

Preface

What is the *Evangelical Heritage Version*?

Our translation is called *Evangelical* because its highest goal is to proclaim the good news of the gospel of salvation through faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ, God's eternal Son. Though there are many topics in the Bible, all of them are there to serve the gospel of Christ. All of our work in producing and distributing this translation is directed to the glory of God and to the eternal salvation of people's souls.

Our translation is called *Heritage* because this word heritage looks to the past, the present, and the future.

Heritage expresses our respect for the generations of Christians and for the faithful translators who have passed the Bible down to us. We are aware that we in the present are building on the foundation which they have laid for us. As the old saying goes: We can see so far because we are standing on the shoulders of giants.

The term *Heritage* also looks to the future. The gospel is a precious inheritance that is to be passed from generation to generation until Christ returns. It is our prayer that this translation will have a part in that great mission which the Lord has left for his church. Our goal and motto is expressed in the hymn verse:

God's Word is our great heritage and shall be ours forever.

To spread its light from age to age shall be our chief endeavor.

Through life it guides our way. In death it is our stay.

Lord, grant, while worlds endure,

we keep its teaching pure throughout all generations.

To this end, our goal is to produce a *balanced* translation, suitable for all-purpose use in the church.

We seek a balance between the *old* and the *new*. We debated whether our translation should be called *new* or *revised*. Neither term tells the whole story. Our translation can be called *revised* or *traditional* insofar as it builds on the tradition of Bible translation that goes back to the King James Version, to Martin Luther, and beyond. It is *new* in that it is not based on any one template, and it introduces new terms in those places where the traditional terms no longer communicate clearly.

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

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

The *Evangelical Heritage Version* is designed for *learning* and *teaching*. Our translators assume that their readers have the ability and the desire to learn new biblical words and to deepen their understanding of important biblical terms and concepts. Translators should not be

condescending or patronizing toward their readers but should be dedicated to helping them grow. The Bible was written for ordinary people, but it is a literary work with many figures of speech and many rare words. The Bible is a book to be read, but it is also a book to be studied. Our footnotes are designed to assist in the process of learning and teaching. Our translation is, in that sense, a textbook.

The *Evangelical Heritage Version* is *not an interpretative translation*. On one level, every act of translation involves interpretation, but when we say that the *Evangelical Heritage Version* strives to avoid importing interpretation into the translation, we mean that our duty and goal is to understand and to reproduce as closely as possible what the original text says and to say no more and no less than what the text says.

We offer this translation to the church as a balanced translation, suitable for all-purpose use in the church.

The following introduction provides a more detailed, expanded version of this preface for readers interested in a more detailed treatment.

Introduction

The Evangelical Heritage Version: A Balanced Translation

Old Versus New

The *Evangelical Heritage Version* seeks a balance between the *old* and the *new*. We debated whether the EHV translation should be called *new* or *revised*. Neither term tells the whole story. Our translation can be called *revised* or *traditional* insofar as it builds on the tradition of Bible translation that goes back to the King James Version, to Martin Luther, and beyond. It is *new* in that it does not follow any one template, and it introduces new terms in those places where the traditional terms are unclear.

- We seek to preserve heritage terms like *sanctify*, *justify*, *angels*, and *saints*, but not to the exclusion of more explanatory translations like *make holy* and *declare righteous*. We make an effort to retain familiar, treasured terms that are well established in the liturgy, hymns, creeds, and catechisms of the church.
- We prefer to preserve familiar expressions in well-known passages, but if the traditional reading or term is not very precise, providing a translation that more clearly reflects the original meaning takes priority over preserving traditional language.
- We try to preserve some common biblical idioms such as *the flesh*, *walk with God*, *in God's eyes*, and *set one's face against*. Our goal is not to preserve Hebrew or Greek grammatical idioms. Rather, it is to preserve important biblical expressions and imagery and, when possible, the wordplay in the biblical text.
- We usually keep traditional names such as *the Ark*, *the Ark of the Covenant*, and *the manger*. There may be specific exceptions when the traditional terms are not very clear, such as substituting *Bread of the Presence* for *showbread*, or *the Dwelling* for *the Tabernacle*.
- When the EHV adopts a new term for an important biblical concept or object, we refer to the traditional term in a footnote at the new term's first occurrence in a given context, for example:

Bread of the Presence^a

Dwelling^b

Footnote a Traditionally *showbread*

Footnote b Traditionally *Tabernacle*

Literal Versus Dynamic

The EHV seeks a balance between the two poles called *literal* and *dynamic equivalent* translation. The translator should not adhere too closely to any one theory of translation.

