

Anna Wecker, “A Wedding Speech” (1586)

Abstract

This 1586 wedding speech written by Anna Wecker, a published cookbook author, on the occasion of the marriage of Jacob Pommern and Barbara Löffelholtz, offers a glimpse into early modern views of marriage. In her marriage poem, Wecker highlights gendered marital expectations and the centrality of faith and religion to marriage. She uses biblical themes from the creation story of Genesis to Paul’s admonitions in the Epistles to urge spousal harmony and familial duty. For the wife, she prescribes modesty and virtue, for the husband, gentleness and care for his family. Wecker counsels the couples to seek a loving bond grounded in faith and duty.

Source

A Wedding Speech, to Honor and Wish a Happy Lot to the Honorable and Dependable Young Man Jacob Pommern and his Honorable and Virtuous Bride, the Maiden Barbara Löffelholtz. Written by Anna Keller, Widow of the Late Blessed Doctor Hans Jacob Wecker. Printed in Nuremberg by Nicholas Knorr.

In the beginning when God finished creating the world

And recognized all things as good

After he had determined to do it in His Wisdom

He made it very good through His Word

Then he also made the man

Made him beautiful to see from a lump of dirt

He created him in His image

He breathed the breath of life into him

And from this made him into a living soul

And afterward God was pleased by this

Since he was well made by God

God brought him into the garden

Which He had also prepared well

With everything that would serve a person’s needs

It should all grow and increase

So that the man could feed himself from it

He also created livestock large and small
And the birds and fish just as unblemished
All of which the man should rule
For this reason God Himself brought them to him
He should also eat all the fruit
Only not from the tree of life
Through which good and evil can be known
Otherwise they would die, death at hand
To each he gave its name
But he did not find his family there
Each kind of creature found its mate
But his equal had not yet been created
Then God said, it will not be good
For man to be alone
We wish to make him a helper
Who will stand next to him in his tasks
Then God let fall upon the man
A deep sleep, and took an entire
Rib from his chest
And from it made the woman
Filled the gap with flesh
Brought the wife to him, as he had wished
With her he should increase the world['s population]
And in this also honor his creator
Also they should live eternally
They were created immortal
He said this is bone of bone
A helper who will be next to me
Woman will be her name

Since she was taken from man
For this reason man will forsake
Father and Mother, as is right
And cleave to his wife
They will be two souls in one flesh
In this way was the first marriage union made
Woe to the one who scorns it
God wishes for the world to increase in this way
And His order shall not be upended.
Thus we also have today
Two such young spouses
Rich in honor and good name
From the good lineage of their parents
How now reach out their hands to marriage,
To that praiseworthy, blessed state
Which God alone instituted
May He preserve them that they, unharmed,
Might thus enter into it
And be well pleasing to their creator
That they also might grow His kingdom
Inherit it along with His Son Christ
May God grant them fruit of their womb
For which reason He created them man and woman
May He preserve them, unblemished,
As they live purely/ taking up their cross
And bless them like Abraham
May their name also be great in the faith
To the praise of the Lord Jesus Christ
Through whom marriage is sanctified

Equated to Christ Himself and the Church

He calls her his Spouse and Heaven

Will be His reward for her

So long as she continues to fear Him

Because He now holds a joyous feast for her

And to it come young and old

And so Christ invites us too

If you wish not to lack for anything

Read David's Psalms well

Which a God-fearing person may savor

It shows the spring of wisdom

How useful and fruitful fear of God is for the pious

And also what the rogues carry with them

Those who hunt for all manner of gratification

Paul gives us a good teaching

That every person should honor marriage

The man should hold his wife dear

Should watch over her like his own soul

No one has hated his own flesh

Thus he says that he should strive lovingly for marriage

Live with her in modesty

Look after her as the weaker one

No abuse/ mistreating her with bluster

She is a rib from his chest

Taken from beside and underneath your heart

God gave her to you without all the pain

Therefore do not scorn His gift

Especially when she is a praiseworthy wife

Love covers many things

Love makes many distasteful things good
When she is inadequate
Punish her with calm and quiet gentleness
In marriage not everything will be sweet
The Cross always accompanies you
Carry it behind the Lord with patience
Ponder that your sin has truly inculpated you
Lay down your life for your wife and children
So that her honour is not harmed
A wife should find comfort and help in her husband
So that she has no grounds to sin
He should handle his servants in a Christian manner too
Not treat them like a tyrant
Not hit and cuss at them like a pagan
Always diligently search God's word
Also raise his children right
So that he is not disgraced by them
Always give a good example
How his wife, children, and servants should live
The man shall earn the bread
Create a reserve for his old age
So that when he is gone from his wife and children
They find their nourishment without him
And that with God and with thrift
They will not need to rely on their neighbor
The wife shall also live in the fear of God
Not oppose her husband with might
So long as he does not separate her from God
She should diligently hold him in honor

