

***THE GLORY AS OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER:
A DEFENSE OF JOHN 1:18
AS FOUND IN THE AUTHORIZED KING JAMES BIBLE***

BY

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This brief excursus is dedicated first and foremost to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who revealed Himself to me in the written word--perfectly preserved down through the ages and given to me in a language I can understand. Recognizing that, as Martin Luther once said, "The Bible is like a lion; it does not need to be defended; just let it loose and it will defend itself," I hereby construct this defense out of genuine gratefulness for the infallible Word of God as contained in the Authorized King James Bible. Without a perfectly preserved Written Word, I would know nothing of a personal relationship with the Living Word.

Secondly, it is dedicated to the many men, women, and children who gave their lives that I might have the Bible in English, a privilege which I do not take for granted. Thank-you for your sacrifice and may the Lord reward you richly in His kingdom.

Last, but not least, I dedicate this paper to my seminary professor, Dr. David Black, whose books have had a profound effect on my acquisition of a working knowledge of the Greek language. No biblical scholar that I have had contact with has exhibited such humility and self-sacrificing devotion toward his students. The reasons for differing with Dr. Black in opinion with regard to the proper reading in John 1:18 are to be laid out in this paper. Despite disagreement, however, he holds my highest respect as a Man of God. I pray, Dr. Black, that you would consider my presentation and consequently change your opinion in this matter.

-Jesse M. Boyd

*"And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles: and the people fled from the Philistines. **But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory.**"*

-II Samuel 23:11-12

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Introduction

John 1:18, the full height of the Apostle's sublime argument in his grand prologue, involves textual variation of a profound nature in the biblical manuscript tradition. As a result, disparate readings of the passage have found their way into our English Versions. This is best illustrated by comparing the reading of the Authorized Version with that of the *New American Standard Bible*:

“No man hath seen God at any time; the *only begotten Son* [ο μονογενης υιος], which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.” (Authorized Version).

“No man has seen God at any time; the *only begotten God* [μονογενης θεος], who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*. (New American Standard Bible).¹

Because of this predicament, the general consensus of textual critics is to cast doubt on the integrity of the traditional text in favor of the reading found in the “oldest and best manuscripts.”² For example, A. T. Robertson, perhaps the greatest Greek scholar America has ever produced, writes, “The best old Greek manuscripts read *monogenes theos* (God only begotten) which is *undoubtedly* the true text.”³ No persuasive evidence whatsoever is given to back up such a dogmatic claim. It is merely assumed to be correct. In light of such hastiness of judgment, along with the theological implications of the passage in question, an investigation is warranted. The purpose of this excursus is to construct a defense for the reading of John 1:18 as preserved in the Authorized King James Bible over and against the supposed “original reading” found in most modern English versions. This will be done by examining both the internal and external evidence. Moreover, an attempt will be made to determine why the variant reading arose while taking into consideration theological implications concerning the divine/human nature of Jesus Christ. May God Almighty guide this quest.

¹Two other renderings of this passage are noteworthy. The NIV reads, “No one has ever seen God, *but God the One and Only*, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.” Moreover, the NWT (Jehovah's Witness Bible) reads, “No man has seen God at any time; *the only-begotten god* who is in the bosom [position] with the Father is the one that has explained him” [Emphasis Mine]

²This expression has become the “catch phrase” of modern textual criticism. Basically, it refers to two manuscripts of Alexandrian origin—Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus (a)—which are dated to the fourth century. They are the oldest most complete New Testament mss in existence. Therefore, these are assumed to be the best and closest to the original reading. Together, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus differ from the traditional text of the New Testament in over 13,000 places, omit 4000 words, add 2000 words, transpose 3500 words, and modify 2000 words. Ironically, the thousands of changes in a and B are not the same changes. According to Herman Hoskier, these two manuscripts differ from each other over 3000 times in the Gospels alone [Herman Hoskier, “Codex Vaticanus and its Allies” *Which Bible?* Ed. by David Otis Fuller (Grand Rapids, MI: Institute for Biblical Textual Studies, 1975), 136]. Despite such problems, however, many textual scholars have jumped on the bandwagon of the Alexandrian text (as translated in most modern English Versions) in an effort to deride the traditional text found translated in the Authorized King James Version.

³A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1932), 18.

A Survey of the External Evidence⁴

Succinctly speaking, the evidence for υιος enjoys the witness of 99% of all extant manuscripts while θεος is found in a handful of manuscripts of a more ancient nature (P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵, a, B, C, L, 33). Thus, the great battle between preponderance and antiquity wages on. This, of course, is the simplistic picture painted by critics such as James White.⁵ However, several observations should be made. First of all, θεος does enjoy the witness of two of the most ancient papyrus fragments (P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵), both of which are dated to the third century; but, one must not forget that two out of ninety-seven papyri is not that remarkable. The other ninety-five are completely silent concerning this passage. There is no way of ever knowing which reading they contained. Nonetheless, it is commonly accepted that the Old Itala was translated extremely early (ca. 150), undoubtedly from Greek papyri.⁶ It's witness unanimously favors the rendering of the AV. Secondly, although the discovery of the noted papyrus fragments is rather recent, it is apparent that such finds did not prove decisive in the UBS' selection of θεος in their Greek New Testament⁷, despite Metzger's claims to the contrary.⁸ This is clearly seen by looking at the very next verse (1:19). The UBS⁴ rejects P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵, and 99% of all manuscripts in favor of Vaticanus. A similar phenomenon occurs in John 12:9.

A second observation involves the testimony of a (4th century). Although strong, it is weakened by the fact that a corrector's hand has supplanted θεος with υιος.⁹ Thus, the value of the reading cannot be properly estimated until more is known about the date of the correction and the reason for it. It is easily conceivable that the corrector saw an error in the original mss and set out to correct it. At this point, it is interesting to note that

⁴ A more thorough and specific survey of the external evidence can be found in Appendices A and B. Appendix A deals with manuscript evidence while Appendix B focuses upon the testimony of the Church Fathers.

⁵ James White, The King James Only Controversy (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1995), 259.

⁶ Benjamin Wilkinson, "Our Authorized Bible Vindicated," in Which Bible? Ed. by David Otis Fuller (Grand Rapids, MI: Institute for Biblical Textual Studies, 1974), 208.

⁷ The Greek New Testament (4th Edition), Ed. by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo Martini, and Bruce Metzger (Germany: United Bible Societies, 1994). This Greek text is the basis for the New Testament translations of many modern versions, including the *NIV*. The *NAS* follows the Nestle-Aland tradition which is practically identical with the UBS⁴ as far as the text is concerned.

⁸ Bruce Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 2nd Edition (Germany: United Bible Societies, 1993) 168.

⁹ The UBS' critical apparatus lists a² as a witness for "ο μονογενης θεος." However, Ezra Abbot ["On the Readings of John i. 18" in Bibliotheca Sacra (1861), 18:850-85] promulgates that the corrector's hand witnesses to υιος. Due to the preponderance of misrepresentation in the UBS⁴, this author chooses to go with Abbot on this one. His documentation is thoroughly documented.

approximately nine correctors worked on this mss over a period of several centuries.¹⁰ This is hardly a credible witness!¹¹ Sinaiticus' testimony is also questionable considering the obvious "carelessness of the transcriber."¹² In the very verse in question, the words "ο ων" are omitted before "εις τον κολπον."

Codex Vaticanus (B / 4th century) also suffered at the hands of correctors. Recent technology has shown that at least two editors worked on the manuscript, one being as late as the twelfth century. John 1:18 is one of 7,578 places where B differs from the traditional text found in the majority of extant witnesses. Furthermore, according to Burgon, 237 words, 452 clauses, and 748 entire sentences are missing from B in the Gospels alone.¹³ Such facts serve to throw doubt on this witness when it goes up against 99% of all extant mss, practically all of the ancient versions, and overwhelming testimony of the early Church Fathers, as is the case with John 1:18.

Before proceeding with the external evidence, it must be pointed out that the changes in a and B, the towers behind which the textual critics hide on this verse, are not the same changes. According to Hoskier, these two mss differ from each other over 3000 times in the four Gospels.¹⁴ Burgon goes on to say argue that is easier to find two consecutive verses in which the two differ from one another than two in which they completely agree.¹⁵

In addition to a and B, θεος is found in two other uncials—the supposed original hand of C (5th century) and L (8th century). All four of these, however, omit the definite article before "μονογενης θεος."¹⁶ Metzger

¹⁰Bruce Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 77. Metzger's exact words are as follows: "In light of such carelessness in transcription, it is not surprising that a good many correctors (as many as nine) have been at work on the manuscript . . . Tischendorf's edition of the manuscript enumerates some 14,800 places where some alteration has been made to the text . . . [with] more recent detailed scrutiny of the manuscript . . . by the use of ultra-violet lamp, Milne and Skeat discovered that the original reading in the manuscript was erased."

