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Tucker's "Katie Luther, first lady of the reformation: The unconventional life of Katharina von Bora" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Tucker, R. A. (2017). *Katie Luther, first lady of the Reformation: The unconventional life of Katharina von Bora*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 208 pp. \$17.99. ISBN 9780310532156

In this historical biography of the nun who became the wife of Protestant reformer Martin Luther, author Tucker aims to make Katharina von Bora Luther's life relevant to North American/Western readers at the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Almost nothing has survived in Katharina von Bora Luther's own voice. Tucker writes, "we see her primarily through her husband's reflections and by her effects on others" (p. 185). The picture Tucker builds is that of a businesswoman who manages the family's financial affairs through farming, brewing, and taking in boarders.

Tucker contextualizes Katharina's life before her marriage by looking at medieval and early modern convent life. Katharina's life as wife, mother, and widow is viewed, not only through the writings of Martin Luther and his associates, but also in contrast with the lives of women reformers including Argula von Grumbach, Katherine Zell, and Renée of Ferrara. Tucker interposes her own experiences into the story of Katharina's life, often shifting into first person voice. Consequently, libraries should balance this work with a less subjective biography.

Reviewer

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