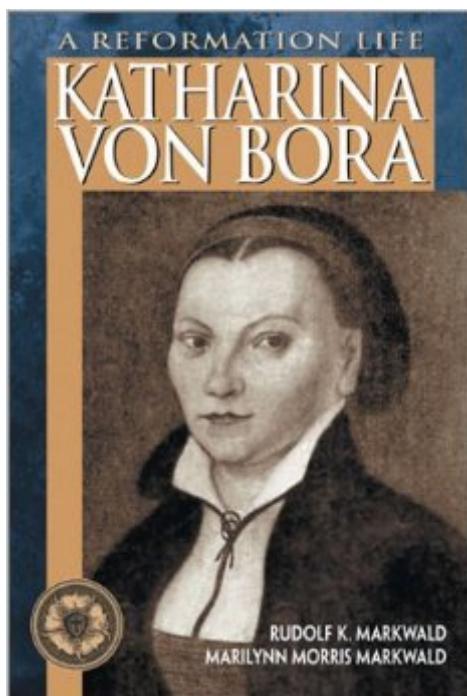


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# Katharina Von Bora: A Reformation Life



## **Synopsis**

This volume traces Katharina Von Bora's background, birth, childhood and early adult years, and her marriage to Martin Luther. Also documents Katy's last years, revealing the faith and legacy of a woman who held steadfast to Christ in great adversity and need and who also advocated evangelical reforms.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Rudolph and Marilyn Markwald have done the English speaking world a great favor by writing the first real biography in English of Katharina von Bora, Martin Luther's wife. (Sure, there are other titles in English concerning Katie, but they are historical novels rather than real biographies.) The Markwalds have added their own original research to that of German biographers who preceded them. This was a challenge because there are only 8 letters of Katharina that are extant.

Fortunately, there is substantial relevant material also available in Luther's letters, letters of other contemporaries, transcripts of the Table Talk, and convent and municipal records. The result is a well-researched and fascinating text which is both quite readable and accurate (supported by extensive footnoting). The text covers Katharina's birth, convent life, escape from the convent, marriage to Luther, managing the Luther household and raising a family, hosting visits of important thinkers and theologians, nursing Luther through his health problems, coping with poverty after Luther's death, and her own accidental death while fleeing the plague. Despite the plethora of books on Luther, until now there was not a good English biography of this strong, independent woman

(sometimes called the Queen of the Reformation and the Balance Wheel of the Reformation) who supported, challenged, and encouraged the Great Reformer. I highly recommend this book to all who are interested in Lutheran and Reformation history.

As noted by another reviewer, this is first full scope biography in English of this significant figure in church history, especially that of the Reformation. While many have heard much in the way of husband Martin's praise of his marvelous Kati, she certainly has been shortsighted in published works until this worthy volume. Markwald's provide well documented primary and secondary source bio of this nun turned Great Reformer's wife. Going through the turbulence of life would be enough, yet add to that the pressure of keeping up with one who is at the vortex of sweeping reform, with infamous Table guests and conversation and demanding family and church life as well. Not only a significant support to her husband and family, this readable and informative work presents through letter correspondence a remarkable portrait of a strong believer with convictions of her own and an intensity of faith and contentment which only comes from the strongest of the saints. Many will gain much from this read which hopefully might stimulate other contributions to this First Lady of the Reformation.

The book was about the amazing life of the woman who married Martin Luther. This is her tale of freedom, marriage, love and the undertaking of running a Monastery for students. She oversaw hired hands that helped her garden, clean the premises, raise animals, cook, etc. for her family and the students who they housed at the Luthers' Monastery.

Because little is known of Katharina's early years, the first couple of chapters are devoted more to the background of the convent life in which she was raised. The authors generally do a good job of pointing out the significant differences between the cultural assumptions that characterized the period with modern expectations. The principal focus of succeeding chapters is her relationship with Luther as revealed in his letters to her and their conversations recorded by guests and published as Luthers table talk. What struck me was the dichotomy between Luther's traditionalist view of marriage (no petticoat government, man as head of the house) as expressed in public with the tone of his letters, recognizing his wife's key role in managing the practical side of their life (she ran several farms, a large household including frequent long term guests, brewing, and even the details of getting his works published by the printers.) The most likely area would be her relationship with her children, which is barely covered. A quotation attributed to her son Paul, a physician, that his mother

was half physician herself, suggests that there may be some other comments surviving from her children and later family tradition. After Luther's death, their home in Wittenberg was overrun by Catholic forces several times. Katharina's major achievement during this time was keeping her family together and raising her children to adulthood before she was killed in a carriage accident during another flight from the wars of the Reformation. Despite the surprising amount of documentation which survived the wars (the latest English translation of Luther's works is expected to run to 65 volumes) my major reservation is the frustrating feeling that there was still some information out there which perhaps did not relate to the themes of the book and so was glossed over. I cannot put a finger on what triggered this feeling, but there are some summary statements which seem to imply more information than was presented in the chapters.

As a female Lutheran pastor who strives to help people grow in their faith this book has been inspirational. Katharina was not only a support to Martin Luther she was a voice. Martin Luther respected her and valued her opinion in a time when a woman's voice was not heard. This book tells how a woman trusted God and grew in her faith by taking risk. I will re-read this book many times to continue to be inspired to trust and take risks to the glory of God. This book is well written and captures the reader's attention.

Great history of the Lutheran Church, Has a different perspective, from the wife's point of view. My wife put on a presentation with the information at church, and was very good.

Great insight to the life of Martin Luther and the reformation by his wife, a former nun. Good read for how 'equal' her life was for those times.

The story of Kate, the wife of Martin Luther is very interesting. It tells of their family and how she was such a help with his ministry.

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