

12<sup>th</sup> February

Memory verse:

**God is our refuge and strength,**  
a very present help in trouble.

Therefore will not we fear,  
though the earth be removed,  
and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,  
though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

Psalm 46:2-3

Two Christian ladies today – and an unchristian philosopher.

A story from history to read



Today marks the death on the scaffold of Lady Jane Grey (1537-1554). There is no portrait of her that we can be sure is actually her and not someone else, but the wood cut on the left dates from the time.

I have put her story as told by H E Marshall in today's Optional Resources file. In order to understand it you will need to know some background and something about the various people who appear in it.

King Henry VIII had a younger sister, Mary who became queen of France. Lady Jane Grey was her granddaughter. Henry VIII divorced his first wife Catherine, who had borne him a daughter, also called Mary. His third wife, Jane Seymour, gave Henry the son, Edward, he longed for, but died herself. When Henry died in 1547 Edward became King Edward VI at the age of nine.

Edward and Lady Jane knew one another well. They were both intelligent youngsters and often had the same tutors. Edward had a Regency Council to help him rule while he was young. The Council was sympathetic to the English Reformation which was just beginning with the death of Henry VIII.

King Edward died young in 1553. Shortly before he died, he and the Council changed his will in order to try to prevent Mary, his older half sister, from taking the throne. Like her mother, Catherine of Aragon, Mary was a bitter opponent of the Reformation. The dying king and his council were concerned that if Mary took the throne (as she was entitled to do under terms set out by Henry VIII) persecution and sorrow would follow. Edward therefore nominated Lady Jane (his first cousin, once removed) to be his successor.

As you will find out if you read the story in H E Marshall's version, this plan failed. It led to the execution of poor Lady Jane Grey.



Lady Jane is well known for her Christian character. A day or two before her death she wrote to her younger sister Katherine from her prison in the Tower of London:

...live still to die, that you by death may purchase eternal life, and trust not that the tenderness of your age shall lengthen your life: for unto God, when he calleth, all hours, times and seasons are alike, and blessed are they whose lamps are furnished when he cometh, for as soon will the Lord be glorified in the young as in the old.

To which parable of Jesus is Lady Jane referring here?

I have put the whole letter in today's Optional Resources files for older children to read. As well as noting the wise advice this letter contains (even for the modern reader) notice the length of the sentences she uses. It would be an interesting punctuation exercise to see if you could, by making small alterations, break down the three magnificent sentences of the letter into smaller ones.

### Something to do

The story of Lady Jane Grey involves some quite complex family relationships. Do you know, for instance, exactly what a “first cousin once removed” is? A drawing of a family tree can be very helpful in sorting out these things. What about your own family? Have you ever tried to draw a family tree? How far can you go back? Try to draw your own family tree today.<sup>1</sup>

### Something to sing and something to do<sup>2</sup>

And the second Christian lady? Her name was Megan Watts Hughes (1842-1907) and she was a singer, composer of hymn tunes and the discoverer of an interesting scientific phenomenon – as well as the protector of a number of orphan boys for whom she and her husband set up a home in Islington.



Megan was noted for her singing when she was still quite a little girl. She was born on **12<sup>th</sup> February** and raised in Dowlais in Wales. A local temperance choir raised funds to help her study music in Cardiff when she was just 16 and then at the Royal Academy of Music in London. She had lessons with the same teacher as a famous singer, Jenny Lind (1820-1887), and many knowledgeable people thought she was as good a singer, if not better than Miss Lind. Jenny Lind knew Megan well and said of her, “I have never met anyone so related to me in the art of music. Two sisters only have I in the art – Madame Schumann [Ernestine Schumann (1861-1936)] and Mrs. Megan Watts-Hughes.” Her voice was said to have a “penetrating sweetness”.<sup>3</sup> Megan was all set for a glittering career.

But something happened to change all that. Megan had always been a chapel goer but at the outset of her career she developed what one newspaper described as “a deep religious nature”.

Megan called Bethania Chapel, Dowlais her “spiritual birthplace.” Bethania had been the scene of a big revival in Dowlais, following a cholera outbreak in the town when Megan was a child of seven. There were also a remarkable blessing there in 1904 but the chapel seems to have been anything but sleepy in the period between. It is not unreasonable to surmise that the reason why “The concert platform became repugnant to her...” as the newspaper put it, was that Megan had been converted at some point between her childhood and her retirement from the singing profession and had come to realise that the kind of life led by Jenny Lind, Christina Nilsson, and Ernestine Schumann was not compatible with her Christian profession.

<sup>1</sup> There are ideas on how to do this here: <https://www.wikihow.com/Draw-a-Family-Tree>

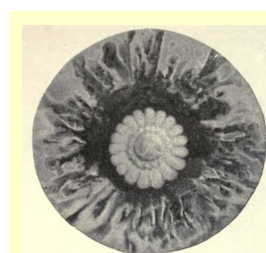
<sup>2</sup> Photo from *Eminent Welshmen* by kind permission from [studio@figurefiveone.com](mailto:studio@figurefiveone.com)

<sup>3</sup> *Eminent Welshmen : a short biographical dictionary of Welshmen who have attained distinction from the earliest times to the present* T.R. Roberts (Cardiff, 1908.)

