

## EARLY LUTHER BIBLES: FACSIMILES FROM SEVERAL SIGNIFICANT EDITIONS

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The year 1534 was epoch-making in the history of the German Bible. The first edition of Luther's complete Bible appeared in that year, as did also the first edition of Johannes Dietsberger's Catholic Bible. In our special Luther issue of *AUSS* last year, I briefly mentioned the steps in development and revision of Luther's translations during his own lifetime, provided an update on current research on the subject, and promised publication in a later issue of *AUSS* of some facsimile reproductions of pages from some early Luther Bibles (see *AUSS* 22 [1984]: 31-32, 128-134, and 6, respectively). The presentation here is in fulfillment of the promise to provide those photographic reproductions.

The first series of facsimiles (nos. 1 through 6) is from two Luther Bibles in the "Wurker Collection" owned by Chester J. Gibson, a prominent dentist in McMinnville, Oregon. The Heritage Room (a "Special Collections" division) of the James White Library of Andrews University is fortunate to have on extended loan from Dr. Gibson a number of his valuable Bibles, including two sections of a copy of the original Luther edition of 1534 and a copy of the "Sauer Bible" of 1763, published in Germantown, Pennsylvania. The Sauer Bible actually appeared in three significant editions, and it represents the earliest publication of Luther's version in America.

The further facsimiles (nos. 7 through 9) are from Luther's "September" and "December" Testaments of 1522. (For brief information about the development of Luther's own translational work from 1522 to 1534, see the "Note" on page 118.)

It should be observed that the 1534 and 1763 editions from the Wurker Collection here represented, as well as the other Bibles with pages shown in facsimile, are large *folio volumes*. Hence the reproductions herein are in *substantially reduced size*.

At my request, Dr. Gibson has provided a brief statement concerning the Wurker Collection. This statement appears on the immediately following page.

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*A Note on Luther's Bible from 1522 to 1534.* The earliest edition of Luther's German Bible was the so-called "September Bible" or "September Testament" of 1522—a translation of the complete NT, for which the Reformer had finished the rough draft at the Wartburg Castle between about mid-December, 1521, and March 6, 1522, when he re-entered Wittenberg. A number of years prior to this, he had, of course, begun to manifest an interest in use of the vernacular, and had translated individual Bible texts within various sermons and treatises, as well as translating the Penitential Psalms into German in 1517.

Luther's German NT gained immediate popularity, with over 100 editions of it (most in High German, but some 20 in Low German) appearing before his first complete German Bible was published in 1534. That complete Bible itself was reached in stages, with separate editions of various OT sections and OT books coming from the press at intervals. The following paragraph, which summarizes these developments, is here reprinted for convenience from my note in the Luther issue of *A USS* (Spring 1984), pp. 31-32:

The major steps in bringing out Luther's complete German Bible of 1534 included the appearance of the OT in several sections and a continuing process of revision. Subsequent to the publication of the NT in 1522, the OT appeared as follows: Pentateuch, 1523; Joshua to Esther, 1524; Job to Ecclesiastes, 1524; the Prophets, 1532; and the completed OT (including the Apocrypha), 1534. Various books of the Prophets had appeared separately between 1526 and 1530—Habakkuk, 1526; Isaiah and Zechariah, 1528; and Daniel (and also Ezek 38-39), 1530. A translation of the Wisdom of Solomon had been issued in 1529. When the section from Job to Ecclesiastes was published in 1524, a separate edition of the Psalms was issued as well. The Psalter underwent significant revisions discernible in the editions of 1528, 1531, and 1534.