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The Word Made Print: Luther's 1522 *New Testament* in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction

IN A LETTER WRITTEN IN 1556, a Reformed citizen of the Swiss town of Zug describes the events that led to the mass burning of Bibles that occurred in his town in that year.¹ The townspeople were divided, according to the letter writer, between those who read “the Gospel, the pure teaching, the word of God” with great enthusiasm for themselves, and those of the “papist” persuasion terrified to read the Holy Scripture on their own. The split had developed over the years, he explains, because local preachers, lax on the issue of lay access to the Word, had allowed vernacular *New Testaments* in particular to circulate among Zug’s largely Catholic citizenry, a situation, reports the letter writer, not tolerated in any of the other cantons. An abrupt halt was called to this leniency in 1556 when a newcomer began to preach that only faith, and not works, would secure salvation. When challenged on his sermon by a band of Catholic citizens, the preacher referred them to passages in the vernacular Bible he had found in Zug and used since his arrival there. The “papist rabble” became incensed, but the Reformed preacher remained adamant. The town council saw a potential for conflict in the situation and called a general meeting.

Each side presented its arguments. The Catholic citizens of Zug were outraged by the preacher’s suggestion that faith was more essential for salvation than good works. Moreover they were terrified that he had based the offending sermon on his reading of a vernacular Bible available locally. Such ideas could prove highly unprofitable to the local Catholic hierarchy. Demoting good works to secondary importance could also lead to public immorality and disorder.² Most importantly, however, the preacher’s sermon and his reference to a German Bible as proof for its truth “sound[ed] Lutheran.” When examined on this point by the council, the culprit is said to have retorted: “I don’t know what Luther has preached, I’ve never even seen him, let alone heard him preach.” Luther played no role, he insisted, in his doctrine of justification by faith. “But,” he is said to have repeated several times, “I can prove my sermon according to the Bible.”

The town council conferred. Although some nearby towns permitted the printing and retailing of a German *New Testament* in a translation by “the very learned Jerome Ems,” an edition authorized and permitted by the Catholic Church,



FIGURE 1. Jerome Hornschuch, *Orthotypographia*, 1608. Reproduced by permission of the Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago.

the obvious conflict that widespread availability of vernacular Bibles had caused in Zug demonstrated that it had been wrong to allow laypeople direct access to Scripture. Thus the council pronounced that the “tütsch bibel” (vernacular Bible) was “heretical and counterfeit,” and issued an ordinance that “all Bibles in our town” were to be delivered to the city hall and publicly burned, for, as a Catholic citizen is said to have announced, “Ein lug ist glich so guot zetruken als ein warheyt” (A lie is as easy to print as the truth).³

The incident at Zug allows us to pose a series of questions about Bibles, printing, truth, and identity in the early modern period, questions I propose to explore in the following essay. First: what did the Catholic citizen mean when he referred to the ease with which “lies” could be printed during the early modern period? What kind of reputation did the printing industry have? Was this reputation in any way connected to the increased production of vernacular texts, and particularly of Bibles, in the first several decades of the sixteenth century? The number of texts printed in German jumped radically after the publication of Luther’s vernacular *New Testament* in 1522 in Wittenberg, as the printers responded to a surge in the market with increased production.⁴ Both spiritual and temporal authorities reacted with concern as it became clear that battles for both confessional and political allegiance could be fought as easily in the printshop as in the churches and streets. Profitability and dogma, lucre and legality thus locked horns, and market factors often won out in dictating what was printed where, when, and under whose name. The town council of Zug thus had good reason to be suspicious of the industry.

Second: was the translator’s identity a factor in defining the “truth” or “falsehood” of Scripture during a period when vernacular Bibles were being printed with almost reckless abandon? The history of Bible translating was even then a long and controversial one; new versions had been commissioned and completed as both religious and political acts, in ironically frantic attempts to create by reduplication what was assumed to be the “original” text. In the Western tradition, the originally collective act of Scriptural translation was a learned activity that became an individual achievement in late Latin antiquity and the early medieval period, only to be transformed again in the late middle ages into an institutionally promoted exercise of revision and emendation, as individual commentators and scribes reworked earlier versions of the *Vulgata* in devout anonymity.⁵ The forces of Humanism, however, together with the invention of print, invested translation with a new, public task. Mechanical reproduction would guarantee the restoration of the Ancients to their original greatness in texts edited by their grateful sons, while at the same time creating an international *respublica literaria* “enlightened by print.”⁶ The reformatory movements of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, with their concentration on spiritual regeneration, followed suit in demanding widespread availability of vernacular *New Testaments* in particular, as the testimony of the original Christians would provide models for

contemporary spiritual rebirth. Reform may have aided the spread of literacy and demanded the “invention” of printing rather than the reverse.⁷ Bible translation rapidly became not a problem to be debated in the studies of scholars, but a popular, political event.

For the German-speaking territories of Central Europe, above all, at a time sandwiched in between Lutheranism and Calvinism, the question of the translator’s identity was not a matter of purely scholarly debate. For some, a text’s provenance seems to have been crucial in guaranteeing its truth, or at least its legality. It was specifically the Ems edition, after all, with its guarantee by the Church, that had been permitted in towns close to Zug. For others, however, such as the troublesome preacher, the translator’s identity was less crucial, since, following the doctrine made famous by the man whose teachings he claimed not to know, *sola scriptura*—the text alone—justified the legitimacy of his claims. The town council too seemed less concerned with the specific provenance of individual vernacular Bibles, as the indiscriminate confiscation and burning illustrates, even though the translator’s identity, together with official recognition by either spiritual or temporal authorities, might have been one way to spot theological “falsehood” in an age of confessional strife. At the very least, then, the question of clear identification was ambiguous; at the most it was an occasion for strife.

Finally: how did a prominent figure like Luther, whose greatest single achievement lay in his new and revolutionary Bible translation, react to the perceived ambiguity of truth and falsehood in Scripture, and to the difficulty of establishing authenticity in an age of mechanical reproduction?⁸ Did he believe his was the “true” version that should be issued only with his permission? What was it that made one version a true “Luther-Bibel,” “his” text, and the next one a lie?⁹ In fact, a peculiar sense of propriety and proprietorship with respect to the Bible emerges in Luther’s *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* (Letter on translating), written eight years after he first published his German *New Testament* in 1522, as he insists as part of a polemic against a pirated edition of the *New Testament* that only “his” version, “mein Testament” (my Testament), is the true and authentic text. Had the man whose message it had been to allow everyone access to the Word come to resent the very proliferation of Scripture he recommended, because it took the “truth” out of his hands? It is not by chance that the center of the *Sendbrief* is a debate about Luther’s rendering in German of Paul’s famous distinction in Romans 3:28 between the Spirit and the Letter, or between faith and good works, precisely the point of debate in the town of Zug. The Reformer defends himself and his German by redefining his own notion of reproduction, of translation, and by identifying with, indeed almost becoming, a copy of Paul. In an age of unreliable and uncontrollable proliferation of texts, accuracy in reproducing the Word of God could be guaranteed only by going beyond the letter to the message of spiritual truth.

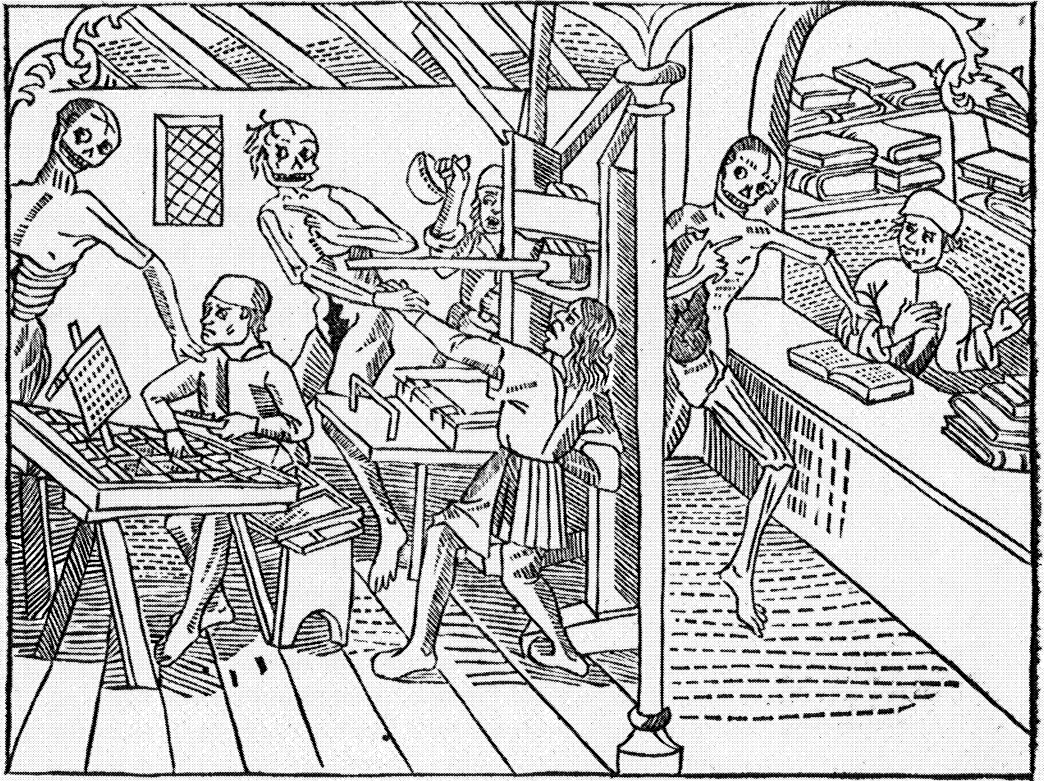


FIGURE 2. Matthias Huss, *La Grante Danse Macabre*, 1499.
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Museum.

I

The Bible burning in Zug, although clearly antagonistic to the Lutheran cause, nevertheless reflects a growing mistrust of printing as a reproductive technology in the early modern period. It is a matter of scholarly debate whether printing simply perpetuated the uses and abuses of the medieval, monastic scriptorium and later, secular *Schreibstuben*, or whether mechanical technology produced radically new and unknown problems of reproduction of its own.¹⁰ From the beginning, however, there was a clear perception that the gradual move away from the individual hand of the scribe (and the concomitant loss of immediacy) was problematic. The reliance of the first printers, for example, on the medieval hand of *textura* as a model for the first typeface and the creation of cursive fonts,

with their close resemblance to script, by the Venetian Aldus Manutius in the late fifteenth century in any case demonstrate that the shift from written to printed reduplication by no means constituted a clean break with the past.¹¹ But any continuities that may have existed between the world of the scriptorium and that of the printshop broke down at precisely that point where mechanical reproduction overtook the individual copyist, namely in the purely quantitative leap in the numbers of texts both demanded by and produced for an ever-growing, although still limited literate public.¹² The new technology allegedly guaranteed homogeneity and thus control over the newly informed classes; the possibility of multiple imprints of the same text was seen by some as one way of maintaining confessional and political unity over time and space.¹³ But the promise of constancy immediately became suspect in an age still fully convinced of worldly transitoriness, and the notion of control was illusory in a world of vernacular texts through which unproctored readers had access to information that they could interpret in a dangerously subjective way.

While it has been asserted recently that we are still quite uninformed about the process of book publishing and printing during the early sixteenth century in Germany,¹⁴ we do have scattered accounts and representations of early modern printshops, and, through them, access to contemporary attitudes toward the activities being pursued there. A clear suspicion of Gutenberg's industry emerges from such early representations as Matthias Huss's picture of a printshop in his *La Grant Danse Macabre des hommes et des femmes*, printed in Lyons in 1499, which mocks the claim that printing can capture the fleeting moment in type (fig. 2). Huss demotes the much-lauded invention of printing, the art that was to let ancient authors live again and that promised eternal life to their modern successors, to the status of just one profession among many in the face of the devils of death, to an activity that in no way could guarantee immortality in spite of the artificial permanence of print as opposed to the ephemeral presence of the spoken word.

