



EVANGELISCHE  
KIRCHE  
IM RHEINLAND



# Reformation Women Since 1517



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# Reformation Women Since 1517





# Word of Greeting

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,  
Dear English-speaking reader in the Rhineland and in the world,

in the anniversary year of the reformation, the exhibition 'Reformation women. Since 1517.' is amongst many other events an important substantial contribution to the way in which the Rhinelanders celebrate the reformation. The exhibition has already been displayed in many places in Germany, plenty of people have read the accompanying brochure with pleasure and interest, and the 'reformation women' will most certainly go on many a journey even beyond the year 2017.

The exhibition and the accompanying brochure show that reformation is more than looking back to the times 500 years ago, it is also looking at the present as well as the future of the Church. The English edition of this brochure shows that reformation is a worldwide event, which nowadays unites many ecumenical partners throughout the world.

While the women who are portrayed here have all contributed to the success of the reformation in Europe, their life stories are a good example for how important it is at any time that women and men bravely stand up for the truth of the gospel and, again and again, shape Church in such a way that God's Kingdom becomes reality in her.

The exhibition's and this brochure's name is a provocation: "ReformatörInnen" - 'Reformation women.' Women who reformed or reform the Church? Yes, they were and are around – and the brochure introduces a fair number of them. However, worldwide there were and are plenty more.

Leafing through this brochure might well prompt you to ask: What do I want to change and what can I contribute to the constant renewal of the Church on the basis of its faith in Jesus Christ and the Holy Scripture and with a view towards the questions of the present and the challenges of the future?

Let the reformation women with their innovative ideas, their hospitality, their diversity and their faith since 1517 inspire you as a modern-day reformer – female and male.

Yours sincerely,



Manfred Rekowski,  
Präsident der Evangelischen  
Kirche im Rheinland



Barbara Rudolph,  
Leiterin der Abteilung  
Theologie und Ökumene



# Preface

Dear Reader, female and male,

in your hand you are holding the brochure to the travelling exhibition 'Reformation women. Since 1517.' – in its English translation.

The exhibition has been conceived by the Gender Desk of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland and will be displayed in many places throughout Germany. The exhibition makes it obvious just how significant women were for the success of the reformation:

Reformation women? For sure!

Here they are: Women who promoted the reformation!

In the anniversary year of the reformation, the public has mainly paid tribute to the well known personages of Luther, Calvin and Zwingli. Yet there were many more people who turned the reformation into a movement that would change the world – and among them many brave and wise women whose stimuli have so far hardly been appreciated in recorded history.

The women's contribution to the great awakening of the 16th century, which formed the origin of the Protestant Churches, was manifold. They play an important part in the rapid spread and the success of the new thinking throughout Europe.

Who are these reformation women?

We have chosen three groups of women: authors, who worked theologically, rulers, and wives of reformers.

Female authors, such as Argula von Grumbach for example, whose pamphlets were published in gigantic numbers, which can compete with those of Martin Luther,

Women who, as duchesses, bravely put into action what they wholeheartedly believed to be true and right, such as Elisabeth of Calenberg-Göttingen, who composed a church order for the regional church as well as the first Protestant state-ethic.

Wives, who like Katharina von Bora supported and promoted the reformers' doings and made them financially feasible.

Later on more roles for women were added, in which they continued to reform the Church. Therefore we have also chosen people like Friederike Fliedner, one of the founders of the



*Irene Diller and Beate Ludwig of the Gender-Desk of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland are the makers of the exhibition. Here they are joined by Sibylle von Jülich-Kleve-Berg.*

Kaiserswerth sisterhood in the 19th century, which to this day is still active worldwide, Ilse Härter, the first ordained female theologian in Germany in the first half of the 20th century, and Dorothee Sölle, who introduced elements of liberation theology into many countries' Churches in the second half of the 20th century.

In this brochure, we present you with seventeen biographies, mainly of women in Germany, but also France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and Poland, ordered chronologically according to their birthyears – yet there are many more to discover!

We also shed light on some cross-section topics: the access to education and clerical ministry, the life in cloisters and the opportunities publicists had – these were fixpoints back in the 16th century and are fixpoints nowadays to the question: Who is able to form Church and society?

You can find further information about the exhibition in German under [www.reformatorinnen.de](http://www.reformatorinnen.de).

The English translation of this brochure enables us as Church from the Rhineland to tell about our history and discover similarities during ecumenical encounters. Perhaps the life stories of these women also invite to appreciate the contribution of women to the current character of the Church and to discover new and specifically your own reformatory concerns.

Enjoy!

Irene Diller and Beate Ludwig

*Irene Diller Beate Ludwig*

*(translation: Kerstin Dixon)*



*Design of the wooden figures  
of the exhibition by:  
Luise Dettbarn, Berlin and  
Anke Heelemann, Weimar*

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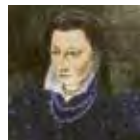
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\* There is no authentic picture

## IMPRESSUM

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*“Proclaim the  
Word of God before  
all the world”*



*There is no authentic picture of Marie Dentière. This portrait was painted by the Swiss graphic artist Roger Pfund in 2009..*

## Marie Dentière

\* 1490/5 in Tournai – † 1561 in Geneva

### Woman preacher of Geneva

From the very beginning of the Reformation Marie Dentière did not only stand up for the right form of the faith but also for the right of women to preach and to publish texts. As this was prohibited by the Town Council of Geneva, she published several texts, among them a widely read history of the Reformation in Geneva as well as a “Vindication of Women” in 1539 under a pseudonym. When it transpired that a woman had written this best-seller, the publisher was arrested and the books were banned. As so often in the course of revolutionary changes, in Geneva, too, the hope of comprehensive intellectual freedom turned into the other extreme, namely, repression and totalitarian behaviour of the new ruling powers.

She cited various biblical quotations supporting her opinion that the mission to proclaim the Gospel had been addressed to everyone, to men and women alike,

referring to quotations such as the rhetoric question: “Has the world ever seen a greater preacher than the Samaritan woman, who was not afraid to preach Jesus and his Word, to profess her allegiance to him before all the world once she had heard him say that we ought to worship God in the spirit and in the word?” “I ask you,” she writes, “hasn’t Jesus died for the poor ignorant ones and for the simple-minded just as for the men with shaven faces, with monastic tonsures and mitres? (...) Do we have two sets of Gospel? One for men and another for women?”, stating the verses from Galatians 3,28: “(...) there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”<sup>1</sup> The “feminist” overall tone of the “Useful Letter”, absolutely unheard of in those days, and the pronounced criticism of Calvin’s and Farel’s successors expressed therein as well as the fact that the letter had been written by a woman provoked the Town

#### MARIE DENTIÈRE

\* **1490/5** in Tournai

Prioress of the Augustinian convent near Tournai

At the beginning of the **1520s** she adopts Reformation ideas.

**1524** Moves to Strasbourg

**1528** Marries Simon Robert whom she follows to Switzerland

**1533** As a widow and mother of two children she marries Antoine Froment

**1535** Actively involved in the establishment of the Reformed Church in Geneva, correspondence with numerous renowned reformers

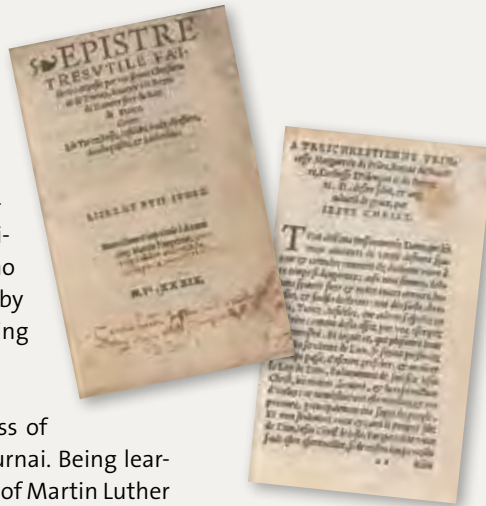
Her campaign for the right of women to preach results in conflicts with the Town Council and with Johannes Calvin. Her texts, partly published under a pseudonym, are banned.

† **1561** in Geneva



*Calvin chairing a colloquium in Geneva (1549)*

Council of Geneva into intervening drastically: All copies they could lay hands on were confiscated: the publisher was temporarily arrested. This incident marked the beginning of censorship in the Geneva of the Reformation. It was not only Marie Dentièrre who was silenced, not a single text written by a woman was printed in Geneva during the entire 16th century.



*Letter by Marie Dentièrre to the Queen: Epistre très utile*

*Marguerite d'Angoulême, also called Margaret of Navarra (1492-1549)*

At first Marie Dentièrre lived as prioress of the Augustinian convent of Près in Tournai. Being learned and erudite she became a follower of Martin Luther and moved to Strasbourg in 1524 where she married Simon Robert in 1528. The couple moved to Switzerland where Robert worked first as a pastor in Bex and then as a reformed pastor in Aigle. After his death in 1533 the widow and mother of two children married Antoine Froment, with whom she lived in Geneva from 1535 onwards supporting the establishment of the reformed faith until she came into conflict with the Town Council and also with the very influential Johannes Calvin.

ing to assert their claim to preach from the pulpit as rightfully as their male colleagues and to be allowed to proclaim the Word before all the world.

In a text formulated as a letter to the Queen of Navarra, she supports the Reformation and advocates higher education for girls, including the teaching of Hebrew. On the occasion of Reformation Day in 2002, the name Marie Dentièrre was added to the existing inscriptions on the Geneva Reformation monument together with the names of Petrus Waldes, John Wyclif and Jan Hus. She is the only woman who was awarded this honour.

400 years were to pass before Ilse Härter, together with Hannelotte Reiffen, was validly ordained in 1934. And in the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland full gender equality of men and women serving in the ministry was achieved as late as in 1975. At precisely the time when the articles of the Augsburg Confession were formulated in the thirties of the 16th century, Marie Dentièrre expounded the theological arguments and the biblical basis substantiating the acknowledgement of women in the ministry and she did that in a convincing and, for those times, highly provocative manner.

Courageously challenging St. Paul's command requiring women to keep silent in church, female theologians like Marie Dentièrre stood at the beginning of women's long campaign within the Churches of the Reformation, try-

Irene Diller  
(translation: Ruth Feiertag)



3 November 2002: The name Marie Dentièrre is added to the existing inscriptions on the Geneva Reformation monument. She is the only woman who was awarded this honour.

# Argula von Grumbach

\* ca. 1492 at Castle Ehrenfels (Bavaria)  
† 23 June 1568 (not certain) in Zeilitzheim



*Argula von Grumbach on a portrait medal, around 1520*

## Courageous authoress of pamphlets

By the end of summer in 1523, 31-year-old Argula von Grumbach takes up her pen and writes a furious letter of protest to the scholars at the University of Ingolstadt. As a mother of four children and wife of an influential gentleman in the Duchy of Bavaria she knows full well what she is doing. She is of noble birth, well-educated and the first woman to publicly support the Reformation. Her letter ends with the famous words: "I have not written womanish twaddle but rather the Word of God as a member of the Christian Church."

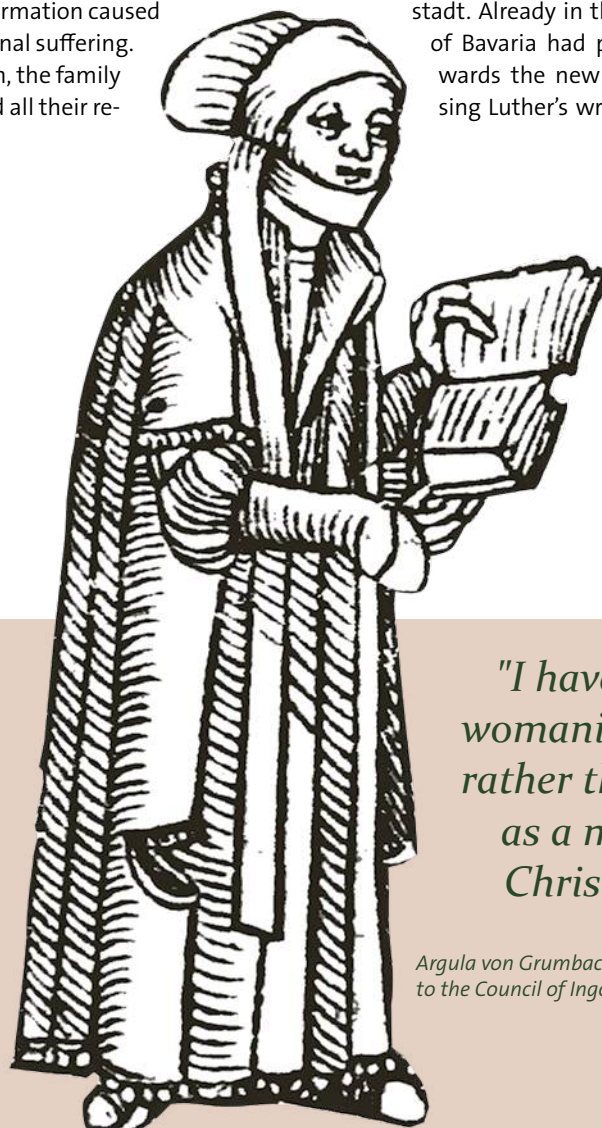
As an adolescent Argula von Grumbach lived at the ducal court in Munich. She corresponded regularly with Martin Luther, Georg Spalatin and Paul Speratus and maintained contacts to the Nuremberg reformer Andreas Osiander. Her writings had great influence on other women like Ursula Weyda, who also wrote a reformatory pamphlet.

Her commitment to the Reformation caused her great vexation and personal suffering. Her husband lost his position, the family ran into financial trouble and all their re-

latives turned their backs on them. Nevertheless, Argula von Grumbach was not to be silenced. Martin Luther admired her fighting spirit and her unwavering faith. In a letter to a friend he called her: "a unique instrument of Christ."

However, the public disputation with the scholars from the university demanded by Argula was never held. Nor did she receive a reply to her letter. But soon copies of her theological writings were printed in large numbers, arousing the interest of the wider public, similar only to the reactions to texts written by Martin Luther.

What precisely made Argula von Grumbach write her bold letter? Until then no man had ever dared to stand up for the 18-year-old Master Seehofer who was propagating reformatory ideas at his university in Ingolstadt. Already in the previous year, the Dukes of Bavaria had prohibited any leanings towards the new faith. Reading and discussing Luther's writings, alone, was a punish-



Her protest pamphlet addressed to the university was printed 16 times within one year. Seven further pamphlets followed.

*"I have not written womanish twaddle but rather the Word of God as a member of the Christian Church."*

*Argula von Grumbach presents her pamphlet to the Council of Ingolstadt.*

### ARGULA VON GRUMBACH

\* ca. 1492 at Castle Ehrenfels (Bavaria) as Baroness von Stauff

**1502** Receives a Bible in German, large parts of which she knows by heart

Theological correspondence with Martin Luther, Georg Spalatin and Paul Speratus; contacts with the Nuremberg reformer Andreas Osiander

**1523** Letter to the scholars at the University of Ingolstadt protesting against the banishment of young Master Seehofer

30,000 copies of her letter are printed and circulated as pamphlets.

**1523 and 1524** Writes seven pamphlets. Impoverishment and expulsion of the family

† **23 June 1568** (not certain) in Zeilitzheim

*“Even if I die, hundreds of women will come after me who are more intelligent, learned and skilful than I am.”*

able offence. Seehofer was forced to recant and was banished to a monastery.

Argula was furious and believed herself vindicated by the biblical testimony: “Nowhere in the Bible I find any indication that either Christ or his Apostles and the Prophets should ever have had someone incarcerated, burned, murdered or expelled from the country.”

At the early age of ten Argula von Grumbach owned a German edition of the Bible, bequeathed to her by her father, which she read frequently, especially after her father’s early death. She owed Martin Luther the conviction that she was entitled to trust her own interpretation of the Bible and to reach personal decisions of conscience on the basis of her interpretation. In his early writings Martin Luther asserted the principle of “sola scriptura”, making the Bible the sole standard in questions of faith. Luther’s axiom proclaiming the priesthood of all baptised Christians offered her further personal encouragement: If ordination to the priesthood was not a prerequisite for interpreting the world in the light of the faith, not only every man but also every woman was entitled to it, hence she, Argula von Grumbach, too.

She reminded her readers of the lengthy discussions Jesus had with women and she was familiar with the female conceptions of God to be found in the Bible. For her there was no doubt: Men as well as women are called to stand up for their faith in public and pledge al-

legiance to Jesus Christ. Firm in her belief she continued: “Even if – God forbid – Luther should recant, it would not affect me. I do not trust in his intellect, not in mine nor in any other person’s, I only trust in the true rock, in Christ himself.”

In 1523 and 1524 she wrote seven pamphlets. After that nothing more was heard of her in public. Late in life she was arrested in Straubing for reading rebellious books. Engraved in a commemorative medal in her honour we find her bitter summary: “Mendacious and jealous tongues have plunged me into misery and suffering.” In Argula von Grumbach we meet a woman who lived her own faith with courage and confidence in herself, confessing her faith in public.

Today, the Evangelical Regional Church in Bavaria promotes the advancement of gender equality through the Argula von Grumbach Foundation. In Zeilitzheim, Bavaria, there is a grave in memory of the courageous Protestant woman who said: “Even if I die, hundreds of women will come after me who are more intelligent, learned and skilful than I am.”

Sonja Domröse, Nicole Richter  
*(translation: Ruth Feiertag)*

*“Nowhere in the Bible I find any indication that either Christ or his Apostles and the Prophets should ever have had someone incarcerated, burned, murdered or expelled from the country.”*

*From a letter by Argula von Grumbach to the University of Ingolstadt: How in Bavaria a Christian noblewoman attacks the University of Ingolstadt in her missive, based on the Holy Scripture, for having urged a Protestant young man to recant the Word of God.*



# Katharina Schütz Zell

\* around 1497 in Strasbourg – † 5 September 1562 in Strasbourg

## Strasbourg's Church Mother

Katharina Zell, née Schütz, was involved in the establishment of a new Church in Strasbourg, committed to the Gospel, "by being keen to learn, by teaching and judging" (Elsie Ann McKee). She is the most productive of Reformation authoresses, of whom we know. Her diverse texts were written in the course of 34 years and offer a unique insight into the development of the Protestant movement from its beginnings to the period of denominational differentiation. Apart from the authoress' profound knowledge of the Bible, these texts reveal her sound judgment trained on the Bible and her ability to interpret the Bible on her own. Her texts also show her expert knowledge regarding the theological controversies of her time and her stance as a keen observer of contemporary developments.

Katharina Schütz was born into a respected family of town citizens and studied religious texts, among them probably also texts by Martin Luther, when still an adolescent. In 1523 she married Matthias Zell, Strasbourg's first Evangelical preacher. When the bishop removed him from office as a consequence, Katharina Schütz defended her own marriage and priests' marriages in

general in a "fuming" public letter. In the following 25 years she worked together with her husband and at the same time independently alongside him in the Strasbourg Church. She undertook diaconal and pastoral work and maintained a wide-spread correspondence. She edited hymns by the Bohemian Brethren for use in church, adding an introduction. The Municipal Authorities granted her the right to visit prisoners and asked her for an expert opinion on the conditions at a nursing and old people's home owned by the Town of Strasbourg.

Above all, however, she opened her house to refugees: Lutherans exiled on account of their faith, peasants expelled by their Lords and Anabaptists with their families fleeing from mortal danger. She arranged their welcome and accommodation in the town and wrote letters of consolation to the sufferers. In times of fierce religious fighting she offered a place of refuge to men and women, regardless of their denomination, thus providing pastoral care in public.

The "letter to the Citizenry of Strasbourg ... concerning Mr Ludwig Rabus, now a Preacher of the City of Ulm ..." is a compilation of three letters dating from the years 1556 and 1557

"... that I have not been acting in the ways of a woman but loyally and artlessly in the abundant ways God has given me through his spirit ..."

"... from the age of ten I have been a church mother and have adorned the pulpit and the schools ..."

"... we let them all come to us, their names did not concern us, we were not compelled to share their opinion nor compassion on all of them as we have been taught by our Master Jesus Christ ..."

"... those who also confess Christ the Lord together with us as far as the main issue is concerned, namely separation from the papacy ..."

"... those who do evil ought to be punished by the authorities; but faith must not be imposed by force, faith is part of the heart and of the conscience, it is not part of an individual's outward appearance."

### KATHARINA SCHÜTZ ZELL

\* 1497/98 in Strasbourg as the daughter of a respected family of town citizens

1523 Marries Matthias Zell, Strasbourg's first Evangelical preacher

From 1524 on Various theological texts, correspondence with Luther and others

1528 Travels to Wittenberg, disputation on the Communion Concord

Provides accommodation for refugees, nurses the sick and works in the parish

Buries Anabaptist women

1548 Preaches at her husband's grave

† 5 September 1562 in Strasbourg

In her understanding compulsion in matters of faith and violence in the name of religion are in utter contradiction to the teachings of Jesus. A Christian ought to be willing to suffer for his or her faith but must not make others suffer for the sake of their faith; a Christian ought to be willing to die for his or her faith but must not kill for the sake of faith. She was convinced that faith in Jesus Christ can reconcile differences. Practical action in the spirit of Jesus must prevail over differences in theological reasoning. This attitude sets Katharina Schütz and Matthias Zell apart from most of their fellow Protestant campaigners.

Her most comprehensive publications date from the time after Matthias Zell's death. She was reprimanded from the pulpit because she opened her house for the widow of an Anabaptist preacher who had been executed. In her public correspondence spanning several years she reminded her opponents and the Church of Strasbourg of the foundations of the Reformation and the Protestant awakening in the town. This new beginning of the Church was in extreme jeopardy not only because it was threatened by external military and political forces, no, the leading Protestant theologians themselves were forsaking the biblical foundations, reverting to clericalism, rules dependence and intolerance towards

dissidents. There was nothing left to do for Katharina Schütz Zell but to protest against this development. Her identification of herself as "church mother" was enhanced by her acting as a prophetic guardian who made significant statements concerning the leadership and constitution of the Church.

