

Review, The New Living Translation

In 1996 Tyndale House Publishers put out the New Living Translation. It claims to be an improvement of The Living Bible, which was a paraphrase.

A paraphrase is a re-wording. Often it puts in additional words that are not in the original with the intention of making the meaning clearer. Unfortunately, these additional words often make room for the doctrinal bias of the translators. Unfortunately the search for a really good modern English translation has still not ended successfully.

We shall first print a correct translation of a passage, and then what the *NLT* has.

Matt 18:20 For where two or three have come together in My name, there I am among them.” (*NET*)

Matt 18:20 For where two or three gather together because they are mine. I am there among them (*NLT*)

What is the point of changing “in My name”?

Matt 26:28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Matt 26:28 for this is my blood, which seals the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out to forgive the sins of many (*NLT*).

Reformed people think of the redemptive blood of Jesus only on the cross, not in the Lord’s Supper. The separate sentence that includes the forgiveness of sins makes that separation more comfortable for them.

Mark 1:4 John the Baptist lived in the wilderness and preached that people should repent and be baptised for the forgiveness of sins.

Mark 1:4 The messenger was John the Baptist. He lived in the wilderness and was preaching that people should be baptised to show that they had turned from their sins and turned to God to be forgiven (*NLT*).

It is a Baptist view that baptism is essentially something the people to do externally show what God has already done to them spiritually. Though forgiveness is directly related to the baptism of John the Baptist, the *NLT* translates it in such a way that is the result of their “turning from their sins and turning to God.”

Acts 2:38-39 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off all whom the Lord our God will call. “

Acts 2:38-39 Peter replied, “Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you and to your children, and even to the Gentiles- all whom have been called by the Lord our God.” (*NLT*)

The addition of “Then” opens the way for the Pentecostal doctrine of subsequence. The Holy Spirit is normally one of the blessings of Baptism itself. “Then” suggests that baptism simply opens the way for it, or that Baptism is a condition for it. For the translators assume that the gift of the Spirit is something that may come some time after baptism. The omission of “For” as the connective between v. 38 and v.39 is wrong. Though “And even to the Gentiles” is not wrong theologically, it is not in the text, and unnecessary.

Luke 2: 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. (*NKJV*)

Luke 2: 11 The Saviour-yes, the Messiah, the Lord- has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David (*NLT*)

“To you” the important “dative of advantage”, has been omitted.

Luke 4: 18 The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor (*NKJV*)

Luke 4: 18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor (*NLT*). The word “anointed” is crucial in this quotation Jesus has made from Isaiah 61. The titles “The Messiah” and “The Christ” both mean “The Anointed One.” Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah is watered down to an “appointment.” The *Good News Bible* has done the same thing here.

John 1: 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (*NKJV*)

John 1: 1 In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God (*NLT*).

The translation “already existed” seems to go out of its way to invite the Arian notion that there once was (a time) when there was no Word. John uses “The Word” three times. Using it only once in such an important

passage loses important emphasis in this climax.

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (*NKJV*)

John 3:6 Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven (*NLT*).

When the Scriptures contrast “Spirit” and “flesh”, “flesh” regularly means sinful human nature. Original sin as the need for baptism has been removed from the passage. It simply says that human nature is not as good or as new as the life given by the Spirit.

Romans 3:26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (*NKJV*)

Romans 3:26 And he is entirely fair and just in this present time when he declares sinners to be right in his sight because they believe in Jesus (*NLT*)

Romans 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. (*NKJV*)

Romans 3:28 So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law (*NLT*).

“To make right with God” is not an adequate translation for “to justify”, because it may wrongly suggest that God stops the justified person from sinning any more. The point is that God does not reckon, or count, His sin against Him, but credits Him with a righteousness that is not his own. Justification is “through faith”, because it is received. “Because of faith” or “because they believe” wrongly suggests that faith is a work, a reason in a sinner for his justification.

1 Cor 10: 16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? (*NKJV*)

1 Cor 10:16 When we bless the cup at the Lord’s Table, aren’t we sharing in the benefits of the blood of Christ? And when we break the loaf of bread, aren’t we sharing in the benefits of the body of Christ? (*NLT*).

Here there are two serious errors. Paul says that the communion is between the cup and Christ’s blood, between the bread and Christ’s body. *NLT* translators do not accept that those who come to the Lord’s Supper receive anything but bread and wine. Paul speaks about “participating” in the next verse, not here. So the translators skew the text to talk about the benefits of the eating and drinking, rather than what the eating and drinking actually is!

1 Cor 11:29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. (*NKJV*)

1 Cor 11:29 For if you eat the bread or drink the cup unworthily, not honouring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God’s judgment on yourself (*NLT*).

“Not discerning the Lord’s body” means “not being aware of the real presence of Jesus’ body. That is different from “not honouring” it, which is far less specific.

Gal 3:26-27 For you are all the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ.

Gal 3:26-27 So you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have been made like him (*NLT*).

The structure of the two verses is “Children of God...through faith...for...baptised.” Putting on Christ is a vivid way of expressing the thought of becoming a believer. In baptism Christians put off wicked ways, as they put off garments they have been wearing, and put on Christ as a new garment (Eph 4:22,24). The new self, created in God’s image, is really Christ himself. He covers us like a garment. The thought of being united with Him and becoming like Him is not in this verse. The connective “for” is crucial for the understanding that God works faith through baptism.