

Marriage, Family, and Household in the Reformation in the Holy Roman Empire and in England

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In describing the transition from Reformation movements to Reformation churches, a classical theology-based history of the Reformation would focus above all on the development of theological teachings, liturgy and church order. No less significant, however, were the changes in social formations and mentalities. In this sense, Waldemar Kawerau noted as early as 1892 that the ecclesiastical Reformation of the church had also become a reformation of domestic life.¹ In recent decades, socio-cultural research has dealt extensively with gender relations and social practices in the context of marriage, family, and household in the Reformation,² confirming that they were not just on the periphery of Reformation reorganization.³ In this paper, I take for granted the results of this kind of research, but will try to return to a greater extent to the normative theological concepts and their substantiations. On the other hand, the much debated and thoroughly controversial questions of the extent to which Protestantism (apart from the introduction of clerical marriage) produced substan-

¹ WALDEMAR KAWERAU, *Die Reformation und die Ehe. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Halle 1892, 4.

² E.g. STEVEN E. OZMENT, *When Fathers Ruled. Family Life in Reformation Europe*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London 1983; PATRICK COLLINSON, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England. Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Basingstoke and London 1988, 60–93; LYNDAL ROPER, *The Holy Household*, Oxford 1989 (German translation: *Das fromme Haus. Frauen und Moral in der Reformation*, Frankfurt a. M. and New York 1995); HEIDE WUNDER, »Er ist die Sonn', sie ist der Mond«. *Frauen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Munich 1992, esp. 65–76; JACK GOODY, *Geschichte der Familie*, Munich 2002, 101–124; CHRISTINE PETERS, *Patterns of Piety. Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England*, Cambridge 2005, 314–342; WOLFGANG REINHARD, *Lebensformen Europas. Eine historische Kulturanthropologie*, München 2006, 199–226; DIARMAID MACCULLOCH, *Die Reformation 1490–1750*, Munich 2003, 784–856.

³ E.g. ROPER, *Das fromme Haus* (see note 2), 11: »Die Geschlechterbeziehungen [...] wurden durch die Reformation keineswegs nur am Rande berührt. Sie standen im Gegenteil im Zentrum der Reformation. Die konservative Umdeutung der Glaubenslehren der reformatorischen Bewegung kreiste um die Bestimmung der Rolle der Frau in Ehe und Haushalt. Dieses konservative Umschreiben der evangelischen Botschaft war der Schlüssel dazu, die Reformation erfolgreich einzuführen und zu verankern.«

tial changes in the daily lives of families at all,⁴ whether it brought about a social emancipation of women⁵ or, especially in the form of English Puritanism, an emotional deepening of family relationships,⁶ will not be discussed here.

The sources on which I am primarily based are for the area of the Lutheran Reformation Luther's sermon *Vom ehelichen Leben* from 1522⁷ and the *Oeconomia Christiana* of the Eisenach superintendent Justus Menius (1449–1558) from 1529.⁸ Moreover, I have used other writings of Luther, Johannes Mathesius, Erasmus Sarcerius and Andreas Fabricius. Heinrich Bullinger's (1504–1575) *Der Christlich Eestand* (1540) can be regarded as exemplary for the Zurich Reformation.⁹ At the same time, it had a strong impact on the early English Reformation: Miles Coverdale translated it into English immediately after its publication. The first English printing appeared in late 1541¹⁰ and until 1575 there were eight more editions. Another author on the border between the German-speaking and the English Reformation was Martin Bucer (1491–1551) with his late work *De regno Christi* (1550) dedicated to King Edward VI of England which was, however, eventually printed not in England, but only seven years later in Basel and in 1563 appeared also in a German translation.¹¹

⁴ COLLINSON, Birthpangs (see note 2), 81–90; MACCULLOCH, Die Reformation (see note 2), 793.

⁵ Cf. e.g. CLAUDIA ULBRICH, Frauen in der Reformation (in: Die Frühe Neuzeit in der Geschichtswissenschaft. Forschungstendenzen und Forschungserträge, ed. Nada Boškowska Leimgruber, Paderborn 1997, 163–177).

⁶ Cf. COLLINSON, Birthpangs (see note 2), 63–64.

⁷ MARTIN LUTHER, Vom Eelichen Leben, Wittenberg 1522 (VD16 L 7025; USTC 700025). Used here: the edition in WA 10/2,267–304. For a comprehensive account on Luther's theology of marriage cf. CHRISTIAN VOLKMAR WITT, Martin Luthers Reformation der Ehe. Sein theologisches Eheverständnis vor dessen augustinisch-mittelalterlichem Hintergrund, Tübingen 2017; THOMAS KAUFMANN, Reformation der Lebenswelt: Luthers Eheologie (in: ID., Der Anfang der Reformation. Studien zur Kontextualität der Theologie, Publizistik, und Inszenierung Luthers und der reformatorischen Bewegung, Tübingen 2012, 550–564); UTE GAUSE, art. Ehe / Familie (in: Das Luther-Lexikon, eds. Volker Leppin and Gury Schneider-Ludorff, Regensburg 2014, 181–2).

⁸ JUSTUS MENIUS, *Oeconomia Christiana* das ist von christlicher Haußhaltung, Wittenberg 1529 (VD16 M 4541; USTC 636874). Used here: the edition in: Ehe und Familie im Geist des Luthertums. Die *Oeconomia Christiana* (1529) des Justus Menius, eds. Ute Gause and Stephanie Scholz, Leipzig 2012, 35–139.

⁹ HEINRICH BULLINGER, *Der Christlich Eestand*. Von der heiligen Ee herkommen / wenn / wo / wie / vnnd von wäm sy ufgesetzt / vnd was sy sye, Zürich 1540 (VD16 B 9578; USTC 632939). A modern German translation in: HEINRICH BULLINGER, *Schriften*, vol. 1, eds. Emidio Campi, Detlef Roth and Peter Stotz, Zurich 2004, 417–575. Cf. ALFRED WEBER, Heinrich Bullingers »Christlicher Ehestand«, seine zeitgenössischen Quellen und die Anfänge des Familienbuches in England, Leipzig 1929.

¹⁰ HEINRICH BULLINGER, The Christen state of matrimonye: The orygenall of holy wedlok: whan, where, how, and of whom it was instituted [and] ordeyned: what it is: how it ought to procede: what be the occasions, frute and commodities therof, Antwerp 1541 (ESTC S108927; USTC 410898).

From the domain of the English Reformation the Elizabethan *Book of Common Prayer* from 1559¹² and the wedding sermon from the second *Book of Homilies*¹³ finished in 1571 were consulted. All other English sources are almost exclusively from Puritan authors of the late 16th and early 17th century: starting from the voluminous *Catechism* of Thomas Becon (1560)¹⁴ and a wedding sermon of Henry Smith from the year 1591¹⁵ up to the detailed manuals of William Perkins (1609),¹⁶ William

¹¹ MARTIN BUCER, *De Regno Christi Iesu servatoris nostri, libri II. Ad Eduardum VI Angliae Regem, annis abhinc sex scripti*. Basel: Oporinus, 1557 (VD16 B 8906; USTC 631342); used here: Martini Bucer Opera Latina, vol. 15: *De regno Christi libri duo*, 1550, ed. Francois Wendel, Paris 1955. German translation: *Vom Reich Christi [...]*, Strasbourg 1563 (VD16 B 8907; USTC 701665). Cf. MARTIN GRESCHAT, *Martin Bucer. Ein Reformator und seine Zeit (1491–1551)*, Münster ²2009, 270–276; BASIL HALL, *Martin Bucer in England* (in: *Martin Bucer: Reforming church and community*, ed. D. F. Wright, Cambridge 1994, 144–160, esp. 154–158).

