὸ μαρτυροῦν, ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς ἐστὶν ἡ ἀλήθεια· ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ Πατὴρ, ὁ Λόγος, καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον· καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι· καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ, τὸ Πνεῦμα, τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα.” Cf. Porson, 1790, 236; Seiler, 1835, 617; and Riggenbach, 1928, 17-18.

¹¹⁶ See Capececiatro, 1893, 161, for a description. For a discussion of the comma in this manuscript, see Westcott, 1892, 207; Westcott mistakenly gives the shelfmark as Cod. Vat. Ottob. 162, an error arising from the fact that Scholz assigned this ms the numbers a¹⁶² and p²⁰⁰. This manuscript has a unique reading of the comma, which strongly suggests that it is not an original part of the Greek text: “Ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, πατὴρ, λόγος, καὶ πνεῦμα ἅγιον, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἐν εἰσιν. καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐπὶ [Editio critica maior gives ἀπὸ] τῆς γῆς, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα. Εἰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν [...]. The reading given by Brooke, 1912, 165, lacks ἅγιον after πνεῦμα in verse 7. See the facsimile in Horne, 1854, 4:217, and the transcriptions in Aland, Behnduhn-Mertz and Mink, 1987, 1:165, and the Editio critica maior IV.1.3:350 for confirmation.

¹¹⁷ Griesbach, 1810, 2:686.

Ravianus”) is a transcript of the Complutensian edition, with some variants introduced from the 1550 edition of Robert Estienne (Stephanus) the Elder.¹¹⁸ Athens, Ethnike Bibliothekē ms Taphu 545 (GA 2473^a), copied in 1634, and Bucharest, Bibl. Academiei Române ms 318 [234] (GA 2318^{apK+}), copied in the eighteenth century, both give the comma in the text, but this is simply because both are copied from printed texts in the *textus receptus* tradition. None of these four manuscripts therefore has any independent critical value.

In addition, five Greek manuscripts have the comma entered in the margin more recently than the body text, but the readings of the comma in four are all derived from sixteenth-century printed editions, and the fifth appears to be cited from memory.¹¹⁹ Since almost all the Greek manuscripts lack verse 7, they

¹¹⁸ Delitzsch, 1871, 10-12; Wachtel, 1995, 318-319.

¹¹⁹ The following readings are all later marginal additions in the margins of the respective manuscripts: 1) Naples Bibl. Naz., II. A. 7 (GA 88^{ap}), a twelfth-century ms: ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες [*add. in margine*: ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, καὶ ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι. καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ] τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἶμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν. This reading is taken from the Beza-Estienne edition of 1590. 2) Oxford, Bodleian Library ms Canonici gr. 110 (GA 221^{ap}), a tenth-century ms: ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι. καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ, τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἶμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν. This reading, taken verbatim from Estienne’s 1550 edition, was apparently made after 1854, when the catalogue of the Bodleian manuscripts remarked that the comma is not found in this codex. 3) Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek cod. 16.7.4^o (GA 429^{ap}), ms of the fourteenth (ap) and fifteenth (r) centuries: ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, πατήρ, λόγος, καὶ πνεῦμα ἅγιον, καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι. καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ, τὸ πνεῦμα, τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἶμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν. The comma is taken verbatim from Erasmus’ 1522 edition; the rest of verse 8 follows the reading in the body text of the ms [1/2B]. The fact that the person who entered the comma into the margin of this codex used Erasmus’ edition is evident from three other marginal annotations which remark that Erasmus’ Latin renderings depart from those ordinarily found in the Vulgate: 176v (1 Jn 2:18): “γεγόνασιν: coeperunt esse Eras.”; 178v (1 Jn 4:18): “κόλασιν: cruciatum Eras.”; 170r (2 Pt 1:15): “μετὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ἔξοδον: post exitum meum Eras.” 4) Naples, Bib. Naz. ms II. A. 9 (GA 636^{ap}), a fifteenth-century ms: ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, πατήρ, λόγος, καὶ πνεῦμα ἅγιον, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι. καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ, τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἶμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν. The comma is taken from Erasmus’ 1522 text, though omitting οὗτοι before οἱ, possibly by haplography, or perhaps on the strength of the Complutensian reading; the rest of verse 8 follows the reading in the body text of the ms [1/2]. This is precisely the procedure followed in GA 429; clearly these annotators wanted to change as little of the text in the manuscripts before them as possible. The fact that all these readings of

consequently also lack the phrase “on earth” in verse 8, since there is no need to contrast the witness of the water, the Spirit and the blood with three witnesses in heaven. There is therefore no trace of the comma in any Greek bible written before the fourteenth century. When the comma is quoted in Greek, it is always under the influence of the Latin Vulgate, or of printed editions such as the Complutensian bible, Erasmus’ editions, or their descendant, the *textus receptus*.

the comma are taken from printed editions discounts their status as independent attestations. Aland, Behnduhn-Mertz and Mink, 1987, 1:165-166; Metzger, 1994, 647-649; Wachtel, 1995, 318-320, identifies the sources of the readings in each of these manuscripts with great acuity. On 7 February 2010, Daniel Wallace published online his discovery of a fifth Greek codex with the comma recorded in the margin: the eleventh-century codex Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Cod. graec. 211 (GA 177^{apr}). The comma is added in the upper margin. Wallace dates the addition to the seventeenth or eighteenth century; in any case it clearly postdates the publication of Estienne’s 1551 edition, since it specifies that the comma is found in verse 7. The text of the addition (ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν οὐρανῷ [*sic*], πατήρ, λόγος, καὶ πνεῦμα ἅγιον, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσι) corresponds closely, but not perfectly, to that in Erasmus’ third edition, and may have been made from memory. Wallace suggests that the addition was not noted by the Münster Institut because of the faintness of the ink, which may not have shown up on the microfilm. See <http://www.csntm.org/tcnote/archive/TheCommaJohanneumInAnOverlookedManuscript>, accessed 17 July 2010.

CHAPTER TWO

1. *Erasmus*

I never discuss this passage without testifying to the truth of what people gather from that passage: that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit share the very same essence, lest anyone should suspect any trace of heresy. And if the slightest offence should arise from this, it comes from those who spin slander out of thin air, and drag into the open a question that ought to be discussed between scholars.

— Erasmus, *Defence against certain Spanish monks* (1528)¹

The following chapter outlines the circumstances surrounding the production of Erasmus' New Testament, especially in relationship to the Complutensian bible, a rival project from the University of Alcalá. We shall investigate the resistance to Erasmus' edition from English churchmen (Henry Standish and Edward Lee), from Spain (Stunica and the commission of Valladolid) and Italy (Alberto Pio da Carpi). We shall also investigate the source of Erasmus' Greek text for the Johannine comma, the so-called Codex Montfortianus, suggesting a hypothesis for the creation of this manuscript and for its conveyance to Erasmus in Leuven, as well as its later fate. We shall then investigate the impact of Erasmus' ambivalent editorial decisions regarding the Johannine comma in sixteenth-century editions of the New Testament in Greek, Latin and various vernacular translations.

¹ LB IX:1031F: "Nec unquam disputo super hoc loco, nisi testificans verissimum esse quod isti colligunt Patris, Filii, & Spiritus Sancti eamdem esse essentiam, ne quis impium aliquid possit suspicari. Et si quid hinc oritur offenciluli, ab illis proficiscitur, qui tales ingerunt de nihilo calumnias, & rem inter eruditos tractandam in vulgum efferunt."

2. Erasmus, the Complutensian bible, and the politics of sacred philology

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, humanist scholars in Western Europe increasingly occupied themselves with the recovery of ancient texts. This impulse took a number of forms, from uncovering and copying long-forgotten books in monastic libraries to restoring the integrity of more familiar texts through ever more sophisticated tools of philological and textual criticism. In the case of texts originally composed in languages other than Latin (mainly Greek, then gradually some Oriental languages), the desire to return to a pristine form of a given text led in many cases to the rejection of mediaeval Latin versions and the preparation of new translations based both on a more reliable original text and on a better knowledge of the original and target languages.

Among the ancient texts submitted to this kind of treatment were the books of Scripture themselves. The first project to publish a critical text of the Bible was initiated in 1502 by Cardinal Francisco de Ximénez de Cisneros (1436-1517), who assembled a number of valuable manuscripts to be edited by a group of prominent scholars at the University of Alcalá de Henares (Lat. *Complutum*), including Diego Stunica, Erasmus' future opponent.² The bible produced by this committee contained not merely the text of the Vulgate. The four Old Testament volumes also contained the Hebrew text, the Septuagint, the Targum (with Latin translation) as well as "primitive" versions of the Hebrew and Targum. The New Testament volume contained both the Vulgate and the Greek. The printing of the first volume, containing the New Testament, was finished on 10 January 1514. The printing of the remaining five volumes of the bible, including an accompanying volume containing vocabularies and grammar, was not finished until 10 July 1517, but when Ximénez died on 8 November the same year, the printed gatherings had still not been divided into volumes and bound for sale.

While the project was advancing in Alcalá, Erasmus gathered materials for his own edition of the New Testament. He used the Byzantine Text, which we now know to be the most recent and least authoritative text type, albeit that best represented statistically in the manuscripts. This decision would have long-

² See Delitzsch, 1871; Lyell, 1919; Bataillon, 1937; Bentley, 1983, 70-111; Metzger and Ehrman, 2005, 137-142; Elliott, 2009c, 232-234. There is no evidence for the oft-repeated claim, made for example by Scrivener, 1894, 2:405, that Stunica was the editor-in-chief of the project; on Stunica's contribution, see Bataillon, 1937, 43; and de Jonge in ASD IX.2:14-17.

lasting consequences for the development of New Testament criticism. In August 1514, Erasmus met the Basel printer Johannes Froben and entered into negotiations to publish his edition of the New Testament with the accompanying *Annotationes*.³ Froben put all the resources of his business behind the project. To protect himself from pirate editions, he applied for an imperial privilege “preventing anyone else from producing a reprint for four years within the Holy Roman Empire, and from importing copies printed elsewhere” (*Cum privilegio Maximiliani Cesaris Augusti, ne quis alius in sacra Romani imperii ditione, intra quatuor annos excudat, aut alibi excusum importet*). The introductory letter by Froben (probably written by Erasmus or one of the other editors in the shop, such as Oecolampadius, Beatus Rhenanus or one of the Amerbach brothers)

³ Nestle, 1901, 3: “Froben, the printer of Basel, was anxious to forestall the costly edition of the Spanish Cardinal, and with this object appealed on the 15th March 1515 to the famous humanist Desiderius Erasmus (1467-1536), then in England.” This account has been repeated widely, (e.g. Bludau, 1902a, 1) but is not correct. The account given by Metzger and Ehrman, 2005, 142, is more accurate. Yet there are still problems with this story. We know that Erasmus had been collecting variants for his New Testament while he was staying in Cambridge between 1511 and 1514. (Incidentally, the claim that Erasmus was Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity has been called into doubt by Rex, 2003, 29-32; it seems rather that he was simply teaching Greek, perhaps expounding upon Greek Patristic texts.) Despite Nestle’s claim, none of the correspondence between Erasmus and Froben discusses the project; indeed, the earliest letter we possess between Erasmus and Froben is dated 17 June 1516. Furthermore, Erasmus was in Basel between August 1514 and early April 1515, when he left for England, returning to Basel by the end of July, when he wrote the preface to *De constructione*, printed by Froben in August. In fact, the evidence seems to suggest that the idea for the New Testament edition came from Erasmus, not Froben. In August 1514 Erasmus wrote to Reuchlin to request a loan of his codex of Revelation (*Epist.* 300, *Opus Epist.* 2:4-5). It is clear from what Erasmus tells Reuchlin that negotiations with Froben to print and publish the New Testament and *Annotationes* had already begun: “Scripsimus annotationes in Nouum Testamentum vniuersum. Itaque est animus excudendum curare Nouum Testamentum Græcum adiectis nostris annotamentis. Aiunt tibi exemplar esse emendatissimum; cuius copiam si feceris Ioanni Frobenio, gratum facies non solum mihi atque illi verum etiam studiosis omnibus. Codex integer et incontaminatus ad te redibit. Vale et rescribe.” Yet after Erasmus left for his trip to England, Beatus Rhenanus wrote to him twice (17 and 30 April) to negotiate further on Froben’s behalf (*Epist.* 328, *Opus Epist.* 2:63; *Epist.* 330, *Opus Epist.* 2:65). It seems that Froben was afraid that Erasmus might back out of the deal and take the edition elsewhere; Rhenanus thus assures Erasmus that Froben will pay as much as anyone else for the edition: “Petit Frobenius Nouum abs te Testamentum habere, pro quo tantum se daturum pollicetur quantum alius quisquam.” Further, see de Jonge, 1988a and 1988b.

emphasises the piety and scholarly integrity of the entire enterprise, in contrast to the unscrupulous practices of other printers, who were content to turn out corrupt texts as long as they could turn a profit.⁴ In private, things were a little different. Erasmus admitted to friends that the first edition, which emerged from the press at the end of February 1516, was full of unfortunate editorial and printing errors caused by the haste with which it was put together; he famously confessed to Willibald Pirckheimer that the edition was “not so much issued as thrown headlong from the press.”⁵

Erasmus’ edition, published before the Complutensian Polyglot, thus initially captured much of its projected market. Its smaller size—and consequently its lower price—also made it more attractive than the six-volume Spanish bible. But besides sympathising with the annoyance and disappointment

⁴ Erasmus, 1516, aa1r: “Io. Frobenius Pio Lectori, S. D. Semper quidem mihi fuit hoc studio, lector optime, ut e nostra officina prodirent autores boni, praesertim ii, quorum lectio conducatur ad bonos mores ac pietatem. Atque eum fructum, teste Christo, non minus specto quam lucrum pecuniarium. Sed cum in omnibus pro mea uirili [cf. *Adag.* 2792, ASD II.6:513], conor, ut emendatos emittam in manus hominum, tum id nusquam acriori diligentia sum adnissus, quam in hoc uolumine; quod quantum emolumentum sit allaturum nescio, certe plurimum hinc utilitatis ad Christianos omnes peruenturum, auxiliante Jesu Opt. Max. confido. Proinde nec meis laboribus peperci, nec pecuniis. Quin et precibus et praemiis egi, ut castigatores adessent complures, haud uulgari doctrina praediti, et in primis Joannes Oecolampadius Vinimontanus, praeter integritatis ac pietatis commendationem, insignis etiam theologus, triumque linguarum egregie peritus, ipso quoque Erasmo in hanc partem aduigilante. Quos tamen omnes operis pietas ad hoc laboris pertraxit magis quam quaestus. Et exorientur fortasse, qui nostram imitentur aeditionem, ut hodie uel maxime uerum est illud Hesiodium καὶ πτωχὸς πτωχῷ φθονέει, καὶ τέκτονι τέκτων [Hesiod, *Works and Days* 25-26]. Quod ego sane non admodum iniquo feram animo, si modo meam fidem uel superent, uel certe aequent. Verum plures sunt, quibus nihil refert quam emendatos aut deprauatos emittant codices, modo id suo faciant compendio. Quamobrem fac memineris lectoris plurimum interesse. Qui librum mendis undique scatentem habet, certe non habet librum sed molestiam. Quin istos etiam imitatores admoneo, ne si temere negotium aggrediantur, autore superstite, mihique pro sua humanitate amicissimo, idem illis eueniat, quod nonnullis euenit, in priore Chiliadum aeditione. Bene Vale lector, ac frui, tuoque fauore uicissim adnitere, ut nostri conatus, qui ut pii sunt, ut omnibus utiles, ita mihi non sint infelices. Basileae; sexto Calendas Martias, Anno M.D.XVI.” Further, see Pabel, 2005, 218-219. On Froben’s abilities as a scholar and his relations with humanists, see Hilgert, 1971.

⁵ Erasmus, *Epist.* 998, written to Willibald Pirckheimer, Leuven 2 Nov. 1517 (*Opus Epist.* 3:117; *Correspondence* 5:167): “Nouum Testamentum quod pridem Basileae praecipitatum fuit uerius quam editum, retexo ac recudo, et ita recudo ut aliud opus sit futurum.”

felt by the Spanish scholars, we can understand their situation better by examining it in terms of the competitive dynamics of the publishing industry. As Royston Gustavson has pointed out in his analysis of the economic dynamics of early publishing, each step in the production of an early printed book, from author to reader, was determined by a number of transactions at which value was captured. Although several stages in the production and consumption of a printed book involved the exchange of money—such as the dealings between the publisher and the printer (where these were different people), the publisher and the bookseller, and the bookseller and the customer—less tangible elements were often in play. A book produced by a creator with high “reputational value” could command a higher cash price. When patrons offered subsidies for printed editions, it was because they wanted to capture for themselves something of the author’s reputational value, which they calculated to be worth more than the cash given for the subsidy. Likewise, the purchaser of a book captured value in the form of pleasure and benefit (in this case spiritual or scholarly), which was considered to have a higher value than the money paid for the book.⁶

It is therefore instructive to look at the economics of the production of the Complutensian bible to see where value was being exchanged. It had cost Ximénez in excess of fifty thousand ducats to produce the Complutensian bible. Six hundred copies were printed, which were sold for six and a half ducats each. Even if all the copies were sold, the project would not recoup even eight percent of what it had cost, something of which Ximénez was quite aware. Clearly this project was designed to capture value in other ways. In Gustavson’s model, the creator (in this case Ximénez, the editors and the University of Alcalá) expected to receive reputational value worth at least twelve times the maximum cash value of what they could expect to recover. The edition itself shows how this was to happen. The title page of the New Testament volume, consisting of ten words, has the function of attracting value for the university: “New Testament in Greek and Latin, newly printed at the University of Alcalá” (*Novum testamentum Grece et latine in academia Complutensi noviter impressum*). The colophon too attracts value for Ximénez, the university and the printer Arnald Guillén de Brocar.⁷

⁶ Gustavson, 2010.

⁷ The colophon to the New Testament volume of the Complutensian bible reads as follows: “Ad perpetuam laudem et gloriam | dei & domini nostri iesu christi hoc sacrosanctum opus noui testa|menti & libri vite grecis latinisque characteribus nouiter impres|sum atque

Ximénez still enjoys a reputation as scholar and saint five centuries after his death; the reputational value captured by the Complutensian bible thus has ongoing worth. The reputational value captured by the University probably led to financial value, for example through increased enrolments or an increased generosity from patrons. By cutting into the projected market of the Complutensian bible, Erasmus' New Testament had thus effectively reduced its power to capture value for a number of the stakeholders. But in time, circumstances would provide an opportunity for some of this value to be recovered.

3. *English opposition to Erasmus: Henry Standish and Edward Lee*

Erasmus loved England, and had a number of very powerful friends and supporters there, including Thomas More and John Colet. Yet not everyone in England was equally enthusiastic about Erasmus' philological work on the bible. Henry Standish, Franciscan minister provincial for England, vigorously opposed Erasmus' text-critical work on the New Testament, though his own philological skill was not equal to his zeal. In letters to Hermann Buschius, Luther and Vincentius Theoderici written during 1520 and 1521, Erasmus describes how Standish had preached a sermon at St Paul's Cross, urging the assembled crowds to stop their ears against the man who had the temerity to write *In principio erat Sermo* (a translation, as Erasmus argued, which more accurately expresses the active and creative power of God's word).⁸ At court, Standish made an even

studiosissime emendatum: felici fine absolutum est in | hac preclarissima Complutensi vniuersitate: de mandato & | sumptibus Reuerendissimi in christo patris & illustris|simi domini domini fratris Francisci Ximenez de Cisne|ros tituli sancte Balbine sancte Romane ecclesie | presbyteri Cardinalis hispanie Archiepiscopi to|letani & Hispaniarum primatis ac regnorum | castelle archicancellarij: industria & soler|tia honorabilis viri Arnaldi guiliel|mi de Brocario artis impressorie | magistri. Anno domini Mil|lesimo quingentesimo de-|cimo quarto. Mensis | ianuarij die decimo." This colophon makes it clear that Ximénez combined the roles of patron and publisher, though this latter role was precluded by his death.

⁸ On the translation *sermo* as an expression of Erasmus' *logos*-theology, which harks back to Tertullian and Irenaeus, see Coogan, 1992, 84-88. Harris, 1887, 51, suggested that London, British Library ms Royal 8 E. III, might contain the sermons of Standish, but in fact the manuscript contains the sermons of Peregrinus, Dominican provincial of Poland in the early fourteenth century. On Standish, see ASD IX.2:10.

greater fool of himself before the king and Thomas More: again he criticised Erasmus for translating *Sermo* for *Verbum*, and then accused him of trying to deny the doctrine of the general resurrection. Erasmus followed the Majority reading of 1 Cor 15:51, πάντες οὐ κοιμηθήσόμεθα (“we shall not all sleep”), rather than the reading ἀναστήσόμεθα, οὐ πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγήσόμεθα (found only in Gams D) which corresponds to the Latin reading *omnes quidem resurgemus, sed non omnes immutabimur* (“we shall all indeed rise again: but we shall not all be changed” [Douay-Rheims]), found in Tertullian, Ambrosiaster, the *Speculum* and the Vulgate.⁹ Erasmus indicates in his *Annotationes* to 1 Corinthians that Standish was a sworn enemy:

You can see then, excellent reader, that there is nothing in me that should be reproached. Since I am following the only reading now represented in the books of the Greeks, since I am translating Greek texts, I could do no other. And yet from that place two men, theologians so great that they believe firmly that the whole church will collapse unless they bear it up on their shoulders, [...] have contrived an atrocious calumny against me.¹⁰

Standish was clearly one of these two “gentlemen.” The other was apparently Nicolaas Baechem, a Carmelite at Leuven.¹¹

⁹ Erasmus, *Epist.* 1126, 1127A, 1196 (*Correspondence* 8:7-17, 19-23, 193). See also Harris, 1887, 50; Robertson and Plummer, 1914, 376-377; Bentley, 1978, 317-318; van Poll-van de Lisdonk, 2000.

¹⁰ Erasmus, *Annotationes* to 1 Cor 15:51, *Opera omnia* 6:518-519; *LB* 6:724F-725A; *ASD* VI.8:310-312: “Vides, optime lector, quam hic nihil sit quod in me debeat reprehendi. Nam quod sequor eam lectionem, quæ sola nunc habetur in libris Græcorum, quum Græca uertam, non licuit secus facere. Et tamen ex hoc loco duo quidam, tanti theologi, vt sibi persuaserint semel ruituram vniuersam ecclesiam, nisi eam suis humeris fulcirent—alter episcopi quoque dignitate præfulgens, vterque professor eius religionis, quæ baptismi professionem pene reddidit irreligiosam—atrocem calumniam mihi struxerunt. Alter in corona frequenti nobilium et eruditorum hominum apud summos principes, impegit quod tollerem resurrectionem, propterea quod concederem, non asseuerarem aliquos in adventu Domini non morituros. Alter in publica et ordinaria professione impegit hære- [*ASD*, 312] sim, quod inducerem lectionem contradictoriam ei quam sequitur ecclesia. [...] [*Opera omnia*, 519] Amant πρωτοκαθεδρίας in scholis, gaudent iisdem in opiparis conuiuuiis, amant salutaribus Rabbini, venantur mitras et abbatias et adulantes hominibus adulterant sermonem Dei, suisque traditiunculis obscurant et obruunt scintillam charitatis Euangelicæ [...]”

¹¹ Harris, 1887, 50-51 (opponents identified as Lee and Standish); *ASD* VI.8:311 (opponents more accurately identified as Standish and Baechem).

Another of Erasmus' opponents was Edward Lee, a young English theologian who would subsequently climb the greasy pole of ecclesiastical preferment to become Wolsey's successor as Archbishop of York.¹² Lee and Erasmus had originally been on good terms; indeed, Lee would later claim that it was Erasmus who had initiated their friendship at Leuven in 1517, inviting Lee to offer comments on his recent edition of the New Testament. But when Lee sent his criticisms, Erasmus found them mainly trifling and inane. Lee took umbrage at Erasmus' ill-disguised scorn and the way he denigrated Lee's efforts to others. A rift opened between the two men, which soon turned to open hostility, antagonism and mutual recriminations.¹³

Lee published his own *Annotationes* on Erasmus' *Annotationes* in 1520, despite Erasmus' best efforts to prevent them coming to light. Erasmus knew that anyone who took him on would become instantly famous; consequently he suggested that Lee had been impelled to enter the lists by private motives rather than any concern for the integrity of the biblical text. The issue was not that the Greek Scriptures had appeared in print, for Aldus had also published the Scriptures in Greek. The issue was not that Erasmus had demonstrated that the Greek text varies from the Latin Vulgate, for Valla had shown the same thing. The issue was not that Erasmus had dared to translate the Greek, for Jacques Lefèvre had done this before Erasmus. The same edition that Lee had execrated was praised by the pope himself. According to Erasmus, the only people to criticise his work were ignorant people with no judgment, who made fools of themselves by blathering senselessly about Erasmus' work amongst the unlearned—a clear reference to Standish's disgraceful performance at court.

¹² Rummel, 1994, 229-230, points out that Lee has received rather short shrift, and his later career has been virtually ignored. There is no shortage of material; the Cottonian collection of the British Library contains the following correspondence of Lee: ms Vespasian C. III. 210, 223, 255, 272 b, 284, 287, 291 (1526); Vespasian C. III. 210, 214 (1525); Vespasian C. IV. 239b, 240, 243, 255, 260b, 261, 262, 276, 285 b, 287, 289b (1528); Vespasian C. IV. 153, 290b, 292, 296, 299, 305, 309, 317, 319b, 322, 323 325, 328, 330b, 334, 339b (1529); Vespasian C. IV. 3, 8, 20, 33, 40, 43, 52, 66, 69b, 78, 31, 88, 92, 99, 100, 108b, 116, 118, 126, 142, 145, 154, 162, 170, 174, 181, 183, 186b, 188, 198, 205, 208, 212, 214, 218, 220 (1527); Vespasian C. IV. 288 (1526); Cleopatra E. IV. 239 (1536); Cleopatra E. IV. 308 (1535); Cleopatra E. V. 293 (undated); Cleopatra E. VI. 234*, 239 (1535).

¹³ On the dispute, see Coogan, 1992, 20-23; Rummel, introduction to ASD IX.4:1-18. For an assessment of Erasmus' character, which contributed, *malgré soi*, to the escalation of many of his disputes with others, see Minnich and Meissner, 1978.

The issue came to a particular head over the question of the Johannine comma. Erasmus had struck the comma from his 1516 and 1519 editions, explaining his choice with a brief annotation—perhaps a little too brief, considering the theological importance with which the passage had become invested.¹⁴ Erasmus clearly expected opposition, for he explicitly quoted the comma in his devotional *Methodus* (1519) to support his argument that all believers are in union with God, and share in the unity of the godhead itself. Indeed, his wording of the comma in the *Methodus* (complete with Erasmus' signature translation of *Sermo* instead of *Verbum*) closely resembles that which appeared subsequently in his 1521 Latin New Testament and the 1522 diglot.¹⁵

Lee was apparently unaware of—or unconvinced by—Erasmus' attempt to re-appropriate the comma, and devoted a long comment (*Annotation XXV*) to the question, the last in his book. Lee quoted the preface by ps.-Jerome to show that this passage had been “adulterated by heretics.” For Lee, Jerome's statement went to show that the evidence of manuscripts is of dubious value. “The Christian reader ought to ponder whether it is right to consider what is in the Greek manuscripts as possessing the status of an oracle.” What is more, Lee continues, he would not be surprised to discover that Erasmus had found his reading in a copy which had been corrupted by a heretic, and simply accepted it without checking it against other manuscripts, although such indolence when dealing with sacred texts is impious. Lee then mentions that Lorenzo Valla had inspected seven manuscripts, and never made any comment about the comma.

¹⁴ Erasmus, 1516, 618: “Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cœlo.) In græco codice tantum hoc reperio de testimonio triplici: ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα id est quoniam tres sunt qui testificantur, spiritus, & aqua, & sanguis. Et hi tres unum sunt.) Hi redundant. Neque est, unum, sed in unum, εἰς τὸ αὐτό id est siue in idem.”

¹⁵ The Latin edition is Erasmus, 1521. See also Erasmus, *Ratio seu methodus compendio perveniendi ad veram theologiam* (1519) in Erasmus, 1933, 258-259: “Quicquid vita communis obtulit, hoc fere vertit [*sc.* Iesus] in occasionem docendae pietatis. [...] Annotandus est apud eundum [*sc.* Ioannem] circulus, in quo fere se volvit, ubique et societatem et foedus Christianum commendans. Praesertim capite duodecimo et decimo tertio se declarat idem esse cum patre, adeo ut qui filium norit, norit & patrem, qui filium spernat, spernat et patrem; nec separatur ab hac communione spiritus sanctus. Sic enim legis in epistola: *Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in caelo, pater, sermo et spiritus; atque hi tres unum sunt.* In idem consortium trahit suos, quos palmites suos appellat, obsecrans, ut quemadmodum ipse idem erat cum patre, ita et illi idem essent secum. Impertit iisdem communem patris suumque spiritum, omnia conciliantem.”

(This point was almost certainly designed to get under Erasmus' skin, for it was he who had rediscovered Valla's annotations on the New Testament, and he certainly considered Valla an important predecessor, however much he protested his own independence.)¹⁶ But then Lee comes to the point: he feared that if the Arians were to reappear, seeking to diminish Christ's divinity, Erasmus' edition would be music to their ears. Indeed, Lee considered the comma to be the single most important passage in the entire bible in support of the doctrine of the Trinity. Even verses such as Jn 10:30 ("the Father and I are one") are not an entirely sufficient foundation for a theology of the Trinity, because they do not mention the Holy Spirit. "But as soon as you have produced *this* verse, the mouth of the heretic is stopped, such that he dare not hiss one syllable more. On this point you will win, without any contest. There is no corner for him to hide."¹⁷

¹⁶ Rummel, 1986, 13-15.

¹⁷ Lee, 1520b, 200-201: "Et hunc etiam locum ab hæreticis adulteratum testatur Hieronymus in procemiali epistola in septem epistolas canonicas ad Eustochium uirginem, cuius uerba subscribo. [He then quotes the text of ps.-Jerome's letter.] Iam secum reputet Christianus lector, an fas sit oracula putare, quæ Græci codices habent. Superiori annotatione docuimus ex Epiphanio, decurtatam esse catholicam Ioannis epistolam, ab hæreticis conantibus Christi diuinitatem ab humanitate diuellere. Hic rursus adducimus Hieronymum contestantem, & aliam non leuis momenti portionem ab hæreticis omissam, qui unitatem diuinitatis in trinitate infestabant. Et utrunque hunc locum sic ab hæreticis deprauatum, præbet nobis exemplar Erasmicum, tum in priore, tum in posteriore æditione. Vt non satis mirer, illum in tale exemplar incidisse, & sic iam bis emisisse, inconsultis (ut par est putare) alijs exemplaribus, (quanquam impium quiddam sapit in dogmatibus tam sacris, tamque uenerandis, & in locis fidei tam necessarijs tanta supinitas,) ne dicam dissimulato, si quid secus haberent cætera exemplaria. Nam Laurentius, qui se profitetur usum septem exemplaribus Græcis, nihil his locis offenditur, nec quicquam monet, quod tamen diligentissime solet, si quid deprehendit redundare, uel dimi- [201] nutum esse, uel uariare inter se codices Græcos. Nec enim tam contemptabiles loci sunt, ut præteritos oportuerit, nisi forte conniuere uolens locorum errata in quibusdam codicibus, resartierit [*sc. resarcierit*] damna ex alijs, quo ne auctoritatem minueret Græcis suis exemplaribus. In quo certe, si sic fecerit, probo hominis & iudicium, & diligentiam. Vt qui in tam apertis mendis nec cæcutiuerit, nec hæreticis hæc cornua, quibus sacram fidem impetant, prodiderit, ne quidem insinuauerit. Nunc etenim si resurgeret hæreticorum impia turba, quæ Christo suam diuinitatem prorsus adimit, si denuo capita exererent [*sc. exsererent*], utinam profunde satis sepulti Arrhiani, & cæteri hæretici, qui unitatem in trinitate non confitentur, quàm sibi placerent, quàm gestirent, quàm sibi uiderentur triumphare, quod quibus olim telis uel maxime conficiebantur, nunc uiderent irrita loco cecidisse, ut ne quidem uestigia illic remanserint? Quantum sibi applauderent testimonio horum exemplariorum? Et quidem non immerito. Nam (exemptis his locis) scrutatus omnem scripturam, nihil tam

Erasmus was incensed.¹⁸ He retorted with justifiable indignation that he had merely drawn attention to the comma because the words are not to be found in the Greek text. As far as Valla was concerned, Erasmus pointed out that even he was not immune to error; and in any case, Erasmus could claim to have inspected more manuscripts than Valla. Had he found one Greek manuscript with the comma, he certainly would have added the missing phrase on the strength of that one textual witness, but since that had not happened, he had no choice but to indicate that the comma was absent from the Greek texts before him.

Erasmus then deals with Lee's citation of the prologue to the Catholic Epistles attributed to Jerome. John Selden (1653) and Christoph Sandius (1680) would later suggest that this prologue is a pseudonymous forgery, and Richard Simon (1689) brought cogent arguments to support their suggestion.¹⁹ Curiously, Erasmus never openly called its authenticity into question, though he did exclude it from his edition of Jerome's works.²⁰ Instead, he deals with the arguments presented in this prologue as if they had been put forward by Jerome, and he even makes the text work for his own ends. First of all, Erasmus points out that even Jerome is not always consistent, and sometimes approves of readings he had criticised elsewhere. Jerome called into doubt and obelised much that the church subsequently taught without harm, such as the stories in the Old

præsens, tam irrepugnabile, tam forte inueneris. Vt etiam si alibi sæpe satis superque sit, unde conuincatur, fuerit tamen ibi utcunque contentioni locus, cum hic nullus sit prorsus. Contra hæreticum aduersantem unitati in trinitate, nusquam inueneris testimonium tam simplex, tam apertum, quàm hoc est Ioannis in hac catholica epistola: Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cœlo, pater, & uerbum, & spiritum sanctus. Et hi tres unum sunt. Statim hoc prolato obstruitur hæretico os, ut ne sibilare quidem ulterius audeat. Hic nullo negotio uiceris. Nullus est planè angulus, quò diuertat. Si ex euangelio affers (Ego & pater unum sumus) adhuc manet scrupus de spiritu sancto. Ille scrupus hoc loco tollitur." Is it coincidence that Froben chose from his stock of title borders one dominated by the figures of a fool and fighting putti? On the question of title borders, see Seidel Menchi, 2008; thanks to Erika Rummel for bringing this article to my attention.

¹⁸ Erasmus' response to Lee's *Annotation XXV* is in his *Responsio ad annotationes Lei nouas* (Basel: Froben, 21 July [XII Kal. Aug.] 1520), 260 [*rectè* 280]-295; ASD IX.4:323-335; translated in CW 72:403-419.

¹⁹ Selden, 1653, 2:136; Sandius, 1669, 383; Simon, 1689a, 206-211; Simon, 1689b, 2:4-11; Bludau, 1904; Bludau, 1921, 16.

²⁰ ASD IX.2:255; Tregelles, in Horne, 1856, 4:372.

Testament Apocrypha, and liturgical texts such as the Song of the Three Young Men (Dan 3:52-87); if we disagree with Jerome's judgment on those passages, perhaps we should be suspicious of his conclusions about the comma, Erasmus suggests. In any case, Erasmus notes that Lee misread Jerome, who simply pointed out that there was some variation between rival Latin translations of the Catholic Epistles, and that this variation had led to some confusion and uncertainty. Moreover, Erasmus points out that Jerome was criticised for changing the readings of the Latin bible as they were commonly accepted. In other words, Jerome's text of the Vulgate did *not* reflect the form of the Scriptures familiar to the majority of the church in the fourth century. In fact, Jerome's prologue provides evidence that the Latin translations most widely read in the fourth century gave a reading in 1 Jn 5:7-8 which corresponded to that found in the Greek manuscripts familiar to Erasmus. And lest Lee should convince himself that it was only heretics who excluded the comma from their texts, Erasmus cites two orthodox Fathers, Cyril and Bede, who both cite a large section of 1 Jn 5, yet omit the comma.

Erasmus then tells how he had been presented with a manuscript in the Franciscan monastery in Antwerp, in the margin of which the comma had been written in a rather recent hand.²¹ Erasmus' remarks on the comma in the 1522 edition of his *Annotationes* include a good deal of his response to Lee's *Annotation* XXV, but here he is even more explicit about the Antwerp gloss, which he claimed was "clearly added by some learned fellow who did not want this phrase to go unnoticed."²² He does not reveal the identity of this "learned fellow"

²¹ Mills, Küster and Allen assumed that this was a manuscript of the Greek New Testament, but Wettstein argued that it was a manuscript containing Bede's commentary on the Catholic Epistles, as de Jonge notes in his commentary on ASD IX.2:255. The context in which the anecdote appears in the *Apologia ad Stunicam* and especially in the *Apologia adversos monachos quosdam Hispanos* (LB IX:1031A) shows quite clearly that it was a manuscript of Bede. However, it seems strange that anyone would bother showing Erasmus a marginal comment in a Latin manuscript of Bede, since the presence of the comma in the work of several Latin Fathers after Augustine—albeit excluding Bede—was uncontested. What was required to convince Erasmus was a Greek witness to the text. In any case, Erasmus apparently suspected Lee of inserting the annotation in the Antwerp manuscript (or organising to have it inserted), a suspicion which makes his comments about the obviously recent handwriting even more pointed. The "atrocious tragedy" raised by Lee may also hint at Erasmus' suspicions.

²² Erasmus, *Annotationes, Omnia Opera* 6:769; LB 6:1079D; also in Erasmus, *Apologia ad Stunicam*, ASD IX.2:254: "In codice qui mihi suppedtatus est e bibliotheca minoritarum

(whom he elsewhere describes as *sciolus*, a “would-be scholar”), but it is clear that he had his suspicions. As Erasmus knew, Lee had been in Antwerp on several occasions between April and July 1519 to negotiate the publication of his *Annotationes*, and thus had the opportunity to handle the manuscript in the convent library.²³ Lee in turn was convinced that Erasmus was behind the difficulties he faced in having his work printed, and was also annoyed that Thomas More had counselled him to let the matter drop.²⁴ For his part, Erasmus was convinced that Lee was employing all means, fair or foul, to prevent him seeing his criticisms before they went to print, thus forestalling the possibility of rebuttal in advance. Erasmus’ oblique comments thus suggest that he believed the “would-be scholar” to be none other than Lee himself. The Antwerp codex, which might have provided a definitive answer to this question, is apparently lost.²⁵ Erasmus’ concluding comments on this episode seem to make his

Antuuerpiensium in margine scholium erat ascriptum de testimonio Patris, Verbi et Spiritus, sed manu recentiore, vt consentaneum sit hoc adiectum ab erudito quopiam, qui noluerit hanc particulam prætermitti.”

²³ Erasmus was in Antwerp several times during the spring and summer of 1519; see *Correspondence* 6:356, 7:396 n75. In *Epist.* 998, written 15 July 1519 (*Opus Epist.* 4:9-12; *Correspondence* 7:11-14), Erasmus challenged Lee (who was also then in Antwerp) to publish his *Annotations*. Erasmus wrote *Epist.* 999 (*Opus Epist.* 4:12-23; *Correspondence* 7:15-25) from Antwerp on 23 July 1519; the next letter in the series, *Epist.* 1000, was written from Leuven on 31 July 1519. *Epist.* 1053 (*Opus Epist.* 4:142-143; *Correspondence* 7:152-153), written by Erasmus to Lupset in December 1519, shows that he was aware of the negotiations between Lee and the printers in Antwerp in April/May 1519. In 1061 (*Opus Epist.* 4:159-179; *Correspondence* 7:171-195), Lee describes these negotiations, and openly accuses Erasmus both of delaying the printing of his *Annotations*, and receiving the copy from the printers so he could write his refutation at leisure. It seems from *Epist.* 1080 (*Opus Epist.* 4:207; *Correspondence* 7:226-227) that this latter accusation at least was not true. In *Epist.* 1074 (*Opus Epist.* 4:198-201; *Correspondence* 7:215-219), Erasmus explains to Wolfgang Faber Capito that he thought Lee was trying to outsmart him by spreading misinformation about the place where his *Annotations* were to be printed. In *Epist.* 1077 (*Opus Epist.* 4:203; *Correspondence* 7:221-222), Paschasius Berselius tells Erasmus that he had a letter attacking Lee printed by Dirk Martens and posted in public places.

²⁴ More, 1947, 137-154.

²⁵ Steven Van Impe informs me that the Franciscan library at Antwerp was dispersed under Napoleon, so the chances of finding the manuscript are slim. If it was a Greek New Testament (which seems doubtful), it was not any of the extant copies in which the comma is entered in the margin, for these all take their readings from printed editions, as detailed above.

suspicious clear: “Here you have the sum of the issue, reader; see what an atrocious tragedy Lee raises on this account for my benefit, as if he had discovered an argument in which he might blow that trumpet of Allecto with all his strength.”²⁶

As to Lee’s suggestion that Erasmus followed the Greek manuscripts as an oracle, Erasmus replies that his work should have had the opposite effect, of making his readers aware that the readings contained in any one given manuscript have anything but oracular status. And what else was Erasmus to do with the texts he had before him? Were Lee hypothetically to be entrusted by the pope with the task of translating the manuscripts of the Greek New Testament in the Vatican, would Lee thunder against the pope’s manuscripts, or dare to insert words not present in the manuscripts? Such conduct would only draw upon him a just accusation of untrustworthiness. In the same way, Erasmus had not set himself up as judge over the Greek manuscripts, merely as their translator.²⁷

One element of Lee’s attack particularly annoyed Erasmus: the slanderous suggestion that he had only consulted *one* Greek manuscript, an accusation aimed at calling his philological competence and editorial diligence into question. In return, Erasmus points out that he had consulted a great many manuscripts in Basel, Brabant and England.²⁸ If Lee could produce a Greek

²⁶ Cf. ASD IX.4:325, ll. 224-226.

²⁷ ASD IX.4:326.

²⁸ Brandt, 1998, 121-122; Brown in ASD VI.3:1-12; and Krans, 2006, 335-336, identify the following mss used by Erasmus: for the first edition he consulted the following manuscripts: GA mss 1^{cap} (Basel, Öffentliche Bibliothek der Universität Basel ms A. N. IV. 2, used for proofreading and annotations); 2^e (Basel, ÖB ms A. N. IV. 1, printer’s copy); 817^e (Basel, ÖB ms A. N. III. 15, proofreading and annotations [Theophylact]); 2814^{rk+} (Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek Cod. I. 1. 4. 1, the second volume of GA 1, borrowed from Reuchlin); 2815^{ap} (Basel, ÖB ms A. N. IV. 4, the second volume of GA 2; used for printer’s copy and corrections); 2816^{ap} (Basel, ÖB ms A. N. IV. 5, corrections; Stephanus used the first volume of this ms as his γ' [= GA 4^e]); 2817^{p+} (Basel, ÖB ms A. N. III. 11, printer’s copy, corrections and annotations). Erasmus clearly counted those mss in multiple volumes as a single ms; by this reckoning, his claim to have used five manuscripts at Basel (a claim questioned by Krans, 2006, 335 n1) is therefore correct. Erasmus also seems to have drawn on notes taken from manuscripts he had examined in England, for his edition contains readings taken from Codex Leicestrensis (GA 69, text and annotations; see ASD VI.3:10-11) and 2105^{p+} (Oxford, Bodleian Library ms Auct. E. 1. 6, annotations [Theophylact; not noted by Brandt]). For the 1519 edition, Erasmus integrated some corrections from 3^{cap} (Vienna, ÖNB ms suppl. gr. 52)

manuscript containing the comma, *and* if Lee could prove that Erasmus had had access to this manuscript, *then* he might have some cause to make accusations of indolence.²⁹ As far as Lee's accusation of trying to conceal evidence from the reader, Erasmus again points out that all he had done is to present what was in the Greek manuscripts available to him. And even if one of the manuscripts available to Erasmus did contain the comma, why would Lee assume that Erasmus had intended to conceal the fact from his readers, rather than inadvertently omitting it through inattention? Such accusations of deliberate deceit and turpitude, Erasmus implies, say more about the accuser than the accused. In any case, why would Erasmus be so crazy as to conceal or omit intentionally what might be used to refute heretics? And what good would it do Erasmus to falsify the evidence of the Greek manuscripts when anyone competent in reading Greek could easily check the originals for himself?

It is true, Erasmus concedes, that Valla did not mention this passage, but this may have been the result of inattention. Alternatively, perhaps Valla's manuscripts actually did contain the comma. But since Erasmus had not seen the

and a ms of the Gospels from St Agnes at Zwolle; see de Jonge in ASD IX.2:191, note to line 461; and Erasmus, *Epp.* 504, 516. For the 1522 edition, Erasmus added material from the Aldine edition and Montfortianus. The 1527 edition integrated variants from the Complutensian edition, while the only source for further corrections in the 1535 edition was codex Vaticanus (GA ms B). In his *Apologia to Stunica*, Erasmus mentions having used manuscripts in Brabant (*vetusta exemplaria, quæ nos vidimus partim in Anglia, partim in Brabantia, partim Basileæ*); on these manuscripts (one Greek, one Latin), see ASD IX.4:55, note to line 855; and 327, note to line 250. See also Rummel, 1986, 35-42.

²⁹ ASD IX.4:323-326: "Quod si mihi contigisset vnum exemplar, in quo fuisset quod nos [sc. Latini] legimus, nimirum illinc adiecissem quod in cæteris aberat. Id quia non contigit, quod solum licuit feci: indicaui, quid in Græcis codicibus minus esset. [...] [326] Primum sic agit Leus quasi mihi non fuerit, nisi vnicum exemplar, cum tam multis sim vsus, primum in Anglia, mox in Brabantia, postremo Basileæ, non semel quasique vnicum illum codicem mendosum secutus cæteros non consuluerim. [...] Cum hac in re nec sumptui pepercerim, nec valetudini, qua coniectura suspicandum est me vnico exemplari fisum cætera non consuluisse? Quid dici potuit magis sycophanticum? Et quæ est ista tanta supinitas, quæ impium quiddam sapit, si non consului codices quorum mihi non potuit esse copia? Certe quod potui conguessi. Proferat Leus codicem Græcum, qui scriptum habeat, quod æditio mea non habet, et doceat eius codicis mihi fuisse copiam, ac postea supinitatem mihi impingat in sacris dogmatibus [sc. dogmatis]." Cf. LB 9:275BC-277AB; CW 72:404-408. Bainton, 1970, 169-170, 354 n21, and de Jonge, 1980, 385-386, identify this passage as the origin of the myth of Erasmus' promise. De Jonge, in ASD IX.2:189, points out a parallel in Erasmus' *Apologia to Stunica*.

texts from which Valla worked, he should not be held responsible for differing from Valla on this point. Is it impiety not to have seen all the manuscripts in the world? Lee maintains that Valla “concealed” the imperfections of his Greek texts by supplying anything missing from them out of the Latin, lest he should lessen the authority of his Greek texts. Erasmus refutes such rubbish outright, maintaining that Valla would disavow such a “defence” of his working methods. Moreover, Valla constantly criticised the Latin Vulgate; why would he want to make his Greek text look more like a version he considered far less than perfect?

Potentially the most damaging accusation that Lee brought against Erasmus was that he had omitted the comma through a desire to promote Arianism. Erasmus felt he could afford to scoff at this suggestion, since, as he pointed out, Arianism had been long suppressed. “Who are these heretics Lee tells me about? To be sure, people who survive only in name. Our poor scared little man is afraid of their ghosts when there is really no need.”³⁰ But even if these long-dead Arians should reappear, Erasmus asked, why would they be silenced by this one passage, backed into a corner as Lee had maintained? There are many passages in Scripture that apologists might use more effectively to defend the doctrine of the Trinity.³¹ The Arians might dispose of Jerome’s testimony, since they were intimately familiar with the Scriptures and very learned; if for this reason only, Erasmus almost regretted that the books of the Arians had been destroyed. (Erasmus should have known that such an admission was dangerous, even hedged about with concessions, but sometimes he enjoyed playing with fire.) When faced with Jesus’ statement that “I and the Father are one,” would Arians be forced to admit that the Son is of one essence with the Father? Might they not argue that this unity is one of agreement rather than one of essence? And in support of this statement they could bring forth Jesus’ prayer: “May they be one, as we are one” (Jn 17:22). (Surely Erasmus was not unaware of Aquinas’ condemnation of Joachim’s interpretation of these passages.) In explaining this

³⁰ Erasmus, 1520, 288; ASD IX.4:329: “At quos tandem hæreticos mihi narrat Leus? Nimirum eos, quorum præter nomen nihil extat. Horum vmbras usque adeo metuit homo formidolosus, vbi nihil opus.”

³¹ ASD IX.4:326: “Ostendit ingens esse periculum, ne Arianorum haeresis rursus caput erigat, si senserit quidam hanc particulam omissam, *Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in coelo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus. Et hi tres vnum sunt.* Cum nulla sit haeresis magis extincta quam Arianorum, mirum vnde sic metuat Leus. Sed fingamus reuiuiscere Arianos; an ob vnum hunc locum obmutescent? An non sunt alia loca permulta, quibus possint reuinci?”

and similar passages, defenders of the Trinity are obliged to show that the writers of Scripture spoke not merely of a unity of witness, will or function, but used the word “one” to refer to a substance which is the same not merely in species but also in number, a *uniquely singular* substance. And this, Erasmus concludes, was a task that even Augustine failed to carry out with sufficient precision (*Adversus Maximinum* III.22). Just as the Arians managed to work their way around Jn 17:22, they would get around the comma with equal ease. It is obvious, they will say, that the Spirit, water and blood can only be one in testimony, not in essence; the Father, Word and Holy Spirit are one in just the same way, with the Father attesting to the Son, the Son teaching what he has received from the Father, and the Spirit instilling in the Apostles what he has received from the Son. Lee’s confidence in the power of the comma to silence the Arians is thus quite misplaced, Erasmus warns. As far as Lee’s concerns about the corruption of Scripture, Erasmus points out that if the Arians find the Scriptures uncongenial, they will corrupt them anyway. In any case, to fear that the entire Scripture will collapse if one passage is corrupt is to open oneself up to an even greater danger, since the Scriptures are full of textual errors. Not even the heretics were bold enough to make judgments about the trustworthiness of the entire Scripture by arguing that one passage was corrupt.

Erasmus insisted that he had put forward these arguments not because he wanted to encourage Arianism, but simply to refute Lee’s slanders. But to be sure of warding off any such accusations, Erasmus declares his belief that “the Son is of the same essence with the Father, just as the church believes and proclaims.” But despite his bluster, Erasmus was worried by the accusation of Arianism, for it had the potential to harm the reception of his New Testament. And when Arians eventually did re-appear later in the sixteenth century, they found in Erasmus’ New Testament and *Annotationes* a goldmine of arguments, just as Lee had feared.

4. *Opposition to Erasmus from Spain: Stunica*

In June 1521, Erasmus received another series of published criticisms of his text, this time from Diego Stunica, one of the editors of the Complutensian edition. It was clear that part of Stunica’s antipathy towards Erasmus was caused by the fact that he had published his edition of the New Testament before the

Complutensian bible could be published. But certainly not all the blame for these circumstances could be placed at Erasmus' feet. A number of factors delayed the publication of the Complutensian bible. Firstly, Ximénez was dead, and no formal application had been made to the pope to request permission to publish. Three years after the printing was finished, Leo X took matters into his own hands, addressing a brief on 22 March 1520 to Francisco, bishop of Ávila, and Francisco de Mendoza, archdeacon of Pedroche. This letter indicates that there was some kind of dispute between the executors of Ximénez' will, who disagreed with the price at which the bibles were to be sold. Clearly the disparity between the cost of the edition and its potential to generate both cash and "reputational value" had become an issue, probably as a result of the appearance of Erasmus' editions, and then that of Aldus and Asulanus in 1518. Leo finally broke the deadlock by commanding the men to fix a price and to sell the bibles without further delay.³²

³² Aland and Aland, 1995, 3-4, write: "The final volume of the polyglot was completed on July 10, 1517, shortly before the death of Ximenes, but publication of the whole work was delayed until March 22, 1520, when papal authorization for its issuance was finally granted (after the manuscripts loaned from the Vatican library had been returned to Rome)." This account makes it sound as though the pope withheld permission pending the return of the manuscripts, but it is clear from the pope's brief, printed on +8v of the first volume of the Old Testament, that the final initiative for the publication of the bible came from Leo himself: "[...] intelleximus quod inter alia quæ bonæ memoriæ Franciscus t. t. sanctæ Balbinæ presbyter Cardinalis: antequam ab humanis excederet summa cum laude absoluit: extat opus noui & veteris testamenti: noui videlicet in greco & latino: & veteris in græco & latino prædictis necnon hebræo & caldeo sermonibus ab eodem Francisco Cardinale multa cum vigilia & doctorum consensu compositum: & vsque ad sexcenta volumina vel amplius impensa eiusdem Francisci Cardinalis impressa. Sed cum post impressionem huiusmodi subito dictus Franciscus Cardinalis morte esset ablatu: & noster ad publicationem dicti operis consensus petitus non esset: nequiuert hactenus opus ipsum ad doctorum manus & publicam vtilitatem cui erit fructuosum aduenire. Manet insuper voluntas dicti Francisci Cardinalis in illius testamento notata pro parte inæquata: & est ex præcio pro quo dicta volumina venduntur explenda. Vnde nos indignum existimantes quod huiusmodi opus amplius cum publicæ vtilitatis iactura lateat. & pia tam imitabilis viri voluntas diutius debita exequutione frustretur: & vtrique damno nostræ prouisionis ope subuenire volentes: Motu proprio & ex certa scientia nostra opus præfatum comprobantes: & vt tale in lucem per doctorum & aliorum manus libere de cætero venire posset concedentes: discretionem vestram: qui: sicut accepimus ex exequutoribus dicti testamenti estis: per hæc scripta mandamus: quatenus volumina prædicta pro precio de quo melius agi poterit: etiam sine aliis dicti testamenti exequutoribus: si qui sint: diligenter vendi

The timing of Leo's brief is apparently significant, and gives further evidence that the appearance of Erasmus' edition had been a factor in the difficulties attending the publication of the Complutensian bible.³³ Leo was surely aware of the imperial privilege protecting Erasmus' edition from being reprinted for four years. And since the election of Charles V as Holy Roman Emperor in June 1519, the protection afforded by Froben's privilege extended to Spain as well. Even if the Complutensian bible was not technically a reprint of Erasmus' edition, it would have looked bad for the pope to consent to a publication that *seemed* to infringe on Froben's privilege. The fact that Leo's order to publish came a mere three weeks after the expiry of Froben's privilege suggests that it had played a part in his timing. And besides, Erasmus had dedicated the 1516 edition of his New Testament to Leo. To consent prematurely to the publication of a work that trod on the heels of an earlier papal dedication would have looked bad.

However, the delayed publication of the Complutensian Polyglot had the unexpected benefit of allowing corrections to be made to respond to some of the more controversial aspects of Erasmus' text. In this way some of the reputational value of the Complutensian bible could be recovered. Stunica's published attacks on Erasmus' text thus had the function not merely of defending the true text of the New Testament, but also of undermining the reputational value of Erasmus' edition by casting his orthodoxy and scholarly integrity into doubt—and since the beginnings of the Lutheran debate in 1517, a reputation for orthodoxy had been at a premium.

Michael Screech's examination of the typography of the Complutensian New Testament has provided fascinating insights into the final stages of its production. It seems that several bifolia are cancels (reprints), including the bifolium KK2r-v and KK5r-v, the sheet on which the comma is found. Significantly, it seems that the comma was actually already part of the text before the reprinting of the cancels. In order to make the Greek text more manageable for those with little knowledge of the language, the Complutensian edition uses small superscript letters to cross-reference each Greek word against the corresponding word in the parallel Latin text; the continuity of these letters on to

procuretis: & faciatis ex ipso precio dictam voluntatem iuxta vires eiusdem precii adimpleri. [...] Datum Romæ [...] xxii. Martii. M.D.XX. Pontificatus nostri Anno octauo."

³³ Elliott, 2009c, 231.

KK3r (which is not a cancel) shows that the comma was part of the text in the first impression. But after Erasmus' edition had omitted the comma, the editors at Alcalá apparently felt compelled to justify its appearance in their edition. Bifolium KK2/5 was therefore reprinted with a long note on the comma—the only strictly theological note in the entire edition—shoehorned into the margins of KK2v. (Screech's finding is consistent with the absence of any note on the comma in a set of manuscript annotations collated while the text of the Complutensian bible was being established for print, notes which Jerry Bentley tentatively ascribed to Demetrius Ducas and Elio Antonio de Nebrija.)³⁴ The new marginal note consists of a condensed extract from Thomas Aquinas' commentary on the decision taken at the Fourth Lateran Council to condemn Joachim of Fiore's position on the Trinity.³⁵ This new note has two functions: firstly, it gives an authoritative theological justification for the omission of the phrase καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἶσιν at the end of verse 8 in the Complutensian edition; more importantly, it was supposed to show on the authority of Aquinas that Erasmus' omission of the comma from his edition and his inclusion of the last phrase of verse 8 betrayed a hint of Arianism. Yet the insertion of this new note required the typesetter to put some of the Greek text on fol. KK2r into line 54, the lowest line available in the forme, usually only used for the signature; this typographical aberration is unique in the entire edition. The different degrees of wear and damage to the frame and the forehead of the saint in the ornamental capital *I* on fols. KK4r and KK5v supports the contention that bifolium KK2/5

³⁴ Bentley, 1980, 148; the notes are in Madrid, Universidad Complutense, Archivo Historico Universitario, ms 117-Z-1.

³⁵ Reeve and Screech, 1990, XXI, reproduce KK2r-v of the Complutensian New Testament; the marginal note reads as follows (original punctuation): "Sanctus Thomas in expositione secunde decretalis de summa trinitate & fide catholica tractans istum passum contra abbatem Ioachim videlicet Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in celo. pater: verbum: & spiritus sanctus: dicit ad litteram verba sequentia. Et ad insinuandam vnitatem trium personarum subditur & hii tres vnum sunt. Quodquidem dicitur propter essentie vnitatem. Sed hoc Ioachim perverse trahere volens ad vnitatem charitatis et consensus inducebat consequentem auctoritatem. Nam subditur ibidem: & tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, s. spiritus: aqua: & sanguis. Et in quibusdam libris additur: & hii tres unum sunt. Sed hoc in veris exemplaribus non habetur: sed dicitur esse appositum ab hereticis arrianis ad peruertendum intellectum sanum auctoritatis premisse de vnitate essentie trium personarum. Hec beatus Thomas ubi supra." My examination of the watermarks in the copy in the Bibliothèque nationale de France did not reveal any conclusive evidence.

was printed after those that surround it. Parts of gathering U were also reprinted, apparently to cast doubt upon Erasmus' controversial reading at 1 Cor 15:51. Screech attributed these alterations to sinister motives: "behind the austere text of the Complutensian Polyglot lay tensions between scholarly integrity and the arrogance of power. And somebody was prepared to betray the reader's trust, quietly giving at times readings in the Greek which never had [...] any valid manuscript authority behind them."³⁶ Yet this revision may equally be interpreted as an expedient designed to recapture some of the value invested in the Complutensian bible by Ximénez, the editors and the University of Alcalá, value that had been compromised by the appearance of Erasmus' edition.

Erasmus wrote his *Apologia respondens ad ea quæ Iacobus Lopis Stunica taxauerat in prima duntaxat Novi Testamenti æditione* between June and September 1521, and it was published in October; this exchange would initiate a remarkable series of no less than thirteen attacks and counter-attacks between the two men.³⁷ On the matter of the comma, the editors of the Complutensian bible claimed to have taken their reading of the Greek text of verses 7 and 8 from a Rhodian manuscript in the library at Alcalá, but the reading in the Complutensian bible is quite different from that in the only two extant manuscripts that contain the comma in Greek (Montfortianus and GA 629), which thus cannot be the Rhodian manuscript.³⁸ Erasmus suspected that the

³⁶ Reeve and Screech, 1990, XXII-XXIII.

³⁷ See ASD IX.2:17-47, on the course of this exchange.

³⁸ The Greek text of the comma in the Complutensian bible reads: "ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ καὶ ὁ λόγος καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἐν εἰσί. καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς· τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα." I give the accentuation of the Greek as in the original in order to highlight its particular features, discussed by Lee, 2005. The parallel Latin text reads: "quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo pater verbum et spiritus sanctus et hi tres unum sunt. et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra spiritus et aqua et sanguis." Wachtel, 1995, 317, remarks that the sixteenth-century editions of the Vulgate tend to follow the reading as given in the Complutensian bible, though with the addition of the phrase *et hi tres [in] unum sunt* in verse 8. In passing it may be noticed that the reading of the parallel Latin text in GA 629 varies slightly from that in the Complutensian, reading *Quia tres sunt* in verse 7, and *spiritus aqua et sanguis* in verse 8. Like the Complutensian, GA 629 omits the phrase *et hi tres [in] unum sunt* at the end of verse 8, as it had in the corresponding place in the Greek. Nevertheless, the number of differences makes it unlikely that GA 629 was the textual model for the reading of the comma in the Complutensian edition.

Rhodian manuscript was a fiction, implying that the reading of the comma in the Complutensian text had simply been translated into Greek from the Latin Vulgate. Erasmus begins his critique of Stunica's annotations on 1 Jn 5:7-8 with a taunt: "Where is that Rhodian codex of yours slumbering all this time?"³⁹ For his own part, Erasmus claims somewhat sententiously—though not entirely truthfully—that he had not taken up the task of emending the readings of his Greek codices, merely that of reporting their contents. Since he had already responded so fully to Lee on this matter, Erasmus continues, he would keep his remarks relatively brief. Indeed, much of his material is simply repeated from the refutation of Lee, sometimes in a slightly edited form. A good deal of this material would make its way into the *Annotationes* accompanying the 1522 edition of the Greek text.

In response to ps.-Jerome's claim that the comma had been omitted by unfaithful translators, Erasmus again points out that when Cyril, a theologian of unimpeachable orthodoxy, cites 1 Jn 5 (*Thesaurus*, assertio 34) he omits the comma, which he certainly would have cited in his disputes with the Arians if he had known it. The implication is clear: if the comma was commonly contained in Greek manuscripts, as Jerome's prologue seems to suggest, why was it unknown to Cyril? Erasmus also adds some new material that did not appear in his refutation of Lee. In August 1521 Erasmus was in the emperor's retinue when it stopped near Bruges. Erasmus took the opportunity to inspect two very old manuscripts in the monastery library of St Donatian, and found that both lacked the comma, information that he duly reports here. In June 1521, Paolo Bombace had also confirmed to him in a letter that the comma was lacking from "an

³⁹ ASD IX.2:252: "Sed interim vbi dormit codex ille Rhodiensis?" When Johann Heinrich Daniel Moldenhawer went to Alcalá in 1784 to inspect the manuscripts, he was told that a large number had been sold "as useless parchments" (*como membranas inutiles*) to a manufacturer of fireworks in 1749, and it was feared that the Rhodian manuscript was one of these; Michaelis, 1788a, 165; Delitzsch, 1871, 31-33; Bentley, 1980, 146. Herbert Marsh was clearly sceptical that any librarian would ever do such a thing, and remarked: "as rockets are not made of vellum, it is a certain proof that the MSS. were written on paper, and therefore of no great antiquity." Michaelis, 1802, 2.2:853. Tregelles, 1849, Appendix:2-3 (and subsequently Delitzsch, 1871, 39-41), argued that the fireworks-maker Torija (not Toryo, as often stated) had bought the leather and parchment from the old bindings when several of the old manuscripts were rebound. Tregelles also asserted that all the manuscripts from Ximénez' library—apart from the mysterious *Codex Rhodiensis*—are still in the Complutensian library, but this claim is uncertain; Aland and Aland, 1995, 4.

extremely old codex in the Vatican library” (BAV ms Vat. gr. 1209 = GA ms B), as Erasmus likewise reports.⁴⁰ Against all this evidence, Erasmus openly doubted the value of the evidence supplied by ps.-Jerome’s prologue.

Erasmus then disposes with Stunica’s objection that the comma is a weapon against the Arians by summarising the arguments he had previously marshalled against Lee. Nevertheless, mere reliance on biblical proof texts would not prove anything: “I for one do not see how the view rejected by the Arians can be upheld except with the help of speculative reasoning. But finally, since this entire passage is obscure, it does not have much power to refute heretics.”⁴¹ In his concluding remarks, Erasmus returns to the Rhodian codex: “Though my dear Stunica so often boasts of his Rhodian codex, to which he attributes such authority, he has strangely not adduced it as an oracle here, especially since it almost agrees with our [Latin] codices so well that it might seem to be a ‘Lesbian straight-edge’ [*i.e.* evidence made to fit the occasion].”⁴²

But Erasmus kept the biggest surprise until last, a truly stunning revelation which he relates with a certain sarcastic humour:

However—lest I should keep *anything* hidden—there has been found in England a single Greek manuscript in which occurs what is lacking in the commonly-accepted texts. It is written as follows: “Ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, πατήρ, λόγος καὶ πνεῦμα, καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσιν. Καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ, πνεῦμα, ὕδωρ, καὶ αἷμα. Εἰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, etc, although I am not sure if it is by accident that the phrase “and these three are unto one,” which is found in our Greek manuscripts, is not repeated at this point [*i.e.* in verse 8]. I therefore restored from this British codex what was said to be lacking in our editions, lest anyone should have any cause to blame me unjustly. However, I suspect that this codex was adapted to agree with the manuscripts of the Latins.”⁴³

⁴⁰ Paolo Bombace to Erasmus, *Epist.* 1213, 18 June 1521 (*Opus Epist.* 4:530; *Correspondence* 8:248); de Jonge, 1980, 389; Coogan, 1992, 107.

⁴¹ ASD IX.2:258, repeated in 1522 *Annotationes*; see Appendix II for text.

⁴² ASD IX.2:258, repeated in 1522 *Annotationes*; see Appendix II for text.

⁴³ ASD IX.2:258, repeated in 1522 *Annotationes*; see Appendix II for text. In passing, it should be noted that Erasmus’ phrase *quod in vulgatis deest* does not refer to the Latin Vulgate, which usually contains the comma, but either to the Greek Vulgate (*i.e.* the Byzantine text) or the editions that Erasmus had already published.

The “British codex” Erasmus consulted has been in the library of Trinity College Dublin since the seventeenth century, and is generally known as Codex Montfortianus.⁴⁴ On the basis of this one manuscript, about which we shall have much to say, Erasmus finally included the comma in his text, firstly in an edition of his Latin translation, published by Froben in June 1521, and then in the Greek text issued the following year.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Trinity College Dublin ms 30; *olim* EEE1 (Ussher’s shelfmark), then Class. A. Tab. 4, n° 21, then B.1.22/G.97. The fullest description of the manuscript hitherto was made by Tregelles, in Horne, 1856, 4:213-217, which, incidentally, quotes the legend of Erasmus’ promise to Lee.

⁴⁵ ASD IX.2:259.

[IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT]

Fig. 1. Dublin, Trinity College ms 30 (Codex Montfortianus), 439r.
The Johannine comma is on lines 14-17.

5. Erasmus' reading of the Johannine comma

Although Erasmus was convinced that the criticisms of Lee and Stunica were ultimately futile, they clearly gave him sufficient reason to believe that the reception of his edition might be damaged by their accusations of heresy, suspicions that would hamper the propagation of the pious *philosophia Christi* outlined in his *Paraclesis*. In order to remove anything by which he might be accused further of Arianism, Erasmus thus decided to commit the lesser evil of including the reading of the comma from Codex Montfortianus in the next edition of his Greek New Testament.⁴⁶ In this way he maintained the ostensible integrity—and thus the market value—of his edition. Erasmus was quite sure that Montfortianus had been adapted in certain respects to the readings in the Latin Vulgate, but despite this conviction, he used this manuscript as the basis for his reading of the comma in the 1522 Greek New Testament: ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, πατήρ, λόγος, καὶ πνεῦμα ἅγιον, καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι. καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ, πνεῦμα, καὶ ὕδωρ, καὶ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν, which he translated as follows: *Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo, pater, sermo, & spiritus sanctus: & hi tres unum sunt. Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra, spiritus, & aqua, & sanguis: & hi tres unum sunt.*⁴⁷ The reading he reported in the *Apologia to Stunica* (and absorbed only partly corrected into the 1522 *Annotationes*) differs from that in Montfortianus in four details: two in verse 7 (the omission of ἅγιον after πνεῦμα, and the reading εἰσιν instead of εἰσι at the end of the verse); and two in verse 8 (the omission of οἱ before μαρτυροῦντες; and the insertion of καί between πνεῦμα and ὕδωρ, though this last error is rectified in the *Annotationes*). These discrepancies can be explained through the precipitate haste with which the *Apologia* was written. For the 1522 edition of the Greek text, Erasmus evidently rechecked the manuscript, and gave the reading of the comma exactly as it appears in Montfortianus,

⁴⁶ On Erasmus' attitude to the relationship between *mendacium*, *simulatio* and *prudencia*, see Trapman, 2002.

⁴⁷ Erasmus, 1522a, 517v [=X3v]. Supporters of the authenticity of the comma from Martin (1721) to Maynard (1995) point to Erasmus' first account of the "British codex" to suggest that Codex Montfortianus and the British codex are not the same book, apparently with the intention of multiplying the manuscript evidence for the comma, but the reading of verses 7-8a in the 1522 New Testament follows Montfortianus perfectly, showing that Martin's objections are groundless.

inserting only “what was said to be lacking in our editions.” Despite what has been claimed by several critics, beginning with Le Long (1720), Erasmus’ reading of verses 7 and 8a (up to the word πνεῦμα) in the 1522 New Testament is the same as in Montfortianus. Even Erasmus’ punctuation reflects that in Montfortianus. In verse 8b Erasmus added καὶ before ὕδωρ; and at the end of the verse he inserted the clause “and these three are one” (καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν) from his 1516 and 1519 text. As we have already noted, Aquinas had condemned this concluding clause as an Arian interpolation, and it is consequently omitted from many Latin manuscripts copied after Aquinas’ day, probably including the one consulted by the scribe of Montfortianus as his model for the comma. The clause “and these three are one” is also omitted from verse 8 in GA 629, in which the Greek was likewise altered to conform to the parallel Latin text. It is also missing from the Complutensian edition, leading us to suspect that the Spanish edition was also altered to conform to the Latin, or simply translated from a Latin copy. As we have seen, the editors of the Complutensian edition were well aware of Aquinas’ opinions on the canonicity of this clause.

Several comments in the *Annotationes* to the text give further evidence of a certain haste and carelessness on Erasmus’ part. When introducing the Codex Britannicus here, he repeats a large chunk of text from the *Apology to Stunica*, complete with his own introductory and concluding comments, but again he failed to recheck the reading of the comma against the manuscript; this might indicate that he prepared the *Annotationes* before rechecking Montfortianus for the text of the Epistle. In the 1527 edition of the *Annotationes* he adds details from the Complutensian edition, which he had seen in the meantime. Comparing the Complutensian reading with that in the Codex Britannicus, he comments that the manuscript contained the phrase καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν at the end of verse 8. It is clear that in the intervening years his memory of the codex had become hazy. When writing this comment, he apparently consulted his own 1522 text, remembering that he had used the reading in Britannicus-Montfortianus as the basis for the comma, but forgetting that it was he who had added the phrase καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν in verse 8 from his 1516/1519 text.⁴⁸

Erasmus claimed on a number of occasions that Montfortianus had been “adapted” to make it conform more closely to the Vulgate. Henk Jan de Jonge

⁴⁸ Heide, 2006, 62-65; Heide also notes a number of errors in the account given by Maynard, 1995, 72-73, 78.

points out that this was an accusation Erasmus made routinely if a particular Greek manuscript varied significantly from the Byzantine text with which he was most familiar.⁴⁹ However, several grammatical peculiarities in the reading of the comma in Montfortianus support Erasmus' suspicion that it was translated from Latin. These oddities begin just before the comma, in verse 6. Instead of ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστὶν ἡ ἀλήθεια ("for the Spirit is the truth"), Montfortianus has the reading ὅτι ὁ Χριστός ἐστὶν ἀλήθεια ("for Christ is the truth"), a translation of the reading *quoniam Christus est veritas*, a common variant in the Vulgate text recorded as early as Codex Fuldensis. This variant changes the sense significantly, turning the ὅτι-clause into an indirect statement rather than an affirmation that the Spirit is identifiable with the truth. This variant in the Latin text apparently arose from a careless confusion of the abbreviated *nomina sacra* $\overline{\text{SPS}}$ (*Spiritus*) and $\overline{\text{XPS}}$ (*Christus*). This mistake is easy to imagine in Latin; confusion between $\overline{\text{ΠΝΑ}}$ (Πνεῦμα) and $\overline{\text{ΧΡΣ}}$ (Χριστός) in a Greek text would be more difficult to explain. Significantly, the variant ὅτι ὁ Χριστός ἐστὶν ἀλήθεια is found in no extant Greek bible except Montfortianus, which suggests that this verse too was translated from Latin, a suspicion strengthened by the strange omission of ἡ before ἀλήθεια.⁵⁰ This unusual reading may have further raised Erasmus' suspicions about this codex, and he declined to take it on, or even to comment on it in his *Annotationes*.⁵¹ In verse 7, Montfortianus gives the phrase οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς, apparently a translation of the Latin reading *hi tres*, possibly modelled after Mt 20:21 and Rev 11:10.⁵² In verse 7, the words for Father, Son and Holy Spirit also lack the definite article; the same omission is to be noted for the Spirit, the water

⁴⁹ De Jonge, 1980, 387.

⁵⁰ Bruns, 1778, 259; "Inspector," 1816, 502; "Crito Cantabrigiensis," 1827, 26; Horne, 1856, 4:215; Westcott, 1892, 183-184. We can conjecture that the Latin manuscript from which the scribe translated had the following reading: "Et Spiritus est, qui testificatur quoniam Christus est veritas. Quoniam [*or* Quia] tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in cælo: Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus: et hi tres unum sunt. Et tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in terra: spiritus, et aqua, et sanguis. Si testimonium hominum accipimus [...]."

⁵¹ On this passage, Erasmus comments (*Opera omnia* 6:768; *LB* 6:1079B): "Quoniam Christus est ueritas.) ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστὶν ἡ ἀλήθεια, id est, Quod spiritus est ipsa ueritas. Veritas est, Hebraice dixit, pro uerax est, Caro fallax, spiritus nescit mentiri. In rebus uisibilibus, fucus est, in rebus æternis ueritas est." Erasmus systematically took the lemmata in his *Annotationes* from the text of the Vulgate, as here.

⁵² "Crito Cantabrigiensis," 1827, 26. The word οὗτοι does not appear in this context in cod. Ottob. 298.

and the blood in verse 8. This grammatical irregularity provides further evidence for the suspicion that the passage was translated from Latin, which has no articles.⁵³ Erasmus follows this reading in his 1522 text, though in his 1527 and 1535 editions he gives the reading ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, τὸ πνεῦμα ἅγιον, probably taking the articles from the Complutensian edition.⁵⁴ In verse 8, Erasmus follows Montfortianus' unique reading ἐν τῇ γῇ ("on the earth"), which is apparently a translation of the Latin reading *in terra*; a more idiomatic Greek rendering would have been ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, as we find in the Complutensian edition. Even though Erasmus probably will have found the reading ἐν τῇ γῇ a little strange—or perhaps even in order to make his suspicions about the reading in Montfortianus plain—he retained this phrase in all subsequent editions of his text.⁵⁵ Such traces of alteration and translation from Latin in Montfortianus suggest that the scribe

⁵³ Marsh, 1795, xvii n21, followed by Horne, 1825, 4:444, pointed out that the native Greek speakers Calecas and Bryennius naturally supplied the missing articles when citing the comma. Wettstein, 1751-1752, 126, and Bowyer, 1812, 3-4, pointed out that even Erasmus made the same error as the scribe of Montfortianus in omitting the article in Rev 22:16, 18 and 19, and much worse besides. Burgess, 1821, 50, tried to show that the omission of the article was not unknown in the writings of the Fathers, but his arguments were refuted by "Crito Cantabrigiensis" (Thomas Turton), 1827, 15-20. Burgess, 1829 replied to the criticisms of "Crito," but there was little more to be said. It is worth noting that Burgess was a staunch enemy of Unitarianism; see Levine, 1999, 233.

⁵⁴ "Crito Cantabrigiensis," 1827, 22, following Porson, points out that when the article is present, as it should be here, either τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα (as given by the Complutensian edition) or τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον (as given by Calecas and Bryennius) would conform more closely to normal biblical usage than τὸ πνεῦμα ἅγιον, the otherwise unattested form given by Montfortianus and Erasmus.

⁵⁵ The reading of the comma in Montfortianus was subjected to grammatical criticism by Porson, Michaelis and Griesbach. A refutation of their arguments was attempted by W. A. Evanson, in the introduction to his translation of Knittel, 1829, xiv-xv. Evanson was effectively refuted by "Clemens Anglicanus" (Thomas Turton), 1829. Amongst his errors, Evanson, 1829, xiv, attempted to show (on the basis of the edition Sedan: Jannon, 1628) that the grammatical aberration in Montfortianus is not unattested, pointing out that the phrase ἐν τῇ γῇ also occurs at Lk 12:51 and Rev 5:13, but Evanson fails to mention that the phrase in Lk 12:51 is following the verb δοῦναι, and was apparently ignorant of the fact that the phrase ἐν τῇ γῇ at Rev 5:13, taken by Erasmus from GA 1 (attested in GA 1 and 2037 only), has been rejected by editors since Bengel in preference to the Majority reading ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. The grammatical construction at Mt 5:35 (cf. also Mt 25:25) is also different from that in the comma, following the command μὴ ὁμόσαι.

may have consulted the Greek translation of the Acts of the Fourth Lateran Council, or perhaps even Bryennius' work.

There are at least two other examples of Latinate readings that could have justified Erasmus' judgment on Montfortianus. At 1 Jn 5:20 Montfortianus has the following reading, which has apparently been adapted to the Vulgate, as Griesbach and Bruns pointed out: ἵνα γινώσκομεν τὸν ἀληθινὸν θεόν [Vulgate: *verum Deum*], καὶ ὧμεν [Vulgate: *et simus*] ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ Υἱῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ.⁵⁷ At the end of 2 Jn 13, the scribe of Montfortianus tacks on the blessing Χάρις μετὰ σοῦ (cf. 1 Tim 6:21), a phrase not found in the same form in *any* other Greek bible, let alone the parent manuscripts. Instead, this reading is apparently an insertion from the phrase *Gratia tecum* found at this point in some Vulgate manuscripts [*Vetus Latina* ΙΛ^HΦ^{T2}]. The same lack was perceived by the scribe of GA 442, who likewise provided a translation of this phrase (ἡ χάρις μετὰ σοῦ [82/3B]) and by the scribes (and correctors) of 383C, 429, 522, 629, 1490, 1758, 1831, 2080 and 2627C (ἡ χάρις μετὰ σοῦ. Ἀμήν [82/4]). These related variants serve to show that the scribes of Montfortianus did not shy away from altering the Greek text they found in their parent manuscripts—but again made the basic error of forgetting to include the article ἡ.

Erasmus' suspicion that Montfortianus had been "adapted" to conform to the Latin Vulgate was thus not simply the result of a scatter-shot suspicion of any manuscript that deviated from the Byzantine text, but had some basis in truth. Of course, ever since Lorenzo Valla had unmasked the *Donation of Constantine*, the ability to detect textual anomalies was a matter of pride for humanists. Erasmus himself cast doubt upon the identity of the author who called himself Dionysius the Areopagite, and diligently separated the wheat of Seneca's real correspondence from the tares of mediaeval pseudepigrapha. But the pruning hook of philological criticism can easily be hammered into the forger's stylus, and not even Erasmus was immune from temptation. At Acts 9:5, the Latin and the Harclean Syriac versions add the following words: "It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And he, trembling and astonished, said, 'Lord, what will you have me to do?' And the Lord said to him [...]." Erasmus wanted to retain the words, swayed by their presence in the Latin, so he simply translated them from the Latin Vulgate, borrowing words where necessary from Acts 22:10 and 26:14. Yet he clearly felt some scruple about this procedure, and duly noted in his

⁵⁷ Griesbach, 1794, 14.

Annotationes that these words were not found in the Greek codices he had consulted (GA 1, 2815, 2816).⁵⁸ He made similar changes to the Greek text to make it conform to the Latin at Mt 14:12 and Mk 1:16.⁵⁹ In one famous instance, Erasmus translated Rev 22:16c-21 from Latin, since both of his Greek manuscripts of Revelation (GA 69^{capr+}, consulted at Cambridge; GA 2814^{rK+} [olim 1^r], consulted at Basel) were defective at the end. In the *Annotationes* to this passage, he indicated clearly how he had arrived at these readings.⁶⁰ (Neither example of such literary sleight of hand roused any comment from Lee, presumably because Erasmus had “corrected” the Greek to make it conform to the Vulgate, just as Lee would have liked.) More problematically, Erasmus included in his fourth edition of Cyprian a work, *De duplici martyrio*, which Erasmus actually seems to have written himself to promote his conviction that the daily martyrdom of the everyday Christian is equal to the more conspicuous self-sacrifice of the traditional martyr.⁶¹ To Erasmus, the idea of “adapting” sacred texts was thus nothing new. He had done it himself.

In summary: the reading of the comma in Montfortianus is clearly translated from the Latin Vulgate, as Erasmus suspected, possibly with reference to the *Acta* of the Lateran Council or Bryennius. Erasmus’ third edition of the Greek New Testament (1522) borrows the comma from Codex Montfortianus intact. In verse 8b, Erasmus included a clause absent from Montfortianus but present in Erasmus’ other Greek manuscripts.⁶² When preparing his 1527

⁵⁸ Erasmus, 1516, 385: “Durum est tibi.) In græcis codicibus id non additur hoc loco, cum mox sequatur surge, sed aliquanto inferius, cum narratur hæc res.” Cf. Bruce, 1988, 182; Heide, 2006, 51-53.

⁵⁹ Elliott, 2009c, 234.

⁶⁰ Erasmus, 1516, 625: “Quanquam in calce huius libri, nonnulla verba repperi apud nostros [*i.e.* in the Latin Vulgate], quæ aberant in Græcis exemplaribus, ea tamen ex Latinis adiecimus.” Erasmus discusses his insertion of this phrase from the Latin in his *Responsio ad annotationes Eduardi Lei*, ASD IX.4:55, 278. See Heide, 2006, 101-111.

⁶¹ Erasmus, 1540, 508-524; in the list of contents (b3v), Erasmus describes the work thus: “Liber unus De duplici martyrio ad Fortunatum, quem in uetustissima bibliotheca repertum adiecimus: utinam liceat & cætera huius uiri salutifera scripta peruestigare.” Further, see *Opus Epist.* 4:24; Seidel Menchi, 1978; Grafton, 1990, 43-45; Kræye, 1990, 44-48; Hallyn, 1999.

⁶² It seems that Erasmus did not employ Montfortianus any further, possibly wary about its reliability after realising that the comma was apparently inserted for his benefit. He even declined to make use of Montfortianus, the first complete manuscript of Revelation to come into his hands, to improve his own translation of the last few verses of that book.

edition, Erasmus adapted his reading of the comma to make it conform even more closely to that found in the Complutensian edition, thus hoping to remove every cause for his critics to accuse him of fomenting Arianism.

6. *John Clement and Codex Montfortianus*

Thus far the story is well known. But two central questions have never been answered adequately: where did Codex Montfortianus come from? And if Erasmus actually inspected Montfortianus in the Low Countries, how did he come to see it? Codex Montfortianus contains several marks attesting to its history, and these permit us to posit a convincing hypothesis to answer both questions.

A few points about the manuscript may be noted here. (Full details are given in Appendix I.) All the parent manuscripts of Montfortianus are now in England; this suggests very strongly that Montfortianus was copied there as well. The presence of three (perhaps four) different hands in Montfortianus indicates that it was written by a team of scribes. The watermarks are similar to those found in paper produced at Genoa in the early sixteenth century. The consistency of the watermarks throughout the codex suggests that it was conceived as a unit and produced in a circumscribed period of time. The presence in Revelation of variant readings taken from Erasmus' 1516 New Testament in the hand of one of the two scribes who copied the text of that book suggests that the Revelation section, if not the whole codex, was written after this time. There is much to suggest that the manuscript was written in some haste: the general roughness of the handwriting; the fact that the codex was written by a team of scribes; the large number of errors; and the lack of gilding, illumination, or real decoration apart from the *kephalaia*, which are sometimes entered in the margins in red. Yet despite a large number of orthographical and grammatical errors, it is also clear that the scribes had some pretensions to philological sophistication, for the readings in the manuscript combine variants drawn from all the parent manuscripts. There is good evidence to believe that at least one of the scribes of the codex was a Franciscan, for twice on 198v, the last page of what was originally the Gospel-volume, is written the inscription *ἰησοῦς μαρία*

φράγκισκος (Jesus, Mary, Francis), a formula often found in Franciscan manuscripts, albeit usually in Latin.⁶³

[IMAGE UNDER COPYRIGHT]

Fig. 2: Inscription in Codex Montfortianus (12v) in the hand of John Clement

On the bottom of 12v is an important ownership mark: *sū thome clemētis olim fratris froyke* (“I belong to Thomas Clement, formerly to Friar Froyke”). This note is in the hand of the royal physician John Clement, who made comparable marks in a number of manuscripts before distributing them to his children.⁶⁴

⁶³ The inscription is noted by Adam Clarke in 1790; Clarke, 1833, 2:254. On 471r (formerly a flyleaf) is written: “Mayster Wyllams of corpus chr[is]ti.” (The words “of corpus chr[is]ti” are in a slightly different ink from the words “Mayster Wyllams”, but by the same hand.) Barrett, 1801, Appendix:3, followed by Harris (1887), 46, suggested that “Mayster Wyllams” was David Williams, a Franciscan at the Oxford house and one of the first members of Corpus Christi College when it was founded in 1517 by bishop Foxe. Further on Williams, see Little, 1892, 278, citing Reg. H. 7, 51v, 58v (inception), 61r, 63r, 64r, 69r, 70v, 72r, 75r, 78r.

⁶⁴ This inscription is in the same hand as Paris, BnF ms gr. 2168, 2r, a book which John Clement originally intended to give to his son Thomas, but later decided to leave to his old college at Oxford (~~Thome vnico filio Ioannes Clemēs donauit~~ [same hand] *Ioānes Clemens Medicus dedit Collegio Corp. Chri. ut orent pro eo et Richardo Paceo, et fidel. defūct. 1563. Octobr. 7*). Another three manuscripts in the Bibliothèque nationale de France bear similar inscriptions in John Clement’s hand: ms gr. 2164, 3r (*Thome Filio, Io. pater donauit*); ms gr. 2165, 1r (*Thome filio Pater suus donauit*); ms gr. 2167, 3r (*Thome Clemēti vnico filio Io. pr donauit*). These inscriptions also reflect the hope of the exiled Catholic family that they and their property might one day return to England. The back flyleaves and paste-down of Paris, BnF ms gr. 2168 contain a number of scribbles which suggest that Clement used these books when teaching Greek to the members of the More household upon his return from Venice. On the back paste-down, Elizabeth More made an inscription in Latin written with Greek letters, which suggests that her lessons did not get very far: Ἐλεσάβετα μωρά Τομέ μορῶ ζαλυτεμ δικιτ. It seems that Elizabeth wanted to write a letter to her father with an address in mock-Greek. It could be the letter (1526?) to which Thomas More refers in a letter to his daughters Margaret, Elizabeth and Cecilia, and to his ward Margaret Giggs, whom Clement would marry in 1526 (repr. in Stapleton, 1588, 234-235): “Quibus vera esse illa perspicio quæ præceptor vester [*i.e.* Clement] amantiſſimus vestri tam amanter scribit de vobis, vt nisi literæ vestræ studium erga literas egregium declararent, videri poſſit amori potius indulsisse quàm veritati.” The flyleaves of the Galen ms also contain inscriptions such as *Diues anus uidua est* and *Nunquam certus amor*. Further, see Wenkebach, 1925, 54; Mercati, 1926, 6; Reed, 1926; Emden, 1974, 121-

Clement, one of the best Greek scholars in England in the first half of the sixteenth century, plays a central role in the early history of Montfortianus. His acquaintance with the Greek language and its literature probably began while he was a student of William Lily at St Paul's school. Clement's skill in Greek developed rapidly after Thomas More took him into his household in about 1514 as a student-ward and tutor to his children. "Surely," Nicholas Harpsfield would later write, "if a man had seen and fully known the order, demeanour and trade of [More's] children, and of this young Clement, and the aforesaid maid that was after his wife [Margaret Giggs], and of his other family, he would have taken great spiritual and ghostly pleasure thereof, and would have thought himself to have been in Plato's Academy—nay, what say I, Plato's? Not in Plato's, but in some Christian well ordered academy and university rather than in any lay man's house. Everybody there so beset himself and his time upon such good and fruitful reading and other virtuous exercises."⁶⁵ In 1515 More took Clement on an embassy to Flanders; by this stage he could note in the preface to *Utopia* that Clement (whom he refers to as *puer meus*, "my valet") was making excellent progress in both Greek and Latin, and enjoyed listening to stimulating conversation.⁶⁶ By 1516 Clement had made such progress that he was in a position to teach Greek to John Colet, the humanist dean of St Paul's. In February and June 1516, Thomas More sent Erasmus greetings from his wife and from Clement, which suggests that Erasmus had met the young man previously, perhaps during the 1515 embassy.⁶⁷ In 1518 Clement was employed by Wolsey,

122; Merriam, 1988; *CE* 1:310-311; Coates, 1999, 142-144; Mayer and Walters, 2008, 137-138. Harris, 1877, 47, did not realise that Thomas Clement was John's son, and wanted to conflate them into one person. On 55-56 he also mentions a fifteenth-century manuscript of scholastic treatises on physics and psychology (Oxford, Magdalene College ms lat. 16), which bears the ownership mark *Thom^as Clemantf* (202r). Henry Austin Wilson, the librarian of Magdalene, suggested to Harris in a letter that he was "not quite sure that Thomas should not be Ihoannes." Wilson's doubts were unfounded: the inscription definitely says Thomas. However, the hand looks like one of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, so (*pace* Harris and Wilson) this book can be removed from association with our Clement family.

⁶⁵ Harpsfield, 1963, 104-105.

⁶⁶ More, 1947, 78-79.

⁶⁷ More to Erasmus (Feb. 1516), *Epist.* 388 (*Opus Epist.* 2:198): "Vxor mea te salutatur, et item Clemens, qui literis et Latinis et Graecis ita proficit indies ut non exiguum de eo spem concipiam." See also More to Erasmus (June 1516), *Epist.* 424 (*Opus Epist.* 2:261). According to Wenkebach, 1925, 5, 42, the "Johannes" whom More planned to send to Pieter Gillis in

who clearly recognised his talent. On 22 April 1518, Erasmus wrote to thank William Gonell for a gift, and asked him to remind Clement, “that young man full of very great promise,” not to study too hard, and certainly not at night: “I would not like this talent to die before time; I would prefer him to remain preserved for learning than be used up by the cardinal’s business.”⁶⁸ The same year, Wolsey appointed Clement as praelector in rhetoric and humanities at Corpus Christi College, Oxford.⁶⁹ Delegates of the university wrote to Wolsey on 9 November 1518 to let him know that the plague that had interrupted classes for some three months had abated and the students were returning, all the more eagerly since Clement had announced his classes.⁷⁰ Soon More could brag in a letter to Erasmus that Clement’s lectures were attended by record crowds. Even the normally severe Linacre praised Clement’s talents.⁷¹ When William Grocyn, a

1516 with a sum of money for Erasmus was John Clement, not More’s brother John, who had no connexion with Gilles, nor More’s son John, who was only eight or nine years old; see Erasmus, *Epist.* 461 (*Opus Epist.* 2:340).

⁶⁸ Erasmus to W. Gonell (22.4.[1518]), *Epist.* 820 (*Opus Epist.* 3:289; *Correspondence* 5:392): “Clementem, summae spei iuuenem, meis verbis admonebis vt ab intempestiuo studio temperet. Memini quam ille sit libro affixus. Presertim vt a nocturna scriptione quoad licet abstineat, et, si forsitan ob Cardinalis negocia cogetur scribere, stans et erectus scribere assuescat. Nolim hoc ingenium ante diem perire, malimque seruari studiis quam Cardinaliciis negociis impendi.” Erasmus’ aversion to studying at night is derived from Ficino, *De vita* I.7, as is clear from his letter to Christian Northoff, *Epist.* 54 (*Opus Epist.* 1:171). Gonell mentioned Clement as a member of More’s household in a letter written to Henry Gold upon More’s return from the embassy; Brewer, 1864, 2.2:1528.

⁶⁹ Fowler, 1893, 88-89, 369, 371; McConica, 1986, 1-68, at 21, 26, 67-68.

⁷⁰ Brewer, 1864, 2.2:1546; Mitchell, 1980, 375. On the difficulties attending the beginning of Clement’s time at Oxford, see Wenkebach, 1925, 7-8.

⁷¹ More to Erasmus (1518?), *Epist.* 907 (*Opus Epist.* 3:463; *Correspondence* 6:215): “Clemens meus Oxonii profitetur auditorio tanto quanto non ante quisquam. Mirum est quam placeat ac deametur vniuersis. Quibus bonae literae propemodum sunt inuisae, tamen illum charum habent, audiunt ac paulatim mitescunt. Linacer, qui neminem, vt scis, temere probat, tamen illius epistolas sic effert atque admiratur vt ego quoque, qui vnice homini faueo, propemodum tamen tam cumulatis laudibus ab illo viro congestis inuideam.” Clement appears (alongside Richard Pace, Cuthbert Tunstall, Thomas More, William Shelly, John Drewe, Roger Drewe, John Chambre, Roger Denton and Francis Poyntz) amongst those involved in the property transactions initiated by Linacre to fund lectureships in medicine at Oxford and Cambridge, although the dates of the legal proceedings (November 1520 to February 1523) mean that Clement must have been included as a party *in absentia*. Perhaps Linacre hoped that Clement would take up one of these lectureships, which were to be based heavily on Galen, after his

pioneer of Greek studies in England, died in 1520, he left Clement a legacy of 40 shillings, a sign of the esteem in which he held the young man.⁷² A letter from More to both Clement and Reginald Pole suggests that Clement was already developing an interest in medicine.⁷³ In early 1520, he left Oxford definitively to study medicine at Leuven.⁷⁴

When he arrived in the Low Countries, Clement already had many connexions to Erasmus' circle.⁷⁵ He studied and boarded in the house of Erasmus' friend Juan Luis Vives in Oppendorp-Gang. (In 1523 Vives would take up Clement's old position at Oxford, though returning to Flanders in 1524 to marry.)⁷⁶ Clement re-established contact with Erasmus, and they got on very well. In September 1521, Erasmus remarked to William Burbank that he felt for Clement something of the affection that he bore for More himself.⁷⁷ When More went to Bruges on an embassy in October 1521, Clement came to visit him, and ended up staying in Bruges until the end of the year, joining the circle of the humanist Frans Cranevelt. An extant letter from Cranevelt invites Clement to join him and More for an afternoon of conviviality.⁷⁸ After More left Bruges, Cranevelt was dejected; but on 2 November 1521 Vives tried to cheer him up by mentioning that in More's absence at least he had the company of his image, Clement.⁷⁹ Later the same month, Vives mentioned in a letter to Cranevelt that

return from the Continent; see Fletcher, 1977, 125-127, 149-155, 190-191, 193.

⁷² Burrows, 1890, 326; Wenkebach, 1925, 11, 51.

⁷³ More, 1947, *Epist.* 71, 137-138, taken from Stapleton, 1588, 60; digest in Pole, 2002, 39.

⁷⁴ More to Erasmus (March/April 1520), *Epist.* 1087 (*Opus Epist.* 4:232; *Correspondence* 7:254).

⁷⁵ Lee's departure from Leuven may be dated to September 1520 by Erasmus' *Epist.* 1139 and 1140 (*Opus Epist.* 4:335-338; *Correspondence* 8:39-44). It is not known whether Clement knew Lee, but it seems likely that he would have known who he was. Herbrüggen, 1997, 12, rightly points out that Erasmus was the common factor between the English circle of humanists (More, Grocyn, Linacre, Colet, Lily) and the Bruges-Leuven circle (Cranevelt, Vives, Jan de Fevij, Marc Lauwerijns, Leonard Clodius). Perhaps it was Erasmus himself who gave Clement entrée into the Leuven circle.

⁷⁶ De Vocht, 1934, 4; De Vocht, 1951-1955, 2:43, 358-359, 404; McConica, 1986, 26; Tournoy *et al.*, 1993, 16.

⁷⁷ Erasmus to Burbank (Leuven, 1.9.[1520]), *Epist.* 1138 (*Opus Epist.* 4:334; *Correspondence* 8:38-39).

⁷⁸ Cranevelt to Clement (before 5.10.1521), in IJsewijn *et al.*, 1995, 54-55.

⁷⁹ Vives to Cranevelt, 2.9.1521, in IJsewijn *et al.*, 1995, 3-4.

he had heard how hard Clement was pursuing his studies in medicine and Greek.⁸⁰ Clement made good use of Cranevelt's library, and borrowed at least two Greek books from him, the *Suda Lexicon* and the letters of Flavius Philostratus.⁸¹ When Clement returned to Leuven in late December 1521 or early January 1522, he discovered from Vives that Erasmus had left for Basel on 28 October. This was a blow, for the young man had wanted to spend the winter with Erasmus.⁸² Instead Clement settled back down to his studies in Leuven and—as Vives colourfully put it—showed up the less gifted members of the “cacademy.”⁸³ But as Easter approached, Clement decided to continue his medical studies in Padua. On the way he stopped in Basel to visit Erasmus and give him letters from More.⁸⁴ In Italy Clement finally found what he had been looking for: a chance to combine his interests in Greek and medicine by joining a group of scholars working on an edition of Galen for the Aldine press, a cadre that included Thomas Lupset and Edward Wotton, his fellow-alumni of Corpus

⁸⁰ Vives to Cranevelt, 13.11.1521, in IJsewijn *et al.*, 1995, 15.

⁸¹ Clement to Cranevelt, late 1521; this letter (Leuven, Universiteitsbibliotheek ms B96/LCB 94, 119r), written towards the end of 1521, is the only surviving writing in Clement's hand, apart from *ex libris* markings; in IJsewijn *et al.*, 1995, 23.

⁸² Vives to Erasmus (Leuven, 19.1.1522), *Epist.* 1256 (*Opus Epist.* 5:11; *Correspondence* 9:17).

⁸³ Vives to Cranevelt (Leuven, 6/9.1.1522), in IJsewijn *et al.*, 1995, 32-33.

⁸⁴ Vives to Erasmus (Bruges, 1.4.1522), *Epist.* 1271 (*Opus Epist.* 5:40; *Correspondence* 9:56). Leonico wrote to Pole on 28.6.1524 that Clement had stayed at his house and had left a copy of More's *Utopia*; see Pole, 2002, 48-49. Clement received his doctorate in arts and medicine from Siena on 30/31 March 1525, though he was studying in Padua at the time, perhaps because the graduation fees were lower at Siena; Erasmus, *Opus Epist.* 4:xxiv; de Vocht, 1928, 425; Woolfson, 1998, 21. Clement is mentioned in two letters sent to Cranevelt in 1525, in de Vocht, 1928, 424-429 (n° 154), 461-463 (n° 169). Clement and Pole are mentioned in an undated letter from Giambattista Opizo to Thomas Starkey, London British Library Cotton Nero B vi, 145r-v. Further, see Woolfson, 1998, 20, 21, 81-86, 112, 114, 137, 148, 222-223 (prosopography); on Thomas Clement, see Woolfson, 1998, 47, 223. London, British Library ms Egerton 2604, 6v, records that Clement was on the payroll of Henry VIII in 1525 though *ultra mare*, receiving £10 for the half-year. In this list Clement's name appears in a group of three, together with “Robert Wakefeld greke reder,” and “Mr Croke greke reder at Cambrige [*sic*],” suggesting that he was being paid in his capacity as a student of Greek rather than as a medical student; cf. Woolfson, 1998, 81 and 149. Evidence of Clement's medical practice is perhaps to be found in London, British Library ms Sloane 3149, 43v, which gives two recipes for clysters by a Dr Clement (probably John), added hastily by a sixteenth-century scribe to a fifteenth-century herbal.

