Luther and the EHV

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When we were embarking on the project that resulted in the Evangelical Heritage Version, we received the suggestion that we name our project the Wartburg Project since we were Lutheran translators who were trying to build on the foundation for Bible translation which Luther began at the Wartburg Castle in 1521 and 1522. Our preparatory studies included considerable information about Martin Luther's principles of Bible translation. Now, as we are celebrating of the 500th anniversary of Luther's stay at the Wartburg, and we can expect a flood of material on Luther as Bible translator, it seems like a good time to consider again the similarity and differences between Luther's practices and ours (the principles are the same; the circumstances are different).

A good springboard to do this is provided by an article that appeared in the Spring 2017 issue of the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly,* namely, "Luther's German Bible: Crucial Qualities of a Consummate Translation" by Ernst R. Wendland. As I was reading the article, I was struck by how closely the recommendations in the article, derived from the principles and practices of Luther, correspond with the principles and practices recorded in the rubrics for the EHV. We encourage you to read this 44-page article in its entirety.[1]

In this article Wendland uses eight terms to discuss key attributes of Luther's translation project and their application to translation projects today. The eight attributes are: confessional, communicative, creative, comprehensive, contextual, collaborative, continuative, and consequential. We will briefly discuss each of these attributes and their relationship to the EHV.

1) Confessional

Summary of Luther's View

This first principle is the shortest, but undoubtedly the most important. "Confessional" Bible translation has reference to the basic presupposition that every true translator brings with him to the task—that he or she is handling the inspired Word of God. The Bible is the special Book, Writing, and Word of the Holy Spirit, who is its author. This principle provides the translator with an all-embracing framework and an ongoing perspective and guide to follow 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." Luther believed that the Holy Spirit played a vital role in translation work, and hence "Scripture Alone" (*sola Scriptura*) must be the concrete guide.

Perhaps the best-known example of a confessional, yet text-faithful rendering in Luther's Bible is in Romans 3:28, where Luther includes the word "alone" (*allein*) to

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[1] Ernst R. Wendland, "Luther's German Bible: Crucial Qualities of a Consummate Translation, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly,* Spring 2017, p 93-137. Another edition of the article including color pictures is posted at Academia, https://www.academia.edu/31465499/Martin_Luthers_German_Bible, or just Google the author and title for easy access.

emphasize Paul's point: "We hold that a man is justified without the works of the law, by faith alone." Luther would argue that this is not a "Lutheran" rendering. Rather, the little adverb *allein* 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.

The EHV View

Although any skilled linguist who is fluent in the source language and the receiving language can do an acceptable job of rendering the basic, literal sense of the words of Scripture, the most important qualities for a Bible translator to possess are a thorough knowledge of the whole message of Scripture, the aptitude to let Scripture interpret Scripture, and a humble willingness to submit to everything which Scripture says. It was this aptitude, more than the depth of his knowledge of the original languages that made Luther such a great translator.

Translators must strive for a balance between preserving the original meaning and producing English which sounds natural, but the preservation of meaning takes priority. When a choice must be made, accuracy in conveying the divinely intended meaning of the text takes priority over literary beauty or rendering the text into common, contemporary English.

The translation must be free of doctrinal errors whether inadvertent or deliberate. It must not falsify the Word of God. It must not subtract from its meaning or add to it. This is reflected in two principles:
> We expect that a translation will understand itself as a "direct quotation" of an ancient document, rather than merely supplying the "gist" of the original's meaning in a contemporizing paraphrase.
> We expect, with Luther, that when theologically necessary a translation will adhere closely to the wording of the original.

The translator should adhere to the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. This is especially true in regard to doctrinal statements. One passage of Scripture must not be set against another. New Testament interpretations of the meaning of Old Testament passages must be accepted.

The translator should remember he is a *translator* not an *editor*. He has no calling to "improve" the message the Spirit has given, either in content or in style. As much as possible, the translator's duty is to say what the author said, in the way that the author said it. If the author's style is repetitious, the translation should be repetitious. If the author's style is flowery, the translation should be flowery. Though Bible, in one sense, has one author, namely, the Holy Spirit, in another sense it has many authors. The translator should respect their diversity of style and vocabulary.

