

could be added at the point where a divine name or reference first occurs in any given book. It would be helpful if such written explanations could also be supported by an oral presentation of the problem and its solution to as many groups as possible in the whole community, and particularly those groups who would have preferred to see the honorific plural actually printed in the text. The main point to be stressed is this: we are not talking about two different gods, but only one – no matter how we happen to refer to him in human speech. (Ba)Leza, the most respected “elder” of the universe, is also our closest “friend”!

RONALD ROSS

## MARKING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE “TODAY’S SPANISH VERSION”

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Languages all seem to have some way of indicating what kind of relationship there is between people who are talking to each other and between them and the people they are talking about. For example, are they friends? Or are they strangers? Do they belong to the same social class? Is one more powerful than the other? (Linguists use the technical expression **social deixis** to refer to this kind of information. They also use the term **honorifics** for the language forms that express relationships between people.)

Different languages express such relationships in very different ways and with varying degrees of complexity. Some languages express these social relationships grammatically, for example, by means of special pronouns or verb endings. They may express many different social levels or as few as two. Other languages have different ways of expressing social information. One way English does it is through the use of different levels of greetings (“Hi!,” “Good afternoon”), names (“William,” “Bill,” “Smith”), and titles (“Mr.,” “Dr.,” “Professor Green”). There are languages, especially in Southeast Asia, in which large portions of the vocabulary shift to match the relative social status of the person being spoken to. And probably most languages reflect relative social status through some degree of shift in the vocabulary.

Referring to information about social relationships, Levinson (*Pragmatics*, 1983, page 90) says that the relations most often expressed are those between:

- (1) speaker and person spoken about (referent honorifics)
- (2) speaker and person spoken to (addressee honorifics)
- (3) speaker and bystander (bystander or audience honorifics)
- (4) speaker and setting (formality levels).

I would add to the first three the relationship between the person spoken to and the person being spoken about: for example, when the speaker, a personal friend of Tom Spitz, refers to him as Dr. Spitz when talking to

a person who is a prospective patient. The same kind of thing occurs in Spanish both with titles and with the honorific formula *don* + (first name).

Up until I now have been talking about language forms which refer to the social relationship between those people who are participating in a conversation [relational social deixis]. There is also absolute information about the status of people; in this case special forms are reserved for certain speakers whom Fillmore calls **authorized speakers** and special recipients whom he calls **authorized recipients** (in *Santa Cruz Lectures on Deixis*, 1975). In languages that express information referring to authorized speakers, only these speakers are allowed to use certain grammatical forms and words. In contrast, when the language marks information referring to authorized recipients, there are certain forms that are used to refer exclusively to those persons, for example, "your majesty."

As I said before, one of the ways languages express honorifics is through the use of special personal pronouns and verb agreement. Many languages have the well-known T-V distinction in their second person pronouns. T (from the French *tu*) refers to the familiar or close relationship form, and V (from the French *vous*) refers to the "polite" or distant relationship form. Generally speaking, the T (or close) forms are used with people whom the speaker perceives as being of lower social status than himself or people with whom he feels some bond of solidarity. The V (or distant) forms are those reserved for persons of higher social standing than the speaker or with whom he does not have a close relationship or a bond of solidarity. Throughout this article I will use T (or "close") and V (or "distant") in this sense.

It was Brown and Gilman, in a 1960 article entitled "Pronouns of Power and Solidarity" who first used the letters T and V as labels for the close and distant relationship forms. In most cases, according to them, the distinction between T and V originally had to do with power. Those people who were powerful were addressed as V, while those who were not were addressed as T. Thus, the expression of the relationships between the powerful and the unpowerful was invariably unequal or asymmetrical; that is, it was always T-V and never T-T or V-V.

Brown and Gilman believe that there is a general tendency for the element of power to be replaced by one of solidarity as the factor which determines language use in the area of relationships. In other words, people increasingly choose their forms of address on the basis of whether or not they have a relationship of solidarity with the other person, rather than on the basis of their relative power. Such a shift occurs gradually and causes some interesting conflicts in the system while the two factors exist together. For instance, if John is powerful and has a solidary relationship with Fred who is not powerful, should Fred address John as T because of their high level of solidarity, or as V because of their different degrees of power?

Brown and Gilman also believe that as people choose the appropriate form of address more and more on the basis of solidarity rather than on the basis of power, there will be a similar increase in the number of equal or symmetrically expressed relationships (that is, T-T or V-V). There will

also be a growth in the use of T with respect to V, probably because it is socially more agreeable to express our solidarity with someone than to express the contrary.

