"Nova propemodum translatio": Luther and the Vulgate[1]

By Wolf-Friedrich Schäufele

The Latin Vulgate was the definitive Bible of Western Christianity for almost a millennium before largely losing this status in the Protestant churches that emerged in the early modern period. Only in the Roman Catholic Church did the Vulgate maintain its dominant position; the Council of Trent declared it the authoritative Bible edition, and, in the late sixteenth century, the so-called Sixto-Clementina provided a carefully revised version of the Latin text that endured into the twentieth century.[2]

On the one hand, it was humanism which led to the Vulgate's diminishing importance. The humanists and humanist-educated reformers studied the ancient biblical languages, Hebrew and Greek, and produced new editions of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament. The most famous of these were the Hebrew Rabbinic Bibles printed by Daniel Bomberg in Venice in 1517 and 1524,[3] the *Novum Instrumentum* of Erasmus of Rotterdam, first published in 1516,[4] and the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, printed between 1514 and 1517 in Alcalá.[5] Learned exegetical study of the Bible was no longer

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1. I would like to thank Dr Ellen Yutzy Glebe, Kassel, for editing this paper. – Abbreviations: *ARG*: *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte/Archive for Reformation History*; MBW: *Melanchthons Briefwechsel: Kritische und kommentierte Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Heinz Scheible, Christine Mundhenk (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1977 ff.); USTC: Universal Short Title Catalogue; VD16: Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts; WA: *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 73 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–2009); *ZKG*: *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*; *ZThK*: *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*.

2. Hildebrand Höpfl, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sixto-Klementinischen Vulgata nach gedruckten und ungedruckten Quellen* (Freiburg, Munich: Herder, 1913); Bruce Gordon, Euan Cameron, "Latin Bibles in the Early Modern Period," in Euan Cameron, ed., *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 3: *From 1450 to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 87–216, esp. 211–215.

3. David Stern, "The Rabbinic Bible in its Sixteenth-Century Context," in Joseph R. Hacker, Adam Shear, ed., *The Hebrew Book in Early Modern Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 76–108, 252–268.

4. See Martin Wallraff, Silvana Seidel Menchi, Kaspar von Greyerz, ed., *Basel 1516: Erasmus' Edition of the New Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

5. James P. R. Lyell, *Cardinal Ximenes, Statesman, Ecclesiastic, Soldier, and Man of Letters: With an Account of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible* (London: Grafton, 1917); Alastair Hamilton, "In Search of the Most Perfect Text: The Early Modern Printed Polyglot Bibles from Alcalá (1510–

based on the Vulgate but on the original Hebrew and Greek texts. On the other hand, new vernacular translations replaced the Vulgate in the context of worship and private piety – a consequence of the Reformation's conviction of the sole normativity of Holy Scripture, independent of the ecclesiastical teaching authority, and of the general priesthood of the baptized, as well as of Luther's doctrine of the preached word of God as a means of salvation.

Nevertheless, Latin retained its status as a scholarly language across Europe even after the Reformation, not least due to humanistic educational reforms. Protestant and Catholic theologians continued to quote the Bible in Latin in their scholarship, and Luther also advocated Latin worship services for pupils and students.[6]

Long neglected by scholars, the role of the Latin Bible in Protestantism has only recently attracted attention.[7] The denominational asymmetry is, however, remarkable, for the Reformed churches used completely new Latin translations of the Bible's original Hebrew and Greek.[8] In 1534/35 the Basel humanist Sebastian Münster published a new translation of the Old Testament, which was reprinted in Zurich in 1539 together with Erasmus of Rotterdam's Latin translation of the New Testament.[9] In 1543 a new complete Latin Bible appeared in Zurich; begun by Leo Jud, it was completed by Konrad Pellikan and Theodor Bibliander after Jud's death.[10] Sebastian Castellio[11] produced another well-known translation, and Immanuel Tremellius and Franciscus Junius trans-

1520) to Brian Walton (1654–1658)," in Cameron, *New Cambridge History of the Bible* (see note 2), 138–156, esp. 140–143.

6. WA 19, 74, 1–20, esp. 4f.: "Denn ich ynn keynen weg will die latinische sprache aus dem Gottis dienst lassen gar weg komen, denn es ist myr alles umb die jugent zu thun" ("Deutsche Messe," 1526). Cf. WA.B 412, 14f. (Nr. 1239): "denique missam latinam nequaquam volo sublatam, nec vernaculam permisissem nisi coactus" (letter from Luther to Wilhelm Pravest, 14 March 1528).

7. See Josef Eskhult, "Latin Bible Translations in the Protestant Reformation: Historical Contexts, Philological Justification, and the Impact of Classical Rhetoric on the Conception of Translation Methods," in Bruce Gordon, Matthew MacLean, ed., *Shaping the Bible in the Reformation: Books, Scholars and their Readers in the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 167–185; Bruce Gordon, "The Authority of Antiquity: England and the Latin Bible," in Polly Ha, Patrick Collinson, eds., *The Reception of Continental Reformation in Britain* (Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1–22; Gordon, Cameron, "Latin Bibles" (see note 2), 200–211.

