



Introduction to Luther's Theology in Global Context

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Abstract

Luther's theology has for the past two centuries been interpreted in the categories of German Protestant thought. As the paradigmatic 'Reformer', however, Luther transcends the geographical and historical restrictions of his own sixteenth-century German context, so that his person and work emerge as inspirations of freedom in global context. This essay looks at Luther's theology of freedom by treating its reception in distinct contexts. The particularities of freedom as 'justification' spoken by 'the word' is a characteristic feature of German Protestantism. Freedom is interpreted in its Nordic and North American contexts in less 'word-focused' and more philosophical-theological concepts as well as in complex dialogue with late medieval thought. Contemporary feminist and liberation theologians take Luther's message into the global context of oppression and violence, seeing in Luther constructive potential for addressing economic and political injustice. The 'global Luther' opens up new possibilities for understanding Luther's theology in terms of experience, emotions, and reason.

I. Introduction

There is a tradition in literary interpretation that Martin Luther invokes in his Psalm commentary of 1532 that determines a proper name according to the genus that it represents.¹ Paul is acknowledged as 'the Apostle', although the New Testament recognizes at least 12 other apostles. Aristotle is known throughout the entire Middle Ages as 'the Philosopher', although the term *philosopher* is attributed to many other thinkers in Western history. The identification of name with genus situates those rare persons in the company of others who have transcended their particular contexts and have come to be associated with intellectual, social, pedagogical, and political movements of global proportions. Paul's gospel message to the Gentiles inspired Christian mission to the 'ends of the earth'. Aristotle's philosophy introduced into the West in the thirteenth century served as the foundation for theoretical and practical philosophy well into the sixteenth century and continues to enjoy a privileged status as the foundation of Western science.

Although he did not explicitly make the connection, history has attributed to Martin Luther (1483–1546) the genus that he is reputed to have initiated. Luther is known throughout the world as ‘the Reformer’. There are, of course, many other reformers either associated with the sixteenth-century Protestant reformation – John Calvin (1509–1564), Geneva’s reformer, for example, or Katharina Zell (1497/98–1562), Strasbourg’s reformer – or other reformations vital to the Christian Church’s historical development. Luther often commended his spiritual predecessor John Hus (c.1369/1371–1415), the theologian who attempted to reform the church’s practice of distributing the sacraments in only one kind (the bread) and was burnt at the stake as a heretic at the Council of Constance. Yet the name representing the genus ‘Reformation’ is attributed to Luther alone. Recently, ‘Luther’ has been used with specific adjectives to signify religious and political reformers outside the West, such as the ‘Muslim Luther’.² This appeal to Luther’s name for highlighting the reformation points out Luther’s enormous significance. What ‘the Reformer’ has come to mean has globally transcended his distinct person and particular work.

It is an academic impossibility to neatly distinguish between Luther as reformer in his own historical context and the meaning of reformation as it is understood by different generations appealing to Luther as authority and source for their own ideas of reformation. Luther is so decisively a figure that has transcended his past – in terms of meaning, authority, and inspiration – that the task of exposing Luther as he truly sought reformation both ecclesiastically and theologically is a perennial historical problem. The appeals to Luther have so overlaid his historical work with interpretation that the meanings themselves inevitably add to any determination of the historical events from 1505, the entrance into the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt, to 1546. Any exposition of Luther’s theology is caught up in this methodological quandary. The expositor must oscillate between past and present in a double search to understand the past and to address present concerns. This essay is no exception: I distill the concept of ‘reformation’ in order to introduce the crucial ideas in Martin Luther’s theology that have had global significance. I begin with the obvious point. Luther’s vast 100-plus volume corpus (in the German critical edition known as the *Weimarer Ausgabe*, published since the nineteenth century in Weimar, Germany, or WA for short) cannot possibly be compressed into an introductory essay. For further reading, I recommend Bernhard Lohse’s *Historical and Systematic Introduction to Luther’s Thought*.³ The purpose here is to analyze ‘reformation’ as the key ingredient in Luther’s theology and to use this concept to introduce the reception of Luther’s thought in the tradition of German Protestantism as well as in the more recent work from North America, Finland, and other parts of the world.

II. *Reforming the Old or Creating the New?*

A great amount of scholarly energy has been dedicated over the past century to pinpointing the precise historical moment that initiated Luther's reformation. The stakes of pinning this world-important event onto a reformation breakthrough in Luther's biography are incredibly high. With Luther's 'eureka moment', a complete paradigm shift is achieved. The 'old' falls off the cliff and the 'new' takes its place.

