Text and Translations

- Textual criticism
- Texts of the OT and NT
- How to read marginal notes
- Habits of scribes
- Examples of textual issues
- Translation philosophies
- Examples of translation issues

Textual Criticism

- Although it’s a divine/human work, the Bible has come to us through a human process and is mediated by human language.
- Textual criticism = The study of the variants in the text of the Bible.
- Involves examining manuscripts to find out what was the original text of the Bible.

Textual Criticism

Why do we need textual criticism? Why don’t we just read the original text?
The “bad news”...

• We don’t have the original manuscripts (autographs).
• We have copies of copies of copies…
• About 5,000 Greek manuscripts with all or part of NT, no two identical.
• Fewer variants for OT (Hebrew).

The good news...

• We have more evidence for the text of the Bible than we do for any other ancient text.
• Klein estimates that 97% of the NT and 90% of the OT is beyond doubt.
• No major article of doctrine is called into question by a textual issue.

Texts of the OT

• MT
Texts of the OT

- **MT - Masoretic Text** - traditional Hebrew text of OT, standardized around AD 100. Earliest manuscripts from AD 800-900. May appear in marginal notes as MT or Heb. or Hb.

- **LXX - Septuagint** - Greek translation of the OT made by Greek-speaking Jews in 250-200 BC. May appear in marginal notes as LXX or Gk. or Sept.
Texts of the OT

• MT
• LXX
• DSS

DSS - Dead Sea Scrolls - Manuscripts from the Qumran community; includes some OT Hebrew manuscripts from 200 B.C.

Modern Hebrew text is based on the MT, with corrections from the LXX and DSS.

This is the OT for Catholics and Protestants.

Eastern Orthodox still use LXX.
Texts of the NT

- **Textus Receptus** or Received Text

Textus Receptus or Received Text - OT and NT that serves as the basis of the King James Version. Based on the few, late manuscripts available at the time (1611).

Texts of the NT

- **Critical text** - reconstruction of the original text by scholars who compare manuscripts using textual criticism. Consensus of scholars from different traditions.
  - Based on earlier manuscripts.
Texts of the NT

- Textus Receptus or Received Text
- Critical text
- **Majority Text** - text based on the majority of manuscripts, most of which are late.
  - Approach taken by very few scholars.
  - Example: Greek text by Zane Hodges.

Marginal Notes

- Textual notes will often use words like “manuscripts” or “authorities” or “ancient authorities” or “witnesses.”
- MS = manuscript; MSS = manuscripts.
- In the OT, marginal notes may refer to LXX or Gk or Sept for the Septuagint.
- MT or Heb for the Masoretic Text.

Introducing some manuscripts of the NT...
Papyrus P52 (c. AD 125): fragments of John 18.

Codex Sinaiticus, 4th century.
What does this mean?

GODISNOWHERE

What does this mean?

GODISNOWHERE

RHWNSDG

What does this mean?

a woman without her man is nothing
Habits of Scribes

“Oh, no! Is there another word I can use instead of ‘verily’ that starts with a ‘B’?”

Habits of Scribes

• Manuscripts were copied by hand.
• Copying a printed manuscript led to errors of the eye.
• Copying a manuscript read aloud led to errors of hearing.
• Sometimes they made deliberate changes.

Examples of Textual Issues

• Genesis 10:4 - the Rodanim or Dodanim?
  – See 1 Chronicles 1:7 - Rodanim.
  – NRSV has “Rodanim.”
  – NRSV marginal note:
Heb. MSS Sam Gk See 1 Chr. 1:7; MT Dodanim.

Rodanim = רiropr
Dodanim = רDoctrine
Examples of Textual Issues

- Luke 2:14 - “on earth peace, good will toward men” (KJV) or “on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests” (NIV)?
- Late MSS - ΕΥΔΟΚΙΑ - “good will”
- Earlier MSS - ΕΥΔΟΚΙΑΣ - “of [God’s] good will”

Examples of Textual Issues

- John 7:53-8:11 - the woman caught in adultery.
- What do the marginal notes say?
- Overwhelming manuscript evidence against its originality.
- It may be a true story, but it probably wasn’t in the original version of John.
- See marginal notes for Mark 16.

Translation Philosophies

- Formal equivalence (literal) - word for word
- Dynamic equivalence - idiom for idiom
  (Gorman: functional equivalence)
- Free (paraphrase) - idea for idea

See handout 2.3.
## Translation Philosophies

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Updates history/culture?</th>
<th>Updates language?</th>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<th>Language – Proverbs 25:21-22</th>
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<tr>
<td>Culture – 1 Peter 5:14</td>
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<td>To translate is to interpret.</td>
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<td>No translation is perfect.</td>
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Translation Philosophies

Every translation has strengths and weaknesses….

“On second thought, Mr. Smith, the King James Version may be just right for you.”

Translation Philosophies

• **Literal translations**
  – Stay close to original language.
  – Harder to understand in receptor language.
  – Can create ambiguity or difficulty.

Translation Philosophies

• Literal translation

• **Dynamic equivalence**
  – Easier to understand than literal translation.
  – Faithful to both original and receptor language.
  – You have to trust that they have understood the idioms in the original language correctly.
Translation Philosophies

- Literal translation
- Dynamic equivalence
- **Free translation**
  - Easiest to understand.
  - Contains the most interpretation/commentary.

- **King James Version**
  - History of use, poetic value, familiarity in worship.
  - Language can be difficult to understand.
  - Inadequate textual basis.

Translation Issues

- Idiom - 1 Corinthians 7:1; 2 Timothy 2:15; Amos 4:6
- Euphemism - 1 Samuel 24:3
- Cultural practice - 1 Corinthians 7:36
- Theological perspective - 2 Peter 1:10; 1 Corinthians 11:10
Translation Issues

• Select a translation that meets your purpose.
• For study, use several that tend to differ.
• Beware of study Bibles that give you all the answers in their notes.
• Identify the textual basis, translation philosophy, strengths/weaknesses, theological perspective of any translation.
• See Gorman 45-46.

Translation Issues

• Look up Paul’s discussion of freedom in Christ (with respect to food) in the end of 1 Cor. 10. Where does this sub-topic end?
• Look up Paul’s instructions to households in Ephesians 5. Where does this sub-topic begin and end?
• Do different translations alert you to interpretive issues?