A RESPONSE TO MARK STRAUSS' EVALUATION
OF THE COLORADO SPRINGS TRANSLATION GUIDELINES

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I am grateful for an opportunity to respond to Mark Strauss' detailed analysis of the "Colorado Springs Guidelines for Translation of Gender-Related Language in Scripture" and my defense of those guidelines.[1] His thoughtful article has caused me to reexamine the guidelines carefully and to reconsider the reasons for them.

It should be noted at the outset that the title of Strauss' article signals more than his disagreement with the guidelines themselves. It also signals his disagreement with standard lexicons (such as BDB and BAGD) and with all the noninclusive-language translations of the Bible into English in this and previous centuries (such as the NIV, RSV, NASB and NKJV). This is because the guidelines simply summarize the recognized and established range of meanings for several male-oriented terms (such as the Hebrew and Greek terms commonly translated "man," "father," "son," "brother," and "he, him, his") and say that the new English translations for those terms found in inclusive-language or gender-neutral Bibles are not legitimate.

In fact, several of the guidelines actually allow for more flexibility in the use of inclusive language than what is found in the most common standard English translations up to this time, including the more recent update of

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[1] The guidelines were written May 27, 1997, at a meeting in Colorado Springs and revised by the twelve participants during the subsequent week. They were first issued in a press release from Focus on the Family on June 3, 1997. They were first published as "Guidelines for Translation of Gender-Related Language in Scripture" in *CBMW NEWS* 2/3 (June 1997) 6. They were subsequently published in a slightly modified form as a paid advertisement in *Christianity Today* 41/12 (October 27, 1997) 14–15 with the title "Colorado Springs Guidelines for Translation of Gender-Related Language in Scripture." The original twelve signers were K. Barker, T. Bayly, J. Belz, J. Dobson, L. Dunberg, W. Grudem, C. Jarvis, J. Piper, V. Poythress, B. Ryskamp, R. C. Sproul and R. Youngblood. Wherever I refer to "the authors of the guidelines" in this article, it should be clear that I am claiming to report only my own understanding of the intent of the authors at each point. In general, the viewpoints expressed in this article are my own. At specific points they may or may not represent the views of the other eleven signers. My explanation and defense of the guidelines, with which Strauss interacts, can be found in "NIV controversy: participants sign landmark agreement," *CBMW NEWS* 2/3 (June 1997) 1, 3–6; "Small changes made to guidelines," *CBMW NEWS* 2/4 (September 1997) 9; "Do inclusive language Bibles distort Scripture? Yes," *Christianity Today* 41/12 (October 27, 1997) 26–32, 39; "What's Wrong with Gender-Neutral Bible Translations?" (Libertyville: Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 1997; also published at www.cbmw.org).

the NASB (1995).[2] In these areas the guidelines approve of using inclusive language when the original Hebrew or Greek text was not specifically male in its meaning and when the other kinds of inaccuracies prevented by the other guidelines were not introduced.

The disagreement, therefore, is not between those who want some changes in the direction of more inclusive language and those who want no changes at all. Nor is the disagreement between those who recognize changes in the English language and those who do not. The disagreement is rather between (1) those who want the systematic adoption of thousands of changes that conceal significant elements of meaning in the original Hebrew and Greek text that are thought to be masculine or patriarchal and (2) those who object to this procedure and say we should not go so far as to use inclusive language just to conceal masculine elements of meaning in the original text, warning that "it is inappropriate to use gender-neutral language when it diminishes accuracy in the translation of the Bible."[3]

It may of course be true that Strauss is right and that the scholars responsible for these standard lexicons and translations are guilty of what he calls "linguistic and hermeneutical fallacies." Whether he is right can only be decided as we examine his specific objections. I only wish to make clear at the outset that the authors of the guidelines did not suddenly create out of thin air some new restrictions on the translation of gender-related language. Rather, we were simply reflecting the consensus of generations of Biblical scholarship regarding the appropriate range of meanings that could attach to various Hebrew and Greek expressions. Considering the state of the English language in 1997, we were proposing English renderings that fell within the known range of meanings for each term and rejecting other English expressions that fell outside that range.

I. CRITICISMS OF POSITIONS NOT FOUND IN THE GUIDELINES

Strauss begins by arguing that the NIVI is more accurate in verses like Matt 12:12, where it translates "How much more valuable is a human being (ἄνθρωπος) than a sheep" rather than the NIV's "How much more valuable is a man than a sheep."

I agree with Strauss at this point, and so do the guidelines. They placed no restrictions on the translation of the singular ἄνθρωπος except to say that it "should ordinarily be translated 'man' when it refers to a male human being" (Guideline A.5). When the word does not refer to a male human being, nothing was specified, leaving translators who wish to use these guidelines

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[2] The endorsement of several kinds of "inclusive language" can be seen in Guidelines A.1, 5, 6, 7, 8; B.1, 2. All of them are consistent with the range of meanings given for the various specified terms in the standard lexicons.

[3] "Statement by participants in the Conference on Gender-Related Language in Scripture," *CBMW NEWS* 2/3 (June 1997) 7. This quotation also appeared as a summary statement introducing the guidelines in the paid advertisement, "Can I Still Trust My Bible?", *Christianity Today* 41/12 (October 27, 1997) 14–15.

free to follow the very procedure Strauss repeatedly advocates—namely, to make decisions on a case-by-case basis as required by the context.

It is puzzling therefore that Strauss concludes his article as follows:

> If we ask which translation—"a man is justified by faith" (Rom 3:28 NIV) or "a person is justified by faith" (NIVI)—brings out better the inclusive sense so central to this apostolic gospel, the answer appears to me to be obvious.

One wonders why Strauss is concerned to emphasize this point in an article dealing with the Colorado Springs guidelines. It seems that rather than analyzing them at this point he is trying to show that the now-abandoned NIVI made some improvements over the current NIV. I would agree that it made some improvements, and so would the other authors of the guidelines. No one objected to every change made in the NIVI but only to "gender-neutral language when it diminishes accuracy in the translation of the Bible."[4] Nothing in the guidelines would object to the translation "a person is justified by faith." Therefore in the first and last examples Strauss gives he is arguing against a position that the guidelines do not advocate. This is unfortunate because it will seem to many readers that he is establishing compelling objections against the guidelines at this point, but in reality he is simply saying something consistent with them.

II. GUIDELINES A.1 AND A.2: GENERIC "HE" AND THIRD-PERSON SINGULAR STATEMENTS

Probably the most important area of difference between Strauss and the guidelines concerns statements with generic "he/him/his," such as "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Rev 3:20 RSV) and "Jesus replied, 'If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him'" (John 14:23 NIV). The guidelines preserve these third-person generic singulars, but Strauss prefers changing "he, him" to "they, them" or "you" in such sentences. He gives several arguments, all involving various ways of claiming that there is no important difference between using "he" and using "they" or "you" in such sentences.

1. *Are "he," "you" and "they" synonymous in some contexts?* At the outset we must recognize that Strauss has set himself a monumental task. He is trying to persuade us that "he" and "they" and "you" are essentially synonymous in English (at least in this type of sentence). But are they?

In English, "he" refers to a single person distinct from the speaker and hearer(s). "They" refers to a group of two or more persons distinct from the speaker and hearer(s). "You" refers to the hearer or hearers. "We" refers to

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[4] "Statement by participants" 7. This fundamental concern is also expressed in the preface to the guidelines in *Christianity Today* 41/12.

the speaker together with one or more others. These are not simply "differences in form," as Strauss claims.[5] They are distinct meanings.

