

Towards an Ethic of Bible Translation

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The Bible is considered by many in the Western world as the most important book of all. One can perhaps say that no book or collection of writings has been translated more often and with more care and into more languages than the Bible. This of course has generated a myriad of opinions, not least of which is that repeated saying *traduttore traditore*. Consequently, one immediately asks: “traitor to what, to whom?” Who or what are we as translators betraying? This reality is further complicated by the forceful suggestion that translation is indeed impossible, not to mention the impossibility of Bible translation. Rabbi Simlai once affirmed that translation is an impossible task: “He who translates is a heretic but he who refuses to translate is a blasphemer.” If this is true, we must suggest that when it comes to the practice and profession of translation, “*you’re damned if you do, and damned if you don’t.*”

Walter Brueggemann has coined the phrase “*Texts That Linger, Words That Explode*” referring to the *traditioning* process present in the Bible, particularly with reference to the prophets.¹⁾ He suggests that at certain times in the history of the community’s embracing of the Biblical text something new happens.

What has been tradition, hovering in dormancy, becomes available *experience*. In the moment of speaking and hearing, treasured tradition becomes present experience, inimitable, without parallel, irreversible. In that utterance, the word does lead to reality.²⁾

If indeed Brueggemann is correct, and we believe that he is, not only is the translation of the Bible a difficult exercise, but developing a translation *ethic* for Bible translation becomes a very complex endeavour. In fact, at the outset we will suggest that an overarching definitive *ethic* of Bible translation is impossibility. And

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1) Walter Brueggemann, “Texts That Linger, Words That Explode”, *Theology Today* 54:2 (1997), 180-199.

2) *Ibid.*, 181.

yet, the pursuit of *an* ethic, rather than *the* ethic, is in our estimation a worthy task.

It is not our main goal at this time to discuss the many and diverse problems that the Bible translator faces. A cursory mentioning of the problems will suffice: historical and cultural distance, different ancient languages, a diverse collection of writings which presents itself as an anthology rather than as a unified text, diverse literary genres, sundry geographical settings, written over a period of at least one thousand years, participation of editors and redactors alongside “authors?”, authorial intent, just to mention a few. If we add to these problems the fact that it is considered a *sacred text* by various believing communities, the translation of these ancient texts becomes a daunting task. Even though our task is not to discuss and explain all of these challenges, some of these problems will inevitably surface as we delve into the real purpose of this essay.

Our main goal here is to explore various issues that are pertinent to the development of a Bible translation ethic. It should be obvious by now to any reader that this author considers that any theoretical framework construed in this exercise is extremely provisional in nature. At the outset, our methodology will be dialogical. A dialogue will be developed with Towner, Pym, Chesterman, Lyotard, Dussel, Wittgenstein and Spinoza. The dialogue will not be symmetrical but rather will intersect at various points in the discussion with differing levels of intensity. As such the dialogue will be rather unstructured for the simple reason that we will glean from each thinker when it is appropriate, rather than present a review or summary of their ideas. The emphasis will be placed primarily on Bible translation, but not to the exclusion of translation work in general.

This dialogue will focus on two significant issues, a) ideology and b) marketing. The discussion around these issues will be illustrated by real examples that come from translation projects in the Americas. None of the examples or situations that will be presented is hypothetical or fictional. Rather they are concrete, real, and one could perhaps categorize them as historical. Some of these examples will serve as case studies that can help hone some ethical issues that bear upon Bible translation.

After considering these two main issues that most certainly bear on the development of a possible ethic for Bible translation, we will attempt to work through a proposal that will suggest some alternatives and guidelines for articulating a very flexible model of Bible translation ethics. The reason that an emphasis is placed on *flexible* is that we consider that culture in its various forms and

expressions mitigates any attempt at developing a rigid, fixed and closed model. If culture can be understood as a set of realized categories or structures, actual and conscious, which provide lifestyles and meaning to a particular society,³⁾ then any ethic must be flexible enough to embrace this complex reality.

1. Ideology and Bible Translation

We have written in other studies that no translation of any text is ever “neutral” or objective. By this we mean that translations of texts never take place in a vacuum. They are produced in specific places, at specific times, under specific conditions. This means that a number of factors play into the exercise of translation. Among these factors, I suggest that the more critical ones are realities of race, class, gender, life-histories, theological persuasions, political alliances, cultural distinctives and, last but not least, marketing issues.⁴⁾ All of these factors contribute to the “ideology” of any given translator or team of translators.

And yet, what do we really mean by “ideology”? Put rather simply, ideology can refer to that systematic body of concepts that exist, characterize and define human life or culture. In one sense, it can be compared to “world-view.” It has to do with the way an individual or group understands and defines reality. Whereas one would consider that the “world-view” of any given society is that element of “common sense” which remains invisible, “ideology” in most cases is not seen as neutral or innocent. World-view can be understood partially by comparing it to the foundations of a building. The foundations are there, they are very necessary, but remain invisible to the naked eye. In much the same way, the world-view of any given culture is not perceived by that culture unless somebody from another culture brings it to light. Therefore one can understand world-views as the lenses through which any community of human beings looks at the world. As such, world-views have to do with the pre-suppositional and pre-cognitive sages of a group of people whereby it seeks to answer the ultimate questions of human life.

3) Aram Yengoyan, “Lyotard and Wittgenstein and the Question of Translation”, P. Rubel and A. Rosman, eds., *Translating Cultures* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), chapter 1.

4) Steven Voth, “Righteousness and/or Justice—A Contextualized Analysis of ‘tsedeq’ in the KJV (English) and the RVR (Spanish)”, Glen Scorgie, Mark Strauss, and Steven Voth, eds., *The Challenge of Bible Translation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), chapter 14.

For purposes of this study, we will differentiate world-view from ideology. Our main distinction will be based on the assumption that any given person is more aware of his or her ideology than of his or her world-view. Ideology is many times something one chooses and consequently it is much more permeated by subjectivity and interest. There are many kinds of ideologies that individuals and groups embrace. We can speak of political, religious, epistemological, economical, social ideologies, just to name a few. These ideologies are never innocent or neutral, but they are always present. Thus, no translation of any given text is innocent or neutral. There is no such thing as an “immaculate translation”. This reality, which we admit, has been stated in somewhat forceful terms, inevitably bears on any discussion of an ethic for translation, and particularly for Bible translation. We consider that Stanley Porter is correct when he observes that, “The history of Bible translation is charged with ideological issues.”⁵⁾ It is for this reason that we suggest that the articulation of a Bible translation ethic, must take into consideration the constant and unrelenting presence of ideology. If a Bible translation ethic does not wrestle with this reality, or chooses to ignore it altogether, it will be an ethic that is devoid of credibility. We admit at the outset that this is not an easy task, nor is it a matter that we have resolved. At most we can say that we are in the process of engaging the reality of “ideology” in the exercise of articulating an ethic. Final and definitive answers are not in the immediate horizon. Given this situation, we will proceed to consider some actual examples or case studies that will illustrate and provide elements that should be evaluated.

1.1. Ideology—Case studies

In discussing and describing these cases, I will switch to first person narrative.

1.1.1. Example 1

In 1990 I began work on a new translation for the International Bible Society. I was elected to be chairman of the Old Testament team. This was to be a translation

5) Stanley Porter, “The Contemporary English Version and the Ideology of Translation”, Stanley Porter and Richard Hess, eds., *Translating the Bible—Problems and Prospects* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 18.

of the original languages into Spanish. The exegetical, stylistic and format guidelines were to be the same as those followed by the team that produced the New International Version for the English language. In terms of translation criterion, it was to try and forge a middle road between a literal translation and a totally functional equivalence translation. We had four maxims that we worked under: accuracy, beauty, clarity, and dignity (the famous ABCs of the NIV, which I will not describe and explain at this juncture).

Soon after the translation began, a debate developed around the issue of capitalization. Spanish is a language that is quite stingy with regards to the use of capital letters. Titles of books, articles, etc. only capitalize the first word. Names of languages, months, and days of the week are not capitalized. In the process of producing the Nueva Versión Internacional, the issue arose of whether to capitalize the word “spirit” in the Old Testament, particularly when it clearly referred to the spirit of God. There were some marketing issues that surfaced, but they were not the most powerful ones. The discussion became polarized because the New Testament team argued in favour of capitalizing the word “spirit”, whereas the Old Testament team unanimously preferred to leave the word un-capitalized. Soon in the discussion, the ideological factors came into play. One of the most important ones was the presupposition that the Old Testament needs to be interpreted in light of the New Testament. This means that one reads, interprets and translates the Old Testament with New Testament eyes. On the other hand, the Old Testament team which I represented argued that it was incorrect to read into Old Testament contexts the New Testament concept of Holy Spirit which surely is elicited by capitalizing the word spirit. A very critical context that generated much heated debate was Genesis 1:2 which obviously provides other alternatives as well. The discussion continued for several years. Eventually, the New Testament ideology won the day. The final decision was not based on careful exegesis of an ancient text. It resulted from a clear ideologically based interpretation. A final vote was taken including all the translators. Since there were more translators on the New Testament team than on its counterpart, the word spirit was capitalized almost throughout the NVI Old Testament.

