

"The TNIV Bible Translation"  
a radio conversation with Dr. John Stek,  
Chair of the Committee on Bible Translation  
for the NIV and TNIV Bible versions,  
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Dr. Zylstra, Dordt College, KDCR radio, and Dr. Stek,  
and may be posted on other websites if posted in its entirety.

Announcer: Good morning, it's 8:05, and this is "Conversations with Dr. Carl Zylstra," a weekly talk show where we discuss contemporary issues. "Conversations" is made possible by a grant from People's Bank at 806 North Main in Sioux Center, along with offices in Rock Valley, Lester, and Akron. Our host is Dr. Carl Zylstra, President of Dordt College. So grab a cup of coffee and join us now as we discuss the TNIV. Good morning, Dr. Zylstra.

Dr. Zylstra: Well, good morning, Denny, and this is the time of year when we have a lot of things coming up on "Conversations." And rather than an update, let me do a pre-date.

Announcer: OK. I heard you talking with Allison before the program, and there are lots of neat things coming up.

Dr. Zylstra: One of the next things, next week, on "Conversations" we have with us Mr. Ron Johannsen who's a livestock environmental advisor. This ties really well with a lot of the stories coming out of the Legislature, although Mr. Johannsen is not a public policy person. He's not an enforcement officer. So you can call in and ask him your questions and he won't report you.

Announcer: OK

Dr. Zylstra: Not that anybody would have anything they would need reported; we know that. But, no, he works with the Extension Service. He's in the area specifically to help people find their way through the mass of regulations and really just to be an environmental advisor, which is what people want to do, if they want to meet regulations. If they are reasonable and if they are possible. So he will be with us, and you'll be able to call in or pass on information to him. That's next week. And we're working hard to get the birds back.

Announcer: Yah, yah, you know usually this time of the year we do a bird program, a very popular program.

Dr. Zylstra: Right, well, the birds are fluttering around my back yard already and I don't know what they are. We just have to get our expert lined up with us.

Announcer: Well, they're just waiting there for the program to begin.

Dr. Zylstra: That's probably it. I'm trying not to feed them until the proper week. And I've kept track of a few things as Dr. van Dyk suggested I keep track of them. So since last year we've had some very unusual birds, including eagles and some water fowl that aren't supposed to be in my back yard. But we can talk about those. So we have a lot coming up. But right now, today, we are going to discuss the [Today's] New International Version of the Bible. And we have with us the best possible guest in the world to talk about this. We have Professor John Stek, Chair of the Committee on Bible Translation for the NIV and the TNIV. Welcome, Professor Stek.

Dr. Stek: Good morning.

Dr. Zylstra: It's tremendous to have you with us. You've been involved now with the translation of the NIV for quite a few years, haven't you?

Dr. Stek: from the beginning, 1965

Dr. Zylstra: You go back to the very beginning. Let's start just to recap, the impact of the NIV has been phenomenal, correct?

Dr. Stek: Yes, far beyond what we had ever anticipated.

Dr. Zylstra: How did you get started? What were your hopes at the very beginning there?

Dr. Stek: Well, it started with an overture that arose out of the Christian Reformed Church, an action of Synod in response to that overture. And then the members of the Bible Department of the seminary on it for a number of years and linked up with representatives of the National Association of Evangelicals. And we formed a joint team for a number of years and finally called together a group, some forty biblical scholars from across the United States for a meeting at Trinity College in Chicago. And we discussed the matter for two days. And the net result of that discussion was that there was a need for a new translation. And they appointed a committee of fifteen to run with it. And that started in 1965.

Dr. Zylstra: So, one of the things that maybe some people aren't aware of, although the NIV almost any place I go, any denomination I'm in, that's one of the most commonly used translations of the Bible, but some people may not be aware of, it started with some desires in the Christian Reformed Church and some official actions by the Christian Reformed Church that, although it's not translation, then, of the Christian Reformed Church, but it really helped get the ball rolling on it.

