



Bringing the Written Word to the World

The People's Bible

CONTENTS

**Ordering information
for *The People's Bible*
in various languages**

**Recent and
forthcoming
theological books
from NPH**

ISSUE NUMBER 31

MARCH, 2004

*A quarterly newsletter
distributed by
Multi-Language Publications
of the Wisconsin Evangelical
Lutheran Synod.*

Editor

Rev. Paul Hartman
<paulhartman@mlpwels.com>

Layout Assistant

Michele Pfeifer

Multi-Language Publications
2500 George Dieter Drive
El Paso, TX 79936
Phone: (915) 857-5852
1-800-876-1388
Fax: (915) 857-7644
Email: orders@mlpstore.com

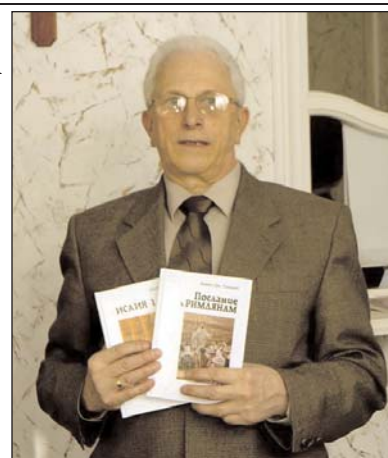
Since the beginning of the Twentieth Century the WELS has emphasized Bible study to the point that all its called workers are able to teach and defend Christian doctrine directly from the Scriptures primarily rather than from doctrinal books, church fathers or the Lutheran Confessions. The study of the Bible in the original languages continues to be a major part of the training given to future pastors, not only in the United States but also in mission churches.

At the same time the WELS and its sister churches have remained committed to the belief that the Scriptures are verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore entirely true and reliable. Thoroughly grounded in the Scriptures, the spiritual leaders in our fellowship are also convinced that Jesus Christ is the central message of the Bible.

An enduring result of these convictions is a series of forty-one commentaries on the entire Bible. The volumes are entitled *The People's Bible* because the authors use their considerable scholarship to comment on the Scriptures in such a way that a typical confirmed member of the WELS could enjoy reading the books and profit from them.

By the time the last volume was published in 2002, thirty-five pastors and professors of the WELS and ELS had served as authors. Eighteen years had passed since the first volume was published in 1984. Some of the books were written by men who have now retired from the ministry, and two of them have joined the church triumphant. Three volumes were authored by sons whose fathers had written previous volumes. One son completed his father's work when his father passed away. Time, circumstance and personality did not change the message. The last volumes are as committed to Christ and the inerrancy of the Bible as the first volumes.

The People's Bible is now being translated into other languages. The entire series was completed in Spanish last fall, making it the first Lutheran commentary on the entire Bible available in Spanish. During the 1990s five volumes were published in Bulgarian. Work continues in Latvian, in which one volume has been published and two more have been translated. Work also continues in Japanese, in which nine volumes have been translated; in Russian, in which six volumes have been published and nine more have been translated; and in Indonesian, in which twenty-seven



*Missionary John Sullivan holding
copies of *The People's Bible*
in Russian*

The People's Bible - continued

volumes have been translated. The Confessional Lutheran Church in Sweden plans to translate eleven volumes.

This is challenging work! Nineteen people, including nine missionaries, from Chile, Peru, Colombia, Mexico, the Caribbean and the United States, translated and revised the Spanish series over a period of fifteen years. Because a different - and more literal - Bible translation was used for the Spanish edition and because of the inevitable need to adapt illustrations and cultural references to Hispanic culture, it was necessary to adjust the commentaries to make them useful to the Spanish reader. A further complicating factor is the reality that Spanish, like English, is a trade language spoken in varied forms by hundreds of millions of people. Consensus on word choice and idiomatic expression was not possible.

All of the translation teams for the other language editions are adapting the English books in ways similar to what was done in Spanish. Missionary Pieter Reid, who works with the Indonesian translation team, illustrates the importance of this task:

"English idioms are deleted, appropriately translated, or a comparable Indonesian idiom is substituted. For example, in the commentary on Matthew there is an idiom (Matthew 19:1-2) that says, "*Burns his supper*." The translation team asked, "What does that mean?" I explained: "This is an idiom which shows how easy it is to get a divorce in America. Forty years ago a husband and wife could not get a divorce unless one of them was guilty of having committed adultery. Now over half the marriages end in divorce. The couple doesn't need a big reason. 'She burns his supper' or 'she burns his toast' is such a little thing but it can be used as a reason for wanting a divorce. Now the law says that a person does not even need a reason to get a divorce; this is called 'no fault divorce.' If this idiom is not understandable, then substitute: 'if a person wants a divorce without having a reason.'"

