The Reformers' Image of Mary: Early German Evangelical Thought & Theology in Visual Art, 1500-1525

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Introduction

With downcast eyes and somber countenance, the Madonna in Albrecht Dürer's *Madonna and Pear* presents to her viewer an image of humility, grace, and tender motherly love. As she gazes down affectionately, the viewer follows her line of vision down first to the Christ child resting on her right breast, and second, to the pear held up in her left hand [Fig. 1]. A figure of humility, motherhood, and modesty in posture and dress, Mary defers her viewer's eyes toward Christ, the fruit of her womb. This *Andachtsbild*, painted in 1526, poses an intriguing contrast to popular images of Mary not even fifty years earlier, in which the Mother of God was depicted in bold and jeweled attire, surrounded by a multitude of objects, angels, and fruits all in bursting colors [Fig. 2, as example]. What brought this subtle change? Why does the motif of the fruit persist? Dürer's *Madonna,* painted when the Lutheran Church in Germany was rapidly evolving, in contrast to the extravagance of older portraits of Mary, provides an important and enduring glimpse into the complexities of both change and continuity in early evangelicalism and the theological conversation surrounding the figure of Mary.[1]

In the traditional church, Mary held multifaceted roles as mother of god, queen and powerful intercessor, and was dubbed with laudatory titles including "immaculately conceived" and "perpetual virgin." Many conceptions of Mary were drawn from scant scriptural evidence – deriving her roles of queen from the Old Testament idea of queenship, her role as intercessor from the marriage feast at Cana, and also equating her to the apocalyptic woman in the book of Revelation. Even while Mary was actually only briefly mentioned in what would become the

[1] Art historian Erwin Panofsky has coined this genre as *Andachtsbild,* meaning essentially "devotional picture." These intimate paintings of mother and child were meant to inspire contemplative devotion. The function of the *Andachtsbild* will be discussed later in this essay. See Falkenburg, Reindert Leonard., and Sammy Herman, *The fruit of devotion: mysticism and the imagery of love in Flemish paintings of the Virgin and Child, 1450-1550*, (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1994), 2-3.

Biblical canon, early church fathers also adopted ideas from other gospels and writings.[2] Even as many of these writings were later officially rejected, their influence in church theology remained, particularly preserved by the tradition of the church fathers. Most importantly for the development of theology concerning Mary was the Protoevangelium of James, which provided stories of Mary's immaculate conception to her parents St. Anne and Joachim, and attested vividly to her perpetual virginity.[3]

All these Marian attributes and praises for Mary grew in popularity in early Christianity and heightened throughout the Middle Ages. Monasteries expressed veneration of Mary, writing and popularizing the chants *Ave Maria* and *Salve Regina,* and theologians inspired lay devotion through their doctrinal writings and teaching on Mary, particularly writings by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. Pilgrimage also grew expediently in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, with pilgrims seeking out relics and shrines of Mary across Europe. By the fourteenth century, Mary was firmly held as powerful protector of and intercessor for Christians, praised in art, image, and elaborate cathedrals dedicated to her virtues and power.[4]

This position that Mary had gained in the church became one of the points of contestation raised by evangelical reformers in the sixteenth century. In the eyes of Martin Luther and other emerging figures of the Reformation, *Marienverehrung,* this veneration of Mary, constituted a

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[2] Later-rejected gospels and writings influenced the formation of the Christian church for over three hundred years, but in the fourth century the cannon was officially established and outlying writings were rejected. The canon became official in the compiling of the Latin Vulgate in 383 and in the Synod of Hippos Regius in 390. Many extraneous gospels existed alongside what eventually became the canon, but were rejected in the Synod.

[3] Most explicitly, the protoevangelium accounts how a midwife at the birth scene of Christ physically examined Mary's vaginal opening for proof of virginity; after realizing Mary was truly a virgin, the midwife's hand withered because of her unbelief. For more cursory information and context of the protoevangelium, see Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought,* (Ignatius Press, 1999).

[4] Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

dangerous distraction from scripturally-founded true faith and justification in Christ.[5] Luther's turn to sola scriptoria, a distinct pivot from traditional Catholicism's use of scripture as a *resource* to use of scripture as sole *source* aided the rejection of many traditional images of Mary as idolatrous and false.[6] However, Mary still had an important role in the church. According to scripture, Mary was *Theotokos* – in German, *Gottesbarerin,* bearer of God – and this biblical truth was vital in understanding the Christ child as fully human and as fully divine. Mary was a necessary part of Christ's connection with humanity and several scriptural dogmas kept Mary in a central place within the emerging reform church. The reformers' passionate criticism of *Marienverehrung* might at first seem to suggest that Mary's importance in the church had dwindled. As this essay investigates, the highly exalted image Mary was, for the reformers, wildly misconstrued, but they sought not to eradicate her entirely, but to sieve out elaborated virtues from her true position as humble role model and mother. This "filtering" of Marian virtue by reformers represents not a major turning point in religious history i.e. an outright rejection of Marian doctrine, but rather a *shift* in religious understanding concerning her place in the church and in soteriology. Therefore, even as there was change in Mary's place in the church, there was much that still remained.

This project seeks to explore the complexities of Mary's changed role in the emerging evangelical movement in Germany through a vital primary source: artistic representations of Mary. Visual images were central in all aspects of life in early modern Europe and were articulations and manifestations of abstracted theological, political, and cultural understandings.

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[5]See *The One Mediator, the saints, and Mary: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VIII,* eds., H. George Anderson, J. Francis Stafford, Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), 23-35, 63-101 For a good overview of traditional theology concerning Mary, and the issues raised by Luther and other reformers in the sixteenth century.

[6] See an excellent study on this shift in Marian language in Heiko Augustinus Oberman, "The Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective" in *The Impact of the Reformation: Essays,* pages 225-252, (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1994).

Here contemporary works of art, utilized historically, provide a window into important ideologies of the reform movement in ways that significantly add to and reinforce traditional textual sources. This project will explore how Marian art produced during this transitional period mirrored theological shifts in a way that also was consistent with parts of past Christian depictions of Mary, and how these images reveal, visibly, the complexities of theological continuity and change.

This essay will ask the central questions: how did early reform groups in sixteenth-century Germany understand the Virgin Mary in ways that both broke from the past and also kept traditional conceptions, and, how can contemporary artistic depictions of Mary fully illuminate these themes of theological continuity or difference in early modern Christianity? More broadly, how was Christianity was conceived by the early reformers? And finally, in terms of historiographical discourse, how can art historical methods aid historical inquiry? In answering these questions, this project will investigate traditional images of Mary to help illuminate the later shift to Dürer's sixteenth-century portrait of the Madonna. Specifically, this essay will use art historical hermeneutics to follow the iconographical device of the fruit motif and uncover its meaning in Marian art. The fruit motif takes a central place in this study because of its specific continuation in Marian images and its significance in relation to Marian ideology and iconography. But, before turning to these images, it is essential to embark on exploring the larger significance of this type of focused investigation, and understand it within the larger historiographical conversation concerning the nature of the early Reformation.

Part I: Historiographical and Methodological discourse in Reformation History

Throughout the early sixteenth century, substantial reform movements grew out of many "protestations" of traditional Christianity and began to form confessions in the second half of the

century.[7] Scholars typically point to 1555 as the consolidation of confessionalization, the process by which dominant confessions – Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Catholicism – were strengthened and established as mutually exclusive churches through state mandate and support.[8] Because of the importance of the confessionalization thesis to concepts of the emerging modern state, many scholarly studies focus on this later period where distinct religious groups have already been established. However, scholars in recent years have proposed that the people involved in early reform movements, in the years prior to confessionalization and the resulting dichotomy between "Protestantism" and "Catholicism," did not see their faith as so defined and divided.[9] Because of the later important bifurcation of "Protestantism" and "Catholicism" – which helps inform Church confessions even up to present day – and its role in the consolidation of the early modern

[7] "Confession" is an early modern term which refers to the "confession of faith" and was used to describe what we would think of as religious groups or churches. For example, "Lutheranism" would be considered a confession. This term was used in legal documents in the later half of the sixteenth century to articulate different religious groups.

