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Century Art”

“As when a ship by skillful steersman wrought  
Nigh river’s mouth or foreland, where the wind  
Veers oft, as oft so steers and shifts her sail,  
So varied he, and of his tortuous train  
Curled many a wonton wreath in sight of Eve  
To lure her eye; she, busied, heard the sound  
Of rustling leaves but minded not, as used  
To such disport before her through the field  
From every beast, more duteous at her call  
Than at Circean call the herd disguised.  
He, bolder now, uncalled before her stood  
But as in gaze admiring. Oft he bowed  
His turret crest and sleek enameled neck,  
Fawning, and licked the ground whereon she trod.  
His gentle dumb expression turned at length  
The eye of Eve to mark his play; he, glad  
Of her attention gained, with serpent tongue  
Organic or impulse of vocal air,  
His fraudulent temptation thus began:”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 9: 513-531

## Introduction

The Creation story as told in Genesis 1-3 of the Bible has a remarkable history of illustration, particularly during the Renaissance period in northern Europe. Despite this narrative covering only three Biblical chapters, with the most popular illustration subject (the Fall of Man) occurring in a single chapter, artists have found reason to expand upon the Biblical text to include elements of the story that are not explicit in the text. In doing so, these artists add to the bare Biblical text, weaving a story that incorporates contemporary theological positions about the Fall. This becomes evident when we examine German, Netherlandish, and Dutch examples of illustrations depicting the Fall, particularly those that were created around the time frame of the Reformation (1517-1700)<sup>2</sup> in Europe. After a brief history of the Creation story and an outline of some of the major theological positions regarding the Fall during the Reformation, I will examine several works in which artists expand upon the Biblical text and incorporate certain elements of the theological debates within their works.

The Creation story probably stems from Canaanite folklore, particularly the first two chapters that detail the order of creation and God's forming order out of chaos.<sup>3</sup> There are two accounts of the order of creation; it is thought that the second account came later, and that it was originally a solitary story before being added to the Biblical canon.<sup>4</sup> There are four authors of Genesis, though only three of them make an appearance in chapters 1-3: Yahwist (J), Priestly (P), and Elohist (E). J is probably the

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<sup>2</sup> Kvam, Scheering, and Zielgar, "Interpretations from the Protestant Reformation," 249

<sup>3</sup> Jenkins, *The Creation*, 220

<sup>4</sup> Jenkins, *The Creation*, 221

oldest author, followed by E and then P.<sup>5</sup> The emphasis in J's work is on the closeness between God and man, while P details rituals for daily life, and D tends to be didactic.<sup>6</sup> Together, they write the story of Creation-- one of the most famous stories of humanity that appear in Christian (both Catholic and Protestant), Jewish, and Muslim faiths.<sup>7</sup>

### **Another Framework for Temptation: Pandora and a Prehistoric Account**

Perhaps the most theologically important part of the Creation story involves the Fall of Man. Interestingly, the Fall in Genesis is not the only story that details the bringing of despair into the world. Greek mythology includes the story of Pandora, which has remarkable similarities to the story of Adam and Eve. Pandora, the first mortal woman created, received a box from the gods that contained something harmful from each, and she was forbidden from opening it (*Fig. 1*). There are two conflicting accounts of the Pandora story. One says that she was doomed to open the box from the beginning, because Zeus created woman as a form of revenge against man and Prometheus, who loved men more than the gods.<sup>8</sup> This account is based on the premise that women are naturally evil, and the box was given to Pandora for the purpose of opening and causing, rather than containing, worldly evil. The second account blames Pandora's natural curiosity. In this narrative, the box is beautifully crafted, and Pandora is tempted by the beauty to see what is inside.<sup>9</sup> This does not assume that women are meant to be evil; rather, it assumes that women cannot resist curiosity. The second account rather closely

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<sup>5</sup> Jenkins, *The Creation*, 182-183

<sup>6</sup> Jenkins, *The Creation*, 182-183.

<sup>7</sup> Jenkins, *The Creation*, 3

<sup>8</sup> Hamilton, *Mythology*, 87-88

<sup>9</sup> Hamilton, *Mythology*, 88

parallels the Temptation of Eve, in which Eve looks at the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge and “saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise.”<sup>10</sup> This is significant, because it may give us a little more information about the roots of Creation myths: both involve a woman who succumbs to temptation. As a result evil is released into an otherwise perfect world, and men are subject to the evil that the woman inflicted.

Perhaps these similarities can be accounted for in prehistoric terms. In the times of hunter-gatherer cultures, women were generally given more opportunity to observe the natural world. There is a suggestion that women established farming cultures, given their observations of plants.<sup>11</sup> Men, then, blamed women for progress and any associated evils that came with it. Hence the Creation stories blame women for originally bringing evil into the world.<sup>12</sup> Though this idea is unproven, it is certainly intriguing and accounts for the similarities between Eve and Pandora. Standard historical scholarship about the Fall of Man from Genesis says that Eve is subjugated due to a tradition of patriarchy in Hebrew culture.<sup>13</sup> This model, however, obviously does not account for the similarities with Pandora. The subjugation of Eve leads to a discussion of theology a consideration of the traditional male-female hierarchy.