¹¹John Burgon noted that a, when collated and compared to the Traditional Text, differs in 8,972 places. Moreover, 3,455 words are omitted, 839 words are added, 1,114 words are substituted, 2,299 words are transposed, and 1,265 words are modified ["The Revision Revised" in *Unholy Hands on the Bible*, Ed. by Jay P. Green (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Trust Fund, 1990), D-6.]

¹²J.P. Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures—The Gospel According to John*, Ed. by Philip Schaff (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1872), 71.

¹³John Burgon, "The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels," in *Unholy Hands on the Bible*, Ed. by Jay P. Green (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Trust Fund, 1990), 41.

¹⁴Hoskier, 136.

¹⁵Burgon, "The Revision Revised," D-6.

¹⁶Of the two papyrus fragments previously mentioned, P⁶⁶ omits the article while P⁷⁵ retains it.

argues that the anarthous use appears to be more primitive based on its appearance in John 1:1.¹⁷ However, John 1:1 involves a definite subject, stative verb, and an anarthous predicate nominative. Colwell's Rule states that anarthous predicate nominatives that precede the copula are customarily definite in meaning. Such is not the case with John 1:18 where the lack of the article would render nothing short of "a begotten god."¹⁸ Thus, Abbot writes, "It seems hardly possible that the omission of the *article* can be correct; but if this be an error, it throws some suspicion on the reading which accompanies it."¹⁹

Θεος, in addition to the aforementioned, is found in one minuscule (33, with the definite article), two ancient versions (Syriac Peshitta, and the Coptic), a late revision of the Georgian version, and the margin of the Harclean Syriac. The two Syriac versions and the Georgian revision omit the definite article while the Coptic retains it.

The manuscript evidence for υιος, on the other hand, is great. It is found in numerous uncials, including a², C³, and A (one of the four earliest). Moreover, it enjoys the witness of every single cursive minuscule except one (33). This amounts to several hundred in number. The ancient versions also constitute a credible witness. "Υιος" enjoys unanimous testimony from the Old Itala, Vulgate, Armenian, Ethiopic, and Slovincic as well as the Harclean Syriac (in the text), Curetonian Syriac, and the Palestinian Syriac. Thus, we are faced with a small number of old mss and a few versions over and against a myriad of later mss and generally older versions. In the eyes of many textual scholars, this evidence favors the former. Thus, the evidence of the early Church Fathers must come in to offset the supposed stasis..

If there is any balance in the external evidence whatsoever at this point, the pendulum most assuredly swings in favor of υιος when one considers the testimony of the Church Fathers.²⁰ Several observations are in order. First of all, the evidence contained in the UBS' critical apparatus is faulty and misleading. A thorough perusal of Abbot's article, "On the Readings of John i.18," makes this truth abundantly clear. Several listings are incomplete, many important Fathers are not listed, and others are misrepresented. All in all, four Fathers seem to favor θεος, quoting John 1:18 with that reading. These include Clement of Alexandria (194), the *Excerpta Theodoti* (date unknown), Epiphanius (368), and Didymis of Alexandria (370). Three patristic

¹⁷Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 169.

¹⁸Cf. *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* used by the Jehovah's Witnesses.

¹⁹Abbot, 851.

²⁰For a more detailed outline of the patristic evidence, one should consult Appendix B.

witnesses possibly allude to the passage with the reading θεος (II Synod of Ancyra, Gregory of Nyssa, and Fulgentius), but all three cases are far from certain. On the other side of the coin, Abbot provides a partial list of Greek witnesses, thirty-two in number beginning with the earliest extant testimony (Irenaeus, A.D. 178) and going up through the twelfth century, that clearly favor υιος. Many of these expressly quote John 1:18 with that reading multiple times.²¹ As far as the Latin Fathers are concerned, no quotation that reads “unigenitus Deus”²² has ever been produced. Abbot provides a sampling of fourteen Fathers, including Tertullian (200), Hilary (354), Victorinus (360), Ambrose (374), and Jerome (378). These, in particular, were well acquainted with Greek and occasionally consulted the New Testament in its original language. Thus, their testimony goes beyond the Latin tradition.²³ Finally, three Fathers (Origen, Basil of Caesarea, and Cyril of Alexandria) appear to be indecisive, exhibiting both readings in their writings.

In estimating the whole of the external evidence, one should not dismiss the wide geographical distribution of the witnesses for “ο μονογενης υιος.” According to Abbot, they represent every important division of the Christian world—Syria, Antioch, Alexandria, Arabia, Cappadocia, Cilicia, Armenia, Caesarea, Constantinople, Rome, and the whole of the Western Church.²⁴ The testimony for θεος, besides being much more limited in number, is almost entirely restricted to Egypt.²⁵ This fact is interesting because according to Scrivener, the North African Church corrupted the New Testament as far back as A.D. 150.²⁶ An ancient Western Church

²¹Abbot, 858-863.

²²The equivalent of μονογενης θεος

²³Abbot, 863-865.

²⁴Ibid., 869-870.

²⁵Cf. Abbot, 870 and Lange, 71. The marginal reading in the Harclean Syriac represents the reading of one or two Greek manuscripts with which it was collated at Alexandria in A.D. 616.

²⁶F. H. A. Scrivener, A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament, 4th ed. (London: G. Bell, 1984 [rep]), 453.

Father by the name of Caius (2nd century) clearly described this unfortunate occurrence.²⁷ Apparently, this is what happened with John 1:18, for no other explanation can satisfactorily explain the external evidence.

A Survey of the Internal Evidence

Having determined that the external evidence greatly favors υιος, it is only appropriate to survey the internal evidence. Those that advocate the authenticity of “μυνογενης θεος” argue that the other reading is easier and thus the result of scribal assimilation to John 3:16, 18; I John 4:9.²⁸ Such an assertion is simply the application of *lectio difficilior lectio potior* (the preference of the more difficult reading). This is a faulty canon of modern textual criticism applied hastily in the UBS⁴.²⁹

According to James White, θεος is the reading that best explains the rise of other variants. He is thus appealing to another faulty canon of modern textual criticism, one that is coated with subjectivity and speculation. No one can really know for certain exactly how variants arose, and oftentimes, what the editors see as the best explanation is quite ludicrous.³⁰ White claims that the difference in morphology between θεος and υιος is so great that the former could have never arisen from the later. Therefore, θεος is the original reading.³¹ What he does not promulgate, however, is that the ancient Greek manuscripts utilized contracted forms of these

²⁷Caius' words are as follows: “For this reason is it they have boldly laid their hands upon the divine Scriptures, alleging that they have corrected them. And that I do not state this against them falsely, any one who pleases may ascertain. For if any one should choose to collect and compare all their copies together, he would find many discrepancies among them . . . their disciples were very zealous in inserting the corrections, as they call them, i.e., the corruptions made by each of them . . . For one may compare those which were formerly prepared by them with those which have been afterwards corrupted with a special object, and many discrepancies will be found. And as to the great audacity implied in this offense, it is not likely that even they themselves can be ignorant of that. *For either they do not believe that the divine Scriptures were dictated by the Holy Spirit, and are thus infidels; or they think themselves wiser than the Holy Spirit, and what are they then but demoniacs* [emphasis is mine]? Nor can they deny that the crime is theirs, when the copies have been written with their own hand; nor did they receive such copies of the Scriptures from those by whom they were first instructed in the faith and they cannot produce copies from which these were transcribed” [Ante-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 5:602].

²⁸Metzger, A Textual Commentary, 169.

²⁹Examples include Matthew 1:7,10; Mark 1:2; and I Thessalonians 2:7. With specific regard to the later, the UBS⁴ accepts the reading of P⁶⁵, a*, B, C*, D* etc. (νηπιου = babes) as opposed to the majority reading of the *Textus Receptus* (ηπιου = gentle). The word translated “babes” makes absolutely no sense in the passage and its context. In fact, this word perverts the sense of the passage so much that the modern English versions which follow the UBS practically everywhere else are forced in this instance to go with the reading of the *TR*.

³⁰For example, one should consider Metzger's argument against John 5:4 (A Textual Commentary, 179).

³¹White, 259-260.

words (υιος=YC; θεος=ΘC).³² Confusing YC for ΘC is just as conceivable as confusing the later for the former.³³ Since ΘC had just appeared earlier in the verse, this scenario seems far more feasible.

