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# Lutheran Confessions: A Harmony and Resource Book

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# BOOKS IN REVIEW

## *THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS, A HARMONY AND RESOURCE BOOK*

NEELAK S. TJERNAGEL, *Editor*  
Published by the Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod, 1979, 220 pp.

In connection with the commemoration in 1980 of the 400th anniversary of the Book of Concord, The Evangelical Lutheran Synod (commonly called "The Little Norwegian Synod"), with headquarters in Mankato, Minnesota, has issued this reference work on the Lutheran Confessions. The actual confessional material is quite drastically abridged. The assumption underlying this is that what is needed is not a new critical edition of the Confessions but rather a handy reference guide to what is already available.

Accordingly, the Confessions are arranged by doctrinal content under the headings of the Small Catechism. The intention of this arrangement is to make the Confessions more accessible in terms of the doctrinal material.

In this respect the book aspires to be something like the harmonies of the Gospel, although here the arrangement is not along chronological or story lines but is rather a sequence of theological categories. Four main headings have been used: I - Man and Sin; II - The Christian Creed; III - The Means of Grace; IV - Prayer. Under these headings 179 references are taken from the Book of Concord and arranged "in order of their difficulty". (p. vii). The material is drawn substantially from the Small Catechism, the Augsburg Confession and the Epitome of the Formula of Concord. The Apology and the Solid Declaration are substantially abridged because of their length. Also the material from the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope is largely omitted.

In recognition of the obvious shortcomings of such drastic abridgement, the editor acknowledges the scholarly superiority of Tappert's edition and the *Triglot Concordia* of 1921. In addition to the harmonization under theological categories, this book contains some additional interesting and useful material. There is, for instance, a very helpful set of notes on the citations from the Confessions. These citations are from scholarly works as well as from the Confessional documents. For anyone researching the Confessions on a particular subject, these will be a useful aid. A glossary of terms is provided. This has rather limited value since it is so short, but should be of interest to lay persons. There is also what is called an "analysis" of the Confessions. Actually it is not an analysis but a sort of theological outline from a reprintationist theological perspective. As such it has some use as a reference guide.

Next is a comprehensive outline of the Book of Concord and this, while a reprint from the Jacobs edition, is very useful. Perhaps the most valuable appendix in the whole book is the quite thorough bibliography of books and periodicals dealing with the Confessions. This latter is a fine resource for any student of the Confessions and will prove valuable for years to come. Unfortunately the editor has not included current or even older German or Scandinavian sources. This is a definite short-

coming in an otherwise very helpful bibliography, because a great deal of work has been going on in Europe on the Confessions. Also missing are references to articles being written by theologians in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Surely scholarship must transcend the linguistic imperialism of the English language.

Generally speaking, this book is a welcome addition to resource material on the Confessions. It does not really contribute anything new, but it does bring together much material in a helpful way.

The biggest single drawback is of course the severe abridging of the documents. Melancthon seems to have suffered most heavily here, since the Apology is drastically reduced and the Tractatus virtually ignored. This limits the scholarly value of the book. Serious students of the Confessions will continue to use Tappert and Triglot Concordia, and will await a more comprehensive bibliography. The principal value of this work will be as a handy reference guide for lay persons and pastors in a hurry.

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