

Report from the Bible Translation Committee

Bible-Translation-Committee Members

Synod 2011 appointed as members to this committee the Revs:

- Andrew de Vries
- Michael Flinn
- Pieter van Huyssteen (Convenor)
- David Waldron

Mandate

Synod 2011 decided:

1. *That the 2011 revision of the New International Version (2011 NIV) be explicitly not approved for pulpit use and that the grounds be recorded in the minutes.*
2. *That a study committee be appointed to evaluate the English Standard Version (ESV) for its suitability for pulpit use.*
3. *That the NKJV be added to the list of Bible translations to be considered for use in the worship services.*

Introductory Comments

The Bible-Translation-Committee members were led by the following directives:

- Already Synod 1986 accepted the 1983-study committee's recommendation that the distinction Pulpit/Study Bible is a valid one.
- The current committee acknowledges that in searching for the ideal Pulpit Bible, one has to admit that not a single translation was, is, or will ever be absolutely perfect in every way. Each translation will have some shortcomings. Indeed, the critic could fairly easily "shoot down" any translation – in which case we won't have any pulpit Bible at all.
- Thus, rather than pursuing an endless study of the strengths and weaknesses of the ESV and NKJV, the committee decided to draw up a list of the minimum criteria to which they reckon any RCNZ pulpit Bible must comply. The committee did not find drawing up such a list to be difficult, because Synod 1986 already adopted the following pulpit-Bible criteria (please cf. below).
- The current committee also fully realises that the two Bible versions Synod charged us to evaluate (NKJV and ESV) are based on two different ground texts – the NKJV on the Textus Receptus (TR), and the ESV on the Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece (NA). However, for the following reasons the committee saw it beyond their mandate to embark on an endless comparative study into textual criticism:
 - Synod 1983, knowing that the NASB and NIV are based upon the NA ground text, nevertheless added them to the 1955-approved KJV which is based upon the TR. Thus already RCNZ Synod 1983 indicated that they accepted both ground texts (TR and NA) were valid texts upon which to base a translation.
 - Synod 1986 already declined the recommendation of the then study committee to study the issue of the different ground-text types.

Pulpit-Bible Criteria (already adopted by Synod 1986)

1. It must comply with the principle of literal accuracy

RCNZ Synod 1986 accepted, with one amendment, the principle of literal accuracy presented by the study committee to Synod 1983. With this approved amendment, the principle of literal accuracy, based on the doctrine of plenary inspiration (1Tim. 3:16,17), reads as follows: “...it is necessary that any translation which is to be used for the pulpits of our Churches should be accurate with respect to the words of the original text. And that all the more since the final appeal in all controversies is to the original tongues and if we wish to use a translation generally it should reflect the words of those tongues. (Acts 1986, Report 14, p.56, item ii)

Furthermore, it is clear from Scripture itself that the original writers did not necessarily understand the full implications of what they had written (1Pet. 1:10-12). The application of this principle would have us check the original and, where the words of the original are clear and make sense, they should be exactly reproduced. We cannot be sure that our attempts to supply meaning to the text will be any better than the original writers and so it is your committee’s opinion that the best translation is that which keeps interpretive alterations to the text to a minimum.” (Acts 1986, Art. 63-b)

Synod 1986 also accepted the characteristics of a pulpit Bible as set out by the 1983 study committee (Acts 1986, Report 14, p.57, item iv). These characteristics have all to do with literal accuracy and read as follows:

a) *Linking words, subjunctive, optatives and foreign (to the English speaker) thought forms should be retained since they reflect the original text accurately and since the preacher is able to explain the precise meaning such forms convey.*

b) *There should be a tendency toward a “word for word” translation since other passages which also use key words or phrases in the text under consideration, if quoted, should be seen to use the same word or phrases.*

c) *Archaic distinctions (as, for example, the difference between ‘you’ singular and plural – the ‘thee and thou’ and ‘you and your’ forms in English provide this distinction) should not be forbidden just because they are archaic.*

d) *Technical terms should be retained – that is theological terms. There is a difference between ‘propitiation’ and ‘atoning sacrifice’ for example which should not be obscured in the translation.*

2. It must comply with the principle of clarity

This principle is about readable English which keeps a good balance between literal accuracy and clarity.

