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The Story of the German Bible

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sagt mit dem großen Wort: „Dieses ist genug zu wahrer Einigkeit der christlichen Kirche, daß da einträchtiglich nach reinem Verstand das Evangelium gepredigt und die Sakramente dem göttlichen Wort gemäß gereicht werden; und ist nicht not zu wahrer Einigkeit der christlichen Kirche, daß allenthalben gleichförmige Zeremonien, von den Menschen eingesetzt, gehalten werden“; so entschieden Luther gerade in der schon öfters zitierten trefflichen Schrift „Deutsche Messe und Ordnung des Gottesdienstes“ betont, daß es seine Meinung nicht sei, daß man überall „unsere Wittenbergische Ordnung annehmen müßte“: so hat er doch auch ebenso entschieden betont, daß es schön sei, wenn Christen auch in diesem Stücke „gleiches Weise und Gebärden“ sind, und gesagt: „Fein wäre es, wo in einer jeglichen Herrschaft der Gottesdienst auf einerlei Weise ginge und die umliegenden Städtlein und Dörfllein mit einer Stadt gleich parteten [teilten].“ (X, 226 f.) L. J.

The Story of the German Bible.

A Contribution to the Quadricentennial of Luther's Translation.

IX. The Eighteen Pre-Lutheran Translations of the Bible.

For the student of the Bible and its various translations and versions it is most stimulating to be told by scholars who know the field that, in addition to more than a score of Psalters which have till now been found complete or in parts, and at least a dozen renderings of other parts of Holy Scripture, as we have seen, there is an immense field of study in the history of the German Bible whose possibilities are not yet exhausted. Among the men whose names are prominent in this field are those of Ebert, Giese, Kehrein, Steigenberger, Panzer, and especially Wilhelm Walther. This eminent scholar writes: "Of printed editions of the whole Bible at the end of the Middle Ages there were eighteen in High German, five in Low German. Kehrein, indeed, mentions nine other editions, 'whose existence, however, was not proved, his purpose being to instigate further researches.' But after we had addressed inquiries to about 400 libraries and, in all cases where an unknown edition seemed to be extant, by further research work determined the existence of an error, the possibility mentioned by him has become an improbability. It is not to be assumed that a German edition of the Bible has been lost entirely. Of the Bible printed by Koburger in Nuernberg in 1483 we have determined the existence to this day of 58 copies, of the so-called first High-German Bible, which is so often referred to as of great rarity, 28 copies, and of that High-German edition which is probably the rarest in fact, we still found ten copies. As a matter of fact the number is somewhat greater, since we do not have the information on all

libraries and some of them have two copies of these treasures, and there are, furthermore, copies in the hands of private persons."

Walther himself enumerates eighteen impressions of complete German Bibles between 1466 and 1521, of which fourteen are in High German. These may be divided into three large groups as follows:—

A. 1. Strassburg, Mentel, ca. 1466; 2. Strassburg, Eggestein, 1470; 3. Augsburg, Pflanzmann, 1473.—B. 4. Augsburg, Zainer, 1473; 5. Swias, 1474; 6. Augsburg, Zainer, 1477; 7. Augsburg, Sorg, 1477; 8. Augsburg, Sorg, 1480 (practically a reprint of 6).—C. 9. Nuernberg, Koburger, 1483; 10. Strassburg, Grueninger, 1485; 11. Augsburg, Schoensperger, 1487; 12. Augsburg, Schoensperger, 1490; 13. Augsburg, H. Otmar, 1507; 14. Augsburg, S. Otmar, 1518.

The Low-German Bibles include the Old Testament of Delft (1477) without Psalms, the famous Picture Bible of Cologne (ca. 1478), the Bible of Luebeck (1494), and the edition of Ludwig Trutebul of Halberstadt (1522). To these may be added the Low-German Bible of Muenster, which is very much like that of Delft.

On the basis of a number of factors it is now assumed that the Bible which was printed by Mentel of Strassburg in 1466 is the oldest of the entire group. The edition by Eggestein was based on that of Mentel, and Pflanzmann followed Eggestein. For that reason a sample of Mentel's work will be of interest, namely, a few verses from Luke 1 (68—75):—

Gesegent ist der herre gott isrl': wann er hat heimgesuocht vnd hat gethan die derlosunge seins volcks. Vnd had vns aufgericht dz horn der behaltsam in dem haus dauids seins kints: als er hat geredt durch den mund seiner heiligen weyssagen die do seint von der werlt. Die behaltsam von vnsern feinden: vnd von der hand aller die vns hassten. Zethuon die derbermd mit vnsern vettern: Vn zegedencken seins heiligen gescugs. Daz geschworn recht das er schwuor zuo abraham vnserm vatter sich selber vns zegeben. Daz wir im dienen on vorcht: vn seine der lost von der hand vnser feinde. In heiligkeit vn inrecht vor im: all vnser tag.

The fourth printed German Bible, that of Zainer, is a corrected edition of the second Bible, that of Eggestein, but it is based entirely upon the Vulgate, from a copy of which Walther believes that it originated in Spain. The other printed Bibles of Group B are clearly reprints of the work of Zainer or so largely dependent upon him that very few striking differences have been noted by Walther. He writes: "In all the more important points the fourth to eighth Bibles are entirely similar. Only the last one, the second edition prepared by Sorg in 1480, has an innovation. It has . . . not only a list of the Biblical books, but also a table which gives the contents of each chapter in a short form."

In the ninth Bible a number of innovations must be noted. The printer, Koburger of Nuernberg, called by *Badius libroriorum facile princeps* (easily the first of booksellers), not only asserted that his edition was clear and correct, but added the boast: "mit hohem vnd groszem vleusz gegen dem lateynischen text gerechtuertigt. vnder-

schidlich punctirt. mit vberschriften bey dem meysten teyl der capital vnd psalm. iren inhalt vnd vrsach anzeygende. Vnd mit schoenen figuren dy hystorien bedeutenden (with high and great diligence compared with the Latin text, provided with clear punctuation marks, with headings of most chapters and psalms, indicating their content and object; and with fine figures explaining the stories). The work of Koburger was so well done that it was made the basis of the remaining editions of Group C, with only comparatively slight changes and corrections. The following samples from the Koburger Bible will serve for orientation:—

Ex. 15, 1. 2: (D) O sang moyses vnnnd die sun israhel disen gesang dem herren vnd sprachen. Wir singen dem herren wunsamgklich. wan er ist groszmechtig worden. er warf in das meere das rosz vn den aufsitzer. Der herre ist meyn stercke vnnnd meyn lobe. vnnnd ist mir gemacht zu eynem heyl. Der ist meyn gott. vnnnd ich will in glorifiziren gott meynes vaters. vnnnd ich erhoh in.

Luke 1, 68—71: Gesegent ist der herre got israhel. wann er hat heymgesucht vnn hat gethan die erloszung seins volcks. Vnn hat uns auffgericht das horn des heyls in dem haus dauid seins Kindes. Als er hat geredt durch den mund seiner heyligen weyssagen die da sind von der welt. Das heyl ausz vnsern veinden. vnd von der hand aller der die vns hassten.

The Low-German Bibles, which are related in language to the Dutch Bibles, offer a fine field for study, since many of the words are close to the Old German, the Anglo-Saxon, and the modern English. The first verses of Genesis in the Delft Bible read:—

IN den beginne seyep god hemel ende eerde. Mer die eerde was vnnutte en ydel. En donkerheden waren op die aensichte des afronts. En gods gheest wert gedragen bouen die wateren. ENde got seide dat lichte moet werden. An dat lichte wort gemaket.

But stimulating as the study of these various versions is in itself, their importance cannot be compared with that of the German translation of the Bible made by Martin Luther, which is to engage our attention in the next chapters.

