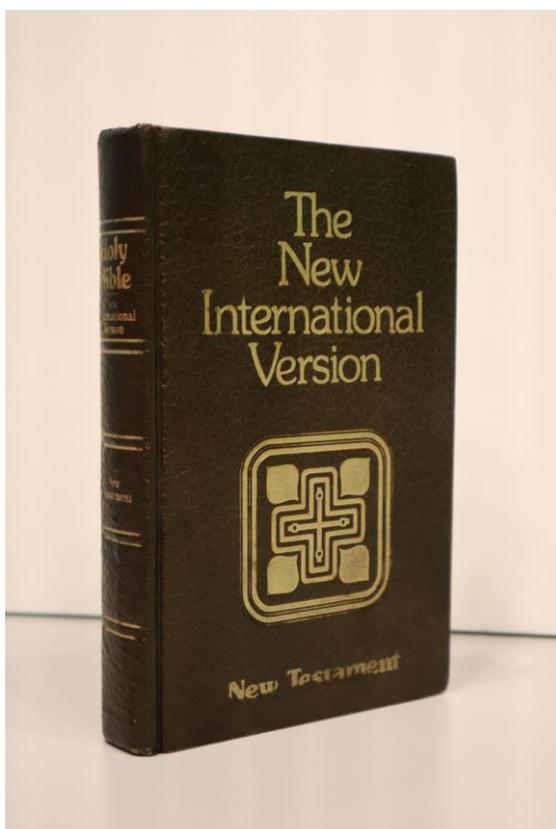




The English Bible (Part 3)

So, what's the fuzz about the NIV?



The NIV Bible (New International Version) is probably the most popular English Bible translation, now into its 450 million copies of production. It covers about one third of all Bible sales in the world and is widely used as the official version at churches, congregations and schools.

It belongs to one of the intermediate 'class' of translations (both word for word and meaning for meaning), which we have briefly covered in the last part of this article.

First printing, the NIV New testament, 1973

With much fanfare and expectations, the original **NIV project** began in **1965** under the auspices of the New York Bible Society (**Biblica**, now still holding the copyright). A committee was formed in producing a new Bible translation in the common language of the American people as well as the international English speaking community. A team of 15 biblical and Pastoral scholars, which represented a variety of denominations, worked from the oldest copies of reliable texts available, variously written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Each section was subjected to vigorous scrutiny (textual criticism) and revisions; and assessed in detail to come to the best option, sometimes through voting. Plans were made to continuously revise the text as new discoveries are made and as changes in the use of the English language occur. The New Testament was released in 1973 and the complete (Old and New Testament) NIV in 1976. It underwent a revision in 1984, becoming known as the 1984 version which most of us are using now.

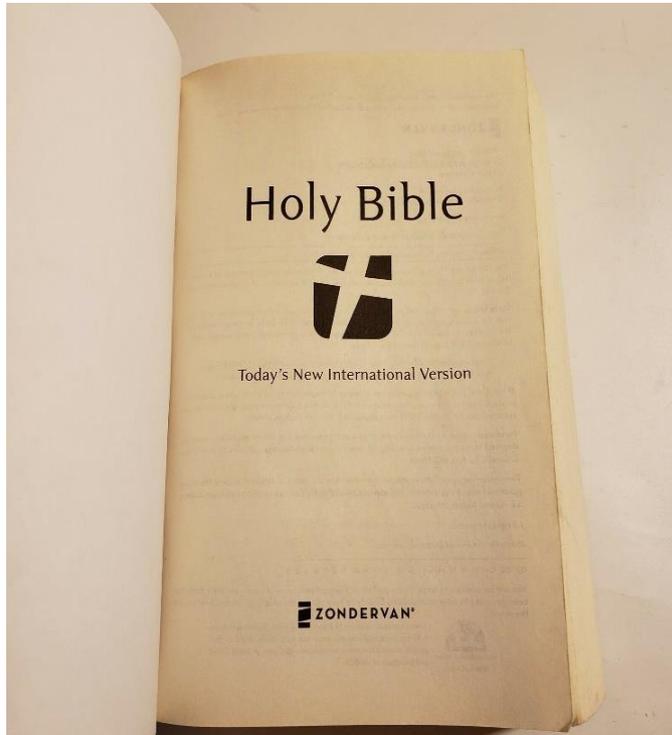


NIV project reported in US Newspaper in May 1968.