¹² *The Boke of common praier, and administration of the Sacramentes, and other rites and Ceremonies in the Church of Englande*, London: Richard Grafton, 1559 (ESTC S93763; USTC 518068). Reprint: *The Book of Common Prayer commonly called The First Book of Queen Elizabeth*. Printed by Grafton 1559, London 1844. Within the wedding liturgy we find here an exhortation to the couple based on the NT conduct rules (Haustafeln) which could be read by the priest instead of a wedding sermon (ibid., 99^{r/v}).

¹³ *The Two Books of Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches*. Oxford 1859, here: 500–515 (*A Homily of the State of Matrimony*). – The two *Books of Homilies* composed by Thomas Cranmer in 1547 and John Jewel in 1571 were collections of Protestant model sermons: cf. ASHLEY NULL, *Official Tudor Homilies* (in: *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, eds. Hugh Adlington, Peter McCullough and Emma Rhatigan, Oxford 2011, 348–365). The first half of the wedding sermon in Book II is an almost unchanged English translation of a German sermon of Veit Dietrich, a Latin version of which had been printed by Nikolaus Selnecker (*The Two Books of Homilies*, 500, note 1).

¹⁴ Thomas Becon, *A new Catechisme sette forth Dyaloge wise in familiare talke betwene the father and the son, s.l., s. a. [1560]*. Again in: *The Catechism of Thomas Becon, with other pieces written by him in the reign of King Edward the Sixth*, ed. John Ayre, Cambridge 1844, 1–410. Thomas Becon (Becon, ca. 1511–1567) was a confidant of Cranmer and canon at Canterbury Cathedral; c. 1556–1559 he taught at the University of Marburg: ALEXANDER BALLOCH GROSART, *Art. Becon, Thomas* (in: *DNB* 4, 1885, 92–94); DERRICK SHERWIN BAILEY, *Thomas Becon and the Reformation of the Church of England*, Edinburgh u.a. 1952.

¹⁵ HENRY SMITH, *A preparatiue to mariage The summe whereof was spoken at a contract, and enlarged after. Whereunto is annexed a treatise of the Lords Supper, and another of vsurie*, London 1591 (ESTC S104139). Used here: HENRY SMITH, *A Preparative to Marriage*, in: *Id.*, *The Sermons, gathered into one volume*, London 1937, 9–47. – Henry Smith (ca. 1550/60–1591), also known as »silver-tonged Smith«, was a lecturer at St. Clement Danes in the City of Westminster and was considered the most popular Puritan Preacher of Elizabethan London: THOMPSON COOPER, *Art. Smith, Henry* (in: *DNB* 53, 1898, 48–49).

¹⁶ WILLIAM PERKINS, *Christian Oeconomie: or, A short survey of the right manner of erecting and ordering a familie according to the scriptures*. First written in Latine by the author M. W. Perkins, and now set forth in the vulgar tongue [...] by Tho. Pickering

Whately (1617)¹⁷ and William Gouge (1622)¹⁸. This might not be a coincidence, as Puritanism was especially interested in the religious sanctification of everyday life.¹⁹

The literary genres of the writings considered here from the Holy Roman Empire as well as from England are not always clear-cut but sometimes tend to merge: from wedding sermons to theological and ethical tracts on the marital status and the duties of spouses up to genuine householder manuals (»Hausväterliteratur«) and advice literature²⁰ and Puritan conduct books²¹. In most cases the so-called »Haustafeln« (conduct rules) from Eph 5:21–6:9, Col 3:18–4:1 und 1 Pt 3:1–7 serve as biblical reference texts.

A preliminary remark on terminology is required. In the following paper, we will discuss the meaning of the family for the establishment of the Reformation. In fact, we find this term (»family«, »familia«, »Familie«)²² pre-eminently in English sources, whereas it is much less common in those from the German-speaking Reformation. William Perkins in his *Christian Oeconomie* from 1609 gives a formal definition:

»A Familie, is a naturall and simple Societie of certaine persons, hauing mutual relation one to another vnder the priuate government of one«.²³

Bachelor of Diuinitie, London 1609 (ESTC S4819). The Latin original from 1590 has not been preserved. – William Perkins (1558–1602) was Fellow of Christ's College at Cambridge und preacher at Great St. Andrew's Church und one of the leading puritans of his generation. Cf. JAMES BASS MULLINGER, Art. Perkins, William (in: DNB 45, 1896, 6–9); MARTIN SALLMANN, William Perkins. Puritaner zwischen Calvinismus und Pietismus (in: Theologen des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts, eds. Peter Walter and Martin H. Jung, Darmstadt 2003, 88–105).

¹⁷ WILLIAM WHATELY, *A bride-bush; or a wedding Sermon compendiously describing the duties of married persons*, London 1617 (ESTC S101310). Used here: WILLIAM WHATELY, *Directions for Married Persons*, London ⁴1790 (ESTC N964). – William Whately (1583–1639) was rector in Banbury near Oxford: CHARLOTTE FELL SMITH, Art. Whately, William (in: DNB 60, 1899, 430–1). Cf. JACQUELINE EALES, *Gender Construction in Early Modern England and the Conduct Books of William Whately, 1583–1639* (in: *Gender and Christian Religion*, ed. R. N. Swanson, Woodbridge 1998, 163–174).

¹⁸ WILLIAM GOUGE, *Of domesticall duties eight treatises [...]*, London 1622 (ESTC S103290). – William Gouge (1575–1653) was rector of St. Anne Blackfriars in London and member of the Westminster Assembly: ALEXANDER GORDON, Art. Gouge, William (in: DNB 22, 1890, 271–273).

¹⁹ On puritanism cf. WOLF-FRIEDRICH SCHÄUFELE, art. Puritanismus (in: EdN 10, 2009, 560–566).

²⁰ Cf. JÜRGEN DONIEN, art. Hausväterliteratur (in: EdN 5, 2007, 254–256).

²¹ COLLINSON, *Birthpangs* (see note 2), 68–74 and *passim*.

²² Cf. ANDREAS GESTRICH, Art. Familie 2. Begriffsgeschichte (in: EdN 3, 2006, 791–2).

²³ PERKINS, *Christian Oeconomie* (see note 16), 1–2.

In the Continental sources, on the other hand, the term »Ehe« – along with »Ehestand« and »eheliches Leben« – is predominant (»marriage« or »matrimony«, in Latin »coniugium« or »matrimonium«). Of course, in this sense marriage almost always includes the children and their education and also the unmarried servants who lived in the house and like the children were under the joint supervision of the spouses. In this broader sense, the sources also speak of »house« or »household« (»Haus«, »Haushaltung«) or »economy« (»Ökonomie«, »oconomia«).