When editors are dealing with the Bible, we must remember that we have entered sacred ground. When we are creating our own writings, we can make the writing conform to a set of rules we have adopted. When we are working with the biblical text, we are in a very different set of circumstances. In ordinary writing, our rules can shape the writing. When we are dealing with the Bible, the nature and intentions of the biblical text must shape our rules.

2) Communicative

Summary of Luther's View

Every translation continually fluctuates between the two poles of "form" and "meaning." It encompasses an exegetical task that is made even more difficult in the case of Hebrew or Greek because one must work with a sacred, "high value" document that is situationally (linguistically, semantically, historically, and culturally) remote, yet whose contemporary translation is often naively assessed comparatively on the basis of literalistic agreement in form.

Meaning embraces 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 that pertain to authorial purpose, for example, warning, rebuke, encouragement, instruction, commission, and condemnation.

Determining meaning in its fullest sense further embraces a careful study of discourse structure, for the larger, genre-governed linguistic forms of a language also become meaningful, in terms of impact and appeal, especially when shaped by a wordsmith like Luther.

The EHV View

We seek a balance between the poles of so-called *literal* and *dynamic equivalent* theories of translation. A translator should not adhere too closely to any one theory of translation because literalistic, word-for-word translations sometimes convey the wrong meaning**,** or they do not communicate clearly in the receiving language. Overly free translations deprive the reader of some of the expressions, imagery, and style of the original biblical texts. The translator should not be too locked in to any one theory of translation whether so-called "dynamic equivalence" or "literal translation" because:

a. Literal (or more precisely, literalistic, word-for-word)[2] translations sometimes give the wrong meaning, or they do not communicate clearly in the receiving language.
b. Dynamic equivalence, though a worthy goal, is not fully possible. Almost always "something is lost in translation."
c. We would like every translation to be both "meaning equivalent" and "emotional equivalent."
d. The translator will have to weigh whether a more dynamic or more literal approach best conveys the divinely intended meaning on a case-by-case basis.

In academic papers some of the most interesting (and also some of the most boring) information occurs in the footnotes. In this section of the WLQ article this footnotes catch the reader's attention:

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[2] There is a lot of confusion about the concept "a literal translation." "Literal" means taking words and phrases in their ordinary, common meaning, in the ordinary base sense, not in a figurative sense. A literal translation cannot be equated with a word-for-word rending. See our Wartburg Project FAQ 11 concerning the concept of a literal translation.

> As Friedrich Schleirmacher (1768-1834) puts it: "Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him" – cited in Daniel Weissbort and Astradur Eysteinsson, translation—theory and practice (sic): *A Historical Reader* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 207.

This is a striking way of presenting the key dilemma that confronts a translator, but if taken too literally, it presents a false alternative. A translator is not forced to choose between these two alternatives but is to do his or her best to balance them. The circumstances in some passages will pull the translator further toward the dynamic end of the spectrum. In other passages the pull will be toward the more literal end.

Luther is often associated with the "meaning" or "dynamic" end of the spectrum, but a consideration of both his principles and his practice indicate that he really is quite balanced between the two. A footnote in this section of the WLQ paper warns against associating Luther too closely with the "dynamic equivalence" or "meaning" end of the translation spectrum.

> Kerr concludes that, from a modern critical perspective, Luther tended to be rather more literal in his renderings—generally more of a "copyist," at least in the Old Testament: "Even though Martin Luther was a champion in his day of a more idiomatic style of translation, it was still a small move from the copyist's role, and would still clearly remain close to that heritage" (*Bible Translation Theories*, 89).

This footnote serves as a corrective to the common notion that Luther was purely a "dynamic equivalence" translator. It is certainly true that Luther vigorously opposed literalism in translation, as he clearly asserts:

> 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 … Words are to serve and follow the meaning, not meaning the words.