The Bible underwent another major update in 2005 (becoming known as the T-NIV, T standing for "Today's") and then in 2011 (becoming known as the 2011-NIV or NIV-2011). Much controversy has emulated from the two revisions such that some churches and schools are now shying away from the NIV as their 'official' version. Even in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Bible Society is leaning towards the newer ESV (English Standard version, first debuted in 2001) for its popular English/ Chinese (中英對照) bilingual version.

The T-NIV was no longer on sale since 2009 because of various issues, most notable being readers not agreeing to the "gender-neutral" revision introduced (e.g. "he" to

"they"). As for the update in 2011, for one year Zondervan, the publisher, sold both the update and the 1984 NIV, and after the one year had expired, the 2011-NIV was just sold as "the" NIV. Although this was a commercial decision, people again thought this was not exactly the appropriate thing to do.

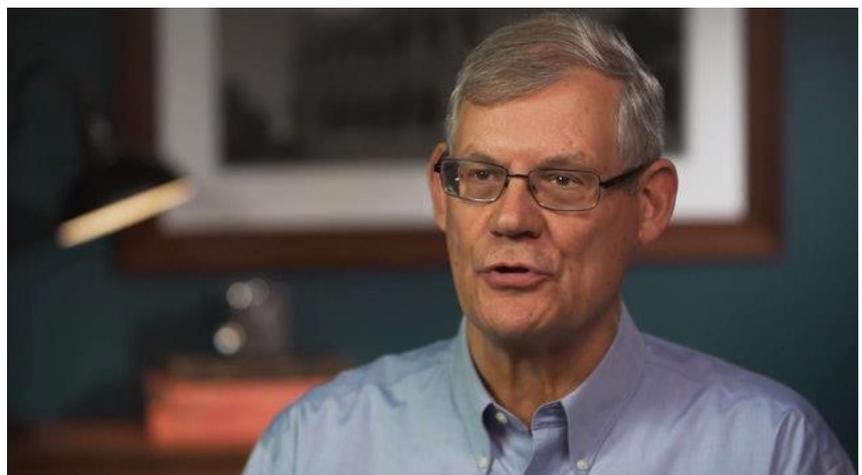


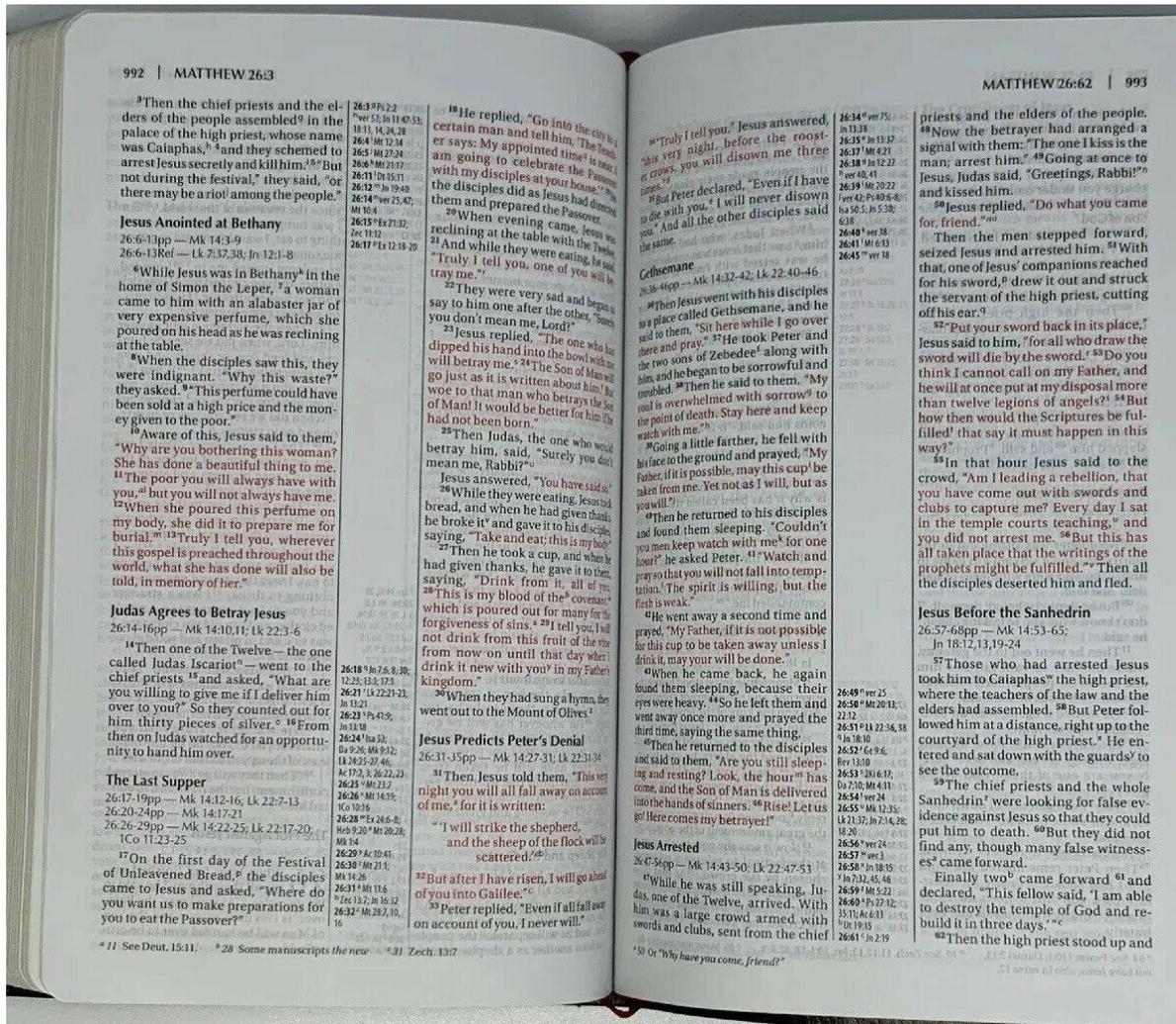
The 2011 Committee on Bible Translation (CBT) was made up of very well-known scholars. Douglass Moo (Wheaton College) was the Chairman, and some famous names included Kenneth Barker (Dallas), Craig Bloomberg (Denver), Gordon Fee (Regent), William Mounce (Gordon-Conwell), Bruce Waltke (Reformed Theological), Ronald Youngblood (Bethel), Karen Jobes and Richard France

The T-NIV

Occasionally spending an hour on a verse, the committee's goal was to accurately translate the Word of God in a way that enables readers and listeners to hear the Bible as it was originally written, and understand the Bible as it was originally intended. Nevertheless, with controversy mounting, inconsistencies in the text are examined as if under a microscope and the whole translation, past and present, becomes somewhat excoriated. There are now campaigns on the Internet to persuade people from using the new version.

