

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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LAEL CAESAR

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

admits that her purpose "is to bring to light the remarkable power of religious entities to obtain special treatment in the legislatures" (237).

Marci A. Hamilton begins with a critique of Stephen Carter's (*Culture of Disbelief*) characterization of a secular America with religion as the underdog. Thinking that religion has lost its force in this culture has opened the door for religion's role as not only the downtrodden institution but also as a clandestine political power. (Reverend Jerry Falwell has recently opened a law school to educate "Christian lawyers.") In fact, religious groups are as savvy and politically entrenched as any K-street lobbyist. Since the late fifties, while minority groups have been fighting for equality, religious entities have been "starting from equality under the law and then asking for privileges beyond equal treatment" (229). Religious organizations live in the world not above it. Even preachers of the eighteenth century exhorted their parishioners that as they had chosen their leaders they must also obey them. The author maintains that the American myth of religion as indubitable causes some to think religious behavior should be beyond the law.

Hamilton avers that religion as a whole should be looked upon with a healthy dose of incredulity and supports her thesis with myriads of examples (endnotes constitute twenty percent of the book). Six areas in Part 1—children, marriage, religious land use, schools, prisons and the military, and housing and employment discrimination—elucidate why in the American social contract law must trump religion and lawmakers must be chary. Religiously motivated crimes are not limited to stereotypical outcast groups. Established, legitimate institutions, such as the Catholic Church, as well as the modern and bizarre, are exhibited.

If "separation of church and state" clarifies the government's role toward the ecclesia, why should it be looked upon with suspicion or even regarded whatsoever? The unsavory conduct of certain parishioners and the cover-ups by religious superiors means that lawmakers owe it to their constituents to scrupulously legislate on religious matters. Silence and semblance have been resorted to in order to defend a religious institution's public image as a close-knit model community. Such a Pollyanna image, as with an innocuous clergy, kept the press from reporting many crimes for decades. Blindly trusting any group is renouncing one's social responsibility. Such cynicism "is not antireligious . . . it keeps the system honest, the result just, and the First Amendment legitimate" (165). Some, revealing a chimerical optimism, may argue that legislation can not be based on a few bad apples. One writer in particular has brazenly written that "the exercise of religion should trump most governmental regulation." Hamilton espoused this understanding in 1993, but since then she has been enlightened to the fallacy of Carter's argument that religion is weak in government and forgotten by lawmakers. She rebuts her previous position by stating that "even if these are bad apples, these bad apples are precisely whom the law is intended to deter and punish" (47).

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said: "[T]he life of the law has not been logic; it has been experience" (*Common Law*, 1881, 1). Part 2 gives a historical perspective in order to elucidate how the relationship between legislation and religion has evolved into the present confusion. In Britain, at least back to the twelfth century, the church and crown were on an equal footing. The clergy were beyond the reach of the law (*privilegium clericale*) and, if ever found guilty, received lesser punishments than ordinary citizens. This ecclesiastical court system of the medieval world was removed by the seventeenth century. If "executive privilege" for clergy were given today, it would be a throwback to a darker time when the church dominated society. The pioneering colonists, children of Queen Elizabeth I, whose reign abolished these courts from criminal jurisdiction, brought with them the knowledge of the consequences arising from an ecclesiastical state. The Founders—relying on the experiences of European history—rejected a society under the crown or the church. Church autonomy, in their opinion, was a will to power, not an inherent right. They believed that humans, even religious ones, will often abuse the power they have and thus developed checks and balances, such as, in this case, the law.

Recently, however, this check has become derelict. Church hierarchy, responding to child abuse accusations, has breached the First Amendment as a restraint on the courts from intervening in interchurch squabbles. Forty years ago, the Supreme Court began to

pander to religious groups by “treating every law that substantially burdened religious conduct as presumptively unconstitutional” (206). The Constitution may not have obviated the specifics of present-day abuses, but it did set up a framework to apply the law. Does the Second Amendment give license for any criminal to own any gun they wish? Does “a speedy trial” mean “immediately”? Yet, the First Amendment is interpreted unconditionally in the vaguest of cases. The results of such a doctrine are that religious institutions are “free to engage in immoral or antisocial behavior” (196).

“The First Amendment is about freedom from government overreaching, not about finding loopholes for criminals to avoid paying what they owe society” (47). Once government intrudes upon belief, then and only then is it overreaching. In *Reynolds vs. United States* (1878), the defendant asked the Supreme Court to apply religious freedom to behavior, as well as belief. Thomas Jefferson precluded this argument, and the Court upheld it, by stating that “the legislative powers of the government reach actions only, and not opinion” (207). In another place, he said that “it does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.” Liberty of belief is absolute; however, once conduct stemming from a conviction begins to harm society then the government has the responsibility to execute the law without exception. Religion, like all entities, must be subject to the law—“unless they can prove that exempting them will cause no harm to others” (5). The public good is the defining factor.

If one is guided by the public good as a bedrock of legislation then why does Bob Jones University’s sanctioning of an interracial dating prohibition (the I.R.S. threatened to revoke its tax-exempt status for this regulation) fail to meet the criteria, but churches rejecting women as clergy, noticeably absent from the book, does not enervate society? Hamilton splendidly built the case for the principle, but arbitrarily applied it in the examples. So it must be, for arbitrariness will be perpetual as long as legislators in a republic are given the latitude to vote the way they interpret the public good.