### **Contemporary Theological Positions of the Fall and Gender Hierarchy**

Balthasar Hubmaier, a Catholic priest-turned-Anabaptist-minister during the Reformation believed that humans were divided into three parts: flesh, spirit, and soul.

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<sup>10</sup> Genesis 3:6, italics original

<sup>11</sup> Woodard, “Archetype of the Fall,” 577

<sup>12</sup> Woodard, “Archetype of the Fall,” 577

<sup>13</sup> Jenkins, *The Creation*, 221

The flesh corresponds to Eve, and the soul corresponds to Adam, while the spirit is left separate, as a metaphor for God. Only the flesh is weak enough to succumb. He notes that unfortunately, the flesh is capable of tempting the soul, which is what happened to Adam. The end result is that the flesh and the soul are tainted, and the soul must stand between the flesh and the pure spirit to act as a kind of buffer between the two. The soul can follow either the spirit or the flesh. Hubmaier believes that had the snake tempted Adam first, there would have been no Fall. Ultimately, then, he finds Eve to be more blameworthy for the Fall than Adam, though he believes that this problem has been solved with the Resurrection of Christ<sup>14</sup> Clearly, Hubmaier finds Eve to be less-important than Adam in the hierarchy. The flesh is the lowest component of man, dirty and capable of being tempted with earthly objects, while the spirit has always been pure. Since Adam falls between the two, he is lower than God, but higher than woman.

Luther takes a similar, though slightly different approach to the male-female hierarchy. He mentions that “the male is like the sun in heaven, the female like the moon... In the first place, therefore, let us note... that it was written that this sex may not be excluded from any glory of the human creature, although it is inferior to the male sex.”<sup>15</sup> This is an interesting point, because it echoes the first chapter of Genesis, which says, “And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night.”<sup>16</sup> The text of the story says that the moon is lesser than the sun, and equating Eve with the moon and Adam with the sun certainly allows Luther to make this point. Puns on the words “sun” and “son,” which suggests maleness, and the idea of

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<sup>14</sup> Hubmaier, “Freedom of the Will,” 262-266

<sup>15</sup> Luther, “Lectures on Genesis,” 268

<sup>16</sup> Genesis 1:16

women's cycles being in concordance with the phases of the moon also strengthen this analogy. Luther improves on Hubmaier, however, in that he designates Eve as being *almost* equal to Adam. He rejects St. Augustine's interpretation that Eve is a form of lower reason and Adam of higher reason; he also says that "neither in body nor in soul, was Eve inferior to her husband Adam."<sup>17</sup> This clearly rejects Hubmaier's analogy, as his interpretation does not make room for Eve to be anything more than body. Luther sees the First Parents as human parents-he notes that he takes the Creation account literally- and Eve is only slightly lesser than Adam because she succumbed to the Fall first.<sup>18</sup>

The idea of Falling and placing the blame on Eve harkens back to a debate about sexual relations as a manner of sin before and after the Fall. It is noteworthy that there is conflicting information in the Biblical text about sex, and theologians dealt with this problem differently in the fifteenth century. Before the Fall, God tells both Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply."<sup>19</sup> This clearly indicates that God intended for there to be sex in paradise (unless there was some other means of procreation, such as Adam donating another rib). However, there is no mention of sexual intercourse until after the Fall: "Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord."<sup>20</sup> Note that this not only occurs after the Fall, but it occurs outside the scope of the Creation story, since it happens in chapter 4 of Genesis. In this instance, Adam has not "kn[own]," or had intimate relations, with Eve until their expulsion from Eden. This certainly begs the question: did Adam "kn[o]w" Eve before

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<sup>17</sup> Luther, "Lectures on Genesis," 273

<sup>18</sup> Luther, "Lectures on Genesis," 273

<sup>19</sup> Genesis 1:28

<sup>20</sup> Genesis 4:1

the Fall? This is an important question to answer, because if Adam and Eve had sexual intercourse before the Fall, then sex cannot be particularly blameworthy for causing the Fall; whereas if sex only occurred afterwards, it may be seen as the vehicle for temptation for Adam and the antecedent of many subsequent sins.

Predictably, there were two theological points of view in this debate during the Reformation period: those who believed that Adam and Eve did have sexual relations before the Fall, which releases sex from blame, and those who believe that sex did not enter the world until after the Fall, implicating it as a form of temptation that made Adam Fall in addition to Eve. Hubmaier and Luther were on different sides of this controversy. Hubmaier indicates that he thinks that sex was the cause for the Fall of Adam because “he willed to eat of this fruit against his own conscience in order not to grieve or anger his rib and flesh, Eve... Nothing tastes good to him but that which tastes and seems good to his Eve, that is, his flesh.”<sup>21</sup> This last statement is particularly enlightening, particularly when coupled with a statement about Eve: “Eve, who is a figure of our flesh, desired to eat and did eat of the forbidden fruit...so that as soon as a person is conceived and born, he is conceived and born in sin.”<sup>22</sup> The idea that a person can be “conceived” in sin indicates Hubmaier’s position. Conception itself is part of the process of sinning, and the only thing that tastes good to Adam is “that which tastes...good to his...flesh.” Sex, an act that both conceives and tastes good to the flesh, becomes the source of the Fall (in that Adam desires his flesh, Eve), and any subsequent sex reenacts the Creation narrative. Hence sex becomes sinful.