X. The Beginning of Luther's Work as Translator.

The last of the so-called pre-Lutheran versions of the Bible in High German, as we have seen, was published by Silvanus Otmar at Augsburg, in 1518. This was at the time when Martin Luther was already becoming prominent on account of his opposition to the traffic in indulgences. But Luther's preparation for the greatest work of his life began long before this, years before he posted his Ninety-five Theses against Johann Tetzel.

It is noteworthy that the education which Luther received was as comprehensive as that of most of the learned men of his day. The secondary schools which he attended at Magdeburg and Eisenach offered a good training in the course of study then in vogue for the learned professions. The University of Erfurt enjoyed a very good reputation among the European schools of the beginning of the six-

teenth century, and Luther made good use of his time in studying philosophy, logic, dialectics, rhetoric, ethics, the latter especially according to Aristotle, and the classics, such as Cicero, Vergil, Livius, Plautus, Herodotus, and others. After he had received his university degree, and after his venture into the field of monastic living, he had several further semesters of work both at Wittenberg and at Erfurt. He became *baccalaureus ad biblia* on March 9, 1509, at Wittenberg, and here he also received the degree of *doctor in theologia*, on October 19, 1512. The work connected with the attaining of these degrees was in itself a training of the hardest kind, which gave Luther much of the freedom and ease that he later displayed in his writings.

To this general education, also of an advanced form, we must add the special training which Luther acquired in Greek and Hebrew. As soon as he was admitted to the theological faculty at Wittenberg, he began to lecture on the Bible, his first lecture on the Book of Genesis being delivered on October 25, 1512. In August of the next year he began his lectures on the Psalter, in April, 1515, on the Letter to the Romans, in October, 1516, on the Letter to the Galatians, in 1517 on the Letter to the Hebrews. From 1513 to 1516 his friend Johannes Lang was a member of the Wittenberg faculty, and Luther did not hesitate to make use of his friend's knowledge of Greek in order to search the original language of the New Testament. As soon as the first edition of the New Testament issued by Erasmus was on the market, in 1516, Luther made use of the Greek text in his exposition of Romans, as may be seen from the edition published by Ellwein. With regard to Hebrew the progress of Luther was also remarkable, once he had mastered the rudiments of the language from the grammar-dictionary of Reuchlin. He paid little attention to grammatical details, but read rapidly and copiously until he had entered into the spirit of the language and could thus use it with pleasure and sympathy. Luther's own remarks on the original tongues of the Bible are characteristic: "The Hebrew tongue is altogether despised because of impiety or perhaps because people despair of learning it. . . . Without this language there can be no understanding of Scripture; for the New Testament, although written in Greek, is full of Hebraisms. It is rightly said that the Hebrews drink from the fountains, the Greeks from the streams, and the Latins from the pools. I am no Hebrew grammarian, nor do I wish to be, for I cannot bear to be hampered by rules; but I am quite at ease in the language, for whoever has the gift of tongues, even though he cannot forthwith turn anything into another language, or interpret it, yet has a wonderful gift of God. The translators of the Septuagint were unskilled in Hebrew, and their version is therefore extremely poor, even though literal. We prefer it to the version of Jerome, even though we confess that he who reviled Jerome as a good Jew was mistaken and did

him wrong. But he has this excuse, that after the Babylonian Captivity the language was so corrupted that it could not be restored." "The knowledge [of Hebrew] is of extraordinary advantage in understanding the Scripture clearly." "Without the Hebrew language it is not possible to understand the Scripture, especially the prophets, in a number of passages."

Luther's genius in linguistics was of particular value also in the German which he chose for his translation of the Bible. The words of McGiffert (*Martin Luther, the Man and His Work*, 225) present the facts in a very satisfactory way: "The German employed by him [Luther] was not his own creation, but it owed him much. The dialects of the day were many and various, so that people living only a few score miles apart, as he once remarked, could scarcely understand each other. But a common diplomatic language had already developed and became the medium of official communication between all the principalities of the land. This he made the basis of his written German. 'I use no special dialect of my own,' he once said, 'but the common German language that I may be understood by all alike. I use the speech of the Saxon chancellery,³⁾ which is followed by all the princes and kings of Germany.' Formal, stilted, and clumsy enough it was as employed in the state documents of the day, but he greatly modified and enriched it, making it more flexible and colloquial and enlarging its vocabulary from the language of the people, spoken and written. He had a wide knowledge of current literature, devotional and otherwise, and an enormous fund of popular saws and proverbs, and his style, as a rule, was not only simple and clear, but wonderfully vivid and picturesque."

This quotation naturally suggests the question as to whether Luther made use of the previous translations of the Bible. This charge has been made repeatedly, occasionally even rising to the height of a direct accusation of plagiarism. Geffcken writes: "That the agreement of Luther with the old translation cannot be an accidental one the few passages which I shall have printed under the text will prove." Hopf believed that he had found in Luther "definite indications of his use of his predecessors." Kraft made the statement: "Any one who makes a comparison between these parallels will hardly retain a doubt that the agreement of Luther with the Bible of the sixteenth century is not accidental." Wedewer thought he could prove that "Luther had used the old Catholic translation to a large extent, resp. retained it essentially in the New Testament, only revising it."⁴⁾ A recent critic of the same school is Florer, who

3) This was practically the language developed in the chancellery of the empire at Prague.

4) See Walther, *Die deutsche Bibelübersetzung des Mittelalters*, col. 40.

asserts: "It is absolutely certain that the extent of Luther's use of the earlier versions has been greatly underestimated. Such extensive similarities in any other literary work would provoke much criticism as to the originality of the author. Due allowance must of necessity be given to the fact that in a translation from one, in this case at times from two languages, into another language certain similarities are inevitable; but the correspondence between Luther's translation of the New Testament and the Koburger edition is so striking that one may speak of changes rather than of similarities."⁵)

These statements would seem at first blush to be serious charges; but as a matter of fact the situation is not nearly as gloomy as these critics allege. A careful comparison of the various passages offered by Florer yields nothing in favor of his position. We print a few parallel columns from sections chosen almost at random, including some of those in which the critics find evidence of plagiarism.

KOBURGER.

Luke 2: Vnd hyrten warn in deselben gegent. die do wachten. vnd behüten. die wachen der nacht vber ir herde. vnd seht der engel des herre(n) stund bey in. vnd die klarheyt gots vm(b) leuchtet sie, vnd sie forchten sich mit grosser vorecht. vnd der engel sprach zu in. Nicht wölt euch fürchten. Aber seht. Ich verkünde euch ei(n) grosse freude die do wirt allem volck. wan(n) heut ist euch geborn. der behalter der do ist christus der herr in der stat dauid.

LUTHER.

Und es waren Hirten in derselbigen Gegend auf dem Felde bei den Hürden, die hüteten des Nachts ihrer Herde. Und siehe, des Herrn Engel trat zu ihnen, und die Klarheit des Herrn leuchtete um sie; und sie fürchteten sich sehr. Und der Engel sprach zu ihnen: Fürchtet euch nicht, siehe ich verkündige euch grosse Freude, die allem Volk widerfahren wird; denn euch ist heute der Heiland geboren, welcher ist Christus, der Herr, in der Stadt Davids.

Now, although the text of the Vulgate in this instance is quite close to the Greek, it is obvious at once that the Koburger edition is clumsy and unwieldy while that of Luther shows the true elegance of idiomatic German. This appears still more strongly in other passages throughout the New Testament, but particularly in the Old Testament.

KOBURGER.

Habakkuk 3: HERR ich hab gehört dein hörung. vnd hab mich geführt. Herr dein werck in dem mittel der iar mache es lebendig. In de mittel der iare. wirst du machen offenwar. so du bist zornig. du wirst gedencen der erbermbde.

LUTHER.

HERR, ich habe dein Gerücht gehöret, dasz ich mich entsetze. HERR, du machst dein Werk lebendig mitten in den Jahren, und lässtest es kund werden mitten in den Jahren. Wenn Trübsal da ist, so denkst du der Barmherzigkeit.

