

Review Article: The TNIV—Some Preliminary Observations

**Note: this is not the edition now posted online but its prototype.
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For about two decades WELS has been using the NIV, not as an official or mandated translation, but as the standard translation used in our publications. Now the International Bible Society and Zondervan have published a revision known as the TNIV (Today's New International Version). When reading the TNIV, people who have been using the NIV as their daily Bible will feel right at home. About 93% of the NIV text remains unchanged. Assurances have also been given by the publishers that the NIV will continue to be available for those who want to use it, and that the TNIV is a supplement to the NIV not a replacement. The TNIV is intended to be a more contemporary version, aimed at 18 to 34 year olds, especially those not very familiar with the Bible, and at those using English as a second language. This preliminary review is not based on a detailed study and comparison of the two versions in their entirety, but on a survey of the publisher's claims and objectives for the new version, on the reactions it has aroused, and on an evaluation based on a single reading of the text.

Updating of Vocabulary and Style

One objective of the TNIV is to update the vocabulary and style of the NIV because of the constant change in the English language. Most of these changes fall into one of the following categories.

- Changes that clarify the meaning of language for today's reader. For example, Mary is said to be "pregnant" rather than "with child." Or "the third watch of the night" is changed to the more understandable, "shortly before dawn." The vocative O is almost eliminated.
- Changes made in paragraph structure, sentence structure, word order, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization as well as word changes based on contemporary English style.
- A minor form of this updating is changes to the spelling of proper names. The manner in which Hebrew proper names are to be represented in English has not become fully standardized. In the TNIV the spelling of many names has been revised to conform more closely to current scholarly practice and to the phonetics of the Hebrew originals. A list of such changes can be found in Appendix II of the TNIV, following the biblical text. Most of these changes pertain to the relationship of the Hebrew letters *kaph*, *qof*, and *heth* to English q, k, c, and ch. Since most of the names that are changed are not well known, the changes will hardly be noticed by most readers. A sample of the changes:

Abimelech	Abimelek
Acco	Akko
Asshur	Ashur

Colosse	Colossae
Erech	Uruk
Evil-Merodach	Awel-Marduk (does this remove derogatory pointing?)
Merodach-Baladan	Marduk-Baladan
Haran	Harran
Korazin	Chorazin
Molech	Molek
Neco	Necho
Succoth	Sukkoth

Many of these changes in style and vocabulary are, of course, debatable or a matter of taste, but by and large they are not controversial and do not effect the message, so we will not deal with them in any detail here. One charge (probably unjustified) is that the change from “with child” to “pregnant” is intended to remove reference to the unborn as a child in order to accommodate abortion.

Changes That Affect the Interpretation

This objective is stated in this way:

- Word changes that more precisely render the meaning of the original text.

One can hardly quarrel with this objective, but in many cases it is questionable if the changes meet this objective. We will look at a few of the more notable examples.

1. “Christ” is changed to “Messiah” when the underlying Greek functions as a title. While “Messiah” (from the Hebrew) and “Christ” (from the Greek) both mean “Anointed One,” what began as a title full of meaning to the early Jewish hearers of the gospel tended in the later Greek-speaking churches to become just another name for Jesus. So where the term is clearly used to designate the God-sent deliverer of Jewish expectations (primarily in the Gospels and Acts), it was judged more appropriate to use “Messiah.” However, where this sense seems less prominent (primarily in the Epistles), the transliteration of the Greek word (“Christ”) has been retained.

For example, in Mt 16:15 instead of saying “You are the Christ,” Peter says, “You are the Messiah.” Perhaps this is more natural in some cases where Jews are speaking in the gospel narratives, but according to the TNIV, in 1 John 5:1, John says to his primarily Gentile readers, “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah is born of God.” Romans 9:5 refers to “the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all.” The translators’ decision to make this change a general rule of translation seems to me to be quite dubious, because a stylistic decision made by the TNIV translators is being allowed to overrule the stylistic decision made by the New Testament writers. If the New Testament writers had wanted to retain a Hebrew expression in their Greek writings, they could easily have done so, as John does in John 4:25, where he places the word “Messiah” on the lips of the Samaritan woman and explains it with the word “Christ” or in the instances where the writers retain such terms as *abba*, *talitha qum*, *rabboni*, and *maranatha*.