Jerome Hornschuch, in his *Orthotypographia* printed in Leipzig in 1608, distrusts mechanical reproduction for somewhat less cosmic reasons, namely technical imprecision in the contemporary printing industry.¹⁵ His little treatise on printing testifies to both the differences and the parallels between the great Renaissance printing houses of Italy and France and the smaller shops of a century later and to the perceptible decline of standards. Hornschuch sees the origins of the decline in the printers' haste, driven by greed, and in the ignorance and drunkenness of the typesetters and correctors (apparently a commonplace). In a woodcut that precedes his text, Hornschuch places a servant girl in the background; she carries the inevitable jug of beer (fig. 1). Hornschuch's treatise was designed to combat such irregularities in the small printshops of central Europe. But the increase in competition and deteriorating material conditions of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that created in Hornschuch



FIGURE 3. *Neue Jarh Avisen, In Jehann petagi Kramladen, 1632.*
 Reproduced by permission of the Herzog-August
 Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, West Germany.

a new version of Huss's earlier cynicism have been demonstrated to have afflicted the industry since its inception. The infallibility of the printed word as opposed to the "instability of script" was recognized even by contemporaries as a fiction.¹⁶

The unreliability of the huge numbers of printed texts on sale, even if set correctly and legibly, is thematized, finally, in a broadsheet published by Jehan Petagus in 1632 (fig. 3). Potential buyers and readers of printed texts are scoffed at by the fool figure in the center of the illustration for being so naive as to believe what they read, merely because it appears on the printed page.¹⁷ Petagus reaches the height of ironic self-criticism of a rapidly expanding industry. And yet, he only catches the crest of the trend that had been growing since the mid-fifteenth century.

Representations and descriptions such as those by Huss, Hornschuch, and Petagus reflect a clear cynicism among contemporaries about the printing industry in general. They introduce a certain skepticism with regard to the recently developed thesis that the printshops of the early modern period were "focal points of cultural and intellectual exchange."¹⁸ It is more likely that the material conditions of (re)production made the printshops of the early modern period into "typical pre-industrial places of work" that intervened in a brutal and abrupt way between a text in the hands of its still scribal author and its widespread,

indeed uncontrollable dissemination in print.¹⁹ Socrates' early suspicion of writing and his doubt as to the possibility of seeking truth by any means other than the spoken word were shared by many in their doubts about print.

The suspicion of printing that becomes increasingly apparent in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries found its expression in two intimately related sets of accusations. First: printers were hasty and negligent in the practice of their trade. Second: they were concerned above all with the pursuit of profits. The sources suggest that these charges found some basis in fact. The substantial capital investment involved in establishing a shop made it necessary to sustain profits while putting questions of quality aside. Even though Gutenberg is said to have used a simple wine press in the construction of his first press, the cost of more sophisticated equipment, although different in different areas for presses of different descriptions, was enormous, often running to the equivalent of several modest homes or to a great quantity of agricultural commodities.²⁰ Moreover, the steel punches for the new movable type had to be designed by highly skilled metal-workers, sometimes even goldsmiths, whose prices were dear.²¹ The fonts were then manufactured in a complex procedure of stamping, molding, and casting of a combination of alloys, a process that, while allowing the fonts to be reproduced at random if the punches could be acquired, also had the principal disadvantage of producing soft type that wore out quickly and had to be replaced, an expensive and tedious process.²² Even paper was still a relatively rare and thus expensive material, although the price dropped—along with the quality—in inverse proportion to both its availability and the demand for books during the Reformation.²³ Luther himself complains of worn type and bad paper in a letter to Spalatin in 1521:

But I can't tell you how this printing annoys me and how much I regret it. If only I hadn't sent [them] anything in German! They print so uncleanly, so uncarefully, and in such a confused way . . . not to speak of the filthiness of the type and of the paper.²⁴

Finally, once the press, fonts, ink, and paper, regardless of quality, were acquired, the printers, trying to cut costs and increase production, would hire uneducated setters and unreliable correctors, dismissed as “a vagabond, ignorant bunch” by one professor,²⁵ who, since labor was cheap, received wages that made carelessness an appropriate response.²⁶ In carrying out the major tasks in the printshop—composing, inking, operating, and correcting—only the composer and corrector had to be even literate; and yet, the story is told of a corrector who could not read Latin and thus overlooked the misset “porcos” (pigs) for “procos” (suitors) in a text.²⁷ While the anecdote confirms Erasmus' charge that it was easier to become a printer than a baker,²⁸ it also indicates that with the increased demand for printed books and the concomitant rise in numbers of printers, competition and financial liquidity dictated that more care be taken with finances than with

the quality and accuracy with which books were produced. The result was that ever more texts of ever poorer quality were put into circulation.

The exigencies of establishing a printshop were compounded by the vicissitudes of the individual shop in an as yet unregulated industry. The world of the scribe provided no models for dealing with problems of marketing and distribution that often crippled the individual printer in times of wildly fluctuating political situations and markets. Survival of any given shop depended, then as now, on maximum production and sales, difficult goals to attain in an industry that had grown too quickly to be regulated by the medieval guilds.²⁹ The first imperial copyright was not issued until 1530. Before this, local “privileges” protected against reprints only within a certain territory.³⁰ Thus, because there was no such thing as profits based on exclusive marketing, the necessity both to beat other printers to the punch with specific imprints and to flood the market immediately as a way of discouraging pirate editions led to what has demurely been called “unwholesome competition” by a modern historian of printing, and the “treacherous rage and rivalry . . . in this miserable trade” by a contemporary.³¹

At the same time as the economics of printing dictated who and what was published when and in what numbers, the strains of the political situation in any given area often made it more advantageous even for the legitimate printer of a text either to manipulate the original into politically acceptable form or to design a fictitious imprint, with the name of a far-away or false place of publication, until the reception of a controversial publication could be better judged.³² City-specific censorship laws forbidding the printing of inflammatory texts existed in Strassburg as early as 1504, and became increasingly specific and strict in the first half of the sixteenth century, as more and more books were printed in connection with specific confessional debates.³³ Sometimes the authorities of smaller towns took matters into their own hands, as in the town of Einsiedeln in the 1560s, where a bookseller was arrested, bound to a stake, and forced to watch his wares, predominantly Protestant books, burned before his eyes. A bystander is said to have remarked that the bookseller should be happy “that they didn’t burn him together with his books.”³⁴ The result of such adverse conditions was a substantial fluctuation in the number of printshops from decade to decade, even from year to year, as presses were established, then folded, replaced, and/or moved elsewhere as a result of both the demands of the market or some new phase of confessional strife.³⁵ Such irregularities caused uneasiness in the industry at large, since survival made political protection of more direct importance to the printers, publishers, and authors of the early sixteenth century than conviction, morality, or even the desire for accuracy.

One might expect there to have been a difference between the reproduction of secular and that of sacred texts. But if printing in general was subject to accusations of inadvertent inaccuracy, then its specific and deliberate corruption

of the Word of God was all the more hotly debated, not only because the industry had its origins in the reproduction of sacred texts but because the availability of vernacular Scripture had long been an explosive affair. The first printed German-language Bible appeared in 1466. The forewords of some of the seventeen subsequent editions before Luther's 1522 *New Testament*, most known then as now only by their date and place of origin, some by the name of their printer, speak of their producers' delight that technology combined with learning had made it possible for "every Christian person" to read "this Book of Scripture with great devotion," so that the teachings of the "Holy Roman Christian Church" could spread throughout the world.³⁶ But there was active resistance, particularly on the part of the Church, to the dissemination of the Word of God in the vernacular and on a mass basis, since, in an argument that anticipates the logic of the town council at Zug, direct and widespread access to sacred texts constituted a deliberate distortion of the original message of Scripture that could be interpreted correctly only by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Only the Church could "guide, discipline, and control."³⁷

Printing thus came to be understood by some as directly responsible for the rise and success of the heretical reformatory movements in the late fifteenth century. In one of the many ecclesiastical recommendations written at that time, the printing of even pre-Lutheran Scripture in the vernacular is specifically condemned. The *Avisamentum salubre quantum ad exercicium artis impressorie literarum* (A salutary directive concerning the practice of the art of book printing) labels the mechanical reproduction of vernacular Scripture an "evil" that must be prevented at all costs before the "spark of error" grows into a "roaring fire."³⁸ The *Avisamentum* proved unsuccessful; vernacular Scripture continued to be printed in great quantities. Some forty years later, in 1529, Duke Georg of Saxony, one of Luther's most powerful antagonists, points to the proliferation of Luther's "false translation" in "many thousand copies, printed in both small and large format" as the reason why so many simple and pious Christians had been misled into acts of insubordination.³⁹ Thus, above and beyond the accidental inaccuracies of reproduction that printing introduced, the widespread availability of vernacular Scripture in print was conceived of as a deliberate corruption of the Church's truth.

Against this background, the many comments about the popularity of Luther's writings and especially his Bibles may be understood as referring to the industry that made possible the widespread dissemination of the Reformer's ideas in print. A friend of Agrippa of Nettesheim writes to him from Basel in 1519: "I have walked up and down throughout the whole city of Basel. Luther's works are not for sale anywhere. They have long since been sold." Spalatin reports of Luther's works from the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1520: "Nothing is bought more often, nothing read with more appetite." The high demand clearly encouraged the printers to increase the supply. "The whole world," writes a religious devotee

from Zwickau, “wants to deal in Dr. Martin Luther’s books and get rich doing so.”⁴⁰ Indeed, somewhat later, the Catholic official Johann Cochlaeus, one of Luther’s most energetic opponents, maintains that the source of the Reformation’s rapid growth lay in the printers’ and booksellers’ greed.

The disposition, efficiency, and investments of the printers and booksellers was a special boost for this new *New Testament*. Anything that was “Lutheran” was usually printed in the most decorative and efficient of ways, the Catholic books, on the other hand, carelessly and corrupted. And that is how it happened that the texts by Luther or by his followers were printed, primarily with the support and money of the printers and press, and always in great numbers so that they would be disseminated to an even greater extent.⁴¹

The printers were willing, Cochlaeus’ remarks reveal, to take the investment risk of printing “anything Lutheran.” Their desire for profit rather than religious devotion contributed, moreover, to the development of subversive marketing techniques. The authorities had attempted, it seems, to control the distribution of Lutheran texts by surprise visits to presses and bookshops. But, Cochlaeus writes:

The booksellers . . . were in the meantime secretly warned by the inspectors and kept their Lutheran texts hidden as a result, putting only some profane texts and other things on display to be sold. The result was, finally, that whosoever came in asking for Lutheran texts would have to buy them separately and in secret, if the bookseller was scared and thought himself in danger, for a higher price than if it had been in public.⁴²

Thus precisely the controversial nature of printed texts either attributed to Luther or “Lutheran” in nature caused them ultimately to be the more profitable ones. As a result, these were the texts produced and reproduced most rapidly and in the largest editions.

Of course, more often than not the large editions of Luther’s works made possible by mechanical reproduction were an indication of a healthy market. One might assume in turn that Luther was pleased by the application of technology to his religious reform. Indeed, much has been made of printing as the impetus for and as a sustaining feature of the Reformation.⁴³ But little attention has been paid to the unique problems that widespread dissemination introduced. With increased production came not only the inevitable competition and subsequent decline in quality of production I have described, but also new strategies of popular persuasion through print on the part of antagonistic authorities to *combat* the Lutheran reform, strategies that collaborated with the printers’ carelessness and obsession with profits to create an unreliable and unpredictable world of print in which Luther’s texts, and particularly his Bibles, had an uncertain and uncontrollable fate. The publishing history of Luther’s first translation of Scripture, the *Septembertestament* of 1522, and of the widespread plagiarism of “his” Bible between 1522 and 1529, reveals the regularity with which inauthenticity of various kinds crept in between the “original” text and its widespread appearance

in print. In an age of furious mechanical reproduction, it became increasingly difficult to distinguish between the truth and a lie on the basis of Scripture alone.