Christi, Anthony Rose of Oriel College, as well as the German Georg Agricola, who would later become famous for his work on mining and metallurgy.⁸⁵ If we want to know how Erasmus could have seen Montfortianus, we need look no further than its owner, the *Wunderkind* John Clement, a member of Erasmus' Leuven circle at precisely the time he was preparing his third edition of the New Testament.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ The Galen manuscripts in Paris (BnF mss gr. 2164-2168), formerly in the possession of Clement, were used in the preparation of the Aldine edition of Galen; see Mewaldt, 1912; Wenkebach, 1925, 9-17, 46-47, 52-53, 57; Wenkebach, 1927-1928; Nutton, 1987, 38-50; Potter, 1998; Gundert, 2006. Caius, 1904, 80, mentions manuscripts which passed between himself and Clement, including a copy of Dionysius Areopagita on permanent loan: "Contulimus etiam Collegio [...] libros quidem magni pretii apud nos, manuscriptos, Dionisium Areopagitam, quem Joannes Clemens medicus habet, ea conditione ut a morte sua mihi aut meo Collegio restituat, Hippocratem, Galenum de medendi methodo, de differentiis febrium, de placitis Hippocratis et Platonis, de usu partium, de causis morborum et symptomatum, Trallianum, Actuarium, commentaria in Homerum, et vetus Testamentum Hebraicum; impressos vero, testamentum vetus et novum græcum, Galeni [81] opera græca, et veterem eorum translationem, libros ut raros ita preciosos, Avicennam, Ælianum, Dictionarium græcum, Nizolium, Budæi commentaria, chiliades Erasmi, Gesnerum de animalibus, Homerum græcum, Wesalium, Catalogum scriptorum illustrium, omnia Caii opera, et alia multa in bibliotheca Collegii omnium usibus cathenis conservanda." Nutton, 1979, 386 n75, indicates that Caius' marginalia in his copy of his own 1544 edition of Galen (now Cambridge, University Library Adv. d. 3, 1) refer to an old codex of Galen which he had acquired from Clement: "nostrum exemplar Ioannis Clementis" (17r); "liber vetus doctiss. Ioannis Clementis qui occasionem dedit emendandi" (234r). Caius' marginalia in his copy of the 1538 Basel Galen edition (now Eton College, Fc 2.6-8) mention a "codex Clementis" a number of times, although it is not certain whether this is a separate manuscript or simply Clement's notes in the margins of his own copy of the Aldine Galen. Vivian Nutton has for example identified Clement as the likely scribe of marginalia in Leiden, ms. Vulc. 57 (once owned by Linacre); see Nutton, 1987, 84-85; Fortuna, 1993, 210. A search at Gonville and Caius College undertaken by Mark Statham on my behalf indicated that none of Clement's books are now held by the College library.

⁸⁶ Erasmus and Clement seem to have fallen out of contact after 1522. This rupture may have been caused by the disparaging comments that Erasmus made about the Aldine Galen edition; see Erasmus' letter to Giambattista Egnatio, *Epist.* 1707, *Opus Epist.* 6:336: "Verti Latine priores aliquot paginas in Galeno. Nihil comperi mendosius. Quæ res animum meum triplici nomine discruciat, et studiosorum, et tanti autoris, denique et ipsius Asulani; qui in hoc male consuluit rei suæ, si famam negligit. Qui præfuit emendationi [*i.e.* Georg Agricola], videtur vix satis tenuisse prima Græci sermonis elementa." Cf. Nutton, 1987, 42, 48.

7. *Frater Froyke*

The “frater Froyke” from whom Clement acquired the manuscript is more shadowy. To begin, there has been a consistent problem with his identity. In his description of the manuscript for the London Polyglot (1657), Brian Walton wrote that Montfortianus was once the property of “brother Froy the Franciscan” (*fratris Froy Franciscani*).⁸⁷ Barrett (1801) got a little closer with the orthography “Froyhe,” the form under which the one-time owner of this codex has generally been known ever since.⁸⁸ On the basis of Barrett’s orthography, James Rendel Harris suggested (1887) that “frater Froyhe” was actually William Roye, a member of the Observant Franciscan house in Greenwich with reported links to the house in Cambridge, a man who would later earn notoriety as assistant to William Tyndale and author of a number of religious satires and translations of Protestant literature.⁸⁹ This plausible hypothesis has been widely accepted.⁹⁰

However, important evidence has appeared recently to cast doubt on this identification. A re-examination of the codex revealed that the name of the friar in John Clement’s inscription is actually “Froyke,” not “Froyhe.”⁹¹ Moreover, on 27 June 2005, Sotheby’s of Milan auctioned a copy of the Aldine edition of Theodore of Gaza’s Greek grammar (1495), which bore an *ex libris* marking on the recto of the second page: *Wenefridæ Clementis olim fratris Frowici observantis*

⁸⁷ Walton, 1657, 6:1 (in section *Variantes lectiones Græcæ Novi Testamenti*): “Novum Testamentum quod olim fuit fratris Froy Franciscani, postea Thomæ Clementis, deinde Guilielmi Clerk [*sic*], & nuper Thomæ Montfortii, S. T. D. Cantabrig. In Evangeliiis habet utraque κεφάλαια tum ordinaria tum Eusebiana cum στίχων numero.” This description was taken over by Hottinger, 1664, 129; and Mills, 1707, CXLVIII.

⁸⁸ Barrett, 1801, Appendix:2.

⁸⁹ Harris, 1887, 46-53. Roye is named in Cooper and Cooper, 1858, 44; and Emden, 1974, 568. Gregory, 1900-1909, 1:143, misquoting Harris, calls him “Francis Froy” through a fortuitous error, but places him at the beginning of the fifteenth century. (Incidentally, even Gregory, 1907, 509, refers to “Erasmus’ fatal promise to insert the verse if it should be found in a Greek manuscript”; *quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus*.)

⁹⁰ Scrivener, 1894, 200; Nestle, 1901, 86; Bludau, 1902b, 173; ASD IX.2:259; Coogan, 1992, 101; Metzger and Ehrman, 2005, 146.

⁹¹ John Clement invariably wrote his lower-case *h* with an incurving arch (as in “thome”), while the *k* in “froyke” has a distinctly different tail.

(“Property of Winifrid Clement, formerly of brother Frowick the Observant”).⁹² Like all her siblings, Winifred Clement (1527-1553) had received instruction in Greek from her father John, probably using this copy of Theodore’s grammar.⁹³ Indeed, her epitaph, erected in the church of St Peter in Leuven, describes her as “knowledgable in the Latin language, and quite outstanding in Greek.”⁹⁴ Amongst the other extant books from John Clement’s library is an eleventh-century Greek manuscript of Josephus, which he likewise gave to his first-born daughter Winifred.⁹⁵ Given the similarity with the inscription in Montfortianus, there can be little doubt that “frater Frowicus” is the same man as “frater Froyke.”

⁹² Sotheby’s, 2005, 80. Judging from the inscriptions and stamps as reported in the sale catalogue, the provenance of the book is as follows: Clement—unknown—Jesuit library in Brussels (1643)— Louise Françoise de La Baume Le Blanc de La Vallière—George John Earl Spencer—John Rylands Library, Manchester—present owner.

⁹³ This was also the Greek textbook specified by bishop Foxe in the statutes for Corpus Christi College, and will thus have been used by Clement during his brief period teaching there; Fowler, 1893, 38. On the education of John Clement’s children, see Sanderus, cit. Bang, 1907, 246: “Cui cum Deus filium quidem vnicum *Thomam Clementem*, virum grauem et doctum, filias vero quatuor donasset: omnes tum Græce Latineque docuit, tum ex hæretica et schismatica Insula exduxit, duas vero ex filiabus Christo apud Louanium despondit, quarum altera *Dorothea* apud Sanctam Claram sanctissime viuit: altera vero *Margareta* apud Sanctam Vrsulam, sororibus fere octoginta, senioribus iunior, Germanis Angla, ex earundem spontanea electione, insigni cum laude præest.” By contrast, the will of William Rastell, made at Antwerp in 1564, transcr. Bang, 1907, 239, names John’s children Thomas, Helena and Bridget as beneficiaries of jewelry.

⁹⁴ Transcr. in Bang, 1907, 248: “[...] Latinæ linguæ non imperita, Græcam verò eximiè callens [...]].”

⁹⁵ Josephus, *De bello Iudaico* IX-XIV, Leiden, Universiteits-Bibliotheek ms Bibl. Publ. gr. 16 J, 1r: ~~*Liber Wenefridæ Clementis ex dono episcopi Stockley*~~. On 7 October 1563 John Clement made another inscription in this book, bequeathing it to New College Oxford (*Ioannes Clemens medicus dedit Novo collegio Oxo[n]ij. ut orent pro anima eius et animabus fidelium defunctorum. A.º D. 1563, octobr. 7*); see Omont, 1887, 188; de Meyier, 1965, 23-24. The suggestion made by Mercati, 1926, 6, and Coates, 1999, 142, that Stockley gave the book to Winifred directly seems hard to believe, since Stockley died in 1539, when Winifred was only eleven or twelve years old. It seems more likely that Stockley gave the book to John Clement, and that he passed it on to Winifred when she was old enough to appreciate it, the book returning to him when she died. Likewise, John Longland (see below) seems to suggest that Frowick died before Winifred Clement was born, so he could not have given Theodore’s Greek grammar directly to her; it too must have passed by way of John Clement.

Francis Frowick (also documented as Frowik, Frowyc, Frwick, Frowicus, Froickus, Frowycus) is recorded as minister provincial of the Observant Franciscans in England in 1517, the year he preached the Lenten sermons at court.⁹⁶ In 1517 he also attended the historic general meeting of the order at Rome, and returned with a letter from Leo X to Henry VIII with instructions about the procedure for future elections of ministers general.⁹⁷ In late August 1517, on his way back from Rome, Frowick stopped in Leuven to visit Erasmus and to share news of the Greek editions recently produced by Aldus, as Erasmus reported with excitement in a letter to Cuthbert Tunstall: Strabo's *De situ orbis* (November 1516), Pindar with scholia (January 1513), as well as Gregory of Nazianzus' *Orationes lectissimæ XVI* (April 1516), which Frowick proudly showed off to Erasmus. Frowick also brought news of Greek editions still under the press when he had left Italy: the Old and New Testaments in Greek—which would be published by Aldus and Asulanus in February 1518 with a dedication to

⁹⁶ Longland, c. 1527, M1r: "[...] undecim plus minus abhinc annis ab inuictissimo rege nostro Christianissimoque Fidei defensore Henrico huius nominis octauo (Coletio Froickoque iam ante relatis in numerum sanctorum patrum) designatus sum ut coram sua maiestate, aulæque sue splendidissima corona, contiones haberem singulis quadragenarij ieiunij sextis ferijs." This letter is dated "Anno Do. M.D.XVII." but this is clearly a mistake for 1527; Longland calls himself bishop of Lincoln, a post to which he was appointed in 1521; and calls Henry "Defender of the Faith," a title the king was given in 1521. Moreover, he describes Colet and Frowick as having died already by this time, but Colet died in 1519, and Frowick visited Erasmus in 1517. See also Lupton, 1909, 91.

⁹⁷ Leo X to Henry VIII, Rome, 16 June 1517, Kew, National Archives SP 1/15, 177r (in the hand of Bembo): "Carissime in Christo fili noster, Salutem et apostolicam benedictionem. Redeunti in regnum istud dilecto filio Francisco Frowyc ordinis minorum de obseruantia professorj prouinciæ istius Angliæ prouintialj viro, vt uisum nobis est, et modesto et prudenti, commisimus; vt nonnulla cum Maiestate tua nomine nostro communicet. Quare hortamur eam in Domino, vt hominj in ijs, quæ ex parte nostra exponet, fidem adhibere velit. Datum Romæ apud sanctum Petrum sub Annulo piscatoris Die xvj. Junij M. D. xvij. Pontificatus Nostri Anno Quinto. [Scripsit] Bembo." English digest in Brewer, 2:1077, N° 3370. Silvestro de' Gigli, bishop of Worcester, to Henry VIII, Rome, 17 June 1517 (Kew, National Archives SP 1/15, 180r-v), briefly reported the outcome of the decisions at the Rome meeting of the Franciscan order, mentioning that "Reuerendus Pater Religiosus et Modestissimus vir frater Franciscus Frwick [sic] istius Inclitissimæ Prouinciæ Anglicæ Prouincialis" would give a fuller explanation upon his return. English digest in Brewer, 2:1078, N° 3374.

Erasmus himself—and Plutarch’s *Lives*, published at Florence on 27 August 1517 by Giunta.⁹⁸

Frowick’s evident knowledge of Greek makes him a clear suspect in the production of Montfortianus. Although Frowick was evidently on good terms with Erasmus in 1517, his attitude may have changed as Standish sowed seeds of opposition within the order. Frowick may also have been swayed by Erasmus’ dispute with Lee, who maintained close ties with the monastic orders; in late February 1520, Erasmus complained in a letter to Capito that Lee wanted to appear “like a good little religious, so he hangs around in the houses of Carthusians and Franciscans, and other monks of the approved religion.”⁹⁹

If Frowick was involved in the production of Montfortianus, he was certainly not alone; the handwriting shows that it was produced by a team of three or four scribes. It is clear from the blunders Standish made during his attempted denunciation of Erasmus before the royal court that he had no expertise in Greek whatsoever. Lee could have carried out the task, but he did not return to England until September 1520, after Clement had reached Leuven. There was at least one other competent Greek scholar amongst the Franciscans in England: Richard Brinkley (BTh 1489 Cantab., DTh 1492 Cantab., DD 1524 Oxon., † 1526), who lived in the Cambridge house from 1489 at the latest, and

⁹⁸ Erasmus, *Epist.* 642, in *Opus Epist.* 3:63-64, dated 30 August [1517]: “S. D., eruditissime Tunstalle. Aceruum voluptatum his litteris tibi adfero: quem nobis optimus ille Frowicus Roma reuersus offudit. Asulanus vtrunque Testamentum excudit Græce, Opera Nazianzeni nobis ostendit. Excusus est Strabo Græcus, Vitæ Plutarchi, Pindarus cum commentariis, aliaque permulta quæ in præsentia non succurrunt.” *Correspondence* 5:91, mistranslates the present tense *excudit* as perfect: “Asulanus has printed both Old and New Testaments in Greek.” However, the printing was not complete until the following February. Erasmus was clearly aware that the edition was still being printed, as is evident from his *Epist.* 643 (*Opus Epist.* 3:65), dated 31 August [1517], in which he repeats the same news to Tunstall; Allen suggested in his notes that Erasmus probably sent this letter with a different courier: “Frater Frowycus Roma reuersus ostendit opera quædam Gregorii Nasianzeni nuper excusa. Addidit vtrunque Testamentum ex Aldina officina proditum, Strabonem Græcum prodisse, ad hæc [Vitas] Plutarchi, Pindarum vna cum commentariis, aliaque complura.”

⁹⁹ Erasmus to W. Capito, late Feb. 1520, *Epist.* 1074 (*Opus Epist.* 4:198, *Correspondence* 7:216): “Vult videri theologus, vult videri trium linguarum peritus, vult videri religiosulus, et ob id versatur apud Cartusienses, apud Minoritas, apud alios probate religionis monachos.” See also Rummel in ASD IX.4:9-10.

served as Conventual minister provincial of England from 1518 to 1526.¹⁰⁰ (Brinkley's election in 1518 may suggest that Frowick had retired or even died, for we have no record of him after this time.) Brinkley's involvement in the production of Montfortianus was already suggested by A. G. Little (1943), and this seems a plausible suspicion.¹⁰¹ Harris (1887) suggested that the Leicester Codex, one of the parent manuscripts used to copy Montfortianus, was kept at the Franciscan house at Cambridge in the early sixteenth century, where it was inspected by Erasmus, and where it was also accessible to Brinkley, if not owned by him.¹⁰²

Whether John Clement had anything to do with the production of Montfortianus is difficult to decide. The short samples of his Greek hand in the letter to Craneveld, with its distinctive lower-case δ , seem not to match any of the scribal hands in Montfortianus. It would also be strange for him to pretend to his son that he had acquired the book from Frowick if this was not the case. However, there is evidence that Clement was not above some degree of deviousness. Both John and Thomas Clement were at one point sued for fraudulently effecting a recovery to "their secret unlauffull berer and maytayner," Winifred Clement's husband William Rastell.¹⁰³ At another stage John was involved in another scandal. In 1560, John Jewel, Anglican bishop of Salisbury, mentioned in a letter to Henry Cole that Clement had mutilated a manuscript of the Greek Father Theodoret, who maintained that the substance of the bread and the wine remains in the eucharist (*Eranistes*, *Dialogue* 2), a position quite different from that later promulgated as dogma in the Roman Catholic church.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Bateson, 1903, 1:4, 21, 46, 48, 49; Moorman, 1952, 155-156; Emden, 1963, 103. Moorman suggests that Brinkley may have served as minister provincial of both the Conventuals and the Observants, in which case he will have been Frowick's successor.

¹⁰¹ Little, 1943, 141-142.

¹⁰² The potential links between Erasmus and Brinkley are numerous. For example, from 1512 Brinkley acted as "president" (that is, chaplain and confessor) to the Minoresses at Denny (Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire); Erasmus is thought to have had contact with this community through his student Thomas Grey, two of whose sisters were members. The document recording Brinkley's appointment at Denny is at Ely; a copy is in London, British Library Add. ms 5847, 186. See Bourdillon, 57-58; CW 69:186-187.

¹⁰³ Ives, 1983, 316, citing Kew, National Archives C1/946/40. I follow Ives' formulation.

¹⁰⁴ Jewel, 1560, 12r: "Ye knowe, that the olde father Theodoretus, had more then sixe lynnes of our syde, and therfore D. Clement tare the whole place out of his boke, and burnte it, thinking there had ben no more copies, least perhappes it should come to lyght." Cf. Graves, 1912-1913,

Jewel repeated this accusation in his *Apologia ecclesiae Anglicanae* (1562) to illustrate his argument that Roman Catholics habitually ignored or even falsified sacred writings to fit their own beliefs:

But in case their Religion bee so auncient and so olde, as they woulde haue it to appere, wherefore doe they not proue it oute of the examples of the primitiue Church, out of the auncient fathers, out of the olde Councils? [...] But if they haue in deede such truste in Antiquitie, wythout any maner of counterfeiting: why did Iohn Clement a Countrie man of oures, not many yeares paste, in the syght of certaine honest men and men of good credit, teare and cast into the fyer certaine leaues, out of a most auncient Father and a Greeke Bysshop called Theodoret, in the which he dyd euidently and expressely teache, that in the Sacrament the nature of bread was not taken away? And that at such tyme as he thought no other example coulde be founde in anye place [?] [...] Why did thei now of late, in y^e printing of y^t auncient father Origene vpon y^e Gospel of Iohn, leaue out y^e whole sixt chapter, wherin it is very credible or rather certain, y^t he taught many things touching the Sacrament contrary to their doctrin: & so had rather set forth y^e boke in maner maimed, then being perfect it shold reprove their errors? Is this to trust to antiquiti, to teare, to suppress, to mangle, to burne the bookes of the auncient fathers? It is a worlde to beholde, how wel these men doe agree in Religion with those fathers, of whom they are wont to bragge to be on their side.¹⁰⁵

562-563. Cf. Theodoret, *Eranistes, Dialogue 2*, in Theodoret, 1975, 152, lines 13-16: “οὐδὲ γὰρ μετὰ τὸν ἀγιασμὸν τὰ μυστικὰ σύμβολα τῆς οἰκείας ἐξίσταται φύσεως. μένει γὰρ ἐπὶ τῆς προτέρας οὐσίας καὶ τοῦ σχήματος καὶ τοῦ εἶδους καὶ ὁρατὰ ἐστὶ καὶ ἀπτά, οἷα καὶ πρότερον ἦν.” Further on Theodoret, see Kilmartin, 2004, 38-39. Further on Jewel and the reaction to his work, see Jenkins, 2006.

¹⁰⁵ Jewel, 1562b, 41v-42v. The original Latin is in Jewel, 1562a, E4v-5r: “Istorum uerò religio, si ita antiqua & uetus est, uti eam ipsi uideri uolunt, cur eam ab exemplis primitiuæ Ecclesiæ, ex antiquis Patribus & Concilijs ueteribus non probant? [...] Quodsi illi ita prorsus fidunt uetustati, & nihil simulant, cur ante non ita multos annos, Ioannes Clement [*sic*], Anglus, aliquot folia uetustissimi Patris & Græci Episcopi Theodreti, in quibus ille perspicuè ac luculenter docebat, naturam Panis in Eucharistia non aboleri, cum putaret nullum aliud exemplar posse uspiam inueniri, inspectantibus aliquot bonis uiris, & fide dignis, lacerauit & abiecit in focum? [...] Cur nuper cum excuderent, ueterem Patrem Origenem in Euangelium Iohannis, sextum illud caput, ubi illum credibile, uel potius certum est, contra ipsos de Eucharistia multa tradidisse, integrum omiserunt: & librum mutilum potius quam integrum,

The very specificity of Jewel's accusation—the fact that he names both the author and the offending passage—gives it the ring of truth. But such an accusation against a man unable to defend himself in person—Clement was at this time back in Leuven—was taken badly. When questioned by other members of the English exile community in Leuven, Clement denied Jewel's accusation outright. In consequence, three fellow-exiles sprang to his defence in print. Thomas Dorman reported that Clement had denied the accusations, and suggested that Clement's character and learning gave credence to his denial.¹⁰⁶ Thomas Harding, former professor of Hebrew at Oxford, now serving as priest at the church of St Gertrude in Leuven, pointed out that Clement's love for the Greek language precluded him from suspicion of such vandalism. He also pointed out that Clement denied every having owned a manuscript of the work in question. Finally, he challenged Jewel to name those who were said to have witnessed this deed.¹⁰⁷ The third of Clement's defenders, John Rastell, had

qui errores suos coargueret, dare maluerunt? An hoc est antiquitati confidere, antiquorum Patrum scripta lacerare, suppressere, truncare, comburere? Operæprecium est uidere, quam pulchrè isti cum [E5r] illis Patribus, quos iactare solent esse suos, de religione conueniant." Cf. Mocket, 1617, 40-41.

¹⁰⁶ Dorman, 1564, 135r: "Of that reuerende olde man, and greate learned clerke M. Doctour Clement, whome in youre Apologye yow haue also to the worlde moste shamefully sclaundred, what shall I heare speake? seing that he religiously denieth that fact, which yow barely without proufes, without witnesses, laye to his charge. Which deniall of his I doubte not, shall emongest the better sorte be taken, to be of [...] greate force against youre false and vntrue reporte [...]."

¹⁰⁷ Harding, 1565, 231v-232r: "Maister doctor Clementes honestie, lerning, and vertue is so great, and yours so small, his grauitie so much commended, your lightnes so much misliked, his truth so well approued, your common lying so well espied: that whether you syr Defender, or any of your fellowes, praise him, or backebite him, his estimation thereby is neither aduanced nor abased. More credite is to be geuen to a becke of his countenance, then to all your brabbling vttered in booke or pulpit. Tou- [232r] ching the matter you haue deuised vpon him, he doth not only denye in word, that euer he burnt or otherwise destroyed any leafe of Theodoritus, but also declareth by the whole order of his life, and by special regard and loue he beareth to the tongue which that lerned bishop wrote in, that he hath euer ben and yet is farre from the will to burne or destroye any scrappe, syllable, or letter of greke, much more certaine leaues of the learned father Theodoritus, where any such thing was written, as you imagine. Naye will ye haue the trouth? In very dede he sayeth, and by such waye as a godly and graue man may auouch a trouth, protesteth, that he neuer had hitherto any part of that booke neither in greke or in latine in written hand. As for a printed booke, by tearing and burning the leaues thereof,

clearly read Harding's refutation, and sharpened the point of Harding's challenge: it was not sufficient for Rastell to know the identities of those who had allegedly witnessed this act of textual vandalism; these witnesses ought also to have seen what was written on the papers burned, and to have had a perfect knowledge of Clement's reasons if their testimony was to be given any kind of credence.¹⁰⁸ The uniformity of these responses almost certainly suggests a degree of collusion. Jewel himself was certainly not convinced by these denials of Clement's culpability, and in a published defence of his original work, he responded directly to the challenges thrown down by the Leuven exiles:

This reporte was made in the presence, and hearinge of M. *Peter Martyr*, and sundrie other learned menne, of whom certaine are yet aliue. The reporter was both a Learned man, and a graue Father, & not longe sithence a *Bishop* in *Englande*: who saide, he was presente, and sawe the thinge donne with his eies.¹⁰⁹

And so the matter might have stood, accusation and denial, without much to decide between them. However, the inventory of Clement's books, drawn up in

he could not haue satisfied the purpose, which by your report he went about, the copies being in great number multiplied. And where as you say the thing was done in presence of certaine honest men and of good credite, for maintenance of your credite, and proufe that you be not a shameless deuyser of lyes, by this write peremptorely we require you, to name them, and bring them forth in your defence, that will saye they were present when it was done. If you do not, you shall declare to the world, how litle truth is in you. This is an euident marke by which false teachers may be espied. Who so euer vnderstandeth this to be an open slander, you ought to pardon him, if he beleue the summe of your doctrine accordingly."

¹⁰⁸ Rastell, 1567, 110r-v: "Ye haue done well so particularlie to set furth this mater, declaring by manie circumstances, that Doctour Clement shoulde Teare, and Caste into the fier, certaine leaues, of such an Author, of such a mater, before men of good credite, and for suche a purpose and hope, as you specifie. And now, as though the mater needed no further prooffe, we aske, *why Iohn Clement a Countrieman of yours dyd so?* But I will tel you firste, why he dyd not so. For, as him selfe hath answered me and other asking this verie question of him, that you appose vs withall, he neuer had anie parte of that booke in Greeke or in Latine in written hande: And therefore could not wel burne that which he neuer had. Nowe, if the honest men that you speke of, did not only se him cast certaine leaues into the fier, but did reade also, the contentes of those leaues before they were cast into the fier, and vnderstoode vpon what intent D. Clement dyd it &c. name them that they maie be knowen for theyr honestie." This John Rastell is not to be confused with the homonymous printer, the father of Winifred Clement's husband William Rastell.

¹⁰⁹ Jewel, 1567, 497.

1549, shows that he actually did possess two manuscripts of Theodoret's writings.¹¹⁰ Again, this evidence is not conclusive; but Clement's apparent equivocation seems to lend at least some weight to Jewel's accusation that Clement had interfered with documents to make them conform to doctrine.

Let us suggest a scenario then for the production and transfer of Montfortianus. Francis Frowick, like Standish and Lee, was concerned that Erasmus' philological work, by departing from the Latin Vulgate, was endangering important doctrines, especially the Trinity. He therefore engaged a team of scribes competent in Greek (perhaps including Richard Brinkley) to copy a complete New Testament manuscript containing the comma. The scribe copying the Epistles deliberately departed from his parent text (GA 326) by inserting a translation of the comma from Latin. In order to help with the phrasing, he may have consulted the Greek translation of the *Acta* of the Lateran Council of 1215, the first documented occurrence of the comma in Greek. Frowick, aware that Clement was about to depart Oxford for Leuven, passed the manuscript off to the young man, drawing his attention to the presence of the comma to make sure that the significance of the manuscript could not be missed. Clement showed the manuscript to Erasmus, who found in it not so much evidence for the authenticity of the comma as a convenient means to silence his critics, to save face and avoid further charges of heresy, difficulties that would compromise the reception of his New Testament and the spread of his *philosophia Christi*. Erasmus' vagueness about the source of the British codex and its location may have been intended to protect Clement—and by implication Clement's patrons Thomas More, Wolsey and Henry VIII—from embarrassment. This scenario can only remain conjecture, but it makes good sense of all the available evidence.

However it was that Clement came to acquire Montfortianus, he had lost the book by 1560, as a direct result of the religious and social troubles that followed in the wake of the Henrician Reformation. Nicholas Harpsfield indicates how Clement made himself unpopular at court with his reaction to the King's Great Matter:

¹¹⁰ Kew, National Archives, reference n° C1/1418: "Theodoretus de providentia bis." It seems strange that Clement should have had two manuscripts of the same treatise by Theodoret; the second volume likely contained other writings by the Father.

What a pitiful hearing and sight was it when the Bishops could not freely do their pastoral duty in reforming the notable dissolute vicious living of the people and the errors and heresies that daily sprang more and more; of the lack of which reformation it chanced that the virtuous learned physician Dr. Clement complained to Dr. Stokesley, Bishop of London, to whom he made this answer—*Vendidimus primogenita*, We have sold the right of our primogeniture, meaning of the renouncing of the obedience of the See Apostolic. This Stokesley was one of the great favourers of the divorce.¹¹¹

In 1534, when Clement's father-in-law More was imprisoned in the Tower for refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy, Clement was imprisoned in the Fleet Prison.¹¹² Powerful friends interceded on his behalf, but on 11 October 1534, John Dudley wrote to Thomas Cromwell: "[A]s towchyng maistr Clements matt'r I beseche your maistership not to gyue to much credens to some great men who peraventure wyll be intercessours of the matter and to make the beste of it for Mr Clement / by cause peraventure they theym selves be the greatest berers of it / as by that tyme I have shewed you how whotly the sendyng of Mr Clement to the flete was taken, by some that may chawnce you thynke to be your frende / you wyll not a litle marvayle."¹¹³ When More was executed, it was Clement's wife Margaret who attended to his body.¹¹⁴ Clement had better luck than More, and was released from his imprisonment. When Edward VI came to the throne, John Clement fled to the Low Countries like many other Catholics. His wife Margaret stayed behind long enough to make an inventory of their property—which comprised not only their house, "The Old Barge," inherited from More, but also

¹¹¹ Harpsfield, 1878, 296.

¹¹² Stapleton, 1588, 348, makes it clear that Clement's offence, like More's, was his refusal to take the Oath: "Viri ad vnum omnes, Ioannes Morus, Ioannes Clemens, Guilielmus Roperus, Ægidius Heron, Ioannes Dancæaus ob iusiurandum reiectum in carceres coniecti sunt. Cæterum omnes tandem, alius alio serius aut citius, magnorum virorum studio dimissi sunt." On 25 March 1535, less than a month before his death, More entrusted his land at Chelsea to ten trustees: John Clement; Henry Say, Walter Marshe, John Heywood, Richard Heywood, William Rastell, John Marshe, John Watson, Thomas Sharpe, Richard Symkys and their successors. The deed is now in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Charters Middlesex 90/London Ch. misc. a. 2; see Trapp and Herbrüggen, 1977, 122-123, n° 236.

¹¹³ Kew, National Archives, reference n° SP 1/86, 75, cit. Merriam, 1988, 146; cf. Brewer *et al.* (1862-1908), 7:483, n° 1251.

¹¹⁴ Stapleton, 1588, 346-347.

their valuable library—just before it was seized on 7 February 1550. Once Mary was on the throne, the Catholic exiles returned, changing places with Protestants. In September 1553, Clement petitioned for the return of his property; the inventory of his library was quoted in full in the petition. Amongst the Greek books listed is a manuscript of the New Testament (*Testamentum novum scriptum*), most likely Montfortianus.¹¹⁵ The *ex libris* marking in Montfortianus indicates that Clement gave the book to his son Thomas, or at least intended to do so, perhaps as a legacy. Unless Thomas' books were included in the inventory of his father's library in 1550, this gift must have been made between 1553 and the autumn of 1560, when John Clement returned to exile in Leuven and Antwerp following the accession of Elizabeth.¹¹⁶ Clement took some of his property with him, including some of his books. On 21 January 1561 Clement, in need of ready cash, sold one hundred pounds of parchment books (*cent livres pesant de parchemin*) to Christophe Plantin.¹¹⁷ In 1565 he sold Plantin another lot

¹¹⁵ Kew, National Archives, reference n^o C1/1418; an incomplete transcription is given in Reed, 1926, 338; also amongst the Latin books was Erasmus' *Annotationes*, listed as *Erasmi in novum testamentum*; see also Guilday, 1914; Mercati, 1926, 13 n1; de Vocht, 1928, 426. The seizure of the Clements' property is recorded by Wriothesley, 1875-1878, 2:34: 'This daye allso the houses of Anthony Bonvise, Doctor Clement, phisition, Balthasar, surgeon, and Rastall, which maryed Doctor Clementes daughter, were seassed [*sc. seized*] by the sheriffes of London to the Kinges use because they had fled the realme and conveyed theyr cheife substance and goodes out of the realme, which persons were ranke Papistes.' Cf. Bang, 1907, 247-248.

¹¹⁶ Amongst the "fugitives over the seas, contrary to the statut of A^o. 13 E. Re^e" certified into the exchequer some time before 1576 were: "Thomas Clement, Gent., Margaret Clement, Widdowe., John Clement, D. of Phisike." See Collier, 1840, 64. The sixteenth-century English herbalist William Turner praised Clement's medical knowledge, despite the fact that he was in exile; Turner, 1551, A2v: "There haue bene in England, and there are now also certain learned men: whych haue as much knowledge in herbes, yea, and more than diuerse Italianes and Germanes, whyche haue set furth in prynte Herballes and bokes of simples. I mean of Doctor [John] Clement, Doctor [Thomas] Wendy and Doctor [George] Owen, Doctor [Edward] Wotton, & maister Falconer. Yet hath non of al these, set furth any thyng, ether to the generall profit of hole Christendome in latin, & to the honor of thys realme, nether in Englysh to the proper profit of their natural contre [...]." Cf. Knight, 2009, 44.

¹¹⁷ Mercati, 1926, 14; Merriam, 1988, 147, writes that Clement did not recover his library from Sir William Cecil, but the fact that Clement evidently had a large number of books during his second exile suggests that he recovered at least some of them.

of books, for which he received 27 gulden and 20 stuivers.¹¹⁸ This must have been a wrench for Clement, who (as Jacques de Pamèle tells us) considered his books as his treasure, and kept them at home locked up in a chest.¹¹⁹ Besides selling books to Plantin, Clement also lent him valuable codices. In 1568, he lent Plantin a manuscript of the Greek Octateuch which he had inherited from More (now Glasgow, University Library ms Gen. 322) for the preparation of the Antwerp Polyglot.¹²⁰ He also lent Plantin a Hebrew Psalter, which he believed to have belonged once to Augustine of Canterbury (now Leiden, ms Hebr. Scal. 8).¹²¹ However, Plantin never used or mentioned Montfortianus, suggesting that John Clement had already given it to his son Thomas before leaving England again in 1560. And the fact that the next owner of the codex lived in England suggests that Thomas Clement disposed of the book before he and the rest of his family joined

¹¹⁸ Antwerp, Archive of the Plantin-Moretus Museum, register XXVII, 29r, cit. Verheyden, 1906, 120. Amongst the books sold in 1565 was *Epistolæ diversorum philosophorum* (Venice: Aldus, 1499), now Museum Plantin-Moretus, R 51; on the first flyleaf is written: “N. 1. 1565. 29^o octobris D. Clemēs vendidit C. Plātino.”

¹¹⁹ Tertullianus, 1584, 8, cit. Carley and Petitmengin, 2003, 219: “Nec parum ad hanc rem contulerunt MS. libri Monasteriorum S. Amandi ac Bauonis, & Anglicus quidam, quem thesauri loco penes se adseruabat quondam Ioan. Clemens Anglus.”

¹²⁰ Plantin to Cardinal de Granvelle, Antwerp, 29.1.1568, in Plantin, 1883, 1:227: “Ce jourdhuy aussi, Mons^r le docteur Clemens, anglois, jadis médecin de feu de bonne mémoire la très catholique reine d’Angleterre, m’a rescrit de Berghes, où il se tient en volontaire exil, ainsi que plusieurs autres bons et catoliques personnages Anglois, et envoyé ung catalogue de quelques livres rares en grec, entre lesquels il dict avoir une partie de la Bible grecque jusques aux livres des Roix, qui est très ancienne et beaucoup différente de celles qui sont imprimées. Je tascheray de l’avoir, pour la faire conférer à celles que j’ay tant de Complute que de Aldus Manutius Romanus et Basle.” See also Montano’s preface to the Antwerp Polyglot, dated X. Cal. Sextiles [23 July] 1571; Montano, 1569-1572, 1:***2v: “Est etiam nobis à CLEMENTE ANGLO, Philosophiæ, & Medicinæ Doctore, qui in hisce regionibus propter Christianam religionem exulat, exhibitum Pentateuchi Græci, ex Thomæ Mori Bibliotheca, elegantissimum exemplar.” The Glasgow Pentateuch has an inscription on the top of the first page, cit. Harris, 1887, 55: *Ioannes Clemens medicus dedit Collegio Corpō. Chrī. Oxōn ut oret pro fidelibus defunctis, A^o. D. 1563 Octobr. 7*. Clement’s intended bequest was clearly never fulfilled. More also gave Thomas Clement his copy of Euclid’s *Elements* (Basel: Herwagen, 1533), presented to More by its editor Simon Grynaeus. It is now in Oxford, Bodleian Library Byw. C. 3. 3; see Trapp and Herbrüggen, 1977, 52, n^o 78.

¹²¹ Mercati, 1926, 7-8. I am grateful to Henk Jan de Jonge for inspecting this manuscript for me. See also Lieftinck, 1955.

John in the Low Countries in May 1561.¹²² This supposition is strengthened by the fact that Thomas did not list Montfortianus in the catalogue of his Greek manuscripts made out for Cardinal Guglielmo Sirleto in about 1573, following John's death in Mechelen the year before.¹²³

The next known owner of the Montfortianus, William Chark (+ 1617), was one of the most active Presbyterian controversialists of Elizabeth's reign.¹²⁴ The continued presence of Montfortianus in England is good reason to suppose that Clement had already disposed of it by the time he fled from England in 1560. In this same year, 1560, Chark matriculated at Peterhouse, graduating as BA in

¹²² This is the most likely course of events, for a number of Thomas Clement's books, including his manuscripts, were lost when the Spanish sacked Mechelen in 1572. Some of these books were subsequently recovered, but most were lost again when the city was sacked for a second time by the Orangists in April 1580. Some were recovered yet again by Thomas' son Caesar (ordained priest at Rome in about 1578, and subsequently vicar general of the Spanish army). If Montfortianus did remain on the Continent after the repeated sackings of Mechelen, it may have been purchased when Chark was being considered as minister to the English Presbyterian merchants in Antwerp in 1578, although it is admittedly unknown whether he ever actually visited the Low Countries during the course of this decision. See Collinson, 1967, 233-234. Richard L. Greaves, art. "Charke, William" in *DNB*, mistakenly places this episode in 1572.

¹²³ Mercati, 1926, 11 n37 (*contra* Wenkebach, 1925, 68), 18-19, 21.

¹²⁴ Tite, 2003, 127-128, 131, 182, 198, 279, identifies Chark as owner of the following Cotton mss in the British Library: Claudius D. VIII (signed on 109r), Nero A. III (90r), Vespasian D. VII (1r), Titus D. I (3r, dated 1575), Titus D. XIX, 120r-168v (120r), Cleopatra A. VIII, 2r-55v (3r). The following information may be added to earlier biographies of Chark. St. George, 1880, 1:154, lists him as "William Chark of London gent." and notes that he was married to Sarah Davers. The letters patent for the grant of his arms were "exemplified by reuerend Campden dated a^o 1604 2^o Jac. Regis." Chark's shield was sable, on a pale argent the letter Υ (ypsilon, the Pythagorean letter) gules. Chark chose a Greek motto: Διὰ τῆς στενῆς ("through the narrow [gate]," Mt 7:13; or "through the narrow [door]," Lk 13:24). Their eldest son, Benjamin Chark, a haberdasher, was still alive in 1633. Benjamin and his wife Sarah lived in Lime Street and had eight children, the eldest of whom (* 1618) was also called William. Their second son, Ezekiel, was rector at St Nicholas in Harbledown, near Canterbury, and married Richard Hooker's youngest daughter Margaret; see Isaac Walton, *Life of Hooker*, in Hooker, 1830, cxvi. After Hooker's death in 1600, Ezekiel Chark tried to destroy the final three books of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*. Walton, in Hooker, 1830, cxvii, writes: "one Mr. Chark, and another Minister that dwelt near Canterbury, came to her [Mrs. Hooker], and desired that they might go into her husband's study, and look upon some of his writings; and that there they two burnt and tore many of them, assuring her that they were writings not fit to be seen." The final three books were edited from the damaged papers by Henry Jackson.

1562/3 and MA in 1566. He subsequently came under the influence of the Puritan Thomas Cartwright, and was expelled from Peterhouse in 1572 for preaching against the episcopal hierarchy. Chark was subsequently hired as preacher at the Inns of Court, where his views were apparently better appreciated. In 1581 he tried unsuccessfully to convert the Jesuit Edmund Campion, who was at that time imprisoned in the Tower.

The codex subsequently passed to Thomas Mountford (or Munford), who took his BD at Oxford in 1584 and his DD in 1588. Amongst the positions held by Mountford were chaplain to Ambrose, Earl of Warwick, canon of Westminster (1585), prebendary of St Paul's (1597), vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields (1602), vicar of St. Mary-at-Hill, Billingsgate (1606-1616), and rector of Tewin, Herts., where he died in 1632.¹²⁵

After Montford's death, the codex was acquired by Archbishop James Ussher, who is sadly remembered these days chiefly for his biblical chronology, mocked as the quintessence of learned foolishness. On 30 June 1626, Ussher wrote to Samuel Ward with a request to "intreat Mr Chancye to send hither Doctor Montfords Greek Testament MS: and whatever else he hath to send unto me [...]."¹²⁶ Ussher subsequently collated Montfortianus for the London Polyglot, and the codex appears in the list of Greek manuscripts consulted for this edition under the siglum *Mont.* in honour of its former owner; in the apparatus, variants from Montfortianus are marked with the siglum *D* (i.e. *Dublinensis*). As already mentioned, Walton states that Montfortianus' previous owner Froy [*sic*] was a Franciscan, but it is impossible to know whether this information had been handed down with the manuscript, or simply extrapolated from his title of *frater* and the Greek inscriptions "Jesus Mary Francis" on 198v. Significantly, Ussher's collation of Montfortianus for Walton's edition was not complete; he merely compared it with the other manuscripts at his disposal: Codex Bezae (GA ms D), an extremely important manuscript from the fifth century, containing the Gospels, Acts 1:1-22:29 and 3 Jn; with Cambridge, Caius and Gonville College ms 403/412 (GA 59); and with the Codex Googii (now

¹²⁵ Foster, 1891, 3:1043; Merritt, 2005, 218-219, 311-312, 321, 331, 335, 338-339, 345-348.

¹²⁶ Boran, 2011, 1:370, n° 210; Oxford, Bodleian Library ms Tanner 72, 142r-143v (original); Oxford, Bodleian Library ms Tanner 461 28r-v (copy); printed in Elr XV, p. 346. Many thanks to Elizabethanne Boran for this reference.

lost).¹²⁷ Ussher's collation (Cambridge, Emmanuel College Cambridge ms 58, *olim* Cat. Mss. Angl. 119) shows that the learned archbishop collated only the books found in Codex Bezae (plus Romans 1, but excluding 3 Jn). This circumstance is reflected in the critical apparatus of the London Polyglot, which consequently lacks variants from Montfortianus after Acts.¹²⁸ This lack was deplored by Wettstein, who considered it one of the shortcomings of the London edition.¹²⁹ Thus overlooked when its greatest secret might have been brought to light, Codex Montfortianus slept on the shelves of Ussher's collection when it passed into the possession of Trinity College Dublin.

8. *Running with the hares, hunting with the hounds: Erasmus' contradictory attitude towards the Johannine comma*

Even after Erasmus had expressed his doubts about the comma in the *Annotationes* to the third edition of his New Testament, he was still happy to employ it when it suited his purposes. In 1523 he published his *Paraphrases of all the Apostolic Epistles*, a Latin translation combined with running theological commentary. In the paraphrase of 1 Jn, Erasmus included the comma without hesitation, interpreting the heavenly witnesses as testifying to Christ's divinity, and the earthly witnesses as testifying to his humanity. Despite this apparent concession to the devotional mode in which he was writing, he avoided making

¹²⁷ On Codex Googii (Gregory 62), see Walton, 1657, 6:1 (in the section entitled *Variantes lectiones Græcæ Novi Testamenti*); Gregory, 1900-1902, 1:143; this ms was erroneously identified by Marsh as Cambridge, University Library ms Kk. 5. 35 (*olim* 2077; Gregory 30a), on which see Gregory, 1900-1902, 1:135.

¹²⁸ Dobbin, 1854, 20-21. In the London Polyglot, the comma is present in the Latin text and in the Greek (taken from the Antwerp Polyglot), but is conspicuously absent from the Syriac, Ethiopic and Arabic columns; see Walton, 1657, 5:922-923.

¹²⁹ Wettstein, 1730, 150: "[...] Codex Angl. XXXII. Montfortii dictus, qui totum N. T. continet, non nisi in Euangeliis & Actis cum editis collatus est, neglectis Epistolis cum Apocalypsi [...]." The description of Montfortianus in Wettstein, 1730, 52, is based on Mills, 1707, CXLVIII, though he adds a little new information: "Novissime in manus Usseri pervenit, nunc vero asservatur Dublinii in Collegio Trinitatis notaturque G. 97: In Euangeliis habet Caput Divisionem eam, quæ in Latinis servatur, teste Usserio, qui Euangelia & Acta Apostolorum contulit, & eorum V. L. in Polyglottis dei curavit."

any mention of the consubstantiality of the persons of the Trinity, stating merely that their witness is united.¹³⁰

Yet away from such devotional works, it is clear that Erasmus' attitude towards the comma as a scholar was still sceptical. In May or June 1524, Guillaume Farel, recently arrived in Basel, attempted to stir Erasmus up with aggressive provocations to debate. One of the points on which Farel challenged Erasmus was the question of the Johannine comma. Erasmus pointed out to Farel that this passage is not to be found in the oldest codices, or in the anti-Arian polemics of the early Fathers; and even if it were genuine, the parallel construction of verses 7 and 8 could only suggest that the unity of the heavenly witnesses was one of witness rather than of essence, as is clearly the case with the earthly witnesses. Farel was not convinced, and was later heard to comment that Erasmus knew less theology than Froben's wife. In return, Erasmus arranged to have Farel thrown out of Basel, and henceforward referred to him with the unflattering nickname "Phallicus."¹³¹

But not all of Erasmus' enemies were so easily thrown off. After his return to England, Lee was sent to France as an envoy for Henry VIII, and he made the most of the opportunity to stir up trouble for Erasmus. In Paris, Lee incited the theological faculty at the Sorbonne against his old enemy. Amongst those he won to his side was Noël Bédard, syndic of the faculty and former rector of the Collège de Montaigu, where Erasmus himself had studied in 1496. In 1526 Bédard published a series of criticisms of Erasmus' *Paraphrases*, on the basis of which he

¹³⁰ Erasmus, 1523, li5v-6r: "Tres sunt enim in cœlo, qui testimonium præbent Christo: pater, sermo, & spiritus: pater, qui semel atque iterum uoce cœlitus emissa, palàm testatus est hunc esse filium suum egregie charum, in quo nihil offenderet: sermo, qui tot miraculis æditis, qui moriens ac resurgens declarauit se uerum esse Christum, deum pariter atque hominem, dei & hominum conciliatorem: spiritus sanctus, qui in baptizati caput descendit, qui post resurrectionem delapsus est in discipulos. Atque horum trium summus est consensus: pater est autor, filius nuncius, spiritus sug [li6r] gestor. Tria sunt item in terris, quæ attestantur Christum: spiritus humanus, quem posuit in cruce: aqua, & sanguis, qui fluxit è latere mortui. Et hi tres testes consentiunt. Illi declarant deum, hi testantur hominem fuisse. Testimonium perhibuit & Ioannes. Quod si testimonium hominum recipimus, æquum est ut plus apud nos habeat ponderis testimonium dei. Manifestum est enim dei patris testimonium: Hic est filius meus dilectus, in eo complacitum est mihi, ipsum audite. Quid dici potuit apertius aut plenius?"

¹³¹ Erasmus to Antoine Brugnard, 27 Oct. 1524, *Epist.* 1510 (*Opus Epist.* 5:569-572; *Correspondence* 10:408-413); further, see Smith, 1923, 376-377; *Correspondence* 9:342.

encouraged the Paris faculty to condemn Erasmus' work.¹³² In the paraphrases of Jn 10:30, Erasmus had placed the following words in the mouth of Jesus: "We are two, but we two bear the same testimony and have the same judgment. And from us two there is one who, if he were alone, would still have an irrefutable judgment" (*Duo sumus, sed duorum idem est testimonium, idem iudicium. Sed ex his duobus unus est, qui si solus esset, tamen esset illius irrefutabile iudicium*). This suggested to Bédā that Erasmus intended to undermine the essential unity of the Father and the Son.

In his published refutation of Bédā's judgment, Erasmus denied that he had ever written or even thought such a thing. Moreover, Erasmus replied that if it is heresy to maintain that the Father and the Son are two, then John's statement that there are three that bear witness in heaven, Father, Word and Spirit, should also be condemned as heresy. Erasmus maintained that in all his writings, he had always confessed the Trinity to be three persons and one essence; to suggest otherwise was impudent misrepresentation.¹³³ Although Erasmus knew that a condemnation from the Paris faculty was potentially very damaging, and naturally wanted to use all possible resources in his own defence, to make the comma work to defend his own orthodoxy was disingenuous at best.

¹³² Rummel, 1986, 124-125, 209-210.

¹³³ Erasmus, 1527b, 7v: "In censura nonagesima, ex his uerbis meis quæ refert, duo sumus ego & pater, sed duorum idem est testimonium, hæresis confingit calumniam, quasi duo dixerim neutro genere, id est, duas naturas, ac non potius masculino. Quod si hæreticum est patrem & filium duos dicere, quid sensit Ioannes Euangelista quum diceret, tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cœlo, pater, uerbum & spiritus? Quid hac sycophantia puerilius aut magis sophisticum. Nec pudet hæc illinire chartis, quum ego declararim sensum meum, & si non declarassem, quum in omnibus scriptis profitear tres personas & unam essentiam, impudens erat hanc suspicionem inducere." See also Erasmus, 1527c, 153v-154v: "[Beda] ait me asserere, patrem & filium simpliciter esse duo, quum hoc uerbum simpliciter non sit in scriptis meis. Altera est, quod à me non est scriptum, nec cogitatum, filium & patrem esse duo, sed filium de se ac patre sic loquentem induco, Duo sumus ego & pater, Quod si per obliquos casus fuissem loquutus, duos dixissem audistis testificantes, non duo testificantia. Quod si hæc propositio est impia, duo sunt pater & filius, impia erit & hæc, tres sunt pater, filius & spiritus sanctus. Porro quum hæc de testium numero non de essentia dei loquar, si hæc propositio est hæretica, filius & pater sunt duo testes, hæreticum erit quod scripsit Ioannes, Tres sunt qui testificantur in cœlo, nam græce dixit οἱ μαρτυροῦντες. [...] [154v] Non hic excutio an pater & filius possint dici duo testes iuxta diuinam naturam, certe duo testificantes dici possunt, nisi Ioannes impie tres dixit testificantes. Testificatus est pater in baptismo & spiritus sanctus[:] testificatur ipse de se filius. Certe iuxta naturam humanam duo testificantes dici possunt pater & filius."

Indeed, evidence from later the same year shows that Erasmus' position on the genuineness of the comma remained unchanged. In a letter to the Spanish Inquisitor Alfonso Manrique (1527?), Erasmus repeated his opinion on the authority of the comma:

Even at the time when the Arian impiety was at its height, it seems that this testimony was not present in the Greek or Latin codices, or certainly in very few, since Cyril does not cite it in his writings against the Arians [*Thesaurus*, PG 75, 363], nor do Athanasius or Hilary. [...] There is no doubt about the obscurity of the passage. Someone will say, "What need is there to remove these words?" I have already explained that I did not touch on any of these words in my first edition, but when compelled by the circumstance of being libelled, I had to give some explanation of these things. No more than two people carped at this passage, Lee and Stunica, and I replied to them at length, declaring that I did not share the opinions of the Arians, and that one did not need this passage to defeat the Arians. But those two gentlemen attracted a legion of followers—not that this makes a difference. Then in the fourth [*sic*] edition I put what is in the Latin texts, on the basis of just one Greek, but recent codex which England supplied, although the Greek codex in the Vatican library [BAV ms Vat. gr. 1209] had what was in my texts.¹³⁴

Erasmus' characterisation of Montfortianus as a "recent copy" may suggest that he harboured suspicions about its origins, but he may simply be comparing its *relative* newness with the great antiquity of the Vatican codex.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Erasmus, letter to Manrique, September 1527?, *Epist.* 1877 (*Opus Epist.* 7:177): "Iam illo tempore quo maxime ferueret impietas Arianorum, apparet hoc testimonium nec in Graecis nec in Latinis codicibus fuisse, aut certe in perpaucis: quum nec Cyrillus adducat pugnans aduersus Arrianos, nec Athanasius nec Hilarius. [...]. De obscuritate loci nulla est dubitatio. Dicet aliquis, Quid opus erat ista mouere? Iam dixi me prima aeditione nihil horum attigisse, sed per occasionem calumniae coactum haec disserere. Nec hunc locum arroserunt plures quam duo, Leus et Stunica, quibus abunde respondi, declarans me nequaquam sentire cum Arianis; nec opus esset hoc loco ad reuincendos Arianos. At isti e duobus faciunt multos, quanquam id quidem parui refert. Denique in quarta aeditione posui quod est in Latinis, ex vnico tantum Graeco codice quem suppeditauit Anglia, sed recenti, quum Graecus codex in bibliotheca Vaticana haberet quod in meis erat."

¹³⁵ I am less confident than de Jonge, 1980, 389, that Erasmus had no suspicion that Montfortianus had been prepared with the intention of deceiving him. For example, he could

In 1527 another official condemnation of Erasmus' work was published, the result of a commission called by the Spanish Inquisition at Valladolid to examine the orthodoxy of Erasmus' theological writings. Amongst the heads, it was asserted that Erasmus had argued "against the sacrosanct Trinity of God." The first objection under this head was that "Erasmus, in his *Annotationes* on 1 Jn 5, continually defends corrupt manuscripts; rages against St Jerome; and argues the case of the Arians, setting up defences for them." Erasmus had allegedly attacked the comma "with inexorable warfare," rejected all evidence in favour of its authenticity, and had dared to call Jerome "violent on many occasions, shameless, often changeable, and self-contradictory."¹³⁶

In his *Defence against certain Spanish monks* (1528), Erasmus objected that the commissioners at Valladolid had deliberately used prejudicial language by asserting that he had argued against the Trinity. Such an accusation, he pointed out, could not fail to raise horror and indignation, especially amongst the unlettered majority who do not read beyond the headlines, and lack the judgment to understand what lies behind them. Erasmus then proceeds to give his opponents a lesson in legal procedure: "The task of a legitimate inquisitor is first to recite verbatim the words which he considers to have some suspicion of impiety, and then briefly to state what is found to be offensive in them."¹³⁷ An accuser who immediately states his own opinion places himself under the obligation to prove what he has asserted. Furthermore, it is not the duty of a man accused to plead his own case simply because someone has made an accusation against him.

Erasmus deals with the first accusation swiftly and cleanly: "As far as the first item in this calumny is concerned, I nowhere defend corrupted codices knowingly, but transmit to Latin ears in good faith what I find in the Greek

have made use of it to supplement those passages that lacked textual support, such as at the end of Revelation. He may of course simply have forgotten to do so.

¹³⁶ LB IX:1029EF: "Erasmus in Annotationibus primæ Ioan. v. corruptos Codices defensat, in beatum Hieronymum debacchatur, Arianorum causam agit atque tutatur. Nam & locum illum, Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cœlo, Pater, Verbum, & Spiritus Sanctus, & hi tres unum sunt, bello inexorabili impugnat, suffragantia omnia respuit, rationes etiam frivolas undique in contrarium coacervat, divum Hieronymum his verbis impetit: Quanquam ille, scilicet Hieronymus, sæpenumero violentus est, parum pudens, sæpe varius, parumque sibi constans."

¹³⁷ LB IX:1030: "Atqui legitimi inquisitoris est primum recitare verba, ut habent, quæ putarit aliquid habere impietatis, deinde paucis subiicere quid in illis offendat."

manuscripts. As far as I am concerned, I leave the reading in the Vulgate untouched. In my annotation I indicate which reading I consider genuine, submitting my judgment to the church, which I have always done.”¹³⁸

Erasmus responds next to the charge that he had argued against the Trinity. His denial of the authenticity of the comma could not be construed as an argument against the Trinity, for one simple reason. The fact that the comma was never cited by the Greek Fathers, even in their struggles against the Arians, is overwhelming evidence that the comma was not to be found in the text of the Epistle with which they were familiar. The issue he had called into question was not whether the Father, Son and Spirit are of the same essence, but merely which reading—that in the Latin Vulgate or that in the Greek—faithfully reflected the Apostle’s words. In his *Paraphrases* Erasmus had followed what was found in the Latin manuscripts; in the *Annotationes* he warned the reader which reading he found more convincing, basing his opinion on serious argumentation. Those who wish to know the details of his decision (he continues) may read his refutations of the criticisms of Lee, Stunica, the letter he wrote in defence of his reading at Jn 7:39 (published as an appendix to his 1527 edition of Chrysostom’s *Martyrdom of Babyla*), and his *Annotationes*, especially the most recent edition (1527).

However, Erasmus could not help touching upon at least some of his favourite arguments. If this passage was missing from the Latin and Greek codices, he asks, from where did Jerome restore it? (The implicit answer to this rhetorical question is that Jerome invented the passage.) And if the comma was excised, who was responsible for this deed? The Arians? How could they corrupt all the codices of the orthodox? And besides, if the Arians had excised the comma from the bibles of their enemies, why would they not also erase other verses like Jn 10:30 (“the Father and I are one”) while they were at it? What is more, if the Arians could argue forcefully that Jn 10:30 referred to a unity of will, they could say the same thing about the comma. And if the codices of the orthodox included this reading, why did Athanasius, Didymus, Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom, Theophylact, Cyril, Ambrose, Hilary and Augustine all fail to cite it against the

¹³⁸ LB IX:1030: “Nam quod attinet ad primam calumniæ particulam, nec usquam sciens defenso corruptos Codices, sed quod in Græcis comperio bona fide trado Latinis auribus, incolumi, quod ad me quidem attinet, vulgata lectione, & in annotatione utra lectio mihi germana videatur indico, iudicium Ecclesiæ deferens, quod hactenus a me factum est in omnibus.”

Arians? “I do not know,” Erasmus sighed in resignation, “what these people are getting at when they contend that this passage is necessary to prove that the three persons share the same nature.”¹³⁹ If this were the only passage from which this principle could be shown, then what were all those Fathers doing who managed to make this point against the comma without the help of the comma? “Heaven forbid that we should force such an important dogma of the Catholic church into such straits that it would simply crumble if anyone could show that this passage did not faithfully reflect the Apostle’s words.”¹⁴⁰ If anyone should argue that Erasmus ought to have tried to avoid a scandal, he points out that he had not addressed his criticisms to the masses, but to scholars in their studies; he had no intention of making this issue public in the future unless forced to defend himself from slander.

As far as his criticisms of Jerome were concerned, Erasmus points out that he had always submitted his own judgments to the church, and that one Jerome does not make the whole church. In any case, the church should not immediately condemn someone for daring to question the soundness of a particular reading, given the great variety of readings to be found in the manuscripts. Such conversations have always gone on amongst scholars without any risk to the faith. In any case, the church has always had a sliding scale in matters of doctrine. Some things are the official teaching of the church; some things are considered likely; some things are tolerated; to yet other things a blind eye might be turned. Repeating an argument he had first made against Lee, Erasmus notes that the church has absorbed into its liturgy many biblical texts of questionable authority.

Another of the “legion of followers” attracted by Lee and Stunica was Alberto Pio, Prince of Carpi.¹⁴¹ In 1531, Pio published the last of a series of criticisms of Erasmus’ work, including his omission of the comma. Predictably, Pio relied on the authority of ps.-Jerome’s letter, and accused Erasmus of rash impudence in daring to contradict the great Father. Why doubt Jerome’s word that the comma was deliberately removed, and thereby seek to diminish Jerome’s authority? While Erasmus had implied that Jerome did not know what he was

¹³⁹ *LB IX:1031*: “Nec satis perspicio quid moliantur, qui contendunt hunc locum esse necessarium ad probandam eandem individuum naturam trium Personarum.”

¹⁴⁰ *LB IX:1031*: “Absit ut nos in tantum discrimen cogamus dogma tantum Ecclesiæ catholicæ, ut plane labascatur, si quis doceat hunc locum non esse veritatis Apostolicæ.”

¹⁴¹ See Trapman, 2002, 40-44, on Pio’s assertion that Erasmus condoned lying.

talking about (Pio continued), in fact it was Erasmus who was ignorant, fostering Arian belief. It was, Pio maintained, impossible for Erasmus to maintain that the bibles used by Cyril and Bede did not contain the comma; perhaps they just omitted to comment on it. The comma was cited by Jerome and other Fathers, and was to be found in the bibles used by the Catholic Church; moreover, Pio insisted that it fit well in the context of the Epistle. If Erasmus maintained that the witness spoken of was one of testimony, of course the Arians would cite such a statement in support of their position. Pio then makes a long and detailed excursus on the nature of unity, and the ways in which the unity of the earthly witnesses and that of the heavenly witnesses differs. We can for example say that wheat and snow are one in that they are both white, even though they are two distinct substances. Moreover, if the author of the Epistle had believed that they were merely one in testimony, he would have said so. In any case, Pio says, virtually any words can be twisted to say anything, as the Arians did with Scriptural passages such as Jesus' saying that he and the Father are one. It is clear from John's Gospel that he believed that Jesus was *homousios* with the Father, and he wrote the same here in his Epistle, in order to fight the teaching of Cerinthus and the Ebionites.¹⁴² By the time Erasmus could respond, the elderly

¹⁴² Pio, 1531, 183v-184r (punctuation and capitalisation slightly altered for clarity): "Præterea videre non valeo qua ratione & ab ipso dissentias asserente in Epistola Ioannis locum fuisse deprauatum, & studiose omissa illa verba ab hæreticis, Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo, Pater filius & spiritus sanctus, & hi tres vnum sunt: quæ verba testaris in codice Græco non esse, sed tantum inquis, tres sunt qui testificantur spiritus aqua & sanguis. Nec cur tibi probabilius videatur quæ Hieronymus ait dempta fuisse & edita a nostris quam studiose prætermissa ab hæreticis: quod tanta pertinacia suadere niteris vt non verearis ad auctoritatem Hieronymi verbis imminuendam petulantissime eum insectari: non erubescens dicere illum sæpenumero violentum esse parumque pudentem: sæpe varium parumque sibi constantem. Tu inquam hæc de diuo Hieronymo profers eruditissimo atque sanctissimo, cui nec dignus esses vel matulam præbere vel soluere corrigiam calceamenti. Nam quæ de te ipso verissime dici possunt illi impigis: quem & ais hoc in loco ignorasse quid sibi vellet. Imo hoc potissimum loco nouit quid sibi vellet & expressit. Sed tu Arriani dogmatis patronus videns hunc locum expressius illud dogma iugulare, Et hi tres vnum sunt, vis superadditum esse a nostris potius quam prætermisum studiose a fautoribus Arriani dogmatis in ipsis codicibus Græcis: quorum forte obtigit Cirillum aut Bëdam aliquod exemplar habuisse etsi locum illum interpretari omiserunt, quem tamen Hieronymus cæterique eximii doctores interpretati sunt, & ecclesia illis codicibus vtitur in quibus ea verba conspiciuntur, quæ & consentiunt posterioribus, & ad amissum [sc. amissim] inter se quadrant. Vti enim tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo videlicet, Pater verbum & spiritus sanctus, & tamen hi tres vnum sunt: ita tres sunt qui

Pio was already dead, but he decided to reply anyway; but on the comma he merely remarked impatiently: “On the triple witness I have replied as accurately as I can, and more than once, so it would be stupid to repeat that all.”¹⁴³

testimonium dant in terra spiritus aqua & sanguis, & hi tres vnum testificantur: quamuis non sint vnum adinuicem, vti sunt illa quæ testantur in cælo. Ita vt sit similitudo quo ad vnitatem testimonii: non autem quo ad identitatem naturæ vt tu inquis, Arrianos non tam stupidos futuros quin hoc retulissent tantum ad consensum testimonii, non ad eandem naturam. At hoc licet concedatur nihil tamen derogat veritati dogmatis nostri quod expresse verba illa confirmant. Et si enim sufficiat ad veritatem testimonii consensus testantium qui similis sit in terra ei qui est in cælo, non tamen hoc tollit quin scriptura exprimens consensum testimonii cælestis declaret qualis sit ille & quam differat ab eo qui est in terra, cum in cælesti illo non tantummodo tres sint qui idem testentur, sed ita illud vnum testantur quod etiam inter se vnum sint. Quod cum dicit vnum sunt, manifeste declarat vnum esse natura & essentia. Sic enim loquimur, & assuetus enunciandi modus, quoniam aliqua esse eadem, <id> est substantia & natura cum dicimus illa esse vnum aut idem. Neutraliter aut substantiue accipiendo ipsum vnum vel idem nullo alio verbo adiecto distrahente aliquo pacto vnitatem aut identitatem in qua conueniunt illa quæ idem aut vnum esse dicuntur: vt si dicamus Erasmus & Albertus vnum sunt: intelligimus natura qua conueniunt. Nec enim congrue diceremus Bucephalum & Alexandrum vnum esse, cum essentia equi ab ea quæ est hominis dissentiat. At non incongrue diceremus Bucephalus & Alexander vnum erant albedine si ambo albi fuissent. vel vna est albedo ni- [184r] uis & farine: non tamen recte vnum sunt nix & farina. Cum igitur dicat scriptura, Pater: verbum, & spiritus sanctus: & hi tres vnum sunt: indicatur vnum esse natura: et si natura, & indiuiduo vt superius deduximus. Si enim tantum ad consensum testimonii id referendum esset, scriptura non protulisset, Et hi tres vnum sunt: sed hi tres vnum & idem testantur, vel hi tres vnum & idem sunt testimonio. Nisi enim sic certis regulis proloquamur ex vsu loquentium vt plurimum assumptis nihil verbo aut scripto prodi posset, cuius certus sensus haberetur. Detorqueri enim possent omnia & referri ad alia extranea vt ad accidens vel ad subiectum. Et sic audientem semper fallere. Violentia enim quadam fere omnia verba detorqueri possunt & sic nihil certi ex scripturæ verbis accipi, vt Arriani faciebant in illo Ioannis, Ego & pater vnum sumus id est consensu voluntatis. Quæ verba Ioannis cum multis aliis eiusdem substantiæ (quæ expressius in ipsius euangelio recitantur quam a cæteris euangelistis) hominibus confitentibus argumento esse possunt & in epistola etiam illa scripsisse. Non autem a nostris fuisse superaddita, vtpote consentiente epistola cum euangelio, & repetente id quod pro cæteris petebat, & cuius causa potissimum euangelium scripserat, vt videlicet filii dei diuinitatem astrueret aduersus Cerinthi & Ebionitarum dogma. Ita & dicendum [sc. that they refer only to a unity of testimony] de aliis scripturæ locis ad eos conuincendos apertissimis nisi ad certam regulam illa accipiamus.”

¹⁴³ Erasmus, 1531, 193 (CW 84:277): “De testimonio triplici tam accurate respondi, nec id semel, ut sit ineptum illa repetere.”

In 1531 there appeared yet another set of published criticisms of Erasmus' orthodoxy, this time from the theological faculty of Paris. Amongst the details of Erasmus' paraphrase to which the faculty objected was his translation of λόγος in Jn 1:1 and 1 Jn 5:7 as *sermo*, as well as the way his paraphrase of 1 John implied that the unity of the three heavenly witnesses was merely one of testimony rather than one of essence; this, it was suggested, gave some handle for the defence of the error of Arius.¹⁴⁴

Some of those who opposed Erasmus on the question of the Johannine comma went about it more subtly. Friedrich Nausea, cathedral preacher at Mainz and later bishop of Vienna, published a set of sermons in 1530 in which he identified those who deny the unity and distinction of the three persons of the Trinity (as expressed in the comma) as followers of the error of Sabellius. By contrast, those who focus too much on the distinction between the persons fall prey to the error of Arius.¹⁴⁵

The dramatic opposition of Lee, Stunica, Pio and the Paris Faculty might give the impression that Catholic scholars were generally hostile to Erasmus' position on that comma, but this was not inevitably the case. Tommaso de Vio Cajetan—generally remembered as Luther's adversary at the Diet of Augsburg in 1518—agreed with Erasmus on the doubtful status of the comma: "If these words belong to the text, they are applied to make manifest what was just said: namely, that the Spirit is truth. But I said, 'If these words belong to the text,' since

¹⁴⁴ *Determinatio*, 1531, C4r-v: "Antequam hæc vniuersitas rerum cœlestium ac terrestrium conderetur, iam cum patre æterno sermo erat æternus, vtitur dictione sermo, cum vtamur dictione verbum, explicando illud in principio erat verbum. Tres sunt in cœlo, qui testimonium præbent Christo, Pater, sermo, & spiritus. Atque horum trium summus est consensus. Nos legimus, Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cœlo, Pater, verbum, & spiritus sanctus, & hi tres vnum sunt. Perperam autem explicat partem illam paraphrastes, hi tres vnum sunt, detrahendo maximo [C4v] testimonio fidei de vnitæ substantiæ in tribus personis, ansam præbens defensionis erroris Arrij."

¹⁴⁵ Nausea, 1530, 312r: "Quidam enim eorum tenuerunt essentiæ vnitatem & distinctionem personarum negarunt, quorum author fuit Sabellius contra illud. Tres sunt, qui testimonium perhibent in cœlo pater, verbum & spiritus sanctus. Imo & contra illud salvatoris, dicentis. Cum venerit paracletus, quem ego mittam vobis à patre spiritum veritatis, qui à patre procedit. Certe hic personarum nominatur diuersitas. Quidam vero (quorum author fuit Arrius) attenderunt personarum distinctionem & sciderunt vnitatem substantiæ contra illud Iohannis. Et hi tres vnum sunt. Et Christo alibi dicente. Ego & pater vnum sumus."

they are not found in all the Greek codices, but only in some. We do not know how that diversity came about.”¹⁴⁶

9. *The comma in early Greek and Latin printed editions*

Even though Erasmus included the Johannine comma in his third, fourth and fifth editions of the New Testament (1522, 1527, 1535), it is clear from the comments cited above, and from the fact that he added material to his *Annotationes* on the comma until 1535, that he always considered it an intrusion. Erasmus’ reservations were picked up by many of those who used his edition, but others took the presence of the comma in Erasmus’ final three editions as convincing evidence that he had become convinced of its genuineness.

Of the Greek editions of the early sixteenth century, the Aldine edition of 1518 generally follows Erasmus’ first edition of 1516, with only some additional details from the important codex Venice, Biblioteca Marciana ms 10 (GA 209^{capr}).¹⁴⁷ Consequently, Aldus’ edition does not contain the comma. The comma is absent from the editions of Nicolaus Gerbelius (Hagenau: Anshelm, 1521), which was based on Erasmus’ 1519 edition, and consequently from that published at Straßburg by Fabricius Capito in 1524, which was based on Gerbelius’ edition. The comma was deliberately omitted from the edition of Simon de Colines (Paris, 1534), which was based principally on Erasmus’ third

¹⁴⁶ Cajetan, 1531, 190r: “QVONIAM tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cœlo: pater verbum & spiritus sanctus, & hi tres vnum sunt. Si hæc verba sunt de textu, afferuntur ad manifestandum quod dictum est quod spiritus est veritas. Dixi autem si sunt de textu: quoniam non inueniuntur in omnibus codicibus græcis, sed in aliquibus. Vnde autem ista diuersitas processerit nescimus. ET TRES sunt qui testimonium dant in terra: spiritus / aqua & sanguis, & hi tres vnum sunt]. Non sic græce habetur, sed sic. QVONIAM tres sunt qui testificantur: spiritus / aqua & sanguis, & tres in vnum sunt.] Ita quod postquam dictum est quoniam spiritus est veritas / subiungitur quoniam tres sunt qui testificantur, spiritus aqua & sanguis. directe reddendo rationem propositorum: videlicet quod iesus venit in aqua & sanguine / & spiritus est qui testificatur. Horum enim dictorum ratio redditur ex hoc quoniam hi tres (sanguis aqua & spiritus) testificantur quidem, sed in vnum coeunt: videlicet testimonium spiritus. Spiritus enim est qui testificatur: sanguis autem & aqua sub spiritu testificantur. immo ipse spiritus testificatur & de sanguine christi oblato in cruce & de aqua baptismali. Ecce officium spiritus, quod (vt diximus) intendit manifestare.”

¹⁴⁷ Hoskier, 1929, 1:180.

edition and the Complutensian, with some further input from manuscripts in Paris, many of which were later used by de Colines's son-in-law Robert Estienne the Elder.¹⁴⁸ The Basel publisher Johannes Bebelius produced three editions (1524, 1531, 1535), based largely on Erasmus' third edition; Bebelius omitted the comma in his first two editions, but reinstated it in the third, perhaps for the same reasons as Erasmus himself. Bebelius' third edition formed the basis of Johannes Valderus' edition (Basel, 1536), which in turn served as parent for that of Melchior Sessa (Venice, 1538); as a consequence, both Valderus and Sessa provide the comma.¹⁴⁹ The comma was also retained in the editions of Robert Estienne the Elder (1546-1551). Estienne's great 1550 *editio regia*, based on Erasmus' fifth edition, the Complutensian text and variant readings from fourteen other manuscripts in Paris, was to enjoy a high reputation.¹⁵⁰ Estienne marked off part of verse 7 with obelisks (thus: `ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ') to show that these words were not in the seven manuscripts of the Catholic Epistles he had at his disposal. Nevertheless, his failure to register in the critical apparatus that the entirety of verse 7 was not to be found in any of the manuscripts in the royal library in Paris subsequently led many to assume that it was. These included a number of editors, beginning with his son Robert Estienne the Younger, who produced an edition in 1569; Théodore de Bèze, who produced editions in 1556-1598; Plantin, who published Montano's Antwerp Polyglot in 1571/72;¹⁵¹ the Leiden Elzeviers, who published three editions, 1624, 1633 and 1641 (the latter

¹⁴⁸ Bludau, 1903a, 282.

¹⁴⁹ Hatch, 1941.

¹⁵⁰ Krans, 2006, 337-338, and Elliott, 2009b, 391, identify the following manuscripts which Robert Estienne I used for his *editio regia* (1550), augmenting the readings he took from the Complutensian Polyglot (which he designates as α') and from Erasmus: β' (Cambridge, University Library ms Nn 2.41 = GA D 05^{ea}); γ' (Paris, BnF ms gr. 84 = GA 4^e); δ' (Paris, BnF ms gr. 106 = GA 5^{cap}); ε' (Paris, BnF ms gr. 112 = GA 6^{cap}); ζ' (Paris, BnF ms gr. 71 = GA 7^e); ζ' (Paris, BnF ms gr. 49 = GA 8^e); η' (Paris, BnF ms gr. 62 = GA L 019^e); θ' (Paris, BnF ms Coislin 200 = GA 38^{cap}); ι' (Paris, BnF ms gr. 102 = GA 2298^{ap}); ια' (lost = GA 8^a 10^p); ιβ' (Paris, BnF ms gr. 83 = GA 9^e); ιγ' (Cambridge, University Library ms Kk 6.4 = GA 398^{ap}); ιδ' (Paris, BnF ms supp. gr. 185 = GA 120^e); ιε' (Paris, BnF ms gr. 237 = GA 82^{apr}); ις' (lost = GA 3^r).

¹⁵¹ Montano, 1569-1572, 5.2:532-533. Montano places the phrase "& hi tres num sunt" in the margin of verse 8, but only in the Latin column. He also notes that the phrase is missing from the Syriac text. Montano gives the Greek text of verses 7 and 8 exactly as it appears in the Complutensian edition, albeit with a more regular accentuation.

two dubbed as the *textus receptus*); and Mills (1707). Although Franciscus Lucas Brugensis (1580) asserted in his notes on the text that none of the manuscripts in Paris contain the comma, his comments fell on deaf ears.¹⁵² It was not until the eighteenth century that the absence of verse 7 from Estienne's manuscripts was finally established definitively by Le Long and Marsh.

A number of Latin editions printed in the sixteenth century followed the earlier form of Erasmus' Latin translation, from which the comma is excluded: Leuven (1519), Basel (1520, 1521) and Mainz (1520), which all predate Erasmus' revision, but also those produced at Wittenberg (1529) and Zürich (1543, 1544), which postdate it. The Zürich editions, in which Erasmus' text was reworked by Rudolf Walter, contain a marginal annotation explaining the decision to omit the comma. Other sixteenth-century editions of the Latin Vulgate invariably contain the comma, such as those of Andreas Osiander (Nuremberg, 1522), Petreius (Nuremberg, 1527), Sante Pagnino (Lyon, 1527), Robert Estienne the Elder (1528, 1532, 1534), Tommaso de Vio Cajetan (Venice, 1530), Jean Mareschal (Lyon, 1531), Konrad Pellicanus (Zürich, 1532-1539) and Isidorus Clarius (Taddeo Cuchi) (Venice, 1542). Behind these apparently conservative editions there is an undercurrent of engagement with Erasmus' editorial decisions. Konrad Pellicanus omitted the comma from the 1543 Zurich Vulgate. In a marginal note, he states that there is a great variety of readings of verse 8 amongst the codices. He preferred to follow the reading given by Cyril, which was to be found almost without alteration in a very ancient manuscript of the Vulgate in Zurich. Finally he refers the reader to Erasmus' notes on the passage.¹⁵³ In his separate commentary on the Catholic Epistles, Pellicanus remarked: "The most diligent Erasmus gives ample discussion of the diverse text amongst the Greeks and the Latins, both ancient and recent, as you can see in his *Annotationes*." In his editions of 1540, 1543, 1545 and 1555,

¹⁵² Lucas Brugensis, 1580, 462: "Inter omnes Parisiensium Græcos codices, ne vnus est qui dissideat; nisi, quòd, septem, duntaxat τὸ *in cælo* confodiant: si tamen semicirculus, lectionis designans terminum, suo loco sit collocatus." Cf. Bludau, 1903a, 284.

¹⁵³ Pellicanus, 1543, NT:106: "Magna hic est codicum uarietas. Cyrillus legit, quia tres sunt, qui testimonium perhibent, spiritus, aqua & sanguis: & hi tres unum sunt. Quam lectionem ijsdem ferè uerbis in uetustissimo Tigurinæ bibliothecæ codice inuenimus. Hispana editio sic legit [...]. Hic enim non additur, quod hæc tria, quæ in terra testantur, unum sint. Vide Annot. Eras. Nos Cyrilli et aliorum ueterum lectionem, tum probatissimorum Græcorum codicum fidem sequi maluimus." On this and the other editions, see Bludau, 1903a, 286-287.

Estienne marked off the words *in cælo* to *in terra* with obelisks, suggesting that he had doubts about the authenticity of the passage, but did not want to strike the words entirely.¹⁵⁴ Cucchi followed suit, but in his comments he is rather indirect. He states that although he respects the opinions of those who would interpret the Greeks and Latins differently—he prefers not to mention Erasmus by name—he did not intend to modify his text in accordance with every one of their judgments. Estienne’s last Latin New Testament, printed in Geneva in 1556/1557, contains the Vulgate text as well as the new translation and notes by de Bèze, whose comments show that he was quite convinced that the comma belonged in the text. Although he acknowledged that the comma was not read by Cyril, Augustine or Bede, de Bèze claimed it as genuine on the evidence of ps.-Jerome, Erasmus’ Codex Britannicus, the Complutensian text and Estienne’s previous editions, noting however that the reading is different in all these copies. The comments of Pellicanus, Cucchi and Beza show that any editor of the New Testament who took his job seriously had to engage with Erasmus’ critical legacy, even if they disagreed with his conclusions.¹⁵⁵

10. Syriac and Arabic versions

The study of the Syriac bible in Western Europe only began in earnest in the middle of the sixteenth century. When Immanuel Tremellius (c. 1510-1580),

¹⁵⁴ Bludau, 1903a, 282-283; Bludau does not mention the obelisks in Estienne’s 1555 Latin edition, which likewise enclose the words *in cælo* to *in terra*.

¹⁵⁵ Bludau, 1903a, 286-288, citing Pellicanus, 1539, 780: “De vario textu apud Græcos et Latinos, veteres et recentiores, satis admonuit diligentissimus Erasmus, quæ videas in suis Annotationibus.” De Bèze’s note is in de Bèze, 1556, 318, cit. Bludau, 1903a, 288 (abbreviated); Heide, 2006, 71 n132: “Nam tres sunt, &c. ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν, &c. Hic versiculus omnino mihi retinendus videtur. Explicat enim manifestè quod de sex testibus dixerat, tres seorsim cælo, tres terræ tribuens. Non legit tamen vetus interpres [*i.e.* the Latin Vulgate], nec Cyrillus, nec Augustinus, nec Beda; sed legit Hieronymus, legit Erasmus in Britannico codice, & in Complutensi editione. Legimus & nos in nonnullis Roberti nostri veteribus libris. Non convenit tamen in omnibus inter istos codices. Nam Britannicus legit sine articulis πατήρ, λόγος, καὶ πνεῦμα. In nostris verò legebantur articuli, & præterea etiam additum erat Sancti epitheton Spiritui, vt ab eo distingueretur cuius sit mentio in sequenti versiculo, quique in terra collocatur. — In cælo, ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ: Hoc deerat in septem vetustis codicibus, sed tamen omnino videtur retinendum.”

Calvinist professor of Hebrew at the University of Heidelberg, published the second edition of the Syriac Peshitta in 1569 (with Latin translation), he refrained from inserting the comma into the text on the basis of its absence from the Syriac text—both the first printed edition and the manuscript available to him in Heidelberg—and “from all the ancient Greek codices” (*omnibus vetustis Græcis codicibus*). But in order to avoid a discrepancy of verse numbers between his Syriac text and those recently provided for the Greek text by Estienne, Tremellius provided a hypothetical rendering into Syriac, which remained however in the note.¹⁵⁶ In his New Testament polyglot (Nuremberg, 1599-1600), Hutter included Tremellius’ hypothetical translation within the Syriac text, albeit in parentheses, since he, relying on ps.-Jerome’s preface to the Catholic Epistles, considered its omission “an egregious error that ought not to be passed over in silence nor excused on any account” (*insigne erratum nec silentio prætereundum nec ulla ratione excusandum*). On the basis of Hutter’s authority, the comma was retained in the Syriac editions of Gutbier (Hamburg, 1664-1667) and Schaaf (Leiden, 1709), and was not excised again until the British and Foreign Bible Society editions of 1816 and 1920.¹⁵⁷

Following the publication of Tremellius’ text, the absence of the comma from eastern versions became an important factor in the discussion. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, Thomas Day of Cambridge prepared a new Latin translation of the first letter of John, which he copied into a manuscript with the Arabic text (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College ms 384); Day’s Latin translation omits the comma entirely. In his commentaries on the New Testament, the Dutch jurist and theologian Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) rejected the comma on the basis of its absence from those Greek texts in which he placed the greatest confidence, such as the Codex Alexandrinus. Declaring himself unwilling to repeat what the learned had already said about this passage, he nevertheless added interesting asides about the reading of the comma in the Syriac and Arabic versions, suggesting that the participle “the witnessing ones” (μαρτυροῦντες) is a

¹⁵⁶ Borger, 1987.

¹⁵⁷ Bludau, 1903b; Metzger, 1977, 53; Borger, 1987, reprints the comments of Tremellius and Hutter. The Latin translation of the comma given by Tremellius is that of Beza, with one minor variant. According to Norton, 1889, [footnote to 1 Jn 5:7, without page number], the comma is also absent from the 1703 edition representing the Syriac text used by the Maronites, as well as the Indian (1816) and Nestorian (1852) editions.

Hebraism, and commenting on the potential semantic difference between “these three are one” and “these three are unto one”.¹⁵⁸

11. Lutheran reactions to the dispute over the comma

Erasmus’ ambiguous stance over the comma led to a variety of responses. Luther used Erasmus’ 1519 edition and annotations for his 1522 translation, but in addition to the fact that the comma was not present in the Greek text he used, he also declined to include it on textual and on theological grounds.¹⁵⁹ In 1527 Luther gave a series of lectures on the first letter of John, in which he explained why he stuck by his initial decision. It is clear that his opinions on this passage were determined largely by the judgment of Erasmus. Luther states that the

¹⁵⁸ Grotius, 1830, vol. 8, 196-197: “Quæ plurima Viri eruditi hoc de loco disseruere hic non repetam. Tantum dicam Manuscriptum illum antiquissimum cuius auctoritate plurimum utor [i.e. Codex Alexandrinus, GA 02, of the fifth century, of which Grotius possessed a collation], non aliud hic habere quam, Ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα [Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant, spiritus, aqua et sanguis], non adiecto illo quod et Syrus et Arabs legere, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσιν [et hi tres unum sunt]. Ego hanc quam ex Manuscripto posui lectionem, et quæ a multis aliis confirmatur libris veteribus, veram puto. Neque vero Arianis ablatas voces quasdam, sed potius additas, unde colligerent, *Patrem et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum* non esse *unum* nisi *consensu* quomodo *spiritus, aqua et sanguis in unum* testimonium consentiunt. Quod cum viderent Catholici, abstulisse quidem eos illud quod de Patre, Filio et Spiritu Sancto insertum fuerat, sed reliquisse illud *tres unum esse*, quia id ita positum ipsis nocere non poterat. Alios vero, relicto illo loco de Patre, Filio et Spiritu Sancto ibi quidem posuisse *unum sunt*; de spiritu vero, aqua et sanguine, *in unum sunt*, ut alius modus unitatis significaretur. Iohannes hic causam reddit cur locutus fuerit non de *Spiritu* tantum, cuius præcipua in hoc negotio est auc- [197] toritas, veram etiam de *aqua et sanguine*, quia in illis etiam non exigua est testimonii fides, et ternarius numerus in testibus est perfectissimus. Μαρτυροῦντες Hebræo more pro μάρτυρες [testes]. Solet autem vox *testis* etiam de rebus inanimis dici, ut Gen. 31: 48, 51.” The collation of Codex Alexandrinus made for Grotius is now in Amsterdam, University Library ms III H 17¹; see Mendes da Costa, 1923, 20, n° 146; de Jonge, 1984a, 109 n32.

¹⁵⁹ Abbott, 1888, 458-463; Posset, 1985. Metzger, 1964, 450, claimed that the absence of the comma from Luther’s translation was due to the fact that Luther used Erasmus’ 1519 text; this may be the case for his 1522 “September Testament,” but Luther had ample opportunity to include the comma in later editions; it is for example still lacking in Luther’s *Biblia: Das ist: Die ganzte Heilige Schrifft, deudsch auff new zugericht* (1545). It is clear from Luther’s comments on the comma that his exclusion of the verse was deliberate rather than fortuitous.

comma was added by Catholic theologians to counter the Arians, but somewhat clumsily. And the text makes little sense: when we finally come to see God we will have no need of such witnesses. In heaven there is no need of testimony or faith; it is only here on earth that we need testimonies to God, but we have all the testimony we need in the Scriptures. Let us then, he says, leave this text behind. In any case, the verse that follows shows the comma up as nonsense. “I can make fun of this text easily, for there is no more inept passage in defence of the Trinity.”¹⁶⁰

Luther’s omission of the comma occasioned a sharp rebuke from his former teacher Hieronymus Emser (1523), who argued that it would be positively harmful for the masses to read Luther’s translation. In his comments on the comma, Emser cited the prologue of ps.-Jerome in its defence; on the basis of this prologue he suggested that the Greeks had “stolen” the comma through their disregard for the Trinity. He also noted that while Luther was clearly following Erasmus’s lead in making these omissions, he had failed to follow Erasmus’ restoration of the verse in the 1522 edition. After all, Emser argued, Erasmus had never intended his first edition to be translated immediately into the vernacular, but submitted it first to the judgment of the learned.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ WA 20:780-781. The lectures survive only in two separate students’ transcripts; the first reads: “*Quoniam tres sunt*. Istum locum gręci non habent codices, videtur studio theologorum antiquorum adversus Arianos inepte insertus, si Analogia fidei respicitur. Ubi videtur deus, non opus testimonio, hic vero opus, habemus hic tantum in verbo nec volumus aliter habere, quando non est testimonium in cęlo nec fides, quę sunt huius vitę. Relinquimus igitur [781] hunc textum. Et sequens textus eludit hunc locum. Et cavillari possum facile, quod non ineptior locus pro Trinitate.” The second set of student notes reads: “*Quoniam tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in cęlo*. Non sic Gręci libri, sed videtur a Catholicis insertus hic propter Arianos et [781] tamen minus apte, quoniam non de testibus in cęlo sed in terra passim loquitur.” Luther expressed himself in similar terms in his *Tischreden*, WA 48:688 (n° 7101); Posset, 1985, 246-248.

¹⁶¹ Emser, 1528, 128v-129r: “Aus dem .v. capitel. In dem andern parag. vorkert Luther örstlich vnsern text. do er dolmatschet der geyst ist die warheyt dann vnser text sagt nit der geist sonder Christus ist die warheyt. Zum andern bricht er jm ab / vnnd läßt auß die nachuolgende wort / nämlich / dann drey sind die do gezeugniß geben jm hymmel / der vatter / das wort / vnd der heylige geyst / vnd die drey sind ein ding / wölches wie der heylig Hieronymus sagt von den kriecken (die nichtzit von der drifeltikeyt halten) auß dem text ge- [139r] stolen worden ist. Zum dritten. do Luther dolmatschet. dann drey sind die do zewgen. Läßt er aber aussenn in terra / das ist auff der erden. Quanquam non me fugit Lutherum in his omnibus Erasmus secutum esse. Erasmus tamen, & si habuit quod pro se diceret, in secunda [*sic*] tamen editione

Melanchthon included a brief reference to the comma in the 1535 revision of his *Loci communes* (*De spiritu sancto*). Posset (1985) suggested that this was because he was not familiar with Luther's unpublished lectures on 1 John, but Melanchthon was surely sufficiently familiar with Luther's views and with Erasmus' *Annotationes*, not to mention the patristic tradition, to make up his own mind. It seems rather that Melanchthon, in distinction to Luther, found this passage a valuable witness to the nature of the divine testimony: "The expression *they bear testimony* is well said; he tells us about the way God reveals himself, that we should understand God as he reveals himself. God testifies about himself, who and what he is: the true God, creator of all things, who conserves and sustains them. And he testifies about his doctrine, about his will towards us, and affirms that there are three in heaven who have given this testimony."¹⁶² Melanchthon is typically independent, drawing his own conclusions about the value of the passage. He does not explicitly mention whether he considered the divine unity as one of essence or testimony, though on balance the latter seems more likely. Bugenhagen, Cruciger, Jonas, Forster and Aurogallus by contrast rejected the comma. The editions of the Vulgate produced at Wittenberg by Paul Eber (1564) and Paul Crellius (1574) omit the comma, consistent with the general suspicion towards this passage shown by the first two generations of Lutherans.¹⁶³

In his detailed commentary on the first Epistle of John (1544), the marginal Lutheran Thomas Naogeorgus (Kirchmeyer) left the comma out of the text. In the commentary he explained that the comma was absent from the codices he had inspected, and therefore seems to be an addition. Moreover, he adds, John is not talking of the Trinity at this point, which he does at length elsewhere; he is speaking here of those things that witness to the divinity of Christ. Moreover, Naogeorgus adds that he cannot see the point of having

postremos duos locos in integrum restituit. Nec primam suam editionem eo animo nobis communicavit / vt statim in populares diuulgari eam voluerit, sed a doctos prius comprobari, id quod de se ipse testatur."

¹⁶² Melanchthon, 1856, 14: "Recensui testimonia, quæ personam esse Spiritum sanctum convincunt, quibus addam et illud 1 Joan. 5: *Tres sunt, qui testimonium perhibent in cælo, Pater, λόγος, et Spiritus sanctus*. Quod diserte inquit, testimonium perhibent: admonet nos de patefactione Dei, ut Deum sic agnoscamus, ut se patefecit. Testificatur Deus de sese, quis et qualis sit, verus Deus, conditor rerum, conservator & opitulator. Testificatur et de doctrina sua, et de voluntate erga nos, et affirmat tres esse in cælo, qui testimonium ediderunt."

¹⁶³ Bludau, 1903a, 289; Posset, 1985, 248-251.

witnesses in heaven, since by the time we get there we will have no need of such testimonies. This rather unusual argument apparently derives from Luther, and suggests that Naogeorgus may have been in possession of notes taken during Luther's 1527 lectures on the first Epistle of John. Indeed, Naogeorgus points out that Luther, a "sincere exponent of the holy Scriptures," left the comma out of his translation. He ends his reflections on the comma by wondering why John should have applied masculine participles to things that are grammatically neuter. But for Naogeorgus, unlike for nineteenth century critics like Nolan and Dabney, this apparent grammatical dissonance hints at the textual difficulty of the passage rather than demonstrating its authenticity.¹⁶⁴

An interesting dissenting Lutheran voice is that of Lucas Lossius, a former student of Melancthon and subsequently rector of the Lutheran Gymnasium in Lüneburg. In 1552 Lossius wrote a commentary on the epistles for all the Sundays and feast days of the year as they were read in church. The Latin text he reproduces is not the Vulgate, but Erasmus' 1522 text. For Quasimodogeniti

¹⁶⁴ Naogeorgos, 1544, 128r-v: "In omnibus ferè Latinis, & nonnullis quoque Græcis, quæ ipse uiderim, exemplaribus, ante textum, Quoniam tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in terra &c. legitur: Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cœlo. pater, uerbum & spiritus sanctus, & hi tres unum sunt. Quo ego propter alterius sententiæ similitudinem ab aliquo adiectum existimo, non à Ioanne scriptum. Neque uideo quid ad hunc locum faciat. Non enim Ioannes hîc agit de personarum trinitate (quam uocant) nec de diuinitatis [128v] trinitate, quæ aliàs sufficienter & clare tradidit, sed ostendere uult, quibus testimonijs ostensus & declaratus sit Iesus quòd sit filius Dei, & hactenus probetur & ostendatur. Neque hoc intelligere possum, cui rei faciat testimonium in cœlo, quum in cœlum nobis uenientibus nullo sit opus testimonio. Videbimus enim facie ad faciem. Enimvero sane in terris tam indigemus testimonijs, ut sine illis fides nostra consistere nequeat. D. M. Lutherus syncerus sacrarum literarum assertor, etiam illam particulam in suo nouo testamento omisit, intelligens nimirum esse adulterinam, & nihil facere ad hunc locum. Miror etiam, quamobrem Ioannes tribus neutris masculina & postposuerit, & præposuerit, irata Grammatica, nisi fortassis scriptura est deprauata." Naogeorgus finishes his commentary (150v) with a rare modesty and flexibility, though he also does not fail to take the opportunity to criticise the Roman Catholic church's attitude to authority: "Hæc in epistolam Ioannis primam pro mediocritate ingenij & intellectus nostri in uerbo Dei annotauimus, permittentes liberum pijs omnibus & Apostolicæ ecclesiæ de his iudicium, nec pro oraculis hæc nostra habere cupimus, ut Papistæ solent. Sit unicuique liberum dissentire, neque dissentiens minus mihi amicus erit, & ego quoque ubi è scripturis admonitus me errasse comperero, aliud sentire, & hæc corrigere non grauabor." There is an anonymous German translation of Naogeorgus' commentary (Stuttgart [?], 1554), in Heidelberg cod. Pal. Germ. 522, with the relevant passage on 234r-235r.

Sunday Lossius gives the reading 1 Jn 5:1-10, including the comma, suggesting that this was in the lectionary in use in Lüneburg. Lossius' commentary was clearly designed to cover all bases, and he frequently reports a number of possible interpretations of any given word or passage. According to Lossius, the phrase *unum sunt* refers in the first place to the ontic unity of the three persons of the Trinity, and in the second place to the unity of their will and testimony in demonstrating the divinity of Jesus. Lossius makes no direct note of the textual difficulties of the passage, though he refers the reader to Erasmus' commentary for a "different reading" of this passage, and remarks that the German translation also varies from what he had provided.¹⁶⁵

12. Swiss reactions to the dispute over the comma

A similar hesitation ruled amongst the Swiss Reformed. In his commentary on the first letter of John, Zwingli omitted the comma in silence.¹⁶⁶ Zwingli's copy of the 1519 Basel edition of Erasmus' *Annotationes* (Zürich, Zentralbibliothek III M 5) contains no marginal comment next to the relevant passage, suggesting that the comma was unimportant to him. Oecolampadius had advised Erasmus in the preparation of the first edition of the New Testament; one can surmise that they discussed the matter of the comma while preparing the text for print. When he published his sermons on 1 John (1524), Oecolampadius simply omitted the comma from the text without further comment.¹⁶⁷ Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli's successor at Zürich, suggested that any agreement was one of witness rather than of essence, which he argued could be proven more securely from other Scriptural

¹⁶⁵ Lossius, 1552 (I used the edition Leipzig: Bapst, 1560), 307-308: "QVONIAM TRES sunt. Aetiologia, qua primum recenset testes diuinos præsentiæ Messiae, ipsas personas tres diuinitatis, Deum Patrem, Verbum & Filium Dei, & Spiritum sanctum, qui unanimi consensu testati sunt Christum esse Messiam & filium Dei, primum in baptismo Christi, Matth. 2. & 7. Deinde sæpe aliàs. Diuersam lectionem huius loci, uide apud Erasmum in annotationibus. Variat & Germanica translatio. TRES SVNT. Personæ diuinitatis. [...] [308] VNVM SVNT. Primum substantia, quia ὁμοούσιοι. Secundo, uoluntate et testimonio, quia unanimiter testantur Iesum Christum esse Messiam, filium Dei, promissum Dominum & seruatorem humani generis."

¹⁶⁶ Zwingli, 1581, 597-598; 1828-1842, 6.1:338; Posset, 1985, 251.

¹⁶⁷ Oecolampadius, 1524, 87r-88r.

passages. Following Erasmus, Bullinger suggested that in verse 8, the water signifies heavenly doctrine, the blood redemption, and the spirit truth; the person who had originally made the allegorical leap had misunderstood the natural meaning of the text. Furthermore, Bullinger followed Erasmus' judgment in the *Annotationes* that this Trinitarian interpretation had begun as a marginal gloss which a half-learned (*sciolus*) reader or scribe had integrated into the text.¹⁶⁸ The rejection of the comma by the leading Swiss Reformed theologians led to its exclusion (or at least its typographical distinction) from New Testament translations intended for use in Switzerland. The Swiss edition of Luther's translation, first printed by Froschauer at Zürich in 1529, gave the comma in small type, while the editions after that of 1531 gave it in parentheses. The Latin-German edition edited by Johannes Zwick and published at Zürich in 1535 omits the comma from the Latin text, but gives it in brackets in the German text. Leo Judaeus and Konrad Pellicanus omitted it altogether from the *Versio Tigurina* (1543).¹⁶⁹

The situation was a little different at Geneva. Calvin noted that the comma was omitted by many, though he notes the opinion of "Jerome" that the omission of this verse had come about through textual interference by the Latins. Because of the dissimilarities in the Greek readings—that is, between those that derived from Erasmus' text, and those from the Complutensian—Calvin did not feel competent to judge the issue. Nevertheless, he did consider that the text flows well if the comma is included. Moreover, since he saw that the text was present in trustworthy codices—by which he probably means printed editions rather than manuscripts—he saw no reason to reject it. "And the sense will be that God, in order to confirm our faith in Christ more fully, testifies in a threefold

¹⁶⁸ Bullinger, 1549, 103: "Quidam multis hic agunt de unitate trinitatis, sed non in loco suo. Nihil enim hic agit de unitate trinitatis, quæ alibi commodius & firmiter inducitur & comprobatur. Nam illud membrum, quod quædam insertum habent exemplaria (quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant, in cælo pater, sermo & spiritus sanctus, & hi tres unum sunt) è margine uidetur irrepsisse. Annotauit id forsitan sciolus aliquis, qui non uidit aqua significari cœlestem doctrinam, sanguine redemptionem, & spiritu uirtutem & administrationem diuinam. Fecit itaque ex aqua patrem, eo quod ex aqua omnia generari dicantur: ex sanguine filium, eo quod sanguinem fuderit: sed ex spiritu personam spiritus sancti. Verum plura huius generis annotata sunt & ab Erasmo in eruditissimis illis suis in nouum testamentum Annotationibus."

¹⁶⁹ Düsterdieck, 1852-1856, 2:355-356.

manner that we ought to agree with him.” Calvin thus concluded that the agreement spoken of refers to a unity of testimony, not one of essence, “as if he were to say that the Father, his eternal Word [*sermo*] and the spirit equally approve of Christ, like the notes of a chord [*symphonia quædam*]; and so several codices read ‘unto one’ [εἰς ἓν].” (In fact this reading [1/2G] is only attested in five manuscripts.) And even if one were to follow the reading ἓν εἶναι, there is no doubt that the Father, Son and Spirit are being described as “one” in the same sense as the blood, water and spirit are said to be one in verse 8. As far as the double appearance of the Spirit is concerned, Calvin explains that the testimony of the Spirit referred to in verse 7 is that given at the baptism of Jesus; that referred to in verse 8 is that of the Spirit in our hearts, which are of course on earth. Nevertheless, realising that many were not going to follow him in accepting the authenticity of verse 7, he goes on to give an interpretation of verse 8 as though the comma were not present.¹⁷⁰

Reaction to Calvin’s exegesis was mixed. Despite his violent differences with Calvin, Sebastian Castellio at least agreed with him in including the comma in his Latin translation of the New Testament (1551). However, the verse is enclosed in brackets in the re-editions of 1554 and 1556, with a short

¹⁷⁰ Calvin, 1671, 75: “7. *Tres sunt in cælo.*] Hoc totum à quibusdam omissum fuit. Hieronymus existimat malitia potius quam errore id fuisse factum: & quidem à Latinis duntaxat. Sed quum ne Græci quidem codices inter se consentiant, vix quicquam asserere audeo. Quia tamen optime fluit contextus si hoc membrum addatur, & video in optimis ac probatissimæ fidei codicibus haberi, ego quoque libenter amplector. Sensus autem erit, quod Deus, quo uberius nostram in Christo fidem confirmet, triplici modo testatur in eo acquiescendum esse. Nam sicuti fides nostra in una Dei essentia tres personas agnoscit, ita totidem modis ad Christum vocatur, ut se in eo sistat. Quod dicit, *tres* esse unum, ad essentiam non refertur, sed ad consensum potius. Ac si diceret, Patrem, & æternum Sermonem ejus ac Spiritum, symphonia quadam Christum pariter approbare. Itaque nonnulli codices habent εἰς ἓν. Verum etiamsi legas ἓν εἶναι, ut est in aliis exemplaribus: non tamen dubium est quin Pater, Sermo, & Spiritus eodem sensu dicantur unum esse, quo postea sanguis, & aqua, & Spiritus. Sed quum Spiritus, qui unus est testis, bis citetur: videtur esse absurda repetitio. Respondeo, quum varie de Christo testetur, apte duplicem illi attribui testandi locum. Nam è cælis Pater cum æterna sua Sapientia & Spiritu tanquam pro imperio pronunciat Jesum esse Christum. ergo illic sola divinitatis majestas nobis consideranda est. Quoniam vero Spiritus in cordibus nostris habitans, arrha, pignus, & sigillum est ad obsignandum illud decretum: hoc modo iterum in terra per gratiam suam loquitur. Cæterum quia non omnes forte lectionem hanc recipient, quæ sequuntur, perinde exponam ac si Apostolus in terra hos solos nominasset testes.”

acknowledgment that it is not found in some copies. In the Basel edition of Castellio's translation (1573), only the words *in cælo* and *in terra* are bracketed.¹⁷¹ Théodore de Bèze followed Calvin's lead, including the comma in his Greek edition, which was accompanied by a revision of Erasmus' Latin translation (1565); de Bèze, like Calvin, understood the comma to refer to a unity of witness, not of essence.

