

Does he who has been born of God τηρεῖ ἑαυτὸν οἷα τηρεῖ αὐτὸν?

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1. Introduction



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The First Epistle of John ends with three affirmations, each of which is introduced by the phrase οἶδαμεν...: οἶδαμεν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει (5.18); οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμεν (5.19); and οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἦκει καὶ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν διάνοιαν (5.20).

Thus John takes up the theme of 5.13, *what we should know* (ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ἵνα εἰδῆτε), and the theme of 5.15, *what we do know* (καὶ ἐὰν οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀκούει ἡμῶν ὃ ἐὰν αἰτώμεθα, οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἔχομεν τὰ αἰτήματα ἃ ἠτήκαμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ); and 'in a series of three affirmations he declares the content of this Christian knowledge which should characterize his readers' (Marshall 1978: 251).¹

John's first affirmation consists of three parts: (1) οἶδαμεν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει, (2) ἀλλ' ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τηρεῖ αὐτὸν (3) καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς οὐχ ἄπτεται αὐτοῦ. Amongst New Testament scholars there is more-or-less unanimous agreement on what the first and the third parts mean. However, this is not the case with regard to the second part, since it has a few variant readings that in different ways influence its interpretation and consequently its meaning.

Therefore, the purpose of this short study is to conduct a textual and lexical-syntactical analysis of 1 Jn 5.18, looking at both external and internal textual evidence in order to determine which of the present variants reflects the original reading.

¹ See also, for example, Boice (1979: 177-78), Brown (1982: 637), Stott (1964: 191), Huther (1882: 479), Ross (1963: 222-23), and Kistemaker (1986: 365).

2. External evidence: Minor variant readings

In 1 Jn 5.18 there are three minor variant readings in the phrase ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ: (a) ἐγεννήθη· ὁ δὲ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ; (b) ἡ γέννησις, and (c) ὁ γεγεννημένος.

2.1. ...but he was born; and he who has been born of God keeps himself...

Οἴδαμεν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει, ἀλλ' ἐγεννήθη· ὁ δὲ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τηρεῖ ἑαυτὸν...

This reading is witnessed to only by one MINUSCULE 33^{IX}. It is most likely a *dittography*, a | l | e g e n n h q h o d e g e n n h q e i s e k. The appearance of the conjunction δε may also be explained within the bounds of *dittography*. Since this manuscript was written with minuscule script, a scribe might confuse the letters α and ο, as well considering the letters l e as the conjunction δε while copying the text. If this is the case, then it can be depicted in the following way: α | l | e → ο δε. Or δε might be simply an addition. However that may be, no value can be attached to this variant reading.

2.2. 'but the birth of God keeps him safe'

Οἴδαμεν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει, ἀλλ' ἡ γέννησις τοῦ θεοῦ τηρεῖ αὐτὸν...

This reading is attested with the following witnesses: MINUSCULES 1505^{XII} 1852^{XIII} 2138^{XI}; OLD LATIN VERSIONS as it^{ar IX} it^{l VII} it^{q VII} it^{t XI}; OTHER VERSIONS as Vulgate sy^{h VII} cop^{bo}; CHURCH FATHERS of V century such as Chromatius, Jerome, and Vigilius.

As it is obvious, along with other witnesses, this variant reading is for the most part witnessed to only by the later manuscripts such as Family 2138.

One may suggest that the appearance of ἡ γέννησις is a scribal error. That is, a copyist might mistakenly consider two letters q e as one letter s while copying the text; thus, ο g e n n h q e i s became h g e n n h s i s, although the question about the change of the article from ὁ to ἡ remains open, since it seems unlikely that one would confuse the letters ο and η). Nevertheless, it is yet difficult to explain this variant, since it looks like ἡ γέννησις was first attested with Church Fathers in V century, then with Latin and some other versions in VII-XI centuries, and afterwards with minuscules of Family 2138 in XI-XIII centuries. Therefore, it could also be a doctrinal adjustment by the Church Fathers.