- Literalistic, word-for-word translations sometimes convey the wrong meaning, or they do not communicate clearly in the receiving language.
 - There is a lot of confusion about the concept of “literal translation.” A literal translation attempts to follow the words of the original language closely. It is impossible for a translation to follow another language exactly word-for-word unless the translation is an academic exercise, which is not intended for reading with understanding and enjoyment. A so-called “literal translation,”

for the most part, does not follow the original text word-for-word but thought-for-thought, because it does not look only at single words but also at the clusters in which they occur. Nevertheless, a word-for-word translation is often possible and should be followed when there is no reason to depart from a word-for-word translation.

- The translator has to weigh on a case-by-case basis whether a more literal approach or a freer approach better conveys the divinely intended meaning.
- Translators must strive both to preserve the original meaning and to produce English that sounds natural, but the preservation of the original meaning takes priority over style. When a choice must be made, accuracy in conveying the divinely intended meaning of the text takes priority over literary beauty or rendering the text into common, contemporary English.

The Wartburg Project website has many articles and FAQs devoted to these points.

Formal Versus Informal

We seek a balance between *formality* and *informality*. The Bible contains many types of literature and many levels of language, from the very simple to the very difficult.

- The EHV’s translation principles do not specify one level of language to be used uniformly throughout the Bible because the level of language in the Bible itself varies greatly from book to book and from passage to passage. The level of difficulty and the literary style of the EHV aim to be similar to the level of difficulty and the literary style of the original. In many Bible passages the original language was neither “common” nor “contemporary.”
- The translator should not drain the color and liveliness from passages by removing the imagery. If Scripture uses five different words for a concept such as sin, the translation should reflect that diversity. If the text uses a figure of speech, the translator should use a figure of speech, the same one if possible.
- When a freer translation is necessary to communicate clearly, a more literal rendering may be preserved in a footnote.
- Translators should remember they are translators, not editors of the biblical text. They have no call to “improve” the style chosen by the Holy Spirit.

Freedom Versus Rules

We seek a balance between *following guidelines* and *exercising good judgment*. It is necessary for a translation to provide translators and editors with a set of rules (general principles of translation) and rubrics (guidelines for translating specific words and expressions), but the relationship between two languages is so complex that it is hard to imagine a rule or rubric which can be applied without exception. Translators and editors should consider exceptions from the rule or rubric on a case-by-case basis.

- Although the rule “use one English word to translate one Hebrew or Greek word” is not a viable standard for a translator to apply consistently, the translator should strive to be consistent rather than casual in his renderings of specific Hebrew and Greek words and word groups, especially technical terms that refer to specific objects.

A copy of our rubrics is posted on the Wartburg Project website.

Balance Across the Board

We aim for *balance across the board*. For example:

- In texts that deal with sexual issues, we try to be euphemistic where the original is euphemistic and blunt or coarse where the language of the original text is blunt.
- In using so-called “gender-accurate language,” our translation strives to be inclusive where the original is inclusive and exclusive where the original is exclusive.

Our Wartburg Project Online Library contains articles on sexual language and gender-accurate language in the Bible.

The *Evangelical Heritage Version* is a translation designed for *learning* and *teaching*. Our translators assume that their readers have the ability and the desire to learn new biblical words and to deepen their understanding of important biblical terms and concepts. Translators should not be condescending or patronizing toward their readers but should be dedicated to helping them grow. Translations should not be “dumbed down.” The Bible was written for ordinary people, but it is a literary work with many figures of speech and many rare words. The Bible is a book to be read, but it is also a book to be studied. Our footnotes are designed to assist in the process of learning and teaching. Our translation is, in that sense, a textbook for students who want to grow in their knowledge of biblical language.

The *Evangelical Heritage Version* is *not an interpretative translation*. On one level, every act of translation involves interpretation, but when we say that the *Evangelical Heritage Version* strives to avoid importing interpretation into the translation, we mean that our duty and goal is to understand and to reproduce as closely as possible what the original text says and to say no more and no less than what the original text says.

- Translators should not introduce into the translation the kind of interpretation and explanation that is permissible and even expected in a study Bible or commentary.
- Translators should not introduce into the translation denominational interpretations that go beyond the simple, natural meaning of what the original words say.
- Wherever possible, when the text, on the basis of Scripture, is open to two equally valid understandings, the translator should attempt to preserve both options. When this is not possible, one of the options can be preserved in a footnote. (For example, does a passage refer to “the Spirit” or to “the spirit”?)