By contrast, Aegidius Hunnius (1593), a fervent Lutheran who attempted to stanch the tide of Calvinism in Marburg, took Calvin's interpretation of "that delightful testimony of John" as evidence of his tendency to "Judaize" in his theology. Hunnius harboured no doubts about the authenticity of the comma, and suggested that Calvin's interpretation of the agreement of the witnesses as one of testimony opened a window not only to Judaism, but also to Arianism. Even if Calvin was not himself an Arian, his arguments, Hunnius predicted, would be cited by Antitrinitarians in their polemics against the orthodox teaching on the Trinity. And as soon as one concession of this kind had been made to the Arians, Hunnius warned, another and yet another would follow until the Arian flood drowned the whole world.¹⁷² Calvin's orthodoxy was defended from

¹⁷¹ Castellio, 1750, 321: "Quoniam tres sunt qui testantur in cælo, Pater, Sermo & Spiritus Sanctus: & hi tres unum sunt; Item tres sunt qui testantur in terra, spiritus, & aqua, & sanguis qui tres unum sunt." Like Beza, Castellio perhaps shows the influence both of Erasmus and Calvin in translating λόγος as *Sermo*. See also Bludau, 1903a, 288-289.

¹⁷² Hunnius, 1593, 57: "Primo quod de codicibus affert, apparet, cupere ipsum, si liceret ullo aliquo prætextu, codices corruptos præferre integris, tantum ut facilius instituto suo potiri, & ex Evangelistæ dicto, consensus, non essentiae unitatem obtinere posset. Deinde quis feret [58] interpretem, absurdè adeò ex voto Arianorum pronunciantem, Patrem, Verbum, & Spiritum sanctum eodem sensu dici à Iohanne unum, quo postea sanguis, aqua & spiritus? [...] Quis ergo non videat, Diabolum [59] per acutum hoc suum instrumentum data opera tales procudere voluisse strophas elusorias, quibus Antitrinitarij propugnacula Christianorum non solum hostiliter attentare, sed etiam diruere valeant, quàmprimum aliquis in Ecclesia locus nefarijs hisce corruptelis & depravationibus Calvinii concessus fuerit. Ita fiet, ut si percontentur Ariano, ubinam ullum in scripturis dictum reperiatur, quo Trinitatis personæ dicantur VNVM, unitate videlicet κατ' οὐσίαν intellecta? [...] [60] Calvinio voce & scripto præeunte clamabunt Antitrinitarij, ad essentiam id non pertinere, sed ad consensum potius [...]. Quid mirum igitur, si procax ista libido pervertendi scripturas hac tandem infausta planeque tragica terminetur catastrophe, ut uno post alterum testimonio sic eluso, & argumento uno post alterum in cordibus hominum concusso atque diruto, longissima latissimaque via sternatur, ad Arianam hæresin plenis catarractis atque imbribus in orbem terrarum effundendam & ingurgitandam?"

Hunnius' charges by the irenic David Paraeus (1595).¹⁷³ But despite Paraeus' calls for calm, Hunnius' predictions turned out to have some foundation: the 1680 edition of Crell's Catechism for the Polish Socinian church contains an article on the spurious authority of the comma which concludes with what looks very much like a paraphrase of Calvin's exposition.¹⁷⁴

Within the Calvinist discourse, the question of the comma was never far from the spectre of Arianism. In his disputation on the three heavenly witnesses (first published 1661), François Turretini (1623-1687) reviewed the manuscript evidence for the passage. "Erasmus," Turretini narrated, "declares that [the comma] is found in the very ancient British Codex, which he considered so authoritative that he restored this verse, omitted from his previous editions, in the later editions, which he revised with utmost care, as he himself says." If the comma is missing from other manuscripts, this is to be attributed to the wicked fraud of the Arians, who removed it.¹⁷⁵ It is perhaps for this reason that the comma is cited not once, but twice in the footnotes of the Westminster catechism (1646).¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Further on this debate, see Pak, 2009, 103-113.

¹⁷⁴ Crellius, 1680, 19: "Neque enim ex eo, quia tres isti testari dicuntur, protinus concludendum est, omnes illos esse personas, quandoquidem sequenti versiculo id ipsum de spiritu, aqua & sanguine dicitur, quod testentur: cum vero dicuntur *unum esse*, aut, ut alia exemplaria habent, *in unum*, non de alia unitate id intelligi debet, quam quæ testium solet esse in testimonio dicendo plane concordium, indicio est non solum quod de testibus hic agatur; sed etiam quod similiter in sequenti versiculo de spiritu, aqua & sanguine affirmetur, hos tres *in unum esse*, seu ut Latina versio sententiam recte expressit, *unum esse*."

¹⁷⁵ Turretini, 1847-1848, IV:290: "Erasmus fatetur [hunc versum] extare in Codice Britannico vetustissimo, qui tantæ fuit apud ipsum authoritatis, ut versiculum istum in prioribus Editionibus omissum, in posterioribus accuratissima cura, ut ipse scribit, recognitis, restitueret. Laudatissimæ Editiones, Complutensis, Regia Antuerpiensis, Ariæ Montani, Rob. Stephani, Eliæ Hutteri, Valtoni, quæ probatissimis et vetustissimis Codicibus usæ sunt, retinent. Unde si in quibusdam desideratur, hoc fraudi et dolo malo Arianorum adscribendum est, qui textum hunc eraserunt, quia punctim transfigebat eorum hæresim; ut Hieronymus testatur."

¹⁷⁶ *The Confession of Faith*, 1658, 155, 159.

13. English translations

The somewhat conflicted attitude towards the comma on the part of various Protestant parties is reflected in the English bible translations of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. William Tyndale, who used the 1522 edition of Erasmus' New Testament and Luther's translation, gave the comma in the 1526 Worms edition of his New Testament without any typographical distinction.¹⁷⁷ Yet it is clear that Tyndale had some doubts about the passage. In his *Exposition of the fyrst Epistle of seynt Jhon* (1531), he included the comma in the text of the Epistle, but in his commentary he avoided the issue of the Trinity altogether, commenting exclusively on the sacraments of the water and the blood that bear witness to Christ.¹⁷⁸ In the revised edition of his New Testament (1534), Tyndale registered his reservations about the comma by placing it in parentheses and smaller type: "(For ther are thre which beare recorde in heauen / the father / the wordt / and the wholly goost. And these thre are one) For theare are thre which beare recorde (in erth:) the sprete / and water / and bloud: and these thre are one." Myles Coverdale (1535) followed Tyndale's wording and his use of parentheses to mark off the comma, albeit omitting the parentheses around the words "in erth." The Great Bible of 1539 followed Tyndale's later practice of giving the comma in parentheses and small type. However, these distinguishing marks disappeared from the Geneva Bible (1560), the Bishops' Bible (1568) and the Authorised Version (1611), which suggests a growing reluctance to call the authority of the comma into question. Cranmer's lectionary from the 1549 Book of Common Prayer (absorbed into later versions, including the 1662 Prayer

¹⁷⁷ See the facsimile edition, Tyndale, 2008, 298v.

¹⁷⁸ Tyndale, 1531, G5r: "Christe came with .iiij. witnesses / water / bloude & sprite. He ordenyde the sacrament of baptysme to be his witnesse vnto vs. And he ordenyd the sacrament of his bloude / to be his witnes vnto vs. And he powerith his sprite in to the hartes of his / to testifie & make them fele that the testimonie of those .ij. sacramentes are true. And the testimonie of thiese .iiij. is / as it after foloweth / that we haue euerlastinge life in the sonne of God. And these .iiij. are one full witnesse sufficient at the most that the lawe requireth / which saith .ij. or .iiij: at the most is one full sufficient witnes. But alas we are not taught to take the sacramentes for witnesses / but for imageseruice / & toffore the worke of them to God / with such a mynde as thold hethen offred sacrifices of bestes vnto their Gods. So that what so euer testifieth vnto vs / that we haue euerlastinge life in Christ / that mowthe haue they stopped with a leuended maunchet of their pharisaicall gloses."

Book) preserves 1 Jn 5:4-12 (including the comma) from the mediaeval lectionary as the Epistle for the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday after Easter. The Douay-Rheims version (1582) was translated from the Vulgate for Roman Catholic readers, and accordingly it includes the comma, albeit marked off with daggers. After the comma was included in the Authorised Version, its place in the English bible was secure until the eighteenth century, when alternative editions and translations again began to challenge its claim to a place in the text.¹⁷⁹

14. Catholic reactions to the dispute over the comma after the Council of Trent

On 8 April 1546, the Council of Trent declared that the "old Latin Vulgate" represents the authentic text of the bible. This pronouncement stimulated critical work at the University of Leuven to determine the most accurate form of the text. In 1547, the Leuven printer Johannes Henten issued an edition prepared by scholars at the university, based on Stephanus' 1540 text but with further manuscript readings added in the margin. The comma is signalled with obelisks, and a marginal note draws attention to the fact that it was absent from five of the Latin manuscripts consulted by the editors. In his critical comments on the New Testament (1555), the Franciscan Niklaas Zegers, professor of Scripture at Leuven, noted that the words were not to be found in the Greek copies, and were lacking from many Latin ones; the only evidence that the words are genuine is the prologue of "Jerome" and the long usage of the Catholic Church. The augmented re-edition of Henten's text prepared by Plantin and published in 1573/1574 indicates further that the words are missing from Bede and the Syriac text.

The critical comments of another of the Leuven editors, Franciscus Lucas Brugensis, engage with those of Zegers, and explain the situation in more detail, noting that the words are absent from many Greek codices (including those used by Estienne), the Syriac codices, from the Latins Augustine, Leo and Bede, and the Greeks Cyril and Oecumenius. The inversion of the verses in some Latin manuscripts would also seem to indicate that the comma is an addition. In defence of the authenticity of the comma, Lucas notes that it occurs in many Latin manuscripts, in the Complutensian edition, and is also defended by the

¹⁷⁹ See also Bludau, 1922, 128-129.

prologue to the Catholic Epistles by “Jerome” and the letter by “pope Hyginus,” clearly unaware that both these documents are forgeries. Lucas followed a similar line in his printed comments (1603) on the official Roman text of the Vulgate as promulgated in the 1590 *Editio Sixtina* and its revision, the 1592 *Editio Clementina*, both of which contain the comma.¹⁸⁰

A similarly critical stance to the advances of philology was taken by the Jesuit Benedetto Giustiniani, who noted in his commentary on the Catholic Epistles (1621) that “I confess that these words are not read in many Greek codices, in certain Latin ones, and are lacking in the Syriac translation,” not to mention from the works of many Fathers who might have been expected to cite them. Giustiniani is scornful of the “heretics and know-alls who report that one Greek manuscript reads ‘and these three are to one purpose [*ad unum*],’ or ‘unto one’ [*in unum*], as if they were conspiring precisely to the same end.”¹⁸¹ Even if the Greek manuscript says “to one purpose,” Giustiniani continues, that does not actively *deny* the doctrine that the three persons of the Trinity are one.¹⁸² For Giustiniani, philological details were all very well, but such niceties should not be allowed to disturb the lapidary formulations of doctrine.

¹⁸⁰ Lucas Brugensis, 1580, 462; Lucas Brugensis, 1603, 361; Bludau, 1903a, 289-291.

¹⁸¹ Giustiniani, 1621, 230 (the commentary on each of the letters is paginated separately): “Adde quòd tres cælestes testes omni sunt exceptione maiores, quippe cùm sint ipsissima summa veritas, quæ vt sæpe dictum est, mentiri, aut fallere nulla ratione potest. Dicuntur autem vnum esse, quod ad voluntatem coniunctionem, & consensionem heretici, & scioli nescio qui, referunt, quod in vno Græco exemplari legatur, & hi tres ad vnum, vel in vnum sunt, quasi ad idem omnino conspirent.” Giustiniani may be referring to the reading and note in Oecumenius, 1545, 216r, whom he mentions at the beginning of the note.

¹⁸² Giustiniani, 1621, 230: “Mitto cæteros, qui hoc tamquam firmissimo telo aduersùs Arianos pugnantes vna trium personarum, atque eandem naturam strenuè defendunt; neque verò Græcus ille codex huic sententiæ aduersatur. Quod enim ait, ad vnum, siue, in vnum, indicat quidem vnam, atque eandem eiusdem rei testificationem, sed substantiæ, ac naturæ vnitatem non abnegat.”

CHAPTER THREE

1. *Arius awakes*

Erasmus' initial exclusion and subsequent inclusion of the *comma Johanneum* in the text of the New Testament, perhaps one of his most controversial contributions to biblical scholarship, continued as the focus of critical and polemical attention through the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹ While Antitrinitarians were virtually universal in their rejection of the comma, Protestants and Catholics were divided over its textual authority, and adapted their attitudes according to their purposes.

That the debate over Arianism should have involved Erasmus was somehow fitting. As early as 1529, in the context of the Lord's Supper controversy, Melanchthon had accused Zwingli of being an Arian trained up by Erasmus.² Besides the fact that Erasmus had drawn attention to the issue of the comma, Antitrinitarians also drew on Erasmus for other details. Erasmus noted for example that Jesus is rarely called God in the New Testament; the word "God" without further precision invariably refers to the Father. Erasmus had also remarked in his preface to Hilary's works that this Father does not refer to the Holy Spirit as "God," and had also remarked on the fact that Jesus and the Spirit are rarely described as God in the New Testament. These points would be repeated by many Antitrinitarian writers through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³ To Myles Davies (1716), Erasmus' role in preparing a highway in the desert for heretics was clear. Merging Lk 11:12 with the famous saying that "Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched" (cf. Erasmus, *Epist.* 1528), Davies

¹ A brief account of the entire dispute is given by "Criticus" (William Orme), 1830; see also Levine, 1999.

² Melanchthon, *Epist.* 624 to Joachim Camerarius, 26.7.1529, in Melanchthon, 1834-1860, 1:1083-84; thanks to Tim Wengert for drawing my attention to this letter.

³ Snobelen, 2006, 118.

wrote:

As to [Erasmus'] revival of *Arianism*, it may be with more justice apply'd to him, what was remark'd of him by the *Romists*, as to his beginning of the Reformation, viz. *Erasmus innuit, Servetus irruit, Erasmus dubitat, Socinus asseverat*. i.e. whatsoever *Erasmus* did but point at, with his Finger, *Servetus* rush'd in upon it; where *Erasmus* did but doubt, *Socinus* affirmed; in short, *Erasmus* may be said to have laid the Eggs, the new *Arians* hatch'd the *Scorpions*; so that upon *Erasmus's* doubts, the *Arians* and *Socinians* fram'd their Assertions and Asseverations: For the *Antitrinitarians* began upon certain doubtful Questions and Interpretations of *Erasmus*, whether such or such places of Scripture used against the *Arians* were well apply'd or no?⁴

For Davies, Erasmus' teachings were not explicitly Arian, but his promotion of an aggressively inquisitive attitude towards the Scriptures led others into disastrous errors. Although Davies applauded the removal of Antitrinitarianism from the register of capital crimes by the *Act of Toleration* (1689), he was certainly no friend to Antitrinitarians, remarking that "to be contented with advising our more modern *Arians*, to stifle [*sic*] their pretended doubts within themselves, or to be satisfy'd with their designing submission, is turning the Byass too far the t'other way."⁵

At the other end of the scale we find Jean Le Clerc (1657-1736), professor at the Remonstrant Seminary in Amsterdam and editor of Erasmus' works. Le Clerc, himself denied advancement on account of the suspicion of Socinianism that had attached to his name, was quite conscious that several of his own contemporaries found Erasmus' interest in the question of Christ's divinity suspicious:

I know that there are some very erudite people who have said that Erasmus was a little too solicitous in collecting the variant readings where Christ's divinity is discussed, and that he prepared the way for those who deny that divinity. For this reason they have desired to cast upon him the

⁴ Davies, 1716, 1:42.

⁵ Davies, 1716, 1:42-3. Further on the question of Erasmus and Arianism, see Martin Lydius, *Apologia pro Erasmo* (1606), ed. in *LB X:1761-1780*, esp. 1766-1767; Burigni, 1757, 2:155, 530-533, cit. Pineau, 1924, 266-267; Jortin, 1808, 2:105, 125, 185-187, 216, 246, 250, 399-404, 411, 417, 428; Tracy, 1981; Nijenhuis, 1993, 259-260; Levine, 1999, 43-45.

suspicion of closet-Arianism. As far as the question of doctrine as such is concerned, he acquits himself in his apologetic writings, contained in the ninth volume of his works, so that to attribute any heterodoxy to him is mere calumny. And as far as those variant readings are concerned, if it is true what he says about the manuscripts and the Fathers, in whom many passages have different readings, that is no reason to chastise him. For we have no right to protect the truth through lies, which has no use of them. If Erasmus had deceived us, it would be necessary to demonstrate this, but I do not see that this is the case. And considering that we have a generous stock of passages and arguments by which to confute Arianism—even if there is some variation in several of the verbal formulations, both in the Fathers and the ancient manuscripts—let us make use of those arguments about which no doubt has been raised, and leave aside those dubious ones as they are. We should moreover rather thank Erasmus because he faithfully warned us about those on which it is unsafe to insist, and exerted such energy in his efforts to uncover the genuine meaning of the sacred oracles, which by and large he managed successfully.⁶

The debate over the question of Erasmus' alleged Arianism thus swung between two poles, represented by those who considered that Erasmus deliberately fomented doubt and heresy; and those who argued that his sole concern was to promote a pious and immediate engagement with the Scriptures, devoid of the

⁶ Le Clerc, preface to *LB* 6, *r-v: "Scio esse viros doctissimos, qui dixerint Erasmum nimis diligenter collegisse varias lectiones locorum, ubi sermo est de divinitate Christi, iisque, qui eam negant, viam muniisse. Quare eum occulti Arianismi suspectum facere voluerunt. Verum ad dogma ipsum quod attinet, ita se ipse in Apologiis, quæ nono volumine continentur, defendit, ut ei heterodoxum quidquam tribui mera nunc calumnia esset. Ad varias autem illas lectiones quod attinet, si vera sunt quæ dicit de MSS. codicibus, patribusque, apud quos aliter loca nonnulla legantur, nihil est quod illi succenseamus; neque enim nobis fas est mendaciis veritatem tueri, quæ sane iis non indiget. Quod si nos fefellisset, ostendendum id esset; quod factum non video. Itaque cum nobis sat magna suppetat locorum et argumentorum copia, quibus Arianismum confutemus, quamvis sit aliqua varietas, nonnullis in verbis, sive apud patres, sive apud priscos codices; utamur iis rationibus, quibus nihil dubium est admissum, dubiaque, prout sunt, relinquamus, et Erasmo gratias potius habeamus, quod nos de iis, quæ tuto urgeri non possunt, fideliter monuerit, totque et tantis laboribus genuinam sacrorum oraculorum sententiam aperire conatus sit, et vero etiam feliciter ut plurimum aperuerit." On Le Clerc as heir to the philological method of Erasmus and a discussion of this preface, see Asso, 2004, esp. 111-112.

claims of authority and the deceptions of those who profit from untruth.

2. Early Antitrinitarians: Servetus, Biandrata, Fausto Sozzini

The scepticism of Michael Servetus (c. 1510-1553), the father of modern Antitrinitarianism, owes a discernible debt to Erasmus. While still a teenager, Servetus acted as secretary to Juan de Quintana at the 1527 meeting at Valladolid. Soon after, Servetus wrote his book *On the errors of the Trinity*. Carlos Gilly has characterised Servetus' treatise as a reaction to Quintana's critique of Erasmus' teaching on the Trinity. Servetus consistently sides with Erasmus, following arguments from his *Annotationes* and citing from his translation. If Erasmus emphasised Jesus' humanity, Servetus took this as the starting-point for a denial of Jesus' divinity. He also took Erasmus' translation of Jn 7:39 ("the Holy Spirit did not yet exist") not as a suggestion that the Apostles had not yet been empowered by the Holy Spirit, but as evidence that the Holy Spirit did not exist before being given to humans. Servetus' ideas are thus more radical than those of Erasmus. It is clear that Servetus took a lot from Erasmus' *Annotationes*, yet he did not follow Erasmus in calling the authenticity of the comma into question. Instead he sought to work out an alternative theological position on the basis of the Scriptural texts that refer to the nature of the relationship between Jesus and God. He discusses the comma alongside two other texts, namely Jn 10:30 and 14:10. In Jn 10:30, Servetus notes that the neuter unum refers to unanimity and concord of wills, not numerical singularity. He approves of those early Christian theologians who spoke of one *ousia*, that is, of the power given by the Father to the Son, but he considered that the later coinages *homousion*, *hypostasis* and *persona* arose from a distortion of the original meaning of *ousia*.⁷ When Servetus

⁷ Servetus, 1531, 22v-23r: "Superest ad aliquos scripturæ locos respondere, ex quibus Moderni tres illas res philosophari posse putant, ut 1. Ioan. 5. Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cœlo, pater, Verbum, & Spiritus sanctus, & hi tres unum sunt. Ad quod, ut plenius satisfaciam, respondebo prius ad duos alios scripturæ locos, quos etiam ad hanc rem probandam inducunt, Ioannis 10. Ego & Pater unum sumus. Et Ioan. 14. Pater in me & ego in patre. Primum inducit Augustinus contra Arrium, quia dixit Vnum, & contra Sabellium, quia dixit, sumus. Ex quo duas illas res contra Sabellium, & unam naturam contra Arrium concludit. Ego tamen simpliciore sensum illa uerba facere puto, nam CHRISTVS loquitur & dixit, sumus, quia Deus & homo, dixit unum, ut aduersus Praxeam inquit Tertulianus [*sic*], & non dixit, Vnus,

comes to interpret the comma, his interpretation is surprisingly close to that of Joachim of Fiore, as outlined and condemned by Aquinas in his exposition of the decretal of the Lateran Council. Like Joachim, Servetus considered that the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was one of testimony only, an interpretation he also finds in the *Glossa Ordinaria*.⁸ Servetus would restate some of the same

nam Vnus singularis nu- [23r] meri significatio uidetur, quasi singularitatem unius & eiusdem rei notans. Vnum uero neutraliter, non ad singularitatem, sed ad unanimitatem & concordiam pertinet, ut duo crederentur in una uirtute. Et hoc est quod antiquiores unam usiam recte dixerunt, quia est una potestas à patre filio tradita. Posteriores tamen vocem homusion, sicut & hypostasim, & personas pessime subsannarunt, de Vsia naturam facientes, non modo contra uocabuli proprietatem, sed contra omnes scripturæ locos in quibus illa vox reperitur [...].”

⁸ Servetus, 1531, 25r-26r: “Primo testificatur pater, Quia qui misit me pater, testimonium perhibet de me, testificatur enim dicens, Hic est filius meus dilectus. Secundo testificatur Verbum, quia ipse CHRISTI sermo satis declarat eum ex Deo esse, ut ipse de se ipso testatur. Ex uerbis potissimum quantus sit ille cognoscitur, licet mundus hodie friuola & inefficacia uerba CHRISTI faciat. Sed dato spiritu cognoscentur esse uiua. Tertio testificatur Spiritus Sanctus, hoc quid sit [25v] taceo, libro sequenti expositurus. Et uidebis quid aliud posse intelligi per paracletum illum: pro nunc dico, ut Ioan. 14. & 15. declarat CHRISTVS, nam me præsentem, sermo quem audistis, seu uerba quæ ego loquor, testimonium dant: postea uos cum induti fueritis uirtute ex alto, ut Lucae ultimo dicitur, testimonium perhibebitis: & accepta per superuenientem spiritum hac uirtute, iussit eos testificari, Act. 1. Et hoc est testimonium spiritus sancti, sicut testimonium conscientiae suæ testimonium spiritus sancti uocat Paulus. Roma. 9. Et hi tres unum sunt, ut est supra declaratum, & ipsamet Glosa [*sic*] Ordinaria exponit, Vnum sunt, id est, de eadem re testantes. Mens enim Ioannis est ex conformitate testium efficaciam ueritatis ostendere, quia non uacillant seu uariant eorum testimonia, ut exceptione aliqua recusari possint, sicut in testibus uarijs fieri iure solet. Præterea Matthæi 17. dicit una glosa, Videas Moysen & Heliam colloquentes IESV. Lex enim & Prophetæ & IESVS unum loquuntur & consonant. Tres ergo ibi testificantur ipsum Verbum, CHRISTVS ipse, & Moyses, id est, lex à patre data: & Helias, id est, spiritus prophetarum, quia testimonium IESV est spiritus prophetiæ, Apoc. 19. Et hi tres unum sunt, & summus inter eos conformitatis consensus. [26r] Item ex uerbis Magistri habetur declaratio, qui Ioan. 5. citat tria testimonia. Primo, testimonium spiritus, quia Ioannes descendente spiritu testificatus est. Secundo, testimonium suum, quia opera quæ ipse facit, testificantur. Tertio, testimonium patris testificantis adducit, & ista tria concordant. Iam retorquere possumus argumentum, ostendentes dictum Ioannis non posse ad mentem illorum capi, quia est contra totum eius scopum & mentem, nam constat ibi agi non de natura illarum trium rerum, sed de fide & unitate testimonij.” Servetus picks up the argument on 64r-v: “In hoc sensu testificatur spiritus sanctus, quod supra reticui, quia spiritus descendens super CHRISTVM in Iordane, expressum testimonium Iohanni perhibuit, expresse testatus est hunc IESVM esse filium Dei, quem tu negas esse filium Dei, & ad id probandum, eius testimonium citauit Iohannes, [64v] & hi tres

arguments in his *Christianismi restitutio* (1553): that the one deity which is in the Father was communicated to the Son, the only person in whom divinity was communicated in an unmediated and corporeal way. From him the Holy and substantial Spirit [*halitus*] was given to others. Turning to the matter of the comma, Servetus argues that the three heavenly witnesses all bear witness to the unity of the deity, and the three earthly witnesses—the water, blood and spirit that issue from the dying Jesus—show that he was not an incorporeal being, but that this man was really the Son of God. It is always John’s intention, Servetus emphasises, to underline Jesus’ status as Son of God.⁹

unum sunt, quia concordant, & unum sunt, quia unius & eiusdem diuinitatis insignijs decorati. Ecce singulare illud, unum, quod quærebas, & singularissimo modo dicuntur unum esse, quia est in tribus una & eadem deitas. Et sic concedo, aliam personam patris, aliam personam filij, aliam personam spiritus sancti: & concedo patrem, filium & spiritum sanctum, tres in una deitate personas, & hæc est uera trinitas. Sed uoce scripturis extranea uti nollem, ne forte in futurum sit philosophis occasio errandi, & cum antiquioribus, qui ea uoce sanè usi sunt, nihil mihi quæstionis est, modo hæc trium rerum in uno Deo blasphema & philosophica distinctio à mentibus hominum eradicetur.”

⁹ Servetus, 1553, 22-23; I used the damaged copy in Paris, BnF; the words in brackets have been supplied from the reprint, Servetus, 1790, 22-23: “Visis contra Christum pharisæorum rationibus, antequam ad sophistarum rationes veniamus, duos scripturæ locos declarabimus, ex quibus trinitatis ratio colligitur. Vnus est, 1. Ioan. 5. Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cęlo, pater,] sermo & spiritus, & hi tres vnum sunt. Alter lo[cus est M]atth. 28. Baptizate in nomine patris & filij et spiritus san]cti. Ad quorum facilem explicationem est aduertend[um, qu]òd vna et eadem deitas, quę est in patre, communicata e]st filio Iesu Christo immediate & corporaliter. [Deinde] eo mediatore, per ministerium angelici spiritus, com[munica]ta est spiritualiter apostolis in die pentecostes. Chri[sto soli] a natura est deitas insita corporaliter & spirituali[ter.] Deinde ab eo datur alijs sanctus et substantialis [halitus.] Vtrunque communicationis modum, corporalem et spi[rit]ualem seorsum postea exponemus, substantiam ipsam spiritus sanct[i] ostendentes, quòd sit eadem deitas cum pa- [23] tre & filio. Nunc ad primum Ioannis locum dicimus, scopum eius esse, vt probet, Iesum illum esse filium Dei. Ad quod probandum adducit sex testimonia, tria in cęlo, & tria in terra, omnia concorditer testantia, hunc Iesum esse filium Dei. Hoc loco testatur sermo de filio, vt de re alia, ne sophistę sermonem illum dicant filium. De cęlo itaque probaturus Ioannes, adducit testimonium cęleste in Iordane, quando angelico ministerio descendit spiritus sanctus, quasi columba, & facta est vox de cęlis. Hic est filius meus. Apparentia, & manifesta testimonia citat Ioannes, alioqui nihil probaret. Manifesta ibi vox, & auditus sermo de cęlo, testatur, hunc Iesum esse filium Dei. Pater proferens ibi manifestatur, de cęlo testificans hunc esse filium suum. Et spiritus in eum de cęlo veniens, ibi manifestè visus testatur. Similia de se tria testimonia citat ipsemet Christus Ioan. 5. Et hæc omnia vnum sunt, quia conformiter de eadem re testantur, eiusdem deitatis

Amongst those who attacked the authenticity of the comma was Giorgio Biandrata (c. 1515-1588), a founding member of the Antitrinitarian *ecclesia minor* that broke from the mainstream Polish Calvinist church on a number of issues, notably disagreements over the Trinity. For Biandrata, Erasmus' objections to the comma were of central importance, for they showed up the inconsistency of the Fathers (notably Jerome) on this particular point. Erasmus had shown that the mention of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is absent from the best codices, "but had been added by some enemy of the Arians." In any case, Biandrata (like Calvin) placed particular emphasis on the fact that the *Glossa ordinaria* refers the comma to a unity of witness rather than to a unity of essence.¹⁰ Erasmus' objections are of such critical worth, adds Biandrata, that the burden of proof is

vnitate. Tria alia in terra testimonia citat Ioannes, quę sunt spiritus aqua & sanguis: quando fluentibus ex latere Christi aqua & sanguine, emisit spiritum, eum Deo commendans, vt homo in terra moriens. Sed quid hi [te]stantur? Equidem non rem aliquam incorpoream, sed [homi]nem ipsum esse filium Dei, à quo moriente illi tres [testes] egrediebantur. Vides mentem Ioannis, qui nullum [non mo]uet lapidem, vt probet Iesum hunc esse filium D[ei]. Sco]pus omnium scripturarum est Iesus filius Dei. Ad h[oc creden]dum nos hortatur Ioannes, si in Christo viuere [volumus.] Qui credit Iesum esse filium Dei, ex Deo natus est. [Quis est] qui vicit mundum, nisi qui credit Iesum esse filium [Dei? Qui] hoc ita non credit, non est Christianus. Qui hoc [non cre]dit, non est fundatus super illam firmam petram, [Tu es] Christus filius Dei viui, Matth. 16. Fundamentum [nostræ] salutis, & fundamentum ecclesię, est cum fiducia cred[ere,] hunc Iesum Christum esse filium Dei saluatorem nostrum." Erasmus had little time for Servetus, who came to Basel in 1530 to publish *On the errors of the Trinity* and apparently to make contact with the elder scholar. When Servetus discovered that Erasmus had left Basel, he followed him to Freiburg to present him with a copy of his book, but Erasmus received him coldly. See Homza, 1989; Gilly, 2005; Bietenholz, 2008, 35-39.

¹⁰ Biandrata, 1567, M1r: "1 Ioannis 5. Tres sunt, qui testimonium. Hic ostendit [Erasmus] Patrum inconstantiam, & Hieronymum flagellat, quod sit parum pudens, violentus plerunque, & sibi non constans. Ostendit deesse illa tria nomina, patris, filii, & spiritus sancti in melioribus codicibus, sed in margine a quopiam Arianorum hoste addita. Ostendit & Cyrillum (ex eo quod additum est, testimonium Dei maius est) elicere spiritum sanctum esse Deum. Ostendit, Hieronymum voluisse ex professo addere, Patrem, filium, & spiritum sanctum, vt inde euinceret tres personas in vnica Essentia. Sed hoc est (inquit Erasmus) non fidem confirmare, sed suspectam reddere: Præsertim cum & Glossa ordinaria, & veteres præcipui illud vnum de vno testimonio non Essentia interpretentur. Et ideo (inquit) quod negant hic Ariani, non video posse doceri, nisi ratiocinatione. Notat & Augustini regulam, quod nulla vnum dici possunt, nisi quę sunt eiusdem substantiæ, quam tam veram esse dicit, quam probat, cum nihil probet: qui hic contra Maximinum neruos intendit, vt probet ex hoc loco spiritum sanctum esse Deum. Vide quàm solidis argumentis vtantur."

incumbent on anyone who disagrees with them to show that Erasmus' critical faculties failed him in some detail. Nevertheless, Biandrata—who in fact distinguished his own position from that of Arius—also pointed out that those who accused the immensely learned Erasmus of the errors of Arius were not to be accorded any patience.¹¹ In fact, Biandrata even went so far as to suggest that it was due to divine Providence itself that Erasmus had appeared on the scene, to draw attention to the problematic status of the comma and to investigate the issue of God's unitary essence; Providence had likewise raised up men like Servetus to continue Erasmus' project.¹² Biandrata raised the issue again in another work, a refutation of the orthodox position of Péter Melius Juhász, Calvinistically-inclined bishop of Debrecen. Whereas the "ministers of Christ" (that is, the members of the *ecclesia minor*) maintained that "the one God, the Father, Jehovah, is fount and wellspring of all essences, giving essence to all, the one God from whom all things flow, lacking nothing, from whom all things have their being and life," Juhász argued that the God Jehovah is not merely the Father or fount of essence, but a certain common essence or nature in which reside three natures distinguished by three persons; these persons are in this essence, and the

¹¹ Biandrata, 1567, M1v: "Erasmi verò censuram si quis superciliosè reiiciet, nihil obstat, quominus ille, quisquis est, ab omnibus doctis, & eruditis etiam rideatur, nisi solidis rationibus euicerit, Erasmus in iudicando parum fuisse perspicacem. Hominem eum agnoscimus, at eiusmodi, vt in omni disciplinarum genere cùm istis Aristarchis fuerit conferendus, nedum vt ii sint audiendi, qui, eum Arii nugis fauisse, calumniantur."

¹² Biandrata, 1567, AA2r-v: "Stabilitis istis tenuioribus fundamentis, Deus, qui nihil imperfectum vnquam reliquit, tandem exerta Maiestatis suæ diuinæ clementia, ad sui, filiique sui cognitionem & notitiam indagandam, alios atque alios excitauit, quanquam semina quædam semper eiecisset per omnes ætates. Excitauit autem Erasmus Roterodamum, qui nostra ætate primus mouit hunc lapidem, & non obscure de vno Deo patre docuit, carpens ceteros magis, quàm apertè aliquid pronuntians: post Erasmus surrexit Michael Seruetus, qui & diligenter, & palam de vno Deo Patre, eiusque filio, contra doctrinam receptam scripsit, damnans totam illam Antichristi Sophisticam Theologiam, qui [AA2v] cùm careret fautoribus, & coadiutoribus, à Caluino suo Antagonista Geneuæ combustus est, non absque piorum multorum offendiculo; sanguine tamen doctrinam suam confirmauit, relictisque doctissimis scriptis, multos sensim ad articuli illius considerationem, & cognitionem perduxit: quorum laboribus tandem res tota (vti videmus) in arenam producta: nec dubitandum, quin & de illis diis fictitiis, & binaturis Christis, Dei Ecclesia, nostra etiam tempestate, bona ex parte non repurgetur, vt vt acerrimos sit hostes habitura, & ingentes persecutiones passura: Nouit enim dominus suos de tentationibus eripere."

essence contains the persons.¹³ In his discussion of these positions, Biandrata repeats that the comma, one of the texts most heavily relied upon by Trinitarians, is not to be found in the best codices; and that when Jesus says, “My Father and I are one,” the word “one” is neuter rather than masculine, which likewise suggests a unity of witness rather than of essence; Biandrata thus came to much the same conclusion as Calvin and de Bèze, even though his basic attitude was quite different.¹⁴

Antitrinitarians were generally happy to accept Erasmus’ attack on the one passage that so many of their opponents claimed as their silver bullet. An original and subtle interpretation of the passage was made by Fausto Sozzini (Faustus Socinus, 1533-1604). Sozzini was one of the most prominent of the early Antitrinitarians, and gave his name to its most characteristic form, which combined the typical Arian subordination of Jesus with the Sabellian understanding of the Spirit as a personification of the spiritual gifts of the Father rather than a separate hypostasis. In his detailed commentary on the first letter of John (first published in 1614), Sozzini deals with the comma because it is commonly included in the text, but he objects that while it is found in some quite accurate copies, it is not to be found in the *very best* texts. Sozzini notes that to understand properly what is going on in the entire passage, it is necessary to

¹³ Biandrata, n. d., A2v: “MINISTRORVM CHRISTI. 3. Vnus ille Deus pater Iehouah est omnium Essentiarum fons & origo, Essentians omnia, est enim ille vnus Deus ex quo omnia, Genesis 2. Exodi 6. 1 Corinthiorum 8. Ephesiorum 4. nullius rei indigus, à quo omnia suum esse & vitam habent, Genesis 17. Actorum 11. Romano. 11. PETRI MELII. Vnus ille Deus Iehouah nec est Pater, nec est fons Essentiarum, sed est communis quædam Essentia, seu natura, in qua tres resident personæ, quæ Essentia quidem distinguitur à personis, sed non est aliud ab ipsis personis, cùm personæ sint in Essentia, & Essentia ipsa contineat personas, aut quod melius est, Essentia & persona per conuersionem distinctas.”

¹⁴ Biandrata, n. d., C2v-3r: “IN TERTIA ANTITHESI. Probant iterum, Christum illum suum essentialem esse [C3r] vnum & eundem Deum cum patre & spiritu sancto. Primo ex 1. Ioannis 5. Et ii tres vnum sunt, id est vnus Deus. Item ex forma baptismi Matthæi 28. & ex Ioannis 10. Ego & pater vnum sumus. Cùm hæc omnia non ita pridem à nobis refutata sint, & iam olim à Caluino & aliis explosa, quod opus est fusius hîc disserere, breuiter tamen in gratiam piorum respondebimus. Primo dicimus, Ioannis locum illum non inueniri in melioribus codicibus, sed additum: Item, Ioannem non dixisse vnus, sed vnum neutro genere: quid verò sub vocula vnum intelligat, seipsum mox declarat, cùm addit: Tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in terra spiritus, aqua & sanguis, & ii tres vnum sunt: Et vberius Euangelii sui capite 17. Adde quod vnum apertè Ioannes ad vnitatem testimoniorum refert, non ad vnum aliquem Deum Trinum.”

explain the phrase “in heaven” in verse 7, for the traditional reading of the passage seems to imply that there are two classes of witness testifying to Christ, one group in heaven and one on earth. But Sozzini argues that this interpretation, followed by most commentators until Sozzini himself, is mistaken. Rather, he suggests that the three earthly witnesses testify to the existence of the Father, Word and Holy Spirit in heaven.¹⁵ Sozzini furthermore suggests that the phrase “and these three are one” (or “in one”) in verse 8 was not originally part of the verse, but once it had entered the text, it provided the mechanism for the invention of the comma.¹⁶

¹⁵ Sozzini, 1656, 1:241 (Commentary on 1 Jn): “Sed iam verba ista, quamvis addititia, recitemus, eaque, ut polliciti sumus explicemus: *Quoniam tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in cælo, pater, verbum, & Sanctus Spiritus, & hi tres unum sunt.* Hæc verba ut melius intelligantur, necesse est, in sequente membro pro certo ponere haberi verba illa *in terra*, ut vulgo habentur; quorum antea mentionem nullam non fecimus; quippe, quæ, etiamsi in quibusdam emendatis exemplaribus inveniuntur, in emendationibus tamen non habeantur. [...] Jam differentia inter unos & alteros testes, ut scilicet hi in terra, illi vero in cælo testentur, ita accipienda est, ut non proprie, ut verba sonant, intelligamus, in ipso cælo, & in ipsa terra testimonium reddi; sed, *testari in cælo* idem significare, *testari existentes in cælo*; quod idem valet, ac si dictum fuisset *De cælo*. *Testari vero in terra*, intelligamus similiter idem esse, ac *Testari existentes in terra*, ut postea explicabimus; non autem, ut à plerisque fit, est simpliciter intelligendum, quod uni ex istis testibus sint cœlestes, alteri vero terrestres. Neque enim *spiritus*, qui numeratur inter illos, qui testatur in terra, terrestris testis est, sed cœlestis; cum sit, ut antea asseruimus, virtus & efficacia divina.” Sozzini had made much the same point in his *Assertiones theologicae de trino et uno deo*, 1611, 127, drawing a number of conclusions for his doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁶ Sozzini, 1656, 1:242. “Verum jam ultima verba hujus particulæ, quam supposititiam esse censemus, inspiciamus atque examinemus. Sunt autem ista, *& hi tres unum sunt.* Sic enim legunt tam Latina, quam Græca vulgata exemplaria, quamvis Græca Complutensis editio habeat, *In unum sunt.* Hæc verba utrocumque modo legantur, verisimile mihi faciunt, in sequentibus post factam mentionem trium alterorum testium legi debere hæc eadem verba, quæ etiam habentur in Syriaca interpretatione, quamvis (ut supra monuimus) non pauca ex emendationibus exemplaribus, præsertim Græcis, illa non habent, sicut nec ipsa Complutensis editio habet. Mihi enim valde verisimile videtur, quod verba ista dederint occasionem addendi triplex testimonium Patris, verbi, ac Spiritus Sancti. Cum videlicet, si verba ista ad exemplum ejus, quod factum est in triplici testimonio spiritus, aquæ, & sanguinis, adderentur, facile inde colligi posset unitas essentiæ & trinitas personarum in ipso Deo; seu Patrem, verbum & Spiritum Sanctum, quamvis dicantur esse tres testes, & consequenter, tres inter se distinctæ personæ, tamen essentia esse unum & idem.”

3. *The Polish Brethren*

East-Central European Antritrinitarians tended to be quite sceptical of the comma. Jan Sommer (1540-1574) declared that the comma had crept surreptitiously into the text of the epistle, and therefore had no reason to be included.¹⁷ The comma was included in the Brest bible (1563), but the distinguished Polish-Byelorussian Antitrinitarian humanist Szymon Budny (c. 1530-1593) removed it from his 1572 revision.¹⁸ And in his annotations on the passage, Budny remarks that learned men—he mentions Erasmus, Luther, Bullinger and Zegers by name—were of the opinion that the comma was an addition to the text, and were likewise inclined to exclude it.¹⁹ Despite the opposition that Budny's revision attracted, he maintained his exclusion of the comma in the 1589 edition, a choice in which he was supported by the Lithuanian Brethren.²⁰ Budny's approach to the emendation of difficult passages was interpreted by many as a challenge to the authority of Scripture. Accordingly, he was censured for many of his editorial choices, including his excision of the comma, by the Jesuit Jakub Wujek. Wujek's rival Catholic translation of the New Testament (1593) relied explicitly and conspicuously on the authority of the Clementine Vulgate.²¹ The Calvinist editors of the New Testament published at Gdańsk in 1606 also restored the comma, which they considered had been removed from the Greek text by Arians.²²

¹⁷ Sommer, 1582, 155v-156r: "Ideo [Iohannes] colligit tria, dicens. Qui tres sunt, qui testimonium dant. Spiritus, aqua & sanguis. [...] Quomodo irrepserint alia verba de tribus [156r] testibus in cœlo, viderit Carolius."

¹⁸ *Biblia święta*, 1563, 2:133r: "Abowiem trzy są którzy świadczą na niebie / Ociec / Słowo / y Duch święty, a ci trzy iedno są. A trzy są którzy świadczą na ziemi / duch / y woda / y krew / a ci trzy na iedno się zgadzają." Budny, 1574, BB8r: "Gdyż trzy są świadczą cy / duch / y woda / y krew / A trzy w iedno są."

¹⁹ Budny, 1574, KK7r: "Lecz teo ludzie vczeni doszli / że to wszystko iest przysada." See also Fleischmann, 2006, 247-248; Fleischmann mistakenly thought that Budny's marginal comment ("Łacin: ze Christ") relates to the comma, but it refers to the variant *Christus est veritas* in v. 6 found in some manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate.

²⁰ Frick, 1989, 99-100, citing Budny, 1589, C3v-3r.

²¹ Frick, 1989, 145-147, citing Wujek, 1593, 13-15.

²² *Nowy testament*, 1606,)(5v, cit. Frick, 1989, 230-231: "[...] niesłusznie to Jezuitowie na wszystkie Księgi Greckie kładą, co w niektórych tylko od Hæretyków wymazano było, gdyż się też nie we wszystkich łacińskich te słowa znajdowały. Czemu iednak prawdziwi Chrześcianie

In 1614, Valentin Schmalz (Smalcus, 1572-1622), a German-Polish Socinian who probably contributed to the formulation of the Raków Catechism, engaged in a controversy over the comma with Hermann Ravensperg, subsequently foundation professor of theology at Groningen. Ravensperg denied that the comma was a human addition, arguing that the context demands the presence of the comma, and that 1 Jn 5:6 does not flow naturally to verse 8 without the comma; moreover, Ravensperg accused Arius of removing the verse from the text. Smalcus retorted that Ravensperg's assertions were based on an ignorance of the wording of the Greek text. Smalcus also refuted Ravensperg's suggestion that "all the more correct editions" such as Jerome, Cyprian, Erasmus' British codex, the Complutensian bible and Estienne's codices, contain the comma, the sole exception being the Syriac text. Again, Smalcus pointed out that this is just wrong.²³

sprzeciwili się. Y Athanasius to miejsce wspomina, y wyklada, także y Compluteńska Biblia z inszemi Exemplarzami te słowa ma. Spor tedy o te słowa, za przyczyną, rzecz pewna, Arrianow, między Doktorami był, y dla tego niektore, nie tylko Greckie, ale y łacińskie Exemplarze, tych słów nie miały." On 234, Frick indicates that the editors of the 1606 New Testament were to an extent reliant on Wujek.

²³ Smalcus, 1614, 49-50: "Sed tandem [Ravensperg] illustrem locum affert, 1 Ioh. 5, 7., ex quo unitatem Essentiæ, in tribus scilicet personis, probare annititur. Vnde constat, me rectè ab initio captionis accusasse Ravensperg. Duo autem monenda in hunc locum ait: Ejus certitudinem & expositionem. De certitudine disserturus, ait, versiculum hunc non esse ab homine additum; & accusat Arium, qui hunc versiculum e Bibliorum codice ejecisse fertur. Sed bene est, quòd fertur Arius ejecisse. Multa enim solere dici, quæ falsa sunt, præsertim ab adversariis malevolis, quis est qui nesciat; & mendacium hoc impudentissimum esse, quivis sensatus facillè conjectare potest. Sed audiamus, quomodo probet Ravensp., eum ab Apostolo esse conscriptum. 1. ait, *confirmat id cohærentia contextus* ver. 8. καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν, *quæ copula inepta esset, nisi quædam inter versum 6 & 8 intervenirent*. Sed magnum hoc est negligentiae Ravensp. argumentum. Nam in exemplaribus, quæ versiculo isto carent, aliter habent illa verba, nempe in hunc modum: *Hic est qui venit in aqua & sanguine, Iesus Christus, non in aqua tantum, sed in aqua & sanguine, & Spiritus est, qui testatur. Nam Spiritus veritas est. Nam tres sunt, qui testantur in terra, Spiritus, aqua & sanguis*. 2. Est. Testimoniorum duorum eandem rem confirmantium oppositio, Terreni scilicet, & cœlestis, *Cur enim, ait, tres testimonium dare in terra dicerentur, nisi testimonii dati in cælo mentio facta fuisset?* Sed & hoc ejusdem valoris est. Nam in plerisque exemplaribus, quæ versiculo isto carent, desunt etiam illa verba, *In terra*. Videatur versio Iunii & Tremellii, & Erasmi annotationes in hunc locum, qui ait: *In græco codice tantum hoc reperio de testimonio triplici: Quia tres sunt, qui testantur, Spiritus, aqua, & sanguis*. & Cyrilli affert testimonium, qui, contra Arianos dimicans, locum hunc omiserit, non omissurus

Johannes Crell (1590-1633)—head of the Socinian Academy at Raków, which would be shut down by the Polish crown four years after Crell’s death—used Erasmus’ *Annotationes* as evidence that the comma had crept into the text from the margin, and borrows Calvin’s argument that the original form of the comma in the Greek text refers to heavenly doctrine, redemption and truth rather than to the orthodox conception of the Trinity, a notion to which Crell as a Socinian was opposed.²⁴ Given the reservations that Socinians harboured about the comma, it is curious to note that Crell’s edition of the bible (1630) contains the comma, albeit marked off in distinct letters.²⁵

Nevertheless, the comma was definitively rejected by the Antitrinitarian apologist Christoph Sandius (1644-1680) in a twenty-page appendix to his *Paradoxical interpretations of the four Gospels* (*Interpretationes Paradoxæ quatuor evangeliorum*; 1669). “These words are missing from an infinite number of Greek codices, and indeed from the very oldest, amongst which the first place is taken by the so-called Codex of St Thecla.”²⁶ Sandius reported that the comma was missing from the body text of the manuscript in the Franciscan monastery in Antwerp mentioned by Erasmus. He cited the absence of the comma from Codex Vaticanus (B) and from the seven other codices Erasmus had consulted for his

eum, si aut scisset, aut credidisset, hoc fuisse scriptum ab Apostolo. Videatur etiam iudicium Theologorum Lovaniensium. 3. est. Consensus tum veterum tum recentiorum exemplarium. *Habent enim, ait, hæc verba, præter Syriacum exemplar, correctæ exemplaria omnia, Legit eadem Hieronymus, Cyprianus, Britannicus codex, Complutensis editio, & vetusti Rob. Stephani libri.* Primum falsum est, quod dicitur de correctioribus exemplaribus omnibus. Nam omnia ferè exemplaria Græca, & antiquiora latina, verba illa non habent; Syriacæ etiam versionis autoritas non postrema est: Illis verò, qui verba ista legunt, opponi possunt tot autoritates veterum & recentiorum, ut meritò eos pudere debeat, qui contrarium [50] affirmant. Vni enim Hieronymo (nam Cyprianum non meminit) opponit Beza, Nazianzenum, Athanasium, Dydimum, Chrysostomum, Hilarium, Cyrillum, Augustinum, Bedam. Plerosque horum Erasmus etiam commemorat, & alia multa scribit, unde apparet, verba ista prorsus esse suspecta & adulterina.”

²⁴ Crell, 1678, 111.

²⁵ Düsterdieck, 1852-1856, 2:356.

²⁶ Sandius, 1669, 376: “His verbis carent infiniti codices *M.S. græci*, & quidem vetustissimi, inter quos primum locum obtinet codex S. Theclæ dictus [...].” This “Codex S. Theclæ” is Codex Alexandrinus, quoted previously by Grotius in his *Annotations*; see Gregory, 1900-1909, 1:31.

first edition of the New Testament.²⁷ He also mentioned with approval the fact that the comma was rejected by Luther, Bugenhagen and Naogeorgos. Sandius (like Selden after him, see below) also asserted that the prologue to the Catholic Epistles was not written by Jerome, thus removing an important piece of evidence cited by defenders of the comma.²⁸

4. *Changing opinions amongst the Lutherans*

While many Protestants in the first half of the sixteenth century were sceptical or at least reserved about the comma, the reappearance of Antitrinitarianism in the middle of the sixteenth century prompted a greater acceptance amongst Protestant theologians searching for biblical evidence of the Trinity. Yet their attitudes were by no means uniform. The Danish Lutheran theologian Niels Hemmingsen (1513-1600), a former student of Melanchthon and subsequently professor of theology at the University of Copenhagen, defended the veracity of the comma in his commentary on the first letter of John, published in 1569. Hemmingsen—while not denying the unity of the divine essence—preferred to read the text according to its natural meaning: that the Father, Word and Spirit all give united testimony to the teaching of Christ and the salvation that comes through him. In any case, this united witness should be borne in mind as a weapon against the machinations of Satan and the pseudo-prophets, who intend the ruin of humankind. Moreover, since the comma is to be found “in the most reliable copies, both Greek and Latin,” and since it fits so well into the text, Hemmingsen saw no reason to omit it.²⁹

²⁷ Sandius, 1669, 377: “Observavit etiam Erasmus codicem è Bibliothecâ Minoritarum Antverpiensium, & pervetustum Bibliothecæ Vaticanæ codicem, qui loco hoc caruerunt: & ad annot. nov. Edvard. Lei. h. l. dicit se vidisse plura quàm septem exemplaria, hoc loco destituta.”

²⁸ Sandius, 1669, 382-385.

²⁹ Hemmingsen, 1569, 221: “*Nam tres sunt qui testificantur in cælo, Pater, Verbum, & Spiritus sanctus, & hi tres vnum sunt.* Quorsum ea pertineant, quæ dixit, explicat & distinctius discernit inter ea testimonia, quæ recensuit uersu superiori. In hoc enim uersu tres testes enumerat, qui de cælo testantur de Christo, qui sunt Pater, λόγος, & Spiritus sanctus. Pater sonabat de cælo hanc uocem: Hic est Filius meus dilectus, idque bis, uidelicet in baptismo & in transfiguratione. Filius qui ascendit uisibiliter in cælum, & sedit ad dexteram Patris, testatus est de Euangelio, non solum dum in terris ageret uisibiliter diuinis suis operibus, sed etiam hodie testatur, dum suam Ecclesiam mirabiliter seruat in tantis persecutionibus & furoribus

Another former student of Melanchthon, the Wittenberg theologian Nicolaus Selnecker (1532-1592), one of the authors of the *Formula of Concord*, gave a similar opinion on the comma in his guide for ordinands. The comma was omitted (he writes) by Cyril, Augustine and Bede, the translator of the Syriac version and Luther, not because they did not approve of the doctrinal content, but because they believed that such an important doctrine should not be based on such shaky textual evidence. He notes that Jerome (i.e. most Vulgate texts by this time), “several” Greek codices, Erasmus and the Complutensian edition include the comma. Selnecker suggests that the words were originally excised by Arians; such interference with Scripture was likewise reported by Socrates Ecclesiasticus, Justin Martyr and Tertullian.³⁰

Diabolorum & hominum, & cum dona dat Ecclesiæ, alios quidem Apostolos, alios Prophetas, alios Euangelistas, alios Pastores & Doctores ad instaurationem sanctorum, ut ædificetur corpus Christi, ad Ephes. 4. Spiritus sanctus in baptismo Christi, in columbæ specie testatus est de Christo, & uisibiliter illapsus in Apostolos ipso [222] die Pentecostes à resurrectione Domini multis miraculis Christi Euangelium de pœnitentia & remissionem peccatorum confirmauit. Et hodiè in omnibus sanctis arrabo est hæreditatis promissæ. Hi tres testes, Pater, λόγος & Spiritus sanctus unum sunt, id est, de eadem Christi doctrina, & salute per illum consequenda, consentiunt, non secus atque unus testis esset. Quidam interpretantur: Vnum sunt, scilicet essentia seu natura diuina: quæ sententia etsi uera est, hoc tamen loco minimè congruit, quemadmodum ex sequenti uersiculo patebit, in quo ista interpretatio locum non habet. Porro, hæc Apostoli uerba sint nobis in conspectu, & his cœlestibus testimonijs muniamus non aduersus omnes Satanæ & Pseudoprophetarum technas, & corruptelas, quæ excogitantur ad euertendam Euangelij certitudinem in perniciem humani generis. Cur autem quidam expunxerint totam hanc sententiam ex textu, præsertim, cùm optimè quadret, & inueniantur in probatissimis exemplaribus, græcis & latinis, non uideo.”

³⁰ Selnecker, 1584, 205-206: “*Qui fit, quòd uerba 1. Ioh. 5. (Pater, Logos & Spiritus sanctus vnum sunt &c.) non leguntur in omnibus exemplaribus noui testamenti?* Cyrillus, Augustinus, Oecumenius, Beda, Syrus paraphrastes, & Lutherus in versione germanica, omittunt uerba illa, cùm in dubium à nonnullis uocata sint. Omittunt autem, non ut illa non maximè probent, sed ne videantur uti uelle testimonio, de cuius autoritate dubitetur, in confirmatione summi articuli. Hieronymus autem, Græci codices plerique, & Erasmus, ac Complutensis editio retinent uerba illa hoc modo: Tres sunt, qui testificantur in cœlo, Pater, Verbum, & spiritus sanctus: & hi tres vnum [206] sunt. Dispuncta uerò illa uel per Arianos, uel per pneumatomachos fuisse, uerisimile est, quemadmodum accidit etiam sententiæ 1. Iohan. 4. Omnis spiritus, qui soluit Christum, non est ex Deo. Hanc enim per Nestorianos remotam fuisse, Socrates tripart. hist. lib. 7. testatur. Licet autem Deus permittat malis temeritatem istam, tamen dolos eorum aperit, & ueritatem conseruat, sicut factum legimus etiam Psalmo 96. ex quo Iudæos expunxisse hæc uerba (Dicite in gentibus, Dominus regnauit à ligno, ἀπὸ τοῦ

In 1599, Conrad Schlüsselberg, professor of theology at the school at Stralsund and superintendent of Pomerania, published a series of *Catalogues of Heretics*. On the title page of the eleventh of these catalogues, in which he refuted the followers of Servetus, Schlüsselberg placed the comma as his motto, indicating the weight he placed on it. “For John says most clearly, ‘For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the *Logos*, and the Holy Ghost,’ (do you hear these three persons?), and then he continues, ‘and these three are one.’ The Arians criticise the church’s statement that God is one and yet three, an expression that is not inconsistent with the words of John the Evangelist, who says, ‘and these three are one.’”³¹ Martin Chemnitz (1599) raised the issue in his treatment of the Holy Spirit; whatever the textual status of the comma, Chemnitz suggested, Scripture is quite clear on the divinity of the Spirit.³² In his commentary on the Catholic Epistles (1608), Benedictus Aretius of Bern accepted the comma, and insisted (implicitly criticising Calvin) that the agreement of the three heavenly witnesses refers to their essence and not merely their witness. Aretius also ran the ridiculous argument that the Arians had attempted to expunge the comma from the Syriac text. But, he concluded, since this verse had been restored in “all the corrected versions these days,” the reader ought not place any weight on the absence of the comma from the Syriac

ξύλου.) Iustinus Martyr in Tryphone testatur. Et citat eadem Tertullianus contra Marcionem, & Bernhardus. Ac in hymno canimus: Impleta sunt, quæ concinit Dauid fidelis carmine, dicens, In nationibus regnavit à ligno Deus.”

³¹ Schlüsselberg, 1599, 570: “Liquidissime etiam Iohannes inquit, *Tres sunt in cælo qui testimonium perhibent, pater, λόγος & S. S.* (Audis tres personas?) & sequitur, *& hi tres vnum sunt.* Sed exagitant Ariani locutionem ecclesiæ, vnum esse Deum & tamen trinum, quæ quidem oratio non discrepat à verbis Euangelistæ Iohannis, qui inquit, *Hi tres vnum sunt.*”

³² Chemnitz, 1599, 249: “De loco vero 1. Ioan. 5. v. 7. magna est disputatio: quibusdam contententibus in Græcis exemplaribus hæc verba: Tres sunt qui testantur in cælo, Pater, Verbum, & Spiritus sanctus: & hi tres unum sunt, non haberi. Sed Heronymus [*sic*] in Præfatione Epistolarum Canoniarum diserte dicit, in Græco hæc haberi; sed a Latinis interpretibus esse ommissa. Et ideo Augustinus ac Beda, in commentariis super Epistolam hanc, istum locum neque legunt, neque explicant. Cyrillus etiam tractans locum de Spiritu sancto, cum textum quinti capitis allegat, huius loci mentionem non facit: cum tamen firmissimum fuisset argumentum. Et in Germanica translatione Lutheri, verba illa etiam non sunt addita. Sed relinquam hanc disputationem in medio, de qua si quis plura desiderat scire, legat annotationes Erasmi. Sive enim legatur hic locus sive non legatur, manifeste tamen ex illo textu Spiritus sancti divinitas probatur.”

version.³³ In his refutation of Smalcius, Johannes Saubert (1615), professor at Altorf, still considered the comma “a centurion of the first rank” in the war against the Arians. While he admitted that the status of the comma was problematic, he also suggested that this was due to an Arian offensive to expunge it from the text.³⁴ Jesper Rasmussen Brochmand (1585-1652), Lutheran bishop of Køge, quoted the comma in an examination of the general reliability of Scripture. Espousing the position that there is nothing doubtful or unreliable in Scripture, Brochmand notes a number of passages falsely thought to contain errors, including the comma. While critics may point out that this passage was omitted by Luther and called into doubt by Calvin, Brochmand stated that Jerome’s prologue to the Catholic Epistles shows that he harboured no suspicions about it; moreover, it appears not merely in the Complutensian edition, but also in the “very ancient” Codex Britannicus, which was “praised to the uttermost degree by Erasmus.”³⁵

³³ Aretius, 1608, 257: “Tres testes Diuinitatis Christi profert ex cœlo, vt monstret efficaciam Spiritus operantis per prædicationem Euangelij veram esse. Tres, inquit, sunt in Cœlo huius rei testes, Pater, qui in Baptismo hoc testatur, Matth. 3. λόγος & ipse Filius, qui idem non negat, imò affirmat, Ioan. 14. & cap. 17. & alibi frequenter. Spiritus quoque Sanctus idem testatur, qui in Baptismo præsens est specie columbæ, & à Christo vt consolator suorum mittitur à Patre in corda fidelium. Atque hi tres vnum sunt, ἐν εἶναι, non solum consensu, quod quidem verissimum est, h. e. eadem est trium personarum Diuinitas, substantia & dignitas. Idem etiam sunt consensu. Nam vnum & idem docent de Christi natura, quòd sit Dei Filius. Hunc versum deleuerunt ex Syriaco Testamento indubiè Arriani, qui hoc fulmine prosternuntur valide. Ideo olim quoque in multis exemplaribus Græcis & Latinis defuit. Sed habent hæc verba hodie correcta exemplaria omnia, & legit eadem Augustinus & Hieronymus. Ideo non moueat nos Syriacum exemplar.”

³⁴ Saubert, 1615, 28-29: “Agmen claudit Locus insignis, & qui in militiâ hac Centurionis primipili instar esse nobis debeat, videl. ex 1 Ioh. 5. vers. 7. Tres sunt, qui testimonium &c. [...] Quod verò sub finem Præses [sc. Jakob Schopper] Locum istum ab Arianis expunctum esse ait, verè ait.”

³⁵ Brochmand, 1638, 37: “Quintò adducunt præclarum illud testimonium de Trinitate, traditum 1. Joh. 5. v. 7.: quod tamen, censore Gordono, Lutherus è textu expunxit, Calvinus verò in dubium vocavit. Ut verò missis Personis, de re ipsâ agamus: negare non possunt Pontificij, quin illustre illud Trinitatis testimonium extiterit in exemplaribus Græcis, quibus suo tempore usus est Hieronymus, teste ipso Hieronymo in Prologo Epistolarum Canoniarum ad Eustachium. Nihil dicam de vetustissimo codice Britaninco [sic], ab Erasmo supra modum laudato: Omitto editionem Complutensem, ut & novem illa exemplaria Græca Henrici Stephani: in quibus editionibus, omnibus & singulis, versus, de quo controversia est, invenitur.” Gordon, 1632,

Once Protestant divines began to defend the comma on doctrinal rather than textual grounds in reaction to the rise of Antitrinitarianism, it also began to reappear in Protestant bibles. The parentheses marking off the comma in Swiss German bibles first disappeared in an edition of 1597. While editions of Luther's translation were still being produced in which the comma was omitted (Wittenberg, 1607; Hamburg, 1596, 1619, 1620) or distinguished through typographical means (Wittenberg, 1599), German editions also began to appear in which the comma was included for the first time (Frankfurt, 1593; Wittenberg, 1596, 1597; Hamburg, 1596).³⁶

5. Catholic opposition to Antitrinitarianism

Although the Antitrinitarians in Poland and Transylvania were refuted principally by Calvinists and to a lesser extent Lutherans, the later sixteenth century saw an increased wave of popularity for the comma amongst Catholic critics as well. Erasmus' annotation on the comma was placed on the *Index*, and readers were directed to expunge the relevant words from their copies.³⁷ Alfonso de Castro (1541) defended the reading, noting that John had written "three" to confute Sabellius and "one" to confound Arius—forgetting that neither man was born until at least a century after the Epistle was written.³⁸ On the strength of the testimony of ps.-Jerome, the Franciscan Miguel de Medina (1564) flatly denied Erasmus' claims that Augustine had declined to comment on the comma in his commentary on the Epistle, and that the comma was lacking from most codices.³⁹ In his 1585 refutation of the atheist Christian Francken, who had criticised the

3:674, discusses the passage briefly, but does not mention Luther or Calvin.

³⁶ Düsterdieck, 1852-1856, 2:355-356.

³⁷ *Index expurgatorius*, 1586, 269; Coogan, 1992, 110; Henderson, 2007, 162-164 on Erasmus and the *Index*.

³⁸ Castro, 1541, 97v: "Hoc autem testimonium adeo est clarum, vt nulla possit tergiuersatione celari. Ibi enim audis tres, & vnum. Tres contra Sabellium, vnum contra Arium."

³⁹ Medina, 1564, 212v: "Illud tamen in hac parte notandum falsum esse, quod Erasmus scribit, Augustinum hunc locum contempsisse cum in eam, quemadmodum & in totum reliquum Ioannis euangelium, absque ullo discrimine commentarios ediderit. Sed neque Hieronymus aduersus Pelagianos, huius loci testimonium adducere timuit, dicens, ut ait Erasmus, In multis Græcis & Latinis codicibus non inueniri. Immò planè contrarium agit Hieronymus."

doctrine of the Trinity as a *figmentum Papæ*, the Kraków philosopher Jakub Górski relied explicitly on the comma as evidence of the existence of the Trinity.⁴⁰ Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino (1602) was aware of Erasmus' work on the New Testament, but retained the comma as a weapon to confute the arguments of Biandrata. Whereas Biandrata had opined that the only Father to quote the comma was Jerome (he clearly has the pseudonymous preface to the Catholic Epistles in mind), Bellarmino argued that the comma is also cited by Hyginus, Cyprian, Idacius, Athanasius, Fulgentius and Eugenius of Carthage. To Biandrata's objection that the Spirit, water and blood are not one, Bellarmino states that many Greek codices either omit these words in verse 8, or read "these three are *unto* one," in other words they agree in their testimony to Christ. The phrase "these three *are* one" is only used in reference to the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Bellarmino's selective use of the philological evidence provided by Erasmus is misleading, while his co-opting of those Latin Fathers whose works merely show a knowledge of the allegorical interpretation of 1 Jn 5:8 is nothing short of deceptive. Moreover, Bellarmino's reliance on the decretal of ps.-Hyginus is quite unworthy.⁴¹ The Jesuit Nicolaus Serarius (1612) noted that Erasmus considered the comma a *locus dubius*, and that it had been excluded from the translation of Luther, who had been followed by the "new Arians." Serarius somewhat optimistically asserts that the comma is however to be found

⁴⁰ Górski, 1585, 36, "Hæc est vita æterna, vt te Deum patrem, solum, & verum Deum cognoscant, & quem misisti Christum Iesum, inquit ipsa veritas, via, ac vita nostra, & propterea nos baptizari & mundari præcepit, in nomine patris, & filij, & spiritus sancti, qui tres in cælo testimonium dant, vt inquit Ioannes [...]."

⁴¹ Bellarmino, 1602, vol. I, 88-89: "Decimum testimonium, *Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo Pater, verbum, & Spiritussanctus, & hi tres vnum sunt, & tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra Spiritus, aqua, & sanguis.* [89] Respondet Blandrata [in margine: disput. 2. Albana.] à nullo authore legi illa, *Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo*, excepto Hierony. Sed [in margine: epist. 1.] Higinus, Cyprian. [in margine: libro de vnitate Ecclesiæ.] Idacius, [in margine: lib. aduers. Varimadum.] Athanas. [k. lib. 1 ad Theophili de vnita. deitate Trinit. vltra medium.] Fulgent. [in margine: lib. contra obiectiones Arianor. prope extremo.] & Eugeni. [in margine: in expositione fidei Catholicæ.] Carthagin. ita legerunt. Deinde ait dici Spiritum, aquam, & sanguinem vnum esse: quæ certò nec numero, nec specie sunt idem. Sed illud, *Et hi tres vnum sunt*, cum agitur de spiritu, aqua, & sanguine, non habetur in multis Latinis codicibus. Græci codices habent quidem καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἶναι. *Et hi tres in vnum sunt*, vbi tantum denotatur vnitas testimonij. At cum agitur de Patre, Filio & Spiritus sancto absolutè καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἶσι: *Et hi tres vnum sunt.*" Further on Erasmus and Bellarmino, see Coogan, 1992, 111-113.

in “a large number of Greek manuscripts,” and that Erasmus himself had cited its appearance in “a Spanish and an English Greek manuscript,” apparently an inaccurate recollection of Erasmus’ taunt about Stunica’s Codex Rhodiensis.⁴² Libert Froidmont (1663) later noted that both Erasmus and Cajetan harboured reservations about the comma. Nevertheless, it seems that Froidmont himself was inclined to favour the authenticity of the verse, for he notes that Jerome had defended its veracity; moreover, he repeats the story that the Arians had tried to delete the verse, and that the Latin translation used by Augustine was made from a Greek original thus mutilated.⁴³

Several Counter-Reformation figures considered the attitude of the Protestant Reformers towards the Johannine comma as a symptom of a broader problem pervading the schismatic churches. The prominent Capuchin preacher Lorenzo da Brindisi (1559-1619, canonised in 1881 and declared a doctor of the church in 1959) wrote a vigorous three-volume refutation of Lutheran theology. Like the “unfaithful translators” against whom Jerome had railed, Luther had expunged the comma from the canon of Scripture. “God only knows what he thinks about the Trinity,” Lorenzo fretted.⁴⁴ According to Lorenzo, the Lutheran

⁴² Serarius, 1612, 70-71: “Versus 7. *Quoniam tres sunt, &c.* in quibusdam Græcis non legitur, neque in Syro, neque in Latinis quinque ad Erasmo citatis. [...] ex istis coniecturis, dubium locum istum voluit Erasmus: Bullingerus, è margine irrepsisse in textum putauit: Lutherus in sua versione Germanica è textu penitus exterminauit, ad eo vt ne in margine quidem vestigium vllum ponat. Et eum secuti noui Ariani, de quibus lib. 1. de CHRISTO, cap. 6. Bellarminus. Sed 1. versus iste in Latinis, penè innumerabilibus legitur, & quidem in correctis. 2. In Græcis quam plurimis: & citat Erasmus ipse Hispaniensem, & Anglicum Cod. manusc. Græcum.”

⁴³ Froidmont, 1663, 657: “Hic tamen versus olim defuit quibusdam textibus Græcis & Latinis: undè ejus non meminit Augustinus; nec multi Patres, tàm Græci quàm Latini solent illo uti adversùs Arianos: undè Erasmus & Cajetanus dubitant, an sit Sacræ Scripturæ pars. Sed S. Hieronymus fortiter retinet, & dicit ab infidelibus translatoribus Arianis omissum fuisse. Aut certè videntur Græci Ariani ex multis Codicibus Græcis primùm erasisse; & deindè translationem Latinam, quâ S. Augustinus & multi Patres usi sunt, ex Codice Græco mutilato factam fuisse. Deindè Henricus Stephanus ex sedecim vetustis exemplaribus Græcis dicit se tantùm septem reperisse in quibus deerat iste versus. Denique Maiores nostri Lovanienses, quando ad emendationem Bibliorum plurima undique manuscripta exemplaria coacervaverunt, nonnisi quinque mutilata isto versu invenerunt.”

⁴⁴ Lorenzo da Brindisi, 1928-1959, 2:448: “Nam quid de Trinitate senserint, Deus novit; hoc certum est quod ex suis bibliis expunxit illud Ioannis: *Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo: Pater, Verbum et Spiritus Sanctus, et hi tres unum sunt*, quod Hieronymus *Præfatione in Catholicas Epistolas* ab infidelibus translatoribus omissum queritur.”

scepticism towards councils was potentially dangerous, since it kicked one of the legs out from under doctrine. For example, if the Lutherans disregarded the authority of the Council of Nicaea, they were left with only Scripture to support the doctrine of the Trinity. And if they got rid of the comma, they were rendered unable to demonstrate the doctrine effectively from the Scriptures. “For this reason we must conclude that either the Lutherans have no belief in the Trinity, or a very weak faith which they are entirely unable to defend against the new Arians and Antitrinitarians, who have no regard for councils.”⁴⁵ In short, Lorenzo concludes, “Luther was an outstanding artificer in the adulteration of God’s word. Inspired by the spirit of Satan, he dared to transfigure himself into a prophet of God and evangelist of Christ.”⁴⁶

The Jesuit Adam Tanner, professor of scholastic theology at Ingolstadt (1613), echoed Lorenzo’s view that Luther’s rejection of the comma was a symptom of his distressingly casual attitude to the authority of the entire canon of Scripture.⁴⁷ The English Jesuit James Sharpe (*The triall of the Protestant private spirit*, 1630) likewise suggested that the Protestant attitude towards the comma smacked of heresy: “[Luther] did leaue out of his *Germane* bible those words of S. Iohn (alleadged by *Athanasius*, *Cyprian*, & *Fulgentius* to proue the blessed Trinity against the *Arrians*) *There are three which giue testimony in heauen, the father, the word and the holy ghost, and these three are one.* To all which also *Caluin* subscribes, who [...] wrests all those places (by which the Fathers out of the old and new Testament did proue against Iews, and *Arrians*, the diuinity of Christ), to a contrary sense and meaning, as the *Lutherans* in diuers bookes on set purpose against him haue conuincid [...]. All which are directly contrary to the

⁴⁵ Lorenzo da Brindisi, 1928-1959, 2:270: “Quare necesse est ut apud Lutheranos vel nulla sit Trinitatis fides, vel quam infirma, quam a novis Arianis et Trinitariis, qui concilia nihili faciunt, tueri nullo modo possint.”

⁴⁶ Lorenzo da Brindisi, 1928-1959, 2.2:126: “Hac vero in parte Lutherus insignis fuit verbi Dei adulterandi artifex pessimusque adulterator satanico spiritu ausus se in prophetam Dei Christique evangelistam transfigurare [...]”

⁴⁷ Tanner, 1613, 51: “Sed & Lutherum quoque per detractionem sacram scripturam violasse, ex eo manifestum euadit, quod non solum vnum subinde vel alterum verbum, aut etiam sententiam [...] 1. Ioann. 5. v. 7. *Tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in cælo, Pater, Verbum, & Spiritus sanctus. Et hi tres unum sunt, &c.* quod præclarissimum est SS. Trinitatis testimonium: sed integros libros si quando minus ad suum stomachum ac præiudicatum errorem facere videbantur à Canone sacræ scripturæ & sacrorum Bibliorum corpore resecare ausus est.”

auncient orthodox, and Catholicke doctrine of the *B. Trinity, three persons, and one God*.”⁴⁸

In its dealings with non-European traditions, the Roman Catholic church was apt to make assumptions about foreign attitudes towards the comma. In 1550 a Latin translation of a number of Ethiopic liturgies was printed along with a letter from Gelāwdēwōs (Claudius), emperor of Ethiopia, who had recently solicited aid from pope Paul III. While the Ethiopic rubrics only give the references of the passages to be read, the Latin translation provides the full text of the readings. In the Latin version, the reading 1 Jn 5-13, intoned by the subdeacon, contains the comma, thus suggesting misleadingly that the comma was contained in the Ethiopic text.⁴⁹ Even more pointedly, when the St Thomas Christians of India, formerly associated with the Eastern Syrian church, united with the Roman Catholic church at the Council of Diamper (1599), they were officially obliged to “amend” their Syriac bibles, which excluded the comma, to make them consonant with the Latin Vulgate.⁵⁰

The comma also spread from the west to other traditions. It is quoted in the Orthodox Confession of the Eastern Church, drawn up in 1643 under the direction of Peter Mogilas, metropolitan of Kiev. This Confession was intended to distinguish the eastern position clearly from the Roman Catholic and Protestant positions, and was consequently adopted by the Graeco-Russian synod at Jassy (1643) and the synod of Jerusalem (1672). Ironically, the comma—quoted from de Bèze’s text—is employed in the Confession as a weapon against the western doctrine of the *filioque*: “In the divine essence, the Father is the cause of the Son and the Holy Spirit, because both these persons have their origin from him, but he from no one.”⁵¹ Probably as a result of the

⁴⁸ Sharpe, 1625, 303-304.

⁴⁹ *Modus baptizandi*, 1550, C1v; Trumpp, 1878, 161 (Ethiopic), 176 (German translation). Thanks to Martin Heide for his assistance with the Ethiopic text.

⁵⁰ Geddes, 1694, 134.

⁵¹ Schaff, 1919, II:275; the text is given in Kimmel, 1843, 64-65, and Schaff, 1919, II:283-284: “Ἀλλὰ μὴν ὁ Πατήρ εἶναι Θεὸς κατὰ φύσιν ἀληθὴς καὶ αἰώνιος, καὶ πάντων ποιητὴς τῶν ὁρατῶν καὶ ἀοράτων, τοιοῦτος λοιπὸν εἶναι καὶ ὁ Υἱὸς καὶ τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα. Καὶ εἶναι ὁμοούσια ἀλλήλοις, κατὰ τὴν διδασκαλίαν τοῦ Εὐαγγελιστοῦ Ἰωάννου, ὁποῦ λέγει (α'. Ἰωαν. ε'. ζ'). ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ Πατήρ, ὁ Λόγος καὶ τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα· καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσιν. Εἰς τὰ ὁποῖα λόγια τοῦτο μόνον ἐξαιρεῖται, ὁποῦ ὁ Πατήρ εἶναι αἷτιος εἰς τὴν Θεότητα τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος· ταῦτα δὲ τὰ δύο πρόσωπα εἶναι ἐξ ἐκείνου, ἐκεῖνος δὲ ἐξ οὐδενός.” The

Confession, the comma first appeared in the Slavonic text in an edition of the Acts and Epistles printed in 1653.⁵²

In such a state of confusion, it is hardly surprising that many theologians, preachers and scholars simply chose not to enter into the debate, and carried on as if the textual status of the comma had never been called into question.⁵³ In his *Annotationes decem in sacram scripturam* (1547), the Spanish humanist Pedro Antonio Beuter (c. 1495-c. 1555) advocated a historical and philological interpretation of Scripture. Citing Erasmus as his model, he suggested that readers should have recourse to the Hebrew and Greek text when the Latin is unclear. Despite what seems to be a very progressive approach, Beuter still cites the comma as the most important evidence in Scripture for the doctrine of the Trinity.⁵⁴ The late sixteenth-century Orientalist Benito Arias Montano, one of the editors of the Antwerp Polyglot, sidestepped the entire issue in his

Latin translation reads: “Atqui Pater natura verus et æternus Deus est, rerumque omnium, quæ sub adspæctum veniunt aut non veniunt, conditor; talis igitur omnino tum Filius est, tum Spiritus Sanctus, sibi que invicem consubstantiales sunt, docente ita Joanne Evangelista (1 Joh. v. 7): ‘Tres sunt, qui testificantur in cælo, Pater, Verbum et Spiritus Sanctus: et hi tres unum sunt.’ Unum illud tamen his in verbis singillatim excipiendum, quod in essentia divina Filii Sanctique Spiritus caussa Pater est, quod ambæque hæ [hac Schaff] personæ ab illo originem habent: at ipsemet ab nemine. Hunc in modum ab ipsa æterna Veritate, Jesu Servatore nostro, edocti sumus: hunc in modum de sanctis Apostolis accepimus: hunc omnino in modum, et non alium, universales particularesque Synodi una cum doctoribus Ecclesiæ docuerunt, tradiderunt, sanxerunt.”

⁵² Porson, 1790, xi-xii; Michaelis, 1793-1801, 2,1:156, remarks of the Slavonic text: “The passage 1 John v. 7. is found neither in the Ostrog edition [1581], the ancient manuscripts, nor in those editions of the Acts and Epistles which are prior to 1653. That of 1653 contains this passage, but I know not whether in the text, or in the margin; that of 1663 has it in the margin, that of 1751, which I have myself examined, and other modern editions, in the text.”

⁵³ Ferrer, 1572, 221; Perault, 1585, 148; Estella, 1595, 254; Acosta, 1599, 114; Salmerón, 1602, 347; Coster, 1607, 436; Saint-Joseph, 1647, 203.

⁵⁴ Beuter, 1547, 36v: “[...] quid potius articulo Trinitatis & vnitatis diuinæ? quidque necessarius cognitione distinctionis ac emanationis diuinarum personarum? At habemus hoc Ioanne scribente lucidius, quamuis cæteri non tacuerint Euangelistæ. Dixerat in prima Canonica Epistola. ca. 5. sic. Quoniam tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo. Pater, Verbum, & Spiritum sanctus. Et hi tres vnum sunt. In Euangelio autem ait. In principio erat verbum. habes Patrem & Filium. De Spiritu sancto verò ait. cap. 14. Paraclytus autem spiritus sanctus, quem mittet Pater in nomine meo, ille vos docebit omnia.” On Beuter, see Tejero and Marcos, 2008, 234, 239.

commentaries on the text.⁵⁵ And the Valencian Dominican Baltasar Arias (1614) managed to give an entire sermon on the comma without mentioning a word of its textual problems.⁵⁶

6. The use of the comma in liturgical music after the Council of Trent

The growing appreciation of the comma as an important proof of the Trinity seems to have given its place in the liturgy and liturgical music something of a boost. The responsory *Duo seraphim* and its versicle *Tres sunt qui testimonium dant* were confirmed by the Council of Trent. In the Tridentine breviary, *Duo seraphim* was set as the eighth responsory at matins on the second to the sixth Sundays after Epiphany, on Trinity Sunday, on the third to the eleventh Sundays after Pentecost, two feasts of the Most Holy Saviour (the third Sunday in July and 23 October), and all the Sundays from the Feast of the Assumption until the last Sunday before Advent.⁵⁷ The melody uses a stereotyped opening formula found in about another ten first-mode versicles, including one with a clear Scriptural and liturgical link: *Seraphim stabant super illud*, the versicle to the responsory at matins given in some books on All Saints' day (e.g. D-Mbs Clm 4305, fol. 188r).⁵⁸ 1 Jn 5:5-8 also appears as the versicle to the gradual (*Hic est qui venit per aquam*) at mass on the feast of the Most Precious Blood (1 July).⁵⁹

Duo seraphim/Tres sunt was set no less than forty-seven times between 1583 and 1620, both as polyphony and as continuo motets, beginning with a fine setting by Tomás Luis de Victoria for four equal voices (*paris vocibus*), described in various contemporary editions as appropriate either for Trinity or

⁵⁵ Montano, 1583, 342; Montano, 1588, 25, 415.

⁵⁶ Arias, 1614, 397-412.

⁵⁷ *Breviarium Romanum*, 1861, *pars hiemalis* 274, 282, 288-289, 296, 302; *pars æstivalis* 137, 178, 186, 200, 206, 212, 218, 225, 231, 238, 244, 250, 256, 261, ccxvj; *pars autumnalis* 135, 141, 146, 154, 160, 167, 174, 181, 188, 194, 202, 209, 215, 222, 228; *Antiphonale sacrosanctæ Romanæ ecclesiæ*, 179*; *Liber responsorialis*, 419; *Processionale monasticum*, 107.

⁵⁸ Other responsory-versicles that use related opening formulae are *Ait puella matri suæ*; *Benedicta tu in mulieribus*; *Benedixitque eis dicens crescite*; *Inveni David servum meum oleo sancto*; *Mortuus est propter delicta nostra*; *Neque despicias me*; *Qui regis Israel*; *Suscipiens puerum in manibus*; *Vias tuas domine notas universi*. This list was compiled with the assistance of Jan Kolářček's database www.globalchant.org.

⁵⁹ *Graduale sacrosanctæ Romanæ ecclesiæ*, 537-538; *Liber Usualis*, 1533-1534.

Michaelmas.⁶⁰ Many of the composers used musical means to express the theology of the text. Some set the opening phrase as a duet, and the section

⁶⁰ Tomás Luis de Victoria, à 4 *paris vocibus* (in the various collections whose titles begin *Motecta*, 1583, RISM V1422; 1585, V1433; 1589, V1423; 1603, V1425; and *Cantiones Sacrae*, 1589, V1424); Jacob Handl (D-Z ms 42/78; PL-WRu ms 15 [c. 1587]); Jacobus Sulcius (D-Dl ms Grimma 50, c. 1593-96); Francisco Guerrero, in *Motecta, liber secundus* (Venice, 1589) and *Motecta* (Venice, 1597); Hans Leo Hassler, à 12, *Cantiones sacrae* (Augsburg, 1591, 2nd ed. 1597); Giovanni Matteo Asola, *Divinae Dei laudes* (1600, A2604); Lodovico Viadana, *Cento concerti ecclesiastici* ([Venice, 1602, lost]; repr. Venice, 1605, V1360); Johannes Ripalta, *Missa, psalmi ad Vesperas* (Milan, 1604, R1733); Ottavio Vernizzi, *Armonia ecclesiasticorum concertuum* (Venice, 1604, V1293); Arcangelo Borsaro, *Concerti ecclesiastici* (Venice, 1605, B3779); Lodovico Balbi, *Ecclesiastici concentus* (Venice, 1606, B748); Leone Leoni, *Sacri fiori motetti* (Venice, 1606, L1997); Giovanni Battista Steffanini, *Motetti* (Milan, 1606, S4728 [first section of text only]); Adriano Banchieri, *Ecclesiastiche sinfonie* (Venice, 1607, B802 [first section of text only]); Arcangelo Crotti, *Il primo libro de' concerti ecclesiastici* (Venice, 1608, C4552); Felice Gasparini, *Concerti ecclesiastici* (Milan, 1608, G454); Juan Esquivel de Barahona, *Motecta festorum* (Salamanca, 1608); Giovanni Francesco Anerio, *Muscorum* [...] *liber primus* (Rome, 1609); Caterina Assandra, *Motetti à due, & tre voci* (Milan, 1609, A2637, SD1609/3); Girolamo Bartei, *Liber primus sacrarum modulationum* (Rome, 1609, A1096); Antonio Badi, *Il primo libro de concerti*, 1610, B626); Giovanni Croce, *Sacre cantilene concertate* (Venice, 1610, C4449); Grammatico Metallo, *Motetti per tutte le solennità dell'anno* (1610, M2439); Claudio Monteverdi, *Sanctissimæ Virgini Missa* [...] *ac Vespere* (Venice, 1610, M3445); Fabio Beccari, *Il secondo libro de sacri concerti* (1611, B1507); Amante Franzoni, *Concerti ecclesiastici* (1614, F1812); Giovanni Francesco Anerio, *Motectorum* [...] *liber secundus* (Venice, 1612); Giovanni Niccolò Mezzogorri, *Del primo libro de sacre concerti* (Venice, 1611, M2616); Vicentio Puteo, *Motecta* (Venice, 1611); Giovanni Croce, *Sacra cantilene concertate* (1612, C4464); Ortensio Polidori, *Motecta* [...] *liber primus* (1612, P5019); Bernardo Strozzi, *Sacri concentus* (1612, S6990); Giulio Belli, *Concerti ecclesiastici* (Venice, 1613); Amante Franzoni, *Apparato musicale* (Venice, 1613, F1813); Serafino Patta, *Sacrorum canticorum* [...] *liber secundus* (Venice, 1613); Donato de Benedictis, *Harmonici concentus* (1614, F1812); Marco da Gagliano, *Missæ et sacrarum cantionum* (Florence, 1614, G105); Pietro Pace, *Il terzo libro de motetti* (Venice, 1614); Rubini, *Sacrae musicales* (1614); Bernardo Corsi, *Motecta* (1615; C4137); Hans Leo Hassler, *Reliquiæ sacrarum concertuum* (Nuremberg, 1615); Giovanni Francesco Capello, *Cantici spirituali* (1616 [PL-Kj]); Alessandro Gualtieri, *Motetti* (1616, G4789); Alessandro Aglione, *Giardino di spirituali concerti* (Venice, 1618); Bastino Miseroca, *I pietosi affetti* (1618, M2877); Andrea Falconieri, *Sacrae modulationes* (1619, F84); Francesco Giuliani, *Sacri concerti* (1619, G2545); Andrea Bianchi, *Libro primo de motetti* (1620³); Samuel Scheidt, *Cantiones sacrae* (Hamburg, 1620); Henri Dumont, *Motets* (1681); there are also several settings in Johannes Donfrid, *Promptuarium musicum* (1623²). There is also a six-voice motet with a slightly different text

mentioning the three witnesses as a trio.⁶¹ The theological significance of the text could also be expressed musically in several ways. For example, Francisco Guerrero's setting (1589) is distinguished by its textbook word setting. He begins with a soprano duet in quasi-canon, depicting the two seraphim calling to one another. The words *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus* are exchanged between three separate choirs, an arrangement with evident Trinitarian significance. The words *Plena est omnis terra* are enunciated homophonically by twelve voices in an impressive depiction of the celestial glory filling the heavens. Gregor Aichinger's setting of the responsory *Duo seraphim* (without the versicle *Tres sunt*), maintained the Trinitarian symbolism by writing the setting for three sopranos—despite the text—and including a ritornello in triple time at the words *Dominus deus Sabaoth*.⁶² His separate setting of *Tres sunt* is likewise scored for three male voices (two tenors and bass).⁶³ The comma was set independently of the responsory *Duo seraphim* by at least eight composers from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.⁶⁴ The composers who set the comma to music were either unaware of the textual problems attending the comma, or sufficiently unconcerned to allow philological quibbles to interrupt the need for music in the divine service. Alternatively, it may be that some of these composers—or perhaps their patrons and masters—were fully cognizant of the issues attending the

(*Seraphim clamabant alter ad alterum*; excludes the versicle *Tres sunt*) in Joachim à Burck, *Sacra cantiones plane novæ, ex veteri et novo testamento, in pium ecclesiarum usum compositæ* (Nuremberg: T. Gerlatzenus, 1573), n° 8. This list was compiled largely from Kurtzman, 1972, 426-432; Kurtzman, 1999, 144-145; Cramer, 1998; the works-lists in *New Grove*; and the *Motet Database* (www.arts.ufl.edu/motet), with some minor additions and corrections made from the sources.

⁶¹ See Kurtzman, 1972, 330-345 and 1999, 144-148 for a discussion of many of these versions. See also Bowers, 2009, 362-363, for a discussion of the theological and liturgical implications of this choice of text.

⁶² Aichinger, 1986, 54-59.

⁶³ Aichinger, 1972, 88-91.

⁶⁴ Gallus Dressler, *Opus sacrarum cantionum, quatuor, quinque et plurium vocum* (Nuremberg: Gerlach, 1585), n° 64, à 4; Marcantonio Ingegneri, *Liber sacrarum cantionum* (1589, I47) and *Corollarium cantionum sacrarum*, ed. F. Linder (RISM 1590⁵); Gregor Aichinger, *Sacra symphoniæ* (1598²) and *Cantiones ecclesiasticæ* (1607); Giovanni Piccioni, *Concerti ecclesiastici* (Venice, 1610, P2221); Richard Dering, *Cantica sacra* (London, 1662); Michael Haydn (ST 183; copied and performed by W. A. Mozart); Franz Schubert (D 181); Joseph Eybler (HV 81).

comma but nevertheless wanted to make a dogmatic point, just like the theological writers who employed the comma in Anti-Socinian apologetics.

The best-known setting of the text *Duo seraphim* is doubtless Monteverdi's bravura setting from his 1610 Vespers, conspicuous for its *gorgia* decoration. The place of the four *sacri concentus*—*Nigra sum*, *Pulchra es*, *Duo seraphim* and *Audi cælum*—within Monteverdi's so-called "Marian Vespers" has caused a good deal of comment, but until now no consensus has been reached. It is clear that Monteverdi was aware of previous settings of this text; the opening motif of his *Duo seraphim* is apparently a salute to Victoria's setting, which he certainly knew, as Jeffrey Kurtzman has shown.⁶⁵ Yet the theological background is certainly also relevant. First is of course the way in which the comma was used to bolster orthodox belief in the Trinity against the attacks of Antitrinitarians. But there might be more to the story. In 1590, Angelo Rocca (1545-1620), founder of the Biblioteca Angelica in Rome, published a commentary on the angelic salutation and annunciation by Augustinus Triumphus (Agostino Trionfo) of Ancona (1245-1328), which Rocca had unearthed in a library in Venice. When Triumphus comes to the verse "the angel Gabriel was sent by God" (Lk 1:26), Triumphus notes that this was something of an exception to the standard operating procedure in heaven. Triumphus notes that ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite had interpreted the verse *Duo seraphim clamabant* as an illustration of the way in which instructions are passed from one heavenly being to another. Normally divine commands are passed down in an orderly chain of command through the nine ranks of celestial beings, from the seraphim and cherubim down to archangels and angels. But at the Annunciation, God bypassed this chain of command and gave his secret instruction directly to Gabriel. Bernard of Clairvaux had suggested that it would not have been proper for the entire heavenly host to know of God's plan before Mary did, so he sent the message directly through one angel alone. Triumphus thus forges a direct link from the text *Duo seraphim* to the Annunciation and hence to the Magnificat, the Marian canticle for Vespers. Triumphus' text may even suggest a solution to another mystery of Monteverdi's Vespers: who is supposed to sing the text *Audi cælum*, a text that appeared on the scene in 1601?⁶⁶ Is it sung by one of the two seraphim, answered *in eco* by the other? Or perhaps by Gabriel himself, as he speeds

⁶⁵ Kurtzman, 1999, 152-153.

⁶⁶ Kurtzman, 1999, 149-152.

towards his encounter with Mary? Although it is impossible to know if Monteverdi knew Triumphus' text, the rediscovery of a manuscript commentary on Scripture was bound to have attracted at least some attention. Without firm evidence we can only speculate, but the possibility of a connexion between Triumphus' commentary and Monteverdi's Vespers is intriguing.

7. William Erbery, Francis Cheynell and the beginnings of the Socinian controversy in England

In June or July 1645, the "Seeker" William Erbery (or Erbury, 1604-1654) stopped at Marlborough on his way to Wales. The country was in the grip of the Civil War, crippled not merely by political uncertainty, but also by religious division. While in Marlborough, Erbery visited a "house where commonly once a week many good people of that Town [met] together to confer and discourse of good things." Here, according to Thomas Edwards, Erbery "declared his opinions, venting himself against Christ being God, affirming he was only man, pleading for universal Redemption, speaking against Baptism & all ministry," and accusing his audience "that they knew not what to do without a man in black cloathes," a performance which caused considerable consternation amongst those assembled. In response to Erbery's denial of Jesus' divinity, some of those gathered cited key passages of Scripture, including the Johannine comma, "unto which Master *Erbury* replied, it was not so in the Originall; but some of the people re-joynd they knew not the Originall, but they beleevd it was so; and however they were assured that he was the Sonne of God: Master *Erbury* objected again, those words were not in the Greek, but put in by some who were against the Arrians."⁶⁷ Erbery's *Testament*, published posthumously in 1658, gives an idea of the arguments he will have presented to the people of Marlborough:

I will not question this Scripture, as not Canonical, though some do scruple at it, seeing many of the ancient Fathers both Greek and Latine, read not this verse in their Bibles, as *Beza* notes; yea, a Father who wrote many Books for the Trinity, in all his Arguments against the *Arians* never quoted this of 1 John 5. 7. which is the clearest Scripture for proof of this point. Again, the Syriack Translation, which is very ancient, and even

⁶⁷ Edwards, 1646, 89-90.

parallel to the Apostolick times, reads not that verse at all. But truly I own that Letter of Scripture, because I see a spiritual truth therein, though the thing be carnally understood by most men and Ministers, who conceiving God to be (as 'twere in a place) in Heaven, think the three persons are three, as the Spirit, Water, and Blood are with us on earth.⁶⁸

The presentation of such ideas to people who by their own confession “knew not the Originall” could hardly fail to arouse hostility; “and so the meeting broke up, the people who met, being much offended at him.”⁶⁹ This vignette gives a dramatic picture of the uncertainty and anger that could be provoked when the most basic tenets of the bible and the Christian religion, the last refuge of a country torn apart by war, were challenged by those whose approach to Scripture had been fundamentally reoriented by the kind of biblical criticism begun by Erasmus and developed by radicals like Sozzini.

Haunted by the sight of a nation gnawed by the “gangrene” of novel belief, the preacher Thomas Edwards provided a number of basic arguments which could be employed for “confutation of this Heresie, and to confirm the people in the Doctrine of the true Faith that Christ is God.” Edwards urged his readers to recall such passages as the prologue to John’s Gospel, in which “every word proves [Jesus] to be God.” But as far as the comma was concerned, even Edwards was somewhat embarrassed by the strength of the critical arguments against its authenticity, and was forced to resort to evasive hypotheticals: “As for that place in 1 *John* 5, *These Three are One*, supposing it be not found in the ancientest Greek Copies, yet there are so many other places as that in 1 *John* 5. 20 &c. of which there can be no such questions, which prove Christ to be God.” Edwards concludes by quoting briefly from the comments of Calvin and de Bèze, who had argued that the comma ought to be retained in the biblical text “though this whole verse was omitted by some.”⁷⁰

One of the first—and most dramatic—Puritan opponents of English Socinianism was Francis Cheynell (1608-1665), a prominent Westminster Divine and frequent preacher before Parliament. Yet despite his evident brilliance and physical fortitude, Francis Cheynell was “sometimes disordered in

⁶⁸ Erbery, 1658, 119.

⁶⁹ Edwards, 1646, 90.

⁷⁰ Edwards, 1646, 90-92.

his brain,” as James Reid later put it.⁷¹ This mental derangement is well illustrated by his treatment of William Chillingworth, an Anglican clergyman who had converted to Catholicism and later reconverted, only to publish books that drew on him the suspicion of Socinianism. Gregory Dodds has recently suggested that Chillingworth’s approach displays certain similarities with that of Erasmus, such as his insistence that beyond a few basic truths, much doctrine and practice is a matter of probability rather than certainty.⁷² In 1643 Cheynell attended Chillingworth’s deathbed in an attempt to convert him from his error, but the dying man would not be moved. At the funeral, Cheynell threw a copy of one of Chillingworth’s works into the grave and shouted: “Get thee gone then, thou cursed booke, which hast seduced so many precious soules; get thee gone, thou corrupt rotten booke, earth to earth, dust to dust; get thee gone into the place of rottennesse, that thou maist rot with thy Author, and see corruption.”⁷³

In his fight against Socinianism, Cheynell not only employed his lurid oratory, but also harnessed the power of the press. His first printed defence of the doctrine of the Trinity appeared in 1650. In the first of two dedicatory epistles, addressed to Edward Reynolds, vice-chancellor of Oxford, Cheynell gave a detailed defence of the Johannine comma. The authenticity of the comma (Cheynell writes) was maintained by Jerome; it was included in the editions of the Estiennes, which were based upon good manuscripts, without any indication of variant readings; and it is found in a number of manuscripts and printed editions, such as the “Britannus Codex” (albeit without articles before *Father, Son* and *Holy Spirit*), Oecolampadius’ edition, the Leipzig edition of Vogel, and the Complutensian edition (even though this latter omits the word οὗτοι, and consistently writes εἰς τὸ ἕν instead of just ἕν). Moreover, Cheynell asserts that the comma was known to Athanasius, Theophilus and Cyprian. “An observation by the great Jerome is particularly noteworthy: that there were Greek copies which remained uncorrupted outside the controversy, and were known to the learned.”⁷⁴ Jerome does not complain about the Greek codices so much as about those who translated the Greek text unfaithfully into Latin, leaving out the

⁷¹ Reid, 1811, 229.

⁷² Dodds, 2009, 209-210.

⁷³ Cheynell, 1644, E3r.