[8] The year 1555 marks the Peace of Augsburg, the religious settlement including the later-named idea of "cuius regio, eius religio" where each German prince was allowed to determine which confession was dominant through his territory. Confessionalization was deemed to come to its pinnacle later in the Peace of Westphalia where the ideas of the Peace of Augsburg were expanded and Calvinism was recognized as a third confession. The historical idea of confessionalization was propagated originally by German scholars of the Reformation in the 1970s and was largely put forward by Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard. They discussed political actions that led to the implementation of confessions in different political areas; including methods of educational reform, propaganda, and other disciplinary procedures to ensure a "confessionally homogenous group" as a nescarery precuser to the modern nation state. Important parts of the confessionalization thesis can be found in Heinz Schilling, *Konfessionskonflikt und Staatsbuildung: eine Fallstudie uber das Verhaltnis von religiosem und sozialem Wandel in der Fruchneuziet am Beispiel der Gradtschaft Lippe* (Gutersloh: Gutersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1981); Wolfgang Reinhard, "Zwang zue Konfessionalisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters," *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 10 (1983), 257-277; Wolfgang Reinhard, "Pressures Toward Confessionalization? Prolegomena to a Theory of the Confessional Age" in *The German Reformation: Essential Readings* (MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999). Later assessments of the confessionalization thesis can be found in "Religious History beyond Confessionalization," German History (2014) 32 (4): 579-598, (October 10, 2014); Thomas A. Brady Jr., " Confessionalization – The Career of a Concept," in *Confessionalization in Europe*, *1555-1700: Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan*, ed. John M. Headley, et al. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 1-35; [8] Ethan Shagan, "Can Historians End the Reformation?," in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte,* Vol. 97;1 (2006). The issue many scholars have taken with followers of the confessionalization thesis is their tendency to present not only the idea of homogenous confessions, but also allow the projection of confessional dichotomies back to before what we call confession-building had occurred.

[9] It has also been argued that people did not see their faith so divided even after confessional building and consolidation occurred. See Michele Zelinsky Hanson, *Religious Identity in an Early Reformation Community: Augsburg, 1517 to 1555* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

state and the later nation state, the earlier complexities of reform movements are often overlooked or misrepresented.

In past decades, several prominent scholars have moved to reveal these complexities and to propose that earlier reform movements and groups were much more fluid and interlinked then previously understood. Michele Zelinsky Hanson is one such scholar in this movement to bring to light religious identity and fluidity in the early Reformation. In her work, *Religious Identity in an Early Reformation Community: Augsburg, 1517 to 1555,* Hanson argued that the confessionalization thesis has overshadowed the experiences of the common people, especially in the early years of reform.[10] She argued that, in practice, concepts such as religious tolerance and plurality existed long before confessional conflict had settled down in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[11] In sixteenth-century Augsburg, the development of religious identity took place in an environment without confessionalization, and Hanson revealed that "boundaries between confessions were not just less visible; they did not exist…in the early years of reform, most people seem not to have felt the need to articulate any particular religious identity."[12] Lee Palmer Wandel has made another important contribution to this movement with her work, *Reformation: Towards a New of History*, in which she sought to investigate the complexities among an entire spectrum of evangelical ideologies as well as in relation to traditional Catholicism. Wandel took special care to refer to the various reformers as "evangelicals," in

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[10] For example, Hanson illustrates four families living peacefully in the same house with differing religious beliefs, even supporting or tolerating some member's practice of Anabaptism. See Hanson, *Religious Identity in an Early Reformation Community: Augsburg, 1517 to 1555*, 28-29.

[11] The teleological explain of the Reformation as leading to the Enlightenment and thus ushering in modern age and the propagation of religious tolerance and plurality has long been embedded in European scholarship. As so eloquently stated by Alexandra Walshem, "The displacement of paganism by Christianity, the Reformation, the disenchantment of the world, and the rise of toleration are part and parcel of a whiggish story of progress toward the more rational and civilized world, infused by a respect for difference and a commitment to liberty of speech and thought, in which we think we live." See Alexandra Walsham, "Migrations of the Holy: Explaining Religious Change in Medieval and Early Modern Europe," in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 2014 Volume 44, Number 2: 241-280; 251.

[12] Ibid., 7-8.

order to preserve the reality that the many different types of reformers did not agree with each other; in her introduction she highlighted the danger of anachronistically viewing the Reformation as solely "Protestant" in conflict with "Catholic."[13]

These efforts to uncover the intricacy and ambiguity of early evangelical and vernacular understanding in the Reformation, for the purpose of this project, can be coupled nicely with some key ideas propagated by Constantin Fasolt on the periodization and boundary between what we refer to as the Middle Ages and the advent of the early modern period. In his essay "Hegel's Ghost: Europe, the Reformation, and the Middle Ages," Fasolt challenged the traditional divide between these constructed periods, arguing that Hegelian concepts of progress have necessarily construed the Reformation as a singular epoch.[14] Fasolt argued that while advancements have been made in Reformation scholarship to address historical complexity, they still propagate the old model of the Reformation as necessarily distinguished from the Middle Ages in historical progression, freedom, and modernization.[15] While this present essay will not seek to frame the sixteenth-century reform movements starting with the eleventh century, as suggested by Fasolt, his work provides an important intervention in thinking about historical breaks. Especially with the early years of the Reformation in itself, the lines drawn by historians between Medieval Christianity and Reformation Christianly can be more of an obstacle than a helpful distinction.

Additional work on this periodization of the Reformation has been put forth by Alexandra Walsham, who, in her essay "Migrations of the Holy: Explaining Religious Change in

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[13] Lee P. Wandel, *The Reformation: Towards a New History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6.
[14] Hegel viewed the Reformation as the antithesis to the middle ages, in which the antithesis of internal and external spirit, characterized in the middle ages, was overcome. Hegel's ideas have not gone unchallenged, but they have provided a conceptual basis for understanding the Reformation. See Constantin Fasolt, "Hegel's Ghost: Europe, the Reformation, and the Middle Ages*,"* in *Past sense: studies in medieval and early modern European history*, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 364.
[15] Ibid., 354-355

Medieval and Early Modern Europe," sifted through the historiographical and categorical linage that hovers over and hampers scholarship to this day. She argued that historians must be aware of the perpetuity of paradigms beginning even in the dialogue of the Reformation itself, and while it is often impossible to escape the cycle, it is crucial to be aware of the epistemological trends and acknowledge their power over the discipline.[16] She proposed that instead of seeing the history of Christianity and the Reformation as a linear movement towards modernity with distinct moments of "progress," historians need to see theological and cultural trends between the Middle Ages and the Reformation as weaving more in a cyclical manner.[17]

In an offshoot of this broader discussion, scholars have worked on continuity in the early Reformation more strictly focused on ideas of Mary. Perhaps most important in recent scholarship examining Mary's continuing role in the new church is the monograph *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Early Modern Germany: Protestant and Catholic Piety, 1500–1648* by Bridget Heal in 2007. In light of the general evangelical reevaluation of Marian devotion and the cult of the saints, Heal effectively demonstrated the great variation and ambiguity of Marian imagery within German Christianity between 1500-1648. For example, Heal displayed how in Nuremberg Luther's moderate stance on Mary and on images in general allowed for the persistence of Marian imagery, in many cases pre-reformation images being reused with new

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[16] Her essay treats the problem of periodization, which comes straight out of the Reformation itself, with renaissance men and reformers alike seeing their time period as one evolving beyond the a "period of darkness, ignorance, and intellectual and cultural backwardness." The essay also touches on the teleology propagated by nineteenth century historians, and the biased and sentimental scholarship of confessional scholars. She argues, importantly, that while mostly religious- affiliated scholarship is something of the past, historians still "take sides" and argue about the "success" or "failure" of the Reformation in light of medieval Christianity as well as the "results" of the enlightenment and modern era. She concludes with suggesting that historians view religious history as a sort of cyclical change instead of a teleology. See Alexandra Walsham, "Migrations of the Holy: Explaining Religious Change in Medieval and Early Modern Europe," in Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 2014 Volume 44, Number 2: 241-280.

[17] However, she does note that "It would be wrong to think in terms of a never-ending circle that runs perpetually along the same track; we do view and structure our world and its relationship with God and the sacred in different ways from our ancestors, and the past is indeed in many ways a very foreign country. It is not a case of *plus ça change*. It may be better to envisage a spiral—twirling and twisting back and forth but ultimately reaching ahead into a future that cannot yet be fully discerned." Walsham, 264.

captions. In the same vein, she also brings to light the later persistence of traditional Catholic images of Mary in resistance to the introduction of militant and triumphalist counterreformation images of Mary in Cologne.[18] With this work, Heal has moved the field forward by integrating several different, and previously separate, historical discussions of evangelical and Catholic theology and imagery side by side. Heal's complex and contextually deep insight into popular culture and piety adds to the idea that confessional conflict was not quite so polarized as some historians have argued. Through the lens of Marian theology and imagery, Heal pointed to a spectrum of understanding and belief and exemplified how local and confessional contexts created a variety of different images and practices. Building on works by scholars such as Beth Kreitzer and Heiko Oberman, Heal argued that the Reformation did not fully eradicate Mary from popular belief and theological practice, as is strikingly evident in visual resources that she provides alongside her arguments.[19] While Heal's work is important in this field, still more close attention needs to be paid to the presence and function of Marian images in the early Reformation as images themselves reveal specific theological variation.

