

EVALUATING BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Alle Schrift von Gott eingegeben.



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Introduction

I sincerely thank the Translation Evaluation Committee (TEC) for asking me to write an essay with my thoughts on this important issue. Though I have not been asked to present this essay at the Symposium, it is a privilege to serve in this way. Most pastors probably do not have access to many of the materials that support this discussion, so I've made an effort to include many web links in this essay so that the average pastor can do further research into many points. As with my presentations in the Michigan District, I'd like to provide the reader with information to make a more informed decision about Bible translations today. I pray that God will bless this effort of sharing information that I believe will be helpful. I am thankful that we all agree that the Bible is God's verbally inspired, inerrant Word.

Friends have described how I arrived in this position as a "journey." My Savior has certainly guided this journey (Rom 8:28). May we follow his Word. About a dozen years ago, I was working pretty hard evaluating Bible translations. It had been a private interest for years. The reason for the intensive work was that I'd been asked to write a book on the Bible in the *People's Bible Teachings* series (NPH). Some fairly clear opinions formed.

I've continued evaluating translations since then. Questions about Bible translations provided more opportunity to evaluate. When it became clear that the NIV Committee on Bible Translation (CBT) was going to revise the NIV, I was aware of the controversies surrounding the NIV and the TNIV (see timeline below). It was clear that the plan was to merge the 1984 NIV and the TNIV. Concerned that it was going to be strongly in the direction of the TNIV, I suggested to President Schroeder and others that a committee be formed in WELS to evaluate Bible translations.

The debate about "gender inclusive" translation is neither simple nor new. A good historian would be able to write a helpful book on the trend over the past few decades and the forces applying pressure (egalitarians and complementarians included). Until 2010, WELS was largely isolated from the controversy. But, much has been happening. Let's briefly consider a little of the history outside of WELS, since most of us are likely aware of what happened within WELS. This little timeline focuses on some of the history and the concerns surrounding the revision of the NIV. (You may click on the links to read the materials mentioned - online. This will greatly increase understanding of the issues too.)

Historical Timeline

- 1978 NIV complete Bible published.
- 1984 NIV revised.
- 1992 NIV Committee on Bible translation begins work on an "inclusive-language" NIV.
- 1995 NIV Inclusive Language edition published in Great Britain (also 1996).
- 1997 March 29, World magazine article, "*The Stealth Bible*" (<http://www.worldmag.com/articles/229>) reports that the NIV is "quietly going 'gender-neutral'" NIV CBT member Larry Walker quoted as saying it was "consensus" on the CBT to have inclusive NIV "take the place of the other" NIV. (See page 35 of "*Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy*" cited in the footnote below.)¹
- 1997 "*The Stealth Bible*" article, mentioned above, prompts an outcry among Evangelicals, and many questions. For some examples of resources in understanding why

¹ For a more complete timeline see: "*The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy: Muting the Masculinity of God's Words*" by Poythress/Grudem. <http://www.cbmw.org/Online-Books/The-Gender-Neutral-Bible-Controversy/The-Gender-Neutral-Bible-Controversy>

Evangelical Christians have opposed gender-neutral translations visit this site: <http://www.cbmw.org/Gender-Neutral-Bible-Resources>.

- 1997 The International Bible Society announces that it had abandoned inclusive language plans.
- 1997 Evangelicals meet in Colorado Springs and agree on some guidelines for translating the Bible, in an attempt to guard against some of the negative effects of “gender-neutral” translation. You may see these guidelines at this site: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/csguidelines.html>.
- 1997 September 1, 1997 article in Christianity Today, entitled, “*Gender: Biblical Feminists Press for Gender-Inclusive NIV*” reports how Catherine Clark Kroeger, founder of Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) was involved in applying this pressure and was promoting the NIVI. Kroeger was prominently mentioned in Prof. Panning’s WLQ article “*Authentein: A word study*.” Available online here: <http://www.wlssays.net/node/1648>. When reporting Kroeger’s death in February, 2011, Christianity Today summarized: “CBE advocates that women may serve as pastors, teachers, and leaders of churches.” There was pressure coming from both egalitarians and complementarians.
- 1998 In February, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod’s CTCR publishes a study called “*Biblical Revelation and Inclusive Language*.” This 39 page document may be found here: www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcsm&id=314.
- 1998 D. A. Carson publishes, “*The Inclusive Language Debate: A Plea for Realism*.” For balance on Carson’s views, see this free book: <http://www.cbmw.org/Online-Books/The-Gender-Neutral-Bible-Controversy/The-Gender-Neutral-Bible-Controversy> This helpful book is practically essential for fairly understanding this controversy and discussion. It is the best source, far superior to Ryken, for representing the view that opposes radical gender neutral changes.
- 1999 The International Bible Society encourages the NIV Committee on Bible Translation (CBT) to continue its work. June 5, World Magazine cover story: “*There They Go Again*.”
- 2000 Danker’s personal revision of Bauer (BDAG) is published, with inclusive-language suggested. Frederick Danker is the Christ Seminary-Seminex Professor Emeritus of New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago. A proud Seminex liberal, Danker worked alone on the revision. There was a definite shift in theology from William Arndt (old LCMS) to Danker (ELCA). For this reason, we need to be more careful with BDAG. In the area of gender language, Danker is progressive/liberal, so many of his comments must be weighed with that in mind. For some help on evaluating BDAG see: http://www.cbmw.org/images/articles_pdf/poythress_ern/poythress_jets46.4.pdf
- 2002 *Today’s New International Version* (TNIV) – New Testament published.
- 2002 May 28 - 110 Evangelical leaders sign a “Statement of Concern” opposing the TNIV. See: http://www.cbmw.org/images/jbmw_pdf/7_2/christian_leaders.pdf or <http://www.bible-researcher.com/tniv2.html>. For a summary of the concerns, see: <http://www.cbmw.org/Journal/Vol-7-No-2/A-Brief-Summary-of-Concerns-About-the-TNIV>. Also: http://www.cbmw.org/images/jbmw_pdf/7_2/scholars_statement.pdf
- 2003 In September, the LCMS – CTCR answers the LCMS Commission on Worship request for an evaluation of Bible translations with this simple statement: “*On theological and linguistic grounds, the English Standard Version, the New American Standard Version, and the New King James Version are preferable to the New International Version. On text-critical grounds, the English Standard Version and the New American Standard Version are preferable to the New King James Version. The CTCR elects to leave “readability” questions to the Commission on Worship. In principle, the CTCR declines to*

endorse officially any English translation of the Bible. Adopted. Commission on Theology and Church Relations, Committee II September 15, 2003.” The LCMS hymnal and CPH now use the ESV. A rather helpful comparison of Bible translations produced by the LCMS may be found at: <http://www.cph.org/pdf/esv/011946study.pdf>

2005 **Today's New International Version** (TNIV) - complete Bible published.

2005 The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) pass resolutions opposing TNIV and other inclusive language translations. Read the SBC resolution here: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/tniv4.html>. Read the PCA resolution here: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/tniv5.html>.

2009 July - The NIV's publisher gets a new name. International Bible Society (IBS) and Send the Light (STL) become "Biblica." See news article here: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/ibs-stl-changes-name-to-biblica-39707/>. Biblica announces that the 1984 NIV and TNIV will both be phased out in favor of a newly revised "NIV." Biblica.com press release: "As we stated at the NIV update announcement in September 2009, we will not be releasing any new products in either the 1984 or TNIV texts after the updated NIV has been published... The 2011 update of the NIV will be called, simply, the NIV."

2010 Nov 1 – The NIV revision is posted online. Evaluations begin. Biblegateway.com switches to revised 2010 NIV, and removes NIV 1984. After many complaints, NIV 1984 is returned to the site, for now. No one knows for how long NIV'84 will be available on this site. Zondervan owns biblegateway.com.

2010 December – The digital version of NIV 2011 is released without fanfare. Many customers buy it without realizing that it is the revised version, including some of our own members. Some buy it to evaluate.

2011 March – **NIV ©2011** published/released in book form. NIV 1984 is no longer published.

2011 June - The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) rejects the NIV 2011. You may read the resolution here: <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1218>

2011 Summer: The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) completes a thorough evaluation of NIV 2011, available here: <http://www.cbmw.org/Resources/Articles/An-Evaluation-of-Gender-Language-in-the>. It concludes with this summary: "We regret, therefore, that we cannot recommend the 2011 NIV as a sufficiently reliable English translation. And unless Zondervan changes its mind and keeps the current edition of the 1984 NIV in print, the 2011 NIV will soon be the only edition of the NIV that is available. Therefore, unless Zondervan changes its mind, we cannot recommend the NIV itself."

I knew that the revised NIV would appear online in November 2010. I read that Doug Moo, the chairman of the NIV Committee on Bible Translation (CBT), was pleased with TNIV's handling of gender language. After some research into the other members of the CBT, I did expect most of them to be leaning toward TNIV. So, as I waited for the revision to appear online, I carefully reviewed and studied Professor Brug's review of the TNIV in Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly (**WLQ volume 103, #2, Spring 2006, pages 138-151**).² This was time well-spent.

The burning question was whether the revised NIV would be more like the TNIV or NIV 1984. I learned that all of the passages that Prof. Brug had mentioned with some measure of concern

² also available online here: <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/2152>

(except for one minor example) had been carried over essentially unchanged from the TNIV. Since I already shared Prof. Brug's concerns with the TNIV (his WLQ review article), these became my first concerns about NIV 2010/2011. So, I was concerned about the new NIV beginning on November 1, 2010.

Since this was an important topic, we discussed the translation and the changes in circuit meetings. After further study, it became clear that all the pastors in our circuit were concerned about NIV 2011. My circuit brothers decided to pass a resolution and asked me to present information about the NIV changes to our pastors' conference. It was intended to be a fairly balanced study including some improvements, some debatable examples, and some weakened renderings. Entitled, "**Evaluating NIV 2011**," it included resources to enable pastors to study and evaluate more on their own.³ A Bible study for use in congregations was also prepared and shared.

Soon, I was invited to present "**Evaluating NIV 2011**" to all four pastors' conferences in the Michigan District. My own Southeastern Michigan conference asked that the material be shared with others in the synod. The Michigan District Convention asked for my permission to share it, and it was granted. Eventually, the work must have reached many others. If you never saw or received it, it's attached as **appendix A**. It begins by attempting to seek common ground by borrowing from a work by Prof. Panning published in WLQ in 1973...

Four Questions To Ask & Answer When Evaluating Bible Translations⁴

1. Is it based on an appropriate original text?

Jesus promised that God's Word will never pass away (Mt 24:35). We are blessed with many reliable manuscripts. Did the translators carefully follow the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek text of the Bible?

2. Does it render this original text faithfully?

Remember that every word of the original Bible text is God's inspired, error-free Word (*Verbal Inspiration*). Does the translation faithfully and accurately convey the same meaning as the original text of God's holy Word?

3. Is it doctrinally sound?

Professor Armin Panning put it this way: "Does the translation of this passage agree with what God says about the subject in other passages? For us purity of doctrine must ever remain *the* essential test of a translation. To endorse a translation that features crisp, contemporary English and that 'reads like a novel' but subtly blends in error or undercuts the reader's confidence in the reliability of God's Holy Word is to court disaster: It is infinitely better to retain a translation that may not be as easy reading, that may not include the latest in scholarship, but which accords to the Lord Jesus Christ His rightful place in God's plan of salvation. I take it for granted that we agree on this, and that it will not be necessary to belabor the point." (*The NASB, Is This The Answer?* p.5) ... My question: Do we still agree on this? I do.

4. Is the receptor language acceptable?

This is a matter of judgment and taste. No translation is perfect. But can you understand what it says? Professor Panning added, "At the risk of being repetitious, let me emphasize that compromising on the style of language to be used in a translation is NOT the same as compromising on the content, on doctrine."

³ This presentation is **Appendix A** - to be sent with this essay.

⁴ See Prof. Armin Panning's helpful article: **WLQ January, 1973; Vol. 70:1, pp. 6-31**, especially p. 14; or *WLS Essay File* - <http://www.wlsessays.net/files/PanningNASB.rtf>.

If we can agree on his point #3, I believe we will be far along the path toward thinking the same way about how we evaluate the available Bible translations. If we cannot agree on point #3, it might be necessary to “belabor the point.” None of us wants a translation that promotes false teaching.⁵ But I am not sure that everyone agrees with the judgment expressed in point #3 above.

Bible Translations

Ever since the tower of Babel, people have been separated by different languages (Genesis 11). The Holy Spirit bridged this language gap at Pentecost when he enabled the apostles to speak in foreign languages (Acts 2). This miracle exempted the apostles from the long process of learning foreign languages. The gospel of Jesus Christ was proclaimed without delay in foreign languages. Today this translation requires much work.

In chapter ten of the *People’s Bible Teachings* volume on the Bible, some early Bible translations are described.⁶ For this essay, let’s move straight to Dr. Martin Luther.

Luther’s German Bible

There were at least 18 German versions of the Bible before Dr. Martin Luther began his work of translating.⁷ These translations were apparently of very poor quality. Luther began translating the New Testament from the Wartburg Castle in the last few weeks of 1521. He was finished by March of 1522. The speed and quality of the translation remains astonishing. While Luther completed the work of translating the New Testament from Greek into German very rapidly, his work on the Old Testament proceeded much more slowly. He began the Old Testament translation in 1522 and finished in 1534. He often commented that Hebrew did not want to become German. Luther made use of a committee of scholars who met in his home to discuss the translation. But Luther certainly remained firmly in charge of the translation project. There was no doubt it was Luther’s translation. Even though Luther made use of a committee, the committee was of the same faith and fellowship too, so there was theological agreement. I cannot imagine Luther working as only one member of a committee of scholars from various church bodies (Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed). There is no question that Luther’s translation was often quite influenced by his interpretation of Scripture. I’m pretty sure that he would not have compromised with Roman Catholic or Reformed scholars to dial it up one degree of ambiguity on a passage in which there was doctrinal disagreement.

Luther continued to revise his translation, seeking to improve it, until his death. But today it is important to clarify that these revisions were not aimed to make the translation more acceptable to various religious views. Nor were these revisions made for the sake of avoiding perceived offense by various groups. The revisions were simply aimed to make the translation more accurate and clear. Luther always carried with him the latest version of his translation. The last version of the German Bible that Luther himself worked on became the standard

⁵ For more on what is “doctrine” in Scripture, see: <http://www.wisesays.net/node/982>

⁶ Keller, Brian. *Bible: God’s Inspired, Inerrant Word* (People’s Bible Teachings series), Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, © 2002. Pages 159ff. (Much of this section/essay is adapted from the book.)

⁷ Heinz Bluhm mentions 18 editions of the German Bible before Luther: 14 in High German and 4 in Low German. *Martin Luther: Creative Translator*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, ©1965. Pages 78 and 97.

German translation for many years (1545 edition).⁸ Unfortunately, some printers took liberties with the text after his death. And, as a result some “1545 editions” available on the internet are not really the 1545 edition of Luther.⁹

Luther’s methods and views of translations are widely regarded as the model for proper Bible translating. There are many claims about Luther’s translation views, but not all the claims can be correct. Some claim that Luther’s translation method was essentially dynamic equivalence.¹⁰ Others have claimed that Luther translated literally.¹¹ Actually, Luther doesn’t fit either category, or he fits both. He almost defies categorization. Luther was often criticized for not always translating hyper-literally. So, much of his writing is his response to this charge. But in many places Luther did translate in an essentially literal way as he himself explained.

Luther tried to find just the right word in German to express the original meaning. Sometimes Luther went to the butcher to find just the right term for the body part of an animal. To a large degree, Luther’s translation standardized the German language. Luther’s principles of Bible translation involved sound judgment and understanding of the Bible text. His choice varied according to particular cases. Luther explained his translation method with these words: “We extolled the principle of at times retaining the words quite literally, and at times rendering only the meaning.”¹² In other words, Luther was not a strict literalist, but he did value the Bible’s very words. He wrote:

What purpose does it serve unnecessarily to abide by the words so rigidly and strictly that people can get no sense out of them? Whoever would speak German must not use Hebrew idioms; but if he understands the Hebrew writer, he must see to it that he grasps his meaning and must think: Now let me see. How does a German speak in this case? When he has the German words that serve the purpose, then let him dismiss the Hebrew words and freely express the sense in the best German he is capable of using. (*What Luther Says*, #319).

On the other hand, Luther was not always so free in translating. He wrote:

On the other hand I have not just gone ahead anyway and disregarded altogether the exact wording of the original. Rather with my helpers I have been very careful to see that where everything turns on a single passage, I have kept to the original quite literally and have not lightly departed from it. For example, in John 6[:27] Christ says, “Him has God the Father sealed [*versiegelt*].” It would have been better German to say, “Him has God the Father signified [*gezeichnet*],” or, “He it is whom God the Father means [*meinet*].” But I preferred to do violence to the German language rather than to depart from the word. Ah, translating is not every man’s skill as the mad saints imagine. It requires a right, devout, honest, sincere, God-fearing, Christian, trained, informed, and experienced heart. Therefore I hold that no false Christian or factious spirit can be a

⁸ In fact, many scholars believe Luther’s version was a major basis of the English versions of William Tyndale and Myles Coverdale, to which versions the King James Version owes a debt. See, for example: Bluhm, Heinz. ***Luther Translator of Paul: Studies in Romans and Galatians***, New York: Peter Lang, ©1984. Especially pages 559ff.

⁹ For various editions of the Luther Bible, see: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/links10.html>

¹⁰ One example in our midst would be: <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/2159>. I greatly respect Wendland’s work in helping bring the Bible into foreign languages. I believe his paper overlooks the important “literal” aspect of Luther’s translation practice (see Luther quotes in this essay).

¹¹ E.g., “*Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation, II: From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*.” Magne Saebo, ed. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008. Pp. 401-402. Also, James Price: <http://www.jamesprice.com/translationtheory/completeequivalence.html>.

¹² Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 35: Luther's works, vol. 35 : Word and Sacrament I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (222–223). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

decent translator. ¹³

I certainly agree with the TEC statement in the Supplemental Report: “We expect, with Luther, that when theologically necessary a translation will adhere closely to the exact wording of the original.” That is an important statement. Luther often did translate rather literally. One can see this by examining the text of Luther’s Bible in many places. Dr. Luther explained:

We have at times also translated quite literally—even though we could have rendered the meaning more clearly another way—because everything turns on these very words. For example, here in [Psalm 68] verse 18, “Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive,” it would have been good German to say, “Thou hast set the captives free.” But this is too weak, and does not convey the fine, rich meaning of the Hebrew, which says literally, “Thou hast led captivity captive.” This does not imply merely that Christ freed the captives, but also that he captured and led away the captivity itself, so that it never again could or would take us captive again; thus it is really an eternal redemption [Heb. 9:12]. St. Paul likes to speak in this way, as when he says, “I through the law died to the law” [Gal. 2:19]; again, “Through sin Christ condemned sin” [Rom. 8:3]; and again, “Death has been put to death by Christ.” These are the captivities that Christ has taken captive and done away: death can no longer hold us, sin can no longer incriminate us, the law can no longer accuse our conscience. On every hand St. Paul propagates such rich, glorious, and comforting doctrine. Therefore out of respect for such doctrine, and for the comforting of our conscience, we should keep such words, accustom ourselves to them, and so give place to the Hebrew language where it does a better job than our German.¹⁴

In summary, Luther’s own explanation bears repeating: “We extolled the principle of at times retaining the words quite literally, and at times rendering only the meaning.”¹⁵ This was ideal. If a confessional Lutheran translation today is to follow Luther’s lead, we will want to do the same. Many careful students of Luther agree that it’s not so simple to put Luther into a little box or category, whether “functional equivalence” or “literal.”¹⁶

Above all, it requires excellent Christian judgment to make the tough calls of when to be more literal and when to be more free in translating. It certainly does matter what a translator’s theological position might be. I repeat Luther’s words with emphasis: “Ah, translating is not every man’s skill as the mad saints imagine. It requires a right, devout, honest, sincere, God-fearing, Christian, trained, informed, and experienced heart. Therefore I hold that no false

¹³ Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 35: Luther's works, vol. 35 : Word and Sacrament I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (194). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

¹⁴ Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 35: Luther's works, vol. 35 : Word and Sacrament I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (216). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

¹⁵ Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 35: Luther's works, vol. 35 : Word and Sacrament I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (222–223). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

¹⁶ I still like using the term “literal,” even though some prefer “formal equivalent.” Nida followers sometimes ridicule the term, “literal,” but translators on the other side of the translation controversy nevertheless prefer keeping the time-tested term: “literal.” The NASB’95 clearly prefers the term “literal,” and has the slogan, “The most literal is now more readable.” Also, see here: <http://www.lockman.org/nasb/>. The ESV clearly wants to be known as “essentially literal.” Terms are what we make them. The term “literal” is still used in many books, including Luther’s Works as quoted here. It can still convey the same meaning it did then. It’s best to define it, so others don’t define it for you. Most pastors and people know the general meaning of “literal.” “Literal” is really not the straw man that opponents portray. For that type of inept translating, perhaps the term “literalistic” or “hyper-literal” is more appropriate. Maybe “inept” is the best term for the examples that come from “engrish.com.”

Christian or factious spirit can be a decent translator.”¹⁷ In the hands of Luther, something similar to “functional equivalence” can be good. In the hands of Zwingli, such a method could become a highway to falsehood, and even “alloeosis.”¹⁸

Over the years, many confessional Lutherans have agreed that Luther showed excellent Christian judgment in his Bible translation. Luther’s translation set the standard for many years of a sound Bible translation. One of the reasons that Luther’s translation excelled was his God-given faith. A person’s beliefs influence and affect the character of a Bible translation. Fee & Strauss claim that “all translation involves interpretation.”¹⁹ This is why Luther excelled as a translator. He excelled as an interpreter of God’s holy Word. Many otherwise gifted translators falter in this aspect of their work: interpretation. This might be the strongest argument for producing a confessional Lutheran version of the Bible. If “all translation involves interpretation,” then I’d prefer a confessional Lutheran translating the Bible, wouldn’t you? (If a non-Lutheran buys and uses it, more is gained than just a new customer!)²⁰

Perhaps the quality of Luther’s translation may be seen in the fact that Jerome Emser, one of Luther’s sharpest critics, actually plagiarized much of Luther’s version. Luther responded: “What kind of virtue that is, to heap slander and shame on somebody else’s book, then to steal it and publish it under one’s own name—thus seeking personal praise and reputation through the slandered work of somebody else—I leave that for his Judge to discover.”²¹

The King James Version

In 1604, King James I supported the idea of preparing a new translation of the Bible in English, to replace the *Geneva Bible* and the *Bishops’ Bible*. He hoped that the new English version would be a Bible common to all, read in both churches and homes. A committee of 47 men revised existing English versions on the basis of the original languages.²² The King James Version (KJV) is also known as the “Authorized Version” (AV).²³ First published in 1611, the

¹⁷ Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 35: Luther's works, vol. 35 : Word and Sacrament I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (194). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

¹⁸ **Alloeosis.** Figure of speech by which Zwingli construed all passages of Scripture in which anything is ascribed to the divine nature of Christ or to the entire Christ that properly is property of the human nature. The purpose of the alloeosis, as used by Zwingli, was denial of the communication of attributes. He also used it in the doctrine of absolution. Thus “Christ” in Lk 24:28 is referred only to His human nature, since it is a mere figure of speech if the suffering and death of our Lord is ascribed to His divine nature. M. Luther, *Vom Abendmahl Christi*, WA 26, 263–509; **FC SD VIII 21, 38–45.** -- *Christian Cyclopedia (CPH, electronic edition, 2000).*

¹⁹ Fee, Gordon D.; Strauss, Mark L. (2009-05-19). *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding and Using Bible Versions* (chapter four; Kindle Location 1090). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

²⁰ This is one reason that some prefer more literal versions. If the translators are not doctrinally united with us, there might be more safety in a version that is tighter to the text. Some pastors would prefer a Bible that allows them to show their interpretation from a more literal rendering to one that interprets it for them with an opposite view. Many laymen have shared this opinion too.

