

An Evaluation of the 2011 Edition of the New International Version NT

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Introduction

Evaluating a new English translation of the Bible can be extremely difficult. That is due to a number of factors. For one, we have such a wealth of options already accessible in our language that any new offering seems superfluous; we are jaded by the abundance. Likewise there is a cynical view that attributes all such productions to pecuniary greed of commercial publishers. Then, too, translations are often controversial due to theological or social issues. In our day the question of inclusive language for gender reference is a hot-button topic that has colored the discussion. A major factor which has generated heat in this area is the rhetoric of “single-issue, watchdog groups” who tend to view any variation from their canonical party line to be a betrayal of the gospel.

In light of factors such as these perhaps it would be helpful to step outside our American culture and consider the responses to new translations in non-western settings. Dick France recounts his experience in attending an English-speaking church service in a remote area of Nigeria. A new translation had recently been published, one designed specifically for settings such as this in which most of the audience spoke English only as a second language “at best.” During the service the Scripture was read from the new translation. After doing so “the Nigerian leader of the service put the book down, saying, ‘Now we will hear it from the real Bible,’ and he proceeded to read the same passage from the KJV.” On another occasion France tells of a new translation in a tribal language of Zaire, the first attempt to put Scripture directly into their own language as it was spoken (i.e., rather than an archaic version based on the KJV). When the new translation was first read to the people “the hearers commented favorably on the ease of understanding but then pointed out that, of course, it wasn’t the Bible! It almost seems,” France goes on to say, “that, by definition, the Bible must be remote and unintelligible.”¹

We may be amused by such reactions, judging them to be simplistic and poorly informed, but sometimes our reactions to new translations and revisions of existing ones are no better. We may not like to think of our favorite translation as “remote and unintelligible,” but what seems comfortable to us due to long familiarity and use in fruitful ministry in our familiar settings may not be unlike the reactions that France

¹ Dick France, “The Bible in English: An Overview,” in *The Challenge of Bible Translation: Communicating God’s Word to the World; Essays in Honor of Ronald F. Youngblood*, ed. G. Scorgie, M. Strauss, and S. Voth, 177–97 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 193.

describes in the settings of Nigeria and Zaire. An outside observer might notice what we do not: the older translations that we use do not communicate in our culture much better than did the KJV in Nigeria.

From our location on the timeline of English-speaking history the ability of an older translation to communicate God's inspired, inerrant revelation is no longer limited to the KJV. The oldest of our "modern" translations are now long enough "in the tooth" that they are showing their age. In neither the case of the KJV—celebrating, this year, its 400th anniversary—nor of the NASB or NIV (both now in their 30s) is this due to deficiencies in the translation itself. The KJV translators sought to make their words speak directly to Tyndale's plow boy²; in their own words, "we desire that the Scripture may speake like itfelfe, as in the language of *Canaan*, that it may bee vnderstood euen of the very vulgar" (i.e., even by the uneducated).³ The NIV translators sought to communicate clearly to their generation. But English stops for no one; our language has continued to change, and that much more rapidly during the past hundred years than it did in the 17th century. The swirling vortex of technological and social transformation that has surrounded us with increasingly swift winds of change has had its impact on our language. Our language *has* changed. Oh, perhaps you speak largely the same way you did in the middle of the 20th century (at least if you are near my age or older). That is quite possible if you've lived in relatively conservative areas of our country or ministered in conservative churches which have long since celebrated their golden anniversary (and perhaps their centennial or even their bicentennial). But English *has* changed. That is undeniable. (I will return to this subject a bit later in the paper.) It is for that reason new translations appear periodically and older ones are revised.⁴ Whether we like it or not, we do not live in an era where a translation can reign as sole monarch for several centuries.⁵ Perhaps such a time will once again be enjoyed by our heirs should the Lord tarry, but it is not this day and it does not appear to be tomorrow either.

² Tyndale said that "If God spare my life, ere many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost" (spoken to an English cleric). His statement echoes the preface of Erasmus' Greek NT: "I would to God that the plowman would sing a text of the Scripture at his plow and that the weaver would hum them to the tune of his shuttle." Both citations from Tony Lane, "A Man for All People: Introducing William Tyndale," *Christian History* 6.4.16 (1987): 7.

³ "Translators to the Reader," [p. 11].

⁴ Indeed "the 1611 KJV" of which some boast has been almost entirely a phantom for more than 200 years since it was revised at least six times, though each time continuing the same name as its predecessor. The last revision to bear that name was the 1769 revision by Blayney that has now been printed for over two centuries, but it is not the same as what was printed in 1611. These various revisions were due to changes in the English language. Later revisions of the same tradition have changed the name. The 1885 was known as the (English) Revised Version, the 1901 as the American Standard Version (originally, the "Revised Version, Standard American Edition"), the 1952/1962/1971 as the Revised Standard Version (and NRSV, 1989), and the 2001/2007 as the English Standard Version.

⁵ The KJV, despite celebrating 400 years, has *not* reigned as sole monarch on the English Bible throne. It was more than a half century *after* 1611 before it became the preferred translation, and for somewhat more than the last half century it has had to share that throne with other translations. It has been quite a few years now since the KJV was the best selling Bible; the NIV has held that position for some time.

New translations, of course, often face considerable opposition if they attempt to replace long-cherished traditional versions (e.g., the reception of the KJV in 1611⁶), but so do revisions of existing translations. “Keep your hands off my Bible!” is a common perspective—and perhaps for good reason in some cases. At the best this attitude could reflect long years of memorization and meditation on words which have become so ingrained in the minds and hearts of its readers that they seem second nature, in contrast to which different words and phrasing seem out of sorts. However, this attitude may also simply reflect an obstinate resistance to change. Change, in itself, is not, of course, a *summum bonum*. But when change can result in greater accuracy and more ready comprehension of the Word of God, at that point inflexibility serves, not to protect fidelity to Scripture, but to hinder effective discipleship and ministry.

The current occasion for such discussion is the recent release of the 2011 revision of the New International Version (NIV11).⁷ The NIV NT was first published in 1973 and the complete Bible in 1978.⁸ It was the only “modern” translation of the time that became widely accepted in conservative circles.⁹ In more recent years, of course, there have been many more versions,¹⁰ though few have achieved the widespread popularity

⁶ The KJV translators anticipated this: “whofoeuer attempteth any thing for the publike (ſpecially if it appertaine to Religion, and to the opening and clearing of the word of God) the ſame ſetteth himſelfe vpon a ſtage to be glouted vpon by euery euil eye, yea, he caſteth himſelf headlong upon pikes, to be gored by euery ſharpe tongue. For he that medleth with mens Religion in any part, medleth with their cuſtome, nay, with their freehold, and though they find no content in that which they haue, yet they cannot abide to heare of altering” (“The Translators to the Reader,” [p. 2], 1611 printing of KJV).

⁷ Although a digital edition of the text was made available on the web in late 2010, the revision was not officially published until spring 2011.

⁸ Official data on the translation and its history can be found at <http://www.thenivbible.com/translation/> and <http://www.thenivbible.com/translation/history/> (<www.thenivbible.com> is a Zondervan site). See also the CBT site: <http://www.niv-cbt.org/>. (Note: any URLs cited in this paper were all accessed sometime in June 2011. I will not clutter the paper with specific dates for each such citation.)

⁹ As of the 1970s the only two alternatives of any significance were the RSV (largely rejected by conservatives), a revision in the KJV/RV/ASV line of translations, and the NASB which had just been published in 1971 (the NT had been released in 1963). Even after its 1995 update, the NASB has managed only a niche market position (at one time #3, it is now #10 in sales in the US), used primarily by those who perceive it to be “more accurate” since it is “more literal” (superficial judgments reflecting little understanding of what is involved in translation) and by first year language students who are comforted by the fact that it is the closest to their own attempts at putting the biblical text into something approximating English! (That in itself should say something about the quality of the translation.) Such perspectives are encouraged by the copyright owner whose official web page declares that “At NO point did the translators attempt to interpret Scripture through translation. Instead, the NASB translation team adhered to the principles of literal translation. This is the most exacting and demanding method of translation, requiring a word-for-word translation that is both accurate and readable. This method follows the word and sentence patterns of the original authors” <http://www.lockman.org/nasb/>.

¹⁰ Since the 70s there has been a relative flood of new translations of which NASB and NIV were the harbingers. These include, GNB (1976), NJB (Catholic, 1985), NCV (1987), NRSV (1989), REB (1989, a revision of the NEB, 1970), CEV (1995), God’s Word (1995, a successor to Beck’s AAT, 1976), NIVI (1996), NLT (1996), ESV (2001; 2d ed., 2007), TNIV (2002), HCSB (2004; 2d ed., 2010), NET (2005), NAB (Catholic, 1970; 4th ed., NABRE, 2011), ISV (2011), CEB (2011), etc.

of the NIV.¹¹ The NIV was revised in 1984, making the 2011 revision the third edition.¹² Unfortunately it is a revision which has already engendered contentious responses.

Factors Which Engender Controversy

The controversy regarding the new revision of the NIV is due to at least four factors. First, the revision poses serious questions regarding linguistics and translation theory. Second, it also raises the question of the issue of language change and the use of gender-related language—a volatile issue due to concerns regarding the radical feminist social agenda. Many are concerned that the NIV is attempting to mollify such radical concerns. Third, there are also personality issues involved; entrenched positions have been staked out by well-known biblical scholars and by high-profile advocacy groups. And fourth, theological boundaries and doctrinal bias impact the nature of Bible translations. Before I attempt an assessment of the NIV11 we need to think about each of these factors since they color one’s view of any new translation which touches on any of these areas.¹³

Linguistics and Translation Theory

First, linguistics and translation theory.¹⁴ To paint with very broad strokes, there are two general approaches to translation. The first is best described as formal equivalence, the second as functional equivalence.¹⁵ Formal equivalence is a translation approach that seeks to reproduce the grammatical and syntactical form of the donor language as closely as possible in the receptor language. Thus for each word in the donor language, the same part of speech is used in the receptor language and, as much as possible, in the same sequence. Functional equivalence, by contrast, focuses on the meaning and attempts to accurately communicate the same meaning in the receptor language, even if doing so requires the use of different grammatical and syntactical

¹¹ The July 2011 Best Sellers List from the Christian Booksellers Association shows the NIV to be the number one selling Bible in the US (a position it has now held for quite a few years), followed in order by NLT, KJV, NKJV, ESV, RV1960 (Spanish), HCSB, Message, NIV, and NASB. This ranking is based on unit sales through May 31, 2011 <http://www.cbaonline.org/nm/documents/BSLs/Bible_Translations.pdf>. Only the NLT and more recently the ESV have begun to see widespread use.

¹² There are two other related translations that have been based on the NIV: the British NIVI (1996 by Hodder and Stoughton) and more recently the TNIV (2002)—an unsuccessful attempt by the publisher to replace the NIV.

¹³ Both in this section and the remainder of the paper I will focus almost entirely on the NT since that is my area of major study. I have not read the NIV11 OT (other than a few scattered passages), nor have I yet read the complete NT, though I have read a good bit of it as of the time this paper was written in June 2011.

¹⁴ I have addressed this issue in much greater detail in an earlier paper (“World Ministry: The ESV as a Window into Translation and Training for the Two-Thirds World,” Bible Faculty Summit, July 2004 at Piedmont Baptist College) which has since been published as “The English Standard Version: A Review Article,” *JMAT* 8.2 (2004): 5–56.

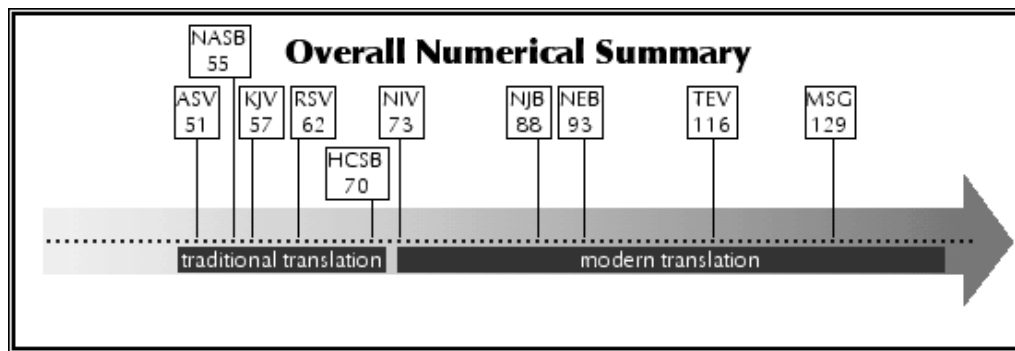
¹⁵ These two approaches have sometimes been called “literal” and “dynamic equivalence.” I have detailed the problems with such terminology in the article cited in the previous footnote.

forms. Although the form may differ in functional equivalence, the translation functions the same as the original in that it accurately communicates the same meaning.¹⁶

These two approaches are not to be thought of as mutually exclusive categories. All translations include both formal and functional equivalents; there is a spectrum with formal equivalence on one end and functional equivalence on the other. Any individual translation may be judged to use a greater or lesser degree of formal or functional equivalence and thus fall on a different part of the translation spectrum. The following diagram shows one possible view of such relationships among translation philosophies.¹⁷

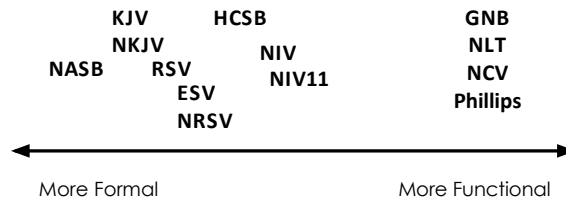
¹⁶ This is not necessarily a “thought for thought” translation, but one which alters the grammatical form when necessary to preserve accuracy of meaning. In some cases form and meaning are inter-related, and in such cases functional equivalence will attempt to preserve the necessary formal elements. But in most instances the form is language-specific and is not essential to expressing the meaning in another language. In many cases it cannot be maintained. Every translation, including the most formal, makes many substantial revisions to the form of the original.

¹⁷ Please note that this scale is not proportional; only the relative positions are significant. Versions linked with a dash indicate those of a similar nature. Similar charts that reflect roughly the same relative positions may be found in Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 42 and in Robert Milliman, “Translation Theory and Twentieth-Century Versions,” in *One Bible Only*, ed. R. Beacham and K. Bauder, 134–54 (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 146. David Bell has attempted to evaluate such factors with a numerical rating in his dissertation and his conclusions are quite similar to the summary chart given in this paper. See “A Comparative Analysis of Formal Shifts in English Bible Translations with a View Towards Defining and Describing Paradigms,” PhD diss., Universidad de Alicante (Spain), 2005. Bell’s summary chart is as follows (p. 314):



Bell’s data primarily compares formal elements, so it is only a partial evaluation, but does provide a reference point for relative positions on the translation spectrum. I would point out, however, that the labels which Bell assigns, traditional versus modern (problematic designations in my opinion), are not distinguished accurately based on his own data. The division point is obviously between NIV and NJB, not between HCSB and NIV—two translations which are very similar in nature and which have only a 3 point spread in Bell’s data.

Form and Function in Translation



No translation can completely ignore the form of the original. If it did, one would not have a translation at all but a new work altogether. On the other hand, no translation can be completely formal if it is to communicate with any degree of accuracy in another language. The NIV attempts to balance both approaches and most analyses concur that it does, indeed, occupy a middle position between formal and functional. The NIV11 does not appear to differ significantly from the 1984 edition in this regard. The two major alternative translations (in that they are the modern translations which are currently the most popular), the ESV and NLT, take their respective positions closer to either end of the translation spectrum relative to the NIV.

Due to the advocacy of the ESV¹⁸ by both the publisher and some well-known users who promote it, the ESV is sometimes viewed as more accurate or more reliable due to its supposed use of formal equivalence.¹⁹ This has even been argued to be more consistent with verbal inspiration—a conclusion which reflects very little understanding of either inspiration or translation.²⁰ These factors account for some of the concern regarding the NIV11.

¹⁸ At some points this review of the NIV11 will sound as if it were a comparative review pitting ESV against NIV. That is due almost entirely to the fact that the most vocal critics of the NIV and NIV11 are strong proponents of the ESV. In thus responding to such criticisms, a comparison of the two translations is inevitable. I have already had my say on the ESV (see <<http://www.ntresources.com/esv.htm>>; a published form appears as “The English Standard Version: A Review Article,” *JMAT* 8.2 [2004]: 5–56); it is a good translation and has its place, though it is not my personal preference despite the fact that I teach from it every Sunday due to the church setting in which I minister.

