

The Young People's Magazine

**Issued by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland
Reformed in Doctrine, Worship and Practice**

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” Ecclesiastes 12:1



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Cover Picture: The former parish church in Tain. See page 158. (The two grey stones on the wall of the church are in memory of the noted, godly ministers in Tain: Angus Mackintosh and his son, Charles Calder Mackintosh.)

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Volume 88

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Number 8

Dangerous Ideas

Last month we began to consider one of Solomon's wise sayings, "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge" (Proverbs 19:27). *The words of knowledge* are what God tells us about who He is, what we are and what we need to know about true religion. We noticed seven "words of knowledge": (1) God really does exist; (2) He created all things; (3) He has given us a revelation, in the Bible; (4) God has told us how we should live; He has given us commandments to direct us; (5) He is to be worshipped; (6) All human beings have sinned; (7) God has provided salvation for sinners, through Christ Jesus.

These are all important truths. We are to believe them and all the other teachings of the Bible, because God has revealed them. And because God has revealed them, they are perfectly reliable; He is totally trustworthy in all that He says. But there are many other teachings going around, coming from all sorts of directions. Each of these is a part of the instruction that is liable to cause us to err from the words of knowledge.

Adam and Eve were created with real knowledge of God. He had spoken to them, and they trusted in Him. They had words of knowledge, which were guiding them as to how they should live. But the devil came into the Garden of Eden. He had rejected the words of knowledge; he was a fallen angel who had sinned and had been put out of heaven. He was so evil that he wanted to make Adam and Eve err from the words of knowledge.

Satan started by trying to raise *questions*, in Eve's mind, about what God had said. Eve told him that they were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; if they did so, they would die. God had told them this. Satan then went further and *denied* what God had said. He was making out that God was a liar, but he was the liar. He has been a liar from the beginning.

He is still a liar, tempting sinners to err from the words of knowledge that God has given, and using many means to do so. He uses individuals to tempt other individuals; he also uses those who put content on the internet and contribute to other media such as radio, television and films. Of course, there are useful websites (the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, as you probably

know, has a website: www.fpchurch.org.uk). But this article is drawing attention to the vast number of influences that can cause us to *err* from the truth – the truths that God has revealed in the Bible.

One of the most dangerous ideas circulating today in countries like Britain is atheism, the thought that there is no God. If there is no God, everyone can do what they want; they can say what they feel like saying, they can think just as they wish – and there is no absolute right or wrong. But there is a God, the one living and true God. It is He who made everything; He is our Creator. So He has authority over us; He has the right to tell us what to do, what to say, and even what to think. And it is good for us that He tells us how to live. It is good for us to be under the commandments of God, who is holy and just. His commands tell us what is right and what is wrong.

In Britain today, less than half of the people claim to follow any religion, even a false religion. And there are many whose lifestyle is not really influenced by their belief that God exists. They think and speak and act just as if there was no God. Satan has been busy persuading people that they will have a much happier life if they ignore God. He not only persuades large numbers of people to deny that God exists, but he persuades many more to act just as they would if they were sure that there is no God. They are drifting through life as if there was nothing beyond this life.

But this life is not all that there is. Heaven and hell lie beyond this life. The blessedness of heaven is so great that we should seek the way to heaven with all possible earnestness; and the awfulness of hell is so real that we should do all in our power to escape it. To put this another way: we must follow most seriously the directions that God has given in the Bible. Especially we should take heed to the call to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31) – trusting in Him as the One who came into the world to save sinners like us. And we should do so at once – without any delay.

A minister called John Cooke met a rich farmer on the road one day. He spoke seriously to the farmer about spiritual things. The farmer told him: “I don’t like religion, and I told you so”. Cooke then spoke to him about another rich farmer – the one that Jesus told about, in Luke 12:19,20. Cooke said, “Here is a farmer, very rich, living to himself in health, ease and pleasure, without God in the world. No doubt his neighbours envied and flattered him, but no one dared to reprove such a man. . . . But though he thought himself wise, and others wished to be like him, God addresses him differently: ‘Thou fool’.”

Cooke asked why he thought Jesus called the farmer in the Bible a fool, but the farmer refused to answer the question. So Cooke himself gave him some answers. One of them was: “Because he preferred the world to God.

