

# AUTHENTICITY, TRANSLATION AND AUTHORSHIP MARTIN LUTHER'S "OPEN LETTER ON TRANSLATING" (1530)

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*It takes a great deal of patience to do good things in public.*  
Martin Luther, 1530

**Abstract:** *The article explores authentic authorship in the early modern period, through the example of Martin Luther's polemical defense strategy and narrative exposure thereof in his 'Open Letter on Translating' from 1530. By analyzing the main arguments through which Luther proves that his translation is the authentic 'German version' of the Scripture, the article claims that the form in which authorship is authenticated in the said historical period is through 'spiritual copyright'. A concept that I find descriptive for a transitionally charged timeframe, when mechanical reproduction through printing posed significant questions regarding authenticity and verisimilitude, spiritual copyright defines the claim of scholars like the Reformer to understand the encrypted message of the Bible and to have the ability to transmit this message. The claim is indicative of a crucial shift in the perception of reality versus fabrication, which eventually led to the modern notion of 'authenticity' as a creation of individual perception.*

**Key words:** *verisimilitude, authenticity, translation, Martin Luther, authorship, the Bible*

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