The defining moment of Protestantism can be captured by one word: freedom. Luther's treatise from 1520, *The Freedom of a Christian*, can be said to mark the beginning of the history of the modern West by categories more modern than medieval.⁴ Luther introduces a new way of conceiving humanity as it strives for redemption that it cannot earn. Freedom is the constitutive determination of the human before the almighty and merciful God. God re-creates the human by setting her free from her past and present; justification really means freedom for living life in vitality and joy.

Luther in his treatise preaches a double freedom according to a modern-sounding anthropological distinction. The 'inner' person, freed by Christ, is re-created as free from any worldly determination, evaluation, or judgment, in order to be free to serve neighbor. The 'outer' person is the relational dimension of the person to her environment. Inner freedom allows her to transcend environmental causality and act as an agent of love. Paul's idea of freedom, the 'gospel message' of the Letters to the Romans and the Galatians, is moved in Luther's text to a modern understanding of freedom as final cause. All humans are created for freedom, in the inner sense of freedom as goal to which every human is oriented, and in the outer sense of freedom from political and religious authority. This tradition of freedom is powerfully ingrained into modern history as written by Lutherans. Rationality and morality are humanity's inner determination (I. Kant). World history has freedom as its endpoint (G. W. F. Hegel) and contemporary liberation theology sees freedom from oppression of all types as the goal of human striving.

If the paradigm shift of freedom constitutes the 'new', its opposite, the old, is cast as its binary opposition. This is the history of the modern West: it is a new history created by Protestantism that supersedes Roman Catholicism. The historical chronology is commonly read as a conceptual opposition between the two churches of the 'Western schism'. Contemporary hard work to correct this conceptual opposition has not really succeeded in silencing the five-century long rumor that Protestantism uplifts human freedom through a divine act while Roman Catholicism prescribes works to the human in striving for redemption. The righteousness of faith supersedes and is vastly superior to a righteousness of works. The binary opposition of religious freedom to servile works has also been used to insist on a philosophical separation between medieval scholasticism that

has an affinity for metaphysics and modern philosophy that concentrates on logic and language. Or in the extreme case, Protestant theology on the surface entirely rejects medieval philosophy as characteristic of Catholic thinking. The Pauline freedom of the Spirit as the Enlightenment mandate to 'think for oneself' is pitted against the Petrine church of Christ that requires subordination to authority. The paradigm shift separating old from new, subservience from freedom, is a deep division that is all-too constitutive of the West's modern identity and has proven, at least so far, resistant to correction.

Scholars have tended to assume that such a breakthrough with all its historical implications existed for Luther. Yet scholarship has – at least since the late 1980s – been much more methodologically aware of the interpretative issues at stake in ascribing novelty to Luther's thinking. The first methodological issue is the intimate relation between historical interest and the coherence principle holding together all parts of the new paradigm. The telling of the reformation story involves presuppositions that in turn shape the way the story is told – all accounts of a 'given' are theory-laden, as contemporary hermeneutical theory propounds. The second methodological issue is the clarification of parameters shaping particular interpretative moves. A particular interpretation of Luther's idea of freedom, for example, is tied to distinct philosophical assumptions. If freedom is interpreted as a modern neo-Kantian category – as is often the case in German scholarship on Luther – then Luther's notion of freedom will be cast in metaphysical terms of its effects rather than in the medieval terms of metaphysical substance. Questions posed of methodological issues have helped Luther scholars address the relation between old and new in less reductionistic terms than binary opposition. How can Luther be understood as both an extension of late-medieval thinking and a harbinger of early modernism?

I now turn to the shaping of Luther's theology by German Protestantism to show how a distinct set of questions has shaped the interpretative options we have today for construing Luther's theology.

III. German Protestantism's Legacy

Luther is a figure of world-historical proportions. Yet the general contours of his person and work as they have been received over the past 150 years have been relatively consistent. The familiar Luther, heroically waving the banner of freedom, is a Luther who has been cast in the mold of German Protestantism's image of itself. The legacy of Luther interpretation is closely allied with the history of German Protestantism. This historical contingency cannot be denied; the anchoring of Luther in German philosophical and theological tradition must be a critical task that can situate where Luther scholarship has come from and where it can go. The German Luther is not the only Luther there is.

