

Taschen
THE BIBLE IN PICTURES

Stephan Füssel

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THE BIBLE IN PICTURES

Le incendiarie illustrazioni di **Lucas Cranach** per la Bibbia di Martin Lutero: il libro che ha cambiato per sempre il cristianesimo.

La Bibbia di **Martin Lutero**, pubblicata nel 1534, è stata **la prima Bibbia completamente in tedesco** ed è un evento cardine nella storia del cristianesimo. La traduzione rivoluzionaria di Lutero, moderna per il linguaggio e l'interpretazione, rese finalmente accessibile la Bibbia ai laici, alimentando rabbia e repulsione verso Roma e il Papato, e generando una nuova religione: il protestantesimo.

La Bibbia 1534 è inoltre rinomata per essere corredata con illustrazioni grafiche scandalosamente e politicamente forti, come quelli raffiguranti la meretrice di Babilonia in sella a una bestia a sette teste mentre indossa la corona papale, o dei Quattro Cavalieri dell'Apocalisse guidati da un soldato turco.

TASCHEN sta pubblicando le 117 illustrazioni xilografiche colorate a mano, uscite dalla bottega di Lucas Cranach. Ognuna è meticolosamente riprodotta da una rara copia originale e sontuosa, appartenente alla *Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek* di Weimar.

Lo studioso **Stephan Füssel** fornisce una panoramica scientifica della vita di Lutero, il contesto storico e il significato culturale della sua Bibbia, e le descrizioni dettagliate delle illustrazioni e la loro iconografia.

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and the ocean filled with aquatic animals surrounds the inner circle of the earth, which in turn shows animals of the woods, the fields and the sea, flowers and mountains. Inside, God forms the woman out of man's ribs. Above Eve's head is a unicorn, symbolizing the purity and virginity of the newly born creature. The four personified winds, Boras, Taurus, Notus and Zephyr, guard the four corners of the sky.

In the early period of letterpress printing, Augsburg was a centre of German language book production - only 1% per cent of the books printed there were in Latin - as opposed to all other printing centres in Germany. While not a single Latin Bible was published in Augsburg between 1468 and 1515, German language Bibles, both complete and partial editions, accounted for approximately 50 per cent of the entire volume produced in print. In 1487 and 1490, the eleventh and twelfth German Bibles were published here by Johannes Schönsperger the Elder (c. 1435-1521), complete with ornate woodcuts. Schönsperger was the stepson of Johann Bamberger, a leading bookseller in Augsburg (c. 1430-1503), where he dominated the market for German language literature together with Anton Sorg. In 1508 Emperor Maximilian I appointed him as book printer to his court and granted him a fixed annual salary. Over 250 volumes from his printing works have survived, among them numerous reprints of "best sellers" from Nuremberg and Strasbourg. In an age without copyright or reprint privileges, this was perfectly normal. Scholars frequently exaggerate when referring to his reprints as "popular editions". In this context it must be stated that he mostly produced small format editions with simple black and white woodcut copies. Of renown are his three reprints of the *Waldhauser* by Hartmann Schedel, which had been published by Anton Koberger in both Latin and German in 1493, featuring 1800 illustrations. In each of the years 1496, 1497 and 1499 Schönsperger issued a complete reprint of reduced format in Augsburg, all of which seem to have sold out quickly after publication.

For his 1497 and 1499 Bible editions Schönsperger took over both text and illustrations from the ninth German Bible of Anton Koberger (and thus the woodcuts from the Cologne Bible). As was his usual practice, he sized down Koberger's format from 27 x 30 cm to 20.5 x 28 cm, reducing it even further in his second edition (to 18 x 21 cm). As the woodcuts originally made for the larger text block were too big for the second edition, he trimmed their borders. How-

ever, the woodcuts (see ill. p. 14, 15) still project beyond the edges of the text block. Grand toward mass production, at least by the standards of the day, Schönsperger's editions were partly coloured in his own workshops using stencils. In this process the outlines were often carelessly painted over. Unlike Zainer, who used a perfect and beautiful *gouache amplex*, Schönsperger experimented with two *fulgur* types, predecessors of the *Schwabacher*. The master of the Schönsperger Bible imitated the wood blocks of the Cologne Bible using Koberger's originals, while simplifying and using coarser outlines more suited to stencil colouring. Some of his wood blocks are signed HIB (a monogram that remains unidentified).

A comparison of this personal tradition most common to the German Bibles before Luther (Cologne-Nuremberg-Augsburg) with the woodcuts of the Master MS of the present edition from 1534 will follow later, using several examples reproduced for this facsimile edition. In the Schönsperger Bible of 1490, a woodcut depicts the Sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22) on fol. XXI^r in several scenes (ill. p. 14 left). It shows both Abraham and Isaac on their long journey out of town, the building of the altar and the sacrifice itself, presented at the last moment by an angel. The wood block projects at least one centimetre beyond the right edge of the text block, although its outer borders had already been trimmed. The delicate woodcut of the Master MS on fol. XIII^r in the Luther Bible (see No. 5, ill. p. 44 top) places the dramatic circumstances of the sacrifice in the foreground; the angel is shown literally staying Abraham's hand. Although the illustration consists of several scenes, the main episode is certainly the first to catch the viewer's eye.

