Biblical Grammar:
Mechanics or Meaning?

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Grammar is made for man; man is not made for grammar.

The Wartburg Bible series
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In the EHV logo, the circle of light or the rainbow radiating from the cross is divided into three parts to symbolize the three *solas* of the Reformation: by grace alone, by faith alone, and by Scripture alone. This semi-circle, together with the base, forms the Latin letter D, which means 500 and honors the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, the year in which the first edition of the EHV was published.

Foreword

It goes without saying that people who participate in a Bible translation project are going to learn a lot. All of them will learn a lot about the meaning of specific Bible passages. They will learn a lot about problems which they did not even know existed.

Two of the most surprising things we learned in working on the EHV involved issues that did not directly involve the interpretation of specific Bible passages.

It was quite a surprise to learn to what degree contemporary changes from one Bible translation to another do not directly involve the quality of the translations but the economics of publishing Bibles in an environment which is increasingly digital and competitive. But that is a topic for another paper.

Another one of the surprising lessons that I learned early in the process of working on the EHV was that I had to unlearn a lot of things that I had spent years in learning. Nowhere was this more true that in the area of English grammar and spelling. It is surprising how much the nature of grammatical study has been revolutionized by the ability to search vast amounts of literature in order to gather objective, "real life" statistics on any specific grammatical construction or on the spelling of a word. With a quick computer search, a grammarian can gather much more data about a grammatical construction than could be gathered in a lifetime of reading. This type of research clearly shows that many of the supposed rules of English grammar are in fact myths. By using Google *ngrams* one can quickly collect several centuries of grammatical data from Google Books and quickly trace changes of usage over time. One of the first handbooks to make extensive use of this new tool is *Garner's Modern English Usage.* A brief review of this work is appended to this e-book.

In the past, grammatical rules published in handbooks were much like the tabulated results of a poll. The grammarian read a lot of literature. He also read other people's grammar books, and from that sample he extrapolated (took a guess) at what the usage of a construction would be across the total corpus of the language, in order to formulate a rule for everyone to follow. Sometimes he also threw in his opinion of what the rule *should* be. Searching Google Books still provides the grammarian with only a sample, but it is a much bigger sample (*big data*), so statements about grammatical constructions can now be much more objective, based on real life data, with less guess work.

Because we receive many questions and comments about grammatical points in our translation, it seemed that it would be worthwhile to summarize the impact of this new development on what we will call "Biblical grammar." What are the best usages for an English translation of the Bible? How do translators connect the Hebrew and Greek grammar of the Bible to the grammar of a contemporary English translation?

What follows is a fairly thorough summary of the philosophy of "Biblical grammar" that we developed while working on the EHV. We address the questions: "What is the current status of the 'grammar wars' between prescriptive and descriptive grammar and between formal and informal grammar?" and "How did we apply this to the usage in the EHV?"

The main lesson to be learned by translators is that the primary function of grammar is not to conform to a rule book but to communicate clearly. For the best communication, writers and

editors must focus more on expressing meaning than on fulfilling mechanical rules. Or to paraphrase the greatest communicator: “Grammar is made for man; man is not made for grammar.”

What Were the Greatest Difficulties Encountered in Producing the EHV?

It goes without saying that producing a Bible translation is a tremendous undertaking. What are the greatest difficulties we encountered in producing the EHV? 1) The first one obviously is the sheer volume of the project. A typical English translation of the Bible fills more than 1500 pages of text. 2) Sometimes the original language of the text, especially in the Old Testament, is extremely difficult. 3) The texts of the Bible were written in a culture or, more accurately, in a number of cultures, very far removed from our cultures. 4) Sometimes the problem for the translator is that the Hebrew text is so hard that it is difficult to find one good translation for a verse, but sometimes the problem is the opposite—there are a half dozen good translations for a given passage, and if there are a half dozen reviewers, each one prefers a different one of the options. All of these difficulties and others are discussed in the Wartburg Project's e-book *Welcoming the EHV.*

This e-book is going to provide a fairly detailed discussion of one area of difficulty that can become quite time-consuming for editors: "grammar wars." Of all the general topics that produce letters to the editor and generate FAQs, the output produced by the contemporary grammar wars comes in number 1 or close to the top. This study will begin by defining the nature of grammar wars. Then we will examine some examples of specific areas of grammatical debate that test editors and their readers. We will connect this all to a survey of the history of the development of English grammar. It is difficult to understand why our language is the way it is without some knowledge of how it got there.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Authors and editors are often faced with hard choices when they are producing communications intended for the public. In many situations they know that no matter which option they choose, part of their audience is going to be unhappy with their choice.

For example, the communicator is often between a rock and a hard place when choosing between two grammatical constructions. If he or she chooses option A (the more formal, traditional construction), the message will sound stuffy or stilted to part of the audience, and the communicator will be labeled a "traditionalist snoot." If the communicator chooses option B (a more informal, colloquial construction which accurately reproduces contemporary speech), cries of "Bad Grammar!" will arise from grammatical traditionalists. How does a communicator produce a balanced style that results in normal speech, but also anticipates and deflects erroneous but predicable criticism by grammatical traditionalists?

This dilemma confronts communicators in almost every medium and genre of communication, whether written or oral, but our examples in this e-book will be taken from the most sensitive genre of all: Bible translation. This e-book is based on experience gained by the Wartburg Project, a society of professors, pastors, teachers and laypeople, who are working together to produce a new Bible translation, the *Evangelical Heritage Version.* (See the Wartburg Project website for information about this project.)

The Bible is the most sensitive genre of communication because Christians cherish the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Translators have no calling to edit or "improve" what the Holy Spirit has said. Experienced readers of the Bible have very definite ideas about what a Bible should sound like, but different groups of those readers have very different ideas about what a Bible should sound like. In addition, readers know many Bible passages by heart from various translations. They expect a new translation to improve the readability of the text but without making any noticeable changes to familiar expressions. The task of Bible translation magnifies the tug of war between formal and informal speech, between freshness and familiarity.

WARNING!! Grammar is very serious business and should never be treated flippantly. Grammar is no joking matter. Grammarians themselves find a discussion about fine points of grammar to be perfectly fascinating. For themselves, they see no need to season the discussion of such a serious topic with levity, but they recognize that sprinkling in a little humor and provocative language might induce otherwise normal people to join in a discussion of this topic, which they might otherwise shun. For this reason, it is standard practice for otherwise serious grammarians to resort to attempts at humor in order to make their topic more interesting to non-grammarians and to inject some levity into their own otherwise dreary existence. Grammatical humor is an acquired taste.

Grammar Wars: Mechanics or Meaning?

The Battle Lines

Grammar wars are fought on two fronts: One front is the battle between prescriptive and descriptive grammar. The other is the battle between formal and informal grammar.

Adherents of *prescriptive grammar* believe that when making tough grammatical decisions, you should follow a rulebook handed to you by some authority—whether that authority is your editor, your fifth-grade teacher, or strongly worded letters from your readers. One advantage of this prescriptive system is that it relieves the editor of any responsibility for making decisions. Anytime you are criticized, you can simply say, "Mr. Nigel Huntington-Jones in his definitive *The King's English,* p 567, paragraph 34.4b says, '*xyz*,'" and further discussion is render moot.

Adherents of *descriptive grammar* believe that nobody except God, the inventor of language, has the authority to make grammatical rules that are binding on everyone, but that doing so does not seem to be one of God's priorities, so he has appointed no pope or czar of grammar and spelling. The best way for writers to speak in such a way that they are likely to be understood by their audience is to speak and write in the way that most people in that audience speak. When confronted with a grammatical sticky wicket, the writer should ask, "What wording would sound normal to most people in this situation?" Then the writer should try to sound like a normal person. This used to be a difficult task because it formerly required that you listen to a lot of average, normal people talk or that you read a lot of books about ordinary people talking in order to be competent to make this judgment. Now the task of descriptive grammar is quite easy. All you have to do is run a phrase or construction through a computer search and you can instantly obtain several centuries of data on a given usage. It is very easy to determine how most people say a certain thing—at least the people in a specified time and place and social stratum.

There is, of course, a middle ground between prescriptive and descriptive grammar: seek balance between mechanics and meaning. A writer cannot simply ignore the grammatical conventions of the grammatical establishment, even if many of them are not true. One cannot simply cast the conventional mechanics prescribed by grammarians to the wind.[1] On the other hand, there is only one grammatical rule that has universal validity: "I should say or write this in the way which will most clearly convey my intended meaning (including the intended mood) to my target audience. If a rule helps me do that, the rule is a useful tool. If the rule hinders that goal or annoys my readers, then I have to set aside the rule and do whatever best conveys the meaning and mood I am trying to convey." Writers and editors need to balance rules and authorities with experience, common sense, and a feeling for their audience. Of course, the wider their target audience is, the more difficult it is to do this. Since the target audience of the Bible is everyone, the Bible is one of the literary works in which it is most difficult to walk the fine line of grammatical balance.

Now that we have sketched the battle lines, let us look at a few of the major and minor grammatical battles in the contemporary grammar wars.

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[1] There is no inherent reason why red must mean "stop," green must mean "go," and yellow must mean "caution," but if that is the convention followed in most towns, it is hazardous to follow some other fashion.

But first, you need to decide which army you want to enlist in.

Are You a Snoot or a Slacker?[2]

What is your basic philosophy about grammar and usage? When you are between a rock and a hard place, do you tend to look the situation up in a rulebook and rigidly follow its advice? If so, you are a *prescriptivist*.

Or is your approach to grammar more *descriptive?* You think, "This is a conversation, not a formal proclamation. Most people I know do not say, 'For whom are you looking?' The normal way of talking is to say 'Who are you looking for?'"

Preliminary Self-Evaluation

Is your approach to grammar more prescriptive or descriptive? (This is, of course, not an absolute either/or.)

Where do you think you fall on this 1–10 scale?

Descriptivist Slacker	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	*Prescriptivist Snoot*
(Rules are made to broken)	…….	*(Rules are Rules!)*

Does it matter whether you are writing or speaking?
Does it matter whether you are talking to your grandma or your friend?
Does it matter if you are going to get a grade on it?]
Does it matter what your boss thinks?

An option for further study:

Read and evaluate an online article about prescriptive and descriptive grammar.

One of the more provocative claims in grammar wars is the decriptivist claim that many of the rules promulgated by the prescriptivists are really not rules at all, except in the imagination of the prescriptivist. They claim that many of the alleged rules of grammar are in fact myths that are not based on any objective evidence. Do you agree that the following rules are actually myths?

Twelve Myths People Believe About English Grammar[3]

Here are twelve "myths" about English grammar that are believed by many otherwise sensible people. Most of the otherwise sensible people who believe these myths are staunch

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[2] Provocative terms like "snoot" and "slacker" are a rhetorical device that grammarians use to enliven what some people regard as a dull subject. The term "snoot" as a synonym for "hard-core grammatical prescriptivist" was popularized by *Garner's Modern English Usage. "*Slacker*"* is a prescriptivist name for practitioners of the "anything goes" school of grammar.

[3] The terms "myths" and "superstitions" are another example of a rhetorical device that grammarians use to promote discussion and to raise awareness of an otherwise dreary topic. The question being pushed here is whether or not many commonly believed grammatical "rules" are in fact "myths" which are not based on objective evidence. Here too, the presentation, terminology, and language are shaped by *Garner's Modern English Usage.*

Most major handbooks about debated grammatical issues are written by curmudgeons, especially if they are written by British authors. Grammarians are accustomed to pronouncing their opinions in strong, sometimes sarcastic terms. Grammatical humor tends to be dry humor that is an acquired taste.

prescriptivists. Checking your attitude and practice toward these myths will help you measure whether you are more of a prescriptivist 'rules are rules' snoot or a descriptivist 'rules are made to be broken' slacker.

The Myths

These myths are also called "grammatical superstitions," which have also been defined as "unintelligent applications of an uninformed dogma."

Myth 1: You should never end a sentence with a preposition.
This is a valid rule in Latin, in which pre-positions must be pre-positioned, but Latin is not English. In English, ending a sentence with a preposition or verbal particle is completely idiomatic. As Winston Churchill remarked, "This 'no preposition last' dogma is a rule up with which it is not necessary to put."

Myth 2: You should not split an infinitive.
You are permitted to politely ignore this rule. Many good writers do.

Myth 3: Do not split a verb phrase.
This rule has greatly annoyed descriptivists for a long time. It also has annoyed them greatly.

Myth 4: You must not begin a sentence with *And* or *But*.
But that rule has been ignored by fine writers from Anglo-Saxon times till the present.

Myth 5: Do not write one-sentence paragraphs.
The previous sentence disproves this rule. One-sentence paragraphs may be emphatic, dramatic, or merely provide relief from wearying verbosity.

Myth 6: Never begin a sentence with *because.*
Because there is no basis for this rule, you may ignore it. But of course you must avoid creating dangling fragments of sentences which begin with *because.*

Myth 7: Never use *since* to mean *because.*
Since *since* may refer to either time or cause, you may use *since* as an alternative to *because.* Whether you *should* do this of course is another question.

Myth 8: Never use *between* to express a relationship between more than two objects. If there are more than two objects, a thing is *among* them.
But since a triangle is a space lying between three points, you do not always have to follow this rule.

Myth 9: It is best to avoid referring to *I* and *me* in formal writing.
Do the *majestic plural* or the *royal we* sound more modest? Substituting a term like *the undersigned* for the simple pronoun *I* immodestly calls more attention to the writer than a simple *I* would.

Myth 10: Do not refer to your reader as *you.*
The use of *you* and *I* makes your writing more warm and personal. There's nothing wrong with warm informality in personal opinions that are inserted into formal writing.

Myth 11: Don't use contractions in formal writing.
When you are reporting informal conversation in writing, thou shalt not sound like a snoot. Don't do it! The construction "did he not do it?" often sounds stuffy compared to "didn't he

do it?" (But contractions are not always appropriate in formal or legal writing. When translating laws, you may sound like a lawyer.) (See FAQ 61 on the Wartburg Project website for a more tedious discussion of this topic.)

Myth 12 Do not use incomplete sentences.

Not true! Nonsense! Why this fuss? There are at least twelve kinds of verbless sentences common in English. The greatest value of such sentences is to express emotion.

Two tips: When you use such incomplete sentences, keep them short so that people know that you made them incomplete on purpose. Statements that should be attached to another sentence are not incomplete sentences—they are fragments.

Self Evaluation

How many of these twelve myths did you believe?

How many of these myths do you believe now?

Have you changed your mind about any of them?

How many of these myths do you practice?

How many of these myths does your grammar textbook recommend as rules?

(There is, of course, a difference whether these myths are practiced as rigid rules or useful guidelines.)

The interesting thing about this list of myths is that it was composed by a prescriptivist.

Self Evaluation 2: Has the previous section moved the needle on your rating of yourself?

Is your approach to grammar more prescriptive or descriptive?

Where do you think you fall on this 1-10 scale?

Descriptivist Slacker	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	*Prescriptivist Snoot*
(Rules are made to broken)	……	*(Rules are Rules!)*

WARNING!

People who make fun of people who believe myths about grammar usually believe a few myths themselves. Grammarologist Bryan Garner, who composed the list of myths above, himself believes the following myth:

Bonus Myth: When it comes to relative pronouns, in restrictive (essential) clauses, use *that* rather than *which* whenever you can. This distinction between *that* and *which* makes good sense. It enhances clarity. And the best American editors follow it.

Garner's claim that this myth is a rule of English is unraveled by his inclusion of the words "it makes good sense" and "the best American editors." The term "best American editors" demonstrates that this alleged rule is not universal if it is followed only by American editors, and indeed only by the best of them. The statement "it makes good sense" shows that there is no objective data to support the rule. This myth is based on an authority's *opinion* about what the rule *should be* rather than on *objective facts* based on the historical usage of the English language. Grammatical authorities have made a lot of progress in persuading American editors that this myth is true, but they have made less progress among adherents of the Queen's English. In the early 20th century H. W. Fowler, who promoted the same *that/which* distinction as Garner, admitted that neither the most nor the best writers have ever practiced this distinction.

