

Introduction to the 2017 Edition

Preface

What is the *Evangelical Heritage Version*?

This preliminary edition of *The Holy Bible: Evangelical Heritage Version*, which consists of the New Testament and Psalms, is intended to acquaint readers with a new translation of the Bible produced by the Wartburg Project.

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

We seek a balance between *the old* and *the new*. We 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 welcome you to test this translation and to give us your feedback. God willing, the whole Bible will be published in the not too distant future.

The following introduction provides a more detailed, expanded version of this preface.

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 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 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 we are adopting a new term for an important biblical concept or object, we cite the traditional term in a footnote at the new term’s first occurrence in a given context, for example,

Bread of the Presence^a

Note a Traditionally *showbread*

Dwelling^b

Note b Traditionally *Tabernacle*

Literal Versus Dynamic

We seek 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” 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.

- We would be happy with a translation that is both dynamic and equivalent, but too often translations labeled “dynamic equivalent” are not really equivalent to the original. They import too much interpretation into the 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 several 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.

- Our basic translation does 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 this translation 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.

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.

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 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 text says.
- 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 “our 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 are working together to produce a new translation of the Bible.

For each book of the Bible, a lead translator produces 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 is then reviewed by several technical reviewers on the basis of the Greek or Hebrew text. These reviewers work independently of one another, and their reactions and preferences are collated by the testament editor. Based on discussions between the editor and translator and reviewers, a second-stage draft of the translation is then prepared.

Next the translation goes through popular review by pastors, teachers, and lay people for clarity and readability. After this input collated, the final draft is prepared for publication.

Our website contains more detailed descriptions of our procedure.

The Wartburg Project is *collaborative*. No book will be 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. Lay people and congregations were involved in testing and giving feedback on the translation. For example, many congregations have 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 our sample lectionaries.

This preliminary edition of the New Testament and Psalms serves the same purpose. It gives congregations and individuals the opportunity to test the translation and to offer suggestions for improvements for the full Bible.

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. This first edition aims to be an all-purpose Bible for the church. (God willing, a study Bible will follow, and perhaps

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.

We have tried to keep this introduction as short as possible because more detailed explanations and examples of our translation principles and practices are available on our Wartburg Project website.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

General Editor: Dr John F. Brug

New Testament Editor: Pastor Brian R. Keller

Principles, Rules, and Rubrics: Our website offers a copy of the principles, rules, and rubrics for our translation. This document has been growing throughout the translation project, and at this time it consists of more than 40 pages of examples.

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 ones 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 a number of studies on translation principles and on specific translation issues.

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Appendices

Here we address only two of the most asked (and perhaps most emotional) questions:

Appendix 1: Capitalization of References to God

Why don't you capitalize the pronouns that refer to God? That would be very helpful to readers, and it seems to give more honor to God.

The capitalization of nouns and pronouns that refer to God is a comparatively recent convention of English usage. It seems to have become popular only in the 20th century. Such capitalization was not the practice of early English translations, including the original King James Version, nor of Luther's German Bible.

Capitalization of nouns and pronouns that refer to God is not a feature of the original text. Therefore, it falls into the category of interpretation rather than translation. Interpretation is a task that belongs more to a study Bible than to a base translation, so it is better not to adopt capitalization of pronouns as a translation principle.

English style, however, does require that proper names and titles be capitalized, so our translation capitalizes all names and titles of God, including Messianic titles and the proper names of the Messiah that occur in prophecies.

It is important to note that capitalization does not distinguish deity from non-deity. Capitalization distinguishes a title or a proper name from a common noun or an adjective, for example: the Antichrist or an antichrist (1 John 2:18); the Evil One or an evil one, the Church or the church, the Devil or a demon. The capitalization of such words as *Satan*, *Baal*, *Asherah*, *Santa Claus*, *the Easter Bunny*, *the Great Pumpkin*, and *I* demonstrates that capitalization is not intended to indicate deity or reverence.

Our practice therefore is that God's titles are capitalized, but God's attributes or modifiers are not capitalized. God is a rock, but God, our Rock, protects us. God is high, but God Most High (the Hebrew word *elyon*) is the LORD. God's attribute is wisdom, but personified or personal Wisdom in Proverbs is capitalized, including Lady Wisdom.

Capitalization or non-capitalization may also be used to express differences of emphasis. A writer may choose to use the temple or the Temple to indicate whether he is thinking primarily of the type of building that this structure is, or he is emphasizing that this is the unique Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem.

But all of these distinctions are not indicated in the original biblical text. They are conventions of the English language.

In short, references to the Messiah or to God are capitalized if they are titles. Otherwise, they are not.

Appendix 2: The Biblical Text

I noticed that your translation sometimes has more words and occasionally even more verses than other recent translations of the New Testament. Why is that?

There are hundreds of handwritten manuscripts of the books of the Hebrew and Greek Bibles. There are many small differences of spelling and wording between these hand-written

copies. Copyists are not inspired, and it is possible, maybe even likely, that our printed version will also contain some typos that escaped detection.

