

# The Young People's Magazine

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

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*"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*



***June 2021***

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**Cover Picture:** Kiltarn church, near Dingwall, where Thomas Hog was minister in Covenanting times. See page 106.

## The Young People's Magazine

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# The Young People's Magazine

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Number 6

## Nicodemus' Meeting with Jesus

Nicodemus was a Pharisee. The Pharisees were very careful to keep the Old Testament laws. But they were more concerned about what other people could see than about what God can see. That was why Jesus spoke about them just cleaning the outside of a cup and a plate: they needed to clean the inside of these dishes too and did not do so. What Jesus meant was: it was not enough for the Pharisees to keep from the sins that other people might see; they must also keep from sinful and unbelieving thoughts – from everything that only God could see.

The Pharisees were very much opposed to Jesus, but Nicodemus came to speak to Him. He came to Jesus when it was dark, probably because he did not want anyone to see him. He said some things that were right. He spoke of Jesus as a teacher – that was obvious. It should also have been obvious that Jesus was a teacher who had come from God; Nicodemus realised this, but not many wanted to accept it. He could see that no one could do these miracles unless God was with him, and so he acknowledged that God must have been with Jesus and that He must have come from God.

When Jesus replied, He said nothing about any of these things. He went to the heart of the matter; He pointed to Nicodemus' real need: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Nicodemus needed to be born again; he needed a new spiritual beginning. Yes, he knew many things. He knew that there was a God, that this God had revealed Himself in the books of the Old Testament, and that this revelation spoke about God's commandments, about sin, about forgiveness, about the coming Messiah and much, much more.

But Nicodemus was still in his sins. He needed to be forgiven. He needed to recognise Jesus as the *Messiah*, or the *Christ* (both words mean the same thing: Anointed One). Jesus was anointed by God the Father as a Prophet to teach sinners like Nicodemus, as a Priest to offer Himself up as a sacrifice in the place of sinners, and as a King to rule over sinners; and Nicodemus needed to know Him as a Prophet, Priest and King.

But the Saviour pointed to Nicodemus' fundamental need: to be born again.

He was spiritually dead; he could not love God; he could not trust in God for salvation; he could not repent of his sins. So he needed the Holy Spirit to work in his soul and give him spiritual life. Only then could he begin to love God or do anything else that was pleasing to his Creator.

We too may know much about the Bible, Old Testament and New. But are we born again? If not, we too are spiritually dead and need to be made alive, so that we may be able to love God and engage in all the other duties that are set before us in the Bible.

In his ignorance, Nicodemus asked, "How can a man be born when he is old?" He was thinking of a second physical birth and, of course, that was impossible; it was not what Jesus meant. Yet it was good that he did not turn away from Jesus, as many a Pharisee must have done. Nicodemus stayed on to hear what more Jesus had to say, and he learned a lot that day.

He might have said, as other Pharisees told John the Baptist, "We have Abraham to our father" (Matthew 3:9). But the godliness of a father, or any other relation will not bring us to heaven; we *must* be born again. The Pharisees believed that they could be saved by trying really hard to keep God's law; they were self-righteous; they thought that they could produce a righteousness themselves that would satisfy God. But they needed more than that; they needed a new heart; they needed to be born again. Otherwise they could not get to heaven.

Nicodemus, like everyone else, would die; yet he was not fit to go to heaven. The Bible tells us perfectly clearly: "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth" (Revelation 21:27), and sin is defiling. Sin would have kept Nicodemus out of heaven unless he was born again, unless he was made holy and had his sins forgiven.

The Saviour went on to tell him, partly repeating what He had already said: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God". So this new beginning, what Jesus called being "born again", involves cleansing, of which the use of *water* is a symbol. And it is the Holy Spirit who carries out this cleansing; it is by the Holy Spirit that sinners are born again. We need Him to come to our hearts, so that we may be born again – if that has not yet happened.

Jesus also told Nicodemus not to be surprised about what He had said about being born again. He told this Pharisee: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again". Even Pharisees, foolishly confident in their own self-righteousness, needed to be born again. Jesus' teaching about the new birth ought not to have appeared strange to anyone who had been brought up with the teachings of the Old Testament.

