

Martin Luther—
The Father of Confessional, Functional-Equivalence Bible Translation (Part 1)

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It is difficult for someone who does not know the German language or the literary, social, and political setting of Central Europe in the early 1500s to appreciate just how revolutionary Martin Luther's translation of the German Bible was. Not that it always involves a radical departure from the original—in fact, Luther's wording is often quite close. But this was his genius. He seemed to be able to sense just how far he needed to push his mother tongue in order "to make these Hebrew writers talk German," as he put it (Koelpin 1977:3), and yet at the same time preserve the essential meaning of the Holy Scriptures. That is what functional equivalence and confessional fidelity are all about.

My aim here is to focus upon Luther's translation principles from the dual perspective of modern translation science and confessional, or evangelical, integrity. While these two concerns may seem at first to stand in a certain tension, or even in an antithetical relationship with one another, they need not be seen that way if these goals are being attended to by a skilled, sensitive, and Spirit-led translator. Such was Luther.

I will begin with a brief historical summary to set the stage. Then follows an overview ‡ of Luther's theory and practice of Bible translation, presented by means of what he himself had to say about it and of what may be observed in his translation into German. It will become clear that Luther's policies, principles, and procedures embody the modern "functional equivalence" method employed today to a greater or lesser extent by Scripture translators the world over. I will conclude with an overview of present-day translation projects in Central Africa where these same methods and goals are still being applied.

We look back now to 1521. The theological revolution against Rome seems to be defeated. Only the final "sacrifice" of its instigator, Martin Luther, is yet to be accomplished. This, at the climax of his dramatic appearance before Emperor Charles V and the Imperial Diet of Worms in April 1521, was his magnificent confession of faith: Unless I can be instructed and convinced with evidence from the Holy Scriptures or with open, clear, and distinct grounds and reasoning—and my conscience is captive to the Word of God—then I cannot and will not recant, because it is neither safe nor wise to act against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me! Amen. (Kittel 1986:161)

In spite of these wonderful words, however, Luther's powerful enemies were unmoved. The imperial assembly formally declared him to be a public outlaw, and all the might and resources of the empire were now ranged against him. But they failed to take into account the plan and purpose of God. So it happened that while Luther was on his way home to

Wittenberg, he was "kidnapped" by agents of his political patron, Elector Frederick of Saxony, and taken to Wartburg Castle for safekeeping. Here Luther, dressed as a knight and armed with a sword, became known as "Knight George." But he never used the sword; for, as he demonstrated throughout his life, the pen is far mightier (Nohl 1962:74). At first, the ever-active Luther was not very happy to be confined in this place that he called "my Patmos." "Here I sit," he complained, "all day long, lazy and full of food" (ibid.:165). But Luther and laziness were incompatible. So it was that during his ten-month stay at Wartburg he wrote and published a dozen works. He also completed the first step of a crucial literary and theological endeavor that was going to occupy his attention periodically for the rest of his life—the translation of the entire Bible into German.

When he had been forcibly seized from his wagon transport and secretly taken to Wartburg Castle, Luther had had the presence of mind to grab his Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament. These became his constant companions as he embarked upon the translation of the Scriptures. Luther realized that if his nascent theological reformation was going to succeed, it had to have the right foundation. Thus he endeavored to make it possible for many others to perceive and utter the same confession that he had been so graciously led to proclaim. After all, how could one's conscience be held "captive to the Word of God" until that person could actually read and understand the Scriptures in his or her mother tongue? But for the vast majority of the population at this time, the Bible was either a closed book written in Latin or a book of little meaning, a literal rendering from the Vulgate into dialectal German. (Luther's was not the first German translation, but all of his predecessors were either very wooden, hence hard to understand, and/or provincial, thus understood only in a limited region.)

Luther set to work with great zeal. Averaging more than 1,500 words a day, he translated the entire New Testament in less than three months, from late December 1521 to March 1522. This "September Testament" as it came to be known, was published in September 1522. Hasty though it was, composed in the white heat of evangelistic zeal, Luther's rendering was not careless or loose. He produced an accurate version easily understood by the masses, but also a literary work that came to play "a major role in shaping the modern German language" (Oberman 1989:305).

Luther, now assisted by a team of scholarly collaborators, took more time to produce the Old Testament. This work was published in sections until the complete "Wittenberg Bible" became available in September 1534. Luther never considered his translation to be final, however. He continued to make improvements whenever he had the chance, revising the text right up until his death in 1546. It is believed that the last printed page upon which Luther looked in this life was a printer's proof of the final revision of his translation of Genesis (Schroeder 1983:50). Luther knew that a new, vernacular translation of the Bible was absolutely essential at this time. A return to the true teachings of Scripture required a meaningful rendering in the language of the people.

Luther's version can now be seen for what it was: a truly revolutionary achievement for his age, linguistically, socially, translationally, and theologically. De Waard and Nida

(1986:183), promoters of the functional-equivalence method, point out its importance from the perspective of translation theory and practice:

Luther's approach to translation was certainly a communication breakthrough, thus setting the stage for important departures for a tradition dominated by ecclesiastical Latin.

And even Luther's Catholic critics admitted the stylistic superiority of his version:

The translation of the [German] Bible is a noble monument of literature, a vast enterprise ... The poetic soul finds in this translation evidences of genius and expressions as natural, as beautiful, and melodious as in the original languages. (The French Catholic Audin, cited in Plass 1948:338)

Truly Luther deserves the epithet bestowed by one of his contemporaries-the "father of the German language." Haile (1983:338) points this out:

The flurry of pamphlet reading in the early 1520s, reinforced by the general familiarity with Luther's Bible, resulted in the normalization of German in accordance with his own middle German dialect. The standard modern language takes its beginning there.

Luther's influence affected not only the German language, but the literature as well. The sheer volume of his own literary production is indeed staggering. Hirst (1986:4) estimates that

roughly one-third of all German writing appearing between 1518 and 1522 [even before he really got going!] bore Luther's name, while between 1534 [date of the publication of the full German Bible] and 1584 Lufft's press in Wittenberg alone produced some 100,000 copies of Luther's Bible translation.

By thus "providing the decisive thrust for the creation of a single German language, the one essential precondition of a national literature" was satisfied (ibid.).

This development had important socioeducational ramifications:

As the Bible became popular reading throughout northern Europe, a new age of literacy, even of poetry, began to disperse the dank fog of barbarism. Thus Luther's Bible became not just a legacy, but an important stage in the still gradually awakening consciousness of man. (Haile 1983:329)

But what is of prime importance is the spiritual significance of all this literary, linguistic, and cultural influence. Schweibert (1950:643) summarizes the revolutionized situation as follows:

The German Bible ... became the center of the [worship] service and its message the daily spiritual food for many a devout German home. It is impossible to evaluate its role in the furthering of the Reformation, for its assistance in spreading the Gospel to the common man was immeasurable.

This dual evangelistic and edificational effect extended far beyond Germany. Luther's Bible served as a primary source for the translations produced later in Holland, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, and England. The impact on English is particularly noteworthy:

Luther's strong influence on [William Tyndale] the father of the English Bible is unmistakable. Since Tyndale's English translation makes up more than 90 percent of the King James New Testament and more than 75 percent of the Revised Standard Version, Luther's legacy is still plain to see. (Zecher 1993:15; cf. Edwards 1976, chap. 5; McGoldrick 1979:43ff.)

