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## Elisabeth von Braunschweig-Lüneburg (1510-1558) and Elisabeth of Denmark (1485-1555) : Lutheran Rulers

Mikkola, Sini

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# ELISABETH VON BRAUNSCHWEIG- LÜNEBURG (1510–1558) AND ELISABETH OF DENMARK (1485–1555)



*Lutheran Rulers*

SINI MIKKOLA AND PÄIVI RÄISÄNEN-SCHRÖDER

Elisabeth von Braunschweig-Lüneburg (also known as Elisabeth von Brandenburg and Elisabeth von Calenberg-Göttingen) was one of the influential female rulers who supported the Lutheran Reformation in Germany. Her mother, also named Elisabeth, had been convinced of Luther's interpretation of faith by 1527 at the latest and offered a model of strong personal, evangelical conviction for her daughter. The lives of both Elisabeths are fine examples of "how the Reformation's success depended both on individuals' risky choices and the decisions of those with authority, whether noble or civic," as Kirsi Stjerna has noted.<sup>1</sup> In order to understand the life of the daughter Elisabeth, it is vital to explore her life in the

context of her mother's choices and life course. Thus, both mother and daughter are discussed in this chapter, although the younger Elisabeth is the primary focus.

The first Elisabeth of Denmark was born in 1485 in Copenhagen to the royal family of the king of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, Johann Friedrich, and his wife, Christina von Sachsen. Her maternal relatives in Germany, especially her uncles Friedrich III the Wise and Johann the Steadfast, would later play important roles in protecting Martin Luther and securing the spread of the Reformation in the electorate of Saxony. Her older brother, Kristian, who ruled Denmark and Norway from 1513 to 1523, and Sweden in 1520–21, played a substantive role in implanting the Reformation ideas in his kingdom.



Portrait of Elisabeth von Brandenburg (von Braunschweig-Lüneburg) by unknown artist.

Elisabeth married the elector of Brandenburg, Joachim I Nestor (1484–1535), in 1502. The marriage fit perfectly with

the ideals of the day: the spouses were well matched in terms of age and social background. The new electress of Brandenburg received the Spandau citadel in the wedding contract and was granted power over the lands around the fortress, including the nearby village. The couple had five children: Joachim (born in 1501), Anna (1507), Elisabeth (1510), Margaretha (1511), and Johann (1513). Elisabeth became familiar with Luther's theological thinking especially via her brother, Kristian, and his wife, Isabella. She not only discussed theological themes with these close relatives but also read Luther's writings herself.

Daughter Elisabeth was thus in her early teens when her mother began taking an interest in Reformation ideas. Younger Elisabeth had a Catholic upbringing but, evidently, began to read Luther's texts by 1524. All in all, her education was more practical than academic. She was instructed in writing and reading, and read the Scripture in German, but her education did not undergo extensive studies in Latin, for instance; it seems, however, that she knew the basics of Latin grammar. The practical nature of her education was mostly due to her gender. In general, very few women were educated in Latin, since a woman competent in the language of scholars was regarded as "learned beyond her sex." Any higher learning, aspired by a woman, easily caused suspicion, especially among male contemporaries.<sup>2</sup>

In July 1525, Elisabeth married Duke Erich von Braunschweig-Calenberg-Göttingen (1470–1540). The marriage took place only a week and a half after the



Sculpture of Elisabeth von Brandenburg, née Princess of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden by Claus Berg, ca. 1530. Located in the Church of St. Canute's, Odense, Denmark.

marriage of one of the most prominent couples of the Lutheran Reformation—namely, Katharina von Bora and Martin Luther. Elisabeth was fifteen, and Erich, widowed a year before their marriage, was forty years older. The marriage may have been the end point of Elisabeth's formal education, as the general aim of the education of girls was to gain wifely skills and, hence, ensure a proper marriage.

