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2011 Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium: "The Early Translation of Ellen G. White Books into Spanish"

Presentation

Glúder Quispe, currently a Ph.D. candidate in Adventist Studies at the SDA Theological Seminary, and a native from Peru, shed light on early translations of Ellen White into Spanish and the role Eduardo F. Forga played in this process.* He limited his research mainly to the years between the 1890s and 1915, the year in which Forga (as well as E. White) passed away.

Translation from White's Books into Spanish from the 1890's to 1907. Quispe pointed to the important role that the literature work played in Adventist missions ([Matthew 28:19-20](#) and [Revelation 14:6](#)) in every new global field. The first impulse to translate Adventist books into Spanish for the mission work in South America came from the European book committee. The first book published in Spanish was *Patriarcas y profetas (Patriarchs and Prophets)* by E. G. White in the year 1893. In the same year a group of missionaries arrived in Mexico and helped in the establishing of a medical mission and a school. In 1896 the first Adventist magazine in Spanish, *El amigo de la verdad* (The Friend of the Truth) with Dan T. Jones (1855-1901) as an editor, began to be published there. Articles by Ellen White and others started to follow soon. Other book projects were planned.

In 1897, G. W. Caviness (1825-1923) joined that group, after having worked as an SDA representative in an interdenominational committee to revise the Spanish translation of the Bible in Mexico City. After Jones' death in 1901 he became the next editor of *El amigo de la verdad*, and he worked 25 years in Mexico, translating also books and periodicals for the Spanish field.

Since he and other translators were non-native speakers, their Spanish contained mistakes, an aspect that contributed much to the importance of Forga and other native Spanish speakers and translators. In 1907, Caviness and Forga met and agreed to work together on providing Spanish-speaking readers with Adventist books, especially those written by Ellen G. White. To put it in a nutshell: the first effort to provide Spanish literature came from the European book committee and American missionaries in Mexico.

Four Stages in the Life of Eduardo F. Forga.

His Early Years (1871-1881). Eduardo Francis Forga Selinger was born on March 26, 1871, in Arequipa, Southern Peru to a wealthy Roman Catholic family from Spanish (father) and German (mother) descent. When he was ten, his father took Eduardo and his three older brothers to Europe to get a higher education there.

His Academic Preparation in Europe (1881-1896). In Europe the four Forga brothers first received a Catholic school education, with which they were soon unsatisfied so that they transferred to a Protestant school in Switzerland. There Forga encountered the Bible for the first time. His schools and touristic visits to other European countries nourished a personal awareness in regards to the differences between Catholic and Protestant churches and nations. He then decided to renounce his Roman Catholic worldview, longing for a deeper relationship with God. Quispe read the following testimonial by Forga about a day on which he seemed to hear a voice saying to him: "My son, give Me thine heart," which encouraged him on the track he was going.

After graduating from high school in Hamburg, Germany (1886-1890), and from a university in Berlin with a degree in mining engineering (1894), he suffered from a heavily limited health and decided to become a vegetarian, spending the

following months researching various topics on health, nutrition, hygiene, and medication.

His Work of Reformation in Peru (1896-1906). After his return to Peru (1896) he did not only work as a superintendent engineer in silver mines but devoted much of his finances and time to promote various health principles: Thus he wrote and translated material on hygiene, alcoholism, and nutrition, and financed the distribution of almost one hundred thousand brochures throughout Latin America. Gluder Quispe reminded the audience of the fact that Mr. Forga had not yet had any contact with Adventists at that time.

In 1898, when Adventism started to spread in Peru, Forga subscribed to *El Faro (The Lighthouse)*, the first SDA magazine in South America, which appealed to him because of its biblical messages, the promotion of a vegetarian diet, and other health-related subjects. He actually copied many articles from *El Faro*, and inserted them in his own publications.

Over the years his influence rose, and he became active in promoting the separation of church and state as well as religious liberty in Peru. His publications did not only reach common people but also political and religious authorities (up to the president), which soon led to his persecution, resulting in house arrest for Forga. This allowed him to continue writing and publishing his monthly magazine *La Reforma (The Reformation)*. Since his writings informed directly about injustices caused by public authorities and clergy, the governor urged him to flee, what Forga then did: over Mollendo he fled to London.