Today, some scholars propose adding a third factor to the scheme of things by distinguishing between solidarity and familiarity or closeness. According to them, the difference between solidarity and closeness is that solidarity means a shared lot or membership in the same group. Closeness, on the other hand, indicates a custom of wilfully spending time together. If we accept this proposal, there would then be three factors: +/-power, +/-solidarity, and +/-closeness. The factor of power would promote the unequal or asymmetrical use of pronouns (T-V), while the factors of solidarity and closeness would tend to generate symmetry (T-T or V-V), regardless of their plus or minus values.

There is often a degree of overlap between the different factors. For instance, closeness, such as that between family members, would entail solidarity as well. Perhaps because of this Nida (in a personal communication) feels that rather than use three factors, it is better to retain the original two and to assume that both "power" and "solidarity" include clusters of rather loosely related concepts. "Power," for instance, would include "authority," "social status," "age," "prestige," "wealth," and the like. "Solidarity" might group together such concepts as "common group membership," "biological relationships," and "familiarity."

### **Honorifics in Spanish**

The use of T seems to be increasing in some parts of the Spanish-speaking world, most notably in the Caribbean zone, where in a growing number of social situations T reportedly prevails over V. In many other areas, V still prevails over T. However no Spanish-speaking society has ceased to make a distinction (except for some varieties spoken by bilingual communities in the United States); and certainly in most areas relationships are still sharply defined along T-V lines and will doubtless continue to be for the foreseeable future.

In contemporary Latin American Spanish, the situation could be characterized as a situation in which power and solidarity co-exist as rival determining factors, perhaps with power prevailing in some places and solidarity in others. In fact, the differences are not always regional. Certain individuals are more likely to define their relationships in terms of solidarity or closeness, while others, perhaps the more conservative, are inclined to define their relationships in terms of power or relative social status. Furthermore, even amongst people who are more inclined to think of relationships in terms of solidarity, there are often differences in the number and type of elements necessary to constitute this category.

It is also important to bear in mind that even in societies where solidarity has come to prevail over power, this does not mean that power has disappeared as a factor in the language of relationships. One interesting though subtle way in which it crops up is that when two formerly non-

solidary people switch to solidary or familiar forms of address, it is only the person with the better power base who can initiate the change.

Because the very forms of the language (pronouns and verb endings in particular) compel us to choose between T and V, it is impossible to engage in a conversation involving address in a neutral way. A speaker must use either the familiar T form or the formal V form. And whichever of the two forms he chooses will tell us something about his relationship with the person he is talking to. And this fact is very important for Bible translation.

Honorifics are marked in most standard Latin American dialects by the contrast between the second person subject pronouns *tú/usted*, the propositional or emphatic pronouns *ti/usted*, the possessive adjectival pronouns *tu/su, tuyo/suyo*, the direct and indirect object clitic pronouns *te/le, lo, la*, and the verb endings *tú sabes/usted sabe*, and so on. Unlike many other languages, Spanish does not indicate different relationships in the first and third persons by means of special pronouns or verb endings. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that in all American dialects of Spanish, even the second person T-V distinctions disappear in the plural.

### **Honorifics and the Bible in Spanish**

Large sections of both the Old and New Testaments are bursting with dialogue, every instance of which takes place between two or more people who are related to each other in any one of a variety of ways. This poses an interesting problem to those who undertake to translate the Bible into Spanish, because the biblical languages do not express honorifics by means of pronouns and verb endings. If the translation is to be a truly meaningful or idiomatic one, the translator must try in each case to render the dialogue in the terms that correctly reflect the relationship between the people participating in the dialogue. Yet in almost none of the existing Spanish translations has this even been attempted.

What has been done instead, is to use the T forms exclusively in both singular and plural, or just in the singular in those versions that lean more toward Latin American Spanish in the non-use of the plural form *vosotros*. This is a way of avoiding the problem, but it certainly doesn't solve it. The assumption seems to have been that if the Greek and Hebrew do not make a distinction, Spanish could get by without making it as well. Among the translations that follow this non-solution are the *Biblia de Jerusalén*, *Nácar-Colunga*, *Reina-Valera*, *Bover-Cantera*, *La Nueva Biblia Española*, *La Biblia Interconfesional*, the translation by José María Gonzalez Ruiz, *La Biblia Latino-americana*, and *El Evangelio del Pueblo*, to mention but a few.

