

**The different editions of *The Book of Mormon* in Spanish,
or the possibility of censored retranslation in search of
quality, accuracy and balance**

***(Las distintas ediciones de El libro de Mormón en español o la
posibilidad de la retraducción censurada en la búsqueda de la
calidad, la precisión y el equilibrio)***

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Resumen: *The Book of Mormon* (1930) no es solo un libro sagrado que asegura ser una traducción, sino que además es uno de los textos que más veces ha sido traducido y retraducido. El español constituye un muy buen ejemplo entre estas muchas lenguas a las que ha sido traducido. La primera versión española data del año 1875 y desde entonces se han publicado una serie constante de revisiones y retraducciones realizadas por diferentes traductores profesionales y no profesionales en 1886, 1929, 1952, 1988 y 1992. Todos ellos fueron proyectos de traducción promovidos y supervisados por la misma Iglesia Mormona. El presente artículo, en consecuencia, comparará todas estas versiones con el fin de valorar su calidad y las diferencias entre las mismas siguiendo un enfoque empírico. Además, se tendrán en cuenta diversas propuestas consolidadas de traducción bíblica y de textos sagrados, y la posibilidad de argumentar la necesidad de un tipo de censura necesario y responsable, sobre todo cuando se trata de escrituras sagradas, que produzca un proceso constante de retraducción que se encamine hacia una calidad, la precisión y el equilibrio cada vez mayores del texto traducido.

Palabras clave: *El libro de Mormón*, escrituras, retraducción, censura, literal, dinámica/funcional, inglés-español.

Abstract: *The Book of Mormon* (1930) is not only a sacred book that claims to be a translation itself, but also one of the texts that has been translated and retranslated more frequently. Spanish is a very good example of the many languages into which it has been translated. It was translated for the first time in Spanish in 1875, and has seen a number of revisions and retranslations by different professional and non-professional translators in 1886, 1929, 1952, 1988 and 1992. They were all planned and controlled translation projects promoted by the Mormon Church itself. This article seeks to compare

¹ I am grateful to Professor James Jewell from Salt Lake City and a former member of staff of the Translation Department of the Mormon Church, for his kindness and friendly conversation, and for providing me with all the materials that has made this article possible.

all these versions in order to ascertain their quality and the differences between them. The focus will be empirical, the traditional proposals for *Bible* and scriptural translation will be taken into account, and the possibility of a type of necessary censored retranslation process in search of quality, accuracy and balance will be discussed – a must when dealing with the challenges involved in scriptural translation.

Key words: *The Book of Mormon*, scriptural texts, retranslation, censorship, literal, dynamic/functional, English-Spanish.

INTRODUCTION

As there is a Jewish *Bible* and many a Christian *Bible*, displaying different numbers of canonical books, strictly speaking, there is also a Mormon “scriptural text similar to the Bible” with its own canon of ancient scriptural writings, including the collective *The Book of Mormon--Another Testament of Jesus Christ*, consisting of fifteen different Books, from the *First Book of Nephi* to the closing *Book of Moroni*,² originating in the Americas, and compiling annals and records dating from 600 BC to 421 AD.

As proven by the huge number of published bibliographies, in recent years there has been much interest in studying Mormonism³ and conducting scholarly research on the history of this still new religion (Bushman and Bushman 1999, 2001; Busman 2004, 2008; Givens 2002, 2007, 2008; Hansen 2009; Stein 2003), its theology (Maffly-Kipp 2009; Mouw 2009) or its prophet-founder Joseph Smith Jr. (Albanese 2009; Barker and Christensen 2009; Brodhead 2009; Bushman 1984, 2007a, 2007b, 2009; Givens 2009; Hudson 2009; Neilsen 2009).⁴ However, there is one rewarding field of study that is still virgin territory as far as *The Book of Mormon* is concerned. There seems to have been insufficient researchers interested in approaching this scriptural text from the viewpoints of translation and Translation Studies. This neglect can be regarded as difficult to understand as Joseph Smith, on the one hand, always claimed that he was the only translator into English of an original that was written in a very exotic old language, and, on the other hand,⁵ *The Book of Mormon* has now been translated into more than one

² *The Book of Mormon. Another Testament of Jesus Christ* consists of the following books: *First Book of Nephi*, *Second Book of Nephi*, *Book of Jacob*, *Book of Enos*, *Book of Jarom*, *Book of Omni*, *The Words of Mormon*, *Book of Mosiah*, *Book of Alma*, *Book of Helaman*, *Third Nephi*, *Fourth Nephi*, *Book of Mormon*, *Book of Ether*, and *Book of Moroni*.

³ The Mormon Church is known officially as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS).

⁴ For access to a large online library on the Mormon Church visit: www.lds.org.

