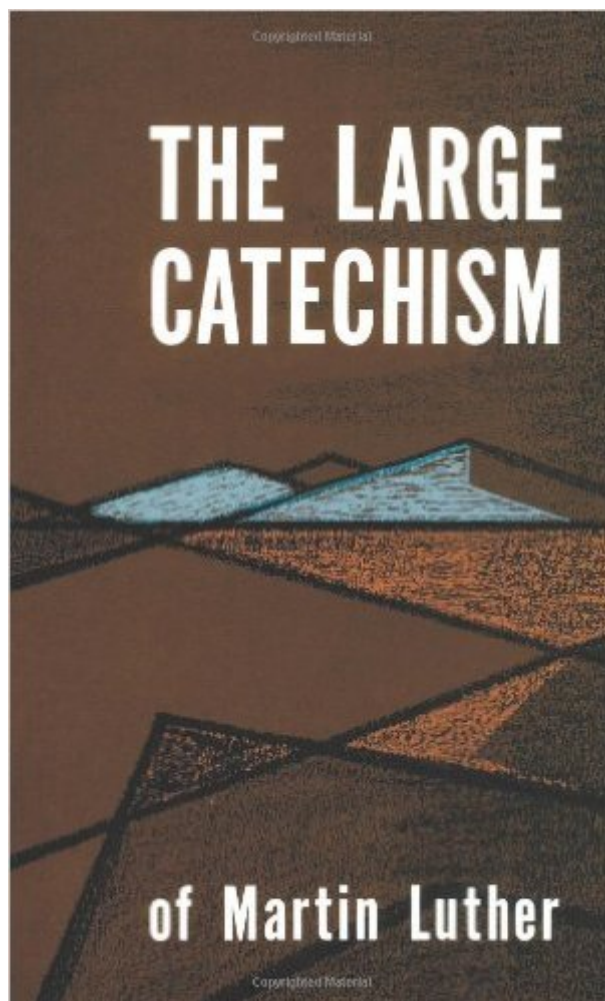


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The Large Catechism Of Martin Luther



Synopsis

By 1529, the year of publication of Luther's Large Catechism, parishioners took the Gospel for granted. Many had forgotten at what great peril the freedom of their faith had been won. In the Large Catechism Luther set out to inculcate the centrality of the Gospel that was largely neglected and whose freedom was frequently abused. Whether Luther is therefore dealing with the Ten Commandments or the Lord's Supper, the dynamic of the Word of God as Gospel provides the cutting edge for what he says. To obscure the Gospel is to lose everything; to illuminate it is to gain all it promises. But it is not a Gospel with a purely individualistic thrust. To risk all for the Gospel is to relate one's self to society and the Christian community. And it is this corporate dimension of the Gospel, involving him who believes all to serve all, which gives Luther's exposition of the basic ingredients of the Christian faith such significance and relevance. Therefore the Large Catechism is a primary source for an understanding of the Christian ethos in action in Reformation Christianity. The Gospel is particularized. The social situation comes alive in concrete terms in a language whose meaning is unmistakable and clear.

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Customer Reviews

This is one of those books of which all too many Lutherans have heard but that far too few have read. I myself must admit that although I was baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran Church, I had not read the Large Catechism until just recently. Upon finishing it, I asked myself why I had not done so years ago, as it would have saved me much trouble. The Large Catechism is Martin Luther's

summary of his own teachings. He wrote the catechism for one simple reason - to remind the infant Lutheran Church of the things for which they stood and to advise them as to how they should live and worship. His explanations are clear and straight-forward. He is remarkably blunt at times, not being a man fond of euphemism, in his admonition for a godly life against a worldly one. Yet at no time does he profess the necessity of leaving the world to follow God. It is his contention that one only need live by God's commandments and everything will work out in the end. It is this down to earth, common sense theology that made Luther, and from him the Protestant Reformation, so successful. Reading Luther, it is easy to see how people were drawn to his ideas. After centuries of clerical obscurantism, endless canonical laws and regulations, papal pronouncements, and a host of other arcana, a theology that can be summed up as "Love God, follow his commandments in your actions as well as in your hearts, observe the sacraments of baptism and communion, and seek comfort in the Word of God" must have been a breath of fresh air to the beleaguered people of Germany. Luther's commentary upon the commandments is both helpful and enlightening. He admonishes those who would think they have heard or thought all they need to think again.

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