

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
March 2015**

Bible Reference:

Proverbs 1:12

Original text:

גְּבֹלְעֵם כְּשֶׁאוֹל חַיִּים וְתַמְיָמִים כְּיֹרְדֵי בֹרַחַת:

HCSB rendering:

Let's swallow them alive, like Sheol,
still healthy as they go down to the Pit.

Suggestion:

Let's swallow them alive, like Sheol,
whole, like those who go down to the Pit.

Rationale:

The HCSB translation “as they go down to the Pit” does not accurately represent the Hebrew כְּיֹרְדֵי בֹרַחַת. The Hebrew preformative כְּ does not introduce a temporal clause (“as” = “when”), but rather it introduces the second party in a comparison (“as” = “like”). The Hebrew יֹרְדֵי is a participle (“those who go down”) and not a finite verb (“they go down”).

What we are suggesting is the commonplace rendering in many translations and commentaries. The word תַּמְיָמִים is parallel to the adjective חַיִּים in the previous stich. We notice that DCH recommends the meaning “whole” for this verse, and we think it goes well with the verb “swallow.”

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
March 2015**

Bible Reference:

Proverbs 1:22

Original text:

עַד־מָתַי פְּתוּם תֵּאָהָבוּ פְתִי וְלֹצִים לְצוֹן חֲמָדוֹי לָהֶם וְכַסִּילִים יִשְׁנְאוּ־דַעַת:

HCSB rendering:

How long, foolish ones, will you love ignorance?
How long will you mockers enjoy mocking
and you fools hate knowledge?

Suggestion:

How long, inexperienced ones, will you love ignorance?
How long will you mockers enjoy mocking
and you fools hate knowledge?

Rationale:

- 1) The Hebrew word translated “foolish ones” in this verse is פְּתוּם. Elsewhere HCSB consistently translates it “inexperienced ones.” There is no good reason to do otherwise here.
- 2) The translation “fools” is usually reserved for three other Hebrew words in Proverbs. The fact that foolish ones indicates a different Hebrew word than the ones translated fools will be lost on most people, and they will not realize that Solomon is here speaking about the inexperienced, the gullible and naïve.
- 3) In an earlier version of HCSB Proverbs 27:12 also had “foolish ones” for the same Hebrew word. This was changed to “inexperienced ones” in a later revision. This verse should receive the same treatment.

Translation Suggestions for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
March 2015

Bible Reference:

Proverbs 5:10

Original text:

פֶּן־יִשְׁבְּעוּ זָרִים כֶּהֱךָ וְעֵצְבֶיךָ בְּבַיִת נֹכְרִי:

HCSB rendering:

strangers will drain your resources,
and your earnings will end up in a foreigner's house.

Suggestion:

strangers will drain your resources,
and your hard-earned pay will end up in a foreigner's house.

Rationale

The translation “earnings” seems rather bland for the Hebrew term עֵצְבֶיךָ. This term is used in Genesis 3 to describe the kind of hard, frustrating toil that Adam and Eve would have to perform in a sinful world. We believe that the idea of hard-earned, and therefore precious, reward which one can hardly afford to lose ought to be included in the translation.

Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
March 2015

Bible Reference:

Proverbs 8:22

Original text:

יְהוָה קָנָנִי רֵאשִׁית דְּרָכָו

HCSB rendering:

The LORD made^a me at the beginning of His creation,
^aOr *possessed, or begot*

Suggestion:

The LORD acquired^a me at the beginning of His creation,
^aOr *possessed, or begot or made*

Rationale:

The verb קָנָנִי in Proverbs 8:22 is a famous *crux*, so we see wisdom in putting a variety of choices before the reader in a footnote. In recent years there are many who take the verb to mean “create” or “make” in this context, so it is reasonable to put “made” into a footnote. Also there are those who like to translate all the verbs in verses 22-25 with birth imagery, so “begot” is also legitimate.

