

The Hero of Universal Protestantism



From chapter XIII of **What The World Owes Luther** by Junius Remensnyder which I found on [The Lutheran Library](#).

Junius Benjamin Remensnyder (1843-1927) was a Lutheran pastor in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and served as the president of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church from 1911 to 1913.

LUTHER was a man for the whole world. While he was a German of the Germans, this was only because he realized most powerfully the genius of his environment. He saw life acutely, and he saw it whole. The great truth he brought to light had in it nothing peculiar to the German spirit. In it he grasped an original and universal Christian idea, quite beyond all race limitations. Thus, Luther as a thinker is not a German type, but "a man by himself" who belongs to no age exclusively, and who, therefore, is a genius in the classic sense of the term, a man who, as a productive force, exerted a most powerful influence not alone on the contemporary, but also on the latter age.

He has thus been claimed by all schools of thought. The great scientific dogmatists of the seventeenth century, who constructed so imposing an orthodox theology, in a strong sense, truly represented him, but the Pietists of the eighteenth century, who directly opposed these stiff theological codes, really were nearer to his inner spirit. Their great leader, Spener, placed Luther's writings next to the Bible as a means of devotion. The Humanists and the Rationalists admired him as the author of freedom of thought. Calvin signed the Augsburg Confession, and called Luther the most distinguished teacher of God since the apostles, so that the Presbyterians have a part in him. The Church of England almost became Lutheran and in its translation of the Bible, in the Thirty-nine Articles,—the majority of which are taken bodily from the Augsburg Confession,—and in the liturgic forms and offices of the Book of Common Prayer, show Luther's hand, so that it is richly entitled to share in his honour.

Wesley ascribed his conversion to Luther's wonderfully spiritual preface to Romans, so that the Methodist Church feels his influence in her foundation. "As Paul converted Luther, so Luther converted Wesley. It was Luther's preface to Romans that turned Wesley from a servant to a son, from a pious churchman and model clergyman to a burning apostle, with a world for his parish, and a mind much more free and liberal than many of his followers realize."¹

And even the Roman Catholics in the Council of Trent introduced many of the reforms he stood for. No one communion then expresses exhaustively the Christianity of Luther or can claim him exclusively. Great men, indeed, live for all mankind. The vicarious principle is shot through the whole web of nature. The world's progress is built upon the hearts of a few. Win a great victory for the right, and its fruitage is reaped by all mankind. Voice a truth, and it will resound about the world. So was it with Luther.

¹ Principal Forsyth, Hackney College, London.