THE TEXTUAL BASE OF SOME SPANISH VERSIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Although the author is here concerned with Spanish versions, the textual matters he discusses are of much wider application. Ed.

Translators in the Latin American field who must adjust their translations to a Spanish text face an increasing array of translations and revisions that are available. The discoveries of old manuscripts and the developments in textual criticism have led to fresh translations and revisions in Spanish as in other languages. When Purvey wrote his prologue to the "Wycliffite" version that appeared near the end of the fourteenth century, he included a practical recommendation for those who are not preparing primary translations but who are translating from a translation:

> look that he examine truly his Latin Bible, for no doubt he shall find full many Bibles in Latin full false, if he look many, namely new; and the common Latin Bibles have more need to be corrected, as many as I have seen in my life, than hath the English Bible late translated. [1]

He recognized that when the source language is itself a translation one must make sure that his text is satisfactory by comparing with the original. It will be useful to review briefly the history of the two main textual traditions, the "received text" and the Westcott-Hort text, as a background for an understanding of textual changes in the modern versions.

Modern progress in textual criticism

Ira Maurice Price has commented on the significance of the historical circumstance that the earliest printed editions of the Greek New Testament preceded the discovery of the oldest and best manuscripts. Because of this they put into circulation an inadequate text that was based on manuscripts dated from the ninth century and later. Price has well observed that successive printings of this text and translations from it served to give it a dominance over the New Testament field for 300 years, from the time of the Erasmus edition of 1516 to that of Lachmann in 1831. [2] Actually this was the text type that was used during most of the Christian era. Called Byzantine because it was used by the Church during most of the Byzantine period (312-1453), this text became so firmly established that today, more than one hundred years after the great editions of Lachmann and Tischendorf, the "received text" is still far from displaced.

In looking backward upon the last one hundred years of textual criticism, students of the New Testament may possibly agree that

[1] F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments,* London: Pickering and Inglis Ltd., 1950, p. 211.

[2] Ira Maurice Price, *The Ancestry of Our English Bible,* 2nd ed. rev. by William A. Irwin and Allen P. Wikgren, New York: Harpers, 1951, p. 202.

Tischendorf's publication of Codex Vaticanus in 1867 was the one publishing event which was most momentous for New Testament study and translation. Unnoticed by the Christian public as a whole, it had far-reaching results for all readers of the Scriptures.

It would probably not have had the same significance were it not for the work of Westcott and Hort, who made Codex Vaticanus the cornerstone of their text. The contribution made by Westcott and Hort to textual criticism cannot be over-emphasized. To them largely goes the credit for pioneering in the classification of manuscripts by types, including not only manuscripts but also translations and citations from the Fathers. The impact of their method has continued to the present day, influencing students, revisers and translators. They recognized that because of the nature and sources of corruptions, some manuscripts are better than others, and such witnesses are logically to be given priority over others. Also recognizing the difficulties introduced by mixing and combining of readings, they applied rules of "intrinsic" and "transcriptional" probability to eliminate inferior readings. Thus this method led to the appraisal of a manuscript on the basis of its use of superior readings.

Along with the development of this method there also came increasing interest in the older, non-Byzantine manuscripts. Codex Vaticanus, a manuscript dating from the fourth century, was one of these. Held by the Vatican Library since about 1475, its value was not recognized until Napoleon carried it as a trophy of war to Paris. It was later returned to the Vatican library. Another is Codex Bezae, a sixth century manuscript which was given to Cambridge by Theodore Bezae in 1581. Codex Sinaiticus, another fourth century manuscript, was discovered in a waste basket when Tischendorf was browsing in a monastery on Mt. Sinai in 1844. A little later when Westcott and Hort began their work of constructing a new text, the foundation was laid for their work in the discoveries of manuscripts dating from the fourth to the sixth centuries, manuscripts which had escaped much of the corruption that entered into documents lying behind the "received text". In the words of Price, "the Westcott-Hort text soon became a standard for general usage, and other critical texts have not varied greatly from it." [3]

The Spanish versions

A casual comparison of the various Spanish versions will show that they do not follow the same readings. There are numerous differences in textual base as well as in style. How shall the trans-

[3] I. M. Price, op. cit., p. 211. (Perhaps the most widely used modern text is the *Novum Testamentum Graece* of Nestle. In constantly revised editions this incorporates many of the principles of textual criticism developed by Westcott-Hort, though deviating to some extent from their text. The B.F.B.S. Greek New Testament is based on that of Nestle, though there are a few departures in the second edition, and many more in the Greek text published in the B.F.B.S. Greek-English Diglot. Ed.)

