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Review of Helen Kraus, *Gender Issues in Ancient and Reformation Translations of Genesis 1-4*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011, xiv + 242 pages, ISBN-13: 9780199600786; Oxford Scholarship Online, 2012, DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199600786.001.0001.

BY CAROL MEYERS, DUKE UNIVERSITY

Translations of scriptures are fascinating cultural documents. They inevitably reflect the beliefs and language patterns of the times in which they are made, and they also exert a powerful influence on subsequent epochs. This is especially the case for the Hebrew Bible and is especially significant when passages relating to gender, many of which are used to justify the subordination of women, are rendered from the original into other languages. Helen Kraus' book is thus a welcome contribution to the understanding of how five important translations of the Hebrew text of Genesis 1-4 into non-Semitic languages participate in the development of androcentric if not misogynist readings.

Kraus examines two ancient translations: the Greek Septuagint, produced by Jewish scholars in about the 3rd century bce (chapter 3); and the Latin Vulgate, the work of Saint Jerome in the 4th century ce (chapter 4). She then turns to Reformation Europe and examines three more: Martin Luther's German Bible of 1523 (chapter 6); the English Authorized (King James) Version of 1611, along with the closely related Tyndale Bible of 1530-1534 (chapter 7); and the Dutch State Translation (Statenvertaling)

of 1637 (chapter 8). Except perhaps for the Dutch version, these translations have been highly influential on the way scripture was/is understood by all who used – and still use – these translations. Moreover, although all of these renderings are based on the Hebrew text, apart from the first translation (the Septuagint) they assiduously consulted and were influenced by the interpretations of the Hebrew in existing translations.

The book begins with a sensible and sensitive depiction of the ‘Problem of Translation’ (chapter 1), which alerts the reader to the challenges and constraints of the translation process. The translator not only must attempt to provide an accurate rendering, which is especially difficult when the original and receptor language belong to completely different language families, but also must strive to make it comprehensible in a culture at a great chronological and cultural distance from the original. On both counts, interpretation is inevitable. With nothing less than the word of God at stake, Bible translators seek to be as faithful as possible to the source text while at the same time making it ‘resonate with its surrounding world’ (p 10). In examining five translations, Kraus thus attends not only to the vocabulary and nuances of the original Hebrew but also to relevant cultural features – notably beliefs about the nature of women and men, the concept of marriage, and gender roles. She takes into account the Greco-Roman context of the Septuagint and the early Christian setting of the Vulgate. As a prelude to consideration of the three Reformation translations, she examines European society in the late medieval and Reformation era in chapter 5, which provides a succinct summary of the considerable scholarship on ‘Women and Marriage in Reformation Europe’. In addition, she takes into account the personal (and sometimes sexual) experiences of the translators, especially the passions and conversions of Jerome and Luther, and the theological and political involvements of the English and Dutch translators.

In focusing on gender issues in Genesis 1-4, Kraus has selected six passages for close textual analysis in each of the five translations: (1) creation of male and female in 1:26-28; (2) creation of ‘man’ in 2:7, 9, 15-17; (3) creation of ‘woman’ in 2:18-25; (4) emergence of human traits, which she calls ‘seeing’, in 3:1-13; (5) consequences of disobedience in 3:14-24; and (6) beginning of procreation, which she calls ‘generation’, in 4:1-2, 17, 25. She first (in chapter 2) looks at the starting point for her project, the Hebrew text of each of these six passages. Then, for each of these passages, she presents the translation issues facing each of the five translations and their solutions, all the while comparing the rendition being studied with its predecessors and contemporaries. She concludes the book

with 'Some Synoptic Observations' (chapter 9), in which she presents trends in the translation traditions for each of the six passages, followed by a rather brief concluding chapter summarizing her work and pointing to the trajectory of the translation process, namely, the tendency for the translators' choices to move towards greater androcentrism and gender inequality. Finally, two extremely useful appendices are provided: 'A Synoptic Comparison of Hebrew and Translated Texts', in which the six passages are laid out side by side for convenient comparison; and a similar arrangement comparing 'Selected Verses from William Tyndale's Bible and the Authorized Version'.

Kraus' handling of the Hebrew text has some problems. She rightfully identifies the aetiological genre of Genesis 1-4, particularly as a tale accounting for gender differentiation. However, she has not been as attentive as she was in looking at the five translations in considering the cultural context and also in examining word usage in other biblical texts in order to grasp lexical nuance. Perhaps most problematic is her assumption of androcentricity in the creation of the first human (*'ādām*) in Gen 2:7. She helpfully points out that this term is not the proper name of Adam until Genesis 5. But she retains the traditional understanding of the word as socially gendered masculine without considering the evidence that, albeit grammatically masculine, it is a collective gender-inclusive noun, one that is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible specifically when gender is *not* an issue. This first 'human' (rather than her 'man') would then be androgynous, at least until the cosmic surgery that produces 'man' (*'iš*) and 'woman' (*'iššâ*), in keeping with important contextual information, namely, the androgynous first human in some ancient Near Eastern tales. Genesis 1-4 may be androcentric in some ways, but probably not in the primacy of male existence. Another problem is that, by not considering the use of garments as status markers in the Hebrew Bible, Kraus misses the way that the first humans are afforded special status rather than sinful shame when God clothes them at the end of their life in Eden (Gen 3:21).

Perhaps most disconcerting is her analysis of the Hebrew of 3:16, arguably the most controversial verse in the Eden story with respect to gender issues, for it has traditionally been understood as divine sanction for female childbirth pain and general male dominance. Her lexical study of words formed from the root *'šb*, linked with pain as well as worry, fails to show that they mean physical labour or mental anguish but *not* physical pain; the Hebrew Bible has other words commonly used for the pain of parturition. Also, although acknowledging that the second part of the verse relates to the first, she accepts the man's 'rule' over woman as general

social rather than specifically sexual dominance. This can be contested in light of demographic considerations in relation to agrarian households in Iron Age Israel.

These comments on her handling of the source text notwithstanding, Kraus' work on the translations themselves provides invaluable insights into the translation dynamics and implications of each. One of the most powerful examples is the way the Greek translation uses a word for male 'rule' that has 'divine overtones': in 3:16 the man becomes the woman's lord just as God is the 'Lord and master of the universe' (p 63), thus introducing an all-encompassing and enduring gender hierarchy. And the Latin translation, in many ways more influential than the Greek, departs dramatically from its usual close adherence to the Hebrew by rendering the 'turning' of the woman to the man in the third line of 3:16 as *sub viri potestate* ('you will be under your husband's control'), thus providing a close parallel to the last line of that verse, *et ipse dominabitur tui* ('and he shall rule over you'). Together they resonate with the Roman (but *not* Israelite) idea of *patria potestas*, the male as household head with wide legal and social powers. And they set the stage for the German *er soll deyn Herr seyn* ('he shall be your Lord'), with *Herr* alluding to the German *der HERR* ('the Lord') as a designation for God. The Dutch *heer*, alluding to *de HEERE*, follows suit.

All told, Kraus' analysis of the translation traditions of Genesis 1-4 illuminates the complex processes affecting the translators' decisions and is an invaluable resource for tracing the path of gender hierarchy and misogyny in five important versions of the Bible. Whether these features originate in the Hebrew text itself can be debated, but their presence in the translations that have been the most accessible to the faithful over the course of more than two thousand years has been established.