

A STUDY OF THE GREEK TEXT OF 1 JOHN 5:6-10 WHICH SHOWS THAT THE TESTIMONY OF “THE THREE HEAVENLY WITNESSES” MUST BE PART OF THE EPISTLE AND GENUINE

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VERSE 6:

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

Here we have the testimony of the Holy Spirit, to the life and death of Jesus Christ. No one knows for certain, what the Apostle John means by, “*He Who came by water and blood*”. It is my understanding of this verse, that John is here speaking of the *baptism* and *death* of Jesus Christ. The Apostle John wrote his First Epistle against the false teachings of a man called, *Cerinthus*, “who taught that Christ, a divine being, descended upon Jesus at the Baptism and left him before the Passion [His Death]” (W F Howard, *Christianity According to St John*, page 55. Words in brackets are mine). This can be seen elsewhere in this Epistle, as in chapter 2 we read, “*Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also*” (22-23). There is an interesting reading, which I believe to be the original, for chapter 4, verse 3, which reads, “*and every spirit that divides [or, separates] Jesus Christ is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist*”. The textual evidence for this is older and stronger than the accepted one. And, 5:1, “Whoever believes that *Jesus is the Christ* is born of God”. Clearly the emphasis in these passages, is to show that JESUS IS THE CHRIST, One and the same Person, from His birth, right up to His death on the cross. Not that Jesus was born a mere “man”, upon Whom the “Christ” descended. John tells us that the Holy Spirit bears “Testimony” to this Biblical Truth about Jesus Christ. As far as the Greek for this verse is, there is no problem. The words, “*it is the Spirit that bears witness*”, are in the neuter gender, not because the Holy Spirit is “*impersonal*”, but for grammatical purposes, as the noun “*pneuma*” (*Spirit*) is a “neuter” word, and it is natural for this grammar. The “Personality” of the Holy Spirit is seen elsewhere in the Bible. Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit using the Greek personal pronoun, “*ekeinos*” (He), which is masculine in gender (see, John 14:26, “*He [ekeinos] shall teach you all things*”, 16:13, “*but when He*

[*ekeinos*] *the Spirit of truth is come*”), where the gender of “*pneuma*”, would have required the neuter “*ekeino*”. It is because Jesus wished to show the Holy Spirit as a Person, that He uses the masculine. The fact that the Holy Spirit “*teaches*”, and can be “*grieved*” (Eph. 4:30), and “*calls*” to the ministry (Acts 13:2), and is “*lied*” to (Acts 5:3), etc, clearly shows that He is a Person, and not an “*impersonal force*”, as taught by the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Interestingly, in Acts 5:4, the Apostle Peter calls the Holy Spirit, “*the God*” (*toi theoi*), Who certainly cannot be “*impersonal*”. I mention the Greek grammar of verse 6 for the purpose of our understanding the grammar of verse 7, especially in the versions that omit the reference to the Heavenly Witnesses.

VERSE 7:

“*For there are three that testify*”

I am using the text that appears in the greater majority of modern versions of the New Testament, which has just the one sentence for verse 7. Bible versions like the New King James, have the words as originally written by the Apostle John: “*For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one*”

The Greek text for the reading found in most versions, is, “*hoti treis eisin hoi marturountes*”. This is referring to “*the Spirit, the water and the blood*”, in verse 8. What no English, or any other language, other than the Greek, can tell you, is that the words in verse 7, are all in the *masculine gender*. All three nouns in the Greek, “*spirit*”, “*water*”, and “*blood*”, are *neuter* words. Now, the Apostle John would not only have been very able in the Greek language, but, he was writing under the guidance of God the Holy Spirit. There is no doubt that he would have employed the correct Greek grammar for what he wrote, and used the rules that govern this language. Instead of writing “*hoti treis eisin hoi marturountes*”, John would have written, “*tria eisi ta marturounta*”, which is *neuter*, and for which there is no grammatical problem, as it agrees perfectly with the *neuter nouns* they refer to. Two “*solutions*” to the problem with the Greek grammar have been put forward. The first is found in commentaries like the *Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools*, where we read, “The masculine points to the personality of the Spirit” (e-edition). In the first place, it is to be noted, that the words in verse 7 (modern text), speaks of “THREE”, and not “ONE” witness, which are given TOGETHER as their TESTIMONY are said to be ONE. In the second place, Why does John in verse 7 use the MASCULINE gender for the Holy Spirit, whereas in verse 6, which we have looked at, he

