

***Getting  
Ready For  
EHV 2017***

## **A Collection of Four Articles About the EHV**

This collection of four articles introduces prospective readers to some of the main issues to consider concerning *the Holy Bible: Evangelical Heritage Version*. The articles are summaries and expansions of articles that have appeared as EHV FAQs. The Wartburg Project website has many more articles on these subjects in the library and FAQ sections of the Wartburg Projects website.

Each article is designed to be read independently of the others, so there is some repetition.

The four articles:

- 1) Why should I try the EHV?
- 2) What were the greatest difficulties encountered in producing the EHV?
- 3) What are some of the features that distinguish the EHV from other translations?
- 4) Becoming accustomed to a new translation

### **Article 1: Why should I try the EHV?**

With the recent publication of the EHV lectionaries for evaluation and use, and with the appearance of the preview edition of the EHV New Testament and Psalms in summer 2017, an obvious question is, “Why should I try the EHV?”

The simplest and most important answer to that question is that every faithful translation delivers the Word of God to its readers. Even if you already have a translation you really like, reading another translation will give you fresh insight into some Bible passages and motivate you to study those verses more carefully.

An additional reason to try a brand-new, in-progress translation like the EHV is that for dedicated readers of the Bible, the opportunity to participate in the evaluation and improvement of a new Bible translation is likely to be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Regardless of what you decide about a specific translation, the opportunity to take a closer look at the process of Bible translation and to participate in evaluating some of the complex decisions that are involved in Bible translation will be its own reward.

As far as the EHV translation itself, here are a few reasons to give EHV a look.

A key word for the EHV in defining our goals is *balance*. The goal of our project is to produce a *balanced* translation, suitable for all-purpose use in the church.

We seek a balance between *the old* and *the new*. We respect and try to preserve traditional terms that are well established in the doctrinal statements and the worship life of the church, but the EHV does nevertheless introduce some new terms in those places where the traditional translation no longer communicates clearly. Such new terminology will be explained in the footnotes to the translation, which will also include a reference to the traditional term.

We seek a balance between the poles of so-called *literal* and *dynamic equivalent* theories of translation. A translator should not adhere too closely to any one theory of translation because literalistic, word-for-word translations sometimes convey the wrong meaning, or they do not communicate clearly in the receiving language. Overly free translations deprive the reader of some of the expressions, imagery, and style of the original biblical texts. So if you like a more literal translation like the NASB, the EHV will provide you will more idiomatic, easy to read renderings of many passages, which you can compare with the more literal translations. If you like one of the freer translations, the EHV will provide you with renderings that stick closer to the Hebrew and Greek texts. Such readings will be presented in the translation itself, with additional options in the footnotes.

Translators should strive for a balance between preserving the *original meaning* of the text and producing *English which sounds natural*, but the preservation of meaning takes priority.

We seek a balance between *formality* and *informality*. The Bible contains many types of literature and different levels of language, from the very simple to the very difficult. For this reason, the translator should not be too committed to producing one level of language but should try to reproduce the tone or “flavor” of the original. Informal conversation should follow a more informal style than a royal proclamation or divine decree.

The EHV strives to preserve not only the meaning but the emotional impact of the original.

The EHV places a priority on producing a *fuller representation of the Hebrew and Greek biblical texts* than many recent translations do. The EHV includes readings which are well supported by ancient manuscript evidence, but which have been omitted from many other recent translations, because these translations tend to focus on certain limited portions of the manuscript evidence rather than the whole range of evidence which is weighed by the EHV.

We place a *priority on prophecy*, so our translation and notes strive to give clear indications of Messianic prophecy.

The EHV is committed to using *archaeology, geography, and history* to provide a clearer understanding of the original meaning of the biblical text, and this will be reflected both in the

translation and the footnotes. Many instances of this are explained in the next two sections of this collection of articles and in our FAQs.

We hope the Evangelical Heritage Version will prove to be very readable to a wide range of users, but the EHV is designed with *learning and teaching* in mind. It is designed to assist careful Bible study in the church. We assume that our readers have the ability and the desire to learn new biblical words and to deepen their understanding of important biblical terms and concepts. Translators should not be condescending or patronizing toward their readers but should be dedicated to helping them grow. The Bible was written for ordinary people, but it is a literary work that includes many figures of speech and many rare words. The Bible is a book to be read, but it is also a book to be studied. Our footnotes are designed to assist in the process of learning and teaching. Our translation is in that sense a textbook. This concept will, of course, be much more fully implemented in our planned study Bible.

The EHV is a *grass-roots translation*, which makes extensive use of parish pastors and lay people in the editing and evaluation of the translation.

The EHV is a *gift to the church*. It is being produced at very low cost because of the abundance of volunteer labor. The EHV has also given a written promise that we will not deny individuals or churches, who have obtained rights to use the EHV in derivative works like commentaries or study Bibles, the right to continue to use the version of the EHV which they have adopted, even if new versions of the EHV appear someday.

“But if only the New Testament and Psalms will be available in a print edition during 2017 and the EHV is making good progress at finishing the whole Bible, shouldn’t I just wait for the whole Bible to appear before I try the EHV?” The answer is “No,” because becoming involved now, gives you that one-in-a-lifetime opportunity to participate in the process of developing a new translation in its formative stages. You can also experience a generous sampling of key Old Testament texts by reading the lessons for each Sunday of the church year, which have been posted on our Wartburg Project website. These readings are available for free use. If you buy the 2017 preview edition of the EHV, it will cost you about 2 cents a day to use it while you are waiting for the full Bible. The EHV will be available for use in church bulletins and other resources even before the full Bible is available in hardcover print editions. Work is also underway on such works as a harmony of the gospels, commentaries, Bible history books, and hopefully, in the not too distant future, a study Bible and catechisms.

Over the next year, as the EHV translation is being completed, this article will be expanded to at least booklet length by the addition of more reasons to use EHV and of many specific examples of the EHV translation principles in practice. This “first edition” deliberately does not include any specific examples so that you can use it as a study guide for making your own discoveries.

In the meanwhile, the FAQs, our rubrics, and articles available in the library section of our website provide many examples of these principles in practice.

## **Article 2: What Were the Greatest Difficulties Encountered in Producing the EHV?**

It goes without saying that producing a Bible translation is a tremendous undertaking. What are the greatest difficulties we encountered in producing the EHV?

The first one obviously is the sheer volume of the project. A typical English translation of the Bible fills more than 1500 pages of text. The original text was written in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) and in various styles within those three languages. The sixty-six books were written over a period of 1500 years, with all the changes of alphabet, grammar, spelling, and style which that timespan implies. The only solution to this problem caused by the volume of text is having enough participants, allowing enough time, and exercising enough patience to keep working through the mountain of text.

Sometimes the original language of the text, especially in the Old Testament, is extremely difficult. Sometimes the difficulty is due, at least in part, to the subject matter, for example, in the difficult task of translating the description of Solomon's Temple. Knowledge of ancient temples and of ancient and contemporary building techniques can help resolve some of the translation difficulties, but, at times, the translation remains uncertain. The same situation exists in the translation of the names of musical instruments and other musical terms. The growing amount of information about ancient music can help the translator, but here too there is a big cultural gap that must be bridged. When the translation of a term is uncertain, the footnotes will indicate that.