The words of Jesus to Nicodemus should not surprise anyone today, no



matter how strongly they may feel that they already live a reasonably-satisfactory life. Perhaps you are looking to various acts of kindness you have done for others and assume that you have never done anyone any real harm. But God sees all the imperfections in your heart; He sees that you do not love Him wholeheartedly – indeed that you do not love Him at all unless you have been born again. So do not be surprised if Jesus is telling *you* that you *do* need to be born again.

And Nicodemus was born again. The Holy Spirit did put new life into his soul, so that he became spiritually alive. After he was born again, he did love God; he did recognise Jesus as the Messiah and did believe in Him. When did this happen? We do not know; it may have been when Jesus told him: “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 may have been some time later. But if it happened on the day when he had this conversation with Jesus, the Holy Spirit, in giving new life to Nicodemus, opened the eyes of his soul so that he looked to Jesus by faith. He trusted in Jesus as One who was able to save him, a sinner. So he could never perish in a lost eternity; all his sins were forgiven; he began to live a holy life; everlasting life was his, for the sake of Christ, and it could never be taken away from him.

Years afterwards, Paul and Silas were in the city of Philippi, in Greece. On the Jewish Sabbath they walked out of the city, beside a river, and found some women who had met for prayer. Among them was Lydia, who belonged to Thyatira, in what we now know as Turkey. She earned her living by selling purple cloth. As Paul preached the gospel, she was born again; “the Lord opened” her heart, so “that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14). She believed the truths about Jesus that Paul was preaching and trusted in this glorious Saviour for the salvation of her soul.

You too should feel your need of being born again. Ask God to send the Holy Spirit to work in your heart, for the sake of Jesus Christ, so that you would believe the truths which you find in the Bible and which you hear preached to you. Ask God to make you able and willing to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, for you are called to believe on Him.

We do not find much in the Bible about Nicodemus afterwards. But we do read about him joining with Joseph of Arimathea, just after Jesus was crucified. Nicodemus brought a large amount of “a mixture of myrrh and aloes” to anoint Jesus’ body, and together they took the body and prepared it for burial in Joseph’s garden. Nicodemus, like Joseph, was then showing very clearly that he was now on the side of Jesus. Obviously he *was* indeed born again and so we can be sure that he is now in heaven.

# The Covenanters: What They Teach Us

## 6. Lessons and Conclusion

*Rev Caleb Hembd*

This is the final section of a paper given at a New Zealand Youth Conference. Last month's section told of the *achievements* of the Covenanters.

**6. Lessons.** The Covenanters teach us valuable lessons for today. First, they remind us that *Christians must be completely devoted to Christ and His truth*. Paul wrote that Christians in Macedonia “gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God” (2 Corinthians 8:5). The Covenanters also “gave themselves to the Lord” as they signed personal and national covenants with Him. They recognised that they were not their own but were bought with a price – bound to glorify God in their body and in their spirit, which are God’s (1 Corinthians 6:20).

They were not simply content to know that they were going to heaven. One of the less faithful ministers tried to dismiss the differences between himself and the Covenanting ministers by saying, “What needs all this ado? We will get heaven, and they will get no more.” This was reported to Donald Cargill, a Covenanting minister who eventually suffered martyrdom. He responded, “Yes, we will get more; we will get God glorified on earth, which is more than heaven”.

Second, we learn from the Covenanters that *we must stand for biblical principles at any cost, even if they seem unimportant to others*. They laid to heart Christ’s warning: “He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10). Often truths that seem “small” become immensely important when examined more closely. For example, church government is part of Christ’s Kingly rights. He alone determines how His Church should be governed. But if we say that church government is a small issue that we can give up for the sake of peace, then Christ no longer rules over the Church in everything. We essentially deny His claim that all power is delivered unto Him (Matthew 29:18). Deny Christ His Kingly office – and what do you have left? One who is not in control of His Church. But Christ *is* King of the Church; therefore, He has the right to decide how it should be organised and governed.

Third, we learn that *Christ, as King of kings and Lord of lords, is in full control during times of persecution*. He knows how much persecution His people can bear. And He prepares them for more intense persecution. Most of the Covenanters did not face martyrdom right away. Instead, they were fined for not complying with government laws. This hardship taught them

to have a “holy indifference” to earthly things and to prepare for greater sacrifices. But most of them did not face martyrdom until the Killing Times of the 1680s – at least 20 years after their difficulties began.