rightly uses the NEUTER, and no one would doubt that the Holy Spirit is a PERSON in verse 6, even though, for grammatical purposes, the NEUTER was correctly used. The second “solution”, is that the THREE WITNESSES, “*the Spirit, and the water and the blood*”, is found in the commentary by John Bengal: “He uses *treis* in the *Masculine*, because these things (the Spirit, the water, and the blood) are symbols of the Trinity” (e-edition). This has been around from very early times, and when looked at closely, is a non-starter. “Spirit”, without any doubt, refers to THE HOLY SPIRIT. So, if Jesus Christ, as seen from verse 6, where He “*came by water and blood*”, is represented by these terms, then what of God the Father? There is NO Biblical support for either “*water*”, or “*blood*” ever used to “*symbolise*” God the Father. Another problem with this “*solution*”, is the fact, that in verse 6 the Apostle John has just spoken of these SAME “*witnesses*”, where no one has ever suggested that the “*water*” and “*blood*” are to be understood as “*symbols*” of the Father and the Son. So, why would John change their meaning in the next verse? These are desperate “*solutions*” being given by those who cannot accept the FACT, that the words as found in versions like the King James, is indeed the work of the Apostle John. It is another FACT, that, when the text reads, “*For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one*”, that there is NO problem with the Greek grammar, as the MASCULINE nouns, “*Father*” and “*Word*”, along with the Holy Spirit, Who is a PERSON, GOVERN the gender of the words, and the THREE are indeed seen as PERSONS in the masculine. This is CORRECT Greek grammar, and to any HONEST student of the Holy Bible, the ONLY possible answer for the Greek grammar of verse 7.

VERSE 8:

“and these three agree as one”

In this clause, the Greek text is very important. “*kai hoi treis eis to hen eisin*”.

We are here concerned with the Greek definite article, “*to*” [usually translated, *the*], which in many cases is left untranslated as its use is functional. In this case, it is used for “*renewed mention*”, when a word (here “*hen*”, *one*) has been used a previous time, the subsequent use takes the article, to *refer it back* to the former use. Grammatically, there is no reason why John would have used the Greek article in verse eight, other than for “*renewed mention*”. For this, we must also have the previous use of “*hen*”, which can only be found in the disputed words in verse 7, “*and these three are one (hen)*”.

Bishop Thomas Middleton, the brilliant Greek scholar, who did not accept the disputed words in verse 7, nevertheless admitted, that without the Greek article in verse 7, he could not account for its use in verse 8. He wrote a huge work that investigates the use of the Greek article in all its forms, in the New Testament, entitled, "*The Doctrine of the Greek Article Applied to the Criticism and Illustration of the New Testament*". Bp. Middleton does a thorough examination of the Greek article being used in verse 8, and admits: "But the difficulty to which the present undertaking has directed my attention, is of another kind : it respects the Article in *eis to hen* in the final clause of the eighth verse : if the seventh verse had not been spurious, nothing could have been plainer than that *TO hen* of verse 8, referred to *hen* of verse 7 : as the case now stands, I do not perceive the force or meaning of the Article" (page 441).

Here we have a leading Greek scholar, who actually rejected the words of verse 7 as being "*spurious*", yet was honest enough to admit the difficulty of John using the Greek article in verse 8, which is clearly for the purpose of "*renewed mention*", and yet there is no other use of the numeral "*hen*", if the words of verse 7 are removed. There clearly is an inconsistency with the Greek grammar of the passage, should the disputed words be rejected. However, once the words are accepted as being part of the passage, no such problem exists. Because of the problem caused by the Greek article in verse 8, Bp. Middleton says, "The difficulty, then, attending the final clause of ver. 8. remains thus far not only unobviated, but in some degree confirmed, and I do not perceive how the present reading is to be reconciled with the extermination of ver. 7. The only alternative left us, is the possibility, that the Article in *eis to hen* may be spurious, or even that the whole final clause of ver. 8. may be an interpolation" (p.450). This is nothing but conjecture, as a "means" to account for the use of the Greek article in verse 8. As far as I am aware, all the Greek manuscripts that contain this Epistle of John, have "*kai hoi treis eis to hen eisin*" in them. Like many who reject the words in verse 7, Bp. Middleton cannot account for the difficulty caused in the Greek, when the words are rejected. It must be remembered, that the Holy Spirit was guiding the Apostle John when he penned his works, as He did for the writers of the entire Holy Bible. This being the case, there can be no room for any errors, or inconsistencies in the original autographs in the Hebrew and Greek.

