

The Johannine Comma of 1 John 5:7-8: Added or Removed?

Description

Of all the passages in the Bible, few have caused as much controversy as 1 John 5:7-8. There is a clause present in the KJV and a few other translations that most modern bibles don't include. This clause is so controversial, it even has its own name: the "Johannine Comma".

The question is this: Did the Apostle John write those words, or were they added later?

We'll tackle that today.

(A disclaimer first: I am not a "King James Only" Christian. I prefer to spend my serious study time with an interlinear bible. I recognize that no translation is perfect, which is why I started learning ancient Greek a few years ago.)

The Johannine Comma

Before we get to the evidence, let's all get on the same page about the topic. Here is 1 John 5:7-8 in the NASB, and most other modern translations read almost identically.

1 John 5:7-8 NASB

7 For there are three that testify:

8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

Here is the 1 John 5:7-8 in the King James Version, which is probably the most widely known version to contain the Comma. *(and yes, I'm going to call it "the Comma" in this article.)*

1 John 5:7-8 KJV

7 For there are three that bear record **in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.**

8 **And there are three that bear witness in earth,** the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

The portion I've highlighted in red is the Johannine Comma.

The debate centers around whether this clause was written by the Apostle John and removed by unscrupulous copyists, or whether it was added later (*either accidentally or on purpose*) by copyists.

To be clear, I don't have a dog in this fight. The Comma doesn't change doctrine one bit, though it would make the Trinity clearer. I have an opinion which will probably become clear as you read. However, my opinion was formed by the evidence listed below.

It's worth noting that this doesn't change doctrine one bit; it simply states the Trinity clearly. (*You can read this article for a ton of [quotes by pre-Nicaean early church fathers on the Deity of Christ.](#)*)

Evidence Against the Johannine Comma

(In a courtroom, the prosecuting attorney goes first. We'll do the same here.)

The biggest piece of evidence put forth by those who believe the Johannine Comma was added is the rarity of Greek manuscripts that contain it.

This is the centerpiece of the argument against the Comma, and with good reason. This is easily the strongest argument against its inclusion. That said, it's not Ironclad.

The crux of the argument is this:

We have over 5000 Greek New Testament manuscripts, and only 11 of them contain the Comma. Further, these 11 are all late manuscripts, and nearly half have the Comma added later than the date of writing.

However...

(There's always a however)

That statement is factually accurate, but also misleading.

While we do have over 5000 Greek New Testament, only about 500 of them contain 1 John. Of the manuscripts that do contain 1 John 7-8 (*the disputed portion*) the vast majority of those manuscripts

are “late manuscripts” dated from after the 10th century. If you care, here is the list of “early” manuscripts that contain 1 John 5:7-8, but don’t contain The Comma.

- 01 (4th century)
- B (4th century)
- A (5th century)
- 048 (5th century)
- 0296 (6th century)
- L (8th century)
- P (9th century)
- K (9th century)
- ? (9th century)
- 049 (9th century)
- 056 (10th century)
- 0142 (10th century)

So while 5000 is an impressive number, the actual number of “early” manuscripts that contain 1 John 5:7-8 is only 12. **And no, none of those contain the Comma.** That is fairly strong evidence, however it’s not the only evidence. There is equally compelling evidence to include the Comma. (*which we’ll get to in a bit.*)

If you care, here are the Greek manuscripts that do contain the Comma. Notice they are later manuscripts, however that’s not nearly as conclusive as you might think. (*More on why in a bit.*)

- 221 margin (10th century, Comma added later)
- 177 margin (11th century, Comma added later)
- 635 margin (11th century, Comma added later)
- 88 margin (12th century, Comma added in 16th century)
- 429 margin (14th century, Comma added later)
- 629 (14th century)
- 636 margin (15th century, Comma added later)
- 61 (16th century)
- 918 (16th century)
- 2473 (17th century)
- 2318 (18th century)

I initially dismissed the Comma because of the lack of Greek manuscripts which support it. **That was a mistake.** There is a LOT of other evidence to consider.