Luther's axiom promulgating the priesthood of all believers convinced Katharina Schütz Zell that neither ordination nor an official ministry are prerequisites for proclaiming the truth of the Gospel. To do so the Christian needs the Holy Spirit and authority based on the knowledge of the Bible and the world, enhanced by the experience of faith and life. Men and women, clerics and lay people are equally called and entitled to examine and, if need be, to criticise sermons and doctrine in the light of the Scriptures. Katharina Schütz Zell exercised the right to proclaim the Word in public through her numerous publications and by preaching publicly at her husband's grave.

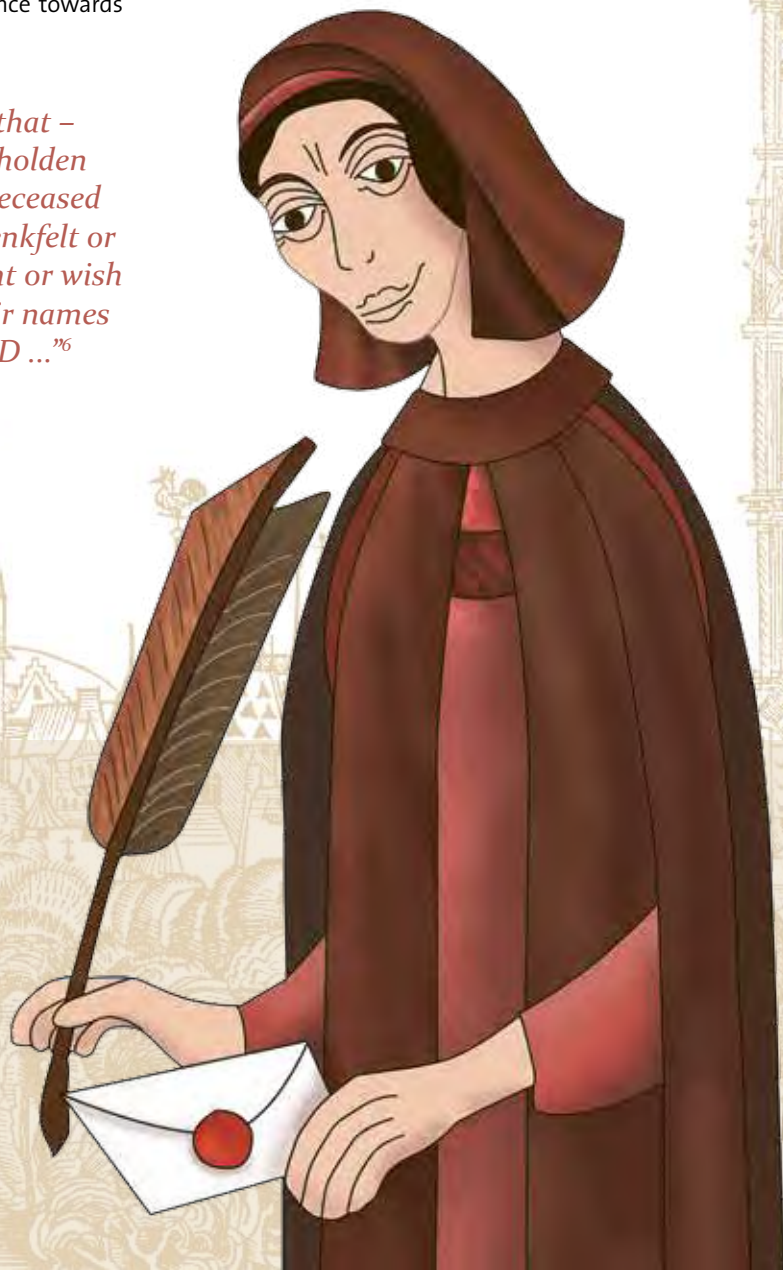
Marion Obitz

(translation: Ruth Feiertag)

Explanatory Notes see pp 64ff

*"I, however, speak for God so that – praise be to the Lord – I am beholden to nobody, neither to the dear deceased Doctor Luther, to Zwingli, Schwenkfelt or others like them and I do not want or wish to be called after them or by their names but only after Christ my LORD ..."*<sup>6</sup>

*No portrait of Katharina Zell has been preserved. This picture (part of a textile artwork by Luise Theill) shows her as an authoress and writer of letters.*



# Katharina von Bora

\* probably on 29 January 1499 at the manor of Lippendorf

† 20 December 1552 in Torgau

## Runaway nun, pastor's wife, business woman

She was the best-known woman of the Reformation period. In 1999 her 500th birthday was celebrated in a style otherwise only regarded as appropriate for the most important Protestant reformers. Today, the clergymen's wives, princesses and Anabaptist women of the 16th century help us to appreciate the Reformation as a mighty movement towards the modern era of faith and forestall any commemoration of the Reformation in the form of a mere celebration of Luther.

Katharina von Bora fulfilled many roles: She was the daughter of a family of landed gentry and a nun, a woman with experience as a refugee, Martin Luther's wife, his intimate and pastoral friend and a mother of six children. She nearly died giving birth to her seventh child. Three years after Walpurga Bugenhagen, three years before Wibrandis Rosenblatt and two years after Katharina Zell she became a pastor's wife and co-foundress of the Protestant parsonage. Those around them suspected the two Katharinas of henpecking their husbands – it remains to be proven whether this statement refers to the two women alone or to the general concept of women's role prevailing in those days.

At that time, being a pastor's wife in the Black Cloister, where the Luther family lived, meant managing a large enter-

prise comprising farming, cattle breeding, brewing and catering – Katharina bought farmland, produced foodstuff, prepared meals and served them to their guests. Their marriage profited from her practical skills, her intelligent planning and the knowledge of theology she had acquired during her time at the convent. She had to deal with the Bible as well as with real estate business. She generated the profits that secured the livelihood of Dr. Martinus Luther. She laid the table where he delivered his famous speeches of which his students were eagerly making notes. Conrad Cordatus's collection of dinner speeches contains most of Katharina's allusions and most of the references to her. Apparently, he did



*Addressing his wife in his extensive correspondence Luther always expresses profound esteem for her:*

*To the highly revered Mrs. Katherin Lütherin ... , To my gracious housewife at Wittenberg ... , Dear Maiden Kethe, Madam von Zulsdorf ... , To my kind, dear Käthen Lutherin, brewer and judge at the pig market at Wittenberg ... , I want your Grace to know ... , Your Holiness' willing servant ML.*

not appreciate Katharina's interruptions and lengthy speeches. He readily took up Luther's criticism of women in general and of Katharina in particular. From Conrad Cordatus we know that Katharina took an active part in the conversations, even though tradition does not reveal anything about the contents, just that she was rather loquacious. There is no doubt, however, that Katharina's conversations with Martin Luther had an influence on his theological positions. This is the reason why not all of those who had benefited from her hospitality and her thinking remained kindly disposed towards her – long pent-up malice evoked by such female dominance was poured on her after Luther's death.

### KATHARINA VON BORA

**\* 29 January 1499** in Lippendorf as a daughter of a family of Saxon landed gentry

Sent to a convent as a child, lives there as a nun

**6 April 1523** Flees from the convent Mariathron in Nimbschen near Grimma

Her betrothal to Hieronymus Baumgärtner does not result in marriage due to his parents' opposition

**13 June 1525** Marriage to Martin Luther, wedding ceremony performed by Johannes Bugenhagen. Seven children issue from the marriage, six of whom survive

Administers and runs the "Black Cloister" (a former Augustinian monastery) with its landed property; farming the land, breeding cattle, accommodating and feeding students and guests

**18 February 1546** Luther dies: although appointed as his sole heiress and guardian of their children, her right to the estate is initially contested. Several Princes support her cause and Luther's last will is executed in parts

**From 1546 onwards** Flees from the Schmalkaldic war, the black plague and harvest failure

**† 20 December 1552** in Torgau after an accident

Martin Luther did not marry her for love. He had to stand up for his teachings personally, he had to accommodate his father who had wished him to become a lawyer, and perhaps he had to set an example of marital fidelity against the sexual libertinism practised by the left wing of the Reformation. Martin Luther decided in favour of marriage, Katharina decided who should marry whom. At first, both were in love with someone else: Luther with Ave von Schönfeld, Katharina with Hieronymus Baumgärtner. Eventually, she took matters into her own hands, making it known in a roundabout way that she was prepared to marry either Amsdorff or Luther.



*Katharina von Bora's tombstone in the Stadtkirche (city church) of Torgau*

Katharina was ingenious enough to fend for herself during the two years between her flight from the convent on Easter Eve, 6 April 1523, and her marriage to Martin Luther on 13 June 1525. Destitute and without the protection of her family she may have lived in the house of Lucas Cranach the Elder, an assumption corroborated by the fact that members of the two families became godfathers and godmothers for children of the other family. Katharina von Bora's qualities can best be inferred from the pamphlets published by her opponents: "After you left your convent, dressed in a laywoman's gowns, and went like a dancing maiden to the High School at Wittenberg, looking for your partner, living in sin with Luther (so it is said) openly and despicably ..." ( from: A missive to Käthe von Bora, Luther's alleged wife, by Joachim von der Heyde, 1528): That means she went to the High School, she may have had contacts to the University of Wittenberg as she was later called Katharina of Alexandria by the students. She enjoyed two years of freedom before sailing into the harbour of marriage just like all the other refugee nuns.

Katharina the former nun, who had been taken out of her family of three brothers and at least one more sister as a child after her mother's early death to be educated at a convent, later took a lively part in the discussions at the professor's house. In addition, she met all the edu-

cational, economic and logistic requirements of Luther's household. She had to top up Luther's maximum annual salary of 200 guilders by 300 guilders to keep operations running. She achieved that by managing Wittenberg's biggest dormitory (a kind of students' residence providing teaching) and by selling their farm produce.

Her biography can be deduced from more than 160 dinner speeches, about 500 letters (more than half of them written by Martin Luther, 21 letters by Luther addressed to his wife have been preserved) and papers, as well as about 30 pamphlets referring to her more or

less in detail. More than 20 contemporary polemical texts refer to Katharina and her marriage to Martin Luther. She was a respected woman in Wittenberg and belonged to Wittenberg's leading circles. After Luther's death, however, her position as a widow was taken advantage of and she had to seek legal support from her husband's friends because, under the laws of her time, a guardian had to be appointed for a widow even though Luther had granted her full power of attorney in his last will nominating her his sole heiress and guardian of his sons.

In her last few years she was denied the enjoyment of a quiet live. She had to flee once more, this time not from the convent but from the Schmalkaldic war and from the black plague. She died in Torgau on 20 December 1552 after an accident. In memory of her there is the Katharinen-Stube (Cathrine's room) in Torgau.

Dagmar Gruß  
(translation: Ruth Feiertag)



*Katharina von Bora, painting by Lucas Cranach the Elder (edited)*

*Katharina wearing widow's weeds, woodcut originally coloured by hand, engraved by Jörg Scheller, 1546, Schlossmuseum Gotha*



# Elisabeth Cruciger

\* circa 1500 in Meseritz in Farther Pommerania – † 2 May, 1535 in Wittenberg

## Poetess of the Reformation

Elisabeth Cruciger, born von Meseritz, came from an old Pommeranian noble family. At an early age she entered the Premonstratensian Monastery Marienbusch near Treptow on the Rega. There she lived in close community with other girls and women of noble descent. They were taught to read and write and the Latin language. Furthermore they studied the Bible and practised singing psalms.

It lay within the order's responsibility to provide pastoral care and do missionary work, thus Elisabeth had contact to the outside world. When Johannes Bugenhagen came to be a teacher at the nearby Monastery Belburg and interpreted the Bible within the meaning of the Reformation, Elisabeth felt an affinity to his teachings. In 1521 she left the monastery and followed him to Wittenberg. Regrettably, we have no information on how she managed the distance. But she certainly showed courage. Elisabeth went on to live in Bugenhagen's household until she married Caspar Cruciger, one of Luther's trusted companions. Thus she became a

pastor's wife and had to fulfil a role which had yet to be defined.

Elisabeth must have participated in the lively theological discussions taking place within the Reformers' families – as shown by her being mentioned in Luther's table talks. The Reformer addressed her as 'Liebe Els' [dear Els = short for Elisabeth]<sup>1</sup>. She had a special relationship with Katharina von Bora, Luther's wife: in a letter to Caspar Cruciger in 1532 Luther talks about the two women presenting each other with trinkets.

Elisabeth gave birth to two children: Caspar the younger, who became Melancthon's successor as a theologian and later converted to the reformed church, and Elisabeth who was in her second marriage married to Luther's son Johannes.

Elisabeth Cruciger died in Wittenberg on May 2, 1535.

Despite the fact that no portrait of her has been preserved, we can easily picture her, based on the potent wording and the rich imagery of her songtext "Herr Christ, der einig Gotts Sohn" (Lord Christ, the only son of God) (EG 67). The text is proof of how solidly she was founded in her faith and in the testimony of the Bible.

And she is courageous. She is able to think of things which are still 450 years in the coming. There is this story of a dream she had: "One morning, hardly awake, a woman in Wittenberg tells her husband, a learned theologian, how in her dream she was standing on the pulpit of the church in her town and was preaching. Her husband answered laughingly: 'Perhaps our dear God deems you worthy to have your songs, which you keep singing around the house, also sung in the church.'<sup>2</sup>

### ELISABETH CRUCIGER

\* circa 1500 on the estate of Meseritz in Pommerania

between her 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> year she entered the Marienbusch Monastery, near Treptow; she is taught reading, writing, calculating, music, Latin and Bible studies

**1517** encounter with Johannes Bugenhagen

**1519** letter to the baptised Jew Joachim in Szczecin which shows her talent for pastoral caring and her orientation towards the Reformation

**1521** Elisabeth follows Johannes Bugenhagen to Wittenberg and finds accommodation in his house

**1524** she writes the song text "Herr Christ, der einig Gotts Sohn" The song is (at first anonymously) accepted into Luther's songbook

**Summer 1524** marriage to Caspar Cruciger, a student of Luther and Melancthon. Wedding ceremony performed by Luther. Elisabeth Cruciger takes on the then new role of a pastor's wife.

**1525** birth of a son (Caspar); move to Magdeburg Caspar Cruciger becomes the Rector of the newly founded Johannesschule.

Birth of a daughter (Elisabeth)

**1528** Caspar Cruciger is appointed professor of theology in Wittenberg and becomes the preacher of the Schlosskirche in Wittenberg (castle church), an office tied to the professorship

† **1535** in Wittenberg



*Elisabeth's dream has become reality. In 1998 Almut Voss, female pastor in Cologne was the first woman to stand on the main pulpit of the Cologne Cathedral*

*The first wife of D. Casp. Cruciger dreamt, she was standing on the pulpit of the church in her town and was preaching publicly. Telling her husband about this dream he answered laughingly: 'Perhaps our dear God deems you worthy to have your songs, which you keep singing around the house, also sung in the church.'<sup>3</sup>*

It probably required real courage to not only put the dream into words but to also have it made public.

Elisabeth's theological thinking captivates due not only to the clarity of its meaning but also to its rich imagery and its emotive language. Her song is the first 'Christ song' handed down to us and is an early reformatory confession of faith that gives testimony to God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. With the medieval picture language "that here we may taste your sweetness in our hearts"<sup>4</sup> Elisabeth makes us virtually taste God's sweetness and the power of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, she makes it clear that everyone has a direct connection to God, the creator of all things. By depicting Christ as the morning star she inspired many a poet to new songs.

She doesn't write about abstract truths but instead, she enables us to experience the pastoral, the healing effect of our faith.

Elisabeth Cruciger gives us a taste of the oneness of God and man, she inspires us with a yearning for this oneness without overruling the tension between the 'not yet' and the 'already now'. Echoing Luther's understanding of baptism we are to be awakened to a new life with and through Christ.

The reformers' sermons have long since faded but Elisabeth's song is still being sung and is striking a chord in us that exudes faith, courage and confidence.

Simone Pfitzner

(translation: Brigitta Müller-Osenberg)

*Explanatory Notes see pp 64ff*



*Elisabeth Cruciger's most famous song Herr Christ, der einig Gottes Sohn, Babstsches Gesangbuch 1545*





her growing sympathies for the Reformation but exacerbated the smouldering conflict at the Dresden Court.

From 1526 onwards, at the latest, she publicly declared her sympathies for the movement that was soon to be called Protestantism. In 1533 the conflict came to a head. Elisabeth refused to make confession and receive communion according to Catholic rites. Although the conflict was not entirely solved by the death of her mother-in-law Duchess Barbara in February 1534, it lost some of its explosiveness. In January 1537, however, the *modus vivendi* that had been found crumbled. All of a sudden Duke John died. Elisabeth was a widow at not quite 35 years of age. Duke George, however, was not prepared to cede to her the widow's estate, consisting of Castle Rochlitz (30 km south of Leipzig) including the reign over the surrounding villages, to which she was entitled under the contract of marriage.

But Elisabeth overcame all obstacles and acceded to her Rochlitz estate in March 1537. She immediately carried



*Philipp of Hesse I was one of the founders of the Schmalkaldic League in 1529*

out what Duke George had feared, she introduced the Reformation in her territory by the end of 1537. In the summer of 1538 she joined the Schmalkaldic League, led by her brother and her cousin. With her small territory she was something like a Protestant foothold of Ernestine Saxony inside Catholic Albertine Saxony.

Elisabeth rendered valuable services to the Schmalkaldic League by reporting on moods and rumours, on conversations and the movements of enemy troops. As she realized how dangerous her activities were, she invented her own secret code for her letters. When

her activities became known she was accused of treason and lost her small territory. Amid the turmoil of the religious wars, she fled to her home town of Marburg. After her death in Schmalkalden she was buried in St Elizabeth Church in Marburg.

Harald Steffes

*(translation: Ruth Feiertag)*

*“For my conscience tells me that I cannot attain eternal life if I fear men more than God.”*



*Castle Rochlitz in the district of Mittelsachsen*

*“It is true, I’m a woman and not a doctor, so that I cannot write like a scholar, but what I have written has not been written by a calf’s head.”*

*Elisabeth von Rochlitz*

# Wibrandis Rosenblatt

\* 1504 – † 1564

## Supporting the Reformation throughout her life

One of the 16th century's most extraordinary women also bears an extraordinary name: Wibrandis Rosenblatt. She was married to three reformers and theology must have played an important part in her daily life<sup>1</sup>.

Wibrandis<sup>2</sup> was born in Säckingen in 1504 as the daughter of Magdalena Strub and Hans Rosenblatt; there is evidence that her father was the mayor in his hometown after 1510 and that he must have been a soldier mainly serving the Habsburg dynasty. At any rate, her mother returned to her hometown of Basel together with Wibrandis and her brother Adelberg. Her mother's relatives were members of the Basel Town Council. In Basel Wibrandis married Master Ludwig Keller in 1524;

but he died only two years later. The couple had a daughter, also called Wibrandis.

On 15 March 1528 Hans Husschyn, a reformer in Basel, became Wibrandis's second husband, he is better known under the humanistic version of his name: Johannes Oekolampad. When they got married, he was 46, i.e. 22 years older than Wibrandis. They had three children, Eusebius born in 1528, Irene born in 1530 and Aletheia, born in 1531.

Oekolampad did not really intend to marry. He wrote to his colleague Wolfgang Capito in Strasbourg: "I will either look for a Christian sister, that means a phoenix, or I will stay single, if the Lord only willed it. That bird is rare and, therefore, known to only a few and it may happen that a different kind of bird than I wanted flies into my net."<sup>3</sup> Oekolampad was not only a university

### WIBRANDIS ROSENBLATT

\* **1504** in Säckingen

**1524** Marries Master Ludwig Keller, issue: one daughter

**1526** Becomes a widow

**15 March 1528** Marries Johannes Oekolampad († 24 November 1531), issue: three children

Theological debates, among others with the reformers Huldreich Zwingli, Wolfgang Capito and Martin Bucer

**11 April 1532** Marries Wolfgang Capito, issue: five children; the family moves to Strasbourg

**November 1541** Wolfgang Capito and three of their children die from the plague.

**1542** Marries Martin Bucer (the widower of her friend Elisabeth Silbereisen), issue: two children

**1549** Travels to Cambridge to nurse Bucer

**1551** Returns to Strasbourg after Bucer's death

**1553** Flees from the plague to Basel

† **1564** in Basel

*Wax image of Wibrandis Rosenblatt – the names of her four husbands are engraved on the lid*



*View of Strasbourg at the end of the 15th century*



scholar but also a priest. His surprising marriage was a clear signal of the Reformation<sup>4</sup> which exposed the couple to mockery by the humanist Erasmus von Rotterdam who, though well-disposed towards Oekolampad, wrote to Willibald Pirckheimer: "A few days ago, Oekolampad married a woman, a girl not without taste; he is desirous of making the flesh tender during Lent!"<sup>5</sup> And Bonifatius Amerbach wrote: "Oekolampad has lately taken a wife. A man of advanced age, with a trembling head, skinny and exhausted, his whole body like a living corpse – isn't that to be called foolish?"<sup>6</sup>

In those days Wibrandis Rosenblatt took an active part in the visits paid to her husband – the reformers Huldreich Zwingli, Wolfgang Capito and Martin Bucer were guests at his house – as well as in his correspondence and dinner conversations. She also participated in the theological debates of her time.<sup>7</sup> Johannes Oekolampad wrote to the reformer Guillaume Farrel in Geneva: "You should know that in lieu of my deceased mother God has given me a Christian sister for a wife, living on a modest scale, but descending from a respectable lineage and, having been a widow for several years, used to bearing her cross. I would certainly prefer her to be a little older but until today I have never found her to be immature despite her being so young. I pray to God for a happy and long-lasting marriage."<sup>8</sup>

When Johannes Oekolampad died on 24 November 1531 from a putrid inflammation and was buried in the cloister of the Basel Minster, Wibrandis was destitute again. A short time before, Agnes Roettel, the wife of the Strasbourg reformer Dr. Wolfgang Capito, had died. Oekolampad's friends worried about Wibrandis and her children and urged the slightly eccentric Capito to marry her. On 11 April 1532, only five months after Oekolampad's death, Wolfgang Capito married



*Wibrandis Rosenblatt*

the twice widowed Wibrandis, who moved to Strasbourg. Wibrandis's mother Magdalena Strub joined her in Strasbourg. Capito was pastor at Saint Pierre le Jeune; Wibrandis managed his household and took care of his numerous guests. They had five children: Agnes was born in 1533, Dorothea in 1535, Johannes Simon in 1537, Wolfgang Christoph in 1538 and Irene, who was named after her deceased half-sister, in 1541. During this period her first-born daughter Wibrandis Keller married Hans Jeliger from Strasbourg.

