

The Wartburg Project

January 20, 2014

Update

In the short time since information about the Wartburg Project has become more widely known a lot of people have contacted us with encouragement and offers to help. We thank you all for your words and your help.

Over the next couple of weeks we will be going through all the acceptances of assignments and through the offers of help. We will then update the lists of translation assignments and draw up new lists of technical and popular reviewers. There will soon be six or seven books ready to begin the review process, but many reviewers may not receive assignments till spring or summer.

One question that has come up is whether in addition to PDF preview copies of books like Matthew, Word files can be made available for use in congregations. Preview copies are not intended for congregational and other public use except for limited testing by reviewers. We do not intend to create a situation in which congregations are doing a piecemeal introduction of a translation. We trust pastors to use good judgment. We recommend that for now congregations generally use a translation they have come to trust until they find another tested, complete translation they would like to use.

We do not plan to make drafts of most books available as soon as they are completed. Most books will be circulated only to reviewers until the review process is complete. Samples are not intended to be immediate replacements for what congregations are using.

There are a number of reasons for this. Our current publishing agreement with Amazon is exclusive (though we can opt out at any time). It allows us to offer free samples (like Matthew, and later this year, Psalms) to a large potential audience for a limited time. It makes our first samples available to Amazon's huge market at a modest cost. But, it does not allow us to simultaneously distribute electronic copies through other channels or to distribute free copies except to a limited number of reviewers. If we do so, our materials will be kicked off Amazon, which is currently the best means available to us to make our project known to a wider audience.

Any potential publishers of hard copy editions would likely be turned off by a product which has various free electronic editions widely circulating. All the books of the Bible will go through at least three generations of development and review. It will be detrimental to the long-term reputation of the project and translation to have too many different partially edited copies floating around. This would open the doors to criticisms of unfinished products that may stick to the reputation of the finished product. (By the way, we ask that any input be sent directly to us so that we can improve the translation.)

More important is the pastoral reason. Pastors and congregations will wisely want to examine a whole translation in its final form before considering whether to "adopt" that translation. It is one thing to experiment with samples and give feedback. It is another thing to "adopt" a translation for regular usage. We seek to follow a wise pastoral approach in developing and promoting an important project like a Bible translation. It is not good to rush things before their time. We seek to provide a reliable translation of God's Word, but we do not want to confuse anyone in the process. Samples that are carefully and wisely used by reviewers could help to make this translation better. Wide and careless usage could seriously harm our efforts.

We sense that there is great excitement. We know that we are making rapid progress. God has blessed

our work. But we need to urge patience. This translation project will take time. We want to be careful. Several times during Jesus' ministry people were very excited by what they had experienced. They wanted to run and tell everyone that Jesus had healed them. But Jesus told them it was not time for that yet. It was time to build the foundation.

This could be the opportunity of a lifetime to participate in translating God's Word for your own blessing and the blessing to the people you serve.

If people ask you about the project, tell them that you are participating to promote a positive project in which brothers can work together and grow in God's Word. We are building on what we are for, not on what we are against. We are consciously aiming to have participants from all districts of the synod, and we are approaching that goal. This is not a synod translation. People who do not favor a WELS translation are welcome to participate if they are committed to working together with brothers in a Bible translation.

Many have told us that they are praying for us and for this project. We encourage prayers. This is a good time to pray, to study, to encourage, but also to be patient. Thanks for being patient as we seek to stay the course. We think we are on track.

May God bless you, and our efforts.