⁵ All the circumstances surrounding this unique act of translation that originated in a new revealed religion: the visions, the scribes, the translation tools (Urim and Thummim), the old Egyptian language, the golden plates, the witnesses, the angel Moroni, etc., have been the object of many research papers (Givens 2009).

hundred different languages, covering the mother languages of the greater majority of the world population. In other words, it is a landmark in the global history of translation, something that is not well known.

Taking these facts into account, this article aims to be preliminary and to open a new world of scholarly possibilities, combining the wealth of translated versions of *The Book of Mormon* and the principles and methods of contemporary Translation Studies, in the hope that others will pursue and complete this first effort.

1. SCRIPTURAL TEXTS, TRANSLATION AND TRANSLATION STUDIES

Initially, the approach will almost necessarily be 'descriptive', pure and product-oriented (Holmes 1988; Toury 1995), and centred on the different historical editions of the translation of *The Book of Mormon* (*The Book*) into Spanish, *El libro de Mormón*, published from 1886 to 1992, now the second language of worship in the Mormon Church and therefore the best possible example.⁶ Any previous prescription-oriented discourses on how scriptural texts – *The Bible*, *The Koran*, etc... – should be translated will initially be discarded. In other words, the first objective will be to find out exactly what the different editors-translators of *The Book* into Spanish have done. In this regard, we will work with the help of the diagram devised and proposed by Neunzig and Tanqueiro (2007: 69-77) in the wake of the classical diagram by James Holmes, mapping the discipline of Translation Studies. Firstly, Neunzig and Tanqueiro classify the research methods in (literary) translation into diachronic and synchronic methods, and the empirical approach into four different branches: study of translation corpora, study of exemplary translations, study of privileged translations, and study of singular works. The corpus of different Spanish revised editions of the Spanish translation must, consequently, be tackled by means of a diachronic approach, as they were produced in different historical moments. It is a single-language parallel corpus with the same original text; and it can be termed an exemplary, privileged and singular set of translations: 'exemplary' because of the antiquity of the first translation, published in 1886, and for having been revised and possibly retranslated many times; 'privileged' for being the translation product of the very Mormon Church itself; and 'singular' for its unusual nature of being a scriptural text in which divine revelation plays a fundamental role.

Another useful diagram is the classic proposal designed by researcher and Translation Studies scholar Mary Snell-Hornby in 1995 (revised edition) advocating in favour of an integrated approach and concept of the discipline

⁶ English continues to be the first language of worship within the Mormon Church. However, due to intense international missionary expansion, Spanish has become the second language of the Church, Portuguese the third, and Tagalog the fourth.

of Translation Studies. It will clearly show the challenge behind the translation of scriptural texts. Snell-Hornby proposed a six-level (A to F) framework, organized parallel and hierarchically, of the newly independent discipline, covering all translation types and avoiding all kinds of former binary oppositions, antitheses or dichotomies. Instead, she advocates for integration, i.e. 'blends', 'blurred edges' and the construction of a 'fluid spectrum' for each of the aforementioned levels (1995: 31-35). 'Bible translation' and the 'language of modern technology' are located at both ends of the spectrum. The 'Bible translation' label can easily be extended to become 'Scriptural translation' in order to include other sacred texts: the *Koran*, the *Book of Mormon*, etc. And this is where the challenge begins. Scriptures can be the object of archaic, mythical or visionary literary translation and general and special language translation, that of Archaeology, Anthropology, Ancient History, Parameology or the proverbs that summarize the old wisdom of the people, or Law, among others (level A). The variety of scriptural text types is also complex: myth, chronicle, annal, proverb, legal code, prophesy, narration, dialogue, lyrical poetry, etc. (level B). In the third place (level C), the translation of scriptures undoubtedly implies familiarity with Cultural History, Literary Studies and Sociocultural Studies, to begin with, as well as expertise in the study of many area and special subject studies: old times, custom and languages, Theology, Symbology and Mythology, outdated terminology, etc. Interpretation of the source text is very difficult and risky due to the sacred nature of the text; and recreation for a different culture in a different language is even more difficult (level D). This type of translation cannot function without the collaboration of all the other disciplines and sub-disciplines that usually help translators: Text Linguistics, Historical Linguistics, Contrastive Linguistics, Terminology and Documentation, Sociolinguistics and Dialectology, Pragmalinguistics and Psycholinguistics, etc. (level E). Finally, Scriptures are frequently meant to be read aloud as a form of preaching. Consequently, phonological effects such as rhythm or sound combinations must be taken into account (level F). This is the challenge. Nothing related to translation is alien to the translation of the scriptures, including *The Book of Mormon*. Eugene Nida has made similar claims:

Of all the various types of translating, however, one can safely say that none surpasses Bible translation in: (1) the range of subject matter (e.g. poetry, law, proverbs, narration, exposition, conversation); (2) linguistic variety (directly or indirectly from Greek and Hebrew into more than 1,200 other languages and dialects); (3) historical depth (from the third century B.C. to the present); (4) cultural diversity (there is no cultural area in the world which is not represented by Bible translating); (5) volume of manuscript evidence; (6) number of

translators involved; (7) conflicting viewpoints; and (8) accumulation of data on principles and procedures employed (Nida 1964: 4).