1. Theological revaluation of the significance of marriage and family

In the reassessment of the significance of marriage and family, two fundamental tendencies of Reformation theology are combined: the levelling of the distinction between »sacred« and »secular« on the one hand, and, consequently, the religious revaluation of areas of life formerly rated as »secular« on the other. Actually, this meant that, in contrast to the late medieval scholastic teachings, the Reformers denied the sacramental character and thus a special sacramental sanctity of marriage that distinguished it from other ways of life or social practices. At the same time, they revalued the status of marriage and household, which in the Middle Ages was considered inferior to the so-called »spiritual status« of priests and religious, and acknowledged its special religious dignity as an order instituted by God, or even as a binding divine commandment.

In contesting the sacramental sanctity of marriage the Reformation counteracted the ongoing process of sacramentalization of marriage pushed along by the Roman Church since the High Middle Ages. Originally, only the voluntary agreement and mutual promise of bride and groom was considered as constituting marriage. After the first sexual intercourse it was regarded as indissoluble. But since the 12th century, the Church had endeavoured to bring marriage under its control, by recognizing it as a sacrament – a sacrament, of course, administered by the spouses themselves to one another but nevertheless demanding priestly consecration as a necessary ingredient.²⁴ This new conception had not yet been fully established when it was repealed by the Reformers. In his tract *Von Ehesachen* (1530) Luther brought the new Reformation conviction to the classic phrase of marriage as a secular matter (»ein weltlich ding«) like clothes

²⁴ URS BAUMANN, art. Ehe VI. Historisch-theologisch (in: LThK³ 3, 1993, 471–474, here: 472–3); OZMENT, *When Fathers Ruled* (see note 2), 26–28.

and food, house and yard, subject to secular authorities.²⁵ Thus wedlock was clearly qualified as a secular legal transaction, as a matter of contract of the spouses and their families. Marital jurisdiction lay with the secular legislator. Secular, not canon law had to be applied and gradually the episcopal marital courts were replaced by novel bodies composed of secular judges in which theologians had only advisory votes.²⁶ Marriage and family were no longer a special domain subject to religious and ecclesiastical norms and jurisdiction, but were levelled into the whole of social life. Like Luther, Heinrich Bullinger, too, declared marriage to be one of those »outward things« which are subject to secular authority.²⁷

Interestingly enough, in England there was no such replacement of ecclesiastical by secular marital courts. Indeed Martin Bucer in the second volume of his late work *De Regno Christi* had made detailed proposals to King Edward VI (r. 1547–1553) for 14 laws towards a »plena religionis restitutio« among which the law on marriage and divorce was by far the most extensive, with 33 out of a total of 52 chapters.²⁸ In a similar way to Luther, Bucer qualified marriage as a »res politica«, for which state laws and secular courts were required. The secular rulers should recapture the marital jurisdiction wrongly usurped by the Antichristian Roman papacy.²⁹ However, under the rule of Edward, no such legislation was implemented, and the Elizabethan Settlement again set aside the issue of a new law on marriage. Thus in England canon law on marriage remained valid and the episcopal courts continued to exist.³⁰

Luther's characterization of marriage as a secular matter was meant to dispute the notion of marriage and family as a special religious and legal sphere apart from other issues of social life. It was not, however, intended to deny marriage any religious significance. On the contrary, for Luther marriage was a special work of God and under his special supervision.³¹ God had intentionally created man as male and female, and determined

²⁵ »das die ehe ein eusserlich weltlich ding ist wie kleider und speise, haus und hoff, weltlicher oberkeit unterworffen« (WA 30/3,205,12–3).

²⁶ Regarding the Saxon territories cf. RALF FRASSEK, *Eherecht und Ehegerichtsbarkeit in der Reformationszeit. Der Aufbau neuer Rechtsstrukturen im sächsischen Raum unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Wirkungsgeschichte des Wittenberger Konsistoriums*, Tübingen 2005.

²⁷ »ob glych wol die Ee ouch die Seel vnd inneren menschen angadt / hört sy doch ouch vnder die eusserliche ding / die der oberkeit underworffen sind« (BULLINGER, *Der Christlich Eestand* [see note 9], ch. 4, not paginated; *Schriften* [see note 9], 436).

²⁸ BUCER, *De regno Christi* (see note 11), 152–234 (ch. 15–47).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

³⁰ MARTIN INGRAM, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570–1640*, Cambridge 1987.

³¹ WITT, *Luthers Reformation der Ehe* (see note 7), 250–258.

both to complement each other. Therefore, marriage was considered a godly order by Luther and the later Lutherans. For Justus Menius, it was the greatest and most worthwhile among all estates of human life.³² Moreover, entering the marital status was not only the normal case based on creation, but a commandment of divine law directly binding for all human beings, of which only a few categories of people expressly defined in the New Testament (Mt 19:12) were exempted.³³ Luther stressed, against his opponents, that getting married was not at will. They should be aware that it was a divine commandment just as strict as or even stricter than the prohibition of murder and adultery.³⁴

Bullinger derived the paramount religious rank of marriage from the circumstances of its establishment. Marriage was the only order still established in Paradise, that is, before the Fall, and its founder was God himself.³⁵ In close dependence on Bullinger's remarks, but in his biblical references and arguments going even beyond into the New Testament, Henry Smith dealt with »The excellency of marriage«. ³⁶ On the background of such convictions about the religious dignity of marriage, Bullinger could speak without hesitation of »holy marriage«, and Bucer could call the »sacrum coniugium«³⁷ a »sanctissima societas«.³⁸

Thus marriage and family did not only participate in the general appreciation of the everyday actions of believers as godly good works – in this sense Luther in his *Sermon von den guten Werken* (1520) had acknowledged even the lifting of a straw as a godly work when done in faith,³⁹ and in the same way we must understand his famous remark from *Vom Eelichen Leben* about God and all his angels complacently laughing about a father washing the diapers of his infant child.⁴⁰ Much more, as the most commendable order on earth, the »holy order of marriage« had its own religious dignity.

³² MENIUS, *Oeconomia Christiana* (ed. Gause / Scholz [see note 8], 44).

³³ LUTHER, *Vom Eelichen Leben* (see note 7), 277,1–280,6.

³⁴ »gleich wie hohe not vnd hart gebot ist / da Gott spricht / Du solt nicht tödten / Du solt nicht ehebrechen / eben so hoch not vnd hart gepot / ia vil hoher not vnd herter gepot ists / Du solt ehelich sein / du solt ein weib haben / du solt einen man haben« (Luther's foreword to MENIUS, *Oeconomia Christiana*, ed. Gause / Scholz [see note 8], 38).

³⁵ BULLINGER, *Der Christlich Eestand* (see note 9), ch. 1 (not paginated; *Schriften* [see note 9], 429–30).

³⁶ SMITH, *A Preparative to Marriage* (see note 15), 9–11.