In some cases, the difficulty is due to the peculiar dialect of the Hebrew. The book of Job is written in a dialect that is not standard Judean Hebrew. There are many rare words and difficult passages. One blessing that helps the translator overcome this problem is that most of the book of Job is written in poetic parallelism, in which alternate lines echo each other. A point which is obscure in one line may be expressed more clearly in the corresponding line. In especially difficult cases, translators have to do the best they can, relying on the meaning of the parallel line as their best resource. Job provides a good illustration of the principle that a translator cannot allow a quest for "the perfect" to stand in the way of achieving "the possible." When commentaries are laden with a half dozen or more options for a given expression in Job (some of which are very different from each other options) since the EHV is a Bible intended for general use, it seems wisest for the translator to choose one meaning that fits the context well (and perhaps one other to be used in a footnote) and not to bog down the text and confuse the reader with too many options. In spite of the difficulties of the language of Job, because there is so much repetition of the same thoughts, readers can be confident that the message of Job is coming through clearly.

The texts of the Bible were written in a culture or, more accurately, in cultures very far removed from our cultures. This applies not only to material objects of daily life, but also to the whole social and political structure of society. Geographical, archaeological, and historical

resources can help us bridge the gap, especially in regard to material goods and historical events. Ancient documents, such as ancient law codes, can also provide some insights into law, family life, and the structures of society during biblical times, but when we are dealing with this problem, there is no substitute for a careful study of the whole biblical text, in order to gain a better understanding of specific issues, such as the relationships of men and women, parents and children, slaves and masters, and so on.

Sometimes this difficulty involves different value systems between the ancient societies and our own, but sometimes the problem simply involves very different ways of expressing the same basic interests. For example, the Song of Songs contains many descriptions of ideal feminine beauty. The lady is like a horse; her hair is like a flock of goats; her nose is like a tower. Many of these pictures do not resonate with contemporary urban Americans, but a translator's job is not to re-write or update the Bible, but to transmit it. Translators should not distort the ancient culture by eliminating its symbolism and word pictures and by making its poetry prosaic. In many cases (maybe even in most cases) translators should retain the ancient pictures and allow modern readers and teachers to search out the right meaning from the context, sometimes with the help of footnotes and commentaries. Just as careful listening and thoughtful consideration of what people are saying is essential when we are trying to communicate with someone from a contemporary culture that is very different from our own, when we are trying to communicate with people from a distant time and place, this is doubly true. Careful listening and thoughtful consideration are the key.

Sometimes the problem for the translator is that the Hebrew is so hard that it is difficult to find one good translation for a verse (see the comments on Job above), but sometimes the problem is the opposite—there are a half dozen good translations for a given passage. Strange as it seems, this situation can be more time-consuming for translators and editors than the first situation. When translators are struggling to come up with even one good translation, all they can do is choose one option and move on (at least for the time being). When there are many credible options, it is easy for translators to get bogged down in debating options and going round in circles or bogging down the text with too many footnotes. This is true, for example, when there are four reviewers for a given passage and each one of the four reviewers prefers a different option for the translation (a situation not as uncommon as you might think). Carefully considering which option will communicate most clearly is a valuable exercise and should not be cut short, but once again, a quest for “perfection” cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the “possible.” Even when there is no clear-cut basis for choosing one option over the other, a choice finally has to be made, and only one person will get his or her first choice. The rest have to say, “Well, I can live with that choice, even though mine was clearly better.” Such is the nature of a collaborative translation.

It is important to remember that such situations in which there is more than one good option will often result in what we call *exegetical questions*. An *exegetical question* occurs when the issue is whether a given passage teaches doctrine A or doctrine B, both of which are scriptural. For example, is Galatians 5:17 about the Holy Spirit who puts a new spirit in us? Or is it about the new spirit that the Holy Spirit puts in us? The end result for preaching and teaching is pretty much the same, regardless of whether the translator decides to write *spirit* or *Spirit*. If translators

always let Scripture interpret Scripture, they will not teach anything wrong, even if they are occasionally unsure of the point of a given verse.

Sometimes difficulties are due to the different structures and practices of the two languages. The interplay of nouns and pronouns is probably the area in which translators most often must depart from a word-for-word rendering of the original Hebrew and Greek texts. English often requires a noun where Hebrew might be able to use a pronoun, and vice versa. English style does not permit us to use a pronoun unless there is a clear antecedent in the near vicinity. In cases in which a Hebrew pronoun does not follow its antecedent closely enough to fit English style, translators often have to replace the pronoun with the appropriate noun in order to make it clear who is being referred to (for example, “Moses” rather than “he”). English style normally does not permit use of a pronoun until a noun has been mentioned to serve as its antecedent. Hebrew often does this. On the other hand, repeating the same noun over and over again, which is not uncommon in Hebrew, sounds strange in English. So for readability and to avoid a mistaken perception of grammatical and stylistic errors, pronoun usage in the EHV normally follows English usage. But if the biblical author is using pronouns to build suspense by withholding the identity of the referent, a translator should preserve the suspense.

Sometimes the standard of politeness is different in the two cultures. *Me and you* is perfectly fine in Hebrew, but *you and me* is more polite in English. To avoid the impression of grammatical error, the EHV usually follows the proper English order, unless it seems that there is some special significance to the Hebrew order.

In the Hebrew culture, lower status people often address higher status people by their title rather than by a pronoun. Not “I thank you,” but “I thank the king” or “I thank my lord.” They address superiors as “father,” equals as “brother,” and inferiors as “sons.”

In English, quotation marks indicate a change of speakers in recorded conversations. Because quotation marks are not part of the Hebrew text, they present a special problem for translators. Inserting quotation marks is always an act of interpretation. Sometimes this task is quite easy, because there is a formula like “Moses said” or a Hebrew word like *lemor* (saying) preceding the quotation. At other times, there are changes of speakers that are not explicitly marked in the Hebrew text, but changes in the number and gender of the pronouns and verbs may point to the change. At still other times, it is uncertain whether there is a change of speakers.

In nested quotations, in which quotations lie within other quotations, the American English practice is to alternate sets of “ ” and ‘ .’. Trying to follow this practice in translating the biblical text would lead to many cases that would look like this: “*quote*”” or even an occasional “*quote*””””. This is confusing and seldom useful. To minimize this, the EHV treats long speeches, prophecies, etc., as documents in their own right. They are set off by special indentation and they do not begin and end with quotation marks. This greatly reduces instances of.”””

Another problem is caused by the expressions: “This is what the LORD says” and “The declaration of the LORD.” Many translations treat these phrases as an introduction to a quotation and add another set of quotation marks at each occurrence. But this phrase usually does not

function as the introduction of new speech or speaker. It is, instead, intended to be an assertion of the authority of the words that follow or precede. The phrase may, in fact, occur several times within a single quotation. For this reason, EHV does not treat every occurrence of “This is what the LORD says” or “This is the declaration of the LORD” as a signal which triggers another set of quotation marks. The EHV’s practice intended to reduce swarms of quotation marks may strike readers as unusual at first, but they will grow to appreciate the absence of the annoying swarms of quotation marks. It also gives a more pleasant look to the page.

It is amazing how much time is consumed by the simple (?) issue of quotation marks.

A somewhat similar issue is that Hebrew does not have the same structure and differentiation of direct and indirect questions that English has, so sometimes Hebrew direct questions have to be converted to English indirect questions.

Sometimes the simplest things can become very time-consuming, for example, commas. It is very common that one reviewer is taking out the same commas that another reviewer has just put in and vice versa. In a translation like the EHV, which will be used frequently in public reading, the most important function of commas is to help the reader place pauses in the spots which help the listener grasp the flow of the sentence. This function of assisting reading is more important than conforming mechanically to abstract rules about punctuation of various types of phrases and clauses. The purpose of punctuation is to help writers convey meaning. It is not the purpose of writers to serve rules of punctuation. Obviously, one cannot just ignore what most well educated people think the rules are, but punctuation rules are sometimes similar to the rules “take the 3-0 pitch,” “punt on 4<sup>th</sup> and long,” and “run on 3<sup>rd</sup> and inches.” These rules are helpful guidelines, but they do not apply to every situation.