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<sup>21</sup> Hubmaier, “Freedom of the Will,” 264

<sup>22</sup> Hubmaier, “Freedom of the Will,” 263

Luther, in contrast, certainly believed that Adam and Eve had intercourse before the Fall, and so it is not a source of temptation for Adam. Luther says that,

“If Adam had persisted in the state of innocence, this intimate relationship of husband and wife would have been most delightful. The very work of procreation would have been most sacred... No less respectability would have attached to cohabitation than there is to sleeping, eating, or drinking with one’s wife... When we look back to the state of innocence, procreation, too, was better, more delightful, and more sacred in countless ways.”<sup>23</sup>

Clearly, Luther believes that “procreation” did exist while in a “state of innocence,” or pre-Fall. Interestingly, only Adam, and not Eve, had to resist temptation for this state to remain. Sex, then, cannot be the trigger for Adam’s Fall for Luther, since Eve does not represent only the body, nor was sexuality unknown to the First Parents. The temptation becomes knowledge about the unknown, while the act that prompted the Fall was mere disobedience to God, not a desire for sex. It is worth noting that Luther’s ideas stemmed from the Catholic tradition. St. Augustine also believed that intercourse occurred before the fall, and it was only disobedience to God that caused man to descend into lust.<sup>24</sup>

The final theological point I would like to examine, before discussing images that incorporate different sides of these debates, is the idea of the Tempter, or the Serpent, being an embodiment of Satan. This is important, because Satan is never mentioned by name in Genesis 1-3. The Tempter is only called “Serpent,” and so attributing the Serpent to Satan is an expansion of Biblical authority. Luther certainly thought that the Serpent and Satan were the same being, and he refers to “Satan’s cleverness”<sup>25</sup> when discussing the Fall. So how did the transition from Serpent to Satan develop? It may

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<sup>23</sup> Luther, “Lectures on Genesis,” 268-269

<sup>24</sup> Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, 26

<sup>25</sup> Luther, “Lectures on Genesis,” 270



have come from the Gospel of John, which talks about the Devil being a murderer and liar from his origins.<sup>26</sup> The idea of murder recalls Cain and Abel (Genesis 4), while the association of a liar certainly recalls the Temptation when the Serpent tells Eve that he has already eaten the fruit.<sup>27</sup> Justin Martyr (AD 100) was probably the first person to make this connection between Satan and the Serpent, though he did not particularly explain his reasoning.<sup>28</sup> Turtullian turned to Isaiah to establish that Lucifer was the morning star that had “fallen,” which corresponds to the Fall of Adam and Eve.<sup>29</sup> St. Cyprian of Carthage took this story one step further and wrote that, “once [the Devil] beheld Man, created in the image of God, he erupted into jealousy and malevolent envy...He took from Man the grace of immortality which he had first lost himself.”<sup>30</sup> Note that the story of the Fall has extended far beyond what Genesis provides: Satan suddenly has a motive, Lucifer, the Devil, Satan, and the Serpent are combined into a single entity, and there is a concern with immortality. This final point references a preoccupation with death, or a lack of immortality. Death is heavily illustrated in certain works, though there is less theological debate about death than other elements of the human condition, given its inevitability and its clear Biblical origins.<sup>31</sup>

With regard to depicting Satan visually, artists often show a Serpent, though this is inaccurate, and there are exceptions. In Genesis God curses the Serpent and says, “Because thou hast done this, thou *art* cursed above all cattle, and above every beast in

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<sup>26</sup> Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, 175

<sup>27</sup> Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, 175

<sup>28</sup> Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, 176

<sup>29</sup> Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, 179

<sup>30</sup> Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, 180

<sup>31</sup> Death is clearly indicated to be one of the products of the Fall in Genesis; “For dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19, italics original)

the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.”<sup>32</sup> Since God is telling the Serpent he will crawl on his belly henceforth, it suggests that the Serpent did not become legless until after the Fall. This means that the Serpent should have legs during the Temptation, the scene that will be the focus of subsequent visual analysis. And if the Serpent is Satan, then images should conform to a depiction of a dragon-like figure. There is only one Biblical description of Satan’s physiognomy;<sup>33</sup> he is depicted as “a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his head.”<sup>34</sup> Clearly, then, any illustrations of Satan as being a mere garden snake do not conform to the texts of Genesis, nor do they illustrate Satan in all his glory as revealed in Revelation. It could be argued, of course, that Satan concealed himself as he entered the body of the Serpent, since the Serpent “was more subtil [*sic*] than any beast of the field that the Lord God had made.”<sup>35</sup> Artists, then, may be able to ignore the passage from Revelation to create a Biblically-accurate portrait of the Serpent (this is certainly true if Satan and the Serpent are not the same being). However, the allusion to legs in Genesis and the absence of legs in many images certainly suggests that artists are often rather cavalier with their physiognomic source.

