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Introduction

In 1591, the Lutheran playwright Arnold Quiting (fl. 1581–93) composed a play about the lives of Adam and Eve.[1] The action of the play takes place many years after the Fall. Adam and Eve have fourteen children, twelve sons and two daughters. The first family struggles to survive in the hostile post-Edenic world, but they take care to pause in their labors every week to honor the Sabbath. The play begins on a very special Sabbath day. God has announced to Adam and Eve that He will actually descend to earth and visit them and their children. He comes to comfort and console Adam and Eve, but also to judge how well they are raising their children. To this end, he tests the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve on their understanding of faith and doctrine. Essentially, He asks to hear them recite their catechism, which is not only Christian but also, quite pointedly, Lutheran. Six of the children, including Abel and Seth, are able to do this, and eight, including Cain, are not. Not only do the pious children acknowledge and honor God as their creator but they also profess belief in Jesus Christ, who will one day come to save them and the rest of humanity. Further, they profess the Lutheran belief that their salvation comes through their faith in Christ and through God's grace given to humanity for the sake of Christ. Their catechism thus

[1] Arnold Quiting, *Kinderzucht* (Dortmund: Arnt Westhoff, 1591). I have used the following facsimile edition: Arnold Quiting, *Kinderzucht Dortmund 1591* (Dortmund: Dortmunder Faktoren-Verein, 1923). For biographical information on Quiting, see Johannes Bolte, "Quiting, Arnold," in *Allgemeine deutsche biographie . . . Auf veranlassung . . . Seiner Majestaet des Konigs von Bayern . . . hrsg. durch die Historische commission bei der Konigl. akademie der wissenschaften* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1875–1912), Bd. 27, pp. 57–8.

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expresses the Lutheran tenets of *sola fide* and *sola gratia*. They explicitly deny that it is possible for them to earn God's favor through good works.

To reinforce the specifically Lutheran content of this catechism, Quiting has Cain, one of the children who cannot recite his catechism, not only insist that good works are indeed necessary for salvation but also accuse his parents and pious siblings of being followers of Martin Luther (*recht Martinianer*) and "evangelical heretics" (*Euangelischer Ketzr*).[2] Cain declares that he, by contrast, is "a good and true papist and member of the Roman Church."[3] Even though God Himself declares that his beliefs are false, Cain holds the pope to be a higher authority. In Quiting's version of the story of Adam and Eve, the confessional differences between Lutherans and Catholics date back to the beginnings of the human race, and the antagonism between Cain and Abel is but the opening move in a long, drawn-out conflict.

Quiting's play was one of many Lutheran versions of the story of Adam and Eve produced in sixteenth-century Germany. Indeed, the story of the creation and fall of the first human beings was one of the most widely retold biblical stories in this period. A startling variety of texts and images – plays, poems, devotional texts, sermons, biblical commentaries, broadsides, prints, and paintings – retold, analyzed, and alluded to the Genesis narrative. The story had profound significance for Lutherans because their theology rested on a major reinterpretation of the Fall and its implications for humankind's relationship with God.[4] Martin Luther (1483–1546) (and subsequently his followers) maintained that Adam and Eve's original act of disobedience in the Garden of Eden had so thoroughly debased and corrupted the human race that we were no longer capable of restoring ourselves to God's favor through our own actions or merits. Human beings could be saved from eternal damnation only through the freely given and completely undeserved grace of Christ, who sacrificed Himself to redeem sinful humanity. Faith in Christ alone,

[2] Quiting, *Kinderzucht*, fol. E5.

[3] "Ein guter Papist unuerirt / Der Römischen Kirchn incorporirt." Ibid.

[4] Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*, trans. Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart (New York: Doubleday, 1992) and Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966).