The duty of a translator is to convey all the meaning (or the openness to more than one meaning), all the beauty (or the ugliness), all the style (high or low), and all the emotional impact of the original text into the translation. Anyone who has ever tried translating realizes that it is impossible to meet this goal fully, but translators must strive to come as close as they can to achieving these goals.

Though translation involves some academic skills, biblical translation is above all an exercise of faith and spiritual gifts. Although any skilled linguist who is fluent in the source language and the receiving language can do an acceptable job of rendering the literal sense of the words of Scripture, the most important qualities for a Bible translator to possess are a thorough knowledge

of the whole message of Scripture, the aptitude to let Scripture interpret Scripture, and a humble willingness to submit to everything that Scripture says. It was this aptitude, more than the depth of his knowledge of the original languages, that made Luther such a great translator.

A translator must adhere to the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. This is especially true in communicating the doctrines of Scripture.

- Since Scripture was delivered to the human authors by one divine author, one passage of Scripture cannot be set against another. There are no conflicting theologies in the Bible.
- New Testament interpretations of the meaning of Old Testament prophecies must be accepted. The translator will recognize and preserve direct prophecy where the immediate context or other testimony of Scripture indicates direct prophecy. To obtain a clear understanding of Scripture, translators and readers need to recognize the presence of Christ in both testaments.

What Is the Wartburg Project?

The Wartburg Project is an association of Lutheran professors, pastors, teachers, and lay people who worked together to produce a new translation of the Bible.

For each book of the Bible, a lead translator produced a draft translation, using the best sources available to produce a translation that aims to preserve the heritage of English Bible translation and also to offer fresh insights.

Each book was then reviewed by several technical reviewers on the basis of the Greek or Hebrew text. These reviewers worked independently of one another, and their reactions and preferences were collated by the testament editor. Based on discussions between the editor and translator and reviewers, a second-stage draft of the translation was then prepared.

Next the translation went through popular review by pastors, teachers, and laypeople for clarity and readability. After this input was collated, the final draft was prepared for publication.

The Wartburg Project website contains more detailed descriptions of our procedure.

The Wartburg Project is *collaborative*. No book was produced by or identified with the name of one individual.

The project is *grassroots*. The *Evangelical Heritage Version* is not the official product of any church body or publishing business (though it is being published and distributed by Northwestern Publishing House). The project has been blessed with a heavy involvement of parish pastors who work with the Word in the daily life of the church. Laypeople and congregations were involved in testing and giving feedback on the translation. For example, many congregations had the opportunity to test the translation of the gospels through their use of our Lenten Passion History, which is available at our website or from Northwestern Publishing House, and by using the free EHV lectionaries, which are posted on our website.

This work of testing and improving the translation of the full Bible will continue with occasional revisions. Our goal, however, is to maintain a stable translation.

The *Evangelical Heritage Version* is a translation *addressed to the church*. Though the Bible is intended for the whole world, for the most part the original books of the Bible were addressed to the church, to the body of believers. Some of the books were first addressed to specific congregations or individuals. Although the *Evangelical Heritage Version* is designed to be useful for the evangelism efforts of the church, like the original books of the Bible it is addressed to the

preaching, teaching, worship life, and devotional use of the church. The EHV aims to be an all-purpose Bible for the church. (God willing, a study Bible will follow, as well as specialized products, such as a simplified Bible, a children's Bible, and various levels of commentaries.)

Working on this project has been a great blessing to all the participants. We pray that it will also be a blessing to all its users.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

See our website, wartburgproject.org, and follow our communications on Facebook.

Principles, Rules, and Rubrics: Our website offers a copy of the principles, rules, and rubrics for our translation. This document at this time consists of more than 50 pages of guidelines used in the EHV.

FAQs: A collection of responses to frequently asked questions is posted on our website. It is designed to address questions and concerns that our readers have about general principles of Bible translation and about specific translation decisions for the *Evangelical Heritage Version*. Two especially important FAQs are FAQ 8, "Is the *Evangelical Heritage Version* a sectarian translation?" and FAQ 11, "Is the *Evangelical Heritage Version* a literal translation?"

Papers: The library section on our website includes many studies on translation principles and on specific translation issues. Many of these are technical studies that may not be of interest to all readers. Others are popular summaries of translation topics.

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