religions

MDPI

Article

Wedding, Marriage, and Matrimony—Glimpses into Concepts and Images from a Church Historical Perspective since the Reformation

Benedikt Bauer

History of Reformation and Newer Church History, Department of Protestant Theology, Ruhr-University Bochum, 44801 Bochum, Germany; benedikt.bauer@ruhr-uni-bochum.de

Abstract: This contribution provides three church-historical glimpses into concepts and images that deal in different ways with the idea of the union of two parties and communicate it through media. The material under discussion is analysed from a gender perspective. Firstly, the Reformation period is discussed as a process of the valorisation of sexuality, the defence of priestly marriage by Philipp Melanchthon is examined, and attention is drawn to the so-called Oeconomialiteratur, which regulated the cohabitation of spouses. The article then turns to bridal mysticism in order to analyse the gender construction of Jesus and the male members of the Moravians on the basis of the "Kleines Brüdergesangbuch". It is emphasised that various options can be discussed, but that the concept of a leading masculinity of Jesus is the most appropriate for the description of the multiple masculinity constructions of the specific episode of the so-called "Sichtungszeit" of this community. In a last step, the reception of images and ideas about Katharina von Bora and Martin Luther since the Reformation period will be used to discuss how their marriage and matrimony became denominational identifiers—both for Protestantism and for Catholicism. For this, the double portrait of Katharina von Bora and Martin Luther by Cranach as well as a polemical pamphlet from the time of the Thirty Years' War and the invention of Katharina von Bora as a pastor's wife in the 19th century will be examined. By means of historical hermeneutics and a gender perspective, the article thus determines how media have both enabled the freedom to explore and establish new concepts and ideas as well as been used as a vehicle of regulation. In addition, the church-historical examples analysed also illustrate that wedding, marriage, and matrimony themselves became a medium to structure lives, to communicate religious and social issues, and to reject, construct, consolidate, and pass on denominational identities.

Keywords: gender; church history; reformation

Citation: Bauer, Benedikt. 2024. Wedding, Marriage, and Matrimony—Glimpses into Concepts and Images from a Church Historical Perspective since the Reformation. *Religions* 15: 938. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15080938

Academic Editor: Katharine Olson

Received: 18 April 2024
Revised: 8 July 2024
Accepted: 25 July 2024
Published: 1 August 2024

1. The Agony of Choice—A Church-Historical Disclaimer

Because every approach to science is subjective and every selection of sources for articles requires explanation, I will begin with an explanatory prologue, offering clarification of the positionality and contextuality of what follows. Being invited to a conference and writing an article in a Special Issue as a church historian means speaking for "the" church history and having to represent it as a discipline. However, I do not intend to do this, insofar as I will present cursory readings through the centuries with a focused thematic emphasis.

From a church-historical and theological perspective, marriage is a complex and wide-ranging topic. It must be addressed by means of marriage theologies. And to do that—so I was told once—properly and profoundly would even be an "art in itself", whatever that might mean. Thus it is not surprising that more than enough other scholars have dealt with marriage theologies themselves, analysed and researched them deeply (see, for example, Witt 2013; Breul and Salvadori 2014) or with a broader focus (Holzem 2008). Here, in line with the thematic focus of this Special Issue, I concentrate on sources that I consider to be of interest for the concept of mediatisation. Moreover, I have chosen to present glimpses

into concepts and images from a church-historical perspective: They are glimpses because they only illuminate very specific areas from a gender perspective. Of these glimpses, I will discuss three that in different ways concern the idea of the union of two parties and communicate it through media—be it wedding, marriage, and matrimony. These three terms define the field that I will approach. In my view, the terms are difficult to separate in the context of church history. They all describe the conditions and consequences of the union of two parties, which are then medially conceptualised, produced, and regulated. Thus, this article raises the question of the interrelation between media, religion, and gender in regard to this topic from a church-related historical perspective.

The (church) historian has the agony of choice due to the abundance of sources. Every selection of sources not only produces knowledge but also leaves blind spots and gaps that cannot be taken into account. Here, the choice of sources reflects both my own research field and certain lines of tradition that exist in Christianity. These lines were redefined, conceptualised, and remembered over the centuries following the emergence of a new denomination during the Reformation. In my gender-focussed historical hermeneutic analysis, I use the chosen sources to investigate three different aspects of the field: wedding, marriage, and matrimony. They show the wide and incompatible variety of views on marriage among Lutherans and the fact that marriage has always posed and still poses problems for Christians because the soul of every individual has historically been gendered female. The three chapters will provide inside into the following:

- Firstly, the new valorisation of sexuality within the framework of (priestly) marriage and the cohabitation of spouses within the marital framework.
- Secondly, the bridal mystical idea of union with Christ and its poetic expression as an ideal of piety within the Pietist movement of the Moravians.
- Thirdly, and finally, the medialised culture of remembrance of the marriage of Katharina von Bora and Martin Luther in its confessional significance.

2. The Cohabitation of Spouses—Religious–Political Practice, Exegesis, and *Oeconomia*

As Ute Gause (2013) pointed out, the Reformation was not only a religious event but also had a significant impact on the perception of sexuality. In establishing priestly marriage, which was articulated both from considerations of the ritual purity of parish personnel unaffected by contact with women and the rejection of Catholic tradition, a valorisation of sexuality was implemented. Gause has even considered talking about "marriage as a reformation". Her proposition is that

> "the staging of marriage is a phenomenon of Reformation change that sought to make explicit something elemental to the Reformation: the worldliness and demonstrative sensuality of the new faith, moreover, a recognition of masculinity in terms of virility" (Gause 2013, p. 327)[1]

Even though I do agree with Gause, I would go even further: Not only is male sexuality being acknowledged but also sexuality in general. However, contrary to Gause, I have to agree with Karant-Nunn's assessment of the taming and domesticating of "the wild beast of sexuality" (Karant-Nunn 1997, p. 7). This means that a very specific form of sexuality was emphasised: a heterosexual and heteronormative sexuality within the framework of marriage. This emphasis reinforced the heterosexual matrix and tamed "the wild beast of sexuality" very effectively—and with a lasting effect on contemporary history.

