

TESTING THE REINA-VALERA 1960 SPANISH TRANSLATION
Its Texts, Translators, Technique, and Theology

by

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The current controversy over the Spanish Bible reminds me of the story of the Promised Land. In this case, the Promised Land represents Textual Purity. Good old Moses represents pioneer Bible translators like Wycliffe, Reina (Spanish), and Almeida (Portuguese). Like Moses delivered Israel from the bondage of Egypt so too did these original translators deliver many from the bondage of spiritual darkness who were without the Scriptures. Praise God for them! However, as Moses failed to reach the Promised Land so too did these translators. One of the reasons Moses wandered for 40 years and never made it to the Promised Land was because of those giants. Remember, the 10 spies brought back an evil report and were afraid of the giants. You see, the giants represent those treacherous, tormenting, troubling, tampering thieves of the word of God. Men like Origen, Westcott, Hort, and Nida. The giants represent Textual Criticism and Textual Corruption. But praise God the story does not end there. Then came Caleb and Joshua. They represent faithful translators and revisers true to the word of God. Men like Tyndale, and later Andrews, Smith, Bois and the other KJV translators. Men like Valera who revised the Spanish Bible while running from the Inquisition. Joshua and Caleb also represent men like Burgon and others who have stood and even fought for the preserved word of God. Finally, they made it to the Promised Land. Praise God for the Masoretic Text, the *Textus Receptus*, and the King James Bible. Textual Purity at last!

A book that was very helpful in my early studies on this issue was, *Defending the King James Bible - A four-fold superiority: Texts, Translators, Technique, Theology* by Dr. D. A. Waite. What I have found is that this same formula can be used to test any translation of the Bible and I will briefly demonstrate this with the Reina-Valera 1960 Spanish Translation.

Testing the Texts

As I'm sure most of my readers know there are basically only two "Family Trees" of Bibles. First there is the "Traditional Family Tree" also known as the *Textus Receptus* (TR) or Received Text. It goes something like this: God's eternal word in heaven, inspired and given through "holy men of God", faithfully copied and preserved by Jews and the early church in Antioch, faithfully transmitted by the superintendence of the Holy Spirit and the priesthood of believers, faithfully translated by KJV translators (tested and proved by friend (Burgon) and foe (W&H) alike), and used by revisers (Valera 1602, Almeida Corrigida Fiel, etc). Then there is the "Divorced Family Tree" also known as the Critical Text (CT) or Catholic Text. It goes something like this: Satan doubts and distorts God's words in Eden, Origen tampers with manuscripts in Alexandria (Egypt), faulty corrupt copies spread, old copies found in monastery trash and Vatican library, used by critics Westcott and Hort to give us the Critical Text, Nestle/Aland continue perpetration, Nida and the modernist United Bible Societies (UBS) replacing good TR Bibles with bad CT bibles around the world including the Spanish Reina-Valera 1960 (RV 1960), etc.

People can say that the RV 1960 "comes from the TR" or "is based on the TR" until they are blue in the face but the fact is that the RV 1960 is not solely based on the TR since it has scores of CT readings. Dr. J. Mervin Breneman, General Editor of the Harper Caribe RV 1960 Study Bible, states that, "*the Reina Valera Spanish translation is based on the Textus Receptus but in the 1960 revision the editors have taken into account some results from the new works of comparison with the*

oldest manuscripts that have been discovered. This comparison of manuscripts to be more sure of the original text is called Textual Criticism.” (Translated from the “notes on textual variants in the New Testament”, Harper Caribe RV 1960 Study Bible, p. 994, emphasis mine.) Throughout this study edition of the RV 1960 there are notes that show where many variants (omissions and additions) used in the RV 1960 come from. (Septuagint, Latin Vulgate, Dead Sea Scrolls, Aleph & B, etc.) Also, Dr. Jose Flores states the following: “*One principle added to the first list of the RV 1960 revision committee was that wherever the RV (1909) Version has **departed from the Textus Receptus to follow a better text we did not return to the Receptus.** Point 12 of the working principles states: in cases where there is a doubt over the correct translation of the original, we consulted preferentially The English Revised Version of 1885, The American Standard Version of 1901, The Revised Standard Version of 1946, and the International Critical Commentary.*” (El Texto Del Nuevo Testamento, 1977, pg. 232, emphasis mine)

The proof is in the pudding! For example:

Romans 1:16

"Traditional Family Text"

English: (KJV)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is...

