

Das new[e] Testament (New Testament), German translation by MARTIN LUTHER
In German, imprint on paper with hand-colored woodcuts
Strasbourg, Josias Rihel, 1561 (title page) or 1558 (colophon)

16mo., 464 ff., preceded by a single paper flyleaf, complete, (signatures, A-Z^s Aa-Az^s AA-MM^s) [signed \$5 (no J, W) -A1, BB as Bb bis, A, not Ai, then Aii, etc.], first leaf in A is the unsigned title page, otherwise the first five leaves only signed, with the first leaf always a letter only, no foliation, thirty long lines in Gothic type, running headlines with the chapter numbers, marginal apparatus, all printed, four- to two-line decorative initials, WOODCUT TITLE with full border and 48 WOODCUTS, all with CONTEMPORARY HAND COLORING, flyleaf partially detached, paper fragile and slightly darkened, some soiling, overall in very good condition. CONTEMPORARY 16th-century brown leather binding over pasteboard, with panel stamps on both covers, in the front depicting Jael about to drive a stake into the sleeping Sisera, 84 x 49 mm., with the monogram, "H V," and an inscription, "Sic pereant omnes omnes// inimic tui domine iudico" and on the rear, Abraham and Isaac, 59 x 31 mm., both painted in gold, orange, brown, blue, and white, and surrounded by a painted border of large leaves edged in gold, and on the front, fleur-de-lis in each corner, rounded spine with four raised bands, lettered "V G" (the owner's initials?), gauffered and painted gilt edges, with pointillé designs, on the fore edge a praying figure (naked except for a loin cloth, possibly Christ), and God the Father enthroned in a rainbow, the other edges with stylized foliate scrolls, two leather and metal fasteners, fastening back to front, some wear at corners along joints and at the top and bottom of the spine, but overall in very good condition, includes modern case. Dimensions 108 x 71 mm (binding 117 x 79 mm.).

This is a remarkable unrecorded copy of one of the smallest known imprints of Martin Luther's translation of the New Testament, of which only two other copies are recorded, both in European public libraries. Printed in Strasbourg by the distinguished publisher Josias Rihel, this imprint is distinguished by a wood-cut title page and numerous finely hand-colored woodcuts. It preserves its original, brightly painted contemporary panel-stamped figurative binding, signed by the binder Hans Volker and with beautiful painted fore-edge decoration.

PROVENANCE

1. Printed in Strasbourg by Josias Rihel in 1558/1561; the initials, "V. G." on the spine, may be those of the owner.
2. Private European Collection.

TEXT

f. A-i, Title page: incipit, "Das new[e] Testament. Doct. Mart. Luth. Strassburg 1561"; verso, [heading] *D. M. Luth.*, incipit, "Ich bitte alle meine fründe und feinde ...";

f. A-ii – A-v, [heading], *Vorrede auff die neue Testamente*, incipit, "Gleich wie das alte Testament ...";

f. A-v, recto-verso, *Das Bücher des neuen Testaments*, i. Euangelium S. Matthes ...";

f. A-vi, Gospels: f. A-vi, Matthew; f. H-i verso, f. Mark; f. M-i, Luke; S-vii, John;

f. Z-v, prologue to Acts; Z-vii verso, Acts;

ff. Gg-ii verso-Xx-viii, Pauline Epistles: f. Gg-ii verso, prologue to Romans; f. H-vii, Romans; f. Ll-iii, verso, prologue to 1 Corinthians; f. Ll-vi, 1 Corinthians; f. Oo-ii, prologue 2 Corinthians; f. Oo-ii verso, 2 Corinthians; f. Pp-viii, prologue to Galatians; f. Pp-viii, Galatians; f. Qq-vii, prologue to Ephesians; f. Qu-viii, Ephesians; f. Rr-vii, prologue to Philippians; f. Rr-vii verso, Philippians; f. Ss-iiii, prologue to Colossians; f. Ss-v, Colossians; f. Tt-i prologue to 1 Thessalonians; f. Tt-ii, 1 Thessalonians; f. Tt-vii verso, prologue to 2 Thessalonians; f. Tt-viii, 2 Thessalonians; f. Vv-I verso, prologue to 1 Timothy; f. Vv-iii, 1 Timothy; f. Vv-vii verso prologue to 2 Timothy; f. Vv-viii, 2 Timothy; f. Xx-iii, prologue to Titus; Xx-iv, Titus; f. Xx-vii, prologue to Philemon; f. Xx-viii, Philemon;

f. Xx-viii, prologue; f. Yy-i, 1 Peter; f. Yy-v verso, prologue; f. Yy-vi, 2 Peter; f. Zz-ii verso, prologue; f. Zz-iii, 1 John; f. Zz-viii, verso, 2 John; f. AA-i, 3 John;

f. AA-ii verso, prologue; f. AA-iii verso, Hebrews;

f. CC-ii, prologue; f. CC-iii verso, James; f. Dd-i, Jude;

f. DD-ii, prologue; f. EE-i verso, Apocalypse, ending f. HH-i verso.

