

AN ANALYSIS OF THE NEW LIVING TRANSLATION NEW TESTAMENT  
AS A TEST CASE IN FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE

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## List of Abbreviations

- ASV.....Holy Bible: American Standard Version
- BAGD.....Bauer, et al. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
- FE.....Functional Equivalence
- FHV.....Freed-Hardeman Version, a.k.a. McCord's New Testament Translation
- GNT.....United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament 4<sup>th</sup> Revised Edition, 1994
- KJV.....King James Version
- LB.....The Living Bible Paraphrased
- NASB.....Holy Bible: New American Standard
- NEB.....New English Bible
- NIV.....Holy Bible: New International Version
- NLT.....Holy Bible: New Living Translation
- NRSV.....Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version
- NT.....New Testament
- TEV.....Holy Bible: Today's English Version, a.k.a. Good News Bible

## Introduction

For the Christian, nothing can be more important than having the Bible available in his own language. For many decades, the English-speaking world relied upon the King James Version. New discoveries and changes in the English language, however, led people to begin demanding new translations. This demand produced the Revised Version of 1881 and its Yankee cousin, the American Standard Version of 1901.

Rather than replacing the KJV, these translations actually initiated what has become an explosion of English Bible translations in the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Besides advances in textual criticism and new insights into New Testament Greek, one of the primary reasons behind this surge is the development of a fundamentally different approach to Bible translating.

With Eugene Nida as their best-known spokesperson, a great many of the world's Bible translators have given up on the traditional word-for-word approach to translation (known as formal correspondence), and have embraced what is known as dynamic equivalence (or functional equivalence). In this new paradigm, focus is shifted away from reproducing the *form* of the text. Instead, the focus is now on the meaning of the text and the response of the modern readers. The ultimate goal of functional equivalence is to translate the text into the common language of the modern reader in such a way that it can be clearly understood. To achieve this goal, the translator must frequently abandon the structure, word order, figures of speech, and grammatical forms of the original in exchange for the closest natural equivalent in the receptor language.

Although functional equivalence is now almost universally accepted, and even taken for granted, among translators, the approach nevertheless raises many questions. In dealing with God's Word, does the translator have the right to do away with the grammatical structure of the

original? Does not the inspiration of the Bible extend to the level of the words themselves (1Cor 2.13)? Are not these words and grammatical structures chosen by the Holy Spirit himself? Does this new approach not give the translator too much of an opportunity to insert his own interpretations and opinions into the text?

These questions have been discussed in numerous forums over the past few decades, but recently, a new opportunity for re-evaluation arose in conjunction with a significant event in the history of the English Bible. On August 15, 1996, the world was given the New Living Translation (henceforth referred to as the NLT). As of August 1998, over three million copies had been sold.<sup>2</sup> The release of the NLT provides an excellent opportunity to critique the functional equivalence (FE) translation philosophy which guided its production. This is due to its outstanding credentials. Prepared over a seven-year period by ninety respected conservative Bible scholars, the NLT was the most expensive single translation project in history.<sup>3</sup> Its pedigree makes the NLT well-qualified to serve as a test-case in evaluating the FE philosophy itself. If the NLT is seen to be fundamentally flawed, this would reflect poorly on the underlying translation philosophy.

The NLT actually began as an attempt to revise the Living Bible, Kenneth Taylor's paraphrase, which was released in its complete form in 1971. Taylor worked from the ASV (not the Hebrew and Greek) and rephrased it in his own words (Lewis, *English* 241). His effort was an incredible commercial success. There are over 40 million copies of the Living Bible in print (Tyndale House Publishers xxxix). The incredible popularity of the LB testifies to the masses of people who hunger for a Bible that can be easily read and understood.

Despite its popularity, the Living Bible has been harshly criticized.<sup>4</sup> As Jack Lewis observes, "scholarly notices of [Taylor's] paraphrase have almost without exception been

unfavorable” (*English* 246).<sup>5</sup> Lewis himself concludes that the LB

. . . is not sufficiently reliable to be useful for serious study by any person who is concerned over the details of what the Word of God says either in historical matters or in doctrinal matters. . . . The person who is unable to make detailed comparison of the paraphrases with the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek statements can never be certain that he is not being misled. (*English* 260)

It must be noted, however, that the LB was never intended to be a study Bible. It claims to be nothing more than a paraphrase, a work which restates “in simplified but related ways the ideas conveyed in the original language. . . . The paraphrase expands or abbreviates where it seems advantageous in order to make the meaning clear to the modern reader,” thus acting like a brief commentary (Lewis, *English* 239). As a paraphrase, the Living Bible has been a great success. It did what it was intended to do. It made the Word of God accessible to those who lacked the reading skills to interpret traditional versions like the KJV and ASV.

It was an awareness of the LB’s technical problems and its popular appeal that led Tyndale House Publishers to commission 90 scholars in 1989 to produce a revision of the LB. The end result, as the advertisements claim, is a translation which “successfully combines for the first time all the accuracy and authority of the King James Version with the warmth and readability of The Living Bible” (“New Living Translation” 1). As Joe M. Sprinkle compares the two works, he concludes that

The NLT is clearly an improvement over the LB. Taylor’s text did serve as the basis of revision, and much of the wording remains unchanged. Taylor himself was on the committee as a “special reviewer.” Nonetheless, the revisers have made changes in virtually every verse. . . . The vast majority of these changes

have only served to improve the work . . . the NLT, unlike the LB, cannot be dismissed as completely lacking in scholarly merit and accuracy. It is instead a serious and legitimate translation worthy of consulting alongside others in our attempt to ascertain the meaning of the text. (455, 458)

This paper will not attempt to compare the NLT with the LB.<sup>6</sup> That the NLT is far different from the LB and that it is an improvement over the LB is not a matter of dispute,<sup>7</sup> and thus does not warrant extended treatment. Instead, the NLT will be evaluated as an independent translation in its own right.

The purpose of this study is to provide a thorough and fair evaluation of the New Living Translation in regard to its underlying translation philosophy, functional equivalence. The basic question to be answered is: Is the NLT an accurate and clear English translation of the New Testament? And the answer to this question will reflect upon the question: Is functional equivalence a valid approach to the translation of Scripture? This study is structured around the following subproblems:

1. What is the difference between formal correspondence and functional equivalence?
2. What are the principles behind functional equivalence?
3. What are some criticisms offered against functional equivalence?
4. Is the NLT an accurate and effective translation?
5. Is the NLT a theologically biased translation?

It is the underlying assumption of this paper that accuracy in translation is to be judged on the basis of how well the translation clearly conveys what the original author intended to say. The biblical authors were inspired men attempting to communicate a message from God. This

divine message was meant to be understood. A translation fails if the message is distorted by the translator's interpretation, or if the translation is worded so awkwardly that it becomes misleading or unintelligible. It is also assumed that the "zero milepost" for evaluating Bible translations is the original Greek and Hebrew, and not tradition or any previous translation. The scope of this study will be limited to the New Testament, for the sake of brevity, and because the author possesses a much higher level of expertise in Greek than in Hebrew.

It is appropriate to begin this study with some words of wisdom from the translators of the 1611 KJV:

It is necessary to have translations in a readiness. Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the Holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, that we may come by the water, even as Jacob rolled away the stone from the mouth of the well, by which means the flocks of Laban were watered [Gen 29.10]. Indeed without translation into the vulgar tongue, the unlearned are but like children at Jacob's well (which is deep) [John 4.11] without a bucket or something to draw with; or as that person mentioned by Isaiah, to whom when a sealed book was delivered, with this motion, "Read this, I pray thee," he was fain to make this answer, "I cannot, for it is sealed" [Isa 29.11]. ("Translators" 4-5)

## Chapter 1

### The Translation Philosophy of the NLT

#### Formal Correspondence vs. Functional Equivalence

“But how shall men meditate in that, which they cannot understand? How shall they understand that which is kept closed in an unknown tongue? As it is written, “Except that I know the power of the voice, I shall be to him that speaketh, a Barbarian, and he that speaketh, shall be a Barbarian to me” [1 Cor. 14.11] (“Translators”).

In Acts 8:30-31, when Philip met the Ethiopian, he asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The man replied, “How can I, unless someone explains it to me?” When it came to the subject matter, the Ethiopian needed some help, and preachers like Philip will always be necessary. Unfortunately, when many modern readers approach the Bible, their difficulty is not just with the subject matter, but with the language itself. In 1996, Tyndale House Publishers commissioned a national survey on Bible reading habits.<sup>8</sup> The survey found that:

Although nine out of 10 Americans own a Bible, fewer than half actually read it. And many of those who read the Bible find it difficult to understand. Lack of comprehension was the number one frustration associated with Bible reading . . . The survey found that the top reasons cited for not reading the Bible are “not enough time” (59 percent), “too hard to understand” (40 percent), and a feeling that the Bible is irrelevant (36 percent). Common frustrations associated with Bible reading include “hard to understand” (54 percent), “hard to relate to my life today” (34 percent) . . . 46 percent would be more likely [to read the Bible] if it were written “in a language which was easier to understand.” (“Americans”1-2)

Many of these barriers to understanding are enhanced, if not caused by, archaisms and

obscurities in the traditional English translations.<sup>9</sup> Many translators have failed to follow the lead of the Levites in Nehemiah 8.8, who “read from the book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read” (NIV). It is clear from the Scriptures themselves that they were written to be understood. In Ephesians 3.4, Paul writes, “In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ.” Although the Christian system is a mystery (μυστήριον) to the uninitiated, those who “seek” are supposed to be able to “find.” Of course, some aspects of the revelation will always be hard to grasp. As Raymond Dillard notes, “Peter found Paul difficult (2 Pet. 3.15-16), but surely it was not Paul’s *grammar* or *language* that Peter found difficult, but rather it was what he had said” (114). And Jack Lewis observes, “Paul tells us, “Every Scripture . . . is profitable . . .” (2 Tim. 3.16); but it is profitable only when correctly understood by the reader” (*Questions* 280).

So the question then is, what is the best way to make the Word plain to the modern reader while still respecting the authority and inspiration of the biblical text? How should the Bible be translated so it can be understood and appreciated by Christians and non-Christians alike?

Traditionally, Bible translators have followed the course of “formal correspondence.” They attempted to render the Bible as literally as possible, while still using intelligible English. “A translation that emphasizes formal correspondence is one that is oriented primarily toward the source message, or the message in its original form, and tries to preserve as much as possible of its grammatical form, sentence and clause structure, and consistency of word usage in terms of the source language” (Wonderly, “Crib” 8).

But there are serious problems with formal correspondence stemming from the fact that no two languages work the same way. As Eugene Nida and Charles Taber explain the problem, “(1) each language covers all of experience with a set of verbal symbols, i.e., words to designate

various features of experience,” but, “(2) each language is different from all other languages in the ways in which the sets of verbal symbols classify the various elements of experience” (19).

To further clarify this point, Barclay Newman lists the following language barriers which make strict formal correspondence undesirable:

- (1) No single word in any one language overlaps completely in its meaning with any word in another language.
- (2) The sentence structure of one language differs from that of another language.
- (3) Technical terms in one language cannot always be maintained in a second language with the same effectiveness.
- (4) A noun in one language cannot always be translated as a noun in another language, and likewise with other parts of speech.
- (5) Idioms and figures of speech frequently must be changed when being translated from one language into another. Even the most literal translations do not employ the Hebrew idiom of Gen. 29.1: “Jacob lifted up his feet and went” (DeWaard and Nida 37).
- (6) Pronouns in the source language must often be rendered as nouns in the receptor language in order to make clear who they refer to (202-03).

For these reasons, it is advisable to follow the example of Jerome, who said that he translated “sense for sense and not word for word” (Nida, *Toward* 13).

With the Bible, this language barrier is even further compounded by the vast cultural differences between the modern reader and the original authors/audience and the 1900+ years of human history which has taken place since the Scriptures were first penned. Furthermore, the

highly-educated Bible translator might tend to use language which, though intelligible to him, is quite different from common everyday English. He will have a more advanced vocabulary than the average reader, and will tend to incorporate grammatical structures and idioms from the Hebrew and Greek which make perfect sense to him but create serious barriers for the everyday Bible student. To give an example of an overly literal translation, consider 2 Corinthians 6.11-13 in the KJV: “O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straightened in us, ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.” This is a very unfortunate rendering, for it makes practically no sense in modern English. In fact, a literal reading of it creates a very absurd picture. Consider, instead, how the passage is treated in the NIV: “We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange – I speak as to my children – open wide your hearts also.”

Here, the NIV explains the idioms and metaphors while still reflecting the basic structure of the original. First, the idiom, “our mouths are open to you,” is changed into the straightforward, “we have spoken freely.” The foreign-sounding “enlarged” heart is changed to the idiomatic expression of the “open” heart. Both of the adjectives, “enlarged” and “open,” are converted into their cognate verbs. The obscure term “straitened” is changed to the more familiar “withholding.” The metaphorical “bowels” (a reference to the body part the Greeks identified as the seat of emotion) is explained as “affection.” The obscure “like recompense” becomes the more familiar “fair exchange.” Although “be enlarged” made sense to Paul’s original readers, in modern English it suggests that the Corinthians need to put on a little weight. Thus, the NIV returns to the idiom of the open heart. Although the KJV is the more literal of these two

translations, the NIV is certainly more accurate.

Barriers to understanding, such as the ones observed above, are what led translators to look to the field of linguistics to see how they could communicate the Word of God in the clearest, most precise way. The results of this quest have become the fundamental principles behind functional equivalence<sup>10</sup> (FE).

#### Basic Principles Behind Functional Equivalence

In contrast to formal correspondence, functional equivalence “is oriented chiefly toward the response of the receptors, and thus focuses upon achieving the closest natural way to communicate the same idea in the contemporary language” (Wonderly, “Crib” 8). The aim is to communicate the meaning, and not necessarily the form of the message. “Correctness must be determined by the extent to which the average reader for which a translation is intended will be likely to understand it correctly. . . we are not content merely to translate so that the average receptor is likely to understand the message; rather we aim to make certain that such a person is very unlikely to misunderstand it” (Nida and Taber 1). Thus, in this approach, the focus is no longer on the source documents and the form of the message, but rather the focus is shifted to the readers. Will they understand the message? How will they react to it? In order to ensure that the message is understood, certain factors are given priority. They are discussed below, as presented in Nida and Taber 14-32.

#### The Priority of Contextual Consistency Over Verbal Consistency (or Word-for Word Concordance)

Some believe that a single Greek or Hebrew word in the original should be translated with the same English word every time. Although such an approach might be an aid for proof-texting and word studies by people not skilled in the original languages, there are several factors

which make this approach not only impractical, but downright inaccurate. It might be timely to observe that even the KJV translators advised against “identity of phrasing:” “we have not tied ourselves to an uniformity of phrasing, or to an identity of words, as some peradventure would wish that we had done. . . . Thus to mince the matter, we thought to savour more of curiosity than wisdom” (“Translators”).

As Nida and Taber express it, “words cover areas of meaning and are not mere points of meaning” (*Theory* 15). Every word may have a variety of definitions as well as connotations.<sup>11</sup> The exact meaning of a word can only be derived by observing its context.<sup>12</sup> It is for this reason that a word such as σάρξ is rendered by as many as 49 different terms in the NIV. In some contexts, σάρξ refers to the literal flesh of an animal (e.g., 1 Cor. 15.39), or by synecdoche to the body as a whole (e.g., 1 Pet. 4.1). In other contexts, it is highly metaphorical, referring to the darker side of human nature (e.g., Rom. 8.5-12), or to racial identity (Rom. 11.14), one’s physical presence (Col. 2.5), and so on. To use the English word “flesh” in all of these different contexts would be unnatural, and, in many cases, misleading. In fact, “flesh” would be a very poor translation of the word in texts such as Romans 8.3; 11.14; Acts 2.17; 1 Corinthians 1.26; and 2 Corinthians 10.3.<sup>13</sup> Although there is some semantic overlap between the Greek σάρξ and the English “flesh,” the two terms do not have identical fields of meaning.

For this reason, FE makes no attempt to render Greek words consistently when the context suggests that different meanings are involved. As the KJV translators said, “there be some words that be not the same sense everywhere” (“Translators”).

### The Priority of Dynamic Equivalence over Formal Correspondence

This priority is based on one factor: intelligibility of translation. FE looks at the translation process in terms of the receptors rather than the verbal forms involved. If retaining

the source document's grammatical structure, word order, idioms, or figures of speech creates a barrier to understanding, then these forms must be changed to suit the receptor language. As John Beekman and John Callow assert, form is to be subservient to meaning. The grammar, vocabulary, and idioms of a language are merely "vehicles," the means by which meaning is conveyed (346).

Suppose a road is used to represent one language and a canal a different one. A car is needed to convey passengers by road; to convey the same passengers by water a different vehicle is needed, namely, a boat of some sort. The same is true with conveying meaning. One language will use a certain form to carry the meaning; a different language will use a different form, even though it is the same meaning that is being transmitted. (25)

Too often, literal translations attempt to put the car in the canal, and the true meaning of the passage ends up getting sunk, or at least muddied up.<sup>14</sup>

But even beyond the level of clear communication of facts, Nida and Taber recommend that intelligibility is to be measured not only by "whether the words are understandable and the sentences grammatically constructed, but in terms of the total impact the message has on the one who receives it" (22). In other words, "a translation of the Bible must not only provide information which people can understand but must present the message in such a way that people can feel its relevance (the expressive element in communication) and can then respond to it in action (the imperative function)" (24).<sup>15</sup>

There are three functions of language, and each must be addressed in a translation. The first is the informative function, which demands that a translation be thoroughly understandable, with the fewest possible ambiguities. The second is the expressive function, which goes beyond

the mere transfer of information to include communication's emotional qualities. Parts of the Bible were meant to be moving. Poetry in translation should still read like poetry, sermons should not be stripped of their rhetorical power, etc. The third function of language is the imperative function, wherein people are challenged to *do* something. Biblical imperatives should be made clear enough so that they can be applied in the present-day context.

Formal correspondence often fails on all three points. Information is obscured when foreign idioms are retained, when grammatical structures from the source language are carried over into the receptor language, when obscure or archaic words are used, and so on. The expressive element of the Scriptures are obscured when a biblical writer's impassioned pleas are reduced to dull, monotonous language, when irony and humor are obscured, and so on. The imperative function is lost when a passage is not sufficiently clear to be applicable to today's reader.

#### The Priority of the Heard Language over the Written Language

Paying attention to how a translation sounds when read out loud is particularly important, considering that the Bible is more often heard than read, be it in a sermon, liturgy, on a cassette tape, or on the radio or television. In a written text, one can use capitalization (such as in distinguishing "spirit" from "Spirit") and punctuation to remove ambiguities, and the use of homophones is not a problem. But although a text may be perfectly understandable when read, this does not mean that it will not be misunderstood when read aloud. For example,

[I]n the Revised Standard Version 1 Chronicles 25:1 has the phrase, "prophesy with lyres," which most listeners would interpret as "prophesy with liars," since the use of lyres in prophesying is rare in present-day cultures, but liars who prophesy are in abundant supply. In another English translation, an early draft had

a statement, “lead us back to the land, Lord,” which in graphic form is perfectly clear, but in oral form would certainly be understood to mean “lead us back to the landlord.” (DeWaard and Nida 16)

Giving priority to the heard language is advantageous because “one can always be certain that if it can be understood by the average hearer it is more likely to be fully intelligible when it is read silently” (Nida and Taber 31).<sup>16</sup>

### The Priority of the Needs of the Audience over the Forms of Language

As Norm Mundhenk observes, “In the final analysis, a translation is good or bad, right or wrong, in terms of how the reader understands and reacts” (qtd. in Carson, “Limits” 5). In order to ensure proper understanding of the message, the following principles are used:

Non-Christians have priority over Christians. That is to say, the Scriptures must be intelligible to non-Christians, and if they are, they will also be intelligible to Christians. Not only is this principle important in making the translation of the Bible effective as an instrument of evangelism, but it is also necessary if the language of the church is to be kept from becoming an esoteric dialect. (Nida and Taber 31-32)

Also, the rapid changes in many languages necessitate that the translator use the language of persons 25-30 years old. While the language of children and teenagers lacks status, the use of language by older people is often becoming obsolescent (Nida and Taber 32).

The needs of the receptors demand that a translation should be an *idiomatic* translation. The New Testament was not written in classical Greek, but in *koine*. It was not written in literary language, but in the everyday Greek of the common person. If God’s original revelation was written in contemporary idiomatic language, then it should remain in such a language. The

hybrid “translationese” of literal versions such as the ASV, KJV, and NASB does not do justice to the style and color of the original. It is an idiomatic approach to translation which “reduces ambiguity and obscurity to a minimum, that makes use of the discourse and stylistic features of the receptor language in a natural way, and that results in a translation that is clear and understandable so that even someone who has had little or no contact with Christianity is able to understand the essentials of the message” (Beekman and Callow 25). “A good modern (English) translation, then, will read in such a way as to appear that it had been produced in English by an American (or Briton) writing at the time the original was written, reflecting the total context of the original work, but in language and terms intelligible in our time” (Bratcher “Art” 88). Robert Bratcher quotes Hilaire Belloc as saying that translation is “the resurrection of an alien thing in a native body; not the dressing of it up in native clothes, but the giving to it of native flesh and blood” (“Translating” 290).<sup>17</sup>

An idiomatic translation is obtained by means of *indirect transfer*. Instead of transposing the text, as in formal correspondence, the translator practices “decomposition,” and then “recomposition” (or analysis-plus-restructuring) (Wonderly, “Crib” 9)<sup>18</sup>. The text is broken down into kernel sentences, which are then restructured into an acceptable idiomatic rendering in the receptor language.<sup>19</sup>

The needs of the receptors also demand that the Scriptures be translated into *common language*. Common language is that part of a literary language<sup>20</sup> (such as English) where there is overlap between the speech of the educated and the speech of the uneducated. Common language avoids the erudite vocabulary, literary elaborations, and such like, which are not accessible to the uneducated, while also avoiding the slang, vulgar speech, and “incorrect” usages which are not acceptable to the educated (Wonderly, “Some” 126-27).<sup>21</sup>

These are the principles of functional equivalence which underlie the New Living Translation. Before entering into an analysis of the NLT itself, however, it would be appropriate to notice a few of the criticisms leveled against FE.

