

*A Translator's Guide to the Revelation to John.* By Robert G. Bratcher. London/New York/Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1984, 204 pp., \$2.40 paper.

This is one of a series of books that the United Bible Societies is putting out as a kind of elementary version of their Translator's Handbook series. The *Guide* uses the *TEV* but also prints out fully the text of the *RSV*. Everything is in English, text-critical notes offer Bratcher's conclusions but usually provide no rationale, and scores of decisions are defended by some such phrase as "most commentators agree" or "commentators generally agree."

The introductory essay, "Translating the Revelation to John," wisely insists that "the translator should in no way try to explain or interpret what the symbols mean: this task is for the teacher, the preacher, the writer of commentaries. The translator's duty is to translate clearly and precisely every one of the figures and symbols used in this book." Yet although there is wise caution in such a statement, there is also naivete; for how does a translator translate "clearly and precisely every one of the figures and symbols used in this book" without making some difficult decisions about what they mean? On 5:5, for instance, the translator is encouraged to render "the root of David" by something like "the famous descendant of David," because the Biblical title "reflects the language of Isaiah 11.1,10," and "in very few languages will 'root' or 'shoot' make much sense in a title like this." But then is one not interpreting "what the symbols mean"?

In general the execution is better than the theory, and for this we may be grateful. What does strike me about this Translator's Guide series, however, is how remarkably elementary many of the comments are. They are very often the sort of thing that should have been covered by any student who has done a couple of years of seminary Greek. That such elementary comments have to be included is vaguely troubling: Does this reflect the low level of Greek instruction, or the inadequate training, of many of our translators?

D. A. Carson