II

It is well known that Luther accomplished the astounding feat of translating the *New Testament* into German between December 1521 and the end of February 1522, during his confinement on the Wartburg. Melchior Lotter the Younger was retained in Wittenberg for the job of printing the translation by the publishers of Luther's works, Christian Döring, and the painter, Lucas Cranach.⁴⁴ The *Septembertestament* contained twenty-one woodcut illustrations out of Cranach's workshop, many of them signed by the master himself. The young printer must have worked like lightning, on three presses simultaneously, it is reported, because—and this was in all likelihood the reason for his haste—the first edition of the *New Testament* was ready for the Leipzig Book Fair by the end of September.⁴⁵

Lotter's achievement set new standards for the industry. The first edition was printed in record time and numbered an unprecedented 3000 copies; it was priced at the comparatively inexpensive, although still substantial, price of one and a half gulden, much more affordable in its convenient quarto size than the folio editions standard for Bibles and meant for the well-to-do buyer. While it was not unusual that the name of the translator did not appear in this first edition (it seldom did in vernacular Bibles), it is surprising that neither the date of publication nor the name of the printer was given.⁴⁶ The young Lotter probably feared controversy since his father, Melchior Lotter the Elder of Leipzig, had just set his son up in business in 1519 in Wittenberg as master of a second branch of the paternal printshop. The new shop had been established with the generous help of the Cranach-Döring publishing team since the Lotters, both father and son, had not had enough excess capital to finance a second shop. Printing 3000 copies of any text would have involved a huge capital outlay in terms of materials and time. The investment must have been considerable, especially for a young printer whose repertoire was not yet large or diverse enough to cover potential losses. Although Lotter must have anticipated a marketing coup with his vernacular *New Testament*, his debts to local paper and ink suppliers as well as to Cranach and Döring would have been large enough to warrant all caution. The anonymity of the first edition of the recently banned monk's translation was thus designed in all likelihood to protect the initial capital investment.

The popularity of the *Septembertestament* was so great that already in December of 1522 a new edition had to be printed. Lotter was again responsible. Luther is said to have made numerous corrections to the original text, although the speed with which Lotter worked to produce an edition of equal proportions considerably influenced the form that the emendations took. Very few of them can in fact be demonstrated to have been Luther's work, and no wonder, since

Lotter began printing the December edition almost before the September edition left the press.⁴⁷ It is significant, however, that this second edition did indicate the identity of the printer, probably because the financial success of the September edition, with a gross intake of 4500 gulden, had made it possible to pay off old debts. And yet, although the translation clearly contained reformatory content, the book that was later to become known as “Luther’s Bible” still did not carry the translator’s name, and would not until the eighth edition printed by Lotter in Wittenberg in 1524.

Far more important than Lotter’s legal, if hasty, reprintings were the some 87 vernacular *New Testaments* based on Luther’s text but printed outside Wittenberg and without his approval between 1522 and 1546, the year of his death. The printers were obviously playing by the rules of “follow-the-leader” in publishing pirate editions and were willing to print what they had seen to be a success.⁴⁸ Adam Petri of Basel, for example, reprinted the Wittenberg *Septembertestament* already in December of 1522, the same month Lotter reissued the authorized edition. Luther is named neither in this nor the subsequent six printings of the Petri edition. Thomas Wolf, also of Basel, issued four unauthorized editions of Luther’s *New Testament* there in 1523 and then four more in 1524. Johann Schöffler of Mainz printed a complete version of Luther’s “evangelium” there in 1524, but with no indication of Luther as translator nor of Wittenberg as the original place of publication. Johann Knoblouch, however, printed a *New Testament* in Strassburg in 1525 without Luther’s name, but with a false imprint from Lotter’s Wittenberg shop, perhaps trying to make it look more authentic.⁴⁹ And there were two sets of reprints in Augsburg, the first in March, June, and October of 1523 by Silvan Otmar (who puts Luther’s name on the book only on the fifth printing), the second by Hans Schönsperger in 1523 and 1524.

Not only is Luther’s identity of little interest to the printers in these boom years, but so too, and perhaps more importantly, is the integrity of his text. Johann Prüss’s 1522 Gospel of John puts Luther’s name not only to a foreign translation, by one Nikolaus Krumpach, but to Krumpach’s extensive glosses as well. Nickel Symydt of Leipzig, in his 1523 vernacular Gospels, shows no respect for Luther’s theological program as represented in the glosses; he reprints the naked text with neither name nor Lutheran foreword. By the end of the decade, when, in Worms and Strassburg, several of the so-called “combined Bibles” were published to great success, the proper name “Luther,” if present, had come to mean nothing at all.⁵⁰ Peter Schöffler the Younger of Worms publishes a German Bible in 1529 in which Luther’s translation of the first three parts of the *Old Testament* appear together with a Zürich translation of the *New Testament* and another Swiss rendering of the *Apocrypha*. Wolfgang Köpfel of Strassburg publishes a Bible in 1530 that contains mostly translations by Luther, except for the *Apocrypha* (which was translated by Leo Judd of Zürich) and the Prophets in Hetzer’s and Druck’s translation published originally in Worms. Vernacular Bibles



FIGURE 4. Lucas Cranach, from the *Septembertestament*, 1522.
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Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg.

were printed that were little more than an assortment of texts, some translated by Luther, some not, yoked together by the printing press rather than by a single spirit or voice.

Although in most cases these editions, however fragmented, were substantially the same as the authorized Wittenberg printings, with only minor changes of orthography, the sheer numbers and success of the vernacular *New Testaments* in circulation gave Luther pause. He soon had a personal device—the well-known “Luther rose”—designed and imprinted only on such editions as he had personally overseen. This personal copyright first appeared in the second part of Luther’s German *Old Testament*, printed by Cranach and Döring in 1524. Below it appeared the words:

Let this sign be a witness to the fact that such books as bear it have gone through my hands, for there is much illegal printing [falschen druckens] and corruption of books [bücher verderbens] going on these days.

The device was in no way binding, although it seems to have been respected by the notorious “Nachdrucker” (illegal reprinters) in both Wittenberg and abroad. There is evidence in only two cases that it was reproduced illegally.⁵¹ But Luther’s rose was not his text. The *New Testament* continued to appear countless times in a variety of shapes and sizes *without* the authenticating mark in the years that followed. Until 1530, unauthorized *New Testaments* were printed at a rate approximately four times greater than the authorized ones.⁵²

The ease with which the pirate editions were produced in an already mechanical age of reproduction can be traced in the history of the Cranach woodcuts that appeared in the original 1522 Wittenberg edition.⁵³ The most well-known of them illustrates chapter 11 of Revelations. The text describes the measuring of the sanctuary and the two witnesses who will prophesy for 1260 days until the beast from the Abyss comes to devour them. The evil beast is depicted in the original Cranach woodcut of September 1522 as wearing the three-tiered crown of the Papacy (fig. 4). The underlying polemic of the new translation against the Roman establishment figured in the print was obvious to all. And yet in the December 1522 version, also published by Cranach and printed by Lotter in Wittenberg, which was located in Electoral Saxony, the polemic was dampened, the two upper levels of the Papal tiara eliminated from the picture, literally cut off and out of the woodcut, which, except for the crown, was reused in its original form (fig. 5). It is significant that Duke Georg of nearby Ducal Saxony had in fact forbidden the printing and dissemination of the Luther *New Testament* in November of 1522, that is after the first but before the second Lotter edition. The woodcuts are singled out in the ban—“several insulting pictures designed to ridicule and insult his Papal Holiness . . . brought into print”—as the most offensive aspect of the vernacular *New Testament*.⁵⁴ Altering the tiara in the December edition was Lotter’s concession to this decree, as well as a marketing

ploy—as his hurried reprint had been—to assure sales of the banned book in the neighboring Catholic territory before pirate editions could appear.

But the most telling reproduction of the Cranach woodcuts is to be found in another vernacular *New Testament* that appeared not in Protestant Wittenberg but in the Catholic territory of Ducal Saxony. This edition was printed in Dresden by Wolfgang Stöckel at the request of Luther's enemy, Duke Georg. Here of course the tiara appears in its non-Papal form (fig. 6). The sale of the set of woodcuts by Cranach to Duke Georg's agent, Jerome Ems, for 40 taler is documented, although in an age of increasingly standardized mechanical reproduction reprinting them illegally would have been as easy as the resetting of the *New Testament* itself.⁵⁵ The most one would have needed was access to the blocks, the least a tracing of the originals on which to base a new set of blocks. For the text, all that was needed was a copy of the original—either bought, borrowed, confiscated, or stolen—in the place of an authorized manuscript. Faced with the pressures of the marketplace and a barrage of political and confessional edicts, the printing community had to work quickly, if irresponsibly, to produce the maximum number of texts that the market would bear.

The 1524 “Luther rose” mentioned earlier was Luther's first attempt to use the tools of the industry to maintain the integrity of his work by officially legitimating “his” texts. His main concern during these early years seems to have been the inaccuracy of the pirate editions. But while his attempt to demonstrate ownership failed, Luther was clearly developing a sense of paternity. In the “Foreword and Exhortation to the Printers” that accompanied the *Fastenpostille* of 1525, for example, Luther publicly castigates the typesetter who had been responsible for producing an illegitimate text. When given his (Luther's) manuscript by Cranach and Döring to be set into type, the “worthless” creature instead absconded with it to Regensburg where it was reproduced, in incomplete and inaccurate form, *before* the “original” edition could appear.⁵⁶ And, as if the fact of the pirated edition had not been enough in itself, Luther rails, “his book” was full of mistakes. The printers are “rascals” who set “false and outrageous” texts. Their creations are so deformed, he objects, that the author does not even recognize them as his own. “I do not recognize my own books . . . here there is something left out, there something set incorrectly, there forged, there not proofread.”⁵⁷ Worst of all, Luther complains, is the “evil” way the printers have of deliberately confusing questions of heritage by printing Wittenberg as the place of publication in an attempt to feign authenticity by investing their texts with a false pedigree. Greed, he declares, occasions such practices.⁵⁸ Like the unintentional mistakes that the printers' haste involved, such deliberate forgeries were part of the industry's ruse to corrupt his message by (re)producing thousands of illegitimate texts.

The early tampering with Luther's Word became increasingly involved in the years just before 1530 when the political and doctrinal struggles implicit in the new translation finally began to be fought openly by means of the press. Luther's



FIGURE 5. Cranach, from the *Dezembertestament*, 1522. Reproduced by permission of the Herzog-August Bibliothek.

antagonist here was the same Jerome Ems, private secretary to Duke Georg of Saxony, who had arranged for the purchase of the Cranach woodcuts for reprinting and whose *New Testament* was legal, we will recall, much later in the towns near the Swiss village of Zug.⁵⁹ The Catholic divine had been opposed, for a number of years, to the widespread availability of sacred writings in the vernacular. Mass dissemination, he claimed, could only lead to confusion and disobedience, since any “Fantast” (dreamer) could interpret the text in his own private way, leading, Ems predicts, to as many meanings of Scripture as the “hydra has heads.”⁶⁰ In his disapproval of widespread accessibility to vernacular Scripture, Ems followed his master, Duke Georg, who had banned the printing, selling, and purchase of Luther’s *New Testament* in his territory just after it appeared. Ems wrote a short treatise soon thereafter in 1523 in defense of Georg’s decree. The piece was entitled “The reasons and causes why Luther’s translation of the *New Testament* has properly been forbidden to the common man [dem gemeinen mann]” and was printed by Wolfgang Stöckel, who had also been responsible for the reprint of the *Septembertestament* in Dresden—that is, by a man who knew how to turn a profit on both sides.

