

Quest for Origins: The Joseph Smith Translation and Latin Version of the New Testament

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THE EARLIEST MISSIONARIES OF THE Christian era carried with them the traditions and sayings of Jesus in oral form for several decades—in some regions for several centuries—before an official translation was made into the common languages of the Roman empire: Greek, Latin, and Coptic.¹ Jesus had spoken Aramaic, but the oral Aramaic accounts of Jesus's life and teachings hindered the expansion of the ministry into regions where primarily Greek and Latin were spoken.² In the late first and early second centuries AD, a Latin translation—based on earlier Greek texts—was initiated by eastern Christian missionaries traveling in the West. In the late second or early third century, a Coptic translation of the Greek was also made for converts living in Egypt. As the church continued to expand, other translations were made to meet the needs of the missionaries so that every congregation could have the scriptures in

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its native tongue. These early translations, based on the Greek, are known today as the Versions.

Each of these Versions has the potential to reveal something about the original text of the New Testament insofar as it can be proven that it restores or retains an original reading from the Greek where the Greek text subsequently has been altered or changed.³ Although not the most vital sources for establishing the original text of the New Testament, the Versions are an important witness for the recovery of the text from the turn of the first century AD and later. In some instances, the Versions may also preserve original text that may have been lost in the primary tradition (Greek). Interestingly, the New Translation of the Bible—known commonly today as the Joseph Smith Translation (JST)—has a number of instances where it restores text that is exactly equivalent to the Latin Version.⁴

The Versions

As Aramaic- and Greek-speaking Christian missionaries moved into the western regions of the Roman Empire, they encountered the bilingual residents of the Italian peninsula and North Africa, who spoke the language of the Empire (Latin) and the language of learning (Greek). The earliest missionaries of the Christian Church arrived in the Latin-speaking West no later than circa AD 55, but possibly as early as AD 40.⁵ Unfortunately, these missionaries traveled before the era of the written Gospels and had to rely on either written sources that have now been lost entirely or on the oral accounts of Jesus's life and teachings. They were forced to communicate in Greek—Aramaic being the regional language of the Jews and their neighbors and therefore incomprehensible to most in the West. Paul's Epistle to the Romans—the earliest Christian correspondence to a community in a Latin-speaking

region—was written in Greek. Apollos, the first known convert from Latin-speaking North Africa, bore a distinctly Greek name and taught the gospel in the bilingual Greek- and Latin-speaking community of Corinth (see Acts 18:24–28; 1 Corinthians 1:12).⁶ While the masses of the western empire spoke Latin, they were also familiar with Greek, and missionaries from the East, such as Peter, Paul, and Luke—none of whom show any predilection for speaking Latin—communicated the gospel in Greek.

The precise dating of the shift from Greek to Latin in the West can be quite accurately discerned. Around AD 90, Clement, who, like Paul, wrote to the church in Rome, still wrote in Greek. Clement was followed by the pseudonymous author of the *Shepherd of Hermas* (about AD 150), who also wrote in Greek. Tertullian, writing around AD 200, was the first Church Father on record to write in Latin. Cyprian, writing about AD 250, is the first author to show substantial knowledge of an established Latin translation.⁷ The general assumption, therefore, is that a far-reaching popular Latin translation was not completed until the third century, although Latin translations of regional character were likely prevalent as early as the late first century. Moreover, the need for a comprehensive and sanctioned Latin translation became necessary in the late second century as the churches and the Fathers began to use Latin predominantly.

So as the missionaries moved west, the first obstacle the church had to overcome was translating or composing its sacred history into Greek, which delayed an official translation into Latin and thus forced the Western Christians to wait until they could receive the gospel in their native tongue. As the Gospel of Mark—the earliest of the four Gospels—was being composed from the oral accounts of Peter’s missionary sermons to answer the specific needs

of the missionaries in AD 60 and later, the Latin-speaking Saints were passing on the traditions they had received, translating them ad hoc into their own vernacular. The Latin-speaking church was not originally textually based on fixed New Testament scripture, and therefore the environment was one wherein regional and private translations could flourish and abound. These translations were originally done to meet the needs of the missionaries but later to meet the needs of the growing branches in Rome.⁸

From the surviving evidence, it appears that regional translations were carried out by anyone that had some knowledge of Greek and Latin. Augustine complained in the fourth century that a new translation was carried about by anyone who thought he had sufficient knowledge of Greek or Latin.⁹ Although such a practice was criticized by early church leaders, the members needed to have the scriptures translated into their own language and were therefore willing to use whatever translation was available, even if it had easily recognizable flaws.

Another significant factor contributing to the creation of loose or popular translations—known today as the *Vetus Latina* or the “Old Latin”—was the demographic composition of the Roman branches before the pre-Claudian (AD 49) banishment of Jews and Christians from Rome.¹⁰ As in other missionary fields, the Roman congregations were initially composed primarily of Jewish converts, it being the practice of Paul and other missionaries to take the gospel first to the local synagogue and then eventually to Gentiles (see Romans 1:16). Although no precise evidence exists, it seems that first-century Latin-speaking Jewish communities began to translate the Old Testament early on, from the Greek Septuagint (LXX), in an informal fashion; their method was based on the popular Targumic approach going on in Jerusalem.¹¹

The Targumim, originally initiated to meet the needs of Aramaic-speaking Jews who no longer spoke and read Hebrew, were popular translations of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Aramaic. They were composed in the first centuries of the Christian era in Judea-Palestine. Roman Jews followed the Judean model of translating the scriptures unofficially into their own vernacular so that worship services could be more meaningful and comprehensible to Latin speakers.¹² When the New Testament texts made it to the West, entering an environment of free translations, it was subjected to the same methods and approaches as the Old Testament had been.