Our preference is “acquired,” however, for two main reasons:

- 1) The verbal root קָנָה occurs 14x in the book of Proverbs. In all of the other 13 occurrences, the HCSB offers a verb of acquisition: get (6x), acquire (3x), buy (3x), and obtain (1x). We see no reason why this meaning would not work also in this context. In short, translating “the LORD acquired” gives the verb the same meaning here that it has everywhere else in Proverbs.
- 2) We know that this section has historically been considered Messianic by many Christian interpreters. Translating “the LORD made” would presumably eliminate the possibility of reading the section as Messianic. The Nicene Creed says that Christ was begotten, not made. Did the HCSB translators want to eliminate the Messianic possibility? That would surprise us, since we have been led to understand that the HCSB translators were eager to see Christ in the Old Testament. With a verb as difficult as קָנָנִי we recommend that the HCSB put into the text a rendering that would more easily allow a Messianic understanding for those interpreters who prefer it.

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
March 2015**

Bible Reference:

Proverbs 8:23

Original text:

מֵעוֹלָם נִסְכַּחְתִּי מִרֹאשׁ מִקְדָּמֵי-אָרֶץ:

HCSB rendering:

I was formed before ancient times,
from the beginning, before the earth began.

Suggestion:

I was appointed^a before ancient times,
from the beginning, before the earth began.

^aOr formed

Rationale:

The verb נִסְכַּחְתִּי is admittedly difficult. BDB understands it as “I was installed” (נִסַּךְ III—a verb that occurs only one other time). HALOT understands it as “I was woven/shaped” (נִסַּךְ II—a verb that occurs only one other time).

What fits the context better? There are those who would like to see birth imagery in verses 22-23, in keeping with חוּלְלָתִי in verses 24-25. They would be happy with “I was knit together” or possibly “I was formed.”

However, if one thinks about the pre-incarnate Christ in this section (which has been very common in the history of Christian interpretation), “appointed” may have a slight preference. The rendering “I was formed” gets close to what is condemned in the Nicene Creed about Christ: “He was begotten, not made.” It is also true that this verbal root is used in Psalm 2:6 (נִסְכַּחְתִּי), talking about God the Father “appointing” or “consecrating” Christ as the Messianic King.

Due to the difficulty of the passage and the diversity of opinion, we think it would be good to have a footnote with the alternate translation.

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
March 2015**

Bible Reference:

Proverbs 12:28

Original text:

בְּאַרְחֵ-צְדָקָה חַיִּים וְדֶרֶךְ נְתִיבָהּ אֵל-מוֹת:

HCSB rendering:

There is life in the path of righteousness,
but another path leads to death.^a

^a Or righteousness, and in its path there is no death

Suggestion:

There is life in the path of righteousness,
and in its path there is no death.^a

^a Or but another path leads to death

Rationale:

We find reasons to prefer the HCSB footnote over the rendering in the text.

- 1) In order to come upon the rendering in the HCSB text, the word אֵל needs to be repointed, and the word “another” needs to be added although there is nothing explicit in the Hebrew to account for it.
- 2) “Its path” accounts for דֶרֶךְ נְתִיבָהּ, assuming that this is a construct chain with the second word missing the mappiq (cf. JM 94h; lit: “way of its path” with “its” referring to “righteousness”).
- 3) Though it is rare to have אֵל negate a noun, both GKC (§152g) and Waltke-O’Connor (§39.3.3a, note 59) look upon this passage as an example of it happening.
- 4) “No death” offers a nice semantic parallel to חַיִּים in the first stich.

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
January 2015**

Bible Reference:

Proverbs 16:23

Original text:

לֵב חָכָם יִשְׁכַּל פִּיהוּ וְעַל-שְׂפָתָיו יִסֵּף לֵקַח:

HCSB rendering:

A wise heart instructs its mouth
and increases learning with its speech.^a

^a Lit *learning upon his lips*

Suggestion:

The heart of a wise person instructs his mouth;
it adds learning to his speech.^a

^a Lit *learning upon his lips*

Rationale:

The HCSB text obviously takes לֵב as the antecedent of the suffixes on פִּיהוּ and שְׂפָתָיו (“its mouth” / “its speech”). This results in what seems to us to be a very odd image—a *heart* having a *mouth* and *lips*. It seems more likely that חָכָם (“wise person”) is the antecedent of the suffixes (“his mouth” / “his lips/speech”), which is what the HCSB inexplicably has in the footnote (“*upon his lips*”). Our suggestion implements this change, along with several other little shifts to make the thought clear and natural in English. We understand both parts of the verse to be making the same point: “intelligent and insightful words come from an inner intelligence” (Steinmann, *Proverbs*, Concordia Commentary, p. 366).

