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“OUT OF LOVE FOR THE TRUTH

and from the desire
to make it plain”

EXHIBITION
BOOKLET
PLEASE
TAKE ONE

MARTIN
LUTHER

A hammer with a wooden handle and a metal head is positioned vertically in the center. Several nails are scattered on the wooden surface around the base of the hammer handle.

REDISCOVERING THE GOSPEL TRUTH

“As long as a person is not a murderer, adulterer, thief, he would swear that he is righteous.

How is God going to humble such a person except by the Law ... to tear to pieces that monster called self-righteousness. As long as a person thinks he is right he is going to be incomprehensibly proud and presumptuous. He is going to hate God, despise His grace and mercy, and ignore the promises in Christ.

The Gospel of the free forgiveness of sins through Christ will never appeal to the self-righteous. This monster of self-righteousness, this stiff-necked beast, needs a big axe. And that is what the Law is, a big axe - **MARTIN LUTHER**

“OUT OF LOVE FOR THE TRUTH AND FROM THE DESIRE TO MAKE IT PLAIN”

This is the booklet version of the Luther exhibition. Written as a general introduction for readers of all levels, we hope that it will encourage an interest in Reformation history and in the life of Martin Luther.

More importantly, we hope that the project will lead to a new appreciation of the Gospel truth which the Reformers recovered and which they put into the hands and hearts of the ordinary people of their day.

The Gospel is the very essence of true Protestantism. We hope that this project will once again ‘make it plain’. Please share this booklet with others.



Right: Martin Luther statue in Baltimore, USA

1 WHO WAS MARTIN LUTHER?

Martin Luther was born in 1483. His father was a mine manager who worked hard to pay for Martin to go to law school; Martin began these studies in 1501. However, in the summer of 1505 he was caught in a terrifying storm and decided to change career to become a monk, a decision that angered his father. Later that year Martin started his new life in a monastery, in the small town of Erfurt.

EARLY PROTESTANT MARTYRS

Religion was a major element of life in 1500s Germany. The Roman Catholic church dominated, but some early protesting voices had already questioned its teachings. In the late 1300s the writings of Yorkshireman John Wycliffe, the famous Bible translator of Oxford University, had influenced people around Europe.

One of these was the priest and scholar Jan Hus who was accused of heresy by a Church council. In 1415 he was burned at the stake in the southern German town of Konstanz, aged 46.

Nearly 20 years later one of Hus' followers, a 42 year old doctor called Paul Craw (Pavel Kravar) from nearby Bohemia was also accused of heresy. He too was burned at the stake, this time in St Andrews in Scotland, in 1433.

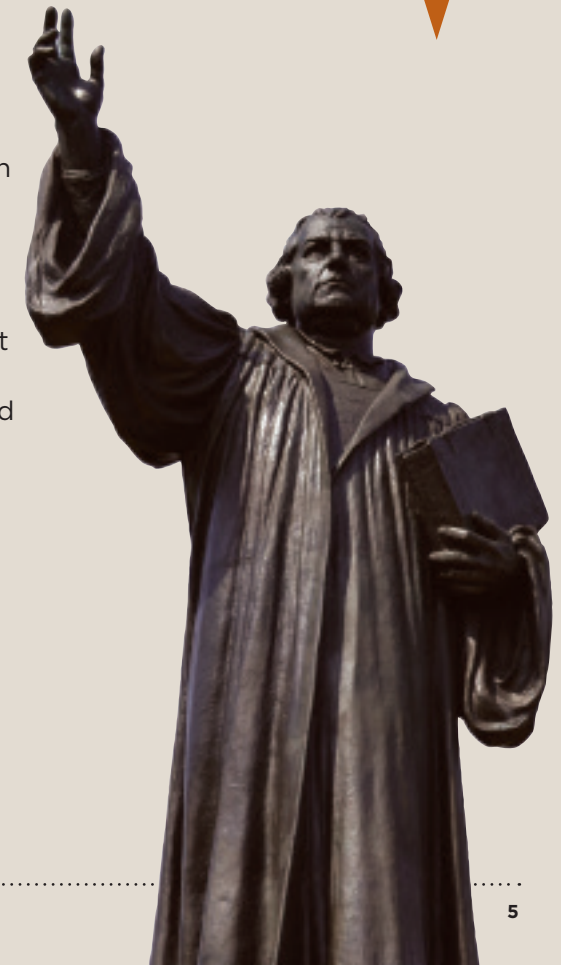
“ I must listen to the Gospel. It tells me not what I must do, but what Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has done for me.

