

Ambrogio Catarino Politi, and Iacopo Nacchianti. He includes their writings in original Latin and, side-by-side, modern English translations. De Boer also provides a previously unknown draft of the Tridentine decree that he compares with the final version.

I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in the early modern image debate. De Boer enriches our understanding of the heterogeneous opinions and intense discussions among leading Catholic theologians before, during, and after 1563.

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***Envisioning the Christian Society: Niels Hemmingsen (1513–1600) and the Ordering of Sixteenth-Century Denmark.* By Mattias Skat Sommer. Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation 116. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020. xvi + 234 pp. € 89.00cloth.**

Few polities in early modern Europe have evaded the scrutiny of historians as the kingdom of Denmark has. In its “age of greatness,” namely the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the conglomerate dynastic state ruled by the Oldenburg kings was massive, embracing Denmark itself, the subject kingdom of Norway, Norway’s vassal-state Iceland, the Færo Islands, the Scanian provinces of southern Sweden, and the Duchies of Slesvig and Holstein. Thanks to its commanding position over the narrow waters connecting the North and Baltic Seas, Denmark wielded power and influence all out of proportion to its small population and meager resource base. After King Christian III (r. 1534–1559) imposed the Lutheran faith on his patrimony by force in 1536, he and his successors naturally emerged as leaders among the Protestant states of northern Europe. Its Protestant identity, as well as its intimate ties to the Continent and especially the German lands, brought Denmark into the European cultural mainstream, as evidenced by the stature of Danish (and Norwegian)-born intellectuals and scholars during Denmark’s late sixteenth-century “Renaissance.”

In his admirably concise book, *Envisioning the Christian Society: Niels Hemmingsen (1513–1600) and the Ordering of Sixteenth-Century Denmark*, historian Mattias Skat Sommer examines the work and influence of one of those scholars, the theologian Niels Hemmingsen. Hemmingsen was the most prominent Lutheran divine in the Danish monarchy at the end of the Reformation century. Educated at Wittenberg and a disciple of Philip Melancthon, Hemmingsen joined the faculty of the University of Copenhagen and rose to prominence in the theological faculty in the 1550s. As professor of theology, he was counted among the *høj lærde* (the “Highly Learned Men”), the senior doctrinal authorities in the kingdom; for much of his career, Hemmingsen served informally as principal ecclesiastical advisor to King Frederik II (r. 1559–1588). Yet Hemmingsen’s fame was not confined to Denmark. The pan-Protestant appeal of much of his written work assured him of a broad international audience and printings abroad. When the newly married James VI of Scotland visited his Danish in-laws in 1589–1590, he went out of his way to meet with Hemmingsen,

even though the aging Dane had by that point fallen from royal favor and had lost his professorship. In his own day, Hemmingsen was better known than his contemporary, the astronomer and polymath Tyge (Tycho) Brahe. But while Brahe's fame has grown over the intervening centuries, Hemmingsen's has not.

As Sommer demonstrates, Niels Hemmingsen's life and work are key to any understanding of Denmark in the immediate aftermath of the Reformation settlement. *Envisioning the Christian Society* is not precisely a biography; those looking for a more conventional narrative account of Hemmingsen's life should turn to Martin Schwarz Lausten's *Niels Hemmingsen—storhed og fald* (Copenhagen: Forlaget Anis, 2013). Sommer does provide a very serviceable *précis* of Hemmingsen's life—likely the best available in English—but his intended focus is both narrower and more expansive: on Hemmingsen's theology, to be sure, but more importantly on the practical implications of that theology for life, law, and society in the kingdom of Denmark.

To accomplish this, Sommer dissects Hemmingsen's considerable literary output, all of it: not just the major works, such as his controversial theological treatise *Syntagma Institutionum Christianarum* (1574), but also his more routine writings, including printed sermons, postils, and exegetical commentaries. As Sommer demonstrates, Hemmingsen's interests were broad, and he expounded on a wide variety of themes: the role of the pastor in everyday life and within the political hierarchy, especially in relation to secular authority; what it means to lead a Christian life; the nature of secular governance; witchcraft, marriage, the ethics of usury.

