Deviations from the Greek in the Gothic New Testament

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The dependence on the use of New Testament texts in the study of the Gothic language requires that the potential influences on the Gothic language be acknowledged and taken into account. The influences of the original Greek language itself, as well as of parallel passages and variant texts, for example, can hinder the study of the nature of Gothic syntax and stylistics. Several examples of passages in the Gothic and Greek will be examined in this paper, with a discussion of the possible explanations for any deviations found in them.

The study of the Gothic language requires that many factors be taken into consideration in making any claim about the nature of the language. The problems stem from the fact that most of the available corpus of Gothic is made up of portions of the New Testament. Since the Gothic New Testament is a translation from the Greek original, the influence of the Greek original must always be considered, as well as the possibility of later influences from variant texts during scribal transmission, and influences at work within the text itself. For this reason a fundamental question within this area is what can really be known about Gothic syntax apart from the basics. In this paper some of these issues are discussed, and some examples of texts will be looked at in regard to the role of the various influences.

The nature of the translation technique employed by the Gothic translator Wulfila has been disputed. The common belief, however, is that the Gothic New Testament is a word-for-word or basically inter-linear translation of the Greek, as seen in Friedrichsen's statement that "the fundamental principle underlying the translation is the systematic correspondence of the Gothic text with the Greek, word for word, and in precisely the same order." [1926:15] While some might not agree on the degree to which the Gothic translator based the Gothic on the Greek, the word-for-word translation technique, rather than a thought-for-thought or looser translation, is undeniable.

The nature of the translation technique limits the ability to discern aspects of the language which could be called true "Gothic" and be considered to be a natural language, as actually spoken by the Goths. Therefore, anywhere the Gothic text is not a word-for-

word rendering of the Greek is important as a possible reflection of true Gothic. Studies often focus on the examples of deviations because "deviations from a strictly word-for-word translation may be traced to the requirements of Gothic grammar, style, or idiom on the one hand, and to external influences on the other." [Friedrichsen 1926:16] The goal of studying these cases is to determine what these requirements might be. Other than determining grammatical aspects of Gothic, one might also use deviations to study areas such as style, as recognized by Yoshioka's statement that "the Gothic translation of the Bible as a whole is a slavishly literal translation, but when we take up individual passages and examine them closely, some instances can be found where scrupulous care is paid in the selection of words and subtle renderings are attempted out of stylistic consideration." [Yoshioka 1996:219] The problem is determining whether such deviations can be attributed to constraints within the language or whether they simply reflect other influences on the text.

One such potential influence is that of variant texts. The exact version of the Biblical text which was used by the Gothic translator is unknown, and there were certainly variant texts either in the Latin or in the Greek to which the translator or scribes were exposed. This problem has been recognized by Burton, as he asserted "...[while] not claiming that a lost variant [for a particular text] definitely existed, ... it *may* have existed, and ... for this reason it is impossible to have complete confidence in the explanation of the apparent discrepancy between the Greek and the Gothic as the result of any 'independence' on the part of the translator." [Burton 1996:90] This will be a possible explanation for any example of a discrepancy between the Gothic and the Greek, and it is especially difficult to deal with in that it can never be proven or disproven. While this must always be considered in a study, it is the goal of this paper to concentrate on other possible explanations.

Another influence which could have led to deviations in the Gothic from the Greek are parallel texts. The extant Gothic texts of the New Testament are mainly Gospel texts. Multiple accounts of the same story are often given in the different Gospels. Since the translator and scribes would have been familiar with the different accounts, it would be natural for one account to influence another. The deviations in which this type of influence can be seen most clearly and which can be attributed most convincingly to this type of influence are lexical deviations, particularly cases in which the Gothic text

contains words which do not have a correspondent in the Greek text. This can be seen in the following examples.