The couple had four children: Elisabeth (1526), Erich II (1528), Anna Maria

(1532), and Katharina (1534). Apparently, Elisabeth and Erich were happy at the beginning of their marriage. They began to face problems early on, however, and one of the most significant issues was Erich's concubine, Anna Rumschottel. Keeping a concubine was common among noblemen of the time, as concubines were both a means of ensuring descendants and a status symbol for the man. The prevalence of concubinage did not, of course, mean that it would not have caused an emotional burden to the marriage and disagreements between the couple. Elisabeth, for instance, thought Rumschottel was guilty of causing her lengthy recuperation from childbirth in 1532, and even accused Rumschottel of witchcraft. Because of the marital discord, Erich and Elisabeth made an agreement that gave Elisabeth the right to separate from her husband and to take over as ruler of the Göttingen and Münden areas. This rather independent position became vital for Elisabeth's later actions in instilling the Lutheran faith in her territories.

In the meantime, mother Elisabeth had also been facing difficulties with her husband, Joachim I, specifically because of issues pertaining to religion. Elisabeth's growing Lutheran conviction and Joachim's favor of traditional beliefs were on a collision course, as Joachim was not willing to accept his wife's faith. Due to their disagreement, the older Elisabeth moved to her Spandau citadel. In the spring 1527, she received communion in both forms—the bread and the wine, the new Lutheran practice with laity—without the knowledge of her husband. Her action

was one of the most important ways an advocate of the new evangelical faith could publicly show her conviction in the 1520s, since the practices and theology regarding the Lord's Supper were central factors that divided the Catholics and evangelicals, and also the evangelicals themselves.<sup>3</sup>

Even though Elisabeth did not receive communion publicly, Joachim soon found out about his wife's actions. Elisabeth's proclamation of her new faith resulted in a long-lasting argument between the couple, as Joachim demanded his wife to return to his faith. Neither of them was willing to give in. Joachim threatened Elisabeth with disciplinary measures, and Elisabeth tried to justify her beliefs and convince her husband. After a year of correspondence, Elisabeth regarded it safer to escape Spandau. In March 1528, she arrived in electoral Saxony and lived there for years under the protection of her brother Kristian and maternal uncle Johann. The fight between Elisabeth and Joachim continued, resulting in the interference of individuals of high rank, including Philip von Hesse, who, although being a Protestant himself, disapproved of Elisabeth's wifely disobedience. In an effort to have his wife come back to the castle and to the Catholic faith, Joachim approached not only Johann but also other men of influence, including the Emperor Charles V.

In 1532, Joachim died—before Elisabeth's return to home, much less to the Catholic faith. Despite the death of her husband, Elisabeth continued the

life of an itinerant up until 1545, when she returned to her Spandau citadel. Throughout the years, she sought to influence her children with one primary goal: to make them sympathetic to Lutheranism and, thus, to have them reform the territories they ruled. Her oldest child, Joachim II, was the most difficult to persuade. By 1539, however, he also adopted the Lutheran faith, and quite soon after became an essential religious-political ally to his sister, the younger Elisabeth.

### **Daughter Elisabeth von Braunschweig-Lüneburg**

The year 1538 was groundbreaking for the younger Elisabeth, now twenty-eight years old. Her mother had been staying at the Black Cloister in Wittenberg, the home of Katharina von Bora and Martin Luther, for several months in 1537. During her mother's stay, Elisabeth visited the Luther household and become personally acquainted with the Reformer. Thereafter, Elisabeth corresponded with Luther and other persons involved with the reforms: for instance, Philipp von Hesse, who became of special importance for her. In 1538, Philipp sent Elisabeth a preacher, Antonius Corvinus (1501–1553), whose influence strengthened the conviction of the already Lutheran-leaning woman. Very soon after the arrival of Corvinus, Elisabeth publicly conveyed her Lutheran beliefs by receiving communion in both forms, just as her mother had done a little over ten years earlier. Erich was not troubled by his wife's conversion—or at least he did not admit being concerned about



it—but noted, “Since our spouse does not hinder us in our faith, we want her to be unrestricted in hers.”<sup>4</sup> Unlike her mother, daughter Elisabeth could begin to practice her faith without the intervention of her husband.

Despite the tolerant attitude of Erich, the religious-political situation in Germany was nothing but settled. More than two decades after Martin Luther’s posting of the Ninety-Five Theses in 1517, Catholic and different Protestant denominations continued to compete for the favor of German rulers. Erich died in July 1540, which opened new opportunities for Elisabeth to spread Lutheranism in the ducal territories of Braunschweig, Calenberg, and Göttingen. In his will, Erich assigned Elisabeth the role of regent until their son Erich II would come of age. Elisabeth was also made the guardian of their children together with her brother Joachim II and Philipp of Hesse. This was in line with contemporary views that widowed women were not competent to be guardians of their children alone, so a male guardian was practically always assigned too.