In view of the rapidly increasing need for providing help to translators by publications, personal consultation, and administrative assistance, I soon realized that we had to have the help of a number of highly trained creative people who could serve as translation consultants in strategic places throughout the world. But people to do such work cannot be found by advertising in help-wanted columns. We had to go out and find key people who could do almost anything and everywhere (Nida 2003: 69).

The training of translation consultants for biblical texts is a much more complex task: knowledge: cultures of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, biblical languages, focus on texts and language structure, words in context, languages, linguistics, cultural anthropology and cheerfully sympathy in order to help others see the problems and to discover valid answers, ask leading questions, help others to translate (Nida 2003: 77).

2. *THE BOOK OF MORMON AND THE BIBLE*

The Book of Mormon is very similar in style, form and content to the *Bible*. Consequently, some classical research proposals on Bible translation will be used and applied to the translation facts found in our preliminary set of examples used in this chapter.

The very same Eugene Nida, exemplary master of Bible (and scriptural text) translators, always defended the stance in favour of translating the Bible as understandably as possible, a viewpoint that encountered many obstacles and disagreements when he struggled to apply it:

We usually found that in three or four weeks we could convince people intellectually that a translation needs to make sense in a receptor language, but it usually took at least 30% more time to convince people emotionally that they should make the translated text so clear that no one would be likely to miss the meaning. This ideological gap between the source text and comprehension by receptors constitutes the greatest stumbling block in Bible translation (Nida, 2003: 76).

The final process involves an oral reading of the translation in order to spot unnatural, awkward, or incorrect renderings. In fact, several oral renderings may be necessary and stylistically helpful, because our ears are much better tuned to language than our eyes. A speaker of the receptor language should also read the text out-loud to a group of

people, and persons responsible for producing the translation should watch carefully the listeners' eyes, facial gestures, and especially the movements around the mouth because the unconscious reflexes tell so much about the comprehension of the text and the pleasure experienced in hearing the form of the discourse (Nida, 2003: 76).

But Nida is not the only author with opinions on this (see: Wendland and Zogbo 2000). Among Spanish Bible Scholars it is possible to mention another classical volume by Alonso-Schökel and Zurro (1977) who in addition to affirming that the Bible is literature and must, as such, be treated respectfully when translating it into other languages (18-22), they also defend the idea of translating the Bible into Spanish in the good style of the best classic Castilian writers of Spain⁷ so as to produce something similar to the classical translations of the English *King James Bible* (1607-1611) or the German *Luther's Bible* (1522), which Spain never had, in their opinion, for different historical reasons (Alonso-Schökel and Zurro 1977: 323).⁸

The Book of Mormon. A New Gospel of Jesus Christ closely resembles the *Bible* in structure, style, form and content. It could even be regarded as an addition or supplement to the *Bible* like the Christian *New Testament* completed the *Jewish Old Testament*. The Eighth Article of Faith of the Mormon Church is worded as follows: "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God" (Bushman 2008: 118).

A question that arises is what approach this Church supports when using translated versions of the *Bible* or when translating their own *Book of Mormon* into other languages, e.g. Spanish. Do they support a strict communicative-functional way of translating as Nida did? Or do they discard an easy version, made for an average contemporary audience, in favour of renderings closer to the sense of antiquity and mystique with which an ancient scripture is supposed to be endowed? As far as the *Book of Mormon*

⁷Luis Alonso-Schökel led the publication of a new Spanish Bible, *Nueva Biblia Española*, in 1975.

⁸ During the reign of the Castilian king Alphonsus X The Wise, the first examples of translated biblical texts from Latin into Castilian-Spanish were produced. Later and until the 15th century there were a number of translations of *Biblia de Alba* (1420-1455), by rabbi Mosé Arragel de Guadalajara, from Hebrew. But the Renaissance put an end to this tradition. The Inquisition banned the translation of the Bible into vulgar languages (1551 and 1559), i.e. all but Hebrew, Greek or Latin as something heretical. And the Council of Trent (1545-1563) of the Catholic Church confirmed this position. Consequently, the first complete version of the Bible in Spanish was made by Casiodoro de Reina and published in Basilea in 1567-1569. Cipriano de Valera revised it and published it again in Amsterdam in 1602. This Reina-Varela Bible has been the favourite text for Spanish Protestants of all denominations ever since. The veto of the Inquisition lasted until the year of 1872 when the translation of the Bible into vulgar languages, under many restrictive conditions, was again allowed (Del Olmo Lete 2009: 118-120).