²¹ Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 35: Luther's works, vol. 35 : Word and Sacrament I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (185). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

²² If only we could be as free today in using and adapting from other versions as the KJV was! But copyright laws now dictate restrictions.

²³ Whether or not it was ever really “authorized” is debatable. That’s another story.

KJV was not immediately accepted. Over time, it surpassed all existing translations so that it became “the Bible” for English-speaking people. Most do not realize that there were quite a number of revisions of the KJV over the years, especially to update archaic words and expressions. For example, in 1769, a Dr. Blayney of Oxford, revised the KJV.

Many churches and Christians have regarded the KJV as a faithful translation over the past four centuries. While generally quite close to the original text, the KJV carries a beauty of expression seldom matched by more modern versions. The KJV rendition of Psalm 23 and Luke 2, for example, have become classics through memorization and repeated usage. Why not try to match the KJV’s rendition of those two sections as closely as possible (as both ESV and NKJV have)? It would instantly give a favorable impression to many members and offer some English textual stability.

The KJV is still regarded as “the Bible” for many Americans to this day, including some in the WELS. Some would still like to retain it for everyday use. We should not look down on older members who want to run back to the KJV for a safe refuge during this Bible controversy. As a pastor, I never discourage people from using their KJV, especially if they’ve used it all their lives. But, we do need to gently explain that the KJV is not the original text of the Bible. And, there is simply no denying that many expressions in the KJV are no longer understood by average readers.²⁴ While many still do read from the KJV with benefit, it can be very difficult to comprehend in certain passages.

Some words change meaning over time too. While it might have been perfectly permissible even several decades ago to say that someone was “gay” (happy), it would not be wise to say that today without a careful explanation (See James 2:3 in the KJV, “the *gay* clothing.”). Some might squirm today if we read the Palm Sunday account from the KJV (Matthew 21:2,5,7). It’s just easier to read the word “donkey.”

Some have mentioned that translations have archaisms, and that can be a matter of taste, judgment, and debate too. The KJV has some true “archaisms.” A “mean man” is a common man. “Meat” is food, not merely flesh. A “meat offering” is a grain offering. To “ear” ground means to till it. Goliath’s “target” was a javelin. Going on a “road” could mean going on a raid. “Passengers” (e.g. Proverbs 9:15) are actually people who pass by, not what we commonly think of today. To “prevent” means to come before (similar to the Latin background of that word). “Wealth” is “welfare” and “wealthy” is “happy” instead of rich (see Psalm 66:12). “Conversation” refers to behavior, rather than mere discussion. To “advertise” means to advise, but today people would think of putting an ad in the newspaper. To refresh the “bowels” means to cheer the heart. A “carriage” was something carried, not a vehicle. “Pitiful” means full of pity, not deserving of it. So 1 Peter 3:8 can say, “Be pitiful.” Today, that sounds strange to most people. They might get the wrong idea.

These descriptions are certainly not intended to downgrade the value of the King James Version. Many passages remain clear enough for most people to understand. Many of today’s Christians have memorized hundreds of Bible verses from the KJV.²⁵ It is good to retain these passages! And even in the 21st century, the NIV CBT still wants to use the KJV for help in explaining their TNIV/NIV’11 translation of 1 Timothy 2:12.²⁶ No one needs to apologize for continuing to use the KJV in personal devotions either. But, in all honesty, there are significant

²⁴ For examples, please see pages 167-169 of *Bible: God’s Inspired, Inerrant Word* (People’s Bible Teachings series), Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, © 2002.

²⁵ I’m thinking mainly of members of our congregations who were confirmed prior to 1980.

²⁶ To be mentioned later in this essay. This seems particularly ironic. My sense is: if the CBT had anywhere else to run, they would. No offense, but the CBT translators are certainly not KJV advocates elsewhere.

difficulties in using the KJV today. The KJV served for four centuries, and it is still number two on the best-selling Bible chart. That is strong testimony to the level of confidence people have in this version of the Bible. Difficulties aside, the KJV is still marked by its classic, stately, and even rhythmic expressions of the English language.

Modern Translations: Three Main Views

There are many different versions of the Bible. There are three main views of Bible translation.

1. *Literal translation or formal equivalence* attempts to offer the closest thing possible to a word-for-word translation from the original languages. It is true that no major Bible translation is “purely literal” in a sense that I call “hyper-literal” or “literalistic.” Often, the product would be unintelligible. Sometimes hyper-literal/literalistic translation might even render a wrong meaning. So, literal versions generally try to translate as literally as possible, as often as possible. Those who claim that literal translations don’t often depart from a “hyper-literal” rendering are erecting a straw man that does not exist. No major English Bible translation that I have seen is as bad as the example cited in WLQ Spring 2011, p. 111. That example was taken from “**english.com**” (sic) where one is able to see more silly examples. On the other hand, no literal translation that I have seen is quite as good as some think Ryken seems to describe.²⁷ The three most popular examples of essentially literal translations are: the New American Standard Bible - updated edition (NASB’95), the New King James Version (NKJV), and the English Standard Version (ESV). In many passages, these three are virtually identical.

2. *Dynamic equivalence or functional equivalence* is the attempt to communicate “thought for thought” a meaning, or “dynamic force,” similar to what an original reader might have obtained from the original language. Sometimes this means departing from literal forms and wording to catch the sense. Here the big name is Eugene Nida. Those who like this theory quote and mention Nida often. Those who oppose this theory, or oppose it being over-used to a fault, tend to attack Nida.²⁸ The *New International Version* (NIV) is the best known example of this viewpoint. Sometimes this method approaches paraphrase. By the nature of this method, even more depends on the interpretations of the translators than “literal” translators.

3. A *paraphrase* is a rather free attempt to catch the sense or basic idea of the original without struggling (or sometimes even trying) to maintain a word-for-word, or even phrase-for-phrase equivalence. Paraphrases are very free, and can essentially be interpretations at times. Two examples of paraphrases are the Living Bible and Today’s English Version. Sometimes it can be difficult to tell the difference between a paraphrase and functional equivalence. The lines of distinction can become fuzzy. The *New Living Translation* (NLT) insists that it is a translation, but many still call it a paraphrase. D. A. Carson and Doug Moo were NLT

²⁷ Ryken, Leland. ***Choosing a Bible***, Wheaton: Crossway, © 2005. I’d rather not argue about Ryken. He bothers a few men a great deal. He overstates sometimes. But if others have been “demonized,” Ryken has too. He does make some valid points. He does allow for exceptions to literal translation (e.g., see page 24 “except where a completely literal translation would have been unintelligible to an English reader...”) As a matter of fact, Ryken is not the leader of essentially literal Bible translation. He’s just a popularizer. For leaders, one might rather look to the real translators of the NASB, NKJV, and ESV, as well as many translations before these.

²⁸ For one example, see <http://www.bible-researcher.com/dynamic-equivalence.html> ... The opposing view tends to attack Ryken in recent years, though they are far from equal targets. See previous footnote.

translators. The NLT is surprisingly more conservative than NIV 2011 in 1 Timothy 2:12, “have authority.” Most agree that NIV 2011 is a translation, but occasionally it looks like a paraphrase (e.g., Psalm 8, Hebrews 2). Some translations do not wish to be trapped into these neat categories, or wish to invent their own (e.g., HCSB below). I do not wish to trouble anyone by the standard categories and will try to explain further on the individual translations.

Some Important English Bible Translations

Translation	Date	Translators
Revised Standard Version (RSV) New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)	1952/1971 1989	32 Ecumenical scholars, led by Bruce Metzger
Living Bible / New Living Translation (NLT)	1971/ 1996, 2004, 2007	Kenneth Taylor; by Tyndale House Foundation
New American Standard Bible (NASB)	1971/1977/1995	Committee of Evangelicals
An American Translation (AAT) God’s Word to the Nations (GWN) New Evangelical Translation (NET)	1976/2000 1988 1992	William F. Beck; revised by others
New International Version (NIV) Today’s NIV (TNIV)	1978/1984/ 2005/2011	116 Evangelicals; 15 member CBT
New King James Version (NKJV)	1982	130 Evangelicals
English Standard Version (ESV)	2001/2007/2011	Evangelicals
Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)	1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009, 2010	Southern Baptist Convention; Evangelicals

Revised Standard Version (RSV)

Some denominations accepted the RSV for use in their churches not long after it was completed in 1952. The RSV is really a revision of the American Standard Version (ASV, 1901). The RSV sold many copies because it was rather easy to read. However, the translators did not subscribe to the verbal inspiration of Scripture, and apparently denied many Old Testament Messianic prophecies. Many conservative Bible scholars declared the RSV’s treatment of Old Testament prophecies about the coming Savior to be unacceptable.²⁹ Perhaps the most well-known example of this was the RSV’s use of the words “young woman” instead of “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14 (See Matthew 1:23). Another concern was removing some passages that declared Jesus to be true God (see Romans 9:5). Some might have gained from reading some passages of the RSV, but there is a stigma attached to the RSV.³⁰

The RSV has essentially been superseded by the NRSV (see below). Some religious periodicals have demonized the RSV and its translators. I will not defend the RSV. But, the truth is that the ESV scholars and translators were determined to correct the problems of the RSV, while saving the better parts. There were many parts that were useful. In fairness, WLS professors from the 1950’s often spoke of some of these positive aspects of the RSV. WELS ultimately declined to use it due to the serious doctrinal problems. Yet, it is interesting to trace the history of how the RSV was treated by the WELS and WLS. One may do this using just the electronic version of the past issues of WLQ. The first quotations in WLQ are positive ones.

²⁹ This was a main reason behind the making of the NASB. See page 16 below.

³⁰ Some *Christian Worship* “Verse of the Day” selections were taken from RSV. For the sake of not disturbing informed worshipers, I suggest switching those to ESV or similar.

The review of the RSV includes this paragraph early on:

It would be neither correct nor fair to denounce the translation of the New Testament in the RSV in sweeping, categorical terms because of errors in fact or misinterpretations that we have found in it. We believe that there are such. But the fact remains that “there are many things that can and should be said in favor of” the RSV of the Bible and of its New Testament in particular. Professor Reim has promised to point such out in an early issue of *The Northwestern Lutheran*, and coming issues of our Synod’s periodicals will no doubt publish articles on both the things to be commended and those to be criticized in the new version.³¹

Professor Blume’s conclusion to that WLQ article strikes a chord with me in this discussion:

Is the RSV really the New Testament in modern American speech?” and “Is it the best that modern scholarship can produce?”, our reply shall have to be: “As we can see it now, the answer is No on both counts.” What answers our pastors will give to the questions of those of their people who have bought and are reading the RSV poses a much more difficult problem. Since last September 30 this writer has become increasingly convinced that no answer to our people’s inquiries will be completely satisfactory to them or to us until we have given them a version of the New Testament that will do for our generation what Luther’s New Testament of 1522 did for the Germany of his day.³²

Amen, Professor Blume. This becomes increasingly fascinating as one traces what followed...

Announcement Re Bible Translation

Included in the report of the Committee on Bible Translation, adopted at the Watertown Convention, August 5–12, 1953, was the following suggestion:

“Since the appearance of the *Revised Standard Version* has incited anew the study of Bible translations, also among us, and made us conscious anew of weaknesses in the *Authorized Version*, which has been in general use in our Synod; and since suggestions have again been made that we proceed with a revision of the *Authorized Version*: the Synodical Committee at its May meeting adopted the following resolution:

“We suggest that the assignment of the Committee on the Revised Standard Version be extended to include a study of some book of the New Testament (e.g. Galatians), that the Committee be encouraged to solicit the cooperation and comment of the members of the Synod and then to publish the book studied in the *Quartalschrift*, so that thereby the translation may be rather widely tested as to readability and theological correctness.’

“Your committee concurs in this recommendation, with the understanding that it be in the nature of a revision of the *Authorized Version*.”

As implied in the above resolution the committee now contemplates undertaking a trial translation of Galatians in the manner indicated, “that it be in the nature of a revision of the *Authorized Version*,” and herewith invites the members of the Synod to contribute whatever might be of value and help to the committee in carrying out its assignment.

The reasons most frequently advanced for urging at least a trial translation of some book of the Bible are: 1. that existing translations contain archaic words or phrases; 2. that they reveal a Calvinistic influence or otherwise reflect the theological bias of the translators. As to language the *Authorized Version*, of which the contemplated translation is to be a revision, could undoubtedly be brought up to date with a minimum of change. It is especially in regard to changes involving

³¹ WLQ Vol. 50:1, p. 2.

³² WLQ Vol. 50:1, p. 15.

doctrine that the committee invites comment, but asks that this be of a specific nature, both as to criticism of the translation to be changed as well as to a possible revision of the same. Contributions are kindly to be sent to the undersigned.

Gerald Hoenecke, secretary
Wisconsin Synod Committee on Bible Translation
Box 953, Thiensville, Wisconsin.³³

There is more history to learn and tell there. Maybe someone else will study it as a historian and share wise insights with us. How interesting that a translation with doctrinal problems prompted a call to produce our own translation! How encouraging it is to read of the strong concern for pure doctrine. May we be just as concerned for pure doctrine today!

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The NRSV appeared in 1989 as an update of the RSV with the same theological problems. Despite all the criticism of the RSV, the NRSV, a product of the National Council of Churches (NCC), remained unwilling to translate Isaiah 7:14 with the word, “virgin.” As Luther said, sometimes translators can’t help but reveal their confessional position. Matthew 1:23 reveals that this prophecy is a direct Messianic prophecy. The Hebrew term “*almah*” is used six times in the Old Testament and always refers to an unmarried lady who is still a virgin. The NRSV also strives to be gender-inclusive/neutral. The overseers of this translation seemed to have a few axes to grind, some of which were not even shared by the translators.³⁴ Instead of “Spirit of God” in Genesis 1:2, the NRSV says, “a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.” The NRSV might be helpful in some passages. It is superior to NIV’11 on 1 Timothy 2:12 (“have authority”), and better than its predecessor, the RSV, on Romans 9:5. But, it is not reliable enough for general use. That Fee and Strauss recommend the NRSV as the best of the “formal equivalent” versions probably reveals more about the theological viewpoints of Fee and Strauss than it does about the NRSV. Respectfully, I must strongly disagree with their judgment. It is debatable if the NRSV really fits in that category. The NRSV is not in the same league with the much more conservative and reliable “big three” of essentially literal versions (NASB’95, NKJV, ESV). The NRSV is the real “RSV” of today. It’s the translation of choice for many/most in the NCC, for many university “religion” professors, for more liberal theologians, and it is the basis for the ELCA’s “Lutheran Study Bible.”³⁵

Living Bible (LB) - New Living Translation (NLT)

Kenneth Taylor wanted his family to be able to understand the Bible. Though he didn’t have the ability to translate from the Hebrew and Greek languages, Taylor offered a paraphrase of the American Standard Version (ASV, 1901). This paraphrase, known as the **Living Bible (LB)** became very popular because it was so easy to read. However, it is not close enough to the original languages and does present some theological problems. It is especially weak on passages pertaining to the sacrament of Holy Baptism. For example, in Mark 1:4, the LB called John’s baptism “a public announcement of their decision to turn their backs on sin” instead of “a baptism of repentance *for the forgiveness of sins.*” I cannot recommend the Living Bible.

In 1989, ninety Evangelical scholars began work on the **New Living Translation (NLT)**,

³³ WLQ Vol. 51:1, p. 63.

³⁴ For a little more information, see: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/nrsv.html>

³⁵ One way to keep it separate from CPH’s “*The Lutheran Study Bible*,” is that the ELCA version is by Augsburg/Fortress, lacks “The” (definite article) in the name, and has a baby blue colored cover.

the heir to the Living Bible paraphrase.³⁶ The New Living Translation does claim to be a translation. Read this introduction to the NLT from the 2007 edition and see if this does not sound familiar.

English Bible translations tend to be governed by one of two general translation theories. The first theory has been called “formal-equivalence,” “literal,” or “word-for-word” translation. According to this theory, the translator attempts to render each word of the original language into English and seeks to preserve the original syntax and sentence structure as much as possible in translation. The second theory has been called “dynamic-equivalence,” “functional-equivalence,” or “thought-for-thought” translation. The goal of this translation theory is to produce in English the closest natural equivalent of the message expressed by the original-language text, both in meaning and in style.

Both of these translation theories have their strengths. A formal-equivalence translation preserves aspects of the original text—including ancient idioms, term consistency, and original-language syntax—that are valuable for scholars and professional study. It allows a reader to trace formal elements of the original-language text through the English translation. A dynamic-equivalence translation, on the other hand, focuses on translating the message of the original-language text. It ensures that the meaning of the text is readily apparent to the contemporary reader. This allows the message to come through with immediacy, without requiring the reader to struggle with foreign idioms and awkward syntax. It also facilitates serious study of the text’s message and clarity in both devotional and public reading.

The pure application of either of these translation philosophies would create translations at opposite ends of the translation spectrum. But in reality, all translations contain a mixture of these two philosophies. A purely formal-equivalence translation would be unintelligible in English, and a purely dynamic-equivalence translation would risk being unfaithful to the original. That is why translations shaped by dynamic-equivalence theory are usually quite literal when the original text is relatively clear, and the translations shaped by formal-equivalence theory are sometimes quite dynamic when the original text is obscure.

The translators of the New Living Translation set out to render the message of the original texts of Scripture into clear, contemporary English. As they did so, they kept the concerns of both formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence in mind. On the one hand, they translated as simply and literally as possible when that approach yielded an accurate, clear, and natural English text. Many words and phrases were rendered literally and consistently into English, preserving essential literary and rhetorical devices, ancient metaphors, and word choices that give structure to the text and provide echoes of meaning from one passage to the next.

On the other hand, the translators rendered the message more dynamically when the literal rendering was hard to understand, was misleading, or yielded archaic or foreign wording. They clarified difficult metaphors and terms to aid in the reader’s understanding. The translators first struggled with the meaning of the words and phrases in the ancient context; then they rendered the message into clear, natural English. Their goal was to be both faithful to the ancient texts and eminently readable. The result is a translation that is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful.³⁷

That’s a good explanation of Bible translation theory. Does the NLT really live up to its claims? I would have to agree with those who say that it does not. But, the NLT reads well. I believe that’s the only reason the NLT is the fourth best-selling Bible translation today.³⁸ The NLT surpasses NIV’11 in translating 1 Timothy 2:12, “have authority.” I believe that the NLT makes better translation judgments in a few areas where NIV’11 has made gender-neutral

³⁶ for more information, see: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/nlt.html>

³⁷ <http://newlivingtranslation.com/05discoverthenlt/nltintro.asp>

³⁸ http://cbaonline.org/nm/documents/BSLs/Bible_Translations.pdf

changes, such as using “brothers” in Acts 1:16 and 6:3 instead of “brothers and sisters.” In Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3, the NLT might be a little more clear than NIV’11 on man/woman roles. What do you think of the NLT translation of Acts 2:42: “All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.” That one made me pause and stare. Interesting, right?

Unfortunately, upon closer examination of the words on the page, the NLT is certainly not the most accurate or doctrinally reliable version. For example, Romans 3:28 reads, “So we are **made right** with God through faith and not by obeying the law” (NLT uses “made right” 39 times; see Rom 5:1; 2 Cor 5:21, etc.). The familiar “flesh gives birth to flesh” in John 3:6 is rendered, “Humans can reproduce only human life” in NLT. The NLT shares some of the same problems/issues as the NRSV and TNIV/NIV’11, including some excessive gender-inclusive changes (e.g., Psalm 8:4-6, Hebrews 2:6-9). Acts 3:21 is rendered, “he must remain in heaven,” as one TEC appointed reviewer rightly described as “obnoxious.”

Fee & Strauss recommend all three of these versions (NLT, NRSV, TNIV), but I respectfully and strongly disagree with their judgment. I cannot recommend the NLT to the WELS. It’s just too loose from the original text.

If someone wants to read the NLT privately, because it does read very well, may God bless you. Occasionally, I have found a passage that is exceptionally good in the NLT. But, usually there is a verse in the near context that is exceptionally poor. The NLT impressed me in Philippians 2:9, “Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names.” But, two verses earlier, there is a serious problem: “Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form...” Php 2:7 (NLT). It would be a good lesson in Christian Dogmatics to find the problems in that one verse.³⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:18–19 (NLT) serves as another example of this. Verse 18 is a problem: “God has given us this task of reconciling people to him.” But verse 19 is much better: “For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.”

Overall, the NLT is just not sufficiently accurate. If readability (testing out how it reads or makes you feel, whether it’s accurate or not) is your #1 concern, NLT might hold the top spot. But I do not believe “readability” should be the #1 concern for the WELS in choosing a Bible translation.

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

The NASB stands as an excellent example of literal translation. The NASB is a very faithful, conservative Bible translation. It “is a revision of the American Standard Version (1901). It was produced by a company of conservative scholars who wished to provide a literal and conservative revision of the ASV, as an alternative to the Revised Standard Version (1952), which had proven to be unacceptable to conservative churches.”⁴⁰ For a review of the original NASB, see the article by Professor Armin Panning.⁴¹ Here are some excerpts from the preface to the NASB’95:

³⁹ Jesus did not give up his divine powers, he gave up the full and constant use of them. His humiliation does not consist in his being born as a human being, but in the lowly nature of his birth and humble life during his state of humiliation. See Pieper’s *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, 292.

⁴⁰ <http://www.bible-researcher.com/nasb.html>

⁴¹ <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/1692>

In 1995 the NASB was updated, increasing clarity and readability. Vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure were carefully reviewed for greater understanding and smoother reading...

The NASB translators believe that to make the best translation of the Scriptures even better, change should not be made just for the sake of change. This means keeping the updated NASB exactly what it has always been and will forever be—literally accurate. In order to be deemed acceptable by translators, updated material had to maintain the highest standards of literal translation. Thus the smoother reading updated NASB refines the differences in style between the ancient languages and current English. In the process, Old English "thees," "thys," and "thous," archaic vocabulary, and sentences beginning with "And" have been updated for better English, while verses with difficult word order were restructured.

In addition, parallel passages have been compared and reviewed and verbs that have a wide range of meaning have been updated to better account for their use in the context. Proper names or titles have been used in place of pronouns only when the context made it clear who the person was. Punctuation and paragraphing have been formatted to fit today's standards. Notes about ancient manuscripts, which have appeared in most editions of the NASB, have been reviewed and, in many cases, feature new and more specific interesting facts.