This project, therefore, brings together some key issues raised by a number of prominent scholars. These issues include historical perceptions of early evangelical Christianity, their relation to the Middle Ages, and the figure of Mary as a site of contestation in emerging evangelical thought: a dialogue which engaged her image figuratively and literally. Here, discussion of early modern Marian theology and evangelical practice will be brought together with close art historical analysis of several art pieces to attain a broader, more inclusive "image" of Reformation theology and lay Christianity.

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[18] Bridget Heal, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Early Modern Germany: Protestant and Catholic Piety, 1500-1648* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 84; 260-261.

[19] Kreitzer's and Oberman's scholarly works will be examined later within this essay.

Before moving forward, a few notes on art historical methodology are necessary. In the context of history as a discipline, visual sources, such as images and artworks, are often undervalued as primary source material on their own terms. For the historical discipline, primacy lies within text, and when images are referenced at all by historians, often they are referred to in passing, as illustrations, or as merely demonstrative.[20] In ignoring the visual as a key primary source, particularly from earlier periods where images were equally important as the written word in communication and articulation, historians can often miss exploring the entirety of an historical phenomenon or historical understanding. However, using visual sources can be difficult because their historical meaning is frequently unfixed and often can never truly be fully recovered or definitely identified.[21] Part of the ambiguity of early modern images rests in their ability to not just be symbolic or representative, but that they were often contemporaneously understood as *being* what they where portraying. This is an issue particularly with religious and devotional images. Medieval European epistemology included belief in Christ's materiality and physicality via the doctrine of the incarnation, as well as in God's permanence in the world, which lent to possibility of physical objects as not just pointing to the divine, but embodying the

[20] However, it is misleading to ascribe this failure to all historians. A number of scholars, particularly in the interdisciplinary group of "visual studies" have dived into using visual sources in tangent with history and sociology. See in particular Robert W. Scribner, *For the sake of simple folk: popular propaganda for the German Reformation*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004); David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response,* (University of Chicago Press, 1989), 431; David Morgan, *Sacred Gaze Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian materiality: an essay on religion in late medieval europe*. (MIT Press, 2015). This is just within the early modern field, this failure also cannot be ascribed to all fields, particularly the field of ancient history.

[21] The work *Compelling Visuality* offers a unique insight to how images, in contrast to other historical sources, function both in the past and the present. The ambiguity of images often lies in their changing function through time, as well as their loss of meaning as time passes, meaning that can never be fully recovered. This compilation of essays suggests that when engaging in interpretation of art that existed in the past but also exists in the present there is no definite "answer" or "meaning" of interpretation; rather there is a discursive element to art historical hermeneutics; "[we should] present our methods and results in such a way that our readers do not become objects of persuasion but participants in a shared intellectual discursive endeavor." See Claire J. Farago, and Robert Zwijnenberg, *Compelling visuality the work of art in and out of history*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

divine.[22] For example, in medieval Christianity, devotional images were *officially* sanctioned as only signifiers of the divine – representations pointing to or as intercession with the deity. However, in practice, many images and objects were treated as if they physically *were* the divine, not merely a representation.[23] This adds a layer of complexity especially when dealing with premodern religious images.

Additionally, the hermeneutics for working with images are estranged from the tools used in textual analysis, and require different priorities and skills. Art historical analysis includes discussion of artistic form as well as content; fixing on the marriage between formal elements in the image and their derived meaning and historical context. Particularly in iconography, colors and forms, as well as motifs and symbols relied on recognized traditions and cultural elements that are not apparent to the untrained eye. Marrying art historical analysis, the "interpretation" of images, with historical analysis involves an integration of formal elements within images, contextualization with interpretations of textual evidence, and deriving conclusions from thoughtful combination of the two.[24]

While the discipline of art history in general has recently embraced this contextualization of the image, the pioneer of this type of approach was Erwin Panofsky in the early twentieth century.[25] His work advocated for "uncovering" the historical "subject matter" within an image, essentially "confronting the 'otherness' of a different historical moment."[26] This practice

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[22] See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality.*

[23] Caroline Walker Bynum's *Christian Materiality* deals specifically with this issue. She points to the complications of the Christian understanding of the world: that because of the doctrines of the incarnation and the resurrection, Christ was inseparably linked to the natural world. Throughout the work Bynum demonstrates the perceived agency of objects, as they bled, cried, moved, and performed miracles.

[24] *Compelling Visuality*, chapter on hermeneutics.

[25] Panofsky introduces his concept of "iconology" in Erwin Panofsky, *Introduction to Studies in Iconology* (1939; rpt. New York: 1967).

[26] Keith Moxey, provides a brief survey of Panofsky's formulation of iconology in Keith Moxey, *Panofsky's Concept of "Iconology" and the Problem of Interpretation in the History of Art,* New Literary History, Vol. 17, No. 2, Interpretation and Culture (Winter, 1986), pp. 265-274; 272.

involves utilizing both art historical and historical hermeneutics, in contextualizing a work within the philosophical and cultural context in which it was created.[27] Panofsky shows that by examining the context in which the image operated, art historians can encounter the object as it was intended to be understood.[28] Panofsky outlined three stages of analysis for higher understanding of Renaissance art: "the preiconographic" stage which involves observing the formal elements of an image, the "iconographic" stage which relates to the conventional meaning of the image's subject, and the iconological stage which involves reading the work as a bearer of unconscious meaning of larger cultural practice and understanding.[29] Panofsky gave the example of a man tipping his hat on the street; the viewer recognizes the act, then realizes the act, in context of the twentieth century, is a gesture of politeness, and then in the final stage, the "iconological" stage, the viewer can interpret the gesture in context of other information like the man's class, nationality, etc, and come to an understanding of a greater worldview or philosophy.[30]

Within his broader concept of iconology, with his concern to connect artistic content and symbolism to the historical conceptual framework, Panofsky had advocated, most clearly with his analysis on the work of Jan van Eyck, that with the turn to naturalism in the Renaissance Eyck and other artists began to "disguise" iconographical symbols, hiding them within naturalistic scene.[31] Panofsky advocated that this kind of symbolism allowed the viewer to

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[27] In Panofsky's time, the early twentieth century, the field was dominated by art historians who focused solely on form. In this way, Panofsky's methods were instrumental in turning the field to focus on historical content. See Michael Ann Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History,* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 24.

[28] Ibid., 39. See especially her whole introduction.

[29] Ibid., 40-42

[30] As explored in Panofsky, *Introduction to Studies in Iconology*.

[31] See first his article, Erwin Panofsky, "Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait, and his later work Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish painting* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987) for the most coherent formulation of this idea.

engage in deeper layers of meditation, slowly "uncovering" hidden meaning while contemplating the image over a long period of time.[32] Working with Renaissance paintings then, Panofsky used his "iconological" approach to decode certain symbols within an image and link them not only to the larger artistic trends of the Renaissance, but to theological and cultural conceptions "hidden" in these symbols. Panofsky's methods allowed art history to move beyond aesthetic and formal elements and into deeper historical particularity. While he used his methodology mainly for Renaissance art, Panofsky's approach to uncovering the "otherness" of images so far removed from the modern eye is helpful.[33] While this approach becomes a bit unwieldy for historians in utilizing images as a vehicle for historical inquiry, this sort of exploration allows for a much deeper understanding of historical themes and moments.

This essay will employ a Panofskian approach in seeking to identify symbols and to align meaning to a historical moment and to textual sources, by diving into complex "iconological" contextualization. As Michael Ann Holly writes, "Iconology does not unlock a painting or other representational form as a statement of explicit meanings as much as it addresses itself to the elusive underlying cultural principles of representation…it asks, in theory, why certain images,

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Criticism of Panofsky's approach, his articulation of "disguised symbolism" has taken two sides; one side claims that symbolism in Renaissance artworks were so evident to contemporary viewers that they were never "disguised"; the other claims that vernacular understandings of church doctrine were minimal, and theological symbols, disguised or not, would have meant nothing to them. John T. Ward, in a more recent publication (1994) provides an excellent in-between commentary on Panofsky's work, claiming both sides of criticism focus on Panofsky's use of the word "disguised" and he argues these critics would agree that symbolism was "embedded" within Renaissance paintings. Ward then goes on to show the fruit of Panofsky's approach to van Eyck's painting, displaying the "embedded" nature of symbols and how the structural characteristics of form contribute to the symbols: "God's plan of salvation appears to be woven into the very fabric of reality and to become visible in the transcendent state of meditation". See John T. Ward, "Symbolism as Enactive Symbolism in Van Eyck's Paintings," Artibus et Historiae, Vol. 15, No. 29 (1994), pp. 9-53.