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not good works, guaranteed our salvation. Thus two central tenets of Lutheran theology, *sola gratia* and *sola fide*, rest on a particular view of what happened to the human race when Adam and Eve sinned.[5]

Luther repudiated the prevailing Catholic view of original sin. Medieval theologians asserted that post-lapsarian human beings retained the capacity to earn God's favor through acts of penance or virtue. Of course, good works were not enough; without the redeeming sacrifice of Christ human beings would all have been condemned to eternal damnation. Although medieval Catholic theologians expressed a wide range of opinions on the relationship between grace and good works, none denied that both were necessary to achieve salvation.[6] As Berndt Hamm puts it, "The Reformation . . . made a structural break with the conceptual framework of ideas of the late Middle Ages . . . that viewed human merit, satisfaction, and morality as relevant to salvation. Reformation theology would go on to assign what is in principle a new kind of autonomous efficacy and dominance to divine grace and mercy."[7]

This new interpretation of the Fall and new understanding of post-lapsarian human nature are reflected in Lutheran retellings of the story of Adam and Eve like Quiting's play. In *Kinderzucht*, the "correct" statement of belief uttered by Abel, Seth, and the other "good" children asserts that salvation comes only through faith in Christ. In contrast, the "false" statement of belief placed in the mouth of the "papist" Cain affirms the necessity and importance of good works. Quiting also has Adam and Eve bitterly lament their original act of disobedience and thank God for promising to send them Jesus as a savior. They too acknowledge that their only hope of salvation is this promised savior.[8]

Quiting not only interprets the story of the Fall in a Lutheran way but he also uses the narrative to promulgate a specifically Lutheran set of ideas about human nature and salvation. His play is clearly didactic, designed to impress on its audience both the "true" catechism and the

[5] This new interpretation was, of course, not drawn solely from rereading Genesis 3.
[6] Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250–1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 22–42 and Berndt Hamm, *The Reformation of Faith in the Context of Late Medieval Theology and Piety*, ed. Robert J. Bast (Leiden: Brill, 2004).
[7] Hamm, *Reformation of Faith*, p. 86.
[8] E.g., Eve's speech in Quiting, *Kinderzucht*, fol. B5 verso–B6.

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importance of learning this catechism. The *Kinderzucht* was very likely intended to be performed by schoolchildren, who in learning their lines would be memorizing a Lutheran catechism.[9] Yet its message was also directed to audience members, including parents. In his introduction to the printed version, Quiting stresses the importance of learning the catechism and castigates parents who do not teach their children to recite it or require their children to attend catechism lessons.[10] Quiting also takes the opportunity to engage in some anti-Catholic polemic by putting a caricatured version of Catholic beliefs about good works in the mouth of the raucous, drunken, and brutish Cain. Quiting's portrayal of Cain lends both dramatic tension and comic relief to what would otherwise be a fairly dry recitation of the catechism.

Thus Quiting uses a retelling of the story of Adam, Eve, and their children to promulgate the Lutheran doctrines of *sola fide* and *sola gratia*. He also uses the story to address three other issues that were significant to Lutherans: the importance of family, the sanctity of family life, and the legitimacy and necessity of social hierarchy.

Quiting's play participates in the Lutheran valorization of family life and the rejection of celibacy as a spiritually superior state.[11] He presents Adam and Eve as the model married couple. Adam is sober, disciplined, and pious. He works hard to provide for his family. He wields authority over his wife and children but is never cruel or tyrannical. Eve is a docile and obedient wife and a devoted mother. Both Adam and Eve pray regularly, love and fear God, and teach their children to do the same. The Lutheran valorization of family life was connected to their denial of the Catholic view that celibacy was spiritually superior to marriage. Lutherans rejected celibacy on the same grounds that they rejected other "good works" such as fasting or pilgrimages. Yet they also saw God's injunction to Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28) as clear evidence that celibacy was contrary to God's original design and intention for men and women. Consequently, many Lutheran writers, like Quiting, portrayed Adam and Eve not just as the first married couple but also as a model to which all couples should aspire.