³⁷ BUCER, *De regno Christi* (see note 11), 153, 164 and *passim*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

³⁹ WA 6,206,9–11.

⁴⁰ WA 10/2,296,27–297,4.

The revaluation of marriage and family implied on the other side a devaluation and delegitimization of other modes of life. First and foremost, of course, this applied to male and female monasticism and the celibate life of priests. The medieval church had placed these forms of sexually abstinent life as religiously superior and meritorious over the secular life of the married. The reformers reversed this order. As the celibate and monastic form of life had no basis in Scripture, and as they moreover violated the commandment of marriage, they must by no means be made compulsory. The basic possibility of an unmarried life due to a special God-given charisma, which was initially still affirmed,⁴¹ soon lost importance; monasticism and celibacy disappeared from the Protestant communities⁴². The most significant consequence of this was that now the pastor became a husband.⁴³ Indeed, with the pastor and his wife, there stood an exemplary married couple at the top of the parish community.⁴⁴ Thus the levelling of the distinction between the clergy and the so-called laity, theologically based on the principle of the general priesthood of the baptized, became socially manifest. The result was (at least to some extent) a social homogenization of the congregation.

The pressure now grew on all unmarried »lay people« to enter wedlock. In the Middle Ages, many people remained single, mainly for economic reasons, and even in the 16th century, the percentage of unmarried people in the rural population is estimated at one third, in the cities at one third to one half.⁴⁵ But the Reformation preachers urged marriage as the binding social model for all, not least in order to assign sexuality to a socially legitimate and controlled place. In this they frequently tended to take the economic issues too lightly. For Luther, marriage in spite of low financial resources simply was a question of trust in God.⁴⁶ Accordingly,

⁴¹ LUTHER, *Vom Eelichen Leben* (see note 7), 279,15–23.

⁴² On Luther's experiment of an »evangelical monasticism« in the years 1522–1524 cf. WOLF-FRIEDRICH SCHÄUFELE, »[...] iam sum monachus et non monachus«. Martin Luthers doppelter Abschied vom Mönchtum (in: *Martin Luther – Biographie und Theologie*, eds. Dietrich Korsch and Volker Leppin, Tübingen 2017, 119–140).

⁴³ LUISE SCHORN-SCHÜTTE, *Die Drei-Stände-Lehre im reformatorischen Umbruch* (in: *Die frühe Reformation in Deutschland als Umbruch*, ed. Bernd Moeller, Gütersloh 1998, 435–461, esp. 446–450).

⁴⁴ LUISE SCHORN-SCHÜTTE, »Gefährtin« und »Mitregentin«. Zur Sozialgeschichte der evangelischen Pfarrfrau in der Frühen Neuzeit (in: *Wandel der Geschlechterbeziehungen zu Beginn der Neuzeit*, eds. Heide Wunder and Christina Vanja, Frankfurt/Main 1991, 109–153); SUSAN C. KARANT-NUNN, *Reformation und Askese: Das Pfarrhaus als evangelisches Kloster* (in: *Kommunikation und Transfer im Christentum der Frühen Neuzeit*, eds. Irene Dingel and Wolf-Friedrich Schäufele, Mainz 2008, 211–228).

⁴⁵ OZMENT, *When Fathers Ruled* (see note 2), 41–42.

⁴⁶ LUTHER, *Vom Eelichen Leben* (see note 7), 302,16–303,28.

he pleaded for an early marriage: men should get married at the age of 20 years, women at the age of 15–18 years.⁴⁷ And even though William Gouge strongly recommended that men and women should marry only several years after reaching the minimum legal age of 14 or 12 years, respectively,⁴⁸ the result will have been virtually the same. Another consequence of the theological and social revaluation of marriage and the social control of sexuality was the closure of the brothels in the Protestant territories. The result was a congregation that was much more homogenized compared to the Middle Ages. The Protestant congregation was a community of spouses and families.⁴⁹

2. Normative Centring

At first glance, it seems surprising how far the new theological and legal ideas of the German and English reformers on marriage and family were in agreement, at least in their outlines. Apparently, in a short time they had succeeded to replace the medieval scholastic teachings on marriage with a relatively coherent set of their own views. This can be understood as the result of a biblically oriented normative centring.⁵⁰ The same biblical references and rules were used throughout, albeit with not unimportant differences in accent and detail.

Usually, the Reformers defined a triple theological purpose of marriage. With the Creation narrative of Gen 1 and the divine call, »Be fruitful and multiply« (Gen 1:28), marriage was assigned the task of procreation and parenting. From the second Creation narrative in Gen 2, it was derived that the spouses should befriend and comfort one another, support one another and provide assistance in everyday life and work (Gen 2:18). And with Paul in 1 Cor 7:2, marriage was considered the most important means of preventing fornication.⁵¹ The model wedding sermon of the *Second*

⁴⁷ Ibid., 303,31–2. Cf. MENIUS, *Oeconomia Christiana* (ed. Gause / Scholz [see note 8], 102); OZMENT, *When Fathers Ruled* (see note 2), 38.

⁴⁸ »[I]f they forbear some yeares longer, it will be much better for the parties themselves that marie, for the children which they bring forth, for the family whereof they are the head, and for the common wealth whereof they are members« (GOUGE, *Of domesticall duties* [see note 18], 180).

⁴⁹ OZMENT, *When Fathers Ruled* (see note 2), 55–56.

⁵⁰ The concept of »normative centering« (»normative Zentrierung«) has been introduced to Reformation research by Berndt Hamm: cf. BERNDT HAMM, *Reformation als normative Zentrierung von Religion und Gesellschaft* (in: *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 7, 1992, 241–279).

⁵¹ All three aspects clearly in BULLINGER, *Der Christlich Eestand* (see note 9, ch. 10, not paginated; *Schriften* [see note 9], 467–472), in the wedding liturgy of the Elizabethan

Book of Homilies and William Perkins eventually added a fourth purpose: the multiplication and propagation of the church.⁵²

For Luther and Menius, among the three classical purposes of marriage procreation and parenting were most essential,⁵³ even though both of them acknowledged the prevention of fornication as another important goal. For William Whately, on the other hand, the latter was the foremost and main purpose.⁵⁴ A special feature of Martin Bucer was his strong emphasis on the partnership of husband and wife, their harmonious coexistence and their mutual support.⁵⁵ According to him the final purpose of marriage was the »*rerum omnium divinarum & humanarum summa cum benevolentia communicatio*«. ⁵⁶ Henry Smith, too, put this aspect in the first place. In his eyes marriage was first of all meant to evade »the inconvenience of solitarinesse«:

»This life would be miserable and irksome and unpleasant to man, if the Lord had not given him a wife to company his troubles.« »Beasts are ordained for food, and clothes for warmth, and flowers for pleasure; but the wife is ordained for man, [...] a Citie of refuge to flie to in all troubles, and there is no peace comparable unto her, but the peace of conscience«. »[L]ike a Turtle, which hath lost his Mate, like one legge, when the other is cut off, like one wing, when the other is clipt, so had the man been, if the woman had not been joyned to him«. ⁵⁷

In the course of the Biblically oriented normative centring of marriage, three central positions of the canon law on marriage were rejected: the recognition of secret marriages, the scholastic casuistry of obstacles to marriage and the prohibition of divorce. This applies equally to the Reformers in the Holy Roman Empire and to the English Puritans. Notwithstanding, certain norms of canon law continued to be applied in the episcopal courts of England, and even secular courts on the continent partly continued to rely on canon law provisions.⁵⁸

As far as secret marriages are concerned – unions based solely on the spouses' mutual marriage vows, without witnesses, parents' consent, or church ceremonies – these were valid under canon law, even though ca-

Book of Common Prayer (see note 12, 96^r) and in SMITH, *A Preparative to Marriage* (see note 15, 13–17).

