

This was essential. But for all your wisdom and patient guidance—yes, I see it now—I had still to despair of myself.”

“Do tell!”

“My monumental self-righteousness exerted itself one more time. In Rome, there is a long staircase—they say it was from the house of Pilate. Any who climbs its steps on their knees are promised 1000 years credit of penance in purgatory. I believed it; I hoped it. And so I began to climb, knee after knee, repeating the prescribed prayers with each step.”

“Oh dear,” sighed Father Johann, visibly crestfallen. *Dear God, was it all for nothing?*

“Fear not, Father!” beamed Martin. “I was half way up when these words entered my mind, *“The righteous shall live by faith.”*”

“The words of the Apostle to the Romans!”

“Yes! To Rome, of all places! A message she needs to hear again! But first I needed to hear it. The righteousness of God is not attained by petty works of human penance—neither our soaring charity, nor my senseless punishments. It is granted freely through the faithfulness of Christ alone. ***Christ alone is the perfection and righteousness of God.***”

“And now at last I see it: I can never earn God’s righteousness—I mustn’t even try. It is given to us freely, by grace alone. And we live it by faith alone, in Christ alone. This is the *evangel*—the good news!”

“And now?” Father Johann asked his zealous young friend, “where will this revelation lead you?”

“By God’s grace, a reformation,” said Martin with grim determination. *“A Great Reformation.”* □

Brad Jersak is editor-in-chief of CWRMagazine. This article is a piece of historical fiction, citing the following sources, often verbatim:

Sources

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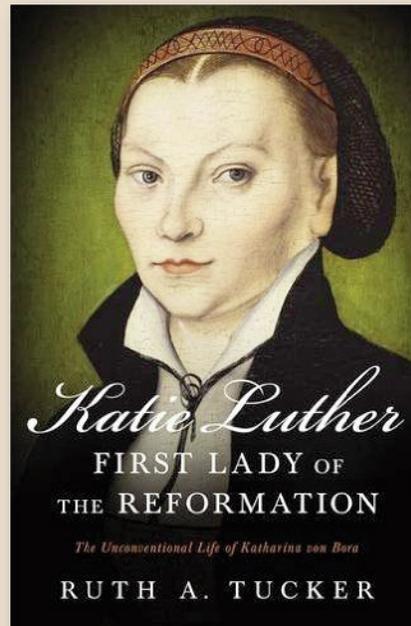
Photo credit: page 3 screenshot of Joseph Fiennes as Luther in “Luther” (*R.S. Entertainment*, 2003).

KATIE LUTHER

by Ruth A. Tucker

It is critical that we do not seek to mold Katie into a modern-day Evangelical. Martin more easily serves such a purpose in that he was adept at God-talk, emphasized salvation by faith alone, and even spoke of being born again. Not so Katie....

Like most Christians of this era, there is no evidence that she professed to have “a transforming personal relationship with Christ,” and would thus be relegated to the pejorative LCWE [Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization] category of “nominal.”



Religion was determined more by where a family lived than by personal profession of faith, an oddity introduced by Anabaptists. By marrying Luther, Katie joined the Protestant ranks. That there is no evidence she actually made this new faith her own has gone essentially unnoticed by historians.

She was nevertheless the most indispensable figure of the German Reformation save for Martin Luther himself. Take her and their twenty-year marriage out of the picture, and his leadership would have suffered severely. Had it not been for the stability she brought to his life, he may have gone off the rails emotionally and mentally by the mid 1520s. His emphasis on, and modeling of, marriage and family as an essential aspect of his reform would have been lost.

Only Katharina von Bora—no other woman—could have accomplished what she did with this most unstable man. Without her, the Black Cloister would have gone to ruin—the result of which would have been no “Table Talk,” and that is only the barest beginning of what would have been lost if she were taken out of the equation. □

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