### **Image Analysis: Tempting a Subjugated and Sexualized Eve**

With this observation about the depiction of the Serpent, I would like to turn to the first image to be discuss: Dürer’s *The Fall of Man* from 1504 (*Fig. 2*). There have been many art historians who identify certain features of this piece, such as the modeling

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<sup>32</sup> Genesis 3:14, italics original

<sup>33</sup> Kelly, *Satan: A Biography*, 278

<sup>34</sup> Revelation 12:3

<sup>35</sup> Genesis 3:1

of Adam on the *Apollo Belvedere* (Fig. 3)<sup>36</sup> and the presence of the four humours (choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic, and melancholic) represented by the cat, rabbit, ox, and elk, respectively, in the Northern tradition.<sup>37</sup> Much can also be said, however, with regard to theology. This image was created before the Reformation, but it contains some visual sensibilities that were debated in the Reformation writings previously discussed. For instance, Adam is a more perfect figure than Eve, if we define perfection as an idealization of the human figure.<sup>38</sup> To me, this indicates a subjugation of Eve, since Eve cannot be “less-perfect” in a perfect world. Dürer is clearly aiming for the image of perfection, right before the Fall occurs. In addition to the four humours existing in harmony, we see a rat that is not being pursued by the cat, suggesting that the concept of predator and prey only occurs after the Fall. But within this image of “perfection,” we still see an Eve that is less stylized than her counterpart. This appears to foreshadow some of the later writings of Luther on this subject, though this image was created pre-Reformation.

Dürer was a Catholic before the Reformation occurred, though he eventually became interested in the theology of Luther and Erasmus (indeed, Dürer even gave some of his later prints to Luther and he painted a portrait of Erasmus)<sup>39</sup>. Though not particularly well-educated,<sup>40</sup> he was very familiar with the writings of Erasmus, which predated Luther’s 95 Theses, and many of his earlier works suggest a need for reform.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture*, 192

<sup>37</sup> Smith, *The Northern Renaissance*, 263

<sup>38</sup> Smith, *The Northern Renaissance*, 263

<sup>39</sup> Dillenberger, *Images and Relics*, 65-67

<sup>40</sup> Dürer withdrew from school at the age of 10, and though he received a moderate education in Latin, he preferred German.

<sup>41</sup> Dillenberger, *Images and Relics*, 53-54

It is not unacceptable, then, to group *The Fall of Man* as a print that illustrates the sympathies of Luther. I believe that the fact that this is the first print that Dürer signed with his full name in Latin<sup>42</sup> suggests not only a moment of self-identification as an artist, but it also an indication that this image is a personal interpretation of the Creation story. The idea of becoming closer to God through personal reflection is originally a Protestant concept, and Dürer certainly expressed these specific sympathies at a later date. With regard to sexuality, *The Fall of Man* is not blatantly sexual, excepting the nudity. There is no contact between Adam and Eve, and there is more of an emphasis on the perfection of the human figure rather than the specific reasons that caused man to Fall. Again, this meshes well with Luther's particular interpretation of the event.

Hans Baldung Grien, one of Dürer's most famous pupils, takes a radically different approach in his depictions of the Fall.<sup>43</sup> For Baldung, there is a deep concern about sexuality and death, and how the Fall unites these two problems of humanity. In 1503, Erasmus wrote, "Just how beastly and intractable this [sexuality] of our nature is, the pudenda of the body can demonstrate, in which are it [the tyranny of desire] exercises the most absolute tyranny."<sup>44</sup> Baldung certainly would have agreed with this particular philosophy as well as the later writings of Hubmaier with regard to sex. It is likely, in fact, that Baldung would have known this writing from Erasmus. He identified himself with Erasmus in the 1520's.<sup>45</sup> In a series of several images, all depicting the Fall, Baldung explores the processes of sex, places primary blame for the Fall on Eve, and examines the ultimate consequence of the Fall: death.

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<sup>42</sup> Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture*, 201

<sup>43</sup> Dillenberger, *Images and Relics*, 159

<sup>44</sup> Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture*, 295

<sup>45</sup> Dillenberger *Images and Relics*, 157

Baldung's *Adam and Eve – Fall of Man* (Fig. 4) clearly implicates sex as the primary temptation in the Fall. As Koerner points out, *Adam and Eve* emphasizes the sexuality of both figures. Adam's face is figured like that of a centaur (a sexual being in Greek mythology), and the branch that is covering his genitals is shaped like a phallus, "emphasizing or replacing the very thing he is trying to conceal."<sup>46</sup> Eve is also covering herself, but her expression is coy, and her demure posture (relative to Adam) suggests a profound sexuality in her contrived innocence. The gestures of each are also intriguing. Adam grasps the branch in a manner that suggests masturbation, while Eve clutches the fruit in her right hand, near her pubic area. Eve's gaze is focused on Adam's hand and the branch. All together, this suggests to me that Eve is imagining Adam's seed (retrieved through Adam's masturbatory gesture) as producing "fruit" when in contact with her genitals. Despite Adam's more overt gesture, I think that Eve is the figure being implicated in the Fall. Though Adam may desire sexual stimulation, Eve seems to be calculating precisely how to bring about that desire, which forces them to Fall.