The proliferation of translations caused consternation among early Latin-speaking church leaders who sensed the resulting confusion generated by the increase of localized translations and regional peculiarities.¹³ To stem the tide of these popular and quite useful translations, fourth-century Christian leaders decided that an officially commissioned text could circumvent the influence of the *Vetus Latina* and could be a potential influence in harmonizing worship services in Italy and North Africa.

Jerome, the most gifted linguist of his day, was commissioned to translate the scriptures into Latin.¹⁴ Beginning with the Old Testament, perhaps indicating which translation church leaders felt needed the most attention, Jerome worked through the Old and eventually into parts of the New Testament.¹⁵ This new translation into Latin has popularly been referred to as the Vulgate, or “common language” translation, although the *Vetus Latina* was certainly in the common language as well. The Vulgate was a corrective Latin translation rather than a new translation, and in most instances it followed the wording of the *Vetus Latina*. The intention was to rescue the text of the scriptures from the masses and place it under the purview

of church leaders. But it was initially presented as an attempt to harmonize the practice of Christian communities and correct the text according to better and earlier Greek manuscripts.

Jerome's method of translating the Old and New Testaments was to use the Hebrew (Old Testament) or the Greek (New Testament) manuscripts available in Caesarea and correct the *Vetus Latina* according to the "original" texts.¹⁶ This new text would therefore be more accurate to the original text of the New Testament in Greek, representing more closely what the earliest documents contained. The logical premise was that Jerome, writing in the fourth century, would have had access to better texts—texts that had survived the Decian and Varian persecutions of the third century and had now been established by Constantine as the basis for a series of new copies.¹⁷ This logical premise has become the prevailing reason why the Vulgate translation remains a permanent fixture in Catholic Christianity, a viable position given the fact that our earliest Greek manuscripts date from only the second century AD and later.

The *Vetus Latina* and the Original Text of the New Testament

Unfortunately, a clear and precise methodology for determining what the earliest Versions reveal about the original text of the New Testament has not been established. Each scholar working on the topic has literally thousands of manuscripts to work from.¹⁸ At first glance it would appear that the *Vetus Latina*, the earliest of the versions, provides the most information for the textual reconstruction of the New Testament. In the case of missing passages, deleted accounts, and missing books, it should hold true that the *Vetus Latina* could provide a valuable reference

point for establishing the original text. When trying to restore the original wording of the New Testament texts, however, the *Vetus Latina* should be only marginally valuable because of its origins as a free text originating from an immediate need rather than a carefully composed text that attempted to preserve the precise wording of the original.

Unfortunately, while the latter assertion is true, the former is not. The *Vetus Latina* preserves very little regarding textual corruption and missing pericopae.¹⁹ For this reason, the *Vetus Latina* tradition is often overlooked as a source for reconstructing the original text of the New Testament. The problem is compounded by the fact that the best estimates place the number of New Testament manuscripts in Latin at about ten thousand, including both the *Vetus Latina* and the Vulgate texts, and there is no comprehensive edition to date.²⁰ Any conclusions, therefore, based on the Latin tradition must remain tentative until a complete Latin text is available—an event that could take two or three generations if current levels of output go unchanged.

Under current practice, the *Vetus Latina* of the New Testament can only be helpful in reconstructing the text of the New Testament when it can be proven that the Greek text is more corrupt than the Latin. In other words, the *Vetus Latina* is deemed useful only when the Greek is questionable since the Greek text is always given preference in textual matters.

Determining the Original Text of the New Testament

The Vulgate text has been deemed to be much more important than the *Vetus Latina* for textual studies of the New Testament because it was a thoroughgoing revision of the *Vetus Latina* done at the beginning of the fourth century using the best available Greek manuscripts. If

Jerome had access to better manuscripts in Greek than are available today, and if he closely and accurately revised the Latin according to those manuscripts, then the Vulgate could provide a better text in some instances, although it would still be a translated text. The difficulty in assessing this type of occurrence is immense, making definitive use of the Vulgate tradition independent of the Greek almost impossible.

If, however, a variant reading can be shown to exist in the Latin as well as another Version that is independent of the Latin—such as the Coptic, Armenian, Georgian, or Syriac—then that variant can arguably be considered original. This is also true of the *Vetus Latina*. Another means of using the *Vetus Latina* or Vulgate translations for preserving the original text of the New Testament is when these translations can be shown to preserve a variant reading that is present in other versions independently but not present in the Greek. In this instance, the variant in question could be a legitimate original reading only if a variety of the Versions preserve a variant reading where there is a possibility of corruption in the Greek.

In the event that a possible original variant is detected, the Vulgate—a text-oriented translation—is given preference over the *Vetus Latina* in all instances. Moreover, the later Versions—judged on the basis that the earlier Versions (Coptic and Armenian) are preferred over the later (Anglo-Saxon and Syriac)—are given consideration only when they can be shown to have had access to an earlier Version (Latin) or directly to the Greek. Regional peculiarities and corruptions can therefore be eliminated from consideration, thus avoiding the potentially endless stream of scribal errors, peculiar translations, and regional doctrinal bias. Otherwise, all textual corruptions, aberrations, and peculiarities would of necessity be considered

potential early readings when such a thesis is historically implausible.