Luther's theology cannot be plumbed without appreciating its revolutionary status in the history of the German language. His own efforts at revising the German language in Bible translation, beginning in 1522 with the *September Testament* (translation of the New Testament), succeeded in uniting particular dialects of fifteenth-century German into *Frühneuhochdeutsch* (early modern high German) and in creating a uniform German language. As any Luther scholar knows, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's lexicon of the German language is a faithful companion to the study of Luther's language.⁵ Luther's literary genius can be matched, as only Nietzsche can claim, by two other authors in German history. 'I flatter myself with thinking that in *Zarathustra* the German language has been brought to its completion. After Luther [i.e., Luther's translation of the Bible] and Goethe, there was still a third step to take.'⁶ Yet Luther was also entirely versed, as was any theologian of his day, in Latin, the language of church, theology, and university. His bilingualism makes study of his theology that much more complicated and richer. Luther wrote in both languages for different audiences. The treatise *Freedom of a Christian*, for example, had a Latin version that was dedicated to the pope who had excommunicated him: Pope Leo X.⁷ It displayed full knowledge of rhetorical conventions from antiquity and couched its deep theological insight in wit, learning, and polemic. A different and shorter version in German was written in more popular prose for the printing press. The Swedish scholar, Birgit Stolt, has been path-breaking in analyzing both versions to get at Luther's ideas through their particular literary, linguistic, and rhetorical vehicles.⁸

Language is tied to particular conceptual views of self, world, and God – the classic question of metaphysics. Luther's own language of freedom lent itself well to elucidation in the philosophical tradition dominating German theology for the last 150 years. Neo-Kantianism, as Risto Saarinen has discussed in detail, was the conceptual matrix in which Luther's thought was conceived for modernity.⁹ This interpretative situation meant, in brief, freedom from the speculative reason of medieval philosophy. If speculative reason had been used to plumb the mysterious depths of God's eternity, then Luther's freedom in Christ meant precisely the opposite in neo-Kantian thought. The freedom that Christ gives can only be cast in empirical, nonspeculative, and strictly conceived experiential categories. Luther's theology spelled the end of speculative reason that was obsessed with the equation of how merits earned in time can have an eternal value. Only faith's nonrational acceptance alone of Christ would be the 'agent' of personal salvation. Thus, the language of freedom was married to the powerful intellectual tradition of German neo-Kantianism. Freedom in Christ would no longer have anything to do with a medieval metaphysics that could explain the nature of change on the journey towards justification. Rather, freedom in Christ would presuppose an antimetaphysical stance that cast justification as an event constituted by the preaching of the gospel.

German Luther scholarship's affiliation with neo-Kantianism has constrained Luther's reformation breakthrough to the category of spirit. Constraining study of Luther was the binary opposition between spirit and nature that German Idealism (e.g. Schelling and Hegel) held together in speculative philosophy. Neo-Kantians broke with this tradition and saw freedom from nature in terms of *Geist*, or spirit. Spirit's autonomy from nature refers to the aspect of the human that has to do with life, movement, development, and transcendence. Nature is the causal nexus in which the human is determined. Luther's theology of justification was construed in this particular philosophical tradition precisely in the category of spirit's freedom from nature. Its legacy has, however, had deleterious effects in understanding the body, the emotions, and experience as constitutive of Luther's reformation.

Three key ideas surface again and again from this tradition that have greatly influenced the reception of Luther around the globe. The first is the idea of a systematic principle of reformation. Luther's thought must somehow be systematic, and a system should be reconstructed from his works in such a way that it is informed by a single methodological principle. The reconstruction of Luther's thought according to a systematizing principle of coherence is a serious methodological question. Current consensus in German scholarship dates the reformation breakthrough to 1520, the time of the writing of the three Reformation treatises (*Freedom of a Christian*, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, *Address to the German Nobility*).¹⁰ Yet questions should be asked concerning the viability of conceptualizing Luther's 100-plus volume writings in such a system and whether that system has a consistent principle, arrived at in 1520 and carried through to the end of Luther's life in 1546.