Now consider the following sentences. The last three illustrate how three inclusive-language versions have dealt with Rev 3:20:[6] (1) If anyone opens the door, I will eat "with him" (RSV, NIV, NASB). (2) If you open the door, I will eat "with you" (NRSV). (3) If anyone opens the door, I will eat "with them" (NIVI). (4) If you open the door, "we will share a meal as friends" (NLT).

I would agree with Strauss that at a very general level of meaning, a similar idea is conveyed: Jesus promises to eat with a believer or believers who respond to him in each of the sentences. But the nuances are different in each case.

The NRSV's "with you" brings to mind Jesus eating with a large group of hearers ("you" takes a plural sense because all the hearers are addressed in the second person in the previous verse). With the NIVI, it is impossible to decide from the English text whether the "them" is plural and refers back to v. 19, giving the sense "Those whom I love. . . . I will eat with them," or whether it is intended in a colloquial, singular sense. The "you" in the NLT has to be understood as plural, because all the readers are addressed in v. 19 in the second person. In addition, the NLT adds a phrase about friendship and specifies a single meal ("a meal"), neither of which is specified in the Greek text. While the sentences in a general way affirm a similar idea, the picture called to mind in each case is different, and the precise meaning is different. None of the gender-neutral versions brings to mind the picture of Jesus eating with an individual believer. Whether we call this a nuance or an aspect of the meaning, it is evident that such differences exist.

Strauss' article was disappointing because he gave no indication of understanding such differences in nuance. Although he emphasized the need to translate meaning, he repeatedly assumed (without argument) that a kind of general approximation of meaning is sufficient for Bible translation (or is the best we can do in these cases). It is a legitimate question to ask whether the differences are important or whether the differences are required by English today. But that discussion cannot even take place unless advocates of inclusive-language translations admit that those differences in nuance exist.

The same argument applies to John 14:23: (1) Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (NIV). (2) Jesus answered him,

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[5] Note his section *Confusing form and meaning* and his statement that "by mandating the retention of form (third-person pronouns) without considering meaning, Guidelines A.1 and A.2 are inherently flawed." He also refers to "the literalist argument of mandating form." When Strauss says that the guidelines mandate form "without considering meaning" he has misrepresented both the intent of the guidelines and all the writing that has been done to support them, which has consistently pointed to loss of meaning in changing third-person-singular pronouns to plural or to second- or first-person.

[6] I have simplified the earlier parts of the sentence to focus on the latter parts. Only the words in quotation marks are exact citations from the versions cited.

"Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them" (NRSV; the NIVI and NLT are similar in using "those" and "them").

It will not do to say there is no difference in meaning. One might argue that it is not an important difference. Or one might argue that, considering the differences, "they" is still a more accurate translation. But it is not correct to deny that differences in meaning exist. There is a loss of clear and specific reference to Jesus and the Father living with an individual believer. In this verse, at least, the Bible's teaching about the personal fellowship between God and an individual believer is lost.

The same considerations apply to Strauss' claim that generic-singular statements are "notionally plural, referring to people in general." He sees no important difference between "He who spares the rod hates his son" (Prov 13:24 NIV) and "Those who spare the rod hate their children" (NIVI). Strauss says, "These verses are not about a specific individual but about people or classes of people."

Here Strauss has failed to distinguish the precise meaning of the verse from the large number of people to whom it applies. Of course, the verse applies to all the people in the world who spare the rod. The verse as written, however, does not bring to mind a picture of all the people in the world who spare the rod, or a group of people sparing the rod (such as all the adults in an extended family, for instance). Instead it talks about a representative individual person from that group of people. When the author wrote (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) "He who spares the rod hates his son," he wrote a sentence that calls to mind a picture of an individual father who is lax in disciplining his son.

There may be several reasons for this focus on one individual. One reason may be to emphasize the father's role in discipline and instruction, a frequent theme in Proverbs. Another may be that the individuality of this verse places a clear focus on the personal responsibility of one father with respect to one specific son. The responsibility and accountability are not blurred with a mental image of all the people in the world who spare the rod and all the children in the world who are insufficiently disciplined. The verse tells us in unflinching terms that this specific father who spares the rod hates this specific son. The impact of the verse is pointed and direct. Gender-neutral translations miss those nuances.

Strauss objects to this argument by saying that plural generic statements that talk about groups of people always assume that there are individuals within those groups. For example, he might say to a congregation of believers, "Those in need of encouragement should stay after the service for prayer." He says that "no one would misunderstand my statement, thinking I was referring to groups rather than individuals." But he fails to recognize that the mental image called to mind is an image of a group of people staying after the service and that this is different from the image called to mind by "If anyone would like prayer for a personal need, he should meet with one of the elders after the service." The images are related, but they are not the same.

2. *Strauss' failure to discuss aspects of meaning other than inclusiveness.* Strauss seems oblivious to this individualized aspect of meaning in generic-singular statements. Whenever he discusses the issue of generic "he," the only aspect of meaning he mentions is inclusivity. For example, after mentioning that Greek αὐτός is functioning generically in "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44 NIV) he says, "The issue that pervades the inclusive-language debate is whether the English personal pronouns 'he,' 'him' and 'his' carry this same inclusive sense." Near the end of his paper he returns to this matter: "The important question is whether English masculine generics like 'man,' 'he' and 'brother' convey the same inclusive sense as their Hebrew and Greek counterparts and so represent the best translation in these inclusive contexts." His assumption is that inclusivity is the only aspect of meaning that should be used to determine "the best translation" of these verses.

What is surprising is that in these statements Strauss completely ignores the primary objection that I and others raised against loss of generic "he" in the very literature that Strauss frequently quotes: that there is a significant loss of emphasis on the individual when singulars are changed to plurals.[7] In each article he quotes I addressed both the questions of (1) loss of individuality and (2) inclusivity (whether the generic applicability to both men and women is retained). It is difficult to understand, then, why Strauss repeatedly says that the only issue is the second one.

3. *Are these just "a few examples of poor translation"?* One might answer that the loss of specific reference to an individual believer in John 14:23 and Rev 3:20 is not that important, because other verses will teach that Christ has fellowship with each Christian individually. But which verses? If we eliminate generic "he" from the Bible, we eliminate most of the verses that teach that Christ has fellowship with an individual believer. Perhaps a few verses will remain, but the systematic shift from individual, personal fellowship and accountability to collective fellowship and accountability is a shift in meaning for the entire Bible, a shift of such magnitude that it will change the emphasis and impact of Scripture in a way that is impossible for anyone now to estimate or predict.

Strauss attempts to minimize the loss by saying, "Critics have tended to find a few examples of poor translation in a particular version (like the NRSV) and to draw sweeping conclusions about the inaccuracy of inclusive language." But in the NRSV alone a computer count indicates over 3,400 cases where "he, him, his" has been dropped or changed to "you" or "we" or "they." A similar number of changes must be made to eliminate generic "he" in other versions. Other "masculine" words require even more changes. No

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[7] See my section "First, the loss of generic 'he, him, his'" in *CBMW NEWS* 2/3 (June 1997) 3; the sections "Singulars to Plurals" and "Anything but Third Person Singular" in "Do inclusive language Bibles distort Scripture?" 27–28, 31–32; and the section "Changes made to eliminate 'he'" in "What's Wrong" 2–7. Loss of specific reference to an individual believer is my first and most emphasized objection in each of these articles, but Strauss fails even to mention the subject.

one can foresee how such systematic changes will affect people's overall view of their personal relationship with God, but the influence will be significant.