Portuguese: (TBS 1994)

Porque nao me envergonho do evangelho de Cristo, pois é...

Spanish: (Valera 1602 Purified)

Porque no me avergüenzo del evangelio de Cristo; porque es...

"Divorced Family Text"

English: (RSV)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power...

New World Trans. (JW)

For I am not ashamed of the good news; it is...

Spanish: (RV 1960)

Porque no me avergüenzo del evangelio, porque es...

Notice that the words “of Christ” are missing in the “Divorced Family Tree” (CT bibles). I believe God preserved every word including the words “of Christ”. Is every word important to you? If you want a preserved Bible you must have the words “of Christ” in Romans 1:16. Furthermore, the removal of the gospel “of Christ” would leave room for “another gospel” which Paul warns about in both II Corinthians 11:4, and Galatians 1:6. Obviously, the RV 1960 takes away the words “of Christ” and thus waters down the true gospel and “divorces from the truth” by following the wrong manuscript trail.

I Peter 2:2

"Traditional Family Text"

English: (KJV)

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

Portuguese: (TBS 1994)

...o leite racional, nao falsificado, para que por ele vades crescendo;

"Divorced Family Text"

English: (RSV)

...long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation;

New World Trans. (JW)

...milk belonging to the word, that through it you may grow to salvation.

Spanish: (Valera 1602 Purified)
...la leche no adulterada de la palabra, para que por ella crezcáis:

Spanish: (RV 1960) *...la leche espiritual no adulterada, para que por ella crezcáis para salvación,*

Notice that this time the divorced CT bibles add the words “to salvation”. I believe in instantaneous salvation by grace not in works or process salvation. What do you believe? Does your Bible agree with what you claim to believe? What about your Spanish department or your missionaries to Spanish speaking countries? If they use the RV 1960, they are using a Bible that teaches that you “grow unto salvation”. Also, every time they buy a RV 1960 they are supporting the UBS which is attempting to replace good TR Bibles with corrupted CT bibles all over the world.

Mark 2:17

"Traditional Family Text"

English: (KJV)
...I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Portuguese: (TBS 1994)
...eu nao vim chamar os justos, mas, sim, os pecadores ao arrependimento.

Spanish: (Valera 1602 Purified)
...No he venido a llamar a los justos, mas los pecadores a arrepentimiento.

"Divorced Family Text"

English: (RSV)
... I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

New World Trans. (JW)
... I came to call, not righteous people, but sinners.

Spanish: (RV 1960)
...No he venido a llamar a justos, sino a pecadores.

Jesus told us in all three Received Text Bibles that He came to call sinners to repentance. The modernists however, in all three Critical Text bibles tell us that He came to call sinners to...go out to eat maybe? They do not say! This, of course, dilutes the doctrine of repentance. Perhaps some need to be reminded of Luke 13:3 which says, “*I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*” Could this be another example of corrupt texts in the RV 1960? As you can see the RV 1960 fails the test of the texts.

