



*Understanding
the first Slovene book,
Trubar's Catechism*



Discover Trubar's Spiritual Treasure

“Father, brother and prophet
to every Slovene” - Andrej Perhar

Primož Trubar (1508-1586) was the author and publisher of the first Slovene books, he synthesized various Slovene dialects into the Slovene literary language, he founded the first Slovene-language schools and the first libraries in Slovenia, he first used the term “Slovenes” about the people group spread across three Austrian provinces, and he co-founded the world’s first Bible Society that published in Slovene, Croatian, Italian and other languages.

Sadly, he is largely unknown outside of Slovenia and southern Germany, where he was exiled the last half of his life. The Trubar Forum seeks to inform Slovenes and the world about this unparalleled historical figure and the message he so passionately taught.

Learn more at www.trubarforum.si/eng

1. Trubar's greatest desire

What if I found out that my wife was pregnant and that I was going to die of cancer before my daughter was born? What would I say if I made a video recording for my daughter? The first thing. What would you say? “I love you.” But then what? Have you heard of Trubar? Would you like to know what Trubar’s first sentence was to the Slovenes? First page, first line, says this: “For all Slovenes I ask grace, peace, mercy and the true knowledge of God through Jesus Christ.” What if Trubar is right? What if there is more to your life than meets the eye?

Nick Vujicic, Ljubljana, April 9, 2011

How would you answer that question about the dying father? What would be the things you would want to communicate to your unborn child that you will never meet? What are the most important things that your child needs to know?

.....

.....

.....

The 1500’s were desperate times in Slovenia. There were plenty of urgent reasons to cry out to God:

- Ottoman Turkish armies repeatedly attacked and burned villages
- The black plague killed 30-60% of Europe’s population, creating a series of religious, social and economic upheavals
- Slovene peasants were oppressed by Austrian overlords
- Numerous times Slovene peasants revolted and were cruelly suppressed

What was Trubar’s first prayer, his first wish for the Slovenes in the first Slovene book? What did he say was their greatest need?

“For all Slovenes I ask grace, peace, mercy and the true knowledge of God through Jesus Christ.”

.....

.....

Grace Receiving something that I didn’t earn.

Where do you see grace lacking in your culture? In what specific areas?

.....

.....

It may be difficult to think about receiving a fantastic gift that you did not earn. Many would hesitate to even take it.

Do you remember the story of the two thieves crucified with Jesus? Read the story in Luke 23:

³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” ⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³ Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

What did this thief do to gain salvation? What good deeds did he do to earn Jesus’ forgiveness if he only had hours to live? What other good things could he do before he died?

.....

.....

.....

Peace Peace with God, peace with others, peace within. In Hebrew the word “Shalom” has the idea of all-around well-being.

Where do you see peace lacking in our world today? In yourself?

.....

.....

What do you worry about? What concerns you?

.....
.....

Philippians 4 says:

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

According to this verse, is it possible to not worry, to experience peace even in difficult times?

.....
.....
.....

Mercy Not receiving the punishment I deserve.

What are examples of mercy that have touched you from history, a story, a book or movie? When have you experienced mercy in your own life?

.....
.....
.....

It's like the story Jesus told in Matthew 18:

²³ "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. ²⁵ Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. ²⁶ "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷ The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

How would you describe your thankfulness if you were shown such amazing mercy for such a massive debt?

.....
.....
.....

The True Knowledge of God

The true knowledge of God is Trubar's foundational desire for Slovenes. He understood that grace, peace and mercy are the results of a right understanding of God, a right relationship with God. What is that relationship based on? We know we have done wrong things, which the Bible calls sin. If we are sinful, how can we receive forgiveness and salvation?

Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

What can a person receive by faith that they didn't earn?

.....
.....

How would you describe a gift? Who gives it, to whom, and what are the conditions for receiving a gift?

.....
.....
.....

The Bible uses terms for salvation like being in God's family, being adopted by God, being a son (or daughter) of God.

The first sentence of the first Slovene book echoes the introduction to Paul's letters in the Bible:

*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:7)
Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. (1 Timothy 1:2)*

As you read Paul and Trubar's introductory sentences, do they seem like nice religious phrases, customary greetings or did they actually wish this for the people they were writing to?

.....
.....

This first sentence is the key idea of the first Slovene book and of Trubar's life. His desire was not simply to print the first Slovene books, to synthesize a literary language, to give Slovenes literacy or national self-awareness. His desire was for every Slovene to know God.

2. Trubar's greatest problem

According to Trubar, the biggest problem for the Slovene people in the 1500's wasn't the Austrian overlords, the attacking Turks or even the deadly plague. He knew everyone has the same basic problem no matter who you are. The problem is in the human heart. And the problem began back in the beginning.

