

Luther's Contribution as Bible Translator to the German Language

The Bible Translator

2022, Vol. 73(3) 301–334

© The Author(s) 2020

Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/20516770221140051

journals.sagepub.com/home/tbt



Anja Lobenstein-Reichmann

Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen; Charles University Praha;

Ruprecht Karls University Heidelberg

Abstract

Translation has often been the primary cultural medium through which history's greatest visions for society have been communicated and acculturated. But few translations have had as much influence on German religion, politics, culture, and language as Luther's Bible translation did. This article discusses Luther's role as a reformer of language and as a Bible translator. Of course these two roles can scarcely be considered independently of each other. The Reformation was deeply marked by his translation choices, and his distinctive way of reading, interpreting, and communicating the Bible's meaning.

Keywords

German Bible, translation, development of the German language, Martin Luther, translation principles

Introduction

In July 1523, the Nuremberg shoemaker Hans Sachs published his famous gnomic poem “Die Wittenbergisch Nachtigall” (The Wittenberg Nightingale), thereby aligning himself, after three years of silence, explicitly and publicly with the Wittenberg Reformation. The poem opens with the lines,

Corresponding author:

Anja Lobenstein-Reichmann, Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Geiststr. 10,
Göttingen 37073, Germany

Email: anja.lobenstein-reichmann@mail.uni-goettingen.de

Awake, the day is dawning
 I hear birdsong in the hedgerows
 A joyful nightingale
 Its voice is heard through mountain and valley.
 (Sachs 1523, 3r)¹

The reference is to Luther. He is the Wittenberg nightingale,² which announces the daybreak and “has brought to light”³ with restored clarity and purity “the holy Gospel / the word of God (formerly obscured by the teachings of man).”⁴ The dualistic metaphor of light/darkness or day/night leaves no room for doubt. Sachs expertly articulates Luther’s Reformation message and contrasts it with the papal church’s “lies of man.”⁵ Luther’s song is depicted as the wake-up call that “wakes us out of our night”⁶ and is heard everywhere as early as 1523—a point of key importance for reception history.

When Sachs writes that “Doctor Martin” has “revealed to us again the word of God, the holy Scriptures,”⁷ he is assuming that something *needs* to be revealed again or brought to light with restored clarity and purity, because it had been covered over and had become unclear. The Reformation is depicted by Sachs not as rewriting the word of God, but as restoring it and making visible what had been in the dark or hidden. But Sachs is not only referring to theology—he means the German language too. The *sola scriptura* vision of systematically reconnecting theology with Scripture, and the call to make Scripture universally accessible, necessitates a German Bible translation. In 1523, Luther wrote to Nikolaus Boie, “we have devoted ourselves to ensuring that the holy Bible is increasingly read in German, so that every lay person can draw from this fountain” (*WA BR* 3:227; cf. also *WA* 6:362).⁸ Sachs praises the 1522 September Testament as Luther’s greatest achievement—his provision of this “fountain” in a form comprehensible to everyone and thus the removal of the word of God from the exclusive purview of Latin-schooled experts. In the sixteenth century it was far from

¹ “Wacht auf, es nahet gen den Tag, | ich hör’ singen im grünen Hag | ein’ wonnigliche Nachtigal, | ihr’ Stimm’ durchdringet Berg und Tal” (quoted in my own modern German translation; all references to Sachs are in Hartmann 2015). Richard Wagner incorporated these words into his opera, *Die Meistersinger* (act 3, scene 5).

² “ist doctor Martinus Luther” (Sachs 1523, 4v).

³ “an den Tag gegeben hat” (Sachs 1523, 2v).

⁴ “das heilige Evangelium / das Wort Gottes (welches zuvor durch Menschenlehre verdunkelt war)” (Sachs 1523, 2r).

⁵ “menschlichen Lügen” (Sachs 1523, 2v).

⁶ “uns aufweckt von der Nacht” (Sachs 1523, 4v).

⁷ “Das Wort Gottes die Heilige Schrift ... wiederum aufgedeckt” (Sachs 1523, 8r).

⁸ “Wir wollen mit aller Macht daran, daß die heil. Biblia kunfftig nach und nach deutlich gelefen werde, damit ein yder Lay aus diefem Brünlein felbt fchöpfen mag.”

normal to read the Bible in German and to teach the word of God everywhere “orally and in writing ... in German.”⁹

Luther's systematic attention to developing a German-language theology quickly became the source of many myths. As early as at Luther's funeral in 1546, his colleague Justus Jonas described him as having reformed not only the church, but the German language too. In his eulogy, Jonas praises the deceased as an “exceptional, magisterial speaker” and a “supremely magisterial interpreter of the entire Bible” (Jonas 1546, 8).¹⁰ He says the chanceries have learnt from Luther “how to write and speak German properly, in fact he restored the German language such that people can again write and speak German properly—people in high places ought to attest and acknowledge the fact”¹¹ (Jonas 1546, 8; similarly also Cyriacus Spangenberg, cited in Josten 1976, 107). In the following, we look at Luther's role as a reformer of language and as a Bible translator, since these two roles can scarcely be considered independently of each other.

Luther and the German language: Inventor and reformer?

Assessments of Luther's importance for the German language have always tended to be skewed by the writer's own confessional, historical, or personal perspective (cf. Lobenstein-Reichmann 2017).¹² Some saw him as “the father of the German language”¹³ (so Johann Walther in 1564, cited in Josten 1976, 106), and a magisterial linguistic genius (so Heinrich Detering, cited in Röther 2017). Others have considered him boorish (Schirokauer

⁹ “mündlich und schriftlich ... in deutscher Sprache” (Sachs 1523, 8r).

¹⁰ “trefflichen, gewaltigen Redner”; “einen überaus gewaltigen Dolmetscher der ganzen Bibel.”

¹¹ “recht deutsch schreiben und reden, denn er hat die Deutsche sprach wieder recht herfür gebracht, das man nun wieder kann recht Deutsch reden und schreiben und wie das viel hoher Leute müssen zeugen und bekennen.”

¹² The literature on Luther and the German language is nearly impossible to master completely. Most important for German studies are (among others) the role of Luther's Bible translation in the development of German language and literature (Wolf 1980; 1996), the putative role of linguistic geography in his translation (Besch 2001, 2008; Haas 2017), Luther's rhetoric and style (Stolt 1980a, 1980b, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984; Lobenstein-Reichmann 1998, 2001, 2004, 2008, 2014, 2017, 2018, 2021, 2022), his understanding of language and his comments on the language used in his Bible translation (Beutel 1991; Lobenstein-Reichmann 2021), his translation practice (Ebeling 1951; Reinitzer 1983, 1985; zur Mühlen 1978; Erben 1985; Redzich 2005, 2017; Ganslmayr 2018; Ganslmayr and Karner 2021), his principles of communication (Gardt 1992), his participation in the linguistic discourse of his time (Sonderegger 1998; Musseleck 1981; Reichmann 2011), and his revision work (Tschirch 1966a; 1966b; Sauer-Geppert 1982) and its continuation in the course of the following centuries (Gelhaus 1989; Wolf 2017).

¹³ “Vater der deutschen Sprache.”

1986, 207). As we have already seen in the writings of Justus Jonas and Hans Sachs, Luther's influence on the German language was discussed even in his own lifetime. But not all the claims are well founded. Even Bruno Preisendörfer's *Reise in die Lutherzeit*, published in 2017 to coincide with the anniversary of the Reformation, carries the title "When our German was invented,"¹⁴ implying that "our German" did not exist before Luther. And in fact this is a commonly held view in Germany today—that Luther actually invented the German language. But in that case, what language was the Benedictine translator Notker the German (d. 1022) speaking and writing? What about troubadours like Walther von der Vogelweide (ca. 1200), mystics like Meister Eckhart (thirteenth century) and Johannes Tauler (fourteenth century), writers like Sebastian Brandt (fifteenth century), or the chancery officials under Ludwig IV, who since 1330 had increasingly been producing official documents in German, not just Latin? What did everyone living between Kiel in the north and Konstanz in the south speak before Luther's time? Obviously, they spoke German, or their regional forms of it.

Even with the publication in 1522 of Luther's translation of the New Testament (Septemberbibel, or September Testament, published by Melchior Lotter in Wittenberg), it is an exaggeration to call him the "inventor of modern German writing,"¹⁵ as we read on the official Luther homepage of the town of Wittenberg (so also Ebert n.d.; similarly Roper 2016, 268). This would be wrong even if one meant by "the German language" only the standard form of High German that had already long begun to crystallize from the various forms of the time (Reichmann 2003, 38–39). This "crystallization" involved a "sociological reconfiguring of the hitherto geographical diversity, and the development from oral drafting and performance towards written drafting of texts becoming the cultural norm" (Reichmann 2003, 42).¹⁶ The formation of New High German is a sociological convergence process, which cannot be traced to a single identifiable linguistic "cradle" of one dialect (Schmitt 2007, 125), much less one single author, but which is instead the combined effect of various processes, especially within written language. It cannot be simply the fruit of a process of oral dialect harmonization, dominated by East Middle German.

It is equally improbable that Luther used his own dialect to "bring into being a supraregional written German"¹⁷ (Besch 2000, 1717) and then

¹⁴ "als unser Deutsch erfunden wurde" (Preisendörfer 2017).

¹⁵ "Schöpfer der neuhochdeutschen Schriftsprache."

¹⁶ "soziologische Umschichtung des bis ins 17. Jahrhundert horizontal gelagerten Varietätenspektrums und die Entwicklung aus der nicht nur medialen, sondern auch konzeptionellen Mündlichkeit heraus in eine konzeptionelle Schriftlichkeit als sprachkulturelles Orientierungszentrum."

¹⁷ "eine überregionale dt. Schriftsprache auf den Weg [brachte]."

“surmounted regional borders with his German Bible translation.”¹⁸ On the eve of the Reformation, the German language certainly exhibited a wide variety of forms (Thuringian, Franconian, Swabian, Alemannish, Bavarian, etc.) and was still second to Latin. But it already knew a written tradition that was less and less marked by regional dialects.¹⁹ By the time of the invention of printing at the latest, German was on the way to becoming a supraregional written language, serving the needs of a public media that was developing, especially in written form. Still, there is no question that the Reformation media event and the related public discourse made a decisive contribution, since it demanded that the population decide for or against. The tracts, catechism, hymns, and especially the Bible translation reached large swathes of the population, who then, especially in the early years of the Reformation, were forced to make a personal choice.

Nonetheless, a standard form of a language is the result of long processes of standardization of grammar and lexicography and cannot be invented by one person. One person of Luther's stature, in the wake of an immense media event such as the Reformation, can at most, in various respects, serve as catalyst, role model, and spokesperson. Luther could not have had such influence if he had first had to invent the language in which he preached and into which he translated the Bible. The script, morphology, lexis, and syntax he used all belonged to the norms of written Early New High German. Recent research has shown clearly how printers had a harmonizing influence on Luther's texts, since orthography was relatively unimportant to Luther himself. His own achievement was not in exercising a decisive influence on the linguistic system and its norms (especially not with respect to orthography), but in becoming a role model for language use through the choices he made. He set communicational and pragmatic norms for the German language, particularly in the areas of word-formation, phraseology, figures of speech, and the structuring of texts. He also shaped semantics, as the theology that he carried into public discourse affected the meaning of entire sets of lexical items. We see this in the German terms for “grace,” “freedom,” “repentance,” and even for “to smile” and “lonely.”²⁰

This was possible because Luther had decided on principle to follow conventions of *German* language use, not those of Latin. In line with his approach involving a radical reconnection of theology with Scripture, and calls for the priesthood of all believers (based on 1 Pet 2.9), all believers

¹⁸ “mit seiner deutschsprachigen Bibelübersetzung ... die regionalen Sprachschranken.”