Douglas Moo, renowned theologian at Wheaton College and author of many popular Bible Commentaries, is Chairman of the CBT





The 2011 NIV

There are a number of reasons why some parts of the Christian community come to refuse the 2011 Version. I will list a few of the important ones below:

1) It is from an evil publisher

The 2011 NIV was published (printed) by the same parent corporation that publishes other secular and 'devilish' books such as "*The Satanic Bible and Romances*" and "*The joy of Gay sex*".

The copyright of the NIV is still owned and controlled by Biblica. In the US, **Zondervan** is still licensed to publish and sell the NIV, while in the UK **Hodder & Stoughton** hold the license. **HarperCollins** is the mother company of Zondervan. The company also holds the *New York Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

HarperCollins also owns the Harlequin, Ecco Books (publisher for atheist writer Richard Dawkins and others), Avon, Harper Perennial, and Harper-One (which publishes books by CS Lewis, Desmond Tutu, Rob Bell, Ann Voskamp, Lee Strobel... among others). Under its Christian line, HarperCollins' acquisitions include BibleGateway, Thomas Nelson, and the WestBow Press.

It is difficult to make the accusations as one can obviously understand that a publishing company as big as HarperCollins must be doing its best to do everything they can as a publisher, both commercially and innovatively.

2) It has important missing verses



Greek New Testament scholar and theologian William Mounce, committee member, speaking about the revisions.

