



# Bringing the Written Word to the World

## Distance Learning: The Wave of the Future!

By John Strackbein

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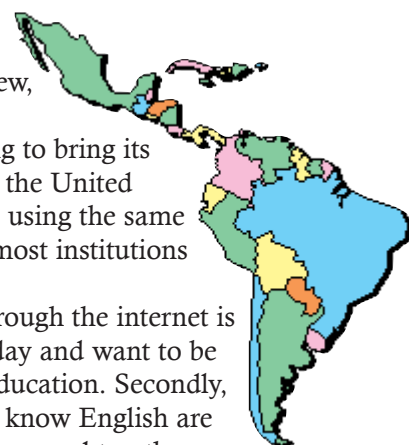
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Teaching is an important part of the ministry, both in the congregation and at the synodical level. The same is true in foreign missions. My name is John Strackbein and I am involved in a new Latin American seminary program that delivers instruction to students in several countries. The program is called LATTE (Latin American Traveling Theological Education). We travel to the students because pulling students out of their countries to a central location would require visas and prevent students from serving their congregations. Furthermore, it is difficult to persuade poor students to return to their countries of origin, and it is costly to transport and set up whole families in a new, central location.

LATTE is not the only educational institution trying to bring its courses to the student. Universities all over Europe and the United States, the military and even Martin Luther College are using the same concept. Instead of traveling to the students, however, most institutions use the internet.

There are various reasons why distance learning through the internet is becoming popular. People are much more on the go today and want to be able to do two or three things at once, including their education. Secondly, some of the immigrants to the United States who don't know English are becoming Lutherans and want to be trained to bring the gospel to other immigrants who also are just learning English. These potential students find it difficult to adapt to a formal setting like Martin Luther College and they often live too far away for professors to visit them frequently. Finally, technology has now made distance learning possible. Computers used to be expensive and complicated. Today, most families can afford one and they are not so difficult to use.

Distance learning through the internet offers interesting opportunities for the WELS. Consider it the globalization of Confessional Lutheran teaching, the pooling of our assets, or even the doing more with less. We have many seminaries all over the world. Through existing technology at our disposal we could have qualified Japanese, Chinese, Russian, and Latino students in the United States taking courses together with their counterparts in their countries of origin. Think of what distance learning could do to educate and train evangelists, teachers, Sunday school teachers and even pastors in countries that forbid missionaries -countries like China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Jordan, Egypt etc. In the United States, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary students who know Spanish well could take supplementary courses along with student pastors from Colombia, or Puerto Rico.

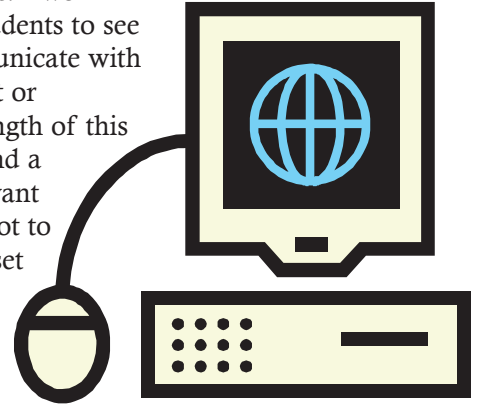


Continued on Page 2

## Distance Learning Project - continued

I got interested in distance learning because in Latin America we have student pastors leading congregations in Colombia and Haiti, where it is very dangerous for missionaries to travel. We also have students who are planning to go to the United States or to other Caribbean islands. How could we enable those students to continue their training?

For our Colombian students we seriously investigated using high speed ISDN lines to connect with Sprint or AT&T. This type of long distance learning would have made it possible to conduct classes to four rooms of people in four different countries at the same time. Two televisions in each room would have made it possible for the students to see the professor and the occupants of the other four rooms, communicate with all of them and on the second television see whatever document or PowerPoint presentation the professor wanted to offer. The strength of this plan was the personal interaction, the discussion possibilities, and a better way of solving a cultural tendency of our students who want up close contact with the people they talk to. LATTE decided not to go that route because it would have cost around \$60,000 to get set up and over \$33,000 per year to use the Sprint internet backbone. Another problem was the difficulty of getting all the students in several time zones together at one time for face-to-face classes.



Once the decision was made to not go with the High Speed ISDN route, I was asked to explore the possibility of teaching over regular internet lines. I did so by taking a couple of on-line internet classes on distance learning from Jim Grunwald, a MLC professor.

The first course dealt with learning theories and teaching methods that best work with on-line courses. The system we used was called Blackboard. The second semester course continued with learning theories but principally helped us to begin constructing an on-line course that we would use with Blackboard.

