

The Symbolism of Marriage in Early Christianity and the Latin Middle Ages: Images, Impact, Cognition. Edited by Line Cecilie Eng. Knowledge Communities. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019. 354 pp. \$144.00 hardcover.

These collected essays describe less how biblical and early Christian marriage symbolism influenced Western marriage, and more how it helped medieval people give expression to what is not marriage—including celibacy, virginity, power relations, and church hierarchy. In addition to this unifying topic, Line Eng's and Mark Turner's first chapter describes the book's unifying perspective, namely, blending theory, which has to do with how the human mind fashions its conceptual world by creatively blending concepts that, on the face of it, have little to do with each other. About half the chapters explicitly allude to this theory.

The authors of the remaining twelve chapters are broadly international, all Euro-American, and represent a wide range of disciplines, including historical theology, New Testament studies, the history of liturgy, religious studies, art history, and the history of canon law. The chapters are sequenced chronologically by subject. One deals with the New Testament period, two with the patristic, one with the Carolingian, and the last seven with the High Middle Ages. So, the broad chronological sweep of its title notwithstanding, this volume favors the period between 1100 and 1300. Though addressing this same historical period, these last essays address a variety of topics, including marriage symbolism's appearance and significance in illuminated manuscripts, its deployment to denigrate Muslim conceptions of heavenly paradise, its invocation to bolster papal authority, and its usefulness in drawing distinctions—especially in the early Cistercian context—between the carnal union characterizing profane marriage and spiritual union with Christ.

The second chapter, Philip Reynolds's extended treatment of marriage symbolism in early and medieval Christian thought, serves as an overview. After showing the limitations of the modern sense of the word "symbol" to express the variety of medieval representation—which includes figure, sign, analogy, and metaphor—Reynolds proceeds to distinguish between the "heady" (and erotic) *nuptial* symbols, which were suitable for expressing the individual soul's ecstatic union with the divine (to take just one example), and the "sober" *conjugal* symbols, which were better adapted for describing marriage's public aspect after the fashion of Christ's union with the church. He ends by showing how western Christendom came to regard marriage as a sacrament in the twelfth century even though, uniquely among the sacraments, it neither involved an element transformed by a consecrating word nor was conceived—at least at first—as remedy for sin.

Among the remaining chapters, of which I will sample just four, Anna Rebecca Solevåg's delineates how the New Testament variously deploys those conjugal and nuptial symbols that Reynolds described. She finds that conjugal symbolism suffuses the New Testament letters that identify themselves as Pauline. Here the "head" imagery (for example, 1 Cor. 11:3–5) is ascribed to God and to husbands in such a way as to structure power relations that subordinate women in both the early Christian family and the ecclesiastical hierarchy emerging out of the Pauline literature. By contrast, nuptial symbolism predominates in the Gospels and Apocalypse, where the prospect of Christ the bridegroom's arrival arouses not so much the soul's desire for God, which

the later mystical tradition will see as symbolized in the erotic imagery of the Song of Songs, but rather relief at being rescued from apocalyptic wrath—a relief occasioned by the bridegroom Christ's second coming.

David Hunter describes how, before the tradition of celibate unmarried priests became normative, the married-only-once requirement for clergy served to enhance both their status as priests and the status of marriage as sacrament. In the early third century, Tertullian forged the link between Old Testament priesthood and single marriage by citing a verse from Leviticus that is not there, at least, not in the original. No matter. His “proof-text” held. Hunter then shows how from Origen through Leo I, the married-once requirement for Christian priests functioned as an especially potent symbol of Christ's indissoluble marriage to the Church—so potent that when Western bishops in the fourth century began to practice permanent sexual abstinence, their marriages to wives nonetheless were not annulled.

Sebastián Salvadó shows how the glosses on the liturgy of the divine office, written from the eleventh century onward for reformed monastic and clerical communities, either allegorized that liturgy's references to marriage or used marriage symbolism to interpret a liturgy's objects (for example, the episcopal ring) to delineate its meaning in the context of a specific liturgical season, and to interpret its oral performances. As an example of the latter, in glossing the Ascension liturgy, Honorius of Autun interprets the responsories sung there as a dialogue between Christ ascendant, the consoling bridegroom, and the Church—left behind on earth—as his consoled Bride.

The volume ends with Wolfgang Müller's argument that the marital symbolism of an indissoluble bond between Christ and the Church was not in all cases so potent a determinant of medieval social realities as David D'Avray's *Medieval Marriage* claims it is. Countering, for example, D'Avray's contention that the idea of spiritual marriage as an unbreakable bond decisively informed later understandings of marriage among the laity, much as it had earlier understandings of marriage of the clergy, Müller observes that high medieval canonists could handily dispense with the high-minded principle of spiritual marriage when occasion demanded, as they did to dissolve marriages between Christian converts and their Jewish spouses—to take just one example.

I found this volume difficult to wade through. Its interdisciplinary nature requires much of the general reader. I had to read several chapters multiple times to get the gist of their arguments. Even so, the editor worked hard to make this collection cohere. She seems to have charged each chapter's author to read all the others' chapters and then to revise his or her own essay to refer to them. This, along with many of the chapters' references to blending theory, results in giving the whole collection an impressive sense of unity.

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