The other arguments against including the Johannine Comma are as follows:

- It also appeared very late in the Latin bibles
- The early church fathers didn’t quote it

However, **neither of those charges are true**. As you will see in a few moments, the Comma was quoted by the early church fathers and it existed very early in the Latin too.

Rebuttal from the Johannine Comma Supporters

To start with, we'll answer the strongest (*and almost only*) evidence from "the Comma was added" school of thought:

Why is the Johannine Comma absent from nearly all early Greek manuscripts?

I have talked about context in almost every article on this website so far, and with good reason. In this case, we're going to discuss historical context.

Firstly, you must remember that the printing press is a (*relatively*) recent invention. Until its invention in the mid 15th century, scribes had to copy everything by hand. The vast majority of scribes did their best to faithfully copy the text without adding personal bias.

However, not all of them were so honest.

Since the bible was written, unscrupulous men have inserted changes to fit their own doctrinal bias. It's sad, but true. For some reason some copiers thought it was fine to change scripture to fit their personal bias. Some did it because they thought they were right, and some did it for personal gain. But whatever the reason, copiers have occasionally changed the words.

In fact, one of the early church fathers says this EXACT thing has been done to the Comma.

The following is a quote from [Jerome](#). Jerome was born in 347 and died in 420. He is best known for translating the original Latin Vulgate bible, which is the official bible of the Catholic church to this very day.

"Just as these are properly understood and so translated faithfully by interpreters into Latin without leaving ambiguity for the readers nor [allowing] the variety of genres to conflict, especially **in that text where we read the unity of the trinity is placed in the first letter of John, where much error has occurred at the hands of unfaithful translators** contrary to the truth of faith, who have kept just the three words water, blood and spirit in this edition **omitting mention of Father, Word and Spirit** in which especially the catholic faith is strengthened and the unity of substance of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is attested."

(Jerome in the prologue to the Canonical Epistles appended to Codex Fuldensis, Translated by T. Caldwell.)

Who were the "unfaithful translators" that Jerome mentions?

The most obvious answer is the Arians.

The Arians were the followers of a man named [Arius](#), who was born in 256 AD and died in 336 AD. Arius believed that Jesus was a created being. He believed the Father created Jesus and therefore Jesus was inferior to the Father. Obviously Arius didn't believe the "One God in three persons" understanding of the Trinity.

(His views were similar to modern day Jehovah's Witnesses.)

Arius gathered a large body of followers who believed this teaching. This was such a big issue, it prompted the first ecumenical council of the Church: [The First Council of Nicaea](#). At the council, they affirmed the Deity of Christ and condemned Arius' teachings as heresy.

Arius himself was exiled.

For a further history lesson, I'm going to quote an excellent article on this same topic:

After his condemnation, **Arius fled to Syria-Palestine and succeeded in converting a large number of both the common masses and influential church leaders to Arianism** (such as Eusebius of Nicomedia, who had previously sheltered Arius during his trials, and Eusebius of Caesarea). This region was also under the control of the Emperor Constantius II (r. 317-361, r. solely 337-361), who was also an Arian. It was during this time that several orthodox bishops such as Eustathius of Antioch, as well as the noted defender of trinitarianism, Athanasius, were banished, **and the eastern churches handed over to Arian leadership** (for instance, Arius' old protector, Eusebius of Nicomedia, was given the patriarchate of Alexandria, in Egypt). **Hence, for nearly half a century** – including the time period in which Eusebius of Caesarea was performing his textual critical work on the Greek New Testament which was eventually affirmed and "codified" in the textual line leading to manuscripts such as Sinaiticus – **the major Greek-speaking regions of the Empire were under Arian control.**

Source

For about fifty years, the Arians had almost complete control of the creation of new copies of the New Testament.

Now, remember those earliest Greek manuscripts that contain 1 John 5:7-8? You probably don't remember the dates, so I'll copy/paste them below.

- Vaticanus written c. 325–350
- Sinaiticus written c. 330–360
- Alexandrinus written c. 400–440
- Ephraemi written c. 450

You'll notice the earliest manuscripts fall comfortably within the time span were the Arians were in

control of New Testament bible copying. The two earliest *might* have been before, but they were likely during and the others were copied afterward.

