

# 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*



***July 2011***

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**Cover Picture:** Sydney waterfront; see page 139.

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# The Young People's Magazine

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No 7

## The Faithful Preacher

The church was in a run-down district of Edinburgh. At that time, in the 1920s, the church did not have a minister. One Sabbath morning, the congregation was made up largely of women and children; just a few men turned up. Perhaps that was the normal pattern. Together the people filled only about a quarter of the church. An old minister, now retired, came to take the service that day. His hair was white; there was a gentle but sad expression on his face as he climbed the steps to the pulpit.

He began the service in the usual way. But, as the congregation waited for his sermon, he looked around and told them, "I have no sermon this morning". He added, "Nothing would come" – he could not think of anything to speak about. At the same time he confessed, "I've been so busy with many things. I'm not sure what I believe, except that Jesus lives. Forgive me; I feel so ashamed." As he spoke, the people could see the tears trickling down his cheeks. Then, upset as he was, he struggled to pronounce the benediction. The service was over; he left the pulpit and went home.

One has to be sorry for the man; it is sad to find him, probably after many years in the ministry, without a message for sinners on their way to eternity. In the 1920s unbelief was destroying the religion of many and undermining their confidence in the truths of the Bible. The First World War was not long over, with all its loss of life, particularly among the young men who fought in the trenches. It followed a time when the idea of evolution had encouraged people to think that the prospects for mankind would always become brighter and brighter as the years went by. These hopes were completely dashed by the death and destruction of four years of terrible war. But instead of people turning back to God, the trend away from religion grew stronger. Even old ministers were affected. How tragic for this man to confess, towards the end of his days, that he did not know what he believed!

With the apostle Paul it was so different. Though he knew that he would be led out, before long, to meet a Roman executioner, he could speak with confidence in the face of death. "I am not ashamed," he wrote, "for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which

I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12). Even on the day of judgement his soul would be safe.

What did the old minister understand by the statement, “Jesus lives”? It is difficult to say. Did he believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He took the guilt of multitudes of sinners and died in their place so that they could be forgiven? Did he believe that Jesus actually rose again from the dead on the third day, that He really went up to heaven 40 days later, that He has all power now in heaven and earth, and that He will return at the end of the world to judge everyone who has ever lived? I doubt he did.

But Paul believed it all. He believed everything revealed in the Bible. And he had a clear message to declare to every group of his fellow sinners whom he ever addressed. The fact that Jesus was now alive was central to Paul’s thinking. He knew that the Saviour would always be with him when he was preaching, because He had promised: “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth . . . and, lo, I am with you alway” (Matthew 28:18). This is the source of power for all true ministers: Jesus Christ is with them. So they can look to Him to work in the heart of their hearers by the Holy Spirit. And that is what happened as Paul travelled around preaching the gospel which Christ had entrusted to him; many sinners were born again and went on through the rest of their lives believing the truths which they had first grasped through Paul’s ministry. He was indeed a true minister of Christ.

So was John Bunyan, a faithful preacher in the English town of Bedford, who had to endure long periods in prison because he wanted to stay faithful to his Master in heaven. He too knew what he believed and trusted Christ to take good care of him. Bunyan is best known as the author of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, which pictures Christian, a true believer, on his way to heaven.

At one stage on his journey, Christian comes to Interpreter’s house (Interpreter represents the Holy Spirit). Bunyan describes the scene: “Then said Interpreter, Come in; I will show thee that which will be profitable to thee. So he commanded his man [his servant] to light the candle, and bid Christian follow him; so he had him into a private room, and bid his man open a door; the which when he had done, Christian saw the picture of a very grave person hang up against the wall.”

This serious person was a preacher, and Bunyan describes the picture on the wall: “He had eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written upon his lips, the world was behind his back; he stood as if he pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over his head”. Bunyan is highlighting some important points about the way a faithful minister lives and carries out his duties.

First, his eyes are directed up to heaven. This shows that the preacher

depends on his Master in heaven for a blessing on his work and that he pleads with God in prayer for that blessing.

Second, in his hand is the best of books, the Bible. It is out of the Bible that the preacher takes his message; everything he believes must be found in that best of all books.

Third, the law of truth is written on his lips. So everything he says, as he preaches, must be based on the truth of Scripture. What God has revealed in the Bible is truth, and the faithful preacher knows that he can find no religious truth anywhere else.