The first example is one of true parallel texts, in which the Sermon on the Mount is recounted by both Luke and Matthew.[1]

1.   Luke 6:20

*audagai   jus **unledans ahmin**,   unte   izwara ist*
'blessed (are) you **poor   (in) spirit**, because yours   is

   thiundangardi   himine

   (the) **kingdom of heavens'**

*makárioi   **hoi pto:khoí**, hóti   humetéra estìn **he: basileía   toû theoû***
'blessed (are) **the poor**,   because yours   is   **the kingdom of God'**

Matthew 5:3

*adaugai   thai **unledans ahmin**,   unte   ize   ist*
'blessed (are) the   **poor   (in) spirit**, because theirs is

   thiudangardi   himine

   (the) **kingdom of heavens'**

*makárioi   **hoi pto:khoì pneúmati**, hóti   autôn estin*
'blessed (are) **the poor   in spirit**, because theirs is

   he: basileía   tô:n   ouranô:n

   the kingdom of the heavens'

The Gothic differs from the Greek in Luke in adding *ahmin* 'in spirit' and in translating 'the kingdom *of God*', *toû theoû*, as 'the kingdom *of heavens'*, *himine*, both of which deviations parallel the text in the Matthew account. Influence of the parallel text would seem to be a natural inference to draw in this case.

The second example is not from parallel Gospel accounts, but rather is an example of a prophecy from the Old Testament being repeated in the New Testament. The Gothic translation of the Old Testament passage is missing, but again the translator or scribes would undoubtedly have been familiar with the passage, whether in the Greek or in the Gothic, and it is given here in the Greek. In this example, the Greek third person singular pronoun *autoû* 'of him' is represented in the Gothic by *gudis unsaris* 'of our God', which is the phrase found in the original prophecy.

2.   Mark 1:3

*raihtos   waurkeith   staigos   **gudis unsaris***

'straight   make   (the) path **of God   our'**

*eutheías poieîte tàs tríbous **autoû***

'straight make the paths **of him'**

Isaiah 40:3

*eutheías poieîte tàs tríbous **toû theoû he:mô:n***

'straight make   the paths **of God   our'**

The third example is another case of parallel Gospel narratives, in which the same
event is recounted in the two different texts. The passage in Mark contains the phrase
thata taihswo 'the right', which represents the Greek *tò deksión* seen in the text of John,
but not in that of Mark.

3.   Mark 14:47

*jah   afsloh   **imma   ausu thata taihswo***

'and he struck **to him   ear   the   right'**

*kaì apheîlen   **autoû tò o:tíon***

'and he cut off **his   ear'**

John 18:10

*jah   afmaimait   **imma   ausu taihswo***

'and he cut off   **to him   ear   right'**

*kaì apékophen **autoû tò otíon tò deksión***

'and he cut off **his   ear   the right'**

In each of the examples given above, the textual deviation is one in which words are
added in the Gothic which do not represent words found in the Greek. In these cases,
looking to the parallel texts can provide an explanation of the Gothic digression.

Another type of deviation, and one which is more interesting and potentially
profitable from the linguistic standpoint, is that involving grammar. There are certain
grammatical areas in which the Gothic differs from the Greek everywhere, areas in which
it is clear that constraints within the Gothic dictate how the Greek is rendered, such as the
translation of the Greek historical present as past, the rendering of Greek futures with the
Gothic present subjunctive or indicative, etc. [Klein 1992:334] These systematic
deviations reveal aspects of the Gothic grammatical structure because of the consistency
with which the Greek structure is translated into the Gothic. Other examples can be seen,

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[1] The standard transliteration of Gothic is used here, except that *–th–* is used rather than *þ*.

however, in which the Gothic grammatically deviates from the Greek in a non-systematic way, and those instances can perhaps also reveal something of Gothic grammatical or stylistic constraints.

One example of this can be seen in the following text, in which a Greek aorist (perfective past) *ebáptisa* 'baptized' is rendered by a Gothic present tense verb, *daupja*.