¹⁹ Even the Imperial Peace of Mainz of 1235 shows few dialectal features; cf. Solms 2000, 1514.

²⁰ See the corresponding articles in the *Frühneuhochdeutsches Wörterbuch (FWB)* at fwb-online.de; also Lobenstein-Reichmann 1998, 2004.

were now to be enabled to read, hear, and understand the word of God. For this to happen in a world where most people did not speak Latin let alone know how to read, the Bible needed to be translated into common language, followed by what became the Protestant educational program. For Luther himself, the German language was more than just a means to the ends of Protestant mission in the public sphere. It was also the expression of his own theological identity and his opposition to the Church of Rome. In his revised edition of the *Theologia Deutsch* in 1518 (*WA* 1:378), he writes, “I thank God that I hear and know God in German better than I ever did in Latin, Greek or Hebrew. If God permits this small book to be more widely known, German theologians will unquestionably be the best. Amen.”²¹

Luther and the Bible

For people to be able to hear and read about God in their own language, the word of God needs to be translated—“The Christian message creates translations” (Burger 2014, 481).²² Translation has often been the primary cultural medium through which history’s greatest visions for society have been communicated and acculturated. And thus the foundations of the Christian world order were laid by the Greek Septuagint translated from Hebrew and Aramaic (third century B.C.), Jerome’s Latin Vulgate, Erasmus’s Latin translation published with his edition of the Greek text, and pre-Reformation German translations such as the Mentel Bible (Koller 1998; Albrecht 2009). And yet few translations, in their own time or subsequently, have had as much influence on German religion, politics, culture, and language as Luther’s Bible translation did (Sonderegger 1998, 230, 254; Redzich 2017; on influences on other national languages, see Ganslmayer, Glück, and Solms 2021).

Initially, as Hans Sachs said, Luther’s Bible translation contributed significantly to the success of the religious Reformation.²³ It is believed that “a copy could be found in 10% of homes by 1533, and in 40% by 1546,” and until well into the eighteenth century, the Bible was “the only book in most Protestant households” (Polenz 2000, 235).²⁴ All alone and hidden from

²¹ “Ich danck Gott, das ich yn deutscher zungen meynen gott alßo höre und finde, als ich und sie mit myr alher nit funden haben, Widder in lateynischer, krichscher noch hebreischer zungen. Gott gebe, das dißer puchleyn mehr an tag kumen, ßo werden wyr finden, das die Deutschen Theologen an zweyffell die beßten Theologen seyn, Amen.”

²² On the history of the Bible, cf. Barton 2021; on Luther’s translation in particular, see Reinitzer 1983; Füssel 2012.

²³ On Luther’s Bible translation, see Volz 1972; Blanke 2017, 298–305; on the revisions, see Sonderegger 1998; Jahr, Kähler, and Lesch 2019; a survey of research is provided by Ganslmayer 2018.

²⁴ “1533 in jedem 10. Haushalt, um 1546 in jedem 2,5. Haushalt ein Exemplar vorhanden gewesen”; “in den meisten protestantischen Familien das einzige Buch.” Cf. also Bentzinger and Kettmann 1983; Wolf 1980, 151–52.

his opponents, like Jerome in his cell, Luther translated the New Testament (later known as the September Testament) from Greek into German. His base texts were the Vulgate and Erasmus's *Novum Testamentum*, the second edition of which had appeared just a few years before, in 1519. The first printing of 3,000 copies of the September Testament, without ascription to the translator, was sold out in weeks (Wolf 1996, 139), and a second printing appeared in December. And yet, Luther's German translation was not, as is commonly assumed, the first. It stands in a tradition of countless partial translations and at least eighteen previous full Bibles such as the Zainer Bible (Augsburg, 1477), Anton Koberger's Nuremberg Bible (1483), and the Low German Halberstadt Bible (also 1522; Sonderegger 1998, 245). In contrast to Luther's translation, however, these translations were not part of a Reformation movement and thus part of an influential public discourse. Their communicative function was quite different, intended more as aids for those reading and interpreting the Vulgate in Latin, and hence more or less focused on the Latin source language and committed to translating word for word (cf., on the translation principles followed, Gardt 1992, and especially Ganslmayer 2018; Ganslmayer and Karner 2021; Lobenstein-Reichmann 2021). The September Testament included only the New Testament and was therefore not the first full German Bible. That was Johann Mentel's Bible (known as the Mentel Bible), published in Strasbourg in 1466. Luther's own full Bible translation appeared in 1534, the Swiss in fact having beaten him to it with their Zurich Bible (published by Froschauer, 1531).

It was the distribution of the September Testament that was the great achievement. Access to the word of God was democratized. As Luther had written in the preface, the "simple man" was to be "guided out of his former confusion onto the right path, and taught," so that he could know "not laws and regulations, but the gospel and promise of God" (September Testament, 1; see Figure 1).²⁵

Luther confronts the Catholic Church with the Scriptures, as a guide that will lead it and all believers out of legalistic religion to the promise of the gospel. He translates the New Testament first in accord with his theology of justification based on Christ alone (*solus Christus*), by which all trust is put in Christ and God's mercy. Redemptive righteousness, or justification (*iustificatio*), is achieved according to Luther solely through faith (*sola fide*) and God's grace (*sola gratia*). Obeying laws or performing good deeds is ineffective. With the principle of *sola scriptura*, Luther lays the foundation for the priesthood of all believers, qualifying them to communicate directly

²⁵ "eynfeltige man" ... "sey nem alten wahn / auff die rechte ban gefuhret vnd unterrichtet" ... "nicht gepot vnd gesetze suche / da er Euangeli vnd verheyssung Gottis suchen solt."

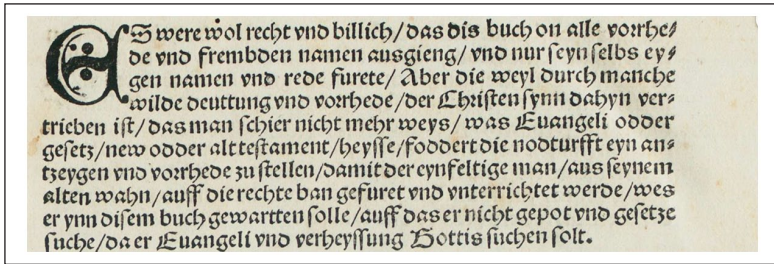


Figure 1. Extract from the preface to the September Testament. Thüringer Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Jena.

Source: https://collections.thulb.uni-jena.de/rsc/viewer/HisBest_derivate_00001574/BE_1086_0003.tif

with God, also providing the decisive legitimation for the Reformation. This is why most statues of Luther show him pointing to the Bible in his hand. The importance of this fundamental legitimation is hard to appreciate today, but this was the actual revolution. The Catholic Church's claim to official and mediatorial status was annulled, and believers with their personal faith now stood directly before their (hopefully) merciful God, with all the consequences that flowed from this.

In any case, Luther had now, by means of his translation, taken out of the hand of the Catholics both the word of God itself and any claim to exclusive rights over its discussion and interpretation. Clearly his contemporaries realized this, as we see from the flurry of competing translations that followed. Catholic translations were produced by Hieronymus Emser (New Testament 1527), Johannes Dietenberger (full Bible 1534), and most notably Johannes Eck (1537). Eck's Old Testament was based on that of Emser,²⁶ but that was not all. Luther took great satisfaction in the way his confessional opponents plagiarized his work. In his *Open Letter on Translating*, Luther complains about Emser's selling his New Testament translation "under his name" (*WA* 30/2:632), whilst still taking a certain secret pleasure in the fact. After all, those plagiarizing were thereby expressing respect for Luther's translation and recognizing that, as Luther himself wrote, "my German is sweet and good" (*WA* 30/2:632).²⁷ And yet none of these translations ever attained the same quality and fame as Luther's own had.

Even the Reformation-minded Swiss were not satisfied with Luther's translation, which had initially been reprinted in Basel and Zurich and had been well received. The circle of humanist Reformers and philologists around

²⁶ Cf. Sonderegger 1998, 272, where dependencies of the various editions are depicted graphically.

²⁷ "das mein deutsch susse und gut sey."

Huldrych Zwingli, such as Leo Jud and Konrad Pellikan (Himmighöfer 1995; Lobenstein-Reichmann 2022), started work on their own translations, which would express their own reading of the word of God. Luther reacted negatively:

Whilst Zwingli had written in the Preface (presumably attributable to him) to the 1531 Folio Bible [the first (Froschauer) edition of the Zurich Bible] that it is good to make use of various translations in order to be able to approach the source text from various perspectives, Luther was opposed to such a practice and despised the Zurich Bible as the work of heretics.²⁸ (Leu 2019, 32)

In contrast to Luther's translation in the seclusion of the Wartburg, the Zurich translation was a public undertaking. Like the seventy translators of the Septuagint, the Zurich translators had met five times a week since 1525 to translate the Scriptures together in the theological faculty of the Great Minster. The result is still appreciated today (Himmighöfer 1995, 302). The Zurich Bible of 1531, often known by the name of its publisher Froschauer, was the first full Bible in German since Mentel.

Luther and his team published their full Bible later, in 1534. Having produced the September Testament all but single-handedly in just eleven weeks, Luther was assisted in all subsequent revisions by Philip Melancthon, Caspar Cruciger, Matthäus Aurogallus, Justus Jonas, Georg Spalatin, and Georg Röhrer, and frequently also by the Hebraist Johann Forster. Gradually they translated and published the Pentateuch, then Jonah, Habakkuk, Zechariah, Isaiah, Wisdom, Daniel, Ecclesiasticus, and so on. Luther continued working on the translation until his death, or until his last authorized edition in 1545. These revisions and Luther's many writings on language, especially his *Open Letter on Translating* and *Notes on the Psalms and Reasons for Translation*, allow us to look over his shoulder in the revision process (most recently, Ganslmayer and Karner 2021). There are doubtless many theological reasons for the success of Luther's translation in the face of much competition, such that it served in his time as a model, and exercised an influence on both German and other languages.²⁹ But alongside its systematic embedding in the Protestant movement is surely Luther's translation policy, language choice, and style.

²⁸ "Während Zwingli in der vermutlich von ihm verfassten Vorrede zur Folio-Bibel von 1531 schreibt, dass es nützlich sei, verschiedene Bibelausgaben zu benutzen, um sich dem Urtext von verschiedenen Seiten zu nähern, verwarf Luther ein solches Vorgehen und verabscheute die *Zürcher Bibel* geradezu als ein Werk von Häretikern."

²⁹ For example, William Tyndale (Göske 2015, 263).