Elisabeth’s regency lasted from 1540 to 1545. During those years, she not only prepared the duchy for her son but also, and more importantly, encouraged the spread of Lutheran faith among her subjects as well as strengthening it in her own children. In the Lutheranizing of the duchy, she acted tenaciously with the support of two men specifically: Philipp of Hesse and Antonius Corvinus. The former was an important political ally, and the latter offered guidance in practical matters concerning ecclesiastical life.

Corvinus was appointed the superintendent of the duchy in 1542. The relationship between Elisabeth and Antonius Corvinus has been deemed as a typical form of cooperation between a pastor and a female ruler.<sup>5</sup> The idea of a spiritual companionship between a male pastor and a theologically or spiritually motivated, usually upper-class woman has been rather common in Western Christianity since the early church. Male pastors or confessors were to authorize and record the theological and spiritual actions of the woman. Corvinus played this role in the relationship with Elisabeth. In reforming duchies and principalities, the impact of the ruler was vital, whereas in the imperial cities, the city councils were in charge. For the reforms to succeed, the ruler needed the support of the estates. Elisabeth earned this support through her letter-writing and by personal meetings, attending church visitations, and facilitating a church order (*Calenberger Kirchenordnung*),<sup>6</sup> which was written by Corvinus, with Elisabeth actively participating in the process. It contained instructions on, for instance, adherence to the principles of the Augsburg Confession (1530), the teaching and education of the laity, the theology and practice of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, stipulations for cloister life and the fate of the existing cloister, and relief for the poor in the region. In May 1542, the order was prepared and sent along with Elisabeth’s cover letter to all proper recipients (such as nobility and clerics, cloisters in the area, and city councils). By 1544, the duchy was widely adopting the Lutheran confession.

To strengthen her subjects in their new faith, Elisabeth had Corvinus to prepare a hymnbook for them as well.

Even though Elisabeth herself was an active writer, it was not until 1545 that her first published text came out in print. It was a public letter (*Sendbrief*) directed at her subjects, in which she fortified them in their faith and offered them encouragement in the difficult times Protestants were facing. In the letter and elsewhere in her other texts, she pictured herself as the loving mother of her subjects. The motherly rhetoric was thus extended from familial relationships to those between a ruler and her subjects. As a phenomenon, the extension of a motherly calling was rather common in the texts of publicly active women of the Reformation era. One of Elisabeth's contemporaries, Italian scholar Olimpia Morata (1526–1555), for instance, described her writings as the offspring she carried and gave birth to. Lay reformer Katharina Schütz Zell (1498–1562) from Strasbourg saw herself as a church mother, a caretaker of the whole Protestant society of Strasbourg and its surroundings. This kind of expansion of the motherly role—or social mothering—that becomes evident in the texts and actions of Reformation era women was especially suitable in a time when motherhood was emphasized in a new intensity as the purpose of female life.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the idea of the female ruler as a mother was a direct parallel to the male rulers' practice of acting as a *Landesvater* to their subjects.

During the time Elisabeth's pamphlet was published, tensions between Catholics

and Protestants had been increasing once again. Emperor Charles V, a devoted Catholic, had tried to solve the disputes between 1539 and 1541 by arranging theological negotiations, but the leading churchmen could not find a common understanding of faith and practice. Charles, keen to find a solution to the religious disagreements dividing his empire, began to plan an armed intervention. The threat to the Lutheran faith in Elisabeth's territory did not come only from the outside, however.

### Challenging Times

In December 1545, Erich II began to rule the duchy. Elisabeth did her best to ensure that her tireless work in making and maintaining the territory as Lutheran would continue. Before Erich II stepped on the throne, Elisabeth wrote her son a *Fürstenspiegel*, a "mirror for the prince."<sup>8</sup> As a well-meaning mother and out of a loyal heart, as Elisabeth herself noted in the preface, she offered Erich II instructions for ruling as a Lutheran duke. Elisabeth had educated all her children in Lutheran faith, and she had also tried to strengthen Lutheranism through family politics: for example, by arranging confessionally suitable spouses for her offspring. Erich II married Sidonia von Sachsen (1518–1575), a Lutheran daughter of Heinrich von Sachsen, but to his mother's disappointment, Erich would ally himself with Catholic princes already in 1546. The relationship between mother and son became increasingly strained. In May 1546, Elisabeth married Poppo

XII, Count of Henneberg-Schleusingen (1513–1574), without Erich II being present at the wedding.

