

The 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 1517 has occasioned an explosion of new books about Luther and the Reformation. Here is a brief bibliography of some that are on my shelves and I have read.

The best and blest place to start with Luther is always with the man himself. The English reader has, for many years, been channeled into the massive, 50+ volume set of Luther's works published jointly by CPH and Fortress in the middle of the 20th century. Recently CPH has even added a few volumes there. This is the standard and most complete Luther for the English reader.

If you are competent in German, the Weimar edition is considered the official and critical edition. But it stretches over 100 volumes.

That is a lot of Luther. As a result, I find that many readers who would like to read the reformer look at that massive list of titles and despair. They don't know where to start. If you are one of those, you may find it useful to check out a new translation of Luther which is much more modest in scope and which seeks to put essential and important documents by the Reformer before a new generation of readers and help those readers understand what Luther is saying.

Luther, Martin. *The Annotated Luther*. (Vol.: 1-4) Ed. Timothy Wengert. Trans.: Various. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015-present. *These volumes are helpful in multiple ways. First it is a new translation of Luther which helps him speak more idiomatically to people of the 21st century. But they are probably more helpful in that they help the reader access the most important works of Luther through choosing to present certain works and accompanying those works with copious notes for the reader. These notes seek to contextualize the work in its theological, historical, and literary contexts. For the interested reader, these afford the best way into the important writings and works of the Reformer. If you need a specific letter or want to read them all, you will need to head over to "Luther's Works" in the CPH/Fortress edition. As of this writing there were four volumes in print with more in the works. You do not need to invest in one of these, however, as many of the more significant titles included in these large volumes are also available as offprints in a paperback format. Thus, if you are wanting to sample, you could buy the "Freedom of the Christian" instead of buying the whole Volume I in which this text is located. It is a paperback and comes with the helpful notes.*

Books about Luther and the Reformation:

Eire, Carlos M. N. *Reformations: The Early Modern World, 1450-1650*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2016. *I must admit that, while this is sitting on my desk, this book is hot off the press and I have not read it yet. This is a serious book. The text without notes runs over 750 pages and weighing in at almost three and a half pounds. The jacket promises that this is a fast paced account of this pivotal period of human history. I am not sure that a book pushing 1000 total pages should ever be labeled "fast-paced" but I cannot render a final judgment yet. You can read a review of this text by the historian Eamon Duffy here: <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2016/11/the-end-of-christendom>*

Hendrix, Scott H. *Martin Luther: Visionary Reformer*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2015. *Hendrix is an important scholar of the Reformation at Princeton who wrote a very fine commentary and introduction to the Lutheran Confessions a few years ago. His text on Luther is accessible and*

sound. At times he may be critiqued for ascribing too much to Luther, but this is a very good introduction and biography of Luther.

Kittelson, James M. *Luther the Reformer*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003. *This is a re-edited edition of an early work by Kittelson which came out around the 500th anniversary of Luther's birth in 1983. A very accessible text written for non-scholars, it has been critiqued by many as being too easy on some of Luther's less savory aspects, including his writings on the Jews. This is a good text to give someone who is interested in Luther, but not a very thorough treatment.*

Kolb, Robert. *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009. *Kolb's text assumes the reader has some familiarity with Luther and with theological terminology. It is very sound and highlights Luther's emphasis on a passive justification, but may be too technical for a lay reader.*

MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *The Reformation: A History*. New York: Penguin, 2003. *This is a massive treatment of the whole reformation, over 700 pages long. MacCulloch's treatment of the Lutheran Reformation is particularly insightful as he is not a believer but he gives the faith and ideas of Luther and the early Lutherans appropriate treatment. His narrative on the magisterial Reformation is particularly helpful. Text has excellent indices.*

McGrath, Alister E. *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2012. *McGrath reads the development of the Reformation through a number of historical and theological lenses, asserting that many of the Reformation controversies are actually continuations of controversies which Christianity had contended with for many years prior to Luther. His text is very good for helping the reader understand the relationship of the Lutheran reformation to other strands of the reformation.*

Pettegree, Andrew. *Brand Luther: How an Unheralded Monk Turned His Small Town into a Center of Publishing, Made Himself the Most Famous Man in Europe – And Started the Protestant Reformation*. New York: Penguin, 2015. *The title rather says it all about this book. Pettegree is a scholar of the 16th century who has sought to contextualize the Reformation within its economic and cultural context. Well written and filled with reprints of the title pages of Luther's books, this text is a valuable resource for studying Luther.*

Trueman, Carl R. *Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2015. *Written by an unapologetic fanboy, Trueman's text is very interesting because he admits that Luther would not consider Trueman a Christian for his views on the sacraments. He is able to ask questions of Luther's theology and the practices and doctrines of American Evangelicals in a way which no Lutheran can do without coming across as a denominational hack. His summary of Luther's life is quite good and his focus on the basic elements of Luther's theology is sound.*

Wittford, David M. *Luther: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: Bloomsbury/T & T Clark, 2011. *Wittford's text is an upper level treatment of Luther's life. He is a good writer and an excellent historian. He tends to ascribe to Luther and the Lutheran movement little in the way of doctrinal motivation, but seats the reformation in a political and cultural context. He sees the events of the Reformation happening for reasons other than theological.*