is concerned, the examples that will be studied will give us an answer, but it is possible to advance what the results will be if the following facts are taken into account. When choosing a Bible in English, the Mormon Church prefers the King James version. And when choosing a Bible in Spanish the old translation by Reina-Valera is preferred.⁹ In this regard, Mormons agree with Nida in their common admiration of both Bibles.¹⁰ But unlike the Mormon Church, Nida wanted something different for modern audiences:

An outstanding Bible translation from this early period is the Spanish work of Casiodoro de Reina, whose translation, published in 1568, was revised by his friend and colleague Cipriano de Valera in 1603. These men were in close touch with all the major intellectual developments in France, England, and Germany, and their knowledge, combined with unusual sensitivity to linguistic usage, resulted in the production of a remarkably fine translation... It should be recognized as an outstanding example of the flowering of literary achievement in Spain in the 16th century, combined with intellectual insights from the ferment of learning in the world of the Reformation (Nida 1964: 16).

The translators commissioned by King James I of England to produce a text of the Bible which could be authorized for reading in the churches did not develop new principles or theories of translation. Actually, they were not seeking to do something new, but rather to select the best of what had been included in previous translations... However, a text that could have been a series of tasteless compromises turned out to be a remarkably fine translation, owing to the unusually good sense the translators showed in matters of exegesis and their extraordinary sensitivity to the style of speech appropriate in public reading (Nida 1964: 17).

⁹ Casiodoro de la Reina (ca1520-1494) was a monk of the Spanish Order of Saint Jerome who was persecuted by the Inquisition and forced into exile for his sympathy to Luther and Calvin's reformist ideas. The translation of the Bible into Spanish took him twelve years. Cipriano de Valera (1532-1602) was another monk of the same order who had to leave Spain for the same reasons. Both died in exile: Reina in Frankfurt am Main and Valera in London.

¹⁰ The Mormon Church published its own official edition of the *King James Bible* in 1979 with notes, summaries and cross-references to the rest of Mormon Church Scriptures and fundamental texts. Very recently they accomplished a similar project. Due to the increasing number of Spanish-speaking members in the Church they published their own Spanish edition of the *Bible*. It was the first time that they published an edition of the *Bible* in a language other than English. They used the then public domain 1909 edition of the *Reina-Valera Bible*, which resonated very close to its contemporary English counterpart, *The King James Bible*, in their opinion. They updated the grammar and vocabulary a little, and added Mormon Church doctrinal footnotes, headings and cross-references to their Scriptures. This *Bible* was published in 2009.

3 THE BOOK OF MORMON IN SPANISH TRANSLATION

The history of the translation of *The Book of Mormon* cannot compete with the more than 2000-year history of the scholarly translation of the Bible and its epoch-making landmarks: the *Septuagint*,¹¹ the *Vulgate*,¹² the Reformation Bibles or the (so-called) missionary era of Bible translation when it was rendered into unknown languages and taken to the remotest parts of the world (Zogbo 21-24). It cannot compete with evangelical organizations such as Eugene Nida's United Bible Societies (UBS), founded in 1946, or the Cameron Townsend's Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), founded in 1942, or with the impulse given by the Roman Catholic Second Vatican Council to the promotion of vernacular translations of the *Bible*.¹³ However, the history of the *Book of Mormon* in translation is also a very rich chapter in the general history of scriptural translation and all types of translation, only second to the Bible itself in the Western World. According to its nature and tradition as a sacred text that must be proclaimed to the people of the world, *The Book of Mormon* has enjoyed the privilege of being translated extensively, frequently and into many different languages, including Spanish.

After its first publication of 1830, no translation from English into other languages appeared until the 1850s when missionary work started in Europe: Danish (1851), French, German, Welsh and Italian (all in 1852), and Hawaiian (1855) were the first. Spanish had to wait until 1875 to begin its own complex process of revisions, re-editions, and retranslations on the following dates:

- 1830: The edition of *The Book of Mormon*.
- 1875: First partial translation by Melitón González Trejo.
- 1879: Chapters and verse numbers were added to *The Book of Mormon*.
- 1886: First Spanish translation by Melitón G. Trejo¹⁴ and Jaime Z. Stewart.¹⁵

¹¹ This is the earliest known written translation of the Jewish Bible from Hebrew to Greek done in or around Alexandria in the third and second centuries BC. The legend says that it was translated by 72 Jews in 72 days, hence its name from Latin 'septuaginta' (70) (Monforte 2009: 53).

¹² Translation of the whole *Bible* done by Saint Jerome, commissioned by Pope Damasus I in 383 AD, and completed in 406 AD (Monforte 2009: 53-54).

¹³ The first official translation of the *Bible* into Spanish was published in 2010, promoted by the Spanish Catholic Church Episcopal Conference: *Sagrada Biblia. Versión Oficial*. All other translations will be reserved for private use only.

