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The Accidental Lutheran: The Journey from Heidelberg to Wittenberg

by Nancy A. Almodovar

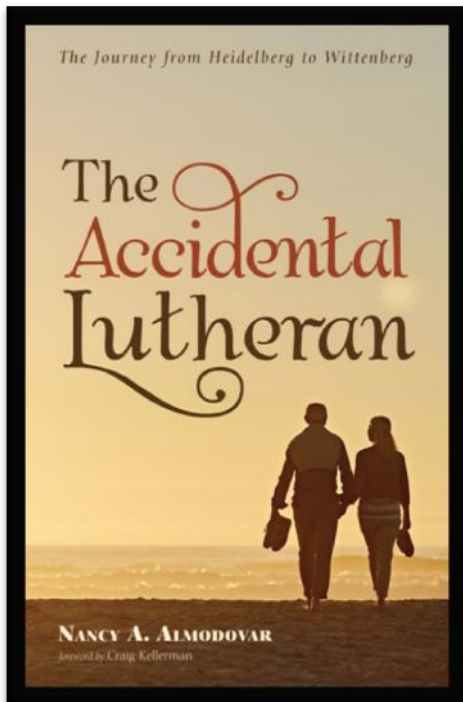
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New Title from Nancy A. Almodovar

The Accidental Lutheran: The Journey from Heidelberg to Wittenberg



After years in the Reformed church, Nancy began to hunger for something more. Then, snowmageddon hit in Idaho and Nancy and her husband Bobby were looking for a church they could attend closer to home. God providentially directed them to Faith Lutheran, where they soon found that their beliefs regarding the Lord's Supper aligned more closely and realized that baptism really does save (1Peter 3:19-21). This is their journey out of the Dutch Reformed understanding and into Lutheran theology.

Nancy A. Almodovar grew up in a Pentecostal home and eventually became a Reformed Christian. However, finding Reformed/Calvinism read into the Word of God things not there, Nancy and her husband converted to Lutheranism as a truer expression of the Scriptures. During this time, Nancy earned a doctorate in philosophy and apologetics (Trinity), a masters of theology (Trinity) and a masters of Christian studies (Luther Rice Seminary), and is currently working on a Fellowship at the International Academy of Apologetics and Human Rights (Strasbourg). She is also a Fellow at the university where she teaches as a professor of world religions. She is the author of over twenty books, one on the problem of evil (*Faith Seeking Consolation*) and one on her journey out of charismatic theology (*A Modern 95: Questions for Today's Evangelicals*).



What made you write this book?

This book was started by requests from several of my friends, who are Reformed, as they began to see on my social media that my husband, Bobby, and I converted to Lutheranism. They wanted to understand what the differences were.

What is the book about?

My husband and I began as Pentecostal/Charismatics but soon came to learn about what is known as The Doctrines of Grace. This book is about our further reforming and converting to Lutheranism, or as is often said, The Church of the Augsburg Confession. It focuses on the major differences the Lutheran Church has with other Christian denominations and evangelicalism: Baptism and The Lord's Supper.

What are the reasons you converted from Reformed to Lutheran?

As the title states, we are "Accidental Lutherans". I wanted to use "providential" as that is a stronger term understood by many reformed Christians, but Accidental fit better. Our journey into Lutheranism began years ago with "undercurrents" (see chapter 2) of its teachings flowing through us but culminated in joining a Lutheran church (LCMS) because of a harsh winter in our small town. We had not intended to convert but once we began to see that the Lutheran understanding of Scripture did not need to figure God out, letting the tensions in Scripture stand, we found we were much more in agreement with them than our previous theological ties.

Who is this book for?