Fourth, we learn that *as the sufferings of God’s people abound, so do their consolations*. The Scriptures teach that all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). A false or backsliding Christian may avoid persecution, but all godly Christians will suffer persecution of some sort. Isaac, for example, was persecuted by Ishmael mocking him (compare Genesis 21:9 with Galatians 4:29).

But we should not shrink from living a godly life because of the troubles that we will endure. Christ reserves the sweetest consolations for Christians who suffer the most for His truth. Paul, who suffered much for his faith, testified: “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ”. The Lord Jesus even commands His people to rejoice and be exceeding glad when persecuted (Matthew 5:12). The Covenanters displayed this exceeding joy again and again in their sufferings.

Finally, we see that *the Judge of all the earth shall do right – even when it seems that the wicked are not getting what they deserve*. Surprisingly, few of the persecutors were brought to justice for their cruelty. No doubt it was hard for the surviving Covenanters to see the men – who had either tortured them or killed their loved ones – walking at liberty. But they did not escape the vengeance of heaven.

One cruel persecutor lay on his deathbed, tormented by a guilty conscience. He called for some Covenanting ministers to counsel him, saying that “his own ministers were good to live with, but not to die with”. The ministers readily came, but “their prayers were drowned in the groans he uttered under the horrors of a guilty conscience”. His friends were shocked and had to leave. One of them said in tears, “We banish these [Covenanters] from us and yet, when dying, we call for them; this is melancholy work!”. The writer telling this story observes, “Cruel and bloody as were the deaths of our martyred fathers, they were enviable compared with those of their murderers”.

**Conclusion.** The persecutors of the godly have appeared in different forms. Sometimes they have openly declared themselves to be the enemies of Christ. For example, during the first few centuries after Christ’s birth, pagans killed thousands of simple Christians. At other times, they have professed to be the friends of Christ. In the 1500s, for example, Roman Catholics persecuted Protestants throughout Europe. In the 1600s, men who professed to be Anglican Protestants persecuted Presbyterian Covenanters.

Yet no matter what kind of persecutors the godly have faced, the Lord has continued to build His Church from generation to generation. What was

prophesied of Gad may be applied to the Church in every age: "A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last" (Genesis 49:19). At times, it seems that the Church has been overcome by a storm of persecution, but she always emerges triumphant. Let us then receive Christ, who is freely offered to us in the gospel, seek grace to devote ourselves entirely to Him, cleave to His truth at any cost, trust in Him at all times, and not fear what man may do unto us. Then we will overcome at last.

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## Anne Askew

Anne Askew was born in Lincolnshire about 1521, exactly 500 years ago. Her older sister died when she was engaged to a wealthy man. Then her father ordered Anne to take her sister's place and marry the man instead; she was given no choice in the matter, it would seem. Anne was perhaps about 21 when she married, and her husband was a strong Roman Catholic. When he found out that Anne read the Bible diligently, was a true Protestant and believed in Jesus Christ, he was angry. Anne later said, "I had rather read five lines in the Bible than to hear five masses".

The time came when Anne was forced to decide between, on the one hand, holding on to her Bible and the true religion and, on the other hand, staying with her two little children and having all the comforts of a rich man's home. Anne did not hesitate; she chose her Saviour, the Word of God and the religion of the Word. And her husband angrily sent her away from her home and her children and, it appears, she never returned. She must have been very sorry to leave her children behind, but she could commit them into God's care.

Anne set off for London. On her way, she spent nine days in Lincoln. She often went to the Cathedral to read the Bible. In 1538 King Henry VIII had ordered a copy of the Bible to be placed in every church in England, so that people could read it.

After she reached London, a man called Wadloe came to live in the house beside the one where Anne stayed; he wanted to spy on her. There could only have been a thin wall between the houses, as he could hear what she said. He told some important man that she was the godliest woman he had ever met. He explained that she began to pray at midnight and did not stop for many hours afterwards. Wadloe seems to have been influenced for good by what he heard.

Someone else overheard her speaking against the Roman Catholic teaching about transubstantiation – the false idea that the wafer in the mass is changed

into the actual body and blood of Jesus, and even His divine nature. As a result she was arrested. She was brought before a man called Dare, who questioned her for some time. Among other things, he asked her what she thought about confession to a priest.