4. *Do we just have to choose which aspect of meaning we will lose?* Strauss at one point hints that he personally recognizes that there is a difference in meaning between singulars and plurals. He says, "I am not advocating uncritical or wholesale changes from singulars to plurals," even though he does not explain why he says this. But even if he were to agree that there is some change in meaning, he has another answer near at hand: "The simple fact is that all translations involve interpretation, and all versions, whether inclusive or not, contain inaccuracies." For him, the important question that must be answered is this: "In each individual case does an inclusive translation capture better the author's intended meaning?"

Is it just a question of tradeoffs, then? From the position of an advocate of gender-neutral translations, the issue might be put bluntly like this: If we retain generic "he" we retain individuality but lose inclusiveness, but if we change "he" to "they" or "you" we retain inclusiveness but lose individuality. In both cases, something is lost and something is retained. Therefore there is room for both kinds of translation.

But the issue is not that simple. The assertion that "all translations involve interpretation" does not of course justify poor or inaccurate translations, nor does it excuse distortion of meaning where a more accurate translation is possible. In this case more accurate translation is possible through using generic "he" because the argument that translations with generic "he" lose inclusiveness is a position that is open to serious question. We now turn to that question.

5. *Does generic "he" exclude women?* Anyone who claims that generic "he/his/him" will not be understood as including women needs to explain the following examples from a wide variety of sources: (1) "A student who pays his own way gets the [college tuition] tax credit" (*USA Today* [July 30, 1997] 3B). Did women college students really think the sentence did not include them? (2) "Anyone can do any amount of work, provided it isn't the work he is supposed to be doing at that moment" (*Reader's Digest* [September 1997] 61, quoting Robert Benchley). (3) "Wages are flat, hours are up, bosses are morons and everyone's stuffed into a cubicle—if he's lucky enough to have a job" (*Newsweek* [August 12, 1996] 3). (4) "During the 22 minutes an average person spends grocery shopping each week, 70 percent of his purchasing decisions are made in the store" (*Chicago Tribune* [July 29, 1996] 4.1). Did women grocery shoppers really think the *Tribune* only counted men's purchasing decisions? (5) "Even if a person has gotten enough sleep, he is likely to be irritable or blue if his waking hours center on a time when his biological clock tells him he 'should' be asleep. Conversely, even if a person stays awake 36 hours straight, he may say he feels terrific if you ask him about his mood at an hour when his biological clock tells him he is supposed to be awake, findings suggest" (Associated Press dispatch downloaded from America Online [February 12, 1997]). (6) "Every college professor doesn't

need to put his main energy into expanding the frontiers of knowledge" (*US News and World Report* [December 30, 1996] 45–47). (7) "For example, a high school student calls one of his friends who is rather short in stature 'vertically challenged'" ("Correctness in Language: Political and Otherwise," the 1996 presidential address of the Linguistic Association of Canada and the U.S., by Valerie B. Makkai, published in *The Twenty-third LACUS Forum* 1996 [ed. A. K. Melby (Chapel Hill: The Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States, 1997) 5–6]). (8) "Some of its faults will become evident in the notes which make up this book, and the alert reader will have no difficulty in discovering more for himself" (J. Chadwick, *Lexicographica Graeca: Contributions to the Lexicography of Ancient Greek* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1996] 8–9). (9) Even *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual* (1994) 94 directs: "Use the pronoun *his* when an indefinite antecedent may be male or female: *A reporter attempts to protect his sources.* (Not *his or her* sources.)"[8]

Major dictionaries all recognize generic "he" not as archaic but as current English. The definition of "he" as a pronoun that is "used to refer to a person whose gender is unspecified or unknown" is given in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (3d ed.; 1996) 831. Similar definitions are found in *Webster's New World Dictionary* (3d college ed.; 1994) 820; the *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* (2d rev. ed.; 1993) 879; Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* (1981) 1041; *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (10th ed.; 1995) 534. Sample sentences include "He who hesitates is lost," "No one seems to take pride in his work anymore" and "One should do the best he can." There is no dispute over whether such generic usage is understandable in ordinary English today. It is still used in a broad range of publications with a sense that does not exclude women.

When we come to recommendations for how people should speak and write today, there is simply no consensus among reference books or English stylists. The *American Heritage Dictionary* (1996) polled the 173 members of its Usage Panel of experts in the English language on how to complete a series of sentences such as "A patient who doesn't accurately report ____ sexual history to the doctor runs the risk of misdiagnosis" or "A child who develops this sort of rash on ____ hands should probably be kept at home for a couple of days." In their responses an average of 46% of panel members used forms such as "his or her" or "her/his" (this statistic combines several different responses and so gives the misleading appearance of the largest single response), 37% used "his," 3% used "their," 2% used "her," 2% used "a" or "the," 7% gave no response or felt no pronoun was needed, and a few gave other responses. But if 37% of these experts (the largest for any one

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[8] Note that most of the examples quoted from current literature are anaphoric—that is, the generic "he" refers back to a previous generic noun or pronoun, such as "a reporter" or "a student" or "anyone." Another kind of statement is kataphoric—that is, the generic "he" refers to a generic noun or pronoun that comes later in the sentence, such as "he who believes in me." The guidelines allow for the use of "one" in many kataphoric statements, such as "the one who believes in me."

specific response) continued to use "his" as their most preferred word in these sentences (and many more would have said it is acceptable but not preferred), then no one should rightly claim that generic "he, him, his" is improper English today. In spite of about thirty years of intensive discussion, no substitutes have gained general acceptance.[9]

6. *Should translators avoid less common expressions?* Strauss recognizes that in previous writing on this topic I have cited "numerous examples of masculine generics in the popular press and contemporary literature. But," he says, "this is not the point. No one denies that masculine generics are still present in contemporary English. What must be asked, however, is this: 'Are these terms in significant decline in contemporary English? Are they perceived as exclusive by many people?'"

The first question has to do with frequency of use. I agree with Strauss that such expressions are less common than they used to be, but that does not mean we should avoid them in translation. All major English Bibles use numerous expressions that are much less common than these but that are understandable and necessary for accurate translation. Contemporary English reflects a more urban and less agrarian society, so terms like "seedtime," "harvest," "shepherd" and "flocks" are less common in today's newspapers. Sacrificial terms such as "burnt offering" are uncommon. Clothing terms like "tunic" are uncommon. But they are still English words and are still necessary for translating certain things in the Bible. When Strauss says that generic "he" is less common in English he has said nothing to invalidate its use in translation.

7. *Will generic "he" soon disappear?* This is an unprovable prediction of the future. If Strauss means to say that a "significant decline" proves that generic "he" will disappear from English in the future, that is a different argument. In that case he is predicting the future, and predictions have a notorious way of turning out to be wrong.

In fact several factors argue against this prediction. English stylist William Zinsser, in *On Writing Well* (5th ed.; 1994) 123, says, "Let's face it: the English language is stuck with the generic masculine." The current *American Heritage Dictionary* (1996) 831 concludes a long discussion on generic "he" with this prediction: "The entire question is unlikely to be resolved in the near future."