### Criticisms Against Functional Equivalence

Although, as D. A. Carson observes, “As far as those who struggle with biblical translation are concerned, dynamic equivalence has won the day -- and rightly so” (“Limits” 1), not everyone agrees that Functional Equivalence is a legitimate approach to Bible translation. KJV advocate David W. Cloud, for example, says that “the modern dynamic equivalency method of translation is evil” (6). For the purposes of this study, the various objections to FE will be grouped according to four broad categories. These are based on (1) inspiration, (2) linguistics, (3) the idea that the Bible was meant to be esoteric, and (4) the danger of unduly free translation.

#### Criticisms Based on the Doctrine of Inspiration

The basic objection to functional equivalence is that it shows a lack of respect for the inspiration of the Bible. To many, the doctrine of verbal inspiration necessitates that the Scriptures be translated in a word-for-word manner. As Foy Wallace bluntly puts it, “Accuracy of translation is word-by-word transplantation” (310). This is elaborated in his quotation from R. C. Trench: “The conscientious task is to take the actual word of the original and to transplant it unchanged, in the trust that any strangeness will disappear by time and use, and its meaning acquired by even the unlearned or unlettered reader” (F. Wallace 44). Thus, he suggests that the translator should be as literal as possible, and then wait until the receptor language changes to fit the translation. This is highly unrealistic and represents an extreme position.

F. Wallace furthermore states, “we should educate the people up to the Bible rather than

rewrite the Bible down to the people, and to thus preserve its inspired essence and integrity” (47). This view seems to imply that every person who reads the Bible should be expected to learn the nuances of foreign grammatical structures, as well as foreign idioms and metaphors. But God did not expect the original readers of the Bible to perform such a bizarre task. They did not need a special education in order to understand God’s word. He gave it to them in their common everyday language. Should not a translation then be written in the everyday language of the common folk?

In reply to this doctrine, Don Jackson states, “A translation which best represents the *meaning* of the words, idioms, and grammatical structures of the original is faithful to the doctrine of verbal inspiration. These forms were chosen by the Holy Spirit because of the meaning they conveyed. If a translation obscures that meaning, it cannot be called a faithful translation” (48, emphasis mine – BH).

Yes, the Holy Spirit did guide the biblical authors in the choices of the very words they used (1 Cor. 2.10-13), but these words were vehicles of meaning. The revelation is found not necessarily in the words, but in the ideas, in the meanings represented by those words. It is in this way that a translation of the Scriptures can still be called the Word of God, for the meaning expressed by the words is the same, whether they be Greek, English, Russian, or Chinese. The conclusion then is that this is not a valid objection. Belief in verbal inspiration does not necessitate a strict literal translation.

Furthermore, those who insist on strict literalism might be asking for more than they bargained for. Consider Milton Fisher’s “word-by-word transplantation” of Genesis 33.14, in which, after meeting Esau, Jacob proposes, “As for me, let me lead my gentleness to the foot of the business which is to my face and to the foot of the children that I shall come to my lord to

Seir” (31).<sup>22</sup>

The word-for-word approach also fails to take into account the way in which the Bible itself handles translation. In Nehemiah 8.8, when the Levites translated the law from Hebrew into Aramaic, it says they gave “the sense” rather than translating word-for-word. When Hebrews 2.7 quotes Psalm 8.5, it changes “you have made man a little lower than God (אֱלֹהִים)” to “you have made man a little (while) lower than the angels (ἁγγέλους).”<sup>23</sup>

Mark 5:41 records that Jesus “said to her, ‘Talitha koum’ (which translated means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise!’).” It is of great significance in this passage that the Aramaic “Talitha koum” would, if translated literally into Greek, be “Little girl, arise.” But what is only implied in the Aramaic has been made explicit (i.e., added) in the Greek: “I say to you.” The inspired biblical author translated for meaning and not just word for word. (Gardner 18)

### Criticisms Based on Linguistics

Not all objections to FE are based on tradition or theology. There are also controversies dealing with the relationship between form and meaning. As J. P. M. Walsh states the problem, Dynamic equivalence proceeds from the conviction that meaning is (to whatever extent) separate from form, and that dissociation of meaning and form is not only permissible but necessary in order for the translation to serve its function – to communicate to the intended reader. . . . Where do I differ? To put the matter strongly: (1) the “meaning” of a text cannot be dissociated from its form. . . . Biblical texts exhibit the richness and multivalence of poetry. They have many meanings at once. There is no unequivocal “meaning” that can be extracted from the words and images. (506-07)

In practical terms, this means that “the best way is to show what the storytellers and poets wanted their audience to see: to be as concrete and specific as possible. If the text speaks of God exalting or lifting up David’s “horn,” then show that, even if one is aware that the “meaning” is that God will make David victorious over his foes” (507).

The problem with Walsh’s criticism here is that the original readers of the OT knew what it meant for God to exalt David’s “horn;” the modern reader does not. A translation should not have to be translated. Meaning should not be sacrificed for the sake of form. As Erasmus said, “Language consists of two parts, namely words and meaning, which are like body and soul. If both of them can be rendered, I do not object to word-for-word translation. If they cannot, it would be preposterous for a translator to keep the words and to deviate from the meaning” (qtd. in Bratcher, “Art” 85-87).

In situations such as the one raised by Walsh, there is a compromise which can be made. If the “horn” is retained in the text, it can be explained in the text: “lifting up his horn *in victory*.” This is nothing more than simply making explicit what is already implicit in the text -- a common practice of translators of all persuasions.

#### Criticisms Based on the Intentionally Esoteric Nature of Scripture

Another criticism is that the translators, in trying to make the text as easy to understand as possible, are assuming what is properly the role of the teacher. Fisher raises a point worthy of consideration when he contends that the Bible was not meant to be understood by absolutely everyone:

God’s written revelation was not directed to or primarily intended for the general mass of unregenerate humanity, for just anybody and everybody. It was directed to a select group within humanity. . . . The Bible is recognized to be a *covenant*

*document*. . . . The persons addressed in this encoded revelation are those who are chosen or elected, called out and initiated as a covenant community. While this verbal formulation is understandable to those “in the know,” as we say, many things therein always have and always will mystify the outsider. Our Lord declared this with regard to His own teaching in parables (see Matt. 13.13; Mark 4.11; Luke 8.10). (20-21)

He furthermore remarks, “We must realize that the Bible, that collection of sixty-six remarkable Books, was not intended by God to serve as a gospel tract to be left on a street corner as an irresistible eye-opener. . . . The soul turning to the Lord through private reading of the Bible is the marvelous exception rather than the rule” (22). In addition, Walsh advises,

Translators should be ready to assume that readers are capable of dealing with the text on its own terms – and that a “deacon” [a reference to Philip in Acts 8.30ff.] will make that possible, one who can mediate between those different cultures and worlds of experience. The translation itself is not the place for this mediation. A translator should not take it upon himself to choose one “meaning” and convey it in terms purportedly accessible to readers from another culture. (508)

Noel Weeks likewise says, “If the unbeliever is unable to understand the Bible as easily as his pulp novel, the cause is not lost” (106). In other words, it is not the job of the translator to decide issues of interpretation, nor is it necessarily his job to make the Bible as easy-to-understand as possible. The role of explanation and interpretation should be left to the teacher.

In response to this criticism, Beekman and Callow say,

An idiomatic translation makes it easier for the teacher to expound the Scriptures on the basis of the text before him. . . . There is a very real danger if the teacher is

constantly having to correct the translation . . . then the believers will tend to assume that *only* those who have the gifts of training of a teacher can understand the Word of God. They will gradually abandon their privilege of doing as the “noble” Bereans did, who “searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). But the conclusion to depend on the teacher to make the Word understandable defeats the very purpose of translation which is that everyone should have direct access to God’s word in his own language. (349)

#### Criticisms Based on the Danger of Unduly Free Paraphrase

In the minds of many, once the form of the original documents is abandoned, this opens the floodgates for all kinds of personal doctrines, opinions, and interpretations to be inserted into the text. Indeed, unduly free paraphrases found in the original Living Bible and others like it only serve to confirm such fears. And these fears are not unwarranted. The enhanced need for a responsible, unbiased approach to translating under the FE approach has led its proponents to recommend that all such translations should be done by committees rather than individuals (e.g., Nida and Taber 174ff; DeWaard and Nida 191).

Functional Equivalence translations are often charged with being “interpretations, not translations.” But it should be kept in mind that “All translators somehow interpret the Bible. The so-called objective, scientific translation does not exist. We all have to recognize that the moment we try to understand what the author wanted to say, we begin to interpret the message” (qtd. in Fueter 344).

FE translations are also frequently reviled as “paraphrases.” Yet all translations paraphrase to some degree. The aforementioned language barriers make it impossible to avoid. As Nida says, “there are legitimate and illegitimate paraphrases.” Thinking about translations in

terms of the number of corresponding words “is practically useless. It really should make no difference to us whether a translation of a term in Greek consists of one or five words.. Our objective must be in finding the closest equivalence in meaning” (“Translation” 105).

Beekman and Callow present the following helpful chart displaying the different types of translations on page 21 of their book.

<b>UNACCEPTABLE TYPES</b>			
<b>ACCEPTABLE TYPES</b>			
<b>HIGHLY LITERAL</b>	<b>MODIFIED LITERAL</b>	<b>IDIOMATIC</b>	<b>UNDULY FREE</b>

A “highly literal” translation is one which “reproduces the linguistic features of the original language with high consistency. The result is a translation which does not adequately communicate the message to a reader who does not know the original language” (Beekman and Callow 21).<sup>24</sup> Interlinear translations, the KJV, and the 1901 ASV are examples of this approach. Equally unacceptable is the “unduly free” translation, which contains “distortions of content, with the translation clearly saying what the original neither says nor implies” (23). The Living Bible is a prime example. The “modified literal” translation is produced when the translator strives to be as literal as possible, yet does make corrections when he perceives that the translation is communicating error. “The resultant translation contains unnecessary ambiguities and obscurities and will be unnatural in style and difficult to comprehend” (24). Such a translation can still be useful for those who have access to reference works and a high motivation to study. The NRSV and NKJV are examples of “modified literal” translations. In an “idiomatic” translation, “the translator seeks to convey to the receptor language readers the

meaning of the original by using the natural grammatical and lexical forms of the receptor language” (24). This approach is now generally understood to be the best. The NIV is a well-known example of idiomatic translation.

The question now is: Is the New Living Translation an effective idiomatic translation, or is it unduly free, and thus an unacceptable translation? The remainder of this study will be devoted to answering that question.

## Chapter 2

### The Accuracy of the NLT

If the scholarship of the last century has taught us anything about translation, it is that literalness is not always equivalent to accuracy. In order for a translation to be accurate, it must clearly communicate the *meaning* of the source document with as little interference as possible from obscure expressions, ambiguities, and idioms and grammatical structures carried over from the source language. An accurate translation will be written in accordance with the common vocabulary, grammar, and style of the receptor language, and it will not ignore the expressive and imperative functions of language (the emotive qualities). In this chapter, the accuracy of the NLT will be studied in relation to the translation of certain words, grammatical constructions, idioms and figures of speech, and gender accuracy.

#### Translation of Theological or Controversial Words

This section will note and analyze the NLT's treatment of certain New Testament words which are considered "theological" in nature, or which have been controversial in the renderings done by other modern translations. Under the heading "Lexical Consistency in Terminology," the introduction to the NLT states:

For the sake of clarity, we have maintained lexical consistency in areas such as divine names, synoptic passages, rhetorical structures, and non-theological terms (i.e., liturgical, cultic, zoological, botanical, cultural, and legal terms). For theological terms, we have allowed a greater semantic range of acceptable English words or phrases for a single Hebrew or Greek word. We avoided weighty theological terms that do not really communicate to many modern readers. For example, we avoided using words such as "justification," "sanctification," and

“regeneration.” In place of these words (which are carryovers from Latin), we provided renderings such as “we are made right with God,” “we are made holy,” and “we are born anew.” (Bible Translation Committee xlv)

Despite this statement, the translators did not completely rid the NLT of “weighty theological terms.” For example, one still finds “atonement” (Heb. 9.5), “reconciling” (2 Cor. 5.8, 19-20), and “redemption” (Eph. 4.30), as well as “righteous” and “righteousness” many times.

A single word may be translated in a wide variety of ways in the NLT. For example, consider the word καταλλαγή, which appears four times in the Greek New Testament (GNT).

		<u>NLT</u>	<u>KJV</u>	<u>NIV</u>
Romans	5.11	making us friends of God	atonement	reconciliation
	11.5	God offered salvation	reconciling	reconciliation
2 Corinthians	5.18	reconciling people to him	reconciliation	reconciliation
	5.19	the wonderful message	reconciliation	reconciliation

Another illustration of the NLT’s variety in renderings is its treatment of δικαιόω in the book of Romans.

<u>Romans</u>	<u>NLT</u>	<u>KJV</u>	<u>NIV</u>
2.13	declared right in God’s sight	justified	declared righteous
3.4	proved right	justified	proved right
3.20	made right in God’s sight	justified	declared righteous
3.24	declares us not guilty	justified	justified
3.26	declares sinners to be right in his sight	justifier	justifies
3.28	made us right with God	justified	justified
3.30	makes people right with himself	justify	justify

4.2	God accepted him	justified	justified
4.5	declared righteous	justifieth	justifies
5.1	made right in God's sight	justified	justified
5.9	made right in God's sight	justified	justified
6.7	set free	freed	freed
8.30	gave them right standing with himself <sup>25</sup>	justified	justified
8.33	has given us right standing with himself	justifieth	justifies

The NLT provides the superior rendering in almost all of these passages. The reason that the term “justify” is an inadequate translation of *dikaoo* is that the modern term does not imply a change in relationship, or an acquittal (which is the usual meaning of the NT word).<sup>26</sup> By spelling out the precise meaning of *dikaoo* in each passage, the NLT actually proves to be the more accurate of the three translations. The remainder of this chapter will present information on several other theological or controversial words in alphabetical order.

#### ἁγιαζω

Usually rendered as “sanctify” in the KJV, this word occurs twenty-eight times in the GNT. In the NLT, it is translated at least twelve different ways, including variations on “be honored” (twice), “make sacred” (Matt. 23.17,19), “make pure and holy” (John 17.17), “give myself entirely” (John 17.19), “be set apart” (in Acts and 1 Cor. 6.11), “be pure” (Rom. 15.16), “brings holiness to his/her marriage” (1 Cor. 7.14), “make holy” (five times), “make holy and clean” (Eph. 5.26), “make holy in every way” (1 Thess. 5.23), and “cleanse from ritual defilement” (Heb. 9.13). In Hebrews 2.1, “the one who makes people holy” is translated as “Jesus.” In 1 Peter 3.15, *hagiazō* becomes “worship,” and in Revelation 22.11, it is “continue in holiness.”

Ἀγιασμός

This is one of the words mentioned in the NLT introduction. Appearing ten times in the GNT, the KJV translates it as “sanctification” five times, and “holiness” five times. In the NLT, it is converted in to a verb “make/be holy” five times. It is found as “holiness” three times, and “holy” and “holy life” once.

Ἅδης

This interesting New Testament word (“Hades”), which literally refers to the place of the dead (the realm of departed spirits waiting for judgment) was unfortunately rendered “hell” in the KJV, thus destroying the distinction between Hades and Gehenna (the fiery hell of eternal punishment). Jesus himself went to Hades (Acts 2.27,31), but it is also said that his soul went to Paradise (Luke 23.43). Translating the word as “Hades,” however, is also inadequate, since “Hades” is simply a transliteration, not an English word, and could not be understood unless its meaning was taught to someone. Furthermore, in popular language, “Hades” is often used synonymously with “hell.”

*Hades* occurs ten times in the GNT. In the NLT, it is translated “the place of the dead”(Matt. 11.23; Luke 10.15; 16.23) and “the grave” (Rev. 1.18; 20.13, 14). In Peter’s sermon of Acts 2, he affirms that Jesus’ soul was not left “among the dead” (2.27, 31). In Revelation 6.8, it is “the Grave,” and in Matthew 16.18, it is still the gates (or “powers” - NLT) “of hell” that will not conquer the church. In every occurrence of the word, the NLT provides a footnote stating that the Greek word used is *Hades*.

A related word is ἄβυσσος (found nine times in the GNT), from which we get the English word “abyss.” In Revelation, it is translated as “the bottomless pit” (the source of malevolent forces, and 1,000-year prison for the dragon). Romans 10.7 affirms that no one needs

to descend to “the place of the dead” to bring Christ up. In Luke 8.31, the Legion implores Jesus not to send them to “the Bottomless Pit.” Another related word is the verb *ταρταρώ* (“to hold captive in Tartarus” – Bauer 805), found only in 2 Peter 2.4. In the NLT, it is rendered “hell,” with a footnote that says, “Greek *Tartaros*.”

### Ἀπολύτρωσις

BAGD explains the original meaning of this word as “buying back a slave or captive, making him free by payment of a ransom,” and the editors recommend “release,” “redemption,” “acquittal,” and “the state of being redeemed” as recommended translations (96). Here is a chart illustrating the translation of this significant NT word.

Verse	NLT	KJV	NIV
Luke	21.28 salvation	redemption	redemption
Romans	3.24 freed us by taking away our sins	redemption	redemption
	8.23 including the new bodies he has promised us	redemption	redemption
1 Corinthians	1.30 he gave himself to purchase our freedom	redemption	redemption
Ephesians	1.7 he purchased our freedom	redemption	redemption
	1.14 he has purchased us	redemption	redemption
	4.30 redemption	redemption	redemption
Colossians	1.14 purchased our freedom	redemption	redemption
Hebrews	9.15 to set them free	redemption	ransom
	11.35 be free	deliverance	be released

The word itself contains the dual idea of purchasing and setting free, and thus is an excellent

term to illustrate the redemptive activity of Christ. In the NLT, this word is only once translated the same way twice, yet the NLT has done a good job of communicating the meaning in context. There is one verse (Eph. 4.30) where “redemption” was apparently overlooked and left in the translation. “The day of redemption” in this verse was translated as “the day when salvation from sin will be complete” in the LB.

### Ἀποστασία

This noun occurs twice in the GNT. In Acts 21.21, it is converted into a verb in the NLT (“turn their backs on the laws of Moses”). This was also done by the KJV (“to forsake Moses”) and NIV (“to turn away from Moses”), among others. The second occurrence (2 Thess. 2.3) is translated as “a falling away” (KJV), “the rebellion” (NIV), or simply transliterated (“the apostasy” – NASB). The NLT has “a great rebellion against God,” which communicates the idea perfectly.

### Ἀφεσις

This word is translated as “forgiveness” (or “forgive,” its verbal cognate), except for its two occurrences in Luke 4.18, where it refers to the release of prisoners.

### Words derived from βαπ-

\_\_\_\_\_ In the NLT, βαπτιστής is consistently rendered “Baptist.” Βάπτω is always a form of “dip.” Βαπτίζω is “baptize,” except in Mark 7.4, where the Scribes and Pharisees “eat nothing bought from the market unless they have immersed their hands in water,” and in Luke 11.38, which has “performing the ceremonial washing required by Jewish custom” as the translation of a single word. Βάπτισμα and βαπτισμός are “baptism,” except in Mark 7.4 (“washing cups”) and Hebrews 9.10 (“ritual washing”).

Here is one place where the NLT failed at creating functional equivalence. Rather than

continuing the KJV tradition of transliterating “baptism,” the NLT could have given the literal translation “immerse/immersion.” The goal of Functional Equivalence is precision and communicating the message in such a way that it can not be misunderstood. By using “baptism,” the translators have utilized a word which is not native to English, and have continued an ambiguity which is not present in the original language. “Baptism” in modern terminology is often understood as involving immersion, pouring, or sprinkling of water. As the translators were certainly aware (as evidenced by their translation of *bapto* and of *baptizo* in Mark 7.4), *baptisma* is immersion.

#### Βεελζεβούλ

In the NLT, this name is rendered as “the prince of demons” (Matt. 10.25; 12.27; Luke 11.18,19) and “Satan, the prince of demons” (Matt. 12.24; Mark 3.22; Luke 11.15). In each of its seven occurrences, a footnote is given with the transliteration “Beelzeboul.”

#### Words Derived From δίκ-

The word δίκαιος is found 79 times in the GNT. The NIV translates it as “righteous” 59 of those times. In the NLT, “righteous” is still encountered frequently, although “godly” seems just as common. Other renderings include “innocent” (Luke 23.47, which carries a footnote saying “Or *righteous*), “just” (Matt. 1.19; 5.45; Luke 5.30), “good” (Mark 6.20), “honest” (Luke 20.20, in reference to the charade of the “secret agents”), “right” (Matt. 20.4), and “upright” (Matt. 23.28).

In Matthew 9.13 (and parallels Mark 2.17; Luke 5.32), Jesus’ use of *dikaioi* is understood to be sarcastic, and is translated as “those who think they are already good enough.” In John 7.24, “Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment” becomes, “Think this through and you will see that I am right,” an unnecessarily free paraphrase which seems to limit

the application of the Lord's words on this occasion. Of course, he was speaking primarily of himself, but the statement seems to be more of a general directive, and thus universally applicable.

Δικαιοσύνη is found ninety-two times in the GNT. Common renderings in the NLT include "righteous," "what is right," "justice," "good," "made right with God," "how God makes us right in his sight" (Rom. 1.17), "the new relationship with God" (Rom. 4.13), "a life of goodness," and others. One rendering which seems misleading is in Matthew 5.6. Here, Jesus says, "God blesses those who are hungry and thirsty for justice, for they will receive it in full." The phrase "hungry and thirsty for justice" suggests a person obsessed with revenge or retribution. This is surely not what Jesus was commending. The Lord was encouraging "a strong desire for a right standing before God" which "includes the doing of right" (Morris, *Gospel* 99). *Dikaiosune* is very seldom translated "justice" in the NLT, so it is especially odd to see it here. A better rendering might be "those who really want to be right with God," or something similar.

The verbal form δικαίω, occurring thirty-nine times in the GNT, is rendered in a variety of ways, which can be illustrated by its occurrences in Romans (see the chart at the beginning of this chapter). An additional noun form, δικαίωσις, occurs twice in the GNT, and is translated "justification" in the KJV and NIV. In the NLT, it is "to make us right with God" (Rom. 4.25) and "makes all people right in God's sight" (Rom. 5.18). The KJV and NIV also use the word "justification" in Romans 5.6, where the Greek word is δικαίωμα (usually meaning "regulations" or "righteous acts"). In the NLT, it is translated as "being accepted by God."

