

346 *Preserve the unity – please!*

Since starting to read Ephesians in Tom Wright's (NTFE) translation^[339] I've appreciated his 'different' ways of expressing things: I've already mentioned his finding better ways to translate *dikaiosunē*, because 'righteousness' has too many negative connotations to convey the writers' meaning.^[341]

Seeing Paul's emphasis in Eph 4 – *Make every effort to guard the unity that the Spirit gives* – I was struck by the difference between the NIV and Tom's version of 4:13a. (Bear with me, folks – this isn't just technical, it's serious – I'm desperate to avoid church splits over gay marriage.) I emailed Tom who very graciously replied – amazing, as he's such an eminent chap!

we all reach **unity** in **the faith** and in **the knowledge of** the Son of God^{NIV}

we should all reach **unity** in our **belief and loyalty**, and in **knowing** God's son.^{NTFE}

Look how different they are! 'Belief [in] and loyalty [towards]' is so much more about commitment to a person; similarly, having knowledge *about* someone is very different from actually *knowing* them. Luvvit!

One translator may read some Greek words looking more towards deepening our relationship with God while another may be looking, rather, for an accurate expression of Paul's theology, and they can end up with different emphases. Tom does both, of course, seeking to balance theology and relationship – but it is a balance. Anyway, here's his reply:

The key point of course is that the Greek root *pistis* doesn't easily translate into a single English term. It covers faith, faithfulness and hence loyalty, trustworthiness etc – all of the above and more.

And we all know an example the other way round: English only has one word, 'love' with which to express the four *different* Greek words. You see the problem!

Why is this significant? I'm trying again to illustrate two points. The first (above) is how translations can be strongly affected by the translator's overall Bible-view – then we have to *interpret* those English words, from our own overall Bible-view!

So if someone is advocating a church split on the basis of (our interpretation of our translation of) 'what the Bible clearly teaches,' then we should be very wary.

Secondly, concerning gay marriage, which is *more* important, specific ethical behaviour or how we treat each other and how we relate to one another – actions or attitudes?

Those who hold the traditional line will say they are maintaining the Bible's teaching on marriage. Absolutely, and I agree that marriage is under attack. People say that individuals should be free to express their sexuality in whatever way they want, when they want, with whoever they want, 'as long as we agree', OK? No, that kind of licence can be destructive of relationships.

But a growing number of Christians affirm marriage-that-is-gay. We want to support those Christians who, being gay, want to form a lifelong, faithful relationship, with all the personal and societal benefits that represents.

For the sake of unity, I hope that traditionalists will tolerate those of us who have changed our minds on this.

Paul Bev. 12.8.24