Luther had to speak so strongly against literalistic translation, because he realized that he was breaking new ground and swimming against the current in his idiomatic renderings of the text. But it is important to point out that the "meaning" that Luther focused upon during translation was the essential content intended by the biblical author. For this reason, when necessary, he stayed closer to the literal rendering in order to preserve biblical meaning or to enrich the German language with biblical expressions.   Luther says,

> 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. (Cited I *WLQ*, p 111)

The EHV principle is to attempt to maintain the same balance.

3) Creative

Luther exercised four kinds of creativity in his work as translator (actually, I am sure there are more, but we are only going to talk about four of them).

1) Change the linguistic form whenever necessary.

Except in a relatively few fortuitous cases the translator cannot retain both form and meaning.

Our EHV project rubrics put it this way.

Thesis 1:   The duty of a translator is to convey all the meaning (or the openness to more than one meaning), all the beauty (or the ugliness), all the style (high or low), and all the emotional impact of the original text into the translation.

Thesis 2: Thesis 1 is impossible.

Thesis 3: Thesis 2 is not entirely correct.

Thesis 4: In bits and pieces a translator can come close achieving the aims of thesis 1. *Tetelestai > It is finished*. The only major thing wrong with this translation is that it has too many words. Were it not for the weight of tradition, we could probably improve the translation by reducing it to a single word, "Finished!"

It requires only a quick look at the original text to demonstrate that it is impossible for a Bible translation (or any translation for that matter) to follow the original language word-for-word, because the structures of the two languages are too different. For example, Hebrew does not normally express the verb "to be." An English translation that followed the Hebrew word-for-word would seldom include the words "is" and "are," which are essential in English. Some languages have no definite articles; others require them. Besides that, the rules for use of the definite article are different in different languages. It is impossible for a translation to follow another language word-for-word unless it is an academic exercise, not intended for reading with understanding and enjoyment.

Here we have to limit ourselves to two examples. The interplay of nouns and pronouns is probably the area in which English translators most often must depart from a word-for-word rendering of the original Hebrew and Greek texts. English often requires a noun where Hebrew might be able to use a pronoun and vice versa. English style does not permit us to use a pronoun unless there is a clear antecedent in the near vicinity. In cases in which a Hebrew pronoun does not follow its antecedent closely enough to fit English style, translators often have to replace the pronoun with the appropriate noun in order to make it clear who is being referred to (for example, "Moses" rather than "he"). English style normally does not permit use of a pronoun until a noun has been mentioned to serve as its antecedent. Hebrew often does this. On the other hand, repeating the same noun over and over again, which is not uncommon in Hebrew, sounds strange in English. So for readability and to avoid a mistaken perception of grammatical and stylistic errors, pronoun usage in the EHV normally follows English usage. But if the biblical author is using pronouns without an antecedent to build suspense by withholding the identity of the referent, a translator should preserve the suspense.

Hebrew verb forms often include an indication of gender when the corresponding English verb forms do not. When the prophet suddenly, without any marker, begins to address Jerusalem as Lady Zion, he uses a feminine form of the imperative. The Hebrew reader with recognize the shift in addressee by the change of gender of the verb forms. The English reader will be left in the dark. To prevent this, the translator may have to insert a feminine vocative, "Lady Zion" to signal the shift.

2) *Express selected implicit information*

The original readers had a great deal of background information which present-day readers do not have in their store of knowledge. The original readers knew that *eleh and eshel* (terebinths and tamarisks) were trees. Modern readers may not know that terebinths and tamarisks are trees, so the translator can be helpful by the rendering "terebinth trees." In English we usual include specifiers like Mount or River in the names of mountains and rivers unless the name is very familiar (the Mississippi). Hebrew names often lack these specifiers, but they can be added in English so the reader will realize that Hermon is a mountain.

Some of this additional information can be included in the translation itself, but some of it can be in footnotes or other helps. Jewish readers had an advantage over us when they read Ezekiel's description of the New Temple in Ezekiel 40-43, because they were familiar with the layout of the temple in Jerusalem. (Though I am not sure Ezkiel was a piece of cake for them.) Many modern readers are apt to be totally lost in trying to make their way through the description. For that reason, even though the first edition of the EHV is not a study Bible, we included a chart of the New Temple to help readers work their way through the description.