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
September 2014**

Bible Reference:

Proverbs 23:13-14

Original text:

אַל־תִּמְנַע מִנַּעַר מוֹסֵר כִּי־תִכְנֹנֵנּוּ בְשִׁבְט לֹא יָמוּת:
אַתָּה בְשִׁבְט תִּכְנֹנֵנּוּ וְנִפְשׁוּ מִשְׁאֵל תִּצִּיל:

HCSB rendering:

Don't withhold discipline from a youth;
if you beat him with a rod, he will not die.
Strike him with a rod,
and you will rescue his life from Sheol.

Suggestion:

Don't withhold discipline from a youth;
if you strike him with a rod, he will not die.
Strike him with a rod,
and you will rescue his life from Sheol.

Rationale:

1) We see no reason why the identical word (תִּכְנֹנֵנּוּ) is translated “beat” in verse 13 and “strike” in verse 14 when talking about the same thing. The impression could wrongly be given to English readers that there are two different Hebrew verbs.

2) When talking about spanking, we think that “strike” is a better English word choice than “beat,” in view of the nuances of each word. Here are the definitions from the Macmillan Dictionary:

- “beat” = to hit someone violently several times
- “strike” = to hit someone with your hand, a tool, or weapon.

In our society where there is much concern about child abuse, English translations need to be careful in how they present the biblically acceptable practice of spanking.

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
March 2015**

Bible Reference:

Proverbs 27:21

Original text:

מִצְרָה לְכֶסֶף וְכֹר לְזָהָב אִישׁ לְפִי מוֹהֲלָלוֹ:

HCSB rendering:

A crucible for silver, and a smelter for gold,
and a man for the words of his praise.^a

^a Or gold, but a man is tested by his praise

Suggestion:

A crucible for silver, and a smelter for gold,
but a man is tested by his praise.

Rationale:

We fear that the HCSB rendering in the text will communicate nothing to the average reader. What does it mean: “a man for the words of his praise”?

The HCSB footnote, on the other hand, is understandable, it fits the context, and it can be defended easily on the basis of the Hebrew (לְפִי often means “according to”). We recommend putting the footnote into the text.

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
April 2015**

Bible Reference:

Ecclesiastes 1:7

Original text:

אֶל-מְקוֹם שֶׁהִנָּחֵלִים הֵלְכִים שָׁם הֵם שָׁבִים לָלֶכֶת:

HCSB rendering:

The streams are flowing to the place,
and they flow there again.

Suggestion:

To the place where the streams flow,
there they flow again.

Rationale:

“What ‘place’?” is the question that a reader/hearer of HCSB will want to ask. The suggested translation above is not only clearer; it accounts for the relative clause in the original.

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
April 2015**

Bible Reference:

Ecclesiastes 2:3

Original text:

תִּרְתִּי בְּלִבִּי לְמִשׁוֹךְ בִּנְיָן אֶת־בְּשָׂרִי וּלְבִי נִתְּנָה בְּחֻכְמָהּ וּלְאַחֲזוֹ בְּסִכְלֹתַי

HCSB rendering:

I explored with my mind how to let my body enjoy life^a with wine and how to grasp folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom—

^a Lit to pull my body

Suggestion:

I explored with my mind how to let my body be taken up with wine—my mind still guiding me with wisdom—and how to grasp folly.

[Omit footnote.]

Rationale:

There is no attested meaning “enjoy life” for מִשְׁךְ. “Enjoy” is not simply an alternate rendering of the root literally meaning “draw or pull,” as the HCSB footnote claims. The translation “enjoy” requires emending the text to לְשִׁמְחָה and this reading is unattested and improbable.

As Fox points out (*A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up*, p. 177f), many translators and commentators have missed the parallelism of the passage:

I explored with my mind
(A) to draw (B) with wine (C) my flesh
and (C') my mind (A') driving (B') with wisdom
and to take hold of folly.

The suggested translation is an attempt to preserve the sense of מִשְׁךְ and to make the author’s point clear: while his body was directed by one thing, his mind was directed by another. It also obviates the need for rearranging the order of clauses as HCSB does.

