

# Comparative Study of Bible Translations



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## Introduction

The corporate worship of the faithful is the primary setting for God's means of grace: the Gospel Word, Absolution, Holy Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Because the Word of God is spoken and sung in numerous ways in the context of worship, it is essential that great care be given to the choice of Bible translation.

Not only must a translation of the Psalter be chosen for inclusion in the new hymnal itself, but also a suitable translation must be provided for the many other Scripture passages that appear in the orders of service and in the rites in the Agenda. While it is not mandatory to quote all Scripture passages from the same Bible translation, the selection of one translation facilitates consistency of wording and style in the orders of service and the propers, including the Scripture readings for the day. Such consistency enhances the clarity and integrity of the orders of worship. Conversely, inconsistencies and poor translations of Scripture passages detract from the service and hinder the proclamation of the Gospel and its appropriation in faith by the members of the body of Christ.

Many aspects of the congregation's life radiate from the Divine Service. The materials used in those other aspects may draw on the theology, language, style, and even the Bible translation(s) in the hymnal. In the past in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Bible translation employed in the hymnal has also been selected for many other publications. Those publications have included lectionaries, Bible studies, Christian day school curricula, and confirmation materials, including Luther's Small Catechism. Therefore the choice of translation for the new hymnal may have a profound impact on numerous aspects of the church's life for many years to come.

The Word of God is the written revelation of Jesus Christ and is the source and norm for the entirety of the Christian faith and life. The Scriptures have the power to make one wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15). Therefore, theological precision is of the utmost importance in a translation of Holy Scripture. Inaccurate translations can obscure doctrines that are vital to the Gospel or may cast doubt on the person and work of Jesus Christ and thereby even cause some to forfeit eternal salvation.

For example, in the early church era, Arians argued that Prov. 8:22 should be translated "the Lord *created* me" and that the verse proved that Christ was a created being. The orthodox Christians argued that the verse should be translated "the Lord *begot* me" and that Christ is eternally begotten of the Father. The RSV substituted "young woman" for "virgin" in Is. 7:14, thus calling into question the virgin birth of Christ. The Jehovah's Witnesses have their own Bible translation that renders John 1:1 as "the Word was a god" instead of "the Word was God," a translation they use to deny the deity of Christ.

The CTCR document, "Comparative Study of Bible Translations and Paraphrases" (September 1975), examined various translations of the biblical passages cited in reference to the Second Article of the Creed in *A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1943). Those passages deal with the doctrines of the two natures in Christ, the divinity and humanity of Christ, the understanding of Christ as Savior, Christ's conception and birth of the virgin Mary, Christ's work of redemption, and his resurrection. The concluding tabulation in that CTCR document indicates that even the best translations occasionally may not convey the meaning of the text as clearly as they should. Most translations err in at least some key soteriological passages to the extent that their translations fail to communicate a doctrine that is essential for the Gospel. That conclusion underlines the necessity for the church always to have pastors who know the original languages of Scripture, and for church leaders to be judicious in the selection of a translation for use in the church's ministry of worship, teaching, and evangelism.

Today the church may choose from a multiplicity of Bible translations. No translation is perfect in all respects, but many are fine works of scholarship that accurately convey God's Word. An evaluation of translations for inclusion in a hymnal must take into consideration not only their theological faithfulness and clarity, but also their suitability for oral reading and listening, their level and style of English diction, their adaptability for musical settings, and their literary beauty, since all of these factors are relevant for use in worship.

Since the Psalms are so important for worship, a translation should remain faithfully close to established liturgical traditions and not jar the ears of the parishioners with daring alternatives. Some of the psalms already

have a well-established liturgical shape. This is especially true of Psalm 23, whose wording in many people's minds is practically as fixed as that of the Lord's Prayer. Most parishes would prefer, even demand, something very close to the KJV, e.g., "The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want." But in Psalm 23 the church may prefer modernized renditions of some phrases, like "he makes me lie down" instead of "maketh," and "You are with me; Your rod and Your staff" instead of "Thou ... Thy."

There are established liturgical expectations for some other psalms, such as "the King of Glory" in Psalm 24 and the confession of sin in Psalm 51. In addition, there are many short phrases from the psalms that are firmly embedded in the liturgy, e.g., "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, and His mercy endures forever." (NIV most often blandly translates *hesed* as "love," but sometimes in poetry retains "mercy.")

Legitimate concerns about the English rendition of the Psalter for use in the liturgy would include readability, suitability for public and corporate reading, ease of memorization, and conciseness (as opposed to verbosity, which is easy to lapse into when trying to "unpack" terse Hebrew poetry). An ideal translation of the psalms should also be suitable for chanting.

### Summary of Translations

Nine versions of the Bible were examined for this comparative study. The following comments are a brief summary of the strengths and weaknesses of each translation. The numbers in parentheses refer the reader to the detailed examples which follow the summaries (available on the CD-ROM).

#### King James Version (KJV)

#### New King James Version (NKJV)

First published in 1611, the KJV served for over three centuries as the nearly universal English translation of the Bible. Furthermore, it was very influential in shaping much of the cultural milieu in the United States, not to mention the liturgical and hymnic language of the English-speaking church. It is still eminently elegant and in most places quite accurate. Since it is a form-equivalent translation, it follows the original languages closely (see below under "Language Issues").

The NKJV, published in 1982, was undertaken in order to update the archaic and obsolete language. For example, "thee" and "thou" have been replaced with "you." It is largely successful in retaining the poetic elegance of the KJV. The NKJV affirms the divinity of Christ and many other doctrines that appear to be called into question in the RSV and NRSV.

The main objection to the KJV and NKJV is that for the New Testament they use the Textus Receptus, a Byzantine form of the Greek text that is widely considered by modern scholars to be inferior to older Greek manuscripts (examples 43, 44, 45, 46). In addition, the NKJV follows the meaning of the KJV in some places where recent scholarship argues for a different understanding (examples 2, 16, 20, 41).

#### Revised Standard Version (RSV)

The RSV, first published in 1952 under the auspices of the National Council of Churches, replaced the KJV in many English-speaking churches. Like the KJV, the RSV is primarily a form-equivalent translation (a translation that follows closely the words and grammatical forms of the original text). The strength of the RSV is that it preserves much of the classic language of the KJV and the beautifully memorable poetry, while updating most of the archaic and obsolete language. However, it retains the archaic language when speaking to God, which is frequent in the Psalms.

The most objectionable feature of the RSV is that it inaccurately renders many passages that refer to the divinity of Christ (examples 22, 29). Furthermore, its rendering of Old Testament prophecies often conflicts with the New Testament fulfillment, e.g., using "created" instead of "begotten" in Prov. 8:22 (see also examples 23, 24, 25, 26, 27). In places, other serious theological problems can be found (examples 18, 30, 32, 35).

### **New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

The NRSV, published in 1989 by the National Council of Churches, is an improvement over the RSV in that it updates the archaic language addressed to God (as in the Psalms). However, it perpetuates the worst aspects of the RSV: faulty Christology and inaccurate translations of passages about the fulfillment of prophecy (examples 26, 27, 30). It adds a few new problems that were not present in the RSV, such as changing many masculine singular forms into generic plural forms for the sake of inclusive language (examples 3, 4, 5, 6; see also 28). Its rendering of some verses raises questions about other important doctrinal issues, such as the inerrancy of Scripture (example 35) and the doctrine of the Holy Trinity (examples 9, 10, 11, 12).

### **English Standard Version (ESV)**

The ESV is the newest translation, published in September 2001. It is a conservative and evangelical revision of the RSV, and like the RSV and KJV, it is a form-equivalent translation. While it has modernized some archaic features of the RSV, such as the pronouns (“thee” and “thou” are replaced by “you”) in language addressing God, it remains accurate and fairly literal. The ESV retains most of the language of the KJV in well-loved passages such as Psalm 23 (“I shall not want”) and the Lord’s Prayer. The translation of many passages is quite close to the wording familiar to Lutherans in our liturgies, e.g., Psalm 51. The handling of Christology and prophecy-fulfillment generally is excellent and often uses uppercase letters to clarify the meaning (e.g., “King” in Ps. 2:6; “Son” in Ps. 2:7, 12; “my Lord” in Ps. 110:1 versus “my lord” in RSV). The ESV has corrected most of the theological problems evident in the RSV (examples 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32). Its handling of some passages that involve the Sacraments (example 38, also Eph. 5:26) is accurate and superior to the NIV. Because the ESV is so new, it has not yet received as much scrutiny as other translations. (An initial examination has revealed, for example, an infelicity in the translation of Psalm 119 where the Hebrew term *mishpatim* is translated as God’s “rules,” rather than the literal translation of God’s “judgments” in the KJV or RSV’s God’s “ordinances.”) Several LCMS exegetes participated in the review process that shaped the final translation of the ESV.

### **New International Version (NIV)**

The NIV, published in 1978, has much to recommend it. It is the translation that was used in *Lutheran Worship* and *Lutheran Worship Agenda*. Generally, it is an accurate and faithful translation. It is a good translation for Christology, the fulfillment of prophecy, and Christian doctrines such as the inerrancy of Scripture. It represents good, modern English without being trendy or dialectical. However, its rendition of poetry is inferior to the literary beauty of the KJV and its descendants. When read aloud, it does not flow and captivate the hearers’ attention as well as some others. It is a dynamic equivalent translation. Its modern idioms are not as close to the original languages and sometimes lack eloquence (“Adam lay with his wife,” Gen 4:1, instead of the literal and meaningful “Adam knew his wife”). Some of the expressions in the NIV betray a reformed bias, like the use of “Sovereign LORD” (example 12), and in some passages that concern Christology (example 21), the nature of faith (example 13), conversion (example 15), and election (example 19). Allusions to the Sacraments are sometimes translated inaccurately (example 38; also Eph. 5:26, where NIV has “washing with water *through* the word” instead of “washing of water *with* the Word”).

(The Translations Committee has received word that a revision of portions of the NIV featuring inclusive language will soon be released into the American market. A complete revision of the NIV will not be available until 2005.)

### **New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

The NASB was first published in its entirety in 1971. It is a form-equivalent translation that succeeds in being highly accurate (a few exceptions include examples 20, 24, 25, 27, 37). While its precision of translation is very helpful for those who cannot work in the original languages, its literal style is rather wooden, and thus awkward for reading in corporate worship. A revision was published in 1995 which has made some progress in smoothing out the language. The revision also replaced archaic terms like “thee” and “thou.”

**An American Translation (AAT)**

In 1976, the translation of William Beck, professor at Concordia Seminary, was privately published. It was followed by later revisions, most recently the fourth edition in 2000. Intended as a Lutheran translation of the Bible, the AAT aims for a readable style in simple English. Unfortunately, easy readability comes at a price, namely, a casual and colloquial style that may not be elegant enough for public reading. For example, it regularly uses contractions (I'm, can't, etc.). In many respects the AAT is an accurate translation. Sometimes it offers the best rendering (example 16). It is, however, also an idiosyncratic translation, and occasionally offers less accurate renderings (examples 27, 38, 39, 40).