Was this the correct ethical decision? Or perhaps we should ask, was a correct ethical process followed? What factors influenced the decision and final outcome of the debate? Certainly the ideological factor was an important one. However, one

cannot dismiss the marketing issue (which will be discussed below). It became quite evident that the New Testament members of the translation team were far more concerned about the possible negative reactions that might be provoked by not capitalizing the word “spirit”. We shall say more about this later, in conjunction with the Reina Valera 1995.

But the question remains: what ethical criteria should be invoked in this kind of a situation. Perhaps we should recognize that we have issues of divided loyalty in a case like this. In fact, it seems that many “loyalties” come into play: loyalty to the Old Testament, loyalty to the New Testament, loyalty to translation tradition, loyalty to the sponsoring society, and loyalty to the consumer, among others. A. Pym has correctly stated that translators are rarely above suspicion.⁶⁾ I would say that Bible translators are never above suspicion and decisions like the one just described will generate even more suspicion particularly among certain communities of faith. So, are there ethical rules that can be followed here? In my own personal case, do professional ethics take precedence over personal ethics at this point? Do ethics of representation as outlined by A. Chesterman help at all in a case like this one?⁷⁾ Perhaps not, because one of the weaknesses of the representation model is that it is impossible to achieve perfect equivalence or totally true representation. Furthermore, if one is to strive for excellence, how is excellence defined in this situation? It must be obvious by now that I have more questions than answers.

1.1.2. Example 2

In this same NVI translation project another heated issue surfaced. In more traditional and historic Spanish translations John 1:1 reads: “*En el principio era el Verbo.*” (“In the beginning was the Verb”). When Reina translated *logos* he used the Spanish word for “verb”. For centuries this became the accepted translation, both in Catholic and Protestant circles. However, in the 20th century, many new translations such as Dios Habla Hoy, El libro del pueblo de Dios, Cantera Iglesias, and many others decided to translate *logos* as “palabra” (word). Now it must be recognized that the tradition is so firmly embedded that when one looks up the word

6) A. Pym, *Translation and Text Transfer* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), chapter 7.

7) A. Chesterman, “Proposal for a Hieronymic Oath”, *The Translator* 7:2 (2001), 139-154.

“*verbo*” in the most prestigious Spanish dictionary, which comes from the Real Academia Española, one finds as the first meaning for *verbo*: the second person of the Most Holy Trinity (*segunda persona de la Santísima Trinidad*).

Many years prior to the NVI translation project, scholars concluded that the most accurate and preferable translation for *logos* was *palabra* (word). Hence, the most logical and exegetically accurate translation of *logos* for John 1:1 would have been *palabra*. However, once again ideological matters and tradition came into play. The word *Verbo* carries such theological and spiritual weight that it becomes very difficult for translators to change it. Consequently, after all the discussion and debate, when the vote was taken, tradition prevailed. Whereas the NVI prides itself to be based on the most recent and contemporary scholarship, at this point it caved in to tradition and ideological pressures.

The ethical issues surface once more. Pym speaks much about team-work. He advocates for a prohibition of solitude.⁸⁾ I quite agree, and yet in the cases just discussed team-work did not help in liberating the translation process from ideological conditioning and pressures. On the other hand, if indeed a translator is authorized to do the work based on his skills, then one wonders about the ethics of what I will call “skill suspension.” The translator places his or her skills on hold, as it were, and privileges ideology, inherited or otherwise, when choosing a particular way of translating. I am not sure at all that translational quality is achieved in this manner.

By way of further illustration, it is important to mention that United Bible Societies in the Americas took a bold step when the revision of Reina Valera 1960 was undertaken. This revision is now known as the Reina Valera 1995. In this edition, Genesis 1:2 reads “...*espíritu de Dios*” (*spirit of God*). The exegetical decision to write “spirit” without a capital “s” caused much conflict and debate. In fact, it became quite a marketing issue because for many years this revision was rejected. Today, more and more leaders and National Bible Societies are accepting this 1995 edition, but it has been a slow process. As will be seen below, issues of marketing and competition also enter into the arena of ethical decision making in translation work. The NVI, published in 1999, by the International Bible Society presented itself as a version that competed with the UBS Reina Valera 1995. Having capitalized the word “spirit” in the Old Testament gave it a certain edge among

8) A. Pym, *Translation and Text Transfer*, chapter 7.

conservative Protestant communities in Latin America.

1.1.3. Example 3

The case study that follows presents the situation where different cultures and ideologies come into play. As I began work on a translation project of the Old Testament with the Toba community in northern Argentina, I was immediately confronted by the “*cacique*” (chief). He had been the one who worked on the translation of the New Testament which was published in 1981. Apparently, over the course of time, a theology of a benevolent God developed within the Toba community. Upon translating the Old Testament and finding that at times God was depicted as a jealous God, or as an angry God, the “*cacique*” told me that this was unacceptable for the Toba community. He therefore refused to translate these adjectives that described God in a very anthropomorphic way, because they diminished God and God’s reputation would suffer tremendously in the community.

Facing this situation, I certainly echo Chesterman’s questions: How are we to decide where the ethical responsibility of the translator stops—or does it stop at all? In this case, where does the ethical responsibility of the translation consultant/translator stop?⁹⁾ It is cases like these that lead me to question the ethical model offered by Chesterman. He develops a theoretical framework based on virtues such as trustworthiness, truthfulness, fairness, and the courage to take a risk in caring for others. He then suggests that all of these must be subordinate to “understanding.”¹⁰⁾ But one immediately asks: whose understanding? Is it the understanding of the “*cacique*” that must be accepted? Or is it the understanding of the translation consultant? In either case, it seems that there is another issue at stake as well, namely, “improving the source text.” Pym argues correctly that improving the source text lies outside the responsibility of the translator. The source text should be considered a *fait accompli*.¹¹⁾ This would suggest that if the source text speaks of a jealous God or a God who can get angry, this should not be changed or even nuanced. On the surface, this may seem to be an easy decision or solution for the translation consultant/translator. However, it is a well known fact, that if the

9) A. Chesterman, “Proposal for a Hieronymic Oath”, 139-154.

10) Ibid.

11) A. Pym, *Translation and Text Transfer*, chapter 7.

cacique does not approve of the translation project and the final product, no one in the community will read the translation. So, issues of power enter the arena of ethical decisions, along with matters of ideology and source text improvement. But perhaps the most important question is: do we want the text to be read by the community? I submit once again that the questions continue to appear at every corner.

2. Marketing and Bible Translation

A simple Google search performed on March 27th, 2006 on “Marketing and Bible and Translation” resulted in 2,040,000 hits in 0.41 seconds. The relationship between marketing and Bible translation is one that most religious communities would rather ignore. The many non-profit organizations and societies that pursue Bible translation attempt to minimize this reality. Furthermore, it is our impression that neither A. Pym,¹²⁾ A. Chesterman,¹³⁾ P. Towner,¹⁴⁾ J. Lyotard,¹⁵⁾ and Wittgenstein,¹⁶⁾ among others, deal with this issue *explicitly and overtly*. There may be some insinuations present as questions of who is the client and what the client can expect are discussed. This represents only a beginning toward acknowledging the reality and forceful presence that marketing has upon Bible translation. We recognize that this may not be as relevant for Bible translation projects into so-called minority languages, where there may not be a long history of tradition and where no previous Bible translation exists. Whereas when one is involved in translating the Bible into a majority language such as Spanish for a continent with a long Catholic and Protestant tradition, marketing shows its face over and over.

Perhaps the most accepted understanding of marketing is that which suggests that it involves the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods, services, and ideas to create exchanges that satisfy

12) Ibid.

13) A. Chesterman, “Proposal for a Hieronymic Oath”, 139-154.

14) P. Towner, “Ethics and Bible Translation: A Working Paper”, unpublished paper presented in Rome, April 2004, 1-12.

15) Aram Yengoyan, “Lyotard and Wittgenstein and the Question of Translation”, P. Rubel and A. Rosman, eds., *Translating Cultures* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), Chapter 1.