The reason for the persistence of generic "he" is probably the absence of any suitable substitute. To take another example, it is relatively easy to replace "If any man will come after me" with "If anyone will come after me" because the third-person-singular sense is retained (and, for purposes

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[9] Actually, various writers have suggested alternatives to generic "he" for over a century. D. Baron, *Grammar and Gender* (New Haven and London: Yale University, 1986) 205–209, provides a chronology of over eighty suggested epicene (gender-neutral) third-person-singular pronouns, such as "thon," "hesh, "heesh," "hizzer," "hiser," "hir," and so forth. None of these has gained common acceptance.

of Bible translation, the Greek τίς is not gender-specific anyway). The guidelines recognize this replacement of generic "man" with generic "one" in English. But it is not so easy to replace generic "he," because there is no commonly recognized third-person-singular substitute in English.[10]

The reason that people who speak and write English resist abolishing generic "he, him, his" is that there are times when clear and accurate writing requires the use of a third-person-singular pronoun with the person's sex unspecified or unknown. Zinsser says, "A style that converts every 'he' into a 'they' will quickly turn to mush. . . . I don't like plurals; they weaken writing because they are less specific than the singular, less easy to visualize" (*Writing* 122–123). And the *American Heritage Dictionary* speaks of "a persistent intuition that expressions such as *everyone* and *each student* should in fact be treated as grammatically singular."

Three professional linguists have told me they knew of no human language that lacked a singular pronoun that was used generically (in some languages it is a masculine singular pronoun, in others neuter singular). Therefore people who predict that English will soon relinquish generic "he, him, his" when there is no commonly agreed singular substitute are predicting that English—perhaps the most versatile language in history—will lose a capability possessed by all major languages in the world. This is highly unlikely. In any case, unsubstantiated and unprovable predictions of the future state of English should not be used to justify the introduction of inaccuracies into translations made for people who speak English in its present state.

8. *But is generic "he" "perceived as exclusive"?* Strauss' second question concerns the way masculine generic terms are perceived: "Are they perceived as exclusive by many people?" He claims that "empirical studies have demonstrated quite conclusively that a large percentage of the population now perceives masculine generic terms as exclusive rather than inclusive," but he gives no further reference in the article except to refer to his forthcoming book.

It is not specific enough, however, to say that many people perceive "masculine generic terms as exclusive." Which masculine generics? Does he mean generic "man," as in "If any man would come after me"? The guidelines allow for "If any *one*." Does he mean generic "he" in a kataphoric use, as in "He who believes in me"? The guidelines also allow for "The *one* who" in many cases. Or does he mean generic "he" in an anaphoric use, as in "If anyone opens the door . . . I will eat with him"? The guidelines do not allow an alternative to this except in rare instances. But do a significant proportion of English speakers perceive this as exclusive? If so, then *USA Today*, *Reader's Digest*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Newsweek*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *As-*

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[10] See the previous note for some proposed substitutes, all of which have failed. As far as using "they" in place of generic "he," the *American Heritage Dictionary* recognizes that some people use "they" when they intend a generic singular sense. But it adds that a writer who uses "they" in this way "may be misconstrued as being careless or ignorant rather than attuned to the various grammatical and political nuances of the use of the masculine pronoun as generic pronoun" (p. 831).

sociated Press Stylebook have all misunderstood their audiences. This is highly unlikely.

Moreover Strauss does not explain what he means when he says a significant group "perceives masculine generic terms as exclusive rather than inclusive." Does he mean that they do not understand generic "he" or that they do not approve of it? There is a significant difference.

9. *Do readers really misunderstand generic "he"?* Or do they disapprove? What then is the issue? The real issue is not that generic "he" will be misunderstood but rather that some hearers will disapprove of it. *The American Heritage Dictionary* article speaks frankly about the use of generic "he": "This course is grammatically unexceptionable, but the writer who follows it must be prepared to incur the displeasure of readers who regard this pattern as a mark of insensitivity or gender discrimination." In the entry concerning the usage of the word "every" they bluntly call the problem a "political" one: "The second complication is political. When a phrase introduced by *every* or *any* refers to a group containing both men and women, what shall be the gender of the singular pronoun?" (p. 636). They do not say that the problem is one of misunderstanding.

Though gender-neutral Bible advocates claim that people will misunderstand generic "he," I honestly do not believe that is the problem. For example, I do not think any significant number of readers of *USA Today* thought that the sentence "A student who pays his own way gets the tax credit" excluded women. Nor do I think that any significant number of competent English speakers will misunderstand Rev 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me," and actually think it excludes women.[11] The problem, if we assess it accurately, is not misunderstanding.

10. *The heart of the objection: the mental image of a male representative for a mixed group.* The real problem is rather that some people in our society find such uses of generic "he" objectionable. Why is this? Once again the *American Heritage Dictionary* explains the problem in reference to sample sentences like "Every member of Congress is answerable to his constituents" and "No one seems to take pride in his work anymore":

> The use of *his* forces the reader to envision a single male who stands as the representative member of the group. . . . Thus *he* is not really a gender-neutral pronoun; rather, it refers to a male who is to be taken as the representative member of the group referred to by its antecedent. The traditional usage, then, is not simply a grammatical convention; it also suggests a particular pattern of thought.

This seems to me to be a fair assessment of what is actually conveyed by ge-

[11] Several articles advocating gender-neutral Bible translation have reported anecdotal evidence of children who ask if these verses apply to them. But similar anecdotes can be told of thousands of other ways that children misunderstand English while they are developing competence in the language, and such childhood misunderstandings are not a reliable guide to the current state of the English language, or to proper Bible translation.

neric "he" and why it is thought by many people to be objectionable. It is not that people misunderstand the generic sense. It is rather that the thought that comes to mind is a male human being standing as a representative of a mixed group composed of both men and women.

Do we think such an image objectionable? If so, what is thought objectionable is not that the representative of the group is a single individual. What is objectionable is that the representative is male.

Was this the same mental image that came to mind for the authors and the original readers of the Hebrew and Greek text of Scripture? When they read Rev 3:20, did they "envision a single male who stands as the representative member of the group"? It is almost certain that they did, for αὐτός was a masculine pronoun, not a feminine or neuter one. They surely did not envision a group, for the Greek expressions are all singular. Nor did they envision a sexless gender-neutral person, for all human beings that they knew were either male or female, not gender-neutral. Nor is it true that they were so used to grammatical gender in all nouns and pronouns that they would have envisioned a sexless person, for pronouns applied to (adult) persons were either masculine or feminine, and these pronouns did specify the sex of the person referred to. They would almost certainly have envisioned an individual male representative for the group of people who open the door for Jesus. Therefore we could say of the Greek generic αὐτος just what the *American Heritage Dictionary* said of the English generic he:

> The use of αὐτός forces the reader to envision a single male who stands as the representative member of the group. . . . Thus αὐτός is not really a gender-neutral pronoun; rather, it refers to a male who is to be taken as the representative member of the group referred to by its antecedent.

But if this was the mental picture that came to mind when the original readers read Rev 3:20, then what is the most accurate translation in English today? Is it not a translation that conveys the same meaning, that brings to mind the same mental picture that was brought to mind in the first century? If so, the mental picture conveyed by the most accurate English translation is that of a single male who stands as the representative member of the group of all who will "open the door" to Christ, both men and women. And the English word that best conveys that idea is the generic masculine third-person-singular "he."