This change is not very harmful, but it is a sample of the tendency of the TNIV translators to be too quick to import their interpretations or stylistic preferences into their translation, even where they are not necessary for clear communication. Another minor example is in the decision to relegate *selah* to the notes. The explanation given is: “Although Selah, used mainly in the Psalms, is probably a musical term, its meaning is uncertain. Since it may interrupt reading and distract the reader, this word has not been kept in the English text, but every occurrence has been signaled by a footnote.” Why exalt the translators’ stylistic feelings over 2000 years of textual tradition?

A more serious example of the tendency to over-interpret that carried over from the NIV to the TNIV is the decision regularly to interpret the Hebrew and Greek words for “flesh,” rather than to translate more literally so that the reader can become familiar with the idioms and word play of the biblical text. An example is in Genesis 6:3 where the choice of “mortal” rather than “corrupt” as the rendering for “flesh” in the main text unnecessarily limits the interpretation and, what’s worse, is probably the wrong choice.

2. Concerning “saints,” current usage (as reflected in major dictionaries of the English language) burdens it with meanings that lie outside the sense of the original-language words. The main Old Testament term that has traditionally been rendered “saints” refers to those who are faithful to God. The New Testament term primarily designates those who have become followers of the Christian Way as people consecrated to God and thus belonging to the Lord in a special sense.

The motive here seems to be to avoid the Catholic connotation of “saint.” This change would not necessarily be bad if *hagioi* was consistently translated with an expression like “God’s holy people” as it is in Ephesians 1:1, but sometimes it is translated with a more non-descript term like “God’s people” as it is in the passages listed below.

Passages in which “saints” (Greek *hagios*, plural) become “believers” include:
Acts 9:32; Acts 26:10; Rom 15:31; 16:15.

Passages in which “saints” become “people” or “God’s people” include:
Ro 8:27; 15:25; 16:2, 15; 1 Cor 6:1, 2; 14:33; 16:15; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:1; 13:13.

This continues a tendency which exists already in the NIV to “homogenize” terminology and to blur the distinction of synonymous or parallel terms. It is true that in the Old Testament *chasidim* is the common title of God’s people just as *hagioi* is in the New Testament. *Chasid*, however, does not mean “holy one,” but “recipient of mercy or merciful or faithful.” In the Old Testament of the NIV and the TNIV this term is sometimes simply translated as “godly one” or some equivalent. In the New Testament the same function of serving as the common name for God’s people is served by *hagioi*. The terms *chasidim* and *hagioi* are thus the same in function, but not in meaning. The NIV often blurs such distinctions. This translation rule is not in itself a big deal, but it is just another sample of what is a tendency of both the NIV and the TNIV to be too careless or casual in preserving the distinctiveness of biblical terms. Another example is the frequent translation of *hesed* simply as “love,” blurring the distinction from *ahavah*.

There is, however, a hint of a theological problem here. Does the translators' comment that "holy people" refers to "people consecrated to God" over-emphasize the sanctification aspect of the term at the expense of the justification aspect of the term? See also problem passages below.

3. References to "the Jews" are described more specifically, such as "the Jews there" or "the Jewish leaders," when the context indicates a more precise group of people.

The motive here seems to be to avoid offending Jews and to avoid inadvertently promoting anti-Semitism by giving the impression that all Jews are responsible for the death of Christ. This motive is commendable, but again it changes the idiom of John and the implementation is inconsistent.