⁵² The Two Books of Homilies (see note 13), 500; PERKINS, *Christian Oeconomie* (see note 16), 13–14.

⁵³ LUTHER, *Vom Eelichen Leben* (see note 7), 301,16–30; MENIUS, *Oeconomia Christiana* (ed. Gause / Scholz [see note 8], 28–30, 64). Cf. WITT, *Luthers Reformation der Ehe* (see note 7), 258–264.

⁵⁴ WHATELY, *Directions for Married Persons* (see note 17), 20.

⁵⁵ BUCER, *De regno Christi* (see note 11), 205–208.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁵⁷ Quotes: SMITH, *A Preparative to Marriage* (see note 15), 16, 13, 17.

⁵⁸ Cf. OZMENT, *When Fathers Ruled* (see note 2), 29–32.

nonists gradually tried to displace them by enforcing formal requirements such as obligatory witnesses and the church wedding ceremony – a process that only came to a close with the Council of Trent.⁵⁹ In contrast, the attitude of the reformers was clear from the beginning. Although the consensus of the couple was the most important and constitutive element of marriage, secret marriages were generally disapproved of. Especially betrothals without parental consent were rejected by almost all authors as invalid.⁶⁰ Increasingly, also the religious consecration of marriage in the church was considered a necessary part of the wedding.⁶¹

The sophisticated casuistry of possible obstacles to marriage, which included not only consanguinity up to the fourth degree, but also relationship by marriage and godparenthood up to comparable degrees as well as other special cases, was rejected by the Reformers in the Holy Roman Empire as unbiblical and illogical.⁶² As early as 1522, Luther countered the relevant provisions of canon law with the enumeration of forbidden degrees of relationship according to Lev 18:6–18 as the only binding norm. This resulted in a notable reduction of restrictions; in particular, marriages between sibling children (first cousins) were now allowed.⁶³ Bullinger's detailed treatment of the obstacles to marriage was also based on Lev 18 and analogies drawn from there.⁶⁴ Bucer recommended that a future English marriage law should follow the laws of God and the example of the Old Testament Fathers.⁶⁵ On the other hand, surprisingly, this question played practically no role in the English Puritans considered here. The marriage with non-Christians prohibited by canon law was also rejected almost universally by the Protestant authors in the Empire as well as in England.⁶⁶ A temporary exception was the young Luther, for whom the worldliness of marriage also permitted weddings with Jews or Muslims.⁶⁷ Perkins at least held that if one of the partners had fallen away from

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 26–28.

⁶⁰ BULLINGER, *Der Christlich Eestand* (see note 9), ch. 5 (not paginated; *Schriften* [see note 9], 440–445); BUCER, *De regno Christi* (see note 11), 157–161; *The Catechism of Thomas Becon* (see note 14), 355–56; SMITH, *A Preparative to Marriage* (see note 15), 24; PERKINS, *Christian Oeconomie* (see note 16), 76; GOUGE, *Of domesticall duties* (see note 18), 446–453.

⁶¹ BUCER, *De regno Christi* (see note 11), 163–64; PERKINS, *Christian Oeconomie* (see note 16), 94; GOUGE, *Of domesticall duties* (see note 18), 203–205.

⁶² OZMENT, *When Fathers Ruled* (see note 2), 44–48.

⁶³ LUTHER, *Vom Eelichen Leben* (see note 7), 280,7–287,11.

⁶⁴ BULLINGER, *Der Christlich Eestand* (see note 9), ch. 7 (not paginated; *Schriften* [see note 9], 447–458).

⁶⁵ BUCER, *De regno Christi* (see note 11), 154–156.

⁶⁶ E.g. SMITH, *A Preparative to Marriage* (see note 15), 25–26.

⁶⁷ LUTHER, *Vom Eelichen Leben* (see note 7), 283,1–16.

Christianity only after wedding, the marriage stayed valid according to the precept of Paul (1 Cor 7:12–14).⁶⁸

The third major questioning of the canon law of marriage in the course of the Reformation normative centring concerned the possibility of divorce, which was denied by medieval church law, but generally admitted by the reformers.⁶⁹ Crucial for that position was the conviction of the outward, secular character of the contract of marriage as well as Jesus' saying in Matthew 19:9 repeatedly cited in this context, which permitted a divorce in case of adultery. As a matter of fact, adultery, according to Reformation principles, dissolved as such the bond of marital union so that divorce – and the possibility of remarriage! – was the inevitable consequence. However, there was resistance to this view also in the Reformation churches. In England, it was the Puritans who voted with biblical arguments for the possibility of divorce, while conservative Anglicans remained sceptical. As late as 1619, William Whately caused an uproar when he declared divorce permissible in his *Bride-Bush*.⁷⁰ In fact, England was the only Protestant country in Europe that did not acknowledge the possibility of lawful divorce, although in the end it was rather political coincidences than religious teachings that were decisive.⁷¹ Regardless, divorce in all Protestant territories remained a rare exception in practical life.

There were differing opinions as to whether the betrayed partner of a penitent adulterer could⁷² or even should⁷³ cling to his or her marriage. In any case, the innocently divorced partner was free to remarry, the basic function of marriage as a means of preventing fornication requiring it.⁷⁴ Remarriage of the adulterous partner, on the other hand, was usually not an issue; in biblical times he would have been punishable by death anyway – a sanction that some Protestant authors could also imagine for their own time.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ PERKINS, *Christian Oeconomie* (see note 16), 59–62.

⁶⁹ CORDULA SCHOLZ-LÖHNIG, art. Eheauflösung (in: EdN 3, 2006, 52–57); OZMENT, *When Fathers Ruled* (see note 2), 80–99. On Luther: ERNST KINDER, *Luthers Stellung zur Ehescheidung* (in: Luther 24, 1953, 75–86); WITT, *Luthers Reformation der Ehe* (see note 7), 205–214.

⁷⁰ WHATELY, *Directions for Married People* (see note 17), 6. Cf. Smith, Art. Whately (see note 17), 431; PETERS, *Patterns of Piety* (see note 2), 330.

⁷¹ MACCULLOCH, *Die Reformation* (see note 2), 848.

⁷² Thus e.g. LUTHER, *Vom Eelichen Leben* (see note 7), 288,29–31; 289,29–290,1.

⁷³ WHATELY, *Directions for Married People* (see note 17), 6–7; GOUGE, *Of domesticall duties* (see note 18), 218–19.