Ems’s polemic foreshadows the rhetoric of the Zug affair of some quarter century later. The Lutheran epistles were more dangerous, Ems maintains, than other vernacular Bibles for several reasons. Luther is guilty, first of all, by association. He could not have derived his translation from a “true,” model text, but must have used a heretical Hussite or Wycliffian version.⁶¹ The translation is in any case incorrect. Luther’s introductions and glosses, moreover, are so much “poison mixed in.” Worst of all, however, is Luther’s skill in translating, his mastery of the language, since in it his lies become honey, and the poison is sweetened, making his version of Scripture all the more dangerous for its unsuspecting readers. Ems explains

that Luther or those who (he says) helped him translate into German in a more delicate and sweet-sounding way [etwas zierlicher vnd siess lawtender] than the old translation. For that reason the common folk [das gemein volck] are more inclined to read it and to swallow the hook that is hidden beneath the sweet words before they are aware of it.⁶²

It might be an idea, Ems suggests, for the Church to call a council of translators together to produce a new and “gloubwirdige” (believable) Catholic translation to compete with Luther’s. But until then, Ems concludes, any faithful follower of the Church will see that it was correct to forbid not only the reading but also the printing and retailing of Luther’s *New Testament* as a way of protecting “das warhafftiges evangelion” (the true Scripture) and the ignorant “gemeynen mann” (common man) into whose hands one of the many printed copies could fall.⁶³

It is ironic, but somehow logical in this world of wild prints and reprints, that Ems, just three years after he writes his elaborate, polemical treatise against making the Word of God accessible to the common man, facilitates the mass



FIGURE 6. From *Das new Testament . . .*, 1527. Reproduced by permission of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum.

production and distribution of the German *New Testament* reprinted illegally by Stöckel in Dresden in 1527, the edition in which the second set of altered Cranach woodcuts had appeared. It bears the title *Das naw Testament nach lawt der Christlichen kirchen bewerten text corrigiert und wiederumb zu recht gebracht* (The New Testament: Corrected and put into the right form according to the text approved of by the Church). This vernacular Bible, although based largely on the Lotter edition of 1522, was legal in the neighboring Catholic territories because it had changed its sign; it no longer bore Luther's name. In an abrupt about face, Duke Georg begins to encourage the reading of vernacular Scripture. He announces in a foreword to *Das naw Testament* that he is sponsoring this "offen druck" (open printing) to "benefit as many readers as possible."⁶⁴ No one should feel, he hopes, that Scripture has been "forbidden him" or "made inaccessible." In fact, everyone should now have access to the "true" and "honest" Word of God.⁶⁵ And, in a turn that widens the gap between authenticity and distortion in printing even as it attempts to erase it, the Duke confers a special privilege on Ems for two years that decrees his (Ems's) version to be the "original" text and bans all others, especially Luther's, as "falschen nachdruck" (false pirate editions). A plagiarism thus becomes the "original," and the "original" an untruth.

A close comparison of the two editions of the *New Testament* printed by Lotter in 1522 and Ems's *New Testament* printed by Stöckel in Dresden in 1527 reveals at the outset some curious physical similarities. The 1527 edition mimics its Lutheran predecessor in a number of ways. Lotter had been a maverick in choosing the convenient and above all economical quarto format for Luther's 1522 text over the more traditional, but more expensive—and thus less popular—folio size. Stöckel could have either returned to the folio for reasons of prestige, or gone over to the even more economical octavo format. Many post-1522 *New Testaments* had already appeared in both sizes.⁶⁶ But the 1527 Dresden *New Testament* appeared in a quarto format that made it look, from the outside, just like Lotter's edition. Stöckel also imitated Lotter's original typeface and his arrangement of the marginal glosses. When opened to any given page, then, the 1527 version looked just like the original. The title pages of the Stöckel and Lotter editions do differ in some copies. Luther's/Lotter's editions have the simple title *Das Neue Testament Deutzsch* on an undecorated page, Ems's/Stöckel's the more complex *Das naw Testament corrigiert und wiederumb zu recht gebracht* against a more fully decorated background. But the Ems version, like the *Septembertestament*, neither identifies the translator on the title page (although in the meantime many Bibles had appeared under Luther's name), nor does it give its place of publication, although it does give the date. Such superficial similarities cannot obscure the fundamental differences that exist between the Luther and the Ems *New Testaments*, particularly the ducal privilege, the substantial introductions, and the new Catholic glosses of the most important texts. And yet, when we remember that Duke Georg had not only banned the Luther edition but also declared in

his foreword that the “offen druck” of the Ems edition would provide everyone with a Bible, there is good reason to suspect that the Stöckel/Ems *New Testament*, precisely *with* its crucial differences, was produced and distributed in such a way that it could be mistaken for the hugely popular Lutheran version at first glance.⁶⁷

In defense of Ems, it must be said that he never actually designated himself as translator of the Dresden *New Testament*, preferring to call himself its editor instead. But even his version was subject to manipulation. Following Ems’s death in 1527, the very year his *New Testament* was first printed, the new secretary to Duke Georg, Johann Cochlaeus, reissued the Ems Bible with the following title: *Das New Testament: So durch den hochgelarten Hieronymum Emser sälligen verteuscht* (The New Testament: Translated into German by the late, learned Jerome Ems).⁶⁸ Cochlaeus had his own reasons for lying about the identity of the translator of Scripture. He had been obsessed, it seems, with the success of Luther’s translation and saw its mass reproduction by the printers as the source of heresy and insubordination among the *Volk*. In his view, at least, the Ems edition had indeed been designed to supplant it. He writes many years later:

Even before Ems’s work had seen the light of day, Luther’s *New Testament* was reproduced and distributed in such numbers by the bookprinters that tailors and shoemakers, yes, even womenfolk and other simple idiots, as many of them who had adopted this Lutheran Evangelium and who had also learned a little bit of German from off of a gingerbread cookie, read it immediately with great fervor and took it to be a source of all truth. Some even carried it around with them in their bosoms and memorized it.⁶⁹

The “offen druck” of the Ems *New Testament* was meant to combat this most popular Lutheran text. By christening Ems as a translator of Scripture posthumously, Cochlaeus literally replaced Luther’s achievement with a Catholic twin. And indeed, Ems’s version was printed and reprinted under his name in nearly 100 subsequent editions.⁷⁰

But was Cochlaeus’ subsequent tampering with the “title” and identity of the Catholic *New Testament* and its translator in fact so foreign to the reasons behind its initial and continued (re)production? Was Ems’s edition meant simply to “publicize the so-called flaws” in his opponent’s text, or was it designed to reappropriate vernacular Scripture, to recanonize, to recatholicize it?⁷¹ It is clear that subsequent publishers, editors, and printers followed Cochlaeus in conceiving of Ems’s version as replacing Luther’s *New Testament* both on the bookshelves and in the hearts of the people. One way was to keep Ems’s edition affordable. In an edition printed in 1529 in Strassburg, for example, the title page and its lengthy summary of the contents indicate not only that Ems is the translator, and thus that the text is a legitimate one approved of by the Church, but also inform the reader that this particular edition is a real bargain, since it contains in abridged form in an appendix all the passages from the *Old Testament* commonly cited, so that the “Käuffer” (consumers, buyers) need not purchase “eyn gantze Bibel” (a

whole Bible) but have everything they need here in one volume. The Strassburg Ems Bible is a folio, but most of the editions printed between 1527 and 1530 appeared in a more convenient and less expensive octavo format.⁷²

The good value that the buyers of the Ems *New Testament* received for their money was to be matched by the accuracy and theological “truth” of their texts. The text itself of the *New Testament* in Ems’s version in fact contains surprisingly few alterations of the Lutheran “original” that could be said to have “corrected” the Reformer’s theological errors; the exceptions are the more Roman “kirchen” (church) for Luther’s Protestant “gemeyn” (congregation) in Galatians 1:2,⁷³ and the removal of the crucial “allein” in “allein durch den glauben” (Romans 3:28), an emendation to which Luther was to respond angrily in the coming years. But the new, clearly Catholic introductions and glosses that were set in the place not only of Luther’s original commentaries, but of Ems’s replacements of them as well, are much more significant for an examination of the role of printing in the dissemination of vernacular *New Testaments*. In the Ems/Stöckel edition, the typeface and placement of the glosses mimic Luther’s/Lotter’s *New Testament* exactly; the Catholic words stand in for and literally replace their Lutheran fellows. And between 1527 and 1529, that is, after Ems’s death, but before Luther’s attack on his plagiarism in the *Sendbrief* in 1530, the marginal glosses and annotations of the numerous Ems *New Testaments* not only become more vehement and more dogmatic in their attacks on the Reformer but are gradually absorbed by typographical manipulation into the very body of Scripture itself. In the six editions of the Ems *New Testament* printed before 1530, there is a gradual shift from glosses printed in the margins of the text (as they had been by both Lotter and Stöckel) to glosses interspersed in the text (the Schumann edition published in Leipzig in 1528), but still italicized to set them off from Scripture, to the 1528 and 1529 editions printed again by Schumann at Leipzig, by H. Fuchs in Cologne, and at Strassburg, in which chapter summaries, glosses, and additional anti-Lutheran polemics were printed not only within the very body of the text, but also in an only slightly smaller and no longer italicized typeface hardly to be distinguished from that of the main text. In these editions, the Lutheran “mistakes” are printed in the margins, apart and as distinct from the central text. Such printing strategies had the effect of making both the defamatory remarks about Luther and the Catholic glosses seem, to the reader, to be part of the Word of God, part of the “true” as opposed to the “false” text in the margins.

It must have been these kinds of manipulations of “his” text, together with the fact that the *New Testament* was by then being published in great numbers as Ems’s translation, that finally caused Luther to take action against the pirate editions when, in 1529, he hears of yet another printing of his *New Testament* under Ems’s name that is being prepared in Rostock. He writes on the 23rd of November to Elector Johann in Wittenberg that this illegal *Nachdruck* must be forbidden in the interest of both preserving Scripture in its “true” form and

saving the souls of the people. And, in the most revealing lines of the letter, he writes:

I, for my part, can put up with Ems's Testament as far as the text is concerned (a text that this very rascal nastily stole from me [mir abgestolen], since it is almost exactly my text [mein text], without many changes that would do any harm), as long as it's available and read. But now he has poisoned it so knavishly and shamefully with his glosses and annotations that the text is no longer fruitful, but can only do harm.⁷⁴

Of course Luther knew that Ems was dead by this time, and that others were manipulating the text. So it must have been precisely the way "stolen goods" were being disseminated—both under Ems's name and with the annotations and glosses nearly indistinguishable from Scripture—to which he objected. That is, the text itself for the most part seems no longer to be the center of controversy. (Bluhm has in fact shown that Luther even kept some of Ems's "corrections" in later versions.)⁷⁵ Rather, it was the marginalia, the poisonous annotations and glosses, that were defiling the "truth" of his Word. In the age of a competitive and unreliable reproductive industry that seemed incapable of even reproducing literally, let alone legally, *sola scriptura* was not enough to determine the truth of the vernacular Word. Luther's own additions had to be more central again, since where they were absent "truth" would be lacking as well.

The publishing history of Luther's *New Testament* between 1522 and 1529 allows a certain insight into the technological, economic, and political factors that influenced the reproduction of vernacular Scripture on a mass basis in the early sixteenth century. Such factors as these made Luther suspicious of the claims that literal reproduction could preserve and disseminate truth. By 1530, he felt obliged by the events of the past eight years to issue a public defense not only of his *New Testament* but also of his method of translating, a method that he conceived of, perhaps only after the fact, as one that avoided the dangers of careless reproduction by binding the concept of "his" identity and beliefs inextricably to the letter of "his text." The *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* (Letter on translating) of 1530 explains the importance of spiritual accuracy in the reproduction of Scripture in the vernacular. It is ironic, but understandable against the background of the Ems plagiarism, that the authenticity of "his" translation and the "proof" that it duplicated the meaning of the original is said in the *Sendbrief* to lie precisely in what Luther added to it, in his supplementations, which had to be included in order to guarantee the reproduction of spiritual truth.