Passages in which the Jew(s) (*hoi ioudaioi*) become Jewish leaders include:

Jo 1:19; 5:10,15,16; 7:1,11,13; 9:22; 18:14, 36; 19:12, 31,38; 20:19; Acts 13:50; 21:11

In many of these passages it is clear from the context that the people referred to are, in fact, the leaders of Israel, not necessarily all the people. Debatable passages are John 18:36, Acts 13:50, and 21:11. The Acts 13:50 rendering as "Jewish leaders" is interesting because five verses earlier, in verse 45, the antagonists of Paul were called the Jews. It is not fair to charge, as some have, that the TNIV removes all references to the guilt not only of the leaders but of the people of Israel. In John 19:12 it is "the Jews" who shout against Jesus and in 19:7 "the Jews" present the case before Pilate. This is an illustration of the inconsistency of application. According to lists based on earlier versions of the TNIV, John 19:12 read "the Jewish leaders," but it has now been changed, perhaps due to pressure. In 19:7 it seems clear that the leaders are the people involved, yet the translation is "the Jews." Though the intention is good, it is hard to imagine how this device will lessen the offense some find in these passages, since the reference to "the Jews" is retained at key places in the Passion narrative.

Gender Neutral or Gender Accurate?

By far the most controversial aspect of the TNIV is its use of gender neutral or, as they would prefer to say, "gender accurate" translation.

- Generic language is used where the meaning of the text was intended to include both men and women. For example, when it is clear that the original text never intended any exclusive male gender reference, "sons of God" becomes "children of God," and "brothers" becomes "brothers and sisters". All gender-related changes in the TNIV are made to update masculine terminology that has generic intent and is often misunderstood by today's generations. This means the elimination of most instances of the generic use of masculine nouns ("a man," or "men" as mankind, humans) and pronouns (he). Relative to the second of these, the so-called singular "they/their/them," which has been gaining acceptance among careful writers and which actually has a venerable place in English idiom, has been employed to fill in the vocabulary gap in generic nouns and pronouns referring to human beings. Where

an individual emphasis is deemed to be present, “anyone” or “everyone” or some other equivalent is generally used as the antecedent of such pronouns.

- *References originally intended to be masculine remain masculine in the TNIV.* [Their emphasis].

The appearance of the TNIV, beginning in 1995, has created great controversy and strife among Evangelicals. Many prominent Evangelicals and a few LCMS theologians, including many of the most prominent defenders of the so-called complementarian view of the roles of men and women, have signed statements opposing the TNIV. They have compiled and posted lists of hundreds of passages in which they feel the translation distorts the intent of the text. The Internet has dozens of sites attacking or defending the TNIV. The more rabid sites vehemently attack the TNIV as consciously pro-feminist and pro-homosexual.

Zondervan and the IBS have responded with a vigorous defense. The official TNIV web site provides responses to many of the most common attacks against the translation.

Does this text pander to any social agenda? A: Absolutely not. Social agenda must never be a component of Bible translation. The overriding concern with any translation is to produce a version that is accurate and understandable. All social and cultural biases must be discarded in the interest of accuracy and clarity.

The TNIV is not gender neutral; it is in fact “gender accurate.” Gender neutrality suggests the removal of specific male or female attributes. The TNIV does not remove these attributes or “neuter” any passages of Scripture. The TNIV uses generic language *only* where the meaning of the text was intended to include both men and women. These changes reflect a more precise rendering of Greek and Hebrew words.

What can we say about this very sharp clash of opinions?

It is clear that not all the criticisms of the TNIV are fair or well informed. There is also much judging, not only of the accuracy of the translation, but of the motives of the translators. The TNIV often does retain gender specific terms in key passages.

Not all gender inclusive translation is bad. “God wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Ti 2:4) represents well the intention of the passage. In 2 Timothy 2:2 the admonition to entrust the testimony “to reliable people” (*anthropoi*) who will be qualified to teach others is not necessarily wrong since the context does not limit the training to pastors, but may include other members of the congregation. In any case, Paul or, more precisely, the Holy Spirit here chose *anthropos* not *aner* and there is no reason the translation should not reflect that fact.