Fourth, the world is behind his back. The faithful preacher is on his way to heaven; he has turned his back on the world and its distractions, its sins and its entertainments.

Fifth, he is pleading with men. It is the duty of every minister to plead with his hearers to flee from the wrath to come and to lay hold on eternal life.

Sixth, a golden crown hangs over his head. In heaven there is a reward which God will give to every faithful minister.

So, after Christian asked, "What means this?" Interpreter told him, "Whereas thou seest him with his eyes lift up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, and the law of truth writ on his lips: it is to show thee that his work is to know and unfold dark things to sinners, even as also thou seest him stand as if he pleaded with men. And whereas thou seest the world as cast behind him, and that a crown hangs over his head, that is to show thee that, slighting and despising the things that are present, for the love that he hath to his Master's service, he is sure, in the world that comes next, to have glory for his reward."

Interpreter went on: "The man whose picture this is, is the only man whom the Lord of the place whither thou art going hath authorised to be thy guide in all difficult places thou mayest meet with in the way. Wherefore take good heed to what I have showed thee, and bear well in thy mind what thou hast seen, lest in thy journey thou meet with some that pretend to lead thee right, but their way goes down to death."

How thankful you should be if you have a minister such as Bunyan described, a man who believes the Bible with his whole heart. You should listen to him carefully and prayerfully as he points you to Christ as the only Saviour, as he shows you the way to heaven and warns you about the difficult places that you will come across as you pass through this world. But make sure you do not listen to those who "pretend to lead" you in the right direction but whose "way goes down to death". And if you really know what it is to pray, be earnest in asking God to bless the work of all true ministers, to help them keep their backs to the world; and ask Him to send out many others.

# “One More Exact Translation”

## 1. The Beginning in 1604

*Matthew Vogan*

This is the first part of a paper at this year's Youth Conference. The full title was: “One More Exact Translation of the Holy Scriptures into the English Tongue”. The subject was the work of the King James translators, and the paper marked the 400 years since the Authorised Version was first published.

When the Authorised Version was first proposed in 1604, the nation was experiencing similar concerns to those of our own day. A massive and increasing national debt in times of economic crisis combined with increasing discontent at high levels of taxation and inflation. James VI of Scotland had only just come to the throne of England and was met with a host of petitions for change. There were those against corruption and the bad handling of public finances and offices, and others for reform of parliament.

Religion also ranked among the most significant of national concerns. There was the threat of home-grown religious terrorism. Roman Catholics made up over 15% of the population and some, under Jesuit leadership, were inclined to use force if they could not obtain their demands through persuasion – thus the Gunpowder Plot of 1605.

The Puritans formed a sizeable minority within the Church of England and presented their requests for reform, according to the Scriptures, to King James in the Millenary Petition, signed by 1000 ministers (10% of the total ministry of the Church of England). They wanted to abolish any doctrines and practices that tended towards Romanism and particularly requested that the Apocrypha be not read in church, that proper Church discipline be maintained and that the Sabbath be honoured properly. In view of the appalling ignorance of biblical truth that prevailed, they sought a greater emphasis upon preaching and catechising.

James called the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 in order to give these requests their due weight in discussion and to establish uniformity. In spite of being outnumbered 18 to four by the bishops, the Puritans made their case for reformation in the Church, in doctrine, worship, government, discipline and practice. As part of this, their leader, Dr John Rainolds, unexpectedly raised the need for one translation only of the Scriptures that everyone would find acceptable.

The official translation used in the Church, the Bishop's Bible of 1568, had not been so well translated as the Geneva Bible of 1560. The translators had neither the learning nor an ear for the right word which others possessed. One of the notoriously-odd renderings of the Bishop's Bible was in

Ecclesiastes 11:1: “Lay thy bread upon wet faces”, instead of, “Cast thy bread upon the waters”. Psalm 23 would not be quite the same if the Authorised Version translators had retained readings from the Bishop’s Bible such as: “He will cause me to repose myself in pasture full of grass. . . Truly, felicity and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of God for a long time.”

The Geneva Bible was highly popular among the people and used in private. But King James objected to the comments printed in the margins of the Geneva Bible, which did not always present kings and queens in the best of lights and justified resistance against them. The Puritan proposal was agreed in the following terms: “That a translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek; and this to be set out and printed without any marginal notes, and only [alone] to be used in all churches of England in time of divine service”. Hampton Court is now firmly associated with this momentous agreement to produce the Authorised Version, which was printed for the first time in 1611, exactly 400 ago.