lator choose between the versions? A comprehensive comparison of the versions would have to take into account various factors: textual base, faithfulness in following the chosen text, style and acceptability to readers. This study is limited to the first factor, that of textual base. Which versions follow the "received text"? Which ones follow Westcott and Hort, and to what extent? A translator may not be free to follow a Westcott-Hort type of text. He may be obliged to follow the Spanish version used by the church in his area, or at least a version that is acceptable locally. In any case he cannot afford to ignore the matter of the text underlying the version he is following. The following ten versions were chosen for this study:

AF A.F.E.B.E. (Asociación Para El Fomento De Los Estudios Bíblicos En España), *El Nuevo Testamento,* seg. ed. Segovia: Grabador Espinosa, 1954. This Roman Catholic translation carries the statement that it was translated by a group of professors from "the text of the original Greek." It is not indicated what Greek text was used.

PB Pablo Besson, *El Nuevo Testament De Nuestro Señor Jesucristo,* seg. ed., Buenos Aires: Junta de Publicaciones de la Convención Evangélica Bautista. A student of Godet, Besson explains in the preface that he has not followed the texts of Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, or of Nestle, but "the common, that of Chrysostum, Theodoret, of the Syriac versions, Gothic and of the Latin Vulgate."

Bov José María Bover, S.I., y Francisco Cantera Burgos, *Sagrada Biblia.* Madrid: Biblioteca De Autores Christianos, 1947. Bover was a professor in a Roman Catholic theological college in Barcelona. Burgos was professor of Hebrew in the Central University.

HA Hispano-Americana, *El Nuevo Testamento de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo.* Buenos Aires, etc.: Sociedades Bíblicas Unidas, 1916. Translated by a committee consisting of both Latin Americans and Europeans, and based primarily upon the text of Nestle.

LA Latinoamericana, *El Nuevo Testamento de Nuestro Señor y Salvador Jesucristo,* edición bilingüe, Nueva York: Sociedad Bíblica Americana, 1953. Based upon the Hispano-Americana text of 1917 and 1923, it has been adjusted to follow the Revised Standard Version.

Mod Moderna, *La Santa Biblia Que Consta Del Antiguo Y El Nuevo Testamento.* Buenos Aires, etc.: Sociedades Bíblicas Unidas, 1888, rev. 1929. Translated by H. B. Pratt with the help of a committee, and based primarily upon the Valera in the New Testament.

NC Nácar Fuster, Eloíno, S.I.C., y Colunga, Alberto, O.P., *Sagrada Biblia,* quinta ed. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Christianos, 1953. A Roman Catholic translation based upon the Vulgate.

Str Juan Straubinger, *El Nuevo Testamento.* Buenos Aires: Dedebec, Ediciones Desclée, De Brouwer, 1948. The Old Testament is printed in a separate volume. A Roman Catholic translation.

TA Torres Amat, *Sagrada Biblia,* sexta ed. Madrid: Editorial Apostolado de la Prensa, S.A., 1956. Translated by P. José Miguel Petisco, S.I. Roman Catholic.

CV Cipriano de Valera, *La Santa Biblia.* Buenos Aires, etc., Sociedades Bíblicas Unidas. Based upon the "received text" in the New Testament. The revision of 1960 follows the same textual base as the earlier revisions.

Various tests were made in order to compare these versions as to textual base. First they were checked against 62 passages in the Gospel of John, passages that are especially useful for showing up

significant differences between the "received text" and the text of Westcott and Hort.[4] The versions were also checked against 14 notable passages in Luke.[5] A further but very limited test in certain problem passages in Acts[6] yielded similar results. The use of this method does not mean that we follow the assumption often made that only readings that depart from the "received text" can be considered as remnants of the original text. Without doubt many original readings underlie the "received text". That is to say, an agreement with the "received text" does not necessarily make it a suspect reading. The versions were found to fall into the following ranking as to quality of textual base. The figures represent the agreements with Westcott and Hort in the passages examined.