It is, therefore, not necessary to believe the myth which advocates *that* as the only pronoun to govern essential relative clauses and *which* as the right word for non-essential clauses. This rule is not supported by the history or usage of the English language. The distinction between non-essential and essential clauses can be clearly marked by the presence or absence of commas. However, timid editors may want to follow this "rule" and use *that* as the marker of essential relative clauses, even though the historical evidence does not justify this practice, because so many people believe this myth, that if you were to fail to follow this rule, it could subject you to erroneous but predictable criticism.[4]

This brings us to one other observation: There are no grammatical handbooks that practice a consistent grammatical philosophy or set of principles throughout. All of them resort to whim and inconsistency at times. We will note many of these inconsistencies throughout this book.

TEST

Before we start case studies, take the following test of your prescriptivist or descriptivist leanings. Give your verdict on each choice. Some comments appear at the end of this section. Check them after you have gone through the list.

1. "Who's there?" The correct answer is: A) *It is I.* B) *It's me.*
2. The king will give Vashti's status as queen to someone A) *better than she* or B) *better than her.*
3. Which is right? A) My mother likes the dog more *than me*.
   B) My mother likes the dog more *than I*.
4. We must resist A) *the devil* B) *the Devil*.
5. Their sin A) *stank B*) *stunk* to high heaven.
6. The light A) *shone* B) *shined* in the darkness.
7. Judas A) *stoled* B) *stole* C) *stold* the money.
8. A) Samuel acted honorably *like* a judge should. B) Samuel acted honorably *as* a judge should.
9. A) Samuel acted *like* a judge. B) Samuel acted *as* a judge.
10. A) If I *were* God, you would be in big trouble. B) If I *was* God, you would be in big trouble.
11. Israel A) worshipped B) worshiped God.
12. A) O LORD, you are our God. B) LORD, you are our God.

Comments on the dilemmas above

1. *It is I*, or *it's me? It's me* is the idiomatic construction. Either way someone will complain, so why not avoid the problem and say *I'm here*?
2. *Better than she* or *better than her*? The issue is whether *than* is a conjunction or a preposition. Historical usage shows it may be either. Written in full, the first phrase would be *who is better than she is.* Hardcore conjunctionites are not persuaded that *better than her* is okay, so if you have a

[4] Actually it is impossible to practice the preceding advice without violating the 'no proposition last' rule. Since the relative pronoun *that* cannot follow a preposition, I cannot say either "the topic about that he spoke" or "the topic that he spoke about" without violating one of the alleged rules. The only option left is "the topic about which he spoke." But that violates the rule about not using *which* to introduce an essential relative clause.

traditionalist audience stick with the use of *than* as a conjunction unless you are aiming for a relaxed, colloquial tone in a sentence.

3. These sentences say different things, even though the word *than* acts like/as a conjunction in both examples. The first means *she likes the dog more than (she likes) me;* the second means *she likes the dog more than I (like the dog).*
4. In the Bible the Devil is a proper names for Satan, not a name for the subordinate demons. So the Devil is correct, but no honor is intended by capitalizing his name.
5. Irregular verbs are losing some of their irregular parts. *Stank* is the correct past tense of *stink,* but *it stunk to high heaven* sounds okay to many people.
6. *Shone* is correct, but *shined* is making inroads.
7. If you listen carefully, you will notice that many speakers say "*he stold the money,"* but only the form *stole* looks right in print.
8. Traditionally, *like* should not be used as a conjunction.
9. Example *A* means Samuel acted like a judge would act, but he was not a judge. *B* means he acted in the office of judge.
10. *Were* is the contrary-to-fact subjunctive, but this usage is fading in English.
11. Many authorities claim *worshipped* is British and *worshiped* is American, but searching actual usage with Google ngrams shows that *worshipped* predominates on both sides of the pond. Large databases enable us to search what usage actually is rather than guessing.
12. Modern usage prefers vocatives without *O*, but many readers like *O* in poetry and prayer.

Who and Whom

The word *whom* is engaged in a life-or-death struggle for survival. This is one of the hottest battles in the grammar wars, so let's tackle it first, since it establishes the pattern for a lot of other skirmishes.

This is the second FAQ we ever received at the EHV, and we received some form of it at least a couple of times a year.

> Why does your translation use bad grammar? In the passion history in the EHV Jesus twice says, "Who are you looking for?" It should be "For whom are you looking?"

The following are our EHV principles that govern the use of *who* and *whom*:

> Do keep distinctions between *who* and *whom*, etc., but in reporting conversation try to avoid uses that sound stilted or pedantic in contemporary English. "Who are you looking for?" sounds like normal conversation. "For whom are you looking?" does not sound normal in conversation. Try out a few English sentences and see what sounds normal.
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> Do the same for the rule "no prepositions last." In Germanic languages "prepositions" (which often are actually detachable particles that are part of the verb) sound very natural at the end of a sentence.

These principles of ours were originally based on our feelings about the English language, not on any specific research. We knew this was a no-win situation. We were between a rock and a hard place. Purists would say that "who are you looking for?" is bad grammar. Most people would say "for whom are you looking?" sounds stuffy. Other terms used by hard-core descriptivists to describe the usage "for whom are you looking?" are "formal," "super-formal," "pretentious," "moribund," "socially divisive," and "a school-teacher superstition."

Since we frequently receive statements that "who are you looking for?" is bad grammar, it seemed like a good time to look up and post some comments by reputable grammarians and editors. This topic has all the necessary ingredients for a lively discussion. The editor of a major American newspaper, who describes himself as a "moderate prescriptivisit," summarizes the current situation thus:

> In conversation, *who* appears to have supplanted *whom*, almost universally. There is no going back.
>
> In formal writing, such as an academic paper or book, *whom* remains on its precarious perch.
>
> In middle-level discourse, such as journalism, which aims at a conversational tone while adhering to the conventions of standard written English, *whom* is slowly slipping away, and probably should. …
>
> It may be time to discuss letting go of the distinction in journalism. No doubt my fellow prescriptivists will see this as a counsel of despair, even though I am holding the ground on *imply* and *infer*, *comprise* and *compose*, even though I continue to use *whom* in my own writing when the pronoun as object is called for. I am two-thirds of the way toward being a dead white male, and I think that *whom* will see me out.
>
> But language is tricky, and it defies predictions. School teacher superstitions, such as the supposed prohibition against the split infinitive or the preposition at the end of a sentence, persist despite having been repeatedly exploded.
>
> For now, *whom,* though it may have seen its best days, is going, going, but not quite gone.

H. W. Fowler,[5] who could be as authoritarian as anyone, already foreshadowed this trend in his 1908 edition:

> The interrogative *who* is often used for *whom*, as in, "Who did you see?" A distinction should here be made between conversation, written or spoken, and formal writing. Many educated people feel that in saying. "It is I" or "Whom do you mean?" instead of "It's me. Who do you mean?" they will be talking like a book, and they justifiably prefer geniality to grammar. But in print, unless it is dialogue, the correct forms are advisable.

Fowler's 1908 rule is pretty much the rule EHV follows: "In print the 'correct' forms are advisable unless it is dialogue." Actually, this ruling was "old news" already in 1908 since substitution of *who* for *whom* occurred already in Shakespeare four centuries ago.

Fast forwarding to the 21st century, how does Garner assess the situation?

> It's true that in certain contexts, *whom* is stilted. That has long been so: "Every sensible English speaker on both sides of the Atlantic says '*Who were you talking*

[5] Henry Watson Fowler (1858-1933) is one of those authorities like Noah Webster, whose name continues to be attached to updates of his work long after his demise. He was a classicist, detached from the mainstream of contemporary linguistic scholarship. Working in near isolation in a country cottage, he produced a work, which his up-dater R. W. Burchfield characterized as "schoolmasterly, quixotic, idiosyncratic, and vulnerable." Yet he was regarded as one of the main authorities for English usage in the 20th century.

to?' and the sooner we begin to write it the better." J.Y.T. Greig, *Breaking Priscian's Head,* p 23, [ca. 1930].

According to the LANGUAGE-CHANGE INDEX on page 965, "*Who* as an object not following a preposition" is "Stage 4." That means that it is "virtually universal but is opposed on cogent grounds by a few linguistic stalwarts (die-hard snoots).

So, "Who are you looking for?" is not "bad grammar." It is viewed as acceptable, but not all "die-hard snoots"[6] will approve (yet).

Garner is careful to note that *whom* is not dead in American English. And, *who=whom* is not always acceptable. For example, "*Who* as an object following a preposition" is only "Stage 2" on the LANGUAGE-CHANGE INDEX. That means that it is "unacceptable in standard usage" even if "a significant fraction of the language community" might use it. In other words, it is not acceptable to say: "That sits well with the local leaders, *one of who* [read *one of whom*] drew upon his own analogy to describe the party." [Garner, p. 965].

One of the real benefits of using big data and ngrams is that it is now much more possible to base grammatical judgments on very comprehensive objective data rather than largely on feelings and biases.[7]

There are a number of problems with rigid attempts to enforce the Law of *Who* and *Whom* and other similar laws:

1. It is a futile attempt at an Amish-style freeze in time, which is impossible in a living language. The "correct" historical form of Jesus' words to Peter (who do you say I am?) is not "whom do you say I am?" but "whom say ye I am?" If we want to preserve the purity of the English language, we would need to preserve not only the cases of *who/whom* but also the cases of the 2nd person pronouns: *thou*=singular subject, *thee*=singular object, *ye*=plural subject, *you*=plural object. If the English language can survive the loss of *thou, thee,* and *ye*, it can survive the loss of *whom.* Actually the loss of

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[6] In Garner's book, "snoot" is not a bad word. He is proud to be a snoot. A snoot is someone who believes that listening to an average speaker of English is like watching someone use a Stradivarius to pound nails. But to have a clear grasp of the meaning, read his description of the word "snoot" on page 840. It's both serious and worth a chuckle.

[7] In its march from being "bad grammar" to "good grammar" a given expression passes through five stages:

Stage 1: Rejected. A new form emerges as an innovation among a small minority of the language community, perhaps replacing a traditional usage. Refined people normally consider innovations at this stage to be outright mistakes.

Stage 2: Widely shunned. The form spreads to a significant portion of the language community, but it remains unacceptable in standard usage. Terms in stage 2 often get recorded in dictionaries as variant forms.

Stage 3: Widespread but… The form becomes commonplace even among many well-educated people, but it is still avoided in careful usage.

Stage 4: Ubiquitous but… The form becomes virtually universal but is opposed on cogent grounds by a few linguistic stalwarts.

Stage 5: Fully accepted. "The form is universally adopted except by a few eccentrics.

The virtue of the sliding scale is that it shows that language is not like math. There's no way to justify absolute judgments of objective rightness and wrongness. Instead, the best we can do is to try to assess acceptability – which is a matter of degree (and a matter of opinion).

thou, thee, and *ye* is more serious than the loss of *whom* since the loss of *thou, thee,* and *ye* is not the loss only of the subject/object distinction but also the loss of the useful singular/plural distinction.[8]

2. Old English like other early Germanic languages had five grammatical cases (nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, and instrumental). Case distinctions held on longer for the pronouns than for nouns. But the effort to preserve *whom* will likely be no more successful than Canute's efforts to hold back the tide. Erasing *he, his, him* and *she, hers, her* will probably happen sooner than the disappearance of *whom* because they will be erased not by the tides of time but by civil penalties based on gender-based political correctness. The weakness of hard-core proponents of the Law of *Whom* is that the only weapon they have in their arsenal is shaming, which is not an effective weapon in a culture that is hard to shame.
3. The attempt to preserve cases is an ill-advised attempt to impose the grammar of a dead Romance language on a living Germanic language. A partisan of the lost causes of "who/whom" and "no preposition last" explained it this way: "When in doubt about correct English grammar, I always relied on the rules of Latin." Even in the case of Latin, nothing could prevent Latin from becoming Italian and Spanish and worst of all, French. The Roman man and woman on the street did not follow the rules of Cicero and Virgil, who did more than any other two guys to insure that Latin would become a dead language.
4. When people try to apply dead rules to living language, they over-correct and make awkward mistakes like "*a woman whom I think is a genius." Whom* is not the object of *I think,* as rearranging the words demonstrates: "*a woman who is a genius, I think."* People who attempt to pray in King James English seldom do it correctly, and they think that the *y* in *ye olde pub* is pronounced as a *y* rather than the correct pronunciation as a *th*.
5. Attempts to preserve archaic language and grammar in the Bible will make the Bible sound quaint and "biblical" rather than living, vibrant, and powerful.

In the EHV we try to use language that is both correct and alive and to observe the distinction between written communication and conversation (even conversation recorded in writing is still conversation). If Jesus says, "Who are you looking for?" some readers will say "Jesus would not use bad grammar." If Jesus says, "For whom are you looking?" or better yet, "Whom seekest thou?" another set of readers will say, "Nobody talks like that. Jesus would not be stuffy. Jesus should sound like a living, lively person, not like an old-fashioned book." When biblical editors are between a grammatical rock and a hard place, if their treatment of disputed issues results in 15% of their readers thinking they use bad grammar, 15% thinking they are stuffed shirts, and 70% who don't care, they can count that as a win.

Perhaps before we leave the topic we should address the statement "Jesus would not use bad grammar." Would Jesus use bad grammar?

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[8] Equal futile is the attempt to keep foreign words out of a living language in order to preserve its purity. The Hebrew language academy could not prevent the infiltration of alien words like *telephon, pizza,* and *chips* into Hebrew any more than English could keep out *pizza* and *hamburger.* Even the French, linguistic jingoists that they are, cannot keep out *le selfie, le sandwich, le bulldozer, l'email,* and *Cool.*

Would Jesus Use Bad Grammar?

The short answer is "Yes, the Bible does use bad grammar" (at least what some grammarians would consider to be "bad grammar").

The most dramatic example is Revelation 1:4-5: "Grace to you and peace from him who is, who was, and who is coming, and from the seven spirits that are before his throne, [5]and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth." χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἑπτὰ πνευμάτων ἃ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ [5] καὶ ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς. The key phrase in red is "from him who is, who was, and who is coming." In Greek the preposition *from (apo)* must be followed by the genitive case, but in our text *apo* is followed by the nominative case (ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος) disregarding the rules of Greek grammar. In addition, the finite verb ἦν is used as if it were a participle. Why do Jesus and his apostle John ignore the rules of Greek grammar? It is clear that they know correct Greek grammar. The following phrases, "from the seven spirits that are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ," have the correct Greek case. So why does the first phrase, "from him who is, who was, and who is coming," use bad grammar? It is because this phrase is a commentary on the LORD's name *I AM* as it was revealed to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3. This name reflects the unchanging nature of the LORD and of his grace. In Revelation Jesus expands that name *I AM* into the three dimensions of time: past, present, and future. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He does not change, and since Jesus does not change, his name "the one who is and who was and who is coming" does not change case, in defiance of the rules of Greek grammar, which require it to change. (In a less flagrant departure from grammar, Jesus' titles, "the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth," remain in the nominative case even though they are in apposition to a genitive, Jesus Christ)

The Greek version of Revelation 1:4-5 is bad Greek grammar (according to purists), but it is good theology and good literature. In this case "good grammar" would blur a main point of the text. In this situation, dramatically expressing the unchanging nature of Christ takes priority over the rules of Greek grammar.