After understanding the use of this idiom, the translation team lit up and said, "In Indonesia, if a woman wants her husband to divorce her, she will put too much salt in her husband's food. So we could use our own idiom, '*she puts too much salt in his food*' as an idiom with an equivalent meaning."

Another example: In the Study Guide for Joshua (p. 9, Q#8), there is a reference to America that the translation team could not understand. They asked, "What does it mean, '*From California to the New York island, from the redwood forest to the Gulf stream waters*'?" My response: "Please delete this reference to America. To include it in the Indonesian translation would only cause confusion for the readers here as it did for you. For your information, these words are part of a song titled 'This Land Is Your Land, This Land Is My Land' which probably every American knows, so it is a phrase familiar to them. Since it is not familiar to the people in Indonesia, we will delete that part of the question."

The translation teams must also take great care to present the written text in a form that will be acceptable to the intended readers. Missionary John Sullivan in Novosibirsk writes:

One of the problems we face is that of capitalization. There are traditional, accepted rules for capitalization, but some feel that the reasons for some of these rules have become obsolete in Russia's post-communist society, while others believe we should continue to use them to avoid shocking people. For example, in communist times, "God" was usually written with a small case "g" ("god") in order to show contempt for the idea of God. Everyone agrees that we should capitalize "God," but the opinions are divided on "Satan." Some think that capitalizing "Satan" indicates respect for him, and therefore want to write "satan," lest our readers think that we respect the evil spirit. Others point out that in religious literature the word is usually used as a proper name for the chief of the fallen angels, and since proper names are capitalized, they prefer to write the name with "S".

The Japanese have a highly complex writing system, as Missionary Glen Hieb explains:

With a Japanese translation the review process is very time consuming. We must review the usage of Kanji in a text. When to use Kanji, and when not to, is important in Japanese. Also

The People's Bible - continued

the proper Japanese must be used. There are different levels of polite Japanese used depending on who is speaking and who is being addressed. Words are constantly being dropped and replaced by newer words, etc. We want to use the best and most up to date expressions. Does the Japanese say what the original in the Bible text says? We must take the time to determine this.

Finding good and reliable translators who are willing to work together as a team is still another difficulty our translation coordinators have had to confront. Sometimes, well-meaning workers have caused unexpected problems. For instance, Missionary Sullivan writes:

Sometimes publishers "correct" what is not a mistake. When the publishing house editor was reading the manuscript of our translation of "This We Believe," she assumed there was a mistake in the sentence: "We reject any thought ... that allows for the possibility of factual error in Scripture, even in so-called nonreligious matters such as historical or geographical details," and changed the word "even" to "except." Fortunately, our translator caught the mistaken "correction," but since the publisher had begun printing before the proofreading was done, the page had to be re-printed.

Missionary Reid describes what can happen when work is done too quickly without adequate supervision:

When we first started translating materials, the persons doing this were Christians, but they did not understand the Bible teachings as taught in the Lutheran church. Their preconceived ideas colored their translations.

Another difficulty in the beginning was that we were paying the translator per page for work completed. Some of the translators would need some additional money and quickly crank out a translation that contained all kinds of unacceptable translations and poor translations. The missionary at that time was not working with the translator and if the translator did not know the meaning, he would just guess and go on.

Now the translators are paid on an hourly basis because the quality of the translation is much more important than having something done that is not usable. The translators are also in contact with the missionary so they understand the meaning of the English words before translating them into Indonesian.

All of the translation programs evidence the same zeal for faithfulness to the message and sound doctrine, even as they adapt the English commentaries to the circumstances posed by the target culture and the Bible text to be quoted in their commentaries. Missionary Hieb writes, "Grammatical review, doctrinal review, proofreading, all are a must when working with a Japanese translation. After the layout, we have to give it one more review too."

Like the Spanish program, the Russian and Latvian programs have chosen to translate directly from the English books without simplifying the manuscripts first. The Japanese and Indonesian fields, on the other hand, have used simplified versions of the English text provided by Rev. Harold Essmann.