Daniel 11, written in the 6th century BC, provides a very detailed prophecy of events that took place in the 2nd century BC. For Daniel's first readers this message would have been a mystery that would be clarified only in the future, but readers living through the crisis of the 2nd century would have been able to recognize the King of the North as the Seleucid rulers of Syria and the King of the South as the Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt and the Kittim as the Romans. Relatively few modern readers could do this, so in this chapter the EHV provides more than the usual number of footnotes to help the reader navigate the text.

3) *Retain certain unnatural forms in critical places*

Sometimes the form of the original needs to be retained in a translation even though this results in a rendering that is not the most natural or idiomatic in the readers' language and culture. This is the case with certain key theological, symbolical, or cultural terms, such as "vineyard," "shepherd," "sheep," "scapegoat," "Passover," "sabbath," "bread," "wine," and "cross."

Sheep cannot be changed to caribou in Arctic translations, nor can palms become pine trees. Translations can enrich the receptor language by introducing concepts and words that were not part of its native repertoire or of its readers' personal experience. They can also introduce idioms that are new to the receptor language like *the sinful flesh, walk with God, in God's eyes, burn with anger,* and *listen to the voice of the LORD*. The goal in this practice is not to preserve Hebrew or Greek grammatical idioms but to preserve important biblical expressions and imagery and, when possible, biblical word-play.

To a limited degree the translator has to create new varieties of English, such as Judean English, conversational Greek English, and so on. The goal of a translator is not so much to make 9th century BC Judeans sound like 21st century Americans but to make them sound like Judeans who speak understandable English. The goal is not always to "say it the way we would say it" but to make Judeans speak in a way we can understand. The translator may in fact have to

create several dialects: formal prophetic Judean English, conversational Judean English, etc. This practice follows the example of the gospels which maintain a Semitic tone to the speech of Jews, which they are reporting in Greek. This occurs even in the midst of the fine Greek of Luke.

4) *Listen for the sonority of the text*

Luther realized that most, by far, of his potential audience would hear, rather than actually read, his translation. [Unfortunately, also for some of our members, their main exposure to the Bible is the readings they hear on Sunday.] He therefore sensibly formulated his text with this important factor in mind: How does the Word sound when it is read?

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 devotions, therefore he would make the 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

Our EHV practice is the same, especially in regard to the psalms and other texts that may be set to music. We work with composers to make adjustments to the wording of the text for musical purposes. We try to retain lofty language in the translation when the original style is lofty. We also try to preserve the use of honorary, deferential language in the text. A Judean did not usually say, "I will give it to you," when speaking to the king. He said, "I will give it to my lord."

We also try to be "worship friendly" by making an effort to preserve language and terms that are embedded in our hymns and liturgy like "saints" and "communion."

That being said, there are also specific cases in which we feel clear communication and a closer reflection of the emphasis of the biblical text requires a change of some of the traditional translations.

- In the EHV gospels Jesus often says, "Amen, I say to you," because the Greek text makes a point of preserving the Hebrew term *amen.*
- We use the term LORD *of Armies,* because the traditional LORD *of Hosts* or LORD *Sebaoth* does not convey the meaning of the Hebrew term to contemporary readers.
- We call the Tabernacle *the Dwelling,* because this is the literal meaning of the Hebrew term, and *tabernacle* does not communicate clearly to modern hearers.
- Although the Hebrew word *minchah* literally means "gift," because the *Minchah* consisted of grain products, the EHV calls the *Minchah, grain offering,* even though this is not a strictly literal translation.
- Concerning the name of the lid over the Ark of the Covenant, there are two competing traditions. The most recent one is "atonement cover." The traditional translation, "mercy seat," is based on Luther's rendering, *Gnadenstuhl,* "throne of grace." Luther's translation was theologically brilliant, because he recognized that this object was more than a lid or cover for a box—God was enthroned above it, and the blood of atonement was being presented there at the foot of his throne of grace.

