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# Response to 1 Timothy 2:11-12 or its parallel, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 by three sixteenth-century Protestant women theologians: Argula von Grumbach, Marie Dentiére, and Anne Askew

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Response to 1 Timothy 2:11-12 or its parallel, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35  
by three sixteenth-century Protestant women theologians:  
Argula von Grumbach, Marie Denti re, and Anne Askew

by

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*Abstract:*

The Protestant women who engaged in theology and biblical scholarship throughout the sixteenth century faced numerous barriers entering into and being heard within their Protestant movements. Because Protestants recognize Scripture as the primary authority on matters of faith, 1 Timothy 2:11-12, along with its parallel in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, provided a unique impediment to sixteenth-century Protestant women theologians. These women faced the burden of both affirming the authority of Scripture and simultaneously contravening the biblical prohibition against women teaching. Many women theologians of the time; including Argula von Grumbach, Marie Denti re, and Anne Askew; addressed this issue in their writings. These writings offer a glimpse into how they each wrestled with the question of women's roles in the religious movements of their times. In this thesis, I argue that von Grumbach, Denti re, and Askew interpreted 1 Timothy 2:11-12 or its parallel 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 to their audiences in a variety of ways to argue that their involvement in the Reformation was exempted from the Pauline injunction against women teaching or holding authority over men.

The Protestant women who engaged in theology and biblical scholarship throughout the sixteenth century faced numerous barriers entering into and being heard within their Protestant movements. One such barrier these female theologians frequently encountered was a Scriptural prohibition against women speaking or teaching on matters of religion. The two specific passages in which this prohibition is most clearly defined are found in the writings of Paul<sup>1</sup> in the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 2:11-12, Paul writes, “Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent.”<sup>2</sup> The parallel passage in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 reads,

Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout this thesis, I will reference the prohibition against women speaking teaching and holding authority over men as simply the “Pauline injunction.”<sup>4</sup> Because Protestants recognize Scripture as the primary authority on matters of faith, these biblical passages provided a unique impediment to female Protestant theologians of the time. These women faced the burden of both affirming the authority of Scripture and simultaneously contravening the Pauline injunction.

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<sup>1</sup> The dominant traditions in Christianity have generally attributed thirteen letters in the New Testament to the Apostle Paul. With the rise of the historical critical method of biblical studies in the twentieth century, most modern biblical scholars hold at least seven of these to be authentically Pauline, with the authorship of the other six called into question (Calvin J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998], 133.) The remaining six; Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus; are known as Deutero-Pauline or the disputed letters (C. K. Barrett, *Paul: An Introduction to his Thought* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994], 4). Within the category of “Deutero-Pauline,” the epistles fall along a gradient, with some letters are more hotly disputed than others. Colossians and 2 Thessalonians are the most similar to the undisputed Pauline epistles and some scholars argue that they be included in the authentic Pauline corpus (Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul*, 134 – 136.), whereas the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus) are nearly unanimously thought to be authored by someone other than Paul (Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul*, 153.).

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. 2:11-12, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations will be from the New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

<sup>4</sup> This phrase is used frequently in writings about the letters of Paul in order to refer to any specific prohibition in Paul that the writer is examining. It is not formally linked with any one Pauline prohibition and so I am free to use it here to refer specifically to the Pauline injunction against women teaching or holding religious authority over men.

Their writings offer a glimpse into how these individuals wrestled with the question of women's roles in the religious movements of their times. In this thesis, I will do a *Wirkungsgeschichte* that examines the reception of two parallel biblical passages, 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, in the historical context of Protestant women theologians in sixteenth century Europe. A *Wirkungsgeschichte* is an examination of a passage of Scripture in the context in which it is received. This "reception history" focuses on a particular person or community in a particular point in time and explores who interprets Scripture and how they do so, as well as the impact of that reading of Scripture on the life and faith of the community. For the purposes of this thesis, I will limit myself to three texts written by sixteenth century Protestant women theologians who responded to the Pauline injunction: the *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt*, written by Argula von Grumbach in 1523; the *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, written by Marie Denti re in 1539; and the *Examinations of Anne Askew*, an autobiographical work by Anne Askew in 1546. With each of these texts, I will consider the specific context in which each woman writes as well as why she chooses to address the biblical verse of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 or its parallel in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. I will examine how the author interprets the passage in order to claim that the Pauline injunction does not apply to her specific actions. Finally, I will analyze how their approaches to these texts are influenced by their relationship to their specific audiences. In this thesis, I argue that Argula von Grumbach, Marie Denti re, and Anne Askew interpreted 1 Timothy 2:11-12 or its parallel 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 to their audiences in a variety of ways to argue that their involvement in the Reformation was exempted from the Pauline injunction.

The Protestant movements of the sixteenth century – often referred to collectively as the Reformation – are far from a monolithic entity. The Reformation was comprised of numerous and often conflicting factions. One common thread among most of these Protestant movements is

the affirmation of “*sola Scriptura*,” or the belief that the Bible constitutes the primary or sole authority on which to build a Christian faith.<sup>5</sup> It is this commonality which caused women from different Protestant communities to confront similar difficulties regarding the teachings of 1 Tim. 2:11-12 and 1 Cor. 14:34-35. Numerous women theologians throughout the Reformation era directly responded to the Pauline injunction contained in these texts, even beyond the three highlighted in this thesis. Katherine Zell (1497/8 – 1562), a German reformer, wrote:

You remind me that the Apostle Paul told women to be silent in church. I would remind you of the word of this same apostle that in Christ there is no longer male nor female and of the prophecy of Joel: ‘I will pour fourth my spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your *daughters* will prophecy.’ I do not intend to be John the Baptist rebuking the Pharisees. I do not claim to be Nathan upbraiding David. I only aspire to be Balaam’s ass, castigating his master.<sup>6</sup>

Giulia Gonzaga (1512/13-1566) was an Italian princess and widow who wrestled with the Pauline injunction in her early Protestant years. She eventually adopted the view that the commandment “women should be silent in the churches. [...] If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home”<sup>7</sup> is only applicable to women with husbands and, more specifically, women with Christian husbands who “are competent to instruct their wives at home.”<sup>8</sup> This interpretation exempted Gonzaga – and along with her, other unmarried women and married women with non-Christian or incompetent husbands – from the Pauline injunction and enabled Gonzaga to continue her involvement in the Reformation. The fight to be heard continued into the seventeenth century, when Priscilla Cotton and Mary Cole, two Quaker

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<sup>5</sup> R. Ward Holder, “Revelation and Scripture” in *T&T Clark Companion to Reformation Theology*, ed. David M. Whitford (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 32.

See also: John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: 1541 French Edition*, trans. Elsie Anne McKee (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 36-44; Martin Luther, “The Diet of Worms, 1521” in *Documents of the Christian Church*, eds. Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2011) 212-214; Ulrich Zwingli, “The Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God, 1522” in *Early Protestant Spirituality*, ed. Scott H. Hendrix (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 44-49.

<sup>6</sup> Robert H. Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971), 55. Original emphasis.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor 14:34-35.

Englishwomen, composed a letter “To the Priests and People of England” (1655) in which they confronted Friends who did not permit women to speak in their circles:

Thou tellest the people women must not speak in a church [1 Corinthians 14:34-5], whereas it is not spoke only of a female, for we are all one both male and female in Christ Jesus [Galatians 3:28], but it’s weakness that is the woman by the Scriptures forbidden, for else thou putteth the Scriptures at a difference in themselves, as still it’s thy practice out of thy ignorance; for the Scriptures do say that all the church may prophesy one by one [1 Corinthians 14:31], and that women were in the church as well as men.<sup>9</sup>

Cotton and Cole interpret that “women” in the Pauline injunction does not mean female persons, but is a reference to human weakness. They conclude their letter by saying to their opponents, “Indeed, you yourselves are the women that are forbidden to speak in the church.”<sup>10</sup> These few examples serve to show that women theologians across a wide spectrum of Protestant movements were concerned with the Pauline injunction and how to respond to these biblical passages.

Although there are a few studies dating back to the 1970s, the vast majority of research on early Protestant women theologians has only taken place within the past decade and there is still considerable need for scholarly examination. On the texts which have been published and translated into English, there is limited secondary literature. Many other texts remain in archives and have yet to be published. And, as will be exemplified later in this thesis with the treatment of Marie Denti re and her *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, many texts written by women theologians were actively suppressed in their own time by the male-dominated and misogynistic social structures. For each woman theologian in the Reformation who is known to have taken up the question of the Pauline injunction, there are still more yet to be discovered, as well as

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<sup>8</sup> Bainton, *Women in the Reformation in Germany and Italy*, 177.

<sup>9</sup> Priscilla Cotton and Mary Cole, “To the Priests and People of England,” in *Radical Christian Writings*, eds. Andrew Bradstock and Christopher Rowland (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 151-152.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 152.



innumerable others whose writings were intentionally destroyed in order to silence their subversive content and preserve the status quo of male domination. Among the women who addressed the Pauline injunction in their writings, I have selected von Grumbach, Denti re, and Askew as three who were leaders in their own Protestant communities, who represent different major schools of the Reformation, and whose writings, along with secondary literature, are available in English.