Now, if the Arians were in control of the copying of the New Testament for about fifty years, could they have omitted the Comma because it was devastating to their belief system?

It seems likely.

At least, Jerome (*who lived through it*) thought so.

We know that Jerome believed “unfaithful translators” had purposely omitted the Comma because of doctrinal bias against the Trinity. Assuming that Jerome was correct, the Arians fit this bill perfectly. Further, Jerome was born in 347 and died in 420. He would have been familiar with this controversy his entire adult life.

We know this for sure, every Greek New Testament we have containing 1 John 5:7-8 was written during or after the Arians were in control of the Bible’s copying.

That’s a good, plausible reason why it doesn’t appear in most surviving Greek manuscripts. (*and notice I said the Greek manuscripts; we’ll get to the Latin ones soon*)

Further, the earliest Greek manuscript (*the Vaticanus or codex B, written 325 – 350*) contains minor evidence of the Comma.

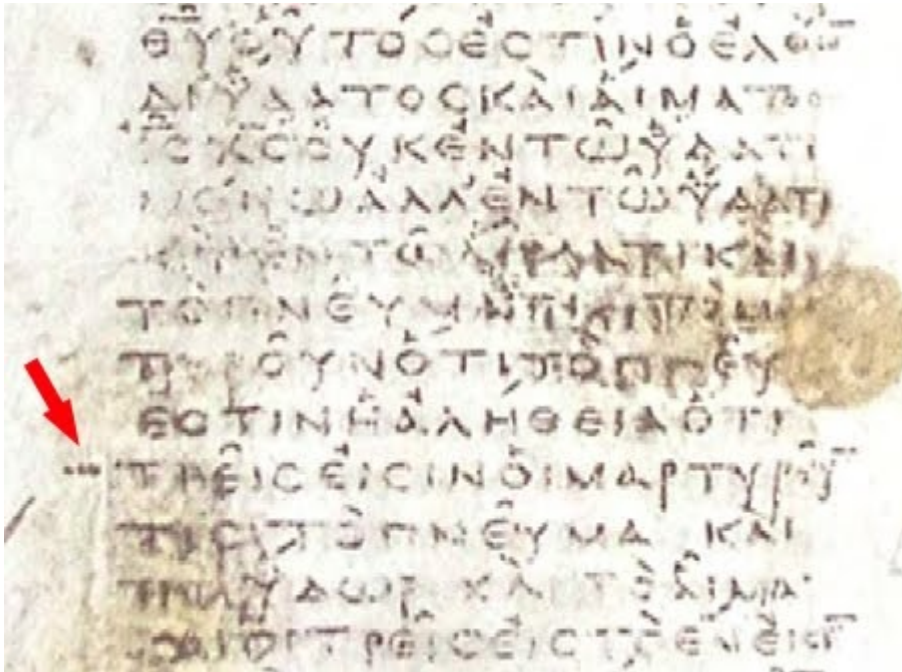
We know this because of the “umlaut”.

An umlaut has several meanings, but in this context it refers to a note a scribe added to indicate there was a textual variant. An umlaut consists of dots placed next to the text to indicate there is some doubt as the correct reading of the passage. The Vaticanus manuscript contains upwards of 750 such indicators. (*For further reading on umlauts in Vaticanus, [Bible.org has an illuminating article.](#)*)

The Vaticanus scribe consistently places the umlaut next to the line supplying the beginning of a questionable reading, whether long or short (and whether the text is included in or omitted from Vaticanus)

J. Edward Miller in “*Some Observations on the Text-Critical Function of the Umlauts in Vaticanus, with Special Attention to 1 Corinthians 14.34-35*” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 (2003) 217-36.

Below is a scanned photo of 1 John 5:6-8 in the Vaticanus manuscript, clearly showing the umlaut next to 1 John 5:7.



There is no other significant textual variant in that verse, so we can safely assume the umlaut there refers to the Comma. No it's not strong evidence, but it does indicate that the earliest Greek manuscript was at least aware of the Comma.