The reading “only-begotten Son,” on the other hand, has much in its favor from an internal perspective. First of all, “μονογενης θεος” is *hapax legomenon*. That is, it appears nowhere else in the New Testament. The funny thing is, the UBS⁴ rejects John 5:4 because it supposedly contains “non-Johannine words or expressions,” but it accepts an expression in the case at hand that fits the exact same definition.³⁴ Metzger appears to be going against his own argument. According to Alford, this expression introduces much harshness into the sentence as well as a strange term into Scripture.³⁵ Alan Wikgren, the UBS’ own, agrees.³⁶

Secondly, in the passage itself, θεον has just occurred alone and immediately prior to the disputed expression. For John to use this word twice in such close proximity implies the existence of two Gods—God and the Only Begotten God. Abbot argues that this introduces a harshness which we can hardly suppose of any writer.³⁷ A third internal observation that supports υιος is the John’s use of “Father” in the very same verse. Such a term almost necessarily implies that its correlative has just preceded it. To connect “μονογενης θεος” with “εις τον κολπον του πατρος” is nonsensical.

Finally, in relation to internal evidence, it is important to consider the nature of the term μονογενης. This adjective appears in the New Testament nine times.³⁸ In all references outside the Johannine corpus it refers to children. In John’s writings, however, it is used to describe the nature of Jesus Christ and his relationship to God the Father. Buchsel, in his definitive treatise on the meaning of this word writes, “μονο-γενης means ‘of soul descent,’ i.e., without brothers or sisters. This gives us the sense of only-begotten . . . it means only-

³²Henry Alford, *New Testament for English Readers*, Vol. 1, Part II (Boston, MA: Lee & Shepard, 1880), 463.

³³Lange, 71. Concerning this point, a statement by Abbot is also in order: “Such a mistake, in some early manuscript or manuscripts, might have easily been propagated, so as to extend to the comparatively few authorities which exhibit the reading θεος. It is much more difficult to account for such an ancient and *wide-spread* corruption as must have taken place, θεος originally proceeded from the pen of the Evangelist” (Abbot, 871).

³⁴Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 179. Also, in I Timothy 1:4, the UBS⁴ defends a reading that is definitely non-Pauline in character.

³⁵Alford, 462-463.

³⁶Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 170.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; Hebrews 11:17; I John 4:9.

begotten.”³⁹ Richard Longenecker, a translator for the *NIV*, disagrees. He argues that *μονογενής* should be understood more broadly as an adjective stressing quality, rather than derivation or descent.⁴⁰ Thus, some English versions stray from the traditional rendering of “only-begotten” in favor of “one and only,” or “unique.” There are several problems with this. First of all, as noted, *μονογενής* is used outside John’s corpus to refer exclusively to children. Thus, the idea of derivation or birth is inherently implied. Although it does not always carry a reference to descent or birth in extrabiblical writings and may stress uniqueness, “of soul descent” seems to be the only idea expressed in Scripture.⁴¹ This is especially the case for John, for in I John 5:18 he calls Jesus “he that is begotten of God” (ο γεννηθεις εκ του θεου). The word translated “begotten” unquestionably comes from the verb “γεννωω” which means “to beget.” For John, the Son was begotten from the Father as opposed to simply unique.⁴² An Old Testament reference also sheds light on the proper definition of *μονογενής*. In Psalm 2:7, Jehovah prophetically speaks of Jesus Christ saying, “Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee.” The Hebrew word translated “begotten” comes from “dly” which unquestionably means “to beget.” In the LXX, “dly” is translated “γεννωω.”⁴³ Thus, the Son’s relationship to the Father is not grounded in uniqueness but the act of having been begotten. Longenecker likes to point to extrabiblical pagan

³⁹*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Ed. by Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 738-739. In Lampe’s *Lexicon [A Patristic Greek Lexicon]*, Ed. by G.W.H. Lampe (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961), 880-881, *μονογενής* is defined generally as “one and only, of a child” (thus, the idea of descent is implied) and particularly of Jesus Christ as “only-begotten.” Moreover, all interlinear Greek-English New Testaments translate the word as “only-begotten.”

⁴⁰Richard Longenecker, “The One and Only Son,” in *The NIV—The Making of a Contemporary Translation*, Ed. by Kenneth L. Barker (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 126. His exact words are as follows: “. . . we must insist that in Johannine usage *monogenes* is an adjective connoting quality, which should be translated in a manner signaling primarily uniqueness.”

⁴¹D.A. Carson argues for the idea of “uniqueness” based on the words appearance in Hebrews 11:17. He writes, “Now, clearly, Isaac was not Abraham’s ‘only-begotten’ son, for Abraham fathered Ishmael and others.” [*The King James Version Debate—A Plea for Realism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 92.]. The very next verse, however, proves Carson wrong. Only in Isaac would Abraham’s seed be called. None of his other children came from Sarah’s womb, and only Isaac was the seed of promise (cf. Romans 9: 6-9). Thus, Isaac was Abraham’s only begotten from God’s perspective. This is definitely the sense implied in Hebrews 11.

⁴²An early heresy in the ancient church focused too heavily on Christ’s uniqueness. Adoptionism held that Jesus was God’s son in the sense that he was a unique human being that did what was pleasing in God the Father’s sight. Thus, the Father adopted him to be his Son. Such a view completely downplays the divine nature of the Saviour.

⁴³*Vetus Testamentum Graece—Iuxta LXX Interpretes*, Vol. 2. Ed. by Constantinus Tischendorf (Lipsiae: F.A. Brockhaus, 1875), 36. Although citing the LXX, the author has serious doubts about the date of its translation. The oldest extant LXX manuscripts are practically contemporaneous with a and B. The reason the New Testament quotations of Old Testament passages appear to come from the LXX as opposed to the Hebrew tradition is because the translators of the LXX (possibly Origen) had the Greek NT on their tables.

writings to substantiate his claim on the meaning of “μονογενης.”⁴⁴ However, an early Church Father paints an entirely different picture. Epiphanius (A.D. 368) quotes John 1:18 three times with “θεος.” Nevertheless, in an exegetical remark following one of the citations, he explains that Jesus is “the only-begotten God (μονογενης θεος); for the one Word is begotten (γεννηθεις from γενναω) from the Father, the Father was not begotten (εγεννηθη from γενναω); therefore, *he is* the only-begotten Son (μονογενης υιος).”⁴⁵ For him, the idea of descent is necessarily implied in “μονογενης.” If the adjective is used of objects, uniqueness might be considered. However, when used of persons, or more importantly the Son of God, the concept of “begotten” is unavoidable. Thus, Buchsel can argue with certainty that in John, “μονογενης denotes more than the uniqueness or incomparability of Jesus.”⁴⁶

Another observation that must be factored into the debate over the proper translation of μονογενης is the Latin tradition. The Latin translation of this word is “unigenitus” which undoubtedly involves descent.⁴⁷ This word appears in the Old Itala, Vulgate, and the writings of numerous Latin Fathers. Some of the patristic citations go back to the third century and involve men who were well-acquainted with the Greek language.⁴⁸

Because μονογενης undeniably suggests descent and is used as such in the Holy Scriptures, θεος becomes internally more difficult in John 1:18. If this adjective were connected with “God,” especially without the definite article as in a, B, C, L, and P⁶⁶, it could mean nothing short of “a begotten god.” This would correspond to the weakening of monotheism in Gnosticism.⁴⁹ Jesus in his deity was not begotten from the

⁴⁴Longenecker, 119-126. The dirge includes *The Magical Papyri, Pseudo-Philo, Tobit, Hesiod, Aeschylus*, and the blasphemous Gnostic *Orphic Hymns*. On page 122, Longenecker also appeals to the writings of Clement of Rome in an attempt to strengthen his point. Clement spoke of the Phoenix, a mysterious bird of the East as “μονογενης.” Longenecker insists that the idea behind this adjective is “unique,” or “the only one of its kind” without any reference to descent. However, if he would read his own translation of Clement’s works more carefully, he would see that the idea of descent is unavoidable. Clement talks of the Phoenix who lives five hundred years and then dies. Prior to its death, it makes a coffin and enters therein. After death, its flesh rots and a worm is engendered. This worm feeds on the Phoenix’s flesh until it sprouts wings and takes up the bones of its *parent* and flies them to Egypt. The legend of the “μονογενης Phoenix” asserted that the child was begotten from the rotting flesh of its parent. Thus, according to Clement, each bird only begat one child. This child was not simply unique, but “only begotten.” Longenecker’s example is a strawman that does not stand up.