The war between Charles V and the Protestant Schmalkaldic League burst out in the summer of 1546. The emperor targeted his first attack against the elector of Saxony, Johann Friedrich, a maternal relative of Elisabeth and the leader of the Schmalkaldic League. The war ended in the Protestants' defeat, and it seemed that Protestants were in a desperate situation by spring 1547. In 1548, Charles imposed the Augsburg Interim, a temporary religious settlement. Protestants were admitted some rights: for instance, clerical marriage was recognized, and the laity could still receive communion in both forms. A host of Catholic practices were to be readopted, however, such as the Catholic form of the Mass.

Erich II reconciled to the Interim, which caused severe tensions between him and his mother, especially after Erich had Corvinus imprisoned in 1549. Elisabeth's following years were filled with controversies with her son and others over matters of religion, with the question of Elisabeth's authority among the most burning ones. In 1552, however, the Second Schmalkaldic War altered the religious-political situation in Germany. In the Peace of Passau, the Interim was reversed and the Augsburg Confession of 1530 was finally accepted. The emperor would not confirm the acceptance of the confession before 1555, though. The Peace of Augsburg in 1555 guaranteed an official position for Lutherans in the empire, with the principle *cuius regio, eius religio*, which gave

the rulers the power to decide the official religion (Catholic or Lutheran) of their territories. The treaty was signed only three months after the death of Elisabeth's mother, her zealous religious inspirer, who passed away in June 1555.

In the spirit of the Peace of Passau, and in a new alliance with Albrecht von Preussen (1490–1568), his brother-in-law, Erich II declared his duchy Lutheran in May 1553. Elisabeth was one of the key agents in this process: she arranged the alliance between her son and son-in-law. Elisabeth's role in encouraging the alliance was based on her warm personal relations with Albrecht, who had married her daughter Anna Maria (1532–1568) in 1550, and in their shared Lutheran sympathies. Elisabeth and Albrecht had been acquainted for several years before the marriage, and their intensive correspondence is an evidence of the mutual importance of the relationship personally, religiously, and politically.<sup>9</sup>

Jane Couchman has documented Elisabeth's personal competence in the intricate and changing religious-political scene by noting that her "struggles to establish the Lutheran faith reveal the depth of her theological erudition, and her political wisdom and tenacity in a complex situation."<sup>10</sup> The inventory of Elisabeth's possessions, made in 1539, is proof of her intellectual interests and theological sophistication. She had a large collection of books, mostly Lutheran and devotional in nature: catechisms, collections of homilies, psalms, and hymnals by Martin Luther and his colleagues. In addition to books on theology and history, she also



owned a broad spectrum of literature that she could utilize in her work as a regent.<sup>11</sup>

### Her Writings

Elisabeth's last years were marked by illness. After suffering not only physical ailments but also her exile and various hardships in confessional and familial relations, she died in May 1558. Before her death, however, in the 1550s, Elisabeth wrote most of the texts that have been used in modern research on the lives of sixteenth-century women. She composed a book for her daughter Anna Maria in 1550 before her marriage to Albrecht von Preussen. It was entitled *Motherly Teaching* (*Mütterlicher Unterricht*), and unlike the "mirror" for Erich, it could have been aimed at any (Lutheran) woman getting married. In it, Elisabeth advised Anna Maria in marital relations and maternity and discussed womanhood at length. At a time when most of the writings concerning marriage and marital advice came from the pens of male contemporaries, Elisabeth's contribution to this genre as a female writer is invaluable.