Dr. Stek: Yah, that was the initial impetus.

Dr. Zylstra: So, now with the NIV, when did you first roll out the first complete NIV?

Dr. Stek: 1978

Dr. Zylstra: 1978

Dr. Stek: Then there was a bit of a revision in the early 80s, but after that we've been holding off any revisions until we could do a complete review of the NIV, and we are now still in that process, though we have completed the New Testament.

Dr. Zylstra: OK. So, just in people's minds (just to make this clear), the NIV that people have come to know and appreciate over the last years, there have just been some minor editorial changes, one of which, if I recall correctly, was from Psalm 23, right? Didn't your first release that first verse of Psalm 23, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing." And more recently it's been "I shall not be in want"?

Dr. Stek: Yes, that's one of the changes.

Dr. Zylstra: OK, so, but it was those types of changes

Dr. Stek: right

Dr. Zylstra: that happened, just things that made it sound a little better, maybe on reflection a little more accurate or a little better expression.

Dr. Stek: Well, yes, and we had received, I don't know about "criticisms," but some discussion of some passages, too, that a number of biblical scholars decided, or judged, that we didn't give the right twist to it, the right nuance, to it. And we took another look at it and in a number of places we said, "Yeah, you're right." And so we reworded it.

Dr. Zylstra: And one of the things that was a little bit ground-breaking, wasn't it in terms of regular standard translations, do I remember the term correctly, dynamic equivalence?

Dr. Stek: Well, that's a very slippery term, because a lot of things go under that name, all the way from complete paraphrase to translating an idiom for which there is no corresponding idiom. And so you have to substitute for it. None right now comes to mind, but it's like the difference between the American proverb, "It's a squeaking wheel that gets the grease," and in Korea, the same proverb is, "It's the crying baby that gets the milk."

Dr. Zylstra: OK

Dr. Stek: So you have to give the equivalent.

Dr. Zylstra: And in the past a lot of the translations that were somewhat standard had been a little closer to word-for-word equivalence, even if it might leave the wrong impression?

Dr. Stek: Or led to very awkward English, not stylistic English.

Dr. Zylstra: But on the other hand, the TNIV didn't try to do what at that time the Living Bible was very popular, and more recently, The Message, that where you take the dynamic equivalence of the whole paragraph or whatever. That's not what you're trying to do?

Dr. Stek: No, not at all. In that sense we've stayed within the long translation tradition of being as close to a word-for-word translation as good English idiom would allow. But it was finally the good English idiom and clarity in English that controlled.

Dr. Zylstra: Now, we're coming to a point where you are doing a complete revision and you've decided to call this new one the Today's New International [Version], TNIV?

Dr. Stek: Uh

Dr. Zylstra: Or someone has decided that.

Dr. Stek: Yes, someone has decided that. This is part of our ongoing work. We knew when we started, and made arrangements with the Bible society early already in 1967, then it was the New York Bible Society, that to keep the version abreast of what was happening in biblical studies and in changes in the English language, we would have to do a significant revision every 20, 25, or 30 years. So we've been working on this one now for about ten years, I would judge. And so it's a part of our ongoing work of keeping the NIV abreast. The only reason why we now have, apparently, two versions that are related to each other is that the publishers decided, because of public outcry, to continue to publish the NIV in its present form without any changes and then to publish the revision under the name Today's New International Version.

Dr. Zylstra: OK

Dr. Stek: So that was a publisher's decision.

Dr. Zylstra: OK. But as far as the translators go, you'd just as soon we put the old one on our shelf and use the new one?

Dr. Stek: Yes. That is our intent.

Dr. Zylstra: Because you think the new one is more accurate?

Dr. Stek: Well, there's a number of places where we judge it's more accurate, well, many places, as a matter of fact, but more accurate in view of, again, ongoing biblical studies

but also changes in contemporary language. I'll just give you another example that's not at all controversial, but it's one that we will have to deal with in the Old Testament. We could use the word "alien" quite freely in the NIV, but today for at least the younger generation, an alien is someone

Dr. Zylstra: E.T.!