The plague broke out in the Free City of Strasbourg: On 4 November 1541 Wolfgang Capito died and three of Wibrandis's children, Eusebius Oekolampad, and Doro-



These three reformers were husbands of Wibrandis Rosenblatt



Johannes Oekolampad



Wolfgang Capito



Martin Bucer

thea and Wolfgang Christoph Capito. A Basel chronicle reports: "In the summer of the year 1541, an outbreak of the plague raged along the river Rhine and in other places and carried off many excellent men and women. In Strasbourg around 3300 died from the plague, among them a large number of respected and courageous people. Almost as many died in Colmar; at Rheinfelden 700 died and in Basel, too, a great many."<sup>9</sup>

The black death also took its toll from Capito's friend Martin Bucer: His wife Elisabeth Silbereisen and five of their children died. According to some reports, Elisabeth is said to have made Wibrandis promise to marry Bucer after her death. It was Wibrandis's fourth marriage. Wibrandis looked after Bucer's handicapped son Nathanael, the only child of Elisabeth Silbereisen that survived the plague, and took care of her own children and her very



old mother. In 1543 their joint son Martin was born, in 1545 their daughter Elisabeth. Wibrandis gave birth to eleven children in the course of four marriages. Meanwhile not only her own mother lived in Bucer's house but also Bucer's father and the latter's second wife.

Wibrandis's fourth marriage was definitely not merely a marriage of convenience. When Bucer had to leave Strasbourg in 1549 after the Schmalkaldic war had been lost and went to live in England, where Edward VI Tudor reigned, Wibrandis followed him with the children in the autumn of the same year. The Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer had invited Bucer to take a leading role in the establishment of the English Church together with him. From then on Bucer worked as a professor in Cambridge. His companion Paul Fagius, who had also been banned, worked alongside Bucer but died already in November 1549. Wibrandis accompanied his widow Agnes Buchbaum on her way back to Strasbourg before Pentecost in the following year, but she returned to Cambridge in the autumn of 1550 together with her daughter Elisabeth Bucer, her niece Margaretha Rosenblatt and her aged mother Magdalena Strub.

On 1 March 1551 Martin Bucer died after a severe illness and was buried in Great St. Mary's; Wibrandis returned to Alsace together with her relatives. Initially she lived in Strasbourg. When in spring 1553 the plague

broke out once more and her son-in-law Christoph Söll died, she moved to her home town of Basel with her children Agnes, Johann Simon<sup>10</sup> and Irene Capito, with Elisabeth Bucer, her aged mother and her niece Margaretha Rosenblatt. She had hoped to spend the rest of her life in Basel. Aletheia Oekolampad, however, remained in Strasbourg and got married.

When Basel was also ravaged by the plague in 1564, Wibrandis succumbed to the epidemic on All Saints' Day. The "Short Basel Chronicle", published in 1624, recorded: "Mrs. Wiprand Rosenblat, widow of Johann Oekolampad, Wolfgang Capito and Martin Bucer."<sup>11</sup> Wibrandis Rosenblatt was buried beside Oekolampad, her second husband, in the cloister of the Basel Minster; but her name is missing on the memorial stone. In her article on Wibrandis Irena Bossart graciously writes: "I would, therefore, like to complete the inscription as follows: 'Praeterea hic sita est mater familias et uxor Wibrandis Rosenblatt – omni laude digna' ".<sup>12</sup> In English: "Here also rests in God the mother and wife Wibrandis Rosenblatt – worthy of the highest praise."

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Prof. Dr. Joachim Conrad

(translation: Ruth Feiertag)

*Explanatory Notes see pp 64ff*





## Idelette de Bure

\*1507 in Lüttich/ Liège - † 29 March 1549 in Geneva

**Wife of John Calvin:  
“...a faithful helper of my ministry”**

Idelette de Bure<sup>1</sup> was born in 1507 in Liège, daughter of the merchant Lambert de Bure the Elder and his wife Isabelle Jamaer<sup>2</sup>, and grew up in the old town area of St Lambert. The family<sup>3</sup> was already in the town records in the 14th century and were involved in the citizens' fight for the freedom of the town. After several rebellions against the prince bishop Louis de Bourbon, who was able to rely on the help of his cousin Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy, the Liège army was defeated on 28 October 1467 at the battle of Brustern. The town was looted by the Burgundian troops. But in 1468 Lambert de Bure was once again at the forefront of the resistance. Lambert de Bure the Younger, Idelette's brother and former Mayor of Liège, paid for his protest with banishment and fled to Strasbourg in 1533.<sup>4</sup>

Idelette was given a sound education before she married Jean Stordeur in Sainte-Veronique in 1525;<sup>5</sup> the couple had a son<sup>6</sup> and a daughter. Jean Stordeur was one of the leading figures of the Anabaptist movement in Liège. Those of a Baptist inclination were increasingly spreading among the clergy. Many of them were pilloried or executed. Three of Jean Stordeur's brothers, Libert, Gerard and Denis, were forced to stand in the marketplace barefoot and with shaven heads with a candle in their hand. He himself was expelled.<sup>7</sup>

Jean Stordeur fled from Liège, first to Basel, where Idelette later followed him with the children, and then they went on to Geneva<sup>8</sup>, when the family met John Calvin. But the Anabaptists were also unwelcome in Geneva, with a decree of the Council dated 19 March 1538: "Johannes Bomecomenus, a printer and Jean Stordeur, a turner from Liège, men who represent the view that children should not be baptised, were questioned, and it was decided to expel them along with the other members of this sect."<sup>9</sup>

So the family moved to Strasbourg, to Idelette's brother<sup>10</sup>. There they met Calvin once again, who had been driven out of Geneva after Easter 1538 together with Guillaume Farel and was now living in the imperial free town<sup>11</sup>. He had been given oversight of the French refugee congregation by Martin Bucer, who had taken a leading role in promoting the Reformation in Strasbourg. Bucer already knew Idelette and introduced her (again) to Calvin. The Stordeurs heard Calvin's sermons in Saint Nicholas, Saint Madelaine and the Dominican Church. By now Calvin was not only exercising his office as preacher, but was also professor of exegesis at the newly founded High School whose Rector was Jean Sturm. Calvin soon became a regular visitor to the Stordeur house; this clearly led to an exchange of views as Jean Stordeur distanced himself in 1539 from the Anabaptist movement. In 1540 the Black Death arrived in Strasbourg and Jean Stordeur died from the plague.

Shortly after this Calvin asked his friends, who had been strongly urging him to get married, to find him a wife.

### IDELETTE DE BURE

**\*1507** in Lüttich / Liège

Daughter of the merchant Lambert de Bure the Elder and his wife Isabelle Jamaer

**1525** married the Anabaptist Jean Stordeur. Birth of a son and a daughter

**1533** flight of Jean Stordeur from Liège to Basel

Idelette followed later with the children

Further flight to Geneva. Meeting with John Calvin

**1538** banishment from Geneva. Moved to Strasbourg, where Calvin was a regular guest at the Stordeur's house

**Spring 1540** Death of Jean Stordeur (plague)

**10.8.1540** marriage to John Calvin

**1541** move to Geneva

**28.7.1542** premature birth of son Jacques, who died after a few days

**† 29 March 1549** in Geneva from the delayed after effects of the premature birth

Several candidates were proposed for consideration. He already had his own expectations and in a letter to Farel on 19 May 1539 he wrote: "Don't see me as one of those fools who are so drunk with love that they forget everything at the first sight of a pretty face. The only beauty that will influence me is a woman who is kind, chaste and modest, who is a good housekeeper, is patient, and above all is concerned about caring for her husband."<sup>12</sup> Calvin was confident of finding such a woman. "My behaviour gives the impression that I am opposed to celibacy, and yet up to now I have been unmarried. I don't know if I will ever be married. If I do take a wife, then she needs to help me to dedicate myself even better to serving God, whilst freeing me from all those banal, everyday cares and needs. In no way do I want to marry just for the will of the flesh, and no-one can bring this charge against me."<sup>13</sup>

Bucer, who was familiar with Idelette's cultivated manner and piety, was convinced that she would be suitable for Calvin. We do not actually know anything about the relationship between the two of them before the wedding. John Calvin and the widow Idelette Stordeur were married on 10 August 1540<sup>14</sup> and moved into a house in the Rue du Bouclier. The marriage was clearly an ideal one; Idelette's only criticism was the fact that Calvin expected that her son from her first marriage would no longer remain a Baptist.

In the meantime circumstances had changed in Geneva: the humanist and reformer Cardinal Jacopo Sadoleto had sent a letter to Genevans, encouraging them to return to the old faith, after Pierre Viret had been in contact with Calvin in Strasbourg. The people in Geneva called Calvin to return, but he hesitated and demanded conditions. But events moved on quickly and so John Calvin set out for Geneva on 13 September 1541. Idelette followed a bit later with her daughter Judith from her first marriage, whilst her elder son – whose name is still unknown – remained for the time being in Strasbourg. The family lived in the Rue des Chanoines, in a house with a small garden and a beautiful view of Lake Geneva and the Jura mountains on one side and of the Alps on the other. The house and its furnishings belonged to the town, however. 32-year-old Calvin was kept very busy, but in Idelette he found an ideal counterpart. She was

able to liberate him from the dark thoughts which oppressed his spirit through various pressures on him.

Calvin and Idelette had one child, their son Jacques, born on 28 July 1642, as a result of whose early birth she was brought to the limits of her strength. The child died after only a few days.<sup>15</sup> The followers of the old faith took advantage of the misfortune of the couple and sneered that this was the result of following the false religion.<sup>16</sup> But Calvin answered this by saying he was content with the myriads of children he had in the faith. But Idelette never fully recovered after August 1542. She still cared for the sick scholar as far as she was able and she kept their house open for religious refugees. In 1545 for example it was the Waldensians who came to Geneva from the Italian Alpine valleys. John Calvin took up the case for the town council to accept them.

Idelette died<sup>17</sup> on 29 March 1549 after a long illness. Her doctor Benoit Textor had made every effort to care for her and in gratitude Calvin dedicated his commentary on the Second Letter to the Thessalonians to him. Calvin shared Idelette's last words as "Oh glorious resurrection! Oh God of Abraham and all our forefathers, for centuries all the faithful have placed their hope in you and none have been disappointed, and so I also wait on you!". And also: "Pray, pray, pray, all of you for me!"

Calvin wrote to Pierre Viret: "I was robbed of the best friend of my life, who, if I had been ordained priest, not only would have shared my poverty but even death itself. During her life she was a faithful helper of my ministry. There was never a word of reproach from her."<sup>18</sup> Calvin spoke of her as "a unique example of a woman."

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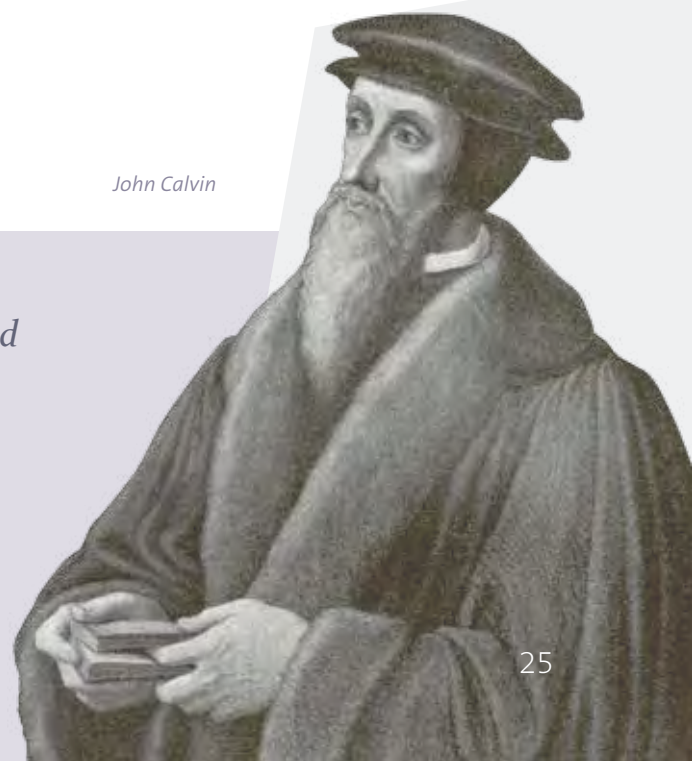
Prof. Dr. Joachim Conrad

(translation: Sheila Brain)

*Explanatory Notes see pp 64ff*

*"I was robbed of the best friend of my life, who, when I was ordained priest, not only shared my poverty but even death itself. During her life she was a faithful helper of my ministry. There was never a word of reproach from her."*

John Calvin



# Elisabeth von Calenberg-Göttingen, Duchess of Brunswick-Lüneburg

\* 24 August 1510 in Cölln (Electoral Principality of Brandenburg)

† 25 May 1558 in Ilmenau (County of Henneberg in Thuringia)

## The Reformation Princess

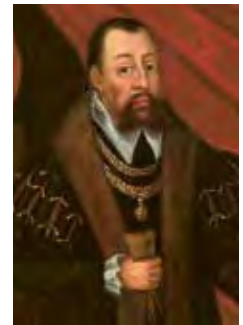
Elisabeth von Calenberg-Göttingen, Duchess of Brunswick-Lüneburg, was known as the “Reformation Princess” who established the Reformation in today’s South Lower Saxony, together with the theologian Antonius Corvinus. She was herself an educated lay theologian and a writer on a wide range of subjects, a strong advocate of Lutheranism in her publications, and as landowner she also had the political power to promote the Reformation in her principality.

Elisabeth was born on 24 August 1510 in Cölln (today part of Berlin), as the third child of the Elector Joachim I of Brandenburg and his wife Elisabeth of Denmark. She was brought up as a Catholic and given a humanistic (classical) education. In 1525 she was married at the age of fifteen to the wid-

wed Duke Erich I of Calenberg-Göttingen, 40 years older than her, and bore him four children: Elisabeth (1526), Erich II (1528), Anna Maria (1532) and Katharina (1534).

In 1528 things came to a head with a dispute with her husband over his mistress Anna Rumschottel, who was blamed by Elisabeth for complications with her second pregnancy and accused of witchcraft. Her rival managed to escape but several of the alleged accomplices died at the stake. Following this dispute her repentant husband agreed to pass over to her almost the whole of the principality including the residence of Münden as her personal domain, which strengthened her political position considerably.

At an early age Elisabeth had come into contact with Luther’s teachings through her mother, who had converted to Protestantism against the will of her husband and had fled to Saxony. On a visit to her mother, Elisabeth had met Martin Luther in per-



Erich I. of Brunswick-Lüneburg about 1530



### ELISABETH VON CALEMBERG-GÖTTINGEN

\* 24 August 1510 in Cölln  
(today part of Berlin)

1525 by marriage, Duchess of  
Calenberg-Göttingen

1534 meeting with Luther

1538 conversion to the Protes-  
tant faith

1542 introduction of the Refor-  
mation into Calenberg-Göttin-  
gen; constitution for Protestant  
monasteries and churches

1546 guidebook on how to  
rule: first statement of Protes-  
tant political ethics

† 25 May 1558 in Ilmenau after  
several years of exile

*“Jesus Christ is first for me, /  
the highest good that God doth  
grant. / Through his Spirit I am  
bold, / and strengthened as a  
Christian soul / within this land  
his word to plant.”<sup>1</sup>*

*Elisabeth*

Elisabeth von Calenberg-Göttingen

son. On 7 April 1538 she received communion in both elements, bread and wine, which was forbidden to the laity in the Catholic Church, and in doing so gave public witness to her reception into the Lutheran faith. Her husband Duke Erich I showed himself to be tolerant in religious issues and accepted this.

After his death in 1540 Elisabeth took on the custodial regency of the principality of Calenberg-Göttingen on behalf of her son Erich II. Despite many difficulties she managed to rule with skill and strategy and resolutely introduced the Reformation in 1542. In doing this she was supported by Pastor Antonius Corvinus, who was nominated by Elisabeth as the first national "Superintendent" of her principality. The Calenberg Church Constitution, drawn up by Corvinus and for which she wrote the introduction, laid the foundation stone for the development of the later Regional Church of Hannover. Shortly afterwards there followed a monastic constitution (1542) which laid out the Protestant re-organisation of the monasteries, along with a nation-wide visitation of all churches, in which Elisabeth von Calenberg-Göttingen personally took part. In 1545 she published a Christian circular letter to all her subjects urging them to increase in faith and to be earnestly pious.

When Erich II took over control of the regime in 1546 his mother passed on to him a handwritten guidebook on how to rule, which included instruction in the Protestant faith and in political ethics. But Erich II thwarted the plans of his mother. In the Schmalkardic War he fought on the Imperial side against the alliance of Protestant princes and towns (the Schmalkaldic League). He converted to Catholicism and re-catholicised the nation. Despite her second marriage in 1546 to Count Poppo von Henneberg (Thuringia), Elisabeth remained in the residence at Münden, which she had retained as her widow's dower property after her son acceded to power. The area around the dower property was kept largely untouched by the re-catholicisation, but her theological adviser Antonius Corvinus was imprisoned for several

years along with other clergy. After the battle of Sievershausen (1553), one of the bloodiest conflicts of the Reformation period, Elisabeth was banished from Münden by Heinrich the Younger of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and lost all her political influence. She fled to Hannover and two years later she moved on to Thuringia, where she died at Ilmenau Castle in 1558.

Elisabeth von Calenberg-Göttingen was one of the most prolific German-speaking writers of her time. Among her works are a book on the married state (1550) for her daughter Anna Maria, a collection of prayers (1551) and a book of comfort for widows (1556), which by 1609 had been re-printed in 5 editions. As well as numerous letters, she also left behind 15 hymns, which she wrote to be sung to well-known hymn tunes: "Jesus Christ is first for me, / the highest good that God doth grant. / Through his Spirit I am bold, /and strengthened as a Christian soul / within this land his word to plant."

Christine Kucharski  
(translation: Sheila Brain)

*Explanatory Notes see pp 64ff*



Cover of a "Confessio Augustana" (Augsburg Confession) printed in Wittenberg 1540, probably from the personal library of Duchess Elisabeth of Brunswick-Lüneburg (Calenberg-Göttingen)



Wülfighshausen convent, founded 1236 as a "choral convent" for women, became a Protestant foundation for women after the Reformation. In the 16th century the convent belonged to the Calenberg group of monasteries, along with Mariensee, Marienwerder, Borsinghausen and Wennigsen. Elisabeth did not close the monasteries in the area under her rule, but reformed them. A monastic constitution of 1542 set out the regulations for the Protestant re-organisation of the monasteries.

# Sibylle von Jülich-Kleve-Berg

\* 17 July 1512 in Düsseldorf – † 21 February 1554 in Weimar

## Luther's own Princess and Protestant mother of the nation

Sibylle von Jülich-Kleve-Berg was designated as the life-long “reigning princess” in Electoral Saxony, which meant that right up to her death she stood on an equal footing alongside her husband Johann Friedrich I, Elector of Saxony. She was the co-ruler of Luther's principality, and at the same time an experienced letter-writer and a competent partner in dialogue concerning matters of faith. Sibylle was born on 17 July 1512 in Düsseldorf as the eldest daughter of the royal family of Duke Johann III von Jülich-Kleve-Berg and Maria von Geldern. She grew up at the Düsseldorf court together with her younger brothers and sisters Anna, Wilhelm and Amalia. In 1539 her sister Anna became the fourth wife of King Henry VIII of England.

When Sybille was only six years old, there were already some first soundings with regard to a possible marriage with the Elector of Saxony, Johann Friedrich I. But the contract of marriage was not finalised until September 1526, after the Electorate of Saxony had considered the option of allying itself to the House of Habsburg through marriage with the sister of the Emperor Charles V.

The marriage contract was only agreed for political considerations, since an alliance between the house of Jülich-Kleve-Berg and Electoral Saxony meant that old contentions over fiefdoms could be set aside and the two royal houses could enjoy an enhancement in their positions.

At their first meeting in Cologne in 1526, it was already evident that the two marriage partners were totally committed to each other. This is also later evident in

the active correspondence between them from 1547 – 1552, at the time when Johann Friedrich I, also called the Magnanimous, was imprisoned by the Emperor for being the leader of the Schmalkadic League. Because of that he lost not only part of his territory but also his status as Elector.

Shortly after Johann Friedrich I was released in 1552 the couple both died in quick succession to each other in 1554. They were buried alongside each other in the town church in Weimar.

There were four sons of the marriage. The elder two inherited the legacy of their father, the third died in his first year of life and the fourth suffered illness the whole of his life, studied theology and died at the age of 27.