**1. The Right Time.** The Puritan Millenary petition to James had concluded with these words: “And we say with Mordecai to Esther, ‘Who knoweth whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time?’” We can certainly trace in these events the mighty hand of God’s providence. There had been suggestions for a new revised translation previously, but they had never been adopted. The fulness of time had now arrived. During the preceding 90 years there had been various translations of the Scriptures into English. Due to the early death of William Tyndale and the lack of ability in Hebrew on the part of others, only the Geneva Bible and the Bishop’s Bible had been translated entirely from the original Hebrew as well as the Greek. It was now possible to distill all of this prayerful and painstaking labour into a permanent result. The revision could also benefit from the full range of translations into almost every other European language. The manuscripts of the Greek New Testament had also been carefully compared by men such as Theodore Beza.

Knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek languages had come to their highest point since the recovery of this knowledge at the time of the Renaissance with many scholarly editions, translations, grammars and dictionaries being published by laymen and ministers during this period. This is especially true of Hebrew. The emphasis on mastery of this language was distinctive to Britain in comparison with other countries. One writer noted that this was so much the case that unless a theologian could “understand handsomely well the Hebrew text, he is counted but a maimed, or as it were half a divine, especially in this learned age”.

There are some further reasons to conclude that this was the right time for

translation. The English language was at a point in its development where it was possible to take the best of both past and present in order to reflect accurately the key forms of the divine original. The Church of England was also largely still genuinely united around a Reformed statement of doctrine.

Roman Catholicism was also reasserting itself through the Rheims translation of the New Testament in English. This was translated from the Latin Vulgate translation rather than the original Greek and many of the words were taken directly from the Latin, which made it almost impossible to understand in places. Bizarre examples include: "Bread of proposition" (Luke 6:4), "You have reflowered" (Philippians 4:10) and "He exinanited himself" (Philippians 2:7). The Rheims translators said that it was an error to believe that the Scriptures must be translated into other languages, or that everyone should be encouraged to read them, or that they could understand them without the help of a priest. They were only producing a translation into English in order to have control over what Bible Romanists were reading and in order to counteract Protestant Bibles.

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## John Knox: His Life and Greatness

### 4. The Last Years

*Rev D W B Somersett*

The purpose of this talk at last year's Young People's Conference was to give an outline of the life of Knox (1514-1572). Last month's article focused on the years 1559-61, when Knox returned to Scotland and was used by God as the leader of the Reformation, the movement which established Scotland as a Protestant nation.

**7 Knox and Mary 1561-1567.** This period of Knox's life is very political. After the triumph of the year 1560 it comes as something of an anticlimax. Mary returned to Scotland in August 1561 determined, if possible, to re-introduce Romanism. This, together with the increasing lukewarmness of several of the nobles to the Reformed cause, led to a period of struggle in which the Church tried to build on the work of the Reformation. Mary was extremely subtle, and she deceived many who had been supporting the Reformation, but she did not deceive Knox. She was eventually imprisoned in Loch Leven Castle in June 1567 and the young James VI became king.

In 1560 Knox had become minister of St Giles' in Edinburgh, living in, or at least near, "John Knox's House" on the Royal Mile. In 1564 he remarried, to Margaret Stewart, the daughter of Lord Ochiltree. She was 17 and he was 50 and the marriage excited some comment. Here is an entertaining account of his courtship written by some Roman Catholic enemy. It gives



some idea of the absurd abuse that Knox had to live with, and which has attached to his name ever since:

“Having laid aside all fear of the pains of hell, and regarding nothing the honesty of the world, as a bond slave of the devil, being kindled with an unquenchable lust and ambition . . . he did pursue to have alliance with the honourable house of Ochiltree, of the King’s Majesty’s own blood. Riding there with a great court, on a trim gelding, not like a prophet or an old decrepit priest as he was, but like as he had been of the blood royal, with his bands of taffety fastened with golden rings and precious stones: and as is plainly reported in the country, by sorcery and witchcraft did so allure that poor gentlewoman that she could not live without him, which appears to be of great probability, she being a damsel of noble blood, and he an old decrepit creature of most base degree of any that could be found in the country.”

