

# GOD

was Manifest in the Flesh

*1 Timothy 3.16*



ἥτις ἐστὶν ἐκκλησία Θεοῦ ζώντος, στυλοῦ καὶ ἐσθλαίου τῆς ἀληθείας. καὶ ὁμολογουμένως μέγα ἐστὶ τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον· Θεὸς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί, ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι, ὤφθη ἀγγέλοις, ἐκηρύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν, ἐπιστεύθη ἐν κόσμῳ, ἀνελήφθη ἐν δόξῃ.

Τὸ δὲ Πνεῦμα ῥητῶς λέγει, ὅτι ἐν ὑστέροις καιροῖς ἀποστή-

Examination of a disputed passage

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*Examination of a disputed passage*

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## WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH

*1 Timothy 3.16*

### A VITAL DOCTRINE

The architects and advocates of the modern English translations of the Holy Scriptures often assure us that their numerous alterations, omissions and additions do not affect any vital doctrine. While this may be true of hundreds of minute variations, there is nevertheless a substantial number of important doctrinal passages which the modern versions present in an altered and invariably weakened form. These inspired words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3.16 have always been held to affirm the essential deity and pre-existence of the Lord Jesus Christ, but this testimony is not maintained by the modern versions when they do not unequivocally declare that Christ was “God manifest in the flesh”. The New International Version reads “He appeared in a body” with a footnote stating “some manuscripts *God*”. The New American Standard Bible has “He who was revealed in the flesh” with a marginal note “Some later mss. read *God*” (the 1995 Updated Edition omits the note). These, as most modern versions in following the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament, omit the deity of Christ in this verse.

### EROSION OF THE SACRED TEXT

Countless millions of the Lord’s people, from the dawn of the Christian era to the present day, have read these words in their Bibles precisely as they appear in our Authorised Version, but now this powerful testimony to the Godhead of our Saviour is swept out of the Scriptures and disappears without trace. If we have the temerity to murmur or complain about this erosion of the sacred text of God’s Word, we are liable to be accused of defending the Authorised Version on emotional

rather than on rational grounds. However, our present purpose is not so much to vindicate this English translation as to demonstrate that we have good reason to believe that the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul to write θεὸς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί, “God was manifest in the flesh”. If these were the words of the Holy Spirit, they are to be cherished as truth and not rejected as an ancient perversion of it.

## THE TRUTH PROCLAIMED

**T**he vital doctrine attested by this text is briefly set forth in the appendix to the Laws and Regulations of the Trinitarian Bible Society, quoted from the Westminster Confession of Faith (section 8, para 2), “*two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one Person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man*”. This Confession of Faith was published with an “Epistle to the Reader” subscribed by forty-four able and godly ministers of the Word, including Thomas Manton, Thomas Goodwin, Thomas Watson and Matthew Poole. This preface explains that the “learned composers...were willing to take the pains of annexing scripture proofs to every truth, that the faith of people might not be built upon the dictates of men, but the authority of God”. The Scripture proofs annexed to section 8, para. 2, include 1 Timothy 3.16, “God was manifest in the flesh”. The Westminster Divines evidently regarded this verse as one of the essential proofs of the Trinitarian doctrine of the Bible, that the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God.

## THE TRUTH DENIED

**T**he denial of the eternal Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ has troubled the Church in every period of its history. Although the opponents of the truth have been known by different names, Arians, Socinians, Unitarians, Jehovah’s Witnesses and others, they have had many things in common, including an intense hostility to the doctrine set forth in this text of Holy Scripture.

In his *Outlines of Theology*, Professor A. A. Hodge, expounding the true doctrine on the basis of this verse, declares that Socinians, Arians and Trinitarians worship different gods and that every non-Trinitarian conception of God presents a false god to the mind and conscience. He contends that it is an historical fact beyond dispute that in whatever church the doctrine of the Trinity has been abandoned or *obscured*, every other characteristic doctrine of the Gospel has gone with it. There can be no mutual toleration without treason.

