

Call to Obedience #281
 PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org

As Little Children By Reimar Schultze

It takes two wings to fly.

“And [Jesus] said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

For over 1,000 years, most churchgoers did not know whether they were saved or lost, but since Martin Luther had his personal experience with God in Wittenberg, Germany, that has all changed. The 16th Century Reformation brought as its greatest gift to man the knowledge of how he could know that he was saved. From Luther on, the doctrine of the rebirth, or conversion, became the centerpiece of evangelical practical theology. It is hard for the evangelical Christian today to believe that a doctrine, so clearly stated in Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus (John 3), could have been lost for so long. Yet, the same can be said of the doctrine of our need to “become as little children.” Over 400 years have passed since Luther’s discovery of the first part of salvation theology, and it is only now that, perhaps, we come to the other half, beginning with the conjunction AND, which relates to the kingdom of heaven: “Except ye be converted, **and** become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (emphasis added).

Imagine that, to enter the kingdom of heaven, we must fly in with two wings. The first wing of our coming into the kingdom is conversion; the second is becoming as a little child. Without these two, we never experience God’s kingdom. As a bird with just one wing can only move in circles without ever becoming airborne, even with the most ardent thrashing of that wing, so the evangelical church has been unable to get airborne and pursue a straight course. She has produced millions of her own kind: one-winged birds, thrashing about aimlessly, going nowhere. The church has brought forth millions of converts, but most of these converts have not come into the kingdom of heaven because they have not become as little children.

We must both be converted and become as little children to enter the kingdom of heaven. The first step of conversion is a momentary event, a crisis of the soul; the second part is a process by which we live the life for which we are born! We are not just born to be born again! We were born again to walk with God, not just for the crisis but for the process of becoming sons of God. For it says, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12).

Now, the power to “become” has been unused by most born-again Christians. It has been left latent; abandoned and ignored. It is for this reason that most of those “born” have died. They have wilted or withered and fallen over for the lack of becoming. They have been like seed cast on stony ground: born, but not nourished to live on and become sons. They have then taken on a form of godliness, a semblance of the real. They have become as plastic plants: lacking fragrance and power for growth, fruit and reproduction.

It is because of this that the conjunction AND is so important—this becoming like little children. It prevents the decay, the early death of that new-born life. The second wing of becoming is just as necessary as the first wing of being converted. The absence of either will spell death. To say that the second wing of this truth is not essential to salvation is to say that a mustard seed does not have to be watered once placed into the ground or that a baby does not need to be fed once born. **Birth will always lead to death if steps for becoming are not taken im**

mediately. Oh, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Now, to become like a little child means first and foremost to come to utter dependence on God. That new life just born is now utterly and entirely dependent upon God. As it was born of God, and not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, so it can only live of God (John 1:13). The old life, the old will, the old choices will bring it back into the earth. This new life can only live by God’s choices, by God’s nourishment, by God’s light, and by God’s power. The old Self-life will destroy the new life of God if it is allowed to have its way. The old Self-life must be immediately and consistently crucified so that the becoming can take place and progress. Therefore, the power to become sons of God is the power given to become as little children—to come to utter dependence upon God.

The power to become as little children is a call to a reversal. It is no longer “I” but “Christ,” no longer my will but his will, and no longer my understanding but his that matters.

It is this childlike spirit of utter dependence that God has worked through in all the ages and that he will continue to work through in the days ahead. Abraham, after his bad experience in Egypt (Gen. 12), had finally come to childlikeness. When it was time for him and Lot to separate, Abraham knew that his understanding was not to be leaned upon ever again, no matter how simple the choices may be (Gen. 13). So, who would choose rocks over green pastures to support cattle? Can’t we make obvious clear choices with our understanding? Hasn’t God given us our brains by which we are to think and analyze and deduct?

No, Abraham had lost all confidence in his own understanding. He knew that what he did not know was like an ocean and that what he did know was like a drop of water in comparison. He knew there was much more to the unseen than to the seen. He refused to make a choice on the basis of his natural senses and intellect. He said, “Lot, you choose by those means, if you like, but I won’t.” In refusing to choose, Abraham left the choice to Divine Providence. He could have chosen to settle in the green pastures or in the rocky hills, but he said to Lot basically, “You choose the ground, but I choose God.” So Lot had no question about his choice. He used his senses and brain to settle a seemingly uncomplicated matter. Cattle thrives far better on green grass and well-watered pastures than in rocky, high territory. Lot took the plains of Jordan. He had not come to childlikeness and missed what God had for him.