Synod 1986 accepted, with one amendment, the principle of clarity presented by the study committee to Synod 1983. With this approved amendment, the principle of clarity, accepted by Synod 1986, reads as follows: “Since Scripture is all that we need to be thoroughly furnished to every good work (1Tim. 3:17) it is clear that any translation which is going to be used in our pulpits must also be readily understood by the people...From this principle it is obvious that SOME interpretation is necessary since the idiom of one language is sometimes incomprehensible to someone of another. The twin concerns mentioned above should make it obvious that both accuracy and clarity are essential. However, where the meaning is unclear (or ambiguous) but the text is clear the translation should follow the text. Where the meaning is clear and the text unclear (or obscure) the translation should give the meaning. But, in all cases where that is done, it ought still to be quite clear what has been added to make the text clear – since further light is constantly being shed on the text of Scripture by the excavations being carried out in Israel and other Near Eastern countries.” (cf. Acts 1986, Report 14, p.56, item ii)

3. It's approach¹ should not be in conflict with the RCNZ's theological confessions

Synod 1986 accepted the study committee's principle called "Bias" as presented to Synod 1983. This is how that principle reads: *"It is impossible to avoid the effects of theological bias completely...Better, in that case, a translation which has a clearly seen bias than one which gives the impression of none...Since this criterion is very difficult to prove the bias has not been made a part of the committee's study...To speak of bias is to impute a motive to the translator which may well be untrue. So we've avoided attempting to read people's hearts."* (cf. Acts 1986, Report 14, pp.56-57, item iii)

Committee's Findings

The Bible-Translation-Committee's studies and samplings of the ESV and NKJV over the synodical interim period (2011-2014) have left them with no doubt that both the ESV and NKJV give ample evidence that they comply satisfactorily with the above-mentioned criteria. For samples of the committee's studies, please cf. the appendix to this report.

The Bible-Translation Committee realises that if the list of approved RCNZ Pulpit Bibles gets too long, it will become clumsy and unpractical (e.g. with pulpit swaps). Yet, for the following reasons, the committee recommends that the ESV and NKJV be declared suitable for pulpit use:

1. Previous RCNZ synods have already accepted the idea of more than one approved version for pulpit use. This was especially clear at Synod 1983 when the NASB and NIV were added to the 1955-approved KJV.
2. Synod 2011 (Art. 112-1) decided that the 2011 revision of the New International Version (2011 NIV) be explicitly not approved for pulpit use. Although this decision of Synod will not leave an immediate "vacuum" in the list of approved RCNZ pulpit Bibles (because the 1984 NIV can still be used for quite some time), the committee believes that, at some time in the foreseeable future, as the availability of the earlier NIV version drops away, this "vacuum" might need to be filled. If Synod 2014 could therefore declare the ESV and NKJV suitable for pulpit use, it could provide sessions with two alternatives should they wish, at some stage, to replace the NIV. Of course, approving a version does not require any session to use it. The KJV was approved by a past synod (1955), but no congregation uses it as their pulpit Bible.
3. The committee has found that, although the literalness of both ESV and NKJV is very much on a par with that of the NASB, the readability of ESV and NKJV is much better than that of the NASB. Thus the ESV and NKJV fill a niche which neither the literal NASB (with its "wooden" English) nor the readable NIV (with its dynamic equivalence) addresses.
4. It appears that quite a number of people in our churches are already making use of the ESV and NKJV for personal Bible studies.

¹ Synod 1983 and 1986 used the word "bias" which we as Bible Translation Committee prefer to avoid, because it seems to be a word with loaded meaning

Report 3
Bible Translation Committee

Recommendations

- 1. That Synod receive this report.*
- 2. That Synod declare the ESV suitable for pulpit use (in the RCNZ)*
- 3. That Synod declare the NKJV suitable for pulpit use (in the RCNZ)*
- 4. That Synod dismiss our committee*

Humbly submitted by:

Pieter van Huyssteen (convenor)
Andrew de Vries
Michael Flinn
David Waldron

Appendix

Sample Study Comparing the ESV with the NKJV, the NIV, NASB and against the Original Languages¹

The committee wants to reiterate that it appreciates that all translations, including the NKJV and ESV, have their weaknesses. However, the committee did not see it as their task to point out these expected weaknesses, but to show with these samples that there's ample evidence in favour of the NKJV and ESV complying with the set criteria of previous RCNZ synods.