Sibylle von Jülich-Kleve-Berg had grown up in Düsseldorf in an environment orientated towards classical humanism. The Dukes of Jülich-Kleve-Berg made an effort to offer a path of reconciliation among the conflicts of the Reformation. However, a comprehensive classical humanistic education such as that experienced by her brother Wilhelm with Konrad Heresbach, Professor of Greek and friend of Erasmus of Rotterdam, was still denied to her. Heresbach attached great importance to keeping his pupil far removed from any feminine influence. What Sibylle learned were the things that were regarded as needing to be learnt in the women's chambers of the Düsseldorf Castle: sewing and needlework and reading and writing.<sup>1</sup>

The marriage blessing was celebrated by Lutheran clergy in both Burg and Torgau. But it actually seems that

*View of Düsseldorf by Matthäus Merian the Elder (1640)*

### SIBYLLE VON JÜLICH-KLEVE-BERG

\* 7 July 1512 in Düsseldorf

1526/27 marriage to Johann Friedrich I of Saxony (“the Wise”) in Torgau, from then on Luther's ruling princess

1528 conversion to the Lutheran faith

1547-1552 imprisonment of her husband as leader of the Schmalkadic League, with active correspondence between the loving couple; exchange of letters between Sibylle and Martin Luther

† 21 February 1554 in Weimar



Sybille only officially converted in 1528 “after sufficient instruction”.<sup>2</sup>

Conversion was proved by the acceptance of communion in both kinds. It is possible that Luther had Sibylle in mind when as part of his work on a text concerning communion he allowed for the administration of the sacrament in a single kind as a concession to “the weak”.<sup>3</sup>

Sibylle met Martin Luther personally in Torgau. He preached there regularly and from her correspondence with Luther it can be seen that Sibylle engaged in discussion with him. There are three known letters from Sibylle to Luther. Sibylle addresses Luther as her pastoral adviser and trusted friend, with whom she can share her personal sufferings. She links these afflictions with requests for prayer and with biblical texts offering comfort, which she takes from Luther’s translations into German. The letters to Luther all come from the year 1544, when her husband was travelling throughout the Empire as advocate for the Protestant cause. Sibylle suffered from his absence and from the boredom that was caused as a result.

Luther’s replies to his “most gracious lady” bear witness to the personal level of their relationship and the stability of their common faith.

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*“That Your Electoral Grace can see how tedious it is here, because of the absence of our noble Lord Your Electoral Grace, I can well believe; but because necessity demands it and such an absence is for the good and the needs of Christendom and of the German nation, we must bear it with patience according to the will of God. (...) But with all that, we do have the advantage of having the beloved word of God, which comforts and sustains us in this life and which assures us of that life of blessedness and brings us there.”<sup>4</sup>*

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*Double portrait of Elector Johann Friedrich of Saxony and his wife Sibylle von Kleve*

Sibylle also shows herself to be an extraordinary letter-writer for her time in the letters she sent to her husband during the time of his five-year captivity. Distress and longing are also features of these letters. Sibylle openly spoke of her extreme suffering caused by the extended absence of her husband. Her longing was also accompanied by boredom, but she particularly missed his physical presence. Her suffering was so great that she became ill. She sought comfort and found this partly by addressing God directly and also in familiar biblical texts. In the case of contentious issues she also showed herself to be an expert in understanding how to argue the point by referring to biblical examples. The Prince regarded her as a partner of equal birth to himself, suffered with her at a distance, comforted her, shared a certain amount of internal political subject matter with her, sent her gifts, but also sometimes rebuked her.

*Portrait of Princess Sibylle von Kleve as a bride at the age of 14 years. Portrait by Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1526*





Sibylle von Kleve 1555 (detail)

*“Most noble prince, my kind and most beloved Lord and husband!*

*My well-disposed and heartfelt faithfulness to you means that I am unable to stop writing to Your Grace, so that as your poor, weak wife I may discover how Your Grace is faring during this time of tedium and bearing the cross (...) (...) for I am now suffering from a huge and heartfelt tedium in my sickness and have shed many hot tears in this brief long time that I am enduring. And so I beg Your Grace, for God’s sake, whether Your Grace can somehow manage to do something about bringing Your Grace together with myself, either by me coming to Your Grace or by Your Grace coming to me, your poor sick wife, for whom our dear Lord God has not been able to provide a single joy at the present time (...)”<sup>5</sup>*

Sibylle was deeply influenced by Martin Luther, both in her spoken words and in her religious thinking, and was clearly very familiar with his German translation of the Bible. Through this she acquired a sound knowledge of the biblical contexts and of theological thinking. Her contemporaries were particularly impressed by her good knowledge of the psalms. This was underlined by the court preacher Johann Stoltz in one of his funeral sermons:

*“She regarded the word of God with all seriousness, loved it, learned from it and studied it. The Psalter in particular was her favourite book. This was so common and familiar to her that no-one was able to suggest a quote but that she was able to give by heart the exact location and the number of the psalm.”<sup>6</sup>*

If in the 19th century Sibylle was regarded as “an example of true womanhood and a willingness to make sacrifices”<sup>7</sup>, then from today’s point of view she can be seen above all as the first resolutely Protestant princess, who was self-assured in taking her place alongside her husband.



Deer hunt of the Elector Johann Friedrich at the Hartenfels Castle in Torgau

She was already seen in this position during her own lifetime. This can be shown for example on a carved relief on the door of the court residence at Torgau, the design of which shows this to be the first royal residence clearly under the influence of Lutheranism. Above the main portal of the newly built great hall, the main entrance area, there were representations of the Reformers Luther and Melanchthon and above them a joint portrait of Elector Johann Friedrich I and his wife Sibylle von Kleve. This was the first time that “a double portrait of a ruling royal couple was hung in the exterior area of a German castle in a central and quasi-public position”, which could be regarded as the expression of a changed understanding of sovereignty “through the joint responsibility of the prince and his wife for the religious and moral well-being of the country”.<sup>8</sup>

Another portrayal that could be seen as a symbol of a Protestant ruler and thus of Sibylle von Kleve is that of Judith with the head of Holofernes which can be seen in the oriel window of her living quarters in Torgau Castle. From the 15th century onwards Judith was repeatedly portrayed as the model of a militant and virtuous princess. In this she became on the one hand a symbol of Protestant determination and on the other a symbol of actively involved women Protestant rulers.

Sibylle von Kleve set an example of how to fill the position of a wife standing side by side with a ruling prince. She always operated from her position as a woman, was a partner on an equal footing with her husband and was able to defend her own autonomy with eloquence

and from a firm biblical basis, despite the constraints, in accordance with her motto: “Everything in Honour”. In the funeral sermons given by the court chaplain Johann Stoltz for Sibylle von Kleve can be found the first historical evidence of the concept of “mother of the nation”, whom he particularly praised for her exemplary biblical faith and her practice of piety.

Dr. Rose Wecker

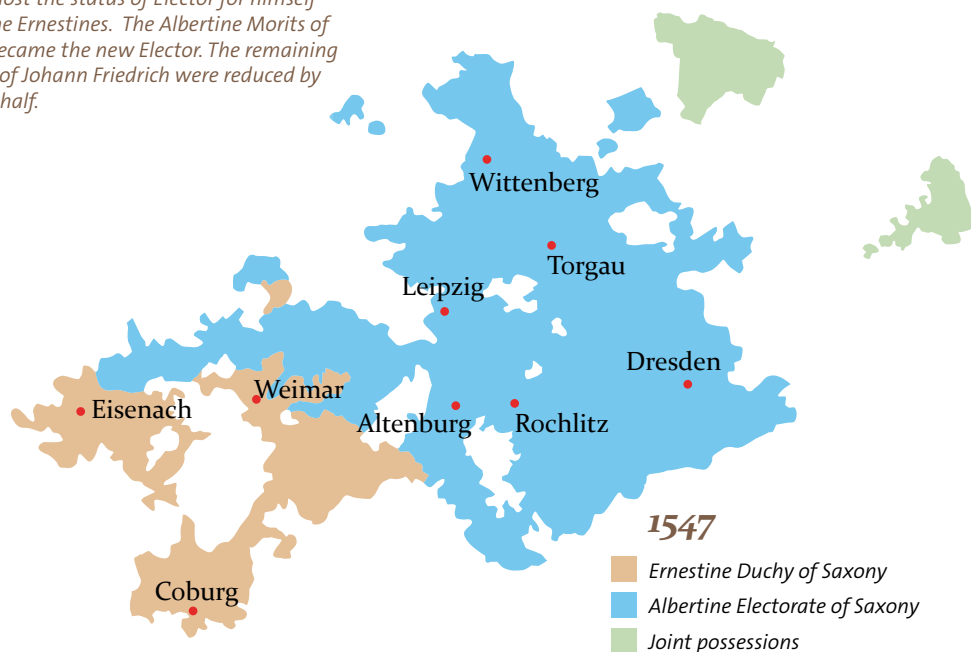
(translation: Sheila Brain)

Explanatory Notes see pp 64ff



Relief of Martin Luther in the chapel of Torgau Castle from 1545

After the battle of Mühlberg 1547, with the Wittenberg capitulation, Elector Johann Friedrich lost the status of Elector for himself and all the Ernestines. The Albertine Morits of Saxony became the new Elector. The remaining domains of Johann Friedrich were reduced by almost a half.



# Magdalena Heymair

ca. \* 1535 – †1586

## Protestant poetess & education pioneer

The poetess, educationalist, pioneer and committed Protestant, Magdalena Heymair was an articulate woman who understood how to put God and the world into rhyme both for herself and her pupils.

“Her rhymes are not always quite correct”, was the judgment of a critic. But how should life be turned into poetry with perfect smoothness? She knew how challenging real life can be; she was not a rich lady but one who had to work really hard for any success.

Magdalena Heymair is the first woman whose writings on pedagogy were published before the 18th century. She was the first teacher to produce her own teaching material, which then became widespread. An exceptional phenomenon! Between 1566 and 1578 she wrote a number of books and songbooks, which were regularly re-issued. Her success as a writer is extraordinary for a woman of her time. For her the Reformation offered a new freedom to express her own opinions, to record these in writing and to publish them.

She was a theological poetess, a woman with her own personal vocabulary. She valued her own mother-tongue, Central Bavarian, and knew how to use it well. She brought knowledge in the form of rhyme. This included a spiritual ABC, biblical letters in verse, songs which could be sung to well-known church tunes and popular songs. A really original church poetess! She deman-

ded and encouraged education for girls, also making this fun. Learning by heart was made easy. Reading the Bible for themselves in a version suitable for children. Providing elementary learning materials, developed along a Reformed pattern. What an advanced thinker! She is a personality standing for the emancipated participation of women in education and knowledge. A democrat – in the sense of a person who desires and enables true participation. One who sees her calling in life as being fulfilled in the Reformed aim of not restricting the Bible to the realm of priests and professionals. One who knew how to use the classroom to best advantage – as a play area for herself and her schoolgirls.

Her songs tell the stories of women in the Bible and emphasise the significance of the women disciples in the New Testament, especially at the time of the Apostles, both men and women. She was certain that just as the Bible has no blank pages in it, so young women are not the unwritten pages. They all bring their hearts with them, with questions, with a family history, with gifts and tasks. In Lutheran schools her verses partly replaced the old Catholic legends of the saints. Her motto was: the best way of giving life to a text is to sing it. With her songs she succeeded in capturing great holy words such as grace, trust, reconciliation, liberation. She spent her whole life seeking out words and even found some that gave expression to things hitherto unspoken.

In order to earn a living she worked as a private tutor, mainly in families of the nobility in Staubing, Cham, Regensburg, Austria and Slovakia. As a Lutheran she was not welcome in several places and was sometimes in

### Magdalena Heymair

\* ca. 1535

No portrait, no exact dates for her life, but numerous writings have been handed down

Lutheran governess to several noble families in Straubing, Cham, Regensburg, Austria and Slovakia

**1566-1578** Schoolmistress in Cham in the Palatinate in Bavaria and in Regensburg

Most of her writings and song books appeared in numerous editions during this time

These included musical settings of the Sunday Epistles, of the Acts of the Apostles, and of the books of Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Sirach) and Tobit

From **1585** chief governess to the widow Judith Rueber in Kaschau (Košice)

† ca. 1586 in Kaschau



Magdalena Heymair published many written works which had a wide circulation, as for example a musical presentation of the Sunday Epistles for singing

danger and had to flee. As a teacher she was censored, but avoided the censorship and moved on elsewhere. She did not allow herself to be intimidated or corrupted. At the same time she was helped by her good reputation as a teacher and the influence of satisfied mothers and rich patronesses. They supported her, for example by covering her printing costs. And she regularly found advocates who were willing to take the risk of publishing her works. The words flew into her mind and then flew onwards.

Magdalena Heymair published her work not under her husband's name but always under her own. We do not have any portrait of her, we don't even know her exact date of birth or death. She remains a poetess with her own distinctive style. She was a distinguished pedagogue with her own concept of education, which characterised the aims, the arguments for and the content of

education for girls. A pioneer producing her own works. A Protestant with her own way of expressing her trust in God and having her own interpretation of the Bible.

Today she would perhaps be a blogger, a lyricist, a best-selling author appearing confidently on talk-shows. Perhaps the Minister of Education. Or even a teacher. If so then certainly in a progressive school.

Christina Bruderek  
(translation: Sheila Brain)



# Amalia von Neuenahr-Alpen

\* 6 April 1539 at Alpen Castle, Lower Rhine – † 20 April 1602 (same)

## Reformed princess of the Lower Rhine

Amalia von Neuenahr-Alpen, born Countess of Neuenahr-Alpen and Limburg, married the Elector of the Palatinate. Her parents were Count Gumprecht IV of Neuenahr-Alpen and Limburg and Cordula, born Countess of Holstein-Schauenburg. Amalia was a beautiful, self-assured and politically aware woman, a ruler who lived her life through the strength of her Christian faith. Baptised as a Roman Catholic, Amalia was brought up by her stepmother Amöna von Daun-Falkenstein as a Lutheran. At the age of eighteen she married Hendrik van Brederode, from an old noble family in the Netherlands, and moved to his Barony of Vianen near Utrecht. Here she came under

the influence of the Calvinist theologian Petrus Dathe- nus and was drawn to the Reformed faith.

Hendrik van Bre- derode played a leading role in the resistance in the Netherlands against the re- striction of



*Amalia of the Palatinate, charcoal drawing by Jacques de Boucq.*



*Hendrik, Count of Brederode*

communal rights and the religious sup- pression of the Calvinists by the Spanish Habsburgs. He was outlawed as a rebel and fled to Germany with Amalia.

After his early death (1568) the leadership of the freedom fight for the Netherlands against Philipp II of Spain was taken on by William of Orange. It was on his initia- tive that in 1569 Amalia entered into mar- riage with the Reformed Elector of the Palatinate, Friedrich III, in order to secure his support. Having been much concer- ned about questions of faith, the Elector undertook intensive study of the Bible, which led to him being attracted towards the teachings of Calvin. In 1563 he estab- lished the Reformed Church tradition in the Palatinate with the publication of the Heidelberg Catechism and a constitution for the Palatinate Church, and in so doing encountered strong opposition from the Lutherans. Marriage to the widow of the leader of the Rebellion in the Netherlands signalled an alignment of the Electoral Palatinate to the Calvinists in Western Eu- rope and was intended to bring to an end the isolation of the Palatinate within Ger-

*Amalia's maxim for governing:*

*>> the whole wellbeing  
of the community lies principally  
in its head <<*



*Amalia von Neuenahr-Alpen*



*The Protestant Church of Alpen is the oldest Reformed parish church in Germany.*

man Protestantism. It is very probable that the active involvement of the Palatinate in foreign policy that can be observed from the 1570s onwards is down to the influence of Amalia, with William of Orange maintaining financial and military support. Amalia's stepson Johann Casimir, with whom she had a close friendship, came to the assistance of the Huguenots in France with his own troops. The Elector also increasingly welcomed into the Palatinate religious refugees from the Netherlands.

Amalia did indeed see the necessity of military intervention on behalf of fellow-believers, but it was in her nature always to be ready for compromise and look for a peaceful balance of interests. In matters of faith, despite her clearly defined profile as Reformed, she always displayed an irenic attitude of reconciliation. The letters from her that have been handed down bear witness to an unshakeable trust in God. Amalia lived in the spirit of the Calvinist concept of God. God is the sole sovereign in her life, by whom she is guided through her own life. Accordingly, she also sees the activity of God in the world of political engagement. For her, God is the controller of world history.

She lived out her Reformed faith jointly with Elector Friedrich III. However, the marriage only lasted seven years. In 1576 the Elector died at the age of 61 in Heidelberg. In 1577 Amalia moved to her widow's residence at Lohrbach, a Palatinate fiefdom with its own renaissance castle and 17 villages situated at Mosbach, not far from the River Neckar. Here she took into her care the children of princely families to give them an education. She saw the purpose of education as helping the pupil to approach "what is attainable in life".

Amalia was not classically educated, but nevertheless she participated in a culture of books and was largely self-taught as she advanced her knowledge. The libraries in Vianen and Heidelberg were key factors in the process of her education. Amalia was particularly interested in natural history. It may well be that her two classically educated husbands, with both of whom she enjoyed a happy marriage, had great influence on her spiritual development. It is also likely that in Alpen or in Moers she had benefited from the highly-educated Count Hermann von Neuenahr-Moers, who was her legal guardian. As well as High German, Amalia spoke Dutch and French, but not Latin.

After the Spanish were driven out of the North of the Netherlands, Amalia took over the rule of the free fiefdom estates of Vianen and Ameide in 1582, under the protection of William of Orange. Amalia's maxim for governing was "the whole wellbeing of the community lies principally in its head". After the murder of her

#### AMALIA VON NEUENAH-ALPEN

**\* 6 April 1539** at Alpen Castle, Lower Rhine

**1557** Marriage to the Reformed freedom fighter in the Netherlands, Hendrik van Brederode, with whom she fled to Germany. Strong Reformed convictions.

**1568** Amalia was widowed; numerous letters about the protecting of her rights and about mediation

between the hostile parties in the Reformation.

**1569** Second marriage to the Elector Friedrich III of the Palatinate; political and military engagement on behalf of the Calvinist churches in Europe. Receiving of religious refugees into the Reformed principality of the Palatinate.

**1582** Took up the governing rule of Alpen, after the Spanish were driven out; interrupted in **1586-1598**, a period of Spanish occupation in the earldom and imposition of the Counter-Reformation

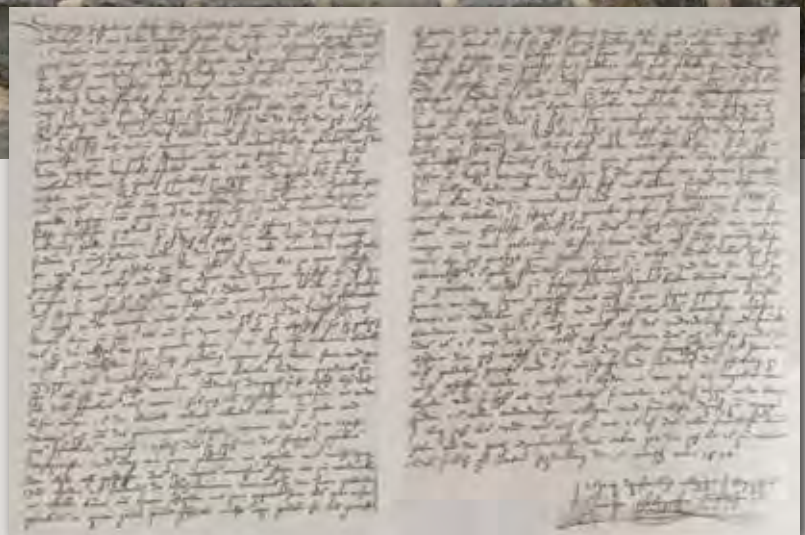
**1602** Laying of the foundation stone of the first Reformed church building in Germany at Alpen.

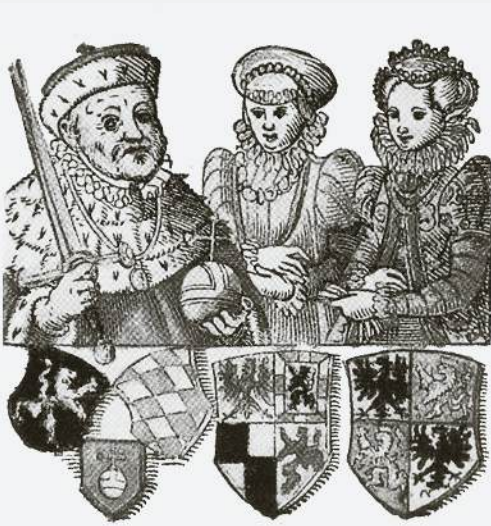
**† 20 April 1602** at Alpen Castle



*Memorial statue of the Electress Amalia, Countess Palatine on the Rhine, Duchess in Bavaria, born Countess of Neuenahr and Limburg, woman of Alpen – she was born at Alpen Castle. When Amalia became a widow for the second time in 1576, she took into her care the children of princely families to help them approach “what is attainable in life”.*

*Letter from the Electress Amalia to the Electress Anna, 7 March 1574.*





Electer Friedrich III with his two wives, on the right Amalia von Neuenahr-Alpen. Woodcut.

Following the death of Friedrich III the Electress Amalia acquired the independence of a sovereign princess. During her life she had fought for her rights with regard to men, and protected the rights of women. In view of her autonomy, her energy, and her inner strength, she can be reckoned among the “femmes fortes” of the early modern era. In this she was free from arrogance, was modest and good-hearted.

In 1602 Amalia died, just after she had laid the foundation stone for the building of the first Reformed Church in Germany. She lies buried there alongside her first husband. A magnificent wall grave memorial in late renaissance style preserves her memory.

