

self not only as a fairly isolated votary of Jewish mysticism and magic, but also as a tribune of good letters, like Erasmus himself. He appealed for solidarity and support to the Dutch Humanist and other influential proponents of the new culture. Eventually he assembled and published two anthologies of eloquent Latin letters in his own support, entitled *Letters of Famous Men*, carefully purged of all elements that might provoke the ire of more conservative readers. Reuchlin's effort to portray himself and his Hebrew studies as part of the wider humanistic movement did not meet with anything like uniform success. Erasmus, for example, expressed his concern that the revival of Hebrew studies might lead to a revival of the Jewish religion, which might be a threat to evangelical Christianity. Accordingly, though he warmly defended the character of his saintly and erudite German friend, he did not support Reuchlin's views on Hebrew and Kabbalah.

Erasmus's restraint, however, had less impact than Reuchlin's consistent efforts to position his work, and far less than Crotus Rubeanus's and von Hutten's explosive satire, which portrayed Reuchlin as the innocent victim of ignorant scholastic persecutors. Especially after 1517, when Martin Luther's denunciation of the Mass and proclamation of the freedom of the will led to the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation, Reuchlin came to be seen as a hero of Protestantism and good letters. From his nephew Phillip Melancthon onward, Protestants who studied and taught Greek and Hebrew admired him, usually without reservation. They loved telling their students about his learning, his Spartan diet, and his wonderful library. And they saw to it that every respectable Protestant university employed a competent professor of Hebrew. To that extent, the wider views of the controversy developed by Reuchlin, and even those represented in the *Letters*, carried the day.

Yet Reuchlin's scholarly apotheosis, his rise to the pantheon of great Christian Humanists, was paradoxical in the extreme. For these same years witnessed the dramatic career of the historical Faust and the rise of a new learned magic. Daring scholars like Trithemius and Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, the speculative practitioners of magic and cryptography who laid the literary foundations of the new discipline, drew heavily on Reuchlin's works. He supplied them with much that was of value: a historical charter that legitimized their work as the continuation of an ancient Jewish learned tradition; an exegetical method that enabled them to find the messages and names of angels they needed in the Old Testament; and, most important of all, a series of bountiful instructions for the making of amulets and the formulation of effective prayers. The enemy of the *virii obscuri*, the hero of good letters, the intrepid philologist who showed his contemporaries the way to Hebrew, as well as Greek, sources of Christian tradition, also ended up as one of the founders of what Agrippa called "occult philosophy."


Renaissance magicians like John Dee consulted Reuchlin and later scholars who recycled his discoveries every time they tried to speak with angels. Philosophers from Giordano Bruno and Tommaso Campanella down to Henry More and Isaac Newton pursued the implications of the Christian Kabbalah

for their new philosophy of nature. In the end, it seems clear that the obscure men had a point. For all his firm Christian faith and deep commitment to decorum and tradition, Reuchlin was an intellectual radical, one whose work shook the foundations of the established curriculum. Those who read him usually did justice only to isolated aspects of his thought. But his friends and enemies alike were right when they treated Reuchlin's learned books as the origin of an intellectual crisis.

See also 1492, 1500 (Dürer), 1523, 1551, 1596

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Anthony Grafton

 1522

Martin Luther returns to Wittenberg and engages in a debate about idolatry with his follower, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt

### *Martin Luther and the Whole Man*

In order properly to situate the significance of Luther's teachings within the history of Western thought, we must counter a central and pervasive misreading of his theology. Indeed, in many ways, it is this misreading itself that is crucial to the development of Western thought, since it lies at the heart not only of the radical reform movements Luther rejected in his own day, but also of that mingled sense of asceticism and worldly calling with which a "Protestant ethic" (Max Weber) precipitated modern social and economic forms. We may situate the "origin" of this misreading in a controversy of 1522. Hastily leaving the sanctuary in Wartburg to which he retreated following the 1521 Diet of Worms, Luther returned to Wittenberg in March 1522 in order to tackle the iconoclasm of his follower, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt. In their debate about the status of images within Christian worship we find both a succinct expression of Luther's theology and that decisive misreading of his theology that even today shapes our reception of Luther's work.

Beginning, perhaps, with Hegel's treatment of Luther in *The Philosophy of History*, modern readers have tended to characterize Luther's eminence in terms of his consummate individualism. According to this modern bias, Martin Luther's emphasis on a doctrine of justification by faith alone (solafideism) is fundamentally an individualistic one, reconfiguring Christian spiritual life around the inner man. For such readers, Luther inaugurates a new subjectivism that privileges the inner life at the expense of the merely external. In place of

an externalist adherence to creed and practice, Luther focuses on the internal workings of God's grace. According to such a view, Luther's solafideism dispenses with the corporate emphasis of the medieval church and its objective forms of worship in favor of a religious practice grounded in individual conscience.

This is the view that Roland Bainton adopts in his influential 1950 biography of Luther, *Here I Stand*. As the biography's title suggests, for Bainton the hallmark of Luther's reform lies in its celebration of an embattled individual conviction: "Here I stand," Luther declared at the 1521 Diet of Worms, which ultimately resulted in his excommunication; "I cannot do otherwise." For Bainton, Luther's declaration marks a new Christian piety, one that can only be articulated in terms of the stand one takes over and against a largely hostile external world.

