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An Open Statement About the TNIV from the International Bible Society and Zondervan

The History of New Translations

History tells us that nearly every new translation is controversial in the beginning, but then usually goes on to serve a useful purpose. The passion with which people from all sides are responding to *Today's New International Version* (TNIV) is part of the normal discourse in updating translations for the next generation.

Perhaps the most classic example is the furor that broke out in 1611 over the *King James Version* (KJV). People were outraged that the older English translations would be supplanted. Nine years after its publication, the Pilgrims still refused to take copies of the KJV on board the *Mayflower*, the *Geneva Bible* being their version of choice for the Plymouth Colony.

To the degree this passionate response indicates a thirst in our world for accessing and understanding God's word, it's a marvelous thing. But such furor can also lead to confusion and bewilderment for the reader.

To that end, it is the desire of the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT), International Bible Society (IBS) and Zondervan to relentlessly work to educate and inform the public about the motivation, mission and rationale for our work on the NIV and TNIV that has been going on for over 35 years.

Background on the Committee on Bible Translation

The TNIV was developed by the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT), the same group that produced the NIV. The CBT includes renowned, conservative linguists and biblical scholars from the most trusted institutions in the world. They come from a variety of denominational affiliations and theological backgrounds. This diversity creates a system of checks and balances, ensuring absolute accuracy.

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Academic Institutions

- Wheaton College
- Calvin Theological Seminary
- Dallas Theological Seminary
- Regent College
- Westmont College
- Tyndale Theological Seminary
- Spurgeon's College (London)
- Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
- Beeson Divinity School
- Bethel Seminary
- North Park Theological Seminary

Denominations

- Southern Baptist
- Baptist
- Independent Baptist
- Baptist General Conference
- Christian Reformed
- Assemblies of God
- Presbyterian Church in America
- Evangelical Covenant
- Independent
- Church of England

The CBT's sole mission is to accurately communicate the meaning of the original text in contemporary English. This group has earned the trust of over 150 million people (those who have had and used the NIV during the last 25 years) primarily because they have done their job well by clearly translating the original Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew languages into the English language without sacrificing accuracy. The TNIV upholds the same standards of accuracy, clarity and meticulous scholarship of the NIV. That same reliability underscores every change in this revision of the NIV, called the TNIV.

Translating God's Word into English

There is an academic, linguistic rationale for the translation of every passage. (See www.tniv.info for NIV/TNIV passage comparisons and rationale for the updated text.) Biblical scholars begin the work of translation by discussing the meaning of the actual Greek, Aramaic or Hebrew text. With the help of tools such as lexicons, original manuscripts, etc., they discuss at length-sometimes for days- the meaning of the original text and choose which English word or words to most accurately and clearly *convey the meaning*. They also work with numerous conservative, evangelical scholars to review their work and ensure its accuracy.

Biblical scholars sometimes have differences of opinion on the translation of Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic. However, these differences on linguistic issues should not be confused with social or political agendas. The CBT members have devoted their lives to reaching the world with the Good News of the Bible. Accusations that these godly servants have been influenced by feminism or political correctness are false. Dozens of scholars, noted below, have spoken publicly in favor of the TNIV. (See www.tniv.info for a continually updated list of endorsements.)

Clarification Regarding Colorado Springs Guidelines

IBS, Zondervan and the Committee on Bible Translation agreed to endorse a document now referred to as the Colorado Springs Guidelines (CSG). The document contained two sections. The first, titled *Statement on Gender-Related Language in Scripture*, dealt with the philosophical principles associated with Bible translation. We *unequivocally* support the tenets set forth in this section, including:

- We agree that the overarching concern in Bible translation is to preserve the sanctity of the truth of sacred Scripture.
- We agree that the goal of all translation should be to render the most accurate translation possible.
- We agree that Bible translation should not be influenced by illegitimate intrusions of secular culture or by political or ideological agendas.
- We agree that there are limited times when the use of gender-accurate language enhances the accuracy of the translation, but overuse can become an instrument of distortion.

The second component, titled *Guidelines for Translation of Gender-Related Language in Scripture*, contains some very specific guidelines that those present generally agreed with or, at the time, were willing to endorse. However, upon further review and consideration, and in consultation with a broader group of evangelical scholars, IBS has determined that many of the technical guidelines are too restrictive to facilitate the most accurate possible text in contemporary English idiom.