‘Eat, drink and be merry,’ was the extent of his aim.” Another answer was: “Because he lived as if he should never die; and, while presuming on many [more] years, he exposed his soul to all the horrors of sudden death, without repentance, without forgiveness, without holiness and without hope”. Yes, the farmer whom Jesus spoke about was indeed a fool. So was the farmer that Cooke spoke to. And so is everyone – even if not rich – who neglects the salvation of their soul.

We are not to listen to the false ideas that tempt us to stop believing in God. Indeed, if we have been influenced by these ideas, we are to stop listening to them. They are dangerous. They encourage sinners to ignore eternity and the fearful consequences of passing out of this world with their sins unforgiven – with their sins still crying out to God for punishment, for ever. They leave people with the idea that their great aim in life should be to enjoy themselves as much as possible – away from God. So they give themselves up to seeking pleasure on Sabbaths rather than using the day as it should be used. On a Sabbath, we should try to worship God and seek salvation through Jesus Christ. If we are being influenced away from God, we need to stop listening to those who make us wander away from the words of knowledge that are to be found in the Bible. The Sabbath should not be a weariness to us; God has given it to us for our good. Let us value it highly and make good use of it.

There is also the idea that when a man and a woman come together, there is no need to marry, or that marriage is an optional extra that can be added on afterwards. But God has given marriage as a gift to mankind. Not least, it gives stability to the relationship between a man and a woman. Today there are so many voices that make light of marriage and promote easy divorce, in spite of the vows that the bride and bridegroom make – to love each other for the rest of their lives. Those influenced by wrong ideas should stop listening to them and begin listening to God on the subject of marriage.

Do not listen to the voices that cause you to wander from any of the words of knowledge. Sometimes you may not be able to avoid hearing them, but ask God to keep them out of your thinking. You need His help; you need the saving power of the Holy Spirit; you need Him to prepare you for eternity; you need the Lord to keep you from the dangerous influences that lurk in so many places. You need to absorb the teaching of the Bible and to have that teaching applied to your mind and soul by the Holy Spirit. Then you will be vaccinated against spiritual diseases that so readily infect people everywhere and make them ignore God. You will be protected against being careless about your soul, against neglecting the remedy that Christ has provided, and against following the unbelieving ideas of this generation.

A Day for Our Spiritual Good

3. The Sabbath a Delight

Rev D A Ross

This is a final section of a Youth Conference paper about the Sabbath Day. Last month's section explained why, in New Testament times, the Sabbath is observed on the first day of the week instead of the seventh.

3. The Sabbath should be a delight. Every day God gives us ought to be a delight, but none can be compared to the Sabbath Day. Not least because it serves as a rest from the cares and toils of the previous six days. It is a blessing to have work, and to be able to work, and those who are able to work have a promise: "The hand of the diligent maketh rich" (Proverbs 10:4).

Yet let us never forget that, due to the sin of Adam, our labour is hard, whatever success we may have. God told Adam: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Genesis 3:19). As we know from experience, it is hard toil; it can be very hard, to get enough for the needs of our body.

While we are conscious for the need of a Sabbath after the fall of mankind, it was also essential before the Fall. But it is more so afterwards, when there are six days of labour mingled with sweat and sorrow. Adam was told: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee . . . in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen 3:17-19). A rest from such intense labour is indeed welcome, it is to be likened to a magnificent gift we cannot afford to miss. In fact, if we do not make a proper use of the Sabbath, our life may be greatly shortened. This gives us every reason to "call the Sabbath a delight" (Isaiah 58:13), as God directs us.

It is clear then that this seventh part of the week is a necessary relief from the ongoing toil of earning our daily bread. God, who made us, knows well our need for such a day. Indeed, seven days of ongoing toil over an extended period of time have proved to be counter-productive for man and beast. Man was given six days to find temporal benefits; he is also given a seventh day to ponder higher blessings. And the God who gave the blessing of working days also gave the blessing of a day of rest, with all its spiritual benefits.

As we noticed already, Adam and Eve in their perfect state had been blessed with a day of rest and, as they needed rest in their perfect state, how much more we in our imperfect state. On top of what we have already noted, we experience sickness, depression, injuries and weariness, which Adam knew nothing about; a day of rest in these circumstances becomes all the more necessary and helpful, and so a precious delight.

The Sabbath must be a delight from the benefit obtained, from perhaps a very heavy form of employment during our six working days, but even should our work be lighter, associated with it is constant activity of body and mind, from which we desire rest. That rest comes to us through the Sabbath command. Not only so, after rest we are better fitted for another six days of work, and to meet needs for ourselves, our families, our dependents, our employers and so many needs of obtaining physical comforts on life's journey. So it is clear that the Sabbath should be a delight even from these temporal advantages, as well as the spiritual and moral benefits – especially a time of communion with our Creator, Lawgiver and Judge.