While there is no question that the dichotomies of inner and outer are essential to Luther's solafideism, such views mistakenly identify Luther's focus on inwardness with the stand-alone integrity and autonomy that our culture ascribes to the modern individual. Whence the increased interest among scholars in Luther's doctrine of "the whole man"—a doctrine which twentieth-century readers have increasingly perceived as central to Luther's teaching. *Totus homo peccator, totus homo justus*: man is both wholly sinner and wholly saint, Luther writes; he exists, in other words, as a total moral entity, neither his sin nor his salvation occurring piecemeal. For Luther, the New Testament concept of the "flesh" encompasses our lived, human totality: our flesh is not then a mere outer wrapping or extraneous shell to be stripped away on the road to salvation. It is, instead, the whole of us. We are saved in our entirety. And yet, since our salvation is imputed to us by an all-merciful God and not earned by our works, we remain the greatest of sinners.

For modern scholars, this doctrine of the whole man indicates the ways in which Luther rejects a traditional New Testament dualism between flesh and spirit. Such a dualism, it is argued, dooms fallen man to heteronomy as opposed to autonomy, to the captivity of a self divided between utterly separate, utterly distinct realms. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). We cannot do as we would because another law, a law besides the spiritual law of God, rules our members (cf. Romans 7): within the Neoplatonic framework of the New Testament, the strife between flesh and spirit amounts to a strife between mind and body, or material and immaterial realities.

Modern readers of Luther's "whole man" have rightly argued that Luther rejects such Neoplatonic dualism—but they have done so under the false assumption that Luther's whole man transcends dualism altogether. For such readers, Luther's redefinition of flesh as encompassing man in his entirety, mind, body, and soul, is central to his vision of a fully embodied, instead of dualistically riven, Christian life. Luther, it is argued, thus combats a medieval tradition of spiritualism that embraces both the moderate Neoplatonic re-

forms of an Erasmus and the iconoclastic asceticism of his radical followers. Both types of reform begin with the strictest of New Testament dualisms—"It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail" (John 6:63), a favorite phrase with reformers of all stamps—and such reformers accordingly emphasize the dangers of a religion caught up in the "mere externals" of ritual and icon. Salvation, for these reformers, requires that we transcend the flesh—while Luther's doctrine of the whole man, it is argued, promotes a cheerful integration of matter and spirit. We are not far here from the Hegelian vision of Luther as the starting point for the modern freestanding individual. By rejecting dualism, it is suggested, Luther rejects the heteronomous terms of a world divided between consciousness and matter, spirit and flesh.

This reading of Luther's divergence from other reformers, however, mistakes the matter on both sides. In the first place, while Luther's doctrine of the *totus homo* does critique a traditional dualistic view, it does not reject dualism *per se* but only deepens it. Rather than banish dualism or promote a more integrated worldview, Luther's vision instead entails a still sharper—indeed a total—sense of the rift between flesh and spirit. In his view, the two are utter incommensurables. Luther's "whole man" is anything but whole, anything but undivided; to be all sinner, all saint, all at once, is to be profoundly cleft. In his essential embodiment, the inward man of Lutheran faith is neither autonomous nor freestanding. Where traditional dualism defines two opposed realms of flesh and spirit, it does so in order to assert the autonomy of the former vis-à-vis the latter. Luther's whole man, in contrast, is defined by the very contention between the two realms, a strife that even the saints must experience. Founded upon the inward assurance of God's grace—upon the inward workings of God's spirit within us—Lutheran faith consists, then, in a radically external gift that can never be incorporated or assimilated into the self since it is nothing like the self. For this reason, Luther often speaks of the "alien word" of God: when God's Word lives in us as an unshakeable confidence in our salvation, it does so by remaining unassimilable, utterly alien. Luther's inward man, thus, is not that "ich" of the Worms declaration ("Hier steh ich"), that *terna firma* of independent and subjective conviction, but something more akin to a shifting ground of contestation—a battle site, even—where the strife between self and Other, flesh and spirit entails that any gains will remain ever "incomplete" and inadequate.

Readers insisting on the "wholeness" of Luther's "whole man" miss the irreparable breach that defines him. At the same time, such readers also miss the ways in which a traditional dualism tends to repair any such breach. At stake in this tradition is not the denigration of the carnal but its elevation in the very name of transcendence. "What I utterly condemn," Erasmus writes in his 1503 *Enchiridion militis christiani*, in the context of the veneration of saints, "is the fact that they [i.e. saint-worshippers] esteem the indifferent in place of the highest, the nonessentials to complete neglect of what is essential. What is of smallest value spiritually they make the greatest." This language of hierarchies—of high and low, indifferent and essential—reveals Erasmus's commitment to a

dualist tradition. Transcendence, for him, entails a dependence on the very materiality it would overcome. All the while arguing against a doctrine of works, against the externalization of religion, Erasmus nonetheless treats the flesh as the very vehicle—the Jacob's ladder, as he puts it—by means of which we scale the heavens.

For Luther's radical followers, in contrast, no Jacob's ladder joins flesh to spirit. Nonetheless, like Erasmus, they too end up elevating the inessential flesh—albeit in purely negative terms. For these writers the prohibited, un-availing flesh becomes a fetish object, granted a supreme importance, as Luther points out, in its very denial. Papist, iconoclast, and Humanist alike end up, as Luther puts it, “drowning in the flesh.” In their insistence on the autonomy of spirit vis-à-vis the flesh, such traditional dualists deny the very force of the strife between the two realms and, paradoxically, lose sight of the New Testament opposition altogether. They, and not Luther, are the non-dualistic thinkers, for ultimately their spirituality becomes indistinguishable from the flesh it denies.