His Refuge Years in Europe and America (1906-1915). In London Forga attended evangelistic meetings with H. C. Lacey, connected these to his previous encounter with the *El Faro* magazine, studied the topics for himself, and finally accepted the newly found Bible doctrines. By the end of that year he married Lacey's sister, Marguerite, which happened to be the sister of W. C. White's second wife. For the following year they planned a visit in the United States before going back to Peru in order to resume Forga's work there. They did, in fact, go but they never left for Peru since Forga became soon involved in the work of translating Adventist publications into proper Spanish. During his last two years Forga worked in Barcelona, Spain, as a missionary and editor as well as a translator of the magazine *Las senales de los tiempos (The Signs of the Times)*. After becoming seriously ill there, he was treated in the Adventist Sanitarium close to Gland, Switzerland, where he passed away on August 28, 1915, at the age of 44.

Translations under Forga's Leadership. It was not before 1907 that Forga systematically read Adventist publications. When confronted with Spanish translations of these, he realized the poor quality and defective language which led him to proofread and revise many publications but also to look for and contact other potential translators. C. C. Crisler (1877-1936) had done the same a year before and we have records of at least two scholars who read previous Spanish translations (which they disliked and considered as American Spanish) and compared them later with Forga's corrections, which they considered as a much better and very good Spanish.

At this point Quispe added a side note on Forga's personal translation practice. Although translating and editing various major Adventist publications, he preferred to work on books by Ellen White, explaining this in the following way: "Other books written by our brethren may be extremely interesting, very important and excellent in their line, but they lack the living, transforming, renewing power of the literary productions imbued with the Spirit of Prophecy" (Forga to E. R. Palmer, Dec 18, 1908).

Some of the assistants of Forga were non-Adventists, as for example Francisco Diez—Spaniard, Presbyterian minister, translator for the American Bible Society, and from 1908 until 1915 translating for the SDA church. Diez actually knew Forga already from before and became his co-worker in 1908. According to the research done by Quispe, Diez treated his translation work for Adventists merely as a business, holding several differences in belief. In a letter to Forga, Diez wrote concerning a statement in *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*: "I call your attention to the following thought on page 167 in the middle of the page: 'God in Christ gave *himself* for our sins. He [God] suffered the cruel death of the cross...' What monstrous theology is this? Do you accept it? It would be better for the lady [i.e. E. White] not to act as a theologian and content herself to be a simple Christian woman."

Quispe described the translation-supervisor Forga as "jealous of the doctrine of the denomination", so that he and Diez probably had several very interesting theological conversations.

Translation of the *Great Controversy*. In 1908 Forga was invited to review the translation of *The Great Controversy* (GC). Considering that he had a scientific background, which of course coined his language, he decided to improve his articulation and literary skills. While reviewing the GC, he also studied English and literature under Professor Bransby at Berkeley University, California. He worked on this book for more than five years. Among several suggestions by different people on how to adapt the book to a Spanish speaking audience (abridging it, title variations, etc.), one main idea came from Forga himself: he suggested to add one chapter on the Reformation in Spain, "a note on the Inquisition which killed the Reformation in Spain and Spanish America" (Forga to N. Z. Town). Since then, this chapter is the 13th in the Spanish *El conflicto de los siglos* (*The Great Controversy*), pages 209-229 and has the title "El despertar en España" (The Awakening in Spain). It appears with the footnote: "This chapter was compiled by C. C. Crisler and H. H. Hall and has been inserted in this book with the approval of the author" (p.209).

Conclusion. The quantity and quality of Spanish Adventist literature increased significantly due to the effort of many workers, with Eduardo F. Forga leading the way.

Response. Tevni Grajales, Professor at the Department of Education and Counseling Psychology at Andrews University, a native of Panama, responded to Glúder Quispe's presentation by expressing his appreciation for the well done research in general as well as on some essential points of accord, e.g. Forga's overall contribution to the existence of Spanish SDA literature; the title and additional chapter in the Spanish *Great Controversy*, his influence on preserving Adventist doctrine, as well as his passion for the work at large. Grajales' suggestions regarding improvement of Quispe's paper tended to the title and outcome of the paper (why the strong emphasis on Forga although the title suggests early Spanish translations in general?), to the lack of primary sources used for the biographical sketch of Forga, to open questions regarding Forga as supervisor (his relationship to his co-workers, or the unmentioned answer to Diez who thought to perceived *monstruous theology* in the concept of God dying for the sin of the world [see above]).

* Please note that this and other articles on the presentations held are condensed summaries in which some lines of argumentation have been abbreviated. All papers/presentations will be published in a revised form in the Journal *Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium*, vol. 7, 2011, at the next Symposium, i.e. March or April 2012. Orders can be made to the [Center for Adventist Research](#).

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