

Dewey, David. *A User's Guide to Bible Translations: Making the Most of Different Versions*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004. 252 pp. Paper, \$15.00.

Real, intimate, reciprocal love is difficult to understand and describe. The translators of the Contemporary English Version (CEV) of the Bible had a problem with translating the concept of love found in John 15:9. David Dewey notes that the last part of this text "So remain faithful to my love for you" was the translators' most difficult phrase to translate in the entire Bible. For the CEV translators, the problem was making clear in a current language what the passage meant when it was written thousands of years ago. What did Jesus mean when his farewell words to the disciples included the counsel, "remain faithful to my love"?

Meaning, Dewey points out, is only one of many questions in the translation process. The book's first section covers a range of concerns that translators address: the unique style of individual Bible books, the reading level of their target audience, and how translation sounds when read out loud. Dewey helps the reader to understand scholars' efforts to translate Scripture into prose that is easy to remember, their struggles with appropriate rendering of the divine name and with issues of gender and theological bias. He gives insight into the difficulties involved in preserving the unity of the whole Bible as translators concentrate on individual passages or genres, books, sections, or testaments, and the idiosyncracies of the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The reader begins to sense the relative newness and extreme challenge of this most complex process when it is considered that the Bible as a single book was not usually available until the fifteenth century, and that, apart from paraphrases, Bible translation is consistently a committee effort.

If Part 1 of this book is technical, Part 2 is a story. Dewey traces the epic of how the English Bible came to the twenty-first century from early Anglo-Saxon songs on the lips of the Yorkshire laborer Caedmon, as far back, perhaps, as the seventh century A.D. He presents Wycliffe, the Reformation's "morning star," and the Bible that bears his name (although we do not know how much of it is his own work). He also recounts Tyndale's famous outburst against the blasphemy of a certain divine, "We were better to be without God's laws than the Pope's" (*Foxe's Book of Martyrs*), to which Tyndale responded: "I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spare my life, before many years I will make sure that a boy who drives the plough knows more of the Scriptures than you do" (120).

For all its careful research and impressive wealth of information, *A User's Guide to Bible Translations* remains thoroughly accessible throughout. Dewey's gift for comprehensive and comprehensible detail shows that he can solve mysteries, as well as generate them—a practice he follows consistently from his introduction. He teases: "[D]on't turn to that final chapter just yet; you will spoil the plot" (25). I offer no encouragement to spoil the plot either. Rather, I urge the reader to secure a copy of this book, whether you are a college student, experienced layperson, theological scholar, or aficionado of English literature. Dewey's presentation of the latest trends in translation and his informative and valuable appendices provide discussion about issues of translation, such as textual criticism, disputed Bible passages (e.g., the endings of the Lord's Prayer and Mark's Gospel), as well as Bible websites and handheld and desktop software. *A User's Guide to Bible Translations* is reading for total profit.

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Hamilton, Marci A. *God vs. the Gavel: Religion and the Rule of Law*. Foreword, Edward R. Becker. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 428 pp. Hardcover, \$28.00.

If religious groups are treated as entirely benign by lawmakers it will be at society's peril. Citizens of the United States tend to see religion as an "unalloyed good," as if it were consistently altruistic and philanthropic. *God vs. the Gavel* posits that "the unrealistic belief that religion is always for the good, however, is a hazardous myth" (3). It is true that humanity has profited in countless ways by religious institutions; however, the focus of this work is the negative side of religion concomitant with faulty legislation. The author