That said, there is a more important aspect of delight in the Sabbath Day and that is spiritual. It is sad that our corrupt disposition takes greater delight in physical rest rather than spiritual. The reason is that our sinful disposition dislikes biblical spiritual activity, which tends to be a weariness to us. But the commandment calls us to keep the Sabbath Day holy, not only to obtain rest for our bodies but also for our souls.

During the six previous days our whole being is busy, not only physically but also our thoughts and desires are wrapped around our concerns for this life. The Commandment is clear: "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work". Come the seventh, you rest – not only in your body but also in your soul. So you must set aside all worldly thoughts, words and deeds and seek that absolute rest for your soul found only in Christ Jesus. There is no other way to rest your soul than to receive the Person and finished work of Christ. So you should diligently guard against worldliness on Sabbaths, so that you may obtain the highest possible spiritual benefit.

Of course the salvation and rest of your soul is so vital that you must think about your eternal welfare on every day of the week. Just as Paul reminds the Hebrew believers to think about spiritual matters every day: "Today if ye will hear His voice". *Today* is mentioned three times in a short section of Paul's letter to the Hebrew church (3:7-15). The Bible is even more precise when it says: "*Now* is the accepted time" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Appropriate and timely as these directions are to seek the Lord, see how gracious the good Lord is to give us a complete day for such high and holy matters as the salvation of the soul: "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy".

It is a precious thought too that, when God made the heavens and the earth in six days, and a seventh day of rest, He did so for the good of man. It is a day fully suited to each one of us; we need rest and a time to reflect more earnestly on spiritual realities, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy . . . the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God".

This privilege should make us stop and think how extraordinary are these

purposes of God towards mankind. So we are required to “call the Sabbath a delight” (Isaiah 58:13), God thought about us in so many ways – not least to give us a day on which to seek the high and holy things of eternity.

Let us now note, first, the important change in punishments laid down in Old Testament times for Sabbath-breaking: “Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among the people” (Exodus 31:14). In one case, someone was stoned to death. This was also true for other sins such as adultery.

But these punishments have been lifted. This is clear from Jesus’ response to the woman guilty of adultery. Christ certainly did not command stoning. Rather Christ pardoned her: “Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more” (John 8:11). This seems to show that this severe form of punishment no longer applies to adultery, and also for transgression of the Sabbath Commandment. “Most commentators note the connection here with the Levitical law that the punishment for adultery was death by stoning (Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:22)”.

Yet we are not to forget the severe, solemn punishment for all sin that is shown in the Old Testament for Sabbath transgression as well as other sins. It reminds us about the reality of eternal death: “The soul that sinneth it shall die”. This will be finally executed on the day of judgement; when Christ will say, “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”. The solemn lesson in the death of a transgressor, in the Old Testament era, is that all sin deserves eternal death, and the only way of deliverance is to believe in Christ. He is the One on whom the just displeasure of God is fully satisfied through Christ enduring the punishment of the sins of others.

In stoning the sinner to death, we have a picture of our damnation under the moral law – what we have so often broken in thought, word and deed. But the lifting of these penalties suggests to us Christ bearing the sins of His people. Surely it should make the Sabbath a delight to realise the mercy of God in Christ, when the fierceness of God’s anger against the sinner who trusts in Christ is taken away, through Christ taking the penalty of sin Himself.

Second, let us note that the Sabbath commandment highlights the reality of rest, not only in time, but especially in eternity. So the Fourth Commandment should make us think about Christ. By our efforts to keep the moral law we lose all eternal rest and earn eternal trouble in hell, but in Christ, by God’s mercy, there is rest. He says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn

of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). Also, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

Some Believed

Nicholas Murray was a minister in the United States. His first church lay in a fertile valley which he described as “beautiful beyond description”. The people who lived there were well known for neglecting religion. Murray worked hard as a minister; he prepared his sermons carefully. But few people came to listen, and the sermons seemed to have no effect on any of them. Murray felt that he was doing no good and nearly gave up in despair.