There are other cases in which biblical grammar does not meet the standards of classical grammar books, and some would label its usage "bad grammar." The Bible has many alleged cases of *solecism* (bad grammar, or more accurately, conversational grammar) and broken or incomplete constructions. The battle between prescriptivists and descriptivists is an ancient one, and the Bible is not in the prescriptivist camp. It uses living, vibrant language that is more interested in impact than in grammatical rule books. Already back in the King James days, scholars defended the Bible against charges of solecism by saying that the Bible does not have *solecism* but only *soleocophanes*. In grammar-speak *soleocophanes* means "yes, it looks like a solecism but it is not." We will provide examples under the proper categories below.

Sometimes the Bible also violates the conventions of "good style." Teachers tell us, "Do not be redundant." A classic example of redundancy is "freely by grace." "Freely" means "by grace" and "by grace" means "freely." To say both is redundant. But here bad style is good theology. The truth of "freely by grace" is too important to say it just once. Paul has to say it twice "freely by grace."

The point is not that writers and editors are free to ignore the conventions of grammar and style, but that good communicators realize that there are times when literary and theological impact over-ride the conventions of grammar and style. The language of the Bible is living, vibrant language that is not bound by a classical rule book.

We will now look at some examples of issues, beginning with categories arranged according to parts of speech.

Pronouns

Sometimes grammatical difficulties are due to differences between the structures and practices of the English language and the structures and practices of the biblical languages.

The interplay of nouns and pronouns is probably the area of grammar in which translators most often must depart from a word-for-word rendering of the original Hebrew and Greek texts. English often requires a noun where Hebrew might be able to use a pronoun, and vice versa.

English style normally does not permit us to use a pronoun unless there is a clear antecedent in the near vicinity. In cases in which a Hebrew pronoun does not follow its antecedent closely enough to fit English style, translators may have to replace the pronoun with the appropriate noun in order to make it clear who is being referred to (for example, using "Moses" rather than "he"). English style normally does not permit use of a pronoun until a noun has been mentioned to serve as its antecedent. Hebrew does this very thing very often. On the other hand, repeating the same noun over and over again, which is not uncommon in Hebrew, sounds strange in English. So for readability and to avoid a mistaken perception of grammatical and stylistic errors, pronoun usage in the EHV normally follows English usage. Footnotes often call attention to places in which the English translation has supplied an antecedent, but this phenomenon is so common that it would be distracting to footnote them all. However, if the biblical author is using pronouns to build suspense by withholding the identity of the referent, a translator should preserve the suspense.

A closely related problem is that Hebrew frequently jumps back and forth between first, second, and third person pronouns in ways that would sound odd in English. In some cases, the EHV adjusts these statements by producing a sequence which is good English. What is being provided in such cases is not just a literal rendering of each pronoun, but an acceptable English rendering of the whole sequence.

Agreement in Number

Biblical texts very frequently use plural pronouns like *they, them,* and *their* after collective singular nouns like *people, nation,* and *Israel, etc.,* especially when the texts refer to actions carried out by many individuals within the group. This is the common usage in Scripture, and EHV sometimes retains it.

Gender of Pronouns

Nouns in Hebrew and Greek often have grammatical gender that does not reflect their actual gender. This often has to be adjusted in English translation.

Nouns like *Israel* and *Edom* are sometimes followed by masculine singular pronouns (*he*) when there is an allusion both to the nation and to the ancestral father of the nation.

Names of cities and countries are usually feminine in gender, but they are followed by feminine singular pronouns in English translation only when the city or country is personified as a woman. EHV does not always retain these feminine pronouns when they reflect only grammatical gender rather than personification.

Each Other / One Another

The preferred usage is *each other* when the reference is to a reciprocal relationship between only two persons. Use *one another* when the relationship involves more than two persons. But this "rule" isn't hard and fast, and there are nuances that depend on context. Many reputable writers from Samuel Johnson onward have ignored the rule, so the use of *each other* for more than two, or of *one another* for two, cannot be considered incorrect.

Articles

Hebrew does not have an indefinite article like the English *a/an*, but the number *one* is occasionally use as a virtual indefinite article. It therefore is always a translator's decision whether or not it is necessary to insert an indefinite article into the English translation to mark the noun as a member of a class.

Hebrew has a definite article (various forms of *ha*), but its use is not the same as the use of the English direct article, so translators cannot simply rely on a word-for-word translation of Hebrew articles into English. For example, where Hebrew would say "he put the hand in the pocket," English would say "he put his hand in his pocket." The use of generic articles is more common in Hebrew than in English: *The lion is strong=lions are strong=a lion is a strong animal*. In Hebrew the definite article may be used to mark the vocative. In these and other similar cases the translation should follow the English idiom. It is not possible to translate every Hebrew article with an English article or vice versa.[9]

The situation is similar with Greek. There is no indefinite article in Greek, but in rare cases the word *one* may be used as a virtual indirect article. Greek has a detached definite article, but its use is not the same as the use of the English direct article, so translators cannot simply rely on a word-for-word translation of Greek or Hebrew articles into English. For example, in Hebrew "the god" might mean "the one true god," but in English this can already be indicated by the capital letter on *God*. The phrase "you have heard that Antichrist is coming" can have the same meaning as "the antichrist is coming."

Those Pesky Prepositions

If you ask neophyte students of biblical Hebrew and Greek, "What are the most difficult words to translate?" they would probably say the verb forms. The maze of aorists, pluperfects, hiphils, hithpaels, niphals, and polels, to name but a few, may baffle the beginning student. On top of that, throw in all the irregular verbs. But there is an underlying system to the madness. There is no such order in the lowly prepositions.

[9] The Hebrew definite article is attached to the noun to form one word. Pronouns are also attached to nouns and verbs to form one word. In Hebrew *in the city* and *in their city* are both written as single words. The same is true of *he hit them.*

Both in the biblical languages and in English, the use of prepositions is to a considerable degree immune from consistent rules. When you think you have found a rule, it does not hold up to closer scrutiny. We can suggest some tendencies in the use of prepositions, but an examination of actual usage consistently turns up violations of the supposed rules.

In English we often fail to observe precise distinctions between prepositions. If a child is misbehaving in the yard, most parents would say, "Go in the house," which the child correctly interprets to mean, "Go and run around inside the house." The parent meant to say, "Go into the house and sit there," but failed to express clearly what he or she meant because of choosing the wrong preposition. If one is speaking very precisely, "a house on the lake" would be a houseboat, but more likely, it is not actually *on* the lake but is a building *next to* the lake. Prepositions also are put together with nouns in strangely irregular ways. "He went through the door" is something only Jesus could do. The rest of us go through doorways. But we regularly fail to say what we mean when it comes to the use of prepositions and their objects. The use of words is flexible and does not follow rigid distinctions.

The situation is even worse in Hebrew and Greeks. Most Hebrew or Greek prepositions overlap with several English prepositions. The use of prepositions is largely idiomatic. There is no simple set of rules. The translator has to know what feels right in English. One example that shows that rules about prepositions are made to be broken follows.

Prepositions of the Vicarious Atonement

One of the most important doctrines of Scripture is the vicarious atonement. This is the truth that Christ died as our substitute and completely paid for all of the sins of everyone in the world. This truth is expressed by three Greek prepositions: ἀντι *anti,* ὑπέρ *hyper,* and περι *peri*. These prepositions convey the ideas of substitution and benefit.

ἀντι *anti*

The two basic ideas of *anti* are substitution and opposition.[10]

This preposition may refer to substitutions made in worldly relationships. In some cases it also conveys the idea *for the benefit of.* For example:

> Matthew 2:22 Joseph heard that Archelaus, Herod's son, *had succeeded* his father as ruler in Judea, he was afraid to go there; or more literally, When Joseph heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea *in place of* his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.
>
> Matthew 5:38 You have heard that it was said, "An eye *for* eye, and a tooth *for* tooth."
>
> Matthew 17:27 So that we do not offend them, go to the sea, cast a hook, and take the first fish that you pull up. When you open its mouth, you will find a silver coin. Take that coin and give it to them *for* me and *for* you.

Anti is also used in connection with Christ's payment for all sins. *Anti* is the preposition that most directly expresses substitution.

> Matthew 20:28 Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to

[10] The Antichrist is a man who both usurps Christ's office and who opposes him.

give his life as a ransom *for* many.

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom *for* many.

ὑπέρ *hyper*+ gen

The most basic meanings of *hyper* with the genitive is *for one's benefit,* or *instead of,* or sometimes *concerning.*

Non-atonement usage of *hyper*:

Philemon 1:13 I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might serve me *in your place* while I am in chains for the gospel.

Usage in the context of atonement:

In which passages is *substitution* primary? In which is *benefit* primary? Is it possible to separate these two meanings?

John 11:50 You do not even consider that it is better for us that one man die *for* the people than that the whole nation perish.

2 Corinthians 5:14 For the love of Christ compels us, because we came to this conclusion: One died *for* all; therefore, all died.

Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself *for* us, as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Luke 22:19-20 He took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given *for* you. Do this in remembrance of me." [20]In the same way, he took the cup after the supper, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is being poured out *for* you."

John 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. The bread that I will give *for* the life of the world is my flesh.

Romans 5:6, 8 For at the appointed time, while we were still helpless, Christ died *for* the ungodly. ··· [8]But God demonstrates his own love *for* us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died *for* us.

Romans 8:32 Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up *for* us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?

2 Corinthians 5:15, 21 And he died *for* all, so that those who live would no longer live for (dative) themselves but for (dative) him, who died *in their place* and was raised again. [21]God made him, who did not know sin, to become sin *for* us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I am now living in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself *for* me.

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse *for* us. As it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree."

Hebrews 2:9 But we look to Jesus (the one who was made lower than the angels for a little while, so that by God's grace he might taste death *for* everyone), now crowned with glory and honor, because he suffered death.

In most cases *for* is the best translation for *hyper* because it conveys both meanings of *hyper,* substitution and benefit.

περι *peri*

Peri usually has sin as its object, and *hyper* usually has as it object the sinners who benefit from the offering. The "correct" usage according to the rule is shown by 1 Peter 3:18.

1 Peter 3:18 because Christ also suffered once *for* (*peri*) sins *in our place*, the righteous *for* (*hyper*) the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

But just when we think we have found a rule that works, we find a passage that violates this rule:

Hebrews 10:12 This priest, after he offered one sacrifice for (*hyper*) sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.

This can hardly mean *for the benefit of* sin. This is an example of the inconsistent use of prepositions. The exception also works the other way as well:

Matthew 26:28 This is my blood of the new testament, which is poured out for (*peri*) many for (*eis*) the forgiveness of sins.

Because of the difficulty and complexity of the subject, there is a separate article just on this issue, *Those Pesky Prepositions.* That article is available in the Wartburg Project online library. That article also deals with the doctrinal implications of prepositions.

A Miscellaneous Aberration

It is sometimes claimed that the prepositions *between* and *among* must be distinguished. However, the alleged rule that *between* can apply only to two objects, and *among* must be used with more than two objects is not true. A person may be between two trees or among the trees, but a triangle is an area between three points. *Between* is also appropriate in reference to a group consisting of many individuals when the focus in on the relationship between many pairs within the larger group. "The counselor resolved the problems between the husbands and wives in the group." A treaty may be made between three nations, and a baseball trade may be made between three teams.

Conjunctions

A question was asked about the EHV translation of Esther 1:19. *The king will give Vashti's status as queen to a different person, one better than she/her.* Should this be "than she" or "than her"?

Many people think that one of these usages is a mistake, but actually it is not that simple. Garner's treatment of this question is fascinating. Here is a taste:

> Traditional grammarians have considered *than* to be a conjunction, not a preposition—hence *He is taller than I (am).* On this theory, the pronoun after "than" gets its case from its function in the completed second clause of the sentence—though, typically, the completing words of the second clause are merely implied….
>
> That view has had its detractors…. Even William Safire plumps for the objective case: "The hard-line Conjunctionites have been fighting this battle for a long time. Give them credit: They had to go up against the poet Milton's treatment of *than* as a preposition (the use of *than whom* in 'Paradise Lost') and against Shakespeare's 'a man no mightier than thyself or me' in 'Julius Caesar.'" (Safire, "Than Me?" *N.Y Times,* 16 Apr. 1995)
>
> For formal contexts, the traditional usage is generally best. Only if you are deliberately aiming for a relaxed, colloquial tone is the prepositional *than* acceptable….
>
> What about "My mother likes the dog more than me?" vs. "My mother likes the dog more than I?" These sentences say different things, even though *than* acts like a conjunction, seemingly, in the first as well as the second. The first means *more than (she likes) me,* the second *more than I (like the dog).* [Garner, p. 899]

In general, use *as* rather than *like* as the form of the conjunction introducing a verb: he did *as* he was told.

Verbs

Strong Verbs

One problem with contemporary English verbs is that irregular (strong) verbs tend to drift toward becoming regular verbs. The principal parts of irregular verbs are losing some to their historic forms.

For example, the historic verb was "stink, stank, stunk." "Stank," however, is receding. "It stunk to high heaven" and "the ref's calls stunk" sound normal to the majority of people.

Should one say, "The light shone in the darkness," or "the light shined in the darkness"? In speech, the second sounds normal to most people. In references to light, the regular form "shined" seems to be making inroads over the irregular "shone." (If "shine" means "to polish," the past tense must be "shined.")

Many English speakers (without even realizing it) say, "He stold or stoled the money," but *stold* looks really odd in print. Stick with *stole.* In such cases, try out a few English sentences and decide what sounds normal to most speakers.

The most notorious case is intransitive *lie, lay, lain* vs transitive *lay, laid, laid*. According to the standard rule *lie* means *to recline. Lay* means *to place.* The classic rule is that *lie, lay, lain* must be used when there is no direct object (he lay down on the bed). *Lay, laid, laid* must be used when there is a direct object (they laid him in the grave). In reality, many or even most American speakers say, "She laid down on the beach blanket, and she was laying in the sun for an hour." Of this practice Garner's *Modern English Usage* says, "This error is very common in speech from the illiterate to the highly educated. In fact, some commentators believe that people make this mistake

more than any other mistake in the English language. Other authorities claim that it is no longer a mistake—or even that it never was a mistake. But make no mistake—using these verbs correctly is a mark of refinement." Not wanting to be unrefined EHV generally follows the classic rule even if it produces some strange-sounding conversations. In short, the correct usage is either "Now I lie down to sleep" or "Now I lay me down to sleep." Though both usages are correct, the first one doesn't have a prayer.

The EHV keeps the classic irregular forms, but if one sounds too odd in a given context, we may try to reword the sentence.

The same kind of problem with archaism can occur in nouns, even in reverse. The historically correct plural of *hoof* is *hoofs* (like roofs). But in recent decades so many people have falsely corrected *hoofs* to *hooves* that *hooves* is well on its way to becoming the common spelling. Some people now think *hoofs* is the wrong form. Such hyper-correction is similar to the phenomenon that people have been told so often that it is wrong to say, "You and me are going," that they overcorrect and say, "He gave it to you and I."

Shall and Will

A special problem is the use of *shall* and *will* and the language of law. The following is a summary of our EHV rubrics about this issue.

The old distinction of *I shall/I will* vs *he will/he shall* for degrees of determination is pretty much gone from American English. Distinctions of *shall* and *will*, however, may still occur to signal nuances, as in the use of the "determined shall"— "I shall return"—and in stock phrases—"shall we dance?" and "a person who shall remain anonymous."

One of the last refuges of "shall" is the "legal shall," which is familiar from the old version of the 10 Commandments: *Thou shalt not*…. This usage occurs hundreds or maybe thousands of times in Exodus–Deuteronomy. The *Concordia Commentary* uses the legal "shall" as its default translation for the Hebrew prohibitive imperfect with *lo (not).* Many other translations use "he must" or "he is to" instead of "he shall."