¹⁴ Melitón García Trejo (1844-1917). Born in the province of Cáceres, Spain, he was the first Spanish member of the Church. He travelled to San Francisco in 1874 from the Philippines where he served in the Spanish Army. He moved quickly to Utah as he was interested in the

- 1920: Paratexts and new layout were added: columns, headings, chronology, references, indexes.
- 1929: Revision by Rey L. Pratt¹⁶ who also added the 1920 paratexts. Edition prepared for the Mormon colonies in Mexico.
- 1952: Edition and retranslation by Eduardo Balderas.¹⁷ Retranslation of early editions began this year with this second translation into Spanish.
- 1971: In support of expanding missionary program, the Church organized a Translation Services Department to direct a systematic program of scripture translation.
- 1980: Revision of his own retranslation by Eduardo Balderas. He added many suggestions of improvement coming from Latin America where the Church expanded greatly in those years.
- 1981: A new English edition of *The Book of Mormon*; the Church Translation Department began reviewing the existing translation systematically, especially the older ones, and producing new editions more in conformity with the English format.
- 1992. Last revised edition. Small changes. No translator or editor's names are included. The merit belongs to the Church as a whole now.

It is observable that the translation history of *The Book of Mormon* has been a continuous process of increasing the levels of product quality control and professionalism. There are not only many more translations, but they are also well-planned and carefully evaluated before publication, especially where theological accuracy is at stake.

Censorship cannot be discarded. This is the process in some detail: the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles consider recommendations from Area Presidencies for new translations of *The Book of Mormon*. Before it is translated, Gospel Fundamentals and other basic doctrinal items such as the Articles of the Faith are translated (if they have not been translated) in order to establish standard terminology. Translation work for *The Book of Mormon* is carried out by worthy, qualified members who are required specifically to do the task, etc.

Mormon Church. He was soon baptized and Brigham Young himself entrusted his missionary work in Mexico and the Spanish translation of *The Book of Mormon*.

¹⁵ James or Jaime Z. Stewart was a friend and fellow missionary of Melitón Trejo in México. Both men worked together to produce the first Spanish translation of The Book of Mormon.

¹⁶ Rey Lucero Pratt (1878-1931) was the father and President of the Mexican Church. He worked as translator for the Church for many years.

¹⁷ Eduardo Balderas (1907-1989). Born in Mexico, he was chief Spanish translator for the Church for almost fifty years.

4. *THE BOOK OF MORMON* IN SPAIN

As is well known, the beginnings of Mormonism were not easy in its nation of origin (Haywood 2008: 224-227). The novelty and supposed extravagance of their beliefs encountered much social and institutional censorship and persecution. Almost from the very foundation of the Church in Fayette, New York State, in 1830, the pilgrimage of this new wandering people began as the Israelites of the Old Testament: Kirtland (Ohio), Independence (Missouri) and Nauvoo (Illinois) where they settled more permanently in 1839 and where Joseph Smith was murdered by a mob of non-Mormons in 1844. The rumours about Smith's unorthodox teachings, which included polygamy, caused continual conflict and violence. The second leader of the Church, Brigham Young (1801-1877), was responsible for organizing the inevitable: a great new communal migration, their exodus to the open lands of the American West, which began in 1846 and lasted more than twenty years. When the first Mormons arrived at what was to be the future Utah and founded Salt Lake City in 1847, they knew that they had finally found the right place and their freedom: their own Promised Land and Dead Sea. But the problems continued: the area was still part of Mexico. The American-Mexican war (1846-1848) ended with the American victory, and the territory was declared part of the USA in 1848. But in 1849 the Mormons declared their own State of Deseret, a move that resulted in the Utah War (1857-1858) by which the US Government established its authority over the place. The situation continued to be very unstable for a number of years, as Utah did not become a state until 1896¹⁸ and only after the Mormon Church renounced polygamy in 1890.

The beginnings of Mormonism in Spain were not easy either. The Church encountered censorship and banning for many years. The first missionaries came to Gibraltar –the British colony in Southern Spain– as early as 1852, among them Edward Steventon (1820-1897), a prominent Mormon missionary, who, although he suffered much persecution and even arrest for preaching, managed to organize a small congregation in 1854. However, they were all British nationals. No Spaniard followed him then. After this prehistory of the Church in Spain, the Mormons did not return to Spain until the latter half of the twentieth century, when the US Government opened four military bases on Spanish soil: Torrejón de Ardoz (Madrid), Rota (Cadiz), Morón (Seville) and Zaragoza. Mormon soldiers and officers had their own chapels within their bases.

Things finally changed in the late 1960s – due to the impact of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The monolithic Catholic Spain of the

¹⁸ Today Mormons still make up 70 per cent of the state's population, which proves the powerful attachment of these people to their land.

