

2019-06-27

Martin Luther and Women: From the Dual Perspective of Theory and Practice

Jurgens, Laura Kathryn

Jurgens, L. K. (2019). Martin Luther and Women: From the Dual Perspective of Theory and Practice (Doctoral thesis, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada). Retrieved from <https://prism.ucalgary.ca>.
<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/110570>

Downloaded from PRISM Repository, University of Calgary

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Martin Luther and Women: From the Dual Perspective of Theory and Practice

by

Laura Kathryn Jurgens

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

CALGARY, ALBERTA

JUNE, 2019

© Laura Kathryn Jurgens 2019

Abstract

This thesis argues that Martin Luther did not enforce his own strict theological convictions about women and their nature when he personally corresponded with women throughout his daily life. This becomes clear with Luther's interactions with female family members and Reformation women. With these personal encounters, he did not maintain his theological attitudes and often made exceptions to his own theology for such exceptional or influential women. Luther also did not enforce his strict theology throughout his pastoral care where he treated both men and women respectfully and equally. Luther's pastoral work shows that he allowed his compassion and empathy to win over his own strict theological convictions about women. It is important to remember that Luther not only wrote about women in the abstract, but also lived both his public and private life among women. However, there have been no comprehensive studies that have examined his theological writings about women and personal encounters with women. For this reason, fundamental aspects of Luther have remained in the dark. As actions speak louder than words, scholars need to include the practical, as well as the theoretical when analyzing his attitudes towards women. In other words, his theology does not tell the whole story. This thesis explores Luther's view of women by examining his theology and his personal correspondence. Scholarship has been slow to examine Luther's attitudes towards women from this dual perspective; therefore, this work provides the comprehensive assessment of both his theory and practice that has been called for by many previous studies. My research not only contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Luther's theological views on women more generally, but also how those views compare to his actual social encounters with women. This thesis argues that Martin Luther's personal encounters with women, as well as his theology need to be examined when trying to provide an authentic assessment of the reformer's attitudes towards women.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Douglas Shantz for his continuous support during my doctoral studies. Thank you for your time and dedication to this project. I cannot express enough gratitude for everything that you have helped me to achieve over the past few years. I am so thankful for your advice and for always having confidence in my abilities. I appreciate your absolute patience, especially while editing my work. Your immense knowledge and academic expertise will always inspire me. I could not have asked for a better advisor and mentor. Dr. Shantz, thank you for everything.

In addition to my advisor, I would also like to acknowledge the rest of my examination committee for contributing their helpful insights and their valuable time: Dr. Christine Helmer, Dr. Irving Hexham, Dr. Mark Konnert, Dr. Anne Moore, and Dr. Tinu Ruparell.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Linda Darwish, Dr. Robert Kennedy, and Dr. Ken Penner for sparking my interest in Religious Studies. Your support and encouragement during my undergraduate program at St. Francis Xavier University will never be forgotten.

For all my loved ones.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Dedication	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Abbreviations	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW	1
INTRODUCTION	1
<i>Thesis Statement</i>	3
<i>Methodology</i>	4
<i>Thesis Outline</i>	8
LITERATURE REVIEW	12
<i>Women and the Reformation</i>	15
<i>Reformers' Attitudes Towards Women</i>	17
<i>Women in the Scholarship on Luther</i>	18
<i>Luther on Women</i>	20
Scholarship from the 1970s	20
Scholarship from the 1980s	24
Scholarship from the 1990s	25
Scholarship from the 2000s	31
Scholarship from the Past Two Years	38
Notable Trends within Scholarship	48
CONCLUSION	51

CHAPTER TWO: WOMEN’S LIVES IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD.....	54
INTRODUCTION	54
INHERITED TRADITIONS	55
<i>Inherited Biblical Ideas</i>	57
<i>Inherited Philosophical Ideas</i>	63
INHERITED IDEAS INFLUENCED HOW TO TREAT WOMEN IN SOCIETY	67
<i>Women and the Law</i>	69
<i>Women and Work</i>	75
<i>Women and Education</i>	85
<i>Women and Family Life</i>	88
CONCLUSION.....	95
CHAPTER THREE: MARTIN LUTHER’S THEOLOGICAL VIEW OF WOMEN.....	97
INTRODUCTION	97
LUTHER’S INTERPRETATION OF EVE	99
<i>Luther’s Earlier Interpretation of Eve (1523 – 1524)</i>	102
<i>Luther’s More Mature Interpretation of Eve (1535 – 1545)</i>	108
Shifts Within the Same Text.....	111
A More Positive Assessment of Eve.....	111
A More Traditional Assessment of Eve.....	114
<i>Contradictions Throughout Luther’s Mid-to-Late Career</i>	117
OTHER BIBLICAL WOMEN.....	123

BIBLICAL SOURCES INFLUENCED LUTHER’S VIEW OF WOMEN.....	127
<i>Women are Physically and Intellectually Weak</i>	127
<i>Women Have Weak Morals</i>	133
LUTHER’S IDEAL WOMAN.....	137
<i>Women Should be Married</i>	137
<i>Women Should be Obedient</i>	140
<i>Women Should Bear Children</i>	144
<i>Women Should Remain at Home</i>	150
CONCLUSION.....	153
CHAPTER FOUR: MARTIN LUTHER’S INTERACTIONS WITH FEMALE FAMILY MEMBERS AND REFORMATION WOMEN	156
INTRODUCTION	156
FEMALE FAMILY MEMBERS	159
<i>Margarethe Luther (1460 – 1531)</i>	159
<i>Katharina von Bora (1499 – 1552)</i>	169
REFORMATION WOMEN	193
<i>Argula von Grumbach (1492? – 1557/1563/1568?)</i>	193
<i>Katharina Schütz Zell (1497 – 1562)</i>	211
CONCLUSION.....	228
CHAPTER FIVE: MARTIN LUTHER’S INTERACTIONS WITH WOMEN THROUGHOUT HIS PASTORAL CARE	230
INTRODUCTION	230

OFFERING SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE	233
<i>Janna von Draschwitz, Milia von Ölsnitz, and Ursula von Feilitzsch (1523)</i>	236
<i>Unknown Woman (1525)</i>	238
<i>Barbara Lißkirchen (1531)</i>	239
<i>Queen Maria of Hungary (1531)</i>	242
<i>Valentine Hausmann (1532)</i>	243
<i>Dorothea Jörger (1532 & 1534)</i>	245
<i>Lady ‘M’ (Name Unknown), (1543)</i>	247
OFFERING COMFORT IN TIMES OF ILLNESS AND DEATH	248
<i>Letters to Comfort Men Struggling with Depression</i>	250
Jerome Weller (1530)	250
<i>Letters to Comfort Men Struggling with Loss</i>	252
Conrad Cordatus (1530)	252
John Reineck (1536)	253
Wolf Heinze (1543)	254
<i>Letters to Comfort Women Struggling with Depression</i>	255
Elizabeth von Kanitz (1527)	255
<i>Letters to Comfort Women Struggling with Loss</i>	258
Queen Maria of Hungary (1526)	258
Widow Margaret (1528)	259

Agnes Lauterbach (1535).....	261
Katharina Metzler (1539).....	262
Widow of John Cellarius (1542).....	264
Eva, the Widow of George Schulz (1544).....	264
<i>Letters to Comfort Couples Struggling with Depression</i>	266
John Agricola & Elizabeth Agricola (1527).....	266
Jonas von Stockhausen & Frau von Stockhausen (1532).....	267
<i>Letters to Comfort Couples Struggling with Loss</i>	269
Mr. & Mrs. Matthias Knudsen (1531).....	269
<i>Second-Hand Accounts of Offering Comfort</i>	270
LETTERS FROM WOMEN TO LUTHER (1543 & 1544).....	274
<i>Dorothea the Countess of Mansfeld (1543)</i>	275
<i>Princess Sibyl of Saxony (1544)</i>	277
CONCLUSION.....	279
CONCLUSION: SUMMARY AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS.....	284
THESIS SUMMARY.....	284
FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS.....	289
FINAL REMARKS.....	294
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	295
PRIMARY SOURCES.....	295
SECONDARY SOURCES.....	296

List of Abbreviations

- Erl** Martin Luther. *Martin Luthers Sämmtliche Werk*. Erlangen and Frankfurt, 1826-1857.
- LW** Martin Luther. *Luther's Works*. Translated by Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut T. Lehmann, and Christopher Boyd Brown. Philadelphia: Fortress Press; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-2009.
- WA** Martin Luther. *Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1883-2009.
- WA BR** Martin Luther. *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Briefwechsel*. Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1930-1985.
- WA TR** Martin Luther. *Martin Luthers Werk: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Tischreden*. Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1912-1921.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Many images come to mind when thinking of Martin Luther such as monk, professor, priest, theologian, composer, and family man. His portrait as a reformer is likely his most iconic image since he is primarily known as the individual who initiated the Protestant Reformation.¹ As the man who sparked the Reformation, Luther came to symbolize everything that the Protestant Reformation represented. His thoughts and actions permeated throughout European culture and diversified Christianity to a degree that was not seen in hundreds of years.² Arguably, not all historians view this division of Christendom as a cultural contribution.³ Blame is often placed on Luther for causing various detrimental consequences brought about by the Reformation movement. However, even scholars who regret Christianity's diversification still acknowledge that Luther's impact has been extensive, especially on religion, culture, and the political.⁴ Due to European powers and colonization, the force of the Protestant Reformation spread across continents and continues to be felt by both Protestants and Catholics even today. Martin Luther's thoughts and actions still play an important role as witnessed by the recent events commemorating the five-hundredth anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.⁵

¹ See Eric Gritsch, *Martin, God's Court Jester: Luther in Retrospect* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

² Scott Hendrix, *Martin Luther: Visionary Reformer* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), ix.

³ For a negative impact of the Reformation movement on women more generally, see Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals, in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001); for negative impact of the Reformation on nuns, see Amy Leonard, *Nails in the Walls: Catholic Nuns in Reformation Germany* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁴ Hendrix, *Martin Luther*, x.

⁵ Thomas Howard, *Remembering the Reformation: An Inquiry into the Meanings of Protestantism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 147-161; for essays marking the 500th anniversary of the Reformation with thoughtful discussion and re-imagining of Luther, see Gesa Thiessen, Salvador Ryan, and Declan Marmion, *Remembering the Reformation: Martin Luther and Catholic Theology*. Minneapolis (Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2017).

Since Luther was a seminal figure in starting the Protestant Reformation, scholars have produced a vast number of studies which capture nearly every aspect of his life and thoughts. For example, there are a variety of works such as books, journals, biographies, and even psychological studies which analyze his theological, political, and social ideas.⁶ Previous scholarship has not only examined Luther's thoughts and actions, but also the ways in which he influenced and affected other aspects of society such as the state, education, and music.⁷ In 2019, therefore, it is hard to believe that any aspects of Luther's life or thoughts have not already been sufficiently explored.

It is also difficult to believe, especially with the growth of women's history since the 1960s, that the perspectives of a man who wrote extensively about women, and who is still clearly influential, would not have already been sufficiently analyzed.⁸ Merry Wiesner-Hanks argues that an educated man's ideas about women are "one of the easiest things to investigate when exploring the experience of women in any culture, as they are more likely to be recorded than women's own ideas."⁹ This is certainly the case with Luther. He wrote much about women and related topics such as marriage, sexuality, and the family which can be found throughout nearly every type of his works.¹⁰ For example, Luther not only wrote extensively about women throughout his theological works, but also wrote personal correspondence to women. As an

⁶ See Erik Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Norton, 1993); see also Ian Siggins, *Luther and His Mother* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981).

⁷ For example, Robin Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017).

⁸ This is especially true when compared to other reformers such as John Calvin who have been studied extensively. There have been at least two book-length studies in English on John Calvin's ideas about women and a large number of articles; see, for example, Jane Dempsey Douglass, *Women, Freedom and Calvin* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985); John Thompson, *John Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah: Women in Regular and Exceptional Roles in the Exegesis of Calvin, His Predecessors and His Contemporaries* (Geneva: Droz, 1992).

⁹ Susan Karant-Nunn and Merry Wiener-Hanks, *Luther on Women: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.

¹⁰ The invention of the printing press has made it possible for these ideas to be published thereby making them widely available since they are not only found in private letters or archival records.

individual living a robust life, Luther would have had many social encounters with women. Therefore, it is surprising that “there continues to be relatively little scholarship on Luther’s ideas about women” including explorations into both Luther’s theology and his personal life.¹¹

Thesis Statement

This thesis argues that Martin Luther did not enforce his own strict theological convictions about women and their nature when he personally corresponded with women throughout his daily life. This becomes clear with Luther’s interactions with female family members and Reformation women. With these personal encounters, he did not maintain his theological attitudes and often made exceptions to his own theology for such exceptional or influential women. Luther also did not enforce his strict theology throughout his pastoral care where he treated both men and women respectfully and equally. Luther’s pastoral work shows that he allowed his compassion and empathy to win over his own strict theological convictions.

It is important to remember that Luther not only wrote about women in the abstract, but also lived both his public and private life among women. However, there have been no comprehensive studies that have examined his writings about women and personal encounters with women. For this reason, fundamental aspects of Luther have remained in the dark. As actions speak louder than words, scholars need to include the practical, as well as the theoretical when analyzing his attitudes towards women. In other words, his theology does not tell the whole story. This thesis explores Luther’s attitudes towards women by examining his theology and his personal correspondence. Scholarship has been slow to examine Luther’s attitudes towards women from this dual perspective; therefore, my work provides the comprehensive

¹¹ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 2.

assessment of both his theory and practice that has been called for by many previous studies. My research not only contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Luther's theological views on women more generally, but also how those views compare to his actual social encounters with women. This thesis argues that Martin Luther's personal encounters with women, as well as his theology need to be examined when trying to provide an authentic assessment of the reformer's attitudes towards women.

Methodology

It is important that we do not forget that Martin Luther was a “deeply emotional individual.”¹² Scholars like Scott Hendrix argue that we need to remember that the Reformation was not started by a “robot,” but by a “dynamic human being leading a vigorous life.”¹³ It is clear that Luther was a complex individual who wrote about women in theory and had personal relationships with women in practice. However, Luther's theological attitudes towards women more broadly have not been considered in a wider social-historical context nor have they been compared to his own relationships with women. These relationships need to be closely examined and analyzed in comparison to Luther's theological attitudes towards women.

Lyndal Roper's recent work, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet*, confirms the historical value of studying Luther's personal life and correspondence from the socio-historical perspective. She argues that his theology “becomes more alive as we connect it to his psychological conflicts expressed in his letters, sermons, treatises, conversations and biblical exegesis.”¹⁴ In other words, Luther's attitudes are not only found in his theology alone. Roper

¹² Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 53.

¹³ Hendrix, *Martin Luther*, x.

¹⁴ Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet* (New York: Random House, 2016), 11.

argues that a psychoanalytical approach provides a richer understanding not only of Luther as an individual but also the religious precepts to which he devoted his life; the “legacies of which are still so powerful.”¹⁵

Earlier scholarship on the history of the Reformation has tended to consider Luther’s emotions as irrelevant and have “edited” them out. Scholars like Richard Nenneman comment that most historians “probably know little about the personal side of Luther’s life” because many believe that it is not the source of his historical significance.¹⁶ Scholars like Heiko Oberman argue that ignoring the historical relevance of Luther’s personal life is problematic and that his practical situation “cannot be overlooked.” Oberman argues that “earlier research so thoroughly shielded Luther’s human failings that his life story threatened to become hagiographic legend: the man-of-God dedicated only the heeding the Gospel cannot be measured according to human categories.”¹⁷

Scholars such as Roper, Hendrix, and Oberman confirm the historical value of studying Luther’s personal life. It is important to view Luther as an emotional human being who had real relationships with women throughout his life. This is a promising method for studying Luther because he not only wrote about women in his theology, but also engaged with women in everyday situations.¹⁸ It is with Luther’s personal situation, especially his letters, that scholars can observe a more complex picture of women than what can be obtained from studying his theology alone. Since his sermons “do not tell the whole story,” it is important that there is a balanced presentation and evaluation of Luther’s view of women from the dual perspective of

¹⁵ Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet* (New York: Random House, 2016), 11.

¹⁶ Richard Nenneman, “The Marriage Test,” *World Monitor* 5 (1992): 63.

¹⁷ Heiko Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 91.

¹⁸ For example, Luther’s letters to women include: WA BR 3, 625, 93-94; WA BR 3, 909, 552; WA BR 5, 1551, 284; WA BR 7, 2265, 305; WA BR 7, 3102, 587; WA BR 8, 3211, 190; WA BR 8, 3344, 454-55; WA BR 8, 3354, 485; WA BR 9, 3565, 300-301; WA BR 10, 3837, 239-240; WA BR 10, 3905, 373-374; WA BR 10, 3978, 548-549; WA BR 4, 1206, 346; WA BR 5, 1526, 230-231.

theory and practice.¹⁹ By exploring Luther's personal life and the context into which his "ideas and passions flooded, [it] opens up a new vision of the Reformation."²⁰

This dissertation is written from a Religious Studies perspective which means that I take an academic and non-confessional approach towards studying Martin Luther. As with other scholars, such as Lyndal Roper, I do not wish to "idolise" nor "denigrate" him.²¹ Instead, I wish to have a better understanding of Luther and his attitudes towards women. As I apply the socio-historical method, I believe the best way to understand Luther is to examine his personal context, especially focusing on his letters to actual women. Although I will draw upon socio-historical aspects, I am not excluding the religious and theological context and questions.

In terms of sources, this dissertation mainly focuses on exploring Luther's personal correspondence with women.²² I examine his practical interactions with female family members, female reformers, and women throughout his pastoral care. When available, I have included letters from Reformation women and letters that women wrote to Luther. Women's letters, such as those written by female reformers, are significant to discuss because women did not have many available options for personal expression. Women wrote letters that were either meant for a private audience or meant for publication with a wider audience in mind. Kirsi Stjerna argues

¹⁹ Albrecht Classen, and Tanya Amber Settle, "Women in Martin Luther's Life and Theology," *German Studies Review* 14, no. 2 (1991), 238.

²⁰ Roper, *Renegade and Prophet*, 53.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

²² It is interesting to note that letters were normally passed from person to person during this period. People feared that they could be forged or intercepted. It was for this reason that important individuals, like chancellors, filed drafts of their letters. However, Luther kept no such copies. Lyndal Roper argues that this provided his correspondents with a huge amount of power since they were the only ones who had record of what Luther wrote. Roper points out that Luther was confident and did not seem worried about this. He often joked that he could always deny his "own hand," see Roper, *Renegade and Prophet*, 49.

that letters were “the most efficient and diverse tool to advise, console, defend, teach, urge, admonish, reminisce, record events, interpret scripture, and mediate.”²³

Related to Luther’s personal letters are his *Table Talks*. I have included statements made about women from these conversations because Luther’s attitudes towards women are not only found in his theology. Although some scholars believe that the testimonies of the *Table Talks* may misinterpret history, one commentator states: “It surely never belies psychology!”²⁴ Luther often told his listeners to “write it down!” so it is important to include what was transcribed in the *Table Talks* because it provides more insights into his personal attitudes towards women.²⁵

Luther’s theological writings have been examined in German from the Weimar edition. When available, the “American edition” of Luther’s works has also been consulted. Since Luther’s authorship is vast, it is unrealistic that this dissertation would include everything that he wrote about women. For this reason, I have paid considerable attention to Luther’s *Declamationes in Genesin* (1527) and *Lectures on Genesis* (1535-1545), when examining his theology. It should be noted that this dissertation does not claim to develop a specific theology of women in Luther’s thought, but rather focuses on exploring how Luther wrote about women in his theological writings and what he said to women in his personal letters.²⁶

²³ Kirsi Stjerna, “Reformation Revisited: Women’s Voices in the Reformation,” *The Ecumenical Review* 69, no. 2 (2017): 203.

²⁴ Preserved Smith, *The Life and Letters of Martin Luther* (London: John Murray, 1911), 359.

²⁵ Jeanette Smith, “Katharina Von Bora Through Five Centuries: A Historiography,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30, no. 3 (1999): 756.

²⁶ It is inaccurate to speak of a theology of women in Luther’s thought, at least in a formal sense. This is because Luther, who was not a systematic theologian, never wrote a specific treatise or discourse on women.

Thesis Outline

This dissertation is organized into five chapters followed by a conclusion. The first chapter introduces the topic, presents an explanation of the structure of this dissertation, and provides a literature review. This literature review is meant to be an introduction to my research topic by highlighting where there are currently gaps in the field. This review is presented chronologically to illustrate how previous scholarship has set the stage for my own research and how my dissertation contributes to filling gaps within the field.

The second chapter provides a framework to understand both Martin Luther and women in their sixteenth century European context. It discusses women's lives and popular societal views of women that were inherited from early and medieval Christianity and classical philosophy. This information will be helpful to the reader because it shows that Luther's theology reflected traditional societal norms and perspectives. Since this chapter presents the proper roles of women in sixteenth century society, it also helps the reader to see whether the women with whom Luther interacted were maintaining social norms. These norms described women as physically and intellectually inferior to men. The perspective that women are inferior affected how women were viewed and treated in early modern society. This chapter then examines women in relation to the law, work, education, and family life to provide context on women's lives and experiences in the early modern period.

The third chapter presents Luther's theological attitudes towards women.²⁷ Although this dissertation argues that a more thorough understanding of Luther can be achieved when considering his personal experiences, his theology must first be explored. This chapter is where the information from the second chapter plays an important role, especially as it shows that

²⁷ It is important to mention that my work examines Luther's theology as a whole and includes both positive and negative aspects.

Luther maintained traditional perspectives from early and medieval Christianity and classical philosophy that were popular in the sixteenth century. Based on the perspectives that are outlined in the second chapter, Luther maintained the social norm that women are naturally inferior to men. The third chapter explores Luther's earlier and later interpretations of Eve. His theological interpretations of Eve are naturally at the center of any study on Luther and women or gender.²⁸ This is because he used Eve as evidence to support his position that women are weaker than men. It is important that his theological attitudes towards women should not only be based on his earlier statements, but also his more mature commentaries.²⁹ It is for this reason that this discussion is divided into two sections. The first section examines the earlier Luther's thoughts on Eve which can be found in his *Declamationes in Genesin* (1527).³⁰ The second part of this discussion analyzes the more mature Luther's interpretation of Eve found in his *Lectures on Genesis* (1535-1545).³¹

In addition to Eve, Luther wrote about other biblical women such as Tamar and Sarah.

Based on his biblical interpretations of women, he came to several conclusions about all women

²⁸ The index of the Weimar edition lists over four hundred citations under the name "Eva" found throughout Luther's sermons, treatises, lectures, and disputations, see WA 63, 167-169; Kirsi Stjerna also argues that "given how prominently women appear in Luther's last lectures of Genesis, it would seem a most proper path to take," see Kirsi Stjerna, "Luther and Women," in *Martin Luther: A Christian between Reforms and Modernity (1517-2017)*, ed. Alberto Melloni (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 615.

²⁹ See Kristen Kvam, "Luther, Eve, and Theological Anthropology: Reassessing the Reformer's Response to the 'Frauenfrage'" (PhD Dissertation, Emory University, 1992), 24-26.

³⁰ Scholars argue that there is nothing especially controversial by the claim that after 1525, Luther is considered to be more mature and older because by then, he was over forty years of age, see Mickey Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs: Martin Luther's Interpretation of the Women of Genesis in the Narrations of Genesis, 1523-45* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 21-23.

³¹ It seems evident that historians tend to favour political lines of separation when periodizing Luther's life and work. Martin Brecht's biographical work on Luther considers Luther's life in three main phases: the young Luther, a middle phase occurring between 1521 and 1535, and a mature period from 1532 to 1546, see Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: A Biography*, trans. James Schaaf (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1999). While other scholars would argue that periodizing Luther's life should centre either on the Peasants' War, Diet of Worms, or the Augsburg Confession, see Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career, 1521-1530*, trans. Theodore Bachmann, ed. Karin Bornkamm (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Helmar Junghans, ed., *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526 bis 1546* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983).

and their nature. He thought that women should be married, obedient, mothers, and should remain at home. This chapter examines each of these natural qualities or proper roles.

The fourth chapter explores Luther's personal interactions with family members and female reformers to determine whether he practiced what he preached in his everyday life. This chapter analyzes Luther's view of women by discussing how he corresponded with women and how he treated them throughout his personal letters.³² The letters that are considered range in dates from 1520 to 1546.³³ This chapter shows that Luther's personal life with women presents him in a different light than what we have seen in the previous chapter. The fourth chapter argues that Luther did not maintain his strict theological convictions and he did not enforce his theology in his own life, especially when corresponding with exceptional women. From these respectful conversations, we can see that Luther made exceptions for these exceptional or influential women who challenged his theology. In his personal situation, there was often a balanced exchange of ideas and a recognition of women's intelligence. This chapter examines how Luther corresponded with women who were close to him on a personal level and with women who often challenged his own theology. The contextual information presented in the second chapter is also helpful to keep in mind, especially while reflecting on whether the behaviours of the women who

³² I have decided to focus on letters that show more of Luther's personality and how he interacted with women. Some letters that were not included do not clearly show Luther's attitudes towards women, apart from always addressing each woman in his letters as gracious, pious, virtuous, honourable, kind, and good friend, etc. which still shows respect for women. Many letters to women do not illuminate Luther's attitudes. For example, in one letter written on June 4th, 1539, to Ursula Schneidewein, he wrote to her to inform her that her son is distressed and wishes to marry. The son is waiting for her permission. Luther said he cared for the son and did not want him to take matters into his own hands, so a response from Ursula would be helpful. This does not necessarily show anything with regards to how Luther viewed Ursula or women more broadly, so it was not included. For more information, see WA BR 8, 453-455.

³³ For examples of Luther's correspondence with women, see Mary Williams and Edwin Keever, *Luther's Letters to Women* (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1930); Luther's correspondence with both men and women can be found in the Weimar edition of Luther's works and is presented chronologically, see WA BR 1 – 10; WA BR 1 (1501-1520), WA BR 2 (1520-1522), WA BR 3 (1523-1525), WA BR 4 (1526-1528), WA BR 5 (1529-1530), WA BR 6 (1531-1533), WA BR 7 (1534-1536), WA BR 8 (1537-1539), WA BR 9 (1540-1542), WA BR 10 (1542-1544), WA BR 11 (1545-1546); see also Laura Sangha, *Understanding Early Modern Primary Sources* (London: Routledge, 2016).

corresponded with Luther were consistent with social norms and perspectives. The influential or exceptional women that are discussed in the fourth chapter include Margarethe Luther, Katharina von Bora, Argula von Grumbach, and Katharina Schütz Zell.

The fifth chapter analyzes Luther's personal interactions with women throughout his pastoral care. His pastoral work is important to examine because Luther, more than anything else, was a pastor and preacher in Wittenberg. Apart from family members and female reformers, he also interacted with many other women to offer spiritual counsel and comfort. Luther's letters to both men and women will be consulted. This chapter argues that from examining these letters, scholars can see that Luther treated both men and women equally throughout his pastoral work. These personal encounters provide scholars with more insights into how Luther interacted with women and how he understood them. This chapter shows that Luther did not often maintain his own theological assumptions or enforce his strict theological attitudes. Luther's pastoral works shows that he often allowed empathy and compassion to win over his strict theological convictions leading him to treat both men and women respectfully and equally.

The fourth and the fifth chapters highlight Luther's complex attitudes towards women and explore whether he enforced his own theological principles in his own life. These chapters show that Luther's actions frequently did not reflect his own theology. Therefore, Luther's attitudes towards women are not only discovered by exploring his theological works, but also by examining his personal experiences and correspondence.

These chapters are followed by a conclusion section which provides a brief summary of my research project and examination. This final section discusses possible future research directions, as well as how my dissertation contributes to the scholarship on Luther and women.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the 1960s and the 1970s, scholars were influenced by the field of social history which experienced a dramatic growth during these years. This period saw the emergence of the social-historical method. The methodologies of social history were influenced by Marxist paradigms such as oppression, consciousness, and agency.³⁴ In the 1970s, scholars like Joan Kelly, Gerda Lerner, and Juliet Mitchell started to use social history in their own works and started examining women's lived experiences of the past.³⁵ Scholars, such as Kelly and Lerner, were not only influenced by the new approaches advocated by social history, but also by the second-wave feminist movement beginning in the 1960s and lasting for about two decades. However, when these scholars conducted their research, they found that there were hardly any women at all in historical works.³⁶ It was not that women were absent from history, but that history was mainly written by men and about men. These traditional historical studies, written by male historians like John Roberts, captured the male experience and presented this experience as universal.³⁷ Mary Spongberg notes that "masculinist history, history that represented the view of the white, middle-class male, had become "general" history, while history about women or other marginalized groups had become "particular" history."³⁸ Such conventional historical studies

³⁴ In addition to Karl Marx, Max Weber and Émile Durkheim also shaped the social historical method. For example, Marx emphasized relationships between the economy and social experience and believed that human lives were determined by material existence which affect history. Weber helped historians to make generalization about past societies by considering social systems as wholes that could not be separated from the economic and political. Durkheim theorized the idea of a collective consciousness and argued that social phenomena are social facts which are ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that are outside the consciousness. See Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 90-92

³⁵ For example, see Juliet Mitchell, *Women: The Longest Revolution: Essays on Feminism, Literature and Psychoanalysis* (London: Virago Publishing, 1966).

³⁶ See Mary Spongberg, "'Hardly any Women At All'? Women Writers and the Gender of History," in *Writing Women's History Since the Renaissance* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 7.

³⁷ See John Roberts, *Europe, 1880-1945* (London: Longmans, 1967); *idem, History of the World* (New York: Knopf, 1976); see also Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The New History and the Old* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987).

³⁸ Spongberg, *Writing Women's History Since the Renaissance*, 10.

have been called “Men’s History.”³⁹ In the face of such enormous neglect from conventional historians and traditional historical works, scholars like Kelly and Lerner attempted to reconstruct the female past.⁴⁰ It was not the case that women did not engage with history, but that their behaviours or actions were not considered to be proper history.⁴¹ Since the 1960s, scholars like Kelly and Mitchell argued that women need to be considered legitimate subjects of study and that scholars should examine the “history of women worthies.”⁴² In other words, women needed to be at the forefront when evaluating history and historical events.

In the 1970s, scholars were primarily concerned with correcting the absence of women from history.⁴³ For example, Kelly, Lerner, and Mitchell argued that the approaches scholars use to think about history required a “radical revision in order to take women’s lives and experience into account.”⁴⁴ Mary Spongberg states that “this was a radical endeavour in itself, as it recognized the need to claim a space for women’s subjectivity within a masculinist discourse.”⁴⁵ This radical approach was called “Women’s History.”⁴⁶

As with Kelly, Lerner, and Mitchell, early modern scholars like Eileen Power witnessed a lack of historical studies that focused on women in their field, especially in the 1970s.⁴⁷

Conventional historians who wrote about the early modern period might mention queens,

³⁹ See Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 133; Merry Wiesner, *Gender in History: Global Perspectives* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 1-2; Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, *A History of Women in the West* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), x-xi.

⁴⁰ Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past*, 133.

⁴¹ Spongberg, *Writing Women's History Since the Renaissance*, 7.

⁴² See Lauri Umansky, *Making Sense of Women's Lives* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 10.

⁴³ However, scholars like Spongberg argue that the “add women and stir” approach to women’s history is limited because it does not modify previous historiographies in feminist terms.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁵ Spongberg, *Writing Women's History Since the Renaissance*, 8.

⁴⁶ Marilyn Boxer, *When Women Ask the Questions: Creating Women's Studies in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 10.

⁴⁷ Eileen Power, *Medieval Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); for a later example, see Diane Bornstein, *The Lady in the Tower: Medieval Courtesy Literature for Women* (Hamden: Archon, 1983).

martyrs, and reformers' wives, but most studies still focus on men. For example, in 1972, Owen Chadwick's work titled *the Reformation* still focuses on men and their roles in the movement.⁴⁸ Studies, such as those by Chadwick, often consider women as passive partners or do not critically investigate women at all. This is not to say that women have been left out of history because of the "evil conspiracies of men in general or male historians," but because history has traditionally been considered and represented in male-centered terms.⁴⁹

In 1977, Joan Kelly published an influential work where she explored women's roles in Renaissance society.⁵⁰ This study challenged the traditional assumption that women's historical experiences were the same as men's experiences. With this work, Kelly deviated from conventional historical studies. She advocated that other historians of women should reassess history through the perspective of women's experiences and voices.

In 1985, following Kelly's publication, Joan Wallach Scott presented an essay to the American Historical Association's conference where she argued that women and gender must become critical categories of historical analysis.⁵¹ Scott challenged the conventional historian's claim that the male figure universally represented the historical subject. She rejected traditional historical examples and undermined the male historian's "ability to claim neutral mastery or to present any particular story as if it were complete, universal and objectively determined."⁵² With

⁴⁸ See Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972); for a later study that still focuses mainly on men, see Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

⁴⁹ Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past*, 140.

⁵⁰ Joan Kelly, *Did Women Have a Renaissance?* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 5-16; see also *idem*, *Women, History & Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997).

⁵¹ It was later published in 1986, see Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review*, 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053-1075; for a later study, see Gerda Lerner, *Scholarship in Women's History: Rediscovered and New* (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1993).

⁵² Spongberg, *Writing Women's History Since the Renaissance*, 10.

her essay, she showed that previous historical studies placed women, both as historical subjects and as historians, outside of history.⁵³

Women and the Reformation

There are two different approaches towards considering women in the scholarship on the Reformation and Martin Luther. Both approaches have been influenced by the emergence of second-wave feminism and Women's History.

The first approach focuses on the women and the Reformation movement.⁵⁴ In the 1960s, Women's History contributed to an increase in scholarship in various fields that focused on including women's experiences of the past. Within this field, studies on this topic appeared relatively early in this wave of Women's History. For example, in 1971, Roland Bainton's work was one of the first studies to address women and the Reformation.⁵⁵ His work was mainly biographical, but still included information on women who were not well known. In 1972, other scholars like Miriam Chrisman, Charmarie Jenkins-Blaisdell, Nancy Roelker contributed by publishing more analytical studies on women and the Reformation.⁵⁶

In the 1980s, scholarship on this topic became increasingly popular. For example, scholars, like Joyce Irwin and Jane Dempsey Douglass, strongly emphasized that importance of

⁵³ Spongberg, *Writing Women's History Since the Renaissance*, 10.

⁵⁴ For larger bibliographies on women and the Reformation, see Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "Studies of Women, the Family and Gender," in *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research II*, ed. Williams Maltby (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1992), 159-187.

⁵⁵ Roland Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971); see also Derek Wilson, *A Tudor Tapestry: Men, Women and Society in Reformation England* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973).

⁵⁶ See Miriam Chrisman, "Women of the Reformation in Strasbourg 1490-1530," *Archive for Reformation History* 63 (1972): 141-168; Charmarie Jenkins-Blaisdell, "Rénee de France Between Reform and Counter-Reform," *Archive for Reformation History* 63 (1972): 196-226; Nancy Roelker, "The Role of Noblewomen in the French Reformation," *Archive for Reformation History* 63 (1972): 168-196; see also *idem*, Nancy Roelker, "The Appeal of Calvinism to French Noblewomen in the Sixteenth Century," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2 (1972), 291-418; Natalie Zemon Davis, "City Women and Religious Change," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 65-96.

examining women's experiences throughout the Reformation from their own personal perspectives including women's roles in society and explorations into how women influenced the Reformation movement.⁵⁷

More recently in the 2000s, scholars like Merry Wiesner-Hanks take a similar approach as Irwin and Douglass.⁵⁸ Recent studies tend to focus on women as individuals, especially their impact and actions either in support or opposition of the Protestant or Catholic Reformations and their spiritual practices.⁵⁹ For example, in 2009, Kirsi Stjerna published a work which built upon main arguments from Kelly and Irwin concerning the inclusion of women and gender-awareness within historical scholarship on the Reformation. Stjerna argues that teaching and evaluating the Reformation is no longer possible without including women as important subjects. She argues that it can no longer be assumed that men were the active leaders within these movements and women were simply passive followers or that "women adopted the gendered world with its gender-biased options and parameters without scrutiny."⁶⁰ It can neither be assumed that the Reformation was equally experienced by men and women in the same manner.⁶¹ Stjerna argues

⁵⁷ See Joyce Irwin, "Society and the Sexes," in *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research*, ed. Steven Ozment (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1982), 343-359; Jane Dempsey Douglass, "Women and the Reformation," in *The Many Sides of History: Readings in the Western Heritage. Vol. 1: The Ancient World to Early Modern Europe*, ed. Steven Ozment and Frank M. Turner (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 318-355; see also Ulinka Rublack, "Gender in Early Modern German History: An Introduction," *German History* 17, no. 1 (1999): 1-8.

⁵⁸ See Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ruth Tucker, *Katie Luther, First Lady of the Reformation: The Unconventional Life of Katharina von Bora* (New York: Harper Collins Publishing, 2017); Karin Jäckel, *Die Frau des Reformators: das Leben der Katharina von Bora* (Reinbeck Bei Hamburg: Rowohlt-Taschenbuch-Verlag, 2007); Michelle DeRusha, *Katharina and Martin Luther: The Radical Marriage of a Runaway Nun and a Renegade Monk* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017); Ursula Koch, *Verspottet, geachtet, geliebt - die Frauen der Reformatoren: Geschichten von Mut, Anfechtung und Beharrlichkeit* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Aussaat, 2016); Sylvia Weigelt, *Der Männer Lust und Freude sein* (Weimar: Wartburg Verlag, 2010); see also Simona Schellenberger, *Eine starke Frauengeschichte: 500 Jahre Reformation* (Sax-Verlag, 2014).

⁵⁹ See Derek Wilson, *Mrs Luther and Her Sisters: Women in the Reformation* (Lion Hudson PLC, 2016); Wiesner-Hanks, Merry, "Nuns, Wives, and Mothers: Women and the Reformation in Germany," in *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe*, ed. Sherrin Marshall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

⁶⁰ Kirsi Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 4.

⁶¹ The actual social role of women during the sixteenth century is still debated. Steven Ozment and other scholars claim that the Reformation did not impose restrictions on women, but rather, gave them an opportunity to become liberated, see Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard

that the assumptions and conclusions about women's experiences are not always warranted. As with Kelly's insights about the Renaissance, Stjerna argues that by including women within historical evaluations, studies would be able to show a much more complete picture. It is for this reason that studies about women's experiences need to become more common in historical scholarship. Stjerna argues that these materials are still lacking and that "much more has been written about the wars, the Diets, and the reformers' assorted treatises than about how the Reformation was experienced [...] by women."⁶² In attempting to address this problem, Stjerna produces biographical accounts to highlight women's leadership roles and contributions to the Reformation. She includes biographies on historical female figures such as Katharina von Bora, Queen Jeanne d'Albret, Ursula Jost, and Olimpia Morata, and many other women.⁶³ Within her work, these women are introduced as history-makers and "as subjects of their own history," so that "there is hope for more inclusive history writing and theologizing."⁶⁴

Reformers' Attitudes Towards Women

The second approach addresses reformers' attitudes towards women by examining their theological or personal writings about women. Overall, scholarship has been slow to analyze Martin Luther's attitudes towards women. Kirsi Stjerna argues that there are "surprisingly few book-length studies have been published on the subject of women in the lives and theologies of the reformers or assessing their theologies from gender perspectives."⁶⁵ Therefore, my

University Press, 1983); while other scholars argue that it was the very opposite for women, see Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁶² Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 4-5.

⁶³ Many other works focus on prominent women, like Argula von Grumbach and Katharina Zell, and often contain biographical information, see Sonja Domröse, *Frauen der Reformationszeit: Gelehrt, mutig und glaubensfest* (Bristol: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).

⁶⁴ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 6.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

dissertation fits within this second group because it addresses this gap in the field. This second direction is not necessarily concerned with women's own personal experiences and perspectives, but rather more concerned with exploring reformers' attitudes towards women.

This direction can be further broken down into two separate categories. First, there are scholars who include women in the scholarship on Luther. This approach attempts to simply "add women and stir" to studies on Luther. This group tends to be composed of older works written from a confessional perspective. They frequently describe Luther in positive terms without providing much evidence. As such, it is not the best approach to take towards examining Luther's perspectives. The second category explores Luther on women. This group includes my own research and dissertation. I will now turn my attention to examining these two categories.

Women in the Scholarship on Luther

Since the 1950s, biographies on Martin Luther, such as early works by Roland Bainton and Ewald Plass, have "lightened the heft of their theological analyses and their accounts of the Reformation as apocalypse-laden conflict with the Roman Church with depictions of the Reformer's marriage and ultimate wedded bliss."⁶⁶ These depictions are typically used as short interludes between the crises of the early Reformation years and Luther's theological development.⁶⁷ For this reason, Katharina von Bora, as Luther's wife, could hardly be excluded from the story. Even though scholars included Katharina in his life, she played a very minor role. Scholars like Plass were not interested in her as an individual. Instead, they were interested in

⁶⁶ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 5.

⁶⁷ A popular approach for biographical studies was to discuss the theological, as well as the psychological, especially as it pertained to Luther and his mother, see Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, 86-94; Siggins, *Luther and His Mother*; Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, 64.

using Katharina to reveal Luther's devotion to principle and his "great humanity." These claims were often unsubstantiated. For example, in 1950, Roland Bainton proclaimed that the "Luther who got married in order to testify to his faith actually founded a home and did more than any other person to determine the tone of German domestic relations for the next four centuries."⁶⁸ In 1959, almost ten years later, Ewald Plass took a similar approach by stating: "Martin Luther's influence on marriage was profound and permanent."⁶⁹ However, these assertions have not been supported and still remain to be proven.

In 1983, there was an increase in scholarship on Luther celebrating the five-hundredth anniversary of his birth. Although years later, published works, such as John Todd's study, presented Luther's marriage and personal life in much of the same way as earlier scholars.⁷⁰ While these studies presented Luther in a similar manner, other studies minimized the importance of his personal life. For example, Helmar Junghans published a two-volume set of essays which alleged to have included every important aspect of Luther's career; however, it did not give any attention to Katharina von Bora or any other women in his life.⁷¹ In 1990, Martin Brecht published a three-volume biography which dedicated a mere nine pages to the subject of Luther's marriage and life at home. At the end of the nine pages, Brecht states that "Luther was able to concentrate on his manifold tasks in such an atmosphere [his life at home] deserves our respect."⁷² In 1991, Gerhard Brendler took a similar approach to Luther's personal life as Brecht.⁷³ From these works, we can see that between the 1950s and the 1990s, there were no

⁶⁸ Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: New American Library, 1950), 233.

⁶⁹ Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, vol. 11 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing Company, 1959), 884.

⁷⁰ John Todd, *Luther: A Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 260-267.

⁷¹ Helmar Junghans, *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526 bis 1546: Festgabe zu seinem 500. Geburtstag*, 2 vols (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1983).

⁷² Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521-1532*, trans. James Schaaf (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 204.

⁷³ See Gerhard Brendler, *Martin Luther: Theology and Revolution*, trans. Claude Foster (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 302-310.

major biographical studies that had sufficiently included women as subjects or evaluated Luther's attitudes towards women and whether he enforced his theological convictions.

Luther on Women

Scholarship from the 1970s

Scholars who were influenced by the new approaches in social history and the feminist movements from the 1960s considered the value in considering the topic of Luther and women from a more critical perspective. In 1973, Martha Skeeters Behrens was one of the first scholars to argue that many aspects of Luther's life and thoughts have been examined; however, one area which has not been sufficiently explored is Luther's view of the female sex: "While work has been done on Luther's ideas about the home, the family, marriage, and sex, his ideas about woman herself have been accorded only a sentence here and there."⁷⁴ She argues that is not because of a lack of existing material, but because of "a general neglect of the woman problem."⁷⁵ This neglect has "contributed to a less than complete understanding of Luther."⁷⁶ Behrens and other scholars began to take a more inclusive look at Luther's writings concerning women in attempts to present a more nuanced picture.⁷⁷ She argues that Luther's relationships with women take on more significance than simply revealing his humanity. Behrens' work

⁷⁴ Martha Behrens, "Martin Luther's View of Woman" (Master's Thesis, North Texas State University, 1973), 1-2.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁷ See Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "Luther and Women: the Death of Two Marys," in *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics, and Patriarchy*, ed. Jim Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper, and Raphael Samuel (Long and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 295-308; Susan Karant-Nunn, "The Reformation of Women," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, and Merry Wiesner-Hanks (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1998), 175-202.

argues that studies on Luther's view of women will at the very least broaden the context of Luther studies, and at most, signal "a new current in historical values."⁷⁸

Behrens' study explores Luther's theological view of natural woman and it discusses how his view contributed to the concept of female inferiority and evil, especially his comparison of women to Eve.⁷⁹ This work is divided into three main parts. The first section explores Luther's theological views of the natural woman and the negative effects of these views on women. She states: "Luther created a new nunnery restricting the activity of woman in the world just as the old ideal of monasticism had done."⁸⁰ The second part of her work focuses on Luther's view of woman in society and concludes that Luther's ideal of marriage defined his idea of woman in society: "Having neither the ability for nor right to leadership in church or state, she belonged in the home."⁸¹ The third section explores Luther's view of woman and how it bears meaning on the Reformation itself. She writes: "At the center of Luther's theology are concepts which traditionally have been hailed as breakthroughs or at least renewals of mankind's religious consciousness. It is apparent, however, that these advances did not always apply to womankind in the same manner."⁸²

It is important to note that Behrens highlights that Luther presents contradictory positions, especially regarding woman's natural inferiority versus punishment for original sin.⁸³ Behrens' work is significant because it appears early in scholarship and highlights the necessity to examine Luther and women, as well as his ambiguous approach. She notes that at certain points Luther presents a contradictory position which denies woman's natural inferiority and

⁷⁸ Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Woman*, 127.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 8-11.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 30-35; 38.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 39-41; 88.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 90; 107.

⁸³ Behrens provides excerpts from Luther's discussion on God's curse upon Eve from LW 1, 115; 202-203.

instead ascribed her restricted position in society to God's curse upon Eve.⁸⁴ In other words, woman had her freedom taken away as part of a punishment for original sin. Behrens notes that "it is not clear why Luther contradicted himself by saying that woman's position was her punishment in some instances, and in many others that it was the result of her natural inferiority."⁸⁵ Behrens argues that it may be assumed that "contrary to Luther's explicit statement that Eve was Adam's equal, that the woman's role in original sin indicated a natural flaw and demonstrated her inferiority to the male."⁸⁶ She continues with her exploration of the place of women in society and concludes that "Luther's belief in the natural inferiority of woman, coupled with his beliefs in woman's punishment dictated that woman should not participate in affairs of church or state."⁸⁷

However, Luther maintained some exceptions to his ideal of woman as passive. Behrens briefly highlights three women, namely Argula von Grumbach, Elisabeth of Brandenburg, and Katharina Zell who were either "not aware of or refused to consider Luther's delineation of woman's role."⁸⁸ She explains that Argula von Grumbach engaged in public protest when the faculty at the University of Ingolstadt forced a student to recant the teachings of Philipp Melancthon. It was reported that Argula von Grumbach's punishment was the responsibility of her husband. Behrens notes that Luther's reaction to this situation is surprising when compared to his support to limit female activities.⁸⁹ In a letter, Luther spoke of her as a "singular

⁸⁴ Behrens also points out that it is paradoxical that Luther seems to value woman's function in procreation but overlooks woman's role as a mother. She offers another paradoxical claim by highlighting that Luther's argument that motherhood was both a woman's reason for existing and also a punishment for sin; it was a sign of God's blessing and curse (for punishment, see LW 1, 200; for the function of a woman's body demonstrates God's blessing, see LW 1, 202); see also Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Woman*, 41; 61-62.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 48-50.

⁸⁹ See WA BR 2, 509; WA BR 3, 706-709.

instrument” which Behrens argues may suggest that she was unique. However, he also calls her an “infirm vessel” which follows with most of his comments about women.⁹⁰ As Behrens notes, that Luther gave her actions “the authority of Christ, making her an exception to the general conception that women should stay in the home and submit themselves to their husbands.”⁹¹

As for Katharina Zell, she was self-assured and strong unlike Luther’s ideal woman.⁹² Behrens notes that Luther was “faced with such notable exceptions to his description of woman” that it is surprising that Luther “did not question his traditional view of her being and her place in the world.”⁹³ Rather, she argues that Luther continued to maintain traditional views as outlined in Genesis, Aristotle, and Paul. She notes that even when Luther read about female figures in scripture who did not fit into this ideal, he deemed them as exceptional, for a woman’s place was in the home: “It may well be that the danger of evil women loose in the world contributed to Luther’s insistence on women’s restricted role.”⁹⁴

One key contribution from this work is that Behrens explores Luther’s theology and begins to compare his theological views to his personal relationships with women. Although this analysis is only discussed over a few pages, it nevertheless begins to analyze Luther’s interactions with women. She notes that Luther would have had little contact with women when he was a monk, but that his later experiences brought him into closer contact with women. However, Behrens argues that Luther “still refused to draw upon these experiences or upon the accounts of saintly women in the Bible. Although he became the loving husband of a competent and devoted woman, his basic view of woman remained the same throughout his life.”⁹⁵ Luther’s

⁹⁰ Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Woman*, 48.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 49.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

interactions with women did not change his perspective. This view is unlike more recent scholarship which argues that Luther's interactions with women changed his views throughout his life. Instead, Behrens presents Luther's theological views in a negative light, but nevertheless provides a detailed discussion of Luther's theological attitudes towards which had not been previously explored.⁹⁶

Scholarship from the 1980s

In an article published in 1987, Merry Wiesner-Hanks challenges whether Luther held negative theological views on women by demonstrating the variation in assessments of his views through four contradictory statements. Two of these statements from Luther affirm a traditional or more negative approach while the other two show his compassion towards women.⁹⁷ This article contributes by highlighting the positive and negative positions held over the centuries in order to show that the range of opinions on Luther's ideas and their impact.⁹⁸ Wiesner-Hanks engages with Martha Behrens' work in order to discuss how scholarship tends to emphasize Luther's negative views. The key finding from this article is that Wiesner-Hanks does not wish to add yet another interpretation to this debate since there is "ammunition enough in his writings to support any position."⁹⁹ Instead, Wiesner-Hanks wishes "to retreat from that battlefield" and explore the language, images, and metaphors that Luther used when speaking about women.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Behrens highlights Luther's negative views on women as exemplified with this quote: "Woman [...] was limited to marriage and the realm of the household, forbidden that factor ultimately necessary to human dignity, choice. She served God by having children, served man by having sex, and served the spirituality of the whole world by staying home under the watchful eyes of her husband. This was Luther's woman in society," see, Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Woman*, 88-89.

⁹⁷ Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 295.

⁹⁸ For a negative approach, see Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Woman*, 34; 95; for a neutral approach, see John Yost, "Changing Attitudes Towards Married Life in Civic and Christian Humanism," in *Occasional Papers for the American Society for Reformation Research* I, no. 1 (1997): 164.

⁹⁹ Wiesner-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 297.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 297.

By exploring how Luther defined the ideal woman, Wiesner-Hanks makes a distinction between what he considered the “female” and “feminine.” She explains that the “female” refers to Luther’s descriptions and discussions of actual women while the “feminine” is the use of imagery which stresses certain qualities like gentleness or submissiveness.¹⁰¹ According to Wiesner-Hanks, Luther’s ideal woman was someone like Martha who remained within the home. His ideal woman was not Mary who tried to understand Christ’s teachings better. She argues that women who appear in his writings are sometimes depicted in positive ways. However, throughout Luther’s writings, even the words used to describe the ideal woman were “hardly complimentary ones – a weak vessel, a nail, a tortoise – and those used to describe women who do not follow the ideal even harsher – burning with lust, stinking, tools of the Devil and so on.”¹⁰² Therefore, this article argues that “the image of the “female” which emerges from Luther’s works is an ambiguous one.”¹⁰³ This finding is perhaps the key contribution from this article because it argues that scholars should take a step back from the debate about Luther’s impact on women in order to reconsider his statements about women, especially in light of such existing ambiguities. This article contributes by initiating a new dialogue that seeks to discuss his ambiguous approach to women rather than offering yet another interpretation to support whether Luther’s views had a positive or negative impact for women.

Scholarship from the 1990s

In 1991, Albrecht Classen and Tanya Settle published an article attempting to explain why Luther’s ambiguities exist. They examine how Luther’s interactions with women may have

¹⁰¹ Wiesner-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 297.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 302.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 302.

influenced his theology and illuminate the function that Luther ascribed to women.¹⁰⁴

Specifically, these authors explore Luther's views on marriage and women. They examine his sermons on marriage and include a discussion of his relationships with various women including his mother, wife, and other Reformation women activists like Katharina Zell and Argula von Grumbach.¹⁰⁵ This article outlines a helpful discussion on Luther's theological views and begins to examine his relationship with actual women and because "his sermons do not tell the whole story."¹⁰⁶

As with Behrens' argument, Classen and Settle argue that Luther, as a monk, would not have been concerned with women, but this changed when he married Katharina von Bora. Unlike Behrens' claim, these two authors argue that Luther "soon seems to have deviated from his previous rigid opinions about women and marriage as such, once he came into closer contact with them."¹⁰⁷ Classen and Settle note that Luther did not extensively discuss his attitude toward his mother, but his relationship with his wife "left definite historical traces."¹⁰⁸ Classen and Settle argue that these traces "need to be closely examined and discussed in light of modern feminist notions of the history of women in the Middle Ages and the early modern period."¹⁰⁹ His relationships with women deserve more scholarly attention since there is a lack of scholarship on how Luther interacted with women, how he treated them, and finally the extent to which he was open to accept their influences.¹¹⁰

Classen and Settle conclude that Luther's theology about marriage, at least his early theology, had a negative impact for women. It did not provide women with a new social or

¹⁰⁴ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 231.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 233.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 233.

¹¹⁰ See Wiesner-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 295-308.

theological position in life since he reaffirms man's patriarchal role. In this way, woman is submissive to her husband and should accept her role or fate as God-given.¹¹¹ It seems that this article is presenting Luther's more negative perspectives; however, it is important to note that the authors make it explicit that their analysis of Luther's views would change if they examined his more mature theology. They note that they only examined Luther's theology from an earlier time in his career before he came into closer contact with women.¹¹²

As with any work, there are limitations to this study. It is not a full-length study, so it does not provide the depth that is required to sufficiently analyze this topic. For example, there is not enough engagement between Luther's theological perspectives and personal correspondence with women. Second, this article focuses solely on his theology on marriage and does not consider other theological works, such as his commentaries on Genesis, that address women. Third, although it does acknowledge that Luther's theology likely developed over his life, it does not provide enough evidence to support this claim. It also does not provide an analysis that offers a clear distinction between Luther's earlier theology and his later theology.

Nevertheless, this article contributes to the field because it highlights the necessity to test Luther's theology in the context of his personal relationships with actual women. It claims that the later Luther deviated from his theological attitudes towards women, especially from his early period. Finally, it argues that if scholars were to examine Luther's theology alone, it would seem as though Luther tried very hard to keep women within the household. Yet, when his personal relationships with women are considered, it shows the considerable respect Luther held for women. This article argues that ambiguities exist and that scholars need to further explore

¹¹¹ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 236.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 238.

Luther's personal correspondence with women, as well as theological attitudes, in order to explain these complexities and apparent contradictions.

In attempts to further explore Luther's attitudes towards women, scholars began to focus on his theological perspectives, especially in the 1990s. For example, in 1992, Kristen Kvam explores features of Luther's theological understanding of women by examining his response to the "Woman Question" or "*Frauenfrage*" as outlined in his lectures on Genesis.¹¹³ Specifically, she focuses on Luther's interpretation of Eve in order to investigate his understandings how women relate to men and their nature, especially by focusing on his exegetical discussions.¹¹⁴ Kvam observes that scholars "have not totally neglected Luther's response to the Woman Question."¹¹⁵ For example, there are several anthologies that have referenced Luther's statements about womanhood.¹¹⁶ However, although some secondary sources have referenced Luther's views on womanhood, there is still a need for "a more sustained investigation."¹¹⁷ Kvam notes that an exhaustive study of his attitudes towards women is merited, but is beyond the scope of her study.¹¹⁸

Nevertheless, Kvam's work contributes to the field by researching and assessing Luther's theological understandings of Eve's character and activity. Kvam argues: "Embedded on the edges of many of Luther's theological considerations are his understandings of the significance

¹¹³ The "Woman Question" refers to a number of issues that are brought together by inquiries into the meaning of womanhood: "While the 'Woman Question' may be pursued from a variety of angles, the overarching concern revolves around perceiving female human persons as a distinct collective and inquiring into the character and activity that the members of this group share." See, Kvam, *Luther, Eve, and Theology Anthropology*, 3-4; see also Joan Kelly, "Early Feminist Theory and the 'Querelle des Femmes'" in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 8, no. 1 (1982): 4-28.

¹¹⁴ It is important to note that this work also makes a distinction between a younger Luther and more mature Luther; see Kvam, *Luther, Eve, and Theology Anthropology*, 31.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹¹⁶ See Elizabeth Clark and Herbert Richardson, *Women and Religion: A Feminist Sourcebook of Christian Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 131-148; Julia O'Faolain and Lauro Martines, *Not in God's Image: Women in History from the Greeks to the Victorians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 195-198.

¹¹⁷ Kvam, *Luther, Eve, and Theology Anthropology*, 14-15.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

of gender and gender relations for Christian anthropology as well as his views upon the particular identity of women.”¹¹⁹ The purpose of her work is to argue that his theological writings contain important resources for creating a Christian anthropology that “presents equality and mutuality rather than hierarchy and opposition as paradigmatic for what it means to be male and female.”¹²⁰ This work suggests ways in which Luther’s understandings of womanhood provide a catalyst for reforming Christian anthropologies that support the gender hierarchy of men over women as being part of God’s design. This study demonstrates how Luther’s ideas about Eve are complex and that she holds a fundamental position for Christian understandings of the female: “The impact of the character of Eve arises out of her particular place in the Christian story. Eve is not simply one biblical woman among others; in the biblical story she is the first woman.”¹²¹ Luther frequently wrote about Eve because she was not only viewed as the first woman, but also as a representative of womanhood more generally.

In 1997, Adam Hill wrote a thesis which examines Luther’s theological approach to women, specifically focusing on his biblical commentaries.¹²² He argues that although Luther’s theology appears to be liberating to women, it was used to further oppress them.¹²³ His work focuses on the two vocations available for women; marriage and monastic life.¹²⁴ Hill focuses on Luther’s religious legitimation of marriage and the celibate life. He argues that Luther’s theology was not concerned with the religious status and women’s function, but had other concerns.¹²⁵ For

¹¹⁹ Kvam, *Luther, Eve, and Theology Anthropology*, 4.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4; 31.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

¹²² Adam Hill, “Martin Luther, Marriage, and Women: An Analysis of Luther’s Religious Legitimation of Marriage and the Celibate Life for Women in His Sermons and Treatise” (Master’s Thesis, University of Calgary, 1997).

¹²³ He focuses on Luther’s Biblical commentaries and considers Luther’s theological stance on marriage and celibacy from a variety of works such as commentaries on Genesis, Galatians, and Corinthians.

¹²⁴ Since Hill discusses Luther’s thoughts on these subjects, this work does not directly deal with women, but rather deals with topics that might be associated with women like marriage or motherhood as a vocation.

¹²⁵ He does not make a distinction between Luther’s earlier and later theology and does not consider how it changed and developed over time.

Hill, this was his principle theological concern with the place of faith and works in Christian theology as seen with his doctrine of justification by faith alone.¹²⁶ Hill argues that Luther's theology concerning the direct responsibility of individuals before God could have provided women with more freedom, but it did not. Hill uses Teresa of Avila as an illustration of this idea since her arguments to justify monasticism do not contradict Luther's theological claims about abolishing monastic life for women.¹²⁷ Rather, Hill argues that Luther's "own tendency to overreact to that which superficially appeared to stand against him," resulted in his poor theological reasoning.¹²⁸ Hill focuses on Luther's sermons and treatises in order to analyze his comments about Mary to show that Luther struggled with issues of sexual intercourse, marriage, and the celibate lifestyle.¹²⁹

Adam Hill acknowledges Wiesner-Hanks' previous work: *Luther and Women: Death of Two Marys* and recognizes that Luther's attitudes toward women were ambiguous at best.¹³⁰ Hill points out that these ambiguities do exist, especially in Luther's position on sexual intercourse within marriage: "Luther's self-contradictions on this matter portray a man who was struggling with this issue himself. His statements, when taken together, present a rather ambiguous position."¹³¹ In contrast to Wiesner-Hanks' work; however, Hill does not retreat from offering his own opinion on Luther's negative impact on women despite acknowledging that these ambiguities do exist. It is also interesting to note that Hill does not incorporate this issue into his broader discussion on Luther's theology, especially pertaining to women. He mentions that Luther held a rather ambiguous position, but only discusses this problem in passing with

¹²⁶ Hill, *Martin Luther, Marriage, and Women*, 58; 81.

¹²⁷ Hill compares Luther's ideas with Teresa of Avila but does not consider Luther's personal relationships with women or whether he enforced his own theology.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

approximately a page worth of information. Previous scholarship emphasizes that Luther's ambiguous theological statements about women deserve much more attention. Therefore, it is surprising that Hill did not include this in his examination since it provides much more context to Luther's position on women, especially in relation to his commentaries on Genesis. Unlike Wiesner-Hanks' previous study, Hill's work does not contribute to exposing Luther's ambiguous perspectives because it primarily focuses on how Luther's theology could have liberated women, but instead further oppressed them.

Scholarship from the 2000s

In 2003, Susan Karant-Nunn and Merry Wiesner-Hanks acknowledged that there had not been adequate growth in the field with regards to Luther's views on women. Due to this, they published a sourcebook which translated and edited Luther's writings about and to women. These two editors argue that they have both explored different aspects of women's lives during the Reformation period and that they expected that these studies would have been connected by other scholars' analyses of Luther's ideas about women.¹³² However, they argue that this has not happened to the extent that it should. They note that there is still no book-length study on Luther's ideas about women in any language. This prompted them to assemble and translate his works. By collecting and translating in English several of Luther's writings and statements about women, the authors are optimistic that this will help begin to fill this void in scholarship on Luther and women.¹³³ The editors wanted to make Luther's writings available to an audience that may not be fluent in New High German or Latin. They also note that they included their source

¹³² See Susan Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling: Shaping the Religious Emotions in Early Modern Germany* (London: Oxford University Press, 2012); Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*.

¹³³ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 2.

citations to make it easier for specialized scholars to find the passages in their original languages. Therefore, this work benefits audiences who are not trained academics, as well as Luther scholars who can now easily find relevant sources. The authors hope that by providing translations and citations that it will “open the floor of wider discussion of the significance” of women in the sixteenth century.¹³⁴

They include primary source material from sermons, letters, lectures, and material from the *Table Talks*, and shorter excerpts from larger works. The editors chose, mainly for clarity, to present the sources by theme and not chronologically. Each chapter has a short introduction which summarizes Luther’s views on the theme and provides additional context by comparing them to the views of other reformers like John Calvin.

One limitation of this work, which is acknowledged by the editors, is that they are both trained as historians and not as theologians, so they make very few theological comments. They state that they “had long hoped someone else would write [this book] for them” because they are not specialists in Luther’s ideas.¹³⁵ Due to this, the reader is forced to look elsewhere for a study that engages with relevant theological concepts. For example, the doctrine of vocation, priesthood of all believers, and the theology of the cross, could all help to enrich scholars’ understanding of Luther’s theological attitudes towards women.¹³⁶ It is also interesting to note that the editors advise their readers that Luther’s theological ideas changed over the twenty-five years (1521-1546) and that he did not hold consistent views, but they do not provide specific examples of these apparent inconsistencies.¹³⁷ For example, they state “because he said so much,

¹³⁴ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 2.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹³⁶ See Mary Haemig, “Review: Luther on Women: A Sourcebook,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 36, no. 4 (2005): 1133-1134.

¹³⁷ This was one of the problems outlined by Jill Raitt, “Review: Luther on Women: A Sourcebook,” *Church History* 73, no. 4 (2004): 854-855.

however, his ideas about sexuality, like his ideas about women, often appear contradictory.”¹³⁸

The editors do not explain further whether they meant that the statements merely appear contradictory or are in fact contradictory claims themselves.

This work contributes to the field by assembling relevant primary source materials on Luther and women in one sourcebook. In addition, the editors translated several works not previously available in English. Therefore, this work acknowledges the necessity to make sources more easily accessible for non-academics and Luther specialists. They hope that this will help to inspire future conversations because there has yet to be a comprehensive study that examines both Luther’s theology and personal encounters with women.

In 2003, Mickey Mattox’s work helps to fill this void. Mattox’s work focuses specifically on Luther’s exegesis and attempts to better characterize “his treatment of the women of Genesis through a close comparison of his work to that of other Christian exegetes,” specifically within the context of ancient, medieval and Reformation era commentators.¹³⁹ Mattox argues that Luther’s interpretation of these women remains within the frame of traditional exegesis which was common among his predecessors and contemporaries.¹⁴⁰ In other words, his interpretation was “traditional,” but not necessarily “conventional.” Mattox hopes to contribute to a better understanding of Luther as part of the Christian exegetical tradition, but also illuminate what Lyndal Roper terms the “theology of gender.”¹⁴¹ Mattox argues that biblical exegesis has had a significant role in “imagining and legitimating the social construction” of early modern society. He argues that the “examination of Luther’s interpretation of the women of Genesis will show

¹³⁸ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 139.

¹³⁹ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 3-4.

¹⁴⁰ This work is not concerned with the impact of the Reformation upon women, does not provide a comprehensive study of how Luther understood human sexual differentiation, nor provides a comprehensive study on Luther’s understandings of the ideal social or ecclesiastical roles of men and women.

¹⁴¹ Roper, *The Holy Household*, 108-109.

how Luther and other exegetes envisioned human society in a fallen world, and how they dealt with moral and theological questions related to the actions of women in the problematic situations common to the story of Genesis.”¹⁴² By choosing women of Genesis to discuss, he is able to address important questions related to the role of women in society, especially within the context of the sixteenth century. However, Mattox is more concerned with the ways in which Luther was able to combine traditional exegetical approaches to these biblical women with his own insights. Although this work focuses on his comments on women, it is significant to point out that Mattox’s work is primarily a study of Luther and his exegetical method.¹⁴³

Mattox divides his discussion of Luther’s theological views into two categories. First, he presents a discussion of a young Luther’s exegesis of Genesis 1-3 which is found in his *Declamationes in Genesis* (1523-1524).¹⁴⁴ Following this, Mattox analyzes Luther’s more mature and different interpretation of Eve from his *Lectures on Genesis* (1535-1545) both in the context of Philip Melancthon’s exegesis and other reformed commentators. These first two chapters examine his changing opinion of Eve.¹⁴⁵ It portrays the differences between the young and elder Luther in this analysis of Eve. What is significant is that Mattox argues that Luther’s paradoxical claims about Eve in his *Lectures* are “not ultimately contradictory but present a generally coherent view of Eve and her position.”¹⁴⁶ Rather than contradictory, Mattox argues that Luther’s mature concept of Eve “should be understood as a development of traditional exegesis.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 3.

¹⁴³ In this way, it is not a study on women more broadly or how Luther treated women.

¹⁴⁴ Published in 1527.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, iv.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

Mattox's third chapter places the later Luther's interpretation of Eve in the context of his contemporaries, especially Philip Melanchthon and Ulrich Zwingli. By reading Luther and his contemporaries so widely, Mattox draws "conclusions both about the mature Luther's solution to the problem of Eve and her relationship to Adam, and also about Luther's place in the exegetical tradition."¹⁴⁸

Chapters four and five analyze Luther's interpretation of six different biblical women in Genesis.¹⁴⁹ Mattox also provides background for Luther's exegesis by discussing the exegesis of Origen, Ambrose, and John Chrysostom in order to further illuminate Luther's place in the history of exegesis.¹⁵⁰ This is an important aspect of this work because it examines Luther's interpretations of six biblical women and compares them to patristic, medieval, and reformed commentators.¹⁵¹ This provides a discussion on Luther's general understanding of women stemming from his interpretations of biblical women. However, as argued by Wiesner-Hanks and Karant-Nunn, a more nuanced understanding of Luther's attitudes towards women requires the additional perspectives. Luther's views on women, and perhaps even the extent of his inconsistencies, become more evident when one explores beyond his biblical commentaries.

Seven years later, in 2010, the lament for more comprehensive studies on Luther and women continued to be heard by scholars such as Else Marie Wiberg Pedersen. Pedersen's work acknowledges Wiesner-Hanks' and Karant-Nunn's sourcebook by stating that it was the first

¹⁴⁸ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 21.

¹⁴⁹ Mattox has been criticized for not outlining his methodology more clearly, especially with regards to why one woman in Genesis was read in one context while another is read in a different context. For example, Mattox choose to examine Rachel in the context of Reformed interpreters whereas Potiphar's wife was read in the context of Catholic interpreters, see Sujin Pak, "Review of *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 35, no. 4 (2004), 1137-1139.

¹⁵⁰ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 24.

¹⁵¹ These women include Sarah, Hagar, daughters of Lot, Rachel, and Potiphar's wife.

time that English translations of Luther's writings about women were made available.¹⁵²

Pedersen notes that this sourcebook demonstrates that Luther held a complex view of women and his writings appear binary in nature on the genre and audience. For example, Pedersen notes that within Luther's commentaries on Genesis 1-3, a traditional exegesis is present. However, she also highlights that within these very same texts, Luther employs positive formulations regarding the relation between male and female theologically.¹⁵³ This article attempts to explore these apparent ambiguities in Luther's approaches to women by discussing his theology, specifically focusing on his commentaries on Mary and the Magnificat. This article argues that throughout his theology, we get a picture of an individual who is conflicted between his more modern ideas about women and the traditional views of his time: "He is a man caught between bad anthropology and good theology."¹⁵⁴ This article acknowledges that it is unable to discuss all aspects, but attempts to provide a balanced presentation of his attitude towards women. This article argues that scholars should sufficiently analyze Luther's texts more comprehensively including hermeneutically, rhetorically, and intertextually.¹⁵⁵

However, Pedersen also argues that we should "ignore Luther again when he feels forced to draw on bad anthropology," especially when he discussed the ministry of the word.¹⁵⁶ She argues that Luther's "good theology" can be seen with Luther's Mariology, where Pedersen argues that the Holy Spirit does not exempt women from being fully rooted in the gospel.¹⁵⁷ According to Pedersen, Luther's "good theology" is challenged by his "bad anthropology." For

¹⁵² Else Marie Wiberg Pedersen, "A Man Caught Between Bad Anthropology and Good Theology? Martin Luther's View of Women Generally and of Mary Specifically," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 49, no. 3 (2010): 191.

¹⁵³ Pedersen, *Man Caught Between Bad Anthropology and Good Theology*, 192.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹⁵⁷ This article examines Luther's Mariology and his attitudes toward Mary in attempts to apply these theological opinions to women more generally; however, biblical women and contemporary women are not the same thing.

this reason, Lutherans should “call him back” to his “good theology” and only develop Lutheran theology from his “good theology.” However, ignoring Luther’s possible flaws, ambiguities, or inconsistencies does not completely acknowledge his complexities and does not help to explain why ambiguities between his “bad anthropology and good theology” exist in the first place.

Despite this, Pedersen’s work explicitly notes the importance of contextualization which is significant. She notes three important aspects. First, Pedersen argues that when Luther addressed women as a subject, it is difficult to determine which statements are rhetorical or symbolic versus what are ontological statements.¹⁵⁸ Second, she argues that scholars should acknowledge that some of Luther’s statements are ambiguous or even self-contradictory, and that it is important that readers are aware of these possibilities. Finally, some of Luther’s statements about women and their nature come from his *Table Talks* and scholars should take care when assessing these statements since they are often second-hand accounts: “They are neither from Luther’s own pen nor do they incorporate the conversation or discussion into which these formulations allegedly fell.”¹⁵⁹ Pedersen points out that Luther’s disciples may have taken him more seriously than he took himself, especially when many comments “may have poured out humorously while Katharina’s famously good beer was pouring in.”¹⁶⁰ Pedersen argues that these statements “stand in stark contrast to his own life among women both in public and in his private life.”¹⁶¹ For this reason, she argues that the relationship between Luther’s theology and personal interactions with women should be examined by future scholarship.

¹⁵⁸ Pedersen, *Man Caught Between Bad Anthropology and Good Theology*, 193.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 193.

Scholarship from the Past Two Years

In June 2017, Kirsi Stjerna published a short article which addresses the topic of Luther and gender. In this article, she argues that “the topic of sex, gender, and women has not attracted rigorous study from “serious” Luther scholars of the past”¹⁶² Even as recently as 2017, Stjerna argues that this methodology and “interest” gap is still “palpable,” especially when examining previous studies on Luther. She notes that this gap is not only obvious, but it is “anything but helpful.”¹⁶³ Stjerna argues that the topic of Luther and women has been either overlooked or unsatisfactorily expanded in previous Luther scholarship.¹⁶⁴ Her article argues that this gap is odd because when scholars look at his commentaries on Genesis, we can see that he paid considerable attention to women and gender in his theological works. However, the theological study of Luther has often ignored questions regarding women and gender: “Luther’s impact on the deliberations on gender and womanhood of a long line of male Christian thinkers cannot be over stated, while, oddly, it has been seriously understudied.”¹⁶⁵ Since there has been a lack of studies, an important aspect of the “essential” Luther has remained in the dark. The main purpose of Stjerna’s article is to argue that gender questions and approaches are not marginal, but rather central to the study of Martin Luther.