Luther's Bible translation

The Bible was not Luther's first translation, but it is certainly his most well known, and it played an important role throughout his life. The Reformation was deeply marked by his translation choices and his distinctive way of reading, interpreting, and communicating the Bible's meaning.³⁰ His reading of Rom 1.17 ("Der Gerechte wird seines Glaubens leben" [The just will live by faith]),³¹ which had prompted the Reformation, remained central, alongside his hotly debated rendering of Rom 3.28 ("So halten wir es nu / Das der Mensch gerecht werde / on des Gesetzes werck / alleine durch den Glauben" [So we maintain / that a person becomes righteous / without works of the law / by faith alone]). The term *alleine* (alone) is, in fact, not present in the source texts, but Luther expands his translation in such a way as to justify the break from Catholic works-righteousness. In his *Open Letter on Translating* (1530), he responds to his opponents:

Here, in Rom 3[.28], I knew very well that the word *solum* is not in the Greek or Latin text; the papists did not have to teach me that. It is in fact these four letters s-o-l-a that are not there. And these blockheads stare at them like cows at a new gate. At the same time, they do not see that it conveys the sense of the text; it belongs there if the translation is to be clear and vigorous.³² (*WA* 30/2:636)

These few lines express Luther's translation principle. In line with normal expectations of language, he assumes that the gospel message is present in the text, and that the (Greek and Latin) languages are no more than necessary containers for the gospel. He had previously stated (in 1524),

We have no access to the gospel other than via the languages. The languages are the sheath containing the sword of the Spirit. They are the chest containing the treasure. ... And as the gospel itself says, they are the baskets containing this bread and fish and crumbs.³³ (*WA* 15:38)

³⁰ Cf. also the comments by Barton (2021, 490) on Luther's observations on reading the *Novum Testamentum*.

³¹ Quoted from Luther's translation of 1545; on Rom 1.17 and freedom theology from a linguistic perspective, see Lobenstein-Reichmann 1997, 53.

³² "Also habe ich hie Roma. 3. fast wol gewist, das ym Lateinischen und krigischen text das wort 'solum' nicht stehet, und hetten mich solchs die papisten nicht dürffen leren. War ists. Dise vier buchstaben s o l a stehen nicht drinnen, welche buchstaben die Eselsköpff ansehen, wie die kü ein new thor. Sehen aber nicht, das gleichwol die meinung des text ynn sich hat, und wo mans wil klar und gewaltiglich verteutschen, so gehoret es hinein, denn ich habe deutsch, nicht lateinisch noch kriegisch reden wöllen, da ich teutsch zu reden ym dolmetzschen furgenomen hatte" (English translation by Charles M. Jacobs in Bachmann 1960, 188).

³³ "Das wyr das Euangelion nicht wol werden erhallten on die sprochen. Die sprochen sind die scheyden, darynn dis messer des geyfts sticket. Sie sind der schreyen, darynnen man dis

These linguistic “baskets” containing the nutritious “fish” each need to be understood with their own distinctive features. Luther says one needs to learn not only Latin, but the Bible’s original languages, Hebrew and Greek, too, so that one can read the Bible in the original (*ad fontes*, as the humanists said). The Bible as God’s word would then explain itself. He himself had used the Hebrew and Greek source texts extensively, not slavishly “word for word” (*WA* 38:13),³⁴ but seeking a balance between the source and target languages. In the *Notes on the Psalms*, he comments on his translation principles: “Sometimes we kept strictly to the original wording, and sometimes we just rendered the meaning” (*WA* 38:17).³⁵ Usually, he gave priority to the meaning over the words: “As any schoolteacher would say, the words should serve the meaning, not vice versa” (*WA* 38:11).³⁶ Whilst other translations render word for word, leaving the source language visible (e.g., the Zurich Bible), Luther adapts, seeking to replace the elements of the source text with those of the target language in such a way that the source language is no longer identifiable. The translation then reads, as Werner Koller writes (1998, 211), “as if the text had been written by a German.”³⁷ Whenever Luther does not succeed in achieving this, which he says requires a measure of luck (*WA* 11:431), and when he is unable to express certain finer semantic nuances of the source text in German such that they are “clear” and “effective,” he stays close to the source text.³⁸ In the *Notes on the Psalms and Reasons for Translation*, he writes,

On the other hand, 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 hast led captivity captive,” it would have been good German to say, “Thou has set the captives free.” But this is too weak, and does not convey the fine, rich meaning of the Hebrew, which says literally, “Thou has led captivity captive.” This does not imply merely that Christ freed the captives, but also that he captured and led away captivity itself, so that it never again could or would take us captive again; thus it is really an eternal redemption. ... Therefore, out of respect for such doctrine, and for the comforting

kleinod tregt. ... Und wie das Euangelion felbs zeygt, Sie find die körbe, darynnen man dife brot und filche und brocken behellt.”

³⁴ “stracks den Worten.”

³⁵ “das wir zu weilen die wort fleiff behalten, zu weilen allein den finn gegeben haben.”

³⁶ “Wie denn alle Schulmeister lernen, das nicht der finn den worten, fondern die wort dem finn dienen und folgen follen.”

³⁷ “wie wenn ein deutscher Autor den Text als Original verfasst hätte.” A word-for-word translation, by contrast, comments, adds footnotes, expands the text even with explanations, to expose the gulf that exists between the source and target languages and at the same time bridge it (Koller 1998, 211).

³⁸ Cf. Stolt 1981; Lobenstein-Reichmann 2017 (fn. 16) and 2020 (fn. 44).

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.³⁹ (*WA* 38:13)

Thus “Luther’s translation principle is at the same time theologically correct (in line with his exegesis), theologically beautiful, and communicative. It takes the believer seriously as a feeling and thinking person and gives him or her space for inner reflection” (Lobenstein-Reichmann 2021, 271).⁴⁰ In contrast to the pre-Reformation Bible translations with their strict adherence to the source language and hence unclear word-for-word renderings, Luther translates freely and meaning-based, with a view to function, audience, and the target language. His translation practice prioritizes comprehension and influence. As his comment on Rom 3.28 shows, he seeks to provide a translation that focuses on the target language and is understood by his contemporaries “clearly” and “effectively.” The adjective “effective” (*gewaltiglich*) is particularly telling. Here it means “influential, powerful” (cf. the entry in *FWB*) with respect to the hearer/reader and his or her actions. Luther wants all people not only to clearly understand the Scriptures, but to be emotionally engaged and, through the influence of the Scriptures, moved to seek the “promise of God” (see above in the preface to the September Testament).

Luther is ever conscious of the three traditional offices of rhetoric, by which a speaker should teach (*docere*), move emotionally (*movere*), and please with his style of language (*delectare*). He knew too that, to engage people with communication, one needs to speak their language. This means both the linguistic structures and their idiom, their everyday way of speaking. Such a focus on communication and audience was of course not new,⁴¹

³⁹“Widderumb haben wir zu weilen auch stracks den worten nach gedolmetscht, ob wirs wol hetten anders und deudlicher können geben, Darumb, das an den selben worten etwas gelegen ist, als hie im .xviij. vers: ‘Du bist jnn die höhe gefaren und hast das gefengnis gefangen,’ Hie were es wol gut Deudsch gewest: ‘Du hast die gefangenen erlöset,’ Aber es ist zu schwach und gibt nicht den feinen reichen sinn, welcher jnn dem Ebreischen ist, da es sagt: ‘Du hast das gefengnis gefangen,’ Welchs nicht allein zu verstehen gibt, das Christus die gefangen erledigt hat, Sondern auch das gefengnis also weggefurt und gefangen, das es uns nimer mehr widderumb fangen kan noch sol, und ist so viel als eine ewige erlösung. ... Darumb müssen wir zu ehren solcher lere und zu trost unsers gewissens solche wort behalten, gewonen und also der Ebreischen sprachen raum lassen, wo sie es besser macht, denn unser Deudsche thun kann” (English translation by E. Theodore Bachmann in Bachmann 1960, 216).

⁴⁰“Luthers Übersetzungsweise ist theologisch korrekt (im Sinne seiner Auslegung), theologisch-ästhetisch und kommunikativ-pragmatisch zugleich. Sie nimmt die Gläubigen als fühlende wie denkende Menschen ernst und lässt ihnen dabei Raum für innere Reflexion.”

⁴¹ Cf., e.g., Ringmann (1507, IIv): “Every language needs its own rules and norms as to what sounds good rather than particularly bad” (“Es erforderet ein iedlich gezüng / und

but Luther's consistent pursuit of these principles in translating the most important book of Christendom, together with the foundational character of this policy for the Reformation movement and the explosive power of its interpretations of the text, made it incontrovertibly revolutionary. But admirers and critics are then divided. For some, Luther's work is the expression of the highest linguistic sensitivity and genius. For others, it simply shows him to be boorish. Luther had himself said of his translation strategy "that one should ask the common man at the market, and see what he says" (*WA* 30/2:637).⁴² And it was this commitment to "the German of uneducated lay people" (*WA* 6:203)⁴³ that provided fuel for his critics. Luther's contemporary, the Mainz theologian Georg Witzel, mocks Luther for having translated "everything with the most common form of German / that he hears every day at table from the average Joe / and researches in women's boudoirs" (cited in Gelhaus 1989, 80).⁴⁴ Even the linguistic historian Arno Schirokauer (1986, 214) takes exception to the thought that "the disciples of Christ speak like peasants; so that peasants as they read can see themselves in the apostles."⁴⁵ He finds Luther's language "boorish, the jargon of the sweaty masses."⁴⁶ By contrast, Albrecht Beutel (2001, 96) calls the September Testament a work of genius. And Heiko Oberman (1987, 318) explains Luther's success:

This translation has had a formative influence on High German. But that is just why it has become a true common-man's Bible and has carried the Reformation message into every home, because Luther used living colloquial language for his translation. He really did "see what the common people say"—he did not consider the common man's language as too shabby for the words of God.⁴⁷

sprach iren eignen lauff und fůrgang / wann es etwas formlich syn / vnd nitt sunder vbel luten soll").

⁴² "dass man dem gemeinen man auff dem marckt drumb fragen, und den selbigen auff das maul sehen soll."

⁴³ "deutsch der ungeleretenn layen."

⁴⁴ "alles mit dem aller gemeinsten deudsch / wie ers teglich vber disch von den welthanen horet / vnd jm frauen zimmer erforschet."

⁴⁵ "Jůnger Christi reden wie Bauern; so dađ die Bauern beim Lesen sich selbst in den Aposteln wiedererkennen."

⁴⁶ "grobianisch, der Jargon gārender Unterschichten."

⁴⁷ "Diese ősbersetzung hat die hochdeutsche Sprache geprāgt. Sie ist aber deshalb eine echte Volksbibel geworden und hat die Sache der Reformation in jedes Haus getragen, weil Luther die lebendige Umgangssprache fůr seine ősbersetzung genutzt hat. Er hat tatsāchlich 'dem Volk aufs Maul geschaut,' die Sprache des gemeinen Mannes war ihm nicht zu schābig fůr die Sprache Gottes."