The samples below have been generated by all committee members as they worked through their regular weekly studies in preparation for sermons or when they were requested to verify what Scripture has to say on a particular issue. We are pleased to say that our samplings, although only 14 in number, happen to come from a variety of Bible books. We believe that the trend shown by the samples presents is a true representation of the overall character of the NKJV and ESV.

SAMPLE 1 (Jude 20-21)

ESV

But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

NKJV

²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

NIV

²⁰ But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. ²¹ Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

NASB

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

GREEK

20 Ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀγαπητοί, ἐποικοδομοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς τῇ ἀγιωτάτῃ ὑμῶν πίστει, ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ προσευχόμενοι, 21 ἑαυτοὺς ἐν ἀγάπῃ θεοῦ τηρήσατε προσδεχόμενοι τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

COMMENT

The ESV, NKJV & NASB are doing the better job by rendering the Greek participles in these verses also as participles in English – thus helping the reader to separate the main verb from the subordinates and to do proper exegesis. The NIV blurs the distinction between core statement and

¹ BY "original languages" the committee means that as far as OT passages are concerned, they were compared with the text of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS) 1983, with morphological analysis from the Werkgroep Informatica, Vrije Universiteit (Informatics Workgroup. Free University), Netherlands. As far as the NT passages are concerned, they were compared with the text of the Nestle-Aland (NA) Greek New Testament, 27th Edition. Where needed, the committee also verified the readings by checking the text-critical apparatus in the BHS and NA.

Report 3

Bible Translation Committee (Appendix)

points that support the core statement, i.e. core statement: that *one keeps oneself in the love of God*; supporting statements: 1) by building up one's faith and 2) by praying and by waiting for Christ!

SAMPLE 2 (1 Pet 1:13)

ESV

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

NKJV

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

NIV

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

NASB

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

GREEK

Διὸ ἀναζωσάμενοι τὰς ὀσφύας τῆς διανοίας ὑμῶν νήφοντες τελείως ἐλπίζατε ἐπὶ τὴν φερομένην ὑμῖν χάριν ἐν ἀποκαλύψει Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

COMMENT

The NIV is quite free in that its phraseology has broken up the original longer sentence into smaller “bite-size” bits. However, in doing that, the NIV has robbed the reader from getting the main idea and subordinate ideas in v.13. The main idea is in the imperative (“set your hope on...”), whilst the subordinate ideas are expressed by two participles (“preparing your minds...” & “being sober-minded”) – vital to spot if one wants to do sound exegesis. The ESV has done the best job, for it has kept The Greek imperative as an imperative in English and the Greek participle as participle in English! Even the NASB and NKJV have not done this! However, regarding the idiomatic phrase “gird the loins of your mind,” the NKJV is the only one of the four that has translated it literally – straight from the Greek. ESV, NIV and NASB have all given a free translation: “prepare/preparing your minds for action.”

SAMPLE 3 (Mt 17:11)

ESV

He answered, “Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. ¹² But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.”

NKJV

Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. ¹² But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.”

Report 3 Bible Translation Committee (Appendix)

NIV

Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. ¹² But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.”

NASB

And He answered and said, “Elijah is coming and will restore all things; ¹²but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.”

GREEK

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· Ἠλίας μὲν ἔρχεται καὶ ἀποκαταστήσει πάντα· ¹² λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι Ἠλίας ἤδη ἦλθεν, καὶ οὐκ ἐπέγνωσαν αὐτὸν ἀλλὰ ἐποίησαν ἐν αὐτῷ ὅσα ἠθέλησαν· οὕτως καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μέλλει πάσχειν ὑπ’ αὐτῶν.

COMMENT

Because some “charismatics” (sadly without good knowledge of the Greek and simply relying on English translations) have interpreted the verbs in v.11 wrongly, they have come up with the fancy understanding that, in the end of times, Elijah will again precede our Lord’s coming. They seem to have come to this idea by having looked at translations like the NASB and NKJV, which are not bad on this point, yet, for the English reader without Greek knowledge, leaving an opening of misinterpretation. We believe this comes especially from translations like the NKJV’s and NASB’s “...is coming...”

Of course, the Greek ἔρχεται (present indicative deponent 3 singular of ἔρχομαι) can be translated as a present continuous in English, “is coming.” But, unfortunately, for the English mother tongue speaker/reader, “is coming” can also be taken as a future tense, i.e. that Elijah is coming in the future! However, the ESV’s “does come” and NIV’s “indeed... comes,” rendering the Greek as a simple present tense (which is still a good translation from the Greek), makes it a bit harder for the reader to see Elijah’s coming as yet/again a future event.