5) *Luther's Use of the Pre-Lutheran Versions of the Bible*, 32.

A careful comparison of dozens of passages forces the conclusion that in fewer than one-third of the New Testament passages is there any kind of apparent agreement. These are practically all such passages as show a close agreement of the Vulgate with the Greek and hence offer the possibility of a similarity in a translation into the same tongue. It is probable that Luther had heard some of these passages in German, and he may possibly even have read parts of these translations, so that certain peculiar expressions adhered in his retentive memory. More than this cannot be proved or even safely alleged with regard to the New Testament. And as for the Old Testament, the dissimilarity is so great as to make any charge of plagiarism ridiculous. The matter is well put by Grimm: "In view of the great difference between Luther's Bible and its predecessor it might seem strange that both occasionally, especially in the New Testament, concur in individual expressions and sentences, for which reason Hopf, in spite of all his veneration for Luther, believed he could not escape the observation that Luther had now and then used his predecessor. But in view of Luther's well-known independence I am unable to imagine that he had a copy of his predecessor before him and that he now and then borrowed individual points therefrom. It is quite possible that many verses and statements had come into general literary and oral use in the form coined by the older Bible and in this manner been impressed upon the memory of Luther."⁶) The same thoughts have more recently been expressed by McGiffert, when he writes of Luther: "He was not the first to put the Scriptures into the German language. Vernacular translations were very common and had a wide circulation among the people. During the previous half century eighteen German editions of the whole Bible had been published, and some of Luther's own acquaintances were engaged in the task of translating before he began. Writing in December to his friend Lang, who had recently issued a German version of the Gospel of Matthew, he urged him to go on with the work, expressing the wish that every town might have its own translator and thus the Bible be better understood by the people. That he had many predecessors diminishes in no degree the importance of Luther's work. Though his was not the first German Bible, it soon won its way to general favor and crowded all others out of use. The contrast with the earlier versions was very great. They were based on the Latin Vulgate, the official Bible of the Catholic Church, and smacked largely of their source. Written in a curious Latinized German, most of them were unattractive and sometimes almost unintelligible. Luther translated his New Testament direct from the Greek and his Old Testament from the Hebrew. Besides getting nearer to the original, he was thus

6) *Kurzgefasste Geschichte der lutherischen Bibelübersetzung*, 5.

able to avoid the deleterious influence of the Latin and produce a translation genuinely German in style and spirit."⁷)

One further testimonial may find its place here, namely, one by Robertson, who writes: "The importance of Luther's Bible cannot be too highly estimated, either as a text-book of Reformed Christianity [sic!] or as a literary monument. His original works hardly bear, one might say, so strong an impress of his magnificent personality as this German Bible. For it was above all things a *German Bible*. Although he went back to the original Hebrew and Greek texts, Luther made no slavish translation; he gave the German people a truer *Volksbuch* than did his scholarly predecessors, who, in their translation of the Vulgate, aimed at closer accuracy. . . . He has rendered the concrete Hebrew poetry and lucid Greek narrative by the language and the proverbial phrases of the peasant's home."⁸)

The question is now raised: How did Luther develop his amazing facility and dexterity in translating the New Testament and even the entire Bible in so short a time? Here his critics should take note of the fact that, after all, he had had occasion to become acquainted with the Bible for almost a score of years, ever since he had discovered a complete copy of the Vulgate in the university library. As we have briefly indicated above, his study of the New Testament since 1515 had been of the most intensive kind, so that he made a very searching examination of many parts of the New Testament in the Greek original. The comprehensive nature of this work is borne out by the following list of sections of the Holy Scriptures translated and, in part, explained by Luther, before the end of 1521:—

1. The Seven Penitential Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). 1517 (revised in 1525).
2. The Lord's Prayer. 1518.
3. The 109th (110th) Psalm. Augsburg, 1518.
4. Matt. 16, 13—20. Leipzig, 1519.
5. The Prayer of Manasseh. Leipzig, 1519.
6. The Ten Commandments. Wittenberg, 1520.
7. The 67th (68th) Psalm. Wartburg, 1521.
8. The Magnificat of Mary. Wartburg, in June, 1521.

Luke 1, 46—55 reads as follows in this edition:—

Meine Seele erhebt Gott, den HErrn, und mein Geist freuet sich in Gott, meinem Heiland. Denn er hat mich, seine geringe Magd, angesehen, davon mich werden selig preisen Kindes Kind ewiglich. Denn er, der alle Dinge tut, hat grosz Ding mir getan, und heilig ist sein Name. Und seine Barmherzigkeit langet von einem Geschlecht zum andern, allen, die sich vor ihm fürchten. Er wirket gewaltiglich mit seinem Arm, und zerstöret alle die Hoffärtigen im Gemüt ihres Herzens. Er setzet ab die groszen Herren von ihrer Herrschaft, und erhöhet, die da niedrig und nichts sind. Er

7) *Op. cit.*, 222.

8) *A History of German Literature.*

macht satt die Hungrigen mit allerlei Gütern, und die Reichen lässt er ledig bleiben. Er nimmt auf sein Volk Israel, das ihm dienet, nachdem er gedacht an seine Barmherzigkeit. Wie er denn versprochen hat unsern Vätern, Abraham und seinen Kindern in Ewigkeit.

9. The 118th (119th) Psalm. 1521.
10. The 36th (37th) Psalm. Wittenberg, 1521.
11. The Gospel of the Ten Lepers, Luke 17, 11—19. 1521.
12. The Gospel for the Second Sunday in Advent, Luke 21, 25—36. Wittenberg, 1521.

Such was the preliminary work of Luther in preparation for his great work of translating the entire Bible into German.

XI. Luther's Translation of the New Testament.

Every one who is at all familiar with the main events in the life of Luther knows also the significance of the Diet of Worms for Luther's own spiritual development and for the progress of the Reformation. Luther had been cited to appear before the mightiest rulers of the earth to give an account of his activities, and he did so with a candor and fearlessness that served to encourage his friends and to confound his enemies. After those two memorable days, April 17 and 18, 1521, he remained in Worms for another week, leaving the city, ostensibly for Wittenberg, on April 26. Two days later he wrote an interesting letter to Lucas Cranach from Frankfort on the Main, in which he stated: "I am going somewhere to be hidden, though I myself do not yet know where." (15, 1936.) On May 1 Luther reached Hersfeld, where he was royally welcomed by the abbot of the Benedictine monastery and where he preached, in spite of the fact that this had been forbidden him. On May 2 he reached his "dear old Eisenach," where he also delivered a sermon. The next day he drove through the beautiful forests to Moehra, his father's early home, and visited his uncle Heinz Luther. On the morning of May 4 he preached in the open air and after dinner set out in the direction of Schloss Altenstein with Amsdorf and a brother monk.

Some of Luther's relatives and friends accompanied him out of Moehra. They bade him farewell just as it was getting dark, and Luther continued his journey, accompanied only by Amsdorf and the customary companion of his journey, in this case Petzensteiner. What happened shortly afterward is given by Boehmer (*Der junge Luther*, 384) in the following description: "Shortly after they [the relatives of Luther] had taken their leave, Amsdorf saw four or five horsemen come bursting out of the woods which lined the road on both sides. He immediately called the attention of his fellow-travelers to this dubious fact. Luther, to safeguard against all eventualities, immediately grasped his Hebrew Bible and his Greek Testament. Brother Petzensteiner, however, who had for good reasons not been informed of

coming events, sprang out of the wagon like a frightened hare and disappeared behind the bushes. Meanwhile the horsemen had approached and now, with crossbows ready to shoot, demanded of the driver whether he had Luther in the wagon. He in his terror immediately acknowledged as much. Thereupon they drew the Reformer out of the wagon with blasphemous curses, while Amsdorf raised a loud cry, and quickly dragged him away on the road to Brotterode, so that he had to run beside the nags in a trot over sticks and stones, like a dog. It was only when the wagon was no longer in sight that they revealed their identity and lifted him upon a horse. But then they rode, in order to avoid the traveled paths and to obliterate their tracks, back and forth for hours, so that he was thoroughly exhausted when finally, toward 11 o'clock, he entered the court of the Wartburg over the rattling drawbridge. There he was received by the knight Sternberg and by the captain of the castle, Hans von Berlepsch." Thus began Luther's memorable stay at the Wartburg, the "exile" which lasted till the beginning of March, 1522, and was interrupted only by a secret visit to Wittenberg in December, 1521.