## A UNITARIAN AMONG THE REVISERS OF 1881-1885

Unfortunately this “mutual toleration” was attempted by those responsible for the Revised Version, and Dr. G. Vance Smith, minister of St. Saviour’s Gate Unitarian Chapel, York, was invited to join in the revising body. Dr. Smith attended a Communion service in Westminster Abbey in company with the other Revisers and in a letter to *The Times* of 11th July, 1870, he declared that he received the sacrament without joining in the Creed and without compromise of his principles as a “Unitarian”. This evoked a solemn protest signed by several thousand clergy, and a resolution of the Upper House of Convocation in February, 1871, “That it is the judgment of this House that no person who denies the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ ought to be invited to join either company to which is committed the revision of the Authorised Version of Holy Scripture...and that any such person now on either company should cease to act therewith”.

Vance Smith nevertheless remained on the committee. Among passages robbed of their true significance was 1 Timothy 3.16 where “*God was manifest in the flesh*” was altered to “*who was manifest...*” This was entirely satisfactory to Dr. Smith, who commented, “The old reading has been pronounced untenable by the Revisers, as it has long been known to be by all careful students of the New Testament... It is another example of the facility with which ancient copyists could introduce the word ‘God’ into their manuscripts – a reading which was the natural result of the

growing tendency in early Christian times to look upon the humble Teacher as the incarnate Word, and therefore as ‘God manifested in the flesh’.”

Most of the Revisers were also of the opinion that the original words written by the Apostle did not include the name of God, and as a result the Revised Version presents this text in a weakened form. Notwithstanding the hostile note in the margin of the Revised Version at this place, there is abundant ancient evidence for the text as we have it in the Authorised Version, and comparatively little for the adulterated text of the modern versions.

## THE PROBLEM STATED

**T**he most ancient surviving manuscripts of the Greek New Testament were written throughout in characters in some respects similar to capital letters (“Uncials”). In these uncial manuscripts it was the normal practice to abbreviate the name of God, using the first and last letters only, with a short line above these two letters as the sign of contraction, thus:-

God = θεός, in uncials ΘEOC, abbreviated Θ̄C̄.

The Greek word meaning “who” is ὅς. The apostrophe fulfils the function of our aspirate “h” and was not written in the uncial form, which was therefore OC. The little stroke in the first letter and the stroke over the two letters were the only means of distinguishing between “God” and “who”, and a moment’s carelessness on the part of the scribe could easily reduce the Divine Name to the simple relative pronoun. The distinguishing strokes were often written very faintly and age and use have made them fainter still.

Some early manuscripts have, “the mystery...*which* was manifested” (Greek ὃ). Some early copyists saw the obvious grammatical solecism in the wrongly abbreviated reading before them and endeavoured to “correct” it by reducing *who* to *which*, thus carrying the error a stage further.

## THE PRINTED GREEK EDITIONS

Many modern scholars insist, with the Unitarian Vance Smith, that misguided piety prompted some early copyists or their later correctors to insert these two distinguishing strokes in 1 Timothy 3.16 to *make* the verse testify to the deity of Christ. The scholars responsible for the earlier Greek editions found “*God was manifested*” in practically all the manuscripts at their disposal, and they did not question that this was the true reading. The Greek of Ximenes, Erasmus, Beza, Stephanus and the Elzevirs, and the various translations derived from their editions all have “God” in this verse. The 19th and 20th century editions of the Greek prepared by Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alford, Westcott and Hort, the Revisers of 1881, Nestle-Aland, Souter, Kilpatrick, and the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament, have all rejected the name of God from this text and have replaced it with “who”. The effect on the various translations is shown in the following quotations from English and European versions.

## THE ENGLISH VERSIONS

These three were translated from the Latin Vulgate which has *quod, which*.