However, as I said before, there is no neutral form. Either choice makes a statement about the relationship. So the exclusive use of T plainly communicates the following often mistaken information:

- (1) all the relationships in the Bible were between social equals because they are all symmetrical (T-T).
- (2) all the relationships in the Bible were between people who were solidary or close.

That such information is frequently false should be clear from the fact that dialogue often occurs between masters and slaves, kings and subjects, total strangers, enemies, and so on.

If the translator decides to attempt a meaningful type of translation which includes honorifics, there are a number of issues which need to be dealt with. In many passages we are given enough information, through the behavior of the participants or through what they say, to be able to determine the nature of the relationship. But what does the translator do when the text provides no clues? He is far removed from the actual events, so how can he be certain his view of a particular relationship is accurate, in the absence of information from the text?

One of the most typical Spanish honorifics is, of course, the word *don*. It is most often used to refer to or address persons of higher social rank or non-intimate equals. However, it can also be used to show polite respect for a person of lower social rank. We might legitimately ask if a translation which aims to be "faithful" in reflecting relationships ought not to incorporate the use of *don* as a part of its social scheme. My own view is that it should not, and most native Spanish speakers I have consulted express dismay at the very idea. I suspect that its universal association with Spanish culture causes it to seem unsuitable in an ancient Middle Eastern setting, and I suppose the same would hold true for other typically Spanish titles such as *señora* and *señorita* (although *señor* of course is quite common and has taken on religious significance).

Something else that must be decided is which factor ("power" or "solidarity") should we use in selecting the appropriate forms for Bible translation? Should we reflect the growing sense of solidarity of many modern Spanish-speaking societies or stress instead the element of power with its asymmetrical relationships in order to underscore the ancientness of biblical society?

### **Relationship terms and the text of the "Today's Spanish Version"**

The study which I undertook for this article was to discover how the "Today's Spanish Version" (*Versión Popular*, referred to after this as "the VP") handles the issue of referring to social relationships. I chose the VP because I have found no other Spanish translation that even tries to deal with the problem. It is true that most translations deal to some degree with the **absolute** information about the social status of people. That is, they will often recognize and indicate the status of a ruler by having others address him with some third person form such as "his majesty". But they totally ignore the issue of the relationship between the persons participating in a conversation, which is far more problematic and more interesting. The VP is also perhaps the first attempt at doing in Spanish a translation which gives higher priority to meaning than to literal form.

While I have examined carefully a number of books from both Testaments, there were some I decided to avoid. I spent considerable time, for example, in the historical books, the prophets, the Gospels, and Acts, but gave much less time to the books of poetry or the Pauline epistles,

since such books have very little dialogue or deal with very few personal relationships. I did computer searches of many such books, however, to confirm my original thinking.

### Old Testament

In the Old Testament, generally speaking, the translators have done a good job of reflecting social relationships. For example, in Genesis when Abraham decides to find a wife for Isaac, he summons his servant and makes him swear to find a wife for his son in their homeland. He invariably addresses the servant as T:

- *Pon tu mano debajo de mi muslo y júrame por el Señor, el Dios del cielo y de la tierra, que no dejarás que mi hijo Isaac se case con una mujer de esta tierra de Canaán, donde yo vivo, sino que irás a mi tierra y escogerás una esposa para él de las mujeres de mi familia.* (Gen 24.2-4)

- Put [close] your [close] hand under my thigh and swear [close] by the Lord, the God of heaven and earth, that you will not allow [close] my son Isaac to marry a woman from this land of Canaan, where I live, but rather you will go [close] to my country and you will choose [close] a wife for him from the women of my family.

When the servant responds, he addresses Abraham as V, thus reflecting his servanthood with respect to the person he is addressing:

- Pero si la mujer no quiere venir conmigo, ¿qué hago? ¿Debo entonces llevar a su hijo a la tierra de donde usted salió? (Gen 24.5)

- But if the woman doesn't want to come with me, what should I do? Should I then take your [distant] son to the land from which you emigrated [distant]?