As a result, IBS, after much prayer and consideration of their highest mission of reaching the world with accurate and clear translations of the Bible, withdrew its endorsement as a matter of integrity. The guidelines that have served the CBT for decades and those of the International Forum of Bible Agencies (IFBA) continue to guide their work. IFBA is a large body of translators including Wycliffe, Summer Institute of Linguistics and others who are responsible for 90 percent of Bible translation work.

As an outcome of that gathering in Colorado Springs, IBS and Zondervan made a commitment to continue publishing the NIV without changes or updates. Indeed, we will continue to publish the NIV without changes or updates, and we will continue to earnestly promote the NIV.

Commitment to Ongoing Communications

We welcome ongoing dialogue with responsible and concerned parties regarding the sacred work of Bible translation. Recognizing that there are diverse opinions regarding translations, IBS and Zondervan will continue to offer numerous choices in translations for today's generation and generations to come. We desire the highest possible standards for ensuring accuracy and clarity in the translation of the original Biblical manuscripts into English, and any other language, so that we may take the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

TNIV Advocates

Craig Blomberg, Ph.D., Professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary

John Kohlenberger, Bible scholar, author and editor of the *Exhaustive Concordance to the Greek New Testament*

Mark Strauss, Ph.D., Associate Professor of New Testament, Bethel Seminary San Diego, and Author of *Distorting Scripture? The Challenge of Bible Translation and Gender Accuracy*

Tremper Longman III, Ph.D., Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies, Westmont College

Gary Burge, Ph.D., Professor of New Testament, Wheaton College and Graduate School

Alan Johnson, Ph.D., Professor of New Testament and Ethics, Wheaton Graduate School

Dennis Okholm, Carolyn and Fred McManis Professor of Christian Thought, Wheaton Graduate School

Gilbert Bilezikian, Th.D., Professor of Biblical Studies, Wheaton College

Paul E. Koptak, Ph.D., Paul and Bernice Brandel Associate Professor of Communication and Biblical Interpretation, North Park Theological Seminary

Linda Belleville, Ph.D., Professor of Biblical Literature, North Park Theological Seminary

John Ortberg, Teaching Pastor, Willow Creek Community Church

Philip Yancey, Author of *The Jesus I Never Knew*

Robert C. Andringa, Ph.D., President, Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, Washington, D.C.

John Armstrong, D.Min., President, Reformation and Revival Ministries

Adam Hamilton, Senior Pastor, Church of the Resurrection

Ted Haggard, Pastor, New Life Church

John Stek, Chairman of the Committee on Bible Translation; part-time Professor of Old Testament, Calvin Theological Seminary

Donald H. Madvig, Ph.D., Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Bible Translation; retired pastor and Professor of Biblical Studies, Bethel Theological Seminary

Kenneth L. Barker, Ph.D., Secretary of the Committee on Bible Translation; Adjunct Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary

Gordon Fee, Ph.D., Committee on Bible Translation; Professor of New Testament Studies, Regent College

Richard T. France, Committee on Bible Translation; Parrish Minister (retired), England and Wales

Karen H. Jobes, Ph.D., Committee on Bible Translation; Professor of New Testament, Westmont College

Walter Liefeld, Ph.D., Committee on Bible Translation; Interim President, Tyndale Theological Seminary; Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Douglas Moo, Ph.D., Committee on Bible Translation; Blanchard Professor of New Testament and Ph.D. Coordinator in Biblical and Theological Studies, Wheaton Graduate School

Martin J. Selman, Ph.D., Committee on Bible Translation; Deputy Principle, Spurgeon's College

Bruce K. Waltke, Th.D. and Ph.D., Committee on Bible Translation; Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Studies, Regent College; Professor of Old Testament, Reformed Theological Seminary

Herbert M. Wolf, Ph.D., Committee on Bible Translation; Professor of Old Testament, Wheaton Graduate School

Ronald F. Youngblood, Ph.D., Committee on Bible Translation; Chairman of the Board of Directors, International Bible Society; Professor Emeritus of Old Testament and Hebrew, Bethel Seminary San Diego