Now, the person not trained in NT Greek might say, “But what do you have to say about the other verb in the sentence (“will restore”), which is clearly a future tense?” To answer this question, one has to remember that in saying “will restore,” our Lord is quoting the exact word from the prophecy of Malachi 3:23 (in the NIV & ESV it’s Mal 4:6). In fact, the Greek word for “will restore” in Mt 17:11 is the exact same one for “will restore” in the Septuagint text (Greek text) of Mal 3:23, i.e. ἀποκαταστήσει (future active indicative 3 singular of ἀποκαθίστημι “to restore”). In other words, as Christ speaks the words of Mt 17:11, He is putting Himself in the shoes of Malachi from whose perspective Elijah’s coming was indeed still a future event. Thus, all four of the above-quoted translations say “...will restore...” simply because, from the past vantage point of the prophet Malachi, Elijah was still going to come and was still going to restore...! Furthermore, to indicate that Christ (in v.11) is making a quote from the OT, the NA-Greek text in the LOGOS 4 version has even been put in italics. Thus far our argument that “comes” & “will restore” do not indicate that Elijah will come again before our Lord’s return.

On another, related, issue: the ESV and NIV are also doing best justice to the emphasis Christ had put on the fact of the truthfulness of Malachi’s prophecy, rendered in Greek by the so-called “μὲν δὲ construction,” i.e.

- “Elijah does come, and he will restore all things (“will” could also mean the emphatic “shall” of older English rather than a mere future). ¹² But I tell you that Elijah has already come...” (ESV);
- “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. ¹² But I tell you, Elijah has already come... (NIV).

Report 3
Bible Translation Committee (Appendix)

SAMPLE 4 (1 Thess 3:12-13)

ESV

and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you,
¹³ so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming
of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

NKJV

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we *do* to
you, ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the
coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

NIV

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours
does for you. ¹³ May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence
of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

NASB

and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all
people, just as we also *do* for you; ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts without blame in
holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

GREEK

ὁμᾶς δὲ ὁ κύριος πλεονάσαι καὶ περισσεύσαι τῇ ἀγάπῃ εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας καθάπερ καὶ
ἡμεῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς, **13** εἰς τὸ στηρίξαι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας ἀμέμπτους ἐν ἀγιωσύνῃ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ
πατρὸς ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ, [ἀμήν].
(εἰς τὸ plus the infinitive form of the verb [here στηρίξαι] describes purpose/result [cf. BDB par
402.2])

COMMENT

The ESV's, NKJV's & NASB's more literal rendering of the Greek gives the reader no doubt that
when the Lord makes the Thessalonians increase and abound in love for one another...., then will He
establish their hearts blameless in holiness... at the coming of our Lord Jesus...

The NIV, in starting v.13 as a new sentence, loose from v.12, robs the reader of the fact that it is the
Lord's increase of the Thessalonians' love that will establish their hearts blameless at the Lord's
return. The sad result is that the reader of the NIV misses an important exegetical point, because he
will be seeing no clear connection between the increase of people's love and their holiness at our
Lord's return.

SAMPLE 5 (Prov 22:9)

ESV

Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.

NKJV

He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor.

NIV

A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.

Report 3
Bible Translation Committee (Appendix)

NASB

He who is generous will be blessed, For he gives some of his food to the poor.

HEBREW

טוב-עין הוא יברך כי-נתן מלחמו ללל:

COMMENT

The ESV is the more literal of the four by rendering the Hebrew text's "good (of) eye" with "bountiful eye" and by saying in a footnote "good eye." In doing this, the ESV is the only one of the above-mentioned four translations that makes much clearer the link which Prov 22:9 has with Mt 6:22-23 – a passage which has so often been wrongly understood, the fact being ignored that this passage (Mt 6:22-23) comes right in the middle of Christ's teaching on not serving two masters (God & mammon): "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy (ἀπλοῦς), your whole body will be full of light,²³ but if your eye is bad (πονηρός), your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" (ESV). The NIV's not bad but freer translation "generous man" makes the link between Prov 22:9 and Mt 6:22-23 harder to spot. As a result, the exegete might come up with all sorts of fancy interpretations of Mt 6:22-23, not seeing its proper meaning within the immediate larger context.