- Wyclif 1380: “that thing that was schewid in fleisch...”
- Rheims-Douay Roman Catholic version 1582: “which was manifested in flesh.”
- Ronald Knox modern English R.C. version 1945: “it is a great mystery we worship. Revelation made in human flesh.”

The following were translated from the Greek:-

- Tyndale 1534: “God was shewed in the flesche.”
- Great Bible 1539: “God was shewed in the flesche.”
- Geneva New Testament 1557: “God is shewed in the flesche.”
- Bishops’ Bible 1568: “God was shewed manifestly in the flesh.”

## GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH

- King James Version: “God was manifest in the flesh,”
- New King James Version: “God was manifested in the flesh,”
- English Standard Version: “He was manifested in the flesh,”
- Revised Version of 1885: “He who was manifested in the flesh,”
- American Standard Version: “He who was manifested in the flesh,”
- New American Standard Version: “He who was revealed in the flesh,”
- New International Version: “He appeared in a body,”
- Today’s New International Version: “He appeared in a body,”
- Revised Standard Version: “He was manifested in the flesh,”
- New Revised Standard Version: “He was revealed in flesh,”
- New Living Translation: “Christ appeared in the flesh”
- Young’s Literal Translation: “God was manifested in flesh,”
- Douay-Rheims (1899 American edition): “which was manifested in the flesh,”
- New Jerusalem Bible: “He was made visible in the flesh,”
- New American Bible: “Who was manifested in the flesh,”
- Holman Christian Standard Bible: “He was manifested in the flesh,”
- New World Translation: “he was made manifest in flesh”
- Phillips: “the one who showed himself as a human being,”
- New Century Version: “He was shown to us in a human body,”
- Revised English Bible: “He was manifested in the flesh,”
- Good News Bible: “He appeared in human form,”
- Contemporary English Version: “Christ came as a human.”

### European Versions with “God”

- Italian (*Diodati*): “Iddio e state manifestato in carne.”
- French (*Osterwald*): “Dieu a ete manifeste en chair.”
- Spanish (*Valera*): “Dios ha side manifestado en carne.”
- German (*Luther*): “Gott ist offenbaret im Fleisch.”
- Portuguese (*Almeida*): “Dens se manifestou em carne.”

...and many others.

# THE DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR ASCERTAINING THE TRUE TEXT

**I**t must be acknowledged that none of the original autograph writings of the Apostles has been discovered, but there are now over 5,300 New Testament manuscripts available, greatly varying in age, extent and reliability. Of these a comparatively small number of ancient manuscripts are in “uncial” or capital letters, and the majority are in small characters and are referred to as “minuscules” or “cursives”. Many of the cursives were derived from manuscripts more ancient than any now in existence. Dr. Scrivener, probably the most able textual scholar of the 19th century, described these as respectable ancestors who are known to us only through their descendants.

Apart from papyrus fragments, the oldest existing manuscripts cannot be assigned to a date earlier than the middle of the fourth century. Before and after that period translations were undertaken in several languages including Syriac, Latin, Coptic, Sahidic, Bohairic, Gothic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian and Slavonic. Some of these translations were made from Greek manuscripts more ancient than any we now possess. Existing manuscripts of these versions are not of very ancient date and they have suffered at the hands of transcribers, but they yield valuable testimony to the contents of the ancient Greek manuscripts used by the translators in those early times.

A wealth of evidence is also furnished by the copious writings of early Christian scholars from the 1st century onwards, usually referred to as the “Fathers”, who quoted often and at length from the Greek Scriptures then in their hands. Although the existing manuscripts of these writings are not all of the greatest antiquity, they often serve as a guide to the Greek text as it was known to Christian readers in the earliest period of the history of the Church.

## THE MOST ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS

**T**he most ancient surviving Greek manuscripts of the Holy Scriptures differ greatly from each other and exhibit the worst corruptions of the text in great abundance. Many of the later manuscripts were executed with far greater care and are more reliable guides to the true text. The early manuscripts were adulterated in various ways, sometimes through mere carelessness, sometimes through ignorance of the language, sometimes through deliberate heretical attempts to suppress what was written, and sometimes through pious but misguided endeavours to embellish or enlarge upon what was written.