With this article, Stjerna discusses the inclusive translating of Luther’s works. She argues that modern editions of Luther’s works have creatively addressed the “unnecessarily male-oriented language favored by earlier generations.”¹⁶⁶ She argues that previous editions of *Luther’s Works* reflect the common use in English of referring to human beings with the male-

¹⁶² Kirsi Stjerna, “Luther and Gender: Shifts in Paradigms and Orientations,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 56, no. 2 (2017): 162.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹⁶⁶ For example, the Annotated Luther fills many gaps, see Hans Hillerbrand, Kirsi Stjerna, Timothy Wengert, and Euan Cameron, *The Annotated Luther* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015-2017).

pronoun. Stjerna argues that by “looking at the original wording, and attending to Luther’s theological intent, however, it is clear that such translation choices are not only problematic and unnecessary in our time, but also do not yield the most faithful translation of Luther’s theology.”¹⁶⁷

With the rest of her article, she provides her observations from reading Luther’s *Lectures on Genesis* and his interpretation of Eve. She argues that based on the space and careful detail “with which the deliberations on all matters regarding Eve, and the tenderness with which he treats the matriarchs in the Genesis narrative” show that this topic was not a marginal interest for Luther.¹⁶⁸ When Stjerna presents her findings of what Luther wrote in his commentaries on Genesis; however, she does not consider his earlier and later theology. She focuses solely on his *Lectures on Genesis* (1535-1545) which were written much later in his life. Since Stjerna does not consider Luther’s earlier and more mature theology, she does not present a complete picture of his theological complexities. She also does not consider apparent contradictions or problematic passages in Luther’s writings. Instead of discussing problematic statements, her article presents Luther in a rather positive light. For example, she states that Luther’s “most endearing statement [...] is his suggestion that between men and women, the ‘only’ difference is sex – *solu sexu differet*.”¹⁶⁹ As I will discuss in the fourth chapter, it is true that Luther emphasized the “sameness” between men and women, but within the same text, he then shifted to highlight their inequalities. It is unclear why Luther shifted so quickly away from presenting Adam and Eve on equal terms towards maintaining his earlier theological interpretation of Eve

¹⁶⁷ Stjerna, *Luther and Gender*, 163.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 166.

and her inferiority to Adam. By not considering these apparent contradictions, shifts, and problematic areas of Luther's writings, Stjerna's work is missing "fundamental" aspects.

However, it is likely that Stjerna is limited by the confined space of a short article to tackle such a complex issue. Nevertheless, her work has many strengths. One contribution is that it highlights the continued necessity to examine the topic of Luther and women. Second, Stjerna incorporates crucial scholarship, which has been included in this review, by Classen, Settle, Mattox, Pedersen, Karant-Nunn, Wiesner-Hanks. She was clearly drawing on the most important secondary sources for our knowledge of Luther and women. Finally, at the very end of the article, she provides an important insight. Stjerna notes that Luther's statement that men and women "only" differ in sex points to something more significant:

There remains a certain dissonance between Luther's perception of the biblical women and of the women of his time. The women in his day did not receive from Luther a welcome to the pulpit or equality in the affairs of the church and society – at least not generally speaking, with only a few exceptions (as with Argula von Grumbach).¹⁷⁰ Luther's theology, though based on a vision of equality in creation, is faulty in its application in real life, where influences other than the Bible shaped Luther's logic.¹⁷¹

This comment is valuable because Stjerna recognizes that Luther's theology becomes problematic or faulty when we look at his personal life with women. She also argues that there are other influences in Luther's personal life that shaped his thinking. These are two comments

¹⁷⁰ As further discussed in the fourth chapter, Luther praised Argula von Grumbach even though she went outside of her domestic realm to publicly speak and write against the University of Ingolstadt.

¹⁷¹ Stjerna, *Luther and Gender*, 167.

that help to highlight the importance of studying not only Luther's theology, but also his personal life and interactions, especially with women. Stjerna does not offer any further comments on this approach, but it is important that previous scholarship has acknowledged the significance of Luther's own life. However, previous scholarship has not adequately examined Luther's theological works and its application in real life. Stjerna argues that previous studies have typically approached Luther without considering his interactions which has made him "seem alien to the very women with whom Luther, actually, could be quite a conversation partner."¹⁷²

On December 4th, 2017, Kirsi Stjerna published a chapter in an extensive book, edited by Alberto Melloni, which deals with seemingly every aspect of Martin Luther.¹⁷³ At the beginning of this chapter, Stjerna notes that the words "Luther and women" bring up several possible avenues for further exploration. For example, how Luther's writings impacted women, how women supported or challenged his theology, how he interacted with women, how he wrote about women, and how women studies and Luther scholarship intersects.¹⁷⁴ She states that the answers to these possible avenues or questions are "incomplete" and that even more "uncharted research areas [concerning Luther and women] can be named, pointing to different sources, questions, and methods."¹⁷⁵ One important area that Stjerna mentions for future research is the "personal." She poses the question: "What do we know of Luther's relationship with women of his time – his family, friends, and associate?"¹⁷⁶ She argues that Luther's personal interactions offer scholars helpful insights into this question, but that it is an "underexplored window."

¹⁷² Stjerna, *Luther and Gender*, 163.

¹⁷³ See Stjerna, *Luther and Women*, 597-615.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 597.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 597.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 597.

This chapter begins with a brief comment on Luther's influence on women then shifts to emphasize his ideas of women while considering his personal relationships and correspondence. She argues that it "seems that in the case of Luther, theory and actual reality do not always neatly correlate."¹⁷⁷ The chapter concludes by presenting Stjerna's brief observations on his exegetical work with women of the Bible.¹⁷⁸ With each section of this chapter, Stjerna is essentially providing a summary of previous scholarship. For example, when she discusses Luther's biblical hermeneutics, she summarizes and presents information that is found throughout Mattox's work. Throughout her chapter, Stjerna brings together the relevant scholarship on Luther and women to show that there is still much work that needs to be done. Once again, Stjerna's work is emphasizing the necessity for future scholars to thoroughly examine Luther's theology while also considering his personal relationships with women.

Stjerna then presents her discussion of Luther and his personal interactions with women which is very brief. Her discussion includes Margarethe Luther, Katharina von Bora, Argula von Grumbach and Katharina Zell. Each of these women receive only about a page or two worth of analysis from Stjerna. Most of the discussion surrounding these women focuses more on presenting biographical information than analyzing Luther's interactions with them. Her engagement with Luther's personal relationships with women is very limited. When Stjerna discusses Luther's letters to women, she only provides extremely short excerpts. For example, her analysis of Luther and Katharina von Bora only considers two short passages from two letters that he wrote to his wife.¹⁷⁹ Specifically, she states that Luther's love for his wife is

¹⁷⁷ Stjerna, *Luther and Gender*, 614.

¹⁷⁸ As with Stjerna's article from June 2017, this chapter presents a very similar account of a more mature Luther's interpretation of Eve. In this way, as with the article, she does not consider Luther's earlier and later theology. As with her article, she also does not include an exploration of Luther's contradictions and problematic theological statements.

¹⁷⁹ Stjerna briefly refers to WA BR 6, 270, as well as LW 50, 290-292; 301-304 (WA BR 11, 275-276; 286-287), but she does not include passages from these letters in her chapter.

evident because he used terms of endearment: “My heart’s beloved, housewife Katharina Luther.”¹⁸⁰ Related to this, she argues that Luther expressed his respect for Katharina by signing his letters as “your holiness, willing servant.”¹⁸¹ These are the only two excerpts from Luther’s letters that she includes in her entire discussion of Luther and Katharina. Therefore, Stjerna does not extensively examine Luther’s letters to these four women or provide enough primary source materials to show how he treated women. In addition, unlike my work, Stjerna does not compare Luther’s theology against his personal interactions with women nor does she consider whether he enforced his theological principles in his own life.

Arguably, as with her article from June 2017, Stjerna likely is limited by having to explore such an extensive and complex topic in such a short chapter. With this chapter, Stjerna is highlighting the necessity for future scholars to examine the topic of Luther and women, especially considering his theology and personal correspondence. She states that “Luther can hardly be understood without “his” women, just as women today can expect to be pleasantly surprised by their critical and compassionate conversations with Martin Luther.”¹⁸² With this chapter, Stjerna provides a concise summary of previous scholarship. By doing so, Stjerna is likely hopeful that this will spark future studies. She concludes her chapter by arguing that “a deeper and broader analysis is still needed when it comes to Luther’s treatment of the topic of women – in his various texts and in the light of his context – in order to unveil his truest instincts and intentions.”¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ See WA BR 6, 270.

¹⁸¹ Stjerna, *Luther and Women*, 270.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 615.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 615.

On December 16th, 2017, Sini Mikkola produced a doctoral dissertation which examines Luther's theology of the body, specifically his view of gender and bodiliness.¹⁸⁴ It is important to note that her work is more concerned with Luther's theology of the body rather than his attitudes towards women more broadly.¹⁸⁵ With her study, she examines Luther's composition of the human being, body and flesh, bodily needs, sexuality, construction of the female and male body, and bodiliness in Luther's marriage. Mikkola argues that Luther's attitudes towards gender are fundamental in his theological writings of the human being, sexuality, and the body.¹⁸⁶ She notes that even though his discussion did not always include "bodiliness," it is possible to obtain his perspective on gendered bodiliness by reading between the lines.¹⁸⁷ In this way, she disagrees with Charles Cortright who argued that "...this effort [of discussing the significance of the body in Luther's view] has been similar to trying to engage with someone in conversation about one thing while he or she is intent on talking about other things believed to be more compelling."¹⁸⁸ She maintains that Luther is also "very explicit in matters concerning the body and gendered ways of being of both women and men."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ Sini Mikkola, "In Our Bodies the Scripture Becomes Fulfilled': Gendered Bodiliness and the Making of the Gender System in Mature Luther's Anthropology (1520-1530)" (PhD Thesis, University of Helsinki, 2017).

¹⁸⁵ In an article from 2015, Sini Mikkola explores how Luther constructed female otherness. She states in her own work that the contents of this article are part of her (then) uncompleted doctoral thesis. Therefore, I did not include a separate section on this article in my literature review because the very same information is included in her PhD dissertation which I do examine in my review, see *idem*, "Female as the Other in Martin Luther's Anthropology in the Early 1520s," *Anthropological Reformations: Anthropology in the Era of the Reformation* 28 (2015): 175-185; this is also the reason for not including Mikkola's online journal article from 2018. The information presented within this article has been taken directly from her doctoral work, especially pages 115-120, and simply repeated in the online article, see *idem*, "By the Grace of God: Women's Agency in the Rhetoric of Katharina Schütz Zell and Martin Luther," *Scholar and Feminist Online Journal* 15, no. 1 (2018): 1-3.

¹⁸⁶ It is important to note that she focuses heavily on Luther's views of the male body and masculinity which are topics that have received little interest from scholars in the past.

¹⁸⁷ Mikkola, *In Our Bodies the Scripture Becomes Fulfilled*, 231.

¹⁸⁸ Charles Cortright, "Poor Maggot-Sack that I Am: The Human Body in the Theology of Martin Luther" (PhD Thesis, Marquette University, 2011), 241.

¹⁸⁹ Mikkola, *In Our Bodies the Scripture Becomes Fulfilled*, 232.

Mikkola's dissertation first examines how Luther treated gendered bodiliness in his theological works, especially in his discussions of femininity and masculinity. Her work notes that the body played a significant role in Luther's writings. She focuses on a variety of Luther's texts from the perspective of themes of bodiliness and gender. Mikkola argue that his works show the ways in which he constructed proper feminine and masculine norms, roles, and characteristics.¹⁹⁰ Based on gendered bodiliness, Luther concluded that women must be subordinate to men. She argues that he maintained traditional attitudes, which were based on his inherited traditions, especially towards masculinity and femininity: "In fact, in questions concerning gender, Luther was in several ways profoundly affected by, and even bound to, his medieval heritage."¹⁹¹ She concludes that Luther was influenced by his tradition, especially in "terms of the multiplicity of discussions concerning both the body and flesh and their different meanings [which are] very evident in his thinking."¹⁹²

Sini Mikkola's work is important because she also explores whether Luther's perspectives varied according to historical and textual contexts.¹⁹³ Her study focuses especially on whether there are differences between his attitudes towards female and male ways of being that are outlined in theory and his practical situations.¹⁹⁴ Mikkola argues that it is important to

¹⁹⁰ Mikkola explains that she presents Luther's views in a "loose" chronology to show whether his personal life influenced his views concerning the body, gendered ways of being, and gender systems. Overall, she argues that Luther's attitudes did not experience major changes throughout his life.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 231.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁹³ Although she focuses on masculinity, Mikkola questions the popularly held view that Luther's marriage influenced his theological perspectives of women. As with my work, she is not convinced by previous scholarship which make unsubstantiated claims that Luther's theology changed due to his increased contact with women. Mikkola argues that it does not seem to be the case that his marriage influenced his theology since his theology tended to place women as subordinate to men in "every respect" and in all genres of his work: "In most of his writings – whether sermons, treatises, or correspondences – Luther formulated quite strict ideals and norms concerning gendered ways of being," see *Ibid.*, 240.

¹⁹⁴ Even though she considers Luther's personal correspondence with women, she only briefly engages with his letters to women and does not include an extensive list. She only includes letters from 1520 to 1526. Therefore, as she admits, it is not enough to provide an extensive analysis or a thorough comparison of Luther's theory and practice. She includes: WA BR 3, 625, 93–94 (Hanna von Draschwitz, Milia von Ölsnitz und Ursula von Feilitzsch);

analyze Luther's "real-life situations." She states that these situations reveal that Luther "could in practice be flexible in his viewpoints concerning the limits that one's gender constituted – he allowed different rules for himself, for instance."¹⁹⁵ She argues that whether Luther applied his theology of the body in practice depended on the situation. However, she argues that "in many cases regarding his fellow men and women he applied his theoretical views in practice in a very strict sense."¹⁹⁶ For example, she points to how Luther applied his thinking of masculinity to men in real-life. She focuses on male figures, such as Philipp Melanchthon, who seemed to be a special case for Luther: "Melanchthon's fragility – even pitifulness, as Luther called it – became an ideal masculinity that he opposed against the masculinity of the early church theologians."¹⁹⁷ In this way, Melanchthon's gendered way of being was not used as an ideal representation, but rather "used and turned around" by Luther.

With regards to women, Mikkola also considers whether Luther made special exceptions for them. For example, she briefly examines women who he considered to be active agents such as Katharina Zell and the three court ladies.¹⁹⁸ With these women, she argues that he considered them to be illuminated by God's grace which made them exceptions to his theology. In other cases, such as with women like Elisabeth Agricola, Katharina Jonas, and Ursula Roth, she argues that Luther's "theoretical and practical views seem to be coherent."¹⁹⁹ She notes that Luther treated these women "in accordance with his overall evaluation of the proper feminine way of

WA BR 3, 695, 204 (*An eine adlige Klosterjungfrau*); WA BR 3, 766, 327–328 (*An drei Klosterjungfrauen*); WA BR 3, 808, 405–406 (Katharina Zell); WA BR 4, 1112, 210–211 (Elisabeth Agricola); WA BR 4, 1133, 236 (Else von Kanitz); WA BR 5, 1476, 154 (Katharina von Bora); WA BR 5, 1526a, 230 (Katharina Hornung); WA BR 5, 1551, 284, 15 (Katharina Jonas); WA BR 5, 1582, 347–348 (Katharina von Bora); WA BR 5, 1682, 544–545 (Katharina von Bora); WA BR 5, 1713, 608–609 (Katharina von Bora).

¹⁹⁵ Mikkola, *In Our Bodies the Scripture Becomes Fulfilled*, 235.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 235.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 235.

¹⁹⁸ Mikkola discusses Luther "going practical" and writing to women for only about ten pages, see pages 104-115.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 237.

being,” especially with regards to his emphasis on the ideal representation of womanhood and gendered bodies.²⁰⁰ Mikkola argues that Luther often admonished these women with strict words.²⁰¹ Due to this, she maintains that Luther enforced his strict theological attitudes to guide men and women towards his “ideal gendered way of being, which included gender hierarchy as a significant component.”²⁰² From her research, she notes that “it is not the difference between theory and practice *per se* that is pervasive in Luther’s texts but rather a continuity, or discontinuity, between theory and practice, which is dictated by the context and the overall situation.”²⁰³ With this dissertation, Mikkola argues that there are two core ideas that underline Luther’s relationships with men and women. First, the closer the individuals were to Luther, such as Katharina von Bora or Philipp Melanchthon, the more special the case.²⁰⁴ Second, whether the situation was strategically important for Luther and his Reformation message, such as Katharina Zell and Frederick the Wise, the more special the case. Mikkola concludes her study by stating that in other cases Luther “did not tolerate – or he tolerated far less – transgressions of his norms concerning the gender system.”²⁰⁵

Mikkola’s work is an excellent study that contributes to scholarship by providing a thorough examination of Luther’s views of gendered bodiliness and gendered systems. It also provides other valuable insights, especially for my own research project. Mikkola makes an important remark by stating that “Luther’s general evaluation of women can be seen in his writing to women.”²⁰⁶ With this comment, she emphasizes the importance of moving beyond

²⁰⁰ Mikkola, *In Our Bodies the Scripture Becomes Fulfilled*, 238.

²⁰¹ I have not found this to be the case, especially with regards to the letters that have been examined in Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 238.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 240.

²⁰⁴ Mikkola focuses on Katharina’s bodiliness and Luther’s masculinity, see *Ibid.*, 165-177.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 240; however, this does not appear to be the case, especially throughout his pastoral care with women who were neither close to him nor strategically important individuals.

²⁰⁶ Mikkola, *In Our Bodies the Scripture Becomes Fulfilled*, 237.

Luther's theology and examining his personal correspondence with women. Her study proves that scholars can discover Luther's perspectives on a variety of topics, including gendered bodiliness, by reading between the lines and considering his personal situation. By applying this method, Mikkola's study provides scholars with new insights on Luther, especially with regards to his views of masculinity and femininity. Her work shows that this unique perspective could not have been obtained by solely examining Luther's theological writings. Therefore, Mikkola's work confirms the value of considering the practical, as well as the theoretical. Her study proves that this method is the most promising approach for future scholarship. The recent works by Kirsi Stjerna and Sini Mikkola have set the stage for my own research project. These previous studies have highlighted the necessity for future scholars to continue to explore Martin Luther's attitudes towards women and have argued that the most fruitful approach to revealing new perspectives is to include an analysis of both his theology and personal life.

Notable Trends within Scholarship

By reviewing the existing literature, there are a few notable trends within the field. Many scholars do not take a step back from debating how Luther's theology impacted women. For example, there are three main approaches to Luther's view of women which are based on the fundamental evaluation that these scholars make on his approach. The first group of scholars, like Adam Hill, reach the conclusion that Luther's attitudes toward women have had a negative impact on women.²⁰⁷ These scholars argue that Luther's support for marriage was not the same thing as supporting women. Furthermore, these scholars, like Ernst Troeltsch, argue that by focusing on the importance of marriage, Luther may have contributed to fostering negative

²⁰⁷ See Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 7.

opinions about the population (the approximately 10-15 percent) who never married.²⁰⁸ Troeltsch argued that “an extensive masculine domination of a patriarchal kind” belongs to “the very essence of Lutheranism, which looks upon the physical superiority of man as the expression of a superior relationship willed by God.”²⁰⁹ There is much evidence from Luther’s arguments to support this group’s conclusions that he considered women as inherently inferior to men. However, Luther’s words fuel both sides of the debate, so it is difficult to maintain that Luther did not also hold the opposite as true. According to Kristen Kvam, Troeltsch is not the only scholar who has been unable to recognize that Luther makes occasional statements about woman’s original equality with man. Contributing to this debate, Kvam argues that other texts thwart this group’s conclusion: “If woman’s inferiority to man is essential to Luther, how does one explain Luther’s occasional claims that God created Adam and Eve as equals? For example, Luther asserted [...] that Eve ‘was in no respect inferior [to Adam, whether you count the qualities of the body of those of the mind.]’”²¹⁰

The second group approaches Luther’s attitudes towards women in a more positive light. These studies, like the work by Ewald Plass, tend to evaluate Luther’s attitudes toward women as positive, which helped to improve their social status. Other scholars, like Gracia Grindahl, utilize aspects of Luther’s theology as the basis for justifying equality between men and women.²¹¹ These studies are typically older and have been written from a clear confessional perspective, which describes Luther as rescuing marriage and women from the imposition of the medieval

²⁰⁸ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 7; for other scholars who have researched this conclusion, see Virginia Brittain, “While Katy Did the Dishes” in *Dialog 11*, no. 3 (1972): 222-225; Vern Bullough, *The Subordinate Sex: A History of Attitudes toward Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 195-199.

²⁰⁹ Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Allen and Unwin, 1931) 2: 546.

²¹⁰ Kvam, *Luther, Eve, and Theological Anthropology*, 15-16; see also LW 1, 115.

²¹¹ See Karen Bloomquist, “Luther’s Theology and the Rising Consciousness of Women,” in *Women and the Word: Toward a Whole Theology*, ed. Jude Michaels (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union’s Office of Women’s Affairs, 1972), 60-66; Gracia Grindahl, “Luther’s Theology as a Resource for Feminists” *Dialog 24*, no. 1 (1985): 32-36.

Catholic emphasis on virginity.²¹² For example, Gerta Scharffenorth, an important representative of this second group, provides one of the longest examinations of Luther's views on womanhood where she argues that Luther's theology helped to overcome "late medieval and early church tenets as to female inferiority."²¹³ She argues that Luther's views on marriage and the family contradict that "the assignment of a special role to women is backed up in Luther's thinking."²¹⁴ She further maintains that any examples of Luther's pastoral advice show that he did not give husbands precedence over their wives, but rather that "Luther applied the same yardstick to the behavior of both husband and wife. Both have the same responsibility, duties and rights."²¹⁵ However, Scharffenorth does not make reference to Luther's commentaries on Genesis which is a main source for his views on the relationship between the doctrine of creation and sexual difference.²¹⁶ Instead, she focuses on Luther's other works such as *The Estate of Marriage* which she argues is his "most important study on male-female relations."²¹⁷ Although these scholars consider Luther to be a resource for a new theological understanding of women, they fail to consider any of his negative or problematic statements.

While the first group concludes that Luther saw women as naturally inferior and the second emphasizes Luther's contributions to the positive assessment of women, the third group takes a more moderate approach. The third group, including Merry Wiesner-Hanks, argues that Luther's view on women is not very clear because he seems to convey contradictory or ambiguous messages about women.²¹⁸ Many other scholars, like Kristen Kvam, have pointed to

²¹² Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 7.

²¹³ Gerta Scharffenorth, *Friends in Christ: The Relationship between Men and Women According to Luther* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1977), 373-411.

²¹⁴ Scharffenorth, *Friends in Christ*, 392; 392-394.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 398.

²¹⁶ Gerta Scharffenorth also omits Luther's *Lectures on Genesis* in her essay titled: *Mann und Frau als Gottes Kreatur*, see *idem*, *Den Glauben ins Leben ziehen: Studien zu Luthers Theologie* (Munich: Kaiser, 1982), 142-166.

²¹⁷ Scharffenorth, *Friends in Christ*, 393.

²¹⁸ See Kvam, *Luther, Eve, and Theology Anthropology*, 18.

the conflicting opinions on Luther's attitudes toward women as a necessity to re-investigate Luther's views on women. This dissertation would fit within this group, as it attempts to re-examine Luther's views by highlighting any contradictions, ambiguities, and inconsistencies. Some scholars argue that the assessment that "Luther's understandings of woman are themselves contradictory may be the most comprehensive and thus most adequate evaluation."²¹⁹ However, if Luther's "legacy on womanhood is ambivalent," then there are a few questions that remain to be explored.²²⁰ For example, what is the extent of Luther's apparent ambivalence? Are there ways in which his theological statements are themselves contradictory? Do Luther's contradictions exist only between his theological statements and personal interactions?

CONCLUSION

It is clear from previous scholarship that scholars have acknowledged the necessity to examine Martin Luther and women by exploring his theology and personal correspondence with women. Previous scholarship has highlighted the necessity to "measure the degree of Luther's commitment to these [theological] penalties as binding characteristics of life in the world by examining not just other treatises – which themselves bear witness to the Reformer's ongoing theoretical persuasion – but also evidence of his efforts to enforce these abstract precepts in his own life."²²¹ As Luther's views both directly and indirectly "assumed an authoritative stance both in the Reformed Church and in society at large," it is important that scholars continue to investigate any apparent contradictions, ambiguities, and complexities, especially in light of

²¹⁹ Kvam, *Luther, Eve, and Theology Anthropology*, 19-20.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

²²¹ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 9.

Luther's personal encounters with women.²²² However, Luther's theological attitudes have not been adequately explored and compared to his personal relationships with women.²²³ As recently as 2017, scholars like Kirsi Stjerna have continued to express the necessity for future studies to examine the topic of Luther and women, especially considering his theology and his personal correspondence. Even in 2019, there is still no book-length study on this topic, despite the many calls from past scholarship to assess Martin Luther's view of women from the dual perspective of theory and practice.

This thesis contributes to the field in several ways. First, it continues the conversation about Luther's perspectives on women and highlights the need for scholars to further examine the topic of Luther and women. Second, it helps to fill the odd gap within scholarship that has been emphasized by many scholars. It fills this gap by providing a comprehensive study of Luther and women by including an analysis of both his theology and personal interactions with women. This approach has not only frequently been called for by previous studies, but it also appears to be the most promising. It is a valuable approach because it provides a more nuanced context to existing scholarly conversations among social-historians and theologians who are interested in assessing Luther's theological character and place within western Christian history. As Johan Huizinga, one of the founders of cultural history, states:

Knowing in the historical sense rarely if ever means indicating a strictly closed causality. It is always an understanding of contexts... this context is always an open one, which is to say that it may never be represented in the metaphor of links forming a chain, but only

²²² Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 232.

²²³ Erik Erikson observes that in Luther's case, scholars find an exclusively masculine story; however, a closer look at Luther's works, including personal letters, shows that Luther held various opinions and attitudes toward women, see Erikson, *Young Man Luther*.

in that of a loosely bound bundle of sticks to which new twigs can be added as long as the band around them allows it. Perhaps more suitable than a bundle of sticks might be a bunch of wildflowers. In their variety and their difference in value new notions added to the conception of a historical context are like newly found flowers in the nosegay: each one changes the appearance of the whole bouquet.²²⁴

This thesis is valuable because it adds a new perspective to Luther's attitudes towards women, like adding a flower to a bouquet. By adding this new perspective, this thesis contributes by extending the boundaries of our knowledge of Luther and women. Studying his view of women exposes the continual search and attempt at understanding the past. The role that Luther played in history and the events known as the Reformation should never be considered a closed book. For these reasons, scholars should continue to pursue a critical investigation of Martin Luther's perspectives to provide a more nuanced understanding of the individual who sparked the Protestant Reformation and who altered Western history over five hundred years ago.²²⁵

²²⁴ Johan Huizinga, *Men & Ideas: History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance* (New York: Meridian Book, 1959), 30.

²²⁵ For more information on Luther and the recent anniversary of the Reformation, especially the rise of individualism and how the deepest individual human experiences occur within the social context, see Christine Helmer, "Luther: The Age of the Individual, 500 Years Ago Today," *Capitalism and Society* 13, no. 1 (2018): 1-8.

CHAPTER TWO: WOMEN'S LIVES IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a framework to understanding both Martin Luther and women in their sixteenth century European context.²²⁶ This chapter provides information on how society viewed and treated women. This contextual information will help to demonstrate that Martin Luther's theology reflected traditional societal norms and perspectives. This chapter first briefly explores popular notions about women that were inherited from early and medieval Christianity and classical philosophy because these traditions influenced early modern writers like Luther. This chapter then examines women in relation to law, work, education, and family life to illustrate how women experienced life during the early modern period. This chapter argues that early modern thinkers, such as Luther, were influenced by the early and medieval Christian tradition and philosophy from classical antiquity. These inherited traditions shaped Luther's theological view of women. Stemming from these traditions was the conviction that women were considered physically and intellectually inferior to men. A woman's inferiority affected how she was viewed and treated in early modern European society.²²⁷

²²⁶ For an extensive overview of the early modern period in Europe, see Euan Cameron, *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); for issues in early Modern Germany, see Sheilagh Ogilvie and Robert Scribner, *Germany: A New Social and Economic History* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995); for works addressing women, see Cissie Fairchild, *Women in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700* (London: Pearson, 2007); Susan Amussen, *Attending to Early Modern Women* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998); Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe, 1500-1800* (London: Harper Collins, 1995); Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey, *Gender Relations in German History: Power, Agency, and Experience from the Sixteenth Century to the Twentieth Century* (London: University College London Press, 1996); Ruth Ellen Joeres and Mary Maynes, *German Women in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

²²⁷ For a recent study on experiencing life as a sixteenth and seventeenth century woman in France, see Suzannah Lipscomb, *The Voices of Nîmes: Women, Sex, and Marriage in Reformation Languedoc* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). Lipscomb's work includes testimonies from over 1,000 ordinary women and deals with topics such as women's power and agency, as well as women's own attitudes towards sex, marriage, and prostitution.

INHERITED TRADITIONS

Before examining women's lives in the early modern period, it is important to first explore commonly held assumptions about women that were inherited from early and medieval Christianity, as well as classical and medieval writers.²²⁸ Ideas about women from classical and medieval writers who were educated men are typically the easiest topic to explore when considering the experience of women. This is because educated men have been thinking and writing about women since the beginning of documented history. Throughout history, men have tried to explain the differences between men and women and have created ideals for proper female behaviours and appearance. Although many classical and medieval writers disagreed about many other topics, most religious and secular writers agreed that women were clearly inferior to men.²²⁹

The belief in female inferiority was common to most classical, scriptural, patristic, and medieval authorities.²³⁰ Early modern philosophers, theorists, and theologians also maintained this theory and thought that women were inferior to men in several ways. They believed that women were physically weak, less intellectually capable, and less competent at controlling their emotions. The view that women were inferior was so fundamental that it was rarely considered necessary to support it with concrete arguments or evidence.²³¹ The fact that women were inferior was simply obvious to everyone. For this reason, this claim was typically asserted as a

²²⁸ See J. Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Differences in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

²²⁹ Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 18.

²³⁰ See Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Early Humanist Reformation, 1250-1500* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002); Emilie Amt, *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

²³¹ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 18.

“truth” rather than defended as a hypothesis.²³² The fact that most esteemed authorities all agreed about a woman’s inferior nature indicated to most people that they must be correct. There were only a few contemporaries who acknowledged that the largely negative perspective of women in Western culture was because most written records were produced by male authors.²³³ In other words, a different picture might have been painted if women were able to leave a record of their own thoughts and experiences.

Ideas about women appear in various types of works written by men including religious literature, scientific treatises, plays, poetry, and philosophical works. These ideas have been perpetuated and read by future generations. Merry Wiesner-Hanks points out that this not only makes them an accessible source for modern historians, but it also means that these ideas influenced perceptions about women in later historical periods.²³⁴ These various works came to influence popular notions about women because they became authoritative and unquestionable. These views would eventually be used as the basis for formulating social and legal codes that would regulate a woman’s behaviour in society. Eventually, opinions about women were no longer simply considered to be one educated man’s interpretation but were regarded as religious truth or scientific fact. Most early modern writers did not pursue the creation of new moral or political thought, but rather chose to apply traditional ideas and doctrines to contemporary issues.²³⁵

²³² Margaret Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early-Modern Society* (London: E. Arnold, 1995), 10.

²³³ For example, Chaucer’s fictionally character the Wife of Barth clearly discussed this in the *Canterbury Tales*: “My God, had women written histories. Like cloistered scholars in oratories. They’d have set down more of men’s wickedness than all the sons of Adam could redress,” see Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. David Wright (London: Oxford University Press, 1985), 236.

²³⁴ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 17.

²³⁵ Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection*, 10.

There were two traditions that had overriding authority and significance to early modern writers like Martin Luther. This included early and medieval Christianity and philosophy from classical antiquity. These two traditions were so connected that by the sixteenth century classical morality could not be removed from the scriptural since each had been interpreted in view of the other for many centuries.

Inherited Biblical Ideas

For early modern Europeans, Christianity and the Bible were the most important sources for popular ideas about women. As the Christian tradition is continuous with Judaism, Christianity inherited many of its perspectives from Judaism. Both Jewish and Christian writers especially turned to the creation account found in Genesis for understanding women, their nature, and the proper roles between the sexes.

There are two conflicting versions of the creation narrative in Genesis. In the first account, God created man and woman at the same time. By contrast, the second version describes that woman is created out of the man's rib after God decides that Adam needs a helpmate. The second narrative was typically the one that came to be retold and visually portrayed much more often.²³⁶ For this reason, medieval and early modern Europeans were more familiar with the second version where woman is created second and meant to be man's subordinate. This second narrative is the one that also describes the first human sin. This version details that Eve is weak and tempted by the Devil to disobey God. She then persuades Adam to follow her actions and their disobedience gets them both expelled from the Garden of Eden.²³⁷

²³⁶ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 19.

²³⁷ See Bob Becking and Susanne Hennecke, *Out of Paradise: Eve and Adam and Their Interpreters* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011).

Based on the creation narrative, Jewish traditions and commentaries on the Hebrew Scriptures often portray women in a negative light.²³⁸ Most early modern Jewish interpreters chose to consider Eve as the source of all evil and sin in the world. They extended her failings and weak nature to all women.²³⁹ Jewish interpreters often used this belief to exclude women from the priesthood and many other religious duties. Since woman was the source of “evil,” Jewish commentators provided a framework for women to follow if they wanted to be “good” or “ideal.” The commentators followed what the authors of the Hebrew Scriptures laid out for what consisted of the ideal woman.²⁴⁰ They thought that the ideal woman was a mother of many children, provided food and clothing for her household, and made no objections when her husband wanted a concubine or a second wife.²⁴¹ In other words, the ideal woman was a good mother and was always an obedient wife.

Christian beliefs about the ideal woman drew upon perspectives from the Jewish tradition as its foundation.²⁴² Although Christianity is continuous with Judaism, what is different with Christianity is Jesus. When looking at the New Testament it clearly shows that Jesus spoke to women and included them as his followers. He preached to men and women and argued that both sexes were equally capable of achieving salvation.²⁴³ Jesus taught that both men and women should not allow their domestic responsibilities to come before their own spiritual well-being. We can also see that many of Jesus’ parables used women as positive examples or discussed

²³⁸ See Kristen Kvam, Linda Schearing, and Valarie Ziegler, *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 58-64.

²³⁹ Carol Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 63.

²⁴⁰ See Susan Niditch, “Portrayals of Women in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, ed. Judith Baskin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004).

²⁴¹ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 20.

²⁴² Lisa Cahill, *Between the Sexes* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 8.

²⁴³ This has led some scholars to consider Jesus as a feminist, see Leonard Swidler, *Jesus Was a Feminist: What the Gospels Reveal About His Revolutionary Perspective* (Lanham, MD: Sheed & Ward, 2007); Denise Carmody, *Feminism & Christianity: A Two-Way Reflection* (Nashville: Abingdon Publishing, 1982).

topics that would have been more significant to women than men.²⁴⁴ Jesus' teachings and behaviours were untraditional and conflicted with societal norms. For this reason, his ideas were often devalued by many of his followers shortly after his death.²⁴⁵ For example, the role of the twelve disciples who were all male was emphasized while the role of Jesus' female followers, such as Mary Magdalene, was minimized.²⁴⁶ Since Jesus' untraditional teachings and actions were not heavily emphasized, most early modern writers were more influenced by early Christian writers like Tertullian and Augustine when it came to their views of women.

During the second century, Tertullian connected all women with Eve by writing to women: "You are the Devil's gateway. You are the first deserter of the law... You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die."²⁴⁷ Tertullian's link between Eve and all women was an idea that was perpetuated by other early and medieval Christian writers for many centuries, such as Augustine.

In the fourth and fifth century, Augustine formed the version of authoritative theology of women that would remain the standard for Western Christianity through to the Reformation period.²⁴⁸ In forming this theology, Augustine focused on the Book of Genesis.²⁴⁹ He wanted to provide a literal interpretation by detailing what happened rather than offering any kind of

²⁴⁴ Ben Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus' Attitudes to Women and Their Roles As Reflected in His Earthly Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 35-44.

²⁴⁵ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 20.

²⁴⁶ For information about women in early Christianity, see Joyce Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins* (New York: Verso, 1991).

²⁴⁷ Tertullian, *De cultu feminarum*. 1, 1, translated by Rosemary Ruether, *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 157; see also Geoffrey Dunn, *Tertullian* (London: Routledge, 2004), 36-38.

²⁴⁸ It was Augustine's view of Christianity that influenced Luther.

²⁴⁹ In Augustine's commentaries on Genesis, he asserted that the initial decision by Adam and Eve had destroyed human free will forever and this was also the cause of sinful lust and sexual desires. He saw their actions as evidence of the fact that men cannot control the actions of their own sexual organs by their will or reason alone. Augustine wrote so strongly about sexual desires that he influenced the tradition and church leaders after him to regard sexuality even in marriage as sinful, see David Furley, *Routledge History of Philosophy: Aristotle to Augustine*. (London: Routledge, 1999), 402-403.

symbolic interpretation which would emphasize the work's spiritual or allegorical meaning.²⁵⁰

Augustine believed that male and female, bodies, sex, and reproduction did not originate with the fall, but was part of God's original plan for creation.²⁵¹ In this sense, Augustine did not believe that the differences between the sexes implied that the female was a "defective" male.²⁵² For Augustine, sexual differentiation is part of God's natural plan for humanity. However, one aspect of God's original plan was to also establish that both men and women were subordinate to God. With this plan for creation, woman is then subordinate to man.²⁵³

After the fall, woman's subordination turned into forced servitude. For Augustine, all women should accept it as part of their punishment for original sin.²⁵⁴ Since Eve was the "weaker part" of the original human relationship, Augustine extended Eve's inferiority and punishment to all women.²⁵⁵ This meant that all women were physically, intellectually, and morally inferior creatures.²⁵⁶ Not only did Eve's disobedience establish her inferiority, but also the belief that there would be consequences if women were not under the rule of men. If Adam had more control over Eve, then the fall would not have happened. Therefore, early Christian writers like Augustine maintained that God created woman after man which was interpreted to mean that she was inferior and was created to be man's subordinate.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁰ Kvam, Schearing, and Ziegler, *Eve and Adam*, 148.

²⁵¹ For information on what Augustine wrote on women and the consequences of his attitudes, see Kim Power, *Veiled Desire: Augustine on Women* (New York: Continuum, 1996).

²⁵² John Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 117; Rist argues that even though Augustine did not see women as defective men, he still considered them to be inferior to men.

²⁵³ This was especially for the purposes of sex and procreation, see Rosemary Ruether, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 4.

²⁵⁴ See Hanneke Reuling, "Genesis and the Stain of Sin: Spiritual, Literal and Dogmatic Interpretation in the Writings of Augustine of Hippo," in *After Eden: Church Fathers and Rabbis on Genesis 3:16-21* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 159-198.

²⁵⁵ Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection*, 20.

²⁵⁶ For more information on original subjection in the Book of Genesis, see *Ibid.*, 23-34.

²⁵⁷ Kvam, Schearing, and Ziegler, *Eve and Adam*, 4.

There are two possible interpretations of Augustine's view of women, especially when considering his theology of the *imago Dei*.²⁵⁸ Whether he considered woman, as well as man to be made in the image of God has been a difficult debate that has received a lot of attention. For example, scholars like Mary Clark argue that Augustine presents a more egalitarian view of women.²⁵⁹ Clark argues that Augustine tried to connect his opinions with bodily sex rather than with female gender. In this way, she argues that Augustine was trying to move away from making negative claims about women themselves.²⁶⁰ Other scholars, like T. J. Van Bavel, argue that: "We should not be blind to the positive aspects of Augustine's view."²⁶¹ Augustine believed that God planned to create woman to be a female human being who was not morally inferior to men.²⁶²

Other scholars, like Julia O'Faolin and Lauro Martines, and Rosemary Ruether, provide a more negative interpretation that Augustine denied the *imago Dei* to women.²⁶³ Judith Stark argues that Augustine is clearly emphasizing that man was created in God's image even when Eve has been created from Adam's side: "His emphasis is *not* on asserting women's *imago* status in her own right."²⁶⁴ Stark points out that since Augustine cited Paul's text, it inferred that woman is not fully made in God's image: "The man ought not to cover his head, because he is

²⁵⁸ See Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'on the Trinity'* (New York, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 291.

²⁵⁹ Mary Clark, *Augustine* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 126.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 127.

²⁶¹ T.J. Van Bavel, "Augustine's View of Women," *Augustiniana* 39 (1989): 52; Bavel also notes Augustine's focus on interpersonal love in married life as a way of changing the subordinate relationship between husband and wife.

²⁶² Augustine thought that women showed much faith, especially female martyrs of early Christianity. He not only recognized "great women martyrs," but also the character of ordinary women who would be considered models and teachers for men. This was especially the case with celibacy, where Augustine thought that wives could often remain chaste and that husbands could not. Augustine's positive claim that women made him different from his predecessors and made him more progressive, see Clark, *Augustine*, 127.

²⁶³ See Julia O'Faolain and Lauro Martines, *Not in God's Image: Women in History* (London: Virago, 1979); Rosemary Ruether, "The Liberation of Christology from Patriarchy," *New Blackfriars* 66, no. 781 (1985): 324-335.

²⁶⁴ Judith Stark, *Feminist Interpretations of Augustine* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 227.

the image and glory of God. But the woman is the glory of man (1 Corinthians 11:7).”²⁶⁵ For Augustine, Paul only assigns the image of God to the man and not to the woman.²⁶⁶ Augustine argued that in a spiritual sense; however, woman should not be excluded. Rosemary Ruether argues that Augustine may have thought that women possessed a redeemable soul, but her specific femaleness was the opposite of divine. She maintains that Augustine divided the *imago Dei* from gender differences and established that the male was the normative image of God.²⁶⁷ Penelope Deutscher makes a similar claim by arguing that “the valuation of women as equally made in the image of God occurs precisely *as* a devaluation of materiality, which is gendered feminine.”²⁶⁸ Edmund Hill disagrees with Ruether and Deutscher by arguing that the passages about how the two genders differs are only meant to be analogical uses of marital imagery.²⁶⁹ Hill argues that Augustine’s theology does not imply that he believed that women were inferior to men. As with Hill, Jean La Porte and Ellen Weave argue that Augustine’s analogies of masculine and feminine have no implications for women’s inferiority in real life.²⁷⁰ However, Kim Power argues that the statements made by Hill and others that Augustine’s theology outlined that woman is not created to be subordinate to man are not supported by evidence. Power argues that this confirms Ruether’s conclusion that Augustine maintained that woman was not made in God’s image.²⁷¹

²⁶⁵ Stark, *Feminist Interpretations of Augustine*, 227.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 232.

²⁶⁷ Ruether, *Liberation of Christology*, 235.

²⁶⁸ Penelope, Deutscher, *Yielding Gender: Feminism, Deconstruction, and the History of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2002), 154.

²⁶⁹ Edmund Hill, “Response: St. Augustine and R.R.R. on Women,” *New Blackfriars* 66, no. 785 (1985): 503-504.

²⁷⁰ Jean La Porte and Ellen Weaver, “Augustine on Women: Relationships and Teachings,” *Augustinian Studies* 12 (1981): 131.

²⁷¹ Power, *Veiled Desire*, 167; Deutscher argues that these positive and negative interpretations of Augustine’s view of women cannot be separated.

The main assumption that women were subordinate to men was absorbed from Augustine's fourth century culture. In the fourth century, society believed that women were the weaker sex, socially inferior, and owed men their obedience. Clark argues that since "biblical narratives were also culturally conditioned they could not liberate Augustine from popular opinion on this matter."²⁷² These popular assumptions were adopted with slight variations by later theological traditions found in Thomas Aquinas and were continued to be accepted in Reformation theologies.²⁷³ Even though scholars interpret Augustine's views as presenting women positively, it was not the interpretation that influenced Luther's theology.

Inherited Philosophical Ideas

Apart from the early and medieval Christian tradition, early modern writers like Martin Luther were heavily influenced by classical philosophy. Aristotle was perhaps the most influential non-Christian source for ideas in many different fields up until the seventeenth century which often had negative effects for women. He believed that nature created the two sexes differently and his writings attempted to describe these differences by offering what he claimed to be "scientific" evidence.²⁷⁴

Unlike Augustine, Aristotle thought that women were partly formed men or a "mutilated male" whose whole physiological system functioned as a lower metabolic level of efficiency.²⁷⁵ He wrote that "a woman was thus a deformity."²⁷⁶ In other words, he believed that women were

²⁷² Clark, *Augustine*, 126.

²⁷³ Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 4.

²⁷⁴ See Sophia Connell, *Aristotle on Female Animals: A Study of the Generation of Animals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Robert Mayhew, *The Female in Aristotle's Biology: Reason or Rationalization* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

²⁷⁵ Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection*, 10.

²⁷⁶ Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, translated by A. L. Peck, *Loeb Classics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943), Book 4, 6, 460.

imperfect men. Women were the result of an error with the conception that created them. It was either the case that the parents were too young, old, or too diverse in age. Since nature's goal was perfection, anything less than perfect was "monstrous." Even though a woman was a "mutilated male," he believed this "deformity" was "one which occurs in the ordinary course of nature."²⁷⁷ Aristotle was not fully sure why such imperfect men were part of the natural order but concluded that it might be because they performed a necessary function for men.²⁷⁸ Aristotle argued that nature stopped women from developing to a particular point where they could transmit semen and breed offspring so that they would instead be hospitable to the male and be able to incubate his semen.²⁷⁹ This was why women were created to be the opposite of men. Aristotle explained this further by describing that female physiology was the opposite of male physiology since it was colder, moister, and more humid.²⁸⁰

Apart from aiding in production, Aristotle believed that nature created women with another purpose. In his *Politics*, he argued that women are naturally ruled by men and their duty consists of obeying their husbands.²⁸¹ He thought that a woman lacked any kind of authoritative faculty and so they could not think on their own and must be told what to do by someone who is intellectually superior.²⁸² For Aristotle, this divided the roles and functions of men and women right from the beginning of nature. He believed that nature provided men with women so that they could be their obedient housekeepers. Aristotle argued that nature had customized women to be attentive to male needs and to do all the trivial tasks in the household that made life easier and

²⁷⁷ Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, translated by Peck, *Loeb Classics*, Book 4, 6, 460.

²⁷⁸ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 22.

²⁷⁹ Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, 765b-6b, translated by Connell, *Aristotle on Female Animals*, 3.

²⁸⁰ Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, 726b31-35, translated by Connell, *Aristotle on Female Animals*, 3.

²⁸¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1254v12-15, 1459b4-9, 1260a23, translated by Connell, *Aristotle on Female Animals*, 3.

²⁸² Aristotle, *Politics*, 1260a20-30, translated by Connell, *Aristotle on Female Animals*, 3; see also Furley, *Routledge History of Philosophy*, 138.

comfortable for men.²⁸³ Since men had an easy life at home, they were able to complete serious tasks like agriculture, business, politics, and philosophy without having to be concerned with taking care of children or the household. Aristotle thought this was obvious since nature created men to be able to gather goods by hunting and farming while women were to sustain them through careful housekeeping. He wrote that women are “more wakeful, more afraid of action, and in general less inclined to move than the male; and takes less nourishment.”²⁸⁴ He concluded from this that men were meant to be outdoors since they were too restless to sit while women were to remain within the home because they were too weak for the tough work that was required outside.²⁸⁵ For this reason, it was natural that males completed the fieldwork and women were made to do the housework. Since women had a more passive role or function, he thought that the female of any species was “softer in character,” “more compassionate,” and more “easily moved by their emotions” such as anger and jealousy.²⁸⁶ He wrote: “All females are less spirited than the males [...] hence a wife is more compassionate than a husband and more given to her emotions, but also more jealous and complaining and more apt to scold and fight.”²⁸⁷

When attempting to explain the differences between the sexes, Aristotle examined “what was a woman’s function,” but for men he tried to explain “what is man.”²⁸⁸ Medieval writers and early modern theorists translated from Greek to Latin many of Aristotle’s opinions of women and completely adopted them into their own theories or theologies.²⁸⁹

²⁸³ Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection*, 13.

²⁸⁴ Aristotle, *History of Animals*, 608a32-608b19, translated by Connell, *Aristotle on Female Animals*, 3.

²⁸⁵ Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection*, 13.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁸⁷ Aristotle, *History of Animals*, 608a32-608b19, translated by Connell, *Aristotle on Female Animals*, 3.

²⁸⁸ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 22.

²⁸⁹ Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection*, 10.

Starting in the twelfth century, scholastic theologians and religious writers tried to combine the teachings of Christianity and Aristotle into one coherent philosophical system. For example, Thomas Aquinas connected early Christian and classical ideas about women. Aristotle's influence on Aquinas is clear throughout Aquinas' theory of the nature of women, especially their shared understanding of woman as a defective male.²⁹⁰ Aquinas emphasized women's inferiority as inherent in their original creation and not the result of Eve's disobedience.²⁹¹ He thought that even in the state of innocence prior to the fall that the differences between the sexes would have made woman subordinate to man.²⁹²

Aquinas had an important role in adapting many of Aristotle's ideas so that they were more acceptable to Christians.²⁹³ Aquinas helped Aristotle's perspectives become commonly held beliefs. It was Aristotle and Aquinas who provided early modern thinkers with the idea that nature designed women to be subordinate housekeepers. For any other task, Aquinas believed, like Augustine, that it would be better for man to look to another man for help.²⁹⁴ Since women were only meant for housekeeping, these philosophers argued that women were unable to contemplate complex matters.²⁹⁵ For this reason, women needed to take care of the domestic affairs and should focus entirely on properly fulfilling this task. It was also for this reason that men ruled over women. This perspective emphasized the fact that since women were to remain within the home, it meant that they were unsuited for activities outside of the household. Aristotle and Aquinas argued that women's physical and intellectual weaknesses made them

²⁹⁰ Kvam, Scheuring, and Ziegler, *Eve and Adam*, 226; see also Eric Johnston, "The Biology of Women in Thomas Aquinas," *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 77, no. 4 (2013): 577-616.

²⁹¹ See Kari Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Woman in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995).

²⁹² Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection*, 20.

²⁹³ Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering, *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 143.

²⁹⁴ John Flood, *Representations of Eve in Antiquity and the English Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2011), 69-70.

²⁹⁵ Emery and Levering, *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology*, 168.

unfit for public roles. Their weaknesses could make them especially subject to attacks on their modesty and chastity. Classical Greek authors and many early modern theorists agreed that respectable women should never leave the home.²⁹⁶

INHERITED IDEAS INFLUENCED HOW TO TREAT WOMEN IN SOCIETY

Merry Wiesner-Hanks and Susan Karant-Nunn argue that often “people fall back upon the generalities provided by their culture. Martin Luther renewed many venerable generalities and contributed them to a definition of women as weak and subordinate that helped to inform ideals [...] down to the twentieth-century.”²⁹⁷ Based on early and medieval Christianity and classical philosophy, most early modern writers like Martin Luther believed that women were inferior to men. This inferiority meant that women needed male assistance with everything that they did because of their physical and intellectual weaknesses.²⁹⁸ Most early modern writers believed that nature created men with greater physical strength whereas women were created with finer and more delicate bodies.²⁹⁹ This was obvious for writers since men were typically stronger and had more muscular bodies. They also believed that this physiology was natural rather than an environmentally produced quality.

Women were not only physically inferior, but also less intelligent than men. Females simply had a feebler mind than males. A woman’s intellectual inferiority was linked with her poor judgement and poor self-control thereby making women appear less balanced and less

²⁹⁶ Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection*, 13.

²⁹⁷ Susan Karant-Nunn and Merry Wiener-Hanks, *Luther on Women: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 14

²⁹⁸ However, women did have souls like men and were responsible for their own salvation.

²⁹⁹ LW 1, 151.

moderate than men.³⁰⁰ This made some writers doubt whether women could even be described as “rational” beings.³⁰¹ Women were physically and intellectually inferior because nature had created them that way by giving them weaker bodies, stronger emotions, and weaker intellects. By contrast, men were believed to have been created with more courage, authority, sharpness, and greater insight and foresight than women.

Since women had strong passions and little reason, writers believed that special allowances needed to be made for their actions. Husbands were advised to show patience in the face of the woman’s “natural imbecility.”³⁰² They needed to be patient because women were easily thrown into anger, jealousy, or discontent but were unable to reform themselves because of their weak intellect. For this reason, a woman was between a man and a child. The idea that women were like children was another popular classical, medieval, and early modern belief.³⁰³ Nature had made women inferior and there was nothing that women could do to change that. These opinions were not only expressed in complex theological or philosophical works, but also spread and communicated more broadly to the public through sermons and university lectures.³⁰⁴

During the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformation caused a movement that brought about much religious change. This change occurred because reformers criticized theological ideas, institutions, and practices of the Roman Catholic church. Although Protestant reformers criticized and challenged many topics, reformers did not reject classical and medieval ideas about women.³⁰⁵ For reformers, like Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin, women were created by God and could be saved through their faith. In this way, men and women were

³⁰⁰ WA TR 1, 1054, 531-532.

³⁰¹ Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection*, 13

³⁰² LW 30, 92.

³⁰³ Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection*, 13; Martin Luther held this position as the next chapter will show, see especially WA 1, 17, 1, 24.

³⁰⁴ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 22.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

spiritually equal to men.³⁰⁶ However, in every other respect the reformers were influenced by their inherited traditions and considered women to be inferior and subordinate to men. Following earlier theorists, like Aristotle and Aquinas who reached the same conclusions, reformers argued that women should be subject to men because of their natural inferiority.³⁰⁷ The reformers also agreed with early Christian writers and Aristotle that women's subjection was part of creation and was inherent in their very being.³⁰⁸ Similar to the classical philosophical views, these Protestant ideas about women were not restricted to written books. They were spread and communicated to church congregations through sermons and homilies. In many parts of Europe, people were required to attend church so there was no way to avoid hearing these perspectives.³⁰⁹ These perspectives would prove to influence how society viewed and treated women which can be illustrated by exploring women in relation to the law, work, education, and family life during the early modern period in Europe.³¹⁰

Women and the Law

Theoretical ideas about women that were based on early and medieval Christianity and classical philosophy directly influenced the legal system and law codes in early modern Europe.³¹¹ During the early modern period, society was based on inequality, subordination, and

³⁰⁶ For more information on spiritual equality, see Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection*, 43-51.

³⁰⁷ See Katherine Rodgers, *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1966).

³⁰⁸ WA 14, 150-151.

³⁰⁹ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 31.

³¹⁰ See Renate Bridenthal, *Becoming Visible: Women in European Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977); Marilyn Boxer and Jean Quataert, *Connecting Spheres: Women in the Western World, 1500 – the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

³¹¹ For information on gender and laws in the early modern period in England, France, Italy, Greece and Norway, see Anna Bellavitis, and Micheletto B. Zucca, *Gender, Law and Economic Well-Being in Europe from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century: North Versus South?* (London: Routledge, 2018); Sara Kimble and Marion Röwekamp. *New Perspectives on European Women's Legal History* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

hierarches. Many of these hierarches were established, expressed, and maintained by the legal system.³¹² It is important to recognize that laws are another type of theory since they describe an author's attempt to create an ideal situation. For this reason, they do not necessarily describe reality.³¹³ However, the laws are still helpful to examine since they provide scholars with evidence that the behaviours that they intended to regulate or prohibit were happening.³¹⁴ Lawmakers, who were men, only tried to restrict actions that they thought people contemplated doing or were doing.

There was a great diversity of laws that existed for women depending on their social classes, ages, and stages of their lives including child, adolescent, wife, matron, widow, or old woman.³¹⁵ Legal codes also varied by region, economic situation, and political changes. The legal rules that existed for women reflected the legal situation in a society that was structured by social estates. The predominant idea was “to each his own” referring to the fact that each social class had special rights and freedoms. In this system, the rights of men and women were based on their social class. The legal system implied that men and women would have varying degrees of legal rights rather than a clear division between an individual with a privileged status or their rights deprived.³¹⁶ The social aspect of the legal system was illustrated in a ranking of social estates determining which members were “better” or “lesser” people. This referred to both sexes.

³¹² Maria Ågren, “Making a Living, Making a Difference,” in *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society*, ed. Maria Ågren (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 8.

³¹³ For a brief discussion on the law vs. practice, especially in Norway and England, see Lyndan Warner, “Before the Law,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jane Couchman and Allyson Poska (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 239.

³¹⁴ When looking at how authorities tried to regulate the morality and behaviours of males and female, scholars initially turned to canon law decrees and archives of the church courts to see how the clergy tried to regulate marriages, failed marriage promises, fornication, and divorce, see Warner, *Before the Law*, 235.

³¹⁵ Heide Wunder, *He Is the Sun, She Is the Moon: Women in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 188; for more information on widows, see Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner, *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2016); Allison Levy, *Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Lousie Mirrer, *Upon My Husband's Death: Widows in the Literature and Histories of Medieval Europe* (Ann Arbor, Boston: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

³¹⁶ Wunder, *He Is the Sun*, 188.

Although rights were based on social status, there was still a clear division and inequality between men and women within the legal system. For example, a burgher wife was more socially superior than a working man which was a rank below on the social strata. She might be recognized as “better” in terms of her social status. However, at the same time, the working man was considered a legal person in court who could represent himself while this was not the case for the burgher woman.³¹⁷ This is not to say that women were without rights. Women sometimes had actionable rights to inheritance, property, and proceeds of their own work. If they were housewives, they might also have possessed actionable rights to maintain authority over children and dependents. Despite these instances, the legal inequality between men and women was still quite pronounced.

During the early modern period in Europe, the law itself changed, especially beginning in the thirteenth century in Italy and then in the sixteenth century in Germany.³¹⁸ In Europe, traditional medieval laws had provided women with a secondary legal status which was based on their inability to perform feudal military service.³¹⁹ This was based on the oldest laws that made it mandatory for every woman who was not married to have a male legal guardian who would be able to endure trial by combat or ordeal for the woman.³²⁰ The laws requiring women to have a male guardian to perform such trials died out in the Middle Ages. This was because court proceedings replaced physical trials and women could appear before a court without a male guardian. In many parts of Europe, single women and widows could make wills, serve as

³¹⁷ Wunder, *He Is the Sun*, 188.

³¹⁸ See Lisa Bitel, *Women in Early Medieval Europe, 400-1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1994); James Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Judith Bennett and Ruth M. Karras, *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

³¹⁹ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 43.

³²⁰ Hunt Janin, *Medieval Justice: Cases and Laws in France, England and Germany, 500-1500* (London: McFarland, 2009), 17.

executors of wills, and be witnesses in civil and criminal court cases.³²¹ Therefore, restrictions on women's legal rights due to feudal obligations diminished in the late Middle Ages.

The legal system started to move away from restricting women based on feudal obligations and instead moved towards using marriage as a basis for limiting women's legal rights.³²² Marriage was used as the main reason for limiting women's roles such as being excluded from public offices and duties. Marriage not only restricted women, but also emphasized their proper roles such as their duty to obey their husbands. A married woman was legally bound or subject to her husband in all things.³²³ For example, she was not allowed to sue, make contracts, or attend court for any reason without her husband's approval.³²⁴ In many parts of Europe, the married woman was so bound to her husband that he had complete ownership over the wife's belongings.³²⁵ For example, the wife's property, goods, or wages belonged to her husband which meant that the husband possessed the sole authority to buy, sell, or lease.³²⁶

However, in early modern cities and states in Europe this varied. Political and legal authorities acknowledged that a wife's total legal dependence on her husband did not typically fit with economic or social realities.³²⁷ For this reason, many cities granted ways for wives to possess some legal and economic independence. For example, beginning in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries almost all cities allowed married women who carried out business on their own or with their husbands to declare themselves "unmarried" for legal reasons.³²⁸ The reason

³²¹ Women were still prohibited from serving as witnesses to wills.

³²² See Christopher Brooke, *The Medieval Idea of Marriage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Charles Donahue, *Law, Marriage, and Society in the Later Middle Ages: Arguments About Marriage in Five Courts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

³²³ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 44.

³²⁴ In many parts of Europe, women were unable to be charged with any civil crime which was the case with Argula von Grumbach.

³²⁵ Warner, *Before the Law*, 237.

³²⁶ This was the case until the 19th century.

³²⁷ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 45.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

for this was so that the women could legally borrow and loan money and make contracts by themselves without requiring their husbands' approval. However, the monetary amount that they could borrow, or loan was often limited. In other cases, women were able to maintain control over the family property if they could provide evidence that their husbands were wasting their family resources on drinking, gambling, or bad investments.³²⁹ Although these laws were established to protect women and children, they were mostly motivated by the rulers' desires to keep families from requiring public charity.³³⁰

The renewal of Roman law in Europe brought on many more changes.³³¹ In many parts of Europe, legal scholars advised the state to change their legal codes so that they conformed with Roman law.³³² In addition, legal scholars teaching in universities recognized the law as an important tool for shaping society and encouraged rulers to expand their legal codes and punish more harshly those individuals who broke the law. These changes during the early modern period had an impact on the legal position for women.³³³

For example, the lawmakers who were being educated with Roman law started to become irritated with the fact that there were exceptions and that women could slip through the cracks of the system.³³⁴ The lawmakers turned to Roman law which provided them with additional reasons for re-establishing women's secondary legal status. They no longer based this legal inferiority on feudal obligations or on a wife's duty to obey her husband within marriage, but on a woman's

³²⁹ See A. L. Martin, *Alcohol, Sex and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), 119-124.

³³⁰ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 45.

³³¹ For information on the evolution of law in Western Europe, see Bart Wauters, *History of Law in Europe: An Introduction* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2018).

³³² Roman law was a legal system that was based on the Roman emperor Justinian's collection of laws and commentaries in the sixth century, see Peter Stein, *Roman Law in European History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1-2; for information on Roman law and European legal history from the Roman Empire to present day, see Ditlev Tamm, *Roman Law and European Legal History* (Copenhagen: DJØF, 1998).

³³³ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 43.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

physical and intellectual weaknesses. Roman law argued that women were inferior to men.³³⁵ In the words of the Roman law, they based women's secondary legal status on their "fragility, imbecility, and irresponsibility, and ignorance."³³⁶ Roman law considered women to be inferior and established laws and restrictions which they argued were for a woman's "protection."³³⁷ For example, simple-minded women along with peasants were not recognized as being legally responsible for their own actions and could not be made to appear before a court. This was because they were irresponsible and ignorant. It was also the case that in all legal disputes a woman's testimony was considered less credible than a man's testimony.

Since women were inferior, they needed male guardians. The lawmakers used these ideas as the basis for their recommendations that the state should implement the re-introduction of gender-based guardianship.³³⁸ Adult women who were unmarried and widows were once again forced to have male guardians who were usually a father or an uncle.³³⁹ They were prohibited from making any financial decisions on their own and even banned from making donations to religious institutions without their guardians' approval. Throughout the early modern period, Roman law caused increasingly more restrictions on unmarried and married women.³⁴⁰ Therefore, the changes that occurred during this time were restrictive rather than increasing a woman's ability to act independently.

In addition to beliefs about feudal obligations, wifely obedience, and Roman law, the notion of a woman's honour was another idea that was essential in constructing women's legal

³³⁵ See Rafael Domingo, *Roman Law: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

³³⁶ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 46.

³³⁷ Manlio Bellomo and Lydia Cochrane. *The Common Legal Past of Europe: 100-1800* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 26.

³³⁸ Male guardianship had a long tradition that was rooted in Roman law, see Warner, *Before the Law*, 238.

³³⁹ See Grace Coolidge, *Guardianship, Gender, and the Nobility in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010).

³⁴⁰ Bennett and Karras, *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender*, 299-300.

rights. During this period, the notion of honour was highly gender specific.³⁴¹ Men's honour was very class-specific and often related to their physical courage, honesty, or integrity. On the other hand, women's honour was simply a sexual matter and it was taken very seriously. For example, women were able to bring defamation suits to court if an individual insulted their honour. Court records show that this happened frequently. Court records also show that some of the worst insults to call a man was "thief" or "coward" thereby insulting his honesty or physical bravery. By contrast, the worst thing that a woman could be called was a "whore."³⁴² However, women were not recognized to be able to defend their own honour completely without the help of a man because of their sinfulness, irrationality, and weakness which were all ideas that stemmed from early and medieval Christianity and classical philosophy.

Women and Work

Heide Wunder argues that there is evidence that women of all ages, ranging from small girls to elderly women, and from all social classes, including nobility worked during the early modern period.³⁴³ These women held a broad range of employment positions.³⁴⁴ Recent feminist scholarship argues that work and other economic activities cannot be removed from the family or political and social institutions.³⁴⁵ This scholarship emphasizes that in order to be inclusive

³⁴¹ See Lyndal Roper, "Will and Honor: Sex, Words and Power in Augsburg Criminal Trials," *Radical History Review* 43 (1989): 45-71.

³⁴² Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 47.

³⁴³ Wunder, *He Is the Sun*, 70; see also Ågren, *Making a Living*, 1.

³⁴⁴ Janine Lanza, "Women and Work," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jane Couchman and Allyson Poska (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 276; See also Jonas Lindstrom, "The Diversity of Work," in *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society*, ed. Maria Ågren (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 24-57.

³⁴⁵ For information on the sexual economy of the household, see Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 31-36; for information on work and life becoming family-based, see Wunder, *He Is the Sun*, 63-84; for more information on how being associated with the household and woman had a negative effect on occupations, see Jean Quataert, "The Shaping of Women's Work in Manufacturing: Guilds, Households, and the State in Central Europe," *American Historical Review* 90 (1985): 1122-

economic life in any time period should include productive, as well as reproductive activities.³⁴⁶ The production of children should be recognized as an economic activity.³⁴⁷ In this case, “reproduction” not only includes bearing children, but also caring and being responsible for all family members which in turn allowed family members, especially husbands, to participate in active labour outside the household.³⁴⁸ Therefore, there is a broad understanding of what should be considered “economic” during the early modern period.

Even though the work that was performed by both men and women in the early modern period was typically similar, or even the same, work identities varied between the sexes.³⁴⁹ For example, studies that examined 13,500 testimonies from a court in England show that eighty-five percent of men affirmed a work identity or role in society whereas only nine percent of women claimed to have a similar identity.³⁵⁰ There were several reasons for this. First, women were forced to frequently change occupations due to biological or social events.³⁵¹ Merry Wiesner-Hanks argues that a man’s work pattern and a man’s position in the economy was based on age, class, and training.³⁵² Boys and men would typically move from one level of employment to the next while staying within the same occupation. This allowed men to establish some type of work

1148; For women’s work and the family, see Pat Hudson and W. R. Lee, *Women’s Work and the Family Economy in Historical Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 76-103.

³⁴⁶ Wunder, *He Is the Sun*, 67.

³⁴⁷ For more on the economy of marriage, see Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Religion and Sexuality in Early Modern Europe* (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 55-56.

³⁴⁸ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 101; this was especially the case for the pre-industrial period, where much of the production occurred within the household, see Barbara Hanawalt, *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Daryl Hafer, *European Women and Preindustrial Craft* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1995); Martha Howell, *Women, Production and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

³⁴⁹ See Karin Hassan Jansson, “Constitutive Tasks: Performances of Hierarchy and Identity,” in *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society*, ed. Maria Ågren (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 127-159.

³⁵⁰ Anna Bellavitis and Clelia Boscolo *Women's Work and Rights in Early Modern Urban Europe* (Switzerland: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2018), 38.

³⁵¹ For information on the different stages in a woman’s life, see Wunder, *He Is the Sun*, 16-37.

³⁵² Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 102; For more information on craft, gender, and labour, see Roper, *Holy Household*, 40-49.

identity. Similarly, women's work rhythms were also based on age and class, but by contrast they were more determined by biological and social events such as marriage, motherhood, and widowhood.³⁵³ These biological or social circumstances were experienced by most individual women and were often factors over which they would have little control.³⁵⁴ Since such factors often changed a woman's lifestyle, women were typically forced to change occupations many times throughout their lives. For this reason, they tended not to form an identity with an occupation.

Second, religious opinion and legal codes made it hard for women to consider themselves as members of a certain occupation.³⁵⁵ For example, Protestant writers wanted to remove the distinction between the clergy and the laity, so they described all occupations as "vocations" for men. This referred to any activities that a man was called by God to perform and was blessed through his labour for completing such duties. However, for a woman, the only possible "vocation" according to the Protestants was wife and mother. This is made clear from advice manuals and sermons produced by the Protestant clergy which considered a woman's productive labour as part of her domestic duties as a wife and mother.³⁵⁶ In other words, her productive labour was because of her role as a "helpmate" to her husband. This idea can also be found in secular laws, tax records, and ordinances that were established beginning in the fifteenth century and continued onwards.

Third, women rarely received any formal training and could not professionally identify with an occupation. This became a problem during the sixteenth century. In the Middle Ages,

³⁵³ Women tended to identify primarily by their family situation rather than any type of work identity, see Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 102.

³⁵⁴ See Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, *Women, Work, and Family* (New York: Methuen, 1978).

³⁵⁵ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 103.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

only men could attend universities to receive professional medical training to become physicians. Although women learned medicine through less formal means they were still recognized as “physicians” in various records.³⁵⁷ However, during the sixteenth century male physicians put a stop to this. They emphasized “professionalization” which was a process that excluded women.³⁵⁸ This made it harder for women to practice as physicians. This emphasis on professionalizing also started to affect other occupations, even ones that did not require university training. For example, women were able to brew herbal remedies, but only men were able to use the official title of “apothecary.”³⁵⁹

To become professionalized, many occupations required a certain amount of formal training and licensing before an individual could use an occupational title.³⁶⁰ This was especially the case with the trades. For example, being allowed to practice a trade required the individual to have sufficient knowledge and skills which were standardized and formalized. This caused work to be divided between successive levels of training, but more significantly for women, it divided the labour between the sexes.³⁶¹ The strong emphasis on professionalization affected areas of work that were typically seen as female such as food and clothing trades.³⁶² If an individual wanted to become a “professional,” they needed to pass examinations to show their knowledge, skill, and experience. However, the examiners already had ideas about who was suitable for the profession and who was not suitable. In determining suitability, the examiners included qualifications that were unrelated to the profession and ability to even perform the work such as

³⁵⁷ See Leigh Whaley, *Women and the Practice of Medical Care in Early Modern Europe, 1400-1800* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001).

³⁵⁸ Lanza, *Women and Work*, 276.

³⁵⁹ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 103; the process of professionalization not only affected “titles,” but also the amount that professionals could charge for their labours. For example, a male physician who was trained at a university could make ten times the annual salary of a woman offering the same services.

³⁶⁰ For more information on professionalization, experience, and common sense, see Wunder, *He Is the Sun*, 85-112.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

³⁶² Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 103.

ownership of a house, ethnic affiliations, gender, as well as a “marital and honourable birth.”³⁶³ If the individual was able to participate in the process of professionalization and had these qualifications, then they would receive admission or membership into a professional organization. However, as women did not receive formal training, could not participate in the process, and did not possess many of these other “qualifications,” they were unable to be admitted into professions.

Gender was also a factor for how individuals defined skilled and unskilled work.³⁶⁴ It was commonly accepted that women were “unfit” for certain types of work such as glass cutting. The reason was that women were “too clumsy” or “unskilled” to perform such tasks even though women often made lace or silk thread which required an even higher level of dexterity and skill than glass cutting.³⁶⁵ Historians who examine the industrial period have emphasized that the introduction of machinery removed the required skill from certain occupations.³⁶⁶ For example, occupations that had traditionally been performed by men were being made more repetitive with machinery and therefore were being recognized as “unskilled work.”³⁶⁷ These occupations were then given to women who performed them with lower pay and status. Wiesner-Hanks argues that the opposite process occurred during the early modern period with the change of stocking knitting into a male-dominated occupation.³⁶⁸ When the knitting frame was introduced, men argued that using it was so complex that only men could be skilled in using the machine. However, Wiesner-Hanks points out that the frame made knitting easier and faster. Despite this, women were prohibited from using it since they were unskilled.

³⁶³ Wunder, *He Is the Sun*, 85.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 76

³⁶⁵ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 105.

³⁶⁶ Lanza, *Women and Work*, 277.

³⁶⁷ Bellavitis and Boscolo, *Women's Work*, 21.

³⁶⁸ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 105.

However, women were not considered to be too unskilled for every task and there were many occupations that a woman could perform.³⁶⁹ Women's work, especially in the cities, included the domestic industry, market retail, and prostitution.³⁷⁰

During the early modern period, domestic service was likely the largest employer of women.³⁷¹ It has been estimated that between fifteen and thirty percent of the population in most cities was composed of domestic servants.³⁷² A position as a domestic servant was one that women hoped could attract a good husband because they could save a sizable dowry and show off their skills at managing a household.³⁷³ Records show that girls could start as a domestic servant as early as ages seven or eight and would travel from their home village to a nearby city to perform their duties. These young girls would rely on friends and relatives to help them find positions. In some areas, such as Germany, women used employment agencies to help them find work. These employment agents were typically older women who had knowledge of the households in their area.³⁷⁴ The agents were regulated by the city and were paid by both the domestic servant and the employer. When employment agents were not used women could approach people themselves to find employment. However, a woman had to be careful because choosing the wrong employer could mean hard duties, unpaid wages, or even sexual advances which would ruin prospective marriages, especially if these advances resulted in a child.³⁷⁵

³⁶⁹ Lanza, *Women and Work*, 277.

³⁷⁰ See Katrina Honeyman and Jordan Goodman, "Women's Work, Gender Conflict, and Labour Markets in Europe, 1500-1900," *Economic History Review* 44, no. 4 (1991): 608-628; Sheilagh Ogilvie, "Women and Labour Markets in Early Modern Germany," *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 2 (2004): 25-60.

³⁷¹ Henry Kamen, *Early Modern European Society* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 160.

³⁷² For discussions on domestic servants, see Susan Karant-Nunn, "The Women of the Saxon Silver Mines," *Women in the Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: Public and Private Worlds*, ed. Sherrin Marshall, 29-46 (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1989); cities provided women who could not find employment as a domestic servant with other types of work such as cleaning, cooking, and nursing on a short-term basis.

³⁷³ For more information on managing the household, see Wunder, *He Is the Sun*, 94-97.

³⁷⁴ Lanza, *Women and Work*, 281.

³⁷⁵ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 112.