⁴⁵This is my personal translation of Epiphanius’ remark. The Greek is recorded in Abbot, 853. It is as follows: “Και φησι, Ο μονογενης θεος; ο μεν γαρ λογος εστιν εκ πατρος γεννηθεις, ο πατηρ δε ουκ εγεννηθη; δια τουτο μονογενης υιος.”

⁴⁶*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 741.

⁴⁷See Stephanus’ treatise on this word in his Greek Lexicon [*Thesaurus Graecae Linguae*, Vol. VI. (Secundum Conspectum Ab Academia Regia Inscriptionum Et Humaniorum Litterarum, 1829), 1170].

⁴⁸e.g. Tertullian.

⁴⁹*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 740.

Father. John 1:2-3 denies this. However, in his human nature, that of a Son, Jesus was begotten of God. The reading of the “oldest and best manuscripts” promotes Gnostic heresy while the traditional reading adequately describes the relationship between the humanity of Jesus Christ and God Almighty, his Father.

Theological Observations Concerning John 1:18

As has been demonstrated, the internal evidence serves to back up the wide distribution of external evidence for υιος over and opposed to θεος in John 1:18. The origin of θεος, however, needs to be addressed. How did this variant reading originate, and why is it so staunchly defended in the face of so much evidence to the contrary? Did the variant reading come about because of a scribal blunder, or were there ulterior motives involved? An attempt will be made to answer these questions by considering the theological implications of such a reading.

John 1:18, as retained in the Authorized Version, unquestionably conforms to Apostle’s description of Jesus’ relationship to God the Father elsewhere in his writings. Moreover, it falls right in line with the prophecy made in Psalm 2:7. As relates to his humanity, Jesus Christ was begotten.⁵⁰ However, if one reads John 1:18 with θεος, he is faced with age old heresies that erroneously describe the nature of the Saviour’s deity. The Watchtower Bible Society of the Jehovah’s Witnesses rightly translates “μονογενης θεος” as “only-begotten god;” and as a result, this is one of the verses they appeal to when teaching that Jesus was a created being. Many years ago, John 1:18 was employed in the Arian controversy. Arius read θεος, proclaiming that “there was a time when he [Christ] was not.” On the other hand, his opponents read υιος.⁵¹ Arius was condemned a heretic at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. These facts serve to highlight the theological implications of the textual variant in question.

How then did “μονογενης θεος” find its way into in John’s Gospel if it was not the original reading? As previously mentioned, a scribe could have confused the contracted forms of God (ΘC) and Son (YC). After all, God (ΘC) had just been used in the opening clause of the verse. On the other hand, as Metzger argues, it is possible that a scribe could have changed θεος to υιος in order to make 1:18 conform to 3:16,18; I John 4:9.⁵² In all rationality, however, this is highly improbable. If early scribes would have seen “μονογενης θεος” in their copies, it is doubtful that they would have altered it. Rather, it is more conceivable that they would have

⁵⁰c.f. Hebrews 1:6.

⁵¹Burton, “Causes of Corruption of the New Testament Text,” B-97.

⁵²Metzger, A Textual Commentary, 169.

reverenced it as a mystery of some sort, having not appeared anywhere else in Scripture. Although the expression is foreign to the Bible, it was a favorite with Christian writers in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries. Many such as Gregory of Nyssa used this phrase numerous times as a title for Christ without any reference whatsoever to John 1:18. As Abbot argues, “So far from stumbling at it, transcribers may have been led by their familiarity with the expression, to introduce it unconsciously into the text.”⁵³ All of this, of course, comprises an effort to explain the variation on grounds of careless transcription. While plausible, the theological nature of the passage points to, as Burgon would contend, intentional corruption.⁵⁴

The very first time John 1:18 is cited by any of the ancients (Irenaeus), it is accompanied by a statement that the Valentinians (Gnostics) appeal to the words “only-begotten GOD who is in the bosom of the Father.”⁵⁵ Other witnesses who cite the passage with θεος are also doctrinally unsound. These include Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Arius, and Theodotus. Origen could not make up his mind about the nature of Christ just like he could not make up his mind about John 1:18. He uses both readings while claiming that Christ was “the firstborn of all creation, a thing created” and that “there is no time when he did not exist.” With regard to Theodotus, he was vehemently opposed by Hippolytus, for his adoptionist Christology.⁵⁶ The Gnostics, in particular, taught that Christ was a messenger sent from the transcendent spiritual world. He was not truly human, for human is material, and according to Gnosticism, matter was evil. Thus, Jesus Christ was not a “begotten Son,” but a “god,” begotten from the Spirit of Gnosis (God). The Adoptionists, Ebionites, and Arians were later influenced by these Gnostic teachings. While the Arians denied Christ’s co-eternality with the Father, the Adoptionists and Ebionites argued that the Son’s deity was begotten. In other words, Jesus was not God. He was a great person who, because of the quality of his life, was “adopted” by God as His Son. The power of God simply came upon Jesus because he was a good example. He was not a begotten Son, but an adopted son whose deity was begotten. Such heresies had a profound influence on the theology of ancient Alexandria. After all, that is where the allegorical interpretation of Scripture and study of Hellenistic philosophies were most ardently encouraged.⁵⁷ Gnosticism originated in Alexandria; Arianism originated in Alexandria; P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵, a, and

⁵³Abbot, 871.

⁵⁴Burgon, “Causes of Corruption of the New Testament Text,” B-95.

⁵⁵Ibid., B-96.

⁵⁶Hippolytus expressly quotes John 1:18 with “ο μονογενης υιος.”

⁵⁷Greek philosophy was elevated at Alexandria by men such as Clement and Origen even though the Apostle Paul had warned against philosophy and vain deceit brought about by the traditions of men (Colossians 2:8).

B originated in Alexandria. It was there that the influence of numerous heresies that attacked the deity of Christ brought about the intentional corruption of John 1:18. Jesus as an “only-begotten God” derives from Gnosticism and it most likely came into the Egyptian texts by way of this heresy’s influence on Alexandrian theology.⁵⁸

The above hypothesis does not hold water with men such as D.A. Carson and John Ankerberg who say that the AV’s rendering of John 1:18 denies the deity of Christ over and against the *NIV* and *NAS*.⁵⁹ It is interesting, however, to see how critics such as these defend “μονογενης θεος” by making statements, whether consciously or unconsciously, that are strikingly similar to the affirmations of old heresies. For example, Carson argues that Jesus is the Son “because He always does what is pleasing in the Father’s sight.”⁶⁰ In addition, Longenecker of the *NIV* translation committee describes Jesus as “*the Jew* standing on behalf of all his fellow Jews and *the Man* representing all men, who offered in fullest measure that loving obedience that is rightfully due God the Father—and therefore, he has the greatest right to the title “Son of God.”⁶¹ He goes on to say that “Jesus was God’s Son *par excellence*, offering to the Father the response of loving obedience that is God’s due.”⁶² This was the view held by early Adoptionists, Dynamic Monarchianists, and Ebionites! They believed that Jesus was a man specially chosen by God, not a begotten Son. Longenecker’s statements in particular, strike New Age tones. The New Age Movement has bought into ancient heresy by viewing Jesus merely as a good example, one who possessed the “Christ-consciousness.” In Russell Chandler’s *Understanding the New Age*, a New Age advocate is quoted as saying “Jesus is the *unique* Son of God . . . but there have been lots of others like him . . . he was a guide and I can be just like him.”⁶³ Longenecker attacks the AV for translating “μονογενης” literally because it leaves open the possibility of an etymological emphasis on *genes* (the ides of generation).⁶⁴ This is exactly

⁵⁸Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 740.

⁵⁹Carson, 64; John Ankerberg, The Facts on the King James Only Debate (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), 21.

⁶⁰Carson, 92.

⁶¹Longenecker, 125.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Russell Chandler, Understanding the New Age (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1988), 309. Cf. Longenecker, 125-126.

