

Modern English Translations

In the late 20th century and into the early 21st century multitudes of English translations were made. A quick browse through a current internet site reveals 50 or more translations to pick from. One publishing house estimates that the average Christian household owns as many as 8 Bibles. This lesson covers a few modern translations that have gained attention in our church body.

The English Standard Version (ESV) was published in 2001.

It was translated, reviewed, and published by a team of more than a hundred people.

Its purpose was to continue the stream of English Bible translations over the past 500 years.

It identifies that stream in the following steps:

- ◆ Tyndale's 1526 New Testament
- ◆ King James Version of 1611 (KJV)
- ◆ English Revised Version of 1885 (RV)
- ◆ American Standard Version of 1901 (ASV)
- ◆ Revised Standard Version of 1952 and 1971 (RSV).

The 1971 RSV provided the starting point for the ESV.

Each word and phrase in the ESV was checked against the original Hebrew and Greek.

The ESV intends to be an essentially literal, word-for-word translation. It wants to be transparent to the original language texts so the reader can see as much as possible the structure and meaning of the original.

It is the main Bible used by the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. It is also the translation used in *The Lutheran Study Bible* published by Concordia Publishing House.

Here's a sampling of some passages from the ESV:

- ◆ Psalm 91:1-6: *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.*
- ◆ Isaiah 53:4-7: *Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.*
- ◆ Romans 3:21-25: *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.*

Bible Translations

The Christian Standard Bible (CSB) was published in 2017.

It was an update of the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB), which was published in 2004.

An interdenominational, international team of 100 individuals worked on the project.

Holman Bible Publishers is a publishing arm connected to the Southern Baptist Convention.

The CSB intends to strike a balance between word-for-word translation (formal equivalence) and thought-for-thought translation (dynamic equivalence). It calls its approach optimal equivalence.

The CSB maintains a standing committee called the Translation Oversight Committee to revise and oversee the translation as needed. The committee published some minor revisions in 2020.

A committee from our WELS church body met a number of times with the CSB committee and suggested a number of changes to the translation. The CSB committee has been very receptive to our committee and has incorporated some of the suggestions into its work.

A peculiarity of the HCSB was its occasional use of *Yahweh* to translate God's personal name in the Old Testament. It did this inconsistently. After feedback from readers, the translators went back to the rendering used by most English translations: *LORD*.

Here's a sampling of some passages from the CSB:

- ◆ Psalm 121: *A song of ascents. I lift my eyes toward the mountains. Where will my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; your Protector will not slumber. Indeed, the Protector of Israel does not slumber or sleep. The LORD protects you; the LORD is a shelter right by your side. The sun will not strike you by day or the moon by night. The LORD will protect you from all harm; he will protect your life. The LORD will protect your coming and going both now and forever.*
- ◆ Matthew 18:15-18: *If your brother sins against you, go and rebuke him in private. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he won't listen, take one or two others with you, so that by the testimony of two or three witnesses every fact may be established. If he doesn't pay attention to them, tell the church. If he doesn't pay attention even to the church, let him be like a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven.*
- ◆ Galatians 6:1-5: *Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won't be tempted. Carry one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone considers himself something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Let each person examine his own work, and then he can take pride in himself alone, and not compare himself with someone else. For each person will have to carry his own load.*

The Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV) was published in 2019.

It was published by the Wartburg Project, a 501(c)(3) in fellowship with ELS and WELS.

The Wartburg Project is a group of Lutheran pastors and professors who worked together to produce a new translation of the Bible. There is also a *An EHV Study Bible* published by NPH.

The translated is titled *Evangelical* because its highest goal is to proclaim the gospel.

It is titled *Heritage* because it respects the translators of the past while also seeking to pass the gospel along to the next generation.

The EHV, similar to the CSB, seeks a balance between the literal equivalent and the dynamic equivalent theories of translation. It tries to sound formal where the language of Scripture is heightened and more informal where Scripture intends to be so. The publishers also intend to help the reader grow in knowledge through the notes that are presented along with the text.

Here's a sampling of some passages from the EHV:

◆ *Psalm 1*

Two Responses to God's Word

The Way of the Godly Leads to Blessing

How blessed is the man

*who does not walk in the advice of the wicked,
who does not stand on the path with sinners,
and who does not sit in a meeting with mockers.*

*But his delight is in the teaching[a] of the Lord,
and on his teaching he meditates day and night.*

*He is like a tree planted beside streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season,
and its leaves do not wither.*

Everything he does prospers.

The Way of the Ungodly Leads to Destruction

Not so the wicked!

No, they are like the chaff which the wind blows away.

*Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*

Conclusion

*Yes, the Lord approves[b] of the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.*

Footnotes

Psalm 1:2 The Hebrew torah is traditionally translated law, but the term torah also includes other types of instruction besides legal regulations, so here it is translated with the more general term teaching.

Psalm 1:6 Literally knows

◆ Romans 8:5-9:

To be sure, those who are in harmony with the sinful flesh think about things the way the sinful flesh does, and those in harmony with the spirit think about things the way the spirit does. Now, the way the sinful flesh thinks results in death, but the way the spirit thinks results in life and peace. For the mind-set of the sinful flesh is hostile to God, since it does not submit to God's law, and in fact, it cannot. Those who are in the sinful flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the sinful flesh but in the spirit, if indeed God's Spirit lives in you.

The Message is a Bible production that was published in pieces from 1993 to 2002.

It is the work of one man, Eugene Peterson, a Presbyterian pastor and author who died in 2018.

He had his work vetted by other Bible scholars.

He calls his approach contemporary equivalence, somewhere between dynamic equivalence and a paraphrase. Examples of paraphrases are *The Living Bible* (TLB) and the *New Living Translation* (NLT). Paraphrases translate freely, try to stay simple, and expand thoughts where they feel it will help a reader's understanding. If you think of a scale going from word-for-word to thought-for-thought, a paraphrase is way over on the thought-for-thought side. It is usually readable and may contain some interesting and insightful ways to express thoughts. However, it ends up being more of the author's interpretation of the original words and is weak at being a reliable study text.

Here's a sampling of some passages from *The Message*:

◆ Psalm 32:1-5:

Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be—you get a fresh start, your slate's wiped clean.
Count yourself lucky—God holds nothing against you and you're holding nothing back from him.
When I kept it all inside, my bones turned to powder, my words became daylong groans.
The pressure never let up; all the juices of my life dried up.
Then I let it all out; I said, "I'll come clean about my failures to God."
Suddenly the pressure was gone—my guilt dissolved, my sin disappeared.

◆ Ephesians 2:7-10: Now God has us where he wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing! No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving. He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.

Many modern English translations carry websites that explain their history and production (and try to sell their books!). The websites are interesting places to learn more about Bible translation. The Wartburg Project website (wartburgproject.org) especially contains a wealth of information on the Bible and its background.

A website like Bible Gateway (biblegateway.com) gives a reader access to many Bible translations into English as well as into foreign languages. It is searchable and is a handy way to make comparisons. Some of the translations also have one or more audio versions on the website.

It is amazing how accessible the Bible is to us and to this world filled with people!

Search the Scriptures. In them you have life.