



AND Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, *3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. 6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* (Matthew 18:2-6)

During my years of service as a Christian and minister, I have received much understanding of the principles of life set forth in Holy Scripture. Much of what I have come to know with certain and absolute understanding was opened to me by the writings of the old masters of faith whose writings taught not opinion but expressed clarity of Holy Scriptures. They stated nothing as conjecture, but relied upon biblical proofs for their arguments. Much like the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion that summarize our doctrine and worship in the English Reformed Faith, each point is bolstered by biblical proofs that confirm their veracity in the Scriptures.

Today, we are bombarded with all manner of abstruse theological arguments that are as difficult to follow as a medical journal written in Latin and delivered to the common folk of Burma. Many religious nearly worship the edicts of Oxford and Cambridge and regard their 'interpretation' of spiritual things on a par with the Bible itself. The institution has replaced its Maker. In the profuse writings of the Oxford adherents one can almost hear their thoughts expressed in nasalized Oxford accents. The simplicity of understanding and truth of Scripture is inundated by a profusion of terms and codes made to cause the points of the writer to be buried someplace beneath the rhetoric. This seems to be even intentional in order to make the opinions and imagination of man to be superior to Holy Writ. It becomes impossible to nail the new theorists down on any point because one cannot distinguish exactly what point they are trying to make.

These historical revisionists are delighted at any re-discovery of ancient texts that confutes the text our ancient fathers ruled to be canonical. With such discovery, any text that weakens the text is heralded; and any that is forceful enough to confirm our Received

Text is cast aside. Intellectualism has replaced the simple message of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These preppies seem enamored by the gothic. They imagine themselves sitting about in ancient dust-covered libraries in smoking robes and wine glasses contemplating, more deeply in their stupor, the meaning of the Scriptures (which, to them, never mean what they simply state).

The Gospel should never be relegated to the street language of the brothel, nor elevated beyond comprehension to the language of the presumed 'alt-theologians' so prevalent today by men who seek arguments infinitum but seldom seemed burdened to *'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'* These armchair theologians are more concerned with prideful intellectual pedigree than with down-to-earth preaching and teaching. Frankly, they are more disgusting to me than an enemy openly flying his colors at the gate. Those preppies are inside the gate where their treason can be far more damaging. *"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."*

In the Reformed faith of the English Reformation, we see the great damage done by the Oxford Movement of the nineteenth century led by men such as John Henry Newman – a black-robed traitor to Christ. Do we have the naiveté to presume that such destructive deception has suddenly ceased emanating from that former bastion of reformed faith? At Oxford of our day, are biblical principles of marriage and ministry still highly regarded? Not at all – they are shunned!

Suppose the ministerial imposters of our day gave up their charms of delusion and returned to the simplicity of Christ in conveying His Gospel to the people? What a great step of ministerial redemption that would mean! Christ taught by simply explaining His message in simple, but dignified, tones. He did not speculate, because the Word He represented was not subject to speculation. His Word was Truth – PERIOD. Why can we not understand that? On the one hand, we profess to bring the Words of Holy Scriptures down to the gutter level so all who love the gutter life will understand without feeling the need to change; and on the other hands lifting man's opinion of the Bible to such mind-boggling confusion as to render the Word completely indistinguishable from a study of birdwatching.

Perhaps the greatest danger to faith of today begins at the seminary level. Of what use can a man be as a minister when all he is taught is contrary to Scripture? We have had graduates of 'distinguished' seminaries apply to our church who were unable to point our proofs of the means of grace to the poor sinner seeking such guidance.

Allow me to give two sterling examples of the power of the Word preached in its native simplicity. In his work, *Christian Leaders of the 18th Century*, Bishop J.C. Ryle wrote of Augustus Toplady, *"A perfect orchestra contains many various instruments of music. Each of these instruments has its own merit and value; but some of them are curiously unlike others. Some of them are dependent on a player's breath, and some on his skill of hand. Some of them are large, and some of them are small. Some of them produce very gentle sounds, and some of them very loud. But all of them are useful in their place and way. Composers like Handel, and Mozart, and Mendelssohn, find work for all. There is work for the flageolet as well as for the trumpet, and work for the violoncello as well as for the organ. Separately and alone, some of the instruments may appear harsh and unpleasant. Combined together and properly played, they fill the ear with one mighty volume of harmonious sounds. Thoughts such as these come across my mind when I survey the spiritual champions of England a hundred years ago. I see among the leaders of religious revival in that day, men of singularly varied characteristics. They were each in their way eminent instruments for good in the hands of the Holy Ghost. From each of them sounded forth the word of God throughout the land, with no uncertain sound. Yet some of these good men were strangely*

compounded, peculiarly constituted, and oddly framed. And to none, does the remark apply more thoroughly than to the subject of these remarks, the well-known hymn-writer, Augustus Toplady."

Toplady was author of many hymns, one of which is Rock of Ages. It is a matter of interest that, after sitting under the sophisticated preaching of the means of grace in London, he was converted to Christ by an illiterate layman's preaching in a barn in Codrington, Ireland. Of this experience Toplady writes in 1768: *"Strange that I, who had so long sat under the means of grace in England, should be brought nigh to God in an obscure part of Ireland, amidst a handful of God's people met together in a barn, and under the ministry of one who could hardly spell his name! Surely it was the Lord's doing, and is marvellous! The excellency of such power must be of God, and cannot be of man. The regenerating Spirit breathes not only on whom, but likewise when, where, and as he listeth."*

Another profound example of the simplicity of preaching comes to us from the revered and respected man of God, Charles Spurgeon: *"For years he remained under deep conviction of sin until one Sunday morning in January 1850 a snow storm forced him to cut short his intended journey and turn in to a Primitive Methodist chapel in Colchester. "The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last, a very thin looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. . . . He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."*

When he had managed to spin out ten minutes or so, he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, "Young man, you look very miserable." Well, I did, but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home.

He continued, "and you always will be miserable—miserable in life, and miserable in death—if you don't obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved." Then, lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, "Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin' to do but to look and live." I saw at once the way of salvation . . . I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, "Look!" What a charming word it seemed to me! Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to HIM . . ."

The pride of the intellect must be guarded against. The intellect can be used for good when it illumines the mind to truth, but too often it enlarges itself above truth and becomes its own truth.

Do not misunderstand – I am not castigating true scholarship because I believe God wants us to be men and women of inquiring minds and intelligent inquiry. But I do not approve of the kind of driveling babel that I find on many sites that seem to hold more fear for the gnat than in the camel about to be served.

A friend this morning shared a quote, apropos to the occasion, by C.S. Lewis: *"The hidden meanings people find in my writings, while ignoring their plain meaning never cease to amaze me."*

I believe the Christian can rest in complete assurance of the truth revealed in Holy Scripture and perhaps learned from Godly preaching. When I can read the works of men who rely upon Scriptural exposition in sharing the deeper beauty of the Gospel, then my faith is bolstered. But when reading the works of men whose lives do not seem to bear

any burden for reaching the lost, but rather seem to be intended to impress, I am not in the least impressed.

21 *Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.* 22 **Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.** (Isaiah 45:21-22) I believe the 'none else' must include Oxford scholars, Continental Higher Critics, and those who simply speculate on what God means but does not say.