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
April 2015**

Bible Reference:

Ecclesiastes 3:15

Original text:

וְהָאֱלֹהִים יִבְקֹשׁ אֶת־נַרְדָּמָה:

HCSB rendering:

God repeats what has passed.^a

^a Or God calls the past to account, or God seeks what is past, or God seeks the persecuted; lit God seeks the pursued

Suggestion:

God repeats what has passed.^a

^a Lit God seeks what has been pursued

Rationale:

The clause is admittedly difficult. Since נַרְדָּמָה and בִּקְשׁ are near synonyms, we agree that HCSB has put the most likely interpretation into the body of the text. We also agree with letting readers see a more literal rendering in a footnote, since this could help them understand why other published translations handle the passage differently. There is no reason, however, not to make the literal rendering intelligible in English.

A more serious problem is that we think that footnotes in which possible interpretations proliferate do not improve readers' general level of confidence in their Bibles. "God seeks the persecuted" would make little sense in context, and "God calls the past to account" requires taking נַרְדָּמָה as an abstract noun meaning "the past," which seems unlikely. We recommend streamlining the footnote as in the suggestion above.

Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
April 2015

Bible Reference:

Ecclesiastes 3:18

Original text:

אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְלִבִּי עַל־דְּבַרְתָּ בְּנֵי הָאָדָם לְבָרָם הָאֱלֹהִים

HCSB rendering:

I said to myself, “This happens concerning people, so that God may test them”

Suggestion:

I said to myself, “This happens for people’s own good, so that God may test them”

Rationale:

There have been many proposals for how and where to fill in the obvious ellipsis in the thought of this passage, and we think HCSB made a good decision (“This happens”). The problem is the lifeless and awkward phrase “This happens concerning people.”

We believe that **עַל־דְּבַרְתָּ** here conveys a purpose idea, similar to its use in 7:14 (HCSB “so that”) and Daniel 2:30 (HCSB “in order that”). The point, in other words, is that God intends to increase people’s wisdom by subjecting them to time and chance.

Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
April 2015

Bible Reference:

Ecclesiastes 4:4

Original text:

וְרָאִיתִי אֲנִי אֶת-כָּל-עֲמָל וְאֵת כָּל-בְּשָׂרוֹן הַמַּעֲשֵׂה כִּי הֵיא קִנְאֵת-אִישׁ מִרֵעֵהוּ

HCSB rendering:

I saw that all labor and all skillful work is due to a man's jealousy of his friend.

Suggestion:

I saw that all labor and all skillful work is due to one person's jealousy of another.

Rationale:

The connotations of English “friend” are too “warm” for the context here. We believe the meaning of אִישׁ//רֵעֵהוּ here is similar to its meaning in Genesis 11:3, 31:49, etc. The suggested translation above resembles NIV, NRSV, NET, and JPS.

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
April 2015**

Bible Reference:

Ecclesiastes 4:8

Original text:

וְלִמְיָ אֲנִי עֹמֵל וּמְחַסֵּר אֶת־נַפְשִׁי מִטוֹבָה

HCSB rendering:

“So who am I struggling for,” he asks, “and depriving myself from good?”

Suggestion:

“So who am I struggling for,” he asks, “and depriving myself of good?”

Rationale:

We’re quite sure this was an oversight. In current English one deprives someone *of* something, not *from* something.

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
April 2015**

Bible Reference:

Ecclesiastes 4:13ff

Original text:

טוב ילד מסכן וחכם ממלך זקן וכסיל אשר לא ידע להזהר עור:
כי מבית הסורים יצא למלך כי גם במלכותו נולד הש:
ראיתי את כל החיים המהלכים תחת השמש עם הילד השני אשר יעמד תחתיו: אין קץ
לכל העם לכל אשר יהיה לפניהם גם האחרונים לא ישמחו בן כי גם זה הכל ורעיון ריח:

HCSB rendering:

Better is a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer pays attention to warnings. For he came from prison to be king, even though he was born poor in his kingdom. I saw all the living, who move about under the sun, follow a second youth who succeeds him. There is no limit to all the people who were before them, yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

Suggestion:

Better is a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer pays attention to warnings. For the youth came from prison to be king, while also during his reign another poor man was born. I saw all the living, who move about under the sun, follow this second youth who succeeded him. There is no limit to all the people whom he ruled, yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

Rationale:

This text is a knot that most translations have a hard time untying. That there is an underlying narrative seems clear, but the pronouns make it hard to tell how many characters there are, how many “rags-to-riches” stories there are, and how exactly the stories fit together chronologically. We think a reader is helped most by a translation that makes a decision and commits to it. Above all, the interpretation chosen should support the main point in context, which is that the fortunes of rulers and the loyalties of their subjects are both fickle.