Nowhere does Luther argue more persuasively for this strange collapse of dualism than in his response to Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt and the Wittenberg iconoclast movement. Karlstadt had been in Luther's camp since the beginning; in 1519 it was he who challenged Johann Eck, a sharp critic of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses, to a public disputation on Luther's behalf (known as the Leipzig Disputation), and it was he who led the reform in Wittenberg when Luther went into hiding following the Diet of Worms. During Luther's year-and-a-half absence, students and townsmen—agitated by radical members of Luther's monastic order—engaged in a number of small riots against the use of images, culminating in late January 1522 in the city council's decision to remove images from all houses of worship. Three days after this council decision, Karlstadt's pamphlet, *Von Abtuhung der Bylder Und das keyn Betdler unther den Christen seyn sollen* (*Concerning the Abolition of Images and That No Beggar Shall Be among Christians*) appeared, initiating the Reformation's first significant discussion of iconoclasm. In February, townspeople took the matter into their own hands and broke into a parish church. When Luther returned from hiding a month later, the terms of the debate had already been established.

Karlstadt's main contention against images returned to a concern the Church had officially resolved as early as 787, at the Second Nicene Council: the problem of the image as idol. “That we have images in churches,” Karlstadt declared in the opening thesis of *Von Abtuhung der Bylder*, “is wrong and contrary to the First Commandment: ‘Thou shalt not have strange gods’” (qtd. Christensen 29). For the early Church, however, idolatry had not been an issue. Instead, the need to assimilate pagan artifacts had harmonized with a strongly incarnationist perspective: God had already shown that the earthly world was a fit vessel to embody the sacred. At Nicaea, this view became settled doctrine: the ecumenical council of bishops ruled that, although true worship belongs to God alone, the veneration of images is acceptable since such honor is im-

mediately passed on to its archetype. As likenesses of corporeal things, images could allow man to reach higher, incorporeal truths. For the Second Nicene Council, in other words, the image functioned as a rung in Jacob's ladder, its materiality become transparent in the ascent to the realm of spirit.

For Karlstadt, however, this early defense of images mistook the relationship between flesh and spirit. Drawing heavily on John 6, Karlstadt argues a strict doctrine of the unavailing flesh. The Word of God, he maintains, is spiritual and it alone profits the believer. No image of Christ could bring us close to Christ, Karlstadt argues, since, as Christ himself said, such was the work of God alone: "no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:65). Indeed, the flesh could only teach us about the flesh, about how Christ looked, and how he died, and not at all about *why* he died: "all those who worship God in images worship in lies, and think of God in semblances and external reports" (qtd. Christensen 33).

In his own 1522 sermons and later treatise, however, Luther counters Karlstadt by reminding him that the crucial step lies not in outlawing images, but in teaching their insignificance: "one pleases God alone through faith" (LW 40, 84). Karlstadt, of course, had also based his position on the doctrine of justification by faith alone; it is thus not Karlstadt's point of departure that Luther rejects. Indeed, in general, Luther's strategy in this debate is not so much to dismiss the iconoclasts as too extreme in their assumptions, as it is to chastise them for not being extreme enough. In certain ways, Karlstadt and his followers are indeed extreme; the rioting they encourage horrifies Luther, and he fears that their violent measures will only accustom the masses to rebellion, as was already the case with Thomas Münzer's followers in Allstedt (cf. LW 40, 88-90, 104). Nonetheless, while their practical measures might be extreme, their theology, Luther argues, simply revisits a papist doctrine of works, promoting a new type of mortification that entails seeking its own worldly death of the flesh (LW 40, 81). In their zeal to implement a doctrine of solafideism, the iconoclasts paradoxically end up replicating the self-mortifying asceticism of the medieval church. To strive for the death of the flesh in this life "means teaching works and the free will all over again" (LW 40, 81).

The problem, Luther argues, lies not with iconoclasm per se but rather with its legislation. Insofar as iconoclasm finds its impetus in the First Commandment, the injunction against images must be understood not as a law in itself but as adjunct to the Law of Laws: Thou shalt have no other gods. Here Luther's Humanist training reveals itself as he insists on a contextualized reading practice, one that situates the commandment with respect to the "whole text." So far Luther is in agreement with Karlstadt: at the heart of the matter is the problem of strange gods. And yet, as Luther points out, Karlstadt's prohibition against images establishes a new legalism to be followed without the free conscience that alone heralds our loving fulfillment of God's law. Karlstadt's iconoclasm is thus dangerously superficial, stripping away external problems while it fills the very heart with idols. A genuine iconoclasm, Luther suggests, would in contrast destroy those idols in the heart. But without God's grace,

those idols are indestructible. The only way to abolish our false gods is through faith in the one true God.

Ultimately, Karlstadt's teaching reveals the impossible bind of solafideism. If only faith can save us, then, it is true, the flesh is of no avail. And yet, to imagine that one can dispense with this unavailing flesh is only to adopt a false trust, a *falsch vertrauen*, that mires us ever more deeply in sin. The flesh cannot save us, but to seek to renounce it will surely damn us, for "to ensnare the conscience with laws in these matters is death for the soul" (LW 40, 90–91). What Karlstadt's "abomination" shares with the papacy is not simply a doctrine of works but a strategy of fetishization. To deny the flesh is only to make its hold on us absolute; it is to turn the dead letter into a spiritual law. It is to transform the merely flesh into the deadly fetish.