General Franco dictatorship avoided applying the new policies of religious tolerance and ecumenism championed by the Roman Catholic Church. In 1967 a law on religious freedom was passed.¹⁹ Consequently, the Mormon Church proceeded to apply for approval and registration from the Ministry of Justice Commission on Religion Freedom²⁰ on 22 May 1968. This was not the end of the problems or the censorship of the Church in Spain. The petitioner was David Brighton Timmins, an American diplomat living in Madrid, and the address given was the chapel located in the American base of Torrejón, on the outskirts of Madrid. The surprise was that in September 1968 seventy religious denominations were granted legal status in Spain, excluding the Mormon Church. The authorities objected on the basis that the applicant on behalf of the Church was a foreigner and that the address of the Church was within the limits of an American base, i.e. not Spain proper. On 17 October 1968 a new petition was presented by Spanish citizens and with a Madrid city address. A few days later, on 22 October 1968, the Church was finally accepted as a legal religion in Spain.²¹ The first four missionaries came to Spain in June 1969, with their Spanish volumes of the *Book of Mormon* in their luggage. Since then, the typical Mormon missionaries, spread across Spain, have been part of the Spanish landscape.

5. EMPIRICAL TEXT EXEGESIS

Now that the socio-historical context surrounding the Spanish editions of *The Book of Mormon* has been studied in some detail, it is time to approach the text and study a number of examples.

Example 1

The first responsibility of translators is to understand the source text and its special meaning. This proves difficult when you have something like this: “nevertheless they did follow me up until we came **without** the walls of Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 4:4) (9). This archaic use of ‘without’, however, is not unique in the English religious jargon. There is, for example, an old English hymn that says: ‘There is a green hill far away, **without** a city wall’. Here ‘without’ also means ‘outside’.

This is what can be read in the different Spanish editions:

¹⁹ Ley 44/1967 - June 28.

²⁰ Comisión de Libertad Religiosa del Ministerio de Justicia.

²¹ The good offices and the envoys sent by President Eisenhower, who visited Spain in 1959 and gave much support to the General Franco regime, had great responsibility in the final approval of the Church in Spain.

- 1886: sin embargo, me siguieron hasta el pie de los muros de Jerusalén (8).
- 1929: sin embargo, me siguieron hasta el pie de los muros de Jerusalén (6).
- 1952: sin embargo, me siguieron hasta los muros de Jerusalén (7).
- 1980: sin embargo, me siguieron hasta que llegamos a los muros de Jerusalén (7).
- 1992: sin embargo, me siguieron hasta que llegamos a los muros de Jerusalén (9).

All the versions interpret the meaning of ‘without’ correctly, but the 1952 omission of “el pie de” [at the foot of] does not seem to be justified. Balderas corrects his first translation in 1980 and adds something new, ‘que llegamos a’ [we arrived at] as a reinforcement, a proposal that was retained in 1992. The result in Spanish is very transparent. The sense of rarity and the need to interpret this difficult word are lost here.

Example 2

This example includes two words: ‘yea’ and ‘even’, which are characteristic of oral preaching discourses, just as punctuation marks are typical of written texts: “And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto my father, **yea, even** in a dream, that he should take his family and depart into the wilderness” (1 Nephi 2:2) (64). The fact that there are two words serving the same purpose is emphatic.

The first two editions present a word: ‘aun’, which seems to translate the original ‘even’, although not very successfully:

- 1886: Y aconteció que el Señor mandó a mi padre, aun en un sueño, que tomase a su familia y partiese para el desierto (3).
- 1929: Y aconteció que el Señor mandó a mi padre, aun en un sueño, que tomase a su familia y partiese para el desierto (3).

However, again Balderas, in his retranslation, omits both elements and discards its translation:

- 1952: Y sucedió que el Señor le mandó a mi padre en un sueño, que partiese para el desierto con su familia (3).

In 1980, the same translator adds a comma between ‘padre’ and ‘en’, probably to recover part of the lost emphasis. In 1992, this comma was retained. What no editor or translator ever tried to reproduce was the archaic verbal form ‘spake’:

- 1980: Y sucedió que el Señor le mandó a mi padre, en un sueño, que partiese para el desierto con su familia (3).

- 1992: Y sucedió que el Señor le mandó a mi padre, en un sueño, que partiese para el desierto con su familia (4).

Examples 3 and 4

The Book of Mormon abounds in Hebraic-like formal elements, typical of the *Bible* and Semitic languages: repetition of the same roots and of the conjunction 'and', for example. Were they preserved by their Spanish translators? If not, should they have been retained? These are the examples:

And it came to pass that he spake unto me, saying: Behold I have **dreamed a dream**, in which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall "return to Jerusalem (1 Nephi 3:2) (5).

And behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, yea, the account of the Lamanites **and** of the Nephites, **and** their wars, **and** contentions, **and** dissensions, **and** their preaching, **and** their prophecies, **and** their shipping **and** their building of ships, **and** their building of temples, **and** synagogues **and** their sanctuaries, **and** their righteousness, **and** their wickedness, **and** their murders, **and** their robbings, **and** their plundering, **and** all manner of abominations **and** whoredoms, cannot be contained in this work (Heleman 3:14) (373). [**'And'** is used eighteen times.]