[9] Quiting was a schoolmaster in Dortmund. Bolte, "Quiting," p. 57.
[10] Quiting, *Kinderzucht*, fol. A3.
[11] Joel F. Harrington, *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

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Finally, Quiting's play expresses a particularly Lutheran set of ideas about the hierarchical organization of society and the legitimacy of social inequality. In the play, Quiting gives an account of the origins of differences in status and wealth between people. God rewards Abel, Seth, and the other children who know the catechism by granting them and their descendants power, fortune, and honor in this life as well as salvation in the next: "From you shall come the great people on earth: kings, princes and potentates; scholars, priests and prelates."[12] Here lies the origin of both secular and ecclesiastical authority. By contrast, Cain and his descendants are damned in this life and the next. God condemns them to be poor, dishonorable, and subservient.[13]

This story about the origin and legitimacy of the social order was popular among Lutheran writers in the second half of the sixteenth century, and Quiting's play was just one of about twenty versions of it.[14] Quiting and his fellow Lutherans were convinced that social inequality was divinely willed. Some people were destined to rule and others to be ruled. Further, the hierarchical organization of human society was a direct consequence of the Fall. Before the Fall, human beings could obey God's law. Had Adam and Eve not sinned, human beings would have been able to live in perfect peace and harmony with each other and with God. However, the Fall destroyed the human capacity to fulfill God's law. Thus to prevent humanity from falling into a state of constant violence and disorder, God instituted the "offices of government, parents and teachers" and gave the holders of these offices the authority to preserve public peace by enforcing secular laws and the mandate to educate children and preach the gospel.[15]

Quiting's play points to the myriad ways in which the biblical story of Adam and Eve could be used in the sixteenth century. The Lutheran view of the consequences of the Fall and of post-lapsarian human nature had ramifications for how they understood the relationships between human beings and God, between men and women, between parents

12 "Das groß Leut auß euch solln werden /Als Könning / Fürstn und Potentatn Gelert / Prediger und Prelatn" Quiting, *Kinderzucht*, fol. E8 verso.
13 Ibid., fol. F2–F2 verso.
14 Johannes Winzer, *Die ungleichen Kinder Evas in der Literatur des 16. Jhs.* (Greifswald: F. W. Kunike, 1908). I discuss other versions of the catechism legend in Chapter 6.
15 Althaus, *Theology of Martin Luther*, pp. 252–4, quote on p. 253.

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and children, and between rulers and ruled. Their view of the proper organization and running of society was predicated on their particular view of the capacities of post-lapsarian humanity. Lutheran writers thus found the story of Adam and Eve a highly useful vehicle for promulgating their views of human nature and salvation, family and gender, and social order.

The book that follows is organized into six chapters. In the first chapter I analyze the differences between late medieval versions of the story of Adam and Eve and sixteenth-century Lutheran versions, and I show that the Lutheran versions reflect a far more pessimistic view of post-lapsarian humanity. Both medieval and Lutheran writers placed Adam and Eve in the context of salvation history. However, whereas medieval writers make the first couple active participants in this history, Lutheran writers depict them as passive, relying solely on the promised savior and not on their own abilities to earn God's mercy. My medieval sources include the widely copied devotional text *The Mirror of Human Salvation* and the popular extrabiblical "Adam legends" that described the life of Adam and Eve and their children after the Fall. My Lutheran sources include commentaries on Genesis as well as dramatic reenactments of the creation and fall of Adam and Eve. This chapter lays the groundwork for subsequent chapters in which I discuss the similarities and differences between sixteenth-century interpretations of the story of creation and earlier interpretations.

Each of the following chapters examines a particular theme connected to the story of Adam and Eve and its significance for sixteenth-century Germans. In Chapter 2 I examine representations of the creation and fall of Adam and Eve in paintings and printed images, sermons, plays, poems, and medical and anatomical texts. Sixteenth-century artists and writers displayed considerable interest in the physical nature of the first human beings and how their bodies were changed by the Fall. They saw the body as both a real physical entity and a symbol of the spiritual state. Sinfulness and salvation were both connected to the body. Accounts of the creation of Adam often dwelt on the material from which he was made, the anatomical structures of his body, and the processes by which he was formed. For example, in one of his sermons on Genesis, Luther claims that the earth from which the first man was formed was the kind of earth found in a newly plowed field or a freshly dug grave. In Luther's

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exposition, the "earthiness" of Adam not only foreshadows his eventual fall from a life of unchanging perfection to the post-lapsarian world of decay and death but it also points to renewal and rebirth. This example highlights a central theme of my book: the degree to which physical and spiritual aspects of human beings were intertwined for sixteenth-century Germans.