⁷⁴ Cheynell, A4r: “Insignis est magni Hieronymi provocatio [...] ad Græca exemplaria extra controversiam incorrupta, & doctis cognita.”

comma; this implies that there must have been Greek copies known to him which contained the comma. Cheynell accuses Erasmus of being untrustworthy—this, he says, is not the worst thing he could say—and guilty of citing only the support of such Fathers as Augustine and Bede, who were both ignorant of Greek and thus reliant on the unfaithful Latin translations criticised by Jerome.⁷⁵ Cheynell cited the Greek-speaking Cyprian, who had (he asserted) quoted the comma, and mentions also Victor’s *History of the persecution of the province of Africa*, Idacius’ *Adversus Varimadum*, and the first letter of pope Hyginus, clearly unaware that this latter is a forgery. Finally, on the authority of Heinrich Alting’s *Explicatio Catecheseos Palatini, cum vindiciis ab Arminianis et Socinianis* (1646), Cheynell asserted that the comma was to be found “in the best and oldest copies; in those from which it is lacking, it was erased by the perfidy of the Arians.”⁷⁶

Cheynell’s second dedicatory epistle, addressed to Francis Rous, provost of Eton, explains Cheynell’s agitation: “since the beginning of the year 1645 there have been many blasphemous bookes to the great dishonour of the blessed Trinity printed in *England*”.⁷⁷ He therefore set himself the task of stemming the tide of error. For Cheynell, the comma is consistent with the rest of Scripture, and provides incontrovertible proof for the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity: “There is *Another* that bears witness, *Iohn* 5. 32. and the Father *himself*, v. 37. bears witness of me. Well then, Christ is one witness, the Father is another, and the Holy Ghost is a third witness, 1 *Iohn* 5.7. we see the *Holy Ghost speaks as plainly in this point as we do when we teach a child to tell one, two, and three*. For there are *three* that bear record in Heaven, the *Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost*: and these *three* are one. If we peruse the Scripture diligently as we ought,

⁷⁵ Cheynell, 1650, A4v: “Erasmus vir (ne quid gravius dicam) suspectæ fidei, Augustinum citat, Latinam versionem (quæ tunc temporis obtinebat) vulgò vitiosè translata proponentem, & Bedam Græcæ lingæ ignarum, vel sat superque ignavum. Augustino & Bedæ Cyprianum opponimus linguæ Græcæ peritum, cujus hæc sunt verba; Dicit Dominus, ego et Pater unum sumus, Johan. 10. 10. [*sic*] & iterum de Patre, Filio & Spiritu Sancto scriptum est, & hi tres unum sunt, 1 Joh. 5. 7. [*De catholicæ ecclesiæ unitate* 6].”

⁷⁶ Cheynell, 1650, A4v-A5r: “Locus 1 Joh. 5.7. extat (*inquit ille*) in melioribus & antiquissimis exemplaribus, & in quibus [A5r] desiderantur, ex iis perfidiâ Arianorum erasus est.” Cf. Alting, 1646, 2:148.

⁷⁷ Cheynell, 1650, B3r.

we shall finde that these Witnesses are three Persons, who are one and the same blessed God. They are one in nature, though three in subsistence [...].”⁷⁸

Cheynell clearly understood Socinianism well enough to realise that it was not merely a challenge to the divinity of Christ, but also to the identity of the Holy Spirit as a divine person. The comma was therefore useful for asserting both the equality and the distinctness of both these divine persons: “God the Holy Ghost is the object of Christians divine Faith. The Holy-Ghost speaking in the Holy Scriptures doth teach us to beleeeve not only in the Father, and in the Son, but in himself also. *It is the Spirit that beareth witnesse, because the Spirit is truth*, I Joh. 5. 6. There are three that beare witnesse in Heaven, but here is *speciall* testimony given of the Spirit, *that we might be moved to beleeeve the spirit, who is to testifie the whole truth concerning the Father, the Son and himself*. It is the Spirit (saith he) whose *speciall* office it is to bear witnesse, and therefore there is this speciall testimony given of him that *the Spirit is truth*; and then it follows, that the Spirit is one with the Father, and the Son; *one in nature*, one and the same God with them both. *These three are one*, 1 John. 5. 7.”⁷⁹

While the comma was employed by the Puritan Cheynell in his polemics against Socinianism, it also found a ready home in Puritan hymnody. The ninetieth of the hundred hymns in *A Century of Select Hymns* (London, 1659) by William Barton (c. 1598-1678) begins with the following strophe:

Three witnesses there are above,
and all these three are one:
The father, Son and sacred dove,
one Deity alone.
The Living father sent the son,
who by the Father lives:
And unto them that ask of him
the holy Ghost he gives.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Cheynell, 1650, 188.

⁷⁹ Cheynell, 1650, 281.

⁸⁰ Barton, 1659, 98, hymn CX; the original erroneously reads *Fathers* in line 6. Dixon, 2003, 20, cites the hymn from an expanded 1668 reprint.

Barton interpreted those passages of Scripture in which Jesus refers to the Father and the Holy Spirit (such as Lk 11:13) as evidence for the essential unity of the three persons of the Trinity, expressed by the comma. Casting this association into verses to be sung to well-known hymn tunes ensured that it would be remembered by the faithful.

Erbery's unsuccessful attempt to introduce Antitrinitarian ideas to Marlborough and Cheynell's vigorous tracts against Socinianism show that the question of the textual authority of the comma was a virtually indispensable part of the debates over the doctrine of the Trinity in mid-seventeenth century England. Barton's hymn shows how orthodox clergy, faced with such challenges to traditional belief, continued to rely on the comma as a proof of the Trinity, imprinting it firmly in the collective memory of the faithful by means of metre and melody.

8. John Milton

Cheynell's fear that the seed of Socinianism had begun to spring up in England was justified, as is evident from a long unpublished treatise by John Milton. In the late 1650s Milton wrote the work *De doctrina Christiana*, in which he criticises many details of traditional Christian belief, including the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine, Milton maintained, was "a mere verbal quibble, founded on the use of synonymous words, and cunningly dressed up in terms borrowed from the Greek to dazzle the eyes of novices."⁸¹ When treated in philosophical terms, the essential equality of Jesus with God, and hence the doctrine of the Trinity, made no sense to Milton: "as [God] has one hypostasis, so must he have one essence proper to himself, incommunicable in the highest degree, and participated by no one, that is, by no person besides, for he cannot have his own proper hypostasis, without having his own proper essence. For it is impossible for any *ens* [being] to retain its own essence in common with any other thing whatever, since by this essence it is what it is, and is numerically

⁸¹ Milton, 1825, 98. I cite this treatise in the translation by C. R. Sumner (1825), the form in which it has been best known since its rediscovery. On Milton's critique of Trinitarian belief in *De doctrina christiana*, see Campbell *et al.*, 2007, 98-101; in this collaborative work, Campbell and his colleagues firmly establish Milton's contested authorship of this treatise.

distinguished from all others. If therefore the Son, who has his own proper hypostasis, have not also his own proper essence, but the essence of the Father, he becomes on their hypothesis either no *ens* at all, or the same *ens* with the Father; which strikes at the very foundation of the Christian religion.”⁸² Milton furthermore suggests that the essential equality of Jesus is unsupported by Scripture. When Jesus speaks of being one with the Father (Jn 10:30, 10:38, 14:10), he is clearly referring to a unity of will or purpose. Furthermore, several statements made in the Fourth Gospel (Jn 5:23, 5:35, 14:20-21, 14:28, 17:21) suggest that Jesus is subordinate to the Father, and essentially distinct from him. For Milton, there is only one conclusion conformable to both Scripture and reason: “if God be one God, and that one God be the Father, and if notwithstanding the Son be also called God, the Son must have received the name and nature of Deity from God the Father, in conformity with his decree and will.”⁸³ In other words, reason leads us naturally to conclude that Jesus was ontologically subordinate to the Father.

As far as Milton was concerned, those who argue that the Johannine comma provides evidence of the essential unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are simply mistaken. Firstly, the comma rests upon shaky textual foundations, being absent from the Arabic and Ethiopic versions as well as the majority of Greek manuscripts. But even assuming, Milton concedes, that the comma is genuine, the passage still does little to help the Trinitarian case. Since the water, blood and Spirit of verse 8 can be described as being one only in their witness, not in their essence, then the same must be the case for the heavenly witnesses. “And not only Erasmus, but even Beza, however unwillingly, acknowledged (as may be seen in their own writings) that if John be really the author of the verse, he is only speaking here, as in the last quoted passage, of an unity of agreement and testimony.”⁸⁴ Moreover, the fact to which the heavenly witnesses testify only confirms the subordinationist position: “What it is that they testify, appears in the fifth and sixth verses, namely, that *he that overcometh the world is he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, even Jesus Christ, that is, the anointed*; therefore he is not one with, nor equal to, him that anointed him. Thus the very record that they bear is inconsistent with the essential unity of the

⁸² Milton, 1825, 99.

⁸³ Milton, 1825, 97.

⁸⁴ Milton, 1825, 96.

witnesses, which is attempted to be deduced from the passage.”⁸⁵ And if we accept that Jesus is not co-essential with the Father or equal to him, then the comma raises yet another theological difficulty: who exactly are these heavenly witnesses? “That they are three Gods, will not be admitted; therefore neither is it the one God, but one record or one testimony of three witnesses, which is implied. But he who is not coessential with God the Father, cannot be coequal with the Father.”⁸⁶ Since Milton had already argued that the Spirit cannot be equal to the Father because the Spirit proceeds from the Father, “it follows, therefore, that these three are not one in essence.”⁸⁷

For Milton, a final difficulty with the passage is the fact that the Spirit appears in both sets of witnesses, a detail he could not explain except by rejecting the comma as an intrusion. Is the Spirit bearing witness in heaven the same as that bearing witness on earth? Elsewhere in the New Testament we hear of the Holy Spirit giving witness on earth, that is, in our hearts. Likewise, Jesus (Jn 8:16, 19) says that he bears witness to himself, and that the Father also bears witness to him, but nowhere does he mention the Spirit as a witness. “Why then, in addition to two other perfectly competent witnesses, should the Spirit twice bear witness to the same thing? On the other hand, if it be another Spirit, we have here a new and unheard-of doctrine.”

Milton’s patient and sophisticated arguments against the comma, some of the most subtle yet brought, are brought in support of his ultimate argument for the fundamental instability of Trinitarian theology: “There are besides other circumstances, which in the opinion of many render the passage suspicious; and yet it is on the authority of this text, almost exclusively, that the whole doctrine of the Trinity has been hastily adopted.”⁸⁸ Given the censure that such opinions surely would have brought down upon his head, it was prudent of Milton to have left this work unpublished during his lifetime.

⁸⁵ Milton, 1825, 170.

⁸⁶ Milton, 1825, 97.

⁸⁷ Milton, 1825, 171.

⁸⁸ Milton, 1825, 171.

9. John Selden

The great seventeenth-century English jurist and polymath John Selden (1584-1654) also turned his attention to the question of the comma in the second book of his massive investigation of the Jewish Sanhedrin (1653). Selden's studies of the Jewish law were not merely antiquarian works, but allowed him to develop a powerful theory of natural and international law which defended English constitutional monarchy against Presbyterian government.

While Selden had been misinformed by some of his sources (Johannes Mariana, Lucas Brugensis, Jacobus Tirinus) that the comma was present "in certain Greek manuscripts of the earliest centuries" (*in codicibus vetustiorum seculorum Græcis MSS. quibusdam*), he was aware that it was absent from the Codex Alexandrinus, from the two Greek codices held by the public library at Oxford, from several printed editions of the Greek text, from many Latin manuscripts, from all the Syriac manuscripts, and from both editions of the Arabic text that had appeared to that point (Rome, 1590/1591; Leiden, 1616). He also notes that many translations into modern languages either omitted the passage or distinguished it through typographical means. Selden notes that Jerome seems to defend the authenticity of the comma in his prologue to the Catholic Epistles; however, Selden himself expresses a certain doubt about the genuineness of the prologue (*si modo is [Hieronymus] autor sit genuinus prologi nomen ejus præ se ferentis in Epistolas Canonicas*). Indeed, as Selden notes, in some manuscripts this prologue is transmitted without Jerome's name, a doubt reflected in Wyclif's translation, where it is simply entitled "a Prologue on the pistles [*sic*] of Cristen feith that ben seven in ordre." Despite his doubts about the prologue, Selden was of the opinion that the putative reference to the comma in Cyprian's *De unitate ecclesiæ* did indeed give evidence that Cyprian was familiar with the passage, and he carefully notes the citations in *Contra Varimadum*, ps.-Eugenius and Fulgentius, as well as in Erasmus' British Codex and his last three editions. Selden also notes that the comma has been hallowed by usage in the lectionary, even that prescribed in the Edwardian Prayer Book, and approved by many of the authors of the Latin middle ages as well as the fourth Lateran council.

Although Selden's final decision on the genuineness of the comma is difficult to distinguish, he seems to have been inclined to accept it as genuine. In any case, as a Christian Cabalist he was quite sure that the Hebrew Scriptures

contained veiled references to the Trinity. To this end he quotes the *Sepher Principio Sapientiae* of Rabbi Elias Ben Moses, and refers his readers to Peter Alfonsi, Raimundus Martini, Paulus Burgensis, the *Victoria Porcheti adversus impios Hebræos*, Pietro Colonna Galatino, Johannes Reuchlin and Hugo Grotius for further evidence of the Cabalistic Trinity, and to Proclus' *Platonic Theology* for evidence of the Trinity amongst the Platonists.⁸⁹

10. Richard Simon and the historical-critical method

The next real advance in the study of the textual problem of the comma came in the *Critical History of the New Testament* (1689) by the French Oratorian priest and Hebraist Richard Simon (1638-1712). Simon's approach to the question of Scriptural authority was defined to an extent in opposition to that of his Calvinist antagonist Louis Capel (*Critica sacra*, 1650). By emphasising the human contingencies of the composition of Scripture, Simon intended to undermine the Protestant insistence on the self-sufficiency of Scripture and thus to demonstrate the need for an institution to provide an authoritative and binding interpretation of the text, in other words, the church. "The church," he writes, "from the first, and most early Ages of Christianity, has been constantly furnished with some Learned Men, by whose diligent care the Sacred Writings have been purged from those Faults, which by the tract of Time have insensibly crept into them [...]. [It was thus] a dangerous matter to attempt a Reformation of those ancient Errors, which derive their Authority from their Age." Moreover, Simon maintained, like Spinoza, that the principles of criticism are independent of belief. No longer should truth be subject to revelation. Henceforth, the criterion of truth was to be the exercise of critical reason. Simon's insistence that the critical study of the bible is necessary to the theologian had a damaging effect on the ultimate authority of religious revelation, and prepared the way for the rationalism of Bayle's *Dictionnaire* (1695).⁹⁰

In the matter of the comma, Simon undertook a thorough review of the manuscript evidence, and came to a number of conclusions about the verse:

⁸⁹ Selden, 1653, 2:133-144.

⁹⁰ Simon, 1689a, *2r; 1689b, 1:A2r; Kosellek, 1973, 87-89. Further on Simon, see Bernus, 1869; Gibert, 2010, 176-184.

firstly, that the Greeks also had a tradition of interpreting verse 8 allegorically as a reference to the Trinity; secondly, that the prologue attributed to Jerome should no longer be attributed to the great Father, but an early imitator; and thirdly, that some of Erasmus' conclusions about the textual status of the verse were open to revision. He came to this final conclusion largely because the only knowledge he had of Erasmus' opinions in this matter was derived from the *Apologia ad Stunicam*. Had he read Erasmus' refutation of Lee's *Annotations* as well, he would have been in a better position to gauge Erasmus' opinions on the passage more accurately.

Simon reports that he examined seven Greek manuscripts in the royal library in Paris (mss 1885, 2247, 2248, 2870, 2871, 2872), and another five in Colbert's library (mss 871, 2844, 4785, 6123, 6584), but found the comma in none of them, either in the body of the text or in a marginal annotation. However, he did find marginal annotations with various combinations of the *symbolum* "one God, one divinity, the witness of God the Father and the Holy Ghost," attesting to a Greek tradition of interpreting the three earthly witnesses of verse 8 as types of the persons of the Trinity. Simon suggested that a scholium containing some form of this statement had been absorbed into the text in the Greek tradition, independently of the Latin tradition.⁹¹ Simon preferred this theory to Erasmus' suggestion that some Greek texts (such as Montfortianus) had been harmonised with the Latin. Simon's theory, however ingenious, has two weaknesses; firstly, the comma as contained in Montfortianus, GA 629 or even the Complutensian text is too different from this credal declaration to permit any critic to suggest realistically how it could have turned into the comma; secondly, there are no extant Greek bibles containing this *symbolum* as part of the body text.

Simon points out that the issue of the comma was invariably associated

⁹¹ Simon, 1689a, 203-204; 1689b, 2:2-3, notes that in the margin of ms 2247 in the French royal library, next to verse 8a, is written: τουτέστι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον καὶ ὁ πατήρ καὶ αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ (*that is, the Holy Spirit and the Father, and He himself, his Son*). Next to verse 8b in the same ms is written: τουτέστι μία θεότης εἰς Θεός (*that is, one godhead, one God*). In Colbert's ms 871 is written in the margin: εἰς Θεὸς μία θεότης, μαρτυρία τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος (*one God, one divinity, the witness of God the Father and the Holy Ghost*). More generally on Simon, see Bludau, 1904b. The *symbolum* μία θεότης, εἰς Θεός is taken from the concluding words of John Chrysostom's *In Johannem theologum*, in Chrysostom, 1837, 8.2:785.

with the question of Arianism. Erasmus had been accused by Stunica of fomenting Arianism. Simon knew that present-day Arians argued strenuously against the comma, though he dismissed their arguments.⁹² To be fair, Simon's arguments were not based invariably on confessional divisions; Simon also dismisses faulty arguments by the Catholic theologian Fromond (*i.e.* Libert Froidmont), who had suggested that the Arians had removed the comma from their bibles. (Accusations that particular groups have corrupted scripture go back to the beginning of Christian apologetic, as seen for example in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* 71-73.) But how is it, Simon asks, that this verse is also absent from the text cited by Cyprian, who lived before Arius, and from the Syriac and other Eastern versions? In any case, Simon argues, Antitrinitarians gain nothing by pointing out that the comma is absent from the mass of Greek texts: "Now whether that Verse be Read in the I. Epistle of St. *John* [...] or it be not Read; yet the Doctrine of the Trinity may always be very well proved from that place, against those who deny that Mystery; because the Fathers from the First Ages of the Church, have applied the Witness of the *Spirit, of the Water, and of the Blood*, to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They have proved, by the Unity of those Witnesses, that the three Persons of the Trinity are one."⁹³ For Simon, as for Erasmus, any attempt to prove or disprove the doctrine of the Trinity on the basis of the comma alone was bound to fail. Simon's examination of the verse was perhaps inconclusive, but his defence of orthodox Trinitarian belief was unwavering.⁹⁴

⁹² Simon, 1689a, 206; 1689b, 2:4.

⁹³ Simon, 1689a, 215; 1689b, 2:11.

⁹⁴ Simon's position was shared by Jonathan Edwards, the Master of Jesus College Oxford; see Edwards, 1698, 1:60-61: "For that Text we shall not easily part with, notwithstanding the Cavils of the *Socinians*, and the *over officious endeavours* of some others, whether *Papists or Protestants*, who would weaken the Authority of that Testimony, and thereby rob us of the advantage of it. For tho some Greek MSS. want it, yet there are others more approved and of greater Antiquity in which you may meet with it. Besides it is to be found in the writings of the Ancients, *Tertull. Cypr. Athanasius*, and *Jerome* who quote these very words: and if you have a mind to know more of this matter, without going any further, you may peruse what Mr. *Poole* in his *Synopsis* hath quoted out of *Gerhard*, Dr. *Hammond* and other Writers in vindication of this Text. From which, I think, it will appear, that the *Authority* of this place remains clear and in full force, notwithstanding the attempts that have bin made to overthrow it. Tho if we gave up this Text, yet we should not [give up] the holy Doctrine contained [61] in it, which is so plainly delivered in other places of Scripture, and shines there with so *bright a lustre*, that a man

Simon's account of Erasmus' decision to include the comma is significant for another reason: it contains the first traces of a myth surrounding Erasmus' New Testament, which maintains that Erasmus promised Lee to include the comma in his edition of the New Testament if a single manuscript authority could be produced. As Henk Jan de Jonge has pointed out, this legend apparently arose from a misreading of certain statements in Erasmus' printed response to Lee's criticisms of his New Testament (*Responsio ad Annotationes Eduardi Lei*, April/May 1520). As far as Erasmus was concerned, there was no manuscript that contained the comma. Rather, he was defending himself against Lee's accusation of laziness and sloppy editing. A possible source of the error is a misreading of the tenses Erasmus used, and hence of the kind of conditional clause employed. Erasmus writes: "If I had encountered one copy containing what we [Latins] read, of course I would have added [to my edition] from that source what was lacking from the rest [of my Greek manuscripts]" (*Quod si mihi contigisset unum exemplar, in quo fuisset quod nos legimus, nimirum illinc adiecissem quod in cæteris aberat*), using pluperfect subjunctives to indicate a contrary to fact condition.⁹⁵ It seems that Simon simply mistook this sentence as expressing a possibility, however distant (*Quod si mihi contingeret unum exemplar, in quo esset quod nos legimus, nimirum illinc adiicerem quod in cæteris abest*), a misreading evidently suggested by the fact that just such a manuscript actually did appear.

The various versions of the myth contain further impossibilities. Some versions of the myth have Erasmus making the spurious promise to Stunica, but the first time Erasmus addressed Stunica in print was in the *Apologia*, published in September 1521, three months after he had included the comma in an edition

had need wink hard, who would avoid the conviction; or else must have so great a confidence in his Eyes, that he may hope in time to stare the Sun it self out of countenance." Cf. Poole, 1669-1676, 4.2:1622-6; in the welter of authorities adduced by Poole it is difficult to determine his own opinion. Nevertheless, on the authority of ps.-Jerome's introduction to the Catholic Epistles, Poole accepts that the earliest Greek manuscripts contained the comma. Moreover, he attributes to Erasmus far more confidence in the authority of Montfortianus than was actually the case, and ignores Erasmus' explicit justification for including the comma: "Codex Britannicus, cujus ob vetustatem tanta erat apud Erasmum autoritas ut ex eo hunc versum in præced. edit. omissum in seq. restitueret."

⁹⁵ ASD IX.4:323; de Jonge, 1980, 385.

of his Latin translation of the New Testament.⁹⁶ Furthermore, it has been asserted often since at least Newton (1690) that Erasmus never saw the Codex Britannicus, but was sent an extract from it.⁹⁷ I can find no evidence in Erasmus' remarks to suggest this conclusion. Indeed, it seems incongruous that Montfortianus should have been confected to provide Erasmus with this passage, and then *not* sent to him; it would surely have been more economical simply to send the passage in a letter and not bother with the fuss of producing the manuscript. On the other hand, it was clearly hoped that a manuscript containing the comma as an integral part of the text would be more likely to sway Erasmus' opinion than a mere marginal addition, as in the unconvincing Antwerp codex. Moreover, Erasmus' correspondence contains no evidence that he was sent this passage separately in a letter, nor do his other writings. As we saw above, the fact that Montfortianus was apparently in John Clement's possession while he was in Erasmus' circle at Leuven in 1520-1521 suggests very strongly that it was he who brought this "British codex" to Erasmus' attention.

While Simon's account does not contain the myth of Erasmus' promise in a fully developed form, it bears the seed from which it grew: "*Erasmus* in his answer to *Stunica*, does vindicate himself well enough by the authority of those Greek Copies he had; yet he was wrought upon by some other consideration, contrary to the Authority of all his Manuscripts, to insert the Passage of *S. John* in a new Edition of his New Testament. He declares that what obliged [*appuyé*] him to make the Change, was his seeing a Greek Copy in *England*, which he believed was more perfect than any Latin edition."⁹⁸ According to Simon, Erasmus had

⁹⁶ De Jonge, 1980, 382-384; for one version of the myth in which the promise is made to *Stunica*, see Turner, 1924, 23.

⁹⁷ Even Michaelis, 1788, 2:1555, seems to have believed that Erasmus never saw the codex: "Erasmus, der dem verkätzernden Geschrey ausweichen wollte, setzte sie gleichfalls in seine letzten Ausgaben, und schrieb zur Entschuldigung dieser Unbeständigkeit, er thuhe es, weil er gehört habe, man habe die Stelle in einem Codice in England gefunden [...]."

⁹⁸ Simon, 1689a, 205: "Erasme se justifie assez bien dans sa Réponse à *Stunica* par l'autorité des MSS. Grecs qu'il avoit lûs. Il trouva néanmoins à propos d'insérer contre l'autorité de tous ses MSS. le passage de Saint Jean dans une nouvelle Edition de son Nouveau Testament. Il témoigne qu'il n'est appuyé pour faire ce changement, que sur un Exemplaire Grec qu'il avoit vû en Angleterre, & qu'il croyoit avoir été reformé sur les Exemplaires Latins." I have given the translation from 1689b, 2:3, to draw attention to the transmission of the Erasmus legend in England, but it should be noted that this old translation is imperfect; the final clause reads:

been led astray by his belief that the Greek texts were more authoritative than the Latin ones. (Had Simon read Erasmus' refutation of Lee's accusation that he considered the Greek texts as "oracles," he would have come to quite a different conclusion.) Nevertheless, the important thing is that Simon uses the language of obligation and coercion, if not yet that of promise and fulfilment. Simon also makes the error of assuming that Erasmus saw the manuscript in England; in fact Erasmus visited England for the third and last time in 1517, before Lee and Stunica began to launch their attacks. As we have seen, is virtually certain that Montfortianus was brought to Erasmus in Leuven by John Clement.

Perhaps Simon's most important contribution to the debate was his assessment of the authorship of the prologue to the Catholic Epistles, about which Selden and Sandius had already raised some doubt. For Simon, Erasmus was wrong to criticise Jerome as "violent, shameless and inconsistent," as if he had been the author of the comma. In fact, the implication of Erasmus' criticism was that "*S. Jerome* must stand chargeable with Forgery, a bold and presumptuous undertaking to correct the ancient Latin Edition according to his own fancy, without the authority of good Copies." As Simon points out, Sozzini developed Erasmus' suspicion in his commentary on 1 Jn by suggesting that Jerome, wanting to champion his own position, acquired a copy containing the comma, or perhaps even a few, and then concealed his own fraud by writing that those that did not contain the comma had been altered by heretics. But in such cases, Simon suggests, speculation is fruitless; we are on firmer ground when we examine the surviving documents. Had Erasmus examined the evidence of Jerome's preface more fully, "he would rather have been inclined to reject that Preface, as suppositious, than to charge *S. Jerome* with Forgery."⁹⁹ (Again, Simon's judgment of Erasmus' position on Jerome's statements in this matter are based on the fact that had had only read Erasmus' *Apologia ad Stunicam*, and not the more subtle argument in the refutation of Lee, where he defends Jerome's integrity.)

Simon thus sets out to demonstrate that the prologue assigned to Jerome is not genuine. In many of the very earliest manuscripts, he points out, this prologue is not to be found with Jerome's authentic prefaces. And in the earliest

"which he believed was more perfect than any Latin Edition," but should rather read "which he believed had been adapted on the basis of the Latin copies."

⁹⁹ Simon, 1689a, 206; 1689b, 2:4.

copies that do contain the prologue—such as Charles the Bald’s bible (now Paris, BnF ms lat. 1)—the name of the author is not given. Rather, Simon suggests, this preface was written by some forger in imitation of Jerome’s style, in order to supply prologues to those books for which Jerome had provided none, and adding the name of the supposed addressee, Eustochium, for an added touch of realism. This anonymous author, evidently aware that some Latin manuscripts contained the comma and others did not, and perhaps in ignorance of the Greek text, simply assumed that this discrepancy was due to the fault of unfaithful translators. But perhaps the most convincing argument against Jerome’s authorship of the preface is the fact that some of the early manuscripts which contain the prologue—Simon counts two in Paris—do not contain the comma in the text. “If that Father had been the author of the Preface, and of the Addition inserted in S. John’s Epistle, that Addition would have been extant in all S. Jerome’s Latin Bibles. This diversity of Copies is in my judgment an evident proof, that he did not compose that Preface to prefix it to the Canonical Epistles.”¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the fact that many manuscripts containing the prologue do not contain the comma in the text of the epistle, and the lack of uniformity in the readings of the comma between the manuscripts “makes it further manifest, that S. Jerome was not the true Author either of the Preface or Addition.”¹⁰¹ Simon goes on to discuss the wild variety of readings in some of the oldest Latin manuscripts to demonstrate the instability of this text and the way in which various attempts had been made subsequently to make the reading more uniform through interpolation or correction. Simon also deals briefly with the assertion made by bishop John Fell in his 1682 edition of Cyprian, that the comma is quoted in *De unitate ecclesiae*. For Simon, the fact that Augustine was evidently ignorant of the comma argues that Cyprian did not know the text. Simon opined that Facundus too was ignorant of the comma. Simon also suggested that the Trinitarian interpretation of the words “these three are one” in the spurious *Disputation of Athanasius against Arius at the Council of Nicaea* may have occasioned the insertion of the comma into the body text in some Greek manuscripts, an explanation he finds more plausible than Erasmus’ suggestion that Greek manuscripts had been corrected against Latin ones. (Simon apparently failed to realise that Erasmus was speaking merely of Montfortianus,

¹⁰⁰ Simon, 1689a, 209; 1689b, 2:7.

¹⁰¹ Simon, 1689a, 210; 1689b, 2:7.

not a widespread program of textual reform of the Greek text.)¹⁰²

However, since the comma “does not clearly establish, but only suppose a Trinity of Persons,” Simon saw little point in arguing about its addition or omission. He did not suspect a secret desire to foster Arianism in those modern Catholic commentators who held that the unity of the witnesses refers to their testimony rather than their essence. He found it pointless to enumerate (like Sandius, on whom see below) the editions and translations which did or did not include the comma, since most printed editions and translations go back to a small number of editions based on manuscripts, such as the Complutensian and Erasmus’ editions. Simon considered it equally problematic for Lutherans to quote the comma against Antitrinitarians, and for an Antitrinitarian like Sandius to show that Luther excluded the comma from his translation. “I do not think,” Simon remarks wryly, “that that Patriarch of the North was well Read in the *Greek Manuscript Copies*, though the most part of his followers do justifie him in this manner, when it is objected to them, that their Master has corrupted the Scripture, by leaving out a passage of the New Testament, that asserts the Mystery of the Trinity [...]. But if the Master was to be justified in this respect, I see no reason why his Disciples should alter his Version in that place, and that they should commend to the people, for the true word of God, a thing they believed to be doubtful.” By quoting the comma against the Antitrinitarians, Lutheran apologists merely provide their opponents with “the fairest occasion imaginable of Triumphant over them.”¹⁰³

Having read Sandius, it was certainly optimistic of Simon to conclude that “I cannot imagin [*sic*] what advantage the *Antitrinitarians* can get against the Catholicks, upon this ground, that that passage is not found in the most part of the Greek manuscripts, nor those others of the Eastern Church, nor yet in the old

¹⁰² Simon, 1698a, 213-214: “Cela me paroît bien plus probable que le sentiment d’Erasme, qui a [214] crû que les Exemplaires Grecs où on lit le témoignage du Père, du Fils & du Saint Esprit, ont été reformés sur les Exemplaires Latins. S’il n’avait parlé que des Exemplaires Grecs qui ont été écrits par des Latins, & qui ont servy à leur usage, sa proposition aurait plus de vraisemblance. Mais il est contre toute apparence de verité, que les Grecs, depuis même leur reünion avec les Latins, ayent reformé leurs Exemplaires du Nouveau Testament sur ceux des Latins. Il paroît au contraire que ceux qu’ils ont décrits depuis ce temps-là ne contiennent point ce témoignage.” The published English translation at this point is misleading. See also de Jonge’s note in ASD IX.2:259, l. 542.

¹⁰³ Simon, 1689a, 216-217; 1689b, 2:12-13.

Latin Copies.”¹⁰⁴ Few of Simon’s readers were sufficiently experienced in the hermeneutical methods of the Fathers to realise how pervasive was their allegorical habit. And even fewer of his readers had the *sang-froid* to follow his conclusion that it was only the “Authority of the Church that does at present oblige us to receive that passage as Authentick.”¹⁰⁵ Most, whether Catholic or Protestant, still expected that such a central proof of the Trinity ought to rest on more secure foundations than these.

Despite some errors of fact and judgment, Simon’s book was an important landmark in the understanding of the comma. Firstly it was important for showing that the prologue to the Catholic Epistles could not have been written by Jerome. Equally important was Simon’s insistence that serious discussion had to be based on a careful study of the manuscripts, not on printed editions, which have no authority independent of their sources. Another impressive aspect to Simon’s approach was his willingness to come to independent conclusions on the basis of his own examination and evaluation of evidence. But perhaps most disturbing to Simon’s contemporaries was his cool willingness to admit that much about the Scriptures is dependent on human contingency, and could rely on no authority more definite than the magisterium of the church. Predictably, Simon’s approach to Scripture, simultaneously rationalistic and dependent on the authority of the church, did not get far without encountering considerable opposition.

11. *Reactions to Simon’s work: Gilbert Burnet, Thomas Smith, Antoine Boucat, Thomas Firmin*

The Scotsman Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715), professor of divinity at the University of Glasgow (1669) and later bishop of Salisbury (1689), shared Simon’s conviction of the importance of examining manuscript evidence. As a result of this conviction, Burnet took considerable pains “to examine all the Antient Manuscripts of the New Testament, concerning that doubted passage of St John’s Epistle” in order to understand the issue more clearly.¹⁰⁶ Burnet gives

¹⁰⁴ Simon, 1689a, 214-215; 1689b, 2:11.

¹⁰⁵ Simon, 1689a, 217; 1689b, 2:13.

¹⁰⁶ Burnet, 1686, 53.

details of manuscripts he had personally inspected in Zürich, Basel, Geneva, Venice, Florence, Strasbourg, Rome and London, not to mention a pilgrimage to Erasmus' tomb in Basel, which he reports with some disappointment as comprising "only a plain Inscription upon a great brass plate."¹⁰⁷ Burnet also shows a detailed knowledge of the opinions of those who had previously written on the comma, notably Bullinger. He does not mention Simon—only Simon's *Critical History of the Old Testament* had appeared to this point—and it is unclear whether Burnet was directly influenced by Simon's approach, or merely shared a similar set of basic assumptions. When inspecting New Testament manuscripts, Burnet particularly looked to find whether those manuscripts that contained ps.-Jerome's preface to the Catholic Epistles also contained the comma. Burnet took this preface to be genuine, and was thus at a loss to explain why Erasmus had omitted it from his edition of Jerome's works. "For as on the one hand Erasmus's sinceritie ought not to be too rashly censured, so on the other hand that Preface being in all the Manuscripts Antient or Modern of those Bibles that have the other Prefaces in them that I ever yet saw, it is not easie to imagine what made Erasmus not to publish it, and it is in the Manuscript Bibles at Basle, where he printed his Edition of S. Jeromes works."¹⁰⁸ The minuteness of Burnet's observations, his desire to inspect as many manuscript witnesses to the comma and ps.-Jerome's prefaces as possible, and his quest to find a justification for Erasmus' editorial decisions, testifies to a growing conviction that the biblical scholar is a historian; like the historian, the biblical scholar is obliged both to use documents, and also obliged not to exceed the boundaries of what the documents say.

While Simon was working on his *Histoire critique du texte du Nouveau Testament*, Thomas Smith (1638-1710), a distinguished antiquarian and fellow of Magdalene College Oxford, was working on a vigorous defence of the comma, published in 1690.¹⁰⁹ Smith maintained that the comma "contains the chief mystery of the Christian religion, that of the most holy and indivisible Trinity, expressed in distinct words" (*præcipuum Christianæ religionis de sanctissimâ & individuâ Trinitate mysterium verbis dilucidis continet*). Although Smith admitted that the comma was absent from many manuscripts, including the Codex

¹⁰⁷ Burnet, 1686, 264.

¹⁰⁸ Burnet, 1686, 54.

¹⁰⁹ On Smith, see Nichols, 1812, I:14-16.

Alexandrinus, he regretted that the poor textual record for the comma had led the “arrogant enemies of Christian doctrine” to assert that Catholics has inserted the comma into the text against the author’s intentions, and against the authority of the most authentic texts. As representative of this position Smith cites Fausto Sozzini, who wrote: “It is clear that these words are forged, and were stuffed into this passage by people who desired to defend their dogma of the Trinity by whatever means possible.”¹¹⁰

Smith defends the attribution of the prologue to the Catholic Epistles to Jerome, though he notes that “Erasmus and Socinus work hard to dissolve the strength and the bond of this testimony, by which they realise that they are bound. They turn and twist this way and that; and lest they should seem to be struck dumb, flatter themselves that this matter is to be disentangled with untrustworthy and dishonest answers.”¹¹¹ As Smith reports, Fausto Sozzini suggested in his commentary on the Johannine epistles that Jerome had chanced upon a copy containing the comma—perhaps even several—and assuming that this reading was correct, complained that the texts more generally in use were corrupt; Smith characterises Sozzini’s hypothesis as “pure, vile calumny” (*mera & putida calumnia*). However, Smith’s argument seems to acknowledge tacitly that it was he who was in a bind. To follow Selden’s sceptical attitude towards Jerome’s authorship of the prologue meant jettisoning a powerful piece of evidence for the authenticity of the comma; but to maintain Jerome’s authorship of the prologue meant having to deal with the suggestions of Erasmus and Sozzini that Jerome’s version did not represent the text as commonly accepted in his day, or—even worse—that Jerome had interpolated the comma into the text himself.

One of the Socinians whom Smith particularly took trouble to refute was Christoph Sandius (*Paradoxical interpretations*, 1669). Smith characterises as “vain and frivolous” (*vanum & frivolum*) Sandius’ suggestion that the argument of

¹¹⁰ Smith, 1690, 125: “Hinc egregiam triumphandi occasionem captantes doctrinae Christianae arrogantissimi hostes, sibi gratulantur, eo usque audaciae proveci, ut contendunt, Catholicos praeter mentem Apostoli & primorum exemplarium fidem hunc locum inseruisse. Unicum, qui instar omnium erit, Faustum Socinum citabo, qui in commentariis in haec verba ita loquitur, *Satis constat illa esse adulterina, & ab hominibus, qui suum dogma de trino & uno Deo quacunque ratione defendere & propagare volebant, in hunc locum infarcta.*”

¹¹¹ Smith, 1690, 139: “Ad vim & nexum hujus testimonii, quo se implicitos sentiunt, solvendum, maximè laborant Erasmus & Socinus, omnesque in partes se versant, & ne silere videantur, rem futilibus & parum ingenuis responsionibus expediendam esse sibi blandiuntur.”

1 Jn 5 runs more smoothly in the absence of the comma. He also dismisses Sandius' objection that the comma makes no sense because it would be unworthy for God to stand as a witness. ("Before what judge," Sandius had asked, "might God stand as a witness?") Smith rejects the anonymous opinion (reported by Sandius) that the passage was inserted by Sabellians. Even more strenuously does Smith deny the suggestion—which Sandius was merely reporting from Bugenhagen's *Commentary on Jonah*—that the comma was actually introduced by Arians. And while Sandius had pointed out that the inversion of verse 7 and 8 in many manuscripts seems to indicate that the comma is an intrusion, Smith simply denies this notion, though without any argument to the contrary.¹¹²

When Simon's *Histoire critique du texte du Nouveau Testament* was published in 1689, Smith read it eagerly to discover the author's opinions on the question of the comma. Since the publication of his *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* in 1685, Simon had a certain reputation; it was thus with a curious combination of horror and satisfaction that Smith observed how Simon had exerted himself in "expunging this most famous testimony of the most holy Trinity from the sacred writings."¹¹³ Indeed, while attracting for himself the reputation of an ingenious and subtle critic, Simon (Smith accused) did not seem to care about the harm his critical conjectures were doing to true piety, while providing material for heretics, "who strive to destroy the mysteries of the Christian faith through their dishonest perversity, under the shield of this new Enlightenment, or through subtlety of criticism."¹¹⁴

In his new work Smith brings new evidence for the universal acceptance of the comma. He cites the Creed of Mogilas (1654) as evidence that the comma was an established part of the eastern Scriptures and religious texts, clearly unaware that the reading of the comma in that document was taken from de

¹¹² Smith, 1690, 148-150; Sandius, 1669, 381-382.

¹¹³ Smith, 1690, 153-154: "Neque enim aliter esset ex- [154] pectandum, quin pro pruritu ipso sacras Scripturas sollicitandi, qui in Criticâ veteris testamenti ubivis se prodit, in hac alterâ omnes ingenii & industriæ nervos idem Author intenderet, ut hoc præclarissimum de sanctissimâ Trinitate testimonium è sacro contextu expungeretur."

¹¹⁴ Smith, 1690, 154: "Interim dum ingeniosi & subtilis Critici famam laudesque captat, quantum aut religionem Christianam audacibus futilibusque suis conjectationibus lædat, aut hæreticorum hujus ævi, qui improbâ perversitate Christianæ fidei mysteria sub novæ illuminationis aut Criticæ subtilitatis præsidio pessundare satagunt, partibus faveat, parum sollicitus videtur."

Bèze's text. As far as Smith was concerned, the evidence for the comma in both Latin and Greek manuscripts was so compelling that "Erasmus, Sozzini, Sandius or Simon have not called it into doubt," a somewhat startling claim. For Smith, the only room for critical disagreement on this matter was the question of which manuscripts correspond more closely to the autograph of the Apostle John, and which less.

Smith then employs the principles of textual criticism to argue his case. (Some of these arguments appear to have been borrowed from Turretini's disputation on the comma.) Omissions from a text are, Smith asserts, a very common source of scribal error. Additions, on the other hand, are much less frequent, and occur only through a conscious intention on the part of the scribe. The parallelism of verses 7 and 8 explains easily how the comma could have dropped out of the text through homeoteleuton. Where Simon points out that many manuscripts transmit the prologue to the Catholic Epistles without Jerome's name, Smith merely counters that an explicit ascription was unnecessary, since the authenticity of the prologue was not in doubt. As to Simon's point that some manuscripts containing the prologue do not have the comma in the text of the epistle, Smith argues that such codices had been copied from mutilated originals. Simon had pointed to the presence of the comma in the margins of some manuscripts as evidence of the fact that the comma had crept into the text from the margin. Smith by contrast believed that the presence of marginal additions showed that the scribes in such cases, suspecting that something was missing from the text but afraid to deviate from the original they were copying, had simply inserted the text into the margins. Smith's attempts to refute Simon's arguments, while admittedly lame, nevertheless demonstrate how easily textual evidence could be misinterpreted and could thus lead to critically inadequate conclusions.

Simon received particularly harsh criticism from his own countrymen. In 1713, Louis Roger, Dean of Bourges, published a pair of treatises: one in defence in the comma against the Socinians and recent critics; and the other in defence of the Septuagint translation of Is 7:14 (ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son") against the Jews. As star witness for the defence, Roger brought "the extremely ancient Greek codex from Britain, seen by Erasmus. He immediately considered it of such authority that in his third edition of 1522 and those that followed, he restored from this codex that verse which he had rejected in the first and second edition of his Greek New

Testament.”¹¹⁵ Roger mentions the ambivalence of Erasmus’ attitude towards this manuscript—first the way in which he used it for the 1521 Latin and 1522 editions, but then by airing his suspicion that it had been “corrected” against the Latin Vulgate. Roger himself sought to exonerate the manuscript from the charge of Latinising by seeking to show that the correction of Greek manuscripts against Latin ones simply never happened. Roger also sought to refute Simon’s suggestions that the comma began life as a marginal gloss, and that the scribe consulted the *Acta* of the Lateran Council.¹¹⁶

Simon found another detractor in the Franciscan Antoine Boucat († 1730), professor of theology at Paris. In his *Theologia patrum scholastico-dogmatica* (1716), Boucat reheated some of Roger’s arguments against Simon, and argued strenuously for the comma as the “legitimate offspring of St John” (*genuinus S. Ioannis fœtus*). Boucat bases his argument on internal grounds (the apparent coherence of the seventh and eight verses) and external evidence (the fact that the comma was quoted and taught by the Fathers from Tertullian onwards). In an appeal to the strength of ecclesiastical authority, Boucat asserts that Simon had drawn upon himself the anathema of the council of Trent for daring to challenge its affirmation of the canonicity of the Johannine epistles.¹¹⁷ Since Simon had emphasised the need to argue from the evidence of the manuscripts, Boucat cites amongst the positive manuscript evidence “the very ancient British codex which Erasmus cites; although it cannot be found, it is believed to be one in Cambridge. Erasmus considered it of such authority that after omitting the comma in the first edition of his Greek New Testament, he restored it in the second [*rectè* third], produced at Basel in 1522.”¹¹⁸ Even if

¹¹⁵ Roger, 1713, 99: “His itaque omissis, proferimus antiquissimum codicem Græcum Britannicum, ab Erasmo visum, cujus primùm tanta fuit apud ipsum auctoritas, ut ex illo codice versum hunc, in primâ & secundâ suâ novi Testamenti Græcâ editione rejectum, in tertiâ anni 1522, & aliis deinceps, restituerit, cum jam anno præcedente eum inseruisset, versioni Latinæ novi Testamenti, ex Græco à se adornatæ, & Basileæ typis Frobenianis editæ: quanquam post modum, quasi facti pœnitens, ad priorem sententiam redire visus est, codicis etiam Britannici auctoritatem elevans, quem & alii post ipsum exagitarunt.”

¹¹⁶ Roger, 1713, 100-119.

¹¹⁷ Boucat, 1766, IV:321-331. Filser, 2001, 521, cites Boucat as typical of the return to dogma in early eighteenth-century Catholicism.

¹¹⁸ Boucat, 1766, IV:324: “Eum [versum] retinet codex Britannicus antiquissimus, quem Erasmus citat; & licet nunc non inveniatur, creditur tamen Cambrigensis, qui quidem tantæ auctoritatis Erasmo visus est, ut omisso versiculo, in prima sua editione Græca novi

Simon had been alive to read Boucat's work, we can only wonder how he might have reacted to such embarrassingly naïve arguments.

Another of Simon's clerical detractors in France was the Benedictine Prudent Maran, who devoted a chapter to the question of the comma in his treatise *On the divinity of Christ, manifest in the Scriptures and tradition* (1746). Again it is clear that Roger's defence was the source of much of Maran's material. As part of his defence of the comma, Maran points out the ambivalence of Erasmus' attitude to the codex Britannicus, which Maran believed to be a different book from the Dublin codex. Maran's account contains a number of small errors which however add up to give a misleading account of the course of events:

First to be mentioned is the British codex. When Erasmus had seen this in England, he considered it of such authority that in the 1522 edition and those which followed he restored to the sacred text the seventh verse as found in this codex, which he had omitted in the two previous editions. Erasmus was inconsistent in his judgment over this codex. He suspected that the Greek codices had been corrected with the help of the Latin ones, an opinion which Simon at first rejected as improbable, but later defended as certain. [Simon] thinks that the reading of the British codex was derived from the confession of faith established at the Lateran Council under Innocent III and translated into Latin by an unskilled translator. He relies on these reasons to explain why the words λόγος καὶ πνεῦμα are read without articles, as in the confession of faith, and why both have the reading καὶ οἱ τρεῖς in accordance with the example of the Latin codices.¹¹⁹

Testamenti, illum in secunda [*rectè* tertia], facta Basileæ anno 1522. restituerit." On 330, Boucat refers again to the British codex as "extremely ancient" (*pervetustus*). It is clear that Boucat is relying on Roger, 1713, 99.

¹¹⁹ Maran, 1859, 199: "Memorandus in primis codex Britannicus, quem cum vidisset in Anglia Erasmus, tanti illum fecit, ut verum septimum in hoc codice repertum, quem in duabus suis prioribus editionibus omiserat, in editione anni 1522. et aliis deinceps, restitueret sacro contextui. Non sibi constitit Erasmus in suo de hoc codice iudicio: suspicatus est Græcos codices ope Latinorum emendatos fuisse: quam opinionem Simonius primo rejecit ut vero non similem, postea ut exploratam defendit. Lectionem codicis Britannici derivatam putat ex Professione fidei, quam in Concilio Lateranensi sub Innocentio III. conditam, et Latine ab imperito interprete redditam pronuntiat. His ratiunculis nititur, quod in codice Britannico sine articulis legantur, ut in Professione fidei, λόγος καὶ πνεῦμα, et quod in utroque scriptum sit, καὶ οὔτοι οἱ τρεῖς, ad exemplum codicum Latinorum."

Maran denies Simon's claim, arguing that a similarity between two manuscripts is not always a reason to suspect that one was copied from the other. In fact, Maran points out that there are enough differences between the reading of the comma in the Acts of the Lateran council and that in the British codex to dismiss Simon's argument. Convinced that he had refuted Simon's judgment in this matter, Maran feels confident in having simultaneously demolished Simon's assertion that the reading in the Complutensian bible is without manuscript support.¹²⁰

But Simon also found many admirers, including the English businessman and philanthropist Thomas Firmin (1632-1697). Soon after Firmin's death, a brief biographical account appeared in the form of a "letter to a person of quality by a gentlemen of his acquaintance." This letter gives an account of Firmin's services to the poor of London, for example in establishing and funding a non-profit linen factory in Little Britain to provide work for the unemployed, a public ministration which the author compares to Stillingfleet's establishment of schools and libraries. However, on the matter of Firmin's religious views, the author writes: "He was [...] not so Orthodox, as I cou'd have wished he had been, in his Opinion about the Holy Trinity, and the satisfaction of our Saviour." Firmin's friend, while not wishing to defend Firmin's beliefs, at least sought to explain them by pointing out that he was "of no Obstinate, refractory Temper, but show'd in the whole Tenour of his Life, that he aim'd at nothing more than to find out the Truth [...]." Moreover, he explains that the war that scarred mid-century England was such that dissidence was almost a natural reaction. When Firmin was a boy, "he found the Nation involved in a Bloody Civil War, and the Church divided by several Schisms, as the state was distracted by different Factions. The Laity at that time looked upon themselves to be ill used by the Leaders of both Churches, who did not seem to contend for the purity of

¹²⁰ Maran, 1859, 199-200: "Duorum codicum similitudo non semper argumento est, alterum de altero descriptum fuisse. Sed Simonium refellit varietas non levis quæ inter codicem Britannicum et Professionem fidei Lateranensem occurrit. Nam in illa habemus ὁ πατήρ: at in codice deest articulus. Deest etiam vox ἅγιον post πνεῦμα in eodem codice. Hoc argumento ruit alia Simonii opinio, qui in editione Complutensi versus septimum sine codicis Ms. auctoritate adoptatum fuisse contendit. Sed versus [200] septimus in hac editione ita discrepat a Latinis codicibus, ut ex Græcis sumtum fuisse pateat. Clausula sic legitur, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς τὸ ἔν εἰσιν. Citat alium codicem in Bibliotheca Dublinensis Academiae nunc asservatum eruditus Bituricensis Decanus, Dissert. pag. 120 [*i.e.* Roger, 1713, 120]."

Religion, so much as they did who should have the Rod in their hands, to jerk the poor People that were under their Power, and as it is natural for Men to run out of one extream into another, they imagin'd a cheat put upon them, even where there was no reason to suspect one."¹²¹

Firmin, his eulogist tells us, spent as much time in study as his other occupations allowed. In his reading he had discovered from writers such as Grotius "how inconsistent with themselves, and how different from us, the Fathers of the Church were before the Nicene Council, in their Explications of the Trinity." As for the Johannine comma, Firmin's friend admits that the textual evidence is not very good. It could not be denied that the "*Alexandrine Manuscript* has only these Words, *There are three that bear Witness, the Spirit, &c.* so have all the Ancient Greek Copies, as also the *Syriac*, the *Arabic*, the *Æthiopic*, and Latin Interpreters in the oldest Manuscripts; that if the Words, according as we find them in our Editions, are extant in any of the Ancient Books, they are Written in the Margin, and not in the Text, and generally in a later Hand: That as several learned Annotators have observed, 'tis plain that many of the Fathers did not read the above mentioned Passage about the Witnesses in Heaven, as now we do, because they never make use of it in their Disputes with the *Arians*, although they cite the other about the Witnesses in Earth [...]."¹²² It is clear where Firmin (and his friend) found their information: "*F. Simon*, in his *Critical History of the New Testament*, c. 18. has well observed, it is not probable *St. Cyprian* read the Words so, and yet *St. Austin* should never employ them against the *Arians* of his Time; and therefore that learned Critick, not without good grounds, supposes that *St. Cyprian* adapted the Words of the 8th. Verse, *Et hi tres unum sunt* (for so the Vulgar Latin reads it,) to the Father, Son, and holy Ghost." Similar textual problems are to be observed, he notes, in 1 Jn 4:3, Jude 4, Rom 9:5, and Tim 3:16, "upon which Place *Erasmus* supposes it to have been added by the Orthodox to stop the mouths of the *Arians*; but *Beza*, that it was designedly omitted by those that denied the Divinity of our Blessed Saviour." According to Firmin's friend, textual differences are only part of the reason for theological disputes, which owed more to the patristic and scholastic habit of paraphrasing Scripture rather than citing precisely. This defect, he suggests, invariably led to "the great obscurity of their Writings, and endless Contentions about Terms;

¹²¹ Anon., 1698, 15.

¹²² Anon., 1698, 15-16.

while speaking the same things in other Words, they don't, or will not understand one another."¹²³

The author concludes his account by arguing that Firmin's public virtues more than outweighed any taint of heterodoxy: "Mr. *Firmin* was a most excellent Member of our Commonwealth, who bent all his Studies, Labours, and Inclinations to serve and advance the Publick Good. He had his Infirmities as has been shewn, but they ought never to be remembred to his prejudice, since he had so many Vertues of the first magnitude to over-balance them. Let it never be said, that he who treated all Mankind, with universal Charity, when alive, should not be treated with the same Charity himself now he is in the Grave."¹²⁴ While it is significant that the author should still feel the need to protect Firmin's posthumous reputation despite his public avowal of Socinian ideas, his protestation nevertheless provides evidence that charity and orthodoxy were just beginning to break apart, a tendency that would lead eventually to modern secular humanism.

12. Isaac Newton

At the same time as Simon was working on his *Histoire critique du texte du Nouveau Testament* in Paris and Smith was labouring on his defence of the comma in Oxford, a detailed examination of the authenticity of 1 Jn 5:7-8 and 1 Tim 3:16 was also being undertaken by Isaac Newton in Cambridge.¹²⁵ In 1690, Newton addressed to John Locke an epistolary treatise, *An Historical Account of Two Notable Corruptions of the Scripture*, in which he subjected matters evidently discussed by the two men previously to a detailed textual examination. Newton's treatise is long and occasionally rambling, even if the drafts show considerable evidence of reworking. The self-consciously historical approach announced in

¹²³ Anon., 1698, 17-18.

¹²⁴ Anon., 1698, 22.

¹²⁵ Newton, *An Historical Account of Two Notable Corruptions of the Scripture*. In a Letter to a Friend, in Newton, 1785, 5:495. Newton's original draft is in Oxford, New College ms 361(4), now transcribed online: www.newtonproject.sussex.ac.uk. See also Newton's notes in Cambridge, King's College, Keynes ms 2, 20, also transcribed in the Newton Project. On the circumstances surrounding the attempted publication, see King, 1858, 231-234; Bourne, 1876, 2:219-223; Bludau, 1922, 210-212.

the title shows that the work was not to be driven by doctrinal considerations, but by the empirical evidence of the extant documents. Newton protested to Locke that he intended to treat “no article of faith, no point of discipline, nothing but a criticism concerning a text of Scripture.”¹²⁶ Yet Newton’s motivation was also to an extent polemical and partisan. He suggests in his address that Locke, who had been constrained to flee to the Netherlands after being implicated in the anti-Catholic Rye House Plot of 1683, would appreciate the treatise all the more because of his opposition to “the many abuses which they of the Roman church have put upon the world.”¹²⁷ Thus the first extended treatment of the question of the comma by a Protestant author is distinguished from the outset by a partisan purpose.

Though Newton’s religious views are not entirely clear, it is certain that the priority he gave to reason and morality would have been sufficient to earn him the stigma of being labelled a Socinian if his views had been more widely known.¹²⁸ Such an accusation could have resulted in the loss of his chair at Cambridge. For this reason, Newton intended that the *Historical Account* should be translated into French and published anonymously on the continent, perhaps after observing that the anonymous—albeit unintended—publication of Locke’s *Letter on Toleration* in Latin (1689) had to an extent shielded the author from identification and reprisals. Once Newton had some idea of how the piece had been received, he would then be in a better position to decide whether he could risk publishing the English original. On 14 November 1690, Newton sent a draft of the treatise to Locke, who in turn sent it, without any indication of its authorship, to Jean Le Clerc in Amsterdam. Le Clerc wrote back to Locke on 11 April 1691, apologising that he had not yet had a chance to translate the work, and suggesting that the anonymous author should consult Simon’s newly published *Histoire critique du texte du Nouveau Testament*—and this despite Le Clerc’s own very public polemic with Simon over the question of Scriptural inspiration, and Newton’s violent anti-Catholic feeling. Locke apparently passed this message on, for Newton took the opportunity to revise the work further, adding material from a careful reading of Simon and Gilbert Burnet. Locke duly

¹²⁶ Newton, 1785, 5:496.

¹²⁷ On Newton’s anti-Catholic feeling, see Iliffe, 1999.

¹²⁸ Further, see Westfall, 1983, 318; Levine, 1999, 200; Snobelen, 1999; Champion 1999a and 1999b; Iliffe, 1999; Mandelbrote, 2004; Snobelen, 2005; Iliffe, 2006.

sent these revisions to Le Clerc for inclusion in the translation. As Justin Champion has pointed out, Locke and Newton were somewhat unusual amongst English Protestant readers in engaging constructively with Simon's work, however inimical his project appeared to fundamental Protestant sensibilities. In this they contrast with many other Anglican writers, such as Edward Stillingfleet, John Williams and Ofspring Blackhall, who merely threw up their hands in horror.¹²⁹ Yet this openness to profit from Simon's stunning erudition may be due to the fact that both Newton and Locke, however reluctant they might have been to admit it, existed very much on the fringes of orthodox Protestantism.

Despite the care Newton took with the revisions, by 1692 he began to get cold feet, afraid that his authorship might be recognised even in translation. He wrote to Locke to request that the papers be returned and publication cancelled. When he discovered that the only fair copy was already in Le Clerc's hands, he was, with some understatement, "sorry to hear this news."¹³⁰ Locke passed on Newton's request to halt work, and on 15 July 1692 Le Clerc wrote to confirm that he would keep the papers until further instruction. Le Clerc apparently still hoped to publish the work at the end of the year, for on 5 December 1692 he wrote again to Locke to suggest that the author should read the second volume of Simon's work (he apparently had the two-volume English edition in mind). But by then Newton had apparently dropped the idea entirely, and the treatise remained amongst Le Clerc's papers until his death, when it passed into the possession of the Remonstrant Seminary. On the basis of this copy the treatise was finally published in 1754, under Newton's name.¹³¹ An abbreviated French translation was made immediately by César de Missy and published the same year.¹³² In 1785 it was re-edited from Newton's draft by bishop Horsley and included in the fifth volume of Newton's complete works.

Newton begins his account by noting that the spuriousness of the comma had previously been exposed by Erasmus, Luther, Bullinger, Grotius and other "learned and quick-sighted men" who "would not dissemble their knowledge." Newton was clearly impressed by Erasmus' attitude of critical scepticism, and he takes over several broad arguments and many details from Erasmus' *Annotationes*

¹²⁹ Champion, 1999b, 92-93.

¹³⁰ Newton to Locke, 16 February 1692 (n. s.), cit. Bourne, 1867, 2:222.

¹³¹ The 1734 edition *Two letters to Mr Clarke*, mentioned by King, 1858, 2:231, is a ghost.

¹³² In the *Journal Britannique* 15 (1754), 151-190.

and his reply to Lee. But despite the doubts of such men, Newton sighs, many of his own contemporaries hung on to the comma as a defence against heresy. For Newton, such deceit was unforgivable, especially in a Protestant: “But whilst we exclaim against the pious frauds of the Roman church, and make it a part of our religion to detect and renounce all things of that kind, we must acknowledge it a greater crime in us to favour such practices, than in the Papists we so much blame on that account: for they act according to their religion, but we contrary to ours.”¹³³ Yet Newton was also hostile to Socinians whom he accused for example of dealing “too injuriously with Cyprian” when they argued that the important passage from his *De unitate* was corrupt. (To distance himself explicitly from the Socinians, even on such an innocuous critical point as this, may have been a ploy to ward off any suspicion that he wished to promote similar ideas. But it is important to note that he had actually read the works of several Socinians, including Sandius and Crell.)¹³⁴ By contrast, Newton suggested that Cyprian’s employment of the phrase *tres unum sunt* rather than the comma in its fully developed form is consistent with the conclusion that it was unknown in the Latin text in general circulation during his lifetime. The absence of the comma from the biblical text known to the early apologists is suggested furthermore by its absence from their apologies: “For had it been in Cyprian’s Bible, the Latines of the next age, when all the world was engaged in disputing about the Trinity, and all arguments that could be thought of were diligently sought out, and daily brought upon the stage, could never have been ignorant of a text, which in our age, now the dispute is over, is chiefly insisted upon.”¹³⁵ In support of his contention, Newton mentions Eucherius’ statement that many people interpreted the three earthly witnesses as types of the Trinity, and the evidence given by Facundus that Cyprian interpreted 1 Jn 5:8 as a type of the Trinity. “Now if it was the opinion of many in the Western churches of those times, that the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood, signified the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; it is plain that the testimony of Three in Heaven, in express words, was not yet crept into their books: and even without this testimony, it was obvious for Cyprian, or any man else of that opinion, to say of the Father, and Son, and Holy

¹³³ Newton, 1785, 5:495-496.

¹³⁴ Snobelen, 2005, 271.

¹³⁵ Newton, 1785, 5:497.

Ghost, ‘it is written, “And these Three are One.”’¹³⁶ In an interesting aside, Newton even suggests that Cyprian’s formulation “Father, Son and Holy Spirit” rather than “Father, Word and Holy Spirit” suggests that he was referring not to the comma as it would later become established, but to the baptismal formula given at the Great Commission (Mt 28:19), “the place from which they tried at first to derive the Trinity.”¹³⁷ (At this point Bishop Horsley, the editor of Newton’s works, added a note deflecting the suspicion that this statement revealed any hint of Socinianism on Newton’s part.)

From Cyprian, Newton worked backwards to Tertullian. The fact that Tertullian was the first to give a Trinitarian interpretation to the phrase *tres unum sunt* led Newton to suggest that this interpretation was “invented by the Montanists for giving countenance to their Trinity. For Tertullian was a Montanist when he wrote this; and it is most likely that so corrupt and forced an interpretation had its rise among a sect of men accustomed to make bold with the Scriptures.” On Tertullian’s authority, Newton suggests, this interpretation was subsequently adopted by Cyprian and other Latins.¹³⁸ Newton then suggests that the Trinitarian allegoresis of the earthly witnesses led a scribe (or scribes) either to record this allegoresis in the margin, “whence it might afterwards creep into the text in transcribing,” or to insert it into the text “fraudulently.”¹³⁹

As far as Newton knew, the earliest author who came under suspicion of inserting the comma deliberately was Jerome. Newton’s treatment of Jerome is based on two questionable assumptions: firstly, that the prologue to the Catholic Epistles was written by Jerome; and secondly, that Jerome was responsible for inserting into the Latin bible a passage from the Greek text which he believed to have been omitted by the “unfaithful translators.”¹⁴⁰ However, Jerome’s confession that the comma was not present in the Latin text before his time “cuts off all the authority of the present vulgar Latin for justifying it. And whilst he was accused by his contemporaries of falsifying the Scriptures in inserting it, this accusation also confirms, that he altered the public reading.” Jerome’s insistence that the passage establishes the truth of Catholic doctrine renders it “the more

¹³⁶ Newton, 1785, 5:498.

¹³⁷ Newton, 1785, 5:498.

¹³⁸ Newton, 1785, 5:500.

¹³⁹ Newton, 1785, 5:501.

¹⁴⁰ Newton, 1785, 5:502.

suspected.”¹⁴¹ Newton was quite convinced that Jerome could have been responsible for such an alteration to the received Latin text. Anyone who has read Jerome’s writings, Newton suggests, will have observed “a strange liberty which he takes in asserting things.” Erasmus had likewise characterised Jerome as “frequently violent and impudent, and often contrary to himself.”¹⁴² Nevertheless, those who accuse Jerome of inserting the comma from a Greek text different from that commonly received in his time thereby undermine the authority of Jerome’s revision. On the other hand, if Jerome had interpolated the comma on the basis of the Greek text, he was quite mistaken, for all the evidence suggested that the Greeks had no knowledge of the comma. Newton makes rather heavy weather with his treatment of Jerome, but his difficulties—like those of Erasmus—all sprang from the false belief that the prologue to the Catholic Epistles was one of Jerome’s genuine works. Even after reading Simon’s book, Newton never seems to have dropped this misapprehension.

For Newton, the most compelling evidence against the original presence of the comma in the Greek text was its demonstrable absence from the text during the time of the earliest Fathers. As to the accusation that the comma had been excised by the Arians, Newton found this simply ludicrous: “Yes, truly, those Arians were crafty knaves, that could conspire so cunningly and slyly all the world over at once [...] to get all men’s books in their hands, and correct them without being perceived: ay, and conjurors too, to do it without leaving any blot or chasm in their books, whereby the knavery might be suspected and discovered; and to wipe away the memory of it out of all men’s brains, so that neither Athanasius, or anybody else, could afterwards remember that they had ever seen it in their books before; and out of their own books too; so that when they turned to the consubstantial faith, as they generally did in the West, soon after the death of Constantius, they could then remember no more of it than anybody else.”¹⁴³ Such was the absurd conclusion obtruded upon those who asserted that the comma was penned by St John himself. Those of Newton’s contemporaries who excused themselves for inserting the comma against the evidence of the manuscripts thus revealed themselves as “falsaries by their own confession, and certainly need no other confutation,” unless they could prove

¹⁴¹ Newton, 1785, 5:502.

¹⁴² Newton, 1785, 5:503.

¹⁴³ Newton, 1785, 5:508.

that the comma had been removed early from the text “by some better argument than that of pretence and clamour.”¹⁴⁴

But having dismissed the comma as a later intrusion into the text, Newton was thus under an onus to explain how the comma arose. He suggested that this first happened “by that abused authority of Cyprian [...], in the disputes with the ignorant Vandals [...].”¹⁴⁵ Moreover, he suggests that while the comma became established early in Africa, it did not become commonly accepted in Europe until the twelfth century or so. This error can perhaps be explained by the fact that many important texts from the early middle ages still remained unpublished until after Newton’s time. Newton also pointed out that the evidence of the Latin bibles is ambiguous, since earlier manuscripts were corrected according to later recensions, causing a considerable variety amongst the texts in circulation: “the old Latin has been so generally corrected, that it is nowhere to be found sincere.”¹⁴⁶ In the case of the Johannine comma, the inconsistent application of these corrections—later joined by the mistaken injunctions of Aquinas against the phrase *tres unum sunt* in 1 Jn 5:8—led to an astonishing variety of different readings.

Newton places part of the blame for the confusion on de Bèze, who maintained that the comma was read by Jerome; by Erasmus in the British codex; by the editors of the Complutensian edition, and by himself, who had read it in “several old books [*i.e.* manuscripts] of our friend Estienne” (*Legimus et nos in nonnullis Roberti nostri veteribus libris*). For Newton, such careless phrasing was reprehensible: “Now to pull off the vizard, I cannot but, in the first place, extremely complain of Beza’s want of modesty and caution in expressing himself.”¹⁴⁷ In order to show that de Bèze’s claim was without foundation, Newton first provides a summary of Simon’s investigations of the manuscripts in Paris and his failure to find the comma in any of them. Newton concludes that the witness of Estienne’s editions can thus be dismissed.

Having disposed of Estienne and de Bèze, Newton concluded that the authority of the comma thus rests “only upon the authority of the editions of Erasmus and Cardinal Ximenes. But seeing that Erasmus omitted it in his two

¹⁴⁴ Newton, 1785, 5:509.

¹⁴⁵ Newton, 1785, 5:512.

¹⁴⁶ Newton, 1785, 5:513.

¹⁴⁷ Newton, 1785, 5:515-516.

first editions, and inserted it unwillingly, against the authority of his manuscripts, in his three last; the authority of these three can be none at all.” Newton provides a short summary of the exchange with Lee, and the appearance of the Codex Britannicus:

Hence notice was sent to Erasmus out of England, that it was in a manuscript there; and thereupon to avoid their calumnies (as he saith) he printed it in his following editions; notwithstanding that he suspected that manuscript to be a new one, corrected by the Latin. But since, upon inquiry, I cannot learn that they in England ever heard of any such manuscript, but from Erasmus; and since he was only told of such a manuscript, in the time of the controversy between him and Lee, and never saw it himself, I cannot forbear to suspect, that it was nothing but a trick put upon him by some of the Popish clergy, to try if he would make good what he had offered, the printing of the testimony of “the Three in Heaven” by the authority of one Greek copy, and thereby to get it into his edition. Greek manuscripts of the Scripture are things of value, and do not use to be thrown away; and such a manuscript, for the testimony of “the Three in Heaven,” would have made a greater noise than the rest have done against it. Let those who have such a manuscript, at length tell us where it is.¹⁴⁸

A few pages later, Newton reconstructs the circumstances in even more detail:

Erasmus, who printed the triple testimony in heaven by that English manuscript, never saw it; tells us it was a new one; suspected its sincerity; and accused it publicly in his writings on several occasions, for several years together; and yet his adversaries in England never answered his accusation; never endeavoured to satisfy him and the world about it; did not so much as let us know where the record might be consulted for confuting him; but, on the contrary, when they had got the Trinity into his edition, threw by their manuscript, if they had one, as an almanac out of date.¹⁴⁹

Newton’s account of these events is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, he clearly believed that the British Codex was a deception masterminded by the “Popish clergy”, a “Phœnix [...] which once appeared to somebody somewhere

¹⁴⁸ Newton, 1785, 5:519.

¹⁴⁹ Newton, 1785, 5:530-531.

in England, but could never since be seen.”¹⁵⁰ Secondly, Newton concludes on this basis that Erasmus never saw this manuscript, but was only given a report of its purported contents. Thirdly, Newton suggests even more strongly than Richard Simon that Erasmus had “offered” to Lee that he would include the comma “by the authority of one Greek copy.” This paragraph thus marks the origin of three particularly persistent myths surrounding Erasmus’ decision to include the comma in his Greek text.

Newton clearly harboured similar suspicions about the authority of the reading in the Complutensian edition. While the edition was ostensibly based on manuscripts from the papal library, no manuscripts containing the comma could subsequently be found. Secondly, the presence of the marginal note in the Complutensian edition aroused Newton’s suspicions. Admittedly, the annotation gave a justification for the reading in the Latin text. “But this is not the main design. For so the annotation should have been set in the margin of the Latin version. Its being set in the margin of the Greek text, shows that its main design is to justify the Greek by the Latin thus rectified and confirmed. Now to make Thomas thus, in a few words, do all the work, was very artificial; and in Spain, where Thomas is of apostolic authority, might pass for a very judicious and substantial defence of the printed Greek. But to us Thomas Aquinas is no Apostle. We are seeking for the authority of Greek manuscripts.”¹⁵¹ More damning was the failure of Stunica to produce a manuscript supporting the reading. “Neither could Sepulveda, or the Spanish monks who next undertook the controversy, find one Greek manuscript, which here made against Erasmus.”¹⁵² Furthermore, the inconsistencies between the readings of the comma in the Greek text of the Complutensian edition and Erasmus’ Codex Britannicus argue that they do not rest on a genuine textual transmission: “The differences are too great to spring from the bare errors of scribes, and arise rather from the various translations of the place, out of Latin into Greek, by two several persons.”¹⁵³ Newton’s comments on the Complutensian bible manage to combine anti-Catholic feeling, anticlericalism and xenophobia under the mask of rationality and empiricism.

¹⁵⁰ Newton, 1785, 5:529.

¹⁵¹ Newton, 1785, 5:521-522.

¹⁵² Newton, 1785, 5:523.

¹⁵³ Newton, 1785, 5:524.

Newton concludes his critique by examining the context of the passage. The inclusion of the comma creates logical problems, he maintains, for the presence of the heavenly witnesses is incomprehensible: "If their testimony be not given to men, how does it prove to them the truth of Christ's coming? If it be, how is the testimony in heaven distinguished from that on earth? It is the same spirit which witnesses in heaven and in earth. If in both cases it witnesses to us men, wherein lies the difference between its witnessing in heaven, and its witnessing in earth? If, in the first case, it does not witness to men, to whom does it witness? And to what purpose? And how does its witnessing make to the design of St. John's discourse?" For Newton, as for Milton in *De doctrina Christiana*, the inclusion of the comma creates insuperable problems for the sense of the passage, not least the double appearance of the Spirit. "Let them make good sense of it who are able. For my part, I can make none." Newton concludes by suggesting that the common attachment to the comma sprang not from the love of truth or reason, but from the perverse attraction of mystery: "It is the temper of the hot and superstitious part of mankind, in matters of religion, ever to be fond of mysteries; and for that reason, to like best what they understand least. Such men may use the apostle John as they please; but I have that honour for him, as to believe that he wrote good sense."¹⁵⁴

Newton's examination of the issue was the most substantial to date, exceeding even Simon's in length, if not in novelty of argument or evidence. Besides expressing his desire that the text of Scripture should be susceptible to proof and verifiability in the same way as experiments and hypotheses in the burgeoning natural sciences, Newton's exposition also marked the beginning of a number of tenacious myths about Erasmus' encounter with the British Codex. Despite the fact that Newton's treatment was not published until well after his death, the presence of similar doubts and hypotheses in the works of several members of Newton's immediate and extended circles leads to the suspicion that he circulated his ideas with certain of his colleagues at Cambridge. And once this letter was published, its impact increased substantially, working upon such important later critics as Richard Porson.

¹⁵⁴ Newton, 1785, 5:529-530.

13. Stephen Nye, Edward Stillingfleet

The textual authority of the comma was also questioned by the Anglican clergyman Stephen Nye (c. 1648-1719) in his *Considerations on the explications of the doctrine of the Trinity, occasioned by four sermons preached by his grace the Lord Arch-Bishop of Canterbury*. This vigorous polemic was published anonymously in 1694 and immediately gave rise to a heated controversy. In this polemic, Nye accuses the archbishop and the clergy at large of deceiving the faithful by failing to draw to their attention the doubtful nature of several passages in Scripture, and by producing translations based on a less than adequate Greek text. The first of the objections Nye makes under this head relates to the comma:

His Lordship would have done a Generous Thing, if he had vouchsafed to inform the (poor gull'd) English Reader, that in very deed, this Text was Unknown to *the Fathers*, who treated of these Questions against the Ancient Unitarians. And that as late as *Erasmus*, there was but one Greek Copy to be found in all *England*, that had in it this Verse. And finally, after all, supposing it were a Genuine Part of Holy Scripture, yet the English *Geneva Bible* owns; that the meaning is not, these Three are *One God*, but these Three are *One in their Testimony*; because they are here considered as *Witnesses*, or as *bearing Record*.¹⁵⁵

That such words, a direct challenge not only to the Archbishop of Canterbury but also the entire Scriptural basis of the church, should have been published by a clergyman attests both to the possibility of debate within the Anglican church, but also to the presence of massive tensions within that church.

Amongst the replies to Nye's treatise was one by Edward Stillingfleet (1635-1699), bishop of Worcester, who also engaged with Locke on the question of Unitarianism, a position he took to be a necessary consequence of Locke's epistemology.¹⁵⁶ Stillingfleet was somewhat ambivalent about the role Erasmus himself played in the question of the comma and the consequent revival of Arianism. Stillingfleet's control of the facts of the matter was somewhat loose; he suggested for example that the editors of the Complutensian bible had access to Erasmus' Codex Britannicus, clearly unaware that the readings in each were

¹⁵⁵ Nye, 1694, 29.

¹⁵⁶ Further, see Marshall, 2000.

entirely different.¹⁵⁷ Stillingfleet does note that it was Erasmus who “first began to raise any scruple” about the passage, and that the authority of Erasmus’ objections was such that the English bibles from the time of Henry VIII and Elizabeth marked the passage off by typographical means. Nevertheless, Stillingfleet concludes that Erasmus’ objections were unavailing, and that his final decision to include the comma in his text proved that he was satisfied of its textual authority:

Yet *Erasmus* his authority was not great enough to cast it out, if he had a mind to have done it. Which doth not appear, for he saith himself, that finding it in the *codex Britannicus*, as he calls it, he restored it in his *Translation* as well as the *Greek Testament*, out of which he had expunged it before in two Editions, and the *Complutensian Bible* coming out with it, added greater authority to the keeping of it in, and so it was preserved in the *Greek Testaments* of *Hervagius*, *Plantin* and *R. Stephens* and others, after the MSS. had been more diligently searched.¹⁵⁸

Yet Stillingfleet’s vague but inaccurate reference to the diligent searching out of manuscripts merely betrays the complacent confidence in the textual stability of the received text which critics like Nye had tried to unseat.

14. John Mills

Perhaps the most impressive achievement of biblical scholarship in the early eighteenth century was the publication of John Mills’ folio edition of the New Testament in 1707, the culmination of some thirty years of work.¹⁵⁹ Mills, an associate of Newton, included the comma in his text mainly because he had chosen to reproduce the text of Stephen’s *editio regia* of 1550, with only a few readings adopted from other editions, mainly those of the Elzeviers. In his general prolegomena, Mills notes that Erasmus included the comma in the Latin edition of the New Testament in 1521, and in the third Greek-Latin edition of 1522.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Stillingfleet, 1697, 162-163.

¹⁵⁸ Stillingfleet, 1697, 166.

¹⁵⁹ According to the entry “Mills, John,” in Cross and Livingstone, 1997, 1087: “His correct name appears to have been ‘Mills’, not (as commonly given) ‘Mill’.” Those who knew him, such as Newton and Whiston, used the form “Mills.”

¹⁶⁰ Mills, 1707, CXIV.

He accordingly gives an account of the manuscript from which Erasmus took his reading, the so-called British codex. The beginning of Mills' description of the manuscript is borrowed from Ussher's account in Walton's edition. However, it is clear that Mills had personally inspected Montfortianus, for he says that the book was written "by a rather recent and inaccurate hand," and suggested that the numerous marginal corrections and additions had been added by Chark, whom he considered to have a particularly calligraphic script. Mills noted that the readings in the text of this manuscript are sometimes far from the Majority text; he had, he assured his readers, gathered over a hundred and forty unusual readings from this manuscript.¹⁶² Nevertheless, all the examples Mills adduced come from the Gospels. It seems that Mills did not get any further through the manuscript, probably in the belief that the variants recorded in the London Polyglot would suffice for his purposes; however, as we have already noted, these did not extend as far as 1 Jn. As a consequence of his own partial inspection of the manuscript and his reliance on the incomplete collation in the London Polyglot, Mills had no idea that Erasmus' Codex Britannicus and Montfortianus were the same manuscript.

Mills' detailed notes on the comma cover ten relentless pages of very small type on folio pages.¹⁶³ He enumerates the known manuscripts from which the comma is missing. He enumerates the Fathers and Councils, both Latin and Greek, who fail to cite the comma when one would expect them most to do so. The only manuscripts he could enumerate which exhibit the passage were

¹⁶² Mills, 1707, CXLVIII: "Codex N. Testamenti, recentiori & minus accurata manu descripti: qui olim fuerat fratris *Froy* Franciscani, postea *Thomæ Clementis*, deinde *Guilielmi Charci*, & demum *Thomæ Montfortii* S. T. P [sc. D]. In Evangeliiis habet κεφάλαια seu *titulos*, & sectiones Ammonianas, cum στιχομετρία, ad calcem cujusque Evangelii. Lectiones variantes manu sua, ac suorum, excerpit *Usserius*, in Evangeliiis, Actis Apost. (ad Cap. 22^{di} versum 29. ubi desinit Exemplar *Cant.*) & Capite primo Epistolæ ad Romanos. neque enim ultra processere. Codicis cum in corpore, tum præsertim in spatio marginali, plurima notavit eruditus quispiam (*Gul. Charcus*, ut opinor; erat enim is in Græcis insigniter versatus, ac præterea καλλιγραφώτατος, adeoque ad hæc notanda quasi genio suo incitatus.) Aliqua hîc illic delevit, quæ in Codicem hunc ex interpolato textu irrepserant. [...] Textum ipsum quod spectat, magna in eo est vis lectionum plane singularium, seu hujusmodi saltem, quæ in Codd. nostris haud comparent. Tales quadraginta supra centum observatas à me olim memini. Sed & genuinæ aliquot ipsius lectiones sunt, ab Editis nostris discrepantes, quarum haud facta est in superioribus mentio, hoc loco memorandæ sunt [...]."

¹⁶³ Mills, 1707, 738-749; Mills' remarks on the comma are reprinted in Burgess, 1822, 11.

Erasmus' British codex, the Vatican codex on which (as he believed) the editors of the Complutensian bible relied, and all of the manuscripts of the Epistles consulted by Estienne. (Mills strangely chose to ignore the objections of Lucas Brugensis and Simon on this last point.)¹⁶⁴ He also mentions the *Acta* of the Lateran Council and Calecas as witnesses to this passage. He then treats of the citations and seeming-citations of the passage in the work of the Latin Fathers. He concluded that the seeming-citation in Tertullian was merely a mystical interpretation of verse 8. He disposes of Cyprian and Augustine in the same way. He disputes the attribution of the preface to the Catholic Epistles to Jerome. But then, just when the reader expects Mills to conclude his account by definitively rejecting the comma, the critic executes a sudden backflip, stating that after weighing all the evidence he could see no evidence to excise the passage.¹⁶⁵ This

¹⁶⁴ Mills, 1707, 742: "Pericopen hanc præferunt Codices MSS. *Britannicus* Erasmo dictus, cujus auctoritate reposuit ille Testimonium de Patre Verbo et Spiritu S. in Editione sua N. Testamenti Gr. an. 1541. [sc. 1522] quod in binis prioribus prætermiserat. [...] *Vaticani* antiquissimi et emendatissimi aliqui ad quos [...] *Hispani* Theologi ediderunt Testamentum *Complutense*, in quo habetur hæc Pericope. *Stephanici* omnes, quotquot Epistolas Catholicas complectebantur, nempe δ. ε. ζ. θ. ι. ια. ιγ. reliqui enim Epistolas has non exhibent. In istis septem nihil hîc deesse notatur præter verba ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. An recte hoc lectionem variantem signârît Rob. Stephanus, dubitat Lucas Brugensis, & quidem circulum, qui lectionis terminum designat, ad verba ἐν τῇ γῇ vers. prox. apponi debuisse asserit Cl. Simonius, nescio qua auctoritate; neque enim dicit se libros istos consuluisse. At vero nisi Pericopen hanc integram (exceptis ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, quæ desunt) exhibuerint Libri isti, maxime δ. ε. ζ. ι. qui sunt in Bibliotheca Regia; vix equidem fieri posse videtur, ut idem Robertus declararit in Epistola præfixa Editioni N. T. quæ prodiit anno 1549. se Codices nactum aliquot ipsa vetustatis specie penè adorandos, quorum copiam ei suppeditavit Bibliotheca Regia, (Codices istius Bibliothecas dicit, quorum, ut & aliorum novem, variantes lectiones posuit in interiori margine Editionis an. 1550.) ex iis ita Librum hunc suum recensuisse, ut nullam omnino literam secus esse pateretur, quàm plures iique meliores Libri, tanquam testes, comprobarent. Certe si Editionem suam ad Codices istos tam accurate exegerit, versiculus iste, quem integrum repræsentat Editio ista, Librorum illorum, quos tantopere prædicat, suffragio comprobetur necesse est."

¹⁶⁵ Mills, 1707, 749: "Verum de Pericope hæc vexatissimâ plus satis. Quæ in utramque partem cum ad minuendam, tum ad firmandam Commatis hujus αὐθεντίαν allata hactenus sunt rationum momenta, sedulò perpendimus. Utra pars præponderet, eruditis judicandum relinquimus. Mihi, fateor, (meliora, si quid melius certiusque dederit longior dies, discere parato) argumentis ad auctoritatem huic Versiculo conciliandam modo adductis tantum roboris inesse videtur, ut eum nullo modo de loco suo movendum esse censeam."

note went unchanged in Ludolf Küster's revision of Mills' work, published in 1723.¹⁶⁶

If Mills' efforts raised the comma further in the public eye, his surprising conclusion was not without cost to his own reputation. As he revealed in a letter dated 18 September 1708 (subsequently published in the *Bibliothèque choisi* for 1708 as well as in the re-issues of Mills' edition), Jean Le Clerc found much to praise in Mills' treatment of the question of the comma. (Le Clerc also mentions in passing that he was in possession of a treatise on the issue in English, sent to him by Locke. He claims—perhaps not without some element of humbug—not to know who had written the treatise, but he emphasises that it was worth publishing, perhaps hoping to encourage its “unknown author” to overcome his hesitation.) Le Clerc was glad that Mills had expressly rejected the attribution of the preface to the Catholic Epistles to Jerome, as had Martianay and Pouget, who produced the recent Paris edition of Jerome (1693-1706). Le Clerc also praised Mills' honesty in presenting all the evidence about the comma, though he raises the suspicion that he had done so in order to make his true meaning plain while maintaining a defence against potential criticism; in other words, by employing the same tactics as Erasmus himself:

If Dr. *Mill* hath not concluded here like a judicious critic, yet certainly he hath shown himself to be a candid and ingenuous man, in producing the arguments which effectually overturn his own opinion: nor would I impute it to his want of judgment, that he was not moved by the weight of the arguments, so much as to a sort of men, who are wont spitefully to reproach those who freely own the truth, as if they favour'd I know not what heresies, merely because they will not argue against 'em from corrupted texts. Truly the best men are sometimes under a necessity of giving way to the froward, which we must forgive.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Mills, 1723, 586.

¹⁶⁸ Le Clerc, 1708, 320-321: “Si expendantur quæ postea habet [*sc.* Millius], ad defendenda hæc verba quasi genuina, quam ipse sententiam sequitur, levia & infirma esse videbuntur. Quam in rem habemus etiam Anglicam Dissertationem, cujus auctor mihi ignotus est, ab eodem *Lockio* ad nos transmissam; quæ digna quoque est, quæ in publicam lucem erumpat. Laudandus tamen est, & quantivis faciendus candor *Millii*, qui nihil hac in re dissimulavit, animadvertitque etiam confictum esse Prologum Epistolarum Canoniarum, sub nomine *Hieronymi*, ad confirmandam vulgatam lectionem; quod agnoverunt quoque Parisienses Benedictini, qui *Hieronymum* nuper ediderunt. Si acutum Criticum hîc se minimè præstitit

By contrast, William Whiston (1711) publicly flayed Mills for allowing his critical faculties to be led by *a priori* considerations of orthodoxy:

In short, they who peruse the full Account of this Matter in Dr. *Mills*, and observe how much his *Premises*, however made too favourable by uncertain Suppositions, require him to reject this Verse, will wonder how his *Conclusion* comes to be for it; especially when he cannot come at that Conclusion without giving up the *Integrity* of almost all the original Copies and Versions of the New Testament for many centuries; only to support the Credit of one Text, which seems to favour some modern Opinions: whereas after all, the Reputation of it with him, as well as with every other considering Person, must be, at best, so *very weak*, as not to be able to *determine* their Opinions in any Point, in which they are not already satisfy'd from other Evidence; and so is even *to them* of very small Advantage or Consideration.¹⁶⁹

Having been deprived of his chair at Cambridge for expressing unorthodox religious beliefs, Whiston knew precisely why Mills had come to the conclusion he did—*ne cui sit causa calumniandi*—but was clearly disappointed that Mills did not have the courage of his convictions, as Whiston himself did. Whiston's colleague Thomas Emlyn (1719, on whom more later) was equally aghast, describing Mills' judgment as “a *suprizing Conclusion* in favour of *this Text*, so unsuitable to *his Premises*, and against *all the Rules of Criticism*; in preferring *one Copy* to *all the Copies* besides; *one Father* to *all the Fathers*; nay rather, without *one Copy*, rejecting *all the Manuscript Copies*; and setting *one supposed*, at best but *dubious*, Testimony of *one or two Fathers*, against *all the certain Evidences* from *all the Copies* and *all the Fathers* for near 500 Years.”¹⁷⁰ Even eighty years after the event, Richard Porson could barely conceal his disgust: “Mill, after fairly summing up the evidence on both sides, just as we should expect him to declare

Millius, at certè ingenuum & candidum virum se ostendit, in proferendis rationibus, quibus sententia, quam ipse amplexus est, evertitur. Nec tam ejus judicio adscripserim, quòd rationum pondere se permoveri passus non sit; quàm iis qui [321] liberè veritatem professos malignè infamare solent, quasi hæresibus nescio quibus faverent, quia nolunt eas depravatis locis oppugnari. Scilicet, optimi quique viri factiosis nonnihil concedere necesse sæpe habent, quod facillè ignoscimus.” The English translation is from Emlyn, 1719, 40.

¹⁶⁹ Whiston, 1711, 4:382.

¹⁷⁰ Emlyn, 1719, 40.

the verse spurious, is unaccountably transformed into a defender.”¹⁷¹

Yet Mills also found his defenders. Le Clerc’s review of Mills’ work prompted the orthodox Lutheran cleric Friedrich Ernst Kettner (1671-1722) to publish an elaborate treatise in 1713, in which he argued that the comma had dropped out of the text soon after the composition of the letter, but had been providently restored in the fifth century. Kettner brought forth a number of arguments to prove that the comma comprised an original part of the text. Firstly, this passage contains a truth and a wisdom worthy of God himself. Its theology is consonant with the Gospel of John, the other letters of John and the Apocalypse. These words seem to belong to the sense of the passage, and are consonant with the theology of the Epistle. The triad of earthly witnesses refers back to the Trinity of heavenly witnesses. The passage was cited by both Tertullian and Cyprian. It is presumptuous to submit the testimony of the divine persons to human judgment. This passage was clearly a part of the original text of the Epistle, since the theology of the Trinity was the most burning issue in Christian theology from the first until the fourth century. Moreover, the divine origin of the text is demonstrated by the fact that it reappeared in the fifth century. When pondering who was responsible for deleting the passage, Kettner weighed a number of possible suspects: the Ebionites; the Valentinians and Gnostics; the Marcionites and Manichaeans; the *Alogoi*; the followers of Artemon; those overly influenced by Origen; the Samosatians; Jerome’s “unfaithful translators;” ignorant scribes; the Arians or others who would distinguish Jesus from the Christ, the divine from the human nature; or even orthodox readers who mistakenly believed (as Luther and Bugenhagen in a later age) that the passage had been inserted by heretics. For Kettner, the devil’s own participation in the process could not be discounted, perhaps working through the influence of Platonists on Christian thought, or through simple mechanical errors like homeoteleuton.

When pondering why it was that the great theologians of his tradition like Luther, Melancthon, Cruciger, Jonas, Förster, Aurogallus and Bugenhagen could have been convinced to reject the comma, Kettner first dismisses a number of possible explanations. It is not that they were driven by excessive love for the teachings of Wyclif, as Emser suggested; nor by hatred of the Trinity and the word *homoousios*, as Sandius suggested; nor by ignorance of textual criticism; nor by a love of the Socinians, for they only appeared after Luther’s death; nor at last

¹⁷¹ Porson, 1790, v.

by malice and a desire to corrupt Scripture. Rather, they were impelled by an excessive veneration for the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries; hampered by the scarcity of uncial manuscripts in Germany, the cost of manuscript bibles and the lack of large public libraries; discouraged by the comparative clarity of other Scriptural mentions of the Trinity, such as Mt 28:19 and 2 Cor 13:13; disinclined by their diffidence towards the Latin Vulgate and Jerome; distracted by more pressing issues; disabled the fact that the Complutensian bible had not been published until after Luther had translated his September Testament; snared in the devil's plans to destroy the bible in the new faith; irritated by the importunity of Emser; and a hundred other reasons. Yet perhaps the most important factor was Luther's respect for Erasmus in matters of biblical philology, in spite of their theological differences, notably Luther's objections to Erasmus' scepticism towards the doctrines of the faith. Erasmus, as Kettner pointed out, wrote somewhat more comfortably about this matter because the Socinians had not yet made themselves known. And even though Erasmus restored the comma to his 1522 text, Kettner continues, some accused him of doing so just through his love of tranquility, and out of reverence for the Roman church and its attachment to the Vulgate. "Erasmus himself gave some handle to such thoughts when he opined that the British codex had been corrected against our manuscripts by Greek exiles, and asserted that this passage had no power to compel anyone unless they were compelled by the authority of the church."¹⁷² It is difficult to decide whether it is the implausible hypothesis or the sheer quantity of competing and often ridiculous arguments brought forward in its defence, but Kettner's sprawling work ultimately collapses under its own excessive weight.

¹⁷² Kettner, 1713, 178: "Securius scripsit ante ortos Socinianos; Et licet Erasmus Dictum hoc restituerit, Editione anno 1922. objectum tamen ipsi est ab aliis, eum prætextu saltem pacis, amore quietis, reverentiâ & splendore Ecclesiæ Romanæ, in favorem Vulgatæ dictum addidisse, ut calumnias & persecutiones, ignavorum & Indoctorum Monachorum evitaret, & Versionem suam Pontificiis gratam redderet. Ipse Erasmus his cogitationibus ansam dedit, cum Britannicum Codicum à Græcis exulis ad nostros Codices correctum fuisse judicaverit & locum non constringere asseruerit, nisi quando aliquis Autoritate Ecclesiæ compelleretur."

15. Jonathan Swift: satire in the service of orthodoxy

Jonathan Swift, dean of Dublin, saw the wider implications of the questions raised over the comma. In one of his satires, *An Argument To prove that the Abolishing Of Christianity In England May, as Things now stand, be attended with some Inconveniences, and perhaps not produce those many good Effects proposed thereby* (1708), Swift suggested that doubts over the status of the comma and the doctrine of the Trinity amongst Dissenters had produced a debilitating effect on public morality:

[T]he *Atheists, Deists, Socinians, Anti-Trinitarians*, and other Sub-divisions of Free-Thinkers, are Persons of little Zeal for the present ecclesiastical Establishment. [...] Free-Thinkers consider it [*sc.* Christianity] as a Sort of Edifice, wherein all the Parts have such a mutual Dependence on each other, that if you happen to pull out one single Nail, the whole Fabrick must fall to the Ground. This was happily express'd by him who had heard of a Text brought for Proof of the Trinity, which in an ancient Manuscript was differently read; he thereupon immediately took the Hint, and by a sudden Deduction of a long *Sorites*, most Logically concluded: Why, if it be as you say, I may safely whore and drink on, and defy the Parson.¹⁷³

It is clear that Swift realised that any innovation in doctrine on the basis of scholarly debate too complex to be understood by any but those trained in the field would almost certainly lead to antinomianism, as it had in the Reformation. Such disputes were thus a source of anxiety for their potentially corrosive effect on public mores, especially amongst those who already identified themselves as separate from the institutional restraints of the Established Church. Swift's satirical tone also reveals that anxiety within the Church of England was directed against both Dissenters and Catholics, whom he conflates into one common fear: "[I]t has been the constant Practice of the *Jesuits* to send over Emissaries, with Instructions to personate themselves Members of the several prevailing Sects among us. [...] [But even] the *Popish* Missionaries have not been wanting to mix with the Free-Thinkers."¹⁷⁴

Swift expressed himself even more directly from the pulpit in a sermon on

¹⁷³ Swift, 1731, 124-126; this passage was identified as part of the debate over the Johannine comma by Klauck, 1991, 310.

¹⁷⁴ Swift, 1731, 124-125.

Trinity Sunday, for which he chose the Johannine comma as his text. Here Swift expressed himself in even clearer terms that objections to the comma actually conceal an anti-religious and antinomian push: “Men of wicked Lives would be very glad there were no Truth in Christianity at all; [...] If they can pick out any one single Article in the Christian Religion which appears not agreeable to their own corrupted Reason, [...] they presently conclude, that the Truth of the whole Gospel must sink along with that one Article.” In reply to the Unitarians’ objection that the word “Trinity” is not to be found in the bible, Swift makes the candid but ingenious reply: the term “is indeed not in Scripture, but was a Term of Art invented in the earlier Times to express the Doctrine by a single Word, for the Sake of Brevity and Convenience.”¹⁷⁵ Swift gives a short history of the Arian dispute, noting *en passant* that the original followers of Arius held faithfully to the Gospel in every detail but the divinity of Christ, and in fact “were more sincere than their Followers among us.” Swift was quite convinced that the revival of Arianism, which he dated to about a century previously, arose “not out of a Zeal to Truth, but to give a Loose to Wickedness, by throwing off all Religion.”¹⁷⁶ In order to refute this wickedness, orthodox theologians had striven to defend the doctrine of the Trinity through sophisticated argument, but the very philosophical complexity of their defence had “multiplied Controversies to such a Degree, as to beget Scruples that have perplexed the Minds of many sober Christians, who otherwise could never have entertained them.”¹⁷⁷ While conceding that “every Man is bound to follow the Rules and Directions of that Measure of Reason which God hath given him,” Swift concluded that in the comma, about which he himself harboured no perceptible doubt, “God commandeth us to believe that there is a Union and there is a Distinction; but what that Union, or what that Distinction is, all Mankind are equally ignorant, and must continue so, at least till the Day of Judgment, without some new Revelation.”¹⁷⁸ As Swift pointed out, Unitarians argued that orthodox Christianity “abounds in mysteries, and these they are so bold as to revile as Cant, Imposture, and Priest-craft.” Swift could only agree that there are mysteries, yet “to declare against all Mysteries without Distinction or Exception,

¹⁷⁵ Swift, 1746, 238.

¹⁷⁶ Swift, 1746, 239-240.

¹⁷⁷ Swift, 1746, 240.

¹⁷⁸ Swift, 1746, 240-241.

is to declare against the whole Tenor of the New Testament.”¹⁷⁹

Swift proposed a double criterion for deciding whether a mystery is to be accepted. Firstly, it must be explicitly declared in Scripture; and secondly, it must not advantage those who preach it to others. In this regard the Protestant churches fare much better than the Catholic church: “It is true indeed, the *Roman Church* hath very much enriched herself by trading in Mysteries, for which they have not the least Authority from Scripture, and were fitted only to advance their own temporal Wealth and Grandeur; such as *Transubstantiation, Worshipping of Images, Indulgences for Sins, Purgatory, and Masses for the Dead.*”¹⁸⁰ But while the enemies of the Protestant church “charge us with the Errors and Corruptions of Popery, which all Protestants have thrown off near two hundred Years,” in fact the mystery of the Trinity holds out “no Prospect of Power, Pomp, or Wealth,” but has always formed part of the preaching of the Apostolic church.¹⁸¹ On Swift’s criteria then, there is no reasonable ground for denying the doctrine of the Trinity, which is asserted by Scripture (specifically in the Johannine comma) and brings no advantage to those who affirm it. On the contrary, those who deny the Trinity intend “to overthrow all Religion, that they may gratify their Vices without any Reproach from the World, or their own Conscience.”¹⁸²

After advancing these arguments, Swift draws a number of conclusions. “*First*, It would be well, if People would not lay so much Weight on their own Reason in Matters of Religion, as to think everything impossible and absurd which they cannot conceive.” Swift recognizes that in the early eighteenth century, any argument is going to have to deal with the problem of reason, a factor that had already played an important role in Sozzini’s notion of Scriptural exegesis; yet Swift undermines this position by asserting that humans are fundamentally irrational, guided more often by emotion and self-interest than by reason: “*Reason* itself is true and just, but the *Reason* of every particular Man is weak and wavering, perpetually swayed and turned by his Interests, his Passions, and his Vices.”¹⁸³ Secondly, Swift also asserts that those who question religion invariably have some dark ulterior motive: “When Men are tempted to deny the

¹⁷⁹ Swift, 1746, 242.

¹⁸⁰ Swift, 1746, 243-244.

¹⁸¹ Swift, 1746, 243-244.

¹⁸² Swift, 1746, 247.

¹⁸³ Swift, 1746, 248.

Mysteries of Religion, let them examine and search into their own Hearts, whether they have not some favourite Sin which is of their Party in this Dispute, and which is equally contrary to other Commands of God in the Gospel.”¹⁸⁴ Swift then exhorts his congregation to avoid reading controversialist literature of this kind, which can only upset the peace of their hearts, and to avoid discussing the matter with those who busy themselves with such issues, lest they become “Unbelievers upon Trust and at second Hand.”¹⁸⁵

Swift’s closing remarks in the sermon betray a certain diffidence not previously evident, a protestation that its subject was one “which probably I should not have chosen, if I had not been invited to it by the Occasion of this Season, appointed on Purpose to celebrate the Mysteries of the Trinity”.¹⁸⁶ It is true that Swift was generally happier to speak on moral questions than doctrinal ones, and the strain is evident in this sermon. Swift goes nearly so far as to dismiss the subtle discussion of doctrine as unintelligible to the most intelligent scholars, let alone to simple believers in the pews. In the face of such ineffable mysteries, Swift preferred to speak about the social and moral consequences which he feared would flow from the toleration of alternative doctrines.¹⁸⁷ But it is also worth noting that Swift had a very ambivalent attitude to his own sermons, and seems to have been almost embarrassed by the requirement of expressing religious convictions in public. On 13 January 1698 he wrote to John Windar, his successor at Kilroot, “These sermons [...] were what I was firmly resolved to burn, and especially some of them; the idlest, trifling stuff that ever was writ, calculated for a church without company [...]. They will be a perfect lampoon upon me, whenever you look upon them and remember that they are mine.”¹⁸⁸

Though Swift considered that detailed controversy could be harmful to the simple believer, a sermon on the Johannine comma could have been the perfect chance to lay out the arguments for and against the comma in brief, and then even to argue that the doctrine of the Trinity may be inferred from firmer texts than this. It is regrettable that Swift opted instead to attack: on one hand to accuse the Roman Catholic church of holding to doctrines that he considered

¹⁸⁴ Swift, 1746, 249.

¹⁸⁵ Swift, 1746, 251.

¹⁸⁶ Swift, 1746, 252.

¹⁸⁷ Mahoney, 2009, 40-41.

¹⁸⁸ Swift, 1794, 626; for an evaluation of Swift’s attitudes to his own sermons, see Parker, 2009, esp. 59.

unscriptural, and on the other to suggest that Deists and Unitarians were plotting to bring down religion and establish a lawless and immoral society in its place.¹⁸⁹ We are easily seduced by Swift's sonorous cadences and easy rhetoric, but we should not fail to recognise that his arguments betray a deep anxiety that the Established Church in England and Ireland was under simultaneous attack from two aggressive foes bent on destroying that church and public morality along with it.