Von Grumbach, Denti re, and Askew were each influential in their own local Protestant movements and were in turn informed and influenced by the theologies of their contemporaries. As a Bavarian noblewoman, Argula von Grumbach occupied a position of privilege in terms of both class power and access to education. She enjoyed a prolonged correspondence with Martin Luther and was one of his ardent defenders. Her position as a member of the aristocracy afforded her the opportunity to openly publish Protestant writings and to confront powerful Catholic institutions.<sup>11</sup> Marie Denti re, a former nun from France, wrote and preached in the context of 1540s Geneva. In this locus of Protestantism, her peers included John Calvin, William Farel, and others among the French-speaking Swiss Reformation.<sup>12</sup> Outside the Protestant movements of mainland Europe, English Protestants faced persecution whenever their views diverged from the teachings of the Church of England which, under Henry VIII, still closely resembled much of Roman Catholic doctrine. Anne Askew endured torture in the Tower of London and was burned at the stake. In her autobiographical text, *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, Askew presents her own theological views and records her experience of imprisonment and torture.<sup>13</sup> Although these women and many others wrote in defense of women’s capacity and right to engage theologically

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<sup>11</sup> Bainton, *Women in the Reformation in Germany and Italy*, 97-108.

<sup>12</sup> Mary B. McKinley, “Volume Editor’s Introduction” in *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre and Preface to a Sermon by John Calvin* by Marie Denti re (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 1-5.

in the Reformation, their writings do not represent a cohesive women's Reformation. Within the context of their specific Protestant movement and community, each of these women theologians addressed the Pauline injunction in her written works.

*Letter to the University of Ingolstadt (1523)*  
by Argula von Grumbach

Among the three Protestant women theologians whose handling of the Pauline injunction I will examine in this thesis, Argula von Grumbach (1492 – 1554/68) was the first to take up the issue. In the 1523 *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt*, von Grumbach used her sociopolitical status to intervene on behalf of another Protestant who had been accused of heresy. While theologians such as Martin Luther were obliged to seek out and rely upon the protection of powerful nobles, von Grumbach née von Stauff was born into the world of the Bavarian nobility and the protection that status afforded her. The von Stauff family was among the “free imperial lords”; where other members of the nobility were subject to a hierarchy of dukes and princes, the free lords were autonomous and answered only to the emperor himself.<sup>14</sup> Von Grumbach's status as a von Stauff provided her a shield from behind which she could write. Late in her career, after having experienced considerable opposition to her engagement in theological circles, she explicitly draws upon the protection granted by her familial connections by signing her letters “Argula, free-born, née von Stauff.”<sup>15</sup> In addition to the political advantages von Grumbach enjoyed, her position within the nobility offered her an opportunity for education that was inaccessible for most women of her time. Following a von Stauff tradition, she received on her

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<sup>13</sup> Kimberly Anne Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 17-24.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach (1492-1554/7): A Woman before Her Time* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 3.

<sup>15</sup> Kirsi Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 76.

tenth birthday a copy of the Bible in German, the Koburger Bible of 1483.<sup>16</sup> Shortly afterward, her family sent her to the court in Munich, where she received a formal education alongside other children of the nobility. Among her peers in Munich was the young Duke William, who would later be a recipient of her *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt*.<sup>17</sup> The combination of her political status and education enabled von Grumbach to be involved in the Reformation in a way that most women of her time could not have been.

Exactly when von Grumbach began to adopt Protestant rather than Catholic theology is unknown, but it is clear that she was an active part of the first wave of Protestantism in Germany. She was aware of Luther's writings and activity from early in his ministry and likely first heard about his early activities through her brother Gramaflanz, who attended the court of Frederick the Wise.<sup>18</sup> One of her mentors, Paul Speratus, the cathedral preacher in Würzburg was – although not a Protestant himself – sympathetic to the reform movements of Desiderius Erasmus and others. Based on a surviving 1522 letter from Luther to Speratus, it seems that it was Speratus who introduced Martin Luther and Argula von Grumbach, allowing them to begin a correspondence.<sup>19</sup> The relationship between von Grumbach and Luther flourished as they exchanged letters on matters both personal and theological,<sup>20</sup> and Luther dedicated to von Grumbach a copy of his 1522 *Personal Prayer Book*.<sup>21</sup> This close association with Luther had a profound impact on the development of von Grumbach's theology and is reflected in her methods of biblical interpretation.

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<sup>16</sup> Bainton, *Women in the Reformation in Germany and Italy*, 101.

<sup>17</sup> Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 9.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 32.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 35.

<sup>20</sup> Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 79.

<sup>21</sup> Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 35.

Von Grumbach's engagement with the Reformation was not limited to her correspondence with other theologians; she both initiated and led the Protestant movement in her own town. Following her marriage to Frederick von Grumbach, she managed the family estate in rural Dietfurt.<sup>22</sup> Here she was optimally positioned close enough to major cities such as Wittenberg, Nuremberg, and Würzburg to be able to visit frequently and maintain an active correspondence with fellow theologians, yet far enough away from these loci of theological revolution to escape much of the internal conflict in these cities. Early in the Reformation period, Dietfurt was an ecclesiastical backwater where, according to von Grumbach, nobody "has been much worried by Luther."<sup>23</sup> This quickly changed when von Grumbach established herself as a Reformation leader and gathered followers around her.<sup>24</sup> She was accused by her detractors of "preaching in public, like some 'bizarre apostle'"<sup>25</sup> and it did not take long for her activities in Dietfurt to gain attention. Because of von Grumbach's role as the leader of the Protestant movement in Dietfurt, the town was singled out in the spring of 1522 to be among the first to hear the religious ordinance issued by the Catholic authorities in Munich against the spread of Lutheran texts and ideas.<sup>26</sup> Her husband Frederick von Grumbach, who had never supported her Protestant beliefs, was the ducal administrator responsible for enforcing this edict. Frederick had no success in limiting von Grumbach's activities and saw that his reputation, his honor, and the respect of his peers were at risk. Until this point, von Grumbach's Protestant activity had been limited to her leadership of the Reformation movement in Dietfurt and her correspondences with other German theologians. This changed dramatically in August of 1523 when von Grumbach reached out to a broad audience with the publication of her first pamphlet – a polemical

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 23.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 37.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 37-38.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 38.

challenge to the authorities at the University of Ingolstadt, reprimanding them for their persecution of her fellow Protestant, Arsacius Seehofer.

The Seehofer affair illustrates the intertwined relationship of politics and religion in sixteenth-century Germany; as a theologian and a noblewoman, von Grumbach was uniquely positioned to intercede. In 1522, Arsacius Seehofer, a young scholar and instructor at the University of Ingolstadt, came under suspicion as his lectures imitated the Protestant theology of Seehofer's former professors in Wittenberg, Philip Melanchthon and Andreas Karlstadt.<sup>27</sup> Seehofer was arrested in 1523 and would have been turned over to the bishops to be tried on charges of heresy if not for the influence of his wealthy family. Seehofer's father intervened and arranged for his son's case to be heard by the University, under the authority of Duke William.<sup>28</sup> Although the conflict that precipitated Seehofer's arrest was a religious question, the Duke was persuaded to take charge under the argument that because Ingolstadt was a ducal university, it would undermine the Duke's authority to allow an internal university matter to be tried by the bishops.<sup>29</sup> During his interrogation by the University authorities, Seehofer narrowly avoided the stake by recanting his Protestant beliefs and was instead sentenced to life imprisonment.<sup>30</sup> Von Grumbach followed these events closely and was most likely kept informed of their unfolding through the firsthand accounts of her brother Marcellus, who was at the time a student at the University of Ingolstadt.<sup>31</sup> Since jurisdiction had been established as a matter for the political sphere rather than the religious authorities, von Grumbach saw a space in which she, as both a Protestant theologian and German noblewoman, was uniquely positioned to intervene. Within

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 38.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 41.

<sup>28</sup> Bainton, *Women in the Reformation in Germany and Italy*, 100.

<sup>29</sup> Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 42.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 46. Seehofer did not long tolerate his imprisonment. Soon after his sentencing, he escaped and moved to Württemberg where he established himself as a Lutheran pastor.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 43.

two weeks she had composed a *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt* that she delivered simultaneously to the University authorities and, along with a personal letter, to Duke William.<sup>32</sup> Her letter was quickly picked up by a printer in Nuremburg and distributed throughout Germany and into neighboring regions of Europe. Demand for her pamphlet was so high that the printer had to print fourteen different editions in the first two months alone.<sup>33</sup>

In the *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt*, von Grumbach anticipates that her opponents would attempt to silence her by referencing 1 Timothy 2:11-12, and so she includes a preemptive defense of her right to speak by explaining why this passage is not sufficient to prevent her from speaking. Von Grumbach's choice to address the Pauline injunction in her pamphlet itself, rather than responding to her critics afterward, shows that she was already aware of the misogynistic leanings of certain members of her audience. The investigation of Arsacius Seehofer had been overseen by a Catholic professor of Canon Law, George Hauer, who was outspoken in his animosity toward Protestants and especially Protestant women. Some scholars suggest that his numerous diatribes against the "wretched, pathetic daughter of Eve," were specifically targeted against von Grumbach.<sup>34</sup> Later writings by von Grumbach evidence the disdain with which she regarded Hauer and her frustration with his abusive and misogynistic sermons.<sup>35</sup> This personal animosity between Hauer and von Grumbach, as well as her foreknowledge of his hatred for Protestant women, may have influenced von Grumbach's decision to preemptively defend her right as a woman to speak about the Seehofer case over which Hauer had presided.