ISLAM IN EUROPE

Islam was advancing in Europe. The Islamic Ottoman Empire had taken control of the former Christian city of Constantinople in 1453 and then advanced through the Balkan region, conquering Serbia, Bosnia and Albania.

By 1510 they had taken over most of the Middle East. The city of Belgrade fell to the Ottomans and in 1529 they laid siege to Vienna, on the doorstep of Germany.

Europe was in the midst of an international crisis. The young monk Martin Luther was at the start of a crisis of his own, one which would change the world.



Right: Martin Luther as a young monk, painted by his friend Lucas Cranach

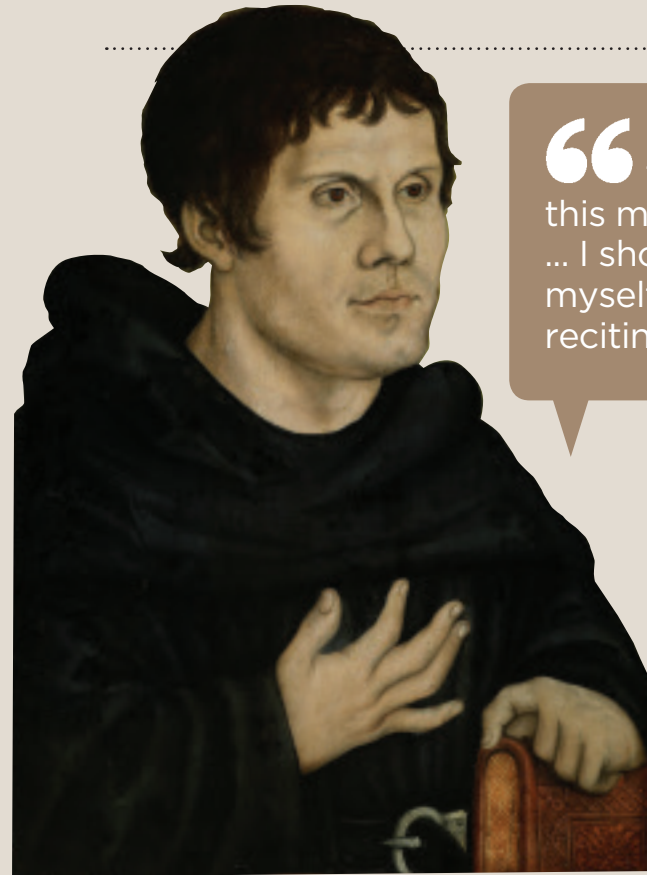
2 CHURCH TRADITION OR BIBLE TRUTH?

The Bible tells us that, even in New Testament times, false teachers and false teaching had crept into the very first churches. Judas Iscariot was a corrupt disciple of Jesus. In the 1500 years which followed, the light of truth had at times almost been extinguished by the darkness of persecution and man-made tradition. Men like Bernard of Clairvaux, John Wycliffe and Jan Hus were raised up by God to keep the faith through those centuries.

CORRUPTION IN ROME

In Luther's day the church claimed that forgiveness of sin could be achieved through 'good works', or could be bought with money. The corruption of Rome, the capital city of the church, troubled Martin Luther deeply. His heart was also heavily burdened with an awareness of his own sinfulness.

“What good works can proceed out of a heart like mine; how can I, with works like these, stand before a holy Judge?”



