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IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF

LUTHER

AND THE REFORMATION
IN WORMS

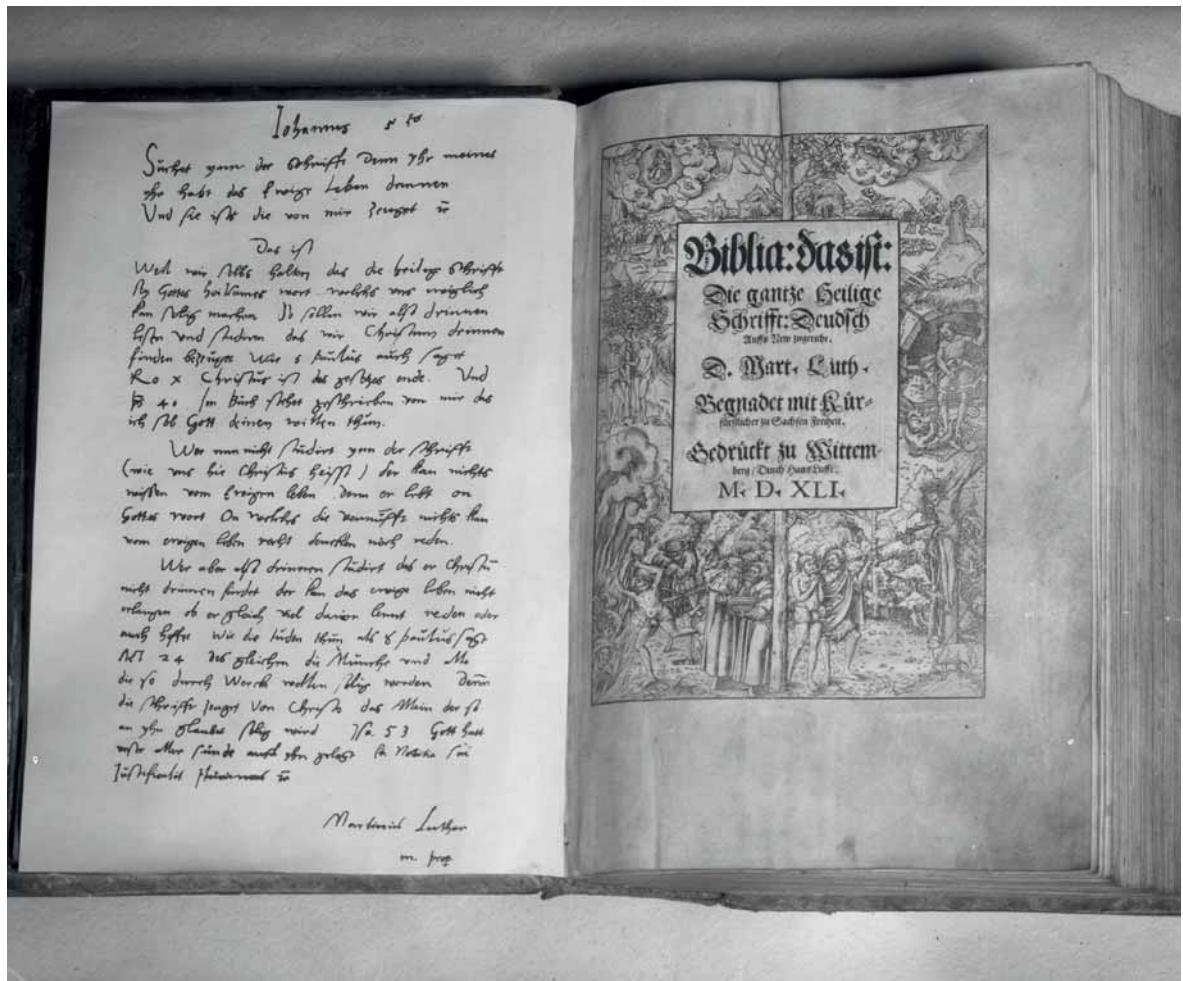
Preface

In the Luther Year 1983, Otto Kammer and Fritz Reuter published this brochure, which was reprinted in 1994 with slight alterations. Martin Luther's appearance before the Emperor and the Estates of the Realm in April 1521 made Worms one of the cities with a significant Lutheran heritage. The city continues to play a vital role in relevant jubilee celebrations, planning and running various projects. One of the most remarkable initiatives is the biennial presentation of the award 'The Undaunted Word'. The idea to set up the prize, endowed by a confederation of fifteen Luther heritage cities (Augsburg, Coburg, Eisenach, Eisleben, Erfurt, Halle, Heidelberg, Magdeburg, Marburg, Schmalkalden, Speyer, Torgau, Wittenberg, Worms, and Zeitz) was thought up in Worms, in the city where Luther distinguished himself by speaking an undaunted word, incurring the displeasure of powerful people. His appeal to his conscience bound by the Holy Bible was a watershed in the early history of the Reformation, but also a milestone in the German history of thought. Luther sparked a movement that culminated in the Age of Enlightenment, always regarding respect for conscience its highest precept, and that forms the base for the constitution of Germany. Worms embraces this heritage and thus decided to publish a new, enlarged edition of the brochure, in cooperation with the Evangelical Deanery, to mark the 'Luther Decade' (2008—2017), a ten-year celebration of the Luther heritage cities.

The original text, written by Otto Kammer and Fritz Reuter, has been carefully revised in some sections and complemented with facts and figures of the Reformation in southern Germany as well as with short biographies of the main characters shown on the Luther monument. The bibliography has also been updated.

Ulrich Oelschläger

