EXEGETIC DISCUSSION OF 1JOHN 5:7, NOT PRESENT IN MOST GREEK MANUSCRIPTS OR OTHER WESTERN TEXTS, NOR IN THE EARLIEST LATIN MANUSCRIPTS. THE PREFACE TO THE CANONICAL EPISTLES AScribed TO ST JEROME IN CERTAIN LATIN BIBLES IS NOT BY HIM. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF PROVING THAT THE TEXT OF ST CYPRIAN CONTAINED THE SELF-SAME PASSAGE FROM THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST JOHN

The remarks of various learned men on the “comma Johanneum” (1John 5:7–8) do not deter me from examining it afresh and checking it in as many Greek and Latin manuscripts as possible. Nowadays in all Greek lectionaries designated as apostolic, and in all Latin versions, the following words appear: *For there are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*. However it is difficult to find any Greek manuscripts containing this passage. I am not referring merely to early versions, but those in our own day. Erasmus accused the Greeks of reworking their text in light of Latin versions, but, as will be shown from the following discussion, he is wrong. It is far more likely that this reading was originally a marginal scholium, later added to the text by copyists. This is the impression I received from reading various Greek manuscripts, and it also appears that the same interpolation occurred in the early Latin manuscripts. This, however, did not occur until after the time of St Jerome, who was not responsible for this interpolation as Socinus, following Erasmus, has accused him of being.

Search as I might in the King’s Library, and in the library of Monsieur Colbert, both of which have an abundance of good manuscripts, I did not find a single one containing this passage. In the King’s Library I consulted seven, six of which have the numbers 5, 302, 337, 465, 605, 2298.¹ There are scholia in some of these manuscripts; but no scholiast mentions the passage in question. Nor did I find it in the five manuscripts from Monsieur Colbert’s

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¹ Here the original catalogue numbers of these minuscule manuscripts have been replaced by the Gregory-Aland numbering. The seventh manuscript was presumably the Latin source referred to below (see *infra*, ch. i8 n. i4).
library that I consulted and which are numbered 33, 62, 296, 468, 601. Some of the manuscripts however are written on paper and are fairly recent. There is even a very finely calligraphed in-16°, which I believe has been written since the invention of printing. Yet the passage in question is not there, any more than in the earliest manuscripts.

I could adduce even more Greek manuscripts I have seen, and the variants in which I have recorded. But more deserving of attention is the fact that, in the margin of some of the manuscripts I have enumerated, minor notes or scholia have been added alongside this passage and, it seems, have subsequently become part of the text. For example in manuscript 465, facing the words ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ ἁίμα (For there are three that bear record on earth, the Spirit and the water, and the blood) we find this scholium: τουτέστι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἁγιον, καὶ ὁ πατὴρ, καὶ αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ “that is to say, the Holy Spirit, and the Father, and he himself.” From this it can be seen that by the three witnesses St John speaks of—the spirit, the water and the blood—the scholiast understood the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit. Thus what was originally a scholium has, as often happens, eventually become part of the text. In this same manuscript alongside the words οἱ τρεῖς τὸ ἐν εἰσι (“and the three are one”), the following note has been added: τουτέστι μία θεότης εἰς θεός “that is, one Divinity, one God.”

This manuscript, about five hundred years old, contains very few scattered scholia. A similar adaptation is to be found in manuscript 62. In the margin, as well as the words εἰς θεός μία θεότης (“one God, one divinity”), the scholiast added the following: μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ πατρός καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος “a bearing of witness to God the Father and the Holy Spirit.”

This, I believe, is the origin of the passage in question, which is very difficult to find in the manuscripts, even though it is now present in their lectionary. This is a much more likely explanation than Erasmus’s statement that the Greek manuscripts where it does appear were altered on the basis of the Latin sources. Erasmus therefore could not include it in the early editions of his New Testament. For this he cannot be held entirely to blame since he was not obliged to print anything that did not occur in his manuscripts. Nonetheless he has been strongly criticised for this on the grounds that he sought to favour the Arian party. Jacques Lopes Stunica says it was wrong of him to remove this passage from his edition, on the assump-

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2 “Queen of the cursive.” In poor condition, says Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament (London: Bagster, 1854), 161 n. (For illustration, see Aland, Text ..., 143).