For further evidence, let's look into the corruption of other parts of 1 John.

A thorough examination of this is beyond the scope of this article. However, [This article](#) deals with the textual variants in other parts of 1 John in great detail. Suffice it to say, that the following passages have significant textual variants in the oldest manuscripts. Further, they all touch on the Deity of Christ in some way. (*Coincidence...?*)

- 1 John 2:23b
- 1 John 4:3
- 1 John 5:6
- 1 John 5:8 (*the ending, not the part with the Comma*)
- 1 John 5:13

Jerome isn't the only one who thought that 1 John had been corrupted by someone. (*Arians maybe?*) [Socrates of Constantinople](#) – born 380, died 440 – had the following to say about [Nestorius](#) and 1 John 4:3. It's worth noting that Nestorius' views on Jesus were far closer to the Arians than the Trinity.

Now in any event, he did not perceive that in the Catholic epistle of John it was written in the ancient copies, 'Every spirit that severs Jesus is not from God.' **For the removal of this [passage] out the ancient copies are understandably by those who wished to sever the divinity from the human economy.** And thus by the very language of the ancient interpreters, **some have corrupted this epistle, aiming at severing the humanity from the divinity.** But the humanity is united to the divinity, and are not two, but one.

(Historia ecclesiastica, VII:32)

Again, someone saying that 1 John had been "corrupted" by unscrupulous copyists who sought to deny the Deity of Christ (*Arians maybe?*) And remember, Jerome and Socrates of Constantinople were alive at the same time and lived through this controversy.

So we have two respected early church fathers – plus evidence from the manuscripts themselves – that someone was altering 1 John to remove references to Jesus Deity.

If I was going to remove evidence of Jesus' Deity, the Comma would be the first thing I'd take out. It's quite possible that the Arians (*who controlled copying of the New Testament for half a century*) left the Comma out of the Greek manuscripts on purpose.

Notice I said Greek New Testament.

The Latin manuscripts are a different story. (*we'll get to that in a minute.*)

Hanlon's Razor – Accidental Omission?

There's a semi-famous saying that goes like this:

"Never attribute to villainy that which can be explained by incompetence."

It's possible that – if The Comma was written by John – its deletion was **entirely accidental**. To quote from James Snapp, Jr. (*And BTW, he's one of the textual critics I most respect. His blog [The Text of The Gospels](#) is often my first stop for researching textual variants. Ironically, he doesn't think The Comma is original to John.*)

In addition, it is possible to explain the early loss of the CJ as a consequence of two simple scribal errors. If a copyist were to copy the longer reading in a narrow column, and transpose the words "?? ?? ???" ("on the earth") so as to appear before the word "?????"

(three) in verse 8, the text would look like this:

??? ????? ??????
?? ??????????????
 ?? ?? ???????
 ? ?????? ? ?????? ???
 ?? ?????? ???????
 ??? ?????? ?? ??????
 ?? ?????? ??? ??
 ?? ?? ?????? ??????
?? ??????????????
 ?? ??????? ??? ??
 ????? ??? ?? ?????
 ??? ?? ?????? ??? ??
 ?? ???????

And if a subsequent copyist were to lose his line of sight and jump from the words ??
 ??????????????? at the end of the second line to the identical words at the end of the ninth
 line, accidentally skipping the intervening words (in bold print), the resultant text would be:

??? ?????? ??????
 ?? ???????????????
 ?? ??????? ??? ??
 ????? ??? ?? ?????
 ??? ?? ?????? ??? ??
 ?? ???????

which is the text found in almost all Greek manuscripts of First John.

([Source](#). bold his, red highlighting mine)

So it's possible that – if The Comma was written by John – then the omission could be the result either an accidental mistake copying, purposeful deletions by the Arians, or a combination of the two. Perhaps villainy and incompetence joined forces, perhaps not.

It's also worth noting that the scribal mistake of writing something once which should be written twice – and skipping everything in between – (*called* "[haplography](#)") is one of the more common scribal errors.

The Early Church Fathers Quoted the Comma

The earliest possible reference to the Comma comes from Tertullian. He was born somewhere between 155-160 and died somewhere between 220-240. This is somewhat important because he predates Arius and his Arian teachings by several decades.