III

The subject of Luther's *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* is his translation of Paul's famous words to the Romans (3:28) that man is justified by faith, and not by works. "Ex fide" was the Latin "original" that Luther cited. His translation

was less than literal: “allein durch den Glauben,” by faith *alone*.⁷⁶ It was as a result of such renderings that Luther had been accused of not reproducing the letter of Scripture exactly. “He translates Paul’s words incorrectly,” one editor wrote. “It [the translation] is a contradictory lie,” Ems intoned.⁷⁷ Luther defended his vernacular *New Testament* as the “true” and accurate one by explaining that spiritual rather than literal translating techniques justified his supplementation (“solcher zusatz von mir”).⁷⁸ The argument was meant to serve as a rebuke to those who would refer to merely any version of the printed Word as the “truth,” while at the same time chastizing plagiarizers incapable of reproducing *his* (Luther’s) words exactly. Fidelity to the mere letter only compromised the spirit; nevertheless, Luther’s translation, *his* Scripture alone, had to be reproduced literally if spiritual accuracy was to be maintained.⁷⁹

In the *Sendbrief*, Luther soundly criticizes Ems for having stolen “his” (Luther’s) *New Testament* in so underhanded a way. The question of proprietorship of Scripture already apparent in the 1529 letters is addressed directly here. Luther writes of the plagiarism:

For we have seen of course the spoiler from Dresden, who “put right” my New Testament [mein New testament]. He admits that my German [mein Deutsch] is sweet and good, and saw quite well that he could do no better, but nevertheless wanted to ruin it. So he went ahead and took over my New Testament [mein new Testament], almost *word for word*, as I had done it, removed my foreword, glosses, and name [meine Vorrede, Gloss, und Namen], and wrote his name, foreword, and glosses instead, and so sells my New Testament [mein New testament] under his name. (634)

We can hear in Luther’s words his frustration with the ease with which the printers accomplished the theft. “They’re stealing my language [meine Sprache] from me” (633). Georg and Ems may have masterminded the original plot, but it was the technology and economics of printing that had become the real culprit. While Luther rejoices in the irony that “his” text is in fact now being produced and disseminated by his enemies, the fact is that it is no longer “his” translation, precisely because the name, foreword, glosses had been changed, and the “allein” deleted from Romans, chapter three. If the Papists had wanted to reprint his *New Testament*, then it should have remained in its original form. “Es ist,” Luther asserts, “mein testament und mein dolmetschung, und sol mein bleiben und sein” (It is my Testament and my translation, and should remain and be mine; 633). Not only is it a lie that “des Luthers buch” (Luther’s book) appears “unter eines andern namen” (under the name of another), but it is a corruption of the spiritual truth of Scripture that the “allein,” Luther’s addition, has been removed (634–35).

It is clear that the central text under discussion in the *Sendbrief* had been rendered in Luther’s original translation with a deliberate nonliteralness, “ex fide” to “allein durch den Glauben.” But, Luther insists, he had good reason for doing so. The Reformer’s justification for the additional “allein” rests in an appeal,

first of all, to a spoken German idiom (*Gemeindeutsch*) comprehensible to all.⁸⁰ In spoken German, Luther explains, the syntax of a negation necessitates that the extra word, *allein* (only), be added to emphasize the alternative to the negated quantity. He gives the example: “Der Baur bringt allein korn und kein geldt. . . . Ich hab warlich ytz nicht geldt, sondern allein korn” (The peasant brings only grain and no money. . . . I really don’t have any money now, only grain; 637). The clearly topical example is meant to illustrate an organic principle of the German vernacular. “That’s the nature of our German language,” Luther writes. When he supplies “allein,” or “solum,” to the Latin “ex fide,” then, he is merely translating according to a rule of spoken diction, rather than to the words before him on the page. To think that he had overlooked the letter of the original is patently absurd.

Of course I knew the text of Romans 3 well, that the word—*sola*—isn’t there in either the Latin or the Greek text. The Papists didn’t have to tell me that. It’s true. These four letters *sola* are not there, these letters that the ass-heads stare at like a cow at a new gate. They stare, but don’t see that they convey the meaning of the text [die meinung des text]. If you want to translate clearly and powerfully [klar und gewaltiglich verteutschen], then they belong there. I wanted to speak German, not Latin and not Greek, since it was German that I had undertaken to speak in translating. (636–37)

The Papists, however, have been unfaithful “Buchstabilisten” (literalists) in translating (637). They corrupted the message of Scripture even as, or precisely because, they translated literally. Luther concludes his tirade with the famous passage:

For one musn’t ask the letters of the Latin language how to speak German, in the way these asses have done. Rather, one must ask the mothers in their houses, the children on the streets, the common man [den gemeinen mann] in the marketplace, and pay attention to their speech, how they talk, and then translate accordingly. Then they will understand and notice that someone is speaking German with them. (637)

The authenticity of a translation thus lies not in the printed sources Ems had used, for example, nor in his literalist method of translating—disparaged by theorists of translating since Roman times—but rather in the accuracy with which it reproduces the spirit of the original message, in this case, Paul’s words, in the vernacular.⁸¹

Luther’s witnesses to the internal linguistic norms of vernacular German—the mothers, the children, and the common man—as well as his examples of its usage betray the more essential argumentation by which he seeks to demonstrate the spiritual accuracy of “his” text. His concern for these representatives of the *Volk* is motivated by his conviction *not* that the peasants, whom he had long since rejected, could be taken to be authorities on Scripture, but rather that in reproducing their language he is copying, even imitating, the life and language of the original author of the passage in question, here of St. Paul.⁸² For Paul believed that the mission of the new church could be fulfilled by a “theology of preaching”

that would spread the Word of Christ among great and small, poor and rich, young and old.⁸³ His was an evangelical mission. “Woe to me,” the Apostle cried, “if I do not preach the Gospel!” (I Corinthians 9:16). Such missionary activities represented an *imitatio Christi*, and were an attempt to reproduce the teachings of a Messiah he had never known personally for vast audiences. Paul’s use of rhetorical techniques learned in his youth to accomplish this task is evident in the epistles to the new Christian communities he had founded—written texts, to be sure, but designed to be read aloud in sermon-like fashion.⁸⁴ His message of course encouraged the reproduction of Pauline texts by those who had heard him. The proliferation of pseudo-epistles in the Fourth Century reflects an attempt to produce more “originals” by mimicking their language and form in surprisingly convincing ways.

The Pauline doctrine of devout service to the new church through preaching necessarily influenced the language in which his epistles were composed. Precisely because Paul’s message was a primarily oral one, the language of his texts (together with that of Revelations) is the closest to what has been taken to be the Koine, or common form of Greek spoken in the postclassical or Hellenistic period.⁸⁵ While there were clearly literary, that is written, influences even on this spoken language, it is widely accepted that Koine represented the vernacular, the “colloquial speech of the marketplace,” of the period.⁸⁶ Beyond the fact that some form of Koine would have been Paul’s tongue, it would have been a matter of conviction that he preach in the language of the people in order to spread the Word to as many listeners as possible. “Do likewise you,” he explains to the Corinthians, “except you utter by the tongue of plain speech, how shall it be known what is said?” (I Corinthians 14:9). It was thus the “plain speech” of his public that Paul mouthed.

St. Augustine, in whose monastic order Luther had originally lived, followed Paul as well as Cicero in recommending *sermo*, the *genus humile*, and the plain style of usage—“imitans consuetudinem,” Cicero wrote—over the more elaborate forms of *oratio* as the most appropriate style in which to teach (*docere*) the plain truth of Scripture.⁸⁷ Thus when Luther, in his own often crass plain speech, insists that only “his” Bible, “Luthers büch,” and not the texts of the “ass-heads,” would be understood by the common man, he is simply inserting himself into both a learned and pious lineage by offering the equivalent in his German vernacular to Paul’s Koine, or commonly understood Greek.⁸⁸ Reproducing the original, if one really understands Paul, dictates that one not slavishly translate a written text “word for word” as Ems has done in removing the “allein,” but that one recreate in the new language a spiritually correct copy of the old. And, in the case of Romans 3:28, Luther explains: “The Latin letters prevent [one] . . . from speaking German very well” (637). Just as Paul had addressed, in his letters, the new Christian communities on their problems in their language, so too was Luther committed, he writes, to reproducing the Word in a language that his

audience could understand. The “allein” betokened his imitation of Paul as popular preacher, and thus had to stay.

Keeping the “allein” in Romans 3:28 was not only consonant with the medium of Paul’s message, but reproduced the central thesis of the Apostle’s theology as well. It was Paul, after all, who had written: “The Letter kills, and the Spirit gives life” (II Corinthians 3:6). In translating the spirit of Paul’s Letter to the Romans correctly, then, Luther revives the saint and his teachings.

That is all I have to say about translating and about the nature of our language. But I did not follow nor trust merely the nature of language in adding the “allein” to Romans 3. Rather, the text and the conviction of the apostle Paul demand and force it with violence [der text und die meinung S. Pauli foddern und erzwingens mit gewalt], for he is treating here the main tenet of Christian dogma. (640)

Not only the letter of the text but also Paul and his spirit are so strong that they literally force Luther’s translation.

The “gewalt” (force, power) by means of which Paul’s teaching on faith demanded the nonliteral translation was, for Luther, clearly worth emphasizing. The Apostle had gone to great lengths, after all, in the letter to the Romans to establish that the Law of Moses was a “secondary and subordinate instrument” to faith in justification.⁸⁹ The helplessness, even passivity of Man, upon whom a powerful God bestowed grace, was essential. Luther’s polemic against the Catholic Church with its indulgences and manipulation of Man’s accessibility to salvation of course finds its model here. Just as important, however, are Paul’s words on the power of the Holy Spirit to cause effective preaching and conversion. “And my speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the showing of the Spirit and power” (I Corinthians 2:4). Thus the power of the Holy Spirit, or grace, had invested Paul with the power to preach the truth. Luther reenacts this bestowal of grace as he translates spiritually, succumbing to Paul’s “strong words.”

And whosoever should want to read and understand St. Paul will have to say it this way and has no choice. His words are too strong and permit no, no work at all [Seine wort sind zu starck / unn leiden kein / ja gar kein werck]. And if it’s not work, then it must be faith alone [der glaube allein]. (642)

Translation becomes an allegory of the Protestant doctrine of faith.⁹⁰ The meaning of Paul’s words is as obvious to Luther as the message of grace had been to Paul. Thus, like the faith they proclaim, the saint’s words have no need of work at all.

Luther’s proof for the “truth” of *his* vernacular translation is thus based on reproducing the Pauline doctrine of enlightenment by grace. Understanding the Word of God and translating it into German had of course never been, for Luther, simply a matter of knowing the sacred languages of Scripture and informing

himself as to doctrine. He believed, rather, that it was the presence of the Holy Spirit (“magis tamen spiritus quam lingua”) that had originally made Scriptural understanding possible.⁹¹ That divine inspiration was necessary for understanding the Word had already been demonstrated at Pentecost when a powerful Holy Spirit had entered the disciples and “forced” them to “speak in tongues.” Luther’s translation of Acts 2:2–4 is revealing of his doctrine of spiritual translation:

Und es geschach schnelle ein brausen vom Himel, als eines *gewaltigen windes* und erfüllet das gantze haus, da sie sassen. Und man sahe an jhnen die Zungen zerteilet, als were sie fewrig, Und Er satzte sich auff einen jglichen unter jnen, und wurden alle *vol des heiligen Geistes*. [My emphasis]

The Reformer’s vernacular translation explicitly reenacted, then, the Pentecostal bestowal of grace. His language, his German, his mother tongue, was only the “scheyden” (sheath; also, vagina) in which the powerful sword of the true Spirit was held.⁹² Like the Apostles, when the “tongues of fire” had set upon them, like Mary and Elisabeth, when they were impregnated by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41—in Luther’s translation, “und sie wartt *des heyligen geysts vol*”) Luther too had become “filled with the Spirit” on the Wartburg and had given birth to, reproduced, the power of the Word in the vernacular. He writes:

And although it is true that the Gospel came and comes daily through the help of the Holy Spirit alone [alleyn durch den heyligen geyst], it came by means of languages. . . . For just as God wanted to spread the Gospel in the world by means of the Apostles, he made them speak in tongues . . . and he has done just the same now.⁹³

Thus even in his own opinion, Luther’s Pentecostal rendering of the Gospel had sacramentalized a “modern” vernacular, and thus created a fourth sacred tongue. “It flowed as from a spring from one language into another by means of translation and even blessed it at the same time.”⁹⁴ He too had been overcome by a powerful Spirit. He was of a kind with the apostles, and had given birth to a new sacred text.