4. Mark 1:8

    *ik **daupja** izwis in watin*

    'I **baptize** you in water'

    *egò: mèn **ebáptisa** humâs en húdati*

    'I indeed **baptized** you in water'

Similar deviations were noted by Klein 1992 [368], where the Gothic present tense verbs *swegneid* 'exults' and *gasaihwam* 'see' are used to translate the Greek aorists *e:gallíasen* and *eídomen*.

5. Luke 1:46-7

    ***mikileid** saiwala meina fraujan,   jah **swegneid** ahma meins du guda*

    '**exalts** soul   my (the) Lord, and **exults**   spirit my   in God'

    megalúnei** he: psukhé: mou tòn kurion, kaì **e:gallíasen

    '**exalts**   the soul   my the Lord,   and **exulted**

    tò pneûma mou epì tô:i theô:i

    the spirit my   in the God'

6. Luke 5:26

    ***gasaihwam** wulthaga   himma daga*

    'we **see**   wonderful (things) this   day'

    ***eídomen** parádoksa   sé:meron*

    'we **saw**   wonderful things today'

In the section of the article where these examples are given, Klein is discussing cases in which deviations would seem to give evidence of Gothic independence from the Greek. "Other irregularities or discrepancies [other than the renderings of Greek historical present and future, e.g.] in the area of tense in particular between Gothic and Greek seem to be nonsystematic, although they do challenge the contention that the Gothic translation is a slavish imitation of the Greek." [Klein 1992:368] His explanation for these deviations

in particular is as follows. "The contexts of both passages [Luke 1:46-7, 5:26] make it appear as though the aorist denotes a past so recent as to be directly contiguous with the present. In 1:47 Mary had been moved to ecstasy by the equally ecstatic words of Elizabeth ... and in 5:26 the multitudes are awestruck upon just having witnessed Jesus' healing of a leper. It is therefore most likely the case that the translator found the Gothic preterite both too remote and impersonal and colorless to render both the temporal nuance and the wonder and ecstasy of the speakers." [Klein 1992:368] This explanation calls on the nuances of meaning which the translator might wish to convey.

Having seen the explanation given by Klein for these two instances of an aorist rendered by a present, we must now look back to the similar example (4) seen in Mark 1:8. Can the strategy given by Klein of appealing to nuances of meaning apply to this case, or must we look for another? To address this question, we will look at the context of the passage of Mark to see if the same sort of temporal and emotional nuances are present. The verses preceding Mark 1:8 give the following context (Mark 1:4-7) "John did baptize... and preach.. and there went out unto him... and were all baptized... and John was clothed... and did eat.... and preached..." This context clearly lacks the "wonder and ecstasy" and temporal nuances seen in (5) and (6).

Another potential explanation for deviations, discussed earlier, is the influence of parallel texts. In this case, the account is given in all four of the Gospels. The Gothic text of the parallels in Matthew and John did not survive, but the Greek is given.

7.   Luke 3:16

    *ik allis   izwis   watin   **daupja***

    'I indeed you (with) water **baptize**'

    *egò mèn   húdati   **baptízo:** humâs*

    'I   indeed with water **baptize**   you'

    Matthew 3:11

    *egò mèn   húmas **baptízo:** en húdati*

    'I   indeed you   **baptize**   in water'

    John 1:26

    *egò **baptízo:** en húdati*

    'I   **baptize**   in water'

It can be seen that in each of the parallel texts, the verb "baptize" is given in the present tense in the Greek, *baptízo*, as well as in the Gothic of the surviving passage in Luke, *daupja*, which makes an explanation based on this influence rather compelling.

Having determined that the explanation for the grammatical deviation in Mark does not seem to be due to syntactic or stylistic constraints, but rather parallel passages, let us now look again at the deviations seen in (5) and (6) to determine if there might be alternate explanations. Since neither of the Luke passages has a parallel, we shall look to other factors.