Images, Luther writes elsewhere, are "neither here nor there, neither evil nor good, we may have them or not as we please" (LW 51, 81–82; qtd. Christensen 47). As with all matters of the flesh, the trouble doesn't merely arise when, like the papists, we imagine using these "minor, external things" to our spiritual advantage. Equally problematic is any insistence that such things work to our spiritual detriment. Whether prescribed or prohibited, whether used or rejected in our efforts to be holy, the flesh becomes our idol. As such, it is no longer an external, minor thing, but instead the absolute and inward fetish that defines us. Both sides, iconoclast and papist, seek to resolve that New Testament strife of flesh and spirit—the one side through ascetic renunciation, and the other by surmounting the flesh on the way to spirit. The two sides fail equally, delivering themselves to a flesh whose claims are the more insistent, the more intractable for the effort. Both sides, iconophobic and iconophilic, radical reformer and papist, drown in a flesh that has taken the place of God.

For Max Weber, it is such fleshly "drowning" that, in its Protestant guise, characterizes that "ethic" so crucial to the rise of capitalism. Weber argues that an iconoclastic worldview makes possible the notion of worldly calling and enables the rationalization of one's conduct in the world. In this way, Protestant asceticism and its injunctions against idolatry work paradoxically against themselves, since they ultimately lead to a capitalist spirit of time management and acquisition. In no way did Martin Luther anticipate this most worldly consequence of Karlstadt's iconophobia. But it is equally fair to say that Luther's theology was similarly unprepared for the world a Karlstadtian asceticism would help to create. Given his doctrine of a whole man utterly riven between the embodied world of space and time and the world of God's word—a doctrine that, impossibly, forecloses participation in the world at the same time that it precludes transcendence—it seems in hindsight inevitable that Luther's (mis)readers would ultimately prove more influential than Luther himself.

See also 1523, 1570, 1666, 1670 (*collegia pietatis*)

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Lisa Freinkel

## 1523

In the preface to his translation of the Old Testament, Martin Luther assails contemporary German usage

### *Luther's Bible and the Emergence of Standard German*

"But this Martin Luther didn't just give us freedom of movement, he also gave us the means for movement; for he gave the Spirit a Body. He gave the Word to Thought. He created the German language. This happened through his translation of the Bible" (Heine 1973, 38–39). In this quotation from the great poet Heinrich Heine, himself a converted Jew, we see one of the main strands of thought concerning Martin Luther's contribution to the history of the German language. That this opinion was not restricted to literati but was also held by language scholars can be seen in a quote from one of the fathers of *Germanistik*, Jacob Grimm (admittedly a younger Jacob Grimm), in the introduction to the second (1822) edition of his *Deutsche Grammatik* (*German Grammar*). After essentially dismissing, for historical-grammatical purposes, most works written in German between the 13th and 18th centuries, Grimm is careful to note that the writings of Martin Luther are *not* included in this evaluation. Indeed, Luther's language, because of its noble, almost miraculous purity, also because of its mighty influence, must be considered to be the "kernel and basis of the New High German language-foundation" (36).

This remarkable conjunction of the linguistic with the religious can be found not just among Luther's supporters, but also among his detractors. One of his foremost contemporary Catholic critics, Hieronymus Emsler, responds in one of several open letters to Luther's claim that the New Testament does not mention priests and bishops: "Now I am disconcerted with the monk for this reason, that our priesthood, in Latin *sacerdotium*, in his translation is not called a priesthood any more, *episcopus* not a bishop, *presbyter* not a priest, and the gobbledygook Doctor not only wants to teach us a new faith, but also a new German" (Enders 1892, 137–138).

Equally extreme, though less religiously motivated appraisals of Luther's contributions have not been lacking either, both pro and con. The scholar Wolfgang Jungandreas (1947) is often cited as an all too ardent admirer of Luther's influence on the German language (see especially p. 71), while the oft-reprinted work of Arno Schirokauer has frequently been criticized as going too far in the other direction. Notable about many of these assessments is the

use of emotion-laden labels for Luther and his biblical language which reflect the evaluators' own religious and aesthetic prejudices and detract attention from the larger areas of agreement. They also discourage any attempt to discuss the nature of the questions they try to answer, and even less to answer them with a close look at the evidence.

Vocabulary and doctrinal differences aside, Emser found Luther's Bible translation to be so good that he plagiarized it for his own Catholic Bible. And while Jungandreas entitles the relevant section of his book "Luther as the Creator of the New High German Literary Language," the facts we actually find discussed in that section have led other scholars to the more modest appellations of "mediator," "expediter," or "catalyst."

As for posing the questions correctly, a good place to start would be with the phrase "Luther's translation of the Bible." On the face of it, this expression implies that a single man is responsible for the contents of a single work. Yet we know that this simplifies the case. While he was acknowledged by all his collaborators to be the genius in charge (Kluge 1918, 60-61), he did in fact have close collaborators who concerned themselves with every aspect of the Bible translation throughout the many editions published in Luther's lifetime. Among these collaborators must also be counted the printers who published his work and whose preferences clearly influenced Luther in the course of his endless revisions.

This brings up the second point. Luther's Bible was a work in progress throughout his life, a work that underwent thousands of changes during that period. In addition, after its first appearance in Wittenberg (in 1522 in the form of the September Testament, a translation of the New Testament), it was quickly reprinted, in both approved and pirated editions, and many of these editions imposed more or less important changes on the language of their model (this is most obvious in its translations into Low German). Thus, at least as far as language is concerned, one can hardly speak of a monolithic "Luther Bible."

This more complex understanding makes the question of Luther's influence on the German language more complex as well. In general, it seems sensible to break this question down into at least the following sub-questions: (1) Did the fact that Luther translated the Bible into German make a difference in the history of the German language, especially with regard to its standardization? If so, why? (2) Did the specific linguistic phenomena in Luther's own Bible translation influence the direction of that standardization? If so, which ones? (3) Where did these linguistic phenomena come from, and to what extent was their choice or their combination Luther's own?