The Catechism is ingeniously arranged to enable uneducated Slovenes in the 1500's to understand key truths from the Bible for themselves by using a variety of teaching methods.

If we look at the book thematically we see his outline:

1. **Explanation of key truths**
 - a. Creation/sin
 - b. 10 commandments
 - c. True faith: What do all Christians believe? Who is God?
 - d. Prayer: "truthful, heartfelt, friendly conversation with God"
 - e. God's word: What is God like? What state is man in before God? What has God done about this?
 - f. Sacraments: baptism and the Lord's supper
2. **Biblical evidence for these truths, including more than 60 Bible quotations about these themes.**
3. **Questions and Answers about these truths**
4. **Truth in practice: Private/public life according to the Bible (for youth, the elderly, parents, married couples, employees, employers)**
5. **Truth in songs: The first printed Slovene songs repeat the main themes again but in song form, with both text and melody.**
6. **A prayer for all Slovenes**
7. **The "Sermon on Faith," which we will look at in the next lesson**

Let's go back to the beginning of both the Bible and the Catechism.

The title of the first section of the Catechism is:

"About creation, the fall of man and the punishment of the first humans and the promise."
"Dear ones, first remember how the first two people were created and what happened to them. Moses writes about this (Genesis 1-3)."

Here are the first two verses of the first printed Slovene song which repeats the teaching from the first section (of course the English translation cannot reflect the rhyme or meter of these original songs).

Sing, sing all people,
Rejoice always!
Because of God's goodness
always give thanks to God.
God gave us his own son,
and did miraculous things with him:
memorize them in order.

With him he created the heavens
and the earth:
In heaven his family,
all good and beautiful things on earth,
man, and then woman.
And he married them
and bestowed on them all of creation
to serve them.

According to Trubar (and Genesis 1), where did heaven, earth and all good and beautiful things on earth come from?

.....

.....

.....

Human life therefore has meaning and purpose, being created by God and in His image. But something happened, as we see in the fifth verse:

Thus mankind got lost in sin,
Because he listened to the snake.
He broke God's command,
he became God's enemy,
he became evil and foolish,
the devil has authority over him
and he is accountable to death.

According to Trubar's song based on Genesis 3, what did man do and what were the effects of that sin?

.....

.....

.....

So, true knowledge of God has to do with a right relationship with God. The biggest problem isn't the plague or wars of Trubar's time, it isn't a global financial crisis or terrorism in our time. The greatest problem is in the human heart. Look at these other Bible verses that paint a very dark picture of the state of man:

~~~~~  
"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)

"But your iniquities have separated you from your God" (Isaiah 59:2)

"There is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10)

"For the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23)  
~~~~~

Since people often compare themselves to others they might think they aren't so bad, so it is important to understand what God's word says.

So, what can we do? Look at the seventh verse of the song:

But God's grace didn't want to neglect mankind so grace said in righteousness: Here is what we will do. We will give grace to mankind, save all believers with a verdict and get rid of the devil.

Then the Father said to the Son, You have to become human; you have to pay for sins so that you can oppose the devil. Because of your suffering the people who will believe on you will become blessed once again.

How would God deal with the problem of sin? How would God's relationship to man change?

.....

.....

.....

That seventh verse of the song combines the story from Genesis 3 with other verses that talk about God's salvation plan. In the Church Ordinances, Trubar mentions John 3:16 several times as "a short summary of the whole Bible."

~~~~~  
*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*  
~~~~~

How does John 3:16 reflect what Trubar said in song?

.....

.....

.....

Imagine you are a Slovene farmer living in 1550 and you hear someone singing this song, which has a total of 17 verses! You could learn a lot about who man is, who God is, what the problem of man is and what God's salvation solution is. Those in Trubar's time who read the teaching sections could learn the same foundational biblical truths in more detail and teach others through song.

The problem is sin. The solution is faith in God. But what is true faith? We'll look at how Trubar described true faith in the final lesson.

3. Trubar's greatest truth...for €1

What phrase is on the Slovene €1 coin? Stati inu obstati, or stand and withstand. Where does that phrase come from? Trubar's Catechism! Slovenes have read the phrase, have heard people quote it in many different contexts, but few have read the whole sentence the phrase is part of or read it in context:

With such faith a Christian can stand and withstand in troubles and temptations, and resist the unbelief that is in our flesh.

Thus true faith ... not only knows and believes that God exists, but also personally knows the true God ... This person also knows what God's will is for people and firmly believes God's word.

What does the phrase "stand and withstand" mean to Trubar in context?

.....

.....

We all have troubles and temptations throughout our lives.