In other passages the gender changes don’t produce any inaccuracy of meaning, but they sound stilted or awkward or ungrammatical (one humanity, humans, everyone... they).

Eph 2:15 to make one new humanity out of the two

Ro 14:1 One person's faith allows them to eat everything. (If you are going to make such number changes, why not say, "Some people's faith allows them.")

The TNIV apologetics make a concerted efforts to provide examples from past and present usage of respected writers to justify this "everyone/they" construction, but it seems clear why the change to "everyone...they was made." The heaviest pressure for this change was due to changing sensibilities about male and female roles, not to changed English grammar which now makes agreement in number irrelevant. The answer to the question whether English grammar really has changed enough to call for these changes or whether the change is a cave-in to the demands of feminists and egalitarians depends to a considerable degree on the presuppositions of the person giving the answer. This issue is thrashed out on the dueling blogs and listserves that attack and defend TNIV. Many defenders of TNIV assert that the primary reason for the change was to communicate clearly in a time of changing grammar, not to accommodate feminism.

Other changes from the singular "he" to the plural "they" may remove or obscure an intended personal application to individuals or blur a biblical idiom.

TNIV Lk 16:27 Send Lazarus to my family?
NIV Lk 16:27 Send Lazarus to my father's house?
Are these really equivalent?

TNIV Jn 2:4 Mother, why do you involve me?
NIV Dear woman, why do you involve me?
Are either of these really equivalent to the Greek?

These are relatively minor issues. Other passages, however, raise doubts about whether the TNIV really is neutral on the issues of the roles of men and women in the church.

Acts 1:16,21,23, 26 TNIV Brothers *and sisters*, ...it is necessary to choose one of the men.... They proposed the names, they cast lots [or voted].
Acts 6:3, TNIV Brothers *and sisters*, choose seven *men* from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them...

What was the role of the women in choosing workers for the church? Were they among the "men and brothers" who were directed to fill these calls? Did they vote? TNIV skews the evidence. In Acts 1:21 the NIVI, one of the preliminary versions leading toward the TNIV, said, "Choose one of *those* who were with us [as the new apostle]." TNIV has backtracked from this by reverting to "men" as the candidates for apostleship, but one can understand the suspicions raised by the preliminary versions of TNIV and why the integrity of the project is suspect to many Evangelicals.

1 Corinthians 14:26-27, TNIV What then shall we say, brothers and sisters?
When *you* come together, each of *you* has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a

revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up. ²⁷ If *anyone* speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret.

Doesn't the immediate context go on to state that women should not do some of these things in the service? Why make this introduction of the topic gender neutral?

2 Peter 1:21, TNIV For prophecy never had its origin in the *human will*, but prophets, though *human*, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (The word is *anthropos* not *aner*.)

Were there women among the holy men of God who received the Scripture by inspiration? Is this intended to refer to women like Miriam or Deborah or Mary who sang hymns of praise? Again, unclarity is introduced.

In Romans 16:1 Phoebe is a “deacon” in the TNIV main text and a “servant” in the footnote. In the NIV she is a servant in the text, a deaconess in the note. In the NIV the women in 1 Timothy 2:11 are “wives” in the text and “deaconesses” in the note. In the TNIV they are “the women” in the text and “women who are deacons or possibly deacons’ wives” in the notes. The option which was first in the NIV is last in the TNIV. In Luke 2:36 Anna is a prophetess in the NIV but a prophet in the TNIV (the Greek is *prophetis* not *prophetes*). It is very difficult not to see a shift in the outlook of the translators in these examples.