Martin Luther's German translation was no accident of history. It was God who had prepared the way (for example, through the prior invention of type-printing about 1400) and whom God calls, he equips. Nowhere is this illustrated better than in the life of the man Martin himself-his pastoral and scholarly training, his personal temperament and interests, and his spiritual gifts. Luther himself spoke of the necessary attributes as "artistry, industry, good judgment, and intelligence with regard to the practice of translation" (cited in Hirst 1986:2); but it further requires "a genuinely pious, faithful,

diligent, God-fearing, experienced, practiced heart" (Plass 1959:105). Certainly Luther recognized this, as he said:

Because someone has the gift of languages and understands them, that does not enable him to turn one into the other and to translate well. Translating is a special grace and gift of God. (cited in Plass 1948:333)

All this must be coupled with genuine humility. In Luther's words,

I have undertaken to translate the Bible into German. This was good for me; otherwise I might have died in the mistaken notion that I was a learned fellow. (Plass *ibid.*:105)

We now turn to consider Luther's methodology-allowing Luther to present the case in his own words as much as possible. It will soon become clear that Luther's procedures are much in keeping with the modern principles of meaning-oriented Bible translation, even though they pre-date them by over four hundred years! Ten principles of confessional, functional-equivalence Bible translation will be presented, principles that were exemplified by Martin Luther. But first, we need to define "confessional" translation and "functional-equivalence" translation.

Confessional Bible translation has reference to the basic presuppositions that every translator brings with him to the task. They provide the translator with an all-embracing framework and an ongoing perspective and guide during the translation process. Luther underscores the importance of this when he states: "I hold that a false Christian or a sectarian spirit is unable to give a faithful translation" (Plass 1959:105). Certainly an errant faith and/or a misguided motivation will always adversely affect exegesis; for wherever one's interpretation of the original is off the mark, the translation inevitably follows.

Luther, as is well known, was strongly Christ centered and evangelical in his approach to hermeneutics. To him it was foundational to "have the understanding of Christ without which even the knowledge of the language is nothing" (Luther 1960:249).

Perhaps the best-known example of a confessional rendering is in Rom. 3.28, where he includes the word "alone" (*allein*) to emphasize Paul's point: "We hold that a man is justified without the works of the law, by faith alone" (Luther 1960:182). Luther would argue that this is not a "Lutheran" rendering. Rather, the word *allein* 'alone' is necessary in German to "convey the sense of the [original] text. [Furthermore] it belongs there if the translation is to be clear and vigorous" (Luther 1960:188).

As to the term "functional equivalence," this is an expression used recently in Bible translation theory to designate the "natural" or "idiomatic" method that Dr. Eugene A. Nida and others pioneered in the early 1950s. Originally called "dynamic equivalence" (Nida and Taber 1969:24), the method was later renamed in order to prevent misunderstanding and also to reflect a somewhat broader conception of the strongly socioculturally influenced process of interlingual communication. According to Nida (de Waard and Nida 1986:36), the essence of translation may be summarized as follows:

An expression in any language consists of a set of forms that signal meaning on various levels: lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical. The translator must seek to employ a functionally equivalent set of forms that will match, insofar as possible, the meaning of the original source-language text.

With more specific reference to the special rhetorical features that convey the original in the most meaningful way, Nida adds that the goal is

to attempt to discover in the receptor language the closest functional equivalent of the rhetorical structure in the source text. The particular set of forms used for different rhetorical functions is largely language-specific, but the functions [that is, expressive, cognitive, interpersonal, informative, imperative, performative, emotive, aesthetic, and metalingual] ... are universals, and it is for this reason that one can aim at functional equivalence. (ibid.:119, 25)

Now we will take a closer look at some of the major principles and procedures involved in functional-equivalence Bible translation. Ten principles have been gleaned from such introductory books as Nida and Taber (1969); Beekman and Callow (1974); Wendland (1985); de Waard and Nida (1986); and Barnwell (1986). These principles will be compared with Martin Luther's methodology as expressed in his writings on the subject and practiced in his German versions of 1522-46. It is indeed amazing how many of these modern translation principles were conceived and used by Luther over four hundred years ago. He may well be called the father of functional-equivalence Bible translation.

1. The priority of meaning

Every translation revolves somewhere between the two poles of "form" and "meaning." The principle that the meaning of the biblical message has priority over the linguistic form whereby it is conveyed is the foundation of functional equivalence methodology.

Form refers to the overt and language-specific phonological, lexical, morphosyntactic, and structural elements whereby a given message is conveyed from source to receptor. Meaning encompasses not only denotative (cognitive, referential, conceptual, propositional) content, but also the connotative aspects of feeling, intensity, and beauty, as well as the intentional (illocutionary, functional) facets which pertain to authorial purpose, for example, warning, rebuke, encouragement, instruction, commission, and condemnation. Meaning is just as complicated as form-and quite a bit more difficult to detect and differentiate in the case of Greek or Hebrew because we are working with a text that is linguistically, semantically, historically, and culturally remote.

Particular translations may be more form oriented or meaning oriented with respect to the source language (SL) text than others. A version that is more form oriented is called a literal translation; one in which the original meaning is expressed in natural receptor language (RL) verbal forms is called an idiomatic translation. An extremely literal version used for special purposes is termed "interlinear." An interlinear translation attempts to reproduce all the SL forms except the phonological as closely as possible. Much meaning is lost in the process. At the opposite end of the spectrum is a "paraphrase." A paraphrase is so devoted to being meaningful in the RL that it often either ignores or drastically alters the forms of the original.

There is no doubt which side of the form-meaning polarity Luther favored. He vigorously opposed literalism (Bluhm 1965:151). Luther (1960:189, 193, 213) put it this way:

I wanted to speak German, not Latin or Greek, since it was German I had undertaken to speak in the translation ... Therefore I must let the literal words go and try to learn how the German says that which the Hebrew [or Greek] expresses ... [W]ords are to serve and follow the meaning, not meaning the words.

It is important to point out that the "meaning" that Luther focused upon during translation was the content intended by the biblical author. Luther tried to imagine himself in the place of the original writer and compose his text accordingly-in natural German forms (see his discussion of Rom. 3.28 in Luther 1960:195ff.). He stressed the fact that a literal rendering often turns out to be not only awkward and difficult to understand in the RL, but also patently wrong. In his comments on Judas's criticism of Mary in Matt. 26.8 and Mark 14.4, Luther says (1960:190):

If I follow these literalistic asses [that is, his critics] I would have to translate it thus: 'Why has this loss of ointment happened?' But what kind of German is that? What German says, 'Loss of ointment has happened'? If he understands that at all, he thinks that the ointment is lost and must be looked for and found again; though even that is still obscure and uncertain ... But a German would say ... 'Why this waste?' Or, "Why this extravagance [schade]?" Indeed, "It's a shame about the ointment." That is good German, from which it is understood that Magdalene had wasted the ointment that she had poured out and had been extravagant. That was what Judas meant ...

In fact, if one takes the content of the Holy Scriptures seriously (as Luther did), then a literal translation is really no option. In his preface to the Book of Job, he concludes:

... if it were translated everywhere word for word ... and not for the most part according to the sense, no one would understand it. So, for example, when he [Job] says something like this, 'The thirsty will pant for his wealth' [Job 5.5], that means 'robbers shall take it [wealth] from him ... Again, by 'light' he means good fortune, by 'darkness' misfortune [Job 18.5] ... We have taken care to use language that is clear and that everybody can understand, without perverting the sense and meaning (Luther 1960:252-53).