If it is accepted that ἡ γέννησις was the doctrinal adjustment, then it may correspond with σπέρμα in 3.9,² since *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* states that 'this could well be original, corresponding to the less precise "anointing" and

² πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ, ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται.

“seed” previously used to designate the Spirit of God’ (Brown 1968: 412). Harnack, for example, also holds the opinion that all other readings were corrupt, and suggests ἡ γέννησις τοῦ θεοῦ τηρεῖ αὐτὸν to have been the correct reading.³ However, Robinson regards this variant as one of ‘typical accidental errors of phoneme or sound-alike confusion.’⁴

Nevertheless, since this variant has relatively poor attestation, it can lay no claim to priority.⁵

2.3. ‘but he who is born of God’

Οἶδαμεν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει, ἀλλ’ ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τηρεῖ...

This variant is not supported in even a single manuscript, but is found only in Origen (doctrinal adjustment too?). Therefore, no value can be attached to this reading either.

Thus, it is evident that amongst three variants ὁ γεννηθεὶς is the reading strongly attested by witnesses of all textual types, and the other readings arose either because scribes made mistakes while copying the text, or they were ‘prompted to introduce one or another change in the interest of clarification of meaning’ (Metzger 1994: 650).

3. External evidence: Major variant readings

There are two major variant readings in the text following the verb τηρεῖ: αὐτὸν, and ἑαυτὸν.

3.1. ‘but he who has been born of God keeps himself’

Οἶδαμεν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει, ἀλλ’ ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τηρεῖ ἑαυτὸν...

The reading τηρεῖ ἑαυτὸν is witnessed to by the following manuscripts and versions: UNCIALS ① A** K^{IX} L^{IX} P^{IX} Ψ^{VIII/IX} 049^{IX} 056^X 0142^X; MINUSCULES 6^{XIII} 33^{IX} 69^{XV} 81^{XI} 206^{XIII} 322 (XV), 323 (XI), 436 (XI), 623 (XI), 630 (XIV), 876 (XII), 945 (XI), 1067 (XIV), 1175 (XI), 1241 (XII), 1243 (XI), 1292 (XIII), 1409 (XIV), 1611 (XII), 1735 (XI/XII), 1739 (X), 1846 (XI), 1881 (XIV), 2298 (XI), 2344 (XI), 2464 (IX), 2492 (XIII);⁶ BYZANTINE witnesses, the majority of lectionaries; EARLY VERSIONS such as Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, and

³ See Bultmann (1973: 88).

⁴ Maurice Robinson to TC-List, 18 June 1997 (<http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/downloads/tc-list/tc-list.9706>).

⁵ See also, for example, Marshall (1978: 252), Strecker (1996: 208), and Smalley (1984: 292-93).

⁶ As well as by the following MINUSCULES: 5, 38, 97, 177, 181, 201, 216, 223, 226, 319, 356, 424, 440, 462, 479, 483, 489, 547, 582, 635, 642, 643, 917, 920, 927, 959, 999, 1022, 1240, 1245, 1248, 1311, 1315, 1319, 1424, 1522, 1597, 1610, 1738, 1799, 1827, 1829, 1835, 1845, 1854, 1872, 1873, 1874, 1876, 1888, 1889, 1891, 2143, 2401, 2423 (Richards 1977: 261).

Slavonic; amongst CHURCH FATHERS it is supported only by Origen. This reading is also followed in the editions of Bover, Hodges & Farstad, Lachmann, Merk, von Soden, and Vogels.

Thus τηρεῖ ἑαυτὸν is attested with the following text-types: Alexandrian, Families 1739 and 2138, and Byzantine, as well as with a few early versions.

3.2. ‘but he who has been born of God keeps him safe’

Οἴδαμεν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει, ἀλλ’ ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τηρεῖ αὐτὸν...