She explained, following what she had read in the Epistle of James: “that every man ought to acknowledge his faults to other, and the one to pray for the other”. She wrote about Dare’s seventh question: he asked “if I had the Spirit of God in me. I answered, If I had not, I was but a reprobate or castaway.” She was acknowledging that, if the Holy Spirit had not worked in her heart, she was not a true Christian.

Perhaps, because he was finding it difficult to draw out from Anne any information that he felt would be useful to him, Dare passed her on to a priest. She answered some of the priest’s questions, but refused to answer others because she knew that he was “a Papist” and would presumably make a bad use of what she might say.

Then she was brought before the Lord Mayor, who asked her if she had said that the priests could not make the body of Christ (from the wafer in the mass).

Anne answered, “I say so, my Lord; for I have read that God made man, but that man can make God, I never yet read nor, I suppose, ever shall read”.

The Lord Mayor tried again: “No, thou foolish woman. After the words of consecration [by the priest], is it not the Lord’s body?”

Anne told him that it was just bread.

Then the Lord Mayor asked, “What if a mouse eat it after the consecration? What shall become of the mouse?” When Anne asked him for his opinion, he foolishly said that the mouse was damned.

“Alas, poor mouse!” Anne exclaimed. And many people in the court began to laugh at the Lord Mayor. They could not take such nonsense seriously.

Then an official of the Bishop of London joined in the questioning. He showed his ignorance of the New Testament when he claimed that the Apostle Paul had forbidden “women to speak or talk of the Word of God”. The only result of all this questioning was that Anne was sent to prison.

None of her friends was allowed to see her. But a priest was sent to examine her. He claimed to be very sorry for her in her situation. Yet he began to ask questions: for instance: “If the host [the consecrated bread, wrongly claimed to be the body and blood and divinity of Christ] should fall and a beast did eat it, did the beast eat God or not?” It was very similar to a question the Lord Mayor asked. But Anne refused to answer, explaining that she saw he had come to tempt her.

Several days later, the Bishop himself, Edmund Bonner, began to examine

her. He asked her what she believed about the sacrament. Anne replied, "I believe as the Scripture doth teach me". It was an excellent confession. It was the basic testimony of the Protestant Reformation – that in religion we are to believe all that the Bible teaches; it is the one source of what we are to receive as religious truth.

Bishop Bonner wrote out a statement for Anne to sign – probably a statement of Roman Catholic teaching, most likely about the mass. But she wrote instead: "I, Anne Askew, do believe all manner of things contained in the faith of the Catholic Church". And by "Catholic Church", she probably meant the *universal church* (the word *catholic* means universal) not the body whose headquarters is in Rome.

Bonner was very angry, but a cousin of Anne, who was present, calmed him down and, with another man, guaranteed that Anne would return to court whenever she was called. So she was set free. But, just three months later, she was arrested again and had to appear before the King's Council, a body of 12 important men, including at least two bishops. They questioned her for five long hours.

Of course, she was asked again about the Lord's Supper. This is the substance of her answer, "I believe that so often as I, in a Christian congregation, do receive the bread in remembrance of Christ's death, and with thanksgiving, according as He has appointed, I also receive the fruits of His most glorious sufferings".

The next day, the Bishop of Winchester threatened Anne that she would be burnt, but she told him "that she had searched all the Scriptures, yet she could "never find that either Christ or His Apostles put any creature to death".

When she later appeared before the Kings Council, they again questioned her on what she believed about the Lord's Supper. Anne insisted that the bread continued to be bread, although they called it God. She pointed out that if they left it in a box for three months, it would become mouldy. So she was convinced that it could not be God. It seems obvious that Anne was right. Her common sense told her that if the bread had been turned into the body and blood of a divine Person, it could not go mouldy. And, more importantly, she knew that the Bible does not teach that any change takes place in the bread of the Lord's Supper. Yet Anne was sentenced at that meeting of the Kings Council to die; she was to be burnt.

Afterwards Bishop Bonner and a government lawyer did their best to persuade Anne to change her mind, but they failed. She was then taken to the Tower of London, where prisoners were kept long ago. Soon two men arrived who wanted Anne to give them the names of other Protestants, and no doubt they would have been treated just as badly as she was, if they had

been discovered. The men tried to force Anne to give them some names by torturing her on the rack, a horrible instrument that pulled limb from limb. When she was taken off the rack she fainted and, after she came round, was questioned for two more hours. “But my Lord God”, Anne wrote afterwards, “(I thank His everlasting goodness) gave me grace to persevere, and will do, I hope, to the very end.” And she did persevere.