Hebrew uses three main ways to give commands and prohibitions:

1) Like the English so-called imperative, the Hebrew imperative is not very strong and can be used not only in commands but also in prayers and requests. In general, EHV translates Hebrew imperatives with English imperatives ("do" and "do not"). (Hebrew imperfects with *al (not)* may also be translated as negative imperatives.)
2) Hebrew expresses strong commands and prohibitions with the imperfect verb. For strong prohibitions the usual negative is *lo.* This is the construction for which the "legal shall and shall not" have traditionally been used. The "legal shall" may be used in strings of legal stipulations that use imperfects plus *lo.* When the text is giving strict civil laws with penalties, "you must" and "you must not" may be used as alternatives. "He shall" or "he is to" may be used when directions or ceremonial procedures are being given. "He should" is a softer suggestion, not a command.
3) In Hebrew a very emphatic command or prohibition is given by adding an infinitive absolute to the main verb. This could be rendered by adding "must"—"you must not" or "you must never." But if "must" is already used for construction number 2 (imperfects), another intensifier is needed here, like "certainly," "surely," "must,"

etc.: “You certainly must not.” In general in the Old Testament reserve the auxiliary “must” for these stronger constructions.

In the New Testament the EHV tries to distinguish laws, commands, suggestions, exhortations, invitations, etc., by careful attention to terms like “you must,” “you should,” “he is to,” “let us,” etc. “You must” and “you should” are good, valid expressions, but they must be (or is it they should be?) used carefully.

Laws should sound like laws, suggestions like suggestions, and encouragements like encouragements. This *must* (or is it *should?*) be determined on a case by case basis.

The order of strength from law to exhortation is roughly:

certainly must>shall> must> is to> should> let us.

“Let” is also possible for some 3rd person imperative uses.

In some cases “let” can sound like permission rather than command—”If they want to go, let them.”

There is a “legal must” (you must not do that) as well a “must of necessity” (you must be born again; a good tree must bear fruit). All of these distinctions must be sorted out on a case-by-case basis.

In contemporary English the verb *might* usually implies possibility: “we might go to town.” Be careful about using it in statements of purpose or result such as “Christ died that we might live.” The same issue is involved with the use of *may* which can express possibility or permission.

Overly Simplistic Views of Verbal Conjugations

We have already noted that both in Hebrew and in English the name *imperative (command verb)* is not an accurate name for this verb form. “Have another piece of pie” may be an invitation or a command depending on who is saying it, a hostess at a dinner or your grandmother.

Translators must be careful not to over-translate Hebrew and Greek verb forms in a way that is not idiomatic in English. For example, the reflexive meaning of a verb form often is not explicitly expressed in English. “I shaved” or “the barber shaved me” are usually expressed by the same verb form (*shaved)* in English. In Hebrew, the first action would have to be expressed by the *hithpael*: “I shaved myself.” The second would be expressed by *qal: “*He shaved me.” In some cases it may be necessary to make the reflexive meaning explicit also in English, “the two-year-old dressed himself.”

In the same way, the force of the Greek middle is not always explicitly expressed in English. In some other cases, the middle force may need to be explicitly expressed, especially if it has doctrinal implications (more on this below). The continuous or repeated-action implication of the Hebrew or Greek imperfect verbs are not always explicitly expressed in English. It is often unnecessary to express these nuances in the English verb because they are expressed by adverbial phrases: “He did it every day.” Sometimes the context alone is enough to make the type of action clear.

Translators must beware of overly simplistic summaries of Hebrew and Greek verb conjugations. Hebrew hiphils are not always causative, and piels are not always intensive. With one Hebrew root the piel may have the same causative force as the hithpael form of another

Hebrew root. For example, some of the verbal roots for the action of hardening Pharaoh's heart in Exodus use the piel, and some use the hiphil with no significant difference in meaning.

Hebrew niphals are not always passive, and hithpaels are not always reflexive/reciprocal/ middles. Both forms may cover the full range of middle-passive meanings.[11] The forms may also be used interchangeably. In Genesis 12:3; 18:18; and 28:14: "all people on earth will be blessed through you" is expressed by a niphal (passive) verb. In 22:18 and 26:4 the same meaning is expressed by hithpael. It is not necessary to look for a different meaning in these two cases: "all people on earth will bless themselves through you" (though such a meaning is a grammatical possibility in all cases). Another way of saying this is that in these two verb forms Hebrew does not have distinct middle and passive verb forms. In a general way, these verb forms indicate that the verb in some way acts on its subject. It must be determined from the context whether this force is passive or one of the many shades of middle/reflexive/reciprocal. Is the subject a passive recipient of the action or is the subject somehow involved in an action that has some sort of effect on it?

The same is in general true of so-called middle–passive forms in Greek.

The point is that translators cannot mechanically rely on the overly simplistic labels that have been placed on Hebrew and Greek verb forms. They have to look carefully at the context to determine what nuance if any is expressed by the admittedly enigmatic Hebrew verbal system. For example, the Hebrew niphil not only has passive or middle connotations but may have what is often called the *tolerative force* (I would prefer the term *permissive force*).

Isaiah 55: 6 reads:

> Seek the LORD while he may be found!
> Call on him while he is near!
>
> "While he may be found" is a niphal form which states that the time to find God is not open-ended, but he will bring it to an end.

Isaiah 65:1 may be read:

> I was available to those who did not ask.
> I let myself be found by those who did not seek me.
> The verbs "was available" and "let myself be found" are niphals that could be translated as passives, "was sought" and "was found," but the following context: "I said, 'Here I am.' I spread out my hand to a stubborn people," indicates that a major point here is that the LORD is allowing them to have an opportunity to repent, with the implication that this opportunity has a time limit.

God is active in graciously making himself available to fallen sinners, and he may become active in withdrawing a person's time of grace by hardening that person. Hardening of the heart is something that people do to themselves, but it is also an act of divine judgment that God does to them. Pharaoh is a prime example. Saul also reached the point where God would no longer allow Saul to find him, and in fact he told Samuel not to pray for Saul. The interplay of active, middle, and passive verbs becomes especially sensitive when the doctrines of conversion and repentance are involved. Scripture teaches that we do not cooperate in our conversion. We are

[11] Passive verbs indicate that the subject was acted upon by another person or thing (I was touched by X). Middle verbs indicate that the subject performed an action that had an effect on him (I touched myself).

turned to God by the Holy Spirit. But Scripture also uses active language of people turning to God. The interplay between the passive and active is best expressed by Jeremiah 31:18:

הֲשִׁיבֵנִי וְאָשׁוּבָה

"Cause me to turn and I will certainly turn."

The first verb is hiphil causative.

The second is emphatic qal.

We prefer a quite literal translation in this verse because it provides understanding for the other passages that speak of people turning to God. We may say, "I see a car turning at the corner," but we understand that a driver is causing the car to turn. We see a person turning to God, but we understand that we see him turn because the Spirit turned him.

In what sense do we accept or receive Christ? Do we receive him as a gift, or is our decision to accept him the key to receiving him? In John 1:11-12. John uses two closely related and sometimes interchangeable words to distinguish those who do not accept Christ (*paralambano*) from those who do receive Jesus (*lambano*).[12] Is there a reason to use different verbs in this context?

NRSV He came to what was his own, and his own people did not *accept* him. But to all who *received* him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.

EHV He came to what was his own, yet his own people did not *accept* him. But to all who did *receive* him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Verb Gender

Hebrew verb forms have more gender markers planted within them than English verb forms do. For Hebrew plural or feminine imperatives which have no vocative accompanying them to indicate that the addressee is plural or feminine, the translator may have to insert a feminine or plural vocative into the translation so that the reader or hearer will recognize the change of addressee. For example, in Isaiah, without any identifying vocative, a prophecy will suddenly begin to address Lady Zion with a command. In Hebrew the change of addressee is clear because of the feminine form of the imperative. In such cases the translator can add an addressee to the English translation to mark the change of gender or number, which otherwise would not be marked in English: "*Lady Zion, arise*." Such markers may also be necessary in some cases to mark a change of speakers in the Song of Songs, though there the special headings which have been added to the translation also mark change of speakers.

Subjunctive

The English subjunctive (If I *were* to do something like that, I would dishonor God) is fading, but EHV keeps it in formal speech, especially in contrary-to-fact constructions. It still appears in suppositions (if I were to go), necessity (it is necessary that he be there) and a few other constructions and idioms. But in informal conversation, if the subjunctive sounds too stilted, we do not use it, but look for another way to express the thought.

[12] For an example of the use of *lambano* as passive reception of a gift see 1 Corinthians 4:7. In Colossians 2:6 *paralambano* is used for receiving Christ.

In curses or blessings both "Cursed be the man who does this" and "cursed is the man who does this" are acceptable uses. "Cursed be" sound more like a real curse.

The Hebrew term *halilah* refers to something that is profane or cursed. It is an oath that means *may I be cursed if this happens.* At times it may have a softer meaning like *that will never happen.* It is used also by God of himself. The EHV shades the meaning depending on the context. *Arur* is a stronger word for *cursed*.

Punctuation

The Hebrew and Greek texts that we use as a basis for translation have well-developed systems of punctuation, but these systems were not part of the original manuscripts. They are a later editorial addition to the text. Some early New Testament manuscripts have no punctuation at all. Others have some punctuation. We have no information about what punctuation, if any, was present in the original manuscripts. The Hebrew manuscripts now have a very complex system of punctuation, but it was not included in the written texts until relatively late in their history. Translators can be guided by these punctuation systems, but for the most part, the punctuation in the EHV is based on applying and adapting the English punctuation system to the texts.

Quotation Marks

In English, quotation marks are used to indicate a change of speakers in written conversations. Because quotation marks are not part of the original biblical text and biblical styles of reporting speech are very different from English patterns, quotation marks present a special problem for translators.

Inserting quotation marks is always an act of interpretation. Sometimes this task is quite easy, because there is a quotation formula like "Moses said" or a Hebrew word like *lemor* (saying) preceding the quotation. At other times, changes of speakers are not explicitly marked by an introduction of the speaker in the Hebrew text, but in some of these cases, changes in the number and gender of the pronouns and verbs in the quotation may point to the change of speaker. At still other times, changes of speakers are completely unmarked, and it is in some cases uncertain whether there is a change of speakers.

> Quotation markers like the word "saying" (Hebrew *lemor* or the Greek *legontes*) do not always need to be translated into English when they are the equivalent of opening quotation marks. They often can be omitted when the quotation is introduced by quotation marks in English or when "saying" sounds redundant in English. If *lemor* or *legontes* are emphatic, this emphasis can be retained in some other way: "He commanded Israel, saying" = "He gave a command to Israel. He said:"

Sometimes the decision whether or not to insert quotation marks and where to insert them changes the meaning of the passage. In Acts 19:4-6 the placement of the quotations marks indicates whether or not the translator believes that Paul also baptized the Ephesians who had earlier been baptized with John's baptism.

As a rule, in EHV, quotation marks follow the American style. They start with double quotation marks at the outer limits of the quotation and use single quotation marks for quotations inserted within quotations. If there are deeper levels of nested quotation marks, they alternate

between “ “ and ‘ ’. The ending period or comma is always placed inside the quotation mark in regular sentences.

In translating large blocks of the biblical text that have nested quotations, the American English practice of alternating sets of “ “ and ‘ ’ would produce tangles of nested quotation marks that produce results like .”’”’ or even “‘“‘“‘“‘. This practice is confusing and seldom useful.

It is less confusing to the reader to use indentation and titles to set off nested quotations rather than to have so many nested quotation marks, since such strings of quotation marks are not useful to the reader, unless he or she goes back and analyzes the printed form. This is not useful to people trying to read a biblical account. We want the Bible to be read, not analyzed. So we follow these practices:

> If a whole chapter, oracle, parable, or sermon is one long speech, treat the whole speech/oracle/law code as one long block statement or as an independent document. It can be indented two extra clicks of the ruler on the left and three on the right. Treat it like a block quotation which is not enclosed by quotation marks. (It is not necessary to provide special indentation to these sections if a heading or introductory line makes the beginning and end of the document obvious.)
>
> This makes it unnecessary to start every paragraph of a long statement with a quotation mark and to leave successive paragraphs of this multi-paragraph speech with no closing quotation mark, except for the last paragraph which has a closing quotation mark. In many cases these quotation marks are too far apart to be useful to the reader.

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

> If a whole long section is one speech by God which includes many occurrences of “this is what the LORD says” or “declares the LORD” embedded in it for emphasis, do not treat each instance of “this is what the LORD says” as the introduction to a new quotation. Such phrases do not indication a change of speaker or a new quotation. They are often emphatic statements of authority. In such cases they are followed by a period not a colon.
>
> The best solution to this problem is to use the part of the text which introduces the speaker and addressee as a separate paragraph without quotation marks and to end it with a colon or period. The introduction to the document or speech can sometimes be converted to indirect speech in English—*The LORD spoke to Moses and told him to tell Israel this:…*. This line then serves as a heading to the whole oracle. Then the paragraphs of the speech follow without enclosing quotation marks. If we want to preserve our grammatical purity, we could indent the speech as a block quote, but this device is not very helpful in a long quotation, since it does not remain noticeable for long. Sometimes speeches in Deuteronomy run on for

chapters without any change of speaker. These instances can be treated as one sermon, regardless of how many chapters they run.

When such phrases are the heading of a poetic section or a speech, they may be concluded with a period rather than a colon, especially if the phrase is expanded by many modifiers. When the poetic structure makes it clear that the lines that follow are what the Lord says, it is not necessary to have a colon. The same function normally expressed by the colon is served by the indented formatting.

Likewise, each letter in Revelation 2 and 3 can be treated as one unit. The new unit is indicated by a heading—*the Letter to Ephesus*. The letter does not have to be bracketed by quotation marks.

When longer biblical quotations are indented in a block, use the same block format also for short quotations found in the same immediate context. Bible quotations that are just a few words or a short phrase and that are not set off in a block are set off by quotation marks. It is not necessary to put quotation marks around every allusion to biblical language.

Close a chapter with a quotation mark even if the speech continues in the next chapter. The next chapter can begin with new introductory words. (This may be less necessary when there are no headings between chapters.)

If no speaker is indicated in the text when the oracle flows over to another chapter, this information may be put into the heading of the new chapter or indicated by adding introductory words that show resumption of the speech—*The LORD said*—if this is necessary for clarity in oral reading.

Double quotation marks rather than single quotation marks are also used around words that are being marked as ironic or sarcastic. But in most cases, avoid using "apologetic quotation marks" when a word is being used in an ironic or "improper" sense: Let the ironic or improper use of words stand on its own without marking the irony with quotation marks. The context should make the irony or "improper" use clear.

A common rule is that quotations introduced by words like "he says," etc., are introduced by a comma. Quotation introductions that lack a "saying word" are introduced by colon. But the type of block quotations discussed above may be introduced by colon regardless of the introductory formula.

Summary of Quotation Marks

This kind of problem arises because the chapter numbers, the headings, and almost all of the punctuation which we add, including quotation marks, are not part of the style of the original biblical text. Even the punctuation in the Hebrew text is a later addition. Our device of quotation marks is designed to help readers follow the change of speakers in a written conversation. It is not particularly useful in law codes and extended prophetic oracles. Beginning a paragraph in a long law code or an extended oracle with a double quotation mark and ending it with five nested quotation marks is not very helpful to the reader, especially if the initial double quotation mark occurs five paragraphs earlier, and there is a whole tangle of single and double quotation marks in between.

Try to follow commonly accepted English punctuation rules, but do not lose sight of the fact that the purpose of punctuation is to clarify not to confuse. The literary style of the Bible is so

diverse, that there is no set of rules for quotation marks that works all the time. Some inconsistencies are necessary to communicate clearly.

Direct and Indirect Speech

Hebrew does not have the same structure for differentiating direct and indirect questions that English has. In Hebrew style it is not uncommon to have summaries or paraphrases that would be indirect speech in English treated as if they were direct quotations. Such statements may need to be converted to indirect speech in English.