But "mercy" is not a very precise rendering of the Hebrew *kopher*. "Atonement" is better. "Cover," on the other hand, misses an important point. The atoning blood was being presented to the LORD at the foot of his throne. The EHV combines the best of the old and new traditions into "atonement seat," since this most clearly brings out the meaning of the text and gets the reader looking in the right direction—not down at the tablets of the law, but up to the throne of the gracious God.

To help the reader follow and express the flow of the text, the EHV often punctuates by the flow of the text rather than by grammatical rules. Remember that the purpose of punctuation is not to fulfill a rule but to help the reader, who cannot hear the natural pauses and the inflection which would be present in speech, put the pauses and inflection in the right place in the sentence. The translator asks what punctuation will help the lector reproduce the speech correctly. Does clarity call for a pause?—put in a comma. Do you want continuous flow?—no comma. Is a comma needed to guide the reader in producing the correct intonation? Put one in. Punctuation is designed to aid the public reading of the text, which sometimes is unrehearsed.

4) Comprehensive

Luther used all the tools available to understand and express the text before him. He gave careful consideration to language, genre, and literary style.

Especially noteworthy is Luther's use of textual criticism. Although Luther did little systematic work in Old Testament textual criticism, he may justly be regarded as a pioneer (maybe even *the* pioneer) of Old Testament textual criticism among Christian translators. He understood the issues and the proper procedures quite clearly, even though he had very limited textual resources to work with (largely the Vulgate and Septuagint) compared to the many resources available to textual scholars today, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and Samaritan Pentateuch. His pioneering work was largely neglected after his death and only revived centuries later. This is discussed at some length on pages 91-116 of *Textual Criticism of the Old Testament: Principles and Practice* by John F. Brug. This volume is now part of the Wartburg series of Bible study materials.

Also relevant to this topic and the next is attention to formatting and layout to help readers follow the flow of the text.

Certainly more could and should be done to create a more "user-friendly" Scripture text today. This might be achieved by paragraphing that follows the flow of the speech or the discourse; by an unjustified right margin; by a single column of print on the page; by large, clear typefaces; by more space between lines and along the margins; with indentation employed to reflect special forms or poetic patterns. These are just a few of the more important formatting variations available as visual cues, which indirectly assist hearers as well—when a pericope of Scripture is proclaimed aloud by sensitive readers following a plainly legible text.

Some of these features, of course, rest more with the publisher than the translators, but we can say that the EHV utilizes all of the named practices except that it uses a justified right margin in prose narrative sections of first print Bible. With modern "type-setting" a

justified right margin does not produce the annoying irregular spacing that it does in many computer word processors. Right-justified margins do produce some longer lines, and they remove the use of the irregular right margin as a cue in keeping track of your place as you read, but a justified right margin does not seem to be a problem with an adequate type-setting program. The EHV does use an unjustified right margin in its more recent study Bibles.

For some readers the font size in Bibles, especially study Bibles, is annoyingly small. This is largely a cost-control measure and prevents the volume from becoming too unwieldy. The font in some of our compact versions will undoubtedly be uncomfortably small for some of readers, but large-print versions are relatively easy to produce in electronic formats.

5) Contextual

Context is, of course, first of all the nearer and farther context in Scripture—Scripture interprets Scripture. Here, however, we are concerned with the external context: the sources outside Scripture that help us understand the biblical text, such as studies of other Semitic languages, ancient literature, historical records, the geography of Israel and surrounding lands, and so on. Luther was interested in making use of all these fields. The difference is that today we have vastly more resources available to us than he did.

The EHV is committed to using archaeology, geography, and history to provide a clearer understanding of the original meaning of the biblical text, and this is reflected both in the translation itself, in the footnotes, and in the online resources at our website. Many instances of this are explained in detail in our booklet, "Introducing the EHV," so here we will simply list a few examples.