16) Ibid.

individual and organisation objectives. The matter of satisfying individual and organisation objectives seems to be the most relevant for our purposes. In other words, how does one develop a translation ethic and at the same time satisfy objectives that are tied into promotion and distribution objectives.

When dealing with modern Bible translations into majority languages, the costs are enormous and the non-profit organization responsible for the project hopes that the product will satisfy the objectives and thus recover part if not all of the initial investment, so that other projects can be initiated. The satisfaction of objectives becomes a powerful player at the translation table. As Towner has indicated, satisfaction may be sought by more than one entity in any given project, such as a National Bible Society, a particular religious confession, etc.¹⁷⁾ As we will see in the examples below, these and other interested parties can exert a tremendous amount of pressure on the translator or translation team.

The examples that we will present exhibit an interesting overlap between marketing and ideological pressures. It is our intention to demonstrate that these issues must be placed forefront in any discussion or development of a Bible translation ethic.

2.1. Marketing— Case studies

Once again, I will revert to first person narrative.

2.1.1. Example 1

For almost ten years I participated in the latest UBS Spanish translation project. The goal was to produce a translation characterized by simple contemporary language which had as its main goal the communication of the message of the Bible. The New Testament was published in the year 2000. This translation is now called *Traducción en Lenguaje Actual*. This is quite an innovative translation of the Bible, where entire bodies of the text were re-structured. The response has been more than positive. I admit that in part, many leaders accept it because they see that it is intended for children. There always has been a condescending attitude toward children.

17) P. Towner, "Ethics and Bible Translation: A Working Paper", 1-12.

The Publications office in the Americas was very happy when they received an order for 100,000 copies of the NT from a Catholic bishop in Venezuela. All was well until somebody called the bishop's attention to the translation of Luke 2:7. The text there says in Spanish "*primer hijo*" (first-born son). Traditional Spanish translations read "*primogénito*." This word means only one thing: *first born*. However, it is not a word that is used in common speech, nor would most children understand it. The bishop however, insisted that we use the traditional historic word. Why? Because the word "*primogénito*", for this bishop, suggested not only first born, but also "only" son. His ideological presuppositions came into play.

From one side, the pressure is exerted for ideological reasons. From the publications unit side, the pressure is financial and market driven. Why should we jeopardize the sale of 100,000 copies because of one simple apparently innocent word? And this could lead to other more catastrophic rejections. The irony of it all is that the New Testament was carefully reviewed and approved by Monseñor Armando Levoratti, a member of the Vatican Bible Commission, and was published with a letter of endorsement by the Archbishop of Tegucigalpa and president of the Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano.

The issue had to be dealt with by those of us who are members of the translation team. What ethical parameters are we to use? Certainly there are no linguistic, exegetical or translational reasons for changing the text. The only reason for changing the text would be to satisfy the need to sell 100,000 copies. On the other hand it compromises our translation philosophy in producing this text. Our studies clearly indicated that the word "*primogénito*" is not a word readily understood by children.

The questions continue to surface: are we to change the translation of a biblical text every time somebody with marketing power requests a change? Does a time ever come in Bible translation work when "enough is enough?" As translators we may have a "Hieronymic Oath" that we follow, we may embrace an ethic based on virtues, furthermore we may have the capacity to clearly differentiate between personal and professional ethics. But the underlying message that we receive seems to be, when "money talks" translators better "shut up" or "put up".

2.1.2. Example 2

The *Traducción en Lenguaje Actual* was challenged by a National Bible Society.

The issue was the translation of 1 John 5:16-17. As translators we discussed the meaning of the text extensively. After much research, we decided to follow what we considered the best exegetical commentaries including the UBS Handbook on *The Letters of John*. Our translation interpreted the text to refer to “spiritual death” or “eternal death” rather than to simply “death” which is quite ambiguous in the context.

This National Bible Society sent a letter to the other General Secretaries of the Latin American National Bible Societies threatening that if we (the translators) did not change the translation of this text in the already published New Testament, they would not distribute the complete *Traducción en Lenguaje Actual*. They required the translators to change the translation so that the text remains ambiguous much like the more literal and traditional translations.

Once again the decision to change a given text is not based on exegetical, historical and linguistic reasons. Nor is it based on some “higher ethic.” The change originates within a pre-conceived ideology. That ideology is the one accepted by a majority of the people who are related to a particular local Bible Society. This National Bible Society then exerts the same kind of ideological pressure on the rest of the National Bible Societies in the continent. However, the threat to not distribute the TLA produces a definite marketing pressure. It is quite clear that a translation of this magnitude required a major investment. Those who participated in this project came from different regions in Latin America. They also represented different specializations. The purpose was to have an interdisciplinary team involved at all stages of the translation. All of this is very costly.

The final outcome was that we were forced to make a change in the text because of this threat. We sacrificed a translation that as specialists we felt was a much better translation because of marketing pressure. What ethic, if any, is operative here? To what extent can we speak of an ethic of representation where the ethical imperative is to represent the source text? Perhaps the ethics of service applies more closely, where the aim of the translation is set by the client and accepted and negotiated by the translator. And yet, the situation here is somewhat different because the client did not set the aim of the translation. The client in this case receives the translation and then exercises power over the product.

Related to this case, one could entertain A. Pym’s comment that an ethics of translation should be able to address moral dilemmas when they arise, but should

not raise them unnecessarily.¹⁸⁾ Did our translation of 1 John 5:16-17 raise a moral dilemma unnecessarily? I am not sure I would characterize the translation as posing a moral dilemma. On the other hand, we as translators are faced with a moral dilemma when we are forced to change a text on the basis of a marketing threat.

2.1.3. Example 3

Still another issue arose when one of the General Secretaries of a National Bible Society returned from an activity with a church that exhibited Pentecostal characteristics. He was alarmed by some of the comments that people made about the *Traducción en Lenguaje Actual*. He immediately shared his concern which was primarily based on the possibility of losing clients. In fact, he also suggested a change in Luke 24:13 where the text talks about two followers of Jesus walking toward Emmaus. In the TLA we translated “*dos de los seguidores*” (two of the followers). The problem that surfaced was based on the interpretation that the two followers may have been a couple, i.e. husband and wife. Since the word “*seguidores*” in Spanish is masculine, this translation ruled out the possibility of suggesting that they were husband and wife.

Once again the issue was not an exegetical, linguistic or translational one. There is no exegetical nor historical basis for understanding the “two of them” as husband and wife. However, the possibility of losing clients generated enough pressure so that the translators had to struggle with a possible change.

2.1.4. Example 4

One of the ongoing debates in Latin American Protestant circles revolves around the use of the name *Jehová*. The most accepted translation for these circles is the Reina Valera in its various revisions. The name for the Tetragrammaton is always *Jehová*. The newer translations have opted for *Señor*, (Lord).

Interestingly enough, a very large and growing neo-pentecostal church known as the Iglesia Universal del Reino de Dios came to a National Bible Society and demanded the following. They said they wanted a Reina Valera 1960 edition but without the name *Jehová*. Instead, they wanted the word *Señor*. The added point of

18) A. Pym, *Translation and Text Transfer*, chapter 7.

pressure came when they said that if the National Bible Society did not provide this kind of text they would go ahead and purchase the *Nueva Versión Internacional* published by the International Bible Society.

The general secretary of that National Bible Society wrote to Dr. Bill Mitchell, the ATCO requesting immediate permission to publish a Reina Valera 1960 with *Señor* instead of *Jehová*. The request was denied, as it should be.

The problem with a request like this is that it is motivated purely by competition and by marketing pressures. This neo-pentecostal church has the potential of purchasing thousands of Bibles. Giving up that market to the International Bible Society is not a pleasant thing for the UBS National Bible Society. The real problem however is that ethical considerations were totally absent when the request was formulated. The only criterion that was operative was market driven. The correct questions were never asked. To what extent can the translation of Reina Valera be altered and still be called Reina Valera? This will be the main issue in the next example. Who has the right to do a simple “search and replace”? Is there such a thing as respect for the source text, and what does that mean? Hard questions like these need to be posed in order to make valid decisions that are supported by an ethic that is not co-opted and coerced by marketing realities.

2.1.5. Example 5

The final example that I will present has a long history and is quite complex. As early as 1994 some of the National Bible Societies in the Americas requested that a Latin American version of the Reina Valera be produced. Initially this proposal did not receive much attention for reasons that need not be mentioned at this point. Some time later, the issue was raised again by various National Bible Societies. The motivation now had changed somewhat. The publication of the *Nueva Versión Internacional* (hereafter NVI) presented a threat to the dominance of the Reina Valera. As it turns out, over a period of time three proposals were generated and presented to the UBS Translation Department. Each proposal had its own characteristics as we shall see, but all of them had a common denominator: urgent market realities.

