

Report of the Committee for Bible Translation, Synod Edmonton 2019

The Committee

The Committee for Bible Translation (CBT) consists of two members:

1. Rev Dave de Boer, Abbotsford BC
2. Rev Rodney Vermeulen, Glanbrook, ON

Rev Dave de Boer has completed nine years on the committee and is scheduled to retire from the Committee. The CBT recommends that Synod release Rev de Boer from the CBT and appoint a replacement.

The Mandate

Synod 2016 mandated the CBT to:

1. Solicit, receive and evaluate comments from the churches on the ESV;
2. To submit worthy translation changes to the ESV editorial committee;
3. To prepare and distribute a report to the churches in advance of the next Synod.

Material from the Churches

The CBT did not receive any material or inquiries from the churches. The CBT did not pass along any suggested translation changes to the ESV editorial committee. The ESV translation committee published a decision not to make changes to the text, which would have made suggestions unwelcome. This decision was later rescinded (see below).

The English Standard Version (ESV)

The ESV since Synod 2016

Since Synod Dunnville 2016 issued its mandate to the Committee for Bible Translation (CBT) a couple of note-worthy things happened in the ESV world. The first noteworthy item was the announcement from Crossway, the publishers and copyright holders of the ESV, that the ESV2016 would be the ESV Permanent Text. This statement was soon retracted in response to numerous protests. The second noteworthy item was a number of changes to the ESV text adopted for the 2016 edition. The change that caused the most discussion was the translation of Genesis 3:16.

ESV Permanent Text

In August 2016 Crossway published a statement indicating that the current 2016 text of the ESV was to become permanent. Their statement said:

Beginning in the summer of 2016, the text of the ESV Bible will remain unchanged in all future editions printed and published by Crossway—in much the same way that the King James Version (KJV) has remained unchanged ever since the final KJV text was established almost 250 years

ago (in 1769). This decision was made unanimously by the Crossway Board of Directors and the ESV Translation Oversight Committee. All future Crossway editions of the ESV, therefore, will contain the Permanent Text of the ESV Bible—unchanged throughout the life of the copyright, in perpetuity.

The creation of the ESV Permanent Text represents the culmination of more than seventeen years of comprehensive work by the Translation Oversight Committee, as authorized and initiated by the Crossway Board in 1998. (For additional information about the ESV Bible translation, read more about the translation philosophy). The decision now to create the Permanent Text of the ESV was made with equally great care—so that people who love the ESV Bible can have full confidence in the ESV, knowing that it will continue to be published as is, without being changed, for the rest of their lives, and for generations to come.¹

As might have been expected Crossway received much feedback about their decision. Further reflection brought them to release the following statement on September 28th 2016:

In August 2016, we posted on our website that “the text of the ESV Bible will remain unchanged in all future editions printed and published by Crossway.” The goal behind this decision to make the text permanent was to stabilize the English Standard Version, serving its readership by establishing the ESV as a translation that could be used “for generations to come.” We desired for there to be a stable and standard text that would serve the reading, memorizing, preaching, and liturgical needs of Christians worldwide from one generation to another.

We have become convinced that this decision was a mistake. We apologize for this and for any concern this has caused for readers of the ESV, and we want to explain what we now believe to be the way forward. Our desire, above all, is to do what is right before the Lord.

Our goal at Crossway remains as strong as ever to serve future generations with a stable ESV text. But the means to that goal, we now see, is not to establish a permanent text but rather to allow for ongoing periodic updating of the text to reflect the realities of biblical scholarship such as textual discoveries or changes in English over time. These kinds of updates will be minimal and infrequent, but fidelity to Scripture requires that we remain open in principle to such changes, as the Crossway Board of Directors and the ESV Translation Oversight Committee see fit in years ahead.

Crossway is responsible for shepherding and preserving the ESV Bible text, as a calling and commission from the Lord; to be undertaken in full consciousness of the fearful responsibility that this entails; which can be accomplished only in complete dependence on the Lord’s grace, mercy, strength, providence, and wisdom; for the glory of God alone.

The Preface to the ESV Bible reads:

We know that no Bible translation is perfect; but we also know that God uses imperfect and inadequate things to his honor and praise. So to our triune God and to his people we offer what

¹ This statement is no longer available at www.crossway.org but was retrieved from <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/2016/09/12/the-new-stealth-translation-esv/>

we have done, with our prayers that it may prove useful, with gratitude for much help given, and with ongoing wonder that our God should ever have entrusted to us so momentous a task. To God alone be the glory!

