

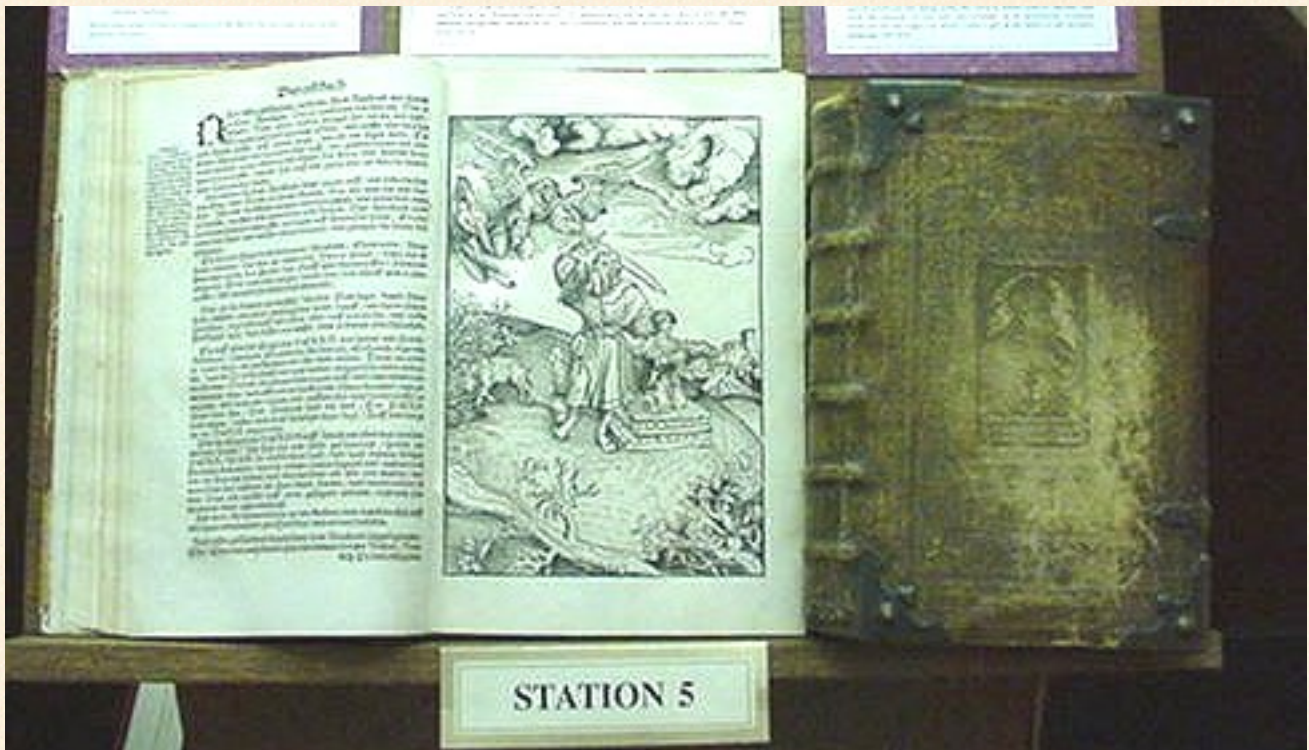
# The Dr. Gene Scott Bible Collection

## STATION 5: LUTHER'S GERMAN BIBLE

### FOUNDATIONS OF THE BOOK: LUTHER'S GERMAN BIBLE

Martin Luther stands out as one of the key figures of Church history, as the man who turned the attention of many in the established Church to the original, pure Pauline message of grace and faith, and thus provided the underpinnings of the Reformation. His translation of the Bible, based on the purest sources of the original text then available, including the work of Erasmus, was to have a profound influence on the English language Bible.

Through Tyndale, who worked closely with Luther in Germany, Luther's concepts have resounded in translation throughout the stream of English printed Bibles. Tyndale's English New Testament was the first printed edition, and Tyndale's translations of Old Testament books appeared in Matthew's and Coverdale's Bibles, and thus were perpetuated through the "Great," Geneva, Bishops' and King James Bibles.