Quotation marks do not always indicate a verbatim quotation when placed around sentences translated from Hebrew. Hebrew "quotations" are sometimes paraphrases.

Even these rules do not work consistently. A special problem occurs in prophetic writings such as Jeremiah. In many cases an oracle to Jeremiah begins with a command to Jeremiah to speak. This is followed by a dictation of the words that he is to speak to the people. The words that he speaks to the people often are not reported in the text as a separate speech. The text reports only the words spoken to the prophet, but they serve a double purpose: showing that the prophet's words came from the LORD and at the same time they reveal what he later said to the people.

Rhetorical Questions

Some Hebrew rhetorical questions sound better translated as English statements: "Am I not the one who has given you the order?" = "I am the one who has given you the order." "Is he not the one who gave the order" = "He is the one who gave the order, isn't he."

Colons

When colons are followed by full sentences, all of the sentences should begin with capital letters.

Dashes

Short dashes (en-dashes) are used to mark interruptions of the sentence structure. The longer em-dash may be used for the same reason, but the EHV uses em-dashes only sparingly to make a stronger break. A dash creates a separation which is stronger than a comma.

> From the Wilderness and from Lebanon to the Great River, the Euphrates River–all the land of the Hittites–as far as the Mediterranean Sea
>
> They came out–they and all their divisions with them–a people as numerous as the sand on the seashore

En-dashes may also be used to differentiate Bible references that run over more than one chapter from references in which all the verses belong to one chapter.

Matthew 4:1-16 Matthew 1:1–4:16

A span of calendar dates may be separated by a short dash, but in charts, hyphens are usually sufficient.

We do not have rigid rules about dashes but go with whatever in our opinion looks best in the context. No spaces are placed around dashes unless a dash is followed by a verse number.

Hyphens in Compound Words

When two words are combined into a compound word, this happens through a gradual process from *armor bearer* to *armor-bearer* to *armorbearer.* All three forms exist simultaneously, sometimes for centuries, as the word is moving from form A to form C. As a general rule, the EHV prefers to keep the two-word, un-hyphented forms of such two-word expressions, unless the one-word form or the hyphenated form is very well established and the word is not very long, especially if the one-word form creates odd letter combinations or diphthongs that are hard to read aloud on the first pass. Longer compound words are good German style, but not so much so in English. The two-word forms are easier to read.

In the past, these sorts of compounds were usually hyphenated, but the situation is different today. The tendency is now to write them as either one word or two separate words. We prefer two separate words in most cases to avoid creating long compound words that will end up being hyphenated in some verses (*armor-bearer*) but not in others (*armorbearer*) because of the line breaks.

However, we try to choose one spelling and stick to it. Do not refer to an *armor bearer* one place and an *armorbearer* in another.

In prefixed words like *re-enter,* the form *reenter* is pretty well established, but we want to avoid spellings that create diphthongs or long vowels that might cause readers to stumble, so we prefer forms like *re-enter.*

As usual, our practice is determined not by one authoritative textbook, but by what practice will serve readers best, especially those reading the text aloud.

Commas

The function of commas is to indicate a small pause in the reading or to divide connected words into groups. Your judgment about how you want a sentence to be read is the most important factor in deciding whether or not you want to place a comma in a specific spot. Here are the EHV's general rules.

1. Do use a comma before *and* in a series, as this usage seems to be gaining ground again after being out of favor for a while— "apples, oranges, and bananas."
2. Do not use a comma between two verbs with a single subject. Not: "He sent two of his disciples, and said to them". Either do not add a comma or add a second subject: "he sent two of his disciples, and *he* said to them."
3. In poetic parallelism, the general rule is to express the subject in both halves of the line, but in gapped partial parallelism, the two lines may be separated by a comma, even if one of them is not a complete subject-verb-object sentence. The comma here indicates the end of a poetic unit, not the end of a grammatical unit.

    I will set his hand over the sea,
    his right hand over the rivers.
    Let the sea roar,
    and all that fills it.
    Let the fields be overjoyed,
    and everything that is in them.

If the second line in synonymous parallelism is an incomplete echo of the first line, it may nevertheless be separated from the first line by a comma in order to mark the poetic structure and assist in the reading.

Poetic punctuation is intended to be a guide to poetic reading and singing, so it does not always follow grammatical necessity but indicates where the poetic pauses are.

4. By their very nature, Hebrew and Greek verbs express the subject in every occurrence of the verb, but in English narration, a single subject often sounds most natural: "They moved forward~~,~~ and ~~they~~ attacked the town."
5. When a sentence begins with *Oh,* whether or not *Oh* is followed by a comma depends on whether or not you want *Oh* to be followed by a short pause.
6. Adverbial phrases at the beginning of a sentence may be set off with a comma, but short phrases do not necessarily need a comma. Again, your purpose is to guide the reader as to how you want the sentence read.
7. The same is true of the word *therefore* at the beginning of a sentence. In the sentence *Therefore the place was named Beersheba* the reader should not read *Therefore* (significant pause) *the place was named Beersheba*, but *Therefore the place was named Beersheba*. No pause—no comma. One way around this issue is to rephrase: *That is why the place was named Beersheba.* In general do not put a comma after an initial *therefore* unless it indicates a conclusion drawn directly from the preceding sentence.
8. If you are unsure about whether a comma is needed, read the sentence out loud a couple of times. Do you need a pause?—put in a comma. No pause—no comma. Example: "Are you going?" "No, I'm not." "You *are* going!" "No I'm not!" The two sentences say something quite different, and in writing it is the comma that marks the difference.
9. Closely related to this is the comma added to prevent an initial misreading of a sentence regardless of whether or not a pause is involved. This comma prevents joining the wrong words together. "Down in the valley below, Bethlehem was glowing in the night." Comma prevents the misreading, "the valley below Bethlehem."
10. *Remember, the purpose of punctuation is not to fulfill a rule but to help the reader,* who cannot hear the natural pauses and the inflection present in speech, put the pauses and inflection in the right place in the sentence. Ask yourself what punctuation will help the lector reproduce the speech correctly. Does clarity call for a pause?—put in a comma. Do you want continuity?—no comma. Is a comma needed to guide the reader in producing the correct intonation? Put one in. Remember the text will often be used for public reading—sometimes unrehearsed.
11. Use a comma whenever necessary to avoid ambiguity. Your goal is always to help the person who is reading aloud, perhaps without practice. (Important enough to say twice.) The purpose of punctuation is to serve the reader, not to serve a rulebook. Grammar is made for man, not man for grammar.
12. Sometimes wording that is clear when readers can see the words on paper may cause momentary confusion for listeners. Listen to the passages being read aloud to try to avoid such situations. Reword the sentence to prevent misunderstanding. Although it is clear in writing that *fir* is a tree or a kind of wood, in listening *fir* might be misunderstood as *fur.* The text must be worded in a way that will minimize that possibility.
13. Words that are appositional are set off by commas. Words that are part of the main term are not.

14. You can understand the principle if you practice reading the difference between "the large, black bird" and "the large blackbird" and "the three wise men" or "the three Wisemen." "Did you see the sun set?" "No, but I saw the sunset."

Apostrophe

Two issues arise with apostrophe.

1) Most style guides still recommend the traditional practice of forming the possessives of biblical and classical names ending in a sibilant sound with an apostrophe only, not with 's—*Jesus'* not *Jesus's.* The first option is pronounced *Jesus.* The second option would be pronounced *Jesusuz.* If you don't want the extra *uz,* don't put the extra *s.* EHV follows the traditional practice.

2) Sometimes plural nouns being used as adjectives are mistaken for possessives. A pastors conference is not a conference belonging to one or more pastors, so no apostrophe is needed. The word *pastors* here functions as an adjective, telling us what kind of conference this is.

In biblical passages, such as those that refer to a launderers or potters field, an advantage of the adjective construction rather than the possessive construction is that it is sometimes impossible to tell whether the possessive should be singular or plural. Even when singular or plural is indicated, the point of the expression often is not possession or ownership of the place but what kind of activity is taking place there. Or the term *Launderers Field* may simply be a place name, in which case it could be capitalized.

2 Kings 18:17 refers to *the water channel from the upper pool, which is on the way to the launderers or wool-cleaners field* (the Hebrew is literally *on highway-of field-of launderer*). The point here is not who owns the field. The launderers field is simply being used as a landmark to help readers identify the location of the water channel. It is possible that one launderer owned the field and worked there by himself, so we could translate *launderer's field*. But in the context, it seems more likely that this is the area of the city where the launderers worked, the launderers' quarter, so to speak. For that reason, EHV went with the descriptive adjective *launderers* rather than with the singular possessive *launderer's*. Either translation is possible. The same situation exists with the potter's field in Matthew 27:7. Interestingly, the UBS Greek text capitalizes the term as a proper name, *Potters Field*, though in English the term *potter's field* has become a stock term and is even used as a generic term for any burial place for the poor.

In such cases, one must decide whether the point is possession or some sort of description. For many years, the baseball stadium in Detroit was named Briggs Stadium, no apostrophe. The issue was not whether Mr. Briggs owned the stadium but that it was named in his honor. St. Johns Church is not a church owned by John, but a church named in his honor, the Church of St. John.

Ram's horn is a special case. There actually is no Hebrew word for *ram* in this expression. The Hebrew is the single word *shofar.* We translated *shofar* as *ram's horn* to distinguish it from the regular Hebrew word for an animal horn, *qeren.* We probably could have (or even should have) translated it *rams horn* since the point is what kind of horn it is, but then many people would have wondered why there was no apostrophe. For simplicity, we choose *ram's horn* as the stock name for this musical instrument. Each horn came from one ram, so we used the singular.

Contractions

Is the use of contractions appropriate in biblical grammar? At the EHV, we get about an equal number of complaints which say that we use too many contractions as those which say that we do not use enough. (Actually, early on, I think we got more complaints about using contractions at all.)

Though subject-verb contractions are not a part of the biblical languages, their use, however, is not less spiritual than avoiding contractions. Their use or non-use depends on the degree of formality of the speech or writing. The Bible has various levels of formality from solemn law codes to everyday conversation.

Biblical speech often is not ordinary conversation but solemn pronouncement of law. Handbooks for legal writers say: "The use of contractions is inappropriate in formal legal writing." And we do not think most Bible readers are ready for "Don't commit adultery."

There are many issues in which translators face this problem of formality v informality, knowing that there is no solution in a given case that will be acceptable to all readers. If Jesus says, "Who are you looking for?", which is the way Americans talk, people will write, "Our Lord would not use bad grammar." If he says. "For whom are you looking?", people will say, "Our Lord was not a stuffed shirt."

There are many areas in which biblical speakers are more formal than American English speakers, such as in the use of deferential titles. It is not our goal to make ancient Judeans sound like Americans, or to make them "say it the way we say it," but to make them sound like Judeans who speak good English.

Bryan Garner is the grammarian whom we use the most in editing the EHV. In his article on contractions in *Modern English Usage,* he says among other things: "Perhaps contractions do not belong in solemn contexts. ... Don't start using contractions at every opportunity. ... It depends on whether the contraction helps or hinders the rhythm with which you want the sentence read. ... You have to go by feel not rule." This last rule is the one we try to follow in the EHV.

This is too complex a situation to address with a simple all-or-nothing rule in either direction. Editors must use judgment in each case.

For example, an "always use contractions rule" does not work because "I won't go" is not completely interchangeable with "I will not go." Contractions common in speech (*I'd've* gone if I were you) do not look good in writing. On the other hand, a "no contractions" rule would make casual, friendly conversation in the Bible sound stuffy.

Semicolons

Be sparing in the use of semi-colons. Though semi-colons occupy a valid niche between comma and period, they tend to strike some readers as archaic, and many older translations tend to overuse them. In general, separate two independent clauses by a period rather than semi-colon unless there is a very close connection.

1. Use a semicolon to stress the immediacy between two independent clauses: "The lion roared; the people ran." Semicolons can be used when presenting a pair of independent

clauses that are 1) closely related in content, and 2) structured in a parallel manner: The rich get richer; the poor get poorer.

2. Semicolons may also be used when commas alone are inadequate to mark boundaries and sort groups: These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; [3]Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; [4]Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.
3. Semicolons are not necessary when the items in a list are on separate lines. Since the line break has already marked the dividing point, a comma or no punctuation is sufficient.

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

Question or exclamation: ? vs !

When interrogative words like *how* and *what* and *who* introduce sentences that are exclamations and wishes, the sentence should be punctuated with ! rather than ?. Another way of saying this is that many words that are sometimes used as interrogatives also function as exclamatory words. Sometimes the only way to tell which punctuation mark to use is from the context of the sentence.

These two sentences have the same form but not the same meaning: "What do you know?" and "What do you know!" (Actually, in conversation the second one is often pronounced, "Well, whadda ya know!" but it cannot be written that way. Actually even the first one can be pronounced "What da ya know?) Only the writer's choice of punctuation and the context help direct the reader to the right inflection of the sentence, and whether the statement should be read as question calling for an answer or as an exclamation.

"What do you know?" is sometimes a question calling for an answer, but it sometimes means the same thing as, "Hi. How ya doing?" and it requires no answer beyond "Not much." "What do you know!" can be an exclamation at a surprising turn of events.

What inflection does the exclamation mark suggest in this sentence: "Really!"
What inflection or tone does the question mark suggest in this sentence: "Really?"
The first expresses surprise; the second a high degree of skepticism.

In English these distinctions of emotion and of certainty or reservation are indicated by patterns of falling or rising tones (by the melody of the sentence).[13] If a teacher says to a student

[13] In some languages, such as Mandarin Chinese, different tones change the meaning of the word. In English tones generally change the mood of the word or the sentence, but not the meaning of words.

about a paper, “It’s good,” and speaks with a level tone, it means the paper actually is good.” If the teacher says, “It’s good” with a rising and falling intonation on the word *good*, it means “It’s good, however …..,” and the listener is left waiting for the next shoe to fall. He realizes that the statement “it’s good” is not complete.

Sentences that have declarative word order can be made into questions by tone. “He gave it to you” can be made into a question by changing the tone. The written sentence, “He gave it to you,” means something different when it is punctuated by ! or ?.

“He gave it to you.” is a matter of fact statement.

“He gave it to you!” expressed surprise. Say this with the right tone.

“He gave it to you?” can be made into several different questions depending on which word is emphasized. “He *gave* it to you?” expressed surprise that you did not have to pay for it.

“He gave it to *you?*” expresses surprise that you were the one he gave it to.

It is extremely difficult to teach the tones of English in writing. For the most part English speakers do not even realize that we use tones, but we do know how to interpret them and use them. Listening to living speakers or to recordings is about the only way to study this. But translators should be aware of the issue and use ! and ? as best they can to express various degrees of certainty or doubt.

Capitalization

Sometimes grammatical conventions change so abruptly that the translator is caught in a whirlpool.

For hundreds of years it was not the custom in English to capitalize pronouns that refer to God. It was not the practice of early English translations including the original King James Version. It also was not the practice of Luther’s German Bible. Though there was a capitalized formal version of the German pronoun “you,” Luther did not use this pronoun (*Sie*) for God. He used the uncapitalized, familiar *du* as his pronoun of choice to refer to God.

During the 19th and 20th centuries this practice of capitalizing pronouns that refer to God became common place, and many people wrongly thought that this was always the practice and that capitalization honored God. More recently, when there was a return to the long-standing practice of not capitalizing such pronouns, this was interpreted by some people as diminishing God’s honor, when, in fact, it was simply a return to the traditional practice, which, by the way, agrees with the practice of the original Hebrew and Greek texts.

> Our basic principle for EHV is: Capitalization of nouns and pronouns that refer to God is not a feature of the original text, and therefore it falls into the category of interpretation rather than translation. Interpretation is more the task of a study Bible, so it is better not to adopt this as a translation principle.
>
> English style, however, requires titles and proper names be capitalized, so our translation capitalizes all titles of God, especially Messianic titles and proper names that occur in prophecies.