If Anne had said that she now believed Roman Catholic teaching about the Lord’s Supper, she would have been set free. But faithfulness to God was more important for her than life. She spent much of her remaining days in prayer. She asked God to forgive those who had been violent against her and to open “their blind hearts”.

Almost a month after she was condemned, Anne Askew was taken out, on 16 July 1546, along with three other Protestants, to die because of her scriptural faith. She was unable to walk as a result of the torture she had experienced; so she had to be carried to the place of burning in a chair. First they had to listen to a sermon preached by Bishop Shaxton, who had become a Protestant, yet had turned back to Romanism under pressure.

The four martyrs stood firm even when they were offered a pardon, but they would only be set free if they gave up their beliefs. They refused; to gain more time in this world meant that they had to pay a price that they knew was far too great – they must be unfaithful to God. So they were burnt to death. Yet it was to the glory of God – who supported them in all their sufferings and brought them safely into heaven. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord” (Revelation 14:13).

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## Assurance of Being Saved

### 4. How Can the Believer Be Assured? (2)

*Rev George Macdonald*

Last month’s section of this paper given at an Australian Youth Conference began to give an answer to the question in the heading of this article.

*A*ssurance of salvation can be increased through the use of God’s appointed means of grace. Speaking with reverence, God does not work unnecessary miracles. In *The Shorter Catechism*, we read: “The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are His ordinances, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation” (Answer 88).

Surely then, we should make a diligent use of these means of grace (these ways by which God blesses His people), not least for the very great blessing

we are looking at today – assurance of personal salvation. It is a blessing worth seeking; so we should ask for it in prayer to God. Christ calls burdened souls to Himself, so that they may find rest for their souls, saying, “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 unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). Surely such rest is, in the end, nothing less than the full assurance of faith and salvation.

*The importance of being well-grounded in the faith.* If we would be assured of our personal salvation, it is vastly important to be well grounded in the doctrines of the Bible. It was the Apostle Paul's desire for his fellow believers “that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:2-3).

The doctrines of Scripture are wonderfully summarised in *The Shorter Catechism* of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. There was a day in Scotland when *The Shorter Catechism* was memorised by almost every schoolchild. Together with regular family worship and church attendance, it meant that young people were well grounded in their knowledge of the truth. I ask you: Are you as well grounded?

There is a tendency today to neglect the systematic teaching of Bible history and doctrine; so a generation has risen up in the Christian Church that is ignorant of basic Christian teaching. People think that being a Christian is all about having certain experiences, and little to do with understanding the truth revealed in the Bible. Head knowledge alone will not save us, but that does not mean that Christian truth is unimportant and we may neglect learning about it. A saving heart-knowledge of God is surely related to what we understand, and is grounded in the revelation God makes of Himself in the Bible.

How can we be assured of our salvation if we are not clear on the nature of that salvation? For example, what a comfort it is when the believer realises that God does not cast off His people! While He may and does chastise them for their sins, those who believe in Christ shall never perish. “My sheep hear My voice,” said Christ, “and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand” (John 10:27-29). When we know such things, assurance is all the more likely.

So my advice to you is: keep on memorising the *Catechism* and, more



than that, seek to know and understand the Christian doctrine summarised there. If you have questions on Christian doctrine, ask your minister or elder. Seek by God's help to be well-grounded in the faith. Do not settle for anything less.

*Always act consistently with your profession.* Some here profess to have a good hope for eternity. We praise God that you have come to Christ while you are yet young. I am sure you would wish to be strongly assured of your salvation all your days. If so, always act in a way consistent with your profession". Do you profess to be a sinner saved by grace? Then be humble. Do you profess to be a sinner saved through Christ? Then love Christ. Do you profess to be a sinner saved from hell? Then have a prayerful and practical care for the ungodly. As I say such things I am conscious of many times when I have come short in them. A consistent, godly walk will go a long way toward that peace of conscience which is a happy companion of an assured faith in Christ and makes for a comfortable assurance of personal salvation.