In 1886, the first one was not retained, and the second was only partially preserved (fourteen conjunctions 'y'). Besides, here the original 'yea' remains as 'sí':

Y sucedió que me habló diciendo: He aquí que he **tenido un sueño**, en el que el Señor me ha mandado que tú y tus hermanos volváis a Jerusalén (5).

Empero he aquí, que una centésima parte de los actos de este pueblo; sí, de la historia de los Nefitas, **y** de los Lamanitas, **y** la relación de sus guerras, disensiones **y** querellas, **y** de sus predicaciones **y** profecías, **y** de sus transportaciones marítimas, **y** de la construcción de sus barcos **y** de la de sus templos, sinagogas, **y** santuarios, **y** de su justicia, **y** de sus iniquidades, **y** de sus robos, asesinatos, **y** pillajes, de todas sus abominaciones **y** fornicaciones, no puede caber en esta obra (436).

In 1929, everything was left almost the same. There is only an extra 'y': 'y de todas sus abominaciones':

Y sucedió que me habló, diciendo: He aquí que he **tenido un sueño**, en el que el Señor me ha mandado que tú y tus hermanos volváis a Jerusalén (4).

Empero, he aquí, que una centésima parte de los actos de este pueblo, sí, de la historia de los Nefitas **y** de los Lamanitas, **y** la relación de sus guerras, disensiones **y** querellas, **y** de sus predicaciones **y** profecías, **y** de sus transportaciones marítimas, **y** de la construcción de sus barcos **y** de la de sus templos, sinagogas **y** santuarios, **y** de su justicia, **y** de sus iniquidades, **y** de sus robos, asesinatos **y** pillajes, **y** de todas sus abominaciones **y** fornicaciones, no puede caber en esta obra (333).

In his retranslation of 1952, Balderas does not retain the first element, and only normalizes the syntax by reducing the number of conjunctions 'y', using only ten:

Y sucedió que me habló, diciendo: He aquí, he **tenido un sueño**, en el que el Señor me ha mandado que tú y tus hermanos volváis a Jerusalén (5).

Mas he aquí, no puede incluirse en esta obra la centésima parte de los hechos de este pueblo, sí, la historia de los lamanitas **y** los nefitas, **y** sus guerras, contiendas **y** disensiones; **y** sus predicaciones **y** profecías; **y** sus embarcaciones **y** construcción de barcos; **y** su edificación de templos, sinagogas y santuarios; **y** su justicia e iniquidades; **y** sus asesinatos, robos, pillajes **y** todo género de abominaciones y fornicaciones (381).

However, in 1980, when he returns to his former translation, he increases the number of conjunctions to sixteen, and seems to understand the important stylistic effect omitted:

Y sucedió que me habló, diciendo: He aquí, he **tenido un sueño**, en el que el Señor me ha mandado que tú y tus hermanos volváis a Jerusalén (5).

Mas he aquí, no puede incluirse en esta obra la centésima parte de los hechos de este pueblo, sí, la historia de los lamanitas **y** los nefitas, **y** sus guerras, **y** contiendas, **y** disensiones, **y** sus predicaciones, **y** sus profecías, **y** sus embarcaciones **y** construcción de barcos, **y** su edificación de templos, **y** de sinagogas, **y** de sus santuarios; **y** su rectitud, **y** sus iniquidades, **y** sus asesinatos, **y** sus robos, **y** sus pillajes, **y** todo género de abominaciones **y** fornicaciones (388).

In 1992, the anonymous Church translators finally realized the importance of the first repetition of roots and acted accordingly: 'soñado un sueño'. They also understood the value of the conjunctions and offered a revised translation displaying eighteen uses of 'y', the same number as the original:

Y sucedió que me habló, diciendo: He aquí, he **soñado un sueño**, en el que el Señor me ha mandado que tú y tus hermanos volváis a Jerusalén (5).

Mas he aquí, no puede incluirse en esta obra la centésima parte de los hechos de este pueblo, sí, la historia de los lamanitas **y** los nefitas, **y** sus guerras, **y** contiendas, **y** disensiones, **y** sus predicaciones, **y** sus profecías, **y** sus embarcaciones **y** construcción de barcos, **y** su edificación de templos, **y** de sinagogas, **y** de sus santuarios; **y** su rectitud, **y** sus iniquidades, **y** sus asesinatos, **y** sus robos, **y** sus pillajes, **y** todo género de abominaciones **y** fornicaciones (451).

Example 5

Phrasal verbs, as idiomatic expressions, are always difficult to interpret and translate. This is even more difficult when they are combined with the archaic language of scriptural texts: "And we cast lots – who of us should go into the house of Laban. And it came to pass that the lot **fell upon** Laman." (1 Nephi 3:11) (6).