I admit that some people today will find the more traditional translation of Rev 3:20 objectionable. But the reason is not that they misunderstand it. They do understand it, and it brings to mind the same mental picture as it did for a first-century reader, the picture of "a single male who stands as the representative member of the group." They recognize that the sentence defines that group as "anyone" who "hears my voice and opens the door"—a group that includes both men and women. The idea that they object to—the idea of a single male as representative of a mixed group—is there in the Greek text just as much as it is there in the English translation.

11. *What if translators do not want modern readers to have the same mental image as first-century readers?* Now some translators may decide that this mental image is not one that they want to convey to readers today. They may translate the verse as "I will come in to them and eat with them," for then the image brought to mind is a mixed group of men and women with no representative individual, and the image is not one of Jesus eating with a single (male) person but Jesus eating with a group of people. But if translators do this, they should not claim that their translation more accurately conveys the meaning of the original text. They should rather state clearly that they decided to convey a slightly different meaning. Perhaps their motives seemed good. Perhaps they thought the idea of Jesus eating with believers was so important that they did not want some readers to encounter at the same time the offensive idea of a single male standing as representative of the group. So they decided not to translate that idea from Greek into English.

But this procedure should give us pause. If we follow it with this knowledge and this intention, then we are consciously deciding to conceal some of the meaning of Scripture in our English translation. If we believe that "all Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim 3:16 NIV) and that "the words of the Lord are pure words" (Ps 12:6 NASB), then should we not want to convey the meaning of those words as accurately as possible? And should we really object to any meaning that is there?

It will not do for someone to object that "all translation loses something," and "all translation is making tradeoffs," and to give examples of other Greek or Hebrew expressions where English is not well-equipped to convey the same meaning. I admit that sometimes difficult choices have to be made because at times English cannot efficiently and clearly convey all the nuances in the original. But this is not one of those cases. The use of generic "he" is a case where English can convey almost exactly the same meaning as the original, and the only question is whether we are willing to let it do so.

12. *Do NT quotations of OT texts provide us a pattern for translating the Bible?* Strauss examines some cases where Paul quotes OT texts and changes singulars to plurals, or where the LXX seems to translate singulars as plurals. He claims that this provides warrant for us to translate singulars as plurals as well.

But Strauss fails to recognize that the NT authors are not purporting to translate the OT text but are adapting and applying it to various situations about which they are writing. In some cases they quote it verbatim. In other cases they quote the LXX where it differs from the Hebrew text (at least the MT now available to us). At other places they freely adapt and change the wording or the emphasis in order to make further application to their own situation. In other cases they simply use words or phrases from the OT in order to allude to a passage but adapt it in significant ways. In short, they quote OT passages in the wide variety of ways a modern preacher will quote, adapt and allude to different passages to suit his purposes. No theory of translation can be derived from this varied procedure.

With respect to the LXX where it has a plural form corresponding to a singular form in the Hebrew text that we now have, Strauss fails to mention several factors that can explain this. (1) The LXX varies widely in translation technique, from very literal in some places to very free in other places. (2) The skill of the different translators varies from section to section.[12] (3) The LXX translators frequently show evidence of working from a different Hebrew original than we now have, and it is possible that in cases like Psalm 32 they were working from a Hebrew original that had a plural form instead of singular in this case. In any case, such variation between our current Hebrew text and the LXX does not automatically imply endorsement of changing singulars to plurals. It is surprising that Strauss in this criticism suggests that techniques used by the LXX translators in the second and third centuries BC should provide us with a standard for how to translate the Bible today, since in the LXX there are "innumerable examples in which it fails to recognize the original and has recourse to conjecture, paraphrase, or transliteration."[13]

13. *Is generic "you" equivalent to generic "he"?* Strauss raises another objection to my criticism of gender-neutral translations of verses like Jas 1:20; 2:14. He says that "you" in English can function in an indefinite sense, as in the contemporary proverb: "You get what you pay for." Strauss says, "This kind of indefinite and general reference appears to be what James intended" in 1:20; 2:14.

But if we look at the entire sentence of Jas 1:19–20 as modified to conform to the gender-neutral requirements of the NRSV, we see that it is not a generalized statement like "You get what you pay for": "You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness." The beginning of the sentence, "You must understand this, my beloved," makes it clear that no generic proverb is intended but a genuine address to the readers. Therefore when the NRSV changed James' statement from "the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God" to "your anger does not produce God's righteousness," the meaning was indeed changed from a statement that is true about human beings generally to a statement that is specific-ally about James' hearers. Strauss is incorrect to read it as an instance of generic "you."

In discussing these examples from James, I should also make clear that I am not affirming that proverbial statements with "you" are exact or acceptable substitutes for proverbial statements with "he." For example, the sentences "He who spares the rod hates his son" and "You who spare the rod

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[12] "We may say in summary that what we find in [the Septuagint] is not a single version but a collection of versions made by various writers who differed greatly in their methods, their knowledge of Hebrew, and in other ways" (E. Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979] 52).

[13] S. Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968) 329. On the other hand, Jellicoe also notes here that "in many cases" where it departs from the Hebrew text it "represents in all probability readings superior to . . . the Hebrew."

hate your son" are not identical in meaning. Part of the change in meaning comes with the ambiguity of "you" (is it singular or plural?), and part comes because "you" addresses the reader more directly than "he." But there may be other changes in nuance as well.

III. GUIDELINE A.3: THE USE OF "MAN" FOR THE HUMAN RACE

Do the guidelines fail to recognize that words have semantic ranges? Strauss criticizes Guideline A.3 because he says it is insensitive to the fact of semantic ranges for word meanings: "It is a basic principle of lexical semantics that words (or, better, lexemes) do not have a single, all-encompassing meaning but rather a range of potential senses (a semantic range)."

Strauss' criticism seriously misrepresents the guideline here. It makes no claim that words "have a single, all-encompassing meaning," nor do any of the other guidelines claim this. The guideline says nothing about any specific Hebrew or Greek words. It rather states that when the human race is referred to in passages like Gen 1:26–27 ("Let us make man in our image") or 5:2 ("Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them 'man' when they were created"), the English word "man" should be used as a name for the human race. The guideline does not restrict the way in which the Hebrew term אדם or the Greek word ἄνθρωπος can be translated in other contexts. It simply says (on the basis of considerable discussion and reflection) that the name used for the human race in the Bible is best translated "man." In this case the guideline is specifying a translation for a specific referent. The reason for this guideline is that other suggested translations, such as "humanity" or "humankind," fail to carry over into English the male overtones that attach to the Hebrew word אדם in these verses and thus wrongly eliminate the hint of male headship that is found in the divinely given name אדם for the human race.