¹⁹ There is a surprising amount of functional equivalence in the ESV, far more than one would suspect from reading the publisher’s PR material. Indeed, some of the best features of the ESV are those places where it has done just that. My review of the ESV points this out in a number of places. Mark Strauss has made a similar observation. “As I was reading through the ESV (in conjunction with another project), I came to the epistle to the Hebrews. Hebrews contains some of the finest literary Greek in the New Testament and can be a very difficult book for my Greek students. I expected to encounter substantial problems in the ESV. Instead, I found that the ESV was quite well translated in Hebrews, with fewer of the kinds of problems I was encountering elsewhere. Then the reason dawned on me. The fine literary Greek of Hebrews—with radically different word order, grammar and idiom—is simply impossible to translate literally into English. To do so produces gibberish. Ironically, the ESV was at its best when it *abandoned* its ‘essentially literal’ strategy and translated the meaning of the text into normal English” (“Why the English Standard Version (ESV) Is Not a Standard English Version: How to Make a Good Translation Much Better,” paper presented at the annual ETS meeting, 2008, p 2).

²⁰ For a discussion of this issue, see my article “Verbal-Plenary Inspiration and Translation,” *DBSJ* 11 (2006): 1–37. Strauss makes a similar observation: “Some critics have claimed that the only way to protect

Language Change and Gender-Related Language

Second, the issue of language change and the use of gender-related language. As I noted earlier, it is undeniable that the English language has been changing. All languages, of course, change continually, though the rate of change may vary in different social contexts. It appears that some identifiable changes have taken place over the last several decades that are relevant to Bible translation.

Of particular relevance is the issue of gender language.²¹ The terminology here is diverse. What “inclusive language” or “gender neutral” mean to one person is not the same as what it means to others. At one end of the spectrum, some define it as the use of feminine language to address God as in “God the Father and Mother.”²² At the opposite end the same designation may be used to describe the use of gender language that attempts to maintain the same gender reference as the original text, especially when a statement refers to both men and women.²³ There are a range of options between these two poles.

Some such changes in English usage may have been initiated by those with a political/social agenda in an attempt to force changes in the language so as to reflect their views on matters of gender. Changes that have taken place in English in this regard, whether through feminist pressure or otherwise, have prompted strong reactions. Poythress and Grudem, e.g., refer to the “‘politically correct’ language police,”²⁴ certainly a rhetorically charged description (even if someone agrees with that sentiment).

Bible translations which make such changes may be suspected of complicity with the feminist agenda. Both the NIVI and the TNIV have been so charged as have other translations such as the NRSV. It is certainly possible that some translations have made changes in gender language for just that reason, but it should not be assumed to be the

the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture is to translate literally. This, of course, is linguistic nonsense. The translation that *best* preserves the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture is one that clearly and accurately communicates the *meaning* of the text as the original author intended it to be heard. The Greek idioms that Paul or John or Luke used did not sound awkward, obscure or stilted to their original readers. They sounded like normal idiomatic Greek. Verbal and plenary inspiration is *most* respected when we allow the meaning of the text to come through” (“Why the English Standard Version (ESV) Is Not a Standard English Version,” 32).

²¹ As a grammarian it pains me to talk about “gender language” since gender is a grammatical category, not a physiological one! But that is the way the discussion has been phrased, so I acquiesce to common usage and in so doing illustrate a point made earlier: words are not always used according to traditional dictionary definitions! ☺

²² This sort of usage is pervasive in, e.g., *An Inclusive Language Lectionary* (NCC; the *Readings for Year B* volume: Westminster John Knox, 1987). As an example, Lesson 2 is from Gal 4:4–7, “And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of the Child into our hearts, crying, [*God! My Mother and*] Father!” (p. 42, brackets and italics in original).

²³ Unless otherwise noted, all uses of “inclusive language” in this paper refer to this definition.

²⁴ E.g., Vern Poythress and Wayne Grudem, *The TNIV and the Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 37; the phrase “language police” occurs 10 times. This book is an updated and expanded edition of idem, *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy: Muting the Masculinity of God’s Words* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000). The earlier edition was a response to the NIVI.

case without evidence.²⁵ In this case the Committee for Bible Translation (CBT) responsible for the NIV11 has been quite specific regarding their motivation.²⁶ They point out that 95% of the NIV11 is identical with the 1984 NIV. Where there are changes they are due to one of three factors:

- Changes in English
- Progress in scholarship
- Concern for clarity

If we take them at their word (as we should), concern for a social agenda is not indicated. When change in gender language is involved, it almost always involves the first item: changes in English. *Why* English has changed is not the issue; rather, they have made such changes only where they have determined that English has, indeed, now changed. It is not an effort to influence change or to appease a feminist agenda.²⁷

How was change in English usage determined? In earlier debates regarding the NIVI and the TNIV it was charged that too many gender-related changes had been made without evidence that these changes were necessary due to language change.²⁸ With the NIV11, the translators have taken special pains to address this question. They commissioned a study of gender language based on the Collins Bank of English—a 4.4 billion word database of English usage worldwide based on both print and audio recordings.²⁹ The CBT explains that:

²⁵ There does appear to be such evidence in the case of the NRSV. The preface, “To the Reader,” says that, “During the almost half a century since the publication of the RSV, many in the churches have become sensitive to the danger of linguistic sexism arising from the inherent bias of the English language towards the masculine gender, a bias that in the case of the Bible has often restricted or obscured the meaning of the original text. The mandates from the Division [of Education and Ministry of the National Council of Churches of Christ] specified that, in references to men and women, 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.”

²⁶ The summary in the text above comes from “NIV Translation Philosophy,” <<http://www.niv-cbt.org/niv-2011-overview/>>.

²⁷ In a Q&A format discussion they say: “Q: Was the goal with the NIV update to make this version more gender inclusive? [A:] The CBT’s mandate under the NIV charter is to maintain the NIV as an articulation of God’s unchanging Word in contemporary English. *To the extent that gender inclusive language is an established part of contemporary English* and that its use enhances comprehension for readers, it clearly was an important factor in decisions made by the translators” (emphasis added; <<http://www.thenivbible.com/experience/common-questions/>>).

²⁸ See the Foreword by linguist Valerie Becker Makkai (U/Ill.-Chicago) in Poythress and Grudem, *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy*, xvii–xxiv. (Makkai’s Foreword is unchanged in the 2004 revision, even retaining reference to the NIVI.) Poythress and Grudem explicitly single this out in regard to the generic “he” in the appendix (see p. 356–57 in the 2000 NIVI edition; pp. 468–70 in the 2004 TNIV edition) responding to Don Carson’s book *The Inclusive Language Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998).

²⁹ A summary may be found here: <<http://www.niv-cbt.org/information/collins-corpus-report/>>; it has also been included as an appendix to this paper. The full report is posted at <<http://www.niv-cbt.org/information/collins-language-study-full-report/>> or in pdf at <<http://www.niv-cbt.org/wp-content/uploads/Collins-Report-Final.pdf>>. Interestingly, this extensive study is now being challenged by those who asked for the data in the first place! See these recent articles: Vern Poythress, “Gender Neutral Issues in the New International Version of 2011,” *WTJ* 73 (2011): 79–96, esp. 91–95; also Denny Burk, “The

Research of this type is just one tool in the hands of translators, and, of course, it has no bearing on the challenge of preserving transparency to the original text. But hearing God's Word the way it was written is only one part of the NIV's overall mission. If readers are to understand it in the way it was meant, translators need to express the unchanging truths of the Bible in forms of language that modern English speakers find natural and easy to comprehend. And this is where a tool like the Bank of English comes into its own.³⁰

The nature of the changes made in this area will be considered later in this essay.

Personality Issues

Fourth, personality issues. My summary here will be brief and deliberately not documented. It is no secret that the issues involved in Bible translation have engendered considerable debate. This has resulted in a polarization between positions, often viewed as the difference between the ESV and the NIV. Entrenched positions have been staked out by well-known biblical scholars and by high-profile advocacy groups. Having made their stand in public, often using rather "vigorous" language, it is extremely difficult to admit that there might be good intentions and even truth on the other side. Particularly when the issues are portrayed as tantamount to a defense of the Gospel, there is little room for discussion. My *perception* of the debate over the last dozen years is that my description here is more characteristic of one side of the debate than the other.³¹

Theological Boundaries

Fifth, theological boundaries in translations. If every association or denomination produced their own translation, the matters discussed in this paper would be quite different. English translations, however, have not been done that way (except for sectarian groups). They have always been produced for large swaths of the church. Over the past century this has typically been for Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant, or evangelical use.³² Relatively few "one-person" translations have been published in

Translation of Gender Terminology in the NIV 2011," *JBMW* (Spring 2011): 17–33, esp. 26–29. The essence of these two articles is that if it can be demonstrated that many people can still *understand* the use of generic "he," then the translator must use that form since it is the closest equivalent of many third person masculine pronouns in the Bible. This misses the point that English has multiple expressions, some current and in active use, others passing out of the language and usually are only matters of passive recognition. If a translation aims to put the NT into *natural* English, it ought to use the most natural expression for such generic terms more often than the older forms that are disappearing.

³⁰ "NIV Translation Philosophy," <<http://www.niv-cbt.org/niv-2011-overview/>>.

³¹ I may be wrong, but the rhetoric from one side sounds to me like the sabre rattling of the old "fighting fundamentalists." Unfortunately, the issues in the debate are *not* of the same importance as the battles over the deity of Christ and the inspiration of Scripture that characterized the fundamentalist-modernist controversy a century ago.

³² Historically that was not always the case. Luther translated for the German Protestants, i.e., what came to be the German Lutheran Church. The earliest English Bibles were also one-person works (Wycliffe, Tyndale, etc.), but beginning with the Bishop's Bible and continuing in the KJV these became committee works intended for the Anglican Church, though even then the KJV committee was comprised of both Puritans and High Churchmen. There are also differences in some mission translations in recent times when

English.³³ None of these have ever become a “standard” translation and they have seldom been used by churches. Instead our English tradition has been that of translations by committee—committees deliberately comprised of a range of denominational and theological perspectives. Every major English translation that has been widely used during the past century has been prepared by just such a committee. The intent of such a structure is to produce a translation that is useable by a wide swath of the church and which does not cater to one particular perspective. This has proven to be a wise approach. I might like to have a Baptist translation (one which makes the biblical basis for my Baptist heritage very clear!), but some of you would surely prefer one with Methodist or Presbyterian distinctives!

This background is relevant to the discussion of the NIV11 since we must ask, for whom is this translation intended? The CBT is comprised of a multi-national, multi-denominational group of 15 scholars who represent a wide spectrum of conservative evangelical theology.³⁴ Yet within this group there are premills and amills, Calvinists and Arminians, Reformed and Baptist, etc. In any of these (or many other) doctrinal positions there are texts which could be translated in such a way as to make the preferred interpretation appear to be the only (or at least the more likely) conclusion. We may like to think that our own theological system is certainly the correct one, but more careful reflection suggests that such a conclusion is inevitably overstated.³⁵ It is therefore wise to prepare our standard translations so as not to prejudice disputed questions. It is not the task of a translation to press a particular theological agenda.

If a translation is intended to serve conservative, evangelical Protestants, then it is only fair that all major positions have a “balancing” input to a translation. We have recognized this in terms of millennial systems, denominational polity, and even soteriology. We draw the line when a position becomes nonevangelical (e.g., salvation apart from knowledge of Jesus) or outright nonorthodox (e.g., open theism).³⁶ The question

translation work has been done by one person or a small group from the same mission, though this is typically the case for tribal translations rather than for large language groups. Spanish, e.g., has a similar translation tradition in this regard as does English. What has come to be known as the Reina-Valera translation began with Casiodoro de Reina in 1569, revised by Cipriano de Valera in 1602. Since that time it has become a committee-based translation, particularly in the 1960 edition, the most popular revision in use today.

³³ The most familiar are Moffat, Beck, Williams, Phillips, Montgomery, and (if paraphrases are included), Taylor.

³⁴ The membership of the 15-member CBT as of 2010 consists of 12 American, 2 British, and 1 Indian scholar who are members of Baptist, Presbyterian, Reformed, Anglican, Pentecostal, and independent churches. (Over the 45 year history of the CBT the diversity is even greater.)

³⁵ Though I do not consciously hold any beliefs that I believe to be erroneous, I recognize that as a finite being suffering the noetic effects of sin, there are flaws in my thinking. It is usually very easy to spot such flaws in others. I just wish that I had such a clear view of myself!

³⁶ I recognize that attempting to distinguish nonevangelical from nonorthodox might be a precarious distinction. My point is not to define such categories in exclusive terms, but to suggest some representative positions that are outside the “doctrinal fold” of evangelical Protestantism. Although I consider both of the examples that I have cited to be serious error, the second is, I think, a more fundamental and

comes in where other positions are judged to be in relation to the evangelical constituency. Is it possible to hold with integrity to the inspiration and authority of Scripture and not agree with, say, the consensus doctrinal position of members of the BFS?³⁷ Since we are not, so far as I know, proposing to prepare our own Bible Faculty Summit Version (and we are not willing to be constrained by a KJV-Only position), we need to expand our doctrinal criteria for who and what is considered acceptable in a translation. Since we recognize as bona fide Christians others who would not be comfortable as part of our conference, the potential doctrinal positions which would be allowed input to the translation process must be a wider circle than our own. It may even be that some evangelicals with a firm commitment to the inspiration and authority of Scripture hold different views than do we in regard to the role of women in the church. Although I am certainly not an egalitarian, I must wonder if the differences such a position entails in contrast to a complementarian view are greater than the differences between say, amillennialism and premillennialism, covenant theology and dispensationalism, or Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist polity.

An Overview of the NIV11

The NIV has always been an attempt to balance transparency to the original text with ease of understanding to a broad audience, i.e., a balance between formal and functional equivalence. Doing so inevitably results in some loss of transparency to the structure of the original text, but it is more than compensated by the resulting access to the meaning.³⁸ “The NIV is founded on the belief that if hearing God’s Word the way it was written and understanding it the way it was meant were the hallmarks of the original reading experience, then accuracy in translation demands that neither one of these two criteria be prioritized above the other.”³⁹ This has not changed in the new revision. The vast majority of the text is unchanged from the existing NIV—only about 5% of the text has changed and most of this “involves comparatively minor matters of vocabulary, sentence structure, and punctuation.”⁴⁰ Someone who knows the wording of the NIV quite well can read large chunks of the new edition without noticing any differences whatsoever.

more serious error than the first—and that despite the fact that the ETS has been unable to muster the will to discipline its own membership in that regard!

³⁷ Deciding just what that might be would be an interesting exercise! Given the diversity of our fellowship, it would not include a position on the millennium, on baptism, on some aspects of salvation, etc. Yet, interestingly, we seem to be able to enjoy and profit from one another’s company without suspecting heresy.

³⁸ The preceding two sentences are close summaries of the video by Doug Moo, chairman of the NIV CBT, “Introductory Video with Doug Moo,” posted at <http://www.niv-cbt.org/niv-2011-overview/video-featuring-dr-moo/>. The video transcript is a slightly abridged version of the first page of the “Translator’s Notes” posted at <http://www.niv-cbt.org/niv-2011-overview/translators-notes/>.

³⁹ “Updating the New International Version of the Bible: Notes from the Committee on Bible Translation,” <http://www.niv-cbt.org/niv-2011-overview/translators-notes/>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

The changes that have been made have as their primary goal bringing the NIV “into line with contemporary biblical scholarship and with shifts in English idiom and usage.” As noted earlier in the paper, there are three main categories of changes: changes in English, progress in scholarship, and concern for clarity. A few illustrations of these changes will be helpful.

Changes Due to Changes in English

Changes in English, other than matters related to gender language which will be considered separately, may involve changes in English word meanings or improvements in word choice. In the earlier NIV the word *alien* occurred 111 times, but that has come to be used most commonly in English to refer to an extraterrestrial being (e.g., ET). As a result, the new NIV now uses “foreigner” (or a similar expression).

NIV, Gen 19:9, “Get out of our way,” they replied. And they said, “This fellow came here as an alien, and now he wants to play the judge!”

NIV11, Gen 19:9, “Get out of our way,” they replied. And they said, “This fellow came here as a foreigner, and now he wants to play the judge!”