ff. Hh-i verso-,Hh-viii verso, *Register der Epistlen vnd Euangelien so man das jar vber lieset an Sontagen vnnnd hohen Festen ... Was in der Epistel an die Romer unnd in der I and die Cor ...;*

List of Gospel and Epistle readings for Sundays and Feasts, followed by a list for Saints Days, Andrew, Thomas, Paul, Purification, Matthias, Annunciation, *Am tag da Gottes son ist Mensch worden*, Philip and James, John, Peter and Paul, Visitation, James, Lawrence, Bartholomew, Matthew, Michael, Simon and Jude.

ff. Hh-viii verso-Mm-viii, *Kurze begriffne auslegungen durch das ganz Neu Testament aus*, incipit, "Auslegung Sanct Matthes. Abraham zeugte. Abraham und David war ... Die Christen ausrotten weils nichts helfen wil," Ende des newen Testaments. Gedruckt zu Strassburg durch Josiam Rihel im Jar M D L VIII." [Mm-viii, verso blank].

Martin Luther's New Testament in German; this imprint, VD 16 ZV 1858 (one copy only listed, Stuttgart, Württembergischen Landesbibliothek); see also VD 16 B 4455, Nuremberg, 1561, published in Strasbourg through Josias Rihel in 1558 (copies in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, and Stuttgart, Württembergischen Landesbibliothek; Online resources); Universal Short Title Catalogue, 627830.

This appears to be a very rare imprint; one copy is preserved in Stuttgart (see above; listed in Strohm, 1984, E 426), and Benzing, 1981-1986, v. 3, p. 506, lists one copy in the Colmar Consistoire, as Josias Rihel, 1558, *Das New Testament*; it is not recorded in Chrisman, 1982.

ILLUSTRATION

The volume is illustrated with a series of woodcuts telling the story of Christ's life and Passion, including a title page with a full woodcut border, one larger half-page woodcut (59 x 43 mm.), twenty-three 13-line figurative woodcuts, 34 x 26 mm., and twenty-four decorative headpieces

(including ornamental designs and landscapes), all with contemporary hand-coloring in bright green, orange, and ochre (the title page also includes gray, and gold and silver highlights). Together these small-scale woodcuts tell the story of Christ's life and Passion, although they are do not follow a completely sequential organization. They must have aided the earlier owners of this volume to navigate the text, and they now add considerably to the charm of the volume:

Title page with full woodcut border, depicting Pentecost, Risen Christ, the Nativity and the Trinity;

[Matthew, twelve woodcuts] f. A-vi, decorative landscape headpiece; f. A-vii verso, Adoration of the Magi; f. B-i, Flight into Egypt; f. E-vii, Christ's Entry into Jerusalem; f. F-viii verso, Last Judgment (?), Christ, pierced by a sword and lily and flanked by Mary and John, three naked supplicants below; f. G-ii, Last Supper; f. G-iii, Christ in Gethsemane; f. G-iii verso, Betrayal of Christ; f. G-vi, Pilate Washing his Hands; f. G-vi verso, Mocking of Christ; f. G-viii, Entombment; f. G-viii verso, Resurrection.

[Mark, four woodcuts] f. H-i verso, decorative landscape headpiece with two deer; f. L-vi, scourging of Christ; f. L-vii verso, Three Mary's at the Tomb; f. L-viii, Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene (?);

[Luke, eight woodcuts] f. M-i, decorative headpiece; f. M-ii verso, Annunciation (larger half-page woodcut, 59 x 43 mm.); f. M-iii, Visitation; f. M-iv, Presentation of John at the Temple (?); f. M-v verso, Annunciation to the Shepherds; f. M-vi, Presentation; f. S-iii, Buffeting of Christ; f. S-iv, Carrying the Cross;

[John, two woodcuts] f. S-vii, decorative headpiece; f. X-viii, Christ Washing his Disciples' Feet;

[Acts, three woodcuts] f. Z-vii verso, decorative headpiece; Z-viii, Ascension of Christ; f. Aa-i, verso, Mary and the Apostles [Pentecost];

Decorative headpieces at the beginning of all the remaining books (note 2 Thessalonians, f. Tt-viii, lamb of God; 2 Peter, f. Yy-vi, a lamb; and 2 John, f. Za-viii, verso, a deer in a landscape) except Philippians, f. Rr-vii verso (undecorated).

BINDING

This book is preserved in its contemporary binding, an outstanding example of a sixteenth-century panel-stamped binding that has been brightly painted. The front panel depicts the rather gruesome scene of Jael about to drive a nail into the sleeping Sisera. This panel includes the initials "H. V." and has been identified as the work of Hans Volker, a binder active in Jena in 1572 (probably died in 1608); see EDBD, p00081, workshop w00419, and see also Weale, 1898, p. 284, no. 777, with slight differences (front panel only) from L. Vallae, *Latinae lingua . . .*, Antwerp, 1526; Haebler I, 457-458; Helwig, 1937, p. 231; and Helwig, 1954, p. 49. The back panel (not identified in other sources), is equally vivid and depicts the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. The beauty of this binding is enhanced by the careful decoration of all three edges, which were gilded, and then decorated by colored pointillé designs, with stylized leaf scrolls on the top and bottom edges, and a delicate painting on the fore-edge depicting a kneeling figure (Christ?) and God enthroned in a rainbow.

