

clause “without cause sparing my enemy” (with variations in the wording). The solution proposed here refers it to the whole verse “without cause betraying my friend and helping my enemy”.

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John 3:16

(A new common language translation into Croatian is just getting under way. Only a few chapters of the Gospel of John have been presented to the Editorial Committee. Already there are several places where the proposed translation departs significantly from most others, including modern dynamic equivalent translations. This note is a discussion of a well-known text in which the rendering proposed for the new Croatian translation departs from both TEV and Die Gute Nachricht. Since the translation is still in the beginning stages the draft text is still subject to change. Reader response to this note is therefore invited and welcome.)

John 3:16, “the most beloved verse of the Bible”, is a particularly difficult verse to translate dynamically. In any language this verse always “sounds better” in the old familiar form we know by memory. In this case we must avoid the question: Which rendering “sounds” best? and rather ask: Which rendering lets us “hear” the meaning of the text best? There are two small grammatical details which have significant influence on the meaning of the verse. Most translations fail to let us “hear” the meaning of these details.

First is the use of the aorist tense for the verb “love” (*ēgapēsen*). In John this form of the verb is used for a particular action completed in the past at a particular time. (See John 13:1, 34; 15:9, 12 and Jn. 4:10f., 19. This form is also used for man’s “decision” for evil, John 3:19.) Here love is not thought of as an attitude but as an *act*!

The second detail is the particularly Johannine use of the conjunction *hina*. This conjunction, which outside of John usually expresses purpose or result, is often used in John to explain or define something. (See John 4:34; 6:29, 39, 40; 15:8, 13.) In this case it refers back to the phrase “God loved” (understood as an act) and defines it more closely as God’s giving His only son. The relationship is more one of *content* than of cause and effect. (See John 15:13 and Jn. 3:16.) In an attempt to give expression to these details the following rendering has been proposed for the Croatian common language translation:

Da, kakvo veliko djelo ljubavi je Bog
učinio za čovječanstvo kad je dao svog
jebinog Sina . . .

Translated back into English this would read:

Yes, what a great work of love God did for
mankind when he gave His only Son . . .

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It is hoped that brief notes like those above will be a regular feature of the Practical series of The Bible Translator. The contribution of such notes as well as longer articles will be welcomed.—Editor.