I have seen two "*solutions*" given for the use of the Greek article here in verse 8. The first is found in the commentary *The Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools*, where Dr Plummer says, "*To hen* here has been made into an argument

for the genuineness of 1Jn 5:7. It is said that *'the one'* plainly implies that *'one'* has preceded. But this lands us in absurdity by making *'one'* in 1Jn 5:8 mean the same as *'one'* in 1Jn 5:7. *'One'* in 1Jn 5:7. means *'one Substance'*, the *'Unity in Trinity'*. But what sense can *'The spirit, the water, and the blood agree in the Unity in Trinity' yield?*" Dr Plummer has failed to understand the use of the Greek article in *"renewed mention"*, and his comments, because of this, does not really answer why John wrote, *"to hen"*. He wrongly argues, that, if the two uses of *"hen"* were connected, then their *"meaning"* must be exactly the same in both cases. In both cases the meaning is of *"unity"*. In verse 7, it is the *"unity of essence"*, as Jesus Christ says in John 10:30, *"I and the Father, one (hen) We are"* (lit. Greek). Which is speaking of more than a *"unity"* of will and purpose, as can be seen from the preceding verses, where Jesus promises those to whom He gives eternal life, that *"they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand"* (v.28), and then goes on to say, *"My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch [them] out of My Father's hand"* (v.29). Which clearly shows the *"unity"* of *"power, protection and authority"*, of BOTH Jesus Christ and the Father. It is after Jesus says this, that He goes on to say, *"I and the Father, one We are"*

Dr Samuel Green, in his *Handbook to The Grammar of The Greek Testament*, has this to say on *"renewed mention"* of the Greek article. *"Sometimes the reference is implicit, the second expression, bearing the article, being equivalent to the former, though not identical"* (page. 181). The *"meanings"* do NOT always have to be the *"same"*. A good example can be found in Romans 5:19, *"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous"*. In the Greek, both uses of the word *"many"*, has the definite article (*hoi polloi*, literally, *"the many"*, *"all"*). If we were to take the MEANING of both uses to be the SAME, then we here have a Biblical case for *"universal salvation"*, that everyone will be saved and go to heaven in the end, regardless of whether they accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and Lord. The first *"many"*, can only refer to the whole fallen human race, who, through Adam's sin, are justly condemned to eternal punishment. The second *"many"* does not mean that because of Jesus' *"obedience"* in going to the cross for mankind, that *"ALL"* (the meaning of *"hoi polloi"*) will be saved without repenting for their sins, and accepting the Salvation provided by Him on the cross. The answer is found in verses 15 and 17, *"But the free gift is not like the offence. For if by the one man's offence many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many... For if by the one man's offence death*

reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ”. Here we read of God’s “Gift” of Salvation in Jesus Christ, as being OFFERED (abounded) to “many” (ALL). But, ONLY those who RECEIVE the “abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ”, can be saved. It is very clear from this passage, that Dr Plummers argument is without any foundation, as it is plainly incorrect. The Greek article in the second use of “*hoi polloi*”, is for the purpose of “renewed mention”, as it is used before in this same verse. However, as we have seen, their MEANINGS are NOT IDENTICAL.

Secondly, Thomas Horne, in his, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, says of the Greek article in verse 8. “A doubt may be reasonably entertained, whether, in the language of St. John, *TO 'EN* is not used as an equivalent to *TO AUTO*, as it is in Phil. ii. 2, in which case no reference to any preceding expression would be applied” (vol. iv, 466). Dr Thorne is quite mistaken to suppose, that there is any comparison between the use of the Greek article, “*to*”, in Philippians 2:2, and 1 John 5:8. To give the full sentence in the Greek of Philippians 2:2, “*hina to auto phronete*”, which literally is translated, “that you may be of **the same** [*to auto*] mind”, where “*to auto*”, is used as part of the phrase, and not for any other purpose. It certainly is not redundant in its use here. In this same verse Paul goes on to say, “*to hen phronountes*”, where again the Greek article has a function in a phrase, “*the one thing minding*”, which does not require any previous mention of “*hen*”, as it is here as part of a phrase. I cannot see any example here that may be used to address the problem of the use of “*to*”, in 1 John 5:8, which remains if the preceding use of “*hen*” is omitted in verse 7.