An archaic choice of wording in Isa 16:6 has been improved considerably. Although *overweening* is still in the dictionary, it is rarely used in contemporary English. (It was probably already archaic when the NIV was first published in 1978!)

NIV, Isa 16:6, We have heard of Moab’s pride—her *overweening pride* and conceit, her pride and her insolence—but her boasts are empty.

NIV11, Isa 16:6, We have heard of Moab’s pride—how great is her *arrogance!*—of her conceit, her pride and her insolence; but her boasts are empty.

Changes Due to Progress in Scholarship

Progress in scholarship may be illustrated from Phil 2:6. In that verse the word ἀρπαγμός was translated as “robbery” in KJV and “something to be grasped” in the original NIV.⁴¹ More recent study, however, has shown that we should understand this text as it is now given in NIV11: “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God *something to be used to his own advantage.*”⁴²

⁴¹ KJV: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” NIV, “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.”

⁴² Although the Translator’s Notes do not specify, the scholarship mentioned is the work of Roy Hoover, “The *Harpagmos* Enigma: A Philological Solution,” *Harvard Theological Review* 64 (1971): 95–119 (summary of his 1968 ThD diss. at Harvard). Although technically the dissertation had been written and the summary article published prior to the first edition of the NIV, the research had not yet been studied and was not widely known at the time. It has since been adopted in several major commentaries on Philippians (see Silva, Fee, etc.). The idiom involved includes the following: 1. When ἀρπαγμός occurs as a predicate accusative with any of the following verbs, it is an idiomatic expression: νομίζω, ἠγέομαι, ποιέω, and τίθημι. (Here the relevant phrase is ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο.) 2. When ἀρπαγμός occurs in this combination as an idiom it does not have the same sense as the ἀρπαγμός word group has in other contexts; i.e., there is no

Changes Due to the Need for Greater Clarity

Clarity has been the aim in the following examples. The change in Matt 1:16 is based on explicit grammatical relationships. The original NIV made it possible to argue that Jesus was the physical son of Joseph, but since the relative pronoun used here (ἧς, *whom*) is feminine, such a conclusion would be invalid. The NIV11 has clarified this by supplying the antecedent of the pronoun.

NIV, Matt 1:16, “Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus.”

NIV11, Matt 1:16, “Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus.”

Likewise a common misunderstanding is avoided by the clarification made in Phil 4:13. Paul’s claim is not of an unqualified ability to do absolutely anything, but is an anaphoric reference to that which he has just talked about in the context, i.e., being content in all circumstances.

NIV, Phil 4:13, “I can do *everything* through him who gives me strength.”

NIV11, Phil 4:13, “I can do *all this* through him who gives me strength.”

Changes Related to “Messianic” Texts

Occasionally there are criticisms of the NIV11 in “Messianic” passages. The issues here are not the same as with the RSV⁴³ since all the members of the CBT accept the reality of OT predictive Messianic prophecy.⁴⁴ I suspect that many of the issues arise due to issues of typological texts, i.e., OT texts which do not themselves prophecy Messiah directly, but which are identified in the NT as typological in relation to Jesus. That is certainly the case in the most commonly cited example: the use of Psalm 8 in Heb 2. The relevant texts are as follows.⁴⁵

NIV	TNIV	NIV11
Psalm 8:4–5		
What is <i>man</i> that you are mindful of him, the <i>son of man</i> that you care for <i>him</i> ? ⁵ You made <i>him</i> a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned <i>him</i> with glory and	What are <i>mere mortals</i> that you are mindful of <i>them</i> , <i>human beings</i> that you care for <i>them</i> ? ^a ⁵ You have made <i>them</i> ^a a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned	What is <i>mankind</i> that you are mindful of <i>them</i> , <i>human beings</i> that you care for <i>them</i> ? ^a ⁵ You have made <i>them</i> ^a a little lower than the angels and crowned <i>them</i> ^a with glory and

connotation of theft or violence. And 3. ἀρπαγμός and ἄρπαγμα are interchangeable forms in this idiom. The –μός ending is a rare form (not used in LXX and only here in NT); –μα is the more common form (though only used 17 × in LXX). As a result, the background for the idiomatic use must come from extra-biblical Hellenistic Greek.

⁴³ For a summary of the issues regarding OT Messianic prophecy in the RSV see R. Laird Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), 58.

⁴⁴ Interview with Doug Moo as reported by the WELS study committee, p. 8.

⁴⁵ Poetic line formatting is omitted for purposes of space; consult BHS or most English translations to see the poetic parallelism.

honor.

them^a with glory and honor.

^a 4 Or *what is a human being that you are mindful of him, a son of man that you care for him?*

^a 5 Or *him*

honor.

^a 4 Or *what is a human being that you are mindful of him, a son of man that you care for him?*

^a 5 Or *him*

Heb 2:6–9

But there is a place where someone has testified:

“What is *man* that you are mindful of *him*, the son of man that you care for *him*? ⁷You made *him* a little lower than the angels; you crowned *him* with glory and honor ⁸and put everything under *his* feet.”

In putting everything under *him*, God left nothing that is not subject to *him*. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to *him*. ⁹But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

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*?

⁷You made *them* a little lower than the angels; you crowned *them* with glory and honor ⁸and put everything under *their* feet.”^a

In putting everything under *them*, God left nothing that is not subject to *them*. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to *them*. ⁹But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

^a Or “*What is a human being that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? ⁷You made him lower than the angels for a little while; you crowned him with glory and honor ⁸and put everything under his feet.*”

But there is a place where someone has testified: “What is *mankind* that you are mindful of *them*, a son of man that you care for *him*? ⁷You made *them* a little lower than the angels; you crowned *them* with glory and honor ⁸and put everything under *their* feet.”^b

In putting everything under *them*, God left nothing that is not subject to *them*. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to *them*. ⁹But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

^b 7,8 Or “*You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor ⁸and put everything under his feet.*”

The original objection was to the TNIV. Poythress and Grudem contended that by changing *man* and *son of man* (and the subsequent pronouns *him/his*) to *mere mortals* and *human beings* (followed by *them/their*) the TNIV “needlessly obscures the possible connection of this verse with Jesus” thereby excluding “this legitimate interpretive possibility.” These changes were claimed to have been made because the original NIV was “too male-oriented,” the changes being “part of a systematic and unnecessary loss of male-specific meaning that is there in the original text.”⁴⁶ The same charge is repeated

⁴⁶ Poythress and Grudem, *The TNIV*, 58, 59, 60.

in the CBMW review of the NIV11 and by Poythress's recent article in *WTJ*.⁴⁷ The WELS study also expressed some concern about the TNIV rendering at this point, but judges the NIV11 to be an improvement at this point.⁴⁸

The issues in this use of the OT in the NT are hermeneutical. I happen to think that the TNIV/NIV11 is a more accurate reflection of the text than the original NIV and other similar translations. Exegesis of Psalm 8 would show that in the OT text on its own (i.e., without reading any NT use back into the OT text⁴⁹) would conclude that the entire reference of the psalm as originally written and intended refers *only* to human beings.⁵⁰ The TNIV actually expresses the contextual meaning of *ʿenôš* (v. 4; LXX, ἄνθρωπος) quite well. In contrast to the “LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (v. 1) for whom the heavens are finger work (v. 3), humans are appropriately described as “mere mortals.” The point of the psalm is that even though we humans are puny beings in comparison with God, we are special creations by God with privilege and responsibility over the rest of creation (vv. 5–8). God has given us a position lower than angels,⁵¹ yet still one of glory with dominion over the animal kingdom. Both “man” (*ʿenôš*) and “son of man” (*ben-ʿādām*) are generic references to the human race, not to any specific person. As such, the use of English plural pronouns following is not only valid, but preferable.⁵² There is no hint here of anything Messianic. If we had only Psalm 8, we would never suspect that it had any relevance to Jesus.

Then we turn to the NT. The paragraph begins with a similar angel-human contrast (v. 5), though this time the angels have the lower position in relation to the “world to come.” The writer then quotes from Psalm 8. His explanatory comment in v. 8b continues the same reference as Psalm 8: everything has been place in subjection to humans,

⁴⁷ “An Evaluation of Gender Language in the 2011 Edition of the NIV Bible: A Report from the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood,” rev. 6/6/11, hereafter cited as “CBMW Review,” https://www.cbmw.org/images/articles_pdf/cbmw%20final%20analysis%20of%202011%20niv.pdf, 12 and Vern Poythress, “Gender Neutral Issues,” 82–84.

⁴⁸ “Psalm 8 as quoted by Hebrews 2:6-8 also caused concern by the way it was handled in the TNIV. In fact it was very difficult to see in the TNIV why the holy writer had cited it as a messianic reference. After expressing our concerns to the CBT, we were relieved to note that in the new NIV, there were some improvements in the way those verses were rendered” (WELS* Translation Evaluation Committee, Supplemental Report, 7 n.2 [hereafter cited as “WELS Report”]). *Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

⁴⁹ I would argue strongly for the hermeneutical autonomy of the OT and reject any hermeneutical approach which uses the NT to re-interpret the OT.

⁵⁰ I can only sketch my conclusions; there is insufficient space in a paper that is already far too long to provide the exegetical details for either the OT or NT texts.

⁵¹ Another exegetical issue here relates to the identity of the “angels.” The Hebrew text reads *mēʿēlōhīm*. The NIV11 reflects this in the marginal note, “or *than God*.” The translation “angels” comes from *παρ’ ἀγγέλους* in the LXX.

⁵² To argue that these pronouns must be singular because the Greek text has masculine singular pronouns (αὐτός, etc.) as Poythress does (“Gender Neutral Issues,” 83) is not an adequate argument. The pronouns are masculine singular because Greek pronouns always match their antecedent in gender and number. The antecedents here are ἄνθρωπος and υἱός, both masculine singular. When a generic, collective term appears, subsequent pronouns often need to become plural in English to clarify the intended reference and avoid a *misreading* that the referent is singular.

but there is an unfulfilled element here: “at present we do not see everything in subjection” (v. 8b). Through the end of v. 8 the antecedent of the pronouns is consistent: human beings. There is a Christological reference beginning in v. 9, introduced with the contrasting/developmental conjunction *δέ*: but we see Jesus (*δέ ... βλέπομεν Ἰησοῦν*). At this point the author begins to show how Jesus is the One who became human to fulfill the typology of Psalm 8: he will show us “how it’s done”; i.e., the dominion over the creation given to humans has never been properly administered, though it will be in “the world to come.” The incarnation was the beginning of the demonstration of how someone who is fully human should and will exercise the dominion God intended.

If these exegetical conclusions can be justified (as I think they can be), then there is nothing obscured in Psalm 8. Even in Heb 2 there is nothing obscured since the reference is only to humans through the end of v. 8. Generic reference is thus valid for Psalm 8:4–8 and Heb 2:5–8. Only in Heb 2:9 does the reference become Christological and singular—and at that point the NIV11 (and the older TNIV) is perfectly clear.

The current rage in some circles of Christological exegesis of the OT, though it sounds pious, is too often (though not always) misleading. One should not criticize translations that are serious about the original meaning of a psalm or other OT passage, even if there is later evidence of typological use of those texts. Even in oracular texts where the reference is explicitly Messianic, there may well be a level of, say, Davidic reference, etc. that should not be obscured by translating in such a way that makes the opposite mistake of what Poythress and Grudem think the TNIV and NIV11 make. But that is another can of hermeneutical worms!

Other Changes

A number of other changes were made throughout the text. These include the use of “Messiah” for *Χριστός* when used as a Messianic title and “God’s/the Lord’s people” (or something similar) in place of “saints” to avoid the usual connotation of special holiness (especially in a Roman Catholic sense). An earlier decision to translate *σάρξ* as “sinful nature” (esp. in Paul) has been criticized by many people, so that expression has now largely reverted to the traditional “flesh.”⁵³ The conjunction *γάρ* is more often included in the text now compared with the earlier NIV where it was often left untranslated for reasons of English style. Also some passages that have been debated and for which there are multiple options have been left open. Examples of each of these types of changes follow.

NIV, Mark 1:1, “The beginning of the gospel about Jesus *Christ*, the Son of God.”

NIV11, Mark 1:1, “The beginning of the good news about Jesus *the Messiah*, the Son of God.”

⁵³ This change encourages some people to think of the physical body as sinful; I am inclined to think the earlier choice was better in many cases, but *σάρξ* does not always have the same meaning. “Sinful nature” remains in Rom 7:18, 25.

NIV, 1 Cor 6:2, “Do you not know that *the saints* will judge the world?”

NIV11, 1 Cor 6:2, “Or do you not know that *the Lord’s people* will judge the world?”

NIV, Rom 13:14, “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the *sinful nature*.”

NIV11, Rom 13:14, “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the *flesh*.”

NIV, Rom 1:16, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God.”

NIV11, Rom 1:16, “*For* I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God.”

NIV, Rom 1:17, “For in the gospel a righteousness *from God* is revealed.”

NIV11, Rom 1:17, “For in the gospel the righteousness *of God* is revealed.”

The vast majority of the sort of changes illustrated above are, in my opinion, very good ones that contribute to understanding the Word of God in English. Even those individual decisions which I might have decided otherwise are justifiable and valid choices.

Gender Language in the NIV11

The most controversial changes in the NIV11 are those which involve gender language. This paper is not the place to resolve all the issues involved. Many entire books have been written on the subject, some providing helpful discussion, others generating considerably more heat than light.⁵⁴

Principles

As I have already indicated, the motivation for making such changes is predicated on the conclusion that the English language *has* changed in these areas. If a translation intends to communicate in contemporary English, then that translation is fully justified in making such changes as are necessary to reflect current usage. Some translations make no attempt at contemporary expression, being content with dated English that is

⁵⁴ For a sampling of the discussion see, e.g., Carson, *Inclusive Language Debate*; Mark Strauss, *Distorting Scripture? The Challenge of Bible Translation and Gender Accuracy* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998); idem., “Current Issues in the Gender-Language Debate: A Response to Vern Poythress and Wayne Grudem,” in *The Challenge of Bible Translation*, ed. G. Scorgie, M. Strauss, and S. Voth, 115–41 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); Poythress and Grudem, *The TNIV*; rev. ed. of *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy: Muting the Masculinity of God’s Words*, 2000); and Gordon Fee and Mark Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth*, ch. 7, “Gender and Translation,” 97–108 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

still, hopefully, intelligible, even if it is not the sort of language that is used in natural written or oral English.⁵⁵

The principle involved in the NIV11, as is the case with a number of other evangelical translations (e.g., ESV, HCSB, NLT, NET), is that language in the donor language which is *not* gender specific should not *become* gender specific in the receptor language. The issue involved is not *if* some form of inclusive language should be used, but what specific types of language are legitimate and how extensive should they be.

I suspect that all translators would agree in principle that the goal in translation is to represent the reference of the donor language in regard to gender language as accurately as possible in the receptor language. That is, if the NT makes a statement that refers to men and women, the translation should do the same to the extent possible. The rub comes, not in agreeing with the principle, but in deciding exactly where such reference is used.

Since the NIV is the translation that is receiving the most criticism, and that often by advocates and/or translators of other translations (which themselves use inclusive language!), a few examples may be helpful to set the stage for the discussion to follow.

ESV, Matt 7:9, “Or which *one* of you, if *his* son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?” (ἢ τίς ἐστὶν ἐξ ὑμῶν ἄνθρωπος, ὃν αἰτήσῃ ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ ἄρτον, μὴ λίθον ἐπιδώσῃ αὐτῷ;) [ESV uses generic “one” for ἄνθρωπος even though it is followed by a masculine pronoun.]

HCSB, 2 Tim 3:13, Evil *people* and impostors will become worse (πονηροὶ δὲ ἄνθρωποι καὶ γόητες προκόψουσιν). [HCSB uses the least inclusive language of all recent translations but here uses generic “people” for ἄνθρωπος.]

NET, 1 Thess 1:4, “We know, *brothers and sisters* loved by God, that he has chosen you” (εἰδότες, ἀδελφοὶ ἠγαπημένοι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, τὴν ἐκλογὴν ὑμῶν).

NLT, 1 Tim 2:1, “I urge you, first of all, to pray for *all people*” (Παρακαλῶ οὖν πρῶτον πάντων ποιεῖσθαι δεήσεις ... ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀνθρώπων).