Our first suggested change disambiguates the first pronoun “he.” We think it is much more likely that this refers to the youth than the old and foolish king, since mentioning that this foolish king had once been a prisoner would require a sudden leap into the deep past. Nor is it clear why, if the old fool were an ex-convict, this would be worth mentioning.

The second change involves taking כִּי גַם as “while also,” not as a concessive (HCSB “even though”). GKC (§160b) does argue for “although” here, but there is nothing innately concessive in the semantics of this combination of particles (see 7:22, 9:12, etc.) and a translation should be based on how the translator understands the relationship between the clauses that they connect. It is not clear how, if the king had

once been a prisoner, the fact that he was born poor would make this unexpected (HCSB “he came from prison to be king *even though* he was born poor”); nor is it clear why his birthplace (“in his [own?] kingdom”) would be relevant. If the point is that yet another poor man (taking שָׂרֵי to mean “a poor man,” not as the condition under which the first king was born [“*as* a poor man”]) is born during the former prisoner’s reign (lit. “indeed, also in his reign...”), the sentence makes much better sense. It also fits the point in the context: kings rise and fall rapidly, and subjects’ loyalties quickly transfer from one to another.

The third change translates הַיְלֵד הַשֵּׁנִי in verse 15 as “this second youth,” not “a second youth” (HCSB). This both reflects the definiteness of the original and the way we understand the narrative. “Who succeeds” was changed to “who succeeded” only for the sake of consistency in English (Ewald, SHLOT, p. 10).

The final change involves אֵין-קֵץ לְכָל-הַעַם לְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-הָיָה לְפָנָיו. HCSB’s “There is no limit to all the people who were before them” is problematic mainly because it is impossible to see the relevance of a statement that in the days before these kings (“them”) came on the scene, the population had been very large. If however the subject of הָיָה is the youth, not the people, and the verse means literally, “all those before whom he (the youth) was” (so Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up*, p. 227), then the relevance of the thought is apparent. Even though he had once ruled over (“been before”) a large population, the king is soon forgotten.

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
April 2015**

Bible Reference:

Ecclesiastes 5:3 (H2)

Original text:

כִּי בָא הַחֵלֹם בְּרַב עֲנָנִים וְקוֹל בְּרַב דְּבָרִים:

HCSB rendering:

For dreams result from much work and a fool's voice from many words.

Suggestion:

For a dream comes with much trouble, and a fool's voice with much talk.

Rationale:

The main problem with HCSB's translation is its thought of words causing a voice, which frankly makes little sense. An additional problem is the thought that hard work causes dreams (which in this context are clearly a bad thing), when elsewhere the Teacher affirms the opposite (5:12; cp. 2:23).

We think a better solution is to take **בָּא...ב** in its natural sense ("come with"). HCSB varies in its handling of **עֲנָנִים** (e.g. "miserable task" in 1:13 and 4:8), and we think "trouble" catches the thought here adequately.

"Much talk" results in a more evident parallel in translation than the literal "many words" ("much trouble"/"much talk," in the suggestion above).

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
April 2015**

Bible Reference:

Ecclesiastes 6:10ff

Original text:

מִה־שֶׁהָיָה כְּבָר נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ וְנִזְדַּע אֲשֶׁר־הוּא אָדָם
... מִה־יֵתֵר לְאָדָם:
כִּי מִי־יֹדֵעַ מִה־טוֹב לְאָדָם בְּחַיִּים מִסֶּפֶר יְמֵי־חַיָּי הַבָּלוּ וַיַּעֲשֶׂם כַּצֶּלַל אֲשֶׁר מִי־יִנָּד לְאָדָם מִה־יִהְיֶה
אַחֲרָיו תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:

HCSB rendering:

Whatever exists was given its name long ago, and it is known what man is. ... What is the advantage for man? For who knows what is good for man in life, in the few days of his futile life that he spends like a shadow? Who can tell man what will happen after him under the sun?

Suggestion:

Whatever exists was given its name long ago, and it is known what a human being is. ... What is the advantage for a person? For who knows what is good for a person in life, in the few days of his futile life that he spends like a shadow? Who can tell a person what will happen after him under the sun?

Rationale:

As we have mentioned elsewhere, we encourage HCSB to reevaluate the use of generic “man” to mean “humanity in general” or “a human being,” especially as a translation for אָדָם. The effect is especially noticeable in a context like this one where the term occurs many times in quick succession.

Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
April 2015

Bible Reference:

Ecclesiastes 7:22

Original text:

כִּי גַם־פְּעָמַיִם רַבּוֹת יָדַע לִבִּי אֲשֶׁר גַּם־אֶת־קַלְלֹת אַחֵרִים:

HCSB rendering:

For you know that many times you yourself have cursed others.

Suggestion:

For you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.

Rationale:

We think there is an unfortunately loss of meaning when HCSB omits “heart.” It contributes the thought that, while readers might pretend otherwise, they know deep down that what the Teacher says is true.

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
April 2015**

Bible Reference:

Ecclesiastes 11:9

Original text:

וְהִלַּךְ בְּדַרְכֵי לִבִּי וּבְמַרְאֵי עֵינָי וְדַע כִּי עַל-כָּל-אֲלֵהָ יְבִיאֲךָ הָאֱלֹהִים בְּמוֹשָׁפֶט:

HCSB rendering:

And walk in the ways of your heart
and in the sight of your eyes;
but know that for all of these things God will bring you to judgment.

Suggestion:

And walk in the ways of your heart
and in the desire of your eyes;
but know that for all of these things God will bring you to judgment.

Rationale:

“Walk in the sight of your eyes” is literal, but what it would mean in this context unclear (Is the Teacher telling the young man to look where he is going?). מְרָאָה frequently has connotations of attractiveness or desirability (Isaiah 53:2). The thought that best fits the context is that the young man should go ahead and pursue whatever he finds attractive, while realizing that he will be held accountable.

Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
March 2015

Bible Reference:

Song of Songs 1:13-14

Original text:

צָרוּר הַמָּרוּ הַדֹּדַי לִי בֵּין שָׁדַי וְלֵוֶן:
אֲשֶׁפֶל הַכַּפּוּרוּ הַדֹּדַי לִי בְּכַרְמֵי עֵין גֶּדִי:

HCSB rendering:

¹³ My love is a sachet of myrrh to me,
spending the night between my breasts.
¹⁴ My love is a cluster of henna blossoms to me,
in the vineyards of En-gedi.

Suggestion:

¹³ The one I love is a sachet of myrrh to me,
spending the night between my breasts.
¹⁴ The one I love is a cluster of henna blossoms to me,
in the vineyards of En-gedi.

Rationale:

There are several places in Song of Songs where HCSB translates הַדֹּדַי as “my love” without presenting any difficulty to the reader; it is clear from the context that the woman in the poem is referring to the man. For example, there is no confusion in 1:16 when she says, “How handsome are you, *my love*.”

However, that meaning of “my love” is not yet established at 1:13-14. In the two occurrences there, it would be natural for a reader to understand “my love” to refer to the woman’s own love and affection as something she holds close to herself, rather than as a term of endearment.

My recommendation is to follow the same convention here as in 8:5, in which הַדֹּדַי is translated, “the one she loves,” not “her love.” The two occurrences in 1:13-14 are the only problem places related to this phrase.

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
March 2015**

Bible Reference:

Song of Songs 2:4

Original text:

הָבִיאָנִי אֶל-בַּיִת תְּיָיִן וְהִנֵּלּוּ עָלַי אֲהָבָה:

HCSB rendering:

He brought me to the banquet hall,
and he looked on me with love.^a

^a Or and his banner over me is love

Suggestion:

He brought me to the banquet hall,
and his banner over me is love.^a

^a Or and he looked on me with love

Rationale:

This lovely image does not stand out as unusually difficult among the countless images in the Song of Songs, so that the poetry should need to become prosaic at this spot. There is delight in contemplating “his banner over me is love.” Even if unlocking the meaning of this particular metaphor could require some effort, that effort is likely enough to be rewarded.

“He looked on me with love,” is a suitable footnote. However, the better rendering belongs in the text itself, since footnotes are often not available or attended to as people encounter the biblical text.

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
March 2015**

Bible Reference:

Song of Songs 5:13

Original text:

לְחֵיוֹ כְּעֶרְוַנַּת הַבָּשָׂם מִגְדָּלוֹת מְרֻקָּתַיִם שִׁפְתוֹתָיו שׁוֹשְׁבִיִּים נִטְפְּוֹת מִזֶּרַע עֵבֶר:

HCSB rendering:

His cheeks are like beds of spice,
towers of^a perfume.

