

Freed & RENEWED in Christ 500 YEARS OF GOD'S GRACE IN ACTION

Reformation ABCs

B is for Bach

“The aim and end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul,” wrote Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), the product of a biblical education that began in childhood. He continued to study theology throughout his career and had an extensive library on Bible commentary and Lutheran theology. A Bible passage of special significance to him was from I Chronicles that describes King David appointing 288 musicians to serve at the tabernacle. “This chapter is the true foundation of all God-pleasing church music.”

A musician of prodigious output, Bach wrote nearly 300 cantatas (at a pace of one per week during one period). He is known to have inscribed his scores with “J. J.” at the top (Jesus, help) and “Soli Deo Gloria” at the end (to God alone be the glory).

Bach was never attracted to fame or fortune. His one stint in a royal court was dissatisfying to him. He believed his true calling was to the music of the church. Soon he left to accept a position as cantor at a church in Leipzig. Bach’s expertise for developing harmonic structure for chorales is one of his most important contributions to the music of the church.

Between his musical genius, his devotion to Christ, and the effect of his music, he has become known in many circles as “The Fifth Evangelist”.

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Reformation ABCs is a project of the Delmarva North Conference of the Delaware-Maryland Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We invite you to use, reprint, and circulate these weekly posts as we observe Reformation 500!

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B is for Bora (Luther), Katharina von

“My dearest Katie...” were often Martin Luther’s first words in his correspondence to his dear wife Katharina. Although she was raised and educated in cloisters and became a nun, Katie became interested in the Reform movement and contacted Luther for help escaping from her convent; it is said that she and eleven other nuns escaped in a wagon of empty herring barrels.

As former nuns joined the movement, Luther sought to match them to other leaders of the Reformation, but couldn’t seem to match Katie. Although she had several suitors, she made a statement that only Luther himself or Nikolaus von Amsdorf (another Reformation leader) would do. Although Luther debated for some time, in the end he agreed with the conclusion that “his marriage would please his father, rile the pope, cause the angels to laugh, and the devils to weep.” Katharina was 26, Luther was 41.

Martin loved and respected Katie for her intelligence, independence, and ability to manage the household and businesses, and even to care for hospital patients when the need arose. He had several loving names for her such as “the boss of Zulsdorf” (their farm) and “the morning star of Wittenberg” (because she rose at 4 AM) and even “My Lord Katie”, as Martin was known to consult Katie on church matters. Martin named Katie as his sole heir, but she struggled financially after his death in 1546 because his will was not legal according to Saxon law. She eventually left her home because of war and died after an accident and illness at Torgau in 1552.

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Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1528

Bobble-head Katharina, author’s collection