The servant accepts the commission with some reluctance, and to ensure that he selects the right girl, he asks God's help. He lays out a fleece, so to speak, and tells God:

- Permite que la muchacha a la que yo le diga: "Baje usted su cántaro para que yo beba," y que me conteste: "Beba usted y también les daré agua a sus camellos" que sea ella la que tú has escogido para tu siervo Isaac. (Gen 24.14)

- Let it be that the girl whom I tell, "Lower your [distant] jug so that I might drink," and who answers me, "Drink [distant] and I will also give water to your [distant] camels" be the girl you have chosen for your servant Isaac.

He imagines the entire conversation with Isaac's bride-to-be taking place in reciprocal V-V. The young woman is a total stranger to him, so none of the elements are present which might justify his addressing her as T. The familiar form would be unthinkable here. He also imagines her responding to him with a V. He is a stranger to her, as well, and he is not in a

servanthood relationship with respect to her and her family, so neither on the grounds of closeness or solidarity nor on the grounds of social inequality would it be fitting for her to address him with a T. And in fact she does not do so when the actual conversation is translated.

Further on, when Rebecca's brother Laban goes out to meet the servant, he says:

- *Venga usted, bendito del Señor. ¡Cómo va usted a quedarse aquí afuera, si ya he preparado la casa y un lugar para los camellos!* (Gen 24.31)

- Come in [*distant*] O blessed of the Lord. Why do you stay [*distant*] outside if I have prepared the house and a place for the camels?

All of the dialogue between Abraham's servant and Rebecca's family takes place in reciprocal V-V. The only times T is used in the remainder of this narrative is first when the servant expresses his desire to leave soon, and Rebecca's family calls her to ask if she is willing,

- *¿Quieres irte con este hombre?* (Gen 24.58)

- Do you want to go [*close*] with this man?

and then in the family blessing before she leaves,

- Oh, hermana nuestra,  
¡que *seas* madre de muchos millones!  
¡que *tus* descendientes  
conquisten las ciudades de sus enemigos! (Gen 24.60)

- O sister of ours,  
may you be [*close*] the mother of millions!  
may your [*close*] descendants  
conquer the cities of your enemies!

In this narrative, then, we find both factors at work. The non-reciprocal T-V relationship between Abraham and his servant is an example of the factor of power. Abraham is powerful and the servant is not. Hence the inequality and lack of reciprocity. In the interaction between the servant and Rebecca's family, it is rather a matter of non-familiarity: they simply do not know each other, so there are no solidarity grounds for close forms of address. Logically, when the family addresses one of their own, Rebecca, they address her as T.

It is my opinion that all of this is believable to the average Spanish speaking person of Latin America. It sounds like the way he would have done things himself.

There is a very interesting case in 2 Kings chapter 9. The prophet Elisha calls one of the company of prophets and sends him to Ramoth Gilead with the purpose of anointing Jehu king of Israel. I presume Elisha was in a position of authority over the other prophet because he was the one giving the orders. We are also told that the other prophet was young.

Elisha addresses him as T, which could be justified on the grounds of social superiority (he was an older, higher ranking prophet) or on the grounds of solidarity (they were colleagues). The prophet to whom the instructions are given never addresses Elisha, so we can only guess how he might have done it. Personally, I would have had him address Elisha as V.

- *Prepárate para salir. Toma este frasco de aceite y ve a Ramot de Galaad; cuando llegues allí, ve en busca de Jehú, hijo de Josafat y nieto de Nimsi. Entra en donde él se encuentra, y apártalo de sus compañeros y llévalo a otra habitación...* (2 Kgs 9.1-2)

- Prepare [*close*] to leave. Take [*close*] this flask of oil and go [*close*] to Ramoth-gilead; when you get [*close*] there, go [*close*] look for Jehu son of Jehoshaphat and grandson of Nimshi. Go [*close*] in to where he is and get [*close*] him to leave his companions and take [*close*] him to another room.

The young prophet arrives at Ramoth Gilead and finds all the captains of the army together, and he says, "I have a message for the captain." Jehu responds, "For which of us?" The young prophet is addressing a ranking military officer, so he answers:

- A *usted*, mi capitán. (2 Kgs 9.5)

- For you [*distant*], my captain.

Jehu immediately gets up and accompanies him into another room. There the young prophet, following instructions, pours the bottle of oil over Jehu's head and says,

- El Señor, Dios de Israel, dice: "Yo *te* consagro como rey de Israel, mi pueblo. *Tú acabarás* con la descendencia de Acab, *tu* amo, y así *vengarás* la sangre de mis profetas y de todos mis siervos, derramada por Jezabel. (2 Kgs 9.6-7)

- Thus says the Lord, God of Israel: "I anoint you [*close*] king over Israel, my people. You will destroy [*close*] the descendants of Ahab, your [*close*] master, and thus will you avenge [*close*] the blood of my prophets and of all of my servants, that was spilled by Jezebel.