ISV, 1 Tim 2:5, “There is one God. There is also one mediator between God and *human beings*—a *human*, Christ Jesus” (Ἐἷς γὰρ θεός, εἷς καὶ μεσίτης θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων, ἄνθρωπος Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς).

Basis

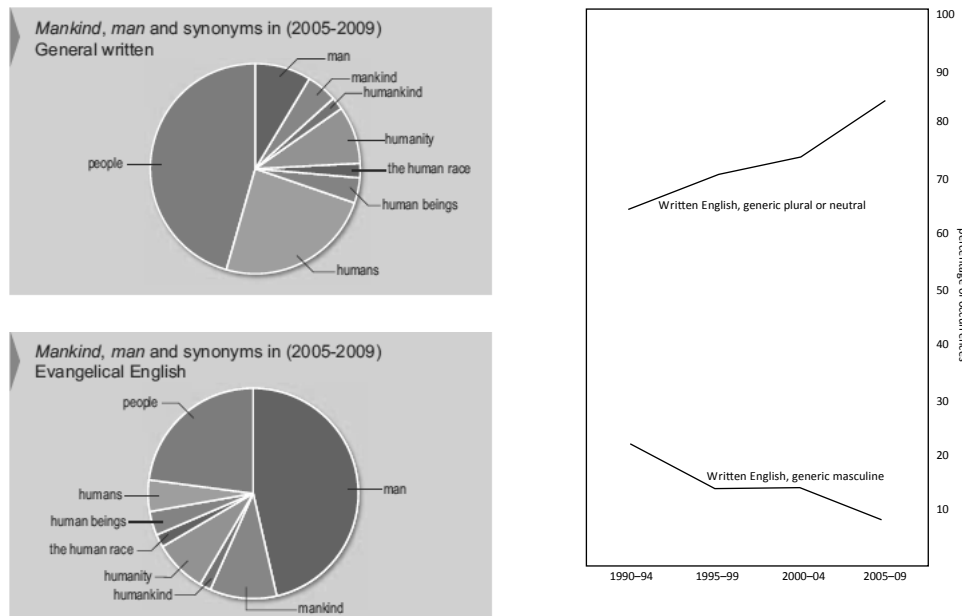
The basis on which the NIV11 has addressed the inclusive language question is the Collins study mentioned previously. Due to the length and complexity of that report only some representative items can be included here.

By far the most significant conclusion of the study is that the most common way in which people currently express a generic reference in English is the use of a plural or

⁵⁵ The NASB and ESV are the best examples of translations which make little attempt to use contemporary English. Although both are far more intelligible than the KJV (for which I am thankful), neither of these use current English idiom.

neutral pronoun. The use of generic “he” has declined significantly over the past 20 years. This can be seen on the right-hand graph below.⁵⁶

A second noteworthy item is the current frequency distribution of the following synonyms: *man*, *mankind*, *humankind*, *humanity*, *the human race*, *human beings*, *humans* and *people*. In this instance there is a dramatic difference in general written English usage and usage in “Evangelical English.” The two pie graphs below make the contrast very evident.⁵⁷ It appears that evangelicals use an “insider” vocabulary and do not reflect the norms of the wider culture in this area.



Implementation

What has the NIV11 done to implement their conclusions regarding language change in relation to gender language?

Guidelines

The CBT adopted seven guidelines for the revision of gender language. None of these were applied rigidly, so variation will be found in many places due to various factors such as oral cadence, contextual factors, etc. The guidelines are listed below with examples.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ The graph shown has been redrawn from a much more complex one in the Collins Report, p. 5. Only the two relevant plots (of fifteen) have been included.

⁵⁷ Both graphs are from the Collins Report, p. 6. If the data are plotted diachronically they show that the use of “man” and “mankind” has declined in frequency over the past 20 years in general, written English. There was a significant decrease in the frequency of “man” in Evangelical English in 1995–99, but that usage has rebounded in 2005–09 to the same frequency as was present in 1990–04.

⁵⁸ The guidelines are taken directly from the pdf version of the “Translators’ Notes” <<http://www.niv-cbt.org/wp-content/uploads/Translation-Notes-Final1.pdf>>.

1. “Using plurals instead of singulars to deal with generic forms was avoided” (p. 5).
2. “Using second person forms instead of third person forms to deal with generics was avoided” (p. 5).

These first two guidelines must not be understood to say that such changes were never made. Many examples of the use of both second person and plurals can be cited, but these are often when a text intersects with another of the guidelines below or for purposes of English locution. In particular, the use of “their” (and related forms) is often treated as a *singular* in the NIV11 (see #3 below).⁵⁹

3. “Singular ‘they,’ ‘them’ and ‘their’ forms were widely used to communicate the generic significance of pronouns and their equivalents when a singular form had already been used for the antecedent” (p. 6).

It is important to notice that #3 explicitly references the use of “they,” “them” and “their” forms as *singular*. This does not mean that these words are always singular, but that they can be used as both singular and plural. Such usage reflects a change in English, the evidence for which is given in the Collins Report. Though it makes many English teachers cringe, for better or worse, English usage no longer restricts these forms to plural reference. Some examples follow.

Contemporary English commonly uses expressions like the following: “If *anybody* had a right to be proud of *their* accomplishments, it was Paul.”

NIV11, Jas 3:2, *Anyone* who is never at fault in what *they* say is perfect, able to keep *their* whole body in check.

NIV11, Mark 4:25, *Whoever* has will be given more; *whoever* does not have, even what *they* have will be taken from *them*” (ὅς γὰρ ἔχει, δοθήσεται αὐτῷ· καὶ ὅς οὐκ ἔχει, καὶ ὃ ἔχει ἀρθήσεται ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ).

This is the usual pattern, though the Translators’ Notes (p. 6) explicitly point out that “at the same time, recognizing the diversity in modern English, a generic ‘he’ was occasionally retained: ‘If I have rejoiced at my enemy’s misfortune or gloated over the trouble that came to him . . .’ (Job 31:29).”

4. “‘People’ and ‘humans’ (and ‘human beings’) were widely used for Greek and Hebrew masculine forms referring to both men and women. A variety of words — ‘humanity,’ ‘human race,’ ‘man,’ ‘mankind’—were used to refer to human beings collectively” (p. 6).

Given the massive preponderance of this usage in general written English (see the graphs from the Collins Report above), this is an obvious choice. If nearly 70% of such references use “people” or “human” and approximately 10% use “man” or “mankind,”

⁵⁹ It is unhelpful and misleading for CBMW to count all uses of “their,” etc. as changes from singular to plural and argue that guideline #1 was not followed consistently (“CBMW Report,” 15–17).

it is hard to criticize a translation for similar usage, unless we are to argue that the insider language of evangelicalism must be the only usage allowed.⁶⁰ One would think that a concern to make the Bible intelligible to both Christians and nonchristians would recommend the use of “standard English” rather than the usage of a minority group.

Mark 8:24, He looked up and said, “I see *people*; they look like trees walking around” (καὶ ἀναβλέψας ἔλεγεν· βλέπω τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὅτι ὡς δένδρα ὁρῶ περιπατοῦντας).⁶¹

Rom 5:12, Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one *man*, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all *people*, because all sinned (Διὰ τοῦτο ὡσπερ δι’ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθεν καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος, καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διήλθεν, ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον).

In this example ἄνθρωπος is translated two different ways based on the meaning of each use. The first instance is translated as “man” since the reference is to Adam; the second is “people” since the reference is to everyone, not just men. The fact that ἄνθρωπος is used in both instances is appropriate in Greek since ἄνθρωπος is the most common generic term to refer to the entire human race, but in English this sort of reference is normally expressed by “people.”⁶²

⁶⁰ The charts from the Collins Report (see earlier in the paper) show that in “Evangelical English” “man” is the most common word in such contexts with about 45% followed by “people” with 20%. One possible reason that I entertained for such a predominance in this category is that one of the written works included in the sample corpus of Evangelical English was Grudem’s *Systematic Theology*, but even Grudem prefers “people” to “man” for generic reference. In his theology the word “man” occurs 915 times, but “people” occurs 1,510 times—a proportion closer to general written English than the “Evangelical English” corpus in which it is included. (Figures based on an Accordance search of the digital version of Grudem’s *Systematic Theology*.) It might be argued that a contemporary writer has other alternatives than someone translating a previous text (Poythress makes just this argument: “Gender Neutral Issues,” 90), but that is an invalid argument. The translation should use natural, contemporary English. Meaning is constrained by the receptor language and it must match the donor language in gender reference. If the donor language is generic, then that must be expressed the way the receptor language works, not constrained by an artificial constraint of older/traditional forms of the language. The fact that “man” formerly served this purpose in English, but has increasingly been replaced by “people, etc.” must be taken into account. “Man” is not the only possible English gloss for ἄνθρωπος.

⁶¹ ESV translates “I see men,” but since the man was blind and only saw shapes like trees, it is hard to understand how he could have identified the people he saw to be males.

⁶² To suggest that eliminating a “male-oriented” term (i.e., generic “man”) is capitulating to the feminist agenda (as does the “CBMW Report,” 12–13) is foolishness. Though this reference is not cited (their primary example is from the OT, Prov 27:17), the charge is applied to many such instances in the writings of CBMW and related writers. Ironically, the ESV frequently does the same thing; e.g., Matt 12:36 I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak (λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι πᾶν ῥῆμα ἄργόν ὃ λαλήσουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἀποδώσουσιν περὶ αὐτοῦ λόγον ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως). Likewise in Grudem’s *Systematic Theology*, “forefather” occurs only twice and “fathers” only once in this sense, but “ancestor” 7 times. (“Fathers” occurs 75 times, but most instances are in Scripture quotes [normally RSV], references to God, or are patristic references.) It appears that the *principle* of generic reference is accepted,

5. “‘Ancestors’ was regularly preferred to ‘forefathers’ unless a specific, limited reference to the patriarchs or to another all-male group is intended” (p. 6).

John 6:31, Our *ancestors* ate the manna in the wilderness (οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν τὸ μάννα ἔφαγον ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ).

The basis for this change is the evidence of the Collins Report (pp. 49–56) which shows that “ancestor” is by far the most common word to use in such contexts; “father” or “forefather” occur infrequently in contemporary written English. There is no inherent “male meaning” that is voided by the use of a contemporary synonym in place of the traditional English gloss “fathers” which is now rarely used. In the example from John 6 there is certainly no “male meaning”—the point claimed by Jesus’ Jewish contemporaries is that ancient Israel ate manna, not that the men ate it. To ask rhetorically “Why does the new NIV seek to eliminate male meaning that is present in the Hebrew or Greek text?”⁶³ is to make a semantic assumption that cannot be justified.⁶⁴

6. “‘Brothers and sisters’ was frequently used to translate *adelphoi* in the New Testament, especially in the vocative, when it was clear that both genders were in view” (p. 6).

This is one of the generally accepted changes adopted in several recent translations. Some place it in the text (e.g., NET, NIV11) and others in the margin (e.g., ESV⁶⁵). Agreement, however, is limited to the plural form, appeal typically being made to BDAG’s note that “The pl. can also mean brothers and sisters.” For example,

Phil 3:1, Further, my *brothers and sisters*, rejoice in the Lord (Τὸ λοιπόν, ἀδελφοί μου, χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ).

Although BDAG does not comment specifically on the singular form in this regard, there are about 30 instances in the NT where the reference of the singular ἀδελφός is not limited to males.⁶⁶ To argue that these uses must be translated as “brother” seems at odds with the same reference of the plural form. That the difference between singular and plural limits the semantic domain, though possible, seems highly unlikely given

but the dispute is in its application. At that point one ought to be discussing exegesis of the passage/s in question, not making accusations of eliminating maleness.

⁶³ “CBMW Report,” 11. Although the ESV usually maintains “father” or “forefather” in instances where NIV11 reads “ancestor/s,” note Heb 7:10 (ESV), “for he was still in the loins of his *ancestor* when Melchizedek met him” (ἔτι γὰρ ἐν τῇ ὀσφύϊ τοῦ πατρὸς ἦν ὅτε συνήντησεν αὐτῷ Μελχισέδεκ). One might, using the same argument as the “CBMW Report,” suggest that the ESV has “eliminated the male meaning that is present in the ... Greek text”!

⁶⁴ NET also uses primarily “ancestor” in place of the older “fathers/forefathers” (though both the older terms are used occasionally). HCSB prefers “fathers,” but “ancestor/s” is also quite common; “forefather/s” does not appear.

⁶⁵ ESV margin note at Phil 3:1, “Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 13, 17.” Grudem also uses this phrase consistently in his *Systematic Theology* in place of generic “brother” which occurs only once alone.

⁶⁶ Matt 5:22, 23; 18:15, 21, 35; Luke 17:3; Rom 14:10, 13, 15, 21; 1 Cor 5:11; 7:15; 8:11, 13; 1 Thess 4:6; 2 Thess 3:6, 15; Jas 1:9; 2:15; 4:11; 1 John 2:9, 10, 11; 3:10, 15, 17; 4:20, 21; and 5:16.

the parallel nature of the statements. Consider the use of ἀδελφός in both the singular and plural forms in 1 John 3:13–17.

13, μὴ θαυμάζετε, ἀδελφοί	Do not marvel, <i>brothers</i> (plural)
14, ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν ὅτι ... ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς	We know that... because we love the <i>brothers</i> (plural)
15, πᾶς ὁ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ	Everyone who hates his <i>brother</i> (sing)
16, ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεῖναι	We ought for the <i>brothers</i> (plural) to lay down our life
17, ὃς δ' ἂν ἔχῃ τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου καὶ θεωρῇ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ χρεῖαν ἔχοντα	Whoever has the goods of the world and sees his <i>brother</i> (sing) having a need

Is it reasonable to think that five references in five verses, all talking about the same general subject, really have two different meanings? That three of them refer to all believers (i.e., “brothers and sisters”), but that two of them relate only to male believers? Is it only the Christian who hates male believers that is a murderer (v. 15)? Or is it only male Christians for whom we are to have compassion and share our material possessions (v. 17)?

The NIV11 has been criticized for this on the basis of Luke 17:3, “If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them” (Ἐὰν ἀμάρτη ὁ ἀδελφός σου ἐπιτίμησον αὐτῷ). The CBMW report says that

Jesus gave a specific example of a brother who sins. He could have said “brother or sister” if he had wanted to, because elsewhere the New Testament says “brother or sister” in James 2:15, “Suppose a brother or sister (Greek *adelphos ē adelphē*) is without clothes and daily food”. But Jesus did not say “brother or sister” in Luke 17:3. He gave a specific example of a brother. Should we feel free to “correct” what Jesus said? (p. 13).

But this is tendentious and ill-informed. If ἀδελφός means “fellow Christian” (i.e., a metaphorical use of the word for physical male sibling), then nothing has been “corrected.” Just because Greek *can* say ἀδελφός ἢ ἀδελφή does not mean that it must always use that expression.⁶⁷

Although the plural form of ἀδελφός is the most common reference with the meaning “brothers and sisters,” there is no reason to reject the same meaning for the singular form. In either case (singular or plural), there must, of course, be contextual justification for the metaphorical use.

7. While the Greek word *anēr* (‘man’ or ‘person’) was frequently translated with masculine forms in English, it is clear in several contexts that the word refers to men and women equally (an option endorsed by major dictionaries of the Greek NT)” (p. 6).

⁶⁷ That exact expression is only used once in the NT (though ἀδελφούς ἢ ἀδελφὰς ἢ πατέρα ἢ μητέρα ἢ τέκνα occurs twice: Matt 18:29 || Mark 10:29) and it is not likely that such a reference would only occur once given the subject matter of the NT. If anything, it would appear that this phrase is the exceptional way to say what is normally expressed simply with ἀδελφός.

The usual word used in the NT to indicate that a person is a male is *άνήρ*. Even this word, however, does not have a “default” English gloss. It cannot be mechanically translated as “man” in every case. In many cases that does work, but in other instances it should be translated as “husband,” also a male word, but with very different connotations. Other more formal uses might best be represented as “gentlemen” (e.g., Acts 14:15) or perhaps “brothers” (e.g., Acts 15:13, in which both NIV and ESV translate the phrase *άνδρες αδελφοί* as simply “brothers”). In other texts *άνήρ* appears to have the same generic meaning as *άνθρωπος*. Although this is not common, there are some examples in which the context seems to justify this conclusion, e.g., Rom 4:8 and Jas 1:12 seem quite sure, Luke 14:24 and Acts 17:34 are possible, and BDAG, 79.2 (but not NIV11) proposes Luke 5:18.