One day a middle-aged man came to see him. The man was a German who had emigrated to the United States, and he was a true Christian. He had gone to feed his cattle, he told the minister, and had felt he should pray. He did so, for some hours. He felt that the Lord had heard his prayers for an outpouring of the Spirit, so that many people would be converted. The two men talked for a little and agreed that they would both pray for a revival of religion and that they would try to get as many others as possible to pray in the same way.

Soon Murray realised that believers were praying more, and many people were attending prayer meetings. More people came to church for the Sabbath services too and the people listened solemnly. Within a few weeks, revival did come to the church and people were born again.

One of the first to show some seriousness was a young woman who belonged to a local family who were very rich. Then she expressed the hope that she had found Christ for herself. Soon after that, she was sent to a city to spend the winter with some friends who were told to take the young woman to various entertainments – presumably so that she would get rid of her seriousness. She gave in to temptation and attended these worldly entertainments – dances, perhaps, and watching plays in theatres.

The result was that, when she came home in springtime, the minister could see that she was further away from Christ than ever. Yet, when the Holy Spirit was again working in the congregation, the young woman once more became serious. Again she believed she found mercy for the sake of Christ, but this time the effects on her life proved permanent. What was more, others in her family – perhaps all of them – were also converted.

It is particularly dangerous when one has been made serious, through preaching about sin and its consequences, to give in to temptation and

involve oneself in worldly entertainments. In our time, there is no need to go to a theatre to watch a play; one can watch any number of films in one's bedroom on the internet. Our sin, and the lost eternity that will follow it if we do not repent, are tremendously serious matters. If God in His kindness brings us to some consciousness of our sins, let us seek grace to seek Him earnestly and urgently, and to trust in Him for the salvation of our soul.

A young man in Murray's congregation was hard-working but ungodly. He must have come to some concern about his soul, because he came to the minister to ask him what he must do to be saved. He came often and seemed very serious. He came by night, like Nicodemus, whom we read about in the Bible; he must have been afraid of what others would say about him. But under the influence of one of his ungodly friends, he stopped coming to church.

Murray said that afterwards, he was always one of the hardest men he ever knew. The man died without showing any sign that he ever again thought seriously about his soul. It is very dangerous, especially after thinking seriously about one's soul for a time, to turn away and become completely careless.

Another man was pleasant and kept God's commandments outwardly. His mother was godly and taught him from the Bible. He found these things interesting, but he felt no urgency about finding Christ. It was something he put off, like Felix, to "a more convenient season".

During the revival, his mother spoke to him seriously about his soul, with tears in her eyes. He pointed out to her that she was dependent on him for her income, and so were his children. He was happy to provide for them all. At that time he was working up in the mountains and earning a lot of money. When he would earn enough to provide for them into the future, he promised his mother, he would "attend to religion". "But", he added, "you must excuse me now".

She warned him about his foolish way of thinking, but he hurried away to get to his work. He seemed confident that he would yet have plenty of time to turn to the Lord. But on only his third day back at work, a large log rolled down a steep bank towards him. He was so badly injured that he died.

How foolish to promise oneself time to seek salvation some time away in the indefinite future! We are called to seek the Lord now, "while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6). We are called to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ now, before it is too late.

Some of the people in the congregation distributed a tract called, *The Way to Be Saved*. It pointed to Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners. One of these tracts was placed in the workshop of a man who was well known for the

ungodly way he spoke. He blotted out the word *saved* in the title of the tract and wrote, in its place, the word *damned*. He tore it in two, but leaving the two parts just hanging together. He then threw it out onto the street.

A young woman, who had become very serious, came along and picked it up. She was shocked at the new title, *The Way to Be Damned*, but she brought it home with her. She read it; then she pasted the torn leaves together and read it several times more. By God's grace, she followed the directions in the tract and found peace with God through believing in Christ.

Possibly it was Murray himself who asked her about her conversion, when she pulled out the tract that was blessed to her salvation. She said, "This is the little book that told me the way to the cross".

The ungodly man was perhaps glad to be rid of the tract. He would not have expected anyone to benefit from it. But he was wrong. God is able to use the sinful actions of wicked people, for the good of someone else. He has his own ways of working, and they are altogether wise.

When Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he called some of the Jewish people to the place where he was staying. He spoke to them, from the Scriptures, about Jesus. We are told that some of them believed and some did not (Acts 28:24). It is still always the same, even in a time of revival.