[Tertullian](#) only alludes to the Comma; he doesn't directly quote it.

“Thus the connection of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Paraclete, produces three coherent persons, one from the other, **which three are one**, not one [person], as it is said, “I and my Father are One.””

He alluded to it again, though it's just an allusion and not a direct quote.

For if in the mouth of three witnesses every word shall stand: — while, through the benediction, **we have the same (three) as witnesses of our faith** whom we have as sureties of our salvation too— how much more does the number of the divine names suffice for the assurance of our hope likewise! Moreover, after the pledging both of the attestation of faith and the **promise of salvation under three witnesses**, there is added, of necessity, mention of the Church; inasmuch as, **wherever there are three, (that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,)** there is the Church, which is a body of three.”

The allusion to the Comma isn't 100% clear, but it's there. 1 John 5 talks much about salvation and verses 7-8 talk about witnesses. Tertullian seems to indicate the witnesses in mind here are the Father Son and Holy Spirit, which would fit with the Comma.

[Cyprian](#) clearly quotes the Comma. He lived from 200 – 258, and so also predated Aruis and the Arian controversies. This is a crystal clear allusion to the Comma.

“The Lord says, “I and the Father are one; “ **and again it is written of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, “And these three are one.”**

(*Treatise 1:6*)

Let's pause for a moment. There is no place in all of scripture (*that I can't think*) with the phrase “and these three are one” except the Comma. None. If you can think of one besides The Comma, [send me an email](#) or leave a comment and I'll edit this article in a heartbeat.

That means something here.

Cyprian specifically says “**it is written**” and then quotes “and these three are one”. Following the Biblical examples, people only use that phrasing when quoting the Bible. The only place that phrase appears in the whole Bible is The Comma. Therefore, The Comma is a Biblical quote according to Cyprian. (*not that's he's infallible, but it's strong evidence.*)

[Origen](#) (*born 184, died 253*) directly alludes to the Comma.

“Behold, the eyes of bondservants in the hands of their lord, as the eyes of a bondwoman in the hands of their lady, so are our eyes towards the Lord our God, until he may pity us; spirit and body are the bondservants of **the Lord Father and Son**; but the soul is the bondwoman of the lady **Holy Spirit. And the Lord our God is three, for the three are one.”**

[Athanasius](#) (*Born 296-298, died 373*) directly alluded to the Comma.

“But also, is not that sin-remitting, life-giving and sanctifying washing [baptism], without which, no one shall see the kingdom of heaven, given to the faithful in the Thrice-Blessed Name? **In addition to all these, John affirms, ‘and these three are one.’**” (Translation by KJV Today)

[Priscillian of Avila](#) quotes the Comma in 380 AD. Curiously, the order is reversed, but all the content is there.

“**As John says**, There are three that give testimony in earth: the water, the flesh and the blood; and these three are one and **there are three that give testimony in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Spirit**; and these three are one in Christ Jesus.

[Augustine](#) directly alludes to the Comma.

“Therefore **God** supreme and true, with **His Word and Holy Spirit (which three are one)**, one God omnipotent, creator and maker of every soul and of every body;”

And in his exegesis of 1 John 5:8, Augustine also said:

Three things then we know to have issued from the Body of the Lord when He hung upon the tree: first, the spirit: of which it is written, 'And He bowed the head and gave up the spirit:' then, as His side was pierced by the spear, 'blood and water.' Which three things if we look at as they are in themselves, they are in substance several and distinct, and therefore they are not one. But if we will inquire into the things signified I by these, **there not unreasonably comes into our thoughts the Trinity itself, which is the One, Only, True, Supreme God, Father and Son and Holy Ghost, of whom it could most truly be said, 'There are Three Witnesses, and the Three are One:'**

The direct quote by Cyprian before 260 is very compelling, but it's not the most compelling. There's one quote that provides even stronger evidence.