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 46.

<sup>33</sup> Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 77.

<sup>34</sup> Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 45.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* 45.

Von Grumbach does not argue that her actions are not the actions forbidden by Paul's letters, but instead acknowledges Paul's word and then interprets it through a Gospel passage and the words of an Old Testament prophet:

I am not unacquainted with the word of Paul that women should be silent in church (1 Tim 1:2[*sic*]) 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 I will confess and he who denies me, him I will deny,' (Matt. 10, Luke 9) and I take comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah (3:12, but not exact), "I will send you children to be your princes and women to be your rulers."<sup>36</sup>

Von Grumbach's defense of her right to speak in response to 1 Timothy 2:11-12 relies on three main points: (1) in a particular circumstance "when no man can or will speak," the Pauline injunction is deauthorized in favor of (2) assigning to the Gospel passages of Matthew 10:32-33 and Luke 9:26 a higher degree of authority, and (3) she locates herself within the prophetic promise of Isaiah that women will be the rulers of the people.

In her first point, von Grumbach stands on Luther's own interpretation of this passage. An important part of Lutheran theology was the concept of the priesthood of all believers. Early in Luther's ministry, Catholic authorities challenged him. They argued that by proclaiming a priesthood of all believers, Luther was violating the Pauline injunction which mandated the "exclusion of women from preaching and sacramental positions."<sup>37</sup> This accusation necessitated a response from Luther in order both to show that he still held the Pauline injunction as authoritative Scripture and to uphold his own doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. In 1521, Luther responded to his Catholic opponents by interpreting the Pauline injunction to mean that "Paul forbids women to preach in the congregation where men are present who are skilled in

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<sup>36</sup> Bainton, *Women in the Reformation in Germany and Italy*, 97-98.

<sup>37</sup> Karen E. Spierling, "Women, Marriage, and Family" in *T&T Clark Companion to Reformation Theology*, ed. David M. Whitford (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 186.

speaking.”<sup>38</sup> Luther’s interpretation makes the Pauline injunction a permeable barrier, rather than an absolute one. He maintains the predominant view of his time that women should be excluded from active ministry, but also asserts that “if no man were to preach, then it would be necessary for women to preach.”<sup>39</sup> Luther responded to the Pauline injunction in a way that both preserved his teachings regarding the priesthood of all believers and maintained the hierarchy of men over women within Christianity. When von Grumbach claims in her *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt* that she is free to speak openly “when no man will or can speak,”<sup>40</sup> she is echoing Luther’s writing on this passage. While von Grumbach begins her response to the Pauline injunction by referring to Luther’s writings, she does not accept Luther’s interpretation as the final word on this passage. Furthermore, her delay of only two weeks between Seehofer’s conviction and the delivery of her letter to the University and to Duke William, suggests that she had no interest in waiting to see if any male theologians would step forward, but that this point was merely “an excuse to justify what she felt she must do anyway.”<sup>41</sup>

After grounding her argument in Luther, von Grumbach turns to the Gospels to find support of her right to speak. She quotes Matthew 10 and Luke 9, where Jesus says “He who confesses me on earth, him I will confess and he who denies me, him I will deny.”<sup>42</sup> Von Grumbach says that she is driven by this passage to speak. The language of being driven indicates, I would suggest, that she considers silence in this circumstance to constitute a denial of the Lord, and that Jesus’s words here are, in fact, a commandment to speak. After introducing the Pauline injunction, von Grumbach raises Jesus’ commandment that the faithful confess him on

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<sup>38</sup> John L. Thompson, “Rules proved by exception: Women in the sixteenth century” in *A Companion to Paul in the Reformation*, ed. Holder, R. Ward (Leiden: Brill, 2009) 530.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Bainton, *Women in the Reformation in Germany and Italy*, 97-98.

<sup>41</sup> Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 46.

<sup>42</sup> Bainton, *Women in the Reformation in Germany and Italy*, 97-98.



earth in order that he will confess them in heaven. In so doing, she creates a contrast between Paul's command that women be silent and Jesus' command that the faithful confess him. Faced with these opposing passages, von Grumbach assigns a higher authority to the warning of Jesus over the commands of Paul. In the Lutheran school of biblical interpretation, the Word of God is professed as the ultimate authority which governs faith. But this does not mean that all Scripture is received as equally authoritative. For Luther, Scripture is only the authoritative Word of God insofar as Jesus Christ is found in it and insofar as the text "drives Christ."<sup>43</sup> By this measure, he is free to authorize and deauthorize specific books or passages within Scripture on the basis of how well they reveal Jesus Christ.<sup>44</sup> Von Grumbach follows the same principle of biblical interpretation when she rejects Paul's teaching in favor of Jesus'. For von Grumbach, it is more important to obey Jesus' command to confess him on earth in order that he will confess her in heaven than it is to obey the Pauline injunction. The words of the Gospel drive her to speak out, despite the words of Paul ordering her to be silent.

Finally, von Grumbach appeals to the Old Testament and places herself within the context of Isaiah's prophetic promise: "I will send you children to be your princes and women to be your rulers."<sup>45</sup> She stands on the foundation of this Scripture passage to suggest that her

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<sup>43</sup> Was christum triebet. For more on Luther's theology of Scriptural authority, see Pol, Andrew J. "Was Christum Triebet": A Survey of an Authoritative and Unifying Principle in Luther's View of Scripture.

<sup>44</sup> Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity: Volume 2, the Reformation to the Present Day* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1985), 29-30.

<sup>45</sup> Bainton, *Women in the Reformation in Germany and Italy*, 97-98. The context for the passage in Isaiah makes it clear that the prospect of children as princes (also translated as oppressors) and women as rulers is not a positive event, but rather is a sign of the failings of the government and social establishment. Although von Grumbach does not provide an in-depth interpretation of this verse, it is possible that she (like other Christian women before her, including Hildegard von Bingen) employed this verse not only because it grants access for women to speak with authority but also because it serves as a condemnation of the male leadership that has – to use the language of Isaiah – led Jerusalem to stumble and Judah to fall. Is. 3:8-12, NRSV: For Jerusalem has stumbled / and Judah has fallen, / because their speech and their deeds are against the LORD, / defying his glorious presence. / <sup>9</sup> The look on their faces bears witness against them; / they proclaim their sin like Sodom, / they do not hide it. / Woe to them! / For they have brought evil on themselves. / <sup>10</sup> Tell the innocent how fortunate they are, / for they shall eat the fruit of their labours. / <sup>11</sup> Woe to the guilty! How unfortunate they are, / for

involvement with the Reformation and her intercession into the Seehofer affair is far from a sinful transgression of her proper role as a woman, but rather it is something she is called to do by God. The appeal to Isaiah provides a finishing touch to von Grumbach's response to 1 Timothy 2:11-12. In the space of a single, previously quoted, sentence in her *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt*, von Grumbach moves away from Paul's command that women be silent, to Jesus's encouragement that the faithful confess him, and finally to Isaiah's prophecy that women will lead and that the leadership of women is within the order of things ordained by God.

Among Protestant women who respond to the Pauline prohibition against women teaching and speaking authoritatively, von Grumbach stands out because of the manner in which she directly confronts the Catholic authorities. Her letter combines "aristocratic confidence and evangelical fervor"<sup>46</sup> in a way that few other Protestants of her time could manage. As a member of the aristocracy, von Grumbach was free to openly challenge the both religious and secular authorities without being handed over to either the bishops or the duke for trial. For a time this meant that she was free to act with impunity, but eventually she did face adverse consequences for her involvement in the Reformation. Duke William was persuaded by his brother Louis that von Grumbach's interference in the Seehofer affair was an insult to his authority and that her preaching needed to be stopped.<sup>47</sup> Although they could not act directly against von Grumbach for fear of offending the von Stauff family, they could indirectly punish her through her husband, who was a ducal administrator and member of the lower nobility. Louis summoned Frederick von Grumbach and berated him that "as the man, he should not have permitted his woman to

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what their hands have done shall be done to them. / <sup>12</sup> My people—children are their oppressors, / and women rule over them. / O my people, your leaders mislead you, / and confuse the course of your paths.

