

# *The Gospel Standard Baptist Library*

Newsletter Number 8

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## **Introduction**

This year is being marked as the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation in Europe, it being 500 years ago that the German Monk, Martin Luther, made his break with the Church of Rome. To mark this event, this issue of the Library newsletter is mainly given over to books about Martin Luther, and themes related to the Reformation. Continuing our series on doctrines we pick up on the doctrine of justification by faith alone, which was the truth at the centre of Luther's break with Rome. We have included a section on books covering the history of the Reformation. Our regular feature on a Puritan author continues with the writings of Thomas Brooks.

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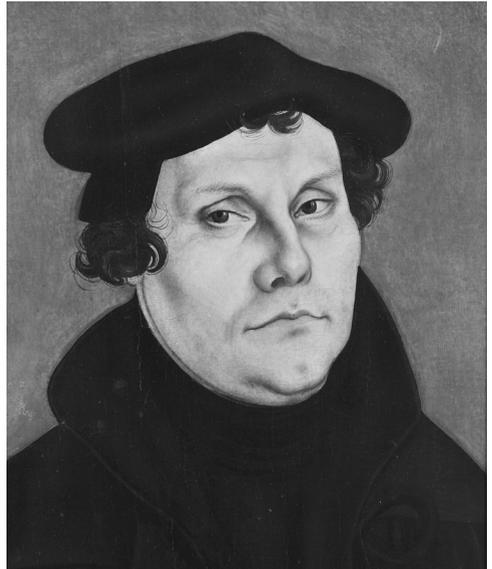
## **Martin Luther**

On the 31<sup>st</sup> October 1517 that Luther nailed his 95 theses against the sale of indulgences to the church door at Wittenberg Castle. These 95 theses set out Luther's key differences with the teaching of the Roman Catholic church. The event marked, if not the beginning, the watershed in the European Reformation, and consequently is being marked by a number of commemorative events this year.

Luther was a prodigious author. One publishing house is releasing the 79th volume of a complete set of Luther's works this year, translated from the German into English for the first time. For any man to have written 79 volumes of material is a remarkable achievement. While the library only has a fraction of his published writings translated into English, we would commend a few titles to your attention.

Firstly, Luther is perhaps best known for his commentary on Galatians. Here he deals with the central truths of the Reformation—Justification by faith, and the believer's relationship to the law. We believe on these points, Luther is a better guide to the truth than Calvin. He is also a truly experimental divine.

Secondly, Henry Cole, a member for a time of William Huntington's church, translated four volumes of Luther's select works into English in the early 1800s. These volumes are prized by all who own them. They contain a



Martin Luther

translation of his commentaries on the first 22 Psalms, Psalm 51, selections from his commentaries on Galatians and Romans, and other short pieces, together with some sermons. This selection perhaps offers one of the best introductions to the writings and theology of Martin Luther.

The Huntingtonians were great admirers of Martin Luther, and alongside Henry Cole, other followers of Mr Huntington translated other selections from his writings for publication. Perhaps best amongst these is Luther's short Exposition of the Lord's prayer, translated by Watkin Maddy, and published by Thomas Nunn. The Library has an original copy of this, and also the recent re-print of it published to mark the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.

Luther, as with every minister of the gospel, was primarily a preacher. His sermons, while perhaps not most suitable for reading in public worship, make for easy and profitable reading. The library has a recent reprint of Luther's sermons in eight volumes, together with several other older editions in single volumes.

Finally, we must not forget that one of Luther's major efforts on the part of the nascent Reformation was the translation of the Holy Bible into the common language of the German people. Both Luther as a translator, and his German Bible, had profound influence on William Tyndale and his translation of the Bible into English. For anybody studying German, the Library also has copies of Luther's German Bible.

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## Doctrine: Justification

Continuing our look at books available on specific doctrines, given the focus on Luther, we turn to the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Ever since mankind fell, when Adam and Eve transgressed the command of God in the Garden of Eden, and were separated from God and turned out of the Garden, exercised souls have asked the question—How can a man be just with God? As transgressors of the law we are separated from God. How is transgression to be taken away and man declared just? The answer is seen in type in Eden, when God took an animal and shed its blood—for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin; through blood the wages due to sin (death) is remitted, and sin is taken away—but man, now forgiven and spared the punishment due to sin, still stood naked before God, having transgressed the law. How was man's nakedness taken away—God made coats of skin from the skin of the slain animal, and clothed Adam and Eve. Here in type we have the doctrine of justification. The type was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who by shedding his blood bore the punishment due for sin, and gains for his people forgiveness and life in place of death warranted by sin, and his perfect law keeping life—the righteousness of Jesus—is imputed unto the sinners for whom he died, that they should be righteous, and declared just by God. Thus through his life *and* his death Jesus makes atonement for his people, reconciling them to God. The Church of Rome taught that man was justified by good works—we merit salvation through our own righteousness. Luther, under the discovering work of the Holy Spirit within his soul came to realise that he had no righteousness by his own works—the best he had was throughly marred by sin. He despaired until the Spirit

drew him to fix upon Christ Jesus, and find in him a perfect righteousness—a covering for his naked soul.

