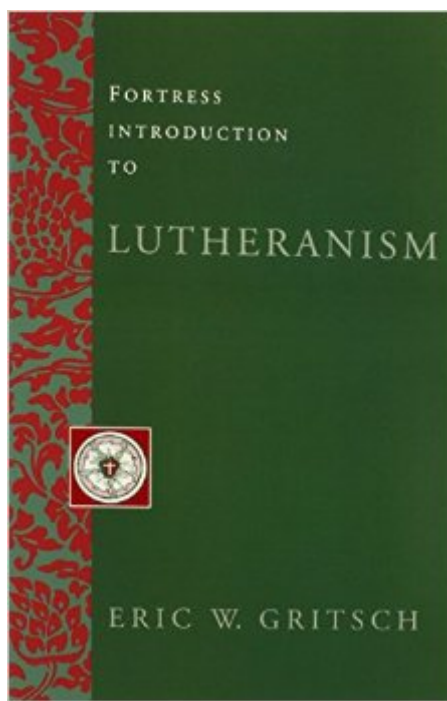


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Fortress Introduction To Lutheranism



Synopsis

This reference offers a concise, well-written overview of Lutheranism's history, from The Book of Concord to the present. Gritsch explores the sect, examining the basic struggle among Lutherans who consider themselves heirs to a reform movement and Lutherans who see themselves as members of a denomination. Numerous photos and illustrations accompany the text.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Although this introduction to Lutheranism is getting close to twenty years old, it remains current and very informative (its focus being primarily historical). At half the price of Gritsch's more recent work on the subject,Â A History of Lutheranism "Second Edition", it covers all the important bases. The first half of the book deals with the history of Lutheranism, beginning with the Reformation and follows its various strands in Europe and America. I found the discussions of the roots of pietism especially helpful. Sketches of key figures (Luther himself, Zinzendorf, and Muhlenberg to name a few) keep the discussion lively. The second half of the book concisely summarizes Lutheran thinking on various matters and helps illuminate the things that make Lutheranism distinct from other Christian bodies that likewise have their origins in the Reformation. Appendix A, An Introduction to the Lutheran Confessions, is worth the price of the book. The book has many pictures and a bibliography, but lacks an index.

Keep in mind that this is a very short book, only 158 pages. The primary text is about 145 pages,

that loses a lot of space to about 50 illustrations and pictures. There is also a good 12-page "A Guide to Further Reading". The author tries to cover a lot of material, but trying to cover nearly 500 years of detailed theology and history in such a short amount of space means much is left out and there is very little depth to any issue. Often things come across as just saying that someone lived in such a time and place and had a thought about something Lutheran. As an ecumenically-minded Eastern Orthodox Christian I enjoy learning about other Christian faith groups, esp. those that have an extensive history, world presence, comprehensive theology, and are liturgical. This means getting an understanding of some of the core Protestant groups, primarily Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, and Reformed. So when I saw this book on a discount table priced very inexpensively, I bought it. I'm not exactly sure at what grade level this work is intended, but it feels like it could be useful for high school juniors/seniors or for an introductory class to Protestant denominations for college freshmen. But this is really just a very general introduction. This is a 2-part book. The first is a general history of Lutheranism, with sections on the Old World, New World, Missionary activity, and worldwide Lutheranism ecumenical activities. The second is a rather general discussion about Lutheran theology in areas like justification, law vs. gospel, the two kingdoms, etc. From an Orthodox perspective, a big shortcoming is a complete lack of an overview of the current theology and practice of the 3 major historical strains of Lutheranism: Germany, Scandinavia (esp. Sweden), and the USA. The USA alone has at least 2 major differing parties: the liberal ELCA vs the conservative Missouri Synod, who seem to me to be almost 2 entirely different faith groups. Which group is more faithful to historical, confessional Lutheranism? This is ignored. Is there something similar in Germany or Sweden? Overall, I wish the author would've spent time discussing what traditional confessional Lutheranism and its proponents held versus what modern Lutherans hold today. This is needed in areas like the nature and meaning of the Eucharist, in particular, but also for the 3 Lutheran sacraments (Baptism, Communion, and Confession), in general, the role of Episcopacy (Scandinavia), the rise of female clergy, and ongoing moral issues (abortion, contraception, divorce/remarriage, non-marital co-habitation, sexual ethics, homosexual marriage, and openly accepting homosexual clergy). A key failing of this book is the lack of an index. So when you want to refer back to anything in it, you have to search the broad table of contents. Sadly, because this was published in 1994 there is no mention of the Roman Catholic-Lutheran agreement on justification that happened later that decade. Overall, this book attempts to do too much with too little. It doesn't appear to do justice to the complexities of the initial Lutheran theological positions nor the diversity in theology in today's various Lutheran bodies within a nation and between nations. But it does get one interested in learning more, so I guess from that perspective it is a success. It just means

you've eaten a happy meal and now want a real dinner!

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