<sup>46</sup> Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 51.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 65-66.

write such improper letters.”<sup>48</sup> Duke William and Louis left von Grumbach “to the discipline of her husband with authority to chop off a few fingers, and if he strangled her he would not be brought to account.”<sup>49</sup> Thereupon Frederick was fired from his position and the von Grumbach family was forced to leave Dietfurt.<sup>50</sup> Frederick had never accepted his wife’s Protestant theology and, after he lost his position and reputation, he took it upon himself to punish her for her religious fervor. In a letter asking for aid from her cousin and fellow noble, Adam von Thering, von Grumbach reported that her husband had been “persecuting the Christian in her.”<sup>51</sup> Martin Luther expressed his deep concern for her wellbeing in a letter to Johann Briessman: “[von Grumbach’s] husband, who treats her tyrannically, has been deposed from his prefecture. What he will do you can imagine. She alone, among these monsters, carries on with firm faith, though, she admits, not without inner trembling.”<sup>52</sup> As Luther points out, even in the face of violence and persecution, von Grumbach did not forsake her writing publically about her Protestant beliefs. For the rest of her life, she continued to write and to speak boldly, relying on her position within the high nobility to afford her some protection against recrimination. In 1524, facing opposition from the Duke and her husband, von Grumbach composed this poem to give herself courage: “Let the stones cry out today! / While you oppress God’s word, / Consign souls to the devil’s game / I cannot and I will not cease / To speak at home and in the street. / As long

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* The dismissal of Frederick von Grumbach coincided with the beginning of the Peasant’s War. While previously the duke had been tolerated non-Catholic theologies, the Peasant’s War and its association with Protestant theology convinced Duke William to take a stand against Protestants. The Peasant’s war may have contributed to the duke’s decision to seek retribution against Argula von Grumbach by means of punishing her husband. (Matheson, 96-103).

<sup>49</sup> Bainton, *Women in the Reformation in Germany and Italy*, 104.

<sup>50</sup> Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 65-66. The dismissal of Frederick von Grumbach coincided with the beginning of the Peasant’s War. While previously the duke had been tolerated non-Catholic theologies, the Peasant’s War and its association with Protestant theology convinced Duke William to take a stand against Protestants. The Peasant’s war may have contributed to the duke’s decision to seek retribution against Argula von Grumbach by means of punishing her husband. (Matheson, 96-103).

<sup>51</sup> Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 74.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 79.

as God will give me grace / I'll tell my neighbor, face-to-face. / For Paul has not forbidden me, /  
Where God's word cannot yet run free."<sup>53</sup>

*Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre* (1539)  
by Marie Denti re

The second theologian I will examine in this thesis is Marie Denti re (1495-1561).

Denti re addressed 1 Timothy 2:12 in her *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, written in response to a query from Marguerite de Navarre.<sup>54</sup> Marguerite, the princess of France and Queen of Navarre<sup>55</sup> who stood as "Queen [of France] in all but name,"<sup>56</sup> wrote to Denti re to find out what had precipitated the expulsion of John Calvin and William Farel from Geneva in 1538. In so doing, she created a platform for Denti re, a friend<sup>57</sup> and fellow Frenchwoman. Denti re was an active part of the Swiss Reformation, and her *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre* gave her the chance to speak to an audience that extended far beyond the borders of her local Protestant context in Geneva. In addition to responding to Marguerite's inquiry regarding Calvin and Farel, Denti re used this opportunity to speak openly on the matters that she considered most important for Protestant Christians, especially regarding inclusivity of women in the church. The *Epistle* is divided into three sections. First Denti re writes an introduction that includes her personal greetings to Marguerite.<sup>58</sup> In the second section, the "Defense of Women," Denti re challenges

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<sup>53</sup> Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 47.

<sup>54</sup> In the remainder of this thesis, I will refer to Marguerite de Navarre by first name alone, as is the accepted standard for identifying European royalty. (Mary B. McKinley, "Marie Denti re: An Outspoken Reformer Enters the French Literary Canon," in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 37, no. 2 [2006]. 402.)

<sup>55</sup> Marie Denti re, *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, in *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre and Preface to a Sermon by John Calvin*, ed. Mary B. McKinley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 51.

<sup>56</sup> Patricia F. Cholakian and Rouben C. Cholakian, *Marguerite de Navarre: Mother of the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 40

<sup>57</sup> Mary B. McKinley, "Volume Editor's Introduction" in *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre and Preface to a Sermon by John Calvin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 12.

<sup>58</sup> Little is known about the relationship between Marguerite and Denti re. In the introduction of the *Epistle*, Denti re states that Marguerite was the godmother of Denti re's daughter and that Denti re's daughter was in the process of preparing a Hebrew grammar to send to Marguerite's daughter (Denti re, *Epistle to Marguerite de*

and dismantles several key themes that were prominent in sixteenth-century discourse about women.<sup>59</sup> Finally, in the body of the epistle, Denti re responds to Marguerite’s inquiry about the events which precipitated the expulsion of Calvin and Farel from Geneva. She also uses this opportunity to critique Catholicism and to adjure Marguerite to do all in her power to aid Protestants in France.

Throughout her *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, Denti re devotes considerable attention to the argument that women be free to speak and teach as God calls them. In the section of her letter entitled the “Defense of Women,” however, Denti re makes no direct mention of the Pauline prohibition against women in authority over men. Rather than addressing the Pauline injunction alongside her other arguments on behalf of herself and other women, she chooses to reference it in the *Epistle*’s introduction. In considering Denti re’s response to 1 Timothy 2:12, I will analyze Denti re’s handling of the Pauline injunction in the context of her life and ministry as well as explore her decision to separate her response to 1 Timothy 2:12 from her “Defense of Women.”

Included in letter’s introduction, before beginning her “Defense of Women,” Denti re makes a brief allusion to 1 Timothy 2:12. Denti re writes:

And even though we are not permitted to preach in public in congregations and churches, we are not forbidden to write and admonish one another in all charity. Not only for you, my Lady, did I wish to write this letter, but also to give courage to other women detained in captivity, so that they might not fear being expelled from their homelands, away from their relatives and friends, as I was, for the word of God.<sup>60</sup>

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*Navarre*, 53.). That Marguerite was the godmother to Denti re’s daughter suggests that the two women have a personal history dating back at least to the baptism of Denti re’s daughter, whose age is unknown but who is old enough to create a French-language Hebrew grammar.

<sup>59</sup> Karen E. Spierling, “Women, Marriage, and Family” in *T&T Clark Companion to Reformation Theology*, ed. David M. Whitford (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 179

<sup>60</sup> Denti re, *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, 53.

In paraphrasing 1 Timothy 2:12, she separates the actions that are forbidden to women – preaching in public in congregations and churches – from those that are not forbidden to women – writing and admonishing one another in all charity. In the second half of this paraphrase, Denti re takes the positive view that although there are some actions forbidden to women, writing to and admonishing one another is not one of them. In the very next sentence, she emphasizes the female nature of her intended audience. In the above-quoted passage, Denti re asserts that her *Epistle* does not violate 1 Timothy 2:12 because it is a letter written by a woman, addressed to a woman, and openly published for the benefit of other women.

This judgment by Denti re relies on a very narrow construction of what her *Epistle* is, namely that it is a letter from one woman to another and not an act of public preaching. While this construction enabled Denti re to claim that her writing the *Epistle* was not a violation of the Pauline injunction, the *Epistle*'s publication was perceived by other Protestants in Geneva and elsewhere to be an act of public preaching. The Genevan council objected to Denti re's writing publically and seized her *Epistle* as it was first being printed; the confiscated copies were presumably destroyed.<sup>61</sup> Beatus Comte, a Protestant pastor from the Swiss town of Lausanne, recommended to the council of Berne that they suppress the *Epistle* "because the title announces that a woman (who has no business prophesying in the Church) dictated and composed it."<sup>62</sup> Comte's recommendation to the Berne Councilors makes it clear that there were those among her detractors who recognized the publication of the *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre* as an act of public ministry or prophesy.

Although Denti re claimed that her writing the *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre* was permissible on the grounds that it is intended for women, it is clear both in the *Epistle* and in

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<sup>61</sup> McKinley, "Volume Editor's Introduction," 14.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 15.

other aspects of her ministry that she openly transgresses this limited role of writing to and admonishing only other women; and she encourages others to do the same. Within the *Epistle*, Denti re advises Marguerite to intercede with her brother the King on behalf of French Protestants and encourages her to promote Protestantism “over your people, whom God gave to you to provide for and to keep in order. For what God has given you and revealed to us women, no more than men should we hide it and bury it in the earth.”<sup>63</sup> Denti re’s request that Marguerite speak to her brother on these issues can be interpreted to mean that she intended for her *Epistle* to reach the King himself.<sup>64</sup> In counseling Marguerite to take an active role both through her own position as Queen of Navarre and through influencing her brother, Francis I, Denti re encourages Marguerite to assume responsibility for and authority over the spiritual lives of those in her territory. And although Denti re names her wider, intended audience as “other women,” Denti re published the text as a booklet, making it accessible to any literate person who could purchase it. Both the financial and educational structures of sixteenth-century Switzerland meant that this potential audience was primarily male, and thus Denti re could not reasonably assert that the *Epistle* was restricted to or even primarily consumed by other women.

In addition to having written the *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre* for open publication, Denti re was an active reformer and preacher within the city of Geneva – a fact which often drew the ire of other Protestants who accused her of acting improperly and her husband of failing to adequately control his wife.<sup>65</sup> She preached in urban and male-dominated spaces including taverns and street corners.<sup>66</sup> In a 1546 letter to Farel, Calvin relates that Denti re had publically

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<sup>63</sup> Denti re, *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, 52-53.

<sup>64</sup> Mary B. McKinley, “Marie Denti re: An Outspoken Reformer Enters the French Literary Canon,” in *Sixteenth Century Journal* 37, no. 2 (2006). 403.