The variant τηρεῖ αὐτὸν is supported with the following witnesses: UNCIALS A*, B²; MINUSCULES 330 (XII), 451 (XI), 614 (XIII), 794 (XIV), 1505 (XII), 1852 (XIII), 1898 (X), 2138 (XI), 2412 (XII), 2495 (XIV/XV); OLD LATIN VERSIONS as it^{ar} (IX), it^l (VII), it^t (XI); CHURCH FATHERS of V century as Chromatius, Jerome, and Vigilius. This reading is also followed in the editions of New English Bible (Tasker), Revised Version (Souter), Tischendorf eighth edition, UBS, Westcott & Hort.

Thus τερεῖ αὐτὸν is found in the following text-types: Alexandrian, and Family 2138, as well as in a few Old Latin versions, and three Latin Church Fathers. One also should note, first, that this reading is absent in such text-types as Family 1739 and Byzantine, and, secondly, that τηρεῖ αὐτὸν is also witnessed to by the same minuscules supporting ἡ γέννησις (Family 2138) as well as by the same Old Latin versions (it^{ar}, it^l, it^q, it^t), and Latin Church Fathers (Chromatius, Jerome, and Vigilius).

3.3. Short analysis of the variants τηρεῖ ἑαυτὸν and τηρεῖ αὐτὸν

In order to show more clearly the distribution of the manuscripts supporting these two readings, the variants and their witnesses are summarized in the following table:⁷

Text-types	Τηρεῖ ἑαυτὸν	Τηρεῖ αὐτὸν
ALEXANDRIAN	Ⓛ A**, 33, 81, 436, etc.	B ² A*
BYZANTINE	K, L, 049, 056, 0142, pm	—
FAMILY 1739	6, 323, 945, 1241, 1243, 1739, 1881	—
FAMILY 2138	206, 630, 1611	614, 1505, 2138, 2412, 2495
EARLY VERSIONS	Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, and Slavonic	Old Latin versions such as it ^{ar} (IX), it ^l (VII), it ^t (XI)

⁷ See also the letter of Robert B. Waltz to TC-List, 17 June 1997 (<http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/downloads/tc-list/tc-list.9706>).

CHURCH FATHERS	Origen	Chromatius, Jerome, and Vigilius
CRITICAL EDITIONS of the New Testament	Bover, Hodges & Farstad, Lachmann, Merk, von Soden, Scriverener, Stephanus, and Vogels	Tischendorf (8 th ed.), Friberg, UBS, and Westcott & Hort

From this table it appears that the variant $\tau\eta\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ $\acute{\epsilon}\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$ predominates in Family 1739 and Byzantine texts,⁸ while the reading $\tau\eta\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$ predominates in Family 2138 and Latin witnesses.

What are then the possible explanations for the appearance of these two variant readings? A first possibility is that if the text was copied by a scribe by means of transcription, he might either mistakenly leave out ϵ from $\epsilon\Delta\Upsilon\text{TON}$ ($\text{TH}\rho\epsilon\iota\epsilon\Delta\Upsilon\text{TON} \rightarrow \text{TH}\rho\epsilon\iota\Delta\Upsilon\text{TON}$), or add ϵ to $\Delta\Upsilon\text{TON}$ ($\text{TH}\rho\epsilon\iota\Delta\Upsilon\text{TON} \rightarrow \text{TH}\rho\epsilon\iota\epsilon\Delta\Upsilon\text{TON}$). A second possibility is that if the text was copied by scribes by means of dictation, then, as Robinson suggests, the appearance of the variants might be a phonetic error:

It is quite possible that the minority of copyists ... may simply have omitted the “E” due to the phonetic error of hearing THREEI and HEAUTON sounded together in pronunciation... it is a likely accidental omission of a single letter in a minority of witnesses, occasioned primarily by phonetic slurring and blending of the –EI and HEAU- phonemes, merging the blended sound in such a way as to write –EI AU- instead of the normal –EI HEAU-.⁹

Although Robinson’s explanation provides only possible reasons for *the loss* of ϵ , it is also possible that ϵ was *added* because of the phonetic error. Thus, when analyzing the possibility of either loss or addition of ϵ , it seems more plausible that the mistake was caused by phonetic error than by transcriptional error.