While this book began as an explanation to our friends as to why we converted, it soon became a source of teaching for those friends outside of Lutheranism. Many of the women I have worked with and counseled often find that in the church they attend there is no assurance and often no comfort in knowing whether or not Christ died for them. In the Calvinist stream of the Reformation, election is a major part of their theology. In that system you have to look inside yourself to see if there is any evidence of salvation. The same with evangelicals; "did you repent enough" is often the question. In Scripture, though, we know that Christ died for the world. This book holds to the Lutheran understanding that God said what He means and means what He says.

Why should they read it?

I would hope that this book finds a place in every home, especially in those of my friends and family, because it ends on the note of "Comfort". Comfort was the basis of my doctoral thesis when I worked through the Problem of Pain, but under the Reformed/Calvinist system, it never brought sure comfort as the Scriptures, now plainly read and taught by Lutheranism, teach.

What have you learned as you wrote this book?

The lessons were broad and yet succinct. In my research I found that real comfort is in the fact that Salvation in Christ Jesus is “Simple and True”. I joyfully worked through the teachings of baptism and found true assurance. Under pentecostalism baptism was something I did as a public demonstration of inward faith. Under Reformed/Calvinism, baptism was just a demarcation or sign that I might belong to Christ. Whereas, in the Scriptures we find that Baptism saves and through the Word and Water we are washed, regenerated and our sins forgiven.

What are the ways that we can connect with you?

I can be contacted either by phone, at 208-587-5097, email at drnancyalmodovar@gmail.com or on via social media at:

Twitter: @BlogLutheran

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NancyAAlmodovar>

I am always available to speak with women at your church or organization and conferences about our journey.

Here lies the true problem of evil: my sins stared back angrily accusing me while Satan's darts of doubt found their place within poisoning any assurance I had. Panic led to spiritual depression and questions about my eternal state.

The admonitions from pastors and friends alike were to look within to see if you love the Law, if you are following God's commands and producing fruit worthy of repentance. Were you trusting in the work of Christ or not? Did you truly repent and believe or not? However, this did not solve my struggle but only exacerbated it a hundred-fold. Being in a position of influence amongst women coming out of more Arminian and evangelical churches left me feeling I was fooling both myself and them. When they doubted I would tell them to look to Christ. Yet, in my own struggles the advice from ministers to me was to look within. Those who came out of Arminian churches were taught to focus within. They were to gain their assurance from following rules and regulations such as "Did you have your morning devotions today?" "Are you producing the fruits of the spirit?" "Am I doing enough to prove I'm a true believer?" "Are all three parts of true faith evidenced in my life?" So my advice to them was to look to Jesus alone while the advice to me, and also from others, was to look within. The women I worked with, who were coming out of works-based churches and what Luther would call Enthusiasts, were asking the same questions I was. How can I be sure I was saved? Did I have true faith? Was I deluded into thinking I was going to heaven? Under this Calvinist system I was crushed.

I often wondered why I had not taken my own advice to others. The reason? How could I know I was among the elect of God when all I saw was wretched within? If Christ only died for some, how could I know I was among that small group and not fooling myself into thinking I was? Yet here, in Scripture I found that Christ is the propitiation for the world, that God so loved the world, that Jesus died for sinners of which I am definitely one. Struggling with assurance the Reformed/Calvinistic view held out no true hope because their source of assurance was within this sinner; i.e. look to your fruit, etc. Instead, in Lutheranism I found the Scriptures plainly read and knowing I am a sinner and in this world I would come to find that Jesus' death covered me completely simply because I am a sinner in this world and Jesus died for the world full of sinners.

Praise for *The Accidental Lutheran: The Journey from Heidelberg to Wittenberg*

“Dr. Nancy Almodovar’s *The Accidental Lutheran* is a must read for anyone seeking the clear, historical, orthodox, and evangelical gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Nancy makes contested doctrines within the Protestant world easily accessible by incorporating her personal journey as the backdrop, citing original sources (e.g., Reformed and Lutheran Confessional documents), and, finally, judging both positions against the final authority: Holy Scripture. A great read, you won’t be disappointed!”

—Jeff Damec, Christian, husband, father, and marketing executive