<sup>65</sup> McKinley, “Volume Editor’s Introduction,” 16-19.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 20.

confronted him and accused him and Farel of being “like the scribes evoked in Luke 20:45,”<sup>67</sup> who “like to walk around in long robes, and love to be greeted with respect in the market-places, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets.”<sup>68</sup> Calvin assures Farel that he rebuked Dentiére until she felt pressured into silence, at which point she complained about their tyranny in not permitting her to speak. Calvin frames this event as “a funny story” and concludes that “I treated the woman as I should have.”<sup>69</sup> In addition to displaying the difficulties Dentiére faced in making herself heard among her male colleagues, this confrontation highlights the fact that Dentiére was openly engaged in public ministry in which she spoke before both women and men. Both in publishing the *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre* and in her ministry outside of her writings, Dentiére preached publically in a capacity outside the realm of simply admonishing other women. Although this public preaching would seem to transgress her boundaries of the Pauline injunction, Dentiére advocates for an expanded role for women to teach and preach in the “Defense of Women.”

Within the body of the “Defense of Women,” Dentiére does not restrict herself to the notion that women may only minister to one another, but launches a series of arguments defending women’s full equality and standing within the church. She addresses the view that women are lesser beings than men and easily swayed to sin – a perspective long taught by the dominant, male-led schools of thought in Catholic theology and continued by many of her fellow Protestants.<sup>70</sup> Regarding this perceived imperfection of women, Dentiére confronts the double

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 19.

<sup>68</sup> Luke 20:46.

<sup>69</sup> McKinley, “Volume Editor’s Introduction,” 19.

<sup>70</sup> Spierling, “Women, Marriage, and Family,” 181-185. These views stemmed from a combination of Christian theology that placed the burden of Original Sin squarely on women’s shoulders and Greek philosophy adopted by Christian scholars that regarded women as misbegotten males, incompletely formed and tending toward hysteria, cowardice, irrationality and lust. Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil Jr., “Series Editors’ Introduction” in *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre and Preface to a Sermon by John Calvin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), x-xiv.



standard that a man's sins are seen as individual failings, whereas a woman's sins are considered evidence of the inferiority of her entire sex. She laments, "even though in all women there has been imperfection, men have not been exempt from it. Why is it necessary to criticize women so much?"<sup>71</sup> She questions why all of womankind is condemned for Eve's sin, and yet all of mankind<sup>72</sup> is not condemned for Judas. After all, according to Scripture, both a man and a woman participated in Original Sin, but only one sex betrayed the Son of God himself unto death.<sup>73</sup> Denti re highlights the contrast that where men are *not* regarded by religious leaders as innately lesser because of the countless male prophets and teachers throughout history who have deceived women and caused them to sin against God,<sup>74</sup> all women *are* said to be innately lesser because one woman deceived one man and caused him to sin against God. Denti re rejects this as both a logical failing and a hierarchical subordination of women that is inconsistent with Scripture. Imitating the Apostle Paul's own rhetorical method of posing questions to which the only acceptable answer is an emphatic "no,"<sup>75</sup> Denti re asks, "Did [Jesus] preach and spread my Gospel so much only for my dear sirs the wise and important doctors? Isn't it for all of us? Do we have two Gospels, one for men and another for women?"<sup>76</sup> She echoes Paul's protests against division and contending factions within the Christian community,<sup>77</sup> "Are we not one in our Lord? In whose name are we baptized? [...] Is it not in the name of Christ? He is certainly not divided."<sup>78</sup> Where Paul wrote to admonish the Corinthians for their squabbling and seeking each group to exalt itself above the others, Denti re uses his words to admonish those who exalt men above women, creating a false and harmful division in the church. She connects Paul's disdain

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<sup>71</sup> Denti re, *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, 56.

<sup>72</sup> "mankind" here referring specifically to men; distinct from "humankind."

<sup>73</sup> Denti re, *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, 56.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* 56.

<sup>75</sup> Jouette M. Bassler, *Navigating Paul* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 41

<sup>76</sup> Denti re, *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, 79.

<sup>77</sup> 1 Corinthians 1.

for the Corinthian overtures at hierarchy to the message of unity and equality in his epistle to the Galatians.<sup>79</sup> Denti re proclaims with confidence Paul’s words: that within the community of the baptized, “we are all one in Jesus Christ. There is no male and female, nor servant nor free man.”<sup>80</sup> In addition to pointing to the Paul’s writings for evidence that men and women are equal before God and thus can be equally called to ministry, Denti re provides a litany of examples from both the Old and New Testaments to support her point. As only a devoted scholar of Scripture could, she details the women who can and have served in roles of religious authority through their “good conduct, actions, demeanor, and [...] faith and teaching.”<sup>81</sup> If women were truly inferior and incapable of teaching and leading in matters of faith, then God would not have called so many women in biblical times to do God’s bidding, and God would not have seen fit to include mention of such women in Scripture. Since there are women called to and praised for their service to God in Scripture, Denti re reasons that these roles are properly suited to women, and women to these roles.<sup>82</sup> These arguments in the “Defense of Women” seem to suggest that Denti re would claim women’s right to minister freely as called by God.

Yet Denti re tempers these arguments by qualifying her conclusions according to 1 Timothy 2:12. Denti re frames her “Defense of Women” within the confines of her interpretation of the Pauline injunction – that women are free to write to and admonish one another, but not men. Denti re begins the “Defense of Women” by saying “not only will certain slanderers and adversaries of the truth try to accuse us of excessive audacity and temerity, but so will certain of

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<sup>78</sup> Denti re, *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, 79.

<sup>79</sup> Galatians 3:27-28.

<sup>80</sup> Denti re, *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, 79.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 54.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* 54-55.

the faithful, saying that it is too bold for women to write to one another about matters of Scripture.”<sup>83</sup> She concludes the section:

Therefore, if God has given grace to some good women, revealing to them by his holy Scriptures something holy and good, should they hesitate to write, speak, and declare it to one another because of the defamers of truth? Ah, it would be too bold to try to stop them, and it would be too foolish for us to hide the talent that God has given us, God who will give us the grace to persevere to the end. Amen.<sup>84</sup>

Positioned as they are to encapsulate Denti re’s “Defense of Women,” these qualifications effectively diminish the power of her other arguments on women’s behalf which – when read apart from the opening and concluding sentences – would otherwise support the rights of women, as wholly equal to men, to minister publically as called by God. By asserting that women have the right to minister, but only to one another, Denti re walks a narrow path between upholding Pauline authority and supporting the expansion of women’s roles within the church.

In responding to 1 Timothy 2:12, Denti re turns the verse around and instead of focusing on the obvious prohibition against women teaching or holding authority over men, she reads it positively as a biblical endorsement of women teaching and holding authority over one another. Her paraphrase of the passage does not linger on what is forbidden, but brushes over it – “even though we are not permitted to preach in public in congregations and churches” – in order to shift the focus onto what is permitted for women – “to write and admonish one another in all charity.”<sup>85</sup> Denti re’s reading of this verse as defending the rights of women to minister to others, albeit in a narrowly defined capacity, suggests that this is thematically related to her

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* 54. By including that certain among the faithful are aligned with slanderers and adversaries of the truth, Denti re makes it clear at the that, unlike the issues she will address in the general “Epistle” section of her letter, the attacks against herself and other women are a problem among Protestants and Catholics alike.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* 56.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* 53.

“Defense of Women.” It would seem appropriate from a thematic standpoint to include this within the “Defense of Women,” but Denti re chooses not to do so.

Although there is no way to know definitively why Denti re separated her response to the Pauline injunction from the body of her “Defense of Women,” I would posit that Denti re was herself somewhat discomfited by her own treatment of the passage. In separating her response to the Pauline injunction from her “Defense of Women,” she ensures that the focus remains on those arguments in “Defense of Women” that support her right – and the rights of other women similarly called – to speak publically. While Denti re’s decision to speak and preach publically could perhaps be justified by her Scriptural and rhetorical arguments contained within the body of the “Defense of Women,” this same decision constitutes a transgression of a strict reading of the Pauline injunction and of her own interpretation which limits women to ministering only to one another. Denti re avoids dealing with a strict interpretation of the passage by creatively paraphrasing the verse to excuse her own activities.

Both through the act of writing the *Epistle* and through speaking openly in Geneva on matters related to Scripture, Denti re preaches publically – an action which could be seen as forbidden to women by 1 Timothy 2:12. Even as, by the mere fact of bringing it up, Denti re acknowledges the authority of 1 Timothy 2:12 to govern the actions of women, she manipulates the text in such a way that her public ministry does not fall under the category of forbidden activities. Throughout her *Epistle*, Denti re quotes Scripture constantly. She typically does so by quoting or paraphrasing a verse and noting the Scriptural reference in the margins.<sup>86</sup> 1 Timothy 2:12 receives similar treatment: she paraphrases the verse in the body of her *Epistle* and cites “1 Tim. 2” in the margin.<sup>87</sup> In paraphrasing the verse, she alters it to exclude her public ministry

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* 51-94.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 53.

from among the prohibited actions. Where the Scripture says “I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent,”<sup>88</sup> Dentière restates it to say, “even though we are not permitted to preach in public in congregations and churches, we are not forbidden to write and admonish one another in all charity.”<sup>89</sup> In this paraphrase, she abandons the final phrase altogether, neglecting to include in her *Epistle* that women are to keep silent. She alters the statement that no woman is to teach or have authority over a man to prohibit instead preaching in public in congregations and churches. While Dentière did preach publically in taverns and other public arenas, there is no evidence to suggest that she ever taught a congregation or preached in a church. By selectively paraphrasing 1 Timothy 2:12 in this way, she maintains both that this Scripture pericope has authority to govern or limit the actions of women and that her own actions are outside those governed by the passage.