However, it should be recognized that solely on the basis of the external evidence, it is almost impossible to determine with confidence the original reading with $\tau\eta\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ – $\acute{\epsilon}\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$ or $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$ – since the witnesses are more-or-less evenly divided between the two variants. Therefore, examining internal evidence may help one to decide between these two readings.

4. Internal evidence: Lexical-syntactical analysis

Amongst New Testament scholars there are two widespread interpretations of $\acute{\omicron}$ $\gamma\epsilon\upsilon\upsilon\eta\theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa$ $\tau\omicron\upsilon$ $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$: the phrase ‘who has been born of God’ refers to either (1) the Christian, or (2) Jesus Christ. There are a few scholars who do not accept

⁸ One should note that the Byzantine witnesses are not divided here as, for example, the Alexandrian.

⁹ Maurice Robinson to TC-List, 18 June 1997.

either of these interpretations. For example, O'Neill, suggests the reading τηρεῖ αὐτὸν, but with the meaning that 'in the case of sin in the community, a perfect member is always ready to intercede and to protect the sinner, τηρεῖ αὐτὸν, so that the Evil One does not touch him' (O'Neill 1966: 63). Robinson, on the other hand, proposes that this statement

could be understood as saying that Christ, "the one having been begotten by God", keeps or guards himself (following the Byzantine reading, obviously). This then connects with the subsequent statement that "the Evil One does not touch him" = Christ, and not the believer per se. This also ties in well (as I read it) with v. 19, in which "the whole world lies in the Evil One," followed by v. 20, in which the attention turns once more to Christ – the one who "keeps himself" in v. 18, as the one who "has given to us understanding that we might know the truth", and so combat the Evil One.' (Maurice Robinson to TC-List, 18 June 1997)

The interpretations of O'Neill, Robinson, and a few others demand thorough and careful study, but since these views are so rare, they will not be considered in this article. Rather, only the views that the phrase refers to the Christian and to Christ will be considered.

4.1. ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ = the Christian¹⁰

If this is the case, ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ is a stylistic variant,¹¹ or simply a synonym for the preceding ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ. Therefore, one would then expect τηρεῖ ἑαυτὸν rather than αὐτὸν. Thus, what are the possible arguments in favor of this reading?

- (1) The aorist participle ὁ γεννηθεὶς is used with regard to the human being in the New Testament in Gal. 4.29,¹² and Heb. 11.23.¹³ However, Jesus Christ is never elsewhere spoken as ὁ γεννηθεὶς (with the exception of the Western variant in Jn 1.13, ὅς ... ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθη it^b, Irenaeus^{lat}, Origen^{lat 1/2}; Tertullian, Ambrose^{2/5}, Jerome^{1/3}, Augustine^{1/14}, and Sulpicius^{vid}). Therefore, on the basis of the usage of this particular form it may be concluded that by ὁ γεννηθεὶς John means the Christian.
- (2) The subject of the verb τηρέω in the First Epistle of John (1 Jn 2.3-5; 3.22, 24; 5.3, as well as in his Gospel) is always the believer obeying the commandments and God's word. Therefore, if John means the believer when he uses this verb elsewhere, he is likely to mean the Christian in 1 Jn 5.18 as well.

¹⁰ See Brown (1982: 637-38), Bultmann (1973: 88; with hesitation), *Calvin's Commentaries* (1979: 312), Houlden (1973: 133), Huther (1882: 480), Kysar (1986: 115-16), Law (1968: 409), O'Neill (1966: 63), and Scrivener (1894: 408).

¹¹ Or, according to O'Neill, 'a poetic variant' (O'Neill 1966: 63).

¹² ἀλλ' ὡσπερ τότε ὁ κατὰ σάρκα γεννηθεὶς ἐδίδωκεν τὸν κατὰ πνεῦμα, οὕτως καὶ νῦν.