In fact, by abolishing the ascetic ideal that valued sexual abstinence as the highest form of Christian life, monogamous marriage was installed as a counter-model. By permitting priestly marriage, priests were—among other theological aspects—no longer imagined as a class distinct from the laity. A change also occurred for women: "In contrast to traditional notions about the moral superiority of celibate life, humanists as well as Protestant and Catholic reformers more generally revaluated marriage and, in the process, attributed a more a more important role to women. Women were praised as their husbands' true companions and as an important source of emotional support." (Stolberg 2003, p. 295). The emphasis on the normativity of marriage, however, derives not only from exegetical

insights that understand marriage as a creation order from Genesis. It also comes from the rejection of the Anabaptist movements, in which ideas of polygamy and libertinistic sexuality existed (see Gause 2020, p. 9). Considering this emphasis on monogamy, the confessional advice of Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560) and Martin Luther (1483–1546), allowing the bigamy of Philip of Hesse (1504–1567)—Landgrave of Hesse from 1518 to 1567 and one of the two leading protagonists of the Schmalkaldic League, who thus played an essential role in the realisation of reformatory endeavours, has a certain irony. After all, as key figures of the Wittenberg Reformation, both Melanchthon and Luther were at the theological centre of the constitution of a new religious denomination (for Melanchthon, see Greschat 2010, pp. 129–30; Greschat 2017, p. 50; Bauer 2020b, pp. 58–59).

Although bigamy was punishable by death, Luther and Melanchthon had decided that it would be morally more acceptable if Philip married his mistress in order to avoid continuing living in concubinage. Melanchthon, however, seriously reproached himself on account of this decision since it was not in line with his general theological and social convictions. It can therefore be argued that this decision was also made in favour of Margarete von der Saale (1522–1566), the second wife of Philip of Hesse, and thus not out of mere power calculation but in favour of a woman. The same reasoning for matrimony not only as a legitimate framework for sexuality but also in opposition to misogynistic tendencies can be found in Melanchthon's defence of priestly marriage, too. In connection with the repeatedly cited ritual impurity through contact with women, an argument against priestly marriage he stated was as follows:

> "According to the Holy Scriptures, women are highly praised for their holiness and religion. For since the histories of the Church testify that God has abundantly communicated grace to them, that they have confessed the Gospel and Christ in manly fashion, as the histories of the holy martyrs and witnesses of Christ indicate. [...] To despise women, or to abuse God's creature for any vice or fornication, is a foolish raging and superbia by the devil. For no one can deny that half of the human race are females. Ask any man whether his mother was a stone or a human being?" (Bauer and Gause 2020, pp. 73–74)[2]

This does not mean that the Reformers implied any emancipatory or even feminist agenda. Nevertheless, it is clear that the priesthood of all believers, supported by the evaluation of humans as simul iustus et peccator, were able to bring about an appreciation of femininity on an anthropological–theological level—all humans thus became essentially equal in front of God. This egalitarian moment can also be observed in the *Oeconomia* literature. It was reintroduced into early modern discourse in 1529 by Justus Menius (1499–1558) (on Menius and the *Oeconomia*, see Gause and Scholz 2012). When I speak of egalitarianism here, however, it does not refer to our modern concept. It rather means that man and woman, according to their complementarity based on creation, stood before God as husband and wife in unison and as a reciprocally entrusted community of work and life.

Accordingly, Menius assigned the husband and wife their respective tasks. At first, this does not sound very innovative or women-friendly, because the wife had to take care of domestic affairs and the children, especially childbearing qua the order of creation—even the supervision of potential wet nurses could be subsumed here. In the temporal context, however, this can be understood as a big step. The woman's work, i.e., childbearing, did not make her unclean, but, like working by the sweat of one's brow for the man (Genesis 3:19), it was one of the tasks foreseen by God, which the Fall entailed. In their toil and suffering, husband and wife fulfilled the order of creation foreseen by God. This also acknowledged and enhanced the value of women's care work—and possibly even more, as Menius wrote:

> "She should not doubt that God will grant her fortune and salvation and help her in all her hardships in a mighty way. As arduous and dangerous as it is for a woman to conceive, bear children, nurture and bring them up, it is all the more comforting for her to know that, firstly, such affliction is God's will and work, it comes from no one else but Him and cannot be or become more difficult than God wants it to be". (Bauer and Gause 2020, p. 42)[3]

In the state of childbearing, "the woman" is thus close to and in the care of God. Her suffering is not a punishment, it indicates that she is fulfilling her God-given task. However, childbearing is not a work for salvation—Menius repeatedly stated that faith alone promises justification, especially with regard to those who cannot have children. It is this (Protestant) faith that guided the bond of marriage, matrimony, childbearing, and household management for the couple and that structured their lives.