Thus when Luther writes in the *Sendbrief* that his translation renders “die meinung S. Pauli . . . klar und gewaltiglich” (St. Paul’s “meaning” clearly and powerfully) in German, he is both obeying and reproducing the “gewalt” (power) of the Holy Spirit. His translation, and his *alone*, meets the challenge of communicating with a German audience not in the idiom of “schriffgelerten” (scholars of writings) like Ems, but as a postfiguration of the preacher, Paul.⁹⁵ Imitating the apostles as they “spoke in tongues,” Luther as translator had acted as a vessel of spiritual truth. It was God’s grace, then, according to the logic of the *Sendbrief*, that guaranteed the truth of his translation. Those who had not received it—and this clearly included Ems and his cronies—could not see the truth and thus could not help but render Scripture inaccurately, try as they might to copy Luther’s words. Truth could be reproduced not on the basis of letters, but on the basis of faith alone.

The logic of the *Sendbrief* follows a complex series of turns. Its strategy is one of imitation, of identification and reduplication, which permits Luther to impose a kind of spiritual copyright on his understanding of Scripture in the face of countless attempts on the part of the printing industry to expropriate it. His language is, like Paul's, the language of the people, his message, therefore, the same as the saint's. Just as Paul had preached that the Letter was dead but the Spirit alive in the Gospel, so too did Luther believe that his nonliteral translation was alive with the spirit of the Word. Yielding to Paul's powerful message at once subjected Luther to the more forceful spirit, but also made him Paul's equal in the sight of the Lord. The Reformer thus had the authority, he believed, to supplement Paul's words with equally valid ones, indeed to inscribe himself into the Scriptural text. Spiritual translation thus fulfilled Luther's apostolic mission, and explains how he, the mere translator, could so often speak of "his Testament." His additions are newly authored parts of Scripture. They could not be tampered with if "truth" was to be preserved.

In a world newly inundated with texts, and above all with Bibles printed in the vernacular, the press could not be relied upon as an instrument to reproduce accurately. In fact, competition as well as political circumstances made both inadvertent and deliberate manipulation of texts the rule rather than the exception, so that the very technology meant to guarantee accurate reproduction in fact contributed to a growing fear of inexactitude on a mass scale on the part of those responsible for "truth" in texts. For the public, however, it was difficult to distinguish between authenticity and falsehood in printed Bibles, since all that they had in their hands was *sola Scriptura*, the text alone. And indeed, just the text seemed to have been enough in most cases, since, if production is an indication of demand, the market for vernacular Scripture, regardless of its origins, boomed after the publication of Luther's *New Testament* in 1522.

It might seem that Luther should have been content enough with his text's success. Widespread dissemination, even without recognition of his individual achievement, did, after all, guarantee popular access to the Word. In the beginning he seems in fact to have been willing to overlook the absence of his name on the original translation, in itself nothing new for vernacular Scripture. But the developments between 1522 and 1529 gave rise to a new sense of identity, perhaps as a result of the rapid reproduction and subsequent deformation of his text. Was it the abuses of printing that caused Luther to develop a sense of Scriptural proprietorship and a notion of himself as a copy of Paul? Did this industry, in which an ideology of profit and concern for the market substituted for a myth of origins, force him to develop this imitative sense of self? It is ironic that the notion of a spiritual reproduction of the saint could become current only in a world of literalism, namely in print. And yet, how could this world be forced to respect the individual, spiritual identification when by definition its technology

made the reduplication of that identity possible on a mass scale? In the case of the *New Testament*, Luther's spiritual uniqueness could not be maintained. Vernacular Scripture continued to circulate widely. Like the preacher at Zug, thousands "proved" their beliefs according to Bibles whose "authorship" was unknown. Distinguishing between "true" and "false" Scripture thus itself became a matter of faith.

Notes

1. The letter is preserved in the *Nachrichtensammlung* (news collection) of the Reformed archdeacon of Zürich, Johann Jakob Wick (1522–88), located in the Zentralbibliothek in Zürich and reproduced in *Die Wickiana: Johann Jakob Wicks Nachrichtensammlung aus dem 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. M. Senn (Küsnacht-Zürich, 1975), 34ff. Wick describes the writer of this letter in a note as a "liebhaber der warheyt" (lover of the truth) and thus as a confessional ally. All translations here are my own.
2. The problems of civic and domestic discipline that could have been implied in the Protestant rejection of good works were constantly feared by both spiritual and temporal authorities. Peter Burke speculates that popular literacy and access to new ideas in general may have made the poor "discontent with their station in life" and consequently caused them to rebel. See his *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1978), 252.
3. The letter writer goes on to report that he subsequently asked one of the citizens present and in agreement with the Bible burning exactly where Luther in particular could be said to have "lied" in translating Scripture. The man self-righteously answers: "Von dem wyngarten da stande in dem Luthers testament wynberg" (Luther's Testament has *wyngarten* [vine-garden] rather than *wynberg* [vineyard]). The letter writer exclaims: "Oh God, my dear brother, the great blindness that surrounds this miserable Volk!" It is interesting that here mistranslation, actually just a dialect difference, defines "untruth."
4. And yet, in spite of the relatively radical jump in the number of vernacular texts printed during the first decades of the sixteenth century, and especially the number of Luther's texts printed at that time, the overall percentage of vernacular as opposed to Latin printed texts remained relatively small, namely approximately 30 percent versus 70 percent. This represented a jump from the pre-Reformation ratio of 20 percent versus 80 percent. See Hans-Joachim Koppitz, "German as a Language of Printed Books in the 16th Century," a paper presented at the "Business and Culture in the Emergence of German as a National Language" conference sponsored by the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 28–29 October 1983. My remarks at that conference form the basis of the present essay. The numbers indicate that printing technology also had an existence quite separate from the debates around religious reform. See Rudolf Hirsch, *Printing, Selling, and Reading, 1450–1550* (Wiesbaden, 1967), 125–53, on the kinds of books printed in the respective centers of printing in Europe during these years. The present essay is concerned primarily with the printing of Scripture in the German vernacular in the smaller printshops of central Europe in the first three decades of the sixteenth century.

5. For an overview of the history of Bible translation, see P. H. Vogel's comprehensive article, "Bibelübersetzungen," in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart [RGG]*, ed. K. Galling, 3rd ed. (Tübingen, 1957), vol. 1, cols. 1193–1219. There is, of course, a clear difference between translating and editing Scripture, as well as between the collective and the individual enterprise. Jerome's and Luther's tasks, for example, are as similar to one another as the original commission called to translate the Hebrew *Old Testament* into Greek and the collective editing of the *Vulgata* in the late middle ages, although Jerome's translation never appeared as "Jerome's Bible" while Luther's did. Luther's main antagonist in the story of "his" *New Testament* translation was Jerome Ems, whose Bible was permitted in the towns near Zug. Ems in fact had called for a new commission of translators to be formed by the Catholic Church before he "translated" the text on his own. His call for a collective act might well have been in response to the overweening pride of Luther's individualistic act. And yet, it often goes unmentioned that later editions of the "Luther Bible" were the result of collective "authorship," since there was a commission for translating, headed by Luther. Our own practice of speaking of the "Luther Bible" and the "King James Bible" reveals that we think of "truth" in Scripture as linked to the shifting sign of the translator's name.
6. It was the argument of the Humanist printers themselves that widespread distribution of editions of the works of the Ancients would make more perfect reproduction of their greatness possible since at least some copies of a printed text, as opposed to a manuscript, would find their way into far-away, learned hands, making it possible for knowledge to be shared. See Martin Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius: Business and Scholarship in Renaissance Venice* (Oxford, 1979), 50, for the idealistic comments by the great Venetian printer, Aldus, on the "enlightening" effects of printing. I am grateful to Lowry for his interesting comments on the present essay on a number of occasions.
7. The formulation is Robert Scribner's in his excellent *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), 3: "It could be argued that Reformation ideas aided the spread of reading ability as much as printing assisted their dissemination." Scribner thus reverses the standard causality that printing and growing literacy forced the Reformation into existence. Scribner is referring here to the Reformation of the sixteenth century, but the spiritualistic "piety" movements of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were important predecessors of the later reforms. See Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven, 1975), especially chapter 2, "Lay Religious Attitudes on the Eve of the Reformation," 15–42. For literature on the relationship of printing and the Reformation, see below, note 43.
8. Luther's translation was revolutionary in a linguistic as well as in a theological-political sense, although the reasons for his "originality" are a matter of debate. For an overview of pre-Lutheran German Bibles, see Walter Eichenberger and Henning Wendland, *Deutsche Bibeln vor Luther: Die Buchkunst der achtzehn deutschen Bibeln zwischen 1466 und 1522* (Hamburg, 1977), as well as Heino Reinitzer, *Biblia deutsch: Luthers Bibelübersetzung und ihre Tradition* (Wolfenbüttel, 1983). The echo of Walter Benjamin's famous essay is deliberate here. See "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit," in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. R. Tiedemann (Frankfurt, 1974), vols. 1–2.
9. The designation is not merely a modern one, but was used soon after the first Luther translation was printed. See, for example, Johann Bugenhagen's remarks in his 1534 edition of Luther's Bible in Low German: "By the grace of God Luther applied such

great learning and care to his interpretation . . . that it is correct that no one else besides God should have a famous name on account of it. Rather, it should be called the 'Luther Bible.'” Cited in Gerhard Bott and Bernd Moeller, *Luther und die Reformation in Deutschland*, catalogue of the 1983 Luther exhibition at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, 280. My translation. I discuss Luther's translating techniques as proof of God's grace and how this bestowal of grace made the Bible "his" book below.

10. The debate has been a long one and is not over yet. For the background on scribes and the scriptorium, see Carl Diesch's article on "Handschriften" in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, ed. W. Kohlschmidt and W. Mohr (Berlin, 1958), 611–18. Paul Kristeller sees many similarities between copying and printing as far as the process by which the "original" text was said to be "published" as soon as it left its author's hand. See his "De traditione operum Marsilii Ficini" in *Supplementum Ficinianum* (Florence, 1937), 1:clxviii–clxxxi. Elisabeth Eisenstein, on the other hand, in her monumental *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1979), argues for a radical break between the world of the scribe and that of the printer. I am interested here above all in the perception of the world of print by those involved in publishing texts in the early modern period and in the influence it had on how, when, and why they sought to publish them.
11. On *textura*, see Diesch, "Handschriften," 614. On Aldus's cursive fonts, see Lowry, *Aldus Manutius*, 301 and *passim*.
12. A private, medieval manuscript collection has been estimated to have run to about 800 manuscripts; Luther's *New Testament* was produced in its first edition alone in 3000 copies, and at a considerably lower price. See Anthony Grafton, "The Importance of Being Printed," in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 11.2 (Autumn 1980): 265–86 (here p. 274), which is a review of Eisenstein's *Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. Grafton argues that manuscripts were produced and owned in far greater numbers than Eisenstein admits. Grafton may be right, but the numbers tell their own story. Moreover books, unlike manuscripts, which were lent out for isolated copying and then returned, were a "commodity" and were frequently handed on or sold. See Natalie Z. Davis, "Printing and the People," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), 189–227, here p. 212. The numbers also bespeak a completely different attitude toward reading in the pre- and post-print eras, even though literacy was still limited in the sixteenth century. Nevertheless vernacular texts would have been read and read aloud far more extensively than Latin manuscripts. See Rolf Engelsing, *Analphabetentum und Lektüre: Zur Sozialgeschichte des Lesens in Deutschland zwischen feudaler und industrieller Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart, 1973); Robert Scribner, "How Many Could Read?" in W. J. Mommsen, ed., *Stadtbürgertum und Adel in der Reformation: Studien zur Sozialgeschichte der Reformation* (Stuttgart, 1979), 44–45; as well as J. R. Goody, *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1968), for a more theoretical approach. Moreover, the printers would not have produced more copies than would be purchased with such regularity, so that we can speak of a growing "pragmatic literacy" (for administration and trade) and perhaps of a new "devotional literacy" in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (Scribner, "How Many Could Read," 2).
13. Jerome Ems, to whom I return below, saw the advantages of "technological determinism" even as he wrote against the dissemination of Luther's works in print. He considers standardized texts of Scripture, for example, as a way for the Church to keep control over its congregations even in far-away lands. See his *Auss was gründ und*

ursache Luthers dolmetschung oder das new testament dem gemeinen mann billich verboten worden sey (Leipzig, 1525). He says that an “ungefelscht” and “gleichförmig” (non-counterfeited and unified) text of the Bible is necessary “so that those people who have emigrated and gone to strange/far-away places will hear the Word of Christ read, sung, and preached in the same way that they learned at home in their churches” (p. iij recto). Ems is probably referring to the explorers, missionaries, and merchants making their way to both the east and the west in search of markets, materials, and souls to save. The Protestants were worried about confessional unity based on a standardized Scripture as well. See Gerald Strauss, *Luther’s House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation* (Baltimore, 1978), 20ff., on the use of standardized texts in the schools, for example, to “ensure religious conformity” and to “check the spread of heterodoxy.”