In Romans 16:7 of the TNIV Junia is “outstanding among the apostles.” The NIV’s masculine Junias was changed to the feminine Junia with no note giving the alternative (Junia is probably correct). There is no mention of the evidence that makes the interpretation “outstanding among the apostles” linguistically unlikely. The other understanding, “highly regarded by the apostles,” should at least be mentioned in a note.

The most controversial rendering has been 1 Timothy 2:12:

1 Timothy 2:12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man;^{b,c} she must be quiet.

^bOr teach a man in a domineering way; or teach or to exercise (or have) authority over a man

^cOr over her husband

In response to sharp criticism of this translation (of the notes in particular) a spokesperson for the translators said:

- We are criticized for adopting an unusual and perhaps undocumented meaning of a key Greek word in this verse, *authentein* (translated in the NIV as "have authority").
- Yes, there are a lot of options in the footnotes here; and yes, this is unusual in the TNIV (we try to minimize footnotes, recognizing that a lot of people don't read them!). But we think they are justified in this case. Anyone who has followed the debates about the role of women in ministry for the last two decades knows that this

is one of the most debated verses in the entire Bible. The meaning of key words (at least one of them very rare), the syntax, the contextual flow, the situation Paul is addressing—all are disputed. We debated a lot about what rendering to put into the text and decided that we needed to represent credible alternatives, defended by able Bible-believing scholars, in the footnotes. Because the Committee tries not to introduce specific doctrinal perspectives on debated matters into the text, we thought that this was the only responsible thing to do. Some of our critics, however, apparently want a Bible that promotes a particular agenda. They note, for instance, that certain interpretations are found only among "egalitarian circles." Apparently, that is enough for some of our critics to rule out the interpretations that they argue for. Our Committee took a different approach, seeking to take into serious consideration all the responsible scholarship on debated matters among evangelicals, no matter what the view of the scholar. We simply think this is what Bible translators should do in order to avoid introducing a particular doctrinal bias into the text.

- The Gk. verb *authentēin* is rare (appearing only here in the entire Gk. Bible and very seldom in pre-NT Gk.) and has received considerable attention from a wide range of scholars over the last couple of decades. Critics claim that the TNIV has not represented the "correct meaning" of this word, "which simply means 'to exercise authority' or 'to have authority.'" Now a careful reading of this assertion should immediately raise a suspicion about this claim, since the authors go on in the next sentence to talk about alternative renderings. So who decides what the "correct meaning" is? The critics? Or the latest and best dictionary of NT Greek, which defines this verb to mean "to assume a stance of independent authority, give orders to, dictate to" (BDAG; see also Louw-Nida, "to control in a domineering manner")? The Committee has simply sought to represent in its translation and footnotes the spectrum of views on this word. Ironically, our critics are the ones who often charge us with involving ourselves in too much "interpretation" in our translation decisions. Here we are criticized for not taking the "right" interpretation" (according to some) and for giving English readers an honest accounting of the options. (It might be noted as an additional irony that the rendering "assume authority" adopted in the TNIV text was taken from the latest major commentary on the Pastoral Epistles from a firmly complementarian author!) [emphases added]

There are some damaging admissions in this defense: 1) that the committee is divided doctrinally on this issue and cannot reach a consensus conclusion on points debated among Evangelicals (what a range of questions that includes!) so they had to settle for majority and minority reports; 2) that in this case, the committee had to yield to pressure to include "adopting an unusual and perhaps undocumented meaning of a key Greek word." [emphasis added]. Can the committee provide any specific examples of texts that support the first option under note b? Again, the NIV's first choice is the TNIV's last choice.

In reading all the arguments and historical accounts of the debate on this issue, it is hard to escape the conclusion that a desire for a gender neutral translation to fill a market niche was a major factor in the decision to produce the TNIV. In fact, some evidence suggests that Zondervan and the committee at first preferred to move exclusively to a gender neutral translation, but that a storm of protest was at least in part responsible for the decision to go to a two-track approach of NIV and TNIV, each of which can serve one niche of the Evangelical market which is sharply divided on this issue. The NIV

successfully satisfied nearly the whole span of Evangelical Christianity. Have we reached the point where there will now be different translations for various doctrinal or age niches?