Words such as "justification" and "righteousness" do not always communicate well to the modern English reader, especially in texts which speak of "righteousness" as something granted by God. Overall, the NLT has done a good job in translating these terms.

Ἐκκλησία

This noun, found 114 times in the GNT, is translated “church” in the NLT, with the exception of the following verses.

Acts	7.38	assembly of God’s people
	19.32	everything
	19.39	assembly
1 Corinthians	14.34	the church meetings
	14.35	church meetings
Hebrews	2.12	all your people

In Acts 19, *ekklesia* is used in reference to an angry mob, and then to a legal assembly. Hebrews 2.12 is a quotation of Psalm 22.22, which, in its original setting, could not refer to a Christian assembly.

It is interesting to note that in his 1525 translation of the New Testament (the first translation of the NT from Greek into English), William Tyndale used the word “congregation.” Included in the guidelines given by James I to the translators of the KJV was the order that the word “church” was to be used (an example of doctrinal bias affecting a translation prepared for the *Church* of England) (McCord 492). The NLT would have been more accurate in using “congregation” instead of “church,” since the word “church” tends to suggest either a building designated for Christian worship or an organized denomination, both of which are foreign to the New Testament.<sup>27</sup>

Εὐαγγέλιον

This noun (traditionally rendered “gospel”) is translated as “Good News” (with capital letters), except in the following verses.

Romans	2.16	message
1 Corinthians	9.4	it
	9.18	as a preacher
2 Corinthians	11.4	kind of gospel
Galatians	1.6	way
	2.2	what

The word “Gospel” occurs only once in the NLT (2 Cor. 11.4), and this is in a negative context. If a reader is unfamiliar with the term, its meaning can not be ascertained from the context, nor from comparing other passages. It would have been better for the translators to say “a different Good News” or “a different message.”

#### Ἰλασμός

Used twice in the GNT, this noun is translated as “atoning sacrifice” in the NIV and “propitiation” in the KJV. In the NLT, it is “the sacrifice for our sins” in 1 John 2.2, and “a sacrifice to take away our sins” in 1 John 4.10.

BAGD gives two possible meanings for this word. The first is “expiation, propitiation.” “Propitiation” suggests an element of appeasement, conciliation, or pacification of an angry God (this would be in accordance to the Pagan Greek usage of the word) (cf. “Propitiation” 935). The second possible meaning is “sin-offering,” which would compare Christ to the sin-offering of the Old Testament. In the TDNT, F. Buchsel, III says John uses the word to denote “removal of guilt” (365). The NLT correctly goes with the second option.

#### Ἰλαστήριον

This similar word is also found twice in the GNT. The first occurrence is Romans 3.25. Here, the KJV has “propitiation” and the NIV has “sacrifice of atonement.” The NLT has “to

satisfy God’s anger against us.” The LB paraphrased the verse in a similar vein: “For God sent Christ Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to end all God’s anger against us. He used Christ’s blood and our faith as the means of saving us from his wrath.”

BAGD defines the word as “that which expiates or propitiates” or “a means of expiation, gift to procure expiation” (Bauer 375). However, the word was used in the Septuagint in reference to “the lid on the ark of the covenant, which was sprinkled with the blood of the sin-offering on the Day of Atonement” (375). The question then is, in which way was Paul using the word in Romans 3.25? Is he thinking in Greek terms of the *hilasterion* as a gift of appeasement against the wrath of an angry God, or was he comparing Jesus to the “mercy seat,” and thinking only of God’s merciful forgiveness of sins (as in McCord’s rendering)? BAGD (Bauer 375) and J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan (303) suggest the former as Paul’s meaning in Romans 3.25.

“Whatever view is taken of Romans 3.25, in Hebrews 9.5, the only other place where the word occurs in the NT, ἱλαστήριον must mean “place of propitiation” or “mercy seat”” (Moulton and Milligan 303). Thus, the KJV has “mercy seat” here, and the NIV has “atonement cover.” In the NLT, *hilasterion* in Hebrews 9.5 is translated as “the ark’s cover, the place of atonement.”

### Καταλλάσσω

*Katallaso* is the verbal form of *katallage*, which was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Here is how *katallaso* is translated in the NLT, KJV, and NIV.

Verse	NLT	KJV	NIV
Romans 5.10	restored to friendship with God	reconciled	reconciled
1 Corinthians 7.11	go back to him	reconciled	reconciled
2 Corinthians 5.18	brought us back to himself	reconciled	reconciled

5.19	reconciling	reconciling	reconciling
5.20	be reconciled	reconciled	reconciled

“Reconcile” is one word which would require the use of a dictionary for many readers. The NLT has done a good job of simplifying the term. It is odd that the term “reconcile” is still found twice in 2 Corinthians 5. Does the uneducated modern English reader really know what he is supposed to do when told to “Be reconciled to God!” (2 Cor. 5.20, NLT). Does this person really know what Christ was doing when he was “reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor. 5.19, NLT)? Of course, the use of a dictionary would make this word plain, but the NLT usually tries to eliminate such obscure words.

### ΜΕΤΑΝΟΕΩ

\_\_\_\_\_ This verb, used thirty-four times in the GNT, is traditionally translated “repent.” In the NLT, it is still frequently rendered “repent,” although the clearer translation “turn from your sins and turn to God” is just as common (see Matt. 3.2; Acts 2.38 for examples).

In Matthew 11.21 and Luke 10.13, the verb is translated more colorfully: “sat in deep repentance.” The word for “sat” is not present in the Greek. Apparently, the translators were trying to make Jesus’ words about Tyre and Sidon more vivid by bringing in imagery of people sitting in sackcloth and ashes (to show their repentance). This imagery might not be understood, though, unless the reader is familiar with the OT custom.

In Acts 17.30, the verb is translated, “turn away from idols and turn to him,” with a footnote giving the alternate reading, “repent.” The reading in the text is a paraphrase, and is subject to question. Indeed, Paul is speaking to pagans in this context, but the command of God that all men are to *metanoein* can and should be taken as a universal imperative, inclusive even of Jews and errant Christians. The translators may have unnecessarily limited Paul’s statement.

The rendering, “turn from your sins and turn to God,” is a definite improvement over “repent.” “Repentance” is often understood as simply meaning “regret” or “sorrow” (cf. “Repentance” 992). In fact, the word is used this way in Genesis 6.6 (KJV). It is clear from the NT context, however, that “*Metanoeo* has both a prerequisite [regret and sorrow] and a consequent [a change in behavior] (Matt. 3.8; Luke 19.8)” (McCord 493). The translators are thus to be commended for implementing a more accurate translation. In the places where “repent” is retained, it seems that “repent” was chosen because the other translation would have been too wordy and awkward.

### ΜΕΤΑΝΟΙΑ

This word, the noun form of *metanoeo*, is usually translated in the NLT along the lines of “turn from sin” (often with “and turn to God” added). Acts 26.20 has “they have changed.” In 2 Timothy 2.25, “give them repentance” is paraphrased as “change those people’s hearts.” The word “repentance” appears in Luke 24.47, Hebrews 6.6, 12.17, and 2 Peter 3.9.

### ΜΟΝΟΥΓΕΝΗΣ

Here is a chart illustrating how this word has been rendered in four NT translations.

Verse	KJV	NIV	NLT	McCord’s
Luke	7.12 only	only	only	only
	8.42 only	only	only	only
	9.38 only	only	only	only
John	1.14 only begotten	One and Only	only Son	unique one
	1.18 only begotten	One and Only	only Son	unique Son
	3.16 only begotten	one and only	only	unique
	3.18 only begotten	one and only	only	unique

Hebrews	11.17	only begotten	one and only	only son	unique son
1 John	4.9	only begotten	one and only	only <sup>28</sup>	unique

Of the above references, only the ones in the writings of John refer to Jesus. Luke 7.12 speaks of the widow's dead son, Luke 8.42 concerns Jairus' daughter, Luke 9.38 describes a demon-possessed boy, and Hebrews 11.17 is a reference to Isaac. There is no problem with the passages in Luke. The controversy with this word surrounds the references to Jesus and to Isaac.

Of the above four translations, the only one which deals accurately with *monogenes* is McCord's New Testament. The KJV, NIV, and NLT all create a contradiction in reference to Isaac. Abraham had a "begotten" son by Hagar (Gen. 16.15), and six more "begotten" sons by Keturah (Gen. 25.2).

Jesus likewise was not an "only begotten son." He was not the only child of Mary (Mark 6.3), nor is he described as the "only begotten" son of God. The Bible does speak of Christ as being "begotten" (*gennaō*) but these references are all figurative, and none of them refer to the incarnation or virgin birth. In Acts 13.32,33, Jesus is spoken of as being "begotten" when he was resurrected. In the book of Hebrews (1.5; 5.5), he is "begotten" in conjunction with becoming high priest. As the eternal Word (John 1.1-3), he was never "begotten" in the sense of having a beginning.

"Only begotten" is certainly an inaccurate and misleading translation of *monogenes* in reference to Jesus and Isaac. But "only" and "one and only" are equally as bad. The Bible itself speaks of Jesus as the "firstborn among many brothers" (Rom. 8.29). Paul tells the Galatians (3.26) that they are "all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." First John 5.1 asserts that "whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born (γενένηται) of God." To refer to Jesus as an "only" son is to create a contradiction.

How then should *monogenes* be translated? It is apparent from the lexicons that “unique” is the *mot juste*. Etymologically, *monogenes* is derived from *monos* (“one, only”) and *genos* (“kind”), thus meaning “one-of-a-kind.” In the Luke passages, “only” or even “only begotten” would be appropriate, since the children spoken of there are the only children of their parents (as indicated by the context). In relation to Jesus and Isaac, the most literally accurate rendering would be “unique.” But one could also translate it as “special” or “beloved,”<sup>29</sup> since this is the connotative/emotional meaning of *monogenes*. The Hebrew word equivalent to *monogenes* is טָיִף (“only”). But in Genesis 22.2, the Septuagint translates *yachid* in reference to Isaac with the Greek term ἀγαπητόν (“beloved”), thus demonstrating that, to the translators of the Septuagint, the main thrust of *yachid* (Greek *monogenes*) in reference to Isaac was “beloved.”<sup>30</sup>

### Νόμος

There has been some discussion over whether *nomos* in Romans and Galatians refers to the Law of Moses, or to the concept of law in general. The NLT translators interpret *nomos* in Romans 7 and the book of Galatians as referring to the Law of Moses. The definite article is usually supplied (or sometimes the word “this”). In Romans 8.3 and Galatians 3.5, the words “of Moses” are supplied by the translators.

### Ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου

This significant phrase is found eighty-two times in the GNT. In the NLT, it is translated as either “the Son of Man” or “I, the Son of Man.”

### Παιδαγωγός

BAGD gives the following definition of this word: “*attendant (slave), custodian, guide*, literally ‘boy-leader,’ the man, usually a slave, whose duty it was to conduct the boy or youth to and from school and to superintend his conduct generally; he was not a ‘teacher’ (despite the

present meaning of the derivative ‘pedagogue’)” (Bauer 603).

The translation of *paidagogos* as “schoolmaster” (KJV) or “tutor” (ASV, NASB) in Galatians 3.24, 25 is thus inaccurate. The NLT has “guardian and teacher” in Galatians 3.24, and “guardian” in Galatians 3.25. In 1 Corinthians 4.15, it is translated as “others to teach you” (cf. “guardian” – NIV, NRSV). It is strange to see the NLT reverting back to the idea of “teacher” after other modern versions changed to the more accurate idea of a “guardian” (NRSV has “disciplinarian” in Gal. 3.24-25).

### Παλιγγενεσία

This is one of the words specifically mentioned in the NLT Introduction. Both of its occurrences are translated “regeneration” in the KJV. The NIV has “renewal” and “rebirth.” In Matthew 19.28, this word (literally “rebirth, regeneration” – Bauer 606) is paraphrased as “the Kingdom,” with a footnote stating “Greek: in the regeneration.”<sup>31</sup> *Paliggenesia* and *basileia* are not really synonymous terms, but they are both used to refer to the Christian dispensation.

In Titus 3.5, a footnote gives the literal rendering, “He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” In the text the NLT has “He washed away our sins and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit.” The problem with this rendering is that “the washing of regeneration” is often interpreted as a reference to baptism.<sup>32</sup> This paraphrase obscures the reference to baptism and its relationship to salvation.

### Παραβολή

This term, traditionally transliterated, “parable,” is found fifty times in the GNT. In the NLT, it is found as “story” twenty-four times, “illustration” twelve times, and “parable” three times. It is also rendered “stories and illustrations” (Matt. 13.34; Mark 4.33), “stories to illustrate the Kingdom” (Matt. 22.1), “lesson” (Matt. 24.32; Mark 13.28), “statement” (Mark 7.17),

“proverb” (Luke 4.23), and “advice” (Luke 14.7). In Matt. 15.15, it is paraphrased as “what you meant when you said people aren’t defiled by what they eat.” In Hebrews 11.19, it is part of the phrase, “in a sense.”

### Σάρξ

The noun *sarx* appears 147 times in the GNT in a wide variety of contexts (see the brief discussion in chapter 1). This chapter will deal with three of its nuances: *sarx* in relation to marriage, in relation to the incarnation, and as a metaphor for the dark side of human nature.

#### *Sarx* in reference to marriage

Several times in the New Testament, reference is made to Genesis 2.24, which states that a husband and wife will become “one flesh.” In the NLT, εἰς σάρκα μίαν (Matt. 19.5; Mark 10.8; 1 Cor. 6.16; Eph. 5.31) is translated “joined into one,” which is less vivid than the original, but conveys the meaning well enough.

#### *Sarx* in reference to the incarnation of Christ

The NLT does assert the fact that Jesus possessed a real flesh and blood human body, while recognizing that, at times, the “flesh” of Christ is used as sort of a euphemism for his death (Eph. 2.15). The following chart will show how *sarx* is translated when it refers to some aspect of the incarnation.

John	1.14	the Word became human
	6.51-56	This bread is my flesh
Romans	1.13	Jesus, who came as a man
	8.3	a human body like ours
Ephesians	2.15	By his death he ended the whole system of Jewish law
Colossians	1.22	his own human body

1 Timothy	3.16	in the flesh
Hebrews	2.14	Because God's children are human beings – made of flesh and blood – Jesus also became flesh and blood by being born in human form.
	5.7	while Jesus was here on earth
	10.20	his death (footnote: “Greek <i>his flesh</i> ”)
1 Peter	3.18	he suffered physical death
	4.1	Christ suffered physical pain
1 John	4.2	Jesus Christ became a human being
2 John	1.7	Jesus Christ came to earth in a real body

These are all accurate renderings.

Metaphorical *sarx* as the dark side of human nature

Since the rendering of metaphorical *sarx* has been such a point of controversy in some circles, it would be useful to present the hard data in its entirety.

Verse	NLT	KJV/ASV	NIV	
Romans	7.5	our old nature	flesh	the sinful nature
	7.18	my old sinful nature	flesh	my sinful nature
	7.25	sinful nature	flesh	the sinful nature
	8.3	sinful nature	flesh	the sinful nature
	8.4	our sinful nature	flesh	the sinful nature
	8.5	the sinful nature	flesh	that nature
	8.6	your sinful nature	flesh	sinful man
	8.7	the sinful nature	flesh	sinful

	8.8	their sinful nature	flesh	the sinful nature
	8.9	your sinful nature	flesh	the sinful nature
	8.12	your sinful nature	flesh	the sinful nature
	8.13	it	flesh	the sinful nature
	13.14	your evil desires	flesh	the sinful nature
1 Corinthians	5.5	his sinful nature	flesh	the sinful nature
Galatians	5.13	your sinful nature	flesh	the sinful nature
	5.16	your sinful nature	flesh	the sinful nature
	5.17	the old sinful nature	flesh	the sinful nature
		the sinful nature	flesh	the sinful nature
	5.19	your sinful nature	flesh	the sinful nature
	5.24	the passions and desires of their sinful nature	flesh	the sinful nature
	6.8	sinful desires	flesh	his sinful nature
Ephesians	2.3	our evil nature	flesh	our sinful nature
Colossians	2.11	your sinful nature	flesh	the sinful nature
	2.13	your sinful nature	flesh	your sinful nature
	2.18	sinful	flesh	unspiritual
	2.23	a person's evil thoughts and desires	flesh	sensual
2 Peter	2.10	evil, lustful desires	flesh	the sinful nature
	2.18	desire	flesh	sinful human nature
1 John	2.16	physical pleasure	flesh	sinful man

Jude            1.23            their sins            flesh            corrupted flesh

In order to evaluate the above information fairly, each passage should be considered in its own context.

The metaphorical use of *sarx* poses an interesting problem to the translator. Although there is some overlap in the various usages of the Greek *sarx* and the English “flesh,” the terms do not have identical fields of meaning. In fact, *Merriam-Webster’s* 10<sup>th</sup> edition does not list a single definition of “flesh” which fits the meaning of *sarx* in the metaphorical passages listed above.<sup>33</sup> If it is simply translated as “flesh” (the word’s most common English “crib” or “pony”), the reader might get the impression that the literal flesh is literally evil, an unbiblical doctrine which leads to asceticism and other theological extremes. To consistently translate *sarx* as “flesh” without regard to the context would be misleading, unnatural, and inaccurate. For more on the NLT’s translation of metaphorical *sarx*, see the chapter on Calvinism.

### Χάρις

For this common word (found 155 times in the GNT), the NLT uses the traditional word “grace” a little less than one-third of the time, although often the qualifier “God’s” is inserted. Other renderings include “God has decided to bless you” (Luke 1.30), “his special favor” (Luke 2.40; Acts 15.11; Eph. 2.8), “God’s unfailing love” (John 1.17), “God’s kindness” (several times), “wonderful kindness and love” (Acts 20.24), “privilege” (Rom. 1.5), “this place of highest privilege” (Rom. 5.2), “God’s generous gift of forgiveness,” “God’s bountiful gift” (Rom. 5.15), “God’s wonderful, gracious gift of righteousness” (Rom. 5.17), “free and undeserved” (Rom. 11.6), “special gift” (Eph. 4.7), and “God’s mercy to his people” (Heb. 10.29).

Romans 11.6 is interesting. In this verse, Paul uses *charis* three times, and each

occurrence is translated differently by the NLT. In the ASV, this verse says, “But if it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.” The meaning of the passage is very clear in the NLT, but the translation has obliterated Paul’s play on words. It reads, “And if they are saved by God’s kindness, then it is not by their good works. For in that case, God’s wonderful kindness would not be what it really is – free and undeserved.”

#### Addition and Omission of Information

During the process of translation, it is often necessary to state information explicitly in the receptor language which was only implied in the source language.<sup>34</sup> As Paul Fueter asserts, “translation has to make explicit what is implicit in the text, so that the culturally distant reader can understand with a minimum of obstacles” (348). The King James Version, for example, used a system of italicized words to indicate that certain information was not found explicitly in the original Greek and Hebrew, yet needed to be supplied in order to make the translation understandable. John Beekman and John Callow summarize the guidelines for implicit information like this:

[I]mplicit information may be expressed explicitly if, and only if, the receptor language necessitates it. It is not expressed explicitly merely because the translator thinks it would be helpful, or because of his own doctrinal convictions or denominational views, or because some other translator has done so, or because he thinks this is something the receptor language readers really need to know. It is made explicit because the grammar, or the meanings, or the dynamics of the receptor language require it in order that the information conveyed will be the same as that conveyed to the original readers. (58)

The following section will present data regarding places in the NLT New Testament where

information has been added which is not explicit in the Greek. It will be seen that many legitimate additions have been made in accordance with the rules stated above. But it will also be seen that the translators have made many unjustified additions which are not really implicit in the text at all.

One common example of making the implicit explicit is the NLT New Testament's practice of using the term "law of Moses" when only the term "law" appears in the Greek, and the Pentateuch is clearly being referred to (cf. Matt. 5.27, 31, 33, 38, 43; Gal. 3.5, 17; etc.). There are many such instances where the translators added information which they apparently thought would be helpful. In the following examples, the information supplied is indeed implied in the original, though it is quite debatable whether the addition of such information was really necessary. Such additions include "fear only *God*" (Matt. 10.28); "no one knows the day or the hour *when these things will happen*" (Matt. 24.36); "watch *for his return*" (Mark 13.37); "cup of *wine*" (Mark 14.23; Luke 22.17, 20); "sixth month of *Elizabeth's pregnancy*" (Luke 1.26); "shaken together *to make room for more*" (Luke 6.38); "without knowing *the corruption they are stepping on*" (Luke 11.44); "Fear *God, who . . .*" (Luke 12.5); "now, *instead of waiting until you die*" (Luke 15.12); "dig *ditches*" (Luke 16.3); "take this cup of *suffering* away" (Luke 22.41); "spices and ointments *to embalm him*" (Luke 23.56); "On the day of Pentecost, *seven weeks after Jesus' resurrection*" (Acts 2.1); "discipline my body *like an athlete*" (1 Cor. 9.27); "You say, 'I am allowed to do anything'" (1 Cor. 10.23); "his secret plan – *that Christ is also for you Gentiles*" (Col. 4.3); "tradition of *hard work*" (2 Thess. 3.6); "Run from *anything that stimulates youthful lust*" (2 Tim. 2.22); "witnesses *to the life of faith*" (Heb. 12.1); "obey your *spiritual leaders*" (Heb. 13.17); "planted *in your hearts*" (James 1.21); "teachers *in the church*" (James 3.1); "do not believe *everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit*" (1 John 4.1). None of the

above insertions affects the meaning of the passage, but yet few, if any of them, are really necessary in order for the passage to be understood.

