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Holm and Koefoeds' "Lutheran theology and the shaping of society: the Danish monarchy as example" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Holm, B. & Koefoed, N., (Eds.). (2018). *Lutheran theology and the shaping of society: the Danish monarchy as example*. Gottingen, DE: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 365 pp. \$100.00. ISBN 9783525551240

One approach to examining a theology is to consider its elements and concepts, evaluating them in terms of such aspects as biblical fidelity, coherence, consistency, orthodoxy, and contemporary relevance. Another approach is to consider a theology in terms of its impact on society and culture. A classic example of this method is Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. This type of analysis requires research not only on theology, but also in such areas as sociology, history, and perhaps economics.

In the Reformation period, Lutheran theology spread to several European countries, including Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland. An interesting and helpful research question might relate to the impact this theology played in shaping the society, culture, and mindset of these countries. Yet perhaps it would be better to narrow the focus on just one of these countries, using it as an example. This book takes this approach, focusing on Denmark during the period from the Reformation to 1800. It addresses different aspects of society in relation to Luther's thought and Lutheran theology as it developed in the period after his death. The societal developments took place in correspondence with the theological developments.

The different scholars who provided the chapters are members of a research group that developed into a broader network called LUMEN (Lutheran Mentality and the North Nordic). This network is interdisciplinary, and therefore the scholars involved approach this subject from different perspectives. The book is enhanced by the diverse perspectives, with scholars whose expertise is in such areas as systematic theology, practical theology, church history, political sociology, classical studies, and art history.

Some of the sixteen chapters focus on the societal influence deriving from different elements of Luther's theology, including his ideas about indulgences, pneumatology,

honor, marriage, society, the two kingdoms, the three estates, and natural law. Other chapters address specific aspects of Danish Lutheran culture, such as the nobility, the household, academics, and marital regulations.

This book shows Lutheran theology have been highly influential in societal life. One probably could assume that the same to be true for other European countries associated with Lutheranism. Academic libraries in general, and particularly ones associated with Christian universities and seminaries, will find this book to be a good addition to their collections.

Reviewer

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