It also appears that the committee leaned strongly to inclusive renderings unless there was highly compelling evidence to the contrary. In some cases, they seem to have backtracked under pressure. Their approach does not seem to have been neutral in examining each case on its own merits, but weighted toward inclusive language. The Committee on Bible Translation and Zondervan made some major public relations blunders early in the controversy. Then they made concessions to critics which they later retracted. The division of the committee between complementarians and equalitarians which leads to split decisions makes it unlikely that the committee can regain the confidence of either side of the debate.

A good, balanced summary and evaluation of the early stages of this controversy can be found in *The Inclusive Language Debate: A Plea for Reality* by D. A. Carson. This book is reviewed in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Fall 1999. He concludes that “critics of gender inclusive translations have administered some telling blows; at other times they appear to have missed the mark rather badly.” In his evaluations of specific passages he also renders a split decision. The July 2005 issue of *The Bible Translator* contains two articles on the topic, one a defense of the TNIV by C. L. Blomberg. See also *Christianity Today*, October 7, 2002.

One other passage requires comment.

Psalm 8:4 ;Hebrews 2:6-7 TNIV But there is a place where someone has testified: "What are *mere mortals* that you are mindful of them, *human beings* that you care for them? You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor.

The reason for this change is gender neutral language, but the effect is to minimize or eliminate the Messianic character of the prophecy. See below.

The Textual Basis of TNIV

Here, in general, the strengths and weaknesses of the NIV are retained.

Both versions are fairly cautious in departing from the Masoretic text and indicate by footnotes where other texts such as the Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls have been followed. They are, however, somewhat careless or inconsistent in their treatment of what constitutes the Masoretic Text.

- If the translators choose a variant from the Masoretic marginal notations these changes are not noted in the footnotes, since they do not regard such changes as departure from the MT.

- For the same reason repointing of the Masoretic Text is usually not indicated in the footnotes. Since the vowels were later additions to the consonantal text, the translators do not regard changing the vowels as changing the MT.
- In some cases, words in the basic consonantal text have been divided differently than in the Masoretic Text. These are usually, but not always, indicated in the textual notes.
- In rare cases, the translators have emended the Hebrew text where it appears to have become corrupted at an even earlier stage of its transmission. These departures from the Masoretic Text are supposed to be marked in the textual footnotes.

The Greek text used in translating the New Testament has been an eclectic one, based on the latest editions of the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament. The translators say that they have made their choices among the variant readings in accordance with widely accepted principles of New Testament textual criticism. Footnotes call attention to places where uncertainty remains.

In my opinion the committee still shows too much favoritism to certain manuscripts and to a shorter text. In the New Testament, verse numbers for verses that appeared in the Textus Receptus which have been removed from the TNIV because they are not supported by "the best Greek manuscripts" are now set alongside the immediately preceding verse numbers and placed in brackets (see, for example, Matthew 17:20[21]). Of Mark 16:9–20 and John 7:53–8: 11, it is said, "Although long accorded virtually equal status with the rest of the Gospels in which they stand, they have a very questionable—and confused—standing in the textual history of the New Testament, as noted in the bracketed annotations with which they are set off. A different typeface has now been chosen for these passages to indicate even more clearly their uncertain status." This is a rather strange handling of the issue, since in the case of Mark 16 the former notation that the "most reliable early manuscripts" omit the passage has been downgraded by TNIV to "the earliest manuscripts" omit the passage, but the suspect nature of the passage is given greater emphasis by italics.

Problem Translations (New or Retained) That May Affect Doctrine

A number of translations diminish the Messianic interpretation of various passages.

Hebrews 2:6-7 (Ps 8) TNIV But there is a place where someone has testified: "What are *mere mortals* that you are mindful of them, *human beings* that you care for them? You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor.

