

an office, in which he was required to expound the sacred writings, and, on receiving which, he swore "to teach purely and simply according to the Scriptures," a vow which was afterwards a source of confidence and comfort to him. His earliest lectures, based upon the Vulgate, or old Latin version, were upon the Psalms and Romans, portions which deepened his own experience, and rooted and grounded him in the Scripture doctrine of justification by faith, "the master key," as he called it, "of the evangelical building."

When placed under the ban of Church and Empire, and carried off in 1521 by friendly violence to the Wartburg, as the only means of safety, the period of his most real and abiding activity commenced. Though supposed by some to have fallen into the hands of the enemy, and by others to have "been carried off by the devil," he was more really the master of Germany, by the opinions and feelings he was forming, than the great Emperor himself. He referred to this time as one of "idleness," but, besides translating the whole of the New Testament, he published in that self-same year no less than 130 tracts, and a greater number in the following year, and was thus forging and polishing for use the instrument by which the greatest and most enduring work of his life was to be accomplished—"the translation of the Holy Scriptures." The response which these holy writings gave to his own conscience when burdened with guilt, and trying to merit salvation by works of law, would, he naturally felt, meet the cries, "uttered or unexpressed" of the whole people. In 1517 he had published the Seven Penitential Psalms, to which were added, at intervals, up to 1521, the Lord's Prayer, the Prayer of Manasseh, the Ten Commandments, the Prayer of Solomon, Psalms, Gospels and Epistles, and these were repeatedly reprinted—an evidence of their necessity and acceptance.

It was first towards the end of 1521, that the idea of translating the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testaments, took hold of him and formed itself into a purpose. Before the close of the fifteenth century, indeed, a translation had been made in the old high German, fourteen editions of which appeared, all founded upon the Vulgate, but none in the common language of the people. It was Luther's holy ambition to give them one in their own tongue, based upon the original Hebrew and Greek, and as free as possible, both from the inaccuracies of the earlier version, as from those of the Vulgate itself. He began most fittingly with the New Testament, which he finished during his nine months' stay in the Wartburg, and which, after careful revision with the aid of friends, especially Melancthon, he published by Michaelmas, 1522. So eagerly this sought after, that in December of the same year a second edition was called for. He forthwith began the Old Testament, and applied himself so zealously to the task, that in the very next year the first part, containing the Pentateuch, appeared. The second and third parts came out in 1524, and at length, in 1534, appeared the first complete edition of Luther's German Bible, from the press of Hans Luft. The final revision was made in 1541, and the latest edition of this final revision, which Luther helped to correct typographically, appeared in 1545. He lived to see no less than ten editions published, and took the utmost pains to secure accuracy in each. Of this great work no less than thirty-eight editions appeared in Germany before 1580, besides seventy-two of the New Testament, and innumerable reprints of other smaller portions. "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed."

The appearance of this work made an epoch not only in the history of the church, but in that of the national life and literature of Germany, and, as substantially the work of one mind, forms an enduring and unrivalled monument of Luther's genius, perseverance and power. He is the best illustration of his own saying: "*Translation is a special gift and grace.* A man may know many languages, and yet be unable to render one into the other." The care with which he did this may be seen from a compari-