

THE LIFE OF MARTIN LUTHER

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649162246

The life of Martin Luther by William Rein & G. F. Behringer

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WILLIAM REIN & G. F. BEHRINGER

**THE LIFE OF
MARTIN LUTHER**

THE LIFE
OF
MARTIN LUTHER.

BY
DR. WILLIAM REIN,
SEMINARY DIRECTOR AT EISENACH IN GERMANY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN AND EDITED BY

REV. G. F. BEHRINGER,

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

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NEW YORK:
FUNK & WAGNALLS, PUBLISHERS,
10 AND 12 DEY STREET.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1883, by
FUNK & WAGNALLS,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington, D. C.

PREFACE.

THE history of mankind presents us with many great names, but with few great men. And even among those that are called great men, few there are whose records will bear a close scrutiny. In most cases the character of the private man is distinct from the influence of his public career.

Among the immortal names that have honored their kind and glorified their God, stands pre-eminently the name of Martin Luther. Yet not in name alone does his greatness shine forth in splendor after the lapse of four centuries, but in word and deed, in character and influence. His private life and public career are a unit, for both were the manifestations of a sincere soul, a generous heart, a true man.

The enlightened, civilized world celebrates the four hundredth anniversary of this great man's birth. He belongs to the world, to Church and State, for both have felt the influence of his teachings. In the truest estimate of his God-given work he belongs to no sect or party, he is a man of and for the people. In what better way can the memorial of his birth be observed than by a study of his life, his character, and his works ; and above all, by a practical appreciation of the influences which have proceeded from him and blessed mankind ?

To that end this volume has been prepared : to present an attractive life-picture of this representative of the

people and servant of God. It is founded upon fact, illustrated from experience, and written for popular comprehension.

In the work of translation and preparation the editor freely consulted and, where necessary, gratefully used, the volumes of Köstlin, Meurer, Krauth, and others, in additions and improvements to the original of Dr. Rein.

But, in the words of Herder, "Of what use to learn of past ages, to praise or to blame? Let us remember Luther's method of thought, his plain hints and his strong truths, and let us apply them to our own times!" In this spirit this book is sent out on its mission.

G. F. B.

BROOKLYN, October 31, 1883.

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CHAPTER I.

AGAINST INDULGENCES.

It was the 31st of October, 1517. The evening mists had already settled down upon the city of Wittenberg and upon the river Elbe, flowing close by. The city itself was yet alive with activity ; for to-morrow, the first of November, being All Saints' day, would be celebrated as the anniversary of the consecration of the Castle Church. A multitude of people, clergymen and laymen, had congregated in the place. In dense groups they stood along the street leading from the market-place to the castle and awaited the beginning of evening service. But before the bells announced the same, there pressed through the scattered crowds, with rapid strides, an Augustinian monk, pursuing his course directly to the chief entrance of the Castle Church. Here he paused, and drawing from his dark cloak a closely written document, he nailed it to the church door. Then he disappeared within the entrance leading to the sacristy. His act did not excite any particular attention, for it was customary at that time, on the occasion of great festivals, to publish the official announcement of special acts, as well as of university disputations, and to use the church doors for that purpose.