



# Martin Luther: 500 Years Reformation – What comes Next?

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After a warm welcome by Gudrun Mobo, representative of UPF Frankfurt, a short but very informative video about UPF International was shown. Our first guest speaker, **Dr. Marco Frenschkowski**, protestant theologian and Professor for New Testament Studies at the University of Leipzig, was then introduced. His presentation dealt with the topic: “**Martin Luther and his Holy Scriptures**“, mainly from the perspective of religious studies.



Professor Frenschkowski started off with the comment that he was always happy to speak at UPF events, not only in Germany but also in other countries, because UPF does excellent interreligious work. He then posed the question as to how one should celebrate 500 years of reformation. How does one celebrate something which is such an established, natural part of our lives? Many things achieved by the Reformation, such as for example, freedom of conscience, the freedom each Christian has to study the Bible on his own, are taken by us today for granted. He introduced his speech as an abbreviated version of a 90-minute presentation, part of a lecture series at the University of Leipzig.

For Martin Luther, the words of Paul in his letter to the Romans about God’s justice were very problematic. Luther hated the words ‘God’s justice’, and hated the idea of God as a ‘judge who justly punishes sinners’. He sought after a new understanding of the term ‘God’s justice’ and found it after much struggle. Through

“God’s justice “- through God’s grace and faith - man is justified: “... righteousness lives through faith “. Luther felt liberated and born anew. This realization opened for him the “gates to Paradise “. He saw the Bible in a new light.

Paul’s teaching about justification by faith became for Martin Luther the standard of Christianity and an important foundation for the Lutheran written canons. Within the Scripture, he had found solutions for all the struggles in life, for everything that is important for man’s well-being, and thus



for him “scripture alone “(“sola Scriptura “) was necessary.

After this central point about Luther’s new understanding of the Bible, Professor Frenschkowski compared aspects of the Bible with the Holy Scriptures of other religions. In all religions, for example, it is taken for granted that the scriptures are handled with respect, and are valued. And in some traditions, especially in Islam, an integral part of this is to learn scripture by heart. Since this is optimally done in the original texts, translations have to be authorized. And furthermore, the content is mostly strictly determined, i.e. canonized, except the Koran. Prof Frenschkowski ended his exceptionally interesting and informative presentation by bringing our attention to a 2017 revised edition of the Lutheran Bible, which is very close to Luther’s translation and includes the apocrypha.



After a short break, **Martin van Kampen**, who has just completed his studies as a teacher of history and English at secondary school level, introduced the woman at Luther’s side - **“Katharina von Bora “**. Luther himself called her lovingly “my Mr. Käthe“, thus giving expression to his respect for her abilities to successfully manage money and property. There are many reasons why it is interesting to study Katharina, and Martin van Kampen could help us, in his respectful, interesting and varied style to better understand this woman.

She managed to manage a large family although she herself had never experienced family life. Her parents, impoverished nobility, could not take care of a large number of children and so sent the five-year-old Katharina into a nunnery. Katharina was given a good education and learned many different aspects of taking care of a large property. There she also came across Luther’s writings in which he protested that many children were sent against their wishes to a monastery. Anyway, Katharina and eleven other nuns fled from the nunnery, and Luther helped them to escape.

Katharina von Bora is an example of a self-determined woman who was also able to have a say in the choice of her partner. She did not want to marry just anyone, as she liked Luther. She is an early example of an emancipated wife. Had it not been



for Katharina’s financial and moral support, Luther would not have been able to continue his activities for as long as he did. His revolutionary insights were only in spiritual matters, and so Katharina undertook responsibility for economic matters. Those who came to study with Luther were received and taken care of. “They can have the Word for free, but they must pay for food, beer and bed “, was her attitude. She was there when Luther gave speeches, spoke to him respectfully, but insisted on her own opinion. She thus earned the name “Doctressa“ - bestowed with some derision as well as seriousness.

Luther was able to experience married and family life with Katharina, and they had six children whom they dearly loved. Luther developed a talent for education which was reflected in the catechism and church songs. They had a life of much joy but also sorrow, and although there were sometimes disagreements, Luther respected his wife very much.

Katharina had many hurdles to overcome, but never gave up. It was especially hard for her when Luther died. Although she had been designated as the sole inheritor, this was not normal in those days and so Katharina was left practically destitute.

She died in 1552 at the age of 50/51 as the result of an accident.

After a break for discussion and coffee, the next speaker took to the podium.



**Christian Haubold**, a teacher of religious studies and history, spoke about **“Luther’s Ways to God“**. Martin Luther suffered under the contemporary understanding of God and sought desperately to find a “merciful God“. Quotations from texts written by Martin Luther can help us better understand his struggles and his search for God. According to his insights “God does not want an audience or those who repeat what he says, but disciples and activists, acting in faith through love. Because faith without love is not enough. “



And still today, we can learn something from Luther, especially when it comes to prayer, which played for him a very central role. He counseled one friend with these words: "Pray first thing in the morning and last thing in the evening". Luther encouraged people to pray to God and read scriptures that "warm the heart and prepare for prayer which does not have to be long but should be frequent and intense". His tract from 1535 "A Simple Way to Pray" gives many helpful tips on prayer: "and what I already said at the Lord's Prayer, I will repeat: if the Holy Spirit comes when you have such thoughts and begins to preach in your heart, with rich and insightful thoughts, then do him the honor by freeing yourself from your own thoughts and be still and listen to him who

knows better than you. And take note of what he says, write it down, and thus you shall ... experience miracles within the laws of God." Only in this way can we understand how Luther was able to accomplish all that he did in his life.

As Prof. Frenschkowski already explained, the term justification was of key significance for Luther. In the Divine Principle, this term is dealt with in the chapter "Resurrection". Our spiritual growth takes place in three stages: justification by hearing and following the law, through belief in Jesus and his words, and through following in this time. Thus, today we can become true children of God by fulfilling the three blessings and are

able to experience the full extent of God's love.

Then Christian Haubold answered the question "What comes next?" He recommended that each person should consider his own relationship to God and concluded that we need an internal reformation today, one which allows God to be our father, our parents. We can be grateful to live freely as children of God and to be co-creators in his kingdom. "We can go through the door of the Blessing and participate in the salvation which our Heavenly Father wishes to bestow today on all of us", was the very promising statement with which our event was brought to an end..