14. See Koppitz, “German as a Language of Printed Books,” 1. Koppitz is referring here primarily to bibliographical information about the industry (size and numbers of editions, etc.) and is specifically comparing the knowledge of sixteenth-century printing to the far more extensive knowledge scholars have about incunabulum.
15. See Jerome Hornschuch, *Orthotypographia* (1608), ed. Ph. Gaskell and P. Bradford (Cambridge, 1972). For a discussion of the material conditions of reproduction in Hornschuch’s shop, see the edition of the *Orthotypographia* edited and with an introduction by Otto Clemen (Schorndorf, 1940), and Grafton, “Importance,” 265–66.
16. Lowry, *Aldus Manutius*, gives ample evidence that even in the world of the great Renaissance printheuses, conditions similar to those in the seventeenth century existed; see pp. 175–78, in particular. The “divinum beneficium” (divine gift of print) of which Hornschuch speaks (p. 5) had not just deteriorated but had been born among vilified circumstances.
17. The Petagus print is also reproduced in W. Harms, ed., *Illustrierte Flugblätter aus den Jahrhunderten der Reformation und der Glaubenskämpfe* (Coburg, 1983). The text spoken by the fool reads:

I offer my services to you entrepreneurs
 I wish you a happy new year and peace.
 I am the excellent man
 I can pull the wool over many an eye.
 That I can make fun of so many of you
 Has the following cause: *You* are the ones
 Who wear the fool’s cap at home!
 One fool makes ten!
 The one who believes easily is an easy target.
 [My translation]

According to Beate Rattay, the fool figure is a character from the contemporary “Wanderbühne” (wandering stage) who ridicules the readers of newspapers here for being as foolish in the act of reading as he is as he cavorts around the stage. See Rattay’s commentary, *Illustrierte Flugblätter*, 2.

18. Eisenstein, *Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, 23.
19. Grafton, “Importance,” 175.
20. Hirsch, *Printing, Selling, and Reading*, 322–33; Lowry, *Aldus Manutius*, 10.
21. See *ibid.*, and H. Carter, *A View of Early Typography up to About 1600* (Oxford, 1969).
22. Ferdinand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400–1800* (New York, 1975), 295–300, describes the ephemeral nature of the hard type itself as the result of this process of manufacturing.

23. On paper, see Hirsch, *Printing, Selling, and Reading*, 34–36; and L. Febvre and H.-J. Martin, *L'Apparition du livre* (Paris, 1958), 168ff.
24. See the complete collection of Luther's letters in his complete works, the *Weimarer Ausgabe* [WA] (Weimar, 1883–), in *Briefe*, 2:379–82, here p. 379.
25. "Ein loses ungelehrtes Gesindlin." See Hans Widmann, ed., *Der deutsche Buchhandel in Urkunden und Quellen* (Hamburg, 1965), 2:28. The quote is from Professor Martinus Cousius of Tübingen.
26. Lowry, *Aldus Manutius*, 12.
27. The story is told by Henry Estienne in his *Artis Typographicae Querimonia* and is cited by Grafton, "Importance," 277. The situation might not have been so bad in the learned houses of Manutius, Estienne, Lefevre d'Étaples, Plantin, and Froben, which might have been more like Eisenstein's "new centers of erudition" (*Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, 448), although they were quite likely to have been such in the smaller houses that printed vernacular texts.
28. See M. M. Philipps, *The Adages of Erasmus: A Study with Translations* (Cambridge, 1964), 182.
29. Lowry, *Aldus Manutius*, 8; Davis, "Printing and the People," 209–10.
30. See Hirsch, *Printing, Selling, and Reading*, 83ff., for the (in)effectiveness of the privileges. Hans Volz deals with the effectiveness or lack thereof of the privileges in Wittenberg. See his "Wittenberger Bibeldruckprivilegien des 16. und beginnenden 17. Jahrhunderts," in *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 30 (1955): 133–39. He unfortunately does not mention the case of the 1522 *New Testament* that I discuss below.
31. Hirsch, *Printing, Selling, and Reading*; Lowry, *Aldus Manutius*, 8.
32. See Hirsch, *Printing, Selling, and Reading*, 99, and Emil Weller, *Die falschen und fingierten [sic] Druckorte: Repertorien der seit der Erfindung der Buchdruckkunst unter falscher Firma erschienenen deutschen lateinischen und französischen Schriften*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1864). Weller does not mention any of the less fanciful pirate editions of Luther's works, but rather concentrates on false information such as the books published in "Cloud Cuckoo Land" and on the "Island of the Blessed."
33. See Karl Faulmann, *Illustrierte [sic] Geschichte der Buchdruckkunst* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1882), section 6, "Die Pressepolizei im XVI. Jahrhundert," 233–52, for an account of the gradual tightening of the censorship laws. In the imperial decree of 1530, it was declared that the printer's name, both first and last, as well as the city of publication, must from then on be printed in all books under penalty of being declared illegal (237). See also Heinrich Lackmann, *Die kirchliche Buchzensur* (Cologne, 1962); and Ulrich Eisenhardt, *Die kaiserliche Aufsicht über Buchdruck, Buchhandel, und Presse im Heiligen Römischen Reich deutscher Nation* (Karlsruhe, 1970), for the attempts of both church and lay authorities to control the explosion of print.
34. Senn, *Wickiana*, 72.
35. Hirsch's table of number of presses in ten German cities between 1500 and 1600 is convincing evidence of the fluctuation in the printing industry. See *Printing, Selling, and Reading*, 110. It is difficult to tell from Hirsch's table exactly where the instability lay, since he does not calculate how many of the presses existed over the course of the years he analyzes. If we look, however, at Josef Benzing's *Die Buchdrucker des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im deutschen Sprachgebiet* (Wiesbaden, 1963), which catalogues presses both chronologically and geographically, we can observe the enormous fluctuation in any given city within a single year. See Benzing on Wittenberg in particular, 464–76.

36. These words may be found in the introduction to a Low German Bible that appeared in Cologne in 1480 and in a Low German Bible printed in Lübeck in 1494. Both introductions are cited in Kenneth A. Strand, *Reformation Bibles in the Crossfire: The Story of Jerome Emser, His Anti-Lutheran Critique and the Catholic Bible Version* (Ann Arbor, 1961), 63. I deal with Strand's treatment of the Ems affair below.
37. See Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980), 95. I am grateful to Greenblatt and to Tom Saine for reading and commenting generously on an earlier version of this essay.
38. The text is bound in the *Sammelband* (anthology) of Hartmann Schedel in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich (signature: dlm 901), and dates from between 1480 and 1490. On the dating and background of the text, see Ferdinand Geldner, "Ein in einem Sammelband Hartmann Schedels (dlm 901) Überliefertes Gutachten über den Druck Deutschsprachiger Bibeln," in *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 47 (1972), 86–89. See also Rudolf Hirsch, "Pre-Reformation Censorship of Printed Books," in *The Library Chronicle* 21, no. 1 (1955): 100–105.
39. The formulation appears in the privilege signed by the Duke and printed in an edition of a German *New Testament* printed in Strassburg in 1529, the translation of which was attributed to Jerome Ems. Gottfried Mälzer suggests that Ems rather than the Duke wrote the privilege, although he gives no reason for this speculation. See G. Mälzer, "Hieronymus Emsers deutsche Ausgabe des Neuen Testaments," in *Die Bibel in der Welt*, vol. 14 (Halle, 1973), 48.
40. Cited in Walter Krieg, *Materialien zu einer Entwicklungsgeschichte der Bücher-Preise und des Autoren Honorars von 15. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Vienna and Zürich, 1953), 223–24.
41. Johann Cochlaeus, *Historia Martini Lutheri: Das ist/Kurtze Beschreibung seiner Handlungen und Geschriften . . .* (Ingolstadt, 1582), 130. My translation.
42. *Ibid*, 132.
43. A polemical overview of both the recent and older literature on the relationship between printing and the Reformation may be found in Bernd Moeller, "Stadt und Buch: Bemerkungen zur Struktur der reformatorischen Bewegung in Deutschland," in Mommsen, *Stadtbürgertum*, 25–39.
44. For a detailed narrative of the printing situation in Wittenberg just prior to and during the Lutheran heyday, see Hans Volz, *Martin Luthers deutsche Bibel: Entstehung und Geschichte der Lutherbibel* (Hamburg, 1970), 94–97. See also Maria Grossmann, "Wittenberg Printing, Early Sixteenth Century," in *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies* (1970), 1:53–74. The following narrative of the printing history of the 1522 *New Testament* is derived from these works as well as from the chronological depiction of these events in Bott and Moeller, *Martin Luther*, 275–92.
45. See H. Weber, "Zu Luthers September- und Dezembertestament," in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 33 (1912): 399–439, here pp. 402–7.
46. It was not, however, until the 1530 imperial law that the printer's name and the location of publication *had* to be printed in a text. Before that, the anonymity of the printer seemed a particular feature of Luther's vernacular texts. In 1523, for example, only 22 of the 189 printed versions of Luther's works bore the name of the man or men who had printed them. See Faulmann, "Pressepolizei," 237.
47. Weber, "Zu Luthers September- und Dezembertestament," 418–20.
48. The term is my "translation" of Lowry's "follow-my-leader," *Aldus Manutius*, 20. The information that follows on the various imprints of the 1522 *New Testament* may be found in the *Weimarer Ausgabe* of the *Deutsche Bibel*, 2:201ff. I examined these Bibles

- in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg; the Universitätsbibliothek, Tübingen; and the Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart. I am grateful to the staff of these institutions for their help in locating these texts.
49. I examined the 1525 Knoblauch edition in the Universitätsbibliothek in Tübingen. It is ironic that in the foreword of the *Old Testament*, bound together with this *New Testament*, Luther complains of the regularity with which the printers “spoil” his work “mit yrem unvleys” (with their carelessness). See the “Vorrede,” unpaginated.
 50. See Bott and Moeller, *Martin Luther*, 279, for a treatment of the economic practicality of the “combined Bibles.” It was not until 1534, of course, that a complete Bible translated by Luther was published.
 51. *Ibid.*, 279.
 52. See Volz, *Martin Luthers deutsche Bibel*, 204. The chapter “Die auswärtigen Nachdrucke der Lutherbibel,” 203ff., details the range of the illegal reprintings. See Reinitzer, *Biblia deutsch*, 125, for a table of the number of pirate editions that appeared until 1530. It is interesting that the printing of pirate editions seems to ebb around that time. Could the “Nachdrucker” have taken Luther’s admonitions in the *Sendbrief* to heart? It is not likely, since Luther continues to print scathing commentaries on the printers in his Bibles of 1534, 1541, and 1545. See also Luther’s letter to Elector Johann Friedrich of Saxony of 8 July 1539 (WA 8:491), in which he complains of a pirate edition printed by “the rascal,” Wolrab, in Leipzig who, Luther claims, is making a profit at the expense of the legitimate printers and of God’s Word.
 53. On the Cranach woodcuts, see Dieter Köpplin, *Lukas Cranach: Gemälde, Zeichnungen, Druckgraphik* (Basel, 1974), 331–43. For an additional brief description, see Wolfgang Hütt, “Lucas Cranach d. Ä. und die Illustrationen zu Luthers Septembertestament von 1522,” in *Bildende Kunst* 6 (1972): 298–300. Scribner discusses the woodcuts briefly in *Simple Folk*, 170, and points out that the city in the background of some of the woodcuts is recognizably Rome. Mälzer, “Hieronymus Emser. . .,” is incorrect that Ems took over the polemic of the prints “unbesehen” (45). He in fact had some of them changed.
 54. The document is reprinted in Reinitzer, *Biblia deutsch*, entry 108. It was posted widely in ducal Saxony but apparently had little effect in spite of the fact that Georg offered to buy back the Bibles from those who had already purchased them. Nevertheless only one of every four copies was turned in to the duke as he demanded. See Mark Edwards, *Luther’s Last Battles: Politics and Polemics, 1531–46* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1983), 41–42, on the ban and its results.
 55. See Hildegard Zimmermann, *Beiträge zur Bibelillustration des 16. Jahrhunderts: Illustrationen und Illustratoren des ersten Luther-Testaments und der Oktav-Ausgaben des Neuen Testaments in Mittel-, Nord-, und Westdeutschland* (Strassburg, 1924), 5, on the Ems purchase. Zimmermann does not suggest why Cranach might have sold the blocks to Luther’s antagonist. Cranach’s illustrations appear elsewhere in considerably changed form, in a Polish *Catholic* Bible printed in Krakow in 1561, where they seem to have been traced, since the lines are so indistinct. See Reinitzer, *Biblia deutsch*, entry 100, fig. 103a. On the ease with which woodcuts could be reproduced, see Hirsch, *Printing, Selling, and Reading*, 49.
 56. The incident is described in the notes to the *Fastenpostille* in WA 17.2:xvi–xviii. See also Widmann, *Buchhandel*, 2:324–26.
 57. WA 17.2:3.
 58. *Ibid.*, 2–3.
 59. On Ems (1477–1527), see the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, 6:96–99. Also see Scott