The first proposal came from the Sociedad Bíblica Argentina. This proposal was subsequently endorsed by other Bible Societies from South America. Essentially the

plan was to adapt the language of the Reina Valera 1995 so that it would reflect Latin American Spanish usage. It would retain the same textual base which is the *Textus Receptus*. The basic argument for proposing this was that the new Reina Valera 1995 Edición Latinoamericana would be the only tool that could compete with the NVI. The NVI used an aggressive marketing message that offered the following to the potential reader: a) translated into contemporary Latin American Spanish b) use of the best manuscripts available c) all translators were “evangelical” Latin American specialists.

The second proposal that emerged as an alternative to the first one was initiated by the Bible Society in Spain. This new product would be called Reina Valera 1995 Segunda Edición. The proposal includes: a) use of the Greek Nestle Aland text of the NT as the textual base, pointing out changes in footnotes, and b) use *Señor* for the Tetragrammaton instead of *Jehová*. Subsequently, this text would then be adapted to Latin American Spanish usage. Both proposals use Reina Valera 1995 as their source text.

The third proposal was presented by the American Bible Society. I must say at the outset that it must be clear that ABS’s proposal concerns not the Reina Valera 1995 but the Reina Valera 1960. It is no secret that the ABS holds the publishing rights of the Reina Valera 1960 revision. I will now directly transcribe some of the wording of the proposal articulated in 2001.

Purpose

To produce a new and thorough text revision of the Reina-Valera Revision of 1960 (RVR 1960) in the language of a new generation of readers and church leaders in both North America and Latin America.

Background

The RVR 1960 is the most used version in Spanish language evangelical and mainline Protestant churches in the United States as well as in Latin America. As the preferred text of pastors and church leaders, it is widely used in church settings for worship and study, in addition to being read in homes. It has been compared to the English KJV, in that like the KJV it is based on the Receptus Text and is the most widely used text in Evangelical churches; however, unlike the KJV, the RVR is the most widely used text in mainline Protestantism as well.

The RVR 1995, was designed to update the out-dated language of the 1960

Revision; however this revision **has failed to compete** (emphasis mine) with the Nueva Versión Internacional (NVI) because it did not go far enough in updating the RVR text.

The Versión Popular (or Dios Habla Hoy) is targeted to both evangelical and Catholic youth. It has a sixth grade reading level. It is equivalent to the GNB/TEV. Biblia en Lenguaje Sencillo (BLS) is for children with a third grade reading level. It is equivalent to the CEV. Market research has shown that the RVR holds great brand loyalty and is the preferred text for church use. However, many people are wearied of the Castilian language found in the RVR 1960.

Introduction to the Proposal

This proposal to prepare a new revision of the RVR is **a response to very real market pressures** (emphasis mine).

Two factors in particular are involved:

(1) When the 1995 revision was done (RVR 95) the scope of the revision itself was far too limited. In the hope of bringing the Spanish text of the RVR 1960 more into line with the contemporary Spanish usage and style (for audiences in the Americas), a minimalist choice was made rather than a maximalist. And there is now a sense among many users that RVR 95 “did not go far enough” in its revision to get beyond outdated Castilian expressions and style so as to enable better understanding via clearer and more contemporary Spanish.

(2) With the publication in 2000 of the NVI (Spanish NIV), which in promotion is now being lauded as a reliably translated Bible in clear and contemporary Spanish, and as a Bible which makes the RVR 95 obsolete, **the RVR market share is under threat** (emphasis mine). To date this promotion has been unrelenting in its negative attacks on the RVR as a Bible (in the NVI viewpoint), which cannot compete for contemporary audiences.

In view of this urgent market need (emphasis mine), this text revision project will enable ABS/UBS to compete with the RVR in this market (emphasis mine). The NRVR text revision committee will take into account what was done in the RVR 95, but the base text will be RVR 1960.

Three proposals were presented to somehow dress-up the Reina Valera so that it can compete with newer and more contemporary translations. The immediate issues involved in these proposals are: a) textual base—*Textus Receptus* or “Critical Text”, b) translation of the Tetragrammaton, and c) adaptation to a contemporary Latin

American Spanish.

The proposals did not prosper at the time they were presented for two main reasons: the UBS consultants along with their ATCO did not agree with the need or the nature of the proposals, b) no funds were made available to the Translation Department to carry out the project. Despite this reality two matters need to be highlighted before I continue the story. First of all, it is quite clear that the underlying and most important motivation was market driven. Fear of losing a piece of the market to the NVI turned into near panic for many National Bible Societies as well as for the Publications department of the Americas. Secondly, it is quite telling that the ABS proposal insists on revising the Reina Valera 1960. Is this a way one to insure a continued monopoly over the version? The issue of who will receive “royalties” for a Latin American version of Reina Valera is no small matter.

To make a long story short, the project lay dormant for approximately two years. Funds were not made available by the UBS World Service Center, and no National Bible Society was willing to allot part of their budget to see the project through. However, things changed radically in 2004. ABS has decided that this is a real necessity and is now willing to finance the project. Despite the strong disagreement of the UBS translators and the many arguments offered against the project by the ATCO of the Americas, the Publications Committee of the Area Board has approved the project and it must be done. Now, two years later, money has not become available, so it seems that the project has died another death.

There are many issues at stake here that concern the translators, and all of these issues have a direct bearing on what ethic if any is followed in these circumstances. First of all there is the question of need. Both translators and ATCO disagree with the way the need has been articulated and argued. The ATCO in his response to the proposal has pointed out clearly that the negative comments on the acceptance of the Reina Valera 1995 are not accurate at all. Secondly, the needs assessment process has been very informal and non-professional. In fact, when a more formal survey was prepared, it was so tendentious that it could never be used as an objective instrument to measure need and interest. Thirdly, there is the whole issue of the textual base of the translation. If one tampers with the textual base, can the translator in good conscience call the product Reina Valera? In other words, to what extent is this a case where the source text is not respected? Furthermore, one could characterize this as a case where the overt intention is to improve the source text.

On what translational ethical grounds can this be done?

Fourthly, there are a number of new translations available in Spanish that meet the criteria suggested by these proposals. These translations offer good contemporary Latin American Spanish and they are based on the best available biblical manuscripts.

Fifthly, there is the serious issue of furthering the “myth” that the only inspired Bible is the Reina Valera. For years the UBS Translation Consultants have been involved teaching in Bible Seminars offered all over the Americas. In these contexts we teach pastors and leaders about translation philosophy, textual history, values and shortcomings of different Spanish translations. In doing so, we attempt to show that Reina Valera, in its various editions, is a good formal translation that has fulfilled its purpose. Originally done in the 16th century, it has had a tremendous impact on the church. At the same time, we show how new versions have improved upon the Reina Valera and that one should not rely on only one translation. By investing in and revising the Reina Valera and turning it into a Latin American hybrid, we are sending mixed messages to the church.

In addition, a major concern is that this project be carried out in a somewhat unprofessional manner. It has been argued that all that is needed is to perform a sort of search and replace technique to accomplish the purpose. One of our translators, Alfredo Tepox performed such an experiment to show the danger and fallacy of such an approach. (See examples in Appendix A, B. A more comprehensive analysis has been offered by our colleague Ron Ross. See especially Appendix C) This method destroys the beautiful Spanish of the Reina Valera and creates an awkward Latin American Spanish version. Poetry is deeply affected, as well as many prose sections. In other words, the task is a very serious and difficult one, and this is not recognized by those pushing to carry out this project.

Finally, it is very clear from the ABS project proposal that the primary concern and motivation is dictated by market realities. There is fear that the NVI will eat into the market share owned and dominated for decades by the National Bible Societies of the UBS. This alone is more important than any ethical or translational principles, or project guidelines that UBS has approved.

This state of affairs raises many ethical questions for the translators who along with their ATCO disagree with the project. Since money at one point was available translators would be forced to participate and carry out a project that goes against

their own principles. Pym has addressed the matter as to whether the translator has a right to refuse to do a translation. He points out that in the code of ethics of the Association des traducteurs littéraires de France (ATLF), 1988, there is a section that asserts the right of the translator to accept or refuse a translation. In this case, the translator's position is quite difficult.¹⁹⁾ To refuse to do this translation is to rebel against authority and thereby risk employment. In addition, if as Pym suggests, when he quotes Goethe that the purpose of a translation is to increase tolerance between the nations, I submit that this translation does not help tolerance.²⁰⁾ This future Latin American version of the Reina Valera will serve to strengthen the mystical powers that the Reina Valera has had over people, and thus nurture intolerance for other UBS Spanish versions as well as versions published by other groups.