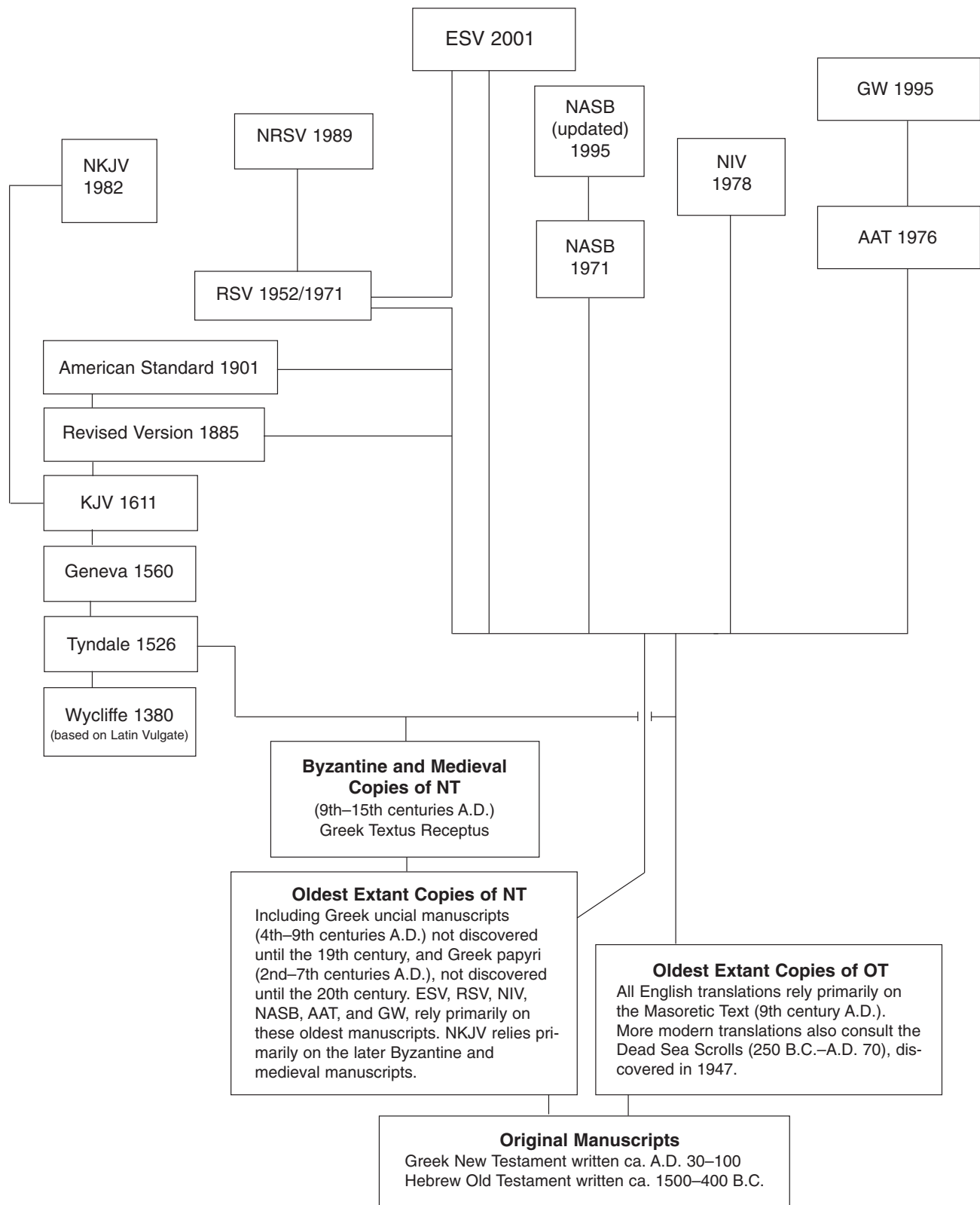
**God's Word (GW)**

GW was published in 1995 by God's Word to the Nations Bible Society. It was preceded by the publication of the New Testament, *God's Word to the Nations*, in 1988. GW represents a translation style that is the furthest out of the mainstream of those considered in this study. It is certainly readable, which makes it especially useful for private, devotional reading. However, to attain readability at times it sacrifices the accuracy that a literal rendering would have provided. At other times it succeeds very well in its translation choices (example 16). However, it contains problematic renderings, both linguistically (examples 17, 18, 27, 38, 41) and theologically (examples 14, 15, 17, 19, 31, 36, 37, 40). Its decision to translate Greek terms for "justification" and "righteousness" with the expression "God's approval" (example 17) departs from the literal, accurate, and well-established biblical vocabulary for justification, which is central to Lutheran theology. For that reason alone it is difficult to recommend it for use in Lutheran worship settings.

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*The chart on the following page provides in summary fashion an overview of the history of translations of the Bible into English. Not all translations are represented, and no attempt has been made to indicate various editions of more recent translations. The chart is provided simply to give a general sense of the history of English translations and the primary sources consulted for these translations.*

# Origins of English Bible Translations



## **Examples**

The bulk of this study consists of a careful analysis of pertinent Bible passages organized under the following categories. The numbers in parentheses indicate the example number. The complete study is available as a PDF file on the accompanying CD-ROM. Go to the “Translations” folder and open the file named “Bible-comparison.”

### **Language Issues**

Formal/Dynamic Equivalence  
Archaic/Obsolete Language (1, 2)  
Gender Inclusive Language (3, 4, 5, 6)  
Paraphrase (7)  
Idiosyncratic Translations (8)

### **Doctrinal Issues**

Trinitarian Issues (9, 10, 11, 12)  
Name of God  
The Nature of Faith (13, 14)  
Conversion (15, 16)  
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“Adoption” (18)  
Election (19)  
Christology (20, 21, 22)  
Inspiration and Prophecy (23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30)  
God’s Involvement in Affliction (31, 32)  
Eschatology (33)  
Creation (34)  
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Sacramental Theology (36, 37, 38)

### **Miscellaneous Texts**

Ten Commandments (39)  
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Role of Women in the Church (41)

**Textual Decisions** (42, 43, 44, 45)

## LANGUAGE ISSUES

### Formal/Dynamic Equivalence

Bible translations fall into two main groups. These groups are based on the method and goal of the translation. A translation may seek to be more literal and accurate, which will make the English more wooden and less familiar to modern speakers of contemporary English. Or a translation may seek to be more “reader friendly” by using idiomatic contemporary English, in which case the translation will not follow the original language as closely. In either case, the translation has some appealing features and some disadvantages. The translators must decide on their priorities. Is literal accuracy the highest priority, or is it smooth English that is easy to understand?

Translations that use the principle of formal equivalence and tend to be more literal seek to render the original biblical text in English that is a close equivalent in form. Ambiguities and other difficulties in the original language tend to be preserved in the translation, rather than being smoothed over. Therefore the formal equivalent translations generally are more precisely accurate, often at the expense of easy reading and simplicity. Examples of formal equivalent translations include the King James Version (KJV) and many descendants of the KJV, such as the New King James Version (NKJV), the Revised Standard Version (RSV), and English Standard Version (ESV). However, not all descendants of the KJV have sought close formal equivalence to the same degree. For example, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) deliberately avoids a literal rendering of some constructions, such as the masculine singular in a generic sense (“he”), which it translates by generic plural (“they”).

A formal equivalent translation with the advantage of being closer to the original may be the best kind of translation for Christians who have a strong knowledge of the faith and who desire to study the Scriptures in depth. The main challenge of a formal equivalent translation is that it requires the reader to learn more about the language and customs of the ancient world in order to understand the translation. The translation may sound archaic, but it is also more timeless and classic. In other words, the language may sound ancient even if the translation has just been published, but the reader or listener recognizes the translation’s ancient language as a formal representation of the ancient biblical text. As years go by and the English language changes, the translation’s language continues to sound classic and memorable.

Phrases that mark a translation as a formal equivalent would include the following KJV renditions, which are literally accurate, but which modern English speakers would not use in normal conversation: “the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee”; “he girded up his loins”; “the Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want”; “Hallowed be Thy name.” Phrases like these continue to appear, with little change, in some recent formal-equivalent translations. While these phrases sound old, they have remained part of the church’s well-loved vocabulary for nearly four hundred years and may endure for many more years. (In contrast, possible dynamic-equivalent translations of those phrases would be these: “The Lord look upon you with favor”; “he tucked his cloak into his belt”; “The Lord is my Shepherd; I lack nothing”; “may your name be holy.”)

At the other end of the spectrum of translation methods is that of dynamic equivalence. The idiom of the original biblical language is replaced with a modern English idiom whose wording may be quite different from the original, but which, it is hoped, accomplishes the same thing by producing the same dynamic effect on the reader or listener. A recent dynamic-equivalent translation will sound more contemporary and will be understood more easily. However, as years go by, the translation’s language may sound more dated or even obsolete. Idioms that once were “hip” and “groovy” become “square.”

A dynamic equivalent translation relies on the assumption that the translators know the dynamic effect of the original language and that the English idiom they use will have the same force as the original. When the original Hebrew or Greek is obscure or difficult, the smooth and easy translation disguises the fact that scholars may be unsure about the meaning of the original. However, a dynamic equivalent translation will communicate more easily to readers and listeners who are not as familiar with the language, history, culture, and customs of the ancient world. Therefore dynamic equivalent translations may be preferred for evangelism and outreach to the unchurched. For decades the American Bible Society has been a strong advocate of dynamic-equivalent translations for mission work around the world. The most widely used dynamic-equivalent translation is the NIV. English paraphrases, such as the Living Bible and Good News for Modern Man, are extreme examples of dynamic

equivalent translations. Because paraphrases frequently depart from the specific meaning of the biblical text, they unsuitable for use in worship and regular Bible study settings.

### Archaic/Obsolete Language

Linguists who study languages and cultures all over the world affirm that religious language and legal language are the most conservative parts of any language. That is because the religion and the legal framework of a society express foundational truths that must remain the same for the community that depends on them to endure. Archaic language may be old, but it is still understood when used properly. Archaic language, once common long ago, may now occur within only a few specific contexts. For example, lawyers must learn an entire vocabulary of archaic English and Latin, e.g., “a writ of habeas corpus,” which has an exact and well-known meaning in law, but which would never be used in common conversation.

Theological writings and liturgies of the church contain many archaic terms, e.g., the remission of sins, confession and absolution, Introit, Gradual, the Propers, the Offertory, the Benediction. Those words have specific and known meanings that have remained the same for hundreds of years, but they would not be used outside the context of worship. Archaic language helps to convey the ancient and rich theology of the Christian faith, and it may be well-loved by many in the church, for example, in the Lord’s Prayer and Psalm 23. Church members know what that language means and cherish it. Thus, even dynamic-equivalent translations may retain traditional, form-equivalent wording in the most important and familiar passages. For example, the NIV translations of Psalm 23 and the Lord’s Prayer retain some of the archaic language of the KJV even though the rest of the NIV generally uses contemporary English.

In contrast to archaic language, which may benefit the church, obsolete language is old language that is no longer understood by most people. Sometimes a word drops out of usage. For example, many people would have to consult a dictionary to define “firmament” in the KJV of Gen. 1:7. Sometimes a form of a word becomes obsolete, even if other forms of the word remain archaic and understood. For example, “begotten” in the Nicene Creed is archaic, while “bare” in the KJV of Gen. 4:1–2 is obsolete: Eve “bare” (bore, gave birth to) Cain and Abel. Sometimes the predominant meaning of a word changes so that the continued use of obsolete language may even convey the wrong idea. For example, in the KJV of Phil. 4:6 Paul counsels, “Be careful for nothing,” and in the KJV of Lk. 10:41 Jesus says, “Martha, thou art careful.” That language is obsolete because in modern English “careful” no longer can mean “full of care, worried.”

### Example 1

Job 19:27

KJV ...*though* my reins be consumed within me.

NKJV *How* my heart yearns within me! (similarly the rest)

This exclamation from Job comes immediately after his great confession of the resurrection of the body, “I know that my Redeemer lives.” A literal translation of the Hebrew is, “My kidneys in my bosom are exhausted by longing.” The archaic English “reins” means “kidneys,” and thus it was an “accurate” translation, but today it is misleading for two reasons. First, the common meaning of “reins” today is to denote the straps fastened to a bridle in order to guide a horse. Second, in the Hebrew language emotions were described as being felt in the kidneys and other nearby organs, while the heart fulfills that function in the English language.