When the young prophet first addresses Jehu, he is both speaker and source, so he chooses the form of address which is appropriate to their relationship. However, once he begins to transmit God's message to Jehu, though he is still the speaker, he is no longer the source of the message. The source is God himself, and God never addresses anybody as V. So the young prophet adjusts his forms of address accordingly. The VP translators very appropriately based their choice on the source of the communication, rather than on the speaker, because the message is transmitted in direct discourse.

A somewhat different case is found in the book of Esther. In chapter 7 we find the following dialogue between Esther and her husband the king:



- *Píde* me lo que *quieras* y *te* lo concederé, aun si me *pides* la mitad de mi reino.

Y Ester le respondió:

- Si *Su Majestad* me *tiene* cariño, y si *le* parece bien, lo único que deseo y pido es que *Su Majestad* me *perdone* la vida y la de mi pueblo... (Est 7.2-3)

- Ask [*close*] of me what you will [*close*] and I will grant it to you [*close*], even though you ask [*close*] me for half of my kingdom.

And Esther answered:

- If His Majesty cares for me and if he agrees, the only thing I desire and ask is that His Majesty spare my life and that of my people.

Xerxes is supplying us with information about social relationships when he addresses his wife Esther with a T. He is the king, after all, and she, though his wife, is still a subject. Esther however uses absolute forms when referring to him. It is a case of an authorized recipient. The king, and only the king, must be called *Su Majestad*, simply because of who he is. She addresses him entirely in the third person. The traditional translations have Esther addressing the king with T.

A review of many other books of the Old Testament reveals that in them too the translators have marked grammatically the same kinds of social interaction, thereby reflecting relative status, degrees of intimacy, and the like. (See, for instance, Ruth and Daniel.)

### New Testament

Let's now turn to the New Testament to see what happens there. We will begin in the book of Matthew. The only pertinent dialogue that occurs before chapter 8 is that between John the Baptist and Jesus on the occasion of Jesus' baptism (3.14-15). John and Jesus exchange reciprocal T, which is peculiar, because John has described Jesus as being more powerful than he is and then claimed to be unfit even to carry his sandals.

In chapters 8 and 9 there are several other interesting dialogues, for instance the one that took place between Jesus and the centurion. Jesus has just entered Capernaum and is approached by the centurion who tells him that his servant is ill. Several things in the context provide information as to the nature of the relationship between the two. One is the use of the Greek participle *parakalón*, which most Spanish versions properly translate with some form of the verbs *rogar* "beg" or *suplicar* "supplicate". The use of such verbs generally conveys that the speaker feels that he or she is in a position of subordination with respect to the hearer.

Then the centurion addresses Jesus as *kyrie*. Bratcher and Nida (*Translator's Handbook on Mark*, page 10) state, "The Greek term *kyrios* has a range of meanings in secular usage all the way from a title for the emperor to a polite 'sir', used in speaking to one of a higher social rank." Newman and Stine (*Translator's Handbook on Matthew*, page 233), referring to this particular passage, say the term is "best understood as a noun of polite address."

When Jesus offers to go and heal the servant, the centurion replies that he is unworthy even to have Jesus enter his house. It is odd, therefore, in light of all these very clear expressions of deference and respect, that this last sentence is uttered thus:

- Señor, yo no merezco que *entres* en mi casa; solamente *da* la orden, y mi criado quedará sano. (Matt 8.8)
- Master, I do not deserve for you to even enter [*close*] my house; just give [*close*] the command, and my servant will be healed.

Together with the second occurrence of the word *Señor*, he addresses Jesus with a T form of the verb. In normal standard Spanish, it would be peculiar indeed to address as T a person for whom one has just expressed such respect; and it would be just as peculiar to refer to the same person as *Señor* and T in the same sentence. This mixture of T and V forms of address applied almost at the same time to a single person sends the reader mixed cues regarding the nature of the relationship between the speaker and the person he or she is talking to. Unlike what happens in most of the Old Testament, here the translators have ignored the information provided by the text about the relationship, and resorted to the same solution as all other translations.