Rom 4:8, Blessed is *the one* whose sin the Lord will never count against them (*μακάριος άνήρ οϋ οϋ μη λογίσηται κύριος άμαρτίαν*).

Jas 1:12, Blessed is *the one* who perseveres under trial (*Μακάριος άνήρ ος ύπομένει πειρασμόν*).

Sample Comparison

In this section I have randomly selected a NT text, 2 Timothy, and examined all the changes from the 1984 NIV to the 2011 revision.⁶⁸ There is a complete catalog in Appendix E which is summarized by category here with a few examples to provide some flavor for the revision.

Of the 30 “revision units,”⁶⁹ the great majority are matters of (relatively) simple changes in English wording, some of which might reflect a slightly different analysis of the Greek text.⁷⁰ By my judgment, 21 of the 30 revision units are only matters of English wording, 7 are wording changes which involved gender language, and only 2 are matters attributable to a different analysis of the Greek text.⁷¹ This means that 70% of the changes are English wording which might be related to the CBT’s explanations for change that involve changes in English usage (e.g., #18, 2:20, “ignoble” > “common”) or for clarity (e.g., #23, 3:6, “weak-willed” > “gullible”). I do not think that any of the 7 changes that involve gender language are controversial. The wording of all 7 are paral-

⁶⁸ My only criteria was that the book not be too long and not include any of the major controversy texts since I deal with them separately.

⁶⁹ I am listing the 30 units separately even though some include more than one change. Determining how many changes have been made is difficult since it’s often hard to determine which parts might have been changed separately. In this regard it’s a bit like determining how many textual variants there are in a text. “Revision units” are thus somewhat like “variant units” in textual criticism.

⁷⁰ Without specific comment from the CBT on each change it is precarious to assign motive to such changes. The revision Guidelines (discussed above) clearly explain some of these changes. Others might be explained from several perspectives.

⁷¹ Neither of these two changes involve textual variants.

leled in other recent translations (ESV, NET, HCSB).⁷² These seven passages are listed here.

- 1:3, forefathers > ancestors
- 2:2, reliable men > reliable people
- 2:15, workman > worker
- 2:21, a man > those who
- 3:13, evil men > evildoers
- 3:17, the man of God > the servant of God
- 4:21, the brothers > the brothers and sisters

Most of what I have read in the NIV11 is similarly noncontroversial,⁷³ but there are some passages that have drawn particular criticism.

Controversial Passages

Before we tackle the controversial passages it is worth pointing out that all translations have warts. Every translation of the Bible ever produced in any language is a human production and not one of them is perfect. Whether we are talking about the ancient translations (e.g., Old Latin, Syriac, or Coptic), historical translations in English (e.g., Wycliffe, Tyndale, Bishop's Bible, or KJV), or contemporary translations such as the ESV or NIV, none of them have been superintended by the Holy Spirit in the way in which the original authors of Scripture were. The original text was inspired. Translations *qua* translations, are not. Thankfully, most translations are reliable and accurate, despite their differences.⁷⁴ The differences are not usually matters of error, but of variations in how the meaning of the original text is expressed in English. Every translation must make choices in what to include and what to omit for the simple fact that languages as different as Hebrew and Greek on the one hand and English on the other communicate meaning in such different ways. If a translation could convey every semantic element of the original and add nothing extraneous, then we would not need to study the biblical languages. But every translation both omits and adds information due to the structural mismatch of the donor and receptor languages. It is not that the same meaning cannot be communicated; it can be, but the resulting structure will always vary in form and usually in length.

Having said that, let me return to my claim that all translations have warts. What I mean by that is that there are texts in all translations that disappoint us. Of course what disappoints you may not disappoint me! As they say, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. So as not to step on your particular toes, let me use an example that *I think* most of us (at least in the original audience in which this paper was presented!) would

⁷² The notes for each passage listed identify which of the three translations have similar wording in each of the 7 texts.

⁷³ The use of "singular *their*" is not controversial theologically, though it has its share of English critics. This was discussed above and will not be included in subsequent discussion.

⁷⁴ As Fee and Strauss put it, "although meaning can never be reproduced *perfectly*, it can be rendered *truly*, that is, with a high degree of accuracy. What Bible readers need to take from this is that all Bible versions—no matter how accurate—have certain limitations" (*How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth*, 31).

class as a wart. In the RSV's translation of 1 John 2:2, ἱλασμός became "expiation" rather than the traditional "propitiation." Granted that propitiation will not win awards for clarity these days, it is still my opinion that using expiation calls for a "wart rating" at this point. Why? Because the two words have different meanings: *propitiation* says that God is satisfied that Christ's sacrifice has paid the penalty for sin. On the other hand, *expiation* says that sin has been forgiven. The focus is very different: one focuses on God, the other on sin. Although both are true statements, expiation does not accurately represent what John said; the ἱλασμός word group is God-focused.

If we assume for the moment that this is a valid "wart" (you may well disagree with me!), is it such a problem that in and of itself would render the RSV unusable? I don't think so.⁷⁵ The question comes in how many warts are tolerable? How big are they? Where are they located? If you will tolerate my extending this metaphor a bit further, it is possible that a single translation wart, if it is large enough and ugly enough, and especially if it is located dab on the front of the translation's nose, could be judged serious enough to cause one to look for another suitor (if I may change analogies altogether!).

What are the potential warts in the new revision of the NIV? There are not many and the CBT has been very upfront in identifying them—though they do not call them warts! The potentially controversial passages all involve gender language. There are only three major issues involving specific texts: Rom 16:1–2; 16:7; and 1 Tim 2:2.⁷⁶ The two most significant of these three texts are discussed in the Translators' Notes as "some of the most famous texts on gender roles."

Rom 16:1–2

There are two specific words involved in Rom 16:1–2: διάκονος and προστάτις.

Συνίστημι δὲ ὑμῖν Φοίβην τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, οὗσαν καὶ διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς, ἵνα αὐτὴν προσδέξησθε ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως τῶν ἀγίων καὶ παραστήτε αὐτῇ ἐν ᾧ ἂν ὑμῶν χρήζη πρᾶγματι· καὶ γὰρ αὐτὴ προστάτις πολλῶν ἐγενήθη καὶ ἐμοῦ αὐτοῦ.

<p>NIV: I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a <i>servant</i> of the church in Cenchræa. ²I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a <i>great help</i> to many</p>	<p>NIV11: I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a <i>deacon</i> of the church in Cenchræa. ²I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has</p>
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⁷⁵ The issues with the RSV are more extensive than one wart which is why it did not meet the approval of most conservatives. Generally speaking, however, the RSV is quite well done, especially in the NT. It's serviceability is evident in that the ESV is a very light revision of the RSV, differing in only about 6–8% of the text according to some estimates.

⁷⁶ As in any translation there will be many much smaller warts. Some will consider the use of singular "their" to be a wart. Others any changes from the traditional renderings of specific terms, etc. Those, however, are systematic/programmatic changes rather than individual warts.

people, including me.

been the *benefactor* of many people, including me.

The second is probably not a major issue and relates to whether or not προστάτις is viewed as a technical (“benefactor”) or a general descriptive (“great help”) term. The first may *not* be controversial in some of our churches. There is quite a variety of roles and structures among churches, even conservative churches, in regard to “deacons.” Some will object to the translation, but that likely depends on how deacons function in that person’s church. I am more inclined to prefer the alternate translation that is found in the marginal note: “Or *servant*.” All that NIV11 has done is to reverse the text and marginal translations that were found in the 1984 edition.⁷⁷

1 Tim 2:12

The second potentially controversial passage and most likely to be debated, is 1 Tim 2:12—a flash point text in recent years.

διδάσκειν δὲ γυναῖκί οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ ἀυθεντεῖν ἀνδρός, ἀλλ’ εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ.

NIV: I do not permit a woman to teach or <i>to have authority over</i> a man; she must be silent.	NIV11: I do not permit a woman to teach or <i>to assume authority over</i> a man; she must be quiet.
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The Translators’ Notes explain the reasoning behind this change.

Much debate has surrounded the rare Greek word *authentein*, translated in the 1984 NIV as “exercise authority.” The KJV reflected what some have argued was in some contexts a more negative sense for the word: “usurp authority.” “Assume authority” is a particularly nice English rendering because it leaves the question open, as it must be unless we discover new, more conclusive evidence. The exercise of authority that Paul was forbidding was one that women inappropriately assumed, but whether that referred to all forms of authority over men in church or only certain forms in certain contexts is up to the individual interpreter to decide.

Some of us may prefer the original NIV translation (or the KJV’s) and may even have strong opinions on the subject. I cannot even begin to discuss the issue here.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Previously the NIV marginal note read, “Or *deaconess*.”

⁷⁸ As a few samples, see *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, ed. A. Köstenberger, T. Schreiner, and H. Baldwin (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); Douglas J. Moo, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. J. Piper and W. Grudem, 179-93 (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991); Douglas J. Moo, “1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance,” *TrinJ* 1 (1980): 62-83; Philip Payne, “Libertarian Women in Ephesus: A Response to Douglas J. Moo’s Article, ‘1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance,’” *TrinJ* 1 (1981): 169-97; Douglas J. Moo, “The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15: A Rejoinder,” *TrinJ* 2 (1981): 198-222; the commentary on this exchange by D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 94-95, and the detailed syntactical study of an argument posed in Payne’s article by Andreas Köstenberger, “Syntactical Background Studies to 1 Timothy 2.12 in the New Testament and Extrabiblical Greek Literature,” in *Discourse*

From a translation perspective, however, it can be said that the option chosen by the CBT is a defensible one. Since the word ἀθεντέω is hotly debated—and it is a *hapax legomenon* (even outside the NT the TLG shows only about 300 uses⁷⁹)—there is little data on which to build a lexical-semantic defense of a particular meaning. One’s conclusions regarding this text must come, not from one word, but from the immediate context, Paul’s teaching elsewhere, a biblical theology of the subject, and ultimately a theological integration at the level of systematic theology. Given the scarce attestation of the word and the lexical uncertainty involved, it is most appropriate for a translation *not* to decide the issue. The choice of the CBT at this point is, I think, defensible in that regard. Nor is this a feminist-driven choice in translation⁸⁰ (a charge explicitly denied by the CBT⁸¹)—unless we also want to charge Calvin with that crime since his Latin commentary and translation say the same thing.⁸² It is, indeed, a translation that allows multiple interpretations, but that may be a wise choice in this case. Those who want to proof-text certain positions (positions which may well be valid) will not be happy, but we must be honest with the text and acknowledge that this is an issue that must be resolved on a much broader exegetical and theological basis.⁸³

Rom 16:7

The third specific passage is Rom 16:7. There are two issues here, though only one of them is new in the NIV11; one is unchanged from the earlier NIV.

Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek, ed. S. Porter and D. A. Carson, 156–79, JSNTSupp 113 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

⁷⁹ For studies of the TLG data see L. E. Wilshire, “The TLG Computer and Further Reference to AYΘEN-TEΩ in 1 Timothy 2.12,” *NTS* 34 (1988): 120–34 and H. Scott Baldwin, “A Difficult Word: ἀθεντέω in 1 Timothy 2:12,” in *Women in the Church*, 65–103, 269–305.

⁸⁰ This is the accusation of the “CBMW Report”: “They have given legitimacy to a feminist interpretation that did not have legitimacy from any other modern English translation (except the discontinued TNIV)” (p. 6).

⁸¹ The CBT’s response to the CBMW review says that “we object very strongly to the accusation that our gender translation decisions were motivated by a desire to avoid causing offense. Our concern is always, in every decision we make, to represent God’s Word accurately and naturally in modern English—we have no other agenda” (“A Brief Response from the Committee on Bible Translation to the Review of the updated NIV by the Committee on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood,” 9 June 2011, paragraph 4; see Appendix C of this paper for the full text or online at <<http://www.niv-cbt.org/wp-content/uploads/cbt-response-to-cbmw-review.pdf>>).

⁸² I first learned this from: CBT’s “Response to CBMW,” paragraph 5. See John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, transl. W. Pringle (original Latin commentary, 1556; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1843; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 68. Calvin’s Latin phrase was *sumere auctoritatem*; in English, “assume authority.” The “Calvin Bible” uses the same terminology; in English: “But I suffer not the woman to teach, nor to assume authority over the man, but to be silent” (1855 translation by Calvin Translation Society; online <<http://lookhigher.net/englishbibles/calvinbible/1timothy/2.html>>).

⁸³ To say that “in one stroke [this translation] removes the Bible’s main barrier to women pastors and elders” (“CBMW Report,” 6), is ill-advised rhetoric.

ἀσπάσασθε Ἀνδρόνικον καὶ Ἰουνιᾶν τοὺς συγγενεῖς μου καὶ συναιχμαλώτους μου, οἵτινές εἰσιν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις, οἱ καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ.

NIV: Greet Andronicus and *Junias*, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are *outstanding among* the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. NIV11: Greet Andronicus and *Junia*, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are *outstanding among* the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

The primary issue involves only one letter in English: Junia rather than Junias. This is partly a text critical question, but it hinges on the *accent*, and accents were not part of the original text. If the text is accented as given in NA/UBS, Ἰουνιᾶν, then this is a man's name, *Junias*, a masculine form of Ἰουνιάς, ᾱ, ὁ. If, however, it is accented Ἰουνιάν, then it is a feminine form of Ἰουνία, ας, ἡ, *Junia*, a woman's name. Resolving an obscure question on the basis of the correct accent involves a number of additional considerations, for a summary of which, see BDAG and Metzger's *Textual Commentary*.⁸⁴ Arguments can be offered for either accent pattern. Contemporary NT scholarship (including the ESV which has *changed* this from the RSV's Junias!) appears to favor the feminine form since appeal can be made to some MSS which do have this accent,⁸⁵ but it is far from certain.⁸⁶

The second issue in this verse is *not* an NIV11 issue at all since the translation in question, "outstanding among the apostles," is unchanged from the earlier NIV. If it

⁸⁴ BDAG, s.v. Ἰουνία and Ἰουνιάς, 480 and Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 475–76. Both of these sources cite the major bibliography on the question, though this should be updated with the works cited below in nn. 86 and 88.

⁸⁵ According to Reuben Swanson's data (*New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Romans* [Wheaton: Tyndale, 2001], 256), there are three accent patterns on this name: Ἰουνιᾶν (only 1837), Ἰουνιάν (B^c D² L^c P Ψ 056 1 33 69 84 104 133 1243 1270 1424 1735 1874 1881 [+ 40 more minuscules]), and all the rest are unaccented (B* κ A C L* 049 D* D¹ F G). There are also several variant spellings: Ἰουλιαν (Ɱ⁴⁶), Ἰουλιάν (6), and Ὀυνιάν (618 1738).

⁸⁶ The lengthy note in NET provides a useful survey of the issue at this point. "The feminine name *Junia*, though common in Latin, is quite rare in Greek (apparently only three instances of it occur in Greek literature outside Rom 16:7, according to the data in the TLG [D. Moo, *Romans* [NICNT], 922]). The masculine *Junias* (as a contraction for *Junianas*), however, is rarer still: Only one instance of the masculine name is known in extant Greek literature (Epiphanius mentions Junias in his *Index discipulorum* 125). Further, since there are apparently other husband-wife teams mentioned in this salutation (Prisca and Aquila [v. 3], Philologus and Julia [v. 15]), it might be natural to think of Junia as a feminine name. (This ought not be pressed too far, however, for in v. 12 *all* three individuals are women [though the first two are linked together], and in vv. 9–11 all the individuals are men.) In Greek only a difference of accent distinguishes between Junias (male) and Junia (female). If it refers to a woman, it is possible (1) that she had the gift of apostleship (not the office), or (2) that she was not an apostle but along with Andronicus was esteemed by (or among) the apostles. As well, the term 'prominent' probably means 'well known,' suggesting that Andronicus and Junia(s) were well known to the apostles (see note on the phrase 'well known' which follows)."

was not a deal-breaker before, it isn't now either. To use this as an argument against the NIV11 is not valid, especially when listed as a *change* in the revision.⁸⁷

The phrase οἵτινές εἰσιν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις has always been ambiguous since it could imply that the parties named *are* apostles—and particularly noteworthy ones at that—or that the apostles thought highly of these two people. Both options have been given in most recent translations.⁸⁸

NIV11 text: “outstanding among the apostles”; margin: “Or *are esteemed by*”

NET text: “well known to the apostles”; margin: “Or ‘prominent, outstanding, famous [apostles].’”