Luke 1:46-7

mikileid *saiwala meina fraujan, jah* **swegneid** *ahma meins du guda*
'**exalts**   soul   my   the Lord, and **exults**   spirit my   in God'
megalúnei *he: psukhé: mou tòn kúrion, kaì e:gallíasen:*
'**exalts**   the soul   of me the Lord,   and **exulted**
          tò pneûma mou epì tô:i theô:i
          the spirit   of me in God'

While Luke 1 does not have a parallel Gospel account, a similar explanation might be seen in the influence of the context. Possible contextual deviations, in which the verses immediately surrounding a text could have influenced the text, can be seen in examples such as the following.

8.   John 11:11

        akei **gaggam,**   *ei   uswakjau   ina*
        'but **we go/let us go,** that I may awaken him'
        allà **poreúomai,** *hína eksupníso   autón*
        'but **I am going,** that I may awaken him'

In this text, the first person singular form of the verb in Greek, *poreúomai* 'I am going' is rendered by a first person plural form *gaggam* 'we are going/let us go' in the Gothic. Looking at a few verses before and after the relevant text, in which the same speaker is addressing the same people, we can see a very similar structure.

9.   11:7

        gaggam *in Iudaian aftra*
        '**let us go** to Judea   again'
        ágo:men eis   tè:n Ioudaían pálin
        '**let us go** into   Judea   again'

10.   11:15

   *akei **gaggam** du imma*

   'but **let us go** to him'

   all' àgo:men pròs autón

   'but **let us go** to   him'

The force of these surrounding verses in which the command *gaggam* 'let us go' appears
could have influenced the translation of the grammatical number of the verb in verse 11.
Similarly, the parallel clauses seen in Luke 1, "my soul exalts the Lord" and "my spirit
exults in God", could have resulted in the tense of the second verb influencing that of the
first. The force of this explanation can be increased by looking to the nature of the text
itself. This text is the song of Mary, and as such is poetic, and the clausal parallelism
noted above is a common poetic device, which could increase the desire for continuity in
the tenses of the verbs.

   Looking again to the second example given by Klein,

   Luke 5:26

   ***gasaihwam** wulthaga   himma daga*

   '**we see**   wonderful (things) this   day'

   ***eídomen** parádoksa   sé:meron*

   '**we saw** wonderful things today'

we note again that there is no parallel text for this passage, and the context is not such
that would be likely to lead to a contextual deviation. Another potential explanation for
the deviation lies in variant texts. Specifically, an alternate form of verb, *ídomen*, is given
in a variant text [Streitberg 106], and this form could potentially be interpreted as a non-
past form.

   It is certainly possible that the deviations seen in the Luke texts were due to the
explanation given by Klein, but we have seen that other explanations are also possible.
The passage in Mark 1:8, on the other hand, would seem most likely to be due to the
influence of parallel texts.

   Having demonstrated the usefulness of the explanation of parallel texts, we shall
now look at some instances in which this explanation has been taken too far and used to
explain deviations where other explanations would seem to be preferable. The examples
of deviations given below are ones which are cited in Streitberg as being due to parallel
passages.

In the first example, the Greek phrase *tô:n khoíro:n* 'of the pigs' appears twice, but the second instance was not translated into the Gothic text, which reads simply *alla so hairda* 'all the herd'.

11.   Matthew 8:32

    *galithun   in   hairda   sweine, ... jah rann ... **alla so hairda***

    'they went into (the) herd of pigs, .. and ran ...   **all the herd** '

    apê:lthon eis   tè:n agéle:n tô:n khoíro:n ... kaì... hó:rme:sen

    'they went into the   herd   of pigs   ... and... ran...

        pâsa he: agéle: tô:n khoíro:n

        all   the herd   of pigs'

While parallel passages could potentially be involved in this instance, the context could quite well also explain the deviation, since the repetition of the phrase "of pigs" within the verse is redundant. Variant texts could also very well be responsible for the discrepancy, as shown in the following text from the Reformed Standard Version for the relevant part of the verse, in which the Greek also lacks the second occurrence of the phrase.