What were your troubles and temptations when you were in elementary school?

.....

.....

.....

What are your troubles and temptations today?

.....

.....

.....

How did you deal with those problems back then and how do you deal with them now?

.....

.....

.....

We all have doubts. Most people believe there is a god or some higher spiritual power.

Has there been a time in your life, maybe because of difficult circumstances, when you doubted God existed? Or even if you believed there is a God, have you doubted that He is good, that he has your best interests in mind?

.....

.....

.....

What is Trubar saying to us? How can we truly stand and withstand in troubles and temptations and when we doubt?

.....

.....

Faith is a word many people use today in a variety of settings. There are many definitions of faith. What was Trubar's definition? The last section of the Catechism is the "Sermon on Faith". The concept of true faith and the phrase "stand and withstand" are central to Trubar's life's message as the introduction to the sermon clearly says:

Primož Trubar frequently preached this sermon and all of his sermons are connected with it, they are all along the same lines and so in agreement with it.

Here is part of what Trubar wrote about faith:

But true faith, which Christ speaks about everywhere in the gospels and which saint Paul, the apostles and prophets write about, is possessed only by one who not only knows and believes that God exists, but also personally knows the true God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the faith by which a person receives the forgiveness of sins and by which he will be made godly and righteous before God, so that he can come into heaven. This person also knows what God's will is for people and firmly believes God's word.

Where did Trubar's definition of faith come from? What does this faith do for a person?

.....

.....

Look at the phrase, "who not only knows and believes that God exists".

Do you think most people around the world believe that there is a god? Is that faith enough to be saved, according to Trubar? What does it mean to "know" someone? What words come to mind?

.....

.....

Re-read Trubar's description of true faith. Re-read the "stand and withstand" sentence.

What does it take to stand and withstand in troubles and temptations according to Trubar? How can a person receive "the forgiveness of sins and by which he will be made godly and righteous before God, so that he can come into heaven."?

.....

.....

The paragraph right before the "stand and withstand" sentence talks about faith, doubt and the nature of God:

So in these troubles we need true faith. This faith makes us rely firmly and solely on God's simple promise, and keep his words until death, and willingly and humbly wait for what God has promised us. It makes us believe without any doubt that the time will certainly come when God will fulfill his word and his promise, for God is true and almighty: with him nothing is impossible – what he wants to do, he can do (see Luke 1:37; Mark 9:23; Psalm 115:3).

What is true faith based on? How does Trubar describe proper trust in God and God's word?

.....

.....

With such faith a Christian can stand and withstand in troubles and temptations, and resist the unbelief that is in our flesh.

Trubar says there is a personal God who created the world, who wants to be intimately involved in our lives, who has a plan for each of us; how could that affect the two areas Trubar talks about:

...when we face troubles and temptations?

.....

.....

...and when we begin to doubt?

.....

.....

Do you have the true knowledge of God through Jesus Christ? In other words, do you know God personally? Are you sure you have the faith, that "not only knows and believes that God exists, but also personally knows the true God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit."?

If you say yes, what is the basis for your relationship with God? Is that what the Bible and Trubar say is the basis for a relationship with God? If you say yes, how is your relationship with God growing?

Prayer is key for growing in personal relationship with God. Remember, Trubar described prayer as *“truthful, heartfelt, friendly conversation with God.”* In prayer, admit your need, “I am a sinner.” Confess your sin and turn away from your sin. Believe that Jesus died for you on the cross and rose from the grave. Receive Jesus in prayer by faith into your life as both Savior and Lord. Place your faith in the one true God. Cultivate a personal relationship with him, a *true knowledge of God.*

Trubar deserves more than recognition of his literary accomplishments because his work in the Slovene language, literacy, writing and publishing were not ends in themselves, but means to a greater goal. His deep desire and prayer was that his beloved Slovenes and all peoples would have a true, personal knowledge of God.

Compiled by Todd Hunnicutt for the Trubar Forum (Združenje Trubarjev Forum).

Bible texts for the English version of this booklet are from the New International Version. THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION® NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Quotations from the Catechism are from *“The Faith of Primož Trubar”* or translated directly from *Katekizem / Abecednik*, published in 2011 by the Trubar Forum.

“The Faith of Primož Trubar,” the *“Sermon on Faith”* section from Trubar’s Catechism, is available in English, German and Esperanto.

This guide, *Discover Trubar’s Spiritual Treasure*, is also available in Slovene, German and Esperanto.

Other information is available in various languages at www.trubarforum.si/eng



ZDRUŽENJE
TRUBARJEV
FORUM

www.primoztrubar.si



www.zazivi-zivljenje.si