



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kelly Hughes, 312-280-8126
or kelly@dechanthughes.com

“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.”— Genesis 3:6-7 (NRSV)

*“There was Adam, happy as a man could be
Till Eve got him messin' with that old apple tree
Ain't that just like a woman?
They'll do it every time.”*
– “Ain't That Just Like a Woman” by Louis Jordan

New Book Shows How Adam & Eve Used to Promote an Unlikely Range of Ideas and Products— From Wife-Spanking to Craft Beer

Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden are critical players in American life, not just in religion and theology, but also in politics, education, sex, and family life, according to two scholars who examine the myriad uses of the first couple in a new book. “Whether they realize it or not, Americans spend a great deal of time negotiating their world with Adam and Eve,” say Linda Schearing and Valarie Ziegler, authors of *Enticed by Eden: How Western Culture Uses, Confuses (and Sometimes Abuses) Adam and Eve* (Baylor University Press, February 1, 2013).

The story of Adam and Eve, told in Genesis 2-3, is unique among stories in the Hebrew Bible for its ubiquity and power in popular culture. “Eden, Eve, Adam and the God who created them are such familiar figures that people routinely appeal to them to justify any number of practices: how to teach science in the public schools, how to choose a proper diet, how to find a partner, how to make love, and how to dress,” the authors say.

Adam and Eve pop up everywhere in American life, including some unlikely places. Schearing and Ziegler examine the ways they are used by both religious and secular groups, who recast the archetypal images to fit contemporary expectations. The first couple are used to to justify, promote, or sell a variety of ideologies and products: Christian online dating, purity culture and God-ordained romance, gambling, pornography, computers, perfumes, and craft beer. In strange, often humorous, and sometimes shocking ways, Genesis 2-3 has been recycled and recreated in the popular imagination, and in promotion of the Western worldview.

The authors guide readers through the American version of the Garden of Eden, which for one conservative evangelical Christian subculture involves wife-spanking, aka “Christian Domestic Discipline.” For more secular tastes, there are Adam and Eve jokes—as plentiful as lightbulb jokes—gambling, video games, films and more.

-continued-

While conservative Christians seek to recreate Eden as a hierarchical paradise where men are men and women submit to them, more secular venues recycle the story for their own purposes, whether crass consumerism or social commentary. The themes of temptation/persuasion and sin/taboo found in Genesis 2-3 are irresistible to marketers, with the serpent as first salesperson: “he is crafty, he promotes an action, and emphasizes the advantage while minimizing any of its undesirable effects,” the authors note. Eve, of course, is the first customer.

“Eve has never really stood for just herself,” Schearing and Ziegler write. “Eve is seen as all women everywhere. As advertising presents images of Eve that tempt and seduce, these messages are telegraphed to viewers as essential traits of all women.”

Eve as seductress is a frequent theme in literature, film, and music, as the Louis Jordan lyric above illustrates. The recent revelation about General David Petraeus’s adulterous affair with his biographer Paula Broadwell generated commentary that frequently cast Broadwell into the role of the temptress who brought about the fall of a man—a story as old as Adam and Eve.

About the Authors

LINDA S. SCHEARING is Professor in the Department of Religious Studies, Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington.

VALARIE H. ZIEGLER is Professor of Religious Studies, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana.

###

Enticed by Eden:
How Western Culture Uses, Confuses, (and Sometimes Abuses) Adam and Eve
by Linda S. Schearing and Valarie Ziegler

Baylor University Press

Paperback Original \$24.95

In Stores: February 1, 2013