Therefore, in the event that the inspired changes made by the Prophet Joseph Smith agree with a variant reading in the Latin Version of the New Testament, they should be considered as potential restorations of the original text only when they agree with a Vulgate reading or variant that can itself arguably be considered original. Agreements with the Vulgate text should always be given preference over agreements with the *Vetus Latina* for potential original readings. Random agreements between Joseph Smith's New Translation and the *Vetus Latina* or Vulgate that cannot arguably be considered original readings may reveal another tendency of the New Translation—the possibility that it, like the Latin, was an attempt to clarify and bring the text of the New Testament up to date.²¹

When the inspired changes made by the Prophet Joseph Smith agree independently with a Version other than the Latin, then that agreement should be considered original only when a plausible case can be made for either corruption in the Greek text or the Version's independent potential for preserving original readings. For example, if a text can be shown to preserve original readings independently, then agreements with the New Translation could potentially also be considered original readings.

Consistent agreement between the texts would also present the possibility that both the versional text and the New Translation had independently preserved original readings.²² For example, a single text within a Version may contain numerous individual readings, called *hapax legomena* by scholars, because it is based on an exemplar that was itself unique or on a text with a diverse textual history. Codex Bezae Catabrigiensis preserves dozens of such textual peculiarities but has largely been dismissed as

inaccurate because of the often strange and peculiar readings that cannot be substantiated elsewhere.²³ However, when another distinct textual tradition—such as the New Translation—can be shown to consistently preserve the same readings and tradition, then a substantial claim can be made that both texts are based on the same earlier text or tradition, even if that text or tradition does not preserve the original text of the New Testament.

Many of the nuances of the Latin translation are well documented, therefore enabling modern scholars to piece together an accurate transmission history of the text. Some of the clarifying features of the Latin translation are as follows: supplying subjects, defining antecedents, separating prefixes of Greek verbs, adding explanatory glosses, and offering sense translations of difficult passages rather than literal translations to make the text more reader friendly. The Latin Version is in many particulars a truly scribal text; accordingly the need to make sense of the text surpasses the need for an accurate transmission of the text.²⁴ Therefore, the changes of the New Translation may have agreements with the Latin Versions because both texts share a similar background in the need to make the text readable and comprehensible to a new audience—the Latin Version originating out of a need to teach the gospel of Christ to Latin-speaking Jews in Rome, and the New Translation arising out of the effort to bring the text of the Bible in line with new revelation in the dispensation of the fullness of times.

The final methodological consideration is the possibility that the New Translation agreements with the Latin Versions will agree consistently with a certain family or grouping of manuscripts. In New Testament textual studies in Greek, when two or more manuscripts agree with one another for a significant number of readings, those

manuscripts are classed together into textual families. Three textual families have been identified with a possible fourth—D-text (formerly Western), Byzantine (Koine), Alexandrian (formerly Neutral), and perhaps Caesarean. When a manuscript is identified as belonging to a certain text family, then its historical setting, scribal characteristics, and regional provenance can be determined with some accuracy.

In the case that changes in the New Translation agree with a certain textual family, identified in the Latin tradition with less precision because of the Vulgate's dominance and later influence on the *Vetus Latina*, those agreements could arguably substantiate the validity of the textual family as having a textual base that could be considered inspired and therefore closer to the doctrines and teachings of the Restoration. This is not immediately an argument that the New Translation and the given text family preserve the original text of the New Testament but instead an argument that both share a similar doctrinal and textual outlook. It may be that the original text of the New Testament was not as accurate as the New Translation—a prophetic translation—and therefore another prophetic translation in the Latin translation may indeed agree with the text of the New Translation, even though both of them represent an inspired modification of the original text.

New Translation Intersections with the Latin Version

The New Translation shares several significant variant readings with the Latin translations of the New Testament.²⁵ In all, the New Translation shares twenty-seven unique readings with the Latin Versions of the New Testament that have no parallel in the Greek. Although this number may appear small upon initial consideration, it is significant enough to use as a test case for determining

whether any textual relationship exists between the New Translation and the Latin Versions. If the New Translation was an ancient text in Latin, Greek, or otherwise, then there would be enough shared material to determine whether the New Translation belonged to a distinct textual family or whether it represented some other form of textual tradition. The issue at hand, however, is whether the New Translation variants have an affinity with the Latin Versions.

The New Translation has no shared readings with the *Vetus Latina* exclusively to the extent they are published today, although in the vast majority of instances when the New Translation readings agree with the Latin, they agree almost exclusively in instances where the *Vetus Latina* and Vulgate are the same. When the texts of the Vulgate and *Vetus Latina* diverge, the New Translation follows the Vulgate tradition rather than the old Latin. The importance of this finding is that the New Translation, which could arguably be considered a harmonizing or popularizing translation, does not share anything uniquely in common with a translation that is known to have been produced for popular consumption and that also was originally intended to make the Greek New Testament more accessible to those who spoke little or no Greek. In other words, one would expect that if the New Translation were an attempt to make the Bible more legible for a lay audience, then it would likely have more in common with the *Vetus Latina* and not the Vulgate.