During the first months of Luther's stay at the Wartburg the literary labors of the Reformer followed lines which indicated the trend of his interests. He produced a translation and an exposition of the 68th Psalm, as noted above, also one of Psalm 22, of the Magnificat, of the 37th Psalm, of Luke 17, 11—19, of Luke 21, 25—36, and other sections of Scripture. He also wrote a number of treatises to defend his previous books against the condemnations of the papists and to attack, in turn, such as refused to accept the truth.

But Luther's chief work during his stay at the Wartburg, that which is, in fact, ever associated with this period of his life, is his translation of the New Testament. This was undertaken shortly after his return from Wittenberg, where he had secretly gone between the 2d and about the 10th of December, in order to counteract the iconoclastic activities of Carlstadt and his friends. It is interesting to follow the progress of the work from statements in Luther's own letters. On December 18 he wrote to his friend Johannes Lang: "I shall remain hidden here till Easter. Meanwhile I shall compile the postils and translate the New Testament into German, wherewith you also, as I hear, are engaged. Continue as you have begun. Would to God that every single city had its interpreter, and this book alone live in the mouth, the hand, the eyes, the ears, and the hearts of all." (15, 2555.) Lang's translation of the gospel of Matthew had appeared in June, 1521, but Luther had heard about it only toward the end of the year. On December 20 Luther wrote to Wenceslaus Link in Nuernberg: "I am now working on the postil and on the translation of the Bible into German." (21a, 372.)

Evidently the great Reformer worked with steady application, for

on January 13 he speaks of his work at length in a letter to Amsdorf: "Meanwhile I shall translate the Bible, although I have taken a burden upon me which transcends my powers. I now see what translating means and why till now it has not been undertaken by any one who would mention his name. But the Old Testament I shall not be able to manage, unless you are present and work along. Yes, if it could be done that I could have a secret room with some one of you, I would come at once and with your assistance translate it all from the beginning that it might become a worthy translation, which would be read by the Christians; for I hope that we can give to our Germany a better translation than that which the Latins have. It is a great and worthy work, in which we should all be engaged, since it is a public undertaking and is to be dedicated to the public welfare." (15, 2559.)

There are no further letters on this topic from the Wartburg available; but after Luther's return to Wittenberg, on March 6, we find that his translation of the New Testament was finished. He so states in a letter to Spalatin on March 30: "I had translated not only the Gospel of John, but the entire New Testament in my Patmos; but now we, Philip and I, have begun to file on it, and if God will, it will become a worthy effort; but we want to make use also of your help occasionally in order to place the words in the proper form. Get ready therefore, but in such a way that you give us simple words, not those in use in the castle and at court, for this book requires to be made clear through simplicity. And to begin with, see that you give us the names as well as the colors of the precious stones in Rev. 21 and that you, please God, either from the court or from any other place, provide us with a sight of them." (15, 2555 f.) By May 10 the work had progressed to a point that the first form of the German translation of the New Testament could be sent out, for on that day Luther wrote to Spalatin: "I am sending you a sample of our new Bible, but with the idea that you retain it, that it may not be propagated. I am expecting the precious stones; they will be kept faithfully and returned." (15, 2556.) Five days later, in writing to the same friend, Luther refers to a slight difficulty in finding a good word and also speaks of the precious stones again. (21a, 407.)

At the end of May, Luther again writes to Spalatin, with reference to the forms of the Gospel of St. Matthew, which had been sent to just a few people: "I hope that you have received the entire German Matthew, with the other things; for it seemed good to us to honor you alone in this way, since we presuppose that this will be shown also to the prince. A copy will also be sent to Duke John; besides him nobody will get to see as much as a leaf, not even those who work in the print-shop. I should like to know how you like this work." (15, 2566.) The progress had been very rapid, as a letter of Luther to Spalatin on July 26 informs us: "Up till now I have sent

you a copy of the New Testament piecemeal up to the Gospel of Luke and the Letter to the Corinthians. I am now sending the rest; if it should not have reached you, make inquiry where inquiry ought to be made or write me in case it is lost that I may not continue to waste also the next forms. In addition, I am sending another, complete copy, as far as it is printed, what I have received from them for the prince; for on that account they conscientiously keep the impressions. The work is proceeding slowly. For now you have only half, and there are still eighteen forms remaining. It will not be finished before the Day of St. Michael, although they daily with three presses print ten thousand pages with prodigious labor and diligence." (15, 2574.) Luther's estimate concerning the date of the complete printed copy of the New Testament (September 29) was not quite correct; for on September 20 he wrote to Spalatin: "Behold, you now have the entire New Testament for you and for the Elector, with the exception of the Preface to Romans, which will be finished to-morrow. I am also sending a copy for the younger prince, which you will give him in my name; this Lucas [Cranach] and Christian [Doering] have given into my hand. For I believe that Wolfgang Stein has already sent one for the older prince." (21a, 446 f.)

It was surely an amazing piece of work for Luther to translate the entire New Testament, revise and polish his translation with the help of Melancthon and Spalatin, see it through the press, and have it ready for the book market in the short space of nine months. It shows the Reformer's immense energy and working ability in addition to his genius. In order to expedite printing, the manuscript was divided into three parts, so that the gospels and the Acts were set at the same time with the epistles and the Book of Revelation. The book was embellished with twenty-one woodcuts from the shop of Lucas Cranach, who followed a series by Albrecht Duerer. The title of the book was:—

Das Neue Testa/ment Deutzsch. Vuittemberg. (Date not given.)

The printer was Melchior Lotther, the publishers Christian Doering and Lucas Cranach. The price per copy was one and a half *gulden*, the value of which can be estimated by considering that the salary of Bugenhagen as professor at the university was forty *gulden* per year until 1526.

The date of the first edition of the New Testament, in agreement with the last letter quoted above and a further one written on the next day (21a, 447) is September 21, 1522. This edition is known as the *September-Bibel*. No sooner was it on the market than preparations were made for a second revised edition. This problem has been studied very thoroughly by Kuhrs (*Verhaeltnis der Dezemberbibel zur Septemberbibel*). The edition was on the market on December 19, 1522, and was hailed with as much delight as had been the

first printing. Melchior Lotther was again the printer, and the woodcuts of the previous edition were again pressed into service. A feature of both editions were the introductions which Luther wrote for the various books and the special notes or glosses, largely in the form of side-heads, which served for the better understanding of the text. The Preface of the Letter to the Romans is rightly regarded as one of the classics of Lutheran literature. It has been repeatedly translated into English, and its testimony is said to have brought John Wesley to the knowledge of the truth of salvation. The Preface to the Book of Revelation as prepared by Luther for the editions of 1522 was suppressed by him in later editions as being too sweeping in its emphasis upon the book as an *antilegomenon*. But even at that Luther conceded that one might well take issue with him concerning his opinion. It is well known that Luther's interpretation of this book in later years may rightly be regarded as an outstanding achievement.

