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[Book review of:] Reformation in Norddeutschland. Gottvertrauen zwischen Fürstenherrschaft und Teufelsfurcht, by Arnd Reitemeier

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Arnd Reitemeier, *Reformation in Norddeutschland. Gottvertrauen zwischen Fürstentherrschaft und Teufelsfurcht*. Wallstein Verlag, Göttingen 2017, 438 S. ISBN 9783835319684. € 61.60.

Which changes in religion had occurred at the end of the sixteenth century in Northern Germany, which were affecting individuals significantly? This issue is addressed in an overview of the Reformation in the area between the southern Harz Mountains on the eastern side and the North Sea, Baltic, and the rivers Weser and Elbe on the western side. Although Luther never preached in this area and the process of religious change occurred considerably later than in other areas, the region has been largely Protestant—albeit in different variants—which is still noticeable today.

The author, historian Arnd Reitemeier, is well suited to deal with the question of religious change in this area as he is a specialist on the history of Lower Saxony and has worked particularly on the interplay of religion, politics, and economics in late medieval times. This provides him with the expertise to relate the religious developments in the sixteenth century to those in the Late Middle Ages. Taking this approach he attempts to trace both continuities and changes. This is fully in line with the current state of the art of Reformation historiography. Reitemeier utilises categories like *Verstärkung* (reinforcement, p. 354) and *Beschleunigung* (acceleration, pp. 10, 354, 364) of developments that had begun earlier, thus following the work of Berndt Hamm, although he is not expressly referred to. The author concludes that society, culture, and politics in Northern Germany changed in many respects, but that continuities prevailed, although the change was perceived by contemporary people as *fundamental und als beschleunigt* (essential and accelerated, p. 364).

In my opinion Reitemeier's book provides an excellent model for a territorial Reformation history.

Firstly, in its introduction and conclusion the book offers a conceptualization of issues like 'one Reformation' or 'several Reformations.' Reitemeier opts for the latter given the variation from one territory to the other and the dynamics that the process of religious change itself induced. On the one hand, an obvious factor was the interplay between the secular authorities (the princes), the local clergymen, and the local congregation: to what extent was the theological concept of the priesthood of all believers realized? On the other hand, the interpretation of the implementation of new theological norms is rather complicated: was this only a top-down process or also bottom-up?

Secondly, Reitemeier's study reflects the state of the art of research not only in regard to the Late Middle Ages and the Reformation, but it also combines a broad range of approaches: the history of theology, politics, social life, and

culture. The publication starts with an overview of radical changes regarding climate, demographics, and government during the sixteenth century before discussing piety, criticism, and reform. This is followed by chapters on the dissemination of Luther's doctrines, on church orders—most of them designed by Johannes Bugenhagen or marked by his principles—, the instrumentalisation of Reformations by princes, confessionalisation and the emergence of religious demarcation and plurality, on education and well-fare, on the new clergy, on the implementation of the new norms directed by the secular authorities, and on social and cultural changes. In addition, the book discusses little researched topics like the relation between the gentry and Lutheranism, the second generation of Reformers, and the book market.

Thirdly, Reitemeier thoroughly analyses the specifics of the 'Reformations' in Northern Germany in his conclusion: the rise of responsibility and power of the princes, who successfully preserved peace in the area in the second half of the century; a slow penetration with Lutheran clergymen because of political fragmentation and, finally, a creeping replacement of Lower German by High German.

Almost every chapter starts with a contemporary quote, which gives Reitemeier's book a lot of vividness. Both the analysis and the synthesis are very thorough. Reitemeier's book can be characterised as mature work in every respect. Only the title is misleading: apart from a few exceptions the publication does not deal with areas that belong to modern Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, but focuses almost exclusively on Lower Saxony and Bremen.

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