In 1555, while in exile, Elisabeth prepared a *Consolation for Widows* (*Trostbuch für Witwen*). The first edition was printed in 1556, and thereafter, several editions were published at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>12</sup> By writing the *Consolation for Widows*, Elisabeth partook in a medieval tradition of *Witwentrostbücher*. Her mode of writing, however, followed

the contemporary way of justifying one's cause by referring to suitable Bible passages and validating one's arguments on scriptural basis. Elisabeth's central concern was to exhort the widows to bear their burdens patiently. At the same time, she pointed out that the cause of the widows' suffering was the treatment they received from others rather than the "weak" nature of women. Thus, one could see the work as not only a book of consolation but also a plea for social reform vis-à-vis the status of female widows. Elisabeth was likely mirroring her own life experiences in this book, as in her former writings; only the context had changed. In her last years, Elisabeth also composed many hymns and poems.<sup>13</sup>

As for other women of her time, Elisabeth's main objective was self-authorization—that is, justifying her own right to act and write. Hence she was not primarily interested in improving the overall status of women in church and society. Her self-justification is most explicitly visible in her advice to her daughter, where Elisabeth discussed her position as a female writer. Otherwise, Elisabeth sought authority by more indirect means, often by relying on common notions of "proper" femininity. Her rhetoric of motherhood is one example of how she operated within the early modern gender system, though Elisabeth did, in fact, stretch the boundaries of what, in her time, was generally considered appropriate for a woman, or a mother.

## IN HER OWN VOICE

*The letter here, which serves as an example of Elisabeth's writings, has been selected from the correspondence between her and Albrecht. Elisabeth wrote the letter in December 1549, after Corvinus had been imprisoned and before her daughter Anna Maria was wed with Albrecht, and it discusses everyday issues as well as spiritual and religious-political ones. It gives a sense of Elisabeth as a person, friend, and mother. It speaks of suffering—or, to put it in Lutheran terms, the cross, and presents Elisabeth as standing her ground, though it does not explicitly feature her particular Protestant identity or leanings of thoughts. A few passages, either linguistically ambiguous or irrelevant in content, have been omitted.*

Letter of Elisabeth von Braunschweig-Lüneburg to Albrecht of Prussia

December 27, 1549

May the grace and peace through the only Saviour Jesus Christ be with your beloved Grace<sup>14</sup> and us all. Amen. Noble Prince, my sweet chosen and most beloved son, brother and cousin,<sup>15</sup> it is my heart's delight to hear that your beloved Grace, and your most beloved daughter are doing well. How I am faring, your beloved Grace has undoubtedly heard already and will hear once more. I am a sorrowful woman; but I comfort myself with the saying: "If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, therefore the world hates you."<sup>16</sup> Mark my words: "A disciple is not above the teacher etc."<sup>17</sup> It has so happened to all the beloved Saints. Praised be God, that I am worthy to suffer in His name. Truly, an unsuspected cross has been imposed on me recently; the dear God will help me carry it so that I will not lay under it, and [he] will deliver me if that is his will.

Moreover, my dear amiable son, I have followed your beloved Grace's advice and sent my daughter to my son and with God's help, I will have her delivered on time to your beloved Grace. . . . May God give you both his blessing, happiness and many, many dear children, who are pious. Amen.

Your beloved Grace may truly believe me, it pains me in the heart not to be able to participate in this Christian function<sup>18</sup> because of my current disposition. But who can [act] against God and His will! I take comfort in my dear God, your beloved Grace and my other friends and hope that your beloved Grace will stand by me with your advice as a wise and god-fearing son, that my wish<sup>19</sup> will happen some other way, so that, although I will not be able to be there now, I will gladly be there at the baptism in a year's time, God willing, which I do not doubt. May the almighty

eternal God, through his infinite goodness, give you this and everything else that may bring your beloved Grace peace and general welfare! Amen. And may [he] defeat the Devil and all his minions! We poor Christians must forever carry the cross. Let them laugh; however, it will turn into eternal lamentation. Your beloved Grace may take comfort in the Lord and do not let your day of joy turn into a day of sorrow; the Lord is stronger than them all; He will undo the many attacks so that they will creep backwards like crabs.<sup>20</sup>

. . . The good Corvinus persists in my heart. May God help and console him! I cannot get an answer. My lord<sup>21</sup> will further inform your beloved Grace that I cannot write down everything; for my heart is filled with sorrow and my eyes are filled with tears. I commend myself to beloved Grace and please remember your sorrowful mother in Sodom and Gomorrah. . . . Now I cannot write more on account of my sadness. Your beloved Grace knows my motherly and affectionate heart well enough. . . .

