

*Martinus Luder—Eleutherius—Martin Luther: Warum änderte Martin Luther seinen Namen?* Jürgen Udolph.

Indogermanische Bibliothek 3: Untersuchungen. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2016. 150 pp. €26.

The five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 received considerable attention in Germany in particular. Numerous publications dealing with Martin Luther appeared to mark the anniversary, some of which shed new light on aspects of Luther's life or made his writings more accessible to a broader public. The following review discusses two short publications that appeared in the context of the anniversary year of 2017.

Luther wrote his *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* (Open letter on translating) in 1530 while staying at Coburg Fortress, while Protestant theologians proclaimed the *Confessio Augustana* at the Diet of Augsburg. The topic of *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* is the approach to translation that Luther adopted while translating the Bible into German. In it, Luther argues against a simple word-for-word translation of the Greek and Latin texts into German. Instead, he argues that the text of the Bible should be reproduced in good German and should be comprehensible to the ordinary man. Luther demonstrates his approach to translation by discussing biblical passages, including Romans 3:28. In his Bible translation, he translated the Latin sentence "Arbitramur hominem iustificari ex fide absque operibus" as "Wir halten / das der mensch gerecht werde on des gesetzes werck allein durch den glauben" (4) ("We consider that man is justified without the works of the law, by faith alone" [5]). Luther added the word *allein* (alone) because, in his opinion, without it the meaning of the sentence is not clear to a German reader. This example demonstrates that Luther's approach to translation had not only linguistic, but also theological motivations. The insertion of the word *allein* means that the biblical verse Romans 3:28 could now be cited in support of the Reformation concept of *sola fide*, Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone, according to which faith alone and not the books of the law make the justification of man in the eyes of God possible. Thus, in *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* Luther combines thoughts about the translation process with his most significant theological realization, his doctrine of justification by faith alone, which he wanted to communicate to the German people by means of a suitable translation.

This new edition of *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* is the first of a series of Reformation tracts being published by the Taylor Institution Library. The book offers a facsimile copy of the original, as well as a transcription of the German text and a modern

English translation. In the transcription and the translation, explanatory information is provided in the footnotes. These details are complemented by a glossary of important figures. In the introduction, Henrike Lähnemann makes some general remarks on the facsimile and the transcription. Howard Jones gives an introduction to the context in which the tract emerged and its content. The book is intended for use at English-speaking universities. Its handy size, the succinct introductions, and the helpful suggestions for use also help in this regard.

Is the name *Luther* itself a product of Luther's translation activities? Luther's name change from *Luder* to *Luther* in 1517 has often attracted interest in academic discourse and has been the subject of much conjecture. It has been suggested that the name change was inspired by the Greek word *Eleutherios* (the liberated one), which Luther used as a signature on a number of letters in the period 1517–19. The name *Luther* is thus often viewed as a Grecification of the original name *Luder*. According to this view, the name change symbolized the transformation that he underwent in his life in 1517. Through his discovery of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, he had become a "liberated" Christian. In his book *Martinus Luder—Eleutherius—Martin Luther*, Jürgen Udolph approaches the question of the motivations behind Luther's name change not as a theologian, but as an onomastician. He offers a new interpretation that largely rejects the theological interpretation just described. According to Udolph, the change from *Luder* to *Luther* is not a Grecification, but a change from the Low German to the High German form of the surname. He demonstrates that in the sixteenth century the original name *Luder* was viewed as a Low German name. By using *Luther* from 1517 onward, Luther was using a High German-sounding version of his name because Low German was viewed as having a lower status in many parts of Germany. Additionally, Luther feared that the name *Luder* would be associated with the early modern High German word *luder* (temptation, licentiousness), thereby providing his opponents with an opportunity to mock him.

Luther only used the sobriquet *Eleutherios* as a signature for a short period in letters to a small number of associates. On Luther's use of *Eleutherios*, Udolph is at least partly in agreement with the theologians, who view this Greek signature as an expression of Luther's newly discovered doctrine of justification by faith alone. But the Greek signature has nothing to do with the name change from *Luder* to *Luther*. Udolph comes to this conclusion after a detailed discussion of Luther's family history and numerous linguistic considerations, as well as an analysis of other examples of name changes in the early modern period. He also offers information on where and when Luther himself used the different forms of his name. The study thus stands on firmer linguistic foundations than some earlier theological reflections on the topic. However, some of the discussions in Udolph's book are somewhat long-winded. It is questionable whether an academic study should be supported with Wikipedia citations, and whether consulting telephone directories to establish the prevalence of present-day surnames containing a *th* is really necessary. In the main text of the book, the secondary literature is cited and

discussed in considerable detail—here too the question arises whether these details could not have been abbreviated and placed in the footnotes. The conclusions of the study are nonetheless noteworthy because they contribute to the demythologization of Luther, and they will hopefully be given due attention by future Luther biographers, and be either included or disproved.

Both books discussed are in their own fashion original products of the Reformation anniversary. They demonstrate in different ways how important thinking about language and translations can be not just in Luther's time but also in the present day, in order to understand and interpret the life and writings of Martin Luther.

Andrea Hofmann, *Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*  
doi:10.1017/rqx.2018.72