Q&A: TRANSLATION DECISIONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN STANDARD BIBLE

What is the CSB's Approach on translating gender?

The Christian Standard Bible retains a traditional approach to translating gender language into English. Masculine terms (Father, Son, King, etc.) and pronouns (he, him, his) are retained whenever they refer to God. Likewise, when Scripture presents historical accounts and parables referring to male humans, the Translation Oversight Committee retained masculine terms and pronouns.

To improve accuracy, the Translation Oversight Committee chose to avoid being unnecessarily specific in passages where the original context did not exclude females. When Scripture presents principles or generic examples that are not restricted to males, the CSB does not use "man," "he," or other masculine terms. At the same time, the translators chose not to make third person masculine pronouns inclusive by rendering them as plurals (they, them), because they believed it was important to retain the individual and personal sense of these expressions.

The following examples demonstrate the CSB translation philosophy regarding gender language:
- The Hebrew 'ish or 'enosh usually imply a man, while 'adam or ben 'adam often call attention to the mortality of humanity, so the latter are often translated "human" or "(mere) mortal."
- In Genesis 1:26-27 and 5:1 the Translation Oversight Committee translated Hebrew 'adam as "man" since the passage goes on to define it as male and female. It is clear in the context that "man" includes male and female.
- The Greek anthropos is usually rendered as "person" or some equivalent since it doesn't refer exclusively to males but to human beings. In some instances the Translation Oversight Committee rendered it "man" or "men" for contextual reasons. The plural anthropoi is usually rendered as "people."
- The Greek anēr most often refers to males, where it is rendered as "man" or "men." However, there are some contexts where it refers to both men and women (e.g., Acts 17:34; Eph 4:13; James 1:8), and there it is rendered in a way that makes clear that men and women are in view. In all cases, the context determined the most accurate rendering.
- When referring to Christians, the traditional rendering "brothers" for the plural Greek adelphoi suggests to English readers today only male believers. But in the vast majority of instances the term refers to both male and female believers. Therefore, the Translation Oversight Committee translated it as "brothers and sisters" in those cases.
- If the context indicates that both male and female believers are in view, the Greek singular adelphos is rendered inclusively (e.g., 1 John 5:16) or as "brother or sister" (e.g., Matt 5:22; Rom 14:10; 1 Cor 8:13; 1 Thess 4:6; Heb 8:11; 1 John 2:9-11). But if such a rendering would be too cumbersome in a given context, the singular "brother" is retained (e.g., Matt 18:15; Luke 6:41-42; 1 Cor 6:6).
- The singular Hebrew and Greek words for "father" and "son" are generally retained. In addition, the plural "fathers" and "sons" are generally retained (e.g., Rom 8:19; 15:8; Gal 3:7; Heb 1:1; 12:5). Depending on the context, the plural "fathers" is sometimes rendered as "ancestors" (e.g., Acts 24:14; Rom 9:5) and the plural "sons" is sometimes rendered inclusively as "children" (e.g., Eph 2:3).
- The Christian Standard Bible has retained the phrase "son of man" where it may have messianic implications (Dan 7:13; Heb 2:6), as Ezekiel's epithet (Ezek 2:1), and as Jesus's self identification in the Gospels. The phrase is also retained in cases where human mortality is in view (Ps 8:4; Isa 51:12); however, it might also be translated "human (being/race)" (Ps 12:1; Jer 49:18) or "(mere) mortal" (2 Sam 7:14; Eccl 12:5). In some cases the plural is translated "children of Adam" to bring out the connection to the progenitor (Eccl 3:10-21); in other cases there is a footnote indicating that possibility (Gen 11:5; Eccl 1:13).