A similar case is found in Matthew 9.18. Jesus is approached by Jairus, whose daughter has just died. Before Jairus even speaks to Jesus, he kneels down before him. The act of kneeling down was “an acknowledgement of the power and authority of Jesus” (Newman and Stine, pages 228, 275). Power and authority are precisely the stuff that non-reciprocal T-V relationships are made of. Yet, the translators of Matthew have disregarded the textual cues, and created a discrepancy between Jairus’ very respectful gesture and his non-respectful forms of address.

- Mi hija acaba de morir; pero si *tú vienes y pones tu* mano sobre ella, volverá a la vida. (Matt 9.18)
- My daughter has just died. But if you come [*close*] and put [*close*] your [*close*] hand on her, she will come back to life.

In Matthew there are several other such cases, for instance the leper in 8.2, and the foreign woman in chapter 15 who asks Jesus to free her daughter from evil spirits. Both prostrate themselves before Jesus, call him *Señor*, and then proceed to address him exclusively with T language forms.

However, honorifics are not totally ignored in Matthew. Interestingly enough, the only place that any effort is made to express normal social relationships by appropriate language forms is in the parables. For example, in the parable about the rich man and his various servants:

- Señor, *usted me dio* cinco mil, y aquí *tiene* otros cinco mil que gané. (Matt 25.20)
- Master, you gave [*distant*] me five thousand, and here you have [*distant*] five thousand more that I earned.

And the rich man replies:

– Muy bien, *eres* un empleado bueno y fiel; ya que *fuiste* fiel en lo poco, *te* pondré a cargo de mucho más. *Entra y alégrate* conmigo. (Matt 25.21)

– Very good. You are [*close*] and good and faithful employee; since you were [*close*] faithful in the small things, I will put you [*close*] in charge of much more. Come [*close*] in and celebrate [*close*] with me.

The whole context tells us this is how it should be. One member of the relationship is rich, the other is not. One member is the employer, the other is the employee. One gives orders, the other obeys them. Here we have the respectful form of address *señor* combined with *usted*, which is normal. The interesting question is why the distant or respectful forms occur only in the parables.

Not only is Jesus always addressed as T in Matthew, and in the other gospels as well, but Jesus always addresses others the same way. This occurs even in such unlikely circumstances as when he is on trial and must respond to the questions put to him by the high priest. It must be remembered that the high priest was literally the most important member of Jewish society and it would be inconceivable to a contemporary Spanish speaker to address such a person as T, particularly in the formal setting of a trial. Later Jesus is taken before Pilate. He is a Jewish prisoner standing before the Roman Governor, but again he addresses him as T.

There is one case in Matthew where the formal form is used outside the parables. In 27.64 the chief priests and the Pharisees go together to see Pilate and request that he take measures to ensure that Jesus' body is not taken from the tomb. After calling Pilate *Señor* they say:

– ...*mande usted* asegurar el sepulcro

– ...give [*distant*] orders to secure the tomb

In contrast with this, when the Jews are outside Pilate's palace demanding that he crucify Jesus, their demands, made collectively, are expressed in T. This might be explained as an aspect of mob psychology.

Luke (1.3) addresses his gospel to "most excellent Theophilus," thereby indicating that Theophilus was a man of high social status. However, having addressed him thus, he proceeds to use only T forms thereafter. Here again we find an unthinkable mixture of familiar and formal forms. The same thing occurs in 7.40, when Simon the unbelieving Pharisee says, – *Dímelo, Maestro* "tell [*close*] me, Master". In Luke, as in Matthew, the use of the formal forms is limited to the parables.

In John we find a similar situation. There is no reason, based on the context, to assume that Jesus and Nicodemus had been close or had even spoken to each other before their conversation recorded in 3.2-10. In fact, we gather from Nicodemus' approach that he is trying to find out who Jesus really is. Nicodemus addresses Jesus as "Rabbi," which in Spanish has been rendered *Maestro*. "Rabbi" was a Hebrew title of respect (Newman

and Stine, page 245) as *maestro* in Spanish. It is odd, therefore, that in the very same sentence in which Nicodemus has addressed Jesus with a title of respect, he proceeds to use language with solely close forms:

- Maestro, sabemos que Dios *te* ha enviado a enseñarnos, porque nadie podría hacer los milagros que *tú haces* si Dios no estuviera con él. (John 3.2)

- Master, we know that God has sent you [*close*] to teach us, because no one can do the miracles that you do [*close*], were not God with him.