8. On the following, see Gordon, "Authority of Antiquity" (see note 7), 10–21.

9. *En Tibi Lector Hebraica Biblia Latina planeque nova Sebast. Munsteri tralatione* [...] (Basel: Isingrinus, 1534/1535), VD16 B 2881, USTC 661173.

10. *Biblia sacrosancta Testamenti Veteris & Novi* [...] (Zurich: Froschauer, 1543), VD16 B 2620, USTC 616579.

11. *Biblia, interprete Sebastiano Castalione, una cum eiusdem annotationibus* [...] (Basel: Kündig, 1551), VD16 B 2626.

lated the Old Testament, as well.[12] Of these new texts produced by scholars in Reformed areas, Theodor Beza's[13] Latin New Testament is the only one that closely resembles the Vulgate.

The Lutherans, on the other hand, consistently upheld the Vulgate text, the defects of which they attempted to eliminate by more or less extensive editing. The bilingual *Biblia Germanico-Latina*, commissioned by Elector August of Saxony, for example, included a moderately revised Vulgate text, which was produced by the Wittenberg professors Georg Major, Paul Eber, and Paul Crell and published in 1565 in ten volumes.[14] The same is true of the three-volume Latin Bible edition of the Württemberg theologian Lukas Osiander the Elder (1534–1604), which appeared in 1589 under the revealing title *Sacrorum Bibliorum secundum veterem translationem*.[15]

This conservative attitude towards the Vulgate can be regarded as paradigmatic for Lutheranism's stance more generally regarding the pre-Reformation tradition of Christianity. Luther himself had pointed the way in this direction. Established scholarship has long acknowledged Luther's epochal achievements as an interpreter and translator of the Bible into German. Less well known, however, is the fact that Luther also worked on improving the Latin Bible text. In a research project at the University of Marburg, we reconstructed Luther's work on the Latin Bible over the course of his life.[16] This article outlines the most important results of this research.

12. *Testamenti Veteris Biblia Sacra, sive Libri canonici, priscae Iudaeorum ecclesiae a Deo traditi, Latini recens ex Hebraeo facti, brevibusque scholiis illustrati ab Immanuele Tremellio & Francisco Iunio* [...] (Frankfurt a.M.: Wechel, 1579), VD16 B 2888.

13. *Iesu Christi D.N. Novum Testamentum, sive Novum foedus, cuius Graeco textui respondent interporetationes duae: una vetus, altera nova Theodori Bezae, diligenter ab eo recognita* [...] (Geneva: Stephanus, 1565), USTC 450538.

14. *Biblia Germanico-latina, uff Churfuerstlichen Sechsischen Befehl gedruckt zu Witteberg* (Wittenberg: Schwertel, 1565).

15. Vol. 1: VD16 ZV 1541, vol. 2: VD16 ZV 29167; vol. 3: without VD16 number.

16. The project was funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) from 2009 to 2012. In addition to the author as project leader, Dr. Christoph Galle was involved as a research assistant, Anne Hammerschmidt and Jan Weifenbach as well as Stefan Michels and Matthias Westerweg as undergraduate assistants.

I. LUTHER'S EARLY LECTURES UP TO THE DIET OF WORMS (1513–1521)

Luther's work on the Latin Bible can be divided into three phases based on the dominant goals and principles. The first phase covers the period of his early lectures up to the year 1521. Luther naturally based his lectures on the Latin Vulgate text of the respective books. For his first lectures on Psalms and for the lectures on the letters to the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, Luther, like other contemporary university instructors, even commissioned special editions of the Vulgate text. The printing was done by the only printer in Wittenberg until 1519, Johann Rhau-Grunenberg (Gronenberg), who had his office in the Augustinian monastery. The wide margins and the generous line spacing allowed listeners to make note of Luther's commentaries in the form of glosses directly alongside the Bible text. Indeed, Luther himself apparently used these prints to prepare his lectures, as well: the Herzog-August-Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, for example, contains his personal copy of the Psalter edition of 1513, in which Luther had noted his glosses.[17] He wrote his longer commentaries, the so-called *scholia*, however, on separate sheets.[18]

While he was clearly relying first and foremost during this period on the Latin text, Luther endeavored from the very beginning to refer to the Hebrew or Greek text of the biblical books, as well. This might have been the legacy of Erfurt humanism.