3. Marry Me, Jesus—Bridal Mysticism and Gender

The union of two parties in the marital nexus is not just a structural element in religious and social contexts but can also be central to theological conceptions that influence piety. At a first glance, bridal mysticism evokes associations with a kind of "female" piety practiced in monasteries in the Middle Ages. One might think of Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), Mechthild of Magdeburg (c. 1207–c. 1282/1294), Teresa of Avila (1515–1582), or other female mystics (on the so-called female mysticism; see, for example, Schäufele 2017, pp. 126–50). However, in fact, the motifs of the bridegroom and bride were also used by "male" authors like Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), John of the Cross (1542–1591), Johann Arndt (1555–1621), and many more. It is not a secret that Martin Luther too uses the mystical heritage of the Middle Ages (see Leppin 2016) and the motifs of bridal mysticism—although on a more abstract level—when writing *The Freedom of a Christian*:

> "Faith . . . unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. By this mystery, as the Apostle teaches, Christ and the soul become one flesh [Eph 5:31–2]. And if they are one flesh and there is between them a true marriage . . . it follows that everything they have they hold in common, the good as well as the evil". (Howells 2012, p. 125)

Bridal mysticism coincides directly with the gender constructions of the practitioners and that of Jesus Christ. The level of abstraction of the imaginations plays an important role here. As I have already explained elsewhere, if women imagine Jesus as the bridegroom, the heterosexual matrix (see Butler 1999) is not disturbed, whatever degree of abstraction is in use. In fact, one could argue that the heterosexual matrix is even reinforced when celibate women implement and affirm a heterosexual norm within piety (see Bauer 2020a, p. 142). This becomes problematic when the heterosexual matrix is disturbed, as in the case of Benedetta Carlini analysed by Patricia Simons, which she describes as "erotic mysticism", in which "pious and sexual performances are intertwined" (Simons 2019, p. 102). Even if men imagine Jesus as a bridegroom with a high level of abstraction, there is no alteration to or disturbance of Jesus' gender by measurement of heteronormativity. For when Jesus stays within the frame of "normal" heterosexuality, by applying those metaphors to the femininity of the church (ecclesia) or the individual soul (anima) as his bride, the heterosexual matrix is not disturbed. However, this is different as soon as men are imagining Jesus as their bridegroom without a high level of abstraction, such as in the specific period of "sifting" in the community of the Moravians. In this period, the favoured expression of piety of the Moravians was a combination of bridal mysticism and mysticism of the Passion of Christ, which manifested in Moravian hymnbooks and daily life (see Vogt 2009; Bauer 2018, 2020a, 2020c). As Jon Petter Heesch argues, the metaphors and motifs being used became "unchained, and [were] not only given new meaning, but also altered liturgical praxis" (Heesch 2023, p. 122). The "Kleines Brüdergesangbuch" offers a large variety of motifs concerning bridal mysticism, such as the following:

> "Have You already loved me, as I was highly grieved? Didn't You send your courting, bridegroom! to me?" (Beyreuther et al. 1978, Hirten-Lieder, p. 84)[4]

> "Which one amongst all. . . that long for their beloved, which one equals my man? . . . Which one will immolate his life willingly for the life of his bride? Where will such a couple be married"? (Beyreuther et al. 1978, Hirten-Lieder, p. 108)[5]

Jesus was depicted as the bridegroom of each and every member of the community—regardless of their gender—whilst focusing on the mystical union with him. The focus

of the imagination lays on his wounds, especially his side wound and its penetration, which alludes to ideas of sexual intercourse:

> "You lacerated wounds! how sweet are thou to me, in thou I have found a little spot [plätzgen, diminutive of place] for me: how gladly am I only dust, if nevertheless I am the spoils of the lamb! . . . My heart seethes out of love to you, my dearest lamb, and all my urges are to live [for] the bridegroom, the one who conciliated me and was given to the cross out of love". (Beyreuther et al. 1978, Hirten-Lieder, p. 89)[6]

> "What does a creutz=luft=täubelein [cross-air-dove, B.B.] do if it wants to get out of its little hut? the limbs are a little sick: sooner or later the soul wants to see the bridegroom; thus she soon sees him stand there, she sees the side, hand, and foot, the little lamb plants a kiss on the faint heart. The kiss of peace pulls out the soul and takes it home in his mouth: the kiss is seen right in the hut. . . and if it's finished, the soul gets it to join it in the cave of the wound." (Beyreuther et al. 1978, Von der Ablegung unsrer Hütte, p. 8)[7]

Therefore, three options for the constitution of Jesus' gender are given, which directly correlate with the constructions of male Moravians' gender (see on that Bauer 2020a):

(1) Jesus can be read as a heterosexual male, and therefore the Moravian brothers would be—in the line of thoughts of heteronormativity—female. In fact, Christian Renatus (1727–1752), the son of the "founder" Zinzendorf, exclaimed that all brothers would be sisters from now on at one point in Herrnhaag, which was "the center of the Sichtungszeit, [that] was also the most vital community in the Brüdergemeine at mid-century" (Atwood 2005, p. 185). He did so because all souls are female (anima) (see Miller 2013, p. 57); therefore, the possession of a male body and being a male are only temporal (see Peucker 2002, p. 71; Bauer 2018, pp. 76–77). This idea was not limited to Herrnhaag, but can also be seen in Marienborn (see Miller 2013, p. 62) and in Zinzendorfs' theology at large (see Vogt 2015, pp. 118–22). Thus, this option is to think of Jesus' gender as resembling that for women imagining Jesus as their bridegroom, except that the believers were initially men—one might ask, if the "brothers" were spiritually "trans-gender" (see Bauer 2020a, p. 142).