17 Missing Verses in the NIV?
- Bill Mounce", Youtube 2017.



Regarding the missing verses, the committee time and again explained that the 1984 NIV either never had these verses, had already included them in the footnotes, or have put brackets around them with the note "The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have..." etc. The gist of the matter is that these verses were not included in the oldest, most reliable Greek texts that were found closer to date (compared to say, manuscripts available in the thirteenth and sixteenth century AD). The NASB and the ESV in fact also treated these verses in the same way. Translators had used the best Bible sources available at the time, although older and more accurate sources have been found since then. The Committee considered that inclusion/exclusion of some of the verses generally do not affect theology of the person of Christ in any way. This again, some people do not agree.

3) **The 2011 NIV has deviated too much from the previous text** (This is probably a valid concern and apparently the crust of the controversy).

Compared to the 1984 NIV: 12056 verses (38.8%) are different.

Compared to the TNIV: 2491 verses (8.0%) are different.

(A very detailed comparison can be found at the Robert Slowley website:

[\(http://www.slowley.com/niv2011_comparison/\)](http://www.slowley.com/niv2011_comparison/)).



There are allegedly reasons put forward to explain this:

a) **Changes in the Use of English:**

For example:

- Words like “alien” has been better replaced with “foreigner”.
- In Exodus 4:14 Aaron’s “heart will be glad when he sees” Moses, but today we would just render this old idiomatic verse as “he will be glad to see you”.

b) **Progress in scholarship and new manuscript discovery.**

In the years since 1611 (publication of the King James Version), many older manuscripts (like the Dead Sea Scrolls) have been discovered and carefully evaluated by scholars. Their conclusion is that the older manuscripts are more reliable. Therefore, translations such in the new NIV actually reflect better Biblical scholarship than was available in 16th century when the 'standard' but older Bibles was published.

For example:

- The committee was more certain than we were forty years ago that the Greek word *kataluma* used in Luke 2:7 means “**guest room,**” not “**inn.**”
- They likewise know that those crucified on either side of Jesus (called *lēstai*) were “**rebels**” rather than “**robbers**” (e.g., Mark 15:27).
- The word translated “**demons**” in the original NIV of Psalm 106:37 is more accurately translated “**false gods.**”
- When the NIV was first translated, the meaning of the rare Greek word *harpagmos*, rendered “**something to be grasped,**” in Philippians 2:6 was uncertain. But further study has shown that the word refers to something that a person has in their possession but chooses not to use to their own advantage. The updated NIV reflects this new information in the word *harpagmos*, making clear that Jesus Christ being equal and in very nature God, did not

consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

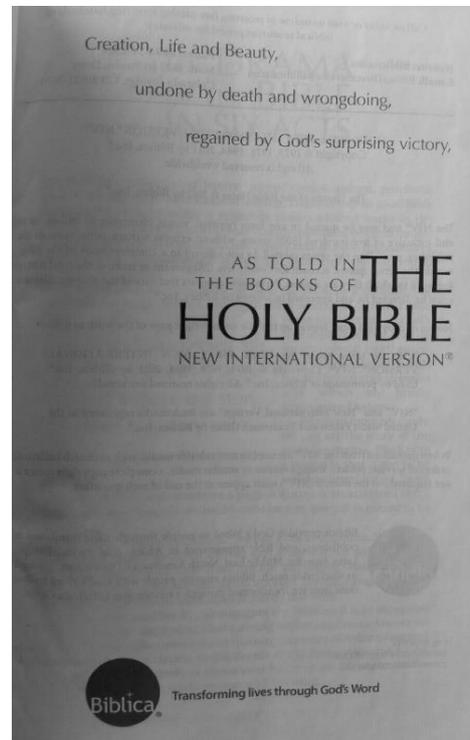
c) **Concern for more clarity.**

For example:

- Familiar verse we talked about in the last WOB, John 4:24 : "God is spirit, and his worshipers must **worship in spirit and in truth.**"

In the 2011 NIV it now reads " God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship **in the Spirit and in truth.**" There is a "the" before Spirit and spirit is now spelled with Capital letter to make it clear it is referring to the Holy Spirit. This is a welcomed revision by many, but not for some, because it carries a different meaning to them.

