

Account of a Christian Woman of the Bavarian Nobility whose open letter; with arguments based on divine Scripture, criticizes the University of Ingolstadt for compelling a young follower of the gospels to contradict the word of God. Ingolstadt, Germany, 1523. Argula von Grumbach. (1492-1554)

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The account below is an excerpt from Argula von Grumbach regarding the declaration of a reformer who was declared a heretic for his criticisms against the Roman Catholic Church. This letter, written two years after the Diet of Worms when Luther was officially declared a heretic, demonstrates the influence of Christian humanism in Germany regarding the use of Scripture as the basis for truth. This letter also illustrates the influence of Luther's translation of the New Testament into the Germany language and the depth of understanding of the Holy Bible. Finally, note the level of literacy for a noble whose father had given her a copy of the Bible (probably in Latin) to read and her command of the German language in the letter below.

There is a passage in Matthew 10: "Whoever confesses me before another I will confess before my heavenly Father." And Luke 9: "Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, I will be ashamed of when I come into my majesty,." Etc. Words like these, coming from the very mouth of God, are always before my eyes. For they apply to women and men.

This is why as a Christian I am compelled to write to you. For Ezekiel 33 says: "If you see your brother sin, reprove him, or I will require his blood at your hands." In Matthew 12, the Lord says: "All sins will be forgiven; but the sin against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, neither here nor in eternity." And in John 6 the Lord says: "My words are spirit and life."

How in God's name can you and your university expect to prevail, when you use foolish violence against the Word of God? When you force someone to hold the holy gospel in his hands for the purpose of denying it, as you did in the case of Aracius Seehofer? When you confront him and make use of imprisonment and even the threat of fire to force him to deny Christ and His word?

Indeed, when I reflect on this, my heart and my limbs tremble. What do Luther or Melanchthon teach other than the Word of God? You condemn them without having refuted them. Did Christ teach you to do so, did his apostles, prophets, or evangelists? Show me where it is written! You lofty experts, nowhere in the Bible do I find that Christ, or his apostles, or his prophets, put people in prison, burned or murdered them, or sent them into exile. Do you not know what the Lord says in Matthew 10? "Have no fear of him who can take your body but then his power is at an end. But fear him who has power to dispatch soul and body into the depths of hell."

I. To the University of Ingolstadt concerning Aracius Seehofer.

How do you obey the imperial mandate which was just issued on March 6 and which states clearly that the gospel is to be preached, as God commanded, and this to be done by teachers approved by Christian churches. The mandate says nothing of the Roman church, however, concerning which I cannot find a single word in the Bible. I would be pleased to be shown by you what God has said about the Roman church. I have read in the history of saints that they were put to martyrdom most by that church. I find little good in it; may God improve matters. Are you not ashamed that Seehofer had to deny all of Martin Luther's writings? He simply

translated the New Testament according to the sources. Therefore, the holy Gospels and the epistles and the history of the apostles are considered heresy by you. One cannot discuss matters with you. And the five books of Moses have also been printed – does that not mean anything? It is easier to have a discussion with a Jew. I have not heard that any article of his has been disproved in writing. I was pleased to hear that a learned lawyer approached him and asked why he was weeping and if he was still a heretic? But jurisprudence helps little here.

I had thought that in line with the imperial mandate you would desist from academic disputations and refer matters to a council of the church. This was read straight from the pulpit. I do not know the reason; Luther does not tempt many here. Our clergy raise few questions, finally some can read the Psalms, which is good indeed...I plead with you for the sake of God and admonish you through God's judgment and righteousness that you point out to me in writing those articles written by Martin or Melancthon which you consider to be heretical. I do not find any article written in German which to my mind is heretical. Much has been published in German and I have read it. Spalatin sent me a list of titles because I wanted to learn the truth. Even though I have not read anything for a long time, I read the Bible even as it has been Luther's foremost concern that it be read. My dear father of blessed memory earnestly asked me to read, giving me a copy when I was ten years old. Regrettably, I did not follow his advice because I was misled by the priests. But how splendidly does the Spirit of God provide understanding, leading from one point to the other. God may be praised that I have been enlightened by the right, true light. I do not want to bury my talent; the Lord give me grace. Christ says in Luke 9 that the gospel will be preached to the poor and blessed are those who are not annoyed with him." Paul says in I Corinthians 9: "I am not ashamed of the gospel and will not misuse my authority." I truly say to you that light that is shining is now in the world. Psalm 118: "The opening of your word provides illumination and understanding." "Psalm 36: "You are the fountain of life and in your light will we see light." John 16: "The Spirit will lead you into all truth." John 14: "I am the Way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father then through me."



Argula von Grumbach