⁷⁴ BULLINGER, *Der Christlich Eestand* (see note 9), ch. 25 (not paginated; *Schriften* [see note 9], 574–5).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*; LUTHER, *Vom Eelichen Leben* (see note 7), 289,8–17; BUCER, *De regno Christi* (see note 11), 189–194.

While for some Protestant writers, including the Puritans Smith, Whately, and Gouge, adultery was the only legitimate reason for divorce, others acknowledged more and different reasons.⁷⁶ So Bullinger subsumed the unbelief of the partner under the facts of adultery.⁷⁷ For Luther, who initially thought differently about disbelief, as mentioned above, a physical incapacity to consummate marriage discovered only after the wedding or the permanent denial of sexual intercourse were other valid reasons for divorce. Even an extreme case of irreconcilable mutual incompatibility of the spouses could in his eyes justify a divorce after which, however, no remarriage was allowed.⁷⁸

The most elaborate and liberal treatment of divorce, its preconditions, its practice and its consequences can be found in Bucer's proposal for a Reformation legislation to King Edward VI; it constitutes the bulk of the large marriage section.⁷⁹ Excerpts from it were printed by John Milton in 1644 in English translation and submitted to Parliament.⁸⁰ Besides adultery, the permanent denial of conjugal love and marital intercourse, as well as the oppression and mistreatment of the partner, he was ready to accept the divorce grounds provided in ancient Roman law – certain serious crimes against third parties, overnight stays abroad, the visit of plays without the consent of the partner and the like.⁸¹

3. *Oeconomia and Politia:*

Marriage, Family, and Household as the Nucleus of Society

The theological revaluation of marriage, family and household contributed to the levelling of the social differences between church members and tended to make Protestant congregations homogeneous communities of married people. But even in their overall vision of social life the Reformers upgraded family and household to the dominant model and nucleus of society.⁸² The ancient model of the tripartite social order constituted by

⁷⁶ SMITH, *A Preparative to Marriage* (see note 15), 45; WHATELY, *Directions for Married Persons* (see note 17), 6; GOUGE, *Of domesticall duties* (see note 18), 217–18.

⁷⁷ BULLINGER, *Der Christlich Eestand* (see note 9), ch. 25 (not paginated; *Schriften* [see note 9], 573).

⁷⁸ LUTHER, *Vom Eelichen Leben* (see note 7), 287,15–17; 290,5–291,14.

⁷⁹ BUCER, *De regno Christi* (see note 11), 165–226 (ch. 22–44).

⁸⁰ The Ivdgement of Martin Bucer concerning divorce written to Edward the sixth, in his second book of the Kingdom of Christ, and now English, London 1644. Cf. DAVID MASSON, *The Life of John Milton*, vol. 3: 1643–1649, Cambridge 1873, 255–261.

⁸¹ BUCER, *De regno Christi* (see note 11), 203–04.

⁸² Compare COLLINSON, *Birthpangs* (see note 2), 60–61; ANDREAS GESTRICH, art.

clergy, nobles, and peasants and labourers – in medieval terminology: *oratores*, *bellatores* and *laboratores* – presupposed a more or less static hierarchy of the three estates, while, of course, due to celibacy the clergy had continually to be supplemented from the other two orders. Luther's doctrine of the Three Orders,⁸³ which he certainly never expounded coherently, is based on the old triple model. But here the three »principal estates« of *oeconomia* (household), *politia* (government) and *ecclesia* (church) are not only of the same rank and equal dignity. They also appear much less sharply demarcated, and show different transitions and functional overlaps. A prince or lord can be at the same time husband and father, as well as the administrator of a church office.⁸⁴ In the end, marriage and household, or, as Luther puts it, *oeconomia* prove to be the middle and the starting point of the entire social order.

»For it is the oldest estate of all in the world, and all others stem from it, into which Adam and Eve, our ancestors, were created by God, and in which they and their godly children and descendants used to live.«⁸⁵

This is by no means just an historical account. In fact, *oeconomia* is still the actual nucleus of society, from which the members of the other two estates must be recruited. In his foreword to Menius' *Oeconomia Christiana* Luther emphasized the resulting responsibility of parents.⁸⁶ If they do not educate their children properly to godly and capable personalities, the spiritual and worldly realm both must perish. For where else should one take pastors and other church officials, councillors and civil servants? Thus, both governments ordained by God in this world, the spiritual and the secular, are ultimately based on marriage and household as their core and nucleus.

Familie 5. Familie und öffentliche Ordnung (in: EdN 3, 2006, 799–801); ANTJE ROGGENKAMP, art. Erziehung 4. Evangelische Erziehung (in: EdN 3, 2006, 524–528).

⁸³ Cf. PAUL ALTHAUS, Die Ethik Martin Luthers, Gütersloh 1965, 43–48; Bernhard Lohse, Luthers Theologie in ihrer historischen Entwicklung und in ihrem systematischen Zusammenhang, Göttingen 1995, 342–344; OSWALD BAYER, Nature and Institution. Luther's Doctrine of the Three Orders (in: Lutheran Quarterly 12, 1998, 125–159); REINHARD SCHWARZ, Martin Luther – Lehrer der christlichen Religion, Tübingen 2016, 153–162; SCHORN-SCHÜTTE, Drei-Stände-Lehre (see note 43); LUISE SCHORN-SCHÜTTE, art. Drei-Stände-Lehre (in: Das Luther-Lexikon, eds. Volker Leppin and Gury Schneider-Ludorff, Regensburg 2014, 174–176).

⁸⁴ ALTHAUS, Ethik Luthers (see note 83), 45.

⁸⁵ »Denn es ist der eltest stand unter allen der gantzen welt, ja, alle andere komen aus dem her, darein Adam und Eva, unser erste eltern, von Gott geschaffen und verordnet sein, darinn sie und alle jhre Gottfürchtige kinder und nachkomen gelebt haben«: Luther, Sermon on Hebr 13:4, August 4th, 1545 (WA 49,797,33–798,3).

⁸⁶ Luther's foreword to MENIUS, *Oeconomia Christiana* (ed. Gause / Scholz [see note 8], 39–42).

This essential connection between *oeconomia* and *politia*, but also *eclesia* results especially from the connection between authority and obedience, which in Luther's eyes is constitutive of all orders of human coexistence and is preformed, pre-trained, practically learned and practiced in the *oeconomia* in the cohabitation of husband and wife, parents and children, heads of the household and servants. In the *oeconomia* all forms of social relationships come together: the community of husband and wife as equal rulers, the equal dominion of parents over their children and the hierarchical dominion of the householders over their servants.⁸⁷ For a theological justification, Luther and other reformers used to refer to the Decalogue's commandment to honour one's parents, which they not only applied to the family, but also to the relationship to authorities in general. In this sense, Luther, following medieval interpretations like that of Thomas Aquinas,⁸⁸ gave in his *Greater Catechism* an explanation of the Fourth (otherwise Fifth) Commandment, that aimed at extending the obligation to obedience from the biological parents to the fathers of the land – the secular authorities – and the spiritual fathers in the church.⁸⁹ In the same sense, the parents' commandment was elaborated in detail in the *Unterricht der Visitatoren* printed for the first time in 1528.⁹⁰ In 1529, Justus Menius clearly pointed out the connection between *oeconomia* and *politia*, household and state government, as the two forms of God's earthly regiment and emphasized the paramount importance of family parenting for the common good:

»Therefore, if you want to advise country and people well and want to contribute to a good condition of the *politia*, then you really have to start in the *oeconomia* with the youth.«⁹¹

The English Puritans also emphasized the fundamental importance of the family as a model and educational institution for the secular, political order as well as for the church. Here, too, the basis for this conviction was the parents' commandment of the Decalogue, which, according to Thomas Becon, applied not only to the biological parents, but also

⁸⁷ SCHORN-SCHÜTTE, art. Drei-Stände-Lehre (see note 83), 175.