This is true also of other punctuation marks such as the question mark and exclamation mark. These two sentences have the same form, but not the same function and meaning: “What do you know?” and “What do you know!” (Actually, in conversation either of these can also be pronounced, “Whadda ya know!” but it can’t be written that way except in recording lively conversation, so we have to rely on the punctuation and context to help.) In such cases the writer’s choice of punctuation directs the reader to the right inflection of the sentence. “What do you know?” is sometimes a question calling for an answer, but it could just mean, “Hi. How ya doing?” and it requires no answer beyond “OK.” “What do you know!” or “Whadda ya know!” can be an exclamation at a surprising turn of events.

What inflection does the question mark suggest in this sentence: “Really?”

What inflection does the exclamation mark suggest in this sentence: “Really!”

Sometimes the issues involved are simply matters of taste not of principle, and there can be no disputing matters of taste. To use the theological term, these issues fall into the realm of adiaphora. But people sometimes have strong feelings about adiaphora. One illustration of this problem is the difference between formal textbook grammar and informal conversational grammar. If Jesus says, “Who are you looking for?” many readers will say “Jesus would not use bad grammar.” If Jesus says, “For whom are you looking?” or better yet, “Whom seekest thou?” another set of readers will say, “Nobody talks like that. Jesus would not be stuffy.”

Very similar reactions are raised by choice of words. One reader's "fresh and lively" is another's "too slangy."

Another emotional issue arises is the strongly sexual language in some Bible passages. The Bible in most cases uses euphemistic terms for sexual matters, but some passages are very blunt. English readers are often unaware of these jarring statements because English translations often hide them behind euphemistic alterations of the language. But do translators have authority to censor the Holy Spirit? These two issues are dealt with at some length in our online course and in the article, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place," in our library section, so specific examples will not be discussed here. We can say all Scripture is written for our learning, but not all Scripture is necessarily for Sunday school.

Sometimes grammatical conventions change so abruptly that the translator is caught in a whirlpool. For hundreds of years it was not the custom to capitalize pronouns that refer to God. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries this practice became common place, and many people wrongly think that this was always the practice. More recently, when there was a return to the long-standing practice of not capitalizing such pronouns, this was interpreted by some people as diminishing God's honor, but, in fact, it was simply a return to the traditional practice, which, by the way, agrees with the practice of the original Hebrew and Greek texts. For further discussion of this issue read EHV FAQ #3b.

Another issue is the trade-off between familiarity and improved accuracy. Long-time Bible readers are used to hearing Jesus say, "Truly I say to you," but in his recorded speech Jesus almost never uses a Greek word that means "truly." He almost always is reported as using the Hebrew word "amen" even when all the surrounding words are Greek. When the original text uses Hebrew words like *halleluia*, *amen*, and *hosanna* in Greek text, it is good practice to honor that choice. First-time readers of the EHV are sometimes jarred when they hear Jesus say, "Amen," but sometimes familiarity has to yield to accuracy.

Another emotional issue involves the choice of the text to be translated. Because some recent translations that are perceived to be liberal by some readers have shorter biblical texts than the King James Version does, the whole topic of textual criticism is suspect for many Bible readers. But properly practiced, with presuppositions of faith, textual criticism strengthens our confidence in the text that has been transmitted to us. The EHV often follows a fuller text than most recent translations (except for those translations that follow the King James text almost exactly), but since some Bible readers have doubts about any textual criticism, careful explanation of good textual practices is necessary. EHV FAQ # 10 discusses this, and other articles on the topic are forthcoming. The textbook *Old Testament Textual Criticism* by John Brug discusses this topic at great length, with an emphasis on Luther's role as a pioneer of textual criticism.

Sometimes a situation is such a mess that no reasonable, consistent solution is anywhere in sight. An example of such a mess is the spelling of place names and personal names in the Bible. A tug-of-war is going on between preserving the traditional spellings, which are largely based on the Greek and Latin spellings rather than on the Hebrew text, and the desire to bring the English spelling closer to the Hebrew. All the systems in use, including ours, are riddled with inconsistencies. To compound the problem there is a lot of inconsistency of spelling within the

original biblical text itself. This huge mess will eventually receive its own article, but there is a preview in FAQ # 17.

These are a few examples of the many ways in which translators find themselves caught between a rock and a hard place, knowing that no matter which option they choose some readers will think it is wrong. But these dilemmas do not discourage them because they know that there is one solution to all these dilemmas: a combination of study, patience, and cooperation. One of the great blessings of a project like the EHV (maybe as great or greater than the end product) is that it prompts Bible readers and translators to a more careful study of the original text and to a more careful study of the principles and practices of Bible translation.

An even greater comfort to translators is expressed by a key principle set forth in Lutheran theology: “The essence of Scripture is not the shape of the letters or the sound of the words but the divinely intended meaning.” If a translation conveys that meaning, it is delivering the Word of God, regardless of what the letters look like or how the words are pronounced, whether the language is a bit stuffy or archaic or a bit too casual for the tastes of some. The external forms change (indeed they must if they are to keep communicating), but the meaning, the essence of the Word of God, must remain forever.

This article is just a sample of key issues, for many more examples see our 40 pages of rubrics and guidelines which can be downloaded from our Wartburg Project website.

## Article 3: What Are Some Features of the EHV That Set It Apart From Other Translations?

Since popular contemporary translations cover a wide range of goals and styles, from the quite literal (NASB) to the very free (The Message), any specific comments that we make about features of the EHV in order to compare it to other translations will apply more directly to some translations than to others, but since we are aiming for a balanced, central position in the spectrum of Bible translations, most of the following comparisons will differentiate the EHV from both ends of the spectrum. Rather than comparing the EHV directly with specific translations, this article will address the more general question, “What are some features of the EHV that might strike first-time readers as different from what they are accustomed to hearing in their current Bible translation?”

### Balance

A key word for the EHV in defining our goals is *balance*. The goal of our project is to produce a *balanced* translation, suitable for all-purpose use in the church.

We seek a balance between *the old* and *the new*. We respect and try to preserve traditional terms that are well established in the worship life of the church, but the EHV does introduce some new terms in those places in which a traditional translation no longer communicates clearly. These new terms will be explained in the footnotes at the places where they are introduced.

We seek a balance between the poles of so-called *literal* and *dynamic equivalent* theories of translation. A translator should not adhere too closely to any one theory of translation because literalistic, word-for-word translations sometimes convey the wrong meaning, or they do not communicate clearly in the receiving language. Overly free translations deprive the reader of some of the expressions, imagery, and style of the original.

Translators will strive for a balance between preserving the *original meaning* of the text and producing *English which sounds natural*, but the preservation of meaning takes priority.

We seek a balance between *formality* and *informality*. The Bible contains many types of literature and different levels of language, from the very simple to the very difficult. For this reason, the translator should not be too committed to producing one level of language but should try to reproduce the tone or “flavor” of the original.

We place a priority on producing a *fuller representation of the biblical text* which has been transmitted to us than many other recent translations do. The EHV includes readings which are supported by ancient manuscript evidence but which are omitted in many other recent translations, because those translations tend to focus on certain parts of the manuscript evidence rather on than the whole range.

We place a *priority on prophecy*, so our translation and notes strive to give clear indications of Messianic prophecy.

