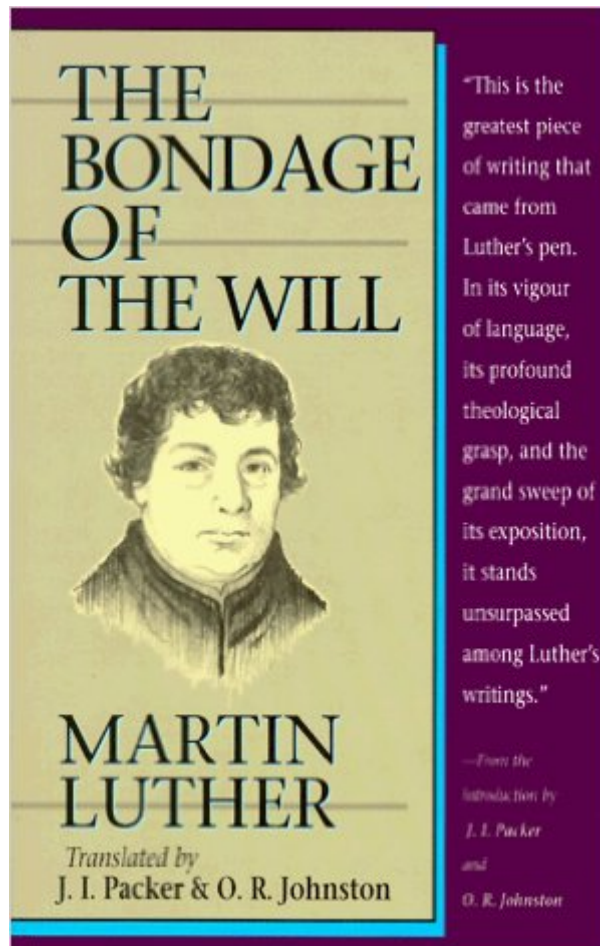


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The Bondage Of The Will



Synopsis

A classic reference, fundamental to an understanding of the original doctrines of the Reformation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

WARNING - Do not buy Sovereign Grace Publishers Henry Cole translation of Bondage of the Will. After slogging through 95 pages of its barely understandable jargon, I asked my dad, Pastor Gerry Mohr (LCMS) if Luther's reputation for intellect was, perhaps, a bit unearned. He replied, "Cole whipped out his translation effort in three months or less. Luther's original is a direct reply to a work by Erasmus directly aimed against what Luther was teaching. Cole does not take the time to understand either Erasmus or Luther; he gets a quick job finished. Good translation is not generally done like that. And Cole does not convey well the arguments and language of Luther in English." Read the translation by Packer & Johnston. These translators say, "This edition was originally to have been a revision of Cole's. It became evident, however, that the tortuous style of this translation so obscured the meaning and force of the original that it was better to attempt a completely new translation, which might more adequately convey the impetuous flow and dialectical strength of Luther's powerful Latin." Packer & Johnston (who are Reformed, not Lutheran) say in their introduction, "This, then, is the Luther whom we meet in *The Bondage of the Will*: a great-hearted Christian warrior; a thorough exegete (he wins the battle of the texts hands down); a profound systematic theologian; and above all, an unflinching defender of the grace of a sovereign God."

Some will see this book as nothing more than Martin Luther's combative apologetic against the doctrine of free will and works salvation. But this is precisely why this book ranks among the best ever written because it passionately, logically, and decisively deals with the error concerning free will and the error adding any human merit to salvation. The subject matter according to Luther is "the hinge on which the whole gospel turns". Luther himself said that this was perhaps his greatest work. I found my own logical attempts to resolve the free will controversy pinned to the mat by Luther's irrefutable logic and accurate use of the scriptures. This book should be a standard text in bible schools and seminaries. This book left me with the impression that the modern church has robbed God of His glory by insisting that a believer merits salvation because he/she was smart enough or had will enough to make a decision for Christ. In some ways it makes me realize that we have abandoned the true gospel in favor of a man-centered, warm-fuzzy, gospel. Read this book!!!!

There are few books which written over 400 years ago are still applicable today; Martin Luther's masterpiece, *The Bondage of the Will*, is one of those books. Anyone desiring to know more about the root of dissent between Luther and the Catholic Church must read this book. In his treatise Luther systematically demolishes Erasmus' arguments in favor of free-will. Luther brilliantly illustrates why the will is in total and complete bondage and enslavement to sin, and why free-will is a completely meaningless term. Luther argues that the only thing the will is free to do is to sin and rebel against God. Luther shows that salvation is totally dependent on the grace of God and His sovereign Will. To say that even a small part of the human will can prepare itself to receive God's grace is an utterly ludicrous sentiment. Erasmus believes that a human being by a very small effort can earn God's grace. Luther totally destroys this view and shows that to espouse such a view makes one worse than the Pelagians, who held that it took numerous great works to earn God's grace. This book is as applicable today as it was when Luther first wrote this book. When so many Protestant Churches hold to a soteriological view more akin to that of Erasmus, it is absolutely vital that the truth of the Reformation be brought back into the spotlight. Read this book to gain a greater understanding of the major area of disagreement among the Reformers and the Catholic Church of the time, and also to understand that our salvation is not predicated on any meritorious work that we accomplish, but simply on the grace of God.

I believe that anyone who considers themselves a Protestant or is a member of any Protestant church that developed from the Reformation should read this book. This book is known as "the

Reformation Manifesto" because it addresses what Luther considered the main disagreement that people of his belief had with the Catholic Church. He called the papacy, indulgences, and other issues such as those, mere trifles. When you read this book, and understand how critical the debate on "free will" vs. total grace is, then you understand why Luther could then say that the other, more dramatic, better-known issues that Reformers took with the Catholic Church were merely "trifles". Those disputes simply stem from the difference in belief that true Protestants have with the Catholic Church when it comes to works and salvation. I only wish our society wasn't so scared to speak as openly and passionately as Luther does here about this issue (and many others) among Christian denominations. Every Protestant should read this book to know what they are truly protesting. And obviously I encourage any other believer or non-believer to read it as well.

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