⁶⁴Longenecker, 126.

what Luciferian H.P. Blavatsky taught a hundred years ago. She once wrote of Jesus, “Neither was he physically begotten.”⁶⁵

The aforementioned comparisons are not drawn to accuse men such as Carson and Longenecker of intentionally leading people into apostasy with New Age doctrine; but their claims against the AV do ring frighteningly close to ancient heresies revived in the New Age Movement. Such measures are a little too extreme to be defined as scholarly attempts at justifying the departure from the traditional Greek text of the New Testament.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a strong case has been made for the Authorized Version’s rendering of John 1:18. Allegations by men such as Edwin Palmer that the KJV followed bad Greek copies and changed the original in this passage are outright foolishness in light of the whole spectrum of evidence.⁶⁶ The expression “only-begotten Son” not only enjoys a wide geographical distribution of external evidence, but can claim the weight of internal testimony as well. Most importantly, however, John 1:18 as translated in the King James Bible witnesses to the awesome nature of Christ’s humanity which was begotten by God, a begotten human nature forever united with the divine preexistent Christ, God manifest in the flesh, the Word made flesh to dwell among us. The same “only begotten Son” who is in the bosom of the Father was sent into the world that “whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Just as “only-begotten Son” was used to combat heresy at Nicea in A.D. 325, let it be sounded forth in the present to combat the perversion of God’s Holy Scriptures at the hands of the textual critics who seemingly express the same violent reaction as the scribes when Jesus said he was the Son of God: “Therefore the Jews sought to the more to kill him, because he . . . said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵H.P. Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, (London: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1893), 2:566.

⁶⁶Edwin Palmer, “Isn’t the King James Version Good Enough (The KJV and NIV Compared),” in The NIV—The Making of a Contemporary Translation (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 142.

⁶⁷John 5:18.

APPENDIX A –

MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE CONCERNING JOHN 1:18

The Greek Papyrii

The question over the Greek papyrii has not entered the debate over John 1:18 until rather recently when many papyrus fragments were discovered. Only two out of ninety-seven extant papyrus mss witness to this verse (P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵), both dating back to the third century. Both read “θεος” over and against the traditional reading of “υιος.” However, one must not forget that 97% of extant papyrii provide no witness whatsoever for John 1:18. It can never be known whether they read “God” or “Son.” However, it is commonly accepted that the Old Itala was translated as early as A.D. 150. It witnesses unanimously to “only-begotten Son.” The Old Itala was undoubtedly translated from papyrii that contained the reading. Besides, the discovery of “only begotten God” in P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵ has not apparently swung the vote in the eyes of textual scholars. The UBS Greek text accepted the reading based on the witness of B alone. This is clearly evident because in the very next verse (1:19), both P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵ are rejected in favor of Vaticanus. These mss are also rejected in John 12:9 in favor of a and B. Thus, the two extant papyrii that witness to the UBS’ rendering of John 1:18, although ancient and persuasive, are not at all the strong pillars they are promulgated to be.

The Uncials

θεος--a*, B, C*, L

υιος--a², A, C³, W, Δ, Θ, Ψ, X, E, F, G, H, K, M, S, U, V

The fact that three of the four most ancient uncials (aBC) contain “only-begotten God” is indeed remarkable. However, some circumstances do lessen their apparent weight. The testimony of a cannot be properly determined unless the circumstances surrounding its various correcting hands can be known. Since they are not known, the corrector’s hand carries as much weight as the supposed original hand. It is not inconceivable that the corrector properly corrected mistakes made by the original writer. This is at least as probable as any other explanation. Besides, the laziness of the original hand of a when he transcribed John 1:18 is apparent; Sinaiticus omits the words “ο ων” before “εις τον κολπον” against the witness of every other known mss.⁶⁸ Another worthy circumstance involves the omission of the definite article in each of the aforementioned uncials (aBC). They all agree in reading “μονογενης θεος” instead of “ο μονογενης υιος.” As Abbot remarks, “It seems hardly possible that this omission of the *article* can be correct.”⁶⁹ If this is an error as it seems, suspicion can be thrown on the reading and the weight of the old uncials lessens.

On the other side of the coin, “only-begotten Son” appears in the majority of uncial mss. This grouping yields a wide scope of geographical distribution. The Western and Byzantine text-types are practically unanimous in their support of this reading.

⁶⁸Abbot, 851. Abbot argues that a² reads as the traditional text in John 1:18. However, the UBS lists this mss as hostile to “ο μονογενης υιος.” Because the UBS is known for misrepresenting evidence (e.g. I John 5:7-8), there is no reason to doubt Abbot in this instance. His documentation is very thorough.

⁶⁹Ibid.

The Minuscules

θεος--33

υιος--all cursive mss except one, several hundred in number

The testimony of the cursives is practically unanimous with regard to the traditional reading. The one exception (33) differs from a, B, C in that it includes the definite article. The cursives also entail wide geographical distribution.

The Ancient Versions

θεος--Syriac Peshitta (2nd century); Harclean Syriac in the margin (ca. 616); Coptic (3rd or 4th century); and a revision of the Georgian (10th century)

υιος--Old Latin (2nd century); Vulgate (4th century); Curetonian Syriac (ca. 4th century); Harclean Syriac in the text (ca. 616); Palestinian Syriac (6th century); an earlier revision of the Georgian (9th century); Armenian (uncertain date); Ethiopic (6th century); Slavonic (9th century)

It is the evidence of the ancient versions that swings the pendulum decisively in favor of “only-begotten Son” with regard to manuscript evidence. Abbot argues that the witness of the versions is of great importance in cases like the present, where, from similarity of the questionable words in Greek (YC vs. ΘC), a scribe might easily mistake the one for the other.⁷⁰ Once again, “υιος” enjoys wide chronological and geographical support.

Conclusion

The Greek manuscript evidence is fairly balanced for both readings. Where one side lacks in number, it excels in antiquity. Therefore, such evidence will inevitably be interpreted differently by textual critics according to which school of thought they belong (e.g. Alexandrian, Majority, TR, etc.). The united testimony of the majority of later mss does not disprove the reading of the older uncials. At the same time, the reading of the fewer more ancient codices is far from being decisive. It is the testimony of the ancient versions, several of which push us back further in time than the oldest Greek mss, that swings the pendulum in favor of the traditional reading.⁷¹

⁷⁰Ibid., 852.

⁷¹The testimony of the Church Fathers also performs such a function. It, however, will be outlined in Appendix B.

APPENDIX B—

PATRISTIC EVIDENCE CONCERNING JOHN 1:18⁷²

INTRODUCTION

Before outlining the evidence, it is important to note that authors often misrepresent patristic testimony when attempting to cast doubt on the traditional Greek text and/or the Authorized Version. The purpose of Mr. Abbot's article was to rebuke Dr. S.P. Tregelles' claim that "μονογενης θεος" is the ancient reading of the Church Fathers *generally*. In fact, he writes, "no critical edition of the Greek Testament gives even a tolerably complete and accurate account of the facts in the case. On the contrary, the most important editions . . . not only neglect to state a very large part of the evidence, but contain almost incredible errors in regard to the authorities which they professedly cite."⁷³ This article was written back in 1861, long before the RSV, the work of Westcott and Hort, and the UBS. However, the misrepresentation continues. The UBS⁴, in particular, only lists 7% of the cursive mss, .02% of the lectionaries, 33% of the ancient versions, 92% of the uncials, and 24% of the church fathers.⁷⁴

In this appendix, the patristic evidence will be presented in the following manner. First, those Fathers who seem to favor "θεος" by expressly quoting John 1:18 will be cited followed by those that appear to allude to the passage with the same reading. Next, the Greek Fathers that favor "υιος" will be cited, followed by a representative list of Latin Fathers.⁷⁵ Finally, three fathers who bear witness to both variants will be considered. *Those witnesses listed with an asterisk are either not listed or misrepresented by the UBS⁴ in the critical apparatus.*

WITNESSES THAT SEEM TO FAVOR "θεος" BY QUOTING JOHN 1:18

1. Clement of Alexandria (194)—He quotes the passage once, but in another place, he alludes to the text by saying "ο μονογενης υιος θεος." The later fact considerably weakens the testimony to "θεος." Moreover, according to Abbot, Clement seems to be "one of the most remarkable among the Fathers for the looseness of his quotations from scripture."⁷⁶ The UBS text cites Clement as favoring "θεος" in two out of three places.
2. Excerpta Theodoti—This a document of uncertain authorship. Many have claimed that it was written by Clement of Alexandria. In it, Theodotus is cited several times, but more frequently the followers of Valentinus (Gnostics) are enumerated. The quotation of John 1:18 appears in a context in which it is

⁷²The majority of the patristic evidence presented in this appendix is taken from Ezra Abbot, "On the Readings of John i. 18," in Bibliotheca Sacra (18:810-872), 1861. The patristic writings cited therein are thoroughly documented. Such evidence will be compared with the UBS' presentation of evidence in their fourth edition of The Greek New Testament in order to achieve a more comprehensive perspective. Moreover, with regard to the later, misrepresentation of evidence will become apparent.

⁷³Abbot, 841[Emphasis Mine].

⁷⁴This information was personally received by G.A. Riplinger, author of New Age Bible Versions (Ararat, VA: AV Publications, 1995), who did extensive collation of textual evidence over a six year period.