After Luther began teaching himself Hebrew (in 1509 at the latest) and soon afterwards Greek, he endeavored to go back beyond the Vulgate, which he held in high esteem, to the original biblical texts. Of course, Luther's command of Hebrew was still in its infancy when he began teaching in Wittenberg, and it is possible to trace how his Hebrew skills improved between the first and second series of lectures on Psalms. He was therefore initially dependent on various philological tools. In addition to dictionaries and grammars such as Reuchlin's *Rudimenta hebraica*,[19] these included above all translations of the Hebrew Bible into Latin that allowed a more precise understanding of the original wording

17. The so-called Wolfenbüttel Psalter has been edited by Eleanor Roach, Reinhard Schwarz, ed., *Martin Luther, Wolfenbütteler Psalter 1513–1515*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt a. M.: Insel, 1983); also in: WA 55.I.

18. Edited in: WA 55.II.

19. Johannes Reuchlin, *De rudimentis hebraicis libri III* (Pforzheim: Anshelm, 1506), VD16 R 1252.

than the Vulgate. For the first lectures on Psalms, Luther relied primarily on the *Quincuplex Psalterium* by the French humanist Faber Stapulensis (Jacques Lefèvre d'Ètaples),[20] which contained both the Vulgate's *Psalterium Gallicanum*, based on the Greek Septuagint, as well as the *Psalterium Hebraicum*, Jerome's translation from the Hebrew. It was Jerome's translation to which Luther refers as the *(textus) Hebraeus* in the first series of lectures on Psalms. In addition, he used Reuchlin's Hebrew-Latin edition of the seven penitential psalms,[21] and he also incorporated some philological information from Nicholas of Lyra's *Postilla*.[22] Starting in 1516, Luther also used the 1515 Latin translation of the psalms by the Italian Jew Felix Pratensis (Felice da Prato, d. 1539), who later converted to Catholicism and joined the Order of the Augustinian Eremites.[23] It was only little by little that Luther came to use the Hebrew Bible autonomously for his interpretations. He probably owned the Hebrew Psalter published by Konrad Pellikan[24] by the beginning of 1517, and, by 1518 at the latest, he was in possession of his first entire Hebrew Bible, an edition printed in 1494 in Brescia.[25]

Luther's references to the *hebraica* or *graeca veritas* were accompanied by his recognition of the Vulgate's shortcomings. Apparently, by producing new editions of the texts for his lectures, he also intended to provide the listeners with an improved Latin text, in which translation errors had been expunged based on the original wording. This can be clearly seen in the case of the edition produced for his first lectures on Psalms.[26] The somewhat awkward title of the edition precisely describes Luther's intention: *Sepher thehillim hoc est Liber Laudum sive Hymnorum (qui Psalterium David dicitur) versiculis singulis in numerum et ordinem veterem reductis, additisque titulis electissime translatis et summariis super*

20. *Quincuplex Psalterium. Gallicum. Romanum. Hebraicum. Vetus. Conciliatum* (Paris: Estienne, 1509), USTC 143422.

21. Johannes Reuchlin, *In septem psalmos poenitentiales hebraicos interpretatio de verbo ad verbum* [...] (Tübingen: Anshelm, 1512), VD16 B 3406, USTC 667859.

22. Written c. 1322–1331. Modern reprint: Nicolaus de Lyra, *Postilla super totam Bibliam*, 4 vols. (Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva, 1971).

23. *Psalterium ex Hebraeo diligentissime ad verbum fere translatum* (Venice: Daniel van Bomberghen, 1515). See Paul Kahle, "Felix Pratensis – a Prato, Felix: Der Herausgeber der Ersten Rabbinerbibel, Venedig 1516/17," *Die Welt des Orients* 1 (1947): 32–36.

24. *Hebraicum Psalterium* (Basel: Froben, 1516), VD16 B 3102, USTC 661225.

25. Stephen G. Burnett, "Luthers hebräische Bibel (Brescia, 1494): Ihre Bedeutung für die Reformation," in Irene Dingel, Henning P. Jürgens, ed., *Meilensteine der Reformation: Schlüsseldokumente der frühen Wirksamkeit Martin Luthers* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2014), 62–69; Christoph Mackert, "Luthers Handexemplar der hebräischen Bibelausgabe von 1494: Objektbezogene und besitzgeschichtliche Aspekte," in ibid., 70–78.

26. See Gerhard Ebeling, "Luthers Psalterdruck vom Jahre 1513," *ZThK* 50 (1953): 43–99; Hans Volz, "Luthers Arbeit am lateinischen Psalter," *ARG* 48 (1957): 11–53, esp. 12–40.

omnes psalmos diligenter castigatus.[27] Luther briefly summarized each psalm and improved renderings of the *tituli* according to the Hebrew, which he had certainly not translated himself from the original text, but had formulated on the basis of Faber Stapulensis's *Quincuplex Psalterium.* Although Luther intended to defer to the Hebrew text for the division of the verses and to correct the body of the Latin text, as well, he only managed to do this consistently in the first five psalms. Lack of time and his still inadequate mastery of Hebrew prevented him from achieving these goals for this edition. His actual changes to the Vulgate text were ultimately limited to about seventy passages, mostly in the first psalms.