SAMPLE 6 (Col 1:19)

ESV

"For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.."

NKJV

"For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell,..."

NIV

"For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,..."

NASB

"For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,..."

GREEK

ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι...

COMMENT

The ESV makes "all the fullness" the subject of the verb "was pleased." In that sense, then, is the ESV the most literal of all versions compared. The NIV is the freest translation.

SAMPLE 7 (Lk 9:44)

ESV

"Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."

NKJV

"Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men."

Report 3
Bible Translation Committee (Appendix)

NIV

“Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.”

NASB

“Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.”

GREEK

θέσθε ὑμεῖς εἰς τὰ ὦτα ὑμῶν τοὺς λόγους τούτους· ὁ γὰρ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μέλλει παραδίδοσθαι εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων.

COMMENT

Of the above-mentioned translations, the NIV is the freest translation of v.44a. The Greek is more forceful than just “Listen carefully...” Literally translated the Greek says, “Place these words in your ears...!” Thus the ESV, NKJV & NASB, being the more literal, are closer to the criteria set by previous RCNZ synods.

SAMPLE 8 (Mt 6:25)

ESV

Do not be anxious

NKJV

Do not worry

NIV

Do not worry

NASB

Do not be worried

GREEK

μὴ μεριμνᾶτε

COMMENT

Looking at the dictionaries (e.g. Louw & Nida, LOGOS 4, and Bauer, p.505), the ESV has done the best job by having rendered the Greek with the idea of “anxiousness.”

SAMPLE 9 (2 Tim 3:16)

ESV

All Scripture is breathed out by God...

NKJV

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,...

NIV

All Scripture is God-breathed...

Report 3
Bible Translation Committee (Appendix)

NASB

All Scripture is inspired by God... (with fn. saying, “God-breathed”)

GREEK

πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος...

COMMENT

Quite surprisingly, the NIV gives the most literal translation of this phrase whilst the ESV kept the meaning literal but made it more reader-friendly for the English mind by changing a verbal adjective into a passive verb (“is breathed out”). The NASB and NKJV are both further away from the Greek by having used the word “inspired/inspiration” instead of the more common “breathed.”

SAMPLE 10 (Lk 12:37)

ESV

Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.

NKJV

Blessed *are* those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down *to eat*, and will come and serve them

NIV

It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.

NASB

Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself *to serve*, and have them recline *at the table*, and will come up and wait on them.

GREEK

μακάριοι οἱ δοῦλοι ἐκεῖνοι, οὓς ἔλθων ὁ κύριος εὐρήσει γρηγοροῦντας· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι περιζώσεται καὶ ἀνακλινεῖ αὐτοὺς καὶ παρελθὼν διακονήσει αὐτοῖς.

COMMENT

The NKJV’s and ESV’s “serve them” is more literal than NASB/NIV’s “wait on them”

SAMPLE 11 (Eph 5:17-20)

ESV

¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Report 3

Bible Translation Committee (Appendix)

NKJV

¹⁷ Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another in the fear of God.

NIV

¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹ Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

GREEK

διὰ τοῦτο μὴ γίνεσθε ἄφρονες, ἀλλὰ συνίετε τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου. **18** καὶ μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἴνῳ, ἐν ᾧ ἔστιν ἀσωτία, ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι, **19** λαλοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς [ἐν] ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς, ᾄδοντες καὶ ψάλλοντες τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ κυρίῳ, **20** εὐχαριστοῦντες πάντοτε ὑπὲρ πάντων ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ.

21 Ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ,

COMMENT

What Paul means in verse 18 about being filled with the Spirit is fleshed out in the rest of the verses. There are four participles in verses 19-21 – addressing/singing, singing, giving thanks, submitting. These are clearly seen in the ESV and NKJV, but are impossible to see in the NIV translation due to the fact that it breaks them into various sentences, and translates only one as a participle (giving thanks) and the others as commands (Speak, sing and submit). This obscures the obvious pattern of the original and makes it difficult for the reader to observe the clear structure in the original.

SAMPLE 12 Heb 13:17

ESV

¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.

NKJV

¹⁷ Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account.

NIV

¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account.

GREEK

Πείθεσθε τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν καὶ ὑπέικετε, αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀγρυπνοῦσιν ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν ὡς λόγον ἀποδώσοντες...

COMMENT

The connective γὰρ (for) is missing in the NIV version. Therefore the command to obey is not clearly linked to the responsibility that leaders have for the souls of men as it is in the original language.