⁷⁵No Latin Father has ever quoted or alluded to John 1:18 with the phrase "unigenitus Deus" (only-begotten God).

⁷⁶Abbot, 853.

explained how the Gnostics understood and explained the first chapter of John. The Gnostics, of course, would consider Jesus to be a “begotten god,” emanating from “the Good.” They would have rejected the idea of Jesus being a “begotten son” because to them, the material/physical world was inherently evil. Perhaps it was the Gnostics who introduced the variant into the text in the first place. The UBS apparently refers to this document with “Clement^{from Theodotus}.”

3. Epiphanius (368)—He quotes the passage three times. In the first instance, an exegetical remark that follows contains the phrase “μονογενης υιος.”⁷⁷ This fact, of course, weakens Epiphanius’ testimony which the UBS⁴ lists in favor of its reading. However, Epiphanius does on another occasion speak of John calling Christ “only-begotten God.” This, notwithstanding, proves nothing, for John calls Jesus Christ God in 1:1 and only-begotten in 1:18. He could have been combining the teachings of two different verses in his writings.
4. Didymus of Alexandria (370)—He expressly quotes John 1:18 twice with “θεος.” On another occasion, he writes, “ο υιος κεκληται μονογενης θεος λογος και εις κυριος Ιησους Χριστος.” However, it stands in doubt as to whether a comma should be placed after μονογενης, after μονογενης θεος, or after neither.

Conclusion—According to Abbot, these four writers comprise all who have expressly quoted John 1:18 with the reading “μονογενης θεος” alone. These are all who can be cited with some measure of confidence for supporting such a reading.⁷⁸ This author, however, would add that the testimonies of Clement and *Excerpta Theodoti* are considerably weak.

WITNESSES WITH ALLUSIONS AND REFERENCES THAT SUPPOSEDLY FAVOR “θεος”

- *1. II Synod of Ancyra (358)—This was a semi-Arian synod which may have read “θεος” in John 1:18, but the evidence is far from decisive. Abbot writes:

After quoting Prov. viii. 22, *etc.*, Col. i.15, *etc.*, and the first verses of the Proem to the Gospel of John, without any allusion, however, to John 1.18, the Fathers of this Synod state their conclusion as follows—“So that we have testimony ‘from the mouth of two or three witnesses’ in proof that the substance of the Son is like that of the Father; for one [Solomon] calls the wisdom of the [all-] Wise his Son; another [John] calls the Logos of God only-begotten God; another [Paul] calls the Son of God his Image. We have no reason to suppose, *a priori*, that the reference to John is verbally accurate any more than that to Proverbs, where we find neither the word υιος, nor the expression η σοφια του σοφου.”⁷⁹

- *2. Gregory of Nyssa (370)—According to Abbot, Gregory nowhere expressly quotes the passage.⁸⁰ This seems rather odd seeing as the deity of Christ was so prominent a theme in this “Great Cappadocian’s” writings. Had John 1.18 read “θεος,” such an explicit citation would have been too remarkable to have been overlooked. Gregory of Nazanzus, another one of the Great Cappadocians who was in close cohorts

⁷⁷“Και φησι, Ο μονογενης θεος: ο μεν γαρ λογος εστιν εκ πατρος γεννηθεις, ο πατηρ δε ουκ εγεννηθη δια τουτο μονογενης υιος.”

⁷⁸Abbot, 854.

⁷⁹Ibid., 855.

⁸⁰Ibid., 856.

with Gregory of Nyssa, expressly quotes John 1:18 with υιος. It is highly doubtful that these two, who worked together to bring about the rejection of Arianism in the early church, would have had different readings in their copies of Scriptures. The supposed allusion is seen when Gregory of Nyssa uses the phrase “ο ων εν τοις κολποις του πατρος” eight times in connection with the expression “ο μονογενης θεος,” twice in connection with the phrase “ο μονογενης υιος,” and once with the phrase “ο εν υψιστοις θεος.” Recognizing as Abbot does, that the expression “ο μονογενης θεος” is a favorite designation of Christ in the writings of this Father as well as in other Fathers who unquestionably read “only-begotten son” in John 1:18, it is hardly fair to assume Gregory of Nyssa as a credible witness to “θεος” as the UBS⁴ does.⁸¹

- *3. Fulgentius (507)—This Latin Father alludes to John 1:18 six times. According to Abbot, these instances taken together show clearly how little can be inferred concerning the original reading of a passage from allusion. Furthermore, they may serve to guard against hasty conclusions made about other Fathers such as Gregory of Nyssa.⁸² In alluding to the passage, Fulgentius uses the phrases “unigenitus Deus,” “unigenitus Filius,” and “unigenitus” alone. Nowhere, however, is the phrase “unigenitus Deus” ever used by Fulgentius, or any other Latin Father for that matter, when expressly quoting John 1:18. This is what should be expected considering the fact that both the Old Latin and Vulgate read “unigenitus Filius.” If Fulgentius had found “Deus” in his copies of Scripture, he most certainly would have quoted it given the theological nature of his writings.

Conclusion—Of the three examples listed, all are doubtful as to whether θεος was read in their copies of John 1:18. Only Gregory of Nyssa is cited in the UBS as favoring this reading. As noted, however, such judgment is hasty and seems to ignore the circumstances of Gregory’s writings.

GREEK WITNESSES THAT CLEARLY FAVOR “υιος”

- *1. Irenaeus (178)—He quotes the passage once with “Filius,” once with “Filius Dei,” and once with “Deus.” With regard to the later, Irenaeus was enumerating the beliefs of the Valentinian Gnostics. Thus, Burgon could write, “Accordingly, the very first time John 1:18 is quoted by any of the ancients, it is accompanied by the statement that the Valentinians appeal to the words ‘only-begotten GOD who is in the bosom of the Father’—seeking to prove that the only begotten is ‘the Beginning,’ and is ‘GOD.’”⁸³

⁸¹Ibid., 857. Abbot notes that he found 125 examples of the expression “ο μονογενης θεος” in Gregory’s treatise against Eunomius alone without any reference whatsoever to John 1:18.

⁸²Ibid., 857.

⁸³John Burgon, “The Causes of Corruption of the New Testament Text,” in Unholy Hands on the Bible, Ed. by Jay P. Green (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Trust Fund, 1990), B:96.

2. Hippolytus (220)—He clearly quotes this passage with “υιος”: “Λεγει γαρ Ιωαννης . . .” According to Buchsel, this witness is very important, for it “proves that it [μονογενης υιος] does not come from the Lat. transl.”⁸⁴
- *3. III Antioch (269)—John 1:18 is quoted with “υιος” in the synod’s epistle to Paul of Samasota. It is interesting to note that Paul of Samasota was the Bishop of Antioch and the most outspoken of the heretical “Dynamic Monarchianists.” He would have considered Jesus to be a “begotten god.” Thus, the synod at Antioch quotes John 1:18, affirming that Jesus was not begotten with regard to his deity but only concerning his humanity.
- *4. Archelaus (300)
5. Alexander (313)—Alexander was the Bishop of Alexandria and an early opponent of Arius. He argued against Arius that Christ was not a created being nor did he have a beginning. John 1:18 with “μονογενης θεος” seems to teach this Arian heresy. Alexander, however, did not have this reading in his copies of John’s Gospel.
- *6. Eusebius of Caesarea (315)—The UBS⁴’s critical apparatus states that Eusebius favored “θεος” three times and “υιος” four times. Once again, misrepresentation of evidence raises its ugly head. Abbot, rejects the three instances supposedly supporting “θεος.” The first, he argues, should be omitted because it is merely an expression of “μονογενης θεος” without any reference to John 1:18. The second should not be taken without consideration of the context which the UBS apparently has neglected.⁸⁵ Evidently, “η μονογενης θεος” is a marginal gloss that has crept into the text. The third instance involves the phrase, “θεον δε και μονογενη.” This is irrelevant to the case at hand. Eusebius simply says that Christ is represented by John as “God and only-begotten” as opposed to “only-begotten God.”⁸⁶ Abbot’s arguments are further strengthened by the fact that Eusebius expressly quotes John 1:18 five times with “υιος.”
7. Eustathius (320)
8. Athanasius (326)—He quotes the passage four times with “υιος.” Moreover, three allusions clearly show that he had this reading in front of him.⁸⁷
- *9. Pseudo-Athanasius (4th century)—This document was written against the Sabellianists who exhibited a faulty Christology.

⁸⁴Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. IV, Ed. by Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 740.