Dr. Stek: not from another country, but from outer space. So, that misleads.

Dr. Zylstra: Yeah, so we're strangers and aliens, well, wow!

Dr. Stek: You should be good to aliens, that means something different for those under twenty than it did for people 25 years ago.

Dr. Zylstra: the aliens within your gates. OK, yes, "Close Encounters," but that's not what the text was trying to say, so while you could argue that literally that still remains an accurate English translation, it just doesn't say what the text says.

Dr. Stek: It's still functions in the legal realm, but not in general language.

Dr. Zylstra: Well, but now, does that mean you have to take other words out, like "covenant"?

Dr. Stek: Oh, no, those are key words that are specifically and distinctly biblical in the way in which they are used, at least, so all those key concepts remain.

Dr. Zylstra: Right, but how do you make those kinds of decisions? That must have been difficult for you as translators.

Dr. Stek: Well, it's an ongoing process of first of all trying to discern precisely what the original language intends, and then how to convey that in contemporary English, as accurately and clearly as you can, without distorting, without losing anything, without adding anything, without twisting anything. You can't do that perfectly because no two languages match perfectly. But you attempt to do it as closely as you can, and you use all the expertise that's available amongst biblical scholars and those who are expert in contemporary English to try to accomplish that.

Dr. Zylstra: Well, when we come back, a weather update here, let's talk specifically about why you mentioned the outcry, why is this an outcry. And if others want to call in and say, "Boy, I've heard this or heard that. What's going on here?" Denny, you can give the number here.

Announcer: Sure, if you'd like to call in, and join in the conversation with us this morning, here's the number, 722-0885, or 1-800-845-0885. And you're listening to "Conversations with Dr. Carl Zylstra." We're talking about the TNIV with John Stek.

Dr. Zylstra: Professor Stek is Chair of the Committee on Bible Translation for the NIV and now what's going to be known as the TNIV, and also a professor emeritus at Calvin Theological Seminary. Professor Stek, there's been controversy over the batch of revisions, this major revision, how would you describe the major controversies?

Dr. Stek: Well, the only major controversy that I am aware of--so many of the changes that we made have gotten no attention at all in public discussion, where we think we have a more accurate representation of the original. But the main controversy has been over the fact that the TNIV has been prepared for those, and it is virtually, well, a high percentage at least, of the younger generation, but for those for whom masculine nouns and pronouns no longer function as generic for the human race. And that has been a bone of contention on the part of those who have at least an emotional attachment and sometimes it seems an ideological attachment to the idea that the masculine half of the human race should always be understood as representative of the whole human race. Or as one of them said in a public broadcast, national broadcast, when I was in dialog with him, he said, "People are not human beings, they are men. The Bible says so."

Dr. Zylstra: Yeah, that doesn't sound like a very felicitous way of expressing the thought.

Dr. Stek: Well, but that is indicative of their approach. Now, another point of contention is that we have decided to use, because of the gap in the English language, the so-called singular "they", "their", and "them" which has had long standing in the English language. As a matter of fact, I've come up with at least a dozen instances in the old King James Version already. And the suggestion is that when you do that you lose the focus on the individual, but that's a misunderstanding even of the English language. For example, the NIV has Nicodemus asking Jesus, "How can a man be born when he is old?" The TNIV says, "How can anyone be born when they are old?" Now, that's a use of the singular "they." But it does not at all take away the expression of individual rebirth. Or in the book of Revelation, where the TNIV now has, "I will give to everyone according to what they have done." That's natural English, common English, it's been around for a long, long time. It doesn't mean that the first part of the sentence has to do with the individual and the last part with a group.

Dr. Zylstra: Right.

Dr. Stek: But it's a misunderstanding of the English idiom.

Dr. Zylstra: Although at that point aren't you arguing against yourself a little bit because certainly the use of "they" as a singular is not real common?