16. William Whiston

It seems that Newton shared some of his religious scruples with his successor as Lucasian professor of mathematics at Cambridge, William Whiston (1667-1752). Like Newton, Whiston was intensely interested in the relationship between faith and natural science. His own efforts to reconcile the biblical creation narrative with recent advances of natural science, particularly the work of Newton and Edmund Halley, led him to propose in his *New Theory of the Earth from its Original to the Consummation of All Things* (1696) that comets had periodically struck the earth and caused significant change. Besides his support for Newton's scientific theories, Whiston was also convinced by Newton's criticisms of Scripture. But Whiston's outspokenness on these matters and his overt Socinianism led to his removal from his chair in 1710, precisely the fate that Newton—discreet to the point of paranoia—had desired to avoid.

Like Newton, Whiston was convinced that Scripture and doctrine needed to be restored to the pristine state enjoyed by the early church. Whiston gave the fullest exposition of his ideas in his five-volume work *Primitive Christianity Reviv'd*

¹⁸⁹ Barnett, 2003, 11-44, argues that apart from a relatively circumscribed group of writers—Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Diderot, Nicolas Fréret, Boulanvilliers, John Toland, Thomas Woolston, Thomas Morgan, Conyers Middleton, Matthew Tindal, Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury, Erasmus Darwin, Thomas Paine, Anthony Collins, Charles Blount, Peter Annet, Alberto Radicati, Reimarus, Lessing and Moses Mendelssohn—the “deist movement” was largely the result of scaremongering on the part of the opponents of these writers rather than a coherent movement to which large numbers of individuals subscribed: “these sparse aggregate figures scarcely amount to a movement in any meaningful sense of the term [...]. No one has yet been able to demonstrate any consensus in deist religious outlook, an identifiable deist programme, or consistent intellectual links based upon it [...].” (19).

(1711-1712). At the conclusion of the article in which Whiston treats the question whether “*God the Father, the Word, or Son of God, and the Holy Spirit, are Beings, or Persons really and numerically distinct from each other,*” he notes that readers may wonder why he omitted to include the comma in his enumeration of the Scriptural evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity. “But the plain reason is, that I believe ’tis certainly spurious, and inserted by some bold Transcribers from a marginal Gloss of the next Verse.” Whiston gives eight arguments against the authenticity of the comma; some are apparently original, while others show evidence that Whiston had engaged with the criticisms articulated by Newton in his *Historical Account*, suggesting that he had seen the drafts, or had engaged Newton in conversation on this matter.

Whiston considered it decisive that the comma is absent from the earliest biblical manuscripts, translations and commentators, “excepting one inaccurate Citation in Cyprian.” Indeed, Whiston considered the fact that the comma was not cited in the polemics of the earliest Fathers like Tertullian to be “one of the strongest Arguments against it in all Antiquity.”¹⁹⁰ It is true, he adds, that the comma was quoted against the Arians at a later period, but these instances are met first in Africa, “the Country where this Corruption was first made.” Only subsequently did the comma creep into texts in the West. “And certainly no wonder, when it seem’d to support the *Orthodox Doctrine* beyond any other Text in the whole Bible.”¹⁹¹

Secondly, Whiston notes that the “strange Confusion” in the manuscript transmission betrays “the greatest marks of Addition, Corruption, and Interpolation possible.”¹⁹² Thirdly, he asserts that the verse was an allegorical interpretation, traces of which are perceptible in several of the African Fathers, until the time of Augustine. Like Newton, Whiston maintained that Facundus provides strong evidence that Cyprian’s apparent quotation of the comma arose “not as an original Text, but as a Gloss upon the Verse following.” And if the comma was an interpolation in Cyprian’s text, it should logically be considered as such in the text of the Epistle itself. In the fourth place, Whiston argues that the comma is “so singular and remarkable” that its sudden disappearance from the texts used by the church—as proposed by defenders of the comma—would

¹⁹⁰ Whiston, 1711-1712, 4:379.

¹⁹¹ Whiston, 1711-1712, 4:381.

¹⁹² Whiston, 1711-1712, 4:379-380.

certainly have caused comment, “especially when it belong’d to one of the more undoubted Epistles, and not to any of those doubtful ones, which were a considerable time not so well known to a great part of the Church.”¹⁹³

Whiston then asserts that the comma fits badly into the argument John is making at this point: an enumeration of those things—water, blood, Spirit—which bear witness to Jesus as Saviour. Moreover, the introduction of the Spirit in both sets of witnesses “reduces the six Witnesses propos’d, in reality to only five.” In a more subversive criticism, Whiston suggests that the inclusion of the Word as one of the three in heaven witnessing to Jesus on earth would lead to the conclusion that the Word and Jesus are here understood as two separate entities. This would seem to make John into “a *Cerinthian* Heretick, and to make *Christ* or the *Word*, and *Jesus* or the *Man*, to be two separate Beings,” a notion which Irenaeus “so earnestly cautions against.”¹⁹⁴ This point finds an echo in a letter written in November 1694 by Gilbert Burnet to Jean Le Clerc, who was angling for a position at Oxford. Burnet sadly informed Le Clerc that the suspicion of Socinianism that had attached itself to his name had ruined his chances in England. According to Burnet, there was a feeling amongst orthodox Anglicans that the Socinians had “endeavoured to reject the authority of all S. John’s writings, which is upon the matter to deny the whole New Testament; for if some books are rejected for which we have as good authority as for the rest, then all may be as well rejected. They study to make them pass for Cerinthus’s works and thus they are serving the ends of the Atheists and are much supported by them.”¹⁹⁵ As far as Whiston was concerned, his intention was not to reject the books of the New Testament, but to strip them of the accreted misinterpretation of the centuries and restore them to their primitive splendour.

In passing Whiston mentions a dialogue (falsely attributed to Lucian) called the *Philopatris*, in which one of the interlocutors calls upon “the Almighty God, the Great, the Immortal, the Heavenly, the Son of the Father, the Spirit proceeding from the Father, One from Three, and Three from One.” This text, Whiston suggests, provides important evidence of the fact that Christians made use of Trinitarian formulations, though he also points out that the formulation given in the dialogue could not have been written before the late fourth century,

¹⁹³ Whiston, 1711-1712, 4:380.

¹⁹⁴ Whiston, 1711-1712, 4:380-381.

¹⁹⁵ Le Clerc, 1987-1997, 2:136 (*Epist.* 225); Asso, 2004, 92-94.

thus disproving the attribution to Lucian. (In fact modern critics have argued from internal evidence that the dialogue was written much later, during the reign of Nicephorus Phocas [963-969], but Whiston's point remains essentially valid.)¹⁹⁶

Whiston also provides evidence for the myth that Erasmus "was first oblig'd to insert [the comma] from a single *British* MS. which yet perhaps he never saw, and which has never appear'd since, in his third Edition of the *Greek Testament*; *ne cui foret ansa calumniandi*, or in plain *English*, *least he should be call'd an Arian*; as his Insertion was without the Authority of the rest of his ancient MSS. from which he had made his two former Editions."¹⁹⁷ Whiston thus shared two unfounded ideas with Thomas Emlyn: firstly, that Erasmus was under some obligation to include the comma; and secondly, that the British codex on which Erasmus claims to have relied was a fiction. It is possible that the second of these notions, like the first, came from Newton.¹⁹⁸

Only after running through all the evidence does Whiston dare to voice his conclusion on the authenticity and value of the comma: "As to me, 'tis, I confess, one of the plainest and most pernicious Corruptions or Interpolations that is now in the World; and built on such poor Evidence as in any other Case of meer Criticism, where *Orthodoxy* were not concern'd, would be look'd upon as perfectly inconsiderable."¹⁹⁹

17. Richard Bentley

One of Newton's colleagues at Trinity College Cambridge was Richard Bentley, perhaps the greatest textual critic of the eighteenth century.²⁰⁰ The production of Mills' New Testament, with its 30,000 variant readings, had caused some alarm

¹⁹⁶ Whiston, 1711-1712, 4:381. On the dating of the dialogue, see Barker, 1957, 117.

¹⁹⁷ Whiston, 1711-1712, 4:381-382.

¹⁹⁸ Whiston and Emlyn knew each other from Whiston's time in Lowestoft (1698-1702), and Emlyn was a member and sometime chairman of Whiston's Society for Promoting Primitive Christianity and the Practice of Infant Baptism (1715-1717); see Farrell, 1981, 24-26, 280-281, 289.

¹⁹⁹ Whiston, 1711-1712, 4:382.

²⁰⁰ On Bentley's projected New Testament, see Jebb, 1899, 154-168, on whom I particularly draw; Bludau, 1922, 204-206; Sheehan, 2005, 45-53; Metzger and Ehrman, 2005, 154-157.

amongst the faithful. In a 1710 critique of Mills' work, Daniel Whitby wrote: "The vast quantity of various Readings collected by the Doctor, must of course make the Mind doubtful or suspicious, that nothing certain can be expected from Books, where there are various Readings in every Verse, and almost in every part of every Verse."²⁰¹ However, it was Whitby's intention to show that only a small proportion of these variants made any difference to the sense (Mt 5:22, 6:13, 10:8, 11:23, 19:17; Lk 1:35, 2:22, 11:2, 11:4; Jn 1:3-4; Acts 8:37; Rom 1:32, 12:11; Gal 2:5; Eph 5:14; Heb 9:1), and that in every case the reading of the *textus receptus* could be defended. The only time Whitby mentions the Johannine comma is to cite Mills' judgment that this passage is the only textual variant in the New Testament that actually impinges on doctrine.²⁰² Opponents of orthodox Christianity, such as the Free-Thinker Anthony Collins (1713), rejoiced in Mills' edition as a useful tool in exposing the "Frauds [...] very common in all Books which are publish'd by *Priests* or *Priestly Men*."²⁰³ In a published response to Collins (1713), Bentley emphasised the importance of philology for the study of Scripture, but also argued that the number of variants did not necessarily mean that the text of the Scriptures was irreparably corrupt: "If Religion therefore was true before, though such Various Readings were in being: it will be as true and consequently as safe still, though every body sees them. Depend on't: no Truth, no matter of Fact fairly laid open, can ever subvert True Religion."²⁰⁴ At the suggestion of the young Johann Jakob Wettstein, Bentley set about to produce a new critical edition of the Greek New Testament and the Latin Vulgate, making use of the critical gains offered by Mills' edition. In this task he was assisted by a number of capable scholars, including Wettstein himself and John Walker, who

²⁰¹ Whitby, 1710, iii: "Etenim ipsa variantium lectionum immensa moles multorum animos suspensos reddet, iisque suspiciones haud parvas injiciet parum quid certi ex libris in omni commate, immo in omni ferè commatis parte variantibus, expectari posse." Translation from Collins, 1713, 89.

²⁰² Whitby, 1710, x: "[...] Varias lectiones quæ morum regulam, aut fidei articulum vel unicum respiciunt, vix ullas esse; quæ sensum verborum in re momenti alicujus mutant, paucissimas. Hoc ultro fatetur *Millius* prol. p. 142. col. 2. his verbis. *In his Codices omnes conveniunt: & si forte locus aliquis qui summi momenti esse videtur, uni, alteri, seu etiam quamplurimis codicibus exciderit (id quod non nisi in uno loco factum est, quod viderim, nempe I Joh. 5. 7.) idem tamèn quoad sensum alibi inculcatus occurrit, ut proinde neutiquam indè periclitetur Christiana veritas. In hoc nobiscum conveniunt Pontificorum Critici probatissimi.*"

²⁰³ Collins, 1713, 96.

²⁰⁴ Bentley, 1725, 64.

collated variants from manuscripts in Paris; David Casley, a pioneer in palaeography and deputy librarian at the King's and Cottonian Libraries, who collected variants in Oxford; and the Italian priests Mico and Rulotta, who collated Codex Vaticanus. On the matter of the comma, Bentley made enquiries in Dublin about Montfortianus in 1729.²⁰⁵

But while Bentley was preparing his edition, rumours circulated that he planned to omit the comma. On 20 December 1716 a correspondent wrote to him to confirm the truth of the rumour. In his reply, written on New Year's Day 1717, Bentley explained that his fundamental premise was to accept Jerome's claim that he had corrected his revision of the bible against the Greek text available to him. If he could only establish "St. Jerom's true Latin Exemplar," he would be able to dismiss the great majority of the variants recorded by Mill as textually insignificant. He therefore proceeded to work only on Latin bibles and manuscripts of the Latin Fathers older than a thousand years, "of which sort I have 20 now in my study, that one with another make 20,000 years." Bentley boldly claimed that on this basis, "I am able from thence to lead men out of the labyrinth of 60,000 various lections; (for St. Jerom's Latin has as many varieties as the Greek) and to give the text, as it stood in the best copies in the time of the Council of Nice without the error of fifty words." (Bentley would lay out these principles more fully in his *Proposals for Printing a New Edition of the Greek Testament*, which appeared in 1721.) Bentley's rigorous scholarship and scholarly acumen led him to an inevitable conclusion: "But by this you see, that in my proposed work, the fate of that verse will be a mere question of fact." Bentley realised that doctrinal reasons were the only possible motivation for the desire to retain the verse so poorly attested in the sources. But even so he was unconvinced by the apologetic utility of the comma: "[I]f the fourth century knew that text, let it come in, in God's name: but if that age did not know it, then Arianism in its height was beat down, without the help of that verse: and let the fact prove as it will, the doctrine is unshaken."²⁰⁶ In May 1717, soon after writing this letter, Bentley gave an oration on the spuriousness of the Johannine comma as part of his application for appointment as Regius professor of divinity. The text of this

²⁰⁵ Jebb, 1899, 160. This correspondence is not preserved at Trinity College Dublin.

²⁰⁶ Bentley to an anonymous correspondent, 1 Jan. 1717, repr. Orme, 1830, 39-40.

lecture is apparently lost, although it was still known to Porson at the end of the century.²⁰⁷

But soon after Bentley's *Proposals* were published, he received a sarcastic reply from Conyers Middleton, the biographer of Cicero, published anonymously in 1721. Middleton and Bentley were old enemies, and had been involved in litigation on a number of matters in the past. Middleton protested, perhaps rather too strongly to be credible, that the criticisms of Bentley's *Proposals* "were not drawn from me by *Personal Spleen*, or *Envy* to the Author of the *Proposals*, but by a *Serious Conviction* that he has neither Talents nor Materials proper for the Work he has undertaken, and that *Religion* is much more likely to receive Detriment than Service from it."²⁰⁸ For it was Middleton's intention to show that Bentley's concern for textual minutiae was of no service to the generality of Christians, and of interest to no one but scholars. Bentley mistook his anonymous critic as John Colbatch, whom he described in an unedifying response as "an ignorant Thief, a Wretch of native Stupidity; of low Talents and vicious Taste; supercilious Pedant; casuistic Drudge," and many such choice insults.²⁰⁹ Middleton published a further attack, this time under his own name, while Colbatch brought a law suit against Bentley.

Inevitably this debate fell to the question of the comma. In 1722 Richard Smalbroke, bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, published an anonymous letter to Bentley in which he attempted to defend the authenticity of the comma, although his reasons for doing so were clearly doctrinal rather than textual:

[S]ince this is a text that has been frequently cited in controversy against the Unitarians and others, as a passage of scripture that most expressly asserts three persons in the Divine Nature; and since [...] the Greek and Latin churches now read this passage, [...]; and since in particular the church of England has in her liturgy appointed the reading of this passage [...] according to ancient custom; [...] out of a just regard to what has been so long reputed part of the word of God, its authority ought to be examined with the most mature deliberation, before it be either tacitly or

²⁰⁷ I made a preliminary search at Trinity College Cambridge, but could not locate the text of the lecture.

²⁰⁸ Middleton, 1752, 2:319.

²⁰⁹ Middleton, 1752, 2:354.

avowedly given up as an indefensible passage.²¹⁰

Smalbroke earnestly defended of the genuineness of the reading of the comma in the Complutensian bible, “not only the first, but the most accurate edition.” His first argument was “that the Complutensian Greek Testament, as soon as it appeared in the world, was of that authority, as to oblige Erasmus, Robert Stephens, and the other subsequent editors of the New Testament, to accommodate their text very much to that edition.”²¹¹ As a result of his respect for this edition, Erasmus “seems to have been confirmed in the genuineness of that verse [the comma], since he continued it in his fourth and fifth editions of the New Testament, that is, after he had seen it in the Complutensian edition, to which he paid a great respect, and very much accommodated both those editions.”²¹² According to Smalbroke, the Complutensian edition was “founded on the most ancient Vatican MSS. and particularly on that excellent Vatican MS. which was recommended, or rather prescribed, to the Complutensian editors as the ground-work of their edition of the New Testament.”²¹³ Given that the exact identity of the manuscripts used by the Complutensian editors is still far from certain, this was a particularly bold claim. But for Smalbroke, the fact that the reading in the Complutensian bible differs from that in any known manuscript proves its authenticity, and that it was most likely taken from “that distinguished MS. from which the pope expressly commanded them not to recede.”²¹⁴

Dogged by such opposition, and harrassed by further litigation, Bentley

²¹⁰ [R. Smalbroke], *An Enquiry in the Authority of the Primitive Complutensian Edition of the New Testament* (1722), repr. in Scott, 1815, 13:458-459. Like Newton, Smalbroke (Scott, 1815, 13:465) moved towards expressing the myth of Erasmus’ promise under the influence of Simon’s language of obligation: “F. Simon is so frank as to acknowledge, that Erasmus had declared, he had seen a Greek copy in England, which obliged him to insert in his following edition of the New Testament the disputed passage of St John. Which is another piece of ingenuity of F. Simon, not practised by our present adversaries, who are pleased to doubt, whether Erasmus ever really saw such a manuscript in England, though he himself says he had seen it; and though likewise he had owned after his first edition of the New Testament, that if he had met with one copy that had the disputed verse, he would have inserted it, as accordingly he did, when he found it in a Greek copy in England, as he himself acquaints us, and consequently must be allowed to have acted sincerely on that occasion.”

²¹¹ Scott, 1815, 13:460.

²¹² Scott, 1815, 13:460.

²¹³ Scott, 1815, 13:461.

²¹⁴ Scott, 1815, 13:462.

seems to have become dispirited with the project around 1729, though there is some evidence that John Walker continued to collect variants as late as 1732. It is quite possible that the full collation of the readings from Codex Vaticanus, which Bentley received in 1729, also led to a growing sense that the task he had undertaken was more complex than originally envisaged.²¹⁵ But given Bentley's brilliance as an editor, it was a great loss to biblical scholarship that his edition was never completed.

18. *Thomas Emlyn, David Martin, Edward Calamy, Jean Ycard, Jacques Le Long: the rediscovery of Codex Montfortianus*

In 1715, Thomas Emlyn, a Presbyterian minister in Dublin, published a *Full Enquiry* into Mills' reasons for including the comma in his edition of the New Testament. Emlyn was a prominent apologist for Antitrinitarianism in a religious climate that was still hostile to such novelties in belief. Emlyn had experienced the strength of this hostility at first hand in 1702 when he was tried, fined and imprisoned on charges of blasphemy after publishing a book entitled *A Humble Enquiry in the Scripture Account of Jesus Christ*, in which he argued an essentially Arian position. In his summing-up, the judge presiding at Emlyn's trial pronounced that he should count himself grateful for the lenient sentence of one year's imprisonment and a fine of £1000: in Spain or Portugal he would have been burned.²¹⁶ In an attempt to protect himself from further censure, Emlyn published the first edition of his work anonymously, and dedicated it to the Convocation; it was only in the second edition of 1719 that he revealed his identity.

Amongst the textual witnesses to the comma enumerated by Mills, Emlyn mentions: "The *British* Copy which *Erasmus* speaks of: who not finding one *Greek* Copy which had this Passage wou'd not put it into his first two Editions of the New Testament: but upon information of a Copy in *England* which had it, did, against the *Faith* of all his Copies, afterwards insert it; rather, as he confesses, to avoid the Reproach of others, than that he judg'd it to be of sufficient

²¹⁵ Jebb, 1899, 160-161.

²¹⁶ Kenny, 1867, 219; Bludau, 1922, 129-139; Gibson, 2006.

Authority.”²¹⁷ In the second edition of his *Inquiry* (1719), Emlyn suggests more pointedly that Erasmus “was moved (against his own *free* Judgment) to put *these* Words into his last Editions of the New Testament, against the Evidence of all the other Manuscript *Greek* Copies.”²¹⁸ Emlyn points to a number of ambiguities surrounding this story, and questions the conclusions that had been based on these uncertain events: “F. *Simon* says *Erasmus* saw it: but where does *Erasmus* say so? He only says (in his *Annotations*) *There is found one Greek Manuscript among the English, which hath it*. He needed not then have said, *Suspicion*, &c, he cou’d, I think, have made a clearer Judgment of it, if he had seen it.”²¹⁹ Emlyn in fact implies that the Codex Britannicus was nothing but a convenient fiction, and that Erasmus had simply invented the reading: “[W]ho ever saw this *British* Copy since, or that wou’d produce it? Dr. *Mill* does not tell us where it was, or that ever he heard more of it. Such rare Discoveries, so useful and grateful to the Publick, are not wont to be lost again, in so critical an Age. What! cannot all the Learned Men of our two Universities, nor our numerous Clergy, give us some account of it? Surely either there was no such Copy, or it is not for the purpose: else it had probably, long before this time, been produc’d. [...] Strange! that a *British* Copy is only to be mention’d by one beyond the Seas, while all *Britain*, and such an inquisitive *British* Critick as Dr. *Mill*, can know nothing more of it.”²²⁰

Whatever the circumstances of Erasmus’ inclusion of the comma in his third edition, Emlyn had little doubt that the omission of the comma from Erasmus’ first two editions was a crucial moment in the revival of Arianism: “The verse concerning the Witnesses in Heaven being thus omitted in St. *John*’s Epistle, and *Erasmus* declaring ’twas not in his Manuscripts, join’d to the want of it also in the Edition of *Aldus*, or his Father-in-Law *Azula*, at *Venice* in 1518, gave grounds to certain men at that time to cry out against the authentickness of the Text. *George Blandrata*, a *Piedmonteze*, and reviver of the *Arian* Heresy, [...] took upon him expressly to deny this verse to have been St. *John*’s. *Socinus* appeared some few years after him, and equally concern’d with the *Arian* to reject a passage so flagrantly opposite to both their Errors, beheld it in the same view, and affirm’d it to have been inserted into St. *John*’s Epistle by some one of the

²¹⁷ Emlyn, 1715, 30.

²¹⁸ Emlyn, 1719, 17.

²¹⁹ Emlyn, 1719, 23.

²²⁰ Emlyn, 1719, 22-23.

persons, who held the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity.”²²¹ However, Emlyn—who had good reasons to protest his own orthodoxy—denied that there was necessarily any connexion between one’s opinions on the textual status of the comma and one’s religious beliefs: “’Twere to be wish’d this strange opinion had been confin’d to the Sect of the new *Arians*, or the *Socinians*, but with grief we have seen it pass those bounds, and find favour with some Christians, who, willing enough to retain the doctrine of the Trinity, do yet reject this excellent passage, wherein that sacred doctrine is so clearly express’d. They have however the ill fortune to find themselves enroll’d among the secret adversaries to that opinion. There’s no *Socinian*, nor even *Arian*, has taken so much pains to decry this fam’d verse, as some of these Christian writers have done; and especially Mr. *Simon*.”²²² It is difficult to decide whether Emlyn was being ironic here, or genuinely wanted to prove his own orthodoxy, but his insistence that a scholar’s critical work and his religious inclinations belong to different fields was to become a fundamental presupposition of eighteenth-century historical criticism. Although Emlyn was right to question the commonly received wisdom concerning Erasmus’ inclusion of the comma in the third edition of his New Testament, and to challenge the assumption of a necessary bond between critical judgment and religious orthodoxy, his suggestion that Erasmus had faked a source was an albatross that would hang about his neck through the ensuing debate. After Montfortianus was rediscovered, this claim would stand in the way of a constructive engagement with Emlyn’s other arguments.

In order to demonstrate to the public at large the truth of Trinitarian doctrine and the barren folly of the Unitarian position, the English Nonconformist churchman and historian Edmund Calamy (1671-1732) preached a series of seventeen sermons on the Trinity at Salter’s Hall in London in 1719 and 1720, including four that dealt specifically with the question of the Johannine comma. Calamy was at pains to show that the doctrine could be demonstrated clearly by both Scripture and reason. The argument from reason was to his early eighteenth-century audience a compelling one, and Calamy expends considerable effort to refuting “that different Set of Notions concerning *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, which some would obtrude upon us, and which they applaud as much more rational and accountable.” For Calamy, this set of notions

²²¹ Emlyn, 1719, 4.

²²² Emlyn, 1719, 4-5.

was an ancient, protean and ultimately incoherent error which was invariably driven by ulterior motives: “This *New Scheme* has appear’d with several Faces at different Times, according as Men have had different Turns to serve: And it is not well settled unto this very Day; nor is it easy to say when it will. [...] I shall chiefly take Mr. *Emlyn* and Mr. *Whiston* for the Standards of this *New Scheme*.”²²³ For Calamy, it was vital to defend the comma against the arguments of those like Emlyn who would dispute its legitimacy. “If the text be genuine, the whole *Arian Scheme* is at once overthrown, and cannot stand before it: And upon that account we have the less reason to wonder that they that are in that Scheme, are so zealous against it, and so desirous to get rid of it.”²²⁴ Calamy’s bluster shows that the terms of the argument had shifted somewhat since the time when Erasmus could conclude that “since this whole passage is obscure, it is not much use in refuting heretics.”²²⁵

One of the points that Calamy was keen to refute was Emlyn’s suggestion that Erasmus had simply invented the story of the British codex to get the monkey off his back. Calamy realised that any judgment in this matter was going to reflect not merely on Erasmus’ own character, but also on the status of the comma and on the reliability of the critical profession at large. “And let Men quibble and cavil as long as they will, either there must have been some *British Copy*, that *Erasmus* could depend on, that had this Verse as he represents, or he that has hitherto been admir’d as a great Restorer of Learning, must come under the Imputation of being at once both weak and false; so that he cannot be depended on.”²²⁶ But Calamy, by concluding that Erasmus was indeed “a Man of more Candor than most that are of his Communion,” in a stroke saved the integrity of the comma, exonerated Erasmus from the suspicion of blame, and rescued the profession of biblical criticism from disrepute. But his tactic also shows how Erasmus’ editorial decisions could be pressed into the service of confessional apologetic with little effort.²²⁷

David Martin, Huguenot pastor of the Walloon Church at Utrecht, also defended the comma in his *Deux dissertations critiques* (1717, English translation

²²³ Calamy, 1722, 289.

²²⁴ Calamy, 1722, 435.

²²⁵ ASD IX.2:258.

²²⁶ Calamy, 1722, 469.

²²⁷ Calamy, 1722, 464.

1719). Martin was convinced that the comma was necessary for a rational belief in the Trinity, and should therefore be defended by all means possible: "If the Holy Spirit has plac'd it there, 'tis a crime to give it up to the audacious criticism of the enemies to the doctrine it contains; and I conceive nothing more injudicious [...] than to assert that this Text may well be dispens'd with [...] because we have many others in which the doctrine of the Trinity is clearly made good."²²⁸ Martin acknowledged that the Arians recognised that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three separate persons, but of unequal divinity. "To convince then the *Arians* intirely by the one text of Scripture, in the Text the Trinity and Unity both together must be equally set before their eyes; for 'tis the unity in the number three, which is the stumbling-block to the *Arians* and the subject of their incredulity. The only Text which comprehends all this, (the Trinity, I say, and the Unity,) is this passage of *St John* [...]."²²⁹

Martin therefore felt it necessary to determine Erasmus' attitude towards the comma with precision. For Martin, Erasmus was an ambiguous figure, for although he was a great scholar, he was also responsible for stirring up this unfortunate hornets' nest: "The Imputation of imposture lay conceal'd till the sixteenth century: *Erasmus* first gave the occasion, perhaps undesignedly."²³⁰ Nevertheless, Martin was resolved to uphold Erasmus' stature as a critical scholar, and the sincerity of his decisions: "*Erasmus* made professions of uprightness and sincerity in his quotations, and has been always look'd on as a man not easily apt to be impos'd on by such sort of facts, and incapable to impose upon others: His enemies and censurers, who were assuredly many in number, could not have wish'd for any thing more desirable than to take him in a fault of his nature: But we have the less reason to think he slipp'd in the use of the *Codex Britannicus*, upon the sole authority whereof he filled up the void space of the seventh verse, which was wanting in his two former Editions, because he seems not to have been over-fond of the business himself, for he declares he did it purely *to guard against calumny*."²³¹

The only way Martin could account for the omission of the comma from Erasmus' first two editions was thus to minimise his critical competence on one

²²⁸ Martin, 1722, 4.

²²⁹ Martin, 1722, 5-6.

²³⁰ Martin, 1719, 3-4; Martin, 1717, 4-5.

²³¹ Martin, 1719, 72-73; Martin, 1717, 133-134.

hand, but on the other to blame this alleged incompetence on the general ignorance of the age: “One might wonder, a man so curious to search into all the Libraries of the *Low-Countries*, of *Basil*, and other Places, as *Erasmus* was, should be able to find no greater number of Manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek, did we not know the Greek Tongue had then lain neglected for many Ages throughout all Europe.”²³² Martin’s argument is a strange *non sequitur*, but one into which he had forced himself by simultaneously requiring to find a reason to disagree with Erasmus’ editorial decision in this matter, while still insisting on his status as a scholar. Motivated by this desire to vindicate Erasmus’ reputation, Martin refuted Emlyn’s suggestion that he had simply invented the comma, and had covered his tracks through deliberate vagueness about the identity and whereabouts of the Codex Britannicus. “Here then is a blot cast upon the candour of that Learned Man near two hundred years after his death: The charge comes somewhat too late to take effect.”²³³ He denies Simon’s suggestion that Erasmus had seen the manuscript in England. In any case, since the manuscript was not to be found, Martin considered further speculation on its contents to be unproductive: “We are not concern’d to enquire further into this Manuscript, to know what is become of it, or whether others have seen it besides *Erasmus*.”²³⁴

Emlyn responded to Martin’s criticisms in *An Answer to Mr. Martin’s Critical Dissertation on 1 John v. 7* (1719). Here he defended Erasmus’ character, describing it as “very unfair and unjust to insinuate that I had *called in question the Veracity of this learned Man, two hundred Years after his Death*, when I never once suspected his Testimony in the least, and only said that I never found *he* gave any such Testimony. [...] Had that great Man, who was the *Wonder and Glory* of his Age, and who laid the Foundations for After-Ages to build upon, said such a Word as that he had seen it, I had easily relied upon his Sincerity; who, I conceive, was too great to use such Falsehood and Deceit.”²³⁵ Emlyn’s argument shows that Erasmus’ character, his motivation and his readiness to resort to pragmatic solutions had become questions of central importance; in such a context, the myth of Erasmus’ promise to Lee takes on particular weight. And Emlyn was not quite as ready as Martin had been to desert the Codex

²³² Martin, 1719, 4; Martin 1717, 6.

²³³ Martin, 1719, 72; Martin, 1717, 133.

²³⁴ Martin 1719, 73; Martin, 1717, 134.

²³⁵ Emlyn, 1719b, 24-25.

Britannicus, which he still considered central to the question: “Indeed, Mr. *Martin* thinks it enough to say, *’Tis not our concern now to inquire what is become of the Manuscript*, or if any others have seen it besides *Erasmus*—and that this Method will introduce a new sort of Scepticism in Matters of Learning. But with his leave, I think it does concern us greatly to know whether such a Manuscript be in being still, which was too remarkable to be lost in Obscurity, if it had once been taken notice of; and whether any one else ever saw it, since ’tis contested so much whether ever *Erasmus* saw it, or pretended to it. And I dare say, such a presuming Credulity as Mr. *Martin* propounds for the Cure of Scepticism, which would hinder a severe Examination into Facts, would do, and has done, the World far more harm than such Scepticism itself; and the longer Men go on to take such things so on trust, the more grievous will the Scepticism be at last.”²³⁶ This last point shows that both adversaries claimed to operate within the epistemological framework of their day: Martin, by suggesting that faith must be illuminated by reason; and Emlyn, in maintaining that biblical study had to conform to the sceptical attitude emerging as a central feature of scientific method.

Martin retorted with *An Examination of Mr. Emlyn’s Answer to the Dissertation upon the Seventh Verse of the Fifth Chapter of the First Epistle of St. John* (1719, English translation 1720), in which he again addresses Emlyn’s suggestion that Erasmus had merely invented the Codex Britannicus. Martin points out that Erasmus notes in his *Annotationes* that he had been sent a report by a friend (that is, Bombace) on the reading of the relevant passage in 1 John in an ancient manuscript in the Vatican. Erasmus’ candour in this report, the precise reading he gives from the *codex Britannicus*, and his general scepticism towards anything he had not seen with his own eyes argues against Emlyn’s insinuation that Erasmus had merely invented the reading.²³⁷

²³⁶ Emlyn, 1719b, 25.

²³⁷ Martin, 1719c, 77: “*Erasmus* was not one of those credulous men, who take every thing for true they hear say’d, especially in matters which suit with their own inclination. He was a learned and judicious man, an exact Critick, who lov’d to see things at hand, and by himself, and as to the present fact, he was in no wise prejudic’d in favour of the disputed passage; all this is certain. When *Edward Ley* complains heavily against him for not having inserted this Text into his two first Editions of the *New Testament* in Greek, *Erasmus* answers him, that the only reason why he did not, was because he found it not in any of the Manuscripts from which these Editions were made; that if he had found it, he would most certainly have inserted it; and if,

Emlyn confuted Martin's fresh objections in *A Reply to Mr. Martin's Examination of the Answer to His Dissertation on 1 John 5. 7* (1720). Here Emlyn set about to remove some of the manuscript witnesses on which Martin had relied as foundations for the genuineness of the comma. He began with the Codex Ravianus of Berlin, which Martin had attempted to date at about five hundred years old, despite the fact that the librarian at Berlin, the learned Mathurin Veyssi re La Croze, had written to Martin to inform him that he considered the book of very recent date. Emlyn also refuted many of the errors Martin had made concerning Estienne's sources, most notably his suggestion that Estienne had found evidence of the comma in seventeen separate manuscripts.

During the course of the tedious Punch-and-Judy show between Emlyn and Martin, one of Martin's tracts came into the hands of the Parisian Oratorian Jacques Le Long, a noted biblical scholar. Some years before, Le Long had received an interesting piece of correspondence. On 19 June 1708 the French Huguenot refugee Jean Ycard, dean of Achonry in Ireland, had written to Le Long to inform him that a manuscript at Trinity College Dublin was the Codex Montfortianus used in the London Polyglot. Ycard may have become aware of this by way of a note made in the manuscript by Samuel Foley (1655-1695) while cataloguing the Dublin collection in about 1688. A report of Ycard's letter was given in a short addendum to the Paris edition of Le Long's *Bibliotheca sacra* (1709); this report was integrated into the text of the Leipzig edition, published later in the same year under the editorship of Christian Friedrich Boerner.²³⁸ But it seems that the news of Ycard's discovery prompted little response amongst the scholarly community, probably because neither Ycard nor Le Long had gone the extra step of identifying the Dublin manuscript with Erasmus' *codex Britannicus*.

adds he, *I had met with but one Copy wherein it had been, I would have plac'd it there*. As soon as he did find such a Copy in *England*, *Erasmus* forthwith puts out a third Edition, and inserts this Text in it, copied word for word from this Manuscript. 'Tis not possible to see in any man more sincerity, integrity, and all together more judgment and precaution, than this learned Critick has shewn upon this occasion."

²³⁸ Le Long, 1709a, 1:308, 672 (following an extract of Mills' description of Montfortianus): "Hunc codicem asservari Dublini in Bibliotheca Academiae literis ad me datis 19. Junii 1708. significavit Illustr. Joannes Ycard Decanus Achonriensis Dublini." Cf. Le Long, 1709b, 372-373: Thanks to Henk Jan de Jonge for drawing these references to my attention. On Ycard (+ 1733), see the brief notices in Hylton, 2005, 122, 194.

In 1716 Christoph Matthäus Pfaff could still wonder aloud what had become of Erasmus' British codex.²³⁹ In the same year, bishop Richard Smalbroke of Lichfield and Coventry wrote to Richard Bentley that "the British Greek MS. cited by Erasmus in favour of this text, and consulted by himself, is perished, or not now to be found."²⁴⁰

Once Le Long realised that Martin was publicly defending a position he considered erroneous, he wrote him an open letter, dated 12 April 1720, published in the *Journal des Sçavans* the following June. Here Le Long asserted that Estienne had used seven manuscripts of the Catholic Epistles (not seventeen, as Martin maintained), none of which contained the comma. The only Greek manuscripts Le Long knew to contain the comma were the *codex Britannicus* mentioned by Erasmus, and "Montfortius," a manuscript used for the London Polyglot and now held by the University Library in Dublin.²⁴¹ Yet on the basis of three differences between Erasmus' text of the passage and the reading in the Dublin manuscripts—Le Long can only be thinking of verse 8b—he concluded that the two manuscripts were not to be identified as the same book, an opinion he repeated in the 1723 edition of his *Bibliotheca sacra*.²⁴²

²³⁹ Pfaff, 1716, 100: "Citat quoque Erasmus Roterodamus Codicem quendam Britannicum, in quo dictum 1. Joh. V. 7. reperiatur, quod ipse inseruit editioni Novi Testamenti Græcæ A. MDXXII. Basileæ ab se editæ. Sed ubinam hic Codex Britannicus nunc versetur, ego hactenus divinare non potui, cùm inter Anglicanos Codices nun extantes nullus sit, in quo id inveniat." "

²⁴⁰ Scott, 1815, 13:459.

²⁴¹ Le Long, 1720, 298-300: "Je ne touche point à l'authenticité de ce texte, j'assure seulement ici qu'il n'est dans aucuns des manuscrits dont Robert Estienne s'est servi pour l'Edition Grecque de nouveau Testament de 1550 [...]. [300] Il n'y a que quatre Mss. du Roi qui contiennent des Epitres Canoniques, δ, ε, ζ, ι, numérotés 2871. 3445. 2242. & 2870. encore le ζ. n'at-il que la premiere Epitre de S. Jean, ce qui suffit. Je n'y ai point trouvé le Verset en question: ainsi j'ai droit de conclure qu'il n'étoit dans aucuns des Mss. d'Estienne; c'est-à-dire, dans les trois autres, θ, ια, ιγ, qui avec les quatre précédens font le nombre de sept, qui sont les mêmes marqués en marge à coté de ce Verset dans l'Edition d'Estienne. [...] [301] je n'en connois que deux où cela se rencontre, le *Codex Britannicus*, cité souvent par Erasme, & le *Codex Montfortius* de la Polyglotte d'Angleterre qui se conserve dans la Bibliotheque de l'Academie de Dublin en Irlande. Comme il se rencontre trois differences dans ce seul Verset entre ces 2 Mss. on peut assurer que ce ne sont pas les mêmes."

²⁴² Le Long, 1723, 172: "Legitur in hoc codice [sc. Montfortiano] Comma I. Epist. Joh. 5:7. sed diversus est ab eo quem Anglicanum [sic] vocat Erasmus in Annot. suis ad hunc locum, si quidem in hoc uno commate tres reperiuntur variæ lectiones in isto, quæ non sunt in codice Erasmico."

Le Long's letter electrified the learned public. The theologian and Newtonian natural philosopher Samuel Clarke asked John Evans, bishop of Meath, to request Ycard (by now dean of Killala) to confirm the find and send further information. (Clarke had some interest in the question, for he had warned in his *Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity* of 1712 that the comma "should not have too much stress laid upon it in any Controversy."²⁴³ After being challenged by James Knight and his publisher Robert Nelson, Clarke asserted even more strongly in 1714: "As to the *Manuscript in England*, it is only a Book mentioned by a *Foreigner*, but which no Man in *England* ever heard of. And *Erasmus* himself, who is the only person that mentions it, declare at the same time, that he did not believe there was any such thing.")²⁴⁴ Ycard replied to Evans on 5 August 1720. Evans duly passed the letter on to Clarke, who then gave it to Emlyn.²⁴⁵

Martin was mortified, incensed and excited in turns by Le Long's letter. First he wrote to Ycard for further details of this extraordinary find. On 21 August, Martin wrote an open letter in response to Le Long, which was published in *L'Europe savante*. The bulk of the letter was directed towards addressing Le Long's assertions about Estienne's manuscripts. Martin wrote: "If the manuscripts you produce, which do not contain that passage from St John, are the same as were used by Estienne, he would not be able to defend himself against the suggestion that he had acted in bad faith, and deceived the public."²⁴⁶ This was clearly an accusation Martin was not happy to hear against Estienne, *ce savant homme*. For Martin, the conclusion was clear: Le Long had simply identified the wrong manuscripts in the Royal Library through an embarrassing series of false conclusions. Nevertheless, Martin does congratulate Le Long for

²⁴³ Clarke, 1712, 238: "Not [Εἷς, *unus*,] One and the same *Person*; but [ἓν, *unum*,] One and the same Thing, One and the same *Testimony*. Though it ought not indeed to be concealed, that This Passage, since it does not certainly appear to have been found in the Text of any Greek Manuscript, should not have too much stress laid upon it in any Controversy." Further on Clarke's attitudes to the comma and his near-Socinian position, see Bludau, 1922, 201-202; and Snobelen, 2006, 132-133.

²⁴⁴ Clarke, 1714, 207; this passage is found in an extended treatment of the comma (206-213), but there is little new in what Clarke has to say.

²⁴⁵ Emlyn, 1743, 2:270; Jortin, 1790, 1:414-415.

²⁴⁶ Martin, 1720, 281: "Si donc les Manuscrits que vous produisez, qui n'ont pas ce passage de *S. Jean*, sont les mêmes qu'*Etienne* a eus, il ne sauroit se défendre d'avoir agi de mauvaise foi, & trompé le Public."

bringing to light “something either unknown to the public until the present, or known only to few” (*une chose qui lui a été ou inconnue jusqu’à présent, ou qui a été connue de peu de personnes*): the fact that Montfortianus, used for the London Polyglot, was preserved in Dublin, and that it contained the comma. By October, Martin had received Ycard’s response. Ycard gave him a precise transcript of the relevant passage from 1 Jn, certified as accurate by William Lewis, librarian of Trinity College Dublin. He followed this with a number of letters giving details of the physical state of the manuscript and some of its unusual readings.²⁴⁷

Martin would return to vindicating the comma in his final tract, published the following year: *La Vérité du Texte de la 1. Epistre de saint Jean, ch. 5, vs. 7* (1721, English translation 1722). It is clear that Martin’s ultimate criterion for accepting the presence of the comma in the printed editions, despite the textual differences between them, was the character of the editors: “A man of learning cannot be ignorant that the *Greek Editions of Ximenes, Erasmus, and Stephens* were made from ancient Manuscripts; and a man of candour cannot doubt of these Manuscripts no more than if they were set before his eyes, unless he suspects *Ximenes, Erasmus, and Stephens* to have been cheats and impostors.”²⁴⁸ Such was the implication of Emlyn’s scurrilous suggestion that Erasmus had simply invented the story of the British codex to confound his enemies. “To suspect *Erasmus* of having introduced an imaginary Manuscript upon the stage, and which no body had ever seen, were insinuations reserv’d for Mr. *Emlyn*’s pen. Mr. *Simon*, who was better acquainted with the character of *Erasmus*, left him all his reputation for uprightness and veracity; but for the *Codex Britannicus* he did not care to think it originally Greek.”²⁴⁹ Fortunately for Martin, the means for vindicating Erasmus, Ximénez and Estienne, and the contested passage of Scripture to which they had all attested, was now in his grasp: “Divine Providence, which visibly takes care to preserve in the Church the truth of a Text so valuable for the doctrine it contains, has thrown into my hands the extract of an ancient Greek Manuscript which I had no knowledge of [...].”²⁵⁰ This, he claimed, was “an authentick Piece never yet produc’d, and which gives the finishing stroke to all the proofs urg’d for the genuineness of this Text; and this is

²⁴⁷ Martin, 1720, 300-301; Martin, 1722, 157-158.

²⁴⁸ Martin, 1722, 156.

²⁴⁹ Martin, 1722, 171.

²⁵⁰ Martin, 1722, 157.

the extract of an ancient *Greek* Manuscript of the New Testament found at *Dublin* in the University Library.”²⁵¹

Martin was eager to claim as much credit for the discovery as possible. Conveniently ignoring the fact that Ycard had written to Le Long in 1708, Martin airily claimed: “The Dissertation I had wrote upon the disputed passage, was doubtless what did raise in him [*sc.* Ycard] the curiosity to see whether it [*sc.* the comma] was in this Manuscript, and he had the satisfaction to find it there.”²⁵² On the basis of Ycard’s detailed letters, Martin makes several remarks about the manuscript, some incisive, some incorrect, such as the error of mistaking the writing material for parchment. The presence of the prologues of Theophylact indicated to Martin that the book could not be older than the eleventh century, but he was inclined to place it as early as the end of that century. On the authority of the palaeographer Montfaucon, Martin also cited the presence of the double points over the ï’s and ü’s as evidence of great antiquity. Martin also pointed out that the reading of the comma in Montfortianus is very close to that given in the Greek translation of the *Acta* of the Fourth Lateran Council. But rather than taking this as evidence that the passage in Montfortianus had likewise been translated from Latin, he used it instead to refute Richard Simon’s assertion that those who prepared the Greek version of the *Acta* sometimes translated the Scripture quotations from the Latin given in the document rather than from the Greek original. “The Manuscript of *Dublin* will finally ruin all these vain subterfuges invented against the *Greek* of the Council of *Latran*,” he crowed.²⁵³ As for Simon’s explanation of the textual descent of the reading of the comma in Montfortianus, Martin found it too fanciful for words: “This kind of genealogy is very curious; the *Greek* of Erasmus was taken from the *Codex Britannicus*, the *Codex Britannicus* came from the *Greek* of the Council of *Latran*, and the *Greek* of

²⁵¹ Martin, 1722, A4r; Martin, 1721, *7r-v: “Enfin, on trouvera dans ce Traité une piece authentique qui n’avoit jamais été produite, & qui met le comble à toutes les preu- [*7v] ves employées pour l’authenticité de ce Texte; c’est l’Extrait d’un ancien Manuscrit Grec du Nouveau Testament, trouvé à Dublin dans la Bibliothèque de l’Université. Je suis redevable de cet extrait à l’honneteté & au zele de M. Ycard, autrefois Ministre en France, & à present Doyen d’Aconry à Dublin. Je le reçus vers la fin du mois d’Octobre dernier, lors que je commençois à relever d’une maladie de langueur [...].” The ms contains a note by Ycard, now bound in as 2r-v; this note is transcribed in Appendix I of the present work.

²⁵² Martin, 1722, 160-161.

²⁵³ Martin, 1722, 171-172.

the Council of *Latran* was only *Latin* in another form; *O curas hominum! o quantum est in rebus inane!* How men make a sport of the most serious matters to satisfy their passion, and compass their end!”²⁵⁴

Martin then compares the text of the comma as given in the Dublin codex with that from Erasmus’ British codex, as quoted in the *Apologia to Stunica*. Although acknowledging the remarkable similarities between the two readings, Martin quoted the defective reading from the hastily written *Apologia* rather than that from the more carefully edited 1522 Greek New Testament. This led him to the false conclusion that two differences—the omission of ἅγιον in v. 7 and of οἱ before μαρτυροῦντες in v. 8—were “too sensible to let us possibly blend these two Manuscripts, and take ’em for the same.”²⁵⁵ This conclusion however had the happy result of apparently multiplying the manuscript evidence for the comma, thus seeming to bolster the case for its authenticity: “[T]he manuscript of *England*, whether it has been lost since the time of *Erasmus*, like an abundance of others, or that it subsists in some corner expos’d to the mercy of worms and damp, finds again its authority under that of the Manuscripts of *Ireland*, by the agreement that it has with it in the Text of the three witnesses in Heaven, and this sacred Text thus receives from these two ancient Manuscripts combin’d together, a new proof of its being authentick.”²⁵⁶ Martin ascribes the preservation of the comma in all these manuscripts to the guiding hand of God:

I admire divine Providence upon this occasion; the first *Greek* Manuscript exposed to the World by printing [*i.e.* the presumed manuscript from which the reading in the Complutensian bible was taken], presents us this marvellous Text with these last words οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἔν εἰσι, which are taken from the 8th *Ŷ*. and which in that Edition are wanting at the close of that Verse; six years after the same Verse of the witnesses in heaven appear’d again in an Edition of Erasmus, who finds it in a Manuscript different from that of the *Complutum* [...]. Lastly come the Manuscripts of *Robert Stephens* [*Estienne*], which have the Text of the three witness in heaven, with some slight differences in the *Greek* articles, but which are nothing to the thing it self. These small variations in the Manuscripts of the *Greek* Editions seem to have been so order’d by Providence, to prevent the

²⁵⁴ Martin, 1722, 171.

²⁵⁵ Martin, 1722, 173-174.

²⁵⁶ Martin, 1722, 174.

thought that some had been copied from the rest, and that one sole Manuscript had been the foundation of all three, or even that it had been a forg'd Manuscript.²⁵⁷

Unfortunately the edifice of Martin's manuscript evidence rested on very slippery foundations indeed. Stunica's failure to produce a manuscript containing the comma when challenged by Erasmus suggests very strongly that he did not actually possess such a book, and that the reading in the Complutensian bible had therefore simply been translated from Latin. Erasmus' British codex was written only a short time before he came to see it, as becomes plain from the evidence presented in the appendix to the present work. Finally, Estienne's manuscripts all omit the comma without exception. Martin's appeal to the powers of Providence in preserving the true text was therefore somewhat optimistic.

Aside from the fact that it publicised Ycard's discovery of the comma in Montfortianus, Martin's last tract is also significant for containing the first fully-fledged narration of the myth of Erasmus' promise. Martin presents Erasmus as torn between his belief in the comma's rightful place in the text and his frustration that this conviction was not borne out by the manuscript sources at his disposal. Having set up the story in such a way, Martin could present Erasmus' inclusion of the comma in the third edition of his Greek text not as a capitulation to pragmatism, but as the fulfilment of his heart's desire:

All this held his mind for some time in doubt betwixt these and the contrary reasons he had for believing the text genuine. Thus when *Ley* and *Stunica* had wrote against him upon his leaving it out of his two *Greek* Editions, he gives no other answer, but that he follow'd his Manuscripts closely, and that if they would shew him one which had the passage, he would streight put out another Edition, in which it should be inserted. Upon this he meets with a Manuscript in *England* where he finds this passage, and without hesitation or offering the least violence to himself, he gives it a place in his Edition. By this means he satisfies his conscience, and silences his calumniators, who spread abroad against him scandalous reports, as if he had meant to favour *Arianism* by suppressing so plain a Text.²⁷⁵

²⁵⁷ Martin, 1722, 81-82; Martin, 1721, 140.

²⁷⁵ Martin, 1722, 84; cf. Martin, 1721, 144-145: "[...] tout cela tenoit quelque temps son esprit

Martin thus formulates a fully-developed version of the myth of Erasmus' promise on the basis of Richard Simon's somewhat imprecise account of the story, the same account that had also led Newton to suppose that Erasmus had made such a promise to Lee. (Martin was unaware of Newton's letter to Locke, which was still unpublished.) Martin also makes the error of assuming that Erasmus saw the manuscript in England, which is clearly impossible. All these errors would be sown into the debate like weeds that still sprout healthily to the present day. Unfortunately Martin did not live to savour what he clearly perceived as a victory, for he died soon after finishing the book.

Between the time Calamy preached his sermons in 1719-1720 and their appearance in print in 1722, he had read Martin's last tract in the French edition. Like Martin, Calamy tried to argue that the slight differences between the text of Montfortianus and the text of the British codex reported by Erasmus proved that they were different manuscripts: "our *English Polyglot* takes Notice of another, that it styles *Codex Montfortius* [sic]; which is also mention'd by Father *Le Long*, and Dr. *Roger*, as well as by M. *Martin*. This Copy is to be found in the Library at *Dublin*. It was formerly *Froyt* [sic] the *Franciscan's*, and afterwards belong'd to *Thomas Clement* [...]. M. *Martin* has publish'd the Copy of the Text and Context as it is there to be found, attested by the Library Keeper of *Trinity-College*. This cannot be the same MS. as Erasmus refers to, because it differs from it. For the

balancé entre les raisons contraires qu'il avoit de croire la vérité de ce Texte; aussi quand Ley & Stunica eurent écrit contre lui sur ce qu'il ne l'avoit pas mis dans ses deux Editions Grecques, il ne repondit autre chose, sinon qu'il s'en étoit tenu uniquement à ses Manuscrits, & que si on lui en presentoit quelqu'un où fût ce passage, il feroit aussi tôt une Edition dans laquelle il le mettroit. Sur cela il rencontre en Angleterre un Manuscrit où il trouve ce passage, & sans hésiter, & se faire la moindre violence, il le met dans son Edition: par ce moyen il satisfait à sa conscience, & il fit taire ses colomniateurs, qui répandoient contre lui des bruits scandaleux, comme s'il avoit voulu favoriser l'Arianisme par la suppression d'un Texte si convaincant. M. Emlyn devoit avoir mieux observé la conduite franche & nette d'Erasme dans toute cette affaire; & avoir aussi pris [145] garde un peu plus de près au jugement qu'il avoit lui-même porté du *Codex Britannicus*. Il en avoit parlé comme d'un Manuscrit imaginaire, feint & supposé; or comment accorder cela avec ce qu'il vient de dire qu'Erasme l'avoit produit contre son propre sentiment, de crainte d'être calomnié? mais de quoi calomnié? De ce qu'il ne mettoit pas dans une nouvelle Edition un passage qu'il trouvoit dans un Manuscrit que personne que lui n'avoit jamais vû? Certainement M. Emlyn n'y a pas pensé. Le Manuscrit dont Erasme a parlé existoit reellement, & le Texte de Saint Jean étoit dans ce Manuscrit: c'est chercher les ténèbres dans la lumiere, que de vouloir former des doutes dans un fait si clair."

Word *Holy* is added to *the Spirit*, in the *Dublin MS.* whereas it is omitted in *Erasmus's Copy*. And withal, whereas the article *οί* is added to *μαρτυροῦντες ν. 8.* in the *Dublin MS.* it is omitted in *Erasmus's Copy*.²⁷⁷ These tiny differences, the result of a slip of Erasmus' pen in the *Apology to Stunica*, corrected in the 1522 edition of the New Testament, would be seized upon by those who wanted to argue that Montfortianus could not be the same as Erasmus' *Codex Britannicus*, with the intention of showing that the comma is more widely attested in manuscripts than is the case, and thus more likely to be a genuine part of the apostolic witness.

When Emlyn's contributions to the debate with Martin were to be reprinted in his collected works, he included a supplementary chapter to his *Reply to Mr. Martin's Examination of the Answer to His Dissertation*. Here he reprinted the letters of Le Long and La Croze, as well as his own conclusions on the readings of Montfortianus, made on the basis of his own inspection of the manuscript in 1725. But given that Martin was no longer alive to defend himself, Emlyn's insistence on having the final word was perhaps in poor taste.²⁷⁸

Once news of the Dublin manuscript had spread, the question of its origin and authority would become an indispensable factor in the debate. As a result of such discussions, the attitude to Erasmus' decision to include the comma changed decisively. Theories about the Dublin manuscript abounded. John Jackson (1736) inexplicably asserted that the comma was written in a different hand from the rest of the manuscript, a red herring that took some time to banish.²⁷⁹ The biblical critic George Benson asked his friend John Abernathy of Dublin to make an exact copy of the relevant passage in Montfortianus, and Benson duly reported its perfect conformity to the reading in Erasmus' edition, as well as the inaccuracy of Jackson's report. Abernathy also sent a transcript to Joseph Wasse, rector of Aynho in Northamptonshire and a noted classicist, who was of the opinion that the writing was no older than the thirteenth century.²⁸⁰ The next step in publicising the reading in Montfortianus was taken by the Methodist minister Adam Clarke (who incidentally entertained beliefs on the Eternal Sonship of Christ which raised the suspicions of his fellow Wesleyans).

²⁷⁷ Calamy, 1722, 469.

²⁷⁸ Emlyn, 1746, 2:269-299.

²⁷⁹ Jackson, 1736, 79.

²⁸⁰ Benson, 1756, 639-640.

After examining Montfortianus in 1790, Clarke had an accurately engraved plate made of the page containing the comma. (In fact Bruns had published an engraving in 1778, a fact of which Clarke seems to have been unaware.) This plate was printed in Clarke's *Concise View of the Succession of Sacred Literature* (1807) and several subsequent publications, including Thomas Hartwell Horne's *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* (1818), the standard Anglophone textbook on biblical criticism for the better part of the nineteenth century.²⁸¹ Clarke followed Martin in dating the manuscript to the thirteenth century, a conclusion seized upon by defenders of the comma like bishop Thomas Burgess.²⁸²

Yet not everyone was entirely convinced by Martin's dating of the manuscript. Even more pressing was the question whether the comma was a genuine part of the Greek text or simply a translation from Latin. David Casley, Bentley's former assistant, answered both questions crisply. Casley seems to have believed that the Dublin manuscript was identical with Erasmus' British codex, for he declared in 1734 that Montfortianus was a recent manuscript, "probably translated or corrected from the Latin Vulgate." Casley's pronouncement began a debate that would take more than a century to settle. "But how to account for this Verse's being first inserted, is the Difficulty," Casley declared, "and some hot Heads have not stuck to call it a grand Forgery."²⁸³

The question of forgery is a difficult one in the case of Montfortianus. Even if the reading of the comma in Montfortianus was translated from Latin with the intention of convincing Erasmus to alter his text, it is difficult to know what we are entitled to conclude about the intentions of those who carried out this task. An accusation of forgery suggests a degree of *mens rea* on the part of the

²⁸¹ Horne, 1818, 2.2:118; Clarke, 1833, 254; Clarke, 1836, 1972.

²⁸² See for example Anon., 1821, 220, who concurs with Burgess, 1821, 12 in positing an earlier date for Montfortianus: "Erasmus, it is well known, promised to restore the verse if it could be found in a single Greek manuscript. This occasioned a diligent search, and the Codex Britannicus, since called the Codex Montfortianus, was produced, upon which Erasmus inserted the verse in his edition, of 1522. This MS., called the Montfort, Griesbach places in the 15th or 16th century, and Porson has treated it with little respect; but Dr. Adam Clarke and Bishop Burgess have, with more reason, assigned it to the 13th century: and that can hardly be treated as unworthy of our attention which induced Erasmus, after vehemently contending against the verse, to insert it in his edition, published next after its discovery."

²⁸³ Casley, 1734, xx-xxi.

scribe. As Casley knew, any competent scribe had to pay constant attention to the textual integrity of the documents he copied, weighing each word to decide whether the parent text (or texts) required emendation. If the scribe was fortunate enough to have two or more (preferably unrelated) copies of the same text to work from, the task of identifying textual problems in any one of them was rendered easier, since omissions or corruptions in one could be restored from the other, unless the same problem was present in all the copies. It is clear from the textual variants in Montfortianus that its scribes constantly compared the principal parent text against one or two secondary parents, which they used to patch the evident deficiencies of their base text. (Erasmus was thus not the first scholar to practice textual criticism on the New Testament, merely the first who cared to leave a conspicuous trail of breadcrumbs attesting to his editorial choices.) Supplying a verse lacking in the Greek text from the Latin Vulgate was simply an extension of the same principle. The scribes of Montfortianus might have been motivated by a desire to deceive Erasmus and, through him, the rest of the Christian world. Alternatively, they might have believed that they were piously restoring a genuine part of the text that had inadvertently been lost through the imperfections of the scribal process, imperfections they knew all too well.²⁸⁴ Here then the line between scholarly conjecture and outright fraud becomes uncomfortably blurred.

In any case, the manuscript continued to attract interest through the eighteenth century. In 1760, John Jortin stated without any doubt in his *Life of Erasmus* that Erasmus' British codex is identical with "the *Codex Montfortii*, and the *Manuscript of Dublin*."²⁸⁵ In the 1780s, the German critic Paul Jacob Bruns wrote to the Irish archbishop William Newcome to make some more detailed enquiries about the manuscript, and duly reported Newcome's opinions in the *Repertorium für biblische und morgenländische Litteratur* in 1778, supplying a facsimile of the reading of the comma in Montfortianus, cut in copper. Newcome reported that the manuscript was paper, though of such a kind as to be easily mistaken for parchment. Bruns agreed that this was most likely the manuscript

²⁸⁴ In comparison it is useful to consider the unusual fourteenth century diglot (Latin/Greek) New Testament manuscript Rome, BAV cod. Ottob. gr. 298, Gregory-Aland [GA] 629^{ap}). The Greek text in this manuscript has been altered in hundreds of places to conform more closely to the Latin, to the extent of providing the Johannine comma in both languages, but it would be strange to describe this manuscript as a forgery.

²⁸⁵ Jortin, 1760, 2:226.

used by Erasmus as the basis of his reading of the comma. Erasmus, like Wettstein after him, had suggested that the manuscript was adapted to make it conform with the Latin text. But there would still be many who tried to argue that Erasmus' British codex and Montfortianus were different books, usually with the intention of multiplying the textual witnesses to the comma.

19. *New editions and translations of the New Testament*

The eighteenth century saw the first English bibles in which the question of the comma again became a textual problem. A new edition of the Greek-English New Testament, based on Mills' work, was published in 1729, edited anonymously by the Presbyterian minister Daniel Mace, who was determined that belief should be based on full and perfect understanding, and he inveighed against such as "pretend to believe they know not what, yet burn with enthusiastic zeal they know not why." Blind faith, Mace argued, "far from being of the nature of Religion, is an explicit abjuration of common sense and reason." Religious understanding is a product brought about by the Reformation, which scattered the gloom of mediaeval ignorance; the Enlightenment, which sets such store on "free inquiry, and dispassionate debate," is the natural consequence of the Reformation.²⁸⁶

Mace's text is based on Küster's revision of Mills' text, but in a controversial move he excluded the comma both from his Greek Text and the parallel translation. In defence of this decision he gave a long note, the longest in his edition.²⁸⁷ Much of the material is drawn from Mills' notes. For Mace, to argue for the genuineness of the text against all the evidence actually imperils the reliability of the biblical text *tout court*: "In a word, if this evidence is not sufficient to prove that the controverted text in St. John is spurious, by what evidence can it be proved that any text in St. John is genuine?"²⁸⁸ Mace was accused of promoting Unitarianism; moreover, his careless selection of variants from Mills' edition and his use of conjectural readings attracted adverse criticism from such figures as the English clergyman Leonard Twells (1684-1742) and the great

²⁸⁶ Mace, 1729, iv-v. Further on Mace, see McLachlan, 1937/38 and 1950.

²⁸⁷ Mace, 1729, 920-935.

²⁸⁸ Mace, 1729, 934; cf. Bludau, 1922, 206-207.

German biblical scholar Johann David Michaelis (1717-1791).²⁸⁹

If things were tough for Antitrinitarians in Great Britain like Emlyn, it could be just as bad elsewhere. In 1730, Johann Jakob Wettstein, who intended to reject the comma from his projected edition, was dismissed from his post as pastor of St Leonard's in Basel on charges of Arianism even before the edition appeared. He subsequently fled to Amsterdam, where he continued his work.²⁹⁰ When Johann Albrecht Bengel published his edition of the New Testament in 1734, he retained the comma, perhaps wary after observing Wettstein's fate, though his notes suggest that he wanted to do otherwise. For there Bengel noted that the comma is present in no Greek manuscript of any authority. He rejected Montfortianus as a new and Latinising manuscript.²⁹¹ He also suggested that the reading in the Codex Britannicus (which he distinguished from Montfortianus) was taken from the Complutensian edition before its publication, pointing out the Spanish connexion at the English royal court through Catherine of Aragon. The fact that both the Complutensian edition and Britannicus put the end of verse 8 ("these three are [unto] one") on the end of verse 7 was for Bengel convincing evidence of their relationship.²⁹² He also noted that none of the Greek Fathers made use of the comma, and that many Latin Fathers also omit the words when quoting the entire passage. Despite the textual difficulties of the verse, Bengel was still inclined to defend its status as an original part of the text, expressly denying that it arose from an allegorical gloss of verse 8. He likewise

²⁸⁹ Bludau, 1922, 206-207; McLachlan, 1938-1939, 617-625. Michaelis' attack was followed by that of Leonard Twells, 1731-1732; see Bludau, 1922, 207-208.

²⁹⁰ Carl Bertheau, art. "Wettstein, Johann Jakob," in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* 12:333-334; Lente, 1902, 93, 103, 107; Hulbert-Powell, 1938, 195.

²⁹¹ Bengel, 1763, 458.

²⁹² Bengel, 1763, 453-454: "*Britannicum* illum codicem, vti vocant, aliquis Britannorum (quorum tum rex Hispanam in matrimonio habebat,) ex Complutensi recensione, antequam ea publicaretur, nactus est & Erasmo misit. Etenim primum Britannicus codex comma ultimum versus octavi omittit, ut Erasmus annotat: (quanquam Erasmus in verbis postmodum adjectis, ejus rei oblitus est:) omittit autem id comma Complu- [454] tensis quoque editio, invitis ms. Græcis omnibus. deinde codex Britannicus & editio Complutensis versum 7 & 8 eodem ordine exhibet, invitis documentis [...] antiquioribus. Potest injici, Comp. editionem per se (ut res loquitur,) & sic quoque Britannicum codicem sine Complutensium opera, Latinorum codicum auctoritate, versum 8 & in extremo mutilasse, & versui 7 postposuisse. Atque hoc ipsum satis esset ad prodendam indolem Britannici codicis, etiam ab Erasmo, quo erat judicio, agnitam."

denied that the verse had been excised by Arians, pointing out that its apparent excision predated the birth of Arius. Bizarrely, Bengel attributed the excision instead to early Catholics who removed the comma from public copies of the Epistle to avoid the great mystery of the Trinity being profaned by being generally known, until at length the words were lost.²⁹³ In his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (1754), John Wesley adopted Bengel's position on the comma: "What Bengelius has advanced, both concerning the transposition of these two verses, and the authority of the controverted verse, partly in his Gnomon, and partly in his Apparatus Criticus, will abundantly satisfy any impartial person."²⁹⁴ Wesley himself implicitly contradicted Calvin by giving a specifically ontological interpretation of the comma: "[Father, Son and Holy Spirit] are one in essence, in knowledge, in will, and in their testimony."²⁹⁵ But as scholarly work on the text of the bible advanced over the eighteenth century, especially at the hands of Michaelis and Johann Jakob Griesbach (1745-1812), the grounds for retaining the comma seemed to be slipping away.²⁹⁶

20. Voltaire and the irrationality of Trinitarian belief

The value placed on reason in the Enlightenment led to the circumstance that religious doctrine came increasingly under attack as anti-rational and thus untenable. In an incendiary article on the Trinity in the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, Voltaire implied that this Christian doctrine is nothing more than an unfortunate importation from pagan thought, "sublime balderdash" (*sublime galimatias*) invented by Timaeus of Locri, given currency by Plato, shoehorned into Jewish theology by Philo, and awkwardly squared with Christian doctrine by Clement, Lactantius (who "pleaded his cause in a strange manner") and Augustine. Voltaire had no doubt whatsoever that the comma was an unwelcome

²⁹³ Bengel, 1763, 474: "Quod reliquum est, efficacissimam cogimur agnoscere prætermis- si Dicti causam (quæ Schelstrateno quoque in mentem venit,) disciplinam Arcani. Hæc seculo II est introducta: hæc jam tum multos, ut apparet, induxit, ut initio a codicibus publicæ duntaxat lectioni destinatis Dictum removeretur, qui ceteros brevi tempore apud Græcos absorpserunt."

²⁹⁴ Wesley, 1847, 639.

²⁹⁵ Wesley, 1847, 640.

²⁹⁶ Griesbach, 1810, 2:687-688, mentions the circumstances of Erasmus' inclusion of the verse, but makes no hint of a promise on his part.

intrusion, but one that arose almost inevitably from the desire to assimilate the foreign idea of the Trinity into Christian doctrine: “Those who pretend that this verse is truly St. John’s, are much more embarrassed than those who deny it; for they must explain it. St. Augustine says, that the spirit signifies the Father, water the Holy Ghost, and by blood is meant the Word. This explanation is fine, but it still leaves a little confusion.”²⁹⁷

Antitrinitarians, he says, are heretics who could not pass for Christians. Nevertheless, he says, they do acknowledge Jesus as saviour and mediator, “but they dare to maintain that nothing is more contrary to right reason than what is taught among Christians concerning the Trinity of persons in one only divine essence.”²⁹⁸ For Voltaire, when an issue comes down to a choice between reason and tradition, the choice is clear. The Antitrinitarians maintain that the doctrine of the Trinity is not to be found in Scripture, and introduces the danger of polytheism. Their principal objections are as follows:

That it implies a contradiction, to say that there is but one God, and that, nevertheless, there are three persons, each of which is truly God—

That this distinction, of *one* in *essence*, and *three* in *person*, was never in Scripture—

That it is manifestly false; since it is certain that there are no fewer essences than persons, nor persons than essences—

That the three persons of the Trinity are, either three different substances, or accidents of the divine essence, or that essence itself without distinction—

That, in the first place, you make three Gods—

That, in the second, God is composed of accidents; you adore accidents, and metamorphose accidents into persons—

That, in the third, you unfoundedly and to no purpose, divide an indivisible subject, and distinguish into *three* that which within itself has no distinction—

²⁹⁷ Voltaire, 1768-1777, 24:459; see also *Examen important de Milord Bolingbroke*, 29:425-426. I cite from the English translation in Voltaire, 1824, 6:290-291.

²⁹⁸ Voltaire, 1768-1777, 21:224; Voltaire, 1824, 1:185. Voltaire begins the article, “Ce sont des hérétiques qui pourraient ne pas passer pour chrétiens,” which Gurton mistranslates: “These are heretics who might pass for other than Christians.”

That if it be said, that the three personalities are neither different substances in the divine essence, nor accidents of that essence, it will be difficult to persuade ourselves that they are anything at all—

That it must not be believed that the most rigid and decided Trinitarians have themselves any clear idea of the way in which the three *hypostases* subsist in God, without dividing His substance, and consequently without multiplying it— [...]

That, when they are asked what they understand by the word *person*, they explain themselves only by saying, that it is a certain incomprehensible distinction, by which are distinguished in one nature only, a Father, a Son, and a Holy Ghost—

That the explanation which they give of the terms *begetting* and *proceeding* is no more satisfactory; since it reduces itself to saying, that these terms indicate certain incomprehensible relations existing among the three persons of the Trinity.²⁹⁹

“Oh, Locke! Locke!” Voltaire cries shrilly; “come and define these terms.”³⁰⁰ Voltaire is clearly pushing the doctrine to breaking point, but this is his intention, for he insisted that anything we dare to believe must be logically watertight. Any lack of logic in belief is an affront to reason. One of the Antitrinitarians’ favourite passages, Voltaire explains, is Augustine’s dictum (*On the Trinity* V.9): “When it is asked what are the three, the language of man fails and terms are wanting to express them. But ‘three persons’ was said not for the purpose of expressing anything, but in order to say something and not remain mute” (*tamen cum quæritur quid tres, magna prorsus inopia humanum laborat eloquium; dictum est tamen tres personæ non ut illud diceretur sed ne taceretur*).³⁰¹ To Voltaire, Augustine’s dumb aporia in the face of this theological “mystery” was dishonest, disgraceful and indefensible. We would be better, say the Antitrinitarians, to abandon terms such as *Trinity*, *person*, *essence*, *hypostasis*, *hypostatic* and *personal union*, *incarnation*, *generation* and *procession*. These terms are not derived from Scripture; as purely mental constructs, they bear no relationship to anything in nature and can therefore only excite “false, vague, obscure and undefinable

²⁹⁹ Voltaire, 1768-1777, 21:225-226; Voltaire, 1824, 1:186-187.

³⁰⁰ Voltaire, 1768-1777, 24:458; Voltaire, 1824, 6:289.

³⁰¹ Voltaire, 1768-1777, 21:225; Voltaire, 1824, 1:186.

notions.”³⁰² Voltaire ends his treatment of Antitrinitarianism by returning to the question of the comma, citing the Benedictine scholar Augustin Calmet as his authority on the dubious textual authority of the passage. Relying on Calmet, he states that “these two [*sic*] verses are not in any ancient Bible; indeed, it would be very strange if St. John had spoken of the Trinity in a letter, and said not a word about it in his Gospel. We find no trace of this dogma, either in the canonical or in the apocryphal gospels.”³⁰³ Yet even Voltaire’s choice of authority in this matter is telling. In the article on Job in the *Philosophical Dictionary*, Voltaire described Calmet as “that simple compiler of so many reveries and imbecilities; that man whose simplicity has rendered so useful to whoever would laugh at antiquarian nonsense.”³⁰⁴ It is surely significant that Voltaire should rely here on an expositor whom he found ultimately ridiculous, but it is consistent with his scorn for the church and its doctrines, the note on which he ends the article: “All these reasons, and many others, might excuse the Anti-trinitarians, if the councils had not decided. But, as the heretics pay no regard to councils, we know not what measures to take to confound them. Let us content ourselves with believing, and wishing them to believe.”³⁰⁵ The theological establishment was unimpressed by Voltaire’s veiled apology for “rational” Antitrinitarianism, and in a lecture delivered at Cambridge on 24 March 1794, John Hey dismissed Voltaire’s exposition of the entire problem as “pert and flippant”.³⁰⁶

21. *Edward Gibbon and George Travis*

Despite the disapproval of wise heads like John Hey, Voltaire’s critical, rational and very literary stance found many adherents in England. Edward Gibbon shared Voltaire’s disdain for religion and its tricks, amongst which he numbered deceptions like the Johannine comma. In the third volume of his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1781), Gibbon reported the scholarly consensus:

The memorable text, which asserts the unity of the three who bear witness

³⁰² Voltaire, 1768-1777, 21:226; Voltaire, 1824, 1:187.

³⁰³ Calmet, 1720, 3:552-569.

³⁰⁴ Voltaire, 1768-1777, 28:318; Voltaire, 1824, 4:240.

³⁰⁵ Voltaire, 1768-1777, 21:227; Voltaire, 1824, 1:188.

³⁰⁶ Hey, 1822, 2:289.

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. [...] The three witnesses (1 John v. 7.) have been established in our Greek Testament by the prudence of Erasmus; the honest bigotry of the Complutensian editors; the typographical fraud or error of Robert Stephens, in the placing of a crotchet; and the deliberate falsehood, or strange misrepresentation, of Theodore Beza.³⁰⁷

Joseph Levine suggested that Gibbon's exposition of the problem marked the apotheosis of a process begun by Erasmus. Perhaps under the influence of Colet, Erasmus had begun to appreciate the need for a historical understanding of Jesus alongside any theological one. In pairing religion and grammar, Erasmus took the figure of Jerome as his model. This shift in perspective was accompanied by an altered view towards texts and by the beginnings of historical method, which Gibbon himself would later codify.³⁰⁸

Gibbon's judgment on the comma prompted the clergyman George Travis to publish a series of letters defending the authenticity of the comma in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1782. These letters, and two more explaining Travis' position in more depth, were subsequently published as an independent book in 1784; a further edition appeared in 1786 in response to Travis' reading of Newton and Griesbach in the meantime. From Travis' objections to Gibbon it was becoming clear that the debate over the comma was not simply about the bible, but about large-scale social cohesion. And in pursuit of the truth all weapons at hand were employed. One of Travis' partisans even resorted to *ad hominem* criticism in a published review: "It is notorious that Gibbon was a professed infidel. Among his friends he was accustomed to ridicule religion, and

³⁰⁷ Gibbon, 1862, 4:335 (XXXVII.4); the latter part of this quotation comes from a footnote.

³⁰⁸ Levine, 1999, 25-31, 157-170.

all its appendages, in a most indecent manner. But he confined not his cavils and sarcasms within the circle of his intimate acquaintance. The writer of this article is well acquainted with several persons—a lady in particular—whom Gibbon, in violation of all the rules of good-breeding, attacked on the subject of their faith, the very first time he had an opportunity of conversing with them. It was by sneers and inuendos [*sic*] that he conducted the assault. The historian scoffed much at the lady's hopes of a resurrection."³⁰⁹ (One wonders *en passant* whether Gibbon's scoffing was general or particular.)

Of course the arguments inevitably led back to Erasmus. Travis had his own ideas why Erasmus had finally included the comma in his third edition of the New Testament: "In whatever light we view the conduct of Erasmus, it betrays, at least, great weakness. If he was really possessed of five ancient MSS, in which this verse had no place, and had thought it his duty to expel it, accordingly, from his two former editions, he ought not to have restored it, in his third edition, upon the authority of a single MS only. It seems impossible to account for the behaviour of Erasmus, in this matter, taking the whole of it into contemplation at once [...]." ³¹⁰ Travis thus apparently chose to ignore Erasmus' explanation that he had included the verse "so that no one would have any opportunity of libeling him" (*ne cui sit causa calumniandi*), preferring to ponder darker motives. Firstly, Travis hints that Erasmus, if pressed, would not really have been able to produce the five Greek manuscripts from which he claimed the comma was lacking. Otherwise, it could be that Erasmus actually had several good Greek manuscripts containing the comma, "which he was not, however, ingenuous enough to acknowledge." Travis thus advances precisely the opposite argument to Emlyn; while Emlyn had suggested that Erasmus had simply invented the verse, Travis advanced the even more preposterous suggestion that Erasmus had a mass of manuscripts containing the comma but hid them from view. For Travis, there could only be one motive for such behaviour: "*Erasmus* was secretly inclined to *Arianism*: a circumstance, which rendered him, by no means, *an indifferent* editor of this *fifth* chapter of *St. John*. Upon the face of his own Apology, then, the conduct of *Erasmus* in this instance, was *mean*. Upon the supposition of his having kept back from the world his *true* motives of action, it was *grossly*

³⁰⁹ Anon., 1794, 380.

³¹⁰ Travis, 1785, 8.

disingenuous, and unworthy.”³¹¹ Travis’ evidence for Erasmus’ alleged Arianism was no less august an authority than *Chamber’s Cyclopædia*, which he proudly footnotes.³¹² Despite the sad inadequacy of his scholarship, Travis was praised by many, and awarded the positions of Prebendary (1783) and ultimately Archdeacon (1786) of Chester for his pains.³¹³

22. Richard Porson

Despite his own personal animosity towards Gibbon, who pointedly declined to enter into the debate that exploded in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, the precocious Richard Porson, professor of Greek at Cambridge, took up the lance in his *Letters to Mr. Archdeacon Travis*, first published in the *Gentlemen’s Magazine* under the name “Cantabrigiensis” in 1788-89, then published separately as a book under Porson’s real name in 1790. In these acute letters, miniature masterpieces of criticism and prose style, Porson poured out scalding torrents of scorn on the unfortunate clergyman. Porson, like Gibbon, was judged even by his friends to have been “without the protection of early, vigorous, and permanent piety.”³¹⁴ Thomas Rennell, canon (later dean) of Winchester, dryly remarked that Porson’s refutation of Travis was “just such a book as the devil would write, if he could hold a pen.”³¹⁵ Porson seems to have made no secret of the fact that he found the doctrine of the Trinity incomprehensible: “*Porson* was walking with a Trinitarian friend; they had been speaking of the Trinity; a buggy came by with three men in

³¹¹ Travis, 1785, 9.

³¹² Chambers, 1728, 1:133: “*Erasmus* seem’d to have aim’d, in some measure, to restore *Arianism*, at the beginning of the 16th Century; in his *Commentaries on the New Testament*: Accordingly, he was reproached by his Adversaries, with *Arian Interpretations and Glosses, Arian Tenets, &c.* To which he made little Answer, save that there was no Heresy more thoroughly extinct than that of the *Arians: Nulla Hæresis magis extincta quam Arianorum.*” This entry from Chambers’ *Cyclopædia* is merely a translation of Mallet’s article on Arianism from Diderot’s *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné* 1:649-650.

³¹³ On Travis’ career, see the article “Travis, George,” in *DNB*. For a typically positive judgement of Travis’ defence of the comma, see Hawkins, 1787, 188.

³¹⁴ Smith, 1810, 164.

³¹⁵ Rogers, 1856, 303.

it; 'There,' says he, 'is an illustration of the Trinity;' 'No,' said his friend Porson, 'you must shew me one man in *three* buggies, if you can.'³¹⁶

Porson admired Newton's account, and borrows from him the story of Erasmus' legendary promise, which appears at the very outset of his preface in the following grand *præteritio*: "It is scarcely necessary to tell the reader, that in the years 1516 and 1519 Erasmus published his first and second editions of the Greek Testament, both which omitted the three heavenly witnesses. That having promised Lee to insert them in his text, if they were found in a single Greek MS. he was soon informed of the existence of such a MS. in England, and consequently inserted 1 John V. 7. in his third edition, 1522 [...]"³¹⁷ Porson reveals that the issues involved in this dispute are as deeply connected with anxieties over religious difference as with philological niceties: "you labor," he accused Travis, "to bring fresh proof of that arch-heretic's [*sc.* Erasmus'] roguery. For it is a maxim with you, Sir, that all Arians are wholly possessed by the devil, and that it is impossible for them 'to quote fairly, to argue candidly, and to speak truly,' (p. 127. 374.); while the orthodox may say what they please, and their bare word is taken without farther inquiry."³¹⁸ Porson brings up Travis' accusation that Erasmus tended towards Arianism only to dismiss it: "instead of accounting for his conduct from his natural timidity, and the violent clamours of his enemies, you make it spring from sheer Arianism, villainy and hypocrisy."³¹⁹ This is not to say that several later-day Arians had not rejected the comma. Porson concedes that Wettstein probably did tend toward heterodoxy, and suggests that Travis had avoided reading his *Prolegomena* for "fear of being infected with the poison of Arianism."³²⁰ La Croze, librarian in Berlin, was likewise "a professed Trinitarian (though, I fear, the leaven of Arianism fermented within his mind)."³²¹ Porson felt that the desire to maintain the appearance of orthodoxy lay at the root of Bengel's vacillation: "I pity Bengelius. He had the weakness (which fools call candour) to reject some of the arguments that had been employed in defence of this celebrated verse, and brought upon himself a severe but just rebuke from an opposer of De Missy (Journ. Brit. X. p. 133); where he is ranked with those, 'who

³¹⁶ Barker, 1852, 2:2.

³¹⁷ Porson, 1790, i.

³¹⁸ Porson, 1790, 2-3.

³¹⁹ Porson, 1790, 118.

³²⁰ Porson, 1790, 4.

³²¹ Porson, 1790, 118.

under pretext of defending the three heavenly witnesses with moderation, defend them so gently, that a suspicious reader might doubt whether they defended them in earnest; *though God forbid that we should wish to insinuate any suspicion of Mr. Bengelius's orthodoxy.*"³²²

On the question of Erasmus and the codex Montfortianus, Porson had his own ideas. He surmised that Erasmus' excuse to Lee had occasioned a hunt for a Greek manuscript containing the comma, which eventually turned up such a manuscript in England.³²³ Porson maintained moreover that "Erasmus never saw the Codex Britannicus, but had only an extract from it," but Porson's sole grounds for coming to this conclusion is that Erasmus did not return to England after 1517; he does not consider that someone (such as John Clement) might have brought the manuscript to Erasmus.³²⁴ In any case, Porson's judgment on the status of Montfortianus was unambiguous:

[Montfortianus] was probably written about the year 1520, and interpolated in this place for the purpose of deceiving Erasmus. This hypothesis will explain how it so suddenly appeared when it was wanted, and how it disappeared as suddenly after having atchieved [*sic*] the glorious exploit for which it was destined. It might have been hazardous to expose its tender and infantine form to barbarous critics. They would perhaps have thrown brutal aspersions upon its character, from which it might never have recovered. The freshness of the ink and materials might then have led to a detection of the imposture; but time would gradually render such an event less probable in itself, and less hurtful in its consequences.³²⁵

³²² Porson, 1790, 18-19. César de Missy, chaplain of the French church at St James' in London, contributed several letters on the subject of the comma to the *Journal britannique*: 8 (May-June 1752), 194-211; (July-Aug. 1752), 274-296; 9 (Sept.-Oct. 1752), 44-66; 11 (May-June 1753), 66-98; 15 (Sept.-Oct. 1754), 148-151, followed by a French paraphrase by de Missy of Newton's letter to Locke, 151-190. There was a reply in the *Journal britannique* 10 (Jan.-Feb. 1753), 127-134.

³²³ Porson, 1790, 112: "But whether mean or not, the words of Erasmus might seem a kind of advertisement requesting any person who knew of such a manuscript, to give him notice of it. His industrious friends in England immediately began a strict search, and were so fortunate, in the interval between the second and third editions, as to discover a copy after their own heart. How seasonable was this assistance in so critical a juncture."

³²⁴ Porson, 1790, 112-115.

³²⁵ Porson, 1790, 117.

Porson rightly pointed out that Travis' insinuation that Erasmus possessed—but concealed—a large number of Greek manuscripts containing the comma was completely ridiculous:

Inquisitive people will say, how happens it that none of these MSS. now remain, except the Dublin copy, which Wetstein [*sic*] is so cruel as to attribute to the sixteenth century [...?] But the answer is easy. They are lost. Either they have been burned, or have been eaten by the worms, or been gnawed in pieces by the rats, or been rotted with the damp, or been destroyed by those pestilent fellows the Arians; which was very feasible; for they had only to get into their power all the MSS. of the New Testament in the world, and to mutilate or destroy those which contained *un des plus beaux passages dans l'Ecriture Sainte* [Martin]. Or, if all these possibilities should fail, the devil may play his part in the drama to great advantage. For it is a fact of which Beza positively assures us, that the devil has been tampering with the text, I Tim. III. 16; and that Erasmus lent him an helping hand.³²⁶

Despite the brilliance of Porson's refutation of Travis' arguments, even he was not above making errors of fact and reasoning: he too deploys the legend of Erasmus' promise, which he apparently borrows from Newton or Martin, even though he knew (and quoted) the relevant passage from Erasmus' defence against Lee's *Annotations*.³²⁷

Travis would not be beaten, and brought out an expanded edition of his letters in 1795. In the meantime, Herbert Marsh, who would later be made Bishop of Peterborough for his services to learning, pointed out in a note in the second volume of his translation of Michaelis' *Einleitung in die göttlichen Schriften des Neuen Bundes* (*Introduction to the New Testament*), one of the monuments of

³²⁶ Porson, 1790, 22-23. De Bèze, 1565, 463 (*ad* 1 Tim 3:16): "Vix alius locus est in quo omnia redemptionis nostræ mysteria vel magnificentius vel planius explicentur: vt non mirum sit fœdè fuisse à Diabolo deprauatum: cui sanè hac in parte (dicam enim liberè quod res est) suam operam imprudens quidem (vt malo arbitrari) sed suam operam tamen Erasmus commodauit: ita videlicet profitens Christi diuinitatem vt tamen pro viribus passim conetur luculentissima & certissima quæque eius testimonia nobis extorquere." Porson's scornful tone is perhaps influenced by an analogous passage in Newton, 1785, 5:508.

³²⁷ Porson, 1790, 111: "Erasmus said, in his answer to Lee, that if he had found a single Greek manuscript containing the three heavenly witnesses, he would have inserted them in his text. You, Sir, think this conduct of Erasmus mean."

late eighteenth-century New Testament criticism (1793), that Cambridge, University Library ms Kk 6.4 (GA 398^{ap}) appeared to be Estienne's codex 17; moreover, Marsh noted that this manuscript lacks the comma. Travis seized upon this note, and in the last edition of his *Letters to Gibbon*, did his best to discount this evidence. Marsh replied with a collection of seven letters (1795), in which he carefully laid out the mistakes in Travis' collations of the Paris manuscripts, an extract from Georg Gottlieb Pappelbaum's treatise on the Berlin codex, and an account of the origin of the readings in Estienne's codex 17'. As William Orme (1830) would later characterise the situation, Marsh's reply "supplied every thing that was wanting to complete the discomfiture and disgrace of the unfortunate Archdeacon."³²⁸

In 1794, the great critic Johann Jakob Griesbach contributed to the epistolary exchanges on the Johannine comma by publishing a lengthy reply to a defence of the comma which Wilhelm Friedrich Hezel, professor of oriental languages at Gießen, had addressed to him the year before. Griesbach comported himself more politely than had any of the English critics, writing to Hezel that he considered his colleague's letter not as a declaration of war, but as an invitation to a mutual search for the truth. Nevertheless, when Griesbach reworked his material into an appendix on the comma to be included in his New Testament edition, his tone became more direct. He concluded this appendix with an uncompromising judgment: "If witnesses so few in number, so doubtful, so suspicious and so recent, and arguments so frivolous were sufficient to demonstrate the legitimacy of any reading, even in the teeth of such weighty evidence and so many arguments; there would no longer be any criterion of truth or falsehood left at all in the business of criticism, and the entire text of the New Testament would be left on a very unsure and dubious footing."³²⁹

³²⁸ Orme, 1830, 94.

³²⁹ Griesbach, 1810, 2:709: "Si tam pauci, dubii, suspecti, recentes testes, et argumenta tam levia, sufficerent ad demonstrandam lectionis cujusdam γνησιότητα, licet obstent tam multa tamque gravia et testimonia et argumenta: nullum prorsus superesset in re critica veri falsique criterium, et *textus Novi Testamenti universus plane incertus esset atque dubius.*"

CHAPTER FOUR

1. *The Johannine comma in the religious controversies of nineteenth-century England*

The Gibbon-Travis-Porson-Marsh dispute became a *cause célèbre*, and rumbled through the scholarly literature and gentlemen's magazines for half a century. In this dispute the anxieties that had motivated Lee, Standish and Stunica again came to the fore: namely, the fear that biblical criticism would bring down the church and its doctrines, and would open the way for Socinianism or even atheism.¹ But the dispute was as much about culture and civilization as it was about erudition and philological precision. As Jonathan Sheehan has recently argued, this was a time when the bible was being redefined in Great Britain as a cultural text as much as a religious one, the cornerstone of civilization.² It was in this context that the legend of Erasmus' promise to Lee took root. And this legend would be used in many forms to display Erasmus the conservative, Erasmus the radical, Erasmus the honest scholar, Erasmus the coward, Erasmus the good Catholic, Erasmus the proto-Arian; every possible variation was employed in the debates over the status of this difficult passage of Scripture.

It is remarkable that the myth of Erasmus' promise to Lee became so popular in England, but at first remained virtually unknown elsewhere. For example, in 1796 Georg Gottlieb Pappelbaum published a study of the Berlin Codex of the New Testament, the so-called Codex Ravianus.³ This codex had previously enjoyed some repute, for it too contains the comma, but Pappelbaum determined through careful collation that the Berlin codex is nothing more than a transcription from the Complutensian edition, thus confirming the suspicions aired previously by La Croze, Michaelis and Griesbach. Pappelbaum made scant mention of Erasmus in his study, much less his putative promise, nor did the

¹ Rabil, 2006.

² Sheehan, 2005.

³ Pappelbaum, 1796; this followed an earlier study by Pappelbaum, published in 1785.

legend of Erasmus' promise occur in the review of Pappelbaum's work in the *Neue allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*.⁴ Yet when Pappelbaum's work was reviewed in England, the myth of Erasmus' promise, invented by Simon, developed by Newton and Martin, and publicised by Porson, appeared prominently at the beginning of the review.⁵ We shall see that the reason for this interest in the myth of Erasmus' promise has much to do with the fact that it could be so neatly deployed in the debates between Anglicans, Unitarians and Catholics that took place in nineteenth-century England.

2. *The legend of Erasmus' promise and English Unitarianism*

There are several reasons why such a story should appeal more to English scholars than to their Lutheran counterparts. Lutheran textual critics were less inclined to feel the need to defend the comma, which Luther had excluded from his translation and Bugenhagen had condemned as an impious interpolation. According to Michaelis, it was unheard of in Germany that someone should be accused of heresy simply for not accepting the authority of the comma.⁶ (He clearly did not have the unfortunate Wettstein in mind.) In England by contrast, the presence of the comma in the Authorised Version prompted many to defend its authenticity.

In Germany the terms of debate between Protestants and Catholics took on a particular dynamic as a result of the Peace of Augsburg and the Peace of Westphalia. Moreover, the position of Antitrinitarianism was quite different in

⁴ Anon., 1797a.

⁵ Anon., 1797b, 493: "Having omitted the verse in the first two editions of his Greek Testament, and having been severely reproved for the omission by Stunica, one of the Complutensian editors, and by our countryman Lee, he [*sc.* Erasmus] promised to replace it if it could be found in a single Greek manuscript. To this challenge Stunica made no reply; from which circumstance, the adversaries of the verse conclude that it did not exist in any of the manuscripts used for the Complutensian edition. It was however found in a manuscript in England; and Erasmus performed his promise, by inserting the verse in his 3d edition."

⁶ Michaelis, 1788b, 2:1558: "Es ist die größte Unbilligkeit, in der Luthrischen Kirche, und zwar der in Deutschland, jemanden darüber zu verkätztern, oder doch verdächtig anzusehen, weil er 1. Joh. V, 7. nicht annimt. Er thut nichts, als was Dr. Luther gethan hat, den doch selbst seine Feinde nicht mehr im Verdachte haben, als sey er gegen die Lehre von der Dreyeinigkeit übel gesinnet gewesen."

Germany and England. Although many Polish Socinians fled west to Germany after Antitrinitarian belief was outlawed by the Polish Sejm at the order of Jan Kazimierz in 1658, it seems that it failed to take root there, again perhaps because of the principle of local religious uniformity enacted at the Peace of Augsburg. The anonymous author of an account of the state of world Unitarianism published in the second issue of the *Unitarian Chronicle* (1833) could not account for one congregation in Germany. Yet according to this author, practically all German Christians in his day were really Unitarians at heart: "With various shades of difference on other points, a large portion of the learned and educated portion of the German nation are [*sic*] Antitrinitarian [...]. Scarcely can a person of the more educated classes be found, who believes in the Trinity in the Athanasian sense, though there is a platonic mysticism in the language of some of the younger men on the subject which might pass for Trinitarianism to an unpractised ear."¹¹ According to the author of this article, preaching in Germany tended to be practical rather than doctrinal, dwelling more on the moral lessons to be had from the life of Christ than on metaphysical accounts of God. German preachers did not varnish "the purity of their teachings with the technical phraseology of what is mis-termed orthodoxy." The virtual absence of organised and acknowledged Unitarianism in Germany may explain the absence of the legend of Erasmus' promise from the German literature of biblical criticism, at least until the late nineteenth century, when it began to appear sporadically under the influence of English criticism.

By contrast, Unitarianism had been gaining ground in England from the time of the Civil War.¹² The terms of the 1689 *Act of Toleration* were broadened in 1779 to permit adherence to Scripture "as commonly received among Protestant Churches" rather than to the Thirty-Nine Articles, but this provision still effectively excluded Unitarians, who lobbied for total equality under the law. Consequently, in 1813 Parliament passed the *Unitarian Relief Act*, which repealed three previous laws that discriminated against Unitarians, including the original provision that the *Act of Toleration* should not extend "to give Ease, Benefit or Advantage to Persons denying the Trinity."¹³ Nevertheless, Unitarians were still

¹¹ Anon., 1833, 337.

¹² I agree with Dixon, 2003, 34-65, in dating the appearance of Socinian controversy in England to the period of the Civil War.

¹³ Maclear, 1995, 189.

subject to discrimination of various kinds. For example, in 1819 and 1822, petitions were presented before the House of Commons from Unitarian congregations who complained that the Marriage Act of 1753 had effectively barred them from formalising their marriages, for it insisted that “every marriage, to be held legal, must be solemnized in the church, by the Ministers of the church, and according to the ritual of the church,” a provision to which conscientious Unitarians were unwilling to submit. Accordingly, the petitioners asked merely to enjoy the same exemption from the Marriage Act as was extended to Quakers and Jews. “Marriage [is] the natural right of the human species,” argued William Smith in presenting the petition before the Commons, “and neither man nor woman, without the grossest injustice, [can] be deprived of its benefits.”¹⁴ Even according to canon law, marriage is essentially a civil contract; to insist on the performance of a religious ceremony for the completion of a civil contract was therefore inconsistent and unjust.¹⁵ The arguments in favour of altering the Act appealed to ideas of reason and natural justice. The Marquis of Lansdowne remarked that it is “most important that marriage contracts should be entered into under all the circumstances most binding to the parties; and the object of the state being secured by publicity and solemnity being given thereto, that publicity and solemnity should take place in the manner which the parties [think] proper.”¹⁶ By contrast, the bishop of Chester objected to any alteration of the Church’s doctrines and discipline: “If one stone [is] to be removed after another, what would become of the building?”¹⁷ It was thus only after extended debate that the *Bill for granting relief to certain persons dissenting from the Church of England, in respect of the mode of celebrating Marriage* was finally passed by both Houses in 1827.¹⁸

As part of their process of self-definition during these struggles, Unitarians published several editions of the bible which reflected their own understanding of Scripture. In 1808, two Unitarian versions of the New Testament appeared, both based on the translation of Archbishop William Newcome. Both editions were subject to a joint critique in *The Eclectic Review* in 1809, probably written by Rev.

¹⁴ Hansard, 1822, 6:1460.

¹⁵ Hansard, 1822, 6:1461.

¹⁶ Hansard, 1824, 11:75.

¹⁷ Hansard, 1824, 11:434.

¹⁸ *Bills Public*, 1826-1827, 2:26-32, No 336.

J. P. Smith of Homerton. Smith begins his review by damning these new bibles with faint praise: “The party which, with exemplary modesty and logical justice, assumes the title of ‘Rational’ and ‘Unitarian,’ has within a short period put on appearances of zeal and ardour remarkably the reverse of that comparative torpor for which it was formerly distinguished.”¹⁹ One thing Smith could find to praise was the excision of the comma from both new bibles. Smith makes the following remarks about the lack of textual support for the comma and the dubious status of Montfortianus:

Under these circumstances, we are unspeakably ashamed that any modern divines should have fought *pedibus et unguibus* for the retention of a passage so indisputably spurious. We could adduce half a dozen or half a score passages of ample length, supported by better authority than this, but which are rejected in every printed edition and translation. One Greek MS., we have said, contains the clause. This is the Dublin, or Montfortianus: a very recent MS. glaringly interpolated from the modern copies of the Vulgate, and distributed into the present division of chapters.

Hence some of the best critics have assigned it to the xvth or xvith century.²⁰

Nevertheless, Smith was concerned that details of the Unitarian revision of Newcome’s work, such as the translation of Jn 1:1 (“and the Word was *a* god”), promoted a theological position unacceptable to the majority of orthodox Christians.²¹ Smith dismissed the second 1808 version in few words as the product of “violent and arbitrary temerity.”

A certain “J. Pharez” wrote to the editors of the *Eclectic Review* disputing Smith’s dismissal of the comma, and sent Smith transcripts of long sections from Martin’s *Examination of Emlyn’s Answer*. In reply, Smith politely referred Pharez to Porson’s *Letters to Travis*.²² Clearly offended by what he took as a brusque dismissal from Smith, Pharez published a pamphlet containing Martin’s tract as well as his own thoughts on the issue. Pharez’ work was applauded by the popular readership. A reviewer calling himself “Scrutator” remarked in a review in the inaugural issue of *The Watchman, or Theological Inspector* that “this is a subject in

¹⁹ Smith, 1809a, 24. The review appears anonymously; in identifying Smith as the author I follow Orme, 1830, 139

²⁰ Smith, 1809a, 248.

²¹ Smith, 1809a, 335-342.

²² Smith, 1809b, 392.

which the people are interested, who have neither the opportunity, the time, nor the talent, to search MSS. for themselves.” This is an important point. It would be easy to imagine that this debate was conducted merely between archdeacons, bishops and Oxbridge dons, while the readers of smart literary magazines applauded politely from the sidelines. But there was clearly a cloud of witnesses, the “plain folks” to whom Scrutator addressed himself, who took these issues equally seriously, even if they did not have the training to follow every detail of the debate. An author like Scrutator permits us to view the debate from a very different perspective, one stripped of the elegant sophistication of a Porson or a Marsh: “What description of characters ever have disputed, and still do dispute the authenticity of this passage? To this question I answer, Arians and Socinians! [... The authenticity of the comma] is a barrier they must destroy before they can be quite happy in robbing CHRIST of his DEITY; and since we know this, I beg leave to be suspicious of the men, and their communications. [...] Arians and Socinians are a race of miscreants that infests God’s earth; like vermin of the dunghill, they are exhaled by the sun—bask in its beams; yet, while they exist by the warmth of that luminary, say, ‘O how I hate thy beams’.”²³ As far as Scrutator was concerned, faulty doctrine was only one of the Unitarians’ errors. They also had an underlying program of social improvement and a belief in the importance of individual happiness, central Enlightenment ideals that many traditional Evangelicals like Scrutator feared would corrode morality and enervate the social order:

In one of their strongholds, not one hundred miles from Storey Gate, George Street, Westminster, they have united their wits, and combined their forces, to get the poor children of the neighbourhood to come to a school which they have formed; there they clothe them, and manifest much regard for them, that they may the more easily persuade them to follow their pernicious ways—to deny the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to defy the Holy One of Israel. [...] [The children learn that] the Bible was given us to learn our duty from it, and that we may be

²³ “Scrutator,” 1809, 229. This “Scrutator” is perhaps John Loveday Jr, who wrote articles against Gibbon in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* 1778, one of which appeared under the name “Scrutator”; see McCloy 1933, 76. The quotation at the end is spoken by Satan in Milton, *Paradise Lost* IV.37.

trained and fitted for a better life than the present; and that we can best please God by doing that which will make others and ourselves happy.²⁴ In short, concludes Scrutator, sounding ever more like a caricature from Dickens, “I despise [the Unitarians’] modern cant of liberality.”²⁵

The prevailing rhetoric of *The Watchman* is very different from the poised incisiveness of *The Gentleman’s Magazine* or *The Eclectic Review*. In the editorial of this inaugural issue of *The Watchman*, an alternative set of issues emerges, a suite of millenarian anxieties arising from the shock of the American Revolution and the horrors of the French, the aggression of Napoleon, and the splintering of religious perspectives: “Every thing seems changing. Strange as have been the political revolutions of this age, its religious revolutions have not been less strange. Temporal calamities began with the attempt to destroy our spiritual consolations; and our spiritual consolations are yet likely to become the source of temporal calamities.”²⁶ This millenarian anxiety fills Scrutator’s account as well. He has nothing but contempt for the 1808 Unitarian New Testament, and urges his fellows not to concede a single point: “Consider the consequences of giving up the text. The enemy will triumph. All scripture is liable to objection—the plainest passages will be attacked. (The New Translation has exposed the wishes of the Socinians; it has divulged the secret, and revealed the conspiracy too soon.) In addition to this, the weak and unlearned would be distressed; Satan would make it an engine to fill God’s people with anguish in a dark and trying hour.”²⁷ Scrutator’s rhetoric of attack and defence, his language of enemies, conspiracies, distress and anguish, combine the apocalyptic fears of Evangelicals with the more general panic of a nation still at war. But had Scrutator and Pharez looked a little closer, they might have discovered that they and Smith, their immediate target, were actually on the same side.