Dentière’s paraphrased version of 1 Timothy 2:12 served her purpose in the *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre* of upholding Scripture and enabling her to continue her ministry of both writing and preaching. While Dentière’s paraphrase allowed her to achieve these goals, she was aware of the content of the original verse: “I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent,”<sup>90</sup> and the difference between that verse and her own paraphrase which only prohibited women from preaching in congregations and churches. Within the *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, there is no indication that this distinction between her interpretation of the verse and its original form caused her any difficulty, and so her decision to separate her response to the Pauline injunction from the “Defense of Women” has no apparent motive.

It is Dentière’s resounding silence on the issue in a later writing, “Preface to a Sermon by John Calvin,” that leads me to suggest she was less than satisfied with her own response to the

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<sup>88</sup> 1 Tim. 2:12.

<sup>89</sup> Dentière, *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, 53.

Pauline injunction. More than two decades after publishing the *Epistle*, in 1561, Denti re composed a preface to Calvin’s sermon on 1 Timothy 2:8-12.<sup>91</sup> Her preface was published alongside his sermon in the volume *The Behavior and Virtues Required of a Faithful Woman and Good Housekeeper: Contained in chapter XXI of the Proverbs of Solomon. Rendered in the form of a song by Th odore de B ze. Plus a sermon on the modesty of Women in their Dress by Monsieur John Calvin. In addition, several spiritual songs with music. M.D.LXI.*<sup>92</sup> Although this is the exact passage in which the Pauline injunction is most clearly stated, Denti re’s preface to Calvin’s sermon makes no mention of the Pauline injunction. Instead she focuses on the need for Christian women to dress and carry themselves with modesty.<sup>93</sup> Even when Calvin’s sermon specifically addresses the Pauline injunction<sup>94</sup> and Denti re has the opportunity in her “Preface” to repeat or expand her earlier interpretation of the passage, she chooses not to do so. It is the combination of Denti re’s decision to separate her response to the Pauline injunction from her “Defense of Women” in the *Epistle* and her silence on the matter in her “Preface to a Sermon by John Calvin,” that leads me to believe that Denti re was dissatisfied with her own handling of the passage.

*Examinations of Anne Askew (1546)*  
by Anne Askew

Anne Askew, the third theologian whose response to the Pauline Injunction I will examine in this thesis, was a Protestant in London during the reign of Henry VIII. The

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<sup>90</sup> 1 Tim. 2:12.

<sup>91</sup> McKinley, “Volume Editor’s Introduction,” 33.

<sup>92</sup> Marie Denti re, “Preface to a Sermon by John Calvin” in *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre and Preface to a Sermon by John Calvin*, ed. Mary B. McKinley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 90.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* 91-94.

<sup>94</sup> McKinley, “Volume Editor’s Introduction,” 32.

*Examinations of Anne Askew*<sup>95</sup> offers a glimpse into a different Protestant context than those faced by Askew's mainland European contemporaries. Askew (1521-1546) was a member of a London conventicle of Bible brabblers – laypeople who read and studied the Bible in English.<sup>96</sup> Although Henry VIII had already separated England from the Roman Catholic Church at this time, the Church of England upheld much of traditional Catholic doctrine and worked to suppress Reformed theology in England. The 1539 Act of the Six Articles was passed to prevent the spread of Protestantism in England and condemned as heretical “any persons who ‘publishe preache tech saye affirm declare dispute argue or hold any opinion’ against transubstantiation.”<sup>97</sup> Askew was first arrested for her denial of the doctrine of transubstantiation. As Askew used Scripture to defend herself before the authorities, her interrogators charged that she was speaking in violation of the Pauline injunction. In response to this accusation, Askew interprets 1 Corinthians 13:34-35 to say that the Pauline injunction does not apply to her actions.

In Askew's *Examinations*, she records her interrogations from her first arrest in March 1545<sup>98</sup> through her execution at the stake on July 16, 1546. The *first examinacyon* details Askew's responses to her interrogators following her arrest in March 1545. Someone, likely her husband from whom she had separated,<sup>99</sup> had accused her to the authorities of denying

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<sup>95</sup> Anne Askew titled her works “*The first examinacyon*” and “*The latter examinacyon*.” When I refer to her specific text, I will use her title and spellings. When referring to the works in general, I will use the modern title “*The Examinations of Anne Askew*” or simply the “*Examinations*.”

<sup>96</sup> Genelle Gertz, *Heresy Trials and English Women Writers, 1400-1670* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 80.

<sup>97</sup> Elaine V. Beilin, *The Examinations of Anne Askew* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), xxv.

<sup>98</sup> In the old style of dating in England, the new year began on March 25. There is some doubt as to whether Askew's first arrest occurred a year and four months before her death (if she was using the new style of dating, or simply four months (if she was using the old). One indication that she may have been using the new style of dating is found in Bishop Bonner's Register, where he recorded her first examination on March 20, 1544 (which would be in the new style March of 1545, as Askew records it). Additionally, there are indications that she was arrested three times: March 1545, June 1545, and June 1546. Although Askew does not mention her arrest in June 1545, John Bale does mention “her other knowne handelynges” that suggest there were more altercations with the authorities than Askew herself recorded. (Beilin, Elaine V., *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, xx-xxii)

<sup>99</sup> Askew's contemporary, Johann Bale, suggests in his commentary on the *Examinations* that it was Askew's husband, Thomas Kyme of Friskney, who reported her heresy to the Privy Council (Beilin, *The Examinations of*

transubstantiation. Following her arrest on this charge, Askew was questioned by several different groups<sup>100</sup> ultimately leading to her interrogation by the bishop of London, Bishop Bonner. According to her accusers, she recanted of her heresy by signing a confession written by Bonner and was released on March 27, 1545.<sup>101</sup> Askew maintains that she never recanted,<sup>102</sup> but was released after her cousin Brittainy bailed her out.<sup>103</sup> Her alleged recantation took place on March 20, 1545, but this was not noted in the diocesan record until June 1546.<sup>104</sup> By writing her own narrative of this trial in the *first examinacyon*, Askew challenges the court's official documentation of her theological views and supposed recantation.

Askew was arrested again in June 1546. Following her arraignment at the Guildhall, she was imprisoned at Newgate and the Tower of London,<sup>105</sup> tried before the Privy Council at Greenwich,<sup>106</sup> and tortured on the rack.<sup>107</sup> After Askew was racked in the Tower on June 29,<sup>108</sup>

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*Anne Askew*, 93). Askew was “compelled against her wyll” to marry Kyme and they separated after having two children. Askew tried unsuccessfully to obtain a divorce and refused to use the name Kyme, always signing her writings as Anne Askew. It was in the process of seeking a divorce that Askew moved to London and joined her community of Bible brabblers. (Beilin, *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, xviii-xix)

<sup>100</sup> These groups included Christopher Dare and the quest at Sadler's Hall; the lord mayor of London; the chancellor to the bishop of London; and finally by the bishop of London himself, Bishop Bonner. See Elaine V. Beilin, *The Examinations of Anne Askew* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), xxx. Also, Gertz, *Heresy Trials and English Women Writers, 1400-1670*, 77.

<sup>101</sup> Beilin, *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, xx.

<sup>102</sup> Gertz, *Heresy Trials and English Women Writers, 1400-1670*, 77-78. Bonner composed a confession of the faith, which he presented for Askew to sign. Askew said she would only sign it with the addition “I believe so moche thereof as the holye Scripture doth agre to.” Bonner responded that she should not “teache hym what he shuld write.” He took her and the written confession before a public audience and demanded she sign it. Askew signed the confession before this audience, writing “I Anne Askew do believe all maner of thynges contained in the faythe of the Catholyck church.” At this point Bonner was “in a greate fuyre” because she had added her own words to the confession he had written for her to sign. That signed document was not considered a proper confession because of Askew's addition. (Askew, *the first examinacyon*, 60-62)

<sup>103</sup> Beilin, *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, xx.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* xxxi.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* xxii.

<sup>106</sup> Gertz, *Heresy Trials and English Women Writers, 1400-1670*, 93.