There are other places where information has been added to help explain a cultural activity or expression. For example, “She knelt *respectfully*” (Matt. 20.20); “the high priest tore his clothing *to show his horror*” (Matt. 26.65; Mark 14.63); “shaking their heads *in mockery*” (Matt. 27.39); “the kiss *of greeting*” (Mark 14.44); “they tore their clothing *in dismay*” (Acts 14.14). At times, information is inserted to explain an idiom or figure of speech that is used. For example, “the axe *of God’s judgment*” (Matt. 3.10); “there your heart *and thoughts* will be also” (Matt. 6.21); “Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, *so these signs indicate that the end is near*” (Matt. 24.28; Luke 17.37); “What I have written, I have written. *It stays exactly as it is*” (John 19.22); “*false teachers, like vicious wolves*” (Acts 20.29); “when this earthly tent is taken down – *when we die and leave these bodies*” (2 Cor. 5.1); “*But it takes only one wrong person among you to infect all the others* – a little yeast spreads quickly through the whole batch *of dough*” (Gal. 5.9); “if my life is to be poured out like a drink offering to complete the sacrifice of your faithful service (*that is, if I am to die for you*)” (Phil. 2.17); “they are *spiritually undefiled, as pure as virgins*” (Rev. 14.4). At times, the translators go too far in this activity and compromise the principle of equivalent affect. For example, Jesus’ bizarre statement in Matthew 8.22 and Luke 9.60 was designed to be shocking and force the hearer to stop and think. The strange paradox of Jesus’ statement, however, is lost in the NLT, which says, “Let those who are *spiritually* dead care for [not ‘bury’] their own dead.”

Sometimes the translators seem to insert information just to make the text more vivid. For example, in Matthew 9.7, it is said that the crippled man “jumped up” when he was healed by Jesus. The verb in the Greek is the simple ἐγερθηεις (“he got up”) (cf. Mark 2.12). In Mark’s

account, it is also said that the man “pushed his way through the stunned onlookers” (Mark 2.12), where the text simply states that he went out before them all. In John 12.32, Jesus says he will be “lifted up *on the cross*” where the original says “from the earth.” Other examples include “*notorious sinners*” (Matt. 9.10; Luke 15.1); “*long, sharp thorns*” (Matt. 27.28; Mark 15.17); “I see people, *but I can’t see them very clearly*. They look like trees walking around” (Mark 8.24); “the hand of the Lord is surely upon him *in a special way*” (Luke 1.66); “She wrapped him *snugly* in strips of cloth” (Luke 2.6); “He was filled with wisdom *beyond his years*” (Luke 2.40); “Just say the word *from where you are*” (Luke 7.7); “people who wear beautiful clothes . . . are found in palaces, *not in the wilderness*” (Luke 7.25); “*unjust tax collectors*” (Luke 7.29); “a *despised Samaritan*” (Luke 10.33); “the Pharisees . . . *naturally* scoffed at this” (Luke 16.14); “*dishonest tax collector*” (Luke 18.10); “*proud Pharisee*” (Luke 18.11); “to save those *like him* who are lost” (Luke 19.10); “*flickering lamps*” (Acts 20.8); “let us follow the Holy Spirit’s leading *in every part of our lives*” (Gal. 5.25); “*Your word is enough*” (Matt. 5.37); and Mark 14.65, which says, “who hit you that time, you prophet?” where the original merely says “Prophesy!” Sometimes, the translators take too much liberty with this practice, such as in John 8.7, where Jesus is made to say, “All right, stone her,” an expression completely absent from the Greek. In Matthew 14.17 and Luke 9.14, the apostles are made to exclaim “Impossible,” when Jesus suggests that they feed the crowd, when in the Greek they merely offer an excuse. In Matthew 27.33 and John 19.17, the place of Jesus’ execution is referred to as “Skull Hill,” when there is nothing in the text to suggest that Golgotha was a “hill.”

Occasionally, information is added which supports the interpretation of the translators, but the information is not clearly implied in the original. For example, the name of the author “John” is inserted in the first verse of 2 John and 3 John. It is said in James 4.5 that the Spirit

“jealously longs for us *to be faithful*.” James 1.5 reads, “If you need wisdom – *if you want to know what God wants you to do* – ask him.” In Colossians 1.8, the Colossians’ “love in spirit” (ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι) is rendered as “the great love for others that the Holy Spirit has given you.” First Corinthians 7.9 says “It’s better to marry than to burn *with lust*.” In Hebrews 9.18, the NLT says “blood was required under the first covenant *as a proof of death*.” The word “Friday” is used to identify the day of the Lord’s death in Mark 15.42, when there is some credible evidence that suggests the crucifixion was on a Thursday.<sup>35</sup> Some of the additions found in the NLT are simply inexplicable. Why would the translators change Jesus’ statement in Luke 12.51 to “I have come to bring *strife and* division?” Why is it said in Mark 10.16 that Jesus laid his hands on the children’s “heads,” when the Greek just says “them?” Why specify that the apostles placed their hands on people’s “heads” in Acts 8.18?

In a functional equivalence translation, omission of information will naturally be less common than addition. Furthermore, omissions are more difficult to detect than additions, so only a short list of examples will be provided. There are some cases where the translators have utilized economy of language to shorten a passage without losing any information. For example, John 1.6 (“God sent John the Baptist”) is significantly shorter than the more literal rendering, “There was a man sent from God whose name was John.” In other cases, though, information is completely lost. For example, in Matthew 22.30, it is said that the angels do not marry, but the clause “nor given in marriage” is left out. Luke 6.49 omits the phrase “on the ground” when speaking of the foolish man’s house-building. Throughout the book of John, the phrase “Jewish people” is simply rendered “people” (John 6.41, for example), but usually with a footnote. Second John 1.12 paraphrases “use paper and ink” as “say it in a letter.” In Mark’s translation of the Aramaic *Talitha cumi* in Mark 5.41, the words “I say to you” (σοί λέγω) are completely

omitted. As a matter of fact, the Aramaic phrase itself is relegated to a footnote. The same is done with the Aramaic phrase *Epaphatha* in Mark 7.34. Another Aramaic phrase, *Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani*, is retained in the text, however, in Matthew 27.45.

#### Unduly Free Paraphrase

A frequent, and often legitimate, criticism of FE translations is that they engage in unduly free paraphrase. Regarding unduly free translations, Beekman and Callow state:

Translations may vary widely in style and still be accurate in content. Thus, when a translation is classified as too free, this is not a judgment concerning its style but rather concerning the information it communicates. [In an unduly free translation there are] distortions of content, with the translation clearly saying what the original neither says nor implies . . . such a translation may say more than was communicated to the readers of the original text, and, as a result, contain extraneous information. (23)

The following list contains passages where information from the original has either been distorted or has been paraphrased where a literal rendering would have been perfectly understandable.

In three parallel passages (Matt. 12.4; Mark 2.26; Luke 6.4), Jesus admits to breaking the law. When his disciples are rebuked for plucking grain on the Sabbath, Jesus retaliates by recounting the story of David taking the showbread from the temple. David broke the law. The disciples did not break the law; they merely violated the Pharisees' oral traditions. Jesus was pointing out the Pharisees' hypocrisy rather than comparing the activity of the disciples to that of David. In the NLT, however, Jesus admits that the disciples were in fact guilty when he says of David's actions, "That was breaking the law, too."

Equivalent effect is compromised in Matthew 19.12, where Jesus says “There are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (NRSV). For the third group, the NLT simply says “some choose not to marry.” No footnote is provided. The shocking and graphic nature of Jesus’ statement has been lost.

Another poor reading is found in Matthew 19.9, where Jesus says that “a man who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery – unless his wife has been unfaithful.” “Unfaithful” here is the translation of the word πορνεία, which means “fornication” or “sexual immorality.” The broader term, “unfaithful” does not necessarily include the idea of sex, which is Jesus’ point. According to *Merriam-Webster’s 10<sup>th</sup> Edition Collegiate Dictionary*, “unfaithful” means “not adhering to vows, allegiance, or duty.” Thus, according to the NLT, a person could divorce for any number of reasons besides sexual promiscuity, including lack of love.

In Matthew 24.22 and Mark 13.20, the translators have replaced the perfectly understandable literal phrase “no one would be saved” with “the entire human race will be destroyed.” This new reading seems to do violence to the context of this passage – the Lord’s prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem. Other questionable paraphrases in Matthew include “those who are unfaithful” for “those who have nothing” (25.29), “vowed” for “said” (26.35), and “as it arose” for “in the east” (2.2). In Matthew 26.74, the Greek says (in the third person) that Peter “began cursing and swearing that ‘I don’t know the man.’” The NLT, however, simply reads. “Peter said, ‘I swear by God, I don’t know the man.’” The statement in the original seems to be a critical rebuke of what Peter did. The NLT translators have eliminated this aspect of the author’s commentary. In Matthew 6.22 (and Luke 11.34), the NLT says, “a pure eye lets sunshine into your soul,” which sounds more like a greeting card and misses the Lord’s point

about covetousness.

In Mark 7.20, the NLT has the odd phrase, “the thought-life,” for the literal “what comes out of a person,” thus destroying the Lord’s verbal contrast between “what goes in” and “what comes out.” In Mark 8.34, the command that a person “deny himself” is paraphrased as “put aside your selfish ambition,” which is more narrow and less compelling than the more literal reading. Mark 13.7 reads “wars will break out near and far,” eliminating the idea of “rumors of wars” found in the original. In Mark 14.51-52, a young man (whom many believe to be Mark) follows behind Jesus and the mob which arrested him. When someone tried to grab him, it is said that “leaving the linen cloth, he fled naked.” The NLT makes the passage more violent and even suggestive when it says, “they tore off his clothes.”

In Luke 3.7, the translators have really expanded the simple phrase, “John said,” into “Here is a sample of John’s preaching.” In Luke 5.33, “eat and drink” becomes “feasting,” an exaggerated term. In Luke 6.28, “bless” becomes “pray for the happiness of.” In Luke 10.41, “many things” is paraphrased as “all these details.” Luke 11.7 has “from his bedroom” instead of the literal “from inside.” Luke 11.34-36 is rather heavily paraphrased, and contains something of an anachronism: “your whole life will be radiant, as though a *floodlight* is shining on you.” In Luke 12.20, “your soul/life is being required from you” is drained of its graphic detail and stated as simply “you will die.” The translators also took the edge off Christ’s words in Luke 14.26, where “hate” becomes “you must *love me more than* your own father and mother. . . .” In Luke 15.2, “sinners” becomes “such despicable people.” In Luke 16.8, the word κύριος (“master”) becomes “the rich man.” The same verse also has “dishonest rascal” instead of the literal “dishonest manager.” Luke 24.34 has “bodies” instead of the literal “flesh and bones.” In Luke 22.18, the NLT has “wine” where the Greek makes reference to “the fruit of the vine.” From the

NLT, one would not be able to authorize the use of unfermented grape juice in the Lord's Supper.

There are three verses in particular where the translators of John went too far in their paraphrasing. The first is John 2.25, which makes a statement about Christ's omniscience: "He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man" (NASB). In the NLT, this verse becomes simply "No one needed to tell him about human nature." In John 6.28-29, the people ask Jesus what work they need to do in order to please God. Jesus responds that the "work of God" is believing in the one whom he sent. The NLT unjustly removes the heart of the people's question – the idea of doing a particular "work." It says, "They replied, 'What does God want us to do?'" Jesus told them, "This is what God wants you to do: Believe on the one he has sent." In John 7.24, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge the righteous judgment" becomes "Think this through and you will see that I am right."

In Acts 3.15, "the Law of Moses" becomes "the Jewish law." In Acts 20.11, "he" becomes "they all." First Corinthians 7.7 is more specific than the proverb-like statement in the Greek. It says, "But we are not all the same. God gives some the gift of *marriage*, and to others he gives the gift of *singleness*." First Corinthians 7.23 literally says "don't become slaves of people," while the NLT has "don't be enslaved by the world." From the context, it seems that Paul is being quite literal in talking about slavery, whereas the NLT has spiritualized the statement. First Corinthians 16.2 has "every Lord's Day," which is a true and understandable reading, but an unnecessary change from what the text really says: "every first day of the week."

First Corinthians 11.3 seems somewhat weakened in the NLT. Literally, it says, "the head of every man is Christ, and the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." The "headship" idiom used in this verse is perfectly understandable in English, yet the NLT has "A

man is responsible to Christ, a woman is responsible to her husband, and Christ is responsible to God.” “Responsible to” is somewhat weaker than “headship,” and there is no good contextual reason for rendering *aner* as “husband” in this verse.<sup>36</sup>

In Galatians 1.13, “the church of God” becomes “the Christians.” In Galatians 3.16, Abraham’s “seed” and “seeds” become his “child” and “children,” although this is explained in a footnote. In Gal. 3.23, the NLT’s “kept in protective custody” seems weaker than the literal “imprisoned and guarded” by the law. In 5.20, “factions” becomes “the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group,” a reading which almost smacks of some sort of ecumenical bias. In 5.22, “the fruit of the spirit” becomes, “when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us.”

Galatians 3.1 has an interesting paraphrase. Consider the contrast from the literal NASB and the NLT: “You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified” (NASB)? “Oh, foolish Galatians! What magician has cast an evil spell on you? For you used to see the meaning of Jesus Christ’s death as clearly as though I had shown you a signboard with a picture of Christ dying on the cross” (NLT).

Galatians 5.17 is also heavily paraphrased: “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please” (NASB). “The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict” (NLT).

In Ephesians 2.10, the NLT says that “we are God’s masterpiece,” where the Greek simply says we are his “workmanship” (that which is made). The term “masterpiece” introduces

an idea (of “supreme achievement” – *Merriam*) not implied in the original, which simply states that as God’s creations we are obligated to do good works. In Ephesians 4.26, “be angry and do not sin” becomes “Don’t sin by letting anger gain control over you,” which loses what is often interpreted as permission to be angry, but not to be driven to sinning.

Second Thessalonians 2.11 has “all these lies” instead of the original “the lie.” Also, in 2 Thessalonians 2.4, it says that the man of lawlessness will “tear down every object of adoration,” when the Greek says that he will “exalt himself.” In James 1.27, the NLT uses the word, “lasting,” for the Greek ἀμίαντος (“undefiled”). In James 2.9, “show partiality” is made more specific: “pay special attention to the rich,” which is the particular topic in question. It can be said, however, that James is making a general statement, and the NLT obscures this. In 1 John 2.18, “this is the last hour” is paraphrased as “the end of the world has come.” In 1 John 3.24, “the Spirit that he has given us” is paraphrased as “the Holy Spirit lives in us,” thus eliminating the concept of “gift” from this verse. In Jude 9, the reference to Michael as “the archangel” is changed to “one of the mightiest of the angels.”

The above passages are examples where the NLT has either distorted the meaning of a passage or else engaged in needless paraphrase where a more literal rendering would have been perfectly understandable. Although no major doctrines are affected by the above passages, they do illustrate a disturbing trend in Bible translation – paraphrase for the sake of change or in order to suit the translators’ own stylistic whims.

#### Units of Measure

In the “Introduction to the New Living Translation,” the translators say that they “sought to translate terms shrouded in history or culture in ways that can be immediately understood by the contemporary reader” (Taylor 3). They seem to have been successful in achieving this goal.

Ancient units of measure are simplified or translated into their modern equivalents. Literal Hebrew and Greek measures are given (along with metric equivalents) in footnotes. For example, in Luke 13.21, “three measures” becomes “a large amount.” In John 2.6, “two or three measures” becomes “twenty to thirty gallons.” In John 12.3, “one litra” becomes “a twelve-ounce jar,” and in John 19.39, “100 litras” becomes “seventy-five pounds.”

Regarding distance, in Luke 24.13, “60 stadia” becomes “seven miles.” In John 6.19, “25 or 30 stadia” becomes “three or four miles.” “About 15 stadia” becomes “only a few miles” (John 11.18), and “200 cubits” becomes “three hundred feet” (John 21.8). The “Sabbath Day’s journey” of Acts 1.12 is rendered as “the half mile.”

Regarding time, the NLT translators state that “we have rendered specific times of day by using approximate equivalents in terms of our common ‘o’clock’ system. On occasion, translations such as ‘at dawn the next morning’ or ‘as the sun began to set’ have been used when the biblical reference is general” (Taylor 3). Thus, one finds “three o’clock in the morning” for “the fourth watch of the night” (Matt. 14.25), “nine o’clock in the morning” for “the third hour” (Matt. 20.3), “noon” and “three o’clock” for the sixth and ninth hour, respectively (Matt.20.5; Mark 15.33), “five o’clock” for “the eleventh hour” (Matt. 20.6), “one o’clock” for “the seventh hour” (John 4.52), and “three o’clock” for “the ninth hour” (Acts 3.1). Of these, only Matthew 14.25 carries a footnote.

In regard to money, the translators state, “Instead of translating ancient currency values literally, we have generally expressed them in terms of weights in precious metals. In some cases we have used other common terms to communicate the message effectively. For example, ‘three shekels of silver’ might become ‘three silver coins’ or ‘three pieces of silver’ to convey the intended message” (Taylor 3). Accordingly, then, in the NLT, one finds “only half a penny” (an

assarion – Matt. 10.29), “millions of dollars” (10,000 talents – Matt. 18.24), “a few thousand dollars” (100 denarii – Matt. 18.28), and “the normal daily wage” (a denarius – Matt. 20.1). The “talent” in Matthew 25.15 becomes a “bag of gold.” There is also “a small fortune” (200 denarii – Mark 6.37), “a Roman coin” (a denarius – Mark 12.15; Luke 21.2), “two pennies” (“two lepta, which is a kodrantes” – Mark 12.42; Luke 21.2), “a small fortune” (300 denarii – Mark 14.5; John 12.5), “a couple of pennies” (two assarion – Luke 12.6), “ten valuable silver coins” (10 drachmas – Luke 15.8), and “ten pounds of silver” (10 minas – Luke 19.13). All of these carry footnotes except to the passages which use the term *assarion* (Matt. 10.29; Luke 12.6).

#### Antiquated Cultural References

One of the more challenging aspects of Bible translation is how to convey ancient cultural practices in modern language. The following passages will illustrate some of the ways the NLT translators handled this problem.

In Matthew 1.18 and Luke 1.25 and 26, the reader comes upon the fact that Mary and Joseph are pledged to be married. The ancient marriage pledge was more binding than the modern concept of engagement, yet “engagement” is the closest simple equivalent, and is thus used by the NLT, which uses terms such as “engaged” and “fiancee” in these passages. In a similar vein, the ten virgins of Matthew 25.1-10 become “ten bridesmaids,” although the two concepts are not exactly analogous.

Speaking of Jesus, John the Baptist says that he is unworthy “to carry his sandals” (Matt. 3.11), “to stoop down and untie his sandals” (Mark 1.7), and “to untie his sandals” (Luke 3.6; John 1.27; Acts 13.25). In the NLT NT, these expressions are all translated as “to be his slave,” which hits John’s point, but loses some of the graphic imagery. In Matthew 23.23, the “mint, dill, and cummin” which the scribes and Pharisees tithe becomes “even the tiniest part of your

income,” which insures that Jesus’ point is not lost. The literal rendering is given in a footnote. In Mark 14.51, the lad’s linen cloth is described as a “nightshirt.” In Mark 15.16, “the courtyard, which is the praetorium,” is translated as “their headquarters.”

In Luke 10.13, the custom of sitting in sackcloth and ashes is explained: “if the miracles I did in you had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon, their people would have sat *in deep repentance* long ago, clothed in sackcloth and *throwing* ashes *on their heads to show their remorse*.<sup>37</sup> In Luke 17.31, the person “on the roof” is said to be “outside the house,” since flat-roofed houses are quite rare in modern America. In Luke 23.27, the “women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him” (NRSV) are said to be “grief-stricken women.” Similarly, in Luke 23.48, the crowd is said to go home “in deep sorrow,” with a footnote giving the literal “beating their breasts.” In John 13.23, the disciple Jesus loved is said to be “sitting next to Jesus at the table,” with a footnote stating, “Greek: was reclining on Jesus’ bosom. The ‘disciple whom Jesus loved’ was probably John.”

In Luke 22.36, Jesus says to “sell your clothes” instead of “cloak,” which could create the wrong impression. In Acts 19.35, the *grammateus* (city clerk) is called “the mayor.” John 10.22 has “Hanukkah” instead of “the Festival of Dedication” (which is given in a footnote). In 1 Timothy 5.10, the widow who has “washed the saints’ feet” is said to have “served other Christians humbly” (with a literal reading in the footnote). Overall, these readings make the text more comprehensible without doing violence to the meaning.

One additional cultural reference is the practice of casting lots. When the soldiers cast lots for Jesus’ clothing in Matthew 27.35, Mark 15.24, and Luke 23.34, it is called “throwing dice,” and a footnote is given. John 19.24 has the soldiers saying, “Let’s not tear it but throw dice to see who gets it” (with a footnote for “cast lots”). In Acts 1.26, however, when the

apostles do the same thing, it says that “they cast lots.” If “casting lots” was too hard to understand in the Gospel passages, why leave it in the Acts passage? It seems that the translators were perhaps too uncomfortable with the idea of using gambling terminology (i.e., “throwing dice”) when the apostles were the ones doing it.

### Gender-Inclusive Language

The use of gender-inclusive language in Bible translations has become controversial in this decade for two reasons: the Feminist movement and changes in the English language.<sup>38</sup> In dealing with this controversy, it is necessary to maintain the distinction between those Bibles which strive for gender-inclusive accuracy and those which are motivated by a feminist agenda. Two examples of the latter are the *New Testament of the Inclusive Language Bible* and the *New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version*. These two translations attempt to “render negligible all references to gender, disabilities, and racial differences. . . . All language offenses, real or imagined, are drawn, quartered -- and neutered” (Edwards 127). Thus, God can no longer be called the “Father.” Instead, in the *Inclusive Version*, he is the “Father-Mother,” and in the *Inclusive Language Bible*, he becomes “My dear Parent” (e.g., Luke 22.42; Gal. 4.6). Likewise, Jesus is no longer the “Son,” but the “Child.” For example, in Matthew 28.19, believers are to be baptized “in the name of the Father-Mother and of the beloved Child and of the Holy Spirit.” The same Bible translates John 5.26-27 as “For just as God has life in Godself, so God has granted the same thing to the Child, and has given the Child authority to execute judgment, because of being the Human One. Do not be astonished at this.”

Translations such as these go too far. Their emasculation of the Father and Jesus causes a profound loss of equivalent effect. They cannot be considered accurate translations, and represent a radical agenda.

