

Adding Words to Scripture

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Relying on the King James Bible, many believe 1 John 5:7-8 clearly validates the Trinity doctrine. But does it?

We are warned not to add to God's inspired word (Proverbs 30:5-6). And, of course, deliberately altering the text of a manuscript -- adding words to Scripture, for example -- to change its meaning is fraudulent and dishonest.

The Hebrew "Old Testament" has been preserved among the Jews (Romans 3:1-2), and the Greek "New Testament" preserved among the Greeks. The majority of manuscripts preserving the New Testament were copied in Greek speaking areas of Asia Minor and Europe up to the time of the invention of printing. These form the "Byzantine" text of the Greek New Testament. The Byzantine text is almost identical to the first printed edition of the Greek New Testament (1516), edited by Erasmus, though he did use non-Byzantine sources in a few places. This and subsequent slightly modified versions, came to be called the *Textus Receptus*, from which the King James Version was translated.

There have been many attempts to corrupt and confuse the text of the New Testament over the centuries, represented by corrupted Greek manuscripts from other areas of the world, notably Rome and Alexandria, and poor translations of already corrupted Greek texts, such as the early Latin translation. The Vulgate, influenced by older Latin translations, was also based on corrupted Greek texts where the Greek was consulted. These corrupt texts are used for many modern English translations. 1 John 5:7-8 is a good example of the lengths to which some have gone to distort the text of the Scriptures.

Words added by some translators and copyists in these verses to make it appear that the New Testament teaches the Trinity doctrine are found in no Greek manuscript before the fifteenth century. In my New King James Bible, the center reference reads: "NU, M [modern eclectic and Majority texts] omit the rest of v. 7 [following '...bear witness'] and through *on earth* of v. 8, a passage found in Greek in only four or five very late mss." "The only Greek manuscripts in any form which support the words, 'in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one; and there are three that bear witness in earth,' are the Montfortianus of Dublin, copied evidently from the modern Latin Vulgate; the Ravianus, copied from the Complutensian Polyglot; a manuscript at Naples, with the words added in the Margin by a recent hand; Ottobonianus, 298, of the fifteenth century, the Greek of which is a mere translation of the accompanying Latin. All the old versions omit the words. The oldest manuscripts of the Vulgate omit them..." (JFB *Commentary*).

The words are not part of the Byzantine text. They do not appear in any manuscript preserved by the Greek speaking Church. A.T. Robertson explains how the spurious words found their way into the *Textus Receptus*. "Erasmus did not have it in his first edition, but rashly offered to insert it if a single Greek MS. had it and 34 [a manuscript of the sixteenth century] was produced with the insertion, as if made to order. The spurious addition is... (in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth)" (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*).

Most scholars today recognize the words are spurious, and many modern translations omit them. The *Darby* translation for example reads: "For they that bear witness are three: the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and the three agree in one."

If the Bible really teaches the Trinity doctrine, why would copyists think it expedient to fraudulently add words to the Bible in an attempt to support it? "Exegetes and theologians today are in agreement that the Hebrew Bible does not contain a doctrine of the Trinity" (*The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 15, "Trinity," p. 54). Continuing from the same source, "Further, exegetes and theologians agree that the New Testament also does not contain an explicit doctrine of the Trinity." The amazing truth of the origins of the Trinity doctrine, and what the Bible really teaches about God's nature, is further discussed in our enlightening article "[Origins of the Trinity](#)"

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