<sup>107</sup> Beilin, *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, xxxii. The rack was a common torture device in use in England at this time. The rack consisted of a rectangular frame with chains attached to rollers at one or both ends. The subject would be chained by the wrists to one end and by ankle to the other (or if there was only one roller, the other part of the victim's body would be bound to a stationary portion of the frame. As the rollers were turned by handle and ratchet, the victim was stretched, inducing pain at the joints. With enough pressure, the joints would separate, often accompanied by a popping sound as ligaments, cartilage, and bone separated.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* xxii.



she was given the choice to either recant or be returned to Newgate to await her execution.<sup>109</sup>

Askew refused to recant and spent the next two weeks writing her *latter examinacyon* while she awaited her execution. On July 16, 1546, Askew was burned to death in Smithfield.<sup>110</sup> Her *Examinations* were edited and published after her death by her fellow Protestant, Johan Bale.<sup>111</sup>

Because Askew's *Examinations* were published posthumously, her text was subject to editing, censorship, and reframing by her male contemporaries. Johan Bale added his commentary to Askew's original text and the *Examinations* were published later in 1546. Bale's gloss was printed with Askew's original text in larger type than his commentary and marginal notes, allowing the reader to differentiate between his additions and Askew's original work.<sup>112</sup> Some copies of the *latter examinacyon* were redacted post-publication, with pages cut and glued together to eliminate portions of the text.<sup>113</sup> The *Examinations* were republished without Bale's commentary in 1563 as part of John Foxe's *Actes and monuments of these latter and perilous dayes, touching matters of the Church*.<sup>114</sup> Foxe included additional details about Askew's execution that were not part of the original *Examinations*. Both Bale and Foxe's editions of the *Examinations* made Askew's works available to the public and she gained popularity and notoriety as a revered martyr of the English Reformation.<sup>115</sup>

Although Askew was originally brought up on charges that she denied transubstantiation, one issue that quickly became of concern to her accusers was Askew's familiarity with the Bible

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* xxxii.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* xv.

<sup>111</sup> Sometimes also written as John Bale.

<sup>112</sup> Beilin, *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, xlvi.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* xlvi.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* liv.

<sup>115</sup> One example of her prominence can be found in the fact that a 1771 edition in the Harvard University library consists of Bale's edited copy of Askew's *Examinations* bound together with a history of Martin Luther and an oration by Philip Melanchthon. (Beilin, *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, xlviii.)

and her use of Scripture to correct or rebuke those interrogating her. Askew records in the *first examinacyon*,

Then the Byshoppes chaunceller rebuked me, and sayd, that I was moche to blame for utterynge the Scriptures. For S. Paul (he sayd) forbode women to speake or to talke of the worde of God. I answered hym, that I knewe Paules meanyng so well as he, which is, i. Corinthiorum xiiii. that a woman ought not to speake in the congregacyon by the waye of teachynge. And then I asked hym, how manye women he had seane, go into the pulpit and preache. He sayde, he never sawe non. Then I sayd, he ought to fynde no faute in poore women, except they had offended the lawe.<sup>116</sup>

Askew responds to the bishop's chancellor's rebuke by denying that he has any greater claim to interpret the Scriptures than she does, by narrowly interpreting the Pauline injunction in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, and by rebuking the bishop for trying to find excess fault in women.

When Bonner uses the Pauline injunction to rebuke Askew for speaking about Scripture, she answers that she knows Scripture as well as he does. Askew openly acknowledges that she reads the Bible,<sup>117</sup> in spite of the "1543 Act for the Advancement of True Religion which ruled that no women, dependents, or servants, and no one of the status of yeoman or below, could read the English Bible."<sup>118</sup> Throughout the *Examinations*, Askew demonstrates her command of Scripture in responding to questioning.<sup>119</sup> When the bishop tried to use the Pauline injunction to silence her, Askew was not cowed. She asserts that her own knowledge of the Bible is as keen as his and then offers her own interpretation of the verse as an alternative to his use of the verse to silence her. By so doing, Askew demonstrates that she does not recognize his interpretation of the Bible as being more authoritative than her own. Because she knows Scripture as well as he, she is free to interpret it for herself.

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<sup>116</sup> Anne Askew, *The first examinacyon* in *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, ed. Elaine V. Beilin, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), 29-30.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

<sup>118</sup> Gertz, *Heresy Trials and English Women Writers, 1400-1670*, 80.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* 1400-1670, 87.

Askew claims that Paul's letter to the Corinthians only prohibited women from teaching from the pulpit to a congregation. She interprets 1 Corinthians 13:34:35 as a specific, narrow restriction against specific actions by women, rather than a broad commandment for women in all circumstances. For Askew, "Paul's text is significant not because it addresses the subject of women's roles in church, but because it provides a definition of preaching."<sup>120</sup> Since Askew has not preached from the pulpit to a congregation, she claims that she has not violated the Pauline injunction. She challenges Bonner, asking how many women he has seen preach from the pulpit, and he is forced to admit that he has seen none. She responds to Bonner's accusations by asserting that she has not broken or offended the law. In the legal context of her interrogation, she maintains that it is only the question of whether she has transgressed any legal boundaries that should be of concern to Bonner.

Finally, Askew rebukes Bonner for finding fault in women where they have not offended the law. Bonner brought up the Pauline injunction to silence Askew after she had been using Scripture to defend herself against charges of heresy. Since this questioning was a part of her trial for heresy, the question of whether she should be allowed to cite Scripture was directly relevant to Askew's ability to offer a defense. After establishing that she has not violated the Pauline injunction, Askew protests that Bonner would use that verse to silence her. Since she – and other poor women – had not offended the law by preaching, Bonner ought not try to find fault with them simply because they know and speak about Scripture.

In the *Examinations*, Askew defends her right to speak and cite Scripture in her defense against charges of heresy. When the Bishop of London says she is to blame for uttering Scripture, Askew responds by arguing that the Pauline injunction to which he referred did not apply to her. She claims the authority to interpret Scripture for herself and rebukes him for trying

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* 1400-1670, 90.

to silence her defense when she had not offended the law. In Askew's response to the Pauline injunction, she maintains that she has the right to read and interpret and speak about Scripture, with only the restriction that she not preach from the pulpit to a congregation.

#### Similar Goals, Different Audiences:

##### Von Grumbach, Denti re, and Askew's handling of the Pauline Injunction in Context

When Von Grumbach, Denti re, and Askew each responded to the Pauline injunction, they did not do so in isolation. Their interpretations of the Pauline injunction were not merely for their own benefit as they developed their own theology and manner of studying and interpreting Scripture; they interpreted the Pauline injunction for an audience. And because von Grumbach, Denti re, and Askew wrote for their audiences, they had to take into account the difference between their own position of power (or lack thereof) in society and their audiences'. These three Protestant women theologians interpreted and responded to the Pauline injunction in a manner appropriate to their specific audience and in a way that both upheld the authority of Scripture and created a space in which the Pauline injunction either did not apply to their actions or was insufficient to silence them. Although von Grumbach, Denti re, and Askew each faced the same task of addressing the Pauline injunction, they did so in ways that were appropriate to their particular situation and intended audience. The audiences von Grumbach, Denti re, and Askew wrote to – and in Askew's case, spoke to – are significant for understanding how these theologians constructed both their interpretation of the Pauline injunction and how they framed it within a larger work.

Von Grumbach's primary audience consisted of the University authorities at Ingolstadt and Duke William. Von Grumbach's high noble status as a member of the von Stauff family enabled her to address Duke William as a peer and to reprimand the University authorities. Von

Grumbach addressed the Pauline injunction as part of a preemptive defense of her right to speak on the issue of the Seehofer trial. Her defense of her own right to speak is only a small portion of the larger *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt*, which condemns the university authorities for their treatment of Seehofer. In this letter, von Grumbach rebukes the University authorities for unjustly persecuting Seehofer: “How in God’s name can you and your university expect to prevail, when you deploy such foolish violence against the word of God?”<sup>121</sup> Von Grumbach’s rhetoric throughout her letter is filled with aristocratic confidence: she accuses the university authorities of greed and ignorance of the Scriptures, and threatened that “God will fall upon [them]” in punishment for their puffed up hearts.<sup>122</sup> She dares the University officials to meet her for a public disputation in German to resolve the issue and offers that if they do not have access to any German Bible other than Luther’s, they can use the Koburger Bible of 1483 as a standard, since it was translated long before the advent of Luther’s Protestantism,<sup>123</sup> this was the same edition of the Bible that von Grumbach herself had possessed and read freely since she was ten years old.<sup>124</sup> As von Grumbach challenges the Catholic authorities at the University, she stands on the protection of her noble status, saying “jurisprudence cannot harm me; for it avails nothing here”<sup>125</sup> and signing her letter “Argula von Grumbach, von Stauff by birth.”<sup>126</sup> Von Grumbach occupies a position within noble society that is equal to or even higher than that of her audience. This difference in relative status gives her the freedom to be more aggressive in her writing and more liberal in interpreting the Pauline injunction to say it is insufficient to silence her.

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<sup>121</sup> Argula von Grumbach, *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt*, in *Radical Christian Writings: A Reader*, ed. Andrew Bradstock and Christopher Rowland (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 70.

<sup>122</sup> Von Grumbach, *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt*, 71.

<sup>123</sup> Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy*, 98.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.* 101.

<sup>125</sup> Von Grumbach, *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt*, 74.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* 71.

Like von Grumbach, Denti re chose to interpret for herself the Pauline injunction before her opponents could raise it as an attempt to silence her, and she did so in a letter intended for the eyes of the nobility. There are notable differences in von Grumbach and Denti re’s approaches, however, particularly related to the vast gap in sociopolitical status between Denti re and her noble audience when compared with von Grumbach and hers. In writing to Marguerite de Navarre, Denti re is cognizant of the differences in their statuses, addressing Marguerite as “my most honored Lady.”<sup>127</sup> Throughout her letter, Denti re solicits Marguerite’s aid in advancing the Protestant effort, particularly among women. This underlying goal in her *Epistle* affects the tone she chooses to adopt in writing to Marguerite. Denti re employs the first person plural “we” to group together Denti re, Marguerite, and other faithful women as she turns her attention to the Pauline injunction.<sup>128</sup> In so doing, Denti re draws Marguerite into communion with other Christian women, regardless of status, and she insulates herself against attack by associating herself with Marguerite, a woman of substantial political power. Although Denti re claimed that her intended audience was women, she published her *Epistle* for the general public and anticipated conflict because it was written by a woman.<sup>129</sup> By using a communal “we” as she defends the rights of women to teach and hold authority, Denti re controls the conversation so that her opponents cannot directly reject her claims without simultaneously offering offense to Marguerite de Navarre.