As to the first question, I believe there is general agreement. Luther's Bible translation, along with his other German writings and the writings of others participating in the ferment of the Reformation, broadened irrevocably the range of registers and functions for which German, rather than Latin, was the preferred linguistic vehicle. Yet, if German was the appropriate language for

most functions in the new Germany, some degree of standardization became urgent. In addition, the overwhelming popularity of Luther's Bible had a tremendous effect on the number of books printed in German, which, in turn, put special pressure on the printers, for economic reasons, to attempt some kind of supraregional language.

Why was Luther's Bible so popular? Even such a skeptic about Luther's originality as Schirokauer acknowledges the crucial factor: Luther had both the desire and the literary talent to convey to people of every station, but especially the common people, the message of the Christian Bible in their own language.

It really should come as no surprise that translating the Bible well was more important to Martin Luther than to his predecessors. His theological premises actually pushed him in that direction. If the relationship of a human being to God was to be mediated by no other human being (for example, popes or priests), but was supposed to be as direct as possible, and the Bible was the Word of God, then it was in every human being's interest to be able to understand the Bible. Two things, at least, follow from this: (1) the Bible should be as widely distributed as possible; (2) it should be available in a way that makes people want to read it, and that people understand.

If these objectives are combined, as they were in Martin Luther, with an extraordinary ear for language and a literary talent unparalleled in his place and time, the results can be, and were, equally extraordinary. Luther was obsessed with the right way to translate the Bible, as evidenced in his many letters to colleagues and friends and, therefore, also with the "proper" way of writing and speaking. His judgment on the preachers and writers of his day can be seen in the following quotation from the 1523 preface to his Old Testament translation: "And I have read no book nor letter up to now in which the right kind of German language can be found. Nobody tries to speak proper German either, especially not the chanceries of the lords and the hack preachers and puppet writers, who allow themselves to think that they have the power to change the German language." On the level of style, there is no question that Luther served as an important model to his contemporaries and continues to serve as one up to the present day. He released written German from the dry forms of the chancery and brought it closer to its spoken roots. Many of the metaphors and proverbs in his Bible translation belong to the core treasury of the modern language.

Yet surely it takes more than this to be the "creator" or "father" of the German language. What of the form of language? What of its syntax, its vocabulary, its inflectional categories, its spelling, even its pronunciation? What was Luther's influence on all of these? Obviously these questions cannot be answered without looking at standardizing tendencies in German before, during, and after Luther's time, and asking what would have been different had Luther not lived.

For quite some time before Luther, strong tendencies were at work toward

a supraregional standard written language, especially in the primarily southeastern chanceries of the Holy Roman Empire. These tendencies reached a high point under the Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519) and his powerful chancellor Niclas Ziegler, whose writing practice was disseminated in a stream of imperial documents throughout the German-speaking regions. Although this emergent southeastern standard deliberately avoided spellings, forms, and words that betrayed a narrow dialect origin, it still showed more general characteristics of southeastern German dialects—spelling, vocabulary, and inflection were necessarily influenced to some extent by regional speech.

Despite the regional idiosyncracies, “gemeines Deutsch” (common German) invariably influenced the chancery of the Saxon electors. By Luther's time, the written language of east-central Germany had already absorbed numerous linguistic characteristics of the southeastern German “standard,” necessarily giving up many linguistic features characteristic of the spoken dialects of that region. It is thus incorrect to assume, as many scholars have, that the language of Luther's Bible was somehow a direct outgrowth of the spoken dialects of east-central Germany, and that Luther established the language of Meissen–Upper Saxony as the standard German language. Regardless of the extent of Luther's influence, the emerging Standard German was, and to a great extent still is, a written language.

What did Luther himself say about the form of his language? The most famous quote is from his *Tischreden* (*Table Talk*): “I don't have a certain, special, individual language in German, but use the common German language, so that both the Over- and the Netherlanders can understand me. I speak according to the Saxon chancery, which all princes and kings in Germany follow; all imperial cities, princely courts write according to the Saxon chancery and that of our prince, and that's why it is the most common German language. Emperor Maximilian and Elector Friedrich of Saxony have thus pulled the German languages together into one certain language in the [Holy] Roman Empire.” Given the earlier quotation from his Old Testament introduction, Luther is obviously talking about form here, not style. But it is also clear that, despite obvious differences, he discerns some kind of overarching unity in the writing traditions of the southeastern and Saxon chanceries, a unity arrived at before Luther himself came onto the scene.

Yet Luther was clearly also aware of the differences, and of the fact that in his own writings, especially the Bible translation, choices frequently had to be made, between words, forms, and spellings. And it is here that many scholars see his major contribution to the emerging standard. As a mediator between north and south, Luther obviously chose those phenomena he felt would gain his Bible the widest acceptance throughout the German-speaking realm. Often his choice fell on southern forms, in line with the already widespread acceptance of those forms. But in numerous other cases, for example, when a widely accepted northern word presented itself as the alternative to an equally widely accepted southern word, he chose the northern form.

Once made, the choice did not necessarily stick. Thus, although Luther initially followed the southeastern practice of dropping a final weak *-e* vowel in word roots and grammatical endings, in his Bible translation he ultimately reintroduced this vowel in line with east-central German written (and spoken) practice. This so-called *Luther'sche -e* (Lutheran *-e*) has contributed importantly to the preservation of the inflectional system (for example, plural or subjunctive markers) that distinguishes New High German from other Germanic dialects.