The Indonesian, Russian, Japanese, Latvian and Swedish language translators have an enormous amount of the work ahead of them. The English edition has 11,464 pages. Perhaps we shouldn't have mentioned that number, since we may have been better off not knowing even the total number of volumes planned for the English edition until we had progressed far into the Spanish project. We kept thinking there would be maybe 30 volumes, then 35 - until we finally learned the awesome truth: 41 books! Our sympathy for our brothers increases when we consider how many potential mistakes have to be screened out of a single manuscript that may contain 500,000 bytes! Pobrecitos!

The People's Bible - continued

On the other hand, Mr. Janis Dimza, who manages the publishing program in Latvia, remarked that one of the joys of working on *The People's Bible* project, is "unity of doctrine." That is, indeed, one of the key lessons we gained from the interviews. Confessional unity has made it possible for people from many different cultures to retain the message taught in *The People's Bible*, even as that message is now being read in entirely different languages around the world. *The People's Bible* is a testament to the blessing of remaining faithful to the fellowship principles taught in Scripture.

The other fields chime in with other expressions of gratitude for the privilege of translating the commentaries. Missionary Reid writes:

The translation team greatly appreciates coming to work every morning - "It's like having a Bible class every time we translate these materials... Your church body and publishing house have produced excellent Christian materials that need to be made available to all Christians."

As we enter the stage of preparing the first *People's Bible* commentary for public publication, Pastor Michael reflected the excitement of those involved in the project and said, "This book ministry will reach many Indonesian people and will be passed on to others. If I preach a sermon, those who came hear it. If a book is printed, it can be read and passed on to others, and even after the author dies, the book will still strengthen many Christians and bring them closer to Christ and motivate them to keep living for Jesus."

Missionary Sullivan adds:

The translators and editors invariably express their pleasure in having been privileged to translate *The People's Bibles*. Their own faith is nourished and strengthened as they translate. The chief editor at one of the publishing houses we use, although not a member of our church, says that she really enjoys reading our books and learning from them. (This was not the editor mentioned previously.) The translators are becoming excited about making more and more of *The People's Bible* volumes available in Russian. Although not all of our translators were willing to work together as a team, and some unfortunately quit, those who are still with us appreciate each other's help.

While it will take many years before even the core volumes (MLP and the seminary faculty have identified seventeen volumes that should be translated first. These volumes are called the core volumes.) are published in the other languages, the fields are already profiting from their work. Indeed, the Indonesian church is so concerned that they have at least a basic translation as soon as possible, that they are postponing the time-consuming work of polishing their manuscripts until the entire series is finished. The fields are using the translations as soon as they become available - and sometimes even before an entire book is finished - for seminary work and to help national pastors prepare sermons and Bible classes.

Our sister churches work and pray for the day when they will have published editions available in their own languages. And they envision making wide use of this tremendous resource:

Materials for the public will also be placed on a web page so Indonesian Christians anywhere in the world could benefit from these materials and become closer to Christ. In the process, they will also find out about our church body and other materials that are available.

Those who download materials in Indonesian will be able to use them personally or in their congregations. Our goal is to share Christ Jesus and have people become closer to Him. A web page could also be accessed by Muslim Indonesians who are interested in learning more about Christianity. After seeing the Christ-centered worthwhile materials on the web, people would also have the option of purchasing these materials in Indonesian printed form from the national church or in English from Northwestern Publishing House. (Missionary Reid)

We expect that our readership will not be just from our Confessional Lutheran Church in Latvia, but also from the national Lutheran church and other denominations. In Latvian there is no other full Bible commentary. Besides our project, one other publishing house has also begun publishing a Bible commentary for theologians with lots of Greek, etc. So we believe, if

The People's Bible - continued

we will get *The People's Bible* out as a series (half a year ago we published the first book, that is yet the single one), many lay people will get more and more interested in it. (Mr. Dimza)

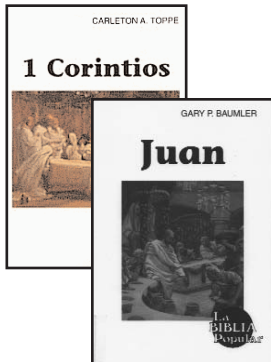
Based on our experience in Spanish publishing we can encourage our brothers to expect an ever-widening circle of people who will read and value *The People's Bible*. Spanish publishing director, Ron Baerbock, writes, "The joy comes from the reports from the people using the materials. They rejoice in having this complete commentary available to them, a commentary which sticks with the truths of Scripture. People from other church bodies have also been faithful purchasers of the books. A leader from the Catholic Church here in El Paso has continued to come to Multi-Language Publications to purchase the new volumes available and now has the complete set. With every book he is becoming clearer and clearer on the Scriptural doctrine of justification by faith. The joy of the gospel is reaching many!"