In closing this chapter on Luther's German translation of the New Testament we quote at length from the appreciation which accompanies the new edition of the *September-Bibel*, issued by Kawerau and Reichert in 1918. We read there, in part: "In December of the year 1521 we meet the announcement in his letters that he was engaged in the translation of the New Testament into German 'that our friends demand.' At the beginning he was still undecided whether he ought not rather to start with the Old Testament; but he realized well that he would not be equal to this task without consulting various sources of assistance, that he would even have to go to Wittenberg in order to employ the help and advice of the learned men there. So he quickly made up his mind to translate the New Testament into German. Such was the speed with which he pursued his labors that he could report to his friend Spalatin after his return from the Wartburg, in sending him a translation of the Gospel of St. John, that he had translated not only this gospel, but the entire New Testament. This is a surprising performance if one considers that he had hardly eleven weeks at his disposal for this work. If one is aware of the fact that the Greek New Testament in the widely spread edition of the Stuttgart Bible Society comprises 657 pages, so that about ten pages of the Greek text had to be translated daily, and if one takes note of the fact that during this short span of time Luther had many another bit of work in hand, one is amazed at his energy and endurance. It has recently been conjectured that this could have been possible only if he had placed the medieval German Bible translation beside him and had then changed this in keeping with his linguistic genius and on the basis of a comparison with the original. But would that really have been an alleviation of the work? In the simple narrative texts the reference to an older German version would have been superfluous, and in the case of more difficult texts with complicated sentence structure.

the older translation with its totally different form of sentence structure and word sequence would have been an obstacle rather than an alleviation. Not one trace can be noted which would lead us to assume that Luther had that medieval Bible available on the Wartburg. His performance is rather explained in this manner, that any piece of work went forward with unusual speed once he had his pen in hand and that he had an amazing endurance in working. But in addition it should be considered that, as preacher of the divine Word and as theological teacher, he had for years lived in the Scripture and was thoroughly at home in it, that he had lectured on the more difficult books of the New Testament (Romans, Hebrews, Galatians), and had thus worked through them in the most intensive fashion. He did not take his work easy; for he makes the significant confession that he only now realized what it meant to translate and that he now understood why earlier translators had not mentioned their names. Through this very work, as he says, it had been brought home to him that he must not think he was learned. For his Greek text he very likely used the edition which a friend in Strassburg, Nicolaus Gerbel, had sent him the summer before.⁹⁾ But the work of this man was essentially a reprint of the great work of Erasmus of 1519, in which this man had combined with the Greek text a Latin translation and detailed remarks." Thus the German New Testament of 1522 came into being.

XII. The Completion of the Whole Bible in German.

Even before the second edition of Luther's New Testament in German, the so-called *Dezember-Bibel*, was on the market, he began work on the Old Testament, a project which he had contemplated for some time. Some of these references have been noted above, and another is contained in a letter addressed to Nicolaus Gerbel in Strassburg, dated November 1, 1521. (15, 2518 f.) After the last proofs of the *September-Bibel* had been read, Luther evidently turned at once to the Old Testament, of which he possessed the Hebrew edition issued by Gerson ben Mosheh in Brescia, dated 1494. With what energy he applied himself to his task appears from a letter addressed to Spalatin on November 3, 1522: "In the translation of the Old Testament I am now at the Book of Leviticus, for it is incredible to what degree letters, business, social duties, and many other things have hindered me. But now I have decided to lock myself in at home and to hurry in order that Moses may be sent to the presses by January. For him we want to issue separately, then the historical books, and the prophets last. For the size and the price of the books make it necessary for us thus to divide them and to issue them gradually." (15, 2578.) The progress made by December 11 is re-

⁹⁾ This was a reprint of the second edition of Erasmus. Cp. Wahl, *Die deutsche Bibel vom 15. bis 18. Jahrh.*; also St. Louis Ed., 15, 2517 ff.

gistered in at least two places. To Spalatin, Luther wrote on that date: "In this week I shall complete the Book of Deuteronomy, and we are even now revising the printed sheets that it may be put on the presses." (21a, 461.) And to Wolfgang Stein in Weimar he addressed the words: "In this week I shall complete the translation of the books of Moses." (18, 1434.)

Meanwhile, on November 7, 1522, the mandate of Duke George of Saxony had gone out which demanded that the New Testament as issued in German by Luther should be delivered to the designated officials. The mandate closes with the warning: "If we should find any one, whether woman or man, who in spite of this our command should be in possession of these books or reprints or copies of them, we shall not permit them to remain unpunished, but shall give such an exhibition of our power as to have every one take note that we intend to enforce the obedience of the Christian Church and of its supreme heads as much as we possibly can." (19, 489.)

However, if Luther knew of these formidable threats, he did not permit them to be an obstacle in his work. On December 12 he sent a letter to Spalatin in which he asked for the proper German names of quite a number of birds, mammals, and reptiles in order to get the lists in Lev. 11, 29 f. and Deut. 14, 5 ff. correct. And on December 19 he wrote to Wenceslaus Link in Altenburg: "Be commended to the Lord and pray for me. Moses I have finished in the translation. A second edition of the New Testament [the so-called *December-Bibel*, mentioned above] is finished; now they intend to take up Moses. It is surprising how much we have need of you in the German language. Whether your bookseller has paid I do not know. To me he has given nothing, and I have given him orders that he should pay Lotther; whether he has given it to him I cannot ascertain, for he does not know either." (15, 2581.) In January, 1523, Luther had an opportunity to show his friend Nicolaus Gerbel his appreciation of the kindness shown by the latter in forwarding to the Wartburg a copy of his Greek edition of the New Testament, which had been printed by Thomas Anshelm at Hagenau. (15, 2519, note 10.) In sending Gerbel a copy of his translation of the New Testament, Luther makes an interesting comparison: "I am returning you your bride [that is, his translation of the New Testament], which you have offered to me, and she is still pure and uncontaminated. And what is marvelous and new in this woman, she desires very seriously and suffers countless rivals and is the more chaste, the more betrothals are arranged for her." (21a, 477.)

The five books of Moses having appeared in 1523 and the historical books from Joshua to Esther inclusive in 1524, Luther prepared for the more difficult sections of the Old Testament. That he was constantly on the alert for assistance in this work is seen from a letter to Johannes Hess, dated August 27, 1523. In this letter he says:

"Greetings, preacher of the Preacher Ecclesiastes [Hess having delivered a series of lectures on this book at Breslau]; but see to it also that that Preacher be alive, for we also want to hear him or at least read him through you. Attend to it, therefore, that we receive your expositions of this book in order to make use of them when this book is to be translated into German." (21a, 542.) Early the next year, when Luther was working on the poetical books of the Old Testament, he wrote to Spalatin, the letter being dated February 23, 1524: "With us everything is getting along well. Only in the translation of Job we had much trouble on account of the sublimity of its transcendently majestic style, so that he seems to be much more impatient on account of our translation than on account of the comfort of his friends . . ., if the author of this book did not indeed desire that it should never be translated. This factor retards the printing of this third part of the Bible." (21a, 596.) At another time he wrote to Wenceslaus Link: "How great and laborious a task it is to force Hebrew writers to talk German! How they strive against it and rebel at being compelled to forsake their native manner and follow the rough German style! It is just as if a nightingale were made to give up its own sweet melody and imitate the song of the cuckoo though disliking it extremely." Another saying of Luther's is also found in practically all biographies: "With Philip [Melancthon] and Aurogallus I sometimes pondered a full fourteen days upon the meaning of a word or line before the proper idiomatic phraseology was discovered." Mathesius, who quotes these words, has also other information concerning the further work of Luther, as we shall see below.