His lips are lilies,
dripping with flowing myrrh.

^a LXX, Vg read *spice, yielding*

Suggestion:

His cheeks are like beds of spice,
raised beds of fragrant herbs.^a

His lips are lilies,
dripping with flowing myrrh.

^a Lit *towers of perfume*; LXX, Vg read *yielding perfume*

Rationale:

This suggestion is mainly aimed at removing from the main text a phrase that strikes the ear as strangely as “towers of perfume” does, and putting something that is at least understandable in its place.

“Towers of perfume” makes an appropriate footnote, offering as it does a more literal reading.

“Raised beds of fragrant herbs” is interpretive, but is a way to keep the verse unified with the imagery of a garden, coming as it does between an expression for aromatic plants and another that mentions a specific flower. At the same time, “raised beds” is a way to stay in touch with the common Hebrew word for “tower” in the outlying use of it in this verse.

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
March 2015**

Bible Reference:

Song of Songs 6:13

Original text:

שׁוּבֵי שׁוּבֵי הַשּׁוּלָמִית שׁוּבֵי וְנַחֲזֶה-בָךְ מִה־תִּחְזוּ בְשׁוּלָמִית כַּמִּחְלַת הַמַּחֲנֵי:^a

HCSB rendering:

Come back, come back, Shulammitte!
Come back, come back, that we may look at you!
Why are you looking at the Shulammitte,
as you look at the dance of the two camps?^a
^a Or dance of Mahanaim

Suggestion:

Come back, come back, Shulammitte!
Come back, come back, that we may look at you!
Why are you looking at the Shulammitte,
as you look at the dance of Mahanaim?^a
^a Or *the two camps*

Rationale:

“The dance of the two camps” is too cryptic. The expression seems like something readers are supposed to be able to understand, but puzzling over it is unlikely to bring them any closer.

The reader is already conditioned to encountering proper place names in the Song of Songs, and will understand them to be meaningful allusions of some kind. Any one of them, including “the dance of Mahanaim” could become a matter of profitable study for those who are so inclined.

**Translation Suggestion for the HCSB
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
March 2015**

Bible Reference:

Song of Songs 8:6

Original text:

שִׁימֵנִי כַחֲתָם עַל-לִבֶּךָ כַחֲתָם עַל-זְרוּעֶךָ כִּי-עֵזָה כַּמֹּת אֶהְיֶה קָשָׁה כַּשָּׂאוֹל קִנְיָהּ רִשְׁפִּיהָ רִשְׁפֵי אֵשׁ
שְׁלֵהֲבַתְיָהּ:

HCSB rendering:

Set me as a seal on your heart,
as a seal on your arm.
For love is as strong as death;
ardent love is as unrelenting as Sheol.
Love's flames are fiery flames—
the fiercest of all.

Suggestion:

Set me as a seal on your heart,
as a seal on your arm.
For love is as strong as death;
ardent love is as unrelenting as Sheol.
Love's flames are fiery flames—
the flame of the LORD^a
^a Or the fiercest of all

Rationale:

The use of the divine name *Elohim* as a way to express a Hebrew superlative is questionable, and a superlative use of “Yah” even more so. Significantly, the rendering “fiercest of all” eliminates from Song of Songs in translation the only direct reference to God. Without any strong justification, it excludes from consideration the most theologically-rich interpretations of the verse.

In the Concordia Commentary, *Song of Songs* (2003), Christopher Mitchell writes: “This is the single most significant phrase in the Song, and tragically most expositions downplay and mistranslate it. It is the apex of the book’s theological highlight (Songs 8:6-7)” (p. 1188). He argues that “the gracious, triune God of the Old and New Testament, who has manifested himself with flames of fire in various passages throughout the Scriptures, is the sole source of this love” (p. 1189). “The imagery of ‘Love’ as fire, finds its fulfillment in Christ’s atonement and the gift of the Holy Spirit.... This love man cannot produce by himself; it is the action of God—a divine flame” (p. 1220). Mitchell finds enthusiastic support in many other theologians, including Luther: “This fire, which God has lit in you, neither death, nor the grave, nor all the onslaughts of the world and Satan will be able to put out.”

Still, we recommend keeping the current HCSB rendering as a footnote, since it is a possible interpretation and is widely held.