The EHV is committed to using *archaeology*, *geography*, and *history* to provide a clearer understanding of the original meaning of the biblical text, and this will be reflected both in the translation and the footnotes.

Let's look at some specific examples that illustrate these principles.

### **Balancing Old and New**

The EHV has a goal of preserving familiar expressions in well-known passages, but if the traditional reading or term is not very precise or clear, we give priority to expressing the meaning of the original text more clearly.

We make an effort to retain key terms that appear in the creeds, catechisms, liturgy, and hymnals. We preserve heritage terms like *sanctify*, *justify*, *covenant*, *angels*, and *saints*, but not to the exclusion of explanatory terms like *make holy*, *declare righteous*, *holy people*, etc. EHV keeps traditional names like *the Ark*, *the Ark of the Covenant*, *the manger*, etc. A translation that moves too far away from the worship life of the church does not serve well as an all-purpose translation.

We also try to reflect common biblical expressions like “the flesh,” “walk with God,” “in God’s eyes,” “set one’s face against,” “burn with anger,” and “listen to the voice.” Our goal is not to preserve Hebrew or Greek grammatical idioms for their own sake, but to preserve important biblical expressions and imagery and, when possible, biblical word-play. We do not, however, slavishly preserve these expressions in contexts in which they sound strange in English.

That being the case, what are some examples of specific cases in which we feel clear communication and a closer reflection of the emphasis of the biblical text requires a change of the traditional terms.

#### *Amen*

The first EHV distinctive that caught some readers’ attention was how often in the EHV gospels Jesus says “Amen, Amen, I say to you.” Readers were used to reading, “Verily, verily or truly, truly, I say to you.” Why the change?

“Truly I say to you” or “I tell you the truth” both convey a clear meaning, but “truly” or “truth” are not the words Jesus uses in the Greek text. Jesus consistently is quoted as using the Hebrew word *amen*. Jesus was introducing a new word for the use of the church, and Jesus’ use of the term is the basis for the popularity of *amen* in the epistles and Revelation and in the life of the church.

One of our translation principles is that we try to follow not only the theological intent of the text but also the literary intent. That is why one of our rubrics says, “Hebrew/Aramaic words used in Greek text should remain Hebrew: *Amen*, *halleluia*, *abba*, *maranatha*, *raca*, *talitha qum*, etc.” When the inspired writers use a Hebrew word in a Greek text, they have a reason to do so, and translators should respect their intention.

Our FAQ # 1 provides a more detailed discussion of this issue.

### *LORD of Armies*

The Hebrew *Adonai Sebaoth* has traditionally been translated *LORD of Hosts* or *LORD Sebaoth*. In contemporary English the word *host* usually refers to a party host or a communion host, but the Hebrew term here refers to soldiers engaged in military service. So EHV translates *LORD of Armies*. If the LORD rules the army of heaven (the angels) and the army of the heavens (the stars), he rules everything, so the common translation *Lord Almighty* does not give a wrong idea, but it loses the imagery of the text.

### *The Dwelling*

The portable sanctuary built by Moses has traditionally been called *the Tabernacle*, but the only tabernacles around today are the Mormon one in Salt Lake City and the containers in which the host is reserved in Catholic churches. The Hebrew word *mishkan* actually means *dwelling place*, so EHV calls the movable sanctuary *the Dwelling (mishkan)* or *the Tent (ohel)* depending on which Hebrew word is used in the original. The term *dwelling* also helps the reader connect God's presence in the Dwelling with the many New Testament references to God dwelling with us.

### *Festivals and Sacrifices*

Israel's autumn festival has traditionally been called the *Feast of Tabernacles*. The word *tabernacle* here is not the same Hebrew word, *mishan*, mentioned above, but a different Hebrew word, *sukkot*, which means *temporary shelters*. The EHV, therefore, calls the fall festival *Festival of Shelters* (with a footnote: Traditionally, *Tabernacles*). The older names for the festival, *Tabernacles* and *Booths* do not convey a clear meaning. *Booths* sounds like a commercial structure or a voting booth. The term *shelters* more clearly conveys the nature of the festival, in which the Israelites lived in temporary shelters, and it more clearly differentiates the two Hebrew words.

For the other festivals EHV uses whatever term most clearly reflects the Hebrew text.

The Passover is *Passover* or *Festival of Unleavened Bread*, depending on what the original text has.

Pentecost is *Pentecost*, *Festival of Weeks*, or *Festival of Reaping*, depending on what the original has.

For the prescribed offerings, EHV uses a mixture of old and new terms—whichever term will most clearly indicate the nature of the offering. The four main offerings are *the whole burnt offering*, *the fellowship offering* (traditionally *peace offering*), *the sin offering*, and *the restitution offering* (traditionally *guilt offering*). Although the Hebrew word *minchah* literally means “gift,” because the *minchah* always consisted of grain products, we call the *minchah*, *grain offerings*, even though this is not a very literal translation. For the offerings of wine and beer *drink offerings* is the term used rather than *libations*, since *drink offerings* is easier to understand. EHV uses *Bread of the Presence* for the *showbread*. Other recent translations also use this term.

### *Atonement Seat*

Concerning the name of the lid over the Ark of the Covenant, there are two competing traditions. The most recent one is “atonement cover.” The traditional translation, “mercy seat,” is based on Luther’s *Gnadenstuhl*, “throne of grace.” Luther’s translation was theologically brilliant, because he recognized that this object was more than a lid or cover for a box—God was enthroned above it, and the blood of atonement was being presented there at the foot of his throne of grace. But “mercy” is not a very precise rendering of the Hebrew *kopher*. “Atonement” is better. “Cover,” on the other hand, misses an important point. The atoning blood was being presented to the LORD at the foot of his throne. The EHV combines the best of the old and new traditions into “atonement seat,” since this most clearly brings out the meaning of the text and gets the reader looking in the right direction—not down at the tablets of the law, but up to the throne of the gracious God.

### *Ephod*

Our names for the high priest’s garments are *special vest* or *vest* (with the footnote *ephod*); *chest pouch* or *pouch*; *robe*; *tunic*; *sash* around the waist; *band* on the vest; *turban* for the priest; *small pointed turban* for the regular priests (unless someone can come up with something better, which is also accurate; *caps* does not do it); and *medallion* (*tzitz*) and *crest* (*netzer*) on the turban.

Most translations despair of finding any translation for *ephod*, so they just keep the Hebrew word *ephod*. But this term communicates nothing. The description of the ephod in Exodus makes it clear this was a vest-like garment (actually sort of like a scrimmage vest), so the EHV calls it a *special vest*.

### *Seren*

Most translations call the rulers of the five Philistine city states the *lords* of the Philistines, but the word used in the original is not a Hebrew word meaning *lord*. *Seren* is a special word used only of the rulers of the five Philistine city states. It seems to be a Philistine term. It may be related to the Greek word *tyrant*, an autocratic ruler of a city state. (One Philistine inscription, in fact, spells it *trn*.) *Seren* is a title like *pharaoh* or *czar*, which is applied to one specific class of rulers. Since this is a unique title, the EHV uses the transliteration *seren* rather than the traditional rendering *lord*. If it makes sense to call a *pharaoh* a *pharaoh*, it is consistent to call a *seren* a *seren*. The Bible uses a unique word here, so we do too.

### *Children of Adam*

The Hebrew *BneAdam* (*sons of adam/Adam*) often simply refers to mankind in general, but *children of Adam* may be appropriate in some contexts, such as those alluding to original sin. It is true that all sinners are properly called *mankind* or *humans*, but that is because they are *children of Adam*.