Whoever we are, God is speaking to us. We must listen to Him; we have no right to reject what He is saying; we have no right to put off considering His calls to believe and repent, until some more convenient season. He says, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

The Minister and the Merchant

It was a beautiful summer afternoon, and R S, an old minister whom we know only by his initials, was making his way alone from Stirling to the village of Doune. He had spent a long and useful life in a town on the Fife coast. He had now retired and he lived in Stirling. He preached occasionally in the town and was now on his way to preach at a communion in Doune.

The sun was now setting behind the hills, and the minister occasionally stopped to look at the wonderful scene. Then he heard the sound of approaching footsteps. After remarking on the beauty of the evening, the minister said to the man who had caught up with him: "As I am on my way to Doune, if you are going that length, and if you have no objection to the company of an old man, we may continue our journey together".

The other man readily agreed. He was much younger, but he had a burden to carry, which forced him to walk less quickly. The minister then asked the other man about his occupation.

"I am a pedlar," the man replied, "or, as I am sometimes called, a travelling merchant."

"I am glad to hear that," the minister said, "for I am a travelling merchant myself."

"Indeed, I should scarcely have thought that by your appearance; may I ask what you deal in?"

"I deal in 'fine linen' and am on my way to Doune, where I hope to dispose of my goods tomorrow." The minister was, of course, speaking in a kind of parable and hoped that he would have a chance to make everything clear to his companion the next day.

The pedlar did not understand the parable and exclaimed, "Tomorrow! I am thinking you have forgotten that the morn's the Sabbath."

"No, no, I have not forgotten that; it is, moreover, the sacramental occasion; there will be preaching at the tent, and a gathering of folk from Galgarnock, Kincardine and Kippen, and some from Stirling itself; with some at least of whom I hope to do business tomorrow." (The tent was a structure where the minister would stand at an open-air service.)

"Well, I have been a long time in this line, but I'm happy to say I never did business on the Lord's day yet, and I never saw any good follow those who did. You're an old man, sir; I would advise you to give up the practice of selling on the Sabbath." The pedlar understood something about keeping the Sabbath, at least in outward things, but whether he understood anything about his need to have his sins forgiven is not clear.

Keeping up his parable, the minister suggested, "If you will not sell, you may perhaps buy."

"No, no, if it's sinful to sell, it's as sinful to buy. I'll wash my hands of the business entirely; I'll neither sell nor buy on the Lord's day."

"Then you'll maybe come to the tent."

"That I will", promised the pedlar.

The two men had now come to the Bridge of Teith, just half a mile from Doune. They parted at the bridge; the minister went to the manse, and the pedlar to his lodgings in Doune. When arranging with the other ministers what share he was to have in the services of the Sabbath, R S said he wanted to preach the first sermon in the tent. It was the normal practice for the youngest minister to do this, but the request of R S was at once granted.

Early the next morning, beneath a cloudless June sky, crowds of people gathered about the tent, from everywhere around the village. It was on a

beautiful green area, on the banks of the Teith Water, near the ancient Castle of Doune. Seldom had more people gathered at Doune to hear the preaching.

At the appointed time R S was in the tent. He cast his eye slowly and searchingly over the congregation, till he spotted the man who had walked along with him the previous day.

After the singing of a psalm, the opening prayer and presumably a reading from the Bible, the minister rose and gave out his text. It was Revelation 19:8: "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints". Did the pedlar yet realise that the minister now in front of him was his companion the day before? And did the pedlar soon realise what his companion had meant by speaking of himself as a travelling merchant who sold fine linen? It was, as the text explained, the righteousness of God's people, the saints.

Before long, all should have become clear. After some introductory remarks, the minister said he had come there to open the market of free grace, that he was a merchant, commissioned by a great and rich King, the King of heaven. He told the people that the article he was there to sell, in the King's name and by his appointment, was "fine linen", which was the righteousness of Christ. After explaining the nature of this righteousness, showing what it was for, and commending its value, he showed that there was nothing in the world equal to it for worth or for beauty.

Then he went on to advise his hearers to buy it: "When folk go to a market, it is with the intention to buy. If they do not, it is generally for one of two reasons: either they do not need the article, or they have no money." He showed they all had an urgent, absolute need of this article. "There is no coming to the Lord's table, there is no getting into heaven, without it."

But they might say, the preacher suggested, they had nothing to buy with. In answer to this objection, he told them they were not asked for anything. Indeed, if they had to give what it was worth, they might well despair, for the wealth of the Indies would not be enough. (He was referring to the islands that now make up Indonesia, where expensive goods like spices came from, at that time.) "But", he added, "it is not to be bought in this way; it is to be had without money and without price; it is to be had freely; it is to be had for the taking. Such is the gospel sense of buying."