- The Greek pronoun in Matthew 1:16b is feminine singular, making it clear that the "whom" in the phrase "***of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ,***" refers back only to Mary, not to both Mary and Joseph. Rephrasing this half-verse it is now: "**and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah,**" making this now clearer.
- Verse 7:1 in 1Corinthians was before only in the footnote, which has now become the text: "**It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman**" (a view Paul had to qualify before).
- Philippians 4:13 now reads, "**I can do all this through him who gives me strength**" (i.e., to be content in all circumstances, whether in riches or in poverty), rather than previously: "**I can do everything through him who gives me strength.**" (我靠著那加給我力量的，凡事都能做。)
- 1Corinthians 11:10 now reads, "**It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head.**" The expression "**a sign of**" before "**authority**" in the 1984 NIV did not correspond to anything explicitly in the Greek and is increasingly recognized as an inappropriate rendition of this verse. Whether Paul wanted the women in Corinth to wear an external head covering while praying or prophesying, or simply to have long hair, or maybe even to wear a partial face veil, the point is they should be able to control what



they do or do not have on their heads.

- 1 Timothy 2:12 now reads, "**I do not permit a woman to teach or *assume authority over a man.***" (我不許女人講道，也不許他轄管男人，只要沉靜 - 和合本) 。 Much debate has surrounded the rare Greek word '*authentain*', translated in the 1984 NIV as "**exercise authority**", following on the translation in the KJV. "**Assume authority**" now looks like a "nicer" English rendering because it leaves the question open, as it must be unless we discover new, more conclusive evidence. The exercise of authority that Paul was forbidding was considered one that women inappropriately assumed, but whether that referred to all forms of authority over men in church or only certain forms in certain contexts is up to the individual interpreter to decide!
- "**Saints**" now become "**God's people,**" "**the Lord's people,**" "**the Lord's holy people**" and the like. Most people today think of a particularly good person when they hear the word "saint," whereas in the Bible it regularly refers to all believers. Sometimes the context suggests an emphasis on God's having declared them holy or the process of their becoming more and more holy, so a variety of similar expressions were used depending on the context. Some would consider that this is leaning towards **Catholicism**.
- Certain uses of "**Christ**" are now "**Messiah.**" This was true particularly in the Gospels and Acts, where the word seemed to retain its specific sense of the *coming deliverer of the Jews* rather than its more common New Testament usage, in which it seems to be virtually equivalent to a second name for Jesus.
- "**Sinful nature**", *sarx*, have gone back to the original meaning and translation of "**flesh**". Especially in Paul's epistles, "*sarx*" can mean either part or all of the human body or the human being under the power of sin. In an effort to capture this latter sense of the word, the original NIV often rendered "*sarx*" as "**sinful nature**". But this expression can mislead readers into thinking the human person is made up of various compartments, one of which is "*sarx*", whereas the biblical writers' point is that humans can choose to yield themselves to a variety of influences or powers, one of which is "**fresh**", the **sin-producing "sarx"**.

Here are 2 more examples from familiar verses where meanings are altered:

○ **Psalm 23:4**

1984 NIV: "***Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil***, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." (我雖然行過死蔭的幽谷，也不怕遭害，因為你與我同在；你的杖，你的竿，都安慰我)。

The 2011 NIV: "***Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil***, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." A footnote on "**valley**" gives the old alternative, "the valley of the shadow of death."

○ **2Corinthians 5:17**

1984 NIV: "**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**" (若有人在基督裡，他就是新造的人，舊事已過，都變成新的了)。

The 2011 NIV: "**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!**" A footnote gives the old alternative, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

The two translations have actually quite different meanings. Does Paul mean that the person in Christ is the new creation? Yes, most likely so. The objection then is that it sounds like the translators' 'updated understanding of Paul's "overall theology" now justifies moving away from a verse that is often memorized and turned to as a clear declaration of the radical nature of an individual's salvation.

The objection would be: A verse about how important it is to get saved, is now changed to what reads like: ' the coming of Christ brings on the restoration of all things that would culminate in a new heaven and new earth!' This in effect may be importing alternate theology into the verse, which is not appropriate or necessary.

Scan here for William Mounce's explanation:



When one considers individual words, the new version is **8%** new. That might not seem like a lot, but in schools and with Bible curriculum, verses are what is important, and many passages needed to be updated.

4) **Completely changing to the use of the 'gender-neutral' language**

Changes were made to “**he**” and “**him**” to “**they**,” “**them**,” or “**that person**.”

- John 14:23 –

“Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.””

The 2011 NIV: “Jesus replied: “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love **them**, and will we come to **them** and make our home with **them**.””