In 484, the Vandal King Huneric called the council intending to persuade many North Africa Bishops to convert to Arianism. The king failed in his attempt. The North African Bishops chose [Eugenius of Carthage](#) as their spokesman in defense of the Trinity. Eugenius indisputably used the Johannine Comma to defend the doctrine of the Trinity.

“. . .and in order that we may teach until now, more clearly than light, that the Holy Spirit is now one divinity with the Father and the Son. **It is proved by the evangelist John, for he says, 'there are three which bear testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.'**"

In my mind, this is absolutely convincing evidence *all by itself*. Even if there was no other evidence (*and there is more evidence*) this single piece of evidence is extremely convincing. To use an example: it's as convincing as finding a videotape of a criminal suspect committing the crime.

Why is it so strong?

Because this was a conference of Bishops from **both** sides of the debate. If the Johannine Comma was added to the scriptures, the Arian Bishops would have thrown a major fit and called foul. If there was any doubt about its authenticity, the Arians would have made a HUGE issue out of it.

But they didn't.

Not one peep.

They didn't complain that Eugenius used the Comma, even though they vehemently disagreed with its content. To me, that says everyone at the Council of Carthage – both Arian and Trinitarian alike – accepted the Comma as scripture. **To me, that says even the Arians knew it belonged.** There were over 350 Bishops at the Council of Carthage. Think about that number, and realize they all agreed it was scripture.

For the Trinitarians to accept the Comma doesn't prove much. But for the Arians to accept it...

That means something.

The Johannine Comma in the Latin

So far, we have focused on the Greek scriptures and ignored the Latin translations. But now let's look at the Latin. "*But Latin is a translation and not the original, so how can it mean much?*" Is a typical response. However, there is precedent for using the Latin

For example, the Vulgate preserved the reading, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" at 1 John 2:23 even while the Byzantine Majority Text failed to preserve it...

...The NIV and the ESV include a sentence in Psalm 145:13 that does not appear in the majority of Hebrew manuscripts. The extra sentence is included simply because it is deemed to fit well structurally and it has the support of one Masoretic manuscript, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate. Furthermore, the NIV in Genesis 4:8 has Cain saying to Abel, "Let's go out to the field" based on the Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Vulgate, and Syriac. No Hebrew manuscript (not even the Dead Sea Scrolls) has this reading in Genesis 4:8. The NIV, ESV and NASB in 1 Chronicles 4:13 add "and Meonothai" from the Vulgate despite its absence in the Hebrew. The NIV, ESV and NASB in 2 Chronicles 15:8 add "Azariah the son of" from the Vulgate despite its absence in the Hebrew. **Thus there is a consensus that Latin readings can be reliable at times.**

[Source](#)

Further, we know that the Latin readings are less likely to have been corrupted by Arian influence. (*which two respected church fathers explicitly stated happened.*) Unfortunately, the oldest manuscript of the Latin (*the [Codex Fuldensis](#)*) was written in the mid 6th century.

It does not contain the Comma...

But it also made changes in the Gospels.

The four Gospels in the Codex Fuldensis are in form of the [Diatessaron](#). What is the Diatessaron? It's the earliest "harmony of the Gospels" written by [Tatian](#). Tatian combined the four separate gospel accounts into a single coherent narrative. Essentially, he took the unique elements of all four gospels and combined them into one book.

But he also made some changes.

For starters, the Diatessaron omits the Genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. And to quote an [article from GotQuestions.org](#)

:

The Diatessaron isn't without its problems. It seems that Tatian added some material not found in the original four Gospels, such as the extra-biblical story of a light that illuminated the Jordan River at Jesus' baptism. Some readings in the Diatessaron are attributed by church fathers to the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Gospel of the Ebionites, and other non-canonical works.

To put it bluntly, accuracy wasn't the primary goal of the Codex Fuldensis because they made changes.

However, the vast majority of Latin manuscripts do contain the Comma. 19th century textual critic F.H.A. Scrivener estimated that

"49 out of 50 [Vulgate] manuscripts testify to this disputed Comma"

(F. H. A. Scrivener, A Plain Introduction to the New Testament Textual Criticism, 4th Ed., Vol. 2, (New York: George Bell & Sons, 1894), p. 403).