### Example 2

John 14:2

KJV In my Father’s house are many mansions (also NKJV)

NIV In my Father’s house are many rooms (also RSV, ESV, GWN, GW, AAT)

NASB In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. (also NRSV)

The issue here is the translation of a single Greek word, which occurs only here and in John 14:23. It is a term used for “a place one lives or dwells for an extended period.” The NIV and NASB are two attempts to render this word in this rather unspecific way. The NIV fits better in the context with its implication of rooms in the same house rather than scattered dwelling places, though either could be understood properly. The KJV rendering, however, is an example of language shift. “Mansion” is derived from “manse,” meaning a “dwelling place.” In modern English it now connotes wealth (and exclusivity, which is inappropriate for being together in the Father’s house). Dreaming of a “mansion in the sky” is an unfortunate result of using obsolete language.

Many other examples of obsolete language in the KJV could be cited, e.g., “tares” (Matt. 13:25–40); “howbeit” (over 50 occurrences); and “cruse” (1 Sam 26:11–12, etc.).

### Gender-Inclusive Language

Gender-inclusive language has become a major issue. In mass media and academia not using it will result in conflict. Yet for others its use (particularly in worship and Bible translation) may be considered heretical. Popular English usage has shifted, and we have become more aware of gender issues in language. In the Hebrew of the OT and the Greek of the NT, the predominant usage conformed to what had been normal English usage: the masculine was used for males alone, for males and females together, and for unidentified persons of either gender (“any man,” “all men”). The feminine was used only for groups or individuals that were exclusively female. It is not linguistically accurate to say, as the preface to the NRSV does, that there is “an inherent bias of the English language towards the masculine gender” or that this “bias” “in the case of the Bible has often restricted or obscured the meaning of the original text.” A greater danger may lie in translating Greek or Hebrew phrases that refer to a specific gender by English phrases that are not gender-specific; examples will be pointed out below. The approach described by the preface of *God’s Word* represents a middle road, one that appears to have been successful: “God’s Word occasionally uses the pronoun *he* to refer to a single person, male or female. The translation team felt that retaining some singular pronouns was more important than slavish loyalty to gender neutrality.” Several passages where the NRSV translation criteria led its rendition astray are discussed here (examples 3–6).

#### Example 3

Matthew 5:23–25

NRSV 23 So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison.

Here is a surprising inconsistency in the NRSV policy of gender neutrality. In vv. 23–24, the word “sister” is added to the text to guarantee that no one mistakenly believes that reconciliation should happen only between men. However, in v. 25 the masculine only is retained. Is this meant to imply that only males will accuse others and bring them into court? Unfortunately, GW is similar in making vv. 23–24 gender neutral but keeps v. 25 gender specific. The ESV replaces the masculine pronoun in 5:25 with its antecedent “your accuser.”

#### Example 4

Acts 1:15–17

NRSV 15 In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, 16 “Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus—17 for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.”

Several changes were made here to make the NRSV more “inclusive.” In 1:15 “believers” is substituted for “brothers” (a change also made by the medieval manuscripts and hence adopted by the KJV). At the beginning of 1:16 the somewhat cumbersome “men, brothers” is rendered as merely “friends.” While “brothers” can simply stand for members of a community, the combination of “men, brothers” in Acts is always of males only; see Acts 7:2 and 23:1, where the addressees are the members of Sanhedrin; 13:15, 26, 38 for members of a synagogue; 7:26 for two males fighting; 15:7, 13 for the “Jerusalem Council”; etc. As in the NRSV of 1:17, the pronoun “us” would then include males and females, and those who have a share in “this ministry” would include females. The context as well as the vocabulary in this passage makes clear that only men were present and active in “this ministry.” The NRSV makes ambiguous who is actually present and falsely implies that women may have been involved.

The ESV in this passage stays close to the Greek. However, the ESV adds a footnote at the end of 1:14 that states, “In NT usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer to men, or to both men and women, who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church; also verse 15.” That footnote is accurate for 1:14 because Jesus’ “brothers” in 1:14 may have included his sisters too. However, that footnote is misleading in saying that the “brothers” also in 1:15 may mean “brothers and sisters.” It is important to note that the standard scholarly edition of the Greek New Testament indicates that many manuscripts have a chapter division between 1:14 and 1:15. Therefore one should not assume that “brothers” in 1:15 must have the same meaning as in 1:14. The beginning of 1:16 specifies that the “brothers” in 1:15 are all men.

### Example 5

Acts 2:7, 15

NRSV 7 Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” ... 15 “Indeed these are not drunk, as you suppose . . .”

ESV 7 ... “Are not all these who...” ... 15 “For these men ...”

Again, the removal of gender specific language results in misleading ambiguity. Who received the Spirit at Pentecost, and who was speaking in Acts 2:7, 15? The issue can be debated as to whether it was the 120 in Acts 1:15 or the apostles, who are more likely the persons in Acts 2:7, 15, because they are the closest antecedent (see 1:26 and 2:14). However, in either case both groups are made up of males (regarding the 120, see example 4). The Greek in both v. 7 and v. 15 is masculine plural. The unspecific gender of the translation “these” may not have been an intentional move to imply that the group was not just the apostles, but a larger group that may have included women. However, the removal of gender-specific nouns makes the translation favor the interpretation that a larger group was speaking.

GW retains the masculine terms in the Acts passages. The ESV confusedly drops the masculine in v. 7 but retains “these men” in 2:15.

### Example 6

Genesis 1:27

NRSV So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

GW So God created humans in his image. In the image of God he created them. He created them male and female.

ESV So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (similarly the rest)

Genesis 2:20

NRSV The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field, but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. (similarly RSV, AAT, GW)

NKJV So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

ESV The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

The use of gender-inclusive language in the OT is equally problematic especially in regard to the theology of man and his relationship with God and the relationship between the sexes. Suffice it to say that both English and Hebrew allow the use of “man” and masculine pronouns to stand specifically for adult males or generically for all human beings. It is ironic that both languages have traditionally allowed such truly inclusive meanings of these words, but that the “inclusive language” movement of today demands that the words be restricted to the gender-specific meaning of adult males. The refusal of the modern “inclusive language” movement to accept the traditional meanings of the words is not only grammatically suspect, but also theologically suspect. When a Hebrew word has an English equivalent with the same meaning, to refuse to translate the word with its equivalent simply because it is offensive to some readers is to abandon the task of translating in favor of rewriting the Bible to make it conform to modern sensibilities.

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has written that it is significant that the same word used for the human race (Gen. 1:27) is also used for the first man (Gen. 2:20). “The man” is “Adam” (Gen. 2:20). “[T]he man is designated as Adam ([Gen. 2:] 20), which is also the term used to describe the race. That the man is given this name suggests that he occupies the position as head of the relationship.” [Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Women in the Church* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, 1985), 23.] “Man” represents the human race in a way that “woman” cannot. Original sin infected mankind through Adam rather than through Eve, though she was the first to sin. He was the first Adam, through whom death entered the world, and Jesus is the “last Adam,” through whom life enters. “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22; cf. 44–49). As a man, Jesus represents the entire human race.

In translating Scripture, then, it is best to be very cautious when replacing “man” with some other “gender-neutral” term, so as not to risk creating a new theology by altering how to refer to the human race. There is no such thing as humanity that is not enfolded, engendered, as male or female, yet the Bible teaches the unity of male and female by saying they are united as “man.” In the case of Gen. 1:27 and 2:20, the NRSV blurs the distinctions in the text by translating “man” as “humankind” in 1:27 and “Adam” as “the man” in 2:20b. The ESV and most other translations provides an accurate translation in both verses.

A warning against embracing “gender-neutral language” was sounded by Leonard Klein years ago: “[O]ne change may present more problems than some have thought, and that is the dropping of the term ‘man’ for the human race. Not only does the term still merit consideration because it is widely used in a number of sciences and elsewhere as the name for the species, but in scientific theology as well it would seem to have a function that cannot be supplanted by the collective ‘people’ or the abstractions ‘humankind’ and ‘humanity.’ Theologically ‘man’ means the adamic whole, the rebellious one who stands over against God as his enemy. Martin Franzmann put it well: ‘In Adam we have all been one, one huge rebellious man’ (*LW* 292). We have a solidarity in our sin and in our redemption by the second Adam that is watered down and obfuscated by more collective or abstract terms. Thus it is arguable that theology must continue to have not a doctrine of *humanity* but a doctrine of *man*, however we may choose to talk about the race in liturgy and preaching.” [Leonard Klein, “That God Is To Be Spoken of as ‘He,’” *Lutheran Forum* (Pentecost 1988), 23.]

The NRSV and GW, which contain gender-neutral problems in their translation of Gen. 1:27, also suffer in their renditions of the great chapter on individual responsibility, Ezekiel 18. No responsible theologian would argue that the principle taught there, that each individual is responsible for his own sin, applies only to men and not to women. Yet this general principle is taught in Ezekiel by using the example of a father and his sons. Both the NRSV and GW attempt to use gender-neutral language wherever they can (“parent,” “children,” “person”), but in the process they destroy the internal consistency of the chapter. The NRSV has “parents” who become “father” and then “parent,” “children” who become “son” then “child,” and summary statements about the teaching of the chapter that pluralize the examples that were originally singular (“When the righteous turn away from *their* righteousness and commit iniquity, *they* shall die for it...” Ezek. 18:26) and thereby weaken the principle of *individual* responsibility. GW has a “person” who has a “son” doing things his “father” never did; then the “son”

becomes a “person” who has a “son,” and that “person’s” “son” does not suffer for the sins of his “father.” The effort expended to make the chapter gender-neutral yields very slim results and introduces internal inconsistencies, with the same person having both gender-neutral and gender-specific designations. In the case of the NRSV, it also weakens the theological point made about *individual* responsibility for sin.

## Paraphrase

### Example 7

Leviticus 13:49–53

GW ...it is mildew. It must be shown to the priest. The priest will examine the mildew and will put the clothing in a separate place for seven days. On the seventh day he will examine the area again. If the spot is spreading, it is unclean. He must burn the piece of clothing or the leather article because the mildew is growing. But if the priest sees that the area has not spread....

NIV ...and if the contamination in the clothing, or leather, or woven or knitted material, or any leather article, is greenish or reddish, it is a spreading mildew and must be shown to the priest. The priest is to examine the mildew and isolate the affected article for seven days. On the seventh day he is to examine it, and if the mildew has spread in the clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or the leather, whatever its use, it is a destructive mildew; the article is unclean. He must burn up the clothing, or the woven or knitted material of wool or linen, or any leather article that has the contamination in it, because the mildew is destructive; the article must be burned up. But if, when the priest examines it, the mildew has not spread in the clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or the leather article.... (similarly the rest)

Portions of Leviticus strike many modern readers as repetitious, but for a translation to excise whatever appears repetitious is to produce a paraphrase rather than a translation. It is particularly misleading to claim that the work is not a paraphrase, and then to omit even a note documenting what portions of the Hebrew text have been excised. (Another arbitrary excision in GW is of the words “twenty gerahs to the shekel” in Lev. 27:25).

## Idiosyncratic Translations, Mistakes

### Example 8

Genesis 3:14

GW You will crawl on your belly. You will be the lowest of animals as long as you live.

NIV You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. (similarly the rest).

The translation “eat dust” is faithful both to the Hebrew and to the context. God is cursing “that ancient serpent called the devil” (Rev. 12:9) for having led Adam and Eve into sin, and the wording of the curse corresponds to the form Satan used to carry out his evil deed. What serpents do by nature (crawl on belly and get dust in the mouth) is what will happen figuratively to Satan as he is defeated by the Seed of Eve, the promised Savior. GW preserves this figure of speech elsewhere when it describes the defeat of God’s enemies: “They will lick dust like snakes, like animals that crawl on the ground” (Micah 7:17); “May his enemies lick the dust” (Ps. 72:9); “They will lick the dust at your feet” (Is. 49:23). Why change the figure of speech here, and begin to paraphrase rather than translate?