These two principles are in tension. To reproduce the Bible literalistically a translator would have to use no capitalization, but English conventions call for the capitalization of proper names

and titles. Our practice is to capitalize only the titles and proper names, but not the common nouns and pronouns that refer to God. "God is holy. God is the Holy One."

Capitalization is not a feature that marks deity versus non-deity. Capitalization distinguishes a title or a proper name from a common noun: the Antichrist or an antichrist (1 Jo 2:18); the Evil One or an evil one; the Church or the church. Capitalization does not indicate deity or reverence: Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, the Great Pumpkin, Satan, the Devil, and I are all capitalized.

Capitalization or non-capitalization may also be used to express differences of emphasis. A writer may 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. But all of these distinctions are foreign to the biblical text, so it is unwise to adopt capitalization as a device for marking Messianic prophecy or for distinguishing direct prophecy from typical prophecy. References to the Messiah are capitalized if they are titles. Otherwise they are not.

SPELLING

Place Names

A couple of years ago we were asked this question: "While reading the Bible and using books like Bible dictionaries, I have noticed that the spelling of people's names and place names is very inconsistent. Is the EHV going to fix this and have a consistent system of spelling?"

The short answer to this question is "No." Here is why.

Sometimes a situation is such a mess that no reasonable, consistent solution is anywhere in sight. An example of such a mess is the spelling of place names and personal names in the English Bible. A tug-of-war is going on between preserving the traditional spellings inherited from the King James Version, which are largely based on the Greek and Latin spellings rather than on the Hebrew text, and the desire to bring the English spelling closer to the original Hebrew or Greek names. All the systems in use, including ours, are riddled with inconsistencies. To compound the problem, there is a lot of inconsistency of spelling within the original biblical text itself. And God has not appointed any "spelling czar" with the authority to decree the correct, authoritative spellings and pronunciations. It is the days of the judges and every editor does what is right in his own eyes.

An example of the chaotic situation is the spelling of the name of the city of Colosse, which received a letter from Paul. On the basis of the Greek text, the best spelling would be Kolossai (though it is also spelling Kolassai and Kolasai in Greek). In the old tradition followed by KJV, the Latinized spelling Colossae was standard. More recently, as Latinized *ae*s were being eliminated from English, the spelling changed to Colosse (NIV 84). Now (NIV 2011) the spelling is being changed back to Colossae. Every editor does what is right in his own eyes.

Although the problem of the spelling of personal and geographic names in the Bible is a nightmare for translators, many users of a translation might never notice the problem, unless they try to look up a name in an atlas or a Bible dictionary, or they read a different translation.

The problem arises because some letters of the Hebrew alphabet (and to a lesser degree, the Greek alphabet) do not have a good correspondence with one specific letter of the English alphabet, so different people transliterate the names differently. A further complication is that

many of the English names have not come directly from Hebrew but via Greek or Latin. Yet another complication is that some names have continued to evolve further as they moved into English.[14]

This problem is not unique to the Hebrew of the Bible but applies also to many other writing systems, for example Arabic and Chinese. Compare *Koran/Quran* and *Beijing/Peking.*

An attempt is underway to get the Hebrew-based names to a more consistent transliteration from the Hebrew. [15] Suggested equivalents are:

כ *kaph=k*

ק *qoph=q*

ח *chet=ch*

צ *tsade=ts*

But *tsade* is often also written as z*,* and *chet* is often written as *h*. *Chet* really needs a special character which is not an English letter—an *h* with a dot under it (ḥ) And this is just a small sample of the problem. There are many other letters that are problematic (*b/v, p/ph/f, t/th, w/v*). Here are some rubrics followed by the EHV to address the situation:

- Some transliterations are so well established that we simply must live with the inaccurate reproduction of the Hebrew. We cannot change the inaccurate *Jerusalem* to the more precise *Yerushalaim*, or *Tyre* to *Tsur,* or *Bethlehem* to *Bet Lechem,* so we preserve traditional spellings like *Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Tyre, Beersheba, Shechem,* and *Hebron*, even though they are not very good transliterations of the Hebrew. Since the main departures from consistent rules for transliteration are found in the names of very well-known places like Jerusalem, which occur very frequently in the Bible, in practice, the occurrence of Bible place names that are poor transliterations of the Hebrew originals may outnumber examples that follow sound rules.
- For less known places we sometimes adopt the newer spellings which attempt to get closer to the Hebrew: *kaph=k* not *c; qoph=q* not *k*; *chet=ch* not *h;* and *tsade=ts* not *z*.
- But for *chet (*or *het or* ḥ*et*) the spelling *ch* is often not a good solution because it may lead to a pronunciation like the *ch* in *church* rather than to a pronunciation more like the German *ach. Chet* really calls for a special sign like an *h* with a dot under it (ḥ), but this is too cumbersome for a translation. (There are some systems of transliteration, which use a lot of diacriticals, which produce a pretty consistent spelling system, but they are too cumbersome to be used in a translation.)
- A similar problem is soft *kaph,* which is also rendered *ch* rather than *k* in many English names. This is a problem because in biblical names *ch* should not be pronounced like the *ch* in *church* but like a hard *h* (hard guttural *xxxhhh* sound). EHV generally uses *k* for soft *kaph* when we want to prevent a pronunciation like *church,* but there are some well-known exceptions where traditional spelling is retained.
- Consonantal *yod* remains *j* not *y* in most cases, but there are some special cases like *Yarkon*, which is a familiar modern place name.

[14] To cite one extreme example, the English name *James* has evolved from a Hebrew original *Ya'aqov,* via the Greek New Testament form *Iakobos*, via the Latin form *Iacomus,* to English *James*. Quite a journey! American Lutheran churches named *St Jacobi* are mostly named after James not Jacob.

[15] A variant of this is trying to get the Biblical names closer to the place names currently used in Israel.

- In some names like *Be'er,* the stop mark indicates that *be'er* is two syllables and warns readers away from the pronunciation *beer* and toward the right pronunciation *be-eer.* Similarly *shaʽal* is read *sha-al* not *shaal.*
- But strongly established traditional pronunciations like Beersheba, Baal, Balaam, and Canaan are retained, without a stop mark. For example, *Baal* could more accurately be spelled and pronounces *Baʽal,* but the pronunciation which sounds like *bail* is too well established to change.
- The stop mark most often represented the Hebrew letter *ayin,* which is a harsh glottal stop. In more precise renderings of Hebrew words, *ayin* is represented by ‘ and *aleph* is represented by ’.

Another problem arises when place names are made up of more than one Hebrew word.

- The word *Beth* (which means *house of*) is written as a separate word in most place names (Beth Shan, Beth Shemesh, etc.), but these same names are hyphenated in some recent translations (Beth-Shemesh).
- But *Bethel, Bethlehem*, and *Bethsaida*, are traditional exceptions to the rule (they are one word—no hyphen).
- *Abel*, *Baal,* and *En* are also usually separate words in city names, but once again there are exceptions.
- The EHV default practice for such names is to write them as two words, no hyphen. (Beth Shemesh means “house of the sun.” so writing it as two words follows the normal English practice: Sun City, Bay City, etc.)
- When two-word names have a definite article preceding the second word, write them as a two-word name, *Beth Hamelek (house of the king)*. It is not necessary to double the first letter of the second noun, but many traditional spellings do so (*Beth Hammelek)*. The EHV does not put a hyphen after the *ha-* except when needed to indicate distinct pronunciation of back-to-back vowels.

Rubrics

A translation needs rubrics for debated spellings like *Beersheba /Beersheva*, *Beth Shean/Beth Sheʽan /Bet Shan*, and *Acco/Akko*, but there is no consistent system in common use. All of the systems are riddled with inconsistencies, so we do not follow any one model woodenly. For better or for worse, EHV uses these names, inconsistent as they are:

Akko not *Acco*
Akkad not *Accad*
Achor not *Akor*
Aijalon not *Ayalon*
Akzib not *Achzib*
Aphek not *Afeq*
Ashkelon not *Ashqelon*
Beersheba not *Beersheva*
Beth Shan not *Beth Shean* or *Beth Sheʽan*
Elat not *Elath* or *Eilat*
Javneh not *Yavneh*
Jericho not Yericho
Joppa not *Yafo* or *Jaffa*
Kabul not *Cabul*
Kinneret not *Chinnereth*
Lo Debar with *b*
Maʽakah not *Maacah*
Meshek not *Meshech*
Machpelah not *Makpelah,*
Mikmash not *Michmash,*
Lachish not *Lakish,*
Yarkon not *Jarkon*
Ramat or *Ramoth* depending on Hebrew
Shittim despite the spelling
Sukkoth in Egypt—*Succoth* in Israel
Taʽanach not *Taanak*

Valley of the Son of Hinnom

- *En Gedi* is two words. but the parallel formation *Endor* is only one word;
- The biblical text itself has many spelling inconsistences, especially the interchange of *i* and *u.* Our footnotes do not indicate all of these.
- The stop mark could also be applied to other combinations of letters. *Keilah* could more accurately be spelled and pronounced *Qeʿeelah*, but the prounciation *Kēlah* (long *i*) is well established.

Many Old Testament geographic places have a different name in New Testament texts. In those cases, use the New Testament name, with a footnote to the Old Testament place name only if necessary.

What a mess! The system is wildly inconsistent, and no solution is in sight. The best we can hope for is to make it as easy as possible for readers to find names in atlases and Bible dictionaries, but these resources too are inconsistent, and some of them offer multiple options for spellings. The best thing readers can do if they don't find what they are looking for is to look up the name online. This will often show the options for spelling.

There are a few bright spots in an otherwise cloudy sky:

- The other common systems in use are less consistent than ours.
- Computers make it much easier to achieve consistency of spelling across the translation.
- English speakers already know that English spelling is a really messed up discipline. The most notorious example is *ghoti,* which is an alternate spelling for "fish": *gh* as in *enough, o* as in *women,* and *ti* as in *nation.* If English spelling as a whole is so messed up, it is no shock if this mess also applies to biblical place names.
- The EHV takes some modest steps toward spelling reform, but it avoids too sharp a break from present practice.

Personal Names

The same spelling chaos exists in personal names, for example, *Melchizedek* but *Adoni-Zedek*—even though it is the same type of formation. This is another example of a translation issue which many readers may never notice, but which requires thousands of decisions for translators.

- The biblical text itself has many spelling inconsistences, especially the interchange of *i* and *u.* Our notes indicate some but not all of these.
- EHV spells "king names," personal names ending in the word *melek* (which means *king*), with a final *k* not a final *ch*: *Abimelek*, *Elimelek*, but it uses *Lamech,* because we preserve traditional spellings of well-known names.
- When a biblical person has two distinct personal names, we preserve distinctions like *Peter/Cephas* and *Jehoiachin/Jeconiah/Coniah*. In general, EHV keeps the distinct names as they appear in the Hebrew or Greek text.
  Alternate names of important figures can be footnoted: If the main text has *Cephas*[a] the footnote reads: [a]That is*, Peter*. If the main text has *Coniah*[b], the footnote reads: [b]Also called

Jehoiachin. This contrasts with the practice of some recent translations, which tend to harmonize the names into one English form.

- Spelling variations may sometimes be harmonized and also may be footnoted, for example: *Tou,*[a] Footnote: [a]Also called *Toi.*
- Minor spelling changes may be harmonized if there seems to be no meaningful distinction.
- The various spellings of *Nebuchadnezzar* can be harmonized to this one spelling.
- The different pre- and post-exilic spellings of the *–yah* names of individuals like *Hezekiah* use only the short form common in English *Hezikiah*, not the long form *Hezkiyahu*.
- Special problem cases are *Joash/Jehoash* & *Joram/Jehoram* because of the contemporary pairs of kings with the same two names in each kingdom (cf. 2 Kg 12). In most cases we use whichever name the Hebrew text has, with a footnote when necessary.
- It seems that the authors of Kings and Chronicles retained whatever spelling of the name was used in their sources, even when this meant calling the same king by different names in the same pericope and even in the same verse. It is most faithful to the text if we respect this decision, or at least indicate it in footnotes. It would be easier for readers if we harmonized the names, but the inspired writers were directed to preserve a variety of names for the same person, and we did not feel that we have the right to overrule them.
- The same name may be spelled differently in one place for example in Ruth 4:20-21 the same man is called *Salmah* and *Salmon*.
- Names like *Joshua/Jesus,* which appear in both the Old and New Testaments and use different Hebrew and Greek versions of the name to refer to two or more different persons, will be harmonized to the most common English name for each person (that is, Old Testament Joshua will be called *Joshua* even when the Greek form of his name (*Jesus*) occurs. Jesus will not be called by the Hebrew form of his name if the text uses the Greek form. New Testament James is *James* not *Jacob* though the Greek form of his name is *Iakobos*. The names of Jesus' ancestors in Matthew 1 will agree with their common Old Testament forms. *Christ* is the rendering for *Christos,* even though it means the same thing as the Hebrew *Messiah.*
- On the *Joshua / Jeshua* alternation, in which the later books of the Old Testament refer to the same high priest as either *Jeshua* or *Joshua,* we preserve this distinction, but Moses' successor is always *Joshua.*

Rubrics

Some other names to use, inconsistent as they may be: *Achan, Achish, Aksah, Arphaxad, Baruch, Caleb, Carmi, Chemosh, Makir, Ma'akah, Menahem, Micah and Mica, Mordecai, Molek, Nakon, Obed Edom, Rekab,*and *Shobak.*

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

A Case study on Spelling: You say *Peniel*. I say *Penuel*

We were asked this question about EHV spelling: "Genesis 32:30-31 refers to a place which some translations call *Peniel* in its first occurrence and *Penuel* in the second occurrence. The EHV calls it *Peniel* in both occurrences. Why?"

This question is an excellent example of how a question that looks very simple at first really is not simple at all. There are a few complications involved in answering this question. (Make that a lot of complications!)

The main Hebrew manuscript that we used to translate the Old Testament calls this place *Peniel* the first time that it occurs (v 30) and *Penuel* the second time (v 31): "Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered." The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip" (ESV). (The name *peniel* means *face of God*.)

The first version of the EHV read: "Jacob named the place Peniel,[1] because he said, 'I have seen God face to face, and my life has been spared.' The sun rose as he crossed over at Peniel, and he was limping because of his thigh." (Note [1]*Peniel* means *face of God.*)

How did we get this translation? A study of a concordance of place names in the Bible showed that some recent translations favored *Peniel* as the place name and used *Penuel* as a man's name. Since many recent Bible atlases could be expected to reflect the spellings of the most popular translations, it seemed that EHV readers would have less trouble consulting Bible atlases if we used the same spelling that would likely appear in recent atlases, so we called the place *Peniel*. It seemed that to avoid confusing readers, we should use just one spelling of the place name. Two different spellings of the same place name in such close proximity would look like a typo to many readers. Since the spelling difference did not have any effect on the meaning, we used just one spelling.

But another, more recent check of atlases shows that our assumption was wrong and that atlases, like translations, are a mixed bag in their spelling of this place. In fact, our cartographer for the EHV Study Bible used the spelling *Penuel* on our map for the patriarchs. So choosing the consistent spelling *Peniel* would not resolve the issue of finding this place in atlases.

(The inconsistent spelling of biblical place names is a very pervasive problem. Maps that we would like to refer to in EHV articles often use a different spelling of a name than the spelling in the EHV text. Do we redraw all the maps, alter all the translations, or do we educate readers to the issue with appropriate footnotes at the right spots in the text? We are inclined toward the third option, because there is no solution in sight on the variety of spelling of place and personal names in the Bible. We also have a discussion of this spelling problem, for which there is no resolution in sight, in our introductory e-book to the EHV and in our FAQ 17.)

Is it possible to figure out how this spelling discrepancy arose in the Hebrew text of Genesis 32?