I find that *The Fall of Man* (Fig. 5) also implicates Eve as the source of desire. Adam presents her to the viewer as an object to be gazed upon and fondled. Though Adam is the figure making this specific gesture, I believe that Eve is given the blame as evidenced by her facial expression. In this image, Eve seems to be triumphant in her seduction of Adam, whereas Adam is simply helpless in his attraction to Eve. I read this image as Adam introducing Eve to the viewer as though explaining the reason he Fell. He simply could not resist her, and so he ate the fruit to be able to "know" her. Again,

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<sup>46</sup> Koerner, "Mortification of the Image," 84

Baldung is blaming Eve for provoking Adam into the Fall, and like Hubmaier, he seems to think that sex was the trigger for original sin.

One of Baldung's most intriguing works that depict the Fall is *Eve, the Serpent, and Death* (Fig. 6), sometimes referred to as the *Ottawa Eve*. This painting nicely integrates and captures Baldung's beliefs about the intersection between sexuality and death. In infrared studies of this painting, Baldung appears to have made Eve more seductive than his original sketches implied. Her mouth was lowered and her eyelids became drooped,<sup>47</sup> both of which enhance her suggestive nature. The Serpent restrains Death, while Death clutches at Eve and Eve fondles the end of the Serpent's tail. As Koch observes, despite the title, Death may actually be an image of Adam, as he would be otherwise missing in this depiction.<sup>48</sup> If this is the case, then we are seeing what will happen to Adam once he Falls, in a rather prophetic sense. I personally agree with Koch's interpretation; it would be odd for Baldung to exclude Adam, particularly when Eve is being presented as such a suggestive figure. Further, Death is presented as a male figure, which strengthens this argument.

My personal reading on this trio is different from any source I have found. I am particularly interested in the idea of the Serpent restraining Death/Adam, and this has become the focus of my reading. I see this image as an expression of the male-female hierarchy, implicating sex and death as reasons for Baldung's profound misogyny (which I will examine below). Adam, as the enlightened male, understands what will happen if he Falls. Though he cannot conceive of death entirely (having never seen or experienced it), he understands that it is not something to be desired. The Serpent restrains him in

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<sup>47</sup> Koch, *Hans Baldung Grien: Eve, the Serpent, and Death*, 31

<sup>48</sup> Koch, *Hans Baldung Grien: Eve, the Serpent, and Death*, 29

order for Eve to be tricked; Adam cannot warn her about the dangers of succumbing to the Serpent, and so Eve Falls. Her sexuality (as evidenced by her expression and her fingers fondling the tail of the snake –a gesture of masturbation) seduces Adam, and he Falls as well, with Death being the end result. Thus, the Serpent restrains the figure with the higher mental capacity (the male), and exploits the subjugated female to destroy man. This reading meshes with Hubmaier’s idea of men and women being consistent with the soul and the body, respectively. The body is lesser and is the only thing that can tempt the soul.

### **Image Analysis: Other Baldung Works**

Needless to say, these three works suggest a rather startling level of misogyny in Baldung’s works. Two other Baldung images that illustrate the implications of this misogyny and which also nicely illustrate the sexism that was prevalent at that time are: *Death and the Woman* (Fig. 7) and *Witch and Dragon* (Fig. 8). In *Death and the Woman*, Baldung does not explicitly depict the Fall of Man, but it is implicated in the idea of death sexually ravishing the weeping woman.<sup>49</sup> Koerner observes that her robes recreate the “V” shape of her genitals, and it becomes both a piece of clothing ripped from her as well as a funeral shroud. The image depicts the moment before the woman becomes fully naked, and so our eyes linger at the bottom of the “V.”<sup>50</sup> I believe that Baldung also parallels the biting of Death with the biting of the apple, reminding the woman that because of Eve’s susceptibility to temptation, Death can bite her. Clearly, sexuality and death are linked, but I find this image to be more misogynistic than the

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<sup>49</sup> Koerner, “The Mortification of the Image,” 78

<sup>50</sup> Koerner, “The Mortification of the Image,” 78

previous three. There is a vicious quality to this work that suggests that women deserve to be bitten by death because of Eve's actions. There is an implication that the rape occurring is actually the woman's fault, because Eve could not control her sexuality. With the Biblical story of the Fall behind it, this image of violence against women seems particularly harsh, even for Baldung.

Baldung's *Witch and Dragon* appears to be an attempt to justify his reasoning that women deserve a violent death due to their sexuality. In this image, a dragon's tongue is being inserted into the woman's body, clearly suggesting that female sexuality is demonic and should be associated with Satan. As Hults observes, "His scandalous drawing of a witch and a dragon exemplifies one of the key elements in the evolving myth of witchcraft—the witch's sexual submission to the devil or demons as a consummation of her bond with Satan."<sup>51</sup> I believe that the image of the dragon is indicative of Satan in Revelation, and if we connect this to the idea that the Serpent is Satan as well, then the "consummation of [a] bond with Satan" suggests that Eve's Fall is identical to the witch's sexual submission: Eve makes a pact with Satan when she eats the fruit and seduces Adam, and female sexuality from that point harkens back to Eve's "bond." Because of this pact with Satan, women deserve the violent death shown in *Death and the Woman*. Hults believes that *Witch and Dragon* was circulated among Baldung's male friends as a "brilliantly conceived dirty joke."<sup>52</sup> We know that the artist

