

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Omissions in the King James New Testament

STAN LARSON

JOSEPH SMITH ONCE WROTE of the Bible: "I believe the Bible as it ought to be, as it came from the pen of the original writers."¹ Unfortunately, none of the manuscripts penned or dictated by the original writers of the New Testament is known to be in existence. All we have are copies of copies; no one even knows how many times removed the process of copying is from the original.²

The invention of printing stopped the process of change due to manuscript copying, crystallizing for posterity that particular form of the Greek text current at the time. The first published edition of the Greek New Testament was edited by the Dutch scholar Erasmus in 1516. It was produced hastily to forestall a rival edition of Cardinal Ximenes—known as the Complutensian Polyglot—already in print, but not published. In preparing the text Erasmus used only six medieval manuscripts, dating from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, not one of which contained the entire New Testament. In his later editions Erasmus corrected the text from other late manuscripts and from the Complutensian Polyglot, but the character of the text remained essentially the same.

By the early sixteenth century only one of the great parchment manuscripts had yet been discovered, the Codex Vaticanus. This fourth century manuscript is still the oldest known vellum or parchment manuscript and is one of the most valuable of New Testament manuscripts. Just how and when Codex Vaticanus came to Rome is not known, but it is included in a catalog of the Vatican Library, published in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. Unfortunately, little attention was paid to it; neither Erasmus nor the Complutensian editors utilized it. Had it received more attention, the history of the printed text of the Greek New Testament (and therefore of the early translations into English and the other vernacular languages of Europe) would have been considerably different.

In 1550 Robert Estienne (most often known by his Latin name, Stephanus) published his third edition of the Greek New Testament, and though he followed Erasmus' edition in the text, for the first time variant readings were given in the margin.³ These were derived from the Complutensian Polyglot and a number of Greek manuscripts, the most important of which were the sixth century Codex Bezae and the eighth century Codex Regius. Stephanus used these last two manuscripts only rarely, and thus there was only minimal improvement of the text established by Erasmus.⁴

STAN LARSON works for the translation services of the Church. He has published articles on the *Book of Mormon* in *The Ensign* and *Sunstone*.

Theodore Beza followed the 1550 edition of Stephanus in his editions between 1565 and 1611. Beza had in his possession both Codex Bezae (acquired about 1562) and Codex Claromontanus (a sixth century manuscript he had acquired between 1565 and 1582), but, because they contained so many readings different from the accepted text, he hesitated to use them in his own editions of the Greek New Testament.

The King James translators utilized the editions of Stephanus and Beza, which varied very little from each other. It was less their fault than their misfortune that the Greek text they used represented a late medieval tradition, and which largely ignored much earlier manuscripts then known and available for comparison.⁵

Thus, the printed Greek text established in the sixteenth century and used to make the revisions embodied in the King James New Testament of 1611 “in spite of the impressive name it attained, rested actually upon relatively few, relatively late, and relatively poor manuscripts, namely upon those known to Ximenes, Erasmus, Stephen, and Beza.”⁶ By comparison, at the present time a modern critical text could utilize 88 papyri ranging in age from the second to the eighth centuries, some 274 uncial parchments ranging in age from the fourth to the tenth centuries, as well as several thousand other manuscripts. These manuscripts are bringing us nearer to the ideal of having a text as close as possible to that originally written.

Not surprisingly these earlier documents have revealed a number of differences from the King James text—a discovery which apparently would not have surprised Joseph Smith, but which seems to have passed unnoticed by many Mormons. Many kinds of textual corruptions occur in the transmission of manuscripts, but this short study will only examine nine passages that illustrate textual omission. The phenomenon of homeoteleuton (or “same ending”) is often the cause of an accidental omission: the same word or ending of a word, often in adjacent lines, make it possible for the eye to skip from one to the other and thus omit the intervening material. The problem at the opposite end—homeoarchton or “same beginning”—can in a similar way be the cause for textual omission. Of course, material could also be deleted intentionally.

The following examples compare the 1611 King James text⁷ with that of the eight most recent critical editions of the Greek New Testament.⁸ In all instances cited, the Greek editions agree, but differ from that translated in the King James Version. For convenience the English text given in comparison with the King James Version is that of the 1971 Revised Standard Version (hereafter abbreviated as RSV),⁹ though almost any modern English version of the New Testament could have been used, since it would be based on one of the twentieth-century critical Greek editions.