The reason for this change was gender neutral language, but the effect is to eliminate or limit the Messianic character of the prophecy. The TNIV defense:

- It is clear that Psalm 8 is not speaking about one particular "man" but about humanity in general, about humanity's place in the scheme of things, in the order of creation. When the psalmist asks "What is '*enosh*'? [traditionally rendered "What is man?"]", he uses a generic word for humanity that hints at human frailty.

When he follows this in a conventional poetic parallel construction with *ben 'adam* [traditionally "son of man"], he employs a conventional Hebrew generic phrase for human being(s)/humanity/humankind that serves here as a close synonym of *'enosh*. One should compare Ps. 144:3, where the psalmist also speaks of humanity generically. There the psalmist begins by asking "What is *'adam*?" and follows that in poetic parallel with "son of *'enosh*," again intending these to be virtual synonyms. And there is also Job 17:17, where the author presents Job asking "What is *'enosh*?" and raising the same question with reference to human beings in general as the author of Psalm 8 (but in a different context). See also Job 25:6, where one finds *'enosh* and *ben 'adam* in similar synonymous parallelism and similarly referring to generic humanity.

- When the author of Ps. 8 speaks of "the son of *'adam*" [traditionally "son of man"], he does not use it as a title; it is purely a conventional generic reference to human beings. When Jesus took to himself the title "Son of Man," he attached his identity to the one spoken of in Dan. 7:13, not to the phrase "son of *'adam* / *'enosh*" as it occurs in Psalm 8 and many times elsewhere (for example, Ps. 144:3; Job 25:6; Dan. 8:17; and often in Ezekiel).
- Nevertheless, the author of Hebrews does establish a link between Psalm 8 and Jesus. He declares the wondrous truth that in Jesus what Psalm 8 affirms about humanity's royal status in God's creation is coming to complete realization in and through the incarnate and glorified Jesus.

The third part of the defense virtually concedes guilt to the charge of minimizing the weight given to Hebrews' use of the passage in determining the best translations of the two passages. Again the feelings of the translators for inclusive language trumps the interpretation of the inspired writers.

This is not the only case where this blurring of Messianic prophecy occurs.

In Psalm 2 divine references are capitalized. "His anointed" is not capitalized as it was in the NIV.

In Psalm 45 the correct translation of verse six, "Your throne, O God, will last forever" is negated by the note which says that the king here is addressed as God's representative. Direct prophecy becomes at best typical prophecy.

Isaiah 7:14 retains "the virgin" in the text, but adds "young woman" as a note. Those critics who are so upset about the gender inclusive issue should be focusing more attention on what TNIV does to direct Messianic prophecy.

In Daniel 7:13 "son of man" is retained but the note says it simply means "human being" and is retained because of its traditional associations.

A number of passages introduce unclarity into the doctrine of justification.

NIV	Titus 2:11	The grace of God that <i>brings</i> salvation has appeared to all men.
TNIV		The grace of God has appeared that <i>offers</i> salvation to all people.

NIV Ro 3:21 A righteousness of God, apart from law, has been made known
TNIV Apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known
TNIV states that it is not the law that reveals the righteousness of God (the revelation is apart from law), but the NIV states more clearly that the revealed righteousness is not by the law (it is the righteousness which is apart from law).

In Romans 3:22, according to the footnote we are justified through Christ's faithfulness rather than through faith in Christ.

NIV Ro 1:5 to the obedience that comes from faith
TNIV call the Gentiles to faith and obedience
Literally to the obedience of faith (i.e., the obedience which is faith)
The TNIV is worse than the NIV in correlating faith and obedience

Ro 3:27 the law that requires faith (literally: the law of faith).

The following passages are some of the TNIV renderings that are questionable either doctrinally or syntactically or both.

