

Reformation Reflections

How many notable women of the Reformation can you name? If your list begins and ends with **Katie Luther**, Martin's wife, you're hardly alone. And yet, Katie wasn't—alone, that is.

One such contemporary of Katie was actually a friend of hers, **Elisabeth Cruciger**, though that friendship came later. Like Katie, Elisabeth spent a significant part of her life as a nun, having been sent to a convent as a young girl by her family.



Around 1520, she left the convent in Pomerania and fled to Wittenberg—a trip of over 240 miles. A few years later, she met and fell in love with a young university student named Caspar Cruciger. She went on to give Caspar two children, a boy and a girl, but tragically died in her mid-thirties.

So what makes her so notable? She wrote poetry and one of the earliest hymns of the Reformation is hers, "*The Only Son from Heaven*" (LSB 402). Here's the second verse that is so fitting for our present season:

**O time of God appointed,
O bright and holy morn!
He comes, the king anointed,
The Christ, the virgin-born,
Grim death to vanquish for us,
To open heav'n before us
And bring us life again.**



Another woman of that era known for putting pen to paper was **Argula von Grumbach**. Born in 1492 to a noble family in Bavaria, she is best known for her letter of protest to the University of Ingolstadt.

The year was 1522 and the Bavarian court in Munich issued a mandate condemning Lutheran teaching. A young man who had studied under Luther in Wittenberg had returned to Ingolstadt as a lecturer and was teaching what he'd been taught. He was arrested, forced to recant, and sent off to a monastery.

Outraged by the persecution, Argula decided to write a letter the following year. Men had remained silent in this case, she would write, but she could not allow the Gospel to remain stifled. Here are a few excerpts:

What have Luther and Melanchthon taught save the Word of God? You have condemned them. You have not refuted them. ...

Even if Luther should recant, what he has said would still be the Word of God. I would be willing to come and dispute with you in German ...

What I have written to you is no woman's chit-chat, but the Word of God: and [I write] as a member of the Christian Church, against which the gates of Hell cannot prevail.

Printers got a hold of the letter and it became an instant sensation. The fallout was almost immediate. She came under vicious personal attack and her husband lost his job. Still, she stayed the course—even traveling to the Imperial Diet held in Nuremberg that year (1523), to encourage the German princes to join the Reformation.

There are other incredible women of faith we could consider, such as Ursula von Munsterberg, Elisabeth of Brunswick and her mother, Elisabeth of Brandenburg, just to name three, but sadly we lack the space. As for the previously mentioned first lady of the Reformation, who's husband would refer to her as "my lord Katie" and the "Morning Star of Wittenberg", she would meet her death on December 20, 1552, with the following words on her lips: "I will cling to Christ, as a burr to a topcoat."

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