
Jesús LUZÁRRAGA, *El Evangelio de Juan en las versiones siríacas* (Subsidia biblica 33; Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico; Roma 2008) 357 pp. ISBN: 978-88-7653-638-0. € 35,00

New Testament text critics, when considering the Syriac versions of the Gospels, can find themselves in a quandary over readings that agree with some Greek manuscripts or are unique to the Syriac versions. Advances have been made recently in the study of Syriac translation techniques (see, for example, J. P. Lyon, *Syriac Gospel Translations: A Comparison of the Language and Translation Method Used in the Old Syriac, the Diatessaron, and the Peshitto* [Leuven 1994]; and J. Joosten, *The Syriac Language of the Peshitta and Old Syriac Versions of Matthew* [Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 22; Leiden 1996]), but a convincing explanation for every divergent Syriac reading remains a desideratum. P. J. Williams, in his recent work, *Early Syriac Translation Technique and the Textual Criticism of the Greek Gospels* (Texts and Studies, Third Series, 2; Piscataway, NJ 2004) identified a number of instances where NA27 failed to appreciate the translation techniques of the Old Syriac [=OS] in its citations of Syriac versions in the critical apparatus. Luzárraga engages these questions with a verse-by-verse comparison of the Greek text of John's Gospel with the Syriac versions.

Many interesting readings preserved in the Syriac versions, especially the OS, are discussed in this book. In the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4,1-42), the disciples, arriving on the scene, are astonished to find Jesus "speaking with a woman" (John 4,27). The Sinaiticus reads that Jesus "was standing" [ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ] as he conversed with her. A century ago Agnes Smith Lewis wondered about Jesus' "innate feeling of chivalry", namely, his courtesy toward a woman, noting that rabbis normally did not stand (*The Old Syriac Gospels* [London 1910] xxx). Luzárraga reiterates Lewis' observations and adds that this addition may be linked to John 7,37 where Jesus is said to be standing to teach. Ephrem knew this reading as well but he links it with John 8,44 and explains that Jesus was "standing" because "whoever stands [ܡܪܘܚܐ] in truth cannot be shaken" (L. Leloir, *Saint Ephrem. Commentaire de l'évangile concordant. Texte Syriaque [Manuscrit Chester Beatty 709] folios additionnels* [Leuven 1963] 88).

Luzárraga offers his independent insights into these Syriac readings. In John 3,6, the Sinaiticus adds: "because God is a living Spirit" and the Curetonian adds: "because God is a spirit and is born of God," a phrase that was known to Ambrose, who accused the Arians of erasing it from their text of John's Gospel (*De Spiritu Sancto*, III.10), as B. Metzger notes (*New Testament Studies: philological, versional, and patristic* [New Testament Tools and Studies 10; Leiden 1980] 197). Lyons (*Syriac Gospel Translations*, 186) argues that the Sinaiticus [=S] reading represents the original OS text and that it antedates the Arian controversy. Independent of this previous research,

Luzárraga arrives at a similar conclusion: “ésta sería además una profesión de fe en la divinidad del Espíritu, en contraste con cualesquiera afirmaciones en contrario” (52). Regarding the translation of the expression ἡρώτων αὐτὸν λέγοντες with ܘܪܟܢܐ in S (John 12,21), Luzárraga concludes that for S “le basta además sólo el ‘decir’ y suprime el ‘preguntar’” (215). Williams confirms Luzárraga’s intuition: “there are a total of 10 texts in which OS witnesses probably represented ‘ask’ by ‘say’—enough to establish it as a regular OS translation equivalence” (*Early Syriac Translation Technique*, 253).

Today, computer concordances can illuminate the nuances of particular lexical choices in the Syriac versions. Luzárraga notes that in John 3,14 δέῃ is translated ܕܘܚܪܐ and he notes: “Por su parte, P suaviza aún más la situación, y habla simplemente de un futuro” (55). He is correct since ܕܘܚܪܐ normally translates μέλλω (see, for example, John 6,6.71; 7,35 and so forth). But there may be more at stake. The expression dei/ is translated with ܕܠܐ in John 3,7 (Curentonian [=C] and Peshitta [=P]); 3,30 (S, C and P); 4,20 (P); 4,24 (C and P); 9,4 (S and P); 10,16 (S and P). (The Harklean version always translates δέῃ with ܕܘܚܪܐ.) But when Jesus speaks about his passion in John 3,14, 12,34 and 20,9, ܕܘܚܪܐ is preferred. In Matt 16,21 ܕܘܚܪܐ is the translation for δέῃ (P and C) in the context of a passion prediction, the only occasion in P and C that δέῃ is rendered with ܕܘܚܪܐ in Matthew. Otherwise, δέῃ is translated with ܕܠܐ (Matt 17,10; 18,33; 23,23; 24,6; 25,27; 26,54; ܕܘܚܪܐ translates δέῃ in S in Matt 24,6). Thus, it would seem that in the Peshitta of Matthew (but not in S) ܕܘܚܪܐ was reserved for references to the Passion, similar to what we find in John. I also wonder if this use of ܕܘܚܪܐ is related to the eschatological sense that ܕܘܚܪܐ can have in targumic literature? So, Luzárraga is correct that ܕܘܚܪܐ in John 3,14 may indicate a “simple future,” but the translator’s preference for ܕܘܚܪܐ in Jesus’ passion predictions remains intriguing.

The Syriac versions are more than just witnesses to the Greek text; they also trace the reception history of the Greek Gospels in early Aramaic speaking Christianity. The translators had to contend with difficult passages in John, such as 7,37-38 or 8,25, and elucidate them for their audiences. They could also rewrite unambiguous verses. For example, John 8,57 reads, “have you seen Abraham?” But the Sinaiticus reads, “Abraham has seen you” (with *p*⁷⁵, *ℵ* and others). Luzárraga explains: “en boca de los judíos el rechazo de que el inferior haya visto al superior” in coordination with John 8,53, echoing the observation of Agnes Smith Lewis (*A Translation of the Four Gospels from the Syriac of the Sinaitic Palimpsest* [London 1894] xxix). Ephrem also knew this reading and explains that Abraham saw Jesus in the lamb that he exchanged for Isaac (*Commentary on the Diatessaron*, 16,27). Such divergent readings are immensely valuable because they witness to some of the earliest interpretations of the Gospels.

Luzárraga’s study of the Syriac versions reveals his thorough knowledge of these texts and I would have enjoyed a few concluding remarks regarding Syriac translation techniques or the relationship between the Syriac versions and the Greek witnesses. Certainly he noticed that the OS and Codex Bezae (D) often agree (in John 4 alone he notes agreements in 4,1.11.27.35.49.51.54). What is his opinion of these numerous agreements? Overall, NT text critics will be grateful for Luzárraga’s insights

into the readings in the Syriac versions and future scholars will want to consider his explanations until each divergent reading in the Syriac versions is satisfactorily explained.

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Obras colectivas

Ignacio CARBAJOSA - Luis SÁNCHEZ NAVARRO (eds.), *Palabra encarnada*. La Palabra de Dios en la Iglesia (Presencia y diálogo 20; Facultad San Dámaso, Madrid 2008). 130 pp. ISBN: 978-84-96318-68-7. € 8,00

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