For further information on theses and other translation matters, please refer to “Language Guidelines and Principles for Translation,” prepared by the Translations Committee of the Lutheran Hymnal Project (September 1999), available at

<http://worship.lcms.org/LHP/transprin.htm>.

## DOCTRINAL ISSUES

### Trinitarian Issues

#### Example 9

Genesis 1:2

NRSV A wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

NKJV And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (similarly the rest)

To translate the second verse of the Bible as a weather report rather than as a statement that the Holy Spirit was active in creation fits well with modern theories about the development of religion. According to those theories, the doctrine of the Trinity was developed by Christian theologians long after the biblical era. On the contrary, the traditional teaching of the Christian church is that the doctrine of the Trinity is revealed in the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments.

#### Example 10

Isaiah 61:1

NRSV The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed....

NASB The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted.... (similarly the rest)

There appears to be an anti-Trinitarian bias in the NRSV which leads to a lower-case “spirit,” and deprives the Holy Spirit of personhood.

#### Example 11

Isaiah 63:8–10

NRSV For he said, “Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely”; and he became their savior in all their distress. It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved his holy spirit; therefore he became their enemy; he himself fought against them.

NKJV For he said, “Surely they *are* My people, children *who* will not lie,” so He became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, *and* He fought against them. (similarly the rest)

This passage from Isaiah refers to all three persons of the Trinity. God the Father is the Savior of his children; God the Son is distinguished from the Father by being the Angel or Messenger of His Presence who saved them; God the Holy Spirit is grieved by their rebellion. It appears as though an anti-Trinitarian bias influenced the NRSV.

#### Example 12

Psalms 51:11

KJV & NRSV Take not thy holy spirit from me.

NKJV et al Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Here is an unusual case in which the KJV joins the NRSV in veiling an OT reference to the Third Person of the Trinity.

## Name of God

Following a long tradition, all the selected translations use “LORD” for the Hebrew name, “Yahweh.” The Dead Sea Scrolls reveal that Jews living before the time of Christ began to avoid saying the name Yahweh for fear of breaking the commandment, “You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold as innocent anyone who takes his name in vain” (Ex. 20:7, literal translation). A strong case can be made for continuing the long-standing tradition of substituting LORD for Yahweh, particularly because that substitution can also be found in NT quotations from the OT. On the other hand, if the Bible is God’s Word in all its parts, and if it teaches a consistent message about the one true God and his dealings with mankind, then how can it be inappropriate to use the personal name of God that he himself inspired the authors to write in the Bible? Perhaps it would be best, after all, to revert to an even older tradition, one inspired by God himself in the original texts of the OT, to use the name Yahweh wherever it appears in the Old Testament. The only mainline modern translation that uses “Yahweh” is the Jerusalem Bible.

A troubling theological bias related to the divine name appears in the NIV translation of the Hebrew “Adonai Yahweh” (2 Sam. 7:19; Is. 61:1; Ezek. 33:11; etc.), that is, “Lord Yahweh,” as “Sovereign LORD.” The NIV also uses “the LORD Almighty” and “God Almighty” for “the LORD of hosts” and “God of hosts” for simplicity, to convey the purported sense of the Hebrew, “he who is sovereign over all the ‘hosts’ (powers) in heaven and on earth, especially over the ‘hosts’ (armies) of Israel” (NIV preface). These novel designations in the NIV import into the Bible fuel for a long-standing debate between Reformed and Lutheran theologians about the theme of Scripture. The Reformed have stressed the sovereignty of God while Lutherans have stressed the mercy of God. To import the word “Sovereign” or “Almighty” into the divine name when the Hebrew words mean something completely different is to allow one’s theological bias to creep into translation. Note the contrasting explanation of the names in one Lutheran translation: “LORD of hosts’...designates God as Israel’s Savior and Protector in all situations” (AAT preface).

## The Nature of Faith

### Example 13

1 Peter 1:6–7

- NIV <sup>6</sup> In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- GW <sup>7</sup> Your faith is tested for its genuineness through this suffering, just as gold is tested for its genuineness by fire. When your faith passes this test and is proven to be more precious than gold which perishes, it results in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ appears again.
- NRSV <sup>6</sup> In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- ESV <sup>6</sup> In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, as was necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The context of 1 Peter is a strong affirmation of the work of the triune God (v.2) accomplishing salvation by the work of Jesus Christ. This work results in an absolutely certain hope for the “sojourners,” who are “guarded by faith” until the “last day.” The NIV and GWN, however, make the certainty of salvation having already been accomplished uncertain through some questionable translation decisions.

The first issue is the translation of a rare Greek word which is difficult to render in English. The word *dokimion*, translated in the NRSV with “genuineness” and in the NIV with (apparently) “proved genuine,” signifies, according to the standard Greek lexicon, the process of determining the genuineness of something or the genuineness of something as a result of a test. One commentator makes the excellent suggestion, “proved charac-

ter,” while the ESV has the best rendering among the translations, “tested genuineness.” The point in the verse is that, just as perishable gold always “passes the test” of fire, so imperishable faith always “passes the test” of trials. In the NIV, however, the trials have a different function: to see if one’s faith is genuine or not. This is a crucial difference. In the Greek, translated satisfactorily by the NRSV and ESV, there is no question that faith is genuine and will endure the tests, just as there is no question that gold will endure fire. The tests are to be looked at for what they are—temporary—in contrast to the hope that does not fade away (v. 4). However, in the NIV “genuineness,” a noun, is turned into a predicate adjective and separated from its modified noun, “faith”: “so that your faith ... may be proved genuine.” Now the trials of the Christian serve a different purpose: they come in order to test to see if faith is actually genuine or not. This translation is not only impossible grammatically (no other translation follows the NIV here), it also supports an understanding of faith that leaves one uncertain about whether or not it is accomplished. Does a person have “saving faith”? We don’t know until that person passes some “tests,” and then we won’t even be completely certain until the last day.

GW has very few points of contact with the Greek, producing here a paraphrase. Surprisingly, the result is similar to the NIV with its implication that there actually is a question of whether or not a person’s faith is genuine, and so testing is necessary to “prove” it.

#### Example 14

Habakkuk 2:4

GW But the righteous person will live because of his faithfulness.

NASB But the righteous will live by his faith. (similarly the rest)

Romans 1:17 (similarly Gal. 3:11 and Heb. 10:38)

GW The person who has God’s approval will live because of faith.

NASB But the righteous man shall live by faith. (similarly the rest)

The doctrine of salvation by faith alone is a special concern of the NT, but it depends on teachings in the OT, especially this passage from Habakkuk. Particularly in view of the NT quotations and the contexts in which they occur, it is strange that GW should use a phrase in Hab. 2:4 that leads readers away from this teaching. In the first place, faith is an instrument for the reception of life (*by* faith) rather than a cause of life (*because* of faith). In the second place, although an obsolete meaning of the word “faithfulness” is “the state of being full of faith,” more common meanings are “strictness or thoroughness in the performance of duty,” or “being true to one’s promises.” To understand Hab. 2:4 according to the common meanings of “faithfulness” transforms the passage from one teaching salvation by grace through faith into one that teaches salvation by works.

#### Conversion

##### Example 15

Revelation 3:20

NIV Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

GW Look, I’m standing at the door and knocking. If anyone listens to my voice and opens the door, I’ll come in and we’ll eat together.

NASB Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me. (so also KJV, RSV, NRSV, ESV, GWN, AAT, though the latter shifts from third to second person in order to avoid the masculine pronoun!)

This text is used in pop Christianity (particularly Campus Crusade for Christ) as a call for an unbeliever to invite Jesus into his heart; once that decision to invite Jesus in takes place, Jesus will then indeed enter into him and, subsequently, live in intimate relationship with him (“dine with him”). The NASB et al. is correct in render-

ing the Greek, *pros auton*, as “to him” following the verb “come in.” Because the inattentive reader or hearer may make the mistake of eliding the words “in” and “to” to form “into,” thus causing confusion, a clearer, though more cumbersome translation, would be “come in *toward* him” or even “come in *before* him.” Unacceptable is the complete omission of the preposition and pronoun in the NIV and GW, leaving the door open for readers to “fill in the blank” as they wish, so that Jesus may well be thought to “enter into” or “come into” a person’s heart. The whole issue could be avoided were one to pay attention to context and note that this is a letter to a church (albeit a struggling one), not unbelievers. Unfortunately, one cannot assume that the context will be read.

### Example 16

John 3:3–8 (esp. vv. 3, 7)

NIV <sup>3</sup> In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”<sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, “You must be born again.” (Also KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV, GWN)

RSV “anew” for “again”

NRSV “from above” for “again” (also GW and AAT)

The dialogue with Nicodemus is one of several examples of Jesus in the Gospel of John seeming to speak about one thing but teaching something deeper. It is clear in this pericope that Nicodemus mistakenly thinks that Jesus is speaking about being “born again” (v. 4) in terms of a physical process. There is an inherent ambiguity in the term *anōthen*; it can be rendered, depending on context, as “born from above” or “born again.” The ESV note here explains this well (though unfortunately choosing to print “born again” in the text). However, Nicodemus is clearly misunderstanding Jesus. In the next verses Jesus clarifies what being “born again/from above” actually entails: being born “of water and the Spirit,” as opposed to being born of the “flesh.” The connection that should be obvious to the reader of John is what was presented in the prologue, particularly 1:12–13: “whoever received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God—to those who believe in his name, those born not from blood nor by the will of the flesh nor the will of a husband but from God.” The same contrast between birth “by flesh” and “by Spirit” is present in John 3. Being “born from above” in chap. 3 must be understood in the same way as “born from God” in chap. 1. So by v. 7 the ambiguity is lost; *anōthen* cannot be (mis)understood in physical terms any longer; the rendering “born again” leaves this possibility open. “Born from above” has the advantage of not leaving the ambiguity unresolved and matching perfectly with “born from God” in 1:13. The Greek *anōthen* also must “from above” in John 3:31. Thus the term “born again” may not be the best choice both in context of the passage and because of the additional connotation given to this term in American Christianity.

### Justification

#### Example 17

The Greek words *dikaioo* and *dikaiosune* have traditionally been transliterated simply from their Latin renderings as “justify” and “justification,” though the noun is often translated with a different root, “righteousness,” which fails to preserve for English readers the links between the Greek noun and verb. Like all words, these and related Greek words have several “components of meaning” and, depending on their contexts, may have different nuances. The standard Greek lexicon reports for the verb: “show/do justice”; “vindicate”; “make free/pure”; “prove to be right.” For the noun we find “justice/fairness”; “righteousness”; “uprightness” of behavior. Concerned that these terms do not adequately communicate to present-day readers, GW (with surprising consistency) translates this word group by expressions with “God’s approval,” such as “having God’s approval,” “to receive God’s approval,” etc. Apparently this decision was made in order to preserve or make clear the juridical nature of justification. While this may be helpful in clarifying some aspects of the Greek words for “righteousness” and “justification,” it fails to convey other aspects of their NT meaning and usage, and does not adequately portray “justification” as Lutherans understand the biblical doctrine.

One example where the GW approach is clearly flawed is Rom. 5:18. Compare this with the much more accurate ESV:

- GW Therefore, everyone was condemned through one failure, and everyone received God's life-giving approval through one verdict."  
ESV Therefore, just as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

Here the neuter noun *dikaïoma*, usually rendered "righteous/just action or thing," is fit into the "God's approval" straightjacket to become "one verdict." What in the Greek is Christ's concrete just action (or righteous deed) of dying on the cross becomes a vague "verdict."

When one turns to the book of James (2:21), which suffers a great deal from the lack of understanding the multivalency of *dikaïoo* and *dikaïosune*, one finds very troubling and confusing results:

- GW Didn't Abraham our father receive God's approval as a result of what he did when he offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice on the altar.  
NIV Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?"