Thus, for Luther, a communication of the meaning of Scripture was the crucial task and responsibility of the translator. To fail in this vital respect would be to make himself the proverbial "traitor" (per the Italian saying, *traduttore traditore*).

2. Change of linguistic form

In order to preserve the meaning of the message in the source language (SL), its linguistic form in the receptor language (RL) often has to be changed so that God's Word sounds natural, even idiomatic, in the RL. (This principle is actually implied by the preceding one, but it is necessary to state the case plainly, lest there be any misunderstanding.)

Something inevitably has to "give" in any translation: either the form of the original (in the case of an idiomatic, functional-equivalence version) or the meaning of the original (in the case of a literal version). That is why a translator is always a "traitor" in one respect or another-he cannot have it both ways; he cannot, except in a relatively few fortuitous cases, retain both form and meaning. Therefore a priority of one or the other has to be established from the beginning.

Luther expressed himself quite frequently and forcefully on this issue. His various writings on translation are permeated with the thought expressed here with reference to Psalm 68:

... what is the point of needlessly adhering so scrupulously and stubbornly to words which one cannot understand anyway? Whoever would speak German must not use Hebrew style. Rather he must see to it-once he understands the Hebrew author [hence the need for a careful exegesis!]-that he concentrates on the sense of the text, asking himself, 'Pray tell, what do the Germans say in such a situation?' Once he has the German words to serve the purpose, let him drop the Hebrew words and express the meaning freely in the best German he knows. (Luther 1960:213-14)

Luther cites Psalm 63.5 as one, among many examples, where he was forced to put this general principle into practice:

"Let my soul be filled as with lard and fat, so that my mouth may make praise with joyful lips." By "lard and fat" the Hebrews mean joy, just as a healthy and fat animal is healthy and grows fat, and conversely, a sad animal loses weight and grows thin ... However since no German can understand this expression, we have relinquished the Hebrew words and rendered the passage in clear German like this, "It would be my heart's joy and gladness, if I were to praise thee with joyful lips." (ibid.:212)

Not even the smallest details escaped Luther's sharp, meaning-focused eye, as we see in his handling of Psalm 91.9:

... we changed the pronoun *mea* into *tua*, making 'your' out of 'my', because the verse is obscure if one says, "For the Lord is my refuge," inasmuch as throughout the psalm the psalmist uses the word 'your' and speaks to or about someone else ... Now since an ordinary German will hardly understand this sudden change in speaking [from second to first person], we tried to put the matter clearly and plainly. After all, one is not accustomed to speaking this way in German as in Hebrew ... We have made changes of this sort several other times as well. (Luther 1960:218)

Observe how Luther "germanized" the blasphemous insult of the crowd, mocking Christ beneath his cross (Mark 15.29): "*Pfui dich, wie fein zerbrichst du den Tempel, und bauest ihn in drei Tagen!*" In place of the original Greek exclamation *oua!* (NRSV has "aha!"), Luther inserts the idiomatic *Pfui dich!* He also considers the natural flow of speech and cuts the long sentence spanning vv. 29-30 into two. In addition, he brings out the sarcasm implied in these words by means of the initial connotative marker *wie fein*.

This manner of translation is not easy: first the meaning of the original must be determined and then it must be expressed clearly and naturally in the RL. Luther (1960:188) compares it to farming:

One now runs his eyes over three or four pages and does not stumble once-without realizing what boulders and clods had once lain there where he now goes along as over a smoothly-planed board. We had to sweat and toil there before we got those boulders and clods out of the way, so that one could go along so nicely. The plowing goes well when the field is cleared. But rooting out the woods and stumps, and getting the field ready-this is a job nobody wants.

In another place, Luther (in Reu 1934:205) likens the work of translation to that of trying to teach a bird to sing a new song:

We are now sweating over the translation of the prophets into German. O God, what great and hard toil it requires to compel the writers against their will to speak German. They do not want to give up their Hebrew and imitate the barbaric German. Just as though a nightingale should be compelled to imitate a cuckoo and give up her glorious melody, even though she hates a song in monotone.

Implicit in this comment is Luther's high regard for the literary excellence of the biblical text. Even the best translation fell far short of the original in his eyes.

As far as the overall RL style is concerned, Luther aimed to produce what is known nowadays as a common-language version. This may be defined as a sort of middle-of-the-road form of a given sociolect that overlaps on its upper and lower ends with literary and colloquial variants respectively (de Waard and Nida 1986:41; Wonderly 1968, chap. 5). Luther might well have called his translation a "market-language version":

We do not have to inquire of the literal Latin, how we are to speak German, as these asses [that is, literalists] do. Rather we must inquire about this of the mother in the home, the children on the street, the common man in the marketplace. We must be guided by their language, the way they

... speak, and do our translating accordingly. That way they will understand it and recognize that we are speaking German to them. (Luther 1960:189)

The style that Luther used in his translation was "common" with respect to dialect as well. As he put it (cited in Plass 1959:727):

... not merely provincial (*certam linguam*) ... [but] people from upper and lower Germany can understand me. My language is that of the Saxon chancellery, which all the princes and kings of Germany imitate.

It is important to note that Luther did have a particular and popular vernacular in mind into which he would shape the biblical message.

3. The expression of implicit information

It is frequently the case that elements of meaning that are implicit in the original text must be stated explicitly in a translation. (The reverse is less often true; however, a translator may sometimes render a "specific" SL term with a "generic" RL term.) Explicating implicit information troubles many people, as though it were "adding" something to the text. The problem has to do with one's definition of meaning and how it is expressed in language.

The meaning of a biblical text encompasses everything that the biblical author intended to communicate to his original audience. That includes not only information, but also message-related feelings, attitudes, values, and intentions of how he wanted them to act on the basis of his words. Meaning also includes elements of this nature that were implied, that is, not overtly stated. An author assumes that certain aspects of meaning are already well known to the audience because of a shared religion, culture, ecological setting, history, and interpersonal situation. Such shared information does not need to be stated. Furthermore, some things are better conveyed indirectly or left unsaid; this can make a greater impression or avoid offense (as in euphemism).

However, when a translator attempts to transmit the same message in a completely different set of communicative circumstances, a considerable number of the original author's basic assumptions and presuppositions concerning his audience's understanding are no longer valid. For example, historical and geographical knowledge are not shared between the biblical author and a modern-day audience. Nor are customs, social institutions, values, figures of speech, idioms, etc. The critical question is, How should such implicit material be conveyed to today's audience where it constitutes an essential part of the intended message?

To do this, three major means are available, all of which were advocated by Martin Luther: (1) a meaningful, functional-equivalent text; (2) readers' helps, such as illustrations, prefaces, and paratextual notes; and (3) the supplementary instruction of the church. (We are concerned here only with Luther's use of the first of these.)

The principle of making information that is implicit in the original explicit in the translation was applied by Luther on several different levels of communication. In its simplest, hence least debatable, form this would involve the use of a "classifier" to specify some point of reference in the original text. For example, Luther explicitly

classified Bethlehem as a city and Judea as a country ('a land') in Matt. 2.1; and in Matt. 2.2 he specified that magi were 'wise men' (*die Weise*, not magi) and that the king they sought was 'newly' (*neu*) born. Bluhm (1965:58) comments in this regard:

Luther was bold and adventurous enough to insert a word when the spirit of a passage called for it ... as long as it did not transgress against essential meaning. Far from transgressing, Luther at times by his very boldness brought out meaning, released implicit meaning. It was as if he ... read the mind and intention of the original writer ...