Another concern is the violence that can be done to the literary quality of the Reina Valera 1960. As was mentioned before, can this adaptation really be called Reina Valera if you change the textual base, and if you change the essence of the Spanish language from Spain, with all of its particularities? The translators do not think so.

In developing an ethic of Bible translation, it may be healthy to invoke the words of the Hebrew prophets who insist on calling things by their name. As UBS consultants we have been very critical of a version called *Biblia Textual*. This is a personal project initiated by Carlos Fushan who set up his own Bible Society called *Sociedad Bíblica Iberoamericana*. He has published the New Testament, as a very literal translation, based on the "critical text" and changing the Reina Valera Spanish language considerably. Fushan criticizes the Reina Valera in the preface of the published New Testament and also in public meetings, and yet he keeps the name Reina Valera on the cover of his New Testament. It is quite clear that keeping the name on the cover serves marketing strategies. A Bible that has the name Reina Valera on its cover will certainly sell. If we have questioned this practice of others, how ethical is it to be involved in a project which may end up in a similar situation?

19) A. Pym, *Translation and Text Transfer*, chapter 7.

20) *Ibid.*

3. Positive Contributions Offered by Marketing

Having presented these examples, and what we consider are some of the more negative effects of marketing on the Bible translation process, it behooves us to admit that “marketing issues” are not always negative, nor is it always a black and white issue. Marketing has the potential of helping in a very positive way, when it comes to Bible translation ethical matters.²¹⁾

It is no secret that marketing principles help us realize that all our work must have objectives. These objectives must be achieved in the most cost-effective manner as possible. Some suggest that we have no moral right to work any other way. When considering objectives, marketing can be understood as no more than strategies to approach markets. If markets are defined as people, then clearly defined objectives that arise out of careful market research can help Bible translation agencies waste less time and money on superfluous materials that nobody will use. Thus, marketing surely can help with careful “needs assessment” studies. These can help agencies determine where and in what it should invest funds that are so difficult to generate in the twenty-first century. Marketing can also help significantly in the area of quantities. Good stewardship can be greatly aided by an adequate use of marketing techniques.

If indeed one can define markets as no more than people, then one must admit that markets can be unscrupulous and unethical. But one perhaps should not assume this from the outset. In other words markets should not be defined *a priori* as being unethical. Though the promotion aspect can easily compromise ethical decisions so as to sell more, this need not be the case. In fact, the promotion aspect of marketing can help the translators crystallize what they really believe about their translations. In addition, marketing questions can help the translators identify their own blind spots, and thus help eliminate excessive cultural baggage and theological subjectivities.

Market questions can also help the translators balance loyalties. Bible translators have a tendency to be extremely loyal to the source text. Academic and exegetical commitments take precedence over everything else. Market questions can help translators be loyal to the client as well. The public for whom the Bible translation

21) I wish to acknowledge and thank my colleague Susan Mills for her insights in this regard. I depend heavily on her ideas in this section.

is offered deserves the loyalty and commitment of the Bible translator as well. This delicate balance is difficult to achieve, especially when the audience is conditioned by tradition and other factors that do not allow it to accept new knowledge and superior translations.

In conclusion, marketing can act as a most helpful instrument if it is infused with a humanitarian concern and does not force the translator to compromise important ethical decisions. If marketing is driven exclusively by a concern for profits, then the waters tend to get very muddy. It seems to me that there should always be room for negotiating, but at the same time there should always be room for ethical values.

4. Towards an Ethic of Bible Translation

The previous discussion has been articulated so as to serve as a catalyst for thinking about a Bible translation ethic. In some sense, the purpose is to begin with the more pragmatic and move on to the more theoretical sphere. It is our contention that the real examples need to nurture the development of any theoretical framework.

We stated at the outset that our intention was not to develop a rigid ethic that would provide closure to the discussion. The examples offered suggest that it would be presumptuous to think that one could offer a full-fledged ethic that is capable of embracing all translation issues in all cultures. This is especially true if one is at least somewhat skeptical as to whether any given translation can ever be adequately accomplished. Lyotard is perhaps correct when he says that translation in any form is virtually impossible, since each language has its own set of rules that are culturally determined and temporally specific.²²⁾ Lyotard also contends that translation is not only an infinite task with no closure, but that every translation begets another one. In other words, translation is an ongoing process that is never neat and tidy. Loose ends appear constantly and that is part and parcel of the nature of translation. In fact, Yengoyan may be right when he asserts that: “translation is a form of house-cleaning which might be tidy, but the real beauty of house-cleaning is

22) Aram Yengoyan, “Lyotard and Wittgenstein and the Question of Translation”, P. Rubel and A. Rosman, eds., *Translating Cultures* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), chapter 1. See also, Jean-Francoise Lyotard, *La condición postmoderna* (Buenos Aires: Red Editorial Iberoamericana, 1995).

to keep disorder and partial chaos as part of the process.”²³⁾

This same reality applies to the attempt to articulate a Bible translation ethic. Closure and comprehensiveness may be an impossibility and to a certain degree undesirable. This may be the reason why Chesterman after describing in detail four basic models of translation ethics, i.e., *ethics of representation*, *ethics of service*, *ethics of communication* and *norm-based ethics*, comes to the disappointing conclusion that,

All in all, these four models are only partial ones; each covers only part of the general ethical field of translation, and each seems therefore inadequate on its own. Maybe we should go back to the beginning and start again.²⁴⁾

Chesterman then goes on to develop an ethic based on virtues rather than values. His approach is helpful and we will build on it. However, we submit that even this model is partial and inadequate on its own. This is not so much a problem of the model itself. The problem in our estimation is the very chaos that translation itself represents. Translation is never neutral and therefore by extension a translation ethic is never neutral.

Our proposal for a Bible translation ethic begins by stating that due to the nature of the translation process itself, it will inevitably be subjective, partial, and flexible and will not pretend to bring closure to the discussion. Perhaps what we are proposing is a kind of minimalist picture. This picture is somewhat similar to what the Ancient Greeks taught us through Heraclites’ insight that one can never step in the same river again. Contexts, language, cultures, ideas, change constantly and this is what needs to be in the background of any theoretical articulation. This picture, as was stated above will always be subjective and cannot claim to be absolute in any sense of the word. This is partly due to the fact that Bible translation is always done in a socio-cultural context. These realities in our opinion do not take away from the possibility of suggesting a course of action that can be considered viable and legitimate.

We will begin by building on Chesterman’s suggestion that virtues such as trustworthiness, truthfulness, fairness, and the courage to take risks in caring for others are valid, human qualities to be pursued in developing a Bible translation

23) Ibid.

24) A. Chesterman, “Proposal for a Hieronymic Oath”, 139-154.

ethic. Admittedly, one has to be conscious that each one of these terms needs to be more clearly defined. For example, what is fairness? Who defines it? Does the idea, concept, and/or practice of fairness vary from one culture to another? But, whatever the answers are to these questions, we can agree with Chesterman that these virtues involve human relationships. It is at this point that we would like to introduce a concept that could be understood as one that can sustain a Bible translation ethic. We suggest that a translation ethic should be one that “composes”, that sets things or persons right, that makes right, that settles. Spinoza speaks of something similar in more ontological terms.²⁵⁾ We take up Spinoza’s suggestion and apply it to the translator and translation process and say that an “ethical” translation is one that “composes” and therefore empowers. Stated in opposite terms, any translation that diminishes, or “disempowers”, is not an ethical translation, subjective as it may sound. We are suggesting that this framework ought to prevail over matters of ideology, religious confession, marketing, and other related issues. The goal of the translator and subsequently of the translation should be to “compose” in the sense of placing in proper form, of settling, and of making right. This in turn, empowers an individual, a community or a situation. A translator should attempt to provide dignity, worth, and value through the translation produced.

We state this in very general categories because the reality of Bible translation is quite complex. First of all, Bible translation is a process that is never finished. It is a never-ending story that for a variety of reasons goes on and on. Secondly, in our experience the translator-client relationship is never clear cut. By this we mean that we are not hired directly by those who will read our Bible translations. In fact, we may have to speak of multiple clients: National Bible Society, denominational leaders (missionaries), indigenous leaders, and indigenous communities. And yet, none of these pay our salaries directly. Thirdly, it is very different if we are producing the only Bible that any given community will read, or if we are producing a Bible for a majority language. S. Noorda is quite forceful when he writes:

Because Bible Societies subsidize the production and sale of Bibles that are made available in ‘poor’ areas of the world, they can establish a monopoly and provide the only version of the Bible that many readers will ever see or hear...Those who are not able to choose will be at the mercy, so to speak, of

25) G. Deleuze, *En Medio de Spinoza* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Cactus, 2004).

whatever theology or translation principle has driven the one version that they have, a fact that should provide food for thought.²⁶⁾

We do not mean to be critical of the work of the Bible Society. After all, one Bible is better than none. All we want to do is to raise consciousness of this reality when trying to articulate a translation ethic. Issues of commercial power, monopoly, and so forth cannot be ignored. It is in light of this that we suggest that a Bible translation ethic should seek to compose and in this way empower the “other” to be, to have life.