(2a) Jesus is depicted as feminine on account of the imagined penetration of the side wound (see Faull 2011, pp. 72–74). Some scholars have even suggested that the side hole was imagined as a vagina (see Fogleman 2007, p. 3.82.257). According to Elke Pahud de Mortange, who draws on Christina Braun's analyses, this would not be particularly unusual, at least in iconographic terms (see Pahud de Mortanges 2018, p. 362). The imagination would go as far as a ritual (re)enactment of the penetration, as happened in 1748 at the feast of the single brothers, where a wounding of a Christ figurine was staged: "After Christian Renatus washed his hands in the stream of blood the Christ figure disappeared, only to leave behind a huge image of the side hole, large enough for a person to bend down and enter the choir house through it. And this is exactly what Christian Renatus, Rubusch, and all the others in attendance did; thus they physically penetrated the sidehole" (Peucker 2006, p. 48). Heesch reflects on other ritual practices in Herrnhaag, which he wants to see established on the basis of metaphors of bridal mysticism, death, and wounds that become "completely unchained":

> "Many of our activities are metaphorical in nature. The metaphorical concepts that characterize those activities structure our present reality. New metaphors have the power to create a new reality. In this context, bearing the ritual in Herrnhaag in mind, it is interesting to see what happens when a new metaphor enters the conceptual system which we base our actions on. It will then alter that conceptual system and the perceptions and actions that the system gives rise to". (Heesch 2023, p. 121)

Should it be the case that the side hole was actually imagined as a vagina, the (re)enactment of the penetration would be a sexual act categorising Jesus as being

female in a heteronormative framing and also in the traditional gender connotation of the mystical bridal metaphor (see on the gendered connotation Kutzer 2023, p. 377). Following Fogleman, however, Peter Vogt rightly asks: Was Jesus really female for the Moravians? ("War Jesus für die Herrnhuter wirklich weiblich?" Vogt 2021, p. 286). Hence, combining this ritualised penetration and the idea of Jesus as a bridegroom—which means "masculine"—one might come to terms with thinking of Jesus as somewhat intersexual in this line of thought (see Bauer 2020a, p. 143).

(2b) Jesus' side wound has been interpreted as the male anus as well—bringing into agreement Jesus' supposed masculinity and the act of penetration, as well as the supposed homosexuality in the Moravian community (see on that Miller 2013). As Peucker puts it,

> "The adoration of the sidehole, the numerous songs about going into the sidehole, and even reenactments of penetrating the sidehole all seem to suggest that penetrative sex would fit the metaphor. [. . .] Penetrative homosexual intercourse as part of religious ritual makes the most sense if the anus were considered to be an image of the sidehole". (Peucker 2006, p. 61)

According to Atwood, the Moravians were aside from this speaking "openly about Jesus' penis" (Atwood 1997, p. 26) at the feast of the circumcision. Whereas Fogleman insists on a "metaphorical, spiritual homosexuality" (Fogleman 2003, p. 309), Faull proposes to describe the relationship between the male Moravians and Jesus as a "mode of performative bi-sexuality" (Faull 2011, p. 56). All in all, this would leave us with a cis-gender male Jesus, which would be the passive and receiving end of penetrative "homosexual" intercourse (see Bauer 2020a, p. 143)—although there was also the reverse "recurring image of Christ penetrating single brothers (usually synecdochically by his side wound)" (Miller 2013, p. 63).

(3) However, as I have argued elsewhere, I would like to conceptualise Jesus' gender in this context as a "strictly transcendental masculinity" and as a "leading masculinity" (Bauer 2020a, p. 143). This is also key to the construction of the brothers' masculinities. Being transcendent as well as symbolising the ideal and archetypical masculinity, I already have and still would suggest framing Jesus' masculinity as a "transcendental hypermasculinity" (Bauer 2020a, p. 143). That means he is the transcendental counterpart for the brothers' immanent masculinity—I would like to understand "hyper" here subject to the Greek preposition as somewhat "above" the immanent masculinities (see Bauer 2018, 2020a). This leaves us with two corresponding masculinities that are related by virtual marriage medialised by song, which are both key elements in that specific time of Herrnhut. This perspective challenges a conventional scientific notion of heteronormative conceptualisations of marriage, since "Moravian familiarities were unique relationships, unique constellations of self and community—identities without precedent, a singular vocabulary of desire, sui generis eroticisms, and fraternal conjugalities" (Miller 2013, p. 58).

However, it does not mean that same-sex relationships were an accepted norm among the Moravians. Rather, the so-called "Streiterehe" ("marriage militant") was regarded as an ideal of marriage to be emphasised at an immanent level, which placed the partnership of the spouses in the service of Christ (see Faull and Norfleet 2011). This makes the bridal mystical motifs all the more interesting. After all, despite the Moravians' subsequent condemnation of the behaviour during the sifting period and the heteronormative reactions from outside, a few questions remain: How could such motives become virulent in the first place? Were they possible because of the positive attitude towards (marital) sexuality that distinguished the Moravians from the surrounding theological opinions (see Peucker 2011)? Was the "concept of sex as a sacramental act [, which] was a liberating experience for many Moravians" (Peucker 2011, p. 35) at the same time a liberation towards queer spaces of thought? And why did a deviation from the typical hegemonic ideas of masculinity and binarities that are prevalent throughout society appear attractive?

4. The (un)holy Couple (of Protestantism)? Marriage and Matrimony as a Denominational Identifier

Let us return to Reformation times for a very brief moment: I have already mentioned the religious–political importance of priestly marriage. In fact, we can see that marrying became a practice of Reformers or at least their pupils from early on: In May 1521, the priest from Kemberg, Bartholomäus Bernhardi (1487–1551), a former student in Wittenberg, married accompanied by the "Apology" of Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1486–1541). Karlstadt himself married in 1522, and by the end of 1523, about a hundred priests, monks, and nuns had entered into matrimony, showing their approval of the socio-religious changes of the Reformation (see Plummer 2012, p. 52). The wedding of the key figure of the Reformation, Martin Luther, to his wife Katharina von Bora (1499–1552), on the other hand, did not take place until 1525—a conceivably bad time in the midst of the Peasants' Wars and, moreover, under the exclusion of a larger public. Even Melanchthon was initially irritated since, on the one hand, it took place unexpectedly and without his presence, and, on the other hand, he considered the timing at the height of the Peasants' Wars to be very inappropriate. However, Melanchthon did not attribute the inappropriate decision to Luther, but thought "that 'the nuns', i.e., the liberated women from the convent [to whom Katharina von Bora also belonged, B. B.], had seduced him 'into this untimely change in his state of life'" (Greschat 2017, p. 49)[8]. However, Melanchthon did not believe in rumours of premarital sexual intercourse between Luther and Katharina von Bora, although they were already circulating at the time. In the 16th century, the polemics against the Reformation couple use a negative matrix to show what the ideal woman and the supposedly correct gender order should be. In polemical writings, which my brilliant colleague Anna-Katharina Höpflinger has analysed, Katharina von Bora is mentioned above all in relation to her leaving the monastery and her marriage to Martin Luther (see Höpflinger 2021). The marriage of the two was a scandal in Roman Catholic circles—it was even rumoured that the Antichrist would be born from this union. Meanwhile, in Lutheran circles, Katharina von Bora and Martin Luther were stylised as the Protestant couple par excellence right from the 16th century.