Not all attempts at gender-inclusiveness are so motivated. Several recent translations, including the New Revised Standard Version, Revised English Bible, New Jerusalem Bible, New American Bible (inclusive only in the NT and Psalms), Good News Bible, Contemporary English Version, God's Word, New Century Version, New International Reader's Version, and the New Living Translation strive to be gender-inclusive. But what does this mean? It means simply that, when the Greek and Hebrew uses terminology which is applicable to both genders, the terms are translated in such a way to be obviously inclusive of both genders. Thus, generic "man" is abandoned in favor of "mankind" or "humankind." Generic "men" becomes "people;" generic "sons" becomes "children." "Fathers" becomes "ancestors," and "brothers" becomes the more explicit "brothers and sisters" when it is clear from the context that both sexes are included. The goal of inclusive language is that, in a world where the inclusive use of masculine terminology is fading away, the biblical message is communicated in terms that cannot be misunderstood. The driving force is verbal accuracy, not any social agenda.

It is clear that the English language is changing. It is becoming more and more rare to see the term "men," for example, used in a way that is inclusive of males and females. In his book, *Distorting Scripture*, Mark L. Strauss discusses ten different studies of both children and adults which demonstrate conclusively that male terminology which is intended to be inclusive is often misunderstood (141-43). In his words,

[T]he evidence appears to be overwhelming that a large percentage of the population perceives masculine generic terms as exclusive rather than inclusive, that is, referring primarily or exclusively to men. . . . There seems little doubt from these studies that when "man" is used as a generic term, it is often misunderstood to refer only to males. At the least, a certain level of confusion and

ambiguity often results. (141-42)

To give one example of such a study (using generic “he”):

In an experiment conducted by Wendy Martyna, students were asked to judge whether pictures of either a male or a female could apply to sentences containing generic “he,” “they,” or “he-or-she.” For example, a student would be given a sentence like “When someone listens to the record player, he will often sing along.” The student would then be shown a picture of either a male or female performing this action and asked whether the picture applied to the sentence. . . .

Twenty percent of the students reported that female pictures did not apply to sentences containing the generic “he.” A subsequent study found that 40 percent did not find females to be applicable. (Strauss, *Distorting* 142-43)

In considering these studies, Strauss remarks, “This is very significant when we realize that twenty (or even forty) percent of readers might miss the point of a biblical passage where generic “he” is used. The issue is not merely one of offending female readers, but of providing a clear and precise translation” (*Distorting* 143).

The question, then, is a question of accuracy. Is it more accurate to translate ἀνθρώπος as “man” or “human/person?” Clearly, the latter is more accurate, since the term could then not be misunderstood as referring strictly to a male. To cite such a case, the person who reads traditional English translations can never know just from the text that the “men” (ἀνδρας) who pray in 1 Timothy 2.8 are males, while the “men” (ἀνθρώποις) who “will be able to teach” in 2 Timothy 2.2 would include both men and women. To further complicate the matter, the word “men” is inserted in very many passages where there is no corresponding word in the Greek. For example, in the NIV there are 1,357 verses where the English words “man” or “men” appear with

no corresponding term in the Greek or Hebrew text. The RSV has 1,032 such verses, and the NASB, 917 (Strauss, *Distorting* 88). This fact becomes alarming when one considers how frequently generic masculine terms are misunderstood.

Inclusive language is not a new thing. The KJV translates the Hebrew word בן as “son” or “sons” 2,822 times and inclusively as “child” or “children” 1,533 times (about 35%) (Carson, *Inclusive* 19). Carson gives an example of the same shift happening when an Old Testament passage is quoted in the New Testament. Second Samuel 7.14 says, “I will be a Father to him, and he will be a son to me.” When this passage is quoted by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6.18, it says “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters (υἱοὺς και θυγατέρας) to me.” In this quotation, Paul took the third-person singular (“he”) and converted it to the second-person plural (“you”). Then, the masculine “son” was expanded to include both genders. Paul is not quoting from the Septuagint here. He is providing his own translation, and the techniques he uses to create gender-inclusiveness are two of the same ones used by translators today.

In the introduction to the NLT, the translators state that they usually translate *anthropos* as “human being” or “person” (not “man”). Furthermore, they say, the term “brothers” (*adelphoi*) is usually translated as “brothers and sisters” or “Christian friends” in order to represent the historical situation more accurately. Here is where the NLT has fumbled. It is entirely accurate to translate ἀδελφοί as “brothers and sisters” in most passages. The term most frequently occurs in Paul’s letters, which are addressed to entire churches made up of men and women. This is made especially explicit in Philippians 4.1,2, where Paul addresses the *adelphoi* and then immediately directs his words to two women, Euodia and Syntyche. But the NLT has missed the mark when they translate *adelphoi* as “Christian friends.” In such cases, dynamic equivalence has been compromised, since *adelphoi* carries undertones of a family relationship

which are lost when the term is rendered as “Christian friends.” Fortunately, according to a letter sent to Mark Strauss by Tyndale president Mark Taylor, an upcoming revision of the NLT will render *adelphoi* more consistently as “brothers and sisters” (the most accurate translation possible) rather than “Christians” or “dear friends” (Strauss, *Distorting* 235; cf. Strauss, “Review” 459).

### Grammatical Accuracy

In a functional equivalence translation, one would anticipate many departures from the grammatical form of the original. This is often necessitated by differences between the source language and the receptor language. Grammatical changes are often also made for the sake of style or ease of reading. At other times, grammatical changes seem wholly unwarranted, and can even change the meaning of a passage.

For example, in some passages, the NLT translators have taken too much liberty in swapping prepositions. To illustrate, in 2 Thessalonians 2.14, *διό* is translated as if it were *ὅτι*. Here, the NLT says “He called you to salvation *when* we told you the Good News.” The NLT has discarded an obvious dative of means (“through our Good News” – *διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἡμῶν*) and treated it as though it were a genitive of time. The exact same thing is done again in 2 Timothy 1.6, where it says that Timothy received his gift “when I [Paul] laid my hands on you” instead of the literal “through [*διό* with dative] the laying on of my hands.” In Luke 1.42, Mary is told, “You are blessed by God *above* all other women.” Actually, she is not blessed “above” (*ὑπερ*) all women, but “among” (*ἐν*) all women. In other words, all women would call her blessed. In Acts 3.15, it is said that Christ was raised “to life,” when the text actually says he was raised “from the dead.” There is no essential loss in meaning here, but, at the same time, there is no compelling reason for the change.

There are certain grammatical nuances which the NLT brings out clearly, such as the iterative present<sup>39</sup> (“I keep hearing” – Philemon 1.5) and customary present<sup>40</sup> (“we keep on praying” – 2 Thess. 1.11). Imperatives are also often translated in such a way as to bring out their customary force. As Daniel Wallace explains the present imperative, “with the present, the force is generally to command the action as an ongoing process” (485). Thus, in John 8.31, the NLT says to “keep obeying.” In Matthew 7.7 and Luke 11.9, Jesus says to “keep on” asking, seeking, and knocking. James 5.13 likewise instructs the readers to “keep on praying. . . continually sing praises.” In Matthew 14.4 and Mark 6.18, an aorist active indicative is translated with an iterative force (“John kept telling Herod”). The NLT also brings out the proleptic (futuristic) aorist. Daniel Wallace states that “the aorist indicative can be used to describe an event that is not yet past as though it were already completed” (563). Thus, in Luke 6.49, it is said that the foolish man’s house “will crumble” (aorist active indicative), and Matthew 9.29 says “it will happen” when Jesus uses the aorist passive to speak of a presently-occurring miracle.

One passage which the NLT has handled especially well is 1 Corinthians 3.16,17. Here, Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as indwelling the church. His use of the second person plural is often obscured in English translations, and, as a result, the passage is often treated as a parallel to 1 Corinthians 6.19, which speaks of the Holy Spirit living in the individual Christian. The NLT makes this exegetical error impossible with its rendering: “Don’t you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? God will bring ruin upon anyone who ruins this temple. For God’s temple is holy, and you Christians are that temple.”

The NLT also often tries to translate the genitive case with more than a simple “of.” For example, the phrase in Matthew 10.6, “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” is treated as a

genitive in simple apposition<sup>41</sup> (“the people of Israel – God’s lost sheep”). Another example is the genitive of product<sup>42</sup> in Matthew 24.15: “the sacrilegious object that causes desecration.”

One of the most common grammatical changes in FE translations is conversion of passives to actives. Such a change is necessary in many languages, and even the English language favors active statements over passive ones. To give one example, in Luke 24.16, the NLT says “God kept them from recognizing him” rather than the literal “their eyes were kept from recognizing him.” This change not only make the sentence more English-sounding, but also makes explicit the agent who caused the men not to recognize Jesus. Such a practice is usually quite justifiable, but not always so. The change from passive to active in 2 Thessalonians 2.7 changes the meaning of the passage, and can affect its interpretation. Speaking of the Man of Lawlessness, this verse (in the Greek) says that the “mystery of lawlessness” will be restrained until the restrainer “is taken out of the way.” In the NLT, however, it is said that the restrainer “steps out of the way,” thus shifting the agent of activity.

Another place where a grammatical change has adversely affected the meaning is in 1 Timothy 1.15. Here, the NLT says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – and I *was* the worst of them all.” The translators have here needlessly changed the present (εἰμι ἐγώ) to a past tense verb, thus obscuring Paul’s personal feeling that he is still the worst of sinners.

#### Miscellaneous Observations

There are a few more observations to be made regarding the accuracy and effectiveness of the NLT NT. One of the goals of a functional equivalence translation is to simplify the language so that it can be quite easily understood. For the most part, this involves the removal of large or unusual words. However, a number of unusual words still can be found in the NLT. For example, people are sometimes said to be “indignant” (Matt. 20.24; Matt. 26.9; John 11.33).

Matthew 24.15 and Mark 13.14 contain the mouth-filling phrase, “the sacrilegious object that causes desecration” (with “abomination of desolation” in a footnote). One also finds “berate” (Matt. 26.10), “retorted” (Matt. 27.4), “propaganda” (Acts 4.17), “infuriated” (Acts 7.54), “waylay” (Acts 25.3), “hounding/hounded” (Acts 22.4, 26.11), “hucksters” (2 Cor. 2.17), “loudmouthed braggarts” (Jude 16), and “tribulation” (Rev. 7.14).

There are many places where the NLT is worded in such a way that it becomes quite vivid and compelling. For example, in Matthew 10.38, Mark 8.34, and Luke 14.27, Jesus says that if anyone wants to be his follower, “you must . . . shoulder your cross. . . .” In Luke 9.33, it is said that Peter “blurted out” his foolish statement. In Luke 9.36, “the voice died away.” Luke 10.20 has “your names are registered as citizens of heaven.” In Luke 23.5, it is said of Jesus’ accusers that “they became desperate.” In Colossians 4.14, Paul’s companion is called “Dear Doctor Luke.” James 1.14 says “your life is like the morning fog.” In Revelation 1.14, it is said that Christ’s voice “thundered like mighty ocean waves.” James 5.3-5 and 2 Cor. 11.16-21 are other examples of especially vivid passages.

There are a few readings in the NLT which are difficult to classify except to say that they are downright strange. Chief among these is Matthew 23.36, which says, “I assure you, all the accumulated judgment of the centuries will break upon the heads of this very generation.” One is left to wonder where this bizarre “breaking upon the heads” idiom came from and what it might mean. In Acts 13.7, it is said that Bar-Jesus “had attached himself to the governor, Sergius Paulus.” What exactly had Paul been doing when he said in Acts. 26.11 that he “even hounded them in distant cities” (cf. Acts 22.4, “hounding some to death”). There is also the term, “seven spirits,” found in the book of Revelation. Revelation 4.5 has “seven spirits,” but in 1.4 and 3.1, the same term is rendered “sevenfold Spirit.” There is also Mark 12.1, where it is said that

“Then Jesus began telling them stories,” which in modern vernacular could be understood to mean that he was lying to the people. It is also interesting to note that the term “disciples” is often translated as “believers” (e.g., Acts 6.1; etc.), and “brothers” often becomes “friends” (e.g., Acts 3.17).

### Chapter 3

#### Idioms and Other Figures of Speech in the NLT

Every language is seasoned with idioms and figures of speech. An idiom, as defined by Beekman and Callow, is “an expression of at least two words which cannot be understood literally and which functions as a unit semantically” (121). Since idioms are figures of speech, and since no two cultures share the same idioms, it is usually unwise to translate them in a word-for-word manner. One example is the New Zealand idiom, “I feel like a box of fluffy ducks” (“I feel excited and enthused”). If this idiom were translated word-for-word into another language, only confusion would result, and meaning would be lost. When an idiom or other figure of speech appears in a source-language document such as the Greek New Testament, there are three things that can be done: (1) The Greek figure of speech can be retained. For example, the idiom, “stop his bowels” from 1 John 3.17 would be rendered word-for-word as “stop his bowels.” (2) An equivalent modern English figure of speech can be substituted. For example, a translation might replace “stop his bowels” with a similar idiom, such as “turn his back.” (3) The figure of speech can be dropped, and instead the idea can be expressed in non-figurative language. For example, “stop his bowels” can be translated as “refuse to help.”

One common biblical idiom is using the term “son of” to accentuate a person’s most notable characteristic. For example, Judas is called the “son of destruction” in John 17.12. Here, the NLT clarifies that Jesus means he is characterized by destruction in the sense that he is “the one headed for destruction.” In 2 Thessalonians 2.3, the man of lawlessness is also called “the son of destruction,” but here it is interpreted to mean “the one who brings destruction.” In Luke 20.34, “the sons of this age” become “people here on earth.” For “the son of man,” see the section on theological terms.

Another New Testament idiom is the term “breaking of bread,” which poses an exegetical challenge in that it could refer to the Lord’s supper or a simple meal. Of its five NT occurrences, the NLT translates this idiom as follows: “sharing in the Lord’s supper” (Acts 2.42), “met in homes for the Lord’s supper” (Acts 2.46), “we gathered to observe the Lord’s supper” (Acts 20.7), “ate the Lord’s supper together” (Acts 20.11), and “when we break the loaf of bread” (1 Cor. 10.16).

Idiomatic expressions are also involved in the levying of blessings and curses. For example, Jesus’ beatitude, “Blessed are those who mourn” becomes “God blesses those who mourn” (Matt. 5.4). Specifying God as the giver of the blessing is the most common way in which the NLT handles such blessings. In Luke 11.27, “Blessed is the mother who gave you birth” becomes the more common “God bless your mother.” Sometimes the term “blessed” (*makarios*) is rendered as “privileged” (Luke 10.23; 14.15) or “God will reward you” (Luke 14.14). Regarding curses, the expression, “woe to you,” can be seen as “What horrors await you” (Matt. 11.21), “How terrible it will be” (Matt. 18.7; Matt. 23), “What sorrows await you” (Luke 6.24). Revelation 8.13 has the eagle crying, “terror, terror, terror,” and in Revelation 18, the people cry, “How terrible, how terrible.”

Other common New Testament figures of speech include the use of “seed” to signify descendants (Matt. 22.25; Luke 1.55; John 7.42; Acts 3.25; 7.5-6; Rom. 1.3; 4.13,16; Gal. 3.16; etc.), and the use of “walk” to indicate one’s behavior or way of life (Rom. 6.4; 8.4; 2 Cor. 5.7; Eph. 4.1; etc.). Such idiomatic expressions are dropped by the NLT in favor of a literal modern rendering (although footnotes often accompany such changes).

Some of the most common figures of speech are those associated with body parts. Below is a list of several examples of anatomical figures of speech in the New Testament, along with

the NLT's renderings.

<u>Figure of Speech</u>	<u>Passage</u>	<u>NLT Rendering</u>
Head (lift up your heads)	Luke 21.28	stand straight and look up
(head over . . . the church)	Ephesians 1.22	authority
(the head, . . . Christ)	Ephesians 4.15	the head of his body
(husband is head)	Ephesians 5.23	husband is the head of his wife
Eyes (eyes full of adultery)	2 Peter 2.14	They commit adultery with their eyes
(the eyes of your heart)	Ephesians 1.18	your hearts will be flooded with light
Face (set his face to go)	Luke 9.51	Jesus resolutely set out
(the face of the earth)	Luke 12.56	the appearance of the earth
(not to receive face)	Luke 20.21	not influenced by what other think
(unknown by face)	Galatians 1.22	didn't know me personally
Mouth (from the mouth of God)	Matthew 4.4	every word of God
(mouth of . . . witnesses)	Matthew 18.16	confirmed by two or three witnesses
(entered my mouth)	Acts 11.8	I have never eaten anything forbidden
Tongue (other tongues)	Acts 2.4	other languages
(tongues of angels)	1Corinthians 13.1	any language in heaven or on earth
Ears (come to governor's ears)	Matthew 28.14	if the governor hears about it
(the ears of the church)	Acts 11.22	when the church at Jerusalem heard
(itching ears)	2 Timothy 4.3	tell them whatever they want to hear
Arm (the arm of the Lord)	John 12.38	his saving power
(with a high arm)	Acts 13.17	powerfully

Hands (the hand of the Lord)	Luke 1.66	the hand of the Lord
(by the hands of lawless men)	Acts 2.23	with the help of lawless Gentiles
(whatever your hand decided)	Acts 4.28	according to your eternal will and plan
Bosom (in Abraham's bosom)	Luke 16.23	with Abraham
(in the bosom of the Father)	John 1.18	near to the Father's heart
Heart (hardness of heart)	Mark 10.5	hard-hearted wickedness
	Mark 16.14	stubborn refusal to believe
(it came into his heart)	Acts 7.23	he decided
(cut to the heart)	Acts 2.37	Peter's words convicted them deeply
	Acts 7.54	infuriated
(hidden person of the heart)	1 Peter 3.4	the beauty that comes from within
Belly (serve their own belly)	Romans 16.18	serving their own personal interests
Bowels (straightened in your bowels)	2 Corinthians 6.12	you have withheld your love from us
(the bowels of Christ)	Philippians 1.8	the tender compassion of Christ
(shuts up his bowels)	1 John 3.17	refuses to help
Loins (let your loins be girded)	Luke 12.35	be dressed for service
(the fruit of his loins)	Acts 2.30	one of David's own descendants
(the loins of your mind)	1 Peter 1.13	think clearly and exercise self-control
Womb (from his mother's womb)	Luke 1.15	even before his birth
(opens the womb)	Luke 2.23	a woman's first child
Feet (feet are swift to shed blood)	Romans 3.15	They are quick to commit murder

(How beautiful are the feet)	Romans 10.15	How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news
Heel (lift up his heel against me)	John 13.18	has turned against me
Blood (born not of blood)	John 1.13	not a physical birth
Flesh and Blood	Matthew 16.17	from any human being

Numerous other examples could be added to the list above. From this list, one should notice the various ways in which the NLT deals with such figures of speech. Many times, if the idiom is changed, a literal rendering will be given in a footnote. One can also see from the above list how the same figure of speech can have different meanings in different contexts.

There are several places in the NLT where a Greek idiom or other figure of speech is retained. For example, “My yoke fits perfectly” (Matt. 11.30), “the love of many will grow cold” (Matt. 24.12), “he walked away, about a stone’s throw” (Luke 22.41), “doing this to cut the ground out from under the feet of those who boast” (2 Cor. 11.12), “I feel as if I am going through labor pains for you again” (Gal. 4.19), “May your roots go down deep into the soil of God’s marvelous love” (Eph. 3.17), and “the message God has planted in your hearts” (James 1.21).

More frequently, the NLT will replace a Greek idiom or figure of speech with a modern English equivalent figure of speech. For example, in Matthew 5.22, the NLT has “idiot” for the term, “Raca,” and “curse someone” for “say, ‘you fool.’” In Matthew 7.13, “the way that leads to destruction” is changed to “the highway to hell.” In Matthew 26.43, “their eyes were heavy” becomes “they just couldn’t keep their eyes open.” In Matthew 27.4, “What [is that] to us?” becomes “‘what do we care,’ they retorted. ‘That’s your problem.’” In Luke 1.18, Elizabeth is said to be “well along in years” rather than “advanced in her days.” In Luke 5.12, “full of

leprosy” becomes “an advanced case of leprosy.” In Luke 5.21, “Who is this who speaks?” becomes “Who does this man think he is?” In Acts 7.54, “they gnashed their teeth at him” becomes “they shook their fists in rage.” In Acts 10.2, “doing much almsgiving to the people” becomes “he gave generously to charity.” In 1 Corinthians 11.14,15, “doesn’t nature itself teach you” is rendered as “isn’t it obvious. . . ?” In Philippians 3.5, Paul’s statement that he is “a Hebrew of Hebrews” becomes “So I am a real Jew if ever there was one!” In 1 Thessalonians 5.4, “you are not in darkness” is changed to “you aren’t in the dark about these things.” In 1 Timothy 4.2, the consciences that are said to be “seared” in the Greek become the more common “dead” consciences. In all of the above instances, a somewhat idiomatic phrase is rendered with a modern idiomatic equivalent. The effect on the translation is overall positive. One verse, however, poses some problems. In 1 John 2.4, the phrase “I know him” becomes “I belong to God,” a figure of speech which is not equivalent to the idea of the original.

The most common way in which the NLT deals with Greek idioms is to convert them to a non-figurative English expression. For example, when Jesus speaks of the “right eye” and “right hand” in Matthew 5.29-30, the NLT has “your eye – even if it is your good eye.” In Matthew 7.6, the term “dogs” is rendered as “unholy people,” which, although it clarifies, seems to lose some of the impact of the Lord’s statement. In Matthew 10.41, that which is done “in the name of a prophet” is now done “as one who speaks for God” (with a footnote). In Matthew 11.19 and Luke 7.35, “wisdom is justified by her children” becomes “wisdom is shown to be right by what results from it.” Like these two examples, most of the NLT’s literal renderings are excellent in clarifying the meanings of the NT idioms. There are occasions, though, where the expressions gets heavily paraphrased, such as in Luke 16.9, where “you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings” becomes “your generosity stores up a reward for you in heaven.” The following chart

gives additional examples of where the NLT NT has translated an idiom or other figure of speech with a more literal expression.