Luther failed to meet his ambitious goals, but, at the time, the production of a philologically correct Latin translation of the Bible did not seem urgent to him even for hermeneutic reasons. In his first series of lectures on Psalms, Luther considered the different textual forms of the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin versions of the psalms to be complementary, equally valid renderings of Holy Scripture that could and should be harmonized.[28] He thus used translations that he had expressly identified as false from a philological perspective as the basis for some of his theological interpretations – and he continued doing this at times even in his second series of lectures on Psalms.[29] Only gradually was this harmonizing tendency lost as his own competence in the ancient languages facilitated recourse to the original texts.

Luther's text editions for his later lectures on the letters to the Romans, Galatians and Hebrews,[30] also produced by Rhau-Grunenberg, no longer show any ambitions of improving upon the Vulgate text. If anything, Luther or the

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27. (Wittenberg: Rhau-Grunenberg, 1513), VD16 ZV 1653, USTC 693439.

28. "Quocirca suspecta est et nequaquam secure audienda illorum sententia, qui hebraicam veritatem litere ad hoc allegant, non vt illuminent [elucident] nostram, Sed vt reprobent tantummodo et contendant. Non oportet hec ita fieri, Sed 'vnusquisque in sensu suo abundet', Et Inuicem superiors arbitrari necesse est. Corollarium: Qui vellet et per tempus posset, vtique omnium expositiones, diuersissimas etiam, quam facillime posset concordare. Et ego pro mea paruitate putarem etiam mihi in Domino id non Impossibile." (WA 55.II, 498, 250–258). See Karl August Meißinger, *Luthers Exegese in der Frühzeit* (Leipzig: Heinsius, 1911), 42f.; Siegfried Raeder, *Das Hebräische bei Luther, untersucht bis zum Ende der ersten Psalmenvorlesung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1961), 6 and passim.

29. Siegfried Raeder, *Grammatica Theologica: Studien zu Luthers Operationes in Psalmos* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1977), 22.

30. *Diui Pauli apostoli ad Romanos Epistola* (Wittenberg: Rhau-Grunenberg, 1515), VD16 B 5019; *Diui Pauli Apostoli ad Galathas Epistola* (Wittenberg: Rhau-Grunenberg, 1516), VD16 ZV 24315. The text edition for Luther's lectures on Hebrews ("Diui Pauli Apostoli ad Hebreos Epistola") has not been preserved, but its wording can be reconstructed from Aurifaber's transcript (WA 57, Hebr, III–VI).

printer made only minor corrections; there are no substantial changes in the wording or meaning of the Latin. Nevertheless, his students' notes and transcripts of the lectures themselves show that Luther was by no means less aware of the Vulgate's inadequacies. On the contrary, in his lectures, he often juxtaposed the Vulgate translation with the Greek original, which had been made accessible to him in the form of Erasmus's *Novum Instrumentum*, and openly criticized mistranslations found in the Vulgate.[31] While he had initially tried to reconcile these divergent translations with each other, beginning with the lectures on Romans, he clearly placed paramount importance on a philologically precise presentation of the literal meaning. In this case, too, Luther, drew not only on his own increasing expertise in ancient languages but on the philologically more accurate translation from Greek into Latin that Erasmus had added to his newly published edition of the Greek New Testament. Starting in 1528 at the latest, Luther also referred to Erasmus's *Annotationes*.[32]

II. THE PRODUCTION OF A LATIN BIBLE TEXT (1522–1529)

A new phase of Luther's work on the Bible began with his translation of the New Testament into German at Wartburg Castle. The September Testament was not only the prelude to the translation of the entire Bible into German – an undertaking that lasted until 1534, after the work on the books of the prophets had come to a temporary standstill in 1524 due to Luther's work load and other, more pressing tasks. In the 1520s, rather, Luther was working to produce a reliable Latin Bible text, and these efforts culminated in the publication of the so-called Wittenberg Vulgate in 1529.[33]

1. Deuteronomion Mose cum annotationibus (1525). In 1522, Luther may already have been planning to produce his own Latin Bible parallel to his translation of the Bible into German. This was certainly the case by 1523: in the summer of that year, the diplomat and later bishop of Ermland Johannes Dan-

31. Raeder, *Grammatica Theologica* (see note 29), 22, 25.

32. Hans Volz, *Martin Luthers deutsche Bibel: Entstehung und Geschichte der Lutherbibel* (Hamburg: Wittig, 1978), 34, 44f.