[32] Many critics of Panofsky's "disguised symbolism" approach focus on his intentional evasion of examining how images actually functioned within their historical context. This is a critical failure of Panofsky's work, and many scholars of visual culture, increasingly in recent years, have sought to stress the importance of viewership and how images were used and were encountered; that the original intent of an artwork should not overshadow how the work was interpreted or used by its audience.

[33] "The system of checks and balances that characterizes Panofsky's "iconological" method has proven to be the door through which it has become possible to essay an interpretation of works of art that does justice to their complex historical particularity." See Moxey, *Panofsky's Concept of "Iconology" and the Problem of Interpretation in the History of Art,* 271-2.

attitudes, historical situations and so forth have assumed one particular shape at one particular time."[34] This method will assist in utilizing these Marian images as useful primary sources, and looking at the use of symbolism as indicative of larger theological themes. However, it is important to note that this present essay does not attempt to engage in the viewership of images, and in that vein does not seek to claim that the ideologies uncovered within these Marian images were synonymous with vernacular religious understanding. It is essential to understand that the intention of a work, especially in the ways images are examined in this essay, certaintly did not dictate how this images were received, understood, or used by their historical viewers. ideas, not understanding ideological principles put in practice.

Part II: Marian Images and Theology

Returning back to the contested image of Mary, it has been mentioned that there was an extensive range of customs, scenes, and models in which Mary was depicted throughout the Middle Ages, and there were as well a whole host of significant visual forms and symbols related to her imae. Popular settings in which she was depicted included images from scripture, typically scenes from the Annunciation, Visitation, the Nativity, her with Jesus in the temple, in the flight to Egypt, as well as extra-scriptural scenes of her Ascension, sitting upon the Heavenly throne, and as the Apocalyptic woman.[35] Frequently, Mary was positioned in paintings with the resurrected Jesus, acting as prime intercessor for the faithful on earth. Within these images, painters and church patrons elevated Mary's status with symbolism such as her throne, halo, and a plethora of animals, fruit, foods, flowers, and plants, indicating her awe-invoking attributes. These images, while often featuring centrally the Christ child, were meant to invoke veneration

[34] Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History,* 14-15.
[35] While the apocalyptic woman is a biblical figure in the book of Revelation, the scripture does not explicitly state that this woman is Mary. Traditional Christian belief linked the two figures as one, but this was mostly delegitimized in later Protestant belief. See the Book of Revelation, 12:1: "and there appeared a great wonder in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."

and elevation of Mary as "blessed among women" and as a powerful spiritual intercessor, queen, sometimes even as co-redemptrix.

One of the most prominent Marian themes involved images of her holding or nursing the Christ child. Art historians have termed this particular depiction of Mary and Child, usually a half-length portrait-style painting, as an *Andachtsbild*, emphasizing this genre's inherent intimate devotional quality.[36] The larger-than-life images of Madonna and child allowed their viewer to intimately interact with the tender exchange between mother and child, Son of God and Mother of God, Bride and Bridegroom, Savior and the saved.[37] Here, an image of the Virgin by Venetian artist Carlo Crivelli in 1490 (which was introduced briefly in the beginning of this essay) provides an excellent example. This Italian piece can be considered as a quintessential *Andachtsbild* and was heavily linked to traditional Christianity because of its proximity to Rome and the papacy. While Crivelli lived during the Renaissance's turn to naturalism in art, his style held tightly to the ornamental and allegorical trends of the late gothic movement, representing a longer tradition of Christian art.[38] In addition, Crivelli's work is especially relevant because of the artist's enthusiastic use of fruit motifs, which are present in almost all of his depictions of the Virgin. There are specifically German and Flemish examples of this motif as well, but Crivelli's pieces provide an excellent beginning to this examination of Marian motifs.

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[36] This particular image of Mary seated with the child in the medieval and early modern period was often fraught with heavy symbolism evoked by motifs of nature. It has been argued in *The Fruit of Devotion* that this "garden motif," the presence of various fruits, vegetables, flowers, and other plants, in Netherlandish paintings points to the garden of love in the Song of Solomon. Symbols allude to the love between the bride and the bridegroom (Christ and the church/Mary), and the 'sweetness' of Christ's love and of his and Mary's virtue, which prompted intimate contemplation and devotion in their medieval viewer. While this analysis certainly holds weight, symbolism in late medieval era was never fixed, and often denoted a number of different interpretations. This fruit imagery, in light of traditional beliefs of Mary, can be contextualized in a different way that does not discount the metaphor of the garden of love or metaphor of taste, but rather can exist coherently with this interpretation. See *The Fruit of Devotion.*

[37] *Fruit of Devotion,* 2-3. See also E. Panofsky, "Imago Pietatis'. Ein Beitrag zur Typengeschichte des 'Schmerzensmanns' und der 'Maria mediatrix'," in: Festschrift für Max J. Friedlander sum 60. Gerburtstage, (Lepzip 1927); S. Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative. This Rise of the Dramatic Close-up on Fifteenth Century Devotional Painting,* (Doornspijk, 1984).

[38] See for example, the work of Fra Angelico (1395-1455) as a well-known painter of the style.

This particular piece, *Madonna and Child* (1473) [Fig. 2], was most likely created for private devotion, and depicts a contemplative Virgin from the torso up, holding her child upon some sort of ledge. Mary is clothed in finery, with her pearl crown representing her purity, her jeweled halo indicating her saintly status, and her beautiful gold and blue cloak. Upon her cloak is the pattern of the sweetbriar rose, indicating a multitude of Marian attributes; the five points of the flower designating the five joys of the virgin, the rose itself referencing Mary's immaculate conception "a rose without thorns," and also possibly indicating her perpetual virginity as the sweetbriar was often evoked in Renaissance literature as the unconsumed burning bush in the Old Testament.[39,] While Mary tenderly holds her child and contemplates his passion and resurrection, the fruit in the top half of the painting dominates the scene.[40] A larger-than-life gourd or cucumber is situated among a number of apples, hanging down around Mary's face.[41] The gourd refers to the story of Jonah in the scripture, where God caused a gourd bush to grow and to give shelter and new life to Jonah in the midst of his suffering. Paired with the apple, the recognized fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, of which Adam and Eve ate

[39] The five joys of Mary were a part of iconographical tradition, and sometimes separated into the seven joys, and even in some places even to fifteen joys. The Joyful Mysteries (5), however, were used in praying the rosary and also opposed the five wounds of Christ. See Anne Winston-Allen. *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997). [39] Especially in early eastern iconic tradition, in the words of eighth-century Benedictine Monk Rabanus Maurus: "The bush, then (as some hold) is a prefiguration of the Virgin Mary since she made the Savior blossom forth, like a rose growing out of the bush of her human body; or rather, because she brought forth the power of the divine radiance without being consumed by it. Hence we read in Exodus: 'The Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and looked and behold the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed' (Ex 3:2) " Rabanus Maurus, "De universe" 19, 6, *Patrologia Latina* 111,513C. See also Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought,* (Ignatius Press, 1999).

[40] The Christ child clutches the goldfinch, an iconographical symbol of resurrection and life, while shying away from the fly in the left corner of the painting, the symbol of death, corruption, and evil. Mary gazes off in this direction, encouraging contemplation of the viewer upon the resurrection of her son, and her own place in the redemption of humanity. See G. W. Ferguson, (n.d.). *Signs and symbols in Christian art*, (Oxford, 1954) for a brief overview of these symbols.

[41] The interchanged use of the cucumber with the gourd, especially in Crivelli's work, is attested to by art historians, see most recently in Ronald Lightbown, *Carlo Crivelli,* (MA: Yale University Press, 2004). See especially 202-203.

to cause the Fall of man, this iconographical device indicates salvation from sin.[42] Juxtaposed directly with Mary's face and with her symbols of purity, these fruits point to Mary's place in the redemption of man; she is the new Eve, providing life and rejuvenation through her son to humanity, restoring the death caused by Eve in the Garden of Eden. While these fruits as a garland could be interpreted to refer to the garden motif in the Song of Solomon and the love between bride and bridegroom, here, Mary is portrayed overwhelmingly as the New Eve with Christ as the New Adam, co-redeemers in the salvation of Mankind from the sin and death of the Fall.