Dr. Stek: Well, you say it is not real common. Merriam-Webster's English usage dictionary, which came out in the middle 90s, actually recommends it. So, it's becoming far more common. And it has been common in speech very, very widespread, both in private conversation and in public conversation, on the TV, radio, etc.

Dr. Zylstra: OK, but that certainly is one where people hear it and they say, "Ooh, what's going on here?"

Dr. Stek: Well, some of them do. Many of them say, "Oh, yeah, that's much clearer."

Dr. Zylstra: OK

Dr. Stek: So there's a great diversity in this.

Dr. Zylstra: Sure

Dr. Stek: And we recognize that, but in our judgment the rising generation is going to feel very much at ease with this language.

Dr. Zylstra: OK. So, in a sense, well, maybe I can get you to at least agree that you're ahead of the curve on this one, if that may be the new and rising usage, but you're probably ahead of the curve on it?

Dr. Stek: Well, it's very, very interesting, if you go into the history of the English language, it was fairly common until about the middle of the 1800s, when English professors began to try to dictate what the language ought to be, and they ruled it out because they said it's illogical.

Dr. Zylstra: Right

Dr. Stek: But as a matter of fact it continued in normal speech, everyday speech, it was simply ruled out in formal writing. Now it has come back and is coming back to fill in a pronominal gap in the English language.

Dr. Zylstra: OK, so that's one. How about, I've also picked up a little controversy about some attempts to make the New Testament not appear anti-Semitic, where it certainly isn't?

Dr. Stek: Yeah, well ...

Dr. Zylstra: Well, it never is anti-Semitic, obviously, but you don't want to leave that impression.

Dr. Stek: You say it never is anti-Semitic. There are those biblical scholars who say John, the author of John, is very definitely anti-Semitic,

Dr. Zylstra: Why?

Dr. Stek: because of the way he uses the term *Ioudaioi*, "the Jews," and does so without further specification.

Dr. Zylstra: Right

Dr. Stek: So, in most places the context makes it clear that he's referring to a particular segment of the Jews. But because of the way in which that has usually been translated literally "the Jews," in not only English, but modern western-European languages, it has been misconstrued by so many readers that it has been turned into an anti-Semitic tool.

Dr. Zylstra: Right

Dr. Stek: So, we've attempted to indicate in each case what the particular referent is.

Dr. Zylstra: Now, one of the questions, a specific one, maybe you can respond to this, that's been raised is from John 19[:12] when the NIV says, "Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, 'If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar.'" The TNIV says, "'Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting"?

Dr. Stek: Well, if you look at the context, it's pretty clear that the Jewish leaders are the ones who are at the forefront in all of this and controlling what's going on there. This is one that maybe is more open-ended than most, but it's a judgment call.

Dr. Zylstra: OK, so, that's one of them. Another change that you've made, which I haven't heard much controversy about, but certainly will maybe take people aback a little bit, is the translation of "Christ," the Anointed.

Dr. Stek: Oh, yeah, in the gospels and Acts and in a few places in Romans, you mean rendering it "the Messiah"?

Dr. Zylstra: Right

Dr. Stek: In all those places where the context indicates that the reference is to the expected one, and there the Greek *Christos*, which is the Greek translation of Messiah, functions differently than later in the epistles where *Christos* becomes virtually a part of the name that refers to Jesus, such as Jesus Christ, or Christ Jesus. So, it functions differently in those two bodies of New Testament literature.

Dr. Zylstra: Again, I haven't heard a criticism of that, but I think it's going to be striking to a lot of people.

Dr. Stek: I think it will be, and, again, it's one of those judgment calls that translators have to make in order to try to convey as clearly as possible, with the least misconstruals, what's going on in the original text.

Dr. Zylstra: OK, we need to take a break, and when we come back we'll be able to pick up more questions about the [Today's] New International Version.

Dr. Stek: OK

Announcer: And in the meantime, if you'd like to give us a call and join in the conversation, you can call us at 722-0885 or 1-800-845-0885. And this is "Conversations with Dr. Carl Zylstra." We're talking about the TNIV with John Stek.