<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Greek Idiom/Figure of Speech</u>	<u>NLT Literal Rendering</u>
Matthew	18.20 in my name	because they are mine
	23.1 sit on Moses' seat	are the official interpreters of scripture
	24.8 beginning of the birth pangs	beginning of the horrors to come
	26.23 dipped his hand in the bowl with me	is eating with me now
	27.25 his blood on us	we will take responsibility for his death
Luke	1.33 the house of Jacob	Israel
	1.34 I do not know a man	I am a virgin
	3.8 bear fruit	prove by the way you live
	4.25 the heaven was shut up	there was no rain
	12.20 your soul is required from you	you will die
	12.35 keep your lamps burning	be . . . well prepared
	13.16 this woman, a daughter of Abraham	this dear woman
	15.23 the fatted calf	the calf we have been fattening in the pen
	17.13 they lifted up their voices, saying	crying out
	24.1 the first day of the week	Sunday
John	14.26 in my name	as my representative
	20.31 in his name	believing in him

Acts	4.37	laid it at the apostles' feet	brought the money to the apostles for those in need
	26.14	to kick against the goads	it is hard for you to fight against my will
Romans	11.16	if the firstfruit is holy, so is the lump	since Abraham and the other patriarchs were holy, their children will also be holy
	12.20	you will heap burning coals on their heads	they will be ashamed of what they have done to you
1 Corinthians	5.6,7	Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened.	Don't you realize that even if one person is allowed to go on sinning, soon all will be affected? Remove this wicked person from among you so that you can stay pure.
	7.1	it is good not to touch a woman	it is good to live a celibate life
	7.14	your children would be unclean	your children would not have a godly influence
	12.13	all were given one Spirit to drink	we have all received the same Spirit
	15.32	I fought with beasts at Ephesus	fighting wild beasts – those men of Ephesus
2 Corinthians	5.3	we will not be found naked	we will not be spirits without bodies
Galatians	6.5	each will bear his own load	we are each responsible for our own conduct

Ephesians	6.1	obey your parents in the Lord	obey your parents because you belong to the Lord
Colossians	1.15	the firstborn of all creation	supreme over all creation
2 Thessalonians	2.4	he sits in the temple of God	he will position himself in the temple of God
1 Timothy	5.22	lay hands hastily on no man	Never be in a hurry about appointing an elder
2 Timothy	4.17	I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion	he saved me from certain death
2 Peter	1.14	soon put off this earthly tent	my days here on earth are numbered and I am soon to die
1 John	2.20	you have an anointing from the Holy One	the Holy Spirit has come upon you
	2.27	the anointing you received	you have received the Holy Spirit
	5.21	keep away from idols	keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts
Revelation	1.5	the firstborn of the dead	the first to rise from the dead

Many of the above passages are accompanied by footnotes giving a more word-for-word rendering of the Greek idiom. Some of the literal interpretations given above are subject to dispute (perhaps most notably the two from 1 Cor. 7), but for the most part they are helpful, and make the translation more readable and effective..

The original writers of the New Testament used current idioms and figures of speech to enhance and flavor their writings. It is only natural, then, and appropriate that translations also

make use of current idioms and figures of speech. Such must be done, of course, without altering the meaning of the passage, creating ambiguities, or compromising the style of the original writer. As an idiomatic translation, the NLT inserts a great many modern idiomatic expressions into passages which are generally straightforward in the Greek. For example, the sneer of the scribes and Pharisees is made to bridge the centuries when the “tax collectors and sinners” of Matthew 9.11; Mark 2.15,16; Luke 5.30 are referred to as “such scum.” Other examples of modern idiomatic renderings include “Get out of here, Satan” (Matt. 4.10), “babble on” (Matt. 6.7), “on the lookout” (Matt. 13.45), “their worship is a farce” (Matt. 15.9), “who in the world can be saved?” (Matt. 19.25; Mark 10.26; Luke 18.26), “pointing” for “speaking” (Matt. 21.45), “pass from the scene” (Matt. 24.34), “Pilate saw that he wasn’t getting anywhere” (Matt. 27.24), “Quiet down” for “Peace, be still” (Mark 4.39), “The apostles returned to Jesus from their ministry tour” (Mark 6.30), “keep a sharp lookout” (Mark 13.35), “they didn’t get their stories straight” (Mark 14.59), “he broke down and cried” (Mark 14.17).

From the book of Luke, one finds expressions such as “source material” (1.1), “Come on, let’s go to Bethlehem” (2.15), “wisdom beyond his years” (2.40), “his boyhood home” (4.16), “they mobbed him” for “they drove him out of town” (4.28), “he slipped away” for “passing through” (4.30), “spread like wildfire” (4.37), “wild with rage” (6.11), “his heart overflowed with compassion” (7.13), “Who does this man think he is, going around forgiving sins?” (7.49), Jesus “began a tour” of the nearby cities (8.1), “they began their circuit of the villages” (9.6), “how long must I . . . put up with you?” (9.41), “if his bill runs higher than that . . . I’ll pay the difference” (10.35), “they grilled him” (11.53), “milling about and crushing” each other (12.1), “Now take it easy!” (12.19), “you say, ‘Today will be a scorcher’” (12.55), “Now what? I’m through here . . .” (16.3), “I know just the thing!” (16.4), “Yes, it will be ‘business as usual’”

(17.30), “she wore him out” (18.4), “this woman is driving me crazy” (18.5), “all the people hung on every word he said” (19.48), “they love to parade around in flowing robes” (20.46), “They stopped short, sadness written across their faces” (24.17). Perhaps the oddest idiomatic rendering in Luke is the mention of the “secret agents” sent out to spy on Jesus in 20.20.

Other examples of idiomatic expressions in the NLT NT include “The Scriptures point to [lit. testify concerning] me” (John 5.39), “Who do you think you are?” (John 8.53), “having a good night’s rest” (John 11.13), “How can you be so stupid?” (John 11.49), “take heart” (John 16.33), “the three o’clock prayer service” (Acts 3.1), “You’re out of your mind!” (Acts 12.15), “Paul . . . looked the sorcerer in the eye” (Acts 13.9), “they went to the synagogue for the services [lit. “and sat down”]” (Acts 13.14), “He put up with them” (Acts 13.18), “Let them go through legal channels” (Acts 19.38), “the day I set foot in the province of Asia” (20.18), “suddenly drop dead” (Acts 28.6), “the Kingdom of God is not just fancy talk” (1 Cor. 4.20), “break out in thanksgiving” (2 Cor. 9.11), “Are we trying to pat ourselves on the back again?” (2 Cor. 5.12), “Have you lost your senses?” (Gal. 3.3), “they are hopelessly confused” (Eph. 4.17), “throw yourself into your tasks” (1 Tim. 4.15), “It straightens us out” (2 Tim. 3.16), “What’s more. . . .” (1 Pet. 2.5).

Overall, the NLT’s use of modern English idioms is good. Such expressions enhance the vividness and communicative power of the text, although, on rare occasions, they can be a bit distracting. A couple of the NLT’s idiomatic renderings sound like they came straight from television. For example, Onesimus and Tychicus are said to be the Colossians’ source for “all the latest news” (Col. 4.9). In Ephesians 6.4, when Paul says, “And now a word to you fathers,” one can hardly help but think he said “and now a word from our sponsors.” First Corinthians 8.1 gets a bit too conversational when it says, “Now let’s talk about food that has been sacrificed to

idols.” Some dynamic effect may have been lost in the translation of Galatians 3.23, where, instead of saying that people were “imprisoned and guarded” by the Law of Moses, the NLT has Paul saying, “we were kept in protective custody, so to speak.”

One of the greatest strengths of the NLT NT is its treatment of idioms. Although those who desire a more formally equivalent word-for-word translation will likely be disappointed, as far as functional equivalence goes, the NLT succeeds in communicating the meaning of the text more clearly and vividly than perhaps any other major modern translation. Rather than sounding stuffy and distant, the language of the NLT makes it sound as though the biblical authors are writing for people today. Its idiomatic style draws the reader in and makes the Bible come alive, without doing injustice to the style of the original. Someone has said that the best translation is the one which people actually take off the shelf and read. According to this criterion, the NLT should perform very well.

## Chapter 4

### Doctrinal Bias in the NLT

As explained in chapter one, when making a translation of the Bible, the translator must of necessity engage in a certain amount of interpretation and paraphrase. This is unavoidable because no two languages work the same way, and thus a word-for-word translation would be very difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend. Since no one approaches the job of translation with a totally *tabula rasa* mind, there is always the possibility that the translator's preconceived doctrines and interpretations will affect the finished product. Since the form of the text is less strictly adhered to, a thought-for-thought translation like the NLT demands special scrupulousness on the part of the translator. The more freedom he has to change the wording of the text, the more he must be on guard against letting the product be colored by his own ideas.

Perhaps the most common cases of doctrinal bias are those associated with the philosophies known as Calvinism and Premillennialism. The large majority of Protestant churches holds to one or both of these teachings. Recent translations have also been influenced by the fastest-growing movement in Evangelical Christianity – Pentecostalism. When a translator comes from a background of one of these three schools of thought, it is very difficult for him to interpret the text without doing so in light of his preconceived beliefs.

This paper is not suggesting that the translators of the NLT schemed and conspired to sneak their doctrinal biases into the translation in an effort to make the Bible conform to their teaching. Instead, it will be assumed that the doctrinal bias found in the NLT exists there because the translators honestly interpreted the text in that way. Done intentionally or not, however, bias is bias, and when the translation is made to say something which the author never intended, it is in error, and needs to be corrected.

In every translation (as well as in the original Greek), there are passages which can be easily interpreted with a Calvinistic, Premillennial, or Pentecostal slant. If this were not the case, these teachings would not be so ubiquitous. Thus, this paper does not seek to criticize passages which *could* be understood in a Calvinistic, Premillennial, or Pentecostal fashion. Instead, this chapter will focus on passages where the meaning of the original has been changed to produce an unambiguous example of doctrinal bias. The remainder of the chapter is divided into four sections, which deal with Calvinism, Premillennialism, Pentecostalism, and passages relevant to how and when a person receives salvation from sin.

#### Is the NLT Biased Toward Calvinism?

Calvinism is that body of doctrine associated with the reformer and theologian John Calvin (1509-1564) and his book, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Although Calvin's doctrines did not originate with him, he systematized and explained them in such a compelling way that they have been associated with him ever since. The distinctive features of Calvinism have been further simplified and systematized into the "five points" which make up the familiar acrostic, T.U.L.I.P. The letters of this acrostic stand for Total Hereditary Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints.

Calvin himself defines original sin as "a hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature, extending to all the parts of the soul, which first makes us obnoxious to the wrath of God, and then produces in us works which in Scripture are termed works of the flesh" (2.1.8). In other words, "each person is by birth a totally wicked and depraved individual. He receives this wicked and sinful heart by inheritance and is as a result estranged or separated from God" (Williams 2). This wicked nature and estrangement from God is a direct result of Adam's sin. So, Calvin said:

Therefore, the only explanation which can be given of the expression, “in Adam all died,” is that he by sinning not only brought disaster and ruin upon himself, but also plunged our nature into like destruction; and that not only in one fault, in a matter not pertaining to us, but by the corruption into which he himself fell, he infected the whole seed. (2.1.6)

Children are thus “cursed from the womb” (2.1.6), and “their whole nature is, as it were, a seed-bed of sin, and therefore cannot but be odious and abominable to God” (2.1.8). Sin, then, is not an act of free will, but instead the result of a wholly depraved nature which cannot be changed except by an act of God.

This doctrine of original sin seems to have been inserted into several passages in the New Living Translation. Before examining these various passages, however, it would be germane to discuss the NLT’s treatment of the Greek word σάρξ. *Sarx* is traditionally associated with the pony word, “flesh,” but, as mentioned in chapters one and two, the actual meaning of the Greek word *sarx* and the English word “flesh” rarely correspond to each other in the New Testament. The New International Version has been harshly criticized by some in non-Calvinistic circles for its translation of the metaphorical *sarx* as “sinful nature.” As one reviewer said, “*Nature* has to do with one’s birth; *sinful* means full of sin. Therefore the conclusion, according to the NIV, is that one is born full of sin” (Vick 2). Such is not a necessary conclusion, however. The reviewer in question is calling attention to only one of the several meanings of the term “nature.” According to Merriam-Webster’s 10<sup>th</sup>, this word refers to “1 a: the inherent character or basic constitution of a person or thing: ESSENCE b: DISPOSITION, TEMPERAMENT . . . 5: a spontaneous attitude (as of generosity) . . . 7 a: humankind’s original or natural condition b: a simplified mode of life resembling this condition. . . .” Although it is true that the word “nature”

is derived from the French word for birth, it is also true that the word commonly refers to one's attitude, disposition, or temperament. Would it not, then, in this sense, be accurate to describe mankind as having a sinful nature? If every single accountable person ever born has sinned (and done so repeatedly), would it not be reasonable to assert that humankind does indeed have a tendency or disposition (nature) that causes people to sin?

Thus, the term "sinful nature" does not necessarily imply the Calvinistic doctrine of original sin. Of course, a Calvinist would understand "sinful nature" to refer to total depravity, just like he would interpret the word "flesh" in the older translations to also refer to total depravity. This is not to say that "sinful nature" is the best rendering of metaphorical *sarx*. It would be better if the term was translated as "sinful desires" or "sinful passions," since these terms communicate the idea of the word without lending themselves quite as readily to a Calvinistic interpretation.

Before proceeding with the rest of this section, it must be noted that an evaluation or refutation of Calvinism is outside of the scope of this paper. It will only be stated that the NLT itself refutes the doctrine of inherited sin in Ezekiel 18.19,20:

"What?," you ask. "Doesn't the child pay for the parent's sins?" No! For if the child does what is right and keeps my laws, that child will surely live. The one who sins is the one who dies. The child will not be punished for the parent's sins, and the parent will not be punished for the child's sins. Righteous people will be rewarded for their own goodness, and wicked people will be punished for their own wickedness.

Also, in Matthew 19.4, Jesus makes the statement that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to children – quite a strange statement from the Lord if it were indeed true that children are born

wicked and estranged from God.

This study has isolated four passages in particular which suggest hereditary total depravity. Foremost among them is the straightforward statement found in Ephesians 2.3: “We were born with an evil nature, and we were under God’s anger just like everyone else.” There is no ambiguity in this verse in regard to hereditary depravity. The Greek in this passage says the following: καὶ ἡμεθα τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς ὡς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ (“and we were by nature children of wrath as also the rest”). The point of controversy here is the meaning of the word φύσει. It can mean “natural endowment or condition, inherited from one’s ancestors” (Bauer 869), as in Romans 2.27, which speaks of uncircumcision as the natural condition of Gentiles, and Romans 11.21,24, which speaks of the olive tree which is naturally wild. The word can also refer to “natural characteristics or disposition” or “the regular natural order” (Bauer 869). These last two definitions would certainly be true of humankind. It is the first definition which is debatable in Ephesians 2.3. The context speaks of the Ephesian Christians as having been “dead” in their “trespasses and sins” (2.1). This spiritual death is associated with their walk (i.e., behavior) and their obedience to the devil and the philosophies of the world, by being “disobedient” (2.2). The cause of this sinful situation was the Ephesians’ “fleshly desires, indulging the cravings of the flesh and of the mind.” Thus, from the context it becomes plain that Paul is speaking of their “nature” as being their habitual or customary behavior of sinning. To interpret the statement in verse three as a reference to hereditary depravity is to introduce a new and incongruous idea into the context. Paul always links sinfulness and spiritual death with personal behavior, not with any inherited condition.

The other three passages which suggest total hereditary depravity are found in the book of Romans. In Romans 5.12, the NLT says, “When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human

race.” The main problem here is that “the entire human race” is a debatable paraphrase of the phrase εἰς τόν κόσμον (“into the world”). The NLT wording seems to suggest the Calvinistic idea of sin as a genetic disease. Paul may have been suggesting nothing more than that sin did not exist on earth before Adam’s transgression.

Romans 7.18 is another questionable paraphrase. McCord’s fairly literal rendering of this passage says, “I know that nothing good is living in me, that is, in my flesh; for to will is present in me, but to do the good is not.” In the context of this chapter the apostle is speaking of the difficulties associated with living under the Law of Moses. He asserts that the Law could not prevent him from being controlled by his sinful desires. As a matter of fact, the law actually made his condition worse. In verse 18, he is speaking of someone who has become a slave to his sinful passions, despite his good intentions to do what is right.

In the NLT, verse 18 says, “I know I am rotten through and through as far as my old sinful nature is concerned.” First of all, the idea of being “rotten” is nowhere found in the text. Paul is speaking of a lack of willpower, not of a hopelessly corrupt nature. Secondly, “sinful nature” is probably not the best choice of words in this verse. Paul is here using the word *sarx* to signify his human weakness. He speaks as if his mind was struggling with his physical body in his attempt to withstand temptation. His body will not comply, though, since it has become so subservient to sin. It is helpful to notice that earlier in Romans 8, Paul links spiritual death to the “fruit” of one’s “spiritual passions” (i.e., personal sin) (7.5). He asserts that he died (spiritually) when sin “sprang to life” and deceived him through the command (the Law of Moses), killing him (7.9-11). Paul was not born spiritually dead. Instead, he died at the moment he disobeyed the law and committed personal sin.

Romans 8.3 is fairly heavily paraphrased and has some information added. The end result

is a reading which suggests that the flesh itself is sinful. Here is how the verse reads in the highly literal ASV: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. . . .” In the NLT, this verse says, “The law of Moses could not save us, because of our sinful nature. But God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours, except that ours are sinful. God destroyed sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.”

The way this verse is worded shifts the emphasis of Paul’s statement. In the ASV reading, the phrase, “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” makes the point that Christ lived as a real human being. In the NLT, however, the way that the phrase “except that ours are sinful” is set off from the rest of the sentence makes the emphasis fall on the “fact” that human bodies are sinful.

This verse makes the statement that the human body is sinful, an unbiblical statement. If the human body was sinful, then Christ would necessarily be under the condemnation of sin, too, for he was “made like his brothers in every way” (Heb. 2.17). The body itself also cannot be sinful because the body is merely an instrument, a “tabernacle.” It is the spirit which is guilty of sin. “Every sin a man commits is outside the body, but he who fornicates sins against his own body” (1 Cor. 6.18<sup>43</sup> FHV). A person can sin with the body or against the body, but the body itself is not sinful. While the teaching of this verse is not exactly something associated with Calvinism, it was placed in this section because of its ramifications for inherited sinfulness.

The doctrine of unconditional election (i.e., predestination) seems to have affected the translation of Acts 2.39. Unconditional election is the doctrine (based on the absolute sovereignty of God) that, before the creation God chose who would and would not be saved

without any basis in the foreknowledge of their individual life choices. As Calvin explains it,

We say, then, that Scripture clearly proves this much, that God by his eternal and immutable counsel determined once and for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction. We maintain that this counsel, as regards the elect, is founded on his free mercy, without any respect to human worth, while those whom he dooms to destruction are excluded from access to life by a just and blameless, but at the same time incomprehensible judgment. (3.21.7)

In Acts 2.39, after promising forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit through repentance and immersion, Peter states, “For the promise is to you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to himself” (NASB). The word in question is the verb “will call” (προσκαλέσθαι – aorist middle deponent subjunctive). The NLT translates it as “all who have been called by the Lord our God.” In dealing with this verb, one must keep in mind that the aorist tense is used to indicate time only in the indicative mood. As Daniel Wallace states, “In the *indicative*, the aorist usually indicates *past* time in reference to the time of speaking. . . . Outside the indicative and the participle, time is not a feature of the aorist” (555). Thus, the Greek does not spell out when this calling takes place. The KJV, ASV, NASB, and NIV translate it in the future tense (“will/shall call”), while the RSV and NRSV translate it as a gnomic aorist (“calls”). Although the latter treatment retains Luke’s ambiguity, the former is an accurate reading as well, since the New Testament teaches that a person is called through the Good News (2 Thess. 2.14), something which could not have happened previous to the events in Acts 2. The NLT reading is suspect because it is more specific than the Greek, and the choice of past tense seems to suggest the Calvinistic understanding of the doctrine of

predestination.

Another aspect of Calvinism which seems to have affected the translation of the NLT is the doctrine of irresistible grace. Irresistible grace is the denial of human free choice in regards to obedience to God and salvation. Since humans are born depraved, it is totally outside of their power to do what is good and right and be pleasing to God. Such can only be accomplished by the Holy Spirit taking control of the person's life and causing him to live a godly life.

One passage which is quite heavily paraphrased and suggests the doctrine of irresistible grace is 1 Corinthians 2.14. Here is the literal translation of 1 Corinthians 2.14 as it appears in the NASB: "But a natural (ψυχικὸς) man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." Paul is simply stating that unspiritual (ψυχικός -- "one who lives on the purely material plane" -- Bauer 894) or worldly person has no inclination to submit to the word of God. Here is how the NLT's paraphrase reads: "But people who aren't Christians can't understand these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them because only those who have the Spirit can understand what the Spirit means." If this statement were true, then no one could ever become a Christian. Non-Christians do not have the Spirit (Acts 2.38; John 14.17; Rom. 8.9). Therefore (according to the NLT), non-Christians cannot understand the word of God. Therefore, non-Christians cannot obey the word of God and be saved (Heb. 5.9; Matt. 7.21-27). Although the following line of reasoning is unbiblical, it is perfectly in harmony with the Calvinistic teaching that obedience is impossible without the Holy Spirit touching and controlling the sinner's heart. As Calvin says,

. . . nothing is accomplished by [preaching the Good News] unless the inner teacher, the Spirit, open the way into our minds. Only those, therefore, come to

him who have heard and learned of the Father. And in what is the method of this hearing and learning? It is when the Spirit, with a wondrous and special energy, forms the ear to hear and the mind to understand. (2.2.20)

There are several texts in the NLT NT which speak of the Holy Spirit “controlling” a person’s life, sometimes without any corresponding terminology in the Greek. It is true that the New Testament speaks of being “led” by the Spirit. The word ἄγω is used in conjunction with πνεῦμα in Romans 8.14 and Galatians 5.18. Both of these are translated well in the NLT with the words “led” and “directed.” The person who is “led” by the Spirit is the person who obeys the word of God, the Spirit’s sword. Other passages, however, give questionable readings. For example, Ephesians 5.18 (NLT) says, “let the Holy Spirit fill and control you.” There is no Greek word corresponding to the NLT’s “control.” In fact, the Greek only says to be “filled in [or by the] spirit” (πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι).<sup>44</sup> A similar paraphrasing takes place in Galatians 5.22, where “but the fruit of the Spirit is” is translated as “But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us.” Also consider Romans 8.5-6,9:

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death. But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace. . . . But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you.