When a woman became a domestic servant her duties greatly varied. Servants would complete several domestic tasks including cleaning, cooking, laundry, and child care. They hardly received any time off from completing these duties.³⁷⁶ This was because most households could not afford more than one servant.³⁷⁷ Servants would typically eat and sleep with the family since there was rarely enough space for the servant to have their own room.³⁷⁸ This was still the case with middle-class or upper-middle class households which had plenty of rooms. It was not until the nineteenth century that domestic servants would become separated from their employers.³⁷⁹

Since domestic servants were rarely separated from their employers, they were recognized to be legally dependent on their employers.³⁸⁰ In this way, servants could be punished or fired with little penalty. The males within the household were also always expected to manage and supervise their servants. For example, employers in Frankfurt whose servants became pregnant under their watch were legally forced to pay for the costs associated with pregnancies for three months. This was the responsibility of the employer even if he was not the father because it was believed that the servant would not have become pregnant had the employer been fulfilling his duty as head of the household.³⁸¹

Although domestic service provided many women with work, other women from both the countryside and the city found employment in retail sales.³⁸² The marketplace during the early

³⁷⁶ Lanza, *Women and Work*, 282.

³⁷⁷ Wunder, *He Is the Sun*, 71.

³⁷⁸ Lanza, *Women and Work*, 282.

³⁷⁹ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 113.

³⁸⁰ Lanza, *Women and Work*, 282.

³⁸¹ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 114; servants were so legally dependent, by law or custom, that they were prohibited from marrying.

³⁸² See Judith Bennett, *A Bitter Living: Women, Markets, and Social Capital in Early Modern Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

modern period would have been bustling with women.³⁸³ By the early modern period nearly all households traded at the market.³⁸⁴ At the market, women would sell products such as pretzels, pies, cookies, candles, or anything that might have been made by hand.³⁸⁵ Women might also sell products from their husbands such as fresh or salted fish, or imported products that they purchased from a trader such as oranges. City markets had regulations which placed strict rules on product purity, honest weights, and fair prices. However, the city officials did not place any restrictions on women's participation in the market. The city markets acknowledged that married women needed to buy and sell without their husbands' permission. For this reason, they created a special exception which allowed women freedom in the marketplace. Records from many cities that did not have this exception indicate that women conducted business regardless of whether there was any special legal approval to do so.³⁸⁶

Women who could not find work as a domestic servant nor had products to sell at the marketplace frequently turned to selling sex for money.³⁸⁷ Most women who engaged in prostitution were on the lowest social level of employment and were often subject to abuse, arrest, disease, and degradation.³⁸⁸ During the late Middle Ages, official brothels and selling sex in certain areas of the city were permitted in most major cities in Europe.³⁸⁹ Prostitution was

³⁸³ For example, records show that women composed more than three-quarters of the traders in early modern Polish cities, see Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 116.

³⁸⁴ Lanza, *Women and Work*, 278.

³⁸⁵ For additional information on women and the marketplace, see Roper, *Holy Household*, 29

³⁸⁶ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 116.

³⁸⁷ For more information on prostitution, see Leah Otis, *Prostitution in Medieval Society: The History of an Urban Institution in Languedoc* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Lyndal Roper, "Discipline and Respectability: Prostitution and the Reformation in Augsburg," *History Workshop Journal* 19 (1985): 3-28; Diane Wolfthal, *Money, Morality, and Culture in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Ulinka Rublack, *The Crimes of Women in Early Modern Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

³⁸⁸ Lanza, *Women and Work*, 283.

³⁸⁹ Even though a brothel was public, it was not considered to be open to all men. For example, married men were not allowed to visit a brothel. Cities had threatened punishment for any married man found at a brothel. In addition, there were restrictions placed on clerics. In Nuremberg, clerics were prohibited from visiting a brothel. In Nordlingen, the city only restricted them from staying the night, see Roper, *Holy Household*, 89; 91.

permitted on the grounds that it protected “honourable” women from man’s uncontrollable sexual desires.³⁹⁰ In this way, city officials thought that women would benefit from the presence of brothels because it made the city safer for “respectable” women.³⁹¹

Some women had no choice but to engage in prostitution. They may have needed the money, but it was also the case that they could have been traded to the brothel manager by their parents or to pay off a debt.³⁹² In any case, a woman’s economic situation made it impossible for her to leave a brothel which meant that she had to keep selling sex.³⁹³ A prostitute’s economic situation was especially dire before holy days or on religious holidays such as Holy Week when the brothel was closed. When the brothel was shut, the woman earned nothing, but still needed to cover the costs of living. For this reason, many prostitutes fell into a cycle of debt. To alleviate this debt, both poor men and women would sell sex outside of the brothel while working some other part-time employment like sewing or laundering.³⁹⁴ It was often the case that the brothel manager would allow his employees to purchase goods through him. Of course, the manager would set the price and would then subtract the money from the prostitute’s future earnings.³⁹⁵

Although selling sex was legal, prostitutes held marginal social positions. For example, prostitutes were not considered to be socially equal to their clients. For example, in Nuremburg the city council discovered that prostitutes were preferring a “special beaux” whom they referred to as their “beloved men” to other regular clients. The city council quickly stopped this practice by re-affirming that prostitutes should be available to any man who pays. As prostitutes, they

³⁹⁰ This argument is as old as Augustine, see Roper, *Holy Household*, 91; Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 121; for young men having a sexual experience with a prostitute was part of becoming a “real” man. For more information on masculinity in early modern Germany, see Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 107-125.

³⁹¹ Roper, *Holy Household*, 94.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 96.

³⁹³ See Robert Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³⁹⁴ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 121.

³⁹⁵ Roper, *Holy Household*, 95.

were not allowed to develop relationships that mirrored a relationship that a respectable woman might have with a man that might result in marriage. The city wanted to make it clear that prostitutes were “common women” who were different from “honourable women.” In this case, Augsburg law maintained that these “common women” could not sue for paternity and in some regions could not even be raped since they were owned by all men.³⁹⁶

Later in the fifteenth century, city councils started to restrict brothels and establish more regulations on prostitutes.³⁹⁷ For example, prostitutes became limited with their choice of clothing and were required to wear a head covering or bands on their clothing so that they would be distinguished from honourable women.³⁹⁸ The council also established harsher punishments for those women who practiced prostitution outside of the designated brothels or areas. These restrictions and penalties increased significantly after the Reformations as both Protestant and Catholic cities eventually closed their city brothels.³⁹⁹ Although sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis played a role, early modern policies influenced by the Reformations and morality were the main cause for such closures.⁴⁰⁰ Any benefits that a brothel might provide the city did not counteract their moral detriment.⁴⁰¹ However, closing the brothels did not stop the exchange of sex for money.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁶ Roper, *Holy Household*, 93.

³⁹⁷ As with other civic assets, prostitutes were inspected by officials to make sure the brothels were fulfilling their obligation to provide the city with “suitable, clean, and healthy women,” for more information see, *Ibid.*, 90-91.

³⁹⁸ Lanza, *Women and Work*, 283; for more information on controlling prostitutes in early modern German cities, see Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender, Church, and State in Early Modern Germany: Essays* (London: Routledge, 2017), 94-114.

³⁹⁹ In the next chapter, Luther’s opinion of prostitutes will be made clear. For example, he described women who sold sex for money in very negative terms. He also believed that “whore” was the worst insult that he could use against his opponents.

⁴⁰⁰ Norbert Schindler, *Rebellion, Community and Custom in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 77.

⁴⁰¹ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 121; prostitution was referred to as “whoredom” which was a term that also included pre-marital sex, adultery, and other unacceptable sexual activities. In this way, selling sex for money related to immorality rather than the economy.

⁴⁰² Lanza, *Women and Work*, 284.

Overall, women were active in nearly every sector of the economy including both skilled and unskilled tasks.⁴⁰³ However, during the early modern period women's economic activities were becoming more and more restricted. Their dependence on a male figure such as a father or husband, unequal access to resources, and inability to receive formal training greatly affected women's economic situation.⁴⁰⁴ During this period, women's work can be characterized by low status, poorly paid or unpaid, frequent changes in occupation, and perceived as socially marginal.⁴⁰⁵ Although this could also describe men's work in the early modern period, Wiesner-Hanks argues that men at least had the comfort knowing that no matter how bad their work situation was that their labour would still have higher value than the work performed by women. However, Wiesner-Hanks also notes that although women's work was considered marginal it was nevertheless essential to both rural and urban economies.⁴⁰⁶ In short, this historical period shows that women's work was diverse and reflected conditions of nearly all parts of the economy.

Women and Education

Gender and social class also played a role in the education of women.⁴⁰⁷ During the early modern period, women typically received less education than men. However, it should be noted that even basic literacy was never obtained by most men or women. This does not mean that men and women were uneducated because many had highly skilled occupations and knew about the

⁴⁰³ Henry Kamen, *Early Modern European Society* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 162.

⁴⁰⁴ For more information on women's work after the sixteenth century, see Deborah Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work, 1700 to Present* (London: Routledge, 1998).

⁴⁰⁵ Lanza, *Women and Work*, 276.

⁴⁰⁶ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 134.

⁴⁰⁷ R. A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 6; see also Barbara Whitehead, *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe: A History, 1500 to 1800* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

world around them. This knowledge came from oral tradition and oral training rather than through reading books.⁴⁰⁸ However, this oral training would be less formal for women than for men. Women would often learn from their fathers or mothers at home.⁴⁰⁹ In some cases, an employer chose to teach them instead of providing education through formal apprenticeship programs as was the case for men.

Often girls' parents were the first teachers that they would encounter, especially with reading. Advice from Thomas Aquinas was often used by Catholic authorities to encourage fathers to take greater interest in their children's education. Aquinas wrote: "For this the activity of the wife alone is not sufficient, but the intervention of the husband is better suited, whose reason is better suited for intellectual instruction and whose strength for the necessary discipline."⁴¹⁰ Protestant reformers also encouraged both fathers and mothers who could read to teach their children. If they were unable to read, reformers urged them to send their children to friends or neighbours who could teach them to read.⁴¹¹

Learning to read was so important that political and religious authorities opened girls' elementary schools to teach the girls who could not learn at home or with their neighbours.⁴¹² Authorities believed that learning to read was part of religious instruction and was necessary for society. These schools were first established in Protestant areas and then in Catholic regions. In the sixteenth century, approximately forty percent of Protestant church ordinances in Germany expressed a strong desire to establish schools for girls.⁴¹³ This desire can be seen with records

⁴⁰⁸ Houston, *Literacy*, 1.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴¹⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, 3, 123, translated by Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 146.

⁴¹¹ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 144.

⁴¹² See Julie Campbell, *Literary Circles and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006).

⁴¹³ However, it is impossible to determine how many of the schools were established since there are no accurate records. In addition, even though a few schools for girls opened, many convent schools for noble and upper-class girls were closed in various Protestant regions, see Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 145.

from the province of Electoral Saxony in central Germany. By 1580, fifty percent of the parishes in the Saxony region established German language schools for boys, and ten percent for girls. However, more schools for girls began to be established in the seventeenth century. In 1600, there were several girls' schools established in southwestern Germany and in the province of Brandenburg. By 1675, numbers increased to ninety-four percent of parishes in Saxony that established schools for boys, and forty percent for girls.⁴¹⁴

Although some schools were established for girls, the education that they received was limited.⁴¹⁵ The authorities thought that girls should learn “reading and writing, and if both of these cannot be mastered, at least some writing, the catechism learned by heart, a little figuring, a few psalms to sing.”⁴¹⁶ For the authorities, the goals of female education should include making the girls' familiar “to the catechism, to the psalms, to honorable behavior and Christian virtue, and especially to prayer, and make them memorize verses from Holy Scripture.”⁴¹⁷ This was so that the girls would grow up to be good Christians. Therefore, female education was meant to improve their moral status rather than enhance their intellectual or academic abilities.⁴¹⁸

Female education was not only to make sure that girls became “good Christians,” but it was also meant to enhance their social roles so that they would become “praiseworthy matrons and housekeepers.”⁴¹⁹ For this reason, in addition to attending school to learn to read and write, domestic skills like sewing were typically part of the education for girls. We can see this from

⁴¹⁴ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 146-147.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁴¹⁶ A 1533 ordination of the girls' school in Wittenberg, Germany, translated by Gerald Strauss, “The Social Function of Schools in the Lutheran Reformation in Germany,” *History Of Education Quarterly* 28 (1988): 197.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁴¹⁸ Houston, *Literacy*, 21.

⁴¹⁹ Strauss, *The Social Function of Schools*, 198.

scholarships that were established for poor girls which stated that the funds should be used to have the girls “sent to school, and especially to learn to sew.”⁴²⁰

Girls would attend school for an hour or so each day and would only attend for one or two years. Girls would attend school for a shorter time than boys which often meant that they learned to read but not write since the two skills were not taught at the same time. One reason that girls often did not learn to write was because it was expensive. Parents would have to purchase materials for writing, and it was an expense that parents were often not willing to endure for their daughters.⁴²¹ Economic decisions were not the only reasons why women often learned to read, but not write. Contemporary ideas about women also played a role. Learning to read would allow a woman to learn about Christian and classical examples of acceptable female roles and behaviours such as being chaste, silent, and an obedient housewife.⁴²² By contrast, if a woman learned to write, then it would allow her to express her own ideas which was not considered acceptable and important.⁴²³

Women and Family Life

In the early modern period, marriages were rooted in the moral order of gender relations that were shaped by early Christian values.⁴²⁴ It was within marriage that society wanted to

⁴²⁰ A 1587 ordinance of the girl school in Memmingen, Germany, translated by Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Working Women in Renaissance Germany* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 81.

⁴²¹ Wiesner-Hanks points out that when looking at parish registers, marriage contacts, and wills, it shows that approximately twice as many men as women could sign their names and that women’s signatures were more poorly written. Wiesner-Hanks argues that it is likely that their name might have been the only thing that they were able to write, see Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 147.

⁴²² See Cornelia Moore, *The Maiden’s Mirror: Reading Material for German Girls in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1987).

⁴²³ However, there were exceptional learned women, see Roland Bainton, “Learned Women in the Europe of the Sixteenth Century,” in *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women in the European Past*, ed. Patricia Labalme (New York: New York University Press, 1980), 117-125.

⁴²⁴ For more information on how the Reformation regarded marriage, see Joel Harrington, *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Menchi Seidel and Emlyn

engrave the natural hierarchy of masculinity and femininity. At the top of this hierarchy was the male as husband and father.⁴²⁵ This is especially found in ordinances of the time which stated: “A married couple live together in the fear of God, in deepest love and unity, yea, are one person, so that the man should love his wife as himself, and the woman fear the husband, and have him before her eyes, and consider him to be her head.”⁴²⁶

Heide Wunder discusses marriage in the early modern period extensively within her own work. She begins her chapter on marriage in *He Is the Sun, She Is the Moon* with a Swabian proverb which states: “A man without a woman is like a stove without a fire.”⁴²⁷ This proverb illustrates one characteristic of the early modern period which was the idea that marital relations were strictly ordered based on gender.⁴²⁸ By associating the man with the stove and the woman with the fire, it provides an interpretation of both the nature of man and women and their relationship. Wunder points out that only the stove makes the house habitable, but without fire the stove cannot fulfill this function.⁴²⁹ Fire is considered to give life, but that it must be controlled by the stove. She argues that this interpretation is confirmed when the proverb is reversed: “A woman without a man is like a fire without a stove.” This version entails that the fire is uncontrollable and destroys when it is without a stove. This proverb assumes that the house where the stove is located is a shared household. This concept is related to the idea of independence and responsibility between the two sexes in the early modern period.

Eisenach. *Marriage in Europe, 1400-1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); Raffaella Sarta, *Europe at Home: Family and Material Culture, 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

⁴²⁵ David Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli, *The History of the European Family: Family Life in Early Modern Times, 1500-1789* (London: Yale University Press, 2001), 28.

⁴²⁶ Roper, *Holy Household*, 165; see also Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 148-149.

⁴²⁷ Wunder, *He Is the Sun*, 37.

⁴²⁸ It also asserts the notion that marriages were not based on the “bright flame” of passion or romantic love, but rather a “fire” that was moderate and constant warmth instead of a “burning” passion that quickly died out, see *Ibid.*, 37; for more on marriage and love, see pages 56-62.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

In other words, marriage was a shared responsibility between the sexes.⁴³⁰ For this reason, duties and expectations of husband and wife were clearly outlined.⁴³¹ It was suggested that a woman should be between twenty and twenty-four years old while the man should be twenty-four to thirty. These were the ages in which people tended to marry during this period.⁴³² These ages were ones that society thought showed enough emotional and vocational maturity to support a household. Sustaining the household meant that every member had to fulfill their duties correctly. In short, the man's duty was to work while the woman was to assist, obey, and care for their comfort.⁴³³ By contrast, models of a bad husband included those men who were without self-discipline and were unable to rule over their households while the bad wife was depicted as forgetting her proper place and desiring to possess manly rule.⁴³⁴

In more detail, the expectations for a man's basic duty within a marriage was to provide for his wife and children, to protect his home, and to rule over his family and servants.⁴³⁵ However, this rule was meant to be firm but just. The head of the household was expected to be steady, moderate in his appetites and desires, and a model of self-control. If he did not possess these characteristics, then he could not rule over those around him and moderate their behaviours. Above all else a husband was meant to rule.⁴³⁶ Only the man was to be head or

⁴³⁰ Luther and Katharina's roles within their marriage are further discussed in the fourth chapter.

⁴³¹ Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 50; see also *idem*, "Inside the Pre-Industrial Household: The Rule of Men and the Rights of Women and Children in Late Medieval and Reformation Europe," in *Family Transformed: Religion, Values, and Society in American Life*, ed. Steven Tipton and John Witte (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 225-243; for more information on marital duties, especially as they relate to sex, see Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection*, 126-134; see also Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "Structures and Meanings in a Gendered Family History," in *Blackwell Companion to Gender History*, ed. Teresa Meade and Merry Wiesner-Hanks (London: Blackwell, 2004), 51-69.

⁴³² See Lutz Berkner, "Recent Research on the History of the Family in Western Europe," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 35 (1973): 398.

⁴³³ Roper, *Holy Household*, 164.

⁴³⁴ Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 50.

⁴³⁵ Scott Hendrix, "Masculinity and Patriarchy in Reformation Germany," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56, no. 2 (1995): 177-178.

⁴³⁶ Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 50.

master of the household.⁴³⁷ Although others could offer him advice, no one else in the family could directly challenge the man's decisions without repercussions. It was the man who made the final decision on everything.

Steven Ozment argues that many modern historians have the impression that paternal authority in early modern Europe meant that the man was “free to dominate his household as he pleased.”⁴³⁸ However, Ozment argues that this was not the case. There were moral and legal pressures on husbands who greatly abused their power. The household was an area of public concern and when fighting occurred the husband had to explain and justify their actions, especially if they resulted in the physical abuse of his wife.⁴³⁹ Ozment argues that neither Protestants or Catholics believed that the household should be ordered and disciplined like a tyrannized home. In this sense, the husband who “played the lion” was often condemned.⁴⁴⁰

At the same time, a man who “played the lion” was related to a commonly held belief that marriage, family, and society could not thrive if the “heads of the house lost their nerve.” During the changing period of the Reformations, it was believed that there would be societal consequences if men doubted their ability to rule or perform their duties.⁴⁴¹ For example, since marriage was closely connected to social status and hierarchy, especially within a workshop-based society, orderly marriages were fundamental to the whole social order.⁴⁴² In the man's strength was the strength and well-being of those around him. Since there was a fear that men should not lose their nerve, wives were advised to humour and console their husbands even when

⁴³⁷ Kamen, *Early Modern*, 153.

⁴³⁸ See scholars like Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 126; 138; 141.

⁴³⁹ Roper, *Holy Household*, 193.

⁴⁴⁰ Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 50.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁴⁴² Roper, *Holy Household*, 165; Wunder, *He Is the Sun*, 41-42.

they are in the worst of moods.⁴⁴³ This example illustrates the conviction that male self-confidence was important for preserving family solidarity and social stability.

While a man's duty was to rule, a woman's basic duty was to manage the household.⁴⁴⁴ Completing everyday domestic tasks was considered a divinely ordained duty where women showed their faith and secured their salvation. A woman was often chosen for marriage based on how well she could run the home. She was also meant to be faithfully at her husband's side. Early modern writers, like Luther, pointed to images from the Middle Ages that showed women being created not from Adam's head, but from his middle or side.⁴⁴⁵ God created woman not to rule above her husband or beneath him as a "footstool," but rather to be his helper and companion. The woman was created to help her husband with domestic and agricultural duties. She was also responsible for her conduct. The woman had a duty to conduct herself in a way that maintained the respect and good opinion of others.⁴⁴⁶

Most early modern writers believed that a woman's obedience to her husband was made easier because she had a more pliant nature.⁴⁴⁷ Although women's nature had disadvantages when it came to temptation, it was something that made the woman more generous and charitable, especially to her husband.⁴⁴⁸ A woman's generosity helped her to forgive her husband's weaknesses. If the husband makes an error, then the wife should not respond with

⁴⁴³ Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 70; for more information on discipline and marital disharmony, see Roper, *Holy Household*, 165-205.

⁴⁴⁴ Allyson Poska, "Upending Patriarchy: Rethinking Marriage and Family in Early Modern Europe," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jane Couchman and Allyson Poska (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 201.

⁴⁴⁵ Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 68.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 64; see also Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "Studies of Women, the Family and Gender," in *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research II*, ed. by William Maltby (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1992), 159-188.

⁴⁴⁷ See Susan Karant-Nunn, "The Transmission of Luther's Teachings on Women and Matrimony: The Case of Zwickau," *Archive for Reformation History* 77 (1986): 31-46.

⁴⁴⁸ Steven Ozment states: "We find the argument, highly flattering to women and perhaps equally self-deluding on the part of the men who make it, that once a woman has sincerely given her love, she remains less inclined to infidelity than a man; whereas men boast pridefully of their adulterous sexual conquests, women consider it shameful to share their love with another after having pledged it to one," see *idem*, *When Fathers Ruled*, 68.

hate. Women were meant to offer a comforting and supporting presence within the household. A good wife was always friendly and helpful, modest, civil, and moderate as to never give into desires for excess food, drink, dress, or speech. A good wife would make sure that nothing came between herself and fulfilling her domestic duties. Ozment notes that in this sense she is said to be “homely.”⁴⁴⁹ She is never without her home or far from the household. Therefore, many writers, such as Luther, emphasized the Greek artist Apelles who painted Venus standing on a snail-shell.⁴⁵⁰ This was to illustrate that the wife should be constantly with her house. Due to this, a woman should not engage in external political or social issues because it brought her away from the home and distracted her from fulfilling her household duties. Although women could sometimes work outside the home, her household had to remain her priority. A woman was respected if she was constantly present within the home and devoted herself entirely to the family and the household.

A wife’s duty also included bearing children. During the early modern period, marriage was fused with reproduction which was especially emphasized by religious authorities.⁴⁵¹ In this sense, the household was above all else a nursery. The traditional Christian idea stemming from Paul that women were meant to bear children seemed undeniable to both sexes. Paul taught that “women will be saved by the bearing of children in faith, love, and holiness, and with discipline [1 Timothy 2:15].” According to both Protestants and Catholics, motherhood exalted women who otherwise experienced misery because of their natural weaknesses and their responsibility for the fall. In 1522, after noting that pregnant women tended to be healthier and happier than

⁴⁴⁹ Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 68.

⁴⁵⁰ LW 3, 200-201.

⁴⁵¹ Lianne McTavish, “Maternity,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jane Couchman and Allyson Poska (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 179; for more information on pregnant women and the female body as destiny, see Wunder, *He Is the Sun*, 113-127.

barren women, Luther wrote that women ought to be constantly pregnant “even if they bear themselves weary or ultimately bear themselves out” since this was “the purpose for which they exist.”⁴⁵²

Within marriage, parenting and parental authority was praised and supported. However, parenting was not only or even primarily a woman’s work since it was too much responsibility for one parent to sustain. Parents had to care for their child’s physical well-being, make sure their child was prepared for both temporal and spiritual success, and impart Christian values and virtues.⁴⁵³ For this reason, both mother and father shared in parenting to a very high degree. The mother’s role was especially important when the child was an infant continuing into their early childhood years. The father took on more of a role when the child turned six or seven years of age. This would be the time when the child was considered mature and could respond to teaching and regular discipline. Unlike earlier claims made by some scholars, the relationship between both parents and children was close and intimate.⁴⁵⁴

Overall, a woman could not reject her divinely ordained duty without completely rejecting God’s word since a woman’s subjection to her husband was based on the early Christian tradition, especially Paul’s writings. Many early modern writers did not believe that a wife’s obedience to her husband was optional, but rather a fundamental aspect of the marriage.⁴⁵⁵ Similarly, a man had to fulfill his own duty which was to rule over his wife. If a husband allowed

⁴⁵² LW 45, 46; See also Ulinka Rublack, “Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Female Body in Early Modern Germany,” *Past and Present* 150, no. 1 (1996): 84-110; Susan Karant-Nunn, “Reformation Society, Women and the Family,” in *The Reformation World*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (London: Routledge, 2000), 452-500; Susan Karant-Nunn, “The Reformation of Women,” in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. Renate Bridenthal (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 65-191.

⁴⁵³ Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 133.

⁴⁵⁴ More recent scholarship has argued that parents were close to their children, see Poska, *Upending Patriarchy*, 202; Linda Pollock, *A Forgotten Child: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

⁴⁵⁵ Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection*, 211.

his wife to take the reins and become head of the household, then he was sinning. Husbands who allowed their wives to “wear the trousers” were condemned. A man must never “resign or give over his sovereignty unto his wife” because God created the husband to be the head of his wife and not the other way around.⁴⁵⁶ If they did so, they would be going against the natural order and God’s command. Since it was God’s will, the man’s authority was also divinely ordained by God.⁴⁵⁷ If a husband failed to rule over his wife, then it would be akin to a parent who does not teach their child, or an owner who fails to train his pet. It would be considered improper and irresponsible. The prevailing attitude was that God created women so that they would be placed under the guidance of strong and sensible males because they are weak, silly, unintelligent, and overly emotional.

CONCLUSION

This chapter provided context on women’s lives in the early modern period. This background information will be helpful to keep in mind while reading the next three chapters. Exploring women’s lives during this period will help to exemplify the extent to which Martin Luther and the women with whom he corresponded maintained societal norms and perspectives. Classical, medieval, and other early modern writers believed that women were inferior in physique, intelligence, judgement, and self-control. Inherited from Aristotle was the belief women were inferior to men not because of social conditioning, but because their nature made them inferior. Interpretations stemming from early and medieval Christianity and classical philosophy affected how society treated women which has been demonstrated through

⁴⁵⁶ Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection*, 214.

⁴⁵⁷ Poska, *Upending Patriarchy*, 198.

examining the law, work, education, and the family life. Since God created women to be inferior, they were only suited to remain within the home, and they were designed to be subordinate to men. The next chapter will show that Martin Luther inherited these perspectives and maintained them in his own theological works.

CHAPTER THREE: MARTIN LUTHER'S THEOLOGICAL VIEW OF WOMEN

INTRODUCTION

Martin Luther's thoughts on almost any topic can be found throughout his theological works and this is certainly true regarding the topic of women.⁴⁵⁸ The purpose of this chapter is to present readers with an outline of Luther's theological view of women. In addition to his theology, a more thorough understanding of Luther can be achieved when considering his personal experiences and correspondence.⁴⁵⁹ However, before examining his personal correspondences with women and the rich insights that it provides, Luther's theological mindset must first be explored.⁴⁶⁰ Therefore, this chapter discusses Luther's theological attitudes towards women to provide readers with foundational information to use as points of reflection and comparison for the next two chapters.

More specifically, Luther inherited traditional perspectives from early and medieval Christianity and classical philosophy and maintained these insights in his own theological works. As the last chapter outlined, these beliefs included the idea that women are naturally inferior to men. Luther emphasized biblical characters, such as Eve and Sarah, to support such insights. Based on his interpretation of Eve and other biblical women, Luther came to several conclusions about women's nature. He thought that women were created to be obedient wives who produced children and who remained silent within the home.⁴⁶¹ As the next two chapters show, however,

⁴⁵⁸ See Martha Behrens, "Martin Luther's View of Women" (Masters thesis, North Texas State University, 1973), 39; for information on Luther's theology, see Hans-Martin Barth, *The Theology of Martin Luther: A Critical Assessment* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013); Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: a Contemporary Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Publishing Company, 2008).

⁴⁵⁹ A recent dissertation by Charles Cortright relies heavily on the argument that Luther's theology and personal experiences are closely connected, see Charles Cortright, "Poor Maggot-Sack that I Am: The Human Body in the Theology of Martin Luther" (PhD Thesis, Marquette University, 2011).

⁴⁶⁰ See Willem Kooiman, *Luther and the Bible*, trans. John Schmidt (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961).

⁴⁶¹ As I outlined in the second chapter, this view was prevalent in sixteenth century society.

Luther did not enforce his own theological principles in his daily life, especially throughout his personal correspondences with family members, female reformers, and women throughout his pastoral care.

In 1517, Martin Luther published his *Ninety-Five Theses* which challenged the Roman Catholic Church's theological teachings on indulgences. Due to this dispute, other important theological questions that were already resolved by the Roman Catholic Church were being reassessed and debated.⁴⁶² This included questions surrounding a woman's nature, existence, equality, as well as acceptable public and private roles.⁴⁶³ Luther admitted that he was hesitant to discuss such topics, but not because of any form of prudishness.⁴⁶⁴ He believed that these were complex questions that confused people to such an extent that most held misconceptions about women's nature and the relationship between the sexes. He felt the need to provide answers and guidance on these matters to clarify any misconceptions and to maintain an ordered society. Whether it was through biblical interpretation, theological analysis, pastoral work, personal experience or correspondences, Luther committed a lot of his attention to the "*Frauenfrage*."⁴⁶⁵ Since he devoted serious consideration of the topic in his writings, it was clearly important to him.

The centrality of the "Woman Question" to Luther's theology is obvious from the frequency and careful detail in which he discussed Eve and the other biblical matriarchs.⁴⁶⁶ Therefore, it is not surprising that Luther referenced the Hebrew Bible, especially the Book of

⁴⁶² See Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972).

⁴⁶³ Kirsi Stjerna, "Luther and Gender: Shifts in Paradigms and Orientations," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 56, no. 2 (2017): 162.

⁴⁶⁴ WA 1, 10, 2, 247.

⁴⁶⁵ Kristen Kvam, "Luther, Eve, and Theological Anthropology: Reassessing the Reformer's Response to the *Frauenfrage* (Woman Question)" (PhD Thesis, Emory University, 1992); see Scott Hendrix, "Luther Against the Background of the History of Biblical Interpretation," *Interpretation* 37 (1983): 229-239.

⁴⁶⁶ Stjerna, *Luther and Gender*, 164; see Sharon Jeansonne, *The Women in Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife* (Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress Press, 1990).

Genesis, more often than any other text when assessing the “*Frauenfrage*.”⁴⁶⁷ Kirsi Stjerna argues that it is possible to think of Luther’s commentaries on Genesis from his mid-to-late career as his “last word on the matter,” especially when compared to the fragmented opinions and statements that he offered in his other published works such as those on marriage.⁴⁶⁸ Since these commentaries are his “last words,” they provide a high point and illuminate the complexity of his attitudes towards women and gender relations. These complexities become even more apparent when exploring his interpretation of Eve. Mickey Mattox argues that Luther would have thought about Eve more often than the few references to her in the Bible would suggest.⁴⁶⁹ It is with Eve’s story that Luther found the biblical character for understanding women’s nature, as well as the relationship between the sexes as God had intended.⁴⁷⁰ For these reasons, it is important to examine Luther’s interpretation of Eve that is found in his commentaries on Genesis.

LUTHER’S INTERPRETATION OF EVE

The next part of this chapter explores Luther’s interpretation of Eve as she influenced his theological view of women. For clarity, it is important to divide this discussion into two sections. The first section examines Luther’s earlier thoughts on Eve which can be found in his

⁴⁶⁷ Stjerna, *Luther and Gender*, 164.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 164; Stjerna argues that Luther’s theological commentaries on Genesis can be considered as an open-ended deliberation on the issue where he is still collecting and analyzing the information that is available to him while “giving the topic his best shot.”

⁴⁶⁹ Mickey Mattox, “Luther on Eve, Women, and the Church,” in *The Pastoral Luther: Essays on Martin Luther’s Practical Theology*, ed. Timothy Wengert (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 256; some scholars disagree with Mattox’s approach to how Luther used the matriarchs of Genesis, see John Maxfield, *Luther’s Lectures on Genesis and the Formation of Evangelical Identity* (Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2008).

⁴⁷⁰ See Vita Arbel, *Forming Femininity in Antiquity: Eve, Gender, and Ideologies in the Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Kathleen Crowther, *Adam and Eve in the Protestant Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Declamationes in Genesin (1527). This work is composed of sermons that were delivered in Luther's mid-career in Wittenberg from 1523 to 1524. They were later published in German and Latin editions in 1527.⁴⁷¹ The second part of this discussion explores Luther's *Lectures on Genesis* (1535-1545) which were lectures given much later in his career. By dividing these discussions into two sections, Luther's theological interpretation of Eve throughout his life will be presented.

Before I discuss Luther's interpretation of Eve, it is first important to briefly explain why his theology focused more on Eve than Mary, the mother of Jesus.⁴⁷² One characteristic of the Protestant Reformation was the movement's critique and rejection of Medieval devotion to Mary.⁴⁷³ For example, Luther criticized the excesses of Medieval devotion to the Virgin Mary, especially in his *Lectures on Genesis* which were written during the last ten years of his life. In these lectures, he criticized what he called the "abominable idolatry [*grewliche Abgötterey*]" of Medieval Mariology, where Mary was made into a Christian idol.⁴⁷⁴ While examining the passage: "She will crush his head" in Genesis 3:15, Luther thought that it was "amazing" and "damnable" that "Satan has managed to apply this passage, which in fullest measure abounds in the comfort of the Son of God, to the Virgin Mary. For in all the Latin Bibles the pronoun appears in the feminine gender: 'And she will crush.'⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷¹ See Mickey Mattox, Mickey, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs: Martin Luther's Interpretation of the Women of Genesis in the Narrations of Genesis, 1523-45* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), especially chapters one and two.

⁴⁷² Luther still discussed Mary in his theology, but not as frequently as Eve, see A. T. W. Steinhäuser, *The Magnificat: Luther's Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967); for more information on Mary and Eve, see Valdimir Tumanov, "Mary Versus Eve: Paternal Uncertainty and the Christian View of Women," *Neophilologus*, no. 95 (2011): 507-521.

⁴⁷³ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996)

⁴⁷⁴ See Luther's writings on *House Postil* in WA 52: 689.

⁴⁷⁵ LW 1, 191.

Luther not only criticized Medieval devotion to Mary, but he also believed that Eve was the biblical figure who symbolized the closeness of women to their nature and their proper roles in society.⁴⁷⁶ It was mainly for this reason that Luther focused more on Eve than Mary even though Mary had previously been the more popular female archetype.⁴⁷⁷ Luther believed that Eve, unlike the Virgin Mary, was not close to God, but rather close to Satan. For example, she betrayed God and Adam by caving to the Devil's temptations and convincing Adam to sin. For Luther, Eve was an example to show the negative effects of allowing women to be freely involved in the world.⁴⁷⁸ If women were not restricted and supervised, then they might become too overwhelmed by Satan's evil forces. Worse still, women could be manipulated by evil and in turn manipulate men. He believed that Eve proved that all women are weak vessels and could be used as instruments by the Devil.⁴⁷⁹ This makes Eve the "evil" woman in contrast to Mary. This is especially evident as the Reformation movement considered Mary to be a model of faith and a positive representation of *sola fide*.⁴⁸⁰ Since Luther was more interested in the "evil" woman, Eve was the focus for his theological view of women.

For Luther, Eve was not only the "evil" woman, but also a helpful biblical character for his theology which outlined the ideal Christian who had a responsibility to show their righteousness in this life.⁴⁸¹ He did not think Mary was involved in this temporal life because she

⁴⁷⁶ Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 35.

⁴⁷⁷ When Luther discussed Mary, he rarely used her to say anything about or to women which is one of the reasons why this chapter does not focus on Luther's theology of Mary. For more information on this topic, see P.N. Brooks, "A Lily Ungilded? Martin Luther, the Virgin Mary and the Saints," *Journal of Religious History* 13 (1984): 136-149; William Cole, "Was Luther a Devotee of Mary?" *Marian Studies* 21 (1970): 94-202.

⁴⁷⁸ Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 36.

⁴⁷⁹ Luther frequently described women as "tools," or "instruments." Even Mary, who is the ideal Christian woman, was meant to be used as a tool to teach men a lesson about humility, see LW 1, 256-257: "Yet how great would the pride of the men have been if God had willed that Christ should be brought forth by a man. But this glory has been completely taken from the men and assigned to the women (who are nevertheless subject to the rule of the men) so that the men should not become vainglorious but be humble."

⁴⁸⁰ Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries*, 159.

⁴⁸¹ This contrasted with the medieval view that the ideal Christian life was to be spent in the monastery attempting to prepare for the next life, see Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 36.

was pure, a virgin, not a temptress, and not tainted by the physical act of sexual intercourse.⁴⁸²

Therefore, Eve, rather than Mary, became the symbol for all women who are active in this life.⁴⁸³

What is different with Luther from other medieval writers is that since he focused more on Eve and understated Mary's role as ideal, it "weakened one side of the standard best woman/worst woman dichotomy," and therefore only emphasized the negative side of women's nature.⁴⁸⁴ How Luther described women was no different from other medieval theologians, but with him it was not balanced by the praise of the Virgin Mary. Although the worship of Mary may have been damaging to women since it provided an ideal that no normal woman could attain as both a virgin and mother, it did at least describe woman in a positive way.

Luther's Earlier Interpretation of Eve (1523 – 1524)

Between 1523 and 1524, Martin Luther maintained a traditional and socially conservative picture of Eve and the relationship that she originally had with Adam.⁴⁸⁵ He found meaning and an explanation of their relationship in Eve's "birth" out of Adam's side.⁴⁸⁶ Since Eve was created from Adam, Luther thought that this meant that all women identify by the men to whom they are related. For Luther, this depicts the divinely intended order of life. This explains the reason that

⁴⁸² Luther's exposition of the doctrine that Mary was always a virgin was used by other early and medieval Christian writers, such as Jerome, to support the argument that Mary was a perpetual virgin, see Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries*, 118. Luther also diminished Mary's status by not placing her on a pedestal and presented her as an ordinary individual, for more information see Else Marie Wiberg, "A Man Caught Between Bad Anthropology and Good Theology? Martin Luther's View of Women Generally and of Mary Specifically," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 49 (2010): 196.

⁴⁸³ Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 36.

⁴⁸⁴ Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "Luther and Women: the Death of Two Marys," in *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy*, ed. by Jim Obelkevich, Lydnal Roper, and Raphael Samuels (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 300.

⁴⁸⁵ Mattox, *Luther on Eve, Women, and the Church*, 256; WA 24, 71-72; see Kathleen Crowther, *Adam and Eve in the Protestant Reformation* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 104-106; 110-110; 137-138.

⁴⁸⁶ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 96.

“woman” took her name from “man,” like how women take their husbands name in marriage: “She will be called wo-man [*Mennin*] because she has been taken out of a man [...] it remains [the practice] up until now that a woman is called after the man, so she has to take her name from him.”⁴⁸⁷ When she takes his name in creation and through marriage, the man maintains authority over the woman and this was part of God’s original plan.⁴⁸⁸

In 1523 to 1524, while commenting on Genesis 2:24, Luther reflected on God’s established order between male and female. He wrote: “‘They’, therefore, ‘will be one flesh,’ that is, they will have one possession, one home, one family [...] glory and all things in common, whatever pertains to life in the flesh, except that the husband ought to rule in the wife.”⁴⁸⁹ In the beginning, they shared everything that related to life in the flesh, but Adam ruled over Eve as God had determined this to be the proper relationship between the sexes. Adam not only had the authority to rule over Eve, but also rule the three estates: civil, ecclesiastic, and domestic.⁴⁹⁰ Luther used the passage in Genesis 3 which states: “And he shall rule over you” as evidence that God gave man the power to rule over not only women, but also everything in life.⁴⁹¹ He also interpreted Paul’s message in 1 Corinthians 11 that the man is the “head of the woman” to mean that the man was created to be the ruler of all things.⁴⁹² For Luther, Adam’s rule over his wife, family, and creation reflected God’s original intent.

Since Eve was subordinate to Adam, Luther believed that she was created to be Adam’s helper: “It was decided that that the woman has been created for this purpose, in order to be a

⁴⁸⁷ WA 24, 76-81, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 18.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 76-81.

⁴⁸⁹ WA 24, 79, translated by Mickey Mattox, *Luther on Eve, Women, and the Church*, 256.

⁴⁹⁰ For more information on the three estates, see Oswald Bayer, “Nature and Institution: Luther’s Doctrine of the Three Orders,” trans. Luis Dreher, *Lutheran Quarterly* 12 (1998): 125-159; Luther thought that civil government or the rule of one human over another was unnecessary before the fall which meant that the civil estate was a consequence of the fall, see LW 1, 104.

⁴⁹¹ WA 24, 102.

⁴⁹² WA 14, 150-151; WA 24, 102.

helpmeet to the man.”⁴⁹³ Eve was created to be Adam’s helper for the “purpose of generation” and therefore was created for no other purpose than to “serve man and to be his assistant in producing children.”⁴⁹⁴ With this view, Eve’s creation from Adam showed her subordination to his rule and not an essential equality between the two sexes.⁴⁹⁵ His comments also make it clear that there was an intended hierarchy from the very beginning.⁴⁹⁶ However, it is not clear whether this authority was founded in the “dominion” of Genesis 1 or in the “power” or “rule” that is first mentioned in Genesis 3.⁴⁹⁷ He said little about the connections or the distinctions between the two.⁴⁹⁸ What is clear is that Luther in his mid-career believed that Adam always had power and authority over Eve, even before the fall.⁴⁹⁹

However, Eve rebelled against Adam’s established authority and disrupted the divinely established order of life by speaking to the serpent.⁵⁰⁰ Luther believed that Eve was “talkative and superstitious” for engaging with the serpent in the first place. He thought that the Devil approached Eve because she was the weaker part of human nature.⁵⁰¹ Eve was liable to deception and easily seduced in a way that Adam was not: “She was a fool, easy to lead astray, did not

⁴⁹³ WA 24, 76-81, translated by Susan Karant-Nunn and Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 18.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 76-81.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 79a; see also WA 24, 80b; Stjerna, *Luther and Gender*, 165.

⁴⁹⁷ This issue remained unresolved even among later sixteenth-century Lutheran commentators on Genesis. There were debates over the existence of an original hierarchy prior to the fall and the idea that the hierarchical relation came about later in Genesis 3, see Mickey Mattox, “Order in the House?” *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 14, 2 (2012): 112.

⁴⁹⁸ Luther stands in contrast here with Philip Melancthon who changed from the language of “dominion” to that of *imperium* suggesting that there is a difference, see Peter Fraenkel, *Testimonia Patrum: The Function of the Patristic Argument in the Theology of Philip Melancthon* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1961), 61-64.

⁴⁹⁹ Mattox, *Luther on Eve, Women, and the Church*, 259.

⁵⁰⁰ Luther connected Eve’s failing to her subordination to Adam’s ecclesiastic authority. He claimed that Eve did not directly hear God’s command to not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Rather, Luther maintained Augustine’s approach, like most of his predecessors, by arguing that she heard this command only from Adam who had first heard it directly from God. In this way, the woman also becomes subordinate to the Word of God which was a Word she only heard from her husband, see Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 95-110; 258.

⁵⁰¹ WA 9, 332-333.

know any better.”⁵⁰² Luther made it explicit in his writings that this was to say that Eve was not as intelligent as Adam.⁵⁰³ He believed that Adam knew better while Eve was a “little woman” who was “simple and too weak” for the Devil’s crafty tricks.⁵⁰⁴ Therefore, she should not have engaged with the Devil because she was not intelligent enough to do so. Rather, she should have brought the matter to her superior.⁵⁰⁵ Instead, Eve took control of the situation rather than entrusting the conversation to Adam. Luther thought that this biblical example clearly showed that ever since creation, a woman’s rule brought about nothing positive.⁵⁰⁶ He believed that when God commanded Adam to rule over all creatures, that everything was good and right, but then woman was created and wanted to “have her hand in things and be wise.”⁵⁰⁷ This resulted in the fall and a complete collapse and disorder of the world.

After this collapse, Adam’s rule over Eve remained. Luther only cited 1 Corinthians 11 as evidence that Eve’s subordination to Adam was continued after the fall. As noted earlier, he believed that a man’s rule or dominance over woman was not established by the fall, but from the very beginning. Luther believed that after the fall, a divine law imposed a debt of obedience on Eve to Adam.⁵⁰⁸ He wrote: “He commands her to humble herself before her husband. That means that she does not live according to her own free will.”⁵⁰⁹ Luther believed that Eve could

⁵⁰² WA 24, 81-85, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 21.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 81-85.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 81-85.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 83-84; WA 9, 334.

⁵⁰⁶ WA, TR 1, 1046, translated by Wiesner-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 300.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 1046.

⁵⁰⁸ In his mid-career, Luther seemed to have followed Augustine and held that the fallen Eve’s original love for Adam meant that she was submissive to him out of love, but that this was changed into her passive subjection. For information on pre-modern interpretation of Eve, see John Lee Thompson, *John Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah: Women in Regular and Exceptional Roles in the Exegesis of Calvin, His Predecessors and His Contemporaries* (Geneva: Droz, 1992), 65-160.

⁵⁰⁹ WA 24, 81-85, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 23.

do nothing without Adam and “wherever he is, she has to be with him, and humble herself before him.”⁵¹⁰

Since Eve had “her hand in things,” and did not humble herself before Adam, Luther blamed her entirely for the fall.⁵¹¹ He also made it clear that it was not Adam’s fault because “Adam was not seduced, but rather the woman.”⁵¹² He thought the woman, not the man, was responsible for the fall. Therefore, Luther did not apply Eve’s failings to humanity in general, but rather, only applied the fault to women alone: “We’ve got you women to thank for that... [the fall].”⁵¹³

He not only applied Eve’s fault to all women, but also her punishment. He believed her punishment was “not said to her alone,” and included “all those who shall become the daughters of Eve.”⁵¹⁴ As this punishment extended to all women, it explains a woman’s continued subjection to man after the fall. This subordination simply reflects Eve’s original subjection to Adam prior to the collapse into sin. Since the fall, women were seen as more subordinate, less valuable, and more sinful than men.⁵¹⁵ Luther considered this punishment of servitude to be little more than God enforcing the original subjection for which the woman was created.⁵¹⁶ In other words, Adam would have still ruled over Eve even in a world that was not contaminated by

⁵¹⁰ WA 24, 81-85.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, 86-87.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 81-85, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 21.

⁵¹³ WA, TR 1, 1046, translated by Wiesner-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 300; Mattox, *Luther on Eve, Women, and the Church*, 257; other scholars make a similar argument, see Robert Blast, *Honor Your Fathers: Catechisms and the Emergence of a Patriarchal Ideology in Germany, 1400-1600* (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: Brill, 1997), 78-92.

⁵¹⁴ WA 24, 81-85, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 23; for information on Adam’s punishment see Stephen Boyd, “Masculinity and Male Dominance: Martin Luther on the Punishment of Adam,” in *Redeeming Men: Religion and Masculinities*, ed. by Stephen Boyd and Mark Muesse (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996).

⁵¹⁵ Elisabeth Gerle, “Luther and the Erotic,” *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 37, no. 3 (2010): 200.

⁵¹⁶ Adam Hill, “Martin Luther, Marriage, and Women: An Analysis of Luther’s Religious Legitimation of Marriage and the Celibate Life for Women in His Sermons and Treatise” (Master’s thesis, University of Calgary, 1997), 47.

sin.⁵¹⁷ This has led some scholars, like Mickey Mattox, to question in what way Luther thought that the subjection of Eve after the fall was any different from her submission prior to the fall, especially since he used 1 Corinthians 11 to support both positions.⁵¹⁸ Luther did not provide an explicit answer to this question and seemed to show no acknowledgment that holding this position would cause any theological tensions or simply be puzzling to his readers.⁵¹⁹

Similar issues arise when we examine Luther's theological interpretation of how Eve fell into sin which can be found within the same work.⁵²⁰ Instead of highlighting the differences between Adam and Eve, he emphasized their similarities through an "original equality." He based this "equality" on his beliefs about the universality of the problem of faith and unbelief.⁵²¹ Luther's insights on God's righteousness and justification by faith alone applied to every person equally. This meant that both men and women experienced the same spiritual and mental process when dealing with faith and unbelief. Given what the earlier Luther previously stated within the same text about Eve, this shift is not only inconsistent, but also surprising.⁵²² With this change, Luther portrayed Eve as a type of every Christian and made her struggle with temptation a model for not only women, but also men.⁵²³ He explained that the Devil tempted Eve like he tempts all Christians. For this reason, Luther believed that Eve's temptation even reflected his own spiritual struggles, as well as his audience's spiritual concerns whether they were male or female.⁵²⁴ He

⁵¹⁷ Mattox, *Order in the House*, 111.

⁵¹⁸ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 108.

⁵¹⁹ It seems that Luther assumed that Eve's willing subordination prior to the fall turned into an unwilling submissiveness after the fall, see *Ibid.*, 109.

⁵²⁰ WA 24, 84.

⁵²¹ Mattox, *Luther on Eve, Women, and the Church*, 258.

⁵²² See Eleanor Commo McLaughlin, "Equality of Souls, Inequality of Sexes: Women in Medieval Theology," in *Religion and Sexism*. ed Rosemary Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974).

⁵²³ This contradicted Augustine's argument that Adam fell out of an "excessive affection" for Eve since Luther thought that Adam had also given into temptation, see Ian McFarland, *In Adam's Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

⁵²⁴ See Egil Grislis, "The Experience of the Anfechtungen and the Formation of Pure Doctrine in Martin Luther's Commentary on Genesis," *Consensus* 8 (1982): 19-31.

even went so far as to compare Eve's fall from faith to that experienced by the Apostle Peter.⁵²⁵ This means that Eve's temptation becomes a model not only for average Christians, but also saintly ones like the apostles.⁵²⁶ By emphasizing this "original equality" and universal experience of faith and unbelief, Luther highlighted the equality of every human person whether they were male or female. This forced his theological commentary in a direction that contradicted the harsh opinion of Eve that Luther had presented earlier in his *Declamationes in Genesin*.

Luther's More Mature Interpretation of Eve (1535 – 1545)

Albrecht Classen and Tanya Settle claim that when Luther entered marriage with Katharina von Bora in 1525, he seemed to have changed his previously strict opinions about women.⁵²⁷ They argue that as Luther came into more contact with women, like his wife, his theology changed. It is likely impossible to know definitively how far Katharina was able to influence his theology and to "train the doctor differently."⁵²⁸ Nevertheless, Katharina's statement is a useful reminder that Luther's personal and social situation was drastically different in the mid-1530s.⁵²⁹ Luther's *Lectures on Genesis* (1535-1545) were delivered later in his career

⁵²⁵ See WA 9, 335 (Reference to Matthew 14): "*Mox enim, ut vacillamus, ut mutamur in fide, succumbimus, cadimus quemadmodum et Petrus in mari.*"

⁵²⁶ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 100; see also WA 24, 85.

⁵²⁷ Albrecht Classen and Tanya Amber Settle, "Women in Martin Luther's Life and Theology," *German Studies Review* 14, no. 2 (1991): 232; see Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: New American Library, 2009).

⁵²⁸ It was reported that Katharina von Bora said a few days after her wedding that: "*Ich mus mir den Doctor anders gewehnen, auff das ers macht, wie ich will,*" by Nicholas von Amsdorf and later recorded by Johannes Stigelius and Batholomäus Rosinus in 1552, see Ernst Kroker, "Luthers Werbung um Katherina von Bora," in *Lutherstudien zur 4. Jahrhundertfeier der Reformation veröffentlicht von den Mitarbeitern der Weimarer Lutherausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1917), 143.

⁵²⁹ See Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career, 1521-1530*, trans. Theodore Bachmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

when he was no longer a monk and had been a married man who fathered six children.⁵³⁰

Scholars, like Stjerna, argue that after becoming married and having children, he held a renewed interest in wanting to understand God's reasons for the "gendered reality" in which he was living.⁵³¹ Scholars argue that since Luther's situation changed, it was likely that he was "inclined to speculate more daringly" with regards to his earlier interpretation.⁵³² They argue that this even led him change from the traditionalism that was presented in his earlier theology.

Unfortunately, there is not much evidence to support the argument that Luther's theology was influenced by women. Many scholars, like Classen and Settle, claim that his theological works were influenced by his increased interactions with women. They argue that as a monk, he would not have had much contact with women, but that his increased contact with women over the years "opened his eyes to a world of femininity."⁵³³ They argue that his personal situation drastically altered his view of women's capabilities and roles. Kirsi Stjerna writes: "Based on the evidence, Luther had an instinctive appreciation of gender differences, supported by his actual relations with women and his observations of women in his realms of operations."⁵³⁴ She even claims that Luther's relationships with women "inspired his theologizing on spiritual equality and perhaps even facilitated an evolution in his thought."⁵³⁵

However, it is not clear what specific "evidence" scholars like Stjerna are referring to when making such questionable claims. For example, is there a specific place in his theology where this change occurred? When in his personal life were his eyes opened? Scholars need to be more specific when making claims that Luther's theology was directly influenced by his social

⁵³⁰ See Eric Gritsch, "The Cultural Context of Luther's Interpretation," *Interpretation* 37 (1983): 266-276.

⁵³¹ Stjerna, *Luther and Gender*, 164.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 164.

⁵³³ Classen and Settle, *Women in Luther's Life*, 254.

⁵³⁴ Kirsi Stjerna, "Luther and Women," in *Martin Luther: A Christian between Reforms and Modernity (1517-2017)*, ed. by Alberto Melloni (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 612.

⁵³⁵ Stjerna, *Luther and Women*, 609.

interactions. As it stands now, these arguments are unsupported by evidence and therefore are not very convincing.

We can see that such claims are often problematic, especially when we examine scholarly discussions of Luther's theological beliefs about the "original equality" between Adam and Eve throughout his career. Scholars, such as Peter Thompson and Kristen Kvam, argue that Luther's theology changed because of his contact with women. They argue that the more mature Luther, who had more encounters with women, was different because he articulated this "original equality" between Adam and Eve.⁵³⁶ In other words, these scholars argue that in Luther's later career, he modified his earlier theological interpretation of Eve and that this change is connected to his increased contact with women.

However, it is surprising that scholars take this stance because Luther's earlier theology already described the "traditional original hierarchy" paradigm, where he focused on Adam and Eve's "original equality," especially with their experiences of faith.⁵³⁷ It is puzzling that scholars argue that this view exhibits a significant difference between Luther's interpretation of the equality between the sexes in his mid-career and later career. It is surprising because, as previously mentioned, this "original equality" was already present in Luther's earlier theological writings from 1523 to 1524.⁵³⁸ In this way, Luther shared the same perspective throughout his career. This "original equality" is also not very surprising because Luther would have had to maintain this "spiritual equality" in his theological writings or else it would have contradicted the

⁵³⁶ See Kvam, *Luther, Eve, and Theological Anthropology*; John Thompson, *John Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah: Women in Regular and Exceptional Roles in the Exegesis of Calvin, His Predecessors, and His Contemporaries* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1992).

⁵³⁷ Mattox also points out that Luther always maintained an "original equality," see Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 116.

⁵³⁸ For a reading of Luther's understanding of the relationship between Adam and Eve that emphasizes Eva's equal position to Adam, see Theo Bell, "Man is a Microcosmos: Adam and Eve in Luther's Lectures on Genesis (1535–1545)," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 69, 2 (2005): 159-184.

core of his Reformation theology.⁵³⁹ Therefore, if scholars want to claim that Luther's theology was influenced by women, then concrete evidence needs to be provided.

Shifts Within the Same Text

Martin Luther's more mature theological interpretation of Eve found in his later career did not include any drastic changes that were brought about by the influence of women from his personal life. Rather, it is more accurate to talk about how Luther's later work included shifts within the same text. These shifts presented a more positive interpretation of Eve, then immediately moved to reflect his earlier and more traditional perspectives. Throughout Luther's *Lectures on Genesis*, he presented contradictory positions by moving between first explaining the similarities and equalities between Adam and Eve to then highlighting their differences. Even though the more mature Luther first expressed a more positive assessment of Eve, he then quickly shifted back to emphasizing his more traditional interpretation. Since Luther swiftly returned to his earlier interpretation within the same text, he did not take a new theological position towards Eve nor towards the nature of women.

A More Positive Assessment of Eve

At first, we can see that Luther's language and discourse regarding Eve presented her in a more positive way in his more mature interpretation. This can first be seen with Luther's interpretation of Eve's "birth" from Adam from later in his career. He no longer emphasized his earlier interpretation that Eve's creation from Adam's side signified a created inferiority. In his

⁵³⁹ Pedersen, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 194; see also David Bagchi, *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

later theology found in his *Lectures on Genesis*, he believed that her creation referred to the likeness between Adam and Eve and not only their “spiritual equality.” For Luther, what was perhaps more important was the idea that the two sexes shared in the basic material for creation, that is, the flesh. Some scholars, like Stjerna, argue that since the rib is made of the same substance, it shows an essential equality that is more significant than the hierarchy that comes after it.⁵⁴⁰ Although Luther later emphasized that Eve was like Adam, she was still created with a specific inferiority since she maintained the status of being born second. However, Stjerna argues that this does not necessarily mean a lesser good for the more mature Luther.⁵⁴¹ He thought Eve was a “most excellent creature” and a “heroic woman.”⁵⁴² With these examples, the mature Luther’s language clearly suggests a shift in his understanding of Eve.⁵⁴³

In addition to sharing the material of creation, Luther also emphasized that Eve equally possessed the image of God with Adam before the fall.⁵⁴⁴ He believed that this allowed Eve to be able to speak innocently and fearlessly with the serpent. This is completely unlike the earlier Luther who thought Eve was “talkative and superstitious.” In his later career, Luther interpreted this conversation as a confirmation of Eve’s dominion of the image of God.⁵⁴⁵ He no longer saw Eve as weak, superstitious, and talkative, but rather fearless. Eve was able to engage in conversation with the serpent because she knew that she was above this creature as a ruler and an *equal* partner to Adam. For Eve, like Adam, was to rule over “the creatures in the air, in the water, and on the earth.”⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁰ Stjerna, *Luther and Gender*, 165.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁵⁴² LW 1, 69; WA 42, 51.

⁵⁴³ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 133.

⁵⁴⁴ Pedersen, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 192.

⁵⁴⁵ LW 1, 185.

⁵⁴⁶ LW 1, 203, see also LW 1, 115; LW 1, 185; WA 42, 138.

Adam and Eve's dominion not only included ruling over creation, but also in the excellence of their intellectual life or their apprehension of the good.⁵⁴⁷ Once again, Luther used Eve's conversation with the serpent as evidence to support his claim. He did not argue that Eve was intellectually weaker than Adam, but rather that Eve was a full partner who "had these mental gifts in the same degree as Adam."⁵⁴⁸ He believed that since Eve answered the serpent's questions accurately, it not only showed that she had heard the command from Adam, but also that "her very nature was pure and full of the knowledge of God, so that in her very self (*per se*) she should understand and perceive the Word of God."⁵⁴⁹ His theology argued that Eve was full of the knowledge of God in that she naturally knew God's will.⁵⁵⁰ Luther believed that Eve understood and perceived spiritual matters "in the same degree as Adam" even without reference to the external Word.⁵⁵¹

As with Adam, Eve not only possessed the knowledge of God, but the mature Luther went so far as to state that Eve was "in no respect inferior to Adam, whether you count the qualities of the body or those of the mind."⁵⁵² He even argued that if Eve "had not been deceived by the serpent," then she would have been the equal of Adam "in all respects."⁵⁵³ It is for this reason that when Eve's inferiority was implied by the allegorical interpretation of "woman" as the lower form of human reason that Luther rejected even this suggestion.⁵⁵⁴ He wrote that there is "something absurd in making Eve the lower part of reason [...] because it is sure that in not part, that is, neither in body nor in soul, was Eve inferior to her husband Adam."⁵⁵⁵ By pointing

⁵⁴⁷ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 134.

⁵⁴⁸ LW 1, 66; WA 42, 50.

⁵⁴⁹ WA 42, 50, translated by Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 135.

⁵⁵⁰ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 135.

⁵⁵¹ LW 1, 66; WA 42, 50.

⁵⁵² LW 1, 115 on Genesis 2:18, see also LW 1, 185; LW 1, 203; WA 42, 138.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁵⁵⁴ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 137.

⁵⁵⁵ LW 1, 185 on Genesis 3:15; WA 42, 87.

to this equality between Adam and Eve, Luther moved away from Aristotle and others who mocked “woman.” He thought that these philosophers ridiculed “a creature of God in which God himself took delight as in the most excellent work.”⁵⁵⁶ Since women were created by God, Luther believed that the “husband differs in no way from the wife, other than according to sex; otherwise, the woman is simply a man.”⁵⁵⁷ This statement highlights Luther’s essential appreciation of the “sameness” of the sexes in terms of the equality given by God.⁵⁵⁸

A More Traditional Assessment of Eve

Shortly after the more mature Luther presented his more positive interpretation of Eve, he quickly shifted back to his traditional interpretation. Throughout his *Lectures on Genesis*, he simultaneously maintained two positions. On one hand, he argued that Adam and Eve shared in the material of creation, equally possessed the image of God, and were no way inferior to each other whether you consider the body or mind. On the other hand, Luther also shifted back to maintain his traditional perspectives and claimed that Eve was inferior to Adam.⁵⁵⁹

For example, Luther moved to highlighting Eve’s inferiority through emphasizing that the difference between Adam and Eve was their physical sex and nature.⁵⁶⁰ He argued that Eve seemed to be a different creature from man because “she has both different members and a much weaker nature.”⁵⁶¹ Although Luther argued that “both were created equally righteous” and shared

⁵⁵⁶ LW 1, 70.

⁵⁵⁷ WA 42, 103, translated by Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 151.

⁵⁵⁸ While Luther is not downplaying the impact of sex and gender in his life, Stjerna argues that he is “not getting it fully, either.” What is fundamental for Luther is that “women are not deficient men without distinctive nature and agency of their own, as was the prevalent teaching Luther inherited; the distinction between men and women is not to be dismissed,” see Stjerna, *Luther and Gender*, 166.

⁵⁵⁹ Pedersen, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 192; see Eleanor Commo McLaughlin, “Equality of Souls, Inequality of Sexes: Women in Medieval Theology,” in *Religion and Sexism*. ed Rosemary Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974).

⁵⁶⁰ Stjerna, *Luther and Gender*, 165.

⁵⁶¹ LW 1, 69; WA 42, 51.

many other equalities, at the same time, he argued that a man's nature was morally superior to a woman's nature.⁵⁶² Therefore, although Luther thought of Eve as a "most excellent creature" who was like Adam in many ways, she was "nevertheless a woman."⁵⁶³

Luther used an allegory for the relationship between male and female as represented by the sun and the moon to further explain these differences. Just as the brightness of the sun excels that of the moon, he claimed that the male was "more excellent" than the woman.⁵⁶⁴ He also wrote: "Just as in all the rest of nature the strength of the male surpasses that of the other sex, so also in the perfect nature the male somewhat excelled the female."⁵⁶⁵ Although the woman was still an incredible creature of God, she was still "not equal in glory and prestige to the man."⁵⁶⁶ Luther argued that just as sun and moon have dominion over the stars, so too does male and female rule over the animals. While women were not excluded from this "glory of the human creature," they were nevertheless "inferior to the male sex."⁵⁶⁷

Throughout the *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther focused on the idea that God structured the world by creating three estates.⁵⁶⁸ The earlier Luther began to formulate ideas about these estates, but they do not become concrete concepts until his later theology. These orders refer to a framework of relationships that have both benefits and mutual obligations.⁵⁶⁹ In the beginning, he believed that only two estates existed: the ecclesiastical and domestic.⁵⁷⁰ Adam was the sole

⁵⁶² LW 1, 151.

⁵⁶³ LW 1, 69; WA 42, 51.

⁵⁶⁴ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 139.

⁵⁶⁵ WA 42, 114, translated by Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 154.

⁵⁶⁶ WA 42, 52, translated by Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 140.

⁵⁶⁷ LW 1, 69; WA 42, 52.

⁵⁶⁸ See Reinhard Schwarz, "Luthers Lehre von den drei Stände und die drei Dimensionen der Ethik," *Lutherjahrbuch* 45 (1978): 15-34.

⁵⁶⁹ Mattox, *Order in the House*, 113.

⁵⁷⁰ Luther's claim that the state was only made necessary after the fall should not be considered an anti-nomian rejection of order. For information on law and order in Luther's works, see David Yeago, "Martin Luther on Grace, Law, and Moral Life: Prolegomena to an Ecumenical Discussion of *Veritatis Splendor*," *The Thomist*, 62 (1998): 163-191.

ruler over these estates, but Eve originally had equality with Adam and was “a partner” in all things given by God and was “in no respect inferior.”⁵⁷¹ However, this changed when everything became contaminated by sin.⁵⁷² With this collapse, Luther believed that the civil estate was now necessary.⁵⁷³ As Adam received divine authority to rule over the other two estates, this power was transferred through him to the civil estate.⁵⁷⁴ This new power outlined in Genesis 3 was different from the “dominion” that both Adam and Eve received in Genesis 1. This new power excluded Eve.⁵⁷⁵ Throughout his *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther was explicit that this was a consequence of the fall.⁵⁷⁶ He believed that had Eve not sinned “she herself would also have been a partner in the rule which is now entirely the concern of males.”⁵⁷⁷ It was only after the fall that Eve lost her original independence, no longer shared full partnership, and was excluded from ruling over the estates with Adam.⁵⁷⁸ Since Eve was excluded from ruling over the ecclesiastical and civil estates, she was to remain within the domestic estate.⁵⁷⁹ Even though she was restricted to the home, she did not have the authority to rule it. Eve was “subjected to the rule of her husband” through being obedient and a servant within the household, where Adam ruled.⁵⁸⁰ Even in the realm where women from this point forward were restricted, she remained under the “rule”

⁵⁷¹ WA 42, 151, translated by Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 157.

⁵⁷² See David Wright, “Woman Before and After the Fall: A Comparison of Luther’s and Calvin’s Interpretation of Genesis 1-3,” *Churchman* 98 (1983-1984), 126-135.

⁵⁷³ Scott Hendrix, “Luther on Marriage,” in *Harvesting Martin Luther’s Reflections on Theology, Ethics, and the Church*, ed. Timothy Wengert (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 346.

⁵⁷⁴ Mattox, *Order in the House*, 114.

⁵⁷⁵ Luther quoted Paul to show that women are not meant to be offices in the church by emphasizing that it must be a competent and chosen man, see LW 41, 154-155.

⁵⁷⁶ Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 42; It also would not be surprising if Luther thought that women were not meant to participate within these estates because of their character (emotionally weak, easily frightened, offended, and suspicious) which would hardly make women ideal candidates for these positions.

⁵⁷⁷ LW 1, 202-203.

⁵⁷⁸ LW 28, 278.

⁵⁷⁹ Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 41

⁵⁸⁰ WA 42, 151, translated by Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 157.

of the man.⁵⁸¹ In Luther's thoughts, there was no space which a woman could call her "own."⁵⁸² As a result, all women collapsed under male dominance. The woman becomes the possession of the man and the "wife is compelled to submit to him by the command of God."⁵⁸³ The eventual subjection of Eve to Adam's power; therefore, was a punishment.⁵⁸⁴

With this perspective, the more mature Luther is like Augustine who made a distinction between the "servitude of love," where Eve was created and the "servitude of condition" into which she had fallen.⁵⁸⁵ Prior to the fall, Eve was created with a dignity equal to Adam, but nevertheless willingly submitted to his rule. Her willingness to submit was later transformed into forced servitude as a form of punishment. After the fall, Eve was unwilling to be subjected to the rule of Adam and this became the first example of institutionalized servitude.⁵⁸⁶ For Luther, submission was a part of the created order, but forced rule was a consequence of the fall that came about with sin.⁵⁸⁷

Contradictions Throughout Luther's Mid-to-Late Career

From this discussion, we can see that much remains the same in Martin Luther's earlier and later theology. His later interpretation of Eve was structurally almost identical to that of his earlier interpretation and familiar themes from his earlier work are clearly present. Throughout his career, he believed that men and women were equal on spiritual terms and that both sexes

⁵⁸¹ LW 1, 202-203.

⁵⁸² Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 61.

⁵⁸³ WA 42, 150, translated by Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 157.

⁵⁸⁴ Mattox, *Order in the House*, 114.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 114; Luther was heavily influenced by Augustine's theology which can be seen within the subject index of *Luther's Works* in which Augustine's name can be found in nearly every volume, see Johan Buitendag, "Marriage in the Theology of Martin Luther – Worldly Yet Sacred: An Option Between Secularism and Clericalism," *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 63, 2, (2007): 447.

⁵⁸⁶ Mattox, *Order in the House*, 114.

⁵⁸⁷ WA 42. 79b.

could equally obtain salvation. With regards to equality more broadly speaking, we can see that the more mature Luther's theology goes beyond what he maintained earlier about Adam and Eve's "original equality." Unlike his earlier comments, Luther in his mid-career defended Eve by arguing that she possessed the image of God, the same intellectual gifts as Adam, and knew God's will without Adam's proclamation.⁵⁸⁸ However, within the same work, he immediately shifted to maintaining his earlier and more traditional theological interpretation. By doing so, he presented contradictory positions throughout his work.⁵⁸⁹

Some scholars, like Peter Meinhold, argue that these contradictions can be attributed to Luther's clumsy editors.⁵⁹⁰ It might be imagined that the editors tried to replace his exuberant comments about women with obviously more traditional language. However, this was likely not the case. If the editors had wanted to censor Luther's possibly "radical" comments about women, then it would have been likely that they would have removed the contradictions entirely and replaced them with a traditional commentary emphasizing Eve's original subordination. Since this did not happen, it is more likely that the published versions accurately reproduced Luther's own "rambling reflections on these issues."⁵⁹¹ If we assume that he was being consistent and coherent, then his clear arguments that Eve is equal to Adam must be somehow reconciled with his equally clear statements that Eve is inferior to Adam.⁵⁹² Mattox speculates that Luther might have meant that Eve had "equal worth" before God, but not in social positions or status. However, if this is true, then he is "frustratingly obscure" about it because he appeared to have already rejected the possibility of differences of social status in a world not contaminated by

⁵⁸⁸ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 140.

⁵⁸⁹ There are no statements or comments by Luther himself that recognize such contradictions or ambiguities in his own theological works.

⁵⁹⁰ See Peter Meinhold, *Die Genesisvorlesung Luthers und ihre Herausgeber* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1936).

⁵⁹¹ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 143.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, 140-141.

sin.⁵⁹³ It might have also been the case that Luther meant that women were only inferior to men based on their physical constitution. If this were the case, then it could be that he distinguished between a “qualitative equality” relating to Eve’s physical, mental, and spiritual capabilities and a “quantitative inequality” with regards to these capabilities as they compare to Adam’s endowments.⁵⁹⁴ If he made this distinction, then he would be able to say without any contradictions that Eve was, at the same time, both equal and inferior to Adam. There is evidence to suggest that this distinction existed in Luther’s theology. Although this does not account for Luther’s beliefs about the inferiority of women stated in his other theological work, it might provide insights into why his personal interaction with women did not reflect his own theology.

These speculations about Luther rely heavily on the assumption that he was being consistent and coherent. This may be a difficult assumption to make when he is clearly inconsistent with different sections of the same text. Perhaps his “rambling reflections” explain why he often contradicted himself, especially, for example, when discussing humanity’s blessing and dominion as outlined in Genesis 1:26-28 and the divine command given to Adam in Genesis 2.⁵⁹⁵ When commenting on Genesis 1:26, he explicitly stated that both “Adam and Eve heard the Word with their ears when God said: ‘Have dominion.’”⁵⁹⁶ However, it appears that it was difficult for Luther to rectify his belief that both Adam and Eve heard the Word of God with the temporal order that is outlined in Genesis 2 which he interpreted to as meaning that only Adam received God’s command.⁵⁹⁷ For example, Luther believed that God’s commandment not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil occurred on the seventh day which was the day

⁵⁹³ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 141.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁵⁹⁶ LW 1, 66 on Genesis 2:3; WA 42, 49.

⁵⁹⁷ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 144.

after Eve was created.⁵⁹⁸ Although the command was given on the seventh day, after Eve's creation, Luther concluded that God spoke only to Adam: "Thus, early on the seventh day Adam appears to have heard the Lord command household and state administration at the same time with the prohibition of the fruit."⁵⁹⁹ In Luther's interpretation, he fused the blessing received in Genesis 1:26 with God's command found in Genesis 2. By doing so, he suggested that only Adam heard the Word of God: "Before Eve was created [on the sixth day], the Law was given to Adam that he might have an outward form of worship by which to show his obedience and gratitude toward God."⁶⁰⁰ Clearly, Luther believed that God spoke only with Adam, regardless of whether Eve was already created or not. He maintained that Adam had been given advantages over Eve which included having the priority to proclaim God's Word.⁶⁰¹ This is contrary to earlier when Luther held that Eve, based on her possession of the image of God, was able to directly perceive God's initial command. Nevertheless, he portrayed Eve as being in some way inferior to Adam. At the same time, he held that God delivered his sermon to Adam on the sixth day while also claiming that God's sermon to Adam occurred on the seventh day. In addition, he maintained that both Eve had heard God's command and later that she did not. Luther also contradicted himself by saying that a woman's position within society was a form of punishment in some cases, but in others it was a result of her natural inferiority.

Martha Behrens points out that it may be assumed that the woman's role in the fall show a natural defect and indicate her inferiority even though this contradicts Luther's statements that Eve was equal to Adam.⁶⁰² Stjerna argues that these inconsistencies show that the issue is very

⁵⁹⁸ LW 1, 81.

⁵⁹⁹ WA 42, 62, translated by Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 144.

⁶⁰⁰ LW 1, 101.

⁶⁰¹ For more information on Luther's understanding of the relationship between Adam and Eve, see Ulrich Asendorf, *Lectura in Biblia: Luthers Genesisvorlesung (1535-1545)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 323.