The second characteristic of German Protestant scholarship on Luther is a specification of the spirit/nature dichotomy in terms of law and gospel. The distinction between law and gospel is one championed by the German theologian Werner Elert in the 1950s and dominates an interpretation of Luther that has been influential in North America. The law/gospel distinction has key warrants in Luther's own writings. Luther claims in the *Galatians Commentary* that '[a]nyone who would know this art well [the capacity to distinguish law from gospel] would deserve to be called a theologian.'¹¹ Yet in neo-Kantian framework, the distinction between law and gospel takes on much more than a distinguishing function. The distinction is applied to all of metaphysical reality. Law (and its correlate, sin) is assigned to the realm of worth, merit, earning, and striving, namely, the entire realm of human existence in the world. The gospel is assigned to the area that is available in the church's preaching but never to be actualized empirically in the world. A metaphysical dualism casts reality in the binary opposites of law and gospel. Such a designation of 'creation' under the law has recently proved uncomfortable to theologians who would like to recover Luther's affirmation of the goodness of

creation. Nevertheless, a metaphysical dualism still haunts interpretations of Luther's theology. Even God is not immune.

The third characteristic of this tradition of scholarship has to do with an antimetaphysical understanding of God. An antispeculative tendency is significant for much modern theology. God cannot be known as God is in the divine essence. This eternal realm is hidden from human reason. Rather, God can only be known by the works God does in creation. In neo-Kantian language, God's effects in creation are known through law and gospel. By restricting knowledge of God to the twofold effects in the world, neo-Kantian theology is content with a dualist understanding of God's relation to creation. Recently, the 'law/gospel' relation has been given a 'linguistic turn'. The result is that the twofold action of God is concretely available in distinct words spoken in Bible and worship service.¹² Law and gospel are more precisely available in distinct words that expose the magnitude of human sin and communicate Christ's benefits to the sinner. Yet the difficulty arises when the dualism of 'words' is related to the doctrine of God. Can God be metaphysically ruptured according to two realms, thereby breaking the axiom of metaphysical monism posited in Western thought?

German scholarship has powerfully influenced the way contemporary scholarship on Luther is conducted. Every historical effort to get at a sixteenth-century Luther still feels the press of this tradition. Particularly strong are its consequences for historical and doctrinal theology. The preoccupation with the 'word' and its contextualization in Luther's sermon has led to a marginalization of doctrinal topics and genres of theology, such as the lecture, commentary, and disputation. Trinity, Christology, and anthropology all require metaphysical and psychological tools to study. If theology only has logic and language at its disposal, then homiletical communication, not doctrine, becomes the inevitable focus. A further interpretative restriction has to do with law as metaphysical category. If law is theologically used to cover creation under divine condemnation of sin, while the gospel is construed as an 'eschatological event' (the language of mid-twentieth-century German theologian Rudolf Bultmann), then no concepts of human experience, consciousness, or subjectivity can be used to understand the human person in a state of grace. The realm of experience, a realm that is perhaps the mark of modern global Protestantism, drops from any categorical reflection. The theology of spirit is left without conversation partners.

IV. Nordic and North American Directions

Although 500 years separates our era from Luther, work on his person and theology has not been exhausted. Many areas for study of Luther have opened up in recent scholarship in Scandinavia and in North America. The scholarship in these geographical areas has embarked on new

directions, particularly motivated by commitments to ecumenism. The 30-year ecumenical dialogue between Lutherans and Roman Catholics conveyed the historical necessity for closer analysis of Luther in relation to medieval thought. The dialogue was completed with the historic signing of the *Joint Declaration* in 1999, a document representing a truly courageous working through differences and coming to binding agreement in the respective theologies of justification.¹³ The *Joint Declaration* had its dissenters, not least a constituency of professors in German theology departments.¹⁴ Yet it was signed and thereby it symbolically marked a new direction both in appreciating Luther's indebtedness to his medieval past and in appropriating Luther for current ecumenical theology.

Ecumenical theology has inspired studies of Luther's theology, particularly in conversation with the work of George Lindbeck. Scholars of ecumenism, particularly David Yeago and Michael Root in North America, Risto Saarinen in Finland, and Theodor Dieter from Germany, have set a new standard for scholarship on Luther. Their theological studies critically reject the idea of a foundational difference (*Grunddifferenz*) between Lutherans and Roman Catholics. This difference, romanticized in Protestant traditions emphasizing freedom against Catholic authority, is no longer accepted as a conceptual cliché of a Catholic works' righteousness pitted in binary opposition to a Lutheran righteousness by faith. Rather, both traditions are theorized by Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model of doctrinal differences. For Lindbeck, Roman Catholic and Lutheran traditions both operate in distinct universes constituted by distinct discourses, traditions, and cultures. Such a theory of doctrine in religion leads to a 'nonreductive framework for discussion among those who genuinely disagree.'¹⁵ Justification by faith through grace can be once again appropriated as the cornerstone of Western Christianity in all its manifestations and not the identifying marker of Protestantism.