Dr. Zylstra: Well, welcome back, Professor Stek.

Dr. Stek: Yes

Dr. Zylstra: During the break we had a couple of phone calls. One was an observation by a teacher who called in to kind of back up your sense about "their" being used as a singular, or "they" being used as a singular. She said, "My students have done this for years, just very naturally."

Dr. Stek: Uh hmm. She confirms our judgment.

Dr. Zylstra: She confirms your judgment, on the other hand, she said, "It always grated on me." So, it also confirms that this isn't uniform.

Dr. Stek: Well, there are members of the committee on which it grates too. But, nevertheless, they judged that that is the movement of the language.

Dr. Zylstra: OK. And the other question maybe gets more to the point that can lead us into some other questions. In places such as John 19 when, as you explained, the context makes clear that this was the Jewish leaders. And there's some other cases such as Luke 17 where the NIV has "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him." In the TNIV it will be, "If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke the offender, and if they repent, forgive them." In those kinds of cases have you not gone beyond translation into interpretation?

Dr. Stek: That's a question that translators face constantly, but we have to start with this: All translation is interpretation from the word go. That is, the first task of the translator is to unpack the original language. Language packages ideas, thoughts, emotions, expressions of emotions. And to translate one has to unpack the original language, thought by thought, as carefully as possible, lifting out of it what the intent of the original is, and with great care and seeking not to damage or distort, repackage it in another language

Dr. Zylstra: Right

Dr. Stek: so that it conveys, as clearly as possible, and with the least misconstrual, as possible, what that original intent is. And beyond that it is simply not a science, but an art, constantly making judgment calls as to how can we accurately convey the thought, safeguard the thought, so that the reader does not get a wrong idea

Dr. Zylstra: OK

Dr. Stek: from the way you formulate it. So, it's all interpretation.

Dr. Zylstra: So we always are interpreting?

Dr. Stek: Inevitably.

Dr. Zylstra: OK. But then where does the translator's task end and the preacher's task, or Bible teacher's task, begin, I guess is [the question]?

Dr. Stek: Yeah, that's a related matter, but our judgment is that if you have to gloss your interpretation to make it clear you haven't completed the translation.

Dr. Zylstra: OK, let me give you another example though, and I know you want to talk about some of the other things where you've improved it beyond these gender issues. But, the example from Galatians 3:26 through 29 where it's talking about the inclusiveness of those who are in Christ. And the NIV has "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus," and you changed this, I believe, to, (I have the TNIV here too) to "children of God."

Dr. Stek: Yes

Dr. Zylstra: Yesterday when I was in a class here at Dordt College one of our instructors who is not, you know, against using gender-inclusive language, pointed out to students what he thought was the importance of—and he wasn't talking about the TNIV here, he probably isn't even aware of that, you've changed this—but in another context he said we have to keep that as sons because of the inheritance issues that were involved, and, in fact, the point of Galatians 3, because it then goes on to say there's neither male nor female, is that it's specifically pointing out that females now can be in the status of sons, and that that was very significant. Now you can maybe debate that back and forth, and in the committee maybe you did.

Dr. Stek: Well, yes, we did, indeed. And if you looked on this a little farther in Galatians 4, where we read in verses 4 and 5, "But when the set time had fully come God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law that we might receive adoption to sonship." And then there is a footnote explaining that.

Dr. Zylstra: So there you kept sonship?

Dr. Stek: Right, and the reason is that the Greek word for "adoption to sonship" is a legal term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture. Now that rendering and that footnote occurs three or four times in the Pauline literature.

Dr. Zylstra: So you saying certainly you wanted to leave that concept clearly in there but you thought in Galatians 4 it was clearly in the text, Galatians 3 it's in the

Dr. Stek: Right, the Greek word used

Dr. Zylstra: And in Galatians 3 it would be more an allusion?

Dr. Stek: Right

Dr. Zylstra: OK. So that's legitimately translated differently.