It is also odd that Jesus addresses Nicodemus as T. He was apparently a man of some status, and there is no reason to believe that a relationship existed before their nighttime meeting.

One of the most surprising cases is that of the woman at the well (4.7-26). Jesus is a Jew, she is a lowly Samaritan. Jesus is a man, she is a woman. Jesus is a rabbi, she was an adulteress and an outcast even amongst her own people. In that day, such differences would have amounted to considerable disparity in social status. That she was aware of their difference in status is obvious from her surprise at the fact that he had even spoken to her. Yet our Spanish-speaking Samaritan woman hesitates not a bit when it comes to addressing Jesus as T, again curiously mixed with the honorific title of *Señor*:

- ¿Cómo es que *tú*, siendo judío, me *pides* agua a mí, que soy samaritana? (John 4.9)

- How is it that you [*close*], being a Jew, ask [*close*] me, a Samaritan, for water?

And further on:

- Señor, ni siquiera *tienes* con qué sacar agua, y el pozo es muy hondo; ¿de dónde *vas* a darme agua viva? (John 4.11)

- Master, you have [*close*] nothing with which to take out water, and the well is very deep; from where, then, are you going [*close*] to give me living water?

On only one occasion in John is Jesus addressed as V, despite the fact that people regularly address him with titles of respect, bow down before him, consider him a prophet, and petition him for favors. And that one occasion really doesn't count because he is being addressed by someone who has not recognized him. It is found in John 20.15. Mary Magdalene has just encountered the risen Christ in the garden near the tomb, and taking him for the gardener, asks:

- Señor, si *usted se* lo *ha* llevado, *diga* me dónde lo *ha* puesto para que yo vaya a buscarlo.

- Sir, if you have taken [*distant*] him away, tell [*distant*] me where you have put [*distant*] him, so that I may go find him.

This is one of only two cases in John where the translators made any use at all of the V forms to indicate either status or distance. The other case, not a very impressive one, occurs when Jesus heals the son of a Roman official. When the man arrives home, his servants come out to meet him and say:

- *Su* hijo vive. (John 4:51)
- Your [*distant*] son lives.

Contrary to the case of the gospels, the Book of Acts does a good job of reflecting social relationships. In chapter 8 Philip and the Ethiopian, never having met before, properly address each other as *usted*. When the believers in Joppa summon Peter because of the death of Dorcas, they say, "*Venga usted a Jope sin demora.*" The messengers sent by Cornelius to Peter, address Peter, whom they presumably do not know, as *usted*. Likewise the Athenians address Paul as *usted* when questioning him about this strange new teaching he was bringing.

In chapter 21, after Paul is arrested in Jerusalem, he asks the Roman commander if he can speak with him. He addresses the commander as V and gets a T in return. This seems natural. The commander is certainly in a position of authority over Paul, who is his prisoner. Later on, when Paul's nephew discovers the plot to kill him and is sent by his uncle to see the commander, he addresses the commander as V and is given a T. This is quite normal, given the status of the Roman commander and the youth of Paul's nephew. There are numerous other examples, but these will suffice.

There is an interesting case where the text of the VP seemingly introduces relationship material unjustifiably, thereby obscuring a possibly interesting shift in relationship. As mentioned before, when Luke addresses Theophilus in Luke 1.3, he refers to him as "most excellent Theophilus." When he addresses him again in Acts 1.1, he abandons the honorific and uses his name only. This change in the form of address has been interpreted by some scholars as an indication that Theophilus had since become a believer, thus reducing the social distance (or providing a base for solidarity) between Luke and himself. However in the VP, he is again addressed as *excelentísimo Teófilo*, probably in an effort to harmonize the two passages.

## Conclusions

With respect to the Old Testament, then, we can say that in those books that present people interacting in dialogue an effort has been made to use the resources of the language which indicate relationship in the most natural way possible. We can see operating both the element of power (that is, relative social status) and that of solidarity (that is, personal closeness) very much as they operate in Latin America today.

However, this has not been done with absolute consistency. For example, in 1 Kings 17 the prophet Elijah is sent by God to ask food of a poor widow. From the context, there is no reason to believe that the two have ever met, yet throughout their rather lengthy conversation, they invariably exchange reciprocal T's. In 2 Kings 4, Elisha is the frequent house guest of a Shunammite woman. The text tells us that she was an

important woman in her community, and she must have known Elisha rather well, for he ate at her house whenever he came to town. Yet she always addresses him with a V (although he returns a T). It is not clear to me why one prophet should receive a T from a lowly woman he has never met, and another should receive a V from an important woman he knows well. But generally speaking, the marking of social relationship has been handled well in the Old Testament.

