

FOREWORD

For many people, the figure of Martin Luther belongs to history. However, on closer inspection, there are many aspects to Luther's life: Luther the Reformer, Father of the Protestant Church, Augustinian monk, a human being wrestling with existential challenges and political powers, and the bridge between the Middle Ages and the Modern Age. His basic drive to reform – founded on a love of freedom, reason and a fundamental trust in God – still has its effect today.

Luther had managed to unleash an intellectual and spiritual force for modernisation that led to freedom with responsibility. Responsible freedom did not only apply to the realms of economics and politics but also had an impact on the Church and society in general. His life and work provide important inspirations for new directions in the 21st century.

However, outside the Protestant Church, Luther has neither a public face nor any particular significance for people today. This is why we need to raise a new awareness and perception of Luther's personality and its effects, with reference to the past and the present. Similarly, we need to increase awareness regarding the places associated with Luther. His historical importance needs to be promoted not only in the key states connected with the Reformation – Thuringia, Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt – but also in Germany and in the whole world. One of the main aims of the Foundation Initiative responsible for this edition is to further this in a decisive, committed and vigorous way.

The reason for the publication of a Luther Breviary to celebrate the Reformer's birthday, 10th November 2007, at his former house in Lutherstadt Wittenberg, is to afford a new emphasis on Luther as a personality for today and to enable this goal to be reached in a readable and practical way. This book will be able to offer some insight into the breadth of Martin Luther's religious ideas, his powerful command of language and his practical wisdom for everyday life.

Let us now look back into history. The Augustinian monk had been developing his version of theology based on a fundamental dialogue with the western tradition of Christianity from his years at Erfurt until his theological "coming out" at Wittenberg. He made an intensive study of the sources: the Church Fathers, the Ancient Philosophers, the Masters of Scholasticism and the writings of the German mystical tradition. Man, who is separated from God (thus "sinful" or "fallen"), is accepted by the Triune God unconditionally and independently of human effort (i.e. "gratuitously"). Based on this fundamental trust in God – founded and lived in holy imitation of Jesus Christ – Luther developed Christian freedom as the centre of his new interpretation of Christian faith and Christian responsibility towards the world.

This rediscovery of the Biblical Word had two main effects: on the one hand it freed the simple Christian from being confronted by texts written in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and thus in this connection, from dependency on priests and scholars; on the other hand, Luther gave a new significance to the Word of God for the institution of the Church itself together with its various spiritual foundations.

The Bible, Holy Scripture, became in this process Luther's sole criterion for the shaping of the Church. *Sola scriptura*, "by scripture alone", is the foundation stone for the Church's mission, which consisted and still consists in making men realize how irredeemably far from God they actually are, and in then showing them the path to redemption. Man obtains his share in the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ *sola fide*, "by faith alone".

Mary the "Mother of God" is the embodiment, symbol and archetype for this kind of faith. This is how Luther interprets faith in his wonderful meditation of the Magnificat (Luke 1, 46-55, 1520). The attitude of the human being to the essentially active and creative God is one of acceptance. This is the existential habitus of inner attentiveness and humility, from which the two themes that bring joy and liberty emerge: trusting in God and openness to the world.

These little meditations written by the great Reformer link theology with social responsibility, and spiritual depth with reforming action. Our Luther Breviary is based on various collections of Luther quotations – frequently entitled the "Little Treasury" – many of which have been handed down to us, starting from the Age of the Baroque. The present extracts from Luther's monumental opus are closely based on a book called "The Christian Signpost for Every Day of the Year", which Helmut Korinth, a pastor from Hamburg, published privately over several years.

The texts have been carefully edited. Linguistic anachronisms and archaic syntactic formulations have been carefully removed. The texts are closely based on the 1984 Revised Luther Bible and have been adapted to the needs of contemporary German. The equally highly poetic English translation has been inspired by the powerful and poetic formulations of the King James Bible. Thus, this Luther

Breviary acts as a special kind of aesthetically rewarding and yet at the same time meditative language training which can and, it is hoped, will transcend both temporal and geographical barriers.

The references for the sources of the original texts have been given to enable the curious and scholarly reader who is interested in further research to look up the original contexts for the meditations. The references are to be found at the bottom of each German text. The sources used are as follows: Luthers Werke auf CD-ROM: WA = Weimarer Ausgabe. Edition: [Electronic Resource]; Version 1.0. Published: Cambridge [amongst others]: Chadwyck-Healey 2000. Unfortunately, we were unable to find the source in the few places where no reference is given.

This first publication of the Internationale Martin Luther Stiftung (International Martin Luther Foundation) reflects the main aim of our foundation project, namely to gain "important inspirations for spiritual direction in a changing world" issuing from the life and work of Martin Luther.

With this in mind, we hope that reading this book brings you not only spiritual inspiration but also practical help.

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