Luther's language

Linguists do not agree on exactly whose language Luther uses for his translation. Clearly the language that Luther “placed in the mouths of the apostles”⁴⁸ (Schirokauer 1986, 207) is not that of the Low German peasants, even though it was their idiom that predominated in Wittenberg in Luther's time. It is also not the East Middle German of the Saxon Chancery in Dresden, as is often understood from the frequently cited quotation from the *Table Talk*: “I have no special, unusual, or distinctive German, but use common German, so that both High and Low German speakers can understand me. I speak as the Saxon Chancery, as do all Princes and Kings in Germany” (*WA TR* 1:523).⁴⁹ Luther means the Wittenberg Chancery of his own Prince-Elector, and by explicitly identifying this, he shows that he is aware of a broader common German idiom. Luther hated the “Meissen dialect” (*Meißnisch*) of the Dresden Chancery, as East Middle German was known in his time (*WA TR* 4:605; cf. Polenz 1990, 220). He himself was seen there, in the view of his contemporary from Meissen, Johannes Mathesius, as a “foreigner” (*außlander*; Mathesius 1566, 159).

Luther's relationship to chancery officials is, however, also clouded by his insulting them elsewhere as patchwork preachers and wretched writers.⁵⁰

Besides, no one pays attention to speaking real German. This is especially true of the people in the chancelleries, as well as those patchwork preachers and wretched writers. They think they have the right to change the German language and to invent new words for us every day. ... Yes, my dear fellow, there are [and this is] also *bethoret* [foolish] and *ernarret* [preposterous].⁵¹ (*WA DB* 8:32)

Considering the types of text that were written in the chanceries, Luther's translation of the Bible with all its complexities can hardly be expected to have kept to the model of a formal chancery style specializing in administrative and juristic texts. Rather, he translated “in conscious opposition to

⁴⁸ “Aposteln in den Mund legte.”

⁴⁹ “Ich habe keine gewilfe, fonderliche, eigene Sprache im Deutchen, sondern brauche der gemeinen deutchen Sprache, daß mich beide, Ober- und Niederländer verstehen mögen. Ich rede nach der sächsischen Canzeley, welcher nachfolgen alle Fürften und Könige in Deutchland.”

⁵⁰ Interestingly, in contrast to the praise of the Saxon Chancery in the *Table Talk*, this quotation is demonstrably from Luther himself.

⁵¹ “Es achtet auch niemant recht deutsch zu reden, sonderlich der herrn Canceleyen vnd die lumpen prediger, vnd puppen schreyber, die sich lassen duncken, sie haben macht deutsche sprach zu endern vnd tichten vns teglich neue wortter, ... ia lieber man, es ist wol bethoret vnd ernarret dazu” (English translation by Charles M. Jacobs, revised by E. Theodore Bachmann, in Bachmann 1960, 250).

the artificial written style of the Chancery clerks, paid scribes, and many academics" (Polenz 2000, 231; cf. also Wolf 1980, 19, 24, 46).⁵² He writes according to genre, addressee, and intended function, in the distinct style appropriate to polemical treatises, biblical exegesis, sermons in Wittenberg Church, or private letters of condolence to friends in need. He not only mastered all the linguistic and social registers of Early New High German, he also used them all. One could even say that Luther himself is the best proof that Early New High German possessed a fully developed written form, not yet harmonized (e.g., with respect to orthography), but nonetheless effective for communication in every sphere of life. This is demonstrated by the reception history of both the Bible and of the three treatises of 1520 (*Address to the Christian Nobility* in *WA* 6:196–276; *Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* in *WA* 6:484–573; *On the Freedom of a Christian* in *WA* 7:12–38).

Appropriateness, clarity, and influence

Luther's stated translation principles of *appropriateness*, *clarity*, and *influence* have frequently been questioned by historical linguists. Until recently, a particular paradigm in language geography predominated, which, on the one hand, projected the modern distinction between standard language and dialect back into a time when there was no linguistic standard, and on the other, overestimated the influence of East Middle German dialect in Luther's Bible translation. It was assumed that Luther's success was due to his using the East Middle German *koine* that was centrally placed between Low German to the north and High German to the south (Besch 2008, 135), and that he had consciously selected from this dialect to ensure that expressions he chose were understood as widely as possible (Besch 2000, 1724). The few examples frequently cited in the literature (most recently in Günther 2017, 86), an obviously unconvincing sample given the total size of the corpus, turn out quite quickly to be problematic.

If Luther had really been concerned for a transregional impact, it is said, he would not have used the Middle and North German form *lippe* (lip), but the more widely known form *lefze* (see Figures 2 and 3). And yet in fact, Luther knew and used both variants:

O gott, erlobe meine seel von den triglichen *lippen*, das ist, falschen leeren. (*WA* 1:218)

O God, save my soul from deceptive lips [here metaphorical], that is, false teachings.

⁵² "im bewußten Gegensatz zur gekünstelten schreibsprachlichen Formulierungsweise der Kanzleibeamten, Lohnschreiber und vieler Gelehrter."

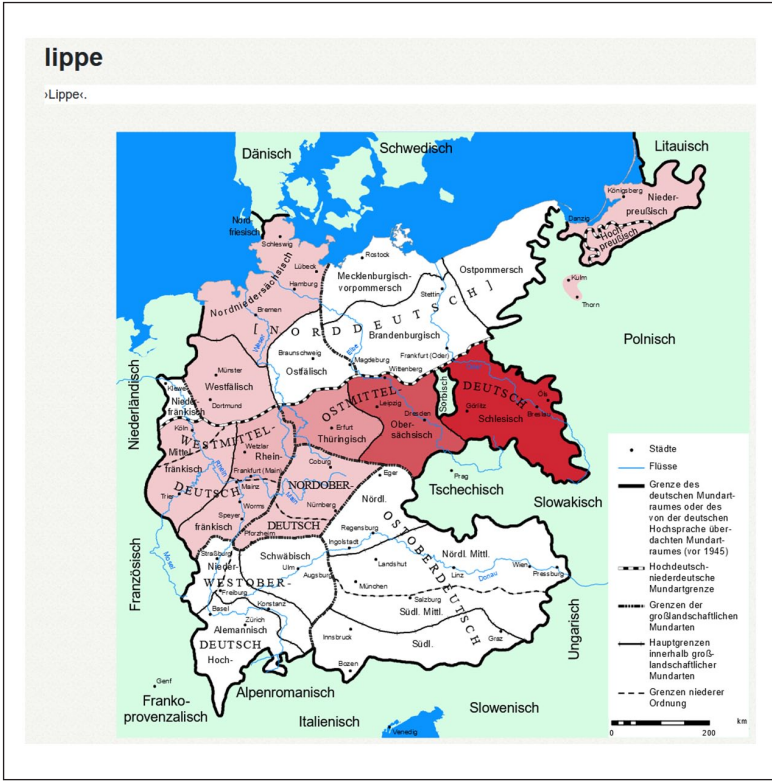


Figure 2. Geographic distribution of the term *lippe*, as attested in *FwB*.
 Source: <https://fwb-online.de/analyse/lemma/lippe.h1.lf/?q=lippe&page=1#/gesamt/karte>

Behüte deine Zunge für bösem / Vnd deine Lippen / das sie nicht falsch reden.
 (Hl. Schrift, Ps 34,14)

Keep your tongue from evil / And your lips / lest they speak wrongly.

Jch will mit meinen *lebszen* erzelen all rechte deines mundes. (WA 31/1:5)
 I will recount with my lips all the pronouncements of your mouth.

Dises volck nahet sich herzu mit den *lebsen*, aber jr hertz ist ferne von mir. (WA 31/1:25)

This people comes close with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

The same is true of another frequently cited example, that is, the competition between the terms *peitsche* and *geißel* (whip). If Luther had wanted his translation to be understood as widely as possible, he should have



Figure 3. Geographic distribution of the term *lefze*, as attested in *FWB*.

Source: <https://fwb-online.de/analyze/lemma/lefze.s.lf/?q=lefze&page=1#/gesamt/karte>

chosen the term *geißel* rather than the borrowed term *peitsche*. But this is not all. Since Early New High German, the term *geißel* has been increasingly restricted to use in religious texts, whilst *peitsche* has become the everyday term.

These examples show that Luther was not interested in the dialectal origins of the words he chose, whether to choose the Upper German *gleichsnen* or the more East Middle German *heucheln* (to be a hypocrite), *fett* or *feist* (fat), *hügel* or *bühel* (hill), *lippe* or *lefze* (lip). In considering such alternatives, one must distinguish between, on the one hand, Luther's lexical starting point, his motives and method, and, on the other, the later effects of his choices. His Bible translation became a model for others' writing and exercised a wide influence, and that is most likely why it is the form *lippe* that

has become standard today. The term can surely not have been chosen with a view to wider communication and comprehension in Luther's own time.

Clarity. The idea that Luther's linguistically central location was advantageous to the wide readability of his translation is based on an understanding that regional varieties of Early New High German were not mutually intelligible. Werner Besch (2008, 145) explicitly claims there existed "barriers to comprehension" and that "Luther would have had difficulty communicating in Kiel or Konstanz" and "would probably have failed" (Besch 2000, 1717).⁵³ It is claimed that Luther's East Middle German Bible was "not easily understood in Upper German areas" (Himmighöfer 1995, 65).⁵⁴ But the premise to such statements is questionable. The claimed communicative limitations, or even borders, really do not correspond to the daily reality of the sixteenth century. Early New High German was marked by a great diversity of equally respected regional varieties without a universal standard, but cannot for that reason be qualified as deficient, as Luther's work itself demonstrates. Especially in written form, transregional communication was possible. How else could the Reformation's polemical pamphlets and tracts or Luther's treatises have been distributed so quickly? To describe dialectic diversity as a brake on linguistic development or communication is to project modern realities onto the past.

Linguistic diversity was normal for speakers of the time, and all the more for writers. The more accepted linguistic variety is, the more it is built into everyday life, and the greater the users' readiness to cooperate towards comprehension and their experience in achieving it. This applies to written texts in particular, but also of course to orality. It is noticeable that only a few counterexamples can be found, and these mostly in polemical contexts. Thus we hear Luther, particularly influenced by Mansfeld–Wittenberg Low German (Polenz 1990, 222), at the Marburg Colloquy mocking Zwingli's "threadbare, shabby German" (*WA* 26:374).⁵⁵ It had been decided to hold the Colloquy in German for the sake of Philipp of Hessen, who did not understand Latin. And yet this polemic outburst demonstrates only Luther's unease over the course of the negotiations, and says nothing about his comprehension of Zwingli's Alemannic dialect. Zwingli had refused to budge on the question of the Eucharist, such that Wittenberg and Zurich would now be going separate ways. On all other points, agreement had been reached, which demonstrates that the participants did in fact understand each other's German, even in oral discourse.

⁵³ "Verstehensbarrieren" ... "Luther in Kiel oder Konstanz ... sprachlich schwer getan" ... "wahrscheinlich gescheitert."

⁵⁴ "oberdeutschen Sprachraum auf Verständnisschwierigkeiten."

⁵⁵ "filtzicht zotticht Deutsch."