	John	Luke	Acts	Total
Latinoamericana	56	12	5	73
Hispano-Americana	56	7	5	68
Straubinger	53	11	3	67
A.F.E.B.E.	53	11	2	66
Bover	52	10	4	66
Nácar-Colunga	50	7	2	59
Moderna	29	2	0	31
Torres Amat	26	2	2	30
Pablo Besson	23	4	1	28
Cipriano de Valera	10	0	0	10
Total passages examined	62	14	5	81

There are two noticeable gaps in this table, marking off three groups of versions. These are listed in the order of their agreement with Westcott and Hort in selected passages. In the upper group six versions stand rather close together with a total spread of only 14 points. There is a rather large gap between the upper and middle group whose three versions vary from one another by only a point or two. It is significant that four of the five Roman Catholic versions examined appear in the upper group with tabulations ranging from 59 to 67. These four, NC, Bov, AF and Str, have been published within the past 20 years. Torres Amat, the old Roman Catholic version, appears in the middle group with a tabulation of 30. It is clear that in recent years Catholic translators have been departing from the Vulgate. Although Roman Catholic scholars subscribe to the Tridentine doctrine that the Vulgate "conforms substantially to the original," yet they leave the Vulgate at numerous points in order to follow better readings.

[4] Taken from Colwell's list in his book, *What is the Best in the New Testament?*, University of Chicago Press, 1952, pp. 100ff.

[5] Luke 4:18; 6:48; 9:54, 55; 11:2-4, 54; 22:17-20, 43, 44; 23:34, 38; 24:12, 36, 40, 51.

[6] Acts 8:37; 18:21; 24:6; 28:16; 28:29.

Some variations

There is a danger that focusing attention on textual variations may leave an exaggerated impression of the importance of the variations. It is still true as Westcott asserted 60 years ago, that recent discoveries and studies confirm the substantial faithfulness of the biblical text. Nevertheless the Bible translator cannot presume to belittle variations, nor do less than follow the direct evidence as far as he is able to go. It will be useful to compare what the several Spanish translators have done with a few of the more significant textual changes, most of which have been adopted by the Nestle text. Following are illustrated four types of textual changes:

1. Change by the restoration of words that had been omitted in the traditional text

Matthew 24:36

ni el Hijo 'nor the Son'. It is conceivable that a devout scribe feared the inclusion of this phrase could encourage a low view of the Messiah. The phrase is omitted in Str, Ta and CV. It is included in AF, Bov, HA, LA, Mod and NC.

John 19:3

Y llegándose ante él 'and coming before him'. The restoration of these words gives a graphic picture of the approach of the soldiers who mockingly worshipped Jesus. They are omitted in the Valera but included in all the other versions.

I Corinthians 9:20

"no estando sujeto a la ley 'not being under the law'. Since there is a series of four occurrences of *hupo nomon* 'under law' in this passage, a copyist may easily have overlooked one of them. This reading is omitted in the Valera. It is included in AF, Bov, LA, NC, Str and Bes. It is included in parentheses in HA, Mod and TA.

I Thessalonians 4:1

de la manera que ahora lo hacéis 'as you are doing'. The Valera and Besson omit this reading. It is included in AF, Bov, LA, NC and Str. HA includes it in parentheses.

1 John 3:1

y lo somos 'and that we are'. The addition is a strong expression of the writer's faith. The Valera and Besson omit the phrase. It is included in all the others.

2. Change by the substitution of a more adequately supported word, phrase or order

Matthew 21:28-31

All the Spanish versions compared, except for Hispano-Americana and Straubinger, follow the traditional order, i.e. the "first" son is the one who does the will of the father. The traditional order is supported by Sinaiticus, Ephraemi and other manuscripts. The order in which the "second" son does the will of the father is followed by HA, Str. and Nestle and is supported by Vaticanus.

John 9:4

The substitution of the plural *es necesario que hagamos* 'it is necessary that we do' for the singular *conviéneme obrar* 'I must work' identifies the Lord with his followers and lays an obligation upon them. HA, LA and Str follow the plural form while the others retain the singular.

John 16:27

The substitution of *del Padre* for *de Dios*. The traditional reading 'from God' obscures the thought that belief in the Son depends on the claim the Son makes as to his relationship to the Father. LA alone follows the Westcott-Hort choice of *para tou patros del Padre* 'from the father'. The other versions side with Nestle in following *para tou theou de Dios* 'from God'.

