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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
MARTIN LUTHER

Martin Luther (1483–1546) stands as one of the giant figures in history. His activities, writings, and legacy have had a huge effect on the Western world. This *Cambridge Companion* provides an accessible introduction to Martin Luther for students of theology and history and for others interested in the life, work, and thought of the first great Protestant reformer. The book contains eighteen chapters by an international array of major Luther scholars. Historians and theologians join here to present a full picture of Luther's contexts, the major themes in his writings, and the ways in which his ideas spread and have continuing importance today. Each chapter serves as a guide to its topic and provides further reading for additional study. The *Companion* will assist those with little or no background in Luther studies, while teachers and Luther specialists will find this accessible volume an invaluable aid to their work.

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Dedicated to
Richard E. Brown
Respected friend and valued colleague
With gratitude

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and Ordained: Lutheran Perspectives on the Office of the Ministry, ed. Marc Kolden and Todd Nichol.

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Preface

The name Martin Luther evokes many reactions. Known primarily as the initiator of the Protestant Reformation in Europe in the sixteenth century, Luther through the centuries has had his advocates and detractors. But his influence has been immense. The essays that follow display the far-reaching importance of his words and deeds as well as the significance of Luther's life and thought – an impact that continues today.

This *Companion* is written to introduce the life and work of Martin Luther (1483–1546). All the writers are experts on the aspects of Luther on which they write. Scholars will mine much from this treasury but beginning students even more.

The two opening essays in the collection set Luther's life and context in terms of the main events he experienced and the city where he spent most of his time. These elements are important for becoming acquainted with Luther's struggles, triumphs, joys, and sorrows.

Luther's wide-ranging work is considered in Part II of this book. Here we encounter the vastness of his writings and work in translating and interpreting Holy Scripture. We consider the main themes in his developing theology, a theology that took shape in light of the issues with which Luther dealt. Luther's views on theological topics had their counterparts in his moral theology or ethics. He spent his life as a professor and preacher who proclaimed the Word of God, undergirded by the spiritual resources of his understandings of Scripture and his own religious experience. Luther's struggle with social-ethical issues emerged as he encountered the concerns of his culture and the church. His responses took shape in the political contexts of his setting in Germany. In establishing the reform movement that became associated with Luther's name, he found himself engaged in numerous polemical controversies in which he sought to set forth his understanding of the Word and will of God in light of opponents who were equally vehement.

Those who followed Luther and built on his views appropriated his work in various ways. The essays in Part III describe ways in which Luther's image and insights were developed by his followers and the legacy that his

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person, theology, and ecclesiastical influence have engendered. Luther has been variously interpreted and approaches to the magisterial reformer have changed and developed in the centuries since his death.

The final part of this *Companion* presents assessments of Martin Luther's relation to modern church history, his contemporary theological significance, and his importance in the worldwide church today. These topics point to Luther's enduring legacy and his towering importance for Christian life and thought.

Among the countless comments made about Luther during his life and in the centuries since, one of the most affecting was made by John Calvin (1509–1564). Calvin, along with Luther, was one of the most eminent of the Protestant reformers. Though they never met, Calvin summed up his understanding of Luther in a single sentence: "We regard him as a remarkable apostle of Christ, through whose work and ministry, most of all, the purity of the Gospel has been restored in our time."¹

Thanks are due to those who provided key help in bringing this volume to completion. Kevin Taylor of Cambridge University Press has aided this venture from the very start with excellent suggestions and continuing support and advice. I value our friendship. Kevin has been ably assisted by Gillian Dadd who has splendidly contributed her competence and geniality to this project as well. In addition, I would like to thank all the contributors who here provide their expertise to introduce us to the multi-faceted Luther. Katharina Gustavs and Mark Mattes have rendered superb English translations, both stepping into the breach to provide their skills for this work. As always, I thank my wonderful family, Linda Jo, Stephen, and Karl McKim, for constant care and support. Their love means more to me than I can express.

This volume is dedicated with gratitude to Richard E. Brown, my esteemed former colleague and firm friend. Richard has always supported my scholarship and has been unfailingly kind in numerous ways. I deeply respect who he is and truly appreciate all he has done for me.

Note

1. Cited in B. A. Gerrish, "The Pathfinder: Calvin's Image of Martin Luther," in *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 38. Calvin made this comment in a treatise against Albertus Pighius, *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii adversus calumnies Alberti Pighii Campensis in Ioannis Calvinii opera quae supersunt omnia*. Ed. Wilhelm Baum, Edward Cunitz, and Edward Reuss. 59 vols. *Corpus Reformatorum*, vols. xxix–Lxxxvii. Brunswick: C. A. Schwetschke and Son (M. Bruhn), 1863–1900, vi:250.

Chronology of Martin Luther

- 1483 Born November 10, in Eisleben, Germany
- 1501 Enters University of Erfurt to study liberal arts
- 1502 Receives Baccalaureate degree
- 1505 Receives Master's degree and makes decision to enter monastery
- 1506 Ordination and monastic vows as Augustinian monk
- 1509 Receives Bachelor of Theology degree
- 1511 Transfer to Wittenberg
- 1512 Receives Doctor of Theology degree in Wittenberg
- 1513 Begins first set of lectures on the Psalms
- 1515 Lectures on Romans
- 1516 Lectures on Galatians
- 1517 Posting of Ninety-five Theses in Wittenberg
- 1518 Heidelberg Disputation and initial trial at Rome
- 1519 Leipzig Debate with Johannes Eck
- 1520 Publishes *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* and burns
Papal Bull of excommunication
- 1521 Diet of Worms and seclusion at Wartburg
- 1522 Returns to Wittenberg and New Testament translation in
German appears
- 1524 Writings on the Lord's Supper against Karlstadt
- 1525 Writes against Peasants; publishes *Bondage of the Will*
- 1525 Marries Katharina von Bora
- 1529 *Small Catechism* published; attends Marburg Colloquy
- 1530 Presentation of the Augsburg Confession
- 1534 Publication of the complete German Bible
- 1535 *Lectures on Genesis* begin and continue to 1545
- 1536 Formulates the Schmalkald Articles
- 1537 Serious illness
- 1538 Writes *On the Councils and the Church*
- 1543 Publishes *On the Jews and Their Lies*
- 1546 Dies at Eisleben on February 18; buried in the Castle Church in
Wittenberg

Abbreviations

BoC	<i>The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.</i> Ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, trans. Charles Arand et al. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.
BR	Martin Luther, <i>D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Briefwechsel.</i> 18 vols. Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1930–85.
DB	Martin Luther, <i>D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Deutsche Bibel.</i> 12 vols. Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1906–61.
Dillenberger	John Dillenberger, ed., <i>Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings.</i> Garden City: Doubleday, 1961.
LCC	Library of Christian Classics
Lull	Timothy F. Lull, ed., <i>Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings.</i> Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989.
LW	Martin Luther, <i>Luther's Works.</i> American Edition. 55 vols. St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress Press, 1958–86.
RGG	Friedrich Michael Schliel and Leopold Zscharnack, eds., <i>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart.</i> 5 vols. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1909–13. Later editions followed.
TR	Martin Luther, <i>D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Tischreden.</i> 6 vols. Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1912–21.
WA	Martin Luther, <i>D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe [Schriften].</i> 65 vols. in 127. H. Böhlau, 1883–1993.
ZThK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>