The New Testament is another matter. In Matthew and Luke the VP translators use resources of the language to express honorifics only in the parables, and in John the formal forms occur in only two minor cases. Nevertheless, there are many instances in these books where we might well expect the formal form in the singular and it does not appear. In the Book of Acts, a genuine effort was made to use socially natural language and it is a convincing effort. In the remainder of the New Testament the only forms used are *tú* in the singular and *ustedes* in the plural.

Many of these cases revolve around the person of Jesus. Throughout the New Testament Jesus enters into only reciprocal T-T relationships. This is very odd in view of the fact that he has contact with many who are socially beneath him and treat him with considerable respect. But even when they prostrate themselves before him and call him "Lord" and "Master," they are never made to use the socially appropriate forms.

On the other hand, Jesus sometimes interacts with people who were, in human terms, socially above him, such as the high priest and Pilate, and in very formal situations that in current Spanish would demand the use of the distant forms; and yet none are used. The result is that the reader is given the false impression, for example, that Jesus felt solidarity toward Pilate, that he knew him very well, or that he exceeded him in social status. Since none of these seems particularly likely, the T form of address clashes with the whole context.

Why have the translators of the VP resisted allowing Jesus to interact with others in a natural fashion in Spanish? It could be that his divinity looms so high in the minds of the translators that they forget his humanity. And because the Deity is always addressed as T in Spanish, Jesus must be so addressed, even when interacting with persons who are unaware of his divine status, or who do not believe it. This would appear to be the view of two scholars who read an earlier draft of this paper. They argued that the reciprocal T-T relationships were imposed by the nature of the Gospels as a witness to the divine Jesus. I should hasten to point out, however, that the dialogue between Jesus and others is not made to appear socially unconventional in the Greek of the New Testament, and therefore I wonder why it should be made to seem so when translated from Greek into Spanish.

It could be that the translators were unconsciously trapped into a kind of "Bible language" resulting from a tradition of hundreds of years of Spanish Bibles that have practically ignored the indication of social relationships. Even Spanish dubbing of movies such as *The Ten Commandments* and *The Life of Jesus* ignores the formal forms. It is tempting to think that perhaps the translators of the New Testament were

simply unaware of the need to include sociolinguistic information in their work. However this seems unlikely in view of the very good job they did in the parables and the Book of Acts.

Nida (in a personal communication) affirms that Spanish readers would not accept a translation in which Jesus was addressed with the formal or distant forms, because they know he is God and therefore insist he be addressed as such even by New Testament unbelievers. This may be so. However a number of Spanish speakers who have read drafts of this article have reacted quite positively to the idea, though admittedly they are far more sophisticated than the average Christian. But readers can be educated. There was a time when many English-speaking Christians might have recoiled at Jesus being addressed as “you” rather than “thou.” But translators and publishers have pushed ahead with more and more modern versions and now the issue is not “you” versus “thou,” but rather the use of inclusive language.

How conscious were the New Testament authors of social relationships? Unfortunately, not much research has been done in this area. We have already seen, of course, that many of the persons with whom Jesus interacted used respectful titles to address him. But apparently the gospel writers didn't stop there. In an interesting article entitled “Some features of the speech of Jesus in Mark's gospel” Lee has shown that, at least in Matthew and Mark, Jesus' speech assumes numerous archaic features associated with a greater degree of “correctness” or formality, befitting a person of superior social rank. These same features, while characterizing the language of Jesus, are totally absent from the surrounding narrative. Hence Jesus' speech is marked for formality in order to “set him off,” as it were, from those around him. This would seem to support the use of respectful language directed at Jesus where he is being addressed by people who are socially his inferiors, if the language in which a translation is being made expresses social relationships grammatically.

A translation that claims to be in “today's Spanish” cannot afford to neglect so integral a part of the language as honorifics. If it does it is not really in today's Spanish, because in today's Spanish honorifics define all two-party relationships between people who are engaged in dialogue, and must therefore define in a believable way all such relationships that occur in the New Testament. I would repeat that in the Old Testament of the VP, honorifics have been handled quite well, as they have in the Book of Acts. So while I would like to see much more consistency in the VP, I also commend the translators for having produced the only Spanish version that even addresses the issue.