I have, further, told my daughter to please your beloved Grace in all matters well and truly, which she has promised. I intend to send her as soon as possible a pretty instruction in my own handwriting, from which your beloved Grace shall be able to sense and discover my cordial feelings and my good will in all maternal matters.<sup>22</sup> . . .

Further, I will have my daughter bring your beloved Grace the wedding shirt, the wedding rings and the bridal wreath;<sup>23</sup> my daughter will hand them over to you and prove herself to be kind to your beloved Grace. And if this all pleases your beloved Grace, I shall be delighted. I have not been able to do better in a hurry. I hope you will be content.

Having heard that your beloved Grace is an excellent huntsman, I could not resist providing you with a knife for your hunting. I pray you take it from me, as your poor mother in the eyes of the world, but rich in front of God, and take more notice of the heart of the giver than of the gift itself, and carry it for my sake, and kill a handsome stag with it.

May your beloved Grace also pray and let pray for me diligently and remind my daughter not to forget [my] motherly love and faithfulness in a faraway country, to write to me often and to commend herself to me. I have sent your beloved Grace's daughter a golden chain and pieces of jewelry. I pray your beloved Grace will find the humble [gifts] agreeable. May your beloved Grace send my kindest regards to your beloved and excuse me for not writing her; now the evening is parting, and I have not been able to write anymore. As soon as the wedding day has passed, may your beloved Grace write to me and console me again. May you and all yours be commended to God Almighty in His powerful hand, as I commend myself to you in your faithful heart. . . .

My little daughter, Miss Kete,<sup>24</sup> sends her kindest regards to your beloved Grace as her beloved brother-in-law. Herewith, thousand times good night. I hope

dear Anna Maria will restore your good night's sleep. Written in Münden, on the day of St. John in the year etc. [15]49. 50.<sup>25</sup>

*By God's grace, Elisabeth, born margravine of Brandenburg etc.<sup>26</sup>  
Countess and lady of Henneberg,  
Your beloved Grace's faithful mother<sup>27</sup>*

## Notes

- 1 Kirsi Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 88.
- 2 Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), 72; and Kirsi Stjerna, "Reformation Revisited: Women's Voices in the Reformation," *Ecumenical Review* 69, no. 2 (2017): 203. However, nearly all the few women who knew Latin came from elite families.
- 3 There were serious disagreements between different evangelical (later Protestant and Reformed) movements regarding the communion. It was, in fact, one of the focal issues that divided the evangelical movement. The main argument between Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli focused on whether the presence of Christ in communion should be understood in a "real" or "spiritual" way; efforts to settle the dispute at the Marburg colloquy in 1529 failed.
- 4 Quotation from Anne Conrad, "Aufbruch der Laien—Aufbruch der Frauen. Überlegungen zu einer Geschlechtergeschichte der Reformation und Katholischen Reform," in *"In Christo ist weder man noch Weyb": Frauen in der Zeit der Reformation und der katholischen Reform*, ed. Anne Conrad (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 1999), 7. Translation by Sini Mikkola and Päivi Räisänen-Schröder, the authors. Erich uses here the pronoun *we* to refer to himself, as was the custom in the writings of the persons of high rank.
- 5 See Stjerna, *Women*, 106.
- 6 The church order has been digitalized by Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel; see Herzogin Elisabeth, *Christliche, Beständige unnd in der Schrifft und Heiligen Vetenen wolgegründte Verklerung und Erleuterung, der fürnemesten Artikel unser waren Alten Christlichen Religion: Für Arme Einfeltige Pfarrherrn, Inn den Druck gegeben* (Erfurt, Germany: Sachsse, 1542), <http://diglib.hab.de/drucke/th-2938/start.htm>.
- 7 Sini Mikkola, "Introduction: Mother, Mothers, Motherhood | Christianity | Reformation Era," in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, vol. 19, ed. Constance M. Furey et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021).
- 8 This was a common genre of political writing in the Middle Ages and in the early modern era. Elisabeth's *Fürstenspiegel* has been digitalized by Göttinger Digitalisierungszentrum as part of an 1824 printing that includes two sixteenth-century mirrors; see Friedrich Karl von Strombeck, *Deutscher Fürstenspiegel aus dem sechzehnten Jahrhundert, oder Regeln der Fürstenweisheit von dem Herzoge Julius und der Herzoginn-Regentinn Elisabeth zu Braunschweig und Lüneburg* (Braunschweig, Germany, 1824), [http://gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/dms/load/toc/?PID=PPN531231186&physid=PHYS\\_0003](http://gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/dms/load/toc/?PID=PPN531231186&physid=PHYS_0003).
- 9 For a modern edition of the correspondence, see Ingeborg Mengel, *Elisabeth von Braunschweig-Lüneburg und Albrecht von Preussen: Ein Fürstenbriefwechsel der Reformationszeit* (Göttingen, Germany: Munsterschmidt, 1954).
- 10 Jane Couchman, "Protestant Women's Voices," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Allyson M. Poska, Jane Couchman, and Katherine A. McIver (London: Routledge, 2013).