Literally, this passage speaks of those who “walk according to the Spirit” (8.5), as well as those who have “the spiritual mind” (8.6) and are “in the Spirit” (8.9) The focus is on the believers’ choice of lifestyle and thought patterns, but the NLT translators have shifted the focus to the

activity of the Holy Spirit.

### Is the NLT Biased Toward Premillennialism?

Premillennialism is a complex doctrine which appears in many forms. Its basic premise is that Christ was prevented from completing his mission during the incarnation, and he will someday return to earth to finally set up and reign over his messianic kingdom. One passage in the NLT NT which seems to have been mistranslated in accordance with this doctrine is 2 Timothy 4.1. Here is the quite literal rendering from the NIV: “In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge.” In this passage, Paul is putting Timothy under a solemn oath, with God and Christ as witnesses. He stresses the importance of his charge by referencing Christ’s imminent return and the fact that he is the ruler of all.

In the NLT, however, this verse is paraphrased so that the nouns have a different relationship to each other. It says, “And so I solemnly urge you before God and before Christ Jesus – who will someday judge the living and the dead when he appears to set up his Kingdom.” According to this rendering, the kingdom does not yet exist (in opposition to Col. 1.13; Mark 9.1), and will not until Christ returns and sets it up. This reading contradicts 1 Corinthians 15.24ff, which (in the NLT) says, “After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having put down all enemies of every kind. For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. . . .” At his return, Christ will not set up his kingdom. On the contrary, he will hand it over to the Father.

Premillennialism is often associated with Zionism, the belief that God’s promises to Israel have not been fulfilled. According to this theory, the Jews are still the chosen people of God, and are destined to reclaim Palestine before the return of Christ. A key verse related to this

topic is Romans 11.26, which (in the NLT) says, “And so all Israel will be saved.” The problem in this verse lies with the word, “so,” which is the translation of the Greek adverb οὕτως (“in this manner, thus, so” – Bauer 597). This word usually indicates the manner in which the action of the verb takes place. In the context of Romans 11, Paul has spoken of Israel as being pruned off of God’s tree of life because of the Jews’ unbelief. In verses 23 and 24, he declares that his people will be grafted in again if they discontinue their unbelief (which was his undying hope). Then, in verse 26, he says “in this way” (οὕτως – i.e., by putting their faith in Christ) all Israel will be saved.

Many translations use the word “so”<sup>45</sup> or “thus”<sup>46</sup> in the translation of οὕτως in Romans 11.26, which is unfortunate because these terms can easily be misinterpreted as if they were drawing a conclusion rather than citing the manner of Israel’s possible salvation. The translator of the Living Bible (who did not read Greek) made this mistake, and used the terminology “then all Israel will be saved.” Although the NLT corrects this error of the LB, their reading is still not satisfactory, since “so” can so easily be understood as meaning “then” rather than “in this way.”

There are other passages in the NLT which may possibly have been influenced by premillennial thought, but none are as significant as those mentioned above. For the NLT’s reading of Matthew 24.22, refer back to the section on unduly free paraphrase.

#### Is the NLT Biased Toward Pentecostalism?<sup>47</sup>

Pentecostal theology is characterized by a belief in the modern-day miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit, in the form of healings, tongue-speaking, and prophecy. There is one verse in particular in the NLT where the meaning has been abused in such a way that it suggests a Pentecostal interpretation. The passage in question is Romans 8.16. The NIV renders this verse quite literally: “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” The

meaning is plain: there are two witnesses to God that testify that someone is a Christian. First, there is the person's own spirit, and secondly, there is the Holy Spirit, which functions as God's seal of ownership (Eph. 1.13-14; 2 Cor. 1.22). The NLT has rearranged this verse, and, instead of having the Spirit testifying to God, the Spirit is speaking to the person he indwells: "For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children." Notice how the translators changed "with our spirit" to "to us," and added the phrase "deep in our hearts." Such is an inexcusable paraphrase.

Another passage which is very controversial in regard to Pentecostalism is 1 Corinthians 13.10. The passage is significant because it speaks of the cessation of miraculous gifts. In verse 8, Paul foretells that the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and miraculous knowledge will cease to exist. In verse 9, these gifts are spoken of as being "incomplete" (μέρους). Verse 10 says that "when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end" (NRSV). The big question with this verse is the meaning of "the complete" (τὸ τέλειον -- nominative neuter singular). It has been variously translated as "that which is perfect" (KJV, ASV), "perfection" (NIV), "the perfect" (RSV, NASB), and "that which is complete" (FHV). The best method of determining the meaning of *to teleion* in this verse is to compare the parallel Pauline passage, Ephesians 4.11-14. In this passage, the apostle says that God distributed spiritual gifts among his people in order to equip the saints and build up the body of Christ. These gifts are said to continue "until we all reach the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of God's Son, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of Christ's fullness, that we may be children no longer, tossed here and there by the waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (FHV).

Thus, it seems that Paul is saying that these spiritual gifts were given to aid the infant church, and the time was coming when God's new people would be more mature, and the

miraculous endowments would no longer be needed. This state was likely reached by the beginning of the first century, when the church was now largely Gentile, had been firmly planted in Europe, and the New Testament had been completed.

For the Pentecostal, however, the phrase, *to teleion* must refer to something eschatological, since their theology demands that miraculous gifts remain in the church until the coming of Christ or the end of the world. Some Pentecostal exegetes suggest that *to teleion* is a reference to Christ. Although a neuter adjective is used of Christ in 1 John 1.1, such is very unusual and one who holds this position has a formidable grammatical burden of proof. The only other interpretation in harmony with Pentecostalism is the one opted by the NLT: “But when the end comes, these special gifts will disappear.” The translation “the end” is not supported by any definition given in BAGD. Instead, *teleios* as a substantive more often refers to “what is perfect” (BAGD’s suggestion for 1 Corinthians 13.10). It is often used to distinguish people and things which are full-grown or mature (Bauer 809). In light of the Ephesians 4 parallel, *to teleion* in 1 Corinthians 13.10 should certainly be interpreted (and translated) along these lines.

One further item to be considered in this section is the translation of the word γλωσσα. The word refers to either the physical tongue (as in Luke 16.24), or to a language. The BAGD lexicon gives an additional third possibility, which poses “a special problem.” The alleged third possibility is “the broken speech of persons in religious ecstasy . . . as found in Hellenistic religion.” But is *glossa* used this way in the New Testament? There is no passage which demands that *glossa* should be understood as unintelligible ecstatic speech. The only place in the NT where *glossolalia* is described in depth plainly depicts it as speaking in a foreign human language which the speaker has never studied (Acts 2.4-12). Paul’s later statements that “tongues are a sign to unbelievers” (1 Cor. 14.22) and that they can be interpreted (1 Cor.

14.5,13,27-28) suggest the same thing, while adding the fact that the speaker did not always understand the language he was speaking (1 Cor. 14.13-15).

It seems, then, that *glossolalia* in the New Testament refers to speaking in other human languages and not necessarily to unintelligible ecstatic utterances. The English word “tongue” does carry “language” as a secondary meaning, but this is an antiquated usage and would be out of place in an idiomatic translation.

Here is how the NLT translates the word *glossa* when it refers to human speech. In Mark 16.17, it is said that the believers “will speak in new languages.” In Acts 2.4, the apostles begin “speaking in other languages,” and the people marvel in verse 11 that “we all hear these people speaking in our own languages.” In Acts 10.46 and 19.6, however, the people are “speaking in tongues” or “in other tongues.” In 1 Corinthians 12-14, the term “tongues” is used nine times, the term “unknown languages” is used nine times, and the word “language” (without “unknown”) is used twice.<sup>48</sup> In the seven occurrences of *glossa* in Revelation, it is translated as “language.” It seems that “tongues” and “unknown language” are used synonymously in those contexts which have often been interpreted as ecstatic utterances. “Languages” is used for non-miraculous speech, and in Acts 2, where the activity of the apostles is spelled out.

Some have objected to the use of the term “unknown language.”<sup>49</sup> Both this term and the word “tongues” lend themselves to an ecstatic utterance interpretation. But the languages under discussion were “unknown,” apparently both to the audience and the speaker, if there was no one with the gift of interpretation. “Tongues” will likely not be found objectionable because it is the traditional rendering, even though “languages” would be more exact.

#### Is the NLT Biased Toward Faith-Only Theology?

The Bible makes it clear that a person is saved through faith (Rom. 1.16,17; 3.22, 26;

Eph. 2.8). This is not to say that salvation is something that is earned by the believer. Salvation is wholly the work of God, yet he chooses to save those who possess faith (John 3.16). Biblical faith must, however, be properly understood. It is not simply belief in Jesus as the Son of God. Belief in Christ is necessary, of course (John 3.18; 8.24), but, as the Lord says, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into heaven’s kingdom, but the one who does the will of my heavenly Father” (Matt. 7.21 FHV). The book of James asserts that belief without action is really no faith at all (James 2.14-26). Biblical faith involves obedience (Matt. 7.21-27; James 2.20-23). It is clear from Bible teaching that one vital component of Christian faith is obedience to God’s commandment to repent and be immersed (Matt. 28.19; Rom. 6.3, 4). In fact, when a penitent believer is immersed, it is at this point that his sins are forgiven (Acts 2.38; 22.16; 1 Pet. 3.21). There are certain readings in the NLT, however, where the wording of the original has been changed and these truths have been obscured.

In particular, there are two passages in Romans (3.22, 25) and one in Ephesians (2.8) where the grammar has been abused. All three of these verses assert that salvation is “through faith” (διὰ πίστεως). In the NLT, however, this genitive of means<sup>50</sup> is converted into a temporal clause. Instead of saying that we are saved “through faith,” the NLT says “We are made right in God’s sight *when* we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins” (Rom. 3.22<sup>51</sup>), “We are made right with God *when* we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us” (Rom. 3.25<sup>52</sup>), and “God saved you by his special favor *when* you believed” (Eph. 2.8). Each of these are false statements (unless the word “trust” in Romans 3.22 is interpreted to include obedience). A person is made right in God’s sight when he obeys the Lord’s teachings, not just when he believes them (Heb. 5.9; Rom. 6.17; Matt. 7.21). Even if these statements were true, they would still be unduly free paraphrases. The phrase, “through faith,” is not difficult to understand, and it

communicates the meaning of the Greek much more accurately than the NLT's paraphrased rendering.

Another verse which places salvation at the moment of belief is Ephesians 1.13. In the NLT, this verse says, "And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago." The phrase "when you believed" is the NLT's translation of the aorist active participle, πιστεύσαντες ("having believed"). There is nothing grammatically wrong with the NLT's rendering. As Daniel Wallace states, "The aorist participle is normally, though by no means always, antecedent in time to the action of the main verb. But when the aorist participle is related to an aorist main verb, the participle will often be contemporaneous (or simultaneous) with the action of the main verb" (624). The main verb in this passage is an aorist indicative, ἐσφραγίσθητε, so the "believing" and the "sealing" could grammatically happen at the same time. However, the New Testament makes it plain that the Spirit is given to believers (Acts 5.32; John 7.38, 39; Rom. 8.9) at the point when they are immersed for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2.38).

Romans 3.26 is another verse which could have been worded better. It says that God "declares sinners to be right in his sight because they believe in Jesus." The English word "believe" is simply not deep enough to convey the meaning of τὸν ἐκ πίσεως Ἰησοῦ.<sup>53</sup> According to BAGD, πίστις in this verse must be interpreted as "trust, confidence, faith in the active sense" (Bauer 662-63). None of the meanings of "believe" given in *Merriam Webster's 10<sup>th</sup> Collegiate Dictionary* really convey this sense.<sup>54</sup>

To avoid giving an inaccurate impression, apart from these verses, the New Living Translation does teach that obedience (including immersion) is necessary for the forgiveness of sins. The NLT does talk about "baptism, which now saves you" (1 Pet. 3.21) and how we "were

baptized to become one with Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6.3). In Acts 2.38, Peter commands, “Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins,” and Paul is still told to “be baptized, and have your sins washed away” (Acts 22.16).

The same can be said for the other problems mentioned in this chapter. The NLT can be used just as well as any other version to challenge the doctrines of Calvinism, Premillennialism, and Pentecostalism. The sad part is that, by the poor renderings listed above, the NLT has fallen into the trap of contradicting itself. Hopefully, these problems will be corrected in later revisions.

### Concluding Remarks

Since its appearance, the Living Bible has been harshly criticized for its inaccuracies, and rightly so. But the New Living Translation is not the Living Bible. Rather than being a one-man paraphrase, the NLT is a legitimate committee translation that reflects the best of contemporary biblical scholarship. Virtually every verse has been changed, and practically every change is an improvement. Perhaps the greatest contribution made by the Living Bible was to illustrate how greatly the people hungered for a Bible written in clear, idiomatic English. With the publication of the NLT, Tyndale House has given the world a readable Bible which is also generally reliable.

This is by no means to say that the NLT is without fault. Like any other translation, the NLT contains errors, and some of them are serious indeed. This study has found that the NLT tends to engage in paraphrase at places where very little paraphrase is needed. The NLT New Testament also has a tendency to incorporate additional information into the text when it is not necessary to do so. There are a few isolated grammatical problems. The most serious shortcomings, however, are those passages which have been paraphrased in such a way that they suggest Calvinistic, Premillennial, Charismatic, or Faith-Only interpretations. Readers need to be alerted to these passages. At the same time, one should remember that other passages in the NLT NT can be used to refute each of these doctrinal systems.

Negative comments aside, the NLT NT does have many positive qualities to commend it. Foremost among these is the fact that it is written in a clear, dynamic, and engrossing English style. The NLT is a pleasure to read, and this makes it an especially useful translation for young people and those who do not have a background in Bible study. The NLT NT does an excellent job translating theological words, units of measure, and antiquated cultural references. The NLT is also more accurate than many other major translations in the way it handles gender-inclusive

language. Another benefit of the NLT is that the translation committee is still active, and a revision is already in the works.

This study began by stating that the NLT can be used as a test-case to measure the merits of its underlying translation philosophy, functional equivalence. Although not all FE translations are equal, the NLT NT does succeed as an effective Bible version. Its accuracy is on a par with most formal correspondence translations, and it is certainly more readable and understandable. The NLT thus serves to vindicate a responsible and scholarly approach to functional equivalence as the best method of translating the Bible for the general public. Formal correspondence translations will still be necessary for in-depth study, but formal correspondence translations are not the only ones which can be considered accurate and reliable.

Appendix

Text-Critical Matters in the NLT

In addition to translation philosophy, an important measurement of the quality of a translation is its underlying text. According to the “Introduction to the New Living Translation,”

The translators of the New Testament used the two standard editions of the Greek New Testament: The *Greek New Testament* published by the United Bible Societies (fourth revised edition, 1993), and *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (twenty-seventh edition, 1993). These two editions, which have the same text but differ in punctuation and textual notes, represent the best in modern textual scholarship (Bible Translation Committee xlii).

The last statement of the quotation given above is indeed true.

Regardless of which text a translation uses, though, the translators still must decide what to do with certain textual variants. Which ones deserve footnotes, and how will the more controversial textual problems be explained? Overall, the NLT’s approach to textual problems is rather conservative, and the textual footnotes are almost always helpful and elucidating (more so than its translational footnotes). The remainder of this appendix will briefly discuss the NLT’s treatment of ten well-known textual variants.

One passage in which the NLT has been curiously over-conservative is 1 John 5.7. This is the infamous “heavenly witness” passage. In the NLT, 1 John 5.7-8 says, “So we have these three witnesses – the Spirit, the water, and the blood – and all three agree.” A textual footnote after the word “witnesses” says, “Some very late manuscripts add *in heaven – the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And we have three witnesses on earth.*” The problem with the additional material given in the footnote is that it undoubtably never was part of

the original text, and thus does not deserve even a footnote.

Probably the only reason this passage was mentioned is because it is found in the KJV. The story of how it became part of the KJV's Greek Text (the *Textus Receptus*) is an interesting one. By the time of Erasmus, this "heavenly witness" passage had become part of the Latin Bible. However, Erasmus did not include this passage in the first two editions of his Greek New Testament because he had never seen it in any Greek manuscript. After being harshly criticized for omitting the passage, he rashly vowed that he would include it in his next edition if someone could produce a single Greek manuscript that contained these words. Thus, Erasmus' critics produced one manuscript (which they probably made themselves),<sup>55</sup> and Erasmus honored his bargain.<sup>56</sup> From Erasmus' text, the passage eventually made its way into the *Textus Receptus* and hence the KJV.

Modern critical scholarship, however, seems unanimous in rejecting the authenticity of the "heavenly witness" passage. From the Revised Version (1881) on, no major translation has placed these words in the text. As Lewis notes, this "*Comma Johanneum*" "is now dropped from almost all texts without the courtesy of a footnote" (*English* 43). The NLT's footnote gives the passage a measure of legitimacy which it does not deserve. In the words of Bruce Metzger, "That these words are spurious and have no right to stand in the New Testament is certain" (*Textual* 647).<sup>57</sup>

The NLT is not nearly so conservative, however, in its treatment of the ending of Mark. After Mark 16:8, the NLT has a blank space, then the "Shorter Ending of Mark," then another blank space and the "Longer Ending of Mark" with verses 9-20 numbered. A footnote attached to verse 8 says, "The most reliable early manuscripts conclude the Gospel of Mark at verse 8. Other manuscripts include various endings to the Gospel. Two of the more noteworthy endings

are printed here.” The NLT is correct in questioning the genuineness of Mark 16.9-20.<sup>58</sup> The problem is in printing the shorter ending in the text itself. Although there are some who still support the genuineness of verses 9-20, there does not seem to be any scholar who believes that the shorter ending is genuine. The shorter ending is useful only as a piece of evidence against the validity of the longer ending. As such, it finds its proper place in a footnote, and not in the text itself. It is somewhat misleading to place the shorter ending on a par with the longer ending as if they were both equally well-attested.<sup>59</sup>

Regarding the footnote, one might question the “various endings” to which it refers. The only other “ending” in existence (besides verse 8, the shorter ending, and verses 9-20) is the *Freer Logion* (an extra paragraph inserted after verse 14), existing today only in Codex Washingtonianus. The rest of the footnote is accurate. The longer ending is “noteworthy” because it exists in the vast majority of existing manuscripts, and has a great deal of tradition behind it. The shorter ending is “noteworthy” because of how it reflects on the genuineness of the longer ending, and because it was probably written earlier (Lane 602).<sup>60</sup>

The longest significant textual variant in the New Testament is John 7.53-8.11 (the *Pericope Adulterae*). In the NLT, this section is preceded by a blank space, and a centered bracketed italicized note that says, “The most ancient Greek manuscripts do not include John 7.53-8.11.” The passage is actually not found in any Greek manuscript prior to the fifth century, including P66, P75, Vaticanus, and Sinaiticus. It is missing from the oldest versions. It is not commented upon by any Greek Father prior to the twelfth century. Its style and vocabulary differs from the rest of John, and the passage is even a “floater,” appearing in some manuscripts after 7.36, 7.44, 21.25, and even after Luke 21.38. The evidence against its genuineness being so strong, the NLT is wholly justified in its note.<sup>61</sup> The following shorter textual variants will be

discussed in canonical order.

In Matthew 5.22, the phrase “without a cause” is placed in a footnote. GNT gives a “B” rating to omit this phrase (actually one Greek word – *eike*), which is lacking in P64, B, and  $\aleph$ , and would likely not be omitted by a scribe (see Lewis, *Questions* 113-14). In Matthew 6.13, the doxology to the model prayer (“For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen”) is placed in a footnote. GNT gives an “A” rating to omit these words, which are lacking in some of the oldest manuscripts (including Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Bezae), interrupt the train of thought, and would likely not be omitted if genuine (see Metzger, *Textual* 13-14 and Lewis, *Questions* 114-15).

John 5.4 is properly omitted from the text of the NLT and placed in a footnote. GNT gives an “A” rating to omit this curious account of an angel coming and troubling the waters of the pool of Bethesda. It is missing from P66, P75,  $\aleph$ , B, C, D, and others, and would not likely be omitted if genuine (see Metzger, *Textual* 179, Lewis, *Questions* 125-26).

Acts 8.37 is omitted from the text of the NLT, and placed in a footnote with a comment that reads, “Some manuscripts add verse 37.” This is a perfectly proper treatment of a textual variant not found in any Greek manuscript older than the sixth century.

Romans 16.24 is omitted from the text and placed in a footnote stating that “Some manuscripts add verse 24.” This is in harmony with the GNT, which gives an “A” rating to omit the verse. No question is raised regarding the integrity or authenticity of the doxology (16.25-27) or of the last chapter or last two chapters of Romans as a whole. The GNT places the doxology in single brackets with a “C” rating. This “indicates that the Committee had difficulty in deciding which variant to place in the text” (3\*), and that the passage “may be regarded as part of the text, but that in the present state of New Testament textual scholarship this cannot be taken as

completely certain” (2\*).

In 1 Corinthians 6.20, the KJV says to “glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” The words after “body,” being spurious, are omitted from the NLT without even a footnote. This is justified, since the words “and in your spirit, which are God’s” are lacking from P46,  $\aleph$ , B, A, C, and the Old Latin. The phrase was likely added by ancient monks, who, regarding the body as evil, had difficulty reconciling Paul’s statement with their own theology.

Ephesians 1.1 has “in Ephesus” in the text, with a footnote stating that “Some manuscripts do not include *in Ephesus*.” The editors of the GNT gave “in Ephesus” a bracketed “C” rating. The absence of this phrase in P46,  $\aleph$ , B, and a few others suggests that the Epistle may have been a circular letter.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>“There are now in print, according to Publisher’s Weekly, some 450 English translations, paraphrases or retellings of all or parts of the Old and New Testaments” (Gray 1).

<sup>2</sup>The NLT came with an original print order of 950,000 and a \$2.5 million promotional budget (Gray 2), and is available in over 50 different editions and bindings (“New Translation”).

<sup>3</sup>This is according to a press release from Hannibal-Lagrange College (“HLG’s”).