Dr. Stek: Well, in our judgment.

Dr. Zylstra: OK. Well, you're the ones who get to put it together.

Dr. Stek: Well, yeah, I must say, in many of these it's a judgment call, and we debated, we argued back and forth, and finally worked towards consensus that is to say, "Which rendering is going to be the most useful with the most people?"

Dr. Zylstra: I think it was Susan Olasky in World magazine who says, "Isn't this a scene out of Groundhog Day?" Didn't we just have this debate a couple of years ago and wasn't there an agreement that you weren't going to do this? That's the controversial, because certainly World magazine has carried the water probably as the lead publication that has really pressed this issue, and their little title here is "Five Days Early, Five Years Late." Anyway, what about that whole issue, because there was a big brouhaha five years ago? And then there was an agreement by the International Bible Society, they said they had abandoned all plans for gender-related changes in future editions of the New International Version.

Dr. Stek: Right

Dr. Zylstra: OK. Why don't you address that issue?

Dr. Stek: That's a little tough for me to address because I'm not the person to ask. Why don't you ask the International Bible Society about that, because that was all of their doing?

Dr. Zylstra: I think this is a point that should be clarified: Your Committee on Translation actually is independent, correct?

Dr. Stek: Our committee is independent and we've had, as I say, ever since 1967 a written agreement with the Bible Society that they would publish our work and benefit from all the royalties to support their other ministries. But they agreed, then, to cover our expenses, as we do our work, and to publish the work that we do. When they came under pressure from various sources, those five years ago, the leadership at IBS at that time made this decision. Leadership at the society has changed since then. They've rethought that decision and decided that that was a bad decision. They have publicly now indicated that they have rethought it, that they judged it was a bad decision, that if they are going to continue to publish a Bible that is in contemporary English, they needed to published the

committee's work, but that they would continue to publish the present NIV for as long as there was a desire for it.

Dr. Zylstra: OK. So the Solomonic division there.

Dr. Stek: Well, we'll find out whether or not it turns out to be Solomonic, but that is how they have, on the one hand, acknowledged that they've changed their mind, on the other hand, tried to satisfy those who want to continue to use the NIV.

Dr. Zylstra: It was over twenty years ago when I began to realize the language was changing. I had resisted it. I was sitting at the table. My four year old son who had taught himself to read, had not yet been to school, had not been, if you will, shaped by any ideological forces other than perhaps Sesame Street and what he read on his own. I made a comment where I used the word "him" where I thought I was using it in a gender-inclusive way, and he said, "Don't you mean him or her?"

Dr. Stek: Yes

Dr. Zylstra: He was four years, had never been to school, and I realized the language had changed out from under me.

Dr. Stek: The committee considered the fact that the language was changing before we came out with the NIV and we decided it was a matter we were going to have to face down the road, but we judged at that time that how the English speaking community was going to handle that, what idioms they were going to use and settle on, was too fluid for us to take on at that time.

Dr. Zylstra: OK

Dr. Stek: So we postponed it until this second revision.

Dr. Zylstra: We have to take one more break. Folks can get their last phone calls in. And also Professor Stek wants to talk about some of the other changes in the NIV.

Dr. Stek: Yes, if I may.

Dr. Zylstra: Yes, certainly.

Announcer: OK, once again, our telephone number 722-0885 or 1-800-845-0885, if you'd like to join in the conversation with us this morning. We'll be back right after business news.

[break]

This is "Conversations with Dr. Carl Zylstra." We're talking about the TNIV and we have with us Professor John Stek.

Dr. Stek: And we had a phone call but we lost it and so if whoever was on hold wants to call back, we'll get you right on.

Announcer: Sure, again, let me give the number, 722-0885 or 1-800-845-0885.

Dr. Zylstra: We don't like to cut off our callers, especially before they get on the air. OK, sorry about that. Sometimes those things happen. Professor Stek, I have to ask you one more gender-specific question.

