

[Addition to Lesson 1, comparing English Bible versions, in response to a question in the last session. PLEASE NOTE THAT this handout contains technical material for the sake of explaining translation changes.]

When comparing translations you will at times observe “missing” words, verses, sections. For example, although **Acts 8:37** appears in the KJV, it is totally absent in the NRSV, NIV, GNT.

<p>KJV <u>36</u> And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?</p> <p><u>37</u> And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.</p> <p><u>38</u> And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.</p>	<p>NRSV <u>36</u> As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” --</p> <p><u>38</u> He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.</p>	<p>NIV (2011) <u>8:36</u> As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?”^{aa} --</p> <p><u>38</u> And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.</p>	<p>Nestle Aland 27 GNT <u>36</u> ὡς δὲ ἐπορεύοντο κατὰ τὴν ὁδόν, ἦλθον ἐπὶ ἄρματι ὕδωρ, καὶ φησιν ὁ εὐνοῦχος· ἰδοὺ ὕδωρ, τί κωλύει με βαπτισθῆναι; τ --</p> <p><u>38</u> καὶ ἐκέλευσεν στήναι τὸ ἄρμα καὶ κατέβησαν ἀμφοτέροι εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ, ὃ τε Φίλιππος καὶ ὁ εὐνοῦχος, καὶ ἐβάπτισεν αὐτόν.</p>
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Your next question should be, WHY?

The **brief answer** is that as new versions were created, even using the KJV as a base, the translators consulted all new Greek manuscript evidence. This comparison often raised questions concerning the best “readings” from the MSS that should be represented in their translation. The translators made changes in keeping with a broad common ground “guild” understanding of MS evidence. These changes result in BOTH subtractions and even additions (e.g. cf. John 1:18 below).

Acts 8:37 is an example of “subtraction” on the basis of MS evidence.

Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd edition, United Bible Societies), provides the following note on the **editor’s committee discussion of Acts 8:37** (he was the secretary):

[quote

8.37 omit verse {A}

Ver. 37 is a Western addition, not found in $\mathfrak{B}^{45,74}$ & A B C 33 81 614 vg syr^{p,h} cop^{sa,bo} eth, but is read, with many minor variations, by E, many minuscules, it^{gig,h} vg^{mss} syr^h with * cop^{G67} arm. There is no reason why scribes should have omitted the material, if it had originally stood in the text. It should be noted too that τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν is not a Lukan expression.

The formula πιστεύω ... Χριστόν was doubtless used by the early church in baptismal ceremonies, and may have been written in the margin of a copy of Acts. Its insertion into the text seems to have been due to the feeling that Philip would not have baptized the Ethiopian without securing a confession of faith, which needed to be expressed in the narrative. Although the earliest known New Testament manuscript that contains the words dates from the sixth century (ms. E), the tradition of the Ethiopian's confession of faith in Christ was current as early as the latter part of the second century, for Irenaeus quotes part of it (*Against Heresies*, iii.xii.8).

Although the passage does not appear in the late medieval manuscript on which Erasmus chiefly depended for his edition [p. 316] (ms. 2), it stands in the margin of another (ms. 4), from which he inserted it into his text because he "judged that it had been omitted by the carelessness of scribes (*arbitror omissum librariorum incuria*)."

End quote]

The point of Metzger's committee note is that the best MSS do not contain Acts 8:37 and there are good reasons why it should not be part of the original text.

John 1:18 is an example of "addition" (to the KJV) on the basis of MS evidence.

John 1:18 is my favorite illustration that the "academic" Greek text for modern translations goes where the evidence of textual criticism leads and that the editors are not making their work a theological agenda (as KJV Only advocates often claim).

<p>KJV <u>18</u> No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.</p>	<p>NRSV <u>18</u> No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.</p>	<p>NLT (2011) <u>18</u> No one has ever seen God,^a but the one and only Son, who is himself God and^{a b} is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.</p>	<p>NA27 Greek Text <u>18</u> Θεὸν οὐδείς ἑώρακεν πώποτε^ϛ. μονογενῆς θεός^ϛ ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο^τ. "the only begotton God" would be "formal"</p>
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In this illustration, the editors of the Greek NT go with an extremely "hard" reading because the MS evidence leads them to do so. Again, Metzger explains their reasoning:

[quote

1.18 μονογενῆς θεός {B}

With the acquisition of \mathfrak{B}^{66} and \mathfrak{B}^{75} , both of which read θεός, the external support of this reading has been notably strengthened. A majority of the Committee regarded the reading μονογενῆς υἱός, which undoubtedly is easier than μονογενῆς θεός, to be the result of scribal assimilation to Jn 3.16, 18; 1Jn 4.9. The anarthrous use of θεός (cf. 1.1) appears to be more primitive. There is no

reason why the article should have been deleted, and when *υἱός* supplanted *θεός* it would certainly have been added. The shortest reading, [p. 170] *ὁ μονογενής*, while attractive because of internal considerations, is too poorly attested for acceptance as the text.