⁸⁸ VOLKER LEPPIN, Die Normierung der Frömmigkeit im »Unterricht der Visitatoren« (in: Der »Unterricht der Visitatoren« und die Durchsetzung der Reformation in Kursachsen, eds. Joachim Bauer and Stefan Michel, Leipzig 2017, 167–194, here: 177–78, note 54).

⁸⁹ WA 30/1,152,19–35; 153,29–155,21.

⁹⁰ WA 26,206,10–211,26. Cf. LEPPIN, Normierung der Frömmigkeit (see note 88), 177–181.

⁹¹ »Darumb / wil man landen vnd leuten wol raten vnd helffen / das es vmb die Politia wohl stehe / so mus mans warlich am ersten ynn der Oeconomia mit der iugent anfahren« (MENIUS, *Oeconomia Christiana*, ed. Gause / Scholz [see note 8], 64).

»toward the temporal magistrates, and the ministers of God's word, and toward our elders and all such as be our superiors and governors.«⁹²

In addition, there were reasons from salvation history: Thus, according to William Perkins, the family was the first and oldest of all communities («Societies & States») that make up mankind. Until the Flood, there was no secular government or church, and the whole civil and ecclesiastical order was confined to the families. It was only after the Flood that Noah's family became the common mother from which the other two estates emerged. The holy and righteous leadership of the family was therefore a direct means of a good ordering of church and community.⁹³ Similarly, William Gouge claimed the families as »excellent seminaries [...] to Church and Commonwealth«:

»Necessary it is that good order be first set in families: for as they were before other polities, so they are somewhat the more necessary: and good members of a family are like to make good members of Church and common-wealth.«⁹⁴

As far as the Reformation is concerned, household and family were not a private preserve apart from social life, but had an important political function.⁹⁵

4. *Oeconomia and Ecclesia:*

Marriage, Family and Household as a »Small Church«

The connection between *oeconomia* and *ecclesia* is not only, however, to be understood as meaning that in the family the necessary obedience to authority should be practiced and the future ecclesiastical staff be raised. Rather, the Reformers almost always claimed the family as a place of religious education and practice in faith and piety. As such, the family and the Christian household could be qualified as a church⁹⁶ or temple⁹⁷ on a small scale.⁹⁸

⁹² The Catechism of Thomas Becon (see note 14), 88.

⁹³ PERKINS, *Christian Oeconomie* (see note 16), Dedication (not paginated).

⁹⁴ GOUGE, *Of domesticall duties* (see note 18), Dedication (not paginated).

⁹⁵ »The home, then, was no introspective, private sphere, unmindful of society, but the cradle of citizenship, extending its values and example into the world around it. The habits and character developed within families became the virtues that shaped entire lands« (Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled* [see note 2], 10). Cf. COLLINSON, *Birthpangs* (see note 2), 60–61.

⁹⁶ E.g. PERKINS, *Christian Oeconomie* (see note 16), 8.

⁹⁷ E.g. JOHANNES MATHESIUS, *Oeconomia oder Bericht, wie sich ein Hausvater halten soll*, Nürnberg 1561 (VD16 M 1419), (not paginated).

⁹⁸ MACCULLOCH, *Die Reformation* (see note 2), 848.

Already in his tract *Vom Eelichen Leben* (1522) Luther had praised the religious education of children as the best part of marriage. As parents introduce their children to the gospel, they are their apostles, bishops, and pastors.⁹⁹ Accordingly, in 1529, Luther conceived his *Small Catechism* for the domestic instruction of the whole family, including the servants, by the pious house-father: The headline of each section stated that a householder should present it plainly to his servants.¹⁰⁰ In fact, Luther later even acknowledged the apocalyptic possibility that the preaching ministry might come to a standstill and henceforth the gospel only could be kept in the homes by the householders.¹⁰¹

How the propagation of the gospel and religious instruction by the fathers at home could be practiced apart from the instructions in Luther's catechism, was explained in detail by different authors. Justus Menius urged parents to teach their children first of all the commandments of God, to live according to God's will and to fear God's wrath and judgment, and on the other hand to teach them to trust God, to pray for everything to him and to thank him for his benefits.¹⁰² Furthermore, there were extensive collections of material for the catechesis of children and servants like for example the voluminous manual edited by the Eisleben pastor Andreas Fabricius in 1569 under the programmatic title *Die Hauskirche (The Domestic Church)* and dedicated to his own children.¹⁰³ The subtitle is meaningful:

»How besides the public ministry of preaching a house-father shall incite his flock at home towards the word of God and the Catechism«.

In 1553 Erasmus Sarcerius with his *Hausbuch fur die Einfeltigen Haus veter von den vornemesten Artickeln der christlichen Religion* even tried to take advantage of the »simple house-fathers« as theological lay controversialists.¹⁰⁴ A summary instruction on domestic elementary catechesis from the perspective of the Swiss Reformation was given by Heinrich Bullinger in 1540 in the 21st chapter of his book *Der christlich Eestand*. The parents should utilize the printed catechisms in German, but also use proverbs for moral education. Morning and evening prayer, home and school lessons,

⁹⁹ LUTHER, *Vom Eelichen Leben* (see note 7), 301,23–25. Thomas Becon, too, calls every husband »a bishop in his own house« (The Catechism of Thomas Becon [see note 14], 337).

¹⁰⁰ WA 30/1,282a,17–8 (note); 292a,1–3; 298a,11–13; 308a,14–16; 314a,12–14; 318a,17–19; 322a,23–25. – On the term »Hausvater« (husband, householder) cf. URSULA FÜHRICH-GRUBERT, CLAUDIA ULRICH, Art. Hausvater (in: EdN 5, 2007, 252–254).

¹⁰¹ LUTHER, Preface to the Book of Daniel (WA.Br 11,122,1–5).

¹⁰² MENIUS, *Oeconomia Christiana* (ed. Gause / Scholz [see note 8], 95).

¹⁰³ VD16 ZV 5704.

¹⁰⁴ VD16 S 1708.

church attendance followed by domestic examination about the contents of the sermon and the living role model of the parents should mesh.