33. On the following, see soon Wolf-Friedrich Schäufele, "Luther und die lateinische Bibel," *Luther* 90 (2019), 174–186; id., "Luthers Übersetzung der Bibel ins Deutsche und ins Lateinische," in Katharina Heyden, Andreas Müller, ed., *Bibelübersetzung in der Geschichte des Christentums* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt) (in print).

tiscus (1485–1548) reported during a visit to Wittenberg that Luther was busy translating the five books of Moses from Hebrew into Latin with Melanchthon's help.[34] The preface of the Wittenberg Vulgate claims that the book was the result of six years of work, which corresponds to such a timeframe.[35]

Luther and Melanchthon's collaboration in 1523 was an impressive project involving coordinated biblical research and translation, but it was a short-lived incident. Ultimately, they only managed to work on Deuteronomy. The fact that it was this biblical book which they so carefully edited was more or less due to chance. In the autumn of 1522, Luther had begun translating the Pentateuch into German. In the early summer of 1523, it appeared in print as the first part of the German Old Testament.[36] When Luther resumed his teaching activities in Wittenberg in the spring of 1523, one year after his return from Wartburg Castle, it was therefore logical to lecture on Deuteronomy, which he was actively translating at the time. In the following years, Luther seems to have frequently combined his work on the German Bible with the exegetical treatment of these books in his lectures. The third element was the project to produce his own Latin Bible – not, as Johannes Dantiscus believed, a completely new translation, but a thorough revision of the Vulgate according to the original biblical texts.

Luther's lectures on Deuteronomy lasted from February 1523 to spring 1524[37] and resulted in a commentary entitled *Deuteronomion Mose cum annotationibus*, which was printed by Hans Lufft in 1525.[38] The exegetical explanations were preceded here by a separate Latin Bible text, probably produced by Luther himself; whether and to what extent Melanchthon or other colleagues from Wittenberg were involved is unknown. This text was not a new translation, but a thoroughly edited Vulgate text which evidences about one thousand changes. The guiding principle in the editing was fidelity to the Hebrew original. There were, for example, a number of passages in the Vulgate text of Deuteronomy

34. "[...] iis diebus ex Hebraico libros Moisi in latinum transfert, in quo opera Melancthonis [!] plurimum utitur" (Franz Hipler, *Nikolaus Kopernikus und Martin Luther: Nach ermländischen Archivalien* [Braunsberg: Peter, 1868], 73f.)

35. WA.DB 5, 1.

36. WA.DB 8, XXI.

37. See Gustav Koffmane in: WA 14, 495.

38. VD16 B 3024 and 3025, USTC 635760 and 635761 (there are two different editions of the first print due to the use of several printing presses). Edited in: WA 14, (489) 497–744 (745–753) 759–761. Already in 1525, five reprints were published abroad as well as a German translation.

that were not in the Hebrew text, such as in Dt 12:15, where a former gloss had obviously been inserted into the Bible text. In addition, the Vulgate included some etymological translations of Hebrew names. Luther deleted all of these additions, and, conversely, where the Vulgate omitted Hebrew words or phrases, he reincorporated these. He also, in numerous instances, corrected the person and number of pronouns based on the original. Luther also endeavored to standardize lexical terms: he tried to render central Hebrew terms – in Deuteronomy, above all the numerous legal and ritual technical terms – with consistent Latin equivalents in all cases, even where the Vulgate gave different translations.[39] Luther relied in part on Reuchlin's *Rudimenta hebraica* or on Felix Pratensis in his translation of the psalms, but he also often followed his own sense of language. The consistent rendering of proper names of persons and places according to the Hebrew must have been particularly striking for contemporary readers. So he wrote *Mose* instead of *Moses*, *Josua* instead of *Iosue*, *Naphthali* instead of *Nephthalim*, *Gilead* instead of *Galaad*, etc. In addition to the corrections or improvements of erroneous translations of the Hebrew in the Vulgate text, there were also passages where Luther interpreted the original text differently, for example, where he understood the syntax differently or used different verb tenses.

The recourse to Hebrew did not necessarily result in a literal translation. As with his German translation of the Bible, Luther also paid attention here to preserving a comprehensible message in the target language. He often translated more freely than the Vulgate and improved the Latin style – for example, by eliminating Hebraisms and converting main clauses into subordinate clauses. In rare cases, however, he decided against the Vulgate in favor of a very literal rendering of the original text, thereby accepting a deterioration of the Latin style. Luther explained these two opposing, seemingly contradictory principles in detail in his programmatic statements on the German translation of the Bible, *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* (1530) and *Summarien über die Psalmen und Ursachen des Dolmetschens* (1533).[40]

Deuteronomy was the only biblical book in which Luther had so thoroughly edited the Latin text. Nevertheless, in the following years, he did not lose sight of the goal of an improved Latin Bible text. On March 21, 1527, he reported in

39. Th. Pahl called this procedure "consistent changes" ("gleichmäßige Änderungen"): Theodor Pahl, *Quellenstudien zu Luthers Psalmenübersetzung* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1931), 15, 95f., 114.