49 out of 50; that's 98%. Granted, these are all based on Jerome's Vulgate and we know Jerome considered the Comma to be authoritative.

Issues of Style, Grammar, and Consistency

The best explanation I've found for this is quoted below.

The grammatical difficulty which is found in this passage if the Comma is deleted rests on **a rule of Greek grammar (as well as in many other languages) which demands gender agreement among parts of a sentence**. If the Comma is left in place, the masculine article, participle, and number in the apodosis of verse 7 then agree with the two masculine (*Father, Word*) and one neuter (*Spirit*) nouns...

...The problem for those who support the deletion of the Comma is that, **if the Comma does not appear in the text, then the masculine predicate in the apodosis of verse 7 is mated with the three neuter nouns (water, blood, spirit) found in verse 8 (which then becomes the subordinate clause), a serious grammatical error**. The problem disappears with the Comma in place,"

Source (*emphasis mine*)

We also have gender agreement rules in English.

For example, you would never say “*The girl picked up her purse himself*” because the masculine pronoun “himself” disagrees with both the feminine noun “girl” and the feminine pronoun “her”. That’s the kind of grammatical mistake you would simply never make. Even a child wouldn’t make this mistake.

However, the Apostle John made this exact kind of mistake if The Comma wasn’t written by him.

Is that likely?

It’s seems far fetched to me, especially given the overall quality of John’s writing. Not impossible, but very far fetched. So, let’s look at this further. I’m going to re-quote The Comma with the Greek grammatical genders added. Then, we’ll look at it.

The Comma’s Gender issue Explained

A note first:

This is slightly hard to explain because in English, we don’t have “gendered verbs”

In Greek, you can have verbs with gender (*participles*). That is, I could write “I was running” using a masculine noun/verb, and you would understand that “I” am male. However, just like in English – **you need to have gender agreement in your sentence.**

So you can’t write “I(masculine) was running(feminine)” because they don’t match gender. That’s horrible grammar, just like the “*The girl picked up her purse himself*” example above.

Make sense?

(I hope so because I’m not sure how else to explain it. :/)

So let’s look at The Comma again with the Greek genders added.

- Relevant **Masculine** words will be colored Blue
- Relevant **Feminine** words will be colored Red
- Relevant **Neuter** words will be colored Purple.

Here we go.

1 John 5:6-9 KJV

7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost:

and these three are one.

8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

Now, the genders all agree with The Comma included.

In verse 7 with The Comma, all the relevant words “?? ?????????????? ?? ?? ??????” (*the testifying in the heaven*) are masculine, matching “? ??????” (*the father*) and “? ??????” (*the Word*) = no problem. The gender of the verbs match the genders of the related word, so it works.

(Sharp eyed readers will notice that “Holy Spirit” is in the neuter gender. This isn’t a problem because there are gender matching words and a conjunction between the verb and non-gender matching word.)

In verse 8 with The Comma, you have the masculine “?? ??????????????” (*the testifying*) mated with the feminine “?? ??” (*the earth*). To answer a set of words that’s both masculine and feminine, you use a neuter. For an example: “*he said ABC, she said XYZ; but they agreed on 123*”. In that example, “they” is neuter, so it can answer both a feminine and masculine noun at the same time because of the neuter gender.

Now, without The Comma.

1 John 5:6-9 NASB

7 For there are three that testify:

8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

Without The Comma, you have the neuter words “?? ?????? ?? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?” (*the Spirit and the water and the blood*) answering masculine words “?? ??????????????” (*the testifying*). You can’t have masculine answered by neuter. You can have both masculine and feminine answered by neuter, but not just masculine. That’s where the gender issue lies, and it’s a major no-no as we’ve seen.

Further, I’m not the only one who thinks so.

At least one early church Father argued the same

Further, we know at least one early church father noticed this grammatical issue. [Gregory of Nazanzius](#) said the following in his Fifth theological oration:

What about John then, when in his Catholic Epistle he says that there are Three that bear

witness, the Spirit and the Water and the Blood? Do you think he is talking nonsense?