### *Measurements*

In dealing with measurements some translations put the ancient measurement in the text and a modern equivalent in a footnote. The EHV, for the most part, uses modern measurements in the text and puts the ancient term in the footnote. This is much smoother for the reader.

## Archaeology, Geography, and History

The EHV is committed to using *archaeology*, *geography*, and *history* to provide a clearer understanding of the original meaning of some elements of the biblical text. This will be reflected both in the translation and the footnotes. Here are a few examples.

### *Applying Archaeology*

#### *Brass or Bronze?*

Older translations often say that the furnishings in the temple were made of brass, probably because the furnishings on the translators' church altars were brass. But analysis of metal objects from the biblical period, including coins, shows that objects with a copper base were made from some form of bronze. Pure copper is too soft to be used for utilitarian objects such as tools. The EHV therefore there calls biblical coins and furnishings *bronze*, not *brass* or *copper*. Although Hebrew uses the same word for both copper and bronze, EHV calls the ore *copper* and most of the objects *bronze*.

#### *Tambourines or Hand Drums?*



Older and even some more recent translations refer to *tambourines* in the Bible, but ancient pictures indicate that the instrument in question (Hebrew *tof*) was not a hollow circle with rattlers on it, which was meant to be shaken, but a small hand drum, meant to be struck. So EHV regularly refers to *drums* or *hand drums*. The Israelites did also have rattles, shaped somewhat like a baby rattle. This instrument is called a *sistrum*. It, of course, would be possible to combine both a drum and tambourine into one instrument.

In the same way, many translations are careless about distinguishing the stringed instruments *kinnor* and *nebel*. It is possible that both of these instruments are four-sided instruments called lyres (harps have three sides or are shaped like a bow), but the EHV tries to be consistent in distinguishing *kinnors* and *nebels* as *lyres* and *harps* respectively. In the same way the EHV tries to consistently distinguish three wind instruments: *shofar*=ram's horn or horn, *yobel*=special ram's horn, and *hatsotserah*=trumpet.

None of these issues affect doctrine, but observing distinctions shows respect for the text.

#### *Beer, Liquor, or Strong Drink?*

Many translations refer to the two categories of alcoholic beverages that appear in the Bible as *wine* and *strong drink* or some such term. *Strong drink* tends to make one think of distilled or fortified beverages like brandy or whisky. The archaeological and historical evidence is that producing this type of alcoholic beverages was not part of the Near Eastern culture (though some dispute this). The two categories of alcoholic beverages in the Bible appear to be grape-based and grain-based. The current archaeological term for these ancient grain-based beverages is *beer*. The similarities and differences between ancient beer and the present-day beers that descend from it is a study in itself, perhaps a topic for another FAQ. Since *beer* is the standard archaeological term for these ancient grain-based beverages, it is the term EHV will use.

### *Horsemen or Charioteers?*

The account in Exodus of Pharaoh's army being overwhelmed by the Red Sea uses a word pair often translated *chariots* and *horsemen*. Archaeological and textual evidence indicates that mounted cavalry was not in general use in the Near East before the Assyrian period in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, so this word pair in most cases probably refers to *chariots* and *charioteers*.

An interesting question in the translation of biblical battle scenes and military rosters is at what point of military history can we begin to refer to horseback riders and cavalry. All the way down through the times of Ahab, in both biblical and secular sources we have no evidence for any large-scale action by cavalry. The mobile strike forces are chariots not cavalry. At about the eighth century, Assyrian stone relief carvings picture soldiers shooting bows from horseback. At first horsemen functioned as mobile, mounted infantry, who served as scouts and perhaps as pursuit forces, but not as attack forces to win pitched battles. One reason is that before the invention of stirrups and treed saddles a horse is not a particularly good battle platform. It seems clear that battles were fought largely by chariots not cavalry, though some survivors may have fled on horseback. The first really significant use of cavalry as a major component of winning battles in the ancient Near East was by Alexander the Great. It is perhaps significant that in ancient pictures Alexander is pictured on horseback, but the Persian king fights from a chariot, which was already becoming obsolete except in parades and on race tracks.

The translation issue then is how we should translate the Hebrew word *parosh*. When is it *charioteers* and when is it *horsemen*? Since the battles recorded in the Old Testament involve chariots not cavalry, it seems that *parosh* should usually be translated *charioteer* rather than *horseman*. The term *charioteers* includes the drivers and the archers or spearmen who fought from the chariot.

1 Kings 20:20 may be the first clear reference to flight on horseback, but verse 21 makes it clear that this battle was a chariot battle rather than a cavalry battle. It seems that the four horsemen in Zechariah 1 are mounted riders, but they are scouts more than attackers. In most biblical texts the ratio of *paroshim* to *chariots* is appropriate for the *paroshim* to be the chariot crews. So in the absence of any evidence for cavalry action and in the presence of clear evidence for the dominant role of chariots, EHV usually translates *parosh* as *charioteer*. This case illustrates the need for translators to look beyond the dictionary meaning listed for a word to the context both in the text and outside of the text.



Assyrian "cavalry,"  
no stirrups, no true saddle



Alexander on horseback  
Darius in his chariot

## Connecting to Geography

In geographical references, some translations use the ancient name of the place; others use the modern name. In general EHV uses modern names for well-known geographical features like the Dead Sea, the Mediterranean, etc., but provides footnotes to the ancient names. An exception is when one ancient name is explained in terms of another. Then both ancient names have to be in the text and the modern name in the footnote (Example: the Sea of the Arabah is the Salt Sea.

<sup>Footnote</sup> That is, the Dead Sea). In some ancient stories such as the stories in Genesis, it might be more appropriate to use the old name in the text.

We will call Israel's neighbors to the north *Aram* and *Arameans* rather than Syrians, because that is the name contemporary historians use. We will use *Chaldeans* as an ethnic name for the Neo-Babylonians where the text uses it. When *chaldeans* refers to a class of *astronomers* or *astrologers*, it should be translated with whichever term fits the context. We translate *Mizraim* as *Egypt* because this is the established translation in both testaments.

We try to introduce readers to terms like *Negev*, *Shephelah*, and *Arabah* because they are commonly used in modern discussions of the geography of Israel. We use the extensive geography in the book of Joshua to explain geographic terms. Our rule is to do whatever seems best to help the reader understand the biblical text and to work comfortably in modern atlases and modern discussions of ancient geography.

## Making Use of History

A careful reading of the biblical text combined with ancient historical resources often helps clear up historical issues. In 2 Kings 23:29 Josiah tries to prevent Pharaoh Neco from going up to meet the Assyrian army at the Euphrates River. Translations disagree about whether he is going *to* the Assyrians or *against* the Assyrians. Even the Hebrew text has both readings.

The meeting of Hezekiah and the Babylonian king, Merodak Baladan, recorded in Isaiah and 2 Kings, makes it clear that Judah was allied with Babylon against Assyria, and the political and military implications of this move are further clarified by other historical sources from the period. The right translation, therefore, is "Pharaoh was going to help the Assyrians at the Euphrates."

Our next example will be given a more detailed treatment to a fairly minor issue, because it is an example of how historians and Bible scholars make mistakes and then try to blame the Bible for their mistake.

The Bible calls a people who appear in the patriarchal accounts in Genesis *Hittites* or *descendants of Heth*. These Hittites are classified with the Canaanite peoples of the land. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, newly discovered ancient texts revealed a new rival of the Egyptians at about the time of the biblical judges. They were an Indo-European people from central Anatolia (Turkey), whom the historians named Hittites.