About this time, in the year 1525, Luther was also working on another edition of the Pentateuch, for on February 11 he wrote to Spalatin: "I have been urged to finish Deuteronomy that the printers may not suffer loss." (21a, 720.) Somewhat more than a year later, on April 20, 1526, Luther wrote to Johann Ruehel: "This matter has so disturbed me that I have almost neglected the Psalter and the psalms. . . . The Psalms are not yet ready, for I have too much to do. Talking and doing is not the same thing. But you shall have your Psalter." (21a, 854.)¹⁰ On August 28 of the same year the Reformer

10) In this connection a few paragraphs on Luther's translation of the Psalter will prove interesting. "As Luther progressed in his knowledge of Hebrew, . . . he refrained more and more from using the Vulgate and St. Jerome's translation in his endeavor to make his translation conform better to the meaning of the Hebrew original. The method used was the comparison of the way he translated individual words and phrases in the different versions of the Psalms. His translation of the seven Penitential Psalms in 1517 was not made from the Hebrew original, but from the Vulgate with the assistance of Jerome's text and Reuchlin's *Septene*. At that time Luther did not possess a Hebrew Psalter, but later received a copy from his learned friend Johann Lang, to whom he had sent the manuscript for correction. The influence of pre-Lutheran German transla-

tions is shown in the choice of words such as *rechtfertigen* for *justificari* and of *erlossen*, which were familiar to Luther through the language of the Church.—When we come to his translation of the 110th Psalm, Augsburg, 1518, we find that Luther begins to consult the Hebrew original, although not in large measure. Three years later, in 1521, Luther published a translation of three psalms (68, 119, 37). Here his use of the Hebrew is evident from some marginal notes, from the transcription of two Hebrew words giving their pronunciation, and from the vocabulary. Reuchlin's Hebrew Grammar (*Rudimenta Linguae Hebraicae*) was used to help him in deciphering the original. Only in the first of these psalms does Pahl find traces of the influence of the Vulgate. Luther endeavors to get nearer to the Hebrew and to follow it in preference to other sources.—Coming now to the eight psalms taken up into his *Betbuechlein* of 1522, we find considerable difference in the style as compared with his other translations. This, Pahl attributes to the fact that the work was to be used as a devotional book, or for family prayers. Here, too, the Hebrew original is used in the main, resort being had to the Vulgate or to Jerome only in difficult passages. Frequently Luther deviates considerably from the Vulgate in favor of the Hebrew text.—The translation of the whole Psalter in 1521 shows still further progress in the understanding of the Hebrew. In difficult passages, however, we find him again resorting to Latin translations and commentaries, especially to that of Felix Pratensis of 1522. By this time the Vulgate and Jerome's Psalter had lost their value for him as sources; so he used them but little. As a theologian who had been brought up on the Latin Bible, however, he could not escape their influence entirely. His use of Pratensis is clear from quotations and translations he makes from it. His independence from the Vulgate and St. Jerome is shown by the fact that he frequently follows the Hebrew where they differ from it. The fact, too, that he translates the same Hebrew word by the same German word where the Vulgate and Jerome use different words shows that he has penetrated deeply into the understanding of the Hebrew by this time, especially with reference to the meanings of individual words. But in syntactical matters as well Luther shows his independence by differing more and more from the Vulgate. Only in one especially difficult case does he resort to it for an explanation. Occasionally the influence of Jerome may be seen. When he reaches the Psalms he had already translated before 1524, we find him revising them carefully according to his newly acquired principles of translation to make them conform in style and accuracy to the other psalms.—In the new edition of 1528 we find a thorough revision of the text of 1524, with special reference to its philological and critical accuracy. Very few changes can be traced to the Vulgate or St. Jerome, but it is evident that Luther has changed his opinion as to the exact connotation of several Hebrew words. By this time he has acquired considerable virtuosity in the treatment of the Hebrew original. He distinguishes between Hebrew synonyms by corresponding differences in the German terms.—In the revision of 1531 we find more radical changes than in any of the former. They are mainly in the direction of improving the German style. Not infrequently the translation deviates considerably from the Hebrew in order to make the German more idiomatic. Luther was now no longer working alone, but was helped by a whole staff of translators. Some of the unprinted Jewish commentaries used could not have been read by Luther himself, and he must have had the help of learned friends. Just what part Luther played in this revision we are unable to say. Perhaps his share consisted mainly in inspiring his fellow-workers and in bringing them under the spell of his thoughts and purposes. He modestly uses the plural *we* in speaking of the revision. The Hebrew titles of the psalms are difficult even for scholars of to-day and may have given rise to sharp debates among the translators.—After 1531 very few changes were made in the text. In the revision of 1534 and in that of 1539/41 they were mainly linguistic or stylistic in character or have to do with typographical errors." (Quoted from a review of Daniel B. Shumway of a book by Theo. Pahl, *Quellenstudien zu Luthers Psalmenübersetzung*. Weimar 1931.)

made the following statements in a letter to Wenceslaus Link in Nuernberg: "I am reading Ecclesiastes, who on account of such reading is extraordinarily unwilling and impatient; there are so many Hebrew forms of speech and obstacles of the unknown tongue; but by the grace of God I am finding my way through." (21a, 883.) About May 4, 1527, Luther wrote to the same man: "I am now at the point of rendering the prophets into German, while I at the same time intend to lecture on Isaiah in order not to be idle." (21a, 936.) The work proved quite arduous, for a letter to the same man on June 14, 1528, contains the sigh: "We are now working to the point of fatigue in translating the prophets into German." (21a, 1167.) And again he writes to the same friend on May 21, 1529: "The Book of Wisdom we have translated, while Philip was absent and I was sick, in order that I might not be idle; it is now in print, after I had revised it with the help of Philip." (21a, 1303.)

Shortly after the close of 1530 the work was nearing its end. But Luther continued with undiminished vigor and energy. On October 10, 1531, he wrote to Spalatin: "Every day I spend two hours in revising the prophets" (making corrections of the first draft of his translation). (21a, 1701.) In February, 1532, while Luther was at the court of the elector, he wrote to Veit Dietrich in Wittenberg: "I am working on a preface to the prophets." (21a, 1731.) On November 2, 1532, the work was almost finished; for Luther wrote to Amsdorf that he was engaged in the translation of the Book of Jesus Sirach. (21a, 1783.)

The translation of the Old Testament, as indicated in Luther's letters, was published in parts, as follows:—

1. The Pentateuch, in two folio editions and one octavo edition. Wittenberg, 1523; then in four new editions, 1524—28, and in various reprints.

2. The historical books Joshua to Esther. Wittenberg, in three editions, 1524 and 1527, and in many reprints.

3. Job, the Psalter, and the writings of Solomon. Wittenberg, 1524; in new editions, 1525 and 1526, and in many reprints.

4. The prophets. Wittenberg, 1533, and in a number of other cities. Even before that Luther had issued the book of Jonah (1526), Habakkuk (1526), Zechariah (1529, Ezekiel 38 and 39 (1533), also Isaiah (1528) and Daniel (1530), all printed at Wittenberg in the first edition.

5. The apocryphal books of the Old Testament, Wisdom (1529), Jesus Sirach (1533), also the Prayer of Manasseh.

These five parts were published, together with the entire New Testament, in 1534 under the heading: *Biblia, das ist, die gantze Heilige Schrift deudsch. Mart. Luth. Wittemberg. Begnadet mit Kurfürstlicher zu Sachsen freiheit. Gedruckt durch Hans Lufft. 1534.*

Thus the great work was finished.¹¹⁾

But Luther did not rest on his laurels. On the contrary, he immediately began the work of revision, and that not alone, but with the help of his faithful friends. He himself remarked at one time: "Interpreters or translators should not be alone, for good and appropriate words will not always come to an individual person." (22, 5.) The work of revision is best summarized in the words of Mathesius: "When the entire German Bible had gone out for the first time and one day with its tribulation taught the other, Doctor Luther takes the Bible and revises it from the beginning with great diligence, earnestness, and prayer; and since the Son of God has promised to be present where several would come together in His name, Doctor Luther immediately orders a sanhedrin of his own of the best people who were then available, who came together weekly several hours before supper in the monastery of the doctor, namely: Doctor Johann Bugenhagen, Doctor Justus Jonas, Magister Philip, Doctor Cruciger, Matthaeus Aurogallus, with whom was also Magister Georg Roerer, who was the corrector; often also strange doctors and learned men came to this important work, as Doctor Bernhard Ziegler, Doctor Forstemius.

