

Martin Luther (der 10. November 1483—der 2. Februar 1546)

Luther and Protestant Reformation

Martin Luther's daring revolution: The reformation 500 years on

Luther Bible: bestseller

In 1534, Luther and collaborators finish translating the Old Testament from Hebrew into German. The reformer's vivid and memorable language helps educate inhabitants of the Holy Roman Empire in literacy, as well as furthers a feeling of national unity. Hundreds of the idioms and sayings from Luther's Bible translation remain woven into the German language today.



The first complete bible translation by Martin Luther, 1534

© Public Domain

But the most important result of Luther's translations was that it made reading the Bible accessible to each and every individual — and not just to the upper educated classes. In its first twelve years, the 1534 Luther Bible sold more than 100,000 copies, making its translator the most widely-circulated publicist of the 16th century.

Last attempt at unification

At the end of July 1530 Emperor Charles V calls for an imperial diet in Augsburg. The empire risks breaking up, in part to the religious divisions brought to life by Luther. Still religiously banned and politically outlawed, Luther cannot take part without risking his safety. Instead, his friend and fellow religious reformer Philip Melanchton represents him in Augsburg.

In arduous hearings, Melanchton attempts to earn recognition of the Protestant denomination from the Catholic side, arguing for the publication of the "Augsburg Confession," which states that Protestant teachings go against the Catholic Church. His fight proves to be in vain.

Impact of the political climate

However, Emperor Charles V can't afford to crack down on the Protestants. The Ottoman army threatens both the Christian West and the Holy Roman Empire, making him dependent on any form of military aid. In order to secure internal unity, the emperor grants Protestants religious freedom in exchange for military participation in the Ottoman-Habsburg wars. However, conflicts between Catholics and Protestants are not settled until the Peace of Augsburg in 1555.