

## COMMENDATION OF TNIV BY MARTIN H MANSER

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Reading the TNIV made me read the NIV text again very closely: what I thought had been changed sometimes hadn't been and then I came across some changes which I nearly missed. I particularly like the TNIV at Matthew 10:29 TNIV: "Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care"; NIV: "Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father"; 1 Corinthians 13:5 TNIV: "It [Love] does not dishonor others"; NIV: "It is not rude".

Quite a few of the section headings are new-and good! e.g. Hebrews 11:1 TNIV 'Faith in action'; is much stronger than the NIV 'By faith'. The relocating of new paragraphs is good, too, e.g. Ephesians 5:21 now comes after 'Instructions from Christian households (formerly before 'Wives and husbands', Ephesians 5:22). I am pleased to see that "clear minded" 2 Peter 1:14 NIV has been changed to 'of sober mind'; I was always uncertain what part of speech 'clear' was in this text; although *clearminded* or *clear-minded* would have made sense. I am also pleased to see that "stand up under" (1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV) has been changed to 'endure'; 'stand up under' was very cumbersome and awkward to say!

What has particularly aroused people's anger is the changes to the vocabulary, e.g. God being 'the Savior of all men' (1 Timothy 4:10; TNIV 'the Savior of all people')

Mark 7:11-12 TNIV: "But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help *their* father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)—then you no longer let them do anything for *their* father or mother." NIV: "But you say that if a *man* says to *his* father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let *him* do anything for his father or mother." (italics added)

Two points are worth making.

First, we expect dictionaries to err on the conservative side of language change. We may like *The Message* and the NLT, but for close study we tend to go back to the NIV, KJV, NKJV, or NRSV. We are armed with our Strong's or G/K (Goodrick/Kohlenberger) Concordances and are prepared not only to open up the thrust of Bible text when we preach but also to do battle in defending the minutiae of the text. We expect the language of the Bible to stay the same. When it doesn't, when the boundaries are pushed out, even a little, we feel upset - and threatened.

Second, alongside this, is the changing English language. It does not change that much, but there are subtle changes. Let us take the case in point, the use of *he* and *man*.

The best-selling British English *Concise Oxford Dictionary* had a usage note in the (9th) 1995 edition: "The use of *they* instead of 'he or she' ... is common in spoken English and increasingly so in written English, although still deplored by some people. It is particularly useful when the sex of the person is unspecified or unknown and the writer wishes to avoid the accusation of sexism that can arise from the use of *he*. Similarly, *their* can replace 'his' or 'his or her' and *themselves* 'himself' or 'himself or herself', e.g. *Everyone must provide their own lunch; Did anyone hurt themselves in the accident?'*"

The 1998 edition of the larger *New Oxford Dictionary of English* (NODE) noted at *they*: "The word **they** (with its counterparts *them*, *their*, and *themselves*) as a singular pronoun to refer to a person of unspecified sex has been used since at least the 16th century. In the late 20th century, as the traditional use of **he** to refer to a person of either sex came under scrutiny on the grounds of sexism, this use of **they** has become more common. It is now generally accepted in contexts where it follows an indefinite pronoun such as **anyone**, **no one**, **someone**, or **a person**, as in *anyone can join if they are a resident and each to their own*. In other contexts, coming after singular nouns, the use of **they** is now common, though less widely accepted, especially in formal contexts. Sentences such as *ask a friend if they could help* are still criticized for being ungrammatical. Nevertheless, in view of the growing acceptance of **they** and its obvious practical advantages, **they** is used in this dictionary in many cases where **he** would have been used formerly."

NODE has the following usage note at *man*: "Traditionally the word **man** has been used to refer not only to adult males but also to human beings in general, regardless of sex. There is a historical explanation for this: in Old English the principal sense of **man** was 'a human being', and the words **wer** and **wif** were used to refer specifically to 'a male person' and 'a female person' respectively. Subsequently, **man** replaced **wer** as the normal term for 'a male person', but at the same time the older sense 'a human being' remained in use. In the second half of the twentieth century the generic use of **man** to refer to 'human beings in general' (as in *reptiles were here long before man appeared on the earth*) became problematic; the use is now often regarded as sexist or at best old-fashioned. In some contexts, alternative terms such as **the human** race or **humankind** may be used. Fixed phrases and sayings such as *time and tide wait for no man* can be easily rephrased, e.g. *time and tide wait for nobody*. However, in other cases, particularly in compound forms, alternatives have not yet become established: there are no standard accepted alternatives for **manpower** or the verb **man**, for example."

So: especially in non-formal contexts, ie in everyday language (and we surely follow earlier Bible translators in wanting such language) then the use of *they* [or a similar word] (with a plural verb) is more acceptable than the use of *he* for instances of the generic sense of male and female. So e.g. Luke 14:27 TNIV: "And those who do not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciples" must surely be preferred to the NIV: "And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

Similarly, *man* has come to mean 'male human being' rather than simply 'human being' and I agree with Oxford that *man* in the sense of 'human being' is 'now often regarded as sexist or at best old-fashioned'. So, again, 1 Timothy 4:10 TNIV: "the living God, who is the Savior of all people" is surely better in contemporary English than NIV: "the living God, who is the Savior of all men."

In short, I commend the TNIV. It makes the unchanging truths of God's word even more accessible to contemporary readers. It makes a good translation even better.

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Compiler and editor of over 100 reference titles. Bible reference and English-language reference titles include *Dictionary of Bible Themes* (Zondervan); *Thematic Reference Bible* (Zondervan); *I never knew that was in the Bible* (King James Bible Word Book) (Nelson); *Biblical Quotations: A Reference Guide* (Facts On File); *English Thesaurus* (Chambers); *World Almanac Guide to Good Word Usage* (Pharos); *Good Word Guide* (Bloomsbury), and *Writer's Manual* (Penguin).

