

## *The Annotated Luther, Volume I: The Roots of Reform*

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As the 2017 celebration of the 500th anniversary of the posting of Martin Luther's 95 Theses draws closer, it provides an opportunity to consider the essential writings of Luther in English. The *Annotated Luther* series desires to create a tool that engages the essential Luther within the context of the origin of his presentations. Revisiting and reassessing Luther's rationale and goals offers an invitation to take a fresh look at the effect of the documents in shaping Lutheran and other Reformation thinking, faith, and life. A collection of work provided by present-day scholars, this first volume (of six proposed total volumes) considers twelve seminal documents of Luther between 1517 and 1520 to present their context, insight, and impact at the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

The intended audience of the *Annotated Luther* series is "the global network of teachers and students in seminary, university, and college classes, as well as pastors, lay teachers, and adult students in congregations seeking background and depth in Lutheran theology, biblical interpretation and Reformation history" (ix).

The strength of this volume begins with the twelve historical documents. These are presented in chronological order, with the intention of reading the influence of the documents in their historical context. The order is as follows: [The 95 Theses or] Disputation for Clarifying the Power of Indulgences, 1517; Letter from Martin Luther to Albrecht, Archbishop of Mainz, 31 October 1517; A Sermon on Indulgences and Grace, 1518; Heidelberg Disputation, 1518; The Proceedings at Augsburg, 1518; A Sermon on the Meditation of Christ's Holy Passion, 1519; Sermon on the Sacrament of Penance, 1519; The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism, 1519; The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods, 1519; Treatise on Good Works, 1520; To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Improvement of the Christian Estate, 1520; The Freedom of a Christian, 1520.

This first volume makes available each of the twelve original documents toward the end of each respective chapter. Each chapter provides annotated information in the side margins (primarily theological and historical references) and foot sections (primarily source materials) of the page, which allows for data that is easily integrated. Indexes of scriptural references, names, works by Martin Luther, and subjects are easily accessible and provided at the end of the volume.

A selection of seventy-seven black-and-white illustrations are sparsely used in this work of 574 pages. The intention of the work is pedagogic illumination, and this again is the strength of the volume. When possible, inclusive language is utilized. Though the perspective is primarily intended for those within the Lutheran or Reformed traditions, the objective is to support the study of a particular common document with an objective assessment of the material.

As a lifelong student of the history and theology of the Reformation, I found this work well laid out. Luther's letters, sermons, and papers in this volume are intentionally presented to give consistent and contextual insights, with the authors providing accessible scholarship. As a research tool, this volume presents an excellent introduction for the presentation of the material, as well as the style and presentation of the material in future volumes.

The value of this book as an advanced resource on the subject is beyond question. It is also valuable in that it provides clarity with an eye toward illumination within the context of communications of the early Reformation period. The hardcover version is certainly appropriate for the reference section of theological seminaries and schools of theology. The series will also assist those seeking deeper viewing of the documents in English. The electronic copy will provide appropriate help and assistance to those researchers and scholars writing about the period, with excellent footnote and reference material easily provided by the digital documents. I would also highly recommend this volume (and the entire series as it becomes available), in both the analog and digital versions, for liberal arts colleges.

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