Joachim Daebel

(translation: Sheila Brain)

protector and a further stay in Lohrbach, Amalia returned to Alpen in 1600. Here in 1581 her brother Count Adolf von Neuenahr-Alpen, who as a result of attending his sister’s wedding had learned about the Reformed Church tradition in the Palatinate, had established a presbyteral-synodal church constitution in Alpen and in the earldom of Moers. In 1582 Albert persuaded the Archbishop of Cologne, Gebhard Truchseß von Waldburg, to convert to Protestantism. Because this step threatened to cause a serious change in the religious landscape of Germany and in the balance of power in the Empire, there was immediate intervention from Spain, the dominant Catholic power. From 1586 to 1598 Alpen was subjected to the rule of the Spanish and to the Counter-Reformation. In 1589 Count Adolf was killed in a gunpowder explosion.

After Maurits of Orange had driven the Spanish out of the Lower Rhine region, Amalia became the landowner and ruler of Alpen. She annulled the Counter-Reformation and agreed a contract of neutrality, which brought a period of consolidation to Alpen. At this time almost the whole population of Alpen followed the Reformed Confession.



Amalia’s second husband, Elector Friedrich of the Palatinate, introduced a Reformed Church order to the Palatinate with the publication of the Heidelberg Catechism and the Palatinate Church constitution.

# Anna Maria von Schürmann

\* 5 November 1607 in Cologne – † 4 May 1678 in Wieuwert

## The star of Utrecht

She was called the “star of Utrecht”<sup>1</sup>, the “alpha of women”<sup>2</sup>, the “flame of wisdom”<sup>3</sup>. Anna Maria von Schürmann has been given many names over the course of time. They are expressions of the numerous identities which can be ascribed to her. She was the daughter of a respectable family, scholar, artist, scientist, theologian, reformer, separatist, and – last but not least – a woman. A number of breaks and apparent changes of course characterise her life. And yet perhaps it is precisely these apparent contradictions which make Anna Maria von Schürmann so special.

Her eventful life began on 5 November 1607 in Cologne, where her Reformed parents had found refuge from religious persecution in the Spanish-ruled Catholic Netherlands. When the situation for Protestants in Cologne also became exacerbated, the family fled in 1610 and finally returned in 1615 to the Netherlands which in the meantime had become more liberal. The young Anna Maria found a home in cosmopolitan Utrecht.

From an early age Anna Maria shared in the education of her brothers, which was mainly given by their father. Her extraordinary gift of learning quickly became apparent and her father did his utmost to encourage this. He was himself inclined to Puritanism and based the education of his daughter strictly on the Bible and on a life of religious and moral ethics. She learnt Latin, Greek and French with great ease and was later considered to be the best Latinist in the country, as well as being able to speak at least seven other languages fluently. After the death of her father in 1623 she continued her education through private study and with the help of professors

who were her friends. In addition, from the 1620s she made a name for herself with her artistic works, showing remarkable abilities in painting and drawing, in glass-painting, etching, woodcuts and silhouettes, as well as embroidery and making music. But it was above all for her literary works that the young woman became famous. Great writers and poets all praised her abilities. She was soon in correspondence with many of the intellectual greats of the time. Among her most important contacts were the professor of Theology in Leyden, André Rivet and his colleague in Utrecht, Gisbert Voetius. From the mid-1630s, Anna Maria received private tuition in theology from the latter and was particularly enthusiastic about his principles of church reformation. In this way he laid the foundation for her academic activity in the following years, which were focussed on theology. He was also the person who enabled his gifted student – and the first woman, at that – to attend theological lectures at Utrecht University, hidden from the view of male students in a concealed partitioned area<sup>4</sup>. She pursued a lively exchange of letters with André Rivet about the educational requirements of women. He formed the basis for her work “Dissertatio” in which she advocated women’s education as a pious duty.

If as an artist she had already attracted attention as an exceptional talent above all because of her sex, so now she achieved a widespread reputation as an academic and theologian.

And yet at the height of this period of academic renown, she began in the 1640s to withdraw more and more from the public scene. She distanced herself from

*“My thesis might well say:  
a Christian woman has a right to  
academic study.”*

### ANNA MARIA VON SCHÜRMANN

\* 5 November 1607  
in Cologne to a Reformed family

1610–1615 Flight because of  
religious persecution

From 1615 Lived and studied in  
Utrecht

Highly gifted and highly edu-  
cated, she became an advocate  
for women’s education

1668 Joined the Pietist sect  
around Jean de Labadie

† 4 May 1678  
in Wieuwert in Western Frisia



Copper engraving of Anna Maria von Schürmann,  
about 1700

*The world makes me to be great, O Jesus make me  
small. I do not wish to be a marvel other than one  
that comes from your grace.*

*Be silent, O antiquity, about your muses,  
Be silent about the Pythia, the Sibyls, the oracles.  
SCHURMANN alone is the ornament of all the  
gifted ones  
She alone stands as a marvel above them all.*



Title page *Opuscula*, 1648 (restored)



Title page *Opuscula*, 1749

needed to have direct access to Holy Scripture opened up to them. As part of this, her defence of the requirement of education for women is surely one of her greatest achievements. Her inclination to take up a modest life in a pietistic community was not seen by her in her biography as a break, but as a logical consequence from the insights she had gained<sup>5</sup>.

So it is that her life journey shows an interesting parallel to the pioneers on the way to the ordination of women (e.g. Anne Kaufmann<sup>6</sup>). Her work was emancipatory, without being feminist. She followed unwaveringly and as a matter of course the calling which her deep faith offered to her and did not regard it as sacrifice.

Ruth Rockel-Boeddrig

(translation: Sheila Brain)

Explanatory Notes see pp 64ff

friends, correspondents and finally also from the institutional Reformed Church. She refocussed increasingly on a spiritual, active Christianity. In 1668 it finally came to a complete break with her former life. She joined the pietistic sect surrounding Jean de Labadie – to the great incomprehension of her colleagues – and left Utrecht with them. The last years of her life were marked by constant flight, as the separatist house church quickly caused offence everywhere they went. Her path led her to Altona, where von Schürmann also published her autobiographical work “Eukleria”. In this she defended her choice of a life far removed from everything “worldly” and made it clear for all time: This is my path! On 4 May 1678 Anna Maria von Schürmann died in Wieuwert in Western Frisia.

All the education which von Schürmann acquired was never self-serving but was always directed towards religion. Each piece of academic knowledge was in the end for the sake of greater piety. The underlying basis was the Reformed concept that all believing Christians

*“For if wisdom is indeed such a great adornment for humankind, [...] then I cannot see why a girl [...] should be denied having this ornament which is by far the loveliest.”*



Letter from Anna Maria von Schürmann to André Rivet concerning the education requirements of women (printed 1648)



Anna Maria von Schürmann, painting by Jan Lievens, 1649 National Gallery London.

# Katharina Charlotte von Pfalz-Zweibrücken

\* 11 January 1615 in Zweibrücken,  
† 12 March 1651 in Düsseldorf

**“Whoever acknowledges me  
before the people...”**

Katharina Charlotte von Pfalz-Zweibrücken was born on 11 January 1615 in the royal residence of Zweibrücken as daughter of the Duke Johann II (1584-1635), Count Palatine of Zweibrücken and his second wife Luise Juliane (1594-1640), who was the daughter of the Elector Friedrich IV of the Palatine. She received a sound education and was married in Zweibrücken on 11 November 1631 to Duke Wolfgang Wilhelm<sup>1</sup> (1578-1653), Count Palatine of Neuburg, to whom she had been betrothed since 11 January of that year. For Wolfgang Wilhelm it was his second marriage; his first wife Magdalena of Bavaria had died on 25 September 1628 in Neuburg on the Danube. He needed a dispensation<sup>2</sup> for this second marriage, since his new wife was doubly related to him: both their grandfathers were brothers, whose respective wives, and thus their grandmothers, were also sisters.

Wolfgang Wilhelm, in the interests of his first marriage to Magdalena of Bavaria (and probably also from personal inclination) had secretly converted to Catholicism<sup>5</sup> on 19 July 1613 in Munich, later making this public on 25 May<sup>3</sup> 1614 in the Collegiate Church of St Lambert in Düsseldorf, against the will of his strictly Lutheran father, Philip Ludwig von Pfalz-Neuburg<sup>4</sup> (1547-1614).

Responsibility for the dispensation lay with Pope Urban VIII (Barbarini), who refused it, however, because Katharina Charlotte remained loyal to her Calvinist faith<sup>6</sup>. The court in Düsseldorf managed to persuade the titular Archbishop of Utrecht, Philip Rovenius, to obtain the dis-



*Katharina Charlotte von Pfalz-Zweibrücken*

pen-sation, by suggesting to him that the Duchess would indeed convert. There may have been bribery involved as well. Gustav Marseille writes that the Archbishop did not know who it was that was concerned, but at the same time quotes the deceived man as calling the process a “pious lie”.<sup>7</sup> Something seems to be wrong about that. In any case, the Duchess insisted on remaining with her Calvinist faith.

So here were this couple, the converted Duke and his Reformed second wife from far away Zweibrücken. Wolfgang Wilhelm was 37 years older than her. But he seems to have been really attached to her, if the gravestone memorial referring to his “exceedingly beloved wife”<sup>8</sup> is not an empty cliché. It is also borne out by the three hundred letters that the couple wrote to each other. Yet he repeatedly harried her and wanted to coerce her into conversion. Neither of their two children survived their first year: Ferdinand Philipp, born 7 May 1633 died 21 Sep-

## KATHARINA CHARLOTTE VON PFALZ-ZWEIBRÜCKEN

\* **11 January 1615** in Zweibrücken as daughter of Duke Johann II, Count Palatine of Zweibrücken and his second wife Luise.

Received an education in accordance with her status, and brought up in the Calvinist faith.

**11 November 1631** marriage to the Catholic Duke Wolfgang Wilhelm,

Count Palatine of Neuburg – a marriage involving two separate faiths

Two children (died in infancy)

Supporter of the Reformed Christians in Düsseldorf, together with the court minister Hundius

† **12 March 1651** in Düsseldorf. Buried in the collegiate church of St Lambert

*Düsseldorf Castle from the side facing the Rhine, with St Lambert Church ca 1798*



tember; Eleonore Franziska came into the world on 9 April 1634 and left it again on 23 November. In December of that grief-stricken year the Duke wrote to her: "If only, my dearest one, you could let yourself be persuaded and were willing to accept conversion, there is no doubt that God would surely grant us children who would remain alive."<sup>9</sup> But the Duchess answered with meekness and piety, in the manner of Job in the Old Testament: "He gave me two little angels, he also had the power to take them away, and for this I can offer him thanks and praise, especially that he took them from unrest into eternal rest."<sup>10</sup> There was another opportunity, when her cousin the Duchess of Siebenbürgen became Catholic. The Duke presented his wife with her cousin as an example, but Katharina Charlotte declined. Her cousin's faith had never been strong. When the Duke commanded his wife to accept the intercession of St Catherine, the Duchess opposed this, on the basis that she already had an intercessor in Christ, to whom she had direct access.

Through her sincere and upright faith Katharina Charlotte, along with her highly respected court preacher, Johann Hundius<sup>11</sup>, offered the only support for the Reformed Christians in Düsseldorf<sup>12</sup>. And as she lay on her deathbed and the Duke yet again advocated turning to the only Church that offered salvation, the Duchess responded: "Thank God, a child of seven years old knows what the church is, namely the holy community of believers and the lambs that hear the voice of their shepherd."<sup>13</sup>

When Katharina Charlotte died on 12 March 1651, the Jesuits, with the backing of the Archbishop of Cologne, refused to allow the Calvinist woman a burial in the mausoleum of the newly erected Catholic court church of St Andrew. On 4 April, however, she was given a resting place befitting her social status in the tomb of the Ducal house in the collegiate church of St Lambert. Johann Hundius, her companion in the faith, gave the funeral sermon, which he had checked out for correct orthodoxy by the Reformed clergy after it was ridiculed by a monk.<sup>14</sup> Duchess Katharina Charlotte decreed in her will that

an annual gift was to be safeguarded for the poor of the homeland she had never forgotten, in Zweibrücken, Lichtenberg, Neukastel and Meisenheim. The consistory wrote that she had been so convinced in her faith "the many thousand pious and good-hearted people had rejoiced to the highest degree in her zeal and her persistent steadfastness right up to the end, and that this example should be extolled everywhere after her death, and that it should be the responsibility of all to follow the same."<sup>15</sup>

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Prof. Dr. Joachim Conrad

(translation: Sheila Brain)

Explanatory Notes see pp 64ff

*"On Tuesday, which was the ninth day of her illness, she sent for me in the night at 1.00am. I arrived a little before two. We knelt for prayer and after praying I remember engaging in various words of comfort throughout the night; how God the Father in his mercy had sent her his son Jesus Christ and how the Lord had shed all his drops of blood to redeem her soul. This soul, which had been redeemed for his own possession, she now committed into the faithful hands of this great Saviour at the time when her need was greatest and God's help the closest. Ah yes, she said, that is what I believe and I thank God for this grace: and just as in ages past the martyr Babilas went to his death with a song of praise from Psalm 116, so is my soul also content that God is good to us. So with her last words, this pious princess could not thank God enough, and with her noble voice declared: My God is more gracious to me than I deserve."<sup>16</sup>*

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From the funeral sermon of Johann Hundius

# Friederike Fliedner

\* 25 January 1800 in Braunfels

† 22 April 1842 in Kaiserswerth (Düsseldorf)

## First Woman Superintendent of the Kaiserswerth Sisterhood



Friederike Fliedner around 1954<sup>1</sup>

The first superintendent of the Kaiserswerth deaconess sisterhood was born as Friederike Münster on 25 January 1800 in the Hessian town Braunfels as the daughter of a teacher. She was 16 when her mother died and from that point on she had to take care of her six younger siblings. After the remarriage of her father and the relocation to Altenberg, Fliedner took on the task of finding a purpose in life. Initially she found her purpose in volunteering from 1826 on as a teacher in the Düsseldorf "Shelter for orphaned and neglected Children" founded by Count Adelbert von der Recke-Volmerstein. The basis for her religiously motivated social dedication had been laid by the teachings of missionaries of the Basel Christian Society who once stopped by her hometown on their way to Russia. Thenceforth she kept a diary, which now gives insight into her religious development toward revivalism. Especially her own shortcomings as well as doubt about her strength of belief troubled her.

The Bible gave her the support she needed as well as guidelines

that she would abide to during her lifetime. The deep piety which sustained her faith would later help her overcome numerous calamities.

During her time as a teacher she met the Pastor Theodor Fliedner (1800-1864) whom she married in 1828. He had taken over the small Evangelical parish in Kaiserswerth near Düsseldorf a few years earlier. There he had been confronted with the social problems of the arising industrial society for which the Evangelical church did not have any solutions. With the support of his wife and her many friends he was one of the first in all of Germany to work in the prisoner care sector and later as one of the pioneers of the Kindergarten Movement. In 1836, in the style of the Catholic organisation of sisterhoods in motherhouses, Pastor Fliedner, along with his wife, founded the first deaconess mother house worldwide, which soon evolved into being the centre for a global network of similar institutions. A foundation for charitable activity had been created. Since then the deaconess movement and professional nursing care for the elderly have been closely tied together. Despite her

### FRIEDERIKE FLIEDNER NÉE MÜNSTER

\* **25 January 1800** in the Hessian Braunfels

**As from 1826** Volunteering work as a teacher in the "Shelter for orphaned and neglected Children" of Düsseldorf

**1828** Marriage to Pastor Theodor Fliedner (1800-1864)

Ten Children, three of which survived

**1836** Establishment of the first deaconess motherhouse – superintendent

† **22 April 1842** in Kaiserswerth in childbirth



Cottage in Kaiserswerth, where the diaconal work of Theodor and Friederike Fliedner began.

familial obligations and the expectations a pastor's wife had to meet, Friederike Fliedner, of necessity, filled the post of superintendent as no other suitable candidate had been found.

During their fourteen-year long marriage, the couple had ten children, seven of which died<sup>2</sup>. The high standard of character, namely self-abnegation and humility, she demanded of herself, she also demanded of her deaconesses. She admittedly opposed stern rules and constraints, since she saw the character shaping of deaconesses as a matter of kindness and faith, but she was nonetheless aware of the type of personality that was required to be one:

*“For a deaconess cannot = may not be an ordinary person, otherwise the world will be fooled.”<sup>3</sup>*

As the superintendent of the sisterhood, Friederike accomplished pioneering work in terms of the construction of social structure within the evangelical church. She not only trained and educated sisters, but also advised her husband on important organisational queries, such as the house rules. She did not shy away from criticising his understanding, chiding him for only seeing things from the point of view of a man while things looked very different from the perspective of a woman:

*“The pastor can only see the things with a man's eyes, which should be seen with a woman's.”<sup>4</sup>*

The long-term Kaiserswerth archivist deaconess Ruth Felgentreff summarised succinctly with the following words: “Seeing with a woman's eyes – that is what the superintendent wanted. Seeing with a woman's eyes is the legacy that she left behind for the Kaiserswerth deaconesses.”<sup>5</sup>

Friederike Fliedner died at the early age of 42 following a premature delivery.

Annett Büttner

(translation: Laura Braun)

Explanatory Notes see pp 64ff



*Friederike Fliedner on her deathbed.*



*The deaconess institute in Kaiserswerth around 1850.*

# Caroline Fliedner

\* 26 January 1811 in Hamburg – † 15 April 1892 in the Palatine Monsheim

## Second Woman Superintendent of the Kaiserswerth Sisterhood

Caroline Fliedner was born on 26 January 1811 as Caroline Bertheau into an old bourgeois Hamburg family. Her ancestors had been religious refugees from France. Amalie Sieveking, who was responsible for Caroline's upbringing fostered a devotion to the Hamburg revival movement. Caroline started working as a tutor after the death of her father (1831) which had caused financial distress for the family. She took the post of a supervisor in a hospital in 1840 on the advice of Amalie Sieveking. She married Theodor Fliedner in 1843. They had met when Theodor Fliedner had been tasked by the Prussian King to find a new supervisor for the newly established motherhouse Bethanien in Berlin. At the time of marriage, he had been a widower for a year and he brought three children with him into the marriage. Caroline

Bertheau was an ideal second wife to continue the newly-established deaconess work. Because of her work as a tutor and supervisor of the unit for female patients in the Hamburg St George's General Hospital, Caroline had the best qualifications for their line of work. At the same time, she saw the marriage as God's will. In a letter to her brother Ernst in March 1843 she wrote: "I am of the conviction that in accepting "Fliedner's proposal" God's will came to fruition."<sup>1</sup>

Caroline Fliedner performed her duties according to her self-understanding as the mother of the sisters, although she valued order and discipline as much as her husband did. Under her leadership the sisterhood grew up to 715 sisters who worked in over 200 communities, hospitals and kindergartens.

*The Deaconess Motherhouse*

### CAROLINE FLIEDNER, NÉE BERTHEAU

**\* 26 Januar 1811** in Hamburg

Attended the "School for young Girls" led by Amalie Sieveking

**1831** Tutor on an estate in Holstein

**1840** Supervisor in the St. George's Hospital of Hamburg

**1843** Marriage with the widower Theodor Fliedner

Eight Children

**1864** Death of her husband

**Until 1883** Administration of the institute together with her son-in-law

Superintendent of the deaconess association consisting of 715 sisters

**† 15 April 1892** in Monsheim in the Palatine, buried in Kaiserswerth



*Caroline Fliedner,  
portrait by Roland Risse 1864*

Her union with Theodor Fliedner resulted in the birth of eight children of whom one died as an infant. She also acted as a new mother for the three children of Fliedner's first marriage. She led, together with her husband, the Kaiserswerth deaconess institute until 1864. At the request of her husband, Caroline took over his duties as chairman during his many trips. It was very uncommon during that time for a woman to have such plenitude of power and authority. Even after her husband's death, she continued to lead the institute, together with her son-in-law Pastor Julius Disselhoff. She saw the protection of Fliedner's legacy as her main task. After her retirement due to health issues she lived out the rest of her life with a son in Monsheim. She died there on the 15 April 1892 and was laid to rest next to her husband in Kaiserswerth.

Annett Büttner

(translation: Laura Braun)

Explanatory Notes see pp 64ff



Fliedner family around 1863. The lifework of Friederike was continued by Caroline Fliedner, the second wife of Theodor Fliedner. Both marriages together resulted in 18 children, ten of which survived.

*“I am of the conviction that in accepting “Fliedner’s proposal” God’s will came to fruition.”<sup>1</sup>*



Kaiserswerth Sisters today

# Dr. Ilse Härter

\* 12 January 1912 in Asperden,  
Lower Rhine  
† 28 December 2012 in Moyland

## Pioneer in the ordained ministry

On the 70th anniversary of her ordination jubilee, on her 101st Birthday, on 12th January 2013 the fellow companions of the retired Minister Ilse Härter organized a farewell service in the church to Moyland.

Ilse Härter was a woman blessed with a critical mind interested in church policy. She was also humorous, clever, with a practical disposition, warmhearted and with human interest. She had a remarkable personality, up to the end she had the great gift of making and keeping friendships and making new ones.

Up to date, in her 101st year of life she was interested in church policy and political development in Germany and in the rest of the world. Ilse Härter saw herself not as pious or devout. She didn't like non-committal sayings.

So therefore what made this girl Ilse Härter, born on the 12th January 1912 in Asperden, Lower Rhine, decide to study theology?

Ilse Härter grew up in the country as the second of three children with her sisters Luise and Edith. Ilse's parents



Ilse Härter, 2006 bestowing of her honorary doctor title award

wanted their children to have a good education so that they would be able to go to university. From the beginning on Ilse Härter was motivated by her inborn curiosity to find out what was hidden behind belief and the church. It was this thirst of knowledge that brought her, in 1931, to study theology in Goettingen.

After Hitler's seizure of power Ilse Härter had to ask herself, if she wanted to continue her studies, because she didn't want to have anything to do with the German-Christian Church.

'I had learnt so much in three semesters to know that this was a different Bible and a different God. It was also clear to me that I was not prepared to be forced into the role the National Socialists dictated for women.'

