This book presents a contemporary, eyewitness account of the life of Martin Luther translated into English. Johannes Cochlaeus (1479–1552) was present in the great hall at the Diet of Worms on April 18, 1521 when Luther made his famous declaration before Emperor Charles V: ‘Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen’. Afterward, Cochlaeus sought Luther out, met him at his inn, and privately debated with him. Luther wrote of Cochlaeus, ‘may God long preserve this most pious man, born to guard and teach the Gospel of His church, together with His word, Amen’. However, the confrontation left Cochlaeus convinced that Luther was an impious and malevolent man. Over the next twenty-five years, Cochlaeus barely escaped the Peasant’s War with his life. He debated with Melanchthon and the reformers of Augsburg. It was Cochlaeus who conducted the authorities to the clandestine printing press in Cologne, where William Tyndale was preparing the first English translation of the New Testament (1525). For an eyewitness account of the Reformation—and the beginnings of the Catholic Counter-Reformation—no other historical document matches the first-hand experience of Cochlaeus. After Luther’s death, it was rumoured that demons seized the reformer on his death-bed and dragged him off to Hell. In response to these rumours, Luther’s friend and colleague Philip Melanchthon wrote and published a brief encomium of the reformer in 1548. Cochlaeus consequently completed and published his monumental life of Luther in 1549.

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An introduction to his life and work

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Chapter 4: The deeds and writings of Dr Martin Luther from the year of the Lord 1517 to the year 1546 related chronologically to all posterity by Johannes Cochlaeus

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