This debate over public policy belongs, Hamilton vigorously argues, in the legislative branch of government rather than the judicial or the executive. A judge is hemmed in by the facts of a case and the executive lacks the constant and varied contact with the *hoi polloi*. The legislative, on the other hand, can call hearings, appoint expert commissions, order extensive studies, and look at the larger picture of society. If a religious accommodation is to be made, it is to be enacted solely by a legislature. All too often, though, religious exceptions are the creation of surreptitious lobbying groups with uncanny political dexterity rather than “the result of legislative consideration in light of the public good” (196). With these distinctions made, the reader must ask whether the abuses of the law are due to religious groups working the system, lawmakers who are not scrupulous enough to probe the consequences of legislation, or the courts for meddling in public policy without the pertinent tools?

Hamilton’s personal legal work in religious land use causes her to exaggerate this field of litigation. The examples appear trivial adjacent with chapters on child abuse and discrimination. Although the cases referenced are not as numerous as other chapters, religious land abuse is adumbrated and made as important as it can be in light of the public good. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 gave enormous latitude to religious landowners until 1997 when the Supreme Court held that federal legislation could not supersede state authority in this realm. Religious groups were not daunted and convinced Congress to pass the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act in 2000. Hamilton believes this is the epitome of special-interest legislation and it has “turned neighbor against neighbor” (97). For example, the emergence of mega churches has, at times, brought disruption and an image transformation to halcyon residential neighborhoods. The author depicts houses of worship intentionally bringing in tatterdemalions to pollute once-pristine neighborhoods. In one case, malcontent residents complained about increased noise and the grievance was labeled as a pretext for antireligious sentiment. The view of this specific court was that whatever the religious institution desired to do would be beneficial for all. Whose view of the public good should be followed—the courts or Hamilton?

It is difficult to divine the author’s view of religion. Is she worried that America is

kowtowing to powerful and devious religious groups? Is she applauding society for being more agnostic than the pious would have? At times—as when disputing Carter’s thesis—she states that religion is a powerful force in the country, yet when finding fault with the nation’s rejection of gay marriage, which she apparently supports under law, the United States is unequivocally not “Christian.” Is it possible America is both?

There is an apparent agenda against religious convictions under the guise of the public good. After opining that religious organizations ought to be curbed from using their property to suit their desires when it interferes with a neighborhood’s image, Hamilton continues to asseverate that landlords contravene fair-housing laws by rejecting unmarried couples or other tenants that run contrary to their own beliefs. The author even indiscreetly finds fault—because of public good—with the religiously motivated act of home schooling. It has always been tenebrous aligning individual liberties with the larger society. Hamilton’s emphasis upon *res publica* (“public good”) makes her appear to be a pre-Revolutionary Whig, who would have neglected individual liberties for the whole. However, it depends upon the issue at hand. In religious land use cases the individual must accede to the many, but with gay marriage, she implies that the multitude must comply with the wishes of the individual. It is a difficult issue that remains opaque after reading this work.

The issues raised in this work affect all. Whether one believes they belong to God or to the state, it is vital that humans belongs to each other. There is a unitary harmony that must be maintained in a commonwealth. *God vs. the Gavel* leaves the impression that freedom is not so much passively demanding one’s own rights, but rather actively being a keeper of each other’s.

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NICHOLAS CROSS

Harris, Murray J. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. cxxviii + 989 pp. Hardcover, \$75.00.

Murray J. Harris is Professor Emeritus of New Testament Exegesis and Theology at Trinity Evangelical School, Deerfield, Illinois. He has published a number of scholarly articles and his published books include *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (Eerdmans, 1983); *From Grave to Glory: Resurrection in the New Testament: Including a Response to Norman L. Geisler* (Zondervan, 1990); *Colossians and Philemon (Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament)* (Eerdmans, 1990); *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* (Baker, 1992); *Three Crucial Questions about Jesus* (Baker, 1994); and *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Devotion to Christ*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 8 (InterVarsity, 2001). He also coedited *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce* (Eerdmans, 1980).

It has been said that if Solomon would write Eccl 12:12 today, he might well say: “Of the making of many Bible Commentaries there is no end.” That is why Harris is aware that “it has become incumbent on authors to indicate in what ways they believe their commentaries make a distinctive contribution to New Testament studies” (xiii). Harris offers three reasons for the uniqueness of his commentary: he is “now inclined to defend the integrity of the canonical 2 Corinthians with even more confidence” (xiii) and has seen many other commentators recently come to similar conclusions; one of the aims of the New International Greek Testament Commentary series is to “cater particularly to the needs of students of the Greek text” (xii) because “Scripture cannot be understood theologically unless it has first been understood grammatically” (xiv); and the commentary offers a “Chronology of the Relations of Paul, Timothy, and Titus with the Corinthian Church” (xv).

In the introduction, Harris discusses literary issues, such as authorship, the “severe letter” and the integrity and purpose of the letter. There is agreement among scholars about Pauline authorship of 2 Corinthians since it belongs to the *Hauptbriefen*, as F. C. Baur called them. However, no letter is more closely tied to the vagaries of historical circumstance than 2 Corinthians, not so much in regard to the historicity, but to the identity of the “severe letter” or *Tränenbrief*. Harris offers, to those who reject the identification of the “sorrowful letter” as 1 Corinthians or 2 Corinthians 10–13, the option of a letter that is no longer