A fellow student advised her to go to Koenigsberg. 'With that I decided to continue my studies in theology. In the lectures of the Professors Schniewind and Iwand I realized how much the Bible could be a guideline in the present discussion.'

She joined the German Confessional Church. After the war she committed herself to reconciliation work, for equal rights, peace and protection of creation and turned to the ecumenical movement and the feminist theology. In all these movements she never lost the clear look for the political dimensions of belief and theology. Ilse Härter learnt something else from the Koenigsberg professors. They 'didn't float over us, instead they stood by us in a way that I had not known until now.' She carried out discussions at eye level with colleagues, also with pupils, the governing body of the church, also with people who came to visit and to ask her questions about her life.

### ILSE HÄRTER

**\*12 January 1912** in Asperden, Lower Rhine

**1931** Theology studies in Goettingen, later in Koenigsberg, Tuebingen and Bonn

**1934** joined the German Confessional Church

**1936 and 1939** 1st and 2nd Church Examinations at the board of examiners of the German Confessional Church

**1939** Refusal of her consecration in Elberfeld because the ordination was reserved for men. 'I shall not be present at my consecration!'

**1941** Because of her refusal to take the oath to Hitler she was dismissed from duty in the parish of Berlin-Wannsee

**From 1942** Church Office Administrator

On **12th January 1943** ordination together with Hannelotte Reiffen by Präses Kurt Scharf. For a long time there were no more fully valid ordinations of women in Germany

**1945-1972** School and Training College minister in Leverkusen and Elberfeld

Concentration on reconciliation, ecumenical and feminist theology

**1972** Retirement, honorary engagement for equal rights, peace and protection of creation

† **28 December 2012** in Moyland, 12.01.2013 memorial service on her 101st birthday and 70th anniversary of her ordination



1944, instructions to Ilse Härter for the spiritual care for the parish of Meinsdorf

“... not to forced into the role the National Socialists dictate for women”

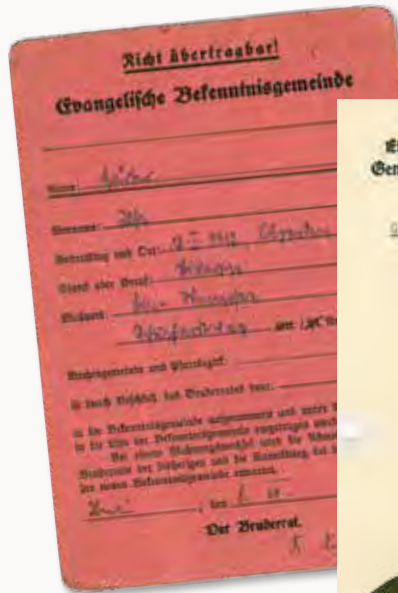
She valued it very much 'when plain language was spoken.' So that sometimes her opponent was quite amazed.

'I shall not be present at my consecration!' was her answer to her planned consecration. For many years she worked, without consecration in different parishes of the German Confessional Church. She took on complete minister's office administration until she, together with Hannelotte Reiffen, on 12th January 1943 was ordained by Präses Kurt Scharf. For a long time there were no more fully valid ordinations of women in Germany. After the Second World War Ilse Härter worked, until her retirement in 1972, as school and training college minister in Leverkusen and Elberfeld.

Ilse Härter was over 70 years of age when she began scientific work to reappraise the history of theological women in Goettingen's Womens Research Project, especially the history of the female ministers committee of the German Confessional Church. She wrote her own articles and positioned herself as a walking dictionary for the history of the German Confessional Church.

Dr. Heike Köhler  
(translation: Kathleen Richter)

Membership card of the German Confessional Church, 1934



Ilse Härter's membership card of the German Confessional Church as minister, right: Minister Ilse Härter, 1943

Ilse Härter's certificate of ministry 1938





*Dorothee Sölle at the "Katholikentag" (Catholic Congress) in Hamburg on 3 June 2000 giving a lecture entitled "From the omnipotent ruler to the compassionate God".*

# Dorothee Sölle

\* 30 September 1929 in Cologne – † 27 April 2003 in Göppingen

## A reformation woman in the 20th century

She was a protestant – in the literal sense of the word: Sölle protested against the unbroken continuation of tradition in the Protestant Church in post-war Germany. She tried to establish a "Theology after Auschwitz". Her first book "Representation" caused a stir. "I only need to join the reality of the people of God, I only need to assume Christ's perspective. It is the perspective

of the poor who are being cheated which makes me resist the values of this world."<sup>1</sup> "... in this context a central category is ... God's dependence on us. Christ has no hands except our hands, he depends on us. When there are no more Christians, Christ will be dead."<sup>2</sup>

Together with Fulbert Steffenski, Heinrich Böll and others she established a new ecumenical practice. In Cologne she developed the Political Night-Prayer, triggered off by an evening prayer focussing on the war in Vietnam held in 1968. Every prayer service resulted in some political action. This new form of service sparked controversial discussions with extensive media coverage. As the first such service had been scheduled for 11 pm, the name Night-Prayer was coined. Sölle and her team created a format with the Political Night-Prayer that is still being practised at church assemblies, in basis groups and city churches.

As a political activist in the peace movement she mobilised many to protest against the deployment of

Pershing II rockets and was arrested several times. She began her academic career as a teacher of German and Religious Education in Cologne. She never held a chair at a German university despite having obtained a doctorate and the post-doctoral lecturing qualification. As a professor at the Union Theological Seminary in New York (1975-1987) she enjoyed international reputation; her main areas of research were Latin American liberation theology and feminist theology.

Dorothee Sölle: God's poetess.

In the 90s of the past century Sölle attended numerous conferences as a speaker. She was a prolific writer, among her publications were many poetical texts and poems. She was awarded several prizes for her literary work: in 1981 a scholarship under the Lessing Prize pre-



*Bible work with Dorothee Sölle in St. John's Church at the "Kirchentag" (Evangelical Church Assembly) in Rostock in 1998*

### DOROTHEE SÖLLE

\* **30 September 1929** in Cologne

**1949-1954** Studies theology, philosophy and literature in Cologne, Freiburg and Göttingen. State examination and doctorate

**1954-1960** Works as a grammar school teacher in Cologne

**1960-1975** Holds various positions at universities as a professorial assistant and senior lecturer besides working as a free-lance writer and journalist

**1956, 1957, 1961 and 1970** Births of her four children from two marriages

**1968-1972** Co-foundress of the Political Night-Prayer in Cologne

**1971** Post-doctoral habilitation thesis entitled "Realisation, Studies on the connections between theology and poetry"

**1972** Travels to Vietnam, political involvement in the peace movement

**1975-1987** Holds a chair for systematic theology at the Union Theological Seminary in New York

**1984** Travels to Nicaragua, receives impulses from the liberation theology

**1994** Honorary professorship at the University of Hamburg

**1995** Her memoir "Gegenwind" (Against the wind) is published

**1997** Mysticism and resistance

† **27 April 2003** in Göppingen



*Hellmut Gollwitzer and Dorothee Sölle (on the left) taking part in a sit-in at the entrance gate to the US American poison gas depot at Fischbach in Rhineland-Palatinate in 1988, demonstrating for the banning of all chemical warfare agents*

sented by the City of Hamburg, in 1982 the Droste Prize for poetry presented by the Town of Meersburg.

Apart from the discussion of liberation theology Sölle increasingly addressed the tradition of mysticism in her works: *Suffering* (1973) and *Mysticism and Resistance* (1993). It was her main concern to “democratise mysticism”.<sup>3</sup>

“The question inherent in mysticism remains how men and women can come to accept suffering as joy... Eckhart’s ethics are a doctrine teaching acting “without asking ‘why’”.<sup>4</sup>

Sölle discovered the femininity of mysticism; most of Christian mystic texts that have been preserved were written by women. Consequently, there is also a feminist element: Throughout the ages democratisation and practical knowledge have very often been the concerns of women educated in theology and interested in spirituality.

Dorothee Sölle is one of the few female academics who managed to combine family life and a career, and earned a high degree of recognition. This fact is also part of her life’s extraordinary achievements.

Right until the end she was a militant woman, an activist, a wise and reflective theologian, a reformation women. She died during a lecture tour in Göppingen on 24 April 2003, suddenly torn from the midst of life.

“She was never afraid to represent the antagonist – the political person vis-à-vis the pious souls, the church trouble maker vis-à-vis the bishops and the church lover vis-à-vis those who had left the church. Many found that irritating.”<sup>5</sup> Dorothee Sölle’s questions and provocations will remain. A Church aspiring to be reformist and to provide answers to the questions of our times needs Sölle’s inspiration and always will.

Renate Schatz

(translation: Ruth Feiertag)

*Explanatory Notes see pp 64ff*



*Dorothee Sölle during her bible work at the Frankfurt “Kirchentag” (Church Assembly) in 1987*



*Political Night-Prayer in 1969*



*Dorothee Sölle and Fulbert Steffensky after their wedding ceremony in the Antoniter Church in 1969*

# Reformation worldwide

## The future of the Church: Theses by Luther's daughters

Evangelical Churches all over the world are interlinked through an effective network. German congregations, too, benefit from impulses radiating from the global ecumenical movement.

The Vereinte Evangelische Mission (VEM) (United Evangelical Mission) is an organisation that promotes such networking in the form of numerous partnerships and projects. The VEM's 29 member Churches cooperate as equals in order to support each other in their programmes, to share responsibilities and experience, to help people in distress or in conflicts and thus to bear witness to the Word of Reconciliation in Jesus Christ. Hence the Reformation anniversary 2017 is not restricted to Germany for the VEM, people in Africa and Asia join their German sisters and brothers in the jubilee celebrations.

In preparation of the Reformation anniversary the VEM organised an international community meeting trip for

*“The leaders of the church have to keep their good communion with one another and their intimacy with God to prevent the church from disaster. They should enlighten their behaviour, their decisions and traditions by God's Word for building a strong church which can accomplish God's Mission in the world.”*

*Kavira Nyanza: Director of the Department for Women and Family in the Baptist Church in Central Africa, Congo (CBCA)*



*“The future of the church belongs to women, their influence will have clearly improved.”*

*Esther Ngalle: Deputy chair of the Christian Women Union in the Protestant Church in Cameroon (EEC) and a lawyer*

women in May 2016 uniting participants from Africa, Asia and Germany under the motto: “Strong women – with each other, from each other, for each other”. The trip was part of the campaign “What is wide, is effective” launched by the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland, the Evangelical Church of Westphalia and the Church of Lippe. These women developed their creative visions for the future of the Church. For, on a global scale, the Church is continually undergoing a process of reformation: Traditional structures are overcome, new ways of implementing Divine Justice are explored with women from every continent playing a significant role.

For some decades now women have not only had a decisive influence on our congregations as members of the Church but also as preachers and woman pastors. The fact that women have unrestricted access to all forms of ministry is a characteristic feature of our Protestant Church and a very late consequence of Reformation. If a woman pastor leading worship, you may be sure that you are in an Evangelical church. Although women are ordained in most Protestant Churches in the world, ordination of women is by no means standard general practice.

*The photos of woman church leaders dressed in historical Luther garments were taken on the occasion of a community meeting trip for women organised by the VEM under the motto: “Strong women – with each other, from each other, for each other” in May 2016 within the campaign “What is wide is effective” launched by the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland, the Evangelical Church of Westphalia and the Church of Lippe.*



*"Church of tomorrow is the Church that works for and with God, desired by all of the Church's members."*

*Rosmalia Barus: Pastor, director of the Department of Diakonia and member of the church board of the Karo Batak Protestant Church (GBKP), Indonesia*

For this reason Kavira Nganza from the Baptist Church in Goma, Congo, is demanding from her Church that women be ordained as well. Especially in patriarchal societies the Church ought to be a pioneer as regards making men aware of gender issues, accepting women's ability to assume leadership responsibilities and enforcing gender equality.

Reformation is anything but completed with its 500th anniversary, the processes that have been initiated must be continued. Pastor Rosmalia Barus from Indonesia demands from the Church more courage and commitment for the victims of violence, most of them women and children. She desires the Church to become more inclusive and more committed to the protection of the environment. After all, the Church ought to be a blessing for the whole world.

Dressed as "reformation women" these theologians from various countries share their visions with us.

*Beate Ludwig und Martina Pauly  
(translation: Ruth Feiertag)*

*"Church of tomorrow will be a healthy growing church."*

*Alice Leung: Pastor and member of the Board of the Chinese Rhenish Church, Hong Kong Synod (CRC)*



*"Church must be Agent of Change. because the challenge of churches nowadays is not only the spiritual development of congregations but also how the existence of Church can be more meaningful for others. Reformation is about transformation and empowerment not only for the members of church but also the people outside church.*

*In Indonesia, many Churches were burnt several years ago, even last year in Aceh Singkil. We have to reevaluate the existence of the Church itself. Does the church give good impact for the society outside church? If the church will be closed would anyone in your community (not the members of church) grieve or mourn?"*

*Debora Suparni: Director of the Sion Foundation of the Christian Church of Northern Central Java (GKJTU)*

The ordination of women is performed in most Protestant Churches in the world. The Lutheran World Federation with its 145 member Churches and approx. 72.2 million members in 98 countries reports for 2013 that 77% of its member Churches ordain women. For the year 2016 it was expected that women will be ordained in 90% of the member Churches.

A survey conducted in 2009 revealed that in the World Community of Reformed Churches women are ordained in approx. 82% of the 229 member Churches with more than 80 million members in over 100 countries.

For further information see:  
[www.Frauenordination-weltweit.org](http://www.Frauenordination-weltweit.org)

# Women in the ministry

## A long-term result of the Reformation

In many Protestant churches women have now equal access to the ministry. Ultimately, this is one of the most important results of the Reformation; it is also one of the most outstanding changes experienced by these churches in the 20th century.

The principle that women should have equal rights and equal positions in Protestant churches is crucially based on the insight that all baptized adults are endowed with the priesthood and thus entitled to preach the gospel. Recognition of Holy Scripture as the only decisive authority, the sola scriptura of the Reformers, opens the path to a long series of Bible interpretations, which in our time are marked by contextual liberation-theological and feminist features. In a long-term view, the widening access to education has created the conditions for women obtaining an equal share in education, jobs and resources. In conclusion, the idea that the Church is an entity that has to be constantly reformed keeps the Reformation constantly in motion and requires both women and men to contribute their impulses to the movement that originated in the Reformation.

*"Therefore, all Christian men are priests, all women are priestesses."*

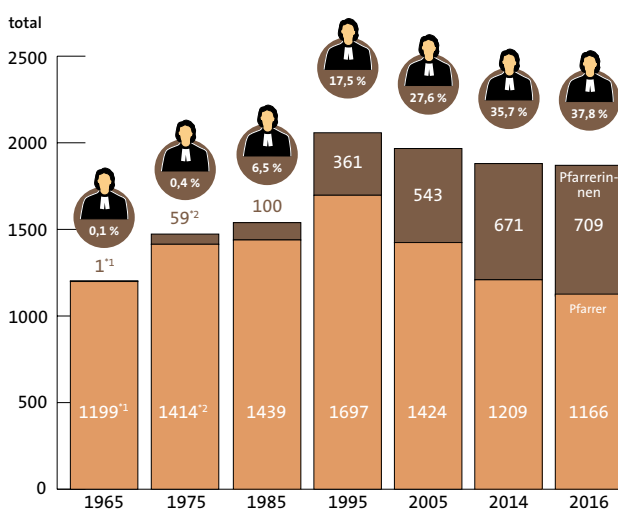
M. Luther (DWB VIII 1596)

The first Reformation women and Reformers' wives to intervene in public matters in the early days of the Reformation up to the Peasants' Revolt in 1525 in both speech and writing, came from the nunneries, the nobility and the middle classes. While Marie Dentière dreamed of preaching and contributed her own writings, the Strasbourg Reformation woman Katharina Schütz Zell, did in fact preach and authored numerous written texts. Argula von Grumbach began a public dispute with theologians of the University of Ingolstadt. Inspired by Luther's writings, she made her own, independent contribution to the religious disputes of the time and became a model for other women.

Pastors' wives have taken part in parish work since the Reformation; in some places, they were at the same time active as midwives and teachers. In the 19th and 20th centuries women with the status of deaconesses were engaged in nursing, social and educational activities; they lived in communities in deaconesses' homes. But even here, the patriarchal family with its traditional allocation of roles remained the ideal. New female occupations like that of the parish worker enabled theologically trained women to assume responsibilities and to shoulder part of the parson's

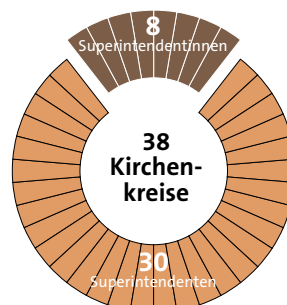


### MALE AND WOMAN PASTORS IN THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN THE RHINELAND



<sup>1</sup> Schätzung | <sup>2</sup> am 31.12.1974  
Quelle: Landeskirchenamt, Stabsstelle Controlling 22.11.2016

### WOMAN DEANS (SUPERINTENDENTINNEN, LEADING A CHURCH DISTRICT)



work such as catechesis and preaching of the Word of God. In the 20th century women became equal to men in that they obtained the right to study at the university and to choose the ministry as a career.

To achieve equality of men and women in the ministry, the traditional doctrine of the inferiority and submission of women had to be overcome, which for centuries had not only been preached from the pulpits but had also been taught and internalized.

A large part of the first Protestant female theologians, who in 1925 organized themselves in the Verband evangelischer Theologinnen Deutschlands (Association of Female Protestant Theologians in Germany) were still content to demand only a "female office" (Frauenamt), which was to be subordinate to the male parson's office. A small minority headed by Carola Barth, Annemarie Rübens and Ina Gschlössl, which split off in 1930 as Vereinigung evangelischer Theologinnen (Union of Female Protestant Theologians), demanded from the very beginning full equality for women in the pastoral office.

In the period of the Kirchenkampf (the church struggle under Nazism), many female theologians, theologically trained pastors' wives and female parish workers proved themselves in the pastoral office as well as in community leadership and gained a new self-confidence.

A direction for many legal regulations until well after World War II was pointed by the Kirchengesetz betreffend Vorbildung und Anstellung der Vikarinnen (Church Law Concerning the Training and Employment of Female assistant minister) of the Protestant Prussian Union of Churches, which came into force in October 1928. It permitted women to be consecrated (though not ordained) to the service of women, girls and children, though it still barred them from conducting services and other official acts; it confirmed the title of Vikarin (female assistant minister) and determined that in the event of marriage female theologians have to leave the ecclesiastical office except only in exceptional cases.

Among the member churches of the EKD (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, Evangelical Church in Germany) some were less quick than others to lift all restrictions concerning women in the ministry. Thus, considerable regional differences regarding education, ordination, titles, vestments, salaries and celibacy remained for several years.

With the beginning of the 1970s the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland gradually removed the restrictions imposed on female assistant minister; in 1975 the new

Pfarrdienstgesetz (law on pastoral service) established equal conditions for men and women.

Equality included, of course, the possibility of appointing women to positions of church leadership. In 1981 Gisela Vogel became the first female theologian to be called to the Landeskirchenamt (regional ecclesiastical office) of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland as well as its first Oberkirchenrätin (female member of the High Consistory).

In 1992, when Maria Jepsen was elected bishop of the regional church of Hamburg, thus becoming the first female Lutheran bishop world-wide, Hannelore Häusler became the first Superintendentin (female dean, head of a sub-division of a diocese, usually comprising the parishes of a city or county) in the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland.

The process which began with the admission of women to some subordinate ministries and ended in granting them equal rights with men has taken almost a century. The long-term impact of reformatory impulses, the new self-confidence which women gained by overcoming the subordination paradigm, and the research results of feminist theology invigorate women and encourage them to contribute their gifts and talents to the benefit of churches and communities. Female theologians are now to be found in the highest pastoral offices, they are a familiar sight in the pastoral ministry of the parish, they sharpen the face of the church as a matter of course.

Dr. Cornelia Schlarb

(translation: Prof. Dr. Hans-Jürgen Diller)

*In Krefeld's pedestrian zone, women theologians promote the exhibition "Women pioneers in the ministry – 40 years of equality between women and men in the ministry in the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland": Katrin Meinhard, Anne Wellmann, Jutta Weigler, Ines Siebenkotten and Daniela Büscher-Bruch (left to right).*



# The Bible for everyone

## New educational ideas of the Reformation

Access to education is one of the demands of the Reformation: Independent thinking, the ability to read and evaluate what the priest preaches – this implies a ministry of the entire congregation! This even includes girls who, in Luther's eyes, should be taught by female teachers.

Until then it was mainly the monasteries which were places of female education. Most monasteries required a dowry and aristocratic descent though, so that this education was limited to the upper classes only.

With Luther's vision of the ministry of all people - which did not go as far as the introduction of female priests - new ideas and ways of education were made possible. This had an impact on the education of girls even though these ideas were mainly aimed at educating girls and women to be able to read the bible and the catechism. It also allowed them to make an assessment of the Christian teaching promoted by the pastors, as well as preparing them for their future life as wife and mother, passing on Christian values to the children. The aim was an education to piety and devoutness to God; a more rounded and worldly education was not yet envisaged, not even for protestant girls and women.

The Reformation was also a time of dissolution of convents and with this a reduction of educational opportunities and institutions for unmarried women.

Even one hundred years before Luther published his 95 Theses on the door of the Schloßkirche in Wittenberg, there were already so called 'low schools' offering writing, reading and arithmetic skills. Since the beginning of the

15th century, these schools, run by local city councils, were mainly serving the rising merchant class in towns and cities. In addition to this, private schools called 'Winkelschulen' emerged which, apart from teaching children, gave adults the opportunity to learn basic skills. Since the middle of the 14th century, people from affluent upper classes provided opportunities for girls to attend private tuition. Merchants, business people and craftsmen often made use of their educated girls and women within their family businesses. These girls generally attended school between the age of six to ten. Further education or even higher university education were not yet an option.