Pay attention to his intentions
Should any of them not be good
Let her seek the opportunity
To turn it around with modesty
She should be gentle toward him
Think of him as your lord
God has placed the load on your back
To bow your head before your husband
We should learn along with Sarah
She called Abraham her lord
They have all become her daughters
Who were found in the faith like her
If he does not do all he ought
Let her still be well pleased with him
Find no bitterness in her heart
Love binds up the pain and hurt
She should not need power against him
Keep to your tasks with friendliness
A Christian wife also trains her husband
If she does it bravely, with God's help
A sensible and considerate wife
Is her husband's honor/ holds his heart
She is not disposed toward pride
Paul gives good advice
As to what the wife's adornment should be
So that she might look beautiful
Not adorned with braids and gold
But thereafter he writes what is fitting
Discipline/ modesty fits a wife well

Clothed in good works
A foolish/ contentious/ quarrelsome wife
Stirs up much hate and great *Eib*^[1]
Misery and murder/ and brings the soul to ruin
Like the godless Jezebel
A wife should make peace
Not stir up the husband to anger
See how Abigail carried herself
As Nabal behaved in such an ugly way
When David desired provisions from him
And Nabal did not hear his voice
She did not speak more harshly
Or ask “why should we do this?”
Rather as soon as the situation occurred
She did not take long to think
Nor ask her husband about it
For she had seen his ignorance
Quickly and nimbly she set out
Packed her donkey, sat on it herself
She had well prepared meat, bread, and drink
Journeyed to him with discipline and honour
Allayed the king’s anger and rage
So that Nabal was not killed by him
Along with innocent blood
This she prevented with her meekness
Thus we read about Judith
Her virtue and honor saved her land and her people
Also many Christian women have won
Their husbands, who have come to the faith

Lemuel's mother teaches the same
What the characteristics of a pious wife are
Read well, seek after her teaching
In this way you will have a good reputation and honor
She will raise her children in the fear of God
So that they flee disgrace and vice
The wife will be saved through childbearing
If she remains pure in the faith
A pious wife is a good portion
He whom God grants one will benefit
She gladdens the man in times of need
When she conducts herself with wisdom
The one for whom God has provided such a wife
Is honoured by God and men
In the same way we now have such a woman
Who, we are confident
Will honour God in her new state
Further His kingdom and help to increase it
Since she was raised well
For which reasons everyone praises her
You both have a good example
Of how a good Christian marriage should be
Only reach after the fear of God
In this way you will also have His blessing
Seek God's praise in all things
In this way you will succeed everywhere
Also love His word at all times
So others can see whose children you are
Keep His commandments at all times before your eyes

Put your faith in no other prayer
Ponder that you are mortal
And that everything here comes to an end
As to beauty/ honor/ goods and money
You lack for nothing in this world
But this does not lead to heaven
The Lord Jesus teaches something else
That we should love nothing more
Than Him/ if we wish to enter His kingdom
He grants you riches
So long as you seek the eternal good
For whoever loves anything more than Him
Will not belong to Him
With this I wish you joy and good fortune
That you be granted God's Spirit
When you reach the end of your journey
And give up your life to God
That He lead you into the state
That served as the origin of marriage
To Christ in Paradise
Singing praise to God with the angels
A joy that lasts forever
Amen, for the one who desires it from the heart

Further reading

Albrecht Classen, „Eine weibliche Stimme im poetischen Ehediskurs – Anna Keller“. In: id., *Der Liebes- und Ehediskurs vom hohen Mittelalter bis zum frühen 17. Jahrhundert*. Waxmann, Münster 2005, pp. 294–300.

<https://blog.nationalmuseum.ch/en/2022/04/switzerlands-first-cookbook-author/>

NOTES

[1] This word seems to imply something like anger or quarrelling, or perhaps error or jealousy

Source of original German text: Anna Wecker, *Ein Hochzeit Spruch*, Nürnberg: Nikolaus Knorr, 1586.
Available online at: <http://diglib.hab.de/drucke/177-quod-24s/start.htm>

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