It is no less true to fact than paradoxical in sound, that the worst corruptions to which the New Testament has ever been subjected originated within a hundred years after it was composed; and that Irenaeus and the African Fathers, and the whole Western, with a portion of the Syrian Church, used manuscripts far inferior to those employed by Stunica, Erasmus or Stephens thirteen centuries later when moulding the *Textus Receptus*. (F. H. A. Scrivener, *Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*)

## HERESIES

### RELATING TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST

**D**uring the first four centuries of the present era the peace of the Church was disturbed by a number of heresies relating to the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit. It is significant that two very ancient manuscripts belonging to the latter part of this period, the *Codex Vaticanus* and *Codex Sinaiticus*, present in a weakened form a whole series of important passages concerned with these vital doctrines. These two documents, which have been favoured by modern scholars engaged in the translation of the Holy Scriptures, represent a very small minority of the existing manuscripts. The 19th century witnessed a steady drift away from the deity of

Christ and towards “unitarianism”. It is not surprising that scholars who have been caught up in this tide of unbelief should welcome the support of these unreliable documents. It is more than unfortunate that earnest evangelical Christians who do not doubt the deity of our Lord should be prepared to surrender such precious declarations of God’s Holy Word without even attempting to examine and assess the evidence. It must also be admitted that some able evangelical scholars have examined the evidence and have been persuaded that they should reject the name of God from this verse, and that the text in its weakened form may still be understood to relate to Christ.

The diluted rendering has thus been favoured by Unitarians, Roman Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses, liberals and also by some whose evangelical integrity has been beyond reproach. Are we then right when we insist that Paul was inspired to write “*God was manifested in the flesh*” or may we safely accept one of the alternatives – “*who was manifested*”, “*He was manifested*”, “*He who was manifested*”, or “*which was manifested*”? It is self evident that these statements do not affirm the same truth and that they cannot all be right.

Think about what this says. “He was manifested in the flesh” or, as the NIV says, “He appeared in a body” could be said about any human being. Henry the VIII appeared in a body. You have a body. Paul himself was manifested in the flesh, but only Christ was *God* manifest in the flesh. Any man of Nazareth would be manifest in the flesh, but only Jesus of Nazareth was *God* manifest in the flesh.

## THE CLAIMS MADE BY THE REVISERS OF 1881

**M**any of the assertions of the Revisers are not in accordance with the facts. Dr. Roberts, a Presbyterian member of the Revision Committee, Bishop Ellicott the Chairman, and Westcott and Hort, whose Greek Text was in the hands of the Revisers, all allege that the word “God” in this text is not supported by the early Greek manuscripts,

by the ancient versions or by the early Christian writers. They also claim that the reading, “*Who was manifested*” has powerful testimony from these ancient sources, and that it is more probable that “*God*” has been spuriously added to the majority of manuscripts than that the divine name has been accidentally omitted from the minority, or reduced to the relative pronoun “*who*”.

## PROBABLE ORIGIN OF THE ERRONEOUS READING

The practice of writing “*God*” in an abbreviated form in the uncial manuscripts made the distinction between “*God*” and “*who*” dependent upon two small strokes, one written within the first letter and the other written above the two letters. An accident or deliberate omission of these two strokes would be sufficient to account for the substitution of “*who*” in a very ancient manuscript from which a few later manuscripts were derived. Transcribers confronted with the odd reading, “Great is *the mystery who* was manifested”, would be tempted to make the sentence grammatical by altering “*who*” to “*which*”, and achieved this by a further abbreviation of the *Greek* ὅς to ὃ. This reading survives in a few manuscripts, including the Codex D of the 6th century.

