

✓ *A History of Lutheranism*, Second Edition. By Eric W. Gritsch.  
(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010, Pp. xvi, 351. \$35.00.)

It is no small task to write the history of a five-hundred-year-old religious tradition. Eric W. Gritsch offers a comprehensive introduction to this historical and contemporary global movement in *A History of Lutheranism*. His careful and wide-ranging scholarship is welcome. Likewise welcome is the accessible style of Gritsch's presentation, appealing to those with scholarly concerns, as well as some whose interest may be more casual. Illustrations of major figures and events bring the author's vibrant prose even more life.

Gritsch's presentation is particularly strong in the early chapters of the book, in which he focuses on Luther's theological insights and his

complex relationships with Frederick of Saxony, Philip Melancthon, Pope Leo X, and the Emperor Charles V. Gritsch is likewise strong in describing the development of early doctrine. Later chapters devote attention to the spread of Lutheranism throughout Europe and especially into the Scandinavian countries, Lutheran interaction with the reformed movements, seventeenth-century confessional identity, eighteenth-century pietistic developments, missionary efforts, and the rise of ecumenism. A final chronology provides significant dates in Lutheranism juxtaposed with events in world history.

Gritsch notes that his intention is not to focus on histories of individual churches (xiii). This is likely the only manageable approach to the study of a diverse global communion in a single volume. However, the result is that his treatment of developments in any particular country can seem cursory, especially after the eighteenth century when Lutheranism expanded beyond Northern Europe. For example, Gritsch's treatment of the spread of Lutheranism to Africa and Asia through missionary efforts is welcome; however, one might wish that more detail about the character of the churches in these areas was provided. As it is, he provides helpful membership figures and a few highlights, but little description.

Careful readers, especially those concerned with Anglican-Lutheran relationships, will notice some errors in Gritsch's facts. In describing nineteenth century revival movements, he writes about the Oxford Movement and Anglo-Catholicism, offered as a parallel to various Lutheran renewal developments. However, he provides an odd date for the Oxford Movement's establishment (1860) and does not seem to understand the nuances of its arguments *vis-à-vis* Roman Catholicism (186-87). He should be forgiven, given that his purpose is not a history of Anglican thought. There are likewise minor errors in his description of late twentieth-century Lutheran-Anglican ecumenical developments (245-47). Despite slight factual concern, Gritsch's overall point is made: there have been significant strides in ecumenical understanding through the establishment of full communion relationships.

*A History of Lutheranism* provides the first definitive presentation of global Lutheranism. It is a major accomplishment and would make a welcome addition to any library as both a handy reference guide and a compellingly written history of an important international communion that has shaped the Christian religion profoundly.