Megan married Hugh Lloyd Hughes in 1872 and together they began working in London to provide help to destitute boys, founding an orphanage in Holloway Road in London. The only singing she did was at what the newspaper describes as “religious gatherings” and “in the slums” – presumably as part of her mission work.

Megan was always interested in the science of sound especially as it related to singing. In those days although musical notation had been well developed for centuries, there was no way of capturing or recording sound, much less reproducing it again. Megan found an unusual way of recording sound although, once captured there was no way of turning the image into sound again. She called the surprisingly beautiful results “voice flowers” and used them as works of art to adorn the orphanage.

Megan experimented by stretching a membrane across a vessel to which a pipe was attached. She used small grains such as salt or various thickened liquids placed on the membrane. When she sang into the pipe the vibrations caused the grains or liquid to form into patterns. Fascinated she wrote:



As I have watched the little heaps in the formation of the floral figures gather themselves up and then shoot out their petals, just as a flower springs from the swollen bud, the hope has come to me that these humble experiments may afford some suggestions in regard to nature's production of her own beautiful forms, and may thereby aid, in some slight degree, the revelation of yet another link in the great chain of the organized universe that, we are told in Holy Writ, took its shape at the voice of God.

Megan's experiments were the first in the field of standing waves and you can make yourself some equipment to reproduce them if you are prepared to take a little trouble.<sup>4</sup>

Megan wrote a number of hymn tunes of which the best is probably “Wilton Square.” Find it in r hymn book today and sing it.<sup>5</sup>

### Something to think about for older children<sup>6</sup>

Emanuel Kant (1724-1804) died on **12<sup>th</sup> February**. Kant was a philosopher; he devoted his life to the study of philosophy. What does the “philosophy” mean? “Philo” means love and “sophy” means wisdom so “philosophy” means the love of wisdom.

Philosophy aims to answer the basic questions of life:

How do we know what we know? (The technical term for this is epistemology.)

How should we live our lives? (The technical term for this is ethics.)

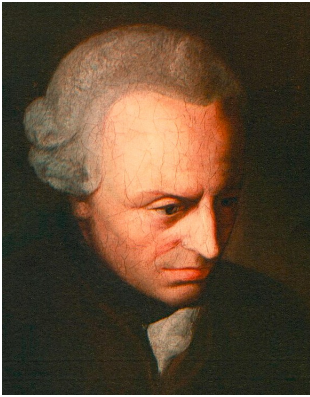
4 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jr6Xsatu4Y>

5 In the old edition of Christian hymns it is 511 (548 in New Christian Hymns). You can find it here with different but excellent words: [https://hymnary.org/tune/wilton\\_square\\_hughes?extended=true&sort=firstLine](https://hymnary.org/tune/wilton_square_hughes?extended=true&sort=firstLine) or played on the organ (with a short introduction) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91YVfWPAILA&t=16s> .

6 Information from Bahnsen, Greg *History of Philosophy*, <https://latinigcse.weebly.com/uploads/7/9/9/6/79964664/t1w1d4.pdf> and other sources.

How can we reason correctly? (The technical term for this is logic.)

What is the nature, structure and origin of reality? (The technical term for this is metaphysics.)



Everyone is a philosopher in reality, whether they realise it or not, because everyone has a way of looking at the world. That does not mean that everyone is a *good* philosopher, of course. The Bible tells us in Col. 2:3 that “in whom [Christ] are hid **all** the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” This means that only Christians can do philosophy correctly.

Emanuel Kant was a very influential philosopher. It was not just other philosophers who listened to his ideas. Historians, scientists, politicians and novelists all took notice of what Kant wrote. An example you may have come across can be found in the novels of Jane Austen whose characters often have an attitude to behaviour that comes from Kant's thinking.

Kant's writing is very hard to understand but it is possible to grasp some of his ideas in a simple form. Most of the time it was just such a simplified version of Kant's philosophy that had an effect on people such as Jane Austen. If we can gain even a simplified understanding of his ideas therefore we will gain an understanding of his influence.

One of Kant's books was called *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Kant thought that God was unknowable because there is no way for the human mind to grasp the workings of the supernatural. But this is not what the Bible says. It tells us that God *is* beyond or above the range of normal or physical human experience (that is “transcendent”) but at the same time God reveals himself and can be known through the Person of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus explains this in John 14:7-11.

Kant wanted a system of ethics (how we should behave) that was rooted in human reason alone. He understood that without God in our system of thought we can never find a solid basis for morality (right and wrong) and so he spent a lot of time trying to find a proof for the existence of God based in human reason alone. Interestingly the Bible itself never sets out to prove to us that God exists, rather it declares His existence to us.

Kant said that we should consider any action we do in the light of what would happen if everyone behaved in the same way. This would enable us to determine how it was our duty to act. Once we have determined our duty, we can do it; “I ought therefore I can,” he said. This is an unscriptural idea and it also goes against human experience. Many times we know what we ought to do but do *not* do it. The Bible points out that man is actually in the situation where he says “I ought but I can't” – as the Apostle Paul explains in Romans 7. Kant has no answer to this very real human dilemma except to say that we have a duty to do our duty!

Philosophers such as Kant who try to explain the basic principles that underlie existence by pure human reason alone can never make a system that hangs together. Human reason is fallen. The consequence is that all the philosophers disagree with one another. There are as many philosophies as there are philosophers.