All translators offered correct interpretations of the idiomatic meaning. However, Balderas omits a word in his 1952 version: 'esta' [this], a decision difficult to understand, and then repents and adds a different element, which results in being more explicit: 'la suerte' [the luck]:

- 1886: Y echamos suertes para ver quién de nosotros tenía que ir a casa de Laban. Y sucedió que esta le tocó a Laman (6).
- 1929: Y echamos suertes para ver quién de nosotros tendría que ir a la casa de Labán. Y sucedió que esta le tocó a Laman (5).
- 1952: Y echamos suertes para ver cuál de nosotros iría a la casa de Labán. Y sucedió que cayó a Lamán (5).
- 1980: Y echamos suertes para ver cuál de nosotros iría a la casa de Labán. Y sucedió que la suerte cayó sobre Lamán (5).
- 1992: Y echamos suertes para ver cuál de nosotros iría a la casa de Labán. Y sucedió que la suerte cayó sobre Lamán (6).

It can be claimed that, on the whole, translation policy has increasingly shifted to promoting translations as close as possible to the original style, provided with that antique flavour of the *King James* and

Reina-Varela Bibles, but applied with a strong sense of balance and never compromising the understanding and communication of the salvation message. Many Translation Studies researchers have supported this view when theorizing on biblical texts and other scriptures (Hill 2009: 97-111; Nord 2009: 113-129; Snell-Hornby 2009: 131-141).

6. ABOUT CENSORSHIP AND OTHER CONCLUSIONS

The Book of Mormon, specifically its 1886 Spanish translation *El libro de Mormón*, was censored for many years in Spain. But this is only a secondary objective of this article. The fundamental objective studies whether the different revisions and retranslations of *The Book of Mormon* in Spanish can be regarded as a clear example of 'institutional censorship', in other words, to find out whether the control of the Mormon Church on translators and translated text was too coercive and manipulative or not.

It is undeniable that all the process and revision circumstances point to a very controlled translation process made by individuals who were committed members of the Church. The purpose of these translations was always missionary and religious. And this control increased as the years passed, always in search of quality, accuracy and balance. But it is also true that all the editions are still available and can be found easily by any individual interested in studying them. There is nothing to hide. Additionally, when the versions are compared, there is nothing contradictory or totally new as far as content and doctrine are concerned. This is not the type of censorship that can be learned in the *El libro de Mormón*.

What can be seen in the examples is a continuous, for better or worse, struggle or search for perfection. Is this type of censorship, or quality control, necessary when dealing with a sacred text – or is it compulsory? Our conclusion will be that due to the immense challenges of translating a sacred text, a continuous process of censorship can be essential. As there is no perfect *Bible* in any language, there is no perfect *Book of Mormon* either.

The Translation Department of the Mormon Church discovered and accepted that their former translations were not as good as they should have been –a widespread reality of translation– and wanted to update their sacred text, to correct mistakes, to recover lost elegance of style, to modernize or rather make it look as archaic as the original, etc. They started a revision and retranslation effort with very few parallels in history. This article has merely opened up a research path that can be followed by others in future. *The Book of Mormon* in translation, a huge corpus, lacks a sound tradition of empirical study devoted to its rich history and many manifestations. Translation Studies, from all its branches and schools (Calzada 2007), has much to offer to the study of this scriptural text.

It would be interesting to give some thought to the fact that users of scriptures believe that the human authors of their texts were divinely inspired. Consequently, do they also believe that this special inspiration applies to their translator? Nida wrote that Saint Augustine explained the differences between Hebrew or Greek books and their Latin counterparts by stating that the Spirit with its divine authority could say something different through the translators from what he had said through the original prophets. The Spirit elected to say this through the lips of the translators and not the original prophets. They were all inspired (1964: 26-27). Saint Jerome, a philologist, rejected this point of view, but perhaps it still demands some contemporary reflection, even when the changes are due to ideological manipulation or censorship (see: Zegarra 2007). Again Nida seems to be right: "But dealing with any religious document such as the Bible, one must bear in mind that its contemporary significance is not determined merely by what it meant to those who first received it, but by what has come to mean to people throughout the intervening years" (1964: 26).

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²² Actually, the full title and credits of this 1929 edition of the *Book of Mormon* in Spanish was as follows: *El libro de Mormón, una relación escrita por la mano de Mormón, sobre planchas tomadas de las planchas de Nefi*, traducido por José Smith, hijo. Dividido en capítulos y versículos, con referencias por Orson Pratt, padre. Traducido al español, bajo la dirección del apóstol Moisés Thatcher, por Melitón G. Trejo y Jaime Z. Stewart. Diligentemente comparado con anteriores ediciones y revisado; y las referencias traducidas al español y agregadas por Rey L. Pratt.

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