We believe deeply that the translation and publication of the Bible is a sacred trust and unspeakable privilege, and we want to do all we can to steward this calling, before God, with the reverence and care that it deserves.²

The CBT welcomed this reversal of the August decision precisely for the two reasons stated in the September statement. A translation committee has to “allow for ongoing periodic updating of the text to reflect the realities of biblical scholarship such as textual discoveries.”³ Translation committees must also allow for “changes in English over time.”⁴

Changes to the 2016 edition of the ESV

The ESV2016 incorporated a number of changes to the ESV2011. 52 words in 29 verses were changed. These word changes were in addition to a number of other less significant changes such as versification, a few corrections, the addition of quotation marks and the like. Appendix 1 contains a copy of the publisher’s official list of word changes to the ESV2016.

By far the most significant change, which is also the change that created the most discussion, was to Genesis 3:16. The ESV2011 reads “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” The ESV 2016 however renders the verse as “Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” Every reader of scripture can accept that this change is quite significant. The change has even raised the accusation that the ESV translation committee has foregone their philosophy of an “essentially literal”⁵ translation in order to render an interpretation of the verse to support the complementarian view of biblical manhood and womanhood. The opinion of the CBT is that the more literal translation of the ESV2011 is to be preferred so that each pastor and scriptural exegete can wrestle with the meaning of the Hebrew.

² <https://www.crossway.org/articles/crossway-statement-on-the-esv-bible-text/>

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ <https://www.esv.org/translation/philosophy/>

The Christian Standard Bible⁶

Dr. Ted VanRaalte of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary published an article in the Clarion Magazine in May 2016 about the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)⁷. He expressed his desire to put this translation on the radar and indicated his own personal benefit from this translation. The Holman Christian Standard Bible was a conservative translation that is faithful to the original texts in the line of other translations like the NASB, the NKJV and the ESV. The HCSB was first published in 2004 and then revised in 2009. A major revision of the HCSB happened in 2017, when the translation was renamed to be the Christian Standard Bible (CSB). The CBT was not mandated to investigate this translation. The CBT has not made a thorough investigation of this translation but is including some information about the CSB in this report.

The Christian Standard Bible is published by Broadman and Holman Publishers, a division of Lifeway Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. The roots of this translation go back to concerns in the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1990's that the NIV translation committee was preparing a major revision that would make use of gender-inclusive language. The NIV revision was published in 2011 with the gender-inclusive language as anticipated. The CSB follows a traditional approach to the use of pronouns in Bible translations. The male pronouns are used for generic references and words like 'man' and 'mankind' are used for the whole human race.

The initial editorial group for the HCSB favored the Majority Text as the basis for the translation. This changed after the death of the key editor. The editorial group was reconfigured, and the new editors based their translation on the BHS for the OT and the *Novum Testamentae Graecae* text for the NT. This means that the HCSB shares the same textual foundation as the ESV and NIV, which are or were in common use in the Canadian Reformed Churches. The HCSB included a large number of manuscript notes with its translation.

The translation philosophy of the CSB translation committee is described as 'optimal equivalence.' The translators put forward this method as a compromise between formal and dynamic or functional equivalence. 'Optimal equivalence' means that the translators used a literal translation when this would be readily understood by modern readers but otherwise opted for a functional translation to convey the meaning of the original text. The original Introduction to the HCSB stated that,

“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.”

⁶ Blum, E., ed., *Holy Bible: The Holman Christian Standard Bible*, Holman Bible Publishers: Nashville, 2004, revised 2009.

⁷ Van Raalte, Th., "Introducing the Holman Christian Standard Bible" Clarion Magazine, Volume 65, May 6, pp. 243-245, Premier Publishing, Winnipeg, 2016.

The CSB is the property of the Southern Baptist Convention, but the translation is not noticeably affected by Baptist theology. One reviewer suggested that the translation of the verb tenses in Matthew 18:18⁸ reflected a Baptist view of the institutional church. This same reviewer concluded that the translation has for the most part avoided a Baptist bias.