Such usage is closely related to a translator's sense of what is natural in actual speech (a quality which the Germans themselves refer to as *Schprachgefuehl*). In his comments on the use of "alone" (*allein*) in Romans 3.28, Luther makes this very point:

But it is the nature of our German language that in speaking of two things, one of which is affirmed and the other denied, we use the word *solum* (*allein*) along with the (negative) *nicht* [not] or *kein* [no]. For example, we say ... "Did you *allein* write it, and *nicht* read it over?" There are innumerable cases of this kind in daily use. (Luther 1960:189)

Many times it is necessary to make the intended meaning explicit in order to avoid making nonsense or the wrong sense. For example, for Psalm 65.8b, which in the KJV is rendered very literally as "thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice" (NRSV has "you make the gateways of the morning and evening sing for joy"), Luther "clarified this to read, 'Thou makest joyful all that go about their business, both morning(s) and evening(s)'" (Luther 1960:212). He thus made what he felt was the sense of the psalm as a whole explicit by personalizing and specifying, rather than leaving it figurative and vague as in the KJV. Luther, in commenting (1960:212-13) on this passage, further reveals his ultimate concern for meaningfulness in translation:

No one should be surprised if here and in similar passages we occasionally differ from the rabbis and grammarians. For we followed the rule that wherever the words could have gained or tolerated an improved meaning, there ... we ran (the) risk, relinquishing the words and rendering the sense.

We conclude this section with just one example of the opposite procedure—that of making implicit what is stated explicitly in the original text for the sake of meaningfulness and/or naturalness in the RL. Of Psalm 68.15b (v. 16 in Luther's version), Luther says:

"a many-peaked mountain" ... we have rendered in German as "a great (*grosz*) mountain." For the meaning is that ... a mountain is properly called great in which many peaks are joined together, one above another right up to the highest peak ... (Luther 1960:215)

In this instance a more generic term ('great') is used in place of one that might be semantically misleading or poetically awkward to express in the RL.

4. The retention of the original unnatural form in places

Sometimes the form of the original will have to be retained in a translation even if this results in a rendering that is not the most natural or idiomatic. (This is the case with certain key theological, symbolical, or cultural terms, such as "vineyard," "shepherd," "sheep," "scapegoat," "passover," "sabbath," "bread," "wine," and "cross.")

Luther realized on the basis of his considerable biblical background, exegetical skill, and translation experience that at times it is virtually impossible to convey the full sense or the precise sense of a particular Hebrew or Greek expression in German and that a concern for naturalness must never be allowed to diminish or distort the intended meaning of a given Greek or Hebrew term. As Luther (1960:194) explains it:

I have not gone ahead anyway and disregarded altogether the exact wording of the original. Rather with my helpers I have been careful to see that where everything turns on a single passage, I have kept to the original quite literally and have not lightly departed from it. For example, in John 6[:27] Christ says, "Him has God the Father sealed [versiegelt]." It would have been better German to say, "Him has God the Father signified [gezeichnet]," or "He it is whom God the Father means [meinet]." But I have preferred to do violence to the German language rather than to depart from the word.

At other times Luther wished to preserve something of the richness of the original thought as a way of enriching, as it were, the German language and manner of conceptualizing things:

... we at times also translated quite literally-even though we could have rendered the meaning more clearly another way-because everything (that is, the precise sense of the original) turns on these very words. For example, here in [Psalm 68] verse 18, "Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive," it would have been good German to say, "Thou has set the captives free." But this is too weak, and does not convey the fine, rich meaning of the Hebrew ... On every hand St. Paul propagates such rich, glorious, and comforting doctrine (cf. Rom. 8.3; 1 Cor. 15.54; Gal. 2.19; 2 Tim. 1.10). Therefore out of respect for such doctrine, and for the comforting of our conscience, we should keep such words, accustom ourselves to them, and so give place to the Hebrew language where it does a better job than our German. (Luther 1960:216)

The preceding also illustrates the importance of maintaining intertextual "resonance," that is, the accumulated significance of certain important expressions that recur in a number of places in the Scriptures, especially in New Testament quotations of the Old.

Then there are those relatively few times where the original text is so difficult or its sense so obscure that to attempt one meaningful rendering would result in the elimination of another equally likely interpretation. (The use of footnotes for such alternatives was not an option in those days.) Luther cites the example of Psalm 91.5-6, which he rendered literally:

Therefore we tried to leave room for each person to understand (the words) according to the gifts and measure of his spirit. Otherwise we would have rendered them in such a way as to give fuller expression to our own understanding of the meaning. (Luther 1960:216-17)

Luther's high regard for the form of the original message of Scripture had a number of important implications as far as his translation procedure was concerned. In his eyes, a thorough knowledge of the biblical languages was essential so that a translation could be based firmly upon the original text rather than on some other translation, such as the Latin Vulgate. (This had been the practice before Luther.) The effort Luther had put into learning Hebrew and Greek undoubtedly influenced his estimation of their supreme importance in exegesis. Thus he gathered together men of scholarly ability to serve as his "revision team." In addition, according to Bachmann, editor of Luther's Works (Luther 1960:230), "Luther ... availed himself of the best (scholarly) aids of his time, inadequate though these were, in order to ascertain the most accurate text of Scripture."

A concern for form also meant that much careful and diligent research was needed in order to come as close to the original concept as the lexical resources of German would allow. Luther was an active researcher. When dealing with some of the more technical terms of biblical vocabulary, he would go out in search of the most precise German words that he could find. He investigated the court jewels of the Elector of Saxony to find names for the gems and precious stones listed in Revelation 21. He examined rare coin collections in Wittenberg to discover suitable equivalents for the various monetary terms

of the Bible. One contemporary reports that Luther once "had several rams slaughtered in his presence so that a German butcher could tell him the proper name for each part of the sheep" (Johann Mathesius, cited in Schweibert 1950:649), enabling him to more accurately render the elaborate details of the Levitical sacrificial system.

In a letter to his friend Spalatin, Luther (cited in Bainton 1950:256) describes his research into the birds and beasts of the OT:

I am all right on the birds of the night-owl, raven, horned owl, tawny owl, screech owl-and on the birds of prey-vulture, kite, hawk, and sparrow hawk. I can handle the stag, roebuck, and chamois, but what in the Devil am I to do with the taragelaphus, pygargus, oryx, and camelopard [names for animals in the Vulgate]?

Those of us who work on translations in various African languages can certainly sympathize with Luther on this point (cf. Wendland 1985, chap. 7). How far can one go in search of indigenous equivalents before seriously distorting the sense of the original or adversely coloring biblical terminology with conflicting or even contradictory local connotations? In a sense-oriented version, however, one must be prepared to err more on the side of greater contextualization so that the message really means something, rather than use all sorts of transliterations, loan words, made-up terms, and semantic reconstructions. Luther's basic policy is described in this apt comment by Roland Bainton (1950:256-57):

If the French call a centurion a gendarme, and the Germans make a procurator into a burgomeister, Palestine has moved west. And this is what did happen to a degree in Luther's rendering. Judea was transplanted to Saxony, and the road from Jericho to Jerusalem ran through the Thuringian forest. By nuances and turns of expression Luther enhanced the graphic in terms of the local (that is, where no point of doctrine was concerned).