As a matter of fact, it was a very happy marriage and they had three daughters, one of whom became the wife of the celebrated minister, John Welsh of Ayr.

**8. The final years 1567-1572.** In October 1570, aged 56, he had a stroke which affected the left side of his brain, and he lost the use of his speech for a while. He recovered and was able to resume preaching, but he never got back his full strength. In 1571 he had to leave Edinburgh for his own safety, following an attempt on his life. He retired to St Andrews, where once again, curiously, he was preaching on Daniel as he had been at the very beginning of his ministry.

By this stage he had to walk with a stick and with a servant holding his arm, and he had to be lifted into the pulpit. In the pulpit, however, says James Melville, “in the opening up of his text, he was moderate the space of half an hour; but when he entered to application, he made me so to tremble that I could not hold a pen to write . . . he behoved to lean at the first entry [into the pulpit]; but ere he had done with his sermon he was so active and vigorous that he was like to ding the pulpit in blads [break it in pieces] and fly out of it”.

He returned to Edinburgh in August 1572 but his health was rapidly declining. His final sermon, on November 9, was at the admission of James Lawson, his successor as minister of St Giles’. During the next fortnight he had many visitors to his bedside. One particular temptation he had at this time was to congratulate himself on all that he had done:

“A gentlewoman, and one that feared God, desiring him to praise God for that that he had been, and so began as it were to praise him; he said ‘Tongue, tongue, lady; the flesh of itself is over-proud, and needs no means to esteem the self;’ and there protested that he did only claim the free mercy of God,

showed unto mankind in the blood of His dear Son Jesus Christ . . . and willed her never to puff up flesh, which of itself was too prone and ready to do the same without any other provocation; and so exhorted her unto humility and to cast away pride; and desired her to remember the words of a woman spoken to her long ago, saying, ‘Lady, Lady, the black one has never yet tramped upon your foot’”.

Every day he had someone read to him Isaiah 53 and John 17, which was “the place where he first cast anchor”, and also Calvin’s sermons on Ephesians in French. He died on Monday, 24 November 1572, at the early age of 58, and his body was buried in the graveyard behind St Giles’. This graveyard was destroyed when Parliament House was built in 1633, but a stone was set approximately marking his grave. This was removed by the Edinburgh Council in the 1960s, so his place of burial is now wholly unmarked.

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*For Junior Readers*

## Hedley Vicars’ Flag

Hedley Vicars was an officer in the British Army in the 1800s. His father had died when he was only 13 years old. His last prayer for young Hedley, as he laid his hands on the boy’s head, was that he would “be a good soldier of Jesus Christ”. The years passed and Hedley trained to be an army officer. He was careless about his soul and rarely, if ever, looked at the little Bible his mother had given him before he left home. But, after one of his young companions died suddenly, he became more serious. He realised he was not ready if that were to happen to him.

He began to read his Bible and to attend church. But still he had no peace – until he opened a Bible one day while waiting for a fellow officer. He was struck by the words which met his eye: “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). As he thought about these wonderful words and prayed over them, he felt that the guilt of his past life was, for Christ’s sake, blotted out for ever.

To be a Christian in the army and to stand up for religion in the barracks would be no easy matter. He knew he would be mocked, but he decided to be upfront about it. He bought a good-sized Bible that nobody could miss and placed it open on his table in the barracks. This led to various sneers and unkind comments.

Then one of his fellow officers came in and saw the Bible. He exclaimed, “Hullo, Vicars. Turned Methodist?” (The word *Methodist* was used to mock anyone who was serious about religion.) To this Hedley bravely replied,

“That is my flag, and by the grace of God I hope to be true to it as long as I live.”

What about you? Do you try to hide your religion? Do you pretend in front of your friends that you do not go to church? I hope not! You can pray that the Lord will help you to be brave and to stand up for what is right. Stand by the Bible and seek God’s help to live by what it says.

Hedley Vicars did not live many years after this. He was sent to fight in the Crimean War (then in the south of Russia, by the Black Sea). He was shot and killed in 1855, when he was only 29. He was buried far from home, in the Crimea. In the last letter he wrote before he died, he declared, “In Jesus I find all I want of happiness or enjoyment”. Should you not pray that you too would experience this?