It is similarly easy to respond to appeals to the so-called Petriglossar, which the Basel printer Adam Petri appended to the 1524 reprint of the second edition of the September Testament.⁵⁶ This had likely been compiled by the Hebraist Konrad Pellikan, who had “noticed ... / that not everyone could understand certain words in this now thoroughly translated New Testament” (see Figure 4).⁵⁷ The resulting glossary contains 199 “foreign” (*ausländische*) words, which according to Petri or Pellikan need to be “shown in our German,”⁵⁸ that is, translated into Alemannic:

The New Testament thoroughly translated into German: With scholarly and correct prefaces ... An adequate index / in which one can find the epistle and gospel readings in this New Testament for the whole year. The foreign words shown in our German.⁵⁹ (Petriglossar, a viv)

If one is to believe this title and the wordlist, there are two forms of German—the writer's Alemannic (“our German” *unser teutsch*) and the language of Luther (qualified as “foreign” in the sense of “incomprehensible, alien” *unverständlich, fremd*; see the corresponding article in *FWB* at fwb-online.de). However, a glance in the Early New High German dictionary is sufficient to reveal that the purported unintelligibility or supposed alienation is just a marketing strategy by the publisher. Reichmann (2011, 423) shows what is really going on here: “The glossaries present expressions which one would not have used in Upper German, in particular in Switzerland, and what one did use is not included in the glossaries.”⁶⁰ Among the terms listed as not known in the West Upper German region is the verb *darben*, explained as meaning “to suffer need, poverty” (*not, armut leiden*). This is surprising, since according to *FWB* this word is attested in both of the given meanings long before Luther and especially in West Upper German, that is, in the Alemannic and Alsatian regions. Pellikan himself, who came from Alsace, should of all people have known the word. Given the large number of references in the mystical works of Tauler (Alsace, fourteenth century), Meister Eckhart (West Middle German, fourteenth

⁵⁶ It should be noted that Petri's father had come originally from Franconia (Kaufmann 2019, 232).

⁵⁷ “gemerckt ... / das nicht yederman verston mag ettliche wörtter im yetzt gründtlichen verteutschte(n) neuwen Testament.”

⁵⁸ “auff unser teutsch angezeigt.”

⁵⁹ “Das neww Testament recht gründtlich teütscht: Mit gantz gelerten und richtigen vorreden. ... Ein gnugsam Register / wo man die Epistlen und Evangelien des gantzen iars in disem Testament finde[n] sol. Die außlendige[n] wörtter auff unser teutsch angezeigt.”

⁶⁰ “Die Glossare bringen Ausdrücke, die man im Oberdeutschen, speziell in der Schweiz, nicht gebraucht hätte, und das, was man brauchte, steht nicht in den Glossaren.”

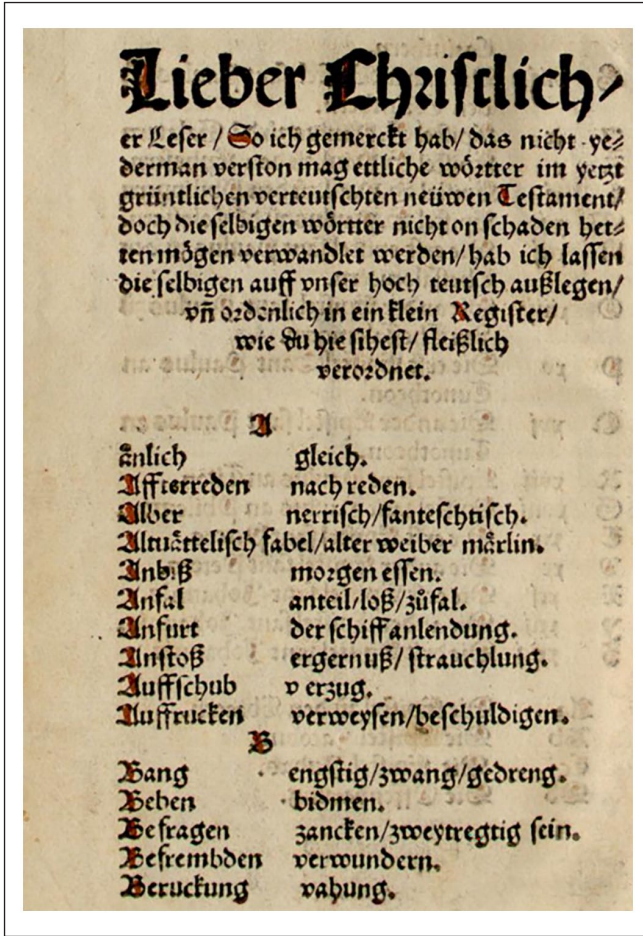


Figure 4. The first page of the Petriglossar with the purported reason for its inclusion in the reprint of Luther's September Testament.

Source: https://www.e-rara.ch/bau_1/content/zoom/774785

century), and Seuse (Alemannic, late thirteenth or early fourteenth century), one might even wonder whether it is actually the other way round—Luther here adopted a West Upper German word, which also occurs frequently in mystical texts (Lobenstein-Reichmann 2018, 40):

Tauler: Dise [lúte] nement ouch alle ding von Gotte glich, haben und darben, lieb und leit. (Vetter 1910, 69)

These people accept all things equally as from God—wealth and poverty, joy and suffering.

Alemannische Gnadenlehre: In söllichem darbenne vnd in dem tröstlösen innren armüte ist got aller nächest der sele. (Steer 1966, 5)

In such poverty and in inconsolable inner wretchedness, God is most close to the soul.

One might ask why Petri and Pellikan went to this trouble. It seems likely that the motive is to be found in sales and marketing, perhaps “a skillfully placed marketing ploy, with which the printer hoped to achieve certain advantages in the Upper German market” (Kaufmann 2019, 239).⁶¹ Whether this succeeded, we do not know. But subsequent editions soon replace the glossary with other appendices, such as maps of the Holy Land: “Even in his Reformation printings, Petri attempted by means of typographic additions such as marginal notes and improved features such as indexes to improve the convenience and attractiveness of his products for potential customers” (Kaufmann 2019, 238).⁶² What is suggested by this examination of the Petriglossar is then further confirmed by a check of the purportedly necessary adaptations of words within the later Swiss editions of Luther’s New Testament. The Zurich New Testament of 1524 replaces Luther’s word *pfeiler* (“pillar”; 1 Tim 3.15; cf. Figure 5) with *sul* (column) and the verbal noun *gedeyen* (“flourishing”; for the Vulgate’s *incrementum* in 1 Cor 3.7; cf. Figure 6) with *wachßen* (grow) and *zunemen* (increase). Here too, this has nothing to do with the terms being unknown in West Upper German. They can also be shown to have been known in the region (Lobenstein-Reichmann 2022, 85–91; for many further examples, see Himmighöfer 1995, 90–91).

Influence. No more need be said here about Luther’s influence on the Reformation. As for the influence of his vocabulary, Johannes Erben (1996, 141) writes, “In the area of the lexicon, the history of German words, Luther must be credited with a significant contribution.”⁶³ A look at the *FWB*

⁶¹ “eine geschickt platzierte Werbemaßnahme, mit der sich der Drucker gewisse Marktvorteile in Oberdeutschland zu verschaffen hoffte.”

⁶² “Auch bei seinen reformatorischen Drucken setzte Petri also darauf, durch typographische Zusatzleistungen wie Marginalien und verbesserte Ausstattungselemente wie Register den Benutzungskomfort und die Attraktivität seiner Arbeiten für potentielle Kunden zu steigern.”

⁶³ “Im Bereiche des Lexikons, der deutschen Wortgeschichte, wird man Luther einen nicht unbedeutenden Anteil zuerkennen müssen.”

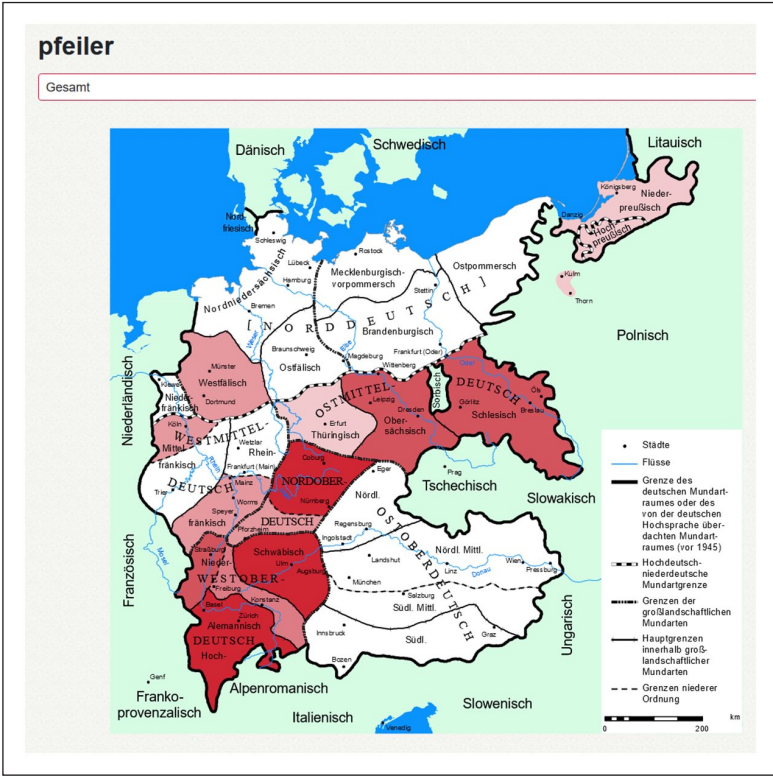


Figure 5. Geographic distribution of the term *pfeiler*, as attested in *FWB*
 Source: <https://fwb-online.de/analyse/lemma/pfeiler.s.0m/?q=pfeiler&page=1#/gesamt/karte>

reveals, however, that many words usually traced to Luther were in fact already long known. The term *bluthund* (bloodhound) is attested at least since 1506, *mördergrube* (“den of murderers”; Günther 2017, 93) in the fourteenth century, and *richtschnur* (guiding principle) in the fifteenth century. Thus Luther himself stands within traditions of German language use.

As has already been hinted at in our discussion of the term *darben* (Lobenstein-Reichmann 2018), his language has roots especially in mystical literature. But in contrast to the philosophical texts of mysticism, Luther adapts terms such as *Eindruck*, *Einbildung*, *Einfluß*, *Einfall*, *einleuchten*, *verzücken*, *anschaulich*, *unbegreiflich*, and *wesentlich* (“impression,” “imagination,” “influence,” “notion,” “be revealed,” “enrapture,” “clear,” “inconceivable,” and “essential,” respectively; Polenz 2000, 234)



Figure 6. Geographic distribution of the term *gedeihen*, as attested in FWB.

Source: <https://fwb-online.de/analyse/lemma/gedeihen.s.3vu/?q=gedeihen&page=1#!/gesamt/karte>

to every-day life and popularizes them. Many of his proverbs and idioms are still in use today (Lobenstein-Reichmann 2014). In word formation, certain domains of terminology derive from the Reformation and Reformation discourses, or are made popular by them. Among these are emphatic formations with the prefix *durch-* (through), such as *durchwülen* (to rummage through), which may be cited as an example of Luther's legendary use of metaphor (cf. Lobenstein-Reichmann 2017, 132):

I was perfectly ready to offer a spiritual and well-founded lesson, but no sooner nor later than I had sufficiently researched and rummaged through [*durchwüelt*] the Scriptures.⁶⁴ (WA 18:456)

⁶⁴ "Das ich wol willens bin gewest, ein gotliche und bewerte lere zu geben, Aber nicht ehe, auch nicht weyter, denn so wir die schrifft genugsam erforschet und durchwüelt hetten."