Luke 15:22

King James Version	The Modern Critical Greek Texts (as translated in the Revised Standard Version)
But the father saide to his seruants, Bring foorth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feete.	But the father said to his servants, “Bring <i>quickly</i> the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet;”

After wasting his fortune, the prodigal son came to his senses and returned to his father. At the emotional reunion the father kisses his son, who confesses his error. Then the excitement of the father is implied by his command to the servants that they should “quickly”¹⁰ bring forth the best robe to put on his son. This reading has been described as “a most probable reading . . . and a most natural exclamation.”¹¹

John 19:3

King James Version	The Modern Critical Greek Texts (as translated in the RSV)
And said, Haile king of the Jewes: and they smote him with their hands.	. . . <i>they came up to him</i> , saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and struck him with their hands.

In John’s description of the mocking treatment the Lord received from the Roman soldiers, an important element has been omitted which in the Revised Standard Version is translated as “they came up to him.” However, because its tense is the “imperfect of continued action,”¹² it could better be translated with an iterative meaning, such as “then time after time they came up to him”¹³ or “[and] they kept coming up to him.”¹⁴ This episode is “descriptive of the soldiers approaching Jesus with mock reverence”¹⁵ and probably indicates their coming to him “in some formal manner, as though doing homage to royalty.”¹⁶ Since this phrase and the one immediately preceding both end with a “him,” the omission was probably accidental and due to homoeoteleuton,¹⁷ or the “same ending” which is a kind of error in which material is skipped because adjacent lines or phrases have identical or nearly identical endings.

I Corinthians 9:20

King James Version	The Modern Critical Greek Texts (as translated in the RSV)
And unto the Jewes, I became as a Jew, that I might gaine the Jewes: to them that are vn’er the Law, as vnder the Law, that I might gaine them that are vnder the Law:	To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law— <i>though not being myself under the law</i> —that I might win those under the law.

Paul, after noting that he acts as if he were under the Law of Moses in order to gain believers in Judaism, immediately safeguards himself with the parenthetical clarification of “though not being myself under the law.” This “probably fell out by accident in transcription,”¹⁸ due to homoeoteleuton, in which the eye of the copyist passed from one occurrence of the phrase “under the law” to another. Notice that the same kind of parenthetical comment occurs in I Corinthians 9:21 concerning those without the Law.

Colossians 1:6

King James Version	The Modern Critical Greek Texts (as translated in the RSV)
Which is come vnto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day yee heard of it, and knew the grace of God in trueth,	... which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit <i>and growing</i> —so among yourselves, from the day you heard and understood the grace of God in truth,

Just as righteous men are metaphorically compared to good trees bearing good fruit, Paul tells us that the gospel is bringing forth fruit “and growing,”¹⁹ both in the world and in the lives of the members. Long ago Adam Clark said concerning the omission in this verse of the aspect of growth: “It had not only brought forth fruit but was multiplying its own kind; every fruit containing seed, and every seed producing thirty, sixty, or a hundred fold. This reading is very important, and is undoubtedly genuine.”²⁰

I Thessalonians 4:1

King James Version	The Modern Critical Greek Text (as translated in the RSV)
Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as yee haue receiued of vs, how ye ought to walke, and to please God, so yee would abound more and more.	Finally, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God, <i>just as you are doing</i> , you do so more and more.

Paul urged the Thessalonian members to do even more in living in accordance with the pattern pleasing to God, but (in order not to imply a rebuke for their present conduct) he adds the thought: “just as you are doing” or “just as you indeed are living.”²¹ Internal evidence supports the view that this addition is original since the statement that they should do so more and more “presupposes the earlier mention of the Thessalonians having begun the Christian life, but such a beginning is not implied in the preceding text” unless the missing phrase is inserted.²²

James 4:12

King James Version	The Modern Critical Greek Texts (as translated in the RSV)
There is one Lawgiuer, who is able to saue, and to destroy: who art thou that iudget another?	There is one lawgiver <i>and judge</i> , he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you that you judge your neighbor?

James offers the practical advice that one should not slander or judge another because that would amount to doing the same to the law. Only one person is lawgiver “and judge”²³ and that person is the Lord. The idea that the Lord is the judge is important since it is in direct contrast with the person referred to in the previous verse who was judging another.