In the third chapter I explore the ways the story of Adam and Eve was used to explain and justify sex differences and gender roles. Here I focus on representations of Eve, examining varying accounts of her creation and her role in the Fall. Representations of Eve were more numerous and paradoxical in the sixteenth century than in earlier periods. The story of Eve gave sixteenth-century Germans ways of redefining and reimagining female sexuality and gender roles. In art, literature, devotional treatises, and sermons, Eve is portrayed as an innocent virgin, an erotic temptress, a foolish and frivolous girl, and a dour and dutiful wife and mother. Her role in the Fall is sometimes that of pathetic dupe and other times that of conniving co-conspirator. My analysis of the complex and contradictory figure of Eve sheds new light on the ways sixteenth-century ideas about gender were refracted through religious controversies.

In the fourth chapter I examine how ideas about sex and reproduction were framed by the Genesis narrative. Here I analyze devotional treatises for pregnant women, midwifery manuals, books on the "secrets of women," and anatomical treatises. I show that conception, pregnancy, and birth were linked analogically to the biblical account of the creation and fall of humankind. In the formation of the child in the womb, sixteenth-century Germans saw an echo of the original divine act of creation, and in the sufferings of a woman in labor they saw a reenactment of Christ's passion.

In the fifth chapter, I examine the ways the Genesis narrative shaped understandings of the natural world. My sources include images of God creating the world, sermons on the topic of creation, broadsides depicting marvelous natural phenomena, books on the "secrets of nature," natural histories, and herbals. Not only did the splendor and beauty of the natural world give evidence of their divine creator but also every natural object, from heavenly bodies to animals to plants, had multiple moral and symbolic meanings attached to it. The book of nature, like Scripture, had emanated from the word of God. Like the Bible, nature was a text

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that needed careful interpretation. However, probing into the "secrets of nature" also had sexual connotations that linked the quest for knowledge to the Fall of Adam. Thus a deep ambivalence pervades much sixteenth-century writing on the natural world.

The sixth and final chapter shows how the story of Adam and Eve could be used to explain and justify the hierarchical organization of society. Here I focus on a new story about the life of Adam and Eve after the Fall, a story that was invented in the sixteenth century and known as the "catechism legend." The play by Quiting, with which I began this introduction, is one such version. About twenty versions of this story were produced, all by Lutheran writers. In the story, God visits Adam and Eve after the Fall and tests their children on the catechism. Abel and Seth recite it flawlessly; Cain cannot. God rewards Abel and Seth by making them the first priest and the first prince, respectively. He punishes Cain by making him the first peasant. Like Quiting, Lutheran pastors used the catechism legend to teach correct belief (Abel and Seth recite a Lutheran catechism), but it also taught that social inequality was both divinely instituted and a consequence of the Fall.

In this book I seek to recover some of the ways Germans of different social, economic, and educational levels responded to and made meaning of the sweeping changes in religious life and thought that they experienced. In the Reformation, ideas about sin and salvation and about the relationship between God and humanity were the subject of fierce and often violent controversy. In the midst of and contributing to the religious controversies of the period, rising levels of literacy and book ownership created new communities of readers. The story of Adam and Eve was a crucial interpretive resource for a wide variety of authors and audiences. It was useful not only to theologians and priests but also to ordinary lay men and women trying to understand the connections in their own lives between body and soul, between human and divine, and between physical and spiritual. Today it gives us a unique window on the beliefs of sixteenth-century men and women on a range of issues from human nature to gender relations to social hierarchy.