The Luther Room (*Lutherzimmer*) was re-established in the Municipal Museum in 1983, where there had been a similar room prior to 1945. Among other things, the Room houses a couple of documents from the Luther Collection (*Lutherbibliothek*). The most valuable item is a **PARCHMENT BIBLE** from 1541 containing a comment in Luther's handwriting.

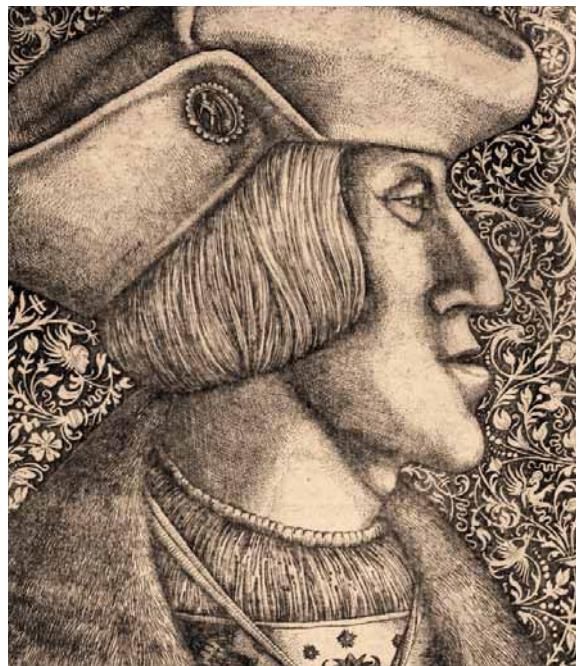


Ten Days in the Life of Martin Luther

In 1521 the population of Worms was approximately 7,000. However, since January of that year almost twice that many had gathered in the city to attend the Imperial Diet. According to the *Golden Bull*, a document stating the imperial law, Nuremberg should actually have been the scene of the first Imperial Diet during the reign of Charles v of Spain. This Habsburg monarch had been elected Holy Roman Emperor in Frankfurt in 1519 and was crowned the following year in Aachen. But an epidemic was raging in Nuremberg. At the urging of Prince Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony and the most influential of the Emperor's electors, a city with previous experience in the staging of the Imperial Diet was chosen instead—the city of Worms.

The flood of visitors that crowded into the city as a result far exceeded expectations. Planning and preparation soon proved to be inadequate. Food was expensive, living space was scarce, and heated disputes flared up over the short supply of living quarters and the allocation of firewood, which had been stored alongside the Rhine for use as fuel. Papal nuncio Aleander gave a detailed report of frustrating shortages in his dispatches to Rome. He complained of his living quarters, low-beamed and inadequately heated, which made him long for the sunny warmth of Italy. Everywhere he went he encountered hostility toward Rome and the Papal Curia. According to his gloomy assessment, the prevailing mood of the populace was ugly: “‘Luther’ is the battle-cry of nine tenths of the Germans, and the rest are calling, ‘Death to the Court in Rome!’”