The New Translation intersections with the Vulgate translation must be considered in detail before any textual relationship can be posited or surmised. Beginning with Matthew 5:1 and extending through 1 John 2:1, the New Translation and Latin Versions contain a shared reading in all four Gospels, Acts, Romans, 1–2 Corinthians,

Ephesians, Hebrews, and 1 John. Some may appear to be rather insignificant, but taken as a whole they represent a surprising degree of textual similarity. The agreements between the Latin Version and the New Translation can be divided into five main categories: (1) a tendency in both to change the present tense “say” to the past tense “said”; (2) a propensity to supply the future tense for Greek copular constructions when the King James Version (KJV) supplies the present tense; (3) a clarification of subjects and objects when either is implied but not specifically stated; (4) a clarification of particles, conjunctions, and pronouns; and (5) supplying the same new words that do not exist in the Greek text.

Say to Said

Surprisingly, both the Latin and New Translation change the present tense of the KJV’s “say” to “said” in a number of instances (see Matthew 20:7; Mark 1:40; Luke 24:36), and although the New Translation does not consistently change “say” to “said,” it does so in accordance with the Vulgate in a number of instances.²⁶ In the Greek New Testament when the verb of the main clause is conjugated in the past tense, the verb of any dependent clause will often be conjugated in the present tense so that the action of the dependent verb is connected to the time of the main verb. For example, in Matthew 20:1–7, the parable of the laborers in the vineyard is recounted in the past tense—“the kingdom of heaven is like a husbandman who went”—where in Greek the subsequent verbal constructions related to the main verb “went” would be in the present tense in order to relate actions that took place in the same time frame as the main verb. However, in this passage, the verb “to say” is conjugated both in the present tense (6–7) and the past tense (4), which makes the Latin

and Greek texts read awkwardly. Invoking the rule of *lectio difficilior praeferenda est*, or “the most difficult reading is preferred,” one would naturally retain the past tense, which is the more difficult reading in this passage because it should logically be in present tense.²⁷

In the KJV the passage reads, “And sayeth unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He sayeth unto them, go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right that shall ye receive.” In all three instances of “say” in this passage, the KJV translators rendered the verb using the archaic conjugation “sayeth” in the third-person singular and “say” in the third-person plural. For reasons now unknown, both the New Translation and the Vulgate employed a past tense instead of following the Greek present tense only for the second instance of the third personal singular “sayeth.” This might be judged as a happenstance overlap, but it occurs in two other instances where a present participle (see Mark 1:40) and a present-tense conjugation (see Luke 24:36) are used accurately, and therefore no obvious reason for the change exists.

Following the rule of the *lectio difficilior*, the introduction of the past tense into the text could potentially be a restoration of an original reading if it were not for the fact that this reading is supported by a few Vulgate manuscripts and has not been recorded in any other version or in the Greek. Therefore, scholars do not consider this Vulgate variation potentially original because it is attested in only one version and is not manifest in the primary tradition even though it follows the pattern of Matthew 20:4 in conjugating the verb “say” in the past tense when spoken by the master of the vineyard.

In this instance, the reason for the variation between the present and past tenses may reveal a history of inter-

pretation for this passage, which if interpreted cosmically as the Creator sending mankind into the vineyard at different stages—implying the premortal existence of man—would mandate the past tense of the verb “say.” In the event that the passage is interpreted as immediately temporal, then the present tense of the verb would adequately demonstrate the point at hand, namely that the vineyard of the Lord had in the past been worked by Israel and now would be worked by newcomers.

Copular Constructions and Changes to the Future Tense

In copular constructions—where the verb “be” is implied but not supplied—the KJV almost always supplies the present tense whereas the New Translation sometimes retains the present but also at times supplies the future (see Luke 6:23). In the Greek construction, the translator or listener of the text is required to supply the proper conjugation, although in the majority of instances the tense of the verb is clear from the context.

Latin and Greek, unlike modern English, can tolerate such sentences without explicitly providing a conjugated form of the verb “be.”²⁸ This is true of relatively refined Greek and Latin but not as often in common parlance. Therefore, because the Latin translations have their origin in the common language of the masses, it would be logical to find that copular constructions were clarified, especially for those whose Greek was limited and for whom more nuanced grammatical constructions would present some difficulty.

In Matthew 6:23 the King James Version supplies “is” in a Greek copular construction while the Latin and New Translation both supply the future “shall be.”²⁹ In Matthew 21:31 the form of the Greek verb “go” is a third-person,

present, active conjugation, which is supported in the majority of Latin manuscripts, although a significant number of manuscripts have a future, active conjugation instead.³⁰ The variant future reading also finds support in the New Translation. A similar case can be found in Luke 3:9, where the Latin has either a present passive in accordance with the Greek text or a future passive form of the verb, which is again found in the New Translation.

In all three instances where the verb of the primary tradition is either supplied or conjugated differently, it is quite obvious that the shift from the (implied) present tense to the future tense may have been motivated by interpretation rather than through an effort to restore the original text. In any case, an argument could be made that both the Latin Vulgate, in this case supported also by the *Vetus Latina*, and the New Translation bear independent witness to an original reading of the primary tradition. However, such an argument cannot overcome the obvious and consistent motivation to change the tense of the verb to reflect the belief in the future judgment.

This intersection between the New Translation and the Latin Versions, when considered in light of the shift in both texts to alter the present tense “say” to “said,” indicates the concern for accurate interpretation in both traditions. Even though in both instances the separate and very diverse textual traditions could be considered as independent witnesses to an original reading, the more logical conclusion is that such shared readings are in reality a window into the earliest levels of Christian interpretation of the New Testament text. Therefore, in these instances of shared readings, the likelihood of shared original text is low; however, the potential to show how early Latin Christianity interpreted the text, which is paralleled in the New Translation, is high.