Another *Andachtsbild* by Crivelli is rich in similar fruit imagery that glorifies Mary's status in ways beyond the Song of Solomon garden motif. In his *Madonna of the Taper* [Fig. 3] Crivelli depicts the Virgin full length and seated upon a throne, surrounded by an overwhelming plethora of fruit and plant motifs. Crowned with an elaborate tiara and halo and adorned with the same sweetbriar cloak as in the preciously analyzed image, Mary aids the Christ child's grasp onto a pear. The pear is situated directly in front of Mary's torso, brazenly evoking Christ as the "fruit of her womb."[43] Symbolizing the incarnation, Crivelli emphasizes Mary's role as Mother of God. An enormous garland encircles the mother and child, holding further depictions of pears, the couplings of gourds and apples, and a bouquet of cherries.[44] At Mary's feet sits a vase of lilies, portraying her purity and virginity, along with a scattering of other cherries and a rose – indicating her purity as well as her immaculate conception. Again, this garland of fruits could be compared to the garden of love, but because of the specific coupling of these fruits with Marian

[42] While the genus of the fruit of Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is not explicitly stated in scripture, in Latin, *mallum* is both the word for "evil" and "apple." Thus, typically the apple was equated to the scriptural fruit in Medivial iconography.
[43] The Hail Mary prayer traditionally was "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed are thee among women and blessed is the fruit of they womb, Jesus," and was derived from the Gospel of Luke.
[44] Cherries here refer to purity, sweetness.

iconographical symbolism, they must be interpreted equally as an elevation of Mary's special qualities; her status as *Theotokos* and supreme queen as she sits, literally, upon a throne of her own virtue.

While Crivelli provides an excellent example of the fruit motif in *Andachtsbilder* because of his number of works that so richly employ the motifs, his work with fruit imagery is not idiosyncratic in the genre. A few exemplar images of Mary that can be examined here are the Flemish/Netherlandish pieces *Madonna and Child in the Rose Garden* by Stefan Lochner (1440) [Fig. 4] and *Virgin and Pear* by Ambrosius Benson (1525?) [Fig. 5]. Both these pieces provide laudatory images of Mary, using the fruit motif as a way to praise her virtue and divine status. This device of the fruit motif is also in traditional Italian pieces like Giovanni di Francesco Fetti's *Madonna* (1460) [Fig. 6] and Ambrogio Borgognone's *Madonna and Child* (1500) [Fig. 7]. While individual analysis of these paintings may not be particularly relevant here, one can quickly see the fruit symbolism and elevation of Mary's status within these paintings, similar to the devices employed by Crivelli. Of course, these paintings provide relevant background for fruit imagery which was prevalent in Marian iconography and important for this project, but it is helpful to note that fruit was not present in all images of Mary. Other images upholding Mary equally uplift her status with the use of different iconographical devices, including many other variations of flowers, the symbols of the snake, the crescent moon, and her illustrious and protective robes. At the turn of the century, artists following the naturalistic trend in Renaissance art also produced many more subdued portraits of Mary and child, like with the works of Raphael and Botticelli, but these portraits did not replace the traditional devotional and heavily symbolic images of Mary's powers and virtue and rather existed alongside them.

It is within this long tradition of *Marienverehrung* in image as well as in practice that Martin Luther and many of his colleagues began to speak out against this extravagant view of Mary. In the early 1500s, these reformers, outraged at the traditional church's intense *Marienverehrung* among other grievances, began to reevaluate Mary in light of *sola scriptura.* For Luther and early reformers such as Henrich Zwingli, Philip Melanchthon and the more radical Andreas Karlstadt and Thomas Müntzer, the only source for ecclesiastical and spiritual knowledge lay within the words in the scripture. While these reformers often disagreed on the interpretation of these words, they largely agreed upon what the scriptures indicated about Mary.[45] However, because these reformers vehemently spoke out against "idolatrous" misunderstanding of Mary's position and power, their polemical Marian writings and ideas have often overshadowed their continuing and more traditional contemplation of Mary's important biblical and spiritual role.

A number of scholarly works have delved into these more positive evangelical views of Mary. In his volume *The Impact of the Reformation,* Heiko Oberman in part examined how evangelicals' turn away from extra-scriptural tradition led them to focus on Mary's essential role in illuminating the nature of Christ and in revealing the grace of God that was placed upon her as virgin and *Theotokos*, instead of in other traditional images of powerful mediator and queen of heaven which had little to no basis in scripture.[46] Oberman convincingly argued that Protestants recognized that Mary had a crucial role in theological principles, but they despised Catholicism's "vulgar cult of the virgin."[47] Thus, Oberman illustrated that Protestants sought the *via media* in

[45] Larger disagreements amongst the reformers included the position of the clergy, the nature of the Eucharist, the practice of worship, and the ordering of society. Wandel explores this differences very helpfully in *Reformation: Moving Towards a new History.*
[30] Heiko Augustinus Oberman, "The Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective" in *The Impact of the Reformation: Essays,* pages 225-252, (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1994), 243.
[47] Ibid., 245.

recognizing Mary within the church not as a holy person, but as an *instrument* and *example* of God's grace to mankind. This work pushes against the popular historical idea that Protestants outright rejected the "image" of Mary and Mary's place in the church. Another excellent study, *Reforming Mary: Changing Images of the Virgin Mary in Lutheran Sermons of the Sixteenth Century,* by Beth Kreitzer scrutinized complex textual "portraits" of Mary through the optic of Lutheran sermons. Throughout, Kreitzer importantly clarified the continuities that Lutheran preachers held with medieval Christianity, particularly in maintaining traditional understandings of Mary as *Theotokos* and of her virginal purity.[48] A handful of other authors have written about Marian images as a space for continuity and change in the early Reformation.[49]

As discussed in these scholarly works, early reformers could not, and did not, do away completely with Marian doctrine; she was fundamentally central in the church via scripture. According to biblical texts, Mary was responsible for not only bringing the messiah into the world, but she was also responsible for his fully human nature which was necessary for the salvation of the world. Thus, Mary remained an important figure in soteriology, but for reformers, she was an exemplar of perfect motherhood, humility, and modesty, rather than a supreme intercessor and queen.[50] For Luther and other early reformers, many traditional doctrines including Mary's virginity, purity, and her redemption of Eve's mistake, in addition to her role as *Theotokos,* were able to coexist peacefully with their new interpretation of scripture but they no longer emphasized these attributes of Mary as avenues for her personal veneration or

[48] Beth Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary: Changing Images of the Virgin Mary in Lutheran Sermons of the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 134.
[49] Most especially Bonnie Noble and Bridget Heal.
[50] "Soteriology"- term for the theology on the history of Christian salvation, as found in biblical texts.

invocation of intercession.[51] In the early years of the Reformation, Luther penned a commentary on the *Magnificat* (1521), making clear his stance on the Virgin; he writes

So tut auch hier die zarte Mutter Christi. Sie lehrt uns mit dem Exempel ihrer Erfahrung und mit Worten, wie man Gott erkennen, lieben und loben soll. [52]

So also here does gentle mother of Christ the same [as the saints in heaven]. She teaches us how to know, love and praise God with the example of her experience and her words.

and also that

Denn Maria sagt nicht: »Meine Seele macht sich selbst groß« oder »hält viel von sich«. Sie wollte auch gar nichts von sich gehalten haben. Sondern allein Gott macht sie groß, dem schreibt sie es ganz allein zu.

For Mary did not say " My soul makes itself great" or "[exalts itself]."[53] She therefore does not wish herself to be exalted at all. But rather, she exalts God alone, whom she credits all to.

Luther's writing here, specially in these passages but throughout his entire commentary, emphasizes Mary's praiseworthy role, but particularly in her humility, grace, and openness to God's grace. Bringing these ideas into confessional formation, Philip Melanchthon later reiterates in his *Apology for the Augsburg Confession: "*Although she is most worthy of the most ample honors, nevertheless she does not wish to be made equal to Christ, but rather wishes us to consider and follow her example [the example of her faith and her humility]."[54]

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[51] Intercession, or Mary as *mediatrix* or *Fürbitter*, was denounced in varying degrees among the reformers. While Melanchthon and Luther denounced Mary as mediator, Henrich Zwingli was much harsher in his dismissal of the cult of saints, writing: "those who make the saints in heaven into *Fürbittern* do so because they do not dare to come to God; but this is against God's word, and diminishes his grade, goodness, and mercy." See Emidio Campi, *Zwingli und Maria: eine Reformationsgeschichtliche Studie*, (Zürich: Theologischer Verl., 1997), 92. Luther himself still attested to the perpetual virginity of Mary, writing in 1537 "[Christ] was her first Son by which she became a mother and still remained a virgin even after birth." See 293 Martin Luther, "Sermon on Colossians 1:9-20" in *Luther's Works, Volume IV,* ed. and trans. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2016), 293.

[52] Martin Luther, *Le Magnificat,* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1967), 14, 22.

[53] Literally, "hold much of me."

[54] *Apology for the Augsburg Confession,* "The invocation of the Saints." In *Concordia Triglotta: Die symbolischen Bücher der evanglish-lutherischen Kirche.* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921). This is an example of the Lutheran image of Mary in the beginning of the "confession building period."

