
P R E F A C E

Martin Luther's work on Christian liberty has long been recognized as one of the classics of the Reformation. His ringing declaration that a Christian is "lord of all, completely free of everything" and a "servant, completely attentive to the needs of all" has echoed through five centuries of history and stimulated numerous discussions on the substance of the faith, what it means to lead a Christian life, and the relationship between the church and the larger society.

There has not been a translation of the longer Latin text (Luther also did a shorter version in German¹) since Harold Grimm revised the earlier work of H. A. Lambert for the American Edition of *Luther's Works* in 1957. Twenty years of teaching "The Freedom of a Christian" to students and adults convinced me that a new translation was needed. Many of the sentences in Grimm's revision were long and overly complex. Furthermore, the situation of today's reader is different from that of the mid-twentieth century. Few have even a general knowledge of Luther or European history.² This has necessitated a basic introduction to Luther's era and the use of many footnotes to explain the historical references and theological concepts in

1. Translated by Philip W. Krey in *Luther's Spirituality*, Classics of Western Spirituality, ed. and trans. Philip W. Krey and Peter D. S. Krey (New York: Paulist, 2007), 69–90.

2. Of course, this description does not fit everyone. Those who desire a thorough theological commentary on the text should consult the work of Reinhold Rieger. His *Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen. De libertate christiana*. Kommentare zu Schriften Luthers, Band 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007) is a model of careful scholarship.

the text. A chronology, map, suggestions for further reading, and a glossary also have been added to aid readers who are entering the world of the sixteenth century for the first time. A list of the abbreviations used in this volume can be found in the back matter. Subject dividers have been used to help the reader follow the flow of Luther's argument. The overall goal is to make one of Luther's most important writings accessible to a new generation of students and readers.

A translation like this is never the work of one individual. A larger community has helped to shape this book, although they are not to be held accountable for any errors it may contain. My deepest gratitude goes out to the following groups and individuals: the Religion Department at Augsburg College, Augsburg College's Lilly Scholars of 2006–2007, and Diane Glorvigen, the program associate for Augsburg's Lilly Endowment grant on vocation. A special thanks to Scott Hendrix, Robert Kolb, and Eugene Skibbe. All three reviewed my translation of "The Freedom of a Christian" and made numerous suggestions that improved the text. Thanks to Marissa Bauck and Michael West, editors at Fortress Press.