*View of Station 5*

Luther's "September Testament" of 1522 was followed by his translation of the **complete Pentateuch** in 1523. Printed by Melchior & Michael Lotther at Wittenberg in folio size, the magnificent example shown here includes 11 gorgeous full-page woodcut engravings by the studio of Lucas Cranach. It is set in "black letter" type with one column of text per page, and is in the finest possible condition. We know of only three other examples of this first edition of Luther's "High German" Pentateuch," making it indeed a supreme treasure of the Dr. Gene Scott Collection. It marks the **first modern vernacular version** of the Old Testament, and was prepared under Luther's direct supervision.



***Click on the image  
above to see an  
enlarged view!***

The deluxe illustrated edition of Luther's masterwork shown here was printed in Frankfurt-am-Main in 1577. In addition to the numerous woodcut illustrations throughout, it incorporates a dedicatory portrait of John Frederick, Duke of Saxony. The text is set in a lovely, script-like type, while the larger headlines appear in the traditional German "fraktur," or Gothic, lettering. Of particular note is the original binding: extensively tooled pigskin, with brass corner mounts, it features embossed portraits of Luther on the front and Melancthon on the back. The page edges were likewise tooled, and you can note traces of the original coloring of the floral designs on all sides.

The printer was Peter Schmid for the publisher Sigmund Feier-abends; there is a lovely colophon page, with elaborate woodcut, between the Book of Solomon and the start of Prophets. Many of the sections of the Old Testament have separate title pages, all attesting to the fact that this is Luther's translation.



As an example of the finest in 16th Century Continental book craftsmanship, from its rare original binding to its elaborate edges to the superb use of woodcuts and typography, both books are almost without parallel, and from the amount of love and care lavished on their production, are ample evidence for the regard in which Luther's gift of the Bible in the people's language was held.

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## Luther's Translation

The religious, social and literary consequences of Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German cannot be overestimated; they are without parallel in the history of Continental Europe. Only Wycliffe's and Tyndale's efforts towards an English Bible can be held comparable - and Tyndale was Luther's collaborator and "apostle to England."

While Luther perhaps cannot be said to have created the modern German language, Bluhm (an authority on Luther's Bible) states, "He enriched and endowed it more impressively and shaped it more significantly than any other author."

Luther's translation brought to life one of the fundamental doctrines of the Protestant Reformation: the "Open Bible," through which God could speak directly to the people without the intermediary services of the established Church. Remarkably, Luther completed his translation of the New Testament in just three months, basing his text in large part on Erasmus' 1518-19 Greek New Testament (2nd edition), and it was published in 1522. Luther's complete Old Testament was not published until 1534, along with the first complete Luther Bible.

Luther's was the first modern translation made from the Greek, and it is recognized today as one of the great translations of the Western world, having served in turn as the basis for subsequent translations of the Scriptures into Dutch, Danish, Icelandic, Swedish - and English. Tyndale was very familiar with it and with the doctrines associated with it. Luther, after all, brought Paul's message of grace and faith back into focus, for the first time in centuries, and rejected the many traditions of the established church that had "made void the Word of God."

The important reference work, "Printing and the Mind of Man," states:

***"Linguistically its influence was equally striking. At first the editions which appeared at Augsburg, Nuremberg and elsewhere in South Germany needed many***

***dialect alterations or explanations of words. So widely was it read, however, that by the middle of the seventeenth century Luther's High German had triumphed and was the dominant literary language of all modern Germany."***

Bluhm has called Luther's translation of the Bible "the greatest work of the greatest German."

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***Other examples of Luther's work are shown at***

***Station 11***

***(including his "Table Talks" in English) and at***

***Station 36***

***, which***

***shows Luther's Bibles from three centuries.***

***At***

***Station 37***

***is an***

***example of a 16th century Luther Bible once owned by Harriet Beecher Stowe (of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" fame) and her husband.***

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## STATION LOCATION MAP

Below is a floor plan map of the Cathedral in 3 sections, one for each level. The first section is the Lower Level, the second is the Foyer Level, and the third is the Mezzanine Level. This station is located in the "Room of the Book" on the Lower Level at the red #5.



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