- Genesis 1:26-27 now reads: "Then God said, 'Let us make **mankind** [substitution for "man"] in our image, in our likeness.....'. So God created **mankind** [substitution for "man"] in his own image, in the image of God he created **them** [plural substitution for "him"]; male and female he created **them**." (神說：我們要照著我們的形像、按著我們的樣式造人，使他們管理海裡的魚、空中的鳥、地上的牲畜，和全地，並地上所爬的一切昆蟲。神就照著自己的形像造人，乃是照著他的形像造男造女) - 和合本，創 1:26-27。

In the first substitution of "**mankind**" for "man," the particularity of the '**first man**' is made unclear. The rationale for this would seem to be the desire to emphasize that all humanity is created in God's image. In verse 27, the second substitution of "**mankind**" for "**man**" again undermines the particularity of

Adam's creation, he who is father of all creation, created in God's image, and in whom all will die through his sin (Rom 5:12). The original text preserves both the particularity and universality which the 2011-NIV can undermine. It would also appear then that the 和合本 translation could be a more faithful translation.

- Psalm 8:4-5 now reads: "What is **mankind** ["man"] that you are mindful of them [substitution for "him"], **human beings** ["son of man"] that you care for them ["him"]? You have made **them** ["him"] a little lower than the angels and crowned **them** ["him"] with glory and honor."

Once again, the rationale for the updated translation seems to be the desire to emphasize a universal truth about all humanity - that humankind has received glory and honor as the crown of creation. The translation decisions, however, hide from view other things. First, and most importantly, the decision to use plurals mitigates the Messianic meaning of this psalm, its particular application to Christ. Secondly, the substitution of a generic term like "**human being**" or "**human beings**" for "**son of man**" (a consistent pattern in the 2011 NIV), weakens the understanding of "**Son of Man**" as the self-designation our Lord uses throughout the Gospels. This is of great importance, especially when it is seen in the light of **Daniel 7:13-14** and **Hebrews 2**. There that same term, "son of man," is used in a prophecy of our Savior's incarnation, where "**one like a son of man**" is "**given dominion and glory and a kingdom**".

The CBT which is seen to be trying to be politically correct and gender-inclusive (Is this really necessary as man and women **are** different?) however does not change any of the feminine pronouns (she/her) or change "mother," "daughter," or "woman" which can leave the reader wondering if they only have a problem with any references to men but not women. To be truly gender-neutral, one must change both the masculine and feminine word usages. Many of the pronouns "**he/him/his**" are used for general truths, applicable for both men and women, which the Committee has sought to make evident in their translation. It is questionable if they had jumped too quickly into 'application', which is the job of the individual reader or teachers rather than the job of the translator..... .

Above is basically a brief layout of what the fuzz is about. I find that it would be difficult to carry on enumerating examples and deciphering the irregularities. Interested readers can pursue further with the many trust-worthy websites on the

Internet addressing to this issue. Form your own opinion as you go along. This should be an intellectually and spiritually satisfying journey.

Here are some helpful links:

- 2011 NIV: Every last change <https://j.hn/niv-2011-every-last-change/>
- Updating the New International Version of the Bible: Notes from the Committee on Bible Translation <https://www.biblegateway.com/niv/Translators-Notes.pdf>
- List of New Testament verses not included in modern English translations https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_New_Testament-verses_not_included_in_modern_English_translations
- 17 Missing Verses in the NIV? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YC1oU2zNC_Q

Like some people would say: 'If God had wanted the Bible to be gender-neutral, He would have made it that way'. Could these subtle revisions mentioned above be changing the theology, the interpretation of the Gospel messages, and ultimately the reader's personal relationship with God? Is it possible that God is no longer revealed as He has chosen to reveal Himself? Would His wisdom and unique relationship with His children be lost in man's "translations"? As always, some would consider that these concerns are serious and menacing while others would like to think of the matter as superfluous and insignificant. You can decide.

The Bible contains God's anchoring and ever-lasting messages, not to those who regard it simply as historical facts and admiring the literary style therein, but to those who read it and recognize, discern and understand God's message to men. Men need the Word of God at this time as never before. That word must not be disguised in phrases that are no longer clear or hidden under words that have changed or lost their meaning. May the Lord take pleasure in all translations, be it in English or Chinese or any other languages, to speak to all people at this momentous time (some would dearly prefer to call it the *end-times*) and to help everyone to *understand* and *obey* His Word.