Much has been written about the Hittite-Egyptian rivalry, and these Hittites play a prominent role in ancient history books. These people moved into an area of Anatolia that had been called the land of Hatti, so the historians named them Hittites, on the basis of the apparently erroneous conclusion that these people were related to the Hittites in the Bible. They then pointed out that these Hittites rose to prominence in central Anatolia significantly later than the biblical dates for the patriarchal period. It was concluded that the biblical references to Hittites must be anachronisms based on confused memories of the Hittites that were introduced into biblical accounts, which these historians claimed were written long after the heyday of the Hittites.

But there is a major problem with this explanation. The problem is that these Indo-European rivals of the Egyptians did not call themselves Hittites. They called themselves Neshians. When they competed with the Egyptians, they were relatively new arrivals in the land of Hatti in central Anatolia, where they displaced an earlier non-Indo-European people called Hattians. The Neshians kept the geographic name, land of Hatti, but they did not call themselves Hattians or Hittites. The Neshians were given the name Hittites by scholars on the basis of the alleged similarity to the name *Hatti* to *Hitti* in the Bible. This error produced a discrepancy between the biblical and historical description of “Hittites.” This discrepancy was not produced by the Bible. It was produced by the historians who erroneously stuck the tag Hittites on the Neshians.

About the Hittites the University of Pennsylvania’s archaeological magazine *Expedition* (January 1974) says:

The first thing to realize about the Hittites is that they are not Hittites. The sad fact is that we are stuck with an incorrect terminology, but it is too late to do anything about it now. This unfortunate situation came about as a result of several deductions made by earlier scholars which, though entirely reasonable at the time, have proved to be false. ...

We now know that these people we call Hittites were Indo-European. ... It is now believed that the Hittites came into Anatolia sometime in the latter part of the third millennium B.C., though exactly when and from where are questions we still cannot answer. ...

The Hittites were indeed a major world power in the period 1700-1200 B.C., but they were not Hittites. That is, they did not call themselves Hittites. They refer to themselves as Neshians, “inhabitants of the city Nesha,” and their language Neshian. But so much for that; the scholarly world had already labelled them Hittites and, like it or not, Hittites they shall forever remain. It is just as well, for the term Neshian only calls attention to our ignorance of this early period; we do not even know where Nesha is to be located....

There was the evidence all along: what we call Hittite should be called Neshian and the evidence for this had been available since 1887.

That is the simplified version of a complicated story. In the EHV we considered calling the biblical *Hittites* *Hethians* to avoid the confusion historians have created. But since the biblical Hittites are the real Hittites and the historical Hittites are the imposters, we decided to keep the term *Hittites* along with the term *descendants of Heth* and to explain the problem with a brief note.

We have provided an extended discussion of this relatively minor point to illustrate a too common phenomenon: scholars misread the biblical text, draw an erroneous conclusion, and then blame the Bible for their error.

## Applying Textual Criticism

One of the more sensitive and emotional issues in Bible translation today is the issue of textual variants. Bible readers notice that many recent translations have a shorter text than the King James Bible, and they suspect that editors are subtracting from the Word of God. Especially noticeable are the omission or the bracketing of the conclusion of Mark and the pericope about the adulterous woman in John.

The EHV approach to the text of the New Testament is to avoid a bias toward any one textual tradition or group of manuscripts. An objective approach considers all the witnesses to the text (Greek manuscripts, lectionaries, translations, and quotations in the church fathers) without showing favoritism for one or the other. As we examine significant variants, the reading in a set of variants that has the earliest and widest support in the textual witnesses is the one included in the EHV text. The other readings in a set of variants may be included in a footnote that says: *many, some, or a few witnesses to the text have this reading.*

The net result is that readings and verses which are omitted from many recent versions of the New Testament, but which have textual support that is ancient and widespread, are included in the EHV translation. If there are readings where the evidence is not clear-cut, our “bias,” if it can be called that, is to include the longer reading along with a footnote that not all manuscripts have it. The result is that our New Testament is slightly longer than many recent translations of the New Testament.

For example, the last phrase of John 3:13 is included in the text of the EHV:

<sup>13</sup>No one has ascended into heaven, except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>13 A few witnesses to the text omit *who is in heaven.*

Most modern translations omit the last phrase, “who is in heaven,” but it was included in the King James Version and the New King James Version. EHV includes the phrase and notes that a few witnesses to the text omit “who is in heaven.” The longer reading is a striking testimony to the union of the two natures in Christ. It is easy to see why some scribes might have omitted it. It is hard to see why some would have added it.

The EHV also includes Mark 16:9-20 in the text without raising doubt on its place in Scripture. These verses are included in the vast majority of Greek manuscripts that have been handed down to us. Evidence for the existence of this long ending extends back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. In the early centuries of the church, these verses were read in worship services on Easter and Ascension Day. That seems significant. Yet we also note that a few early manuscripts and early translations omit verses 9-20, and a few manuscripts have a different ending. Strong subjective arguments can be made against inclusion of the long ending, but our default setting is to go with the manuscript evidence rather than subjective opinions.

Sometimes the inclusions are just one word, as is the case in Acts 8:18: “When Simon saw that the Holy<sup>a</sup> Spirit was given.” The NIV and the ESV omit the word “Holy” here. We include the word with the note: <sup>a</sup>18 A few witnesses to the text omit *Holy*.

Unlike the KJV and the NKJV, the EHV does not include the so-called *comma Johanneum* of 1 John 5:7-8, because the longer reading lacks early, widespread textual support. This is how those verses are translated, along with the footnote:

<sup>6</sup>This is the one who came by water and blood: Jesus Christ. He did not come by the water alone but by the water and by the blood. The Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. <sup>7</sup>In fact, there are three that testify: <sup>b</sup> <sup>8</sup>the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three are one.

<sup>b7</sup> Only a very few late witnesses to the text add: *testify in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.* <sup>8</sup>*And there are three that testify on earth...*

In the Old Testament the Masoretic Hebrew Text as exemplified by the BHS text is given preference unless there is good, objective evidence for another reading. We consider significant Hebrew variants as well as variants from other ancient versions, especially the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint), which was the Bible of the early Christian church.

When there is evidence that something which has been lost from the Hebrew text has been preserved in an ancient version or a parallel passage, the accidental omission may be restored to the EHV translation. A footnote reports the source. The most common type of evidence that would justify the inclusion of the longer reading is when the longer reading occurs between two occurrences of the same Hebrew word, and the shorter reading still makes good sense without the missing words (this would make the reader less likely to notice that words were missing). We will illustrate the problem with three examples.



In 1 Samuel 13 the Hebrew text tells us:

<sup>7</sup>Saul remained at Gilgal.... <sup>10</sup>Samuel met him there.....

<sup>15</sup>Then Samuel left Gilgal <> and went up to Gibeah in Benjamin, and Saul counted the men who were with him. They numbered about six hundred. <sup>16</sup>Saul and his son Jonathan and the men with them were staying in Gibeah<sup>e</sup> in Benjamin, while the Philistines camped at Mikmash.

<sup>e</sup>16 Two Hebrew manuscripts read *Gibeah*; most read *Geba*.

The Hebrew text of verse 15 reads: “Samuel went up from Gilgal <> to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men.”

The Greek Old Testament reads: “Samuel went up from Gilgal. <The rest of the people went up after Saul to meet the army. They went up from Gilgal> to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul counted the people who were present with him, about six hundred men. <sup>16</sup>Saul and his son Jonathan and the men with them were staying in Geba in Benjamin, while the Philistines camped at Mikmash.”

It appears that the eye of the scribe of the Hebrew manuscript skipped from one occurrence of “from Gilgal” to the next. It is Saul and the people who go to Gibeah in Benjamin in verse 15.