A comparison of Luther's Bible with a contemporary (southeastern) Catholic one reveals that, where the two make different choices, Luther's is usually much more in line with the modern standard language (Kluge, 33–35). This is certainly not to say that Luther always made the correct choice (a teleological notion one frequently encounters in these discussions); for example, Luther holds to a vocalic distinction between the preterite singular and preterite plural of many strong verbs that has been abandoned in the standard language, and had been abandoned by numerous contemporaries of Luther (thus Luther has *steig, stigen* "he, they climbed" as opposed to the modern *stieg, stiegen*).

The linguistic level in modern German most often cited as showing the influence of Luther's Bible is the lexicon, including both word choice and word formation. It is far less easy to show any direct influence in the areas of syntax or inflection (the syntactic patterns he used can be found in many contemporaneous writings, the "Lutheran *-e*" was not just Luther's, and then there are the wrong choices such as *steig*). In a fairly recent (1990) article, von Polenz has made an interesting case for Luther's central role in the (northern-oriented) pronunciation principles of the German literary language, based not so much on his written Bible translation as on his own oral practice and that of his students.

On the whole, there seems little justification for calling Luther the "creator" or "founder" of the modern German language. But there is also little justification for the position taken by Schirokauer and others that Luther was basically irrelevant to the formation of the standard language. Moreover, one should keep in mind that it has now been more than 450 years since the last edition of the Bible was printed that Luther personally oversaw. Although in its time, it surely came closer to a living standard language than any other book, languages change. As early as the 17th century, some of the language Luther used was perceived as rare or obsolete (and thus hard for common folk to understand). Despite some revisions this situation has only gotten worse since then. The interesting question is, what should be done about it? Revise Luther's text extensively in the light of the modern language, even retranslate, or leave it as it is (with some apparatus allowing modern readers to decipher it)? It seems clear that Luther personally would have chosen the first option. While he certainly was capable of using a sacral style in his biblical passages, a style that often deliberately evokes a poetic feeling of ritual and even antiquatedness, he would hardly have wanted the whole Bible to end up conveying that feeling. Certainly he wanted the common folk to understand it.

See also 1457, 1515, 1522, 1815, 1824

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Orrin W. Robinson



The town of Dinkelsbühl installs texts behind its altars

### *The Image of the Word*

In 1537, four years after it embraced the Protestant faith, the town of Dinkelsbühl redecorated the altars of its churches. In the great parish church dedicated to Saint George, the retable of a Last Supper painting was erected, captioned in gold by the biblical text of the Institution. In the Hospital Church just around the corner, a similar altarpiece was installed, which is still in place today. The retable is known only from descriptions: an oblong wooden panel displaying, on three fields, the Institution flanked by the Ten Commandments. The hospital's records list payment "to Beckerle to make the altar, 2 florin; 5 day-wages work at the altar, 7 pounds; 5 day wages, 4 pounds; and further eight florin to Wolf, painter of the panel, to gild and make [it]" (Bürckstümmer, I, 86). Given how far and in between commissions for church ornaments were in Dinkelsbühl at the time, Beckerle and Wolf—a carpenter, perhaps, and a painter-sculptor—no doubt welcomed the task even though their craft was making pictures, not words.

The idea for this altarpiece was conceived by Matthias Rösser, the hospital's administrator and indefatigable leader of church reform in Dinkelsbühl. In 1525, when Rösser was mayor and master of the Guild, he led a campaign against the city's corrupt Catholic priest and, after a setback in the wake of the Peasant Wars, he had worked with like-minded guildsmen and clergy to win the city council to his cause. By 1537, both the Georgskirche and the Hospital Church had Protestant pastors and preachers. By then, revenue from the monasteries went to the council; church services were held largely according to the Lutheran rite; pastors had full authority in religious matters and re-

ceived their call from the city rather than from the bishop; and burghers went to Wittenberg for religious education.

But it was from Luther himself that Dinkelsbühl derived the form of the retables. In 1530, at the Diet of Augsburg, Luther had delivered a sermon on Psalm 111, in which he advised "whoever might want to have panels set up on the altar" should paint the Last Supper, along with the words, in big, gold letters, "The gracious and merciful Lord instituted a remembrance of his miracle" (Luther, *Werke*, vol. XXXI/1, 415). Like the picture he imagined, with its programmatic pairing of images and labels, Luther's statement about church pictures resists exegesis because it already *is* exegesis. To modern-day audiences who, like Luther, seek to explain everything, it may seem self-evident that altars should be decorated with images that reenact the biblical event. But it is well to remember that Luther's is the earliest known northern European text that explicitly states a general preference for the subject matter of altarpieces. As such, it was part of the campaign he launched from the Coburg fortress in 1530, and institutionalized in the Augsburg Confession, to replace practices based on custom with practices grounded in Scripture, and generally to explicate acts and objects whose motivations had been left unstated. Moreover, though the Last Supper seems the obvious subject for a retable, it was rare in the North, occurring only on some altars dedicated to specific mysteries, but almost never found, before 1530, on a high altar. The first surviving high altarpiece designed in this manner was none other than the great retable painted in the shop of Lucas Cranach the Elder for the city church in Wittenberg. Dedicated in 1547, this crucial ensemble, displayed in the church of Luther's own ministry, served both to commemorate the reformer, who died in 1546, and to proclaim, in the face of Catholic armies encamped at the city's gates, that Luther's religion was not a sect but a church.