The ecumenical orientation created the theoretical conditions for productive dialogue. Its path was opened up by a distinctive historical-theological focus on Luther. Heiko Oberman is the decisive forerunner of scholarship contextualizing Luther in medieval theological and practical efforts of reform.¹⁶ Yet Nordic theologians, particularly represented by the University of Helsinki in Finland and most recently in Denmark, have for the past two decades insisted on looking at Luther in Aristotelian, not nominalist categories. Tuomo Mannermaa, whose path-breaking work has been recently translated into English, sets a historical agenda that involves the reconstruction of the metaphysical categories employed by the early Luther (of 1514).¹⁷ Mannermaa construes justification in the medieval category of substance, by which – without going into the depths of the difficulties associated with this term – is meant an Aristotelian substance that has accidents that inhere in it. The conceptual transformation achieved by recontextualizing Luther in this metaphysical framework, rather than in the neo-Kantian framework of a metaphysic of effects, is

significant. Justification is no longer construed as an event that is applied through the word to, although never appropriated by, the individual who endures this application entirely as passive hearer. Rather, justification is the presence of Christ in the believer's soul with specific 'substantial' effects. Justification means real change, not merely a verbal announcement. By recasting the human recipient of Christ's benefits in philosophical terms, both psychology and theological anthropology become viable disciplines for categorizing the change that redemption effects in the human person. Human development on the road of faith can be described in experiential terms, rather than in terms of a word-event in a moment of the present tense. Furthermore, love emerges as the determining divine attribute. Love is both a divine person, the third person of the Trinity, and the divine attribute given to the human individual in justification. The focus on love tempers the usual obsession in Luther scholarship with truth. Truth tends to divide and conquer, whereas love truly conquers all.

Finnish scholarship is just one example of a new interest in Luther's use of reason that has implications for the study of philosophy, doctrine, and liturgy in Luther. There are other studies in this vein that contextualize Luther in both continuity and discontinuity with medieval thought. The particular focus on doctrine, particularly the two key doctrines of Christian theology, Trinity and Christology, is a welcome alternative to the doctrinal marginalization resulting from the word-oriented approach of German scholarship. The identity and essence of God are answers to the question, 'Who speaks the word?' Once the move beyond the 'word' to its speaker (and hearers) is made, a study of the nature of the speaker requires the use of philosophy, particularly metaphysics and logic. Terms used to describe who God is and what God's nature consists of are metaphysical terms, meaning terms that explicate reality. God's reality is Trinitarian and God's identity is characterized by distinct attributes, such as love and justice. Hence, any examination of God in Luther necessitates a close look at the works of specific philosophers and theologians with whom Luther was very familiar; for example, William of Ockham (c.1285–1347) and Gabriel Biel (c.1410–1495). Luther was indebted to the philosophy of his day to help express and explicate his theology and did not dismiss reason and speculation as he is often rumored to have done. Furthermore, study of Luther's use of reason leads scholars to the academic genres of Luther's professorial activity – the predominantly Latin biblical commentaries, the theological treatises, and the disputations. Examples of studies opening up this historical and doctrinal approach to Luther are Graham White's pivotal work on the use of reason in Luther's disputations, my own book on the Trinity, Theodor Dieter's careful analysis of Luther's connection to Aristotelianism in the *Heidelberg Disputation*, and Frank C. Senn's contextualization of Luther's and Lutheran liturgy in the Catholic tradition.¹⁸

Advocates of this ecumenically and historically sensitive approach to Luther's theology are hopeful that new research possibilities will be opened up. One effect is the generation of interdisciplinary interest in Luther. Luther captured the dawn of a new era with his treatise, *Freedom of a Christian*. The treatise multiply intersects ideas of human existence and the nature of God's life, and its cultural-historical, political, economic, and ecclesial aspects inspire the reception in disciplines beyond theology that it has actually enjoyed. Luther's impact has been acknowledged in many fields, particularly art history, musicology, German literature studies, psychology, and economics. It is hoped that the newer generation of theological studies would reciprocally permeate the interdisciplinary study of the reformation so that the older binary oppositions would no longer skew what in reality is a nuanced and complicated picture.