⁶⁰² Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 42.

complex and that it shows Luther's limitations with it which scholars ought to study further.⁶⁰³ Mattox writes: "Obviously, he is not above contradicting himself in a way which does not reflect a theological distinction at some other level, but signifies only unclear or incomplete thinking."⁶⁰⁴ Jane Dempsey Douglas argues that these variations in Luther's exegesis show that he was divided between progressive and traditional ideas that, on one hand, provided an account of original equality between the sexes and, on the other, maintained an original hierarchy, where men were superior.⁶⁰⁵ As with Douglas, Else Pedersen maintains a similar position.⁶⁰⁶ Mattox argues that this might be a plausible argument, but that it is better to think of Luther as maintaining these tensions together in his own mind. Mattox argues that it could be possible that Luther maintained these variations and that it was not necessarily contradictory for him to think that Eve was both inferior and not inferior to Adam.⁶⁰⁷ However, this position does not explain why Luther would not have been explicit to his readers about such variations. There is no denying that there are unexplained inconsistencies and contradictions in Luther's interpretations that challenge the assumption of an underlying coherence and consistency in his theological perspective on Eve.

There are a few conclusions that can be drawn from Luther's interpretations of Eve throughout his career. First, sex and gender relations were at the center of his theological analysis, especially his writings on the creation and the fall.⁶⁰⁸ If any discussions of Luther's theological teachings dealing with human nature, love, grace, and life in creation and society, do not place sex and gender at the core of these considerations, then they will likely miss

⁶⁰³ Stjerna, *Luther and Gender*, 164.

⁶⁰⁴ Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 145.

⁶⁰⁵ See Douglas, *The Image of God*, 236-266.

⁶⁰⁶ Pedersen, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 192.

⁶⁰⁷ Mattox, *Luther on Eve, Women, and the Church*, 260.

⁶⁰⁸ Stjerna, *Luther and Gender*, 167; see Helen Kraus, *Gender Issues in Ancient and Reformation Translations of Genesis 1-4* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

fundamental elements. In other words, he placed women at the core of Christian narratives for a reason. This is obvious with Luther's treatment of biblical texts. For example, both narratives about creation and the fall would be insufficient without Eve. In other words, we can clearly see that women are at the center of Luther's theology and this cannot be overlooked by future scholarship.

Second, Luther wrote about his view of women during the sixteenth century and his work reflects the period in which it was published.⁶⁰⁹ Luther's theological works were written by a male to an all-male audience who would have likely held traditional or stereo-typical beliefs about women.⁶¹⁰ His socially conservative ideas about women are still obvious in his later theology and they show the extent to which he maintained and transmitted the traditional view of women's inferiority that is found in early and medieval Christianity and classical philosophy.⁶¹¹ He thought that as a form of punishment, women were to be subordinate to men and that it was a Christian duty to support this social order which kept women submissive.⁶¹² He did not make any promises that this social order would change. Rather, this was "just how things were" in society. In his mid-career, Luther explained that it was Eve's fault for why women were in this inferior position. It was because of her failings that she did not share the rule of the earth with men. Behrens points out that Luther felt that women had no rights and did not give any thought to the woman's "impatience by grumbling."⁶¹³ For Luther, a woman did not have any rights because God took them away as punishment for Eve's actions. He wrote: "They cannot perform the functions of men, teach, rule, etc. In procreation and in feeding and nurturing their offspring they

⁶⁰⁹ For more information on how culture has shaped "sexist" theology throughout history, see Alvin Schmidt, *Veiled and Silenced: How Culture Shaped Sexist Theology* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1990).

⁶¹⁰ For more information on Luther's own stereotypical ideas, see Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says: An Anthology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing Company, 1959), 1456-1460.

⁶¹¹ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 15.

⁶¹² Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*, 160.

⁶¹³ LW 1, 202-203.

are masters. In this way, Eve is punished; but as I said [...] it is a gladsome punishment if you consider the hope of eternal life and the honor of motherhood which had been left her.”⁶¹⁴ Based on this passage, Behrens argues that Luther did not reflect on a woman’s plea for a new social position because he thought this was simply “grumbling.” Behrens argues that Luther trapped women since it was natural for women to try and retrieve what they had lost with the fall.⁶¹⁵ With this, she argues that Luther removed the possibility of achievement for women and the prospect of evidence to the contrary. For example, if a woman was able to perform the roles of a man, then it would prove his theory that she lost her “original” function or role through sin. If a woman accepted her role within society, then she remained inferior to men. Based on Luther’s theological assumptions, it would be impossible for women to overcome these prescribed limitations.⁶¹⁶

OTHER BIBLICAL WOMEN

Between the years 1535 and 1545, Luther not only wrote extensively on Eve, but also on other biblical women including Sarah, Hagar, Rebecca, Tamar, Rachel, Leah, Dinah, and Potiphar’s wife.⁶¹⁷ While Eve told him much about a woman’s nature, the matriarchs of the Hebrew Bible provided him with models for positive female behaviour and ideal domestic virtues.⁶¹⁸ According to Luther, two women who exemplify these virtues are Tamar and Sarah.

⁶¹⁴ LW 1, 202-203.

⁶¹⁵ Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 44.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁶¹⁷ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks *Luther on Women*, 59; Luther’s writings on Genesis also deviate to include discussions on minor characters that only appear in a verse or two including: Lot’s wife and Rebecca’s old nurse Deborah; Luther’s works dealing with women from the Hebrew Bible include: LW 4, 47-58 (Hagar); LW 3, 298-300 (Lot’s Wife); LW 5, 314-315; 317; 331; 355; 362; (Leah and Rachel); LW 7, 79; 87-88 (Potiphar’s Wife); LW 6, 192-193 (Dinah).

⁶¹⁸ Jane Strohl, “Marriage as Discipleship: Luther’s Praise of Married Life,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 47, 2 (2008): 139; for more information on Luther’s approach to the Hebrew Bible more broadly, see Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament*, trans. Eric Gritsch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

The more mature Luther believed that the story of Tamar was an excellent example of a biblical woman who exhibited the combination of following God's word and ideal domestic virtues.⁶¹⁹ As with other matriarchs, Tamar faced challenges with bearing children. She also experienced difficulties with her husbands. For example, Tamar's first husband was killed by God for being wicked while Luther believed that her second husband was guilty of sexual malpractice by not maintaining his conjugal duties.⁶²⁰ Judah, the father of these two husbands, promised Tamar that she may marry his third son, but he did not keep this promise. In response, Tamar pretended to be a prostitute, seduced Judah, conceived a child, and therefore secured her right to motherhood that this family had promised to her. Luther argued that, although she was guilty of incest, she committed this sin for a "legitimate reason." He wrote: "She grieves because the highest honor of women is being taken from her, namely, to be a wife, especially of this son of Judah, and because she is being deprived of all the adornments of a lady of the house."⁶²¹ He believed that Tamar's strange behaviour was "justified and almost excusable" because she was following God's word and trying to fulfil her natural duty of securing domesticity.⁶²² For this reason, Luther commended Tamar as she was an "excellent matron" who was diligent in her household duties and therefore exhibits proper Christian virtues for a woman.⁶²³

Sarah is another matriarch in the Hebrew Bible who Luther depicted as being dedicated to the household. Sarah, who did not let her husband rest until he banished the concubine, was found "in the tent" when the three guests visited Abraham. He commented that an apathetic person may read these words and pay no attention to them, but "by means of these few words the

⁶¹⁹ LW 7, 17; 22; 27-28; 45; see also David Steinmetz, "Luther and Tamar," *Consensus: A Canadian Lutheran Journal of Theology* 19 (1993): 135-149.

⁶²⁰ LW 7, 20-21; WA 44, 316, 39-317, 6.

⁶²¹ LW 7, 34-35; WA 44, 326, 36-40.

⁶²² Strohl, *Marriage as Discipleship*, 140; LW 7, 34-35.

⁶²³ Karant-Nunn and Wienser-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 59.

Holy Spirit wanted to set before all women an example to imitate.”⁶²⁴ He thought that Sarah was a good example to imitate because she was not frivolous, did not have an indecent curiosity, and did not run around collecting gossip. If Sarah was like most women, then she would have rushed to the door when the guests arrived, would have listened to their conversations, and would have foolishly interrupted them. However, Sarah did not behave in this manner. She did not offend others by being curious, but rather, “like a tortoise, [remained] in her little shell and [did not] take the time required to get a brief look at the guests she [had] and at what kind of guests they [were].”⁶²⁵ In other words, she remained “in the tent,” where she belonged and “[busied] herself with her own tasks, which the household demands, and [was] unconcerned about the other things.”⁶²⁶ For this reason, Luther had “great praise” for Sarah.⁶²⁷ He even commented that Sarah was more holy than any monk in the cloister: “The fact that Sarah stands at the hearth and busily prepares food for the guests—this not only has no out-ward appearance of a good work but seems to stand in the way of good works. Yet to one who has regard for the Word it will be evident that Sarah did a holier work than all the hermits did.”⁶²⁸ For Luther, just as Abraham is used as an example of faith and good works, Sarah too can “give instruction about the highest virtues of a saintly and praiseworthy housewife.”⁶²⁹

However, there are some inconsistencies with how Luther portrayed Sarah. He believed that she was an ideal wife exhibiting proper domestic virtues, but also considered her to be a

⁶²⁴ LW 3, 200-201.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., 200-201.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., 200-201; Luther also considered the biblical figure Martha as an excellent model because she was the obedient wife serving God through everyday household tasks. By doing so, he belittled her sister Mary, who devoted herself to “other things,” like learning Jesus’ teachings, see Wiesner-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 305.

⁶²⁷ LW 3, 200-201.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 216-217; WA 43, 30, 5-12.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 200-201.

complaining wife.⁶³⁰ Abraham could not bring himself to take the necessary action to exile Hagar and her son Ishmael, but Sarah had no issue.⁶³¹ She overcame her wifely submission and modesty when she berated Abraham into exiling them.⁶³² When Sarah accused Abraham of doing her wrong, the biblical narrator did not make any attempts to correct or condemn her accusations. This is unlike Luther who simply portrayed her as a complaining wife. He thought that Sarah's speech was evidence of the plight that Abraham had to deal with within his marriage.⁶³³ Scholars, like Sharon Jeansonne, point out that according to the text, there is no reason to believe that Sarah's accusations were unwarranted, so it is not exactly clear why Luther portrayed her in such a negative light.⁶³⁴

Scholars have also pointed out that parts of Luther's interpretation of this narrative are problematic. For example, Adam Hill argues that he inaccurately used Sarah and Abraham's relationship as "proof" that a woman should be submissive to her husband. However, as Hill notes, their relationship cannot be used as evidence to support this conclusion.⁶³⁵ Sarah was not commanded by God to be obedient to Abraham, but rather God commanded Abraham to be obedient to Sarah. Janice Nunnally-Cox makes a similar argument by noting that Abraham was ordered by God to follow Sarah in Genesis 21:12: "Whatever Sarah tells you, do as *she* says."⁶³⁶ It appears that Luther did not provide any commentary on this specific passage. Instead, he maintained the assumption that Sarah was obedient, and that Abraham conceded to Sarah's

⁶³⁰ Hill argues that Luther's writings about Sarah and Abraham are not proof that a woman should be submissive to her husband. He points out that it is Abraham who God commands to be obedient to Sarah's desire to banish Hagar, Hill, *Martin Luther, Marriage, and Women*, 44.

⁶³¹ Strohl, *Marriage as Discipleship*, 139; Luther argued that the fight between Sarah and Hagar was an example of the boundless weakness of women, see LW 3, 47.

⁶³² Luther thought that Sarah's challenge to Abraham's rule was not meant to be a model for other women, see LW 3, 200-201.

⁶³³ Hill, *Martin Luther, Marriage, and Women*, 44.

⁶³⁴ Sharon Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1990), 16.

⁶³⁵ Hill, *Martin Luther, Marriage, and Women*, 44.

⁶³⁶ See Janice Nunnally-Cox, *Fore-Mothers* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981), 8.

demands because she begged him to do so; for anything a woman wanted “they achieved by weeping.”⁶³⁷

BIBLICAL SOURCES INFLUENCED LUTHER’S VIEW OF WOMEN

These biblical narratives told Martin Luther quite a lot about women, their nature, and their proper roles. Throughout his career, Luther found within Eve’s story many theological insights about women. He also discovered excellent models of women’s virtues with the biblical matriarchs such as Tamar and Sarah. From these narratives, he established a distinctive, but nevertheless traditional and arguably restrictive, theoretical understanding of a woman’s nature, the ideal woman, and a woman’s role within the church, home, and society.⁶³⁸ Over the years, Luther maintained these traditional perspectives throughout his theological works. However, as the next two chapters show, these theological precepts were not enforced throughout his personal correspondences with women.

Women are Physically and Intellectually Weak

When we examine Luther’s theological attitudes towards women, we can see at the core of his understanding of women’s nature is the assumption that women are weaker than men. This weakness is part of a woman’s character and spirit which were both inferior to men and less noble than a man’s nature. He thought that women are both physically and intellectually weak, as

⁶³⁷ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 59; WA TR 1, 1054, 531-532, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 28-29.

⁶³⁸ Mattox, *Luther on Eve, Women, and the Church*, 252.

well as morally weaker than men.⁶³⁹ As outlined in the second chapter, this assumption about women's nature was inherited from his sixteenth century context.

It was clear to Luther that women are weaker than men which he thought was visible by looking at the differences between the two sexes and their physical strength.⁶⁴⁰ For example, he claimed that women are more “timid and downhearted in spirit” than men.⁶⁴¹ He concluded from these differences that women are “weaker physically.”⁶⁴² Since women lack physical strength, they are more “easily frightened, easily offended, easily angered, easily made suspicious.”⁶⁴³ It is for this reason that Luther advised men to deal with women and treat them in “such a way that [they] can bear it.”⁶⁴⁴

Luther not only believed that women were physically fragile, but they were also intellectually inferior and more emotional than men.⁶⁴⁵ He argued that we can “see the boundless weakness of women” when considering a woman's intellectual capabilities.⁶⁴⁶ He asserted that the female sex was weak, lacking in courage and judgement, timid, and was “slow of mind.”⁶⁴⁷ He argued that this was obvious from looking at the physical traits of men and women. He believed that God created “men with broad chests and shoulders, not broad hips, so that men can understand wisdom. But the place where the filth flows out is small.”⁶⁴⁸ Luther believed that with women, it was the other way around which explained why “they have lots of filth and little

⁶³⁹ Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 15; Pedersen, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 192.

⁶⁴⁰ LW 1, 151.

⁶⁴¹ LW 30, 91-92.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, 91-92; Luther believed that women required a man's protection due to their frail nature, especially when the woman was pregnant, see LW 5, 382.

⁶⁴³ LW 29, 57.

⁶⁴⁴ LW 30, 91-92.

⁶⁴⁵ Luther thought that men were their wives' “heads” representing the intellectual part of the human body, see WA 1, 17, 1, 26: “*denn der Mann ist des Weibes heubts.*”

⁶⁴⁶ LW 3, 47.

⁶⁴⁷ LW 16, 163-164; since women lacked proper judgment, Luther believed that women tended to believe in lies and nonsense and this trait was inherited from Eve, see WA 1, 431-435.

⁶⁴⁸ Erl. 61, 125, translated by Eunjoo Kim, *Women Preaching: Theology and Practice Through the Ages* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 83.

wisdom.”⁶⁴⁹ He thought that women did not possess much wisdom, but rather had an animal-like intuition.⁶⁵⁰ Although a woman’s cognitive ability was “animal-like,” he advised husbands not to treat their wives like beasts, but rather like children.⁶⁵¹ Luther argued that the comparison of women with children was fitting because they are the weakest member of the family and required the man’s protection.⁶⁵²

With this animal-like intuition or power, women are able to deal with “spur of the moment type” situations that arose in everyday life, especially those that arose within the household.⁶⁵³ Luther wrote that his own “experience bears witness that women have great ability to devise strategy on the spur of the moment.”⁶⁵⁴ He thought that a woman’s first impulse in immediate danger is very successful and usually excellent.⁶⁵⁵ However, their intuition is not enough to contemplate complex matters of the Church or state, where “the greatest strength of character and wisdom” was necessary.⁶⁵⁶ Due to their limited intelligence, women are not competent when they talk about serious or convoluted matters. Luther did not see women as learned in any way, did not think that they are intelligent enough to write books, and did not consider the possibility that a woman could improve her ability to reason.⁶⁵⁷ On the contrary, Luther thought that the more time women spent deliberating important and difficult matters, the more they complicated the issue and hindered any progress.⁶⁵⁸ It was for this reason that he

⁶⁴⁹ Erl. 61, 125, translated by Kim, *Women Preaching*, 83.

⁶⁵⁰ Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 26.

⁶⁵¹ WA 1, 17, 1, 24.

⁶⁵² Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 235-236.

⁶⁵³ Intuitive power was seen to be a feminine characteristic and therefore inferior which is why men were not encouraged to develop this “power,” while at the same time, women were discouraged from developing their rational cognitive abilities, see Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 27.

⁶⁵⁴ LW 6, 60.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁵⁷ Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 29; it was often the case that girls did not receive the opportunity to learn how to write, see pages 85-88.

⁶⁵⁸ LW 6, 60.

discouraged women from attempting to improve their cognitive ability: “There is no dress that suits a woman or maiden so badly as wanting to be clever.”⁶⁵⁹ He believed that although women “have words enough, they are lacking in substance, which they do not understand.”⁶⁶⁰ For this reason, women speak “foolishly, without order, and wildly, mixing things together without moderation.”⁶⁶¹

From this, Luther concluded that it appears God designed women for housekeeping while men were created for “keeping order, governing worldly affairs, fighting, and dealing with justice – [things that pertain to] administering and leading.”⁶⁶² He believed that since men are able to participate in complex intellectual matters that the male had a greater nobility of his sex which “enables him to do many things both in public and private life, as well as many splendid achievements to which woman is a stranger.”⁶⁶³ By contrast, women are confined to the private life within the home. Although Luther believed that women had no intelligence for contemplating matters that did not pertain to the household, they could “speak masterfully about housekeeping” with such a captivating voice that they “surpass Cicero, the most eloquent orator.”⁶⁶⁴

Since women are “slow of mind,” Luther believed that they also tend to “indulge in their moods” and are “controlled by them.”⁶⁶⁵ He accused women of being over emotional, rash, overanxious to control their husbands, greedy, frivolous, and giddy: “For the weakness of inborn

⁶⁵⁹ WA TR 2, 1555, 130, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 29.

⁶⁶⁰ WA TR 1, 1054, 531-532, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 28-29.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 531-532.

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, 531-532.

⁶⁶³ LW 42, 144.

⁶⁶⁴ WA TR 1, 1054, 531-532, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 28-29; the assumption about women’s intellectual abilities might have also been influenced by his own sixteenth century context where girls did not receive as much education as boys. As further discussed in the second chapter, women were often trained as domestic servants when they were young girls which might explain their ability to speak “masterfully about housekeeping,” see pages 77-85.

⁶⁶⁵ LW 3, 47.

levity of this sex is well known.”⁶⁶⁶ Luther not only thought that women had levity in morals, but also that “garrulousness and curiosity are censured in this sex.”⁶⁶⁷ Luther claimed that women have an indecent curiosity, like to collect gossip, and run around. It was within women’s nature to be unable to keep quiet about the weakness of a neighbour and therefore they frequently gossip and speak evil of them.⁶⁶⁸ He wrote:

Women are commonly in the habit of gadding and inquiring about everything with disgraceful curiosity. Or they stand idle at the door and look either for something to see or for fresh rumors. For this reason, Proverbs [7:11] states about wicked women that they have ‘feet that do not tarry.’ This is due to their curiosity to see and hear things which nevertheless do not concern them at all.⁶⁶⁹

He thought that a woman liked to gossip so much that a “woman is not to be trusted,” and “no secret is to be entrusted to them.”⁶⁷⁰ When advising married couples, Luther did not advocate that both spouses ought to have reservations, but rather that only the man should be careful. He believed that women are more likely to be untrustworthy because of her inherent weakness.⁶⁷¹ He thought that a healthy marriage could not exist without mutual trust, but that men should limit this trust because they could mistakenly give it away: “For she is a human being; and although she fears God and pays heed to his word, nevertheless, because she has Satan, the enemy, lying in wait everywhere and because human nature as such is weak, she can

⁶⁶⁶ LW 3, 200-201.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., 200-201.

⁶⁶⁸ LW 51, 158; see also WA 1, 17, 1, 26.

⁶⁶⁹ LW, 3, 200-201.

⁶⁷⁰ WA TR 4, 4434, 311, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 30.

⁶⁷¹ Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 82; see also Lyndal Roper, *Holy Household, Women and Morals in the Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

fall and disappoint your hope somewhere.”⁶⁷² Luther claimed that “what goes in through women’s ears come out again through their mouths.”⁶⁷³ It was for this reason that Luther believed that the only woman who could be entrusted with a secret was a dead woman.⁶⁷⁴

Luther’s opinions on the intellect of women and women’s place within the home become convoluted when looking at his discussions of women’s ability to preach or prophesy.⁶⁷⁵ When he opposed Roman Catholic ideas of the priesthood, he used women’s prophesying in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament to support the idea that the office of priesthood could be applied to all believers.⁶⁷⁶ By contrast, when individuals took this statement literally and believed that the ordained ministry should no longer exist, Luther contradicted his earlier statements by saying that women’s preaching is similar to that of untrained men or equal to the preaching of a child, fool, drunk, or a mute.⁶⁷⁷ Some of his strongest statements supporting and rejecting a woman’s ability to preach or perform other public religious actions came out in the middle of polemics that were directed against those with whom he debated.⁶⁷⁸ Whereas in his more careful and balanced deliberations, Luther typically argued that although such behaviour was generally prohibited to women by both Paul and other imposed restrictions, there are circumstances where it would be allowed and even praiseworthy. There were certain factors that

⁶⁷² LW 2, 301-302.

⁶⁷³ WA TR 4, 4434, 311, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 30.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 311.

⁶⁷⁵ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 58; Luther’s answer to whether women should preach or not was based in his understanding of woman’s natural suitability for the task, as well as his reading of 1 Corinthians 14 which he saw as divine law that simply made the practice forbidden without necessarily explaining the reason why, see LW 26, 280.

⁶⁷⁶ See WA 34, 484, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 58: “Therefore, the law of Leviticus about the priesthood is repealed and a new one is given, that reads: “Your sons,” daughters, young men, old women. That means all types of flesh, that is, [all types of] people. I accept women, maidens, and will teach them all how they will prophesize [...] No one is discriminated against, neither city residents nor peasants. Therefore, this text truly sets up a new priesthood, that does not depend so much on the person. The four daughters of Philip were prophetesses. A woman can do this. Not preach in public, but console people and teach. A woman can do this just as much as a man.”

⁶⁷⁷ LW 40, 390-391; LW 41, 154-155.

⁶⁷⁸ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 58.

would warrant a woman's preaching or leadership. These factors included if she was called by God, had a special gift, was widowed or unmarried (so that the issue of a wife's obedience did not apply to her), she was advised to do so by men, authority was given to her by a man, or there were no men available or qualified.⁶⁷⁹ If a woman's religious leadership was to be seen as acceptable, then at least the first factor was required and it was better if more of these factors applied to the situation.⁶⁸⁰

Women Have Weak Morals

In addition to being physically and intellectually weak, Luther also believed, throughout his career, that women are morally weaker than men. He thought that all women are subject to the Devil's tricks because of their natural moral weakness: "For the Devil is laying snares against the modesty of this sex, which by nature is weak, irresponsible, and foolish and hence exposed to the snares of Satan."⁶⁸¹ This view is based on Luther's comparison of Adam and Eve and moral stamina. He assumed that Adam's moral stamina would have resisted the Devil while Eve's disobedience was simply an example of woman's natural weakness to temptation.⁶⁸² He wrote: "Satan's cleverness is perceived also in this, that he attacks the weak part of human nature, Eve the woman, not Adam the man."⁶⁸³ Luther argued that the Devil saw that Adam was more excellent and was afraid to tempt him because he knew that his attempt would be ineffective. The Devil was afraid of that and thought: "I will first of all attack the female, and perhaps

⁶⁷⁹ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 58.

⁶⁸⁰ With regards to this view, Luther did not deviate from medieval commentators or other Protestant contemporaries; however, he differed from them by maintaining a wider understanding of the emergency situations, where a woman could be justified in preaching or performing religious leadership, see LW 41, 154-155.

⁶⁸¹ LW 6, 192-193; see also Joy Schroeder, "The Rape of Dinah: Luther's Interpretation of a Biblical Narrative," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1997): 775-791.

⁶⁸² Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 16.

⁶⁸³ LW 1, 151.

through her I will be able to make him fall.”⁶⁸⁴ Therefore, the Devil knew to attack Eve because she was the weaker part.⁶⁸⁵

Although Luther portrayed Eve as weaker than Adam, he also believed that women have enough power to easily manipulate men. When he spoke about women in relation to the “evils of passion,” he cautioned that women are a suspicious creation.⁶⁸⁶ He thought that men needed to be cautious when dealing with women: “Thus it is written in Ecclesiastes 42:14: ‘Better is the wickedness of man than a woman who does good; and it is a woman who brings shame and disgrace.’ It is as though the writer were saying: ‘It is safer to converse with morose and evil men than with a woman who feigns friendliness and affability.’”⁶⁸⁷ This was especially true if a woman had the additional feature of attractiveness because Luther thought that “such a woman attracts and inflames the heart.”⁶⁸⁸ In this way, women have complete power and are not only feared for their charisma, but also their sexual prowess. Luther asserted that women use men’s sexual appetites to make them do whatever they wanted. It was women who took advantage of men: “For girls, too, are aware of this evil [sexual desire], and if they spend time in the company of young men, they turn the hearts of these young men in various directions to entice them to love [...] Therefore it is often more difficult for the latter to withstand such incitements than to resist their own lusts.”⁶⁸⁹ For Luther, the immorality rests on the woman as temptress rather than on the man who actually succumbs to his lustful desires.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁴ WA 24, 81-85, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 22.

⁶⁸⁵ LW 1, 151.

⁶⁸⁶ Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 21.

⁶⁸⁷ LW 7, 86.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁶⁸⁹ LW 13, 109.

⁶⁹⁰ Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 21.

The woman as “temptress” is a theme that frequently appears in Luther’s works, especially when he discussed women who were prostitutes.⁶⁹¹ As previously discussed in the second chapter, prostitution was a popular practice in many German cities such as Wittenberg.⁶⁹² These cities either tolerated or even licensed and taxed prostitution given that women would be discrete in their activities and lived in either the city brothels or certain areas of the city.⁶⁹³ Although prostitution was a somewhat prevalent activity, Luther saw it as an abomination and strongly spoke against it. However, he did not preach against prostitution because it was harmful to women or possibly even degrading to them. In other words, his concern was not for the women themselves. Luther considered prostitutes to be “stinking, syphilitic, scabby, seedy and nasty.”⁶⁹⁴ Rather, he was worried about the possibility that these “seedy” women might seduce and corrupt his male students.⁶⁹⁵ He warned that “such a whore can poison 10, 20, 30, 100 children of good people, and is therefore to be considered a murderer, worse than a poisoner.”⁶⁹⁶ He considered prostitutes as being tools of the devil who desired to bewitch his students in Wittenberg. However, Luther did not believe that prostitutes were not the only individuals with the power to bewitch men. He wrote: “All women know the art to catch and hold a man by crying, lying and persuasion, turning his head and perverting him... it is often more difficult for him to withstand such enticements than to resist his own lust.”⁶⁹⁷ Merry Wiesner-Hanks argues

⁶⁹¹ Throughout Luther’s works, he also used the image of the prostitute or “whore” symbolically which was among common forms of abuse during the sixteenth century. For example, Luther compared the Catholic Church’s selling of indulgences with prostitution which thereby made Rome a “whore,” see Donald Kelley, *The Beginning of Ideology: Consciousness and Society in the French Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 75.

⁶⁹² It is likely that Luther’s view of woman as “temptress” was also influenced by the number of women who were visibly prostitutes in sixteenth century Germany. These women did not engage in this type of work because of their ‘weak moral nature,’ but because of their poor socio-economic status, see pages 83-85.

⁶⁹³ Wiesner-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 301.

⁶⁹⁴ WA TR 4, 4857, 552–554, translated by Wiesner-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 301.

⁶⁹⁵ A notice was posted by Luther to warn his students against prostitutes, see *Warning Against Prostitutes, May 13th, 1543*, WA TR, 4, 4857.

⁶⁹⁶ WA TR 4, 4857, 552–554.

⁶⁹⁷ LW 7, 76; WA TR 4, 4786.

that Luther believed in some way that all women to some degree share the qualities of a prostitute or a “whore.”⁶⁹⁸

For Luther, the one quality that was shared between prostitutes and all women was that they use their seductive and manipulative powers for selfish reasons. He thought that women would use their blandishments and charms to accomplish their will.⁶⁹⁹ If that did not work, women are consumed by madness “so that they want to those whose love they are not permitted to enjoy to be destroyed.”⁷⁰⁰ In a statement from the *Table Talks*, he emphasized that women are a positive evil force which try to deceive men and are symbolized in Eve as the Devil’s passive tool: “God made Adam master over all creatures, to rule over all living things, but when Eve persuaded him that he was lord even over God she spoiled everything. We have you woman to thank for that! With tricks and cunning women deceive men, as I, too, have experienced.”⁷⁰¹ Behrens argues that this portrayal of women shows that Luther held negative feelings towards women and that these feelings are almost like a “paranoid fear” of a woman’s ability to trick men and control them.⁷⁰²

Throughout his theological works, Luther frequently shifted between portraying women in two contradictory ways. At certain times, he portrayed women in a relatively harmless way by depicting women as weak, ridiculous, and light-headed. This meant that women are weak and helpless and that they could be used as instruments of the Devil.⁷⁰³ At other times, he considered

⁶⁹⁸ Luther suggested that any woman who attempted to act with reason, by extension, may also be the Devil’s whore see Erl. 16, 272, translated by Wiesner-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 301-302: “Usury, drunkenness, adultery and murder can all be detected and understood by the world as sinful. But when the devil’s bride, reason, the petty prostitute, enters into the picture and wishes to be clever, what she says is accepted at once as if she were the voice of the Holy Ghost... she is surely the Devil’s chief whore.”

⁶⁹⁹ LW 8, 87-88.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., 87-88.

⁷⁰¹ LW 54, 174-175.

⁷⁰² Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 22.

⁷⁰³ Ibid., 16.

woman to be a positive and successful manipulator who would do anything to get her own way. With this view, women are powerful and intelligent enough to manipulate and take advantage of men by using their sexual prowess even though men were supposed to be superior to women in every way.⁷⁰⁴

LUTHER'S IDEAL WOMAN

How Luther understood the nature of women influenced his perspective of the ideal woman. In his descriptions of the ideal woman, the two concepts that appear frequently are “natural” and “natural womanhood.” For Luther, the ideal woman fulfilled her nature by being an obedient wife who produced children and remained within the home.⁷⁰⁵

Women Should be Married

When Luther's works are examined, it becomes clear that he had always considered marriage and matrimony to be extremely important.⁷⁰⁶ Even before Luther's own marriage, it is obvious that he believed matrimony was significant. Words about “marriage” or “matrimony” appear no fewer than 1,991 times over nearly every single one of the fifty-four volumes of Luther's works.⁷⁰⁷ It is not surprising then that he wrote that his observations on marriage kept

⁷⁰⁴ Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 20.

⁷⁰⁵ Lyndal Roper, “Luther: Sex, Marriage, and Motherhood,” *History Today*, 33, 12 (1983): 38.

⁷⁰⁶ For example, see: *A Sermon On the Estate of Marriage* (1519); *On the Freedom of a Christian* (1520); *The Estate of Marriage* (1522); *That Parents Should Neither Compel nor Hinder the Marriage of Their Children and That Children Should Not Become Engaged Without Their Parent's Consent* (1524); *On Marriage Matters* (1530).

⁷⁰⁷ Buitendag, *Marriage in the Theology of Martin Luther*, 44.

him busier than any other topic in theology.⁷⁰⁸ It is also not surprising that Luther's ideal woman was a wife, especially considering the importance he placed on marriage and matrimony.

He believed that there are several practical reasons why women should desire marriage.⁷⁰⁹ Women ought to happily accept marriage with a man because men provided a safe-haven for women through marriage.⁷¹⁰ He thought that since women are weak, they required a man to protect and look after them.⁷¹¹ For this reason, Luther advised that in no case should a woman not marry.⁷¹² In fact, it was unbelievable to him if a woman choose not to enter marriage.⁷¹³ This was because it was only through marriage and motherhood that a woman could fulfil her God-given role or function and distinctively religious duties. He wrote: "Say, yes, dear lady, if you were not a wife, you would certainly wish to become one, so that you could do God's will by suffering and perhaps dying through these delicious pains [of child birth]."⁷¹⁴ For Luther, women required a man to give meaning to their lives, particularly through bearing

⁷⁰⁸ LW 45, 385; Although there are a lot of works that deal with the Reformation and marriage, there are surprisingly few studies that focus entirely on Luther and marriage, see Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 83-100; Roper, *Sex, Marriage and Motherhood*, 33-38; Susan Johnson, "Luther's Reformation and (Un)holy Matrimony," *Journal of Family History* 17 (1992): 271-288; Strohl, *Marriage as Discipleship*, 137; Emmett Cocke, "Luther's View of Marriage and Family" *Religion in Life* 42 (1973): 103-116; David Menet, "Luther on Marriage" (Master's thesis, Concordia Theological Seminary, 1999).

⁷⁰⁹ See Michael Parsons, *Reformation Marriage: The Husband and Wife Relationship in the Theology of Luther and Calvin* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2005).

⁷¹⁰ Luther believed that marriage was a remedy for humanity to defend against lustful actions, but this was only required after the fall, see LW 1, 118; WA 42, 89, 34-37: "In Paradise woman would have been a help for a duty only. But now she is also, and for the greater part at that, an antidote and a medicine; we can hardly speak of her without a feeling of shame, and surely we cannot make use of her without shame."

⁷¹¹ Luther could have been influenced by the laws at the time that required women to have a male protector, see pages 72-75.

⁷¹² WA 20, 149.

⁷¹³ Viewing marriage as the only ideal for women, as well as their only natural vocation may have added to feelings of hostility that were directed towards unmarried women. Even women who were well-respected, such as Margaretha Blarer who was the sister of Ambrosius, was suspect because of her decision to not marry. For example, Martin Bucer accused Margaretha of being "master-less" without a husband, see Wiesner-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 299.

⁷¹⁴ WA 17, 1, 25, translated by Wienser-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 299.

children. Without a man, she was not able to realize her role in life that was established by God.⁷¹⁵

Since this was the canon of normal womanhood, any woman who did not wish to marry was in some way diverging from the norm.⁷¹⁶ There were certain situations in which Luther recognized that women might be forced to act “unnaturally.”⁷¹⁷ This was typically due to practical reasons such as physical illness or a shortage of men.⁷¹⁸ In these cases, he considered unmarried women to be a type of “problem” that needed to be solved. Luther’s solution was to require these women to live with a family. He advised that they not be allowed to live on their own or with other unmarried women. This was a solution that was adopted by many cities in the sixteenth century.⁷¹⁹ These women were required to live with a family so that they could be under the “natural” control of the man of the household.⁷²⁰ Therefore, Luther strongly emphasized marriage for women because without a husband the woman was “without head and without offspring.”⁷²¹

⁷¹⁵ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 236.

⁷¹⁶ Roper, *Sex, Marriage, and Motherhood*, 35.

⁷¹⁷ Luther believed that almost everyone should enter marriage, except for those who dedicated themselves to God, people with certain disabilities, and eunuchs, see WA 1, 10, 2, 277.

⁷¹⁸ There was a period where the sex ratio in Europe was unequal and more women were being born than men. This meant that fewer women were able to find a mate to carry out these “natural” inclinations even if they desired to do so. This may have contributed to accusations surrounding the practice of witchcraft. Ian McLean argues that the prosecution of single women or widows as witches may have been based on a fear of “abandoning the traditional view of woman as a person married or destined for marriages,” see Ian McLean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 88; see also Erik Midlefort, *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany: 1562-1684* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1972), 184-186.

⁷¹⁹ See Joel Harrington, *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁷²⁰ Wiesner-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 302.

⁷²¹ LW 16, 50.

Women Should be Obedient

Since the husband was the “head” of the wife, this meant that he controlled her and that she was created to be submissive to him.⁷²² From Ephesians 5:22-23 and Colossians 3:18, Luther concluded that the wife was not created out of the head which meant that she is not able to rule over her husband.⁷²³ He believed that God “did not create this sex for ruling, and therefore they never rule successfully.”⁷²⁴ For this reason, the woman shall be subordinate and obedient to the man: “For that reason the wife wears a headdress, that is, the veil on her head, as St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians in the second chapter, that she is not free but under obedience to her husband.”⁷²⁵ This subordination and obedience meant that the woman should “not undertake or do anything without his consent.”⁷²⁶ Although it was normal in sixteenth century society for a woman to rule or manage the household, she was still not the head of the household. He believed that the man had complete control over the woman, who was his helpmeet and subordinate: “Women were created for no other purpose than to serve men and be their helpers.”⁷²⁷ For Luther, husbands should regard their wives in this way.⁷²⁸ Therefore, what a wife should do within a marriage is be subordinate and obedient to her husband.

Wives were expected to be obedient to the husband’s rule, no matter how severe, without question, even if their husbands were not Christians.⁷²⁹ Luther recognized that this might be an

⁷²² WA 17, 1, 26-27; it is interesting to note that there were some situations in which a woman was not bound by her husband’s rule. For example, if the husband was impotent and would not let the wife have sex with another man, a woman could leave her husband or make secret arrangements. This seems to have been allowed so that a woman could fulfil their God-given duty to produce children, see LW 36, 103-105.

⁷²³ WA 17, 1, 26-27, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 95.

⁷²⁴ LW 15, 130.

⁷²⁵ WA 17, 1, 26-27, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 95.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁷²⁷ Erl. 20, 84, translated by Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 13.

⁷²⁸ LW 30, 91-92; see also Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

⁷²⁹ Erl. 51, 46-47.

unpleasant or difficult task for women. He believed that women are “generally disinclined to put up with this burden” since they “naturally seek to gain what they have lost through sin.”⁷³⁰ If a woman challenged this burden; however, then it was a sin. If a woman assumes authority over her husband, then “she is no longer doing her own work, for which she was created, but work that comes from her own fault and from evil.”⁷³¹ Luther thought that proper obedience was the “highest, most valuable treasure” that a woman could possess.⁷³² It was the woman’s responsibility to make sure that her obedient works were pleasing to the man. He claimed: “What could be happier for her?”⁷³³ He asserted that if the woman wanted to be a Christian wife, she should think: “I won’t mind what kind of husband I have, whether he is a heathen or a Jew, pious or evil. I will think instead that God has put me in marriage, and I will be subject and obedient to my husband.”⁷³⁴ For Luther, when a woman is obedient “all of her works are golden.”⁷³⁵

Despite this complete subordination, he advocated that marriages should be based on love and mutual consent otherwise they might result in violence, hatred, adultery, and divorce.⁷³⁶ He also thought that both sexes should treat each other well within a marriage: “Both should conduct themselves in such a way that the wife holds her husband in honor and that the husband, in turn, gives his wife the honor that is her due.”⁷³⁷ However, the quality of these tender actions is questionable. For example, he advised husbands to rule their wives with reason and gentility because the “woman is a weak vessel or tool” and therefore, “must be used carefully as you use

⁷³⁰ LW 1, 203.

⁷³¹ LW 15, 130.

⁷³² Erl. 51, 428, translated by Wiesner-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 298.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, 428.

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*, 428.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*, 428.

⁷³⁶ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 234.

⁷³⁷ LW 30, 1, 3-7; WA 1, 17, 1, 19.

other tools.”⁷³⁸ Although a man must take care of a woman, he advised that the husband make take care of her “as you take care of another tool with which you work.”⁷³⁹

Luther also emphasized that the husband ought to be lenient towards his wife, especially when things do not go exactly as planned: “Therefore see to it that you are a man and that the less thoughtful your wife is, the more thoughtful you are. At times you must be lenient, slacken the reins a bit.”⁷⁴⁰ Luther’s view here might have been progressive for his time, especially since during this period corporal punishment of wives was not uncommon.⁷⁴¹ The purpose of his comments on this subject was likely to refine this old method of punishment used by men so that it seemed more civilized.⁷⁴² However, the image of husbands having to “slacken the reins” has indicated to some scholars, like Martha Behrens, that Luther may still have thought of women as “work horses in full harness.”⁷⁴³ He also suggested that if things were not going well, then it might be because women lack thoughtfulness.

Furthermore, even though Luther advised that each partner should treat the other well, this did not mean that there was equality between the sexes within a marriage. Rather than focusing on the spiritual similarities between the sexes, as he did with Adam and Eve, Luther emphasized the external differences between men and women. Throughout his career, Luther believed that, spiritually, men and women are alike since both are baptized and have the God’s blessings. In this way, there is no spiritual difference between a man and a woman. However, externally “God wants the husband to rule and the wife to be submissive to him.”⁷⁴⁴ A woman’s

⁷³⁸ Erl. 51, 431.

⁷³⁹ LW 30, 91-92.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid., 92.

⁷⁴¹ Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 76.

⁷⁴² Ibid., 76.

⁷⁴³ Ibid., 76.

⁷⁴⁴ LW 30, 92-93.

relationship with her husband suggests that a woman had no purpose or meaning without him regardless of the spiritual equality that exists between them.⁷⁴⁵

A woman's subjection to her husband through marriage and motherhood was so important to Luther that he replaced the ideal of chastity with obedience as a woman's most important virtue.⁷⁴⁶ By 1523, he appeared to have emphasized the married life over being celibate.⁷⁴⁷ Scott Hendrix observes that Luther made marriage "the real religious order" and the "most religious state of all" by elevating "it to the spiritual status that had been reserved for the celibate members of the priesthood and monastic orders."⁷⁴⁸ We can see this approach in Luther's commentary on Galatians 4:30, where he argued against the emphasis on the sacramental honour granted to marriage as meaning that it was inferior to celibacy that was epitomized in monastic life.⁷⁴⁹ He thought that this was hypocrisy.⁷⁵⁰ Instead, Luther argued that the celibate life is nothing more than an "impressive front of sanctity."⁷⁵¹

However, this is not to say that he condemned celibacy entirely.⁷⁵² Rather, he thought it was impossible to maintain except for a few individuals. Luther believed that if a man chose to remain celibate that they could be given the ability by God to remain truly chaste, but this would

⁷⁴⁵ Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 77.

⁷⁴⁶ Luther based his rejection of celibacy on a radical reinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 7 (1523), see LW 28: 16-17; 19; for information on the significance of women's virginity, see Jane Schulenberg, "The Heroics of Virginity," *Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Mary Beth Rose (Syracuse University Press, 1986).

⁷⁴⁷ Wiesner-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 298; He also rejected celibacy because he had so much trust in the institution of marriage as a way for humanity to fulfill God's design for the created order, see Pedersen, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 192-193

⁷⁴⁸ Hendrix, *Luther on Marriage*, 338.

⁷⁴⁹ Luther thought that monasticism saw itself as an elite rank that was higher than the other estates and claimed that celibacy was a "state of perfection." Luther believed that this was going against evangelical freedom. He thought that this evangelical freedom could only be found in monastic life in one respect and that was in the monastic schools that provided children with education, see Pedersen, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 193; for more information on Luther's critique on the monastery life, see Gerle, *Luther and the Erotic*, 205-206.

⁷⁵⁰ For the first time, Luther criticized the sacramental character of marriage in his work titled: *the Babylonian Exile of the Church (1520)*.

⁷⁵¹ LW 26, 459.

⁷⁵² Although Luther discouraged a celibate lifestyle, he did not condemn it entirely because he could not find any biblical grounds to do so since Mary and Jesus remained celibate, Hill, *Martin Luther, Marriage, and Women*, 56.

only be in very rare instances.⁷⁵³ It was only through early deaths that individuals were able to remain virgins: “God has not allowed many virgins to live long, but hurried them out of this world [...] He knows how precious their treasure [virginity] is and how difficult it is to maintain very long.”⁷⁵⁴ Although he believed that men would be going against their natural sexual urges, it is nevertheless possible for them to remain celibate. By contrast, Luther argued that women’s sexual desires are so strong that the gift of celibacy was given to less than one in a thousand women.⁷⁵⁵ Luther considered a woman’s natural sexual drive to be much stronger than man’s sexual urges thereby making it harder for a woman to remain celibate.⁷⁵⁶ It may also have been the case that he thought women’s weak nature might make it harder for them to control their desires.⁷⁵⁷ In addition, if a woman chose to remain celibate, they were not only going against their natural sex drive which was essentially impossible, but much more significantly, they were going against God’s imposed natural order.⁷⁵⁸

Women Should Bear Children

This imposed order not only included being obedient to man, but also bearing and raising children which he thought was to serve and honour God.⁷⁵⁹ For Luther, an individual’s obligation was to have as many children as possible, as God had commanded.⁷⁶⁰ He believed that this was God’s intention and design from the very beginning: “They are primarily created by God for this,

⁷⁵³ LW 28, 16-17.

⁷⁵⁴ WA 10, 1, 708, translated by Wiesner-Hanks, *Death of Two Marys*, 301.

⁷⁵⁵ See Michelle Derusha, *Katharina and Martin Luther: The Radical Marriage of a Runaway Nun and a Renegade Monk* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2017), see also, LW 45, 21.

⁷⁵⁶ Roper, *Sex, Marriage, and Motherhood*, 35.

⁷⁵⁷ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 137.

⁷⁵⁸ Luther saw marriage and family life as Christian callings, see Donald, McKim, *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 169-171.

⁷⁵⁹ Hendrix, *Luther on Marriage*, 338.

⁷⁶⁰ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 234.

that they should bear children, be compassionate, and bring joy and happiness to men.”⁷⁶¹ He maintained that the reason why Adam’s situation was not considered to be “good” prior to the creation of Eve was because Adam did not have the ability to procreate alone.⁷⁶² Adam needed Eve for the purpose of bearing children. He claimed that God placed in Eve and in all women “His creation of all human beings” which extended to the “use of creation.”⁷⁶³ This included: “conceiving; giving birth to, nourishing, and bringing up children,” but also “serving her husband and managing the home.”⁷⁶⁴

Luther asserted that God used women as a “vessel or tool” for no other purpose than to bear children: “For by nature woman has been created for the purpose of bearing children.”⁷⁶⁵ Women were not only created for procreation, but by nature, they also had a strong desire to produce children even with possible complications: “If women grow weary or even die while bearing children, that does not harm anything. Let them bear children to death; they are created for that.”⁷⁶⁶ For Luther, this also explained female physiology and femaleness.⁷⁶⁷ He wrote: “To me it is often a source of great pleasure and wonderment that the entire female body was created for the purpose of nurturing children.”⁷⁶⁸ In this way, women have a specific function in life

⁷⁶¹ WA TR 1, 12, 5-6, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 71.

⁷⁶² Hill, *Martin Luther, Marriage, and Women*, 17.

⁷⁶³ LW 1, 202.

⁷⁶⁴ LW 4, 291.

⁷⁶⁵ LW 5, 355; it is also interesting to note that Luther emphasized the barrenness of Sarah as a “Hell” for Abraham. Hill argues that if a woman’s divine duty is to produce children then it is not clear why Luther described her inability as the man’s “Hell” and not the woman’s. He argues that by asserting that it belongs to Abraham that Luther implies that a woman’s duty to procreate is not a duty to God as it is a duty to her husband: “Motherhood becomes less a means for religious legitimation of a woman, than of her husband,” see Hill, *Martin Luther, Marriage, and Women*, 40-45.

⁷⁶⁶ Erl. 20, 84, translated by Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 13.

⁷⁶⁷ When examining Luther’s conclusions about women’s honour and tasks through brining new children into the world, we ought to keep in mind that Luther was historically limited with regards to his knowledge of female physiology.

⁷⁶⁸ LW 1, 202; see also LW 4, 291: “She carries human beings in her womb, brings them forth into this world, nourishes them with milk, and takes care of them by bathing them and performing other services.”

which can be seen by the efficacy of a woman's body in procreation.⁷⁶⁹ For example, he saw that women have breasts for "nourishing, cherishing, and carrying her offspring."⁷⁷⁰ He used these physical characteristics as evidence that it was God's intention that women were created to produce children.

He also maintained that women's physical characteristics, such as those that make a woman attractive or not, could influence procreation.⁷⁷¹ He believed that unattractive women are usually the most fertile. Since procreation is the main purpose of marriage, men should try to choose women who are more likely to reproduce successfully. While unattractive women are more fertile, beautiful women could still contribute to the process of procreation. Luther argued that beautiful women are God's incentives to men who are driven only by their sexual urges to help them accept the limitations of matrimony: "Because of so many great troubles and difficulties of marriage it is not wicked if one chooses a beautiful woman with her bodily strength unimpaired in order that he may be able to endure this bond of marriage with all its troubles longer and more easily."⁷⁷² For Luther, a beautiful woman might make marriage more bearable, last longer, and thereby allow for more chances to produce children.

Since women were created for procreation, women only have one function in life which they are destined by God to fulfill: "What better and more useful thing can be taught in the church than the example of a godly mother of the household who [...] rules the house, performs the functions of sex and desires offspring with the greatest chastity, grace and godliness: What

⁷⁶⁹ Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 54.

⁷⁷⁰ LW 5, 355.

⁷⁷¹ For information on Luther's views on sex and lust, see Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "'Lustful Luther': Male Libido in the Writings of the Reformer," in *Masculinity in the Reformation Era*, ed. by Scott Hendrix and Susan Karant-Nunn (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University, 2008); Elisabeth Gerle, *Passionate Embrace: Luther on Love, Body, and Sensual Presence* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017); Gerle, *Luther and the Erotic*.

⁷⁷² LW 5, 290; WA 43, 628, 33-36; see also Richard Kothe, *Marriage and Sex According to Luther's Lectures on Genesis in the Context of the Twentieth Century* (Concordia Theological Seminary: Fort Wayne, 1982).

more should she do?”⁷⁷³ Luther thought that women should complete works of this kind to fulfill the purpose that God implanted in them since the beginning of creation. In other words, a woman could please God through bearing children. Although this act pleases God, Luther did not claim that a woman could be saved through bearing children. He strongly rejected the idea of being saved through good works. His commentary on 1 Timothy 2:15 makes this stance clear in relation to producing children.⁷⁷⁴ Paul includes faith and charity in his instruction on woman’s salvation. Luther also believed that it was right that women should receive charitable instruction “on everything that may be frail in woman.”⁷⁷⁵ He emphasized that Jesus did not hold woman in contempt, but rather entered a woman’s womb. When reflecting on Paul’s statement that “woman will be saved through bearing children,” Luther noted that this is admirable praise, “except that he uses the little word ‘woman’ and not ‘mother.’”⁷⁷⁶ He argued that having children does not produce faith in a woman, but rather that childbearing is a mark of a faithful Christian woman. He asserted that a faithful woman would actively involve herself in bearing children:

You will be saved if you have also subjected yourselves and bear your children with pain. It is a very great comfort that a woman can be saved by bearing children. That is, she has an honourable and salutary status in life if she keeps busy having children. She is described as ‘saved’ not for freedom, for license, but for bearing and rearing children. Is she not saved by faith?... Simple childbearing does nothing, since the heathen also does this. I add this, therefore, that they may not feel secure when they have no faith.⁷⁷⁷

⁷⁷³ LW 5, 331.

⁷⁷⁴ LW 54, 223.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., 223.

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid., 223.

⁷⁷⁷ LW 28, 279.

For Luther, any woman who is not a Christian may produce children. For this reason, childbearing does not make a woman a faithful Christian. However, a woman who can have children may not be considered a faithful Christian unless she bears children.⁷⁷⁸ Therefore, women were not saved through the works of motherhood even though they were created solely for that purpose. For Luther, producing children could not save a woman, but it was at least related to redemption through showing a woman's faith.⁷⁷⁹ However, the emphasis on woman as a "tool" or "vessel" for producing children hints at the idea that if a woman did not have this function, then they would not be "worth" saving.⁷⁸⁰

By maintaining this view, Luther created a fundamental link between motherhood and the faithful or ideal woman.⁷⁸¹ He made motherhood a duty or requirement for women who wished to prove their faith rather than a religiously legitimized vocation.⁷⁸² Luther religiously required women to be mothers and to experience motherhood. This was partly because he believed God created women to do so since it was their function, but also because it was the "one good thing" that a woman could accomplish.⁷⁸³ He believed that women carried around with them "very many faults in the mind as well as in the body," nevertheless "that one good thing, the womb and childbearing, covers and buries them all [women's faults]."⁷⁸⁴ He thought that this "argument and proof is very strong; it penetrates and prevails" and that there is nothing that could be used to argue and convince as powerfully as it does, "not beauty, not morals, not wealth, or whatever

⁷⁷⁸ Hill, *Martin Luther, Marriage, and Women*, 51.

⁷⁷⁹ Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 98.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁷⁸¹ See Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "Nuns, Wives, and Mothers: Women and the Reformation in Germany," in *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: Public and Private Words*, ed. Sherrin Marshall (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1989).

⁷⁸² Hill, *Martin Luther, Marriage, and Women*, 52.

⁷⁸³ LW 4, 291.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 291.

other endowments women have.”⁷⁸⁵ Clearly, bearing children was at the center of Luther’s theological view of women and his explanation for their nature and purpose.

Since he believed that procreation was God’s intention from the beginning, any situation in which procreation was not possible was not “good.”⁷⁸⁶ This meant that childlessness was a problem. He claimed that women who did not want children were “callous” and “inhuman.”⁷⁸⁷ Luther thought that saintly mothers also considered childlessness as a disgrace.⁷⁸⁸ A woman would be considered “evil” if she chose to “shun” this blessing: “Those who have no love for children are swine, stocks, and logs unworthy of being called men or women; for they despise the blessing of God.”⁷⁸⁹ Since a woman’s salvation seems to be decisively linked with the act of bearing children, it is uncertain how childless women fit within Luther’s requirements for faith and salvation.⁷⁹⁰ Luther thought that procreation was so important that he heavily focused on women’s purpose as mothers. Even though he used harsh terms like “tool,” or “vessel” to describe a woman’s function, he nevertheless thought that motherhood was a noble calling.⁷⁹¹ Stjerna argues that for Luther, there is nothing inferior about a woman’s calling. She argues that his biblical hermeneutics raise women in this view and in the task of motherhood means that no one is equal to them.⁷⁹² However, any contemporary reader would see that there is a problem with Luther’s thinking because he does not include in women’s sacred calling duties other than physical mothering. Furthermore, he did not recognize the possibility of wholeness and holiness

⁷⁸⁵ LW 4, 291.

⁷⁸⁶ Hill, *Martin Luther, Marriage, and Women*, 17.

⁷⁸⁷ LW 1, 118.

⁷⁸⁸ LW 3, 133.

⁷⁸⁹ LW 5, 363.

⁷⁹⁰ Hill, *Martin Luther, Marriage, and Women*, 52.

⁷⁹¹ Stjerna argues that scholars, especially Lutherans, have used Luther’s theology to support women’s autonomy with their bodies and reproductive rights based on Luther’s thoughts on a woman’s holy calling, see Stjerna, *Luther and Gender*, 165.

⁷⁹² *Ibid.*, 164-165.

from different ways of living as a woman such as those living a single or unmarried life. This meant that there were many women that did not fit into Luther's concept of the ideal woman.

By strongly emphasizing procreation, it might also explain why Luther did not have much to say about a woman's relationship with her children after they were born. He did not write much about this and was vague about this part of a woman's life. He advocated that women ought to bring up their daughters well so that they can become good mothers themselves, but he was not specific about how a woman became a "good mother." He wrote: "It is no small thing when a young woman is well reared and becomes a good mother, who is then able to bring up her children in piety."⁷⁹³ This view is not surprising for an earlier Luther, who was still a monk, but this view did not change significantly even after he was married and had a family of his own.⁷⁹⁴ Furthermore, it appears paradoxical that Luther strongly emphasized and valued a woman's function in procreation, but at the same time, he overlooked her role as a mother who raised children.⁷⁹⁵ Another paradox can be found in Luther's persistence that motherhood was both a woman's purpose for being but also her punishment because of the fall. This meant that bearing children was seen both as God's blessing, as well as a curse or punishment.⁷⁹⁶

Women Should Remain at Home

If women were created to bear and raise children, then it meant that they had to remain in the home to complete these activities and their other household tasks.⁷⁹⁷ Women were confined

⁷⁹³ LW 51, 151-152.

⁷⁹⁴ Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 56.

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁷⁹⁷ Hill argues that Luther could have religiously legitimized domestic service and motherhood as possible vocations for women; however, Luther seems to describe the woman's role as submissive to her husband as a type of punishment or curse rather than a vocation that was divinely blessed. Instead of a vocation, this was a continuous reminder of woman's sinful nature originating with Eve, see Hill, *Martin Luther, Marriage, and Women*, 48.

by their station in life to remain within the household which according to Luther showed female Christian faithfulness to both God and their husbands. He believed that creation reveals that women ought to be domestic because “they have broad backsides and hips, so that they should sit still.”⁷⁹⁸ For Luther, women do not mind “sitting still” because women “enjoy staying home, enjoy being in the kitchen, do not enjoy going out, and do not enjoy speaking to others.”⁷⁹⁹ For Luther, the wife gladly stays at home and completes her everyday tasks.

He found support for his position in Paul’s writings (Titus 2:5), where he prescribed that a woman “should be a domestic, so to speak, one who stays in her own home and looks after her own affairs.”⁸⁰⁰ A married woman’s work and affairs included the “godly administration” of children and the household so that what the husband provides can be properly allotted and administered.⁸⁰¹ Luther argued that “women bear children and raise them, rule the house and distribute in an orderly fashion whatever a man earns and brings into the household, so that nothing is wasted or frittered away on unnecessary things, but that everyone receives what he needs.”⁸⁰² For this reason, he asserted that women are called “treasure of the house” by the Holy Spirit because they ought to be considered the “honor, jewels, and gems of the household.”⁸⁰³

A wife’s affairs did not include continuous prayer and fasting. Although prayer and faith still played a role, obediently completing everyday household tasks was the ideal. He thought that when a woman was in the kitchen or when she was making the bed that it was an everyday task that did “not bother the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁰⁴ He thought that a wife was appointed for “things

⁷⁹⁸ WA TR 1, 55, 19, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 28.

⁷⁹⁹ LW 29, 56; WA 25, 45.

⁸⁰⁰ LW 3, 200-201.

⁸⁰¹ LW 52, 123-124; Luther has often been praised as the founder of the Christian home, see William Lazareth, *Luther on the Christian Home* (Philadelphia, 1960), 199-234.

⁸⁰² WA TR 1, 12, 5-6, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 71.

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁸⁰⁴ LW 29, 56; WA 25, 46.

that are very ordinary in the judgement of the flesh but nevertheless extremely pious in the eyes of God.”⁸⁰⁵ For these reasons, Luther used Martha as the ideal example and not Martha’s sister, Mary. He believed that Mary was not the ideal woman because she left the household and tried to understand Jesus’ teachings better. By contrast, Martha remained in the home and managed the household by preparing the food and overseeing the servants. For Luther, these are the virtues of a “good housewife.”⁸⁰⁶

A “good housewife” was also similar to a “nail driven into the wall” which did not leave and was not meant to leave the household.⁸⁰⁷ Luther argued that the pagans “depicted Venus as standing on a tortoise; for just as a tortoise carried its house wherever it creeps, so a wife should be concerned with the affairs of her own home and not go too far away from it.”⁸⁰⁸ Since women should “not go too far away” from the household, he maintained the conviction that women should be excluded from preaching and from ruling with the Church and the state.⁸⁰⁹ However, they were not only excluded from these two estates, but also their own. Even though women stayed at home and looked after their own affairs, they were nevertheless excluded from ruling as the head within their own households.⁸¹⁰ Although Luther advocated that a woman’s Godly duty was to remain at home, he still thought that this “calling” was inferior even though women took care of the “superior” members of the other two estates. He believed that women were limited to one “calling” and that remaining within the household was a limited calling which was

⁸⁰⁵ LW 29, 56; WA 25, 46.

⁸⁰⁶ LW 3, 200-201.

⁸⁰⁷ LW 1, 202-203.

⁸⁰⁸ LW 3, 200-201; the comparison of a woman with a snail and her shell is not an original analogy to either Luther or the Reformation, but rather is an ancient one, see Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 15.

⁸⁰⁹ Luther’s perspective on the state provides insight into his view of women. Both the institution of marriage and the state are examples of the authority that Luther thought God created to protect against sin in society. A comparison can be made here between the subjection the wife to her husband and the man to the state.

⁸¹⁰ During the sixteenth century, the man was meant to be the “head” of the household and the woman was expected to “rule” over the household according to the husband’s demands.

appropriate for a limited creature.⁸¹¹ However, even though women are limited creatures, they were necessary: “One has to have women. If one did not have this sex, womankind, house-keeping and everything that pertains to it would fall apart; and after it all worldly governance, cities, and order.”⁸¹² He believed that even if men were able to bear children by themselves, the world cannot dismiss women.⁸¹³ For Martin Luther, women are indispensable.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there is no fundamental difference in Martin Luther’s earlier and later theological attitudes towards women. Throughout his career, Luther presented many ambiguities in his theology, especially with his interpretation of Eve. He shifted from a traditional perspective to a more positive assessment then back again to his earlier views. These ambiguities are important for understanding Luther’s theological view of women. While Luther believed that both men and women were spiritually equal, he also maintained a strict theological perspective of women that was common for the sixteenth century. Luther’s traditional opinion of women and their nature tends to be continuous with early and medieval Christian writers, philosophers from antiquity, and with other sixteenth century theologians’ views.⁸¹⁴

While exploring his attitudes towards women, it is important to remember that he would have inherited these traditional views and that he would have been influenced by the worldview

⁸¹¹ Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 105.

⁸¹² WA TR 2, 1658, 166, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 125

⁸¹³ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁸¹⁴ This is like other Protestant authors at that time writing about the same material, for example John Calvin. However, unlike Calvin, Luther provided new directions and conclusions, see Jane Dempsey Douglas, “The Image of God in Women as Seen by Luther and Calvin,” in *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Børrensen (Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1991), 242; see also Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), and idem, ed., *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 13–47.

of his time.⁸¹⁵ During the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church maintained the Aristotelian tradition that considered woman to be inferior to man because they were considered an “unfinished” man.⁸¹⁶ Since they were “unfinished,” women were incapable of having an independent character or thought. Based on these weaknesses, Aristotle argued that the domestic life was best suited for women.⁸¹⁷ Even though Luther eventually criticized the Church for relying heavily on Aristotle, he remained an Aristotelian for life.⁸¹⁸

In addition to these philosophical influences, Luther’s attitudes were strongly shaped by the tradition of the Church and the Scriptures. There is no doubt that he read the Bible critically, but as Behrens argues, there is no record of whether Luther seriously questioned the core assumptions that he made about women.⁸¹⁹ For Luther, even though women were spiritually equal to men and could equally achieve salvation, they were lower than males in the hierarchy that was established in the world by God. He thought that women were physically weaker, less rational, more emotional, and more morally deficient than men. For example, women, as portrayed by Eve, could be more easily misled than men. Their intellectual abilities were less engaged than men’s abilities, especially in the realms of the Church and state and they were not capable of higher cognitive development. Since they have no intellectual abilities, women are meant for the household. He thought that women’s physical qualities provided an explanation of their nature such as “broad hips,” and “narrow shoulders” meaning that they were suited for bearing children and lacked the intellectual weight in their heads. He thought that all women are inclined to “indecent chatter” and “gossip,” so he advocated that they should remain silent,

⁸¹⁵ Luther maintained and transmitted many of the perspectives of high and late medieval thought, see Pedersen, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 192.

⁸¹⁶ Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 9.

⁸¹⁷ See Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy: The Lives and Opinions of the Great Philosophers of the Western World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009).

⁸¹⁸ Erik Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Norton, 1962), 86.

⁸¹⁹ Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 101.

pious, and submissive.⁸²⁰ For Luther, marriage was an institution where women could display “good” Christian virtues and stay “under the control” of the husband, stay obedient to him, and remain with the household. However, even the words that Luther used to describe women who lived up to his ideals are not very complimentary ones. He described women as a weak vessel, a nail, and a tortoise. By comparison, women who did not follow this ideal were described using even harsher words such as burning with lust and tools of the Devil.

Martin Luther’s theology from his mid-to-late career can tell scholars much about his view of women. However, a more thorough understanding of his attitudes towards women can be obtained by exploring his personal life in addition to his theology. In other words, his theology does not tell the whole story. Before exploring Luther’s personal interactions with women, it was first necessary to examine his theological view of women so that readers can use it as a point of reflection and comparison while they read the next two chapters. The next two chapters argue that Martin Luther’s personal correspondences provide more insights into how he viewed women, interacted with them, and whether he practiced what he preached in his everyday relationships with women.

⁸²⁰ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 13.

CHAPTER FOUR: MARTIN LUTHER'S INTERACTIONS WITH FEMALE FAMILY MEMBERS AND REFORMATION WOMEN

INTRODUCTION

This chapter argues that exploring Martin Luther's personal interactions with women provides a more nuanced understanding of his attitudes towards women than examining his theology alone. Luther's view of women will be explored by discussing how he interacted with women and treated them throughout his personal letters. His personal correspondences present him in a different light than we have seen in the previous chapter. Throughout Luther's encounters with women, he did not maintain his strict theological convictions and he did not enforce his theological principles in his own daily life. This is interesting as Philip Melanchthon, one of his closest colleagues and first biographers, stated that Luther's "character was, almost, so to speak, the greatest proof" of his theological doctrine.⁸²¹ Therefore, it is important to explore whether Luther maintained his own theological convictions throughout his life. This is where his encounters with women gain a greater significance than simply showing Luther's humanity. When Luther communicated with exceptional women who challenged his theology, he did not lash out, enforce his own beliefs, or reprimand them. Instead, his encounters show that there was a balanced exchange of ideas and a recognition of women's intelligence. He seems to have made exceptions to his own theological rules for exceptional or influential women with whom he corresponded. Since actions speak louder than words, these interactions contrast strongly with his theological statements.

⁸²¹ Philipp Melanchthon, *Vita Lutheri*, Frankfurt am Main 1555 [VD 16 M 3428], fo. c 17 r-v, translated by Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet* (New York: Random House, 2018), 11.

This chapter explores how Luther corresponded with Margarethe Luther, Katharina von Bora, Argula von Grumbach, and Katharina Schütz Zell.⁸²² This section presents a brief biographical sketch of each woman to highlight that they possessed characteristics that were contrary to what Luther described in his theological writings. This chapter then analyzes how Luther communicated with these four exceptional women who often challenged his traditional theological convictions.

There is so much information on Luther that scholars probably can know more about his inner life than any other individual in the sixteenth century. For example, the Weimar edition spans one hundred and twenty volumes, including eleven volumes of letters and six volumes of his conversations with guests at the dinner table.⁸²³ This allows scholars to examine his relationships with friends, colleagues, and women throughout his personal correspondences.⁸²⁴ He was different from other late medieval theologians because he did not write about women in the abstract but lived both his public and private life among them.⁸²⁵ In other words, Luther's life revolved around women. For example, many of the guests who boarded or gathered in his household were women. He had a close circle of friends including the Jonases, the Bugenhagens, and the Melanchthons which meant that there were frequently women who were pregnant or nursing within his household. When scholars move beyond the home, we can see that Luther also

⁸²² For anthologies of women's writing in the early modern period, see Peter Freybe, *Frauen mischen sich ein: Katharina Luther, Katharina Melanchthon, Katharina Zell, Hille Feicken und andere* (Wittenberg: Drei Kastanien Verlag, 1995); Katharina Wilson, *Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1996).

⁸²³ Roper, *Renegade and Prophet*, 9.

⁸²⁴ In a recent article from 2010, Lyndal Roper argues that Luther's letters can reveal far more about Luther. With this article, she examines how Luther used his letters tactically, especially his correspondence with Spalatin, see *idem*, "'To His Most Learned and Dearest Friend': Reading Luther's Letters," *German History* 28 (2010): 283-295.

⁸²⁵ See Matthieu Arnold, *Les Femmes dans la correspondance de Luther* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998).

preached at St. Mary's Church in Wittenberg, where his congregation included women.⁸²⁶ He not only interacted with women as a preacher, but also on a more personal level. Women wrote to Luther to receive his counsel on several issues including childbirth, spousal relations, marriage, family matters, coping with loss, and worry over salvation. It was normal for Luther to speak to women with a confident tone while presenting himself as an expert on women.⁸²⁷ He had experience with women from different vocations and with a variety of matters pertaining to women's lives. Although Luther maintained a traditional theological perspective, his personal correspondence show that he nevertheless viewed himself as a friend of women.⁸²⁸

The next two chapters highlight Luther's complexities and discusses whether he enforced his own theological principles throughout his life. Although it could be argued that Luther made "some of the most misogynistic remarks of any thinker," the next two chapters show that his personal situations frequently do not reflect his own theology.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁶ Kirsi Stjerna, "Luther and Women," in *Martin Luther: A Christian between Reforms and Modernity (1517-2017)*, ed. Alberto Melloni (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 604.

⁸²⁷ Stjerna, *Luther and Gender*, 162.

⁸²⁸ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 203; for more information Luther's traditional views, especially his rhetoric concerning the female as other or the female as the secondary sex, see Sini Mikkola, "Female as the Other in Martin Luther's Anthropology in the Early 1520s," *Anthropological Reformations: Anthropology in the Era of the Reformation* 28 (2015): 175-185.

⁸²⁹ Roper, *Renegade and Prophet*, 11; Paula Rieder argues that recent medieval historians tend to apply the word "misogyny" to a wide range of attitudes towards women and that the tendency to understand misogyny and patriarchy as "coterminous" is problematic, see *idem*, "The Uses and Misuses of Misogyny: Critical Historiography of the Language of Medieval Woman's Oppression," *Historical Reflections* 38, no 1 (2012): 1-18.

FEMALE FAMILY MEMBERS

Margarethe Luther (1460 – 1531)

Without attempting to psychoanalyze Luther after his death, it is worth thinking about the nature of his relationship with his mother, Margarethe Luther, née Lindemann.⁸³⁰ She was often called Hanna by her family.⁸³¹ Margarethe would have likely been Luther's primary female role model and may have influenced the way he thought about women.⁸³² This is a reasonable claim since he would not have had contact with many other women during his early life.⁸³³ It was not the case that Luther would have had any female servants or even male servants.⁸³⁴ Surveys that were conducted in the late medieval period show that very few village households had servants at all.⁸³⁵ It was also unlikely that Luther's family home included an extended family since there was a decline in these types of living arrangements during this period.⁸³⁶ Therefore, Margarethe likely would have been Luther's first interaction with women and first female role model.

There has not been much said about Margarethe Luder, either in scholarship about herself or in biographical works on Luther.⁸³⁷ According to biographers, there is very little known about Margarethe, the extent to which she influenced Luther, and even less known about how he

⁸³⁰ Luther's family name is typically referred to as "*Luder*," especially when discussing his parents. It was not until later in his life that he changed the spelling of his own last name, see Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 259.

⁸³¹ Heiko Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 87.

⁸³² See Ian Siggins, *Luther and His Mother* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Pub, 2003).

⁸³³ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 238.

⁸³⁴ Other studies suggest that the Luder family was unable to afford a servant in Luther's early years, see Heinz Schilling, *Martin Luther: Rebel in an Age of Upheaval* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 46.

⁸³⁵ Frances and Joseph Gies, *Marriage and the Family in Middle Ages* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), 239; George Huppert, *After the Black Death: A Social History of Early Modern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 67.

⁸³⁶ Gies, *Marriage and the Family in Middle Ages*, 296.

⁸³⁷ There may be several reasons for the lack of information about Margarethe. For example, Luther did not write much about his mother. It may also be the case that scholars may have chosen to ignore certain aspects of Luther's life that paint a more complex picture of the reformer, see also Oberman, *Man Between God and the Devil*, 86-87.

viewed his own mother.⁸³⁸ Luther did not frequently mention Margarethe in his writings and his own brief comments do not tell scholars much about her personality.⁸³⁹ Heinrich Boehmer states that we have “only a very shadowy conception” of Margarethe even though George Spalatin (1484 – 1545) once noted that Luther was her “spit and image.”⁸⁴⁰ Heiko Oberman argues that there is accurate information available on Hans Luder, but that the same cannot be said for Luther’s mother.⁸⁴¹ He argues that it is Luther’s relationship with his father that has attracted all the scholarly attention. Oberman comments that this had caused Margarethe to disappear “in the shadow of a much more impressive husband who so thoroughly tyrannized his son that the Reformation came to be explained as an act of self-defense, a protest against merciless fathers, be they called Hans, the pope, or God.”⁸⁴² The idea that Margarethe had also influenced Luther seemed “inconceivable or at least irrelevant.” This explains how Margarethe has remained “pale and undefined: a simple woman, uneducated and superstitious, nothing more.”⁸⁴³ Even Erik Erikson, who is willing to offer grand psychoanalytical claims from limited evidence, admits that a “big gap exists here, which only conjecture could fill.”⁸⁴⁴

Although there have been many biographical works on Luther, they seldom include a detailed discussion of Margarethe. If there is an examination, it tends to only be a few short sentences about her as a person where many works repeat the same information or present

⁸³⁸ Ian Siggins, “Luther’s Mother Margarethe,” *Harvard Theological Review* 71 (1978): 125-150; Siggins’ work includes a collection of available historical data on Luther’s mother, but it does not consider the actual relationship between Luther and Margarethe. For example, this article looks predominately at whether Margarethe’s first name is Margarethe or Hanna, as well as whether her maiden name was Lindemann or Ziegler.

⁸³⁹ Richard Marius, *Martin Luther: The Christian between God and Death* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2009), 26.

⁸⁴⁰ Heinrich Boehmer, *Road to Reformation*, trans. John Doberstein and Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1946), 8; Heinrich Boehmer, *Der junge Luther* (Leipzig: Koehler, 1939).

⁸⁴¹ Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, 87; Oberman describes Hans Luder as a man who was “resolute, farsighted in his planning, ambitious, and [who] strove for independence, according to the motto ‘A free peasant is nobody’s slave.’”