The New American Standard Bible has been produced with the conviction that the words of Scripture, as originally penned in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, were inspired by God. Since they are the eternal Word of God, the Holy Scriptures speak with fresh power to each generation, to give wisdom that leads to salvation so that men and women may serve Christ for the glory of God.

The updated NASB represents revisions and refinements recommended over the last several years and incorporates thorough research based on current English usage. And rest assured, the translators and consultants who contributed to the updated NASB are, as always, conservative Bible scholars who have doctorates in biblical languages, theology, or other advanced degrees. Representing a variety of denominational backgrounds, the translators of the updated NASB meticulously followed all the same tried-and-true safeguards as set forth in the original NASB, which took the NASB translators nearly 10 years to complete.

In preparation, numerous linguistic tools and literature of biblical scholarship were consulted. Decisions about English renderings were made by consensus of a team composed of educators and pastors who were directed by their faith that the original words of Scripture were inspired by God. Therefore, their work was treated reverently and carefully, as changes were kept to a minimum. Completed sections of work were passed to critical consultants for a thorough review of the translation. The work passed between committees on numerous occasions before final review and revision in plenary sessions.

In perfecting the updated NASB, more than 20 translators spent nearly three years scrutinizing the NASB in order to modernize and maintain it in accordance with the most recent research on the oldest and best manuscripts. Thus, some passages have been updated for even greater fidelity to the original manuscripts.

At NO point did the translators attempt to interpret Scripture through translation. Instead, the NASB translation team adhered to the principles of literal translation. This is the most exacting and demanding method of translation, requiring a word-for-word translation that is both accurate and readable. This method follows the word and sentence patterns of the original authors in order to enable the reader to study Scripture in its most literal format and to experience the individual personalities of those who penned the original manuscripts. For example, one can directly compare and contrast the simple eloquent style of John with the deep complexity of Paul.

Instead of telling the reader what to think, the updated NASB provides the most precise translation with which to conduct a personal journey through the Word of God.⁴²

You may decide for yourself if NASB'95 reads well enough or if it is still rather stiff or

⁴² <http://www.lockman.org/nasb/>

wooden.⁴³ Its strength lies in the fact that it closely follows the original text. For this reason, the NASB is recommended as a reference Bible. If someone does not know Hebrew or Greek, and would like to check the translation of a Bible passage, the NASB is helpful.

My study of the NASB'95 reveals that it is not quite as literal ("formal equivalent") as its reputation. It catches more idioms than some have noticed. Genesis 4:1 is translated, "the man had relations with his wife Eve," although it notes the literal translation, "knew" (also Gen. 19:5). I wish I kept a list of all the times I've noted this aspect in my studies. Instead, I'll quote and highlight places where Fee & Strauss seem surprised to find ("even") NASB'95/NASU handling idioms fairly well:

For example, in John 10:24 the people ask Jesus (literally), "Until when will you take up our souls?" The Greek idiom "take up souls" means to "keep in suspense," so **even the NASU translates, "How long will You keep us in suspense?"** Similarly, in John 9:21 the parents of the man born blind tell the religious leaders that their son "has lifespan." **This idiom means he is "of age" (NASU, TNIV, ESV) or "old enough" (NJB, GNT, CEV) to speak for himself.** (Notice that "of age" is an English idiom.) Mark 1:32, translated literally, says that Jesus healed all "those having badly." The Greek idiom means "those who were sick." In cases like these, even formal equivalent versions must abandon a literal policy and translate idiomatically. Other Hebrew and Greek idioms may be comprehensible when translated literally, but result in awkward or obscure English. First Samuel 10:9 (ESV) reads, "When he [Saul] turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart." The Hebrew idiom "give a new heart" means "to change one's disposition or heart attitude." Most versions read **"God changed his heart" (NASU, HCSB, TNIV).** Esther 1:14 (ESV) speaks of the close advisers to King Xerxes "who saw the king's face." The Hebrew idiom means **those "who had special access to the king" (cf. NASU, TNIV, NIV, NRSV, HCSB).** In Joshua 10:6 (ESV) the men of Gibeon say to Joshua, "Do not relax your hand from your servants." The Hebrew idiom "relax your hand" means to "abandon," and most versions say **"do not abandon your servants" (NASU, HCSB, NRSV, TNIV, GW, NET; cf. NKJV).** Mark 1:2 NKJV reads, "I send my messenger before Your face." "Before your face" is a Greek idiom which means "ahead of you," and most versions translate accordingly (HCSB, NET, NIV, TNIV, NAB, GNT, GW). While the original NASB used "before your face," its **1995 update (NASU) revises this to "ahead of you."**⁴⁴

Though Fee & Strauss did not specifically quote it, NASB'95 renders Mark 1:32 properly as "all who were ill" (see their reference above). I like NASB's treatment of Psalm 23, demonstrating admirable respect for the English translation tradition. I applaud their including "eternity" at the end of Micah 5:2. They characteristically use "lovingkindness" for *chesed*, one of the recognizable marks of the NASB.

NASB'95 is a fine conservative Bible translation, which does not introduce false doctrine. I am not aware of any problems with NASB'95, other than whether it reads well enough. That can be decided by more use. If you've used it and decided, fine. If you haven't used it, maybe you should. I believe that the NASB'95 "is a contemporary Bible translation which, although not

⁴³ Fee & Strauss use the less usual "NASU" for NASB'95. Since Fee & Strauss are on the CBT, I wonder if they would mind if we, in a similar way, might refer to NIV'11 as TNIV2. It seems more clear and less confusing.

⁴⁴ Fee, Gordon D.; Strauss, Mark L. (2009-05-19). *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding and Using Bible Versions* (chapter 4; Kindle Locations 978-992). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

a perfect translation, is one which may be used with a high degree of confidence.”⁴⁵

Unfortunately, NASB'95 lacks confessional Lutheran materials to go along with it (i.e., no hymnals, Catechisms, Bible history materials, to my knowledge, make use of it). Some confessional Lutherans prefer it and quote it. NASB'95 hovers near the bottom of the top ten list, in terms of sales, and can be more difficult than other choices to find for purchase. The Lockman Foundation informed me of some vague plans to revise it, but no timetable has been set.⁴⁶ I would expect any revision to be conservative and in the direction of easier reading.

An American Translation (AAT)

Most modern translations are the work of Evangelical/Reformed scholars. The AAT is the work of a Missouri Synod Lutheran, Dr. William F. Beck. Beck wanted to translate the Bible as Luther did. “Bible Bill Beck” wanted his translation to be in “coffee and doughnuts American language.” His translation still reads easily. It is generally clear and accurate in rendering the meaning of the original languages, although it is a rather free translation. In my terms, it is not particularly “tight to the text.”

Several attempts at revising the AAT followed, but it never became a very popular version, even among Lutherans. It was not adopted for use in most churches because of a perceived lack of proper dignity or solemnity in certain places. Some pastors reported in the 1970's and 1980's that reading the colloquial language of the AAT in worship did not seem to flow well. Some were “tripping over their tongues.” Of course, that is a matter of Christian judgment, and some might disagree. One significant problem was that it was not available for purchase in most bookstores. Some feared the accusation that they were using a “sectarian” Bible. But, overall Beck's translation can be recommended, and is especially useful for devotional reading. Many find it to be the most helpful version for understanding certain key Bible passages. For many years, Reformed translators borrowed from Luther's translation of the Bible. It seems fitting to have a conservative Lutheran translation available in English.

Since there have been several versions of Beck, and several spin-off versions, it might be helpful to clarify a little. Beck's New Testament translation was first published by Concordia Publishing House in 1963. Since CPH no longer seemed interested, Christian News (New Haven, MO: Leader) published the full Beck's Bible posthumously in 1976.

In 1978, some Lutherans decided to revise the AAT. Considerable effort went into this revision of Beck's published in 1988 as “**God's Word to the Nations**” (GWN; renamed the “**New Evangelical Translation** - NET, in 1990).⁴⁷ WLS Professors Siegbert Becker and David Kuske worked on this excellent New Testament translation. In the early 1990's there were high hopes that **GWN/NET** would become a full Bible. Some good translation examples came out as ILCW worship lessons, and a Proverbs volume.

But then the oversight of the translation changed. The translation philosophy changed to

⁴⁵ This statement by the WLS faculty was actually applied to NIV 1978 and NIV 1984. I use it as boilerplate for a recommended version. Quoted words taken from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, & Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. (1998). *Vol. 85: Wisconsin Lutheran quarterly, Volume 85* (electronic edition.). Logos Library System; Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly (108). Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House.

⁴⁶ Email: “We are not in the process of revising or updating the NASB at this time. It is something we will likely do but it would not be ready for a number of years after it is started. We do not have a start date at this time.”

⁴⁷ One must distinguish this NET from the “*NET Bible*,” or *New English Translation*, see here: <http://bible.org/netbible/>. For this reason, I still use “GWN” or “GWN/NET” for clarity.

“closest natural equivalence.”⁴⁸ The result was a 1995 version known as the **“God’s Word” translation (GW)** that many confessional Lutherans could not recommend.⁴⁹ It was marked by doctrinal problems such as the phrase, “because of faith” making faith a cause of salvation. When Dr. Robert Preus saw that the changes included making faith a cause of justification, he wept.⁵⁰ The complaints of Preus and others did result in some passages being improved in the next edition. But the 1995 edition is the one on biblegateway.com. I found ten passages with that troublesome phrase: Romans 1:17; 3:28, 30; ch. 4 (heading); 4:20; 5:1; Galatians 2:16; 3:11,24; Hebrews 10:38. Romans 3:28 reads, “We conclude that a person has God’s approval because of faith, not because of his own efforts.” The revised version of GW seems to be at: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/gw/>, although it lists 1995 as the copyright date too. But, even in the revision, problems still remain. It still uses “approval” for just about every justification passage. Regularly inserting “Moses’ teachings” as the translation for “Law” becomes more annoying, and less clear, as I read the text. And Acts 6:3 says, “brothers and sisters” which is not correct. “Happy” seems to be used way too much (106 times). For example, 1 Corinthians 13:6 reads, “It isn’t happy when injustice is done, but it is happy with the truth.” How does this GW translation of James 1:2 sound to you: “My brothers and sisters, be very happy when you are tested in different ways”? I’m not ready to recommend GW for regular use. But in some passages it can be quite helpful (e.g., Romans 9:22-23). GW seems like a rather free paraphrase and not a serious contender for general use right now.

In 2000, Christian News (New Haven, MO: Leader) published another revision of the original AAT, this one prepared by John Drickamer. Some changes improved the text. In Romans 3:20 and 3:30, Drickamer changed Beck’s “make righteous” to “declare righteous.” For more examples, see **Appendix B**, being sent along with this essay. The strength of the AAT is excellent translations of Messianic prophecies. Overall, Beck’s AAT is probably the best translation in English in the category of Messianic prophecy. AAT offers helpful renderings of passages that are especially important in Lutheran doctrine (e.g., Romans 9:22-23; 1 Peter 2:8; etc.). There are many strong renderings in the AAT.

But, the AAT has its weaknesses and quirks too. AAT uses “fellow Christians” for “brothers” in 1 Corinthians 14:39, which is not good in context. AAT tends to use “holy people” instead of “saints.” This is possible, but I wonder... Will we soon have a “Holy People Triumphant” Sunday at the end of the church year? Will we sing “For All the Holy People” instead of “For All the Saints”? Will my congregation’s name be changed to “Holy Man Stephen” or even “Holy Person Stephen”? After we think a little more deeply, don’t quite a number of the changes being made these days (in NIV and other versions, including AAT) seem rather superficial and even shallow? One brother in the ministry who recently read the AAT wrote that he’s “sick of seeing the word ‘happy’” in the AAT (which also appears maybe too often in NLT and HCSB). He continued, “anyone suffering from depression, or even normal sadness that affects us all, would have to find the AAT a stumbling block.” I will add that “happy” is not the same as “blessed,” and I’m glad that at least the AAT left “blessed” in places like Psalm 1 and the Beatitudes of Matthew 5. While reviewing the AAT, I am repeatedly reminded of one major weakness: AAT is still not in a searchable computer format. We can’t just type the word “happy” and see where it appears. We have to page through the whole AAT Bible to see where it might or might not appear. But I share my brother’s perception that it’s overused in AAT too.

In many cases, the AAT would be better served to just adopt the GWN rendering. For

⁴⁸ <http://www.godswordtranslation.org/ME2/Sites/Default.asp?SiteID=87ADA8B8A8474F90A93883C58F52923F>

⁴⁹ see <http://www.bible-researcher.com/godsword.html>

⁵⁰ <http://www.reclaimingwalthers.org/articles/jmc00150.htm>

example, AAT's 2 Peter 1:10, "make sure you're God's called and chosen ones" is not nearly as good as GWN's "make sure that your calling and choosing are secure." Is there something we can do to pry into God's secret counsel? Or, worse, is there something we can do to make sure God calls and chooses us? This is how strange ideas are formed in readers' minds.

AAT has a tendency to turn Hebrew/Greek nouns into English verbs. I prefer that a translation be more "tight to the text," as I like to say. Changing Hebrew/Greek nouns into English verbs can lead to strange ideas too. In 1 Corinthians 6:10, the AAT says that those who "get drunk" will have no share in God's kingdom. Those who "get drunk" might have had too much to drink one time. That does not necessarily make them "drunkards" who do this habitually, without repenting. Again, this kind of over-simplification often just leads to more problems. Is it really that hard to understand, "drunkards"? Really? What do you think of AAT's version of the "fruits of the Spirit" section in Galatians 5:22-23, "But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace. He makes us patient, kindly, good, faithful, gentle, and gives us self-control." To some, this doesn't seem quite the same. It's a repetitive tendency in AAT. In the **Appendix B** comparison of translations, there are more examples of problems in the AAT.

But it is very strong in Messianic prophecy. I believe, overall, that the AAT "is a contemporary Bible translation which, although not a perfect translation, is one which may be used with a high degree of confidence."⁵¹ I still prefer my 1988 GWN (New Testament) to the 2000 AAT. But, I would have no problems with the AAT being used for Bible History materials. Some will enjoy reading the AAT as a devotional Bible. Whether it is ready for regular worship use is another question. Some have described the style as simple, and flat. I believe too many contractions are used in all the Beck's editions mentioned above, since contractions are less clear to read/hear. But, if the WELS voted for AAT, I would go along with that. I'd suggest that an even better option would be to revise the AAT Old Testament and the GWN New Testament. That idea appeals to more than a few in WELS. Perhaps the WELS TFC will take that into account too.

WLS Prof.-em. David Kuske has completed his own New Testament revision in the Beck's tradition of simplified translation. Kuske's version is a revision of the GWN/NET (similar to a WELS/NPH translation for which I was privileged to serve as a parish reviewer). At this writing, Kuske's NT revision has not yet been published, but Prof. Kuske was kind enough to supply me with a copy. It features shorter sentences than NIV. Kuske uses "Good News" instead of "gospel," "undeserved favor" instead of "grace," "acquit" instead of "justify," and "holy people" instead of "saints," etc. It seems to me that it would serve well as a simplified Bible for English as a second language people, for inmates, for children, and for adult readers who like a simpler version. I'm not sure that all would be satisfied with it for regular worship and Bible Class use. Perhaps it will be more thoroughly discussed by the Translation Feasibility Committee (TFC).

New International Version (NIV)

The original **NIV (1978/1984)** became the best-selling Bible translation on the market. All of the original NIV translators held that the Bible is God's inerrant Word. They aimed for "dynamic equivalence" of the original languages. In other words, the NIV aims to be neither a

⁵¹ This statement by the WLS faculty was actually applied to NIV 1978 and NIV 1984. I use it as boilerplate for a recommended version. Quoted words taken from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, & Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. (1998). *Vol. 85: Wisconsin Lutheran quarterly, Volume 85* (electronic edition.). Logos Library System; Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly (108). Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House.

literal “word-for-word” version, nor a paraphrase. The NIV 1984 became familiar to WELS. It served us well. Yet, there is no such thing as a perfect translation. In some cases, the NIV 1984 was not as close to the original wording as I often hoped.⁵² But, it read very well, and if NIV 1984 were not removed from the market, it would still achieve wide use and broad acceptance among us.

But the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT) has issued revisions that have not been as popular or as well-liked among us. *The New International Version - Inclusive Language Edition (NIVI, 1996)* was probably the worst.⁵³

When the complete *Today's New International Version (TNIV) 2005* arrived, WELS did not instantly sign on the dotted line, making a new deal with TNIV. WELS was largely untouched by the firestorm of controversies roughly outlined in the timeline at the beginning of this essay. TNIV was a very controversial version with both supporters and critics.⁵⁴

We often like to clarify that WELS does not have an “official translation.” But NIV’84 was widely used in WELS. It is difficult to see how the decision to remove NIV’84 from the market, essentially replacing it with a version of the TNIV is good for them or the churches using NIV. They were offering a choice when NIV’84 and TNIV were both available. Those who liked one or the other could choose. It was easy to see from the sales charts that NIV’84 was the more popular choice by far. TNIV was not selling well at all. So, it was quite a daring move to merge the two versions, with the product ending up much more like TNIV than NIV’84. This gamble will likely cost Zondervan sales. But all the translation decisions were made by the CBT, so Zondervan can’t really be blamed for that. But, it can’t make much business sense for Zondervan to essentially trade the #1 selling translation for one that struggled to stay in the top ten.

Removing NIV’84 has seemed oppressive to people. Some are ready to leave NIV simply because this seems so harsh to remove the #1 selling translation from the market. It has applied pressure on Northwestern Publishing House and WELS to make a quick decision, one that might not be in our best interests in the long run. Had we all been more informed about the controversies, we might be better prepared as a synod. Some will and some will not be fooled by an NIV cover on top of a translation that is essentially “TNIV 2.” If it had been called “TNIV 2,” I think that would be quite fair. Some would want it. Others would not. But people would know it’s “TNIV 2.”

It is easy to demonstrate that NIV 2011 is way more TNIV than NIV 1984. 91-92% of the verses are identical to TNIV, while only 61% of the verses are the same as NIV’84. See http://www.slowley.com/niv2011_comparison/. See the chart at: <http://biblewebapp.com/niv2011-changes/>. See page 13 of **Appendix A: “Evaluating NIV 2011.”**⁵⁵ The CBT website does

⁵² For some examples, see Appendix A, page 11, and also page 2.

⁵³ The 1995 CBT included a statement in the NIVI Preface that certainly did not calm concerns: “it was often appropriate to **mute the patriarchalism** of the culture of the biblical writers through gender-inclusive language when this could be done without compromising the message of the Spirit” (emphasis mine). For the whole preface, see: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/nivi-preface.html>. Some even began to ask if all current members of the NIV-CBT really subscribe to “inerrancy.” E.g., see: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/niv-inerrancy.html>. According to the original charter, article III, section 3, each CBT member must regard the Bible as “inerrant in the autographs.” I’ve heard that they have a “high view of Scripture” which dogmatically seems very indefinite.

⁵⁴ see “supporters and critics” at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Today's_New_International_Version

⁵⁵ To my eyes, much has changed from NIV’84 in the direction of TNIV. For more information: http://www.slowley.com/niv2011_comparison/index.html.

claim that 95% of NIV remains the same.⁵⁶ I have not seen the raw data supporting that claim. That must be some kind of “word level” comparison, but the data I have seen shows only 91.37% of NIV’84’s words remain in NIV’11, and there is no comparison made to TNIV.⁵⁷ My question is: how much of TNIV remains the same in NIV’11? Might it be that more than 99% of the words remain from TNIV to NIV’11? The claim about 95% remaining the same from NIV’84 to NIV’11 is only important to this particular discussion if we also learn what percentage of TNIV’s words remain the same in NIV’11.

If 99+% is correct, it makes my point: NIV’11 is essentially TNIV 2. If this new translation were not called “NIV” but were called, “TNIV 2,” it would make the whole change even more interesting. Not as many people would assume it’s the same old NIV. People would not immediately make it the default selection, because we never had a deal with the TNIV, did we?

So, I would submit the idea that we do not so much need to seek a “deal-breaker” at all. Instead, an entirely new deal needs to be made. That is a more difficult road for a translation to travel, but I believe NIV’11 must travel that road.

There are serious concerns with NIV 2011. Some of these concerns were raised by TEC appointed reviewers (See the TEC appointed reviewers’ comments quoted in **Appendix B**: the chart comparing NIV 2011 with other translations). Several of the reviewers seemed to indicate that if their concerns continued through the Bible, there should be serious doubt whether we should adopt NIV’11. Many of those concerns do seem to continue from book to book. Individual reviewers may disagree. Some TEC appointed reviewers certainly did come to different judgments. I will not repeat a long list of passages here, so I will repeat this request: **please look for and read the TEC appointed reviewers’ concerns in Appendix B.** The first few pages document some of the more serious concerns. The remainder lists examples of other concerns in Biblical order, especially those mentioned by the TEC appointed reviewers.

In **Appendix A**, I tried to list some of the improvements, some debatable changes, and some weakened passages in NIV’11. I must admit that I did not find nearly as many improvements as problems. I will discuss a few of my concerns below. One purpose of **Appendix B** was to list other concerns, especially those of other TEC appointed reviewers.

At what point is “critical mass” reached for each pastor or professor or editor or teacher or layman...? At what point is a pastor able to say, “I’ve seen enough. There are too many problems here.” I cannot answer that question for anyone else. I can report that some have already reached that point. One pastor spoke on the synod convention floor, concluding that due to the problems, NIV 2011 is “unacceptable.” Several congregations have studied the NIV’s changes with their pastors and decided that they will not be using NIV’11. Some pastors have met and studied the issue and determined that NIV is not sufficiently reliable. Individual pastors have said in public and private that they could not recommend NIV’11. We all have the right to use our best Christian judgment in this matter.⁵⁸

While reading and receiving materials from the TEC, we should not ignore the concerns that have been raised by others. I agree with President Schroeder’s comments on the September 2011 WELS Connection video regarding the importance of this issue, and the importance of “all viewpoints being heard and all concerns being addressed.” If this essay is read and/or heard within WELS, it can be one example of that being carried out. Thank you for this opportunity.

⁵⁶ <http://www.niv-cbt.org/category/questions/tniv/>

⁵⁷ <http://www.biblewebapp.com/niv2011-changes/>

⁵⁸ We do well to listen to these judgments. If NIV’11 is chosen, some have stated openly that they would not be purchasing materials based on NIV’11. Then NPH would unfortunately have to suffer a loss of sales. And perhaps this difference in judgment might become difficult in other ways.

Delegates will be voting on this matter in the summer of 2012. How much of the objective evidence will they see and have time to carefully weigh and consider? I do not believe it is sufficient to simply read through the NIV 2011 to see how it reads/feels. Sure, take that test drive. But it isn't enough. Pastors, please look under the hood too. Check it over carefully (exegetically/doctrinally).

I highly recommend that every pastor read Prof. Brug's TNIV review. See: <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/2152> in the WLS essay file (or, WLQ Spring 2006. Vol. 103, No. 2, pp. 138ff.). All of the points Prof. Brug made about the TNIV apply now to NIV 2011 (with the possible exception of a minor point - see if you can find it).