40. WA 30/II, 632–646, esp. 636,31–639,23 and 640,19–25; WA 38, 9–17, esp. 11,11–22 and 13,3–21.

a letter to the minister Clemens Ursinus that he was busy correcting the Bible – the Latin Bible must be meant here – according to the Hebrew original text.[41] Actually, Luther presented another specimen of this work in the same year: a Latin version of Psalm 119 (in the Vulgate numbering, Psalm 118), which was published by Hans Lufft at the beginning of October 1527; the title *Octonarius David* referred to the division of this psalm into groups of eight verses.[42] Again, despite the subtitle, *ex Ebreo versus* (translated from Hebrew), it was not a new translation, but a thorough revision of the Vulgate text based on the Hebrew. In the 176 verses Luther made about 250 changes, following the same principles as in his edition of Deuteronomy.

2. The Wittenberg Vulgate (1529). Apparently, Luther and Melanchthon made practical arrangements to have a Latin Bible edition printed soon after they first came up with the idea. Christian Döring, Lukas Cranach the Elder's business partner, acted as the publisher. As with the German Bible translation, the Wittenberg printer Melchior Lotther was to do the printing. As he subsequently complained in a letter to Elector Friedrich the Wise on 11 September 1524, however, Lotther had made significant investments – the production of a special printing type and the purchase of high-quality printing paper from Épinal in Lorraine – in anticipation of the commission, which Luther himself had promised him, only to have the order for the Latin Bible, as well as for the remaining parts of the German Bible, unfairly withdrawn from him.[43] In the end, the Wittenberg Vulgate was printed by Nickel Schirlentz in 1529.[44] The book had folio format, was set in a pleasing type and laid out simply but elegantly. This Latin Bible was, however, incomplete: it contained the entire New Testament, but the Old Testament only went as far as 2 Kings, omitting the poetic books and the books of the prophets. The absence of the books of the prophets again proves the connection between Luther's German and Latin Bible editions;

41. "Sum in opere Biblia corrigendi ad veritatem Ebraicam, ora pro nobis" (WA.B 4, Nr. 1089, p. 177, 23f.).

42. VD 16 B 3421, USTC 679123. Edited in: WA 23, (435) 437–442.

43. Lotther's letter in: WA.B 2, 347–352; on the Latin Bible, see ibid., 349f., line 82–99. See also, Hans Volz, *Hundert Jahre Wittenberger Bibeldruck 1522–1626* (Göttingen: Häntzschel, 1954), 48f.

44. *Pentatevchvs, Liber Iosve, Liber Ivdicvm, Libri Regvm, Novvm Testamentvm* (Wittenberg 1529), VD16 B 2594; cf. Christian Heitzmann, ed., *Die Bibelsammlung der Württembergischen Landesbibliothek Stuttgart*, section 1, vol. 4: *Lateinische Bibeldrucke 1454–2001*, part 1: *1454–1564* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2002), 268f. (no. S379). Edited in: WA.DB 5.

for the German translation of these books had also come to a standstill and would not be completed until 1532. The poetic books of the Old Testament, on the other hand, had already appeared in German in 1524. Apparently, Luther had failed to follow through with the Latin adaptation. But he was able to fall back later on his extensive preparatory work on Psalms, for which he had had a special fondness from the beginning, and, in 1529, in the same year as the publication of the Wittenberg Vulgate, he also had a Latin Psalter printed separately, which was not included in his concurrent Vulgate edition.

A large number of printing errors, especially in the Old Testament, reveal that the Wittenberg Vulgate had been produced in great haste. In 1526, Melanchthon had tried in vain, through his friend Joachim Camerarius, to obtain an imperial privilege for protection against reprints.[45] His concern proved justified: it does indeed appear that pages of the New Testament – which had already been printed separately and finished before the Old Testament – were stolen from the Wittenberg printing house, reprinted abroad, and released for sale before the Wittenberg edition was completed.[46] Hans Volz suspects that this pirated print was the edition of the Latin New Testament produced by Johann Setzer in Hagenau in 1529.[47] As a result, the publishers Döring and Cranach decided to bring their still unfinished full Bible onto the market immediately. They were able to obtain a one-year privilege from the Saxon Elector to distribute the Wittenberg Vulgate in Saxony.[48]

The Wittenberg Vulgate appeared without Luther's name, but it did name Wittenberg on the title page as the city of publication, and it also contained Luther's German prefaces to the various biblical books in Latin translation. The preface in the front matter, certainly written by Luther, provides information about the origin and purpose of the work.[49] According to this account, the printers in Wittenberg had initially wished to produce a new edition of the Latin Bible free of textual corruption due to the handwritten tradition. The original intention of the editors, Luther claimed, had been only to correct misprints rather than to change the text of the Vulgate itself. When they began working

45. MBW.T 2, no. 514.

46. See the printing privilege granted by Elector Johann of Saxony in 1529; see Hans Volz in: WA.DB 8, XLVIII-L. The text of this privilege: ibid., XLIXf.

47. *Novvm Testamentvm, Vuittembergae recognitum. Cum indice* [Hagenau 1529]. See Heitzmann, *Bibelsammlung* (see note 44), 261 (Nr. D 368).