‘Luther,’ of course, was a topic that excited his contemporaries. In Wittenberg he had occupied himself as a theologian not only in his study but also through his publications, which were critical of the Church of Rome and which printing made available to a broad public. Like many of his contemporaries, the Augustinian monk felt himself cut adrift in a world that was being transformed by economic changes and new



discoveries (e.g., America, 1492). In an age steeped in piety but also pervaded by end-of-the-times forebodings, Luther sought to redefine the relationship between God and man. No longer could, or should, the individual will of man or good works obtain righteousness (i.e., salvation) in the eyes of God. Luther came to the realization that this is possible ‘only by the grace’ (*sola gratia*) of God, that by this grace ‘only through faith’ (*sola fide*) is a man able to be considered righteous before God, just as the Bible—the ‘only source of authority’ (*sola scriptura*)—has promised.

For the time being, this kind of reflective thinking did not place him in strong opposition to his Church.



Luther's arrival in Worms. Engraving by Gustav Spangenberg (1828–1891).

ing of John Hus at the stake a hundred years before in Constance. Even such an attempt would have caused a riot. Secondly, it prompted Charles v to send Luther a summons (March 6, 1521), requiring his appearance in person and granting him safe conduct, although there had been no such intention when the invitations to the Imperial Diet had originally been issued.

Luther began his journey on April 2 in an equipage consisting of a two-wheeled carriage drawn by a team of three horses, loaned to him by the town council of Wittenberg. He was accompanied by Brother Petzensteiner (like Luther, an Augustinian monk), a theologian named Amsdorf, and a student, Suaven. The Imperial Herald, Kaspar Sturm, who had delivered the summons to Luther, was responsible for their safe conduct and rode in advance of the party as their escort. Along the way, the Reformer preached in Erfurt, Gotha, and Eisenach, where theologian Justus Jonas

joined his party. In Oppenheim, friends of Luther attempted to persuade him to change his destination and head for the security of Ebernburg Castle, but he was determined to continue on to Worms, ‘even if the town numbered as many devils as tiles on its roofs.’

It was ten o'clock in the morning on Tuesday, April 16, in Worms. The streets and byways of the city were somewhat less crowded than usual in the days since the Imperial Diet had convened. It was customary to take an early lunch, and the noonday break had already begun.

The trumpet of the watchman blared forth announcing the arrival of new visitors. In no time crowds had gathered at Martin's Gate (*Martinspforte*) and along Kämmererstrasse. ‘Luther is coming,’ people called to one another, ‘... the brave man!’ People expected wondrous deeds of him, just as they expected of young Charles v, who had recently turned twenty-one.



could continue to preach against the bull of Pope John XXIIII promoting the crusade against Naples and the sale of indulgences to fund the crusade. However, the Faculty of Theology turned against him in 1412.

In 1414, Hus was summoned to the Council of Constance, where his case was tried. Emperor Sigismund had granted him safe conduct. Still he was arrested, but allowed to defend himself. He refused to recant his doctrine exposed in his 1413 book *De ecclesia*, claiming that the church was a congregation of the faithful with Jesus Christ as their only head, thus without any hierarchical structure. Breaking the promise to grant him safe conduct in order to condemn and burn him was to arouse grave concerns with Luther's followers a century later when he was summoned to appear before the Diet of Worms. Legend has it that Hus—his name being the Czech word for 'goose'—said on the stake:

'Today you are roasting a goose, but from the ashes will arise a swan.' These words were later related to Luther. After Hus' execution, his reformatory impetus continued.

In Bohemia the protest movement of the Husites emerged, became increasingly radical and waged war against King Sigismund. From this movement the Bohemian Brethren arose, a denomination that seceded from the Church in 1467. While they were granted freedom of worship in 1609, they had to leave their home country after the 1620 Battle of White Mountain. They were also pressurized in the wake of the Counter-Reformation. In 1722 Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf granted them asylum on his estate in Upper Lusatia. In 1918 they constituted the Moravian Church, acknowledged under the umbrella of the Protestant Church. Their *Losungen* or *Daily Watchwords*, first