Our works do not save us, but the testimony of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount is true: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

The First Epistle of John is much concerned with the relationship between the assurance received through believing the testimony of the Word and the believer's obedience to the Word and a fruitful life of faith as a result. John writes, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him" (3:18-19). We also read of the high place given to the love of the brethren as an evidence of saving faith: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (3:14).

*Repentance and salvation.* There is an important relationship between repentance and faith in Christ, which directly affects personal assurance. God's people do not only repent when they first turn from sin to Christ. Rather, that is only the beginning of life-long repentance.

John Colquhoun, a Scottish minister of the early 1800s, speaks of holiness as *the* happiness of a human being. To think of happiness without holiness would be a contradiction, he says, as holiness is the main ingredient in all true happiness. So to bring sinners to holiness was, next to the glory of God, the great purpose of what Christ has done.

If we would be happy, we must be holy. So, when we are conscious of sin in our life we need to seek grace to repent of that sin, by returning to God through Christ. In Psalm 116:7 the Psalmist says to his soul, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee". Christ in

His work of atonement is the place of rest for the soul, and surely we never truly repent of sin until we rest in Him. And so resting, we will find strength from Him to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.

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## Is There Much to Lose?

*Rev K M Watkins*

This is the third article warning against using modern Bible translations. Unlike the Authorised Version, they cannot be relied on to give us the whole Word of God.

**I**n the previous articles we saw that most modern translations of the Bible leave out words and verses from Scripture. Sometimes they include the words, but cast doubt on them by notes suggesting that they are not really the Word of God, sometimes even whole passages. But some may still ask whether there is much to lose. Does it really matter? After all, the Bible contains thousands and thousands of words. What does it matter if a few are missing? Especially if we can find the same teachings elsewhere in the Bible, what real harm is caused?

In a court of law, a witness must “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth”. What the witness says must be true, and everything he says must be true; he must not speak anything that is false. But he must also declare all the truth that could have a bearing on the case. Leaving something out could be as harmful to the outcome as speaking an outright lie. The omission might seem to be very small – but it could be absolutely necessary to reaching the right verdict. A faithful witness will not leave out the smallest detail – he will give a full testimony. He will hold back nothing that needs to be known.

We need our Bible translation to be a faithful witness too. We need it to tell us the truth, without error or falsehood. But it must also tell us *all* the truth. It must not leave anything out. To be reliable, it must include everything that God has said. “*All* scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The whole Bible is inspired by God, and all of it is useful to teach, reprove, correct and instruct. Without a complete Bible, our knowledge and service cannot be complete. If our translation does not have all of God’s words, we cannot be fully equipped for serving the Lord in all things. “*Every* word of God is pure” (Proverbs 30:5). Therefore not a word is to be lost!

The Authorised Version (AV) is a full translation. It does not leave out

anything that God inspired. When we use the AV, we can be confident that we have the whole word of God. Like the stream of faithful translations that went before it, such as Tyndale's and the Geneva Bible, nothing is missing. But many of God's words *are* missing from most modern translations of the Bible. They do not tell the whole truth. In the New Testament especially, they leave out many inspired words. These translations rob their readers of parts of God's Word.

The New King James Version (NKJV) does not leave words out, but it does show us how much is missing or made doubtful by the modern translations, through the notes in its margin. More than 400 times in the New Testament it tells its readers that words are "omitted" from certain Greek manuscripts. Is there much to lose? There certainly is! If a witness in a court left out or cast doubt on more than 400 necessary pieces of information, he would be looked on as most unreliable – and that is how we should look on modern translations of the Bible.

The problem is not just the quantity. It is also the importance of these parts of God's Word that are missing or left hanging in doubt. Several examples will demonstrate that there is a lot to lose by adopting a modern translation.

On two occasions, recorded by Matthew and Luke, the Saviour taught His disciples the pattern of prayer called the Lord's Prayer. Only Matthew's Gospel gives the wonderful words of the conclusion: "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen" (Matthew 6:13). But did Jesus really say them? Not according to the New International Version (NIV), the English Standard Version (ESV) and many other modern translations, for they miss them out. The NKJV, by saying that the "NU-Text omits" them, implies that we cannot be sure that Jesus said them ("NU-Text" refers to a modern edition of the Greek New Testament produced on unsound principles). *The Shorter Catechism* shows us how much we lose without these words, for they teach us "to take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and in our prayers to praise Him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory to Him. And, in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, Amen" (Answer 107).