I Peter 2:2

King James Version	The Modern Critical Greek Texts (as translated in the RSV)
As new borne babes desire the sincere milke of the word, that ye may grow thereby,	Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up <i>to salvation</i> ;

Peter suggests that just as newborn infants grow and mature by their use of milk, so too should Christians grow up “to salvation,” or more literally “into salvation.” This is to be “attained through a process of growth, fostered by the continual nourishment of the newly-given life upon spiritual things.”²⁴ The idea of growing up “into salvation” is a key element since it “shows why they were regenerated, and why they were to desire the unadulterated doctrines of the Gospel. . . . This was the end they should always have in view.”²⁵ It has been suggested that the phrase under consideration was omitted either because of an error during the copying process or because the concept of growing ‘into salvation’ was “theologically unacceptable.”²⁶ While it is true that doctrinal considerations may have been a factor in its deletion, the same idea is expressed by Paul when he counseled people to “work out” their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

I John 3:1

King James Version	The Modern Critical Greek Text (as translated in the RSV)
Beholde, what manner of loue the Father hath bestowed vpon vs, that wee should be called the sonnes of God: therefore the world knoweth vs not, because it knewe him not.	See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; <i>and so we are</i> . The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

John explains that the Father’s love is evident to us by his calling us his sons and this is made more emphatic by adding the omitted words “and so we are,” that is to say, “we have been *called* children of God, and that is not the empty bestowal of a high sounding title; we really are children of God.”²⁷ It has been pointed out concerning this verse that “the reading . . . which best takes into account both internal and external evidence is the inclusion” of the words under consideration, and that their omission should be attributed to scribal oversight due to homoeoteleuton.²⁸

Jude 25

King James Version	The Modern Critical Greek Text (as translated in the RSV)
To the onely wise God our Sauour, be glory and maiestie, dominion and power now and euer. Amen.	. . . to the only God, our Savior <i>through Jesus Christ our Lord</i> , be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, <i>before all time</i> and now and for ever. Amen.

In Jude's very formal ending to his epistle he explains that God is our savior "through Jesus Christ our Lord"²⁹ and also that the praise and honor directed to God extends back "before all time," that is, before time began. The shortened form of the text as found in the King James Version has less effect on a reader.

Often when a modern English version of the New Testament is compared to the King James Version, the former is criticized because of words or phrases here and there that are absent—there seems to be much more concern about possibly losing something from the Scriptures than of canonizing as scripture something that may in fact be a later addition. This analysis at least at these points—has reversed that criticism in pointing out possible omissions in the King James New Testament. Though these examples provide probabilities rather than certainties, they seem to indicate that textual omissions have indeed shortened the text of some New Testament passages as found in the King James Version. Several are quite significant, and if they represent true errors it would be unfortunate to continue to have them missing.

NOTES

¹ Joseph Smith diary, October 15, 1843, located in the Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the *History of the Church*, VI, 57 (and consequently in Joseph Fielding Smith, compiler, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1938], p. 327), the statement is expanded to indicate sources of error: "Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors."

² Harold K. Moulton, *Papyrus, Parchment and Print: The Story of how the New Testament Text has reached us* (London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1967), p. 9, says that "anyone who has ever tried to copy any document knows how, with the best will in the world, mistakes creep in; and when a man copies from a copy of a previously copied copy, the opportunity for error is multiplied."

³ See the marginal notes of the King James translators to different textual readings at Matt. 1:11; 26:26; Luke 10:22; 17:36; I Cor. 15:31; Eph. 6:9; Heb. 10:17; Jas. 2:18; and II Jn. 1:8. Their comment to Luke 17:36 states: "this 36th verse is wanting in most of the Greek copies."

⁴ Elizabeth Armstrong, *Robert Estienne, Royal Printer: An Historical Study of the Elder Stephanus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), p. 137.

⁵ Codices Vaticanus, Bezae, Claromantanus, and Regius support the reading in the passages discussed here. Thus, if these manuscripts had been properly used, all of the KJV omissions discussed here could have been avoided.

⁶ Jack Finegan, *Encountering New Testament Manuscripts: A Working Introduction to Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), p. 59.

⁷ The text of the King James Version as first printed in 1611 is being used because a number of changes have been made to the text in the succeeding centuries. For example, in Jude 25, which is discussed here, there has since been added the word "both." Richard C. Trench, *On the Authorized Version of the New Testament in Connection with Some Recent Proposals for Its Revision* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1873), p. 59, discusses other examples of changes since 1611 and states that there has been "a large amount of tacit unacknowledged revision of our version . . . out of which it results that a copy of the Authorized Bible at the present day differs in many details from the same as it first was issued by the king's printer, through professing to be absolutely identical with it."