*J van Kralingen*

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*For Younger Readers*

## God Is in Control

There was once a man in Frankfurt, a city in Germany, who had a lot of money. But, as Jesus said about another rich man, he was “not rich toward God”.

This man had made many journeys on the sea. And several times his ship sank. But each time he was saved; God was good to him.

But did he thank God for saving him? No, he did not want to think about God; he did not want to speak about God.

Yet he was not happy. He had plenty money; so he could buy everything he wanted. But he often felt quite restless. He seemed to know he needed something he did not have.

One evening he picked up his Bible and began to read it. As he read, some verses caught his attention and he started to think about them. But he did not know what this part of the Bible meant. “Who can explain it to me?” he asked himself.

The obvious answer was to go and ask one of the ministers in the city: What do these verses mean? But he did not know any of the ministers. That was probably his own fault, because he did not want any minister to visit him. But now it was different; he would be very glad to see a minister in his house.

Perhaps you ask, Could he not have gone to visit one of the ministers? I am sure he could have done so; surely no minister

would have turned him away. Perhaps the real reason was that he was ashamed to visit a minister.

The rich man thought about one minister that everybody knew. But he said to himself: "He does not know me". So the man thought he could not go to this minister to ask him to explain his difficulty.

Just then the man's door bell rang. He opened the door, and standing in front of him was the minister he was thinking about. The man cried out: "Heaven sends you to me; come, come".

The minister was surprised to hear him speak like this. He went inside and asked the man why he spoke as he did.

The man answered, "I was just thinking that, if I could see you, you could explain this part of the Bible to me".

The minister did as he was asked. He explained the verses that the man could not understand. But the minister did not stop there. He went on to speak about Jesus and how sinners can be saved. He spoke about Jesus as "the way, the truth, and the life". Do you remember that Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6)?

God blessed the minister's words. The man believed on Jesus and became a true Christian. Now he was rich toward God.

But why did the minister come to the man's house? It was God who sent him – just like the man said, "Heaven sends you to me".

The minister was going to visit a friend on the same street. But without thinking, he went to the wrong door. Inside that door, there was a man who needed to see a minister. God knew that, and sent the minister to help him.

God is in control of everything. He even controls people's mistakes. He can bring good out of everything.

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## The Right Clothes

**H**ave you ever seen people wearing clothes which were unsuitable for an event – perhaps for a funeral or a wedding? How do you think they felt when they realised that the clothes they were wearing were not suitable for the occasion?

One Tuesday, I went to court. The judge I saw is very particular about the

way that lawyers dress. Especially he expects male lawyers to wear a suitable tie. If the tie is bright or shiny or is too colourful, the judge will not treat the lawyer well during the hearing.

While waiting to see the judge, I noted that all but one of the male lawyers wore an appropriate tie. He realised this just in time and asked to borrow my tie. All the other lawyers knew already that the judge is very particular about how they dress and they were very careful to wear clothes that he would approve of.

When we die, we will all face a judge who will care about the clothes we are wearing. The judgement will be based on the clothes we are wearing. Only those who wear the right clothes will be approved; only they will be safe. That judge is the Lord Jesus Christ and the right clothing is the white robe of Christ's righteousness. Have we obtained this white robe from Him by faith through grace?

*BT*

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## Daniel Rowlands

### 6. Resting Solely on a Crucified Saviour

Daniel Rowlands began his ministry in 1733 at Llangeitho in Wales. After he was converted, crowds of people flocked to hear him. The previous article, in May, told about the effects of Rowlands' preaching on Thomas Charles, a young man who was later to become a noted minister himself. This is the final article in the series.

Rowlands was highly respected in Wales. Many men might have become proud as, over the years, they saw great crowds of people coming to hear them again and again. Not so Rowlands. God kept him humble and dependent on Himself. As he watched large numbers of people gathering to listen to him preach, he might cry out: "May the Lord have mercy upon me, poor worm, and sinful dust and ashes!"

The Countess of Huntingdon was a good woman who did much to support godly preachers in Rowlands' time. She once sent a man to paint his picture. Normally only very important people could expect to have their portrait painted and Rowlands felt disturbed at the thought.

"Why is it you refuse?" asked the painter.

"Why?" he replied, "I am only a lump of clay like yourself." Rowlands most certainly did not feel important. He was truly a humble man.

