



The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520: The Annotated Luther, Study Edition

Martin Luther

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In his *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Martin Luther set forth a reconsideration of the sacramental Christian life that centered on the word. His thesis is that the papacy had distorted the sacraments with its own traditions and regulations, transforming them into a system of control and coercion. The evangelical liberty of the sacramental promises had been replaced by a papal absolutism which, like a feudal lordship, claimed its own jurisdictional liberties and privileges over the totality of Christian life through a sacramental system that spanned birth to death. Yet Luther does not replace one tyranny for another; his argument for a return to the biblical understanding of the sacraments is moderated by a consideration of traditions and external practices in relation to their effects on the individual conscience and faith.

This volume is excerpted from The Annotated Luther series, *Volume 3*. Each volume in the series contains new introductions, annotations, illustrations, and notes to help shed light on Luther's context and interpret his writings for today. The translations of Luther's writings include updates of Luther's Works, American Edition, or entirely new translations of Luther's German or Latin writings.

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