In context with Luther's theology, images of Mary produced in the early Reformation can be properly examined. Clearly, Lutheran practice in particular held many continuous ideologies of Marian doctrine, but chose to direct these dogmas toward veneration of her son, and praise solely her role in bringing Christ into the world and as a model of motherhood and humility. As Bridget Heal has put forth, the significance of evangelical theology concerning Mary in images and visual sources has been largely unrepresented in historiographical discussion.[55] Here, Albrecht Dürer shall provide an intriguing window into specific visual culture and theological conceptions in early-Reformation Nuremburg.

Albrecht Dürer was a German artist from Nuremburg, active from about 1480-1528, and is often cited as one of the major Northern artists and an emblem of Northern Renaissance art. He is exceptionally pertinent to this study in the fact that he was an active artist prior to and during the spread of reform ideas in Germany, and was personally acquainted with Martin Luther and held him in high esteem.[56] Early works by Dürer include traditional devotional images of Mary, most prominently his *Life of the Virgin,* which included extra-canonical scenes from Mary's life, praising her role in the salvation story. It has been argued that this extensive work of nineteen woodcuts "boldly portrays the near participation of Mary in the Trinity," and the elevation of her status far above humble mother.[57] Dürer's later works, however, clearly begin to

[55] Heal, 114.
[56] For Dürer, at least in the beginning, Luther was an emblem of propagating God's word, not necessarily a radical rejection of traditional belief. When Luther goes into hiding in 1521, Dürer writes "Oh God, if Luther be dead, who will henceforth expound to us the holy Gospel with such clearness?" See Dürer, Albrecht, *The Writings of Albrecht Dürer,* William Martin Conway, tns. and eds., (London, Peter Owen Ltd, 1958), 158-159.
[57] Price, David. *Albrecht Dürer's Renaissance humanism, reformation and the art of faith*, (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2006), 162. See especially 154-165. This idea is first put forth by Erwin Panofsky "Albrecht Dürer and Classical Antiquity." In *Meaning and the Visual Arts,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

be influenced by reform ideas.[58] While some scholars have extensively argued over whether Dürer was "Catholic" or "Protestant," it is apparent that this argument is unproductive in that during the early Reformation, "Catholic" and "Protestant" simply did not exist.[59] Dürer then, through his work presents the context of this early period where community members were struggling to make sense of various reform movements alongside the traditional customs of centuries of Christianity. As an artist, Durer presents a translation of contemporary evangelical discourse that surrounded him, which he interpreted with his own personal training in iconography, his experience and familiarity with Luther's teaching, and under the direction of similarly minded patrons. Unlike with Hanson's treatment of the lives of common people to approach popular piety and town practice, Dürer was a more elite member of society, with strong connections to reformers and reformed political figures, and so he provides an interesting perspective on how contemporary theological discourse affected the the environment of well-connected and more elite members.

Dürer's life and work, poised at the very beginning of the Reformation, provides an excellent window into the workings of reform movements as his work evolves beyond traditional Marian depictions. Many early paintings and woodcuts by Dürer emphasized traditional laudatory Marian forms, including *Feast of the Rose, Madonna (1506)* [Fig. 8], the later *Crowned by an Angels (1518*) [Fig. 9], and especially *Virgin and Child with Siskin (Goldfinch) (1506)* [Fig. 10]. This last piece follows quite nicely with Crivelli's depiction of the Virgin, though without the emphasis on her position as co-redemptrix. In Dürer's image, Mary is

[58] Much to many scholars' dismay, Dürer never proclaimed himself as a "Protestant." Rather, Dürer seems to have been swayed by many of the reform ideas, based on his close friendship with Martin Luther, and his position in the city council of Nuremburg, a group of men heavily involved in humanism and notions of reform. Price notes that Dürer mentions Martin Luther and the Reformation prolifically in his writings in the 1520s, but his lack of partisanship in these writings as well as his work is noticeable. Price notes that Dürer produced more art sensitive to the Reformation but he did not compose polemical pieces like many other artists of his time. See Price, *Albrecht Dürer's Renaissance humanism, reformation and the art of faith*, 226.

[59] As previously established. See especially Hanson.

depicted seated in magnificence, and crowned with roses representing her sorrow and joy, her charity and her virginity.[60] Her immaculate conception and purity is emphasized by the lily of the valley, and she holds the Christ child with symbols indicating his passion and resurrection. Mary is set up here, albeit less dramatically than in Crivelli's works, as exalted bearer of God and redemption. These earlier depictions of Mary by Dürer contrast slightly with his later works.

While Dürer continued to produce images of crowned Mary in woodcuts through the 1520s, many of his other depictions of Mary began to take a subtle turn earlier.[61] His piece *Madonna and Child (1512)* [Fig. 11], represents a leaning not only to the naturalism of the Renaissance, but also to a toning down of Marian iconographical symbols. Here Mary is clothed in modest dress, lacking crowns, halos, jewels, or elaborate embroidery, and she tenderly looks down upon her child held gently in her hands. The infant Christ holds onto a half-consumed pear. Mary's motherhood is emphasized here, and the only symbol (the half eaten pear) alludes both to the incarnation of Christ and the sweetness of his love.[62] Another image simplifying Mary's position, *Madonna of the Carnation (1516*) [Fig. 12], depicts a close up of almost just Mary's face, and the top part of the Christ child holding onto the carnation that his mother offers.[63] The Christ child also clutches a pear, indicating Mary's role as his mother. Mary stares off outside the pictorial plane, directly at the viewer, encouraging the viewer to meditate on the love between mother and child.

Dürer's *Madonna and Pear* [Fig.1], with which this essay began, also depicts a subtle contrast to both Crivelli's Madonna and traditional Marian iconography, and Dürer's own earlier

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[60] While the red rose often represented Christ's passion or the blood of martyrs, the most common association of the rose throughout the Middle Ages was with the Virgin. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux compared her virginity to a white rose and her charity to a red rose, and the rosary, dedicated to Mary, emerged in the thirteenth century.

[61] His later woodcuts though were less explicit from his earlier works, and he moves away from the forms especially of the apocalyptic woman.

[62] See the *Fruit of Devotion* and the "motif of taste and consumption."

[63] Carnation represents love and tenderness. See G. W. Ferguson, (n.d.). *Signs and symbols in Christian art*, (Oxford, 1954).

Madonnas. Clothed in a plain dress with a contrasting collar, the Virgin's hair is free and loose, unembellished. Her only adornment is the pear in her hand, the symbol of her part in Christ's entry to the world. Within this image, Mary's virtue is in her humility and willingness in submitting to God's will to bring forth the salvation of the world. The Christ child, the fruit of her womb, clutches onto a dandelion weed, the symbol of suffering, alluding to his coming passion and to the price paid for redemption.[64] While Dürer still produced images of Mary with some of the traditional symbols – mostly including crowns and halos adorning the Virgin, these works were not as prolific as before, and they began to become more subdued than his previous works.[65] His images of scenes such as the Ascension and the Apocalyptic woman were not produced in later years, ceding to images such as this *Madonna and Pear.*[66]

This subtle shift in Dürer's images of the Virgin is symbolic of the larger shift in Marian theology. Coming from a background of prolific symbolism, Dürer's images leading up to the 1520s begin to slide toward a more exclusively scripturally-based contemplation of Mary. Here, Mary is solely gentle mother, god-bearer, not co-redemptrix and queen of heaven. This image that Dürer presents, while reflecting this shift, also does not break totally or even radically from Marian tradition. More subdued portraits of Mary did occur more frequently in late medieval art, although not the as the primary representation of Mary. The symbol of the pear, presenting the incarnation, is seen profusely in traditional portraits of Mary alongside other symbols, and it remains as a symbol congruent with the continuing importance of the incarnation within

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[64] The flower has been unidentified by art historians in this painting. This essay concludes that its blackened and withered leaves indicate a dandelion weed, which often represented "the bitter herb" of Christ's passion.
[65] See figure 14 for an example of Dürer's woodcuts of the Virgin, 1520.
[66] In *Albrecht Dürer's Renaissance humanism, reformation and the art of faith*, Price argues that Dürer stops producing *Andachtsbilder* in 1523 following a written condemnation of the Regensburg Pilgrimage. Price writes that Dürer begins producing more secular pieces hereafter, including portraits of prominent German reformers. However, this *Madonna* was painted in 1526, and is clearly a devotional image, providing evidence of Dürer's continued use of the genre and its traditional implications. See figure 13 for an example of Dürer's earlier depictions of the Apocalyptic woman.

theology. This image, *Madonna and Pear,* especially situated among Dürer's still enduring and more traditional woodcuts of the Virgin, presents a complicated picture of the early Reformation. Not quite divorced from the past, but rather overlapping with traditional Christian visual devices of devotion and depiction, this image indicates not an epochal break from tradition, but rather reflects the theological adaption of old principles with the emerging ideas of the reformers. Mary is still *Theotokos* or *Gottesmutter*, as traditionally symbolized by the pear, but she is portrayed not as triumphant mother and co-redemptrix, but as a gentle doer of God's supreme will as a small but necessary part in the salvation story.