In contrast to Scrutator’s effusions, Pharez’ work was not well received amongst the learned. Smith replied in print, defending himself and the late Porson against Pharez’ inept charges. There is more than a little of Porson’s own rhetoric in Smith’s withering assessment of Pharez’ critical capacities, from the sonorous cadences to the deployment of the ultimate insult: *pity*. In fact, Smith

²⁴ “Scrutator,” 1809, 230-231.

²⁵ “Scrutator,” 1809, 232.

²⁶ Anon., 1809, 3.

²⁷ “Scrutator,” 1809, 236.

was in the fortunate position of having found his very own Travis: “Grossly destitute of literature and the very lowest principles of critical science, [Pharez] assaults the greatest critic in Europe, and sings aloud his self-complacent triumph. Actually ignorant *what words* are deemed spurious, and what are held to be genuine, and equally ignorant on the nature of the evidence and the minor points of the case, he blunders through page after page with the most comfortable fatuity. He truly deserves our pity: but as to feeling angry with him, it is quite impossible.”²⁸ Nevertheless, Smith was incensed by Pharez’ “false and insolent insinuations” that he tended to Unitarianism, and felt compelled to make a public declaration of his Trinitarian orthodoxy and his rejection of the errors of the “ignorant and injudicious.”²⁹ During his exasperated rehearsal of the circumstances leading to the inclusion of the comma in the *Textus receptus*, Smith brought up the myth of Erasmus’ promise, apparently after checking Erasmus’ *Annotationes* to verify the story.³⁰ Smith evidently shared Gibbon’s judgment that Erasmus’ decision was more pragmatic than scholarly. From Smith’s account it is also clear that a number of inaccuracies had become ingrained in the story, such as the conviction that Erasmus did not see the Montfortianus, and that he was at Basel (rather than Leuven) when he decided to include the comma in his text. More importantly, Smith’s account of the myth shows how successfully it could be turned to the purposes of interdenominational polemic.

Another volley in the struggle between the orthodox and Unitarians occurred in a rather surprising place. The fifth volume of Abraham Rees’s *Cyclopædia* (1802) contains a detailed article on Codex Montfortianus under the

²⁸ Smith, 1810, 163.

²⁹ Smith, 1810, 164.

³⁰ Smith, 1810, 67: “Erasmus published his first and second editions faithfully according to his manuscripts, and of course without the passage. This brought on him violent reproaches from the bigoted adherents of the Romish Church, and its established Latin version. By them he was goaded into a promise, certainly not a very judicious one, to insert the passage in his next edition, provided one Greek manuscript could be discovered which contained it. *Most opportunely*, therefore, one was *found* in England; a *transcript* of the clause in question was made and sent to Erasmus in Switzerland; and, in his third edition of 1522, he redeemed his pledge by inserting the words so seasonably discovered. He consulted [*i.e.* considered], however, his critical reputation by subjoining this note: ‘To afford no occasion to calumny, we have inserted this passage, which was said to be a deficiency in our former editions, out of a British manuscript; which manuscript, however, I suspect to have been corrected according to our copies,’ that is, those received in the church of Rome.”

lemma *Britannicus Codex Erasmi*. The article is based largely on the account of Michaelis and Marsh, and all the arguments known to that point were adduced to show that the manuscript could not be any older than the fifteenth century. But when the *Cyclopædia* was reprinted in Philadelphia, the American editors added a note at the end of the article:

It can scarcely have escaped the observation of any attentive reader, that almost the whole of this article has been inserted for the sole purpose of showing that the passage 1 John v. 7, so terrific to all Anti-trinitarians, ought to be considered as spurious. [...] Is it to be believed that such a scholar as Erasmus, who had left this passage out of his two first editions of the Greek Testament, would have ever again inserted it, if he had found the passage in Greek to be such a clumsy and boyish translation from the Latin, and of course so totally destitute of authority, as it is here represented to be? We rather believe, notwithstanding all that is said by Michaelis, that the *Britannicus Codex Erasmi* could not be the same with that denominated Montfortianus & Dublinensis.³⁷

This note attracted a firm rebuke from the author of an article published in the 1824 *Unitarian Miscellany and Christian Monitor* (almost certainly Jared Sparks), in which Erasmus' promise to include the comma is characterised as "most cowardly."³⁸

A more favourable view of Erasmus' character and choice was given in the biography of Erasmus (1873) by the Unitarian Robert Blackley Drummond.

³⁷ Rees, 1806-1822, 5 (unpaginated), art. *Britannicus Codex Erasmi*.

³⁸ Sparks, 1824, 305: "We are so often and heavily charged with *glossing*, that it is quite pleasant when we can get trinitarians to gloss for us—and this is not the only time they have performed the office. If there is any thing *terrific* in the matter to us, it is the unblushing perseverance with which a decidedly spurious passage has been kept in our Bibles, by those who ought to know better, and who do know better—we do not mean the writer of the remarks, for he appears to know little about it. This to be sure is a subject of terror; but it is the orthodox who ought to be startled by it, much more than ourselves. [...] Then as to what the editor says of Erasmus, and the "clumsy and boyish translation," he ought to have known, that Erasmus had made a most cowardly promise, that if *one* manuscript should be found which contained the text, he would print it in his next edition. He was told of this manuscript in England, and he did print it—though he suspected all the time that it was a translation from the Latin; *Quanquam et hunc suspicor, ad Latinorum codices fuisse castigatum*; those are his very words." The article is not signed, but was apparently written by Sparks, or perhaps the co-editor of the *Unitarian Miscellany*, Francis William Pitt Greenwood.

Drummon made particular mention of Erasmus' omission of the comma in the first two editions of the New Testament, and how this had drawn upon him the accusation of Arianism.³⁹ Drummond particularly commended Erasmus' honesty and rationality, two qualities actively promoted by Unitarians: "But the best proof of the courage and honesty of Erasmus might be thought to be the omission of 1 John v. 7. Yet, what else could he have done but omit it? The words were not in his manuscripts."⁴⁰ Drummond cites Erasmus' justification of this omission directly from his apology to Lee: "As to the charge that Erasmus had been guilty of carelessness and dishonesty in not consulting more than one manuscript, it was simply absurd. He had, in fact, consulted many in England, in Brabant, and at Basle, and at different times had had in his hands a greater number than Valla. Had he found the words in a single copy, he would, he says, have inserted them; but that not having been the case, he followed the only course that was open to him—pointed out what was wanting in his Greek manuscript."⁴¹ Despite paraphrasing the text that spawned the myth of Erasmus' promise, Drummond still goes on to cite the myth of the promise in an extended version, even claiming that Erasmus offered *twice* to include the comma. Drummond fixes responsibility for the production of Montfortianus squarely on Lee, whose character was such as to have ventured such a "pious fraud." He records Erasmus' doubts about the passage (which was, according to Drummond, communicated to him in a letter), but he portrays Erasmus' decision to include the comma as a pragmatic concession for the sake of avoiding further conflict.⁴² The unspoken implications of Drummond's narration are that the

³⁹ Drummond, 1873, 1:313: "But by-and-by more bitterness infused itself into the strife. Accusations of heresy and Arianism were heard. Erasmus, it was said, had charged the Apostles with lapses of memory and with writing bad Greek; he had altered texts which were important for proving the Deity of Christ, and he had omitted altogether the testimony of the Three Witnesses in the First Epistle of John."

⁴⁰ Drummond, 1873, 1:318.

⁴¹ Drummond, 1873, 1:331.

⁴² Drummond, 1873, 1:333-335: "Erasmus in his reply had twice professed his willingness [334] to insert the testimony of the Three Witnesses if a single manuscript could be produced containing it. Lee must in due time have satisfied himself that none such could be found at Oxford or Cambridge, nor probably anywhere else. But what then? Were there no amanuenses living? Was it impossible to have a manuscript written on purpose which should contain the disputed words, and satisfy the scruples of this troublesome Grecian? That the *Codex Montfortianus* was written under the direction of Lee, with the express object of deceiving his

comma has no place in the text, and that moderns who accept the comma as a genuine part of Scripture are capitulating to untruth for the sake of irrational dogma.

Erasmus was also claimed as a progenitor of the Unitarians by Gaston Bonet-Maury, whose *Early Sources of English Unitarian Christianity* was published in English translation in 1884. Bonet-Maury notes evidence from the sixteenth century that Erasmus' work was associated with Antitrinitarianism. For example, the trial records of the Anabaptist Herman van Flekwijk, burned at Bruges in 1569, reveal that Erasmus was believed in some quarters to promote Antitrinitarianism. When the inquisitor at Flekwijk's trial cited the comma as proof of the Trinity, he replied: "I have often heard that Erasmus, in his Annotations upon that passage, shows that this text is not in the Greek

opponent and exacting from him the fulfilment of his promise, there is indeed no positive proof; but its opportune appearance at this particular juncture lends a countenance to the supposition, and there was nothing in the character of Lee to make it probable that he would have hesitated to commit a pious fraud which he thought so important to the orthodox faith. One only wonders that he should have gone such a long way round to accomplish his purpose, instead of simply affirming the existence of the manuscript; but no doubt he had a tender conscience, and found it more agreeable to equivocate than to lie; and besides, how did he know but Erasmus would run over to England to have a sight of this newly-discovered treasure? It does not appear that he ever even saw the Codex Britannicus, as he calls it. He desired peace, and shrunk from the clamour that was raised against him on all sides. Having been informed, therefore, that such a manuscript had been found containing the testimony of the Three Witnesses, although he suspected, and with good reason, that it had been corrected after the Latin, he inserted the spurious [335] words in his third edition, which appeared in 1522. There the text corresponds exactly with the reading of the *Codex Montfortianus*, which is now deposited in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, proving its identity with the Codex Britannicus of Erasmus. In the subsequent editions it was altered into better Greek." Drummond had presented his thoughts on this topic in 1868. Drummond's presentation of the events was censured by Mangan, 1927, 28, who chided him for presenting his countryman Lee in such a shabby light, and in turn gave an even more gushing version of the legend: "Erasmus very magnanimously agreed to restore it in his third edition if it could be found in any Greek original. Lee accepted the offer and found it for him in an English codex which Erasmus calls the *Codex Britannicus*. Erasmus was as good as his word, and the disputed matter appeared in the next edition." Mangan's account suggests a level of cordiality and co-operation between Erasmus and Lee that simply did not exist. Mangan did not grasp that Erasmus wanted to free himself of the suspicion of Arianism that would otherwise damage both him and the reception of his New Testament.

original.”⁴³ Bonet-Maury then goes on to identify not merely Erasmus and the Anabaptists as proto-Unitarians, but Luther and Calvin as well: “Anabaptism was saturated with Antitrinitarian ideas [...]. It is not difficult to recognise traces of this influence in Luther’s Bible and in Calvin’s Commentaries. Still more decidedly was it felt in England, where Erasmus’ Annotations and his Paraphrases upon the New Testament were officially introduced into every parish (1547).”⁴⁴ Moreover, Bonet-Maury mistakes Erasmus’ scholarly integrity in criticizing the text of the New Testament for a sign of an inner conflict betraying an unresolved tendency towards Arianism.⁴⁵ Finally, Bonet-Maury concludes: “If Erasmus was not Unitarian, in the proper sense of the term, he at any rate, by his strictly philological exegesis, supplied weapons to the adversaries of the Trinity, particularly to the Anabaptists of the Low Countries.”⁴⁶

And not merely to them. In his defence of the scriptural basis for Unitarianism (1818), Charles Abraham Elton made much of the rejection of the

⁴³ Bonet-Maury, 1884, 40; cf. Coogan, 1992, 68-70.

⁴⁴ Bonet-Maury, 1884, 40-41.

⁴⁵ Bonet-Maury, 1884, 41-42: “If we examine the passages in the writings of Erasmus bearing upon the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ, we find ourselves confronted by two sets of utterances in direct opposition to each other. Those in the one set tend to destroy the chief Scriptural arguments invoked in aid of these dogmata; those in the other, on the contrary, protest with animation against accusations of Arianism, and display the official dogma. The passages coming under the former category are in general to be met with in his Annotations and in his Preface to the Works of St. Hilary. One of the most remarkable is the note upon the celebrated verse 1 John v. 7. Having justified his omission of this gloss by the testimony of the Fathers and of the oldest manuscripts, Erasmus adds (Opp. v. 1080): “But some will say that this verse is an effective weapon against the Arians. Very true. But the moment it is proved that the reading did not exist of old, either among the Greeks or among the Latins, this weapon is no longer worth anything. [...] [42] Even admitting it were undisputed, do we think the Arians such blockheads as not to have applied the same interpretation [as in the previous verse] to the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit? [...] Such performances rather compromise than strengthen the faith. Far better is it to employ our pious studies in endeavouring to resemble God, than in indiscreet discussion with a view to ascertain wherein the Son is distinguished from the Father, and wherein the Holy Spirit differs from the other two.’ On the other hand, in his Explication of the Apostles’ Creed, and in his Apology, addressed to Alfonso Mauricio, Archbishop of Seville, against the heretical articles extracted from his works by certain Spanish monks, Erasmus expresses his adhesion to the Trinitarian dogma [...]”

⁴⁶ Bonet-Maury, 1884, 43.

comma by Erasmus, Zwingli and Newton.⁴⁷ The Unitarian critic Frederick Farley (1860), drawing on the arguments of Marsh, dismissed Montfortianus as a fraud, and the comma as an interpolation—and a doctrinally useless interpolation at that: “But admit for the sake of argument, that the verse is the genuine testimony of St. John, the Evangelist, the disciple whom Jesus loved. What then? Of what is it the proof? Of the doctrine of the Trinity? of the Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity? of Three Persons in one God? By no means.”⁴⁸

Thus in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Unitarians were amongst those most inclined to conclude that the Johannine comma was a spurious interpolation. For despite their constant protests that the comma, even if genuine, does not necessarily support the doctrine of the Trinity, it is clear that many Unitarians realised that many of their Trinitarian opponents still held the comma dear as evidence of the Trinity, and thus good reason to marginalise those who would deny this central doctrine.

3. Erasmus and the Johannine comma in the struggle for Catholic emancipation in England

Besides the question of Nonconformists like Unitarians, perhaps the most pressing politico-religious problem in nineteenth-century England was the question of Catholic emancipation. When Pitt urged emancipation following the *Act of Union with Ireland* (1800), tensions between Catholics and the Established Church had sharpened to a point, coming to a head with the resignation of Pitt in 1801, the débâcle of Lord Clare’s funeral in 1802, Grattan’s failed petitions in 1805 and 1810, and the failure of Daniel O’Connell’s Catholic Committee in 1809. (Although Catholics and Unitarians were worlds apart theologically, the Unitarian push for social equality and recognition of all religious creeds may have worked in favour of Catholic struggles for legal recognition.) A favoured rhetorical *topos* of anti-Catholic rhetoric in the nineteenth century was the

⁴⁷ Elton, 1818, 71: “This text was rejected as no part of genuine Scripture, by Erasmus, Zwinglius, and Newton. Dr. Horsley, however, wonders ‘why he must acknowledge the passage to be at all an interpolation?’ Why, indeed! It is a saying, common with the Trinitarians, that ‘if they could not find the Trinity there, they would burn their Bibles;’ and Bishop Horsley would doubtless defend this passage, or any other.”

⁴⁸ Farley, 1860, 50.

depiction of the Church of Rome as the enemy of intellectual freedom and integrity; this theme emerges clearly in several accounts of Erasmus' dispute with Lee.

A good example of the deployment of the Erasmus myth in anti-Catholic polemic is supplied by Herbert Marsh. In 1801, Marsh published the fourth and final volume of his translation of Johann David Michaelis' *Introduction to the New Testament*. Marsh's translation is greatly expanded in places, and includes the story of Erasmus' purported promise, which did not appear in Michaelis' German original. As Marsh relates the story, Erasmus' omission of the comma "gave great offence to the members of the church of Rome, whose oracle was the Vulgate: and who concluded, from the omission of the passage in the Greek manuscripts, not that it was spurious, but that the Greeks had maliciously erased it." Marsh, perhaps identifying with Erasmus as a fellow-philologist, strove to maintain his scholarly integrity: "Erasmus however did not think proper to translate the passage from Latin into Greek, and to insert it without authority: but he promised to insert it in his next edition, if a Greek manuscript could be discovered, which contained it. Before the publication of his third edition he received intelligence, that such a manuscript existed in England, and likewise a transcript from this manuscript of the place in question. From this transcript Erasmus inserted the controverted passage in his third and following editions, 'ne cui sit causa calumniandi'."⁵⁷

In 1822 Marsh published the sixth volume of his *Course of Lectures, Containing a Description and Systematic Arrangement of the Several Branches of Divinity*, which also contains a report of the Erasmus myth. Again he promoted the misconception that Erasmus had never seen Montfortianus, but received a transcript of the passage.⁵⁸ Here too his hostility to the Roman Catholic church,

⁵⁷ Michaelis, 1801, 4:437-438; this is a reworking of a longer note in Marsh, 1795, xxi-xxiii.

⁵⁸ Marsh, 1812-1823, 6:24: "Erasmus had published two editions of the Greek Testament, one in 1516, the other in 1519, both of which were without the words, that begin with ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ and end with ἐν τῇ γῇ. This *omission* as it was called by those who paid more deference to the Latin translation than to the Greek original, exposed Erasmus to much censure, though in fact the complaint was for *non-addition*. Erasmus therefore very properly answered, *addendi de meo quod Græcis deest, provinciam non susceperam* ["I had not taken it upon myself to add from my own conjecture what is absent from the Greek texts"]. He promised however, that, though he could not insert in a Greek edition what he had never found in a Greek manuscript, he would insert the passage in his next edition, if in the mean time a Greek MS. could be

embodied in the person of Lee (one of “those who paid more deference to the Latin translation”), is palpable. Marsh’s narration implies that Erasmus was the unwitting and innocent victim of a confidence trick pulled by the devious Catholic authorities. Such a spin was typical of Marsh’s attitude towards the Roman Catholic church. For example, in his tract *A Comparative View of the Churches of England and Rome* (1816), he aimed to provide evidence “that the Church of Rome not only carries its Authority further, than is necessary for its own preservation, but that its authority is exercised in such a manner, as to extinguish the right of private judgment in its own members, and to trample on the rights of all other Churches.”⁵⁹ Such strongly-held beliefs could hardly fail to influence Marsh’s version of the events surrounding the inclusion of the comma in the biblical text.

But the story of Erasmus’ promise could also be used by Roman Catholic apologists. Charles Butler (1805), a Roman Catholic lawyer and amateur biblical critic, gives a different spin to the story as part of his defence of the veracity of the comma.⁶⁰ The rhetoric of Butler’s account is quite different from that of Newton or Marsh. Rather than painting Lee and Stunica as devious or doltish, Butler emphasises their piety and reputation, and by implication the authority of the Roman Catholic church and the integrity of its processes. Stunica’s somewhat embarrassing failure to produce the Rhodian manuscript is saved by the

discovered, which had the passage. In less than a year after that declaration, Erasmus was informed, that there was a Greek MS. in England, which contained the passage. At the same time a copy of the passage, as contained in that MS. was communicated to Erasmus: and Erasmus, as he had promised, inserted that copy in his next edition, which was published in 1522.”.

⁵⁹ Marsh, 1816, 177-200.

⁶⁰ Butler, 1807, 2:257-258: “[Erasmus] did not insert The Verse in the two editions of 1516 and 1519. For this, he was reprehended, in the severest terms, by Lee or Ley, an English divine of some note, afterwards advanced, by Henry the eighth, to the Archbishoprick of York; and by Stunica, a Spanish divine, employed on the Complutensian Polyglott. In answer to them, he declared his readiness to insert The Verse, if a single manuscript should be found to contain it. As The Verse was inserted in the Complutensian Polyglott, and ought not to have been inserted in it, without the authority of one or more manuscripts, Stunica was bound, in honour, to produce such a manuscript: but he produced none. [...] At length, the Codex Montfortianus, then called the Codex Britannicus [*sic*], now in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, was found to contain The Verse. In performance of his promise, Erasmus inserted The Verse in his edition of 1522; and retained it in his editions of 1527, and 1535.”.

appearance of Montfortianus, about which Butler appears not to harbour any doubts. Erasmus, compliant and co-operative to the last, submits to reason and the authority of the church, and cheerfully includes the comma not merely in the next edition, but in all that follow. For further information on the dispute, Butler refers the reader to the *Vie d'Erasme* by Burigni (1757), but readers looking for more information on the purported promise would not find it there; Butler is relying rather on the tradition of the myth as it had grown up in England.⁶¹

The exclusion of the comma from the edition of the Syrian Peshitta published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1816 created a backlash in the edition produced by a team of Dominican scholars (1887-1891), which included it in a fresh translation from the Latin, without any indication that this reading was not attested in any of the manuscripts used for the edition. This edition had clear polemical motives, and was described by the Patriarch of Babylon, Petrus Elias Abylonan, as “containing all the divine books in a perfect state, edited by the efforts of skilful critics and printed by Catholic presses” (*omnes divinos libros perfecte continentem, peritorum virorum opera bene castigatam, typisque Catholicis impressam*). The archbishop of Amid, Georgius Ebed-Jesus Khayyath, praised the Dominicans for doing away with editions prepared by Protestant scholars, “in which there is clearly nothing of use to readers, which are defective, corrupted in many places by bad faith and over-subtle astuteness, [...] which issue from publishers attached to Protestant sects and which are in common use, though with great danger to our souls” (*in quibus nihil sane est commodi lectoribus, utpote mancis, passimque mala fide et subtili astutia corruptis [...] quæ a Protestantium sectarum ac societatum typis prodeunt, et tanta cum animarum perniciæ per omnium manus circumferuntur*).⁶²

4. Orlando Dobbin and the scientific study of Codex Montfortianus

By the end of the eighteenth century, it was clear that more work was needed on the text and provenance of Montfortianus. Accordingly, in 1801 John Barrett of Trinity College Dublin published a collation of those parts of the manuscript which had not been included in the London Polyglot (in essence Romans to

⁶¹ Butler’s account seems to have formed the basis of that by Anon., 1808.

⁶² Borger, 1987, 282.

Revelation), along with some speculations on the provenance of the manuscript. With this renewed scholarly attention on Montfortianus, the manuscript appeared regularly in nineteenth-century tourist guides of Dublin as a must-see.⁶³ But as a result of constant handling, the page containing the comma became quite soiled, and the glazing became more visible than elsewhere. “We often hear,” said an Irish bishop quoted by F. H. A. Scrivener in 1861, “that the text of the Three Heavenly Witnesses is a *gloss*; and any one that will go into the College Library may see as much for himself.”⁶⁴

As useful as Barrett’s work was, it did not seem to answer the questions that still lingered in the minds of many. As a consequence, Orlando Thomas Dobbin (1807-1890) undertook a more detailed study of Codex Montfortianus, which appeared in 1854. Dobbin included a full collation of the textual variants in the Gospels and Acts (those parts not collated by Barrett), and a full account of the manuscript basis for the Johannine comma, with which he intended to put an end to all speculation over its textual legitimacy. Given Dobbin’s importance in the history of the comma, it is worth spending a little time on his background.

Dobbin’s work expressed a confidence in the power of philology to illuminate historical questions that impinge upon the claims of Christianity. A decade before his work on Montfortianus, Dobbin published a defence of the truth of the Gospels against the “mythicism” of David Friedrich Strauss, the originator of the quest for the historical Jesus (*Tentamen Anti-Straussianum*, 1845). Throughout, Dobbin’s work breathes a conviction that the “evidence of the truth of Christianity is [...] of a kind that grows and strengthens rather than decays with time.”⁶⁵ Dobbin worked on the premise that if he could demonstrate the early date of the Gospels on philological grounds, then their reliability as historical documents could be asserted with a greater degree of confidence. While expressing his respect for the work of the eighteenth-century German critics, Dobbin considered that their more recent successors had, in their zeal to show that Christianity was consonant with reason, “left Christianity that bald and unsightly thing which she appears in the writings of Paulus, Bretschneider, the

⁶³ Gamble, 1811, 24; McGregor 1821, 204; Wright, 1825, 17; “X. D.”, 1841, 341.

⁶⁴ Scrivener, 1861, 149.

⁶⁵ Dobbin, 1845, v. The only correspondence of Dobbin’s that I could locate was a letter dated 21 February 1853, addressed to an unnamed archbishop, presumably Richard Whately of Dublin (Dublin, Trinity College ms 7762-72/1202); the letter does not mention Dobbin’s work on Montfortianus.

Bauers, and others.”⁶⁶ Strauss, concedes Dobbin, “may have succeeded in denuding the birth, baptism, resurrection and ascension of Jesus of all that is real, and in reducing them to a mythic exposition of the religious sentiment of the age.” Nevertheless, Dobbin believed that he could “meet mythicism by a philological fact.”⁶⁷ This clinching philological fact, documented minutely by Dobbin, was the observation that Jesus is habitually called “Jesus” in the Gospels and Acts, and “Jesus Christ,” “the Christ,” or “the Lord” in the Epistles, Revelation and the Apostolic Fathers. This difference in usage, Dobbin asserted, provides proof positive of “an early date for the Gospels, and one considerably later for the Epistles.”⁶⁸ According to Dobbin, only three possible explanations could explain the uniformity of usage within these two groups of writings. He rejects the first possible answer, that “[t]he Holy Spirit may have directed their minds to the exhibition of a special uniformity,” by pointing out that the Holy Spirit would have suggested the same thing to both groups of writers equally. He likewise dismisses the suggestion that this literary peculiarity was “the result of a deliberate pre-arrangement and mutual understanding between the Evangelists themselves.” The most natural explanation was that the personal name “Jesus” gave way to the honorific and theological titles such as “the Lord Jesus” and “the Christ of God” as theological reflection on his nature progressed with time. Dobbin suggests that the writings of John show this change of usage in progress; in the Fourth Gospel, John uses the name “Jesus,” while in the Johannine Epistles—which Dobbin considered to have been written by John somewhat later than the Gospel—we more frequently find the title “Jesus Christ.” Dobbin continues his argument by pointing out that the development of the name “Christian,” first attested in 1 Pt 4:16 and in the events related in Acts 11:26 and 26:28, must postdate the assignation of the title “Christ” to Jesus. The writing of 1 Peter and the events described in Acts 11:26 and 26:28 thus provide a *terminus ante quem* for the writing of the Gospels. Dobbin concedes that this conclusion is not supported by the earliest church historians, but he defends himself by asserting that all the earliest historical records of the church are in any case too late to be reliable on this point. “With the fullest faith in the honesty of the

⁶⁶ Dobbin, 1845, ix.

⁶⁷ Dobbin, 1845, 28.

⁶⁸ Dobbin, 1845, 50.

historian, I regard him as an incompetent witness on the point in debate.”⁶⁹ Dobbin believed that since the Gospels were written so early, insufficient time had elapsed for Strauss’s process of mythologizing to have taken place, “the mythic dress which historic events assume on his system, being utterly at variance with the supposition of their recent occurrence.”⁷⁰ Much could be said to criticise Dobbin’s argument and the presuppositions on which it is based, from his dogged exclusion of all other evidence to his mistaken assumptions about the authorship of biblical books. Nevertheless, his attempt to refute Strauss is important for laying bare the assumptions underlying his work on Montfortianus: that whatever one’s ideas about the role of the Holy Spirit in the creation and preservation of Scripture, it is clear that Christian texts are products of humans situated in a historical time; that the language of religious texts changes over time in response to changes in theological reflection; and that philology is an indispensable means for investigating religious texts and thus of providing support for the historical and theological claims of Christianity.

In matters of religion Dobbin was a moderate. As such he was suspicious of the revivalism that had begun to appear in Ulster in the 1850s, which he considered a dangerous expression of radical solipsism, a license for immorality and the cause of the further entrenchment of interdenominational prejudice. In a tract against revivalism (1859), Dobbin set out his objections under five heads:

In the first place, That that religious experience, which is called Conversion, is not convulsion or spasm, syncope or deliquium, cries of distress and copious tears, although by some persons these are identified with it, or considered essential to it. Secondly, That conversion is not a mere intellectual apprehension of truth, however vivid and fresh it may prove in an individual’s experience. Thirdly, That it is not a punctilious attendance on sacraments, prayer-meetings, and other means of grace, formerly neglected, but now earnestly observed. Fourthly, That neither are fluent gifts of prayer or exhortation to be assumed as conclusive proof of genuine conversion, although these have been boasted of as characterizing the recent converts. Nor, fifthly, and finally, can a newly-awakened sectarian zeal—concern for a church rather than for catholic Christianity—be deemed convincing evidence that a man has received

⁶⁹ Dobbin, 1845, 75.

⁷⁰ Dobbin, 1845, 80.

from on high the unction of the Holy Ghost. If the Revival scheme be worked with a view to aggrandise a particular sect, more than to win sinners to Christ, it must fail of attaining its highest end; for a person may be an ardent Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Methodist, and yet be a very unworthy disciple of our Lord.”⁷¹

A similar opposition to confessional bias may be observed elsewhere in Dobbin’s work. In his work against Strauss he had been careful to avoid partisan arguments that might give “offence to any body of religionists, believing that our common Christianity is equally dear to all [...]”.⁷² After serving for some time as a Protestant minister at Killoconnigan (Meath), he addressed to John Wodehouse, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, *A plea for tolerance toward our fellow-subjects in Ireland who profess the Roman Catholic religion* (1866). Against the current of much Protestant polemic, Dobbin describes the Catholic Irish peasantry in stirring terms: “Most of the class who present themselves to my observation are marked by a sobriety and honesty, a truthfulness of speech, a kindness and helpfulness to one another, a patient, uncomplaining endurance of bitter poverty and privation, a thankful willingness to labour at any employment when employment can be had, and a submissive, trustful dependence upon Providence, with a habitual respect for the ordinances of religion, that are pleasing in the highest degree.” As for the Roman Catholic clergy of Ireland, “they look after their flock, after their dues, and, if lucky enough to have one, look after their farm, and give as little trouble, if not causelessly assailed, as any other class in the community.”⁷³ Dobbin’s work thus reflected the piety of a broad-church clergyman determined to defend the faith against modernists who sought to dismiss Christianity as a tissue of myth, combined with an Enlightenment rationalism which recoiled equally from the fits and babblings of religious enthusiasts and from the injustice of religious and political discrimination.

Such is the background to Dobbin’s work on Montfortianus. His collation of the codex permitted him to conclude that the manuscript was written by three or four different scribes; and that the Gospels were copied from GA 56 and 58, and Acts and the Epistles from GA 326. On this evidence he dated Montfortianus confidently to the sixteenth century. Regarding the Johannine comma, which he

⁷¹ Dobbin, 1859, 6-7; further, see the classic work, Knox, 1950b.

⁷² Dobbin, 1845, xi.

⁷³ Dobbin, 1866, cit. Godkin, 1867, 544-545; cf. 239.

considered “neither genuine, nor of any importance in dogmatical theology,” and whose Greek expression “manifestly betrays a translation from the Latin,” Dobbin continued: “by this single testimony the verse must stand or fall. [...] It is wanting in the Lincoln College Codex [GA 326];—therefore its presence in the Monfort ms. is an arbitrary and unauthorised interpolation.”⁷⁴ Dobbin asserted—though without tendering any particular proof—that the Epistles in Montfortianus were written “before the Erasmian controversy began.” On this basis he found no reason to conclude that the scribe had mischievous motives in inserting the comma: “Let a moderate share of Greek scholarship be combined with a high veneration for the Latin Vulgate, and a desire to complete what is evidently a tentative text throughout,—one designed for private edification, and not for sale,—and this supposition meets all the phenomena of the case; the existence of the reading in our Codex is accounted for, and the fair fame of the author is untarnished.”⁷⁵ (Dobbin’s exoneration of the scribes has not been universally accepted; Franciscan historian A. G. Little characterised the production of the manuscript as “a disreputable episode.”)⁷⁶ Dobbin also disposed of many of the other claims made about Montfortianus. He refuted the opinions of Adam Clarke and Thomas Burgess, who had claimed a great antiquity for the codex on the basis of its script; he also dismissed their argument that the textual differences between Montfortianus on the one hand and the Complutensian edition and Erasmus’ text on the other proved that Montfortianus must predate the age of printing.⁷⁷ Dobbin was aware that his text-critical work had the potential to be controversial, but confessed himself glad to have brought some clarity to an issue that had thus far lain in some doubt. Dobbin protested all along that his own motives in this study were pious: “We have always held as indisputable, that there is as serious damage done to the sacred oracles by the retention of doubtful Scripture in the Inspired Volume, as by the exclusion of the true.”⁷⁸

Dobbin did not say the last word on the codex; most glaringly, he overlooked the fact that the scribes of Montfortianus had used Codex

⁷⁴ Dobbin, 1854, 6, 9, 57, 61.

⁷⁵ Dobbin, 1854, 61-62,

⁷⁶ Little, 1943, 142.

⁷⁷ Dobbin, 1854, 5.

⁷⁸ Dobbin, 1854, 62.

Leicestrensis throughout, despite the fact that he had inspected the latter codex personally. Nevertheless, he laid the foundations for the serious and systematic study of the text of Montfortianus, which permitted him to demonstrate that the comma was a conscious and deliberate insertion. But far from being killed off by the evidence brought by Dobbin, the comma and its associated myths continued to be employed for confessional purposes of all kinds.

5. *The myth of Erasmus' promise and the defence of the textus receptus*

The advances in biblical philology in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gave rise to a great deal of anxiety about the authority of the so-called *textus receptus*, especially when textual questions seemed to impinge on matters of doctrine. (This debate is still being thrashed out amongst conservative Christian groups, particularly in the United States.) Conservatives such as Frederick Nolan (1815) were anxious that the work of critics like Griesbach threatened passages such as Jn 7:53-8:11 (the woman caught in adultery), Acts 20:28 (the command to the bishops), 1 Tim 3:16 (the short Christological creed) and the Johannine comma. Nolan feared that the excision of these passages would undermine several key doctrines of Christianity. He therefore set about to prove that the *textus receptus* is inspired. Admittedly his view was not simplistic. He considered that an insistence on the "literal identity between the present copies of the inspired text, and the original edition" was "a vulgar error" and "repugnant to reason," but he did maintain that "the belief of its doctrinal integrity is necessary to the conviction of our faith."⁷⁹ The efforts of biblical critics had not brought us closer to God's word; instead, they "are so far from having established the integrity of any particular text, that they have unsettled the foundation on which the entire canon is rested."⁸⁰ Nolan proposed the hypothesis that the text had become confused at two identifiable times: during the persecutions of Diocletian, when many texts were destroyed; and in the recension of Eusebius, whose text "was peculiarly accommodated to the opinions of the Arians."⁸¹ The aim of biblical criticism should thus be to restore the "Vulgar Greek" text to the pristine

⁷⁹ Nolan, 1815, vii.

⁸⁰ Nolan, 1815, viii.

⁸¹ Nolan, 1815, 28.

state it had enjoyed before this period of confusion. Once this was done, the passages under threat from Griesbach's knife could be defended as original constituent parts of the original Greek text. The *textus receptus*, which Nolan considered to represent this "Vulgar Greek" text most closely, could thus be used to defend Scripture and doctrine against modern-day heretics and rationalist critics. Indeed, one reviewer of Nolan's book crowed that it had "given an effectual check to Socinian insolence."⁸² This review also cites the myth of Erasmus' purported promise, illustrating how the issue of the comma and the myth of Erasmus' promise became inevitable features of the debate over the *textus receptus*.⁸³ But the review of Nolan's book also shows how the story of Erasmus' promise is starting to fall apart, not merely because the author was clearly not in full control of the facts, but also because the story itself, not anchored to a definite textual source, could take on virtually any number of possible variations. The story's lack of determinacy may in fact go some way towards explaining its appeal.

The myth also appears in another defence of the *textus receptus*, Charles Forster's *A new plea for the authenticity of the three heavenly witnesses* (1867).⁸⁴ Forster, preacher at Canterbury cathedral, bleated sadly that the issue of the comma had weighed heavily on his heart for some thirty-six years. He had finally been galvanised into action by the shock of reading a note in Wordsworth's Greek Testament, in which the editor explained that he had excised the comma on the authority of Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann and Tischendorf. The pain

⁸² Anon., 1816, 23.

⁸³ Anon., 1816, 3-7: "[...] the text of the heavenly witnesses [...] had been omitted in both Erasmus's former editions, but which was inserted in this on the authority of the Montfort MS. which at present exists in the library of Dublin University: Erasmus having pledged himself to reinstate this passage in the sacred text, if a single manuscript were produced, in which it was extant. [...] [7] [H]aving been accused by Lea and Stunica, as a falsifier of the inspired text, [Erasmus] inserted [the comma] in his third edition, on the joint authority of the Monfort MS. and Latin Vulgate." Nolan's work was not well received by the scholarly community; Tregelles characterised his manner of argumentation as "peculiarly repulsive and uncandid."

⁸⁴ Forster, 1867, 1-2: "[Erasmus] omitted the text in the first two editions of his Greek Testament, solely upon the ground that it was not found in any Greek manu- [2] scripts. He qualified the omission, on its being challenged by Stunica, one of the editors of the Complutensian Polyglot, by stating that he would restore it, on the production of a single Greek manuscript which contained it. And he kept his word on its being discovered in a Greek manuscript in England; hence, subsequently, entitled 'Codex Britannicus.'"

brought about by seeing this “mutilated text” prompted Forster to respond to Wordsworth’s decision. As far as Forster was concerned, Wordsworth’s “very learned, and very elaborate, edition” was jeopardised by “a false first principle of Scripture criticism,” namely “the rejection of a common Textus Receptus.” According to Forster, any departure from the *textus receptus* as produced by the Elzeviers of Leiden and hallowed by Mills’ approval “makes every man, at once, the manufacturer of his own Bible, and the dictator of that Bible as the standard for all others.” For Forster, there was only one answer: “as the rejection of the Textus Receptus is the sole cause of the evil, so the restoration of the Textus Receptus is its only remedy.” To employ critical editions is merely to abandon ourselves to “the sport of every novelty-loving scholastic speculatist.”⁸⁵ Forster explicitly relies on the authority of Bull, Pearson, Mills, Bengel and Knittel in his defence of the comma, which he considered to be particularly endangered by the “evil” of textual criticism. Forster identifies Richard Simon as the fountainhead of critical opposition, and Porson as responsible for bringing the issue to the attention of a wider public. Forster therefore attempted to challenge Porson’s knowledge of the Greek Fathers, but only ended up making a fool of himself by relying on the flimsiest of arguments.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Forster, 1867, vii-xii; Wordsworth, 1866, 2:123.

⁸⁶ For example, in an attempt to show that the Greek Fathers knew and quoted the comma, Forster cites such passages as the following from a sermon on the Trinity by John of Chrysostom (PG 48:1087), in which “the text of the Heavenly Witnesses [72] stands out”: “Βλέπε γάρ μοι τὰς μαρτυρίας τῆς ἁγίας καὶ ὁμοουσίου Τριάδος, καὶ σέβου ταύτην ὀρθῶς, ἵνα μὴ ἀπόλη.” Forster claims that the word μαρτυρία in proximity of a mention of the Trinity must refer to the comma (“The idea exists solely in 1 John v. 7”), but in fact the word μαρτυρία here means nothing more than “Scriptural witnesses.” This sentence merely serves to introduce a list of Scriptural passages, including several from the Hebrew bible, in which Chrysostom sees evidence of the Trinity. Other passages adduced by Forster, such as the following from the *Eclōgē* of ps.-Clement of Alexandria (PG 9:704), cit. Forster, 74, are barely more convincing: “Πᾶν ῥῆμα ἴσεται ἐπὶ δύο καὶ τριῶν μαρτύρων, ἐπὶ πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος, ἐφ’ ὧν μαρτύρων καὶ βοηθῶν αἱ ἐντολαὶ λεγόμεναι φυλάσσεσθαι ὀφείλουσιν.”

6. *Shifts in the Roman Catholic attitude to the comma in the light of the magisterium of the church and the doctrine of papal infallibility*

The Catholic response to the issue of the comma was mixed. An anonymous contributor to the *Dublin Review* of 1861 wrote: “To Catholics, the authenticity of this verse is comparatively unimportant, for the simple reason that their rule of faith does not contract or expand with the dimensions which verbal criticism may give to the sacred text [...]; but if you withdraw the passage from the Protestant Canon, one of the principal supports of Trinitarian doctrine is taken away.”⁹⁹ Yet not all Roman Catholic scholars were so sanguine. When the New Testament of the Revised Version—which excluded the comma along with a handful of other spurious and doubtful passages—was published in 1881, it received a blistering critique in the *Dublin Review*:

We have no patience to discuss calmly their shameful treatment of the “Three Heavenly Witnesses.” The Revisers have left out the whole verse in 1 John v. 7, 8, without one word of explanation. Surely no one but a textual critic could be capable of such a deed. Nor would any one critic have had the hardihood to do such a thing by himself. It required the corporate audacity of a Committee of Critics for the commission of such a sacrilege. But textual critics are like book-worms—devoid of light and conscience, following the blind instincts of their nature, they will make holes in the most sacred of books. The beauty, the harmony, and the poetry of the two verses would have melted the heart of any man who had a soul above parchment. Fathers have quoted them, martyrs died for them, saints preached them. The Church of the East made them her Profession of Faith; the Church of the West enshrined them in her Liturgy. What miserable excuses can these Revisers have for such a wanton outrage on Christian feeling? They cannot find the words in their oldest Greek MSS.!¹⁰⁰

The attacks of the anonymous reviewer are not scholarly; in fact it is his intention to throw biblical criticism into disrepute. Indeed, this review shows that Simon’s project—which had aimed at bolstering the authority of the church by maintaining its status as sole judge in questions of criticism—could easily be

⁹⁹ Anon., 1861, 320.

¹⁰⁰ Anon., 1881, 141.

bastardised through fanaticism. For it is clear that the reviewer's opinions have as much to do with an Irish Catholic animosity towards Protestant England. For example, he compares the Catholic bishops who presented their confession of faith to Hunneric with the committee of revisers, whom he depicts as a bunch of spineless heretics:

About fourteen hundred years later some two dozen Anglican prelates, aided by Methodist preachers, Baptist teachers, and one Unitarian, assembled in synod at Westminster to revise the New Testament, and without a semblance of persecution they yielded up to modern unbelief a verse which Catholic bishops held to the death against Arianism. These men are worse than the ancient Vandals, who only killed the bishops, but did not mutilate the text of Sacred Scripture. In this Socinian age the world could better spare a whole bench of Anglican bishops than one single verse of Holy Writ which bears witness to Christ's Divinity and the mystery of the Blessed Trinity.¹⁰¹

After reviving the argument from grammar, the reviewer makes a more pertinent point: that the minute atomisation of the biblical text exercised by critics put considerable strain on the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*. If *scriptura* is no longer assured, what happens to confidence in doctrine? According to the reviewer, the Revised Version "cannot but give a severe shock to those who have been brought up in the strictest sect of Protestantism. Their fundamental doctrine of verbal inspiration is undermined. The land of John Knox will mourn its dying Calvinism. The prophets of Bible religion will find no sure word from the Lord in the new Gospel."¹⁰² The reviewer all but expresses his hope that the new translation may indeed erode religion in England, if only to show that Catholic Ireland was right all along: "The going forth of the Heavenly Witnesses is the sign of the beginning of the end. Lord Panmure's prediction may yet prove true—the New Version will be the death-knell of Protestantism. [...] after it is dead and gone the Catholic Church will continue to read in her Bible and profess in her Creed that 'there are Three who give testimony in Heaven and these Three are One.'"¹⁰³

A further issue addressed by the reviewer is the social impact of biblical

¹⁰¹ Anon., 1881, 142.

¹⁰² Anon., 1881, 143.

¹⁰³ Anon., 1881, 143.

criticism. Traditionally, each Catholic parish church considered itself a refuge and a mission to which the poor and needy would naturally be drawn. As a consequence, the Catholic Church felt itself under a particular obligation to preach to the working classes; it was of course the failure of Anglican clergy to do likewise which gave rise to Methodism. The editors of the Revised Version had suggested that the best way to convert the working classes was to present the most accurate text possible. By contrast, the reviewer poured scorn on the revisers' confident rationalism, which he considered powerless to do the real work of the Gospel. "Heaven help the poor working man if his sole hope of salvation lies in the new Gospel of Textual Criticism!"¹⁰⁴ What the working classes really needed was a church that could interpret the bible to them with confidence and love; the only church competent and willing to do that was the Catholic Church: "It is now at length too evident that Scripture is powerless without the Church as the witness to its inspiration, the safeguard of its integrity, and the exponent of its meaning. And it will now be clear to all men which is the true Church, the real Mother to whom the Bible of right belongs. Nor will it need Solomon's wisdom to see that the so-called Church which heartlessly gives up the helpless child to be cut in pieces by textual critics cannot be the true Mother."¹⁰⁵ It was perhaps fortunate that the anonymous reviewer, whose purple prose reeks with emotional ploys and fallacies of every flavour, did not receive a printed reply, which could have started a pamphlet war on the scale of the Travis-Porson exchange, if anyone had had the patience to pick it up. Yet even behind the cheap rhetoric, the reviewer had put his finger on a number of central issues.

Meanwhile, the Austrian Jesuit Giovanni Battista Franzelin considered the question of the comma in the fourth thesis of his treatise on the Trinity (1869).¹⁰⁶ Franzelin's opinion on this issue is particularly important, for he was intimately involved in the formulation of the doctrine of papal infallibility at precisely this time, as Ermenegildo Lio (1986) has shown. According to Franzelin, the comma could be proven as genuine on theological grounds, and its certificate of authenticity provided by the authority of the church:

According to the Catholic principles that it is the task of the church, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to guard the sacred Scriptures as public

¹⁰⁴ Anon., 1881, 144.

¹⁰⁵ Anon., 1881, 144.

¹⁰⁶ Franzelin, 1869, 38-90.

instruments of revelation, and to distinguish them from human texts, the passage 1 Jn 5:7 ought to be considered genuine. As concerns the manner of conservation, there exist documents which go towards showing the immemorial antiquity of this reading, and these constitute a historical defence sufficient for legitimate judges to determine that the text has an Apostolic origin. Moreover, those documents produced to the contrary do not prove that it is an interpolation, although they do reveal that when codices were being copied, the omission of the text was more or less widespread even in antiquity.¹⁰⁷

When put in these terms, it seemed only reasonable that the church should desire to protect part of the text of the Scriptures over which it had been commissioned to watch. Yet from the very beginning of his exposition of this thesis, it is clear that Franzelin's position was motivated at least in part by sectarian grounds. Since Protestant critics had repudiated the authority of the church as custodian and interpreter of the word of God, Franzelin imagined them "blown about by every wind of doctrine, unable to understand the Catholic method instituted by Christ from his economy, and unable to rely on its assistance as long as they are in the grip of their fundamental error."¹⁰⁸ Franzelin insisted that the church has been charged with the task of guarding over Scripture, assisted by the Holy Spirit. For this reason the Council of Trent had commanded that the Catholic church was to accept as canonical all those books "customarily read in the Catholic church and included in the ancient Latin Vulgate version." Not simply were the individual books to be considered canonical, but the text of each of these books in every part was also to be considered as possessing canonical status. Anyone

¹⁰⁷ Franzelin, 1869, 38: "Secundum principia catholica de munere Ecclesiae sub assistentia Spiritus Sancti Scripturas sacras velut publica revelationis instrumenta custodiendi et discernendi a textibus humanis, locus 1 Io. V. 7 genuinus censi debet. Ad modum conservationis quod spectat, suppetunt monumenta, quae lectionis immemorabilem antiquitatem demonstrant et sufficiens sunt praesidium historicum, ut a legitima iudicibus de textus Apostolica origine decerni potuerit. Documenta vero contraria quae obiciuntur, interpolationem non demonstrant; quamvis ex illis pateat, omissionem textus in transcriptione Codicum iam antiquitus plus minusve late propagatam fuisse."

¹⁰⁸ Franzelin, 1869, 38: "Protestantes qui repudiata auctoritate Ecclesiae custodis et interpretis [sic] verbi Dei suo quique ingenio ac arbitrio circumferuntur omni vento doctrinae, methodum catholicam ex oeconomia a Christo instituta fidei christianae essentialem nec intelligere nec ea iuvare possunt, quamdiu in suo errore fundamentali versantur."

who taught otherwise was automatically under formal anathema.¹⁰⁹

As a result of such official confidence in the doctrinal truth of the comma, John Henry Newman felt free to make use of it in his *Grammar of Assent* (1870) as the basis of the nine propositions to which one must give assent for full belief in the Trinity. Newman's reasoning is a little strange; he argues that if we can accept that "there is one who bears witness of himself," there should be no real hindrance to accepting the proposition that "there are three that bear witness." Newman is clearly aware that the comma is textually problematic, but expects the believer to accept its doctrinal veracity because it is consistent with the system he has laid out.¹¹⁰

The fifth volume of Jean-Pierre Paulin Martin's *Introduction à la critique textuelle du Nouveau Testament* (1884-1885) contains a detailed account of many hundreds of variant manuscript readings of the comma collected over the course of some three decades. On the basis of his examination of such a quantity of evidence, Martin had no doubt about the status of the comma as an allegorical interpolation, despite his confessed affection for the verse as a neat summary of the doctrine of the Trinity. But when Martin submitted a summary of his findings to the *Revue des sciences ecclésiastiques* in 1887, his article set off another spasm of

¹⁰⁹ Franzelin, 1869, 42: "Distincte definitur, partes omnes horum librorum credendas esse canonicas, simulque norma traditur, secundum quam Concilium intellexerit et omnes fideles intelligere debeant integritatem ac partes canonicas horum librorum. Norma est consuetudo lectionis in Ecclesia catholica et comprehensio in veteri vulgata latina editione: 'si quis autem libros ipsos integros cum omnibus suis partibus, prout in Ecclesia catholica legi consueverunt et in veteri vulgata latina editione habentur, pro sacris et canonicis non susceperit... anathema sit.'"

¹¹⁰ Newman, 1881, 130-131: "That systematized whole is the object of notional assent, and its propositions, one by one, are the objects of real. [131] To show this in fact, I will enumerate the separate propositions of which the dogma consists. They are nine, and stand as follows:— 1. There are Three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. 2. From the Father is, and ever has been, the Son. 3. From the Father and Son is, and ever has been, the Spirit. 4. The Father is the One Eternal Personal God. 5. The Son is the One Eternal Personal God. 6. The Spirit is the One Eternal Personal God. 7. The Father is not the Son. 8. The Son is not the Holy Ghost. 9. The Holy Ghost is not the Father. Now I think it is a fact, that, whereas these nine propositions contain the Mystery, yet, taken, not as a whole, but separately, each by itself, they are not only apprehensible, but admit of a real apprehension. Thus, for instance, if the proposition 'There is One who bears witness of Himself,' or 'reveals Himself,' would admit of a real assent, why does not also the proposition 'There are Three who bear witness'?"

controversy, drawing published rebuttals from Pierre Rambouillet, Auguste-François Manoury and Jean-Michel-Alfred Vacant.

In the midst of this discussion and controversy it is not surprising that the Roman Catholic Church should have made an official pronouncement on the status of the comma. Perhaps more surprising is the fact that this decision should have been so long in coming. After debating whether the genuineness of the comma might safely be denied or even called into doubt, the Vatican's Biblical Commission voted on 13 January 1897 in the negative. This decision was ratified two days later by Pope Leo XIII, although Catholic scholars were subsequently to point out that the decision, made by *in forma communi* rather than *in forma solenni*, lacked the delegated power of papal infallibility, and thus could not actually preclude further investigation.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, some Roman Catholic critics, such as Louis Duchesne, were bitterly opposed to the decision, and made their displeasure known, at least amongst friends.¹¹² Others pointed out that decisions of the Commission are disciplinary rather than doctrinal, and intended merely to direct scholars how to avoid error. In 1911, Joseph Pohle, professor of dogmatic theology at Breslau, applauded the Commission's decision:

In these parlous days, when Protestant and Rationalist critics are sapping the very foundations of sound Biblical science, and in their eagerness to frame new hypotheses are trotting out a horde of critical monsters which forthwith proceed to devour one another, there is danger that Catholic savants may venture too far along slippery paths, losing sight completely of the firm ground of ecclesiastical Tradition. An immediate authoritative intervention in the controversy raging round the *Comma Ioanneum* seemed all the more advisable because a definitive solution of the problem on purely scientific grounds could hardly be expected for a long time to come.¹¹³

August Bludau, professor at Münster and subsequently Roman Catholic bishop of Ermland (East Prussia), published a series of closely argued articles on the textual tradition of the comma between 1902 and 1927 in order to come to just such a definitive solution on scientific grounds. And in 1905, Karl Künstle, Roman Catholic professor at Freiburg im Breisgau, published one of the most

¹¹¹ Pohle, 1915, 33. On the workings of the Commission, see Fries, 1996, 608-609.

¹¹² O'Connell, 1994, 168.

¹¹³ Pohle, 1915, 33-34.

important books yet to appear on the origins of the comma.

Despite the freedom exercised by Bludau and Künstle, it was no doubt as a result of the Commission's ruling that early twentieth-century Catholic editors of the Vulgate attempted to soft-pedal the textual difficulties of the verse. This tendency prompted the following outburst from the eminent Protestant textual scholar Caspar René Gregory (1907):

[A] Roman Catholic edition of the Greek New Testament which claims to be constituted according to the ancient manuscripts has just been issued, for I think the third time, containing this verse without note or comment and with no allusion to it in the critical notes. Such an edition is insupportable when we consider the learning of the Roman Catholic theologians. Why, it is precisely a Roman Catholic professor of theology [Künstle] who has shown that these words come from a heretic [Priscillian]. And nevertheless Brandscheid ventured to publish them as good scripture with episcopal approbation. No one can to-day complain that textual criticism has done wrong in thrusting these spurious words out of the text of the New Testament. The pity is only that they have been allowed for so long a time to usurp a place upon the pages of the New Testament, and that a theologian could in the twentieth century still be found so devoid of critical insight as to publish them as a part of the sacred text.¹¹⁴

Clarifying its decision on 2 July 1927, the Commission explained that its earlier pronouncement was simply intended to rein in the audacity of private scholars who claimed for themselves the right to make representations whether or not the comma should be rejected or called into doubt merely on the basis of their own judgment. The Commission did not, it insisted, desire to prevent Catholic writers from investigating the question or even from reaching a negative result on the question, provided that the arguments were weighed carefully and discussed with the gravity that the situation demands. Moreover, scholars investigating such questions had to be prepared to abide by the judgment of the Church, which was entrusted by Christ with the task not merely of interpreting Scripture,

¹¹⁴ Gregory, 1907, 310-311. Gregory's comments were made in the context of a review of Brandscheidt (1906-1907), an edition first issued in 1893; Brandscheidt's editions include the comma without any comment or sign of doubt.

but also of preserving it faithfully.¹¹⁵ It seems that there had been a change of attitude over the issue in the intervening thirty years, possibly as the result of the work of Künstle and Bludau, if not the railing of Gregory. Yet those who drafted the 1927 decision were careful to point out that this proclamation was in effect little more than a restatement of the authority of the Church over the judgment of individuals. At Vatican II, cardinal Julius Döpfner used the Commission's ruling over the comma as evidence that theologians were still allowed to continue their research even when the Commission had made a decision in its non-infallible magisterium. The definitive text that issued from this discussion at the Council suggests that since our will has priority over our intellect, the believer assents to a particular doctrine through faith rather than through understanding.¹¹⁶ (This position is surprisingly close to that of Jonathan Swift; of the Puritan Ralph Venning, who wrote: "The Scripture saith, that one is three, and three are one. 1 *Ioh.* 5. 7. *How can reason think this true?* and yet 'tis true; for God who is truth, and speaks nothing but truth, saith 'tis so";¹¹⁷ or of the Baptist Elder John Leland, who declared: "That there are *three* that bare record in heaven, and that these *three* are *one*, I believe, because God has said it; but I cannot understand it.")¹¹⁸ And change was slow to come. In a footnote to his English translation of the Vulgate (1950), Ronald Knox remarked equivocally: "This verse does not occur in any good Greek manuscripts. But the Latin manuscripts may have preserved the true text."¹¹⁹ However, by 1969, when the Württembergische Bibelanstalt published its critical edition of the Vulgate under

¹¹⁵ Denzinger, 2001, 997, § 3681-3682: "Utrum tuto negari aut saltem in dubium revocari possit, esse authenticum textum s. Iohannis in Epistola I, cap. 5 vs. 7, qui sic se habet: 'Quoniam tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in caelo: Pater, Verbum et Spiritus Sanctus: et hi tres unum sunt'? [S. Officium ad hoc dubium 13. Ian. 1897 Responsum dederat: Negative.] [3682; 2 July 1927] Decretum hoc latum est, ut coaceretur audacia privatorum doctorum ius sibi tribuentium, authenticam commatis Ioannei aut penitus reiiciendi aut ultimo iudicio suo saltem in dubium vocandi. Minime vero impedire voluit, quominus scriptores catholici rem plenius investigarent atque, argumentis hinc inde accurate perpensis, cum ea, quam rei gravitas requirit, moderatione et temperantia, in sententiam genuinitati contrariam inclinarent, modo profiterentur, se paratos esse stare iudicio Ecclesiae, cui a Iesu Christo munus demandatum est, sacras Litteras non solum interpretandi, sed etiam fideliter custodiendi."

¹¹⁶ Naud, 1996, 31-32; Figueiredo, 2001, 219-220.

¹¹⁷ Venning, 1652, 39.

¹¹⁸ Leland, 1845, 732.

¹¹⁹ Knox, 1950a, 256; Meehan, 1986, 12.

the joint direction of Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars, the consensus of critical opinion finally decided against the Johannine comma, and it was relegated to the critical apparatus.¹²⁰ The present-day “official” Roman-Catholic bible in Latin, the *Nova Vulgata* (1979), does not include the Johannine comma, because it renders the Greek text of the Nestle-Aland edition. After more than four and a half centuries, Erasmus’ initial judgment on the Johannine comma had been vindicated.

¹²⁰ Metzger, 1977, 351.

EPILOGUE:

The Johannine comma and the claims of Evangelical Fundamentalism

Despite the fact that professional textual critics are now in agreement that the comma was not an original part of the Greek text of 1 Jn, the issue is certainly not a dead letter, thanks to a number of tectonic shifts in Evangelical culture, especially in the Anglophone world. The first catalyst of these shifts was the critical work of such scholars as Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann, Tregelles, Tischendorf, Gregory, Westcott and Hort, von Soden and Nestle. Their support for the Alexandrine recension of the New Testament posed an aggressive challenge to the authority of the *textus receptus*.¹ John Burgon, dean of Chichester, vigorously opposed the methodology of Westcott and Hort, the leaders of the committee for the revision of the Authorized Version, which had been set up to reconsider both the translation and the Greek text on which it was to be based. Burgon favoured the Majority (Byzantine) text, though his attitude towards the *textus receptus* was less than enthusiastic: “[...] we do not, by any means, claim perfection for the Received Text. We entertain no extravagant notions on this subject. Again and again we shall have occasion to point out [...] that the *Textus Receptus* needs correction.”² The comma was presumably one of those passages Burgon believed should be corrected, for he never objected to its excision by the revision committee.³ What he did object to was the editorial methodology adopted by the committee, “the new German system,” which he felt gave disproportionate weight to minority readings; and the way in which the committee structure failed to do justice to the opinions of those dissenters who wanted to stay closer to the Majority Text, like Frederick H. A. Scrivener (1813-

¹ As Wallace, 1997, 306, points out, and Heide, 2006, demonstrates in considerable detail, the *textus receptus* and the Majority or Byzantine text are not the same thing; the *textus receptus* departs from the Majority text in over eighteen hundred places.

² Burgon, 1883, 21 n2; cf. Wallace, 1996, 299.

³ Wallace, 1996, 299.

1891). In contrast to Burgon's rather refined position, the revision prompted a less nuanced popular defence of the *textus receptus* as the basis of several national versions, such as the Authorised Version and the Dutch States Version (*Statenvertaling*), which were widely considered in Great Britain, America and the Netherlands not merely as repositories of true doctrine, but also as hallowed cultural documents, a "priceless treasure which was bequeathed to them by the piety and wisdom of their fathers."⁴

The work of F. H. A. Scrivener illustrates the powerful gravitational pull of the Authorised Version. His expertise in biblical studies was considerable, and he did valuable work on important early manuscripts like the Codex Bezae. The last years of his life were devoted to a reconstruction of the Greek text underlying the Authorised Version, a composite of readings from a number of early printed editions. Scrivener's edition of this Greek text, published posthumously in 1894 and reprinted unchanged to the present, remains the authorised Greek text of groups such as the Trinitarian Bible Society, even though it is as much the product of critical artifice as the eclectic Nestle-Aland text that conservatives deplore.⁵ But despite his work on the *textus receptus*, Scrivener maintained that the authenticity of the comma could "no longer be maintained by any one whose judgement ought to have weight."⁶ However, the fact that the comma appears in Scrivener's edition of the Greek text underlying the Authorised Version has lent the verse an ongoing—albeit spurious—authority.

Aside from such challenges to the *textus receptus* and the Authorised Version, nineteenth-century religious culture was also challenged by the natural sciences. The Darwinian revolution raised a new set of questions about the literal veracity of the Scriptural creation narrative, causing tensions that would lead famously to the Scopes trial of 1925. The increasing precision of nineteenth-century natural science also led some to expect the same degree of verifiability in the human sciences, including theology and biblical studies. Many nineteenth-century millenarians assumed that the dates and events mentioned in Scripture are literally true, and used them as a means to predict the coming Apocalypse. At an 1887 bible conference, William Hoyt praised the bible as inerrant in every

⁴ Burgon, 1883, 232.

⁵ <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/site/principles.asp>, accessed 5 March, 2010.

⁶ Scrivener, 1894, 401.

detail, capable of providing a “photographically exact forecasting of the future.”⁷ Just such a literalist attitude led to some of the notable millenarian prophecies of more recent times, such as Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) and *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon* (1981). The principle of the “verbal inerrancy of Scripture” (that is, of the *textus receptus* and the Authorised Version) was the first of a number of “essential” doctrines adopted by the American Presbyterian General Assembly in 1910, subsequently dubbed the “five points of fundamentalism.”⁸ This is a very different proposal from that espoused by the foundational Presbyterian document, the Westminster Confession, which simply characterises the Scriptures as “most necessary”; by the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, which maintain that “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation”; or by the Tridentine Catechism, which follows 2 Tim 3:16 in maintaining that “all Scripture divinely inspired is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice.” The application of the principle of literal inerrancy to the *textus receptus* and the Authorised Version alone led many fundamentalists to try to build the best possible case for doubtful verses retained in these texts, even against all the evidence of biblical criticism. This movement has also led to an increased attention amongst fundamentalists on Erasmus, on whose work the *textus receptus* ultimately rests.

An examination of *The Fundamentals* reveals that its basic impulse is anti-rationalistic and ultimately anti-intellectual: “No expert scholarship can settle questions that require a humble heart, a believing mind and a reverent spirit, as well as a knowledge of Hebrew and philology,” wrote one of the contributors to *The Fundamentals*, the Anglican canon Dyson Hague.⁹ There was a lot of good sense in what Hague had to say, but much of his argumentation is based on nothing firmer than prejudice: “some of the most powerful exponents of the modern Higher Critical theories have been Germans,” Hague asserted, “and it is notorious to what length the German fancy can go in the direction of the subjective and of the conjectural. For hypothesis-weaving and speculation, the German theological professor is unsurpassed.”¹⁰ According to Hague, German Higher Critics are given not merely to fancy, but also to apostasy: “the leaders of

⁷ Pierson, 1888, 17, cit. Marsden, 2006, 56.

⁸ Marsden, 2006, 56-57, 112-113, 117.

⁹ Hague, 1910, 116.

¹⁰ Hague, 1910, 90.

the Higher Critical movement in Germany and Holland have been men who have no faith in the God of the Bible, and no faith in either the necessity or the possibility of a personal supernatural revelation.”¹¹ Hague revived the anxiety that had motivated Erasmus’ opponents. Biblical criticism, he asserted, “threatens the Christian system of doctrine and the whole fabric of systematic theology.”¹² In response to this threat, Hague hoped to raise an army of Christian soldiers: “[I]t is the duty of every Christian who belongs to the noble army of truth-lovers to test all things and to hold fast that which is good.” He assures his readers that every believer has the right, “even though he is, technically speaking, unlearned,” to challenge the work of professional scholars:

[T]o accept any view that contradicts his spiritual judgment simply because it is that of a so-called scholar, is to abdicate his franchise as a Christian and his birthright as a man. [...] The most ordinary Bible reader is learned enough to know that the investigation of the Book that claims to be supernatural by those who are avowed enemies of all that is supernatural, and the study of subjects that can be understood only by men of humble and contrite heart by men who are admittedly irreverent in spirit, must certainly be received with caution.¹³

Hague might have been surprised to discover that his own defiant resistance towards professional biblical scholarship was the heritage of a German professor who lived some four centuries previously. But despite the initially positive reception accorded *The Fundamentals*, first-generation fundamentalism had effectively run out of steam by the 1950s.

However, the last half-century or so has seen a resurgence of fundamentalism and conservatism worldwide, accompanied by a renewed defence of the *textus receptus*.¹⁴ This movement first made itself visible in Jasper J. Ray’s *God wrote only one Bible* (1955), still widely quoted by many conservatives. Although Ray admitted that the Authorised Version has some inaccuracies that might be corrected, he also claimed that salvation is only to be found through reading translations based on the *textus receptus*.¹⁵ The renewal of enthusiasm for

¹¹ Hague, 1910, 91.

¹² Hague, 1910, 110.

¹³ Hague, 1910, 115.

¹⁴ See Thuesen, 1999, for an analysis of this movement.

¹⁵ Ray, 1955, 122, cit. Kutilek, 2001, 45, 54. As Beacham and Bauder, 2001, 18, point out, not all fundamentalists insist on the supremacy of the Authorised Version. It is not my intention to

the *textus receptus* led to the foundation of the Dean Burgon Society in 1978 (which espouses a far more optimistic attitude towards the accuracy of the *textus receptus* than its eponymous patron) and the Majority Text Society in 1989.¹⁶

Erasmus has been co-opted as a mascot by the *textus receptus* movement, and is routinely misquoted to make him seem to support its interests. For example, David W. Daniels (2003) depicted Erasmus, Luther and the Anabaptists as a band of brothers: “Desiderius Erasmus was raised a Catholic, and did not openly ‘leave’ the Roman Catholic religion, but he did not believe Roman Catholic doctrine either. In fact, his best friends and defenders were the Christians, like the Anabaptists and Martin Luther. [...] Erasmus, who was counted by everyone around him as a Christian, not a Catholic, helped to bring about the resurrection of the preserved Bible (not the Roman Catholic perversion), which in turn helped bring the Protestant Reformation.”¹⁷ Such wilful distortions of the written record for the purposes of denominational polemic have no other purpose but to spread deliberate misinformation, to corrode historical and religious understanding, and to entrench destructive prejudices.

The renewed authority given to the *textus receptus* has caused many latter-day fundamentalists to express a growing animosity towards the work of biblical criticism. For example, within a week of the death of Bruce Metzger in February 2007, Jeffrey Khoo of the Far Eastern Bible College in Singapore published online an article entitled “Bruce Metzger and the Curse of Textual Criticism,” in which he admonished: “Let us beware lest we fall into the snare of unbelieving scholarship, and the seduction of worldly honour and glory. [...] Metzger’s philosophy and methodology will only lead to chronic uncertainty and perpetual unbelief of the total inspiration and perfect preservation of the Holy

identify all conservative biblical scholars who engage in the objective textual study of the bible with those who reject biblical criticism on doctrinal grounds. For example, two recent editions of the Majority Text by conservative scholars (Hodges and Farstad, 1982/1985; Robinson and Pierpont, 2005) follow the evidence of the manuscripts instead of doctrine in their omission of the comma. I can only concur with Douglas Kutilek’s review of Maynard, 1995: http://www.kjvonly.org/doug/kutilek_debate_over_john.htm, and with the conclusions of Daniel Wallace.

¹⁶ See Wallace, 1996.

¹⁷ Daniels, 2003, 43-45.

Scriptures.”¹⁸ Similar animus is directed towards other conservative Evangelical biblical scholars like Daniel B. Wallace, whose scholarly work on the manuscript text of the New Testament has led him to challenge those who maintain the sole authority of the King James Bible. One critic characterises Wallace as a “common Bible Thief who writes to STEAL the Bible from INNOCENT VICTIMS, and does not know what to replace THE BIBLE with.”¹⁹

But despite the fact that most fundamentalists reject textual criticism as a threat to doctrine and belief, many nevertheless try to use textual criticism to shore up support for the *textus receptus*. A common ploy is to show that the books of the New Testament (more specifically, the Majority text) have better manuscript attestation than any other premodern literary text, in order to support the claim that on these grounds alone they must be accepted as both

¹⁸ <http://www.biblefortoday.org/articles/metzger.htm>, accessed 5 March 2010. Khoo defends the comma here (<http://logosresourcepages.org/Versions/johannine.htm>, accessed 10 March 2010), employing half-truths such as the following: “The text is found in eight extant Greek manuscripts, and five of them are dated before the 16th century (Greek miniscules 88, 221, 429, 629, 636).” Although all these manuscripts date from before the sixteenth century, the comma occurs as part of the body text only in 629. In all the others the comma has been added in the margin from printed editions at some time since the appearance of Erasmus’ third edition of the Greek text; see chapter 1.7 above for further details. Even less accurate are the claims made by Timothy W. Dunkin (<http://www.studytoanswer.net/bibleversions/1john5n7.html>, accessed 6 March 2010: “Metzger and the UBS have slighted [*sic*] the actual number of Greek manuscripts which contain the verse. In addition to the ones listed above, D. A. Waite is reported to have identified manuscripts #634 and Omega 110 as containing the Comma, and Holland notes that the Comma appears in the margin of #635. Additionally, Waite also identifies at least ten other manuscripts as possibly containing the Comma, though this is currently unconfirmed. Most interesting of all is the appearance of this verse in the text of an 8th-century manuscript, Codex Wizanburgensis, as reported by Dabney. Finally, there are at least two Greek lectionaries (early didactic texts usually containing copious scriptural citations) in which the Comma appears (Lectionaries #60 and #173).” It is to be applauded when professional critics intervene to correct such errors, such as Jan Krans’ explanation in an online bulletin-board that the eighth-century “Codex Wizanburgensis,” cited by defenders of the comma as evidence of a conspiracy to conceal early Greek manuscripts containing the comma, is actually the Latin manuscript Wolfenbüttel, HAB cod. Guelf. 99 Weissenburgensis; see <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/textualcriticism/message/3976>. The strange orthography of the name of this Codex goes back to Lachmann.

¹⁹ <http://www.blessedquietness.com/journal/resource/wallace.htm>, accessed 7 August 2010.

textually reliable and therefore literally true. Such attempts have long roots. In 1854 *The North American Review* published a critique of a number of scholarly works on Shakespeare, which began with the suggestive words: “It seems strange that the text of Shakespeare, which has been in existence less than two hundred and fifty years, should be far more uncertain and corrupt than that of the New Testament.” These words were quoted—quite out of context—by Calvin Ellis Stowe (*Origin and history of the books of the Bible*, 1868) in order to demonstrate the faithful preservation of the biblical text. The quotation was subsequently picked up by John W. Lea in his school primer *The Book of Books* (1922), and more recently by Josh McDowell in his widely-quoted *Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith* (1992).²⁰ But to seize on a throw-away line from a review of some secondary literature on Shakespeare published more than a century and a half ago is not merely intellectually irresponsible; it also deliberately ignores some very particular details in the textual transmission of Shakespeare’s plays. Shakespeare seems to have exhibited little interest in preserving a definitive text of his plays (in contrast to his poems), and revised some of them a number of times. Furthermore, his plays were published in a number of different recensions, some apparently prepared from Shakespeare’s working copy (“foul papers”), some from memory, some posthumously.²¹ To draw comparisons with the unusually fluid text of Shakespeare for the purpose of “proving” the textual stability of the books of the New Testament is little more than smoke-and-mirrors.

Making use of another ploy going back to Stowe, McDowell gives a table of classical authors with details of their manuscript attestation, in order to prove that “one can logically conclude from the perspective of literary evidence that the New Testament’s reliability is far greater than any other record of antiquity.”²²

²⁰ Stowe, 1868, 82; Lea, 1922, 15-16; McDowell, 1992, 19-20. Jeffrey Khoo borrows the argument from McDowell in his course booklet *The KJV-NIV Debate*, used for instruction at the Far Eastern Bible College: www.febc.edu.sg/assets/pdfs/studyresource/The%20KJV-NIV%20Debate.pdf, accessed 10 April 2010.

²¹ For a convenient summary, see G. Blakemore Evans, “Shakespeare’s Text,” in Shakespeare, 1997, 1:55-69.

²² McDowell, 1992, 1:46; cf. Stowe, 1868, 59-64. McDowell’s work has provided the basis for much popular apologetic. Typical is the following comment by Matt Slick of the Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry (<http://www.carm.org/manuscript-evidence>, accessed 10 April 2010): “The New Testament is constantly under attack and its reliability and accuracy

The effort to compare the textual integrity of the New Testament to that of classical authors goes back to Richard Bentley, who exclaimed that “if the *Scriptural Text* has no more Variations, than what must necessarily have happen’d from *the Nature of Things*, and what are common and in equal proportion in all Classics whatever; I hope this *Panic* [caused by the appearance of Mills’ edition] will be remov’d, and the Text be thought as firm as before.”²³ Indeed, Bentley even went so far as to assert that “the *New Testament* has suffer’d *less injury by the hand of Time than any Profane Author*.”²⁴ Bentley’s point is well taken, but McDowell’s figures on the textual transmission of classical texts are simply wrong. To take just one example, McDowell claims that there are only two extant manuscripts of Lucretius’ *De rerum natura*, and that the earliest manuscript dates from 1,100 years after the author’s death (c. 55 BCE).²⁵ Neither of these claims is accurate. In their fundamental study of the text of Lucretius (1942), W. E. Leonard and S. B. Smith enumerated thirty-nine manuscripts of the work, the earliest of which (Codex Oblongus, Leiden, UB ms Voss. lat. Fol. 30 [O]) was written in the early ninth century, probably at Tours. Besides Codex Oblongus, we have another three manuscripts of Lucretius from the ninth century (Leiden, UB ms Voss. Quadratus 94 [Q]; Copenhagen, KB ms Vet. Coll. n. CCXI [J, also known as the *Fragmentum Gottorpiense*]; Vienna, ÖNB ms lat. 107 Phil. 128 [Kv/Ku; *Schedæ Vindobonenses*], ninth or early tenth century). The text of these manuscripts suggests that they were all copied from a lost insular archetype of the sixth or seventh century. Another family of thirty-five manuscripts copied in the fifteenth century goes back to a manuscript copied from the insular archetype, discovered by Poggio in 1418, probably at Murbach, but now lost. These fifteenth-century manuscripts thus have value as witnesses to the readings in the lost archetype, independent of the surviving ninth-century manuscripts.²⁶ McDowell’s carelessness over the philological details of the text of

are often contested by critics. But, if the critics want to disregard the New Testament, then they must also disregard other ancient writings by Plato, Aristotle, and Homer. This is because the New Testament documents are better-preserved and more numerous than any other ancient writings.”

²³ Bentley, 1725, 64.

²⁴ Bentley, 1725, 71.

²⁵ McDowell, 1992, 1:42.

²⁶ Leonard and Smith, 1942, 95-115. If ever an argument should be mounted for the providential preservation of a particular text, it might most appropriately be made for

Shakespeare and Lucretius seriously undermines the credibility of his philological claims for the textual stability of the bible.

The fundamentalist insistence on the verbal inerrancy of the *textus receptus* has led to an astonishing revival of interest in textual questions, none more so than the *pericope de adultera* and the Johannine comma. Curiously, the neo-fundamentalist attitude towards the comma is more severe than its early twentieth-century incarnation. The *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909, rev. ed. 1917), the edition of choice of most fundamentalists, has a marginal comment beside the Johannine comma which remarks laconically: "It is generally agreed that v. 7 has no real authority, and has been inserted." Neo-fundamentalist interest in the comma culminated in Michael Maynard's *A History of the Debate over 1 John 5:7-8* (1995). But Maynard's claim to have established the authenticity of the comma is undermined by frequent and serious errors of fact and argumentation, and a selective use of evidence.³⁹ Maynard subscribes to the fundamentalist credo that "the Received Text has been the dominant view throughout the ages."⁴⁰ Consequently, his approach is fundamentally opposed to textual criticism, and rests not on rational principles, but on primary causality in the form of an appeal to providence: "If He has ordained that there would be eight Greek manuscripts, four of them having 1 John 5:7 in the margin, and four others having it in the main Greek text, and if there were no more, or if there would be 20 or 200 more Greek manuscripts with 1 John 5:7, it is all planned. So who are we to say that we must have 20 or 200 manuscripts with 1 John 5:7 in order to prove it genuine?"⁴¹ In Maynard's world there is thus no need for biblical scholarship; the *textus receptus* is right, and that is that. Likewise, Edward F. Hills argued: "Erasmus, Stephanus, Beza, and the Elzevirs, were providentially guided" in a number of ways, in the first instance "by the manuscripts which God in His providence had made available to them."⁴² If nothing else, the suspicious circumstances in which Codex Montfortianus was produced and delivered to Erasmus should give some occasion to ponder the implications of Hills' assertions. As Keith Elliott pointed

Lucretius' poem, which has for most of its existence been alternately ignored and reviled as the insidious production of an insane atheist.

³⁹ Heide, 2006, 62, 65, 72, 75, points out some of the errors in Maynard's account. The list could be extended.

⁴⁰ Maynard, 1997, 32.

⁴¹ Maynard, 1997, 33.

⁴² Hills, 1984, 193.

out in a blistering review of Harold Greenlee's *The Text of the New Testament: From Manuscript to Modern Edition* (2008), appeals to providence have little place in scholarly discussion of the text of the bible: "That is not the sort of presupposition one would find in works of textual criticism of the Greek or Latin classics or of other ancient literature. [...] [S]uch a view is a hostage to fortune—the vast quantity of textual variants is hardly suggestive of providential preservation."⁴³

Despite Maynard's claim to have examined the history of the debate over the comma, it is clear that his reading has been cursory at best. For example, he comments on Erasmus' 1535 edition of the New Testament: "Why did he [*sc.* Erasmus] continue to include it [*sc.* the comma], having written against it fifteen years ago [*sic*], in 1520? Apparently because he changed his views prior to 1527, perhaps as early as 1522."⁴⁴ As we have seen, every statement made by Erasmus regarding the reading of the comma taken from the "British codex" expresses his view that the comma had been added to that manuscript by recourse to the Latin Vulgate. But if Erasmus had changed his mind on this issue, he surely would have removed those passages from his *Annotationes* in which he expresses his doubts about the reading from the "British codex." Not only did he retain these comments in the 1527 and 1535 editions, but he expanded upon them. To take another example, Maynard's insistence that Codex Montfortianus was written in the thirteenth century shows that he did not engage seriously with Dobbin's fundamental 1854 study, in which it is demonstrated clearly that the scribes of Montfortianus based its text on manuscripts produced in the second half of the fifteenth century.

One of the more disturbing claims routinely made by fundamentalists is the implication that professional textual critics are involved in a conspiracy against the truth. The prolific and influential fundamentalist writer Jack A. Moorman (1988), after reviewing the evidence for the comma presented by Bruce Metzger, poses the suggestive rhetorical question: "But is the case as open and shut as Metzger would have us believe? And is the entire story being told?"⁴⁵ Unfortunately Moorman has done little to inform himself of any serious critical

⁴³ Elliott, 2009a, 539.

⁴⁴ Maynard, 1995, 89.

⁴⁵ Metzger, 1971, 715-717; Moorman, 1988, 116. Moorman also relies heavily on the dubious argument from grammar.

work on the question. Despite the fact that August Bludau published a dozen detailed and important articles on the history of the comma between 1902 and 1927, his work is virtually ignored by defenders of the comma. Defenders of the comma claim that we have an insufficient knowledge of the many thousands of manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate, yet the fundamental studies of the occurrence of the comma in manuscripts of the Vulgate by Martin (1885), Berger (1893) and Ayuso (1947/1948), not to mention the *Vetus Latina* edition of 1 Jn (1966, ed. W. Thiele), are rarely cited. Defenders of the comma like Maynard claim that manuscripts of the Syriac version may yield evidence of the comma in early versions apart from the Latin, but none of them bother to do anything about studying these manuscripts, preferring the dream of undiscovered troves of favourable evidence. Moreover, they routinely ignore or dismiss Aland's critical edition of the Syriac text and Borger's 1987 study of the early Syriac editions, or shrug Borger off by implying that he published his article merely "to defend the omission of the Comma in Barbara Aland's edition."⁴⁶ And despite the advances made at the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung in Münster, defenders of the comma continue to question the data, suggesting that there are more Greek manuscripts containing the comma which professional scholars have surreptitiously swept under the carpet. Maynard misuses the statistics collected by the *Institut* to insinuate that the manuscript evidence against the comma is not as strong as professional textual critics maintain: "There are only 14 Greek MSS which omit 1 John v. 7f (less than 3% of all hostile Greek MSS) in the first eight centuries. All the rest (482 MSS or 97.2% of the hostile MSS) are dated to the tenth century or later. Many opponents of the Received Text, consider MSS dated to the tenth century or later as 'late and conflated'."⁴⁷ Had Maynard wished to represent the statistics in a different way, he could have said that 100% of the extant Greek manuscripts written before the fourteenth century lack the comma, or that more than 99% of the Greek manuscripts written before 1522—even those containing the Majority text—lack the comma; but these conclusions would have been less favourable to the misapprehensions he wishes to promote. (Even Maynard's choice of the word "hostile" to describe manuscript evidence that does not support his case says much about the adversarial, black-and-white terms in which fundamentalists often think.) It is only by ignoring the solid

⁴⁶ Maynard, 1995, 274.

⁴⁷ Maynard, 1995, 285.

advances in the textual study of the comma made over the past century that Jack Moorman can claim: “Since the Westcott and Hort cloud fell on the textual scene very little attention has been given to 1 John 5:7, 8.”⁴⁸ (It is clear then that Moorman has not read the studies of Bludau, Künstle, Cipolla, del Alamo, Ayuso, Thiele, Wachtel, de Jonge or Levine.) When they do read recent critical literature, fundamentalists routinely quote in a selective fashion. In this way scholars like Henk Jan de Jonge and Walter Thiele have been co-opted by Scriptural literalists as supporters of their cause, quite against the grain of their arguments.⁴⁹

Maynard’s misuse of evidence is matched by the employment of arguments based on religious bias. For Maynard, the involvement of Roman Catholics in the preparation of critical editions of Scripture is nothing short of a scandal: “Received Text advocates are still waiting for the fundamentalists [*sic*] mta (minority text advocates) to explain why they trust four liberals and a Jesuit [Carlo Martini], who is in line to become the next pope, with the identity of the New Testament!”⁵⁰ Despite the violence of Maynard’s rhetoric and the hundreds of errors and fallacies that litter his work, his book is widely praised and constantly cited by other fundamentalists.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Moorman, 1988, 121.

⁴⁹ See e.g. Maynard, 1995, 120, 250, 264-265, 237, 281-283, 302, 325. Maynard and many other fundamentalists misuse de Jonge’s argument (1980) that Erasmus’ decision to include the comma in his 1521 Latin text and 1522 Greek text did not arise from a promise or challenge to Lee, as an indication that Erasmus believed the comma to be a genuine part of the text of 1 Jn. Thus, much to their surprise, Erasmus and de Jonge are turned into advocates for the authenticity of the Johannine comma. Jeffrey Khoo uses the appearance of the myth in the work of Bruce Metzger (a mistake Metzger corrected by 1992 when it was drawn to his attention by de Jonge) to discredit the rest of his work, ignoring the fact that many of his fellow-fundamentalists still cite the myth as well: <http://www.biblefortoday.org/articles/metzger.htm>, accessed 4 March 2010. Maynard, 1997, 36-37, likewise co-opts Walter Thiele as an unwitting ally: “Walter Thiele was my professor at Tübingen. [...] Thiele in 1959 argued, ‘No, Cyprian did not merely allude to verse 8, he actually had a Latin manuscript in his hand which had 1 John 5:7.’ So Thiele is going against the crowd. Yet Thiele is a Hort-Westcott advocate!” See http://av1611.com/kjbp/faq/holland_1jo5_7.html; http://www.febc.edu.sg/BBVol15_1b.htm; http://www.deanburgon_society.org/KJBible/reply.htm, all accessed 4 March 2010.

⁵⁰ Maynard, 1995, 329.

⁵¹ See for example Fannin, 2002, 265-267.

The arrival of the Internet has enabled fundamentalists to broadcast a dangerous mixture of ignorance and deceit about the aims and findings of biblical criticism more effectively than ever before. On one website, Timothy W. Dunkin claims that Metzger and the Alands “routinely perpetuate false information based upon a partial coverage of the evidence available.”⁵² On another website, John Hinton, a Harvard graduate, advises his readers: “Modern version users need to ask themselves [...]: Why am I trusting this Bible when it is a fact that the translators intentionally set out to deceive me by this slight [*sc. sleight*] of hand concerning 1 John 5:7?”⁵³ On another website, Peter Ruckman describes the accepted account of Erasmus’ inclusion of the comma in the third edition of his Greek text as a “‘historical’ fairy tale,” while his own account of events is formed from a bewildering mixture of factoids, basic errors and slander.⁵⁴

⁵² <http://www.studytoanswer.net/bibleversions/1john5n7.html>, accessed 6 March 2010.

⁵³ <http://av1611.com/kjbp/ridiculous-kjv-bible-corrections/1-John-5-7-Scams.html>, accessed 5 March 2010.

⁵⁴ <http://solascriptura-tt.org/Bibliologia-PreservacaoTT/1Jn5-7-Ruckman.htm>, accessed 6 March 2010. Ruckman writes further: “Manuscript 61: Professor Michaelis says that this manuscript in four chapters in Mark possess [*sic*] three coincidences with the OLD SYRIAC, two of which agree with the Old Itala, while they differ from every Greek manuscript extant. Do you mind if I remind you of something very basic? The AV of the English Reformation and Luther’s Heilige Schrift of the German Reformation BOTH contain the Johannine Comma. [...] Manuscript 61 was supposed to have been written between 1519 and 1522; the question comes up ‘from WHAT?’ Not from Ximenes; his wasn’t out yet. Not from Erasmus for it doesn’t match his ‘Greek’ in places. The literal affinities in 61 are with the SYRIAC (see Acts 11:26), and that version was not known in Europe until 1552 (Moses Mardin).” If Ruckman had read anything more recent than Michaelis—or realised that Michaelis argued decisively against the genuineness of the comma—he would have discovered that Dobbin showed decisively in 1854 that the Epistles in Montfortianus were copied from GA 326, and that the comma is therefore a departure from the parent text introduced intentionally by the scribe of GA 61. The fact that Montfortianus has marginal readings in the first scribal hand in Revelation which are clearly derived from Erasmus’ first edition of the Greek New Testament places the date of the copying of the manuscript after 1516. The present work shows that the presence of readings in Montfortianus close to those of the Syriac arise from the fact that the scribes used GA 69, a manuscript of the Ferrar group, whose archetype was quite strongly influenced by Syriac readings. Ruckman was unaware that Luther never included the comma in his New Testament translation and rejected it as “inept.” Yet Ruckman allows himself to accuse academic critics of being “lazy children who have not done their homework.”

We have seen then that since about 1800, in the wake of the Travis-Porson exchange, the nature of the debate over the comma has changed in several ways. While most professional critics in the nineteenth century rejected the comma, its most strident defenders were either conservative clergy such as Frederick Nolan or Thomas Burgess, or lay amateurs such as “Pharez.” This is a tendency that continues to the present day; the only defenders of the comma now are fundamentalists who submit their judgment in textual matters to the *a priori* criterion of doctrine. In the course of these discussions, the narrative of Erasmus’ initial rejection and subsequent acceptance of the comma has been subject to all manner of variation and interpretation. The myth of Erasmus’ promise to Lee, a story with no more than a tenuous connexion to the actual course of events, has been moulded and re-formed to meet the needs of religious controversies on all sides, and to make all kinds of claims about Erasmus’ own attitude to the textual authority of the Johannine comma. More importantly, discussions of the comma over the last two centuries have almost invariably been drawn into wider discussions of toleration and social order. In the nineteenth century, the debate was driven by fear of the perceived threat of Unitarians, Roman Catholics or rationalist biblical criticism. Today this anxiety is joined by secular social issues. The resurgent biblical literalism of the last half-century, which has injected the question of the comma with new life, is driven by an aggressively conservative view of Scripture which rejects biblical criticism as a conspiracy against the truth. This retrograde movement likewise undermines empirical science while advocating Creation Science and Intelligent Design, and promotes a conservative social order in which pressing issues of social justice are publicly denounced as abominations, and are actively opposed through the mobilisation of the religious right. The question of the comma is thus not merely a dusty chapter in the annals of biblical scholarship, but a microcosm of the religious tensions in which we find ourselves right now.

CONCLUSION

The hostility generated by the Johannine comma over the last five hundred years shows how much has been invested in these few words by those afraid that the divine essence itself might be lost forever if the vessel of these words should be lost or shattered. The debate is impelled in large part by a profound philosophical question: the nature of truth and its uneasy relationship to fraud. This is a particularly delicate question in relation to Scripture, which claims to be inspired by God, the very source of truth, however the exact nature and mechanism of that inspiration is understood. Many physical details of Montfortianus—the evidence provided by the paper; the presence in its margins of readings from Erasmus' first edition of the Greek New Testament entered by the text-scribe; and its English provenance—suggest very strongly that it was produced intentionally to refute Erasmus. But the scribes who carried out this pious fraud presumably did so in the belief that they were acting in the service of a greater truth. If an equivocal statement or representation can be deemed deceptive if reasonable people are actually deceived by it, then Erasmus' inclusion of the comma on pragmatic grounds must also be counted as deceptive. So the question stands: can the truth ever be served by fraud? Is it discredited if those who argue in its defence use trickery and deceit? Such questions resist easy answers, as Pilate famously realised.

The extent and acrimony of the debate becomes more comprehensible when we realise what is tied up in the issue. For Erasmus, the matter at stake was his reputation and integrity as a scholar. If this had been damaged, Erasmus realised that his mission of reform could be seriously impeded. For Lee and Stunica, the preservation of every jot and tittle of Scripture was the only way to ensure the stability of the church, its doctrine and its authority. Luther and many of his early followers were convinced by Erasmus' arguments against the authenticity of the comma; by contrast, Calvin and his followers tended to accept the comma but reduce its theological significance. Antitrinitarians almost

universally argued against the authenticity of the comma, though many unwittingly accepted thereby their opponents' assumption that establishing the authenticity of the comma would amount to providing substantive proof of the validity of Trinitarian doctrine. Many latter-day religious fundamentalists consider the comma as the keystone in the preservation of the *textus receptus* and the Authorised Version, which in turn forms the basis of a dangerously conservative social program.

The growth of biblical philology in the eighteenth century, to which Erasmus had given an important initial impetus, coincided with the rise of Deism, Unitarianism and the Enlightenment, factors that conspired against traditional faith in favour of a religion that aimed at reason and humanity, as well as a historical and critical attitude towards the sources of religious faith and institutions. For agnostic humanists like Gibbon or Porson, the rejection of the comma was an important step towards breaking the power of the church over people's lives and consciences. For Anglican apologists, the preservation of the comma was one means to preserve the Established Church's claim to authority in matters of Scripture, while the legend of Erasmus' promise to Lee could be used to refute both Unitarians and Roman Catholics, and to keep them from participating in the political arena. For these minority groups, the issue at stake was public recognition of the validity of their belief and consequently their political enfranchisement.

The myth of Erasmus' promise to restore the Johannine comma arose not merely through a misunderstanding of his reply to Lee, as Henk Jan de Jonge rightly suggested, but also because it provided a convenient focus for religious tensions and anxieties of all kinds. The myth was begun by Isaac Newton and David Martin, who independently drew on the careless phrasing of Richard Simon. It is ironic that this fictitious account should have been promoted by Richard Porson, normally such a careful critic, and more than ready to deride the slightest error of fact or argumentation made by his opponents. As a result of public attention on the dispute between Porson and George Travis, the myth of Erasmus' promise began to appear in many different versions and contexts. The fact that the myth could not be referred back to any text in Erasmus' surviving *œuvre* meant that it could be adapted easily to many different purposes. Depending on how it was told, the myth could be used to exemplify Erasmus' honour, his scholarly integrity, his pragmatism, or his weakness in the face of authority. It could be used as evidence that Erasmus came to accept the comma,

or that he rejected it as an interpolation from the Latin Vulgate. It could be used as a stick to beat the Roman Catholic Church, or a rock on which to build it up. It could be used as evidence of the ultimate unity of Christian doctrine, which does not rely on any one text for its claim to truth. It could be employed as evidence of the providential security of the *textus receptus*, or of the essential Unitarianism of primitive Christianity. For sceptics like Gibbon or Porson, the presence of the comma within the biblical text was simply one more reason to despair of the reliability of Scripture and the arbitrariness of ecclesiastical structures.

But perhaps the most surprising thing about the Johannine comma is the fact that it is still quite alive. A century ago, Adolf Jülicher could declare with some confidence: “We make far too much fuss about the Johannine comma; it is only a harmless parasite in the body of the Holy Scripture.”¹ But Jülicher was wrong. Over the past half-century the issue has been revived by fundamentalists, and has become a rallying-cry of defiance against textual criticism and liberal humanism. Dozens of websites run by fundamentalists still peddle a mixture of ignorance, half-truth and misinformation on the textual status of the comma, using arguments and texts that were decisively refuted a hundred and fifty years ago. Influential fundamentalists like Edward F. Hills, Jack Moorman and Peter Ruckman do little but spread error about the aims and achievements of biblical criticism, suggesting that the critical rejection of the comma is part of a conspiracy to deceive the honest bible believer. What is worse, the fundamentalist attitude towards biblical criticism is invariably paired with an aggressively conservative social message. One internet blogger concludes his defence of the comma with the claim that the omission of the comma from modern editions has been driven by “deceitful” textual scholars, “lying homosexuals, homosexual sympathizers, abortion supporters, feminazis, socialists, and Christ denying apostates”.² Such examples show how fundamentalism is not only inimical to biblical scholarship, but also promotes a destructive social order. The particular *bêtes noires* of those who try to defend the indefensible may have changed since the sixteenth century, but the irrational fear—and the scholarly standards—are the same. Underlying this position are the assumptions that biblical scholarship will inevitably erode faith and morals;

¹ Jülicher, 1905, 935.

² <http://av1611.com/kjbp/ridiculous-kjv-bible-corrections/1-John-5-7-Scams.html>, accessed 5 March 2010.

that knowledge is a force of corruption and decadence; and that accepting difference is the thin end of any number of wedges. As members of the scholarly community, we must therefore be vigilant and speak out when we see the historical and textual record abused in such a way as threatens to undermine our entire undertaking.

APPENDIX I

Anatomy of a manuscript: a technical description of Codex Montfortianus

Codex Montfortianus became the focus of considerable critical attention in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because of its special status as the conduit for the transmission of the Johannine comma to Erasmus' third edition of the New Testament, and thence to the so-called *Textus receptus*. However, early discussions failed to take account of any codicological data apart from pointing out the presence of tremas (double dots) over certain vowels—an observation that was at best inconclusive—and the comparison of its text with that in a small number of other manuscripts.

Nevertheless, the codex contains a considerable amount of information about its own past, and much of this information is yet to be fully exploited. Because Erasmus' first citation of reading of the comma in this manuscript contains two errors, some critics—most recently Maynard (1995)—have tried to argue that Erasmus' "British codex" and Codex Montfortianus are different manuscripts. However, the present examination of the text of the manuscript gives ample justification to identify the two manuscripts as one and the same book. Further evidence allows us to date the manuscript quite firmly to the early sixteenth century. An examination of the textual variants in Codex Montfortianus has revealed that it was copied largely from manuscripts written in the second half of the fifteenth century, most of which were only gathered in one place after 1502; these data provide a *terminus post quem* for the copying of Montfortianus. It seems that Montfortianus also contains readings taken from Erasmus' 1516 New Testament. The notion that Montfortianus was copied specifically to strong-arm Erasmus into including the comma—a suspicion hitherto based on nothing more than circumstantial evidence—thus becomes more plausible. A *terminus ante quem* for the copying of Montfortianus is provided by the presence

of the *ex libris* marking in the hand of John Clement (+1572) and the identification of the previous owner as Francis Frowick (+1518?).

Parent manuscripts

In his pathbreaking study of Codex Montfortianus (1854), Orlando Dobbin firmly identified GA 56, 58 and 326 as its parent texts. On the basis of a new and more detailed examination of the text of Montfortianus, it can now be confirmed that a number of other manuscripts were also employed, as well as Erasmus' 1516 *editio princeps* of the New Testament. These refinements of Dobbin's conclusions have clear implications for the dating of Montfortianus. My comments here treat three representative parts of the manuscript in greatest detail (Mark, the Catholic Epistles and Revelation), while making observations about the rest of the manuscript in passing. This choice was made on the basis of those books that exist in the fullest and most accurate critical editions: Mark in the collation of Lake and Lake (1941), the Catholic Epistles in the *Editio critica maior*, and Revelation in the collation of Hoskier (1929).

The relationship of the text of Montfortianus to its parents is sometimes obscured by the fact that the scribe has made a number of deliberate changes, for example, occasional attempts to make the text more "synoptic." For example, at Mk 15:47, the parent manuscripts have καὶ Μαρία, which the scribe of Montfortianus expanded to καὶ ἡ ἄλλη Μαρία to make it conform to Mt 27:61. At Mk 16:1, the scribe of Montfortianus expanded the reading of his parent texts (ἀλείψωσι τὸν Ἰησοῦν) to ἀλείψωσι τὸ σῶμα τὸν Ἰησοῦν to make it conform to Lk 24:3. It is difficult to decide whether the reading of Montfortianus at Mk 9:43 (βληθῆναι for ἀπελθεῖν 56, 58, 69 *et multi*) was taken from another text (perhaps GA 12 or Erasmus), introduced by parablepsis from Mk 9:45, or deliberately altered according to the synoptic parallel at Mt 18:8-9.

Once such deliberate alterations have been taken into account, as well as normal orthographical errors (omissions, itacisms, mistaken vowel quantities, confusions between single and double letters), the following parent manuscripts may be identified with confidence:

1. Oxford, Lincoln College ms gr. 18 (GA 56^e). Edmund Audley, Bishop of Salisbury, presented this manuscript to Lincoln College in about 1502.¹

2. Oxford, New College ms 68 (GA 58^e). This manuscript has been in the New College collection since 1500, when it was donated by John Hopkinson of Lincoln, whose name is written on the back flyleaf.² A relationship between Montfortianus, 56 and 58 was first suggested by Mills (1707), followed by Wettstein (1730).³ This relationship was later established firmly by Dobbin (1854) through a careful comparison of the texts. Both GA 56 and GA 58 were written by Johannes Serbopoulos, a scribe from Constantinople whose dated manuscripts show that he was resident in England from 1484 at the latest, and lived at St Mary's Abbey at Reading between at least 1489 and 1500. As his model for GA 56 and GA 58, Serbopoulos used a Gospel manuscript copied in 1338 by a certain Theodosius (now Oxford, Bodleian Library ms Selden supra 29, *olim* 3417 = GA 54^e), in which he made some marginal annotations.⁴ Serbopoulos also used GA 54 as the basis for another Gospel manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library ms Auct. D. 5. 2 (GA 47^e). The common origin of GA 47, GA 56 and GA 58 accounts for the similarity of their texts.⁵

¹ Dobbin, 1854; Scrivener, 1894, 1:198-200; Gregory, 1900-1909, 1:141-142.

² The date of the donation is recorded in the Benefaction Book, Oxford, New College ms BT 1.88.8, 31; thanks to Naomi van Loo of New College Library for this information.

³ Mills, 1707, CXLIX; Wettstein, 1730, 51.

⁴ The proems and other prefatory material found in GA 56, GA 58 and GA 47 were copied by Serbopoulos from GA 54: 75r (Mark), 114r-115r (Mark), 115r-117v (Luke), 182r-183r (John), 230v (*stichoi* on John). In GA 54, 234r, there is a later ownership mark: *Martinus Selenus*; the same hand has written on the front pastedown: *Elizabeth dei gratia Anglie Francie et Hybernie Regina fidei defensor*. Gamillscheg and Harlfinger, 1981, 1:107, identify Serbopoulos as the scribe of marginalia on 38v, 114r, 180r, 183r.