The context in which Askew addressed the Pauline injunction was dramatically different from those faced by von Grumbach and Denti re. Askew did not interpret the Pauline injunction in anticipation of future opponents’ attempts to silence her. She was directly accused of having violated the Pauline injunction and responded to the passage in order to defend herself against

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<sup>127</sup> Denti re, *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, 50.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* 53.

these allegations. The *Examinations* are Askew's personal record of her interrogations, which she wrote and sent to her fellow Protestants in London. This creates two overlapping contexts through which to understand her statements of belief in the *Examinations*: first, she is formulating theological responses to the questions put to her by her interrogators; and second, she is composing an account of these events for the benefit of her co-religionists. Askew presents her theology in a dialogue, rather than a treatise format, and throughout her *Examinations*, she employs a witty style that "showed her intellectual prowess without burying it in lengthy disquisition."<sup>130</sup> Like von Grumbach and Denti re, Askew uses her written text to convey her own theology and she does so in a way that is tailored to her specific audience.

As von Grumbach, Denti re, and Askew interpreted the Pauline injunction, they were doing so for the benefit of their audiences as well as for themselves, and their interpretations of the passage are adapted to their specific audiences. In challenging the authorities at the University of Ingolstadt, von Grumbach takes a forceful and direct approach, both in her letter as a whole and in her interpretation of the Pauline injunction. She bypasses Paul and appeals directly to the commands of Christ to claim that she speaks according to the will of Christ, even if doing so requires that she violate the Pauline injunction.<sup>131</sup> In speaking to an audience of higher noble status than she, Denti re is constrained in that she cannot be as assertive in tone as von Grumbach, but she does have the benefit of speaking to her audience as ally, not opponent.

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<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* 76.

<sup>130</sup> Gertz, *Heresy Trials and Women Writers*, 105.

<sup>131</sup> I am indebted to my colleague Claudia Avila for her insight that von Grumbach may have been more inclined to reject the Pauline injunction because of her experiences as a free-born von Stauff. For the free imperial lords, the only political authority over them was the emperor; while von Grumbach would have been familiar with dukes and princes who acted as intermediary powers between other people and the emperor, these intermediaries held no authority over her. Likewise, Paul acts as an intermediary between Christ and the people by continuing to interpret Christ in his letters and to establish laws not found in the teachings of Christ (such as the commandment that women be silent). Just as politically the commands of princes and dukes did not apply to the free imperial lords who answered to the higher power of the emperor, von Grumbach asserts that the Pauline injunction does not apply to her as she is acting in obedience to the higher power of Christ.

Dentiére is more conservative in her approach to the Pauline injunction insofar as she does not address the issues of women holding authority over men or the command that women be silent; instead she focuses on what will best advance her goal of gaining Marguerite's support in promoting biblical literacy among women. To this end, Dentiére's paraphrase and interpretation of the Pauline injunction focus on the claim that women can teach and hold authority over one another. Askew had two separate audiences to consider: she first gave an oral response to the Pauline injunction to the bishop's chancellor who was interrogating her and she later recorded that interaction in her *Examinations*, with the intended audience of her conventicle of Bible brabblers,<sup>132</sup> who were Askew's social peers. Within the context of being interrogated in a legal proceeding, Askew responded to the accusation that she had violated the Pauline injunction by defining the activities which are forbidden to women in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. Askew claims that the Pauline injunction prohibits only preaching from a pulpit to a congregation, not merely speaking about the Bible and matters of faith more broadly. She then rebukes the Bishop's Chancellor for trying to find fault in women who have not offended the law. Here Askew is interpreting the Pauline injunction within a legal context and her interpretation is tailored to that context. She defines for herself the Pauline injunction she is accused of violating and says that she has not transgressed that interpretation of the passage. In framing this encounter and her interrogations as a whole for her co-religionists, Askew presents a narrative in which, at every opportunity, she uses her wit and knowledge of Scripture to defeat those who were oppressing her Protestant faith. While Askew's interpretation of the Pauline injunction for her first audience served the purpose of protecting Askew in a legal context, her framing of that encounter for the benefit of her second audience served her goal of both recording her own defense and of offering encouragement to others who might face a similar situation of their own. For von Grumbach,

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<sup>132</sup> Gertz, *Heresy Trials and English Women Writers, 1400-1670*, 84.



Denti re, and Askew, their particular contexts informed how they should interpret the Pauline injunction to best advance their individual goals with their audiences.

Since these three Protestant women theologians each interpreted the Pauline injunction for an audience, the audience’s responses provide insight as to how these theologians were received by their largely male Protestant communities. Von Grumbach’s *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt* enjoyed widespread distribution and consumption, evidenced by the fact that her Nuremberg printer had to issue fourteen editions within a mere two months in order to meet the demand.<sup>133</sup> By the beginning of the Peasant’s war in 1524, more than 29,000 copies of the *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt* were in circulation.<sup>134</sup> Although her works were widely read, she was never accepted as a theologian per se within the male Protestant community. Even Luther, with whom she maintained a regular correspondence, saw her only as a good Christian woman and martyr for suffering her husband’s persecution of her faith and did not acknowledge her skills or authority as a theologian. Six months after von Grumbach published her *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt*, Luther addressed the Seehofer affair in his text *Against the Blind and Insane Condemnation of the Seventeen Articles By the Miserable, Dishonorable University of Ingolstadt* and made no mention of von Grumbach’s prior handling of the case.<sup>135</sup> Denti re’s *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre* received a mixed response from her fellow Protestants. Some condemned the book altogether because it had been written by a woman. Others who shared Denti re’s sentiments insisted that it could not have been written by a woman, but was actually the work of Denti re’s husband, Froment.<sup>136</sup> The Geneva Council’s decision to confiscate and destroy all but four hundred copies – which Froment had removed before the authorities arrived

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<sup>133</sup> Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 77.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* 72.

<sup>135</sup> Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521-1532* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 88.

– meant that the *Epistle* had a limited readership. Although Dentiére found little support from the wider community upon publishing the *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre*, her *Preface to a Sermon by John Calvin* was printed alongside Calvin’s original sermon in 1561, suggesting that by that time she had gained a degree of recognition among her male Protestant peers. Askew was much more enthusiastically received by the Protestants of her time than either von Grumbach or Dentiére. Askew’s *Examinations* were edited and published posthumously by her male Protestant colleagues Johann Bale and later John Foxe, making it the only one of the three texts examined in this thesis to receive active support from male Protestant leaders. The *Examinations* quickly became the most popular English trial narrative of her era and her story was retold among Protestants in both narrative and ballad forms.<sup>137</sup>

The responses von Grumbach, Dentiére, and Askew received from their communities indicate that these women and the texts in which they responded to the Pauline injunction had substantial impacts on their local Protestant movements. In the *Letter to the University of Ingolstadt*, von Grumbach stated that the Pauline injunction did not apply to her because she assigned higher authority to the Gospel passages. This text found broad readership across Germany and Duke William’s decided to hand von Grumbach over to her husband for punishment. In the *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre* Dentiére maintained that Pauline injunction only forbids women from preaching in congregations and that it permits women to minister to one another. Dentiére’s *Epistle* generated considerable debate among male Protestant leaders as to how they should respond. The Geneva Council decided that Dentiére’s *Epistle* could not simply be ignored but that it merited active suppression, by means of confiscating and destroying the physical volumes of her work. In the *Examinations*, Askew, like Dentiére, contended that

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<sup>136</sup> McKinley, “Volume Editor’s Introduction,” 14-15.

<sup>137</sup> Gertz, *Heresy Trials and Women Writers*, 105-106.

because she had not preached from a pulpit to a congregation, she had not violated the Pauline injunction. Upon her death and the subsequent publication of her *Examinations*, Askew's writings became a well-known narrative of English Protestant martyrdom and "her name remained familiar to the public for generations."<sup>138</sup> Although the specific responses these women received varied, in each case it is clear that the writings in question created a significant impact on their local Protestant communities.

Von Grumbach, Denti re, and Askew were a few among many Protestant women theologians in the sixteenth century who challenged the status quo of male-dominated Christianity. These three women theologians each faced the same goal of affirming the authority of Scripture and interpreting the Pauline injunction to their audiences in a way that allowed them to continue speaking and teaching with authority on matters of faith. Although von Grumbach, Denti re, and Askew each faced negative repercussions because they, as women in the sixteenth century, were bold enough to engage in theology, they were not dissuaded from their work as active members of the Protestant reformation. Von Grumbach and Denti re continued to write and speak about matters of faith for the rest of their lives and Askew was revered by her community long after she faced a martyr's death.

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* 105.

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