5. The importance of discourse analysis to exegetical study

In order for an accurate exegetical study to be carried out and a correspondingly natural translation effected, a verse-by-verse approach is inadequate. What is needed is a holistic approach. A discourse and genre-oriented perspective must be adopted and applied with respect to both the SL text and the RL text.

Any verbal text, especially a literary one, whether oral or written, is composed of smaller segments that are combined to form larger ones and so on up the hierarchical ladder of linguistic organization until the complete composition is constituted. Such a discourse must therefore be viewed (both analyzed and evaluated) as a whole, a unity that communicates more than, and is essentially different from, the sum of its individual parts-with respect to form, content, function, and effect. A discourse perspective includes also a concern for the various language-specific textual forms or "genres" in which the Scriptures are composed-narratives, parables, proverbs, songs, oracles, letters, apocalypses, legislation, and many other subcategories of these.

Discourse analysis is the fruit of some relatively recent insights of literary and linguistic science; therefore it is not surprising that Luther had little to write on the subject. But that he intuitively recognized these principles is evident from the fact that his translation is not chopped up into distinct verses. Rather, it consists of meaningful paragraphs of varying length-according to his arrangement of the subject matter at hand (Plass

1948:331). Words are not connected to one another in just any fashion, but are carefully selected to conform to the meaning-environment into which they are to be set. Luther often wrestled with this task, and when he himself did not have the answer, he readily consulted others. Thus Luther adopted a text-holistic as well as a contextually shaped perspective on whatever passage he happened to be translating.

Luther recognized and appreciated good literature and could compose it himself, as his many beautiful hymns attest (see Burger 1967:127ff.). He greatly valued the connotative qualities of the Word of God and strove to emulate the effect in German garb. He felt, for example, that "the language of (Job) is more vigorous and splendid than that of any other book in all the Scriptures" (Luther 1960:252) but that there was a problem on the German side:

We have so much trouble translating Job, on account of the grandeur of his sublime style, that he seems to be more impatient of our efforts to turn him into German than he was of the consolation of his friends ... Either he always wishes to sit upon his dunghill, or else he is jealous of the translator who would share with him the credit of writing his book. (In a letter to Spalatin, cited in Koelpin 1977:1)

Similarly with the Psalms, Luther perceived not only their great theological import, but also their poetic beauty and emotive impact; and so he spent much of his translation career trying to perfect his own German version of the Psalter. The dynamic power of the Hebrew prophets too must have impressed Luther because he devoted a great amount of his time to attempting to push them into preaching German! (ibid.:3). Even the foundational, narrative-legal books of Moses did not escape Luther's attention; for the goal, as far as he was concerned, was quite comprehensive:

I will get rid of Hebraisms, so that no one can say that Moses was a Hebrew. Good translating means adapting the statement to the spirit of the (receptor) language. (cited in Reu 1934:269)

It was Luther's desire to make his translation sound like the original text in German. Plass (1948:336) gives a good summary of the result:

His translation is the German Bible rather than the Bible in German. The German language was like clay in his hands, like a violin played by a virtuoso. The sighs and sobs of some of the Psalms; the high hallelujahs of others: hymns to the God of salvation; the majestic cadences of Isaiah; the lamenting notes of Jeremiah; the profound depth beneath the simple diction of John; the tremendous power of the tense, stormy, telescopic style of Paul-Luther's translation has all of these in German.

The rhetorical feature that Luther seemed to appreciate the most about the Scriptures was its conciseness, a quality that tends to move its hearers to think more deeply about what is being said. He said, for example, concerning the story of David's life:

The words are few, but the import is great ... That means we have to imagine David's thoughts when he slew the lion, or when he had to fight Goliath: "What if I shall be killed? But it shall not be so. My right hand is the hand of God." That's what you call rhetoric! (cited in Haile 1983:331)

Luther was convinced that a person could not properly understand the Scripture "unless it is brought home to him, that is, unless he goes through the same experience" (ibid.:335). So it was that he translated the Bible as German literature with the purpose of providing better access to the diverse feelings, emotions, and attitudes of the biblical participants. Thus the readers veritably shudder when they read the soldiers' slander in Matt. 27:29: "*Gegrueszet seiest du, der Juden Koenig!*"

For Luther, Christ was the most effective communicator of all ("he combines heaven and earth into one morsel when he speaks"- (ibid.:331), so the good Doctor paid special attention to the words of our Lord. He wanted Christ, if nobody else, to speak German:

For example, Christ says ..., "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" [Matt. 12.34, Luke 6.46] ... If I am to follow these asses [that is, his critics], they will lay the original before me literally and translate thus ... Tell me, is that speaking German? What German could understand something like that? What is "the abundance of the heart"? No German can say that; unless, perhaps, he was trying to say that someone was altogether too magnanimous or too courageous, though even that would not yet be correct. For "abundance of the heart" is not German, any more than "abundance of the house," "abundance of the stove," or "abundance of the bench" is German. But the mother in the home and the common man say this, "What fills the heart overflows the mouth." That is speaking good German, the kind I have tried for-and unfortunately not always reached or hit upon ... (Luther 1960:189-90)

But there are many other such examples of functional equivalence in the Luther Bible--all illustrations of Luther's profound grasp of the dynamics of discourse and how to convey it from one language and literature to another.

But how does one duplicate Luther in the thousands of other languages in the world? Just listen to his advice. It is something that all present and future translators of God's Word need to keep in mind.

I am persuaded that without knowledge of literature, pure theology cannot at all endure, just as heretofore, when letters [that is, literary study] have declined and lain prostrate, theology too has wretchedly fallen and lain prostrate; nay I see that there has never been a great revelation of the Word of God unless He has first prepared the way by the rise and prosperity of languages and letters, as though they were John the Baptists ... Certainly it is my desire that there shall be as many poets and rhetoricians as possible, because I see that by these studies, as by no other means, people are wonderfully fitted for the grasping of sacred truth and for handling it skillfully and happily ... Therefore I beg of you that at my request (if that has any weight) you will urge your young people to be diligent in the study of poetry and rhetoric. (cited in Smith and Jacobs 1918:176ff.)

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Martin Luther—

The Father of Confessional, Functional-Equivalence Bible Translation (Part 2)

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In part one, five principles of functional equivalence that Martin Luther employed in translating the German Bible were presented: (1) the priority of meaning; (2) the need to change linguistic form; (3) expression of implicit information; (4) retention of the original unnatural form in places; (5) the importance of discourse analysis to exegetical study. Here in part two are five more such principles: (6) the importance of context; (7) monitoring the reception of the message; (8) the value of readers' helps; (9) the team approach; and (10) need for revision. A survey of translation projects in Central Africa concludes this article.

6. The importance of context

The internal linguistic context, or "co-text," is a crucial factor in biblical exegesis. Any given term must be understood and translated so as to fit the context, near and far. The external, situational context must also be considered when doing exegesis. (This study is known in theological circles as "isagogics.") The external context includes such distinct but interrelated aspects as the cultural, social, economic, educational, philosophical, literary (oral and written), political, environmental, and religious sectors.

There is no doubt that Luther translated with the linguistic context in mind. "Luther, never a literalist, chose the more appropriate word according to the circumstances in which the term occurs," says Bluhm (1965:64). We have already seen instances of this in part one. Another instance is Luther's various translations of the Hebrew word *chen*, as the editor of Luther's Works points out (in Luther 1960:222fn.):

This Hebrew root may mean favor or grace, with respect either to form and appearance or to speech; it may also mean the favor or acceptance one has in the sight either of God or of men. Luther found that his favorite equivalent, *Gnade*, was not always adequate for every form, context, and usage; he also utilized such terms as *Gunst*, *lieblich*, *holdselig*, and others to render the word.