The NIV 2011 translators' notes make some nice claims.

Using plurals instead of singulars to deal with generic forms was avoided. Except for some instances where all alternatives proved awkward or potentially misleading, singular nouns or substantive participles in the biblical languages were translated with singular nouns or noun equivalents in English ("The one who. . .," "the person who. . .," "whoever. . .," and the like).

Using second person forms instead of third person forms to deal with generics was avoided. In other words, the translation does not read, "You who have this-or-that should do such-and-such," to avoid saying "He who has this-or-that should do such-and-such." The exception to this rule was when a second person form was already present in the immediate context and it would be poor English style not to preserve it throughout.⁵⁹

When I examined the changes in NIV, I noticed that there are actually many examples of singulars being changed to plurals. The following are just a few examples: Psalm 8:4-6; Hebrews 2:6-8; John 14:23; Proverbs 10:26; 11:9; 12:11; 12:15; 16:17; etc... Many more could be given. And there are many examples of second person forms being used to replace third person forms, to avoid "he" such as, Matthew 6:24, 27; Luke 16:13; 1 Corinthians 3:18; etc.⁶⁰ Some in our midst have complained about the overstated claims of those promoting the ESV. The NIV has overstated claims too. Some of the CBT's claims mentioned above and below, among others, strike me the very same way ESV's claims strike TNIV/NIV'11 supporters.

One of the big claims by the *Translators' Notes* is "Progress in Scholarship." In some cases, there has been a little progress. In other cases, one must wonder. The following is one example of such "progress." The CBT wrote, "We now know that the word translated 'demons' in the original NIV of Psalm 106:37 is more accurately translated 'false gods.'" Really? What about the divinely inspired New Testament which says, "the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons (δαίμονιους) not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons (τῶν δαίμονιων)" (1 Cor 10:20, NIV)? Also Prof. Brug wrote regarding the term דַּיְמוֹן in Psalm 106:37, that it "is a rare word that is usually translated 'demons.' Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 10:18-22 seem to support this understanding. The Akkadian word *shedu* seems to refer to a supernatural being that is less than a god."⁶¹

The translators claim that "alien" means "extraterrestrial being." I wonder if their Collins Bank of English usage really bears that claim out. Might we find some uses for the term "illegal *alien*" during the election process? Isn't the CBT's reference to "E.T." from the 1980's? How up to date is that? The movie, "E.T." came out in 1982, before the 1984 NIV revision appeared. A good debate could ensue on "strangers" (as the replacement) and whether that's really the right term too. Isn't a "stranger" often someone creeping around in a dark neighborhood, a person

⁵⁹ <http://www.niv-cbt.org/niv-2011-overview/translators-notes/> or <http://biblica.com/niv/accuracy/>

⁶⁰ <http://www.cbmw.org/Resources/Articles/Data-Supporting-CBMW-Review-of-2011-NIV>

⁶¹ Brug, John. *Commentary on Psalms 73-150*. Milwaukee: NPH, 2004. p. 255-256.

little children are warned to avoid? I still remember, “Don’t accept a ride from a stranger!” We can discuss these claims for days, perhaps. Finally, someone has to make judgment calls and the CBT made theirs.

There are many changes of many different types, as **Appendices A & B** demonstrate. We could discuss them all. But, I’m going to move on to some of the more serious concerns. The new footnote, “young woman,” on Isaiah 7:14, is a cause for some real concern for the future. Psalm 16 is significantly weakened as a Messianic prophecy as the TEC appointed reviewer noted. The footnote added to Psalm 45:6 is just wrong. The Messianic prophecies of Psalm 72 are changed into petitions.

Psalm 8 & Hebrews 2

One of the biggest problems with the NIV 2011 is the changed translation of Psalm 8:4-6 and Hebrews 2:6-9. Dr. Martin Luther, the Lutheran Confessions, and many confessional Lutheran scholars have clearly explained Psalm 8:4-6 as a Messianic prophecy and Hebrews 2:6-9 as the fulfillment. I recommend the chapter, “*Luther and Psalm 8*,” in “*Luther Lives*” (NPH, 1983. pp. 85ff.), where Prof. Wilbert Gawrisch wrote about this “direct or rectilinear Messianic prophecy.” Now available here: <http://www.wlsessays.net/files/PS8.pdf>.

Some might debate that this is an exegetical question. **My main point in this presentation is that NIV 2011 makes it impossible for an English reader to interpret Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2 as direct, rectilinear prophecy about Christ.** Some, such as Fee & Strauss, actually assert that “all commentators agree” that Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2 are merely about humanity in general.⁶² That is true of many commentators, but it is simply not true among confessional Lutherans of our heritage as will be demonstrated below.⁶³ It is not even true among non-Lutherans.⁶⁴ NIV 2011 unnecessarily closes the door on interpreting Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2 as all of the following have: Luther, The Formula of Concord - S.D., VIII, 70, Calov, Starke, Stoeckhardt, Zorn, Kretzmann, Lillegard, Honsey, Gawrisch, Brug, etc.

First, note the changes in this presentation below and consider the impact on Messianic prophecy here. More commentary will follow.

Psalm 8:4	Psalm 8:4 - New text in NIV2011 – (Heb. Ps. 8:5)
NIV1984	what is man (Heb: <i>Enōsh, nom. m. sg.</i>) that you are mindful of him (Heb: <i>3rd m. sg. suffix</i>), the son of man (Heb: <i>ben Adam</i>) that you care for him (Heb: <i>3rd m. sg. suffix</i>)?
NIV2011	what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them ?
Psalm 8:5	Psalm 8:5 - New text in NIV2011 – (Heb. Ps. 8:6)
NIV1984	You made him (Heb: <i>3rd m. sg. suffix</i>) a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him (Heb: <i>3rd m. sg. suffix</i>) with glory and honor.
NIV2011	You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor.

⁶² Chapter seven - since I only have the Kindle version, I do not know the page. See the discussion on Psalm 8 there. Occasionally, TNIV / NIV 2011 promoters make sweeping statements like this. Such statements can be just as irritating as some of Ryken’s statements are to the other side. There are at least two sides to this debate, and both make comments that annoy.

⁶³ Does it make you feel that confessional Lutherans do not matter at all to those who make such statements?

⁶⁴ e.g., *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Philip Edgecumbe Hughes, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977. pp. 86-87 on Hebrews 2:8b. See Guthrie, on Hebrews 2:8. Also F. F. Bruce mentions Spicq.

Psalms 8:6	Psalms 8:6 - Uses TNIV text – (Heb. Ps. 8:7)
NIV1984	You made him ruler (<i>Heb: 3rd m. sg. suffix</i>) over the works of your hands; you put everything under his (<i>Heb: 3rd m. sg. suffix</i>) feet:
NIV2011	You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet:

Hebrews 2:6	Hebrews 2:6 - New text in NIV2011
SBLGNT	διεμαρτύρατο δὲ ποῦ τις λέγων· Τί ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος ὅτι μιμήσκη αὐτοῦ , ἢ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ὅτι ἐπισκέπη αὐτόν ;
NIV1984	But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is man that you are mindful of him , the son of man that you care for him?"
NIV2011	But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is mankind that you are mindful of them , a son of man that you care for him?"
Hebrews 2:7	Hebrews 2:7 - Uses TNIV text
SBLGNT	ἡλάττωσας αὐτόν βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους, δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφάνωσας αὐτόν ,
NIV1984	You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor
NIV2011	You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor
Hebrews 2:8	Hebrews 2:8 - Uses TNIV text
SBLGNT	πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ · ἐν τῷ γὰρ ὑποτάξει τὰ πάντα οὐδὲν ἀφῆκεν αὐτῷ ἀνυπότακτον. νῦν δὲ οὐπω ὁρῶμεν αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα ὑποτεταγμένα·
NIV1984	and put everything under his feet." In putting everything under him , God left nothing that is not subject to him . Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him.
NIV2011	and put everything under their feet." In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them . Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them .

I prefer the **GWN** (1988) translation of Hebrews 2:6-9, utilizing the v.6 footnote:

⁶ But somewhere someone has declared: "What is Man that You should think of Him, or a Son of Man that You should care for Him?" ⁷ You made Him lower than the angels for a little while, then crowned Him with glory and honor and made Him Ruler over what Your hands have made ⁸ and put everything under His feet. When God put everything under His feet, He left nothing outside His control. At the present time we do not yet see everything put under Him. ⁹ But we do perceive that Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, is now crowned with glory and honor because He suffered death, so that by God's grace [undeserved love] He might taste death on behalf of everyone.

Textual note on Hebrews 2:8-9: There is no contradiction in these verses if one interprets this as a direct, rectilinear prophecy of Christ. The original verbs ὁρῶμεν and βλέπομεν are usually both translated "see" in English, which makes it look to some like there might be a contradiction. But there isn't. Notice that these are two different Greek words. In Hebrews 2:9, βλέπομεν seems to be the "eyesight of faith" and seems to be more similar to the use of βλέπομεν in Hebrews 3:19, which seems to be more like "perceive." In the translation above (GWN), the

βλέπομεν is rendered “perceive,” which clarifies a superficial appearance of contradiction. It certainly can refer to “spiritual perception”⁶⁵ and likely does mean “perceive” in Hebrews 2:9.⁶⁶

Only by faith can we know that Christ is the Ruler of the threefold Kingdom, and faith rejoices in this knowledge. As to the Kingdom of Power, we cannot see with our natural eyes that Christ governs all things. Heb. 2:8: “Now we see not yet all things put under Him.” Rather it often appears “as though not Christ, but the devil were sitting on the throne” (Luther, St. L. IV:2016).⁶⁷

Whose feet? The crux of interpretation involves determining who is meant by “his” when Hebrews 2:8 says, “put everything under his feet.” NIV 2011 really changes the evidence needed by an English reader by translating “their,” and forcing the reader into a plural interpretation of people. Consider a few other New Testament passages that quote Psalm 8 and apply the Psalm to Christ. Examine each context carefully too. Let Scripture interpret Scripture. Letting the New Testament interpret the Old Testament prophecies is “essential for a correct understanding.”⁶⁸ Please check these verses in context...

1 Corinthians 15:27 (NIV84) For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ.

Ephesians 1:22 (NIV84) And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,...

Jesus quotes Psalm 8:2 and applies it to himself in ***Matthew 21:16 (NIV84) “Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him. “Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read, “ ‘From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise’?”***

Dr. Martin Luther wrote that Psalm 8 “was written about our Lord Jesus Christ” (LW 12:97). He also wrote: “Thou hast put all things under His feet.” Thereby he testifies that Christ, true man, is also at the same time true God. For God does not make anyone Lord over the works of His hands nor put all things under anyone’s feet unless He is His equal, that is, unless He is God.” (LW 12: 131).

Luther’s Works Vol. 12: Here’s some more of Luther’s commentary on Psalm 8...

“a glorious prophecy about Christ, where David describes Christ’s person and kingdom and teaches who Christ is...” (p. 98).

“This passage is quoted powerfully in Hebrews 2:8: “In putting everything in subjection to Him, He left nothing outside His control.” Adam in Paradise is also made lord over God’s creatures and works, but not everything is put under his feet. Yes, according to the first creation no man is made lord over another man, much less over angels. The text in Genesis 1:28 reads this way: “Have

⁶⁵ Kittel, abridged, p.707; H. Meyer on 2:9, “perceive; namely, with the eyes of the mind; comp. iii. 19, al.”

⁶⁶ *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Verlyn Verbrugge, ed. Zondervan, 2000. p. 227.

⁶⁷ Pieper, II, 389.

⁶⁸ Prof. Wilbert Gawrisch in *Luther Lives*, p. 86. <http://www.wlsessays.net/files/PS8.pdf>

dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” In comparison with the dominion of Christ, that is still a small dominion, namely, a dominion of human reason over fish, birds, and animals. Here the text reads much differently: “Thou hast put all things under His feet,” excluding nothing but the Father, who has subjected everything to the Son (1 Cor. 15:27). And this dominion extends to angels, men, and everything that is in heaven and on earth.

St. Paul expresses this gloriously in Ephesians 1:20–23: “He raised Him from the dead and made Him sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and He has put all things under His feet and has made Him the head over all things for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” And St. Peter speaks (1 Peter 3:21, 22) of “the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to Him.” Hebrews 1:6: “And again, when He brings the First-born into the world, He says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship Him.’”

Therefore Christ is a much greater and higher lord than Adam was before the Fall. For nothing was subjected to Adam or put under his feet, but everything is put under Christ’s feet, so that the whole world and all His enemies will have to be His footstool (Ps. 110:1). Therefore this text cannot be neglected, since it strongly proves the doctrine that Christ is true God and man. If He were not man, He could not be called אָנוּשׁ or *filius adam*, son of man. If He were not God, He could not be Lord over all the works of God nor have all things under His feet. For no one has a right to be Lord over heaven, earth, angels, man, life—yes, over sin and death—except one who is true God by nature. (pp. 133-134).

Luther’s Works Vol. 29: Here’s what Luther wrote about Hebrews 2:7...

Many have worked hard to expound this verse. A great number of teachers, especially Jerome and, at different times, Augustine, Ambrose, and Chrysostom, seem to understand it as referring to mankind alone. But we state briefly that though it is possible to understand this verse in an improper sense as referring to man, just as if someone were to understand the statement in Ps. 72:8 that “He will rule from sea to sea” in an improper sense as referring to the emperor, whereas it refers to Christ alone,... yet in the proper sense this verse can be understood only as referring to Christ. Otherwise it is necessary to force the words that precede and those that follow into that meaning by means of extraordinary twistings and turnings. Therefore those who think that this verse refers to the dignity of human nature, which is very close to that of the angels, follow an improper understanding, which is the death of true understanding.

Formula of Concord, S.D., VIII, 70:

For no other creature—neither man nor angel—can or shall say, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me” [Matthew 28:18]. For although God is in the saints with all the fullness of His Godhead that He has everywhere with Himself, He does not dwell in them bodily. Nor is He personally united with them as in Christ. For from such personal union it follows that Christ says, even according to His human nature, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me” (Matthew 28:18). Also John 13:3 says, “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands.” Also Colossians 2:9 says, “For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” Also Scripture says, “You have crowned Him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under His feet. Now in putting everything in subjection to Him, He left nothing outside His control” (Hebrews 2:7–8[; see also Psalm 8:6]). “He is excepted who put all things in subjection under Him” (1 Corinthians 15:27).⁶⁹

⁶⁹ *Concordia : The Lutheran Confessions*. 2005 (Edited by Paul Timothy McCain) (592). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Martin Chemnitz wrote much that was based on Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2:

“So far we have spoken of the presence of the entire Person of Christ, according to both natures, in the Sacrament and in the Church, which Scripture and the witness of the ancient Christian Church set forth, and we have shown how comforting this doctrine is. But if we are asked beyond that regarding Christ’s presence with other creatures, which are outside the Church and subject to God’s general governance, Scripture teaches clearly that to the Lord Christ, according to His humanity, or, as the ancient teachers say, to the humanity of Christ, all things are subject, not only in the Church, but all things in general, so that nothing is excepted but Him who has subjected all things to Christ. In connection with this subjection, Scripture mentions especially the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea, and, in general, all works of God’s hands, whether they are things in heaven, or things in earth, or things under the earth, even the enemies of Christ and so also the devil and death itself (Psalm 8; Philippians 2; Revelation 4; 1 Corinthians 15). In the last passage there is given as the correlative of this subjection Christ’s rule, which in Psalm 8 is explained by the term *maschal*. This means to have and exercise in a mighty way all rule, authority, and power. Christ’s human nature must therefore not be removed entirely and excluded from the universal dominion, which it has and exercises over all things, and so from the governance of the world, because Scripture expressly says that even all things outside the Church have been put under Christ’s feet. These statements must not be understood as referring alone to Christ’s divine nature, but properly of the subjection of all things to the human nature, which the human nature has received in time by its exaltation, as we have sufficiently shown above. We do not say that the human nature rules separately, but the Person rules mightily in and through both natures, with a dominion that is essential to the deity of the λόγος, but communicated to the human nature in time, by virtue of the personal union.”⁷⁰

Chemnitz: “He is not, however, Lord and Judge of the godly or elect only, but all things, no matter what they are, whether in heaven or on earth or under the earth, are subjected to Christ as Lord (Ps. 8:6–8).”⁷¹

Chemnitz: “Ps. 8:6 speaks of the humiliation of Christ. David for the first time in Scripture begins to speak more clearly and openly regarding the death and resurrection of Christ, Ps. 8:6; 16:10; 22:1 ff...”⁷²

Chemnitz: “all things are subject not only to Christ’s divine nature but also to His assumed nature (Eph. 1:20–23, Ps. 8:4–6, Heb. 2:6–8).”⁷³

Johann Gerhard: “All things have been put under His feet” (Ps. 8:[6]).” Gerhard cites Psalm 8 when teaching about Christ’s exaltation. “The prophets also prophesied about the presence and dominion of Christ as man (Ps 8).” “All things are subject to Christ according to His humanity. Ps. 8:[6]; 1 Cor. 15:22; Eph. 1:22; Heb. 2:8” (see esp. p. 237 for Gerhard’s discussion). “The *kingdom of power* is the general dominion over all things, namely, the governance of heaven and earth (Ps. 8:[6]; Dan. 7:14; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:21); the subjection of all creatures (1 Cor. 15:27; Eph. 1:[22]; Heb. 2:8)...”⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Pieper, II, 199-200.

⁷¹ Chemnitz, Martin. *Examination of the Council of Trent*. CPH, 1971. Vol. 3, p. 335.

⁷² Chemnitz, Martin. *Loci Theologici*. CPH, 1989. Vol. II, p. 458

⁷³ Chemnitz, Martin. *The Two Natures in Christ*. CPH, 1971. p. 217.

⁷⁴ Gerhard, Johann. *On the Person and Office of Christ*. CPH, 2009. pp. 51, 210, 222, 235-237, 244, 320.

Professor Wilbert Gawrisch: declared that Psalm 8 was a direct prophecy of Christ (rectilinear prophecy, only about Christ). Please read all of this article, including the endnotes: <http://www.wlsessays.net/files/PS8.pdf>. Prof. Gawrisch is listed here in my list because he listed some other great Lutheran theologians who agree with him including: Calov, Starke, Stoeckhardt, Zorn, Kretzmann, Lillegard, Honsey.⁷⁵

Prof. Adolph Hoenecke: cites Hebrews 2:7 and Psalm 8:6 with reference to Christ.⁷⁶

Prof. John Schaller: cites Psalm 8:5f. and Hebrews 2:7 with reference to Christ.⁷⁷

Prof. Stoeckhardt:

“This can have reference only to the man, Christ Jesus... From verses 5 and 6 one can gain the right understanding for the whole Psalm. What is here said of the son of man, viz., that for a short time he was deprived of the protection of God, obviously does not apply to all men in general... We turn to Heb. 2:6-9 for light... The meaning is that the man... is no one else than Jesus... In 1 Cor. 15:27 the words of Psalm 8:6: “Thou hast put all things under His feet,” are also applied to Christ.”⁷⁸

Pastor C. M. Zorn: first describes what “scholars” claim about Psalm 8, and then writes:

“And yet, in New Testament Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, who inspired David to write this psalm and led him to set it to music interprets it quite differently. Be willing to accept his interpretation in preference to that of the learned theologians if their interpretation does not agree with the Scriptures.... Jesus is the one the Lord here has in mind. He is the Son of man... Jesus Christ was for a little while not attended by angels (Mt 26:53) and was even forsaken by God (Mt 27:46)... This prophecy is about Jesus’ sufferings and majesty... In the Hebrews passage quoted previously, we noted that this passage refers to Jesus Christ. Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit, says this in 1 Corinthians 15:27 as well as in Ephesians 1:22. Jesus Christ is the supreme ruler, the Creator of all; his kingdom has no bounds; everything is subject to him and placed under his feet... This prophecy is about Jesus’ kingdom.”⁷⁹

Kretzmann’s Popular Commentary:

“The reference, as Heb. 2, 6-10 shows, is to Christ, who assumed human nature, with all its weakness and lowliness, who was made in the likeness of men and was found in fashion as a man, Phil. 2, 7. 8. It is to this singular man alone that the next words can apply... Literally, “Thou hast caused Him to lack a little of God,” this being fulfilled when the Son of Man, in the depths of His sufferings for mankind, was forsaken by His heavenly Father, as He Himself cries out, and hast crowned Him with glory and honor, with the majesty and glory peculiar to the essence of God, this taking place when Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, entered upon His state of exaltation, when the Savior, who had deliberately waived the right to use the divine power and majesty communicated to His human nature, assumed and practiced this right, also according to His humanity. V. 6. Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands, as the Ruler of

⁷⁵ **Luther Lives:** “Luther and Psalm 8,” NPH, 1983, pp. 85ff. <http://www.wlsessays.net/files/PS8.pdf>

⁷⁶ Hoenecke, Adolph. **Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics**, Vol. III, Tr. by James Langebartels. NPH, 2003. pages 107, 217.

⁷⁷ Schaller, John. **Biblical Christology**. NPH, 1981. pages 87, 96.

⁷⁸ **Lectures On Select Psalms**, Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1965/1980.

⁷⁹ **The Psalms: A Devotional Commentary**, NPH, 2005. page 25.

the entire universe, with boundless power and majesty, and that according to His human nature; Thou hast put all things under His feet, Eph. 1, 22.”⁸⁰

Prof. George O. Lillegard:

“In regard to the interpretation of this psalm, it may as well be frankly stated that hardly any writer of the present age considers it a direct prophecy of Christ. But over against the virtual consensus of modern commentators, we confidently place the directly Messianic interpretation given by the N. T., the ancient church, and the older Lutheran exegetes.”⁸¹

Prof. Rudolph E. Honsey:

“As we consider this psalm as a whole, we can see that the Messianic Interpretation is more justifiable than any other interpretation even from internal considerations, apart from New Testament quotations, as we have noted in certain verses. The New Testament quotations leave us no other choice than the Messianic Interpretation. It was of the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus stated: “They are they which testify of me.” (John 5:39.) Cf. also Luke 24:44–47”⁸²

Prof. John Brug: “Psalm 8 is quoted twice in the New Testament as a Messianic prophecy which was fulfilled when Christ came and regained dominion over the world for us.” While Brug does see background allusions to the creation account, he writes, “The glorious things said of man in this psalm are fulfilled only by Christ and secondarily, by those with whom he shares this blessing. In that sense, the prophecy is direct.” “There is, however, no Old Testament figure who partially fulfilled the prophecy of the psalm. As a prophecy, it is fulfilled only by Christ.”⁸³ I do not believe that NIV’11 fits with Professor Brug’s explanation either.⁸⁴

Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*:⁸⁵ demonstrates the importance of Psalm 8 / Hebrews 2 in dogmatics.

The Kingly Office of Christ

Christ, the Redeemer, also exercises dominion over all the world and the whole universe. Scripture stresses the universal character of the dominion of Christ: “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father” (Matt. 11:27); “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18); “Thou hast put all things under His feet” (Ps. 8:6; Eph. 1:22; 1 Cor. 15:27); “He left nothing that is not put under Him” (Heb. 2:8). (Vol. 2., p. 385; see also vol. 2, p. 219.)

