Under the coordination of Grant Kaplan, Professor of Theology at Saint Louis University, and Kevin Vander Schel’s, researcher at the Center on Modern Christian Thought, Political Theology, and Theological Hermeneutics, Oxford University Press published in 2023 the first volume of the Oxford History of Modern German Theology, a book that comes to fill a gap in the contemporary historiographical research and to offer a synthesis dedicated to an important contemporary topic.

Segmented into five big parts and accompanied by a general introduction (p. 1-5) written by David Lincicum, Judith Woolfe and Johannes Zachhuber, a specific one dedicated to the aforementioned volume (p. 6-12), by the two editors, a rich bibliographic list and other important tools in the understanding of such a complex academic demarche, the book starts with the presentation of the backgrounds of the topic approached. There, Robert Kolb deals with the reformation and the Protestantism (p. 15-37), realizing both a historical and a theological approach with multiple relevance. Later, Thomas Wallnig (p. 38-55) provides the research entitled «Early Modern Catholic Theology in German-Speaking Lands», Douglas Shantz brings into discussion the German pietism (p. 56-79), and Eric Carlsson investigates the Protestant Enlightenment and its forms (p. 80-101). The research of John R. Betz (p. 121-142) comes to complete the previous one with an approach of the counter-enlightenment, while the one of Michael C. Legaspi (p. 121-142), speaking about the beginnings of the historical criticism and the one of Paul Franks entitled «Translation, Bildung, and Dialogue: central concepts of German-Jewish Religious Thought 1873-1848» (p. 143-169) deal also with important topics from the history of Modern German Theology.

The six chapters of the second section dedicated to the period 1781-1806 come to emphasize the way how the historical evolution of the society has impacted the theological discourse too. Therefore, Andreas Holzem (p. 171-200) presents the main aspects related with the political, social, cultural, and legal changes that took place in the German space between 1781 and 1806, Ian Hunter discusses the elements related with the early theological reception of Kant’s religious philosophy (p. 201-220), Myriam Bienenstock deals with the Pantheism controversy from the 1780s (p. 221-238) and Daniel Whistler speaks about the way how the Romanticism impacted the discourse about religion (p. 239-259). Werner Busch provides a research dedicated to the relationship between Romantic Art and Theology (260-275), and Rainald Becker about the changing of place of religious order and its role in the theological development (p. 276-296)

Dedicated to the period between 1806 and 1815, the 3rd section contains four chapters speaking about topics like the Nationalism (p. 297-320) and its local impact, the debates about the academic status of Theology and the foundation of the University of Berlin (p. 320-335), the relationship between myth and mythology (p. 336-356) and the early historicism and its role in the shifting of the theological discourse (p. 357-376).

The next part, dedicated to the period between 1815 and 1830 contains
seven chapters. Authors like Richard Schaefer, Todd H. Weir, Grant Kaplan, Paul Michael Kurtz, Andrew Dole, Kevin M. Vander Schel or Justin Shaun Coyle speak there about topics like the political Restoration and its effects on the theological space (p. 381-401), the Catholic Tubingen School in its first generation (p. 422-438), or the Catholic rationalism (p. 500-518).

Containing twelve chapters, the last part of the book, that presents the period between 1830 and 1848, comes to deal with aspects like the relationships between Church history and the history of doctrine (p. 595-613), the one between race, revelation and the comparative history of religion (p. 650-669), the Roman Catholic historical criticism (p. 699-715), or the issues related with the religious freedom (p. 716-736).

Bringing into attention an important topic, presented in a complex perspective, the book coordinated by Grant Kaplan and Kevin M. Vander Schel manages not only to be a monograph necessary for the historical research, but also a book that helps the theologians, philosophers, sociologists or historians to understand the dynamics of the religious life in the German space between 1781 and 1848. In the same time, the collective of authors is capable to emphasize the way how religion and politics interfered in certain moments and which were the elements that brought them together or in conflict.

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