Clarified Subjects and Objects

In six instances, the New Translation supplies or clarifies the subject or object of an otherwise ambiguous construction. When the subject or object of the preceding clause clearly provides an antecedent for the verb or object, then repetition of that subject makes the following sentence seem redundant. Therefore, stylistically it is often preferable to leave out continued references to the same subject or object for the sake of stylistic harmony. For example, in John 8:59 Jesus is the subject of the phrase “he escaped and went out of the temple,” while John 9:1 starts with “and he going saw a blind man.” The antecedent of the verbs “going” and “saw” is certainly found in John 8:59 (Jesus). Because of the chapter break between John 8:59 and 9:1, the grammatical continuity may appear arbitrarily distanced and therefore a subsequent scribe will replace “he” in John 9:1 with its antecedent, “Jesus.”

This feature of copied text is more prevalent in later rather than earlier texts, or in other words, the primary tradition (Greek) is more likely to have originated or perpetuated the ambiguous antecedent rather than clarifying it. Therefore, the following unique agreements between the Latin Versions and the New Translation ought to be seen as part of the overall tendency of each tradition to make the text more legible and comprehensible to an audience that was becoming increasingly more distanced from the primary tradition.

In Matthew 5:1 both the Latin Versions and the New Translation clarify the identity of the subject—“Jesus”—of the verb “went up,” which is grammatically correct but not stated. In the Greek, the antecedent of the verb is stated only in Matthew 4:17, and all subsequent verbs are conjugated in the third-person singular to reflect that subject. The Latin tradition, in an attempt to more closely connect

the once-stated subject to the following verbs, adds “Jesus” in 4:23 and again in 5:1.³¹ The addition of the specified subject is certainly a clarifying tendency of the Latin Versions and the New Translation, and while likely not original cannot be proven or disproved as an original reading.

Clarifying Tendencies of the New Translation and the Latin Versions

Similar overlaps are found in Mark 6:45, which supplies “him” in the phrase “before to Bethsaida.” The Latin also has several clarifying additions in Luke 4:6 that seek to make the text read more smoothly: “And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.” The KJV English is awkward but comprehensible, while the Latin is a slightly clumsy translation of the Greek. The New Translation, together with the Latin manuscripts W, S, and, V, sought to correct the clumsy wording of this passage, and both rendered it, “And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for *they are* delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give *them*” (emphasis added).³²

In 2 Corinthians 12:6, the New Translation follows the variant Latin text, adding “in me” to the phrase “lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth in me.” The KJV translation makes the grammatical issue of this verse obvious where it supplies “to be” after “me” and renders 2 Corinthians 12:6 as a copular construction, whereas the New Translation, along with several Vulgate manuscripts, more correctly recognizes the intent of the text in indicating that Paul wanted to avoid giving the impression that he was anything other than what he really was. Again, in John 1:38 (“Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him,

Rabbi [which is to say, being interpreted, Master] where dwellest thou?") the Latin adds the indirect object "him" after the ambiguous participle "following," which is again repeated in the New Translation.³³

The New Translation and the Latin Versions offer a host of other clarifying conjunctions, adverbs, articles, and pronouns. The likelihood that any of these shared readings has a claim to originality can, in most cases, only be determined when the text in question has a distinct claim elsewhere to preserving original readings. As a general rule of thumb, the greater the likelihood that the given text preserves original readings, the greater the likelihood that any of the following clarifications will have a similar claim to originality.

All of the following examples—a small fraction of such changes in the Latin and New Translation—have exact verbatim parallels in the New Translation. Both the Latin Vulgate and the New Translation add "and if" in Luke 20:6. Both create a relative construction by adding "who" in Luke 3:23. John 10:14, 1 John 2:1, and Ephesians 2:8 are made to begin with "but." The text of Hebrews 8:4 is altered by adding the conclusion "therefore." The text of Hebrews 9:21 is altered by adding the comparative conjunction "likewise." And Hebrews 6:6 is altered so that the Greek noun construction is changed into a passive infinitive "to be renewed."

All of these ancient alterations of the Greek text are mirrored in the New Translation and reveal, once again, a similar scribal tendency to make the text more comprehensible to the audience. Each of these additions or alterations clarifies a nuance of Greek grammar or construction—particularly where ambiguous terms such as *gar* occur, which can be translated as "and, but, for, moreover, even"—and therefore the translators of the Latin Versions,

as well as later versional translators, had to specify how the ambiguous word should be rendered. In these instances of overlap, it is clear the New Translation and the Latin Version reveal a similar outlook on how the given passage should be translated.

