

Keep Us, Lord, O Keep Us Ever

Thomas Kelly (1769–1855)

Keep us, Lord, O keep us ever!
Vain our hope, if left by thee;
we are thine, O leave us never,
till thy face in heav'n we see,
there to praise thee
through a bright eternity!

All our strength at once would fail us,
if deserted, Lord, by thee;
nothing then could aught avail us,
certain our defeat would be;
those who hate us
thenceforth their desire would see.

But we look to thee as able
grace to give in time of need;
heav'n, we know, is not more stable
than the promise which we plead;
'tis thy promise
gives thy people hope indeed.



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ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Elements in a Philosophy of Ministry: Imitation

Kevin T. Bauder

Nearly ten years ago I determined that I had to get into better physical condition. My approach involved two strategies. First, I made some significant and long-term changes in my eating habits. Second, I knew that I needed an exponential increase in exercise.

My puzzle was what to do for exercise. I started out just walking a mile. This quickly increased to two, and then to three. Eventually I settled into a routine of walking about five miles per day.

The next summer, my wife bought me a bicycle for my birthday. Call it a codger-cycle: it was low, heavy, and sported clunky tires. After a few short excursions I began riding about ten miles a day, pedaling as many as twenty some days. Then I parked the codger-cycle in favor of an old Schwinn World Sport and an older Schwinn Collegiate. These were classic road bikes, and for a few summers I really enjoyed cycling. Then a couple of crashes—one of them pretty bad—took some of the luster off that sport.

Presently, my summer routine is to walk five miles or ride ten miles at least five days every week. I almost always get six days, and most weeks I even find time to do seven. I'll alternate between cycling and walking, though as the years have passed I've done more walking and less cycling. Of course, in the winter I don't ride at all.

For a while I tried Alpine walking, which mimics cross-country skiing. Alpine walking is done with sticks that are about the length of ski poles, and my Romanian colleagues gave me a set of these several years ago. I enjoy this *Volkssport* but find it hazardous in the winter. I've never been able to get the sticks to grip well on Minnesota ice, which we have aplenty. Occasionally I walk with a standard stick or staff, especially in the winter. Usually, however, I just walk. People now come up to me in stores and other places just to comment that they've seen me walking in their neighborhoods.

This was a good habit to be in when COVID brought the shutdown to Minnesota. I never felt trapped or confined, since I had the freedom to be out on the streets and trails nearly every day. For a few months I could go out and

walk early on Sunday mornings, then come back home to watch the services of Fourth Baptist Church on the computer.

I've found that an extended walk can provide a good opportunity to think through problems. It is also a great chance to listen to audiobooks or podcasts. Incidentally, Librivox has hundreds or thousands of free recorded books, including volumes in theology, philosophy, history, and literature. I would never substitute an audiobook for technical reading, but for me it's a good way to plough through reading that has to be done for survey work. I listen to most audiobooks at double speed, which allows me to cover a book every week or so. That's how I got through Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, Augustine's *The City of God*, Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, and Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*. I'm listening to Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* a volume at a time.

Last year I started getting invitations to run in the Air Force Marathon. I've never been a runner, so I just ignored those invitations. Then the marathon was cancelled because of COVID, and the Air Force switched to a virtual marathon. Their advertising said that athletes could sign up for 5K, 10K, a half marathon, or a full marathon. They could complete the distance in their own neighborhoods and upload a screen shot of their tracking software to certify their times (I use Strava). Best of all, athletes didn't have to run. They could walk, cycle, or crawl to complete their distances.

I signed up for the 10K. The event required athletes to complete their distance during September of 2020, which I did easily. For my registration fee I received a race bib, a certificate of completion, a full color patch, a tee shirt, and a finisher's medal. The 10K distance is only 6.2 miles, and I was walking that far on some days anyway. To my surprise I really enjoyed being part of a community that was completing the event. And yes, I liked getting the swag.

Evidently the event was a success for the Air Force, too. They announced a series of six "History and Heritage" races, 10K each, to be held every other month during 2021. They were all virtual, and they all had the same stipulation: finish your distance running, walking, cycling or whatever. I'm sure they'd let you do it in a canoe. Over the year I signed up for all six races. Each came with the bib, the finisher's certificate, a patch, and a 3.5 inch medal devoted to some historic aircraft to which the race was dedicated. Alas, there were no T-shirts for these races.

This September the Air Force Marathon was held as an in-person event, but the organizers also kept the virtual event. This time I wanted to try for a bit more distance, so I signed up for the half marathon. Again the enjoyment of the exercise was matched by the enjoyment of being part of a community and the enjoyment of receiving the goodies after the race.

Through the year I had also participated in several other 10K virtual events. These were all smaller and had less sense of community than the Air Force Marathon, but they were also less expensive. I enjoyed them all and have amassed a bit of a collection of race bibs, certificates, and medals.

The *crème de la crème* came when the Boston Athletic Association decided to hold the Boston Marathon as a virtual event as well as an in-person event this year. I'd never even be able to qualify to get into the Boston Marathon, so this was just too good a chance to pass up. While 5K, 10K, and half marathon options were available, I signed up for the full 26 miles. It took a day, but it was worth it. The BAA produced its own app for the Marathon, so my route and speed was recorded automatically. The app came with audio—it was hilarious to hear a crowd cheering for me as I approached the finish line. The marathon community was well organized and quite communicative. I don't know whether the BAA will do a virtual marathon ever again, but I'm glad they did this year, and I'm glad I participated.

I would walk or cycle for the exercise anyway. Being able to participate in these virtual events, however, makes the process far more interesting. Every walk is a training session. I'll never win anything but I've learned one thing: even if you can't have a great finish time, you can still reach the finish line.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