But at last Rowlands was persuaded to agree. Yet, as the painter went on with his work, the minister kept muttering to himself: "Alas! Alas! Drawing the portrait of an old sinner!" He did not feel that it was quite right for him to accept an honour such as this.

Rowlands did not have much money to live on. At one time he was offered a church in North Wales where he would have been well paid. He was inclined to go there but his friends tried to persuade him to stay in Llangeitho. But it was a godly old widow who really touched his heart, when she asked him: "Mr Rowlands, what shall the poor old widow do for the bread of life if you go away?" He decided to stay where he was and go on preaching the good news about Jesus Christ to the poor old widow and the others who gathered to hear him.

He was well known for his kindness to young preachers. One day a young man named Robert Roberts came to preach at Llangeitho. The young preacher was nervous at the thought of preaching in front of Rowlands. But the older man considerably kept himself well out of sight, in the pew where he was sitting. After the service was over, Rowlands called Roberts into his parlour and told him: "Well, my boy, I heard you preaching and I understand that your great Master has taken you as a little apprentice in the great work of the gospel. Give to Him all the glory; keep not a whit for yourself."

No great praise here! But Rowlands no doubt realised that if he praised Roberts' sermon, the young man might be inclined to take some glory to himself. But, with the good advice, there was some encouragement. Rowlands seems to have been saying that, as he listened to the sermon, he could see that the preacher was someone whom Christ, the Master of the Church, had sent out. Roberts had just started in the work of the gospel; so he was as yet only an "apprentice" preacher.

Rowlands was a man of prayer. He often spent the whole of a Saturday night in his study crying to the Lord for His help in the work of the Sabbath. One day he was to preach in a church on the opposite side of the valley to his home. As they stood outside the church, people could see Rowlands leaving home. Then they lost sight of him and, as he did not re-appear, some of them went to look for him when the time for the service came. They found him on his knees in a wood. When he got up, he told them: "It was a happy meeting I had there". After he had thus met God, no one should have been surprised to hear Rowlands preaching with special power.

God gave Rowlands good health until the very end of his life. Otherwise the preacher would never have been able to carry out the great work which his Master had given him to do. In fact Rowlands always said that he wanted to die when his usefulness was over. That is what happened. He preached on the very last Sabbath of his life. In one of his last sermons he told the people: "I am now near leaving you; I am now going to be taken away from you. I am not tired of the work, but I am tired in the work. I find some indication that my heavenly Father is going to deliver me from my labours and bring me

to my everlasting rest. But I hope that He will continue to you His gracious presence after I am gone.”

Before the next Sabbath came round Rowlands had indeed gone. He told his family: “I have nothing to say about my acceptance with God but what I have said at all times. I die as a poor sinner, resting solely and altogether upon the merits of a crucified Saviour.” On the Friday of that week he became seriously ill and, on the next day, 16 October 1790, he died. His work was over and he passed into heaven to receive his eternal reward – solely and altogether because of the finished work of Jesus Christ. He was 76 years old.

The next day was a communion Sabbath, and large crowds gathered – no doubt expecting to listen to the great Daniel Rowlands preach the same gospel that they had so often heard him proclaim. But his work was finished and, with great sadness, they returned to their own villages carrying the distressing news that the faithful preacher whom so many people respected had left this world. Yet it was a blessed event for Rowlands; he entered his eternal rest. Never again would he be disturbed at the thought of himself as a sinner; he was now perfectly holy.

For many years it did not prove possible to put up a monument to this great preacher. An old deacon remarked that if Daniel Rowlands had been a soldier and had slain many thousands in battle – as many thousands as had been converted through his ministry – a monument would have been erected to his memory without any difficulty. But it did not matter much; his real memorial lay in the large number of people who profited from his preaching.

When a memorial was eventually put up – a marble statue of Rowlands with an open Bible in his hand, as if preaching to a congregation – his own words were carved in its base: “O heaven, heaven, heaven! Thy mansions would have been empty enough if Zion here below did not rear up children for thee.” Rowlands was thinking of the duty of the church in this world to preach the gospel because, if the Church does not do so, sinners will not be ready to go to heaven when they die.

Rowlands grew up in a time when much of the Church in Wales was careless about the gospel, and multitudes of sinners lived and died without hearing about the way of salvation. We live in a time when much of the Church, not only in Wales but in most parts of the world, is careless about the gospel. How much we who have the gospel should value our privileges and how earnestly we should pray that God would bless to our souls the truth about Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners like us. And how earnestly God’s children should pray that He would so transform His Church that the pure gospel would be preached everywhere!