⁵ Dobbin, 1854, 32-33, doubted that the same scribe wrote both GA 56 and GA 58, but his objections are groundless. It is certain that Serbopoulos wrote both mss, as well as GA 47, which is signed. See also Scrivener, 1894, 1:198-200; and Gregory, 1890, 2:476-477. Gregory, 1900-1909, 1:141-142, provided additional evidence for the common origin of GA 56 and GA 58 by pointing out that they contain the same poems on each of the Evangelists; Gregory did not realise that these verses were copied from GA 54. The following manuscripts are assigned to Serbopoulos: 1) Theodore of Gaza, *Grammatica* [*i.e.* Γραμματική εισαγωγή], Dublin, Trinity College ms 925 (dated 1480 [Gamillscheg and Harlfinger give 1483/4], this is therefore Serbopoulos' earliest dated ms). 2) Theodore of Gaza, *Grammatica*, Cambridge, Trinity College ms R.9.22/350/823 (copied at Reading, dated 9 Oct. 1489. A very faint inscription in

red on the top of the front page indicates that it was acquired in 1554 (?) by a member of the Wotton family, probably Thomas, 1521-1587: *Wotton 1554* (?). On the title page is another inscription in a different hand, recording the motto of Henry Wotton, Thomas' son: *H. Spes nō cōfūdit. W.* On 161v is an even firmer identification: *Henricus Wottonus est dominus meus*). 3) Theodore of Gaza, *Grammatica*; Isocrates, *Oratio ad Demonium* (with interlinear Latin translation of individual words), *Oratio ad Nicoclem*, Oxford, New College ms 254 (copied at Reading, dated 5 Oct. 1494). 4) Eustratius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, Oxford, Corpus Christi College ms 106 (copied at Reading, dated 3 May 1495; belonged to Grocyn). 5) Eustratius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* 1, 6, 9-10; Aspasius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics* 2-3, 7-8; Michael of Ephesus, *Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics* 5; Oxford, New College mss 240 and 241 (2 volumes, copied at Reading in 1497, possibly from an original owned by Grosseteste. The volumes belonged to Linacre [ms 241, 213v: *Secunda pars Eustrathii Thōe Linacri*] and then Pole, who gave them to the College in 1547 [ms 240 and 241, front pastedown in later hand: *Donum Reginaldi Pool Cardinalis Archiep(iscop)i Cantuariensis MDLVII*]. The first three gatherings (of five bifolia) in ms 240 are in vellum, but thereafter we find a similar arrangement to that seen in the mss of Emmanuel: the outermost and innermost bifolium of each quire in these mss is vellum, and the intermediate three bifolia are paper [crown watermark]). 6) John Chrysostom, *Homilies on St Matthew*, Oxford, Corpus Christi College mss 23 and 24 (copied at Reading: ms 23 dated 25 Sept. 1499; ms 24 dated 8 May, 1500; possibly copied after a lost original from the library of Grosseteste; ms 23 (and probably ms 24) belonged to Grocyn [ms 23, 1r: *W. Grocini*]; ms 23 was given to the College by its president, John Claymond [ms 23, 1r: *Orate pro anima Joannis Claimondi Collegij Corporis Christi primi p̄sidis qui hunc Librum eidem condonauit*], though it seems that ms 24 did not enter the College collection until 1618. Linacre's accounts record that Claymond paid £5 for books from Grocyn's estate; see Burrows, 1890, 328). 7) Selection from Josephus, Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College 355/582, 159r-186v. 8) A Gospel book, inscribed with Serbopoulos' name on Iv, Oxford, Bodleian Library ms Auct. D. 5. 2 (GA 47^e). 9) Arrian (excerpts), Basil, Nemesius of Emesa; Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Barocc. 82, 1r-50r, 92r-161v. 10) Theodore of Gaza, *Grammatica*, Oxford, Bodleian Library ms gr. class. e. 96. 11) Manuel Moschopoulos, *Schedographia*, Oxford, Bodleian Library ms Selden supra 19. 12) The latter part of the *Suda*, Oxford, Corpus Christi College ms 77, 85r-v, 94r-332v (possibly copied from Grosseteste's copy, which is now Leiden, Universiteits-Bibliotheek ms Voss. gr. F. 2. The first two-thirds of this ms were written by Emmanuel of Constantinople; this ms was owned by Grocyn). 13) Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's De cælo*, Oxford, Corpus Christi College ms 109 (perhaps copied from Grosseteste's exemplar, or at least from one of the same family. Inscribed on 1r: *Hic liber emptus fuit ab hēredibus Guilielmi grocini [...]* *pro Collegio Corporis Christi Claimondo p̄siede*. This ms is specified as Serbopoulos' work in Linacre's account of Grocyn's estate [*Item Simplicium de Celo, manu Iohannis Seruopoli, 2^o fo. μὴ ποτε δὲ, pretium xxs*]; Burrows, 1890, 329). 14) A Gospel book, Oxford, Bodleian Library ms Lincoln Coll. gr. 18 (GA 56^e). 15) A Gospel book, Oxford, New College ms 68 (GA 58^e). 16) Aristotle, *De partibus animalium*, Paris, BnF ms suppl. gr. 333, 1r-75v, 223r-244r (copied from Grosseteste's

3. Oxford, Lincoln College ms gr. 82, *olim* ω 25 (GA 326^{ap+}), a *praxapostolos* written in the first third of the eleventh century, and bequeathed to Lincoln College in 1483 by Robert Flemmyng, dean of Lincoln cathedral, who studied Greek at Ferrara under Guarino between 1446 and 1451. The scribe of this manuscript was Leon “the Sinner” (Ἀμαρτωλός), who also wrote the *praxapostolos* Grottaferrata ms A'. β'. III (GA 1837^{ap+}), the text of which is closely related to that in 326.⁶ Very occasionally GA 326 and 1837 have different readings, but these are apparently due to itacism or mistakes in vowel quantity.⁷

The close relationship between 326 and 1837 is demonstrated by the fact that a number of variant readings appear only in these two manuscripts.⁸ Some

copy, Oxford, Corpus Christi ms 108; *ex libris* Thomas Linacre). 17) Gregory of Nazianzus, Paris, BnF ms Suppl. gr. 339^{Ga}. See Burrows, 1890, 372; Madan *et al.*, 1895-1953, 2.1:621; James, 1900-1904, 2:265; James, 1910a, 291-292; James, 1910b, 400; James, 1927, 352-353; Smyly, 1933, 174; Weiss, 1957, 147-148, 174; Hunt *et al.*, 1975, 42, n° 87, pl. ix; De la Mare, 1980, 76; Barbour, 1981, n° 92; Gamillscheg and Harlfinger, 1981, 1:106-107; Dionisotti, 1988, 30-31, 36-38; Gamillscheg and Harlfinger, 1989, 1:103-104; Harris, 1995, 147-149; Coates, 1999, 110, 112. It is quite clear that neither Serbopoulos nor Emmanuel acted as scribes of Montfortianus.

⁶ Dobbin, 1854, 33-34; Scrivener, 1861, 198; Scrivener, 1894, 1:287; Gregory, 1900-1909, 1:266; Hutter, 1977-1997, 5:40-45; notices by Marco d'Agostino in d'Aiuto *et al.*, 2000, 230-231, 235-236. The other mss written by Leon are Vienna, ÖNB ms theol. gr. 188 (GA 124^e), on which see Lake and Lake, 1941, 16-18; the *tetravangelion* Grottaferrata A'. α'. III (see below); the lectionary Rome, BAV ms Vat. gr. 1287, 66r-71v; Messina, Biblioteca Regionale Universitaria ms. gr. 130, 202r-205v; and Athens, Ethnike Bibliothek ms 74.

⁷ E.g. **1 Tim 3:14** ἐλπίζων ἐλθεῖν πρὸς σε τάχιον Byz, incl. 61L, 69, 328, 1837 *et multi* [4/1]; ἐλπίζων ἐλθεῖν πρὸς σε ταχεῖον 075, 43, 61T, 62, 88, 105, 326, 330, 398, 632, 915, 920, 1243, 1505, 1646, 1718, 1719, 1720, 1770, 1838, 1877, 1924, 1945, 1950 [4/1B]. **1 Tim 6:5** εὐσέβειαν. ἀφίστασο ἀπὸ τῶν τοιούτων Byz, incl. 61C, 69, 328, 1837 *et multi* [8/1]; εὐσέβειαν. ἀφίστασω ἀπὸ τῶν τοιούτων 02, 025, 0151, 181, 326, 627, 628S, 1243, 1319, 1828, 1838, 1874, 1917, 1959 [8/1B]. On the basis of such minor variants, we suggest that Grottaferrata ms A'. β'. VI (GA 1838^{ap}) is a descendant of 326. Numbers in square brackets refer to the *Teststellen* and *Lesarten* assigned in *Text und Textwert*.

⁸ E.g. **2 Cor 2:17** ἐκ θεοῦ κατενώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ Byz [9/1]; ἐκ θεοῦ κατέναντι θεοῦ P⁴⁶, 01*, 02, 03, 04, 0243, 33, 38, 61, 69, 81, 88, 218, 630, 915, 1175C, 1739, 1852, 1881, 2200, 2464 [9/2]; ἐκ θεοῦ κατενώπιον κατέναντι θεοῦ 326, 1837 [9/9]. **Gal 1:8** εὐαγγελίζεται ὑμῖν Byz [1/1]; εὐαγγελίζεται ὑμῖν 61C, 69, 328 *et nonnulli* [1/2]; εὐαγγελίζεται ὑμῖν 326, 1837 [1/3C]. **Gal 5:1** τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἢ Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἠλευθέρωσε στήκετε Byz [16/1]; τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ οὖν ἢ Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἠλευθέρωσεν στήκετε 1, 69C, 90, 205, 901, 1070, 1759, 1830, 1882, 1921 [16/1B]; τῇ

variants are shared by 1837 and 326, and passed from 326 to Montfortianus.⁹ Bart Ehrman identifies one of these unusual readings (1 Jn 5:6 [6]: “This is the one who came by water and blood *and the Holy Spirit*, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood”) as a deliberate “orthodox corruption,” one that can now probably be attributed to Leon himself.¹⁰ Other readings shared by 1837 and 326 occur only in a slightly larger number of manuscripts.¹¹ The fact that 326 and 1837 are now at Grottaferrata suggests that they were copied in one of the Basilian libraries reorganised and centralised to Grottaferrata and S. Basilio in Urbe by Pietro Menniti in 1696; at least we can be confident that they were in one of the Basilian libraries immediately before Menniti’s reform.¹²

ἐλευθερία Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἐλευθέρωσε στήκετε 69* [16/8B]; τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ οὖν ἡ Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἡλευθέρωσεν στήκετε 326, 1837 [16/11]; τῇ οὖν ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡ ὁ Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἡλευθέρωσεν ἰδὲ ἐγὼ ὁ Παῦλος λέγω ὑμῖν στήκετε 61 [16/30]. On “Group 61,” see Wachtel, 1995, 68.

⁹ **1 Pt 3:9** εὐλογοῦντες εἰδότες ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο ἐκλήθητε ἵνα Byz, incl. 61L, 69 [31/1]; εὐλογοῦντες ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο ἐκλήθητε εἰδότες ἵνα 326C [31/1B]; εὐλογοῦντες εἰς τοῦτο ἐκλήθητε εἰδότες ἵνα 61T, 326*, 1837 [31/1D]. **1 Jn 1:7** καὶ τὸ αἶμα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει Byz, incl. 69 [53/1]; καὶ τὸ αἶμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καθαρίζει 61, 326, 1837 [31/3]. **1 Jn 5:6** οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἐλθὼν δι’ ὕδατος καὶ αἵματος Byz [71/1/2]; οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἐλθὼν δι’ ὕδατος καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου 61, 326, 1837 [71/6]. **2 Jn 8** ἵνα μὴ ἀπολέσωμεν ἃ εἰργάσασθε ἀλλὰ μισθὸν πλήρη ἀπολάβωμεν Byz, incl. 69 [78/1]; ἵνα μὴ ἀπόλητε ἃ εἰργάσασθε, ἀλλὰ μισθὸν πλήρη ἀπολάβητε 61, 326*, 1837 [78/2G]. **Jude 25(1)** μόνῳ σοφῷ θεῷ σωτῇρι ἡμῶν Byz [96/1]; μόνῳ σοφῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῇρι 61, 326, 1837 [96/7B].

¹⁰ Ehrman, 1993, 60, writes that this phrase also occurs in GA 39, but this is a mistake arising from the fact that 39^a is the old number for the Acts and Catholic Epistles in GA 326. I am not sure whether this evident alteration to verse 6 arose from doctrinal motives or simply a desire to accommodate the number and identity of the witnesses here to those in verse 8. In any case, the text of 1 Jn 5:6-8 in Montfortianus thus displays no less than three very striking textual alterations within the course of two verses: the addition of the phrase “and the Holy Spirit” in verse 6, the Latinized reading “Christ is the truth” in verse 6, and the insertion of the comma in verse 7. Marshall, 1994, 237, and Painter, 2008, 321, point out that the text of 1 Jn has been subjected to “orthodox corruption” at several points (2:17, 4:3, 5:6, 5:20). At 1 Jn 5:20 (“We know, however, the Son of God is come”), many Vulgate manuscripts add the quasi-credal phrase: “and put on flesh for our sake, and suffered, and rose from the dead; he took us up.” This variant was not inserted into Montfortianus.

¹¹ E.g. **Jas 2:4** καὶ οὐ διακρίθητε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς Byz, incl. 61C, 69, 326C [9/1]; καὶ οὐ διακρίθητε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς 61*, 326*, 915, 1837, 2523 [9/1B].

¹² Lake and Lake, 1941, 19.

4. Leicester, Record Office cod. 6 D 32/1 (GA 69^{capr+}), commonly known as Codex Leicestrensis or the Leicester codex, copied by a Greek scribe and knight called Emmanuel of Constantinople.¹³ The relationship between Montfortianus

¹³ On the Codex Leicestrensis, see Scrivener, 1859, xl-xlvii; and Harris, 1887. The following mss are known to have been copied by Emmanuel of Constantinople: 1) Psalter, Cambridge, Trinity College ms O. 3. 14 (previous owners include archbishop Whitgift and dean Neville; in vellum throughout; extensive Latin interlinear translation, esp. in Ps 118; bound by the Scales Binder for a certain “Bhale,” tentatively identified by Barker as Robert Bale, O. Carm., † 1503). 2) Psalter, Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College ms 348/541 (bound at the Franciscan house in Cambridge; apparently owned by Brinkley, perhaps copied and bound under his instructions). 3) Porphyry, *Isagoge*; Aristotle, *Categories*, *De interpretatione*, *Analytica*, *Topica*, *Sophistici elenchi*, Durham, Library of the Dean and Chapter ms C. I. 15. 4) Plato, Durham, Library of the Dean and Chapter ms C. IV. 2. 5) New Testament, Leicester, Record Office cod. 6 D 32/1. 6) *Suda*, London, British Library ms Harley 3100 (*olim* Durham cathedral library, incomplete). 7) Psalter, Oxford, Corpus Christi College ms 19 (bequest of John Claymond). 8) *Suda*, Oxford, Corpus Christi College ms 76/77 (2 vols. The hand of Johannes Serbopoulos enters on 94v and continues to the end; the watermarks on the paper also change at this point, although the use of vellum and paper gatherings continues. These mss were owned by William Grocyn [1r in both volumes: *Liber Vlielmi Grocini*], then John Claymond, who gave it to the College [1r in both volumes: *Orate Pro Anima Joannis Claymondi Collegij Corporis Christi primi p̄sidis Qui hunc librum eidem condonauit*]). 9) Demosthenes (presented to George Neville on 30 December 1468), Leiden, Universiteits-biblioteek ms Voss. gr. F. 56. 10) Aristotle, *Sophistici elenchi*, Paris, BnF ms gr. 2056 (I agree with Gamillscheg and Harlfinger that only the final section, 279r-479v, is in Emmanuel’s hand). 11) Aristotle, *Analytica* (incomplete), Paris, BnF ms gr. 2030, 37r-198v. Emmanuel’s codices are distinguished by his unusual hand, characterised by a near-recumbent ε (which at times almost looks like an ω); many, such as Leicestrensis, the Plato and Aristotle at Durham, and the London *Suda*, are moreover distinguished by the fact that the quires usually consist of five bifolia made by sandwiching three sheets of paper between two of parchment, thus strengthening the quires where they are most vulnerable. (This is not an invariable rule; in n° 6 and 7, only the outermost bifolium of each quire is parchment; in n° 2, the innermost vellum bifolium has been reduced to a strip of vellum in the gutter.) Harris, 1887, 8, suggested that a ms of Homer (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College ms 81) may also have been the work of the same scribe as the Leicester Codex, whose identity was as yet undetermined. James, 1912, 166, cast some doubt on this attribution. Gamillscheg and Harlfinger, 1981, 1:71, attributed the Homer ms more convincingly to Demetrios Xanthopoulos; apart from the slight difference in script, this ms lacks the vellum-and-paper arrangement favoured by Emmanuel. On Emmanuel and his mss, see Harris, 1900, 26-30; James, 1904b; James, 1909, 1:164-167; James, 1910; Allen, 1910, 446-447; James, 1911; James, 1927; Gray, 1929, 113; Barker, 1973, 365, 373; Gamillscheg and Harlfinger,

and Leicestrensis was first posited by Barrett (1801), who pointed out that the text of Revelation in Montfortianus resembles that in Leicestrensis. Barrett, followed by Dobbin, suggested furthermore that the text of Revelation was added to Montfortianus in the late sixteenth century by William Chark, who owned both manuscripts at one stage. Hoping to discover a closer relationship between the two manuscripts, Dobbin (1854) collated the Gospels and Acts in Leicestrensis, but on this basis concluded: “[T]here is no relation between them at all save that which Dr. Barrett detected, namely, that the Apocalypse of the one was taken from the other.”¹⁴ Such was the authority of Barrett and Dobbin in the study of Montfortianus that their conclusion went unchallenged by Tregelles; by Scrivener, who was even sceptical that Revelation had been copied into Montfortianus from Leicestrensis, citing a number of points at which their texts disagree; and by Harris in his landmark 1887 study of Leicestrensis.¹⁵ However, such conclusions were premature, as we shall see.

In 1904, James discovered that the scribe of Leicestrensis was Emmanuel of Constantinople, to whom he subsequently ascribed a number of other books. This Emmanuel had escaped Constantinople some time around its capture by the Turks. In February 1454 he was presented to the duke of Alençon at Abbeville, and given a gift of 30s; he was said to come highly recommended by three cardinals, a detail which suggests that he came to France by way of Rome, one of the few places where a Greek could have ingratiated himself with three cardinals in such a short time.¹⁶ In 1455 Emmanuel appeared in England with three other Greeks (including Johannes Argyropoulos) to solicit aid. By 1456 he had entered the circle of William Wayneflete, bishop of Winchester and founder of Magdalene College Oxford.¹⁷ Emmanuel subsequently passed into the service

1981, 1:77-78; Dionisotti, 1988, 30, 36-38; Gamillscheg and Harlfinger, 1989, 72; Harris, 1995, 136-139.

¹⁴ Dobbin, 1854, 22-23.

¹⁵ Scrivener, 1859, xlii-xliii.

¹⁶ Prarond, 1899, 113.

¹⁷ Issue rolls of the English exchequer 1455-1456, Kew, National Archives E. 403/806, 807, cit. Gray, 1929, 83: “26 April, 1456: Episcopo Wyntoniensi. In denariis sibi liberatis per manus proprias in persolutionem x marcarum quas dominus Rex eidem episcopo pro tantis denariis per ipsum Episcopum solutis cuidam Emanuell Militi de Constantinoble [*sic*] ex mandato ipsius domini Regis de avisamento Consilii sui liberare mandavit ex causa predicta per breve de privato Sigillo inter mandata de termino sancti Michaelis ultimo preterito. vj li. xiiij s. iiij d.”

of George Neville, chancellor of Oxford University and later chancellor of England and archbishop of York. Emmanuel's links with Neville and Wayneflete suggest that he was pivotal in the introduction of Greek to Oxford. Amongst Emmanuel's earliest students in England may have been William Grocyn. There is some evidence that Emmanuel was later associated with (or even resident at) the Franciscan convent at Cambridge, perhaps after Neville's fall from power, for Harris showed that a Psalter copied by Emmanuel (Gonville and Caius College ms 348/541) was bound in this convent.¹⁸

The Caius Psalter also bears an annotation relating to the arrangement of the quires (or at least it did until a harsh twentieth-century rebinding), signed by the Cambridge Franciscan Richard Brinkley. This annotation suggests that the binding, perhaps also the copying, was done at Brinkley's behest.¹⁹ Brinkley also

¹⁸ Harris, 1887, 10-12, 23-31; on the career of Neville, see Weiss, 1967, 142-148.

¹⁹ Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College ms 348/541, 97r (*in margine*): "brynkelei." There was formerly an annotation on the bottom of 113r (now cut away in a recent rebinding): "here xwld [*i.e.* should; xeeld *Smith*] be non qweyre off y^e numbyr off [eff. *James*] 8, ffor here ys all q [*i.e.* quaterniones; quod *James*] ffr. Ric. [Rc. *James*] Brynkeley." On 4r-v, an early reader (not Brinkley) has inserted a transliteration of the Greek text into Latin letters. The Psalter was evidently seized from the Cambridge Franciscans at the dissolution of the monasteries, and given to Caius College by William Mowse in 1571 [front flyleaf: *Collegio de Goneville & Caius, Gulielmus Mowse .LL. Doctor dono dedit. 1571.*]. See Smith, 1849, 166; James, 1907, 1:393. An annotation in Brinkley's hand in a Hebrew Psalter, Oxford, Bodleian ms Laud. Orient. 174, 1r, records that he borrowed it from the monastery of Bury St Edmunds in 1502: "Hoc psalterium Ebraycum est de bibliotheca Venerabilis Monasterij Sancti Eadmundi Acomodatum fratri Ricardo brynkelei ordinis minorum sacreque theologie humillimo professori, 1502^o." On 62v Brinkley lists the Hebrew names of God: "el fortis | eloi timor | Sabaoth princeps exercituum | elion. excelsus | epel. qui est | Adonai. dominus | ya. spiritus almus [...] | tetragrammaton. ineffabile quatuor litterarum apud grecos | Saday. omnipotens nomen omnium | eloym nomen trinitatis [...]." Brinkley's source is Jerome, *Epist.* 25, CSEL 54:218, or one of the sources deriving from it, such as Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmi* 104, CCSL 98:942; or Isidore, *Etymologies* VII.1. Amongst the other books owned by Brinkley are Pelbartus de Temesvar, *Pomerium sermonum* (Hagenau: Gran, 1521), now Salisbury, Cathedral Library M. 1. 27; Aeneas Silvius, *Epistolæ* (Nuremberg: Koburger, 16.9.1481), now in Ipswich Central Library (Leader, 1988, 294); Plotinus, *Enneades*, transl. M. Ficino (1492), now London, Middle Temple Library (given to Brinkley by Katherine Wyndysor). London, British Library ms Cotton Cleopatra C. 9, containing the *Gesta Ricardi primi regis* and *Lamentationes Matheoluli* and other works, was given to Brinkley by Friar Thomas of Trumpington [63r: *Liber ffris Thomæ Trūpŷton sacrae theologiae doctor, ordinis minorum* (then in Brinkley's hand:) *quem dedit ffrī Ricardo Brynkele tunc temporis studenti Cantabrigie*]. A fourteenth-century Latin ms of

wrote his name in an exquisitely illuminated twelfth-century Greek Gospel-book, which he borrowed from the Franciscan house at Oxford.²⁰ These loans suggest a custom of reciprocal borrowing between the Franciscan houses of Cambridge and Oxford. The presence of variants from Leicestrensis in Erasmus' New Testament and *Annotationes* suggests that it was at Cambridge when Erasmus was living there, that is between 1512 and 1513, and was perhaps in Brinkley's possession.²¹

The text of Leicestrensis is consistent with the hypothesis that Emmanuel came to England by way of Italy, for its readings indicate that its text in the Gospels is closely related to a Southern Italian manuscript now at Grottaferrata (ms A'. α'. III. = GA 826^e), copied in the early eleventh century by Leon "the Sinner," with which it shares a large number of distinctive readings.²²

Euclid, in which Brinkley wrote his name in Greek characters and the date 1487, was offered for sale in 1922 (Maggs Brothers, 1922, 1:128), but my enquiries at Maggs Brothers failed to turn up any indication of the present location of the manuscript. Harris also suggested that Brinkley may have owned Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College ms 372/621 (*Liber de animalibus*), but this is based on conjecture rather than any written evidence. See Harris, 1887, 18-21; James, 1895, 88; James, 1907-1908, 1:392-393, 2:420-423, 2:469-470; Moorman, 1952, 156; Emden, 1963, 103. On Brinkley's status within the order, see Parkinson, 1726, 1:221-224.

²⁰ Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College ms 403/412 (GA ms 59^e), title page: *Iste liber est de communitate fratrum minorum Oxoniensium concessus [omissus Smith] et accommodatus fri Ric. Brynkeley magistro*. Harris, 1887, 19, points out that the words *concessus* to *magistro* are written in Brinkley's hand, and that Brinkley also wrote his name elsewhere in the ms: in the margin of Lk 11 (p. 303), in Latin (*m[agister] bryngkeley*); and at the end of the Gospels, in Greek characters (Π Βρηγκελει Διδασκοῶς [*sic*; intended as equivalent to *magister*]). This manuscript was given to the College by Thomas Hatcher in 1567 (title page: *Nouū Testamentum Græcum. Quod Collegio de Goueuille & Caius dono dedit Thomas Hatcher artium Magister 1567*). Smith, 1849, 197; Harris, 1887, 17-28; James, 1907-1908, 1:392-393, 2:469-470; Grey, 1929, 113.

²¹ Harris, 1887, 19; Lake and Lake, 1941, 13-14, caution against the automatic assumption that Brinkley owned Leicestrensis in the absence of firm evidence. Despite the Lakes' misgivings, the traces of readings from Leicestrensis in Erasmus' New Testament suggests quite strongly that the manuscript was in Cambridge during his time there.

²² **Mk 1:16** ἀμφιβάλλοντας] Byz; ἀμφιβάλλοντας τὰ δίκτυα 05, 13, 28C, 69, 124, 346, 543, 565, 788, 826, 828, 837, 983 [*Teststelle 13/Lesart 5*]. **1:21(1)** εἰσελθὼν] Byz; *om.* 01, 04, 019, 037, 28, 69, 346, 543, 565, 788, 826, 828, 837, 892, 983, 1138, 2766* [14/3]. **1:21(2)** εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν ἐδίδασκεν] Byz; ἐδίδασκεν εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν 01C2, 019, 28, 33, 69, 346, 500, 543, 565, 788, 826, 828, 837, 983 [15/3]. **1:42** καὶ εἰπόντος αὐτοῦ εὐθὺς] Byz; καὶ εὐθὺς 01, 03, 05, 019, 032, 16, 69, 370, 519, 543, 565, 706, 772, 788, 826, 827, 828, 829, 836, 856, 892, 983, 1014, 1216, 1243, 1262, 1279, 1403, 1446, 1457, 1489*, 1528, 1579, 1593, 2109, 2174, 2427,

2693 [25/2]. **3:21(2)** γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστη] Byz; γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέσταται 038, 13, 69, 174*, 346, 525, 543, 565, 788, 826 [51/5]. **3:31(2)** πρὸς αὐτὸν φωνοῦντες αὐτόν] Byz; πρὸς αὐτὸν καλοῦντες αὐτόν 01, 03, 04, 019, 032, 038, 1, 13, 28, 69, 118, 124, 131, 205, 209, 346, 543, 565, 700, 788, 826, 892, 983, 1342, 1582, 2427 [54/2]. **4:16** καὶ οὗτοί εἰσιν ὁμοίως] Byz; καὶ οὗτοί εἰσιν 05 032, 038, 1, 13, 28, 69, 118, 131, 205, 209, 435, 543, 565, 579, 663, 676, 700, 788, 793, 826, 828, 983, 1261, 1273, 1387, 1561, 1582, 1901, 2193*, 2542, 2694, 2697, 2750, 2779 [58/2]. **4:40(1)** Τί δειλοί ἐστε οὐπω(ς)] Byz; Τί οὐπω(ς) δειλοί ἐστε 0167, 1, 13, 69, 131, 191, 205, 209, 346, 543, 652, 788, 826, 828, 872, 983, 1582, 2193, 2542 [61/3]. **4:40(2)** πῶς οὐκ ἔχετε πίστιν] Byz; οὐπω ἔχετε πίστιν 01, 03, 05, 019, 037, 038, 1, 13, 28, 69, 131, 191, 205, 209, 346, 372, 543, 565, 579, 652, 700, 788, 826, 828, 892, 983, 1342, 1582, 2427, 2542, 2737 [62/2]. **5:21(2)** ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ πάλιν εἰς τὸ πέραν] Byz; ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ πάλιν ἦλθεν εἰς τὸ πέραν 13, 69, 346, 543, 826, 828, 983 [66/7]. **6:2(2)** καὶ ἀδελφὸς Ἰακώβου καὶ Ἰωσή] Byz; καὶ ἀδελφὸς Ἰακώβου καὶ Ἰωσήτος 03, 05, 019, 037, 038, 13, 33, 69, 124, 346, 428, 543, 565, 579, 693C, 700, 788, 826, 828*, 2427 [73/2]. **6:16** Ὃν ἐγὼ ἀπεκεφάλισα Ἰωάν(ν)ην οὗτος ἐστὶν αὐτός] Byz; Ὃν ἐγὼ ἀπεκεφάλισα Ἰωάννην οὗτος 01C2, 03, 019, 032, 037, 69, 372, 543, 788, 826, 892, 2427, 2737 [78/2]. **7:33** κατ' ἰδίαν ἔβαλεν τοὺς δακτύλους αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰ ὦτα αὐτοῦ καὶ πτύσας ἤψατο τῆς γλώσσης αὐτοῦ] Byz; κατ' ἰδίαν ἐπέβαλεν τοὺς δακτύλους αὐτοῦ πτύσας εἰς τὰ ὦτα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἤψατο τῆς γλώσσης αὐτοῦ 13, 69, 346, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983 [99/7C]. **8:1** ἡμέραις πάμπόλ(λ)ου] ἡμέραις πάλιν πολλοῦ 01, 03, 05, 011, 019, 021, 022, 032, 037, 038, 042, 043, 0211, 1, 13, 28, 33, 59, 61C, 67, 69, 73, 179, 205, 209, 305C, 331*, 346, 495, 517, 543, 563, 565, 579, 703, 713, 766, 780, 788, 826, 892, 983, 1047, 1071, 1241, 1273, 1342, 1424, 1582, 1675, 2193*, 2427, 2487, 2542, 2623, 2710 [101/2]. **8:15(1)** Ὁρᾶτε βλέπετε] Byz; Ὁρᾶτε καὶ βλέπετε ⁴⁵ 04, 043, 0131, 13, 16, 28, 61, 69, 92, 119, 124, 152, 163, 173, 174, 184, 211, 217, 233, 330, 345, 346, 348, 382, 427, 491, 513, 555, 558, 578, 693, 732, 752, 788, 792, 826, 827, 828, 829, 863, 923, 983, 1004, 1093, 1176, 1216, 1230, 1243, 1253, 1278, 1279, 1424, 1528, 1533, 1574, 1579, 1588, 1641, 2106, 2127, 2174, 2405, 2515, 2586, 2726, 2738 [107/3]. **8:15(2)** Ἡρώδου] Byz; τῶν Ἡρωδιανῶν ⁴⁵ 011, 032, 038, 1, 13, 22, 28, 60, 69, 107, 118, 191, 205, 209, 251, 346, 495, 557, 565, 577, 585, 657, 660*, 697, 719, 788, 791, 826, 828, 872, 983, 1005, 1192, 1210, 1273, 1337, 1365, 1582, 2147, 2193, 2372, 2542 [108/4]. **8:26** Μηδὲ εἰς τὴν κώμην εἰσέλθης, μηδὲ εἴπῃς τινὶ ἐν τῇ κώμῃ] Ὑπαγε εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου καὶ ἐὰν εἰς τὴν κώμην εἰσέλθῃς μηδενὶ εἴπῃς μηδὲ ἐν τῇ κώμῃ 13, 66C, 69, 346, 788, 826, 828, 983 [116/4]. **9:24** μετὰ δακρύων ἔλεγε(ν) Byz; μετὰ δακρύων εἶπε(ν) 13, 69, 191, 346, 389, 543, 695, 788, 792, 826, 828 [121/1C]. **9:38** δαιμόνια ὅς οὐκ ἀκολουθεῖ ἡμῖν καὶ ἐκωλύσαμεν αὐτὸν ὅτι οὐκ ἀκολουθεῖ ἡμῖν] Byz; δαιμόνια ὅς οὐκ ἀκολουθεῖ ἡμῖν καὶ ἐκωλύσαμεν αὐτόν 032, 033, 13, 28, 69, 79, 106, 130, 182, 251, 389, 412, 427, 439, 444, 515, 543, 544, 580, 660*, 697, 700, 732, 740, 752, 776, 788, 791, 799, 826, 828, 877, 924*, 933, 948C, 959, 983, 1005, 1169, 1173, 1195*, 1225C, 1241, 1252, 1309, 1326, 1365, 1385, 1394, 1402, 1403, 1424, 1455, 1459, 1538, 1574, 1589, 1669C1, 1682, 2145, 2203, 2263, 2315, 2372, 2561, 2590, 2766, 2788, 2808 [126/1ZB]. **10:21(2)** καὶ δεῦρο ἀκολουθεῖ μοί ἄρας τὸν σταυρόν] Byz, incl. 61, 152, 555; καὶ ἄρας τὸν σταυρόν σου δεῦρο ἀκολουθεῖ μοί 032, 13, 69, 124, 299, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983, 2193* [138/4]. **10:36** Τί θέλετε ποιῆσαι με ὑμῖν] Τί θέλετε ποιήσω ὑμῖν 04, 038, 1 13, 69, 118, 146,

Leicestrensis is also related to Grottaferrata A'. α'. V. (GA 828^e), another Southern Italian manuscript.²³ However, Leicestrensis departs from 826 and 828 in a number of minor details (for example Mk 10:43, 11:23, 12:25, 12:41, 13:2(1), 15:41). These differences could have arisen through error, but may also indicate that Emmanuel used a lost manuscript of the “Ferrar Group” (“Family 13”), as Lake and Lake (1941) suggested.²⁴ Hutton (1911) created a complex

191, 205, 209, 266, 299, 346, 406, 422, 543, 556, 565, 593, 706, 719, 731, 755, 788, 826, 827, 828, 969, 983, 1204, 1253, 1291, 1424, 1446, 1582, 1593, 1641, 1675, 2193*, 2317, 2411, 2708 [144/3]. **11:32(2)** ὅτι ὄντως προφήτης ἦν] ὄντως ὅτι προφήτης ἦν 01C2, 03, 04, 019, 044, 13, 69, 191, 346, 543, 826, 828, 873, 892, 983, 2427 [153/2]. **12:14(2)** καὶ ἐλθόντες λέγουσιν αὐτῷ] Byz; καὶ ἐλθόντες ἤρξαντο ἐρωτᾶν αὐτὸν ἐν δόλῳ λέγοντες 011, 1, 13, 28, 69, 118, 124, 191, 205, 209, 299, 346, 495, 543, 563, 788, 826?, 828, 872, 903, 983, 1582, 2193 [156/5]. **12:23** ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει ὅταν ἀναστῶσιν] Byz; ὅταν οὖν ἀναστῶσιν ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει 13, 346, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983 [159/6]; ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει 01, 03, 04*, 019, 037, 044, 69, 1172, 1342, 1571, 2427. **12:25** ἄγγελοι οἱ] Byz; ἄγγελοι θεοῦ οἱ 13, 543, 733, 759, 826, 828, 983, 2290, 2750 [160/5]; ἄγγελοι θεοῦ 16, 61, 69, 79, 119, 152, 154, 165, 176, 184, 217, 235, 238, 348, 377, 382, 472, 491, 513, 578, 693, 695, 732, 799, 807, 829, 873, 898, 1009, 1071, 1160, 1166, 1216, 1220, 1243, 1279, 1330, 1396, 1463, 1515, 1528, 1557, 1579, 1588, 1641, 1780, 2174, 2263, 2561, 2726, 2784 [160/6]. **13:2(2)** καταλυθῇ] Byz; καταλυθήσεται 69, 106, 140, 346, 511, 543, 728, 826, 827, 873, 983, 999, 1039, 1053, 1181, 1253, 1288, 1342, 1442, 1450, 1538, 1574, 2112, 2487, 2606, 2738, 2750 [166/3]. **14:65** αὐτὸν ἔβαλλον] Byz, incl. 61, 152 *et multi*; αὐτὸν ἐλάβανον 05, 011, 032, 038, 0257, 1, 13, 22, 31, 69, 165, 346, 495, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983, 1053, 1192*, 1542, 1582*, 1604, 2509, 2542, 2680 [178/3]. **14:72** καὶ ἐκ δευτέρου] Byz, incl. 61, 152, 555; καὶ εὐθέως ἐκ δευτέρου 04*, 05, 011, 032, 038, 13, 69, 79, 124, 130, 169, 346, 472, 495, 543, 563, 565, 579, 700, 788, 826, 828, 932, 983, 1009, 1342, 1515, 1542, 1604, 1654, 2220C, 2290 [180/2B]. **15:12** ποιήσω ὃν λέγετε τὸν βασιλέα] Byz, incl. 61, 152, 555 [182/1/2]; ποιήσω τὸν βασιλέα 02, 05, 032, 038, 1, 13, 69, 79, 118, 205, 209, 474, 543, 565, 700, 788, 826, 828, 983, 1542, 1582, 1654, 2193*, 2542 [182/4]. **15:46** κατέθηκεν] Byz; ἔθηκεν 69, 826, 828 *et nonnulli* [189/2].

²³ Given that Emmanuel of Constantinople apparently copied part of the text of Leicestrensis in one of the Basilian monasteries in Southern Italy, he may have been the person who brought the Calabrian manuscript GA 326 to England.

²⁴ The relationship between these manuscripts was first posited by H. W. Ferrar, whose work was edited posthumously (1877) by T. K. Abbott. Further work on the group was done by Lake, 1899; Harris, 1900, 73, suggested that the family arose in the “Graeco-Arabic surroundings in Sicily in the twelfth century: [...] this subordinate group [mss 69, 346, 543] is descended from a Graeco-Arabic bilingual.” In their examination of Leicestrensis, Hutton, 1911, 49-56; Lake and Lake, 1941; and Geerlings, 1961a, 1961b, 1962, considered only the Gospels, though there is much to confirm the Calabrian origin of this family in the other books in Leicestrensis; see below. Further on the Ferrar Group, see Bonicatti, 1957; Canart and

stemma which shows that 69 was one of the most important members of the Ferrar Group. The Lakes posited another stemma of the Ferrar Group, more convincing than that suggested by Hutton.²⁵ However, it is suggested here that Leicestrensis is more closely related to 826 and 828 than the stemma of the Lakes indicates. As a group, Leicestrensis, 826 and 828 also bear strong family resemblances to several other Gospel manuscripts from the Ferrar Group, such as an eleventh-century manuscript now in Paris, BnF ms gr. 50 (*olim* 2244; GA 13^{et}); an eleventh-century manuscript now Athens, Ethnike Bibliotheke ms 74 (GA 788^e); the twelfth-century codex Milan, Ambrosiana ms S. 23 sup. (GA 346^{et}); and the twelfth-century manuscript Ann Arbor, Michigan University Library ms 15 (GA 543^{et}). It may thus be noted that Montfortianus draws on the distinctive Southern Italian textual tradition by way of GA 326 in Acts and the Epistles, and through Leicestrensis in the Gospels. Even without knowledge of the Grottaferrata manuscripts, Harris (1900) suggested on the basis of extra-Scriptural material in Leicestrensis that its text reflected Graeco-Arabic elements that combined in Sicily. Hutton was unaware of the fact that James had identified the scribe of 69 as Emmanuel, and on textual grounds he suggested that the manuscript could date to 1000 AD or before, a judgment which—albeit incorrect—reflects his opinion of the antiquity of the text type.²⁶

The Lakes pointed out that when copying Mk 14:1-41, the scribe of 828 seems to have used as his model Rome, BAV cod. gr. 2002 (GA 174^e), which was brought to Rome in the late seventeenth century from the monastery of S. Maria del Patir, near Rossano Cosenza (Calabria).²⁷ The text of Revelation in Leicestrensis is based primarily on an important uncial now in Rome (BAV ms gr. 2066 = GA 046^r), the so-called “Codex Basilianus.” A sixteenth-century annotation in Basilianus shows that it was likewise in the monastery library at S. Maria del Patir at that time.²⁸ This detail lends further weight to the suggestion

Leroy, 1977; d’Agostino, 1995; the contributions by d’Agostino in d’Aiuto *et al.*, 2000, 230-231, 235-236.

²⁵ Lake and Lake, 1941, 42.

²⁶ Hutton, 1911, 49-56.

²⁷ Lake and Lake, 1941, 19-20, 61.

²⁸ On the monastery, see Diehl, 1890, 292-298; aside from the text of Revelation, the ms contains the commentaries *In hexameron* by Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. Its old shelfmark was *Basilian. 105*. On 1r is the sixteenth-century catalogue marking: “Libro 24 Sancto basilio

that Leicestrensis was copied in Calabria—not in England, as the Lakes hesitantly suggested—and quite likely at S. Maria del Patir.²⁹ The dependency of Leicestrensis on 046 is clear from the beginning; the inscription Ἀποκάλυψις ἰω τοῦ θεολόγου καὶ εὐαγγέλιου (046, 181, 94) evidently forms the basis for the shorter (and more accurate) inscription found in Leicestrensis, Montfortianus and elsewhere (Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰωάννου τοῦ θεολόγου, 61, 69, 325, 498, 680, 792, 1006, 1957, 2042, 2049, 3025). Despite the fact that 046 represents an important early recension, its readings are sometimes a little unusual, and many of the manuscripts that descend from it correct some of its stranger features. Nevertheless, Leicestrensis is occasionally one of the few manuscripts to reproduce some of the unusual readings of 046 unaltered, or at least recognisably related.³⁰ Besides the readings derived from 046, Leicestrensis clearly contains readings not drawn from some other source, but this source is evidently lost, since no single extant manuscript contains all these other readings.³¹ However, it

homelia sop. la genesis.” While consolidating this collection in 1698-1701, P. Menniti wrote on the first flyleaf: “Ex bibl. Mon. S. M. de Patirio”; see Batiffol, 1891, 63.

²⁹ Lake and Lake, 1941, 11-16, 58-59.

³⁰ For all references to Revelation I quote from Hoskier, 1929; all variants are given as they depart from his base text. Manuscripts are designated by GA numbers, not Hoskier’s numbers. I have generally not listed variants which evidently arose through itacism, ν ἐφέλκυστικόν or omissions, unless they are particularly significant. After Rev 20, the mutilation of Leicestrensis precludes further comparison with the variants in Montfortianus. **Rev 4:8** καὶ ἔσωθεν] καὶ ἔξωθεν καὶ ἔσωθεν 046; ἔξωθεν καὶ ἔσωθεν 61, 69, 181; κυκλόθεν· ἔξωθεν καὶ ἔσωθεν 1828. **4:11** εἰσι καὶ] οὐκ ἦσαν καὶ 046, 18, 61*, 69, 1678, 1778, 1828, 2020, 2073, 2080. **8:7** τῶν δένδρων] τῆς γῆς 046*, 69, 175, 218, 429, 498, 2017, 2032, 2821. **9:11** Ἀβαδδὼν] Ἀβλαδδὼν 046 and nineteen others; Ἀβλαδδὼν 61, 69. **9:17** ἵππους] ἱππικούς 046, 61, 69, 2351. **9:20** οὐτε] οὐδε 8, 046, 61, 69, 1678, 1778, 2020, 2053T, 2080. **11:6** τὴν γῆν ἐν πάσῃ πληγῇ, ὅσάκις ἐὰν θελήσωσιν] τὴν γῆν ὅσάκις ἐὰν θελήσωσιν πάσῃ πληγῇ 046; τὴν γῆν ὅσάκις ἐὰν θέλωσιν ἐν πάσῃ πληγῇ 61, 69, 498, 1704; the related variant θέλωσι appears in 2351. **11:9** τὰ πτώματα] τὰ σώματα 1732, 1828, 1876, 2014, 2026, 2034, 2036, 2037, 2042, 2043, 2046, 2047, 2059*, 2074, 2082; τὸ σῶμα 61, 69, Bohairic. **12:2** γαστρί] ἐγγαστρί 046; γαγαστρί 69. **13:13** ἵνα καὶ πῦρ ποιῇ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβαίνειν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ εἰς τὴν γῆν] καὶ πῦρ ἵνα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβαίνει ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν 046, 104, 314, 336, 432, 429, 459, 522, 620, 627, 628, 922, 935, 1597, 1894, 2024, 2048, 2071, 2079; πῦρ ἵνα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβαίνει ἐπὶ τὴν γῆς 69; πῦρ ἵνα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβαίνει ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν 61. **18:21** ἔτι] ἔτι ἐν αὐτῇ 8, 046, 61, 69, 1828. **19:5** θρόνου] οὐρανοῦ 046, 61, 69, 2089, 2043.

³¹ The following readings in the text of Revelation in Leicestrensis appear to come from manuscripts other than 046: **Rev 1:6** βασιλεῖς καὶ] βασιλεῖον ἱεράτευμα 42, 61T, 69, 325**, 376,

456, 468, 517, 1854, 2026 *comm.*, 2070 *comm.*, 2351. **2:13** ὁ πιστός δς] ὁ πιστός μου δς 61, 69, 2050, 2053, 2351. **2:22** τοὺς μοιχεύοντας] τοὺς μοιχεύσαντας 61, 69, 241, 699, 2026, 2057, 1894, 1626. **2:25** ἄχρις] ἄχρις, C, 61, 69, 218, 452*, 339, 1352, 1611, 1852, 2045, 2053, 2351. **3:4** ἔχεις ὀλίγα ὀνόματα] ἀλλὰ ὀλίγα ὀνόματα ἔχεις 61, 69; ἀλλ' ὀλίγα ὀνόματα ἔχεις 314, 175, 241, 256, 429, 522, 664, 743, 1094, 2016, 2023, 2075, 2077. **3:8** μικράν] μακράν 61T, 69, 432, 1248, 1611, 1852. **3:9** γνῶσιν] γνῶση 61, 69, 1094. **3:12** τοῦ θεοῦ μου τῆς καινῆς] τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς καινῆς 61, 69, 2052. **3:14** ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός καὶ ἀληθινός] ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός ὁ ἀληθινός 61, 69, 104, 336, 459, 620, 628, 680, 922, 1733, 1876, 2014, 2015, 2034, 2036, 2037, 2043, 2046, 2047, 2050, 2053T, 2074, 2082*, 2351. **3:18** φανερωθῇ] φανη 61, 69, 792, 2026, 2057, 2070. **4:5** αἱ εἰσι] αὐτοῦ καὶ 61, 69, 1611*, 2351; αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰσι 1854. **4:8** πτέρυγας ἔξ] ἔξ πτέρυγας 61, 69, 1854, 2087. **5:13** τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς] τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ 42, 61, 69, 468, 2014, 2015, 2196. **6:9** τὴν πέμπτην σφραγίδα] τὴν σφραγίδα τὴν πέμπτην σφραγίδα (ς), 61, 69, 922, 935, 1352, 1611, 1774, 1854, 2026, 2286, 2329, 2351, 2595. **6:9** εἶδον ὑποκάτω] καὶ ἴδον ὑποκάτω C, A, 046, 61, 69, 104, 175, 181, 218, 336, 680, 792, 2017, 2019, 2038, 2060. **6:13** ὑπὸ μεγάλου] ἀπὸ μεγάλου ς, 61, 69, 1678, 2016**. **7:1** ἀνέμους] ὁ ἀνέμους C, 18, 61, 69, 94, 203, 362*, 429, 506, 522, 792, 919, 920, 1611, 1678, 1778, 1849, 1859, 1952, 1955, 2019, 2039, 2040, 2056, 2349, 2004, 2070, 2305, 2073, 2076, 2080, 2138, 2200, 2254, 2256, 2258, 2302, 2392, 2351. **7:16** διψήσουσιν] διψήσωσιν P, 69, 94, 218, 452, 467*, 468*, 680, 1611, 1852, 2021, 2031, 2038, 2056, 2058, 2059*, 2081*, 2082, 2595. **8:3** δώση] δω 325**, 61, 69, 456, 1006, 1841, (2019), 2053 (apparently the result of an abbreviation). **8:4** τοῦ ἀγγέλου] τῶν ἀγγέλων 69*, 205, 209, 218*, 2045. **8:6** ἡτοίμασαν] ἡτίμασαν 69*, 680, 2033. **8:4** τοῦ ἀγγέλου] τῶν ἀγγέλων 69*, 205, 209, 218*, 2045. **8:6** ἡτοίμασαν] ἡτίμασαν 69*, 680, 2033. **9:2** ἐσκοτίσθη] ἐσκοτώθη A, 61, 69, 1006, 2057, 2064, 2595. **9:6** καὶ οὐχ εὐρήσουσιν] καὶ οὐ μὴ εὐρήσουσιν 1, 61, 69, 82, 93, 180, 325, 337, 456, 468, 517, 582, 620, 628, 699, 1597, 1719, 1734, 1849, 2186, 2200. **10:8** βιβλαρίδιον] βιβληδάριον 046, 68; βιβλίον C, A, 61, 69, 1006, 1611, 1841, 1854, 2053 *comm.*, 2305L. **11:3** ἐξήκοντα] ἐξήκοντα πεντε ς, 69, Armenian¹⁻³, possibly introduced by optical error arising from the following word, περιβεβλημένους. **11:6** ἔχουσιν ἐξουσίαν κλεῖσαι τὸν οὐρανόν] ἔχουσιν ἐξουσίαν τῶν οὐρανόν κλεῖσαι 69; ἔχουσιν ἐξουσίαν τὸν οὐρανόν κλεῖσαι 61, 498, 792, 1704, 1862, 2020, 2058, 2084, 2196. **11:11** τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ ἡμισυ] τρεῖς ἡμισυ ἡμέρας 61, 69, 254, 1678, 1778, 2020, 2042, 2071, 2080, 2302, 2329. **11:13** ἔμφοβοι] ἐν φοβῶ ς, 61, 69, 180, 177, 337, 2351. **11:15** βασιλεύσει] βασιλεύει 325, 69, 172, 336, 456, 517, 582, 620, 628, 1774, 1862, 1876, 1888, 2014, 2015, 2018, 2029, 2031, 2034, 2037*, 2043, 2046, 2047, 2063, 2082. **11:16** κάθηνται] οἱ κάθηνται 61, 69, 205, 209, 2045, 2196, 2351. **11:19** θεοῦ ἐν] θεοῦ ὁ ἐν C, A, 61, 69, 172, 250, 254, 424, 616, 919, 1678, 1778, 1841, 1849, 1857, 1888, 2018, 2020, 2040, 2073, 2076, 2080, 2084, 2254, 2258, 2329, 2351. **11:19** ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ] ἀστραπαὶ καὶ βρονταὶ καὶ φωναὶ 61, 69, 141, 172, 250, 424, 498, 616, 1778, 1828, 1854, 1862, 1876, 1888, 1957, 2014, 2015, 2018, 2020, 2034, 2036, 2037, 2042, 2043, 2047, 2057, 2058, 2070, 2074, 2082, 2084, 2305, 2329. **12:4** εἰς τὴν] ἔστη 61; ἔστη 69; ἔστηκεν 757, 1876, 2073, 2077, 2079, 2200?; ἔστησεν 2254. **12:11** διὰ τὸ αἷμα] διὰ τοῦ αἵματος 61, 69, 792, 2019, 2073, 2076, 2254, 2258. **12:13** ἄρρενα] ἄρενα 046, 792, 2015, 2044T, 2058, 2059, 2084, 2256;

can be said with some confidence that this missing source must have had a text quite similar to that of the tenth-century codex Meteora, Monastery of the Metamorphosis ms 573, 245v-290r (GA 2351^r), which is also related to 046. Despite the remarkable similarities between 2351 and Leicestrensis, it is unlikely that Emmanuel used 2351 itself, unless it made its way back to Meteora after being used by Emmanuel in Calabria: not an impossible scenario, but perhaps an unlikely one. There are also some striking similarities between Leicestrensis and Athens, Ethnike Bibliothek ms 91 (GA 1828^{aprt}).

The text of Revelation in Montfortianus is based on that in Leicestrensis, as demonstrated by a number of unusual readings which appear only in these two manuscripts, or with only a few others.³² From Leicestrensis, Montfortianus

ἄρσενα 8, C, E, P, 35, 61, 69, 628, 1006, 1611, 1841, 1854, 2026, 2031, 2040, 2053T, 2056, 2065, 2070, 2073, 2076, 2254, 2258, 2351. **13:2** λέοντος] λεόντων 8, 61, 69, 1611, 1828, 2351. **13:15** ἀποκτανθῶσι] ἀποκτανθῆναι 61, 69, 2351, Bohairic. **13:18** τὸν ἀριθμὸν] τὸ ὄνομα (arising by homeoteleuton from previous verse) 61, 69, 1828, 2019, 2053 *comm.*, Armenian⁴. **14:1** ἔχουσαι] αἱ ἔχουσαι 61, 69, 1828. **14:7** πηγὰς ὑδάτων] τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων 61, 69, 94 (*cf.* Rev 8:10, 16:4); πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων 2256. **14:9** καὶ τρίτος ἄλλος ἄγγελος] καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος 61, 69, 181, 2059, 2081, 2186, 2814. **14:9** προσκυνεῖ τὸ θηρίον] προσκυνεῖ τὸ ποτήριον 69. **14:10** βασανισθήσεται] βασανισθήσονται A, 110, 61, 69, 254 *ex. em. vid.*, 1006, 1841, 2004^{sup}, 2019, 2040(?). **14:11** εἰς αἰῶνας αἰώνων] εἰς αἰῶνας αἰώνων ἀναβαίνει 046 *et nonnulli*; εἰς αἰῶνα αἰώνων ἀναβαίνει 051, 1, 61, 69, 91, 93, 104, 203, 242, 459, 468*, 506, 920, 1849, 1859, 1934, 2019, 2023 *comm.*, 2027, 2037, 2046, 2056, 2059, 2060, 2065 *ex em.*, 2073, 2075, 2077, 2081, 2186, 2254, 2286, 2302, 2595. **15:1** θαυμαστόν] θαυμάσιον 61, 69, 1828. **16:9** ταύτας] αὐτάς 69, 2305*. **16:10** τὰς γλώσσας] τὰς γλώσσας 69*, 632, 792, 1006, 2043. **16:21** ταλαντιαία] ταλαντιέα 61, 69, 1888. **17:16** οὗτοι] οὕτω 69 (probably in error). **18:2** κατοικητήριον] κατοικητήριον 69, 680. **18:2** καὶ φυλακὴ παντὸς ὀρνέου ἀκαθάρτου καὶ μεμισημένου] *om.* 61, 69, 2053 *comm.* **18:4** συγκοινωνήσητε] συγκυνωνήσητε 046, 452, 1006*; συγκοινωνήσεται 69, 522, 922, 1094, 1852, 2031, 2034, 2036, 2047, 2053T, 2058, 2059, 2070T, 2138, 2258; συγκοινωνήσατε 61. **18:8** ἡμέρα] ὥρα 61, 69, 792, 1828*. **18:13** θυμιάματα] θυμιάματος 046, 61, 69, 256, 680, 792, 1352, 1828, 1854, 2017, 2048. **18:13** ῥεδῶν] ῥεδιῶν 61, 69, 2022, 2060T, 2286T, 2305T. **18:21** θάλασσαν λέγων] θάλασσαν μέγαν λέγων 69 (probably by error). **18:24** εὐρέθη] εὐρέθησαν 69, 104, 336, 459, 582, 620, 680, 866b, 922, 1859, 2078, 2436. **19:2** πόρνην] πόλιν 69, 94, 205, 209, 241, 632 *comm.*, 699, 792, 986, 1384, 1611, 1678, 1732, 2023, 2029, 2045, 2071. **19:3** εἶρηκαν] εἰρήκασιν 69, 149, 201, 368, 386, 424, 616, 743, 1006, 1384, 1597, 1732, 1841, 1862, 1948, 2025, 2040, 2051, 2053T, 2055, 2057, 2062, 2064, 2065, 2067, 2072, 2076 *comp.*, 2258. **19:14** αὐτῷ] αὐτοῖς 69, 429, 522.

³² **Rev 1:7** κόψονται] κόψωνται 61, 69, 2256. **2:1** λυχνῶν] λυχνῶν 61T, 69. **2:16** σοι] *om.* 61, 69, 1626, 1746, 2020, 2052, 2057. **2:23** ἐν] *om.* 61, 69, 632*, 2070, 2302. **3:1** καὶ νεκρὸς εἶ] νεκρὸς εἶ 61, 69. **4:3** ὅμοιος ὁράσει σμαραγδίνῳ] ὁμοίως ὁράσις σμαράγδινων 046 *et multi*;

inherits some unusual readings from 046.³³ Sometimes variants recorded in the margins of Leicestrensis are entered in the margins of Montfortianus by the scribe of the text, a point which adds significantly to the assertion that the text of Revelation in Montfortianus was copied on the basis of Leicestrensis.³⁴ The great majority of the places where Montfortianus departs from Leicestrensis are readily explicable. For example, the scribe of Leicestrensis persistently removed the *ν ἐφελκυστικόν* when copying from 046, but the scribe(s) of Montfortianus restored it in the great majority of instances. Likewise, the scribe of 046 tends to give figures in Greek numerals, whereas the scribe of Leicestrensis (Emmanuel of

ὁμοίως ὁράσεις σμαράγδων 61, 69. **4:11** δύναμιν· ὅτι] δύναμιν· καὶ ὅτι 61*, 69. **6:1** ἐκ τῶν σφραγίδων] τῶν σφραγίδων 61, 69, 2041, 1075*. **7:17** πᾶν δάκρυον] πάντα τὰ δάκρυα 61, 69. **9:13** φωνὴν μίαν ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων κεράτων τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τοῦ χρυσοῦ τοῦ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ] μίαν φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ 69; μίαν φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τοῦ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ 61. **9:21** τῶν κλεμμάτων αὐτῶν] τῶν κλεμμάτων 61, 69. **10:5** εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν] ἐπὶ τὸν οὐρανόν 61, 69. **11:2** ἔσωθεν] ἔξωθεν *8^a*, A, P, 046 *et multi*; ἔξωθεν 61, 69, 792. **11:5** ἐκπορεύεται] ἐκπορεύσεται 61, 69, 2070, 2305, 2351. **12:8** τόπος] *om.* 61, 69. ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν] ἀδελφῶν 61, 69. **13:4** ὃς ἔδωκεν] τῷ δεδωκότι 046 *et nonnulli*; τῷ δόντι 61, 69. **13:5** ἐξουσία ποιῆσαι] ἐξουσία πολεμῆσαι 61, 69, Bohairic, Arabic, Armenian⁽²⁾.³ **13:10** ἀποκτανθῆναι] ἀποκτανθεῖναι 61*, 69T (corrected *super lineam*). **14:10** τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ] τοῦ θυμοῦ αὐτοῦ 61, 69. **14:13** ἐκ τῶν κόπων] ἀπὸ τῶν ἐργῶν 61, 69 (cf. *a laboribus suis* Vulg.; ἀπὸ τῶν κόπων τῶν ἐργῶν Bohairic). **15:4** Κύριε] *om.* 61, 69, 94, 2057, *h, dem, arm, aeth, gig, Cypr., Prim., Beat., Ambr.* **16:16** τὸν (*bis*) *om.* 61, 69. **16:19** τῆς ὀργῆς *om.* 61, 69, 2053. **17:4** χρυσοῦν ποτήριον] ποτήριον χρυσοῦν 046 *et nonnulli*; τὸ ποτήριον χρυσοῦν 61, 69. **17:9** ἐπ' αὐτῶν] ἐπάνω αὐτῶν 61, 69; ἐπάνω 1828. **17:12** ἄλλ' ἐξουσίαν] ἀλλὰ ἐξουσίαν *8, A*, 61, 69, 1006, 1841, 2040, 2329. **17:13** τὴν] (*bis*) *om.* 61, 69, 2329, Armenian². **17:16** ἡρημωμένην] εἰρημωμένην 61, 69, 2017, 2040. **17:17** θεός] κύριος 61, 69, 2070, 2305. **18:6** κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῆς] ὥς καὶ αὐτὴ καὶ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα 046, 110, 201, 368, 385, 498, 506, 517, 522, 1955, 2024; ὥς καὶ αὐτὴ καὶ κατὰ ἔργα 149; ὥς καὶ αὐτοὶ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα 69; ὥς καὶ αὐτὴ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῆς 61, 469, 2078, 2200, 2436. **18:13** σωμάτων] ψυχῶν 61, 69. **18:14** τὰ λιπαρὰ] λιπαρὰ 61, 69, 664, 808. **19:14** τὰ στατεύματα] στατεύματα 61, 69, 2038, 2051, 2055, 2064, 2067, 2068, 2200, Armenian. **20:9** καὶ ἀνέβησαν ἐπὶ] ἐπὶ 61, 69. **20:12** ἐστῶτας] *om.* 61, 69, 82, 429, 522, 2091.

³³ **Rev 1:6** ἐποίησεν] ποιήσαντι 046**, 42, 61T, 69, 325, 376, 468, 456, 517, 1854, 2019. **1:11** Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ Α καὶ τὸ Ω, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος] *om.* 046, 61, 69 *et multi*. **12:8** ἴσχυσαν] ἴσχυον 046, 61, 69. **15:6** λίνον] λινοῦν 046, 61, 69, 94, 254T, 498, 1704, 1828, 2031, 2056, 2073, 2078, 2254 *comm.*, 2436. **17:9** ἐπὶ ὅπου] ὅπου 046, 61, 69, 141, Bohairic. **17:17** αὐτῶν] αὐτοῦ 046, 61, 69, 181, 1854, 2256. **18:7** Κάθημαι] ὅτι καθιῶ 046, 61, 69, 632**, Armenian², Bohairic. **20:12** καὶ βιβλία ἠνεώχθησαν· καὶ βιβλίον ἄλλο ἠνεώχθη] καὶ βιβλία ἠνοιχθησαν· καὶ ἄλλο βιβλίον ἠνεώχθη 046, 61, 69, 91, 175, 242, 250, 424, 616, 1094, 1934, 2017, 2075, 2077.

³⁴ **Rev 6:16** ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου] ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ *8, 046, 61*, 69** et nonnulli*.

Constantinople) prefers to write the words in full, sometimes producing a unique reading. The scribe who copied Revelation into Montfortianus preferred to re-translate the figures back into Greek numerals. Thus at Rev 4:4 we find $\overline{\kappa\alpha}$ in 046, ἵκοσι τέσσαρες in Leicestrensis, and $\overline{\kappa\alpha}$ once again in Montfortianus, a feature repeated at many points. Many of the differences between Montfortianus and Leicestrensis show that the individual scribes followed their own preferences in a systematic way. Other differences are due to readily explicable scribal errors, such as the omission of an occasional word, itacisms, and confusion over double letters, vowel lengths and abbreviations.³⁵ The tendency of the scribe(s) of Montfortianus to errors of itacism is clearly illustrated by the reading at Rev 19:2 (~~ἀληθ~~ ἀληθινὰ). The differences between Leicestrensis and Montfortianus led Hoskier to conclude that “neither MS. was copied from the other,” but that “the two MSS. were merely derived from a common exemplar.”³⁶ But, *pace* Barrett and Dobbin, it is quite clear that Leicestrensis was used in other books in Montfortianus. Taking Mark as an example, we see that a large number of readings in Montfortianus for which Dobbin could not account are taken directly from Leicestrensis.³⁷ Readings from Leicestrensis are also to be found for

³⁵ **Rev 1:9** διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ] διὰ τοῦ λόγου τοῦ θεοῦ 61 [unique]. **5:8** φιάλας] φνάλας 61, 582, 1957, 2017, 2038, 2049, 2050, 2079, 2595. **8:8** δένδρων] ἀνδρῶν 61 [unique]. **9:15** ἁνῶν] οὐνῶν 61 [unique].

³⁶ Hoskier, 1929, 1:289. Hoskier correctly points out that both Leicestrensis and Montfortianus “are distinctly of the B [*i.e.* 046] group, yet partaking also of the P revision, having also quite an element of \aleph —(and of old \aleph^* at that, as a rule)—as well as reproducing some of the idiosyncracies of A. Of all the cursives, it is easy to see a family-likeness to 1 and its followers, but by no means a slavish one.” Finally, Hoskier mentions that he had gone further into the question in a “complete ‘exposé,’ chapter by chapter, which speaks for itself, in our manuscript deposited with the University of Michigan.” Enquiries at Michigan failed to turn up this manuscript.

³⁷ At the following points in Mark, Montfortianus takes its readings from Leicestrensis: **Mk 1:9** ἦλθον Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ Ναζαρέθ. **1:25** λέγων Φημῶντι. **1:34** ἤδρισαν αὐτὸν τὸν Χριστὸν εἶναι [20/4, also in 555]. **2:20** ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ. οὐδεὶς. **2:22** ἐπιδράπτει. **2:24** ποιοῦσιν οἱ μαθηταὶ σου τοῖς σάββασιν. **3:11** ὅτ’ ἂν αὐτὸν ἐθεώρουν προέπιπτον αὐτῷ καὶ ἔκραζον. **3:18** Ματθαῖον τὸν τελώνην καὶ Θωμᾶν. **3:23** Σατανᾶν ἐκβαλεῖν. **3:28** καὶ αἱ βλασφημίαι ὅσα ἂν. **4:37** κύματα ἐπέβαλλεν. **5:9** τί ὄνομα σοι. **5:38** θόρυβον καὶ κλαίοντας. **6:13** ἐθεράπευον αὐτούς. **6:14** τὴν ἀκοὴν Ἰησοῦ φανερόν. **6:15** Ἄλλοι δὲ ἔλεγον. **6:15** ἐστὶν ὡς εἰς τῶν προφητῶν. **6:31** εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς δεῦτε. **6:32** ἀπῆλθεν. **6:38** λέγουσιν αὐτῷ. **6:45**. προάγειν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ πέραν πρὸς Βιθσαϊδάν [Βηθσαιδάν 56, 58, 69]. **6:45**. ἀπολύσει. **6:53** γῆν Γενησαρέθ. **6:54** ἐπιγνόντες αὐτὸν οἱ ἄνδρες τοῦ τόπου. **7:2** ἐσθίοντας ἄρτους ἐμέμψαντο 61; ἐσθίοντας τοὺς ἄρτους ἐμέμψαντο 69.

example in the Epistles in Montfortianus.³⁸ Moreover, Leicestrensis seems to have influenced the arrangement of the books in Montfortianus; the unusual order of the Catholic Epistles in Montfortianus derives from GA 326, while the placement of the Pauline letters before Acts is apparently a relic of the order of the books in Leicestrensis. Hoskier's suggestion that Leicestrensis and Montfortianus are merely siblings in Revelation is therefore less likely than the hypothesis that Leicestrensis is the parent of Montfortianus, with variations and corrections introduced by the scribe(s) of Montfortianus partly on the basis of their own scribal preferences, and partly on the basis of another text (or texts) which has since disappeared.

Although many of the differences between Montfortianus and Leicestrensis can be explained through deliberate scribal intervention, it is clear that the scribe(s) of Revelation in Montfortianus had at least one other text to work from besides Leicestrensis, for in a handful of instances Montfortianus follows some other common reading (often the Majority reading) where

8:7 αὐτὰ εὐλόγησας [102/3]. **8:15** Ὁρᾶτε καὶ βλέπετε [107/3, also in 555]. **8:17** διαλογίζεσθε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ὀλιγόπιστοι ὅτι ἄρτους. **8:17** ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ὅτι ἄρτους. **9:7** αὐτούς. **9:23** εἶπεν αὐτῷ εἰ δύνασαι. **9:34** πρὸς ἀλλήλους. **9:40** καθ'. **9:41** τῷ ὀνόματι μου. **9:45** εἰς Γέεναν. **10:1** Ἰουδαίας πέραν [130/3, also in 555]. **10:16** εὐλόγει. **10:29** καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς. **10:33** αὐτὸν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν. **10:35** θέλωμεν ἵνα ὁ ἅν. **11:1** εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα. **11:6** ἐνετείλατο αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς. **11:13** φύλλα μόνον. **11:22** αὐτοῖς εἰ ἔχετε. **11:22** ἅν. **11:28** δέδωκεν. **12:17** ἀποδοτε οὖν τὰ. **12:20** ἦσαν παρ' ἡμῖν. καὶ ὁ. **12:25** ἄγγελοι θεοῦ [160/6]. **12:27** οὐκ ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς θεὸς νεκρῶν, ἀλλὰ ζώντων. ὑμεῖς οὖν πολὺ πλανᾶσθε [161/1]. **12:29** πρώτη παντῶν ἐντολὴ [ἐντολῶν 56, 58, 69] ἐστὶν ἀκοῦσε. **12:32** ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς καὶ. **13:2** οἰκοδομὰς ἀμὴν λέγω σοι οὐ μὴ 61; οἰκοδομὰς τὰς μεγάλας ἀμὴν λέγω σοι οὐ μὴ 69. **13:2** ἀφεθῇ λίθος. **13:6** εἰμι ὁ Χριστὸς καὶ πολλοὺς. **13:19** θλίψεις οἷα οὐ γέγονε. **13:20** ἡμέρας ἐκείνας οὐκ ἂν ἐσώθη πᾶσα σὰρξ. **13:21** πιστεύητε. **13:26** μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς. **13:27** ἕως ἄκρου τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. **13:32-33** εἰ μὴ ὁ πατὴρ μόνος. βλέπετε. **14:1** πῶς αὐτὸν δόλῳ κρατήσαντες. **14:8** ἐποίησεν. **14:9** ἐποίησεν. **14:32** ἕως ἀπελθὼν προσεύξομαι. **14:45** λέγει αὐτῷ Χαῖρε ῥαββὶ 61; λέγει αὐτῷ Ῥαββὶ ῥαββὶ 56, 58; αὐτῷ λέγει Χαῖρε ῥαββὶ 69. **14:53** πρὸς τὸν ἀρχιερέα Καιάφαν. Καὶ. **14:68** οὔτε. **15:3** οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς πολλὰ, αὐτὸς δὲ οὐδὲν ἀπεκρίνατο. **15:3** τὸν βασιλέα. **15:20** ἐξέδυσαν αὐτὸν τὴν χλαμύδα. **15:39** ὅτι οὕτως κράξας. **15:42** ὁ ἐστὶ πρὸς σάββατον. **16:14(1)** ἐγγεγερμένον ἐκ νεκρῶν οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν [191/3, also in 555].

³⁸ For example, in 1 Pt we find the following traces of Leicestrensis: **2:2** ἀξιωθῆτε 61, 69, 915. **2:6** ἐπ' αὐτῷ 61, 69 *et multi*. **2:11** ἀπέχεσθαι 61, 69 *et multi*. **4:1** παθόντος ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν σαρκὶ 61, 69, 1505, 1609, 1729, 1590. **5:8** ὅτι ὁ ἀντίδικος 61, 69 *et nonnulli*. In 1 Jn we find the following: **2:8** ἡμῖν 02, 149, 61, 69, 81V, 180, 323, 398, 436, 621, 945, 1739, 1827, 1845, 1881, 1890, 2243T, 2298, 2541, 2805. **3:24** 61, 69 *et nonnulli*.

Leicestrensis has an omission, lacuna, or an unusual reading.³⁹ For example, at Rev 1:4, Leicestrensis follows 046 in the minority reading εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θϋ, where Montfortianus follows the Majority reading εἰρήνη ἀπὸ τοῦ, giving the reading from Leicestrensis in the margin. Leicestrensis omits the second half of Rev 18:22, but Montfortianus restores it without deviation from the Majority text. Rev 14:17 is omitted in GA 69, 628, 1704, 1948, 2039 and 2138, apparently by homeoteleuton with the following verse. However, the scribe of Montfortianus clearly realised that Leicestrensis had an omission as he was copying. Once he had written θυσιαστηρίου (Rev 14:18), he evidently realised that a verse was missing in Leicestrensis. He consequently crossed out θυσιαστηρίου and inserted 14:17 from the Majority text. But unfortunately those readings where Montfortianus differs from Leicestrensis in Revelation are not all to be found in one manuscript, a situation that prevents us from identifying a secondary parent used by the scribe(s).

The close relationship between Montfortianus and Leicestrensis means that Montfortianus can tell us something about the damage suffered by Leicestrensis early in its history. The first and last pages of Leicestrensis are now defective. The text currently begins at Mt 18:15; the last leaf, containing Rev 18:7-19:10 is torn, and the last few leaves are missing entirely. Leicestrensis was thus already mutilated by the time it came into the possession of the Puritan preacher William Chark late in the sixteenth century, following the dissolution of the monasteries, for Chark wrote his *ex libris* (Εἰμὶ Ἰερμοῦ Χάρκου, “I belong to

³⁹ The following readings in Montfortianus cannot readily be explained as deliberate corrections of readings taken from Leicestrensis; they may have arisen through error, or may reflect readings in a lost parent: **Rev 2:12** Περγάμω] τῷ Περγάμω 61. **2:13** μου] *om.* 69, but not 61. **3:15** οὔτε] οὐ 61*. **4:5** ἐκπορεύονται] ἐκπορεύοντο 61L. **4:8** ἐν καθ’ ἑαυτό] ἐν 61, 2029. **11:2** μέτρησον] μέτρισε 046; μέρισον 61T [μέτρησον 61L], 2021; μέτρισον P, 181, 203, 218, 627, 664, 792, 919*, 1719, 1734, 1828, 1852, 1894, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2026, 2033*, 2038, 2043, 2057, 2060, 2082, 2254, 2286, 2329, 2595. **13:14** ὁ (*ante* ἔχει)] ὁς C, A, P, 046, 051, 61, 172, 250, 424, 616, 1828, 1854, 1862, 1876, 1888, 1094, 2014, 2015, 2018, 2019, 2026, 2031, 2034, 2036, 2042, 2043, 2047, 2057, 2059, 2060, 2073, 2081, 2082, 2084, 2138, 2286, 2302. **14:10** τῶν ἁγίων ἀγγέλων] ἀγγέλων ἁγίων 8, C, P, 051, (35), 61, 181, 1006, 1611, 1678, 1778, 1841, 1854, 2004, 2020, 2026, 2028, 2029, 2031, 2033, 2040, 2044, 2045, 2053T, 2054, 2056, 2057, 2059, 2060, 2068/2069, 2073, 2075**, 2080, 2081, 2083, 2091, 2254, 2286, 2302, 2329. **18:11** ἐπ’ αὐτήν] ἐπ’ αὐτοῦς 046; ἐπ’ αὐτῇ 69 (Majority); ἐπ’ αὐτῆς 61, 172, 792, 1888*, 2018.

William Chark”) in the top right corner of 1r.⁴⁰ However, Ferrar readings in Montfortianus begin at Mt 9:16, which suggests that Leicestrensis was already damaged when it was used by the scribes of Montfortianus, but lacked fewer pages than when it came into Chark’s possession. The last few leaves of Codex Leicestrensis are also mutilated, but the presence of readings derived from 046 right to the end of Revelation in Montfortianus suggests that the end of Leicestrensis was still intact when it served as the parent manuscript for Montfortianus.

According to information given in the London Polyglot, Chark owned Montfortianus after Thomas Clement. Mills suggested that Chark was one of those who added marginalia recording variants and corrections from the Leicester codex, though it seems that at least some of these variants were entered while the manuscript was being copied and corrected.⁴¹ After Chark’s death the two manuscripts were separated: Montfortianus passed to Thomas Mountford, while Leicestrensis passed to Thomas Hayne, who gave it to the city of Leicester in 1640.⁴²

5. Montfortianus shares a number of somewhat unusual readings with two other Gospel manuscripts: Cambridge, University Library ms Hh. 6. 12. (GA 555^e), dated to the fifteenth or sixteenth century; and what appears to be its parent, the thirteenth-century manuscript Rome, BAV cod. Pal. Gr. 227 (GA 152^e).⁴⁴ On 1v,

⁴⁰ Dobbin, 1854, 23, erroneously records the inscription as beginning ολιμ instead of εἰμί; see also Deeds and Stocks, 1919, xvii, 167.

⁴¹ Mills, 1707, CXLVIII: “Codicis cum in corpore, tum præsertim in spatio marginali plurima notavit eruditus quispiam (*Gul. Charcus*, ut opinor; erat enim is in Græcis insigniter versatus, ac præterea καλλιγραφώτατος, adeoque ad hæc notanda quasi genio suo incitatus.)” Cf. Dobbin, 1854, 7; Scrivener, 1894, 1:200, writes: “In the margin of this copy [Montfortianus], as of Cod. 69, are inserted many readings in Chark’s handwriting, even the misprint of Erasmus, ἐμαῖς for ἐν αἷς, Apoc. ii. 13.” Scrivener is slightly inaccurate here. Firstly, Erasmus’ reading at Rev 2:13 (ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐμαῖς Ἀντίπα) is not a misprint, but reflects the reading in Leicestrensis, which Erasmus must have recorded in Cambridge. Secondly, the short sample of Chark’s hand in the *ex libris* on 1r of Leicestrensis is significantly more flamboyant than the modest hand in the marginal additions. The variant reading ἐμαῖς in Montfortianus was added from Erasmus’ first edition by the second corrector.

⁴² Metzger, 1981, 138.

⁴⁴ Taking Mark as a case study, we find the following distinctive readings in both Montfortianus and GA 152 (numbers in square brackets refer to *Teststellen* and *Lesarten* in

GA 555 bears an inscription in a typical English hand of the early sixteenth century: *Poyntz / dominus regit me et nihil mihi deserit*. The book's owner, Poyntz (who also wrote his name on 1r and 185v), is perhaps Sir Francis Poyntz († 1528), a humanist and diplomat in the service of Henry VIII. Francis Poyntz knew Greek, translating the *Tabula Ceбетis* into English in the 1520s, besides some of Erasmus' Latin works. In 1523 Poyntz was named along with John Clement in the documentation relating to property given by Linacre to endow medical lectureships at Oxford and Cambridge.⁴⁵ In 1525 he was sent on a royal mission to Spain with Edward Lee.⁴⁶

Text und Textwert); all concordant sources are given, unless they are too numerous to mention here: **Mk 1:40** καὶ γονυπετῶν καὶ λέγων 61, 152, 555 *et nonnulli* [23/2]. **1:42** *om.* 021*, 31*, 61, 152, 435, 522, 555*, 1288, 1309, 1416, 1481, 1573, 1574, 1808*, 2182, 2206, 2486, 2810 [25/V]. **3:7** ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ τῆς Ἰουδαίας 16, 61* 152, 184, 348, 555*, 829, 1216, 1279, 1528, 1579, 2726 [44/1F]. **3:20** ὄχλος πολὺς 1, 16, 61, 131, 152, 184, 191, 205, 209, 513, 555, 676C, 829, 1004, 1216, 1243, 1279, 1528, 1546, 1579, 1582, 2174, 2193*, 2405, 2726 [49/3]. **3:21(1)** ἀκούσαντες οἱ περὶ αὐτοῦ 16, 61, 152, 184, 330, 384, 555, 574, 629, 829, 875*, 923, 1192, 1216, 1243, 1279, 1528, 1541, 1579, 1588, 2132, 2140, 2174, 2387, 2521, 2535, 2726 [50/3]. **3:29** καολάσεως 16, 61, 152, 184, 348, 513, 555*, 829, 1216, 1243, 1279, 1528, 1529, 1645, 1647, 2174, 2726 [52/5]. **5:42** ἐξέστησαν οἱ γονεῖς αὐτῆς 61, 152, 555 [71/7]. **6:17** ἐν τῇ φυλακῇ 61, 152, 555 *et nonnulli* [79/3]. **8:26** ὕπαγε εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου καὶ ἐὰν εἰσέλθῃς εἰς τὴν κώμην μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἴπῃς ἐν τῇ κώμῃ 16, 61, 152, 184, 348, 555, 752, 829, 1216, 1243, 1279, 1528, 1579, 2174, 2405, 2726 [116/4C]. **9:8** εἰ μὴ τὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον 16, 61, 184, 348, 513, 544, 752, 829, 1216, 1243, 1279, 1528, 1579, 2174, 2726 [120/5]; ἐ μὴ τὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον 152, 555 [120/5B]. **9:24** μετὰ δακρῶν {ὁ πατὴρ τοῦ παιδίου} ἔλεγε(ν) 61, 124, 152, 163, 174, 211, 233, 345, 382, 555, 591, 752, 829, 1216, 1243, 1253, 1279, 1528, 1579, 2174, 2726 [121/6]. **10:13** αὐτῶν ἄφηται 61, 152, 555 *et nonnulli* [133/2]. **10:19** μὴ φονεύσῃς μὴ μοιχεύσῃς 61, 152, 555 *et nonnulli* [134/2]. **12:23** ἐν τῇ οὖν ἀναστάσει ὅταν ἀναστῶσιν 61, 152, 555 *et nonnulli* [159/1/2E]. **12:41** ἀπέναντι 61, 152, 555 *et nonnulli* [163/3]. **13:2(2)** καταλυθῇ 61, 152, 555 *et multi* [166/1/2]. **13:15** καταβάτω 01, 03, 019, 044, 16, 61, 152, 184, 217, 245, 330, 348, 513, 544, 555, 578, 591, 693, 732, 829, 892, 1082, 1216, 1243, 1279, 1342, 1528, 1579, 1588, 1651, 1704, 2095, 2127, 2174, 2265, 2295, 2427, 2516, 2535, 2610, 2726, 2738 [168/2]. **13:28** αὐτῆς ἤδη ὁ κλάδος 61, 152, 555 *et multi* [169/1]. **15:27** καὶ ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφή ἡ λέγουσα, μετὰ ἀνόμων ἐλογίσθη 61, 152, 207, 245, 287, 555, 1182, 2095, 2213 [184/1R]. **16:17-18** καιναῖς, καὶ ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν ὄφεις ἀροῦσιν 04, 109, 033, 037, 044, 099, 1, 22, 33, 61, 152, 165, 168, 176, 233, 382, 517, [555: ... ἀροῦσι], 565, 579, 697, 698, 713, 872*, 892, 1005, 1047*, 1210, 1243*, 1253, 1278, 1424*, 1579, 1582*, 1675, 2561 [194/3]. **16:19** Κύριος Ἰησοῦς 61, 152, 555 *et nonnulli* [195/4]. See Gregory, 1900, 1:159 for a description of GA 152.

⁴⁵ See Fletcher, 1977, 125. The paper of GA 555 has a number of different watermarks, e.g. on bifolia β4/5 (similar to but not identical with Briquet 11154), Γ6/9, ε6/7 (similar to but not

If the scribes of Montfortianus actually used GA 152 rather than GA 555 (though there is no physical evidence in the manuscript that it was ever in England), it should not necessarily surprise us that the manuscript is now in Rome.⁴⁷ Many English libraries were broken up in the religious turmoil of the sixteenth century; at least one of John Clement's books, the manuscript of the *Anacreontica*, ended up in the Bibliotheca Palatina in Heidelberg, moving with part of this collection to Rome and finally to Paris, where it remains to the present day (BnF ms suppl. gr 384).⁴⁸

6. Oxford, Bodleian Library ms Clarke 4 (GA 378^{ap}). This manuscript, quite close to the Majority text, was used alongside Leicestrensis as a subsidiary parent for the text of Acts and the Epistles. Where Montfortianus has a Majority reading *contra* 326 and 69, it is invariably taken from 378.⁴⁹

identical with Briquet 1612), η1/8. Neither of the two hands in GA 555, 1v, matches that in a letter by Francis Poyntz in Kew, National Archives SP 1/44, 15r-v, but on the other hand it is not certain whether this letter was written by Poyntz himself or a secretary.

⁴⁶ Cooper, 1858, 85. Further on Poyntz, see Woolfson, 1998, 104, 113, 114, 194, 265.

⁴⁷ Thanks to Massimo Ceresa at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana for arranging to have the manuscript examined for me.

⁴⁸ On the history of the manuscript, see Anacreon, 1868, iii-xxiv, which includes a useful account of Clement's activities in Italy; see also Renouard, 1843, 375-376.

⁴⁹ Traces of 378 in Montfortianus are to be found for example in **Jas 1:25** ἐπιλησμών 1C, 61T, 254, 322, 323, 378, 398, 442, 621, 1251, 1524, 1827, 1842, 2180, ̡596, ̡1441. **Jas 2:16** μὴ δῶ δὲ αὐτοῖς 61, 378, 621, 630, 808, 2544. **1 Pt 1:10** εἰς ἡμᾶς 018, 1042, 33, 61, 180, 206, 218*, 378, 621, 629, 996, 1490, 1501, 1661, 1729, 1799, 1831, 2186, 2243, 2344. **1 Pt 1:16** γίνεσθε 020, 6, 18, 35, 43, 61, 93, 94, 104, 180, 181, 252, 321, 330, 378, 436, 459, 468, 629, 665, 876, 996, 1067, 1409, 1448, 1501, 1609, 1661, 1729, 1831, 1832, 1838, 1842, 1874Z, 1875, 1881, 1890C, 2186, 2298, 2541, 2718, 2774, ̡1281. **1 Pt 3:14** ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ πάσχετε 044, 61, 206, 252, 378, 429, 614, 630, 876, 1292, 1448, 1490, 1505, 1611, 1799, 1831, 1832, 1890, 2138, 2200, 2243, 2374, 2412, 2652, ̡1281. **1 Pt 3:17** θέλει τὸ 61, 365, 378C, 720C, 1241, 1678V, 1735, 1838, 1881, 2243, 2652, ̡596. **1 Jn 1:4** ὑμῶν 61, 378 *et multi*. **1 Jn 1:6** ἔχομεν 61, 378 *et multi* [Byz]. **1 Jn 1:6** περιπατοῦμεν 0142, 18, 33, 35, 61, 180, 378, 607, 1501, 1505, 1842, 1890, 2147, 2544, 2652, ̡921. **1 Jn 1:7** ἔχομεν 61, 378 *et multi* [Byz]. **1 Jn 2:2** μόνον 61, 69, 378 *et multi*. **1 Jn 2:4** ἐν τούτῳ ἀλήθεια] 044, 5, 61, 254, 378, 400, 436, 623, 808, 915, 945, 996, 1067, 1409, 1505, 1523, 1524, 1661, 1844, 1852, 2451, 2805. **1 Jn 2:11** εἶδεν 18, 61, 378, 1241, 1751. **1 Jn 3:1** ὑμᾶς ὅτι οὐκ ἔγνω 61, 378, *et multi*. **2 Jn 1** αὐτοῖς 61, 378, 442*, 1241, 1661, 1836, 1838*. **2 Jn 6** ἵνα καθὼς ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς 018, 5, 6, 33, 61, 93, 307, 321, 323, 378, 400, 424, 436, 442, 453, 614, 621, 623, 665, 720, 876, 918, 1067, 1243, 1270, 1297, 1409, 1595, 1678,

7. Erasmus, *Novum instrumentum* (Basel: Froben, 1516). The marginal corrections to the first four chapters of Revelation in Montfortianus were quite clearly taken from Erasmus' first edition of the New Testament, the only source (manuscript or print) that contains all these variant readings.⁵⁰ These variant readings were entered by the scribe of the Epistles. Barrett (1801) and Harris (1887) thought that the text of Revelation had been added to Montfortianus by William Chark in the late sixteenth century. However, the uniformity of paper stock throughout the manuscript, as well as the presence of readings from Leicestrensis throughout the entire text, suggests that Revelation was an integral part of Montfortianus from the time of its creation, thus removing Chark from consideration as text scribe of Montfortianus. The presence of variant readings from Erasmus' 1516 edition in the hand of the scribe of the Epistles means that the second volume, and probably the entire manuscript, can be dated to 1516 or after.

Summary. The variants in Montfortianus indicate that its scribes used the following manuscripts: in the Gospels they used GA 56 and 58 as primary parents, with Leicestrensis (69) and 555 (or perhaps 152) as secondary parents in cases where there was for example a lacuna or a doubtful reading in the primary parents. In Acts and the Epistles the scribes of Montfortianus used 326 as their primary parent, with 69 and 378 as secondary parents. In Revelation they used 69 as their primary parent, and an unidentified manuscript or manuscripts

1739, 1832, 1845, 1846, 1881, 2147, 2186, 2243, 2298, 2344, 2412, 2492, 2541, 2652, 2805, 2818, 2896. **2 Jn 6** ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατῆτε 61, 69, 378 *et multi* [Byz]. **2 Jn 12** γενέσθαι 61, 378 *et nonnulli*; γὰρ γενέσθαι 6, 326, 424C1, 1127, 1739, 2805. **3 Jn 14** ἰδεῖν σε 61, 378 *et multi* [Byz]. **Jude 12** δις ἀποθανόντα καὶ ἐκρίζωθέντα 61, 180, 307, 321, 378, 453, 467, 629, 996, 1501, 1609, 1661, 1678, 1729, 2147, 2186, 2243, 2412, 2492, 2652, 2718, 2774, 2818, 2921, 2938, 2941. **Jude 25** καὶ μεγαλωσύνη κράτος καὶ ἐξουσία 61, 378 *et multi* [Byz].

⁵⁰ **Rev 1:5** ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν] ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν Erasmus¹, 61**, *et nonnulli*. **1:17** ἐπέθηκε] ἔθηκε 046, 69; ἔθηκεν 61T *et alii*; ἐπέθηκεν 8, 1, 61**, 296, 1894, 2050, 2060, 2071, 2082, 2286, 2329, Erasmus¹⁻⁵, Aldus, Colines. **1:20** εἰσὶ] εἰσὶν 61** *et alii*, incl. Erasmus¹, Aldus. **2:3** ἐβάστασας] ἐβάπτισας 1, 61**, 2028, 2037*, 2044, 2046, 2052, 2054, 2059, 2068, 2081, 2083, 2186, Erasmus¹⁻², Aldus. **3:1** ζῆς] ζῶς 1, 61**, Erasmus¹. **4:10** προσκυνούσι] προσκυνήσουσι 046 *et multi*; προσκυνήσουσιν 8, A, 1, 61T, 69 *et multi*; καὶ προσκυνουσιν 61L**, 792, Erasmus¹, Aldus. **4:10** βάλλουσι] βάλλουσιν 8*, 046, 61**, 181, 296, 2031, 2048, Erasmus¹⁻⁵, Aldus, Colines; βάλουσι 69 *et multi*.

containing readings similar to 1828 and 2351 as secondary authorities. In addition, Erasmus' 1516 text was used as the source of alternative readings added in the margins of Revelation, some by the scribe of the text. In the process of proofreading, the scribes also used 69 to enter *variæ lectiones* and corrections in the margins of Montfortianus. Many readings in the body text of Montfortianus are taken directly from Leicestrensis. Elsewhere the scribes conflated elements from the manuscripts at their disposal to create a reading not found in any other manuscript.⁵¹ Dobbin was correct in suggesting that there are “arbitrary and fanciful variations” made by the scribes of Montfortianus—for example Rom 8:11 and 1 Pt 3:16—but these are not nearly as frequent as Dobbin believed; many of those readings for which Dobbin could not account are simply introduced under the influence of Leicestrensis.

The care with which the scribes of Montfortianus compared conflicting readings from the manuscripts before them may be illustrated by an example. At Lk 15:4, GA 56 reads οὐκ ἀπολείπει, GA 58 reads οὐχὶ καταλείπει, and Leicestrensis reads οὐχὶ καταλείπει. Faced with a conflicting reading between 56 and 58, the scribe of Montfortianus follows Leicestrensis. Corrections have also been entered in 326 consistent with those in Leicestrensis; these were probably introduced when all the manuscripts were assembled for the purpose of copying Montfortianus.

It is striking that Leicestrensis was used extensively in Matthew and Mark, but hardly at all in Luke at John. This anomaly may have arisen if both volumes of Montfortianus were being copied simultaneously, perhaps even in the same room, and that Leicestrensis was being shared by the scribes as they progressed;

⁵¹ E.g. **2 Cor 12:21** μὴ πάλιν ἐλθόντα με ταπεινώσει ὁ θεός 69 *et multi* [26/1B]; μὴ πάλιν ἐλθόντος μου ταπεινώσει με ὁ θεός P⁴⁶, 03, 010, 012, 125, 81, 88, 326, 915, 1837, 2805 [26/2B]; μὴ πάλιν ἐλθόντα ταπεινώσει με ὁ θεός 61 [26/4]. **Col 3:23** καὶ πᾶν ὃ τι ἐὰν ποιῆτε Byz [9/1]; καὶ πᾶν ὃ τι ἂν ποιῆτε 69 *et nonnulli* [9/1B]; καὶ πᾶν ὃ ἐὰν ποιῆτε 61 *et nonnulli* [9/3]; καὶ πᾶν ὃ ἐὰν ποιεῖτε 056*, 326, 1837, 2104 [9/3C]. Some corrections in Montfortianus seem to show that Leicestrensis was sometimes followed as the primary parent. For example, at **Jude 3**, Montfortianus originally had the relatively rare reading ὑμῶν σωτηρίας (6, 61*, 69, 104, 254, 459, 1523C, 1838, 1842, 1844, 1850, 1881, 2298, 2805 [89/2C]), which was subsequently corrected from 326 to the better-attested ἡμῶν σωτηρίας (P⁷², 02, 03, 5, 36, 43, 61C, 62, 81, 88, 93, 296, 307, 321, 322, 323, 326, 378, 431, 436, 442, 453, 614, 621, 623, 630, 641*, 665, 720*, 915, 918, 999, 1067, 1127, 1243, 1292, 1311, 1367, 1409, 1523*, 1524, 1678, 1720, 1735, 1739, 1837, 1845, 1846, 2147, 2197, 2200, 2344, 2401, 2412, 2652 [89/2]).

for example, while the scribe of the first volume was copying Luke and John, the scribe of the second volume may have been copying Revelation, handing Leicestrensis over only when the first scribe wanted an alternative reading, or wanted to proofread the transcript he had made on the basis of GA 56 and 58. This hypothetical situation would explain why readings from Leicestrensis occur in the text of Matthew and Mark in Montfortianus, but mainly as marginal additions in Luke and John.

Having identified the parent manuscripts of Montfortianus, we are in a position to analyse the text of 1 John, that part of the manuscript which bears most closely on the question of the Johannine comma. The recent publication of the Catholic Epistles in the *Editio critica maior* permits us to observe precisely that the scribe of Montfortianus follows 326 very closely in 1 Jn, departing only in a small number of places, usually to follow GA 378 or Leicestrensis. The corrector who marked *variæ lectiones* from Erasmus' 1516 edition in the margin of many books in Montfortianus did not mark anything in the margins of 1 Jn. I have marked where 326 and 69 agree, where 326 has unusual readings shared only with a few other manuscripts. Since readings from printed editions are not given in the *Editio critica maior*, I have also indicated the relevant readings from Erasmus' first edition of the Greek text.

1 Jn 1:3 καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ] 326, Erasmus¹; καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ] 61, 69

1:6 περιπατῶμεν] 69, 326, Erasmus¹; περιπατοῦμεν] 0142, 18, 33, 35, 61, 180, 378, 607, 1501, 1505, 1842, 1890, 2147, 2544, 2652, ℓ921

1:9 ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας] 326; ἡμῶν τὰς ἁμαρτίας] 61 only

2:4 ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια] 326, Erasmus¹; ἐν τούτῳ ἀλήθεια] 044, 5, 61, 254, 378, 400, 436, 623, 808, 915, 945, 996, 1067, 1409, 1505, 1523, 1524, 1661, 1844, 1852, 2451, 2805

2:11 οἶδεν] 326; εἶδεν] 18, 61, 378, 1241, 1751

2:22 ὁ Χριστός] 326; Χριστός] 61 is the only manuscript with this reading, though it is also given by Erasmus¹.

2:25 ζῶν τὴν] 18, 326, 1241, 1609, 1837 only; ζῶν] 61 only

3:2 οὐπω] 326, Erasmus¹; οὐκ] 61 only

3:12 τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ] 326, Erasmus¹; τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ] 61, 621, 1751, ℓ596

- 3:23** ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ] 326, Erasmus¹; ἐντολή] 61 only
- 3:23** πιστεύσωμεν] 326, Erasmus¹; πιστεύωμεν] 61
- 4:1** ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ] 326, Erasmus¹; ἐκ θεοῦ] 1, 61, 522 Cyr.
- 4:2** πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ] 326, Erasmus¹; πνεῦμα θεοῦ] 61 only
- 5:2** ὅταν τὸν θεὸν ἀγαπῶμεν] 326, Erasmus¹; ὅτι τὸν θεὸν ἀγαπῶμεν] 61 only
- 5:2** ποιῶμεν] 326; ποιοῦμεν] 5, 61, 623
- 5:6** ὕδατι καὶ ἐν τῷ αἵματι] 326; αἵματι καὶ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι] 69; ὕδατι καὶ αἵματι] 61, 81, 621, Cyr.
- 5:6** τὸ πνεῦμά] 69, 326, Erasmus¹; ὁ Χριστός] 61, 629 only
- 5:6** ἡ ἀλήθεια] 69, 326, Erasmus¹; ἀλήθεια] 048V, 61, 93, 665, Cyr.
- 5:7** ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα] 326, Erasmus¹ *et multi*; ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, πατήρ, λόγος, καὶ πνεῦμα ἅγιον, καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι 61, 429Z, 918, Erasmus³
- 5:8** καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ 61, 88Z, 429Z, 918, Erasmus³
- 5:8** πνεῦμα, καὶ ὕδωρ, καὶ αἷμα 61, 918, Erasmus³
- 5:8** καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἐν εἰσιν] 326, 918, Erasmus¹⁻⁵; *om.* 61, 629
- 5:12** ὁ ἔχων τὸν υἱὸν] 326, Erasmus¹; ὁ ἔχων τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ] 61, 104, 180, 206, 429, 467, 522, 614, 630, 876, 1127, 1292, 1490, 1505, 1611, 1799, 1831, 1832, 1838, 1846, 2138, 2147, 2200, 2243, 2412, 2544, 2652
- 5:12** ἔχει τὴν ζωὴν] 326, Erasmus¹; ἔχει ζώην] 61 only
- 5:15** αἰτώμεθα] 326, Erasmus¹; αἰτούμεθα] 61 only
- 5:20** ἐσμέν] 326, Erasmus¹; ὦμεν] 61 only

It can be seen clearly that the scribe of Montfortianus generally followed 326 very closely in this Epistle, though taking readings from GA 378 at three points (1:6, 2:4, 2:11). The remaining variants generally fall into a number of categories: 1) simple scribal errors, such as *ou* instead of *ω*, *ὅτι* for *ὅταν*, *ὦμεν* for *ἐσμέν*; 2) the persistent omission of articles; and 3) omission of words such as *αὐτοῦ*, or words which could be supplied from previous clauses (1:3, 5:6).

Besides these apparently unintentional variants are a number of deliberate attempts to make the Greek conform to the Latin Vulgate against the reading in the parent manuscript, such as ὁ Χριστός (5:6, where its reading coincides with the Latinising ms 629), the addition of the comma (5:7-8, like 629, although the reading is quite different), and perhaps in the addition of τοῦ θεοῦ in verse 5:12. We are thus quite justified in concluding 1) that 326 and 378 were the sources used for 1 Jn by the scribe of 61; and 2) that the comma is a deliberate interpolation on the part of the scribe of 61. Dobbin (1854) already suggested as much on the basis of his examination of 326; our knowledge of the extant manuscripts, more extensive and detailed than what was available in Dobbin's day, confirms his conclusion.

Many of those who have argued for the authenticity of the Johannine comma have dated Montfortianus as early as possible in an attempt to establish the genuineness of the passage. Martin (1722) suggested a date as early as the eleventh century on the basis of the tremas on some of the vowels, but this argument was refuted by Porson.⁵² Indeed, this scribal habit is to be observed in the work of both Emmanuel of Constantinople and Johannes Serbopoulos, whose manuscripts represent the most important parents of Montfortianus. This did not stop many from continuing to claim an excessively early date for the manuscript in an attempt to lend it an increased authority.

Instead, all the evidence points to a date in the early sixteenth century. For a start, along with the Greek *kephalaia* the manuscript contains chapter divisions following the Latin custom, divisions introduced in the mid-thirteenth century. This detail suggests two conclusions: that the manuscript was written under Western influence, and cannot have been written before the mid-thirteenth century. Secondly, three of the parent manuscripts (56, 58, 69) were written in the second half of the fifteenth century; Montfortianus can therefore not have been written before then. Thirdly, given that mss 56, 58 and 326 first came together in 1502 at Oxford, we can conclude with a high degree of certainty that Montfortianus was copied in Oxford, and no earlier than 1502. Perhaps most tellingly, the presence in Montfortianus of readings that appear to be drawn from Erasmus' 1516 edition of the New Testament—a crucial factor that has never been noticed previously—restricts the period in which the book could have been copied to the years 1516-1520. The presence of marginal readings in Revelation

⁵² Porson, 1795, 107.

entered by the text scribe from Erasmus' 1516 *Novum instrumentum* also gives weight to the suggestion—hitherto merely a suspicion without real foundation—that Montfortianus was copied as a result of the publication of Erasmus' New Testament, in an attempt to force Erasmus into including the Johannine comma in his text.