Communicated Omnipotence

The Epistle to the Hebrews, by quoting the testimony of the Old Testament, gives us the following information: “Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet. For in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him.” In these words there are stated two very important truths: First, the power given to Christ is described, not as limited power, but as divine omnipotence or as Christ’s rulership over the whole universe. The positive statement: “Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet,” is reinforced by the negative: “He left nothing that is not put under Him.” In the second place, as we study v. 8 in the light of vv. 7–9, we learn that divine omnipotence was given to Christ after His preceding humiliation, and so in time, according to His human nature. (Vol. 2, p 158-159)

⁸⁰ <http://www.kretzmannproject.org/home.htm>

⁸¹ *Commentary on the Chief Messianic Psalms*, Bethany/WLS, 1972.

⁸² <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/858>

⁸³ *A Commentary on Psalms 1-72*, Milwaukee: NPH, 2004.

⁸⁴ See: <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/2152> in the WLS essay file (or, WLQ Spring 2006. Vol. 103, No. 2, pp. 146-148.).

⁸⁵ Pieper, Francis. *Christian Dogmatics*. St. Louis: CPH, 1950-1953.

Dr. Robert Preus: described the classic confessional Lutheran position in this matter.

The New Testament, then, is the key to understanding these Old Testament prophecies; it is an inspired interpretation of these prophecies in the light of fulfillment... **Psalm 8:5 refers directly and only to the humiliation and exaltation of Christ.** And Ps. 45:6 points to Christ's throne and in no sense to Solomon's, as the Jews contended. Admittedly, according to such exegesis, the New Testament interpretation will settle the meaning of an Old Testament passage. This fact, however, does not imply that the Lutheran exegetes pay no consideration to the context of the Old Testament prophecies. On the contrary, they repeatedly attempt to show the Messianic character of such prophecies by the Old Testament context. For instance, Brochmand goes to great length in order to show from the Old Testament text alone that Ps. 45 can refer only to the coming King Christ. Some of his observations are that the throne of the King is the throne of God ("Thy throne, O God"); it is an eternal throne; it designates a rule of complete righteousness. No such description could possibly refer to Solomon's reign. That Solomon might have been a type of Christ does not occur to Brochmand in this instance. Of course, such an interpretation of the Old Testament text must agree with the interpretation given it in the New Testament; and therefore the New Testament is often of invaluable help to the interpreter of the Old Testament. If the old Lutherans were charged, as they were at times by Socinians and Arminians, of not reading the Old Testament prophecies in their Old Testament context, they replied that the New Testament understands perfectly and takes into account the Old Testament context; and furthermore the fulfillment of prophecy in the New Testament belongs to the wider context of the prophecies themselves.⁸⁶

Many modern scholars do not see Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2 this way, but many confessional Lutherans have and still do. For this Messianic interpretation, NIV'11's changes to Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2 seem unworkable to me. How can anyone get the direct, rectilinear Messianic prophecy (meaning) from NIV'11? I will submit that it can't be done. That's unacceptable for a Bible translation. For some, this is a deal-breaker, if one must be named.⁸⁷ Repeating claims about progress and accuracy can begin to sound like fingernails on the chalkboard to someone who still wants to interpret Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2 as those above did.

Psalm 8: Who is the "son of man"? Where does the idea of "the ideal man" come from?

Some have said that Psalm 8 describes the ideal man, who would be Adam, right? But, how could "Adam" be his own son, the "son of Adam"? (Heb. "**ben Adam**" = son of Adam, or son of man, or Son of Man). Think about it. It can't be Adam. Then, if it is not Adam, how can a sinner be the "ideal man"? So if you use the phrase "ideal man," it still refers to Christ, not "human beings" (NIV'11).

From my past reading, this terminology ("the ideal man") at least seemed to be associated with liberal theology. Further research finds this term used by Philo, Schleiermacher, and liberal theologians. It seems to have a questionable past. Perhaps it was adopted by commentators without desiring or realizing the baggage connected with this phrase? Consider just three examples (below) of how this phrase formed baggage in my mind. I've highlighted the phrase "the ideal man" in each quotation.

Pieper: Accordingly the Son of Man is not **"the ideal man,"** not "the flower of humanity," not a mere man endowed with similar high gifts, but the singular, wonderful Man in whom the Son of

⁸⁶ Preus, Robert. *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, Vol. 1, CPH, 1970. p. 335.

⁸⁷ Along with **1 Timothy 2:12; Acts 1:16** and fn.; **Acts 6:3; 1 Cor 14:39; Isa 7:14** fn.; **Ps. 45:6** fn.; **Ps. 16:10**; changes to the pronouns, including **Mt. 18:15ff**, etc...

God appeared in the flesh for the purpose of destroying the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). Both the name and the definition are already given in the Old Testament (Dan. 7:13).⁸⁸

Mueller: “The expression Son of Man which our Savior usually employed when He spoke of Himself, does not describe Christ as the “Ideal Man,” but as the unique Descendant of man, Gen. 3:15; 26:4; 28:14; 2 Sam. 7:12, in whom the Son of God became incarnate, Is. 7:14; 9:6. That is Christ’s own explanation of the name which He adopted as His usual designation, as this appears from Matt. 16:13–17 (cp. v. 16: “the Christ, the Son of the living God”). Hence the “Son of Man” is the God-man, foretold in the Old Testament, Dan. 7:13, 14, who came to destroy the works of the devil, 1 John 3:8, and who therefore had to be true God, Matt. 9:2, 4, 6; 12:8; 26:63, 64; 25:31 ff., and at the same time true man, Matt. 8:20; 11:19; 17:12, 22, 23; 20:18, 19.”⁸⁹

Prof. Blume made a reference to the “ideal man” on the last page of his essay, “The Life of Our Lord in Contemporary Interpretation,” available here: <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/192>. He wrote:

This then is the Jesus who emerges from the studies in the Gospels being carried on in many places of the theological world in this 450th year of the beginning of Martin Luther’s Reformation. The resulting Jesus is still the teacher of profound insight; He is still the ideal man whose personal conduct is worthy of all emulation. But—as to the Baptist’s word about Him as the Lamb of God come to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29)? Here the men of The New Hermeneutic would answer with a unanimity that is not so common among them in other matters. They would say:

The words attributed to John the Baptizer surely reflect a great spiritual truth which the early church felt and was striving to bring to expression in this quaint figure. They may still be of value to us today if they will serve as a means whereby we may come to an existential encounter with the spiritual Christ.

This brief excursion through current Gospel interpretation will have served its purpose if it will but encourage us to a deeper devotion to God’s Written Word so that under our Lord’s gracious protection and guidance Luther’s heroic word may remain true for us also:

*Das Wort sie sollen lassen stahn
und kein Dank dazu haben!*

How do we interpret Messianic Psalms?

I looked back at the “*Introduction to the Psalms*” notes I received as a WLS student.⁹⁰ Professor Wilbert R. Gawrisch wrote this about Messianic Psalms:

Although Christ and His Gospel are to be found in every Psalm, those that treat specifically and in detail of the Messiah’s person, work, and kingdom are called Messianic Psalms. Examples are Pss 2, 8, 16, 22 (the so-called Holy of Holies of the Psalter), 23, 24, 40, 41, 45, 47, 68, 69, 72, 87, 89, 110, and 118. These Messianic Psalms have been of special significance to the people of God in OT as well as in NT times. They were the wellspring of faith and hope for those who looked for redemption in Israel, even as they are the foundation of the believer’s assurance and joy today.

Higher critics do not recognize the Messianic Psalms as being prophetic of Christ. Prejudiced by their refusal to admit the fact, or even the possibility, of divine prophecy and by their assumption of the purely human origin of the Scriptures, they regard the Messiah-King of Ps

⁸⁸ Pieper, Francis, *Christian Dogmatics*. Vol II, p. 71.

⁸⁹ Mueller, J.T. *Christian Dogmatics*, St. Louis: CPH, 1934. p. 259

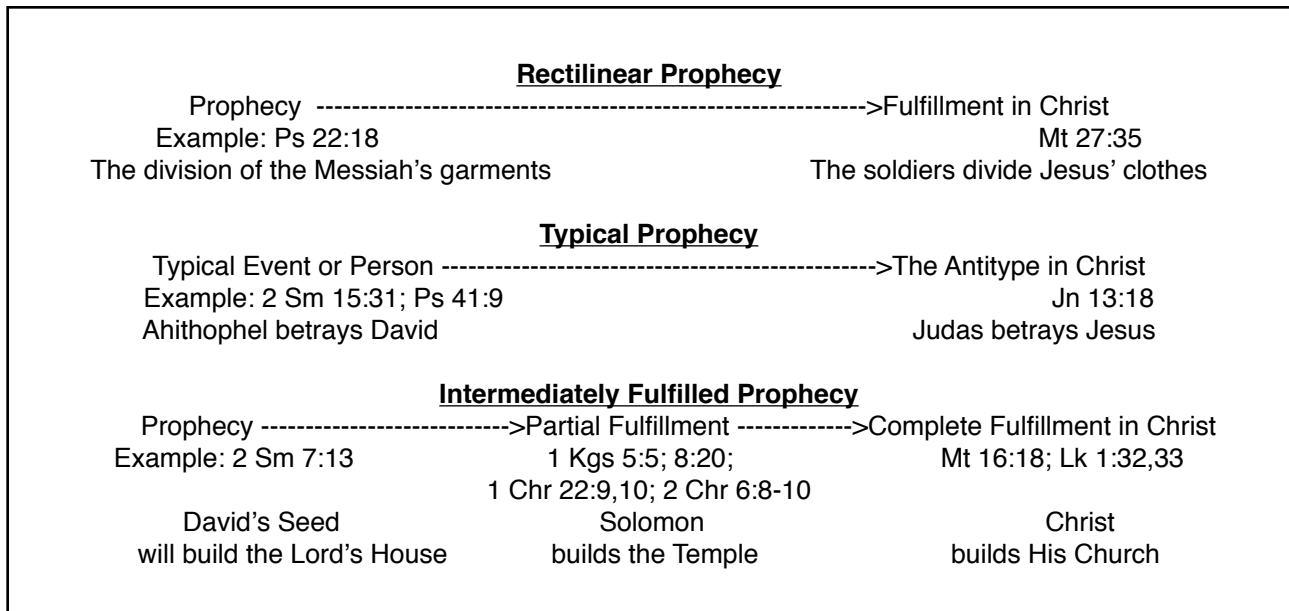
⁹⁰ Seminary Mimeo Co. 1973/1981, pp. 28-31. See online: <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/600>

2 and many other Messianic Psalms strictly as references to a reigning Hebrew king. Scores of NT passages assure us, however, that the Psalms predict in detail the coming of the Savior of the world and the establishment of His kingdom in grace and glory. Jesus Himself expressly said, "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Lk 24:44). He urges, "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me" (Jn 5:39). ...

The distinction between direct or rectilinear and typical prophecy is one that the interpreter must bear in mind. Direct Messianic prophecies are those which find their fulfillment in the Messiah and in no one else. Examples are Pss 22, 40, 45, 72, etc. Typical prophecies are those which refer to the Messiah by way of some type. David in his person, for example, was a type of the Messiah (Eze 34:23,24). What happened to David when he was betrayed by his friend Ahithophel is a typical prophecy of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, one of the Twelve (Ps 41:9; Jn 13:18). So also the nation Israel as such was a type of Christ (Ho 11:1; Mt 2:15). At the same time Israel is also representative of God's people in the NT. Israel's experiences, such as its deliverance from slavery and its entrance into the Promised Land, are typical of the travail and triumph of the Christ's church, of Zion in a spiritual sense (Ga 3:7; Rm 11:26; He 12:22,23; Ps 2:6; 48).

There are in the OT Messianic prophecies also which find their complete and final fulfillment in Christ but which have, in addition, an earlier, intermediate, partial fulfillment. For example, in 2 Sm 7:1-16 (p.p., 1 Chr 17:1-15) the Lord tells David that he will set up his "seed" after him and that "he shall build an house" for the Lord's name. The Lord also promises that He "will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (cf. also Ps 89:3, 4, 27-29, 36-37). From 1 Kgs 5:5; 8:20; 1 Chr 22:9, 10; and 2 Chr 6:8-10 we see that this promise was fulfilled in part when Solomon built a temple for the Lord. But Solomon's temple of wood and stone was a type and symbol of the spiritual temple, the church, which is built by Christ as God's eternal dwelling place (Nu 12:7; Mt 16:18; 1 Cor 3:16, 17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Tm 3:15; He 3:6; Rev 21:2,3)...

These three types of Messianic prophecies may be represented diagrammatically as follows:



I hope we all still agree that there is "direct, rectilinear" Messianic prophecy in Scripture. Professor Nass, of the TEC, has written, "I personally lean toward the typical understanding of

most all of the psalms, rather than the segregation into two groups.”⁹¹ This statement seems to require further study and discussion.

Prof. Nass correctly notes that there has been a shift in the LCMS away from any direct, rectilinear Messianic prophecy. As you can see above, Professor Gawrisch taught us the possibility of all three types of Messianic prophecy. I have always held to the explanation above. Is there anyone in our midst who denies the possibility of “typical” prophecy when it is truly typical, as Prof. Gawrisch describes above? I’m not aware of anyone.

But, as Nass correctly noted, there has been a trend in the LCMS to remove all direct, rectilinear prophecy. This type of view can be seen in Lutheran Study Bibles (CSSC, CSSB, TLSB). These seem to never see direct, rectilinear Messianic prophecy, not even in Isaiah 7:14 or Psalm 22. Isn’t there a danger in denying the possibility of any direct, rectilinear prophecy of Christ? I believe more discussion and clarity is needed on this point.

When Professor John Jeske and Professor David Kuske reviewed the NIV Study Bible (NSB) and the Concordia Self-Study Bible (CSSB) in 1987, they commented on Messianic Psalms with clarity. They described the new “typical” way of interpreting these Psalms with words such as: “disappointing, inexcusable, and untenable.”

CSSB’s comment on Isaiah 7:14 will disappoint many Lutherans: “Matthew 1:23 understood the woman mentioned here to be a type (a foreshadowing) of the Virgin Mary.... ‘Immanuel’ ... may be another name for Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz,” Isaiah’s younger son. But his mother was no virgin, and Isaiah’s son was not God with us.

An area which will be a distinct disappointment to Lutheran readers is NSB’s treatment of the Messianic psalms. This becomes even more disappointing when one finds the same shortcoming in the “Lutheran edition.” In Psalm 2:2, e.g., the NIV text properly capitalizes “Anointed One.” But the note to this verse in both the NSB and CSSB says: “The psalm refers to the Davidic king and is ultimately fulfilled in Christ.” In the light of verses 8 and 12, which can refer only to the Messiah, such a comment from Lutheran commentators is inexcusable.

CSSB’s note to Psalm 110 makes the untenable comment, “It may be, however, that David composed the psalm for the coronation of his son Solomon, calling him ‘my lord’ (v. 1) in view of his new status which placed him above the aged David.” In Matthew 22:41–45, however, Jesus tells us clearly whom David was calling “his Lord.”

The comments on Psalm 16 are equally disappointing. In spite of what Peter says in Acts 2:29–31 that David who died and was buried was speaking not about himself but about Christ, CSSB says re verses 9–11: “David speaks here, as in the rest of his psalms, first of all of himself ...” CSSB’s note to Psalm 22 calls it “the anguished prayer of David as a godly sufferer ...” Despite the psalmist’s clear statements in verses 1, 16 and 18, the author of this note does not recognize the psalm as direct Messianic prophecy speaking only about Christ and not David. George Stoeckhardt, highly respected Missouri Synod exegete of a former generation, made this comment about Psalm 22: “To all who read this psalm the truth simply jumps out that here the suffering and glorified Messiah speaks all of the words of the psalm.... Contemporary exegetes who see in these words the suffering of David, and who see only a type of Christ’s sufferings ... have a veil over their eyes” (Stoeckhardt, *Selected Psalms 57f.*). On this score the CSSB’s introduction to the book of Psalms is also less than satisfactory.⁹²

Please notice how these two WELS/WLS professors regard the commentary of George Stoeckhardt. I remember Professor Gawrisch recommending Stoeckhardt, Zorn, Lillegard, and Kretzmann to me personally after class when I asked him for commentaries on the Psalms that

⁹¹ <http://www.wels.net/sites/wels/files/Messianic%20Prophecy%20and%20English%20Translations.pdf>

⁹² *Wisconsin Lutheran quarterly, Volume 84* (electronic edition.). Logos Library System; Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly (122). Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House.

correctly handle Messianic prophecy.⁹³ I still find these resources faithful and useful. More discussion and clarity would be helpful on this point of Messianic prophecy.

What is the meaning of ἀθεντεῖν in 1 Timothy 2:12?

Another controversial issue is the NIV's adoption of the TNIV translation for 1 Timothy 2:12.

1 Tm 2:12		1 Timothy 2:12 - Uses TNIV text
SBLGNT	διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω, οὐδὲ ἀθεντεῖν ἀνδρός, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ.	
NIV1984	I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent .	
NIV2011	I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet .	

Since this translation comes straight from the TNIV, see Professor Brug's comments in his review of the TNIV in Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly (**WLQ volume 103, #2, Spring 2006, pages 144-146**).⁹⁴ There he notes that:

1. The CBT was "divided doctrinally on this issue."
2. The CBT "had to yield to pressure to include 'adopting an unusual and perhaps undocumented meaning of a key Greek word.'"
3. The first choice of NIV'84 is the TNIV's last choice.

Actually, this last point reveals that NIV'11 is even worse than TNIV in that it doesn't even offer "have authority" as a possibility anymore. It seems completely forgotten. That's a trend to notice.

The NIV *Translators' Notes* explain incorrectly that the 1984 NIV read "exercise authority." Actually, it read "have authority." Here's the rest of the CBT's statement:

Much debate has surrounded the rare Greek word *authentein*, translated in the 1984 NIV as "exercise authority." The KJV reflected what some have argued was in some contexts a more negative sense for the word: "usurp authority." "Assume authority" is a particularly nice English rendering because **it leaves the question open**, as it must be unless we discover new, more conclusive evidence. The exercise of authority that Paul was forbidding was one that women **inappropriately assumed**, but whether that referred to all forms of authority over men in church or only certain forms in certain contexts is up to the individual interpreter to decide. Footnotes to verses 11 and 12 also inform the reader that *anēr* and *gunē* here could mean "husband" and "wife" rather than "man" and "woman."⁹⁵

There are several troubling statements in there. First, by their own explanation, "it leaves the question open." The 1984 NIV "have authority" did not leave the question open. This is a very big difference. When a clear prohibition is turned into an ambiguous statement, that's a big change. Some might claim that they can still see a prohibition in there, but it's a different prohibition. Instead of forbidding "having" authority over men, women are now forbidden to "inappropriately assume" authority over men. If a congregation calls a woman to be the pastor, she could say she did not "inappropriately assume" that authority. Then, according

⁹³ This was before Prof. Brug's People's Bible commentaries on the Psalms were published. Gawrisch certainly did not recommend Leupold or CSSC/CSSB.

⁹⁴ also available online here: <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/2152>

⁹⁵ <http://www.biblegateway.com/niv/Translators-Notes.pdf>

to a likely understanding of the word, “assume,” she could “have” and “exercise authority” over men for the next four decades.

This reminds me of that old adage, “Don’t speak so someone can understand you, speak so you cannot be misunderstood.” To say the very least, 1 Timothy 2:12 in NIV’11 can be misunderstood. That will very likely become a problem for complementarian congregations who adopt NIV’11 as their primary Bible. The problem is really not that some complementarians can somehow find an interpretation they can live with in “assume authority.” The problem is that egalitarians and feminists will certainly be able to find their interpretation in “assume authority” when they definitely could not find it in “have authority.” This translation was designed that way, as the Translators’ notes indicate.

Should we find it strange that some who usually have no use for the King James Version, suddenly appeal to it in 1 Timothy 2:12? Since when do modern Greek scholars point to the KJV for exegesis? (Sure, it serves a purpose.)

Is KJV’s “usurp” precisely the same as TNIV’s/NIV 2011’s “assume”? It is very close. To my mind “assume” is more broad, and subject to misunderstanding as you will see in the definitions below. The KJV translators were certainly using a “different lexicon.” As one WELS professor stated, “usurp” was “wrong.”⁹⁶ It certainly did lead to some misunderstanding of the doctrine, which still remains today.

What was the Old English definition in 1611? What was the origin of “**usurp**”?

Origin: 1275–1325; Middle English < Latin *ūsūrpāre* to take possession through use, equivalent to *ūsū* (ablative of *ūsus* use (noun)) + *-rp-*, reduced form of *-rip-*, combining form of *rapere* to seize + *-āre* infinitive ending *u·surp* - [*yoo-surp*, *-zurp*] –verb (used with object)

1. to seize and hold (a position, office, power, etc.) by force or without legal right: The pretender tried to usurp the throne.
2. to use without authority or right; employ wrongfully: The magazine usurped copyrighted material.⁹⁷

Here is the Collins definition of **assume** — vb

1. (may take a clause as object) to take for granted; accept without proof; suppose: to assume that someone is sane
2. to take upon oneself; undertake or take on or over (a position, responsibility, etc): to assume office
3. to pretend to; feign: he assumed indifference, although the news affected him deeply
4. to take or put on; adopt: the problem assumed gigantic proportions
5. to appropriate or usurp (power, control, etc); arrogate: the revolutionaries assumed control of the city
6. Christianity (of God) to take up (the soul of a believer) into heaven
[C15: from Latin *assūmere* to take up, from *sūmere* to take up, from *sub-* + *emere* to take]⁹⁸

There are quite a few possibilities for misinterpretation. Let’s work through the list above.

⁹⁶ If understood in a 20th century sense

⁹⁷ I cite the “Collins” Dictionary, since the CBT apparently respects Collins, and they’re British (like most of the Collins Bank Data). English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition 2009 © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009

⁹⁸ English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition 2009 © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009

1. Is a woman forbidden to take “authority” for granted? (Just assume it’s hers).
2. Is a woman forbidden to take the authority upon herself, as in “the call seeks the woman, the woman doesn’t seek the call”? If that’s the meaning, it also applies to men who are not to “assume” a called office in the church without a regular call.
3. Is a woman forbidden to pretend to have authority?
4. This meaning would not seem to apply.
5. Is a woman forbidden to “usurp” or “arrogate” authority? Is that the genuine meaning of ἀὐθεντεῖν?
6. This meaning would not seem to apply.

Also the NIV 2011 footnotes add “wife...husband” on 1 Timothy 2:12 too, which does not fit the context. And, speaking of footnotes, where is the old translation, “have authority”? It’s not there. The CBT doesn’t even seem to remember what the NIV 1984 really said. It said, “have authority.” It was clear. It was correct. Is there anything in the Greek or English language that makes “assume authority” more accurate and clear than “have authority”? Or is it really an ambiguous compromise?