## THE DOUBTFUL VALUE OF THE SINAI MANUSCRIPT

Westcott and Hort and many modern scholars have attached great importance to the Vatican manuscript, but this does not contain the First Epistle to Timothy at all. The only Greek manuscript of great antiquity which can plausibly be quoted in favour of “*who*” is the Codex Sinaiticus of the 4th century, but this manuscript is characterised by numerous alterations and omissions. A comparison of these three manuscripts with the Received Text reveals 2,877 omissions in the Vatican manuscript, 3,455 omissions in the Sinai manuscript, and 3,704 omissions in Codex D. In view of these figures a small but significant omission from

1 Timothy 3.16 in the Sinai manuscript and a larger omission in Codex D would hardly seem beyond the bounds of possibility.

## THE TESTIMONY OF THE CODEX ALEXANDRINUS “A”

This almost complete uncial manuscript, probably of the 5th century, was given to King Charles I of England by Cyril Lucar, Patriarch of Constantinople, and is displayed in the British Museum near to the Codex Sinaiticus. Codex Alexandrinus is a very important witness to the deity of Christ in this passage. The critics assert that it originally had “*who*” and that a later hand altered this to “*God*” by adding the two strokes required. However, many distinguished scholars who have examined this manuscript during the last three hundred years have explained that these strokes were written in the original manuscript, that they had become indistinct with the passage of the centuries and had been written over at a later time to make them clearer, and that the original strokes could still be discerned.

The passage has been examined so many times that the parchment is worn away, rendering its present evidence doubtful, but we may refer to the weighty opinions of those who had the manuscript in their hands long ago. They agreed that it supports the Received Text, “*God was manifest in the flesh*”.

Patrick Young had custody of this manuscript from AD 1628-1652 and he assured Archbishop Ussher that the original reading was “*God*”. In 1657 Huish collated the manuscript for Walton, who printed “*God*” in his massive Polyglot. Bishop Pearson wrote in 1659 “we find not ‘*who*’ in any copy”. Mill worked on his edition of the Greek from 1677 to 1707 and clearly states that he found “*God*” in the Codex Alexandrinus at this place. In 1718 Wotton wrote, “There can be no doubt that this manuscript always read ‘*God*’ in this place”. In 1716 Wetstein wrote, “Though the middle stroke has been retouched, the fine stroke originally in the letter is discernible at each end of the fuller stroke of the corrector”.

In his “Lectures on the true reading of 1 Timothy 3.16” (1737-1738) Berriman declared, “If at any time the old line should become all together indiscernible there will never be just cause to doubt but that the genuine and original reading of this manuscript was ‘*God*’”. Woide, who edited this Codex in 1785, remarked that he had seen traces of the original stroke in 1765 which had ceased to be clearly visible twenty years later. One of the 1881 Revisers, Prebendary Scrivener, who examined the manuscript at least twenty times, asserted that in 1861 he could still discern the all-important stroke which Berriman had seen more clearly in 1741.

## THE EVIDENCE PROVIDED BY OTHER GREEK MANUSCRIPTS

**T**he great majority of the Greek manuscripts have “*God was manifested*”, and very few indeed have “*who*” or “*which*”. At the time of the Revision nearly three hundred Greek manuscripts were known to give indisputable support to the Received Text, while not more than a handful of Greek manuscripts could be quoted in favour of “*who*” or “*which*”. It is thus apparent that the correct and best attested reading of this verse is preserved in the Authorised Version.

## THE TESTIMONY OF THE ANCIENT VERSIONS

**A**lmost all of the ancient versions appear to read “*who*” or “*which*” instead of “*God*” in this passage: namely, the Old Latin, Latin Vulgate, Coptic, Peshitta-Syriac, Gothic, Armenian and Ethiopic translations. However, modern scholars have been inclined to overestimate the value of the testimony of the ancient versions in this place. The Peshitta-Syriac version was evidently influenced by Greek manuscripts like Codex D and the Latin versions, which have “*which was manifested*” instead of “*God was manifested*”. This reading no doubt would have become popular at a time of Nestorian influence in the Syrian Church. Nestorius denied the union of the two natures of God and man in the one

Person of Christ. He was accused of teaching that there were two distinct persons – the Person of God the Son and the Person of the man Christ Jesus. This teaching was condemned by the Council of Ephesus in AD 431 at which Cyril of Alexandria presided. (Cyril himself witnesses in favour of “God” in 1 Timothy 3.16.)