He then concluded, "And will no man buy this fine linen? Must I go back and say, Lord, Lord, there were many at the tent, many at the preaching, many in the market, but none would believe, none would buy? And must I go back with this report? And will you go back as you came, poor and wretched, miserable, and blind and naked? I put it to you again: Will no man buy?"

The preacher then paused. There was an old grey-haired man next to the tent who, with his hands clasped and tears in his eyes, was heard saying to himself, "I'll buy; I'll buy; I'll take Christ and His righteousness".

The minister heard him and said, "The Lord bless the bargain! There is one man here who has got a great bargain this day; and as for you, my fellow traveller, my brother merchant, come! O come before the market closes, and buy likewise! If you do, you will make the best bargain you ever made in your life before." We do not know what effect this appeal had on the pedlar. But what effect does the good news of the gospel have on you?

Katherine von Bora

1. Escape From a Convent

F R Daubney

This is the first article about Martin Luther's wife, from a paper given at this year's Youth Conference. Mr Daubney writes, "Katherine's history is to be found in the letters between her and her husband, and in the records of comments made by their friends. Some books and articles have been written about Katherine, and in them you find that the details of some of the stories differ, and that some conversations which are supposed to have taken place are a mixture of conjecture and imagination. In writing this paper I have tried to weave a path through the various sources and to give as accurate a history as I can. To help me to do this, I read *Katherine von Bora* by Armin Stein, *Luther and his Katie* by Dolina MacCuish, J H M D'Aubignés *History of the Reformation* and many other sources on the internet."

In all likelihood, we would not have known Katherine von Bora, if she had not become the wife of Martin Luther, the Reformer. Her life is bound up with that of her famous husband, and it is by following his life that we follow hers.

Katherine van Bora was born on 29 January 1499 into a poor family. It is thought that she was only an infant when her mother died. Shortly after this her father remarried and Katherine, at the age of five, was removed from her home and placed in the care of nuns at the Benedictine convent in Brehna (in eastern Germany). We can only imagine how frightening it must have been for the small girl to be suddenly removed from familiar surroundings and placed in a strange and harsh environment.

Four years later, Katherine's father transferred her to a different convent, at Nimptschen (now in south-west Poland), where two of her aunts were nuns. There, Katherine learned to read and write, and was taught some Latin. She also learned how to look after farm animals, to brew beer and to sew. The convent helped care for the sick, so she also learned a little about herbal

remedies. At 16, she took the vows of a nun. This does not mean that she felt called to be a nun; she probably had little choice in the matter; her father did not want her to come home, and there were few other options available to an unmarried woman in 1515.

The convent was not a closed order, so the nuns were able to talk to each other freely and information from the outside world would filter in. Two years after becoming a nun, Katherine must have heard rumours of great goings on in Germany. In 1517 Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, to protest against the Roman Catholic Church's practice of selling indulgences (indulgences were letters endorsed by the Pope that promised forgiveness of sins in exchange for the payment of money).

Luther taught that forgiveness of sins came as a free gift from God through faith alone – not through the Church but directly from God. He also proclaimed that Scripture, and nothing else, should be the basis of Christian doctrine. Luther's teaching and preaching of the evangelical gospel spread rapidly through Europe, causing common people to have their eyes opened to the soul-destroying doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. This resulted in many monks and nuns giving up their vows. Katherine and the other nuns would, no doubt, have heard that Luther had been put out of the Church of Rome and that his life was in danger.

In the next few years, Luther's writings found their way into Katherine's convent. At that time the Holy Spirit blessed the Word of God to 12 of the nuns, including Katherine, giving them to understand that justification with God came by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. The women could no longer, in good conscience, live in the convent and go through the motions of confession to a priest. Nor could they perform penances, in the belief that they would earn them the forgiveness of their sins.

In 1523 they secretly wrote to Luther, asking for help to escape. It is said that Katherine herself wrote the letter. Luther arranged for the women to be smuggled out in a wagon belonging to Leonhard Koppe, a local man from a nearby town, who regularly delivered provisions to the convent. Koppe came with his wagon at night-time when the nuns were required to be in their own cells engaging in private devotions in preparation for a special service the following day. Twelve nuns (some say nine) were smuggled out through the window of Katherine's cell and hidden inside empty herring barrels which were then covered in straw. If captured, both the women and Koppe could have been executed according to a law of 1285.

