

**2005 Martin Luther's message for us today:** A perspective from the South. For detail see List of Publications below.

[Key terms: Reformation theology – Martin Luther – experiential theology – Lutheran theology in Africa]

Books on Luther can fill a substantial library. Why add another one? My answer is that Luther is the prototype of a contextual theologian with extraordinary depth of insight. He does not speculate about God but formulates God's response to the unfolding situation of his time. But this situation was located in the West half a millennium ago. That is probably why Western accounts of Luther's theology are not likely to rouse the enthusiasm of Southern readers.

This book changes all that. Just as Martin Luther's work reflects his response to the challenges and predicaments of 16th century Europe, rather than engaging in metaphysical speculations, this book reflects my interpretation of Luther's theology in response to the conflicts and predicaments we had to face during the last three decades of Southern African history. It is not meant to do justice to a historical figure, but to retrieve the profound insights of the Reformer for our situation today – and do so critically.

The chapters deal with the following insights: The Word of God is light in the darkneses of life; faith is trust in God's promise; predestination must make way for God's open future; the Scriptures are authoritative in as far as they witness to Christ; the gospel does not lead to a new enslavement to the law, but to freedom and responsibility; the church is composed of those who have been unconditionally and redemptively accepted by God into his fellowship; the ministry is not meant to be elevated above the laity but to empower the priesthood of all believers; through baptism the community accepts the baptised into God's fellowship; in the Lord's Supper Christ gives himself to us here and now as he gave himself on the cross for us; God's rule overcomes sin and evil, whether in our hearts through his Word, or in society through institutions and offices; confession refers to the foundations of faith, while prophesy challenges social evils; the gospel of unconditional, transforming acceptance is the foundation of an appropriate response to the HIV pandemic.

All these are momentous insights in momentous times. They show that, properly interpreted, Luther's experiential theology can help us overcome impassés created by an outdated metaphysics and deal more appropriately with the challenges of today.