"moved in a circle of socially prominent, well-educated people: humanists, clerics, aristocrats,

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<sup>51</sup> Hults, "Baldung and the Witches of Frieburg," 269

<sup>52</sup> Hults, "Baldung and the Witches of Frieburg," 269



professionals, and well-to-do merchants. These men evidently shared a deep-seated misogyny that enabled them to appreciate the now obscure jokes in Baldung's drawings."<sup>53</sup>

The fact that clerics probably saw and laughed at this image, believing it to be metaphorically true, leads me to believe that Baldung may have had an impact on how theological notions of the Creation story developed during this time. He clearly dispenses with Luther's version of the story, in which mere disobedience prompts the Fall, and he lashes out against women. Of course, this cannot be proven, but I think it is a plausible and intriguing idea.

### **Image Analysis: Luther's Side of the Argument**

Before moving to two final images that have rather rare depictions of Satan, I want to model Koerner's argument in *The Moment of Self-Portraiture* by discussing a rather standard image of the Fall as a point of comparison. Lucas Cranach the Elder and his son Lucas Cranach the Younger are the two artists most closely associated with the Reformation.<sup>54</sup> Cranach the Elder grew up as a Catholic, but converted to Protestantism, and Cranach the Younger was only two years old when the 95 Theses were posted.<sup>55</sup> Cranach the Elder had a close, personal relationship with Martin Luther, and they were even godparents to each other's children.<sup>56</sup> It is because of this relationship that an image produced by Cranach the Elder may denote Cranach as representing Luther's side of the theological debate about the Fall.

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<sup>53</sup> Hults, "Baldung and the Witches of Frieburg," 264

<sup>54</sup> Dillenberger, *Images and Relics*, 79

<sup>55</sup> Dillenberger, *Images and Relics*, 79

<sup>56</sup> Dillenberger, *Images and Relics*, 85

Cranach's *The Fall into Sin* (Fig. 9) depicts Adam and Eve in harmony with nature, with the Tree of Knowledge being the center of the image. This print is part of a collection of images that Cranach produced during 1509 that favor woodblock prints with tree trunks as a central motif.<sup>57</sup> In this image, there is "a sense of impending doom as Adam and Eve proceed to transgress God's commandment."<sup>58</sup> The primary focus, however, is the disobedience of "commandment," not the implications of sex. To me, the most interesting aspect of this image is that Adam and Eve are not covered, though Adam has his legs crossed, which defies many (though admittedly not all) images of the Fall narrative. Cranach clearly takes the word of Genesis as his source, in that once they eat the fruit, "the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons."<sup>59</sup> Like Luther, Cranach is taking the Bible rather literally. Adam and Eve did not know that they were naked before they ate the fruit, and so they had no reason to cover themselves. Though some may argue that Adam and Eve's nudity may be a sign of sex, I believe that it is simply Cranach adhering to Genesis in his image. This image is completely de-sexualized in that there is no sexual interaction between Adam and Eve, and they do not even have a lustful awareness of their sexuality. Perhaps they have experienced intercourse, but in the words of Luther, "the very work of procreation [was] most sacred" while they persisted in this state of innocence.

### **Image Analysis: Getting Back to Book with Satan**

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<sup>57</sup> Schade, *Cranach: A Family of Master Painters*, 36

<sup>58</sup> Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, 25

<sup>59</sup> Genesis 3:7

I conclude my visual analysis with two images of the Serpent that vary from everything else thus far presented: van der Goes' *The Fall of Man* (Fig. 10) and Rembrandt's *The Fall of Man* (Fig. 11). For the purpose of clarity, they will be referred to by artist, rather than by title. Thus far, every image of the Fall presented depicts the Serpent as a common garden snake, some larger and others smaller, but all without legs. Both of these images, however, figure the Serpent more closely with the Genesis and Revelation descriptions, respectively. The van der Goes piece depicts the Serpent as a salamander with the head of a young girl, which follows a tradition of Christian art and literature.<sup>60</sup> According to Koch, the salamander was considered "to be a pestilent beast most venomous' and hence one to be avoided."<sup>61</sup> It was also thought, according to Classical literature, to be an animal that was capable of living in fire.<sup>62</sup> I read this image as van der Goes' integration of Classical myths of the salamander with the Genesis account of the Serpent. Since the Serpent has legs and is clearly a vile creature, the salamander is an optimal animal upon which to figure the Serpent pre-Fall. The head of the woman again implicates female susceptibility to temptation, and it also keeps with the idea that Satan can change his appearance to be most alluring to the unwary. With the face of a young female, it is easy to imagine that the Serpent's façade would have been believable to Eve, and he would have easily tricked her into accepting the fruit. Further, this depicts the only reasonable explanation for the Serpent being able to physically speak to Eve in the garden.