Testing the Translators

Much has been said and written by so called fundamentalists either claiming that Eugene Nida had nothing to do with the RV 1960 or even defending Nida. I have not the time to cover this at length here. Suffice it to say that saying that Nida had nothing to do with the changes in the RV 1960 (since he was not actually on his revision committee) is like saying the President has nothing to do with the political decisions his cabinet members make (since he is not a member of his own cabinet!) Besides, it does not really matter who made the changes but rather that the changes were made. Just for the record, here are a few details on some of the men involved in the 1960 as consultants, advisors, or editors: Dr. Alfonso Rodríguez Hidalgo (Presbyterian) studied at Princeton Theological Seminary, was involved in the United Bible Societies, and a member of the Faith and Order Commission. Alfonso Lloredo wrote an article attacking the TR and praising the CT. Dr. Honorio Espinosa (Southern Baptist) studied under A.T. Robertson, a CT proponent. Gonzalo Báez Camargo (Methodist) worked with the UBS as a contributing author. Dr. Eugene Nida speaking of the RV 1960 said, “*Nevertheless in some instances where a critical text is so much preferred over the traditional Textus Receptus, **the committee did make some slight changes, particularly if such***

changes were not in well-known verses. . .” (The Bible Translator, Vol 12, No.3 July 1961, pg. 113).

As you can see, they were liberal scholars at best, not exactly the kind of people I would trust handling the word of God (in any language). Let’s look at the “pudding” again and see some examples of their work:

Mark 1:2

Godly Translators

English: (KJV)

As it is written in the prophets...

Portuguese: (TBS 1994)

Como está escrito nos profetas...

Spanish: (Valera 1602 Purified)

Como está escrito en los profetas...

Liberal Scholars

English: (RSV)

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, ...

New World Trans. (JW)

Just as it is written in Isaiah the prophet...

Spanish: (RV 1960)

Como está escrito en Isaías el profeta...

In verse 2 Mark quotes from Malachi 3:1 not Isaiah. In verse 3 he quotes from Isaiah 40:3. If a new Christian reads verse 2 in the RV 1960 and then goes to Isaiah to find the quote – guess what? That’s right, he will not find it! I believe in an inerrant Bible. If you want an inerrant Bible without error or contradiction, Mark 1:2 must read “the prophets”, not “Isaiah the prophet”. By the way, the original Valera 1602 has “the prophets” from the Received Text. Furthermore, Valera had a margin note with the cross references in Malachi and Isaiah. He must have known his Bible. On the other hand, the revisers of the RV 1960 must not be as familiar with their bibles since they put in “Isaiah” only. By the way, where did the liberal 1960 revisers get “Isaiah” from anyway? Yes, right again, the Critical Text.

Ephesians 4:6

Godly Translators

English: (KJV)

One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Portuguese: (TBS 1994)

Um só Deus e Pai de todos, o qual é sobre todos, e por todos e em todos vós.

Spanish: (Valera 1602 Purified)

Un Dios y Padre de todos, el cual es sobre todas las cosas, y por todas las cosas, y en todos vosotros.

Liberal Scholars

English: (RSV)

one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.

New World Trans. (JW)

one God and Father of all [persons], who is over all and through all and in all.

Spanish: (RV 1960)

un Dios y Padre de todos, el cual es sobre todos, por todos, y en todos.

Notice that the godly translators included the word “you” while the liberal scholars left it out. Sounds ecumenical to me! God is in all believers and “you all” refers to the church at Ephesus. But if “you” is left out it becomes an all inclusive, New Age, “God is in everybody and everyone’s Father” (saved or unsaved) kind of teaching. These liberal scholars remind me of Elymas the sorcerer to whom Paul said, “*O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou **child of the devil**, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?*” (Acts 13:10)

II Kings 23:7

Godly Translators

English: (KJV)

And he brake down the houses of the sodomites...

Portuguese: (TBS 1994)

Também derrubou as casas dos sodomitas que estavam na casa do Senhor...

Spanish: (Valera 1602 Purified)

Además derribó las casas de los sodomitas...

Liberal Scholars

English: (RSV)

...broke down the houses of the male cult prostitutes...

New World Trans. (JW)

...he pulled down the houses of the male temple prostitutes...

Spanish: (RV 1960)

Además derribó los lugares de prostitución idolátrica...