Here Abraham seems to get "God's approval" because of his action. The NIV is much more helpful, though "recognized as" or "seen to be righteous" is preferable. By v. 23 the result is nonsense: "Abraham believed God, and that faith was regarded by God to be his approval of Abraham" (citing Gen. 15:6; identical in Rom. 4:3 and Gal. 3:6). How is this to be understood? That God regarded Abraham's faith as something that God himself would approve? Can God's approval be regarded by him as something else? Unless one already knew that "his approval" is a translation of *dikaïosune* it would be extremely difficult for an English speaker to make sense of this verse.

Another issue is whether or not "God's approval" actually conveys a proper understanding of God's act of *dikaïoo* / *dikaïosune*. By using "God's approval," the GW has decided that *dikaïosune* takes place only in God's mind or attitude. He considers us approved; he thinks we are approved; to push it to the extreme, he pretends we are approved. The Lutheran Confessions in fact have a much fuller understanding of justification:

And because to be justified means that out of unrighteous people righteous people are made or regenerated, it also means that they are pronounced or regarded as righteous. For Scripture speaks in both ways. (Apology IV.72)

Therefore we are justified by faith alone, justification being understood as the making of a righteous person out of an unrighteous one or as regeneration. (Apology IV.78)

. . . by faith alone we are justified, that is out of unrighteous people we are made righteous or are regenerated. (Apology IV.117)

I cannot change at all what I have consistently taught about this until now, namely, that through faith (as St. Peter says) we receive a different, new, clean heart and that, for the sake of Christ our mediator, God will and does regard us as completely righteous and holy. (S.A. XIII.1)

The Lutheran Confessions, while certainly placing the emphasis on the declaration of righteousness, refuse to rule out the regenerative result of that declaration. The use of "God's approval" for *dikaïoo* / *dikaïosune* is thus too restrictive; while it is certainly a component of the Greek words, it does not exhaust the meaning. It is not acceptable from a linguistic perspective, nor does it accurately reflect a scriptural, Lutheran understanding of what God does for us for Christ's sake. "Righteousness" and "justification" are part of the technical terminology of the Scriptures that should be learned by members of the Christian church.

## “Adoption”

### Example 18

Romans. 8:15

- NIV For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” (RSV “spirit of sonship”)
- GW You haven’t received the spirit of slaves that leads you into fear again. Instead, you have received the spirit of God’s adopted children by which we call out, “Abba! Father!” (also AAT)
- KJV For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” (also NKJV)
- ESV For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” (NASB “spirit of adoption as sons”)
- NRSV For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit...

Rom. 8:23

- NIV Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (also RSV; GWN and AAT = “being adopted”; GW, NRSV = “adoption”)

Gal. 4:5–6

- NIV ...to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. 6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” (RSV = “adopted as sons”; GWN = “adopted as his full-fledged sons”; GW, NRSV = “adopted as his children”; AAT = “make us His sons”)

Eph. 1:5

- NIV ...he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will... (RSV = “to be his sons”; GWN, AAT = “made his sons”; GW = “to adopt us”; NRSV = “adoption as his children”)

Summary:

- NASB each occurrence = “adoption as sons”
- KJV “adoption” or “adoption as sons” (also NKJV)
- NRSV “adoption” or “adoption as children”
- ESV “adoption as sons” except Eph. 1:5 = “adoption.”

The rendering of *huiiothesia* is partly an issue of culture. In our North American context, an adopted child is sometimes considered from a legal perspective to be “less than a full child.” In fact, recent legal cases have removed children from adoptive parents and returned them to the birth parent(s). In Greco-Roman culture, however, an adopted son had greater legal protection and more certainty of inheritance, etc., than a naturally-born son. This may account for the NIV rendering of Gal. 4:5. However, particularly in Romans is the leveling of the term troubling; there the point is that the adopted son is chosen by the father, and for this reason the father will not reject him. Compare Romans 9 and particularly 10:13–24 for a similar point, but using instead the image of the ingrafted branch selected by God. The unfortunate result of the inconsistent rendering of this term in the NIV has also destroyed the clear connection between Rom. 8:15 and Gal. 4:5. The RSV shows similar inconsistency, and while its rendering of Gal. 4:5 is less troubling than the NIV, in Eph. 1:5 the point of God’s “choice” (see v.4) in salvation is lost.

GW renders each occurrence differently according to its understanding of the context (in keeping with its principles of translation), though at least the root “adopt” is present in each passage. The only problematic ren-

dering is Rom. 8:15: “you have received the spirit of God’s adopted children by which we call out, “Abba, Father.”” The unfortunate selection of the lowercase “spirit” forces one to read this passage as saying that God has given us a certain attitude, one that God’s adopted children have, which then enables us to approach God. The most likely rendering is to see the “Spirit” in this text as referring not to some sort of human attitude or disposition but to the Holy Spirit, particularly since the working of the Spirit is the topic of the entire section of Rom. 8:1–17. The genitive case “of adoption” is a “Genitive of Apposition” or (in some grammars) an “Epexegetical Genitive,” where the noun (here “adoption”) in the genitive case clarifies the noun which it modifies. Hence, “Spirit of adoption . . .” can be rendered in longhand: “the Spirit who adopts with the result that we are made able to cry out, ‘Abba.’” This, then, is in contrast to a misunderstanding of the work of the Spirit in the first half of the verse: “Spirit of slavery” is not “attitude of slavery” but Paul’s statement that the Holy Spirit is *not* a “Spirit who enslaves.” The Romans should not think of the Holy Spirit as one who places us back under the law of “sin and death” (8:2) but as the one who brings us into relationship with the Father, so that we, too, live in the hope of glory. RSV and NASB unfortunately understand both occurrences of “Spirit” in Rom. 8:15 as (human?) “spirit” as well.

## Election

### Example 19

2 Thessalonians 2:13

NIV But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. (also NASB, KJV, NKJV, RSV; similar GW, GWN)

NRSV But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. (also ESV; similar also NIV footnote)

This example is a combination of both a textual and a theological issue. The Greek text printed in the standard editions of the Greek NT reads with the RSV and ESV. This is the Greek edition identified as the basis for all modern translations. However, NIV and NASB adopt a variant reading (a difference of only one letter: *aparche*—“first fruits” vs. *ap’ arche*—“from the beginning”) that differs from this edition. Based on text-critical principles, the NRSV reading is most likely correct for two reasons: 1) The phrase *ap’ arche* occurs nowhere else in Paul (who typically uses *apo ton aionon*—lit. “from the ages” to describe “from eternity”); and 2) this is a common corruption; in two other places *aparche* was changed to *ap’ arche* in one or a few mss. (Rom. 14:4 and 16:5). The larger issue may not be text-critical at all, however.

The NIV renders “to be saved” as a verb here (it is actually a prepositional phrase, translated properly in NRSV, ESV). The result is that the prepositional phrases “through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth” are attached not to the verb “chose” but “to be saved.” This makes election seemingly dependent at least partially on our action (“by believing the truth”). The NRSV’s retention of the prepositional phrase (“for salvation”) keeps the focus in the proper place: the sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth are what is given to those whom God chooses. It should be noted here that the GW translation is particularly troubling in making the same word order shift as the NIV, then rendering “sanctification of the Spirit” as “a life of spiritual devotion.” What is the Spirit’s work in the believer has now become the believer’s work to gain salvation. This is unacceptable. The NIV permits, and perhaps requires, an understanding of election that is not purely by God’s grace but dependent also on human action.

## Christology

### Example 20

John 1:14

NIV We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only...

GW It was the glory that the Father shares with his only Son...

NIV the Only Begotten (also KJV, NASB, AAT)  
 ESV the only Son (also NRSV, GW)

## John 1:18

NIV No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only... (NIV note: God the Only Begotten)  
 NASB the only begotten God  
 ESV the only God  
 RSV the only Son (also NRSV note)  
 NRSV God the only Son  
 KJV the only begotten Son (also in the NIV note)  
 NKJV the only-begotten of God  
 GW God's only Son  
 AAT the one-and-only Son Who is God

## John 3:16

NIV one and only Son (GWN one-and-only Son)  
 KJV only begotten Son (also NASB, NKJV, AAT)  
 ESV only Son (also NRSV, GW)

The translation issue in these verses is the rendering of *monogenes*. The KJV translators, working with an etymological understanding of the production of meaning, simply split the word into its constituent parts: *mono* = “single” and *gennaō* = “beget” (“become the parent of”) (the latter rather than *genos* = “descendant” or “kind”). This decision at least had history on its side: The Vulgate used the term *unigenitus* (*genitus* being the perfect passive participle of the verb *gigno*, also meaning “to give birth to”) as opposed to some form of *genus* (resulting in “unique kind” or “only kind”). However, responsible linguistic study recognizes that words are not merely the sum of their parts, and that usage and context is determinative. The standard Greek lexicon gives two usages in the NT for this term: “one and only” when the focus is on the fact that the noun being modified is the only one of its kind within a specific relationship (so “only son of his mother” in Luke 7:12). The other usage is “unique,” used when the focus is on the modified noun’s being the only one of its kind or class. In any case, the KJV’s “begotten,” with its focus on birth rather than relationship, is unacceptable.

In these three passages (and indeed the rest of the gospel) the question is therefore which relationship is being clarified: that between Jesus (are there other sons?) and the Father or between Jesus and all other beings (is there anyone else like Jesus?). It is clear from the context of the Johannine prologue that the second relationship is in focus here: Jesus is not the darkness (1:5), not John (1:6–10, 15), not like the world or his own (1:10–13), and not Moses (1:17). The evangelist is not concerned about whether or not there are other “Sons of God”; the concern is the unique nature, mission, and work of Jesus Christ.

The text-critical issue in 1:18 of deciding whether the noun should be “God” or “Son” is a difficult problem in its own right; strong arguments can be made on either side, though in either case the referent is clearly Jesus, as he is the one “who makes the Father known.” The only theological impact of this textual decision is whether or not Jesus is explicitly described as “God” in this passage and hence can be used as a “proof-text” for the divinity of Jesus, an issue which is clearly enough settled elsewhere in the fourth gospel (e.g., 8:24, 28, 58; 10:33–36; 20:28). For the record: NIV, ESV, NASB adopt “God”; KJV, NKJV, NRSV, GW use “Son.”

How do the translations fare? As we saw, “only begotten” with its focus on something like “only child” is unacceptable. The NIV’s “one and only” is also focused on the relationship between Jesus and other potential “sons of God”—again, not the issue in John (as in, e.g., Luke 7 above). The most preferable rendering in all three passages (and that recommended by the standard lexicon, though not adopted by any translation) is “unique,” though “only” (so NRSV, GW, ESV) is also a good option if understood as “like no other.”

### Example 21

Acts 3:21

- NIV He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. (similar NRSV—a surprise, as the RSV reads “whom heaven must receive...”).
- NASB ...whom heaven must receive until [the] period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. (also KJV, NKJV, RSV)
- ESV ...whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. (similarly AAT)

The clause “he must remain in heaven” has been cited as an example of “Reformed” theology penetrating particularly the NIV translation. If Jesus “must remain in heaven,” he cannot be bodily present in the Sacrament. There are two problems with this rendering, even apart from the doctrinal issues. First, a somewhat technical, grammatical issue. In the clause *hon dei ouranon men dexasthai*, the infinitive (*dexasthai*) functions as the subject of the impersonal verb *dei*. The subject of the infinitive must then be expressed in the accusative case (rather than the nominative). In this particular clause we find two accusatives: *hon* and *ouranon*, either of which could potentially function as the subject. The NIV and NRSV take the pronoun *hon* as subject, while all other translations translate “heaven” as the subject. The rendering of NIV and NRSV should have been ruled out because the result would be nonsensical: “He must receive heaven.” This option is chosen, however, by making one critical move: The middle voice deponent verb *dexasthai* is translated not in the active voice, but the passive: “be received” instead of “receive.” In fact, *dexasthai* occurs in two other places in the NT, and in both places it is translated as an active: Matt. 11:14 “And if you are willing to accept it” and 2 Cor. 6:1 “As God’s fellow workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain.” An additional problem unresolved in the NIV and NRSV is the “leftover” *ouranon*. What is the function of this accusative noun, if not the subject of the infinitive? Apparently it is understood to be expressing agency (“by heaven”) or location (“in heaven”). While these translations would be possible were *ouranon* in the dative case, this would be an otherwise unattested use of the accusative in the Greek NT.