⁸⁴² *Ibid.*, 87.

⁸⁴³ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁸⁴⁴ Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, 72.

unsupported claims. For example, one common piece of information includes depicting Margarethe as a small woman with a bleak temperament who often treated Luther harshly.⁸⁴⁵ For instance, many authors, such as Gerhard Brendler, comment on the occasion when Luther stole a nut and she beat him so badly that he bled.⁸⁴⁶ Oberman argues that “honesty was a matter of course” and that Luther “received a thrashing that ‘drew blood,’ as the adult Luther still remembered.”⁸⁴⁷ Many biographical works, like those works by John Todd and Richard Friedenthal, repeat this same information about Margarethe.⁸⁴⁸ These scholars come to the conclusion that Margarethe was a woman of “humble circumstances, tough, bent with work, simple in her superstitions, and perhaps a bit solid in manner.”⁸⁴⁹

Other scholars who write about Luther and Margarethe, such as Roland Bainton, James Atkinson, and Larry Mansch, do not provide enough evidence for their claims.⁸⁵⁰ For example, it is occasionally noted that Luther’s parents were hard working individuals. In 1483, the Luther family moved to Eisleben from Moehra so that Hans Luther could find work in the mines.⁸⁵¹ While Hans was at work, Margarethe is portrayed as carrying wood on her back from the forest because she did not have help or financial resources.⁸⁵² However, more recent scholars, such as Albrecht Classen and Tanya Settle, question this assertion. They argue that it is hard to picture Hans, a successful miner, being forced to live as a lowly peasant.⁸⁵³ It is also hard to picture

⁸⁴⁵ For Luther’s own comments on his parents’ method of discipline, see WA TR 3, 35665a, 415-416.

⁸⁴⁶ See Gerhard Brendler, *Martin Luther: Theology and Revolution*, trans. Claude Foster (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 5; Siggins, *Luther’s Mother*, 125.

⁸⁴⁷ Oberman, *Man Between God and the Devil*, 87.

⁸⁴⁸ See John Todd, *Luther: A Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 2-3; Richard Friedenthal, *Luther*, trans. John Nowell (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), 9; Gert Wendelborn, *Martin Luther und reformatorisches Werk* (Vienna: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfol, 1983), 13.

⁸⁴⁹ Oberman, *Man Between God and the Devil*, 87.

⁸⁵⁰ James Atkinson, *Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1968), 17; Larry Mansch, *Martin Luther: The Life and Lessons* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company Publishers, 2016), 15; see also Brendler, *Martin Luther*, 14; Friedenthal, *Luther*, 9.

⁸⁵¹ Atkinson, *Martin Luther*, 17.

⁸⁵² Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 26.

⁸⁵³ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 239.

Margarethe living as a peasant when she was not poor, but instead was the daughter of an established burgher family in Eisenach.⁸⁵⁴

Since there is hardly any information on Margarethe, it is difficult to determine the extent to which she influenced Luther's own views, especially his theological view of women. Some scholars, like Robert Kolb, argue that it is "fruitless" to analyze Luther's theological development based on his relationship with his parents, especially his mother.⁸⁵⁵ It appears certain scholars, such as Kolb and Martin Brecht, are reacting against studies like Erikson's work which sometimes rely too heavily on often ambitious and unsupported assumptions.⁸⁵⁶ Heiko Oberman also has reservations about Erikson's psychological claims about Luther and argues that "these reservations are well founded insofar as there is no evidence on which to base a diagnosis of Luther as a neurotic or psychotic."⁸⁵⁷ However, he also argues that we must take Luther's "own statements on the subject [of his upbringing] seriously, even if no reliable scientific method has yet evolved to penetrate the person of the Reformer behind the few psychologically revealing, autobiographical fragments he left."⁸⁵⁸ Luther provided some "telling" comments about his childhood. However, with these comments, he did not distinguish between his father or mother, so it is difficult to know when Luther was specifically referring to Margarethe.

Other scholars, like Classen and Settle, who try to evaluate Margarethe's influence on Luther have found it especially useful to explore her superstition and fear of witches.⁸⁵⁹ For

⁸⁵⁴ For more information, see Siggins, *Luther's Mother Margarethe*, 125-150.

⁸⁵⁵ Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 12.

⁸⁵⁶ Martin Brecht and James L. Schaaf, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 6; Erikson, *Young Man Luther*.

⁸⁵⁷ Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, 91.

⁸⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁸⁵⁹ Marius, *Martin Luther*, 26-27; Sigrid Brauner, "Martin Luther on Witchcraft: A True Reformer?" in *The Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jean Brink, Allison Coudert, and Maryanne Horowitz (Kirkville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1989), 29-42.

example, Luther later told the story of how his mother had been haunted by a neighbour woman who was a witch.⁸⁶⁰ She believed that the witch had killed one of her children. Classen and Settle argue that Luther adopted similar beliefs to a certain extent concerning witchcraft because of Margarethe's fear of witches.⁸⁶¹ In Luther's writings, he credited many illnesses to witchcraft which possibly stemmed from his mother's influence.⁸⁶² This would suggest that his mother's convictions formed at least some of Luther's own beliefs.⁸⁶³ However, it may also be the case that he adopted such superstitious beliefs from other sources. For example, significant parts of the population were very superstitious.⁸⁶⁴ Despite this, Classen and Settle argue that Margarethe's influence on Luther cannot be ignored by scholarship, especially with regards to witches and witchcraft.⁸⁶⁵

Whether or not Margarethe directly influenced Luther is still a topic for debate and not the primary focus of this chapter. Since there is hardly any available information on Margarethe, it may be impossible to identify the degree to which she influenced Luther, but their relationship is still important to examine. This lack of information should not suggest that Margarethe did not have any impact on Luther, that he did not credit the role that she played in his life, or that scholars cannot gain a sense of Luther's attitudes towards women from their relationship.

⁸⁶⁰ LW 54, 188.

⁸⁶¹ See WA TR 3, 2982b, 131.

⁸⁶² See Jörg Haustein, *Martin Luthers Stellung Zum Zauber Und Hexenwesen* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1990).

⁸⁶³ Ian Siggins takes a similar approach by arguing that Luther's use of feminine and masculine imagery to describe God "gives eloquent testimony to the inner resources Martin Luther inherited, not only from Hans, but from Hanna Luder," *Luther's Mother*, 150.

⁸⁶⁴ See Geoffrey Scarre and John Callow, *Witchcraft and Magic in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); William Monter, *European Witchcraft* (New York: Wiley, 1969); Allison Coudert, "The Myth of the Improved Status of Protestant Women: The Case of the Witchcraze," *The Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe*, *Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers* 89 (1989): 61-86.

⁸⁶⁵ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 240.

What is clear from their relationship is the role that Margarethe played in Luther's life. When discussing his parents, the roles that each played in his life are apparent.⁸⁶⁶ His father worked outside of the household while his mother remained within the home, was responsible for raising the children, and provided the necessities for the family.⁸⁶⁷ For Luther, he considered his parents to be role models for a proper Christian marriage.⁸⁶⁸ Using his parents as role models might explain why Luther's theology placed the woman within the passive role within the marriage. He thought the relationship between husband and wife should be characterized by the woman's role as the man's servant and that the man should have total control over the woman.⁸⁶⁹ He would have witnessed Margarethe being obedient, remaining within the household, and bearing children. His theological convictions might have reflected how he observed the marriage between his own parents and the fact that they maintained traditional societal norms. It is also reasonable that Luther depicted this relationship as maintaining the theological convictions that he later wrote and preached.⁸⁷⁰

The relationship between Luther and Margarethe has often been characterized as impersonal and unemotional. This is because he addressed Margarethe formally. For example, in 1518, he dedicated one of his works to her and wrote: "*Meiner Lieben Mutter Margarethe Lutherim.*"⁸⁷¹ It appears that Luther was close to his mother. When he received word that she was dying, he offered her solace, comfort for her spiritual state, and warm wishes from his own wife and children. Sadly, this is the only surviving letter from Luther to Margarethe.⁸⁷² She received this letter shortly before her death. In this letter, Luther expressed sadness that he could not be

⁸⁶⁶ See WA TR 3, 2888b, 51.

⁸⁶⁷ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 293-240.

⁸⁶⁸ See WA TR 2, 1659, 167; see also WA TR 3, 213.

⁸⁶⁹ WA 17, 1, 26-27.

⁸⁷⁰ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 240.

⁸⁷¹ WA BR 3, 48; 249.

⁸⁷² David Herbert, *Martin Luther: The Man and the Image* (New York: Irvington Publishers, 1983), 230.

present with her: “I am heartily sorry, especially that I cannot be with you physically as I would so much like to be.”⁸⁷³ He comforted Margarethe by saying that although he cannot be with her physically, he nevertheless appears “physically here in this letter” and that he will not be away from her in spirit.⁸⁷⁴ This letter shows their personal relationship to such an extent that Merry Wiesner-Hanks and Susan Karant-Nunn describe it as a “monument of filial devotion.”⁸⁷⁵ In the letter, Luther explained that since Margarethe created him, that they are obligated to each other. Due to this, he added himself “to the throngs of those who comfort” her and wished to make sure that she received enough theological instruction and consolation.⁸⁷⁶ He wrote: “Even though I hope that your heart without any further help has been long and richly enough instructed [...] and that it is in addition provided on all sides with preachers and comforters, nonetheless, I want to do my part and acknowledge my duty as your child to you as my mother.”⁸⁷⁷

This letter not only shows “filial devotion,” but also, though surprising as it may be to modern readers, instructional attention to theological doctrine.⁸⁷⁸ This letter includes a detailed discussion of God’s mercy, foundations of Christian salvation, faith, and baptism. Luther not only attempted to comfort Margarethe by drawing on his personal life, but also by discussing many complex theological points while using evidence from the Bible to support his conclusions. For example, Luther wrote that “Jesus Christ is our Mediator [1 Timothy 2:5] and stepping-stool of grace, and our Bishop in heaven before God, who daily intercedes for us, and atones for all

⁸⁷³ *Letter to Margarethe from Wittenberg, May 20th, 1531*, WA BR 6, 1820, 103-106, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 203-205.

⁸⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 203-205.

⁸⁷⁵ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 203.

⁸⁷⁶ *Letter to Margarethe*, WA BR 6, 1820, 103-106, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 203.

⁸⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁸⁷⁸ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 203.

[Romans 3:25] who only call upon and believe in Him [Hebrews 4:16; 7:25].”⁸⁷⁹ In this one short sentence, Luther included many theological points and used several different biblical references to justify his statements.

With this theological instruction, Luther wanted Margarethe to pass away with the assurance that God loves and saves. He argued that Jesus provides comfort since he has been victorious over sin and death and that Christians need to trust in this: “Anyone who does not want to let himself be comforted commits an injustice and the greatest dishonor upon the dear Comforter, just as though asserting that it were not true that He had told us to be comforted.”⁸⁸⁰ For this reason, Luther encouraged Margarethe to “rejoice with all certainty and pleasure” knowing that all Christians will conquer sin and death. Though, he recognized that “thoughts of sin or death sometimes [still] frighten us.”⁸⁸¹ He advised Margarethe to recognize that Jesus is the true “Victor” and “Saviour” and that Jesus commands Christians to be comforted. He also included passages from Paul to further support this point and stated that “death is consumed in victory” and that God has given Christians victory over death through Jesus.⁸⁸² With these words and thoughts, he wrote: “Dear Mother, let your heart be occupied, and with none other” than Luther’s own words.⁸⁸³ He advised her to be “thankful” that God has let her recognize that his words are true and that God has not allowed her to “remain stuck in papist error, according to which we were taught to build upon our works and upon the holiness of monks, and not to regard Christ as our one Comforter, our Saviour, but as a gruesome judge and tyrant [and] from whom

⁸⁷⁹ *Letter to Margarethe from Wittenberg, May 20th, 1531*, WA BR 6, 1820, 103-106, translated by Georgiana Malcolm, *Luther’s Letters to Women* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1865), 62.

⁸⁸⁰ *Letter to Margarethe*, WA BR 6, 1820, 103-106, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 204.

⁸⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁸⁸² *Ibid.*, 204.

⁸⁸³ *Ibid.*, 204.

we could receive no grace or consolation.”⁸⁸⁴ He wrote that now they know otherwise. He concluded his letter by stating that she should experience “neither danger nor distress,” but instead be “comforted.”⁸⁸⁵ He reminded Margarethe to “thank God with joy” because she has God’s “seal and His letters, namely the gospel, baptism and the Sacrament.”⁸⁸⁶

Although Margarethe fits closely with Luther’s ideal woman, this letter shows another side of her personality. It seems that she was an obedient wife and mother who remained in the household, but at the same time exhibited an intelligent nature. This letter makes it clear that he did not instruct Margarethe because she was not familiar or did not already understand these complex theological concepts. Instead, Luther discussed these themes to remind and comfort Margarethe. For example, he acknowledged his mother’s own theological knowledge and intelligence when he stated: “First of all, dear Mother, you well know now about God’s grace.”⁸⁸⁷ In this way, Margarethe conflicted with his theology which outlined that a woman is “slow of mind” and unable to comprehend any topic that did not pertain to matters of the household.⁸⁸⁸ The theological arguments and biblical passages outlined in this letter have nothing to do with the household, but Margarethe clearly understood them. Luther must have also believed that Margarethe could understand his detailed religious arguments and evidence.⁸⁸⁹ If he did not believe this, then there would be no reason to write such a letter to his mother. In this letter, he presented these arguments in a way that suggests that Margarethe was not simply using her “animal-like” cognitive abilities or intuition, but truly comprehending his theology.⁸⁹⁰

⁸⁸⁴ *Letter to Margarethe*, WA BR 6, 1820, 103-106, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 204.

⁸⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁸⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁸⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁸⁸⁸ LW 16, 163-164.

⁸⁸⁹ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 242.

⁸⁹⁰ WA 1, 17; WA 1, 24.

We can also see this with another example. In 1518, Luther gave Margarethe, as a present, a copy of the devotional treatise that was written by Johann von Staupitz (1460 – 1524) titled: *On the Love of God*.⁸⁹¹ Luther must have assumed that Margarethe would have been capable of reading and understanding this work otherwise the present would be meaningless to her. In this way, Margarethe challenged Luther's theological convictions that all women were weak and unintelligent creatures.

From this interaction, it can be concluded that although Luther may have hardly mentioned his mother in his writings, it did not mean that he did not respect Margarethe.⁸⁹² It seems likely that Luther respected Margarethe, but that he did not have a substantial emotional connection with his mother.⁸⁹³ This lack of emotional connection may have several explanations. Classen and Settle speculate that it might have been because she was a strong woman, as suggested by scholarship, and that Luther did not fully understand Margarethe.⁸⁹⁴ It may have also been the case that he was hurt that his mother did not understand his reasons for becoming a monk in 1505. This seems plausible since Luther mentioned Margarethe more frequently after his marriage to Katharina von Bora than before it. Despite this lack of emotional connection, there is enough evidence to support the claim that Luther respected Margarethe even though she conflicted with his own theological convictions. There is no evidence to suggest that Luther believed that Margarethe was incapable of understanding his theological arguments and evidence, even though she was a woman. However, this relationship did not force Luther to confront his own theology or create new theological beliefs about women. It is likely that Luther

⁸⁹¹ See *Ein seligs neues Jar: von der Liebe Gottes* (1517/1518); see also Brecht and Schaaf, *Road to Reformation*, 8.

⁸⁹² Luther wrote that a mother should be respected and honoured, see WA BR 3, 43, 414.

⁸⁹³ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 242.

⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 242.

made an exception for his mother in his practical situation and maintained in his writings the perspective of women that had been found in the traditional society in which he lived.

Katharina von Bora (1499 – 1552)

As a monk, Luther had little personal contact with women.⁸⁹⁵ This eventually changed when he married Katharina von Bora in June 1525.⁸⁹⁶ After Luther left the monastery, an unknown woman wrote to him inquiring whether he was already married. He replied that even although he “did not lack the feelings of a man,” he was hesitant to marry because he soon expected a heretic’s death.⁸⁹⁷ However, as the years passed this fear faded and Luther started to contemplate marriage.⁸⁹⁸

There were several possible motivations for his decision to marry. For example, in 1523 Luther helped twelve nuns escape from a convent in Nimbschen.⁸⁹⁹ Three of the nuns were accepted back into their former homes while the other nine waited in Wittenberg until marriages

⁸⁹⁵ In 1522, Luther commented: “I will not mention the other advantages and delights implicit in a marriage that goes well — that husband and wife cherish one another, become one, serve one another, and other attendant blessings — lest somebody should shut me up by saying that I am speaking about something I have not experienced,” see LW 45, 43.

⁸⁹⁶ In 1999, the 500th anniversary of Katharina von Bora’s birth saw an increase of new works even though available sources for recreating her life are minimal. See Thomas Klosterkamp “Katharina von Bora, Ehefrau des Reformators Martin Luthers,” *Dom St. Marien. Informationshefte* 15 (2011): 32-43; Dolinda MacCuish, *Luther and His Katie* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publication, 1983); Helmar Junghans, “Katharina Luther in the Light and in the Shadow of the Reformation,” in *Ad Fontes Lutheri: Toward the Recovery of the Real Luther; Essays in Honor of Kenneth Hagen’s Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. by Timothy Maschke, Franz Posset, and Joan Skocir (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), 86-103; Martin Treu, “Katharina von Bora, the Woman at Luther’s Side,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 13 (1999): 157-178; Udo Hahn, *Katharina von Bora: Die Frau an Luthers Seite* (Stuttgart: Quell, 1999); Rudolf Markwald and Marilyn Markwald, *Katharina Von Bora: A Reformation Life* (St. Louis, Mo: Concordia Publishing House, 2004); for an earlier, but valuable study, see Roland Bainton, “Katherina von Bora,” in *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1971), 23-44.

⁸⁹⁷ See WA BR, 3, 394; Marilyn McGuire, “The Mature Luther’s Revision of Marriage Theology: Preference for Patriarchs Over Saints in His Commentary on Genesis” (PhD Thesis, Saint Louis University, 1999), 57.

⁸⁹⁸ For another reference to Luther’s fear of marriage, see WA TR 2, 2458, 469.

⁸⁹⁹ Civil and canon law decreed that this was an act that was punishable by death, see McGuire, *The Mature Luther’s Revision*, 57; E. G. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times: The Reformation from a New Perspective* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950), 588.

could be arranged for them.⁹⁰⁰ It was difficult to arrange a marriage for one nun named Katharina von Bora. Luther may have felt that he needed to marry Katharina himself because he believed that he was responsible for this nun.⁹⁰¹

Another motivation could have been to please Luther's parents and fulfill their desires for him to have a family. In 1525, Luther described his parents' desire for him to marry in a letter written to Johannes Ruehel, Johannes Thuer, and Kaspar Mueller.⁹⁰² Luther later repeated this motivation as a reason for his marriage in a letter written to Nicolaus von Amsdorf (1483 – 1565).⁹⁰³

There could have also been more scandalous motivations. For instance, there were rumours circulating that Katharina von Bora was pregnant at the time of their wedding.⁹⁰⁴ If this were true, Luther would have deviated from his own strict theological prescriptions about sexual intercourse before marriage, especially if the child was his own.

It is more likely that Luther was motivated to marry so that he could show support for clerical marriages and set an example for others to imitate.⁹⁰⁵ For example, in 1525 when Luther heard that Albert the Archbishop of Mainz was considering marriage, he wrote to John Reuhel that he would set an example of marriage himself if he were in the mood to do so.⁹⁰⁶ He stressed this intention more in a letter written to Johann Breimann on August 15th, 1525.⁹⁰⁷ Later, he

⁹⁰⁰ McGuire, *Mature Luther's Revision*, 57; Jeanette Smith, "Katharina Von Bora Through Five Centuries: A Historiography," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30, no. 3 (1999): 747-748; between 1523 and 1524, nuns were leaving their convents. In 1524, Luther wrote a letter to three unknown nuns to offer advice on how to reintegrate into society, especially through promoting marriage, see WA BR 3, 326-328.

⁹⁰¹ WA BR 3, 358; Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, 278.

⁹⁰² WA BR 3, 531.

⁹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 541.

⁹⁰⁴ Smith, *Katharina von Bora*, 749.

⁹⁰⁵ McGuire, *Mature Luther's Revisions*, 58.

⁹⁰⁶ See WA BR 3, 522.

⁹⁰⁷ WA BR 3, 554f.

announced his intentions to marry in stronger terms by stating: “If I can manage it before I die, I will still marry my Katie to spite the devil.”⁹⁰⁸

Luther’s reasoning seemed to rest on a logical basis for his marriage rather than emotional.⁹⁰⁹ This is not surprising since marriages in the sixteenth century were based on conviction and not love. However, these logical reasons contrast with his feelings that later developed for Katharina.⁹¹⁰ He later wrote: “A wife is a friendly, gracious, and pleasant companion in life.”⁹¹¹ Martin Luther married his pleasant companion, Katharina von Bora, on June 13th, 1525.⁹¹²

Scholars extract information about Katharina predominately from Luther’s writings. However, there are other sources that can tell us about Katharina.⁹¹³ Scholars have access to eight of her own letters that were written to other individuals in printed text and manuscripts of seven of these letters.⁹¹⁴ These texts provide scholars with insights into Katharina’s personality. For example, one of the first letters to be preserved was written to Hans von Taubenheim, where she asked him to let her lease the farm at Boos.⁹¹⁵ This letter shows her confident and

⁹⁰⁸ LW 49, 11.

⁹⁰⁹ Luther was interested in a different nun, but she had already married someone else, see Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times*, 586.

⁹¹⁰ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 244; see also Treu, *Katharina von Bora*, 157-178.

⁹¹¹ WA TR 1, 12, 5-6, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 71.

⁹¹² Since a priest was marrying a nun, it was considered by catholic polemicists as sacrilegious and equal to incest, see Thomas Fudge “Incest and Lust in Luther’s Marriage: Theology and Morality in Reformation Polemics,” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 34, no. 2 (2003): 319-345; Pedersen argues that that this new perspective of matrimony influenced Luther’s view of women, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 193.

⁹¹³ Such as letters from Erasmus of Rotterdam and other figures, see Alexander Dalzell, *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 11; 325; Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 52-70; 64; see also Sabine Kramer, *Katharina von Bora in den schriftlichen Zeugnissen ihrer Zeit* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016), 145-147.

⁹¹⁴ Sabine Kramer’s work, for the first time in the research of the history of the Reformation, includes a collection of all letters and documents related to Katharina von Bora, see Kramer, *Katharina von Bora*, 279-353; see also Smith, *Katharina von Bora*, 750 (Appendix 1 & 2).

⁹¹⁵ Smith, *Katharina von Bora*, 750.

independent nature because she is seeking a leasing opportunity by herself and not with the help of her husband.

Unfortunately, many of Katharina's other letters have not survived.⁹¹⁶ None of Katharina's letters to Luther have been preserved.⁹¹⁷ Yet, Luther's letters to Katharina still contain valuable insights into their relationship, especially since he often wrote to her in his letters.⁹¹⁸ Claudia Medert and Ute Mennecke note that Luther's admiration and respect for Katharina is illuminated by the salutations in his letters.⁹¹⁹ Among them were: "*lieber Herr Kethe*," "*meine Kaiserin*," and "*frauen Doctorin Katherin Lüdherin*."⁹²⁰ Other titles included: "the Virgin," "Doctor," and even "Preacher" (at least once in July 1545).⁹²¹ The various ways that Luther addressed his wife increased over the years. Scholars, like Else Marie Pedersen and Kirsi Stjerna, argue that this revealed that they had an intimate relationship that allowed for respectful humour and openness with personal information.⁹²² Humour was an important part of their relationship. For example, Luther often teased Katharina. In a letter written in 1540, he addressed her as: "*Der Reichen frawen zu Zulsdorff, frawen Doctorin Katherin Lüdherin, zu Wittenber leiblich wonhafftig und zu Zulsdorff geistlich wandelnd, meinem Liebchen*."⁹²³ He also

⁹¹⁶ Scholars have letters from Katharina to others such as Christian III of Denmark and Albrecht of Prussia dated on February 9th, 1547.

⁹¹⁷ See Kirsi Stjerna, "Katie Luther: A Mirror to the Promises and Failures of the Reformation," in David Whitford, *Caritas et Reformatio: Essays on Church and Society in Honor of Carter Lindberg* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 27-39.

⁹¹⁸ See Kramer, *Katharina von Bora*, 44; for example, Luther's letters to Katharina include: WA BR 6, 1908, 270-271; WA BR 7, 2130, 91; WA BR 8, 3140, 50-51; WA BR 9, 3509, 168; WA BR 9, 3511, 171-173; WA BR 9, 3512, 174-175; WA BR 10, 3519, 205; WA BR 10, 3670, 518-519; WA BR 11, 4195, 275-276; WA BR 11, 4139, 49-50; WA BR 11, 4201, 286-287; WA BR 11, 4203, 291.

⁹¹⁹ Claudia Medert and Ute Mennecke, "Luthers Briefe an Seine Frau," *Luther* 54 (1983): 124-145.

⁹²⁰ Other salutations included: "*Allerheiligeste Fraw Doctrin*" (WA BR 11, 291); "*Meiner herzlieben Hausfrauen, Katherin Lutherin... Mein herzliche Käte*" (WA BR 6, 270); "*Meiner freundlichen lieben Hausf[rawen] Frawen Katherin Lutherin von Bora zu Wit[tenberg]*" (WA BR 11, 300); and signed letters to her with a similar tone: "*M. Luther. Dein altes liebichen*" (WA BR 11, 276); "*Ewer heiligkeit williger diener*" (WA BR 11, 297); he also openly expressed affection for Katharina, see WA TR 1, 49, 17.

⁹²¹ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 57.

⁹²² Pedersen, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 193; Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 245.

⁹²³ WA BR 9, 205.

made puns out of her name and referred to her as “*meae Cathenae*,” and even changed her nickname of “Kethe” to “*Kette*” which means chains.⁹²⁴ However, this playful teasing only occurred because Luther respected and loved Katharina.⁹²⁵ He once commented: “I would not give up my Katie for France or Venice.”⁹²⁶ Additionally, in a letter written to Katharina in 1540, Luther asked her to show Philip Melanchthon (1497 – 1560) the letter because he did not have time to write to him. He told Katharina that “this should comfort you with knowledge that I love you very much, as you already know, and since he has a wife too, he will certainly understand.”⁹²⁷ The letter is signed “your loving husband, Martin Luther.”⁹²⁸

In the early stages of their marriage, Luther described Katharina as “compliant and in every way... obedient and obliging to me.”⁹²⁹ He also nicknamed Katharina “my rib” thereby emphasizing the natural subordinate position of Eve to Adam.⁹³⁰ According to Luther’s theological interpretations and sixteenth century society, women were expected to rule the household under their husband’s supervision and be completely submissive to their husband’s authority.⁹³¹ Since this was proper for all women, Luther expected Katharina to maintain this theological principle.⁹³² He believed that marriage was the only vocation for women and that women should obey their husbands. His views also coincided with the political reinforcing of the

⁹²⁴ WA TR 4, 5069, 621.

⁹²⁵ Susan Karant-Nunn, “Martin Luther’s Masculinity: Theory, Practicality and Humor” in *Masculinity in the Reformation Era*, ed. Susan Karant-Nunn (Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2008), 167-189.

⁹²⁶ LW 54, 7.

⁹²⁷ *Letter to Katharina von Bora, February 7th, 1546*, WA BR 11, 286, 287, translated by Theodore Tappert, *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 106.

⁹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁹²⁹ LW 49, 154.

⁹³⁰ Smith, *Katharina von Bora*, 762.

⁹³¹ However, other pertinent letters can be used as evidence that Luther encouraged mutual respect between partners within a marriage, see *Letter to Stephan Roth*, who in relation to his wife was too weak-hearted, see WA BR 4, 4: 442.

⁹³² For information on bodiliness and the reconstruction of gender in Luther’s marriage to Katharina, see Sini Mikkola, “‘In Our Bodies the Scripture Becomes Fulfilled’: Gendered Bodiliness and the Making of the Gender System in Mature Luther’s Anthropology (1520-1530)” (PhD Thesis, University of Helsinki, 2017), 165-177.

patriarchal household in society.⁹³³ He wrote that what a wife should do in a marriage is “namely, that she should be subordinate and obedient to her husband and not undertake or do anything without his consent.”⁹³⁴ Despite Luther’s theological conviction that the husband was the “head” of the wife, Katharina von Bora was not submissive within the household and was not entirely obedient to her husband, Luther.⁹³⁵

Luther and Katharina lived in the Black Cloister in Wittenberg which had been the Augustinian cloister, where he was a monk since 1512.⁹³⁶ In 1532, Elector Johann officially gave the couple the building even though they had already been using it as their home for many years.⁹³⁷ Katharina ran the entire household which at certain times would include over forty people.⁹³⁸ The establishment was more than one person could operate, but Katharina managed the entire household, as well as several domestic servants. It is not certain how many servants there were.⁹³⁹ The servants, both men and women, were sometimes faithful and sometimes unreliable.⁹⁴⁰ For this reason, she took responsibility for the entire household herself.⁹⁴¹

The fact that Katharina ran the entire household is not contrary to Luther’s own theological views nor the societal norms at the time. He believed that women were supposed to run the household. What was different was the fact that Luther was supposed to be the “head” of the household while Katharina was expected to manage it entirely under his supervisor and consent. During the sixteenth century, Katharina, as the wife, was not allowed to “undertake or

⁹³³ Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Working Women in Renaissance Germany* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 7.

⁹³⁴ WA 17, 1, 26-27, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 95.

⁹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁹³⁶ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 245.

⁹³⁷ See WA BR 6, 257f.

⁹³⁸ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 245.

⁹³⁹ Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 240.

⁹⁴⁰ Roland Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971), 32.

⁹⁴¹ Smith, *Katharina von Bora*, 750.

do anything” without her husband’s consent.⁹⁴² According to Luther’s theology, since the wife was not created from the “head” she was unable to rule over her husband.⁹⁴³ As the wife was unable to rule over the husband, this meant that the wife was to be completely subordinate and obedient.

However, Katharina ruled over and above Luther and often did whatever she pleased while she managed. She took her role to manage the household very seriously. She herded, milked, slaughtered the cattle, made butter and cheese, brewed, planted, and reaped the fields. Katharina was determined to make the establishment self-sustaining and was successful in this venture.⁹⁴⁴ In a letter dated on July 28th, 1545, Luther confirmed that she was more than simply a housewife and mother of six children. Although he deeply appreciated Katharina’s call as a mother and saw it as a vocation that was equal to that of the apostles and bishops, he wrote: “Friendly, dear housewife Katharina of Luther von Bora, preacher, brewer, gardener, and what else she can be...”⁹⁴⁵ He recognized that he could not carry out his own tasks, as a writer, preacher, and teacher, without her efficient labour in the household.⁹⁴⁶ Her efficiency within the household is likely the reason why Luther acknowledged that she played a dominant role in their home and their everyday life.⁹⁴⁷ He referred to Katharina not as “My Lady” (“*Domina*”), but as “My Lord” (“*mea Dominus Ketha*”), thereby providing her with a masculine title which emphasized her role and dominance.⁹⁴⁸

⁹⁴² WA 17, 1, 26-27.

⁹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁹⁴⁴ Bernard, Lohse, *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 33.

⁹⁴⁵ WA BR 11, 149, 4139: “*Meiner freundlichen lieben Hausfraw Catharina Luthers von Bore, predigerin, Brawerin, Gertnerin vnd was sie mehr sein kan.*”

⁹⁴⁶ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 187; McGuire, *Mature Luther’s Revisions*, 60; MacCuish, *Luther and His Katie*, 38.

⁹⁴⁷ Pedersen, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 194; Smith, *Katharina von Bora*, 746.

⁹⁴⁸ WA BR 1844; 2106; WA BR 2106; 2267; Luther often played with traditional roles, especially when expressing gender or class, see Pedersen, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 193.

She was not only completely in charge of domestic duties, but also the finances.⁹⁴⁹ It is especially noteworthy that Katharina did not follow her husband's orders, especially with regards to household finances.⁹⁵⁰ She likely thought, from her point of view, that it was best to limit Luther's excessive spending. Even though she directly disobeyed Luther, it is likely that Katharina believed that she was properly fulfilling her role as a "good housewife" who was managing the household.⁹⁵¹ Luther believed that God created fingers on the hand so that money would slip through and that God would replenish whatever was provided.⁹⁵² He maintained his decision to share his wealth and attempted to convince Katharina that it was necessary to help others in certain cases.⁹⁵³ She clearly did not share her husband's sentiment. For example, when Luther wrote to a friend detailing that he was sending him a generous present he attached a note saying that it had to be kept secret from the "crafty Katie."⁹⁵⁴ This was because Katharina would limit Luther and not allow him to send such generous gifts.

This was not the only time that Katharina disagreed with Luther over the finances. He also strongly disapproved of accepting money from anyone, but Katharina accepted any offers even though she knew of her husband's objection. For example, the Archbishop of Mainz (1490 – 1545) once sent a gift of twenty guildens to Luther. He wanted to return the money, but before he could do so the funds were already accepted by Katharina.⁹⁵⁵ On April 20th, 1526, Luther wrote to Johann Ruehel about the gift of twenty guildens and stated: "*Das Ihr meiner Käten hie zu Wittenberg geben habt, bin ich lang hernach innen worden, meinet nicht anders, Ihr hättet's*

⁹⁴⁹ Smith, *Katharina von Bora*, 750; Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 60.

⁹⁵⁰ Oberman, *Man Between God and Devil*, 279; Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 244.

⁹⁵¹ Luther never reprimanded Katharina for her disobedience which shows that they likely had a practical relationship where he knew Katharina was right, for the good of the household, to limit his excessive spending.

⁹⁵² WA TR 2731b; WA TR 5181.

⁹⁵³ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 244.

⁹⁵⁴ WA BR 1009.

⁹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 999.

*wieder mit weg, wie ich bat... bin's auch noch nicht beschlossen zu behalten.*⁹⁵⁶ Katharina likely accepted these funds because she was aware that they had little money themselves which was a recognition that would likely not have occurred to Luther without her influence.⁹⁵⁷ In this way, she may have also made Luther more aware of his excessive spending habits.⁹⁵⁸ Luther did not alter his own attitudes concerning money. However, Katharina was at least a strong enough individual to support her position with valid arguments and found ways to limit his excessive spending.⁹⁵⁹

Another example of Katharina's dominant role within the household can be observed with Luther's arrangements for after his death.⁹⁶⁰ Luther expressed his wish to have Katharina as an independent ruler of the household. However, this was impossible according to Saxon law. In his will, Luther contradicted Saxon law by insisting that Katharina would be the main beneficiary and head of the Luther family.⁹⁶¹ Stjerna notes that Luther's insistence shows the equality in their marriage.⁹⁶² His insistence to break Saxon law and leave everything to his wife was very radical for the time. The Saxon lawyers disputed this and did not want Luther's arrangements to be met since it conflicted with their laws and popular social norms. Despite this contention, Luther's will was created. However, after his death, his executor of the will, Chancellor Gregor Brück (1483 – 1557), did not keep Luther's wishes. Brück ruled in favour of an arrangement that did not allow the children to stay with Katharina except for her youngest

⁹⁵⁶ WA BR 4, 57.

⁹⁵⁷ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 63.

⁹⁵⁸ WA BR 6, 271.

⁹⁵⁹ WA TR 4, 5181, 701.

⁹⁶⁰ See *Luther's Will, January 6th, 1542*, WA BR 9, 571, 562-564; see also LW 34, 295-297.

⁹⁶¹ Harry Halie notes that Luther scorned the treatment of wives under Saxon law, see Harry Halie, *Luther: An Experiment in Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 259; Pedersen, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 194.

⁹⁶² Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 66.

daughter, removed her autonomy, and deprived her of most of the wealth that she had earned in the household and from the land.⁹⁶³

Katharina's dominant personality must have been well known since even Luther's contemporaries feared that she ruled the reformer to the same extent that she ruled the household. It appears that Luther's contemporaries were correct about Katharina. She would often rule over and limit Luther's freedom. For example, Katharina refused to let him attend a friend's wedding in Torgau because the intervening area was plagued by marauding peasants.⁹⁶⁴ She said "no" and Luther obeyed.⁹⁶⁵ He often followed Katharina's orders. In 1536, Luther wrote a letter to Else Agricola, who was residing in Eisleben, because his wife asked him to do so: "My lord Käte asks me to say many good things to you."⁹⁶⁶ Although Luther, as the husband, should have made demands of his wife, it was the other way around with Katharina von Bora.

Luther came to rely heavily on Katharina and even admitted that he was dependent upon her: "*Denn ich verseehe mich zu meiner Keten... mehr guts denn zu Christo.*"⁹⁶⁷ In other cases, he asked Katharina for favours. For example, in 1532, he once asked her to find a souvenir for the children because he was unable to find one while he was away in Torgau.⁹⁶⁸ Luther's growing dependence on Katharina is also evident by the fact that he was eager to receive her letters. In one letter written in July 1540, Luther wrote to Katharina and noted that he has received letters from his children, but did not receive anything from her: "The fourth letter [this one] would you, God willing, answer for once with your own hand."⁹⁶⁹ In another letter written on July 16th,

⁹⁶³ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 66.

⁹⁶⁴ Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 29.

⁹⁶⁵ WA BR 615-617.

⁹⁶⁶ *Letter to Else Agricola in Eisleben, from Wittenberg, November 13th, 1536*, WA BR 7, 3102, 587, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 212.

⁹⁶⁷ WA TR 1, 980, 496.

⁹⁶⁸ See *Letter from Torgau, February 27th, 1532*, WA BR 6, 1908, 270-271.

⁹⁶⁹ WA BR 9, 3509, 168, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 190.

1540, he asked her to write back to make sure that she has received everything that he has sent.⁹⁷⁰ In another letter, Luther wrote that he was surprised that Katharina had not written back: “*Und mich wundert, das du so gar nichts her schreibest oder empeiitest, so du wol weisst, das wir hie nicht on sorge sind fur euch, Weil Meinz, Heinz und viel vom Adel inn Meissen uns seer feind sind. Verkeuffe.*”⁹⁷¹ He was often concerned about her well-being in Zülsdorf and pleaded with her to come home.⁹⁷²

Luther was also dependent on Katharina because she took care of him, especially when he was ill. He would occasionally write to her about his health. For example, on February 27th, 1537, in a letter written from Tambach, Luther informed Katharina that “no water has passed out” of him.⁹⁷³ She constantly worried about his ailments since he kept her briefed. In a letter to Katharina a week before Luther’s death, he promised that if she did not stop worrying that they would be “swallowed up by the earth.”⁹⁷⁴ From these letters, we can see that Luther benefited from Katharina’s leadership, independence, and overall caring nature.

Katharina von Bora was unlike Sarah who followed Abraham’s orders. Katharina did not follow her husband’s demands, but rather managed the household and the finances according to what she thought was best.⁹⁷⁵ Luther clearly disapproved of Katharina’s behaviour in accepting money on several occasions, but he allowed her to continue her actions without punishment. This is interesting as Luther was quoted as saying that “the wife follows the husband [...] and beyond this, she is obligated to submit to the man; authority pertains to the husband in all the matters of

⁹⁷⁰ *Letter from Eisenach, July 16th, 1540*, WA BR 9, 3512, 174-175.

⁹⁷¹ WA BR 9, 518f.

⁹⁷² *Letter from Wittenberg to Zölsdorf, September 18th, 1541*, WA BR 10, 3670, 518-519; see also WA BR 11, 291; WA TR 2, 2458, 469.

⁹⁷³ WA BR 8, 3140, 50251.

⁹⁷⁴ *Letter From Eisleben, February 10th, 1546*, WA BR 11, 4203, 291, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 195.

⁹⁷⁵ Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 34.

this life.”⁹⁷⁶ He added: “Indeed, stupid women try not to submit to their husbands.”⁹⁷⁷ Even though Luther held this position, he never left Katharina. He also never believed that she was “stupid,” and required to be punished for her disobedience.

Katharina was not only disobedient with regards to running the household, but also because she boldly spoke her mind. In Luther’s theology, he wrote that when women talk “about matters other than those pertaining to the house, they are not competent” and that they are “lacking in substance which they do not understand.”⁹⁷⁸ Luther certainly acknowledged Katharina’s wisdom in practical matters and sought out her knowledge in the area of the household, but he did not welcome Katharina to business outside of the domestic sphere.⁹⁷⁹ He may have teased Katharina by addressing her as “Doctor” or “Preacher,” but she did not have any authority outside the home as a theologian or preacher of the Word. He never encouraged Katharina to pursue such activities and to find a public voice for theological debate or preaching activities any more than he did any other woman.⁹⁸⁰ In this way, Katharina fits with Luther’s ideal woman who remained in the household and completed her everyday household duties.⁹⁸¹

If we put Luther’s theological teachings on women’s inabilities aside, it may have been logical for him to exclude women from church politics and theological debates.⁹⁸² This was due to the power structures during the sixteenth century and women’s limited access to decision making, especially in political arenas. While Luther did not seem to encourage Katharina to preach or practice ministry out “in the world,” he nevertheless treated her as an equal partner and equal “in Christ” which is consistent with his theological perspective. Even though Luther did

⁹⁷⁶ WA 14, 141, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 93.

⁹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁹⁷⁸ WA TR 1, 1054, 531-532.

⁹⁷⁹ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 60.

⁹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁹⁸¹ LW 3, 200-201.

⁹⁸² Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 60.

not encourage Katharina, it should not be assumed that she was incapable of thinking about complex theological matters. Katharina von Bora, unlike Katharina Zell, did not follow the same path despite being married to a reformer. Unfortunately, we do not have any insight from Katharina herself on whether this was how she wanted to contribute to the Reformation movement.⁹⁸³ It appears that she was satisfied with her domestic calling and did not ask for more in terms of expanding her vocation beyond the household. For this reason, Luther did not have someone at home encouraging him to promote a rationale for the vocation of women with a public voice or ability to preach. Katharina may not have encouraged Luther or used her voice outside of the household, but she was certainly very vocal at the dinner table, so perhaps she had enough theological engagement at home.

The Luther household frequently hosted meals where Luther would discuss theology with his guests. These guests were usually friends or students. The conversations from these meals are recorded in the *Table Talks*. It is important to note that during these talks Katharina was not found “in the tent” preparing the meals and serving the guests as illustrated by Luther’s ideal example of Sarah.⁹⁸⁴ According to Luther, all women should follow Sarah’s example, but Katharina certainly did not. Instead, she was an active participant in these conversations.⁹⁸⁵ On several occasions, she would sit alongside Luther and his guests at the table and actively converse with them.⁹⁸⁶ This is completely unlike Sarah who “like a tortoise” remained in her

⁹⁸³ Katharina may have believed that she was fulfilling her role as the pastor’s wife and did not feel the need to publicly speak out. A related and interested work edited by Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski explores equating “power” with “public authority” or public agency. Perhaps Katharina felt that she already had enough “power” within the family and household, see Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003); see especially Jo Ann McNamara, “Women and Power Through the Family Revisited,” in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003).

⁹⁸⁴ Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 37.

⁹⁸⁵ Smith, *Katharina von Bora*, 746; Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 246.

⁹⁸⁶ See Kramer, *Katharina von Bora*, 165-167.

shell and did not interact with the guests.⁹⁸⁷ Even though these conversations were often blended with both German and Latin, Katharina was able to actively engage in these discussions.⁹⁸⁸ For example, the *Table Talks* describe a moment when an Englishman who was pious and well-educated went to the table with Luther but did not understand the German language. Luther said to him: “I will give you my wife as a teacher; she could teach you German very well, for she speaks very well and is so accomplished at it that she far surpasses me.”⁹⁸⁹ Despite this compliment from Luther, in the same sentence he added: “Nevertheless, when women speak well it is not praiseworthy. It befits them to stammer and not to be able to speak well; that adorns them much better.”⁹⁹⁰

However, at these talks, Katharina engaged with Luther and guests about rhetoric, dialectic, and biblical matters such as righteousness. She was not weak, lacking in courage, nor was “slow of mind” even though this is how Luther described all women in his theology.⁹⁹¹ She not only seemed to have been familiar with the language of discourse, theology, and prominent theological issues of the time, but also had enough fortitude to speak her mind.⁹⁹² This is likely why Katharina was considered a lively conversationalist.⁹⁹³ Her interactions were frequent despite the annoyance from some of the guests who thought that her behaviour was inappropriate for a woman.⁹⁹⁴ Any woman who did not maintain their expected role of an invisible, meek, obedient wife was a target of criticism, especially given sixteenth century ideals for women.

⁹⁸⁷ LW 3, 200-201.

⁹⁸⁸ Katharina was well-educated at Brehna and Marienthron, see Smith, *Katharina von Bora*, 747.

⁹⁸⁹ WA TR 4, 4081, 121-122, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 30.

⁹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹⁹¹ LW 16, 163-164.

⁹⁹² Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 69.

⁹⁹³ Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 37.

⁹⁹⁴ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 63.

As with Katharina's disobedience in the household, there is no evidence that Luther made any real attempts to enforce his own theological convictions and silence Katharina. Sometimes he teased her when she was being clever and told her that "God created man with a broad chest, not broad hips, so that in that part of him he can be wise; but that part out of which filth comes is small. In a woman, this is reversed. That is why she has much filth and little wisdom."⁹⁹⁵ He also laughed at Katharina for her "chattering and talkativeness."⁹⁹⁶ He recommended that she curb her keenness by saying the Lord's Prayer before speaking.⁹⁹⁷ He asked her whether she had prayed the Our Father before she said so many words. Luther wrote: "But women [...] do not pray before they start to preach, for otherwise they would stop preaching and leave it alone; or, if God overheard them, He would forbid them to preach."⁹⁹⁸ Beyond this playful teasing, Luther made no real effort to stop Katharina from speaking at the table even though his guests thought it was very inappropriate behaviour for a woman. Furthermore, he did not attempt to silence or punish his wife even though she was not hesitant in providing her own beliefs and opinions and even when they contradicted Luther's own views.

When Katharina provided her own opinions, she could be without reproach and unruly. For example, she was not afraid to admonish Luther when necessary. Once there was an indecent remark made about Caspar Schwenckfeld (1490 – 1561) to which she chastised Luther with: "Oh come now, that is too raw!"⁹⁹⁹

In addition to chiding Luther, she was also very disagreeable. In letters to Katharina, Luther would remind her to read the Bible.¹⁰⁰⁰ At one occasion, he consistently bothered

⁹⁹⁵ WA TR 2, 1975, 285, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 29.

⁹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹⁹⁷ WA TR 2, 1975; 1978.

⁹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1975, 285, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 29.

⁹⁹⁹ WA TR 5659, translated by Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 37.

¹⁰⁰⁰ LW 211.

Katharina to read through the Bible and promised her fifty gulden if she finished it before Easter.¹⁰⁰¹ Although he wanted Katharina to read the Bible, he recognized that she was already familiar with the Psalms more than any papist.¹⁰⁰² Finally she refused his offer and said: “I have read enough. I have heard enough. I know enough. Would to God I live it.”¹⁰⁰³

She also often contradicted Luther’s own views and arguments.¹⁰⁰⁴ For example, Katharina once criticized a pastor for not preaching enough Gospel to which Luther replied that he was preaching the Gospel fine, but he did not preach enough law.¹⁰⁰⁵ On another occasion, sources tell us that, while in the company of others, Katharina challenged Luther over a theological matter.¹⁰⁰⁶ She was not convinced when he brought up the topic of Abraham’s struggle, where God commanded him to kill Isaac.¹⁰⁰⁷ She told him that: “I do not believe it [...] God would not have done that to His son.”¹⁰⁰⁸ By stating this, she challenged Luther and questioned whether God had truly wanted Abraham to sacrifice his son. He assured her that it was God’s intention, but Katharina further commented that his argument did not persuade her, and she continued to argue against Luther and the Bible.¹⁰⁰⁹

She also asked complex questions while referring to Psalm 7:8 such as: “How could David say, ‘Judge me according to my righteousness,’ when he did not have any?”¹⁰¹⁰ Such statements are remarkable since she not only argued against her own husband in the presence of

¹⁰⁰¹ WA BR 2267.

¹⁰⁰² WA TR 5008.

¹⁰⁰³ WA TR 3835, translated by Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 37.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 62; Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 246.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 69.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁰⁰⁷ WA TR 1, 1033, 522: “*Non possum mihi persuadere, quod Deus tam atrociam ab aliquo exigat, das er von jemand solt begern sein Kind zu erwurgen.*”

¹⁰⁰⁸ WA TR 1033, 2754b, translated by Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 37.

¹⁰⁰⁹ WA TR 1, 1033, 522.

¹⁰¹⁰ WA TR 2787b, 6280 translated by Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 37.

company, but she also questioned the Bible which Luther thought was unquestionably true.¹⁰¹¹ The *Table Talk* discloses that he had wanted to disregard the attack and not answer until a colleague encouraged Katharina to force him to an answer.¹⁰¹² She also challenged him on biblical arguments about polygamy about which Luther liked to tease Katharina.¹⁰¹³ He jokingly said that there would come a time when a man would marry multiple women.¹⁰¹⁴ She responded: “Before I put up with this, I would rather go back to the convent.”¹⁰¹⁵ This shows that she was not only intelligent enough to keep up with theological debates, but also Luther’s humour. Typically, Katharina’s answers have been belittled as examples of her lack of understanding, but many scholars have pointed to these challenges as a demonstration of her fortitude and ability to think for herself and draw from her own experiences.

It appears that Luther was sometimes frustrated by Katharina’s antagonism. It was recorded at one occasion that Luther teased her by stating: “If I can endure conflict with the devil, sin, and a bad conscience, then I can also put up with the irritations of Katy von Bora.”¹⁰¹⁶ On another occasion, where he argued with Katharina, he was quoted as saying:

You convince me of whatever you please. You have complete control. I concede to you the control of the household, provided my rights are preserved. Female government has never done any good. God made Adam the lord of all creatures so that he might rule all living things. But when Eve persuaded him that he was a lord above God, he thereby spoiled it all. We have that to thank you women for...¹⁰¹⁷

¹⁰¹¹ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 246.

¹⁰¹² WA TR 5069.

¹⁰¹³ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 63.

¹⁰¹⁴ Smith, *Katharina von Bora*, 752.

¹⁰¹⁵ LW 54, 153.

¹⁰¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

¹⁰¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 174; WA TR 3, 2847b, 26.

However, at the same time, Luther recognized Katharina's intelligence and he appreciated her mental capabilities. This is evident with a comment he made in which he wrote: "*Meine Kethe melius nunc intelligit psalmos quam olim omnes papistae.*"¹⁰¹⁸ Although this was meant to criticize the Pope, it still shows Luther's appreciation for Katharina's intellect. This is also clear since he kept her informed on various matters pertaining to the Reformation movement, especially theological negotiations.¹⁰¹⁹ He seemed to have valued her judgment and would often consult her privately about matters of running the Church.¹⁰²⁰ He especially discussed issues of the Reformation with Katharina and she would support him in his polemical endeavors.¹⁰²¹ For example, in a letter written to his wife from October 4th, 1529, Luther informed her of the results of the Marburger conference which dealt with uniting the Swiss reformers with the Wittenbergers.¹⁰²² Luther wrote: "Know that our friendly conference at Marburg has come to an end, and we are on almost all points united" except on Jesus' presence in the Lord's Supper.¹⁰²³ In this letter, Luther told Katharina to inform Johann Bugenhagen (1485 – 1158) that the best arguments were made by Ulrich Zwingli (1484 – 1531) who stated that "*corpus non potest esse sine loco; ergo Christi corpus non est in pane,*" and those of Johannes Oecolampadius (1482 – 1531) which stated that the "*Sacramentum est signum corporis Christi.*"¹⁰²⁴ He must have thought that Katharina was capable enough in Latin and theology to be able to correctly inform Bugenhagen.¹⁰²⁵

¹⁰¹⁸ WA TR 4, 5008, 610; Luther also emphasized her intellectual capacities in WA TR, 2, 1461, 104.

¹⁰¹⁹ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 57.

¹⁰²⁰ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 187.

¹⁰²¹ Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 42.

¹⁰²² LW 49, 234-239.

¹⁰²³ *Ibid.*, 234-239.

¹⁰²⁴ Luther wrote: "The body cannot be without place; therefore, the body of Christ is not in the bread," and "the Sacrament is the token of the body of Christ," translated by Malcolm, *Luther's Letters to Women*, 34.

¹⁰²⁵ A year later, Luther wrote to Katharina about the Diet at Augsburg, see *Letter to His Wife, August 14th, 1530*, WA BR 5, 544-545.

Portraits of Katharina's personality, both contemporary and those later depicted, are conflicting and not always flattering. She has been described as a proud, strong-willed, overly frugal housewife while on the other hand considered lively, energetic, and a joyful person with charm, wisdom, and self-assurance.¹⁰²⁶ In these ways, Katharina does not fit the ideal nature and roles that Luther described for women in his theology.¹⁰²⁷ Katharina has been described as a domineering or independent woman who was often difficult and who would not remain silent.¹⁰²⁸ She was unlike Sarah and Martha. She was not silent, but rather engaged with theological discussion, as well as ruled over the household and ruled over Luther. She involved herself in Luther's life, especially through involving herself in his letters.¹⁰²⁹ His own relationship with Katharina is unlike traditional relationships of his time between husband and wife.¹⁰³⁰ For example, some have described Katharina's role in the Luther engagement as assertively "setting her cap" for Luther because she proposed to him.¹⁰³¹ It appears that their relationship was composed of two strong personalities which meant that neither person was suppressed.¹⁰³² Often times, these two strong personalities conflicted. Regardless of what Luther taught or what Katharina accepted, when the need arose "Käthe took to the streets and marketplace, spoke out, doled out money to Martin, and ruled her household with as iron a fist as order demanded."¹⁰³³ Luther the "self-perceived lord of his family" who was faced with his own crises, such as diets or

¹⁰²⁶ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 63; Smith, *Katharina von Bora*, 745.

¹⁰²⁷ Ruth Tucker argues that Katharina's independent spirit and the operation of her household could be used as a role model for wives of pastors who work outside the home, see *Katie Luther, First Lady of the Reformation: The Unconventional Life of Katharina Von Bora* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017).

¹⁰²⁸ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 62.

¹⁰²⁹ See WA BR 4, 109; WA BR 5, 441.

¹⁰³⁰ Pedersen, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 194.

¹⁰³¹ See Herman Selderhuis, *Martin Luther: A Spiritual Biography* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017); Smith, *Katharina von Bora*, 764.

¹⁰³² Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 138; 141-142.

¹⁰³³ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 13.

illnesses, “tolerated in Käthe, and probably appreciated, [her] wielding of power.”¹⁰³⁴ As the last chapter has shown, the patriarchs’ households were characterized by a submissive, obedient, and quiet housewife which is certainly not how contemporaries or scholars describe Katharina von Bora.

The reader might assume that Luther’s own experience in marriage would be scattered throughout his theological works, especially in his *Lectures on Genesis*. However, anyone maintaining that expectation might be disappointed with the lack of direct evidence to support this conclusion. His colleagues would often mention Katharina’s influence on Luther as would Luther himself in various letters.¹⁰³⁵ An example of this comes from the letter between Johann Agricola and Kreuziger who called Katharina the ruler of heaven and earth, as well as the partner of the Jupiter who ruled over her man.¹⁰³⁶ However, whether she had any influence on Luther’s theological works is an interesting but ambiguous question.

Much of this influence is implied and can be drawn from clues from Luther’s own words. Jeanette Smith argues that the frequency in which Katharina appears in Luther’s letters (approximately twenty-one extant letters) shows this influence.¹⁰³⁷ Modern scholars, like Marilyn McGuire, argue that it is a fair assumption that when creating his detailed descriptions of the patriarchs’ households, he likely drew on the examples from his own sixteenth century society, especially his own life at home with Katharina.¹⁰³⁸ Stjerna argues that it can be assumed that there was at least mutual influence between the two and that they both shaped each other’s perspectives: “Katharina was a significant part of Luther’s theological and real-life landscape,

¹⁰³⁴ Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 13.

¹⁰³⁵ See Ingelore Winter, *Katharina von Bora: Ein Leben Mit Martin Luther* (Dusseldorf: Droste, 1990).

¹⁰³⁶ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 68.

¹⁰³⁷ Smith, *Katharina von Bora*, 745; Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 52-57.

¹⁰³⁸ McGuire, *Mature Luther’s Revisions*, 61.

especially with regard to the reformer's fundamentally important notions of marriage, love, family, gender roles, and the understanding of divine love and of God as a parent that they shaped."¹⁰³⁹ Carter Lindberg comments that Luther's marriage "influenced his theology of human relations, especially in terms of the mutuality and reciprocity of love, and contributed to new perspectives on the dignity and responsibility of women."¹⁰⁴⁰ Harry Haile credits Katharina's influence on Luther's "unusually high opinion of womankind, which contrasts strongly with the misogyny so widespread especially in the medieval and Renaissance church."¹⁰⁴¹ Classen and Settle argue that Katharina became an important and influential person in Luther's life: "Her intelligence, competence, devotion, and persistence made her a vital part of his life, and certainly elevated her worth, as well as the worth of women in general, in his eyes."¹⁰⁴² Pedersen claims that she operated as inspiration for his theology and his theological teachings.¹⁰⁴³ Bainton argues that Luther's theological views on marriage were affected by his own experiences by pointing to statements such as: "Nothing is more sweet than harmony in marriage, and nothing more distressing than dissension."¹⁰⁴⁴ Such passages are used to support the view that Luther's marriage influenced or affected his theology. Other statements from Luther that are used as support include: "Marriage offers the greatest sphere for good works, because it rests on love – love between the husband and the wife, love of the parents for the

¹⁰³⁹ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 68.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Lindberg, *the European Reformations*, 101-102.

¹⁰⁴¹ Haile, *Luther*, 269.

¹⁰⁴² Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 247.

¹⁰⁴³ Pedersen uses two letters to Katharina from 1546 as specific examples to prove her point; Classen and Settle argue that Katharina was able to take Luther away from his work and provide him with new thoughts and additional material with which to finish his translations, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 245; Luther refers to these roles, see WA BR 9, 4201: 286-287; with regards to the small catechism is more than indicated that Katharina "said all that is in that book" and where Luther asked his wife if she teaches the catechism and the creed, see also WA BR 9, 4203, 291; he also compared his relation to the Epistle to the Galatians to that which he had with Katharina even calling it by her name which Veit Dietrich, a German theologian and reformer, recorded Luther calling Galatians his "Käthe von Bora," see WA TR 1, 146, 69: "*Epistola ad Galatas ist mein epistelcha, der ich mir vertrawt hab. Ist mein Keth von Bor.*"

¹⁰⁴⁴ WA TR 250, translated by Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 42.

children, whom they nourish, clothe, rear, and nurse [...] if it be said that marriage entails concern, worry, and trouble, that is all true, but these the Christian is not to shun.”¹⁰⁴⁵ Other passages emphasize Luther’s sentimental nature, especially when he said: “Let the wife make her husband glad to come home, and let him make her sorry to see him leave.”¹⁰⁴⁶ The scholars listed above argue that Luther’s theological views were established as much by his biblical exegesis as his own marital experience.

Other scholars have given Katharina’s influence on Luther very little weight. For example, Martin Brecht’s study does not even mention Katharina in his entire work.¹⁰⁴⁷ While other scholars maintain that she had limited to no influence on Luther’s theology. For example, Katharina’s biographer, Ernst Kroker, argues that Luther’s appraisal of her limited theological intellect was confirmed by the fact that there are only a few letters in which Luther refers to actual theological matters with Katharina.¹⁰⁴⁸ Kroker also argues that since Luther did not use Latin in his letters to Katharina, it shows that the two did not discuss intellectual matters. Therefore, Brecht’s and Kroker’s interpretations do not emphasize any possibility that Katharina influenced Luther’s theology.

From examining Luther’s theology, it appears that there is not enough evidence to claim that he used his own experiences as examples in his own theological works. There is not much strong evidence that Luther’s marriage influenced his theology directly despite claims made by Bainton, Pedersen, Stjerna, and others. When these scholars argue that Luther’s marriage directly influenced his theology, they do not provide explicit examples to prove their point. To reinforce

¹⁰⁴⁵ WA 2, 3, 513f, translated by Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 42.

¹⁰⁴⁶ WA TR 6320, translated by Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 43.

¹⁰⁴⁷ See Brecht and Schaaf, *Road to Reformation*.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ernst Kroker, *Katharina von Bora, Martin Luthers Frau: ein lebens und Charakterbild* (Zwickau: J. Herrmann, 1906), 282-284.

these arguments, scholarship needs to highlight exactly where in Luther's theology we can see this influence.

Rather, it appears that Luther liked to use illustrations from Scripture, and he found a lot of examples in the Book of Genesis. It does not appear as though Katharina influenced Luther's theology since his practice of marriage and family life is consistent with his theological views; many of which were written prior to Katharina. Luther believed that by marrying he was keeping with the order of creation that God intended. He thought marriage showed the freedom of a priest to marry and that marriage provided a remedy against sin. There is no doubt that Luther showed a strong sense of vocation in the home and applied to Katharina and his children works of love.¹⁰⁴⁹ When looking at Luther's theology of marriage, it appears that he maintained his own theological perspectives. However, when we look at Luther's theological attitudes towards women, especially their nature and roles, his own marriage does not reflect his prescribed theology.

It is possible that Luther made a distinction between his own wife and other women, thereby allowing Katharina to get away with certain behaviour because she was his wife. He never punished or stopped Katharina when she did not follow his theological precepts. A few questions arise: Did Luther make an exception for his wife when she went against his theology? How did Luther relate to other women who conflicted with his theology such as those who wrote and spoke about theological matters in public, especially since women's place was not in the public realm?

Like Katharina, these Reformation women did not fit within Luther's theological framework. His letters to female reformers show how he interacted with women who did not

¹⁰⁴⁹ Emmett Cocke, "Luther's View of Marriage and Life," *Religion in Life* 42 (1973): 113.

maintain proper roles and did not fit his theological descriptions of “women.”¹⁰⁵⁰ He corresponded with Argula von Grumbach and Katharina Schütz Zell who were two of the most published Reformation women of his day.¹⁰⁵¹ These women possessed qualities that challenged Luther’s theology convictions. They were not silent, they were not unintelligent, and did not remain in the household. They were very much unlike Sarah or Martha. These women did not fit within Luther’s theological beliefs or ideals. They seemed to have not been aware or refused to even consider his stance on proper women’s nature and roles. While some of his letters to these women are extant, other letters from these women to Luther have been lost.¹⁰⁵² Although there is no evidence that suggests that these two women corresponded with each other, they both were in direct contact with Luther. By reading between the lines, some conclusions can be drawn based on how Martin Luther interacted with and treated these women.¹⁰⁵³

¹⁰⁵⁰ For more information on women in the Reformation movements, see Charmarie Blaisdell, “The Matrix of Reform: Women in the Lutheran and Calvinist Movements,” in *Triumph Over Silence: Women in Protestant History*, ed. Richard Greaves (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985); Ursula Koch, *Verspottet, Geachtet, Geliebt - Die Frauen Der Reformatoren: Geschichten Von Mut, Anfechtung Und Beharrlichkeit* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Aussaat, 2017); Caroline Vongries. *Frauen Der Reformation* (Leipzig: Buchverlag für die Frau, 2017); Sylvia Weigelt, *Der Männer Lust und Freude sein* (Weimar: Wartburg Verlag, 2010).

¹⁰⁵¹ See Rebecca VanDoodewaard, *Reformation Women: Sixteenth-century Figures Who Shaped Christianity's Rebirth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017).

¹⁰⁵² In her article, Kirsi Stjerna notes that writing letters was the form of religious writing that was most available to literate women. She argues that personal letters “offered the most diverse channel” for women’s religious writing. This was certainly the case since letters could have many purposes. For example, they could be used for personal correspondence, political, theological, or pastoral reasons, see Kirsi Stjerna “Women and Theological Writing During the Reformation,” *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 16, no. 3 (2016): 13.

¹⁰⁵³ Stjerna argues that these two women represent what the Reformation movements could have meant for women, especially those who believed that Reformation teachings invited women to embrace teaching and leadership roles outside the household. However, these women were a minority, see *idem*, *Luther And Women*, 605.

REFORMATION WOMEN

*Argula von Grumbach (1492? – 1557/1563/1568?)*¹⁰⁵⁴

Martin Luther and Argula von Grumbach, née von Stauff, had a social relationship, where they communicated through personal letters and met on one occasion.¹⁰⁵⁵ Luther's letters to Argula remain a significant source of information about their relationship and his attitudes towards women. These letters show how he interacted with a woman who did not maintain proper roles. Examining Argula is crucial to the task of analyzing Luther's understanding of the nature of women and their proper roles, as well as how he related to women who were outspoken and had a strong theological voice in public. Argula von Grumbach is an important figure in tracing how women received, related to, and developed Luther's reformation teachings.¹⁰⁵⁶

Argula von Grumbach was a Bavarian noble woman who was born to the von Stauff family in the early 1490s.¹⁰⁵⁷ She was born into a privileged, cultured, and religious family. Argula's family was from the house of Hohenstaufen which was composed of lords or barons who had independent jurisdiction and were only accountable to the emperor.¹⁰⁵⁸ Her mother, Katherine, came from a noble and distinguished family from Bavaria known as the Thering or Törring family.¹⁰⁵⁹ Argula's father, Bernhardin, was a leading figure in the Löwenbund or Löwlerbund which was a resistance movement that fought against the centralizing of the

¹⁰⁵⁴ Stjerna provides these dates for Argula's birth and death. However, Peter Matheson has dated her death in 1554/1557. Matheson points to a letter written by Katharina Mollerin to Duke Albrecht in 1557 where she described Argula as deceased, see *idem, Argula Von Grumbach (1492-1554/7): A Woman Before Her Time* (La Vergne: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013), 167-168, "von der wolgebornen frauen frau Argula selig zeedenckhen."

¹⁰⁵⁵ Luther wrote to Spalatin about Argula von Grumbach's suspicion concerning a possible marriage to Katharina as late as November 30th, 1524, see LW 2, 93.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Stjerna, *Luther And Women*, 605.

¹⁰⁵⁷ There are inconsistencies about the dates of her birth and death.

¹⁰⁵⁸ For more biographical information on Argula von Grumbach, see Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 72-86.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Peter Matheson, *Argula Von Grumbach: A Woman's Voice in the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 4.

Bavarian princes' power. Throughout her childhood, Argula's parents strongly emphasized the value of education.¹⁰⁶⁰ She received private education and she had access to books to read because her family was wealthy. For example, when Argula was ten years old, her father gave her an expensive copy of a German translation of the Koberger Bible from 1483.¹⁰⁶¹ Her father was advised against purchasing such a present by Franciscan advisers who thought that Argula would be confused by the Scriptures. The fact that Argula's father dismissed the Franciscans' advice might show that she was determined and was a "rather religiously intense young girl."¹⁰⁶² From studying the Koberger Bible, she gained an excellent knowledge of scripture. When she was fifteen or sixteen, she continued her religious education at the royal court in Munich.¹⁰⁶³ While she was studying there, she met Johann von Staupitz and became interested in Martin Luther's theology.¹⁰⁶⁴

Argula not only had extensive scriptural knowledge, but she was the first Protestant writer, possibly the first woman, to greatly utilize the printing press to support her message.¹⁰⁶⁵

¹⁰⁶⁰ Matheson, *Woman's Voice in the Reformation*, 5.

¹⁰⁶¹ Uwe Birnstein, *Argula Von Grumbach: Das Leben Der Bayerischen Reformatorin - Mit Reiseführer "auf Argulas Spuren"* (Schwarzenfeld, Oberpf: Neufeld Verlag, 2014), 13.

¹⁰⁶² Matheson, *Woman's Voice in the Reformation*, 5.

¹⁰⁶³ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 73.

¹⁰⁶⁴ For more information on Argula's evangelical network, see Birnstein, *Argula Von Grumbach*, 21-24.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Argula von Grumbach's original German publications with various editions include: *Wie ein Christliche Fraw des adels / in // Beyern durch iren / in Gotlicher schrift / wolgegrund // tenn Sendbrieffe/ die hohenschul zu Ingoldstat // vmb das sie eynen Euangelischen Jungling / zu widersprechung des wort gottes. Betragt// haben / straffet.* Actum Ingelstat. M D Xxij. Erfurt: Matthes Maler 1523. (Köhler: Fiche 1002/2543); *Ain Christennliche schrift // ainer Erbarne frawen / vom Adel // darinn sy alle Christenliche stendt / vnd obrigkayten ermant/ Bey // der warheit / vnd dem wort // Gottes zuo bleyben / vnd // solchs auß Christlicher // pflicht zum ernstlich // sten zuo handt // haben.* Argula Staufferin. M.D.xxii. Augsburg: Philipp Ulhart Sr. 1523. (Köhler: Fiche 16/66); *An ain Ersamen // Weysen Radt der stat // Ingolstat / ain sandt // brief / von Fraw // Argula von grun // back gebore // von Stauf // fen.* Augsburg: Philipp Ulhart Sr., 1523. (Köhler 5/19); *Dem // Durchleuchtigen hochge // bornen Fürsten vnd herren /Herren Jo // hansen / Pfaltzgrauen bey Reyn // Hertzogen zuo Beyern / Grafen // zuo Spanheym x. Mey // nem Gnedigisten // Herren.* Argula Staufferin. Augsburg: Philipp Ulhart Sr., 1523. (Köhler: Fiche 284:818); *Dem durchleuchtigsten Hoch // gebornen Fürsten vnd herren /Herrn Fri // derichen. Hertzogen zuo Sachssen / Des // hayligen Römischen Reychs Ertz // marschalck unnd Churfürsten // Landtgrauen in Düringen / unnd Marggrauen zuo // Meyssen / meynem // gnedigisten // herren.* Argula Staufferin. Augsburg: Philipp Ulhart Sr., 1523? (Köhler: Fiche 10/40); *An den Edlen // und gestrengen he // ren / Adam von Thering // der Pfaltzgrauen stat // halter zuo Newburg // x. Ain sandtbrieff // von fraw Argula // von Grumbach // geborne von // Stauf // fen.* Augsburg: Philipp Ulhart Sr., 1523. (Köhler: Fiche 967:2427); *Ein Sendbrieff der edeln // Frawen Argula Staufferin / an die // von*

Scholars such as Peter Matheson argue that she broke “taboo after taboo.”¹⁰⁶⁶ Argula was confident in her right to publicly speak out on religious matters even though she was a woman.¹⁰⁶⁷ Although she explicitly wrote as a woman, she was first and foremost a Christian theologian who embraced the Bible in the spirit of the priesthood of all believers.¹⁰⁶⁸ Matheson argues that since she pioneered the way and was recognized by many of her contemporaries, she “broke through the silence around women.”¹⁰⁶⁹ Argula was certainly an exception to Luther’s theology which described all women as “timid and downhearted in spirit.”¹⁰⁷⁰

Argula von Grumbach was very outspoken and was not hesitant in posing a problem for the Bavarian authorities in the 1520s. On March 5th, 1522, the officials in Munich declared a sanction against the reception of Lutheran teachings because they were considered disruptive to all tradition and the social order.¹⁰⁷¹ In Ingolstadt, the university was encouraged to condemn any signs of heretical Lutheran views. A student named Arsacius Seehofer, who attended the University of Ingolstadt and was influenced by the writings of Luther and Melanchthon, was caught breaking this sanction.¹⁰⁷² Seehofer copied Luther’s actions, but unlike Luther he did not have support from the University of Ingolstadt.¹⁰⁷³ He did not receive this support because

Regensburg. // M.D. Xxiiij. Nuremberg: Hans Hergot, 1524 (Panzer 2342); *Eyn Antwort in // gedichtß weiß / ainem auß d // hohen Schul zu Ingol // stat / auff ainen spruch // newlich con jm auß // gangen / welcher // hynden dabey // getruckt // steet.* // Anno. D.M. Xxiiij. // Rom. X. // So mann von hertzen glawbt / wirt // man rechtuertig / so man aber mit dem // mundt bekennet / wirt mann selig. // Argula von Grumbach // geboren von Stauff. // Eyn Spruch von der // Staufferin / jres Dispu // tierens halben. // Nuremberg: Hieronumus Höltzel, 1524. (Köhler: Fiche 285; 820).

¹⁰⁶⁶ Matheson, *A Woman's Voice in the Reformation*, 2; for a discussion of Argula’s early life, see *idem*, *Argula von Grumbach*, 4-10.

¹⁰⁶⁷ See Stjerna, *Women and Theological Writing*, 1-35.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Kirsi Stjerna, “Reformation Revisited: Women’s Voices in the Reformation,” *The Ecumenical Review*, 69, no. 2 (2017): 207.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Matheson, *A Woman's Voice*, 2.

¹⁰⁷⁰ LW 30, 91-92.

¹⁰⁷¹ Matheson, *A Woman's Voice*, 14.

¹⁰⁷² Birnstein, *Argula Von Grumbach*, 27.

¹⁰⁷³ *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt, September 20th, 1523*, translated by Matheson, *A Woman's Voice*, 76.

Bavaria had been very conservative. Bavaria would later become a popular place for people who supported the Catholic Counter-Reformation.¹⁰⁷⁴

After receiving a series of warnings in 1522, Seehofer was eventually arrested.¹⁰⁷⁵ Argula followed the Seehofer trail and would have received detailed reports of the trial from her brother, Marcellus.¹⁰⁷⁶ There were numerous protests about the arrest and Argula felt compelled to make her voice heard.¹⁰⁷⁷ She maintained two principles from the Reformation: the priesthood of all believers and the importance of Scripture above all else. She employed her authority to interpret the Bible and speak publicly.¹⁰⁷⁸ Argula was not apprehensive about supporting Seehofer even though it was inappropriate behaviour for a woman. Argula sent letters to the university, as well as to several influential male figures including the Magistrate of Ingolstadt, Duke William IV of Bavaria, the Elector Frederick of Saxony, Count John of the Palatinate, and even the council in Regensburg.¹⁰⁷⁹

Based on her letter to the University of Ingolstadt, we can gain a sense of her intelligence as well as her impressive knowledge of the Bible and contemporary theological debates. In addition to Scripture, she was very familiar with nearly all of Luther's works.¹⁰⁸⁰ From at least 1519 onwards, Luther's writings were available to Argula. Even though she lived in a remote town, the printing press allowed for greater access to reformers' works. Matheson argues that

¹⁰⁷⁴ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 247.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Matheson, *A Woman's Voice*, 15.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Theodor Kolde, "Arsacius Seehofer und Argula von Grumbach," *Beiträge zur bayerischen Kirchengeschichte* 11 (1905): 64.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Birnstein, *Argula Von Grumbach*, 29.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Her noble status also likely empowered her to compose the letters.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 247; see also Peter Matheson, "Breaking the Silence: Women, Censorship, and the Reformation," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27 (1996): 97-109; for translated versions of these letters, see Matheson, *A Women's Voice*, 96-113 (*Letter to Duke Wilhelm*); 113-123 (*Letter to the Council of Ingolstadt*); 129-135 (*Letter to Frederick the Wise*); 150-160 (*Letter to the People of Regensburg*).