The Syriac version was older by two centuries than the Nestorian heresy, and it is possible that the earliest Syriac manuscripts had “God was manifested”. Under the influence of the Latin versions the later Syriac manuscripts could have been altered to read “which was manifested”. This reading would be acceptable to the Nestorian element because it appeared to be in harmony with their error, and it would be acceptable to any of the orthodox who were prepared to regard the Apostle’s words as an allusion to Colossians 1.27 and 2.2 and therefore a personal tribute to Christ.

One of the Syriac versions, which was remarkable for its literal adherence to the Greek, was attributed to Philoxenus Bishop of Hierapolis in Eastern Syria, AD 488-518. This version actually includes the name of God in 1 Timothy 3.16 and indicates that Philoxenus found “God” in the Greek or Syriac manuscripts in his hands.

## THE GOTHIC VERSION

**A**nother ancient version likely to prefer the weaker rendering of this important verse was the Gothic translation by Ulphilas, who became Bishop of the Goths in AD 348. He was known to favour the heresy of Arius, who denied the pre-existence of the Son of God, affirming that He was created by God and not of one substance with the Father.

Existing manuscripts of the Gothic version indicate some measure of corruption from Latin sources. The Latin versions all have “which was manifested”. Finding this erroneous reading in the sources available to him, Ulphilas would have no difficulty in adopting it, but would be likely to welcome it as favourable to his “Arian” views.

# THE ARMENIAN AND ETHIOPIC VERSIONS

The 5th century Armenian version was influenced partly by the Syriac and partly by the Latin. Extant manuscripts differ greatly from each other and closely resemble the Latin Vulgate. It is probable that when the Armenian church submitted to Rome in the 13th century the Armenian text was revised in accordance with the Latin.

The Ethiopic version was probably translated in the 6th or 7th century, but extant manuscripts are of comparatively recent date. According to Scrivener, it was the work of someone whose knowledge of Greek was far from perfect and the text has numerous interpolations from Syriac and Arabic sources. The present text may be compounded from two or more translations, and great caution is needed in applying this version to the criticism of the New Testament.

An accidental or deliberate omission in one early Greek copy gave rise to a small company of similarly defective Greek manuscripts. These influenced the Latin versions, which in their turn influenced the versions in several other languages. These versions cannot therefore be regarded as witnesses of indisputable authority against the Received reading, “*God was manifest in the flesh*”, which is supported by the majority of the Greek manuscripts. Nor can the ancient versions be fairly quoted in support of “the mystery...*who* was manifested”. In this particular text they have more in common with the old Latin “quod manifestum est” – “*which* was manifested”, an ancient error also found in the Greek Codex D and still reflected by the Roman Catholic versions.

## THE TESTIMONY OF THE “FATHERS”

Bishop Ellicott insisted that the reading “God”, as in the Received Text, was a “plain and clear error” and that there was decidedly preponderating evidence for “who”. His “preponderating evidence” included an imposing list of ancient writers, but it is evident that his judgment of this class of evidence was affected by his strong prejudice against the Received Text.

The early writers allowed themselves great latitude in quoting the general sense of passages of Scripture relevant to their subject and it was not always incumbent upon them to quote the whole verse in every context. If an enemy of the truth denied that Christ had a natural body, the orthodox writer would emphasise that “Christ was manifest in the FLESH”. If anyone questioned whether his natural body was visible, the writer would remind him that, “He was MANIFEST in the flesh”. In other contexts it might be equally suitable to the writer’s purpose to write “One who was manifest in the flesh”, or “He who was manifest in the flesh”, while the copy upon the writer’s desk contained the full reading, “God was manifest in the flesh”.