“If ever a monk were to get to heaven by this monkery it would be I ... I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, recitings, and other work”

LUTHER'S STRUGGLE

He tried to make himself right with God by his 'good works'. He prayed more, he fasted for days, he tried to be holier, he was unable to sleep – sometimes for weeks. To all around he appeared to be the holiest monk in the monastery, but in his heart he knew nothing but sinfulness.

He found himself resenting this burden, and he realised all of these reluctant actions were only causing him to sin even more in his heart. He would go to confession for hours, and after he was finished he would remember sins he had forgotten to confess, and so had to go back and begin over again. His spiritual problems only became greater. Physically he was utterly exhausted.

He hated this holy God who demanded 'righteousness' – another word for 'perfection'.

Right: The Black Cloister and tower in Wittenberg which became Luther's home for most of his life. Today it is a museum called Lutherhaus, telling his story.

3 LUTHER ACCEPTS CHRIST

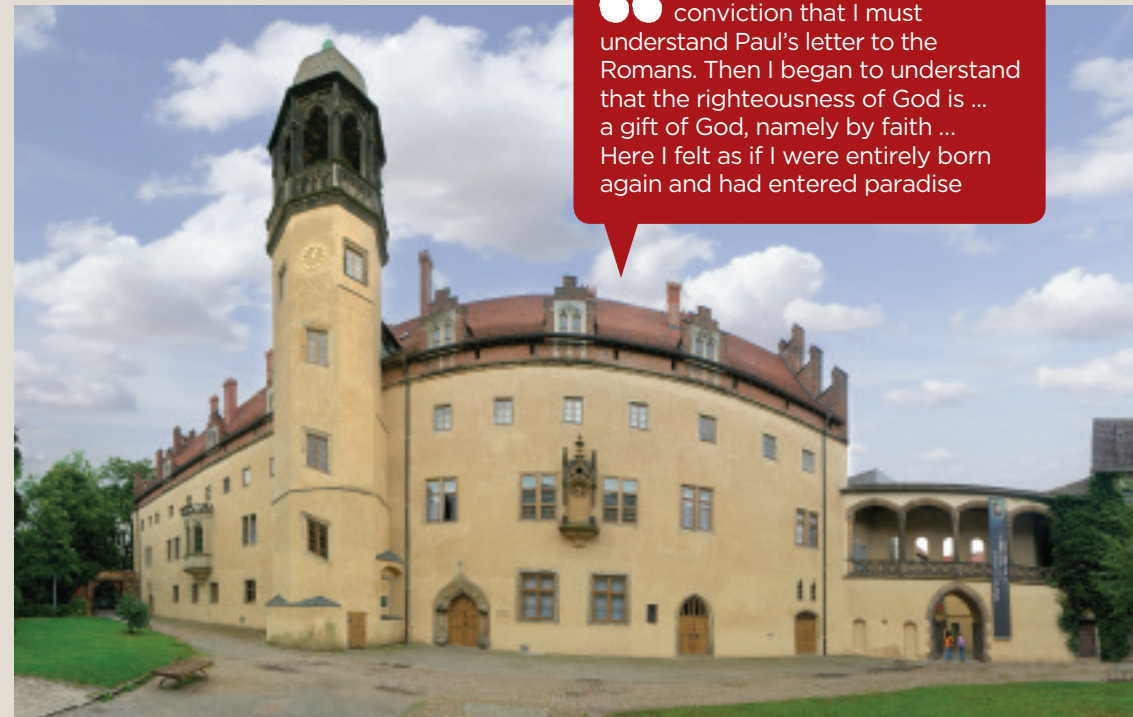
From 1512, Martin Luther became Professor of Theology at the new University of Wittenberg. He carefully studied the old scrolls and manuscripts of the Bible – in particular the books of Psalms, Romans, Galatians and Hebrews. He came to see that the truth of the Bible, which was shut away from the ordinary people in ancient languages they could not understand, was very different from the traditions of the church. The ceremonies that the church insisted upon could not bring relief to his troubled soul.