VERSE 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”

Here we read of the “*Witness of God*”, as being “*greater*”, than any “*witness of men*”. This “*Witness*” in our present case, is that of *God the Father*, as it says that “*He has testified concerning His Son*”. It is a very specific “*Witness*”, and not spoken in general terms. One of the major teachings of this Epistle of the Apostle John, is to show that Jesus IS the Christ, and was born as the God-Man, and NOT as a mere man, upon Whom the divine Christ descended at His baptism, which was the current heresy being taught by the Ebionites, against

whom the Apostle John directed this Epistle. This same Apostle wrote in his Gospel, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (1:1). Where it is clear, that “*the Word*” is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 14 of this same chapter, we read: “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*”. This is known as the Incarnation, where Almighty God, the Second Person of the Divine Trinity, became man, while He remains to be God. He did NOT change from Deity to humanity, but, added a *human nature* to His *divine nature*. This truly is a mystery as no human mind can ever fathom this. The Apostle Paul wrote, “*Christ Jesus, who, subsisting in the nature of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation [humbled Himself], [by] taking the nature of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men*” (Philippians 2:5-7). John writes at the opening verse of chapter 5 of his first Epistle, “*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God*”. It was THIS that God the Father was “*Witnessing*” to in verse 9, where John writes, “**THIS** *is the Witness*”. We have had the “*Witness*” of the Holy Spirit in verse 6, Who is in full agreement with the additional “*witnesses*” of the “*water and blood*”, in verse 7. Apart from the disputed words in verse 7, where we read of “*the Father*”, where else do we read of God the Father’s “*Witness*” to His Son Jesus Christ? This statement in verse 9 is incomplete without the reference of the *Heavenly Witness* in verse 7. Further, the Greek grammar is very clear to this. There has been a very subtle change (corruption) made to this verse, to try to remove the “*Witness*” of God the Father as being specific, and referring back to what is spoken of in verse 7, with the Witnesses of “*the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit*”. Instead of “*which*” (Greek, “*hen*”, “*for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son*”), we have the Greek conjunction, “*hoti*”, which cannot be accounted for in this place, as it is WRONG GREEK. The reading with “*hen*”, naturally points “*aute*” (THIS), back to the already mentioned “*Witnesses*” in verse 7, which becomes an impossibility in the Greek grammar here, if “*the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit*”, are removed from the text in verse 7. It has wrongly been suggested, that, because of the impossible reading “*hoti*” in this construction of the Greek text, that it was “*corrupted*” to “*hen*”, for which there is no grammatical objection and better suits the construction. This is pure conjecture, as there is NO evidence to back up this charge. The reading with “*hen*”, was clearly known to Tertullian writing in Latin as early as 2nd/3rd centuries, but used a Greek New Testament and translated himself into Latin. This shows without any doubt, that “*hen*” was part of this text in the Greek, at a very early time. Dr A T Robertson, in his *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, calls the Greek text with the reading “*hoti*”, “*a harsh construction*” (e-edition).

Brooke Westcott in his commentary on John's Epistle's, says on the conjunction: "The second *hoti* is ambiguous" (e-edition). Its use instead of "*hen*" here cannot be accounted for in the Greek construction as we have it. As I have said before, God the Holy Spirit is the final Author of the entire Holy Bible, and there is no way that He would have inspired the Apostle John, or any other writer, to write what is inconsistent in the grammar, and which causes any problems, as the use of the conjunction here clearly does. Those who oppose the words in verse 7, of "*the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit*", really do NOT have any "answers" to the problems caused in the entire passage of the Greek text, once these words are rejected. They then have to try their best to discredit the text, by supporting and suggesting things they normally would not do. There are NO objections that can be found in the Greek text, that very clearly show that the "*Witness*" of God the Father MUST refer to that already mentioned in verse 7, which can ONLY be found in the words: "*the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit*", where ONLY the Father is mentioned. The "*Witness*" CANNOT be taken to refer to that of "*the Spirit, water and blood*", as there is NO mention of God the Father here. We must NOT make a passage of Scripture say what it does not, and accept its Teachings even when it goes against what we hold to. Just because the early SURVIIVING Greek manuscripts do not have the words, "*the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit*", this must NOT make us conclude that ALL the other evidence, especially the Greek text, as we have seen, is ignored.

VERSE 10:

"He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony which God has given concerning His Son"

This verse is very similar to the previous, which also speaks of the "*Witness*" of God the Father. Here, like verse 9, we have "*hen*" (which) used, for which there is no objection to the Greek text. Not only does a person who is *born-again* by the Holy Spirit, have this "*witness*" in them, about the Lord Jesus Christ, but, there is also the "*Witness*" just mentioned of God the Father in verse 9, to which John here is referring. We now have the "*Witness*" by Two Persons of the Trinity to Jesus Christ, God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit, Who also gives us the internal assurance about Jesus Christ. Again, it must be asked, where other than verse 7 do we have the "*Witness*" of the Father?

All of the internal grammatical evidence points to the fact that the disputed

words in verse 7 do form part of this Epistle of John.