At first I was a little skeptical about using distance learning because as a teacher I am used to being in front of the classroom and being the focal point of the learning that takes place. If you have seen the movie, "Paper Chase" or "The Dead Poet's Society," that was my idea of the teacher's roll. But when you teach on-line, it doesn't work that way. Most of the learning takes place by reading assignments, doing research, answering review questions, and then using threaded discussions and debates with other students over a period of several days to arrive at conclusions and practical applications. The professor guides the learning process in the proper direction by correcting and commenting on essays, organizing the program and materials and making sure everything stays on the stated schedule. Once everything is in place, he takes a background role except when needed.

I am very excited about this way of teaching. First, it is cheap, involving a small fee for the use of Blackboard. Second, it gives our very busy students flexibility to take part in the discussion at times best suited for them since no one has to be on at the same time to do the class. Third, it will let us reach out to qualified future students in countries where we do not have the money or manpower to enter.

Is distance learning the wave of the future? There are many people all over the world, including the United States, that will not get the training they need if we don't consider it. Maybe it is time for anyone involved in education to give it a second look. It may be just the answer in certain circumstances. I would like to recommend that anyone who wants to learn how to offer a course using Blackboard should sign up for the distance learning courses offered at MLC. In my opinion, it is the wave of the future for some of our educational needs in WELS.

**The distance learning courses taught by Dr. James Grunwald are listed in the MLP Catalog (p 12). Contact the professor directly for information about the courses offered this fall. Contact him by website: [www.mlc-wels.edu/grunwald](http://www.mlc-wels.edu/grunwald); email: [grunwajr@mlc-wels.edu](mailto:grunwajr@mlc-wels.edu); phone: 507-354-8224 ext. 349; or US mail: Dr. James Grunwald, Martin Luther College, 1995 Luther Court, New Ulm MN 56073.**

# History of Translation - The German Bible

## Part 4 - The Renaissance

Translation played a key role in the Renaissance of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, since the "the very concept of a rebirth of Western European civilization was based on a new look at the classics of Greece and Rome" (Child 76). While scholars still generally worked in medieval Latin, they were not necessarily able to read classical Greek. The common people, nobles and scholars alike no longer spoke Latin in their daily discourse but used a wide variety of languages that were evolving from Latin and other sources. Furthermore, the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century not only facilitated the distribution of translated materials, but the greater availability of the printed word itself both increased literacy and stimulated an appetite for more publications to read.

As our synod has become increasingly active in sharing the gospel around the world during the last two generations, the amount of translation work has increased tremendously. The quality of that work varies from outstanding to barely intelligible. The resulting concern in our fellowship about translation methods and principles reflects a similar interest during the Renaissance when scholars discussed translation theory because of the uneven results of their work. The French humanist and translator Etienne Dolet provides a "typical" (Child 76) example of a statement of translation principles during the Renaissance era:

1. The translator must understand perfectly the content and intention of the author he is translating.
2. The translator should have a perfect knowledge of the language from which he is translating (i.e., "source language") and an equally excellent knowledge of the language into which he is translating (i.e., "target language").
3. The translator should avoid the tendency to translate word for word, for to do so is to destroy the meaning of the original and to ruin the beauty of the expression.
4. The translator should employ forms of speech in common usage.
5. Through his choice and order of words the translator should produce a total overall effect with appropriate "tone" (Child 76-7).

### The German Bible

One of the most notable areas of translation work during the Renaissance was the effort to translate the Bible into the language of the people. The first English version was produced by John Wycliffe during the fourteenth century, and the King James version was completed in 1611. The primary translation used by evangelical Christians in the Spanish-speaking world was completed by Casiodoro de Reina during the sixteenth century. The German version, produced under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther, was perhaps the most notable achievement in Bible translation of that era because it not only influenced the King James and Spanish versions but also helped shape the German language itself.

Summarizing the importance of Luther's achievement, James Korthals writes: "Before 1518, fourteen High German and four Low German editions were available. All of them, however, were translations of the Vulgate. Luther's was the first German translation made from the Greek, using the second edition of Erasmus' Greek New Testament... Luther translated the New Testament into the language of the Saxon court. His effort did a great deal to standardize the German language. Luther was not the first nor the only person to develop High German as a literary language. His Bible, however, was one of High German's most significant and most widely distributed documents. It made Luther the most influential author in the German tongue... Luther's German avoided courtly or stilted expressions and refrained from using foreign words or slang. Such a language should speak to the people, and they should be able to understand it" (179).