LUTHER'S TOWER EXPERIENCE, 1515

In Autumn 1515, in what has become known as his 'Tower Experience', Luther was reading in the tower of Wittenberg's Black Cloister monastery. Meditating day and night on Romans chapter 1, but struggling to understand it, he suddenly realised that the perfect righteousness God requires is found only through faith in the Perfect Saviour Jesus Christ. It cannot be achieved by good works.

The light of the Gospel dawned on Martin Luther as he grasped from Romans 1 v 17, that 'the just shall live by faith'.

“Romans is in itself a bright light, almost bright enough to illumine the entire Scripture”



“I was seized with the conviction that I must understand Paul's letter to the Romans. Then I began to understand that the righteousness of God is ... a gift of God, namely by faith ... Here I felt as if I were entirely born again and had entered paradise”

THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

This discovery affirmed for Luther the grand theme of the whole Bible – that there is the Law of God which condemns us all by its demand for perfection, but thankfully there is the Gospel which brings us the good news that Jesus Christ has satisfied the Law's demands on our behalf.

Luther later wrote of his conversion in the tower that: “... I learned to distinguish between the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of the gospel ... when I discovered the proper distinction – namely, that the law is one thing and the gospel is another I made myself free ...”

This Gospel light from the Book of Romans had overcome the darkness of the church of Rome. Released from the futile slavery of 'works salvation', and thrilled by his new faith in Christ alone, it was now time to tell the world.

Background: A Victorian depiction of Luther nailing the 95 Theses.

4 WHAT WERE LUTHER'S '95 THESES'?

Luther made his public declaration in the usual manner of the time – nailed to the door of the Castle church in Wittenberg for all to see. He was aware that this action could result in being ‘excommunicated’ by the church, or even death. Yet his opening statement announced that he was motivated, “Out of love for the truth and from the desire to make it plain”.

INDULGENCES

Indulgences were payments demanded by the Church, who claimed that these would buy ‘forgiveness’ of sins. However, Luther was beginning to understand, through the study of scripture, that forgiveness cannot be bought or earned. His greatest concern was for the people he pastored and their spiritual well being.

So, on 31 October 1517 – the eve of All Saints Day – Luther made his protest against the abuse of indulgences. The ‘95 Theses’ were individual challenges to the Church, written in Latin.

PUBLIC REACTION

Without Luther’s knowledge, the Theses were translated into German and multiple copies were printed on a printing press, allowing wide and rapid circulation. They were soon known all over Germany and Luther became famous.

“The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God – **Thesis 62**”

CHURCH REACTION

The church was enraged. It decided that Luther’s writings had 41 errors, that they were in conflict with the church’s teaching and he was declared to be a heretic. He was given 120 days to retract his views, but he refused, and so was excommunicated in 1521. Like the martyr Jan Huss in 1415, Luther was summoned to a church court called a ‘Diet’ in the town of Worms, in May 1521. He again refused to recant, and famously said to his accusers ‘Here I stand, I can do no other’.

Amazingly Luther was allowed to leave. On the way home he was ‘kidnapped’ by friends and held in Wartburg Castle where he began his next great project.

Right: The room at Wartburg Castle in which he did much of his translation work., with Luther's 1534 Bible.

5 A BIBLE THE PEOPLE COULD READ

There had been German language Bibles already, but very few in number, and intended for use only by the élite in society – the Church and the nobility. The first of these had been printed in Strasbourg and appeared 50 years earlier, in 1466. It was based on the ‘Latin Vulgate’ translation rather than the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. Despite these earlier German editions, there was no Bible for the common people.

As a fugitive in Wartburg Castle Martin Luther began the task of translating the New Testament from the original Greek into the daily German language of the ordinary people. He said it was ‘the speech of the mother at home, the children in the street, the men and women in the market, the butcher and various tradesmen in their shops’.