48. WA.DB 8, XLVIII–XL; Volz, *Wittenberger Bibeldruck* (see note 43), 49.

49. WA.DB 5, 1f.

on the Pentateuch, however, he continued, they found that the traditional text had become so distorted that it was necessary to refer back to the original Hebrew. By the time they were finished, the Vulgate had been changed in most places and a practically new translation *(nova propemodum translatio)* had been created. Luther self-critically remarked that it had not been possible to invest sufficient effort in the project, because such a new translation would actually require more time and a large number of employees.

In fact, the Wittenberg Vulgate, contrary to what the preface suggested, was not a completely new translation. Rather, like *Deuteronomion Mose*, it is an adaptation of the Vulgate text. Moreover, not all parts had been revised with the same intensity. While the books of the Old Testament and especially those of the Pentateuch contain a larger number of alterations, the books of the New Testament seem to have received a more superficial treatment with significantly fewer amendments. These differences are very likely due to the working process over several years. Our attempt to distinguish the hands of different editors using philological differential analysis, and thus perhaps to identify the individual contributions of Luther, Melanchthon, or other collaborators, was unfortunately unsuccessful.

Luther probably did not deliver a complete handwritten manuscript of the Wittenberg Vulgate to the printing house, but an older printed Latin Bible into which he had entered his alterations by hand. It is unclear whether Luther and his presumed collaborators used the same copy from the beginning or whether earlier comments were subsequently compiled in one volume. In the case of Deuteronomy alone, the process can be reconstructed on the basis of detailed text analysis, which suggests that the text version of Deuteronomy for the Wittenberg Vulgate can only have been produced after the publication of the *Deuteronomion Mose* of 1524. It seems that Luther himself, or an assistant, first began to transfer the *Deuteronomion Mose*'s amendments to the Vulgate text into the full Bible to be used as a printing template, so that additional changes could be marked if necessary. This procedure proved to be cumbersome and error-prone. From Dt 2 onwards, therefore, a printed copy of *Deuteromion Mose* was apparently used, in which the few new alterations were entered, and this was given to the printing house as a template for Deuteronomy.

The historical question of which edition of the printed Vulgate served as the basis for the Wittenberg revision must remain open. Karl August Meißinger and also Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, the editors of the Wittenberg Vulgate in the Weimar Luther edition, suggested that it might have been the Vulgate

published by Johann Petri, Johann Amerbach, and Johann Froben in Basel in 1509 (and reprinted in Lyon in 1512).[50] Our own analysis, however, reveals that Luther's original was closest to the text of the 1521 edition of the Vulgate produced by Jacques Sacon in Lyon for Anton Koberger, one copy of which became known as the *Stockholm Vulgate*.[51] However, this edition cannot simply have been identical to Luther's original either; it is possible that several Vulgate editions were used, resulting in a mixture of readings.

According to the preface, the Wittenberg Latin Bible edition was expressly not intended to replace the Vulgate in the context of worship services. In fact, as mentioned above, Luther wanted to maintain Latin church services for pupils of Latin schools and students of theology alongside the German congregational worship, and the Vulgate was to continue to be used in these Latin services. The new Wittenberg edition was instead intended for learned Bible study by theology students and pastors, who could thus gain a deeper understanding of the text. In this way – or, perhaps, by this detour – educated people who were versed in Latin but not to the same extent in the ancient biblical languages could come closer to the original wording. The Wittenberg Vulgate was thus ultimately to serve the same function for these readers that Faber's *Quincuplex Psalterium*, Reuchlin's translation of the penitential psalms, and other aids had served for Luther.

The rapid progress of Protestant biblical philology soon made this purpose obsolete. It is therefore not surprising that Luther apparently did not pursue the revision of the Latin Old Testament any further and that the Wittenberg Vulgate did not undergo a new edition. Only the New Testament part was reprinted four times before 1570. Just a few traces of scholarly reception of the Wittenberg Vulgate can be found: Veit Dietrich apparently used it in the first volume of the edition of Luther's lectures on Genesis (1544/45), and Major, Eber, and Crell used it in 1565 as a basis for the Latin version of their aforementioned *Biblia Germanico-Latina*.

50. VD16 B 2584; Heitzmann, *Bibelsammlung* (see note 44), 146f. (Nr. D 220). See Meißinger, *Luthers Exegese in der Frühzeit* (see note 28), 23f.; WA.DB 5, X, XVIII–XXI.

51. *Biblia cum concordantiis veteris et novi testamenti et sacrorum canonum* [...] (Lyon: Sacon, 1521), VD 16 ZV 26610, USTC 616598. Paul Kaiser, "Die Stockholmer Vulgata, eine angebliche Lutherbibel," *ZKG* 13 (1892): 126–130.

3. The Latin Wittenberg Psalter (1529). In the same year as the Wittenberg Vulgate, the so-called Wittenberg Psalter appeared in print – not from Nickel Schirlentz's workshop, but from that of Hans Lufft.[52] The fact that the Latin text of Psalms was not also included in the Wittenberg Vulgate but only printed separately is further evidence that this edition was intended for a different purpose.