## Sin Will Surely Be Punished

*W S Plumer*

Taken, with editing, from *Short Sermons for the People*. Plumer was a well-known minister in America. The text for this sermon was: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17).

**F**orgetting God is the cause of all the wickedness of the wicked. To forget Him is itself wickedness. All the wicked forget God, and all that forget God are wicked.

Just because there are many wicked people, it will not save them from ruin. Those who have gone with a multitude to do evil shall go with a multitude to suffer punishment. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished" (Proverbs 11:21). Even if all the nations forget God, it will not make it safe to forget Him. Numbers cannot save. Indeed, the more who engage in sin, the more God is provoked.

To be turned into hell is to be banished from God, shut out from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. It is to be left in utter darkness and despair and made to endure His wrath for ever. It is very clear that this dreadful doom awaits all who die in sin.

1. Every wicked man daily condemns himself to hell. He does so by laying down rules for others while ignoring God's commands. When someone wrongs his good name, or tramples on any of his rights, he expects the matter to be put right. But does he confess, or even try to put right, the wrongs he has done to God? The wicked man lays down rules for Christians, but does not observe them himself. These rules are often good and scriptural, but the wicked man does not conform to them. He expects others to be meek and humble, but he is proud and self-righteous. He demands respect from others, but he shows none to God. He expects others to respect him, but he does not care about God's honour in the world. He condemns anyone to whom he has done a small favour for not thanking him, but he does not condemn himself when he refuses to thank God for countless favours. All God will need to say to such a person is: "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant" (Luke 19:22).

2. Every man dooms himself to hell when he rejects the gospel. When someone says, I do not want to have Christ for my Saviour, he almost says, I entrust myself to death – for there is life in no one else. "He that believeth not shall be damned." When the Jews at Antioch rejected Christ, then Paul and Barnabas said, "Seeing ye put it far from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). All the eternal Judge will need to do in such cases is to confirm the sentence which



the sinner has passed on himself and to turn away all His mercies from him. Then the sinner will be in hell.

3. The wicked love all that makes hell so dreadful to a holy mind. In that world of woe sin abounds. Well, here the wicked draw iniquity with a cart rope; they are greedy for it. The sinner hates God in this life; in hell all hate Him. Here unbelief reigns; in hell no one relies on Christ. Here the wicked harden their hearts; in hell there is no true repentance. Here the wicked shun the society of saints and seek the company of God's enemies; in hell there are no holy people to annoy them; all there are of one mind. Thus the wicked are fit for hell; they are fit for nowhere else. A good, wise God will treat them accordingly. Everyone will go "to his own place" – the place he is fit for. All who are fit for heaven will go to heaven; all who are fit for hell will be turned into it. The vessels of mercy are prepared for glory; the vessels of wrath are fitted to destruction (Romans 9:22).

4. Such is the dreadful nature of sin, and such are its dreadful effects on man, that nothing can be done with the wicked but to turn them into hell. God has given us a whole chapter on this awful subject: "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, what is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work, or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work? Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work: how much less shall it be meet yet for any work, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned! Therefore thus saith the Lord God, As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Ezekiel 15:1-6). The reasoning is this: if a vine does not bring forth good fruit, it is of no use except for a fire. And if sinners die in their sins, they cannot glorify God's grace, for they have rejected it. The only use for them is to turn them into hell. Their "end is to be burned" (Hebrews 6:8).

5. Those who take all the steps necessary for some result may expect to see it. He who is lazy enough and wasteful enough will surely become poor. So the wicked are careless enough, unthankful enough, sinful enough and hardened enough to be undone for ever. The sinner takes no better care of his soul than the drunkard of his body. He who follows down the Mississippi will surely fall into the Gulf of Mexico. And he who is borne along by the current of his depravity will find himself in the gulf of despair. The broad road leads to destruction, nowhere else. Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption."

6. The kinder God is, the viler the wicked are. They pervert everything.

Do they not receive their good things here? When God gives them health, they abuse it by ignoring Him. If he sends them prosperity, they say they shall never be moved. Thus "the prosperity of fools shall destroy them" (Proverbs 1:32). "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things," will be the just and awful answer to many a man, who now lives in ease and forgets God. Present success often points to a dreadful doom. "When . . . all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever" (Psalm 92:7).