This law – which, among other things, dealt with escaping nuns – could only be enforced by the authorities of the region in which the offence took

place. If the nuns could reach another principality which chose not to enforce the statute, punishment could be avoided. The convent from which the nuns made their escape was in the region under the control of a Duke George, a staunch supporter of the Pope. The women were therefore in great danger whilst travelling through this region and had to remain hidden in, or among, the barrels.

They were stopped on the road at the boundary of the Dukedom, but Koppe managed to convince the border guards to let him cross. You can imagine how unpleasant and terrifying the journey must have been for the young women in hiding. Koppe headed for the safety of Wittenberg, which was controlled by Elector Frederick III, sometimes called Frederick the Wise. (The Electors were princes and wielded great power within their provinces.)

Frederick was the Elector of Saxony and the protector of Luther. He appointed Luther and his friend Philip Melancthon as professors in the University of Wittenberg, which he had founded. He refused to carry out the papal bull against Luther in 1520. After the ban was imposed on Luther the next year, Frederick welcomed him to the shelter of Wartburg Castle, where Luther began to translate the Bible into German.

Of the 12 nuns, three returned to their family homes and nine continued on to Wittenberg. As Luther hoped, Frederick III did nothing about the statute of 1285, and the newly arrived nuns were free. Luther first tried to place them back with their parents, but their families either did not want to be involved in the crime of assisting escaped nuns, or simply could not afford to support an additional daughter, much less an ex-nun who had renounced her vows and for whom it would be difficult to find a husband.

Katherine von Bora went to stay in the home of Philip and Elsa Reichenbach. He was the town clerk in Wittenberg and was highly respected. He and his wife were a happy couple but had no family. Katherine was made very welcome and did all that she could to help around the house and garden. She became a much loved “adopted” daughter to the Reichenbachs. It was her daily prayer that the Lord would reward them.

In 1523 Luther was living in the now-deserted Augustinian monastery with his man-servant Wolfgang, who attended to the household chores and did various other jobs for him. Luther often called at the Reichenbach's house and stayed for supper. Within the year he was able to report to his friends the good news that, although the church authorities had tried to hide what had happened at Nimptschen, the news had reached other convents and many other nuns had left, including a further three from Katherine's former convent who were removed by their relatives.

Luther found husbands for most of Kopp's refugees, but he struggled to

find a suitable match for Katherine. She was now in her mid-20s and beyond the usual age for marriage. She was also strong-willed. One of Luther's students, a young man called Baumgaertner, who belonged to a noble family, seemed keen to marry Katherine, and it would appear that she was well disposed towards him. But the young man was discouraged by his parents, who maybe did not like the idea of their son marrying a runaway nun. Instead Baumgaertner was married off to a woman of his father's choosing.

For Junior Readers

Archie Robertson

Archie was born on the island of North Uist in 1890. Although there were Bibles in his home, he did not receive much religious teaching from his parents. One time, when he was very frightened by a thunderstorm, he turned to his Bible but, apart from that, it was mostly neglected.

When he was old enough, he decided to join the army and was sent to India on a troopship. During the voyage, a storm rocked the ship so much that he feared he would be drowned. He was so afraid that he found a quiet corner where he could pray that the Lord would keep him safely and spare his life. As a result he vowed that he would now lead a better life, but his good intentions did not last very long.

In August 1914 the First World War began, and his battalion was brought back to Europe. He had to spend most of the following year in Inverness, where the Cameron Highlanders' headquarters was. Around this time, someone gave him a small New Testament and made him promise that he would always carry it with him and also that he would read at least one chapter every day. He even signed an agreement to do this and kept his promise, even though he did not enjoy doing so at first.

But he went on reading his daily portion and, the more he read, the more he felt inclined to continue reading. While in Inverness he was able to attend church and obtain good books to read. He also got to know a godly man who was helpful to him. As the Lord blessed these means to him, his sense of sin increased. Then his mother died suddenly; as a result of this, he began to seek the Lord more earnestly. It was early the following year that he was brought to a saving knowledge of Christ. Some time later, after getting to know more about the Free Presbyterian Church, he became a member of the Church at a communion season in Dornoch.

As time went on, he felt strongly that he wanted to tell others of the way of salvation and to be used in God's service. After the war he was asked by

the Church to become a lay missionary, taking services when no minister was available. This was his calling for the remainder of his life – he served in several different congregations at first, then in Tain for 40 years, till the end of his life.

