

LUTHERANS IN AMERICA: A NEW HISTORY, by Mark Granquist. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015. Pp. 388. \$60.00 (paper).

Many pastors do not like history. The work of a pastor seems never ending, and myriad responsibilities leave little time for reading beyond that required for weekly preaching, especially on a topic that seems dull and detached from the daily practice of ministry. But Mark Granquist's updated history of Lutheranism in the United States is worthy of a read by even the most reluctant students of history. Written in an engaging style that situates American Lutheranism in the broader context of American religion and life in general, Granquist succeeds in touching on a variety of issues that will be helpful for pastors as they reflect on their ministries today.

For example, many pastors, especially younger ones, experience a disconnect between their own piety and that of parishioners they serve, especially related to the practice of the Lord's Supper. Granquist points out throughout his narrative the changing nature of sacramental practice in Lutheran congregations from the late seventeenth century to the present, providing readers with a foundation for further exploration of this topic. Granquist also touches on the reality of revivalism among Lutherans in the last two centuries and its enduring effects on congregational piety, an awareness of which would have been helpful in the early years of my own pastoral ministry. Perhaps even more relevant to the current practice of ministry, Granquist discusses the role that hymnals have played in American Lutheran history, especially highlighting the process and controversies leading up to the publication of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* of 1978, which continue to impact congregational life to this day. Clearly, history is not irrelevant.

These are simply provided as a few examples among many that pastors can use to reflect on and enhance their ministries. Throughout his work, Granquist carefully

blends discussion of American Lutheran history with reflection on changes in American life more generally, highlighting how changes in society, political and economic, have impacted American Lutheranism. He is also careful to discuss the Lutheran experience in America "from below," focusing not only on institutional history and theology, but also on how Lutheranism was lived out in America among the laity. In addition, he also devotes a fair amount of space to discussion of women and ethnic minorities among Lutherans, which is lacking in previous histories.

Notably, there is a different tone in Granquist's history than is found in earlier histories by E. Clifford Nelson and Abdel Ross Wentz. Wentz and Nelson, living in a time when American Lutheran influence had reached its zenith, considered merger among American Lutherans desirable if not inevitable. In light of the controversies and schisms that have occurred since then, Granquist's history is a more sober appraisal, while avoiding outright pessimism. Younger pastors who cannot remember a time before the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 1988 will find the last two chapters of Granquist's book especially informative.

Because of the vast amount of information that Granquist covers in 388 pages, his work understandably avoids extraneous detail and at times leaves the reader longing for more specific discussion. But this is an invitation for students to undertake their own research of these topics. Granquist's new history is an excellent introduction to a field that receives little attention among historians. One must also note that because of space limitations, while not ignoring the presence of smaller Lutheran bodies, Granquist's work is focused mostly on the ELCA, its predecessor bodies, and the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod.

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