Older translations say that the furnishings in the temple were made of *brass*, probably because the furnishing on the translators' church altars were brass. But analysis of metal objects from the biblical period, including coins, shows that metal objects with a copper base were usually made from some form of *bronze*.

Older and even many more recent translations refer to *tambourines* in the Bible, but ancient pictures indicate that the instrument in question (Hebrew *tof*) was not a hollow circle with rattlers on it, which was meant to be shaken, but a small hand drum, meant to be struck. So EHV regularly refers to drums or *hand drums*.

Many translations refer to two categories of alcoholic beverages in the Bible, *wine* and *strong drink*. *Strong drink* tends to make one think of distilled or fortified beverages like brandy or whisky. The archaeological and historical evidence is that producing distilled or fortified alcoholic beverages was not part of the Near Eastern culture (though some dispute this). Since *beer* is the standard archaeological term for ancient grain-based beverages, it is the term EHV will use.

Archaeological and textual evidence indicates that mounted cavalry was not in general use in the Near East before the Assyrian period in the 8th century BC. Many translations refer to *horsemen* even in the earliest texts, but in the early periods the reference seems to be to *charioteers,* not *cavalry,* so the EHV translates accordingly.

Luther understood that training in literature, poetry, and music was an important part of the training of translators. Thanks to our church's worker training program, our translators and reviewers have a good background in these fields of study.

6) Collaborative

A diversified and well-organized translation team generally produces results that are more accurate, effective, and acceptable to the receptor language audience than a translator working in isolation can achieve. Although Luther completed his September Testament alone and in a hurry, that was due to special circumstances [being hidden away in the Wartburg Castle] and was certainly not his preference. Throughout the process of translating the Old Testament Luther had his "Sanhedrin" of consultants who worked with him. Their meetings are recorded in considerable detail in multiple volumes of the Weimar Edition of Luther's Works.

The big difference today is that translators have a much larger number of qualified collaborators to assist them than Luther had available to him.

There is, first of all, the 400-year tradition of English Bible translation that stretches back to the King James Version and beyond that, through Tyndale to Luther. Because of Luther's impact on English Bible translation and our study of the *German Bible* volumes of the Weimar Edition during our preparation, it is not an exaggeration to say that one of the EHV's most important collaborators is Luther.

The base of our translation is provided by the standard Greek and Hebrew texts, but we gladly stand on the shoulders of giants by consulting the full tradition of English Bible translation. Although the EHV translators worked independently and did not follow any one prototype, more than a dozen translations were consulted on a regular basis.

Then there is the church's rich heritage of commentaries on the biblical text. The most valuable resources vary for each biblical book, but in many cases ten or more commentaries were consulted at the various stages of translating, editing, and reviewing a given book. We could single out for mention the *Concordia Commentary,* but different reviewers consulted different commentaries.

As mentioned above, we try to preserve heritage terms like *justification*, *saints*, and so on, and we try to be conscious of correlating with terminology widely used in worship and in the creeds of the church. We do not want to distance the translation of the Bible from the life and heritage of the church. Our chosen name, the *Evangelical Heritage Version,* reflects this commitment.

Individual scholars have offered us the results of their work. To mention just one striking example—the work of a scholar in South Africa, who was translating the relevant passages of the

Greek Old Testament back into Hebrew to facilitate the comparison of textual variants, was offered to us early in the EHV process, and we were able to use it as we analyzed variants. In another striking case, a Pakistani Christian in Karachi suggested improvements to our renderings of emmer and spelt

Whereas Luther's collaboration was limited largely to his colleagues in Wittenberg, virtually all our collaboration is done electronically. We can quickly share information or request feedback from around the world, and receive unsolicited comments or criticism or praise from countries around the world.

Our work on a given biblical book involves multiple levels of collaboration and feedback. First, a translator prepared a draft of the book based on the Hebrew or Greek text. There was already a lot of collaboration built in to this first step. The translators consulted many resources from across the span of the Christian church, using the collective knowledge of the church that has been accumulated in translations, commentaries, and other resources. The translators invited further evaluation of their work by sometimes leaving several options in the translation for editors and reviewers to consider.