Lutheran retables pictured a new, revolutionary frontality. This is especially true for the word-altarpiece in Dinkelsbühl. Long before they embraced Lutheranism, the burghers of that town, led by Rösser, had agitated against their exclusion from the altar. Already in 1503, the town council complained that of the countless private Masses performed for money, only a few were openly recited, and that priests did not participate in the festive church processions organized by the laity, who milled about idly in worldly clothes. As early as 1522, the Catholic priest, Bastian Süßler, was pressured into administering the sacrament of the Eucharist in both manners. These lay communions in the vernacular were performed intermittently on special days, until 1531/32, when they were briefly forbidden. During those bitter months, most citizens refused the customary Easter communion in protest. The German Mass became official in Dinkelsbühl in 1534, except for the Hospital Church itself, which tolerated Catholic services for some years afterward. In 1537, then, the word-altarpiece was erected behind an altar in the middle of the nave, traditionally reserved for the lay altar. It was there that—in Dinkelsbühl, begrudgingly—commoners had received Holy Communion from time to time. Until

the 17th century, the choir of the Hospital Church retained its late Gothic Marian retable, a remnant, perhaps, of the parallel Catholic services that had been held in this church. The Virgin's missing crown suggests that, at some point, this ensemble sustained an iconoclastic blow.

What did the new ensemble say about the altar it backed? In place of image, relic, or host, the triptych enshrined the text of the institution of Holy Communion as paraphrased in Luther's *German Mass*. These are precisely the words that the Catholic Church had formerly withheld. Now facing the congregation, so that everyone can read them for themselves, they focus communion on the laity, defining its activity as reading, understanding, and believing. In place of a priesthood of God's deputies, speaking Mass unintelligibly in low tones for (or rather, before) the parishioners, the entire laity is now, as this altarpiece announces, a congregation of priests. For as Luther put it, "All Christians are of a priestly estate" (*Werke*, VI, 407).

Openly displayed and legible to anyone who can read, the writing hails the individual as a comprehending mind. It inserts the ordinary person into the central, but formerly prohibited, connection between word and gesture on which the representative power of the Church had been founded. In the Catholic Mass, the priest intones the effective sentence from a book that—mentally and materially—he alone possesses. Published on an altarpiece, and built into a culture that, through the institutions of catechism and school, endeavors to make subjects into readers, this sentence now places everyone before the Mass. In 1537, the citizens of Dinkelsbühl suddenly inhabited the public sphere of representation that had formerly been the monopoly of the Church.

Dinkelsbühl's textual altarpiece erased what went before. Unlike the lost retable of the Georgskirche, it does not feature a Last Supper panel. In its present state, the ensemble does not gloss over this omission, but trumpets it through its physical form. The concave segments fixed on both sides, together with the molding that spans the top, give the altarpiece the unmistakable shape of a predella that has been stripped of its image-bearing corpus. The sculpted and gilded words display what a previous priesthood had withheld. The altarpiece that can be seen in the Hospital Church today may well have been damaged at some point. A report by the church custodian Johannes Melchior Wildeisen, dating from about 1645, states that the retable in the Georgskirche had been "of the same sort" as the one "still in use" in the Hospital Church, and that the former was "made with a painted piece, the Last Supper" (Bürckstümmer, I, 82). Whether this "and" adds what the Hospital Church's altarpiece, in 1645, also had is unclear from Wildeisen's wording. A much over-painted painting of the Last Supper that was recently discovered in the Hospital Church may well be the original altarpiece panel, although when and why it was removed remains a mystery. In any case, the writing is the only surviving surface behind the altar: letters written "in reserve" on the toppled idol's base.

But what sort of spectacle do evenly sculpted letters, layered in gold, provide? While a reading eye scans them from left to right and top to bottom, the

carved inscriptions form a diffuse center through their greater density in the middle panel, and through the symmetry of their triptych format. Since the writing occupies the framework of a figure in a shrine, it becomes itself a display of shiny, recursive shapes standing out from a dark background. Through their contributions to the printed book, the instrument of Scripture's new dispensation, wood-block cutters and type inventors (whose products Wolf had to imitate) could justly hail their craft for advancing a word-based faith. In 1537, writing was in and of itself a work of beauty.

In the middle panel of the altarpiece, in the interval following Christ's words about the bread—"Do this in my memory"—the carver chiseled, in high relief, not a period or comma but an object: a single blossom. Placed off-center and thus registering the contingency of patterns shaped by writing, this little flower is hardly a substitute for the carved, polychrome effigies it historically replaced. But the gaze fixes on it nonetheless, arrested by its appearance as a thing. From a distance where reading is impossible, the flower halts the eye through its isolated glint. From up close, it is read rather than viewed, and thus punctuates the biblical text and separates the words about the bread from the words about wine. Christ's order to "do this" and "remember" finds time to be performed and experienced in the pause the blossom inserts. After the bread has been blessed and elevated—Luther retained this crucial gesture of late medieval liturgy—the wine, too, is lifted, blessed, and poured; the flower will have affirmed that, in Dinkelsbühl, the chalice is also the layman's to receive. Far from being a mere thing distinct from language and devoid of inner meaning, the little rose on the altarpiece signals interiority itself, where meaning unfolds as sentiment in the heart.

If this is a reading, it violates the expected bandwidth of the written text. To an eye accustomed to writing, letters yield their meaning too effortlessly to be construed as figures, nor are the surrounding rubrics easily taken for texts. Friedrich Schleiermacher, the founder of modern hermeneutics who renewed Luther's faith, banned from poetry all verses "that look like an ax or bottle" (Schleiermacher, 580). Picture-poems to him convey messages through their external form and, therefore, violate the primacy of inner meaning that hermeneutics assumes—religiously—for language. Lutherans, by contrast, wished to exhibit writing as a beautiful emblem of all the truths it conveyed. In 1586, the Danish reformer Jacob Madsen termed the letters of the alphabet a "treasury" and "delicious hoard" which, present from the beginning and surviving until the world's end, contain within themselves all "spiritual and mundane learning" (Arvidsson, 195). In the same year, Peder Trellund crafted for the parish church in Holbjerg, Denmark, a retable, now in the Historical Museum in Copenhagen, of nineteen plaquettes in different colors, sizes, shapes, and materials. Each tablet showcases a biblical verse or saying, and each is written in a distinctive scriptural style. Cursive, antiqua, and micrography vie with each other in virtuoso calligraphy and carving, while the content of all these bits of writing—the pious texts themselves—are barely readable from any distance.