Missionary Sullivan echoes these sentiments in Russia where he observes: "Many people have expressed their gratitude for these printed resources that bring the saving Word of God to them and build them up in their faith." In Latvia, Mr. Dimza notes that the commentaries "will surely be a blessing for the Latvian nation to get a good and truthful explanation of the Word of God."

The Wauwatosa theologians spoke German. Counted among their spiritual descendents are Christians who speak Bulgarian, Indonesian, Latvian, Japanese, Russian and Spanish.

Soli Deo Gloria.

How do I order copies of The People's Bible for my ministry?



Selected volumes of The People's Bible are currently available in the following languages:

**Bulgarian
Latvian
Russian**

The complete set of 41 volumes is now available in **Spanish** with special pricing available while supplies last!



You can order online at:
www.mlpstore.com

or visit
The People's Bible website at:
www.peoplesbible.org
or
www.bibliapopular.org

Recent and Forthcoming Theological Books from NPH

Rev. Curtis Jahn, Professional Products, Northwestern Publishing House

The two most recently published theological works from Northwestern Publishing House are:

A Tale of Two Synods: Events That Led to the Split between Wisconsin and Missouri by *Professor Mark Braun*. A must read for every Lutheran interested in knowing about the substance of the split between the two synods, this book is especially useful for WELS members who want to better understand the personality and soul of their synod.

Feminism: Understanding and Balancing Its Impact on Marriage, Family, and Church by *Pastor Nathan Pope*. Both books are paperbacks. Regarding this book, Prof. John Schuetze writes: "Two attributes describe this book—practical and well researched. Pastor Nathan Pope has done a great deal of scholarly research. Yet he also presents the material in a practical and timely manner. That makes this book an excellent treatment of a difficult but important subject."

These two books are already available from NPH.

Within the next year or so, NPH plans to publish four new titles (six volumes). In the order that they will be released, they are:

Speaking the Truth in Love to Muslims by *Roland Cap Ehlke* (paperback). Since "9-11" and already before, a steady stream of studies have appeared to help Christians understand Islam. Like many of those books, *Speaking the Truth* provides basic information on the beliefs, practices, and history of Islam. But what makes this book truly unique is its clear Lutheran theological perspective. The book offers a clear law and gospel approach to witnessing to Muslims.

Commentary on Genesis 1-11 by *Carl Lawrenz and John Jeske* (hardcover). A comprehensive commentary on the Hebrew text of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Prof. Lawrenz completed chapters 1-4 before his death in 1989. Prof. Jeske was commissioned by NPH to write the commentary on chapters 5-11. This commentary represents half a century of Genesis study and scholarship at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Prepared to Answer: Telling the Greatest Story Ever Told by *Mark Paustian* (2 vols., paperback). How often aren't pastors and laypeople

confronted with comments or questions that touch on religious and moral issues? "All religions are basically the same." "It's a woman's right to choose." "All the church cares about is money." Mark Paustian identified 50+ such issues. In every one of them he sees an opportunity not only to address the issue in a caring and considerate way with Scripture, but, most importantly, to tell a story about Jesus from the Gospels. These two volumes will help Christians grow in their faith and knowledge; at the same time, the books serve as a model of "friendship witnessing" in our everyday conversations with people.

Commentary on the Psalms by *John Brug* (2 vols., hardcover). A comprehensive commentary on the Hebrew text of all 150 psalms. Contains the Hebrew text for each psalm, the author's original translation, notes on the Hebrew text and translation, and commentary/application. Sprinkled throughout the books are special articles on key words and concepts in the Psalms. Prof. Brug has written this commentary especially for the parish pastor in his work of preparing sermons and Bible classes on Psalms. When published, this will be the only confessional Lutheran commentary in print in English on the entire Hebrew Psalter.

Plans for publishing other theological works in the future (more than a year away) include:

College Doctrine Text (actual title not yet determined) by *Prof. Lyle Lange*, written to serve as a textbook at MLC, will also serve as a handy compendium of Christian doctrine.

Ministers of Christ: A Commentary on 2 Corinthians, 2nd edition, by *Prof. John Meyer*, updated by Prof. Armin Panning (hardcover).

The Wauwatosa Theology, Vol. IV. Essays by *J. P. Koehler, August Pieper, and John Schaller*. (hardcover).

Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics, Vols. I & II by *Adolf Hoenecke*. (hardcover)

For any books not yet published, please wait until you have received advertising information from NPH before trying to order them.