It can be observed, for example, that the double portraits of Katharina von Bora and Martin Luther made by Cranach (see Figure 1) serve to address the rumours: Katharina von Bora is portrayed here as a well-off bourgeois, and the portraits show that her marriage to the reformer has not led to a socially precarious situation, but the couple live a good Christian and respectable life—Katharina is "under the bonnet" ("unter der Haube") as her hairnet indicates, showing her honourable status as a wife.

The couple and their marriage and matrimony thus became a point of identification for the Lutheran denomination as early as the 16th century. This identification continued through the centuries: The wedding and also the marriage of the two were repeatedly the subjects of writings and images—both from the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic sides. In the period of the Thirty Years' War, for example, the pamphlet "Nun muss es ja gewandert seyn" ("Now it must have wandered") (see Figure 2) was published (see Grochowina 2021). The "Battle of White Mountain" (1620) had just been lost, the Bohemian Winter King Frederick V of the Palatinate (1596–1632) had to give up his kingship, Protestant nobilities were executed, Protestants in general were expelled from Bohemia—and yet the Thirty Years' War was to continue. The fact that the pamphlet focuses on Martin Luther and Katharina von Bora is remarkable: the couple seem to stand as a cipher for Lutheranism in the 17th century as well. The etching illustrates the theme of emigration: Martin Luther, so corpulent that his belly—symbolising greed and avarice—has to rest on a wheelbarrow, walks ahead with a large cup in his hand and a pannier with heads presumably intended to show the Bohemian nobles. We can see books and the heads of Zwingli, Calvin, and Melanchthon on the wheelbarrow—Protestantism in general is fleeing Bohemia. Katharina von Bora on the other hand appears very gaunt, carrying a child in her arms, a wooden barrel and the Bible on her back, and leading a dog on a leash. In this picture, it is Katharina

von Bora who is carrying the Word of God after Martin Luther, his focus apparently laying more on his belly.

Figure 1. Double portrait of Martin Luther and Katharina von Bora, Lucas Cranach the Elder, ca. 1529, oil on wood, 57 × 41 cm, Museum in the Melanchthonhaus Bretten.

In the accompanying text, the words make it clear—and I quote Nicole Grochowina's insightful analysis:

> "sola fide' is therefore a fine principle, but it would not result in the child having enough to eat. In addition, the idea that faith alone makes one blessed now has a special connotation, because apart from faith—as is put into the mouth of Katharina von Bora—they have nothing left. After all, they were on flight. All in all, it should be noted that the people no longer want to believe 'our words' either. So what kind of faith is this that cannot feed the people? In this respect, her statement ends almost logically with the request to have a sip of the wine, because her mouth is dry and her feet are weak". (Grochowina 2021, p. 102)[9]

The polemic makes it obvious: the marriage of the two is deprived of any foundation, except for faith alone. They have neither a permanent home nor enough food for themselves, let alone their child. The couple's physical relations figuratively demonstrate that the denomination initiated by Luther is a selfish one that aims more at its own bodily well-being than the Word of God.

Lastly, let us take a look at the 19th century. If we think of Katharina von Bora, the image of the pastor's wife has become imprinted in cultural memory. However, this is a 19th-century construction. For, if we want to be historically accurate, "the pastor's wife in Wittenberg [...] was Walburga Bugenhagen (1500–1669)" (Jancke 2021, p. 204), the wife of Johannes Bugenhagen (1485–1558). Nevertheless, Katharina von Bora has entered the

cultural imaginary of Protestantism as such a wife. In fact, the Luther household was a professorial household. However, under the ideals and premises of the 19th century that stylised Protestant marriage and the bourgeois nuclear family, Katharina von Bora became a pastor's wife—the contemporary ideals were projected back into the 16th century. In religious–political terms, then, the following can be observed: "Marriage became proof that the Protestant churches were better than the Catholic Church"(Jancke 2021, p. 211). Gabriela Jancke demonstrated the invention of the legend and the establishment of the tradition of Katharina von Bora as a pastor's wife using the painting "Luther's Wedding" ("Luthers Trauung") by Paul Thumann (1834–1908) (see Figure 3).

Figure 2. Nun muss es ja gewandert sein, 1625, broadsheet, etching, below four-column poem (type print, 35 lines), Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (digital copy: VD17 1:739706E).

Figure 3. Luthers Trauung, after an oil painting on wood by Paul Thumann, in Die Gartenlaube 13 (1872), pp. 205–7.