See: “*Authentein – A Word Study*” - by Armin J. Panning. Prof. Panning’s study really does answer the question about what ἀὐθεντεῖν means. “With *authentein* the apostle expresses the general principle. The woman is not to exercise authority over the man. Whatever activity or pursuits would tend to overturn that order of things is to be avoided.”⁹⁹

BAG/BAGD offer “have authority” as the first meaning for ἀὐθεντέω. I believe that’s correct. The second meaning “domineer” does not seem to be appropriate in 1 Timothy 2:12. Liddell-Scott-Jones (LSJ) suggests “to have full power or authority over” for 1 Tim. 2:12. That’s workable. In there I find “to have authority over” and that fits perfectly. Unfortunately, Seminexer Fred Danker’s personal revision of the Bauer lexicon (BDAG - see on the year 2000 in the timeline on the first page) reveals a theological bias by suggesting, “to assume a stance of independent authority, give orders to, dictate to.” I cannot accept that. That’s Danker’s personal opinion as a liberal scholar. It would be a mistake to follow him.

George W. Knight III (NIGTC) defines ἀὐθεντεῖν with a great deal of care and erudition. I think his definition is outstanding. Please notice all of the nuances in his excellent definition.

Contrary to the suggestion of KJV’s “to usurp authority” and BAGD’s alternative, “domineer” (so also NEB), the use of the word shows no inherent sense of grasping or usurping authority or of exercising it in a harsh or authoritative way, but simply means “to have or exercise authority” (BAGD...). Paul refers, then, with ἀὐθεντεῖν to exercise of a leadership role or function in the church (the contextual setting), and thus by specific application the office of *episkopos/presbyteros*, since the names of these offices (especially *episkopos*) and the activities associated with them (cf., e.g., 3:4,5; 5:17; Tit. 1:9ff.; Acts 20:17, 28ff.) indicate the exercise of authority. It is noteworthy, however, that Paul does not use “office” terminology here (bishop/presbyter) but functional terminology (teach/exercise authority). It is thus the activity that he prohibits, not just the office (cf. again 1 Cor. 14:34,35).¹⁰⁰

I agree with Panning and Knight on the meaning of ἀὐθεντεῖν. I hope that we all do.

⁹⁹ Available online: <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/1648> or <http://www.wlsessays.net/files/PanningAuthentein.pdf>.

¹⁰⁰ *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Eerdmans, 1992. pages 141-142.

Even CBT “Chair” Doug Moo shared this exact same view in a 1980 Trinity Journal article.¹⁰¹ He wrote that we can be fairly certain that ἀθεντέω. means “have authority” and that there is no reason for thinking it means anything like “usurp authority.” So, without knowing Doug Moo personally, I must wonder if he was outvoted, or changed his mind, or compromised. But, I will now utilize the old ball-yard appeal on a debated call, “Your own guy says so!” If a player on your own team says you are out, “your own guy says so” means you are out. In this case, even CBT “Chair” Doug Moo (1980) agrees with my/our view on this. The CBT’s own guy wrote that it means “have authority” and not anything like “usurp authority” way back in 1980. I agree.

Hendiadys?

This might come up if we prepare a possible “confessional Lutheran” translation. In the past, a hendiadys explanation of 1 Timothy 2:12 was common in WELS/WLS, “teach **in such a way as to** have authority.” For years, I puzzled over that grammar, because the οὐδὲ seems perfectly fine as it usually is rendered, “or/nor.” The hendiadys explanation seems, to me, to have been virtually eliminated by this impressively thorough study: http://www.cbmw.org/images/articles_pdf/kostenberger_andreas/syntactical1tim2_12.pdf. If you find this study as convincing as I do, you might agree that the translation “teach in such a way as to have authority,” is rather passe. In this case, I believe some careful scholarship has advanced our knowledge of the Greek grammar. When the time comes to do a translation, I hope someone remembers to re-check this article. There was nothing wrong with the translation of 1 Timothy 2:12 as NIV 1984 had it: ***“I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.”***

What about Mark 16:9-20?

NIV 2011 casts way too much doubt on Mark 16:9-20.¹⁰² This is unacceptable. The textual criticism of Mark 16:9-20 is a very large topic that I’ll have to abbreviate here. See the WLQ article on this part of God’s Word by Prof. David Kuske: <http://www.wlqessays.net/node/1287>. Also, see “*The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel according to St. Mark*” by John W. Burgon, available for free at Google books. You might be surprised when you read all the evidence! Also see the resources that will be mentioned under the New King James Version (NKJV) below. I’ll state it plainly based on the resources mentioned and my study of the texts: I am certain that Mark 16:9-20 belongs in God’s Word. My WLS professors said essentially the same thing in class. My understanding is that Professor Blume was very upset about this point in the first NIV, shortly before our Savior called him home to heaven.¹⁰³ Now, NIV’11 is much worse. I cannot accept the NIV’s treatment of this portion of God’s Word.

What about clarity and comprehension?

We use and teach Matthew 18:15-18 very often. I believe that the following changes in the pronouns will make teaching and comprehending this section much more difficult. Many more examples could be listed in NIV’11 that are similar, and perhaps even worse. But this is a very common Bible passage among us. There will be repetitive uses of this section. That’s why I chose this as a representative example of a long list of pronoun changes.

¹⁰¹ <http://www.djmoo.com/articles/1Tim2.pdf> See especially pages 66-67.

¹⁰² See **Appendix B**.

¹⁰³ A brother in my circuit confirms this. I think I’ve heard it from more than one man.

Matthew 18:15	Matthew 18:15 - New text in NIV2011
SBLGNT	Ἐὰν δὲ ἀμαρτήσῃ εἰς σὲ ὁ ἀδελφός σου, ὕπαγε ἔλεγξον αὐτὸν μεταξύ σου καὶ αὐτοῦ μόνου. ἐὰν σου ἀκούσῃ, ἐκέρδησας τὸν ἀδελφόν σου·
NIV1984	"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.
NIV2011	"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.

I believe these changes will make this passage more difficult to teach. Try to imagine teaching this in confirmation instruction.¹⁰⁴

Matthew 18:17	Uses TNIV text
SBLGNT	ἐὰν δὲ παρακούσῃ αὐτῶν, εἰπὸν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ· ἐὰν δὲ καὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας παρακούσῃ, ἔστω σοι ὡσπερ ὁ ἐθνικός καὶ ὁ τελώνης.
NIV1984	If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.
NIV2011	If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Matthew 18:17 (above) seems particularly confusing in NIV'11.

In NIV'11, "**they**" and "**them**" are intended to be singular. But it's confusing because "**they**" still brings the usual meaning of more than one person. Carefully notice the **plural verbs** (refuse, not refuses). If they were truly singular, wouldn't it take a singular verb? "If they still **refuses**..."? Yet it doesn't, because "**they**" still seems plural.

What if someone asked a wife, "Where is your husband?" Would she really say, "They is here?" No, but "**they**" is used with **plural verbs** in Mt 18:17 (NIV'11). So, if I asked a husband, where is your wife, could he say, "**They are** here"? Think of the outcome if the wife heard this! (Try this with your wife at your own peril). This is just not good, precise communication. It's confusing, and needlessly more difficult.¹⁰⁵

What is "accuracy"?

This question is being asked more and more by defenders of NIV 2011. The question first struck me as similar to Pilate's, "*What is truth?*" But there is objective truth in Scripture, and there is a correct meaning in a given Bible passage. So, there can be such a thing as "accuracy" and "inaccuracy" in Bible translation.

God's Word gives wisdom to "the simple" (Ps. 19:7). "It gives understanding to the simple" (Ps. 119:130). The Holy Scriptures are able to make ordinary children "wise for salvation" (2 Tim. 3:15). "One does not need to be a scholar to read and understand God's Word."¹⁰⁶ God's Word is clear. Please review Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics* I, 319-329; and Professor Carl Lawrenz's paper, "The Clarity of Scripture" in *Our Great Heritage*, I, 184-201. Let's understand all of the points made in these resources.

Accuracy refers to rendering the correct meaning into the receptor language (in our

¹⁰⁴ adapted from: http://www.slowley.com/niv2011_comparison/Matthew.html

¹⁰⁵ I credit p. 47 of this article for assisting my thinking in this matter: http://www.cbmw.org/images/jbmw_pdf/7_2/criticisms_justified.pdf

¹⁰⁶ Kuske, David. *Biblical Interpretation: The Only Right Way*. NPH, © 1995. p. 71.

case, American English). On a subjective level, one can speak of various levels of accuracy in translating a given Bible passage. One might prefer one rendering over another, but either could be “acceptable” if the same meaning is conveyed. In some cases, a translation does not give the correct meaning, or the reader is not able to obtain that meaning by reading the passage. That could be “unacceptable” and “inaccurate.” And sometimes, an exegetical question appears which does not seem certain to us. This will require special care. But, there are times when the passage is quite clear and is not rendered the way it should be. Maybe the translators do not want to accept the passage.

The famous deal-breaker of the RSV was the use of “young woman” in Isaiah 7:14. In the immediate context of Isaiah chapter seven, and the wider context of Matthew chapter one, “young woman” simply will not cut it. It is an inaccurate and unacceptable translation. It will not help to list the names of “scholars” who claim it could mean that. It doesn’t in context. Matthew 1:23 is normative. It is difficult to look past this footnote. Draw your own conclusions.

Sometimes, perhaps a kind and well-meaning professor might suggest in class that a given student’s translation is at least grammatically possible. That same professor might call the same translation “inaccurate” or “unacceptable” in a published version. What is linguistically possible is not necessarily accurate or acceptable in context.

This We Believe states: “Translations of the Hebrew and Greek that accurately reflect the meaning of the original text convey God’s truth to people and can properly be called the Word of God.” This statement takes it for granted that we are able to determine if a translation “accurately” reflects “the meaning of the original text.” It is possible to say that a given passage is translated accurately or inaccurately.

Gordon Fee & Mark Strauss also use the term “accuracy” and define it as, “equivalent meaning.”¹⁰⁷ That is a definition I can recognize. Fee & Strauss state that “translators must first of all be good interpreters of the biblical text.”¹⁰⁸ That’s one reason why a confessional Lutheran version might be the best choice for our use if a “functional equivalent” version is desired.

I would submit that “functional equivalence” (dynamic equivalence) reveals the translators’ interpretations more than “formal equivalence” (literal translation). For that reason, if the translation is done by an ecumenical group of “Evangelicals” (as most modern translations), the “formal equivalent” (literal) versions might be more tight to the original text and less interpretive (and so, safer). If we want a more interpretive translation, perhaps a confessional Lutheran viewpoint will be judged to be best for WELS.

Can we trust the pronouns?

This is an important question with NIV 2011, because so many pronouns have been altered to suit the “gender-neutral” aims of the translators. I’m convinced that NIV’11 would frustrate me if I used it to teach Bible Class because, in my Christian judgment, the pronouns are not sufficiently accurate (examples follow). Others have shared that same concern with the TNIV / NIV’11.¹⁰⁹ Some of them even drew up some guidelines for translation that are quite

¹⁰⁷ Fee, Gordon D.; Strauss, Mark L. (2009-05-19). *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding and Using Bible Versions* (chapter two; Kindle Location 332). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰⁸ Fee, Gordon D.; Strauss, Mark L. (2009-05-19). *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding and Using Bible Versions* (chapter five; Kindle Locations 1268-1269). Zondervan. Kindle Edition

¹⁰⁹ E.g., see the list of 901 examples here: http://www.cbmw.org/images/jbmw_pdf/7_2/translation_inaccuracies.pdf. I began working through this list. Some were changed in NIV’11, some were not. Such lists are possible if desired.

useful. For the background on these guidelines, please review the timeline at the beginning of this essay. I will insert a few comments in red below. By any standards, there were real scholars involved. Two members of the NIV CBT helped write the guidelines: Ken Barker and Ron Youngblood. But, these guidelines were not followed in the making of NIV'11.

Colorado Springs Guidelines for Translation of Gender-Related Language in Scripture¹¹⁰

A. Gender-related renderings of Biblical language which we affirm:

1. The generic use of "he, him, his, himself" should be employed to translate generic 3rd person masculine singular pronouns in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. However, substantival participles such as *ho pisteuon* can often be rendered in inclusive ways, such as "the one who believes" rather than "he who believes."
2. Person and number should be retained in translation so that singulars are not changed to plurals and third person statements are not changed to second or first person statements, with only rare exceptions required in unusual cases.
3. "Man" should ordinarily be used to designate the human race, for example in [Genesis 1:26-27](#); [5:2](#); [Ezekiel 29:11](#); and [John 2:25](#).¹¹¹
4. Hebrew *'ish* should ordinarily be translated "man" and "men," and Greek *aner* should almost always be so translated.
5. In many cases, *anthropoi* refers to people in general, and can be translated "people" rather than "men." The singular *anthropos* should ordinarily be translated "man" when it refers to a male human being. [BK: See *anthropos* in [Matthew 19:5](#). It **must** mean "man" there.]
6. Indefinite pronouns such as *tis* can be translated "anyone" rather than "any man."
7. In many cases, pronouns such as *oudeis* can be translated "no one" rather than "no man."
8. When *pas* is used as a substantive it can be translated with terms such as "all people" or "everyone."
9. The phrase "son of man" should ordinarily be preserved to retain intracanonical connections.
10. Masculine references to God should be retained.

continued on next page

¹¹⁰ <http://www.bible-researcher.com/csguidelines.html>

¹¹¹ See p. 12 in <http://www.cph.org/pdf/esv/011946study.pdf>. And see chapter 12, pp. 224ff in: "**The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy: Muting the Masculinity of God's Words**" by Poythress/Grudem. <http://www.cbmw.org/Online-Books/The-Gender-Neutral-Bible-Controversy/The-Gender-Neutral-Bible-Controversy>

B. Gender-related renderings which we will generally avoid, though there may be unusual exceptions in certain contexts:

1. "Brother" (*adelphos*) should not be changed to "brother or sister"; however, the plural *adelphoi* can be translated "brothers and sisters" where the context makes clear that the author is referring to both men and women.

[Note: the key is "context makes clear." See Acts 1:16; 6:3 in context, where NIV'11 is incorrect. Also, the guideline says that "*adelphoi* can be translated" that way, but that does not necessarily mean that it usually "should" be done.]

2. "Son" (*huios*, *ben*) should not be changed to "child," or "sons" (*huioi*) to "children" or "sons and daughters." (However, Hebrew *banim* often means "children.")

[See Galatians 3:26; 4:7 in NIV'11]

3. "Father" (*pater*, 'ab) should not be changed to "parent," or "fathers" to "parents" or "ancestors."

[See Exodus 10:6 as representative of many examples in NIV'11]

C. We understand these guidelines to be representative and not exhaustive, and that some details may need further refinement.

SOME EXAMPLES YOU CAN CHECK FOR YOURSELF

The following verses illustrate the guidelines for translation of gender-related language in Scripture. For Guideline **A1** (first sentence): [John 14:23](#); [Rev. 3:20](#); (second sentence): [John 3:18](#). **A2**: [Psalm 1:2](#); [34:20](#); [Gal. 6:7](#); [James 5:14-15](#). **A3**: See guidelines for examples; also [Psalm 90:3](#). **A4**: Hebrew: [Psalm 1:1](#); Greek: [Acts 20:30](#); [1 Cor. 13:11](#). **A5** (first sentence): [Matt. 12:36](#); (second sentence): [1 Cor. 15:21](#); [1 Tim. 2:5](#). **A6**: [Matt. 16:24](#). **A7**: [Gal. 3:11](#). **A8**: [John 12:32](#). **A9**: [Psalm 8:4](#); [Dan. 7:13](#). **A10**: [Matt. 6:9](#); [John 3:16](#). **B1**: [Matt. 18:15](#). **B2** (first sentence): [Gal. 4:7](#); (second sentence): [Exod. 19:6](#). **B3**: [Gen. 48:21](#).

For many, many more examples:

See this study: <http://www.cbmw.org/Resources/Articles/An-Evaluation-of-Gender-Language-in-the>. You may click on the spreadsheets here: <http://www.cbmw.org/Resources/Articles/Data-Supporting-CBMW-Review-of-2011-NIV>. Click on the Excel spreadsheet's tabs below (A1, A2, etc.) to see every example! They are overwhelming in number. See how many times a singular is changed to a plural, etc.

Straw people?

The controversy over "gender-inclusive" or "gender-neutral" translation has a history that seems to keep repeating. Sometimes advocates construct "straw men." Sometimes scholars talk past one another. To aid discussion, and save time/space, please consider reading through or at least skimming this article, written in 2002. http://www.cbmw.org/images/jbmw_pdf/7_2/criticisms_justified.pdf. Do you notice events repeating too?

What about the Collins Bank of English usage?

Perhaps the CBT and NIV supporters make a little too much of the Collins Bank. For a little more information from a different angle, consider an article in the *Westminster Theological Journal* 73 (2011): pp. 89-96. You may access this article here: http://frame-poythress.org/poythress_articles/2011Gender.pdf. The Collins Bank is discussed on pages 89 and following.

First, the Collins Bank never asked any of our members how they speak or understand language at our level or in church. In that sense, the survey completely missed us. Most of their sources were British (which would include some very liberal individuals in the media and academia, and probably even the NIV).

Second, isn't it a matter of historical record that over the past couple of decades there was pervasive pressure in academia and the media and in liberal churches (particularly in Great Britain) to use this type of language? Well, many did, and Collins Bank reflects that.

Third, on pages 93ff (esp., pp. 98-99) of the book "*The Gender Neutral Bible Controversy*," the authors assert that native speakers of a language (e.g., laity, teachers, parish pastors) are able to discern subtleties of language at a "level 3" (discerning), which means that our church members are able to sense what is and is not appropriate, understandable, and clear to them. They might even be better at this for the locality than many professors, foreign scholars, and the Collins Bank of English.

To ask, "is this how many members of the media and academia write?" is one thing. To ask people, "do you require this type of writing and speaking in order to comprehend what I am saying?" is another thing. That's apples and oranges.

Locality does matter too. I could say, "My thermometer indicates that it is 29 degrees. The weatherman reports it is 29 degrees. Therefore the temperature for all English speaking people is 29 degrees!" Would that be right? That fails to take into account location, location, location. Where is the thermometer? In Adrian, MI. Does that automatically count for Milwaukee, Texas, Alaska, or Buckingham Palace? Certainly not. The Collins Bank is a thermometer of English usage for what they checked. Before someone can say, "That's different," let me explain. If I need a drink at the Symposium, will I be directed to a water fountain or a bubbler? (My English dictionary says "bubbler" is local to WI.)

Might the Collins Bank data be useful? Yes. Is it the ultimate trump card for usage? No.

Verbal Inspiration and Bible Translation:

Some questions have been raised about verbal inspiration and how it relates to Bible translation. It is helpful to re-read Franz Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, pages 343ff. on the topic, "*The Original Text of Holy Scripture and the Translations*." There are many helpful reminders in that section for this discussion. The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC), of which WELS is a member, has provided a helpful treatment of the doctrine of verbal inspiration. Here are excerpts:

"Inspiration does not consist in the inspiration of the message or the thought content only, neither does it apply to the biblical writers only, but it is a *verbal inspiration*, an inspiration of every word in the Bible. The Holy Spirit caused the writers to write the exact words which they wrote... Every single word of the Bible is God's Word, and therefore every word is holy. No man is permitted to add anything to his Word or subtract anything from it (Dt 4:2; Pr 30:5-6)..."

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God -- even single words.

That all Scripture is God-breathed means that every single word is the inspired Word of God. When Christ and the apostles appeal to Scripture, they do not adduce merely general scriptural thoughts; they are not even satisfied to quote single passages, but they often lay their

finger on a single word of Scripture to prove their point. In John 10:35, Christ refers to a single word *elohim* (gods) from Psalm 82:6, and adds, “The Scripture cannot be broken.”...

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God -- even the specific forms of the words.

... In Galatians 3:16 Paul attaches all weight to the singular noun “seed” (Ge 22:18), and proves by it that Christ was already promised to Abraham. The promise given to Abraham must refer to Christ since the word “seed” is a singular and not a plural noun. Paul also declares that God chose this term intentionally. It did not merely happen that Moses used the singular form “in your seed,” but it was the will of God that this form was used. The Holy Spirit, who taught Paul what he should say, thereby demonstrated that even the individual words of Scripture are exact and true.¹¹²

Please do not misunderstand. By quoting this, I am not asserting that translators must follow literalistic methods that result in a version that makes no sense in the receptor language! Nor am I saying that it is wrong to render the same exact meaning in a functional equivalent way. Luther often did that. I am saying that translators should be very careful not to change the meaning of Scripture. I am saying that translators must be very precise and extremely careful in following the original text in terms of its very words and forms, understood in context. The very words and forms of the original text are divinely inspired. Translators need to show reverent care for the text of Holy Scripture. In this evaluation, we need to show loving concern as watchful shepherds of the precious souls we are divinely called to serve.

But, it is not merely the original language words and forms that matter. The context is crucial for properly understanding the meaning of the words. Translators have occasionally become too free in rendering God’s Word to the point that meaning is changed. Some examples are mentioned above, such as:

- Some cases when singular is made plural, or plural is made singular, simply to fit a gender-neutral aim.
- When words that are not ambiguous are made to be ambiguous.
- When phrases that are more open to interpretation are made to favor an unlikely interpretation.

Is there some level of subjectivity in evaluating a translation’s accuracy? Sure. But pastors can do it too. Even an expert can err. God’s original text never does. May we never become sloppy with God’s Word to the extent that we say, “close enough,” when we could do better. In school days, we worked hard to learn the very words and forms of the original text. Why? Our professors taught us to be exact and precise in our interpretation of God’s holy Word.

Granted, translating is very hard work. Granted, no translation will be perfect in every respect. But translators still need to take great pains to be as exact and precise as possible in carrying over as much of the meaning as possible from the very words and forms that God has given in the Old and New Testaments. We must not be flippant about translating too freely, especially if the meaning changes by doing so. That said, there will be times when a “hyper-literal” or literalistic rendering gives the wrong sense too. To quote Luther again: “Ah, translating is not every man’s skill as the mad saints imagine. It requires a right, devout, honest, sincere, God-fearing, Christian, trained, informed, and experienced heart. Therefore I hold that no false Christian or factious spirit can be a decent translator.”¹¹³

Appendix B offers some of the places where there is concern. Please see them there. There is some legitimate concern about whether NIV’11 is accurate enough.

¹¹² from <http://www.celc.info/essays/TheEternalWordArticleI.pdf>

¹¹³ Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 35: Luther's works, vol. 35 : Word and Sacrament I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (194). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Christian judgment: A booklet of corrections?

I believe this basic idea came up at least twice at the 2011 Synod Convention: “Why don’t we publish a booklet that corrects the problems in NIV 2011 and give it to people when they buy the Bible?” Each time I heard that suggestion, it seemed that a member of the TEC agreed with it.

Well, I respectfully disagree. Members of the congregation I serve thought that was quite revealing. The very idea of publishing and supplying a “book of corrections” for a recommended Bible translation struck them as alarming. Why recommend that translation then? Should it tell us something that there’s a sincere desire for such a booklet, and an agreement that one could well be made? Think through how this sounds to the average WELS layman, who regards the Bible as God’s holy Word. To my members, it seemed to make the whole discussion rather obvious, to the point of seeming ridiculous. They asked, “Why would I need corrections for the Bible, if it’s really a good translation of God’s holy Word?” It is troublesome, isn’t it? It has just seemed to hover in mid-air ever since. There is agreement that a booklet could well be made, and might be very useful, if we opt for NIV’11. But, doesn’t that say something about NIV’11?

A “Study Bible” which features notes which repeatedly correct the translation above strikes some lay members as similar to what Roman Catholics have historically done with their notes. Usually, we teach them to believe the Bible text, even if you can’t always believe the notes below. Would we really want to start telling them the opposite?¹¹⁴

NIV 2011 Evaluation:

I do not wish to oversimplify. Nor do I wish to be misrepresented. I do not wish to be unfair or unclear. There are some improvements in NIV’11, such as the ones I explained in my “Evaluating NIV 2011” presentation (**Appendix A**).

Philippians 2:6 is an improvement over NIV’84. I was never satisfied with “something to be grasped” there and explained it, even in worship lessons. The Greek ἀπαγμὸν can mean “used to his own advantage.” Actually, I prefer GWN’s, “a prize to be displayed,” but NIV’11 is an improvement.¹¹⁵

In Bible Class, I always corrected NIV’84 when it said “put their faith in.” NIV’11 has “believed” in those four passages (John 2:11; 7:31; 8:30; 11:45). That’s an improvement because it reduces the background of decision theology.

In Pastoral Theology, we discussed Matthew 5:32 as a problem passage. NIV’11 improves what was a misunderstood passage by using the phrase “makes her the victim of adultery.” Although, I prefer GWN’s “causes her to be looked upon as an adulteress.” A little daughter can be a “victim” of adultery when her parents divorce, but she is not “looked upon as an adulteress.” GWN is more accurate, but at least NIV’11 has a passive idea that could be explained.

Acts 3:21 is an improvement too. See the resources mentioned at the bottom of p. 2 in **Appendix A**. NIV’11 has a good change in 1 Timothy 2:4. I always explained it that way anyway. It was never a problem to explain it, but NIV’11 is accurate here. And Galatians 3:24 is an improvement (“until Christ came” instead of “to lead us to Christ”).

¹¹⁴ A one volume Bible commentary that could be used in connection with various translations might be more practical for us.

¹¹⁵ See the thorough discussion in the *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (NIGTC) on Philippians by Peter T. O’Brien. Pages 211-216.

Unfortunately, I found many more problems in NIV'11 than improvements. The problems in NIV 2011 involve departure from the meaning of the original text, not merely in form. See Psalm 8:4-6; Hebrews 2:5-8; and 1 Timothy 2:12 above. Also consider Acts 1:16 and its footnote; Acts 6:3; 1 Cor. 14:39; Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 7:14's footnote, and Psalm 45:6's footnote. See **Appendix B** and the comments there. Recall the many pronoun changes mentioned earlier and the extra sources for evidence provided.

Some cases were regarded as “debatable.” There was some disagreement of judgment in such cases, even among WELS professors, which I noted in part two of my “Evaluating NIV 2011” presentation (pp. 3-4). I will now reveal that I agree with Professor Brug’s judgment in each case I mentioned.

I will allow debatable examples to remain that, but some examples do seem significantly worse. I cannot see 2 Peter 1:21 as an improvement. Luke 1:37 seems “questionable” as Prof. Brug noted. Removing “saints” in every case seems rather unnecessary. Just about every worship service reminds me how often we use the term “saints” in worship: liturgy, hymns, prayers, names, etc.

NIV'11 overuses the “brothers and sisters” change. Acts 1:16 is incorrect in context. Acts 6:3 is incorrect in context. “Sisters” were not voters in the early church. So, let’s be honest. What is this change, really? “Sisters” in each case is a fabrication of the translators, who must assume that having women voters is normal. In these cases, adding “and sisters” is really adding to God’s Word, because these words are not in the original text, and absolutely do not fit the context. So, this is a change of meaning. I am not going to stick my neck out and say translators may never use “brothers and sisters” in other contexts. The AAT does it too. Maybe ESV has a workable solution by keeping “*brothers*” in the text and stating in a footnote on Acts 1:14: “Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, **depending on the context**, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verse 15.” Interestingly, that footnote is not on Acts 1:16 (but it is on Acts 6:3). The key phrase is “depending on the context.” By leaving it out of the text, ESV left it up to the reader to interpret the context. NIV'11 does not leave the option open. In fact, NIV'11 compounds the problem by adding this footnote to Acts 1:16: “The Greek word for *brothers and sisters* (*adelphoi*) refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God’s family; also in 6:3; 11:29; 12:17; 16:40; 18:18, 27; 21:7, 17; 28:14, 15.” Note that the opposite view no longer exists. The NIV’s door has slammed shut on my view of this verse.

Please see my list of examples: **Appendix B**. The first five pages list the examples I regard as the worst, most significant “weakenings.” Psalm 8:4-6, Hebrews 2:6-8, and 1 Timothy 2:12 are at the top of my list. Acts 1:16, 6:3, and 1 Corinthians 14:39 (etc.) will negatively impact the application of the principles of man/woman roles in the church. The NIV translators revealed something about themselves when they added the footnote to Isaiah 7:14, “*or young woman*.” That was the deal-breaker for many with the RSV. The new footnote definitely shows some movement in a direction away from us. Psalm 45:6 has a footnote that is just wrong, “Here the king is addressed as God’s representative.” No, here the Messiah is called “God.” There is further weakening in Messianic prophecy in other Psalms, such as Psalm 16:10. It is harder to find Jesus in there now.

The remainder of the examples are gleaned, in Biblical order, mainly from the TEC appointed reviewers with whom I found agreement. Please read their words, and compare to the other translations.¹¹⁶ In almost every case, there are better translations available. This is

¹¹⁶ I thank my associate, Pastor James Backus, for assisting with Appendix B, and for serving faithfully to enable me to write this essay.

one reason why I was stunned to hear some call NIV'11 the "best" choice.

The original NIV 1978/1984 apparently fits a reading level of grade 7.8. Whether NIV 2011 fits the same exact level remains to be seen. NIV 2011 might actually read at a higher level. For example: "patience" was changed to "forbearance" in Galatians 5:22. How is that easier or better? I don't know of many people today who use the word, "forbearance." Other translations are accused of using "Biblish," but NIV'11 seems to have some too. In 1 Timothy 2:12, "have" was changed to "assume." This is not an easier word to read. There are others.

I believe that **Genesis 6:1-7** is an awkward read in NIV'11. And I agree with Professors Lawrenz and Jeske that in Gen. 6:3, NIV's "mortal" is "unacceptable" (their word). How many people know the word, "Nephilim" (6:4)? This is the type of translation that NIV proponents would mock in the ESV, if it were not in the NIV. At least ESV provides a footnote there, NIV'11 does not.

NIV'11 probably still reads at an 8th grade reading level, but I don't think it reads as well as NIV'84 supporters claim. Others share that view. NIV'84 was easier to read, and had better flow. The changes of NIV'11 do not seem to improve reading flow. NIV'11 does have the feel of a more "P.C." Bible. Some have told me that they find that aspect of NIV'11 annoying. I have to agree with that too.

After much study, thorough discussion, and careful consideration, I must respectfully disagree with the assessment that NIV'11 is the "best" choice. I will propose later in this essay that there are better choices available right now for a confessional Lutheran synod to use.

New King James Version (NKJV)

This very literal version probably even surpasses the NASB in "word-for-word" translation. I wrote that more than a decade ago, but after continual study, I am even more convinced that it is true. Like the NASB, the NKJV is very reliable. NKJV is the #3 best-selling Bible today. It is available just about everywhere, even Walmart. What the NKJV lacks in readability, it makes up for in reverence and faithfulness to the original. Those who no longer understand many words of the KJV would do well to consider this revision.

The NKJV translators used the "textus receptus," the so-called "Received Text" as the basis of the New Testament, but carefully indicate where variants exist in footnotes. It is certainly not true that the NKJV did not consider other textual evidence. I would begin by submitting the book that describes the making of the NKJV: *The New King James Version: In the Great Tradition* by Arthur Farstad. The textual footnotes of the NKJV are the most fair of any major Bible translation. Not all scholars agree that the Alexandrian manuscripts are earliest and "best."¹¹⁷ Past WLS professors routinely recommended a book about this written by Harry A. Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type & New Testament Textual Criticism* (1984). Prof. David Kuske began his WLQ review of Sturz's book with these words: "This is the best book written on the practice of New Testament textual criticism, bar none."¹¹⁸ He concluded the WLQ review with this sentence, "It is the best single book written on the practice of NT textual criticism." Harry Sturz was the man who was mainly responsible for the NKJV footnotes. He was a first-rate scholar who did not share the "Alexandrian Priority" view.

This is not a simple subject, and one must be careful not to make simplistic statements disparaging the New King James Version. Before rejecting the NKJV or using the NKJV, I'd recommend, at the very least, reading through the book: *The New King James Version: In the*

¹¹⁷ See for example the work of Robinson and Pierpont both here: <http://www.skypoint.com/members/waltzmn/RobPier.html> and here: <http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/v06/Robinson2001.html>

¹¹⁸ WLQ Vol. 82:1, p. 78.

Great Tradition” by Arthur Farstad. You might be surprised. When one reads about how this version was made, one realizes the impressive care that was taken to produce it.¹¹⁹ Over-simplifications tend to gloss over that godly care. The NKJV deserves more respect and study in WELS. Many have used it to good benefit in the ELS.

From time to time, when reading a more free translation, it is helpful to check a more literal Bible translation. The NKJV supplies excellent literal translations of key passages of the Old and New Testaments, and deserves to be one of the most-consulted Bible translations today. The publisher of the NKJV (Thomas Nelson) has personally assured me that they definitely have no plans to revise the NKJV. For better or worse, that is something worth knowing. Those in ELS who wish to keep their NKJV may do so, while NIV users must change now, and later too.

I particularly appreciate the NKJV’s inclusion of Mark 16:9-20, which is often used in Luther’s Small Catechism (we still have children memorize it), and the Book of Concord. It is quoted at least 13 times in the WLS Dogmatics Notes. If you have never even looked at John Burgon’s book, “*The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel according to St. Mark*,” do yourself a favor and see how much evidence there really is.¹²⁰ It might surprise you. My WLS Professors recommended that we read it if we had questions about this section. In this old book, a scholar from over a century ago puts many of today’s scholars to shame. You’ll find evidence not found elsewhere. And it’s free as a PDF at Google Books.

You will find a few archaic words in the NKJV if you use it often, such as “tarry,” “brethren” (which if you study the definition, fits *adelphoi* perfectly, but it would have to be taught), and “gird.” Professor Panning’s statement seems to apply to the NKJV: “It is infinitely better to retain a translation that may not be as easy reading, that may not include the latest in scholarship, but which accords to the Lord Jesus Christ His rightful place in God’s plan of salvation. I take it for granted that we agree on this, and that it will not be necessary to belabor the point.”¹²¹

In these days of new and constantly changing Bible translations, the New King James Version (NKJV) stands firm as a very faithful and reliable translation of God's holy Word. What I appreciate most about the NKJV is its accuracy. You can be sure that the pronouns and words of the NKJV correspond precisely to the original Hebrew or Greek text. I recommend the NKJV. I believe that the NKJV “is a contemporary Bible translation which, although not a perfect translation, is one which may be used with a high degree of confidence.”¹²²

English Standard Version (ESV)

The English Standard Version was produced by scholars who were not pleased with the direction the NIV was moving. Several LCMS professors were included in the group of scholars who worked on the ESV.¹²³ The ESV is a revision of the RSV, but with the clear aim of correcting the problems in the RSV. The ESV does correct the most serious problems (Isaiah

¹¹⁹ Farstad, Arthur. *The New King James Version: In the Great Tradition*. Thomas Nelson. 1995

¹²⁰ Please do not confuse the real John Burgon with the Dean Burgon Society.

¹²¹ “The NASB, Is This The Answer?” p.5, quoted above.

¹²² This statement by the WLS faculty was actually applied to NIV 1978 and NIV 1984. I use it as boilerplate for a recommended version. Quoted words taken from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, & Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. (1998). *Vol. 85: Wisconsin Lutheran quarterly, Volume 85* (electronic edition.). Logos Library System; Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly (108). Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House.

¹²³ <http://www.esv.org/esv/scholarship/translation-review-scholars/>

7:14; Romans 9:5; etc.). Its goals are to be more “literal” than the NIV and more easy to read than the NASB. The ESV seems to accomplish both goals. The ESV purposefully aims to follow the “Colorado Springs Guidelines” mentioned above¹²⁴. These guidelines deal with gender-inclusive or gender-neutral Bible translation. Two members of the NIV CBT helped write the guidelines: Ken Barker and Ron Youngblood.

I agree with Prof. Brug’s good, even-handed preliminary review of the ESV.¹²⁵ Please read that. Brug compares TNIV (very similar to NIV 2011) to the ESV...

The ESV is better than the TNIV in so far as, it introduces fewer questionable or wrong interpretations into the translation. It is not entirely immune to the TNIV’s negative reputation as a divisive translation, in that it is something of a counter-translation to the TNIV, but it carries less negative baggage than the TNIV. Neither the TNIV or ESV will win the degree of acceptance that the NIV enjoyed in Evangelical Christianity. If the choice was between the TNIV and ESV, my vote, based on an initial study, would go to the ESV. What if the choice were between the NIV [1984] and the ESV? This decision would not be so easy. While the ESV does enjoy some advantage in not introducing as much interpretation into the text, it reads less smoothly than the NIV. It is not that its language is very archaic and hard to understand like the King James, but just that it does not have the natural flow of contemporary English. In many places it sounds quite stilted even to a reader used to the idioms of the King James. Perhaps some of this is due to the fact that the ESV is not a fresh translation but a touch-up of the RSV, done in part to meet the need for a quickly available alternative to the TNIV.

I also agree with the observation that ESV lacks “the natural flow of contemporary English.” In some cases, I believe that is partially due to the ESV’s attempt to be more “transparent” to the original text. Consider Ezekiel 33:7 which sounds a little awkward in the ESV, “So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel.” We would probably say, as NIV 1984 did, “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel.” But if you examine the Hebrew text, you will see that the ESV is trying to offer emphasis by prolepsis. “You” is brought forward for emphasis, perhaps (cp. NASB, NKJV).

According to evidence available, the ESV seems to read at a level comparable to the NIV. See some evidence of this from the ESV’s publisher: <http://www.crossway.org/blog/2005/08/readability-grade-levels/>. Also see this agreed to by the NIV’s publisher: <http://www.zondervan.com/Cultures/en-US/Product/Bible/Translations/ESV.htm?QueryStringSite=Zondervan>. The people at the congregation I serve have repeatedly said that they find the ESV a little easier to understand than the NKJV, and similar to the NIV in terms of reading level. They were insulted when I told them that some say that the ESV is too hard for most people to understand in WELS. If the Missouri Synod can read it and make sense of it, is it possible that WELS members could too? It would seem so. It remains a good option on the table. See **appendix B**, for more examples.

The main problem I had with the ESV was 1 Corinthians 11:3. But, if we explain the footnote as correct, that might be surmountable. Perhaps more study/discussion on this point would be helpful. Professor Nass has raised some criticisms of the ESV, many of which I would agree with. His paper, is available here: <http://www.wels.net/news-events/forward-in-christ/april-2011/some-thoughts-esv-and-bible-translation>. After reading the paper a few times, I addressed some matters with Professor Nass. The following is the basic gist of my response to Prof. Nass’s essay.

¹²⁴ See the guidelines here: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/csguidelines.html>

¹²⁵ <http://www.wlssays.net/node/2151> (WLQ Fall 2006. Vol. 103, No. 4, pp. 302ff.)

The ESV has published a very conservative revision (ESV 2011) which corrects some of the concerns raised. For example, in 2 Cor 4:3 (cf. Nass p. 7) the new ESV 2011 has removed “only” so now it reads, “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.”

Prof. Nass demonstrates that ESV is neither perfectly literal nor perfectly consistent. Neither is NIV’11 perfectly functionally equivalent nor perfectly consistent. Both translations had to make judgment calls. That’s why we should judge translations on the words provided, not the “motives” of the translators or publicity claims. The following are just some notes on some of Prof. Nass’s criticisms of the ESV.

Col 2:8 (Nass, p.4) Doesn’t NIV 2011 do the same thing? Also see footnotes of each.

Jonah 1:2 (Nass, p. 11) Doesn’t NIV 2011 do the same thing “because”?

Jonah 1:5 (Nass, p.11) Doesn’t NIV 2011 do the same thing “had gone”?

Jonah 1:11 (Nass, p.12) Doesn’t NIV 2011 do the same thing “rougher and rougher”?

Jonah 1:14 (Nass, p. 12) Doesn’t NIV 2011 do the same thing, “have done as you pleased”?

Jonah 2:4 (Nass, p. 12) Doesn’t NIV 2011 do the same thing?

Jonah 2:8 (Nass, p. 12) Doesn’t NIV 2011 do the same thing?

Jonah 3:3 (Nass, p. 12) Doesn’t NIV 2011 do the same thing?

Jonah 3:7 (Nass, p. 13) Doesn’t NIV 2011 do the same thing?

Jonah 4:2 (Nass, p. 13) Doesn’t NIV 2011 do the same thing?

Jonah 4:5 (Nass, p. 13) Doesn’t NIV 2011 do the same thing?

Jonah 4:6 (Nass, p. 13) Doesn’t NIV 2011 do the same thing?

Acts 4:12 (Nass, p.17) ESV 2011 now has a footnote on “men”: “The Greek word *anthropoi* refers here to both men and women.”

Romans 5:18 (Nass, p.17) ESV 2011 now has a footnote on “men”: “The Greek word *anthropoi* refers here to both men and women; also twice in verse 18.”

Isaiah 53:5 (Nass, p.18) ESV 2011 has been revised as follows: “But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.” (Same as NIV, the comparison version there).

Luke 1:27 (Nass, p.19) Isn’t “betrothed” a preferable technical term? Please note the helpful footnote there: “That is, legally pledged to be married.”

Isaiah 43:28 (Nass, p.20) “princes” is also used in NASB95 and NKJV.

2 Cor 11:25 (Nass, p. 20) NIV 1984 uses “stoned” there too, and I prefer it. “Pelted with stones” seems like “pelted with dung, fruit, or vegetables,” more of an insult than an attempt to kill, like when a shoe was tossed at Pres. Bush. I never had a problem teaching “stoned” in Bible Class...

Eph 2:19 (Nass, p. 20) “Aliens” is in current use today as “illegal aliens.” We use that way more here than “E.T.” as a 1980’s reference. Note the footnote there: 2:19 “Or sojourners. A “stranger” can be someone creeping around in the neighborhood.

Acts 8:23 (Nass, p.21) “gall of bitterness” requires explaining, and there is a footnote: 8:23 “That is, a bitter fluid secreted by the liver; bile...”

2 Cor 6:12 (Nass, p.21), this is easier to read in NIV. But compare NASB and NKJV.

Gal 4:18 is a case where the ESV is rougher than other literal versions.

1 Kings 3:7 (Nass, p.22), see a TEC appointed reviewer who disagreed on this (on Acts 1:21 in Appendix B).

Amos 4:6 is actually touted by ESV as an example of what they intended to do. Interesting that both sides point this verse out. Both sides think they are right. I see your point here, but I think the AAT is closer to the idiom and catching the meaning in our language. But it’s not impossible to explain.

Php 1:3 (Nass, p.24) I’m pretty sure I heard a very nice choir piece with ESV’s exact words.

continued on next page

Psalm 23 is beautiful in the ESV. Luke 2 is nicely done. Isaiah 55:10-11 seems well done to me. It doesn't waver on Isaiah 7:14 as NIV'11 does. It's not as weak on Psalm 8 / Hebrews 2 as NIV is. It's certainly better on 1 Timothy 2:12. I am thankful for Prof. Nass's work on this issue, and for providing examples and discussion. It is my hope that some of these reactions might help provide something useful too.

Despite his criticism of the ESV's promotional claims, and some of its weaknesses, Prof. Nass also wrote: "It seems that the same judgment can be placed on the ESV today that was placed by WELS on the NIV in the 1970's: Doctrinally it is 'a translation which may be used with a high degree of confidence.'"¹²⁶ I agree with that statement of my brother in Christ. The more I examine and work with the ESV, the more I like it. I believe that the ESV "is a contemporary Bible translation which, although not a perfect translation, is one which may be used with a high degree of confidence."¹²⁷

Holman Christian Standard Bible

The Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) is a relatively new translation. Here is Michael Marlowe's summary of some of the background.

The Holman Christian Standard Bible is a publishing project of Broadman & Holman Publishers, the trade books division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. LifeWay (formerly known as the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) is a non-profit agency of the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in America. The version originated in 1984 as an independent project of Arthur Farstad, who had formerly served as general editor for the *New King James Version*. Farstad's original concept was to produce a modern English translation of the New Testament based on the Greek Majority Text which he had edited with Zane Hodges and published in 1982. At the time, Farstad was employed as a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. In his translation work he was joined by another man on the DTS faculty, Edwin A. Blum. Together they produced translations of some portions of the New Testament.

In 1998 the people at Broadman & Holman were seeking to buy the copyright of some already-existing Bible version for use in their publishing projects. For many years they had been using the *New International Version*, but this was not convenient for them, because the copyright holder of the NIV (the International Bible Society) had sold exclusive North American publishing rights for their translation to the Zondervan corporation in Grand Rapids, and Zondervan would allow other publishers to use the NIV only under some very expensive and restrictive license agreements. Also, there was at the time no small concern about a planned revision of the NIV. In 1997 it had become public knowledge that the International Bible Society was preparing a politically correct "inclusive language" revision which would make the NIV less accurate but more acceptable to feminists. This move toward liberalism on the part of the IBS was very destructive of the trust which many Southern Baptists had formerly placed in the NIV, and there was a feeling that the denomination's publishing agency should not be dependent on the people who now control the text of the NIV. The desire of conservatives to have a version under their control was later expressed by David R. Shepherd, vice president of Bible publishing for Broadman &

¹²⁶ "Some Thoughts on the ESV," p. 4.

¹²⁷ This statement by the WLS faculty was actually applied to NIV 1978 and NIV 1984. I use it as boilerplate for a recommended version. Quoted words taken from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, & Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. (1998). *Vol. 85: Wisconsin Lutheran quarterly, Volume 85* (electronic edition.). Logos Library System; Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly (108). Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House.