In the writings of the English Puritans, the idea of religious education of children and of religious life in the »house« occupies even more space than in the writings of the reformers from the Empire. In addition to catechesis in the narrower sense, the effort to awaken, promote and nurture piety in a comprehensive way is much more evident here, and not only in regard to the children and the service staff, but also in regard to the spouses themselves. According to Henry Smith, the householder, like the Seraph who ignited the zeal of the prophet Isaiah, should kindle zeal for God in his wife, servants, and children, and like a nurse give the milk of his knowledge to each one of them.¹⁰⁵ In his family, the house-father stands in the place of Christ and has to exercise his threefold office: to rule like a king, to teach like a prophet, and to convert like a priest.¹⁰⁶

In his *Christian Oeconomie*, William Perkins treated what he called »the household service of God« at a prominent place in the second chapter.¹⁰⁷ This kind of divine service should comprise »a conference vpon the word of God, for the edification of all the members thereof, to eternall life«¹⁰⁸, prayer meetings in the morning and in the evening, and prayer before and after meals. Families in which this kind of worship was held were small churches, yes, a kind of paradise on earth.¹⁰⁹

William Gouge counted mutual intercession, the call to conversion, spiritual edification, the prevention of sin, and encouragement for growth in grace among the reciprocal duties that the spouses owe each other.¹¹⁰ The parents should educate their children with Bible reading and daily catechesis to true piety,¹¹¹ but also incite their servants daily to grow in faith and to gain eternal bliss.¹¹² Similarly, William Whately required the spouses to encourage one another in faith and piety by praying and singing together, and conversing about their home in heaven.¹¹³ Their main concern must be that in their house God should be properly worshipped,

¹⁰⁵ »One compareth the master of the house to the Seraphin, which came and kindled the Prophets zeale; so he should go from wife to servants, and from servants to children, and kindle in them the zeale of God, longing to teach his knowledge, as a nurse to empty her breasts« (SMITH, *A Preparative to Marriage* [see note 15], 38).

¹⁰⁶ SMITH, *A Preparative to Marriage* (see note 15), 38.

¹⁰⁷ PERKINS, *Christian Oeconomie* (see note 16), 2–9.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰⁹ »little Churches, yea even a kind of paradise vpon earth« (*ibid.*, 8).

¹¹⁰ GOUGE, *Of domesticall duties* (see note 18), 235–242.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 536–543.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 666f.

¹¹³ WHATELY, *Directions for Married Persons* (see note 17), 24–25, 32.

and that his knowledge and fear should be planted in the hearts of their children and servants, which would require joint reading of the Bible and prayer, domestic catechesis, regular church attendance followed by a domestic examination and careful observance of the Sabbath. In this way, a Christian family becomes a veritable »church«, a house of God in which he dwells.¹¹⁴

The most detailed instructions for religious parenting and the religious life of the »domestic church« can be found in Thomas Becon. According to him, »every man is a bishop in his own house«, and as such he is responsible to lead his wife, his children and his servants the way to bliss.¹¹⁵ His whole house should become a school of piety.¹¹⁶ Not only does the householder have to lead by his personal example. He also must ensure that all members of his household daily come together for prayer, for the recitation of the Creed and Decalogue and, if possible, for reading the Bible, and that thanksgiving be held before and after each meal. On Sundays and public holidays, he and his entire family and servants should visit the services and afterwards examine children and servants about the sermon which they had heard.¹¹⁷ Like the servants, the parents should also teach their children in the Christian faith and guide them to practiced piety:

»In these and such like godly exercises the parents must daily and diligently train up their youth, that they, being thus acquainted with virtue from the beginning, may the more easily for ever after abstain from all sin and vice«. ¹¹⁸

This includes not only the domestic instruction in the catechism and the orientation of the entire education in family and school towards piety – even the childrens' learning to speak is understood here as a challenge for religious education. Already the very first words they speak should preferably be serious, sober and pious like e.g. »God, Jesus Christ, faith, love, hope, patience, goodness, peace &c.« As soon as they speak complete sentences, they should be taught short phrases apt to encourage them to live in virtue and hatred against vice and sin, e.g.

»God alone saveth me. Christ by his death hath redeemed me. The Holy Ghost sanctifieth me. There is one God. Christ alone is our Mediator and Advocate«. ¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 44.

¹¹⁵ The Catechism of Thomas Becon (see note 14), 337.

¹¹⁶ »For every householder's house ought to be a school of godliness; forasmuch as every householder ought to be a bishop in his own house, and so to oversee his family, that nothing reign in it but virtue, godliness, and honesty« (ibid., 360).

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 359–60.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 349.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 348.

In such statements the religious education of children is usually placed in the responsibility of both parents, sometimes even in the special responsibility of the mother. Otherwise, however, in the normative texts considered here, it is always the husband and householder who, apart from exceptional circumstances, is called to direct the religious life in his house.¹²⁰ Reality might have looked differently. From the England of the 16th and 17th centuries we know that domestic piety was generally regarded as the domain of women, especially in families of the aristocracy and the middle classes.¹²¹ In general, one must expect that especially in the area of marriage, family and household normative texts often do not correspond completely to social practice.

5. Conclusion: Seven Theses

1. Marriage, family and household underwent a comprehensive theological reassessment and revaluation in the Reformation.
2. From the 1520s, marriage and family received extensive discussion in writing from Luther and in Lutheranism; also, the Upper German and Swiss reformers devoted themselves extensively to this topic. In England it was mainly Puritan authors from the end of the 16th century onwards who paid special attention to matters of marriage and family.
3. The reformers declared marriage a »secular matter«, i.e. an outward, civil issue. This levelled the special religious status of the sacramentally conceived marriage in relation to other areas of life. Canon marriage law and ecclesiastical marital jurisdiction were largely abandoned on the continent, but both remained in England.
4. On the other hand, the Protestant theologians greatly valued the marital status: as God's foundation and commandment, as the order of creation, as the first and oldest of all social formations.
5. As part of a Bible-based normative centring secret marriages were rejected, the list of obstacles to marriage was revised and the possibility

¹²⁰ »Nun brachte nicht mehr die Mutter ihrem Kind das Ave-Maria und das Vaterunser bei, sondern der ideale protestantische Hausvater, von dem erwartet wurde, dass er seine Familie beim Gebet leite und dabei auch Spontanität und Sinn für die Besonderheit einer Situation zeige wie der Pastor bei seiner Predigt auf der Kanzel. Gewiss spielte dabei auch eine Rolle, dass in den protestantischen Kirchen das Vorbild für Glaubens-treue das Geschlecht gewechselt hatte: von der gebenedeiten Jungfrau Maria zum buch-stäblich patriarchalischen Abraham« (MACCULLOCH, *Die Reformation* [see note 2], 835).

¹²¹ SARA MENDELSON, PATRICIA CRAWFORD, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550–1720*, Oxford ²2003, 225–230. Cf. also WUNDER, »Er ist die Sonn« (see note 2), 115.

of divorce was established. In these points, however, the views of the authors differed in detail.

6. Marriage, family and household (*oeconomia*) were discovered as the nucleus of society and state (*politia*). Here, the universal structure of authority and obedience constitutive for all estates was practiced, here the staff were recruited to serve both the secular and spiritual regiments of God.
7. Marriage, family and household were discovered as a place of religious parenting and domestic worship in their significance as a »small church« and »temple of God«.