Several other interesting instances of Luther's practice of "contextual" (rather than "verbal") consistency in translation are provided by Plass (1948:337):

His amazing wealth of vocabulary was an invaluable asset to Luther in translating.... [He] uses no fewer than ten synonyms for the word *Leid* (sorrow). At the same time he does not choose a different word merely for the sake of variety. The Professor carefully notes the shade of difference in synonyms and makes his selections accordingly ... [Thus] the *Pferde* (horses) are held in with bit and bridle, but fiery *Rosse* (chargers) carry Elijah to heaven in a fiery chariot, and it is the strong *Gaeule* (work horses) whose neighing is heard (James 3.3; 2 Kings 2.11; Jer. 50.11).

On the other hand, Luther also realized that in certain domains of vocabulary, the Hebrew or Greek possessed a wealth of lexical resources that simply could not be matched in German. Koelpin (1977:8) cites an example:

It [Hebrew] possesses many words for singing, praising, glorifying, honoring, rejoicing, sorrowing, etc., for which we have but one. Especially in sacred and divine matters is it rich in words. It has at least ten names with which to name God, whereas we have only one word. It may therefore be rightly called a holy tongue.

As to the "situational" context, we might point out first that this is a factor seldom given the attention it deserves in Bible translation. After all, the situational context is not part of the text per se, and some may feel that it can be dispensed with or largely ignored. It is hard for translators to put themselves into the biblical author's situation and then attempt to express this context accurately (with reference to the SL text/context) and appropriately (with reference to the RL text/context). But Luther was well able to do just this, as has already been suggested. Luther reveals his keen awareness of issues of a sociolinguistic nature in his discussion of Luke 1.28:

When the angel greets Mary, he says, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" Up to now that has simply been translated according to the literal Latin (*ave Maria gratia*). Tell me whether that is also good German! When does a German speak like that, "You are full of grace"? He would have to think of a keg "full of" beer or a purse "full of" money. Therefore I have translated it, "Thou gracious one" (*du holdselig*), so that a German can at least think his way through to what the angel meant by this greeting ... though I have still not hit upon the best German for it. Suppose I had taken the best German and translated the salutation thus: "Hello there, Mary" (*Gott grusse dich, du liebe Maria*)--for that is what the angel wanted to say, and what he would have said, if he had wanted to greet her in German. (Luther 1960:191-92)

So why then did Luther not render the greeting that way? Perhaps out of evangelical concern for his former Catholic brethren. They, he says with tongue in cheek, "would have hanged themselves out of (their) tremendous fanaticism for the Virgin Mary, because I had thus destroyed the salutation" (ibid.:192).

Another example, this one from the Old Testament, also reveals how closely language usage is related to co-text, context, culture, and connotation. What sounds perfectly natural in one setting may seem completely out of place in another:

Psalms 92[:14] says, 'Even when they grow old, they will nevertheless bloom and be fruitful and flourishing.' We know, of course, that word for word the text says this, 'When their hair is gray they will still bloom and be fat and green.' But what does this mean? The psalm had been comparing the righteous to palm trees and cedars [verse 14], which have no 'gray hair,' neither are they 'fat' (by which a German means an oily or greasy substance [*schmaltz*], and thinks of a hefty paunch). But the prophet here intends to say that the righteous are such trees, which bloom and are fruitful and flourishing even when they grow old. (Luther 1960:218)

All mother-tongue speakers know such information intuitively and produce their utterances accordingly when they talk in the varied interpersonal situations of life. The hard part is to transform such knowledge into verbal action when translating. That takes scholars with the boldness to accompany their sociocultural acumen.

7. Monitoring the reception of the message

As the Scripture message is being translated, it must be continually monitored, via various testing procedures, to determine how well it is "getting through" to the intended audience. And not only the message, but also the medium needs to be evaluated in this way. In the electronically captivated West, for example, what will happen to the written "Scriptures" when nobody reads anymore? However, in most parts of the world, the problem is "when no one, or few, can read."

This was the question for Luther's day. The level of literacy in one or another of the local dialects was probably much lower than 50 percent (Marquand 1991:3) and complicated by the fact that no single dialect of speech dominated Germany then. Moreover, printed literature was so expensive that it was beyond the means of most ordinary readers. Luther realized that most, by far, of his potential audience would hear, rather than actually read, his translation. He therefore wisely formulated his text with this important factor in mind: How does the Word sound when it is read?

"Luther had an ear for the ringing, sonorous phrase," asserts Bluhm (1965:65), pointing to the alliteration that joins the key nouns of Matt. 2.6- Hertzog (duke) and Herr (master, lord). And listen to the phonesthetics of Psalm 23.1, "Der Herr ist mein Hirte; mir wird nichts mangeln." Luther's German translation "was the first to give the words of Scripture rhythm and melody," according to Burger (1967:124):

While he was translating the Bible, Luther spoke his sentences out loud to himself, and his sure sense of rhythm and melody never allowed any sentence to pass whose accents, pauses and cadences, whose sequence of vowels and consonants, did not satisfy him entirely. (ibid.)

Luther wanted the sound of his text, particularly in key passages, to "ring through all the senses into the heart" so that those hearing it might "rightly conceive of the word(s) and the feeling behind (them)" (cited in Burger 1967:125-26). Ewald Plass (1948:336-37) provides some detail:

The Reformer translated for the ear no less than for the eye. He realized that "his" Bible would be read aloud in church and in family devotion, wherefore he would make the very sound of it pleasing to the ear. He therefore avoided all harsh constructions, all unbalanced sentences and disturbing subordinate clauses. The result was a rhythmic flow of language. For instance, Ps. 33.18 Luther translated: "*Des Herrn Auge siehet auf die, so [not 'die' again] ihn fuerchten, die auf seine Guete hoffen.*" In Matt. 5.44 he avoided a similar cacophony by translating: "*Bittet fuer die, so euch beleidigen und verfolgen.*"

Luther's desire for idiomaticity in German appears to be a major factor in many of his subtle stylistic flourishes. We see this, for example, in his breaking up of the long utterance of Matt. 26.54 into two parts—an emphatic rhetorical question followed by a brief self-responding assertion: *Wie wuerde aber die Schrift erfuellet? Es musz also gehen.* (NRSV has "But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?")

Koelpin (1977:12-13) presents a good summary of Luther's basic aim and the effect of his practical oral/aural-oriented policy:

Luther aimed to produce more than a faithful translation. He wanted a text that was crisp and pleasant to hear. By his own admission he read Holy Writ "as though it had been written yesterday." And he wished his translation to be read in the same way. He adapts his language to any mood, to the tenderness of the Christmas story as well as to the terrors of the Apocalypse. He employs all the skills of the poet's craft: an added syllable for the sake of rhythm, the use of alliteration, assonance, and rhyme. All is so naturally conceived that it does not seem artificially contrived.

Luther considered the Word of God, especially the Gospel, to be a living word-hence best communicated in living speech-a voice resounding into the whole world and publicly shouted aloud so that all can hear it (Burger 1967:125; cf. Luther 1960:12:259).

Luther's concern for the medium of message transmission extended also to the typography and format of the printed page. After all, how can a text be properly read aloud if it has not been set out legibly in written form? His fashioning of the text into meaningful paragraph units rather than a disruptive sequence of individual verses has already been mentioned. A project undertaken late in life (perhaps so that he himself might benefit) was a special "large-type" edition of the New Testament, prepared for readers with failing eyesight in mind (Panning 1983:82).