¹⁰⁸⁰ Matheson argues that Argula was profoundly affected by Luther's writings.

Argula would have been able to keep up with the latest writings.¹⁰⁸¹ By 1523, she had affirmed that she had read all his works that were published in German. She wrote: “A great deal has been published in German, and I have read it all.”¹⁰⁸² Throughout the letter to the University of Ingolstadt, Argula’s theological arguments reflected those of the Protestant reformers. Her knowledge and her conviction about the reformers’ teachings and Scripture meant that she could argue with well-educated men at the university.¹⁰⁸³

In the letter to the University of Ingolstadt, she showed her passion for supporting the Reformation movement: “When I reflect on this [Seehofer trial] my heart and all my limbs tremble.”¹⁰⁸⁴ She was so upset that Seehofer was forced to recant Reformation teachings that she could no longer keep silent. She argued that she has kept silent, depressed and passive, as Paul believed that women should keep silent in the church: “I suppressed my inclinations; heavy of heart, I did nothing. Because Paul says in 1 Timothy 2: ‘The women should keep silent, and should not speak in church.’ But now that I cannot see any man who is up to it, who is either willing or able to speak, I am construed by the saying: ‘Whoever confesses me,’ as I said above.”¹⁰⁸⁵ She argued that since men have failed to speak, that it has made her silence intolerable. Due to this, Argula needed to make her voice known. She wrote: “How in God’s name can you and your university expect to prevail, when you deploy such foolish violence

¹⁰⁸¹ Living in a remote town may have even encouraged Argula to take on a more radical role, see *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁰⁸² *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt, September 20th, 1523*, translated by Matheson, *A Woman’s Voice*, 86; she also read his New Testament translation and was familiar with his translation of the Pentateuch.

¹⁰⁸³ Her letter shows that she agreed with Luther’s theology except for her assessment of a woman’s right to participate in the world of theology and church politics. Argula strongly supported women’s rights as well as the Reformation and often combined both causes together in her letters and pamphlets Classen and Settle argue that her promotion of women’s rights within the Church might have “endangered” most of the support of Luther and his followers. However, Stjerna argues that the fact that Luther “expressed only admiration” for Argula is an important piece of evidence for examining Luther’s attitudes towards women, see *idem, Luther and Women*, 605; Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 248; see also Matheson, *A Woman’s Voice*, 27.

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt, September 20th, 1523*, translated by Matheson, *A Woman’s Voice*, 76.

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

against the word of God; when you force someone to hold the holy Gospel in their hands for the very purpose of denying it, as you did in the case of Arsacius Seehofer?"¹⁰⁸⁶

This conflict led Argula to publish eight pamphlets; the first of which had sixteen editions.¹⁰⁸⁷ She demanded to have an official response from the university and a public debate. She noted in the letter that the authorities condemned Luther and Melanchthon, but they have not properly refuted them by using the Bible.¹⁰⁸⁸ She also rhetorically asked what Luther and Melanchthon teach other than the Word of God.¹⁰⁸⁹ She wrote: "Did Christ teach you so, or his apostles, prophets, or evangelists? Show me where this is written! You lofty experts, nowhere in the Bible do I find that Christ, or his apostles, or his prophets, put people in prison, burnt or murdered them, or sent them into exile. Don't you know what the Lord says in Matthew 10? [10:28]."¹⁰⁹⁰ For Argula, their arguments had to be based entirely on Scripture. She argued that there was no Scriptural evidence supporting their claims or laws: "I hear nothing about any of you refuting a single article [of Seehofer] from Scripture. What I do hear is that a learned lawyer came forward to him and asked: 'Why was he crying? Wasn't he a heretic?' But jurisprudence is no value here."¹⁰⁹¹ In this letter, she wrote: "How are the lawmakers and their representatives to endure if they invent laws out of their own heads and not from the counsel and the word of God?"¹⁰⁹²

She also criticized the prestigious Ingolstadt theologians and their knowledge of Scripture: "Haven't you read the first chapter of Jeremiah [1: 11; 13]."¹⁰⁹³ Since the University

¹⁰⁸⁶ *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt, September 20th, 1523*, translated by Matheson, *A Woman's Voice*, 76.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Matheson, *A Woman's Voice*, 2.

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Birnstein, *Argula Von Grumbach*, 31: "Was lehren Luther und Melanchthon anderes als das Wort Gottes?"

¹⁰⁹⁰ *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt, September 20th, 1523*, translated by Matheson, *A Woman's Voice*, 76.

¹⁰⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁰⁹² *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁰⁹³ *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt, September 20th, 1523*, translated by Matheson, *A Woman's Voice*, 77; Luther once wrote that there could be no pigs anywhere in Bavaria because they were all at the "sty" that is the

of Ingolstadt provided no evidence that was based on the Bible, Argula offered her own scriptural interpretation to correct the University of Ingolstadt.¹⁰⁹⁴ She heavily incorporated biblical passages throughout her letter. Argula argued that the men should do the same rather than trying to win the disputation with force and not Scripture.¹⁰⁹⁵ In this letter, she used the Bible as the foundation for all her arguments and supported her disputation against the university with over eighty biblical quotations and clever rhetoric.

In this letter, she additionally criticized the financial exploitation and immorality of the clergy: “Greed has possessed you; you would be much readier to suffer God’s word if you did not profit from the publication of the Decretal. The gospel does not pull in so many dollars for its advisers. I have seen how my dear lord and father of blessed memory had to pay twenty gulden for a piece of advice four lines long; not that it did him a cent of good.”¹⁰⁹⁶ This was bold behaviour for any lay person and especially for a woman since she broke with gender expectations. It was radical for a woman to challenge educated men, but perhaps more dangerous to defend a Lutheran in an area where Lutheran views were condemned.¹⁰⁹⁷ At the end of the letter to the University of Ingolstadt, Argula argued that what she has written is not a “woman’s chit-chat, but the Word of God; and (I write) as a member of the Christian Church, against which the gates of Hell cannot prevail.”¹⁰⁹⁸

The University of Ingolstadt and the Duke of Bavaria did not feel that it was necessary to reply to a woman. Kirsi Stjerna points out that the arguments of a “desperado” and a “bitch,” as

theological faculty at Ingolstadt,” see WA 15, 95-140: “*Wider das blind und toll Verdamniß der siebenzehn Artikel von der elenden schändlichen Universität ausgangen.*”

¹⁰⁹⁴ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 83.

¹⁰⁹⁵ *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt, September 20th, 1523*, translated by Matheson, *A Woman’s Voice*, 84.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 78.

¹⁰⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt, September 20th, 1523*, translated by Matheson, *A Woman’s Voice*, 90.

she was called, were completely ignored.¹⁰⁹⁹ The only reply she received was an anonymous, misogynistic poem from a student.¹¹⁰⁰ When she received no reply and when the University of Ingolstadt later forced the student to recant Protestant teachings, she publicly protested and published her letters. These letters, which were later published between 1523 and 1524, became popular, were widely read, and were reprinted throughout the Southern German area.¹¹⁰¹ Her first epistle from September 1523 to the University of Ingolstadt had fourteen editions in two months and twenty-nine editions in a year.¹¹⁰² This made her the “most famous Lutheran and a best-selling pamphleteer.”¹¹⁰³ Peter Matheson comments that “if the estimate that some 29,000 copies of her pamphlets circulated on the eve of the German Peasants’ War is approximately correct, and there seems no reason to doubt it, she has to be taken with great seriousness as one of the major pamphleteers of the Reformation.”¹¹⁰⁴

In response to public protests, along with Argula’s criticisms, the authorities eventually changed Seehofer’s punishment from the death penalty to imprisonment for life in the Ettal monastery.¹¹⁰⁵ After the sentence was changed, Argula started to focus on supporting the

¹⁰⁹⁹ Stjerna, *Women and Theological Writing*, 7.

¹¹⁰⁰ A student at the University of Ingolstadt responded to Argula in rhyming couplets. He wrote: “Frau Argula is your name, and what’s more ornery, without shame. You forgot that you’re a maid. And are so fresh you’re not afraid to assume the role of doctor and teach new faith to prince and proctor. By your stupidity inflated Ingolstadt is castigated.” Argula was not silent nor afraid to reply. She wrote: “I answer in the name of God to shut the mouth of this bold snob. Reproaches me with lack of shame when he is scared to give me his name,” see *A Word About the Stauffen Woman and Her Disputativeness*, translated by Matheson, *A Woman’s Voice*, 163; *An Answer in Verse to a Member of the University of Ingolstadt in Response to a Recent Utterance of His Which is Printed Below, 1524*, translated by Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 104.

¹¹⁰¹ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 72.

¹¹⁰² Silke Halbach, *Argula von Grumbach als Verfasserin reformatorischer Flugschriften* (Frankfurt a. Main: Peter Lang, 1992), 187; Halbach’s work contains a comprehensive analysis and listing of Argula’s writings.

¹¹⁰³ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 72.

¹¹⁰⁴ He continues to comment that “the fourteen editions of her first writing were a quite remarkable achievement, ranking her without any doubt as a ‘bestseller’ of formidable proportions,” see Matheson, *A Woman’s Voice*, 53-54.

¹¹⁰⁵ Arsacius Seehofer later escaped from the Ettal monastery, see Birnstein, *Argula Von Grumbach*, 28-29; especially page 41.

Protestant Reformation more broadly and promoted women's active roles within the Church.¹¹⁰⁶ Not surprisingly, Argula was seen with suspicion, distrust, and hatred, but also admiration.¹¹⁰⁷

Although her behaviour and actions were condemned, she could not be persecuted like a man because she was a woman who was a member of the Franconian nobility. Despite this, she began to feel the consequences of her actions.¹¹⁰⁸ She especially felt these consequences in her own marriage. In 1516, Argula married Friedrich von Grumbach who was a northern Bavarian landowner with honourable Franconian roots.¹¹⁰⁹ There is very little that is known about Argula's husband. It appears that he was not very literate and did not support Luther or the Reformation. He remained Catholic throughout his life.¹¹¹⁰ When Argula and Friedrich moved to Lenting, near Ingolstadt, he became an administrator in Dietfurt in Altmühltal.¹¹¹¹ There is little known about their marriage, but what is known is that there were tensions between the two.¹¹¹² These tensions were especially caused by Argula's sympathy for the Protestant Reformation.

Friedrich von Grumbach was under a lot of pressure from the authorities to keep Argula in line. Since Argula could not be officially persecuted, there were rumours circulating that the authorities had wanted Friedrich to issue a punishment for his wife's behaviour.¹¹¹³ The rumour was that the authorities had given him the ability to punish her by cutting off a few of her fingers.¹¹¹⁴ It was likely that the authorities wanted to cut off Argula's fingers so that she could

¹¹⁰⁶ Argula von Grumbach's letters and a large poem, which consists of over 500 verses, exemplify statements of her own beliefs and they should be further studied as expressions of the sixteenth-century female writer.

¹¹⁰⁷ Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 47; Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 247.

¹¹⁰⁸ Her works inspired other women to publish their own tracts. For example, in 1524, Ursula Weyden published *Wyder das unchristlich schreyben und Lesterbuchldes Apts Simon zu Pegaw unnd Seyner Brüder*.

¹¹⁰⁹ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 74.

¹¹¹⁰ He died in 1530.

¹¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹¹¹² Argula wrote a poem about how her husband accused her of neglecting her domestic duties and how she prayed for God to show her how she should treat her husband, see Matheson, *A Woman's Voice*, 8-9.

¹¹¹³ Kolde, *Arsacius Seehofer und Argula von Grumbach*, 97f.

¹¹¹⁴ Matheson, *A Woman's Voice*, 18; the rumours about Friedrich's role in punishing Argula eventually made their way to Luther which he acknowledged in his letters to others. It is likely that Argula wrote to him about them, but that her letters were not preserved.

no longer write. They also told Friedrich that no legal action would be taken against him if he happened to strangle and kill Argula. Even though the authorities put intense pressure on Friedrich, he did not punish Argula for her behaviour and actions. For this reason, Friedrich lost his position as an administrator and the family was forced to move away from Bavaria.¹¹¹⁵ After losing his position, Argula described her husband as persecuting the Christ in her which suggests that Friedrich later engaged in some form of domestic abuse.¹¹¹⁶

Scholars do not have much information about Argula after this period.¹¹¹⁷ There are hints; however, of how difficult this time was for Argula. For example, in November 1528, Luther sent Spalatin a letter, that included a letter from Argula, which described that he was “moved” at “what this most pious woman has to put up with and suffer.”¹¹¹⁸ In 1530 when her husband died, her advocacy stopped because she had to look after her family alone.¹¹¹⁹ In 1533, Argula married Count Burian von Schlick who also died two years later.¹¹²⁰ In 1563, she may have appeared once again as a defender of the Reformation movement when a woman was arrested for attempting to convert peasants to Lutheranism by reading Luther’s Bible and preaching sermons.¹¹²¹ However, information about this event is not entirely reliable.¹¹²² Therefore, the remaining parts of her life remain a mystery.¹¹²³

¹¹¹⁵ Behrens, *Martin Luther’s View of Women*, 47.

¹¹¹⁶ Stjerna, *Reformation Revisited*, 206.

¹¹¹⁷ Scholarship on Argula von Grumbach is minimal, but recent feminist studies have begun to focus more on her, see Albrecht Classen, “Woman Poet and Reformer: The 16th-Century Feminist Argula von Grumbach,” *Daphnis* 20, no. 1 (1991): 167-197.

¹¹¹⁸ Sadly, the fact that Luther included Argula’s letter with his letter to Spalatin was likely the reason why Arula’s letter was not preserved, see WA BR 4, 605: “*Argulae nostrae literas ad te mitto, ut legas pro meis literis, Et videas, quid ferat ac patiatur piissima muller.*”

¹¹¹⁹ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 248.

¹¹²⁰ Birnstein, *Argula Von Grumbach*, 76-77.

¹¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 80-82.

¹¹²² Peter Matheson firmly rejects this date because it rests on confusion with her sister-in-law Anna von Stauff, see *idem*, *Argula Von Grumbach*, 167.

¹¹²³ See Stjerna, *Reformation Revisited*, 206.

In 1520, Martin Luther and Argula von Grumbach first started exchanging letters and they maintained personal contact throughout their lives. Luther clearly thought that she was significant enough to keep in continuous contact with her.¹¹²⁴ Even though Argula maintained contact with Wittenberg and sent several letters to Luther and Spalatin, all her letters to Luther have been lost. Argula's letters to Luther likely did not seem worth preserving which is often the case for women's history.

Upon her initiative, Luther and Argula met each other on one occasion in Coburg on June 2nd, 1530.¹¹²⁵ Peter Matheson points out that Luther appears to have felt like a "circus exhibit" and was tired of receiving visitors but made an exception for Argula.¹¹²⁶ When reflecting on this meeting, Classen and Settle argue that Luther's later impression of Argula appeared to have down-played the role that she played in the Reformation movement. They point to a letter that Luther later wrote to his wife where he mentioned instructions that he received from Argula on cooking and how to wean a baby.¹¹²⁷ In this letter, he did not mention whether he had any significant theological discussions with her. Classen and Settle argue that this was perhaps because he was intimidated by Argula. It might have also been likely that Luther thought it was not safe to publicly associate with Argula. She was a controversial figure who not only did not maintain contemporary ideals for women but also offered a basis for possible revolutionary riots

¹¹²⁴ In 1522, Luther hand-wrote a dedication to Argula in a book of prayers. Luther recognized that she was a worthy correspondent and someone significant enough to receive his personal dedication. Peter Matheson notes that this book was thought to be lost, but he found it at the Berlin State Library. The dedication reads: "*Der Edlen frawen Hargula vonn Stauffen tzu Grumpach.*" At the end of the booklet it has written: "*Gedruckt tzu Wittemberg durch Johann Grunenberg, 1522.*" see *idem*, "A Life in Letters: Argula von Grumbach (1492-1556/1557)," *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 4 (2009): 31.

¹¹²⁵ Birnstein, *Argula Von Grumbach*, 68; Luther was also familiar with one of her sons named Georg von Grumbach, see WA BR 5, 348, 1582.

¹¹²⁶ Matheson, *A Woman's Voice*, 23.

¹¹²⁷ WA BR 5, 347f.

by the peasantry due to her exegetical interpretations.¹¹²⁸ However, it is important to emphasize the fact that Luther made an exception to meet with Argula. This shows that she was a significant individual for Luther. It is also important to highlight that Luther made at least four references to Argula's visit with him.¹¹²⁹ Within two or three days after their meeting, he made a reference to her in two letters to Melanchthon, one to his wife, and one to a German theologian named Wenzeslaus Link (1483 – 1547).¹¹³⁰

Luther's attitudes towards Argula can mainly be uncovered in his letters to friends and colleagues which contain several references to her letters and her works.¹¹³¹ For example, he confirmed his approval of Argula's behaviour and words in a letter to Paul Speratus (1484 – 1551), a Protestant reformer, on June 13th, 1522.¹¹³² Luther also later wrote to Spalatin on January 18th, 1524 regarding several political concerns.¹¹³³ In this letter, the first matter that he addressed was Argula's letters to him which he also forwarded to Spalatin to read.¹¹³⁴ She clearly was not only considered to be a simple admirer, but also impressed Luther as a notable person whose letters were worth sharing with others and studying.¹¹³⁵ In another letter to Spalatin from February 1st, 1524, Luther described Argula as a testimony for Christ and a favourite of Christ:

¹¹²⁸ Albrecht Classen, *Medieval German Literature: Proceedings from the 23rd International Congress on Medieval Studies Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 5-8, 1988* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1989), 146-147.

¹¹²⁹ Birnstein, *Argula Von Grumbach*, 70.

¹¹³⁰ See WA BR 5, 346f., 350-347f., 349f.

¹¹³¹ This counters Kirsi Stjerna's claim that "neither Luther, nor other male reformers, however, gave Argula public credit for her theological participation." Luther not only shared her writings with others, but also wrote to others about how he was impressed with Argula's "valiant fight," "great spirit," and "boldness of speech and knowledge." Since letters could be read aloud or shared with others, I would argue that they were "public." Lyndal Roper also shares my view. She states: "Letters were not "private" in the sense we might now assume, but were forwarded to others, read aloud, and shared." Therefore, Luther did publicly acknowledge Argula von Grumbach, see *Stjerna, Women and Theological Writing*, 7; Roper, *Reading Luther's Letters*, 283.

¹¹³² WA BR 2, 559.

¹¹³³ Luther's letters to Spalatin which mention Argula include one from October 30th, 1524 (WA BR 3, 364); November 24th, 1524 (WA BR 3, 390); and November 30th, 1524 (WA BR 3 393f) among the letters that were already discussed in this chapter.

¹¹³⁴ Luther also asked Spalatin to extend his greetings to Argula, see WA BR 3, 235.

¹¹³⁵ See WA BR 3, 235.

“*Argulam illam seruet & triumphet Christus.*”¹¹³⁶ He wrote: “I am sending you the letters of Argula von Grumbach, Christ’s disciple, that you may see how the angels rejoice over a sinful daughter of Adam, converted and made into a daughter of God.”¹¹³⁷ Luther also commissioned Spalatin to greet Argula for him and comfort her in the name of Christ. In February 1524, Luther also reported to Johann Breißmann that Argula had taken on the courageous role of an active defender of evangelical beliefs in Bavaria, where the Duke had started to persecute Protestant followers.¹¹³⁸ He wrote:

The Duke of Bavaria rages above measure, killing, crushing and persecuting the gospel with all his might. That most noble woman, Argula von Stauffer [von Grumbach], is there making a valiant fight with great spirit, boldness of speech and knowledge of Christ. She deserves that all pray for Christ’s victory in her. She has attacked the University of Ingolstadt for forcing the recantation of a certain youth, Arsacius Seehofer. Her husband, who treats her tyrannically, has been deposed from his prefecture.¹¹³⁹ What he will do you can imagine. She alone, among these monsters, carries on with firm faith, though, she admits, not without inner trembling. She is a singular instrument of Christ. I commend her to you, that Christ through this infirm vessel may confound the mighty and

¹¹³⁶ WA BR 3, 241.

¹¹³⁷ WA BR 2, 503, translated by Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 79; see also Kolde, *Arsacius Seehofer und Argula von Grumbach*, 114-115.

¹¹³⁸ WA BR 3, 241: “*Dux Bavariae saevit ultra modum occidendo, profligando, persequendo totis viribus euangelium. Nobilissima femina Argula a Staufen iam magnum agonem magno spiritu et plena verbo et scientia Christi in ea terra agit. Digna, pro qua omnes rogemus, ut Christus in ea triumphet. Invasit scriptis Academiam Ingolstadiensem, quod Arsacium quendam iuvenem ad foedam adegerint revocationem. Maritus, per sese illi tyrannus, nunc ob ipsam praefectura deiectus, quid sit facturum, cogita; illa sola inter haec monstra versatur forti quidem fide, sed, ut ipsa scribit, non sine pavore cordis interdum. Ea est instrumentum singulare Christi, commendo tibi eam, ut Christus per hoc infirmum vasculum confundat potentes istos et gloriosos in sapientia sua.*”

¹¹³⁹ With this passage, Luther is likely referring to how Argula had to defend against Friedrich’s accusations that she was not a good wife. Friedrich was later dismissed from his administrative position under Duke Ludwig because he did not follow orders from the authorities to punish Argula.

those who glory in their strength.¹¹⁴⁰

In this letter, he described her actions on behalf of Seehofer and commented on her “great spirit, boldness of speech and knowledge of Christ.”¹¹⁴¹ He described her as “*instrumentum singulare Christi*,” perhaps highlighting that she was unique and that she had the ability to confound and threaten the powers in Bavaria.¹¹⁴² He wrote: “*Nobilissima femina Argula a Staufen iam magnum agonem magno spiritu et plena verbo et scientia Christi in ea terra agit.*”¹¹⁴³

However, in this letter he also called her an “infirm vessel” which is consistent with most of his theological comments about women. Yet, this letter highlights that he was inconsistent with his own theology when he provided Argula with the authority of Christ to pursue her activities. This makes her an exception to his theological view that women should remain silent within the household and submit themselves to their husband’s authority.

Luther was not alone in praising Argula’s action as many of his contemporaries also offered their approval. For example, Justus Jonas (1493 – 1555) wrote to Luther on June 25th, 1530 with his praise for Argula’s courage and spiritual convictions, especially with the threat of persecution from the Bavarian authorities.¹¹⁴⁴ Jonas thought that she represented those individuals who were inspired by God whereas members of the Roman Catholic Church appeared in contrast to Argula as being rejected by God and ignorant.

¹¹⁴⁰ WA BR 4, 706; WA BR 2, 509, translated by Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 79.

¹¹⁴¹ He also praised Argula’s writing style as “*quae placuerunt*” which is an impressive compliment since it comes from Luther himself who was one of the highest authorities on style, grammar, and vocabulary of the German language.

¹¹⁴² WA BR 3, 247.

¹¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 247.

¹¹⁴⁴ WA BR 5, 392.

Luther also acknowledged Argula as one of his informants which was a role she happily accepted.¹¹⁴⁵ Peter Matheson argues that since Luther and Argula frequently corresponded, it is reasonable to suggest that she was his main informant about the Seehofer case.¹¹⁴⁶ For another example, in 1522, Luther received a letter from Argula in which she reported on the martyrdoms in the Netherlands.¹¹⁴⁷ In addition, on June 5th, 1530, Luther reported to Melanchthon the relevant information that Argula was able to report to him about the reception of the Emperor in Munich.¹¹⁴⁸ Both Luther and Argula shared a hatred for the pompous ceremonies and idleness of the political rulers.¹¹⁴⁹ She must have been well known for her political knowledge. For example, she wrote to Spalatin to keep him informed about the progress of the Reformation. In addition, Justus Jonas also considered Argula to be a valuable informant for political events in the German Empire.¹¹⁵⁰

Martin Luther's interactions with Argula von Grumbach stand in strong contrast to his theological beliefs about a woman's nature and proper roles. She conflicted with Luther's theological descriptions of a woman. She differed from his beliefs about a woman's passive nature, their intellectual weakness, and their place within the household. Argula did not exhibit Luther's view that there was a "boundless weakness of women," especially with regards to intellectual capabilities.¹¹⁵¹ In fact, Luther acknowledged Argula's strengths on political, intellectual, and theological levels. This is evident by the fact that she was Luther's political informant. It is also clear that, apart from Argula's recommendations that Luther marry at once in the fall of 1524 and advice on childrearing, theological issues were prevalent in their personal

¹¹⁴⁵ WA BR 5, 536; 1f.

¹¹⁴⁶ However, Matheson notes that we do not know this for sure, see *idem*, *Argula von Grumbach*, 83.

¹¹⁴⁷ WA BR 2, 559-562.

¹¹⁴⁸ For the political and historical context of those events, see WA BR 5, 352.

¹¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 251.

¹¹⁵⁰ WA BR 5, 536.

¹¹⁵¹ LW 3, 47.

correspondences.¹¹⁵² Her behaviour was not consistent with Luther's theological view that all women have an "animal-like intuition" and therefore are unable to contemplate complex matters that do not pertain to the household.¹¹⁵³

Argula also did not adhere to Luther's theology which outlined that a woman should remain silent within the household. In fact, she even rebelled against her own husband and his authority by taking on a new role outside the home. It is interesting that Luther interacted with someone who he clearly would have thought was being inappropriate since she abandoned her natural role and left the home. His theology maintained that creation revealed that women ought to be domestic because "they have broad backsides and hips, so that they should sit still."¹¹⁵⁴ For this reason, he believed that God designed women for housekeeping while God created men for "fighting and dealing with justice."¹¹⁵⁵ Contrary to this belief, Argula was very publicly outspoken and an active female defender of the Protestant Reformation.¹¹⁵⁶ Uwe Birnstein even describes Argula as the first evangelical church woman.¹¹⁵⁷ She was certainly interested in having a public voice on theological matters. She boldly fought for the Reformation and supported Luther whenever he was criticized. In addition, she argued that the University of Ingolstadt was treating Seehofer unjustly, so she fought for Seehofer. Even though Luther believed that men were able "to do many things both in public and private life" and that women were strangers to this, he nevertheless spoke about Argula von Grumbach and her achievements with high regard.¹¹⁵⁸

¹¹⁵² WA BR 3, 393-294.

¹¹⁵³ WA 1, 17, 1, 24.

¹¹⁵⁴ WA TR 1, 55, 19, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 28.

¹¹⁵⁵ WA TR 1, 1054, 531-532.

¹¹⁵⁶ See Classen, *Woman Poet and Reformer*, 167-197.

¹¹⁵⁷ Birnstein, *Argula Von Grumbach*, 83.

¹¹⁵⁸ LW 42, 144.

It is also interesting that Luther kept in contact with Argula even though she received so much criticism. For example, she was very outspoken and publicly debated theological issues in a society in which women were not allowed to debate in public. She rebelled against social conventions of the time, especially those that limited women's life in writing and debating. However, he was nevertheless impressed with her and her activities in support of the Reformation movement in Bavaria.¹¹⁵⁹ He knew that she had become evangelical because of his own teachings and that she often publicly defended his theology. Stjerna argues that perhaps Luther did not imply that women would be unable to "become" theologians and think about theological matters because of their sex.¹¹⁶⁰ We can see that women, such as Argula, did emerge as theologians and that they did earn Luther's respect.

Some scholars, like Peter Matheson, contend that in Luther's view "individually, she might be worth of praise and deserving of encouragement, but she had no place, it would seem, in the serious business of theology."¹¹⁶¹ These scholars propose that as much as Luther recognized Argula as one who supported the Reformation movement, her sex was seen as a problem.¹¹⁶² Although she was in agreement with Luther theologically and in her criticisms of the abuses in the Church, her "unfeminine" behaviour was not consistent with the norms of society and was considered to be detrimental to the Protestant cause.¹¹⁶³ For example, when Luther wrote about the student's case and the University of Ingolstadt he refrained from including Argula's name. In other words, he did not publicly associate himself with Argula in that situation. However, this act is ambiguous. It may have been the case that direct

¹¹⁵⁹ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 250.

¹¹⁶⁰ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 60.

¹¹⁶¹ Matheson, *A Woman's Voice*, 21-23.

¹¹⁶² Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 80.

¹¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 80.

communication with and about a woman would have been “licentious” for a man who had such high stature.¹¹⁶⁴ It is unclear whether Luther respected a woman’s theological contribution as equal with that of men or whether he desired to protect himself or Argula. The reason behind Luther’s actions in this case is left to speculation.

On the other hand, he did not condemn Argula for acting beyond the accepted realm of what was expected or outlined as proper for women in both his own theology and sixteenth century society.¹¹⁶⁵ It is obvious how often Luther lashed out against his enemies or evangelicals who had taken his teachings too far, such as Andreas Karlstadt or the peasants during the Great Peasants’ Revolt.¹¹⁶⁶ Yet, Luther never condemned Argula for her own participation in the public sphere. He never lashed out against her or her actions. He also did not remind Argula of her proper place or nature as a woman. Since there is no such reaction or curtailing in relation to her behaviour, it is reasonable to assume that Luther responded with sensitivity and likely saw no benefit to referencing a woman’s participation in an event in which she had already been dismissed and penalized.¹¹⁶⁷ Martin Luther, of all people, knew the price that needed to be paid for disobedience and breaking social norms.

¹¹⁶⁴ Hermina Joldersma, “Argula von Grumbach (1492 - After 1563?),” in James Hardin and Reinhart Max, *German Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation, 1280-1580* (Detroit, Washington and London: A Brucoli Clark, Layman Book Gale Research, 1997), 89-96; especially page 90.

¹¹⁶⁵ WA BR 3, 235, 247, 241.

¹¹⁶⁶ For more information on the issues between Luther and Karlstadt, see Ronald Sider. *Karlstadt's Battle with Luther: Documents in a Liberal-Radical Debate* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001); for an overview of the revolts and civil wars in Europe, see Mark Konnert, *Early Modern Europe: The Age of Religious War, 1559-1715* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

¹¹⁶⁷ Stjerna, *Luther and Women*, 606.

Katharina Schütz Zell (1497 – 1562)

Argula von Grumbach was not the only female reformer with whom Luther corresponded. He also interacted with Katharina Schütz Zell who was the wife of the Strasbourg minister named Matthew Zell (1477 – 1548).¹¹⁶⁸ Katharina was known for her impressive knowledge of the Scriptures, public ministry, helping others, and for being bold and outspoken. She represents what a woman could do if she followed Luther's principles of the priesthood of all believers, *sola scriptura*, Christian freedom, and serving one's neighbour out of love.¹¹⁶⁹

Katharina Schütz Zell is an example of a woman whose significance in the Reformation has only been recently studied.¹¹⁷⁰ Katharina came from an artisan family in the city of Strasbourg. She received a good education, but did not study Latin which suggests how her parents, especially her father, viewed education.¹¹⁷¹ While she was in Strasbourg, she was a devout Christian and a role model for other women to follow.¹¹⁷² Later in 1557, she wrote in her autobiography that at the age of ten she even called herself "*Kirchenmutter*" because she thought she was called by God to look after the church and the people.¹¹⁷³ When she was younger, she planned on remaining unmarried and thought she would support herself as a

¹¹⁶⁸ For biographical information on Katharina Zell, see Elsie McKee, "Katharina Schütz Zell: A Protestant Reformer," in *Telling the Churches' Stories: Ecumenical Perspectives on Writing Christian History*, ed. Timothy J. Wengert and Charles W. Brockwell, Jr. (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 73-90; Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 109-133.

¹¹⁶⁹ See Charlotte Methuen, "Preaching the Gospel through Love of Neighbour: The Ministry of Katharina Schütz Zell," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61 (2010): 710-11.

¹¹⁷⁰ See Sini Mikkola, "By the Grace of God: Women's Agency in the Rhetoric of Katharina Schütz Zell and Martin Luther," *Scholar and Feminist Online Journal* 15, no. 1 (2018): 1-3.

¹¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹¹⁷² Elsie McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell: The Life and Thought of a Sixteenth-Century Reformer* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 28.

¹¹⁷³ See Katharina Schütz Zell, "*Ein Brief an die gantze Burgerschafft der Statt Strassburg/von Katherina Zellin/dessen jetz saligen Matthei Zellen/dess alten und ersten Predigers des Evangelij diser Statt/nachgelssne Ehefraw/Betreffend Herr Ludwigen Rabus/jetz ein Prediger der Statt Ulm/sampt zweynen brieffen jr und sein/die mag mengklich lesen und urtheilen on gunst und hasss/sonder allein der war heit warnemen: Dabey auch ein sanffte antwort/auff jeden Artickel/seines brieffs,*" in Elsie McKee, *The Writings: A Critical Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 170.

weaver.¹¹⁷⁴ However, these plans changed when Katharina eventually became influenced by Reformation theology.

She became familiar with Luther's teachings because they were spread across Strasbourg by Matthew Zell. By 1521 or 1522, it was likely that Katharina was convinced by Luther's theology that she was saved by grace and not by works.¹¹⁷⁵ She used his theology as the foundation to build her own evangelical theology. However, she then expanded it to be more inclusive since she had conversations with people about issues that mattered to them personally. She believed that God's gift of faith and trust in Jesus as her only saviour, as well as her understanding of the Bible meant that she was qualified to help others.¹¹⁷⁶

After reading Luther's writings, Katharina reconsidered her plan to stay unmarried. She was especially influenced by his teachings that marriage was superior to celibacy. This influence led her to marry for vocational reasons even before Luther's own marriage. On December 3rd, 1523, Katharina married a man named Matthew Zell.¹¹⁷⁷ Sini Mikkola notes that Katharina "first public evangelical act" was to marry Matthew who was an evangelical preacher and priest.¹¹⁷⁸ The two considered their marriage to be a partnership in many ways. Unlike the social conventions of the time, Katharina not only considered herself to be an equal partner with her husband in the marriage, but also in public ministry.¹¹⁷⁹ This is significant since traditional cultural conventions required a "good wife" to be silent and obedient. However, she was not confined by her station in life and did not show her faithfulness to God and to her husband by

¹¹⁷⁴ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 111.

¹¹⁷⁵ Elsie McKee, *Church Mother: The Writings of a Protestant Reformer in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, trans. Elsie McKee (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 15.

¹¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹¹⁷⁷ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 112.

¹¹⁷⁸ Mikkola, *By the Grace of God*, 2; Wilhelm von Honstein, the Catholic bishop of Strasbourg, later excommunicated the Zells in 1524, see McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 51.

¹¹⁷⁹ McKee, *Church Mother*, 58.

remaining silent within the household.¹¹⁸⁰ Rather, she extended her role outside of the home.¹¹⁸¹ Katharina was one of the first women as a model of “the pastor’s wife” in the Reformation movement to show that she could work equally with her husband without losing her own identity as a woman.¹¹⁸²

From the moment Katharina became a wife, she was active in the Reformation movement. Both Katharina and Matthew supported clerical marriages because they represented a controversial step in religious reform.¹¹⁸³ Clerical marriages were an explicit way of affirming biblical authority because they strongly disobeyed Canon law.¹¹⁸⁴ Shortly after marrying Matthew, Katharina felt the negative social impact of marrying a priest. Rumours and slander began to circulate. In response to this, she wrote a letter to justify her husband “on account of the great lies invented about him.”¹¹⁸⁵ In 1524, she was so certain of the rightness in her position that she wrote a private letter to the bishop in Strasbourg.¹¹⁸⁶ This was bold behaviour as Mikkola comments that “a woman writing to a bishop was [...] an outrage.”¹¹⁸⁷ In the letter, she wrote: “I cannot excuse myself and persuade my conscience that I should be silent about these very great devilish lies that have been said and published about me, as I have been silent until now.”¹¹⁸⁸ She also wrote: “If you will not allow yourself to be instructed by the truth, I will patiently suffer such injustice with Christ, who teaches me not to resist evil and, when someone strikes me on

¹¹⁸⁰ WA TR 1, 55, 19.

¹¹⁸¹ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 110.

¹¹⁸² McKee, *Church Mother*, 1.

¹¹⁸³ For information of the debates surrounding the moral state of clergy, see Joel Harrington, *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 35-38.

¹¹⁸⁴ McKee, *Church Mother*, 57; to support their views, the Zells used Luther’s comments about God’s commandment for men and women to bear children, see WA 12, 243.

¹¹⁸⁵ *Katharina Schütz’s Apologia for Master Matthew Zell, Her Husband, Who is a Pastor and Servant of the Word of God in Strasbourg, Because of the Great Lies Invented about Him, September 1524*, translated by McKee, *Church Mother*, 69.

¹¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹¹⁸⁷ Mikkola, *By the Grace of God*, 2.

¹¹⁸⁸ McKee, *Church Mother*, 64.

one cheek, to offer the other and to let the overcoat go after the coat [Matthew 5: 39-40].”¹¹⁸⁹

With this letter, she not only wanted to discredit rumours, but also prove that the rightness of clerical marriages was based on scripture and that the Church invented the idea that celibacy was superior to marriage. Katharina wrote:

An evil teaching is more dangerous than a wicked life. Teaching affects many others, but with a wicked life the greatest harm is to the self. I must also say a little about the teaching, not only for my husband, but for the whole multitude of those who preach the Gospel, such as Luther [...] I say then to the poison brewers, yes, to those who pour out all the worse kinds of poison, who are still in Strasbourg and in all the lands, whether they still wear gray hoods [Franciscans] or black hoods [Augustinians], or used to wear them, ‘If the teaching of Luther and his followers is false, why have you not shown its falsity and overcome it with clear godly scripture?’¹¹⁹⁰

Throughout this letter, as with Argula, Katharina used scripture to support her arguments. She believed that the only basis for determining whether a teaching was true or false was to prove it by using the Bible. For Katharina, like other reformers, she constantly and explicitly appealed to scripture as the sole religious authority. She added: “It is as if they [Roman Catholic clergy] want to build beautiful houses and tall cathedrals with clay and straw, while the others [Luther, etc.] build them with good lime and stone [Matthew 7:24-27].”¹¹⁹¹ She argued that the

¹¹⁸⁹ McKee, *Church Mother*, 66.

¹¹⁹⁰ Katharina Schütz’s *Apologia for Master Matthew Zell, Her Husband, Who is a Pastor and Servant of the Word of God in Strasbourg, Because of the Great Lies Invented about Him, September 1524*, translated by McKee, *Church Mother*, 69.

¹¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

Roman Catholic church builds with “clay and straw,” that is, man-made church teachings, while by contrast, Luther builds with “lime and stone,” referring to God’s word.

Eventually, this letter became part of her second publication, titled *Katharina Schütz’s Apologia for Master Matthew Zell, Her Husband, Who is a Pastor and Servant of the Word of God in Strasbourg, Because of the Great Lies Invented about Him*, which was published in September 1524. There is no point in the *Apologia* at which Katharina shows any doubt about what she is writing or her right to say it.¹¹⁹² As with her other works, she is persistent with a strong assurance that she is acting appropriately and there is never any sign of self-belittlement because she is a woman.¹¹⁹³

Even though there were rumours concerning their clerical marriage, she was well respected and considered to be an unofficial “mother” of the established church in Strasbourg.¹¹⁹⁴ This is significant as this was a time when church leadership was a privilege for only males. She was well respected because of her knowledge of theology and contemporary theological issues due to her social interactions with reformers and constant reading of scripture.¹¹⁹⁵

As with Argula, Katharina was one of the most vocal and published Reformation women.¹¹⁹⁶ She started writing publicly in 1524 and continued to publish until 1558; a period of over thirty-four years.¹¹⁹⁷ This was a long period for a person to write publicly, especially since most lay pamphleteers only published over a period of a few years.¹¹⁹⁸ Katharina wrote both

¹¹⁹² McKee, *Church Mother*, 25.

¹¹⁹³ This assurance can be found throughout her works, see especially *Foreword to the Hymnbook of Bohemian Brethren* (1534); *A Letter to the Whole Citizenship of the City of Strasbourg from Katharina Zell* (March 1558).

¹¹⁹⁴ McKee, *Church Mother*, 1.

¹¹⁹⁵ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 113.

¹¹⁹⁶ Stjerna, *Luther and Women*, 607; see also Merry Wiesner-Hanks, “Kinder, Kirche, Landeskinde: Women Defend Their Publishing in Early Modern Germany,” in *Books Have Their Own Destiny*, ed. Robin B. Barnes, Robert A. Kolb, and Paula L. Presley (Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1998), 143-152.

¹¹⁹⁷ Mikkola, *By the Grace of God*, 2.

¹¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

private and public letters. Her works, which all referenced the Bible, included pastoral care letters, catechetical texts, devotional works, homiletical pieces, and autobiographical works.¹¹⁹⁹ She also wrote sermons and even edited hymns to make them reflect the new Reformation theology and people's experiences.¹²⁰⁰ Throughout any genre of her writings, there is a strong sense of agency, self-authorization, an obligation to help others, and a strong confidence that she had a right and duty to publicly speak.¹²⁰¹

In Katharina's works, she wrote about issues that were important to her and her community. For example, Katharina was very active in defending the Reformation movement and especially Martin Luther from critics. In December 1522, Johannes Cochlaeus (1479 – 1552), a German humanist, published a book in Latin against Luther in Strasbourg. Katharina was bold enough not only to publicly assert that she wanted to challenge Cochlaeus, but also asked him to translate his work from Latin to German so that she could respond to it: "I will

¹¹⁹⁹ Katharina's original German published works include: *Entschuldigung Katharina Schützinn/für M. Matthes Zellen/jren Eegemahel/ der ein Pfarrher und dyener ist im wort Gottes zu Strassburg. Von wegen grosser lügen uff jn erdiecht* (Strasbourg: W. Köpffel, 1524) (= *Katharina Schütz's Apologia for Master Matthew Zell, her Husband*); *Den leydenden Christglaubigen weyberen der gmein zu Kentzigen minen mitschwestern in Christo Jesus zu handen* (Strasbourg, 1524) (= *Letter to the Suffering Women of the Community of Kentzingen*); *Den Psalmen Miserere/mit dem Khünig David bedacht/ gebettet/ und paraphrasirt von Katharina Zellin M. Matthei Zellen seligen nachgelassne Ehefraw/ sampt dem Vatter unser mit seiner erklärung/ zugeschickt dem Christlichen mann Juncker Felix Armbruster/zum trost in seiner kranckheit/ und andern angefochtenen hertzen und Concienczen/ der sünd halben betrubt &c. In truck lassen kommen* (August 1558) (= *The Misere Psalm Meditated, Prayer, and Paraphrased with King David by Katharina Zell*); *Klag red und ermahnung Catharina Zellin zum volk bey dem grab m: Matheus Zellen pfarer zum münster zu Straßburg/ deß frommen manns/ bey und über seinen todten leib.* (January 11, 1548) (= *Lament and Exhortation of Katharina Zell to the People at the Grave of Master Matthew Zell*); *Ein Brieff an die gantze Burgerschafft der Statt Strassburg/ von Katherina Zellin/ dessen jetzt saligen Matthei Zellen/ deß alten und ersten Predigers des Evangelij diser Statt/nachgelassene Ehefraw/Betreffend Herr Ludwigen Rabus / jetz ein Prediger der Statt Ulm / sampt zweyen brieffen jr und sein/ die mag mengklich lessen und urtheilen on gunst und hasß/ sonder allein der war heit warnemen. Dabey auch ein sanffte antwort/ auff jeden Artickel/ seines briefs* (Strasbourg, December 1557) (= *A Letter to the Whole Citizenship of the City of Strasbourg from Katharina Zell*); *Von Christo Jesus unseerem saligmacher/ seiner Menschwerdung/ Geburt/ Beschneidung/ etc. etlich Christliche und trostliche Lobgsang/auß einem vast herrlichen Gsangbuch gezogen/Von welchem inn der Vorred weiter anzeygt würdt* (Strasbourg: J. Froelich, 1534–36) (= *Some Christian and Comforting Songs of Praise about Jesus Christ Our Savior*).

¹²⁰⁰ Stjerna, *Women and Theological Writing*, 27.

¹²⁰¹ Mikkola, *By the Grace of God*, 1.

perhaps ask him to give it to me in the German language and so answer him...”¹²⁰² She then brazenly added: “In order that everyone may know of whom I speak – for, as I hope, he is not shy about his name – he is called Johannes Cochlaeus. I would have almost said ‘wooden [cooking] spoon (*kochleffel*),’ for he acts just like a spoon that makes a lot of noise in an empty pot but is made out of such poor fir wood that one could not use it to stir a child’s pap.”¹²⁰³

With her writings, Katharina not only defended the Reformation movement but also encouraged others to remain strong in supporting the evangelical faith. For example, in 1524, she wrote to women who were suffering in the community of Kentzingen because of their Protestant faith.¹²⁰⁴ She offered consolation and praise to the women who remained at home to face persecution from the bishops and civil overlords: “All of us, I, and those who are united with me in Christ, know and consider well with compassionate hearts the great distress that you suffer for Christ’s sake.”¹²⁰⁵ In this letter, Katharina told the women to speak to their husbands using Jesus’ words: “Trample your flesh under foot, lift up your spirit, and speak comfortingly to your husbands and also to yourselves with the words that Christ Himself said: ‘Do not fear those who can kill the body; I will show you one who can kill your body and soul and cast them in Hell [Luke 12:4-5, 8-9].’”¹²⁰⁶ This statement from Katharina deserves some attention. Katharina’s recommendation that the women speak to their husbands in this way reverses the traditional belief that men are the teachers and that women, especially wives, are subordinate to them. She

¹²⁰² Katharina Schütz’s *Apologia for Master Matthew Zell, Her Husband, Who is a Pastor and Servant of the Word of God in Strasbourg, Because of the Great Lies Invented about Him, September 1524*, translated by McKee, *Church Mother*, 70.

¹²⁰³ McKee, *Church Mother*, 70.

¹²⁰⁴ *Letter to the Suffering Women of the Community of Kentzingen, Who Believe in Christ, Sisters with Me in Jesus Christ, 1524*, translated by McKee, *Church Mother*, 50.

¹²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

was not only confident in speaking out, but also maintaining views that conflicted with traditional social conventions in society.

Katharina not only wrote about issues that were important to her and her community, but she was also very active in improving social life within Strasbourg, especially by establishing social welfare programs and committing herself to the poor and sick.¹²⁰⁷ For example, as a social activist she established a relief for refugees and argued that the city government not only create more welfare programs, but also reform the ones that they managed.¹²⁰⁸ In the sixteenth century, welfare was introduced across western Europe.¹²⁰⁹ Since there were so many drifters, the city governments restricted its welfare to citizens or documented residents. In 1523, Strasbourg was the first city in the Empire to adopt this welfare system.¹²¹⁰ Elsie McKee argues that “Katharina Schütz Zell had been a major support to the first administrator of the city poor relief organization.”¹²¹¹ During the Peasants’ War, Katharina also helped to set up a separate fund for refugees because they were not citizens and therefore not covered by the city welfare program. She fought to have the city consider the needy outside of its own citizens by providing them with food and places to stay.¹²¹² In 1525, the city magistrate was unhappy with Katharina’s support for the peasant refugees, especially when the Zells welcomed a significant number of them into the city when the war was lost.¹²¹³ However, this is not diminish Katharina’s social activism. Later, in October 1553, Katharina wrote a letter to Schwenckfeld where she reflected on how she felt when she organized the relief for the poor refugees. Katharina wrote that she felt like she

¹²⁰⁷ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 250; Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 116; Kirsi Stjerna argues that Reformation women’s theology can be characterized by one word: “compassion,” see *idem*, *Reformation Revisited*, 214.

¹²⁰⁸ McKee, *Church Mother*, 1.

¹²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹²¹² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹²¹³ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 250.

must disburse “everything I have – as if I were richer than the city of Strasbourg, with all its welfare agencies, agencies that I helped to establish and make rich!”¹²¹⁴

Later in 1548, when the welfare program became mismanaged, Katharina felt it necessary to intervene.¹²¹⁵ Katharina discovered that the welfare managers were not giving the poor or sick appropriate food nor adequate physical care. She found out that the food was not only inappropriate for the sick, but it was often spoiled.¹²¹⁶ The poor people were also forced to labour for their own keep, even when they were too weak to do so. She also learned that the funds were being spent on making the lives of the welfare managers more comfortable.¹²¹⁷ The state of mismanagement of the welfare programs “seemed outrageous to the pastoral soul of the ‘church mother’ and responsible citizen of Strasbourg.”¹²¹⁸ She took her concerns to the city government and argued that there needed to be proper physical and pastoral care for the poor. In 1557, the city government investigated the matter and significantly reformed the welfare program. Katharina’s concern as a Christian citizen certainly had an effect. McKee argues that Katharina was not afraid to confront such a serious issue and she spoke “out for the physically abused and spiritually neglected, and called the city government to account on the grounds of their public commitment to serving God’s will, and the common faith which she assumed that they all shared. She had done her best; the rest was up to others.”¹²¹⁹

¹²¹⁴ *Letter to Sir Caspar Schwenckfeld, My Gracious Dear Sir and Old Friend: to His Own Hands* (October 1553), translated by McKee, *Church Mother*, 189.

¹²¹⁵ For more information of the welfare program mismanagement, see McKee, *The Life and Thought*, 188-193.

¹²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 193; Stjerna points out that Katharina brought other suggestions for change to the city government, but that these suggestions were largely ignored. For example, Katharina wanted to see changes made in local hospitals which made doctors more responsible and placed women in management roles, see *idem*, *Women and the Reformation*, 116.

Katharina's often confrontational behaviour contradicted Luther's theology, especially when he advised that a woman should be "domestic" and should be concerned with the affairs of her own home so that she does "not go too far away from it."¹²²⁰ Despite Luther's claim that all women enjoyed "staying home," Katharina was not content to support the Reformation movement or improve social life from the domestic sphere.¹²²¹ This made Katharina unlike Martha and more like Martha's sister Mary. Martha was a "good housewife" who was like a "nail driven into the wall" which was not meant to leave the household.¹²²² By comparison, as with Mary, Katharina left the home and took on a public role, especially with her Reformation writings and social activism.¹²²³ By extending her role outside the home, she did not fit into Luther's convictions that women were restricted to one calling and should remain within the household.¹²²⁴

Apart from maintaining a public role, Katharina was also very radical in nature and therefore she did not fit Luther's theological descriptions of a woman's nature. She was not silent, not submissive, and not timid. She challenged both male theologians and traditional societal views by speaking out publicly. For example, Katharina published the *Apologia* which refuted a rumour about her husband's infidelity, defended clerical marriages, and strongly defended her right to speak about such matters.

She was also not afraid to engage with radical theologians such as Caspar Schwenckfeld, Ulrich Zwingli, Johannes Oecolampadius, and even some Anabaptists.¹²²⁵ She was very familiar

¹²²⁰ LW 3, 200-201.

¹²²¹ LW 29, 56.

¹²²² LW 1, 202-203.

¹²²³ LW 3, 200-201.

¹²²⁴ LW 5, 355.

¹²²⁵ She often wrote very personal letters to Caspar Schwenckfeld, see *Letter to Sir Caspar Schwenckfeld* (October 19th, 1553), translated by McKee, *Church Mother*, 186-215; see also Elsie McKee, "The Defense of Zwingli, Schwenckfeld, and the Baptists, by Katharina Schütz Zell," in *Reformiertes Erbe: Festschrift für Gottfried W.*

with these reformers' writings. For example, Katharina often read Caspar Schwenckfeld's works either to herself or aloud to Matthew. Since Katharina supported these reformers, she also welcomed many of them into her home. In the early 1530s, Schwenckfeld lived with the Zells.¹²²⁶ When he left Strasbourg, Katharina maintained personal contact with him throughout her life. In 1542, she realized that it had been a long time since she had last heard from Schwenckfeld.¹²²⁷ Katharina decided to resume correspondence with him. Elsie McKee states that for the next three years, their correspondence "flourished as never before or after."¹²²⁸ It is not surprising that the focus of these letters between the two were theological. For example, in 1542, Schwenckfeld wrote a letter to Katharina which contains much theological discussion.¹²²⁹ In the letter, he wrote about the glory of Jesus, included two booklets, and referenced several church fathers and medieval writers such as Johannes Tauler. The main theological topic that was frequently discussed was Schwenckfeld's understanding of Christology and its connection to the Lord's Supper.¹²³⁰ He argued that Jesus was not a divine creature but was fully human. Katharina thought that Schwenckfeld's argument did not contradict the Bible, so it seemed to be orthodox Christian thought. However, his views were often criticized by Lutherans and Zwinglians. Katharina who was "never adverse to getting into a theological debate if it could possibly advance the cause of the Gospel" tried to bring about theological understanding between Lutherans and Schwenckfeld, and Zwinglians and Schwenckfeld.¹²³¹ Of all the

Locher zu seinem 80. Geburtstag vol. 1, ed. Heiko A. Oberman, Ernst Saxer, Alfred Schindler, Heinzpeter Stucki (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1992), 245-264.

¹²²⁶ Elsie McKee, "A Lay Voice in Sixteenth-Century 'Ecumenics': Katharina Schütz Zell in Dialogue with Johannes Brenz, Conrad Pellican, and Caspar Schwenckfeld," in *Adaptations of Calvinism in Reformation Europe: Essays in Honour of Brian G. Armstrong*, ed. Brian Armstrong, and Mack Holt (London: Routledge, 2016), 84.

¹²²⁷ He had last written a letter to Matthew Zell in 1535.

¹²²⁸ McKee, *The Life and Thought*, 109.

¹²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹²³¹ *Ibid.*, 111; see also McKee, *Lay Voice*, 90; this led to some radical supporters of the Lutheran side to publicly attack Katharina.

reformers, Stjerna describes Katharina as “authentically and fiercely ecumenical.”¹²³² Although Katharina enjoyed being involved in actual conversations with reformers, she mainly interacted with them through personal letters. According to McKee, Luther was Katharina’s favourite correspondent.¹²³³

The fact that Katharina wrote to Luther can only be confirmed through the fact that he responded to her: “*Ich hab ewer schriftt.*”¹²³⁴ As with Argula, none of Katharina’s personal letters to Luther have been preserved. However, scholars have access to Luther’s letters to Katharina which tell us about his attitudes towards her. For example, on December 17th, 1524, Luther wrote to her for the first time soon after the publication of her *Apologia*.¹²³⁵ It is likely that Katharina sent her *Apologia* to Luther as a way of to introduce herself.¹²³⁶

In this letter, Luther congratulated Katharina on her marriage. This letter offered his praise for her bravery to enter this institution at a time when the Reformation movement had not been fully established and still faced significant threats.¹²³⁷ In this letter, Luther also praised her for finding Jesus’ true meaning through the Reformation and especially through her husband.¹²³⁸ He wrote: “That God has so richly given you His grace so that you not only personally see and are acquainted with His kingdom, which is concealed from so many people, but also that He has given you such a husband, through whom you daily and unceasingly are better able to learn and

¹²³² Stjerna, *Reformation Revisited*, 209.

¹²³³ McKee, *Lay Voice*, 85; McKee notes that Katharina was very familiar with the German publications of others.

¹²³⁴ WA BR 6, 27.

¹²³⁵ *Letter to Katharina Zell, from Wittenberg, December 17th, 1524*, WA BR 3, 808, 405-406; see also Elsie McKee, “Speaking Out: Katharina Schütz Zell and the Command to Love One’s Neighbor as an Apologia for Defending the Truth,” in *Ordentlich und Fruchtbear, Festschrift für Willem van’t Spijker*, ed. W. H. Neuser & H. J. Selderhuis (Leiden: J. J. Groen en Zoon, 1997), 9-22; Christian Nielson, “Women Confront the Reformation: Katharina Schütz Zell, Teresa of Avila, and Religious Reform in the Sixteenth Century” (Master’s Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2001).

¹²³⁶ McKee, *Life and Thought*, 65-66.

¹²³⁷ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 251.

¹²³⁸ WA BR 3, 405.

hear this.”¹²³⁹ With this interaction, Luther maintained his own theology because Katharina’s marriage to Matthew meant that she would not pursue her goals alone and have the man’s help. Luther wrote: “*An dem Du es täglich und ohne Unterlaß beser lernen und immer hören magst.*”¹²⁴⁰ He thought it was worth writing a letter to congratulate Katharina since “because of this [marriage]” she can now be closer to God.¹²⁴¹ He also asked her to give his regards to her husband who he called her “*Herr*” showing his belief in the hierarchical structure within the family: “Pray to God for me, and give my greeting to your lord, Mr. [*Herr*] Matthias Zell!”¹²⁴² Sini Mikkola argues that it is likely that Luther’s goal with this letter was to emphasize the traditional hierarchical structure between husband and wife. However, she also points out that Luther’s way of paying respect to Matthew was the correct style of letter writing, especially when writing a letter to a married woman.¹²⁴³ Therefore, Luther’s reference to her husband may be explained by the fact that writing to a married woman, if not handled properly, might be considered an improper act.

Even though Luther explicitly praised Katharina’s marriage, this letter might tell us more about his attitudes towards her writings and agency. For example, Katharina had already been married for almost a year when Luther wrote this letter. Although he offered his praise, the focus of this letter is not her marriage, but the *Apologia* itself. Mikkola argues that it is safe to assume that Luther wrote this letter in response to Katharina’s *Apologia*; otherwise, he would have written to Katharina about her marriage much earlier.¹²⁴⁴ It is clear that “Luther’s notion of

¹²³⁹ *Letter to Katharina Zell, from Wittenberg, December 17th, 1524*, WA BR 3, 808, 405-406, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 206.

¹²⁴⁰ WA BR 3, 406.

¹²⁴¹ *Letter to Katharina Zell, from Wittenberg, December 17th, 1524*, WA BR 3, 808, 405-406, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 207.

¹²⁴² *Ibid.*, 207.

¹²⁴³ Mikkola, *In Our Bodies the Scripture Becomes Fulfilled*, 118.

¹²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 118.

Schütz Zell as one who knows God’s kingdom strongly implies encouragement offered by Luther to Schütz Zell regarding both the publishing of her evangelical faith and her actions to aid the evangelical movement.”¹²⁴⁵

Luther’s encouragement might be explained by the fact that he wanted to gain more of Katharina’s support. Perhaps it was likely that Luther wrote to Katharina to encourage or strengthen her devotion to him.¹²⁴⁶ She was in correspondence with many reformers, even ones that did not share the same theological opinions with Luther. Even though she was influenced by several reformers, she was “particularly devoted to Luther’s theology.”¹²⁴⁷ Mikkola argues that perhaps Luther wanted to strengthen or maintain Katharina’s loyalty towards him.¹²⁴⁸

Sini Mikkola’s argument that Luther supported Katharina has weight, especially when we look at Luther’s other letters which reveal a completely different tone. For example, on January 24th, 1531, Luther wrote a letter to Katharina where he addressed her as: “*Der tugendsamen Frauen, Katharin Schützin, meiner lieben Schwester und Freundin in Christo, zu Straßburg.*”¹²⁴⁹ In this letter, he did not address Katharina in the same manner as his earlier letter with the personal “*Du*,” but rather as “*Mein Liebe frawe*” and “*ewer*.”¹²⁵⁰ The terms “*Schwester*” and “*Freundin*” are also important clues since they show equality and respect. These clues show that

¹²⁴⁵ Mikkola, *In Our Bodies the Scripture Becomes Fulfilled*, 119; she argues that if Luther’s letter to Katharina is seen as encouragement, then it appears that Luther thought of Katharina as a woman who was influential in social, political, or ecclesiastical ways. Mikkola argues that Luther may have taken advantage of strategically useful relationships, whether they be with men or women, as many of his predecessors and contemporaries had done. However, this does not explain why Luther also treated women in his pastoral care with the same respect as many of them did not promise to be strategically useful relationships.

¹²⁴⁶ Mikkola argues that “on the basis of this notion, as well as the timing and tone of the letter, I tend to regard Luther as a supporter of Schütz Zell’s public agency,” see *idem*, *By the Grace of God*, 3.

¹²⁴⁷ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 113.

¹²⁴⁸ Mikkola, *In Our Bodies the Scripture Becomes Fulfilled*, 119

¹²⁴⁹ WA BR 3, 405.

¹²⁵⁰ WA BR 6, 27.

Luther came to respect Katharina even though she was a woman who was very vocal, learned, and courageous in publicly supporting the Reformation.¹²⁵¹

At the beginning of this letter, he apologized for not replying to her sooner because he thought it was too soon for a reply while the situation was still recent. However, he outlined that now “the bitterness is a little softened” he decided to finally respond.¹²⁵² He hoped that this letter would help Katharina “to entreat both your lord and other friends, that (if it pleases God) peace and union may be preserved.”¹²⁵³ In this letter, Luther discussed a serious theological matter with her and shared his position with the Strasbourgers.¹²⁵⁴ He discussed with Katharina the conflict between human love and divine love. He attempted to come to terms with the conflict and the priority of one over the other.¹²⁵⁵ He reminded Katharina that love will “have the upper hand with us” for she knows “full well that love should be above all things” and that she has the “precedence, except of God, who is over all things, and even above love.”¹²⁵⁶ In this letter, he emphasized that the human will and decision is irrelevant: “God must do it; our doing is nothing.”¹²⁵⁷ He advised her that they should not deal with such matters with their own zeal or devices, but “by hearty prayer and spiritual sighs; for it is God’s affair, not ours.”¹²⁵⁸ He reminded Katharina that since it is up to God that they must: “Pray, pray, pray; and let Him take care.”¹²⁵⁹ What is significant with this letter is that Luther did not address Katharina as simply a wife, but rather as an individual with whom he could engage in a serious theological discussion.

¹²⁵¹ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 251.

¹²⁵² *Letter to the Wife of Matthew Zell, January 24th, 1531*, WA BR 6, 27, translated by Malcolm, *Luther’s Letters to Women*, 49.

¹²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

¹²⁵⁵ WA BR 6, 27.

¹²⁵⁶ *Letter to the Wife of Matthew Zell, January 24th, 1531*, WA BR 6, 27, translated by Malcolm, *Luther’s Letters to Women*, 49.

¹²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

In this way, this letter is completely different from his earlier letter to Katharina, where he seemed to only emphasize her role within marriage.

Katharina was unlike other women who were in correspondence with religious leaders. She not only received spiritual advice, but also offered advice to others in her letters. In this way, much of Katharina's theologizing occurred through her extensive correspondences. It is safe to assume that she would have offered Luther the same spiritual counsel as she did with others. For example, when theologians were unable to reach an agreement on the interpretation of the Lord's Supper, Philip of Hesse (1504 – 1567) recommended that they nevertheless practice intercommunion. Luther was willing until Melanchthon noted that to agree with the Swiss could close the door to the Catholics.¹²⁶⁰ When Luther's decision to decline reached Strasbourg, Katharina sent Luther a complaint begging that love is above all else to which Luther wrote: "Yes [...] except where God's Word is at stake."¹²⁶¹ Apart from the likelihood that she advised Luther, it seems that she also disagreed with him. For example, in a letter discussing the Eucharist, she downplayed the difference in the interpretation of the Lord's Supper.¹²⁶² This may have been because she did not understand the nuances, but it is more likely that she was committed to maintaining unity. It is also very likely that she sent her ideas and works to Luther who may have indirectly responded to her writings with his mention of her name in his own works.¹²⁶³ For example, Luther mentioned Katharina in his introduction to a printed sermon on Psalm 110 and the Second Article of Faith in 1530.¹²⁶⁴

¹²⁶⁰ Katharina Zell makes the same comment, see Roland Bainton, "Luther and the Via Media at the Marburg Colloquy," *Collected Papers 2* (1963): 46-47.

¹²⁶¹ WA BR 1777, translated by Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, 64.

¹²⁶² Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 114.

¹²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 114.

By comparison, when scholars examine Luther's letters to Argula we do not find such explicit theological discussions as we do with his correspondence with Katharina.¹²⁶⁵ It may be the case that any theological discussions that arose with Argula were not preserved. What has been preserved is Luther's theological discussions with Katharina which show that he approached her as an equal partner in their theological discussions about the nature of humanity and man's relationship with God.¹²⁶⁶ Sini Mikkola points out that it is significant that Luther did not write to Matthew Zell who was an "enthusiastic evangelical" along with his wife.¹²⁶⁷ The fact that Luther wanted Katharina's support and that he wrote specifically to Katharina, and not Matthew, shows that he thought she was an individual who should be taken seriously.¹²⁶⁸ His letters to Katharina also show that he considered himself to be a friend of women, unlike theologians before him, and he did not consider women to be incompetent in ministry or theological matters.¹²⁶⁹ This is unlike his theology where he outlined that women were not intelligent enough to contemplate matters of the Church.¹²⁷⁰ Luther thought that women had experience with devising strategy "on the spur of the moment," but this intuition was not enough to deliberate complex matters of the Church or state.¹²⁷¹ He believed that matters of the Church and theology required the "greatest strength of character and wisdom" which women did not possess.¹²⁷² If he believed that women were incapable of speaking about theology without

¹²⁶⁵ Luther often admired Argula von Grumbach as a "confessor of faith" and Katharina Zell more as a "theological thinker," see Mikkola, *By the Grace of God*, 3; Charlotte Methuen, "'And Your Daughters Shall Prophesy!' Luther, Reforming Women and the Construction of Authority," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 104 (2013): 102.

¹²⁶⁶ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 252.

¹²⁶⁷ Mikkola, *In Our Bodies the Scripture Becomes Fulfilled*, 119.

¹²⁶⁸ Mikkola, *By the Grace of God*, 3.

¹²⁶⁹ Stjerna, *Luther and Women*, 608.

¹²⁷⁰ LW 6, 60.

¹²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹²⁷² *Ibid.*, 60.

“foolishly” and “wildly” mixing things together, then it is not clear why he would have bothered to have a theological conversation with Katharina.¹²⁷³

As with Katharina von Bora and Argula von Grumbach, Luther did not lash out or condemn Katharina for stepping outside her proper role as a woman.¹²⁷⁴ His interactions with his family members and female reformers show that his opinions about women did not reflect his theology, especially with regards to a woman’s nature as intellectually weak, as well as the belief that a woman must remain in the home and should not take on a public role. Both Argula von Grumbach and Katharina Schütz Zell forced Luther to face significant exceptions to his theological convictions, where he inherited the traditional perspectives that were presented in early and medieval Christianity and classical philosophy.

CONCLUSION

When scholars explore Luther’s social relationships with individual women, we can see a much more complex picture of women stemming from his personal letters than what scholars can obtain from examining his theology alone. If scholars were to examine Luther’s theology alone, then they would receive an entirely different impression of his attitudes towards women.¹²⁷⁵ By only considering his theology, it would appear as if he attempted to keep women submissive and restricted within the household. It would also seem like Luther did not respect nor recognize women’s intellectual capabilities. However, when we examine his own interactions with women,

¹²⁷³ WA TR 1, 1054, 531-532.

¹²⁷⁴ Sini Mikkola makes a similar point in her article where she argues that Luther’s “lack of disapproval concerning her public writing and the lack of prohibition to write in the future also strongly supports the view that Luther recognized her agency,” see *idem*, *By the Grace of God*, 3; *idem*, *In Our Bodies the Scripture Becomes Fulfilled*, 119.

¹²⁷⁵ There is no evidence that Luther himself recognized that a contradiction existed between his theology and personal relationships with women.

we can see a more nuanced and different picture. From his conversations, we can see that Luther made exceptions to his own strict theological convictions about women for exceptional or influential women with whom he corresponded.¹²⁷⁶ For example, Luther admitted his inferior status to Katharina throughout his letters to her as he employed word-play and flirtation and called her his “Lord.” When interacting with women who did not fit Luther’s theological descriptions, such as Argula von Grumbach and Katharina Schütz Zell, he did not lash out or condemn them, but rather admired them, engaged with them in serious theological discussion, and even recognized their intellectual abilities. For Luther, these women were exceptional. Martin Luther’s interactions with women show that there was respect, an equal exchange of theological ideas, and an acknowledgement of women’s public roles, intelligence, piety, and ethics.¹²⁷⁷

¹²⁷⁶ It does not seem that a woman’s socio-economic status was important for Luther. Although Luther did correspond with many women from the middle to upper classes, the exception that he often made for women did not have to do with their social status. There is no evidence to suggest that Luther would have only interacted with women if they were from the middle or upper social classes. A few comments to make on this point. First, Luther corresponded with many widows. During the sixteenth century, widows had low social status because they were no longer under the rule of man and therefore were often seen with suspicion. Their lower social status and their suspicious qualities were reasons why widows were targeted as witches. Also, Luther interacted with nuns who were often lower on the social scale. Frequently, women from families who could not obtain enough money for a suitable dowry found themselves living as nuns because they could not secure a husband. Finally, when Luther corresponded with women who were of especially high social status, such as Princess Sibyl or Queen Maria of Hungary, he did not address them any differently than any other lay persons. Other scholars have also made this point about Queen Maria, see Classen and Settle *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 253.

¹²⁷⁷ Classen and Settle *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 254.

CHAPTER FIVE: MARTIN LUTHER'S INTERACTIONS WITH WOMEN THROUGHOUT HIS PASTORAL CARE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter argues that Martin Luther treated both men and women respectfully and equally, especially throughout his pastoral care. Luther's pastoral work shows that he allowed his compassion and empathy to win over his own strict theological convictions about women. His pastoral care is important to explore because his daily life was preoccupied by pastoral duties more than with anything else.¹²⁷⁸ Apart from family members and female reformers, he corresponded with many other women to offer spiritual counsel and comfort.¹²⁷⁹ Luther's pastoral care has been relatively unexplored by scholarship, especially how it relates to women. Yet, it is an area that can provide a better understanding of Luther's interactions with women. When we look at his pastoral work, we can see that his pastoral tone was the same whether he addressed men or women who were troubled by their consciences and wanted his advice.¹²⁸⁰ Luther desired to help the afflicted person whether they were male or female. This chapter explores how he interacted with various women with whom he offered spiritual guidance and comfort. This chapter also compares Luther's letters to men and women to show that he interacted and treated both sexes equally throughout his pastoral care. This is not to say that Luther's treatment of both men and women as spiritual equals is surprising. It is to be expected.

¹²⁷⁸ Timothy Wengert, *The Pastoral Luther: Essays on Martin Luther's Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 2.

¹²⁷⁹ These letters emphasize his contact with gender norms, class issues, and matters of authority; for more information on Luther's spirituality, see Peter Krey and Philip Krey, *Luther's Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 2007).

¹²⁸⁰ The first collection of Luther's letters of spiritual counsel were published shortly after his death. For information on the earliest five collections of the sixteenth century, see August Nebe, *Luther as Spiritual Adviser* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society: 1894); Paul Scheurlen, *Vom wahren Herzenstrost: Martin Luthers Trostbriefe* (Stuttgart: Steinkopf Verlag, 1935); for information on Luther's letters to his contemporaries, where he offered spiritual counsel, see Theodore Tappert, *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003).

What is surprising is that he did not apply his negative theological convictions about women throughout his pastoral care. As this chapter will show, Luther's pastoral care does not contain any assumptions that women were struggling more or needed more sympathy than men because of their inferior nature. Instead, Luther was explicit throughout his letters that both sexes shared the same temptations and the same struggles. He furthered this point by frequently comparing his own personal and spiritual struggles to women's experiences thereby placing himself on the same level as women.

It is important to mention that Luther's spiritual counsel was not only limited to his written letters but could also be found throughout his theology.¹²⁸¹ When looking at his letters to men and women it is important to keep in mind that his spiritual counsel was not only the application of external techniques.¹²⁸² His advice was part of his theology and was the application of his theology.¹²⁸³ For example, when we look at Luther's theology more broadly we can see that he believed that God was real but that people did not know God's will and the true knowledge of God through Jesus.¹²⁸⁴ He thought that humanity needed God because they are sinful. He wrote: "Not to believe, trust, fear Him, not to give Him glory, not to let Him rule and be God" is a sin.¹²⁸⁵ At the core of this statement is the belief that the relationship between God and humanity is broken by sin.¹²⁸⁶ Luther believed that God takes action to restore this relationship by gifting humanity unmerited grace: "God gives you nothing on account of your worthiness. Nor does he establish his Word and Sacrament on your worthiness. But out of pure

¹²⁸¹ See Dennis Ngien, *Luther As a Spiritual Adviser: The Interface of Theology and Piety in Luther's Devotional Writings* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011).

¹²⁸² Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 14.

¹²⁸³ For more information on Luther's pastoral theology, see Robert Kellemen, *Counseling Under the Cross: How Martin Luther Applied the Gospel to Daily Life* (Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2017); John Pless, *Preacher of the Cross: A Study of Luther's Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013).

¹²⁸⁴ See Luther's *Commentary on Galatians* (1524), WA 40, 607-609.

¹²⁸⁵ WA 10, 25, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 14.

¹²⁸⁶ WA 3, 28, 74; Luther believed that sin is not believing in God, see WA 3, 331.

grace he establishes you, unworthy as you are, on his Word and sign.”¹²⁸⁷ Since this is a promise by God, it could only be received by establishing a personal trust with and a commitment to God.¹²⁸⁸ Luther believed that spiritual counsel was focused on faith above all else, especially when dealing with spiritual temptations.¹²⁸⁹

Although these short examples do not represent a complete picture of Luther’s theology, they may help to illuminate the relationship that exists between his spiritual counsel and theology. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that Luther’s advice is based on his own theological framework. This would not only include Luther’s theology of faith, but his theology more generally, especially since it is interconnected. For this reason, it is important to explore whether his spiritual counsel reflected his own theology, especially when interacting with women. As established by the previous chapter, Martin Luther’s interactions with women often did not mirror his own theological convictions about women. His pastoral care was no different.