"When, now, the doctor had previously gone over the Bible as issued and had taken instruction from Jews and outside philologists, also had addressed questions to older Germans concerning proper words (just as he had several sheep slaughtered in order that a German butcher might tell him the names of each part of the sheep), then Doctor Luther came into the council with his old Latin and with his new German Bible, together with which he constantly had also the Hebrew text; Master Philip brought his Greek text, Doctor Cruciger, beside the Hebrew, the Chaldaic Bible; the professors had their rabbinical commentaries along, Doctor Pommer also had a Latin text before him, in which he was well versed. Every one had prepared himself in advance for the text which was up for discussion and had looked over Greek and Latin besides the Jewish commentators. Thereupon this chairman proposed a text and called upon every one's vote, hearing what every one had to say on the passage according to the peculiarity of the language or the exposition of the ancient doctors.

"After this preliminary admonition every one brought out what he knew from the grammar and the context, as it agreed with the preceding and the following, or sought to bring proof of learned men, until finally, in 1542, the work, by the grace of God, was completed; although afterwards, when Doctor Luther wrote against the Jews, the understanding grew from day to day and many passages were reundered in a clearer fashion, which after the decease of the Doctor, with

11) The printing of the first complete Luther Bible was going on in June. On August 6 the Elector granted the printing privilege to Johann Lufft. On October 17 Levin Metzsch had a complete copy of Luther's Bible.

the knowledge and council of the learned men of Wittenberg, were entered into the last editions of the Bible by Magister Georg Roerer, as, for example, the confession of Eve, Gen. 4, of her son Cain, whom she believed to be the promised Messiah: 'I have received the man, the Lord, or God.' Also in the last words of David the Doctor has the text: 'Is that the ordinance of men?' in later editions thus: 'That is the manner of a man, who is God from heaven.' Master Philip afterwards likewise rendered some texts in a very fine manner, as Job 19, 25: 'I believe that my Redeemer lives, and at the end of the world He will arise,' where the ancient Bible speaks of our resurrection. Doctor Ziegler likewise explained some texts from the Hebrew very beautifully, especially Is. 53: 'The Messiah died poor, in order that He might make us rich'; also, Habakkuk in the 2d chapter: 'Write the prophecy on a tablet that those who are busy in office and preach have a certain form, how they may speak of the promised Seed of the Woman in the proper way; for he who believes will be justified, accepted, and saved; he who is rebellious and does not believe will be damned.'

"Doctor Forstemius explained many texts in a very happy and comforting way in his lexicon, as he expounded Jacob's last words concerning Dan in a thoroughly Christian manner of the promised Seed of the Woman (Gen. 49, 18): 'Lord, I have waited for Thy salvation; Samson and Gideon will not help me and mine from sin and death; Thou alone art the one and true Helper, who will take away sin and death forever and bring righteousness and life to all that trust in Thee.' The verse Gen. 8, 21 ff., where God speaks from heaven, later also became clearer, where God promises that He would henceforth not curse the world again on account of man, . . . but that He would bless all nations in Isaac's name, which is Christ, as St. Paul testifies.'" (Pp. 240—242.)

As Mathesius indicates, the revision of the Bible continued practically as long as Luther lived. As early as 1535 a second edition of the Bible became necessary; a third in 1536. The fourth edition, thoroughly revised, was published in Wittenberg 1540—41; and the last edition, the fifth, as issued under Luther's supervision appeared in 1545. The order of the books was the same as that of the Latin Vulgate except that Luther took the apocryphal writings, which in the Latin were intermingled with the canonical sections, and placed them in a separate volume or part.

In evaluating the worth of Luther's translation, one must keep in mind what he himself said of his work. In his Preface to the Old Testament of 1523 he writes: "Herewith I commend all my readers to Christ and pray that they may help me to obtain the power from God to conclude the work in a profitable way. For I confess freely that I have ventured too much, particularly in rendering the Old

Testament into German. For the Hebrew language, sad to say, is in an unfortunate condition, so that even the Jews know little enough about it and we cannot depend upon their glosses and explanations, as I have attempted it. . . . But as for myself, although I cannot boast of having attained all, I may nevertheless say this, that this German Bible is clearer and more certain in many places than the Latin, so that it is true: where the printers with their customary lack of diligence do not corrupt it, the German language here most certainly has a better Bible than the Latin language. . . . I have well considered it from the beginning that I might sooner find ten thousand who criticize my work than find one who would follow me in the twentieth part." (14, 16. 17.) And in his *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen*, of September 8, 1530, in which he defends certain parts of his translation, especially Rom. 3, 28, against the attacks of his enemies, he has also the following passages: "In the second place, you may say that I translated the New Testament into German according to my best ability and conscience; I have compelled no one to read it, but have left it free, only trying to be of service to such as cannot produce a better translation. No one is forbidden to make a better one. He who cannot read it, may let it lie. I do not beg, nor do I praise, any one for it. It is my Testament and my translation, and it is to remain and be mine. . . . I have used all diligence in translating so that I might offer a pure and clear German. And it often happened to us that we for fourteen days, for three and even four weeks, searched and asked for an individual word and yet occasionally did not find it. In Job we, that is, Magister Philip, Aurogallus, and I, worked with such diligent application that we sometimes barely finished three lines in four days. But now that it is translated and ready, every one can read and criticize it, with his eyes quickly running over three or four pages and finding no harsh place. But he does not notice what kind of obstacles and logs lay there where he now walks as over a planed board, where we had to perspire and were troubled before we removed such obstacles and logs so that others could walk there so easily. . . . For this I can testify to with a good conscience, that I showed my highest faithfulness and diligence therein and was not actuated by selfishness; for I neither took nor sought nor gained a farthing thereby, nor did I set forth my honor therein, that God, my Lord, knows, but I have done it to serve the dear Christians and to the honor of Him who sits above, who every hour grants me so many blessings that, if I had worked at my translation with a thousandfold application and diligence, I should thereby not have deserved one hour of my life." (19, 968 ff.)

These and other expressions of Luther concerning his work of translating the Bible should be kept in mind at all times. All those who have used the German Bible of Luther have carefully abstained

from declaring it to be the authentic Bible text, knowing full well that no translation can aspire to an honor which pertains to the original text alone. But it is clear that Luther made his translation with a linguistic equipment second to that of no other scholar of his age, that he approached his work with a minimum of preconceived notions and prejudices, and that his attitude throughout was that of a consecrated believer.

But there is one phase of his work which deserves special mention, namely, that phase which has given him the name "the creator of modern High German." This was shown, for one thing, in Luther's choice of words; for he possessed an amazing facility and fertility in selecting words which exactly reproduce the *sense* of the original, although he rarely became a literalist. But his genius in the field of language was particularly prominent in his poetical ability, as it appears in his use of rhythm, of alliteration, and of rime. Among those given by Grimm we find the following especially interesting:—

Is. 7, 9: *Glacubet ihr, nicht, so bleibet ihr nicht.*

Ecl. 12, 6: *Ehe denn der Eimer zerleche im Born und das Rad zerbreche im Born.*

John 16, 12: *Ich habe euch noch viel zu sagen, aber ihr koennet's jetzt nicht tragen.*

Story of Susanna (apoer.):

Unter einer *Linden*. . . . Der HErr wird dich *finden*.

Unter einer *Eichen*. . . . Der HErr wird dich *zeichnen*.