He believed that the first definite step towards his conversion was accepting the New Testament and beginning to read it every day. I hope you also read your Bible every day, praying that God will bless it to your soul as we are assured in Psalm 19:

“God’s law is perfect, and converts the soul in sin that lies:
God’s testimony is most sure, and makes the simple wise.”

J van Kralingen

For Younger Readers

God Does Answer Prayer

A woman in London went one day to a station to see a friend away on a train. When she came out of the station, she went on a bus to get home. After she sat down, she looked for her purse, but she could not find it. So she had no money to pay her fare.

What could she do? She had to get off the bus at the next stop. She went into Hyde Park and sat down on a seat. She just needed a small coin to pay her fare, and she asked God to provide it. She asked Him to supply her need. Then she took out her New Testament and opened it. She noticed the words in Philippians: “My God shall supply all you need”.

She used the point of her umbrella to write in the stones at her feet. She wrote, “God is love”. As she was writing the last letter, her umbrella pushed out a coin from among the stones. It was just what she needed. God had heard her prayer and supplied her need.

The woman thanked God for the coin and rushed away to find another bus. She gave the coin to the conductor, the man to whom the passengers paid their money. He looked at the coin carefully. The woman said, “It’s all right. It’s been buried in the ground.” She explained what had happened: how she had prayed and how she had found the coin.

The conductor was surprised. He told her: “I wish He would answer me like this”. As she left the bus, the woman promised to pray for him.

Three weeks later, this man was the conductor on another bus that the woman used. He told her that he and his wife wanted to follow Jesus. What wonderful things God is able to do in answer to prayer! I hope the man and his wife did really begin to follow Jesus.

Looking Around Us

A Longer Life

Is it possible for human beings to live longer? For the last 25 years, research has been going on in various places around the world, trying to find an answer to this question, attempting to discover what would make people able to live longer *safely*.

A team of researchers at a New York medical school has been looking into a substance called taurine. It is found naturally in meat, fish and eggs; it supports, among other things, the working of the nervous system and the production of energy in the human body. Earlier research has shown that when people experience the effects of old age, the level of taurine in their body is lower. So the question was asked: If we took extra taurine, would the levels of it in our body increase and would we live longer?

The team carrying out a study that involved nearly 250 mice has now reported. Half of the mice were given extra taurine; the others got no extra taurine. After the mice had all died, the researchers found that 12% of the females who took taurine had lived longer, on average, and 10% of the males. Taurine appears to be working in mice. But it is impossible to say if these results would be repeated if extra taurine was given to human beings, or even if there would be any effect at all.

But let us recall why we die. It is because of sin. Adam and Eve came into the world perfect. If they had kept from sinning, they would never have died. But they did sin, and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). So no one will ever be able to discover a way to keep people alive for ever. That is totally impossible. Yet various ways may yet be found to increase our lifespan. After all, modern medicine has increased the average lifespan in various countries by tens of years.

But far more important than increasing the length of our lives in this world is to discover how to live for ever in the blessedness of heaven and to avoid being sent down to spend eternity in hell. We are sinners and we need to be saved from our sin and from all its terrible consequences. No great research is needed to find out about salvation. God has revealed to us in the Bible all that we need to know.

The Bible tells us: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). It is not a case of getting a few extra years in this world, but of living *for ever* away from all the sadness, trouble and sin that we experience in this world.



Members of the Youth Conference at Strathallan in April 2023

Those researching the subject do not want just to increase the time that people live; they would like these extra years to be healthy ones. But what about people's spiritual health? Does anyone think about that? Some people may be ready enough to believe that they must be prepared for eternity, although they are in no hurry to seek the Lord and find salvation.

Their problem is that they do not like the idea of being spiritually healthy – in other words, being holy – until death has almost caught up with them. Their unbelieving hearts may tell them that they will not be happy if they are holy; they would much prefer to go on in their sins for many more years. Yet those who believe in Jesus Christ – who have been born again and have begun to live holy lives – have God's blessing. And they have His blessing in a way that no unconverted person can possibly have, even in this life.

Other substances may yet be discovered that will make people live longer – and even lead to many more years of *healthy* living. But no amount of taurine or any other substance will keep anyone in this world for ever. So let us be in earnest about our souls! Let us seek the Lord now, "while He may be found" (Isaiah 55:6)! Let us realise that we must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ before it is too late, or else be lost for ever!

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