The editor reviewed the draft, checking it against the EHV rubrics. He sometimes placed notes on additional passages in order to draw reviewers' attention to them

Four technical reviewers evaluated the translation by comparing it with the Hebrew or Greek text. The reviewers work independently, so we received four independent evaluations of the translation. Though the main duty of tech reviews is to check the accuracy of the translation against the original text, they also consider readability, especially for education and public worship. On the basis of the input from reviewers, the editors made changes and corrections and identified areas that needed further input. They consulted with the translator and a panel of reactors when necessary.

When this process had been completed, the translation was sent to a larger number of popular reviewers (ten or more per book). They read the translation largely for clarity and readability, but they were free to raise questions about issues of substance.

The EHV is a *grass-roots translation*, which makes extensive use of parish pastors and lay people in the editing, proof-reading, evaluation, and improvement of the translation. Congregations that use the translation in their services and classes provide valuable feedback which can be used in improving the translation.

Luther had to pretty much start from scratch and create his own traditions of translation, and only a very limited number of collaborators were available to him. Today English translators can build on well-tested traditions and have an army of collaborators.

7) Continuative

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 key terms or difficult passages in the

receptor language, and even organizational efficiency. Thus at the end, they realize that, in view of what they have picked up along the way, they need to begin all over again. They must undertake a careful revision in order 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 many cases, unfortunately, such an opportunity does not materialize. For one reason or another, the production team is disbanded and its members return to other pursuits.

Translators must approach the task with humility. Luther once commented that he was very happy that he had undertaken the work of translating the Bible, because before he did this, he had been under the delusion that he was a learned fellow. We can paraphrase Ecclesiastes as saying, "Of the making of many translations there is no end, and much study wearies the body." Part of this is because of the ever-changing nature of language and because of preferences for different styles of translation, but much of it is due simply to the nature of the art of translating, writing, and editing. No matter how many times translators, writers, or editors reread their work, if they are honest, they will always see something to change. They change A to B to C, and then they decide A was better after all. It simply is the nature of the discipline. In many passages, there can be more than one good translation.

At the Wartburg Project our motto has always been "purely positive." We do welcome differences of opinion and discussion concerning every point of translation, but only with a spirit that is based on careful study of the evidence, a spirit of cooperation and compromise on issues that are a matter of style and individual preferences, and the principle that upholding the integrity of the text is the highest priority, outranking our likes and dislikes.

Among all the manuscripts and resources that we have used in working on the EHV, including the Hebrew and Greeks manuscripts available to us, we have never found any that had no mistakes. So try as we may, we do not expect to be exempt either. Though the inspired authors of Scripture were protected from error, translators and editors are not, so we will always be rechecking our work to make corrections or clarifications and updates, and our readers will be part of the process.

Translating, writing, and editing have two common enemies. One is carelessness that does not try to produce a clean product. The other is perfectionism that can never bring anything to conclusion and say "I have to go with what I have." In the Evangelical Heritage Version we were aware of both pitfalls, so we worked to try to produce a good product, but to do it relatively quickly, so it could be used relatively quickly.

The Wartburg Project will have a continuing editorial and administrative board to oversee the typical revision that usually comes three to five years after the appearance of the first edition, but even as we continue to correct and improve, we want to have a stable text so that the churches will have a relatively uniform text in their catechisms, liturgy, and other worship resources. Revisions and corrections to electronic versions can be done relatively quickly and economically. Major revisions to print Bibles are costly and cannot be too frequent.

Even in the midst of change, the EHV stresses another *c,* continuity. Even if there are new editions of the EHV at some future date, churches will always be free to continue to use the earlier editions if they prefer them.

8) Consequential

Luther's version can now be seen for what it was: a truly revolutionary achievement for his age, linguistically, socially, translationally, and theologically. It was the first time a mass medium had ever penetrated everyday life. Everyone read Luther's new Bible or listened to it being read. German readers quickly adopted this Bible as an indispensable, indeed fascinating, guide for life. That is why it became the cornerstone for an enduring Lutheran culture in Germany. It also had a profound effect on the English Bible.