¹³ Πίστει Μοῦσης γεννηθεὶς ἐκρύβη τρίμηνον ὑπὸ τῶν πατέρων αὐτοῦ...

- (3) Τηρέω is used with reflexive pronouns not only in 1 Jn 5.18, but also in, for example, 1 Tim. 5.22 (σεαυτὸν ἀγνὸν τηρεῖ), Jas. 1.27 (ἄσπιλον ἑαυτὸν τηρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου), and Jude 21 (ἑαυτοὺς ἐν ἀγάπῃ θεοῦ τηρήσατε), as well as in 1 Jn 5.21. In addition, Huther states that it is not always necessary to supply a predicate to τηρέω (Huther 1882: 480). Brown also argues that ‘the ongoing role of Christ is more that of a Paraclete for sinners than of a protector for the sinless.’ He refers to Jn 17:12, and 15, where Jesus ‘turns the protective role over to God when he leaves the earth’ (Brown 1982: 638). Therefore, it follows that the task of keeping the Christian is God’s, not Christ’s. However, the Christian should keep himself from sin, or hold fast to God so that the wicked one does not touch him.
- (4) Since in 3.3 John asserts that πᾶς ὁ ἔχων τὴν ἐλπίδα ταύτην ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ἀγνίζει ἑαυτὸν, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος ἀγνός ἐστιν, it may be said also that the Christian ‘keeps himself from sinning’ because these two ideas are virtually identical (Law 1968: 409).
- (5) There are other passages in the First Epistle of John where the perfect and the aorist points of view are exchanged, such as for example in 1 Jn 3.9, 10 (compare ἀπέσταλκεν and ἀπέστειλεν; ἠγαπήκαμεν and ἠγάπησαμεν) (Law 1968: 409). However, in the case of the perfect ἠγαπήκαμεν, many of the witnesses support the reading of the aorist ἠγάπησαμεν. Nevertheless, John might use ὁ γεννηθεὶς and ὁ γεγεννημένος interchangeably as well.
- (6) It does not seem logical that John, having just described the Christian as ὁ γεγεννημένος, would immediately expect the reader to understand by ὁ γεννηθεὶς Jesus Christ. If this had been what he meant, he would probably have written ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ or some similar phrase, because ‘there is nothing in ὁ γεννηθεὶς, any more than in ὁ γεγεννημένος, by which it is intrinsically a fitting appellation for the Divine Son’ (Law 1968: 408).

4.2. ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ = Jesus Christ¹⁴

If by ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ John really means Jesus Christ, then one would expect τηρεῖ αὐτὸν rather than ἑαυτὸν. Therefore, what are the arguments in favor of this interpretation?

- (1) If one were to hold to the interpretation that ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ = the Christian, then it would be too difficult to explain the shift John makes from the perfect participle ὁ γεγεννημένος to the aorist participle ὁ γεννηθεὶς. However, there is logic in such a change of tense if one believes that by this shift, John wants to draw the Christian’s attention to Jesus Christ. Though it is

¹⁴ See Boice (1979: 179), Brooke (1957: 148), Bruce (1970: 125-26), Bultmann (1973: 88), Dodd (1961: 138), Gore (1928: 670), Grayston (1984: 145), Haas (1972: 128), Metzger (1971: 719; 1994: 650), Plummer (1980: 125), Ross (1963: 223), Smalley (1984: 303), Smith (1967: 198), Stott (1964: 192), Strecker (1996: 208), and Westcott (1960: 194).

true that this particular form in nominative case does not refer to Christ elsewhere in the New Testament, it should be recognized that, for example, in Mt. 1.20 and 2.1 the aorist participle derived from γεννάω is used of Jesus' birth. The Nicene Creed speaks as well about Christ as Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς. Plummer contends, 'On any other interpretation S. John's marked change of tense appears arbitrary and confusing.' Regarding the shift in tense he suggests that

the perfect expresses a permanent relation begun in the past and continued in the present; the aorist expresses a timeless relation, a mere fact: the one signifies the child of God as opposed to those who have not become His children; the other signifies the Son of God as opposed to the evil one. (Plummer 1980: 125)

