

(22), when the theme of holiness seems to play a far greater role in the book. The theme of holiness is hardly irrelevant in modern culture; today's churches tend to be weak on this theme, and there is a corresponding hunger in the laity for a solid emphasis on personal and corporate holiness. Servanthood, a special emphasis in the Mennonite tradition, is also needed in modern preaching. However, Ezekiel does not provide much material for this theme and so Lind imports material from other passages and Mennonite traditions to make up the lack. In addition to the actual commentary on Ezekiel, this work contains a great deal of interesting and useful material which might well belong in some book other than this commentary.

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Matheson, Peter. *Argula von Grumbach: A Woman's Voice in the Reformation*.
Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995. 213 pp. Cloth, \$33.95.

Peter Matheson, Professor of Church History and Christian Doctrine at Knox College in Dunedin, Scotland, offers us a treasure in this first-ever English translation of the writings of Argula von Grumbach. At the time they were written in the 16th century, her letters were reproduced in the form of pamphlets and spread all over Germany. Since then, however, she has received only scant attention until recently when scholars have begun to recognize the significance of her work for an understanding of the history of the Reformation and of the development of women's contributions to the field of theology.

Argula von Grumbach (née Stauffe), a daughter of Bavarian nobility, was born in 1492. She grew up in a cultured and religious home, receiving a Bible from her father at the age of ten and spending time as a lady-in-waiting to the empress when she was a teenager. The event which apparently stimulated her short writing career was the forcing of 18-year-old Arsacius Seehofer, a young student at the University of Ingolstadt, to recant his reforming beliefs. With these seven letters and one poem, written in 1523 and 1524, Argula von Grumbach became one of the major pamphleteers of the Reformation and the first Protestant woman to make use of the printing press.

Her first letter, *To the University of Ingolstadt*, written on Sept. 20, 1523, establishes the topic, style, and tone of all her writings. Written to rebuke the theologians of the university for using force to cause a "mere child" to recant his beliefs in the gospel of Christ, she insists that, instead, the truth should be decided by means of open debate, and based on the authority of Scripture alone. The letter was not originally intended for publication, but the sensational news of a woman daring to step out of her traditional role and to criticize church and state, challenging them to open debate, caused it to become very popular. She justifies her involvement, as she continues to do in almost every letter, by claiming the responsibility, based on Matthew 10 and other passages, of a baptized person to confess Christ. She writes in a straightforward, guileless style, stating her opinion and then proving it with a mass of scriptural support. She shows a broad knowledge of Scripture and a certainty that Scripture rather than tradition, position, or expertise is the highest authority. She sees things apocalyptically, in

clear rights and wrongs, and often does not take the time to consider secular and social considerations, or to make her writings flow smoothly. Throughout her writings she shows a fearlessness and joy in her faith in God.

Von Grumbach wrote six other letters within the year after her letter to the University of Ingolstadt. *To Duke Wilhelm* is written to a childhood friend, seeking to give him more reliable information about the events and issues involved in the Seehofer trial, and to convince him to remove his support for the theologians and clerics in their persecution of believers. In *To the Council of Ingolstadt* she confidently defends her actions in writing to the university, claiming that "my action and my intentions have been grossly misinterpreted" (118). A chance dinner meeting caused her to write *To Johann of Simmern*, mentioning that she had perceived his interest in Scripture and encouraging him to dedicate himself to pursuing truth through Scripture. Her letter *To Frederic the Wise* is the only one she wrote to someone she knew would be sympathetic. In it she encourages Frederic to stand firm in the confidence that God was about to triumph. *To Adam von Thering* was written to an uncle who disapproved of her involvement in the man's world of theology and politics. She approaches the matter as if he had simply been misinformed about her actions, admitting her own foolishness, and inviting him to help her see where she has been wrong, while at the same time demonstrating that it is the clergy and tradition which were wrong. She wrote her last letter, *To the People of Regensburg*, recognizing the likelihood of more derision, yet feeling convicted to exhort them to defy the edict against the teachings of Luther and to fight chivalrously against the opponents of God.

Argula von Grumbach's last writing was stimulated by a slanderous poem written about her under the pseudonym, Johannes of Lanzhut. This poem castigates her for abandoning the "woman's place," for her lack of learning in Scripture and theology, for idolatry of Luther and infatuation with Arsacius Seehofer, and for a supposed desire to attain sexual freedom through this new theology. Von Grumbach chose to respond in a poem of her own, challenging the author to reveal himself honestly and to engage with her in a public debate using Scripture instead of childish and inaccurate attacks. She uses Joel 2 to justify her involvement as a woman. This poem gives the most interesting glimpse into Argula von Grumbach, the person, with human feelings and a sense of humor.

Matheson provides a great service in presenting these writings of Argula von Grumbach in their own simplicity and certitude. In addition to the translation, he includes an introduction, a short history of von Grumbach's life, and a history of the meager scholarship in the area. His best original commentary is in his analysis of her interpretation of Scripture, of her relationship to Luther and the Reformation, and of the role of women in society and the Reformation. His introductions to each piece of writing consist mainly of a summary of her main points and a scholarly discussion of precise dates and people involved. While it would have been easier for the nonspecialist to relate to von Grumbach had Matheson included in his introductions more background information giving insight into her thoughts and attitudes, this book is worthwhile reading for anyone interested in the Reformation or in the contributions of women to the church.