⁸ Hermann von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt: Text mit Apparat* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1913); Alexander Souter, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947); Henr. J. Vogels, *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, 4th ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau and Barcelona: Herder, 1955); Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, and Kurt Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 25th ed. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1963); R. V. G. Tasker, *The Greek New Testament, Being the Text Translated in the New English Bible, 1961* (Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press, 1964); Augustinus Merk, *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, 9th ed. (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964); José M. Bover, *Novi Testamenti: Biblia Graece et Latina*, 5th ed. (Madrid, 1968); Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, *The Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed. (United Bible Societies, 1975).

⁹ *Revised Standard Version*, 2nd edition 1971 (New York: American Bible Society).

¹⁰ Notice how the omission could have been assisted by homoeoteleuton: pros tous doulous autoY tachY. According to Ernest C. Colwell, "Scribal Habits in Early Papyri: A Study in the Corruption of the Text," in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, ed. by J. Philip Hyatt (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), p. 376, the error of skipping from the same to the same and the omission of short words are the most frequent unintentional errors made by scribes.

¹¹ Alexander B. Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), I, 582.

¹² Marcus Dods, "The Gospel of St. John," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), I, 853.

¹³ This is the rendition of the *New English Bible*, second edition (Oxford University Press, 1970).

¹⁴ This is the rendition of the *Jerusalem Bible* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966).

¹⁵ J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 615.

¹⁶ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 791.

¹⁷ Notice how the omission could have been assisted by homoeoteleuton: periebalon balon AYTON KAI êrchonto pros AYTON KAI elegon.

¹⁸ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 559. Notice how the omission could have been assisted by homeoteleuton: tois hypo nomon hōs YPO NOMON mē ōn autos YPO NOMON.

¹⁹ Notice how the omission could have been assisted by homoeoteleuton: estin karpophorouMENON KAI auxanoMENON KATHōs.

²⁰ Adam Clark, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes* (New York, 1831), II, 488.

²¹ According to William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 655, *peripateō* (which earlier in the verse the King James Version translates literally as "walk") in this verse has the figurative meaning of "live" or "conduct oneself."

²² Metzger, *Commentary*, p. 632.

²³ Notice how the omission could have been assisted by homoeoteleuton: heis estin nomotheTHS kai kriTHS.

²⁴ Francis Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), p. 90.

²⁵ Clark, *Commentary*, II, 809.

²⁶ Metzger, *Commentary*, p. 689. If the omission were accidental, it could have been assisted

by homoeoarchton (“same beginning”): auxêthête *EIs* sôtêrian *EI* egeusasthe. If it were intentional, it would illustrate the type of dogmatic alteration which, according to Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 2nd ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 201, involves “the elimination or alteration of what was regarded as doctrinally unacceptable or inconvenient.”

²⁷ Alexander Ross, *The Epistles of James and John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954), p. 179. Italics in the original.

²⁸ J. Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 126, 128. Notice how the omission could have been assisted by homoeoteleuton: hina tekna theou klêthōMEN kai esMEN.

²⁹ Notice how the omission could have been assisted by homoeoarchton: sôtêri HMŌN Dia Iêsou Christou tou kuriou HMŌN Doxa.

The Closet Bluebird

SAMUEL W. TAYLOR

REED SMOOT HAD BECOME a U. S. Senator, and the “Y” a university, when I began kindergarten at Brigham Young Academy, with Ida Dusenberry as my teacher. Ida Smoot Dusenberry was a younger sister of Reed Smoot. I wasn’t too fond of kindergarten because each day Miss Dusenberry would tie me up with a rope and lock me in a black closet. While I never complained, the curriculum did seem monotonous. Each day when my mother asked what I’d learned, I would say, truthfully, “To take little bites.” During the course of the year this was all there was time for outside the closet.

Being of modest nature, I never told my mother that I was receiving special attention. She was baffled when I refused to continue my education at BYA, but she enrolled me in the first grade at the Parker school, where my teacher was Edith Young, granddaughter of Brigham. Miss Young had no rope or closet, but she did have the Robins and the Bluebirds. I found myself in the Bluebird ghetto until nearly Christmas when Miss Young promoted me to the Robins on the discovery that I had memorized the first grade reader and was bringing *Black Beauty* to school to while away the time.

In the second grade, however, Miss Andelin consigned me again to the Bluebirds until she found the reason for my inattention. I had found Horatio Alger much more interesting than school, and was devouring a book a week in class. Then in the third grade Miss Bean cast me to the Bluebirds until the day I spelled the class down. She told me, at the end of the year, that if only one student could be promoted, it would be me. The next year when Jimmie Hickman consigned me to the Bluebirds I realized that the twig was permanently bent, and I accepted the fact that life consisted of Robins and Bluebirds and that I could never expect to get along with authority.

Professional “wowers” were touring Mormon country during my years