Some modern commentators⁴ take *μονογενής* as a noun and punctuate so as to have three distinct designations of him who makes God known (*μονογενής, θεός, ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ...*).

[It is doubtful that the author would have written *μονογενής θεός*, which may be a primitive, transcriptional error in the Alexandrian tradition ($\overline{\gamma\tau/\theta\epsilon}$). At least a D decision would be preferable. A. W.]

End quote]

This Greek text reading and subsequent translations shows that translators are about the science of textual criticism and are NOT doing theology with their work.

One more “famous” example of revising the KJV is 1 John 1:7-8 by subtraction

KJV	NRSV	NIV (2011)	NA27 GNT
<p>1John 5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. 8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.</p>	<p>1John 5:7 There are three that testify:</p> <p>8 the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree.</p>	<p>1John 5:7 For there are three^a that testify:</p> <p>8 the^a Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.</p>	<p>1John 5:7 ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες^ς,</p> <p>8 τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν^λ.</p>

Here is Metzger's editors note:

[quote

5.7-8 *μαρτυροῦντες, 8τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα* {A}

After *μαρτυροῦντες* the Textus Receptus adds the following: *ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ Πατήρ, ὁ Λόγος, καὶ τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα. καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσι. (8) καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῆ*. That these words are spurious and have no right to stand in the New Testament is certain in the light of the following considerations.

(A) External Evidence. (1) The passage is absent from every known Greek manuscript except eight, and these contain the passage in what appears to be a translation from a late recension of the Latin Vulgate. Four of the eight manuscripts contain the passage as a variant reading written in the margin as a later addition to the manuscript. The eight manuscripts are as follows:

61: codex Montfortianus, dating from the early sixteenth century.

88^{v.r.}: a variant reading in a sixteenth century hand, added to the fourteenth-century codex Regius of Naples.

221^{v.r.}: a variant reading added to a tenth-century manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford.

429^{v.r.}: a variant reading added to a sixteenth-century manuscript at Wolfenbüttel.

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629: a fourteenth or fifteenth century manuscript in the Vatican.

636^{v.r.}: a variant reading added to a sixteenth-century manuscript at Naples.

918: a sixteenth-century manuscript at the Escorial, Spain.

2318: an eighteenth-century manuscript, influenced by the Clementine Vulgate, at Bucharest, Rumania.

(2) The passage is quoted by none of the Greek Fathers, who, had they known it, would most certainly have employed it in the Trinitarian controversies (Sabellian and Arian). Its first appearance in Greek is in a Greek version of the (Latin) Acts of the Lateran Council in 1215.

(3) The passage is absent from the manuscripts of all ancient versions (Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Arabic, Slavonic), except the Latin; and it is not found (a) in the Old Latin in its early form (Tertullian Cyprian Augustine), or in the Vulgate (b) as issued by Jerome (codex Fuldensis [copied a.d. 541–46] and codex Amiatinus [copied before a.d. 716]) or (c) as revised by Alcuin (first hand of codex Vallicellianus [ninth century]).

The earliest instance of the passage being quoted as a part of the actual text of the Epistle is in a fourth century Latin treatise entitled *Liber Apologeticus* (chap. 4), attributed either to the Spanish heretic Priscillian (died about 385) or to his follower Bishop Instantius. Apparently the gloss arose when the original passage was understood to symbolize the Trinity (through the mention of three witnesses: the Spirit, the water, and the blood), an interpretation that may have been written first as a marginal note that afterwards found its way into the text. In the fifth century the gloss was quoted by Latin Fathers in North Africa and Italy as part of the text of the Epistle, and from the sixth century onwards it is found more and more frequently in manuscripts of the Old Latin and of the Vulgate. In these various witnesses the wording of the passage differs in several particulars. (For examples of other intrusions into the Latin text of 1John, see 2.17; 4.3; 5.6, and 20.)

(B) Internal Probabilities. (1) As regards transcriptional probability, if the passage were original, no good reason can be found to account for its omission, either accidentally or intentionally, by [p. 649] copyists of hundreds of Greek manuscripts, and by translators of ancient versions.

(2) As regards intrinsic probability, the passage makes an awkward break in the sense.

For the story of how the spurious words came to be included in the Textus Receptus, see any critical commentary on 1John, or Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, pp. 101f.; cf. also Ezra Abbot, "I. John v. 7 and Luther's German Bible," in *The Authorship of the Fourth Gospel and Other Critical Essays* (Boston, 1888), pp. 458–463.

End quote]

These three illustrations should help you to gain some "consciousness" of what textual editors do to achieve their work. It is a work of science. There is some subjectivity in the process, for example, "when one knows biblical writings in Greek, one has a "sense" of what "they" would say as opposed to not say." This aspect is still objective in the sense that it is based on patterns.