It is the only painting depicting Katharina von Bora at all in Thumann's five-part Luther cycle for the Wartburg, which undertakes a national Luther heroisation. Thus, Katharina von Bora has only a place via her wedding in 19th-century representations of the Reformation. Moreover, she is not recognisable as a person of the 16th century, but she is depicted in recent visual patterns. This rejection of the woman—remember the 17th century—thinking theologically or at least biblically and depicting her in the pure function of the wife corresponds to the contemporary context of the picture: the women's movement took action and was fought against, and "the woman" was relegated to the private sphere of the domestic. However, there is nothing to be seen of Katharina von Bora as a pastor's wife in the painting. With a change in media ("Medienwechsel") or the combination of media (see Emich 2008) in various receptions, this image is used to illustrate the "invented tradition" of the pastor's wife Katharina von Bora—it serves to assign women their heteronormatively determined place using religious legitimation.

Even in the 20th century, this tradition continued to have an effect in different ways: the Nazi regime colported the pastor's wife Bora as a German mother and gave its ideology a religious basis; Jochen Klepper's counter-draft in the form of a novel, which had only been passed down as a fragment, depicted Luther as an anti-Aryan seeker and was partly merged with biographical elements of his wife; and feminist movements emphasised the emancipated businesswoman Katharina von Bora, who had her husband's back and also thought along theological lines. It becomes clear that the person Katharina von Bora is essentially remembered on the basis of her marriage to Martin Luther. The lack of sources about and by her provided recipients with the opportunity to fill her life story with their own ideas or to rewrite it.

The cross-denominational references to the Luther couple through the centuries also support the conclusion that marriage and matrimony are important socio-religious themes that have been negotiated again and again. In this context, Katharina von Bora and Martin Luther serve as a projection medium not only for theological but also for social ideas,

concepts, and movements. The references of Protestant and Roman Catholic authors to the couple are remarkable and show that not only historical persons but also the unions of people in a binding framework become both theological and political issues. Katharina and Martin thus become the (un)holy couple of Protestantism. Their marriage and marital status are denominational identifiers for both Protestantism and Catholicism.

5. Conclusions—Medial Regulation and Medial Freedom

It is clear that weddings, marriage, and matrimony are important topics in church history. However, the discourse in my selected sources was more concerned with sexuality, marriage, and matrimony as such, whereas weddings rather served as a medium for communicating other content (e.g., a religious–political statement or a pious ideal). Nevertheless, these topics have church historical relevance on various levels: as a concept of piety and virtual union between believers and Jesus, as a statement of belief in an emerging denomination and a new concept of being and being together, or as part of a culture of remembrance that uses a historical tradition—invented or not—to legitimise its own point of view. In addition, the involvement of media in these negotiation processes has been demonstrated:

Media became a realm of freedom to develop, try out, or discard individual and collective ideas, to reinterpret and rewrite history and stories, as well as to interpret, comment on, and influence contemporary events. However, media have also continually been used for the sake of regulation: To regulate the new affirmation of sexuality, which would be transferred into the clearly defined framework of marriage, to define oneself and others through confessional polemics, or to fend off an emerging women's movement, which was put in its place from a patriarchal point of view.

Finally—and I will make use here of the openness of the media concept applied in this Special Issue—wedding, marriage, and matrimony themselves became a medium. They have since been used as a medium to structure lives, to communicate religious and social issues, and to reject, construct, consolidate, and pass on denominational identities.

It could, therefore, be discussed whether the concept of media should be defined as restricted as we understand it, where only text, images, etc., are considered to be media. Rather, my observations from sources demonstrate that concepts themselves also become media, that is, carriers of knowledge and meaning. This results in a reciprocal process of exchange and transformation between the physically present material and the ideational–theological media, which, from the perspective of my church-historical gender research, could be summarised under the term "mediatisation" used in this Special Issue.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: Data are contained within the article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 "die Inszenierung von Ehe ein Phänomen des reformatorischen Umbruchs ist, die etwas für die Reformation Elementares deutlich machen wollte: die Weltzuwendung und demonstrative Sinnlichkeit des neuen Glaubens, zudem eine Anerkennung von Männlichkeit im Sinne von Virilität".

2 "Und so man Heiligkeit und die Religion ansehen will, so haben die Weibsbilder ein sehr großes Lob in der Heiligen Schrift. Da nämlich die Kirchenhistorien bezeugen, dass ihnen Gott reichlich Gnade mitgeteilt hat, dass sie gar männlich das Evangelium und Christus bekannt haben, wie das die Historien der heiligen Märtyrer und Zeugen Christi anzeigen. [...] Denn Weiber zu verachten oder Gottes Geschöpf zu allem Laster und Unzucht zu missbrauchen ist ein unsinniges Wüten und Hochmut vom Teufel. Denn niemand kann leugnen, dass die Hälfte des menschlichen Geschlechts Weibsbilder sind. Frage ein jeglicher sich selbst, ob seine Mutter ein Stein oder Mensch gewesen sei?"

3 "Sie soll auch gar nicht daran zweifeln, dass Gott ihr dazu Glück und Heil bescheren und ihr in all ihren Nöten auf mächtige Weise helfen werde. So beschwerlich und gefährlich es auch ist, wenn ein Weib schwanger werden, Kinder gebären, nähren und aufziehen soll, umso tröstlicher ist es für sie auch, dass sie sich erstens gewiss ist, dass solche Kümmernis Gottes Wille und Werk ist, von niemand anderem herkommt als von ihm und nicht schwerer sein oder werden kann, als Gott es haben will."

[4] The quotations from the Kleines Brüdergesangbuch are translated from the German version of the text in Beyreuther et al. (1978) by me and are quoted according to the names of the hymnbook's syllabus. Due to the fact that a continuous pagination is missing in the edition, I use the page numbers of each chapter of the hymnbook's syllabus in addition to the regular citation. Because of the loss of literary quality in the translation, the original version of the lyrics is provided in the footnotes. "Hast Du mich doch schon geliebt, da ich Doch gleich hoch betrübt? hast Du deine werbung nicht, Bräutigam! auf mich gericht?" (Beyreuther et al. 1978, Hirten-Lieder, p. 84).