Report 3
Bible Translation Committee (Appendix)

SAMPLE 13 Psalm 121

ESV

I lift up my eyes to the hills.
From where does my help come?
² My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.
³ He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
⁴ Behold, he who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
⁵ The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade on your right hand.
⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.
⁷ The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
⁸ The LORD will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and forevermore.

NKJV

I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help?
² My help comes from the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.
³ He will not allow your foot to be moved;
He who keeps you will not slumber.
⁴ Behold, He who keeps Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.
⁵ The LORD is your keeper;
The LORD is your shade at your right hand.
⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,
Nor the moon by night.
⁷ The LORD shall preserve you from all evil;
He shall preserve your soul.
⁸ The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in
From this time forth, and even forevermore.

NIV

I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
² My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
³ He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
⁵ The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
⁶ the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
⁷ The LORD will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
⁸ the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.

HEBREW

- 1 שִׁיר לְמַעֲלוֹת אֲשָׁא עֵינֵי אֱלֹהֵהֶרִים מֵאִין יבֹא עֲזָרִי:
- 2 עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:
- 3 אֱלֹהֵי־יְהוָה לְמוֹט רִגְלֶךָ אֱלֹהֵי־יְהוָה שְׁמֹרֶךָ:
- 4 הִנֵּה לֹא־יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שְׁמוֹרֶךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל:
- 5 יְהוָה שְׁמֹרֶךָ יְהוָה צִלְּךָ עַל־יַד יְמִינֶךָ:
- 6 יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא־יַכְכָּה וַיִּרַח בְּלִילָהּ:
- 7 יְהוָה יִשְׁמְרֶךָ מִכָּל־רָע יִשְׁמַר אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ:
- 8 יְהוָה יִשְׁמַר־צִאתְךָ וּבֹאֶךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם:

COMMENT:

The Hebrew verb שָׁמַר (to keep, to guard) is used six times. The only version to consistently translate this as ‘keep’ is the ESV. The guarding and keeping of God over his people is the key theme in the Psalm, and become less clear when the translations use different words.

SAMPLE: 14, 1 Kings 20:35 & 37

ESV

³⁵ And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his fellow at the command of the LORD, “Strike me, please.” But the man refused to strike him.

³⁶ Then he said to him, “Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as you have gone from me, a lion shall strike you down.” And as soon as he had departed from him, a lion met him and struck him down.

³⁷ Then he found another man and said, “Strike me, please.” And the man struck him—struck him and wounded him.

NKJV

³⁵ Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his neighbor by the word of the LORD, “Strike me, please.” And the man refused to strike him. ³⁶ Then he said to him, “Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, surely, as soon as you depart from me, a lion shall kill you.” And as soon as he left him, a lion found him and killed him.

³⁷ And he found another man, and said, “Strike me, please.” So the man struck him, inflicting a wound.

Report 3
Bible Translation Committee (Appendix)

NIV

³⁵ By the word of the LORD one of the company of the prophets said to his companion, “Strike me with your weapon,” but he refused.

³⁶ So the prophet said, “Because you have not obeyed the LORD, as soon as you leave me a lion will kill you.” And after the man went away, a lion found him and killed him.

³⁷ The prophet found another man and said, “Strike me, please.” So the man struck him and wounded him.

HEBREW:

וְאִישׁ אֶחָד מִבְּנֵי הַנְּבִיאִים אָמַר אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ בְדַבַּר יְהוָה הַכִּינִי נָא וַיִּמָּאֵן הָאִישׁ לְהַכּוֹתוֹ:

וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יֵעַן אֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹל יְהוָה הַנִּגַּן הוֹלֵךְ מֵאֵתִי וְהַכֹּךְ הָאֲרִיָּה וַיִּלְךְ מֵאַצְלוֹ וַיִּמְצָאֵהוּ הָאֲרִיָּה וַיִּכֶהוּ: 36

וַיִּמְצָא אִישׁ אֲחֵר וַיֹּאמֶר הַכִּינִי נָא וַיִּכְהוּ הָאִישׁ הַכָּה וּפָצַע: 37

COMMENT

In verses 35 & 37 the prophet makes exactly the same request in Hebrew **הַכִּינִי נָא** = strike me please. The NIV translation makes it sound as if the second time around the prophet asked in a more polite manner and thus was able to gain compliance with his request.