The connection between Andreas Gryphius’s reference to *der warheit eine Ehefrau* in his prologue for *Leo Armenius* and his depiction of Theodosia in his drama *Leo Armenius* has received scant scholarly attention. This article attempts to clarify this connection through an alternative reading of Theodosia’s role in Gryphius’s drama based on the mystical theology of a man who greatly influenced Gryphius’s religious poetry, Johann Arndt.

The aftermath of the Thirty Year War and the political skirmishes of the Counter-Reformation estranged many people from their Christian faith in German-speaking Europe. To counterbalance this displacement of religious convictions, many poets and dramatists set aside confessional differences to present an idealized version of Christianity in their works.¹ Martin Opitz inspired poets to address poetry as “a hidden theology and a lesson about divine matters”.² Following this example, Paul Gerhardt and Andreas Gryphius veiled their versions of an ideal faith in allegories. Their allegorical poetry often reflected the teachings of Johann Arndt.³ Arndt’s promotion of

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Christian piety in the face of political and confessional hypocrisy became popular with many disillusioned Christians.

The importance of piety also plays a central role in the dramas of the seventeenth century. Unlike baroque poetry, the religious intentions stated in the prologues of the dramas appear overtly. Gryphius even asserts that he wishes to unveil “that which no one should hide” in the prologue to his play *Leo Armenius*. Gryphius claims that he desires to inspire piety in those who are caught up in the vanity of life. Scholars have shown how the depiction of Gryphius’s protagonist, Leo Armenius, could elicit sympathy from an audience. Leo’s dual nature represents the worldly and spiritual sides of a person. On one side, Leo’s tyrannical history, as an emperor who gains worldly success through violence and enforcement of the law, aligns him with the Old Testament Lion of Judea. On the other side, Leo’s faith in the redemptive power of the New Testament connects him with the lion symbol for the Gospel of Mark, which nobly embodies faith in Jesus Christ. Despite his cruelty, Leo is mentioned as a holy martyr in the prologue to the play. The fact that his tyranny is forgiven and he becomes a martyr at the moment of his death reinforces Martin Luther’s concept that salvation is based on faith alone, regardless of one’s actions.

Yet, the Lutheran doctrine of *sola fide* appears counterproductive to provoking piety. After all, if the protagonist proves that a well-timed affirmation of faith can absolve an entire life of sins, why should one bother to lead a pious life? Indeed, Walter Benjamin asserts that *sola fide* denied men the spiritual benefit of pious works, since only God’s grace mattered. Thereby the actions of men were relegated to a secular sector that praised civic duty, but deprived one’s actions of all value, which produced a deep sense of

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5 Aikin (fn. 1), p. 58.
6 “einen heiligen Märterer”. Gryphius: Grossgünstiger Leser (fn. 4), p. 13, l. 3.

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