Dr. Stek: Yes

Dr. Zylstra: And then I know you would probably want to talk about a lot more important things that were changed in the NIV. Rom. 2, verse 28 [and 29], talking about circumcision, "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart." And I kind of looked at something that's

Dr. Stek: Romans 2, what's the particular passage?

Dr. Zylstra: [Romans] 2, verse 28

Dr. Stek: Yes

Dr. Zylstra: And that is not, if I read that correctly, I'm not going to open up my Greek Bible, although I do have it with me, you'd be proud of me, as a former professor of mine, I do have my Greek Bible with me, but you changed that in the TNIV to "A person is not a Jew who is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical" And, I guess, some people would say, "Come on, now, if you can't even make circumcision gender-specific, then, you know, what's happening?"

Dr. Stek: Well, the reference, however, is more than just to the males amongst the Jews,

Dr. Zylstra: Well, yes.

Dr. Stek: even though circumcision was applied only to the males. When he's talking about who is not a Jew, then he's talking about the whole community.

Dr. Zylstra: Right

Dr. Stek: So, the only way you can convey that, in our judgment, given the present state of the English language, is to do something like "A person is not a Jew who is one outwardly."

Dr. Zylstra: But, see, that was also the case back then, as well. They knew that circumcision was only applied to males, but that it included others, in terms of their representation.

Dr. Stek: Well, they would have had no reason not to say, "A man is not a Jew who is not ..." because that was the normal way, all over the place. When they talk about people without intending to be gender-specific, they used in their language, "a man," *anthropos* or *aner*.

Dr. Zylstra: Well, actually, neither one of those is used. It's just a pronoun in Greek too. So that makes it, actually, from a translator's point of view, a little easier. But, anyway, that was an example that I thought, well, you know, some people might think, "Now, come on, if there's one place you could keep it, you could keep it there." You want to talk about other changes that have been made.

Dr. Stek: Well, just to indicate some of the kinds of things that we think have brought the version up into more contemporary English, for example, we've eliminated almost all the vocative Os, except where they have some rhetorical purpose.

Dr. Zylstra: where it says, "O, Israel," or

Dr. Stek: Yeah, or "O, Lord," or "O, God" or whatever.

Dr. Zylstra: Has that really been lost from the English language?

Dr. Stek: Oh, yes. Well, it has been lost as a vocative "O" and it's been turned into what we call a pathetic "Oh." It's the emotional "oh" and there's nothing in the original language to indicate that. Because it's out in everyday speech, it no longer functions as the vocative, it functions as a pathetic "oh" or a rhetorical one.

Dr. Zylstra: OK

Dr. Stek: And references to time of day are no longer "fourth watch of the night," for example. That becomes "shortly before dawn." The "third hour," it's "about nine o'clock." The "sixth hour," it's "about noon," etc. The word "saints" is used with much greater discrimination, and it is only used where it's pretty clear that the author is referring to the whole church, and not to a particular segment of the church. There are other sensitive terms, like to call someone a paralytic, or to say that someone is crippled. Those have negative connotations today. And so the paralytic becomes "the paralyzed man," or "the cripple" becomes a "lame person."

Dr. Zylstra: Right, you use it as an adjectival, rather than a substantive.

Dr. Stek: Right. "Talents," our attention has been called to the fact, particularly in the parable of the talents, that most people take that in the sense of 'abilities' rather than 'wealth.'

Dr. Zylstra: Yeah, most sermons I've heard lately have done that.

Dr. Stek: Right. And so now in the parable of the talents, "talents" is not "talents," not five talents or two talents or one, but five bags of gold, two bags of gold, and one bag of gold. Or in another parable, instead of the 10,000 talents, it's billions of dollars. And instead of the hundred denarii, it's a few hundred dollars, which we think is much clearer to the English reader. A "tunic" and "cloak" are now commonly "shirt" and "coat." "To be with child" is "to be pregnant" or "to conceive." "To be barren" is now "to be unable to conceive." Those kinds of changes, which are sensitive to current emotional responses to older language, we think have made it much more accessible.