HCSB: “They are noteworthy in the eyes of the apostles”; margin: “Or *are outstanding among.*”

NASB: “who are outstanding among the apostles” (no marginal note).

ESV: “They are well known to the apostles” (no marginal note).⁸⁹

In text with multiple issues such as this it is precarious for a translation to attempt to resolve all possible implications and it is certainly not appropriate methodology to decide what is acceptable translation based on preconceived theological positions. As always, the text must determine our theology, not our theology the text.

A recurrent problem with criticisms of the NIV11 is the expectation that a translation should do more than it is possible to do. Not all issues can or should be resolved by translation, especially *one* translation. Many of the questions raised are those of the biblical languages and can best be discussed in that context. Readers without such ability dare not lean exclusively on any one translation. Even if a church has adopted a standard translation (and that is wise for consistency in ministry), readers must be taught that careful study of difficult issues requires the use of multiple translations. They need to know that all translations will have some “warts.” Perfection should not be expected, though this should not raise questions regarding reliability and accuracy

⁸⁷ It is listed under “Examples of specific changes from the 1984 NIV to the 2011 NIV” in the “CBMW Report,” 7.

⁸⁸ The NET note again provides helpful perspective in summary form: “The term ἐπίσημος (episēmos) is used either in an implied comparative sense (‘prominent, outstanding’) or in an elative sense (‘famous, well known’). The key to determining the meaning of the term in any given passage is both the general context and the specific collocation of this word with its adjuncts. When a comparative notion is seen, that to which ἐπίσημος is compared is frequently, if not usually, put in the genitive case (cf., e.g., 3 Macc 6:1 [Ἐλεαζαρος δέ τις ἀνὴρ ἐπίσημος τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς χώρας ἱερέων ‘Eleazar, a man *prominent among the priests* of the country’]; cf. also Pss. Sol. 17:30). When, however, an elative notion is found, ἐν (en) plus a personal plural dative is not uncommon (cf. Pss. Sol. 2:6). Although ἐν plus a personal dative does not indicate agency, in collocation with words of perception, (ἐν plus) dative personal nouns are often used to show the recipients. In this instance, the idea would then be ‘well known to the apostles.’ See M. H. Burer and D. B. Wallace, ‘Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re-examination of Rom 16.7,’ *NTS* 47 (2001): 76–91, who argue for the elative notion here.”

⁸⁹ It is interesting that the two major, conservative, formal equivalent translations reflect opposite conclusions with no marginal note regarding the alternative!

overall. The pastor's job, after all, is that of teacher. He must train his people how to think about such translation issues and how to compensate for them.

Evaluation of Gender-Related Changes

Translations tread a reactionary, theological minefield when they implement changes in gender-related language. This is unfortunate since the issues addressed are legitimate matters related to the clarity of Scripture. Because there has been a deliberate feminist secular agenda in the social/political sphere, there is suspicion that such pressures are what drive changes in translation. It is true that there has also been an evangelical feminism in the form of an egalitarian view of women's roles in the home and in the church. Egalitarianism has been influenced by the secular ideology, though acknowledging that influence does not mean that these evangelicals have adopted the entire feminist creed. Though it may seem to be an awkward combination to some of us, evangelical egalitarians still hold to the authority of Scripture and usually to its inspiration and inerrancy.⁹⁰

In response to evangelical egalitarianism, conservatives have mobilized to push back against that which is viewed as faulty in significant areas of theology. That has often been a helpful corrective and has served to maintain a credible defense of the traditional, conservative position of the church in these areas. Unfortunately, single-issue groups, as helpful and necessary as they sometimes are, run the risk of becoming myopic, one-string-fiddle players who view everything through a narrow window of priority. The results can include blindness to legitimate concerns in related areas, misrepresentation of other positions, rhetoric, and invalid argumentation. I am afraid this is reflected in some of the attacks on the new revision of the NIV in which the CBT has been accused of capitulating to the feminist agenda.

The translation of gender language in Scripture in recent evangelical translations and particularly in the NIV11, though it *could* be treated so as to comply with the secular feminist creed,⁹¹ is an attempt to express accurately the meaning of God's revelation. As two members of the CBT clearly say, the NIV does not advocate "the blanket replacement of masculine terms with inclusive language. This is not about gender 'neutrality' (as some have claimed), but about gender 'accuracy.' The goal is not to eliminate gender distinctions in Scripture, but to clarify them."⁹² Whereas inclusivist versions intend to eliminate any patriarchal reference in Scripture, the goal of gender accuracy "is to reflect as accurately as possible the original meaning of the text. Gender

⁹⁰ As with any such position there is a spectrum of positions and the leftward edge blends seamlessly into the secular ideology with the concomitant abandonment of the authority of Scripture. This attitude should not, however, be presumed to represent the more conservative wing of egalitarianism.

⁹¹ Some translations have done just this, e.g., *The Inclusive New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version*, ed. Victor R. Gold, Thomas L. Hoyt, Sharon H. Ringe, Susan Thistlethwaite, Burton H. Throckmorton, and Barbara A. Withers (Oxford Univ. Press, 1995) and *The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation*, ed. Priests for Equality (Lanham, MD: Sheed & Ward, 2007). Neither of these are evangelical translations. See also the *Lectionary* mentioned in n. 22.

⁹² Fee and Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation*, 101.

accurate versions seek to introduce inclusive language only with reference to human beings and only when the original meaning included both sexes.”⁹³

The reason that changes are needed is that *English has changed* in the past quarter century. This means that any of the recent evangelical translations which reflect inclusive language (ESV, NET, HCSB, NIV11, etc.) are first steps in that direction. Different approaches have been implemented and all translations will benefit as such efforts are evaluated and used. Earlier approaches such as the NIVI and the TNIV were pioneer attempts that proved unsatisfactory, but translators have learned from them. The HCSB has been the most reticent to make many such changes, the ESV is more generous (though within certain strict limits), NET and NIV11 have worked with slightly broader parameters.

One of the most significant influences on the gender language of the NIV11 has come as a direct result of criticisms of the TNIV: the documentation of what changes have actually taken place in English in the past quarter century. It is the Collins Report (discussed earlier in this paper) that has provided an objective baseline for the revision of the NIV in the area of gender language.⁹⁴ The results appear to me to be justifiable and in almost all cases helpful. Yes, there are a few warts (as any translation has), but I do not think that they are of sufficient quantity or seriousness to detract from the far greater gains in clarity (in all areas) in the revised NIV.

Conclusion

Is the NIV11 a viable, usable translation in conservative churches? In order to decide that we ought first to ask on what bases such a question should be evaluated.

Criteria

Fee and Strauss have proposed four criteria for evaluating a translation: accuracy, clarity, naturalness, and appropriateness.⁹⁵ Although proposed in a book written by two members of the CBT, it appears to me that these are appropriate criteria for any translation, not just the NIV. Some translation teams would respond differently as to the importance of each or might understand the criteria differently, but the issues would nevertheless remain. What is not included is any direct evaluation of the formal/functional spectrum. That, I think, is deliberate since we are seeking to evaluate the results, not the means by which they were achieved. If we were to apply these four criteria to the NIV11, what would be the result?

⁹³ Ibid., 102.

⁹⁴ The CBT has said that “In the pursuit of this agenda [i.e., ‘to represent God’s Word accurately and naturally in modern English’], CBT used extensive research into the state of modern English as a basis for our decisions about gender translation. In all our public information about the update, we have stressed the importance of this research, the ‘Collins Report,’ for our work” (CBT “Response to CBMW Review,” paragraph 4).

⁹⁵ Fee and Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation*, 36–41.

Accuracy

First, is the NIV11 accurate? If accuracy is defined as communicating God's revelation in such a way that what God intended us to understand is, indeed, understandable as intended,⁹⁶ then I would rate the NIV11 (as the older NIV in its time) high in terms of accuracy. The NIV does not attempt to reproduce the donor text primarily in a word-for-word fashion, but were it to do so, the result would usually be less accurate since the donor and receptor languages express meaning so differently. The meaning, however, is communicated accurately and that is the goal of translation: the accurate communication of the intended meaning of the donor text.

In the area of gender language, the efforts of the NIV to accurately represent generic/inclusive reference in the donor language with suitable equivalents in the receptor language accurately conveys the intended reference in contemporary English. Though not every such choice will meet the approval of the critics, I would conclude that the choices of the CBT in this regard are defensible and express the Word of God accurately in English.

Clarity

Second, is the NIV11 clear? If God's revelation is to function in a revelatory manner, then it must be understandable in the receptor language. The use of unclear language compromises the revelatory goal of Scripture. The text as originally written was clear to its original readers. That does not mean that all parts were equally easy to understand, but that the obstacles to comprehension were not in the language used, but in the profundity of the concepts involved. Even though Paul claimed that everything he wrote to the Corinthians could be read and understood (2 Cor 1:13), Peter admitted that some of the things Paul wrote were hard to understand (2 Pet 3:15–16). This should be the case with a translation also. It should represent the meaning accurately in clear language so that the reader does not stumble due to obscurities of lexicon or syntax.

By taking a mediating position between formal and functional equivalence (though tending, I think, closer to the formal end of the spectrum) the NIV has been able to produce a text that is clearer than many translations, especially those weighted more heavily with formal equivalence. "Formal equivalent versions have a tendency to alter the forms of the original until they are just comprehensible. Unfortunately, what is comprehensible to a translator may be obscure, awkward, or even meaningless to the

⁹⁶ Fee and Strauss phrase it this way: "By accurate we mean that a translation reflects the meaning of the original text as closely as possible. It should transport modern readers back to the world of the Bible, enabling them to hear the message as the original readers heard it. ¶ Although accuracy relates primarily to properly transferring the linguistic meaning of the forms of the biblical languages, it also relates to biblical history and culture. Every book in the Bible was written at a particular place and time, and a translation should seek to reproduce the foreignness of the text.... Accuracy also relates to genre or literary form.... Reproducing the style of the original is also part of accuracy" (ibid., 36–37). The "foreignness of the text" relates to the items specified—the cultural and chronological distancing of the text's setting and message—not to the language used in the receptor language to communicate this information.

average reader.”⁹⁷ People who have sufficient training in the biblical languages may tend to judge clarity more generously than the “average reader” who does not understand the range of options available for many of the formal elements in Hebrew and Greek. If we are serious about making the Word of God a vital tool in the lives of English-speaking Christians, then we must aim for a translation that communicates clearly in the language of the average English-speaking person. It is here that the NIV excels.

Naturalness

Third, is the language of the NIV11 natural? The questions of clarity and naturalness are related. Clarity asks if a text can be easily understood. Naturalness asks if the translation communicates in the receptor language using expressions that would be used by a receptor language speaker. We may well understand English statements which we would never think of using in our own speech and writing. As one example, Acts 11:22, Ἡκούσθη δὲ ὁ λόγος εἰς τὰ ὦτα τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς οὔσης ἐν Ἰερουσαλήμ, might be translated as “The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem” (ESV) or “News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem” (NIV). Neither of these translations are formal equivalents⁹⁸ nor do they use natural English idiom. We do not speak of information “reaching the ears.” Instead we would say, “News of this reached the church in Jerusalem” (NIV11). Despite not reproducing the idiom involving the ears, the revision in the new NIV has accurately reproduced the meaning and done so in much more natural English. It is the little changes like this that make the NIV11 sound much more natural than many other translations.

Appropriateness

Fourth, is the result appropriate for the intended audience? This criteria may be more subjective than the first three since there are many variables. It does acknowledge that there is not one translation that is best for every purpose. Though a church may adopt one translation as a standard for their “in house” ministries (e.g., Sunday School, worship services, etc.), they might well consider a different translation if they were reaching out to a group of migrant workers whose English skills were very limited. Likewise an established church with a large population of seniors (e.g., some churches in Florida, though this is too often true in the north as well, though for different reasons), were they to decide to change from their traditional KJV to a modern translation, would likely make a different choice than a new church plant reaching young adults in a university town or families in an inner city. What is appropriate for one may not be as suitable for another.

In light of factors such as these I cannot give a simple answer to Fee and Strauss’s fourth criteria. Based on many years of using the NIV and my initial exposure to the

⁹⁷ Fee and Strauss, *How To Choose a Translation*, 39.

⁹⁸ A formal equivalent of this clause in Acts 11:22 would read, “But the word was heard in the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem.” Even this is not “strictly” formal since the word order has been revised to match English. A “word-for-word” translation would read, “it was heard but the word into the ears of the church of the one which was in Jerusalem”—neither clear nor natural.

NIV11, I would suggest that the new NIV is still one of the more versatile choices. It not only communicates the meaning of God's revelation accurately, but does so in English that is easily understood by a wide range of English speakers. It is as well suited for expository preaching as it is for public reading and use in Bible classes and children's ministries. It may not be as well suited for use in some very traditional churches in socially conservative parts of the country. Though its use could potentially increase comprehension in such settings, the cost in terms of rejection based on it "not sounding like the Bible" might outweigh the potential gains. Nor is it as useful for discerning the formal structure of the biblical text. This is not of concern to many Christians, but those who consider themselves "serious students" like the biblisch cadences of more formal translations. Yet even here students should make use of multiple translations that reflect various emphases: both the formal ones for structure (to the extent that can be gleaned from an English translation), the functional ones to jar the mind long accustomed to traditional phrasing, and also those mediating translations like the NIV (and NET, HCSB, etc.) which attempt to balance both concerns. A case could be made that a translation like the NIV11 is one of the better choices as an all-around tool for ministry, supplemented for serious Bible study by a translation that flanks the NIV on either side.

Reactions

Just as the KJV in 1611, any new translation faces certain challenges. The NIV11 is no exception to such attacks. The charge has been led by the CBMW. The potential issues in this regard have already been mentioned at several points in the paper. Essentially CBMW is a very vocal single-issue⁹⁹ group that has determined that one of the primary ways to champion their position is to advocate a single approach to translation: formal equivalence with explicit objection to "gender-neutral" translation.¹⁰⁰ There is also potential for conflict of interest at this point since some of the key players in CBMW are also responsible for a competing translation, the ESV.¹⁰¹ The tone of their official review of the NIV11 is unhelpful and the methodology employed is designed more for rhetorical effect than it is for a substantive engagement in the issues.¹⁰²

Other opposition has come from the Southern Baptist Convention which passed a resolution opposing the NIV11 at their annual convention in June 2011. This was not a

⁹⁹ Their single issue is the defense of a complementarian view of men and women and all-out opposition to egalitarianism. I personally hold a complementarian position, so my objection is not to the position itself, but to some of the ways in which CBMW has attempted to advance that cause.

¹⁰⁰ See the Mission and Vision Statement on the CBMW website at <<http://www.cbmw.org/Our-Mission-and-Vision>>, s.v. "What's at Stake, #5."

¹⁰¹ Wayne Grudem is a member of the Board of Directors of CBMW and also a member of the Translation Oversight Committee for the ESV and General Editor for the ESV Study Bible.

¹⁰² The methodology essentially collates a large quantity of data which are presented in summary form. This gives the uninformed reader the impression of thousands and thousands of errors. In reality there are a few basic issues in regard to how gender-related language should be translated. These get little attention in the review. Previously published reviews of the NIVI and the TNIV have employed the same basic method.

recommendation from the resolutions committee, but a motion from a pastor on the floor. The heart of the 2011 resolution is the claim that “this translation alters the meaning of hundreds of verses, most significantly by erasing gender-specific details which appear in the original language.” It also references a 1997 resolution on translation which condemned “gender inclusive translation.” Unfortunately, neither the “gender-neutral” (in the title of the 2011 resolution) nor the term “gender inclusive” in the 1997 resolution were defined. And definition is the heart of any such statement (though rarely included in formal resolutions). By the definitions used by the CBT both the SBC’s own HCSB and the ESV use “gender inclusive” language. It appears that a very broad definition of the term was used and applied to a translation which itself uses a very narrow definition. As explained above, the only changes in the NIV11 that may be termed “gender inclusive” are those which the translators understood to be inclusive of both men and women in the original text. That is hardly objectionable. It is unfortunate that the SBC has not issued a more accurate statement, but given the size and influence of that denomination, it will have wide impact. Had the motion come from the resolutions committee, or better, a committee appointed to spend a year studying the issue, it is possible that it might have been considered more carefully. The CBT has issued a formal response to the SBC’s resolution objecting strongly to the claims made in the resolution (see the appendix).