[5] "Welcher unter allen denen. . . die sich nach geliebten sehnen, welcher gleichet meinem Mann? . . . Welcher wird sein eigen leben für das leben seiner braut willigliche zum opfer geben? wo wird solch ein paar getraut?" (Beyreuther et al. 1978, Hirten-Lieder, p. 108).

[6] "Ihr aufgerissnen Wunden! wie lieblich seyd ihr mir, ich hab in euch gefunden ein plätzgen für und für: wie gerne bin ich nur ein staub, wenn ich nichts desto wenger auch bin des Lammes raub! . . . Mein herze wallt vor liebe nach dir, mein liebstes Lamm, und alle meine triebe sind, um dem Bräutigam zu leben, Dem, der mich versöhnt und ward für mich aus liebe ans creutz hinan gedehnt" (Beyreuther et al. 1978, Hirten-Lieder, p. 89).

[7] "Wie machts ein creutz=luft=täubelein, wenns 'raus will aus dem hüttelein? die glieder sind ein wenig krank: der seele wirds kurz oder lang, den Bräutigam zu sehn; so sieht sie Ihn bald stehn, sie sieht die Seite, Hand und Fuss, das Lämmlein gibt ihr einen kuss, aufs matte herze. Der frieds=kuss zieht die seele 'raus, und in dem munde mit nach hause: der hütte sieht man den kuss an. . . wenns gar ist, hohlt die seele sie nach zur Wun-den=höhle!" (Beyreuther et al. 1978, Von der Ablegung unsrer Hütte, p. 8).

[8] "dass 'die Nonnen', also die befreiten Frauen aus dem Kloster [zu denen auch Katharina von Bora gehörte, B.B.], ihn verführt hätten, ‚in dese unzeitgemäße Veränderung seines Lebensstandes hineingeraten zu sein'".

[9] "'sola fide' sei demnach ein schöner Grundsatz, würde aber nicht dazu führen, dass das Kind genügend zu essen hätte. Zudem bekomme der Gedanke, dass der Glaube allein selig mache, nun noch eine besondere Konnotierung, denn abgesehen vom Glauben—so wird es Katharina von Bora in den Mund gelegt—hätten sie ja nun auch nichts mehr übrig. Immerhin seien sie auf der Flucht. Insgesamt sei festzuhalten, dass auch das Volk ‚unsern Worten' nicht mehr glauben wolle. Was also sei das für ein Glaube, der die Menschen nicht ernähren könne? Insofern endet ihre Einlassung fast schon konsequent mit der Bitte, auch einen Schluck von dem Wein zu bekommen, denn ihr Mund sei trocken und ihre Füße seien schwach."

References

Atwood, Craig D. 1997. Sleeping in the Arms of Christ. Sanctifying Sexuality in the Eighteenth-Century Moravian Church. *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8: 25–51.

Atwood, Craig D. 2005. Interpreting and Misinterpreting the Sichtungszeit. In *Neue Aspekte der Zinzendorf-Forschung*. Edited by Martin Brecht and Paul Peucker. Göttingen: V&R, pp. 174–87.

Bauer, Benedikt. 2018. Bridal Mysticism, Virtual Marriage and Masculinity in the Moravian Hymnbook Kleines Brüdergesangbuch. *Journal for Religion, Film and Media* 4: 67–79.

Bauer, Benedikt. 2020a. A Man Is Only as Good as His Words!? Inqueeries on Jesus' Gender. *Religion and Gender* 10: 135–54. [CrossRef]

Bauer, Benedikt. 2020b. Die Hochschätzung der Ehe in Philipp Melanchthons Schrift, Widder des vnreinen Bapsts Celibat (1541). In *Sündige Sexualität und reformatorische Regulierungen*. Edited by Benedikt Bauer and Ute Gause. Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, pp. 51–62.

Bauer, Benedikt. 2020c. "du hast gebrannt, den Bräutgam zu umfassen". Brautmystik und Wundenkult sowie deren Implikationen für die Männlichkeitskonstruktionen in der Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine. In *Opening Pandora's Box. Gender, Macht und Religion*. Edited by Benedikt Bauer, Kristina Göthling-Zimpel and Anna-Katharina Höpflinger. Göttingen: V&R, pp. 181–206.

Bauer, Benedikt, and Ute Gause, eds. 2020. *Sündige Sexualität und reformatorische Regulierungen*. Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag.

Beyreuther, Erich, Gerhard Meyer, and Molnár Amedeo, eds. 1978. *Kleines Brüdergesangbuch. Hirten-Lieder von Bethlehem, Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, Materialien und Dokumente 4,5*. Hildesheim: Olms.

Breul, Wolfgang, and Stefania Salvadori, eds. 2014. *Geschlechtlichkeit und Ehe im Pietismus*. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.

Butler, Judith. 1999. *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. Tenth Anniversary Edition*, 2nd ed. New York and London: Routledge.

Emich, Birgit. 2008. Bildlichkeit und Intermedialität in der Frühen Neuzeit. Eine interdisziplinäre Spurensuche. *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 1: 31–56. [CrossRef]

Faull, Katherine. 2011. Temporal Men and the Eternal Bridegroom. Moravian Masculinity in the Eighteenth Century. In *Masculinity, Senses, Spirit*. Edited by Katherine Faull. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, pp. 55–79.

Faull, Katherine, and Jeannette Norfleet. 2011. The Married Choir Instructions (1785). *Journal of Moravian History* 10: 69–110. [CrossRef]

Fogleman, Aaron Spencer. 2003. Jesus Is Female. The Moravian Challenge in the German Communities of British North America. *William and Mary Quarterly* 2: 295–332. [CrossRef]

Fogleman, Aaron Spencer. 2007. *Jesus Is Female: Moravians and the Challenge of Radical Religion in Early America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gause, Ute. 2013. Durchsetzung neuer Männlichkeit? Ehe und Reformation. *EvTh* 73: 326–38.