An extension of scholarly interest into life issues would also promote Luther as a contributing theologian to current pressing questions of human existence in a violent world. James W. Jones takes a groundbreaking look at Luther's psychology of justification that precipitated both his uplifting experience of a merciful god and the catastrophic anger that he directed particularly viciously against people who didn't believe in Christ exactly as he did.¹⁹ Birgit Stolt has carefully applied philological and rhetorical analysis to tease out the experiential and emotional dimensions to justification, while Volker Leppin has taken a controversial position in Germany – although his position is regarded as groundbreaking in Scandinavia and in North America – by taking seriously the mystical aspects of Luther's theology.²⁰ Experience, reason, and emotions emerge in this research trajectory as exciting areas of study that highlight Luther's contributions to Christian history, if not to world history.

V. *The Global Luther*

The time for exploring Luther's global impact has come. In contemporary religious studies, globalization and empire have become important terms for Christianity as it recasts itself as a global religion, rather than as a religious export from the West. This global sensitivity is most recently being cultivated in Luther scholarship, although there is much work to be done to set Luther free from usual parochial and ethnic confines. Luther must be recast as a theologian, not of bourgeois comfort and tame religion, but of fiery preaching, dangerous prophecy, and complexity of thought.

There is one theological element in Luther's thought that has proven its capacity to fire up the contemporary theological imagination. The 'theology of the cross' (*theologia crucis*) has emerged in recent feminist, postcolonial, and liberation theology as a prime epistemological category subverting the status quo of power. The theological potential of Luther's theology of the cross has been documented ever since the German theologian Walther von Loewenich discussed it as the provocative

centre of Luther's entire thought.²¹ Loewenich, indebted to the neo-Kantian paradigm, understood Luther's theology of the cross in epistemological terms. God is not to be found in the transcendent clouds of eternal glory, but in a most unlikely place: in the blood and humiliation of the cross. Since this neo-Kantian turn in understanding the theology of the cross, revelation has emerged as the primary epistemological category. God's true divinity is revealed under its opposite in order to free humans from their constraints of sin and finite reason. God's freedom, even from God's own divinity, facilitates an encounter with humans in a way that frees them from sin. Theology's knowledge may be too modern a category to interpret Luther's own words in the *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518) of a *theologian* of the cross. But Loewenich's epistemological rendering of the cross has served as an important starting point for contemporary theological interests in liberation.

Luther's subversive potential is currently plumbed by feminist and liberation theologians. The critical starting point of this scholarship assumes that the cross of Christ's atoning sacrifice has functioned as a patriarchal concept of abusive power that supports the oppression of women and minority populations. Although Luther's Christology does include an atoning theological element, his theology of the cross also presents liberative possibilities. The new knowledge of the cross as the revelation of God's essence in humility and powerlessness is evidence for God's will to overthrow human structures privileging a specific race, class, and gender. Mary Solberg, Deanna Thompson, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, and Marit Trelstad in an edited volume, all appropriate Luther's critical appropriation of the cross to construct a theology of creative freedom achieved in Christ that can be actualized in women's lives.²² Vitor Westhelle is careful to dismiss a romantic view of suffering while making constructive use of Luther's ideas of God's economy in order to argue for just economic conditions for people in the Third World.²³ These examples of constructive and politically robust developments in Luther scholarship pave the way for viewing Luther, not as a domesticated functionary of the hegemonic tradition, but as a theologian who can powerfully, critically, and constructively address a voice of justice today. When contextualized in the world today, Luther's freedom of a Christian spells freedom from oppressive global structures for all to live in this world in the full dignity that God assigns to each one of God's beloved creatures.

The truly global dimension of Luther's impact comes to the fore when his name is invoked with an adjective not historically associated with his sixteenth-century movement. In very recent articles, the name Luther has been applied to Islam: for example, 'the Islamic Luther'. The analogy of the Protestant reformation to a similar question in Islam has attracted recent academic attention.²⁴ The 'Reformer' continues to inspire humans in today's global religious context. Luther's profound insight into the human desire for freedom, whether political, religious, economic, or

personal, continues to serve as powerful example and model for those far removed from his sixteenth-century Saxon context. Freedom is Luther's message to the world, but this freedom is precious. The justification of the individual costs God's life; God's death sets love free to quietly restore the world to its full glory. This powerful message was formulated at the intersection between old and new. It has transcended these historical limitations time and time again. Perhaps the meaning of 'Reformer' is theologian in global context.

