



Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation

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Originally published in 1884 as a portion of the author's larger "Beacon Lights of History, Volume VI: Renaissance and Reformation," this Kindle edition, equivalent in length to a physical book of approximately 30 pages, describes the life and teachings of German theologian Martin Luther.

Sample passage:

It was then that a kind and enlightened friend visited him, and recommended him to read the Bible. The Bible never has been a sealed book to monks; it was ever highly prized; no convent was without it: but it was read with the spectacles of the Middle Ages. Repentance meant penance. In Saint Paul's Epistles Luther discovers the true ground of justification—not works, but faith; for Paul had passed through similar experiences. Works are good, but faith is the gift of God. Works are imperfect with the best of men, even the highest form of works, to a Mediaeval eye—self-expiation and penance; but faith is infinite, radiating from divine love; faith is a boundless joy—salvation by the grace of God, his everlasting and precious boon to people who cannot climb to heaven on their hands and knees, the highest gift which God ever bestowed on men—eternal life.

Luther is thus emancipated from the ideas of the Middle Ages and of the old Syriac monks and of the Jewish Pharisees. In his deliverance he has new hopes and aspirations; he becomes cheerful, and devotes himself to his studies. Nothing can make a man more cheerful and joyful than the cordial reception of a gift which is infinite, a blessing which is too priceless to be bought. The pharisee, the monk, the ritualist, is gloomy, ascetic, severe, intolerant; for he is not quite sure of his salvation. A man who accepts heaven as a gift is full of divine enthusiasm, like Saint Augustine.

About the author:

John Lord, LL.D. (1810–1894) was an American historian and a touring lecturer. Other works include "The Old Roman World," "Ancient States and Empires," and "Points of History."

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