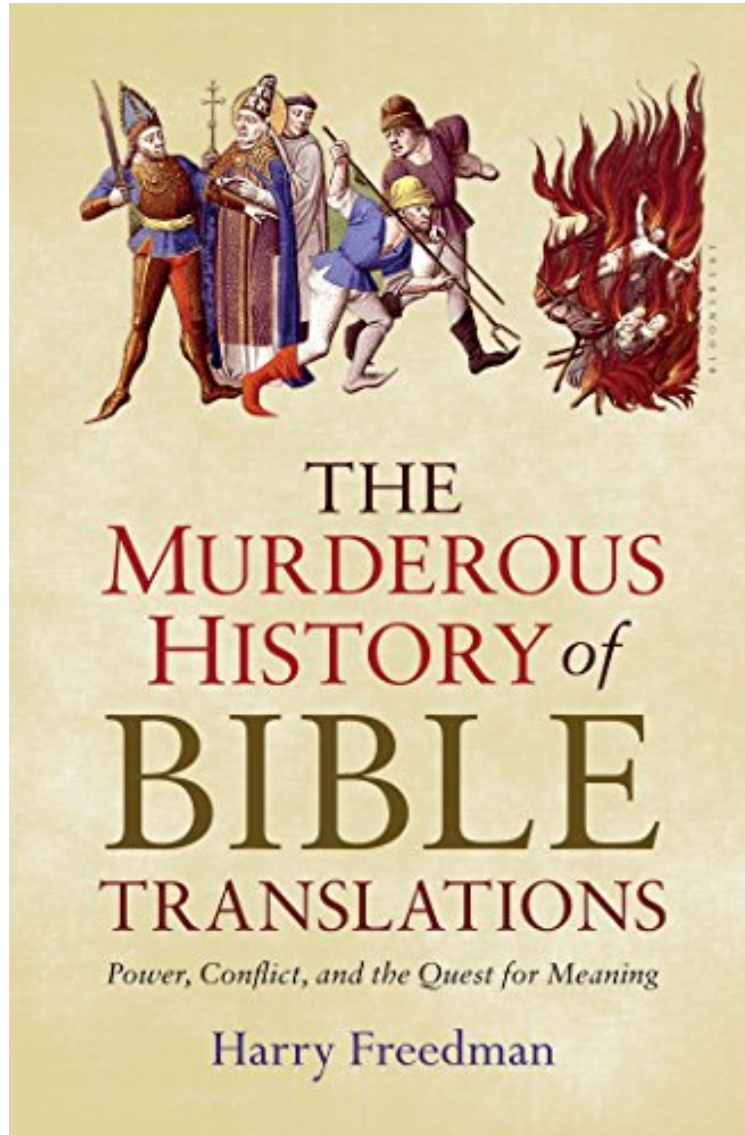


The Murderous History of Bible Translations: Power, Conflict, and the Quest for Meaning

Harry Freedman

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Harry Freedman : The Murderous History of Bible Translations: Power, Conflict, and the Quest for Meaning before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Murderous History of Bible Translations: Power, Conflict, and the Quest for Meaning:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. engaging and easy to read By KenWell written, engaging and easy to read. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Three Stars By Sam Haddon More historical detail - less

comparative analysis than expected. 5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. The burning bush By Hande Z Christians swear by the Bible, but what is in the Bible today (in its many translations) do not say exactly the same thing. Freedman's book is an account of how we got to where we are. The stories in the Bible began long before paper or writing. Freedman tells us that the first Bible translation was linked to the history of the Library of Alexandria, 300 years BCE. Ptolemy I built the greatest library in the world and to make it so demanded visitors to surrender every book to the library, retaining a copy for themselves. The first translation was by Jews but in the Greek language because the diaspora Jews were illiterate in Hebrew. That was the Septuagint translation. The full account is fascinating and illuminating. From that, the next major translation was in Latin, partly as a result of the decline of Hellenism. This was the Vulgate Bible. Interspersed between the two are the accounts of the political and theological struggles that helped lead to the Vulgate translation. Then came Martin Luther and his fight with the Catholic Church. He translated the Bible into German and it became a popular book, making lots of businessmen rich publishing and selling it without paying any royalty to Luther, as Freeman pointed out. Then on the Anglo-Saxon front, came the Wycliffe translation and the Puritans version known as the Geneva Bible. The Puritans were deeply Calvinists and their translation (which was the one the pilgrims took to America) reflected their differences. The saddest story is that of William Tyndale, the man who defied the Church and King and translated the Bible into English (So that the boy behind the plough will know as the Bible as well as you his reply to the bishops when they demanded why he was doing it). Tyndale's translation was the foundation of the King James Version (which retained about 70% of Tyndale's translation). Tyndale was burnt at the stake (with his Bibles) as a heretic and the Lord Chancellor who saw to that, Thomas More, was canonised as a saint. Freeman then discusses many other translations including the German translation by Moses Mendelsohn, the distinctive American translation of Noah Webster, and the first translation by a woman Julia Smith. Then there was the Catholic response, when a group of French Dominicans in Jerusalem translated the Bible into French, known as the Jerusalem Bible. It was translated into English with consultations with the author of *The Lord of the Rings*, J R R Tolkien for style. A later revised edition made the Jerusalem Bible one of the most popular Catholic Bibles today. Freedman's book is a thought-provoking book and ought to raise questions regarding those who claim that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, and those who claim that it is a work of man inspired by God. It also leads one to understand why the Bible, which contains so many stories, letters, and teachings became a closed book with no new chapters, new letters, and new stories incorporated into it. When, in other words, did God say Stop?

Harry Freedman, author of *The Talmud: A Biography*, recounts the fascinating and bloody history of the Bible. In 1535, William Tyndale, the first man to produce an English version of the Bible in print, was captured and imprisoned in Belgium. A year later he was strangled and then burned at the stake. His co-translator was also burned. In that same year the translator of the first Dutch Bible was arrested and beheaded. These were not the first, nor were they the last instances of extreme violence against Bible translators. *The Murderous History of Bible Translations* tells the remarkable, and bloody, story of those who dared translate the word of God. The Bible has been translated far more than any other book. To our minds it is self-evident that believers can read their sacred literature in a language they understand. But the history of Bible translations is far more contentious than reason would suggest. Bible translations underlie an astonishing number of religious conflicts that have plagued the world. Harry Freedman describes brilliantly the passions and strong emotions that arise when deeply held religious convictions are threatened or undermined. He tells of the struggle for authority and orthodoxy in a world where temporal power was always subjugated to the divine, a world in which the idea of a Bible for all was so important that many were willing to give up their time, security, and even their lives.