The readability and literary quality of the translation is evaluated differently by various readers. One reviewer praised the readability of the translation and preferred the HCSB over the ESV.⁹ Another reviewer questioned the literary style of the translation and rated it lower than the ESV, NKJV and RSV.¹⁰ The recent revision to the CSB has removed some of the distinctive features of the original HCSB. The CSB no longer capitalizes the pronouns used for God. The CSB no longer translates the Greek ‘doulos’ as slave but has reverted to the traditional translation of ‘servant’.

The CBT has not done a study or evaluation of the CSB and is not recommending for or against the use of this translation in the churches. The CBT is providing information about the CSB because the CSB is not known or used in our churches but appears to be comparable to the other translations that are currently being used.

Conclusion

The CBT recommends that Synod maintain the CBT committee as a resource for the churches for Bible translation matters. The CBT recommends continuing the same mandate as is listed above.

Appendix 1 – Changes in the ESV2016¹¹

<u>2016 Text Update Verses</u>	<u>Previous Text Verses</u>
Genesis 3:16	
Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.	Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.
Genesis 4:7	
Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.	Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.
Exodus 38:11	
And for the north side there were hangings of a hundred cubits; their twenty pillars and their twenty bases were of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver.	And for the north side there were hangings of a hundred cubits, their twenty pillars, their twenty bases were of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver.
Numbers 14:42	
Do not go up, for the LORD is not among you, lest you be struck down before your enemies.	Do not go up, for the Lord is not among you, lest you be struck down before your enemies.
Judges 6:13	
And Gideon said to him, "Please, my lord , if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?"	And Gideon said to him, "Please, sir , if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?"

⁸ Marlowe, M., "The Holman Christian Standard Bible," <http://www.bible-researcher.com/csb.html>, 2011

⁹ Van Raalte, Th., "Introducing the Holman Christian Standard Bible" *Clarion Magazine, Volume 65, May 6*, pp. 243-245, Premier Publishing, Winnipeg, 2016.

¹⁰ Marlowe, M., "The Holman Christian Standard Bible," <http://www.bible-researcher.com/csb.html>, 2011

¹¹ <https://www.esv.org/about/2016-updates/>

2 Samuel 23:34	
Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai of Maacah, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite ,	Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai of Maacah, Eliam the son of Ahithophel of Gilo ,
1 Kings 8:48	
if they repent with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies,	if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart in the land of their enemies,
2 Kings 20:18	
And some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father , shall be taken away,	And some of your own sons, who shall be born to you , shall be taken away,
2 Chronicles 6:38	
if they repent with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity to which they were carried captive,	if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart in the land of their captivity to which they were carried captive,
2 Chronicles 13:9	
Whoever comes for ordination with a young bull or seven rams becomes a priest of what are not gods.	Whoever comes for ordination with a young bull or seven rams becomes a priest of what are no gods.
Esther 9:32	
The command of Esther confirmed these practices of Purim, and it was recorded in writing.	The command of Queen Esther confirmed these practices of Purim, and it was recorded in writing.
Psalm 18:48	
who rescued me from my enemies; yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me; you delivered me from the man of violence.	who delivered me from my enemies; yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me; you rescued me from the man of violence.
Proverbs 13:16	
Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool flaunts his folly.	In everything the prudent acts with knowledge, but a fool flaunts his folly.
Isaiah 2:3	
For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.	For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
Isaiah 10:5	
Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury!	Ah , Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury!
Ezekiel 40:14	
He measured also the vestibule, sixty cubits. And around the vestibule of the gateway was the court.	He measured also the vestibule, twenty cubits. And around the vestibule of the gateway was the court.
Hosea 13:14	
I shall ransom them from the power of Sheol; I shall redeem them from Death.	Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death?
Micah 4:3	
He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away;	He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations far away;
Matthew 4:24	
So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures , and paralytics, and he healed them.	So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics , and paralytics, and he healed them.

Matthew 17:15	
"Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and he suffers terribly.	"Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly.
Luke 7:36	
One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table.	One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.
Luke 22:44	
And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.	And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.
Luke 24:47	
and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.	and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
Luke 24:50	
And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them.	Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them.
John 5:22	
For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,	The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,
Ephesians 1:5	
he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.	he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.
Ephesians 3:1	
For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—	For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—
Colossians 1:11	
being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,	May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,
James 2:10	
For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.	For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.