### Luther on Translation

Luther's explanation and defense of his translation principles will strike a cord with many engaged in translation work today. It may comfort those who labor hard in this field to know, for example, that Luther himself felt the sting of criticism. Often it appears that his critics had little appreciation for the difficulty of being both faithful to the source text and readable in the target language. "There is a saying, 'He who builds along the road has many masters.' That is the way it is with me too. Those who have

## The History of Translation - continued



*Luther translating the Bible at the Wartburg.  
Taken from the [Images of Luther](#) pages of  
the [Evangelical Lutheran Church of America](#) website.*

never even been able to speak properly, to say nothing of translating, have all at once become my masters and I must be the pupil of them all... That is the way it was with St. Jerome too when he translated the Bible. Everybody was his master. He was the only one who was totally incompetent. And people who were not worthy to clean his shoes criticized the good man's work. It takes a great deal of patience to do a good thing publicly, for the world always wants to be Master Know-it-all." ("On Translating" 183-4).

Luther's principles address the same issues faced by translators in our fellowship. He asserts, for example, that translation must bear in mind the way a message will be understood in the target language. "Whoever would speak German must not use Hebrew style. Rather he must see to it -once he understands the Hebrew author- 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" ("Defense" 213-4).

Luther gives an example taken from Psalm 92. He writes: "[Verse 14] says, 'Even when they grow old, they will nevertheless bloom, and be

fruitful and flourishing.' We know, of course, that [translated literally] 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 trees, 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. They must abide forever, for the word of God which they teach abides forever [I Pet. 1:25]" ("Defense" 218-9).

In his open letter about translating, Luther cites another clear example from the New Testament in Luke 1:28. This passage also illustrates the principle that the translation must bear in mind the actual message in the source language: "When the angel greets Mary, he says, 'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you!' [Gegruesset seistu, Maria vol gnaden, der Herr mit dir.] Up to now that has simply been translated according to the literal Latin. [The Latin Vulgate reads: Ave gratia plena. A New Testament History Bible of the fifteenth century, for example, written in German, simply retains these three untranslated Latin words for the opening of Gabriel's address to Mary, and follows them with a literal German paraphrase: Ave gratia plena, Maria, du pist vol aller gnaden....] Tell me whether that is also good German! When does a German speak like that, 'You are full of grace'? What German understands what that is, to be '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,' so that a German can at least think his way through to what the angel meant by this greeting. Here, however, the papists are going wild about me, because I have corrupted the Angelic Salutation; though I have still not hit upon the best German rendering for it. Suppose I had taken the best German, and translated the salutation thus: 'Hello there, Mary' [The German Gott grusse dich, du liebe Maria, literally, 'God greet you, you dear Mary,' has no exact equivalent in English....] -for that is what the angel wanted to say, and what he would have said, if he had wanted to greet her in German." (190-1; material quoted in brackets taken

## The History of Translation - continued

from the notes of the Luther's Works edition.)

This does not mean that Luther always abandoned the literal text of the source language. Quite the contrary: "We have at times also translated quite literally -even though we could have rendered the meaning more clearly another way- because everything turns on these very words. For example, here in [Psalm 68] verse 18, 'Thou hast ascended on high; thou has led captivity captive,' it would have been good German to say, 'Thou hast set the captives free.' But this is too weak, and does not convey the fine, rich meaning of the Hebrew, which says literally, 'Thou hast led captivity captive.' This does not imply merely that Christ freed the captives, but also that he captured and led away the captivity itself, so that it never again could or would take us captive again; thus it is really an eternal redemption [Heb. 9:12]. St. Paul likes to speak in this way, as when he says, 'I through the law died to the law' [Gal. 2:19]; again, 'Through sin Christ condemned sin' [Rom. 8:3]; and again, 'Death has been put to death by Christ.' These are the captivities that Christ has taken captive and done away: death can no longer hold us, sin can no longer incriminate us, the law can no longer accuse our conscience. On every hand St. Paul propagates such rich, glorious, and comforting doctrine. 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." ("Defense" 216).

Still another reason for rendering a literal translation is to allow the reader in the target language to derive various interpretations from the translated text, since the message in the source language can be understood in different ways: "Likewise, in Psalm 91:5-6 we have stuck to the Hebrew, 'You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday,' etc. Since they are expressed in obscure and veiled words, one man might well interpret differently than another these four torments or misfortunes which a righteous person must endure for God's sake. Therefore we tried to leave room for each person to understand them according to the gifts and measure of his spirit" ("Defense" 216-7).

Perhaps the most well-known translation issue associated with Martin Luther is his insertion of *allein* (alone) in Romans 3:28: "We hold that a man is justified without the works of the law, by faith alone" ("On Translating" 182). Luther advances two arguments to defend his translation: 1) How will the text be understood by the targeted reader? and 2) What is the actual message in the source text? Concerning the targeted reader, Luther writes:

I wanted to speak German, not Latin or Greek, since it was German I had undertaken to speak in the translation. 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 word *nicht* [not] or *kein* [no]. For example, we say, "The farmer brings *allein* grain and *kein* money"; "No, really I have now *nicht* money, but *allein* grain"; "I have *allein* eaten and *nicht* yet drunk"; "Did you *allein* write it, and *nicht* read it over?" There are innumerable cases of this kind in daily use.