As the cornerstone of Reformed truth, it should not surprise us that perhaps of all doctrines (with the possible exception of those concerning the Person of the Lord Jesus), the blessed truth of justification has been solemnly assailed down through the history of the Church. It is either undermined, confused with sanctification, or at worse denied. All our readers would do well to ensure they have clear views of this important doctrine, and will find much comfort in viewing their free justification in Jesus Christ as the firm foundation on which faith can eternally rest.

The Library has a short pamphlet translation of Martin Luther's entitled: *Method and Fruits of Justification*, which is a good place to start understanding the doctrine at the heart of the Reformation. Gospel Standard Trust Publications published a very readable and precious examination of the doctrine of Justification by John Gill a few years ago, and this is available to borrow in the Library. The Library also has a copy of the *Marrow of True Justification* by the early British Baptist, Benjamin Keach. Two Puritan treatises on the subject are *Justification by Faith* by John Owen and *Justification of a Sinner* by William Pemble. Perhaps what has become regarded as the foremost book on the subject is Justification by James Buchanan, a godly minister in the Free Church of Scotland during the 1800s. It constitutes one of the most comprehensive study of the doctrine, while being readable and spiritually valuable.



James Buchanan

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## History of the Reformation

Fundamental to understanding the Reformation, is to know how it developed. The Reformation had various catalysts in different countries, and these resulted in different final outcomes. In some areas the Reformation began politically, and only later became a spiritual movement. In others, the reverse was true.

When it comes to recording the history of the reformation, perhaps one of the most preeminent church historians was J. H. Merle D'Aubigne. D'Aubigne's history of the Reformation we published in two series, the first (widely republished) covered the Reformation in the times of Luther, the second (very rare), covered the history of the Reformation in the times of Calvin. The reader should not be put off by the length of these works, they are incredibly readable. More recently the Banner of Truth extracted from these volumes a shorter work on the history of the Reformation in England. (Incidentally, D'Aubigne's biography of Oliver Cromwell—*The Protector*, is also well worth a read.)

When it comes to the Reformation in Scotland, John Knox's own account of the movement is a very readable book on the subject. Two Free Church of Scotland ministers produced important books on the Reformation: Thomas Lindsay wrote a

valuable *History of the Reformation*, while William Cunningham produced a volume *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*, which despite its heavy title, gives valuable insights into the heart of the Reformation.

Of course, no history of the Reformation in Britain would be complete without a mention of John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. Printed in numerous abbreviated editions, the Library has a selection of these, as well as copies of the complete work in eight volumes.

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## Thomas Brooks

Continuing our series on the Puritans, we bring to your attention in this issue, Thomas Brooks (1608-1680). Originally a seafarer, Brooks was ordained to the ministry in 1640, and spent the remainder of his life preaching in London. C. H. Spurgeon said of Brooks: "He scatters stars with both hands, with an eagle eye of faith as well as the eagle eye of imagination." As well as his collected works in six volumes, the Library has several of his well known works as individual volumes for easier reading: *The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod*, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*, *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, *The Secret Key to Heaven—The Importance of Private Prayer*, and the beautifully titled *An Ark for All God's Noahs in a Gloomy, Stormy Day*.

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## A Notable New Book

The Library has in its collections several manuscripts which have never been published. These include letters, autobiographies and sermons. Over the years some of these have been transcribed and published, helping to preserve them for future generations and make this rare material available to a wider readership. Recently the Library was pleased that the Huntingtonian Press have been able to publish some of these manuscripts, the writings of James Abbott, a godly friend of James Bourne and Bernard Gilpin, and a copy of this new book is available to borrow from the Library.

### How to Use the Library

**Borrowing Books:** To borrow any of the books mentioned in this newsletter, you do not have to visit the Library, or become a subscriber. Simply phone or email the librarian (contact details below) with the book title you wish to borrow and your address. The book will be posted to you free of charge. Return postage is paid and you have three months to read the book. Similarly, you can borrow any book from the catalogue (except those marked as being in the reserved collection); the catalogue is available on the website.

**Surplus Books:** The Library regularly receives books surplus to requirements and these are sold to raise money for the maintenance and expansion of the Library's collection and general upkeep. A catalogue is regularly produced.

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