For clarity, this chapter is divided into two sections which explore the two main reasons why Martin Luther offered spiritual counsel. First, he offered advice to both men and women who were coping with spiritual struggles or temptations. Second, he provided comfort to individuals who were dealing with illness and death. Luther’s letters are presented chronologically in each section.

¹²⁸⁷ WA 2, 694, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 15.

¹²⁸⁸ WA 23, 358.

¹²⁸⁹ Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 15.

OFFERING SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

Many individuals who were dealing with spiritual trials or temptations consulted Martin Luther. He believed that it was very important to help others so that they not “struggle and suffer alone.”¹²⁹⁰ This was such an important task that Luther believed that “all of us should aid them with our prayers and bear one another’s burdens [Galatians 6:2].”¹²⁹¹ He addressed both physical trials and spiritual temptations. He wrote: “We see that the whole world is full of shameful works of unchastity, indecent words, tales, and ditties... the vice of unchastity rages in all our members: in the thoughts of our heart, in the seeing of our eyes, in the hearing of our ears, in the words of our mouth, in the works of our hands and feet and all our body.”¹²⁹² He thought that to control these desires required labour and effort. Although he dealt with physical temptations, he was more concerned with spiritual matters. Luther provided an example to explain his focus on spiritual temptations. He believed that it may be the case that boys are physically tempted by beautiful girls, but when they are older, they are tempted by gold, honour, or glory.¹²⁹³ He thought that spiritual temptations were worse than these physical trials. Luther argued that some individuals were more troubled than others by such temptations, but this did not relate to their sex. He believed that there were many kinds of spiritual struggles which were caused by the Devil. He wrote: “To me, Satan casts up my evil deeds, the fact that I used to say Mass, or that I did this or that in the days of my youth. Others, again, he vexes by casting up to them the wicked life which they have lived.”¹²⁹⁴ Luther thought that the Devil was the reason why people concentrated on their sins which would often cause them to experience melancholy. Since people

¹²⁹⁰ *Table Talk Recorded by Conrad Cordatus, Autumn, 1531*, WA TR 2, 2286b, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 119.

¹²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹²⁹² LW 1, 275, 276.

¹²⁹³ WA TR 2, 1606.

¹²⁹⁴ WA TR 1, 141, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 19.

dwelled on their sins, it could lead them to doubt God's graciousness and become unsure of God's forgiveness: "I have myself learned by experience how one should act under temptation, namely, when anyone is afflicted with sadness, despair, or other sorrow of heart or has a worm gnawing at his conscience."¹²⁹⁵

In autumn 1531, Conrad Cordatus (1480 – 1546) recorded a conversation which described how Luther consoled both men and women who were spiritually tempted. Cordatus was formerly a Roman Catholic priest and eventually worked closely with Luther as a Protestant reformer and pastor in neighbouring Niemeck.¹²⁹⁶ Eventually, Cordatus' involvement in various controversies led to him being forced out of Zwickau. Cordatus then stayed in Wittenberg, where he was a frequent companion at Luther's dinner table. This interaction was recorded in the *Table Talks*.¹²⁹⁷ In this conversation, Luther told Cordatus that there were three remedies that he advised for people who were feeling spiritually tempted. He offered this advice to both men and women. First, he recommended that people do not dwell on their thoughts because negative thoughts are not their own but belong to the Devil. He wrote: "Dwelling on thoughts, wrestling with them, wishing to conquer them or wishing idly for them to come to an end will only make them more disturbing and strengthen them unto perdition without providing a remedy."¹²⁹⁸ He thought that the best thing to do was to let "them vanish as they came and not to think much about them or dispute with them."¹²⁹⁹

¹²⁹⁵ WA TR 1, 122, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 19.

¹²⁹⁶ Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church, 1532-1546* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985), 148.

¹²⁹⁷ *Table Talk Recorded by Conrad Cordatus, Autumn, 1531*, WA TR 2, 2286b, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 117; this recorded conversation was blended by Michael Stiefel with a letter to Wenzel Link which was dated on July 14th, 1528. For this reason, it is published in many editions of Luther's letters, for more information on this issue, see WA BR 4, 495, 496.

¹²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

Second, Luther advised that people should avoid solitude when feeling this way, especially since Satan seduced Eve while she was alone. He believed that Jesus did not want people to be alone, but rather part of a community. For this reason, Luther thought that anyone who was tempted should seek out the company of others.¹³⁰⁰ Luther wrote: “I too, often suffer from great temptation and melancholy. Then I seek out the company of men.”¹³⁰¹ It is interesting that Luther then added: “Indeed, a simple maid with whom I have spoken has often comforted me.”¹³⁰² This comment is surprising, especially since it stands in contrast to Luther’s theological convictions about women. It is not clear who he is referring to with this comment; however, it reveals that Luther believed that both men and women were able to provide comfort to others.

Third, apart from external remedies, there were also spiritual treatments that could prevent spiritual struggles and temptations. Luther believed that one remedy was reading the Bible. He wrote: “Read something in the Holy Scriptures [...] Although you may be disinclined (for Satan tries to hinder it and awaken aversion to it), still you should compel yourself to do this.”¹³⁰³ He thought that by reflecting on the Scriptures a person could turn away from their temptations and focus more on God. Luther believed that a tempted individual who turned to the Scriptures would say: “I know nothing of any other Christ save Him whom the Father gave and who died for me and for my sins, and I know that He is not angry with me but loves me.”¹³⁰⁴ He thought that a tempted individual should pray and believe that God will help them “for surely those who believe will be helped.”¹³⁰⁵ He argued that only faith in God could remove fear,

¹³⁰⁰ When seeking out company, Luther believed that men and women should especially converse constantly with others about the Psalms and Scriptures.

¹³⁰¹ WA TR 3, 3754, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 20.

¹³⁰² *Ibid.*, 20.

¹³⁰³ *Lectures of Isaiah (1532-1534)*, WA 25, 230, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 20.

¹³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹³⁰⁵ *Table Talk Recorded by Conrad Cordatus, Autumn, 1531*, WA TR 2, 2286b, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 119.

anxiety, and depression. For this reason, it was important that both men or women who were struggling with their spirituality read and rely on God's word. Luther thought that individuals did not have to do this alone. He believed that it was most helpful when a clergyman or neighbour communicated God's word to the afflicted person. This belief was at the foundation of Luther's pastoral care to men and women, so it is not surprising that he often reached out to provide spiritual advice.¹³⁰⁶

Janna von Draschwitz, Milia von Ölsnitz, and Ursula von Feilitzsch (1523)

On June 18th, 1523, while in Wittenberg, Luther wrote to the three noble maidens, Janna von Draschwitz, Milia von Ölsnitz, and Ursula von Feilitzsch, to provide spiritual advice. This letter is a good example to show how Luther approach women in offering spiritual counsel. He wrote to them after Nicholas von Amsdorf (1483 – 1565) reported to him that the women from the court at Freiberg were receiving abuse for reading Luther's works.¹³⁰⁷ Amsdorf requested that Luther write a letter to the women. At the beginning of the letter, Luther wrote to the women that he suspected that they “do not need my comforting.”¹³⁰⁸ He noted that he typically did not write “gladly to people with whom” he is not acquainted, but he did not know how to deny Armsdorf's request. Since he could not turn Armsdorf away, he offered the women advice on how to deal with the abuse. First, he requested that the women should set their “hearts at ease” and recommended that they not hold a grudge or unpleasant wishes for those who abused them. He used biblical support to further prove his point. Drawing on Paul, he emphasized that “if we

¹³⁰⁶ Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 20.

¹³⁰⁷ *Letter to the Noblemaidens Janna von Draschwitz, Milia von Ölsnitz, and Ursula von Feilitzsch, from Wittenberg, June 18th, 1523*, WA BR 3, 625, 93-94, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 205.

¹³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 205.

are oppressed, we should praise,” while also quoting Matthew 6 which states: “Bless those who slander you, pray for those who insult you, and do good to those who persecute you.” It was important for Luther that these women relied on God’s word. Luther reminded the women that they should do this “in view of the fact that [they] are enlightened by God’s grace” and that the abusers will do more damage to “their souls than all the world could do.”¹³⁰⁹ He wrote in the letter that the women are unfortunately “too set in opposition” to the abusers and therefore “rage against God and gruesomely accumulate offenses.”¹³¹⁰ He recommended that the proper behaviour is to take pity on the abusers as “senseless people who do not perceive how grievously they ruin themselves even as they intend to do you wrong” and remain faithful and let “Christ do the work” for them.¹³¹¹ He advised that even if the women believe that they might have cause to take matters into their own hands that they “should still not shrink back.”¹³¹² He strongly emphasized that the women turn over the issue to Jesus: “You should consider that even though you wanted to do much against them, you did not carry anything out. For it is a divine matter in which you suffer, which God lets nobody judge or avenge than He Himself.”¹³¹³ Luther advised the women to act in this way and to also hold their friends to his advice. At the end of the letter, he recommended that they also take his “writing in a good way” suggesting that he was concerned whether the women thought he was offering unsolicited advice.

¹³⁰⁹ *Letter to the Noblemaidens Janna von Draschwitz, Milia von Ölsnitz, and Ursula von Feilitzsch, from Wittenberg, June 18th, 1523*, WA BR 3, 625, 93-94, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 205.

¹³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 205.

¹³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 205.

¹³¹² *Ibid.*, 205.

¹³¹³ *Ibid.*, 205.

Unknown Woman (1525)

It was often the case that Luther wrote to women to provide spiritual counsel. For example, on July 31st, 1525, Luther wrote to an unknown woman where he described that receiving a letter from Dr. Luther was “useful to those who are weak in faith.”¹³¹⁴ This letter is a good example of how Luther shared his own experiences with women throughout his pastoral care. In this letter, he showed sympathy for the woman who was suffering great challenges to her faith. He comforted the woman by explaining that “weak faith is also faith” and that Jesus is as close to the weak person as the strong. It is important to note that Luther did not mean that Jesus is close to the woman because she is weak due to her inferior nature. He used this sentiment as a broader statement that Jesus is close to anyone who is weak regardless of their sex. Another reason why it is clear that Luther was not claiming that the woman is weak was that he explicitly expressed that he suffered the same challenges to his own faith. He not only sympathized with the woman but related to her on the same level. He described his own struggle as an “illness” which made him think that he meant nothing to God. He wrote: “I wondered why such a thing had happened to me, [and] I was more certain of everything [else] than of my own life.”¹³¹⁵ Since he compared his own spiritual struggles to the woman’s problems, he believed that he related to the woman. He did not believe that the woman’s inferiority was the cause of her spiritual struggle since Luther admitted to experiencing the same temptations. He concluded this letter by emphasizing that God never leaves a person and that Jesus will strengthen her with his power. He drew upon Romans 14, Joel 3:10, and 2 Corinthians 12 to further his point that “strength increases through weakness.”¹³¹⁶

¹³¹⁴ *Letter to an Unknown Woman, from Wittenberg, July 31st, 1525*, WA BR 3, 909, 552, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 207.

¹³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 207.

Barbara Lißkirchen (1531)

In addition to the unknown woman, while in Wittenberg, Luther corresponded with Barbara Lißkirchen who was residing in Freiberg, Saxony on April 30th, 1531.¹³¹⁷ Barbara was the sister of Jerome Weller and was struggling with her spirituality.¹³¹⁸ She was especially troubled by the doctrine of predestination.¹³¹⁹ Barbara was tormented with worry over whether she was herself one of the elect.¹³²⁰ At the beginning of the letter, Luther addressed Barbara with respect calling her “the honorable, virtuous [...] my kind, good friend.”¹³²¹ In his letter, he attempted to encourage her and to reaffirm her faith.¹³²² As with the unknown woman, he offered his guidance because he knew about her problems since he experienced his own spiritual struggles.¹³²³ He wrote: “I am truly sorry to hear that [...] I know this affliction well and have lain in the hospital to the point of eternal death.”¹³²⁴ He believed that his own experiences related to Barbara’s experiences. In this way, Luther placed himself on the same level as the woman. He also recognized her as someone who was worthy of receiving his advice in the form of a whole sermon. It is worthwhile to note Luther’s advice to Barbara is based heavily on the Bible. He mentioned Exodus 20:2, 1 Peter 5:7, and Psalms 55:23 to support his points. Luther explained both practical steps such as prayer and soul searching, as well as theological advice on how to

¹³¹⁷ *Letter to Barbara Lißkirchen in Freiberg, from Wittenberg, April 30th, 1531*, WA BR 12, 4244a, 135-136, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 208-209.

¹³¹⁸ There is little biographical information available on Barbara Lißkirchen, see WA BR 6, 86.

¹³¹⁹ Luther often counselled individuals who were tempted by the thought that they were not among those who were saved, see WA TR 1, 865; see also WA TR 2631b.

¹³²⁰ Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 115.

¹³²¹ *Letter to Barbara Lißkirchen in Freiberg, from Wittenberg, April 30th, 1531*, WA BR 12, 4244a, 135-136, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 211.

¹³²² Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 252.

¹³²³ WA BR 6, 86.

¹³²⁴ *Letter to Barbara Lißkirchen in Freiberg, from Wittenberg, April 30th, 1531*, WA BR 12, 4244a, 135-136, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 208-209.

face her fears. He wrote: “I would like to comfort and advise you by [telling you] about my prayer.”¹³²⁵

In this letter, Luther provided four detailed pieces of advice to aid Barbara in her spiritual struggle. He based this advice on his own personal experiences.¹³²⁶ In this letter, Luther placed himself on an equal level with Barbara and offered comfort through sympathizing with her over a shared experience with spiritual struggles. He advised her that she must first understand that her thoughts are “assuredly the suggestions and fiery darts of the wretched Devil.”¹³²⁷ He told her that there is often a struggle to cast away such thoughts. Throughout the letter, Luther continued to confess that he experienced the same spiritual problems: “I will tell you how God helped me out of this [predicament] and by what means I daily hold out against it.”¹³²⁸ He admitted that “when such thoughts occur to us” that he too had problems removing such thoughts. He suggested that if they enter her mind that she should “cast them out again” as one would “immediately spit out any filth that fell into your mouth.”¹³²⁹ Luther admitted to her that “God has helped me to do this in my own case.”¹³³⁰

Second, when she has such negative thoughts, she should ask herself in which Commandment it is written that she should think about the matter. If there is no such Commandment that orders her to think about that issue, then she should say: “Begone, wretch

¹³²⁵ *Letter to Barbara Lißkirchen in Freiberg, from Wittenberg, April 30th, 1531*, WA BR 12, 4244a, 135-136, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 208.

¹³²⁶ WA BR 6, 87.

¹³²⁷ *Letter to Barbara Lißkirchen in Freiberg, from Wittenberg, April 30th, 1531*, WA BR 12, 4244a, 135-136, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 115.

¹³²⁸ *Letter to Barbara Lißkirchen in Freiberg, from Wittenberg, April 30th, 1531*, WA BR 12, 4244a, 135-136, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 209.

¹³²⁹ *Letter to Barbara Lißkirchen in Freiberg, from Wittenberg, April 30th, 1531*, WA BR 12, 4244a, 135-136, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 116-117.

¹³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 116-117.

Devil! You are trying to make me worry about myself. But God declares everywhere that I should let him care for me.”¹³³¹

Third, if these thoughts continue even after Barbara has taken these measures, then she must not give up, but rather turn her attention to God’s Commandments and put her thoughts away from her. He wrote: “You must turn your mind away from them and say ‘Don’t you hear, Devil? I will have nothing to do with such thoughts. God has forbidden me to. Begone! I must now think of God’s commandments.’”¹³³²

Fourth, she must not forget that God loves and cares so much for her that he sacrificed his own son for humanity. In these ways, he told her that “in no other [way], does one learn how to deal properly with the question of predestination.”¹³³³

It should be noted that at the end of the letter, he advised Barbara to submit to her brother’s supervision on this matter: “I have also written to your brother Jerome Weller that he warn and admonish you with all diligence until you learn to put away such thoughts and let the Devil, from whom they come, plumb their depth.”¹³³⁴ Albrecht Classen and Tanya Settle argue that Luther’s approach here shows that he was a little hesitant towards women. They argue that he often treated women as equals but seemed to fall back on his traditional ideas about them.¹³³⁵ Classen and Settle argue that it appeared as though maintaining the patriarchal hierarchy was the structuring principle even though Luther frequently allowed it to be dismissed by his own experiences with intellectual women. However, Luther only “falls back” on his traditional ideas about women at the very end of this letter. It should not be ignored that Luther treated Barbara as

¹³³¹ *Letter to Barbara Lißkirchen in Freiberg, from Wittenberg, April 30th, 1531*, WA BR 12, 4244a, 135-136, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 209.

¹³³² *Letter to Barbara Lißkirchen in Freiberg, from Wittenberg, April 30th, 1531*, WA BR 12, 4244a, 135-136, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 116.

¹³³³ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹³³⁵ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 252.

an individual who was worthy of receiving his advice, as someone who could intellectually comprehend his recommendations, and as someone with whom Luther shared similar personal experiences. Scholars do not have enough information about Barbara Lißkirchen to make any further conclusions about her or her relationship with Luther. However, it is safe to assume that he respected her and thought that she was worthy of a comprehensive theological explanation and comparison to his own spiritual struggles by revealing his mind and personal experiences to this woman.

Queen Maria of Hungary (1531)

In September 1531, Luther provided similar advice to Queen Maria of Hungary while he was in Wittenberg. He wrote to Queen Maria and offered her guidance concerning her worries and spiritual temptations.¹³³⁶ As with Barbara, Luther consoled Maria by explaining his own struggles and placing himself on an equal level with her and her own problems. He wrote: “*und ich an mir selber wohl erfahre.*”¹³³⁷ Queen Maria was an educated woman who knew of Luther’s theology and promoted his Reformation message to others.¹³³⁸ It is important to emphasize that Queen Maria did not fit into his theological convictions about women. She was intelligent and actively promoted the Reformation message to others rather than remaining silent and staying within the household. Despite this, Luther does not lash out or admonish her for her actions. Although she was a female sovereign, he also did not try to break down the social barriers between Maria and himself. Rather, he pleaded submissively with her to reject Satan’s words and

¹³³⁶ WA BR 6, 194-197; it should be noted that the identity of the addressee, as well as the exact date of this letter has not been verified to enough of a degree and therefore may be doubted, see the introduction to the letter in WA BR 6.

¹³³⁷ WA BR 6, 196.

¹³³⁸ Karl Zimmermann and Georgiana Malcolm, *Luther’s Letters to Women* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1865), 16.

prevent falling into his temptations.¹³³⁹ Apart from the fact that Luther wrote to her in German instead of Latin, scholars have no evidence to suggest that he approached her any differently than he would with any other lay person.¹³⁴⁰ There is also no evidence to suggest that he approached her any differently because she was a woman.

Valentine Hausmann (1532)

By comparison, when Luther wrote to men to offer his advice on their spiritual doubts, his letters followed the same format as when he wrote to women. For example, Luther counselled Valentine Hausmann on February 19th, 1532. Valentine was a burgomaster in Freiberg, Saxony and was the younger brother of a clergyman named Nicholas Hausmann. As with Barbara, Valentine Hausmann was troubled for a long time by doubts, unbelief, and subsequent fear.¹³⁴¹ In a letter written by Luther, he warned Hausmann, as with Barbara, not to be too distressed over the matter but to “accept this scourge as laid upon you by God for your own good.”¹³⁴² He noted that even as Paul had to “bear a thorn in the flesh [2 Corinthians 12:7].” Luther then compared Hausmann’s troubles to the apostles’ sufferings. He then added that God has deemed Hausmann worthy of such unbelief and terror “for they will drive you all the more to pray and seek help and say, as it is written the in the Gospels, ‘Lord, help thou mine unbelief’ [Mark 9:24].”¹³⁴³ Luther emphasized that there are many people who have less faith than Hausmann, but that they are not aware of this. He told him that the fact that “God makes you

¹³³⁹ Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther’s Life*, 253.

¹³⁴⁰ Even in instances where Latin could have been used instead of German, Luther continued to use German.

¹³⁴¹ Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 119.

¹³⁴² *Letter to Valentine Hausmann, February 19th, 1532*, WA BR 6, 267, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 119.

¹³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 119.

sensible of this is a good sign that he wishes to help you out of your condition.”¹³⁴⁴ He stated that it was a “good sign” that he was suffering and was aware of his problem. He told Hausmann that the more someone was aware of an issue, the closer they were to improving it. Luther advised Hausmann to “cling calmly to God, and he will cause everything to turn out well.”¹³⁴⁵

Valentine Hausmann continued to have doubts and worries about his unbelief, so Luther wrote to him with further instructions on how to handle the situation on June 24th, 1532.¹³⁴⁶ He advised Hausmann once again to not worry too much about it because God will take care of him. Even if it seems that God means evil and harm, Luther reassured him that what God “does is for our benefit, even if we do not understand it.”¹³⁴⁷ For Luther, God’s will is unknown to humanity. He recommended that he does not focus on his misfortune and “sink into your own thoughts.”¹³⁴⁸ As with Luther’s letters to women like Barbara, he promoted patience. He encouraged Hausmann that under no circumstances should he allow himself to become impatient if at once he does not have strong faith. He quoted Romans 14:1 and 15:1 to support this advice. In addition to instructing Hausmann to have patience, he also told him to pray: “You should fall upon your knees and cry out to heaven [...] Make a brave effort. Pray all the harder when you think it is to no purpose.”¹³⁴⁹ He advised him to not remain passive, but to pray powerfully and know that the terror comes from the Devil. Finally, as with other letters to women, he instructed that if Hausmann is unable to pray well that he should read the Psalms or the New Testament.

¹³⁴⁴ *Letter to Valentine Hausmann, February 19th, 1532*, WA BR 6, 267, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 119.

¹³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹³⁴⁶ *Letter to Valentine Hausmann, June 24th, 1532*, WA BR 6, 322-323.

¹³⁴⁷ *Letter to Valentine Hausmann, June 24th, 1532*, WA BR 6, 322-323, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 120.

¹³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

Dorothea Jörger (1532 & 1534)

Apart from providing counsel on spiritual doubts, Luther also interacted with women to provide advice more generally. For example, on March 7th, 1532, he wrote to Dorothea Jörger to offer praise and advice on how best to spend her funds for establishing an endowment for poor students.¹³⁵⁰ Dorothea originally wrote to Luther to inform him about the endowment. In Luther's response to her letter he called this work "necessary and useful."¹³⁵¹ In this letter, he addressed her as "an honourable" and "very virtuous lady." He seemed to have been overwhelmed by her generosity and gladly welcomed her charitable contribution.¹³⁵² Luther advised her that it is best if she invests the money and uses the interest for her endowment so that it can last longer. He then wrote that "if this opinion pleases [Dorothea], the affair will be all straight."¹³⁵³ It is interesting to note that he asked for Dorothea's opinion and permission before going ahead with his plan to assist the poor students. If he thought that women were incapable of contemplating complex matters, as outlined in his theology, then he should have assumed that he was correct. If he followed his theology and inherited traditions like Aristotle that influenced society, he would have believed that women lacked any kind of authoritative faculty and therefore needed to be told what to do. In other words, he would not have asked for her opinion or her permission and instead should have told Dorothea how to proceed with the matter.

¹³⁵⁰ *Letter to Dorothea Jörger, March 7th, 1532*, translated by Malcolm, *Luther's Letters to Women*, 68; WA BR 6, 273f; Luther wrote another letter to Dorothea Jörger years later, but this time it was a short letter of consolation regarding the disunion of her sons. Luther wrote: "I am truly sorry, both for their discord and your trouble." He assured her that there are always misfortunes and crosses in life and that God uses them to bring Christians closer to his Word and prayer. Luther offered to assist Dorothea by contacting her sons but decided to wait in case they "might suspect that I had been informed" by Dorothea to tell the sons that they set a bad example, see *Letter to Dorothea Jörger, September 5th, 1544*, translated by Malcolm, *Luther's Letters to Women*, 145.

¹³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹³⁵² Classen and Settle, *Women in Martin Luther's Life*, 253.

¹³⁵³ *Letter to Dorothea Jörger, March 7th, 1532*, translated by Malcolm, *Luther's Letters to Women*, 69.

On April 27th, 1534, Luther wrote another letter to Dorothea. She had provided 500 gulden as a charitable endowment and he notified her that her gift was well invested and has already helped many poor students.¹³⁵⁴ He wrote: “I wanted you to know how things were going and how they stood with your money.”¹³⁵⁵ Luther noted that he was “unaware and would not have believed in this little city and poor school that there were so many pious, able fellows who throughout the year have survived on water and bread and have suffered frost and cold, so that they might study the Holy Scripture and the word of God.”¹³⁵⁶ He informed her that her gift was a great comfort and refreshment. Luther was impressed by Dorothea’s initiative and plan for endowment and was himself unaware of the poor state of things. As a sign of his appreciation, he included a booklet with his letter. He wrote: “As sign [of appreciation] I have requested, via Michel Stiefel [1487 – 1567], this little booklet, which I have attached [to this letter]. Because he has had to be without a parish, I have given him 10 florins. He asks me to give you his enthusiastic greetings.”¹³⁵⁷

Aside from this charity, scholars can see from his address to her that he seemed to have been very friendly with this woman. He addressed her as “*meiner besondern Freundin in Christo*.”¹³⁵⁸ The Luther family and Dorothea were likely close contacts since she included with her letters a gift of quince jam for Luther and Katharina: “*und bedancken und beide gegen euch*

¹³⁵⁴ Letter Letter to Dorothea Jörger, April 27th, 1534, WA BR 7, 2109, 61, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 210-211.

¹³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 210-211.

¹³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 210-211.

¹³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 210-211.

¹³⁵⁸ WA BR 6, 273f.

affs freundlichst.”¹³⁵⁹ However, there is not much more that can be learned from the interactions between Dorothea and Luther.¹³⁶⁰

Lady ‘M’ (Name Unknown), (1543)

Although Luther occasionally provided general advice to women, he offered spiritual guidance much more frequently. For an example, on January 11th, 1543, Luther wrote to Lady ‘M’ to offer spiritual advice. Earlier editors of Luther’s letters believe that the ‘M’ stood for Margaret and that it might have referred to Mrs. Margaret Eschat or Eschhaus.¹³⁶¹ However, Mrs. Eschat was not known to have had a brother named John which was outlined by the letter. There is also no indication that her husband was a burgomaster anywhere. Although the identity of ‘M’ is unknown, this letter expressed that Lady ‘M’ was a sensitive woman who was troubled by what she said in a moment of anger. She inadvertently said: “I wish that all those who brought it about that my husband was made burgomaster would go to the Devil!”¹³⁶² The woman’s brother wrote to Luther indicating that she was struggling spiritually due to this sin that she committed. Luther wrote to the woman stating that her brother had told him that “the evil spirit is tormenting [her] and making [her] believe that on account of these words [she] must remain in the Devil’s power forever.”¹³⁶³ In his pastoral care, he reached out to Lady ‘M’ to counsel her. It is interesting to note that his theology outlined that since women are physically weak, they are

¹³⁵⁹ WA BR 6, 273f.

¹³⁶⁰ Luther sent Dorothea another letter in January 1533 which included a model for a last will, see WA BR 6, 407-409; Luther kept in contact with Dorothea throughout his life and wrote other letters which include ones written on May 6th, 1533 (WA BR 6, 461-462) and October 24th, 1533 (WA BR 6, 546f).

¹³⁶¹ Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 102.

¹³⁶² *Letter to Mrs. M, January 11th, 1543*, WA BR 10, 3837, 239-240, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 102.

¹³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 102.

more easily angered than men.¹³⁶⁴ Following Aristotle's conviction, his theology maintained that women were more "moved by their emotions" and overly emotional compared to men. This would mean that Lady 'M's' fragility as a woman likely caused her to say something harsh in her moment of anger. What is interesting is that Luther did not blame Lady 'M' or even remind her that her outburst was a part of her weak nature. He also did not recommend that she try to better control her emotions. Instead, he blamed the Devil and advised her not to take this mistake more seriously than the promise of salvation.¹³⁶⁵ He reminded her that Jesus died for her sins and that she should "spit on the Devil," and tell him that her sins have been taken away by Jesus and is therefore absolved. He wrote: "You must not believe your own thoughts, nor those of the Devil. But believe what we preachers say, for God has commanded us to instruct and absolve souls."¹³⁶⁶ He quoted from Luke 23:34, John 20:23, Luke 10:16, Matthew 5:6, and Romans 4:25 to support his points. He encouraged Lady 'M' to no longer be troubled by her sins, but to be confident and content that her "sin is forgiven."¹³⁶⁷ In Luther's letter to Valentine Hausmann, he gave the same advice. In this way, Luther did not believe that Lady 'M' required simpler instructions because she, as a woman, was a simple creature. At the end of the letter, he advised her to rely resolutely on this belief and that if she believed then "the Devil will stop."¹³⁶⁸

OFFERING COMFORT IN TIMES OF ILLNESS AND DEATH

During the sixteenth century, sickness and death were prevalent in people's lives. The pervasiveness of various diseases such as tuberculosis was made worse by poor sanitation and

¹³⁶⁴ LW 29, 57.

¹³⁶⁵ *Letter to Mrs. M, January 11th, 1543*, WA BR 10, 3837, 239-240, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 102.

¹³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

diet. These diseases were also exacerbated by the fact that people did not fully understand their origins and treatments.¹³⁶⁹ People commonly believed that the cause of illness was linked with witches and black magic. In a sermon preached in 1529, Martin Luther passingly referred to sickness as being caused by sorcerers; however, he predominately associated the root of illness with natural causes and the Devil.¹³⁷⁰ Luther recommended physicians, barbers, and apothecaries when advising the sick. He thought that medicine was useful, but that there were also mental and emotional origins of various physical conditions. In this way, physical health relied on the thoughts of the mind.¹³⁷¹

Luther often expressed empathy when individuals were plagued with illnesses of any kind, especially melancholy or depression.¹³⁷² He empathized equally with both men and women. As with his spiritual counsel, Luther frequently compared a woman's experience to his own. For example, this was especially true in cases where a woman lost her child. Luther often compared his own pain and struggles with losing his own children, Elisabeth and Magdalena, with women's experiences of losing children. In this section, we will see that this was especially the case with Agnes Lauterbach and Katharina Metzler who wrote to Luther about grieving over the death of a child.

In his letters, Luther would not attempt to minimize their anguish, but rather encouraged them to remain calm and confident in God.¹³⁷³ In cases when sickness led to death, Luther offered counselling to the surviving mourners.¹³⁷⁴ He thought that grief was a natural and proper

¹³⁶⁹ Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 16.

¹³⁷⁰ Hermann Werdermann, *Luthers Wittenberger Gemeinde wiederhergestellt aus seinen Predigten* (Verlag: Gütersloh, 1929), 105-109; see also John McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (Harper and Row Publishing: New York, 1951).

¹³⁷¹ See *Letter to Conrad Cordatus, 1530*, LW 49.

¹³⁷² See Stephen Pietsch, *Of Good Comfort: Martin Luther's Letters to the Depressed and Their Significance for Pastoral Care Today* (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2016).

¹³⁷³ Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 17.

¹³⁷⁴ See Neil Leroux, *Martin Luther As Comforter: Writings on Death* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

emotion, but that it should not be excessive in expression and that it should be enlightened by faith. Whenever Luther advised a woman to grieve moderately, it should not be assumed that this was because he thought that women were more emotional or needed to be reminded to control their emotions. He gave men the same advice. This was because Luther believed that although there is sorrow in death, it is also a joyous occasion for a Christian. He encouraged those who suffered, whether they were male or female, to grieve moderately and have patience. Luther believed that because God was gracious, death should not be considered as a form of punishment by God: “If we are sure of God’s grace, everything will be well with us.”¹³⁷⁵ By offering comfort, Luther’s letters centered on God’s word and faith and this was no different whether he was writing to men or women.

This chapter will now consider examples of Martin Luther’s letters to both men and women. It will begin with a discussion of how he comforted men. His approach in comforting women will then be compared with his comfort of men. This chapter will then briefly explore how Luther comforted couples. How Luther comforted men, women, and couples will be divided into two main sections for each discussion which deals with topics of depression, as well as the topic of sorrow over the loss of a loved one.

Letters to Comfort Men Struggling with Depression

Jerome Weller (1530)

Luther frequently wrote letters to men and women who were struggling with melancholy or depression. In July 1530, Luther wrote a letter to Jerome Weller (1499 – 1572) who was

¹³⁷⁵ See *Letter to John Reinneck, April 18th, 1536*, WA BR 7, 399, 400, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 69.

struggling with depression. Weller was influenced by Luther to change from the study of law to the study of theology. Years later, Weller was a teacher of theology in Freiberg, Saxony. Between the years 1527 to 1535, Weller spent eight years interacting almost daily with Luther.¹³⁷⁶ He even lived in Luther's home and tutored his children. During one occasion while Weller was staying in Wittenberg, he experienced a fit of depression. Luther was absent from his home at this time but addressed a letter to Weller to offer advice.¹³⁷⁷ He began the letter by acknowledging that Weller must feel like his depression was caused by the Devil: "You say that the temptation is heavier than you can bear, and that you fear that it will so break and beat you down as to drive you to despair and blasphemy."¹³⁷⁸ He told Weller that he was familiar with this craft of the Devil. He informed Weller about what happened to him when he first entered the monastery. He wrote: "I was sad and downcast, nor could I lay aside my melancholy."¹³⁷⁹ As with his letter to Barbara Lißkirchen, Luther shared his own life experience with the recipient of his letter. He then advised Weller that whenever he feels this depression to "avoid entering upon a disputation with the Devil and do not allow yourself to dwell on those deadly thoughts."¹³⁸⁰ Luther advised Weller, like Barbara, to cast his thoughts out of his mind and whenever he felt depressed to seek out the company of other people.

¹³⁷⁶ Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 84.

¹³⁷⁷ *Letter to Jerome Weller, July 1530*, WA BR 5, 518-520; on October 7th, 1534 Luther also wrote to Jerome's brother, named Matthias, who was depressed and provided him with the same advice, see WA BR 7, 104-106.

¹³⁷⁸ *Letter to Jerome Weller, July 1530*, WA BR 5, 518-520, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 85.

¹³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

Letters to Comfort Men Struggling with Loss

Conrad Cordatus (1530)

Throughout Luther's pastoral care, he not only addressed problems like depression, but also the loss of a loved one. He showed equal amounts of sympathy when writing letters to men and women, especially those who lost a child. Luther not only wrote letters to grieving parents but also became one himself when his own child, Elizabeth, died on August 3rd, 1528.

On January 3rd, 1530, Luther wrote to Conrad Cordatus, who at the time was a pastor in Zwickau, to congratulate him on the birth of his newborn son.¹³⁸¹ Cordatus would have been a close friend and Luther had an interest in the boy because he was the boy's sponsor at his baptism.¹³⁸² However, Cordatus' son passed away shortly after he was baptized.

Luther was sad to hear of his early death, so on April 2nd, 1530, he wrote a letter to Cordatus. This letter offered comfort and referred to Luther's own experience and grief with losing his second child.¹³⁸³ This was two years after Luther had lost Elisabeth. Cordatus would have known this because his wife lived with the Luthers in Wittenberg at the time of Elisabeth's passing.¹³⁸⁴ Scholars can only speculate about how Luther would have treated grieving parents before becoming one himself. In the letter, Luther wrote: "I can easily believe what you write, for I too have had experience of such a calamity, which comes to a father's heart sharper than a two-edged sword [Hebrews 4:12]."¹³⁸⁵ He wanted Cordatus to know that others have felt similar pain and that, according to his reference to Hebrews, death is a power that rivals God's word.¹³⁸⁶

¹³⁸¹ WA BR 5, 215-217.

¹³⁸² Leroux, *Martin Luther as Comforter*, 189.

¹³⁸³ WA BR 5, 273-274; See also WA BR 4, 511.

¹³⁸⁴ Leroux, *Martin Luther as Comforter*, 189.

¹³⁸⁵ *Letter to Conrad Cordatus, April 2nd, 1530*, WA BR 5, 273-274, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 60.

¹³⁸⁶ Leroux, *Martin Luther as Comforter*, 189.

However, Cordatus should be comforted to know that God preferred that his son should be with him “for he is safer there [Heaven] than here.”¹³⁸⁷ However, only two years after burying Elisabeth, Luther empathized and acknowledged in the letter that “all this is vain, a story that falls on deaf ears, when your grief is so new.”¹³⁸⁸ He wrote: “Greater and better men than we are have given way to grief and are not blamed for it.”¹³⁸⁹ Luther believed that it was a “good thing” for Cordatus to have this kind of trial so that he could learn in his own “experience what is that power of the Word and of faith which is proved in these agonies.”¹³⁹⁰

John Reineck (1536)

Luther not only wrote to men, such as Cordatus, who lost a child, but also to men who lost their spouse. For example, in April 1536, Luther’s boyhood schoolmate John Reineck lost his wife. At the time of his wife’s death, Reineck was the superintendent of a foundry in Mansfeld, Thuringia. This loss prompted Luther to write a letter to Reineck on April 18th, 1536 to offer consolation: “I have learned that our dear Lord and Father has afflicted you by taking your dear wife unto himself.”¹³⁹¹ He told Reineck that it is “natural” that he grieves sorely because of losing his loved one. This was the same message that he told Conrad Cordatus. He also rhetorically asked in the letter how one should conduct themselves in such a situation. Luther assured that God has limited life on earth so that Christians may learn of God’s good will and love. He advised that although life might seem to only include grief and lament “we

¹³⁸⁷ *Letter to Conrad Cordatus, April 2nd, 1530*, WA BR 5, 273-274, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 60.

¹³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹³⁹¹ *Letter to John Reineck, April 18th, 1536*, WA BR 7, 399-400, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 69; for more examples of letters to men who have lost their wives, see *Letter to John von Taubenheim, January 10th, 1539*, WA BR 8, 352-354; *Letter to Bartholomew von Staremburg, September 1st, 1524*, WA BR 18, 1-7.

nevertheless have His holy and sure Word which reveals to us this hidden will of His and gladdens the heart of the believer.”¹³⁹² He assured him that if Christians are sure of God’s grace, then everything will be well. Luther hoped that Reineck would find more comfort in God’s grace than pain from his loss. He also noted that it should be a great comfort for Reineck to know that his wife “departed this vale of tears with so many graces and in so Christian and a fine way.”¹³⁹³ In this way, Luther assured Reineck that God is not dealing with him with wrath, but with grace. He wrote: “An affectionate wife is the greatest treasure on earth, but a blessed end is a treasure above all treasures and an everlasting comfort.”¹³⁹⁴

Wolf Heinze (1543)

For another example of how Luther comforted men, we can look at how he corresponded with Wolf Heinze who lost his wife in 1543. Heinze’s wife, Eva who was an organist, was among the six thousand people who were reported dead due to the plague in Halle. Luther likely knew about Heinze’s loss from Justus Jonas who was the Heinzes’ pastor and at the time was currently visiting Wittenberg.¹³⁹⁵ On September 11th, 1543, Luther wrote to Heinze to offer comfort: “I can well imagine how painful this parting is to you, and I assure you that I am deeply grieved for your sake.”¹³⁹⁶ Although Luther does not explicitly mention his own recent loss of Magdalena on September 20th, 1542, he nevertheless offered Heinze sincere feelings of sympathy and understanding. Luther wrote Heinze this delicate letter one week short of the one

¹³⁹² *Letter to John Reineck, April 18th, 1536*, WA BR 7, 399-400, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 69.

¹³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹³⁹⁵ Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 77.

¹³⁹⁶ *Letter to Wolf Heinze, September 11th, 1543*, WA BR 10, 394-395, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 77.

year anniversary of Magdalena's death, so he would have been able to personally relate to the recent loss of a loved one.

He also comforted Heinze by assuring him that there is "wretchedness and woe in this life" so that Christians can recognize that Jesus saved them from such a wretched existence. He wrote: "In Him we have our most precious treasure, and although everything temporal (including ourselves) must pass away, He will remain ours forever."¹³⁹⁷ Luther reassured Heinze that his wife is in a better place and that God will comfort him. He told him that although this was God's will it cannot and should not be without mourning. However, Luther cautioned against over-reacting and becoming too despairing. He told Heinze to leave the "weeping to that scoundrel in Mayence [Cardinal Albert of Mayence] and to those who are of his kind; they are the people who are really wretched."¹³⁹⁸

Letters to Comfort Women Struggling with Depression

Elizabeth von Kanitz (1527)

A letter written to Elizabeth von Kanitz offers insight into how Luther advised and counselled women, especially those who were struggling with depression.¹³⁹⁹ Elizabeth was one of the nine nuns who left the convent in Nimbschen in 1523. In 1527, she was visiting in Eicha, close to Leipzig, when Luther wrote a letter to her inviting her to open a school for girls in Wittenberg.¹⁴⁰⁰ At the beginning of the letter, Luther addressed her as "esteemed," as well as

¹³⁹⁷ *Letter to Wolf Heinze, September 11th, 1543*, WA BR 10, 394-395, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 77.

¹³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹³⁹⁹ See *Letter to George Spalatin, April 10th, 1523*, WA BR 3, 54-57.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 84.

“honorable and virtuous.”¹⁴⁰¹ In the letter, he told her explicitly that he wanted to use her work as an example to others. He wrote: “I have in mind using you as a teacher for young girls and through you setting others an example in undertaking this work.”¹⁴⁰² Due to this, Luther offered her a free stay at his home: “You would stay and eat in my house, so that you would have no danger and no worry.”¹⁴⁰³ However, she refused. She likely refused because she was afraid of the plague which was quickly spreading in Wittenberg during this time.¹⁴⁰⁴

Elizabeth von Kanitz may have also refused because of her feelings of melancholy as outlined in the letter. This letter highlighted that he heard that she was suffering from spiritual afflictions and the Devil was tempting her with heavy thoughts: “I hear too that the evil one is assailing you with melancholy.”¹⁴⁰⁵ He advised that she should not let Satan terrify her and that “it is a good sign” for Jesus also “suffered all this, and so did many holy prophets and apostles, as the Psalter sufficiently shows.”¹⁴⁰⁶ That this was a “good thing” was similar to the advice that Luther gave Conrad Cordatus. In the letter, he told her to be of good cheer and “willingly endure this rod of your Father. He will relieve you of it in his own good time.”¹⁴⁰⁷ With this letter, Luther does not blame Elizabeth’s weak nature as a woman for her suffering or her depression. Rather, he compared the woman’s suffering to Jesus’ suffering. He concluded the letter to Elizabeth by recommending that she visit him so that he could talk to her further about this matter.

¹⁴⁰¹ LW 43, 370; WA BR 4, 1133, 23.

¹⁴⁰² *Letter to Elizabeth von Kanitz, August 22nd, 1527*, WA BR 4, 236-237, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 84.

¹⁴⁰³ *Letter to Maiden Else von Kanitz, August 22nd, 1527*, WA BR 4, 1133, 236, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 207-208.

¹⁴⁰⁴ See *Letter to George Spalatin, August 19th, 1527*, WA BR 4, 232-233.

¹⁴⁰⁵ *Letter to Elizabeth von Kanitz, August 22nd, 1527*, WA BR 4, 236-237, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 84.

¹⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

This letter is also a good example to show how Luther approached female education. This chapter will not focus on this topic in much detail, but it is worth briefly mentioning.¹⁴⁰⁸ Luther believed that teachers were needed “for instructing young girls under twelve in true Christian discipline, honour, and virtue and, in accordance with the ordinance for our pastoral office, teaching them to read and write German.”¹⁴⁰⁹ After the monasteries closed, there was a greater need for education, especially for young girls.¹⁴¹⁰ He thought education was important so that the world would have “good and capable men and women, men able to rule well over land and people, women able to manage the household and train children and servants aright.”¹⁴¹¹ Advocating for the education of girls was not completely innovative, but it was a new direction for Luther.¹⁴¹² He was serious about promoting education, especially education for girls. This is evident by how often he advocated for girls to receive an education. For example, his personal letters show that he actively invited educated women like Elizabeth von Kanitz to teach girls publicly. He also expressed how their work was an example for others to imitate.¹⁴¹³ In his theology, especially in his work titled: *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520), he promoted that everyone in schools and universities should read the Bible. He wrote: “And would to God that every town had a girls' school as well, where the girls would be taught the gospel for an hour every day either in German or in Latin.”¹⁴¹⁴ He added: “A spinner or a seamstress

¹⁴⁰⁸ There are other studies that focus more on this topic, see Andrea Schulte, “Martin Luther and Female Education,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 29 (2002): 437-439.

¹⁴⁰⁹ LW 45, 188-189; see also Behrens, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 98.

¹⁴¹⁰ See LW 45, 175.

¹⁴¹¹ Quotation from: *To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools* (1524), see LW 45, 368.

¹⁴¹² Luther also argued that there should be more education for boys, see LW 45, 370.

¹⁴¹³ Pedersen, *Martin Luther's View of Women*, 193.

¹⁴¹⁴ LW 44, 205-206.

teaches her daughter her craft in her early years. But today even the great, learned prelates and the bishops do not know the gospel.”¹⁴¹⁵

Letters to Comfort Women Struggling with Loss

Queen Maria of Hungary (1526)

Luther frequently wrote to women to comfort them with the loss of a spouse. On November 1st, 1526, while Luther was in Wittenberg, he wrote to Queen Maria of Hungary to offer comfort because she had recently lost her husband. Queen Maria’s husband, King Lewis of Hungary (1506 – 1526), was an opponent of the Reformation while Maria supported the movement. Luther wrote an exposition of four Psalms and dedicated them to Queen Maria to encourage her position for the Reformation movement: “I decided to dedicate these four psalms to Your Majesty so that by this means I might exhort Your Majesty to continue cheerfully and confidently to further God’s holy Word in Hungary.”¹⁴¹⁶ They included Psalm 37, 62, 94, and 109.¹⁴¹⁷ However, before Luther finished, King Lewis was killed fighting against the Turks in the battle of Mohacz on August 29th, 1526. He wrote to Queen Maria: “But seeing that in the meantime that matter has unhappily taken a turn [...] Your Majesty’s beloved husband has been slain, my original intention also had to be altered.”¹⁴¹⁸ While Luther did not change much in his approach to the Psalms, he now included a preface to his book with a dedicatory epistle which was meant to comfort Queen Maria. Luther wrote: “In this great and sudden misfortune with

¹⁴¹⁵ LW 44, 205-206.

¹⁴¹⁶ *Letter to Queen Maria of Hungary, November 1st, 1526*, WA BR 19, 542-553, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 56-57.

¹⁴¹⁷ Malcolm, *Luther’s Letters to Women*, 16.

¹⁴¹⁸ *Letter to Queen Maria of Hungary, November 1st, 1526*, WA BR 19, 542-553, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 57.

which Almighty God has at this time visited you, not in anger or displeasure [...] but as a trial and chastisement in order that Your Majesty may learn to trust alone in the true Father [...] and to be comforted by [...] Jesus.”¹⁴¹⁹ Luther offered comfort by emphasizing that it was God’s will and that Queen Maria should turn to the Scriptures for support. He wrote: “For although it is (and probably should be) a great and bitter trial for Your Majesty to be left a widow so soon and to be deprived of your dear husband, still much consolation is to be found in the Scriptures, and especially in the Psalms.”¹⁴²⁰ He believed that anyone who could read the Scriptures and experience God’s love could easily “endure all the misfortune” that may come upon them on this earth.¹⁴²¹

As with Elizabeth von Kanitz and Valentine Hausmann, he then compared Queen Maria’s situation to Jesus’ suffering. He wrote: “Everyone thinks that his own cross is the heaviest and takes it to heart more than the cross of Christ – even if he had endured ten crosses.”¹⁴²² He believed that this was because people were not as patient as God, so that a smaller cross seemed more painful than Jesus’ cross. Luther’s letter to Queen Maria emphasized that one should accept one’s suffering because Jesus has suffered more than anyone else can ever experience.

Widow Margaret (1528)

Jesus’ suffering is a theme that is often found throughout letters from Luther’s pastoral care. For example, on December 15th, 1528, Luther wrote a letter to comfort the “honoured,

¹⁴¹⁹ *Letter to Queen Maria of Hungary, November 1st, 1526*, WA BR 19, 542-553, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 57.

¹⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁴²² *Ibid.*, 58.

virtuous” widow Margaret after her husband attempted suicide and died some time afterwards.¹⁴²³ He was informed of Margaret’s grief and misfortune by her son and was “moved by Christian love to write [her] this letter of consolation.”¹⁴²⁴ He comforted her by reassuring her that Jesus was victorious in her husband’s struggle and that her husband died with “his right mind and had Christian confidence in our Lord.” He also told John Reineck that his wife departed this world as a Christian and “so in a fine way.” In this letter, Luther comforted her by stating that her husband was engaged in a difficult struggle between Jesus and the Devil. As with Queen Maria and Elizabeth von Kanitz, he compared the husband’s struggle with Jesus’ struggle and reaffirmed that Jesus was victorious over death and rose from the dead. He reassured Margaret by stating: “That your husband inflicted injury upon himself may be explained by the Devil’s power over our members.”¹⁴²⁵ Luther wrote that the Devil may have directed her husband’s hands even against his own will. As with Jerome Weller, he noted that Margaret must feel like her husband’s depression was caused by the Devil. He told Margaret that if her husband had done this out of his own free will “he would surely not have come to himself and turned to Christ with such a confession of faith.”¹⁴²⁶ He wrote that: “Suffering and misfortune must come if we are to be partakers of comfort.”¹⁴²⁷ He also advised her to thank God for “this great blessing” that her husband did not remain in his despair as others do but was “lifted out of it by

¹⁴²³ *Letter to the Widow Margaret*, WA BR 4, 624, 625, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 58; Luther did not believe that a person was entirely damned if they committed suicide. He wrote: “I am not inclined to think that those who take their own lives are surely damned. My reason is that they do not do this of their own accord but are overcome by the power of the Devil, like a man who is murdered by a robber in the woods,” see WA TR 1, 222, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 58.

¹⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

God's grace."¹⁴²⁸ He provided similar advice to Wolf Heinze and John Reineck when he reassured them that their wives were in a better place and that God will comfort them.

Luther concluded the letter by advising Margaret to be content with God's will and to focus on the Scriptures, especially Psalm 44:22 which states: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." As with Valentine Hausmann, he also recommended that Margaret read the Scriptures. For Luther, there must also be mourning if there is to be comfort. As with his letters to John Reineck and Conrad Cordatus, this letter also emphasizes that grieving is a "natural" process. He also assured Margaret by drawing on several other Scriptural passages, such as Revelations 14:13 and John 11:25, that prove that those who die in the Lord are blessed.

Agnes Lauterbach (1535)

As with Luther's letter to the widow Margaret, he often advised both men and women to be content with God's will throughout his pastoral care. For example, Luther wrote to Agnes Lauterbach who was very troubled by the death of her son. On October 25th, 1535, while in Wittenberg, Luther wrote a short letter to offer consolation.¹⁴²⁹ In this letter, Luther attempted to comfort Agnes by claiming that it was God's will and that God "works in mysterious ways." He comforted Conrad Cordatus in the same manner. By drawing on Psalm 126, Luther encouraged the woman through explaining that what now might be a seen as a loss might later be joyous since God's work is hidden. Although Luther believed that grieving was natural, he told Agnes,

¹⁴²⁸ *Letter to the Widow Margaret*, WA BR 4, 624, 625, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 59.

¹⁴²⁹ *Letter to Agnes Lauterbach in Leisnig, from Wittenberg, October 25th, 1535*, WA BR 7, 2265, 305, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 212.

like Wolf Heinze, to “be moderate in your grieving!”¹⁴³⁰ This was because Luther believed that God still lives, and that God has seen more pain than Christians have experienced in this world.

Katharina Metzler (1539)

Similar themes can be found through Luther’s other letters to women. For example, while in Wittenberg, Luther wrote to Katharina Metzler of Breslau on July 3rd, 1539. Katharina’s husband was a teacher in Breslau who died on October 2nd, 1538 and then approximately eight months later her son also died.¹⁴³¹ According to Philip Melanchthon, the boy had only been sick for nine days.¹⁴³² In 1539, Luther wrote a short letter to Katharina to console her on her son’s death. He wrote that he “cannot refuse” as much as God enabled him to “comfort” Katharina after her son’s passing.¹⁴³³ As with John Reineck, Luther consoled the woman by stating that her son was pious and departed this world as a Christian. Luther encouraged Katharina by stating that she should be happy when considering the benefits of a good death to the agony of a shameful death. In this letter, as with his correspondence with Conrad Cordatus, he showed sympathy and could “well imagine” the sufferings of the woman. He empathized with her because he knew from his own experience of losing Elisabeth in 1528 that it was difficult to lose a child.¹⁴³⁴ As with Reineck, he comforted the woman by arguing that “it is natural and proper that a person should be grieved [...] for God did not create us without feelings or as stone or

¹⁴³⁰ *Letter to Agnes Lauterbach in Leisnig, from Wittenberg, October 25th, 1535*, WA BR 7, 2265, 305, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 212.

¹⁴³¹ Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 72.

¹⁴³² Philip Melanchthon’s letters to Katharina Metzler are printed in WA BR 8, 486.

¹⁴³³ *Letter to Katharina, the Widow, Metzler in Breslau, from Wittenberg, July 3rd, 1539*, WA BR 8, 3354, 485, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 215.

¹⁴³⁴ Wiesner-Hanks and Karant-Nunn argue that Luther’s “bereavement would have been no greater had the deceased been sons,” see *Luther on Women*, 203.

wood.”¹⁴³⁵ Luther reassured Katharina that it is God’s will that we “grieve and lament the dead, for to do otherwise would be a sign that we had no love.”¹⁴³⁶ He emphasized, as with his letters to men like Wolf Heinze, that this grieving “must be done in moderation.”¹⁴³⁷ He explained that God helps Christians to see that they are able to both fear and love God. Therefore, Luther recommended that Katharina “acknowledge the gracious good will of God and in order to please Him to bear this cross patiently.” Being patient was also the same advice that he gave to Valentine Hausmann. In attempt to console, Luther then compared the cross that God has borne for all Christians in comparison “to which our crosses are nothing or are only slight.”¹⁴³⁸

What is significant with this letter to Katharina is that he used a biblical argument to help her consider her own sufferings in comparison to biblical characters who also suffered. He referred to David and his son, Absalom. At the same time, Luther highlighted other figures in Scripture such as Elijah and Jonah who also grieved. It is important here that Luther believed that Katharina could relate to male biblical figures like Jonah. In contrast to his theology, he believed that Katharina was intelligent enough to understand his biblical argument. This letter also suggests that Luther believed that her problems were not caused by her inferior nature or because she was overly emotional since male biblical figures also experienced similar suffering and grieving.

¹⁴³⁵ *Letter to Katharina, the Widow, Metzler in Breslau, from Wittenberg, July 3rd, 1539*, WA BR 8, 3354, 485, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 215.

¹⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 215.

Widow of John Cellarius (1542)

In 1542, Luther wrote a brief letter to Mrs. John Cellarius who was mourning the loss of her spouse. Her husband initially taught Hebrew at Heidelberg and Leipzig. Earlier in 1519, John Cellarius adopted the Evangelical faith because of a disputation between Luther and Jon Eck in Leipzig.¹⁴³⁹ He was a pastor in Frankfurt and Bautzen before he was made a bishop in Dresden, where he died on April 21st, 1542.

On May 8th, 1542, Luther wrote to the widow: “If all our sufferings on earth were piled up in a heap, they would be as nothing compared with what the guiltless Son of God has suffered for us and our salvation.”¹⁴⁴⁰ Luther emphasized this idea throughout the letter because it is meant to be comforting that her “sorrow is not the greatest experienced by the children of men; there are many who suffer and endure a hundred times more.”¹⁴⁴¹ As with Queen Maria, Luther added that there is no death that can be compared to the death of Jesus who saved humanity from eternal death. For this reason, the widow should be comforted in Jesus who died for all and “who is worth more than we, our husbands, our wives, our children, and all that we possess.”¹⁴⁴² At the end of the letter, Luther noted that Katharina von Bora prays that the widow will experience God’s comfort.

Eva, the Widow of George Schulz (1544)

For another example, on October 8th, 1544, Luther wrote a short letter to the “honorable and virtuous” Eva who was the widow of George Schulz. After completing his studies in the

¹⁴³⁹ Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 74.

¹⁴⁴⁰ *Letter to the Widow of John Cellarius, May 8th, 1542*, WA BR 10, 63, 64, translated by Malcolm, *Luther’s Letters to Women*, 124-125.

¹⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

¹⁴⁴² *Letter to Mrs. John Cellarius, May 8th, 1542*, WA BR 10, 63, 64, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 74.

university in Wittenberg, George Schulz stayed in Wittenberg for many years. In 1535, he moved to Freiberg, Saxony, where he died. In 1544, Luther offered consolation and attempted to comfort Eva after the death of her husband. He wrote: “I am deeply grieved at your misfortune [...] I can well believe the pain of such a parting.”¹⁴⁴³ Once again, Luther showed his sympathies and placed the woman on the same level as him by noting that he too experienced the same pain. As with Reineck and Heinze, he noted that it is natural that Eva feels grief because “in fact, it would not be well if it were not so, for that would be a sign that your love is cold.”¹⁴⁴⁴ Despite this grief, Luther supported the woman by saying that she may have great comfort knowing that her husband died as a Christian and that it was God’s will: “It should be a great comfort to you, first of all, that your husband’s departure was so Christian and blessed, and, in the second place, that you know it to be the will of God.”¹⁴⁴⁵ He provided Reineck and Heinze with the same comforting sentiment. With this point, Luther’s letter to Eva also shifts into the first-person plural while he argued that it is only fitting that *we* should sacrifice *our* own will to God’s since God sacrificed his son for humanity.¹⁴⁴⁶ This use of first-personal plural is another example of how Luther frequently placed himself on the same level as women throughout his pastoral care. At the end of the letter, he prayed that God provides comfort to her. As this letter is short, it does not provide much detail about how God will comfort, but instead tries to provide reassurance to Eva.

¹⁴⁴³ *Letter to the Widow of George Schulzen, October 8th, 1544*, WA BR 10, 663, 664, translated by Malcolm, *Luther’s Letters to Women*, 146.

¹⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Leroux, *Martin Luther as Comforter*, 215.

Letters to Comfort Couples Struggling with Depression

John Agricola & Elizabeth Agricola (1527)

Martin Luther frequently wrote to couples who were struggling with melancholy or depression. In these letters, he treats both parties respectfully and equally. For example, he interacted with John and Elizabeth Agricola concerning depression. In the beginning of June 1527, he wrote to John Agricola (1494 – 1566), who was the head of a Latin school in Eisleben, to recommend that his wife return to Wittenberg for the sake of her health. Luther observed that she seemed anxious and depressed: “It seemed to us that it would be good for your Elsa if she came here for a few days to breathe again the air to which she was accustomed... We shall be glad to do for her whatever may in any way be of benefit to her.”¹⁴⁴⁷

When Luther wrote to Elizabeth Agricola in June 1527, he greeted her with respect as the “esteemed and virtuous Mrs. Elizabeth Agricola [...] my dear friend.”¹⁴⁴⁸ He encouraged her to not feel so “fearful and downhearted.”¹⁴⁴⁹ It should be noted here that Luther was not suggesting that Elizabeth was feeling “downhearted” because this was a part of a woman’s nature.¹⁴⁵⁰ In theory, he believed that women were more “downhearted in spirit.” However, Luther did not blame Elizabeth’s depression on her weak character in this letter. Instead, he argued that this suffering is often felt by others.¹⁴⁵¹ Luther then reminded Elizabeth to be happy that God loves her. Luther prayed that God “may be gracious” and give Elizabeth strength.¹⁴⁵² In a letter later

¹⁴⁴⁷ WA BR 4, 209, 210, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 82; Elizabeth accepted Luther’s invitation to stay in Wittenberg. While she was there, Luther noticed that her illness was more spiritual than physical. He later wrote to John Agricola to inform him of this in July 1527, see WA BR 4, 219, 220.

¹⁴⁴⁸ *Letter to Elizabeth, Wife of Agricola, June 10th, 1527*, WA BR 4, 210, 211, translated by Malcolm, *Luther’s Letters to Women*, 25-26.

¹⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

¹⁴⁵⁰ LW 30, 91-92.

¹⁴⁵¹ Luther often shared with others that he too experienced melancholy, for example, see *Letter to Jerome Weller, July 1530*, WA BR 5, 518-520.

¹⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 28.

written in July 1527, Luther notified John Agricola that he was “glad and willing to receive” Elizabeth in Wittenberg and that her health was improving.¹⁴⁵³

Jonas von Stockhausen & Frau von Stockhausen (1532)

For another example, in 1532, Luther wrote to both Jonas von Stockhausen and Frau von Stockhausen. Jonas von Stockhausen was a nobleman who was selected to serve as a captain to police the town of Nordhausen in Thuringia.¹⁴⁵⁴ He served in this capacity between 1521 and 1532. He was afflicted with melancholy and was later relieved of his duty because of his illness. Luther first wrote to him to offer support on November 27th, 1532.¹⁴⁵⁵ He noted in the letter that his friends have advised him that Jonas von Stockhausen was becoming weary of life and was longing for death. He encouraged him to listen to his friends’ advice through which God will strengthen and comfort him. Luther believed that his prayers and prayers from others would help Stockhausen. As with Luther’s letters to Agnes Lauterbach and Katharina Metzler, he also advised Stockhausen that he should and must remain obedient to God’s will. He wrote: “Since you must be certain and must understand that God gives you life and does not now desire your death, your thoughts should yield to this divine will, be obedient to it, and not doubt that your thoughts, being in conflict with God’s will, were forcibly inserted into your mind by the Devil.”¹⁴⁵⁶

¹⁴⁵³ WA BR 4, 219, 220.

¹⁴⁵⁴ This was a popular practice in the sixteenth century.

¹⁴⁵⁵ *Letter to Jonas von Stockhausen, November 27th, 1532*, WA BR 6, 386-388.

¹⁴⁵⁶ *Letter to Jonas von Stockhausen, November 27th, 1532*, WA BR 6, 386-388, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 89.

Luther then encouraged Jonas von Stockhausen that Jesus suffered and was unwilling to give into the burdens unless it was God's will.¹⁴⁵⁷ He provided the exact same advice to women like Agnes Lauterbach, Elizabeth von Kanitz, and Queen Maria. He then told him that he must be resolute when facing his problems. Luther believed that Stockhausen should "grit" his teeth in the face of his thoughts, and "for God's sake be more obstinate, headstrong, and wilful than the most stubborn peasant or shrew."¹⁴⁵⁸ As with Barbara Lißkirchen, he advised that if Stockhausen fights against his thoughts or ignores them, then God will help him out. However, if he does not resist, then he will lose the battle. At the end of this letter, Luther reminds Stockhausen that compared to Jesus, "our crosses are nothing" which is the very same advice that he gave to the widow of John Cellarius, Queen Maria, and Elizabeth Agricola.

On the same day, Luther also wrote a letter to Frau von Stockhausen instructing her on how she might help her husband get well.¹⁴⁵⁹ He advised her not to leave her husband alone for even a single moment and to remove anything that he could use to harm himself from the home. He wrote: "Solitude is poison to him."¹⁴⁶⁰ In this letter, Luther trusted her with the healing process and advocated that she read to her husband: "There is no harm in your reading or telling him stories, news, and curiosities, even if some of them are idle talk and gossip of fables about Turks, Tartars, and the like, as long as they excite him to laughter and jesting."¹⁴⁶¹ Luther then added that after she does this to "quickly recite comforting verses from the Scriptures."¹⁴⁶²

¹⁴⁵⁷ For information on Luther thoughts about Jesus' suffering, see Dennis Ngien, *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther's 'Theologia Crucis'* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2005).

¹⁴⁵⁸ *Letter to Jonas von Stockhausen, November 27th, 1532*, WA BR 6, 386-388, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 90.

¹⁴⁵⁹ *Letter to Mrs. Jonas von Stockhausen, November 27th, 1532*, WA BR 6, 388-389.

¹⁴⁶⁰ *Letter to Mrs. Jonas von Stockhausen, November 27th, 1532*, WA BR 6, 388-389, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 91.

¹⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, 91; he also advised Valentine Hausmann to focus on the Scriptures.

What is significant with this letter is that Luther assigned the wife with improving her husband's health.¹⁴⁶³ With this role, she is trusted by Luther to competently complete this task. Luther advised her that it does not matter if her husband becomes angry by her actions. He wrote: "Act as if it were disagreeable to you and scold about it, but let it be done all the more."¹⁴⁶⁴ In this case, Frau von Stockhausen was not submissive to her husband's rule. She took on a dominant role within the marriage and by doing so received Luther's approval.¹⁴⁶⁵

Letters to Comfort Couples Struggling with Loss

Mr. & Mrs. Matthias Knudsen (1531)

Luther often comforted and empathized with both parties equally when dealing with loss, especially in letters that were addressed to both husband and wife. On October 21st, 1531, he wrote a to Matthias Knudsen and his wife Magdalena Knudsen who lived in Husum.¹⁴⁶⁶ In this letter, Luther treated both partners equally when dealing with their son's death. He wrote in the letter that as parents it is inconceivable that they should not be mourning and that it is natural for good parents to feel this way. He wrote: "When you have sorrowed and wept moderately, shall comfort yourselves again – nay, thank God with joy that your son has made such a good end."¹⁴⁶⁷ He provided the same advice to John Reineck and the widow Margaret. Luther also emphasized that the parents should grieve but that they should show moderation. As we have

¹⁴⁶³ WA BR 6, 388; it is important to note that Luther discussed the ability of a godly woman to be able to comfort and support husbands by using Eve as the first example, see LW 6, 255; he also used Rebecca as an example of a woman who protected her husband, see LW 5, 179.

¹⁴⁶⁴ *Letter to Mrs. Jonas von Stockhausen, November 27th, 1532*, WA BR 6, 388-389, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 91.

¹⁴⁶⁵ WA BR 6, 389.

¹⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 212-213; nothing substantial is known about how the boy died, but the letter suggests that his death followed a lasting illness.

¹⁴⁶⁷ *Letter to an Aged Couple, October 21st, 1531*, WA BR 6, 212-213, translated by Malcolm, *Luther's Letters to Women*, 148-149.

seen with Luther's letters to Wolf Heinze, Agnes Lauterbach, and Katharina Metzler, he often recommended grieving in moderation. In this letter, Luther did not include any personal experiences of his own grief in this letter. Rather, he argued they should be happy and thank God that their son had a good end and is in the eternal rest of Christ. He provided Heinze with similar advice. Luther commonly made this argument when trying to console spouses or parents. In the letter, he wrote: "This great blessing should be more agreeable to you than if he had enjoyed all this world's goods and honors for a thousand years."¹⁴⁶⁸ Luther concluded the letter by stating that God will "comfort and strengthen" them until they day that they will see their son again in Heaven.

What is significant with this letter is that Luther did not distinguish between husband and wife. He considered them to be equal in spiritual and practical terms. There is no point in this letter where Luther addressed the woman differently than the man. As with his other letters, Luther approached men and women equally when offering consolation and comfort.

Second-Hand Accounts of Offering Comfort

In addition to Luther's personal letters, there are also second-hand accounts from observers who witnessed his personal interactions with women throughout his pastoral care. These second-hand accounts are important to examine because they provide more insight into how Luther treated both men and women. These observations show that Luther treated them equally throughout his pastoral work.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Matthias Knudsen, October 21st, 1531, WA BR 6, 212-213, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 61.

In autumn 1531, Conrad Cordatus recorded a *Table Talk* which provides an account based on his observations of Luther's encounter with a sick man.¹⁴⁶⁹ While Cordatus observed Luther's ministry to the sick man, he wrote: "When he [Luther] approaches a sick man he converses with him in a very friendly way, bends down as close to him as he can with his whole body, and first inquires about his illness, what his ailment is, how long he has been sick, what physicians he has called, and what kind of medicine he has been using."¹⁴⁷⁰ Cordatus noted that Luther then inquired whether the sick man has been patient before God. When he had assurance that the sick man's will was inclined towards God "he acknowledges that the illness, sent upon him by the will of God, is to be borne with patience, and that he is prepared to die in God's name, if this be His will, Luther highly praises this disposition of his as a work wrought in him by the Holy Ghost himself."¹⁴⁷¹ Luther told the sick man that it is God's mercy when a man comes to have a knowledge of the Word and Jesus. Luther commended others to have such faith while at the same time cautioning the sick man to continue to be steadfast in his faith and promising to pray for him. The sick man thanked Luther and said that he can never repay him for his visit. Cordatus wrote: "Luther is accustomed to reply that this is his office and duty and that it is therefore not necessary to thank him so profusely."¹⁴⁷² Luther concluded the visit by telling the sick man that he should not be afraid because God has not only provided him with Word and Sacrament, but also salvation through Jesus.

In March 1536, Anthony Lauterbach (1502 – 1569) recorded a conversation which provides another second-hand observation of Luther's pastoral work. In 1532, Lauterbach

¹⁴⁶⁹ *Table Talk Recorded by Conrad Cordatus, Autumn 1531*, WA TR 2, 2194b, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 36.

¹⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 37.

married a former nun and became a deacon in Leisnig. He later moved to Wittenberg for several years, where he served as deacon. He would eventually move to Pirna, Saxony, where he served as a bishop from 1539 until his death in 1569.¹⁴⁷³ While Lauterbach was living in Wittenberg, he was often a guest at Luther's table. He would take extensive notes of his sermons and conversations.¹⁴⁷⁴ He would also occasionally join Luther on pastoral visits.

In March 1536, Lauterbach recorded his observations of Luther's ministry to a sick woman.¹⁴⁷⁵ He observed that after Luther preached that day, he visited an "honourable" sick woman, named Mrs. Brey, who was an exile from Leipzig.¹⁴⁷⁶ This second-hand account of Luther attending to Mrs. Brey is identical in nature to his visit with the sick man recorded earlier by Conrad Cordatus.

Luther was summoned to provide pastoral care to Mrs. Brey because her husband drowned in March 1536. Due to this, she was "overcome by such great grief and sorrow that she became ill and fainted fifteen times the first night."¹⁴⁷⁷ As with the sick man, Lauterbach wrote that when Luther visited Mrs. Brey that she asked: "My dear doctor, how can I repay you for this kindness?" Luther said that she does not need to repay him for his work. He then asked how the woman was feeling and advised her to submit to God's will who was "chastising her after freeing her from all the evils of Satan."¹⁴⁷⁸ He told her that "a daughter should bear the chastisements of her Father unto her death or life."¹⁴⁷⁹ He quoted Romans 14:8 which states: "We are the Lord's,

¹⁴⁷³ Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 43.

¹⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁴⁷⁵ *Table Talk Recorded by Anthony Lauterbach, March 1536*, WA TR 3, 3612c, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 43.

¹⁴⁷⁶ For more information on the persecutions in Leipzig, see Luther's letters to the evangelicals in Leipzig from October 4th, 1532 and April 11th, 1533 in WA BR 6, 370-372.

¹⁴⁷⁷ *Table Talk Recorded by Anthony Lauterbach, March 1536*, WA TR 3, 3612c, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 43.

¹⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

whether we live or die.” He also reminded her of John 14:19 which states: “Because I live, you shall live also.” Luther told her that God has sent her a very precious gem when he brought her suffering upon her and that he also gave her the strength to bear it. He told her to “therefore, pray.”¹⁴⁸⁰ She responded positively and said many “godly things.” When he left, Luther “committed her to the protection” of the Lord.¹⁴⁸¹

In 1537, Lauterbach also recorded another account of Luther’s ministry of the sick. Katharina von Bora’s aunt, Magdalene von Bora, was a permanent resident in Luther’s home after she followed Katharina from the convent in Nimbschen.¹⁴⁸² She was an important member of the Luther household and helped to care for and teach Luther’s children. In 1537, she became sick and died. Lauterbach who was present at Luther’s last ministry to Magdalene provided an observer’s account of how Luther interacted with Magdalene.¹⁴⁸³ He described that Luther approached Magdalene while she was on her deathbed and he offered her comfort “in this fashion.” He asked if Magdalene recognized him and could hear him. When it was clear that she knew him and could hear him, he said: “Your faith rests alone on the Lord Jesus Christ [...] He is the resurrection and the life [John 11:25]. You shall lack nothing. You will not die but will fall asleep like an infant in a cradle, and when morning dawns, you will rise again and live forever.”¹⁴⁸⁴ She agreed with Luther. He then asked her if there was anything that troubled her to which she replied “no.” He said again that God will deliver her from any pain and that she will not die. Anthony recorded Luther as saying: “It is well with her, for this is not death, but sleep.”

¹⁴⁸⁰ *Table Talk Recorded by Anthony Lauterbach, March 1536*, WA TR 3, 3612c, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 44.

¹⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁴⁸² Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 45.

¹⁴⁸³ *Table Talk Recorded by Anthony Lauterbach, 1537*, WA TR 5, 6445, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 45.

¹⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

He then went to the window and prayed by himself and left her at noon. At seven o'clock she "fell asleep."¹⁴⁸⁵

LETTERS FROM WOMEN TO LUTHER (1543 & 1544)

Although this chapter is primarily focused on exploring Luther's letters to women, it is important to examine two examples of how women approached him. It is important to examine two examples of how women approached Luther because they show that women felt comfortable in writing to Luther. Both examples also illustrate that these women believed that Luther would take them seriously, even though they were women. These examples show that women believed that their opinions were relevant to him otherwise it does not seem likely that they would have written to Luther in the first place.

The first example is a letter written on August 26th, 1543 to Luther by Dorothea who was the Countess of Mansfeld.¹⁴⁸⁶ In this letter, she offered Luther medical advice. This example suggests that Luther appeared to have been open to the recommendations of women. It is likely that Dorothea would not have written to Luther if he was not willing to listen to her advice. Dorothea's letter also implies that she was comfortable enough to explicitly disagree with the advice already given to Luther by male physicians and was confident that her own recommendations were superior. She also must have assumed that Luther would have appreciated her advice since she so readily provided him with it.

¹⁴⁸⁵ *Table Talk Recorded by Anthony Lauterbach, 1537*, WA TR 5, 6445, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 46.