Dr. Zylstra: Let's take that "barren" one, though, because that not used in Biblical times as a negative description, also, of a person, and that we lost, well, maybe I'm wrong on that?

Dr. Stek: Well, I don't know that the language was. That a woman was unable to conceive was, indeed, a disgrace, but whether or not the language that was used carried those negative connotations, that's more difficult to determine. And we judge that there is no reason, then, to impose that on the English version.

Dr. Zylstra: OK.

Dr. Stek: Those are very subtle changes that have been made, that's illustrative of.

Dr. Zylstra: I've been, since I received a complimentary copy of the New Testament, I've been reading this along with our family in devotions and we've been doing a little comparison there as well as just reading through. And it strikes me, just in terms of an overall judgment, that the TNIV, maybe because it's been updated, is a little smoother, probably there is a little more elegance,

Dr. Stek: It reads better.

Dr. Zylstra: It just reads better, OK, thank you, you said it that way.

Dr. Stek: Oh, I should call attention to another change that is fairly significant, particularly in Corinthians, where the NIV has used the word "spiritual" in a number of places where it probably conveys the wrong idea, and fails to convey the fact that what lies behind it is that whatever is being called "spiritual" is really "that which is of the Spirit." So, now instead of talking about "spiritual songs," it's "songs from the Spirit." And similar changes. "You who are spiritual" is now "You who live by the Spirit." "Spiritual wisdom and understanding" is now "the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives." We're judging that that's a much clearer rendering of the intent of the original. As a matter of fact, that older understanding of pneumatikos is now recognized that it had no parallel in the ancient world.

Dr. Zylstra: I know this, you call our attention to 1 Corinthians, that you're still struggling over glossolalia, speaking in tongues,

Dr. Stek: Yes, that's a difficult one, simply because we don't have all the answers.

Dr. Zylstra: footnotes and so forth there, because apparently there are some on your translation group that still don't want to concede that speaking in tongues was a reference to a glossolalia, rather than the ability to speak other languages.

Dr. Stek: Well, I think that there is fairly common understanding among New Testament scholars that it's not always clear, that in some contexts it may be referring to speaking a foreign language, in other contexts it's not in speaking a foreign language, but in a language of the angels or something. So, it's not clear from the original in every case whether it is what we call glossolalia or whether it is talking in a foreign tongue.

Dr. Zylstra: Is that an example of a translation issue that wasn't quite as hot an issue now as it was your first time around, or was it as hot an issue?

Dr. Stek: Oh, I don't know that there is any difference, at least that we felt any difference in terms of the committee itself. We've come out now with the New Testament. Those who were part of the original team, the New Testament people, had virtually all retired by the time we did the review, and they had been replaced by another generation of New Testament scholars, very highly trained and very skilled scholars.

Dr. Zylstra: Well, let me give you a chance to wrap up here with just a response. I received an article written by a high school student, mailed from a different state from where we are, at a Christian high school, who did some surveying of people about their initial reactions to the TNIV. One of his women teachers says, "I'm against it. I hate when women do this. It shows that some women feel insecure about their gender." One of his other teachers says, "It's not right. It's not the way God wanted it." I mean, he got some more positive ones, too. What do you say to people who have that fear that you've kind of ideologically distorted the Scripture? And we've got about half a minute here.

Dr. Stek: Well, this is like trying to decide, in a disputable matter, which side is being ideologically guided. And I think one would have to be careful about using that term with respect to either side. But it is a difference in judgment as to how one does translate to bring an ancient language into modern idiom.

Dr. Zylstra: Great summary. Thanks for being with us.

Announcer: This has been "Conversations with Dr. Carl Zylstra." "Conversations" is made possible by a grant from People's Bank at 806 North Main in Sioux Center, along with offices in Rock Valley, Lester, and Akron. And our thanks to our guest, Professor John Stek. This is KDCR, Sioux Center, 88.5 FM.

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