In all three Received Text Bibles the word used is “sodomites”. However, in all three Critical Text bibles it changes it to “prostitutes” or in the case of the RV 1960, “idolatrous prostitution”. This is also sin but not the same as sodomy. There is not too much idolatrous prostitution nowadays but there sure is sodomy. These words water down God’s abhorrence of sodomy. Could this be another example of liberal scholars in the RV 1960? Unfortunately, the RV 1960 fails the test of the translators.

Testing the Technique

It is also obvious that the RV 1960 translators employed dynamic equivalence instead of formal equivalence. Those who have respect for the very words of God employ formal equivalence by carefully translating every word as literally as possible. Those who truly believed in verbal inspiration would only use this method since every word is important! Others however, whether they admit it or not, believe only in concept inspiration, that God only inspired the thoughts or concepts conveyed. Henceforth much more liberty is taken in translating. Liberal scholars employ dynamic equivalence and man’s paraphrasing of God’s words is the end result. True Bible believers would never defend this sloppy, man honoring, Bible mutilating technique.

Back to the “pudding” for some examples of the result of dynamic equivalence in the RV 1960:

Matthew 5:22

Formal Equivalence

English: (KJV)

...whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment:

Portuguese: (TBS 1994)

Eu, porém, vos digo que qualquer que, sem motivo, se encolerizar contra seu irmão, será réu do sínédrio;...

Spanish: (Valera 1602 Purified)

...cualquiera que se enojare sin razón con su hermano, estará expuesto a juicio;...

Dynamic Equivalence

English: (RSV)

But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment;...

New World Trans. (JW)

...everyone who continues wrathful with his brother will be accountable to the court of justice;...

Spanish: (RV 1960)

...cualquiera que se enoje contra su hermano, será culpable de juicio;...

Omitting the words “without a cause” from these verses makes Jesus “liable to judgment” because Jesus was angry in Mark 3:5. The Dynamic Equivalence verses also contradict the command in Ephesians 4:26 to “be ye angry and sin not”. In fact, of the three Critical Text bibles the RV 1960 has it the worst. The Jehovah Witness’ (JW) bible at least reads “continues wrathful” and the RSV says “liable to judgment”. The translation of the RV 1960 to English is “whosoever is angered against his brother shall be guilty of judgment”! Jesus is NOT guilty of judgment because when He is angry it is not “without a cause”. I personally believe He is angry “with cause” at the wrong technique used in translating the RV 1960.

II Kings 10:25

Formal Equivalence

English: (KJV)

...and went to the city of the house of Baal.

Portuguese: (TBS 1994)

...interior da casa de Baal.

Spanish: (Valera 1602 Purified)

...la ciudad del templo de Baal.

Dynamic Equivalence

English: (RSV)

...into the inner room of the house of Baal

New World Trans. (JW)

...city of the house of Baal.

Spanish: (RV 1960)

...el lugar santo del templo de Baal,

Here we have an example where the RV 1960 is worse than the RSV and the JW bible! The word “santo” in the RV 1960 means holy. It says “the holy place of the temple of Baal”. But Baal is not holy! Since when does God (and godly translators using the right technique) consider idolatry “holy”? Talk about taking liberty with the text! May I remind defenders of the RV 1960 of Isaiah 5:20 which says, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil;”!

Daniel 3:25

Formal Equivalence

English: (KJV)

...and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

Portuguese: (TBS 1994)

...e o aspecto do quarto é semelhante ao Filho de Deus.

Spanish: (Valera 1602 Purified)

y el parecer del cuarto es semejante al Hijo de Dios.

Dynamic Equivalence

English: (RSV)

...appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.

New World Trans. (JW)

...of the fourth one is resembling a son of the gods.

Spanish: (RV 1960)

...del cuarto es semejante a hijo de los dioses.