More significant in terms of readability is the fact that "all prints of the Luther Bible down to 1586 divided the text up ... into rhythmical units and used punctuation [especially the comma] to indicate the pauses necessary for rhythmical diction, not as signs of grammatical articulation" (Burger 1967:125). In this respect, Luther has not been surpassed even up to the present day. In fact, things have actually regressed in the interests of economy and due to a highly conservative tradition of Scripture publication. (For a recent exception, see the poetic format of the New Evangelical Translation.)

Certainly a lot more could and should be done to create a more "user-friendly" Scripture text today. This could be achieved by more discourse-cognizant paragraphing; a unjustified right margin; a single column of print on the page (each line a distinct utterance unit); clear, sharp typefaces; more space between lines and for the margins; and form/content-shaped indentation to reflect special syntactic or poetic patterns. These are just a few of the more important formatting variables available as visual cues.

8. The value of readers' helps

Luther's version did not, of course, include many of the features that we call readers' helps, because their great value has been learned in more recent years. Explanatory footnotes, selective cross-references, a glossary of important terms and technical terms, appropriate illustrations, prefaces to the individual books, section headings, tables, summary charts-all of these facilitate understanding and further study.

But Luther prepared the ground for such extratextual aids. His Bible contained an index, and later editions also provided an indication of the regular gospel and epistle readings for each Sunday (Koelpin 1977:14). The most important of these helps was undoubtedly the series of explanatory prefaces that he prepared for the Old Testament, the New Testament, and each of the individual books of the Bible. Luther used these introductions to raise the abysmally low level of biblical knowledge among his constituency, lay and

clergy alike. One might raise some objections nowadays concerning their theological narrowness—they tended to be rather dogmatic and too Lutheran for a general church readership. But this depends on one's own ecclesiastical persuasion, and of course the religious times have dramatically changed since Luther's day. At any rate few would deny that his prefaces contain many good theological insights and are especially helpful in the area of practical application, as we see in the following excerpt from the "Preface to the Book of Job":

But this [book] is written for our comfort, that God allows great saints to falter, especially in adversity. For before Job comes into fear of death, he praises God at the theft of his goods and the death of his children. But when death is in prospect and God withdraws himself, Job's words show what kind of thoughts a man—however holy he may be—holds towards God: he thinks that God is not god, but only a judge and wrathful tyrant, who storms ahead and cares nothing about the goodness of a person's life. This is the finest part of the book. It is understood only by those who also experience and feel what it is to suffer the wrath ... of God and to have his grace hidden. (Luther 1960:252)

Along with the book introductions, Luther in some editions also "added comments on the margin for the guidance of the common folk" (Koelpin 1977:14). We might regard such marginal expository "glosses" as being an important forerunner of the annotated "study Bibles" so popular nowadays.

We might even view Luther's inclusion of the Apocrypha as a "readers' help." While Luther considered this corpus to be inferior to the canon, he also felt that Christians could derive some real benefit from it, especially to gain a greater awareness of the religious life and thought of Bible times. The Apocrypha can provide a useful background to the genuinely inspired books of Scripture. In those days of deprivation with respect to scholarly aids and practical study helps, every little bit counted, and it is to Luther's credit that he recognized this serious need and did something about it, using the best materials at hand.

Another area in which the Luther Bible supplied special help to its readers (and nonreaders as well) was through its magnificent illustrations. In this regard, Zecher (1993:12) observes:

Das Neue Testament Deutsch was published in September 1522. [It was] a typographical masterpiece, containing woodcuts from Lucia Cranach's workshop and selections from Albrecht Durer's famous Apocalypse series...

Such beautiful, graphically detailed illustrations, created by recognized masters of the day, contributed to the impact and appeal of certain editions. This is evident in the very first complete Bible that Luther provided for the German people—the 1534 "Wittenberg" version published by Hans Lufft, which included 124 woodcuts (Panning 1983:80). However, the illustrators sometimes got a bit carried away with the spirit of their own age. Consequently they transculturized the message visually—and hence also conceptually—as they transferred the setting from ancient biblical times to contemporary Germany. This was especially true in the Book of Revelation. (But then again, why can the imagination not be allowed to run a bit more freely in this book?) The whore of Babylon, for example, in chapter 17, is anachronistically depicted in the September Testament of 1522 as wearing the official papal tiara (Bainton 1950:259). Whatever other purpose they served, the illustrations did help to germanize the Bible and make people

feel "at home" when reading it. As Bainton notes: "Moses and David might almost be mistaken for Frederick the Wise and John Frederick [his son]" (ibid.:257).

9. The team approach

A diversified and well-organized translation team generally produces results that are more accurate, effective, and acceptable to the RL audience than a translator working alone can achieve. (Although Luther completed the September Testament alone and in a hurry, that was due to special circumstances.)

Panning provides a description of how Luther would often proceed at the beginning of a translation (1983:76):

Luther apparently always began from the original Hebrew. In a first pass, Luther would translate literally and woodenly, even word for word. Often the first rough draft would be in Latin. At times when Luther didn't know a Hebrew word, he simply transliterated it or left a blank for the time being. The second stage was to fit the parts together lexically, syntactically, grammatically. When he had determined ... what the Hebrew said, then he went at what it meant, trying to put the content into basic German, which was then reworked and polished and refined in the painstaking search to find just the right German words. After crossing out three, four, and even more attempts, a final decision would be reached and the crabbed and cluttered manuscript would be sent to the long-suffering typesetter.

It is indeed striking to observe how similar these procedures are to the basic three-step method of analysis, transfer, and restructuring that is recommended in some of the most popular Bible translation manuals (for example, Nida and Taber 1969:33; Wonderly 1968:52).

But Luther openly acknowledged that a one-man translation has its limitations, especially where the Old Testament is concerned:

I freely admit that I have undertaken too much, especially in trying to put the Old Testament into German. The Hebrew language, sad to say, has gone down so far that even the Jews know little enough about it, and their glosses and interpretations (which I have tested) are not to be relied upon. (Luther 1960:249)

Therefore, Luther's subsequent revision of his initial New Testament version, as well as his translation of the Old Testament and Apocrypha, was undertaken with the help of a scholarly translation committee (*collegium biblicum*), which he affectionately referred to as his Sanhedrin. Luther, realizing his limitations, selected committee members who were recognized scholars and specialists in their field, men like Philip Melancthon for Greek and Matthew Aurogallus for Hebrew. As Luther himself explained this important practical point:

Translators must never work by themselves. When one is alone, the best and most suitable words do not always occur to him. (cited in Zecher 1993:12-13)

In his preface to the Old Testament, Luther acknowledges the help of his "team":

If all of us were to work together, we would have plenty to do in bringing the Bible to light, one working with the meaning, the other with the languages. For I too have not worked at this alone, but have used the services of anyone whom I could get. (Luther 1960:250)

Even with such a highly qualified and close-knit committee, the work was not easy, mainly due to the nature of the translation that Luther was trying to produce, namely, one that emphasized the meaning of Scripture, rather than its linguistic form:

I have constantly striven to produce a pure and clear German in translating; and it often happened that for two or three or four weeks we sought and asked for a single word and at times did not find it even then. Such was our labor while translating Job that Master Philip, Aurogallus, and I could at times scarcely finish three lines in four days. (cited in Plass 1959:106)