Most of the variants in the handwritten manuscripts fall into the same category as typos that do not affect the meaning of the text. But occasionally some manuscripts have copying errors that omit words or even verses. It is this type of variant that an apparatus must deal with.

Recent English translations fall into two general camps in their approach to the text of the New Testament. Some translations closely follow the so-called *Textus Receptus* (TR, Received Text) which was the basis of the King James Version. The so-called *Majority Text* (MT) is not identical to the *Textus Receptus*, but both reconstructions of the text rely heavily on late medieval manuscripts and are sometimes also called the Byzantine text type. Closely following this textual tradition results in a longer text of the New Testament. The King James, New King James, and some of its cousins are examples of translations in the *Textus Receptus* tradition.

The second major approach follows a critically reconstructed text which relies more heavily on older Greek manuscripts, with an emphasis on certain texts from Egypt, where a greater number of very old manuscripts have survived because of the dry climate. This text type is sometimes called the *Alexandrian Text*. A preference for this tradition is summarized in the critical editions of the New Testament known as the United Bible Society (UBS) and Nestle editions (Nestle/Aland, NA). Overall, it is this tradition that results in a shorter text of the New Testament. The NIV, ESV, and HCSB are translations that lean in the direction of the UBS/Nestle tradition.

Our approach to the text of the New Testament is balanced in that it avoids a bias toward any one textual tradition or group of manuscripts. An objective approach considers all the witnesses to the text without showing favoritism for one or the other, since each of these has its own strengths and weaknesses as a witness to the biblical text. In the New Testament, the textual evidence should be weighed on a case-by-case basis.

From a set of variants, our translation adopts the reading that best fits the criteria of having manuscript evidence that is early and that is distributed throughout more than one geographical area of the church. The other readings in a set of variants are dealt with in one of three ways:

- A reading that has very little early or widespread support in the witnesses is not cited in a footnote in order to avoid an overabundance of textual notes.
- A reading with significant early and/or widespread support but not as much early or widespread evidence as the reading included in our translation may be reflected in a footnote that says, “*Some* witnesses to the text read/omit:”
- A reading that does not have early or widespread support, but that is familiar to Bible readers because it was present in the King James tradition (for example, the addition or omission of a whole verse) may be reflected in a footnote that says, “*A few* witnesses to the text *read/omit*:” or a similar explanatory note.

In short, many readings and verses that are omitted from UBS/Nestle-based versions of the New Testament or that are marked as belonging to a second tier in these versions (such as the ending of Mark) are included in our translation if they have manuscript support that is early and widespread. If there are cases for which the evidence is not clear-cut, our “bias,” if it can be called that, is to include the reading in the text with a note that not all manuscripts have it. The result is that our New Testament is somewhat longer than many recent translations of the New Testament, since it includes readings that they relegate to the footnotes or omit. This is not adding to God’s Word. It is reflecting the textual evidence that has been preserved for us.

In the Old Testament we follow the BHS version of the Leningrad Codex of the *Masoretic Text* as our base text, but also consider variants from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint), and other ancient versions. A fuller description of our treatment of the Old Testament text will accompany our full Bible when it is published, but since Psalms is included in this edition, we here provide a brief summary of the terminology in our Old Testament textual notes.

Hebrew: This term refers to the consonantal reading in the main body of the text of the BHS version of the Masoretic Text (*the kethiv*).

Alternate Hebrew reading: This term includes the *qere*. The *qere* is also called *the Hebrew reading in the margin*. This term also includes readings that are found as the main body of the text (*the kethiv*) in only a few Hebrew manuscripts. It includes all other types of Hebrew variants, such as the *tiq soph*, etc.

Greek or the Greek Old Testament: In the Old Testament apparatus, *Greek Old Testament* refers to readings of the Septuagint. If a reading occurs only in some versions of the Septuagint or in a Greek version like Aquila, we use the term *alternate Greek reading*. In most cases the existence of variants within the Septuagint is not noted.

Versions or *ancient versions* is used when more than one ancient version supports a reading (Greek, Latin Vulgate, Syriac, etc.)

Dead Sea Scrolls: The notes use the general term, not the names of specific manuscripts.

Samaritan Pentateuch refers to the Samaritan edition of the Hebrew Old Testament.

Targum refers to Jewish paraphrases of the Old Testament without identifying specific editions.

The translation does not mark all departures from the Masoretic punctuation.

We are not attempting to provide a full apparatus, but only to alert English readers to the existence of significant variants and to demonstrate that the existence of textual variants does not affect any doctrine of Scripture. For a serious study of variants readers must turn to the apparatus of the Hebrew Bible and to commentaries.

Rather than undermining confidence in the message of Scripture, a proper use of textual criticism increases confidence in the message of Scripture because it demonstrates that there is no doctrine of Scripture that is challenged or changed by textual variants.