One of the more important contributions of Sommer's book is its emphasis on Hemmingsen's remarkable independence of thought. Though a product of Wittenberg and heavily influenced by Melancthon, Hemmingsen did not simply echo the German theologians. In matters of theology, practical or abstract, he was very much his own man, as evidenced by his evolving thoughts on the practice of usury and his approach to Luther's teaching on the Three Estates. Above all, Sommer argues, Hemmingsen was *Danish*, always mindful of the needs and circumstances of his homeland and his sovereign. As an irenicist, Hemmingsen sought unity among the non-Roman confessions. His openness to other theologies, especially Calvinist, would paint him as a crypto-Calvinist and eventually end his career, but it left a distinct impression on the evolution of the state church in Denmark. While he saw the role of the pastor as a pivotal one, actively involved in combatting sin among his parishioners, Hemmingsen also viewed the clergy as the loyal servant of a pious king. Indeed, Hemmingsen's inclinations meshed well with those of his master, King Frederik II, who actively sought to fashion a grand Protestant alliance to oppose what he saw as the dangerous militancy of post-Tridentine Catholicism.

Hemmingsen's independence did have its limits. His opposition to the Book of Concord set him at odds with powerful men in the Germanies, notably Elector August of Saxony, Frederik II's brother-in-law, and it was pressure from August that eventually (and reluctantly) compelled Frederik to dismiss Hemmingsen from the theological faculty in 1579.

Clearly written and without an abundance of jargon, *Envisioning the Christian Society* accomplishes several things. It establishes the key role played by Niels Hemmingsen in the maturation of the Lutheran state church in Denmark, a role that rivals—in its overall significance—the accomplishments of the Palladius brothers in the first generation of Danish reformers, or of Hans Poulsen Resen and Jesper Brochmand early in the next century. Most importantly, Sommer reminds us that early modern Lutheranism was not a single monolithic entity, and that it is indeed correct to speak of multiple distinct

“Lutheranisms” at the end of the sixteenth century. Sommer’s book is a worthy contribution to the extant literature on the history of Lutheranism in the confessional age; it is an indispensable contribution to the history of Renaissance Denmark.

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***The Identities of Catherine de’ Medici.* By Susan Broomhall. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, 228. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2021. xiv + 394 pp. €157.00/\$189.00 hardback.**

Susan Broomhall has been writing about women and gender in early modern France for more than two decades, so it is no surprise that she decided to write a book about perhaps the most significant woman in the kingdom in the sixteenth century, Catherine de’ Medici. This is not a biography, as there are plenty of those widely available in both French and English. So, Broomhall has decided to write a very different kind of book, a monograph that examines the many competing identities of Catherine crafted by herself and her supporters, as well as those propagated by her critics and enemies during her lifetime. Moreover, Broomhall makes an effort to show how all these competing representations of Catherine were received by her contemporaries.

The book is organized in an interesting way. Rather than either a chronological analysis of Catherine’s career, or simply arranging her material into separate chapters based on Catherine’s allies and critics, Broomhall chooses to use various roles in Catherine’s life—as a daughter of the Medici, wife, queen, regent, mother raising sons and daughters, etc.—as lenses through which to view her from the perspectives of both her supporters and her enemies. And this works well in a variety of ways, though it leaves other possible identities of the queen unexplored. Nevertheless, what this way of looking at Catherine shows us, and this is perhaps the most significant argument of the book, is that identity formation for Catherine was always negotiated and a social process rather than an individual act, with both supportive as well as pejorative representations of her interacting and building upon each other. In the end, Catherine had a multiplicity of identities that were never static, making the job of historians trying to pin down who Catherine really was a complicated task. And because of the way women were perceived in the sixteenth century, especially those adjacent to power as Catherine was, it was normally the queen’s emotions that tended to dominate her competing identities constructed by friend and foe alike. Only a few voices claimed Catherine was a unique woman who had the emotions of a man. As Broomhall shows throughout the book, the authors of these constructions, written primarily by men, claimed to understand Catherine’s inner emotions, desires, feelings, and intentions and to represent them more truthfully than the queen herself.

The book bristles with insights in every chapter, but for readers of *Church History* there are three chapters that will be of particular interest, chapters 5, 7, and 8. Chapter 5 analyzes Catherine’s reliance on her Catholic religion in her role, as Broomhall labels it, of “chief mourner of the Valois.” Whether in personal acts of prayer and piety or more public acts such as funding masses for the dead for her husband and