An avid admirer and imitator of Dürer, Lucas Cranach the Elder provides a similar example of these subtle iconographical turns in *Mariensbilder*. Operating from around 1504-1553 mainly in Wittenberg, Cranach and his work is also posed at the "dawn" of the Reformation. Because of his location in Wittenberg, Cranach as particularly close to the reform movement, and was even closer to Martin Luther than Dürer. After 1520 and until his death, Cranach painted a large number of paintings with Luther in them, as well as several portraits.[67] Cranach's work however, in the early 1520s, still follows suit with the images of Madonna that Dürer produced: a more subtle approach to Mary's theological position. While Cranach does not have earlier paintings quite explicitly exalting Mary, his works in the mid 1520s still reflect a more nuanced approached to the image of Mary, in which she is exalted, but only through association with her son.

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[67] The relationship between Cranach and Luther is excellently explored in the recent work Andrew Pettegree*, Brand Luther,* (NY: Penguin Press, 2016). See in particular the chapters "Brand Luther" and "Luther's Friends" for discussion of Cranach's contribution to the Reformation, particularly in the art of printing and Luther's public image, as well as his deep friendship with Luther. Additionally, Cranach's Lutheran works are discussed in length by Joseph Koerner in Joseph Leo. Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). In this highly detailed examination of art in Luther's Germany, Koerner argues that later Protestant art, mainly that of Cranach, remained purely didactic, stripped of devotional quality, portraying frequently the visible church and/or images *reflecting* principles of faith (salvation through Christ alone, baptism and communion, and preaching the true gospel).

A first piece that beautifully showcases this attitude, much like with Dürer's work, is Cranach's *Virgin and Child* [Fig. 15], painted between 1520 and 1530. Within the piece, a meditative Madonna looks off and down outside of the pictorial plane, clearly in intense contemplation. She tenderly holds her small child, Jesus, around his waist as he is posed standing on her lap and looking directly at the viewer. In his right hand he lifts a crust of bread and in his left he clasps an apple. Both the Virgin and Christ are pictured directly in front of an apple tree, with numerous apples filling the space behind and around Mary's head. Here, traditional iconography is employed; the crust of bread, Christ's body broken for salvation, and Eve's apple exist side by side, representing Christ as redeemer from original sin. The apples around Mary's head emphasize her position not only as pure, "amongst sin but not in sin," but also suggesting, very subtly if at all, her position as the new Eve in her place as Mother of God, bearer of the new Adam and redeemer. These iconographical symbols, while still bearing strong traditional ties, are not only intensely toned down from traditional *Andachtsbild* images, but the focus is clearly on Jesus Christ, not on his mother.

Another painting by Cranach of the Madonna and Child is *Madonna of the Grapes,* or *Traubenmadonna* [Fig. 16]. This was evidently a favorite motif of Cranach's, in that he had produced a plethora of *Maria mit Kind* images bearing grapes. This particular work in question was produced in 1525. It has been argued that the presence of the grapes in this *Andachtsbild* represents Cranach's flexibility in composing works for both Lutheran and Catholic audiences; Bonnie Noble argues in her work *Lucas Cranach the Elder: Art and Devotion of the German Reformation* that Catholic viewers would have seen the grapes as representing the traditional

Eucharist, while Lutherans would have seen it as a propagation of the Eucharist in both kinds.[68] While in context here with Dürer's work, as well as traditional iconographical images, it is clear that Cranach's work does pose a "crossroads" between theologies, Noble's claim about the signifying function of the grapes may be off base. First, while grapes held specific Eucharistic significance, they also signified, conceivably more potently, the passion of Christ.[69] Grapes were also tied tightly to Biblical verse posing Christ as the true vine and the church as his branches.[70] As seen in the previous image, the Eucharist was more often portrayed, especially in this later period, as a crust of bread – the broken body of Christ.[71] If Cranach was attempting to provide a open interpretation to Lutherans, i.e. the interpretation of Eucharist in both kinds, why then did he not include both and crust and the grapes (wine)? This interpretation of the grapes obfuscates perhaps a more obvious symbol the grapes represented, and indicates why Cranach placed grapes in his Madonna and Child images so frequently. Here, the presence of grapes seems to overwhelmingly represent Jesus as being nurtured by the fruits of Mary's motherhood and love, and symbolizing, in turn, Christ as a true vine from which Christians are all nurtured. In this particular image, Mary offers Christ the grapes, her nurturing fruit, and Jesus in turn places the grapes in the mouth of his mother, nurturing the church. Here, again, the "sweetness" of Christ's love can also be identified.[72]

While Cranach supports the new turn in theological visions of Mary, a more subdued portrait in which the main focus is Christ, Cranach's work still surprisingly holds onto very

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[68] Her argument develops in Bonnie Noble, *Lucas Cranach the Elder: Art and Devotion of the German Reformation*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009), 163-188. One of the thrusts of the early Reformation was the push for lay people to receive both the bread and wine of the Eucharist. Priests had been withholding the chalice of wine from congregations since the early Middle Ages.

[69] The Eucharist was, after all, the passion present in the Mass. Grapes were substantially the blood of Christ's passion.

[70] John 15:1-17.

[71] In the High Middle Ages, and less frequently into the later period, the Host itself was portrayed, usually in a monstrance, or emitting beams of light, but not necessarily in *Andachtsbilder*.

[72] Referring back to the consumption motif outlined in *The Fruit of Devotion*.

traditional Marian principles. In both these images, the fruit links back to iconographical praise of Mary's virtues as new Eve and as *Theotokos,* but they do not provide basis to venerate Mary in her own right. Most significantly in the second image of Madonna with the grapes, Mary's place as nurturer of God is evident, but this is turned around as Christ re-offers the grapes to his mother. Here Mary is presented as the church and the body of believers, which is a very old conception in traditional Christianity, receiving the sweetness of Christ's love.

Conclusion

As evident in examining these works – from traditional iconographical depictions of the Virgin and Child to the works of Dürer and Cranach in the early Reformation – there is much iconographical continuity underlying these *Andachbilder*. While images by Dürer and Cranach offer a more naturalistic and maternal image of Mary, the traditional motifs, embodied in the fruit, still prevail. These images by Dürer and Cranach support the reform movement which sought to tone down *Marienverehrung,* but importantly, not to eradicate it. Reformers believed that praise for Mary was still legitimate and appropriate, but that it needed to be constrained to the frame of her role as mother and unassuming servant of God. The Madonna pieces surveyed here iconologically portray this conception, casting Mary in a more humble light, but still in line with a long tradition of the Virgin in image.

This project serves to reach a number of ends. First, it supports the literature that has exposed the reformers' vision of Mary, especially that of the earlier reformers, as more favorable than previously thought. Overlooked by scholars intent on examining the rise of the nation state via rigid confessional boundaries, it is apparent that the early reformer's "image" of Mary was surprisingly congruent with the past, who held onto most traditional beliefs but elevated some above the others, e.g. the motherhood of Mary emphasized rather than her perpetual virginity.

This stance influenced and underlies early art of the Reformation. These pieces present a complex picture of early modern Christianity, displaying not an epochal break from tradition, but rather prompting a consideration of the early Reformation as a reorganization of traditional knowledge. Here, images have provided an intimate look at the continuity and fluidity of Marian ideology into the early Reformation. As Alexandra Walsham has argued, and as seen in this essay, historians must "conceptualize theology less as a static body of dogma than as a living breathing tissue that evolves in response to the social conditions by which it is confronted."[73]

On a larger scale, studying visual sources as evidence of something deeper than aesthetics or as a prop for textual sources has been shown here to be vital for historical scholarship, particularly in this period; the use of art historical hermeneutics to utilize images allows the historian to dive deeper in historical questions and to provide a fresh consideration of circulating historical ideologies. The next step for the historian, something which is beyond the scope of the project, is to place this image in its proper context and to examine how these visually communicated ideologies were received and used by their viewers. But that is for another project. Here, this essay opens the door to the extensive use of art historical tools to aid historical inquiry, instead of bypassing the wealth of information "hidden" within these images, which, were vital sources of contemporary information and articulation.