- H. Hendrix, *Luther and the Papacy* (Philadelphia, 1981), 90ff. Ems is said to have been one of Luther's early teachers in Erfurt and was still on speaking terms with him in 1518. But he began to write against the younger man in 1521 in a series of pamphlets, the most vehement of which was entitled: "Wider das unchristliche buch Martini Luthers Augustiners, an den Tewtschen Adel aussgangen. . .," ed. L. Enders (Halle, 1889). Luther answered in several crass pamphlets himself. The exchange is detailed in Strand, *Reformation Bibles*, 33ff. Strand and Mälzer both follow Gustav Kawerau, *Hieronymus Emser: Ein Lebensbild aus der Reformationsgeschichte* (Halle, 1898).
60. Ems, "Wider das unchristliche buch," 39. My translation.
 61. Ems, "Reasons," xvij (verso).
 62. *Ibid.*, clvij (verso).
 63. *Ibid.*, clvj (recto). It is ironic that Ems complains at the end of the treatise about having been hurried by his printer—Wolfgang Stöckel of Leipzig—to such an extent that he was unable to proofread his own citations from the Bible adequately. It seems that printers did in fact have the upper hand.
 64. *Ibid.*, iiij.
 65. The Duke's formulation is "das warhafftig und rechtschaffen wort Gottes," and reminds us that the struggle in these editions was to have the last word on the "truth" of any given translation of Scripture.
 66. Compare the edition printed in Strassburg in 1522-23 that bears the title *Jhesus: Das New Testament Dutsch*, which is an octavo edition, and the two folio editions printed in Strassburg in 1525 and in Augsburg in 1528.
 67. In his article "Emser's 'Emendations' of Luther's New Testament: Galatians I," in *Modern Language Notes* 81 (1966): 370–97, Heinz Bluhm claims that Ems must have in fact used the *Septembertestament* in preparing "his" *New Testament* since he keeps many of Luther's renderings from that edition that had already been changed, either by Luther or by the printers, in other post-1522, approved editions. If this was the case, then Ems might indeed have come upon the idea to have "his" edition printed in the same format with the same typeface, since he had the *Septembertestament* before him as he worked. The printer, Stöckel, also played a considerable role in the entire affair. He worked for both the Catholics and the Protestants both before and after the 1527 *New Testament*, and had even printed some of Luther's texts and was in the service of Duke Georg of Saxony as an unofficial "court printer" when he printed the Ems *New Testament*. On Stöckel, see Benzing, *Buchdrucker*, 83, 465; and *Lutherbibliographie: Verzeichnis der gedruckten Schriften Martin Luthers bis zu dessen Tod* (Baden-Baden, 1966), for Stöckel's printings of Luther's texts.
 68. See Reinitzer, *Biblia deutsch*, 198–99. I used an edition printed in 1539 in Breisgau that also bears the title designating Ems as the "translator."
 69. Cochlaeus, *Historia*, 121.
 70. See Mälzer, "Hieronymus Emser," 50–51, for a detailed examination of the afterlife of the Ems "translation." See also Reinitzer, *Biblia deutsch*, 198–99. Heinz Bluhm, *Martin Luther: Creative Translator* (St. Louis, 1965), also discusses the 100 subsequent editions of the Ems *New Testament*, 161–62. It is interesting that some of the subsequent Catholic editions of the *New Testament* that are based on the Ems "translation" do in fact acknowledge publicly that his text was the foundation on which theirs were built. See, for example, Johann Eck's *Bibel: Alt und new Testament* (1537), in which Eck explicitly states that he used Ems's translation, and chastizes the printers who have issued reprints of Ems's work without identifying them as such (ii). The Bible translation of the Catholic Johann Dietenberger (1475–1537), also based substantially on

- Luther's translation of the entire Scripture, but not identified as such, was published in 1534 (as a competing edition to Luther's first entire German Bible) and went through a total of 58 editions. See Reinitzer, *Biblia deutsch*, 203–5.
71. Strand, *Reformation Bibles*, 66. Strand suggests that Ems "did not mean to steal Luther's translation as such." In concluding this, Strand overlooks the typographical manipulations of the 1527 edition based on the 1522 Lotter edition that were quite literally meant to sell Luther's text, albeit with new glosses, under another's name, and thus neglects the very crucial role that the production, marketing, and distribution of the various texts played in influencing public sentiment.
 72. Compare the editions printed by Schumann in Leipzig in 1528 and 1529, by H. Fuchs in Cologne in 1529, by Weissenhorn in Augsburg in 1529, and by Fabrum in Freiburg in 1529. All are in the octavo format. I examined these editions in the Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart.
 73. Bluhm, "Emendations," 377.
 74. WA 5:183ff.
 75. Bluhm, "Emendations," passim.
 76. Bluhm has demonstrated that Luther actually cites the Latin *Vulgata* incorrectly in the "ex fide" passage. I suggest below that Luther may have had complex reasons for doing so. See Bluhm, *Creative Translator*, 125–38. Also see Bluhm's more recent work on Luther as translator in his "The Evolution of Luther's Translation of the First Penitential Psalm," in *Daphnis: Zeitschrift für Mittlere Deutsche Literatur* 12.4 (1983): 529–45.
 77. The first statement can be found in the text of the annotations added by an anonymous editor to Ems's glosses in the 1529 Strassburg edition of Ems's text. The comments are made after the translation and glosses of Romans 3:28, precisely the passage under consideration here. The second statement is Ems's in "Reasons," lxvij (verso).
 78. *Sendbrief*, in WA 30.2:633. Hereafter all page references to the *Sendbrief* will be included parenthetically in the text. All translations are my own.
 79. The question of spiritual as opposed to literal understanding of Scripture has created a separate discipline of its own. For an introduction, see G. Ebeling's article, "Geist und Buchstabe," in *RGK* 1290–94.
 80. An interesting preliminary study on the notion of the vernacular, or "Gemeindeutsch," in relation to Luther and his effect on the German language may be found in Stanley N. Werbow's "Die gemeine Teutsch': Ausdruck und Begriff," in *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 82.1 (1963): 44–63. Werbow cites the relevant passages in which Luther uses the term. Robert P. Ebert demonstrates, however, that Luther's syntax had little or no impact on contemporary usage. See his "Verb Position in Luther's Bible Translation and in the Usage of his Contemporaries," *Monatshefte* 75.2 (1983): 147–56. But where linguistic influence may have been lacking, Luther's *name* and reference to his language in the service of nationalistic claims for the German-language sub-nations abound in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See my dissertation, "Institutions in the Pastoral: The Nuremberg Pegnesischer Blumenorden, 1644" (Princeton, 1983), especially chapter 5, "Redemption in the Vernacular."
 81. Horace writes in his *De arte poetica*, for example: "Nec verbo verbum curabis reddere fidus interpres" (lines 133–34). More contemporary to Luther, Albrecht von Eyb, the great German translator of the late fifteenth century, declares that translation should proceed "nit als gar von Worten zu Worten, sonder nach dem synn und mainung der materien" (not at all word for word, but according to the meaning and significance). Eyb is quoted in Paul Hankamer, *Die Sprache: Ihr Begriff und ihre Bedeutung im 16. und*

17. *Jahrhundert* (Bonn, 1927), 13.
82. Luther's rejection, indeed betrayal, of the peasants is well known. See his *Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern* (1525) and *Ein Sendbrief von dem harten Büchlein wider die Bauern* (1525) in WA 18:344–62, 375–402. See Stephen Greenblatt, "Murdering Peasants: Status, Genre, and the Representation of Rebellion," *Representations* 1.1 (1983): 1–29.
83. See James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric of the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1974), 280–84. Also see G. Bornkamm's article on "Paulus," in RGG 5:166–90, esp. col. 174 on Paul's theology of preaching the Word.
84. Compare Col. 4, 16, and 1 Thess. 5, 27. See also W. G. Kümmel's analysis in his article "Paulusbriefe," in RGG 5:195–98, as well as his chapter on Romans in his *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Heidelberg, 1973), 266–80.
85. See C. F. Evans, "The New Testament in the Making," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. I, ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge, 1970), 232–84.
86. See Matthew Black, "The Biblical Languages," in *Cambridge History of the Bible*, 1:1–11, here p. 10.
87. See Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 284–92, on St. Augustine. See also Cicero *Orator* 23.76. On the classical background of the plain style, see Wesley Trimpi, *Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of the Plain Style* (Stanford, 1962), 5ff.
88. Luther also inserts himself explicitly into this lineage, an act that makes him the most recent, authentically inspired "church father." See the *Sendbrief*, in WA 30.2:642. "And I am not the only one nor even the first who has said there that faith *alone* can save. Ambrose, Augustine, and many others said it before me."
89. See Evans, "New Testament in the Making," 247.
90. *Sendbrief*, 642. See Siegfried Raeder, "Voraussetzungen und Methode von Luthers Bibelübersetzung," in *Geist und Geschichte der Reformation*, ed. H. Liebing and K. Scholder (Berlin, 1966), 152–79, esp. 153.
91. "More the spirit than the letter." See Luther's "Operationes in Psalmos" (1519–21), in WA 5:597, for an explanation of this method of Scriptural exegesis.
92. Luther explains the importance of language learning only in conjunction with help from the Holy Spirit in his pamphlet, "An die Ratsherrn aller Städte deutsches Landes . . ." (1524), in WA 15:37. The famous formulation that language is the sheath in which the sword of the Spirit is held is also in this text, p. 37. On Luther's understanding of his translation as a Pentecostal moment, see Peter Meinhold, *Luthers Sprachphilosophie* (Berlin, 1958). There is a fascinating woodcut of Luther that supports understanding his Bible translation as a Pentecostal act. In the *New Testament* printed by Hans Lufft in Wittenberg in 1534, the Apostle Matthew bears Luther's features in the woodcut at the beginning of the Gospel of St. Matthew. See Reinitzer, *Biblia deutsch*, 172.
93. Luther, "Ratsherrn," 38.
94. *Ibid.*
95. In the *Septembertestament*, Luther glosses the Gospel of Mark 1, using the word *gewaltiglich* for the first time to describe Mark's preaching style in the following way: "For he taught with force [gewaltiglich] and not like a scholar of writings [Schriftgeler-ten]. That's his sermon . . . and whatever he says was forceful [hatte eyn gewalt] and lives [lebet]." Thus Mark too was preaching the spiritual, living truth and not the dead letter.