## EXPOSITORS OFTEN QUOTE ONLY WHAT IS IMMEDIATELY RELEVANT TO THEIR THEME

Even at the present time a minister accustomed to use no other version but the Authorised Version may well mention in his sermon, prayers and written articles, “One who was manifested in the flesh in the mysterious miracle of the incarnation”, and none of his hearers or readers would imagine for one moment that the word “God” was missing from his text in the preacher’s Bible. It must therefore be allowed that early writers availed themselves of the same liberty without intending to conceal the full reading. These same early writers would no doubt have been astonished if they had been told that Biblical scholars today would read such an inference into their quotations.

### CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

This principle may be illustrated from Cyril of Alexandria who wrote “*God manifest...*” in two places, while in another he wrote, “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor indeed the great mystery of Godliness, that is Christ, *who* was manifested in the flesh”. Elsewhere he wrote, “I consider the mystery of godliness to be no other but the Word of God the Father, *who Himself* was manifested in the flesh”. These uses of “*who*” cannot be quoted against the presence of “*God*” in the manuscripts in Cyril’s hands.

## GREGORY OF NYSSA

The critics have done their best to demolish the evidence of the 5th century Codex Alexandrinus, but Gregory of Nyssa frequently and powerfully testified for “God manifest in the flesh” at least a hundred years before this manuscript was written. Gregory died in AD 394 and his life spanned the period during which the 4th century Codex Sinaiticus was written. In those of his writings that have survived he has “God” in this text no less than twenty-two times.

Even distinguished textual critics have been capable of “plain and clear errors”. Griesbach quoted Gregory of Nyssa as hostile to the Received Text, but he appears to have borrowed this information from Wetstein before passing it on to Scholz and Alford. The words quoted by Wetstein were not the words of Gregory at all, but the opinion of Apollinaris against whom Gregory was writing.

*Euthalius* in the 5th century attributed to a “wise and pious Father” the section title for 1 Timothy 3.16-4.7. This title makes mention of “God incarnate” and was used by Gregory of Nyssa in his dispute with Apollinaris in the 4th century.

*Diodorus of Tarsus* (died AD 370) quotes Paul’s actual words and asserts that he finds them in Paul’s epistle to Timothy.

*Chrysostom* (died AD 407) has at least three references to God manifest in the flesh, and there can be no doubt that this reading was prevalent in the 4th century. The testimony of *Dionysius of Alexandria* carries the attestation of the Received Text back to AD 264. It has been alleged that the letter to Paul of Samosata was not actually the work of Dionysius, but it cannot be denied that it belongs to the 3rd century and has “God”.

Obvious allusions to this text in the writings of Ignatius, Barnabas and Hippolytus make it clear that Christian readers in the 2nd century found in their Scriptures what we find in our Authorised Version – a declaration that “*God was manifest in the flesh*”.

Among 5th century witnesses was a writer formerly confused with Athanasius. At the time of the Nestorian controversy this now anonymous writer insisted that the correct reading was “God”. This writer would have settled the great debate about the testimony of the Codex Alexandrinus in favour of “God”. The anonymity of the writer does not weaken the force of his testimony. The Vatican, Sinai and Alexandrian manuscripts are all “anonymous” and so are most of the ancient documents.