- (2) When John uses the same verb γεννᾶσθαι regarding the Christian and Christ, he may intend 'to emphasize the identity of God's Son with his disciples' (Smalley 1984: 303). Boice also states,

No doubt John emphasized the birth of Jesus Christ for two reasons: first, to stress our kinship with Christ and, second, to remind us that the One who is to keep us from temptation was Himself also tempted. (Boice 1979: 179)

He is supported as well by Haas saying 'it may have been a matter of theology, which means that the author used the two almost identical phrases to emphasize that the Son identifies himself with his followers' (Haas 1972: 128). One should also note that in his Gospel and the First Epistle John usually uses the perfect passive forms derived from the verb γεννάω to speak of the Christian (see Jn. 3.6, 8; 1 Jn 2.29; 3.9; 4.7; 5.1, 4, 18.), but he never uses the aorist participle ὁ γεννηθείς (with the exception of Jn. 8.41, and 9.32 speaking about the human being, and 18.37 speaking of Christ).

- (3) The idea of disciples being 'kept' (τηρέω) by Jesus is found particularly in Johannine literature in Jn. 17.12,¹⁵ and Rev. 3.10,¹⁶ and the idea of believers being 'protected' by God is found in Jn. 17.15,¹⁷ 1 Pet. 1.5,¹⁸ and Jude 24.¹⁹
- (4) Since the verb τηρέω used with reflexive pronouns is followed by adverbial adjectives in 1 Tim. 5.22 (ἀγνόν), and Jas. 1.27 (ἄσπιλον), and by an indirect object in Jude 21 (ἐν ἀγάπῃ θεοῦ), correspondingly τηρεῖ ἑαυτὸν would demand some predicate expansion, or explanation 'of that from which the Christian "keeps" himself' (Smalley 1984: 293).²⁰

¹⁵ ὅτε ἤμην μετ' αὐτῶν ἐγὼ ἐτήρουν αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ᾧ δέδωκάς μοι, καὶ ἐφύλαξα...

¹⁶ ὅτι ἐτήρησας τὸν λόγον τῆς ὑπομονῆς μου καὶ γὰρ σε τηρήσω ἐκ τῆς ὥρας τοῦ πειρασμοῦ...

¹⁷ οὐκ ἐρωτῶ ἵνα ἄρῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἀλλ' ἵνα τηρήσῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

¹⁸ τοὺς ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ φρουρομένους διὰ πίστεως εἰς σωτηρίαν...

¹⁹ Τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ φυλάξαι αὐτοὺς ἀπταιστούς...

²⁰ See also 2 Cor. 11.9: καὶ ἐν παντὶ ἀβαρῆ ἑμαυτὸν ὑμῖν ἐτήρησα καὶ τηρήσω.

5. Conclusion: τηρεῖ αὐτὸν

Taking into account the considerations of the external along with internal evidence for both variants, the author of this article is inclined to think that the reading τηρεῖ αὐτὸν reflects the original, rather than the variant τηρεῖ ἑαυτὸν. Yet it is still difficult to decide between these two readings since the case from internal considerations is more-or-less equally strong for either variant, and the external evidence is evenly divided.

Thus the probable translation of 1 Jn 5.18 would be as follows: *WE KNOW THAT WHOEVER IS BORN OF GOD DOES NOT SIN* (does not live constantly in sin), *BUT HE WHO HAS BEEN BORN OF GOD* (Jesus Christ) *KEEPS HIM* (the Christian) *SAFE* (from constant sinning), *AND THE WICKED ONE DOES NOT TOUCH HIM* (the Christian).

However, this article is only a starting point in the author's task of looking for the original reading with regard to τηρεῖ. (Since he does not yet read German and French, only English sources were consulted.) In further study one should also consider and carefully analyze the interpretations of Latin and Greek Church Fathers, as well as the Reformers.

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