It is highly unlikely that another "Luther" will arise before the Lord returns, to make the contribution that Luther did to Bible translation theory and practice. Nevertheless, there are many today who by faithfully following Luther's principles (aided by computer-based tools and internet technology) are together, in corporate cooperation, able to accomplish results that he never dreamed possible.

We pray that the cumulative effect of the Scriptures in these many languages will turn out to be similar to what happened in Luther's day, when a spiritually needy population finally received the saving Word of life in a form that faithfully and intelligibly reflects the divine intention of the sacred original—and at the same time "pulls the heart-strings" (Chichewa *chokoka mtima*) via their diverse mother tongues.

Energetic communal participation in Bible translation-related activities—as producers and/or recipients—anticipates that wonderful beatific vision in the heavenly throne room, where there will be "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing in front of the throne and of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palm branches in their hands, who sing: "Heil sei dem, der auf dem Stuhl, sitzt, unserm Gott, und dem Lamm!"(Revelation 7:9,10, EHV and Martin Luther).

Energetic participation in Bible translation-related activities is essential for the development of a dynamic, healthy church—the pastorate as well as the laity. Such involvement may include actual translation and review work; the careful comparative study of various translations plus how and why they differ; the consistent support of Bible translation, publication, and distribution work, both at home and abroad—on the mission field.

We at the Wartburg project echo and endorse all these thoughts. One of the great blessings of a project like the EHV (maybe as great or greater than the end product) is that it prompts Bible readers and translators to a more careful study of the original text and a more careful study of the principles and practices of Bible translation. All participants grow from the process. They also grow in their ability to work collaboratively and cooperatively in dealing with the many knotty issues involved and their ability to subordinate their own preferences to the common good. If they grow more excited about the Bible for themselves, they will be more excited about sharing it with others.

It is important that the church promotes an accurate, meaningful, readily communicable version for use in its diverse activities—preaching, teaching, singing (hymnody),

publications, etc. It must address both the needs of both evangelism of those who do not know Christ and the edification of believers.

The key concern here is Scripture usage: How is the Bible being regularly utilized not only in church-related activities, but also at home—privately (e.g., personal and family devotions) and publicly as an evangelism tool to share the Gospel in a meaningful way with others, or on occasion to serve fellow Christians at their point of need, whether for encouragement, consolation, instruction, or, if need be, for reproof.

We hope the Evangelical Heritage Version will prove to be very readable to a wide range of users, but the EHV is designed with learning and teaching in mind. It is designed to assist careful Bible study in the church. We assume that our readers have the ability and the desire to learn new biblical words and to deepen their understanding of important biblical terms and concepts. Translators should not be condescending or patronizing toward their readers but should be dedicated to helping them grow. The Bible was written for ordinary people, but it is a literary work that includes many figures of speech and many rare words. The Bible is a book to be read, but it is also a book to be studied. Our footnotes are designed to assist in the process of learning and teaching. Our translation is in that sense a textbook. This concept will, of course, be much more fully implemented in our planned study Bible.

A translation that is clear and accurate, accompanied by a good collection of Bible study aids, will encourage Bible study at all levels of readership. We also encourage others to use our resources in producing translations in other languages if they find them useful.

Translators often find themselves between a rock and a hard place, knowing that no matter which option they choose some readers will think it is wrong. But these dilemmas do not discourage them because they know that there is one solution to all these dilemmas: a combination of study, patience, and cooperation. We welcome you to be part of that process with us.

An even greater comfort to translators and Bible readers is expressed by a key principle which is set forth in theology: "The essence of Scripture is not the shape of the letters or the sound of the words but the divinely intended meaning." If a translation conveys that divinely intended meaning, it is delivering the Word of God, regardless of what the letters look like or how the words are pronounced, whether the language is a bit stuffy or archaic or a bit too casual for the tastes of some readers. The external forms change (indeed they must if they are to keep communicating), but the meaning, the essence of the Word of God, remains forever.