An important member of the review team was its recording secretary, Georg Roerer, who diligently made notes of the major decisions. In an extensive, sustained, and detailed project such as this, it is essential to be able to refer back to past proceedings so that the same ground is not plowed twice and also to encourage the development of a stable set of translation procedures. That is exactly what happened as we see from the following descriptions by Johann Matthesius of the committee in session:

Then, when D. (Luther) had reviewed the previously published Bible and had also gained information from Jews and friends with linguistic talents, and had inquired of old Germans about appropriate words ... he came into the assembly (Konsistorium) with his old Latin and a new German Bible, and always brought the Hebrew text with him. M. Philip brought the Greek text with him. D. Creuziger a Chaldean Bible in addition to the Hebrew. [sic] The professors had their rabbinical commentaries. D. Pommer also had the Latin text, with which he was very familiar. Each one had studied the text which was to be discussed and had examined Greek and Latin as well as Hebrew commentators. (cited in Reu 1934:212-13)

Thereupon the president [Luther] submitted a text and permitted each to speak in turn and listened to what each had to say about the characteristics of the language or about the expositions of the ancient doctors. Wonderful and instructive discussions are said to have taken place in connection with this work, some of which M. Georg (Roerer) recorded, which were afterwards printed as little glosses and annotations on the margin. (cited in Plass 1950:649)

10. Need for revision

No translation is ever perfect or complete. That means critical and qualitative revision is essential. It is, in fact, a never-ending process from one generation to the next.

During the course of a translation project, a team learns many things-about the original text, exegesis, consistency, how to handle difficult terms or passages in the RL, and even organizational efficiency. Thus at the end, they realize that in view of what they have picked up along the way they must now begin all over again, revising to correct the inevitable errors and to improve the wording wherever possible, based on their past experience and also the feedback from the publication of selected portions.

In most cases, unfortunately, such an opportunity does not materialize. For one reason or another the team is disbanded and its members return to other pursuits. In Luther's case, however, it was different. As has been mentioned, the translation and revision of the Bible occupied Luther for most of his life. As soon as the September Testament of 1522 appeared in print, Luther immediately set to work on a thorough revision (even as he was simultaneously engaged in a translation of the Old Testament). Amazingly, a second and significantly revised edition was published just three months after the first. This same cycle was repeated for the OT books: analyze, translate, publish, and revise. In all, according to Koelpin (1977:3), Luther produced five major text revisions during his lifetime:

He promoted the task of revision and improvement to the very end of his life, all of it done in the recognition that final authority belongs only to the original text, and that Christ is the unity of Scripture. (Bachmann, in Luther 1960:229)

Luther's "Sanhedrin" supported him in this ongoing work. A supplement to secretary Roerer's 1552 notes (cited in Schweibert 1950:653-54) gives us an insight into the cooperative endeavor:

On January 24, 1534, certain invited men started to revise the Bible anew and in many places it was rendered into more distinct and clear German than before. They particularly had trouble with the section of the Prophets from Jeremiah on as it was difficult to render into good German. Isaiah and Daniel had been printed in German several years earlier. The words of Jesus gave the commissions great concern to render them into clear German....

As the group worked closely with one another meeting after meeting, they became aware of each other's particular strengths and were progressively knit into an ever more competent team. Schweibert (1950:655-56) summarizes the change that took place:

The word-for-word searching in an attempt at a literal translation of the Greek and Hebrew texts had been replaced by a spirit of freedom, an attempt to render the exact meaning of the original in the idiom of the 16th-century German.

Luther noted this progressive shift in the direction of greater functional equivalence and expressed his satisfaction at the result:

The former German Psalter is closer, in many places, to the Hebrew and further removed from the German. This one (1531) is closer to the German and further removed from the Hebrew. (cited in Reu 1938:221)

The Professor himself remained the guiding light and principal motivating factor in the revision process. He provided that essential continuity and set the desired standard so that a consistency of style and method might be maintained during the long period over which the translation and revision took place.

The initiative throughout came from Luther. He called the commission together, he largely outlined the assignment for each session, he led the discussion and usually spoke the deciding word [in cases of disagreement] ... In other cases Luther made changes in his entries, either during the meeting or afterward, as is apparent from a comparison of these with Roerer's protocol and sometimes is evident in Luther's own copy. (Reu 1934:235)

Of great assistance in the revision process was a set of notes that Luther personally recorded in his Handexemplar, a special copy of the Bible reserved specifically for the purpose. Apparently Luther and his "updated" annotated version were inseparable. Whenever he worked with the German text, he tested it out either on his audience or personally on himself. Then he would carefully write down any corrections and potential improvements in the margins. These jottings would often serve as the basis for discussion during the meetings with his review team. Luther's detailed notes performed the same service even after his death. They were incorporated into the revised Bible that he happened to be working on right up to the end, a version that was published later in 1546 (Schweibert 1950:656). So it was that "for Luther there was always a 'next' edition. He ate, drank and slept Bible translation" (Panning 1983:79).

11. A present-day application

Luther lives. In Central Africa, for instance, translation methodology and objectives very similar to his are in use today, contributing to the cause of gospel communication to which he devoted his life.

It is not likely that another Luther will arise in the remainder of human history to make the contribution that he did to Bible translation theory and practice. Nevertheless, there

are many today who by faithfully following Luther's principles (aided by computer-based and internet technology) are together able to accomplish results that he never dreamed possible. Commissioned and supported by different mission boards and umbrella organizations, trained personnel are currently seeking to translate the Word of God accurately and idiomatically in hundreds of non-Indo-European languages.

A group of such translators are working [*erw: then in 1995*] under the auspices of the Lusaka Translation Centre, which is located on the campus of the Lutheran Seminary in Lusaka, Zambia. Here a staff of three-translation consultant, manuscript coordinator, and computer keyboarder-are working under the auspices of the Bible Society of Zambia (affiliated with the worldwide United Bible Societies) to manage translation projects in ten distinct languages of Zambia and Malawi: Tumbuka, Chewa, Bemba, Tonga, Mambwe-Lungu, Lala, Lenje, Nkoya, Mbunda, and Luvala (one percent of the thousand or more Bantu tongues in Africa as a whole). These projects range in progress from the Tonga, whose new Bible is currently being typeset in preparation for final publication next year [*erw: published in 1996*], to the Bemba, which is just organizing itself to begin a new translation later this year [*erw: scheduled to publish in 2012*].

The teams of three or four persons vary considerably, of course, in their respective levels of competence. Some members are lay persons, men and women with no special biblical training who often have difficulty with the English texts from which they must translate. They are serving in this capacity simply out of a strong desire to have the Scriptures in their own language and because nobody else more qualified is available. Others are seminary graduates having much greater biblical knowledge and exegetical experience. A few are even familiar to some extent with the original languages. The Translation Centre seeks to provide ongoing assistance in staff selection and training, exegetical checking, final manuscript examination, and overall project organization.

All ten of the foregoing principles are currently being applied- to the extent possible-in each of these Bantu translation programs. "Functional equivalence" is the ultimate technical goal. This ideal guides both the day-to-day and the long-term operating procedures. We can hope that the cumulative effect of the Scriptures in these many languages will turn out to be quite similar to what happened in Luther's day when a spiritually needy population finally receives the saving Word of life in a form that faithfully and intelligibly reflects the semantic intention of the original and at the same time "pulls the heart" (*chichewa chokoka mtima*) in their diverse mother tongues.

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