In earlier years he had translated some of the Psalms and various other parts of the Bible, so he was familiar with the task. He completed a first draft of his New Testament within 11 weeks between December 1521 and February 1522. With the help of his friend Philip Melancthon he improved his translation and prepared to print it.



PRINTED FOR THE PEOPLE

Luther cleverly made use of new printing technology. In September 1522 over 3000 copies were printed in Wittenberg, the largest quantity of books ever produced in the town, and just in time for Europe’s biggest book fair in Frankfurt. It sold out quickly and was reprinted in December.

Luther now began work on the Old Testament. In 1523 the first five books were printed, in 1524 the Psalms, and with the help of other translators by 1534 the entire Old Testament was complete.

Hundreds of thousands of copies were printed. Millions of people were reading the Bible for themselves. The Reformation was unstoppable.

6 A DOCTRINE THE PEOPLE COULD UNDERSTAND

LAW AND GOSPEL: Luther had helped millions of people to read the Bible through his German translation. He would now help them to understand its message by recovering the doctrine of Law and Gospel. “For the law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1 v 17, KJV).

Law and Gospel are not opposites, but work together. As Luther said, “The first duty of the gospel preacher is to declare God’s Law and show the nature of sin. Why? Because it will act as a schoolmaster and bring him to everlasting life which is in Jesus Christ”.

THE LAW

The Law (the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, which were developed further by Jesus in His famous Sermon on the Mount) confronts us with the reality that everyone has sinned - outwardly by our words and deeds, and inwardly by thoughts and motives. The Law demands absolute perfection to be right with God, yet shows our inability to be perfect.

“Virtually the whole of the scriptures and the understanding of the whole of theology - the entire Christian life, even - depends upon the true understanding of the law and the gospel



“The commandments exist to show, not our moral ability, but our inability. This includes God’s command of all men everywhere to repent and believe the gospel, an impossible act of will apart from a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit uniting us to Christ

THE GOSPEL

The Gospel comforts us with the good news that Jesus Christ came into the world to fulfil the demands of the Law, and that, by faith, His perfection is ‘imputed’ to all who trust in Him. He died on the cross and rose again on the third day so we can have our sins forgiven. He takes our sin and we receive His righteousness - tradition says that Luther called this ‘The Great Exchange’.

Other Reformers would carry on this doctrine, and it has remained as the foundation of Protestant theology for centuries. The most famous theologians and preachers throughout history have all understood and proclaimed Law and Gospel.

However in more recent times, the theme of Law and Gospel has faded from regular use in many but not all churches, because of this many Christians today have never heard of it.

BRITISH PROTESTANTISM CAN TRACE ITS ORIGINS TO THE ERA OF LUTHER, TYNDALE AND HAMILTON

7 LUTHER AND THE BRITISH REFORMATION

News of Luther's Gospel revolution soon reached England and Scotland. In 1519, just two years after the '95 Theses', his books were available in Britain. The university towns of Cambridge in England and St Andrews in Scotland were soon discussing Luther's recovered Gospel.

WILLIAM TYNDALE OF RURAL ENGLAND

By 1521 a group of Reformation-minded men were meeting at the White Horse Inn in Cambridge. It is likely that William Tyndale was among them. Of humble origins but a linguistic genius, he committed his life to producing an English translation of the Bible.

He began the project in England, but fled to Luther's Germany to complete the task. It is believed that Luther met Tyndale in Wittenberg in 1525, and that same year his English Bible was printed. Tyndale also adopted Luther's 'Law and Gospel' doctrine. After years as a fugitive, Tyndale was arrested and burned at the stake in Antwerp, Belgium in 1536. However, in death he won his greatest victory. His Bible laid the foundation for all following English translations.