⁸⁵“του ευαγγελιστου διαρρηδην αυτον υιον μονογενη ειναι διδασκοντος δι ων εφη, θεον ουδεις εωρακε πωποτε: ο μονογενης υιος, η μονογενης θεος, ο ων εις τον κολπον . . . [emphasis mine].”

⁸⁶Abbot, 846.

⁸⁷Ibid., 860.

- *10. Cyril of Jerusalem (350)—Cyril reads “μονογενης” without “θεος” or “υιος” while alluding to the passage. If “θεος” was in his copy of John’s Gospel, he surely would not have left such an important word out. Thus, he can be cited as favoring “υιος,” for the nature of “μονογενης” implies sonship.
- *11. Emperor Julian (362)—He quotes the passage twice with “υιος.”
- *12. Titus of Bostra (362)—He quotes the passage once with “υιος” and on another occasion, alludes to it with the phrase “μονογενης υιος θεος.”
- 13. Gregory of Nazanzius (370)—He provides a word for word quotation of the last half of John 1:18 which matches the *Textus Receptus*.
- *14. Pseudo Basiliius (4th century)
- *15. Rufinius (390)
- 16. Chrysostom (398)—He quotes the passage not less than eight times. Abbot writes, “In several of these instances, he so *comments* on the word υιος as to show beyond question that he had this reading.”
- *17. Theodore of Mopsuetia (407)—This Father was a champion of the Antiochene method of biblical interpretation (literal) over against the allegorization of the Alexandrian school. Moreover, he argued for the humanity of Jesus Christ and ardently defended the Nicene faith.
- *18. Nonnus of Egypt (410)—He only uses “μονογενης.” As noted, however, this term used alone implies sonship.
- 19. Theodoret (423)—He quotes the passage four times.
- 20. Proclus (434)—He was Patriarch of Constantinople.
- *21. Pseudo-Cyril (5th century)
- *22. Andreas (ca. 635)
- *23. Pseudo-Caesarea (7th century)
- 24. John of Damascus (730)—He quotes the passage three times.
- *25. Theodore Studites (813)—He quotes the passage twice.
- *26. Andreas the Presbyter (9th/10th century)

- *27. The Catena on John 1:18
- *28. Theophylact (1070)
- *29. Euthymius Zigabenus (1110)—He quotes the passage three times.
- *30. Elias Cretensis (787)
- *31. Zacharias Chrysopolitanus (1157)
- *32. Nicetas Choniates (1200)—He quotes the passage four times.

Conclusion—It is clear from the above list that the Greek Fathers generally favored the reading “only-begotten Son.” The UBS⁴ has failed to list many of these witnesses, and with regard to Eusebius of Caesarea, they have misrepresented the evidence, leading the reader to believe that he quoted John 1:18 with “only-begotten God” three times. This, however, is simply not so. The list provided is representative and by no means complete. Abbot added the last three witnesses, although late, for the sake of emphasis and completeness.⁸⁸

LATIN WITNESSES THAT QUOTE JOHN 1:18 WITH *FILIUS*

Note: No quotation that reads “*unigenitus Deus*” has ever been produced from a single Latin Father.⁸⁹ Thus, only a select list of the more prominent Latin Fathers follows.

1. Tertullian (200)
- *2. Hilary (354)—He quotes John 1:18 at least seven times. It is interesting to note that the UBS⁴ lists Hilary as favoring “υιος” five out of seven times. However, it is not promulgated in the critical apparatus what Hilary read on the other two occasions.
- *3. Phoebadius (359)
4. Victorinus (360)—He quotes the passage six times.
5. Ambrose (374)—He quotes the passage at least seven times.⁹⁰ The UBS⁴ lists him as favoring “ο μονογενης υιος” ten times and “μονογενης υιος θεου” once. The later is obviously an expression used for Christ without any clear reference to John 1:18.

⁸⁸Ibid., 863.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid., 865.

6. Jerome (378)
7. Faustinus (384)
8. Augustine (396)—He quotes the passage three times.
- *9. Adimantus the Manichaeon (396)
- *10. Maximus (428)—He quotes the passage twice.
- *11. Idacius Clarus (385)—He quotes John 1:18 three times.
- *12. Vigilis of Tapsa (484)—The UBS⁴ lists this Father as reading “ο μονογενης” one of two times. However, it is not promulgated what he recorded on the other occasion. As noted, “ο μονογενης” implies sonship.
- *13. Junilius (550)
- *14. Aleuin (780)

Conclusion: The testimony of the Latin Fathers unanimously attests to “only-begotten Son” in John 1:18. This fact, coupled with the unanimous testimony of the Old Latin and Vulgate indicates that this reading was widespread in the Western Church. Some of the aforementioned Fathers such as Tertullian, Hilary, Victorinus, Ambrose, and Jerome were well-acquainted with Greek and occasionally consulted the original language of the New Testament in their writings. Therefore, their testimony goes beyond the Latin tradition.

FATHERS WHO QUOTE JOHN 1:18 WITH BOTH READINGS

- *1. Origen (230)—He has the reading “θεος” once, “υιος” once, “υιος του θεου” once, and “unigenitus Dei Filius” in a work preserved only in the Latin version of Rufinius.⁹¹ The UBS’ citation of Origen is somewhat queer. He is listed as favoring “θεος” four times in the Greek and “υιος” one out of two times in the Latin. However, the other occasion in the Latin is not mentioned. This evidence is different than that presented by Abbot. Due to the preponderance of misrepresentation in the UBS’ critical apparatus, it seems more prudent to go with Abbot on this one. With regard to Origen himself, he clearly uses both readings. This “contradiction,” however, is not surprising seeing as his own Christology was contradictory in nature. He argued that Christ was “the firstborn of all creation, a thing created” and that “there is no time when he did not exist.” For Christ to be eternal and a creature is nonsensical. Apparently, Origen could not make up his mind with regard to John 1:18 either.

⁹¹Ibid., 866.

- *2. Basil of Caesarea (370)—Basil has “θεος” once. In another passage, he mentions True Son, Only-Begotten God, Power of God, and Logos as names given to Christ in Scripture. But, he quotes the text in question with the reading “υιος”. The UBS⁴ lists Basil as favoring “ο μονογενης θεος” one out of two times. Once again, however, it is not promulgated concerning the other citation.
- *3. Cyril of Alexandria (412)—Cyril has “θεος” four times, and “υιος” three times. Cyril wrote a commentary on the passage. In the text of John presented in the commentary “υιος” appears, but in Cyril’s exegetical comments, he quotes the passage with “θεος”. With regard to the later, there is a question of variant readings. Thus, his testimony to “θεος” is considerably weakened.⁹² The UBS⁴ cites Cyril as favoring “θεος” three times and “υιος” once.

Conclusion: The testimony of these three Fathers is dubious at best. It seems quite hasty on the part of the UBS⁴ to list them as witnesses clearly hostile to the traditional text.

CONCLUSION

All in all, the witness of the Church Fathers overwhelmingly favors the reading of “only-begotten Son” in John 1:18. Though the Greek manuscript evidence seems balanced on the surface, the testimony of the Church Fathers along with that of the Ancient Versions clearly swings the pendulum toward the rendering of the *Textus Receptus* and the Authorized Version over and against the UBS⁴ and modern English versions. The patristic evidence can be summed up in the following manner:

FOUR witnesses quote John 1:18, favoring “θεος.”

THREE witnesses seem to allude to John 1:18 with the reading “θεος.” The evidence, however, is doubtful in all three cases.

THIRTY-TWO Greek witnesses are listed that clearly favor “υιος.” Many of these expressly quote the passage multiple times.

FOURTEEN Latin witnesses are cited that quote John 1:18 with “Filius.” Also, no occurrence of “unigenitus Deus” has ever be found in any writings of the Latin Fathers.

THREE witnesses exhibit both readings in their writings.

⁹²Ibid.

APPENDIX C -

JAMES WHITE & D.A. CARSON EXPOSED

James White, author of The King James Only Controversy, and D.A. Carson, author of The King James Version Debate—A Plea For Realism, are two of the most notable “scholars” who have written against the integrity of the Authorized Version. Unfortunately, a casual reading of each of these works yields much deception, exaggeration, and misrepresentation of evidence. An example of this occurs with regard to John 1:18.