A necessary component of this ethic is “service.” This is quite different from the ethics of service as explained by Chesterman. Since we are suggesting an ethic for Bible translation, we feel it is legitimate to suggest a more theological nuance for the concept of service. By this we mean that translators and translations ought to be infused with a spirit of service on behalf of the fellow-human being. The translation should not be an end in and of itself. The translator should continually ask: how can this translation best serve the so-called “client.” At this point we are not as concerned about loyalty as Chesterman is, for loyalty has the potential of exercising a compromising effect on the translator. We are concerned however that a deep sense of service infuse the entire translation process.

Finally, as part of this Bible translation ethic we propose that “liberation” has to go along side the intent to compose, to empower and to serve.²⁷⁾ Bible translation should be a process whereby liberation in its broadest sense is achieved. This will certainly be contextually and culturally determined. And yet, the intent to liberate needs to be present throughout the entire process of Bible translation. The translation process of the Bible should not become one more institution, or one more subsystem (Foucault) which directly or indirectly facilitates the “exclusion of the other.” We suggest that an ethic of liberation is needed to keep the Bible translation process from becoming an entity of power that places people “outside.” On the contrary it should bring the “other” inside and nurture life in its full expression. The ethic must seek to articulate the feasibility of a horizon of life, rather than the

26) S. Norad, “New and Familiar: The Dynamics of Bible Translation”, A. Brenner and J. W. van Henten, eds., *Bible Translation on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 26-27, 30.

27) E. Dussel, *Ética de la liberación en la edad de la globalización y de la exclusión* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 2004), 1-661. A comprehensive treatment on the ethics of liberation for a globalized World.

building of walls of exclusion, marginalization and death. An ethic of liberation must engage in a transformative action by which all of the knowledge employed in the translation process is for the development of life. Many of the Bible translation projects are done on behalf of, in the interest of, for the sake of, and in conjunction with communities of victims, or “victimized communities.” That is why an ethic of liberation is so imperative. An ethic of liberation will provide the opportunity for the Bible translation process to intervene creatively in the qualitative progress of history. It represents the channel by which the translation process can transform the sword into a plow that will open the way for the development of life.

An ethic of liberation is an ethic of responsibility for the “other.” It could be called an ethic of radical responsibility, because it will not pass by on the other side when confronted with a victim. The responsibility for the other who is vulnerable, who is suffering becomes the litmus test of an ethic of Bible translation. It is our contention that if liberation is absent, from any ethical construct, then we would call that construct something else. Given the devastating realities that most people experience on planet earth, a Bible translation ethic needs to demand that liberation become an integral component of its framework. We state this passionately, while at the same time acknowledging that it is a subjective matter,

In conclusion, we consider that these elements, though not absolute or comprehensive, are necessary for a Bible translation ethic, so that matters of ideology, marketing, interest groups, and personal agendas, can be addressed in such a way that no single one of them dominates the translation process. What is clear to us is that this discussion, much like Bible translation, is and should be a never ending process. What we propose is not meant to bring closure to the issue but simply to provide some principles that in our consideration are essential. Nevertheless questions still remain. How do we ethically address a situation where a National Bible Society decides not to carry forth any more translation projects? Is there an ethical responsibility towards the translator in such a case? How do we infuse an ethical framework with justice and by this we mean biblical justice? These and many other questions still remain to be addressed. It is these considerations that lead us to emphasize that a Bible translation ethic must remain provisional, flexible and open to new horizons.

APPENDIX A

El Sermón del monte: Las bienaventuranzas

(Lc. 6:20-23)

¹Viendo la multitud, subió al monte; y sentándose, vinieron a él sus discípulos. ²Y abriendo su boca les enseñaba, diciendo:

³Bienaventurados los pobres en espíritu, porque de ellos es el reino de los cielos.

⁴Bienaventurados los que lloran,^{a)} porque ellos recibirán consolación.

⁵Bienaventurados los mansos,^{b)} porque ellos recibirán la tierra por heredad.

⁶Bienaventurados los que tienen hambre y sed^{c)} de justicia, porque ellos serán saciados.

⁷Bienaventurados los misericordiosos, porque ellos alcanzarán misericordia.

⁸Bienaventurados los de limpio corazón,^{d)} porque ellos verán a Dios.

⁹Bienaventurados los pacificadores, porque ellos serán llamados hijos de Dios.

¹⁰Bienaventurados los que padecen persecución por causa de la justicia,^{e)} porque de ellos es el reino de los cielos.

¹¹Bienaventurados **son ustedes** cuando por mi causa **los** vituperen y **los** persigan, y digan toda clase de mal contra **ustedes**, mintiendo.^{f)} ¹²**Regocijense y alégrense**, porque **su** galardón es grande en los cielos; porque así persiguieron a los profetas^{g)} que fueron antes **que ustedes**.

La sal de la tierra

¹³**Ustedes son** la sal de la tierra; pero si la sal se **desvaneciera**, ¿con qué **sería** salada? No **serviría** más para nada, sino para ser echada fuera y **pisoteada** por **la gente**.^{h)}

La luz del mundo

a) 5:4; Isa 61:2.

b) 5:5; Sal 37:11.

c) 5:6; Isa 55: 1-2.

d) 5:8; Sal 24:4.

e) 5:10; 1 Pe 3:14.

f) 5:11; 1 Pe 4:14.

g) 5:12; 2 Co 36:16; Hec 7:52.

h) 5:13; Mar 9:50; Lev 14:34-35.

¹⁴Ustedes son la luz del mundo;ⁱ⁾ una ciudad asentada sobre un monte no se puede esconder. ¹⁵Ni se enciende una luz y se pone debajo de un cajón, sino sobre el candelero,^{j)} y alumbr a todos los que están en casa. ¹⁶Así alumbr e la luz de ustedes delante de la gente, para que vea sus buenas obras, y glorifique al Padre de ustedes, que está en los cielos.^{k)}

Jesús y la ley

¹⁷No piensen ustedes que he venido para abrogar la ley o los profetas; no he venido para abrogar, sino para cumplir. ¹⁸Porque de cierto les digo que hasta que pasen el cielo y la tierra, ni una jota ni una tilde pasará de la ley, hasta que todo se haya cumplido.^{l)} ¹⁹De manera que cualquiera que quebrante uno de estos mandamientos muy pequeños, y así enseñe a la gente, muy pequeño será llamado en el reino de los cielos; mas cualquiera que los haga y los enseñe, éste será llamado grande en el reino de los cielos. ²⁰Porque les digo que si la justicia de ustedes no fuera mayor que la de los escribas y fariseos, no entrarán en el reino de los cielos.

Jesús y la ira

(Lc. 12:57-59)

²¹Ustedes oyeron que se dijo a los antiguos: No matarás;^{m)} y cualquiera que llegue a matar será culpable de juicio. ²²Pero yo les digo que cualquiera que se enoje contra su hermano, será culpable de juicio; y cualquiera que diga: Necio, a su hermano, será culpable ante el concilio; y cualquiera que le diga: Fatuo, quedará expuesto al infierno de fuego. ²³Por tanto, si traes tu ofrenda al altar, y allí te acuerdas de que tu hermano tiene algo contra ti, ²⁴deja allí tu ofrenda delante del altar, y anda, reconcíliate primero con tu hermano, y entonces ven y presenta tu ofrenda. ²⁵Ponte de acuerdo con tu adversario pronto, entre tanto que estás con él en el camino, no sea que el adversario te entregue al juez, y el juez al alguacil, y seas echado en la cárcel. ²⁶De cierto te digo que no saldrás de allí, hasta que pagues el último cuadrante.

i) 5:14; Jua 8:12; 9:5.

j) 5:15; Mar 4:21; Lev 8:16; 11:33.

k) 5:16; 1 Pe 2:12.

l) 5:18; Lev 16:17.

m) 5:21; Éxo 20:13; Deu 5:17.

