

Silenced Voices of the Reformation



Marguerite of Navarre (1492-1549)



Argula von Grumbach (1492-c.1554)



“I am not unacquainted with the word of Paul that women should be silent in church . . . but, when no man will or can speak, I am driven by the word of the Lord when he said, “He who confesses me on earth, him will I confess, and he who denies me, him will I deny.” “I take comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah . . . “I will send you children to be your princes and women to be your rulers.” . . . I send you not a woman’s ranting, but the Word of God. I write as a member of the church of Christ against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.”

“That most noble woman, Argula, is there making a valiant fight with great spirit, boldness of speech and knowledge of Christ. She deserves that all pray for Christ’s victory in her . . . She alone, among these monsters, carries on with firm faith, though, she admits, not without inner trembling. She is a singular instrument of Christ. I commend her to you, that Christ through this infirm vessel may confound the mighty and those who glory in their strength.” – Martin Luther

Marie Dentière (c. 1495-1561)



“If God then gives graces to some good women, revealing to them by his Holy Scriptures something holy and good, will they not dare to write, speak, or declare it one to another? Ah! It would be too audacious to wish to stop them from doing it. As for us, it would be too foolish to hide the talent which God has given us.”

“Although it is not permitted to us [women] to preach in public assemblies and churches, it is nonetheless not forbidden to write and admonish one another in all love. Not only for you, my Lady, have I wished to write this letter, but also to give courage to other women held in captivity, in order that they may not all fear being exiled from their country, relatives, and friends, like myself, for the word of God . . . that they may from now on not be tormented and afflicted in themselves but rather rejoicing, consoled, and excited to follow the truth, which is the gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . This is the principle cause, my Lady, which moved me to write you, hoping in God that in the future women will not be so much despised as in the past.”



Katharina Zell (1497-1562)



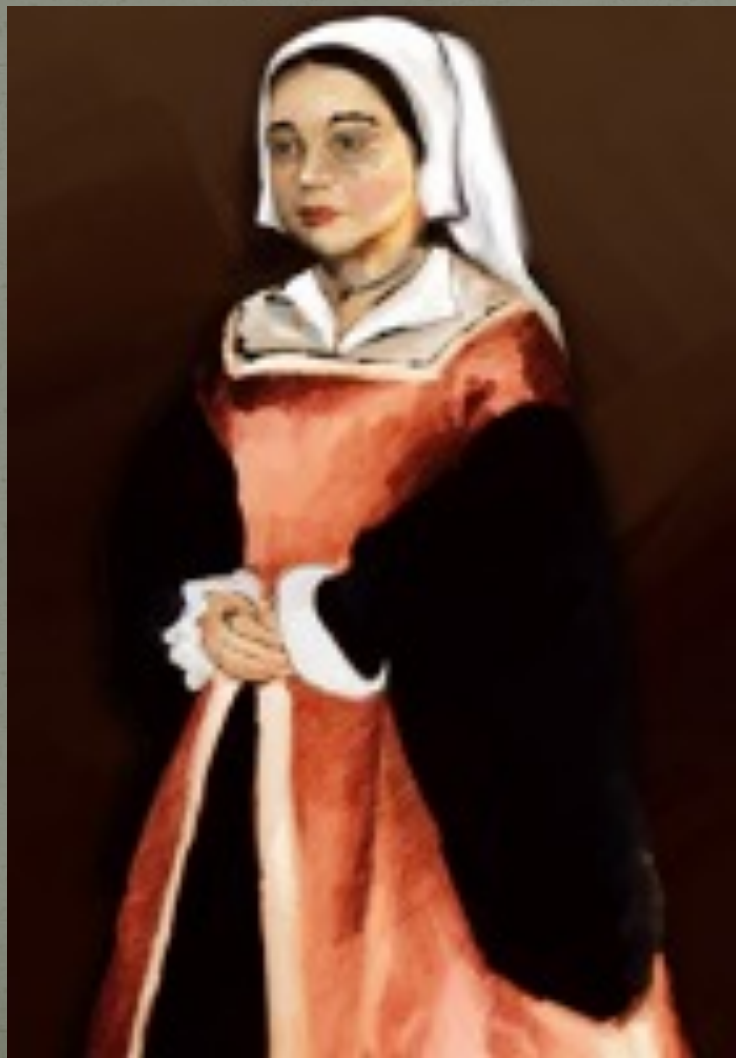
“What can I do or achieve now that I am a poor woman, who, so many say, should spin and care for the sick . . . I am convinced that if I agreed with our preachers in everything I would be called the most pious and knowledgeable woman born in Germany. But since I disagree I am called an arrogant person and, as many say, *Doctor Katharina*.”

Maria van Beckum (1510-1544)
Ursula van Beckum (c.1520-1544)



“We have been baptized once according to the command of Christ and the practice of the apostles; for there is but one true baptism, and he who receives it, has put on Christ, and leads an unblamable life through the Holy Ghost; in the answer of a good conscience.”—Maria van Beckum

Anne Askew (1521-1546)



“Because I lay still and did not cry, Lord Chancellor and Master Rich, took pains to rack me with their own hands, until I was nigh dead . . . I swooned, and then they recovered me again. After that I sat long hours reasoning with Lord Chancellor upon the bare floor, where as he with many flattering words, persuaded me to leave my opinion. But my Lord God (I thank his everlasting goodness) gave me grace to persevere, and will do (I hope) to the very end.”

Olympia Morata (1526-1555)



I, a woman, have dropped the symbols of my sex,
Yarn, shuttle, basket, thread.

I love but the flowered Parnassus with the choirs of joy.
Other women seek after what they choose.
These only are my pride and delight.

“There is no part of the world so distant that we would not be glad to live in it, if we could but serve God there with full liberty of conscience.”

Jeanne d'Albret (1528-1572)



“Although I am just a little Princess, God has given me the government of this country so I may rule it according to His Gospel and teach it His Laws. I rely on God, who is more powerful than the King of Spain.”