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Adam and Eve in the Reformation

THE ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION AND FALL OF ADAM AND EVE occupies only a few pages in the Bible. Despite its brevity, for generations of Jews and Christians, this story has been crucial to defining human nature and to understanding relationships between human beings and God, between men and women, and between the sacred and the profane.[1] As such it has inspired a wide array of interpretations. In the early centuries of Christianity, Gnostic writers interpreted the story of Adam and Eve allegorically. They took Adam and Eve to represent different aspects of the human being, soul and spirit. Quite frequently, Adam represented the soul and Eve the higher principle of the spirit. It was the spirit (Eve) that awakened and enlightened the soul (Adam). The marriage of Adam and Eve signified the ideal union of soul and spirit that the believer sought to achieve.[2] By contrast, for Augustine (354–430), the great Church Father, Adam and Eve represented men and women, not soul and spirit. Woman, the second and inferior creation, was less rational and more subject to the passions than man. Although given

[1] On ancient and medieval traditions of interpretation, see John Martin Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968); Thomas O'Loughlin, *Teachers and Code-Breakers: The Latin Genesis Tradition, 430–800* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999); Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988); Frank E. Robbins, *The Hexaemeral Literature: A Study of the Greek and Latin Commentaries on Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1912); and Gregory A. Robbins (ed.), *Genesis 1–3 in the History of Interpretation: Intrigue in the Garden* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1988). On early modern interpretations of Genesis, see Philip C. Almond, *Adam and Eve in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Arnold Williams, *The Common Expositor: An Account of the Commentaries on Genesis 1527–1633* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948).

[2] Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, pp. 64–8.

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to man as a helper, she led him astray, and as a result God reinforced husbands' authority over their wives.[3]

Very few people encounter stories from the Bible, including the story of Adam and Eve, in the bare text of Scripture. Biblical stories have almost always been presented with explanations and interpretations attached, even if they are only implicit; this was as true in the past as in the present. Since the Middle Ages, most Bibles have included explanatory material, often from various authors, along with the text.[4] When Martin Luther (1483–1546) translated the Bible into German in the sixteenth century, he too included explanatory notes to help readers understand the "true" sense of various passages. In his Bible, Luther presents an interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve that was different from that of his medieval predecessors and that aroused the ire of some of his Catholic contemporaries. As we shall see, this conflict was played out in part in the explanatory notes included in different translations of the Bible. The invention of printing and the translation of the Bible into various vernaculars made it accessible to a literate laity rather than it being the near-exclusive province of learned theologians. However, both before and after those historical watersheds of the invention of printing and the Protestant Reformation, most people heard, saw, or (more rarely) read a *retelling* of the story of Adam and Eve, rather than encountering the actual text of Genesis.[5]

[3] Ibid., p. 114. On Augustine's views on marriage and sexuality, see also Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 387–427.

[4] See G. W. H. Lampe, *The Cambridge History of the Bible II. The West from the Fathers to the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). Indeed, in the Middle Ages the term "Scripture" encompassed the writings of the Church Fathers and other authorities and the decrees of various church councils as well as the canonical books of the Bible. Lesley Smith, "What Was the Bible in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries?" in Robert E. Lerner (ed.), *Neue Richtungen in der hoch- und spätmittelalterlichen Bibelexegese* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1996), pp. 1–15; and Karlfried Froehlich, "Johannes Trithemius on the Fourfold Sense of Scripture: The *Tractatus de Inuestigatione Scripturae* (1486)," in Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson (eds.), *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation: Essays Presented to David C. Steinmetz in Honor of His Sixtieth Birthday* (Grand Rapids, MI: Willian B. Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 23–60.

[5] Only about 5 to 10 percent of the population of early modern German-speaking territories could read, although there was considerable regional diversity in literacy rates. Rolf Engelsing, *Analphabetentum und Lektüre: Zur Sozialgeschichte des Lesens in Deutschland zwischen feudaler und industrieller Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1973). Richard Gawthrop and Gerald Strauss argue that most

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