Jesús y el adulterio

²⁷Ustedes oyeron que se dijo: No cometerás adulterio.ⁿ⁾ ²⁸Pero yo les digo que cualquiera que mira a una mujer para codiciarla, ya adulteró con ella en su corazón. ²⁹Por tanto, si tu ojo derecho te es ocasión de caer, sácalo, y échalo de ti; pues mejor es que pierdas uno de tus miembros, y no que todo tu cuerpo sea echado al infierno.^{o)} ³⁰Y si tu mano derecha te es ocasión de caer, córtala, y échala de ti; pues mejor es que pierdas uno de tus miembros, y no que todo tu cuerpo sea echado al infierno.^{p)}

Jesús y el divorcio

³¹También se dijo: Si alguien repudia a su mujer, que le dé carta de divorcio.^{q)} ³²Pero yo les digo que el que repudia a su mujer, a no ser por causa de fornicación, hace que ella adúltere; y el que se casa con la repudiada, comete adulterio.^{r)}

Jesús y los juramentos

³³Además han oído que se dijo a los antiguos: No perjurarás,^{s)} sino cumplirás al Señor tus juramentos.^{t)} ³⁴Pero yo les digo: No juren en ninguna manera;^{u)} ni por el cielo, porque es el trono de Dios;^{v)} ³⁵ni por la tierra, porque es el estrado de sus pies;^{w)} ni por Jerusalén, porque es la ciudad del gran Rey.^{x)} ³⁶Ni por tu cabeza jurarás, porque no puedes hacer blanco o negro un solo cabello. ³⁷Al contrario, que el hablar de ustedes sea: Sí, sí; no, no; porque lo que es más de esto, procede del mal.

El amor hacia los enemigos

(Lc. 6:27-36)

n) 5:27; Éxo 20:14; Deu 5:18.

o) 5:29; Mat 18:9; Mar 9:47.

p) 5:30; Mat 18:8; Mar 9:43.

q) 5:31; Deu 24:1-4; Mat 19:7; Mar 10:4.

r) 5:32; Mat 19:9; Mar 10:11-12; Lev 16:18; 1 Co 7:10-11.

s) 5:33; Lev 19:12.

t) 5:33; Núm 30:2; Deu 23:21.

u) 5:34; San 5:12.

v) 5:34; Isa 66:1; Mat 23:22.

w) 5:35; Isa 66:1.

x) 5:35; Sal 48:2.

³⁸Ustedes oyeron que se dijo: Ojo por ojo, y diente por diente.^{y)} ³⁹Pero yo les digo: No resistan al que es malo; antes, a cualquiera que te hiera en la mejilla derecha, vuélvele también la otra; ⁴⁰y al que quiera ponerte a pleito y quitarte la túnica, déjale también la capa; ⁴¹y a cualquiera que te obligue a llevar carga por una milla, ve con él dos. ⁴²Al que te pida, dale; y al que quiera tomar de ti prestado, no se lo niegues.

⁴³Ustedes oyeron que se dijo: Amarás a tu prójimo,^{z)} y aborrecerás a tu enemigo. ⁴⁴Pero yo les digo: Amen a sus enemigos, bendigan a quienes los maldicen, hagan bien a quienes los aborrecen, y oren por quienes los ultrajan y los persiguen; ⁴⁵para que sean hijos de su Padre que está en los cielos, que hace salir su sol sobre malos y buenos, y que hace llover sobre justos e injustos. ⁴⁶Porque si ustedes aman a quienes los aman, ¿qué recompensa tendrán? ¿No hacen también lo mismo los publicanos? ⁴⁷Y si saludan solamente a sus hermanos, ¿qué hacen de más? ¿No hacen también así los gentiles? ⁴⁸Así que sean ustedes perfectos, como perfecto es el Padre de ustedes, que está en los cielos.^{a)}

APPENDIX B

El rey de gloria

Salmo de David.

¹ Del Señor es la tierra y su plenitud;^a

El mundo, y los que en él habitan.

² Porque él la fundó sobre los mares,

Y la afirmó sobre los ríos.

³ ¿Quién subirá al monte del Señor?

¿Y quién estará en su lugar santo?

⁴ El limpio de manos y puro de corazón;^b

El que no ha elevado su alma a cosas vanas,

Ni jurado con engaño.

y) 5:38; Exo 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deu 19:21.

z) 5:43; Lev 19:18.

a) 5:48; Deu 18:13.

⁵ El recibirá bendición **del Señor**,
Y justicia del Dios de salvación.

⁶ Tal es la generación de los que le buscan,
De los que buscan tu rostro, oh Dios de Jacob. *Selah*

⁷ **Alcen**, oh puertas, **sus** cabezas,
Y **álcense ustedes**, puertas eternas,
Y entrará el Rey de gloria.

⁸ ¿Quién es este Rey de gloria?

El Señor, el fuerte y valiente,
El Señor, el poderoso en batalla.

⁹ **Alcen**, oh puertas, **sus** cabezas,
Y **álcense ustedes**, puertas eternas,
Y entrará el Rey de gloria.

¹⁰ ¿Quién es este Rey de gloria?

El Señor de los ejércitos,
El es el Rey de la gloria. *Selah*

APPENDIX C

Adaptación del texto de la Reina-Valera (versión de 1960) al español de América Ejemplos de modificaciones que serían necesarias

La Sociedad Bíblica Estadounidense se ha propuesto publicar una edición de la traducción de Reina-Valera (Revisión de 1960) en el español de América. La decisión de emprender semejante tarea obedece a motivos de *marketing* e implica realizar una revisión mucho más a fondo que ninguna de las anteriores. Se pretende que el resultado sea un lenguaje que le suene natural al oído latinoamericano e implica no solo americanizar el español de Reina y Valera, sino también modernizarlo. Quizá esto último sea lo más difícil. Reina hizo su traducción en los albores de los Siglos de Oro de la literatura española. Se publicó en 1569. Cualquier idioma sufre cambios considerables en cuatro siglos y medio. Ciertamente se han introducido modificaciones en las revisiones de 1862 y 1909, pero se conserva el sabor arcaico que le caracteriza y es precisamente eso lo que hace que a muchos les

suene a Biblia. Los ejemplos que se consignan a continuación no son más que eso, ejemplos. Se ha procurado dar ejemplos de las distintas áreas del lenguaje en las que habría que hacer modificaciones. Los comentarios se basan en la Revisión de 1960, que es la que se pretende adaptar.

1. éxico (palabras de uso restringido en América, de significado diferente: pámpano, langosta (= ‘saltamontes’), etc. Creo que la mayoría de estos casos se resolvieron en la edición de 60.

2. Morfología

2.1 El uso de vosotros. El uso de *vosotros* es un rasgo peninsular en cierto sentido.

En gran parte de España se emplea *vosotros* pero a diferencia del uso bíblico, alterna con *ustedes*. En la Biblia se emplea exclusivamente *vosotros* como pronombre de la segunda persona plural, uso que no corresponde al lenguaje verdadero de ningún lugar. Desde luego que no solo habría que cambiar el pronombre *vosotros*, sino también el pronombre objetivo *os* y todas las formas verbales correspondientes. En su lugar se usarían *ustedes* y los pronombres objetivos (los/las/les) y formas verbales de la tercera persona plural.

2.2 La alternancia usted/tú. En el español de RV *tú* y *ti* son las únicas formas de la segunda persona singular. Es decir, se omite la alternancia *tú/usted* usual en la mayoría de los dialectos del español para marcar diferencias de poder y de solidaridad. Habría que incluir esta alternancia no solo para acercar el lenguaje de Reina al español americano, sino para no deformar el sistema de tratamiento usual en casi todos los países. (Por supuesto que en América hay bastantes países en que priva el *voseo*. Pero el sistema es similar aunque las formas difieran.)

2.3 El imperfecto de subjuntivo. En el lenguaje de Reina, al igual que el español peninsular actual, prevalece el imperfecto de subjuntivo en ‘-se’: *tuviese, llegase, perdiese, supiese, salvase, etc.* En la mayor parte de América Latina se prefieren las formas en ‘-ra’: *tuviera, llegara, perdiera, etc.*, si bien no faltan quienes utilicen las formas terminadas en -se en registros formales. Por lo

menos habría que reducir la preponderancia de formas en *-se*. Este cambio se ha hecho, cuando menos de manera incipiente, en la Revisión del 95 (ver por ej.: Mt. 1.22; 2.15; 2.23; 4.14; 8.17; 12.17; 13.35, etc.).