Entire sets of terms bear traits of the Reformation, for example, from *götze* (idol): *götzenanschlag*, *götzengrube*, *götzenbild*, *götzendiener*, *götzendienst*, *götzengeschlecht*, *götzenhirte*, *götzenkalb*, *götzenkirche*, and *götzenknecht* (“attack on idols,” “den of idolatry,” “idol statue,” “idolator,” “idolatry,” “brood of idols,” “idol-shepherd,” “idol-calf,” “idol-church,” and “idol-servant,” respectively). One should also note the compounds of the Reformation word *gnade* (grace): *gnadenlicht*, *gnadenpredigt*, *gnadenschrein*, *gnadenstul*, *gnadenblick*, *gnadenhimel*, *gnadenflügel*, *gnadendeckel*, *gnadenrecht*, *gnadenrock*, *gnadenvater*, *gnadengeist*, *gnadenmittel*, *gnadentron*, *gnadenwal*, *gnadenwort*, *gnadenreich*, and *gnadenzeichen* (“light of grace,” “grace sermon,” “grace casket,” “seat of grace,” “look of grace,” “grace-heaven,” “grace-wing,” “grace covering,” “right to grace,” “grace robes,” “Father of grace,” “Spirit of grace,” “means of grace,” “throne of grace,” “election by grace,” “word of grace,” “rich in grace,” and “sign of grace,” respectively).

Many new compound nouns are formed in the course of the Reformation media event and the related public discourse, since such terms represented powerful arguments in the verbal struggle for Reformation truth. Luther was usually the initiator of theological and polemical argumentation. He provided the occasion for the debate, set the key terms to be used, and defined their meaning. The Nordhausen teacher Michael Neander recommends that all who have to preach in German should get used to using “particular terms of Reverend Luther, and especially his wonderful Bible translation”⁶⁵ (cited in Josten 1976, 105). Even when public discourse concerned theological matters, it was the way in which one debated that was most important. By means of his polemic texts, pamphlets, and tractates, Luther made a significant contribution to the development of an influential public culture of communication and debate (Polenz 2000, 229).

And yet this vocabulary stemmed less from the religious genre of the Bible than from profane genres. It is striking, in fact, how many different genres Luther used—far more than just the Bible or sociopolitical tractates and pamphlets. There are two versions of the catechism, the didactic theological tractates, the approximately 2,000 (extant) sermons, his rules for church order, his administrative texts, not least his fables and thirty-seven hymns. His contribution to the German language was this diverse. He particularly left his mark on word meanings, for example, everyday words such as *lächeln* (to smile), *einsam* (lonely), *narr* (fool), and, of course, programmatic theological terms such as *gerechtigkeit* (justice), *gnade* (grace), *freiheit* (freedom), *freier Wille* (free will), or the term *legende* (legend), which

⁶⁵ “sich an gewisse wort vnd fürnehmlich an die herrliche Version Reverendi viri Lutheri.”

he used in order to disparage others' claims to truth. The *gnadheinz* (grace fanatics), as the Lutherans were mockingly known, opposed what they saw as the idolatry of the Catholics and in the process taught believers an idiom to use in worshipping and speaking of God. The Catholic counter-polemic adopted these terms and thus contributed greatly to the common understanding of theological terminology, which was to prove highly influential in this debate over truth expressed in words, affecting everyone. Luther was acutely conscious of the power of words and of how the struggle over truth depended on semantics, especially the meaning of particular debated terms. And he knew that he himself was sometimes rather biting and coarse:

I was born to fight with mobs and devils, which is why my books tend to be tempestuous and bellicose. I must dig out the stump and the root, cut back thorns and hedges, and fill in the puddles. I am the coarse log-trimmer, who must clear and prepare the way.⁶⁶ (*WA* 30/2:68–69)

In his open letter to Pope Leo of 1520, he defends his harshness, his “biting” words against his opponents “because of their unchristian teaching and for self-defence,”⁶⁷ and makes appeal to Christ, “who too, in his great zeal, calls his opponents a brood of vipers, hypocrites, blind, sons of the devil. ... What is the use of salt if it does not sting? What is the use of a sword blade if it is not sharp enough to cut?” (*WA* 7:4).⁶⁸

Luther's influence can be seen in how he enriched the vocabulary of the “common man” (*gemeiner Mann*) with theological terms and new meanings, in how he thus provided the tools to think and talk about theological issues, and in how he brilliantly adopted the traditional language of the mystics and introduced this high-brow and often very sophisticated idiom into common vocabulary.

Appropriateness. What is most distinctive in the language of Luther's Bible translation? It is the way the translator masters all registers and uses them appropriately for the context. For his Bible translation, Luther uses the language of common people, but then also that of profound philosopher-mystics such as Johannes Tauler and Meister Eckhart. His preaching stood in the tradition of the German popular preachers Berthold of Regensburg,

⁶⁶ “Ich bin dazu geboren, das ich mit den rotten und teuffeln mus kriegen und zu felde ligen, darumb meiner bücher viel stürmisch und kriegisch sind. Ich mus die klötze und stemme ausrotten, dornen und hecken weg hawen, die pfützen ausfullen und bin der grobe waldrechter, der die ban brechen und zurichten mus.”

⁶⁷ “umb yhrer unchristlichen lere und schutzs willen.”

⁶⁸ “der auch seyne widdersacher auß ... scharffer embickeyt nennet schlangen kinder, gleyßner, blinden, des teuffels kinder. ... Was soll aber das salcz, wenn es nit scharff beysset? Was soll die schneyde am schwerdt, wen sie nit scharff ist zu schneyden?”

David of Augsburg, and, again, Tauler and Eckhart. Luther's "vibrant verbal style, with apostrophe, dialogic structures such as question and answer, free syntax, ellipses, abrupt breaking-off of sentences, modal particles, and proverbs comes from his affinity, less with the book-learned, and more with local priests in their daily parish life, talking with people in their own language about God and the world" (Polenz 2000, 230).⁶⁹ The translation history of Gen 1.1 demonstrates how naturally Luther was able to combine philosophy and simplicity. From the start, he was caught between two alternatives. Initially, he did not have the "Spirit of God" hovering over the waters, but used the word *wind* (wind) in his 1528 edition, in accordance with the Latin *spiritus*. By doing so, he was alluding to the etymology of *spiritus* as derived from *spirare* (to breathe, to blow). Luther's explanation shows what it means for him to "see what the common people say" and thereby, surely, also to see what they feel (Stolt 2000, 55):

Where the depths were, there was not yet any light, but the wind or spirit of God is hovering over the water. In Hebrew, wind and spirit are one word, and you can understand it as you wish. If it means a wind, then it is the air weaving in and out among itself over the depths. But if you want to call it a spirit, you can do so, since I cannot make a distinction. It would be nice for it to mean spirit, as one could then understand it as God taking the creation he had made under himself like a hen pulls an egg under itself to brood a chick. But still, I would rather leave it as it is, as a wind, so that the three persons of the Deity will appear properly one after the other.⁷⁰ (*WA* 24:27; cf. also *WA* 47:29)

He had already used the image of the chick and the hen in his 1522 St. Stephen's Day sermon (December 26), to communicate graphically to his hearers that one cannot be saved by good works, but that one must seek refuge under the wings of the mother hen, Christ:

⁶⁹ "lebendige sprechsprachliche Stilistik, mit Anreden, dialogischen Formen wie Frage und Antwort, mit großer Freiheit der Wortstellung, mit Ellipsen, Anakoluthen, Modalpartikeln, Sprichwörtern, ist daraus zu erklären, daß er sich als Geistlicher weniger mit den Buchgelehrten als mit den Priestern des praktischen Gemeindelebens verbunden fühlte, die mit den Leuten über Gott und die Welt in deren Sprache redeten."

⁷⁰ "Wo die tieffe war, da war noch kein liecht, sondern der wind odder geist Gottes schwebet auff dem wasser. Ynn der Ebreischen sprache ist wind und geist gleich ein name, und magst es hie nemen wie du wilt: Wenn es ein wind heyst, so ists das, das die lufft untereinander her webet auff der tieffe, wie sie pfliget, Wiltu es aber ein geist heysen, so magstu es auch thün, denn ich weys es nicht eben zu örtern, Aber fein were es, das es geist hiesse, so künd mans also verstehen, das Gott die Creatur, die er geschaffen hatte, unter sich genomen habe, wie eine henne ein eye unter sich nympt und das hülin ausbrüt. Doch ich wil es lieber also lassen bleiben, das es ein wind heysse, Denn ich wolt gerne, das die drey Person ynn der Gottheit hie ördenlich nach einander angezeyget würden."

Christ is said to be such a mother hen, so that we are kept in faith under him and through his righteousness. Hence this Psalm explains the wings and shoulders, saying that his truth (that is, the Scriptures, received by faith) is breastplate and shield against all fear and danger. We must see Christ in this text and teaching and be bound to him with a firm faith that he is truly as it is said of him here. Thus we too are safely under his wings and his truth, and are well kept there. So the gospel is his wings or truth.⁷¹ (*WA* 10/1/1:284)

The agrarian metaphor of Christ as a mother hen communicates to the reader a tangible *comfort, protection, tenderness, and motherly attention*. In this quotation, this is taken up with the further metaphors of *wings, shield, and breastplate*. Luther adapts not only his imagery but even his syntax to his hearers. It is clear and to the point, but never jargon or slang (Schildt 1978, 47–59). Luther prefers simple short sentences in parallel or in sequence and uses Hebraisms deliberately to achieve a kind of religious alienation (Hartweg 2001, 285). In his Bible translation he thereby created a religious style (Stolt 2000, 112) appropriate to the word of God, which hallowed it and yet remained intelligible. Even if many of these distinctive features of Luther's language can be traced back to the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin source texts, they often achieve their sacral function specifically because of their presence within a German text. Stolt (2000, 112) demonstrates this with reference to the ritual particle “see” (*siehe*), which calls the reader to pay special attention at particular points in the Bible text (Gen 28.12; Matt 1.20; 3.13; etc.) and indicates that a key event in salvation history—an encounter with the godhead—is about to occur (as a “prophetic vision style”; Stolt 1980b, 312; 1981, 112). Sacred texts are those that are taken to transcend human existence, transcending life and death. This is not the current affairs of modern journalism, but universally applicable and eternal truths—the Holy, salvation history, and sanctification in an intermediate world that connects our banal humanity with the Christian metaphysical. The most basic stylistic feature is therefore myth and speaking and thinking in imagery (Lobenstein-Reichmann 2017, 128–29).