The second major consideration is the translation of *dexasthai* itself. No standard Greek lexicon offers “remain” as a possible English equivalent; BDAG suggests for this passage: “whom the heavens must receive” in the sense of “welcome,” perhaps with an implication of warmth, heartiness, and hospitality. Nowhere else in the NT is Jesus described as in some way confined to heaven. The improper translation of the NIV and NRSV could lead to an understanding of Christ in his exalted state as being “confined” to heaven and “incapable” of physically coming to earth until the last, thus seeming to be support for an argument against the physical presence of Jesus Christ in the Lord’s Supper.

This verse also offers an interesting comparison of translation styles. The NASB is a literal rendering in the extreme. In the first half of the verse the genitives are simply translated with “of,” which results in cumbersome English: “until the period of restoration of all things.” The NIV again goes its own way, making “God” the explicit subject of the restoring “until the time comes for God to restore everything”; while “God” is the speaker and subject in the second half of the verse, making him the acting agent in the “restoration” inaccurately makes God (here the First Person of the Trinity) the one who restores himself, rather than sending the Second Person to carry out the restoration. The ESV and AAT provide the clearest and most readable renderings of the verse.

### Example 22

Romans 9:5

- RSV ...and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever.
- NRSV ...and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever.
- KJV ...and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. (similarly NASB)
- NKJV ...from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God.
- NIV ...and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised!

ESV ...and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever.  
AAT ...and from them according to His body came Christ, Who is God over everything, blessed forever.

In this passage the RSV makes a bold attempt to deny the divinity of Christ by dividing a single sentence into two and thus avoiding what the Greek clearly says, namely, that Christ is God. Though the translators of the NRSV apparently did not desire to be so blatant, their translation still obfuscates the clear biblical witness to Christ's divinity. The same issues are relevant in translations of Titus 2:13, where the RSV and NRSV include in the footnotes an alternate translation that avoids calling Christ God.

### Messianic Prophecy and Inspiration

For Christians who are convinced that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God and that Jesus is the Savior promised in the OT and revealed in the NT, the most important passages to consider in the OT are the Messianic prophecies. In Luther's day, the main controversy over these passages was whether they predicted Jesus as the Christians claimed, or whether they said nothing about Jesus Christ and instead predicted somebody else either in ancient Jewish history or in a future messianic age, as the Jews claimed. Today the same controversy rages, but now among Christians themselves. What used to be the "Jewish" understanding has been embraced by many Christians and has influenced how messianic passages are translated in Christian Bibles. Even conservative Christians debate whether messianic passages originally spoke only of Christ or also of others before Christ, while liberal Christians deny that the passages originally spoke of Christ at all, but only came to be used that way by later Christians.

The following Messianic passages have been chosen for diagnostic purposes. In each case, one or more of the translations has the effect of removing or at least veiling the promises of Christ in the OT.

#### *The Abrahamic Covenant*

The first few passages to be considered are various expressions of the Abrahamic covenant. This important covenant is the foundation of the entire OT. The book of Genesis shows what led up to this covenant and how it set apart the Israelites from the other nations of the world. The books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy show how this covenant led to the shaping of the Israelites as God's people historically, spiritually, and legislatively. The NT explains its spiritual application to the church. In general terms God promises in this covenant that Abraham would have "seed," or offspring, that the world would be blessed through Abraham on account of his seed, and that Abraham and his seed would be blessed and would have an inheritance. This covenant has material and spiritual aspects, the greatest of which is that Jesus Christ as the seed of Abraham brings the blessing of salvation to the world. In evaluating the translations of this covenant, first we shall consider the verb of blessing and then the agent of blessing.

#### **Example 23**

Genesis 12:3

RSV By you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.

NRSV In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (similarly the rest)

Genesis 22:18

RSV By your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves....

NRSV By your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves....

KJV In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (similarly the rest)

The verb of blessing in this covenant has two Hebrew verbal forms, the Niphal and the Hithpael. Normally in Hebrew the Niphal is translated as passive, "be blessed" (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 28:14; cf. Gal. 3:8). Often, the Hithpael is translated as a reflexive, "bless themselves," or "gain a blessing for themselves" (Gen. 22:18; 26:4; c.f. Acts 3:25). Some Hebrew scholars believe that both the Niphal and Hithpael forms are best translated as "be blessed"

because God's blessings come by grace alone, not by human merit or action. Because both forms are used in expressions of the same covenant, most translations standardize the verbal forms in the parallel passages with the passive translation "be blessed." The RSV standardizes the reflexive translation "bless themselves". Only the NRSV attempts to preserve the distinction between the two Hebrew verbal forms (Niphal = "be blessed," Hithpael = "gain a blessing for themselves").

The NT teaches that the Abrahamic covenant promises that Jesus would be born from the line of Abraham and would bring the blessing of salvation to the world. The covenant is thus a gospel message of what Jesus would do for the world. As a gospel message, it makes sense for the verb of blessing to convey primarily the sense of what happens to the people (passive verb) rather than what they do to or for themselves (reflexive verb). The people are blessed by Jesus; they do not merely invoke blessings on themselves in his name. Both NT quotations use a Greek passive verb ("be blessed") even though one of the quotations is derived from a passage using the Hebrew Hithpael. If the expressions are to be standardized, it is preferable to follow the lead of the NT and standardize them as passive, as most translations do.

On the other hand, the non-standardizing translations of the NRSV could be understood properly from a theological point of view. Those who are saved by grace through faith are blessed by God and so they "gain a blessing for themselves" through faith. The poorest choice from theological, grammatical, and contextual views is to standardize the reflexive form ("bless themselves") in the fashion of the RSV.

#### Example 24

Genesis 28:14

- KJV In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.  
NKJV In you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.  
RSV By you and your descendants shall all the families of the earth bless themselves.  
NRSV All the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring.  
NASB In you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.  
NIV All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.  
AAT In you, that is, in your Descendant, all the people on earth will be blessed.  
GW Through you and through your descendant every family on earth will be blessed.  
ESV In you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

The NT teaches that "the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). While it is not clear to which of the many formulations of the Abrahamic covenant this refers, it does provide a cautionary note about how to translate the Hebrew word for "seed" in this covenant. In some contexts the word can have the collective meaning "descendants," while in other contexts the word can have the singular meaning "descendant." In the case of the Abrahamic covenant, some contexts speak of the many descendants that Abraham had as his seed, especially the Jewish nation. Other contexts, as the quotation from Galatians shows, should be understood as speaking of the singular descendant Jesus.

When the same Hebrew word can have more than one meaning and it is not always clear which of the meanings is intended in a particular context, it makes sense to translate the word with an English equivalent that may have the same range of meanings. In uncertain cases, then, the Hebrew word for "seed" should be translated by the English "offspring," which can also be either collective or singular. Where the context provides the information necessary to make a decision for or against one of the meanings, then another more restrictive word may be used. In the case of the passage under consideration (Gen. 28:14) the context speaks of all the families of the earth being blessed by the "seed," which would indicate that the "seed" here is the singular Christ rather than the collective Jewish nation. This is made most explicit by using the singular "descendant." The less precise "offspring" or "seed," allows either a singular or collective understanding. The collective understanding is forced on the reader by using "descendants," providing "biblical" support for the false doctrine that the Jewish nation as a whole is the source of gospel blessings to the families of the earth today.

*The Davidic Covenant*

In addition to the Abrahamic covenant, the Davidic covenant is a major theme that often appears in the historical and prophetic literature of the OT and in the gospel proclamation of the NT. In general terms God promises in this covenant that David would have “seed,” or offspring, who would have God as Father and who would build God’s house and rule his kingdom forever. In some contexts, the material, temporal aspects of the covenant are in view, and the attention is on Solomon building the Temple in Jerusalem and the Davidic dynasty ruling over Israel for many generations. In other contexts, the spiritual, eternal aspects of the covenant are in view, and the attention is on Jesus Christ as the Son of God ruling spiritually over God’s people for eternity.

**Example 25**

2 Samuel 7:19

KJV And *is* this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?NKJV *Is* this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?

RSV [Thou] hast shown me future generations, O Lord GOD!

NRSV May this be instruction for the people, O Lord GOD!

NASB And this is the custom of man, O Lord GOD.

NIV Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O Sovereign LORD?

AAT And this is what you teach me about the Man, Lord GOD.

GW Almighty LORD, this is the teaching about the man.

ESV And this is instruction for mankind, O Lord GOD!

The unconditional nature of the first recording of the covenant (2 Sam. 7:11–16) shows that the spiritual, messianic aspect of the covenant is in view, and the NT affirms that the words spoken there are about Jesus Christ (see Heb. 1:5, which quotes 2 Sam. 7:14). Such an understanding can help in the translation of a difficult portion of David’s response to God’s promises in the covenant. Of the translations shown above, only those of AAT and GW make use of the messianic nature of the covenant to guide the meaning derived from the difficult Hebrew. They are also the closest to George Stoeckhardt translation, “This is the manner of the man who is the Lord God” (*Christ in Old Testament Prophecy*, p. 29).

**Example 26**

Psalm 2:7

KJV Thou art my Son... (similarly NKJV, ESV, NIV, NASB, GW, AAT)

RSV You are my son... (similarly NRSV)

Psalm 2:12

KJV Kiss the Son.... (similarly the rest)

RSV Kiss his feet.... (also NRSV)

NASB Do homage to the Son....

Psalm 2 reflects the Davidic covenant and is quoted several times in the NT as prophesying that Jesus is the Anointed One (“Messiah,” “Christ”) of God, the Son of God, the King who rules with an iron scepter and dashes nations to the ground. Given its messianic nature, the command in the last verse to “Kiss the Son” (most translations), or “Do homage to the Son” (NASB) not only makes sense but is faithful to the Hebrew words in the text. To decide that the text must be corrupt and to conjecture a different text, “Kiss his feet” (RSV, NRSV), suggests an anti-messianic bias on the part of the translators.

Miscellaneous Messianic Passages

**Example 27**

Psalm 8:4–6

- KJV What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. You madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all *things* under his feet....
- NKJV What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all *things* under his feet.
- RSV What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet....
- NRSV What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet.
- NASB What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet....
- NIV What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet....
- AAT What is man that You should think of him, or a son of man that You should come and visit him? You make Him lower than God for a little while; then crown Him with glory and honor and make Him ruler over what Your hands have made, putting everything under His feet.
- GW What is a mortal that you remember him or the Son of Man that you take care of him? You have made him a little lower than yourself. You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him rule what your hands created. You have put everything under his control...
- ESV What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.

Although many interpreters understand Psalm 8 to be a celebration of the great worth of all human beings and so would have not trouble with the NRSV translation, the translation is seriously flawed. It is an example of a self-acknowledged inconsistency of the NRSV. The general guidelines are that the translation be “As literal as possible, as free as necessary,” but the drive toward gender-neutral language has proved to be overwhelming. The translation committee decided that it was impossible to be literal when it came to using “man” or masculine pronouns to refer to human beings in general, even though both Hebrew and English allow such usage. In order to combat “linguistic sexism,” the translation committee decided to use paraphrases where they felt that “man” should be understood generically rather than as an adult male.