Immediately after his famous statement at the Diet of Worms in 1521 ("Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen."), Martin Luther accepted the protection of Frederick the Wise, the Elector of Saxony at Warburg Castle. There, in only three months, he produced his German translation of the New Testament from the original Greek, subsequently printed in Wittenberg in September 1522. His translation of the entire Bible appeared in 1534. No work undertaken by Luther was more important. While not the first German translation, this was the first to be disseminated widely in affordable copies (between 1522 and 1546 it is estimated that more than three hundred editions were published in High German, representing more than a half million copies), distinguished by the excellence of Luther's German prose and by the accompanying marginal notes and prefaces.

Strasbourg, a free imperial city, was an important center of German-language printing, second only to Cologne and Nuremberg, and a major center for printing Luther's ideas from the 1520s. The city formally adopted reformation teaching in 1529 when the Magistrates abolished the Latin Mass after a decade of Protestant activities. Chrisman, 1982, states that the first complete edition of Luther's German translation of the Scriptures was printed in Strasbourg in 1535, followed by five more editions from 1537 to 1547. Eight editions of Luther's New Testament were printed between 1529 and 1549, and then none until 1576. Chrisman was apparently not aware of this New Testament, printed by Josias Rihel in 1558/1561 (this imprint not listed in her 1982 bibliography of Strasbourg imprints). Rihel came from an important printing family that had close ties with the humanist/reform circles in the city, and especially the Gymnasium. His father, Wendelin, opened his print shop in 1535. After his father's death in 1554, Josias continued the family shop near the Gymnasium, while his brother Theodosius, ran an independent shop.

The survival of this tiny book is quite remarkable; only two other examples of this imprint have been identified. Most editions of Luther's Bible were much larger, and thus more expensive. For example, of the approximately 350 High German Bibles in Luther's translation from 1522 to 1546, the year of Luther's death, listed in Reinitzer, 1983, table II, pp. 116-125, there are only twelve imprints in sextodecimo format (of these none are complete Bibles, and only two are New Testaments). This is a New Testament that many people could have afforded. Its popular audience is also suggested by the inclusion of numerous woodcuts illustrating the life of Christ. The colorful painted panel-stamped binding with its beautifully gauffered and painted edges on this particular copy suggests it was a cherished possession and helps explain its survival.

LITERATURE

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VD 16. *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts (25 vols., Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1983–2000)*.

Volz, Hans. *Martin Luthers deutsche Bibel: Entstehung und Geschichte d. Lutherbibel*, Hamburg, 1978, and Berlin, Wittig, 1981.

Strohm, Stefan, with Peter Amelung, Irmgard Schauffler, and Eberhard Zwink. *Die Bibelsammlung der Württembergischen Landesbibliothek Stuttgart: Katalog. Abt. 2. Deutsche Bibeldrucke, Band. 1. 1466-1600*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Frommann-Holzboog 1984.

Weale, W. H. *Bookbindings and Rubbings of Bindings in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, London, 1898.

ONLINE RESOURCES

VD 16: Verzeichnis der Drucke 16. / 17. Jhd. (VD16 / VD17) (1/1)

<http://gateway-bayern.de/VD16+B+4455>

Universal Short Title Catalogue (St. Andrews)

<http://www.ustc.ac.uk/cicero/record.php?SN=627829> (Strasbourg-Nuremberg)

This imprint

<http://www.ustc.ac.uk/cicero/record.php?SN=627830>

Einbanddatenbank (Database of bindings in German Libraries)

<http://www.hist-einband.de/>

<http://www.hist-einband.de/recherche/ebwerkz.php?rwz=b&id=100170b>

Bertram Salzmänn and Rolf Schäfer, "Bibelübersetzungen, christliche deutsche"

<http://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/nc/wibilex/das->

[bibellexikon/details/quelle/WIBI/referenz/15285/cache/1ee18574e2ab8d0957ddde9a8aea4571/](http://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/nc/wibilex/das-bibellexikon/details/quelle/WIBI/referenz/15285/cache/1ee18574e2ab8d0957ddde9a8aea4571/)

[#h8](http://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/nc/wibilex/das-bibellexikon/details/quelle/WIBI/referenz/15285/cache/1ee18574e2ab8d0957ddde9a8aea4571/#h8)

"Translations of the Reformers, Martin Luther, William Tyndale and Myles Coverdale,"

University of Glasgow Special Collections

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/specialcollections/virtualexhibitions/divinewritethekingjamesbibleandscotland/translationsofthereformers/>

Luther's Bible

<http://www.bible-researcher.com/luther.html>

Wikipedia, Luther's New Testament, 1522, 1546, including Luther's opening words and the Prologue to the New Testament (as in this imprint)

http://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Lutherbibel#Das_Newe_Testament_Deutsch

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