Luther himself put his trust in the gospel, that it would speak to people by itself and stand by them in life and death. In 1532 he wrote that the words of the gospel are “not just talk, but words of life, ‘which can stand against

⁷¹ “Christus eyn solch gluckhenne sey, das wyr ym glawben unter yhm unnd durch seyne gerechtickeyt behallden werden. Darumb der obgenante ps. die flugell und schultern selbs außlegt und sagt: Seyne warheytt (das ist die schrifft, ym glawben gefast) ist krebß und schild widder alle furcht und fahr; denn Christum müssen wyr ynn dem wort und predigt fassen unnd an demselben hangen mit eynem festen glawben, das er alßo sey, wie von yhm itzt gesagt ist, ßo sind wyr ynn demselben gewißlich unter seyner flugelln und warheytt, werden auch darunder wol behallden. Alßo ist ditz Euangelium seyner flugell oder warheytt.”

sin in life and death” (*WA* 36:131).⁷² Luther and the Wittenberg translators succeeded admirably in giving life to these words in German too. With a sometimes breathtaking literary style that is still always clear, they brought divine speech into harmony with the everyday experience of speaking and hearing people and their questions about life and death, the origins and meaning of creation and life, good and evil, justice and injustice, guilt and reconciliation. And yet Luther’s “great achievement in ecclesiastical idiom was not a new beginning but the culmination of long linguistic traditions in which he had grown up, which he adopted, and on which he drew with great mastery”⁷³ (Polenz 2000, 243). The resulting authoritative Bible text is of great importance in translation studies, in identity and group formation, and in shaping meaning. But above all, it contributed to the formation of a European Protestant community with common concepts and a common understanding, affecting their lifestyles, education, and society.

References

- Albrecht, Jörn. 2009. “Übersetzung.” Pages 870–86 in vol. 9 of *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*. Edited by G. Ueding. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Bachmann, E. Theodore, ed. 1960. *Luther’s Works, Vol. 35: Word and Sacrament I*. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg.
- Barton, John. 2021. *Die Geschichte der Bibel: Von den Ursprüngen bis in die Gegenwart*. Translated by Jens Hagedstedt and Karin Schuler. 3rd edition. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta. (Original: *A History of the Bible: The Book and Its Faiths*. London: Penguin, 2019)
- Bentzinger, Rudolf, and Gerhard Kettmann. 1983. “Zu Luthers Stellung im Sprachschaffen seiner Zeit (Anmerkungen zur Sprachverwendung in der Reformationszeit).” *Zeitschrift für Phonetik, Sprachwissenschaft und Kommunikationsforschung* 36: 265–75.
- Besch, Werner. 2000. “Die Rolle Luthers für die deutsche Sprachgeschichte.” Pages 1713–45 in vol. 2 of *Sprachgeschichte: Ein Handbuch zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und ihrer Erforschung*. Edited by Werner Besch, Anne Betten, Oskar Reichmann, and Stefan Sonderegger. Rev. edition. 2 vols. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- . 2001. “Bibelübersetzung im 16. Jahrhundert ohne kodifizierte Schriftsprache? Sprachregionalität in Deutschland als zusätzliches Übersetzungsproblem Luthers.” Pages 73–93 in *Bibelübersetzung heute: Geschichtliche Entwicklungen und aktuelle Herausforderungen*. Edited by W. Groß. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

⁷²“nicht Redewort, Bunder lebewort, *quae possunt stare in vita et morte contra peccatum.*”

⁷³“kirchensprachliche Leistung war kein Neuanfang, sondern der Kulminationspunkt langfristiger Sprachtraditionen, in denen er aufgewachsen, die er sich angeeignet, aus denen er mit großer Sprachmeisterschaft geschöpft hat.”

- . 2008. *Deutscher Bibelwortschatz in der frühen Neuzeit. Auswahl–Abwahl–Veralten*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- , Anne Betten, Oskar Reichmann, and Stefan Sonderegger, eds. 1998/2000. *Sprachgeschichte: Ein Handbuch zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und ihrer Erforschung*. Rev. edition. 2 vols. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Beutel, Albrecht. 1991. *In dem Anfang war das Wort: Studien zu Luthers Sprachverständnis. Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- . 2001. "Auf dem Weg zum Septembertestament (1522): Die Anfänge von Luthers Dolmetschung des Neuen Testaments." Pages 95–116 in *Bibelübersetzung heute: Geschichtliche Entwicklungen und aktuelle Herausforderungen*. Edited by W. Groß. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- Blanke, Heinz. 2017. "Bibelübersetzung." Pages 298–305 in *Luther Handbuch*. Edited by Albrecht Beutel. 3rd edition. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Burger, Christoph. 2014. "Luther's Thought Took Shape in Translation of Scripture and Hymns." Pages 481–88 in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*. Edited by Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and L'Ubomir Batka. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ebeling, Gerhard. 1951. "Die Anfänge von Luthers Hermeneutik." *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 48: 172–230.
- Ebert, Martin. n.d. "Martin Luther und die deutsche Sprache." <https://www.luther.de/kontext/sprache.html>.
- Erben, Johannes. 1985. "Luthers Bibelübersetzung." Pages 33–50 in *Martin Luther im Spiegel heutiger Wissenschaft*. Edited by Knut Schäferdiek. Bonn: Bouvier.
- . 1996. "Luther und die neuhochdeutsche Schriftsprache." Pages 136–45 in *Martin Luther im Spiegel heutiger Wissenschaft*. Edited by Knut Schäferdiek. Bonn: Bouvier.
- Füssler, Stephan. 2012. *Die Luther-Bibel von 1534: Eine kulturhistorische Einführung*. Cologne: Taschen.
- Ganslmayer, Christine. 2018. "Luther als Bibelübersetzer: Neue sprachwissenschaftliche Perspektiven für die Luther-Forschung." *Jahrbuch für germanistische Sprachgeschichte*: 55–105.
- , and Gerhard Karner. 2021. "Beim Übersetzen über die Schulter schauen: Historische Übersetzungsprozessforschung und Luthers Übersetzungsarbeit auf der Veste Coburg." Pages 227–59 in *Luthers Deutsch in Mittel- und Osteuropa*. Edited by Christine Ganslmayer, Helmut Glück, and Hans-Joachim Solms. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz.
- , Helmut Glück, and Hans-Joachim Solms, eds. 2021. *Luthers Deutsch in Mittel- und Osteuropa*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz.
- Gardt, Andreas. 1992. "Die Übersetzungstheorie Martin Luthers." *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 111: 87–111.
- Gelhaus, Hermann. 1989. *Der Streit um Luthers Bibelverdeutschung im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert: Mit der Identifizierung Friedrich Traubs*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Goebel, Ulrich, Anja Lobenstein-Reichmann, and Oskar Reichmann, eds. 1986—. *Frühneuhochdeutsches Wörterbuch*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

- Göske, Daniel. 2015. "‘The touchstone that trieth all doctrines’: Der eigentliche Sinn der Heiligen Schrift in frühen Übersetzungen Tyndales und Luthers." Pages 259–81 in *Eigentlichkeit: Zum Verhältnis von Sprache, Sprechern und Welt*. Edited by Claudia Brinker-von der Heyde. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Günther, Hartmut. 2017. *Mit Feuereifer und Herzenslust: Wie Luther unsere Sprache prägte*. Berlin: Bibliographisches Institut.
- Haas, Walter. 2017. "Etliche wörtly geenderet: Luthers Bibel und die Zürcher Bearbeitung." Pages 167–86 in *Martin Luther und die deutsche Sprache*. Edited by Norbert R. Wolf. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Hartmann, Charlotte, ed. 2015. *Hans Sachs: "Die Wittenbergisch Nachtigall."* Wolfenbüttel. <http://diglib.hab.de/edoc/ed000238/start.htm>.
- Hartweg, Frédéric. 2001. "Luthers Stellung in der sprachlichen Entwicklung: Versuch einer Bilanz." Pages 276–96 in *Martin Luther (1517–1526)*. Edited by Frédéric Hartweg. Strasbourg: Presses Univ. de Strasbourg.
- Himmighöfer, Traudel. 1995. *Die Zürcher Bibel bis zum Tode Zwinglis (1531): Darstellung und Bibliographie*. Mainz: P. von Zabern.
- Jahr, Hannelore, Christoph Kähler, and Jürgen-Peter Lesch, eds. 2019. *Die Revision der Lutherbibel 2017: Hintergründe–Kontroversen–Entscheidungen*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- Jonas, Justus. 1546. *Zwo Tröstliche Predigt Über der Leich Doct. Martini Luther zu Eissleben den XIX. und XX. Februarii gethan*. N.p.: Rhaw. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Zwo_Tr%C3%B6stliche_Predigt_Uber_der_Leich_D/fammz-FCY7IC?hl=en&gbpv=1 (Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek digital collection, BSB VD16 J 899).
- Josten, Dirk. 1976. *Sprachvorbild und Sprachnorm im Urteil des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts: Sprachlandschaftliche Prioritäten. Sprachautoritäten. Sprachimmanente Argumentation*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Kaufmann, Thomas. 2019. *Die Mitte der Reformation: Eine Studie zu Buchdruck und Publizistik im deutschen Sprachgebiet, zu ihren Akteuren und deren Strategien, Inszenierungs- und Ausdrucksformen*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Koller, Werner. 1998. "Übersetzungen ins Deutsche und ihre Bedeutung für die deutsche Sprachgeschichte." Pages 210–29 in vol. 1 of *Sprachgeschichte: Ein Handbuch zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und ihrer Erforschung*. Edited by Werner Besch, Anne Betten, Oskar Reichmann, and Stefan Sonderegger. Rev. edition. 2 vols. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Kurrelmeyer, Wilhelm, ed. 1904–1915. *Die erste deutsche Bibel* [Mentel Bible]. 10 vols. Tübingen.
- Leu, Urs. 2019. "Charakter und Bedeutung der Zürcher Reformation." Pages 12–36 in *Noli me nolle: Sammlung Johann Caspar Lavater, Jahresschrift*. Edited by Ursula Calfisch-Schnetzler. https://lavater.com/application/files/6515/6578/4061/2018_08_13_SlgJCL_2018_Jahresschrift_Inhalt_low_res.pdf.
- Lobenstein-Reichmann, Anja. 1998. *Freiheit bei Martin Luther: Lexikographische Textanalyse als Methode historischer Semantik*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- . 2001. "Vom Adel christlicher Freiheit." Pages 63–137 in *Martin Luther (1517–1526)*. Edited by Frédéric Hartweg. Strasbourg: Presses Univ. de Strasbourg.