## THE WEAKNESS OF THE “ARGUMENT FROM SILENCE”

**W**estcott and Hort and other modern scholars have argued that if the correct reading had been “God manifest...” Origen and Eusebius would have quoted it. Nothing can be proved in this way. It is known with absolute certainty that Gregory of Nyssa read “God manifest...”, but it will never be known why he did not quote this text in his treatise on the deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. If this treatise were the only surviving work of Gregory of Nyssa, scholars would wrongly argue from his “silence” that he could not have read “God” in the Greek manuscripts in his hands. The critics include the silence of Origen and Eusebius among their arguments for the rejection of the Received reading, “God was manifest”, but there are other cases where the testimony of Origen and Eusebius has been regarded by the same modern scholars as being of little value. For instance, in the Authorised Version, Matthew 5.22 reads, “...whosoever is angry with his brother *without a cause* shall be in danger of the judgment”. In the modern versions the words “without a cause” are omitted on little more evidence than that of the Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus and Jerome’s Latin. In this place the Received Text and the Authorised Version have the support of nearly all other extant manuscripts, all the Syriac and Old Latin manuscripts, and the Memphitic, Armenian and Gothic versions. Eusebius, the Latin Fathers from Irenaeus and Origen’s old Latin version all bear the same testimony, but all are set aside in favour of the Sinai and Vatican manuscripts. A note in the Greek text underlying the New English Bible announces that the translators regarded “without a cause” as “an early explanatory addition”.

The reader is entitled to doubt whether these scholars have attached sufficient weight to the external evidence and to wonder to what extent subjective presumptions of the superiority of the Vatican and Sinai manuscripts have influenced their assessment of all the other documents.

## THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE

**D**r. Bloomfield and other learned authorities have demonstrated that the new reading “*the mystery...who was manifested*” violates all the rules of construction and exhibits only too clearly the marks of accidental or deliberate corruption. The context makes it plain that Paul is presenting six propositions relating to the Lord Jesus Christ, in Whose divine Person – God was

- (1) Manifest in the flesh
- (2) Justified in the Spirit
- (3) Seen of angels
- (4) Preached unto the Gentiles
- (5) Believed on in the world
- (6) Received up into glory.

It cannot be doubted that the weak alternative is old, but it is an ancient error. From the earliest times a host of reliable documentary witnesses have survived to assure us that the first readers of Paul’s Epistle to Timothy read this verse as we read it here.

## THE MISLEADING CHARACTER OF THE MARGINAL NOTES IN MODERN TRANSLATIONS

**M**ost modern versions have a footnote which attempts to explain in general terms the textual reason for removing the deity of Christ. The New Revised Standard Version has in the text, “He was revealed in flesh” and a marginal note, “Gk *Who*; other ancient authorities read *God*; others, *Which*”.

The Contemporary English Version, although substituting the word “Christ” for “Who” (“Christ came as a human”), has an endnote which brings explicit doubt on the deity of Christ. It reads “The Greek text has ‘he’, probably meaning ‘Christ’. Some manuscripts have ‘God’.” In other words, there is only a probability that the phrase refers to Jesus. Also, the footnotes says that only “some” manuscripts have “God” rather than the vast majority of manuscripts having “God”. These are some examples of the way in which the mere opinion of the scholar is sometimes set against the whole stream of documentary testimony.

Even though the New Revised Standard Version has a grudging admission that “other ancient authorities read *God*”, the result is that the average reader of these modern versions is left entirely at the mercy of the textual critics and translators and has no means of discerning the true text of God’s Holy Word.

## OVERWHELMING PROOF

**W**hile it is of interest to record the opinions of scholars during the last century, it is infinitely more important that we should know what was written by the Apostle in the first, and the evidence is overwhelmingly in favour of the inclusion of the Name of God in this text. To quote Professor Charles Hodge (*Systematic Theology*), “For *God* we find the great body of the cursive Greek manuscripts and almost all the Greek Fathers... The internal evidence is decidedly in favour of the common text... The leading truths concerning the manifestation of Christ are concisely stated, (1) He is God; (2) He was manifested in the flesh...”

This text as we have it is an integral part of God’s inspired and holy Word. It would be presumptuous to add to it, perilous to reject it, wise and profitable to receive it and to remember the admonition to the prophet of old –

*“Diminish not a word”*

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- To publish and distribute the Holy Scriptures throughout the world in many languages.
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