Shared Words or Phrases

Perhaps the most arresting set of shared readings can be seen when the Latin Versions supply a word or phrase that is likewise restored in the New Translation. This is the category of shared readings that holds the most potential for preserving and restoring lost or altered text. In Luke 9:44 the Vulgate tradition changed the Greek “ears” to “hearts” in the phrase “Let these sayings sink down into your ears.” The variant text is exactly paralleled in the New Translation. This reading is followed three verses later with the variant text “And Jesus, perceiving the *thoughts* of their heart” (Luke 9:47; emphasis added), which is again directly paralleled in the New Translation.³⁴ The evidences that both the New Translation and Latin Versions are witnesses to the original texts are first, the consistent agreement in both traditions of not only the altered word but also shared number; second, both readings are found in close proximity and reveal a potential localized corruption in the primary tradition (Greek); and finally, the variant readings are supported by textually diverse and distant traditions that could have in no way influenced one another.³⁵ Moreover, the New Translation and the manuscripts W, S, and V exhibit only one other minor divergence in the text for this passage (Luke 9:44–47).³⁶

Initially it may appear that the accepted text (“hearts” and “thoughts”), by applying the principle of *lectio difficilior*, is the more difficult text and therefore should be retained. However, the reading “ears” seems to be the more

difficult reading, because the saying of Jesus preserved in this passage implies that the audience will not simply hear the word but also understand the word. However, elsewhere in the Gospels, Jesus consistently says, “hear in the ear” (Matthew 10:27; see Luke 12:3), “their ears are dull of hearing” (Matthew 13:15; Acts 28:27), and other phrases indicating that Jesus often used phrases associating hearing with the ears, where in modern parlance we would expect hearts or even thoughts when speaking of personal understanding. Therefore, if Jesus consistently used the phrase “hear with your ears,” then the shift to hearts would be the more difficult reading because it departs from Jesus’s standard usage elsewhere, and therefore the variant Latin and New Translation readings may have a legitimate claim to originality. The change in Luke 9:47 could also be either an issue of scribal error—known in this instance as haplography—where the scribe missed a single word or a short phrase in the text and therefore a later scribe, upon finding the missing word(s) supplied the text from memory. The close proximity of the two variant readings suggests that this might have been a localized scribal error. Overall, the potential that the New Translation and a few Latin Vulgate manuscripts preserve an original reading is significant but not absolutely certain.

In 1 Corinthians 11:10 Paul spoke about the role of women in the Church, saying, “For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.” The entire context of this passage reveals that Paul was discoursing on the practice of head coverings for both men and women in the Church. In Greek custom, men typically participated in cult sacrifices and prayers with their heads uncovered, while it was customary for women to cover their heads. In Roman tradition, both men and women—much like in Jewish custom—covered their heads when

participating in prayers or sacrifices. Paul's instructions to the Corinthian Saints follows the specific traditions of the Greeks, with the Apostle endorsing the Greek practice of only men praying with their head uncovered. The Apostle's instructions in 1 Corinthians are an endorsement of cultural or regional practice.

In the above quotation, however, the logical line of reasoning is broken by the insertion of the idea that women ought to have "power" on their heads, which is obviously a more difficult reading than the expected reading, "a covering." The variant textual tradition for this single passage is quite substantial, with nearly all Latin manuscripts, both the Vulgate and *Vetus Latina*, the Bohairic Coptic Version, and Ptolemy as quoted in Irenaeus supporting the expected reading, "a covering."³⁷ The New Translation also contains the reading "a covering."

According to text-critical thinking, the more difficult reading would be preferred in this passage. However, the variant reading enjoys not only substantial support in the Latin tradition, it also has broad support in a variety of unconnected sources, such as the Bohairic Coptic tradition from Egypt and a quotation of the Gnostic heretic Ptolemy, who certainly did not learn of the reading from Latin tradition but may have encountered it in Egypt prior to the rise of the Coptic textual tradition. Moreover, the New Translation offers another diverse manifestation of this singular reading, relying only on the KJV English text.

While the reading "power" enjoys the favorite position because it is a *lectio difficilior*, it blatantly ruptures the sense of the passage and appears to be an overt corruption of the text, either through scribal error or through later heretical Christian interpretation of this passage. In this passage, if the New Translation and other versional alterations of this passage are to be considered original,

then it would contradict the assumption that the more difficult reading is always preferred, which is a common occurrence in text-critical studies.³⁸ If the New Translation, Latin, and other versions are used in this manner, then the logical corollary would be that what has traditionally been perceived as scribal correction and harmonization of the text may in fact preserve a more historically correct text than previously thought, suggesting also that corruption of the text took place earlier in the transmission process than is traditionally assumed.

In Romans 9:10, both the Latin Vulgate and the New Translation correct an awkward translation with the addition of either the name “Sarah” (New Translation) or “her” (Vulgate). The KJV rendition of this passage is, “And not only *this*; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac” (italics in original). The first phrase is textually clumsy and relies on the example of verse 9 to make sense. The first phrase literally says “and not only;” which clearly implies that Sarah of verse 9 was not the only example of such faith. Both the Latin Vulgate and the New Translation clarify this ambiguity through the addition of an object, and even though they differ in regard to the exact word, they agree on its placement and interpretation. The Greek and Latin construction of this passage is, however, quite intelligible, and the addition of the object is certainly a clarifying tendency and therefore has little claim as a representation of the original text.

The final example is from Romans 4:2, where the text has been corrected away from a more difficult reading. The passage in question reads, “For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.” Paul’s argument in this passage is that one can be justified in relationship to the requirements of the law but that such justification is not the only requirement of righteousness,

which Paul goes on to say was accounted to Abraham because he “believed.” Therefore, both good works and belief are required of the faithful.

In a large number of Latin Vulgate manuscripts, together with the New Translation, the phrase “of the law” or “the law of” is added to the first line so that it reads, “For if Abraham were justified by the law of works.”³⁹ In this case, the added text represents a more difficult reading because Abraham lived before the introduction of the law and therefore could not have been subject to it, even though the “if” may imply that Paul was setting up a hypothetical situation. The origin of the reading “of the law” is therefore difficult to account for, unless it somehow represents the original text of the Apostle or a confusion on the part of a scribe. In either case, the reading has a legitimate claim to originality by modern text-critical standards that cannot be discredited easily.