At first glance this might seem to be a simple copying error, switching a Hebrew *u* for a Hebrew *i*. This variant between the Hebrew letter *yod (i)* and the Hebrew letter *vav (u)* is an extremely common variant in the Hebrew text. At some stages of the Hebrew script, *yod* and *vaw* are virtually indistinguishable. In many cases, with common words, the reader can tell which letter is intended because he or she recognizes the word in context. But in the case of a proper name that occurs only once or rarely in the Bible, in reading handwritten manuscripts it is sometimes impossible to tell which letter was intended. This problem occurs very often in the lists of personal names in Chronicles, and the EHV often notes the variant spellings in the

footnotes. EHV did not, however, footnote every *vaw/yod* variant in Chronicles so as not to bog down the reading of the text too much, but it lists enough examples to illustrate the problem.

But this simple explanation, that this is a copying mistake, is suspect here. Because the two versions of the name stand side-by-side, regardless of which spelling he chose, wouldn't a scribe have written the word the same way both times? If this variant originated as a copying error, it could have occurred only fairly late in the history of the copying of the text (more than a thousand years after the writing of the text) because in the oldest forms of the Hebrew alphabet the two letters *vav* and *yod* look significantly different.

Furthermore, there are other interesting *yod/waw* interchanges in the Pentateuch. The *yod/waw* interchange here in Genesis 32 is parallel to another one in Genesis 4:18 where the variant spellings (*Mehujael/Mehijael*) are right next to each other. The same thing happens with the name *Abigail/Abugail* in 1 Sam 25:14 and 18. Something may lie behind the way these letters were used at the time of the earliest written Hebrew which allowed them to be written interchangeably, and for which the explanation may never be recovered.

(It's worth noting that the third person feminine pronoun in Genesis is often spelled with a *waw* in the middle like the third person masculine pronoun, and yet the Masoretes always pointed it to be pronounced as "*hee*" (הִוא)[16] rather than "*hu*" in those cases in which it clearly refers to a woman. Does this strange situation indicate a spelling variant, a copying variant, or an updating of the grammatical form? It seems that perhaps the third option is most likely.)

In Judges 8:8, 9, 17, the other main story involving this place, *Penuel* is the regular Hebrew spelling of the name. So maybe the first spelling of *Peniel* in Genesis was just a mistake, and we should make them all *Penuel*?

Not so fast. It may be more complicated than that. In the Waltke O'Conner Hebrew syntax book, in paragraph 8.2, it is suggested that a possible explanation of the variant is a survival in Genesis 32 of two of the archaic case endings of old Hebrew: The theory is that the *i* in *Peniel* is accusative plural (the Hebrew word for *face* is plural) and the *u* in *Penuel* is nominative plural. (Or maybe one of them is an old construct ending.) If an archaic case ending was involved, this would help explain the confusion of later copyists, who no longer knew the ancient case endings. (There are some other possible archaic endings in the Pentateuch and Psalms.) But in the grammatical structure of these verses, this argument does not seem particularly convincing.

The new BHQ volume of Genesis provides information about how early versions handle this problem variant: The Old Greek translates the name in both 32:31 and 32:32 as Εἶδος θεοῦ *face of God*. Of the other Greek versions, Aquila also translates the name into Greek, but Symmachus does not. All other references to this place in the Old Greek (Judges 8:8, 9, 17; 1 Kings 12:25) do not translate the term but rather render it as Φανουηλ (*phanouel*). The Targums Jonathan and Neofiti keep the spelling *Peniel* in Genesis 32:31. All the other versions (Samaritan Pentateuch, Vulgate, Syriac, Targum Onqelos) transliterate the occurrence in verse 31 as *Penuel*, evidently assimilating it with the spelling in verse 32. So it appears that most of the early versions want to harmonize the spelling of the two occurrences in these two successive verses, even though the copyists in the Masoretic tradition retained the two distinct spellings in their respective places. (In other words, these ancient versions did the very thing that EHV and NIV did, though they

[16] This occurs very often in Genesis: 2:12; 3:12 & 20; 4:22; 7:2; 12:14, 18 &19; 14:7 & 8; 17:14; 19:20; 20:3 & 5 (2x); 21:22 & 24; 22:20; 23:2, 15 & 19; 24:44; 38:21

harmonized the spelling in the opposite direction). Or (and this seems most likely) the evidence may simply indicate that the translators of the ancient versions were as confused as we are by the whole situation. (A fairly good rule of thumb is that if the ancient versions are confused, our chance of becoming unconfused is not very good.)

Another approach for us would be to go by majority vote. In the Hebrew Old Testament, *Penuel* is the most common spelling. This would suggest changing all the occurrences to *Penuel* as some of the ancient versions did. Though the standard Hebrew text has the two different spellings in the two verses, other ancient versions have the spelling *Penuel* also in the first occurrence.

So what are the possibilities?

1) There may be a copying mistake (penmanship problem) here. But we have already said that this would be a surprising mistake to make with the two words so close to each other. But anyone who has been an editor knows that astounding mistakes happen, and typos sometime remain uncorrected for centuries. The Masoretes, in fact, deliberately did not correct obvious mistakes in the Hebrew text but only called attention to them in marginal notes.
2) The earliest copyists of Genesis, or perhaps the author of Genesis 32, had reason to spell the name two different ways. The most likely reason for this is that the spelling *Peniel* is intended to reflect the name and pronunciation of Jacob's time and the spelling *Penuel* is intended to reflect the name and pronunciation at Moses' time or a copyist's time. There are in fact some other updatings of place names in Genesis.

It seems the best solution for the EHV in Genesis 32 is to spell the name *Peniel* the first time it occurs and to spell it *Penuel* the second time and to add this footnote: "*Penuel* is an alternate spelling of *Peniel*," and to offer no explanation since any explanation would be a guess.

Oh, one more complication. In Genesis 32 the Hebrew verse numbers do not match the English verse numbers, so if you want to look this up in the Hebrew text, you have to look at Genesis 32:31-32, as you may have noticed in the textual evidence above.

The lessons to be drawn: Bible translation is tremendously complicated. A single letter can generate a lot of data and a lot of theories. There are features of the Hebrew text for which we do not have a clear explanation and which seemingly already stumped the ancient translators. However, these difficulties do not prevent us from conveying the meaning of the Hebrew text. The lesson to be learned from Jacob's encounter with the LORD is the same whether the place is called Peniel or Penuel or both.

English Spelling

If writing is a tool to help readers recall speech, the most sensible form of writing/spelling is a form of alphabetic writing which has a close one-to-one match between the written letters and the sounds of the speech. As the pronunciation of words changes, the spelling should change to reflect the change of the sound.Unfortunately such phonetic spelling is rare, and English is not a good place to find it.

Bad Alphabet Match

In English spelling, the problem started when the primitive ancestor of English first became a written language around the 7th century. Instead of inventing an alphabet that matched the sounds of English, the missionaries who shaped the written language borrowed the Latin alphabet and tried to make it fit English. As we saw earlier in the case of the Hebrew/English alphabet matchup, the matchup of the Latin alphabet with the sounds of proto-English was not that great.[17] English had sounds which could not be represented by the letters of the Latin alphabet, most notoriously the kind of *th* in words like *the, this,* and *that,* or the hack in a back of the throat like the one in the German *ach*! For a while, the proto-spellers of English tried to solve the problem by inserting runes (þ, ð) into the English alphabet as additional letters of the alphabet to be used to represent these sounds, but eventually they settled for using the combination *th* to represent two different kinds of *th* (*thin* and *thick*, *this* and *that*). They also used various combinations of *g, c*, and *h* to represent other native English sounds. They eventually settled on *th* and *gh* as their workhorses. In the course of this painful process some of the spellings that the word *thought* has gone through include: *þoht*, *ðoght, thowgth, thouch, thotht, thoughte,* and *thowcht.* Typically, about the time that the authorities figure out how to spell a sound, the sound becomes obsolete in the language and disappears (see the next paragraph).[18] This problem could be fixed by having a better alphabet.[19]

Changing Pronunciation

Another problem that bedevils spelling is that letters survive in words beyond their useful lifetime. Historic, obsolete spellings abound in English (a bad habit we learned from the French). The word *knight,* in which all the letters were once pronounced (compare the German *Knecht*),

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[17] Depending on the dialect, modern English has somewhere between 24 to 27 separate consonant sounds and 13 to 20 vowels. However, there are only 26 letters in the modern English alphabet, so there cannot be a one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds. By another count English has only 26 letters for 44 sounds, but it has 205 spellings for those 44 sounds, instead of just 44.

[18] A nightmare in the opposite direction is that there are a six to ten different ways of pronouncing *-ough* as illustrated by *dough, rough, cough, bough, through,* and *thought,* which should be spelled more like *doe, ruf, cawf, ba'o, thru,* and *thawt.*

We can't even begin to talk about the fall-out of the Great Vowel Shift in which English brexited from the continental vowel system. Unfortunately the spelling of vowels did not shift to keep up with shifting pronunciation. Why do the words *weak, great, bread, wear,* and *heart* not sound alike?

English also has a sort-of-a-vowel grunt called the schwa which is used in unaccented syllables. This grunt is actually the most common vowel in English. Since no one could decide what vowel to use to represent schwa, we decided that the only fair thing to do was to use them all (a, e, i, o, u): *a* as in *alone*, *e* in *system*, *i* in *easily*, *o* in *gallop*, and u in *circus*. Can we get a *y* in there? Oh wait a minute! That's not a vowel. (The phonetic symbol ə is used to represent this sound. Or less scientifically you can write it *uh*.)

This is perhaps the place to mention that some grammarians think the Great Vowel Shift is a myth. One finds wildly different statements about this and other facets of the history of grammar, so one does not know what to believe. Nevertheless, I am confident that this e-book will meet the accepted standard of reliability for grammar books— at least 60% of the statements about grammar that we espouse in this book are likely to be truth not myth.

[19] One other letter that they did invent was *w*. They took two *u*'s (which was written as *v* at that time) and put two *vv* together to invent a *double-u*.

now should be spelled *nite. Night* should be spelled the same way.[20] An argument for preserving these old, obsolete spellings is that this practice better shows the word's origin (otherwise how would a reader know that the English *knight* is the same word as the German *Knecht*?), but most readers are more interested in how to say a word than they are in the word's pedigree. Another reason for keeping obsolete spellings is that the practice enabled publishers to sell more spelling books. This value, of course, expired when the invention of the spellchecker made the study of spelling obsolete. This problem could be fixed by updating spellings before the situation got out of hand.

But the opposite vice also happens. Self-appointed authorities added superfluous letters to established, perfectly fine English spellings in order to bring the spelling closer to the real or imaginary Latin origins of the words or worse yet to make the spelling look more French. For example, the fine English spelling *det* or *dette* was changed to *debt* to link it to the Latin *debitum*); *dout* became *doubt* to link it to Latin *dubitare*. In the ultimate type of absurdity, *iland* became *island* to connect it to the Latin *insula*, even though *iland* had never been a Latin word.

People have been aware of the absurdity of this strange debacle in English spelling at least since the days of Shakespeare, who satirized it in his play *Love's Labour's Lost (Act V, Scene 1)*, in which the character Holofernes insists that pronunciation of words should change to match spelling, rather than changing spelling to match pronunciation. Holofernes insists that everyone should pronounce the unhistorical *b* in words like *doubt* and *debt*. "I abhor…such rackers of orthography, as to speak *dout*, when he should say *doubt*; *det*, when he should pronounce *debt*,—d-e-b-t, not d-e-t. He clepeth a *calf, cauf; half*, *hauf*; *neighbour* vocatur *nebor*; *neigh* abbreviated *ne*. This is *abhominable*, which he would call *abominable*. It insinuateth me of insanie: anne intelligis, domine? to make frantic, lunatic."

The Normans, who were Norwegians disguised as French nobles in order to invade England, had already complicated things when they imposed themselves and their French influences on England and on the English language in the 11th century. Because of them, the spelling of Romance words in English depends on whether the word came to English directly from Latin or from the degenerate form of Latin called French.[21]

Ossifying Bad Spelling

The advent of printing in the 1400s had the beneficial effect of stabilizing bad spelling. Now a printer could broadcast more examples of senseless spelling in a week than a scribe could do in a lifetime.

Through the last five centuries, there has been a steady stream of attempts at spelling reform, but they are doomed to failure because half the people hate them for changing spelling too much and the other half of the people hate them for changing it too little.

Sensible spelling reform made some giant steps backwards in the 1700s with the work of Samuel Johnson, who was one of the more successful Latinizers and antiquarians who wanted to

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[20] The permission which English readers have to skip useless consonants also applies to useless vowels. Don't waste your breath on the second *a* in *caramel*, the first e in *different*, the second *o* in chocolate. They are as useless as the deceased *m* in *pungkun pie.* No wonder *separate* has three syllables as a verb, but only two as an adjective.

[21] The only useful contribution from French to American English is the term *French fries*, which is useful for distinguishing them from the less tasty American fries.

carry English back to purer roots. He perhaps deserves more credit than any other man for creating and codifying the mess that is English spelling.[22] He also established the now standard grammarian's practices of basing rules on personal whim rather than on data and resorting to wit when one's grammatical claims are short of objective fact.

Sensible spelling reform took its most notable baby-step forward beginning in 1806 when Noah Webster published his *Compendious Dictionary of the English Language.* Many of the spellings he used, such as *color* (not *colour*) and *center* (not *centre*), would become hallmarks of American English. In 1828 he published *An American Dictionary of the English Language.* It brought some unity and modest improvement to American spelling but at the cost of solidifying the split between American and British spelling. (Perhaps this was his intention all along since he was a fervent patriot.) However, Webster's attempt to bring about a thorough reform that would move American English toward true phonetic spelling was a colossal failure—serving as an object lesson to all would-be Websters. Perhaps this failure was just as well, since real reform would have hurt sales of Webster's dictionaries and blue spelling books.

Today there is no Webster on the scene. Would-be spelling czars have no authority except in their self-defined mini-kingdoms. Calling your dictionary a *Webster's Dictionary* does not make you Noah Webster. Today anybody can call their dictionary a *Webster's* since the term has been public domain since 1834. I seriously considered calling this book *Webster's Biblical Grammar*, but *Brug's Biblical Grammar* seemed more catchy. Merriam, of course, loves to remind people that they are the real heirs of Webster, but no one is listening.

No grammar or spelling book can ever be more than a snapshot of a part of a moving stream. Spelling, like language and life, is always in a state of flux with co-existing forms side by side as old forms gradually fade and new ones grow. Many of the spelling rules confidently stated in authoritative tomes are in fact myths. Now with the appearance of *ngrams* and other computer checks, the alleged rules can be checked and debunked and/or enforced more vigorously.

An example of a spelling myth rebutted by computers is reflected in the EHV's practice of spelling *worshipped* with the double "p." Many dictionaries and authorities confidently state that *worshiped* is the American spelling and *worshipped* is the British spelling, but a computer survey shows that *pp* is the standard American and British usage by a ratio of 3:1. Garner comments that some American dictionaries state a preference for *worshiped* with one "p," but this spelling has never attained a predominance in print. Double "pp" has steadily outranked single "p" in America, and in Britain there has been no competition at all. It's double "p" consistently.

Just as Latinists created fake spellings by inserting extra letters into English words, popular electronic spell and grammar checkers can temporarily establish their mistakes as correct spellings and rules, but the never-stopping current of living languages will fix them in time. The correct term for the owner of an establishment that serves food is a *restaurateur* but the confining boundaries of dictionaries cannot keep these individuals from becoming *restauranteurs.*

[22] Anyone who wants to understand how dictionaries are made should read the wordy but witty preface to Johnson's dictionary. It is posted on our WP website. But be warned that this is much like visiting a sausage factory before shopping for hot dogs. Any illusion about how authoritative dictionaries really are is soon dispelled by Johnson himself.