<sup>4</sup>For a thorough review of the LB, see Jack Lewis, *English* 237-60. Cf. also J. Noel Merideth, “The Living Bible Paraphrased” and Robert Bratcher, “Review of the Living Bible.” Bratcher, the translator of the TEV (Good News Bible) NT, takes issue with the following verses in the LB NT:

Matthew 5.18	1 Timothy 3.16
Mark 13.30	2 Timothy 2.8
John 1.17	Hebrews 5.7
John 13.20	Hebrews 9.18
John 13.23	1 Pet. 5.1

Romans 1.17 (and other passages where “justification” is paraphrased as “ready for heaven”)

The inaccuracies in all of these passages have been corrected in the NLT.

Most of the problems enumerated by Lewis have also been corrected, with a few exceptions, including 2 John 1 and 3 John 1, where the author is identified as “John” (the name of the author is not given in the Greek). The translation of “Beelzebub” as “Satan” (Matt. 12.24, 27) is also unchanged, as is the insertion of “the Law of Moses” in place of “you have heard that

it was said” in Matthew 5.27, 33, 38, 43. Romans 5.12 and Ephesians 2.3 both still contain readings that expound the doctrine of original sin. Second Timothy 4.1 still says that Christ is coming again “to set up his kingdom,” a thought which contradicts with 1 Corinthians 15:24. Romans 8:16 still says that the Spirit “speaks to us deep in our hearts.”

<sup>5</sup>For an example of a favorable review of the Living Bible, see William Kerr, “The Living Bible – Not Just Another Version.” According to Jack Lewis, this article has been reprinted and circulated as advertising by Tyndale House (*English* 246).

<sup>6</sup>For a brief comparison between the LB and NLT, see the three reviews in JETS 40:3 (Sept. 1997) 455-64.

<sup>7</sup>According to Tyndale’s web page, the Living Bible will remain in print indefinitely, despite the existence of the superior NLT. This is lamentable. If the LB was so inaccurate that it warranted a complete revision, why continue to sell the inferior original when a better revision is available? The answer, of course, is that Tyndale knows it can still make money from the LB. According to Paul Gray’s article in Time, Americans spend an estimated \$400 billion a year on Bibles.

<sup>8</sup>The survey was done in May 1996 by Barna Research. The quotations here are taken from *The Northern Michigan Christian* III:8, August, 1996. The survey was also available on Tyndale House’s home page ([www.tyndale.com](http://www.tyndale.com)), but has since been removed.

<sup>9</sup>Those who doubt that such archaisms and obscurities actually exist are challenged to read chapters 23 and 24 of Jack P. Lewis’ *Questions You’ve Asked About Bible Translations*, where he creates two stories constructed mostly of abstruse words and statements found in the KJV and ASV. See also Lewis, *English Bible* 53-61, 96-105, 192-97.

<sup>10</sup>Nida originally called this approach “dynamic equivalence,” but in his 1986 book *From*

*One Language to Another*, he renames it “functional equivalence,” since some translators had taken the “dynamic” idea too far and tried to “embellish or jazz up” the text (DeWaard and Nida 59, Preface).

<sup>11</sup>To give an example from the English language, the Random House Webster’s College Dictionary lists 110 different meanings for the word “run,” ninety-one meanings for “take,” and eighty-four meanings each for “break,” “turn,” and “set.”

<sup>12</sup>As the NLT translators correctly assert, “The context – not the lexicon – must determine which English word is selected for translation” (Bible Translation Committee xli).

<sup>13</sup>See Nida and Taber 16-17 for his discussion on the use of *sarx* in these passages.

<sup>14</sup>William Wonderly notes that:

Our traditional versions of the Bible, and the in-group religious language that is in turn influenced by them, are not only archaic (using language forms that are no longer in current use); they also use language forms that *never were* in current use. This is due to the interference from Hebrew, Greek, and Latin features of vocabulary, grammar, and style that has come about in the process of translating. We sometimes refer to this as *translationism*. It is most noticeable in the carrying over of Hebrew and Greek idioms into a language where they do not fit (*blessing I will bless, die the death, son of perdition*), but is more subtle (and perhaps a greater impediment to communication) in matters of style. For example, the style of the Pauline epistles, with their heavy use of verb-derived nouns and of intricately related subordinate clauses, is carried over into many of our traditional Bible translations to produce a style which is really foreign to the genius of the receptor language. (“Some” 130-31)

<sup>15</sup>Speaking of the NLT, the Bible Translation Committee says, “Its living language is not

only easy to understand, but it also has an emotive quality that will make an impact on the listener” (xlii).

<sup>16</sup>The “Introduction to the New Living Translation” states that it was “Written to be read aloud . . . the New Living Translation is recommended as a Bible to be used for public reading” (Bible Translation Committee xlii).

<sup>17</sup>Martin Luther took an idiomatic approach to his translation of the Bible, saying, “I endeavored to make Moses so German that no one would suspect he was a Jew” (qtd. in Bratcher, “Nature” 99).

<sup>18</sup>Wonderly gives the following as the three steps of indirect transfer:

1. Analysis or decomposition into basic concepts and kernel sentences within source language.
2. Transfer to equivalent kernel forms in receptor language.
3. Restructuring or recomposition in receptor language, at desired surface level (“Crib” 9-11, includes diagrams).

<sup>19</sup>This is discussed at length in Nida and Taber chapter 3.

<sup>20</sup>Wonderly defines literary languages as “languages that are spoken by relatively large numbers of people, which represent a complex and socially stratified society, and which have a literary tradition such that the well-educated or “cultured” person is expected to have a command of the language superior to that possessed by the uneducated person” (“Some” 126, cf. *Bible* 3).

<sup>21</sup>For an in-depth discussion of this matter, see Wonderly, *Bible* chapter 5, as well as Nida and Taber chapter 7.

The NLT claims to be written “generally at the reading level of a junior high student” (Bible Translation Committee xlii). The chart posted by Tyndale’s web page places the NLT’s

reading level at between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

<sup>22</sup>“Zephaniah 1:12 is a case in point. RSV had “I will punish the men who are thickening upon their lees.” What in the world does that mean? NRSV has, “I will punish the people who rest complacently on their dregs.” This is a bit more intelligible but is liable to be understood quite literally of derelicts on Skid Row” (Bratcher “Translating” 291).

Bratcher gives another notorious example of over-literalism. In the KJV, 2 Kings 19:35 has, “and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses” (cf. Isa. 37:36).

<sup>23</sup>An additional example is Acts 15.17, which changes “Edom” to “men” when quoting Amos 9.12.

<sup>24</sup>In his article, “Crib, Transposition, and Dynamic Equivalence,” Wonderly states,

[T]ransposition, or the moderate formal-correspondence type of translation, is ruled out – or ought to be – for Biblical translation. . . . But in point of fact our traditional Bible translations are almost all transpositions! Christians have managed to use them by learning the special variety of language in which they are written – a variety used only in religious contexts –, and people have come not only to tolerate this but to expect Bible language to be this way. (8)

<sup>25</sup>In this passage (Romans 8.30), δικαιόω actually occurs twice. In its second occurrence, it is left untranslated by the NLT (in the KJV/NIV it is rendered “justified”). In this verse, the translators have smoothed out the repetition in the original, making the reading less wordy and awkward. Compare: KJV – “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also *justified*: and whom he *justified*, them he also glorified;” NLT – “And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And he *gave them right standing with himself*, and he promised them glory.” The meaning of the passage is not affected.

Three other verses listed in this chapter contain untranslated words. In Romans 5.10, the second occurrence of καταλλάσσω is left untranslated because it seems redundant. In the first part of the verse, Paul states that Christians are reconciled. Then he restates the fact, “being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (KJV). Paul has simply restated the fact expressed in the first part of the verse. The NLT makes the statement smoother by eliminating the restatement without affecting the meaning.

In Romans 8.12, σάρξ appears twice in the Greek, but is only translated once by the NLT. This was done to smooth out a repetition. Paul apparently backtracks to explain the clause “debtors to the flesh” as meaning “to live after the flesh.” Compare: ASV – “So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the *flesh*, to live after the *flesh*,” NLT – “So, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what *your sinful nature* urges you to do.” In the NIV, the second *sarx* is translated as “it.”

Almost the exact same thing occurs in Ephesians 2.3. Here, Paul backtracks and explains “living in the lusts of our flesh” as meaning “doing the desires of the flesh.” The NLT has combined the two phrases: “following the passions and desires of our evil nature.” The NIV translated the second *sarx* in this verse as “its.” Although leaving words untranslated can be a dangerous activity, in these four verses, none of the meaning has been lost.

<sup>26</sup>See Nida and Taber 18-19 for more on the semantic differences between *dikaioo* and the modern use of “justify.”

<sup>27</sup>The *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.) lists definitions in chronological order of their appearance (19a). The noun “church” is defined as: “1 A building for public and especially Christian worship; 2 the clergy or officialdom of a religious body; 3 a body or organization of religious believers: as a the whole body of Christians, b

DENOMINATION, c CONGREGATION; 4 a public divine worship; 5 the clerical profession.”

Of these definitions, only 3a and 3c represent the meaning of *ekklesia* in the NT (except in 1 Corinthians 14, where the meaning is the same as 4).

<sup>28</sup>Although the Living Bible translates *monogenes* the same way in the text, John 1.14 is augmented by a footnote suggesting “His unique Son” as an alternate rendering. Likewise, John 3.16, 18 carry a footnote with the alternate translation “the unique Son of God.” In Hebrews 11.17, the word is omitted entirely.

<sup>29</sup>According to his comments at the 1988 FHU Preachers’ and Church Workers’ forum, McCord will change “unique” to “beloved” in reference to Jesus and Isaac in the next edition of his *New Testament* (which he now refers to as the FHV – “Freed-Hardeman Version”). This new edition already exists in the form of an English-Russian parallel Bible this writer saw in the southern Urals in November 1998.

<sup>30</sup>For an interesting discussion on the translation of *monogenes*, see the 1988 Preachers’ and Church Workers’ Forum – “Only Begotten, Translation, and Unity,” available in video or audio cassette form from the Freed-Hardeman University recording services (158 E. Main St. Henderson, TN 38340). Also available from FHU Recording Services is a three-lecture series given by Hugo McCord at the 1988 February Lectureship. His lectures deal primarily with the translation of *monogenes*. See also McCord, 493-494; Jack Lewis, *Questions* 359-364; and Dale Moody, “God’s Only Son.”

<sup>31</sup>The Living Bible does precisely the same thing in this verse.

<sup>32</sup>In the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, D. Edmond Hiebert states, “Most commentators take the washing as a reference to water baptism” (445). Cf. also Gordon Fee 204-05.

<sup>33</sup>Nida comments, “for most persons “flesh” has only three meanings: (1) meat which may

be purchased at the butcher's (but this is slightly obsolescent), (2) the flesh of a person, e.g., "She has put on a lot of flesh," or "That person is fleshy," and (3) sex, which is becoming increasingly a central meaning" (Nida and Taber 17). Nida took a survey of approximately fifty Bible translators, and asked them to evaluate the following renderings of *sarx*:

	ASV	NEB	TEV
1. Luke 24.39	flesh	flesh	flesh
2. 2 Corinthians 7.5	flesh	poor body	we
3. Romans 11.14	flesh	men of my own race	people of my own race
4. Acts 2.17	flesh	everyone	men
5. Romans 8.3	flesh	lower nature	human nature
6. 2 Corinthians 10.3	flesh	weak men	world . . . worldly
7. 1 Corinthians 1.26	flesh	human standard	human point of view

Asked to evaluate the ASV's translation in these passages (consistently translated "flesh"), their judgment was as follows: Good: 1; Unnatural: 2; Misleading: 3,4,6; Unnatural and misleading: 5,7. In all but the first instance (Luke 24.39), "flesh" in present-day English does not fit the context (Nida and Taber 17).

<sup>34</sup>See Beekman and Callow, chapter 3, for more information.

<sup>35</sup>For more on the possibility of a Thursday crucifixion, see the following sources:

Westcott, B. F. *An Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Cambridge and London: 1881. 343-49.

Aldrich, J. K. "The Crucifixion on Thursday – Not Friday," *Biblioteca Sacra* 27 (1870): 401-29.

Rusk, Roger. "The Day He Died," *Christianity Today*. (March 29, 1974): 4-6.

Rusk, using information from computer models to calculate the occurrence of full moons throughout ancient history, suggests Thursday, April 6, AD 30 as the exact date of Christ's death. For a dissenting opinion, see the article cited by H. W. Hoehner.

<sup>36</sup>The Greek word *aner/andros* could be used generically, of a man, or specifically, as a husband. The second option, being the rarer of the two, is the one which requires the burden of proof. In most, if not all, places in the New Testament where *aner* is properly translated as husband, this meaning is signaled by the presence of a genitive noun, such as "her," or the name of the wife, or the presence of *gune* with a genitive indicating that it means "wife" (Matt. 1.16, 19; Mark 10.12; Acts 5.9, 10; Rom. 7.2, 3; 1 Cor. 7.2-39; Eph. 5.22-33; 1 Tim. 3.12; etc.).

<sup>37</sup>For additional examples of explanatory expansion of the text, see the section on addition of information.

<sup>38</sup>Last year, two excellent books on this topic were published: D. A. Carson's *The Inclusive Language Debate: A Plea for Realism* and Mark L. Strauss' *Distorting Scripture? The Challenge of Bible Translation & Gender Accuracy*.

<sup>39</sup>"The present tense may be used to describe an event that repeatedly happens. . . . It is frequently found in the imperative mood, since an action is urged to be done" (D. Wallace 520).

<sup>40</sup>"The customary present is used to signal either an action that regularly occurs or an ongoing state" (D. Wallace 521).

<sup>41</sup>This phrase is actually probably not a genitive in simple apposition, since a genitive in simple apposition requires that both nouns be in the same case (D. Wallace 94, 96). In this case, "lost sheep" is accusative, and "house" is genitive. More likely, the phrase is an example of the attributed genitive, in which the head noun ("lost sheep") functions as an attributive adjective (D. Wallace 89). The force of the Lord's statement, then, is that the house of Israel is like lost sheep.

They are characterized by “lost sheepness.” It might be translated, “Go instead to the people of Israel, who are like lost sheep.”

<sup>42</sup>See D. Wallace 106-07.

<sup>43</sup>First Corinthians 6.18 is also poorly translated in the NLT. The thought of sin being “outside the body” is completely removed from the text. It says, “Run away from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body.”

<sup>44</sup>To the translators’ credit, the dative in this verse (*en pneumati*) was correctly translated as a dative of agency and not (as it is traditionally translated and understood) as a dative of content (“be filled *with* the Spirit”). For more on this, see D. Wallace 94, 375.

<sup>45</sup>One definition of “so” given in *Merriam-Webster’s 10<sup>th</sup> Collegiate Dictionary* is “then, subsequently,” and another is “most certainly, indeed,” and “therefore, consequently.” Although οὕτως can sometimes have this meaning, such is not the case in Romans 11, since Paul makes Israel’s salvation contingent upon their cessation of unbelief.

<sup>46</sup>One of the uses of “thus,” according to *Merriam-Webster’s 10<sup>th</sup>*, is as a synonym of “hence” or “consequently,” which will not do in Romans 11.26. The translation, “in this way” (as given in the FHV) is much more precise, and perfectly understandable.

<sup>47</sup>Although this paper does not aim to analyze the study notes found in the various editions of the NLT, there is one that is certainly worth mentioning in light of this chapter. Attached to John 14 in the NLT reference edition, there is a note entitled “Study: Guided by the Spirit.” It says,

Imagine how the disciples must have felt when Jesus returned to heaven, leaving them alone in a hostile world. Thankfully, Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to help them.

We also have the Holy Spirit with us today. He teaches us and gives us the strength we need to live for Christ. Look up the verses on the right to learn more about how the Holy Spirit works in our lives.

Among the verses listed in the study note are John 14.16-17 and John 16.13, passages which say that the Holy Spirit “will guide you into all truth.” The note clearly implies that Christians today experience the exact same miraculous guidance given to the apostles.

<sup>48</sup>First Corinthians 13.1 says, “If I could speak in any language on heaven or on earth . . . .” First Corinthians 14.9 says, “If you talk to people in a language they don’t understand, how will they know what you mean?”

<sup>49</sup>The KJV translators also decided to insert the word “unknown” into some of these passages (1 Cor. 14.2,4,13,14,19,27), thus creating the expression “unknown tongue.”

<sup>50</sup>According to Daniel Wallace, there are four basic uses of διό with the Genitive: agency (“by, through”), means (“through”), spatial (“through”), and temporal (“throughout, during”) (368-69). Of these, the dative of means is the only possible meaning for Romans 3.22, 25 and Ephesians 2.8.

<sup>51</sup>There are some good reasons to interpret Romans 3.22 in a way quite different from the NLT’s rendering. As Leon Morris observes,

The Greek translated *in Jesus Christ* is a genitive (“of Jesus Christ”), a genitive which most students understand as objective (as NIV, RSV, etc.). But it could be subjective, referring to the faith Jesus exercised, and the word *faith* could be taken in the sense “faithfulness”. . . . A reference to Christ is supported by the fact that the words *all who believe* may be held to be redundant if we translate *faith in Christ Jesus* in the immediately preceding section. (*Epistle 174-75*)

In other words, Paul might be affirming in Romans 3.22 that people are saved “through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.” Morris then suggests that the best answer may be to see the genitive in both ways. Perhaps Paul had both the objective and subjective genitive in mind (175). This is the usage Daniel Wallace describes as the “plenary genitive” (119-21). The rendering in the NLT does not leave this interpretive option open.

<sup>52</sup>The NLT’s translation of this verse is likely wrong for another reason. According to Morris, “Grammatically it is possible to take *in his blood* as qualifying *faith* (as KJV; so Hodge), but it is an unlikely understanding of the words. For Paul faith is in Jesus Christ, and it is not easy to see him speaking of faith in blood. It is better to see it as referring to propitiation. The propitiation is effected (a) through faith, and (b) in Christ’s blood” (*Epistle* 182). Thus, it is unlikely that Paul is speaking of our being justified “when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us” (Rom. 3.25 NLT).

<sup>53</sup>The wording of this phrase (“the one of faith of Jesus”) is somewhat unusual. It is usually interpreted to mean “those who have faith in Jesus.” But it could also mean “those who have the same kind of faith that Jesus had” (cf. Morris, *Epistle* 184).

<sup>54</sup>This dictionary defines “believe” as follows: “1 a: to have a firm religious faith b: to accept as true, genuine, or real 2: to have a firm conviction as to the goodness, efficacy, or ability of something 3: to hold an opinion: THINK.” Furthermore, in the section dealing with the word, “belief,” this dictionary says, “BELIEF may or may not imply certitude in the believer. . . FAITH almost always implies certitude” (104).

<sup>55</sup>“As it now appears, the Greek manuscript [Greg. 61] had probably been written in Oxford about 1520 by a Franciscan friar named Froy (or Roy), who took the disputed words from the Latin Vulgate.” The manuscript is now located in the library at Trinity College, Dublin.

(Metzger, *Text* 101).

<sup>56</sup>“Erasmus stood by his promise and inserted the passage in his third edition (1522), but he indicates in a lengthy footnote his suspicions that the manuscript had been prepared expressly to confute him” (Metzger, *Text* 101).

<sup>57</sup>Metzger sums up the evidence against the passage as follows:

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE: The passage is absent from every known Greek manuscript except eight, and these contain the passage in what appears to be a translation from a late recension of the Latin Vulgate. . . . The passage is quoted by none of the Greek Fathers. . . . The Passage is absent from the manuscripts of all ancient versions. . . . INTERNAL PROBABILITIES: As regards the transcriptional probability, if the passage were original, no good reason can be found to account for its omission, either accidentally or intentionally. . . . As regards intrinsic probability, the passage makes an awkward break in the sense.  
(*Textual* 647-49)

The editors of the GNT thus give an “A” rating to omit the passage.

<sup>58</sup>By way of brief summary, the main evidence against the genuineness of Mark 16.9-20 is as follows: These verses are missing from the two oldest manuscripts of Mark (Vaticanus and Sinaiticus), as well as the oldest Old Latin manuscript (Codex Bobbiensis –It<sup>k</sup>) and the oldest Old Syriac (Sinaitic Syriac). Eusebius (d. 339) said that the longer ending was lacking in “almost all” the Greek MSS he had seen, and that the most “accurate” copies ended at verse 8 (*Quaestiones ad Marinum* 1). Jerome (d. 419) also says that “almost all of the Greek codices lack the longer ending” (*Jer. Ep.* 120, 3). Most scholars think that verses 9-20 are written in a style different from Mark’s. Furthermore, verse 8 is the ending which best explains the origin of the others.

<sup>59</sup>The NLT is not the first version to print the shorter ending of Mark. The NASB prints it in italics and brackets after 16.9-20. The NRSV and NEB print the shorter ending, then the longer ending in the text, and the TEV prints the shorter ending after 16.9-20.

<sup>60</sup>For more on the ending of Mark, see Metzger *Textual* 102-06; *Text* 226-28. For a recent defense of the longer ending, see William Farmer's *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark*. Some significant journal articles from this decade include the works cited by J. T. Thomas and S. N. Helton. For a thorough discussion of textual questions related to the ending of Mark, see Brennan Hughes, "The Ending of Mark's Gospel," which concludes Mark originally wrote material beyond verse 8, but the last page of the codex was lost. Verse 8 being an awkward ending to the book, the shorter ending and then the longer ending were composed in the second century to compensate.

The classic defense of the longer ending (largely from a theological standpoint) is found in John Burgon's *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark*. Another defense of the longer ending's validity is found in J. W. McGarvey's *Commentary on Matthew and Mark*, although discoveries made after this book's publication have rendered some of his arguments void, and apparently caused him to change his mind (see Helton's article).

Whatever one believes about the ending of Mark, it is important to remember that all the information found in Mark 16.9-20 (except the drinking of poison) is contained in other New Testament passages. Furthermore, if Mark did write an ending to his book which has been lost, the Christian can be assured that none of the information found therein was necessary for mankind's salvation, since God through his providence has preserved his message (Matt. 24.35).

<sup>61</sup>For more on John 7.53-8.11, see Metzger, *Textual* 187-89, who concludes that "The evidence for the non-Johannine origin of the pericope of the adulteress is overwhelming" (187).

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