But does the word אדם have male overtones? Perhaps not always in the Bible, but certainly in the early chapters of Genesis, where God names the human race (2:22, 23, 25; 3:8, 9, 12, 20). When we come, then, to the naming of the human race in 5:2 (reporting an event before the fall), it would be evident that God was using a name that had clear male overtones. In the first four chapters the word אדם had been used thirteen times in a male-specific way: eight times to mean "man" in distinction from woman,[14] and a further five times (3:17, 21; 4:1, 25; 5:1) as a name for Adam in distinction from Eve. When we read 5:2, therefore, the male overtones attaching to אדם in the first four chapters would certainly remain in the readers' mind. The existence of these overtones convinced the authors of the guidelines, as well as the translators of all English Bibles known to me prior to the NRSV in 1989, that the most accurate English translation of אדם when it refers to the human race in Gen 1:27; 5:2 is an English word that is both a name for the

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[14] The number is actually greater than this, because in the larger narrative it is clear that references to "the man" prior to the creation of Eve are also referring to a specific male human being: See the twelve additional instances of אדם in 2:5, 7 (twice), 8, 15, 16, 18, 19 (twice), 20 (twice), 21.

human race and that carries male overtones. The English word "man" does this, but the modern inclusive-language translations "humankind," "human beings" and "human" do not carry this full meaning. They convey part of the meaning (they refer to the human race as a whole), but they do not convey the other part of the meaning (the male overtones, together with the probable implication of male leadership in a male-oriented name for the human race). It is precisely the male overtones of the word "man" that some translators find objectionable today, but those same male overtones also attach to the Hebrew word אדם and are therefore part of the meaning that should be brought over into English. Strauss fails to address this issue in his paper.

And here the question must be faced: Why would we seek to have a translation that conceals the male overtones of the Hebrew word? Does this preference really indicate a desire for greater accuracy in translation, or do we prefer it because we are somehow embarrassed by the male overtones of the Hebrew word and recognize that modern readers will find that part of the meaning to be offensive?

In fact it is precisely the male overtones of the word "man" that led feminists in the first place to say that such a name for the human race was offensive. It is fair to conclude that such feminists would have objected to the procedure of God himself described in Gen 5:2. But I myself cannot say that it was incorrect for God to give the race a name with male overtones. Nor can I say that the naming of things by God is an unimportant or trivial matter in Scripture. Rather, it has great significance and should be translated by us as accurately as possible.

IV. GUIDELINE A.4: HEBREW אישׁ AND GREEK ἀνήρ
AS PRIMARILY OR EXCLUSIVELY MASCULINE TERMS

Strauss does not initially express as much disagreement with this guideline because he admits that these Hebrew and Greek words are primarily used to refer to male human beings. He mentions a few examples where he thinks the words mean "person" rather than "man" or "men," but he then says, "The relative rarity of these inclusive senses for אישׁ and ἀνήρ makes it understandable why Guideline A.4 reads: 'Hebrew *îsh* should ordinarily be translated 'man' and 'men' and *anēr* should almost always be so translated."

Strauss still objects to the guideline, however, because he contends that sometimes these two words are used to mean "person," and translators should not be restricted by such a guideline but should be free to determine in each context whether the word refers to a man or men or whether it refers to people generally:

> From a linguistic and hermeneutical perspective, however, this is still a strange principle. To be more precise, the principle should be worded something like this: "אישׁ and ἀνήρ should be translated 'man' or 'men' when they carry the sense 'male(s)' and may be translated 'person(s)' or 'human being(s)' when they carry the sense 'human being(s).'" Of course to state the principle this way eliminates the need for having a principle at all, since this is the way every

word in Hebrew or Greek should be treated. Whatever the word means in context is how it should be translated.

1. *Do Strauss' examples disprove the default male meaning for Hebrew אִישׁ and Greek ἀνήρ?* In this criticism Strauss fails to interact with the real issue at stake in this guideline. The question is not whether אִישׁ and ἀνήρ can mean "person" in certain unusual or idiomatic constructions, for the guideline has enough flexibility to allow for those cases (it says "ordinarily" for אִישׁ and "almost always" for ἀνήρ). What is at issue, rather, is what may be called the default sense of these terms, the sense that the original readers or hearers would ordinarily have attached to the terms when the context does not itself force the reader to adopt one sense or another. In dealing with these two terms, the authors of the guidelines decided that the semantic ranges for these words were not sufficiently elastic to include the sense "person" when that sense was not demanded in unusual contexts or constructions. One factor weighing significantly in this conclusion was the existence of the alternative terms אדם in Hebrew and ἄνθρωπος in Greek, both of which frequently mean "person."[15] On the other hand, the terms אִישׁ and ἀνήρ are much more clearly male-marked terms and are very often used when the author wishes to specify a man in distinction from a woman.[16]

Strauss, however, claims that אִישׁ and ἀνήρ are not as clearly male-marked terms as people might think. He cites a number of examples that he thinks demonstrate that they can mean "person," but these examples are largely inconclusive. For example, he quotes Exod 16:16 regarding the gathering of manna: "Each one (אִישׁ) is to gather as much as he needs" (NIV). He gives this as an example of a context where "there is little doubt that both males and females are intended."

But Strauss does not quote the entire verse: "This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Gather of it, every man of you, as much as he can eat; you shall take an omer apiece, according to the number of the persons whom each of you has in his tent'" (RSV). The specification that each one should gather "according to the number of the persons whom each of you has in his tent" suggests that not every Israelite went out to gather manna, but only one representative from each tent. In this case the word אִישׁ would be used to specify that it was the male head of the family who went out to gather manna according to the size of his family.[17]

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[15] The male overtones present with אדם in the early chapters of Genesis might not be present, or might not be so clear, with its uses elsewhere in the HB. The uses of both אדם and ἄνθρωπος are too complex to be analyzed extensively in this article. More extensive analysis of these common terms would be helpful to the larger discussion.

[16] BDB 35 gives as the first meaning for אִישׁ "man, opposite woman"; BAGD 66 gives as the first meaning for ἀνήρ "man in contrast to woman." If the meaning "person" were part of the default sense of these words we should have no difficulty finding examples, because both words are common: ἀνήρ occurs 216 times in the NT and hundreds of times in the LXX as a translation of אִישׁ. In the OT, אִישׁ occurs 2,166 times.

[17] This would be true even if there were unusual cases where only females lived in a tent. The requirement for a "man" to gather manna would be understood as a representative generic term.

Similar considerations apply to the other examples Strauss cites (such as 1 Sam 5:9; Ps 62:12), where the translation "men" makes perfectly good sense. These examples do not disprove the default masculine sense of these terms. But even if Strauss finds a few verses where "man" would not fit well, the guidelines allow for some flexibility in individual cases (this would apply to some idiomatic expressions and perhaps to some case laws, for example). Guideline A.4 says only that אישׁ should "ordinarily" be translated as "man." Strauss has not provided convincing evidence to overturn this principle.

Moreover, from a linguistic perspective it is highly unlikely that אישׁ and ἀνήρ would lose these default senses and come to mean just "person," for then Hebrew and Greek would be left without any common word to perform this ordinary language ability to specify clearly that one is talking about a man in distinction from a woman.

2. *Can a passage that speaks about a representative man or woman apply to others as well?* There are many gender-specific passages in the Bible that apply to the other gender. For example, the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) also applies to prodigal daughters. But the parable itself does not speak about a prodigal daughter or a generic prodigal "child." It speaks about a prodigal son. The parable of the good Samaritan (10:25–37) also applies to women, but the specific person in mind is a man who had compassion on the injured traveler. The parable of the woman with the lost coin (15:8–10) also applies to men and even to angels who rejoice over a sinner who repents, but the parable specifically talks about a woman who had ten silver coins and lost one and sought it diligently, and "when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost'" (v. 9). The parable of the five wise and five foolish maidens (Matt 25:1–13) also applies to men and encourages them to be ready for the Lord's return. But the parable does not specifically speak of ten "servants" or "people" who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom, but of ten female "virgins."[18] Accurate translation requires that we keep the gender that is specified in the Greek text in each of these passages and not obliterate it simply because we want to be sure people realize that it applies to men as well or women as well.