Ro 3:25 The TNIV's replacement for NIV's "a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood" is "a sacrifice of atonement through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith." Is there a hesitance to speak of faith in this blood?

Ro 9:33 Christ is called a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. Here the NIV is no better.

Ro 10:4 Compare the TNIV's "culmination of the law" with the NIV's "end of the law".

TNIV Lk 1:37 For no word from God will ever fail.
NIV For nothing is impossible with God.

1 Co 7:39 retains the same dubious addition as the NIV, "he must belong to the Lord."

Ps 51:6 introduces the strange idea that God expects faithfulness from an unborn child and teaches such children wisdom.

TNIV Dn 9:24 to anoint the Most Holy Place.
NIV to anoint the most holy.
The TNIV can't refer to Christ; the NIV can.

Individual Improvements

There are numerous cases in which specific translations are better in the TNIV than in the NIV.

TNIV John 1:18 the one and only Son, who himself is God and is in the closest relationship with the Father.

NIV God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side.

TNIV Acts 3:21 Heaven must receive him

NIV He must remain in heaven

TNIV Ro 11:26 in this way all Israel will be saved

NIV so all Israel will be saved.

TNIV Lk 7:47 Her many sins have been forgiven, as her great love has shown.

NIV Her many sins have been forgiven, for she loved much.

TNIV Lk 22:31 Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat

NIV Satan has asked to sift you (Note: pl) as wheat

TNIV Ro 8:34 Who then can condemn? No one. Christ Jesus who died...

NIV Who is he that condemns? Jesus Christ who died....

TNIV Ga 3:24 The law was put in charge of us until Christ came

NIV The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ

TNIV 1 Ti 3:16 the mystery from which true godliness springs
the mystery of godliness is great

TNIV 1 Ti 2:9 women to dress modestly...adorning themselves not with elaborate hairstyles...but with good deeds.

NIV women to dress modestly... not with elaborate hairstyles..but with good deeds.

TNIV Ps 40:6 my ears you have opened

NIV my ears you have pierced

TNIV Lk 14:2 abnormal swelling

NIV dropsy

TNIV 1 John 3:20 If our hearts condemn us, we know the God is greater than our hearts. Repunctuated to make v 20 separate from v 19.

It should be noted that some of these translations are more interpretive than the NIV. In these cases the interpretations are correct, but they still are interpretations.

Summary

The main objections that have been raised to the TNIV are 1) that it is becoming a niche translation that divides rather than creates unity in translation use among Christians, 2) that it increases the tendency of the NIV to put too much interpretation into the translation,¹ 3) that it unnecessarily obscures biblical idioms and usage, and 4) that it carries the principle of inclusive translation too far, applying it in many cases where it is not clear that this is appropriate.

Shortly after the NIV appeared the faculty of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary suggested thirty changes to the translation of the Old Testament. Of these thirty suggestions, seven have been implemented in the TNIV and two partially implemented by a footnote. Eighteen remain unchanged, and three are worse in the TNIV than they were in the NIV (Ps 2:6, Ps 8:5, and Micah 5:2). In my opinion the gains that have been made are not enough to offset the new problems that have been introduced.

In my opinion there is no good reason why we should adopt the TNIV in its present form. Though it offers many improved renderings, it does not significantly improve on the NIV's weaknesses. The number of doctrinally dubious translations seems to be greater in the TNIV than in the NIV, especially in Messianic passages. It is a very polarizing translation rather than a unifying one (not all the blame for this can be placed on the TNIV itself, some is due to unfair criticism, but the fact remains). The fact that the committee and the Evangelical community are becoming more divided and polarized on important translation issues does not bode well for the future of the committee and for future revisions. If the time comes to consider a new translation for general use, WELS should consider other options beyond the TNIV, perhaps one that does not yet exist.

¹ The NIV is generally rated as holding a mid-point between dynamic equivalence and formal equivalence. In my opinion it shades too much toward so-called dynamic equivalence."