This practice continued during the following centuries. Anne Maria van Schurmann (1607-1678), a reformed pietist theologian who herself had listened to theological lectures at the University of Utrecht demanded in 1652, "My thesis shall be this: A Christian woman is entitled to a study of the sciences." Unsurprisingly, this suggestion was paid no attention to.

The idea of a higher education for girls as part of the pietism movement did not succeed, as seen in the example of the 'Gynäceums', founded in Halle by August Hermann Francke (1663-1727). This higher school for girls followed his ambitious vision of educating wealthy citizens and aristocratic girls in the original language of the bible. Unfortunately the required ascetic lifestyle of a boarding student did not comply with the ideas of the aristocratic girls which led to the closure of the institution. In the context of the Age of Enlightenment it was not at least Jean Jacques Rousseau's 'Émile or On education' (1762), which sketched the persistent gender stereotype, in which the

*The 'Old Mägdelein-Haus' (house for girls) of the Franckeschen Stiftung (Francke Charity) in Halle was refurbished with grants from the German Institute of historical buildings and monuments. The Gynaeceum was established by August Hermann Francke in 1698 for, "the gentile and aristocratic daughters", together with an extensive orphanage and other facilities. Here 6-15 year old girls learned useful life skills for the common good as well as Greek and Hebrew.*



natural role of the woman is limited to that of wife and motherhood.

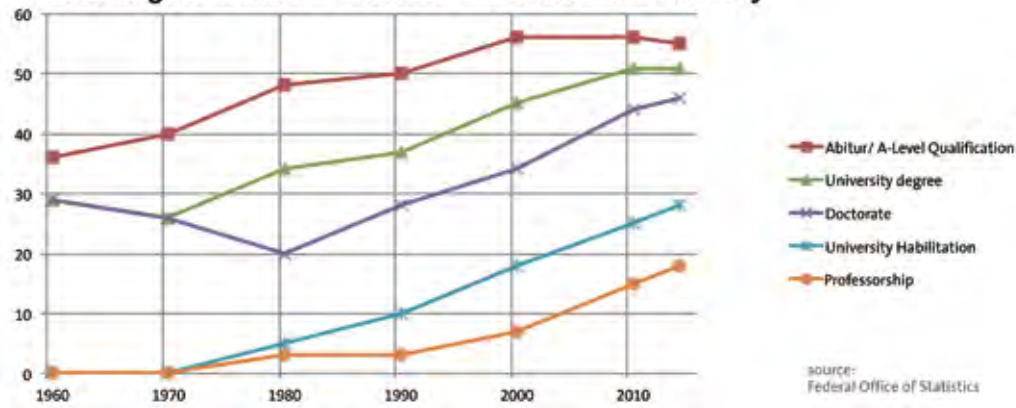
During the 19th century, state school higher education continued to be a male privilege. As merchants, protestant clergy and civil servants wanted to support their daughters' education in some way; it was mainly privately run schools offering higher education for girls.

During the industrial revolution and its vast changes in the social system things also changed for women. By the end of the 19th century women were already executing a range of jobs such as carers and social workers within the protestant and catholic context. Women worked within deaconess houses such as the Kaiserwerth Sisterhood which was founded with the help of Friederike and Caroline Fliedner, in small initiatives or catholic congregations for women. Particularly the deaconess houses provided access to education and training for women. In 1850, Amalie Sieveking (1794-1859), a protestant social reformer encouraged Christian women to do valuable community work instead of wasting their time by reading cheap novels. This helped to establish an educational environment for women; religion and piety became the inspiration for education.

Universities opened their doors to women in the beginning 20th century. Since 1908 it was possible for women to apply for university courses in Prussia including theology. The sole degree was that of a doctorate though, women were not yet entitled to sit examinations by the church.

Within the last decades we have seen fundamental changes within society. Women are equally educated and qualified as men in the western world and predominantly in

Percentage of women in Education and Academia in Germany



employment. Interestingly the choice of career for boys and girls is often still lead by gender stereotype, even though an increasing number of women choose 'male jobs'. Still, a majority of women choose jobs within the social sector. Taking the level of responsibility and necessary qualifications for most of these jobs into account, the pay is unproportionately low.

Today, men and women have similar qualifications when it comes to academic and scientific education. In fact, more girls than boys achieve higher degrees. Despite this, most higher-rank jobs in industry, science and even in the protestant church are still occupied by men. This gender gap is not least connected to the volatile issue of compatibility of family and work life.

Prof. Dr. Ute Gause  
(translation: Doro Thyssen)



The children's sick ward of the deaconess house in Kaiserwerth. A global network of institutions developed from Fliedner's model. Friederike and Caroline Fliedner improved the structure and organisation of the nursing profession for women.

# Female writers of the Reformation

## From Pamphlet to Facebook

Today, Argula von Grumbach would be a blogger, Katharina Schütz Zell would post on Facebook and Elisabeth von Calenberg would hold a press conference in one of her state rooms.

500 years ago, these three women, and with them other female protagonists of the Reformation, already knew of the great power of the media. While modern means of communication are Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, the contemporary form of the early 16th century was the printing press, which laid the foundation of a new era of publishing ideas and news. It was the beginning of a revolution in publishing as it became possible to sell books and pamphlets more cheaply to a much broader customer market. This was particularly interesting for women and lay theologians.

Here are a few more exemplary authors and poets of their time: Ursula Weyda, Elisabeth Cruciger, Florentina von Oberweimar or Ursula von Münsterberg.

Many of these publishing authors had to face animosity and reprisals. Friedrich Grumbach was made redundant by the Dukes of Bavaria after his wife Argula published her papers. This caused severe financial problems for the family and nearly brought the marriage to break. Katharina Schütz was called before the courts of the

city council for her mourning sermons. She died before she could be sentenced by the judges. Did these women have a 'media strategy' to make themselves heard? Their use of media such as pamphlets and book printing was certainly done with confidence and efficiency, their songs were sung and some even dared to preach in public.

It has to be remembered that at that time not many people were able to read. But everyone could listen and so those who were unable to read themselves were read to; at home, in public houses, on the market square or from the pulpit. By the way, these were also times when more women than men could read as reading was seen as a 'woman's trade'.

Reading to others requires a more simplistic language of the text. Texts from this era are proof of this, as they were mostly written in a colloquial style. "Dem Volk aufs Maul schauen," "To hear what the people say," or "To look at man's mouth," when he or she speaks was Luther's advice.

Not only were pamphlets and books written in German, the language of the people, the authors were aiming to be understood by the general public. Well known and powerful proverbs and sayings were used as much as

Elisabeth, Argula and Katharina and their reformist activities



During her reign, **Elisabeth von Calenberg-Göttingen** not only had the political powers to introduce the Reformation to her territory of Lower Saxony; she was also a very active publishing author. She wrote the first paper on protestant government ethics for her son and lived in an interfaith marriage with her husband until his death; he kept his catholic faith whereas she became a protestant.



**Argula von Grumbach** was the first protestant publishing author. The Frankish aristocrat penned her first paper in 1523, a fiery letter to the male academia of the University of Ingolstadt. She wanted to start a discussion with the professors around their persecution of a young man on the basis of his religious beliefs. She believed their action to be un-godly and against the Christian ethos. She talked of her own writing as everything else but 'women's gossip'. She claimed to bring sustainable theological arguments to the discussion. Within one year she published six more papers. With these she reached the same amount of printed copies as Martin Luther, the theological bestseller.

clear, common and graphic language. These lightened the tone and kept texts accessible and fun to read. Ursula Weyda from Thuringia did not shy away from clear language when she accused the catholic Abbot with these words, “You plough through the holy scripture like a foul-mouthed sow”. If published on social media today, she would receive thousands of ‘Likes’ or create a ‘Shit storm’; depending on the denomination of the reader.

Pamphlets and leaflets were meant to agitate, involve and mobilise people, they were written to inform and to sharpen one’s mind and conscience. They were not usually written in a meek and well-balanced way. Their purpose was often to accuse the church of greed, to criticise the mercenary system of purchasing sacraments and salvation, as well as the of cleric system of prebends and selfishness.

What was the basis for this kind of action? The holy scriptures.

They followed the principle of the Reformation: The bible lays down the rules as the ‘sola scriptura’, ‘only the scriptures’. Bible quotes were an integral part of all publicised texts, sometimes up to one hundred in only one essay. These women were not just writers; they were



**Katharina Zell** printed her papers in Strasbourg. She concerned herself with refugees, opposed her bishop, married a priest and with that became one of the first ‘pastor’s wives’. She was much more than his wife though, she called herself a ‘church-mother’, wrote songs and, what’s more, wrote and read eulogies and sermons at funerals. Even at funerals of female Baptists, who were despised by any male Lutheran pastor so that they would not have received a Christian burial.



preachers and messengers. They wanted to disseminate and spread God’s word and lead people to believe in God. Some of them also criticised problems within society. Katharina Zell from Strasbourg for example, deemed the conditions in the local hospital as being catastrophic.

Role models for all these self-confident female reformists were often female figures from the Bible. There was Deborah, the judge, the fearless fighter Judith, the apostle Maria Magdalena. One verse from the New Testament is particularly important as it encourages women to speak out and in this is inspiring to men and women until today: In Paul’s letter to the Galatians (3:28) it says, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Sonja Domröse  
*(translation: Doro Thyssen)*

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*“I have not written womanish twaddle but rather the Word of God as a member of the Christian Church.”*

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*Argula von Grumbach*

# Nunneries in the Reformation

## Prison or Paradise?

Life behind convent walls? The vows of poverty, obedience and chastity? For Luther and his fellow Reformers there was no doubt: human beings are justified only by their faith in Christ, not by their own works of piety. To find divine grace and salvation, there is no need for a devoted life behind convent walls or for monastic vows. Luther, a former Augustinian hermit, does not regard them as binding. Looking at the monastic lives of women, he also finds much to criticize. Before the Reformation nuns held quite a special position in church and society. There is a general conviction that the brides of Christ are particularly close to God and His mercy by virtue of their very virginity. They are mediators between God and humanity, their intercession and their prayer are particularly effective. There is no mention of this in Luther. To him, the vow of chastity is against the Word of God. Just as a tree bears fruit, a woman is meant by her Creator to bear children. As Holy Scripture says: "Be fruitful, and multiply." (Gen. 1, 22) That applies to nuns as well; after all, it is impossible for them not to be women.

Luther's writings circulate also in the nunneries. Cistercian, Benedictine, Franciscan and Dominican nuns discuss his theses intensely and put their own form of life into question. The consequences are often serious: convents dissolve or cease accepting novices. Nuns leave their cloistered communities. And when that is impossible they flee from their convents. A famous ex-

ample is Katharina von Bora, who, together with a few fellow nuns, leaves the convent of Mariathron on Easter Eve, 1523. For 15 years she had lived here as a Cistercian nun. Ursula von Münsterberg, who escapes in 1528 from a convent of the Order of St. Mary Magdalene, publishes 69 articles to justify her flight with theological arguments. She writes, int. al.: "They say that our blessedness is in our vows. But it is these very vows which tear us away from God, throwing us into uncertainty and eternal damnation. Therefore, we had to abandon those vows."

Luther presumably does not envisage total abolition of the monastic form of life, preferring an as it were "purified" form of the cloistered life, which would be along the lines of the theology of the Reformation and compatible with the principle of Christian freedom. As a matter of fact, the continuing existence of a nunnery as well as the conditions of that existence depend on the policy which the local ruler chooses to adopt. That policy is of course not merely a matter of theological argument. Many princes use the Reformation to sanitize their bankrupt treasuries by confiscating monastic property. A remarkable exception is Elisabeth von Calenberg-Göttingen. Nuns wanting to stay in their convents have to accept the Protestant religion. In the everyday life of the community that means that instead of the Roman Catholic mass, there will be Protestant sermons, the language of the liturgy is no longer Latin, but German. The nuns have to give up their customary vestments and are not allowed to accept new novices.

The majority of the nunneries do not receive the Reformation with enthusiasm. Many convents reject the new faith with the deepest conviction; they use every means to fight for the preservation of their customary form of life and their spiritual identity. When Duke Ernst I. (later to be called "the Confessor" for his Reformatory zeal) introduces the Reformation in the principality of Lüneburg, his life is made difficult by many recalcitrant nunneries. In the Benedictine convent of Lüne, the nuns try to literally fumigate the Protestant preacher with the smoke of burning rags of felt. When celebration of the Mass is banned from the convent church, the nuns simply divert the granary or the cloister for their purposes. And later, when they do participate in the Protestant service, they pointedly disrupt it with their noisy singing and recitations of the Rosary prayer. In Wienhausen, Ernst I. ordered the paintings of saints and even parts of the convent building to be destroyed. Lüne and Wienhausen turn Protestant only in 1562, after more than thirty years of stubborn resistance. Elsewhere



*Katharina von Bora, a runaway nun, became Martin Luther's wife; in that function she administered and managed the vast holdings of a former convent.*



*Some nunneries escaped dissolution: Elisabeth von Calenberg established the tradition of the Hanoverian Protestant women's convent. The picture shows Medingen nunnery.*

things are similar, as in Ebstorf, Medingen, or Walsrode. At the beginning of the 18th century all these convents are transformed into Protestant endowments, where the daughters of the nobility and of deserving burghers are provided for in a style that is suitable to their status – but which resembles the cloistered community and the spiritual life only remotely.

The nuns of the 16th century are also prone to take up their pens to defend themselves against the attacks of the Reformation with theological arguments. Caritas Pirckheimer, the humanistically educated abbess of the Clarissan convent in Nuremberg, chooses this course of action when the Nuremberg city council decides to dissolve the convent and when families inspired by the Reformation take their daughters out of the convent. In the end, her arguments convince Philipp Melanchthon in a theological dispute, so that the Poor Clares are allowed to stay in the nunnery to the end of their lives.

The resistance of the female communities is often much more embittered than that of the men; for more is at stake for the women. They are confronted by Reformers who are fired by the new doctrine but who are incapable of sympathy with the inner afflictions and religious doubts of the nuns. And it is doubtful that they were capable of imagining what withdrawal from the convent and laicization meant to women in the 16th century, in economic and legal, but also in spiritual and cultural terms.

In the Middle Ages convents are religious, social and economic centres which offer a secure existence to un-

married women from the nobility and from the urban patriciate. Here they can share the spiritual and intellectual life of their time. Many nunneries offer a thorough education to their prospective nuns. They learn not only to read and to write; often they learn Latin as well and become conversant with theological problems. And, for instance as abbesses, they can take on positions of spiritual leadership. Outside the protective walls of the nunneries, things are very different for them. Their social status is entirely undefined. Even if they come from noble families, they cannot, as a rule, expect to return there. They are without means and dependent on the support of others. The former brides of Christ are literally left to the streets. There is no form of life in which they could follow their spiritual calling. There is only matrimony, the status of which the Reformation has enhanced. It is now the only form of life available for women. Women are thus confined to the roles of housewife and mother. There is no place for female preachers and theologians. The Reformation did not create spiritual offices for women – access to the academic study of theology and to the pastoral office came to them only in the 20th century after a long, laborious struggle.

Dr. Claudia Eliass  
(translation: Prof. Dr. Hans-Jürgen Diller)

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**Weitere Literaturhinweise finden sich in den Anmerkungen zu den einzelnen Biographien ab S. 64**

# Explanatory Notes

## *Marie Dentière*

### *Seite 8*

- 1 Dentière: Epistre, 79 (translated into German by C.L. Griffiths)

## *Katharina Schütz-Zell*

### *Seite 12*

- 1 A letter to the entire Citizenry of the Town of Strasbourg (according to McKee II, p. 169)
- 2 A letter to the entire Citizenry of the Town of Strasbourg (according to McKee II, p. 170)
- 3 A letter to the entire Citizenry of the Town of Strasbourg (according to McKee II, p. 243f)
- 4 A letter to the entire Citizenry..., (according to McKee II, p. 209)
- 5 A letter to the entire Citizenry of the Town of Strasbourg (according to McKee II, p. 209)
- 6 A letter to the entire Citizenry of the Town of Strasbourg (according to McKee II, p. 225)

## *Elisabeth Cruciger*

### *Seite 16*

- 1 Elisabeth Schneider-Böcklen: Elisabeth Cruciger – [www.frauen-und-reformation.de](http://www.frauen-und-reformation.de)
- 2 Sonja Dörmöse: Frauen der Reformationszeit, S. 59.
- 3 In: Adami, Johann Samuel: *Deliciae Biblicae* (Dresden/Leipzig 1693. S. 644; zitiert nach: Koldau, Linda Maria. *Frauen-Musik-Kultur. Ein Handbuch zum deutschen Sprachgebiet der Frühen Neuzeit.* Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau-Verlag, 2005. S. 420.
- 4 Corinna Dahlgrün: Herr Christ, der einig Gotts Sohn; in: Jochen Arnold, Kalus-Martin Bresgott (Hg): *Kirche Klingt - 77 Lieder für das Kirchenjahr*, S.18.

## *Wibrandis Rosenblatt*

### *Seite 20*

- 1 In the Historisches Museum in Basle there is a wax image of Wibrandis Rosenblatt (inventory No. 1915.47) engraved by an unknown wax engraver in the 2nd half of the 16th century. On the lid of the wax image the names of her four husbands are shown: the humanist Master Ludwig Keller (Basle + 1526), then the reformers Dr. Johannes Oekolampad (Basle + 1531), Dr. Wolfgang F. Capito (Strasbourg + 1541) and Dr. Martin Bucer (Cambridge + 1551).
- 2 Regarding the biographical data of Wibrandis Rosenblatt see Ernst Staehlin, *Frau Wibrandis. Eine Gestalt aus den Kämpfen der Reformationszeit*, Bern / Leipzig 1934.
- 3 Ernst Staehlin, *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads*, Vol. 2: 1527-1593, Leipzig 1934, No. 457

- 4 See Susanne Burghartz, Wibrandis Rosenblatt – Die Frau der Reformatoren, in: *Theologische Zeitschrift Basel* 60 (2004), p. 337-349, here p. 341.
- 5 “Ante pauculos dies Oecolampadius duxit uxorem, puellam non inelegantem, cupiens in quadragesima macerare carnem...”; in *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads*. Zum vierhundertjährigen Jubiläum der Basler Reformation, hg. von Ernst Staehlin, Vol. 2: 1527-1593, Leipzig 1934, No. 554, p. 144.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 René Teuteberg, Wibrandis Rosenblatt, in: *Der Reformation verpflichtet. Gestalten und Gestalter in Stadt und Landschaft Basel aus fünf Jahrhunderten*, hg. vom Kirchenrat der Evangelisch-reformierten Kirche Basel-Stadt, Basel 1979, p. 39-42.
- 8 See also Luise Schorn-Schütte, „Gefährtin“ und „Mitregentin“. Zur Sozialgeschichte der evangelischen Pfarrfrau in der Frühen Neuzeit, in: Heide Wunder / Christina Vanja (Hg.), *Wandel der Geschlechterbeziehungen zu Beginn der Neuzeit*, Frankfurt a.M. 1991, p. 109-153.
- 9 Quoted after Johannes Janssen, *Culturzustände des deutschen Volkes seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters bis zum Beginn des dreißigjährigen Krieges*, Vol. 8, Freiburg 1893, p. 225.
- 10 Wibrandis is worrying about her son Johann Simon Capito although he has meanwhile embarked upon a study course of theology at the newly founded University of Marburg. A letter of the year 1557 reveals her worries: “Dear Hans Simon! I have not got any message from you since the messenger from Marburg was here. But I know full well that if I had received a message from you, it would not have pleased me; for it has long been your way that you are to be my cross. Oh, if only the day were to come when I hear something good from you, then I would gladly die...” Wibrandis closed the last letter we know of with regards from the grandmother Magdalena Strub, from Irene Capito and Elisabeth Bucer. A reply has not been preserved; nothing further has been heard of Johann Simon’s life.
- 11 Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, *Kurtze Baßler Chronik* 1624, p. 203
- 12 See Irina Bossart, Wibrandis Rosenblatt, in: *Frauen der Reformationszeit*, <http://www.hanna-strack.de/wibrandis-rosenblatt-1504-1564/> / see also the same authoress, Wibrandis Rosenblatt (1504-1564) – „euer Diener im Herrn“ oder: Das Wort gewinnt Gestalt im Tun, in: Adelheid M. von Hauff (Hg.), *Frauen gestalten Diakonie*, Vol. 1, Stuttgart 2007, p 321-335.

