

A Review of the TNIV

Christians' interest in fresh translations are always justifiably concerned about the nuts and bolts of new ones. These concerns take several avenues. One has to do with an accurate representation of the ancient, inspired text. Do translations give a fair and accurate representation of what the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek texts meant in their original context? Another one is, do the new translations change theology in any way? Or still another, why make changes anyway—are old and tried ones still not the best? And why do we need new translations anyway?

With questions such as these, I have taken a sample analysis of the New Testament TNIV and have arrived at positive answers to all of the questions above. I have placed the most crucial ones below.

With the passage of time and the rapid change in society that so defines our times, new translations are not only inevitable but also desirable. Any document that human beings handle is in need of constant revision and improvement, no matter how good or useful they may have been. I have found the TNIV to be concerned to keep the tradition of the NIV—translators have changed only what was necessary. When looking for changes, one has to look fairly closely to find them. But they are there. Even texts that are well-known for their difficulty, such as John 7:53-8:11, have been retained, but in a manner that preserves it for those concerned that it be in the text but with a print font that will indicate that it has difficulty.

Changes occur for the following reasons.

1) Changes of style and Different Manuscript Readings

But where needed, improvement has been made. For instance, John 14:2 in the NIV reads: "In my Father's house are *many rooms*; **if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.**"

The TNIV has the following: "My Father's house has *plenty of room*; **if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?**"

Several observations are in order: 1) The TNIV changed "many rooms" to "plenty of room." This change makes the translation less literal but conveys better the meaning of the Greek text. 2) The TNIV turned the underscored above two sentences into one and, instead of statements, placed a question mark at the end. First, the TNIV translators have taken different stances from those of the NIV on matters relating to the Greek text. Some manuscripts have "that;" others do not. They have considered that the evidence for keeping "that" to be stronger and have, therefore, included it. Since this is the case, this impacts the clauses around it. This is what happens. The "that" turns the last sentence into a clause

that goes with the first sentence. “That,” then, introduces what is called a final clause. Now “that” impacts whether one should or should not turn the new sentence into a question.

There is another question that editors of the Greek texts have—should a period or a question mark be placed at the end of this sentence? Two sides exist. It makes good sense to do read it as a question. This is simply a matter of attempting to assign modern punctuation marks to an ancient text that does not have these marks. Two possibilities exist—either a period to indicate a statement or a question mark. Scholars who have edited Greek manuscripts and compiled Greek texts have opted for one or the other. The TNIV has just switched opinions by choosing to place a question mark there instead of a period. This question is a rhetorical device that fits the context. This portion contains dialogue between Jesus and several disciples. This particular translation makes the text clearer and more powerful.

2. Changes due to Gender Considerations

This is a difficult area to deal with but the TNIV translators have done a good job of bringing the text into the 21st century while maintaining biblical integrity. Let me present a few test cases.

Acts 17:34 is the first case. The NIV reads: “A few **men** became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.”

The TNIV has: “Some of the **people** became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.”

The TNIV changed “men” to “people.” The Greek text actually warrants this change for in the context the Greek word *andrej* (*men* in the NIV) includes the “woman” “Damaris.” Clearly the Greek syntax warrants such a translation.

2 Corinthians 5:16-19a presents another example.

The NIV of 2 Corinthians 5:16 reads: “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, **he** is a new creation; **the** old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting **men's** sins against them. . . .”

In comparison, the TNIV translates: “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is on Christ, **there** is a new creation: **The** old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us

the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting **people's** sins against them. . . .”

Note two changes indicated by the bold face and the underlining. As in the case above, the context clearly warrants it. All people are sinners (not just men) and all people who come to Christ are not just men. Women are not left out of God's plans. This text is not just directed to men.

Of special interest will be 1 Corinthians 14:34. The TNIV retains verse 34 “Women should remain silent in the church.” As is typical and helpful, when manuscript evidence allows for other possible translations or placements of texts (not minor ones, of course), in the NIV tradition, the TNIV provides a marginal reading and/or note. Thus, a footnote observes that this verse occurs after verse 40 in some manuscripts.

But compare 1 Corinthians 11:5 where women are permitted to prophecy if their heads are covered. This suggests, then, that Paul is referring to cultural roles and their expectations.

In like manner, a special case of 1 Timothy 3:11 is to be noted. Let us compare: NIV: “In the same way, **their wives are to be women** worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.” The TNIV has: “In the same way, **women who are deacons**^a are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.” It is also helpful to include the Greek text here to assist in the decision.

3:11 **Gunai/kaj w`sau,twj semna,j**(mh. diabo,louj(nhfali,ouj(pista.j evn pa/sinÅ

Note that the TNIV has placed a notation leading to a footnote providing an alternative translation, a fact I noted above. Also to be noted is that the TNIV has better syntactic support. The “women likewise are to be worthy of respect” (literal translation) is the same construction as in verse 8 where Paul is exhorting church leaders (i.e., deacons) to possess and maintain a certain kind of Christian character. The TNIV's addition of “who are deacons” in verse 11 makes it clearer what and who are meant here. Verse 11 structurally and syntactically fits in and includes women in that role. Verse 11 structurally acts as an aside (or parenthesis) in that it talks about women in the paragraph about “men” (note verse 12), but at the same time it is necessary to include any gender that acts in this leadership capacity. It is known that some women during this time did fit into society as benefactors and leaders. They were women of wealth and status.

Also of interest might be the change of gender and or style in Acts 2:6 (“TNIV: “each one heard their own language”—a shift in style from “one” to “their”); Acts 2:15 (TNIV: “These people”—NIV “These men”; “men” is not in the Greek); Acts 2:22 (TNIV: “People of Israel”—NIV “Men of Israel”); and further on in verse 29 (TNIV: “Brothers and sisters”—NIV “Brothers”; Greek has “Men brothers”). This kind of change can be observed further: Acts 2: 37; 3: 12, etc.

3. What about theology and translation? Pentecostals and Charismatics will be particularly concerned about their theological issues, so I have paid attention to parts where translation could be critical: 1 Corinthians 12 –14 and Acts 2. Everything is in good order.

People in the twenty-first century have long anticipated the TNIV--It will serve the church well.