Gause, Ute. 2020. Sündige Sexualität und reformatorische Regulierungen—Reformation, Ehe und Geschlechterrollen. In *Sündige Sexualität und reformatorische Regulierungen*. Edited by Benedikt Bauer and Ute Gause. Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, pp. 7–11.

Gause, Ute, and Stephanie Scholz. 2012. *Ehe und Familie im Geist des Luthertums. Die Oeconomia Christiana (1529) des Justus Menius*. Leipig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.
Greschat, Martin. 2010. *Philipp Melanchthon. Theologe, Pädagoge und Humanist*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus.
Greschat, Martin. 2017. Melanchthons Verhältnis zu Luther. In *Philipp Melanchthon. Der Reformator zwischen Glauben und Wissen. Ein Handbuch*. Edited by Günter Frank. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, pp. 43–59.
Grochowina, Nicole. 2021. "Kaiser und Kaiserin"? Bilder von Martin Luther und Katharina von Bora im 17. Jahrhundert. In *Bild—Geschlecht—Rezeption. Katharina von Bora und Martin Luther im Spiegel der Jahrhunderte*. Edited by Carlotta Israel and Camilla Schneider. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, pp. 64–112.
Heesch, Jon Petter. 2023. "Metaphors unchained"—Exploring the use of metaphor in the Thirty-four homilies on the Litany of the Wounds. In *Die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Theologie—Geschichte—Wirkung*. Edited by Wolfgang Breul. Göttingen: V&R, pp. 109–26.
Holzem, Andreas, ed. 2008. *Ehe—Familie—Verwandtschaft. Vergesellschaftung in Religion und sozialer Lebenswelt*. Paderborn, München, Wien and Zürich: Schöningh.
Höpflinger, Anna-Katharina. 2021. "Euch beyden zu verdamnis." Katharina von Bora und Martin Luther in ausgewählten Darstellungen des 16. Jahrhunderts. In *Bild—Geschlecht—Rezeption. Katharina von Bora und Martin Luther im Spiegel der Jahrhunderte*. Edited by Carlotta Israel and Camilla Schneider. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, pp. 22–63.
Howells, Edward. 2012. Early Modern Reformations. In *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*. Edited by Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 114–34.
Jancke, Gabriele. 2021. Wie eine Nonne und Reformatorenfrau zur Pfarrfrau wurde und wozu sie als solche gebraucht wird: Eine erfundene Tradition. Das Bild der Katharina von Bora im 19. Jahrhundert. In *Bild—Geschlecht—Rezeption. Katharina von Bora und Martin Luther im Spiegel der Jahrhunderte*. Edited by Carlotta Israel and Camilla Schneider. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, pp. 184–246.
Karant-Nunn, Susan. 1997. *The Reformation of Ritual: An Interpretation of Early Modern Germany*. London: Routledge.
Kutzer, Mirja. 2023. Lebendige Allegorie. Das Hohelied in der christlichen Mystik. *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 38: 373–98.
Leppin, Volker. 2016. *Die fremde Reformation. Luthers mystische Wurzeln*. München: C. H. Beck.
Miller, Derrick R. 2013. Moravian Familiarities: Queer Community in the Moravian Church in Europe and North America in the Mid-Eigteenth Century. *Journal of Moravian History* 13: 53–75. [CrossRef]
Pahud de Mortanges, Elke. 2018. Body@Performance und Gedächtnis. Zur Anatomie des Heils in den Erinnerungskulturen des Christentums. *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 2: 348–62. [CrossRef]
Peucker, Paul. 2002. "Blut' auf unsre grünen Bändchen". Die Sichtungszeit in der Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine. *Unitas Fratrum* 29: 41–94.
Peucker, Paul. 2006. "Inspired by Flames of Love". Homosexuality, Mysticism, and Moravian Brothers around 1750. *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1: 30–64. [CrossRef]
Peucker, Paul. 2011. In the Blue Cabinet. Moravians, Marriage, and Sex. *Journal of Moravian History* 10: 6–37. [CrossRef]
Plummer, Marjorie Elizabeth. 2012. *From Priest's Whore to Pastor's Wife: Clerical Marriage and the Process of Reform in the Early German Reformation*. Burlington: Ashgate.
Schäufele, Wolf-Friedrich. 2017. *Christliche Mystik*. Göttingen: V&R.
Simons, Patricia. 2019. "Bodily Things" and Brides of Christ. The case of the early seventeenth-century "lesbian nun" Benedetta Carlini. In *Sex, Gender and Sexuality in Renaissance Italy*. Edited by Jacqueline Murray and Nicholas Terpstra. London: Routledge, pp. 97–124.
Stolberg, Michael. 2003. A Woman Down to Her Bones. The Anatomy of Sexual Difference in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries. *Isis* 94: 274–99. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
Vogt, Peter. 2009. "Honor to the Side". The Adoration of the Side Wound of Jesus in Eigtheenth-Century Moravian Piety. *Journal of Moravian History* 7: 83–106. [CrossRef]
Vogt, Peter. 2015. The Masculinity of Christ according to Zinzendorf. Evidence and Interpretation. *Journal of Moravian History* 15: 97–135. [CrossRef]
Vogt, Peter. 2021. Die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine als Fallbeispiel für Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte im Pietismus. Wege der Forschung seit 20 Jahren. *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 45: 269–91.
Witt, Christian Volkmar. 2013. *Martin Luthers Reformation der Ehe. Sein theologisches Eheverständnis vor dessen augustinisch-mittelalterlichem Hintergrund*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.