

everyone commends the rich documentary evidence of the book (concerning both the primary and the secondary sources), stating that it is written in a nice “elegant stile” (Nathan Rein), that “the complex subject he deals with is skillfully elaborated [...] along with abundance of fascinating details” (Scott Dixon), and that, it actually represents an “obligatory reading for all future scholars that will engage with the period of the second generation of reformers” (Luka Ilić).

Certainly one can state a few of the objections critics lay against the author. However, it should not be overlooked the enormous effort that the author has invested in collecting and processing scientifically the vast number of primary, as well as relevant secondary sources in order to produce the first exhaustive biography of Flacius on English language. Although his text is sometimes difficult to understand and follow (therefore, commendation to the Croatian translator for the excellent job!), and it contains incomplete notes (in terms of not knowing the origin of a certain source) or they are missing, it must be acknowledged that Olson has written a very interesting, richly illustrated and excellently documented biography that meet the conditions of the academic (and the aesthetic) criteria. Since the main hero of the book is very controversial historic figure, crucial for the survival of the Lutheranism, a certain proportion of subjectivity and sympathy toward the author (a Lutheran himself) must be justified, given the fact that it is the very reason why this book attained an additional religiously inspiring dimension for the Christian readers as successors of the Reformation.

Although this book is not a first biography of Flacius (available) on Croatian language, it has filled a tremendous gap in the contemporary biographic presentation of his life and work. In the anticipation of its second volume, we congratulate the author on the accomplished success, and we heartily recommend this engaging and stimulating work to the audience.

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Martin Luther

The Large and Small Catechisms

Faculty of Theology, “Matija Vlačić Ilirik”, Zagreb, 2010, pg. 113

Martin Luther’s The Small Catechism is closely connected with Croatian Protestant publishing since the first edition printed by Urach Publishers in 1561 was *Catechism: One little book in which very necessary and prudent lessons and articles about the true Christian faith can be found, with short explanations written for young people and common folk. Also a sermon on the virtues and fruits of the Christian faith / by Stipan Istrianiin with the help of good Croats, interpreted for*

the first time (*Katehismus. Edna malahna kniga u koi esu vele potribni i prudni nauki i artikuli prave krstianske vere, s kratkim istomačenem za mlade i priproste ljudi. I edna predika od kriposti i ploda prave karstianske vere, / krozi Stipana Istrijanina s pomoću dobrih Hrvatov sad naiprvo istomačena*). This was originally written in old Croatian and taken from Luther's *The Small Catechism*. There were several editions in all three alphabets (Glagolitic, Latin, and Croatian Cyrillic). Alojz Jembrih edited the most contemporary reprint on two occasions in Pazin, Croatia; the first edition came out in 1991, working from the version printed in 1564, and was reissued in 1994 based on the original printed in 1561.

Centuries passed before Luther again appeared in a Croatian publication in 1902: *The Evangelical Catechism of the Christian Faith According to the Small Catechism by Martin Luther (Evangelički katehizam kršćanske vjere po malom katehizmu dra. Martina Luthera)*, translated by I. Marbach and P. Čobrd / with quotations taken from the Croatian Bible compiled by Ivan B. Zoch (reissued in Zagreb in 1943, and in Slavonski Brod in 1993). It should be noted that the forgotten Slovak, John B. Zoch, was an accomplished teacher and lexicographer, and Croatian loyalist. The next edition was *Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism / a Christian Songbook and Brief History of Christ's Church (Dr. Martina Luthera Mali katekizam/kršćanska pjesmarica i kratka povjest Crkve Kristove)* which was edited by Rudolf Sablić, an evangelical pastor from Vinkovci (first edition unknown, second edition printed in Vinkovci in 1925, printed again in Zagreb in 1942). Recently, the Croatian Evangelical Church issued *Catechism* (Slavonski Brod, 2003), based on Luther's *The Small Catechism* and *The Large Catechism* (Vinkovci, 2008), and translated from the English and Slovakian versions.

Luther's catechisms were originally published in 1529 at a time when an independent ecclesial organization of Protestants who followed Luther's reforms had already been established. *The Large Catechism* was primarily intended for pastors, while *The Small Catechism* was for beginners in the faith, for young people and common folk, as it says in the Urach edition. It can be freely said that Luther was the founder of the printed catechism as it is known today, easily recognized by the question-answer principle, a format which would come to be accepted by the Calvinists (for example, *The Heidelberg Catechism*), as well as by the Catholics (at the Trident assembly for priests). Unfortunately, in contemporary Croatian language, the term catechism is primarily associated with Sunday school textbooks which, strictly speaking, do not follow the format of the classical catechism even if their task is to instruct, primarily children and young people.

In both of his catechisms, Luther discusses and explains the foundations of the Christian faith to the readers, at least as he sees it. *The Large Catechism* consists of Luther's preface, introduction, the first part (in which he analyzes the Ten Commandments), the second part (which explains the Apostles' Creed, which

is divided into three chapters, though it was traditionally divided into twelve chapters), the third part (about the *Lord's prayer*, and in which he interprets the seven petitions), and finally, Luther gives his observations regarding the sacraments of baptism, the altar and confession. *The Small Catechism* covers the same themes, but in a more concise manner, and without the analysis of the sacrament of confession. These translations of the catechisms were based off of the Weimar edition of Luther's works, a project which began in 1883 and ended only in 2009. It should be mentioned that the translator, Marina Miladinov, captured the simplicity of Luther's language. That which continues to attract readers to Luther's works is the simplicity with which he expresses his theology without being banal. Furthermore, Luther is consistent in his style, so, for example, he notes that, "to bear false witness is nothing more than to speak gibberish" (*The Large Catechism*, p. 46). These types of statements give life to the text, and Luther would not be true to himself were he to write otherwise. Luther nicely combines his experience with his theological theory, two things that are generally at odds with each other. Though he lived in a monastery for a time, before and after that experience, he had become well acquainted with people, especially Germans, and he loved them, and sometimes even idealized them. He writes, "We Germans have long since called God by name (lovelier and better than any other language) which was deduced from good words" (*The Large Catechism*, p. 21). Although it has been almost half a millennium since Luther addressed his German audience, the text can still be read today without any major problems. Unfortunately, history reveals that twentieth century Germans forgot *The Small Catechism*, for had they read it, they would not so easily have fallen into the evil of Nazism.

The Croatian professional and reading publics have a chance to encounter the thought of Martin Luther and the spirit of the German Reformation under his leadership in a practical way. The catechisms point to the God of the heavens while also providing an understandable picture of a good life on earth in which it is expected that a person will be humble and will help other people. Luther expects Christians to live a good and godly life, but godly in an active way. Thus it seems good to finish with Luther's explanation of the seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not steal" as taken from *The Small Catechism*. He writes, "We must both fear and love God, therefore, we do not take the money or property of our neighbor, nor do we make claims using false goods or trade, rather we help our neighbor to improve and protect his property and feed himself" (p. 102).

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