“ The Law and the Gospel are two keys. The Law is the key that shutteth up all men under condemnation, and the Gospel is the key which opens the door and lets them out – **William Tyndale**



“ The Law showeth us our sin. The Gospel showeth us the remedy for it ... The Law saith pay thy debt. The Gospel saith Christ hath paid it – **Patrick Hamilton**



PATRICK HAMILTON OF ROYAL SCOTLAND

Descended from the Scottish Royal family, Hamilton was a bright student who travelled to Paris to further his studies in 1517, the year that Luther posted his '95 Theses'. Soon Luther's writings reached Paris. Hamilton returned to Scotland and became a Professor at St Andrews University in 1524. That same year Luther's writings were circulating in Scotland, and in 1525 Tyndale's English Bible also reached Scotland. Church authorities were alarmed that Hamilton was 'inflamed with heresy' – he fled to Luther's Wittenberg, and then to the town of Marburg.

TYNDALE AND HAMILTON MEET IN MARBURG, GERMANY

In Marburg Hamilton met with William Tyndale and other English Reformers. Here Hamilton wrote 'Patrick's Places', outlining Luther's 'Law and Gospel' doctrine, which was printed as a pamphlet. Hamilton returned to St Andrews, where he was charged with heresy, and burned at the stake in February 1528. Hamilton's death was the beginning of the Scottish Reformation, led by John Knox, and therefore the birth of Scottish Presbyterianism.

Right: Luther's wife Catherine. The famous engraving entitled 'Luther amidst his family at Wittenberg, on Christmas Eve, 1536', by German artist Otto Schwerdgeburth.

8 MARTIN LUTHER'S LEGACY

Luther died in 1546 and was buried at the Castle Church in Wittenberg. As we commemorate his life we must remember that he, like every human, had flaws – such as his attitudes towards Jewish people. However, he was mightily used by God to recover the Gospel of 'faith alone in Christ alone' from the darkness of 'works salvation'.

Later Reformers built on the foundation he had laid. Every Reformer, Luther included, would point away from themselves towards their Perfect Saviour, Jesus Christ.

MARRIAGE

Luther married former nun Catherine von Bora. Luther had helped her and other nuns to escape from a convent hidden inside fish barrels. She insisted that they should get married! They went on to have six children and adopt four others. Catherine was a powerful influence on her husband's life.

MUSIC

Luther enjoyed music. For the first time in 1000 years he encouraged church congregations to sing together, not just to listen to choirs. He wrote nearly 40 hymns including 'A Mighty Fortress is our God' based on Psalm 46. He played the lute (a type of guitar) and the flute.



“Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. I am quite of the opinion that next to theology there is no art which can be compared to music; for it alone, after theology, gives us rest and joy.”



CHRISTMAS

It is said that Luther began the tradition of putting lights on the Christmas tree, to represent Christ as the Light of the World. There is also a tradition that he wrote the original words of 'Away In A Manger', which has been called 'Luther's Cradle Hymn'.

RELEVANCE FOR TODAY

In the centuries that followed Luther, other famous preachers were converted to Christ by reading Luther's works, particularly his wonderful Prefaces to Romans and Galatians. Two of these were John Bunyan, the author of Pilgrim's Progress, and John Wesley, the father of Methodism.

9 WHY DOES THIS MATTER TODAY?

Even though we are 500 years on, we live in a time which is similar to Luther's.

'GOOD WORKS' IS COMMON

Today most people have little idea of what the Gospel is. For those who do believe in God, they think that they can be right with Him through their own good works. "I'm a good person, so I'll get into Heaven" is a familiar attitude. Sadly these people have no understanding of Jesus Christ as Saviour, Mediator and Substitute.

JESUS CHRIST NOT ALWAYS THE FOCUS

Today many sermons preached and books written are little better than 'moralism', telling people that all they need to focus upon is good behaviour. The Bible's purpose is often only to provide techniques for becoming a better parent, neighbour, leader etc. The focus is on ourselves rather than on Jesus Christ.