For poor, undone souls, feeling that they have nothing worthy of their own, it is good news indeed to hear that Jesus did "not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9:13). Let them be in no doubt about it, for it is confirmed out of the mouth of three witnesses, Mark (2:17) and Luke (5:32) joining Matthew. But must sinners repent of sin when coming to Christ? Yes, they have the same threefold witness, according to the AV, for "unto repentance" is included in all three texts. But not according to the NIV, ESV, NASB and the rest, where the reference to repentance is retained

only in Luke. Some might argue that it does not matter that it is missing from the other two, but it is wrong to reason like that. For repentance is so necessary and so unwelcome to sinners, that we need all three witnesses to insist on it.

Did Pilate really testify that Jesus was a “just person” (Matthew 27:24)? The NKJV implies we cannot know, because the “NU-Text omits *just*”. The description is missing from the modern translations. Again, Christ’s sinless righteousness is taught many times in other places of the Bible, but it is so important that we should not want to lose even one testimony, for salvation depends on the fact that He who died for His people’s sins had no sin of His own.

Luke 22:43,44 is the only account we have of the Saviour in Gethsemane being strengthened by an angel and how “His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground”. It is grievous to find the modern versions raising doubt about whether these wonders of Christ’s agony really are the Word of God or not. The NKJV, for example, says, “NU brackets vv. 43 and 44 are not in the original text”. Yes, there is much to lose by using a modern translation!

The next casualty is Christ’s prayer, in Luke 23:34, for the pardon of those who crucified Him, for the NKJV tells us that the NU-Text brackets it as “a later addition” – that is, an uninspired corruption to the true Bible. Luke’s is the only Gospel to record this first of Christ’s seven sayings on the cross – but the modern translations unite in suggesting that it cannot be trusted.

In John 3:13, the Lord Jesus Christ made a wonderful claim of being God, for during His conversation on earth with Nicodemus, He spoke of Himself as “the Son of Man which is in heaven”. How could He be on earth and in heaven at the same time? Only if He was God, because only God is omnipresent – present in all places at all times. The NKJV implies that these words are unreliable, because the NU-text “omits” them. All the other modern translations leave them out.

In the Saviour’s words instituting the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:24, “Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me”, the NKJV says that the words “Take, eat” and “broken” are all omitted from the NU-Text. No child of grace would want to lose those precious words when sitting at the Lord’s Table! If the ESV, NIV or NASB was being used, he would not even hear them, because they are not in those translations.

In Colossians 1:14, believers are told that in Christ they “have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins”. At least, that is what the AV says. But it is not what modern translations say, for they leave out the words, “through His blood”. The NKJV implies that these words are

doubtful, for not only the NU-Text but also the M-Text omits them. (The M-Text is another unreliable edition of the Greek New Testament, claiming to represent the majority of Greek manuscripts.) It might be said that these words appear in the parallel text, Ephesians 1:7, but that is not good enough. Two witnesses confirm each other. How can a soul be redeemed and forgiven? “Through His blood” is the full and only answer. Christ shed His blood to ransom the souls of His people. Which of them does not want to be assured of that again and again!

These are just examples. Is there much to lose by using a modern English translation? There most certainly is! Let us keep with the trustworthy AV. Next time we shall seek to explain *why* the modern versions are making these fearful mistakes about the reliability of Scripture.

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*For Junior Readers*

## “The Lord Helps”

The man lived in Germany. He was a weaver, making cloth, some of which would be made into clothes for people to wear. He worked for someone else, but the time came when it was difficult to sell the cloth. The weaver was told that there was very little work for him to do; so he would have to leave.

What could the weaver do? He still needed to earn some money, so that he and his family could have food to eat. He pleaded with his master to keep him on as a weaver. But the master said he was very sorry; there was no help for it. He really had to leave.

“Well,” the weaver said, “the Lord helps.” Of course, the weaver was right. However difficult things may be, we should always ask the Lord to help us.

The weaver went home and told his wife what had happened. She was very sad. Probably she thought most about their children because she would soon have no food to give them.

They did have a little money but that did not last long. Then they had no food at all and no coal or wood to put on the fire to keep themselves warm.

But there was still plenty fresh air, and they did not need to pay for it. So the weaver’s wife opened the window to let it in while she swept the floor.

