

FOREWORD

The Fourth International Congress for Luther Research, held in Saint Louis, Missouri, August 22-27, 1971, was an event both in the history of Reformation scholarship and in the history of American intellectual life. It brought together scholars from many countries for mutual exchange and discussion, and it provided a forum for co-operative inquiry by theologians of various confessional traditions. Thus it represented the continuing development of Luther research as a field of historical and theological investigation in its own right, as well as the broader enterprise of critical analysis and reflection upon the persistent issues raised by the faith and thought of Martin Luther.

The theme of the Congress, "Luther and the Dawn of the Modern Era (Luther und die Neuzeit)," united these several concerns. From this theme came several major areas of study, the results of which are set forth in this volume. The essays and lectures printed here may each be read independently, as a learned interpretation by a scholar of international standing who has summarized here the results of ongoing research; as such, they provide a useful *Forschungsbericht* on the present state of our knowledge about the several historical questions involved. They are also, however, part of a larger whole. Believing as most of them do that the only way to a trustworthy synthesis is through precise analysis, the authors of these lectures have combined a careful and even a meticulous *explication de texte* with a consideration of the larger—and perforce more speculative—issues of how the Reformation does (and does not) bring about the rise of the modern epoch of Western history.

In one very important sense, the reader of this volume will be unable to share in the educational experience of the Congress. A large part of the time during the crowded days of our meeting was devoted to seminars on a variety of topics related to the general theme. Here the members of the Congress examined pertinent texts from Luther himself and from other authors (Augustine, Aquinas, Karlstadt, to name only a few) whose thought is pertinent to an assessment of Luther's place in intellectual history. The literary deposit of these seminars cannot be presented in such a volume as this, for it will become evident only in the individual productions of the members of the several groups, many

of whom have testified that their publications in the future will be different for their having been participants in the Congress and in its seminars.

As the fourth of the Congresses for Luther Research, the meeting in Saint Louis followed earlier ones in Aarhus, Denmark; Münster, Germany, and Järvenpää, Finland. Those of us who have been members of the Congresses from the beginning can document the account of their evolution from 1956 to the present. At our first meeting, a decade after the end of World War II, "Bücher wurden Menschen," as names previously known to us only from our bibliographies now became acquaintances and even friends. By now the Congress has acquired an identity of its own, more international and certainly more ecumenical than it had originally been, but also more committed than ever to the scholarly study of Luther.

The Congress in Saint Louis would not have gone as it did had it not been for the dedication and energy of Carl S. Meyer. As Executive Director of the Foundation for Reformation Research, which acted as host for the Congress, Professor Meyer spent many hours in preparing for the Congress and helping to make it a success. His belief in historical scholarship and his integrity as a Christian gentleman were in evidence, quietly and unobtrusively, throughout the Congress. It was a loss for his many friends and for the scholarly cause when Carl Meyer died on December 17, 1972. Thus the appearance of this volume is also a tribute to his memory.

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