

*Martin Luthers Reformation der Ehe. Sein theologisches Eheverständnis vor dessen augustinisch-mittelalterlichem Hintergrund.* By Christian Volkmar Witt. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017. Pp. XIV + 344. €99.

The title of this book tells the reader that its subject is Martin Luther's reformation of marriage. As the subtitle indicates, Luther's understanding of the theological basis for marriage is based upon St. Augustine's doctrines and his medieval successors. The subtitle correctly notes that this is a much broader investigation than the title states. As both title and subtitle indicate, this is a scholarly work written primarily for specialists.

The first chapter introduces Luther's later ideas about marriage and Witt refers to *Vom ehelichen Leben* (1522) as a justification for Luther's beliefs. These included the belief that marriage was a union between equals, that the offspring which the marriage produces are an indication of God's creation, and that raising and educating their children is the most important duty a married couple has. As such, husband and wife are a "community" ("Gemeinschaft") blessed by God and as a result this relationship cannot be broken, except for a very few exceptions. In this, Luther is in opposition to Augustine, who insisted that there were no circumstances that would allow for the breaking of the matrimonial bond.

The second chapter is an in-depth investigation of Augustine's view on marriage and W. notes that Luther had intensively studied Augustine's writings on this matter. For the most part, Luther followed Augustine's teachings and he agreed with Augustine that marriage is good and is formed by three things: *proles*, *fides*, and *sacramentum*. However, W. suggests that Luther thought that marriage was intrinsically good whereas Augustine thought that it was a derivative good—that it was necessary because of human sexual desires. W. devotes considerable space to discussing Augustine's hierarchy of marriage, celibacy, and virginity and notes that the Virgin Mary represents the highest level.

The third chapter is a continuation of the previous but now with Augustine's influence on a number of medieval theologians, including Gratian, Lombardy, and Bonaventura. W. notes that Augustine's views on marriage had a massive impact on his successors, and the few departures from his teachings were mostly related to the possibility of dissolving the marital union.

Luther had receded into the background in the previous two chapters but in the fourth he returns to center stage. W. recounts Luther's early views of marriage, ending in the year 1522. During these years Luther believed that marriage was one of the highest goods. W. suggests that while Luther was distancing his beliefs from those of Augustine regarding celibacy, his criticisms were relatively muted. However, W. points out that two years prior to *Vom ehelichen Leben* Luther had attacked canon law, especially regarding obstacles to marriage. More important are Luther's views about marriage itself. W. suggests that Luther was moving away from regarding marriage from the viewpoint of canon law, instead seeing it from contract law.

The fifth chapter indicates some of the continuity between Luther's views from 1522 to 1531: marriage is fundamentally concerned with the special bond of love

between two people, which is founded upon God's grace. Luther again stressed the importance of children and emphasized that the parental duty was their education and well-being.

The sixth chapter is comparatively brief and it is where W. discusses Luther's lectures on Genesis. W. stresses that Luther understood marriage to be a replication of the original creation in paradise and that husband and wife were equals in marriage. Rather than believing that marriage was a means to avoid many sins, Luther contended that it was what God had commanded: that the two should live in harmony and to thrive together. W. acknowledges that his investigation can be continued by discussing the Catholic Church's reactions to Luther, but he prefers to end his book without any further discussion.

This book was written primarily for a rather small group of specialists. The reader is expected to have considerable expertise in theology, to have a specialist's understanding of both Luther and Augustine, and to have a significant grasp of the theology of marriage ("Ehethologie"). Furthermore, the reader is expected to read not only German and Latin but also Luther's original German. The reader is unlikely to be familiar with Luther's spelling (three short examples: "als eyne brawt mit yhrem breudgam"; "Drey ursachen weyß ich, die man und weyb scheidet."; and "Was aber von eym Heydnischen gemahl hie S. Pauli redet, ist auch zuverstehen von eym falschen Christen" [1, 30, 276]). And, W. quotes from Luther's works on more than a hundred pages. Obviously, a non-specialist will not be able to make full use of this book; nonetheless, a non-specialist will gain a fuller understanding of one of the most contentious issues in the history of theology. Although this book was intended for a small group of specialists, W.'s expert grasp of the theological complexities, his ability to set out the arguments clearly, and his genuine respect for Augustine as well as for Luther will be welcomed by every type of reader.

Christopher Adair-Toteff  
*University of South Florida*

*God's Human Future: The Struggle to Define Theology Today.* By David Galston. Salem, OR: Polebridge, 2016. Pp. v + 198. \$28.

Galston challenges Christians to get over "belief." Consequent to the Enlightenment, God was understood as supernaturally predisposed and incredulous, the necessary Being behind nature, something that had not been recognized through the Middle Ages. While God, folded into the cosmological order, gave medieval persons a sense of social place and purpose, "this God"—G. asserts—"does not exist anymore" (4). G.'s conclusion is echoed in the dispersion of progressives from Christian communities. That diaspora leaves Christianity to the closed orthodoxy of belief. That psychic affection for a transcendental elsewhere couples, even in liberal orthodoxy, with the elaboration of revealed truth, divine norms, and a slate of final aims uncoordinated with contemporary cosmology. G. refuses to bless such resentment of the world: