

Issues in translation stem primarily from two areas of study:

1. Translation disputes – disagreements over how to translate what was originally written by prophets/apostles (last week's topics)
2. Textual disputes – disagreements over what was originally written by prophets/apostles (this week's topic)
Famous variants: 1 John 5:7; John 7:53-8:11; Mark 16:9-20

A. Textual criticism

1. Lower textual criticism – goal: reproduce original biblical text from manuscripts/translations
2. Higher Textual criticism – goal: what can be inferred about the process of the text's writing and transmission; often highly subjective

B. Textual variants – variations in the copying/transmission process

1. Each variant reading creates a variant over every other manuscript that includes that passage
2. Ehrman quote (Jones, 105-106); Response to Bart Ehrman: “[99%] of the [~400,000] variations are irrelevant to the proper translation and understanding of the Greek text” (p.64 - White).
3. Transmission of Scripture NOT like the telephone game
4. Common variations (pp.30-31 of KMP)
 - a. Unintentional variants (95% of GNT variants) – introduced by tired or incompetent scribes
 - (1) Errors of Sight - looking back and forth b/t manuscripts while copying
 - (a) *Homoeoteleuton* – similar endings (1 John 3:1 – eliminated phrase “and we are”)
 - (2) Errors of Hearing – homonyms (words or groups of words that sound the same)
 - (a) Or/oar; night/knight; Matt. 2:6 – ἐκ σοῦ / ἐξ οὔ (Codex Sinaiticus)
 - (3) Errors of Writing – simply writing down the wrong thing
 - (4) Errors of Judgment –
 - (a) Copying ancient footnotes into the text itself (possibly John 5:4)
 - (b) Mistakenly copying text that was in two columns into one (Jesus' genealogy in Luke 3)
 - b. Intentional variants
 - (1) Revising Grammar and Spelling (e.g. book of Revelation)
 - (2) Harmonizing Similar Passages / Expansion of Piety
 - (a) Eph 1:2, Col 1:2
 - (b) Jesus→Christ Jesus→our Lord Jesus Christ
 - (3) Eliminating Apparent Discrepancies and Difficulties
 - (a) Origen “corrected” a perceived geographical error in John 1:28
 - (4) Conflating the Text – a scribe knowing of variants would include both in his copy
 - (5) Adapting Different Liturgical Traditions –
 - (a) Matt 6:13 – “For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, Amen.”
 - (6) Making Theological or Doctrinal Changes – omitting Matt 24:36

C. Principles of Text Criticism (KMP 27-28)

1. External criteria
 - a. Favor the older manuscripts
 - b. Favor the reading that is supported by the majority of manuscripts
 - c. Favor the reading that is best attested across various families of manuscripts

2. Internal Criteria
 - a. Favor the reading that best fits the literary context
 - b. Favor the reading that best corresponds with writings by the same NT author
 - c. Favor the reading that best explains the origin of the other variants
 - d. Favor the shorter reading
 - e. Favor the more difficult reading

D. Text types/families

1. Alexandrian – “concise”; older ; foundation for most modern translations
2. Western
3. Byzantine – “fuller” (conflations); more “recent”; more numerous; foundation for KJV
4. Caesarean

E. New method – CBGM (does away with the idea of text families)

F. Contrast transmission of NT with transmission of Qur’an

1. No central authority existed before hundreds of copies were sent all over the world in many languages; no one who wanted to could have censored versions (as happened with Qur’an)

God preserved His Word through *tenacity of the text* – if a reading appears, it never disappears

G. Back to the “famous” variants:

1. *Comma Johanneum* (1 John 5:7) – (White, pp. 99-104)

a. Erasmus’s first Greek edition in 1516 did not contain it because not a single Greek manuscript that he examined contained it. Only the Latin Vulgate.

b. Said he would include it if one Greek text could be found to show it. A text was produced...quite possibly manufactured just for this occasion. Erasmus included v.7 in later editions.

c. Theologically, while the passage is a nice bow of Trinitarian theology, it is not necessary to have it to prove the doctrine of the Trinity from the Bible.

2. *Pericope de Adultera* (John 7:53-8:11) – (White, p. 328)

- a. external evidence – appears in different manuscripts in many different places in John’s gospel. Even appears in Luke’s gospel in one manuscript.
 - b. internal evidence – John 7:52 moves extremely cleanly into 8:12
 - c. nothing wrong doctrinally with this passage; likely an early oral tradition that found its way into manuscripts over time.
3. Long ending of Mark (Mark 16:9-20) – (White, p. 316)
- a. external evidence – fact that there are two different endings (shorter and longer) itself lends weight to the argument that the shorter one is original.
 - b. internal evidence – significantly different writing style and vocabulary
 - c. content – out-of-character statements and doctrines (baptism/belief, signs)
 - d. quite probably an early scribe was dissatisfied with the abrupt ending at v. 8 with no mention of the resurrection
4. Luke 23:34a (“Father, forgive them...”)

We should be more concerned if there were never any variants. You can almost always trace back the variants to a source and/or a reason.

Some material taken from:

James White. *The King James Only Controversy*;
Köstenberger, Merkle, and Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek*
Bart Ehrman. *Misquoting Jesus*
Timothy Paul Jones. *Misquoting Truth*

See also:

Timothy Paul Jones. *How We Got the Bible*
Hixson and Gurry. *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*