D.A. Carson—The King James Version Debate

1. On page 64 of his work, Carson presents a chart that is supposed to show which English versions promulgate the deity of Christ in various passage. His results are supposed to lead the reader to believe that the *NIV*, “a translation done by evangelicals but based on an eclectic text,”⁹³ has the highest number of such references. He accuses the *KJV* of lacking a proper Christology in John 1:18 while arguing that the *NIV* teaches the deity of Christ in this verse. Actually, the rendering of the *NIV* teaches the existence of two different “gods”—the God the Father, and God the One and Only who is at the Father’s side. This is heresy, not evangelical orthodoxy! Buchsel writes, “An only-begotten God corresponds to the weakening of monotheism in Gnosticism.”⁹⁴ The *AV*, in this passage, teaches that Jesus Christ, the only-begotten *Son* (begotten in his humanity, not his divinity) declares God. If this passage downplays Christ’s deity as Carson suggests, then I suppose John 3:16 does as well, for it also refers to Jesus as the “only-begotten Son.” What Carson does not tell his readers on this page is that the apparent difference between the two readings is based on textual variation, not translation. This paper has demonstrated why the reading in the *KJV* is superior to that of the *NIV*. With regard to two other passages that appear on the chart (Titus 2:13, II Peter 1:1), both the *NIV* and the *KJV* basically say the same thing. How does the *KJV* not provide a witness to the deity of Christ in these passages?
2. On page 92 of his work, Carson attacks the *AV*’s rendering of *μονογεννης* as “only-begotten” over and against the *NIV*’s “One and Only,” claiming that “these facts have been documented repeatedly.”⁹⁵ Unfortunately, Carson presents no documented facts. Is the reader supposed to believe this nonsense just because he says so? Hardly! He also says that the *NIV* is more accurate than the *KJV* in its translation of “*μονογεννης*.” Buchsel, in his definitive treatise in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament would disagree.⁹⁶ Besides, the term’s connection with offspring throughout the New Testament implies the action of having been begotten.

⁹³D.A. Carson, The King James Version Debate—A Plea For Realism (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 64.

⁹⁴Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. IV, Ed. by Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 740.

⁹⁵Carson, 92.

⁹⁶Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 740.

3. Carson, while criticizing the *AV*'s translation of “μονογενής” as “only-begotten,” says that Jesus is God’s Son “because he always does what is pleasing in the Father’s sight.”⁹⁷ Such a statement hints of Adoptionist heresy!

James White—*The King James Only Controversy*

1. On page 258, Whites says that the *NIV*'s rendering of John 1:18 is “even more interpretive.”⁹⁸ How so? He provides no answer, its just *personal opinion*.
2. White quotes Jay P. Green who argues that the Sinaitic mss robs Christ of his glory in its rendering of John 1:18 (only-begotten God). White, who does not cite the quotation properly (its page 14, not page 12), says that “Mr. Green’s reaction is based upon his understanding of theology, not upon the external evidence of the text . . . we must now allow the *misuse* of biblical texts to determine the readings we choose for the text of Scripture.”⁹⁹ To be sure, Green is basing his argument on 99% of the external evidence. This includes almost unanimous testimony from the Early Church Fathers.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the first time John 1:18 is cited in church history (Irenaeus), it is done so in connection with Valentinus and his Gnostic followers. This is not theological bias, but historical fact. Even today, modern forms of Gnosticism (i.e. Jehovah’s Witnesses) cite the passage as it reads in the *NIV* and *NAS*. Its interesting that White fails to finish Green’s statement which reads, “See Burgon’s full discussion in this volume.”¹⁰¹ White makes no attempt to do battle with Burgon’s arguments which no textual critic has been able to convincingly answer to this day.
3. On page 259, White provides a chart that lists the external evidence of the UBS’ critical apparatus. This seems to be what he bases his entire argument upon. However, it has been shown that the UBS misrepresents the evidence with regard to Origen, Cyril, a², Eusebius, and Gregory of Nyssa. With regard to P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵, the UBS⁴ rejects them in John 1:19 in favor of Vaticanus.
4. White says that P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵ are “the two oldest manuscripts.”¹⁰² Apparently, he did not read his UBS text very well. According to the editors, P⁵² is the oldest papyrus fragment (ca. 125). Moreover, White fails to mention that several Church Fathers (e.g. Irenaeus, Tertullian, etc.) quote John 1:18 with “only-begotten Son” long before the aforementioned papyrus mss were copied.

⁹⁷Carson, 92.

⁹⁸James White, *The King James Only Controversy* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1995), 258.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰This testimony from the Early Fathers has been demonstrated in Appendix B

¹⁰¹Unholy Hands on the Bible, Ed. by Jay P. Green (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Trust Fund, 1990), xiv.

¹⁰²White, 259.

5. White argues that “υιος” arose from “θεος” in an attempt to harmonize John 1:18 with 3:16, 18. An argument from the opposite end of the spectrum could also be true. The phrase “only-begotten God” is found nowhere else in Scripture. It seems odd that John would use it in 1:18 when “ο μονογενης υιος” appears in John 1:14, 3:16, 3:18, and I John 4:19. Even Alan Wikgren of the UBS committee admits this. He writes, “It is doubtful that the author would have written μονογενης θεος.”¹⁰³
6. White says, “it is most logical to conclude that μονογονης θεος is the original reading that gave rise to all the other variants, including the reading that is found in the majority of Greek texts.”¹⁰⁴ On the previous page, he writes, “It is difficult to see how the reading θεος could arise from υιος. The terms are simply too far removed from one another in form to account for scribal error based upon morphology.”¹⁰⁵ White misleads the reader by failing to promulgate the fact that “Son” was abbreviated YC in ancient Greek manuscripts while ΘC stood for “God.” These two abbreviations are close enough in form to suggest the possibility of transcriptional error. Thus, Wikgren is able to suggest that μονογενης θεος “may be a primitive, transcriptional error in the Alexandrian tradition.”¹⁰⁶ Where such a situation occurs, the value of the ancient versions is great. These, of course, overwhelmingly support the reading “only-begotten Son.”
7. White concludes his excursus on John 1:18 by asserting, “This decision is not arrived at due to gnostic or heretical beliefs or leanings, but simply due to the external evidence itself.”¹⁰⁷ While White may not be a Gnostic, his decision is based upon a biased and incomplete presentation of the external evidence. He accepts the reading *a priori* because it appears in the “oldest and best manuscripts” (i.e. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus).

Conclusion: Both White and Carson misrepresent the evidence with regard to this passage. Hasty pronouncements are made without any supporting evidence or examples. Therefore, doubt arises with regard to their books. One should reject such argumentation that pits itself against the Authorized Version. Not only do these two authors wrongfully slander those that hold to the preservation of the AV, but they distort the evidence to prove their biased and prejudiced presuppositions.

¹⁰³qtd. in Bruce Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 2nd Edition (Germany: United Bible Societies, 1993), 170.

¹⁰⁴White, 260.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 259.

¹⁰⁶qtd. in Metzger, 170.

¹⁰⁷White, 260.

APPENDIX D –

A SAMPLING OF OTHER PLACES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WHERE MODERN VERSIONS (*NIV*, *NAS*, et. al) DOWNPLAY THE DEITY OF THE GOD-MAN, JESUS CHRIST, AND READ WITH THE *NEW WORLD TRANSLATION* OF THE JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

	AV (King James)	NIV, NAS, NWT
Mt 1:25	firstborn son	a son
Mt 8:29	Jesus, thou Son of God	Son of God
Mt 13:51	Yea, Lord	Yes
Mt 16:20	Jesus the Christ	the Christ
Mk 11:10	that cometh in the name of the Lord	coming
Lk 4:41	Thou art Christ, the Son of God	You are the Son of God
Lk 7:31	the Lord said	OMITTED
Lk 22:31	the Lord said	OMITTED
Lk 23:42	he said unto Jesus, Lord remember me	Jesus, remember me
Jn 4:42	the Christ, the Saviour	the Savior
Jn 6:69	Christ, the Son of the Living God	Holy One of God
Jn 9:35	Son of God	Son of Man
Ac 16:31	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord Jesus
1 Co 15:47	the second man is the Lord from heaven	the second man from heaven
1 Co 16:22	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord
1 Co 16:23	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord Jesus
2 Co 4:6	Jesus Christ	Christ
2 Co 5:18	Jesus Christ	Christ
2 Co 11:31	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord Jesus
Eph 3:9	created all things by Jesus Christ	created all things
Eph 3:14	Father of our Lord Jesus Christ	Father
Co 1:2	Lord Jesus Christ	OMITTED
Co 1:28	Christ Jesus	Christ
1 Th 2:19	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord Jesus
1 Th 3:13	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord Jesus
2 Th 1:8	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord Jesus
1Ti 2:7	truth in Christ	truth
2 Ti 4:1	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord Jesus Christ
He 3:1	Christ Jesus	Jesus
1Pe 5:10	Christ Jesus	Christ
1Jo 1:7	Jesus Christ	Jesus

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