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Anttila, Miikka E. Luther's Theology of Music: Spiritual Beauty and Pleasure

Michael O'Connor

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Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Anttila, Miikka E.

Luther's Theology of Music: Spiritual Beauty and Pleasure.

Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann 161. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013. Pp. vii, 227. ISBN 978-3-11-031019-1 (hardcover) €88.74.

Based on a doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Helsinki, Anttila's book is a welcome addition to Luther studies and to studies in the theology of music. The aim is focused but ambitious: while offering a closely delineated account of Luther's theology of music, the author hopes that new insights gained here will shed light on Luther's thought more broadly. After an introduction that lays out background and method, there is a (perhaps overly) long survey of ancient and medieval views on the pleasure of music. Subsequent chapters, the core of the book, deal with the topics of gift, affect, joy and pleasure, and aesthetics.

This work is indebted to the so-called Finnish school of Luther scholarship. Rising out of the work of Tuomo Mannermaa (1937–2015), this approach distances itself from an exclusively forensic emphasis on justification through faith alone, to stress an ontologically transformative understanding of justification as union with Christ (*theosis* or deification). As a result, space has opened up for the exploration of the more “world-affirming” aspects of Luther's theology, previously overlooked or downplayed. Anttila takes up this opportunity with regard to music.

Luther famously described music as a “most excellent gift of God.” Anttila takes the familiar saying and treats it with anthropological seriousness, drawing on the gift-exchange thinking of Marcel Mauss already fruitfully applied to theology by John Milbank, Louis-Marie Chauvet, and others. Luther understands the Triune God as gift, not only the giver of good gifts but the one who is present in every gift given (including music). Anttila argues that, for Luther, the receivers of God's gifts do not remain passive but receive God's gifts actively by reciprocating: giving themselves in return to Christ and their neighbour in love and service. The responsive act of praise and thanksgiving indicates the centrality of music for Luther.

Although Luther stresses the primacy of God's Word, his own experience taught him that faith was an affair not simply of the mind but chiefly of the heart; from the beginning crucially affective. He stresses the *orality* of the Word which falls from the lips and beats upon the ear. (Luther has very little to say about silent meditative reading of the Bible.) By means of this living Word (the Word "on the move"), the Holy Spirit seeks out and creates the response of joyful and trusting faith. Hence music is the perfect partner for the Word of God; the Word of God "needs and uses music" (136). Luther sweeps aside the anxieties of those stoics (including Augustine) who feared that too much music could be a danger for one's spirituality, its sensual pleasures distracting from the spiritual word; on the contrary, Luther's view is that "*not* to enjoy the delight of music would be an act of unbelief and to *not* be moved by music would be inhuman" (119–20). The pleasure of religious music is not merely a temporary condescension from God to humans—a brief sweetener to draw them in until they are able to take the strong drink of the gospel neat; a pedagogical strategy—but an abiding and affective quality of God's attitude towards his creatures; the pleasure of music is forever. Anttila asserts that Luther's "theology of music" is a "theology of pleasure" (138) (and far less fraught than his theology of sexual pleasure). The life of faith is one of joy which breaks out spontaneously—even necessarily—in singing, dancing, jumping, and so on; it is a noisy affair.

For Anttila, joy is the quality of music that makes it the best gift of God, since joy is "the affect of faith" (137). He takes time to demonstrate that this emphasis on joy is not exclusive to Luther's writing on music; he finds it a constant thread throughout Luther's work, albeit one yet to receive sufficient scholarly interest.

Unsurprisingly, faith is the key to Luther's aesthetics: the beauty of God's creation can only be seen with the eyes of faith. Luther thus reverses the *via pulchritudinis*: rather than seeing beauty as the way to God, he sees faith in God as the way to see true beauty in the world.

This book draws heavily on Luther's own writings and on select secondary sources. It assumes in the reader some knowledge of the cultural and religious context. Although the book is not a "musicological" study (173), the author hints at links with Tinctoris, Glarean, and others that might profitably be pursued in musicological studies, situating Luther not only within religious or humanist thought but more specifically within early modern musical thought.

An extra round of English-language editing would have addressed the occasional lapses of spelling and phrasing, but the writing is generally clear and effective and a pleasure to read.

MICHAEL O'CONNOR

St. Michael's College, University of Toronto

Barbaro, Francesco.

The Wealth of Wives: A Fifteenth-Century Marriage Manual. Ed. and trans. Margaret L. King.

The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 42. Toronto: Iter Academic Press / Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2015. Pp. xv, 146. ISBN 978-0-8669-8540-6 (paperback) US\$31.95.

The Venetian nobleman Francesco Barbaro wrote *The Wealth of Wives* for his friend Lorenzo de' Medici in 1415, on the eve of Lorenzo's wedding. Barbaro's book was neither the first nor the last treatise of the age that sought to lay out the characteristics of the ideal wife for a well-born young man in Renaissance Italy. The most widely-known discussion of the Renaissance family today is Leon Battista Alberti's *Della Famiglia* (1430s). That may change with the publication of this new edition of Barbaro's work by Margaret L. King. Her translation of the original Latin text, with careful attention to earlier translations into Italian and English, gives a new generation of scholars access to Barbaro's incisive mind as well as his acute rendering of his world and its values. His achievement is enhanced here by King's excellent introduction, in which she demonstrates how *The Wealth of Wives* both reflected and challenged ideas about women and their role both as wives and mothers in Renaissance society.

Born in 1390 to a prominent Venetian family, Barbaro was only twenty-five and unmarried when he wrote *The Wealth of Wives*. Though Barbaro dedicated his treatise to Lorenzo de' Medici, he wrote the work with a broader audience in mind: his social and cultural contemporaries, and their wives. His connections to a group of prominent young men—Florentine and Venetian, versed in humanist thought—helped to frame his discussion of women's roles in the context of both ancient and Christian values, as well as the need of his contemporaries for a true partner in the domestic economy. The result is a series of descriptions and prescriptions that both reflect and push forward Renaissance