The problem with paraphrases is that they are more interpretation than translation, and the interpretation may be wrong. In the case of Psalm 8, the NT teaches that the “man” who was made lower than the angels but is now crowned with glory and honor is Jesus (Heb. 2:8–9). To make the “man” in Psalm 8 a generic plural “human beings,” and “the son of man” into “mortals” makes it impossible to read the psalm the way the NT understands it. Finally, on the basis of the NT quotation “lower than the *angels*,” the corresponding Hebrew word *elohim* here should be translated either as “heavenly beings” (ESV, NIV) or as “angels” (KJV, NKJV) rather than as “God” (RSV, NRSV, NASB, AAT) or “yourself” (GW). At no time was Jesus “less than God” (contrary to the RSV and NRSV), though he was made “lower than angels” through his incarnation during the state of humiliation so that he could “taste death for everyone” (Heb. 2:9).

**Example 28**

Psalm 22:16

NRSV My hands and feet have shriveled.

KJV They pierced my hands and my feet. (similarly the rest)

Psalm 22 is the closest thing in the OT to an eyewitness account of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Jesus quoted the psalm while suffering on the cross (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” v. 1; Matt. 27:46); the spectators mocked him (“All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads; ‘He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him’” vv. 7–8; Matt. 27:39–44); Jesus was thirsty on the cross (“My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth” v. 15; John 19:28); he was “poured out like water” on the cross (v. 14; John 19:34); the soldiers divided his garments by casting lots (“They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing” v. 18; John 19:23–24). In view of these strikingly precise prophecies and fulfillments, there is good reason to translate the difficult verse under consideration in a way that corresponds to the crucifixion account. While the Hebrew is difficult, it literally seems to mean, “they dug,” “bored,” or “pierced my hands and my feet.” This agrees with the NT account of Jesus’ crucifixion (cf. John 20:25). This also agrees with the prophecy of the piercing of Christ in Zech. 12:10, which should be translated as, “they shall look on me, whom they have pierced.” The NRSV is a speculative translation that veils the correspondence to the crucifixion (“My hands and feet have shriveled”).

**Example 29**

Psalm 45:6

RSV Your divine throne endures for ever and ever....

KJV Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever.... (similarly the rest)

The most offensive doctrine that Jesus taught his fellow Jews was that he was the Son of God. This is the teaching which provided the legal grounds for the sentence of death by the Sanhedrin (cf. Matt. 26:63–66). The same doctrine continues to be offensive today, and much modern biblical scholarship is predicated on the assumption that Jesus was merely a human teacher whose followers later elevated him to divine status in their sacred writings. The RSV veils one clear expression of the divinity of Christ in the OT by translating the clear Hebrew words in a way that did not offend the members of the translation committee who did not believe in Christ’s divinity. Two factors show that the RSV translation is simply wrong. First, the Hebrew words here are clear, as even the NRSV shows; second, this passage is quoted in the NT to prove that Jesus Christ is God, as even the RSV shows (“But of the Son he says, ‘Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever...’” [Heb. 1:8]).

**Example 30**

Isaiah 7:14

KJV Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

NKJV Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.’

RSV Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

NRSV Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

NASB Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

NIV The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

AAT Look, the virgin will conceive and have a Son, and His name will be Immanuel!

GW A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and she will name him Immanuel [God Is With Us].

ESV Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

The best known messianic prophecy of the OT has become a battle ground for scholars who understand messianic prophecies in different ways. Three different understandings of this prophecy from Isaiah have affected

how the passage is translated and explained. One understanding is that this passage originally spoke only of Jesus. Another understanding is that this passage originally did not speak of Jesus at all, but rather of someone (perhaps Hezekiah or a son of Isaiah) to be born nearly 700 years before Christ. The third understanding is that it spoke both of a person born nearly 700 years before Christ and also of Christ. Because only Jesus has been born of a true virgin, those who favor the second or third understandings must understand the Hebrew word *almah* “virgin” either as a (non-virgin) young woman or as a woman who was a virgin at the time of the prophecy but soon after had sexual relations to conceive a child.

While scholarly articles have been written on both sides of the question whether *almah* means “virgin” or “young woman,” in all other OT passages where it occurs, this Hebrew word refers to a woman or girl who was a virgin. There are other reasons for favoring the “virgin” translation, including the fact that Jews living before the time of Christ already indicated that this was how they understood the word in their translation of the passage into Greek. Another strong reason for favoring the “virgin” translation is the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. This prophecy is quoted in Matt. 1:23 as being fulfilled when Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, and all translations use “virgin” in the quotation there.

The NRSV has a particular problem with these passages. It translates Is. 7:14, which the evangelist cites as: “Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.” Yet, the context of Matthew 1, particularly vv. 18 and 25, apparently led the translators to retain “virgin” in the NT. However, translating the two passages differently implies at least a fault in the evangelist, if not some form of altering the text to his own interests. While the translation in Matthew is “correct,” to imply that the evangelist misread or changed the Isaiah text reveals a fundamentally different understanding of the nature of biblical inspiration and predictive prophecy.

## God’s Involvement in Affliction

### Example 31

Leviticus 14:34

GW When you come to Canaan that I am going to give to you, mildew may appear in a house.

NIV When you enter the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as your possession, and I put a spreading mildew in a house in that land... (similarly the rest)

The Hebrew text clearly says that God is the one responsible for placing the mildew in the house. This text corresponds to many others that say the God afflicts people in various ways. To attempt to “protect” God from this activity by mistranslating such passages leads to a secularization of human suffering and deprives it of spiritual significance.

### Example 32

Joel 2:13

KJV Turn unto the LORD your God: for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

NKJV Return to the LORD your God, For He *is* gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.

RSV Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil.

NRSV Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.

NASB Now return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in loving-kindness, And relenting of evil.

NIV Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

- AAT Turn to the LORD your God because He is kind, merciful, slow to get angry, full of love, and feels sorry about disaster.
- GW Return to the LORD your god. He is merciful and compassionate, patient, and always ready to forgive and to change his plans about disaster.
- ESV Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.

The Hebrew words at the end of the verse can mean “to repent of evil,” as a criminal might repent of having done wrong, or “to relent from imposing affliction,” as an angry judge might be relent from imposing a sentence against a repentant criminal. It is the latter sense that is demanded by the context here.

## Eschatology

### Example 33

Matthew 26:64

- NIV “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”
- NASB Jesus said to him, “You have said it [yourself]; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”
- KJV Jesus said unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.
- ESV Jesus said to him, “You have said But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (also GWN, GW, AAT)

In his trial before the Sanhedrin, Jesus describes himself in terms of the Son of Man of the book of Daniel. A major question in Matthew is exactly when the Kingdom of this Son of Man begins. Matthew’s answer is quite simple: It is present in the person of Jesus Christ; life and ministry, death and resurrection demonstrate that fact. Tied in here closely is the eschatological discourse of Matthew 24, which is routinely misinterpreted as describing “Signs of the End of the Age” (as in the NIV’s chapter heading). Rather, it is a description of what will take place in the Kingdom, beginning with his own death and resurrection, the destruction of Jerusalem, and ultimately the final return. The citation of Daniel 7 in 24:30 is therefore not the final coming (which is not discussed until later in chapter 24) but the enthronement of the Son of Man at his resurrection. Again in chapter 26, the same verse from Daniel is cited to his accusers; Jesus will be killed in disgrace by the enemies of the Kingdom, but the Father will vindicate him and place him, the Son of Man, in the seat of glory, where he will be “from now on” (*ap’ arti*). The ESV, GWN, and GW catch this precisely.

“In the future” (NIV) is an impossible rendering of *ap’ arti*; the NASB’s “hereafter” is not sufficient. In the case of the NASB this is one of only two places where the “hereafter” is used in its translation of the NT, the other being John 13:7, where it is used to render *meta tauta* (lit. “after these things”). The Greek phrase occurs five other times (Matt. 23:39; 26:29; John 13:19; 14:7; Rev. 14:13), each time properly rendered in the NASB as “from now on,” while the NIV does well on most of those. Troubling is the unique way in both translations that the phrase is translated in this passage. A misunderstanding of both the text and the nature of the Kingdom of God has resulted in the NIV and, to a lesser degree, the NASB, from trying to “fix” the text, but instead revealing a misunderstanding of the Kingdom.

## Creation

### Example 34

Genesis 1:1

- NRSV In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth....
- NKJV In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (similarly the rest)

To translate the first verse of the Bible as a temporal clause as the NRSV rendition above is to remove a fundamental text stating that God created the world from nothing.

## Inerrancy of Scripture

### Example 35

Genesis 2:19

KJV And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field....

NKJV Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field....

RSV So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field....

NRSV So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field....

NASB Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field....

NIV Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field....

AAT When the LORD God had formed out of the ground every animal in the field....

GW The LORD God had formed all the wild animals ... out of the ground....

ESV So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field....

In order for the RSV, NRSV, and ESV to be correct, the Bible must contradict itself. The first chapter of Genesis says that the animals were created *before* man, while this verse from the second chapter of Genesis would assert that animals were created *after* Adam, as a result of God's resolution to make a helper for Adam, as a prelude to the creation of Eve. The KJV, NKJV, NASB, and AAT are capable of being understood in a way that does not demand such a contradiction in the Bible because they do not specify that the animals were created as a consequence of God's resolution to make a helper for Adam. The NIV and GW provide the best understanding of the passage, clarifying that the animals had been created earlier, but were now brought to Adam to teach him to value even more highly the woman that God would make for him as a helper corresponding to him.

## Sacramental Theology

### Example 36

Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25

NKJV covenant (also RSV, NRSV, ESV, NIV, NASB)

KJV testament (also AAT)

GWN last will and testament

GW promise

Covenant is perhaps the most discussed vocable in the Greek NT. Linguistics, liturgical usage, and theology intersect with intensity in the rendering of this term in the context of the institution of the Lord's Supper. The latest standard lexicon points out that in the context of the Greek of the NT there is only one passage (Heb. 9:16f.) where *diatheke* has exclusively the sense of "last will and testament" (impossibly translated as "covenant" there in the NIV). In the other passage where such a translation seems warranted there are still components of "covenant" present (Gal. 3:15, 17). The new lexicon of the Septuagint offers only "treaty" or "covenant" as possible glosses for *diatheke*.

In some theological systems, "covenant" has assumed the idea of an agreement between two equal parties. To read this into any NT passage is impossible; to understand the Lord's Supper as some kind of agreement between God and his people is impossible both theologically and in context.

Within the context of the synoptic gospels there is no question that a Passover (covenantal) context is presumed; for Jesus to use the Septuagint word for "covenant" in a way that is foreign to any other NT usage here would be extremely difficult to abide. It seems better to use terminology which connects, rather than distances itself, from the OT. Nonetheless, the discussion should continue.

Luther and the Lutheran Confessions generally preferred "testament" instead of "covenant" (Apology XXII, 2;

Formula SD VII, 92; VIII, 29). The choice of GWN, “last will and testament,” is a hyper-Lutheran rendering which is an over-correction and fails to fit the Passover context. GW’s “promise” seems weak in English and completely departs from the Lutheran liturgical and catechetical tradition. Here the use of the technical term “covenant” or, should one so choose, even “testament,” is worth preserving.

**Example 37**

Ezekiel 37:11

- GW ...all the people of Israel are like these bones....
- AAT ...these bones are all the people of Israel...
- KJV ...these bones are the whole house of Israel.... (similarly the rest)

Daniel 8:20–21

- KJV The ram which thou sawest having *two* horns *are* the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough goat *is* the king of Grecia....
- NKJV The ram which you saw, having the two horns—*they are* the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat *is* the kingdom of Greece.
- RSV As for the ram which you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. And the he-goat is the king of Greece....
- NRSV As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. The male goat is the king of Greece....
- NASB The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece....
- NIV The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat is the king of Greece....
- AAT The ram you saw with the two horns means the kings of Media and Persia. And the hairy he-goat is the king of Greece....
- GW The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kingdoms of Media and Persia. The hairy male goat is the kingdom of Greece....
- ESV As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. And the goat is the king of Greece....