What Strauss fails to consider in all of these examples is the existence in Scripture of male-specific (and female-specific) representative figures that apply in a broader generic sense to all people. Surely the existence of the "righteous man" in the OT wisdom literature (for example, in Psalms 1 and 32), a man who is the ideal representative whom all the people of Israel are to imitate and who is also probably a messianic figure foreshadowing Christ, must not be arbitrarily ruled out with the claim that these verses

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[18] The subsequent relative pronoun and participle, together with feminine adjectives and definite articles in the subsequent verses, specify quite clearly that ten women or "maidens" (RSV) are specified in this parable.

apply to women as well as men. Everyone agrees that they do, and that is not a disputed point. The point of difference is whether the language in each case is gender-specific in the original text and, if so, whether it should be rendered in a gender-specific way in English.

Similar considerations apply to Strauss' NT examples with the use of ἀνήρ. Of Jesus' statement that "the men (ἄνδρες) of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah" (Matt 12:41) Strauss says, "Since females were certainly among those converted at Nineveh, the sense here appears to be 'people.'" But he gives us no evidence to show how he knows that Jesus is talking about all the people who repented at Nineveh. If Jesus had wanted to specify that the male human beings of Nineveh, the "men" in a narrow sense, would be the ones to stand and pronounce judgment on this generation, then this is exactly the way he would have said it: He would have used the word ἄνδρες to specify men in distinction from women.[19] Surely in the ancient world this would not be an impossible thought—the idea that those who would arise and pronounce judgment would be the men as representative leaders of the entire group. Strauss' argument here is based on an unsupported assumption. He fails to show why the meaning "men," which is clearly the default sense of ἀνήρ, is not possible here.

Finally, in Jas 1:20 James states: "The anger of man (ἀνήρ) does not work the righteousness of God." Strauss says, "James is obviously referring to human anger (so NIVI), not male anger." But how does Strauss know this? How can he be sure that James is not dealing with the representative godly man throughout much of his epistle, in clear dependence upon the teaching about the righteous man in the OT wisdom literature? In fact if we understand the author to be the earthly brother of Jesus himself, then it is not at all unlikely that the righteous "man" whom James has in mind throughout this epistle is preeminently his own brother according to the flesh, the godly older brother and perfectly righteous man whom James knew intimately for nearly thirty years. If this was the purpose of James, then he would have done exactly what we find in this book: He would have used the male-specific term ἀνήρ repeatedly to indicate this example of a representative godly man and would have spoken by contrast of the unrighteous man and his sinful anger.

Thus Strauss has given no examples where איש or ἀνήρ clearly mean "person" and do not have a specifically male meaning. There may in fact be some idiomatic uses where they do have this sense (the guidelines allow for this), but Strauss at least has not provided any of them.

3. *The danger of using unusual examples as a wedge to obliterate the male orientation of* איש *and* ἀνήρ. What the authors were concerned about in Guideline A.4 was the procedure so commonly used in the NRSV and

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[19] The same argument would apply if Jesus was speaking in Aramaic here and Matthew accurately reported in Greek the force of Jesus' words.

NIVI: The translators apparently began with the possibility that אִישׁ and ἀνήρ could mean "person" in some idiomatic expressions and then used that possibility as a wedge to obliterate the evident male orientation and male specificity of this term in hundreds of other cases. There are in fact hundreds of verses where contextual indicators alone do not determine whether "man" or "person" is the intended sense. In these verses Guideline A.4 specifies that אִישׁ should "ordinarily" and ἀνήρ "almost always" be translated "man" or "men." This is an attempt to prevent a wholesale loss of the male orientation that attaches to these terms in Hebrew and Greek.

V. GUIDELINE A.5: THE TRANSLATION OF ἄνθρωπος WHEN IT REFERS TO A MALE HUMAN BEING

Should we translate the main "point" or as much of the meaning as possible? Strauss objects to the second sentence of Guideline A.5: "The singular *anthrōpos* should ordinarily be translated 'man' when it refers to a male human being." In several places he examines a verse where a man is called an ἄνθρωπος and claims that the "(primary) point" is not maleness but humanity. Therefore he prefers the translation "human" to the translation "man." But in each of these examples he never makes clear why he thinks that only one "point"—namely, humanity—is being affirmed rather than a larger complex of meanings that may in fact include maleness as well as humanity.

For example, regarding Jas 5:17, "Elijah was a man (ἄνθρωπος) just like us," Strauss prefers the translation "Elijah was human just as we are" (NIVI) because, he claims, "the point is not that Elijah was a 'male' like we are (many of James' readers were not) but that he was subject to the same human weaknesses that we are."

But when Strauss says that "the point is not A but B" he reveals an assumption that only one level or aspect of the meaning needs to be brought over into English. This does not reflect the nature of actual language, where a single statement can have multiple layers or aspects of meaning. Of course James wants to affirm Elijah's humanity, and that is clearly one aspect of the meaning of the statement, perhaps even its most important aspect. But how can Strauss be sure that it is only Elijah's humanity and not also his maleness that James intends to affirm? James could have simply said that "Elijah had a nature like ours" and omitted any mention of the word ἄνθρωπος. But in fact James said, "Elijah was an ἄνθρωπος just like us."

Of course the term ἄνθρωπος can mean "person," but it can also frequently mean "man," especially when referring to a male human being.[20] It is doubtful that the writers of NT Greek would ever have referred to an individual woman as an ἄνθρωπος. If in fact James repeatedly focuses on the characteristics of a godly man, then it would not be surprising that he would speak of Elijah as a man of like nature to ourselves. In this case the word ἄνθρωπος

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[20] See BAGD 68, 2.b.

would be preferable to ἀνήρ because ἄνθρωπος would not sound so exclusively masculine in its overtones but would still affirm that Elijah was a man.

VI. OTHER TERMS AND OTHER GUIDELINES

Space does not permit extensive discussion of Strauss' objections to some other guidelines, but the considerations would be similar. Hebrew בן־אדם is an idiom that refers exclusively to male human beings throughout the OT (no woman is ever called a בן־אדם). It is likely that the male flavor of בן ("son") carries over to the idiom as well, and Strauss' translation "human being" loses significant nuances not only of masculinity but also of derivation from another generation. Regarding Hebrew אבות, "fathers," Strauss' proposal "ancestors" fails to account for the male nuance that would attach to the plural of אב as well as to the singular (although perhaps "forefathers" could do this, a possibility neither specified nor excluded by the guidelines). Concerning the singular ἀδελφός, Strauss fails to recognize its use as a male representative generic in passages like Matt 18:15: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother."

With respect to the singular Hebrew word בן, "son," the editors of BDB do not think the meaning "child" is as possible as Strauss asserts that it is, because they do not give the definition "child" for בן.[21] Significantly, Strauss cites no lexicon claiming that בן can mean "child" and not just "son," and the sense "child" is clearly not required by the examples he cites.