Where Master Wolf of Dinkelsbühl gave the iconoclastic texts some mea-

sure of aesthetic appeal, Trellund conceals the text kernels beneath their exuberant inscription. The heterogeneity of both the writing and the material from which writing can be made (soapstone, copper, wood, gold, and the like) belong to a forgotten phase in the historical transition from script to print. In 1580, a retable of nothing but inscriptions would have celebrated Protestantism's "new dispensation" of the word. And that dispensation depended on the printed book, specifically on Luther's German Bible, which, through the unprecedented ease of reading it facilitated and through its existence in thousands of identical copies, makes us forget—indeed renders (so to speak) immaterial—the stuff of which it is made. Carving biblical verses in stone, letter by tiny calligraphic letter, reflects a condition of writing, and through it, of communicating, distinct from the modern hermeneutic settlement, where that which counts is the message, not the medium. This a priori medial condition is not confined to eccentric objects like the Holbjerg and Dinkelsbühl retables; it obtains for countless works of Reformation art, where texts overwhelm the images they inscribe. In 1606, in the village church of Türkheim near Ulm, a local pastor ordered 195 biblical quotations painted on the walls, forty of them in Hebrew; and in 1649, the preacher and pedagogue Balthasar Schupp outfitted Hamburg's Church of Saint Jacobi with 229 choice sayings.

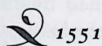
The iconic character of writing even finds expression in early editions of the German Bible itself. The still-current practice of printing the key bits of text—or "text kernels"—in a special type goes back to Luther's editor Georg Röhler. In the revised German Bible of 1541, Röhler introduced a system of setting some words in Antiqua, others all in upper-case Fraktur, and the rest in ordinary mixed Fraktur. In an afterword, Röhler explains that wherever scripture speaks of Christ, it is set in upper-case Fraktur, whereas passages referring to evil or death are set in Antiqua. On the opening page of the Song of Songs, for example, we find the "I" in "I am black" in Antiqua, whilst in "I am like you" it is capitalized in Fraktur. Not different words but the different graphic supports for words give each sentence its underlying value. It is said that Luther rejected Röhler's system as "sheer nonsense." Yet he ordered his translations and vernacular writings to be set in Fraktur probably because he believed that it, and not Antiqua, which was reserved for Latin texts, was the inscriptive vulgate for German readers and a font, or "Schriftbild," untainted by paganism and Rome. More crucially, Röhler's foregrounding of some words over others agreed with Luther's exegetical method and with evangelical doctrine, which held that scripture should be interpreted by means of scripture alone. Printing text kernels—or a "canon in the canon"—in a special type merely reified the fact that the Bible's clarity depended on iconic features of writing. For how else could a text that had been obscure for centuries display those passages that now unlock its meaning? Already in his first Bible translation of 1522—the *September Testament*—Luther engineered Scripture's legibility and through it its capacity to be its own interpreter (*scriptura sui ipsius interpres*) by means of typography and layout. Even before it was carved in wood or stone, the biblical "text kernel" displayed writing as image.

In his visits to parish churches in Saxony in 1528, Luther found God's word poorly taught and rarely understood, even by village pastors. To teach the local ministry what to teach, Luther sought ways of setting forth what should be grasped at the end of an interpretive process not yet begun. Both his large and small catechisms extracted from Scripture and its "kernels" a second-order norm. And in a spirit of conciseness that would occupy Protestant pastors for centuries, Luther would further reduce these to thumbnail sketches—some but four lines long—that summarized catechism itself. Formerly, everything began with the priest, whose ordination linked him to Christ's first disciples; now religion started with catechism, which prepared an understanding of the faith that alone was the way to salvation. In the Wittenberg Church Ordinance and in his *German Mass* (both 1526), Luther states that, prerequisite to the communion, "a crude, basic, simple, good catechism is necessary" (Sehling, I, 12). The Preface to the Large Catechism recommends that no one be admitted to the altar who had not given public proof of his knowledge of doctrine. In the Schmalkaldic Articles (1537), he keeps confession for the purpose of preliminarily "interrogating and instructing" on their grasp of faith. What began as a voluntaristic ideal—the laity approaching the altar bound only by their conscience—became obligatory in teaching and testing. Parishioners in Dinkelsbühl and Ilstorp were expected to know the texts displayed in their church by heart and to be able to recite them on command. In some Lutheran regions, being a citizen depended on passing literacy exams, the set text of which was Luther's Small Catechism. From being a visual conduit to the sacred realm, the altarpiece had become a standardized test for admission to the secular state. The odd little object in Dinkelsbühl is, therefore, an important relic for the history of both art and literature.

See also 1523, 1670 (*collegia pietatis*), 1800 (January), 1897

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Joseph Leo Koerner



In Paris, Petrus Lotichius Secundus publishes a book of Latin elegies that explore his experiences in the Schmalkaldic War

### *Make Poetry, Not War*

German literature, especially of the 16th and 17th centuries, teems with Latinate family names. Many names of German or other origin were Latinized by simply appending an *-ius* suffix—for example, Justus Georg Schottelius,