Why the Catechism Endures

By Rev. Paul McCain, Publisher at Concordia Publishing House

Written in 1529, the “Small Catechism,” has stood the test of time for nearly 500 years, and each generation has used Luther’s core text and offered elaboration and further explanation in a question-and-answer format.

The reason the Catechism endures is because it is such a clear explanation of the Christian faith and lends itself well to further explanation and use as a key tool in the Church’s life and ministry and in the home of every single Christian. Proof of this is the fact of how many editions of it have been printed and how every generation of Lutheran Christians have crafted explanations that speak to the issues of their time.

The 1991 Edition

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During confirmation instruction, it has become necessary to offer an even more comprehensive foundation of the Christian faith than was possible with the 1991 edition. People also need help learning how to use The Small Catechism with Explanation as a life-long resource, not simply as a “textbook” to be used for a relatively brief period of time in a “class.”

During its 2013 convention, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod directed its Commission on Theology and Church Relations to prepare a new explanation with the concurrence of the President of the Synod and the support of Concordia Publishing House. The necessity for this new expanded and improved explanation was underlined by the Synod when it noted that such an effort was necessary due to “the many changes in the understanding of morals, and civil and natural law in both the church and society.”

The New 2017 Edition

This new Explanation offers expanded discussions of issues that are pressing upon the Church at this time and that require us all to be grounded firmly and surely in the Word of God as we respond to the dramatic changes in our culture. These include a wide range of issues, such as “hot button” topics like homosexuality, same-sex marriage, abortion, end-of-life issues, and artificial reproductive technology. There is additional biblical content and more question and answers. The best features of the new Explanation are its passionate focus on the comfort of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for sinners and its thorough grounding in the witness of the Holy Scriptures as it carefully provides faithful answers to a wide variety of questions.

And so, while each generation prepares new explanations of the Small Catechism, the Catechism itself continues to endure for now nearly 500 years because of its beautiful articulation of the Word of God, which as the Lord promises, endures forever.

Learn more at cph.org/catechism2017
What’s new in the Explanation?

The Central Thought section guides you through simple Bible study and reflection questions

A Closer Reading helps you dig deeper into the wording of Luther’s Small Catechism

Connections and Applications relates Scripture to important issues in today’s culture

Psalms, hymns, and prayers combines Scripture and catechism study with worship for devotional use

Bible narrative references, expanded notes, and quotes from Martin Luther and the Confessions delve into God’s Word

Expanded appendix provides helpful articles, reference material, and a glossary to aid in personal study

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