

LETTER 8
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TRANSLATION PROBLEMS

There is great need of a version in good English that is truly accurate. Sometimes I have great hopes for the NIV and at other times I tend to become a bit discouraged, particularly about the Old Testament section.

The reason for my discouragement could be briefly summarized under two headings:

1. Sixty years ago there were a few very conservative scholars in established seminaries, but hardly anyone who held to an evangelical viewpoint was involved in giving a doctoral program in Semitics or Old Testament. In recent years a very considerable number of bright young fellows have taken doctorates in the Semitic field, but practically every one of these has done the greater part of his advanced work under scholars with critical or radical viewpoints. Although I believe that everyone who is working on the NIV desires that it be entirely true to the Scriptures, it is my impression that most have been influenced by liberal and critical teachings in ways they do not realize. This inevitably affects the translation at many points.

2. It has particularly bothered me that Kohler-Baumgartner is often quoted as an authority.

Examining a list of meanings is only a very superficial expedient, as words in different languages rarely correspond exactly. There is only an overlapping; generally each word in either language has areas and possibilities of meaning not found in connection with the other. Inevitably each covers certain aspects of the meaning of the other and includes possible meanings that the other does not cover. When using Kohler-Baumgartner this problem is further compounded by the fact that the meanings were stated in German and the English is only a translation of the German, and sometimes a mistranslation. As a result English meanings are sometimes given that have comparatively little