In the faithful Bibles, Nebuchadnezzar recognized the fourth man in the fiery furnace to be like “the Son of God” (Capital and Singular). In modernist bibles he recognizes the fourth man to be like “a son of the gods” (lower case and plural). So called fundamentalists are using the same excuse that the liberals use to defend this translation. They say Nebuchadnezzar, being a pagan king, could not have recognized the Son of God. But all you have to do is study the context. There was a competition going on between the God of the Hebrews and the gods of Babylon and guess who won? I believe in a “Capital G” God. Jesus is the Son of God not just a son of the gods! Which do

you believe to be the correct rendition? This is another example of dynamic equivalence in the RV 1960, which fails the test of technique.

Testing the Theology

Many complain, “You are always comparing with the KJV!” While I do not have a problem with that since it is my standard, I have a solution. Let’s compare with the truth! The best way to recognize a counterfeit is to be familiar with the “Real McCoy”. Most fundamental Baptists who use the RV 1960 are not bad in their theology (other than Bibliology) but they are using a bible that is. We are not attacking those who simply use the RV 1960 but those who messed its theology up. Unfortunately, many have swallowed the corrupt RV 1960 hook, line, and sinker. What did they expect? When you combine the wrong texts, translators, and technique, you are bound to end up with error not truth. This is evident in the RV 1960 “pudding”. For example:

Ephesians 3:9

Truth

English: (KJV)

in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

Portuguese: (TBS 1994)

Deus, que tudo criou por meio de Jesus Cristo:

Spanish: (Valera 1602 Purified)

Dios, que creó todas las cosas por Jesu Cristo.

Error

English: (RSV)

...in God who created all things;

New World Trans. (JW)

...in God who created all things.

Spanish: (RV 1960)

...en Dios, que creó todas las cosas;

I believe Jesus Christ is my Creator and not a created being like the JW’s teach. The RV 1960 agrees with the RSV and the JW bible. Why would so called Baptist fundamentalists defend a Bible that agrees with the JW bible against the TRUTH which just so happens to be in the *Textus Receptus* and the KJV? If you want Christ as Creator in Ephesians 3:9, do not use the RV 1960! Go with the truth and depart from evil.

Luke 2:22

Truth

English: (KJV)

And when the days of her purification...

Portuguese: (TBS 1994)

E, cumprindo-se os dias da purificacao dela,...

Spanish: (Valera 1602 Purified)

Y cuando fueron cumplidos los días de la purificación de ella...

Error

English: (RSV)

And when the time came for their purification...

New World Trans. (JW)

Also, when the days for purifying them...

Spanish: (RV 1960)

Y cuando se cumplieron los días de la purificación de ellos

How important are pronouns? In the true Bibles “her” refers to Mary and in the false bibles “their” or “them” refers to Mary and Jesus. Mary needed purification, but did Jesus? According to the RV 1960 He did. That is heresy! I can understand this being in the Jehovah Witness bible but not in a bible that “fundamentalists” defend. I believe Jesus Christ is the pure, spotless Lamb of God who

died and shed His precious blood to pay my sin debt and I want a Bible that teaches that without exception. If Jesus needed purification He could not have been my substitute and make atonement for my sins. Do you want a Bible that teaches that Jesus needed purification? If you don't, then do not use a Bible that has such error like the RV 1960. Again, this is what happens when you combine corrupt texts, liberal translators, and faulty technique. You get bad theology!

Job 21:7-13

Truth

English: (KJV)

Wherefore do the wicked live ...?... and in a moment go down to the grave.

Portuguese: (TBS 1994)

...vivem os ímpios...e num momento descem a sepultura.

Spanish: (Valera 1602 Purified)

¿Por qué viven los impíos ...?... y en un momento descenden á la sepultura.

Error

English: (RSV)

Why do the wicked live ...?... and in peace they go down to Sheol.

New World Trans. (JW)

...wicked...keep living...and in a moment down to Sheol they descend.

Spanish: (RV 1960)

¿Por qué viven los impíos ...?...y en paz descenden al Seol.

