

A Brief Review of the New International Version¹

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The Preface

The Preface of the NIV should be considered in order to gain an understanding of the perspective of the translation committee. Unfortunately, the church of Christ is listed among and referenced as a denomination. Anyone who has ever read Christ's prayer for unity in John 17:20-23 knows how disappointing it is to see the church for which He died presented as being what Anglican, Assemblies of God, Baptist, Brethren, Christian Reformed, Evangelical Free, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Nazarene, Presbyterian, and Wesleyan are—a denomination. The Word of God teaches, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). The NIV has errors in it.

The seventh paragraph of the Preface says, "The first concern of the translators has been the accuracy of the translation and its fidelity to the thought of the biblical writers. . . . They have striven for more than a word-for-word translation." If we are told the translators are placing emphasis on "the thought of the biblical writers" and were going for "more than a word-for-word translation," then we ought not to be surprised if that is just what they have done. Those who write about what the biblical writers thought based upon the words they used in the text are called commentators, not translators. Some of the doctrines crucial to the denominations listed in the Preface did make their way into the NIV, and herein lays one of the greatest dangers of the NIV. The commentators have placed their denominational views into the text. If the NIV is easier to read and understand than the KJV or ASV and contains errors, then the error is easily grasped and in many cases more readily accepted than a creed book, manual, book of discipline, catechism, or even erroneous commentary would be because it has been presented as if it were the Bible itself.

TRANSLATION/DOCTRINAL ERRORS

Time and space afford only a brief review of the NIV errors. The reader is invited to place the NIV alongside the KJV and/or ASV at the passages to be cited for comparison. In that way more information can be compressed into the next few lines of this article.

Psalm 51:5

The Calvinistic doctrine of "Original Sin" is taught in this verse in the NIV. At one time it read, "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." Now it reads, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." You wonder why any attempt was made to change the verse because each rendering teaches the same error.

Romans, Galatians, Colossians

Another Calvinistic doctrine known as "Total Depravity" emerges from the NIV in Romans 7:5, 18, 25; 8:3, 4, 8, 12, 13; Galatians 5:16, 19; and Colossians 2:11-13. The word "flesh" is replaced with the words "sinful nature."

Romans 1:17

The false doctrine of salvation by "Faith Only" is supported by the NIV in this verse where it says righteousness is "by faith from first to last." The KJV has "from to faith" which

points to the fact that the basis of faith, the inspired scriptures, must be brought into action within a person's life.

John 3:16

A key word in this beautiful and familiar text is "should." The ones who believe in Christ "should" not perish. A combination of the false doctrines of "Once Saved, Always Saved" and "Faith Only" are supported by the NIV for it says those who believe "shall" not perish.

Matthew 19:9

The allowable grounds for putting away a spouse mentioned here as the sexual sin of "fornication" is broadened to "marital unfaithfulness" by the NIV. "Marital unfaithfulness" would include but not be limited to "fornication" and is, therefore, inaccurate and inappropriate.

Mark 16:9-20

The denominations listed in the Preface have for many, many years objected to the teaching of the Lord on the essentiality of baptism in order to be saved as presented in Mark 16:16. Unable to evade the force of the passage, the NIV translators cast doubt on its inspiration by drawing a line after verse eight and then placing within brackets the following statement: "The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20." A statement like that could lead the reader to believe that these verses should never have been included in any translation and could cause the reader to wonder why, with so scant a textual representation, even the NIV translators went ahead to place the verses below their offensive statement.

The truth is that only two uncial codexes omit the verses, and one of them, the Alexandrinus Manuscript housed in the British Museum in London, leaves a space into which these twelve verses could fit as if the copyist knew of their existence but without having them before him left space for them. And, thousands of the cursive manuscripts include these verses.

1 Corinthians 2:14, 12:13, 13:10

The direct operation of the Holy Spirit as advocated by the Pentecostal groups and Calvinists is taught in the NIV at these locations. Instead of "the natural man" it has "the man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God." Therefore, the Holy Spirit must come upon man directly according to the NIV to make him accept things. The apostles taught that the Holy Spirit uses His word like a sword to influence men (Eph. 6:17). Instead of drinking "into one Spirit" or taking in the teaching of the Holy Spirit as the KJV reads, the NIV has this ridiculous statement: "We were all given the one Spirit to drink." "That which is perfect" refers to the completed revelation from God to man, the Bible (Jas. 1:25). The NIV changes the words to "perfection" thereby opening the way for teaching Premillennialism where a state of perfection for one thousand years is believed to be just on the horizon.

Conclusion

The NIV is preferred over the KJV and ASV by many who believe it is easier to read and understand. If that is true, then it would also make the many errors it contains easy to understand and believe. Any translation done by men may contain errors, but the KJV and ASV are preferred over the NIV.

¹When I served as the preacher for the Getwell Church of Christ in Memphis, Tennessee Burnell Matthews from Brunswick, Maine wrote, "Request any information about the NIV translation/doctrinal errors." This was my response to him.