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<sup>60</sup> Koch, "The Salamander," 323

<sup>61</sup> Koch, "The Salamander," 324

<sup>62</sup> Koch, "The Salamander," 324

The Rembrandt image, in contrast, shows the Serpent as a dragon, which meshes nicely with the account of Satan in Revelation. Though the Serpent does not have seven heads in this image, it is clear that Rembrandt is trying to unite Satan and the Serpent as the same being. This may be due to the conditions under which Rembrandt worked. When he was a young teen, the Dutch Republic forced Calvinism on the entire state, and he grew up combining humanistic elements and religious narratives in his works.<sup>63</sup> As we can see, Adam and Eve are depicted as an old, un-sexed couple who are not remotely idealized and are uncovered. Calvin rejected the sexual interpretation of the Fall, believing marriage and intercourse to be sacred and one of God's gifts.<sup>64</sup> Smith reads this image as being sexual because of the nudity,<sup>65</sup> but I disagree and see Rembrandt as adhering to Calvin's ideals. In Calvin's writings, he explicitly refers to the Serpent as Satan, clearly understanding the two as being united.<sup>66</sup> Thus, like the Calvinist images of Adam and Eve, it would make sense that Rembrandt depicted the Serpent as Satan, using the only known reference in the Bible to do so.

## **Conclusion**

This analysis of several writings and images of the Northern Renaissance period regarding the Fall of Man demonstrate how the artists incorporated more than just Genesis descriptions into their images. The writings of theologians like Luther, Hubmaier, and Calvin outline the major debates of theology, and the images these artists present suggest that they were familiar with at least the framework of different sides of

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<sup>63</sup> McGrath and Marks, *Blackwell Companion to Protestantism*, 281.

<sup>64</sup> Smith, "Raphael's Creation, Rembrandt's Fall," 504

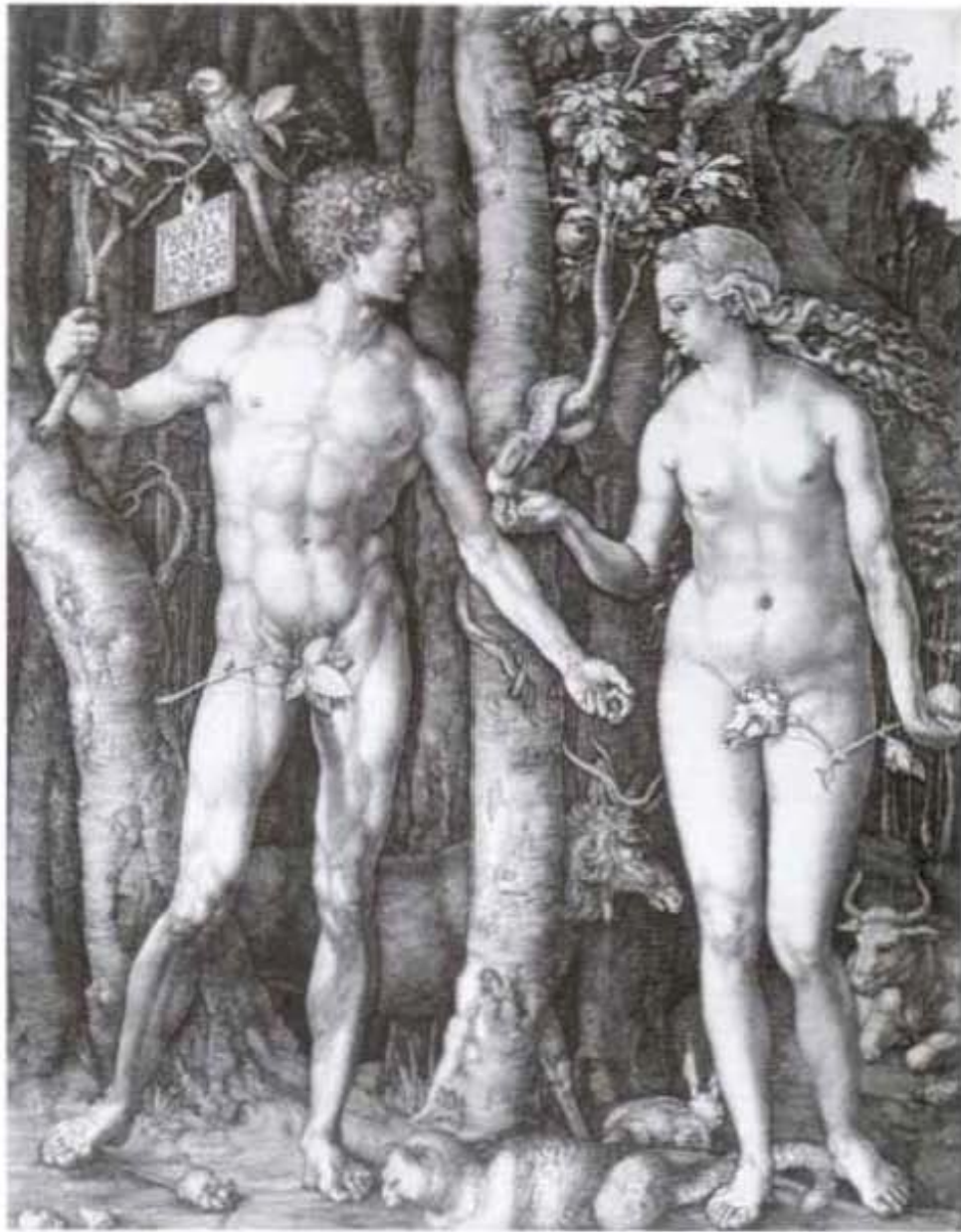
<sup>65</sup> Smith, "Raphael's Creation, Rembrandt's Fall," 503-504

<sup>66</sup> Calvin, "Commentaries," 278

these debates. While it is difficult to determine the proximate influence of the theologians on the artists, and, indeed, it is nearly impossible to prove which specific texts the artists read, there is a clear consistency between the theologians and artists as each group tries to work through the problems of Creation and come to understand the motivations and meanings of the bare framework of the Fall in Genesis.