Conclusions

The overlaps between the New Translation and the Latin Versions represent a significant body of comparative material, material which, if viewed from the perspective of text-critical theory reveals a similar approach to translating the Greek text of the New Testament. Both the Latin Version and the New Translation contain a significant number of readings that smooth out ambiguities of the primary tradition (Greek), clarify verb tenses (particularly in copular constructions), clarify the relationships between subordinate and insubordinate clauses, and insert similar phrases and terms into the Greek text in a number of instances. This body of material represents enough shared material to make a comparative analysis of the two texts and to determine, if possible, any textual relationship.

Overall the two texts—the Latin Versions and the New Translation—share a particularly close relationship in conjunction with the Greek text. Both consistently refine and bring into greater clarity the ambiguities and clumsiness of the Greek text, especially considering that both the Latin Versions and the New Translation approach the Greek as a nonprimary language text and therefore treat grammatical nuances as a significant obstacle. In fact, the large majority of overlaps between the two traditions have very little claim to originality but instead are part of a scribal clarifying process that renders the text more comprehensible to a new audience in a new locale. It is interesting, however, to observe the sheer number of instances where the two traditions alter the texts in exactly the same way in the same passages, especially when the vast majority of the shared passages are not grammatically problematic. In other words, the Latin Versions and the New Translation share a striking number of secondary readings that may reveal something of the nature and intent of both traditions. However, the New Translation has more in common with the Greek text of the New Testament, and therefore its intersections with the Latin Versions represent only a small portion of the overall New Translation approach.

In a number of instances, both the New Translation and the Latin Versions insert new material into the Greek text of the New Testament in exactly the same places. These insertions may represent the preservation of original readings in both traditions. Overall, they represent one fifth of the overall number of shared readings between the two traditions. That may, in fact, signal that a significant percentage of the text may preserve original readings. Each reading must be weighed individually, with the case for originality being made only after external and internal criteria are considered. As with any New Testament textual

variation, even in the Greek text, the likelihood that an original reading has been identified rests almost entirely on logical deduction through the application of modern text-critical assumptions. By those very assumptions and logical deductions, the New Translation has a legitimate claim for preserving a handful of original readings.

Notes

1. See Bruce M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 285–374; Jean Gribomont, “Les plus anciennes traductions latines,” in *Le monde latin antique et la Bible*, ed. Jacques Fontaine and Charles Pietri (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1985), 43–62; Benjamin Kedar, “The Latin Translations,” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Jan Mulder (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 299–338.

2. See Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3rd ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 272–77.

3. See Eugene Ulrich, “Characteristics and Limitations of the Old Latin Translation of the Septuagint,” in *La Septuaginta en la Investigacion Contemporanea: V Congreso de la IOSCS*, ed. Natalio Fernández Marcos (Madrid: Cardenal Cisneros, 1985), 67–80; J. W. Wevers, “The Use of Versions for Text Criticism: The Septuagint,” in Marcos, *La Septuaginta en la Investigacion Contemporanea*, 15–24, 67–80; U. Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1973), 285–98.

4. All references to the text of the New Translation are taken from Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004). In some instances, the references made to the New Translation will appear differently than they appear in the 1979 LDS edition of the New Testament. Joseph Smith and his contemporaries referred to his Bible translation as the New

Translation (see D&C 124:89; *Times and Seasons* 1, no. 9 [July 1840]: 140; Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957], 1:341, 365; 4:164). The term Joseph Smith Translation came into use in the late 1970s. The title Inspired Version refers to the edited, printed edition, published by the Community of Christ (historically the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints).

5. Paul's arrival in Rome can be traced to the early 60s, perhaps as early as AD 59. For a brief overview of the history of the Latin tradition, see Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 52–53.

6. The majority of inscriptions from first-century Corinth are recorded in Latin, although there is clear evidence that Greek was commonly spoken. The Corinth synagogue inscription, written in Greek, may suggest that the Jewish community, and hence the Christian community also, preferred to communicate in Greek.

7. See Aland and Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 52. This shift can also be seen in the development in the title of the New Testament (see Wolfram Kinzig, "The Title of the New Testament in the Second and Third Centuries," in *Journal of Theological Studies* 45, no. 2 [1994]: 519–34).

8. Paul's letter to the Romans, which can be dated to circa AD 60, contains references to at least three, possibly four, different branches meeting in the homes of Aristobulus (Romans 16:10), Narcissus (Romans 16:11), Tryphena and Tryphosa (Romans 16:12), Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, and Hermes (Romans 16:14).

9. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 11.16.

10. Suetonius reports that Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome because of the incessant rioting over "chrestus" (see Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, 2.5.4).

11. See D. S. Blondheim, *Les parlers Judéo-Romans et la Vetus Latina* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Edouard Champion, 1925), c–cxxiv; Pierre Petitmengin, “Les plus anciens manuscrits de la Bible latine,” in Fontaine and Pietri, *Le monde latin antique et la Bible*, 89–117.

12. See Philip S. Alexander, “Targum, Targumim,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:320–30.

13. See Metzger, *Early Versions*, 285–374; H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Bible in its Ancient and English Versions* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1970), 101–27.