Holman:

Some recent translations have reinterpreted the Bible to make it consistent with current trends and their own way of thinking ... Current trends in Bible translation have been a real wake-up call for everybody who's concerned about preserving the integrity of Scripture. The HCSB will be under the stewardship of Christians who believe we should conform our lives and culture to the Bible - not the other way around.¹²⁸

Shepherd's comments were made in 1999. After the Southern Baptist Convention's resolution in 2011, there should be no doubt about the concerns there. After unsuccessfully trying to obtain the NASB, they chose the private translation work of Arthur Farstad, the general editor of the NKJV. When Farstad died, Blum took over. Michael Marlowe describes what happened next:

The version was then rapidly produced by a large team of translators, editors, and stylists under contract with Broadman & Holman. Most of the team members were Baptists, and all of the New Testament translators were Baptists. But, as usual, much of the harder work in the Old Testament was done by scholars from the Presbyterian seminaries. There were also people on the team from various other denominations. Looking at the list of translators, we see that a woman who was employed as an editor at Lifeway (Janice Meier) is credited with the translation of Psalms 1-51.¹²⁹

The Introduction to the HCSB explains its translation philosophy as "Optimal Equivalence." This theory of translation comes from Dr. James Price, who (like Farstad) was also a key man in the making of the NKJV (then, his theory was called, "complete equivalence," and is described in the NKJV preface). Both the NKJV and the HCSB have conservative backgrounds and leanings. This is how the HCSB explains its translation theory.

Optimal Equivalence: In practice, translations are seldom if ever purely formal or dynamic but favor one theory of Bible translation or the other to varying degrees. Optimal equivalence as a translation philosophy recognizes that form cannot be neatly separated from meaning and should not be changed (for example, nouns to verbs or third person "they" to second person "you") unless comprehension demands it. The primary goal of translation is to convey the sense of the original with as much clarity as the original text and the translation language permit. Optimal equivalence appreciates the goals of formal equivalence but also recognizes its limitations.

Optimal equivalence starts with an exhaustive analysis of the text at every level (word, phrase, clause, sentence, discourse) in the original language to determine its original meaning and intention (or purpose). Then relying on the latest and best language tools and experts, the nearest corresponding semantic and linguistic equivalents are used to convey as much of the information and intention of the original text with as much clarity and readability as possible. This process assures the maximum transfer of both the words and thoughts contained in the original...

The gender language policy in Bible translation

Some people today ignore the Bible's teachings on distinctive roles of men and women in family and church and have an agenda to eliminate those distinctions in every arena of life. These people have begun a program to engineer the removal of a perceived male bias in the English language. The targets of this program have been such traditional linguistic practices as the generic use of "man" or "men," as well as "he," "him," and "his."

A group of Bible scholars, translators, and other evangelical leaders met in 1997 to respond to this issue as it affects Bible translation. This group produced the "[Guidelines for Translation of](#)

¹²⁸ <http://www.bible-researcher.com/csb.html>

¹²⁹ <http://www.bible-researcher.com/csb.html>

[Gender-Related Language in Scripture](#)" (adopted May 27, 1997 and revised Sept. 9, 1997). The Holman Christian Standard Bible was produced in accordance with these guidelines. *[i.e., the Colorado Springs Guidelines]*

The goal of the translators has not been to promote a cultural ideology but to faithfully translate the Bible. While the Holman CSB avoids using "man" or "he" unnecessarily, the translation does not restructure sentences to avoid them when they are in the text. For example, the translators have not changed "him" to "you" or to "them," neither have they avoided other masculine words such as "father" or "son" by translating them in generic terms such as "parent" or "child."¹³⁰

There is much to like there! I appreciate the conservative background of the HCSB very much. And, I understand that many WELS pastors are reading and appreciating HCSB too. Maybe some of you know much more about it than I do. I like the HCSB's conservative approach to Scripture. I like that the HCSB does not waver on Isaiah 7:14. I like that the HCSB followed the Colorado Springs Guidelines, so that one can have some confidence about the pronouns. I'm impressed that HCSB does not make key passages overly "Baptist" in nature.

In many places where the NIV is weak, HCSB is better. For example, Romans 9:22-23, "And what if God, desiring to display His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience objects of wrath **ready** for destruction? And [what if] He did this to make known the riches of His glory on objects of mercy that He **prepared beforehand** for glory" (HCSB). That is just excellent! Sometimes, I get the impression that the HCSB translators were reading past issues of WLQ. Genesis 4:26 adds the footnote, "or *to proclaim*" the name of the LORD. I appreciate "from eternity" in Micah 5:2.

There is no playing around with the translation of 1 Timothy 2:12 in the HCSB, "I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; instead, she is to be silent." Acts 1:16 and 6:3 both say "brothers" with no footnote there either. That's solid. I could live with HCSB's translation of Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2. (Almost no translations get the "capital letters" right on those, if they are applying them to the Messiah.) What I like are HCSB's references to the New Testament passages. That would be useful to the reader, for example: "Psalm 8:6 : [1Co 15:27](#); [Eph 1:22](#); [Heb 2:5-8](#)."

Prof. Nass has offered a helpful review of the HCSB.¹³¹ Please read it. I appreciate his work. He's done such a fine job, I will defer to his review for the most part. I might differ slightly in the concluding comparison with the ESV. The HCSB does have individual passages which are superior to the ESV, but I'm not sure that the HCSB is superior to the ESV, overall. Maybe some day it will be. A few matters would take some getting used to.

HCSB uses "happy" instead of "blessed" in Psalm 1. I don't believe those two are synonyms, really. I definitely prefer "blessed." Happy can be a passing emotion. "Blessed" refers to gifts and blessings that come from God.

HCSB has the two disciples "arguing" on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:15). That's unusual. HCSB uses the word, "moron" (Matthew 5:22), which mimics the Greek sound. But it's quirky. I'm picturing smirking grade-school children, maybe.

The HCSB version of 1 Cor 14:33-35 certainly seems to answer the question about whether it is appropriate for women to speak in voters' meetings. "As in all the churches of the saints, the women should be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but should be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, they should ask their own husbands at home, for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the **church meeting**." (It's

¹³⁰ <http://www.bible-researcher.com/csb-intro.html>

¹³¹ <http://www.wels.net/news-events/forward-in-christ/april-2011/introduction-holman-christian-standard-bible-hcsb>

interesting that NLT has a similar view.)

The English style of the HCSB seems “flat” in these key passages: Psalm 23, Luke 2, and John 3:16. When I first read that the NIV was “flat” in an LCMS review, I struggled to understand what was meant. But now I get it. HCSB is really flat in those places. I’m not sure my people or I will ever quite be satisfied with HCSB’s Psalm 23. I really don’t like Psalm 23:6, “Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord as long as I live.” I’m not really faulting the accuracy of Luke 2. It was a “feeding trough.” I just think our people expect “manger” still. “Away in a feeding trough” will be a good Christmas carol in the future, perhaps. This paragraph mainly relates to English style, English translation traditions, and expectations of people. These are minor concerns compared to those I have with other versions.

I am disappointed with the brackets around the Mark 16:9-20 text in HCSB, and I’m pretty sure Farstad would be too, for what it’s worth. The translation of 1 Tim 5:17 seems loose and narrowly interpreted: “The elders who are good leaders should be considered worthy of an **ample honorarium**, [a] especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” At least the footnote comes to the rescue there: “*Lit of double honor, or possibly of respect and remuneration.*”

Then there are little preferences. In Acts 20:27, I prefer “will” or “counsel” to HCSB’s “plan.” In the latest text edition, “Yahweh” is used 495 times in the HCSB. That would take some getting used to. For another review of the HCSB, visit: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/csb.html>. President Wendland, while speaking at the Michigan District Convention, described the HCSB as “half-baked.” It doesn’t seem quite finished. If we could revise the HCSB ourselves, I would be very interested. But that won’t happen. Maybe the next edition of the HCSB will be even better.

The HCSB is pretty much under the control of the Southern Baptists, for better or worse. Like the LCMS, the SBC saw problems coming. They were wise to be aware and to act years ago. Baptists now have good options available to them.¹³² The LCMS has not been vulnerable to the NIV change. It really cannot be denied that in the 1990’s the LCMS saw problems coming and issued a statement on inclusive language.¹³³ Now that we are all becoming more alert to the issues, perhaps we can produce something better than the HCSB. That would be my hope. I’m not convinced the HCSB is the answer for us. But when I consider the concerns with the NIV’11, I am convinced that HCSB is a more reliable version (overall) than NIV’11. I have not used the HCSB as much as some of the other versions I’ve reviewed. I’ve known some of those over a long period of time. At this point, I think the HCSB might be usable, but I’m not sure I am quite prepared enough to make the judgment. Let me just conclude by saying that I am favorably inclined toward HCSB. Based upon what I’ve seen and read, in a head to head comparison, based on reliability alone, I would choose it over NIV’11. The passages that concern me most about the NIV’11 are better in HCSB.

Translation Discussion Points

Readability

Is readability (smooth reading) the number one concern in evaluating Bible versions?

¹³² HCSB, ESV, and NASB’95 seem recommended most often by Southern Baptists.

¹³³ <http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=681>

To listen to some people, one might get that impression. But I think we would all agree that readability is not the number one concern. Evaluating translations would be pretty easy, and quite fun and relaxing, if all it required was reading a translation a great deal and asking, “Do I like how this reads/sounds? How does it make me feel?”

Readability is certainly one aspect of evaluating Bible translations, but it is not the most important concern. Evaluating Bible translations includes checking Bible passages that have been controversial over the years (Isaiah 7:14; Romans 9:5). It includes checking passages that might reveal a theological slant (Romans 9:22-23; Psalm 8; 1 Timothy 2:12). There are many other considerations as well. Fee & Strauss list some of their considerations, but their list is certainly not exhaustive. Their conclusion that NRSV and TNIV and NLT are probably the best choices in each category reveals that their considerations are quite different from mine. I cannot recommend any of those three versions. I agree with my professors who taught me that doctrinal purity and accuracy should be at the top of the list of concerns (cf. Panning’s point #3 mentioned toward the beginning of this essay).

Evaluate: People cannot read or comprehend the more literal versions.

One certainly hears this an awful lot. The members I’m called and privileged to serve generally find it annoying and insulting when someone says that they cannot understand this or that Bible. I do not wish to be careless in my answer, though. There are passages that are more difficult than others. There are translations that are more difficult to read than others. One has this opinion, and another has that.

I appreciate some objective comparisons, when they are available. I’m not saying that these are fool-proof. I’ve also read about the short-comings of this or that test. But consider just one example of a reading level test between the NIV and the ESV... See NIV’s test here: <http://www.zondervan.com/Cultures/en-US/Product/Bible/Translations/New+International+Version+%28NIV%29.htm?QueryStringSite=Zondervan>. Then, see ESV’s test here: <http://www.crossway.org/blog/2005/08/readability-grade-levels/> or here: <http://www.zondervan.com/Cultures/en-US/Product/Bible/Translations/ESV.htm?QueryStringSite=Zondervan>. One method of testing reading level is known as: “Flesch-Kincaid.” That’s what was used for the ESV. Was that the test used for NIV too? NIV’84 is placed at grade 7.8. The ESV is roughly the same. And, the NKJV has run several tests (Dale-Chall, Fry, and Raygor) that come to a similar conclusion that NKJV reads at an 8th grade level. You may read about this in the Introduction to Farstad’s, *“The New King James Version: In the Great Tradition.”* After that, there are also firm opinions of individuals. But the “objective” studies I have seen rate NIV, ESV, and NKJV as similar in readability.

Evaluate: We must simplify to the point of sacrificing terms such as “saint” and “grace.”

I don’t think we do. Everyone sings, “For All the Saints” and “Amazing Grace” in the same worship service. It’s important that we teach these words. It is possible that we might consider two Bible versions: one that is simplified, and one for regular use in worship and Bible Class. These and other terms still seem important in the Catechism, the liturgy, hymns, prayers, and common use at church. (Also see comments on this in the review of the AAT).

What are the two key rules of thumb in selecting a Bible translation?

1. Be sure that the translation accurately translates the original text of the Bible. Much was written about this above, but much more could be written.
2. Be sure that you can read and understand the words of the translation. Ultimately, a Bible translation that you can’t read is a Bible translation that is not that helpful for you. If it’s just going to sit on the shelf unused, it might as well be a Hebrew or Greek version. On the

other hand, a Bible translation that you love to read could be a great help, as long as it does not lead you astray. The best translations will be those that accurately translate God's verbally inspired and inerrant word from the original languages into language that you can easily read and understand.

A Statement of Christian Judgment: for further thought/discussion...

If an ecumenical / Reformed / Evangelical group is doing the translating, I tend to prefer a more literal version so that it is more tight to the text. That way, we may interpret it.

If a more colloquial version is desired (functional equivalent), then I'd prefer that it be done by confessional Lutherans. I will always prefer a version that is tight to the text, but it is possible to have it read well too. Luther's German translation was really both.

If we cannot simply move forward with NIV 2011, what solutions are available to us?

Here are some of the better selling translations on the market today:

Bible Sales (as of Oct 2011):

from http://cbaonline.org/nm/documents/BSLs/Bible_Translations.pdf

- 1 New International Version (both 1984 & 2011, undistinguished)
- 2 King James Version
- 3 New King James Version
- 4 New Living Translation
- 5 English Standard Version
- 6 Holman Christian Standard Bible
- 10 New American Standard Bible update

The TEC has called the NIV 2011 the "best" option. Based upon my study of the text, and that of the other versions, I respectfully disagree with that judgment. So, I was asked to include any "better solutions" that I would suggest. Here they are.

Suggestions of "Better Solutions" for WELS/NPH

1. **Continue to use NIV'84 for now. Do not revise the *Christian Worship* hymnal, *Luther's Small Catechism*, or any of the NPH Bible History ("Christ-Light") materials for years (as long as possible). By not changing these materials, the translation may remain unrevised (NIV'84). **Publish the new Christ-Light curriculum now (prior to the 2013 deadline) using NIV'84.****

Explanation: I would imagine that the work on Christ-Light 2 was based on NIV'84 anyway. NPH would not suffer a loss for work already done. *Christ-Light 2* could continue to be published (like the Catechism and hymnal) until a new translation is developed or chosen.... Congregations may continue to use NIV'84 under "fair use" rights.¹³⁴ Perhaps an attorney could explain this more clearly. My current understanding is that NPH could even publish new materials (including Meditations, Forward in Christ, and most books) using NIV'84 under "fair use," provided NIV'84

¹³⁴ See: <http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html> and <http://www.copyright.gov/history/studies/study14.pdf>. This is a legal matter: "The cases indicate that there are eight elements which the courts consider; any one of the eight may in a particular case, be decisive. These factors are: (1) the type of use involved; (2) the intent with which it was made; (3) its effect on the original work; (4) the amount of the user's labor involved; (5) the benefit gained by him; (6) the nature of the works involved; (7) the amount of material used; and (8) its relative value" (quoted in the second link cited: *Copyright Law Revision*, p.15). Also, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_use.

comprises less than 20% of the new publication. Books that occasionally quote NIV'84 would seem to be fine.

New or revised books that could not be published would likely include: a study Bible (if based on NIV'84), a Bible commentary (if based on NIV'84), a catechism (revision), and possibly other doctrinal books in which NIV'84 would comprise more than 20% of the text.

WELS/NPH could appeal to Zondervan to permit continued use of NIV'84. Yes, I know that it is very unlikely that they will allow it, but we could ask (again). It might make them think a little more.

One problem for pastors is: what do we recommend people to buy (new members, children, confirmands, etc.)? NIV'84 copies might be around for a few years, but people would have to be informed how to find them and recognize them. If newer members hear you use "NIV" they might accidentally buy NIV'11. At the congregation I serve, we are concerned about that.

Maybe like in the case of "Coke Classic," an ***NIV Classic*** will return to remain on the market, and available for use in NPH materials. But, I regard that as doubtful now due to the fact that the NIV is ruled by the 15 scholars on the CBT. My only reason for considering this as a possibility rests with Zondervan. Maybe they could push Biblica to allow NIV'84 to remain on the market. I'm not sure that NIV'11 is selling very well.¹³⁵

Then, if the TFC agrees, a confessional Lutheran version might be available within a decade. May God bless the effort so that there is agreement on that version, or it will be very sad. It seems wise to encourage and receive the input of more parish pastors if there is such a project. It seems wise to learn from the mistakes made in other translations.

2. This is a modified version of #1. Continue to use NIV'84 under "fair use" rights, as described above. Maybe, if necessary, NPH could **make some use of other translations in various ways on a temporary basis.**

Explanation: If Meditations or another book would approach 20%, perhaps another reliable Bible version could be included for some of the devotions. I believe that AAT is available to WELS/NPH. Perhaps AAT could be used (revised) as needed for a few items. A combination of the best AAT Old Testament with the GWN New Testament would be a decent starting point for a revision. Not everyone is as optimistic about AAT's suitability. I'd suggest **revising it**, not taking it as is. My view of how to revise it would be consistent with what this essay has presented.

3. **The ESV** is usable. CPH materials use it. I am convinced it could be a solid Bible for us, if some could look past promotional claims, and if we could agree that the footnote of 1 Cor. 11:3 would be used. The ESV should be a stable text for the future. It could also be a temporary Bible for WELS to use, while a fresh confessional Lutheran version is being prepared.
4. **The NKJV** is usable. It's probably the most doctrinally reliable version, overall. Keep in mind Prof. Panning's point #3, quoted on page 5. The ELS has been using it for years, and a few pastors told me that they have no plans to change. If WELS had waited to decide on a Bible translation for use in publishing until the NKJV was finished, it might have been our choice. Several pastors have told me this. If we had chosen the NKJV, we would not be scrambling to make a decision right now. Yes, NKJV would require a shift in gears for people who are accustomed to the NIV. But it would have an easy transition in most congregations, where older members remember the KJV very well. Again, this could also be a temporary solution, until a confessional Lutheran version is completed.

¹³⁵ Anecdotal evidence: shared by some who visited various bookstores throughout the country. Zondervan called me to offer 50% off cases of NIV'11 with free shipping. The same deal was not offered for NIV'84. I wonder, do you do that if it's selling that well?

5. The **NASB'95** is usable. Some pastors prefer it. It's very close to NKJV in reliability. We could use it temporarily. Maybe when it is revised, it will be even more suitable for use.
6. The **HCSB** is usable. If this is the "compromise" version that brings together those who want a more accurate version than NIV'11 and those who want a more readable version than the more literal translations, I will go along with it. Although it is not my first choice, I am convinced that HCSB is a better choice than NIV'11. This could be a reliable version to use temporarily.
7. **Obtain another version and revise it.** There are various possibilities for the TFC to explore. The AAT is mentioned above. There are other free versions, such as the KJV, ASV, and the World English Bible (WEB)... <http://ebible.org/web/> It's free to use/revise... There are really no copyright restrictions. But, it's just someone's revision of the ASV. Perhaps a combination of these (and others) could be used. Could it work? I think so, but it would take some effort and care. Would all be satisfied with it right away? Maybe not. But, some would choose this over a new version that is judged unreliable.

What about a new Confessional Lutheran translation?

It seems that any choice WELS makes might be relatively temporary, and that the long term solution really might be a good Confessional Lutheran version. Might I humbly offer a few suggestions about this? If these suggestions are not deemed wise, feel free to reject them, please.

The first suggestion is that we not follow the pattern used by modern translations, with ecumenical committees. I'd suggest that we follow the Luther model as closely as possible. Let's pick someone as close to Luther as we can, and put him in charge. A committee can assist him, but he would oversee the work. At first, I thought this might be risky, but it's really no more risky than bringing every translation decision up to a vote. Luther would have been outvoted a few times, but it was his baby. If the Lord provides the right man, it can work well.

I believe that we need to learn from the mistakes made in other translations. There is some degree of danger in inviting in too much influence from outside of our fellowship. Review how the GWN became the GW. That history teaches a lesson! Also examine the passages that have been pointed out as weaknesses. Let's avoid the problem areas. No version will be "perfect," but let's make it the best version it can be. Let's learn from the mistakes of others.

I believe we should check and compare Luther's German translation as this version is made and reviewed. The more I check Luther's translation, the more impressed I am. Yes, he wrote in a style that people could read, but he was not playing fast and loose with the original text. He was meticulous in getting the right meaning. And, sometimes, Luther's version is unique. Genesis 4:1 and Romans 3:28 come to mind.

What is "doctrine"?

This question has come up in connection with the Bible translation evaluations. In the words of Yogi Berra, this seems like "deja vu all over again." Please read: *'What is "Doctrine" According to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions?'* (WLQ vol. 57:1, pp. 34ff.; vol. 57:2, pp. 81ff.). Harold Wicke's essay, is available online here: <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/982>.

Wicke asks, "What in Scripture is doctrine, and what, if anything, is not doctrine?" ... First consider the WLQ editor's comment:

"Comments from readers after the appearance of the first installment of this essay raised the question whether in asserting that all that Scripture says is doctrine the author might not be losing

sight of the fundamental theme of Scripture. In response to these comments Pastor Wicke writes: "My article also acknowledges that Christ is the theme of the entire Scripture: page 91, line 24ff. It was, however, not my intention to show the relationship of all portions of Scripture to its central and all-pervading theme, but rather to answer the question how much is included in doctrine and whether this or that or some other point in Scripture is not to be included under the term doctrine." Thereby we were confirmed in our understanding that the essay acknowledges what the recently adopted Synodical Conference Statement on Scripture asserts with the words: "All Scripture is written because of Christ and has a connection with the revelation of God in Christ, some passages directly, some more remotely. Every word of Scripture is therefore an organic part of the Scripture's witness to Christ."—Ed."

Now, consider excerpts from the second installment:

Everything in Scripture has spiritual value, even that remark in Genesis 12:6: "And the Canaanite was then in the land," which Dr. Reu in his essay "What is Scripture?" classifies as not being profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, etc. (p. 62). Leupold in his Exposition of Genesis (p. 419) points out: "This is stated in preparation for the promise about to be given to Abram. For no one can fully realize the greatness of the things promised to Abram until he remembers that the land promised to the posterity of Abram was already occupied by the Canaanites. But Abram's faith is not daunted by this seeming difficulty."

Wicke regarded 2 Timothy 3:16-17 as "decisive."

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine (*didaskalia*), for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Various translations have been offered for this passage, none of which, however, affect the point to be made. Whether we say: "All Scripture," or individualize: "Every Scripture," that is, every Scripture passage—all of it and each passage in it is profitable for doctrine." ... "all Scripture is profitable for doctrine ... The *pasa*, whether it is "all" or "every," simply leaves out nothing."

As far as I am concerned, therefore, "doctrine" and "Scripture" are synonymous: we can eliminate no statement in Scripture from having the character of or from being "doctrine."

Whether we include this or that individual item or this or that individual statement in a confession of faith or doctrinal statement, which we as Christians set up and adopt, does not decide whether it is a divine teaching or not.

I personally prefer the findings of the 1957 panel which studied this passage and summarized its findings thus: "By doctrine is meant the entire body of Christian doctrine. We believe that for practical purposes the terms 'doctrine' and 'Scripture' may be considered synonymous."

Summary: Let us attempt a summary. Doctrine includes everything in Holy Writ, for Holy Writ is God's Word—all of it in every particular profitable for doctrine.

Conclusion:

May this information be useful to you and others. May we always regard God's Word as holy and gladly hear and learn it. May we believe, teach, and confess that "πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος -- *all Scripture is inspired by God.*" May God bless you richly!

APPENDIX A: "*Evaluating NIV 2011*" - presented to all Pastors' Conferences in the MI District

APPENDIX B: "*Comparison Chart*" - NKJV, NASB'95, ESV, HCSB, AAT, NIV'11, with comments from TEC appointed reviewers.