*Fig 1: Henry Bates, Pandora, 1891, Tate Britain.*



*Fig. 2. Albrecht Dürer, The Fall of Man, 1504, The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.*



*Fig. 3: Apollo Belvedere, 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, Pio Clementino Wing, Musei Vaticani, Vatican City, Rome.*





*Fig. 4: Hans Baldung Grien, Adam and Eve – Fall of Man, 1525, Museum of Fine Arts, Szepmüvészeti Museum, Budapest.*

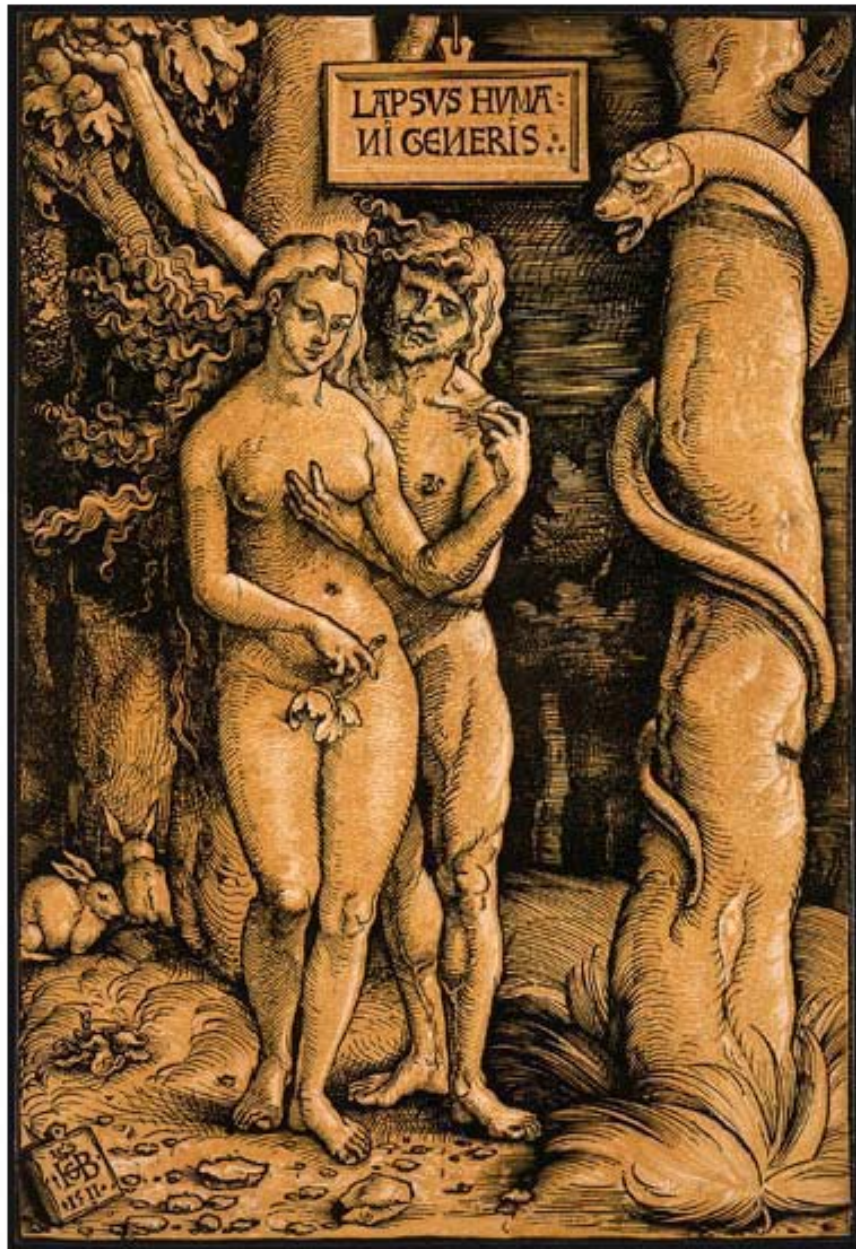


Fig. 5: Hans Baldung Grien, *The Fall of Man*, 1511, Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam.



*Fig. 6: Hans Baldung Grien, Eve, the Serpent, and Death, 1510-1512, The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa*



*Fig. 7: Hans Baldung Grien, *Death and the Woman*, 1518-20, Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Kunstmuseum, Basel.*





*Fig. 8: Hans Baldung Grien, *Witch and Dragon*, 1515, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe.*



Fig. 9: Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Fall into Sin*, 1509.



*Fig. 10: Hugo van der Goes, The Fall of Man, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.*



*Fig. 11: Rembrandt, The Fall of Man, 1638, British Museum, London.*



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