First, because he has ventured to reckon under one numeral things which are not consubstantial, though you say this ought to be done only in the case of things which are consubstantial. For who would assert that these are consubstantial?

Secondly, because he had not been consistent in the way he has happened upon his terms; **for after using Three in the masculine gender he adds three words which are neuter, contrary to the definitions and laws which you and your grammarians have laid down.** For what is the difference between putting a masculine Three first, and then adding One and One and One in the neuter, or after a masculine One and One and One to use the Three not in the masculine but in the neuter, which you yourself disclaim in the case of Deity?

Gregory was arguing the same grammatical point as the previous quote. **That means Gregory of Nazanzius was arguing that the Johannine Comma belongs in the Bible.**

So now we have have two highly respected early church fathers (*Jerome and Gregory of Nazanzius*) saying that the Comma belongs in the Bible. Plus we have a third early church father (*Socrates of Constantinople*) who said people were messing with 1 John to remove references to the Deity of Christ.

It's easier to remove than Add

I'll just take a moment to talk about this. It's FAR easier to remove/ignore something than it is to add it. This goes double for an important book like the bible. It's a lot easier to catch an addition than an omission.

Further, what's the motive to add it?

The trinity was already an accepted doctrine by at least Tertullian's time. (*200, give or take 20 years*) Further, The Comma was directly quoted by Cyprian before 260. For the Comma to have been added by copyists, the addition must have been *extremely* early.

I understand why the Arians would want to remove the Comma. But why would a Trinitarian add a verse to support a doctrine that was already widely believed?

Anyone?

One more thing that always bothered me about this passage

(*And to be clear, I'm not saying this is evidence.*) I've read this verse many times and something always seemed... Off about it. There's something about it that just doesn't fit perfectly.

Here's the verse with just a little extra context.

1 John 5:6-9 NASB

6 This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is **the Spirit who testifies**, because the Spirit is the truth.

7 For there are three that testify:

8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

9 **If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater**; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son.

It makes some sense I suppose. Verse 6 says the Spirit testifies and verse 9 references the testimony of God, which could be from the Holy Spirit back in verse 6. It makes some sense.

However, if you look at it with the Comma added, it just makes more sense.

1 John 5:6-9 NKJV

6 This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.

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

8 And there are **three that bear witness on earth**: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

9 **If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater**; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.

The “witness of God” in verse 9 makes a LOT more sense when paired with the “Three that bear witness in heaven” from verse 7. Likewise, the “witness of men” in verse 9 makes more sense when paired with the “three that bear witness on earth” of verse 8.

Like I said before, this isn't evidence. However, the verse makes a whole lot more sense with the Comma present.

Conclusion

To summarize:

The arguments for the Comma being added are thus:

- It doesn't appear in any early Greek manuscripts (*Which you might expect because the Arians were in charge of the Greek manuscripts for a long time*)

The arguments for the Comma being written by the Apostle John are thus:

- What's the motive for adding it because the Trinity was already accepted by at least 260?
- It was quoted or alluded to by a large number of early Church fathers
- **It was exactly quoted by Cyprian before 260**
- Socrates of Constantinople said that "*some have corrupted this epistle*" of 1 John because they wished to separate Jesus humanity from his deity.
- **Jerome specifically said the passage had been removed by "Unfaithful translators" (who we would guess are the Arians)**
- **Gregory of Nazanzus says the Comma belongs.**
- It is present in 98% of the Latin copies (*which were virtually free from Arian influence*)
- **It was accepted by at least 350 Bishops – many of whom were Arians – at the Council of Carthage.**

It's the points in **red** that really pushed me into believing that the Apostle John wrote the Comma. A super early quotation, plus two highly respected early church fathers, plus **the Arians accepted it as scripture**, even though it directly countered their foundational belief.

That's good evidence.

If you say the Comma wasn't written by John, then how do you explain:

- Cyprian quoting it before 260
- Jerome's explicit testimony that it was removed
- The Grammatical problems with John's writing without The Comma
- Over 350 Bishops – including a LOT of Arians – accepting it as scripture at the Council of Carthage

Anyone?

(if you have an answer please put it in the comments below)