Short Biography

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Notes

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¹ This strategy, technically known as 'antonomasia . . . makes a proper noun out of a common noun, [so that] it is transferred to other things.' Martin Luther, 'Exposition of Psalm 2' (to verse 12), in *Luther's Works: American Edition on CD-ROM*, 55 vols, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis, MO: Concordia; and Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002), vol. 12:82 (referred to as LW).

² See the online article on February 15, 2002, by Paul Donnelly, 'Tariq Ramadan: The Muslim Martin Luther?' at <http://dir.salon.com/story/people/feature/2002/02/15/ramadan/>

³ Trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999).

⁴ See LW 31:333–377.

⁵ The entire lexicon, *Das Deutsche Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm auf CD-ROM und im Internet*, is available online at <http://germazope.uni-trier.de/Projects/DWB/>

⁶ This quote is taken from an unpublished personal letter to Erwin Rohde. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Christopher Middleton (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1996), §121.

⁷ The Latin version, translated into English by W. A. Lambert and revised by Harold G. Grimm, is available in LW 31:333–377. The German version, translated by Bertram Lee Woolf in 1953, can be found in: *Reformation Writings of Martin Luther*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Philosophical Library, 1953).

⁸ See Birgit Stolt, *Rhetorik des Herzens*, Uni-Taschenbücher 2141 (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

⁹ See Risto Saarinen, *Gottes Wirken auf uns: die transzendente Deutung des Gegenwart-Christi-Motivus in der Lutherforschung*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte/Abteilung Abendländische Religionsgeschichte 137 (Stuttgart, Germany: Franz Steiner, 1989).

¹⁰ An influential proponent in this regard is Oswald Bayer, whose work has recently been translated into English: *Theology the Lutheran Way*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattes (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007); and *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation* (forthcoming with Eerdmans).

¹¹ LW 26:341 (to verse 23; 1535).

¹² Oswald Bayer has emerged as the chief proponent in interpreting Luther's understanding of the gospel as concrete words spoken by God that effect creation and justification. See footnote 10 for references.

¹³ *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification: The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

¹⁴ See Irene Dingel, 'The Debate over Justification in Ecumenical Dialogue,' *Lutheran Quarterly* 15 (2001): 308.

¹⁵ George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1984), 91.

¹⁶ Heiko A. Oberman's watershed book, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism*, was first published by Harvard University Press (Cambridge, MA) in 1963 (reprint: Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000).

¹⁷ See his *Christ Present in Faith: Luther's View of Justification*, ed. and introduced by Kirsi Stjerna (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005).

¹⁸ Graham White, *Luther as Nominalist: A Study of the Logical Methods Used in Martin Luther's Disputations in the Light of Their Medieval Background*, Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft 30 (Helsinki, Finland: Luther-Agricola-Society, 1994); Christine Helmer, *The Trinity and Martin Luther: A Study of the Relationship Between Genre, Language and the Trinity in Luther's Works (1523–1546)*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte/Abteilung Abendländische Religionsgeschichte 174 (Mainz, Germany: Zabern, 1999); Theodor Dieter, *Der junge Luther und Aristoteles: eine historisch-systematische Untersuchung zum Verhältnis von Theologie und Philosophie*, Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann 105 (Berlin, Germany: de Gruyter, 2001); Frank C. Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997).

¹⁹ James W. Jones, 'Living in the Midst of Horrors: Luther and Psychoanalysis,' ch. 5 in *The Global Luther: Theologian for Modern Times*, ed. Christine Helmer (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2009).

²⁰ See his English essay, 'Luther Studies in Germany – The Presence and Absence of Theology,' *Dialog* 47, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 105–113.

²¹ See Walther von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1976).

²² Mary M. Solberg, *Compelling Knowledge: A Feminist Proposal for an Epistemology of the Cross* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997); Deanna A. Thompson, *Crossing the Divide: Luther, Feminism and the Cross* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004); Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006); Marit Trelstad, ed., *Cross Examinations: Readings on the Meaning of the Cross Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006).

²³ See Vitor Westhelle, 'Politics and Power: Incursions in Luther's Theology,' ch. 15 in *The Global Luther: Theologian for Modern Times*, ed. Christine Helmer (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2009).

²⁴ Michaëlle Browers and Charles Kurzman, eds., *An Islamic Reformation?* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004).