TRANSLATION IS COMPLICATED (HONEST)

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An interesting look at whether or not the NIV is "one of the worst translations for anyone who is seriously interested in what the Bible says".
Category: Bible Translation

Every now and then I find myself being dragged back to the subject of Bible translations in the English language. Generally, this is in order to react to yet another translation being published or to the egregious claims being made my the marketing department of some Bible publisher or other. In other words, I write about English translations when I'm annoyed!

In this case, I'm grateful to Ian Paul for pointing me to a genuinely interesting discussion about the translation of the NIV and whether or not it has a particular agenda.

If you want the short version of the discussion take a look at Ian's blog, where he summarises the original blog post and some of the discussion. However, if you are a real geek, you should look at the original post on Is That In The Bible?.

The piece starts out with the following quote, which will not please some Kouyanet readers:

> *The New International Version of the Bible, or NIV, was first published in 1978. Since then, it has become one of the most popular English Bible translations, and almost certainly the most popular one among Evangelical Christians. It is also one of the worst translations for anyone who is seriously interested in what the Bible says. Its translators are conservative Evangelical Christians who are committed to certain theological doctrines as well as to the inerrancy of the Bible, as is implied in its prefaces:*

The author then cites a ton of passages to back up his claim that the NIV is a bad translation. To be honest, you can find similar pieces dismissing various translations all over the Internet and I tend to ignore them. What makes this really interesting is that David Instone-Brewer, one of the NIV translation committee has responded to the blog post and the comments section has really come alive. If you are interested in Bible translation in English and especially if Old Testament and Hebrew scholarship are your thing, you really need to read what's going on here.

I'm nowhere near expert enough to have an opinion on the particular passages that are debated in the comments, and I'll leave that to others. However, let me make two comments.

For the general reader, the best guide to English translations, by a long way, isÂ One Bible, Many Versions: Are All Translations Created Equal?Â Also, while we continue to argue about the minutiae of translations into English, there are still 1,860 distinct languages that are likely to need a Bible translation.