History, my friend, tells us that Lot chose for the moment while Abraham chose for eternity. Lot unknowingly chose Sodom and Abraham chose Jerusalem. Lot chose destruction and shame, but Abraham chose the Incarnation, Calvary, the Resurrection, Pentecost and the Church Age. Abraham chose that which made his seed as the sand by the sea and as the stars in the heavens. Oh, my friend, let God make your choices. We need to embrace becoming as little children. Obvious choices are not obviously right. My friend, if there has ever been a call to distrust our senses and intellect, it is from this passage on Abraham and Lot.

Young man, it may seem clear-cut that you should marry that beautiful Rachel, but look at what is behind that decision? Rachel was a woman who kept the idols of her father hidden in her heart; a woman who was never happy, causing frequent irritation. But Leah gave Jacob their son Judah; and Jacob prophesied that the scepter would never depart from Judah’s house (Gen. 49:10). Rachel was buried on the roadside—Leah with Jacob. And, the Lion of the tribe of Judah is with us yet today.

What do you know? The highest pinnacle that our intellect could ever reach is to know that that intellect is totally unfit to lead the new man in Christ Jesus. Oh, how we need to become as little children, and stay in that process. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Pr. 3:5). This requires childlikeness, dear ones.

Childlikeness means plugging into the perfect mind of God! Paul said, "For it is written, I will baffle and render useless and destroy the learning of the learned and the philosophy of the philosophers and the cleverness of the clever and the discernment of the discerning, I will frustrate and nullify them and bring them to nothing" (1 Cor. 1:19 AMPLIFIED). Indeed, what looks green and well-watered may have shame and destruction hidden behind it; what looks beautiful and attractive may have the seeds of worldliness hidden within it. Do not lean on your own understanding. Become as a little child and trust God, and the kingdom of heaven will be yours.

Moses, for example, was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt: biology, philosophy, political science, mathematics, geometry, history and geography. Yet, how much of that did God need to make him a deliverer? It took forty years of wilderness living until Moses knew that he was nothing. Yes, he too had to enroll in the school of becoming as a little child.

God met Moses at the burning bush and said, "Get my people out of Egypt." Moses asked, "How can it be done?" Forty years earlier he would have been able to have come up with a plan, but now he knew that he knew nothing. God said, "Cast your rod on the ground," and Moses did. And the rod became a serpent. God said, "Take it up again." Moses did, and the serpent became a rod again. "Oh, Moses, that was lesson number one." Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

But Moses said, "How am I going to get Israel out of Egypt, Lord?" "Neither by your learning, Moses, nor by your understanding. In fact, I don't need your understanding. It will happen by your simply doing what I tell you to do and believing that it will work." Then God gave Moses lesson number two, "Put now thine hand into thy bosom" (Ex. 4:6). Moses did so, and when he took his hand out, it was leprous as snow; and you know the rest of the story, if you know the Bible.

Had Moses leaned on his own understanding, he would never have taken a nation of a million and a half people into the wilderness of Sinai. His understanding would have told him that it was impossible to do without killing almost everyone. It was only his becoming childlike that allowed Moses to become God's deliverer.

God did not need an intellectual to deliver Israel out of Egypt. He needed a little child! God's work is always through "trust and obey!" The kingdom operates not by reason but by revelation: revelation from the all-knowing mind of God to the waiting, trusting, obedient, and childlike heart. Reason crucified Jesus, and it will crucify almost every plan of God.

I'm talking about the kingdom of God. I'm talking about the absolute necessity of every man and woman beginning to walk in childlikeness right after conversion. Otherwise, Christ's plan and Christ himself will be crucified by us. This, dear ones, is more serious than I can tell you. It takes two wings for a bird to fly. It takes two wings for a man to enter the kingdom of heaven: conversion and becoming as a little child. Indeed, the Holy Spirit has given you, my friend, the power to become. Use it and learn to walk with God.

Again, can you see that we need another great reformation? Luther gave us a reformation about the first wing of the kingdom: conversion. So let us embrace this reformation on the second essential wing to complete our salvation: becoming as a little child.

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