An exemplary approach to considering the NIV11 may be seen in the deliberations of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.¹⁰³ Although they have not made a final decision yet, their preparation and consideration of the issue is a model from which other groups could learn much. After detailing their extensive study and deliberations, their concluding recommendation to their Synod meeting is as follows.

As we have considered all these matters, the committee has become firmer in its consensus regarding the new NIV. We believe it could be used as a translation for our synod’s publications. Before going any further, we ask all to understand what we are saying and what we are not saying in advancing such a thesis. We are not suggesting that this is the only way to go. Nor are we saying that there aren’t other good translations out there. We are certainly not suggesting that the new NIV become the “official version” of WELS. In fact WELS has never adopted an official version. Congregations and individuals are free to adopt and use such versions as most suit their needs.

But we do wish to advance the proposition that the new NIV could serve us adequately as a translation for our synodical publications. At the same time we are far from certain that those feelings are shared by a majority of WELS members. That is why we also believe that the thesis needs to be tested by further discussions held among a wider audience until we reach a more general agreement. Before we make some suggestions for broadening the conversation, permit us to list the main reasons why we believe the new NIV, despite its flaws, is still workable:

¹⁰³ A variety of reports and related documents are posted on the WELS website: <<http://www.wels.net/news-events/forward-in-christ/bible-revision-new-international-version-2010>>. See especially the Supplementary Report as well as the Q&A document. There are also reviews of the ESV, HCSB, and AAT.

1. As noted above, while there are some notable weaknesses, there are also even more notable improvements. Does the good outweigh the bad? We do not advocate reading the chart above simplistically by saying, “The fact that improvements are in the majority ends all debate.” Yet we can suggest that its many improvements should be considered as one factor tipping the scales in the new NIV’s favor. We believe it is a faithful and accurate translation, for the most part, and that it is the best of all the versions for public reading in our churches.

2. We believe that no other current translation would be a significant improvement over the NIV, one that addresses all the NIV’s weaknesses without adding its own new ones to the mix. No matter what version a person proposes, it will have both its weaknesses and its strengths. There is no perfect translation of the Bible. Above we have noted some of those strengths and weaknesses among the likeliest runners up. The same could be done for any other version that a person would nominate for consideration. When we apply the evaluative criteria we have set forth above, we believe that the NIV emerges as the best option.

3. Our synod is used to the NIV. To continue using it in its revised form would provide the greatest continuity and cause the fewest disruptions among us. Many of us can remember, for example, what it was like to memorize our catechism verses as children in the KJV and then teach them as pastors to our catechism classes in the NIV. We learned how easy it was to get confused and mix the two up. That would not happen if we adopted the new NIV. In fact we are of the opinion that if a church began using the new NIV in public reading tomorrow, most congregation members wouldn’t even notice the change.¹⁰⁴

As summarized above, there have been both positive and negative reactions to the NIV11.¹⁰⁵ Whatever one decides they will have plenty of company.¹⁰⁶

Recommendations

Making a specific recommendation regarding any Bible translation is always a hazardous enterprise. There is no one translation that is best in every situation. Any counsel that I suggest here must be weighed carefully against specific needs and settings, but hopefully this paper and my concluding comments can suggest the relevant factors.

My judgment is that the NIV11 is a usable translation in many situations. It continues the NIV tradition largely unchanged, though improved in many small ways across the breadth of the canon. It is not perfect. No translation is. (Have I mentioned that before?! ☺) It has a few warts. All translations do. Overall, however, it is an improvement of an otherwise fine translation.

¹⁰⁴ “WELS Report,” 11–12.

¹⁰⁵ At the time of this writing I am not aware of any other major, published responses or official position statements regarding the NIV11. The blogosphere has been “relatively” quiet. Even *World* magazine has remained calm on this release, the editor, Marvin Olasky printing a brief, mild review that said he was “not a fan,” but there were “some improvements” (“Another New NIV?” 1 Jan 2011, online at <<http://www.worldmag.com/articles/17442>>).

¹⁰⁶ And yes, I deliberately used a “singular *they*” in this sentence! ☺

The major sticking point for some will be the use of inclusive language, yet *all* recent translations (including the ESV) do exactly this. The difference is the extent of such expressions. So long as it is realized that the purpose of such language is to accurately reflect inclusive language in the original texts of Scripture, then it is hard to fathom objection to doing the same in translation. Since contemporary English has changed in this regard, it is only reasonable that those translations which operate on a principle of ongoing revision (as does the NIV¹⁰⁷) reflect current usage when a revision is prepared.

Are the gender-related revisions perfect? No. Would I choose to word some of them slightly differently? Of course, and so would you. That, however, is not the issue since it would be true of any of us if we were revising any translation, and not just in matters related to gender. One must look at the broader picture—the translation as a whole. Does the NIV11 have sufficient commendable qualities and minimal detracting warts to make it usable? I conclude that it meets that criteria.

I think that many churches of the sort represented here would find it helpful in ministry. It is of sufficient quality and accuracy to serve as the primary Bible in the local church, just as was the NIV before it. Of course those churches which have balked at using the NIV will not likely find the NIV11 of interest either. There could be many reasons for that, some legitimate, others not. For those churches still using the KJV, a change to the NIV is a broader leap than to a revision of a more recent version in the same KJV lineage, e.g., the ESV.¹⁰⁸ That broader leap, however stretching it might be, has the potential to provide greater gains since the result is clear, normal, accurate English rather than less clear, somewhat archaic English. Whether a pastor is willing to lead his people through such a transition will depend on the particular local church setting and atmosphere. It may not be a wise choice at a particular time, especially early in a pastor's ministry when the necessary trust has not yet been established and the essential teaching foundation has not yet been laid.

Regardless of the setting, it behooves a pastor to spend time teaching his people regarding the issues involved in translation, including the issue of gender language.¹⁰⁹ Ordinary Christians who have no knowledge of the biblical languages¹¹⁰ need to learn the limits of what a translation can do and what it cannot. They also need to learn how to use multiple, complementary translations in their study. Without such teaching from their pastor, any transition to a new translation will find rocky going. Even churches that are presently using the 1984 NIV need an introduction to the questions raised by the NIV11. If these are considered carefully and alternate positions described

¹⁰⁷ The NIV Charter explicitly provides that “The Committee shall for a reasonable time provide for a periodic review and revision of the projected translation with a view to improving its renderings, embodying the fruits of future biblical scholarship, and keeping its idiom current” (Art. 7, §4).

¹⁰⁸ The ESV is a revision of the RSV which was a revision of the RV/ASV which was a revision of the 1769 KJV which was the 6th revision of the 1611 KJV (which was a revision of the Bishop's Bible which was a revision of...).

¹⁰⁹ The most helpful book on the subject that I have read is Fee and Strauss's *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth*. I recommend it highly.

¹¹⁰ Strong's numbers don't count!

fairly, Christians can understand and profit from any of the new translations that use some form of inclusive language. If a pastor demonizes opposing positions and treats either the ESV or the NIV or the NIV11 as evil, then he may sway his congregation to his point of view, but he will also do them a severe disservice—as well as accrue more serious judgment to himself (Jas 3:1). Pastors who cannot work with the biblical languages are at a disadvantage in dealing with these questions, but they can and should draw on fellow pastors or trusted professors to help them work through these issues.¹¹¹

We ought to rejoice in the wealth of reliable English translations that are available to God’s people today. The NIV11 is a welcome addition to that list.

Appendices

- A. Summary of the Collins Report
- B. SBC Resolution on the NIV11
- C. CBT Responses
- D. WELS Translation Evaluation Committee Report
- E. Changes from NIV to NIV11 in 2 Timothy

Appendix A: Summary of Collins Corpus Report¹¹²

Introduction

Prior to the update of the New International Version of the Bible (NIV) for 2011, all previous Bible translation efforts have been hampered by the lack of accurate, statistically significant data on the state of spoken and written English at a given time in its history. Beyond appealing to traditional style guides, all that translators and stylists have been able to do is rely on their own experiences and others’ anecdotal evidence, resulting in arguments such as, “I never see anybody writing such-and-such,” or “I always hear such-and-such,” or “Sometimes I read one thing but other times something else.”

As part of the review of gender language promised at the announcement of the latest update to the NIV on September 1, 2009, the Committee on Bible Translation sought to remove some of this subjectivity by enlisting the help of experts. The committee initiated a relationship with Collins Dictionaries to use the Collins Bank of English, one of the world’s foremost English language research tools, to conduct a major new study of changes in gender language. The Bank of English is a database of more than 4.4

¹¹¹ I have taught a seminar on the English Bible (it can be adapted from 4–10 hours) in many churches across the country over the past 20 years and am glad to be of help to churches who need outside help in these areas. I am confident that many of my colleagues at BFS could do the same.

¹¹² The following summary is reproduced from the CBT web site: <<http://www.niv-cbt.org/information/collins-corpus-report/>>.

billion words drawn from text publications and spoken-word recordings from all over the world.

Working with some of the world's leading experts in computational linguistics and using cutting-edge techniques developed specifically for this project, the committee gained an authoritative, and hitherto unavailable, perspective on the contemporary use of gender language — including terms for the human race and subgroups of the human race, pronoun selections following various words and phrases, the use of “man” as a singular generic and the use of “father(s)” and “forefather(s)” as compared to “ancestor(s).” The project tracked usage and acceptability for each locution over a twenty year period and also analyzed similarities and differences across different registers and varieties of English: for example, UK English, US English, written English, spoken English, and even the English used in a wide variety of evangelical books, sermons and internet sites.

Research of this type is just one tool in the hands of translators, and, of course, it has no bearing on the challenge of preserving transparency to the form and structure of the original text. But since its first publication in 1978, the NIV has always aimed not only to offer transparency to the original documents, but also to express the unchanging truths of the Bible in forms of language that modern English speakers find natural and easy to comprehend. And this is where a tool like the Bank of English comes into its own.

The summary that follows provides insight into the wealth of information that emerged from this program of research and the methods that were employed. We hope it will be of interest to scholars and lay people alike as they familiarize themselves with the updated text of the NIV.

—Professor Douglas Moo
Chair of the Committee on Bible Translation
September 2010.

Methods

The analysis of generic pronouns was facilitated by the development of a groundbreaking anaphora resolution grammar with built-in semantic tagging designed to track the relationship between pronouns/determiners and antecedents in citations drawn from all corpora. The anaphora resolution grammar yielded a higher proportion of positive (relevant) citations than has previously been possible using manual techniques and allowed researchers to fully exploit the immense scale and breadth of Collins' corpus holdings.

Summary of findings

The study examined gender language in English concentrating on three specific areas of usage over a 20-year period from 1990 to 2009.

1. Generic pronouns and determiners

This part of the study considered the types of pronouns and determiners that are used to refer to indefinite pronouns (such as someone, everybody and one) and non-gender specific nouns (such as a person, each child and any teacher):

- A. masculine (*he, his, himself, etc.*);
- B. feminine (*she, her, herself, etc.*);
- C. plural/gender-neutral (*they, them, one, themselves, etc.*);
- D. alternative forms (*s/he, him or her, his/her, etc.*)

In all the varieties of English analyzed, plural/neutral pronouns and determiners account for the majority of usages. Between 1990 and 2009, instances of masculine generic pronouns and determiners, expressed as a percentage of total generic pronoun usage in general written English, fell from 22% to 8%.

e.g. ‘...when a **person** accepts unconditional responsibility, **he** denies himself the privilege of “complaining” and “finding faults.”’

Instances of ‘alternative’ generic pronouns and determiners fell from 12% to 8%.

e.g. ‘**Any citizen** who wants to educate **himself or herself** has plenty of sources from which to do so.’

Instances of plural/neutral generic pronouns and determiners rose from 65% to 84%.

e.g. ‘If you can identify an **individual** who metabolises nicotine faster you can treat **them** more effectively.’

Figures for the other corpora analyzed in the study are broadly comparable with figures from the general written English corpus both in overall magnitude and in the general trend over time.

2. Mankind, man and synonyms

This part of the study considered the use of the terms *man, mankind, humankind, humanity, humans, human beings, the human race* and *people* when used to refer either to all humans or to smaller subsets of humanity. In all the corpora analyzed except Evangelical English, when all instances are considered, *people* is by far the most frequent synonym, followed by *humans*. *People* and *humans*, however, are much looser synonyms when the focus narrows to references to the human species as a whole. In these instances, *man, mankind, humankind, humanity, the human race* and *human beings* are more precise.

Of these more precise alternatives, *man, humanity* and *mankind* are the most frequent synonyms in the general written English, general spoken English, US written English and US spoken English corpora. *Man* accounts for between 22.8% and 30.3% of relevant citations, *humanity* accounts for between 21.8% and 32.7% of relevant citations, and *mankind* accounts for between 15.9% and 17.8% of relevant citations. *Humankind, Human beings* and *the human race* are comparatively infrequent.

In Evangelical English, *man* is the synonym that occurs most frequently, accounting for more than half of all genuinely collective occurrences. *Mankind* accounts for 14.2% of genuinely collective occurrences and *humanity* accounts for 11.3% of genuinely collective occurrences. *Humankind*, *human beings* and *the human race* are, as in the other corpora, relatively infrequent.

In all the corpora except Evangelical English, *man* and *mankind* have become steadily less frequent (with some fluctuations) over the 20-year course of the study, tapering off to very similar levels in current usage (approximately 3 citations per million words for *man*, and approximately 2 citations per million words for *mankind*.)

In the Evangelical corpus, the frequency with which all of the synonyms tracked in this part of the study occur is markedly higher than it is in the other corpora, most likely due to the nature of the subject matter addressed in Evangelical books and sermons.

When *man*, *mankind* and their synonyms occur with follow-on pronouns (e.g. ‘Clinical ecology shows us how to restore the balance between **man** and **his** environment’, ‘When the Almighty himself condescends to address **mankind** in **their** own language...’), *man* is almost invariably followed by the pronoun *he*, *humanity* is typically followed by the pronoun *it*, and *mankind* – on the rare occasions where it is used with a follow-on pronoun – is generally followed by the pronouns *it* or *they*.

3. Forefather, ancestor and father

This part of the study considered the use of the terms forefather(s), ancestor(s) and father(s) in the sense ‘a person/people from whom one is descended’ or ‘the founder(s) of a movement/nation etc.’ Frequencies have fluctuated, but it is evident that *ancestor* is significantly more frequent than *forefather* in each corpus and each period. The frequency of *forefather* is higher in Evangelical English than in the other corpora, but still much less frequent than *ancestor*.

Appendix B: Two SBC Resolutions on Translation

ON THE GENDER-NEUTRAL 2011 NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

June 2011

WHEREAS, Many Southern Baptist pastors and laypeople have trusted and used the 1984 New International Version (NIV) translation to the great benefit of the Kingdom; and

WHEREAS, Biblica and Zondervan Publishing House are publishing an updated version of the New International Version (NIV) which incorporates gender neutral methods of translation; and

WHEREAS, Southern Baptists repeatedly have affirmed our commitment to the full inspiration and authority of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:15-16) and, in 1997, urged every Bible publisher and translation group to resist “gender-neutral” translation of Scripture; and

WHEREAS, This translation alters the meaning of hundreds of verses, most significantly by erasing gender-specific details which appear in the original language; and
 WHEREAS, Although it is possible for Bible scholars to disagree about translation methods or which English words best translate the original languages, the 2011 NIV has gone beyond acceptable translation standards; and
 WHEREAS, Seventy-five percent of the inaccurate gender language found in the TNIV is retained in the 2011 NIV; and
 WHEREAS, The Southern Baptist Convention has passed a similar resolution concerning the TNIV in 2002; now, therefore, be it
 RESOLVED, That the messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, June 14-15, 2011 express profound disappointment with Biblica and Zondervan Publishing House for this inaccurate translation of God's inspired Scripture; and be it further
 RESOLVED, That we encourage pastors to make their congregations aware of the translation errors found in the 2011 NIV; and be it further
 RESOLVED, That we respectfully request that LifeWay not make this inaccurate translation available for sale in their bookstores; and be it finally
 RESOLVED, That we cannot commend the 2011 NIV to Southern Baptists or the larger Christian community.