Very soon a nasty boy walked along the street outside their house. He threw a dead raven in through the open window; perhaps he had heard the weaver and his wife talking together. The boy said, “There, saint, there is something to eat”. He was mocking the weaver because he was a holy man.

But, as we will see, the Lord used the dead raven to help the weaver and his family

The weaver picked up the bird and said to it, "Poor creature, you must have died of hunger". Then he felt the bird's crop – the part of its throat where food is stored before going into its stomach. He expected that it would be empty; instead he felt something hard there. So he picked up a knife and cut its throat open. He was really surprised when he found a gold necklace.

What do you think the weaver said? "The Lord helps", he reminded himself and his wife. He was very thankful. He walked away to a jeweller and showed him what he had found and told how he had found it. He left it with the jeweller and asked him to lend him two dollars so that he could buy the things he really needed.

Some days later the jeweller came to see him. He told the weaver that, when he had cleaned the necklace, he recognised it. He asked, "Shall I tell you the owner of it?"

"Yes," the weaver answered, "I do want to give it back to the right people."

The jeweller told him that the necklace belonged to his master's wife. So the weaver brought the necklace to their house. They were very pleased to get it, especially because they were afraid that one of their servants had stolen it.

The master was sorry for the poor weaver. "Yes, the Lord helps," he said, repeating the weaver's words. The master gave him a good reward and promised to find work for him somehow. He said, "You shall never be in need again, while I can do anything for you". And I am sure the weaver went straight back to the jeweller to return the two dollars; he was an honest man.

Yes, the Lord helps those, like the weaver, who trust in Him. And God tells us to trust in Him at all times, whatever we need. Especially we should be asking for good things for our souls.

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### *For Younger Readers*

## **What a Good Man Thought of Himself**

John Newton was a godly minister in London long ago. He became old and could not see to read. So someone else read the Bible at family worship. The reading included the words, "By the grace of God I am what I am".

Newton said, "I am not what I ought to be". Then, "I am not what I wish to be". Then, "I am not what I hope to be". He knew he was not as good as he should be, he was not what he wanted to be, and not what he would yet be in heaven. Ask God to make you fit to go to heaven at last, for Jesus' sake.

# Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2020-21

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# Looking Around Us

## At the Heart of Every Community?

Earlier this year The Old Forge, the remotest pub on the British mainland, was for sale. It is in the village of Inverie, which is on the Knoydart Peninsula

in Lochaber, in the west of Scotland. The only way of reaching the village is by walking 18 miles (29 km) or by taking a seven-mile (11 km) trip by sea.

“Pubs are at the heart of every community, and it is no different in Knoydart.” So said a leader of the group seeking to bring The Old Forge into the ownership of the local community. It is a great pity that it is a pub that should be considered the central point of any community. Pubs have been such a source of drunkenness, which so often leads on to other serious sins. To give up control of one’s thinking through alcohol or drugs is a serious sin. Even to weaken that control is wrong.

Solomon wisely asks, “Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes?” And his answer is the right one, “They that tarry long at the wine” (Proverbs 23:29,30).

What should be at the heart of a community? A church. But not just any church – certainly not a church which rejects the Bible and the beliefs and the practices that God reveals to us in that precious book. What we should wish to see at the heart of every community is a church faithful to the Word of God, where the people of God in that town or village or city district can go to worship God, to learn more about the truth and to get good for their souls. This would be a church where unconverted people also could come – and ought to come – with a conviction that what they will hear is true, and that it has authority because it faithfully reflects what God has revealed.

Churches like this are not generally at the heart of communities today because most people do not welcome the truths of God’s Word. They have not been born again; so they do not love God and do not value spiritual things. They do not enjoy hearing about God; they do not see how serious it is to be a sinner, and so they do not feel their need of the glorious salvation that God has provided through His Son Jesus Christ.

Many of them would much prefer to waste their Sabbaths in foolish, ungodly conversation in a pub than listen to the glorious gospel in a church, which would point them to the way of salvation. This salvation has benefits even for this life: Paul told Timothy that “godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is,” but especially “of that [life] which is to come” (1 Timothy 4:8). With eternity before us, how earnest we should be to make good use of our time in this world! How urgently we should feel our need of salvation, so that we may enjoy a happy eternity rather than go down to the “blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 13).

**Price £1.00**