The preceding passages provide interesting lessons in translation and theology. These particular passages are commonly quoted by the Reformed in the discussion about the Real Presence of Christ’s Body and Blood in the Sacrament to prove that the “is” in the words of institution can mean “represents.” [Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 3 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 317.]

What is interesting about these passages is that the original Hebrew of these passages does not even include the verb “to be.” In such cases, translators regularly supply the verb in English. It is striking that the Lutheran translation GW joins the interdenominational translations NIV and NASB in supplying the word “represents” in Dan. 8:20, and stands alone in Ezek. 37:11 in supplying the words “are like” for the missing verbs in Hebrew, thus supporting the case of non-Lutherans who use these verses to prove that “is” can mean “represents.”

**Example 38**

1 Peter 3:21

- NIV ...and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also...
- KJV The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us...
- NKJV There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism...
- RSV Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you... (also ESV, similarly NASB)
- NRSV And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you...

AAT In the same way also, baptism now saves us...  
GW Baptism, which is like that water, now saves you...

In this crucial passage St. Peter draws an explicit connection between the flood and Holy Baptism. The waters of the flood were a “type” of Baptism, which is the antitype (antitypon). Only the NKJV transliterates the Greek, though some readers may need an explanation of the technical term “antitype.” The NRSV is perhaps the clearest in the use of “prefigured,” with the use of “corresponds” also being acceptable (RSV, ESV, NASB). Least desirable is NIV’s “symbolizes,” which weakens considerably the connection. Rather surprising is the AAT’s avoidance of the imagery altogether, choosing the rather flat “in the same way also.”

## MISCELLANEOUS TEXTS

### The Ten Commandments

#### Example 39

Exodus 20:8

KJV Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. (similarly the rest)  
AAT Remember to keep the rest day holy.  
GW Remember the day of worship by observing it as a holy day.  
NIV Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Although the word “sabbath” in Hebrew means rest, in this context it is the name of a specific day of the week, the seventh day, Saturday. Israelites were not free to rest whenever they chose, or to change the day of their worship according to their own whim. Now that Jesus has fulfilled the OT laws of worship, they are no longer binding on NT believers (see Col. 2:16–17). This does not mean, however, that the worship laws in the OT should be translated as though they did not require worship on the Sabbath.

Another issue concerns the NIV translation of the phrase, “*by* keeping it holy.” In the traditional rendering, “*to* keep it holy,” the phrase explains the purpose for keeping the Sabbath holy; it answers the question, “why?” The NIV, however, may signal a shift in meaning in that the phrase asks “how” the Sabbath day is remembered. Answer: by keeping it holy.

### The Aaronic Blessing

#### Example 40

Numbers 6:24–26

GW The LORD will bless you and watch over you. The LORD will smile on you and be kind to you. The LORD will look on you with favor and give you peace.  
NASB The LORD bless you, and keep you; the LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace. (similarly the rest)

One of the goals of GW is to translate the text as simply as possible. Since the subjunctive mood is no longer commonly used, the future indicative was substituted for it in the Aaronic blessing. Unfortunately, this substitution changes the meaning to a prediction of the future. The Hebrew verbs are in the jussive form, which is used to express earnest desire, a prayer, or this benediction as an invocation of God to bless and forgive, rather than in the imperfect form which is used to predict the future. The future prediction might be understood as an automatic result rather than a promise by grace.

## The Role of Women in the Church

### Example 41

Romans 16:7

- NRSV Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles.
- NIV Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles. (similar also NASB, GWN, AAT)
- RSV Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners; they are men of note among the apostles.
- GW Greet Andronicus and Junia, who are Jewish by birth like me. They are prisoners like men and are prominent among the apostles.
- ESV Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles.

This verse, which has become rather significant for those who advocate women serving in church leadership positions, includes both a textual issue and an issue of the clearest English rendering. First, the difference between “Junias” and “Junia” is not simply how to transliterate the same Latin name; “Junias” is masculine, “Junia” feminine. In Greek the only difference is the position of the accent, which was not used in Greek manuscripts until into the seventh century; when accents were added, the choice was for the feminine. In addition, “Junias” is a name that is unknown in any other literary or inscriptional source, whereas “Junia” is known from more than 250 different sources. Nevertheless, the masculine name Junias is chosen in NIV, NASB, and GWN.

The feminine name raises the critical issue of how to render the prepositional phrase *en tois apostolois*, “among the apostles” or “to the apostles.” Only the ESV adopts this rendering; nonetheless, there is very strong support for it in considering parallel examples of the same construction in Paul:

“The speaker will be a foreigner to me” (1 Cor. 14:11). This stands in parallel to the simple dative (without the preposition) “I will be a foreigner to the speaker.”

“In order to reveal his Son to me” (Gal. 1:16).

“It is evident to them” (Rom. 1:19).

It is significant that in each of these cases the perception of the subject is the issue: “appears to be a foreigner”; “reveals to me”; “evident to them”; and, in Romans 16, “well-known to the apostles.” While clearly “among” is a possible rendering, the question is whether it is more accurate than simply “to” or whether it can be misunderstood to mean that this woman was “among” the apostles. As in the parallels cited above, the perception of the indirect object is the issue here; hence, “among” in the sense of “part of” is not likely here. It is further ruled out by the fact that Paul nowhere else names either individual, or for that matter anyone outside the familiar circle of the disciples of Jesus (aside from Paul himself) as “apostle.” (An unnamed apostle is mentioned in 2 Corinthians 8, but there is no reason to speculate that it is an otherwise unknown “apostle.”) He does, however, on other occasions appeal to the other apostles for support (esp. 1 Cor. 9:5; 15:7) in a similar manner to the way he does here. The reason for mentioning the apostles in this passage is to praise Andronicus and Junia (who indeed receive the most commendation of anyone mentioned in Romans 16)—to paraphrase: “they are well known, even to the apostles.” The NRSV and the ESV make the correct decision text-critically, but only the ESV has the clearest rendering of the verse. [A recently published study on this passage supports the interpretation given above. See Michael H. Burer and Daniel B. Wallace, Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re-examination of Romans 16:7 in *New Testament Studies* 47 (2001), 76—91.]

### Example 42

1 Corinthians 14:34–35

NRSV footnote: “Other ancient authorities put vv. 34–35 after v. 40.”

These verses have received significant text-critical attention only in very recent years, primarily because of their command for the silence of women in church. These two verses appear in every extant copy of 1 Corinthians; however, in three closely related manuscripts (the earliest dating to the 6th century) and a handful of Latin manuscripts and church fathers (all of which also are related to these three Greek manuscripts) the verses follow 15:40. Some scholars have tried to use this shift as “evidence” of the verses being an interpolation to the text and not part of 1 Corinthians at all. The shifting of verses is not all that rare an occurrence in the manuscripts, but a shift in the order of verses is *not* good evidence that the verses were added later. The evidence is very strong that these verses have always been an authentic part of 1 Corinthians. One might well ask what prompted the NRSV editors to include their note if not to attempt to raise questions about the authenticity of the verses.

## TEXTUAL DECISIONS

Some of the most contentious debates among conservative American Christians revolve around which text should be the basis for translation. In the case of the OT, most modern translations have similar principles concerning which text they follow. Obviously, the KJV, produced in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, is not influenced by these principles. There is consensus that the best available Hebrew text should form the basis of the translation. Variant readings should be introduced only when there is a compelling case to adopt a reading from the Dead Sea Scrolls or from the ancient translations of the Bible, especially from the Septuagint. On the other hand, there is a wide divergence in practice in how the variant readings are evaluated.

For purposes of brevity, only one OT text critical example is provided.

### Example 43

Ps. 145:13b

RSV “The LORD is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds” (similarly NRSV, NIV, ESV). Omitted by all other translations.

This psalm is an alphabetic acrostic in Hebrew, which means that every verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The verse for the *nun* letter in Hebrew is missing from almost all Hebrew manuscripts, but is preserved in the Septuagint and the Syriac.

The issues in the NT are more complex than the OT, primarily because of the far greater number of manuscripts (over 5,000 Greek alone) but also because of the greater number of NT variations. The KJV was based on the edition initially compiled by Erasmus in 1516; he had available to him only six NT manuscripts, none earlier than the 10th century. In the last 500 years, more and far earlier manuscripts (some dating to the first half of the second century) have come to light, and the process of evaluating their readings is critical to any translation project. The following examples will examine several notorious passages where differences exist between the KJV/NKJV and all other editions.

### Example 44

1 John 5:7–8

KJV 7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. 8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. (also NKJV)

NIV 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. (similarly the rest)

The longer passage became widespread in the later Latin Vulgate manuscripts and used in the late Middle Ages as a “proof text” for the doctrine of the Trinity. However, it is not found in any Greek manuscript prior to the 16th century. Erasmus himself refused to include the verses in his edition until bowing to pressure in his 3rd edition (1522). Luther did not include the verses in his translation and during his lifetime they never appeared in editions of his text. These obviously secondary verses are found in comments by the Latin father Cyprian; at some point they apparently were written in margins of Latin manuscripts (a common practice) and then, thinking it was a correction, a scribe entered it into his text. Were these verses in early manuscripts, they would certainly be the clearest passage in Scripture concerning the Trinity; their late appearance, however, precludes their use. The ESV is the first translation not even to acknowledge in a note the insertion found in the KJV.

#### Example 45

Acts 8:37

KJV 36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (also NKJV)

Others v. 37 not included

This passage has slightly more evidence in the Greek manuscripts than the previous example: about a half dozen, the earliest of which is from the 8th century. The verse is apparently an adaptation of the Eastern church’s Greek baptismal liturgy inserted into the text of Acts. Unfortunately, the only manuscript of Acts used by Erasmus had the verse, who then included it in his edition, and from there into Luther’s and the KJV. At issue is whether or not Philip required a verbal confession of faith from the Eunuch prior to Baptism. The verse has often been used as “proof text” to justify the practice of a requirement for verbal confession and, conversely, against the practice of baptizing infants. Luther himself was forced to attempt to respond to those who used the verse to make those arguments on more than one occasion. Again, text-critical principles support the modern editions and results in a text that is in line with the rest of Scripture on the efficacy of baptism for all, including infants.

#### Example 46

Mark 16:9–20

John 7:53—8:11

These are probably the most well known textual problems in the NT. Finding them in his handful of late manuscripts, Erasmus uncritically printed them in his text, and from there they entered Luther’s translation and the KJV. While both passages have some early attestation, the difficulty comes in explaining their absence in some manuscripts, the fact that other endings are given for Mark besides this one, the fact that many manuscripts (even though they include the verses) mark them off as secondary, and the discussion and rejection of these verses by such fathers as Eusebius and Jerome. There is also, especially in the case of the longer ending of Mark, clear evidence and context for their creation in the second century. All modern editions print the verses with some kind of indication that they are either of questionable authenticity or spurious. While this raises some issues with regard to Luther’s use of Mark 16:16 in the Small Catechism (he was unaware of the textual problems), it is also clear that everything contained in the Longer Ending is found elsewhere in Scripture—everything, that is, except the “signs” of picking up snakes and drinking poison. A glance at the parallel passages noted in the margins of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* confirms this. Add to this the literary problems of how the Longer Ending does not fit with the rest of Mark and that neither passage matches the grammar or vocabulary of its respective book, it is clear that both the one- and three-year lectionaries have made the correct decision in having the Easter pericope from Mark end at 16:8 and not including the passage from John 8 at all.