There are hundreds of passages in which the alliteration agrees with the rhythm, as in the following cases:—

Ps. 8, 2 (v. 1 in English Bible): *HErr, unser Herrscher, wie herrlich ist dein Name in allen Landen, da man dir danket im Himmel.*

Ps. 20, 7 (6 in English Bible): *Nun merke ich, dasz der HErr seinem Gesalbten hilft und erhoeret ihn in seinem heiligen Himmel; seine rechte Hand hilft gewaltiglich.*

Ps. 52, 4 (2 in English Bible): *Deine Zunge trachtet nach Schaden und schneidet mit Luegen wie ein scharf Schermesser.*

Ps. 86, 11: *Weise mir, HErr, deinen Weg, dasz ich wandle in deiner Wahrheit.*

Ps. 104, 3: *Du woelbest es oben mit Wasser; du fahrest auf den Wolken wie auf einem Wagen und gehest auf den Fittichen des Windes.*

Jer. 25, 16: *Dasz sie trinken, taumeln und toll werden.*

Is. 40, 31: *Dasz sie laufen und nicht matt werden, dasz sie wandeln und nicht muede werden.*

These examples could be multiplied almost indefinitely. And that this was not accidental or intuitive, but the result of deliberate choice is shown by a comparison between earlier and later translations of the same passages in the various editions prepared by Luther between 1522 and 1545. The following examples will bear this out, the first line showing the earlier work, the second the revision.

- Deut. 32, 6:** Du naerriecht und unweises¹ Volk.
Du toll und toericht Volk.
- Ps. 33, 1:** Freuet euch im HERRn, ihr Gerechten! Den Aufrichtigen-
stehet das Ruehmen wohl an.
Freuet euch des HERRn, ihr Gerechten! Die Frommen sollen-
ihn schoen preisen.
- Ps. 46, 4:** Wenn gleich das Meer tobete und auf einen Haufen fuehre.
Wenn gleich das Meer wuetete und wallete.
- Ps. 88, 8:** Dein Grimm haelt an ueber mich und draenget mich mit:
allen deinen Fluten.
Dein Grimm druecket mich und draenget mich.
- Ps. 111, 9:** Heilig und schrecklich ist sein Name.
Heilig und hehr ist sein Name.
- Prov. 14, 13:** Das Herz hat auch im Lachen Schmerzen, und das Ende-
der Freude ist Graemen.
Nach dem Lachen kommt das Trauern, und nach der-
Freude kommt Leid.
- Jer. 2, 32:** Vergisset doch eine Jungfrau ihres Kranzes nicht noch eine-
Braut ihres Schleiers.
Vergisset doch eine Jungfrau ihres Schmuckes nicht noch
eine Braut ihres Schleiers.
- Mark 14, 33:** Und fing an zu erzittern und zu aengstigen.
Und fing an zu zittern und zu zagen.
- Luke 2, 7:** Sie hat ihn in Tuchle gewickelt und geleet.
Und wickelte ihn in Windeln.

Instances of this kind could likewise be multiplied almost indefinitely, as a comparison of the various editions of Luther's German Bible will show.

It is not surprising therefore that we find men of all kinds, historians, literary critics, theologians, writers, and others, joining in their praise of Luther's German Bible. A few of these comments may be included here:—

"That this excellent man transmitted to us a work which was composed in styles that differed so widely from one another, at the same time maintaining the poetical, the historical, the commanding, and the didactic note, so that all seems cast into one mold, this has done more to further the cause of religion than if he had attempted to imitate the individual points of the peculiarities in the original. Vain were the later attempts to render the Book of Job, the Psalms, and other songs into poetical form and thus to make them palatable. For the average person, who is to be influenced by a translation, the simple form will always remain the best." (*Goethe.*)

"Luther was the man who took the decisive step. The literary authority of official documents was relatively small; only few people read the products of the chancelleries. But Luther's powerful personality moved the German people in its very foundations; here questions were concerned which touched the hearts of man, no matter what his position in life. For that reason the thought-provoking con-

content of his writings, which had a direct bearing upon their propagation, was bound to have an extraordinary influence also upon their form. And this all the more since this content was of a nature to be assimilated in the memory of men according to its wording. This is true in particular of his Bible translation and of his hymns. But the form chosen by Luther in itself bore the guarantee of a far-reaching effect; for it was with full consciousness that he chose the language which even then was fairly generally acknowledged. . . . The language of Luther can hardly be separated from his spirit; it was the bearer of Protestant ideas." (Behaghel, *Die deutsche Sprache*.)

"Luther's German translation represents an enormous intellectual energy, of which but few people have an inkling. One of the greatest intellects of the German people, a man with German depth of heart, with an unmatched linguistic ability, and with an iron capacity for work has made the old Bible a gripping German book of the people." (Risch, *Was jedermann von seiner Lutherbibel wissen muss*.)

Since testimonials of this kind can readily be collected from most biographies of Luther as well as from discussions of German language and literature, these may suffice for our present purpose. But there is one additional excellence in the translation of Luther, emphasized by Hirsch (*Luthers deutsche Bibel*), which has not been brought out by any one else in the same degree. Hirsch writes: "Every reader of Luther's Bible who is sensitively attuned has noticed how strongly the individual Biblical books show their individuality, how strongly the contrasts in tone and content in the individual parts of these books have been brought out. Luther's Bible possesses a wealth and a variety which the work of one individual does not ordinarily possess. . . . As a rule, a translation covers such peculiarities more or less. How did Luther manage to bring about the opposite effect? By gradations in the use of the linguistic helps. They appear so plainly that one is obliged to think of thoughtful understanding, of an art which was consciously exercised. The most striking exhibition of this fact is found in the placing of words in sentences. In the narrative sections of the Bible it is as plain and natural as possible. Take, for example, Luke 7. The simple, popular Greek, which strings words and sentences together without inversion, is followed [by Luther] in a German which is equally simple and popular; one may even say that the effect is increased by dissolving the participles into small independent sentences. . . . But the difference appears in the words of Jesus which the chapter offers. They clearly paint the eager and energetic manner which Luther believed to have noticed in Christ." If one compares, for example, Luke 7, 11—17 with 31—35, the point made by Hirsch will immediately stand

out. Another chapter showing this peculiarity in a marked degree is 1 Cor. 15. One has but to take the Greek text and make a comparison with that of Luther, possibly also with later translations in German and other languages, and the excellence of Luther's work will appear with increasing impressiveness. It was a truly great work which this man of God performed when he gave to the German people and to the world his translation of the Bible into the modern High-German tongue.

Before closing this chapter, we ought to refer, at least in a few brief words, to some features of Luther's Bible which are often overlooked. The first outstanding feature of this kind is his use of prefaces and glosses, or explanatory remarks, in the margin. Some of these introductions, or prefaces, are rightly considered as belonging to his masterpieces, in particular that prefixed to the Letter to the Romans of 1522 and that prepared for the entire Old Testament in 1523. Luther possessed the faculty of summarizing both clearly and adequately the chief points of any book or treatise, and he made excellent use of this ability in his introductions to various books of the Bible. But his short explanatory remarks, which in some cases completely filled the margins of his Testament, are also worthy of careful study.

The other outstanding feature of Luther's *September-Bibel* and other early editions is his employment of vignettes, initial letters, and woodcuts as illustrations. Thus the initial letter at the beginning of chapter 1 of St. Luke shows the evangelist writing at a desk, while a corner of the picture shows an ox, the symbol of the third evangelist. The sketches for the illustrations were made in part by some of the leading artists of the day, those for the Book of Revelation, for example, by Albrecht Duerer himself or by some artist who followed his work very closely. The Wittenberg artist Lucas Cranach likewise did much work for Luther's editions of the German Bible, and somewhat later even Hans Holbein provided sketches. It is stated by at least one contemporary of Luther that the Reformer himself indicated to the artists just how he wanted the figures of the illustrations to be arranged. Thus the *Bilderbibel* of the pre-Lutheran days served as a model for Luther's first editions and subsequently exerted a great influence on some of the finest printed Bibles, down to that by Schnorr von Carolsfeld and the very recent *Palaestina-Bilderbibel*.

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