REFORMATION SUNDAY: OCTOBER 27

To the University of Ingolstadt

Writings of Argula von Grumbach

Argula von Grumbach (1492-c.1554) wrote forcefully in defense of the Reformation, becoming the first published author among Protestant women. Born into the noble von Stauff family in Bavaria, Argula was encouraged to read the Bible at a young age. Having lost her parents to the plague and then her uncle to a political execution, she married Friedrich von Grumbach in 1516.

Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses in 1517, and both he and fellow Reformer Philip Melanchthon published works in the early 1520s laying out their Reformed teachings. Argula von Grumbach read all these works, and she began corresponding with Luther in 1522. A scant year later, von Grumbach gained notoriety when she wrote a letter challenging the arrest of a former student at the University of Ingolstadt for teaching Lutheran views. Her published letter cited over 80 scripture passages, and she directly challenged the University theologians to a public debate on the legitimacy of their conduct.

To have a woman call out eminent theologians and challenge them to a debate was unheard of. Critics slandered von Grumbach, calling her a "shameless whore" and a neglectful wife and mother. The Ingolstadt theologians wanted the "silly bag" punished, and von Grumbach's husband, who remained a Catholic, lost his administrative post for not properly controlling his wife. In the end, University authorities ignored her challenge, and no public debate occurred.

Von Grumbach's voice lives on through her writings. As she concluded toward the end of the letter, "What I have written to you is no woman's chit-chat, but the word of God."

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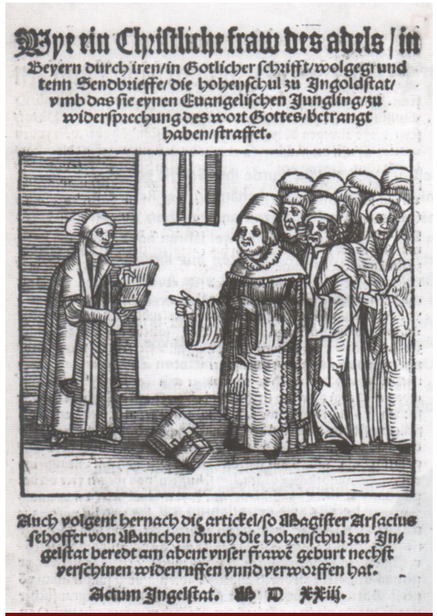
Wye ein Christliche fraw des adels / in
Beyern durch iren / in Gotlicher schrifft / wolgegrund
tenn Sendbrieffe / die hohenschul zu Ingoldstat /
vmb das sie eynen Euangelischen Jungling / zu
widerspechung des wort Gottes / betrangt
haben / straffet.
Auch volgent hernach dis artickel / so Magister Arsacius
seehoffer von München durch die hohenschul zu In-
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verschinen widerruffen vnnd verworffen hat.
Actum Ingelstat. M D XXiij.

Title page image from *To the University of Ingolstadt* by Argula von Grumbach, 1523.

At top of page: Portrait medal of Argula von Grumbach, about 1520.

PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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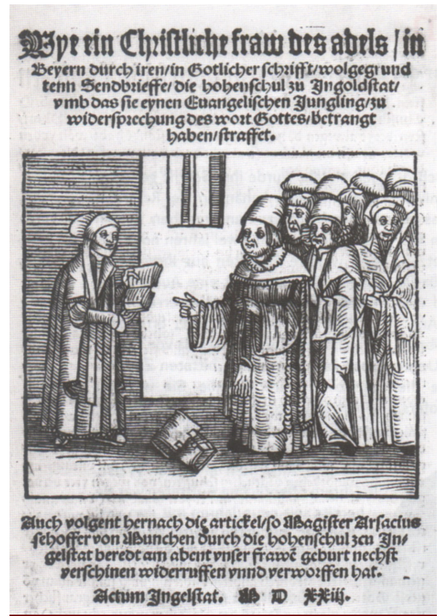
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