With regard to the Greek plural term υἱοί, Strauss objects that it can be translated as "children." His primary argument is that there are passages where the two words υἱοί ("sons") and τέκνα ("children") seem to be used interchangeably, such as Rom 8:14–22. But the fact that Paul can oscillate between the terms υἱοί and τέκνα no more proves that they are synonymous than the fact that the English translation of Romans 8 uses both "son" and "child" proves that "son" and "child" have the same meaning in English. They do not, even though both terms occur in our translations of Romans 8. As with the male marking that attaches more clearly to ἀνήρ because an alternative is available with ἄνθρωπος, so it is unlikely that Greek would lose the ability to specify "sons," especially when an alternative is available with τέκνα when a speaker wants to specify "children."

Finally, it should be noted that Guideline B.2, which says that υἱοί should not be translated "children," occurs under the general heading, "Gender-related renderings which we will generally avoid, though there may be unusual exceptions in certain contexts." Therefore the guideline would allow for the occasional translation of υἱοί as "children" if specific contexts required it. But this is far different from an attempt to eliminate masculine language as much as possible from Scripture, which could then result in translating υἱοί as "children" in most if not all of its occurrences.

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[21] BDB 119–122. The word is very common, occurring 4,870 times in the HB (this includes both singular and plural forms).

In this critique and elsewhere, Strauss fails to recognize the flexibility of the guidelines to account for occasional exceptions. The guidelines are not intended as ironclad rules but as "guidelines," which is why they were called by that name. With the exception of A.10, all of the guidelines, or the headings under which they appear, include qualifications such as "ordinarily," "in many cases," and the like. The authors of the guidelines recognized that translation is a complex process and that it is impossible in a short statement to account for all the specific difficulties faced in individual verses throughout the Bible. Strauss fails to give sufficient acknowledgment to the guidelines' flexibility in unusual cases, coupled with specific guidance in the vast majority of cases.

VII. IS THERE A THEME THAT CHARACTERIZES STRAUSS' OBJECTIONS?

Strauss' paper is not that of a friendly critic who suggests some small changes to add precision to one or another guideline. Rather, it is a thoroughgoing criticism that rejects every guideline that suggests any kind of restriction on the types of inclusive language found in current gender-neutral Bibles.[22] Such thoroughgoing criticism is consistent with a theme that runs through much of Strauss' argument: the idea that guidelines like the Colorado Springs guidelines are not necessary or wise because the best translation decisions regarding gender-related language are made on a "case-by-case" basis in each context.

But it is not enough for translators simply to say, "We will make translation decisions on a case-by-case basis." Translators must also know the range of possible meanings that each word can take and the boundaries to that range of meanings. As has been seen above, Strauss fails to recognize those boundaries sufficiently at several points. So do the modern inclusive-language translations that he defends.

The Colorado Springs guidelines were formulated out of concern that recent inclusive-language Bibles had translated masculine language with meanings that fell outside the recognized and established range of meanings for these specific terms. Of course, people may still differ over specific guidelines and argue that certain words can be used in broader senses in certain contexts. Those arguments will have to be settled when they arise on the basis of the relevant facts that can be found. But it should be recognized that the guidelines themselves were simply summarizing material that had been available for years in standard lexicons, and they were saying nothing different from what these standard reference works have said for years, yet taking into account recent changes in the English language. By contrast the inclusive-language versions are the ones pushing for the recognition of several meanings that have not been established prior to this time.

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[22] Strauss does not object to Guideline A.10, "Masculine references to God should be retained," but all the current inclusive-language translations (NRSV, NIVI, NCB, CEV, NLT) follow this principle, so it is not currently in dispute.

What do the terms "he," "him," "his," "man," "son of man," "father," "son" and "brother" have in common? They are all masculine terms. All of Strauss' proposals suggest alternative words that lack the male specificity or male nuances of these terms. It should give us pause to realize that these were the same terms that were repeatedly purged from the NRSV in 1989, not because the translators thought the English language had changed, and not because the translators had discovered a broader range of meanings for these Hebrew and Greek terms, but because the translators were directed by the copyright holder (the Division of Education and Ministry of the National Council of Churches of Christ) that "masculine-oriented language should be eliminated as far as this can be done without altering passages that reflect the historical situation of ancient patriarchal culture."[23] I do not think it is for entirely unrelated reasons that advocates of gender-neutral Bibles have objected to precisely the same words a few years later. Strauss' title leads us to think that his differences with the guidelines are only "linguistic and hermeneutical." But the editors of the NIVI said they thought "it was often appropriate to mute the patriarchalism of the culture of the biblical writers" ("Preface" vii), and the editors of the NLT say that there are "occasions where the original language is male-oriented, but not intentionally so" (p. xliv). In all these cases the real objection seems to be to masculine elements that are present in the original Hebrew or Greek text.

In differing with Strauss, I have argued that at every point where he disagreed with the guidelines they should be retained because they serve to preserve some male specificity or male nuances that were there in the original Hebrew and Greek text. I do not agree that we should try to "eliminate" or "mute" these elements, or that these nuances were not "intentionally" there in the God-breathed words of Scripture.

VIII. CONCLUSION

I am thankful for Strauss' paper because it has made me and others examine the positions we took in the Colorado Springs guidelines, and such a challenge to one's position is almost always helpful in academic discussion. Sometimes the challenge brings to light points that must be modified or abandoned, and even when the challenge does not lead to changes, at least it causes one to reconsider his own position and, if the challenges can be considered and answered, ultimately to see the position as more solid than it was before.

After considering Strauss' critique at length, it seems to me that he has failed to be persuasive for several reasons. (1) He has misrepresented the guidelines at some important points, and as a result several rhetorically forceful parts of his paper are not opposing the guidelines at all but his own misrepresentation of them. For example, he is not correct to suggest that the guidelines require that ἄνθρωπος be translated "man," or that they mandate

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[23] "To the Reader" 3.

the retention of form without regard to meaning, or that they represent a "woodenly-literal approach."

(2) For purposes of his critique he assumes the validity of some improper standards for correct English translation today, such as NT citations of OT statements, the LXX translation of the Hebrew text, and an implicit prediction of the future state of the English language that is impossible to prove.

(3) His article indicates an inadequate understanding of several Greek and Hebrew words, such as the existence of clear male overtones when אדם is used as a name for the human race, the clear male-marked quality in the default sense of Hebrew איש and Greek ἀνήρ, and the limitation of the Hebrew word בן (in singular) to mean "son" and not "child."

(4) His argument at significant points seems to me to be based on either oversights or mistakes. Among the oversights are the failure to acknowledge that many changes in form are both unnecessary and do bring changes in meaning, the failure even to consider the loss of meaning that occurs when we delete representative generic male and female figures from the Bible, the failure to give adequate weight to the fact that words have boundaries to their ranges of meanings, and the failure to explain why it is precisely the male aspects of meaning and the male overtones in Hebrew and Greek expressions that should be concealed in English translations. Among the things that seem (to me, at least) to be mistakes in his argument are the claim that generic singular statements in the Bible are "notionally plural," the failure to distinguish between what a verse actually says and the broader number of people to whom its teaching applies, and the assumption that the goal of accurate translation should simply be to translate the "(central) point" rather than as much of the meaning as possible.

I wish to thank Mark Strauss for his article, because I have learned much and gained deeper understanding of this issue as I thought through the challenges he raised. For that I am grateful. In the end, however, it does not appear to me that any of the Colorado Springs guidelines should be modified or abandoned in light of Strauss' criticisms. In fact, I find that I have greater confidence in the validity of the guidelines after considering his extensive critique.