In all these phrases, this is the German usage, even though it is not the Latin or Greek usage. It is the nature of the German language to add the word *allein* in order that the word *nicht* or *kein* may be clearer and more complete. To be sure, I can also say, "The farmer brings grain and *kein* money," but the words "*kein* money" do not sound as full and clear as if I were to say, "The farmer brings *allein* grain and *kein* money." Here the word *allein* helps the word *kein* so much that it becomes a complete, clear German expression.

We do not have to inquire of the literal Latin, how we are to speak German. 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 ("On Translating" 188-9).

Later in the same open letter Luther demonstrates that his translation of Romans 3:28 fits the broader context of what the apostle Paul is saying in the same letter and elsewhere. In other words, the inclusion of *allein* reproduces the actual message in the source text. To understand the actual message

## The History of Translation - continued

in the Bible, Luther asserts that translators need to be believers in Christ. When translating Christian publications today, we would echo Luther's opinion expressed in his "Prefaces to the Old Testament": "We Christians are the ones who must do the work, for we have the understanding of Christ without which even the knowledge of the language is nothing" (249).

Luther translated the entire New Testament into Greek during an incredibly short period at the Wartburg Castle in 1522, but he spent the nearly 25 remaining years of his life translating the Old Testament and refining his entire German Bible. This is one of Luther's most lasting gifts to the Christian church. This monumental achievement was not done alone, however. He worked with a team of experts assembled from the faculty and other reformers in Wittenberg. With that team he also prayed to the Lord for guidance and blessing.

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## New Publications

### The Promise

*The Promise* has recently been published in Arabic (38-7394), Burmese (38-7427), Chayahuita (38-7407), Mizo (38-7426) and Urdu (38-7395). The English (38-7055) and Spanish (38-7118) editions were reprinted. All editions are available at 65 cents each or \$50 per hundred copies. 375,000 copies have now been published in 33 languages.

### Chinese - Simplified Characters

*What the Bible and Lutherans Teach* (38-7430; 65 cents each or \$50 per hundred), *What Christians Believe* (from the Bible Teachings Series, 38-7350) and *Biblical Worship* (38-7535) are now available. All volumes of the Bible Teachings Series are available at \$1.25 each or \$10 for ten copies, regardless of language.

### Japanese

The second of the Bible Teachings Series books is now available: *The Words Jesus Taught* (38-7502). *Jesus the Christ* was published last summer (38-7422). Look forward to the third volume (*God's Great Exchange*) later this summer.

### Spanish

*The Whole Bible* study guide (which references the People's Bible) continues to be made available to WELS and ELS related ministries for field-testing. One fourth of the project is now available. To request free samples for field-testing, write Pastor Ronald Baerbock at rbaerbock@elp.rr.com. *Luther's Catechism with Explanation* (by David Kuske) is now available in a comb-bound edition (38-7367, \$23). *The Writer's Handbook for the Lutheran Messenger* has been revised and reprinted. The handbook is free of

charge. Workshops for Messenger have been held during the past year in Puerto Rico, Chile, Peru and Milwaukee. Contact Pastor Baerbock about the possibility of future workshops.

### From India

*Bible Stories in Pictures* (38-7439) and *Sermon Book on the Gospels* (38-7384; \$6) are now available in Telugu. We look forward to receiving the Hindi edition of *Bible Stories in Pictures* soon. All volumes of *Bible Stories in Pictures*, regardless of language, are available at \$6.50 each.

### Norway

*The Simplified Catechism* was recently printed in Norwegian (38-7520).

### Russia

*Bible Stories in Pictures* (38-7493) has been published! Copies are expected at our catalog center in El Paso by the end of this summer and will be available at \$6.50 each.

### Bible Graphics in Digital Form

All ministries engaged in world missions or in multi-cultural outreach and in fellowship with the WELS and ELS are eligible to receive a set of *Bible History Illustrations* (38-7391). The package contains 119 full-color illustrations in digital format (TIFF) on six CD's. The files range from 20 to 35 Mb and can be printed as 20 by 26 inch teaching pictures. The files can also be used in many other applications, as long as they are not used for profit and the copyright information is included with the illustration. A thumbnail album is included with the package. Ministries will be asked to pay for the cost of the CD's: \$16.50, plus shipping. The illustrations were painted by an artist associated with Christ-Light© of Northwestern Publishing House.