Phoenix, AZ

Official text posted at <<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1218>>

Resolution On Bible Translation

June 1997

WHEREAS, Southern Baptists believe that the Bible is truth without any mixture of error and are deeply committed to the preservation of the Scriptures; and
 WHEREAS, There is an ever increasing proliferation of Bible translations with the intent of translating the Scriptures into the current language of the people; and
 WHEREAS, Bible publishers and translators are consistently faced with the tension of accuracy and readability along with the pressure from those who do not hold a high view of Scripture to take license with the use of particular terms, including, but not limited to, the use of so called gender inclusive language;
 BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Dallas, Texas, June 17-19, 1997, urge every Bible publisher and translation group to continue to use time honored, historic principles of biblical translation and refrain from any deviation to seek to accommodate contemporary cultural pressures, understanding that we are anxious to support the most accurate translations; and
 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we respectfully request that the agencies, boards, and publishing arms of the Southern Baptist Convention refrain from using any such

translations in our various publications, and from using them in printing copies or portions of copies of the Bible.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, That we urge Southern Baptists to be continually vigilant regarding this matter and prayerful for the Bible publishers and translators in the monumental task that they undertake.

Dallas, Texas

Official text of the resolution posted at

<<http://sbc.org/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=284>>.

For the resolution of 2002 on the TNIV, see

<<http://sbc.org/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1118>>.

Appendix C: Responses from the CBT to Reviews and Resolutions

Response to the SBC 2011 Resolution

COMMITTEE ON BIBLE TRANSLATION

c/o Douglas J. Moo 591 Meadowview Dr. West Chicago, IL 60185 djlmoo@comcast.net

A brief response from the Committee on Bible Translation to the resolution introduced on the floor of the Southern Baptist Convention regarding the updated New International Version

June 15, 2011

The Committee on Bible Translation (CBT) welcomes informed criticism of our work. No translation is perfect, and we are always working to improve our translation. The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has recently adopted a resolution regarding the updated New International Version (NIV). We take this opportunity to offer a brief response.

First, we object strongly to the accusation that the NIV “alters the meaning of hundreds of verses, most significantly by erasing gender-specific details which appear in the original language.” Our concern is always, in every decision we make, to represent God’s unchanging Word accurately and naturally in modern English.

Secondly, we object strongly to the accusation that “the 2011 NIV has gone beyond acceptable translation standards.” In fact, the translation standards followed by CBT are exactly those followed by professional translators around the world. CBT employs those standards in combination with the best biblical and linguistic scholarship to render God's eternal Word accurately into modern English. This mandate is what guides us in all our decisions -- not any other agenda.

For additional information on the translation philosophy and scholarship of the New International Version, please see the NIV Translators’ Notes:

www.niv-cbt.org/niv-2011-overview/translators-notes/

For additional information on the evangelical scholars who make up the CBT, see:

<http://www.niv-cbt.org/translators/>

Response to the CBMW Review

COMMITTEE ON BIBLE TRANSLATION

c/o Douglas J. Moo 591 Meadowview Dr. West Chicago, IL 60185 djlmoo@comcast.net

A Brief Response from the Committee on Bible Translation to the Review of the updated NIV by the Committee on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

June 9, 2011

The Committee on Bible Translation (CBT) welcomes informed criticism of our work. Our translation is not perfect, and we are always working to improve it. The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) has recently released a review of the updated NIV on their website. We take this opportunity to offer a brief response.

In evaluating the CBMW review, one point above all others should be kept in mind. CBMW is an advocacy group for one particular view of the role relationships among men and women. In contrast, the Committee on Bible Translation, translators of the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible, is composed of scholars that mirror the spectrum of evangelicalism. The committee includes both complementarians and egalitarians. CBMW has a self-proclaimed agenda that is not found in the NIV translation committee.

Of course, many evangelicals – including many members of the Committee on Bible Translation – agree with the general complementarian position that CBMW advocates. But CBMW has gone a significant step further, insisting that a complementarian view must result in a certain approach to translation. Their review of the updated NIV reflects this narrow view of translation. The result is a biased review that does not fairly represent the updated NIV. We could note many specific examples of unfair criticism. But we wish to note four general areas of concern.

First, we object very strongly to the accusation that our gender translation decisions were motivated by a desire to avoid causing offense. Our concern is always, in every decision we make, to represent God's Word accurately and naturally in modern English – we have no other agenda. In the pursuit of this agenda, CBT used extensive research into the state of modern English as a basis for our decisions about gender translation. In all our public information about the update, we have stressed the importance of this research, the "Collins Report," for our work. The CBMW review briefly mentions this study but fails to acknowledge its significance or to recognize its importance for our work. Our gender decisions simply reflect what the data are telling us about the state of modern English. Let us say it as emphatically as we can: the NIV translators have never been motivated by a concern to avoid giving offense. We were simply following what wide-ranging, objective research tells us about the state of modern English.

Second, we object to the "guilt-by-association" labeling of some of our translations. The review notes some renderings in the updated NIV that are adopted also by "feminist" interpreters. Yet they fail to note that many of these same renderings are also

adopted by complementarian interpreters. (For instance, “assume authority” in 1 Tim. 2:12 is Calvin’s rendering.) The fact that egalitarians and complementarians alike adopt many of these translations suggests that, in fact, there is broad scholarly support in favor of these conclusions. It is the scholarship that has influenced the decisions of CBT in these texts – not a modern agenda of any kind.

Third, the CBMW review betrays a simplistic understanding of word meaning. They accuse the updated NIV again and again of translating Greek and Hebrew words “incorrectly.” But their reason for this charge often appears to be the notion that words have only one meaning. In fact, in every language, words have many meanings and shades of meaning – and a good translation must represent this variety. At several points the CBMW review accuses the NIV of an “incorrect” translation when the best dictionaries of the ancient languages give the very same meaning that we have adopted.

Fourth, the CBMW review criticizes the updated NIV for avoiding certain masculine terms. The review notes, for instance, that the updated NIV often makes changes to “avoid the word ‘man.’” It would be only fair to note that almost all modern English translations do the same thing. The English Standard Version, for instance, is based on the Revised Standard Version. Yet over 700 occurrences of the word “man” or “men” found in the RSV are dropped in the ESV. If the NIV can be accused of “avoiding” certain masculine terms, then the same charge can be made against the ESV, along with almost all modern versions. Why single out the NIV for criticism for translation decisions that, to some degree, are being widely adopted by modern translators? CBT, along with translators of other modern versions, are not trying to “avoid” certain words. Rather, positively, we are trying to find the right word in contemporary English to represent the meaning of ancient Hebrew and Greek words. (Every modern version uses “you” for the second-person singular – not to “avoid” “thee” and “thou,” but to communicate God’s Word in modern English.)

We are grateful to live in a time when so many good translations of the Bible are available in English. These Bibles are based on different philosophies of translation and make different decisions about how to render words from the original languages into English. This diversity gives readers unparalleled access to the meaning of God’s eternal Word. The updated NIV, following the philosophy of balancing transparency to the original documents and comprehensibility for a broad audience that has made the NIV so well-loved, has an important place in this mix of translations. We are disappointed that our brothers and sisters at CBMW have not communicated more evenhandedly about our work.

Appendix D: Introduction to the WELS Report

The most helpful study of the NIV11 and related issues that I have read in preparing this paper has been the word of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod’s Translation Evaluation Committee. It is a model for both sanity and charity, exemplifying a wise approach by a group of churches in dealing with a complicated, emotional decision. I thank God for their example. I have reproduced here only the first

part of their 13 page report to provide some idea of the “flavor” of their work. The entire report along with numerous other related reports and documents may (and should!) be read on the WELS website: <<http://www.wels.net/news-events/forward-in-christ/bible-revision-new-international-version-2010>>.

Translation Evaluation Committee Supplemental Report for the 2011 WELS Convention

As we are all aware by now, the New International Version has undergone a major revision in 2011. This revision will replace the version that has been used in our publications and that has been popular in our church body for over a generation. As individuals and congregations, we are faced with the question of whether or not we want to continue with the revised NIV or look for a different English Bible translation. As a synod, we must decide which translation we wish to be used in our publications.

An Emotive Issue

Change is often unsettling whatever the reasons for it. It tends to stir the emotions as people take sides both for and against. When change comes to our Bible, it’s not surprising that the news is greeted with great excitement and with reactions ranging from hearty approval to shocked dismay.

What is more, much of our response to different translations is a matter of personal taste. Some people love the soaring cadences of the King James Version (KJV), the Bible they recall from their youth. Others prefer the more down to earth style of William Beck’s “An American Translation” (AAT). To some, the Bible should sound nearly foreign to us, reflecting the linguistic patterns of those long ago times and far away cultures. Others prefer a more contemporizing approach so that readers can immediately appreciate what the message means for them—almost as if it had been written yesterday in America. These reactions tend to be visceral, and the opinions they produce strong. An old Latin proverb suggests that people ought not argue over matters of taste, no doubt because they so often do.

That’s why above all we ask the Lord Jesus to give us a rich measure of his Spirit so that we “love one another deeply, from the heart” (1 Pt 1:22). God give us the power to understand one another as fellow Christians, taking each person’s words and actions in the kindest possible way! In our evaluation of the various English versions, it is likewise important for us to apply the eighth commandment to the work of the translators lest we demonize those whose approach we may disagree with or dislike.

An Unavoidable Issue

Here one might well ask, “If this is such an emotive issue, why then would one ever want to revise a version as popular as the NIV?” There are two reasons. First of all, language changes. The English we speak today is not exactly the same as the English that was spoken in Elizabethan England or even at the time of the Civil War. Words once

used often, pass into oblivion. The meanings of individual words also change—sometimes within the space of a single generation.

For this reason, “freezing” a translation that was intended from the outset to communicate in contemporary English was not an option for a committee charged with the responsibility for translating it. The original NIV charter mandated periodic updates so that the NIV would not become obsolete. The last major revision of the NIV had occurred in 1984. The Committee on Bible Translation (CBT) therefore felt it was time to process the many suggestions for revision they had received over the intervening years. In this connection we might reiterate something we said already in the BORAM.[*] Although he published a translation of the entire Bible in 1534, Luther and a committee of scholars continued to work on revising it throughout his lifetime and until his death in 1546. Revising a translation is, therefore, hardly a new concept.

A second reason can be summed up in the phrase “advances in scholarship.” A great deal of work has been done, for example, in the area of biblical linguistics and semantics (the meanings of words) since 1984. Our grasp of some facets of the biblical settings has also been sharpened. The result has been an increasing precision in our understanding of some words and phrases in the Scriptures. Translators who want to be faithful to the original will naturally want to incorporate those advances in any revision of their version.

...

[*BORAM = Book of Reports and Memorials, the primary source of information for the WELS synod convention]

E. Changes from NIV to NIV11 in 2 Timothy

Key

- w wording and/or punctuation change, probably for purposes of English style, though some may reflect minor nuances of the Greek text
- wg wording change involving gender language (a subcategory of ‘w’)
- k minor changes in how the Greek text is understood (often involves case function, etc.)

#	Ref.	NIV (1984)	NIV11	Key	Notes
1.	1:1	according to the promise of life	in keeping with the promise of life	w	
2.	1:3	forefathers	ancestors	wg	¹¹³
3.	1:5	I have been reminded	I am reminded	w	
4.	1:7	For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline	For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline	k	

¹¹³ This is a common change in recent translations; see ESV, NET, and HCSB.

5.	1:8a	do not be ashamed to testify	do not be ashamed of the testimony	w	
6.	1:8b	But join with me	Rather, join with me	w	
7.	1:8c– 9	the power of God, who has saved us	the power of God. He has saved us	w	
8.	1:12a	Yet I am not ashamed	Yet this is no cause for shame	w	
9.	1:12b	what I have entrusted to him for that day	what I have entrusted to him until that day	k	
10.	2:2	entrust to reliable men	entrust to reliable people	wg	114
11.	2:3	Endure hardship with us	Join with me in suffering	w	
12.	2:4	gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer.	gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer	w	
13.	2:5	if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes	anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor’s crown except by competing	w	
14.	2:13	he will remain faithful	he remains faithful	w	
15.	2:14	Keep reminding them of these things	Keep reminding God’s people of these things	w	115
16.	2:15	a workman who does not need to be ashamed	a worker who does not need to be ashamed	wg	116
17.	2:18	who have wandered away from the truth	who have departed from the truth	w	
18.	2:20	some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble	some are for special purposes and some for common use	w	117
19.	2:21	If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes	Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes	wg	118
20.	2:24	the Lord’s servant must not	the Lord’s servant must not be	w	119

¹¹⁴ Although this has frequently been understood to refer to training pastors, the text is not that specific: πιστοῖς ἀνθρώποις could well be generic. There is no reason in the context why it could not also refer to Timothy training women to be teachers (i.e., of other women). NET has the same wording.

¹¹⁵ The direct object of the verb is only implied; both NIV and NIV11 supply the implied object for clarity, as do almost all English translations, though their specific choice varies.

¹¹⁶ An ἐργάτης is “one who is engaged in work, *worker, laborer*” (BDAG, 390.1). The reference is to Timothy in any case, so “worker” is not objectionable. My *guess* is that “workman” is not very common in English and when it is used it seems to imply in English something like “craftsman.” This is a common change; see ESV, NET, and HCSB.

¹¹⁷ “Ignoble” is an uncommon and awkward word.

¹¹⁸ Greek text has only an indefinite pronoun, τις, so change from “man” to “those who” is entirely justified (neither ESV, NET, or HCSB use “man”). The original NIV “he” does represent a masculine pronoun, but only because the antecedent of the pronoun (τις) is also masculine as a generic (neuter would be inappropriate and the indefinite pronouns do not distinguish masculine and feminine by form, but the feminine is not used as a generic).

		quarrel; instead, he must be kind	quarrelsome but must be kind		
21.	2:25	Those who oppose him he must gently instruct	Opponents must be gently instructed	w	120
22.	3:5	Have nothing to do with them	Have nothing to do with such people	w	
23.	3:6	weak-willed women	gullible women	w	
24.	3:7	never able to acknowledge the truth	never able to come to a knowledge of the truth	w	
25.	3:8	these men oppose the truth—men of depraved minds	these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds	w	121
26.	3:13	while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse	while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse	wg	122
27.	3:17	so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped	so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped	wg	123
28.	4:6	the time has come for my departure	the time for my departure is near	w	
29.	4:21	Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers	Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers and sisters	wg	124
30.	4:22	Grace be with you	Grace be with you all.	w	125

¹¹⁹ Although the two preceding verses are directed specifically to Timothy (a string of 2S imperatives), the language changes to third person in v. 24. The subject of the finite verb, δεῖ, is δοῦλον κυρίου; there is no pronoun or alternate subject, the thought being developed with two complementary infinitives. It may be that Paul deliberately shifts to a broader reference at this point such that “the Lord’s servant” is parallel with “everyone who confesses the name of the Lord” (v. 19) rather than being an indirect reference to Timothy.

¹²⁰ “Opponents” is an accurate translation for τοὺς ἀντιδιατιθεμένους; the only significant change is from active to passive voice due to breaking a long sentence into two shorter ones, but the meaning is unchanged. The phrase “he must gently instruct” is the translation of an adverbial participle. There is no explicit subject since it modifies the main verb δεῖ μάχεσθαι ἀλλά ... εἶναι.

¹²¹ There is no explicit word for the first “men” (in NIV; cf. NASB, ESV) or for “teachers” (in NIV11). Either must be supplied for clarity. Other translations supply “people” (e.g., NET); HCSB uses simply “these.”

¹²² Greek: πονηροὶ ἄνθρωποι (anarthrous adjective in first attributive position). ESV, NET, and HCSB translate very similarly, recognizing the generic reference of ἄνθρωποι: “evil people.”

¹²³ The reference of ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος is certainly generic, but it is an awkward phrase to put into English. “Servant of God” may not be the best choice, but it is serviceable so long as people don’t try to work backwards from English to Greek (always a dangerous route regardless of the translation used). The marginal note reads, “Or *that you, a man of God.*” NET does something similar: “the person dedicated to God,” with a note reading, “*tn* Grk ‘the man of God,’ but ἄνθρωπος (*anthrōpos*) is most likely used here in a generic sense, referring to both men and women.”

¹²⁴ The marginal note reads, “The Greek word for *brothers and sisters* (*adelphoi*) refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God’s family.” NET uses the same expression; ESV has “brothers” in the text, but a marginal note, “Or *brothers and sisters.*”

¹²⁵ Clarifies that the second person pronoun, ὑμῶν, is plural.