The ever chaotic state of grammar and spelling can be frustrating, but it is just one small reminder of the important theological truth behind the Babel Principle of Grammar. Mankind is always trying to produce its one empire, its one language, but no matter how hard people tug and pull together, the Babel Principle is always pulling them apart. Mankind cannot even produce a unified spelling system for one language, let alone one language for the world. It is a great comfort that the spelling and grammar in our Bibles is never settled, never finished, always restless. The only spelling and grammar that are settled are the spelling and grammar of dead languages. The spelling and grammar of the biblical languages was never settled during the 1500 years the Bible was being written. Biblical language is not settled today, and it never will be, as long as the Bible is alive in the life of the peoples. Language flows with the flow of history. And as the letters and sounds and spelling swirl and change, the meaning remains the same. The essence of the Word is the divinely intended meaning that stays the same in spite of the constant change of form. The form, in fact, must change to keep the meaning the same.

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

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

The Social Level and the Formality of Language

A secondary issue concerning grammatical usage is whether some words and constructions that are common in speech are inappropriate to formal writing. What is important here is to define the term "formal writing." The Bible is in some sense a formal document, but the speech recorded in the Bible is not always formal speech. It may at times be quite informal, even rough. For that reason the EHV standards for level of language are:

> Translators should not specify one level of language and usage 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 goal is that the level of formality of the translation should be similar to the level of formality of the original. In many Bible passages the original language was neither "common" nor "contemporary" nor "refined." If the word in the original is uncommon, archaic, or informal, the translation should try to reflect that.
>
> The goal of a translator is not so much to make Judeans sound like 21st century Americans but to make them sound like Judeans who speak good English. Consider the example of the gospels which maintain a Hebraic tone in much of the speech which they record in Greek.

The tranlator's goal is not always to say it "the way we would say it" but to make Judeans speak in a way we can understand.

Here is a representative sample of issues of formality:

- In the Hebrew culture, lower status people often addressed higher status people by their title rather than by a pronoun or their name. Speaking to the king, even nobles did not say, "I thank you," but "I thank the king" or "I thank my lord." In social or political settings people address superiors as "father," equals as "brother," and inferiors as "sons." The level of social formality or deference appropriate for their culture should not be removed from the text.
- When Jesus calls his mother "woman" or "lady, he is not being formal or distant. He is teaching her that in her relationship with him as her Savior, her relationship is not that of mother to son but of sinner to Savior.
- Sometimes the standard of politeness is different in the two cultures. *Me and you* is perfectly fine in Hebrew, but *you and me* is more polite in English. To avoid the impression of grammatical error, the EHV usually follows the proper English order, unless it seems that there is some special significance to the Hebrew order.
- If a repetitious style or use of broken constructions are part of the author's literary style, the EHV tries to retain them. Breaks in construction may be marked by a —.
- Except in poetry, for the most part, EHV follows normal English word order: subject, verb, object, even if the Hebrew or Greek has fronted the object for emphasis. In prose, we use fronting of emphatic words sparingly, and only if it sounds normal in English. Emphatic fronting is common in biblical narrative, and EHV translators frequently retained it, but reviewers of the EHV were in favor of using fronting less frequently than the Hebrew does.
- There are other ways to emphasize direct objects besides fronting, such as switching the construction from active to passive, which fronts the object as the subject. (Much gold they brought > Much gold was brought.) Hebrew frequently uses third person plural active verbs as a substitute for the passive. In such cases using the English passive may catch the flavor of the text best. (One thousand tons of gold they brought=One thousand tons of gold were brought.)
- Sometimes Hebrew verbs that can be used without specifying a direct object sound better in English when a direct object is supplied: *they came and crossed > they came and crossed the river*.
- In general, we prefer the bare vocative in normal prose, rather than vocative with "O" except when "O" is in the original text (See Matthew 15:28; 17:17 in Greek). Expressions like "O God" or "O Lord" may be retained in formal address, prayer, and poetry. The reviewers of Psalms have expressed a preference for *O LORD* in poetry. Go by what sounds and feels right. Sometimes the choice depends on the location of the vocative in the sentence.

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

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

Test Case on Slang

In Isaiah 55:1 the EHV says, "Hey, all of you who are thirsty, come to the water." Many other translations say, "Come, all of you who are thirsty, come to the water." Isn't "hey" too slangy? What is wrong with "Come"?

Here is the full EHV translation with its footnote:

"*Hey*,[1] all of you who are thirsty, *come* to the water,
even if you have no money!
Come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

Footnote: [1]The English word *hey* expresses the same urgency as the Hebrew word *hoi*. It is the cry of the street vendor who is eager to sell his wares.

The first Hebrew word in Isaiah 55 is not the Hebrew word for "come" which is used three times later in the verse. The Hebrew word here is *hoi,* which is not a verb but an exclamation. It even sounds like the English exclamation *hey*. So with its rendering *hey* the EHV is following a literal understanding of the Hebrew word *hoi,* and it is differentiating it from the three instances of *come* that follow later in the verse.

The Hebrew word *hoi* is often used in contexts of sorrow or grief (though the proper word for that is often *oi*), but here *hoi* is simply trying to get attention.

The English word *hey* serves the same set of functions as *hoi*: to attract attention, to express surprise, interest, or annoyance, or to express agreement. It covers a wide range of moods: "Hey, what's going on? Hey, what's up? Hey, that's great! Hey, how are you doing? Hey, look at me now." All these have their own shade of meaning, often depending on the tone of voice. *Hey* is also regaining its old use as a synonym of *hello,* a usage which occurs across the Germanic languages. Here we are interested only in the first use of *hey*, to gain attention.

The imagery of the text is that of a street vendor, urging the crowd to buy his wares. Though we did not have this example in mind when we translated Isaiah, a recent visit to Miller Park in Milwaukee, demonstrated that *hey* is a good choice here. The vendors were shouting, "Hey, cotton candy," "Hey, ice cold beer here," "Hey, lemonade," or whatever cry was appropriate to their wares. So it seems that *hey* catches the right tone here—the urgency of a vendor. The reason that we did not follow the example of those translations that ignore the difference between *hey* and *come* is that removing the word *hey* diminishes the imagery and the urgency of the text. We found only one other English translation that used the translation *hey* (the NET), but several British translations use the interjection *ho,* a Britishism that would not work here.

In short, the reason that the EHV uses *hey* is to preserve the imagery of a vendor's cry. An important goal of EHV is to reflect not only the meaning but also the tone of the text. The tone of this text is not the polite address of a student to a teacher ("Excuse me, Miss Smith," rather than "Hey, Miss Smith") but the aggressive shouting of a vendor.

In every image we have to ask what is the point of comparison. The two imagery words in our text *hey* and *buy* both make the same point: nothing is more important than obtaining

salvation. Perhaps the word *buy* also carries some of the connotation of the colloquial English "Hey, I'll buy that," which means "I agree with that."

Sex

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

Our principle is that the level of bluntness should try to match the level of bluntness of the text.

Poetry

Poetry should look and sound like poetry. Unusual and emphatic word order may be retained to some degree, as it is in our hymns. When translating poetry, we pay attention to rhythm and to balance of the length of lines, especially for musical performance.

- Hebrew poetry often uses a technique called gapping in which a key element of a sentence, such as the main verb, occurs in only one of the two parallel lines. In such cases it may be necessary to supply the missing element in the English translation of the second line, either for clarity or to make poetic lines of relatively equal length. An extreme example is when the negative *not* occurs in only one of the two parallel lines but applies to both.
- If the second line in synonymous parallelism is an incomplete echo of the first line, it may nevertheless be separated from the first line by a comma in order to mark the poetic structure and to assist in the reading.
- Poetic punctuation is intended to be a guide to poetic reading and singing, so it does not always follow grammatical necessity but indicates where the poetic pauses are. (The same is also true in long prose sentences). Guiding the reader takes priority over mechanical rules about the type of clauses being linked.
- Poetry may be formatted as poetry. If two lines are parallel, they should have the same left margin. If the second line of the verse is simply a run-on of the verse, it should be indented one tab = two spaces on the ruler. These should be set by a tab not by spaces.

  God, we have heard with our ears.
  Our fathers have told us the work you worked
      in their days, in days long ago.

  Lines of poetry that are subordinate to a preceding line may be indented by tab or kept flush left, depending on the structure of the poem.
  Poetic formatting is not part of the Hebrew text, but it is popular with English readers because it follows the conventions of English poetry.
- Poetic devices such as emphatic word order or chiasm can sometimes be retained since unusual word order is common also in English hymns and poetry, but use this cautiously.

- Rare words will be used more commonly in poetry, since Hebrew poetry frequently uses rare or unusual words to create the poetic parallelism, just as English poetry uses rare word to create rhyme (or is it rime?). In parallelism we use two different words in English if there are two different words in Hebrew.
- To preserve parallelism, clauses that seem like dependent clauses in English may be formatted and punctuated as independent sentences. For example, an independent sentence may start with *because* or *for.*

CONCLUSIONS

A communicator's degree of freedom depends in part on whether one is acting as an author or an editor. Authors can shape their message and style to their audience's preferences and biases as long as they do not compromise their message. Translators have much less freedom because their duty is to try to convey not only the message, but also the style and emotional impact of the document which they are translating, as best they can. This is even more true when the author whose work they are translating is the Holy Spirit. We have no right to "improve" God's message but must convey its meaning and emotional impact as best we can. This is true whether the message and language are "in season or out of season."

As long as our language and our audiences have such marvelous diversity and complexity, authors and editors who are writing for a diverse set of readers or hearers will often find themselves between a rock and a hard place. They cannot accommodate the preferred style of all of the members of their diverse audience. What satisfies one reader will dissatisfy another.

Things that they can do which will help bridge the divide are: listening to many speakers of various levels of English, reading a lot of good literature, consulting the most reliable handbooks, knowing their audience, finding a balanced position between descriptive and prescriptive approaches, and accepting the fact that a communicator can't please everyone all the time, but that they have to do the best they can.

But these dilemmas do not discourage them because they know that there is one solution to all these dilemmas: a combination of study, patience, and cooperation. One of the great blessings of a project like the EHV (maybe as great or greater than the end product) is that it prompts Bible readers and translators to a more careful study of the original text and to a more careful study of the principles and practices of Bible translation. People who have become more aware of the complexity of the problems of translation will be less inclined to think that there is one ideal solution to a problem or that their preferences are the "correct" solution. People who have become more aware of the tangled history of the English language will be less inclined to think that there is always one ideal solution to a problem or that their preferences are the "correct" solutions.

In one sense the study of English grammar and usage is an exercise in frustration. Every perceptive grammarian or editor relives the experience of Solomon, "With much wisdom comes much grief. The more knowledge, the more pain! There is no end of making many books, and much study wears out the body."[23] When Solomon became a thoughtful person who weighed events carefully, he came to a deeper understanding of life and he saw the futility of everything under the sun more clearly than he did when he had been a superficial seeker of pleasure. He

[23] Ecclesiastes 1:18 and 12:12

learned to accept the things he could not fix and to enjoy the blessings that still remained. Every perceptive grammarian or editor learns the same lesson.

Because language provides a "slice of life" in a sinful world, the study of language can be a source of theological insight. It provides one example of the universal lesson about life: God has given us great gifts; we make a mess of them; they are still great gifts. What is true of marriage and government and a myriad of other gifts of God is true also of language. Of all of the earthly gifts that God has given us, none is greater than the gift of language—the ability to communicate with God and with each other in such a marvelous way. Because of our sin God has burdened the gift with chastening judgments (compare Genesis 3:16-19 and Genesis 11:7-9). The currents of history batter language: sounds change and decay; invasions jumble languages; new experiences create new words; old words are applied to new objects. Arrogant efforts to decree linguistic improvement cause more problems than they solve. Yet though it all, after three thousand years, David still can communicate to us the deepest sorrow over sin and the greatest joy of forgiveness, and we can play part, however small, of carrying this message across the centuries and across the miles and across oceans and mountains and hostile borders until the message leads another troubled soul to peace with God and to the doors of heaven. And if, as a result of our efforts, the message reaches just one soul in need that would be reward enough.

Appendices

1) A New Resource for Translation: *Garner's Modern English Usage*

This reviews an important new grammatical resource that we used extensively in preparing the EHV.

One of the practical problems in translation, on the one hand, is avoiding constructions that will sound old-fashioned and stuffy to some readers, and, on the other hand, avoiding constructions that will sound like bad grammar to some readers. In a sea of grammatical change, how does one objectively determine what the current standards are for editing standard contemporary prose?

There is now a valuable resource to address this issue for the EHV. *Garner's Modern English Usage* has proved to be useful for understanding which constructions, phrases, and words (including spellings) are most common and acceptable today. Our interest started with an article about this new resource on modern English usage. Here's a link to the article for aficionados of good English usage: http://www.businessinsider.com/bryan-garner-interview-english-usage-google-ngrams-big-data-2016-4

Below are a few edited excerpts from that article about the author, Bryan A. Garner:

> The 57-year-old Texan has written 25 books, many of them award-winning, and he's the editor-in-chief of *Black's Law Dictionary*, said to be the most widely cited law book on the planet. In his new book, *Garner's Modern English Usage* (Oxford), Garner has made extensive use of so-called *big data* to write more precisely and more objectively about English usage than anyone ever has done before. Google gave him license to delve into its *Google Books Ngram Viewer*, which displays graphs showing how words have occurred in print over a number of centuries.
>
> In many ways, books about word usage have always been based on a good deal of guesswork. That's why Garner calls the use of ngrams "absolutely revolutionary" in the field of usage lexicography.

Here's a little bit of what Garner had to say in the interview:

> The biggest change is the level of empiricism (objectivity) underlying all the judgments. I made extensive use of corpus linguistics, and especially of *Google Books* and the ngrams, to assess the judgments that I've made in previous editions, and it was a most enlightening process. I've added almost 2,500 usage ratios of the most current available information about how many times one form — the standard form, let's say — would appear in relation to a variant form. That's enormously useful information for the connoisseur. But even for a less serious aficionado, those ratios can be extremely interesting.…
>
> If you want to know how often, for example, "between you and I" occurs in comparison with "between you and me" in print sources or current books, that information is now available to us, whereas previous lexicographers and usage writers simply had to guess. There's a lot of this kind of empirical evidence spread throughout the book, and in some cases my judgments about terms changed. I've added about a thousand new entries, a lot of them for connoisseurs — plural forms, some arcane plurals that weren't in the book before. I've tried to make the book the most comprehensive treatment of English usage ever published. That was the goal anyway.…
>
> Once the ngrams became available, it took me a little time to start playing with ngrams and realize this is absolutely revolutionary in the field of lexicography. The moment I played with a couple of ngrams, I realized this fundamentally changes the nature of usage lexicography. For a long time, some descriptive linguists have complained that usage books with a prescriptive bent

are written by people who just sit back and say, “I like this better than I like that. “I don’t think that’s ever been so, because the best usage books, even prescriptive ones, have been based on lifetimes of study — when you consider people like H.W. Fowler and Wilson Follet and Theodore Bernstein and others.

But still, they had to guess. Even the editors of the *Oxford English Dictionary* had to guess based on the few citation slips in front of them. But now we can apply *big data* to English usage and find out what usage was predominant until what year.

Other related resources in the Wartburg Project Online Library

“Eleven Weirdly Spelled Words—And How They Got That Way.” A quick explanation of how English spelling became such a mess. 3 p

“A History of English Spelling.” This exposé of the scandal of English spelling is written from a British point of view. It assigns the greatest amount of blame for this debacle to Samuel Johnson but also is generous at spreading the blame around. 6 p

Samuel Johnson, “Preface to the Dictionary.” Long, lively, witty, this is one of the best primary resources for understanding why English spelling is such a mess. 17 p