¹⁴⁸⁶ WA BR 10, 3905, 373-374.

The second example is a letter to Luther written by Princess Sibyl of Saxony on March 27th, 1544.¹⁴⁸⁷ This example is significant because many letters to Luther from women have not been preserved. It is rare to find an extant conversation occurring between Luther and a woman, but in this case, we have his reply to Princess Sibyl. This example is important because it shows how Luther interacted with women and how women responded to Luther.

Dorothea the Countess of Mansfeld (1543)

On August 26th, 1543, Dorothea the Countess of Mansfeld wrote to Luther to offer him her own advice.¹⁴⁸⁸ She seemed to be an educated woman, especially in medicine.¹⁴⁸⁹ Dorothea received word of Luther's recent illness to which he was advised to make an incision in his leg and have blood flow out to relieve a headache.¹⁴⁹⁰ During the sixteenth century, one of the most common treatments for any illness was bloodletting. In this letter to Luther, Dorothea explicitly disagreed with the advice that was previously given to him by male physicians. She wrote: "I am not of the opinion, nor do I want to be, that it is somewhat useful to make the blood flow in cases of a headache where there has not been one before."¹⁴⁹¹ Rather, since Luther has already had a headache before, he probably should let the wound heal. She suggested that he observe the wound and whether it is inclined to heal. If this is the case, she stated that "it is my advice to let it heal in God's name" and if not then she is concerned that it might injure Luther further if he

¹⁴⁸⁷ WA BR 10, 3977, 546-548.

¹⁴⁸⁸ *Letter from Dorothea, Countess of Mansfeld to Luther, August 26th, 1543*, WA BR 10, 3905, 373-374, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 219.

¹⁴⁸⁹ See Alisha Rankin, *Panacea's Daughters: Noblewomen As Healers in Early Modern Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

¹⁴⁹⁰ *Letter from Dorothea, Countess of Mansfeld to Luther, August 26th, 1543*, WA BR 10, 3905, 373-374, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 219.

¹⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 219.

lets it heal by itself.¹⁴⁹² She also noted in the letter that he ought not worry about his experience of dizziness. She explained that fast and sharp movement of the head may bring about this feeling when there is no physical movement. She wrote: “I would gladly give you my advice in this matter [...] and I am sending you herewith a little vial on which is written ‘for dizziness,’ together with a sneezing powder that should be used along with it, in accordance with the accompanying instructions.”¹⁴⁹³ Along with this, she also provided more medical recommendations for Luther and included two bottles of aquavit. She stated that she does not doubt that if he used it, then he would feel better. Dorothea explained in the letter that she has “great and much experience of this from God.”¹⁴⁹⁴

It is worth noting that although there was no objection to women working in hospitals, there was an increase in opposition to women caring for the sick outside of an established institution.¹⁴⁹⁵ As discussed in Chapter Two, during the Middle Ages, only men could attend universities to receive professional medical training to become physicians. Nevertheless, women often learned about medicine from elsewhere and were still recognized as physicians in various records.¹⁴⁹⁶ However, during the early modern period, male physicians made it more difficult for women to practice as licensed physicians since they emphasized professionalization which was a process that frequently excluded women.¹⁴⁹⁷ Women who wanted to practice medicine often could not call themselves physicians. Women were also typically prohibited from giving a

¹⁴⁹² *Letter from Dorothea, Countess of Mansfeld to Luther, August 26th, 1543*, WA BR 10, 3905, 373-374, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 219.

¹⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 114.

¹⁴⁹⁶ See Leigh Whaley, *Women and the Practice of Medical Care in Early Modern Europe, 1400-1800* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001).

¹⁴⁹⁷ Janine Lanza, “Women and Work,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jane Couchman and Allyson Poska (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 276.

diagnoses or prescribing treatment while using the title of a “physician.”¹⁴⁹⁸ Despite this, Dorothea wrote to Luther to diagnose him and prescribe him treatment for his ailments. She must have assumed that Luther was open to her medical advice and would take her seriously even though she was being exceptional and stepping outside the normal boundaries for a woman.

Princess Sibyl of Saxony (1544)

On March 27th, 1544, the wife of Elector John Frederick of Saxony wrote to Luther from Weimar to ask about his health and family, but more specifically to lament that she greatly missed her absent husband who was away at a Diet at Spire.¹⁴⁹⁹ After inquiring about Luther, she wrote: “We cannot conceal from you, our kind devotee of the consoling word of God, that we have a sad time here because our heart’s very dearest lord and husband is not here.”¹⁵⁰⁰ She noted that if she were closer to Luther’s location that she would have requested that he come to them “so that we could have been a little bit happy with your presence and you could have comforted us a little.”¹⁵⁰¹ However, Sibyl said that since this cannot be done, she must entrust the matter to God who will help all things to come to a happy end: “We hope to the dear God that He will graciously hear us and that our heart’s very dearest lord and husband [...] will return to us with fresh and healthy body.”¹⁵⁰² She had no doubt that this will happen. She quoted John 3:22 and Psalms 50:15 to support her belief: “Call upon me in the time of need, and I will save you,

¹⁴⁹⁸ Agatha Streicher is a notable exception. In March 1561, Agatha was the first woman in early modern Germany to become an officially licensed physician, see Lore Sporhan-Krempel, “Agathe Streicher: Ärztin aus Ulm. Ulm 1520-1581,” in *Lebensbilder aus Schwaben und Franken*, ed. Max Müller und Robert Umland (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960), 52-61.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 103-104; The exact date of this letter is unknown, but it may have been March 30th, 1544, see WA BR 10, 3977, 546-548.

¹⁵⁰⁰ *Letter from Electress of Sibylle of Saxony to Luther, March 27th, 1545*, WA BR 10, 3977, 546-548, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 220.

¹⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 220.

¹⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 220.

and you should praise me.” She outlined in the letter that these verses have provided her with comfort and that she does not doubt God. At the end of the letter, she commended Luther to God’s grace so that he may stay healthy in body and soul and give Luther “a long life for the sake of His godly word, with which you have consoled me and many other persons.”¹⁵⁰³

On March 30th, 1544, while in Wittenberg, Luther responded to Princess Sibyl to comfort and cheer her in her loneliness.¹⁵⁰⁴ At the beginning of the letter, he humbly thanked Sibyl for inquiring about his health and family: “Thank God, we are well.”¹⁵⁰⁵ Luther discussed many details about his health, but then dedicated more than half of the letter to addressing Sibyl’s concerns. Luther reassured her that he can well understand why she would feel sad and lonely while her husband is away. He reminded her that “it is necessary, and his absence is for the good and advantage of Christendom.” Luther advised her to “bear it with patience according to divine will.”¹⁵⁰⁶ He reminded her that “we have the advantage of possessing the precious Word of God, which comforts and sustains us in this life.” In addition, Luther told her that prayer pleased God and that it “will be heard in time.” These “two such unspeakable treasures neither the Devil, nor the Turk, nor the pope, nor their followers can have, and they are consequently much poorer and more wretched than any beggar on earth.”¹⁵⁰⁷ Luther reminded her once again to “patiently endure” the evils which she encounters, but to also to thank God and have compassion on those individuals who have been deprived of God’s grace.

¹⁵⁰³ *Letter from Electress of Sibylle of Saxony to Luther, March 27th, 1545*, WA BR 10, 3977, 546-548, translated by Karant-Nunn and Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women*, 221.

¹⁵⁰⁴ *Letter to the Princess Sibyl of Saxony, March 30th, 1544*, WA BR 10, 3978, 548-549, translated by Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 104.

¹⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.

CONCLUSION

Martin Luther's letters to women throughout his pastoral care help scholars to measure his commitment to his theological convictions as binding characteristics in his own life. The letters that have been examined in this chapter are evidence of his efforts to enforce his theology in his own life. With these letters, Luther did not maintain his strict theological convictions, nor did he try to enforce his beliefs about women in his own practical situations. In theory, Luther maintained and transmitted many traditional beliefs about women. He believed that women were physically and intellectually inferior to men. This inferiority meant that weakness was part of a woman's character and spirit.¹⁵⁰⁸ By comparison, Luther's personal interactions show that he did not treat women any differently than men, especially throughout his pastoral care. In times of spiritual struggle, suffering, illness, or the loss of a loved one, Luther showed empathy and compassion to both men and women. With this compassion, he did not enforce his theological convictions, but rather often showed empathy towards the individual. This sense of compassion and empathy often replaced Luther's strict theology and led him to engage in respectful conversations and treat both men and women equally throughout his pastoral care.

From these letters, Luther considered both men and women equally worthy of his responses and detailed instructions. Even though Luther's theory deemed women to be inferior to men, throughout his practice he was happy to engage with women on matters of common interest. This is clear from the identical tone that he used to address both men and women. Whether Luther wrote to Barbara Lißkirchen or Wolf Heinze, he interacted and treated both men and women equally throughout his pastoral care.

¹⁵⁰⁸ LW 1, 151.

Luther's letters throughout his pastoral care also show that he thought that women were intelligent enough to understand his recommendations and to follow through with his advice. He believed that women could follow through and solve their problems. This is clear from the fact that Luther provided both men and women with the same advice. In practice, he did not believe that women needed easier or simpler instructions, even though women were simple creatures, according to his theory. This is surprising since Luther's theology described women as being "slow of mind" and that it is with women's intellectual capabilities that we can "see the boundless weakness of women."¹⁵⁰⁹ However, this theological conviction is not found throughout his pastoral care.

His theology not only described women as intellectually inferior, but also more emotional than men.¹⁵¹⁰ In theory, he believed that this inferiority tended to make women "indulge in their moods" and allowed women to be "controlled by them."¹⁵¹¹ Even though Luther's theory outlined that women were overly emotional creatures, in his practice he did not believe that women needed more comfort than men after tragic events such as illness or death. In fact, we can see from the letters that Luther advised both men and women to be moderate in their emotions, especially when grieving. His letters show that this was not a piece of advice that was more often told to women than men. Based on his theology, it is surprising that Luther did not remind women more often to be moderate since they were the more emotional creatures. In practice, Luther did not believe that women were more emotional than men.

Even though women had an inferior intellect, it is clear from Luther's letters that he also did not think that women experienced more spiritual struggles because of their weakness. His

¹⁵⁰⁹ LW 16, 163-164; LW 3, 47.

¹⁵¹⁰ WA 1, 17, 1, 26.

¹⁵¹¹ LW 3, 47.

theological convictions claimed that women are subject to the Devil's tricks because of their natural moral weakness. If women are more "exposed to the snares of Satan," then it should follow that women tended to experience more spiritual temptations than men.¹⁵¹² However, this does not seem to be the case. In practice, Luther did not address women more often than men nor believed that women needed help more often because they were the inferior sex.

Another significant point is that although Luther's theory claimed that women were "by nature weak, irresponsible, [and] foolish," he did not blame women's spiritual struggles or problems on their own natural weakness.¹⁵¹³ For example, when providing spiritual advice to women, Luther did not use a woman's "downhearted spirit" as an explanation for why the woman experienced spiritual struggles in the first place.¹⁵¹⁴ Throughout his practical situation, Luther never blamed women for experiencing spiritual troubles or temptations, even though his theory maintained that a woman's natural weakness made her more vulnerable to the Devil's tricks.

Finally, it is significant that Luther frequently compared a woman's struggles to his own. In practice, he often placed himself on the same level as women when writing letters to them. This shows that Luther believed that he could relate to women and that his personal experiences were not that much different than theirs, even though he was a man.

These examples show that Luther, regardless of his strict theology, respected the women with whom he interacted and treated both men and women equally. Therefore, Luther's correspondences with women illuminate how he treated women equally and how he did not maintain his strict theological convictions in practice, especially throughout his pastoral care.

¹⁵¹² LW 6, 192-193.

¹⁵¹³ Ibid., 192-193.

¹⁵¹⁴ LW 30, 91-92.

From examining Luther's letters, several themes also emerge.¹⁵¹⁵ He emphasized throughout his letters to men and women that: God knows better than humanity, that God is the one who has taken away the loved one, that God created humanity with emotions so it is natural to grieve but that there should be moderation, that God, Jesus, and Scripture offer more comfort than anything else, and a death as a faithful Christian is better than a miserable life.

In addition to these themes, we can see that Luther also emphasized two main points throughout his letters to both men and women. First, a Christian's death acts as a witness to testifying about the Gospel's power over sin and eternal death. This is not only shown through the ritual acts of a funeral, but also through the behaviour of the grieving.¹⁵¹⁶ Second, the reality that Christians might have to adjust to life without their deceased loved ones, but that this is part of God's will. For Luther, living a life of faith means living each day in the balance of life and death so that humanity can experience pain to know God's goodness.

With regards to other patterns that emerge in Luther's letters, there is not enough evidence to suggest that there were any significant changes or developments in his approach to pastoral care between men and women. This chapter explored Luther's letters starting in 1523 to 1544. From examining these letters, it is not the case that Luther mainly advised men in his early career and then later became more equal in his care of men and women. This chapter showed that Luther addressed both men and women equally right from the beginning of his pastoral work. We can see that this is the case from how Luther treated both sexes and how he provided the same advice to both men and women who shared common problems. We can see from examining these letters that even though Luther held strict theological convictions, he did not treat women differently than men when corresponding with them throughout his pastoral care.

¹⁵¹⁵ Leroux, *Martin Luther as Comforter*, 188.

¹⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 188.

Although there are no changes with regards to how Luther treated men and women, there is one significant development that is important to mention. Luther often shared his own experiences in his letters to men and women. As Luther eventually entered marriage, fathered children, and lost children, his approach to offering advice and comfort changed. In other words, his own personal life affected how he provided pastoral care to men and women. Luther was empathetic and brought his own personal experiences into his letters. This means that any meaningful personal experiences influenced his perspectives. For example, substantial losses, like losing Elisabeth and Magdalena, certainly influenced Martin Luther and helped him to empathize equally with both men and women who had experienced similar loss.

CONCLUSION: SUMMARY AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

THESIS SUMMARY

The first chapter established the current state of research. This literature review not only helped to place my research within the context of existing literature, but it also revealed existing gaps in the field. This chapter demonstrated that there are no full-length studies that have explored Luther's theology and personal correspondences with women. This literature review sets the stage for my own research and dissertation work. Since the 1970s, there have been many calls for future scholarship to examine Luther's theology and personal life. He not only wrote about women in the abstract but lived with women both in his public and private life. Scholars recognized that Luther's ideas about women only received a "sentence here and there" in previous studies.¹⁵¹⁷ Scholars like Wiesner-Hanks, Karant-Nunn, and Mattox have helped to continue this conversation by either translating Luther's writings or examining his theological views.¹⁵¹⁸ Despite these scholars' contributions; however, the field has been slow to examine his attitudes towards women from the dual perspective of theory and practice which has meant that aspects of the "fundamental" Luther have remained in the dark.

The second chapter provides the reader with context for understanding women's lives and experiences in the early modern period. This chapter highlighted that popular social and theological views about women influenced early modern writers like Luther. These traditional views considered women as inferior to men because they were physically weak, less intellectually capable, and less competent at controlling their emotions. Since women were inferior, they were created to be man's subordinate and remain within the household. Although

¹⁵¹⁷ Martha Behrens, "Martin Luther's View of Woman" (Master's Thesis, North Texas State University, 1973), 1-2.

¹⁵¹⁸ Mickey Mattox, *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs: Martin Luther's Interpretation of the Women of Genesis in the Narrations of Genesis, 1523-45* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 3.

Protestant reformers challenged many topics, reformers like Luther did not reject these classical and early medieval ideas about women. This meant that prominent writers perpetuated these traditional ideas about women throughout the centuries.

These traditions and perspectives influenced how society viewed and treated women. This is especially evident in areas of the law, education, economics, and family life. For example, women's legal rights and freedoms were limited so that women could remain under the rule of men because of their natural inferiority. Such restrictions also existed in women's work which contributed to women's work being characterized by poor pay, low status, frequent changes in occupation, and perceived as marginal. A woman's inferiority meant that she also did not require as much education as men. She was meant to focus on being a good housewife who completes her domestic duties. For this reason, women did not need to learn how to write because it was not part of her vocation. Women showed that they were a good housewife by being obedient to their husbands and producing children. This chapter argued that Luther inherited his theological attitudes towards women from early and medieval Christianity and philosophy from classical antiquity. Due to this, Luther's theology held traditional views of women, especially maintaining that women have an inferior nature and were created to be subordinate to men.

The third chapter outlined Luther's traditional attitudes towards women that are found in his theological works. His theology influenced his own understanding of women's nature and their proper roles. This chapter argued that Luther's theology cannot be the only factor for determining his view of women. If scholars were to examine his theology alone, then they would receive a completely different picture of the reformer's attitudes towards women. This chapter

presented Luther's theology because it was necessary to first explore the theoretical before considering any insights that can be obtained by examining the practical.

With this chapter, I also highlighted Luther's complexities. The earlier Luther held that Eve was a weaker creature who was created out of Adam's side. He believed that Adam always had power and authority over Eve right from the beginning of creation. Luther argued that Eve was the weaker part of human nature which is why the Devil approached Eve and not Adam. By comparison, Luther's more mature theology believed that Eve's creation from Adam's side referred to the likeness between Adam and Eve, especially since the two sexes shared in the same material for creation. What is surprising is that the more mature Luther also assumed that Eve equally possessed the image of God with Adam before the fall. This allowed Eve to talk fearlessly with the Devil. She not only shared in equal rule, but also could understand spiritual matters "in the same degree as Adam" and was in no way inferior to Adam, "whether you count the qualities of the body or those of the mind."¹⁵¹⁹ However, the more mature Luther quickly shifted back to maintaining his more traditional interpretations of Eve.

Luther not only wrote extensively on Eve, but also on other biblical women. Scholars can gain more insight into his view of women by examining what he wrote about biblical women other than Eve. He used women, like Sarah, as models for female behaviour and ideal domestic virtues. For Luther, they possessed characteristics that all women should strive to cultivate such as being silent, obedient, and dedicated to the household.

Based on his interpretations of Eve and other biblical women, Luther maintained that women were physically, intellectually, and morally weak. He thought that women's weakness was obvious when looking at the physical differences between the sexes. Women were not only

¹⁵¹⁹ LW 1, 66; WA 42, 50; LW 1, 115 on Genesis 2:18, see also LW 1, 185; LW 1, 203; WA 42, 138.

physically weaker, but they also lacked a superior intellect. Women were slow of mind, timid, overly emotional, and had an animal-like intuition. Since women were physically and intellectually inferior, it made them the Devil's targets.

This natural inferiority meant that women should be under the rule of men. He promoted marriage for women so that they could fulfill their divinely ordained duty to be an obedient wife, to bear children, and to remain within the household. It was clear for Luther that the husband was the head of the wife which meant that she had to be submissive to him. Wives were also expected to produce children. He believed that God used women for no other purpose.¹⁵²⁰ Since a woman's primary function was to produce children, it meant that she should be like a tortoise that does not go too far away from her house. For Luther, it was within the home that a woman could fulfill her roles and divinely ordained duties.

The fourth chapter analyzed Luther's everyday personal correspondence with family and female reformers. This chapter presented practical examples and provided a more nuanced understanding of Luther's attitudes towards women. It showed that it is important to evaluate Luther's personal life and the extent to which he was committed to enforcing his theological convictions. It appears that Luther ignored or contradicted his own theology, especially when corresponding with his family and women reformers. He certainly made exceptions for exceptional or influential women who did not follow his own theological convictions. For example, Katharina von Bora and Argula von Grumbach were not silent nor obedient wives. However, he never condemned these women for stepping outside of their proper roles. This lack of reprimand is surprising. He often lashed out against his enemies or evangelicals, like Andreas Karlstadt or the peasants during the Peasants' War, who had taken his message for reform too

¹⁵²⁰ LW 5, 355.

far. Yet, we do not see the same action taken against women who went against his own theology. Instead, Luther acknowledged their roles and intelligence, especially by engaging with them in theological discourse. Since actions speak louder than words, his personal engagements with women provide scholars with a more accurate picture of the reformer's attitudes towards women.

The fifth chapter provided even more practical examples of Luther interactions with women, especially how he treated both sexes equally throughout his pastoral care. Luther's pastoral works shows that he allowed his compassion and empathy to win over his strict theological convictions about women and this led him to treat both men and women respectfully and equally. He assumed that women, like men, were worthy of his detailed responses. Luther did not provide women with easier advice but rather believed that women were intelligent enough to understand and follow through with his recommendations. Luther also did not think that women needed more comfort than men in difficult times even though his theology maintained that they were the more emotional creatures. By analyzing pastoral letters to both men and women, this chapter provided more evidence that Martin Luther frequently did not maintain his own theological convictions about women in his own life.

If scholars wish to establish Luther's attitudes towards women scholars, then they need to move beyond studying his theology. It certainly is the case that Luther's convictions were outlined in his theology. However, they can also be discovered by examining his own personal situations. If scholars examined his theology alone, then they would receive a completely different picture. It would seem as though he believed women were inferior in every way and should remain submissive and restricted to the household. By contrast, his personal correspondences with women show a completely different side of Luther. Therefore, scholars

must include the practical, as well as the theoretical, when exploring Martin Luther's attitudes towards women.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

There are a few areas and questions that I hope this dissertation has motivated scholars to pursue further. For example, future research could expand on my dissertation by examining more letters from Luther to various women, especially letters not considered in this work. Due to space limitations, my work could not examine all of Luther's various letters to women. For example, the Weimar edition includes eleven volumes of his letters to both men and women.¹⁵²¹ For the purpose of this thesis, I selected Luther's letters to women that highlighted moments where he did not enforce his own theological convictions. For this reason, there are other letters to women that are published in the Weimar edition that I did not have enough space to examine. It would be helpful for future studies to analyze letters to women that have not been included in this study.

In addition to exploring other letters, scholars could help to expand the field by translating more of Luther's letters to women into English. There have only been a few studies that have completed this task such as those works by Susan Karant-Nunn and Merry Wiesner-Hanks, Theodore Tappert, as well as Karl Zimmermann and Georgiana Malcolm.¹⁵²² Future studies should translate more of Luther's letters that are published in the Weimar edition because there are still letters in German that have not yet been translated into English. Further, scholars could conduct archival research so that there are even more primary source materials on this

¹⁵²¹ The letters are presented chronologically, see WA BR 1 – 10; WA BR 1 (1501-1520), WA BR 2 (1520-1522), WA BR 3 (1523-1525), WA BR 4 (1526-1528), WA BR 5 (1529-1530), WA BR 6 (1531-1533), WA BR 7 (1534-1536), WA BR 8 (1537-1539), WA BR 9 (1540-1542), WA BR 10 (1542-1544); WA BR 11 (1545-1546).

¹⁵²² Susan Karant-Nunn and Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Theodore Tappert, *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960); Karl Zimmermann, *Luther's Letters to Women* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1865).

topic. Archival research might reveal more sides to Luther's conversations, interactions, and social perspectives; this presents a great opportunity for further research.

Future research should also examine Luther's theological works, especially as they relate to women and gender.¹⁵²³ When attempting to answer questions about Luther's view of women, it makes a difference which of his texts are examined. For example, his academic lectures were different from his theological sermons when addressing women's nature and purpose. Scholars like Else Pederson point out the importance of contextualization.¹⁵²⁴ At certain points, it is difficult to determine how much of Luther's writings are simply rhetorical, contain symbolic language, or make ontological statements. Some of his statements are ambiguous or even self-contradictory. It is important that future scholars and readers of Luther's works are aware of not only the purpose of various works, or genre, but also any shifts that might occur in the same text. This is especially important since the Weimar edition of Luther's works contains over one hundred large volumes and includes many different genres and styles. His vast authorship highlights that his use of rhetorical and metaphorical language is rich and complex, but that has not yet been fully studied. Therefore, Luther's text should be examined more thoroughly, especially through various approaches such as terminologically, hermeneutically, rhetorically, and intertextually.

Future research should also explore how Luther's theology affected women in different countries. Previous scholarship has examined the impact of Luther's theology on women more

¹⁵²³ For example, although there are several works that deal with the Reformation and marriage, there are surprisingly few studies that focus entirely on Luther and marriage, see Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 83-100; Lyndal Roper, "Sex, Marriage and Motherhood," *History Today* 33 (1983): 33-38; Susan Johnson, "Luther's Reformation and (Un)holy Matrimony," *Journal of Family History* 17 (1992): 271-288; Jane Strohl, "Marriage as Discipleship: Luther's Praise of Married Life," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 47, no. 2 (2008): 136-142; Emmett Cocke, "Luther's View of Marriage and Family," *Religion in Life* 42 (1973): 103-116.

¹⁵²⁴ Else Marie Wiberg Pedersen, "A Man Caught Between Bad Anthropology and Good Theology? Martin Luther's View of Women Generally and of Mary Specifically," *Dialog: a Journal of Theology* 49, no. 3 (2010): 193.

broadly but most still tend to focus solely on women in Europe. Scholars should expand their focus to include women from other countries around the world.¹⁵²⁵ A similar necessity to explore women and gender from a more global perspective is another area for future research in the field of women and gender studies. Expanding this research to include studies of women from different countries is certainly a future research direction that would benefit both fields.

With regards to the Reformation and women's history, future studies need to include comprehensive works on how the Reformation affected social life, especially starting from the medieval period to the early modern period. Studies that have examined the socio-historical aspects of the Reformation are lacking in this field.¹⁵²⁶ For example, scholars do not know much about those women who responded to Luther's advice to leave the monastic life.¹⁵²⁷ Therefore, this is a possible avenue for future research.

More detailed studies of individual Reformation women should be completed, especially works that focus on their religious writings and their agency. Kirsi Stjerna argues that until relatively recently there has been a misconception that Reformation women are not important enough to study.¹⁵²⁸ She points out that recent scholarship that considers the religious writings of medieval women has increased significantly in the last three decades.¹⁵²⁹ By comparison; however, the religious writings of Protestant women from the sixteenth century have received

¹⁵²⁵ See Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History: Global Perspectives* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); see also Anders Örténblad, Raili Marling, and Snjezana Vasiljevic, *Gender Equality in a Global Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Nancy Cook, *Gender Relations in Global Perspective: Essential Readings* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2007).

¹⁵²⁶ Kirsi Stjerna's work remains one of the best sources on this topic, see Kirsi Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009).

¹⁵²⁷ For a good study that focuses on the impact of the Reformation on nuns, see Amy Leonard, *Nails in the Wall: Catholic Nuns in Reformation Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹⁵²⁸ Kirsi Stjerna, "Reformation Revisited: Women's Voices in the Reformation," *The Ecumenical Review*, 69, no. 2 (2017): 202.

¹⁵²⁹ Kirsi Stjerna "Women and Theological Writing During the Reformation," *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 16, no. 3 (2016): 1.

much less attention from scholars. There are several reasons for this. In the past, Stjerna notes that studying the theological texts of Protestant women has seemed “futile or impossible.” This feeling of futility is largely because there are few women from the sixteenth century that have even been remembered by their name or their life achievements.¹⁵³⁰ Sini Mikkola also argues that the “fragmentary primary sources limit possible research and make sophisticated analysis difficult at best.”¹⁵³¹ Since there are so few theological texts available or recognized as valuable, “it has generated an impression that the mothers of the Protestant faith either did not write theology or were not interested in it.”¹⁵³² Stjerna notes that scholars have been working in the archives to find these missing theological voices. This work has resulted in scholarship which explores the first-generation Protestant women such as Olimpia Morata, Argula von Grumbach, Katharina Schütz Zell, and Marie Dentièrre.¹⁵³³ However, there is still room for scholarly conversations about women’s theological contributions. Mikkola also points out that there need to be more studies conducted on Protestant women even including women like Katharina Zell. She argues that Katharina is “an example of those women whose significance in the Reformation has been acknowledged only recently” by scholars.¹⁵³⁴ With this recent acknowledgment, Stjerna argues that “we can expect a major rewriting of the 16th-century history and denomination

¹⁵³⁰ Stjerna makes the same argument in another article by stating that “we have not known much until relatively recently about the Reformation women, not even their *names*,” see *idem*, *Reformation Revisited*, 202.

¹⁵³¹ Sini Mikkola, “By the Grace of God: Women’s Agency in the Rhetoric of Katharina Schütz Zell and Martin Luther,” *Scholar and Feminist Online Journal* 15, no. 1 (2018): 1.

¹⁵³² Stjerna, *Women and Theological Writing*, 1.

¹⁵³³ See Rebecca VanDoodewaard, *Reformation Women: Sixteenth-century Figures Who Shaped Christianity's Rebirth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017); Derek Wilson, *Mrs Luther and Her Sisters: Women in the Reformation* (Oxford: Lion Books, 2016); Katharina Wilson, *Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996); Paul Zahl, *Five Women of the English Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

¹⁵³⁴ Mikkola, *By the Grace of God*, 1.

histories with women at centre stage, in the main picture, and with their horizons colouring the panorama. The contributions of women should not be left only to the footnotes.”¹⁵³⁵

It would not only be helpful to have more scholarship on individual women, such as Marguerite de Navarre or Lady Ursula von Münsterberg, but also works that examine women and women’s lives through the lenses of women themselves.¹⁵³⁶ This would help to illuminate the complexity of the impact of the Reformation on women during the sixteenth century. Stjerna argues that studying Reformation women also adds to “our understanding of gender and genderedness – how we understand human experience and perspectives as women and women.”¹⁵³⁷ These future directions would not only contribute to making a history of women, but they may also help to better explain how the Protestant Reformation affected women and how Luther viewed women.

As a follow up to my own dissertation, I am especially interested in researching women, like Elisabeth of Brandenburg (1510 – 1558) and Elisabeth von Sachsen (Elisabeth of Saxony) (1503 – 1557), who openly accepted Luther’s theology and helped to spread the Reformation message. It would be interesting to further study why such influential women worked on behalf of the Reformation and were receptive to Luther’s theology, especially when his writings often placed women in submissive and restrictive roles. There is no doubt that parts of his theology, such as the concept of the priesthood of all believers, would have been very appealing to women. However, I would want to research how these exceptional women reconciled Luther’s traditional theology with the parts of his theology that they found most appealing as women.

¹⁵³⁵ Stjerna, *Reformation Revisited*, 202.

¹⁵³⁶ There have been some recent studies on Marguerite de Navarre, see Barbara Stephenson, *The Power and Patronage of Marguerite De Navarre* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017); Rouben Cholakian, *Marguerite De Navarre: Mother of the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

¹⁵³⁷ Stjerna, *Reformation Revisited*, 211.

FINAL REMARKS

Scholars cannot ignore the fact that Martin Luther was a dynamic individual who not only wrote about women in the abstract, but also had daily interactions with them throughout his life. This dissertation is valuable because it contributes to scholarly conversations by arguing that a “sentence here and there” is not enough to explain the complexities of Luther’s attitudes towards women. My research contributes by analysing both his theology and social interactions together in one study. I have contributed by providing an extensive study on Luther and women from this dual perspective. If scholars continue to focus solely on his theology, then they will continue to paint an incomplete picture because his theology does not tell the whole story. My research proves that scholars need to consider a variety of different perspectives when trying to unravel Luther and his complex attitudes towards women. This dual approach is most promising because it provides much more context to the reformer’s attitudes towards women. As actions speak as loud as words, my dissertation responds to the need for a balanced evaluation of his theology and his personal correspondence with women. Although more work remains to be completed on this topic, my dissertation helps to fill the odd gap in scholarship by expanding the boundaries of our knowledge of Martin Luther and women.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

- Aristotle. *Generation of Animals*. Translated by A. L. Peck. *Loeb Classics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. Translated by David Wright. London: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Dalzell, Alexander. *Collected Works of Erasmus*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974.
- Hillerbrand, Hans, Kirsi Stjerna, Timothy Wengert, and Euan Cameron. *The Annotated Luther*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015-2017.
- Karant-Nunn Susan, and Merry Wiener-Hanks. *Luther on Women: A Sourcebook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Katharina Schütz Zell, *Church Mother: The Writings of a Protestant Reformer in Sixteenth-Century Germany*. Translated by Elsie McKee. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- Kvam, Kristen, Linda Scheearing, and Valarie Ziegler. *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works*. Translated by Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut T. Lehmann, and Christopher Boyd Brown. Philadelphia: Fortress Press; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-2009.
- . *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Briefwechsel*. Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1930-1985.
- . *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Tischreden*. Weimar: Böhlau, 1912-1921.
- . *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Weimar: Herman Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1883-2009
- . *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Sämmtliche Werk*. Weimar: Erlangen and Frankfurt, 1826-1857.
- Luther, Martin and A T. W. Steinhäuser. *The Magnificat: Luther's Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967.
- Luther, Martin, Karl Zimmermann, and Georgiana Malcolm. *Luther's Letters to Women*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1865.

- Luther, Martin, and Ronald Sider. *Karlstadt's Battle with Luther: Documents in a Liberal-Radical Debate*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001.
- Luther, Martin, and Theodore Tappert. *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel*. Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003.
- Luther, Martin, William Hazlitt, and Alexander Chalmers. *The Table Talk of Martin Luther: Translated and Edited by William Hazlitt, with a Memoir by Alexander Chalmers*. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1878.
- Matheson, Peter. *Argula Von Grumbach: A Woman's Voice in the Reformation*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995.
- McKee, Elsie. *Katharina Schütz Zell. The Writings: A Critical Edition*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.
- Scheurlen, Paul. *Vom wahren Herzenstrost: Martin Luthers Trostbriefe*. Stuttgart: Steinkopf Verlag, 1935.
- Smith, Preserved. *The Life and Letters of Martin Luther*. London: John Murray, 1911.

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Abrams, Lynn and Elizabeth Harvey. *Gender Relations in German History: Power, Agency, and Experience from the Sixteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*. London: University College London Press, 1996.
- Ågren, Maria. "Making a Living, Making a Difference." In *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Allen, Prudence. *The Concept of Woman: The Early Humanist Reformation, 1250-1500*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002.
- Althaus, Paul. *The Ethics of Martin Luther*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972.
- Amt, Emilie. *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Amussen, Susan. *Attending to Early Modern Women*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998.
- Amy Leonard. *Nails in the Walls: Catholic Nuns in Reformation Germany*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Arbel, Vita. *Forming Femininity in Antiquity: Eve, Gender, and Ideologies in the Greek Life of Adam and Eve*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

- Asendorf, Ulrich. *Lectura in Biblia: Luthers Genesisvorlesung (1535-1545)*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998.
- Atkinson, James. *Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism*. Baltimore: Penguin, 1968.
- Bagchi, David. *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Bainton, Roland. "Learned Women in the Europe of the Sixteenth Century." In *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women in the European Past*, edited by Patricia Labalme, 117-125. New York: New York University Press, 1980.
- . *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971.
- . "Luther and the Via Media at the Marburg Colloquy." *Collected Papers 2* (1963): 394–398.
- . *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. New York: New American Library, 1950.
- Barth, Hans-Martin. *The Theology of Martin Luther: A Critical Assessment*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013.
- Bavel, T.J. Van. "Augustine's View of Women." *Augustiniana 39* (1989): 5-53.
- Bayer, Oswald. *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: William B. Publishing Company, 2008.
- . "Nature and Institution: Luther's Doctrine of the Three Orders." Translated by Luis Dreher, *Lutheran Quarterly 12* (1998): 125-159.
- Becking, Bob and Susanne Hennecke, *Out of Paradise: Eve and Adam and Their Interpreters*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011.
- Behrens, Martha. "Martin Luther's View of Woman." Master's Thesis, North Texas State University, 1973.
- Bell, Theo. "Man is a Microcosmos: Adam and Eve in Luther's Lectures on Genesis (1535–1545)." *Concordia Theological Quarterly 69*, no. 2 (April 2005): 159-184.
- Bellavitis, Anna and Clelia Boscolo. *Women's Work and Rights in Early Modern Urban Europe*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.
- Bellavitis, Anna and Micheletto Zucca. *Gender, Law and Economic Well-Being in Europe from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century: North Versus South?* London: Routledge, 2018.

- Bellomo, Manlio and Lydia Cochrane. *The Common Legal Past of Europe: 100-1800*. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995.
- Bennett, Judith and Ruth Karras. *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Bennett, Judith. *A Bitter Living: Women, Markets, and Social Capital in Early Modern Germany*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Berkner, Lutz. "Recent Research on the History of the Family in Western Europe." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 35 (1973): 395-406.
- Birnstein, Uwe. *Argula von Grumbach: Das Leben Der Bayerischen Reformatorin - Mit Reiseführer "auf Argulas Spuren."* Schwarzenfeld, Oberpf: Neufeld Verlag, 2014.
- Bitel, Lisa. *Women in Early Medieval Europe, 400-1100*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Blaisdell, Charmarie. "The Matrix of Reform: Women in the Lutheran and Calvinist Movements." In *Triumph Over Silence: Women in Protestant History*. Edited by Richard Greaves. Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1985.
- Blamires, Alcuin. *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.
- . *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Blast, Robert. *Honor Your Fathers: Catechisms and the Emergence of a Patriarchal Ideology in Germany, 1400-1600*. Leiden, New York, and Cologne: Brill, 1997.
- Bloomquist, Karen. "Luther's Theology and the Rising Consciousness of Women." In *Women and the Word: Toward a Whole Theology*, edited by Jude Michaels, 60-66. Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union's Office of Women's Affairs, 1972.
- Bornkamm, Heinrich. *Luther in Mid-Career, 1521-1530*. Translated by Theodore Bachmann. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.
- . *Luther and the Old Testament*. Translated by Eric Gritsch. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.
- . *Road to Reformation*. Translated by John Doberstein and Theodore Tappert. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1946.
- . *Der junge Luther*. Leipzig: Koehler, 1939.
- Bornstein, Diane. *The Lady in the Tower: Medieval Courtesy Literature for Women*. Hamden: Archon, 1983.

- Børresen, Kari. *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Woman in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas*. Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995.
- Boxer, Marilyn and Jean Quataert. *Connecting Spheres: Women in the Western World, 1500 – to Present*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Boxer, Marilyn. *When Women Ask the Questions: Creating Women's Studies in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
- Boyd, Stephen. Masculinity and Male Dominance: Martin Luther on the Punishment of Adam.” In *Redeeming Men: Religion and Masculinities*, edited by Stephen Boyd and Mark Muesse, 188-210. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996.
- Brauner, Sigrid. “Martin Luther on Witchcraft: A True Reformer?” In *The Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe*. Edited by Jean Brink, Allison Coudert, and Maryanne Horowitz, 29-42. Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1989.
- Brecht, Martin and James L. Schaaf. *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- Brecht, Martin. *Martin Luther: A Biography*. Translated by James Schaaf. Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1999.
- . *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church, 1532-1546*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- . *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521-1532*. Translated by James Schaaf. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990.
- Behrens, Martha. “Martin Luther’s View of Women.” Masters Thesis, North Texas State University, 1973.
- Brendler, Gerhard. *Martin Luther: Theology and Revolution*. Translated by Claude Foster. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Bridenthal, Renate. *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977.
- Brittain, Virginia. “While Katy Did the Dishes.” *Dialog* 11, no. 3 (1972): 222-225.
- Brooke, Christopher. *The Medieval Idea of Marriage*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- Brooks, P. N. “A Lily Ungilded? Martin Luther, the Virgin Mary and the Saints.” *Journal of Religious History* 13 (1984): 136-149.

- Brundage, James. *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Buitendag, Johan. "Marriage in the Theology of Martin Luther – Worldly Yet Sacred: An Option Between Secularism and Clericalism." *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 63, no. 2 (2007): 445-461.
- Bullough, Vern. *The Subordinate Sex: A History of Attitudes toward Women*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973.
- Cadden, J. *Meanings of Sex Differences in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Cahill, Lisa. *Between the Sexes*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.
- Cameron, Euan. *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- . *The European Reformation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Campbell, Julie. *Literary Circles and Gender in Early Modern Europe*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2006.
- Carmody, Denise. *Feminism & Christianity: A Two-Way Reflection*. Nashville: Abingdon Publishing, 1982.
- Cavallo, Sandra and Lyndan Warner. *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Chadwick, Owen. *The Reformation*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*, translated by David Wright. London: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Cholakian, Rouben. *Marguerite De Navarre: Mother of the Renaissance*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- Chrisman, Miriam. "Women of the Reformation in Strasbourg 1490-1530." *Archive for Reformation History* 63 (1972): 141-168.
- Clark, Elizabeth and Herbert Richardson. *Women and Religion: A Feminist Sourcebook of Christian Thought*. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.
- Clark, Mary. *Augustine*. New York: Continuum, 1994.

- Classen, Albrecht and Tanya Amber Settle. "Women in Martin Luther's Life and Theology." *German Studies Review* 14, no. 2 (1991): 231-260.
- Classen, Albrecht. "Woman Poet and Reformer: The 16th Century Feminist Argula von Grumbach." *Daphnis* 20, no. 1 (1991): 167-197.
- . *Medieval German Literature: Proceedings from the 23rd International Congress on Medieval Studies Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 5-8, 1988*. Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1989.
- Coakley, Sarah. *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'on the Trinity'*. New York, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Cocke, Emmett. "Luther's View of Marriage and Family." *Religion in Life* 42 (1973): 103-116.
- Cole, William. "Was Luther a Devotee of Mary?" *Marian Studies* 21 (1970): 94-202.
- Connell, Sophia. *Aristotle on Female Animals: A Study of the Generation of Animals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Cook, Nancy. *Gender Relations in Global Perspective: Essential Readings*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2007.
- Coolidge, Grace. *Guardianship, Gender, and the Nobility in Early Modern Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010.
- Cortright, Charles. "Poor Maggot-Sack that I Am: The Human Body in the Theology of Martin Luther." PhD Thesis, Marquette University, 2011.
- Coudert, Allison. "The Myth of the Improved Status of Protestant Women: The Case of the Witchcraze." *Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers* 89 (1989): 61-86.
- Crowther, Kathleen. *Adam and Eve in the Protestant Reformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Davis, Natalie Zemon. "City Women and Religious Change." In *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*. Stanford: Stanford: University Press, 1975.
- Dempsey Douglass, Jane. "The Image of God in Women as Seen by Luther and Calvin." In *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, edited by Kari Børrensen, 228-257. Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1991.
- . "Women and the Reformation." In *The Many Sides of History: Readings in the Western Heritage. Vol. 1: The Ancient World to Early Modern Europe*, edited by Steven Ozment and Frank M. Turner, 318-335. New York: Macmillan, 1987.
- . *Women, Freedom and Calvin*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985.

- DeRusha, Michelle. *Katharina and Martin Luther: The Radical Marriage of a Runaway Nun and a Renegade Monk*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017.
- Deutscher, Penelope. *Yielding Gender: Feminism, Deconstruction, and the History of Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Domingo, Rafael. *Roman Law: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Domröse, Sonja. *Frauen der Reformationszeit: Gelehrt, mutig und glaubensfest*. Bristol: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010.
- Donahue, Charles. *Law, Marriage, and Society in the Later Middle Ages: Arguments About Marriage in Five Courts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Duby, Georges and Michelle Perrot. *A History of Women in the West*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Dunn, Geoffrey. *Tertullian*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Durant, Will. *The Story of Philosophy: The Lives and Opinions of the Great Philosophers of the Western World*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1926; 2009.
- Emery, Gilles and Matthew Levering. *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Erikson, Erik. *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*. New York: Norton, 1958; 1993.
- Erler, Mary and Maryanne Kowaleski. *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- Fairchilds, Cissie. *Women in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700*. London: Pearson, 2007.
- Flood, John. *Representations of Eve in Antiquity and the English Middle Ages*. London: Routledge, 2011.
- Fraenkel, Peter. *Testimonia Patrum: The Function of the Patristic Argument in the Theology of Philip Melancthon*. Genève: Librairie Droz, 1961.
- Freybe, Peter. *Frauen mischen sich ein: Katharina Luther, Katharina Melancthon, Katharina Zell, Hille Feicken und andere*. Wittenberg: Drei Kastanien Verlag, 1995.
- Friedenthal, Richard. *Luther*. Translated by John Nowell. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970.

- Fudge, Thomas. "Incest and Lust in Luther's Marriage: Theology and Morality in Reformation Polemics." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 34, no. 2 (2003): 319-345.
- Furley, David. *Routledge History of Philosophy Volume: Aristotle to Augustine*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Gerle, Elisabeth. *Passionate Embrace: Luther on Love, Body, and Sensual Presence*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017.
- . "Luther and the Erotic." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 37, no. 3 (2010), 198-208.
- Gies, Frances and Joseph Gies. *Marriage and the Family in Middle Ages*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987.
- Grindahl, Gracia. "Luther's Theology as a Resource for Feminists." *Dialog* 24, no. 1 (1985): 32-36.
- Grislis, Egil. "The Experience of the Anfechtungen and the Formation of Pure Doctrine in Martin Luther's Commentary on Genesis." *Consensus* 8 (1982): 19-31.
- Gritsch, Eric. "The Cultural Context of Luther's Interpretation." *Interpretation* 37 (1983): 266-276.
- . *Martin, God's Court Jester: Luther in Retrospect*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.
- Haemig, Mary. "Review: Luther on Women: A Sourcebook." *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 36, no. 4 (2005): 1133-1134.
- Hafter, Daryl. *European Women and Preindustrial Craft*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1995.
- Hahn, Udo. *Katharina von Bora: Die Frau an Luthers Seite*. Stuttgart: Quell, 1999.
- Haile, Harry. *Luther: An Experiment in Biography*. New York: Doubleday, 1980.
- Halbach, Silke. *Argula von Grumbach als Verfasserin reformatorischer Flugschriften*. Frankfurt a. Main: Peter Lang, 1992.
- Hanawalt, Barbara. *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Harrington, Joel. *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Haustein, Jörg. *Martin Luthers Stellung Zum Zauber Und Hexenwesen*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1990.

- Helmer, Christine. "Luther: The Age of the Individual, 500 Years Ago Today." *Capitalism and Society* 13, no. 1 (2018): 1-8.
- Hendrix, Scott. *Martin Luther: Visionary Reformer*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017.
- . "Luther on Marriage." In *Harvesting Martin Luther's Reflections on Theology, Ethics, and the Church*, edited by Timothy Wengert, 169-184. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004.
- . "Masculinity and Patriarchy in Reformation Germany." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56, no. 2 (1995): 177-193.
- . "Luther Against the Background of the History of Biblical Interpretation." *Interpretation* 37 (1983): 229-239.
- Herbert, David. *Martin Luther: The Man and the Image*. New York: Irvington Publishers, 1983.
- Hill, Adam. "Martin Luther, Marriage, and Women: An Analysis of Luther's Religious Legitimation of Marriage and the Celibate Life for Women in His Sermons and Treatise." Master's Thesis, University of Calgary, 1997.
- Hill, Edmund. "Response: St. Augustine and R.R.R. on Women." *New Blackfriars* 66, 785 (1985): 503-504.
- Himmelfarb, Gertrude. *The New History and the Old*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987.
- Honeyman, Katrina and Jordan Goodman. "Women's Work, Gender Conflict, and Labour Markets in Europe, 1500-1900." *Economic History Review* 44, no. 4 (1991): 608-628.
- Houston, R. A. *Literacy in Early Modern Europe*. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Howard, Thomas. *Remembering the Reformation: An Inquiry into the Meanings of Protestantism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Howell, Martha. *Women, Production and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Hudson, Pat and W. R. Lee. *Women's Work and the Family Economy in Historical Perspective*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990.
- Hufton, Olwen. *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe, 1500-1800*. London: HarperCollins, 1995.

- Huppert, George. *After the Black Death: A Social History of Early Modern Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Irwin, Joyce. "Society and the Sexes." In *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research*, edited by Steven Ozment, 343-359. St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1982.
- Jäckel, Karin. *Die Frau des Reformators: das Leben der Katharina von Bora*. Reinbeck Bei Hamburg: Rowohlt-Taschnbuch-Verlag, 2007.
- Janin, Hunt. *Medieval Justice: Cases and Laws in France, England and Germany, 500-1500*. London: McFarland, 2009.
- Jansson, Karin. "Constitutive Tasks: Performances of Hierarchy and Identity." In *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society*, edited by Maria Ågren, 127-159. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Jeansonne, Sharon. *The Women in Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*. Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress Press, 1990.
- Jenkins-Blaisdell, Charmarie. "Rénee de France Between Reform and Counter-Reform." *Archive for Reformation History* 63 (1972): 196-226.
- Joeres, Ruth and Mary Maynes. *German Women in Eighteenth and Ninetieth Centuries*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Johnson, Susan. "Luther's Reformation and (Un)holy Matrimony." *Journal of Family History* 17 (1992): 271-288.
- Johnston, Eric. "The Biology of Women in Thomas Aquinas." *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 77, no. 4 (2013): 577-616.
- Joldersma, Hermina. "Argula von Grumbach (1492 - After 1563?)." In *German Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation, 1280-1580*. Edited by James Hardin and Reinhart Max, 89-96. Detroit, Washington and London: A Bruccoli Clark, Layman Book Gale Research, 1997.
- Junghans, Helmar. "Katharina Luther in the Light and in the Shadow of the Reformation." In *Ad Fontes Lutheri: Toward the Recovery of the Real Luther; Essays in Honor of Kenneth Hagen's Sixty-fifth Birthday*. Edited by Timothy Maschke, Franz Posset, and Joan Skocir, 86-103. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001.
- . *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526 bis 1546*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983.
- Jütte, Robert. *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

- Kamen, Henry. *Early Modern European Society*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007.
- Karant-Nunn, Susan. *The Reformation of Feeling: Shaping the Religious Emotions in Early Modern Germany*. London: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- . "Martin Luther's Masculinity: Theory, Practicality and Humor." In *Masculinity in the Reformation Era*. Edited by Susan Karant-Nunn, 167-189. Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2008.
- . "Reformation Society, Women and the Family." In *The Reformation World*, edited by Andrew Pettegree, 452-500. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.
- . "The Reformation of Women." In *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, edited by Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, and Merry Wiesner-Hanks, 174-201. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1998.
- . "The Reformation of Women." In *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, edited by Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, 165-191. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1998.
- . "The Women of the Saxon Silver Mines." *Women in the Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: Public and Private Worlds*, edited by Sherrin Marshall, 29-46. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1989.
- . "The Transmission of Luther's Teachings on Women and Matrimony: The Case of Zwickau." *Archive for Reformation History* 77 (1986): 31-46.
- Kellemen, Robert. *Counseling Under the Cross: How Martin Luther Applied the Gospel to Daily Life*. Greensboro, North Carolina: New Growth Press, 2017.
- Kelley, Donald. *The Beginning of Ideology: Consciousness and Society in the French Reformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Kelly, Joan. *Women, History & Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997.
- . "Early Feminist Theory and the 'Querelle des Femmes.'" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 8, no. 1 (1982): 4-28.
- . *Did Women Have a Renaissance?* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977.
- Kertzer, David and Marzio Barbagli. *The History of the European Family: Family Life in Early Modern Times, 1500-1789*. London: Yale University Press, 2001.
- Kim, Eunjoo. *Women Preaching: Theology and Practice Through the Ages*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009.

- Kimble, Sara and Marion Röwekamp. *New Perspectives on European Women's Legal History*. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Klosterkamp, Thomas. "Katharina von Bora, Ehefrau des Reformators Martin Luthers." *Dom St. Marien. Informationshefte* 15 (2011): 32-43.
- Koch, Ursula. *Verspottet, geachtet, geliebt - die Frauen der Reformatoren: Geschichten von Mut, Anfechtung und Beharrlichkeit*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Aussaat, 2016.
- Kolb, Robert. *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Kolde, Theodor. "Arsacius Seehofer und Argula von Grumbach." *Beiträge zur bayerischen Kirchengeschichte* 11 (1905): 49-188.
- Konnert, Mark. *Early Modern Europe: The Age of Religious War, 1559-1715*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.
- Kooiman, Willem. *Luther and the Bible*. Translated by John Schmidt. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961.
- Kothe, Richard. *Marriage and Sex According to Luther's Lectures on Genesis in the Context of the Twentieth Century*. Concordia Theological Seminary: Fort Wayne, 1982.
- Kramer, Sabine. *Katharina von Bora in den schriftlichen Zeugnissen ihrer Zeit*. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016.
- Kraus, Helen. *Gender Issues in Ancient and Reformation Translations of Genesis 1-4*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Krey Peter, and Philip Krey. *Luther's Spirituality*. New York: Paulist Press, 2007.
- Kroker, Ernst. "Luthers Werbung um Katherina von Bora." In *Lutherstudien zur 4. Jahrhundertfeier der Reformation veröffentlicht von den Mitarbeitern der Weimarer Lutherausgabe*. Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1917.
- . *Katharina von Bora, Martin Luthers Frau: ein Lebens- und Charakterbild*. Zwickau: J. Herrmann, 1906.
- Kvam, Kristen. "Luther, Eve, and Theological Anthropology: Reassessing the Reformer's Response to the 'Frauenfrage.'" PhD Dissertation, Emory University, 1992.
- La Porte, Jean, and Ellen Weaver. "Augustine on Women: Relationships and Teachings." *Augustinian Studies* 12 (1981): 115-131.

- Lanza, Janine. "Women and Work." In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Jane Couchman and Allyson Poska, 276-293. London: Taylor and Francis, 2016.
- Lazareth, William. *Luther on the Christian Home*. Philadelphia, 1960.
- Leaver, Robin. *Luther's Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017.
- Leonard, Amy. *Nails in the Wall: Catholic Nuns in Reformation Germany*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Lerner, Gerda. *Scholarship in Women's History: Rediscovered and New*. New York: Carlson Publishing, 1993.
- . *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Leroux, Neil. *Martin Luther As Comforter: Writings on Death*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Levy, Allison. *Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.
- Lindberg, Carter. *The European Reformations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.
- Lindstrom, Jonas. "The Diversity of Work." In *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society*, edited by Maria Ågren, 24-57. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Lipscomb, Suzannah. *The Voices of Nîmes: Women, Sex, and Marriage in Reformation Languedoc*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Lohse, Bernard. *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.
- MacCuish, Dolina. *Luther and His Katie*. Scotland: Christian Focus Publishing, 1983.
- Mansch, Larry. *Martin Luther: The Life and Lessons*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company Publishers, 2016.
- Marius, Richard. *Martin Luther: The Christian between God and Death*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap, 2009.
- Markwald, Rudolf and Marilynn Markwald. *Katharina Von Bora: A Reformation Life*. St. Louis, Mo: Concordia Publishing House, 2004.

- Marland, Hilary. *The Art of Midwifery: Early Modern Midwives in Europe*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1993.
- Martin, A.L. *Alcohol, Sex and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001.
- Matheson, Peter. "A Life in Letters: Argula von Grumbach (1492-1556/1557)." *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 4 (2009): 27-60.
- Matheson, Peter. *Argula Von Grumbach (1492-1554/7): A Woman Before Her Time*. La Vergne: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013.
- . "Breaking the Silence: Women, Censorship, and the Reformation." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27 (1996): 97-109.
- . *Argula Von Grumbach: A Woman's Voice in the Reformation*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995.
- Mattieu, Arnold. *Les Femmes dans la correspondance de Luther*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998.
- Mattox, Mickey. "Order in the House?" *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, 14, no. 2, (2012): 110-126.
- . "Luther on Eve, Women, and the Church." In *The Pastoral Luther: Essays on Martin Luther's Practical Theology*, edited by Timothy Wengert, 251-270. Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009.
- . *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs: Martin Luther's Interpretation of the Women of Genesis in the Narrations of Genesis, 1523-45*. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Maxfield, John. *Luther's Lectures on Genesis and the Formation of Evangelical Identity*. Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2008.
- Mayhew, Robert. *The Female in Aristotle's Biology: Reason or Rationalization*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- McFarland, Ian. *In Adam's Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2011.
- McGuire, Marilyn. "The Mature Luther's Revision of Marriage Theology: Preference for Patriarchs Over Saints in His Commentary on Genesis." PhD Thesis, Saint Louis University, 1999.
- McKee, Elsie. "'A Lay Voice in Sixteenth-Century 'Ecumenics': Katharina Schütz Zell in Dialogue with Johannes Brenz, Conrad Pellican, and Caspar Schwenckfeld." In

- Adaptations of Calvinism in Reformation Europe: Essays in Honour of Brian G. Armstrong.* Edited by Brian Armstrong, and Mack Holt, 81-110. London: Routledge, 2016.
- . *Katharina Schütz Zell: The Life and Thought of a Sixteenth-Century Reformer.* Leiden: Brill, 1999.
- . "Speaking Out: Katharina Schütz Zell and the Command to Love One's Neighbor as an Apologia for Defending the Truth." In *Ordentlich und Fruchtbar, Festschrift für Willem van 't Spijker.* Edited by W. H. Neuser & H. J. Selderhuis, 9-22. Leiden: J. J. Groen en Zoon, 1997.
- . "Katharina Schütz Zell: A Protestant Reformer." In *Telling the Churches' Stories: Ecumenical Perspectives on Writing Christian History.* Edited by Timothy Wengert and Charles W. Brockwell, 73-90. Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.
- . "The Defense of Zwingli, Schwenckfeld, and the Baptists, by Katharina Schütz Zell." In *Reformiertes Erbe: Festschrift für Gottfried W. Locher zu seinem 80. Geburtstag vol. 1.* Edited by Heiko Oberman, Ernst Saxer, Alfred Schindler, Heinzpeter Stucki, 245-264. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1992.
- McKim, Donald. *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- McLaughlin, Eleanor. "Equality of Souls, Inequality of Sexes: Women in Medieval Theology." In *Religion and Sexism,* edited by Rosemary Ruether, 213-266. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974.
- McLean, Ian. *The Renaissance Notion of Woman.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- McNamara, Jo Ann. "Women and Power Through the Family Revisited." In *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages,* edited by Mary Erler and Maryanna Kowaleski, 17-30. New York: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- McNeill, John. *A History of the Cure of Souls.* Harper and Row Publishing: New York, 1951.
- McTavish, Lianne. "Maternity." In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe,* edited by Jane Couchman and Allyson Poska, 177-197. London: Taylor and Francis, 2016.
- Medert, Claudia and Ute Mennecke. "Luthers Briefe an Seine Frau." *Luther* 54 (1983): 124-145.
- Monter, William. *European Witchcraft.* New York: Wiley, 1969.

- Meinhold, Peter. *Die Genesisvorlesung Luthers und ihre Herausgeber*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1936.
- Menet, David. "Luther on Marriage." Master's Thesis, Concordia Theological Seminary, 1999.
- Methuen, Charlotte. "'And Your Daughters Shall Prophesy!' Luther, Reforming Women and the Construction of Authority." *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 104 (2013): 82–109.
- . "Preaching the Gospel through Love of Neighbour: The Ministry of Katharina Schütz Zell." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61 (2010): 710–11.
- Meyers, Carol. *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Midlefort, Erik. *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany: 1562-1684*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1972.
- Mikkola, Sini. "By the Grace of God: Women's Agency in the Rhetoric of Katharina Schütz Zell and Martin Luther." *Scholar and Feminist Online Journal* 15, no. 1 (2018): 1-3.
- . "'In Our Bodies the Scripture Becomes Fulfilled': Gendered Bodiliness and the Making of the Gender System in Mature Luther's Anthropology (1520-1530)." PhD Thesis, University of Helsinki, 2017.
- . "Female as the Other in Martin Luther's Anthropology in the Early 1520s." *Anthropological Reformations: Anthropology in the Era of the Reformation* 28 (2015): 175-185.
- Mirrer, Louise. *Upon My Husband's Death: Widows in the Literature and Histories of Medieval Europe*. Boston: University of Michigan Press, 1992.
- Mitchell, Juliet. *Women: The Longest Revolution: Essays on Feminism, Literature and Psychoanalysis*. London: Virago Publishing, 1966.
- Moore, Cornelia. *The Maiden's Mirror: Reading Material for German Girls in the 16th and 17th Centuries*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1987.
- Neilson, Christian. "Women Confront the Reformation: Katharina Schütz Zell, Teresa of Avila, and Religious Reform in the Sixteenth Century." Master's Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2001.
- Nenneman, Richard. "The Marriage Test." *World Monitor* 5 (1992): 58-73.
- Ngien, Dennis. *Luther As a Spiritual Adviser: The Interface of Theology and Piety in Luther's Devotional Writings*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011.

- . *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther's 'Theologia Crucis.'* Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2005.
- Niditch, Susan. "Portrayals of Women in the Hebrew Bible." In *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, edited by Judith Baskin, 25-42. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004.
- Nunnally-Cox, Janice. *Fore-Mothers*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1981.
- Oberman, Heiko. *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- O'Faolain, Julia and Lauro Martines. *Not in God's Image: Women in History from the Greeks to the Victorians*. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.
- Ogilvie, Sheilagh and Robert Scribner. *Germany: A New Social and Economic History*. London: Edward Arnold, 1995.
- Ogilvie, Sheilagh. "Women and Labour Markets in Early Modern Germany." *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 2 (2004): 25-60.
- Örtenblad, Anders, Raili Marling, and Snjezana Vasiljevic. *Gender Equality in a Global Perspective*. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Otis, Leah. *Prostitution in Medieval Society: The History of an Urban Institution in Languedoc*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Ozment, Steven. "Inside the Pre-Industrial Household: The Rule of Men and the Rights of Women and Children in Late Medieval and Reformation Europe." In *Family Transformed: Religion, Values, and Society in American Life*, edited by Steven Tipton and John Witte, 225-243. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005.
- . *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Pak, Sujin. "Review of *Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 35, no. 4 (2004), 1137-1139.
- Parsons, Michael. *Reformation Marriage: The Husband and Wife Relationship in the Theology of Luther and Calvin*. Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2005.
- Pedersen, Else Marie Wiberg. "A Man Caught Between Bad Anthropology and Good Theology? Martin Luther's View of Women Generally and of Mary Specifically." *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 49, no. 3 (2010): 190-201.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.

- Pietsch, Stephen. *Of Good Comfort: Martin Luther's Letters to the Depressed and Their Significance for Pastoral Care Today*. Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2016.
- Plass, Ewald. *What Luther Says: An Anthology*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing Company, 1959.
- Pless, John. *Preacher of the Cross: A Study of Luther's Pastoral Theology*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2013.
- Pollock, Linda. *A Forgotten Child: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Poska, Allyson. "Upending Patriarchy: Rethinking Marriage and Family in Early Modern Europe." In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Jane Couchman and Allyson Poska. London: Taylor and Francis, 2016.
- Power, Eileen. *Medieval Women*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Power, Kim. *Veiled Desire: Augustine on Women*. New York: Continuum, 1996.
- Quataert, Jean. "The Shaping of Women's Work in Manufacturing: Guilds, Households, and the State in Central Europe." *American Historical Review* 90 (1985): 1122-1148.
- Raitt, Jill. "Review: Luther on Women: A Sourcebook." *Church History* 73, no. 4 (2004): 854-855.
- Rankin, Alisha. *Panaceia's Daughters: Noblewomen As Healers in Early Modern Germany*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- Reuling, Hanneke. "Genesis and the Stain of Sin: Spiritual, Literal and Dogmatic Interpretation in the Writings of Augustine of Hippo." In *After Eden: Church Fathers and Rabbis on Genesis 3:16-21*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Rieder, Paula. "The Uses and Misuses of Misogyny: Critical Historiography of the Language of Medieval Woman's Oppression." *Historical Reflections* 38, no 1 (2012): 1-18.
- Rist, John. *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Roberts, John. *History of the World*. New York: Knopf, 1976.
- . *Europe, 1880-1945*. London: Longmans, 1967.
- Rodgers, Katherine. *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny*. Washington: University of Washington Press, 1966.
- Roelker, Nancy. "The Appeal of Calvinism to French Noblewomen in the Sixteenth Century." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2 (1972), 291-418.

- . "The Role of Noblewomen in the French Reformation." *Archive for Reformation History* 63 (1972): 168-196.
- Roper, Lyndal. *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet*. New York: Random House, 2016.
- . *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Religion and Sexuality in Early Modern Europe*. Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 2013.
- . "'To His Most Learned and Dearest Friend': Reading Luther's Letters." *German History* 28 (2010): 283-295.
- . *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1991.
- . "Will and Honor: Sex, Words and Power in Augsburg Criminal Trials." *Radical History Review* 43 (1989): 45-71.
- . "Discipline and Respectability: Prostitution and the Reformation in Augsburg." *History Workshop Journal* 19 (1985): 3-28.
- . "Luther: Sex, Marriage and Motherhood." *History Today* 33, no. 12 (1983): 33-38.
- Rublack, Ulinka. "Gender in Early Modern German History: An Introduction." *German History* 17, no. 1 (1999): 1-8.
- . *The Crimes of Women in Early Modern Germany*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- . "Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Female Body in Early Modern Germany." *Past and Present* 150, no. 1 (1996): 84-110.
- Ruether, Rosemary. *Women and Redemption: A Theological History*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012.
- . "The Liberation of Christology from Patriarchy." *New Blackfriars* 66, no. 781 (1985): 324-335.
- . *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974.
- Salisbury, Joyce. *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins*. New York: Verso, 1991.
- Sangha, Laura. *Understanding Early Modern Primary Sources*. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Sarta, Raffaella. *Europe at Home: Family and Material Culture, 1500-1800*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.

- Scarre, Geoffrey and John Callow. *Witchcraft and Magic in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.
- Scharffenorth, Gerta. *Den Glauben ins Leben ziehen: Studien zu Luthers Theologie*. Munich: Kaiser, 1982.
- Scharffenorth, Gerta. *Friends in Christ: The Relationship between Men and Women As Seen by Luther*. Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1977.
- Schellenberger, Simona. *Eine starke Frauengeschichte: 500 Jahre Reformation*. Markkleeberg: Sax-Verlag, 2014.
- Schilling, Heinz. *Martin Luther: Rebel in an Age of Upheaval*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Schindler, Norbert. *Rebellion, Community and Custom in Early Modern Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Schmidt, Alvin. *Veiled and Silenced: How Culture Shaped Sexist Theology*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1990.
- Schroeder, Joy. "The Rape of Dinah: Luther's Interpretation of a Biblical Narrative." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1997): 775-791.
- Schulenberg, Jane. "The Heroics of Virginity." In *Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, edited by Mary Beth Rose. Syracuse University Press, 1986.
- Schulte, Andrea. "Martin Luther and Female Education." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 29 (2002):437-439.
- Schwarz, Reinhard. "Luthers Lehre von den drei Stände und die drei Dimensionen der Ethik." *Lutherjahrbuch* 45 (1978): 15-34.
- Schwiebert, E.G. *Luther and His Times: The Reformation from a New Perspective*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1950.
- Scott, Joan Wallach. "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053-1075.
- Seidel, Menchi and Emlyn Eisenach. *Marriage in Europe, 1400-1800*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016.
- Selderhuis, Herman. *Martin Luther: A Spiritual Biography*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017.
- Siggins, Ian. *Luther and His Mother*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981.

- . "Luther's Mother Margarethe." *Harvard Theological Review* 71 (1978): 125-150.
- Smith, Jeanette. "Katharina Von Bora Through Five Centuries: A Historiography." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30, no. 3 (1999): 745-774.
- Sommerville, Margaret. *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early-Modern Society*. London: E. Arnold, 1995.
- Spongberg, Mary. "'Hardly any Women At All'? Women Writers and the Gender of History." In *Writing Women's History Since the Renaissance*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Sporhan-Krempel, Lore. "Agathe Streicher: Ärztin aus Ulm. Ulm 1520-1581." In *Lebensbilder aus Schwaben und Franken*. Edited by Max Müller and Robert Uhland. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960.
- Stark, Judith. *Feminist Interpretations of Augustine*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007.
- Stein, Peter. *Roman Law in European History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Steinmetz, David. "Luther and Tamar." *Consensus: A Canadian Lutheran Journal of Theology*, 19 (1993): 135-149.
- Stephenson, Barbara. *The Power and Patronage of Marguerite De Navarre*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017.
- Stjenra, Kirsi. "Luther and Women." In *Martin Luther: A Christian between Reforms and Modernity (1517-2017)*, edited by Alberto Melloni, 597-615. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017.
- . "Luther and Gender: Shifts in Paradigms and Orientations." *Dialog: a Journal of Theology* 56, no. 2 (2017): 162-168.
- . "Reformation Revisited: Women's Voices in the Reformation." *The Ecumenical Review* 69, no. 2 (2017): 201-214.
- . "Women and Theological Writing During the Reformation." *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 16, no. 3 (2016): 1-35.
- . *Women and the Reformation*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009.
- . "Katie Luther: A Mirror to the Promises and Failures of the Reformation." In *Caritas et Reformatio: Essays on Church and Society In Honor of Carter Lindberg*. Edited by David Whitford, 27-38. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002.
- Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977.

- Strauss, Gerald. "The Social Function of Schools in the Lutheran Reformation in Germany." *History of Education Quarterly* 28 (1988): 191-206.
- Strohl, Jane. "Marriage as Discipleship: Luther's Praise of Married Life." *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 47, no. 2 (2008): 136-142.
- Swidler, Leonard. *Jesus Was a Feminist: What the Gospels Reveal About His Revolutionary Perspective*. Lanham: Sheed & Ward, 2007.
- Tamm, Ditlev. *Roman Law and European Legal History*. Copenhagen: DJØF, 1998.
- Thiessen, Gesa, Salvador Ryan, and Declan Marmion. *Remembering the Reformation: Martin Luther and Catholic Theology*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2017.
- Thoma, Albrecht. *Katharina von Bora: Geschichtliches Lebensbild* (Berlin: Boston De Gruyter, 2018).
- Thompson, John. *John Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah: Women in Regular and Exceptional Roles in the Exegesis of Calvin, His Predecessors and His Contemporaries*. Geneva: Droz, 1992.
- Tilly, Louise and Joan Scott. *Women, Work, and Family*. New York: Methuen, 1978.
- Todd, John. *Luther: A Life*. New York: Crossroad, 1982.
- Treu, Martin. "Katharina von Bora, the Woman at Luther's Side." *Lutheran Quarterly* 13 (1999): 157-178.
- Troeltsch, Ernst. *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*. Translated by Olive Wyon. London: Allen and Unwin, 1931.
- Tucker, Ruth. *Katie Luther, First Lady of the Reformation: The Unconventional Life of Katharina von Bora*. New York: Harper Collins Publishing, 2017.
- Tumanov, Valdimir. "Mary Versus Eve: Paternal Uncertainty and the Christian View of Women." *Neophilologus*, no. 95 (2011): 507-521.
- Umansky, Lauri. *Making Sense of Women's Lives*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000.
- VanDoodewaard, Rebecca. *Reformation Women: Sixteenth-century Figures Who Shaped Christianity's Rebirth*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017.
- Vongries, Caroline. *Frauen Der Reformation*. Leipzig: Buchverlag für die Frau, 2017.

- Warner, Lyndan. "Before the Law." In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Jane Couchman and Allyson Poska, 254-254. London: Taylor and Francis, 2016.
- Wauters, Bart. *History of Law in Europe: An Introduction*. Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2018.
- Weigelt, Sylvia. *Der Männer Lust und Freude sein*. Weimar: Wartburg Verlag, 2010.
- Wendelborn, Gert. *Martin Luther und reformatorisches Werk*. Vienna: Hermann Böhlau Nachfol, 1983.
- Wengert, Timothy. *The Pastoral Luther: Essays on Martin Luther's Practical Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017.
- Werdermann, Hermann. *Luthers Wittenberger Gemeinde wiederhergestellt aus seinen Predigten*. Verlag: Gütersloh, 1929.
- Whaley, Leigh. *Women and the Practice of Medical Care in Early Modern Europe, 1400-1800*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001.
- Wilson, Katharina. *Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1996.
- Whitehead, Barbara. *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe: A History, 1500 to 1800*. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Wiesner-Hanks, Merry. *Gender, Church, and State in Early Modern Germany: Essays*. London: Routledge, 2017.
- . *Gender in History: Global Perspectives*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- . *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- . "Lustful Luther?: Male Libido in the Writings of the Reformer." In *Masculinity in the Reformation Era*, edited by Scott Hendrix and Susan Karant-Nunn, 190-212. Kirksville, MO: Truman State University, 2008.
- . "Structures and Meanings in a Gendered Family History." In *Blackwell Companion to Gender History*, edited by Teresa Meade and Merry Wiesner-Hanks, 51-69. London: Blackwell, 2004.
- . "Kinder, Kirche, Landeskinder: Women Defend Their Publishing in Early Modern Germany." In *Books Have Their Own Destiny*. Edited by Robin Barnes, Robert Kolb, and Paula Presley, 143-152. Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1998.

- . "Studies of Women, the Family and Gender." In *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research II*, edited by Williams Maltby, 158-187. St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1992.
- . "Nuns, Wives, and Mothers: Women and the Reformation in Germany." In *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe*, edited by Sherrin Marshall, 8-28. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- . "Luther and Women: The Death of Two Marys." In *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics, and Patriarchy*, edited by Jim Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper, and Raphael Samuel, 295-310. Long and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987.
- . *Working Women in Renaissance Germany*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987.
- Williams, Mary and Edwin Keever. *Luther's Letters to Women*. Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1930.
- Wilson, Derek. *Mrs. Luther and Her Sisters: Women in the Reformation*. Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2016.
- . *A Tudor Tapestry: Men, Women and Society in Reformation England*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973.
- Wilson, Katharina. *Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996.
- Winter, Ingelore. *Katharina von Bora: Ein Leben Mit Martin Luther*. Dusseldorf: Droste, 1990.
- Witherington, Ben. *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus' Attitudes to Women and Their Roles As Reflected in His Earthly Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Wolfthal, Diane. *Money, Morality, and Culture in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Wright, David. "Woman Before and After the Fall: A Comparison of Luther's and Calvin's Interpretation of Genesis 1-3." *Churchman* 98 (1983-1984), 126-135.
- Wunder, Heide. *He Is the Sun, She Is the Moon: Women in Early Modern Germany*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Yeago, David. "Martin Luther on Grace, Law, and Moral Life: Prolegomena to an Ecumenical Discussion of *Veritatis Splendor*." *The Thomist*, 62 (1998): 163-191.

Yost, John. "Changing Attitudes Towards Married Life in Civic and Christian Humanism."
Occasional Papers for the American Society for Reformation Research 1, no. 1 (1997):
151-166.

Zahl, Paul. *Five Women of the English Reformation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.