2.4 El futuro de subjuntivo. El futuro de subjuntivo está prácticamente extinto en todas partes. Hace 30 años se usaba de cuando en cuando en documentos oficiales de la Universidad de Costa Rica, pero hoy se sentiría como una pedantería. Es muy común en la Revisión del 60 y tendría que eliminarse por completo: *si la sal se desvaneciere; si alguno no os recibiere; si ganare todo el mundo y perdiere su alma; si dos de vosotros se pusieren de acuerdo; si tocara solamente su manto, será salva, etc.* El futuro de subjuntivo se sustituye o por el presente de indicativo o por el presente de subjuntivo, de acuerdo con la sintaxis de la oración. No he podido encontrar casos del futuro de subjuntivo en la revisión de 1960.

2.5 El leísmo de Reina. Si bien en América Latina hay zonas de leísmo (por ej.: la sierra ecuatoriana), prevalece en la mayoría de los países el uso de *lo* y *la* como complementos directos pronominales ya sea de persona o de cosa. (En muchos lugares se emplea *le* con valor de complemento directo de verbos que tengan un bajo nivel de transitividad o cuando el complemento directo supera en animidad al propio sujeto.) Reina es bastante leísta y precisamente en casos en que no lo serían la mayoría de los latinoamericanos: *venimos a adorarle; para poder acusarle; Herodes quería matarle; para tentarle; buscaba oportunidad para entregarle; le llevaron para crucificarle; veamos si Elías viene a librarle.* Muchos casos de leísmo se eliminaron en la Revisión del 95.

3. Sintaxis.

3.1 La pasiva perifrástica. En el lenguaje de Reina abundan los casos de la pasiva perifrástica (ser + participio pasivo ['Las reinas fueron recibidas con júbilo']), mientras que la pasiva con *-se* parece que se emplea mucho menos. No he encontrado en el texto de la RVR ningún caso de la construcción impersonal ('Se recibió a las reinas con júbilo'), aunque es muy común en la lengua moderna.

3.2 La traducción de los participios. En el griego antiguo el uso de los participios es constante, y en el texto de Reina se han traducido casi siempre por gerundios, lo cual hace que a menudo el texto esté sobrecargado de gerundios. Esto podría parecerle al lector un rasgo arcaizante, pero es probable que se trate más bien de un ejemplo de la interferencia de la lengua fuente en la estructura de la lengua receptora. La superabundancia de gerundios persiste en la Revisión del 95, pero se ha corregido, por ejemplo, en la TLA:

RVR60: ²² *Pero Jesús, volviéndose y mirándola, dijo: Ten ánimo, hija; tu fe te ha salvado. Y la mujer fue salva desde aquella hora.* ²³ *Al entrar Jesús en la casa del principal, viendo a los que tocaban flautas . . .*

TLA: ²² Jesús **se dio vuelta, vio** a la mujer y le dijo: «Ya no te preocupes, tu confianza en Dios te ha sanado». Y desde ese momento la mujer quedó sana. ²³ Jesús siguió su camino hasta la casa del jefe judío. Cuando llegó, **vio** a los músicos preparados para el entierro . . .)

RVR60: ³⁵ *Recorría Jesús todas las ciudades y aldeas, enseñando en las sinagogas de ellos, y predicando el evangelio del reino, y sanando toda enfermedad y toda dolencia en el pueblo.*^{e 36}

TLA: ³⁵ Jesús recorría todas las ciudades y pueblos. **Enseñaba** en las sinagogas, **anunciaba** las buenas noticias del reino de Dios y **sanaba** a la gente que sufría de dolores y de enfermedades.)

RVR60: ²³ *Estando en Jerusalén en la fiesta de la pascua, muchos creyeron en su nombre, viendo las señales que hacía.*

TLA: **Mientras** Jesús **estaba** en la ciudad de Jerusalén, durante la fiesta de la Pascua, muchos creyeron en él porque **vieron** los milagros que hacía.

3.3 Colocación del verbo. En el español de RVR60 se percibe una fuerte tendencia a colocar el verbo al final de la cláusula como era usual en los siglos 16 y 17:

Antes que Felipe te LLAMARA, cuando estabas debajo de la higuera, te VI
-> *Te vi bajo la higuera antes que te llamara Felipe.*

Cosas mayores que estas VERÁS → Verás cosas más importantes que estas

Y Asa, y el pueblo que con él estaba → Y Asa, y el pueblo que estaba con él

El español tiene un alto grado de flexibilidad en la sintaxis y no cabe duda que se presentan situaciones pragmáticas que favorecen la posposición del verbo. Pero me parece bastante más común en el español de Reina que en la lengua actual. La posición que ocupe un constituyente dentro de una oración la determina la pragmática y me parece que las reglas de la pragmática actual difieren bastante de las de antes.

- 3.4 Frasas adverbiales arcaizantes: *en gran manera, en días de Herodes, he aquí, con muy grande gozo, de cierto os digo.*
- 3.5 Otras locuciones arcaicas: Sospecho que las locuciones arcaicas *Levántate y toma al niño; y tomó Roboam por mujer a Mahalat; en el quinto año del rey Roboam; y era Roboam de cuarenta y un años; y huyeron los hijos de Israel delante de Judá; y les tomaron muy grande boñín; ceñía sus lomos con un cinturón de cuero; y le habló y dijo;* el uso frecuente del verbo ‘subir’ con un sentido que le es ajeno en el español general y que puede ser interferencia del hebreo: *subirá a atacar; entonces subirá el pueblo, cada uno derecho hacia adelante; y subió Judá y Jehová entregó en sus manos; ¿Quién de nosotros subirá primero a pelear con los cananeos?*
- 3.6 La ausencia del pronombre dativo. En la lengua moderna es casi de rigor en la mayoría de las regiones de habla hispana el uso del pronombre dativo *le* aunque esté presente también la frase nominal completa. No así en el lenguaje de Reina. *Dijo Elías a Eliseo; luego envié a él un capitán; y el rey envió a él un hombre; y envió a él un profeta.* En todos estos casos, en el lenguaje latinoamericano moderno se usaría *le* y en muchos casos se prescindiría de *a él*. De hecho, los pronombres preposicionales se consideran como enfáticos.
- 3.7 El presente perfecto: En ciertos casos, el uso que se le da al presente perfecto es más característico de España que de América: *el rey ha dicho que descendas;*

es porque Jehová le ha dicho que maldiga a David; el rey ha dicho que salgas.
En América sería más esperable, por ejemplo: *El rey dijo que salieras.*

4. Aspectos sociolingüísticos: No solo habría que introducir el ‘usted’, sino que habría que acomodar el sistema de tratamiento al sistema hispanoamericano, que no es, dicho sea de paso, un sistema monolítico. Ahora en la RVR y en la gran mayoría de las versiones españolas, el sistema de tratamiento del español está anulado. Todo el mundo se trata de tú con todo el mundo en una especie de lenguaje bíblico que no se usa fuera de la Biblia y las películas religiosas que pasan en Semana Santa. La introducción del ‘usted’ implica analizar todas y cada una de las situaciones dialógicas que se dan en el texto bíblico y decidir si son simétricas (tú ~ tú o bien *usted ~ usted*) o asimétricas (tú ~ *usted*). Y eso implica un análisis social. Hoy en día un sistema de tratamiento basado en el poder se está convirtiendo en uno basado en la solidaridad. Pero dudo que un sistema solidario sirva en el contexto bíblico. Nos pueden ayudar *Dios habla hoy* y la *Nueva versión internacional*, las únicas versiones en español que han tomado en cuenta el tratamiento y que, por lo mismo, ya han hecho gran parte del trabajo. Hay que señalar, sin embargo, que se quedaron cortos en el Nuevo Testamento.

<Keyword>

ethics, Bible translation, ideology, marketing, liberation

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<abstract>

성서 번역과 윤리에 대한 고찰

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본 연구에서는 번역과 관련된 몇몇 실제 상황들을 조심스럽게 살펴봄으로써 성서 번역과 윤리의 문제를 분석하려고 시도할 것이다. 사례 연구라는 방법론에서 두 개의 중요한 현실적인 문제가 대두되는데, 하나는 “이데올로기”이고 다른 하나는 “마케팅”이다. 본 연구는 이 두 가지 현실적인 문제들이 번역 과정에 끼치는 압력과 영향력을 탐구한다. 성서 번역은 결코 이 두 가지 절박한 문제들이 끼치는 압력으로부터 완전히 자유로울 수는 없으며, 따라서 성서 번역 윤리는 이것들의 영향을 받기 마련이다. 본 연구는 마지막 부분에서 유동적인, 그러나 동시에 이것들을 극복할 수 있는 성서 번역 윤리를 제안하고자 한다. 어떤 성서 번역 윤리이든, 그것이 발전되고 형성될 때 사람들의 요구가 맨 앞에, 그리고 가장 중심 자리에 위치해야 한다고 본 연구는 제안한다.

(민경식 역)