- 11 For an introduction to the inventory, see Eva Schlotheuber and Gabriele Haug-Moritz, introduction to *Das Bücherinventar der Elisabeth von Calenberg. Edition und Anmerkungen*, edited by Eva Schlotheuber and Gabriele Haug-Moritz (Wolfenbüttel, Germany: Herzog August Bibliothek, 2011).
- 12 The 1598 edition of the book of consolation has been digitalized by Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel; see Herzogin Elisabeth, *Der Widwen Handbüchlein / Durch eine Hoherleuchte Fürstliche Widwe/ vor vielen Jahren selbst beschrieben und verfasset / [Elisabeth/ geborne Marggräffin zu Brandenburg/ Frauen von Henneberg]* (Leipzig, Germany: Voigt, 1598), <http://diglib.hab.de/wdb.php?dir=drucke/yj-130-8f-helmst-2>.
- 13 For in-depth discussions and analyses on Elisabeth's writings of different genres, see Nina Johansson, "'Die grenzen der Witwen wird er feste machen . . . ' Konstruktionen von Weiblichkeit im lyrischen und didaktischen Werk der Herzogin Elisabeth von Braunschweig-Lüneburg (1510–1558)" (diss., Stockholm University, 2007); and Wilma Rademacher-Braick, *Frei und selbstbewusst: Reformatorische Theologie in Texten von Frauen (1523–1558)* (St. Ingbert, Germany: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2017), 322–36.
- 14 The original reads "e.l." (*euer liebden*) throughout the letter. This was a cordial form of address between befriended or related members of the nobility. *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm* (hereafter cited as *DWB*), vol. 12, col. 916, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB>.
- 15 The original *veter* (*Vetter*) could be used very broadly in reference to any male relative or even to a male member of the same religious or professional community. *DWB*, vol. 26, col. 26.
- 16 John 15:19. Elisabeth omits the passage "but I have chosen you out of the world" in her quote.
- 17 Matthew 10:24.
- 18 The original *werck* refers to the wedding.
- 19 The original *das mein sach auff ander wege komme* is unclear. She must be using *sach* not in the literal meaning of "thing" but rather metaphorically.
- 20 A similar metaphor can be found in Luther's proverbs; see Martin Luther, *Martin Luthers Werke*, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 66 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1987), 51:226. See also Mengel, *Elisabeth*, 86n213. It was generally used to express the backward development of human plans. *DWB*, vol. 11, col. 2132.
- 21 The original *mein her*, must refer rather to the messenger (or God himself?) than Elisabeth's husband.
- 22 Elisabeth is referring to her manuscript *Mütterlicher Unterricht für Anna Maria*, which contained motherly advice for the bride on how to be a good Christian (and more specifically, Lutheran) wife.
- 23 The original reads *junfernn krentzlein* and refers to wreaths worn by virgins before their marriage. *DWB*, vol. 10, col. 2384.
- 24 Katharina.
- 25 December 27, 1549. The second number, 50, refers to the local custom of starting a new year on December 25. Elisabeth has crossed out the first number. Mengel, *Elisabeth*, 87n217.
- 26 The original reads "V.G.G.E.G.M.Z.B. etc"—"Von Gottes Gnaden Elisabeth, geborene Markgräfin zu Brandenburg etc." The abbreviations have been removed in this translation.
- 27 Mengel, *Elisabeth*, 85–87. Translation by Sini Mikkola and Päivi Räisänen-Schröder, the authors.

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