'LAW AND GOSPEL' IS OFTEN ABSENT

When Jesus Christ is presented, it is often as part of a self-centred message of 'come to Jesus and your life will be improved. You'll be happier, healthier, and wealthier.' The crushing demands of the Law, the Ten Commandments, are largely unknown. And so Christ as the only One who can fulfil the demands of that Law is an unfamiliar idea.



CAN'T READ, WON'T READ

In Luther's time people were unable to read the Bible and understand it. Today people can't be bothered to read it or understand it. Our attention spans are becoming shorter and shorter. The language barrier today is that people are not familiar with the key words of Scripture – sin, salvation, justification, etc.

FAITH UNDER ATTACK

In Luther's time the Church criticised and persecuted people of true faith, while promoting its own false religion. Today our media frequently attacks true Christianity while at the same time insisting upon tolerance for other religions. As we know, Christians can end up in court for standing firm for their beliefs, just as Luther and many Reformers did.

IF THE CHURCH IS TO HAVE A NEW REFORMATION FOR OUR DAY, IT WILL BEGIN, JUST AS IT DID IN 1517, BY REDISCOVERING THE GOSPEL TRUTH.



LUTHER READING LIST

LUTHER'S OWN WRITING

- *95 Theses* (1517)
- *The Bondage of the Will* (1525)
- *Commentary on Galatians* (1535)

(Also see further reading list)

LUTHER'S THEOLOGY

- *Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom*
Carl Trueman (Crossway)
- *Histories and Fallacies: problems faced in the writing of history*
Carl Trueman (Crossway)
- *The Genius of Luther's Theology*
Robert Kolb & Charles P Arand (Baker Academic)
- *Reformation Thought an Introduction*
Alister McGrath (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing)
- *On being a theologian of the cross: reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation (of 1518)*
Gerhard O Forde (Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co.)

LUTHER'S LIFE

- *Martin Luther a Life*. Martin Marty (Penguin Books)
- *Martin Luther: the man who started the Reformation*.
Thomas Lindsay (Christian Focus)
- *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. Ronald Bainton
- *The Wit of Martin Luther*. Eric W Gritsch (Fortress Press)

FURTHER READING

An excellent reading list can be found here:

- <http://www.reformation21.org/articles/reading-luther-not-wisely-but-well-part-one.php>
- <http://www.reformation21.org/articles/reading-luther-not-wisely-but-well-part-two.php>

BOOKSHOPS

The following shops do not appear as adverts but as possible sources for books on this reading list. Other bookshops are also available.

BEULAH BOOKSHOP

25 Central Promenade, Newcastle, Co Down BT33 0AA
T: 028 4372 2629 www.beulahbooks.com

EVANGELICAL BOOKSHOP

15 College Square East, Belfast BT1 6DD
T: 028 9032 0529 www.evangelicalbookshop.co.uk

GOWAN BOOKS

Boho Rd, Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh BT74 8AS
T: 028 6634 1239 www.gowanbooks.com

ICM BOOKS

115 Dunkirk Road, Lurgan, Co Armagh BT66 7AR
T: 028 3832 1488 www.icmbooksdirect.co.uk

WESTMINSTER BOOKS (ONLINE)

www.wtsbooks.com

“ I fear that after our time the right handling of the Law will become a lost art. Even now, although we continually explain the separate functions of the Law and the Gospel, we have those among us who do not understand - MARTIN LUTHER

www.luther1517.org

On 31 October 1517, Martin Luther took a hammer and nailed his '95 Theses' to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany. His stand for the Gospel was the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

Even though the story is set 500 years ago, you will find that many of the themes are relevant to the present day.

We hope that this booklet helps you to understand the historical events, and more importantly, to rediscover for yourself the clear Gospel truths which spread worldwide, and which need to be proclaimed again in our generation.

“Faith alone in Christ alone.”

FOUR OTHER BOOKLETS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE



The Luther 1517 project has been jointly published by the Imperial Grand Black Chapter and the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland. It is our desire that this project will reaffirm for our members how central faith is to our two Institutions, will stir up faith within our memberships, and will be a Gospel witness to wider society.