Two more examples:

From 1 Samuel 1: Hannah and Elkanah bring Samuel to the house of the LORD in Shiloh.

<sup>24</sup>The boy <was with them. And they brought him before the LORD, and his father killed the sacrifice as he regularly did before the LORD, <sup>25</sup>and they brought> the boy. He killed the bull and presented the child to Eli.

The words in the arrow brackets are not in the Hebrew text, but the Greek Old Testament has these words. The Hebrew text has the puzzling reading *the boy [was] a boy*, which is usually translated, *the boy was still young*. The longer reading may preserve evidence of an accidental omission from the Hebrew text between the two occurrences of the word *boy*.

From 1 Samuel 14: Saul is trying to find the guilty party.

<sup>41</sup>So Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel, <“Why have you not answered your servant today? If the fault is in me or my son Jonathan, respond with Urim, but if the fault is with the men of Israel> respond with Thummim.” Jonathan and Saul were chosen, and the people were not chosen.

The words in the arrow brackets are not in the Hebrew text but are restored from the Greek Old Testament. They give a clearer statement of Saul’s request, which requires the use of Urim and Thummim. The accidental omission from the Hebrew text seems to have been triggered by the repetition of *Israel*.

<sup>42</sup>Saul said, “Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. <Whoever the LORD identifies by lot shall be put to death.” But the people said to Saul, “This will not be done.” But Saul prevailed over the people, so they cast lots between him and Jonathan his son.> Jonathan was selected by lot.

The words in the arrow brackets are not in the Hebrew text but are restored from the Greek Old Testament. An accidental omission from the Hebrew manuscript seems to have been triggered by the repetition of the word *son*.

## Spelling

Readers may notice that EHV spellings of personal and place names may not always agree with those of other translations.

The problem of the spelling of personal and geographic names is a nightmare for translators, but many users of a translation might never notice it, unless they try to look a name up in an atlas or Bible dictionary. The problem arises because the letters of the Hebrew alphabet do not always make a good match with a letter of the English alphabet, so different people transliterate the names differently. A further complication is that many of the English names have not come directly from Hebrew but via Greek or Latin.

Today the spelling of place names and personal names in the Bible is in near total disarray with a tension between preserving traditional English spellings and bringing the spelling into closer alignment with Hebrew.

If reading the following explanation is too painful, you may skip to the last two paragraphs of this section.

An attempt is underway to get closer to a consistent transliteration of the Hebrew: כ *kaph*=*k*, ק *qoph*=*q*, ח *chet*=*ch*, ט *tsade*=*ts*, but in practice *tsade* is often written as *z*, and *chet* is often *h*. *Chet* really needs a special character which is not an English letter, an *h* with a dot under it.

A particular problem is soft *kaph*, which has also been rendered *ch* in many names. This is a problem because biblical *ch* is not pronounced like the *ch* in *church*. EHV generally uses *k* when we want to prevent a pronunciation like *ch* in *church*, but in some familiar names the traditional spelling with *ch* is retained.

Some English transliterations are so established that we simply must live with the inaccurate rendering. We cannot change the inaccurate *Jerusalem* to the correct *Yerushalem*, or *Tyre* to *Tsur*, or *Bethlehem* to *Bet Lechem*.

Among the many spelling options are *Beersheba/Beersheva*, *Beth Shean/Beth She'an/Bet Shan/Beth Shan*, *Acco/Akko*, *Hebron/Chevron*. There is no consistent system in common use. All of the systems are riddled with inconsistencies.

As a general rule EHV keeps spellings made familiar by recent translations since this is the spelling in many recent Bible helps, such as *Zondervan Bible Atlas*, which may be consulted as a source for spellings, but this system too is inconsistent.

Consonantal י *yod* remains *j* not *y* in most cases (*Joshua* not *Yehoshua*) but there are some special cases like *Yarkon*, which is a familiar modern place name.

What a mess! The system is wildly inconsistent, and no solution is in sight. The best we can hope for is to make it as easy as possible for readers to find names in atlases and Bible dictionaries, but these books too are inconsistent, and some of them offer several options. The best thing readers can do if they do not find the term in a dictionary is to know the common alternates like *k* for *c* and try again. Looking up a name online will often produce a list of options.

The same chaos exists in personal names: *Melchizedek* but *Adoni-Zedek* even though it is the same type of formation. EHV spells names ending in *melek* (the Hebrew word for *king*) with a final *k* not a final *ch*: *Abimelek*, *Elimelek*, but keeps names like *Lamech* and *Baruch*. In general we preserve traditional spellings of well-known names.

In regard to the spelling of biblical names, there is a regression to a pre-Webster era, in which there is no king, and every speller does what is right in his own eyes.

There are a few bright spots in a cloudy sky: 1) the other common systems are even less consistent than the EHV's, 2) computers make it much easier to achieve consistency of spelling across the translation, and 3) English speakers already know that English spelling is a really messed-up discipline. The most notorious example is *ghoti* which is an alternate spelling for "fish": *gh* as in *enough*, *o* as in *women*, and *ti* as in *nation*. Messed-up spelling is no stranger to readers of English.

This is an example of a translation issue which many readers may never notice, but which requires thousands of decisions for translators and editors. This topic will eventually receive an article of its own in the library section of our website.

## The Important Question

How often do translation differences affect doctrine? As a percentage of the whole translation the number of passages in which the different translations have doctrinal implications will probably be relatively small, but they are nevertheless important.

In Genesis 2:24 many translations have something like “For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and be united with his wife, and they will become one flesh.” But the Hebrew verb means *cling to*, and the New Testament rendering reflects the same idea. So the EHV translation, “For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and will *remain* united with his wife, and they will become one flesh” is more precise than the translation *be united with his wife*. It more clearly reflects the permanent nature of marriage, which is Jesus’ point in quoting this passage in Matthew 19.

There are some interesting features in the EHV translation of 1 Peter 3:17-21:

<sup>17</sup>Indeed, it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil, <sup>18</sup>because Christ also suffered once for sins in our place,<sup>a</sup> the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you<sup>b</sup> to God. He was put to death *in flesh*<sup>c</sup> but was made alive *in spirit*,<sup>d</sup> <sup>19</sup>in which he also went and made an announcement to the spirits in prison. <sup>20</sup>These spirits disobeyed long ago, when God’s patience was waiting in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In this ark a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. <sup>21</sup>And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the body but the *guarantee*<sup>e</sup> of a good conscience before God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

<sup>a</sup>18 A few witnesses omit *in our place*

<sup>b</sup>18 Some witnesses to the text read *us*.

<sup>c</sup>18 Here *flesh* is a reference to Christ’s state of humiliation. See Romans 1:3; 1 Timothy 3:16.

<sup>d</sup>18 Here *spirit* is a reference to Christ’s state of exaltation. See Romans 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:16.

<sup>e</sup>21 Or *legal claim*, or *assurance*

This translation and the notes recognize that the *flesh/spirit* contrast at times refers to Christ’s humiliation and exaltation, and that baptism is God’s pledge to us, not our pledge to him.

Pastoral reviewers have expressed appreciation for the way the EHV handles texts involving the sacraments. Another example is 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 where the EHV chose the familiar “heritage” term “communion”:

<sup>16</sup>The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a communion<sup>a</sup> of the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a communion<sup>b</sup> of the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup>Because there is one bread, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

<sup>1</sup>16 Or *joint partaking*

<sup>b</sup>16 Or *joint partaking*

*Communion* has been a common name for the Lord's Supper for hundreds of years, and this translation helps explain the derivation of that name. This passage deserves a full article for itself. See FAQ 33, which provides such a study

The EHV translation of the Great Commission is unique (as far as we know):

<sup>18</sup>Jesus approached and spoke to them saying, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Therefore go and *gather* disciples from all nations by baptizing them in<sup>a</sup> the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and by teaching them to keep all the instructions I have given you. And surely I am with you always until the end of the age."