The early 1500s were a mixing of knowledge and and new ideas, exemplified perhaps first in Renaissance humanism, and taken up in evangelical reform, and the image of Mary was just one of the spaces of contestation. In Reformation studies, this project therefore opens a pathway to viewing the early Reformation as a time of varied transition, and as still closely linked with what has been periodized as the late Middle Ages. The figures of Dürer and Cranach provide an excellent example of the type of non-clerical understanding of the early reform;

[73] Walsham, 262.

adapting to reformed theological principles, but still deeply entrenched in the customs of the past. For early reformers and the educated elite in Wittenberg and surrounding cities, there was not yet a “Protestant” or “Catholic” church, perhaps not even until the late 1500s, but rather only a Christianity that needed to be righted and salvaged.

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Figures

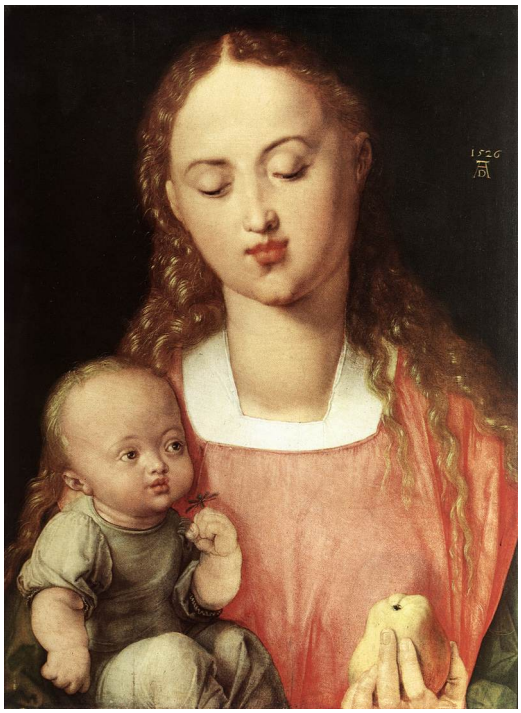

Figure 1: Durer, Madonna and Pear (1526)

Figure 2: Crivelli, Madonna and Child (1475)

Figure 3:: Crivelli, Madonna of the Taper (1490)

Figure 4: Madonna and Child in the Rose Garden by Stefan Lochner (1440)

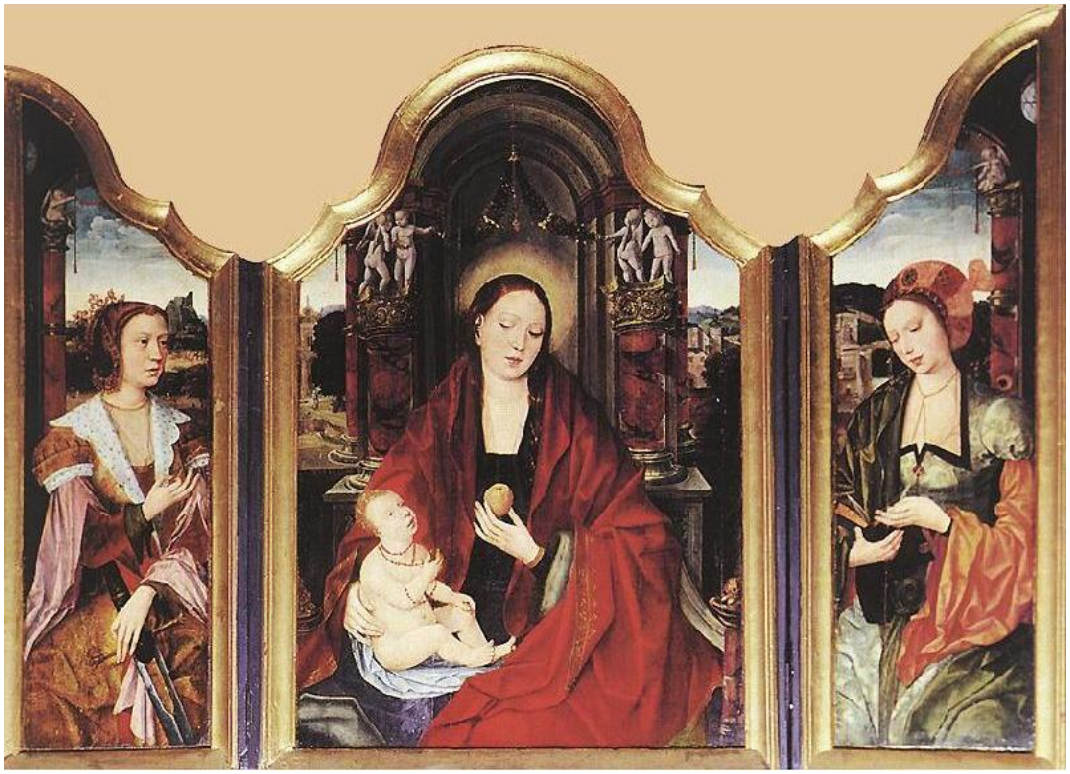

Figure 5: Virgin and Pear by Ambrosius Benson (1525?)

Figure 6: Virgin and Child by Giovanni di Francesco Fetti (1460)

Figure 7: Madonna and Child, Ambrogio Borgognone (1500),

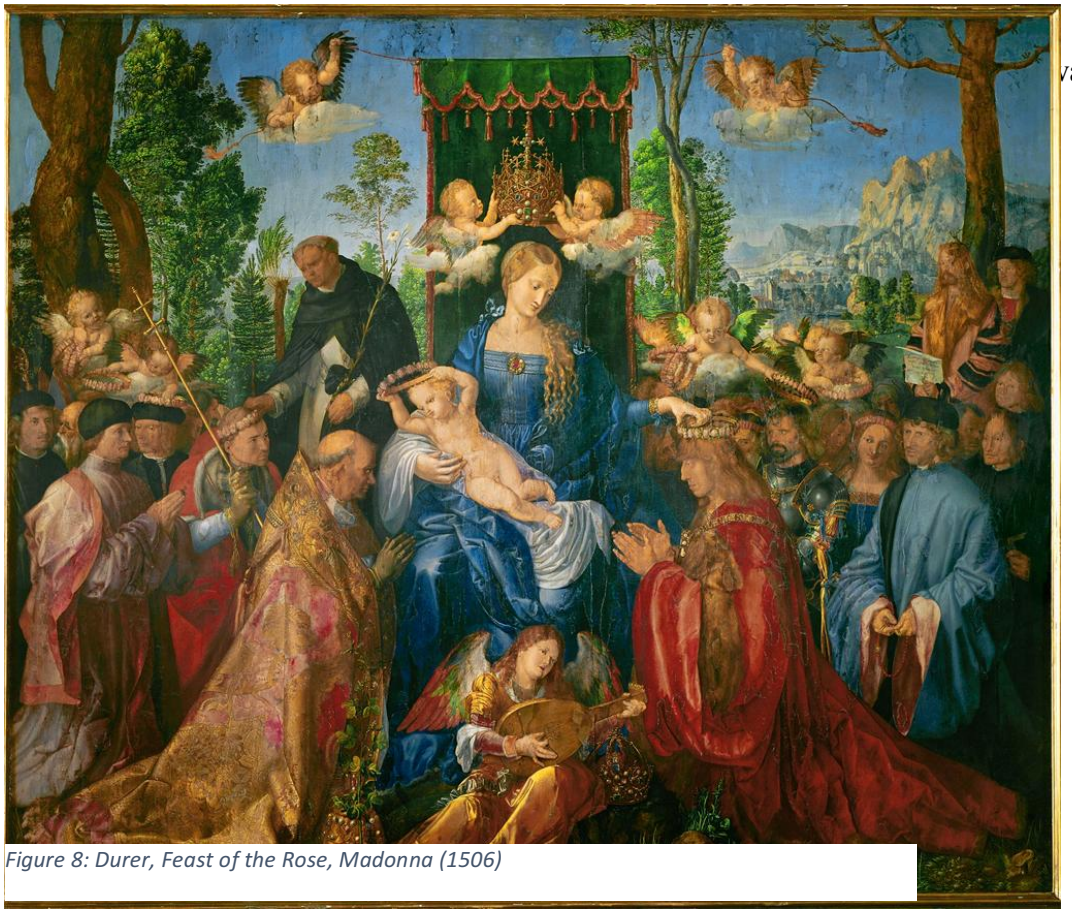

Figure 8: Durer, Feast of the Rose, Madonna (1506)

Figure 9: Durer, Crowned by an Angels (1518)

Figure 10: Durer, Virgin and Child with Siskin (Goldfinch) (1506)

Figure 11: Durer, Madonna and Child (1512),

Figure 12: Durer, Madonna of the Carnation (1516)

Figure 13: Durer, The Virgin on the Crescent (Apocalyptic Woman) (1499)

Figure 14: Durer, 1520

Figure 15: Cranach's Virgin and Child, 1520-30

Figure 16: Cranach, 1525, Madonna of the Grapes, or Traubenmadonna