Scribal hands

The text of vol. 1 (the Gospels and liminal material) is written in one hand throughout, with twenty or twenty-one lines of text per page. The scribe began quite neatly, but sometimes his script becomes larger and less careful, presumably as the result of fatigue or haste. Nevertheless, certain features, such as the constant reappearance of the neat hand and the consistent number of lines per page, suggests that the same scribe wrote the entire text of the Gospels, despite the apparent variation in script.⁵³

Acts and the Epistles are written in a different hand from the Gospels. The scribe of Acts-Epistles has a slightly fatter script than the scribe of the Gospels; this second scribe forms some letters (for example upper-case K) quite differently from the scribe of vol. 1; the scribe of vol. 2 prefers final ς , while the scribe of vol. 1 prefers final σ . Moreover, the scribe of volume 2 prefers a page with seventeen to nineteen lines of text. The first nineteen quires of vol. 2 are marked with sequential signature markings (a-t), apparently entered by the scribe of the Epistles, although the scribe left the final twelve quires without signature markings. This sequence of signatures is entered in a hand different from the hand that entered details from the lectionary. The only foliation marks (apart from the modern pencil sequence) after this point in the second volume are from a separate sequence of signatures (beginning at aa), apparently added in stage 2, when the two original volumes were brought together; even this new sequence only reaches quire iii, the last quire containing the Epistles.

Nevertheless, the fact that the two volumes were written by different scribes does not mean that they were not conceived as a unit. Firstly, Acts is spliced in between the Pauline and Catholic Epistles. (Incidentally, the same

⁵³ Dobbin, 1854, 16, thought that there was a break in hand after the sixth folio in Mark, but it seems to me and to Barbara Crostini-Lappin that this apparent difference is simply the result of the scribe returning to the work after a break.

order may be observed in 69, which however does not place Jude after James, as does Montfortianus.) Secondly, the same watermarks may be found throughout the manuscript, even into Revelation.⁵⁴ The presence of multiple hands, the relative frequency of errors (which are simply crossed out), the use of paper from the same stock, and the distribution of variants from the parent manuscripts all seems to suggest that the manuscript was put together by a team of scribes in a relatively short period of time, despite the care taken to compare the text from at least two or three parent texts.

The physical construction of Montfortianus

Stage 1 (before 1521). The staining and wear on fols. 199 and 200 suggests that they were formerly the outer leaves of two separate volumes. This suggestion is also borne out by further evidence: the beginning of a new sequence of signature in Romans (placed after the Gospel of John); the empty pages at the end of the original vol. 1 (quire aa); and scribal differences between the Gospel section and the rest of the manuscript. The two original volumes would thus have comprised the following:

Vol. 1: Gospels (now 6r-191v), preceded in each case by lists of the *kephalaia*. On 192r-198v are the prologues of Theophylactus to Mark, Luke and John, and several more prologues to Luke, including those of Titus of Bostra and Cosmas Indicopleustes, the *stichoi* on John by Nicetas the Paphlagonian Philosopher, as well as the *stichoi* on Luke sometimes ascribed to Nicetas. All this additional material is copied from GA 58.⁵⁵

Vol. 2: Pauline Epistles (200r-344v), Acts (344v-411r), Catholic Epistles (Jas, Jude, 1Pt, 2Pt, 1 Jn, 2 Jn, 3 Jn) (411v-442v); Revelation (443r-469v). This volume also has the ecumenical prologues to the Epistles, with the

⁵⁴ Harris, 1887, 52, reported that there is no watermark on the paper of Montfortianus; Abbott, 1893, reported one; Barbara Crostini-Lappin and I found another two.

⁵⁵ Barrett, 1801, Appendix:3-4; Dobbin, 1854, 31. The preface to Luke by Titus Bostrensis is in Mills, 1707, 120, together with seven other proems; see also Soden, 1902, 306 [n° 102], 316 [n° 121, Cosmas], 379 [n° 12, *stichoi* of Nicetas on John], 381 [n° 26, *stichoi* on Luke, sometimes attributed to Nicetas]; thanks to Henk Jan de Jonge for his assistance with these prefaces.

exception of 2 Pt and the Johannine Epistles.

The majority of the text of Revelation is added in a third hand; a fourth hand seems to enter on 465v, line 3. The scribes of Revelation did not add the red running headers and other textual markers found in the Gospels, Acts and the Epistles. It seems then that the manuscript was conceived as three separate jobs completed at more or less the same time. The reddish-brown foliation added in stage 2 stops at quire iii (439r), and thus fails to continue into the Revelation section. This evidence suggests that in stage 3, the third scribe added the text of Revelation first by filling the remaining leaves of quire iii, subsequently adding another three quires as he continued. The book of Revelation is added, based primarily on codex Leicestrensis. This happened soon after the completion of the text of the Epistles, for the paper on which the text of Revelation was copied contains watermarks found earlier in the manuscript (e.g. fols. 465 and 459); this paper is mingled with another stock that has no discernible watermark, and is a little thicker, with a slightly more fibrous surface, possibly the same paper as appears also in quires yy and zz. The text in Revelation generally has eighteen or nineteen lines per page.

Stage 2 (before 1521). The two original volumes of Montfortianus were brought together, and a new continuous foliation, covering both volumes and reaching until quire iii, was added in a reddish-brown ink.

Stage 3. The two original volumes plus Revelation were bound together, possibly at the instruction of “Mayster Wyllams” of Corpus Christi, whose ownership marking occurs on 471r, the back flyleaf from this stage. The original sixteenth-century binding is of goatskin on beech boards, panel-stamped with indistinct floral designs. The original fore-edge clasps are preserved.

Several pages of the ms contain manuscript notes in Latin, giving the details of lectionary readings.⁵⁹ These lectionary readings occur among other places on the front endpaper and flyleaves of what was earlier vol. 1, and on the back flyleaf of what was earlier vol. 2. Barrett (1801) suggested that the lectionary readings were written in the hand of “Mayster Wyllams,” but the lower-case *c*, *e*, *h*

⁵⁹ Oxford, Lincoln College ms lat. 78, presented to the College by John Forest († 1446), contains a table of the lessons (4r-12r), which the “lectionary scribe” may have consulted.

and *l* of the “lectionary scribe” are formed quite differently from those of “Mayster Wyllams.”⁶⁰ On 303r, the “lectionary scribe” added a heading in Latin at the beginning of the second letter to the Thessalonians: “ad thessolōstēs [corrected to “thessolāstēs”] 2ⁿ 1^m ca^m”; the lectionary scribe clearly had trouble spelling “Thessalonicenses.” This inscription seems to be written in the same ink as the Greek title to this book; the scribe had trouble with the same word in Greek, misspelling and then correcting it: “πρὸς θελλ θεσσαλονικεῖς δευτέρα”. On the basis of the similar ink and the shared mistake in Latin and Greek, I tentatively identify the “lectionary scribe” as the scribe of the Greek text of the Epistles.

The purpose of these lectionary details is difficult to decide. The manuscript was copied in England, so it was evidently not intended as a liturgical book. Rather, it would seem that these entries were made by someone who wanted to follow the Greek text during the mass while it was being read aloud in Latin, or who wished to study the text in private devotions on the relevant days in the church’s calendar. It is also possible that these details were deliberately added to make the manuscript look like it had been in use for some time before it was handed over to John Clement.

Stage 4 (1740s). The note by Jean Ycard (now fol. 2r-v) indicates that a rebinding was considered desirable by the early nineteenth century. The book, along with many of the other manuscripts in the collection, was accordingly restored in early 1742 under the direction of John Lyon. Lyon’s accounts show that this restoration consisted in providing a new spine, and cost one shilling.⁶² The front endpaper from this stage are now fol. iv; this leaf is in a different paper from the rest of the manuscript, and is marked with Lyon’s shelfmark (A. 4. 21).

Stage 5 (nineteenth century). In 1790, Adam Clarke saw the manuscript and noted that it had already suffered from repeated and careless examination since its rebinding half a century previously: “It is a very thick 12mo. volume, and, by bad usage, is now broken into two parts about the middle. [...] This MS. is not taken proper care of, and in the next binding it is likely to suffer considerable

⁶⁰ Barrett, 1801, Appendix:2-3, followed by Michaelis, 1801, 4.

⁶² O’Sullivan, 1970, 22.

damage.”⁶³ According to the 1964 conservation report, the book was re-sewn in the nineteenth century.

Stage 6 (1964). The book was conserved in 1964 by Anthony Cains, including resewing and rebacking. The original boards and fore-edge clasps were retained.

Paper

The manuscript is written on paper throughout, not on vellum as some earlier commentators stated.⁶⁴ The format is in octavo, not in duodecimo as claimed by Abbott’s 1900 catalogue.⁶⁵ Three watermarks are in evidence. Two of these are quite similar, and correspond closely to watermarks from paper produced in Genoa between c. 1495 and c. 1516. As is common in paper folded in octavo, the watermarks occur on the top of the gutter, and are consequently cut in half (or even in quarters) in each instance, making identification difficult. One watermark has a large orb surmounted by a cross finished with small circles on the arms and top of the cross (visible for example on fols. 345, 421, 424, 438, 439 and 459). The next is a plain cross surmounting a crescent/orb similar in form to Bricquet 5235 (Genoa, 1495) and 5258 (Genoa, 1516), and containing the letter M (perhaps also N) in the lower part of the orb (visible for example on fols. 3c, 9, 173, 301, 381, 384, 398, 405, 417, 440 and 465); the circle is about 44 mm across, and the entire figure about 70 mm long.⁶⁶ There is a third, smaller watermark showing a small orb surmounted by a palmette, which always appears at the top of the page in the middle (e.g. fols. 168, 340 and 349). The uniformity of watermarks through the volume suggests strongly that the entire manuscript was created as a unity. The paper is lightly glazed; brush marks from the application of the glaze are occasionally visible.

Former shelfmarks from Trinity College Dublin

⁶³ Clarke, 1833, 254.

⁶⁴ Firstly Martin, 1722, 158.

⁶⁵ Abbott, 1900, 30.

⁶⁶ This watermark alone was recorded by Abbott, 1893, who gives a good illustration. I would like to thank Barbara Crostini Lappin for her generous co-operation in analyzing the watermarks and scribal hands of Montfortianus.

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|-----------------------------|----------|
| Ware/Ussher (c. 1656) | EEE. 1 |
| Catalogue c. 1670 | B. 1. 22 |
| Foley (c. 1688) | G. 97 |
| Bernard (1697) | 752 |
| Lyon (c. 1742) | A. 4. 21 |
| Abbott (1900) ⁶⁷ | 30 |

Physical Description

Format: All quires have eight leaves in octavo. Two leaves have been cut away: the original fol. m6 was evidently cut away during the process of copying, for there is no loss of text; the original fol. aa5 has also been cut away, but it is impossible to say when this happened, for it is part of a run of blank leaves at the end of the original vol. 1.

Foliation: There are a number of foliation-sequences in this ms. The most recent is in pencil (upper right of each leaf); a note on fol. [472r] records that this was done in April 1964, apparently when the volume was last conserved (stage 6). There is also a separate modern pencil pagination for Revelation, on the lower outside corner of each page (1-54 = 443r-469v). Before the addition of Revelation, vol. 2 had its own signatures for the first nineteen quires (a-t), apparently added by the original scribe, leaving the last twelve quires unmarked. In stage 2, a continuous foliation sequence running through both volumes was added in a different, reddish-brown ink, and apparently in a different hand, reaching until signature iii.

Description: The following is a description of the book in its current state, with references to the latest pencil foliation.

Fols. i-iii. Flyleaves in Japanese paper, added in stage 6.

Fol. iv. This flyleaf was added in the 1742 rebinding. It bears the shelf

⁶⁷ W. O'Sullivan, introduction to Colker, 1991, 1:21-33. See also W. O'Sullivan, *Ussher's manuscripts*. Typescript, Dept. of Manuscripts, Library of Trinity College Dublin; thanks to Peter Fox for his assistance with these details. None of the entries in the *Catalogus Bibliothecæ Ussearianæ* (Dublin, Trinity College ms 3) could be identified firmly with Montfortianus.

mark “Class A. Tab: 4. N° 21” from Lyon’s reclassification of the manuscripts.

The next eleven leaves comprise a blank quire included in stage plus a few extraneous leaves subsequently included through error in later rebindings. (For the purposes of description, this original quire will be assigned the hypothetical folio numbers α1-8.) This blank quire, used for notes, originally comprised the following bifolia: α1/8 is now 1/5; α2/7 is now 3/4c; α3/6 is now 3a/4b; α4/5 is now 3b/4b. Fol. 2 was bound into the book in 1964. Bifolium 3c/4 was originally located at the back of the book, as indicated by the wormholes, which match those in fol. 471.

Fol. 1 shows dark stains caused by contact with the boards and the leather of the binding, suggesting that the binding from stage 2 lacked a paste-down and flyleaves at the front. On 1r is written the shelfmark assigned by Samuel Foley in about 1688 (G. 97).

On fol. 1v (originally α1v) is an inscription with the lectionary readings for the feast of St Lucy (13 December) in the hand of one of the original text scribes (henceforth the “lectionary hand”):

co° stē lucie virg Math 13 [13:44-52]

The “lectionary hand” does not match that of John Clement or “Mayster Wyllams.” Also on 1v is written, in two different hands of the sixteenth or seventeenth century: “Notetur D” and “W”.

The present fol. 2 comprises a note by Jean Ycard, dean of Achonry, datable to about 1708-1722, bound into the book during stage 6: “Greek Testament M.S. | Dean Ycard | this N.T. is, as i Can prove it, the same | w^{ch}. in y^e English polaglotte [*sic*] in Gregory & | in Mills is Called Montfortius. one | of y^e Most Notables [*sic*]; & however the rea | dings of y^e same were not gathered but | to y^e 22 of y^e Acts of the holy Apostles | & those of y^e 1st Chap of y^e Epistle to [2v] the Romans. the Covert [*sic*] is loose & | one of the Sheets is Loose too. i Would | have had it bound, if i Could have | taken so Much upon me, & added | what i think fit to prove What | M.S. it is: y^t, hence forth people be | not so much at a loss. as i wass [*sic*]. | John Ycard”.

Fol. 3r (originally α2r) contains phrases and pen trials in Latin and Greek. The first (*sit no[men domini benedictum]*, Ps 112:2) is in the hand of John Clement. The early mottos in Greek seem to be written by two of the scribes who copied the biblical text; in any case they do not match Clement’s hand: ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω [Mt 5:18, 10:23, 13:17, 17:20]; μακάριος ἀνὴρ ὃς οὐκ ἐπορεύθη [Ps 1:1]; ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν [Gen 1:1]; τῷ θεῷ δόξα ἀμὴν. There

is also an early inscription, perhaps in the hand of Samuel Foley (1655-1695): εἰς ἐστὶ[ν] θεός ὃς οὐρανὸν τ' ἔτευξε καὶ γαῖαν μακράν. *Sophocles* [ps.-Sophocles, frag. 1025, cited by Athenagoras, *Apology for the Christians* 5; ps.-Justin, *Exhortation* 7.46; Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation* 7; Theodoret, *Græcarum affectionum curatio* 109.36-37]. The same folio contains the shelfmark from the catalogue of c. 1670 (B. 1. 22, subsequently crossed out), and, in Foley's (?) hand, a shelfmark and further descriptor (G. 97, *Montfortius's Greek Testam. MS.*). This page also has lectionary readings for Easter Sunday, Monday and Tuesday:

1^a resur^e 1^æ cor 5 exp[urgate] [1 Cor 5:7-8] ./ marci 16 [16:1-7] ./
 fe^ā 2^ā act stans petr⁹ act x [10:37-43] ./ luc 24 [24:13-35] ./ exe 3
 fe^ā 3^ā act 13 [13:16, 26-33] ./ surgēs paul⁹ stetit ihs me^o luc 24
 [24:36-47]

The mark ./ refers to place-markers in the margin of the text at the relevant point.

On 3v are another two readings in the "lectionary hand":

do^{ca} 1^a post trinitatē 1^ā johis 4 Δ hic 16 Δ
 do 2^a 1^a 10. 3. > hic 14 >

The marks Δ and > likewise refer to place-markers in the margin of the text at the relevant point.

fols. 3a-b, apparently added in stage 5.

fols. 3c-4, originally from the back of the book, misplaced during a rebinding (see above).

fol. 4v contains further readings in the "lectionary hand":

de corp xⁱ 1^ā corin 11 [11:23-29] Δ Ioh 6 [6:56-59]. Δ
 de st^ō ~~Ioh~~ Barnaba bapti eph 2^o [2:19-22] > Ioh 15 [15:12-16] >
 In vigi Ioh iniciū stī marci [*recte* Lucae]
 die joh luc 1^o >
~~die~~ vig' ap[ostolorum] petⁱ & pauli act 3 [3:1-10] > Joh 21 [21:16-19] >
 die eorum act. 12 [12:1-11] > Math 16 [16:13-19] >
 In cō^e stⁱ pauli act 1^o [Sarum: Gal 1:11-26; Rome Acts 9:1-22] >
 Mathe 19 [19:27-29] >

fol. 5v (originally α8v) bears the shelfmark (EEE1) from the catalogue of Ussher's library.

fol. 6r. *Kephalaia* for Mathew.

fol. 7v: Beginning of the text of Matthew.

fol. 8r: Ματθαῖος marked in a later (nineteenth-century?) hand in upper right corner.

fol. 12r-v. On both sides of this folio, the text takes up only twelve lines, suggesting an initial miscalculation in that the amount of text required for one quire.

fols. 13-20: second quire (without signature)

fols. 21-28: quire b (this sequence was apparently added at stage 2)

fols. 29-36: quire c

fols. 37-44: quire d

fols. 45-52: quire e

fols. 53-60: quire f

fol. 53v: End of the text of Matthew. The text scribe then adds: τῷ θεῷ χάρις, | Συνεγράφη τὸ κατὰ ματθαῖον ἅγιον εὐαγγέλιον [...]. ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος ἁγίου ἀμήν. This doxology, not used in the Greek church, is clearly a translation of the Latin formula *In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, Amen*. The scribe of Revelation has added: ἐκ τοῦ σοῦδᾶ ματθαῖος ἔχει τίτλους ξη. κεφάλαια τοε.

fol. 54r-v: *Kephalaia* for Mark

fol. 55: Beginning of Mark

fols. 61-68: quire g

fols. 69-76: quire h

fols. 77-84: quire i

fols. 85-92: quire k

fol. 87r: End of the text of Mark. The liminal comment (Τὸ κατὰ μάρκον ἅγιον εὐαγγέλιον, ἐγράφη μετὰ χρόνους δέκα τῆς τοῦ χριστοῦ ἀναλήψεως) is copied from the corresponding point in GA 58, fol. 170v.

fols. 87v-89r: *Kephalaia* for Luke

fol. 90r: Beginning of Luke. A nineteenth-century (?) hand (the same as fol. 8r) has added the title Κατὰ Λουκᾶν.

fol. 92r: A nineteenth-century (?) hand (the same as fol. 8r and 90r) has added the header Λουκᾶς

fols. 93-100: quire l

fols. 101-107: quire m

fols. 108-115: quire n

fols. 116-123: quire o

fols. 124-131: quire t

fols. 132-139: quire q

fol. 146v: The Revelation scribe has added: σουῖδας | λουκάς ὁ εὐαγγελιστὴς ἔχει τίτλους πγ' κεφάλαια τμη'. At the bottom of the page, the text scribe has added a note on the composition of John (incipit: Ἰστέον ὅτι τὸ κατὰ ἰωαννὴν εὐαγγέλιον ἐν τοῖς χρόνοις τραϊανοῦ; desinit: τοῦ χριστοῦ γενεάν), copied from GA 58, 279v.

fols. 140-147: quire r

fols. 148-155: quire s

fol. 148r: Beginning of Gospel of John.

fols. 156-163: quire t

fols. 164-171: quire u

fols. 172-179: quire x

fols. 180-187: quire y

fols. 188-195: quire z

fols. 192r-198v contain a number of prefaces and poems on the Gospels, all copied from GA 58. The "lectionary scribe" indicated this section with the running header *prohemia*, visible on 195v and 196r.

fol. 192r: Verses to the Evangelist John (tit.: Στίχοι εἰς τὸν εὐαγγελιστὴν ἰωάννην; incipit: Βροντῆς τὸν υἱόν, τίς βροτῶν μὴ θαυμάσῃ; desinit: τρανεῖ θεουργὸν καὶ παθητεῖν σαρκίῳ); copied from GA 58, 347r.

fol. 192r: Note on the composition of the Gospel of John (incipit: Ἰστέον ὅτι τὸ κατὰ ἰωάννην εὐαγγέλιον ἐν τοῖς χρόνοις Τραϊανοῦ; desinit: ἔνδοξον τοῦ Χριστοῦ γενεάν), copied from GA 58, 279v.

fols. 192r-193v: Proemium to the Gospel of John (tit.: Προοίμιον τοῦ κατὰ ἰωάννην εὐαγγελίου; incipit: Τὸ πνεύματος δύναμις; desinit: ἀρκτέον ἤδη, καὶ τῆς τοῦ ρητοῦ ἀναπτύξεως), copied from GA 58, 279v-281v.

fols. 194r-195r, l. 8: On the Gospel of Mark (incipit: Τὸ κατὰ Μάρκον εὐαγγέλιον μετὰ δέκα ἔτη; desinit: ἄκουε οὖν τί φησὶν· ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου); copied from GA 58, fols. 173r-174v, where the passage ends: τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ.

fol. 195r: Note on the composition of the Gospel of Mark (incipit: Ἰστεὸν ὅτι τὸ κατὰ μάρκον εὐαγγέλιον ὑπεγορεύθη ἐν Ῥώμῃ ὑπὸ πέτρου; desinit: εἰκόνα τοῦ εὐαγγελίου δεικνύς); copied from GA 58, 174v. See Soden, 1902, 311, n° 108.

fol. 195r: Verses on the evangelist Mark (Στίχοι εἰς τὸν ἅγιον μάρκον τὸν εὐαγγελιστήν; incipit: Πέτρου μνηθεὶς τοῖς ἀπορρήτου λόγοις; desinit: ὁ δευτερεύων μάρκος ἐν θεογράφοις), copied from GA 58, 174v.

fol. 195v: Verses (Ὅσα περὶ χριστοῦ θεήγορος ἔθνεα πέτρος; incipit: Κρύσσων ἐδίδασκεν ἀπὸ στομάτων; desinit: οὕνεκα δὲ μετρόπεσιν, εὐάγγελος ἄλλος ἐδείχθη); copied from GA 58, 174v-175r.

fols. 195v-196r: Proemium to the Gospel of Luke (Προοίμιον τοῦ κατὰ λουκᾶν θείου εὐαγγελίου; incipit: Χρὴ τὸν ἐντυγχάνοντα τῇδε τῇ βίβλῳ; desinit: τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσι τὰ νοήματα); copied from GA 58, 175r-176r.

fol. 196r-v: Preface by Titus of Bostra (Τίτου ἐπισκόπου Βόστρις; incipit: Ἰστέον τοὺς μὲν ἄλλους εὐαγγελιστὰς, ἐξ ἀρετῶν ἀρχομένους; desinit: ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκλησία προσδέχεται); copied from GA 58, 176r-v.

fols. 196v-197v: Preface of Cosmas Indicopleustes (Κοσμᾶ ἰνδικοπλεύστου; incipit: Οὗτος ὁ λουκᾶς ὁ τρίτος τῶν εὐαγγελιστῶν ὃς θεωρήσας πολλοὺς; desinit: καὶ τὸν ἑαυτοῦ μαθητὴν τὸν θεοφιλῆ θεόφιλον); copied from GA, 176v-177r.

fol. 197r-v: Preface to Luke (incipit: Λουκᾶς ὁ μακάριος εὐαγγελιστὴς ἱατρὸς μὲν ἦν τὴν τέχνην; desinit: κατὰ ἀκριβείαν ἐποιήσατο); copied from GA 58, 177v.

fols. 197v-198r: Note on the Gospel of Luke (Tit.: ὑπόθεσις τοῦ κατὰ λουκᾶν εὐαγγελίου; incipit: Κατὰ λουκᾶν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἐπιγέγραπται; desinit: καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἀνελήφθη βλέπόντων τῶν μαθητῶν); copied from GA 58, 177v-178r.

fol. 198r: Note on the Gospel of Luke (incipit: Λουκᾶς ὁ θεῖος ἀντιοχεὺς μὲν ἦν; desinit: ὥς καὶ ἄξιος τῷ ὄντι ἐστὶν ἀκούειν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου); copied from GA 58, 178v-179r.

fol. 198v: Note on the Gospel of Luke (incipit: Ἰστέον ὅτι τὸ κατὰ λουκᾶν εὐαγγέλιον, ὑπαγορεύθη ὑπὸ παύλου; desinit: θυμῶντος ἤρξατο); copied from GA 58, 179v.

fol. 198v: Niketas Paphlagon, Verses on St Luke (tit.: Στίχοι· Νικήτα φιλοσόφου τοῦ Παφλαγόνος εἰς τὸν εὐαγγελιστὴν Λουκᾶν; incipit: Ζωῆς τὸν ἄρτον Χριστὸν ἡξιωμένος; desinit: ῥήτορ πυρίπνους, πάνσοφος θεολόγος; copied from GA 58, 179v-180r.

fol. 198v: Verses on St Luke attributed to Niketas (incipit: Τρίτος δὲ λουκᾶς ῥητορεύει μειζόνως; desinit: Παῦλον γὰρ ἔσχε τεχνικ(ήν) παιδοτρίβην); copied from GA 58, 180r. Cf. Soden, 1902, 379 (n° 11).

fols. 196-199: quire aa.

fol. 199r: Notes made by three of the scribes: ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω [Mt 5:18, 10:23, 13:17, 17:20]; ὅς κε θεοῖς ἐπιπείθεται, μάλα τ' ἔκλυον αὐτοῦ [Homer, *Iliad* I.218]; μακάριος ἀνὴρ, ὃς οὐκ ἐπορεύθη ἐν βουλῇ ἀσεβῶν [Ps 1:1]; then in a different hand: ὅς κε θεοῖς ἐπιπείθεται, μάλα τ' ἔκλυον αὐτοῦ [Homer, *Iliad* I.218, repeated from above]; ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ [Homer, *Odyssey* I.1]; then in a third hand: Ἡ φιλοχρημοσύνη μήτηρ κακότητος ἀπάσης [1 Cor 2:9a]; ρῆ ξεῖνον παρεόντα φιλεῖν, ἐθέλοντα δὲ πέμπειν [Homer, *Odyssey* XV.74].

fol. 199v: Notes made by three of the scribes: τῷ θεῷ δόξα ἀνὴν. πρὸς πρὸς θεοῦ; ὅς κε θεοῖς ἐπιπείθεται, μάλα τ' ἔκλυον αὐτοῦ [Homer, *Iliad* I.218]; πρὸς θεοῦ πάντα ἀγαθὰ [translation of Augustine's dictum *Ex deo omnia bona*, from *De libero arbitrio* II.18.49, in *PL* 32:1267]; ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἡ ἐλπίς μου καὶ ἐν τῇ ἁγίᾳ παρθένῳ τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ. ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ πατρὸς. In a different hand: εὐνοῦχοι, οἵτινες ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς ἐγεννήθησαν οὕτως καὶ εἰσὶν εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες εὐνουχίσθησαν ἑαυτοὺς διὰ τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ εἰσὶν [Mt 19:12]. Some of these mottos, especially πρὸς θεοῦ πάντα ἀγαθὰ (sometimes πρὸς θεοῦ τ' ἀγαθὰ), reappear as marginalia elsewhere in the book (e.g. 249v, 254v, 258v, 320v, 341v, 405v). Sometimes these mottos appear run together, almost like a kind of magical invocation: πρὸς θεοῦ τ' ἀγαθὰ ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω τῷ θεῷ χάρις (267v).

[Original vol. 2]

fols. 200-207: quire bb/a

fol. 200r: Added by scribe: πρὸς θεοῦ τ' ἀγαθὰ

fols. 208-215: quire cc/b

fols. 216-223: quire dd/c

fols. 224-231: quire ee/d

fols. 232-239: quire ff/e

fols. 240-247: quire gg/f

fols. 248-255: quire hh/g

fols. 256-263: quire ii/h

fols. 264-271: quire kk/i

fol. 265v: the text scribe adds colophon at the end of 2 Cor: τῷ θεῷ χάρις ἐν χριστῷ ἰησῷ τῷ κυριῷ, apparently a retroversion from the Latin of Rom

7:25; the Vulgate has *Gratia Dei per Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum*; but the text of Romans in Montfortianus reads: Χάρις ᾧ [Μ: δὲ] τῷ θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν), suggesting that the scribe was translating the phrase from his memory of the Latin.

fols. 272-279: quire ll/k

fol. 273: scribe adds in lower margin: ἀμὴν λέγω ὅτι οὐδεὶς [cf. Lk 18:29]

fols. 280-287: quire mm/ll [sic!]

fol. 287v: A scribe (not the text scribe) has added in the lower margin a phrase from the text contained on this page: Βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας [Phil 3:2].

fols. 288-295: quire nn/m

fol. 293v: a scribe (not the text scribe) has added in the upper margin πολλά μέ τὰ παρακ, with some pen trials.

fols. 296-303: quire oo/n

fol. 303 only has 14 lines of text, ending with 2 Thess 1:10, with the rest of the page filled with wavy lines. This irregularity apparently arose since this page is at the end of a quire, though there is no omission of text.

fols. 304-311: quire pp/o

fol. 304r. The variaē lectiones seem to be added by the text scribe; this is the same corrector as the second corrector of Revelation.

fols. 312-319: quire qq/p

fol. 316v-317v: The variaē lectiones are made by the text scribe, who appears to be the same as the second corrector in Revelation. Most, though not all, of these corrections correspond with Erasmus' text; others are apparently taken from 69 (e.g. 2 Tim 2:14 κυριοῦ 61T, Erasmus¹; θεοῦ 61L, 69).

fols. 320-327: quire rr/q

fols. 323v-324r: The lectionary scribe writes "philomemi [sic] prohemium" as running header.

fols. 328-335: quire ff/r

fol. 329r: On line 7, it is clear that the scribe had a difficulty with the reading at Heb 4:6. He gives οὐκ εἰσῆλθον εἰς αὐτήν, then leaves a gap which he filled in later with δι' ἀπειθείαν, in a slightly different pen and ink.

fols. 336-343: quire tt/ f ["s" shaped like a "6" crossed out and changed to

"f"]

fols. 344-351: quire vv/t

fols. 352-359: quire xx
fols. 360-367: quire yy
fols. 368-375: quire zz
fols. 376-383: quire aaa
fols. 384-391: quire bbb
fols. 392-399: quire ccc
fols. 400-407: quire ddd
fols. 408-415: quire eee
fols. 416-423: quire fff

fols. 424-430: quire ggg. Between fols. 427 and 428 is a blank leaf belonging to the original quire, without a modern foliation number.

fols. 431-438: quire hhh

fols. 439-446: quire iii. Fol. 439r has the Johannine comma. Gregory, 1907, 374, writes: "The paper on which this volume is written is very thick and is heavily glazed. That does not show in general, because it is so white. The page, however, upon which that spurious text is found has been 'pawed' to such an extent by curious visitors, whose acquaintance with soap and its use appears to have been a distant one, that the paper has been well browned, and therefore the glazing is distinctly seen." Cf. Gregory, 1900-1909, 1:143: "[...] die Glasur die feine Oberfläche des Papiers und allen Blättern gemeinsam ist, nur dass die schmutzigen Finger der Neugierigen (ich will voraussetzen, dass die Textkritiker reine Hände hatten) diese Seite braun gemacht haben, sodass die Glasur des Papiers deutlich gesehen wird."

fols. 447-454: quire [lll] (without original signature)

fols. 455-462: quire [mmm] (without original signature)

fols. 463-470: quire [nnn] (without original signature)

fol. 470v: Lectionary readings in the same hand as the rest:

In dedica^e epi apoka 21 [21:2-5] euang luc 19 [19:1-10]

do^{ca} luc 6 [6:43-48] In octa die Ioh 10 [10:22-30]

The reading Lk 6:43-48 is set down for the ceremony of the Reconciliation of a church; set in between the feast of the Dedication of a church and its Octave, the indication "do^{ca}" probably refers to the Reconciliation rather than to the Sunday following the feast of Dedication.

fol. 471: back pastedown from stage 3: "Mayster Wyllams of corpus chr[is]ti."

Two unfoliated endpapers added in stage 5

Three unfoliated endpapers in Japanese paper added in stage 6

APPENDIX II

Erasmus' annotations on the Johannine comma (1516-1535)

This text of Erasmus' two annotations on the Johannine comma is based on the fifth edition of 1535 and on a collation of this edition with all preceding editions (1516, 1519, 1522 and 1527). The text is cumulative; nothing was removed from these two annotations in successive editions apart from some minor rephrasing in the annotation on the phrase *Et hi tres vnum sunt* in verse 8. Capitalisation, accentuation and punctuation have been regularised. It should be noted that Erasmus has taken the lemmata connecting his annotations with the biblical text from the Latin Vulgate rather than from his own translation. Abbreviations are expanded; orthography and punctuation are in conformity with ASD.

Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in cælo.) [1516: In græco codice tantum hoc reperiō de testimonio triplici: Ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα; id est, *Quoniam tres sunt qui testificantur, Spiritus et aqua et sanguis.*] [1522: Diuus Hieronymus præloquens in epistolas canonicas suspicatur hunc locum fuisse deprauatum a latinis interpretibus, et a nonnullis omissum fuisse testimonium Patris, Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Et tamen iuxta nostram æditionem adducit hunc locum Cyrillus in opere, cui titulum fecit *De thesauro*, libro XIII. capite penultimo: *Rursum, inquit, Ioannes in eadem epistola ait: "Quis est qui vincit mundum, nisi qui credit quia Iesus est Filius Dei? Hic venit per aquam et sanguinem et Spiritum Iesus Christus, non in aqua solum, sed in aqua et sanguine. Et Spiritus est qui testimonium perhibet, Spiritus enim veritas est. Quia tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent, Spiritus, aqua et sanguis, et hi tres vnum sunt. Si testimonium hominum accipimus, testimonium Dei maius est,"* etc. Hactenus Cyrillus, vir, ni fallor, orthodoxus. Atque hic cum dimicet aduersus Arianos,¹ plurimæque in illos congerat e diuinis libris testimonia, probabile non est illum omissurum fuisse telum, quo maxime confici poterant illi, si aut scisset aut credidisset hoc fuisse scriptum ab apostolo.]

¹ Arianos] Arrianos 1522.

There are three that bear witness in heaven.) [1516: In the Greek manuscript text¹ I find only this about the threefold testimony: “Ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα, that is: “For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood.”] [1522: In his preface to the Catholic Epistles, St Jerome suspects that this passage has been corrupted by Latin translators, and that the testimony of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was omitted by several people.² Yet Cyril, in the second-last chapter of book XIII of the work he calls *On the treasure*, cites this passage in conformity with our edition:³ “Again,” he says, “John says in the same Epistle, ‘Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is the one who came by water and blood and Spirit,’⁴ Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth. There are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood, and these three agree. If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater, etc.’”⁵ This is what Cyril says, who is—unless I am mistaken—a man of orthodox belief. And since he is fighting here against Arians, and brings against them many testimonies from the holy Scriptures, it is unlikely that he would have omitted that weapon by which they might be vanquished so effectively, if he had either known of it, or believed that it was written by the Apostle.]

¹ *In græco codice*. The singular form *codice* led Lee to assume (perhaps mischievously) that Erasmus only had the authority of one manuscript for his omission of the comma, a suggestion that angered Erasmus (ASD IX.4:326). In the *Responsio ad Annotationes Lei novas* (ASD IX.4:323), Erasmus consequently changed this phrase to *In græcis codicibus*, but in the *Annotations* he left it in the singular.

² Ps.-Jerome, *Prologue to the Catholic Epistles*, PL 29:825-831; this preface is wrongly attributed to Jerome, as discussed above in chapter I.5.

³ That is, in accordance with Erasmus’ New Testament text of 1516 and 1519. Erasmus used Cyril in the Latin translation of George of Trebizond; see CW 46:229-230.

⁴ The occurrence of the words “and spirit” in Cyril’s text is also attested in 01, 02, 6, 33V, 93, 94, 104, 206, 307, 424Z, 429, 436, 453, 467, 522, 614, 665, 720*, 876, 918, 1067, 1127f., 1292, 1409, 1448, 1490, 1505, 1611, 1678, 1735, 1739Z, 1799, 1827, 1832, 1838, 2138, 2147, 2200, 2344, 2374, 2412, 2541, 2652, 2805, 2818, perhaps reflecting a desire to harmonize this passage with verse 8.

⁵ PG 75:616A-B. This argument is repeated from *Responsio ad Annotationes Lei novas* (ASD IX.4:324-325).

[1535: Colligit autem Cyrillus Spiritum Sanctum esse Deum non ex eo quod additur, *Et hi tres vnum sunt*, sed ex eo quod sequitur: *Si testimonium hominum accipimus, testimonium Dei maius est*; quod ad Spiritum refert, cuius ante facta mentio.] [1522: Iam Beda, locum hunc diligenter enarrans, cum accurate multisque verbis exponat testimonium triplex in terra, nullam mentionem fecit testimonii in coelo Patris, Verbi et Spiritus. Nec huic tamen viro defuit omnino linguarum peritia, nec in obseruandis antiquis exemplaribus diligentia. Imo ne hoc quidem addit *In terra*] [1527: duntaxat in codice manu descripto]; [1522: tantum legit: *Tres sunt qui testimonium dant*. In codice qui mihi suppeditatus est e bibliotheca Minoritarum Antuerpiensium, in margine scholium erat asscriptum de testimonio Patris, Verbi et Spiritus, sed manu recentiore, vt consentaneum sit hoc adiectum ab erudito quopiam qui noluerit hanc particulam prætermitti] [1535: quandoquidem nec in æditione Badiana vlla fit mentio Patris, Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Beda sequutus est Augustinum, qui in libris quos scripsit *Aduersus Maximinum Arianum*—quum nullum non moueat lapidem vt ex canonica scriptura probet Spiritum Sanctum esse Deum, omnesque personas esse ὁμοούσιους—hoc tamen testimonium non adducit, quum locum hunc alias non semel adducat, nominatim lib. III. cap. XXII. ostendens per Spiritum, sanguinem et aquam significatum Patrem, Filium et Spiritum Sanctum. Proponit autem illic et inculcat hanc regulam: Nulla dici *vnum*, nisi quæ sunt eiusdem substantiæ. Quæ si tam vera est, quam ille videri vult, hic locus adferebat certam victoriam, non Filium modo, sed et Spiritum Sanctum euincens ὁμοούσιον Patri. Satis igitur liquet Augustinum hanc particulam in suis codicibus non legisse; quam si legisset nec adduxisset, videri poterat cum aduersario colludere, quod is nusquam solet.]

[1535: For Cyril infers that the Holy Spirit is God not from what is subjoined—“and these three are one”—but from what follows: “If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater,” which refers to the Spirit, who was mentioned previously.¹] [1522: And although Bede, in his careful commentary on this passage, makes an accurate and lengthy exposition of the triple witness on the earth, he made no mention of the testimony of the Father, Son and Spirit in heaven. And this man was certainly not lacking in linguistic skill or diligence in examining ancient manuscripts. Indeed, he does not even add the words “on earth,”] [1527: at least not in the manuscript version of his work,] [1522: but reads simply: “There are three that bear witness.”² In a manuscript supplied to me from the Franciscan library at Antwerp, there was an annotation about the testimony of the Father, Word and Spirit added in the margin, but it was in a rather recent hand, such that it was clear that it had been added by some learned fellow who did not want this phrase to be omitted,]³ [1535: since there is no mention of the Father, Son and Spirit in the edition of Josse Bade. Bede followed the example of Augustine, who in his books *Against Maximinus the Arian*, though leaving no stone unturned⁴ in showing from the canonical Scriptures that the Holy Spirit is God, and that all three persons are of the same substance, nevertheless did not adduce this testimony. Yet he cites this passage [*i.e.* 1 Jn 5:7-8, without the comma] several times elsewhere, especially in *Against Maximinus* III.22, where he argues that the Spirit, blood and water are to be understood as standing for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There he proposes and then inculcates the principle that nothing can be called one except what is of the same substance. If this is as sure as he wants us to believe, then that passage would render him a sure victory by showing successfully that not only is the Son of the same substance with the Father, but also the Holy Spirit. It is therefore quite clear that Augustine did not read this passage in his manuscripts; for if he had read it but had not adduced it, he could have seemed to collude with the enemy, which was nowhere his practice.]

¹ 1 Jn 5:6.

² CCSL 121, 321-322, ll. 84-111 (cf. PL 93:114b-d), cit. above in ch. 1.5; this argument is repeated from *Responsio ad Annotationes Lei novas* (ASD IX.4:325).

³ This entire section, from the discussion of Bede onwards, is taken over from Erasmus' *Apologia ad Annotationes Stunicae* (ASD IX.2:254).

⁴ Cf. *Adag.* 330 (*Omnem mouere lapidem*), ASD II.1:429-430.

[1522: Sed vrgemur autoritate Hieronymi, quam equidem nolim eleuare, quanquam ille sæpenumero violentus est, parumque pudens, sæpe varius, parumque sibi constans; tamen non satis video quid sibi velit hoc loco Hieronymus. Verba ipsius subscribam: *Sed, inquit, sicut euangelistas dudum ad veritatis lineam correximus, ita has proprio ordini Deo iuuante¹ reddidimus. Est enim prima earum vna Iacobi, duæ Petri, et tres Ioannis, et Iudæ vna. Quæ si sicut ab eis digestæ sunt, ita quoque ab interpretibus fideliter in latinum verterentur eloquium, nec ambiguitatem legentibus facerent, nec sermonum sese varietas impugnet, illo præcipue loco vbi de vnitæ trinitatis in prima Ioannis epistola positum legimus. In qua etiam ab infidelibus translatoribus² multum erratum esse a fidei veritate comperimus, trium tantummodo vocabula, hoc est aquæ, sanguinis et Spiritus in ipsa sua æditione ponentibus, et Patris Verbique ac Spiritus testimonium omittentibus, in quo maxime et fides catholica roboratur, et Patris ac Filii et Spiritus Sancti vna diuinitatis essentia comprobatur. Hactenus Hieronymi verba retulimus,³ ex quibus liquet Hieronymum nihil queri de codicibus græcis, sed tantum de iis, qui græca latine verterunt. At nunc in græcis codicibus hoc potissimum deest, quod omissum queritur, et habetur in codicibus latinis, licet non omnibus. Sed vnde Hieronymus castigauit errorem interpretum? Nimirum e græcis exemplaribus. Sed illi aut habebant quod nos vertimus, aut variabant. Si variabant quemadmodum et latina, quonam argumento docet vtrum sit rectius, vtrumue scriptum sit ab apostolo: præsertim cum quod reprehendit, tum haberet publicus vsus ecclesiæ? Quod ni fuisset, non video qui possint habere locum quæ sequuntur:*

¹ iuuante] om. 1522.

² infidelibus translatoribus] infidelibus, translatoribus 1522-1535.

³ retulimus] rettulimus 1522.

[1522: But we feel the pressure of the authority of Jerome, which I should certainly not wish to disparage, although he is frequently violent, shameless, fickle and inconsistent; however, I do not quite understand what Jerome means at this point.¹ I shall record his words: “But just as we corrected the Evangelists some time ago according to the rule of truth, we have likewise with God’s help² restored these [Catholic Epistles] to their proper state. The first is a single letter by James, then two of Peter, three by John and one by Jude. If the letters were also rendered faithfully by translators into Latin just as their authors composed them, they would not cause the reader confusion, nor would the differences between their wording give rise to contradictions, nor would the various phrases contradict each other, especially in that place where we read the clause about the unity of the Trinity in the first letter of John. Indeed, it has come to our notice that in this letter some unfaithful translators have gone far astray from the truth of the faith, for in their edition they provide just the words for three [witnesses]—namely water, blood and spirit—and omit the testimony of the Father, the Word and the Spirit, by which the Catholic faith is especially strengthened, and proof is tendered of the single substance of divinity possessed by Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”³ We have repeated Jerome’s words to this point, from which it is clear that Jerome was not complaining about Greek codices, simply about those who translated the Greek into Latin. But precisely that which Jerome complains was omitted is now absent from the Greek manuscripts, whereas it is present in the Latin manuscripts, though not all of them. But from where does Jerome correct the error of the translators? Clearly, from the Greek manuscripts. But they either had what we have translated, or another reading. If another reading, in agreement with the Latin [Vulgate] version, what are his grounds for showing which of the two readings is the more correct, or which written by the Apostle, especially since what he reproaches is what was then in the public usage of the church? If this were not the case, I cannot see how the following passage fits:

¹ Erasmus made similar comments about Jerome in his *Responsio ad Annotationes Lei novas* (ASD IX.4:323).

² The phrase *Deo iuuante* occurs nowhere in Jerome’s extant authentic works.

³ These words had been cited against Erasmus by Lee; see Erasmus, 1520, 200.

Sed tu virgo Christi Eustochium, dum a me impensius scripturæ veritatem inquiris, meam quodammodo senectutem inuidorum dentibus corroendam exponis, qui me falsarium corruptoremque sacrarum pronunciant scripturarum. Quis eum clamasset falsarium, nisi publicam mutasset lectionem?

Quod si apud græcos legit Cyrillus quod nunc habent græci codices, si apud nos Augustinus ac Beda, aut tantum hoc legit aut vtrunque legit, non video quid adferat argumenti Hieronymus, quo docet germanam esse lectionem, quam ipse nobis tradit. Sed dicet aliquis: “Erat hoc efficax telum aduersus Arianos.”¹ Primum cum constet et apud græcos et apud latinos olim variasse lectionem, nihil hoc telum aduersus illos valebit, qui sine dubio pari iure sibi vindicabant lectionem, quæ pro ipsis facit. Sed finge non esse controuersam lectionem, cum quod dictum est de testimonio aquæ, sanguinis et Spiritus, *vnum sunt*, referatur non ad eandem naturam, sed ad consensum testimonii, an putamus Arianos² tam stupidos futuros, vt non idem hoc loco interpretentur de Patre, Verbo et Spiritu? præsertim cum simili loco viri³ sic interpretentur orthodoxi in libris Euangelicis; nec hanc interpretationem reiiciat Augustinus cum Ariano⁴ Maximino disputans; imo cum hunc ipsum locum sic interpretetur fragmentum *Glossæ ordinariæ*, in versuum interuallo additum: *Vnum sunt*, inquit, *id est, de re eadem testantes*. Hoc non est confirmare fidem, sed suspectam reddere, si nobis huiusmodi lemmatis blandiamur. Fortasse præstiterat hoc piis studiis agere, vti nos idem reddamur cum Deo, quam curiosis studiis decertare quomodo differat a Patre Filius, aut ab vtroque Spiritus. Certe ego quod negant Ariani⁵ non video posse doceri nisi ratiocinatione. Postremo cum totus hic locus sit obscurus, non potest admodum valere ad reuincendos hæreticos. Sed hac de re copiosius respondimus calumniatori per apologiam.

¹ Arianos] Arrianos 1522.

² Arianos] Arrianos 1522.

³ viri] 1527, 1535; vere 1522.

⁴ Ariano] Arriano 1522.

⁵ Ariani] Arriani 1522.

“But you, Eustochium, virgin of Christ, by asking me so persistently for the true readings of Scripture, you are in a way exposing me in my old age to be gnawed by the teeth of those who bear me ill-will, and who call me a corrupter of the sacred Scriptures.” Who would have called him a forger, unless he had changed the public reading?¹

So if Cyril amongst the Greeks read what the Greek codices have now, and if Augustine and Bede amongst the Latins read only this, or both readings, I do not understand what argument Jerome can bring to show that the reading he hands down to us is genuine. Perhaps someone will say, “This was an effective weapon against the Arians.” But firstly, since it is certain that the reading varied both in the Greek and in the Latin traditions, this weapon will be worthless against them, who would doubtless with equal justification claim for themselves whichever reading serves their cause. But imagine that the reading is not in dispute, since what is said about the testimony of the water, blood and Spirit being one refers not to an identity of nature, but to an agreement in testimony, do we really think that the Arians would be so stupid as not to apply the same interpretation to the Father, the Word and the Spirit here, especially since orthodox writers give this same interpretation to a similar passage in the Gospels, since Augustine does not reject this interpretation in his diatribe *Against the Arian Maximinus*, and since an interlinear fragment of the *Glossa ordinaria* interprets this very place in this way? “[The three] are one,” says the *Glossa*, “that is: testifying about the same thing.”² Satisfying ourselves with little phrases like that does not amount to strengthening the faith, but rendering it more suspect. Perhaps it might be preferable to conduct ourselves in pious pursuits in order to be united with God, than to engage in hair-splitting debates about how the Son is distinguished from the Father, and how the Spirit differs from them both. I for one do not see how the view rejected by the Arians³ can be upheld except with the help of speculative reasoning. But finally, since this entire passage is obscure, it does not have much power to refute heretics. But we have responded to our calumniator on this matter rather fully with an *Apologia*.

¹ Argument repeated from Erasmus’ *Responsio ad Annotationes Lei novas* (ASD IX.4:324), and (in large part verbatim) *Apologia ad Annotationes Stunicae* (ASD IX.2:254-256).

² *Glossa ordinaria*, 1603, 1414; the interlinear gloss actually says: “Vnus Deus de eadem re testantes.” On Erasmus and the *Glossa ordinaria*, see de Jonge, 1975.

³ That is, the orthodox view of the Trinity.

Illud addam, cum Stunica meus toties iacet Rhodiensem codicem, cui tantum tribuit autoritatis, mirum¹ non hic adduxisse illius oraculum, præsertim cum ita fere consentiat cum nostris codicibus vt videri possit Lesbia regula.

Veruntamen, ne quid dissimulem, repertus est apud Anglos græcus codex vnus, in quo habetur quod in vulgatis deest. Scriptum est enim hunc ad modum: Ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, πατήρ, λόγος καὶ πνεῦμα, καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσιν. Καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ, πνεῦμα, ὕδωρ, καὶ αἷμα. Εἰ² τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων etc. Quanquam haud scio an casu factum sit, vt hoc loco non repetatur quod est in græcis nostris: καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν. Ex hoc igitur codice Britannico reposuimus quod in nostris dicebatur deesse, ne cui sit ansa calumniandi.

¹ mirum] om. 1522.

² Εἰ] scripsi; εἰ 1522; Εἰς 1527, 1535.

One thing I shall add: though my dear Stunica so often boasts of his Rhodian codex, to which he attributes such authority, he has strangely not adduced it as an oracle here, especially since it almost agrees with our [Latin] codices so well that it might seem to be a “Lesbian straight-edge.”¹

However—lest I should keep *anything* hidden—there has been found in England one single Greek manuscript in which occurs what is lacking in the commonly-accepted texts. It is written as follows: “Ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, πατήρ, λόγος καὶ πνεῦμα, καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσιν. Καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ, πνεῦμα, ὕδωρ, καὶ αἷμα. Εἰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, etc.,² although I am not sure if it is by accident that the phrase “and these three are unto one,” which is found in our Greek manuscripts, is not repeated at this point [*i.e.* in verse 8]. I therefore restored from this British codex what was said to be lacking in our editions, lest anyone should have any handle to blame me unjustly.³

¹ Cf. *Adag.* 493 (*Lesbia regula*), *ASD* II.1:563-564: “Quoties praepostere non ad rationem factum, sed ratio ad factum accommodatur [...]”. This paragraph is taken from Erasmus’ *Apologia ad Annotationes Stunicae* (*ASD* IX.2:256-258); see de Jonge’s notes to this passage for further information on Erasmus’ sources.

² This information on the reading in the British codex was first given in Erasmus’ *Apologia ad Annotationes Stunicae* (*ASD* IX.2:258), where Erasmus (or the compositor) in his haste made four errors recording the manuscript reading. The reading in Montfortianus is as follows (the points where Erasmus makes an error in the *Apologia* and *Annotationes* are underlined): “Ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, πατήρ, λόγος καὶ πνεῦμα ἅγιον, καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσι. Καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ, πνεῦμα, [καὶ erroneously added here in the *Apologia*, but removed from the *Annotationes*] ὕδωρ, καὶ αἷμα. Εἰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων [...]”. Erasmus’ removal of the erroneously inserted καὶ in the *Annotationes* indicates that he realised that the reading he had given in the *Apologia* was faulty; this evidently prompted him to check the manuscript and insert the reading from the comma directly into the text of the New Testament, for the reading there reproduces perfectly that given in Montfortianus. However, he apparently forgot to make the appropriate correction in the *Annotationes*.

³ Despite what has been asserted since Le Long (1720), this statement is true; in his 1522 edition, Erasmus splices the comma as it appears in Montfortianus (up to the word πνεῦμα in verse 8) into the reading he had given in his 1516 and 1519 editions. On the expression *ansa calumniandi*, cf. *Adag.* 304 (*Ansam quaerere et consimiles metaphoraes*), *ASD* II.1:411-412.

Tametsi suspicor codicem illum ad nostros esse correctum.¹

Duos consului codices miræ vetustatis latinos in bibliotheca quæ Brugis est diui Donatiani. Neuter habebat testimonium Patris, Verbi et Spiritus, ac ne illud quidem in altero addebatur *In terra*; tantum erat: *Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant, Spiritus, aqua et sanguis.*]

[1527: In exemplari Constantiensi utroque, post testimonium aquæ, sanguinis et Spiritus, adiectum erat testimonium Patris, Verbi et Spiritus, his verbis, *Sicut in cælo tres sunt, Pater, Verbum et Spiritus, et tres vnum sunt.* Nec erat additum *testimonium dant*, nec pronomen *hi*.

In codice quem exhibuit publica bibliotheca scholæ Basiliensis, non erat testimonium Spiritus, aquæ et sanguinis.

Ad hæc Paulus Bombasius, vir doctus et integer, meo rogatu locum hunc ad verbum descripsit ex bibliothecæ Vaticanæ codice pervetusto, in quo non habebatur testimonium Patris, Verbi et Spiritus. (Si movet autoritas vetustatis, liber erat antiquissimus; si pontificis, ex illius bibliotheca petatum est testimonium.)

Cum hac lectione consentit æditio Aldina. Quid Laurentius legerit, non satis liquet.

¹ correctum] correctnm 1522.

However, I suspect that this codex was adapted to agree with the manuscripts of the Latins.¹

I have consulted two extraordinarily old manuscripts in the library of St Donatian in Bruges. Neither had the testimony of the Father, Word and Spirit. One of them did not even have the phrase “on earth,” simply: “There are three that bear witness: the Spirit, the water and the blood.”²]

[1527: In both copies at Konstanz, after the testimony of the water, blood and Spirit was added the testimony of the Father, Word and Spirit, with these words: “Just as in heaven there are three, the Father, Word and Spirit, and the three are one.” Neither the words “give testimony” nor the pronoun “these” were added.

In the copy available for view at the public library of the University of Basel, the testimony of the Spirit, water and blood does not occur.

Additionally, Paolo Bombace, a learned and honest man, made a literal transcription of this passage at my request from a very ancient codex in the Vatican Library, in which the testimony of the Father, Word and Spirit is not mentioned.³ (If the authority of antiquity impresses you, the book was extremely old; if you are impressed by the authority of the pope, it is his library from which this witness was sought.)

The Aldine edition agrees with this reading. What Lorenzo [Valla] read is not entirely clear.⁴

¹ Erasmus was evidently aware, even before seeing the Complutensian bible, that Aquinas suggested that the phrase “and these three are one” was added by Arians to make it seem that their unity was only one of testimony or intention, not one of essence; as a result, this phrase was subsequently omitted from many Latin bibles. The unusual omission of this phrase in the Greek text of the British codex made Erasmus suspect its authenticity. See above, chapter 1.6.

² The information on the codices in Bruges is first mentioned in Erasmus’ *Apologia ad Annotationes Stunicae* (ASD IX.2:256); de Jonge, in ASD IX.2:257, notes that this passage refers to a visit to Bruges in August 1521; this passage was written in September 1521.

³ The information on the Vatican codex inspected by Bombace is mentioned in Erasmus’ *Apologia ad Annotationes Stunicae* (ASD IX.2:256); de Jonge, in ASD IX.2:257, notes the letter from Bombace containing this information (*Epist.* 1213) was dated 18 June 1521.

⁴ Lee had argued that if this variant was so important, it would have been mentioned by Valla, who had seen seven codices of the Greek text; see Erasmus, 1520, 200-201. In his reply to Lee (ASD IX.4:323, 326), Erasmus points out that Valla was a fallible human, and that he himself had seen more than Valla’s seven codices, all of them lacking the comma.

Interea perlata est ad nos æditio Hispaniensis, quæ dissidebat ab omnibus. Habet enim hunc in modum: Ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, καὶ ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσι. Καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα. Primum in hoc dissonat exemplar, quod ex eadem, ni fallor, bibliotheca petatum sequuti sunt Hispani, ab exemplari Britannico, quod hic adduntur articuli, ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, τὸ πνεῦμα, qui non addebantur in Britannico. Deinde quod Britannicum habebat οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς, Hispaniense tantum καὶ οἱ τρεῖς; quod idem fit in Spiritu, aqua et sanguine. Præterea quod Britannicum habebat ἓν εἰσι, Hispaniense εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσι. Postremo quod Britannicum etiam in terræ testimonio adiiciebat καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσι, quod non addebatur, hic duntaxat, in æditione Hispaniensi. Equidem arbitror illud εἰς τὸ ἓν esse ex idiomate sermonis Hebraici; *Ego ero illi in patrem* non potest aliud sonare quam *Ero illi pater*.

Iam Hispaniensis æditio scholium e decretalibus adiecerat, quod diuo Thomæ tribuitur. Id declarat iuxta codices emendatos in testimonio Spiritus, aquæ et sanguinis non addi *Et hi tres vnum sunt*; verum id adiectum videri ab iis qui fauebant Ariano dogmati.

In the meantime the Spanish edition has been brought to me, which conflicts with all the rest, for it reads as follows: Ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, καὶ ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσι. Καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα. First of all, the exemplar which the Spanish have followed, which, if I am not mistaken, they obtained from the very same library,¹ differs from the British codex in this respect: that here the articles are added—ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, τὸ πνεῦμα—which were not given in the British codex. Secondly, where the British codex had οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς, the Spanish exemplar had simply καὶ οἱ τρεῖς; and the same thing happens with the Spirit, the water and the blood [in verse 8]. Furthermore, where the British codex had ἓν εἰσι, the Spanish edition gives εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσι.

Lastly, where the British Codex added καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσι also to the earthly witnesses, this phrase is not added in the Spanish edition, at least not here.² I am quite certain that the phrase εἰς τὸ ἓν is a Hebraism,³ “I shall be as a father towards him” cannot mean anything but “I shall be his father.”⁴

Now, the Spanish edition added a scholium from the decretals, attributed to St Thomas. It declares that in the testimony of the Spirit, the water and the blood in carefully-copied codices, the phrase “and these three are one” is not added, and that it seems that this was added by those who favoured the Arian teaching.

¹ That is, from the Vatican library, repository of codex B, which Erasmus has just mentioned.

² Erasmus makes two further mistakes in comparing the readings of Montfortianus and the Complutensian edition. Just like the Complutensian edition, Montfortianus lacks the phrase καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν in 1 Jn 5:8, as Erasmus had already remarked in the *Apologia ad Annotationes Stunicae* (ASD IX.2:258) and his comments in the 1522 *Annotationes*, just a few lines above. This inconsistency can be explained by the fact that these observations were written at different times; by the time Erasmus saw the Complutensian edition, he no longer had access to Codex Montfortianus, which Clement had taken with him to Italy. By 1527 he had evidently forgotten that the phrase καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν in his text was carried over from the 1516 and 1519 edition. This should not be taken as evidence that Montfortianus and the Codex Britannicus are different manuscripts, only as proof that even Erasmus sometimes made mistakes.

³ Erasmus seems to suggest that the reading in Montfortianus, which contains this apparent Hebraism, looks more trustworthy than that in the Complutensian edition, which lacks it.

⁴ 2 Sam 7:14 (Vulg.).

Nam si hic adderetur, non posset exponi nisi de consensu testimonii, quando natura non possunt vnum dici, Spiritus, aqua et sanguis. Ex hoc consequeretur et illud quod præcessit de Patre et Filio et Spiritu Sancto, *Et hi tres vnum sunt*, accipi posse de consensu charitatis ac testimonii. Nunc his verbis Ioannes asseruit eandem essentiam Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Principio quod colligunt verissimum est: Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti eandem esse naturam simplicissimam et indiuiduam. Id nisi esset, non vere nasceretur e Patre Filius, nec vere Spiritus Sanctus a Patre Filioque procederet, vtique Deus de substantia Dei.

De collectione tantum agimus. Constat hic agi de fide testimonii, non de substantia personarum. Quod si multis aliis locis hæc vox *vnum* “consensum” sonat, non “vnitatem indiuidui,” quid absurdi sit, si hic similiter interpretemur? Quoties legimus in vtroque testamento, cor vnum, spiritum et animam vnam, os vnum, mentem vnam, quum consensus ac mutua charitas significatur? Is enim sermonis tropus quum tam familiaris sit diuinis voluminibus, quid vetat quominus et hic similiter accipiatur? Dominus Ioannis decimo dicit: *Ego et Pater vnum sumus*. Hoc testimonio quomodo prosternetur Arianus, nisi doceas *vnum* in literis sacris non appellari nisi *quæ sunt eiusdem substantiæ*? Nunc quum innumera loca suppetant quæ docent intelligi de consensu mutuaque beneuolentia, ad confirmandam opinionem orthodoxi valebit, ad retundendam hæretici pertinaciam, non video quantum valeat. Quod autem Christus ibi loquatur de concordia quam habet cum Patre, probabili coniectura colligitur, quod Christus non respondet ad id quod dixerat sese vnum cum Patre, sed quod Deum appellabat Patrem suum, seque singulari modo vocabat Filium Dei. Et apud Ioannem XVII, *Pater sancte*, inquit, *serua eos in nomine tuo quos dedisti mihi, vt sint vnum, sicut et nos*.

For if it were added here, it could only be explained as referring to the consensus of their testimony, for Spirit, water and blood cannot be said to be one in nature; and from this it would follow that the preceding statement too, concerning the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, “and these three are one,” could be understood as indicating the consensus of their love and witness. Now with these words John asserted that the essence of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is the same. First of all, what they infer is very true: that the nature of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is most simple and indivisible. If this were not the case, the Son would not really be born from the Father, and the Holy Spirit would not really proceed from the Father and the Son, at any rate as God from the substance of God.

So far we have dealt with what can be inferred from the verse. But here we are clearly dealing with the reliability of witness, not about the substance of persons. For if this word “one” in many other places means “agreement” rather than “the unity of an individual,” what is so strange in our interpreting it here in a similar way? How often do we read in either Testament “one heart,” “one spirit and soul,” “one voice,” “one mind,” when this signifies agreement and mutual love? Since this trope is so familiar in the Scriptures, what is stopping us from assuming the same meaning here? In Jn 10, the Lord says: “The Father and I are one.”¹ How is an Arian going to be vanquished by this evidence, unless you tell him that the word “one” in the Scriptures can only mean “what is of the same substance”? Now, since the Scriptures provide innumerable passages which teach that it can be understood as referring to consent or mutual love, I fail to see how far this will help to confirm the opinions of the orthodox, or to repress the stubbornness of the heretic. However, that Christ is speaking there of the concord he has with the Father can be inferred with a high degree of likelihood, since he is not referring to his statement about being one with the Father, but to the fact that he called God his Father, and was thus in an extraordinary fashion calling himself the Son of God. And in Jn 17 he says, “Holy Father, protect them in your name whom you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.”²

¹ Jn 10:30; cf. *Responsio ad Annotationes Lei novas* (ASD IX.4:327).

² Jn 17:11 (NRSV, altered).

Ac rursus, *vt omnes vnum sint, sicut tu Pater in me et ego in te, vt et ipsi in nobis vnum sint.* Totus hic locus de consensu charitatis ac testimonii tractat, et velimus nolimus cogimur illud vnum aliter interpretari de nobis quam de personis diuinis. Non igitur constringit locus, nisi compellat orthodoxorum autoritas et ecclesiæ præscriptio docens hunc locum aliter exponi non posse. Pium autem est nostrum sensum semper ecclesiæ iudicio submittere, simul atque claram illius sententiam audierimus. Nec interim tamen nefas est citra contentionem scrutari verum, vt Deus aliis alia patefacit.

Sed vt ad lectionis negocium redeamus, ex his quæ commemorauimus constat et latinorum et græcorum codices variare; meaue sententia nullum periculum est quamcunque lectionem amplectaris. Nam quod ait Thomas de particula ab hæreticis addita, primum non affirmat, sed ait: *dicitur*. Alioqui ecclesia catholica per orbem terrarum amplecteretur quod ab hæreticis esset adulteratum.

Illud torquebit grammaticos, quomodo de Spiritu, aqua et sanguine dicitur, *Tres sunt qui*, et *Hi vnum sunt*, præsertim quum *Spiritus, aqua et sanguis* apud græcos sint neutri generis. Verum apostolus magis respexit sensum quam verba, pro tribus testibus, quasi tribus personis, supposuit tres res: Spiritum, aquam et sanguinem. Quod genus si dicas, *Qualis sis artifex, ipsum ædificium testis est.*]

Et hi tres vnum sunt.) [1516: *Hi* redundat,] [1519: nisi quod interpretes adiecit explicandæ sententiæ gratia.] [1516: Neque est *vnum*, sed *in vnum*,] [1527: εἰς τὸ ἕν in quibusdam.]¹

¹ εἰς τὸ ἕν in quibusdam] 1527, 1535; εἰς τὸ αὐτό id est sive in idem 1516; εἰς τὸ αὐτό, id est, in idem, vt verbum verbo reddam 1519, 1522.

And again, “that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us.”¹ This entire passage deals with the consensus of love and witness, and whether we want to or not,² we are compelled to interpret that word “one” in some other way than referring it to the divine persons. Therefore, this passage does not constrain us, unless the authority of the orthodox and a prescription of the church compels us by teaching that this passage cannot be interpreted any other way. For it is pious always to submit our thinking to the judgment of the church as soon as we have heard it make a clear statement. But in the meantime it is not wicked to investigate the truth, though without causing contention, as God reveals different things to different people.

But to return to the business of this reading, the evidence we have recalled here shows that the Greek and Latin codices disagree; and in my opinion there is no danger which reading you embrace. For as to what Thomas says, that the passage was added by heretics, first of all he does not affirm it, he simply states, “It is said that ...” Otherwise, the Catholic Church throughout the entire world would embrace what was adulterated by heretics.

It will torture the grammarians that the Spirit, water and blood are described by the phrases “there are three” and “these are one,” especially since the words “Spirit,” “water” and “blood” are grammatically neuter in Greek. Indeed, the Apostle pays more regard to the sense than to the words, and for three witnesses, as if they were three people, he substitutes three things: Spirit, water and blood. You use the same construction if you say: “The building is a witness to the kind of builder you are.”]

And these three are one.) [1516: The word “these” is redundant] [1519: except as far as the translator added it to make the meaning plain.] [1516: And it should not be “one,” but “unto one,”] [1527: εἰς τὸ ἓν, as in some manuscripts.

¹ Jn 17:21; cf. *Responsio ad Annotationes Lei novas* (ASD IX.4:327-328).

² Cf. *Adag.* 245 (*Nolens volens*), ASD II.1:358-359; *Adag.* 1682 (*Volens nolente animo*), ASD II.4:137-138.

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The published version of this dissertation will contain full indices

SUMMARY

This study seeks to show how the Johannine comma (1 Jn 5:7-8) and its attendant myths developed and came to be used in religious controversies from the time of Erasmus to the present day. First we give an account of the fifth chapter of 1 Jn, in order to show that the comma is required neither by grammar nor by context, as many defenders of the comma since Nolan (1815) have asserted. Next we suggest how the Johannine comma entered the biblical text. First, Tertullian (*Adversus Praxeian* xxv.1) considered that the (authentic) verse 1 Jn 5:8—just like many passages in the Hebrew bible, such as Gen 1:26-27, 3:22 and 19:24—gave some intimation of the Christian Trinity. In Cyprian we see a further development: the allegorical interpretation of the Spirit, water and blood of 1 Jn 5:8 as types of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the persons of the Christian Trinity, a doctrine still in the process of formulation and negotiation. This allegorical stage is represented by several other figures, including Augustine, Eucherius of Lyon and Facundus. There is evidence from the late fourth century that this explicitly Trinitarian interpretation of 1 Jn 5:8, especially the phrase “these three are one,” gained some currency as a credal statement, primarily in the Latin tradition. Accordingly, it is in the context of (Latin) creeds (such as Priscillian’s *Liber apologeticus* and the *Expositio fidei chatolice*) that we first find the Johannine comma fully articulated.

It is then posited that the invention of the comma involved the combination of three elements: first, the regular text of 1 Jn 5:8; second, a rendering of 1 Jn 5:8 in which the water, spirit and blood are replaced by their allegorical equivalents; and third, the phrase “one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). All three of these phrases are bound by the phrase “are one” (*unum sunt*), which acts as the “switch” at which these phrases can converge. The textual diversity of the comma from the fourth to the fourteenth century is explained by the number of possible ways in which these three phrases can be combined. Once this credal phrase had been formulated, the comma began to enter the text of Latin bibles,

probably after being copied into the margin and mistaken as an integral part of the text by a subsequent copyist. Through the Middle Ages, the comma is found in Latin bibles with increasing frequency. The verse also became entrenched in the Roman liturgy as part of the lectionary reading for the first Sunday after Easter, and as versicle to the commonly-used responsory *Duo seraphim*.

When Erasmus came to prepare his New Testament for publication in 1516, he followed his Greek codices in not including the comma. He was consequently accused by his English antagonist Edward Lee of deliberately leaving a way open to Arianism. In 1520 Erasmus was presented with a Greek New Testament from England containing the comma, the so-called Codex Montfortianus. The present study brings together evidence to suggest that Erasmus was given this manuscript by the young English humanist, John Clement, *protégé* of Thomas More, who was studying at Leuven from 1520 to 1522. Furthermore, firm evidence is presented to correct the hypothesis put forward by Harris (1877) that the owner of Montfortianus before John Clement was the Franciscan William Roye, later assistant of Tyndale. On the basis of comparable markings in other books from the Clement collection, the “frater Froyke” (not “Froyhe,” as recorded by Barrett in 1801) named as the previous owner of Montfortianus is identified rather as Francis Frowick, minister general of the Observant Franciscan order in England, who visited Erasmus at Leuven in 1517. Frowick’s knowledge of Greek makes him a likely candidate as one of the scribes of Montfortianus. In order to forestall any further accusations of heresy, which had the potential to attract a negative reputation to his New Testament edition, Erasmus included the comma from Codex Montfortianus in the third edition of his Greek New Testament (1522), having included it in an edition of the Latin text the previous year. However, in his notes to the passage, he indicated very clearly that he believed the reading of the comma in Montfortianus to have been translated from Latin.

The ambivalence of Erasmus’ decision sowed the seeds of disagreement for centuries to come. Those who wanted to retain the comma as an essential piece of Scriptural evidence for the Trinity pointed to the fact that the reading was to be found in at least one Greek codex (if not more), and extrapolated on the basis of Erasmus’ final inclusion of the verse within his edition that he considered it genuine. Some of those who did not seem to register Erasmus’ doubts about the comma (like Calvin and de Bèze) nevertheless followed his argument that the three witnesses are united in their testimony only, not in their

essence. On the other hand, detractors of the comma pointed to the very poor manuscript attestation and Erasmus' doubts about Montfortianus to argue that the comma was to be excluded from the biblical text. For the first half-century after Erasmus' Greek text first appeared, these two sides were evenly matched. This lack of consensus is reflected in the various editions and translations produced in the sixteenth century.

The appearance of Antitrinitarian theologies in the second half of the sixteenth century changed the dynamics of the discussion, and support for the comma among Catholic and Protestant apologists increased as they tried to employ every means possible to defend the traditional doctrine of the Trinity. Many Antitrinitarian apologists explicitly called upon Erasmus' works to argue that Trinitarian belief was a late aberration in Christianity. Moreover, from the later sixteenth century, sectarian apologists began to associate the opinion of a given opponent on the status of the Johannine comma with the larger issue of their confessional identity. Catholic critics accused Protestants of damaging the integrity of the Scriptural canon; on the basis of Calvin's attitude towards the comma, Lutherans accused him of Judaizing; while Antitrinitarians accused their orthodox opponents of wilfully ignoring the textual evidence.

The second half of the seventeenth century saw a good deal of criticism of the comma, alongside a number of other textually difficult but doctrinally significant textual variants. The passage was criticised by the Antitrinitarians John Milton and Isaac Newton, as well as the Catholic Richard Simon. Simon's somewhat loose account of the events surrounding Erasmus' final inclusion of the comma gave rise to a number of myths: firstly, that Erasmus never saw Montfortianus; and secondly, that he promised Lee that he would include the comma if Lee could produce a manuscript attestation. The rediscovery of Codex Montfortianus in the early eighteenth century sparked a renewal of interest in the textual legitimacy of the comma, and discussion of the origins of the manuscript. This question was debated with particular intensity in England, though there were also important contributions from French and German scholars. At the same time, it became clear that the comma was one of the important points that divided the orthodox from Antitrinitarians. Despite the fact that Antitrinitarians were no longer liable to prosecution in Great Britain, they were still denied preferment of all kinds. The question of the comma thus took on a particular importance in demonstrating the illegitimate basis for political discrimination against Antitrinitarians. This movement gained momentum during the

eighteenth century, as the scholarly consensus against the authenticity of the comma grew, and the increasing popularity of Enlightenment ideals amongst social élites led to an increasing aversion to dogmatism and religious persecution. The tensions that had been growing through the eighteenth centuries came to a head in its last decade, which witnessed a vitriolic public debate over the comma, sparked by a short comment in Gibbon's *History*. Gibbon's claim was refuted somewhat inexpertly by the Anglican clergyman George Travis, who was in turn answered copiously—and hilariously—by two brilliant textual scholars, Richard Porson and Herbert Marsh.

In the early nineteenth century, it became clear that many conservative Christians were becoming increasingly concerned that the advances in biblical philology being made by scholars like Griesbach were beginning to impinge on central Christian doctrines. The old question of the comma was drawn into this debate by those who feared that its removal by modern critics posed a threat to the doctrine of the Trinity. As new editions of the Greek text of the New Testament were published, conservatives mobilised to defend the authority of the *textus receptus*, the form of the text standardised in the editions of the Elzeviers of Leiden and close to that underlying the English Authorised Version and the Dutch *Statenvertaling*. There were also renewed calls from the Roman Catholic Church to maintain the authority of the Clementine edition of the Vulgate and to discourage speculation on textual details such as the comma.

Meanwhile, pressure was mounting in Great Britain for the end of discrimination towards religious minorities, pre-eminently Unitarians and Roman Catholics. Within the context of this discussion, the myth of Erasmus' promise to include the comma was employed for sectarian ends of all kinds. Anglicans used it as evidence of the Catholic church's tendency to trample individual conscience. Catholic apologists used it to depict Erasmus as a good and obedient son of the church. Antitrinitarians used it as an illustration of Erasmus' enlightened and essentially Unitarian position under attack by the ignorant dominant hierarchy. The myth thus became a multi-purpose tool for justifying any number of religious and political positions. And the fact that it could not be anchored to any definite text in Erasmus' surviving corpus gave it an almost endless flexibility.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the evidence of the manuscripts finally led to the virtually universal rejection of the comma's authenticity amongst professional biblical critics. However, the resurgence of biblical fundamentalism

over the past forty or fifty years, especially amongst Evangelicals in the United States and elsewhere, has given new life to the question of the comma. The fundamentalist defence of the comma culminated in a critically inadequate but widely cited account of the question by Michael Maynard (1995). Now that the debate has moved to the Internet, it has become easier for conservatives, relying on unreliable guides like Maynard, to question the scholarly consensus on matters of textual criticism like the comma, and to cast suspicion on the entire philological project of higher criticism. According to many Evangelical fundamentalists, biblical criticism has fallen prey to a destructive secularism bent on casting doubt on the literal truth of the bible (that is, the *textus receptus* and the Authorised Version). Prominent fundamentalist leaders and educators thus actively encourage their followers to treat the advances of biblical scholarship with suspicion and hostility. As a consequence, the gap between the findings of professional biblical critics and popular conviction is growing; within these discussions, the question of the comma has taken on a kind of iconic status. Fundamentalist resistance to the biblical sciences goes hand-in-hand with resistance to the natural sciences and a conservative social program hostile to the rights of women, non-whites, gays and non-Christians. Within the last decade, fundamentalist activists have lobbied governments in the United States, Australia and the Netherlands to promote anti-scientific explanatory models such as Intelligent Design in schools, and to influence policy in other ways according to the agenda of the religious right. It is argued that the simultaneous attack on biblical criticism, scientific method and civil rights currently being mounted by Evangelical fundamentalists, which threatens to roll back many of the gains of the last two hundred years, is a matter of grave concern.

The first appendix to the present dissertation presents the physical evidence of Codex Montfortianus: text, paper, script and arrangement. The occurrence throughout the manuscript of imported watermarked paper of a kind attested elsewhere from 1495 to 1516 suggests that the manuscript was copied around this time, probably within a relatively short period and in the same place. The fact that readings from Codex Leicestrensis occur throughout Montfortianus—a previously overlooked element of its textual composition—further suggests that the manuscript was conceived as a unit. (Evidence is also presented to localise the copying of the parent manuscript Leicestrensis to Calabria, probably to the monastery of S. Maria del Patir, near Rossano.) The presence in Revelation of marginal readings taken from Erasmus' 1516 Greek

text in the hand of one of the original scribes suggests that this part of the manuscript—if not the entire work—was copied no earlier than 1516. The suggestion that the manuscript was written in the hope of convincing Erasmus to include the comma in the next edition of the Greek text—previously only a hypothesis without proper evidence—thus receives considerable material support.

A second appendix gives the text and translation of Erasmus' remarks on the Johannine comma from his *Annotations*, showing how these remarks increased in detail between 1516 and 1535.

SAMENVATTING

De geest van Arius opgeroepen.

Erasmus, het comma Johanneum en religieuze onenigheid in vroeg modern Europa

Deze studie beoogt te laten zien, hoe het comma Johanneum (1 Joh. 5:7-8) en de legenden waarmee het omgeven is, ontstaan zijn en zich ontwikkeld hebben, en hoe dit materiaal is ingezet in godsdienstige controversen van Erasmus' tijd tot vandaag de dag. Eerst bespreken we 1 Joh. 5, om te laten zien dat noch de grammatica, noch de context, de aanwezigheid van het comma Johanneum vereisen, zoals verdedigers ervan sinds Nolan (1815) hebben beweerd. Vervolgens onderzoeken we, hoe het comma Johanneum in de tekst van 1 Joh. terecht is gekomen. Eerst meende Tertullianus (*Adversus Praxean* xxv.1), dat het authentieke gedeelte van 1 Joh. 5:7-8, net als diverse passages in de Hebreeuwse bijbel, zoals Gen. 1:26-27; 3:22 en 19:24, een aanduiding van de Triniteit bevatte. Bij Cyprianus zien we een verdere ontwikkeling: de allegorische interpretatie van de Geest, het water en het bloed in 1 Joh. 5:8 als typen van Vader, Zoon en Heilige Geest, de personen van de Triniteit, een leerstuk dat toen nog geen vaste vorm had aangenomen en nog in discussie was. Dit stadium van de allegorische uitlegging van de oude, oorspronkelijke tekst van 1 Joh. 5:8 wordt ook vertegenwoordigd door verscheidene andere auteurs, onder wie Augustinus, Eucherius van Lyon en Facundus. Er zijn aanwijzingen uit het eind van de vierde eeuw dat 1 Joh. 5:8 in deze expliciet trinitarische uitleg, speciaal de woorden 'de drie zijn één', toen in zekere mate ingang had gevonden als een soort geloofsbelijdenis, het eerst in de Latijnse wereld. In Latijnse uiteenzettingen over het christelijk geloof (zoals de *Liber apologeticus* van Priscillianus en de *Expositio fidei catholice*) treffen we het comma Johanneum dan ook voor het eerst in zijn volledige formulering aan.

Vervolgens betogen we, dat het comma Johanneum tot stand is gekomen door de combinatie van drie literaire elementen: ten eerste, de traditionele tekst

van 1 Joh. 5:7-8; ten tweede, een weergave van 1 Joh. 5:8 waarin Geest, water en bloed worden vervangen door hun allegorische equivalenten; en ten derde, de zinsnede 'één in Christus Jezus' (Gal. 3:28). De drie constituenten van de beide reeksen van drie zijn verbonden door de zinsnede 'zijn één' (*unum sunt*), die functioneert als de 'wissel' waarop de drie van elke reeks samenkomen. De tekstuele variatie waarin het comma Johanneum zich van de vierde tot de veertiende eeuw voordoet is verklaarbaar uit het aantal mogelijke manieren waarop de drie constituenten kunnen worden gecombineerd. Toen deze geloofsbelijdenis eenmaal vorm gekregen had, begon het comma Johanneum de tekst van de Latijnse bijbel binnen te dringen. Waarschijnlijk werd het eerst *in margine* genoteerd, en vervolgens door een latere copïist bij vergissing opgevat als onderdeel van de tekst en daarin opgenomen. In de middeleeuwen komt het comma Johanneum in Latijnse bijbels steeds vaker voor. Het vers werd ook verankerd in de Romeinse liturgie als deel van de schriftlezing voor de eerste zondag na Pasen, en als versregel in de veel gezongen responsorie *Duo seraphim*.

Toen Erasmus in 1516 zijn uitgave van het Nieuwe Testament gereed maakte voor publicatie, volgde hij zijn Griekse codices en nam hij het comma Johanneum niet op. Bij gevolg werd hij er door zijn Engelse tegenstander Edward Lee van beschuldigd dat hij moedwillig de deur voor het Arianisme openzette. In 1520 kreeg Erasmus uit Engeland een Grieks handschrift van het Nieuwe Testament dat het comma Johanneum bevatte, de zogenaamde Codex Montfortianus (minuskel 61). Wij voeren gegevens aan die erop wijzen, dat Erasmus dit handschrift kreeg van de jonge Engelse humanist John Clement, een beschermeling van Thomas More, die van 1520 tot 1522 te Leuven studeerde. Voorts wordt hier voor het eerst op hechte gronden de hypothese van Rendel Harris (1877) gecorrigeerd volgens welke Clement de Montfortianus gekregen zou hebben van de franciscaan William Roye, de latere assistent van Tyndale. Op basis van notities in andere boeken uit de verzameling van Clement, vergelijkbaar met aantekeningen in de Montfortianus, moet namelijk de 'frater Froyke' die genoemd wordt als vorige bezitter van de Montfortianus geïdentificeerd worden als Francis Frowick, overste van de observante franciscanen in Engeland. Frowick had Erasmus in 1517 in Leuven een bezoek gebracht. Daar Frowick Grieks kende, is het waarschijnlijk dat hij ook een van de copïisten van de Montfortianus was. Ter voorkoming van verdere beschuldigingen van ketterij, die zijn uitgave van het Nieuwe Testament een negatieve reputatie konden bezorgen, nam Erasmus het comma Johanneum in 1522 uit de Codex Montfortianus in zijn

derde editie van het Griekse Nieuwe Testament op. Het jaar daarvoor had hij het al in het Latijn opgenomen in een editie van zijn Latijnse vertaling. In de aantekeningen echter bij de passage in kwestie gaf hij duidelijk te kennen, dat hij geloofde dat de tekst van het comma Johanneum in de Montfortianus uit het Latijn in het Grieks was vertaald.

De tweeslachtigheid van Erasmus' beslissing zaaide het zaad voor eeuwenlange, vaak heftige onenigheid over het comma Johanneum. Enerzijds wezen zij die het comma als een sterk schriftbewijs voor de Triniteit wilden behouden erop, dat deze lezing voorhanden was in ten minste één, zo niet meer, Griekse handschriften. Zij leidden uit het feit dat Erasmus de passage uiteindelijk in zijn editie had opgenomen af, dat hij haar voor authentiek hield. Sommigen van hen die weinig grond zagen om het comma Johanneum van de bijbeltekst uit te sluiten (zoals Calvijn en Beza), volgden niettemin Erasmus' interpretatie, dat volgens 1 Joh. 5:7 de drie hemelse getuigen slechts één waren in hun getuigenis, niet in wezen. Anderzijds wezen degenen die het comma Johanneum afwezen, op de zeer schaarse attestatie ervan in de handschriften en op Erasmus' twijfels over de Montfortianus. Zij betoogden dat het comma buiten de bijbeltekst moest worden gesloten. Gedurende de eerste halve eeuw nadat Erasmus de Griekse tekst van het comma Johanneum voor het eerst had opgenomen, hielden de groepen voor- en tegenstanders elkaar ongeveer in evenwicht. De onenigheid wordt weerspiegeld in de diverse edities en vertalingen die in de zestiende eeuw verschenen.

De opkomst van antitrinitarische theologieën in de tweede helft van de zestiende eeuw veranderde de dynamiek van de discussie. Onder katholieke en protestantse apologeten, die alle middelen aanwendden om het traditionele leerstuk van de Triniteit te verdedigen, nam de steun voor het comma Johanneum toe. Veel antitrinitarische apologeten echter beriepen zich expliciet op Erasmus' werken om te betogen, dat geloof in de Drieëenheid een late afwijking van de christelijke geloofsleer was. Bovendien begonnen radicale apologeten vanaf het eind van de zestiende eeuw iemands opvatting over het comma Johanneum te zien als direct gerelateerd aan diens confessionele identiteit in het algemeen. Katholieke critici beschuldigden protestanten ervan dat ze de integriteit van de canon der Schrift aantastten. Lutheranen beschuldigden Calvijn op grond van zijn houding tegenover het comma Johanneum van 'judaiser'. Antitrinitariërs beschuldigden hun orthodoxe tegenstanders van het opzettelijk negeren van de tekstuele gegevens.

In de tweede helft van de zeventiende eeuw werd op het comma Johanneum heel wat kritiek geleverd, evenals op een aantal andere lezingen die tekstkritisch problematisch, maar theologisch significant waren. Het comma werd gekritiseerd door de antitrinitariërs John Milton en Isaac Newton en door de katholieke Richard Simon. Simons weergave van de gebeurtenissen die leidden tot Erasmus' uiteindelijke opneming van het comma in de tekst van 1 Joh. is ietwat slordig; daardoor ontstonden hierover ongefundeerde, doch algemeen verbreide verhalen: ten eerste, dat Erasmus de Montfortianus nooit zou hebben gezien; ten tweede, dat Erasmus Lee zou hebben beloofd dat hij het comma zou opnemen indien Lee een handschrift zou tonen waarin het voorkwam.

De herontdekking van de Codex Montfortianus in het begin van de achttiende eeuw leidde tot hernieuwde interesse in de omstreden authenticiteit van het comma Johanneum en tot discussie over de oorsprong van de codex in kwestie. Het debat over deze vragen werd vooral in Engeland met grote hevigheid gevoerd, maar er kwamen ook belangrijke bijdragen van Franse en Duitse geleerden. Tegelijkertijd werd het duidelijk, dat het comma Johanneum een van de belangrijke onderwerpen vormde die orthodoxen en antitrinitariërs verdeelden. Hoewel antitrinitariërs in Groot-Britannië niet langer werden vervolgd, waren ze nog op allerlei manieren achtergesteld. De echtheid of onechtheid van het comma Johanneum werd daardoor een kwestie van bijzonder publiek belang: om de politieke discriminatie van antitrinitariërs als illegitiem aan de kaak te stellen, moest de onechtheid van het comma Johanneum worden aangetoond. Deze trend won aan kracht in de achttiende eeuw, toen de wetenschappelijke consensus over de onechtheid van het comma Johanneum toenam en de groeiende populariteit van Verlichtingsidealen onder sociale elites tot een toenemende afkeer van dogmatisme en godsdienstvervolging leidde. De spanningen die gedurende de achttiende eeuw waren opgelopen bereikten een kritiek punt in het laatste decennium van die eeuw: toen barstte er een venijnig debat over het comma Johanneum los, waartoe een korte opmerking in de *History* van Gibbon de aanleiding gaf. De bewering van Gibbon werd enigszins onhandig bestreden door de Anglicaanse geestelijke George Travis, die op zijn beurt uitvoerig (en vermakelijk) van repliek werd gediend door twee briljante experts op tekstkritisch gebied, Richard Porson en Herbert Marsh.

In de vroege negentiende eeuw werd het duidelijk, dat veel conservatieve christenen in toenemende mate bezorgd waren, dat de vorderingen op het terrein

van de bijbelse filologie, zoals die van Griesbach, begonnen te botsen met centrale christelijke leerstukken. De oude kwestie van het comma Johanneum werd in dit debat betrokken door hen die vreesden dat de verwijdering ervan uit de bijbel een bedreiging vormde voor het leerstuk van de Triniteit. Terwijl nieuwe, kritische edities van het Griekse Nieuwe Testament het licht zagen, kwamen conservatieven in beweging om het gezag van de *textus receptus* te verdedigen: de tekstvorm gestandaardiseerd door de tekstedities van de uitgevers Elzevier in Leiden (1624, 1633). Deze tekstvorm staat niet ver af van die welke ten grondslag ligt aan de Engelse *Authorised Version* en de Nederlandse Statenvertaling. Ook vanuit de rooms-katholieke kerk klonken hernieuwde oproepen om het gezag van de Clementijnse editie van de Vulgata, waarin het comma is opgenomen, te handhaven en speculatie over tekstkritische details, zoals het comma Johanneum, te ontmoedigen.

Intussen nam in Groot-Britannië de druk toe om discriminatie van religieuze minderheden, vooral unitariërs en rooms-katholieken, te beëindigen. In de context van deze discussie werd de legende over Erasmus' belofte, dat hij het comma Johanneum zou opnemen indien het in één Grieks handschrift zou blijken voor te komen, door allerlei religieuze groepen voor eigen doeleinden aangewend. Anglicanen gebruikten haar als bewijs voor de neiging van de katholieke kerk om het individuele geweten te fnuiken. Katholieke apologeten gebruikten haar om Erasmus af te schilderen als een goed en gehoorzaam zoon van de kerk. Antitrinitariërs gebruikten haar als illustratie van Erasmus' verlichte en in wezen unitarische positie, bestreden door de onwetende maar heersende hiërarchie. De legende werd zo een voor verscheidene doeleinden inzetbaar instrument waarmee tal van religieuze en politieke posities konden worden gerechtvaardigd. En het feit dat deze legende niet tot enige specifieke passage in Erasmus' werken kon worden herleid, verleende er een haast onbeperkte flexibiliteit aan.

In de eerste helft van de twintigste eeuw leidde het ontbreken van het comma Johanneum in de meeste Griekse handschriften uiteindelijk tot een bijna algemene verwerping van de authenticiteit ervan onder professionele beoefenaars van de bijbelwetenschap. De heropleving van bijbels fundamentalisme in de laatste veertig of vijftig jaar echter, speciaal onder evangelicalen in de Verenigde Staten en elders, heeft de discussie over het comma Johanneum nieuw leven ingeblazen. De fundamentalistische verdediging van het comma Johanneum culmineerde in een werk van Michael Maynard

(1995) waarin hij van het eeuwenlange debat over 1 Joh. 5:7-8 verslag deed. Hoewel dit verslag niet aan de eisen van gezonde kritiek voldoet, wordt het wijd en zijd geciteerd. Nu het debat verlegd is naar het Internet, is het voor conservatieven gemakkelijker geworden om, vertrouwend op onbetrouwbare gidsen als Maynard, de wetenschappelijke consensus inzake tekstkritische onderwerpen zoals het comma Johanneum aan twijfel onderhevig te maken en het hele filologische project van het literaire en historische bijbelonderzoek verdacht te maken. Volgens veel evangelicale fundamentalisten is de bijbelwetenschap ten prooi gevallen aan destructieve vrijdenkerij die erop uit is twijfel te zaaien omtrent de letterlijke waarheid van de bijbel, d.w.z., van de *textus receptus* en de *Authorised Version*. Vooraanstaande fundamentalisten die leidinggevende taken vervullen en verantwoordelijk zijn voor opvoeding en vorming van jongeren, moedigen zo hun volgelingen aan de vorderingen in de bijbelwetenschap met argwaan en vijandigheid tegemoet te treden. Bij gevolg wordt de kloof tussen de uitkomsten van de professionele bijbelwetenschap en de overtuigingen van het brede publiek steeds groter. In de discussies over de kritische bijbelwetenschap heeft de kwestie van het comma Johanneum een soort iconische status gekregen. Fundamentalistische weerstand tegen de bijbelwetenschappen gaat hand in hand met weerstand tegen de natuurwetenschappen en met een conservatief sociaal programma dat vijandig staat tegenover de rechten van vrouwen, niet-blanken, homoseksuelen en niet-christenen. In het afgelopen decennium hebben fundamentalistische activisten bij regeringen of ministers in de Verenigde Staten, Australië en Nederland gelobbyd om op scholen het gebruik van anti-wetenschappelijke denkmodellen zoals Intelligent Design te bevorderen, en om de politiek op andere manieren te beïnvloeden in overeenstemming met de agenda van religieus conservatieven. De onderhavige studie signaleert, dat de aanvallen die evangelicale fundamentalisten momenteel tegelijkertijd doen op de kritische bijbelwetenschap, natuurwetenschappelijke methoden en burgerrechten, veel van de winst die de laatste tweehonderd jaar op deze terreinen is geboekt in gevaar brengen en daarom aanleiding geven tot zorg.

In een appendix bij deze studie worden de fysieke aspecten van de Codex Montfortianus (minuskel 61) beschreven: de tekst, het papier, het schrift en de inrichting of structuur van het handschrift. Door het hele handschrift heen komt geïmporteerd papier met watermerk voor van een soort dat elders gedateerd kan worden in de jaren 1495 tot 1516. Dit is een aanwijzing dat ook dit manuscript in

ongeveer die tijd geschreven is, waarschijnlijk binnen een relatief korte periode en op een en dezelfde plaats. Verder komen overal in de Montfortianus lezingen voor die het handschrift deelt met de Codex Leicestriensis (minuskel 69); dit is vroeger niet opgemerkt; het wijst erop, dat het manuscript bij zijn ontstaan als een eenheid werd opgevat, en geen composiet is van onderdelen uit allerlei verschillende plaatsen en tijden. Aangetoond wordt dat de Leicestriensis gecopieerd werd in Calabrië, waarschijnlijk in het klooster van S. Maria del Patir, bij Rossano. Dat in de Montfortianus in de marge bij Openbaring lezingen staan die stammen uit de Griekse tekst van Erasmus' editie van 1516, in de hand van een van de oorspronkelijke copïisten, wijst erop dat dit deel van het handschrift—zo niet het handschrift als geheel—niet eerder dan in 1516 werd geschreven. De suggestie dat het handschrift geschreven is met de bedoeling Erasmus ertoe te bewegen het comma Johanneum in de volgende editie van zijn Griekse Nieuwe Testament op te nemen, was voorheen slechts een veronderstelling zonder behoorlijke onderbouwing. Nu krijgt deze zienswijze aanzienlijke steun in concrete gegevens.

Een tweede appendix biedt de tekst en een nieuwe Engelse vertaling van Erasmus'opmerkingen over het comma Johanneum in zijn *Annotationes*. Men kan hier zien hoe deze opmerkingen in de periode van 1516 tot 1535 zijn gegroeid doordat Erasmus er steeds meer informatie in opnam.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Grantley McDonald was born in Melbourne (Australia) on 9 April 1974. He undertook his secondary education at Scotch College, Melbourne. He completed a BA (Hons) at the University of Melbourne, with a double major in Latin and German. His undergraduate dissertation in German dealt with the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* of the Brothers Grimm, while his dissertation in Latin was on Horace's *Odes*. He graduated with first-class Honours.

For his postgraduate work Grantley transferred to the Faculty of Music at the University of Melbourne, where he completed his PhD in 2002. He spent a portion of his PhD candidature in Europe, first as an exchange student at the Freie Universität Berlin (1997-1998), and then as a postgraduate research fellow at the Herzog August Bibliothek (Wolfenbüttel) and the Warburg Institute (University of London) (1999). His dissertation established a firm link between the practice of metrical song in the sixteenth century (the so-called *Humanistenode* or *musique mesurée à l'antique*) and the reception of the work of the Florentine Neoplatonist Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499). From 2000 until the completion of his dissertation in 2002, Grantley was an adjunct lecturer in Latin at the University of Melbourne and at Monash University, and was also director of music at Queen's College, University of Melbourne. His dissertation was accepted unanimously by the examiners without amendment, and was awarded the inaugural McCredie Medal by the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

In 2003, Grantley was appointed as senior Latin teacher at Melbourne Grammar School and State Examiner of Latin for VCE (final-year students). Simultaneously he taught as adjunct lecturer in mediaeval and Renaissance music at the University of Melbourne, and served as director of music at St Peter's Anglican Church, Eastern Hill.

In 2006 he was awarded a postdoctoral fellowship at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. In 2008 he took up a CNRS ("Le Studium")

postdoctoral fellowship at the Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance (Université François-Rabelais de Tours). Since July 2010 he has been a postdoctoral researcher (*wetenschappelijk medewerker*) at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, where he is working on the Lutheran composer and controversialist Leonhard Päminger. In 2011 he will be a visiting fellow of Trinity College Dublin, where he will continue his investigations of Codex Montfortianus.

He has published on the work of a number of Renaissance thinkers (Marsilio Ficino, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, Philipp Melanchthon), poets (Conrad Celtis, Laurentius Corvinus, Jean Lemaire de Belges, Andreas Tscherning) and musicians (Josquin des Prez, Nicola Vicentino, Thomas Stoltzer, Ludwig Senfl, Wolfgang Gräfinger).

STELLINGEN

I

The phrase *tres unum sunt* (or *tria unus deus*), borrowed from the Majority reading of 1 Jn 5:8 (ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν, “There are three that bear witness, the Spirit, the water and the blood, and these three are unto one”), was understood by several Latin Fathers until the fifth century as an oblique reference to the Trinity.

II

The Johannine comma was formed by the combination of three phrases: (1) 1 Jn 5:8 (Majority text); (2) a repetition of 1 Jn 5:8 (Majority text) with the Spirit, water and blood replaced by the persons of the Trinity, of which they were held to be types; (3) the phrase *unum sunt in Christo Iesu* (based on Gal 3:28). These phrases combined variously at the shared phrase *unum sunt*.

III

There is no convincing evidence that the biblical text familiar to Cyprian of Carthage or Augustine contained the Johannine comma.

Contra Walter Thiele, “Beobachtungen zum Comma Iohanneum (I Joh 5,7f.),” *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 50 (1959): 61–73.

III

St Jerome did not write the prologue to the Catholic Epistles (incipit *Non ita ordo est ...*).

V

Since the publication of Erasmus' 1516 edition of the New Testament damaged the ability of the Complutensian edition to attract value, the attacks of Stunica on Erasmus' edition were motivated in part to damage the market value of Erasmus' edition.

VI

The seeds of the conflict over the Johannine comma were already present in the tensions and contradictions of Erasmus' presentation of it in his New Testament edition and *Annotationes*.

VII

Several persistent misconceptions about the Johannine comma originated in the account given by Richard Simon (1689).

VIII

The myth that Erasmus promised to include the Johannine comma in his New Testament if a manuscript attestation should be produced, became popular because of its potential in interdenominational polemic.

Cf. Henk Jan de Jonge, "Erasmus and the *comma Johanneum*," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 56 (1980): 381-389.

IX

Religious fundamentalism presents a threat to the sciences: both to the philological sciences on which academic biblical studies are built, and to the natural sciences.

X

Codex Leicestrensis (Gregory-Aland miniscule 69) was copied in Calabria, not in England.

Contra Kirsopp Lake and Silva Lake, *Family 13 (The Ferrar Group)* (London: Christophers, 1941), 13.

XI

Frater Froyke, the first known owner of Codex Montfortianus (Gregory-Aland miniscule 61), is to be identified not as William Roye, but Francis Frowick, Minister Provincial of the Observant Franciscans in England in the second decade of the sixteenth century.

Contra James Rendel Harris, *The Origin of the Leicester Codex of the New Testament* (London: Clay, 1887), 47.

XII

Codex Montfortianus is to be identified with Erasmus' Codex Britannicus.

Contra Michael Maynard, *A History of the Debate Over 1 John 5:7-8* (Tempe, AZ: Comma Publications, 1995), 78.

XIII

The Ancient Theology (*prisca theologia*) was an important means of legitimising the study of pagan classical literature in Northern European Universities in the years between 1490 and 1518.

XIII

Laurentius Corvinus' poem *Carmen quo valedicit Prutenos* (1509) is not the first extant reference to Copernicus' heliostatic model.

Contra Leopold Prowe, *Nicolaus Copernicus* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1883) 1:343, 347, 350-351; Jerzy Dobrzycki, "Notes on Copernicus's Early Heliocentrism," *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 32 (2001): 223-225.

XV

Laurentius Corvinus' depiction of Martin Luther in the poem *Quis negat hoc ævum felix* (1524) depicts him in a positive light by drawing on Lucretius' presentation of Epicurus.

Cf. Grantley McDonald, "Laurentius Corvinus and the Epicurean Luther," *Lutheran Quarterly* 22 (2008): 161-176.

XVI

The Nuremberg merchant Hieronymus Baumgärtner (1498-1565) served as the most important link between the composer Ludwig Senfl (*ca.* 1490-1542/3) in Catholic Munich, and the Lutheran world beyond Bavaria.

XVII

The Neoplatonic elements in Philipp Melanchthon's *De anima* provided an alternative to Luther's more exclusively Christian psychology.