<sup>a</sup>19 Or *into*

This translation recognizes that we gather disciples by using the means of grace through which the Holy Spirit makes them disciples.

Romans 4:25 – the meaning of Christ's resurrection:

<sup>25</sup>He was handed over to death *because* of our trespasses and was raised to life *because* of our justification.

This translation agrees with other justification passages by showing that Easter is the declaration of an objective justification which had already occurred.

This section just gives a sample of the kind of issues involved. Because of the importance of this topic, we have a separate article in our library about passages which provide a useful basis for a doctrinal comparison of translations. It deals with these and many more passages on the basis of ten different translations.

## Article 4: Getting Used to a New Bible Translation

For devoted Bible readers, getting accustomed to a new Bible translation can be a challenge, especially if they have used one translation for many years. We like familiarity and can feel some regret even when we have to get a new copy of the same translation we have been using. I am on my third or fourth copy of the NIV, and it is going to be close race between me and my present copy to see which of us expires first. I don't like to start new copies.

Devoted Bible readers may experience some sense of loss when they have to buy a new copy of the same translation. In their old Bible they had a feeling for the position of their favorite passages on the pages of their Bible. And now they are going to have to redo all their underlings and notes. But remember that the benefit that results from going through the process of becoming familiar with a new Bible more than compensates for whatever is lost.

Remember that such change is a normal part of the life of the church today. I am of retirement age, and I am on my third Bible translation (with a lots of others used on the side), my second hymnal (with a third on the way), my fifth or sixth catechism, and my fourth translation of the Lutheran Confessions. In some of these cases, I did not feel any great need for the change, but I experienced some benefits from them all. I am at the point of life where I don't really need anything new. If you too are at the point of life where you don't need a new Bible translation or hymnal or catechism for yourself, remember that the important question is not "What do I need?" but "What do I want to leave for the next generation? What do I want to pass on as a gift to my children and grandchildren?"

Remember that turning toward something new does not mean you have to dump the old. You can still pray the old version of the Lord's Prayer (maybe in your private prayers you still do that on auto-pilot). You can still use the beloved King James Version of the Christmas story. You can have the KJV version of Psalm 23 read at your funeral if you wish to. Regardless of your age, you can keep turning back to your own well-worn version of your confirmation Bible for your daily reading from time to time.

Even in an era when you can have as many translations of the Bible on your phone as you care to have, I think most devoted Bible readers will still have their favorite go-to translation, even if that version changes one or two times in their lifetime. But regardless of whether your new translation becomes your favorite or remains a supplement to your old favorite, you can be sure you will be blessed by the process of working through a new translation.

What are some things to keep in mind as you do this?

The first thing to do, before you even start reading the translation, is to refresh and expand your understanding of the process of Bible translation. The EHV Translation Rubrics, which are available on our web site, provide about forty pages of information concerning the principles and the specific rules that were the basis for the EHV translation.

Take time to understand the difficulties of the translation process as it is outlined in articles 2 and 3 of this pamphlet. It is a good idea to do some of this before you even begin to read a new

translation, but you can use the resources we have mentioned whenever you run across something in the translation that puzzles you.

Approach the task with humility. Luther once commented that he was very happy that he had undertaken the work of translating the Bible, because before he did this, he had been under the delusion that he was a learned fellow. We can paraphrase Ecclesiastes as saying, “Of the making of many translations there is no end, and much study wearies the body.” Part of this is because of the ever-changing nature of language and because of preferences for different styles of translation, but much of it is due simply to the nature of the art of translating, writing, and editing. No matter how many times translators, writers, or editors reread their work, if they are honest, they will always see something to change. They change A to B to C, and then decide A was better after all. It simply is the nature of the discipline. In many cases, there is more than one good translation of a verse.

Understand what the specific goals of this translation are and how this translation compares to other translations that are available. Where is this translation trying to fit into the spectrum of translations that runs from the very literal to the very free? See the appendix at the end of this article.

Take your time. It takes at least two or three years of regular use of a translation to become familiar with it. Most translations do a revision after three to five years of regular use. By looking at selected passages readers can get a feeling for the doctrinal and literary perspective of a translation, but gaining an informed appreciation of a translation requires several readings of the whole translation.

Look at the “minors” but focus on the “majors.” In evaluating Bible translations, people can get caught up in their likes and dislikes concerning individual passages and lose sight of the big issues of translation: preservation of biblical imagery, clear reflections of prophecy, and clear communication of the theological, literary, and emotional intent of the text. Above all else, comes doctrinal clarity.

At the Wartburg Project our motto has always been “purely positive.” We do welcome differences of opinion and discussion concerning every point of translation, but only with a spirit that is based on careful study of the evidence, a spirit of cooperation and compromise on issues that are a matter of style and individual preferences, and the principle that upholding the integrity of the text is the highest priority, outranking our likes and dislikes.

Among all the manuscripts and resources that we have used in working on the EHV, including the Hebrew and Greeks manuscripts, we have never found any that had no mistakes. So try as we may, we do not expect to be exempt either. Though the inspired authors of Scripture were protected from error, translators and editors are not, so we will always be rechecking our work to make corrections or clarifications and updates, and our readers will be part of the process.

Translating, writing, and editing have two common enemies. One is carelessness that does not try to produce a clean product. The other is perfectionism that can never bring anything to conclusion and say “I have to go with what I have.” In the Evangelical Heritage Version we are aware of both pitfalls, and we are working to try to produce a good product, but to do it relatively

quickly, so it can be of use to the church in the near future and so the church can have input into its final form.

When the EHV departs from traditional renderings, it is not novelty for the sake of novelty but an attempt to convey the meaning of the text more clearly or to get closer to the style and intent of the author.

These articles provides a few examples of the many ways in which translators find themselves between a rock and a hard place, knowing that no matter which option they choose some readers will think it is wrong. But these dilemmas do not discourage them because they know that there is one solution to all these dilemmas: a combination of study, patience, and cooperation. One of the great blessings of a project like the EHV (maybe as great or greater than the end product) is that it prompts Bible readers and translators to a more careful study of the original text and a more careful study of the principles and practices of Bible translation. All participants grow from the process. We invite you to be part of the process with us.

An even greater comfort to translators and Bible readers is expressed by a key principle which is set forth in Lutheran theology: “The essence of Scripture is not the shape of the letters or the sound of the words but the divinely intended meaning.” If a translation conveys that divinely intended meaning, it is delivering the Word of God, regardless of what the letters look like or how the words are pronounced, whether the language is a bit stuffy or archaic or a bit too casual for the tastes of some readers. The external forms change (indeed they must if they are to keep communicating), but the meaning, the essence of the Word of God, must remain forever.

## Appendix: A chart of Bible translations

This chart was published by Zondervan, publishers of the NIV. We would not necessarily agree with all of their assessments. I would move NIV somewhat to the right and TNIV even farther to the right. Also, is the ESV really more word-for-word than the KJV? I would not call Living Bible and the Message dynamic equivalent translations—they are paraphrases off the end of the arrow. Since CSB labels their translation technique “optimal,” I guess they would place themselves in the middle, where we would place the EHV (though we would say it is not very helpful to place the EHV on a chart because we evaluate each passage on a case by case basis, sometimes being more literal, sometimes less literal.)