Acts 20:28

The substitution of *la iglesia de Dios* 'the church of God' for *la iglesia del Señor* 'the church of the Lord' is a recognition that the passage to which Paul referred in Psalm 74 speaks of the *congregación de Dios*. It also makes implicit the doctrine of the Trinity. The Church is governed by the Spirit; it belongs to God and is acquired by the blood of Christ. The versions are divided on this change. The reading *de Dios* is followed by AF, Bov, HA, Mod, NC and TA. The reading *del Señor* is followed by Bes, LA, Str and CV. Both HA and LA put the opposite reading in a footnote.

3. Change by omission with the support of a strong combination of authorities

John 5:3b, 4

que esperaban el movimiento..... cualquiera que fuese su enfermedad 'waiting for the moving..... whatever disease he had'. Most textual critics since Tischendorf have rejected this passage because of the counts against it: numerous variations in the text of the passage, omission by old representatives of various groups of manuscripts, omission in pre-Nicene texts (except Latin), and the fact that the passage appears to be an explanation of verse 7. It is omitted by AF and Bes. It is included by Bov, Mod, NC, TA and CV. Str includes it in parentheses. HA and LA include it in a footnote.

John 7:53—8:11

Codex D (Bezae) is the only early witness to this passage. The numerous variants within the passage, some 60 in all, point to extensive alterations beyond that found in other narrative text in the Gospels. The location of the passage at other places in various documents also indicates doubt. It is included by NC, Str, TA and CV. Bes, HA, LA and Mod include it in parentheses. Bov includes it with the addition of an extended explanatory footnote.

1 John 5:7

Porque tres son que dan testimonio en el cielo..... 'Because there are three that give testimony in heaven'. These words are not given by any early Greek manuscript, nor by any of the ancient versions except Latin. First appearing in passages of Cyprian and Priscillian, these words gained wider currency during the Arian persecution. Mod, Str, TA and CV include the passage. The others omit it. Bov, HA and NC include it in a footnote.

Luke 9:55b, 56a

vosotros no sabeis..... sino a salvarlas 'you do not know..... but to save them'. Both Alexandrian and Byzantine witnesses agree in rejecting this reading. It is omitted by AF, HA, LA, NC and Str. It is included by Bes, Bov, Mod, TA and CV. It is given in a footnote by HA and LA.

Acts 8:37

Dijo Felipe..... el Hijo de Dios 'Philip said..... the Son of God'. This verse is supported both by the Bezan text and the appropriateness of this simple confession of faith. But its omission by such strong manuscripts as Sinaiticus and Vaticanus casts the verse in doubt. It is omitted by HA and LA. The other eight Spanish versions include it.

4. Change by omission where there is reasonable doubt on both sides

Mark 16:9-20

Most scholars since the time of Westcott and Hort have held that the last 12 verses of Mark were not part of the original text. Both the external and the internal evidence against the passage are all but conclusive. It does not appear in the earliest types of text. It is almost unknown in early Christian literature. And there is a distinct change in style and subject matter in verses 9 to 20. There still remain, however, a few vigorous defenders of the originality of this passage. The RSV and Berkeley versions have played safe by including it within parentheses, so also HA and LA. It is included in the body of the text by AF, NC, Str, TA and CV. Mod separates it from verse 8 by a space. Bov adds an explanatory footnote.

Luke 23:38

en caracteres griegos, latinos y hebreos 'in letters of Greek, Latin and Hebrew'. These words are probably a gloss from John 19. They are omitted in Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and L. The words are included in AF, Bes, Bov, TA and CV. They are omitted in HA, LA, Mod, NC and Str.

Luke 24:40

Habiendo dicho esto, les mostró las manos y los pies 'Having said this, he showed them his hands and his feet'. This verse, which is omitted in D, appears to be an adaptation of John 20:20. LA is the only one of the 10 versions to omit these words. LA puts them in a footnote.

Acts 24:7, 8a

mas el tribuno Lisias..... viniesen ante ti 'but the tribune Lysias..... to come to you'. This passage which appears in the Bezan text may or may not be original. It is omitted in LA and HA, but the latter inserts it in a footnote. All the other eight versions include it.

FOUR NEW LANGUAGES

The Scripture Gift Mission reports that publications appeared in 1961 in four "pioneer languages" in which no previous part of the Word of God had been issued: Barun (Sudan), Tagal (N. Borneo), Copper Eskimo (N.W Canada), Chokri Naga (Assam). Twenty-one other editions were issued in languages in which the S.G.M. had not previously issued any of its publications though Gospel portions had already been made available by the Bible Societies.