## *Idelette de Bure*

### *Seite 24*

- 1 There were few authors who dealt with Idelette de Bure in the 19th and early 20th centuries: *Quelques femmes de la Réforme. Recueil biographique*,

- Lausanne 1859; Jean Anderson, *Les femmes de la Réformation*, Paris 1865; Charles A. Rahlenbeeck, Art. Idelette de Bure, in: *Biographie nationale de Belgique*, vol 3 (1872), col 167-168, G. Heusser, Calvin's wife Idelette von Büren, Basel 1884; and finally Nathanaël Weiss, *Un portrait de la femme de Calvin*, Fontenay-aux-Roses 1907. Coming in a close second place are some fictional descriptions of her life from the 1990s such as Marc-François Gonin, *Moi, Idelette de Bure, épouse Calvin. Mémoires imaginaires*; Genève 1990 or Edna Gerstner, *Je me prénomme Idelette et j'ai épousé Jean Calvin*, Biographie romancée de Madame Jean Calvin; Champigny-sur-Marne 1994. In last place are Roland Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in England and France*, Boston 1974, and Emile M. Braekman, *Idelette de Bure, de vrouw van Calvin*, in: *Bulletin de la Société d'histoire du Protestantisme Belge* 10/7 (1986), pp 175-190. It is also worth reading Irena Backus, *Frauen um Calvin: Idelette de Bure und Marie Dentièrre*: lecture given on 16 June 2009 in the context of the lecture series given at the Theological Faculty of Basel University on: "Calvin und die Wirkungen. Glaube gestaltet Gesellschaft".
- 2 Isabelle Jamaer was the daughter of Antoine Jamaer and his wife Ydelecte.
  - 3 Information about the family origins can be found in Rahlenbeeck, Art. Idelette de Bure [see note 1].
  - 4 This is confirmed in a letter from Calvin written in 1541; cf. Emile Doumergue, *Calvin. Les hommes et les choses de son temps*, vol 3, Lausanne-Neuilly 1906, p574.
  - 5 In a letter Calvin refers to the relationship between Idelette and Jean Stordeur as "fout" (a love match), which led to speculation that the couple were not married. Cf. *Calvini Opera quae super sunt omnia*, ed. Wilhelm Baum et al, vol 12, Brunswick 1874, col 580.
  - 6 Idelette's son remained a member of the Baptist movement. Idelette once complained to Calvin's secretary François Bauduin, that Calvin could not tolerate the fact that the boy grew up a Baptist.
  - 7 Cf. Olivier Donnerau, *L'anabaptisme auf Pays de Liège (1533-1593)*, in: *AHL* 32 (2003), pp 5-38, here pp 7, 11-12.
  - 8 Nathanael Weiss reckons that Stordeur moved directly to Geneva, cf. *Un portrait de la femme de Calvin* [see note 1], p266
  - 9 Archives d'Etat de Genève. *Registres du Conseil* vol 30, fol. 202 r.
  - 10 Théodore de Bèze/ Nicolas Colladon, *Vie de Calvin*, Genf 1565; referring to the return of the Stordeur family, Beza and Colladon wrote in 1565 "Il y eut aussi lors cest heur qu'il (Calvin) ramena à la foy un fort grand nombre d'anabaptistes qu'on luy adressoit de toutes parts. [...] Il y eut aussi de ce nombre un nommé Jean Stordeur natif du Liège; lequel estant décédé peu après, il print sa veufve à femme. [...] (ce qu'il fit par le moyen et conseil de M. Bucer)."
  - 11 Cf. Richard Stauffer, *Johannes Calvin*, in: *Gestalten der Kirchengeschichte*, published by Martin Greschat, vol. 6, Stuttgart/ Berlin/ Köln/ Mainz 1981, pp 211-240, here p 217.
  - 12 On 6 February 1540 Calvin noted with regard to Farel, that he had once again raised the question of marriage. Calvin had a well-to-do noblewoman in view, but had two conditions, namely that the lady should learn French and that she should give up her noble rank. The lady was not willing to learn French.
  - 13 Cf. Daniel Ollier, *Le mariage de Calvin*, in *Revue chrétienne* (1892), pp 210-226, p 211. See also Braekman, *Idelette de Bure* [as note 1], p182.
  - 14 We know little about Calvin's private life. Because of the allegations made by the Catholic side, that Calvin was suspected of sodomy – by which was meant at that time homosexual practices – or of having had relationships with a number of women, Theodore Beza in his biography of Calvin indicates that Calvin had led a "pure and unblemished" married life. But this statement is of a rather apologetic nature: "But the man has not yet been born who would dare to accuse him (Calvin) of what has been rumoured. [...] He lived for nine years in an impeccable marriage. After the passing of his wife he lived for sixteen years as a widower until his death. [...] Who else could stand as a more convincing opponent of any form of adultery? It is true that the Lord tested him severely in this regard, and indeed in the very person of those who were closest to him. There were much worse things that happened in the house of Jacob and of David." As it happens, John Calvin's brother Antoine was divorced and Judith Stordeur, Calvin's stepdaughter, who had married in 1554 was charged with adultery. Calvin complained about this in 1562 in a letter to Heinrich Bullinger: "I wrote recently to Blerer, but was not in a position to write to you at the time, because I was suffering from a high fever. Shortly before that a great dishonour fell upon my house because of the shameful behaviour of my stepdaughter." Cf. Doumergue, *Calvin* [see note 4] p 574
  - 15 Older literature passes down the tradition that two years later Idelette brought a daughter into the world who died on 30 May 1544. And that another son was born and died young.
  - 16 Calvin found a resolute opponent in a former close companion, the converted Carmelite Jérôme-Hermès Bolsec, who was arrested and exiled from Geneva after he turned against Calvin's doctrine of predestination in 1551. He returned to the Catholic faith and in 1577 he published a polemical biography of Calvin, giving detailed particulars about his sexuality. He refers to the classic characteristics of a heretic, claiming that John Calvin had led a dissolute life in his youth and even carried a fleur-de-lis brand mark on his shoulder - the beginning of a legend - and indeed that his father Gérard Cauvin had been a blasphemer. Bolsec completed his horror story with the allegation that Calvin had pestered other women; cf. *Histoire de*

la vie, des moeurs [...] de Jean Calvin, Lyons/ Paris 1577, pp. 70r-70v. Cf. also Mirjam van Veen, "In excelso honoris gradu". Johannes Calvin und Jacques de Falais, in: *Zwingliana* 32 (2005), pp 5-22.

- 17 Other sources give 6 April 1549 as the day of her death; cf. Rahlenbeeck, Art. Idelette de Bure [as note 1], col. 168.
- 18 Letter from Calvin to Pierre Viret on 7 April 1549 in: *Calvini Opera* [as note 5], vol. 13 (1875), col. 230-231.
- 19 Literally "singularis exempli femina" in: Jean Calvin, *De Scandalis*, in: *Calvini Opera* [as note 5], vol. 8 (1870), col. 73.

### **Elisabeth von Calenberg-Göttingen, Herzogin von Braunschweig-Lüneburg Seite 26**

- 1 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elisabeth\\_of\\_Brandenburg,\\_Duchess\\_of\\_Brunswick-Calenberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elisabeth_of_Brandenburg,_Duchess_of_Brunswick-Calenberg)

### **Sibylle von Jülich-Kleve-Berg Seite 28**

- 1 Bräuer, Sybille, 128
- 2 Bräuer, Sybille, 136
- 3 Bräuer, Sybille, *ibid*
- 4 WABr, Letter from Luther on 30.3.1544
- 5 Letter of 6 February 1550, quoted by Weigert, Sybille, 83f
- 6 Stoltz, Vier Trostpredigten, Diijr-v
- 7 Burkhardt, Letters p 3
- 8 Müller, Hekdin, 68. 75

### **Anna Maria von Schürmann Seite 38**

- 1 Paul Schackert, Anna Maria von Schürmann, *Der Stern von Utrecht, die Jüngerin Labadie's*, Gotha 1876, p 1
- 2 Johannes Smetius (1590–1651), quoted by Michael Spang: *Wenn sie ein Mann wäre. Leben und Werk der Anna Maria von Schürmann 1607–1678*, Darmstadt 2009, p 65
- 3 Martin Kempe (1642–1683), quoted by (as above) p 191
- 4 Pieta van Beek, *The first female university student: Anna Maria van Schurmann*, Utrecht 2010
- 4 Dietmut Meyer, *Anna Maria van Schurmann*: <http://frauen-und-reformation.de/index.php?s=bio&id=61> [in German only – as at 15.8.2017]
- 5 Simon Meyer, *Anna Auguste Kaufmann. Pioneer, but not women's liberationist*, in: *Pioneers in the ministry*, Irene Diller/ Stefan Flesch (ed.), Düsseldorf 2015, p 64ff
- 6 Severine Delhougne, *Anna Maria van Schurmann (1607–1678)*, <http://www.rheinische-geschichte.lvr.de/persoenlichkeiten/S/:page/AnnaMariavan-Schurmann.aspx> [In German only - as at 15.8.2017]

### **Katharina Charlotte von Pfalz-Zweibrücken Seite 40**

- 1 On his life, cf Anke Hufschmidt (revised.), *Der erste Pfalzgraf in Düsseldorf: Wolfgang Wilhelm von Pfalz-Neuburg (1578-1653)*. Catalogue for the exhibition at the Düsseldorf Stadtmuseum, 14 September to 16 November 2003.
- 2 NRW state archive, Rheinland section, Jülich-Berg II No 2114. Bemühungen um die päpstliche Dispens.
- 3 Dated according to the Gregorian calendar. Cf also Eric-Oliver Mader, "...confusion and perplexity was caused because of our conversion". Perceptions, representations and pre-conditions of the conversion of Count Palatine Wolfgang Wilhelm of Pfalz-Neuburg to Catholicism (1713/1714) in: *Düsseldorf yearbook* 75 (2004/2005) pp109-142, here p110.
- 4 It was through his mother Anna von Jülich-Kleve-Berg (1552–1632) that he owed his claim to the Lower Rhine region.
- 5 Cf Eric-Oliver Mader: *Die Konversion Wolfgang Wilhelm von Pfalz-Neuburg. Zur Rolle von politischem und religiös-theologischem Denken für seinen Übertritt zum Katholizismus*, in: Ute Lotz-Heumann (ed.), *Konversion und Konfession in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Gütersloh 2007, pp 107-146; Olaf Richter, *Der Übertritt des Pfalzgrafen Wolfgang Wilhelm zum katholischen Glauben in Düsseldorf im Jahr 1614*, in: Jörg Engelbrecht/ Stephan Laux (ed.), *Landes- und Reichsgeschichte. Festschrift for the 65th birthday of Hansgeorg Molitor*, Bielefeld 2004, pp117-145.
- 6 In the report of the nunciature it says that he married, "although he was denied the necessary dispensation. The Curia tried to find a Catholic wife for him instead." Cf *Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland. Siebzehntes Jahrhundert*, vol. 5 *Nuntiatur des Ciriaco Rocci. Außerordentliche Nuntiatur des Girolamo Grimaldi*, published by Roland Becker in the Commission of the historical institutes in Rome, Berlin/Boston 2013 p28 footnote 14.
- 7 Cf Gustav Marseille, *Studien zur kirchlichen Politik des Pfalzgrafen Wolfgang Wilhelm von Neuburg*, in: *BGNR* 13 (1898), pp1-111. Here numerous letters between the couple have been printed, pp 95-111.
- 8 "Coniux dilectissima", cf Karl Berndt Heppe, *Herzogin Catharina Charlotte und das Abendmahlsgerät der Neander-Kirche*, in: Günther A. Eberhard (ed.), *Geschichtliche Miniaturen: Neanderkirche Düsseldorf (SVRKG 82)*, Düsseldorf 1984 pp49, 51. Rudolf Mohr, *Konfessionalisierungen und katholischer Hof. Eine Leichenpredigt auf die reformierte Herzogin Catharina Charlotte*, in: Burkhard Dietz und Stefan Ehrenpreis (ed.), *Drei Konfessionen in einer Region. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Konfessionalisierung im Herzogtum Berg vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert (SVRKG 136)*, pp 183-196, here p187.
- 9 Letter from Duke Wolfgang Wilhelm to his wife Katharina Charlotte of 27 December 1634, quoted by Helmut Ackermann, *Duldung – Bedrängnis*

– Überleben. Die evangelischen Gemeinden in Düsseldorf unter Pfalzgraf Wolfgang Wilhelm, in: Düsseldorf yearbook 75 (2004/2005) pp 81-108, here p 104.

- 10 Letter from Duchess Katharina Charlotte to her husband Wolfgang Wilhelm, quoted by Ackermann, Duldung... (see note 9), here p 105.
- 11 Johann Hundius from Großbockenheim had attended the Grammar School in Hornbach in the Duchy of Pfalz-Zweibrücken and after studying in Heidelberg he started his church ministry in 1622 in Contwig, near to the royal residence of Zweibrücken. Katharina Charlotte brought him with her to Düsseldorf. An account of his life in: Die evangelischen Pfarrerinnen und Pfarrer im Rheinland von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart, vol.2 (SVRKG 175/2) revised by Jochen Gruch, Bonn 2013, p437 No 5894.
- 12 Cf Ackermann, Duldung... (see note 9), here p 103
- 13 Letter from Duke Wolfgang Wilhelm to his wife Katharina Charlotte on 27 December 1634, quoted by Ackermann, Duldung... (see note 9), here p 106.
- 14 Cf Mohr, Konfessionalisierungen (see note 8), p 191 footnote 33, also p 192ff
- 15 Quoted by Adalbert Natorp, Geschichte der evangelischen Gemeinde Düsseldorf, 1881, p67.
- 16 From: Der Grund | Der Seligkeit, printed in Duisburg by Herman Boccerum, 1651.

### **Friederike Fliedner** **Seite 42**

- 1 No portrait was ever painted of Friederike Fliedner during her lifetime. Photography was still in its infancy and having her likeness drawn or painted in oil was too expensive. The present picture was made in 1954 at the request of the archivist of Kaiserswerth, the deaconess Anna Sticker. It was modelled on a drawing of Friederike on her death-bed.
- 2 In some of the literature you may even find higher numbers of births, possibly including some of her miscarriages. The high death rate was not only due to the infant mortality which was at 25 percent in the 19th century. She lost two of her daughters at the age of five and seven during a typhus epidemic while she was training deaconesses for their new tasks at a hospital in Saarbrücken.
- 3 Anna Sticker: Friederike Fliedner und die Anfänge der Frauendiakonie. Ein Quellenbuch, 2. Auflage, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1963, S. 162.
- 4 Gertrud Schacky, „... daß der Geist nicht gedämpft wird“ Friederike Fliedner – begnadete Persönlichkeit zwischen Partnerschaft und Gehorsam, in: Kaiserswerther Mitteilungen 4 (1986), S. 10-12, hier S. 11.
- 5 Ruth Felgentreff, Frauendiakonie und Genderforschung, in: Kaiserswerther Diakonie (Hg.): Ökonomie der Hoffnung. Impulse zum 200. Geburtstag von Theodor und Friederike Fliedner, Düsseldorf 2000, S. 73.

### **Caroline Fliedner** **Seite 44**

- 1 Katrin Irle: Leben und Werk Caroline Fliedners geb. Bertheau, der zweiten Vorsteherin der Diakonissen-Anstalt Kaiserswerth. Phil. Diss. Uni Siegen 2002, S. 123, zugänglich unter: <http://www.ub.uni-siegen.de/pub/diss/fb1/2003/irle/irle.pdf>

### **Dorothee Sölle** **Seite 48**

- 1 Sölle, Stellvertretung, S. 179
- 2 Ebd., S. 180
- 3 Sölle, Mystik, S.13
- 4 Sölle, Leiden, S.123
- 5 FulbertSteffensky (<http://www.fembio.org/biographie.php/frau/biographie/dorothee-soelle/>)

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## Titelbild:

### **Brief der Kurfürstin Amalia an die Kurfürstin Anna vom 7. März 1574**

aus: Kurfürstin Amalia von der Pfalz und ihre Kirche zu Alpen 1604 – 2004, Regensburg 2004 von Dr. Joachim Daebel

### **Feder:**

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## Vorwort:

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Foto: Hans-Jürgen Vollrath

Seite 4: **Irene Diller, Beate Ludwig**

Seite 5: **Ausstellung Reformatorinnen. Seit 1517.**

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Ein gesichertes Bild von Katharina Zell ist nicht erhalten. Dieses Porträt wurde 2009 von dem Schweizer Grafiker Roger Pfund gemalt.
- Seite 6: **Argula von Grumbach**  
Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg/  
Foto: Monika Runge
- Seite 6: **Katharina Schütz Zell**  
Ein gesichertes Bild von Katharina Zell ist nicht erhalten. Dieses Bild ist nach einer Textilarbeit von Luise Theill gezeichnet.
- Seite 6: **Katharina von Bora**  
Lucas Cranach der Ältere,  
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- Seite 6: **Elisabeth Cruciger**  
Ein gesichertes Bild von Elisabeth Cruciger ist nicht erhalten. Das abgebildete Portrait zeigt einen Bildausschnitt (bearbeitet) aus dem Reformationsaltar in der Stadt- und Pfarrkirche St. Marien in Wittenberg von Lucas Cranach der Jüngere,  
Foto: Nick Thompson

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Porträt der Elisabeth von Rochlitz, das nach ihrem Tod entstand, Museum Schloss Wilhelmsburg, Schmalkalden
- Seite 6: **Wibrandis Rosenblatt**  
Fälschlicherweise wird dies Bildnis häufig mit Zsuzsanna Lorántffy identifiziert. Doch Géza Szentmártoni Szabó hat nach der Restaurierung des Gemäldes anlässlich des 400. Jahrestages der Fürstin (2000) festgestellt, dass die Frau in einer typischen deutschen Bekleidung des 16./17. Jahrhunderts eigentlich Wibrandis Rosenblatt darstellt. Darauf weist auch die Rose in der Hand der Dame hin; Bildquelle: Wikimedia Commons
- Seite 6: **Idelette de Bure**  
Kopie, gemalt 1909, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Liège, Foto: Xavier Würth, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Idelette\\_Calvin.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Idelette_Calvin.jpg), Das anonyme Porträt aus dem Museum in Douai trägt die Aufschrift „Femme de Jan Caluein“. Ob es sich aber tatsächlich um ein Porträt Idelettes handelt, ist unsicher. Da das Gemälde 1940 zerstört wurde, lässt sich diese Frage nicht weiter klären (Ein Betrag von Achim Detmers, <http://frauen-und-reformation.de/?s=bio&id=29>)
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Lucas Cranach der Ältere, Klassik Stiftung Weimar
- Seite 6: **Magdalena Heymair**  
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Foto: Privat, Fulbert Steffensky

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### *Marie Dentière*

Seite 8: Oben: **Marie Dentière**  
Ein gesichertes Bild von Marie Dentière ist  
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de/artikel/kultur/von-der-hochburg-des-  
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Epistre très utile**  
[http://www.e-rara.ch/mhr\\_g/content/  
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Dentière), s. S. 5, [http://www.e-rara.ch/  
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le:Marguerite\\_d%27Angoul%C3%Aame.  
jpg?uselang=de](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marguerite_d%27Angoul%C3%Aame.jpg?uselang=de)

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Landesbibliothek -- P I 5/52#17, 2013.  
urn:nbn:de:bvb:70-dtl-0000022753,  
[http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:70-  
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Jüngling zu Widersprechung des Wortes  
Gottes bedrängt haben, strafet."**  
Digitalisiert von: Landesbibliothek  
Coburg. Exemplar mit der Signatur: Co-  
burg, Landesbibliothek -- P I 5/52#17, 2013.  
urn:nbn:de:bvb:70-dtl-0000022753, [http://  
nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:70-  
dtl-0000022753](http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:70-dtl-0000022753)

### *Katharina Schütz Zell*

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File:Strasbourg1493.png?uselang=de](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Strasbourg1493.png?uselang=de)

Seite 13: Unten: **Katharina Schütz Zell**  
Ein gesichertes Bild von Katharina Zell ist  
nicht erhalten. Dieses Bild ist nach einer  
Textilarbeit von Luise Theill gezeichnet.

### *Katharina von Bora*

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Seite 17: Oben: **Pfarrerin Almut Voss**  
© epd-bild/Henning Kaiser

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fxmdk73, 123rf.de

### *Elisabeth von Rochlitz*

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[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johann\\_und\\_Elisabeth.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johann_und_Elisabeth.jpg)

Seite 18: Unten: **Erste Seite des chiffrierten Briefes**, in dem Herzogin Elisabeth von Rochlitz in der von ihr erfundenen Geheimschrift Kurfürst Johann Friedrich I. von Sachsen vor Verrätern im eigenen Lager warnt. Januar 1557, ©Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (Inv.-Nr. Sig 10024 Geheimer Rat (Geheimes Archiv), Loc 88607/15, fol. 58)

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Foto: Udo Rupkalwis, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Schloss\\_Rochlitz.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Schloss_Rochlitz.jpg)

Seite 19: Unten links: **Porträt der Elisabeth von Rochlitz**, das nach ihrem Tod entstand, Museum Schloss Wilhelmsburg, Schmalkalden

### *Wibrandis Rosenblatt*

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Seite 20: **Straßburg**, wikipedia.de

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Balthasar Jenichen/wikipedia.de

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Foto: Clemensfranz,  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kloster\\_W%C3%BClfinghausen\\_Aussen.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kloster_W%C3%BClfinghausen_Aussen.jpg)

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[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kloster\\_W%C3%BClfinghausen\\_Innen.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kloster_W%C3%BClfinghausen_Innen.jpg)

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Merian d. Ä. (1640). Kupferstich  
Aus Merians »Topographia Germaniae«, Bd.8: »Topographia Westphaliae« (Westfalen), Frankfurt am Main 1647. Dieser Scan wurde von einem Faksimile-Druck erstellt, der 1961 im Bärenreiter-Verlag, Kassel, erschienen ist und auf dem Originalband basiert. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Duesseldorf-Kupferstich-Merian.png?uselang=de>

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Herderkirche\_-\_Cranach-Altar\_Linker\_  
F%C3%BCgel\_3.jpg?uselang=de

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Bildagentur für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte, bpk/ Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen

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Seite 37: Unten rechts: **Heidelberger Katechismus**, Druck 1563, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Heidelberger\\_Katechismus\\_1563.jpg?uselang=d](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Heidelberger_Katechismus_1563.jpg?uselang=d)

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**Requests:**

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[www.reformatorinnen.de](http://www.reformatorinnen.de)

## Women who advanced Reformation:

Marie Dentière  
Argula von Grumbach  
Katharina Schütz Zell  
Katharina von Bora  
Elisabeth Cruciger  
Elisabeth von Rochlitz  
Wibrandis Rosenblatt  
Idelette de Bure  
Elisabeth von Calenberg-Göttingen  
Sibylle von Jülich-Kleve-Berg  
Magdalena Heymair  
Amalia von Neuenahr-Alpen  
Anna Maria von Schürmann  
Katharina Charlotte von Pfalz-Zweibrücken  
Friederike Fliedner  
Caroline Fliedner  
Ilse Härter  
Dorothee Sölle

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