Believe it or not, the Jehovah Witnesses got it right on that one! On the other hand, the RV 1960 and the RSV teach that the wicked go to Sheol in peace. That sounds pretty Catholic to me. I do not believe there will be any peace in Hell, do you? Also, while the KJV has the word "Hell" in 54 verses the RV 1960 only uses it 13 times giving preference to the more politically correct "Hades" like other modern versions. In fact, guess how many times the RSV uses "Hell"? That's right, 13! This is yet another example of bad theology in the RV 1960 which also fails the test of theology. To summarize:

Corrupt Texts + Modernist Translators + Faulty Technique = Bad Theology

By the way, back to the Promised Land, I failed to mention that the 10 spies represent so called fundamental Baptists that put a higher premium on popularity than on purity. They represent people who care more about tradition than truth. The 10 spies represent pastors who look the other way when their missionaries are using an inferior translation put out by the modernist United Bible Societies. They represent American pastors who claim to be KJV but allow their Spanish department to be "RSV". They represent compromisers who do not want to "rock the boat" and stir up controversy or cause division. But truth divides and I for one would rather be divided by the truth than united in error. Don't be a compromiser, be a Joshua and push for the Promised Land of Textual Purity in any language.

Some say, "But there is no 'Promised Land' in Spanish so I'll just keep on using the 1960." If you had three glasses of water to choose from, one being pure (KJV), another being a little dirty (NKJV), and the last one being filthy (NIV), of course you would drink from the pure one. Now what if you are thirsty but there is no perfectly pure water available yet? If you had to choose between a clean glass of water (Valera 1602 Purified) offered to you by friends (fundamental Baptists) or a dirty glass of water (RV 1960) sold to you by foe (the modernist UBS), would the choice not also be obvious?

In closing let me offer two reasons why I believe those who are still using the RV 1960 should change now. The first reason is because there are superior alternatives. The RV 1960 obviously failed the test in all four areas (texts, translators, technique, and theology). For example, in a comparison of 220 verses in the New Testament, the following number of discrepancies (changes, additions, and omissions) was found in Spanish Bibles. From worst to best:

<u>Bible</u>	<u>Discrepancies</u>	<u>Publisher</u>
1960	191	Bible published and copyrighted by UBS.
1909	122	Bible printed by Bearing Precious Seed and others
2001	69	Bible published by Trinitarian Bible Society
1865	21	Bible republished by Local Church Bible Publishers
2004 RVG	1	Revision of the 1909 by Humberto Gómez
1602 Purified	0	Revision of the 1602 published by independent Baptist Church in Mexico (<i>Iglesia Bautista Bíblica de la Gracia</i>)

As you can see there are five complete Valera revisions available that are far superior to the 1960. Furthermore, the second reason is the source. Every time a 1960 is bought, a percentage goes to the modernist UBS. Not only are you getting an inferior product, you're paying the "Philistines" for it! Why not get a superior product and support godly publishers in the process?

Will you stand for truth or will you settle for tradition? Will you seek purity or popularity? Will you live by conviction or convenience? Will you be a contending saint or a compromising spy? I hope and pray you will be a Joshua and fight for the "Promised Land" of Textual Purity (in any language).

About the Author

Allen Johnson grew up on the mission field of Brazil where his parents have been serving the Lord for over 30 years. He attended Hyles-Anderson College and later received a B.A. in Foreign Languages, International Studies from Purdue University in 1997. He finished his formal language studies at *Universidad Complutense* in Madrid, Spain. He received his Master's degree in Pastoral Studies from Landmark Baptist College in May of 2003. Bro. Johnson has spent over a decade in full time Christian service. Before becoming a missionary with Wings Bearing Precious Seed he was involved with Christian education and church ministry including four years at Landmark Baptist Church and College where he was the Director of the Spanish Department. He taught and coordinated the Spanish program in the college, and preached in the Spanish ministry of Landmark Baptist Church. He has also preached abroad (in English, Spanish, and Portuguese) in Brazil, Canada, Chile, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and South Africa. In 2006 he became a missionary with Wings Bearing Precious Seed, a Bible distribution ministry sowing Scriptures around the world. Brother Johnson is available to preach and he may be reached at:

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