- . 2004. "Wortbildung bei Martin Luther." Pages 69–97 in *Sprachwandel und Gesellschaftswandel—Wurzeln des heutigen Deutsch.* Edited by Klaus Mattheier and Haruo Nitta. Munich: Iudicium.
- . 2008. "Luther als Sprachreformer." Pages 85–94 in *Une Germanistique sans ravage: Mélanges en l'honneur de Frédéric Hartweg.* Edited by Emmanuel Béhague and Denis Goedel. Strasbourg: Presses Univ. de Strasbourg.
- . 2014. "Sprichwörter." Cols. 655–57 in *Das Luther-Lexikon.* Edited by Volker Leppin and Gury Schneider-Ludorff. Regensburg: Bückle & Böhm.
- . 2017. "Bible Translation and the German Language." Pages 117–41 in vol. 1 of *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Martin Luther.* Edited by Derek R. Nelson and Paul R. Hinlicky. 3 vols. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2018. "Mystische Wurzeln in Luthers Sprache." Pages 27–54 in *Sprache, Reformation, Konfessionalisierung.* Edited by Mechthild Habermann. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- . 2021. "Luthers Sprach- und Übersetzungsreflexionen." Pages 261–84 in *Luthers Deutsch in Mittel- und Osteuropa.* Edited by Christine Ganslmayer, Helmut Glück, and Hans-Joachim Solms. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz.
- . 2022. "Das Wort Gottes auf Deutsch: Zürcher und Luther-Bibel im Vergleich." Pages 81–104 in *Gelebte Reformation.* Edited by Francisca Loetz and Wolfram Schneider-Lastin. Zurich: TVZ.
- Luther, Martin. 1524. *Das Gantz Neüw testament recht grüntlich teutsch: Mit gar gelerten und richtigen vorreden und der schweresten örteren kurtz aber gut auslegung: Die auszlendigen wörter auff unser teutsch angezeigt.* Basel: Adam Petri.
- . 1883–2009. *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. 1. Abteilung: Schriften.* 73 vols. Weimar: Böhlau.
- . 1912–1921. *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. 2. Abteilung: Tischreden.* 6 vols. Weimar: Böhlau.
- . 1930–1985. *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. 4. Abteilung: Briefwechsel.* 18 vols. Weimar: Böhlau.
- . 2021. *Das Neue Testament Deutsch: Septembertestament.* Faksimile-Ausgabe. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- Mathesius, Johann. 1566. *Historien / Von des Ehrwürdigen in Gott Seligen thewren Manns Gottes / Doctoris Martini Luthers / anfang / lehr / leben und sterben / Alles ordentlich der Jarzal nach / wie sich alle sachen zu jeder zeyt haben zugetragen.* Nürnberg.
- Musseleck, Karl-Heinz. 1981. *Untersuchungen zur Sprache katholischer Bibelübersetzungen der Reformationszeit.* Heidelberg: Winter.
- Oberman, Heiko A. 1987. *Luther: Mensch zwischen Gott und Teufel.* Berlin: Siedler.
- Polenz, Peter von. 1990. "Luther und die Anfänge der deutschen Schriftlautung." Pages 185–96 in *Luthers Deutsch: Sprachliche Leistung und Wirkung.* Edited by Herbert Wolf. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- . 2000. *Deutsche Sprachgeschichte vom Spätmittelalter bis zur Gegenwart.* Vol. 1. 2nd edition. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Preisendörfer, Bruno. 2017. *Als unser Deutsch erfunden wurde: Reise in die Lutherzeit.* Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch.

- Redzich, Carola. 2005. "Mittelalterliche Bibelübersetzung und der Übersetzungsbegriff." Pages 259–78 in *Übertragungen: Formen und Konzepte von Reproduktion in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*. Edited by Britta Bussmann, Albrecht Hausmann, Annelie Krefzt, and Cornelia Logemann. Trends in Medieval Philology 5. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- . 2017. "Luthers langer Schatten: Teleologie und Typologie in der Forschungsgeschichte zur Bibelübersetzung." Pages 465–82 in *Luther—zeitgenössisch, historisch, kontrovers*. Edited by Richard Faber and Uwe Puschner. Berlin: Peter Lang.
- Reichmann, Oskar. 2003. "Die Entstehung der neuhochdeutschen Schriftsprache: Wo bleiben die Regionen?" Pages 25–56 in *Die deutsche Schriftsprache und die Regionen: Entstehungsgeschichtliche Fragen in neuer Sicht*. Edited by Raphael Berthele, Helen Christen, Sibylle Germann, and Ingrid Hove. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- . 2011. "Lexikalische Varianten im frühneuhochdeutschen Bibelwortschatz und die neuhochdeutsche Schriftsprache: Fakten und Reflexionen." Pages 383–478 in *Frühneuhochdeutsch: Aufgaben und Probleme seiner linguistischen Beschreibung*. Edited by Anja Lobenstein-Reichmann and Oskar Reichmann. Hildesheim: Olms.
- Reinitzer, Heimo. 1983. *Biblia deutsch: Luthers Bibelübersetzung und ihre Tradition*. Hamburg: Wittig.
- . 1985. "Die erste Gesamtausgabe der Bibelübersetzung Martin Luthers von 1534: Grundlegung und einigendes Band evangelischen Glaubens." Pages 137–54 in *Die neue Lutherbibel: Beiträge zum revidierten Text 1984*. Edited by Siegfried Meurer. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- Ringmann, Matthias. 1507. *Julius der erst römisch Keyser von seinem Kriege*. Strasbourg.
- Roper, Lyndal. 2016. *Der Mensch Martin Luther: Die Biographie*. Frankfurt: S. Fischer.
- Röther, Christian. 2017. "Weltgeschichtlicher Erfolg als Schriftsteller." <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/martin-luther-weltgeschichtlicher-erfolg-als-schriftsteller-100.html>.
- Sachs, Hans. 1523. See Hartmann 2015.
- Sauer-Geppert, Waldtraut I. 1982. "Verstehbarkeit: Zur Revision der Lutherbibel." Pages 193–208 in *Was Dolmetschen für Kunst und Arbeit sey: Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Bibelübersetzung*. Edited by Heimo Reinitzer. Vestigia Bibliae 4. Hamburg: Wittig.
- Schildt, Joachim. 1978. "Sprechsprachliche Gestaltungsmittel." Pages 21–86 in *Zur Literatursprache im Zeitalter der Frühbürgerlichen Revolution*. Edited by Gerhard Kettmann and Joachim Schildt. Berlin: Akademie.
- Shirokauer, Arno. 1986. "Frühneuhochdeutsch." Pages 169–224 in *Die Entstehung der neuhochdeutschen Schriftsprache*. Edited by Klaus-Peter Wegera. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer. (Original: Pages 311–93 in *Germanistische Studien*. By Arno Shirokauer. Hamburg: Hauswedell, 1957)
- Schmitt, Ludwig Erich. 2007. "Zur Entstehung und Erforschung der neuhochdeutschen Schriftsprache." Pages 121–49 in *Die Entstehung der neuhochdeutschen*

- Schriftsprache*. Edited by Klaus-Peter Wegera. 2nd edition. Frankfurt: Peter Lang. (Original in *Zeitschrift für Mundartforschung* 12(1936): 193–223)
- Solms, Hans-Joachim. 2000. "Soziokulturelle Voraussetzungen und Sprachraum des Frühneuhochdeutschen." Pages 1514–27 in vol. 2 of *Sprachgeschichte: Ein Handbuch zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und ihrer Erforschung*. Edited by Werner Besch, Anne Betten, Oskar Reichmann, and Stefan Sonderegger. Rev. edition. 2 vols. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Sonderegger, Stefan. 1998. "Geschichte deutschsprachiger Bibelübersetzungen in Grundzügen." Pages 229–84 in vol. 1 of *Sprachgeschichte: Ein Handbuch zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und ihrer Erforschung*. Edited by Werner Besch, Anne Betten, Oskar Reichmann, and Stefan Sonderegger. Rev. edition. 2 vols. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Steer, Georg, ed. 1966. *Scholastische Gnadenlehre in mittelhochdeutscher Sprache*. Munich: C.H. Beck.
- Stolt, Birgit. 1980a. "Bibelübersetzung: Ihre philologische Genauigkeit und Verständlichkeit." Pages 114–32 in *Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer Revision des Luthertextes*. Edited by Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg. Erlangen: Martin-Luther-Verlag.
- . 1980b. "Erzählstrukturen der Bibel und die Problematik ihrer Übersetzung." Pages 312–21 in *Akten des 6. Internationalen Germanistenkongresses Basel*. Edited by Hans Rupp and Hans-Gert Roloff. Bern: Peter Lang.
- . 1981. "Sakralsprache—zu Luthers Zeit und heute." Pages 113–33 in *Kommunikation und Sprache in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung bis zum Neuhochdeutschen: Wissenschaftliche Konferenz 26.–27. September 1980 in Oulu (Finnland)*. Edited by Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR. Linguistische Studien, Reihe A, 77. Berlin: Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR.
- . 1982. "Biblische Erzählweise vor und seit Luther sakralsprachlich volkssprachlich umgangssprachlich?" Pages 179–92 in *Was Dolmetschen für Kunst und Arbeit sey: Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Bibelübersetzung*. Edited by Heimo Reinitzer. Hamburg: Wittig.
- . 1983. "Luthers Übersetzungstheorie und Übersetzungspraxis." Pages 241–52 in vol. 1 of *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526 bis 1546: Festgabe zu seinem 500. Geburtstag*. Edited by Helmar Junghans. 2 vols. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- . 1984. "Luther, die Bibel und das menschliche Herz: Stil- und Übersetzungsprobleme der Luther-Bibel damals und heute." *Muttersprache* 94: 1–15.
- . 2000. *Martin Luthers Rhetorik des Herzens*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Tschirch, Fritz. 1966a. "Die Sprache der Bibelübersetzung Luthers damals: Eine notwendige Auseinandersetzung mit den Thesen Arno Schirokauers." Pages 53–67 in *Spiegelungen: Untersuchungen vom Grenzrain zwischen Germanistik und Theologie*. By Fritz Tschirch. Berlin: Erich Schmidt.
- . 1966b. "Die Sprache der Bibelübersetzung Luthers heute: Eine Apologie der Bibelrevision von 1956/64 durch Besinnung auf ihre sprachgeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen." Pages 68–108 in *Spiegelungen: Untersuchungen vom*

- Grenzrain zwischen Germanistik und Theologie.* By Fritz Tschirch. Berlin: Erich Schmidt.
- Vetter, Ferdinand, ed. 1910. *Die Predigten Taulers aus der Engelberger und der Freiburger Handschrift sowie aus Schmidts Abschriften der ehemaligen Straßburger Handschriften.* Berlin: Weidmann.
- Volz, Hans, ed. 1972. *Die ganze Heilige Schrift Deusch: Wittenberg 1545.* 2 vols. Munich: Rogner & Bernhard.
- Wolf, Herbert. 1980. *Martin Luther: Eine Einführung in germanistische Luther-Studien.* Stuttgart: Metzler.
- , ed. 1996. *Luthers Deutsch: Sprachliche Leistung und Wirkung.* Frankfurt: Lang.
- Wolf, Norbert R. 2017. “‘... , dass Reformation kein abgeschlossener Prozess ist, sondern stets fortgeschrieben werden muss’: Bibelrevisionen 1522 bis 2017.” Pages 187–213 in *Martin Luther und die deutsche Sprache.* Edited by Norbert R. Wolf. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Zur Mühlen, Karl H. 1978. “Luthers deutsche Bibelübersetzung als Gemeinschaftswerk.” Pages 90–97 in *Eine Bibel—viele Übersetzungen: Not oder Notwendigkeit?* Edited by Siegfried Meurer. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

Abbreviations

<i>FWB</i>	<i>Frühneuhochdeutsches Wörterbuch</i> (Goebel, Lobenstein-Reichmann, and Reichmann 1986–, in References)
<i>Hl. Schrift</i>	<i>Die ganze Heilige Schrift Deusch</i> (Volz 1972, in References)
Mentel Bible	Kurrelmeyer 1904–1915 (in References)
Petriglossar	Luther 1524 (in References)
September Testament	Luther 2021 (in References)
<i>WA</i>	Weimarer Ausgabe, Schriften (Luther 1883–2009, in References)
<i>WA BR</i>	Weimarer Ausgabe, Briefwechsel (Luther 1930–1985, in References)
<i>WA TR</i>	Weimarer Ausgabe, Tischreden (Luther 1912–1921, in References)