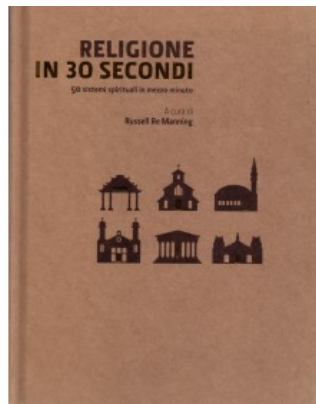
Fol. XXVII^v (Gen. 18) illustrates the popular motif of Jacob's ladder, on which only three angels are standing; otherwise the rather empty background shows a lake, meadows and a townscape. The illustrations are clearly derived from the manuscript tradition, as exemplified in the *Bible historiale* of Diebold Lamber around 1415-1442 (ill. p. 12 right). In the Luther Bible of 1534 (fol. XVIII^r; see No. 6, ill. p. 44 bottom), the Master MS, however, created a dramatic and lively scenery filled with angels: "Und sie / die Engel Gottes stiegen dran auff vnd wider" (Behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it).

While on fol. LXXII^v (Exod. 14) of the Schönsperger Bible the Master HIB depicts Pharaoh's army perishing in the sea



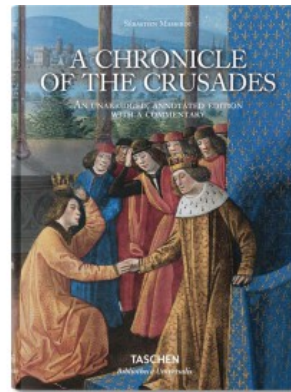
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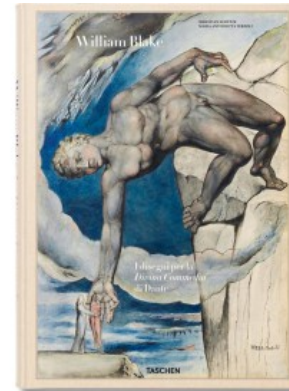
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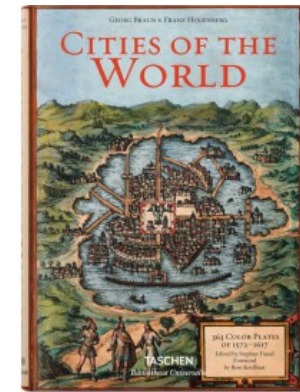
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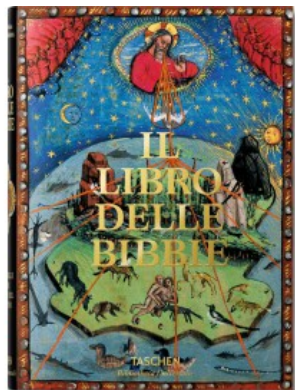
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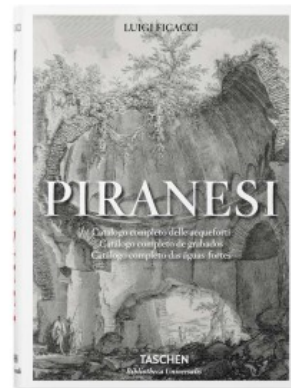
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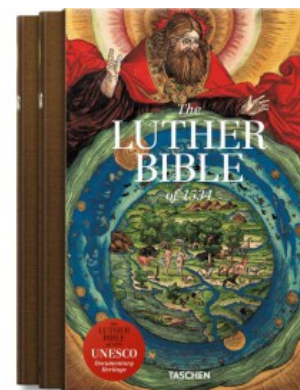
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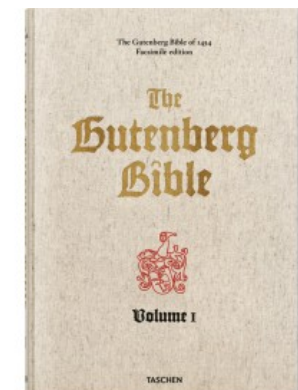
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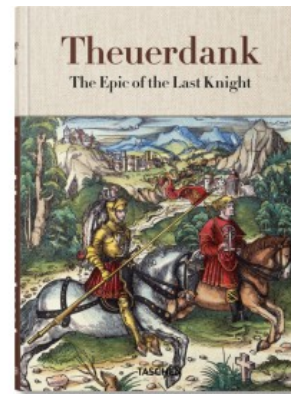
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