14. For a brief description of the most important Latin manuscripts, see Alberto Vaccari, *Scritti di Erudizione e di Filologia* (Rome: Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 1952), 350–56; Pierre Jay, “La datation des premières traductions de l’Ancien Testament sur l’Hébreu par saint Jérôme,” *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 28 (1982): 208–12.

15. The *Vetus Latina*, or Latin version of the Old Testament, was certainly undertaken by Jews who spoke both Hebrew and Latin (see Ulrich, “Characteristics and Limitations,” 67–80; Matthew Kraus, “Hebraisms in the Old Latin Version of the Bible,” *Vetus Testamentum* 53, no. 4 [2003]: 487–513). It is likely that Christians in the third century, who had separated themselves definitively from the synagogue, no longer held any particular attachment to the earlier Jewish-oriented translation of the Old Testament into Latin. By comparison, Christians who spoke Greek overwhelmingly preferred the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament (LXX) to the Hebrew from the beginning.

16. See Vaccari, *Scritti di Erudizione e di Filologia*, 207–11.

17. See Aland and Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, 64–67.

18. See J. K. Elliott, “Textual Criticism, Assimilation and the Synoptic Gospels,” *New Testament Studies* 26 (1980): 231–42.

19. For example, only two Latin manuscripts (K [Bobiensis] and E [Palatinus]) contain the shorter ending of the Gospel of Mark, which ends at Mark 16:8 in the majority of early Greek manuscripts,

even though the longer ending of Mark is likely a post-third-century addition to bring the Gospel of Mark into harmony with the other Gospels.

20. The work of collating and gathering all Vulgate manuscripts was initiated by Bonifatius Fischer. Work on creating a comprehensive edition of the Latin text of the Old and New Testament continues today (see Aland and Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, 186–92).

21. This should not be interpreted as a counterargument to the possibility that the New Translation “restores and teaches doctrine,” categories that cannot be detected textually (see Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Joseph Smith’s New Translation*, 8–10).

22. The logical argument would be that the translator of the versional text was using a more accurate text than other exemplars within the same Version or family and that the New Translation agreed with the distinctive versional text because it was correcting the texts towards the same text used by the translator of the Version.

23. For example, see Luke 3:23–38 in Codex Bezae Catabrigiensis.

24. The origin of the text in the first- and second-century Western mission helps clarify why the Latin is so predominantly a text intended for use and teaching rather than for fixing and preserving the text.

25. Perhaps the strongest indication that the New Translation is closer to the Greek text than to the Latin can be found in Matthew 19:18, which reads, “Thou shalt do no murder” (KJV). This text is obviously a translation of the Latin instead of the Greek “Thou shalt not kill,” clearly indicating the reliance of the KJV translators on the Latin text or on an English translation that had followed the Latin wording. New Translation intersections with the Latin should be given some credence because in the vast majority of instances the New Translation agrees with the Greek text and departs from the practice of preserving an English translation with a Latin orientation in a number of instances. Departures from this norm, therefore, may reveal places where the New Translation preserves

the better text in connection with Latin, from which, in the overall picture, it departs.

26. The shift from present tense to past tense is limited in both cases to the verb “say.” In Matthew 20:7, the reading is found in Co (Complutensian Polyglot, AD 1514), and E (Erasmus 15274); in Mark 1:40 the reading is found in W (Wordsworth-White Vulgate 1889–1954), S (Stuttgart Vulgate 19944), V (Complutensian Vulgate, Leuven Vulgate 1547, and Plantinus’s Vulgate 1583), and in Luke 24:36 the reading is found in G (Gutenberg’s Vulgate 1452–54), Co, and E.

27. One of the most revered rules in textual criticism is that when faced with two potentially early readings, the most difficult reading is almost always preferred because scribes tend to harmonize discrepancies and errors when copying texts rather than allowing difficult and awkward texts to survive. Therefore, difficult readings are likely to have a greater claim to originality, although scribes continually introduce new errors into the text, which can often be traced based on recourse to a control text.

28. See Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 261–62; 472–73.

29. In the Greek text, the present tense of the verb *to be* is supplied in the apodosis—“if therefore the light that is in you *is* darkness”—but left out of the protasis—“how great a darkness.” The Latin Versions unanimously supply a present tense for the first clause and a future in the second clause.

30. *Praecedent* (versus *praecedunt*) in E, Wi, St, Si, C.

31. The reading “Jesus” is supplied in V (excluding Co, L, P).

32. The wording of the KJV English has been retained for comparative purposes, so that the shared readings of the New Translation and the Latin Vulgate would be more apparent.

33. The Latin *se* is omitted only in S but is almost certainly an original reading because the reading “him” is also manifest in one of the earliest Greek papyri (P66) and in a later uncial (1241). See this reading for the sigla cl. css.

34. Both of the variant readings are found in W, S, and V.

35. This logic could of course be invoked in all instances of shared variant texts. However, such an argument is substantive only when other logical criteria are met that would independently satisfy the burden of proof for demonstrating an original reading.

36. W, S, and V all read *sciens* (knowing) instead of *videns* (seeing) in Luke 9:47.

37. The reading *kalumma* is absent in the Greek manuscript tradition. All published Vulgate manuscripts contain *velamen* except L, P, and C.

38. See J. K. Elliott, "The Case for Thoroughgoing Eclecticism," in *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. David Alan Black (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 101–24.

39. The reading *legis* is added in E, Wi, St, and Si.