12.   *...kaì ... hó:rme:sen **pâsa he: agéle:*** [RSV]

    'and ... ran   **all   the herd** ...'

Another example of an overuse of the parallel passages explanation can be seen in the next example, in which the deviation in the Luke passage is explained by Streitberg as being due to the influence of the passage in Mark. In the passage in Luke, the Greek verb *eîpen* 'said' lacks an explicit pronominal subject, but the Gothic does show an explicit subject in *is qath* 'he said'. The passage in Mark, however, does have an explicit pronominal subject *ho* 'he' with the same verb in the Greek.

13.   Luke 7:50

    *ith **is qath** than do thizai qinon*

    'but **he said** then to the   woman'

    eîpen   *dè   pròs tè:n gunaîka*

    '**(he) said** but to   the   woman'

    Mark 5:34

    *ith   **is qath** du izai*

    'but **he said** to her'

    ho dè eîpen autê:

        'but **he said** to her'

The problem with the explanation given by Streitberg is that the passage in Mark is not parallel to the one in Luke, as it is the account of a completely different event, and the woman in question is not even the same. Since the third person singular nominative pronoun is not necessary in either the Greek or the Gothic, it is much more likely that this is due to a variant text or something within the Gothic itself.

The last example of a deviation for which the parallel passage is not the most likely explanation is found in Mark, with a parallel passage in Matthew.

14.   Mark 15:45-6

fragaf **thata leik** *Iosefa* ... **ita** *biwand*   *thamma leina*

'he gave **the body** to Joseph ... **it** he wrapped with the linen

        jah galagida ita hlaiwa

        and laid   **it** in the tomb'

edoré:sato *tò ptô:ma tô:i Io:sé:pha ...* **autòn** *eneíle:sen   tê:i sindóni*

'he gave **the body** to Joseph   ... **him**   he wrapped with the linen

        kaì katéthe:ken **autòn** *en mne:meio:i*

        and deposited   **him** in the tomb'

Matthew 27:59-60

jah nimands **thata leik** *Iosef   biwand* **ita** *sabana   hrainjamma*

'and taking **the body** Joseph wrapped **it** with clean fine linen

        jah galagida ita...

        and laid   **it...**'

kaì   labò:n **tò sô:ma** *ho Io:sè:ph enetúliksen* **autò** *sindóni   katharâ*

'and taking **the body** Joseph   wrapped   **it** in a sheet clean

        kaì éthe:ken **autò**..

        and placed **it...**'

In this example, the deviation is the use of the third singular neuter accusative pronoun *ita* 'it' in the Gothic to represent the masculine pronoun *autòn* 'him' seen in the Greek. While it is true that in the parallel Matthew passage the neuter pronoun in the Gothic reflects the neuter pronoun in the Greek, that explanation overlooks a much simpler grammatical explanation. In both of the Gothic passages the antecedent of the pronoun is *thata leik*, 'the body', which is a neuter noun, as are the corresponding nouns found in the Greek, *tò ptô:ma* and *tò sô:ma*. The deviation in the Gothic is actually just the usage of

the grammatically correct form of the pronoun to refer back to the neuter noun. The Greek's use of the masculine pronoun in Mark to refer to the neuter noun is apparently a stylistic choice, by which the writer can speak of the body as still being a person. The Gothic translator apparently chose not to reflect this stylistic device but instead simply used the "correct" form of the pronoun .

In all of the examples we have seen, there seem to be several possible explanations available for the deviations in the Gothic text. In each case, however, we can see that certain explanations can give a better account of the deviation. While the specter of variant texts can never be dispelled, we cannot give up as a lost cause the endeavor to understand Gothic more fully. Rather, we can continue to study instances of deviations and carefully consider potential explanations, and perhaps be able to identify the best possible explanation for each example. Through this we may continue to expand our knowledge of the Gothic language.

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