

1 Timothy 3:16

Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. (*NIV*)

1. Although the above verse in the *NIV* does not support the Trinity, there are some Greek manuscripts that read, “God appeared in the flesh.” This reading of some Greek manuscripts has passed into some English versions, and the *King James Version* is one of them. Trinitarian scholars admit, however, that these Greek texts were altered by scribes in favor of the Trinitarian position. The reading of the earliest and best manuscripts is not “God” but rather “he who.” Almost all the modern versions have the verse as “the mystery of godliness is great, **which** was manifest in the flesh,” or some close equivalent.

2. In regard to the above verse, Bruce Metzger writes:

["He who"] is supported by the earliest and best uncials...no uncial (in the first hand) earlier than the eighth or ninth century supports *theos*; all ancient versions presuppose *hos* or *ho* ["he who" or "he"]; and no patristic writer prior to the last third of the fourth century testifies to the reading *theos*. The reading *theos* arose either (a) accidentally, or (b) deliberately, either to supply a substantive for the following six verbs [the six verbs that follow in the verse], or, with less probability, to provide greater dogmatic precision [*i.e.*, to produce a verse that more clearly supports the Trinitarian position].¹

3. When properly translated, 1 Timothy 3:16 actually argues against the Trinity. “By common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory” (*NASB*). This section of Scripture beautifully portrays an overview of Christ’s life and accomplishments. It all fits with what we know of *the man*, Jesus Christ. If Jesus were God, this section of Scripture would have been the perfect place to say so. We should expect to see some phrases like, “God incarnate,” “God and Man united,” “very God and very man,” *etc.* But nothing like that occurs. Instead, the section testifies to what non-Trinitarians believe—that Christ was a man, begotten by the Father, and that he was taken up into glory.

Buzzard, pp. 144 and 152

Dana, p. 137

Farley, pp. 69 and 70

Morgridge, pp. 82 and 115

Snedeker, p. 451

Endnotes:

1. Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (United Bible Society, New York, 1975), p. 641.

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