7. This dreadful end might be avoided if the wicked would listen to warnings. But they are so stubborn that afflictions only convert them into murmurers. Sermons leave them with greater guilt on their souls. They refuse every offer of saving help from God. He invites them to reason with Him, but they will not listen. Although Jesus Christ is set forth before them evidently crucified and their own needs show them they ought to pray, they never call to the Lord Jesus in true faith. What course is left to God but to cut down those who cumber the ground; to cast off those who have finally rejected Him, who have judged themselves unworthy of eternal life?

8. The peace and safety of holy men and angels require the wicked to be shut up in prison. Here they tempt and torment the Church of God. When they have laid snares for the godly and caught them with their wiles, they have shouted for joy. A good and strong government will not allow wrongdoers to roam at large. If the wicked will not honour God willingly, they will do so reluctantly. "The Lord hath made all things for Himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Proverbs 16:4). All the cunning and power of the ungodly shall perish, and the righteous shall all be safe.

**Lessons.** 1. The longer men continue in sin and resist God's calls, the greater the danger that they will be undone for ever. Good influences lose their power, and evil influences grow stronger, every day men resist God's Spirit and grace. The more anyone sins, the easier it is to sin and the greater is the force of evil habits on the soul. The longer one lives in sin, the less time one has to repent and to prepare for eternity. If you are 20 and are still in love with sin, you have five whole years less to prepare to meet God than you had at 15, and you have five years more of sinning to repent of. You have a greater work to do and less time to do it in.

2. The only wise thing for you to do is to make peace with God at once. This can be done through Jesus Christ, who is our peace. Everyone who flies to Christ for refuge shall have it. Vengeance shall not overtake him. Eternal mercy will take him to its bosom, and lavish riches upon him. If he who does not provide for his own household is worse than an infidel, what shall we think of him who does not provide for his own soul?

# Looking Around Us

## “Free Money”

Some weeks ago, dozens of cash machines in Sydney, Australia, were paying out too much money. Word got round that some of the Commonwealth Bank’s cash machines were giving out, so it was said, “free money”, and queues began to form as people flocked to take advantage of the mistake. So the BBC website asked, “If you take money under these circumstances, what is the correct course of action, legally and morally?” The pity was: all the answers ignored God’s mind on the matter.

The Bank said afterwards that it had a correct record of all the money taken out and would be pursuing the money – although there would be no problem if you had plenty money in your account. Then if you asked for \$100 and were given \$200, you would simply have \$200 less in your account. The problem arises when you have, say, \$500 in the bank and ask for \$400; then, if you are given \$800, you have \$300 in your hand which does not rightly belong to you.

Certainly in the UK the law is clear: if you take more money than you have a right to, it is theft. So a lawyer advises: “The best course of action in terms of the law is to report it straight away to the bank”. But in 2003, a family of four in Coventry made several visits to a cash machine which was not working properly. Between them they took out £134 410, and spent the money on a new car and on flights to Jamaica. Three of them were convicted and sentenced to prison. It looked like free money, but it was not.

Banks do not always take a hard line against those who receive smaller amounts of money. In January, some people in Dundee took advantage of a cash machine paying out double what they asked for; the machine’s operator told them by that they would not have to return the extra money. But the operator added that it was up to individuals’ consciences.

On what basis were their consciences expected to operate. Probably on people’s general sense that it is wrong to take what is not yours. Simon Rippon of the Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics in Oxford stated that, “morally speaking, you are doing something wrong, stealing, if you take the money”, but he did not seem to offer any foundation for what he said. But there is solid authority in the Bible for his statement. In particular, there is the Eighth Commandment: “Thou shalt not steal”, where God is telling us that it is wrong for us to take what we have no right to take.

But Tim Chappell, the Director of the Open University’s Ethics Centre took a line which casts doubt on the quality of the Centre’s ethics. He looked

on cash-machine faults as providing “a windfall for the customers. . . . The bankers get plenty of free lunches. Why shouldn’t their customers too?”

It is very difficult to justify the enormous salaries paid to some bankers, however great their responsibilities and their abilities, but one wrong cannot justify another. In everything we do, we must remember that “we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive [the consequences of] the things done in his body” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

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*John Newton*

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