In fact, it closely resembled the edition of the *Psalterium Gallicanum*, which was based on the Greek Septuagint; although less precise than Jerome's *Psalterium Hebraicum*, it had served as the authoritative text for worship and liturgy of the Hours since the early Middle Ages. The new Wittenberg Psalter was not intended to be a new translation or revision based on the original Hebrew text as an aid for learned Bible study; it was instead only a revised and corrected edition of the traditional Latin text. Consequently, the Wittenberg Psalter was printed with the title *Psalterium translationis veteris, correctum* [The Psalter in the Old Translation, Corrected]. It is appropriate that Psalm 119 (Vulgate: 118) was not reproduced here in the version of the *Octonarius David* of 1527, carefully edited by Luther, but essentially according to the Vulgate version. In his preface[53] to the second edition of the Wittenberg Psalter, printed in 1537, Luther confirmed that his sole concern had been to correct the transcription and printing errors that had arisen in the course of transmission, but otherwise to retain the version of the text in ecclesiastical use. Obviously, Luther's edition of the Psalms was to be used in the daily morning and evening services of the Latin pupils and theology students. According to the provision for use in worship, the Wittenberg Psalter contained not only the psalms, but also the biblical Cantica traditionally used in the Liturgy of the Hours as well as the Athanasian Creed.

III. LATE PERIOD (1530–1546)

After 1529, Luther did not pursue the plan of publishing a corrected Latin Bible based on the Hebrew and Greek original. Having completed the translation of the German Bible, it was not the completion of the Latin Bible edition that dominated his agenda, but the constant revision of his German Bible. As Lu-

52. *Psalterivm Translationis ueteris, Correctum* (Wittenberg 1529), VD 16 B 3146, USTC 688052. Edited in: WA.DB 10/II, 158–289. See Volz, "Luthers Arbeit am lateinischen Psalter" (see note 26), 47–53; Heitzmann, *Bibelsammlung* (see note 44), 268 (Nr. D 378).

53. WA.DB 10/II, 185–188.

ther's philological skills in the ancient biblical languages improved, he became less interested in a precise Latin translation as an aid to a correct understanding. Instead, Luther's exegetical works now show a tendency towards a freer Latin rendering of the biblical text. Luther increasingly moved away from the Vulgate, finally translating ad hoc from the original text. This can be seen, for example, in his Commentary on Galatians, but also in the lectures on Genesis. The traditional authority of the Vulgate, to which he had adhered in general terms until the end of the 1520s, no longer played a role for Luther; he used the Latin scholarly language sovereignly and autonomously in order to guarantee the best possible and most accurate recording of the Hebrew (or Aramaic) or Greek sense of Scripture.

With this practice, Luther became a trendsetter for later Lutheranism. As long as Latin versions of the Bible served as a crutch for those unable to read the original biblical text, ultimate philological precision was essential. The growing knowledge of the ancient languages and the independent recourse to the Hebrew and Greek original texts, on the other hand, enabled theologians to deal with the Vulgate text, which was still held in high regard as a document of early Christianity, in a relaxed manner. Outside the academic sphere, the German Luther Bible dominated, anyway, and Luther worked throughout the rest of his life with his colleagues to revise and improve it. It seems remarkable that with Luther's death the Bible revision also came to an end; the reformer's translation was henceforth regarded as sacrosanct and serves as a significant identity marker of Lutheranism to this day.[54] The Wittenberg Vulgate and Luther's work on the Latin Bible, however, quickly fell into oblivion.

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54. Stefan Michel, *Die Kanonisierung der Werke Martin Luthers im 16. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 17–109.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Martin Luther arbeitete zeitlebens an der Verbesserung des überlieferten Vulgatatextes. In den 1520er Jahren verband er seine bahnbrechende Übersetzung der biblischen Bücher ins Deutsche mit deren wissenschaftlicher Auslegung an der Universität und der Herstellung eines zuverlässigen lateinischen Bibeltextes zu einem koordinierten Gesamtprojekt, das er mustergültig anhand des Buches Deuteronomium durchführte. Das Unternehmen ließ sich in dieser Weise nicht durchhalten, die 1529 gedruckte „Wittenberger Vulgata", die als Hilfsmittel zum ursprachlichen Bibelstudium für Gebildete gedacht war, blieb unvollständig. Anders als im Vorwort angekündigt, handelte es sich nicht um eine „nahezu neue Übersetzung", sondern um eine Bearbeitung der Vulgata anhand der hebräischen und griechischen Grundtexte. Ihre Wirkung war beschränkt. Während reformierte Theologen lateinische Neuübersetzungen der Bibel schufen, verwendeten lutherische Gelehrte dort, wo sie nicht selbst aus den Grundtexten übersetzten, meist weiterhin die Vulgata.