

Honoring the Scriptures

By Santiago Lange

Many years ago in a Moscow theater, a well known actor named Alexander Rostovzev was "converted" while playing the role of Jesus in a play entitled Christ in a Tuxedo. He was supposed to read two verses from the Sermon on the Mount, remove his gown, and cry out, „Give me my tuxedo and top hat!“ But as he read the words, „Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,“ he began to tremble. Instead of following the script, he kept reading from Matthew 5, ignoring the coughs, calls, and foot-stamping of his fellow actors. Finally, recalling a verse he had learned in his childhood in a Russian Orthodox church, he cried, „Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!“ (Luke 23:42) Before the curtain could be lowered, Rostovzev had trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior (Source: Why Christians Sin, James Kirkland Johnston).



As in Alexander Rostovzev's case many have dramatically experienced the God energized transformational power of the Holy Scriptures in their own personal lives. In the Bible we find beautiful love stories which reflect the tenderest passions. We find also stories of God interacting with political intrigue and manoeuvring which rival anything we know in the twenty first century. There are simple accounts of homely little everyday occurrences. There are narratives of intense interest and intricate plot. There are strange and cryptic passages filled with weird symbols and allegories which are difficult to penetrate and comprehend. Yet, through all this variety there runs one coherent theme. Through all the Bible we find the same story, the Bible is the divinely inspired book about God and about Jesus Christ, the Son of Man. In his second letter the apostle Peter tells us that the Bible was written by men who were moved by the Holy Spirit: *... no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (1 Pet 1:21)*

The more we wrestle with the Scriptures, the more thrilling our study becomes. God has not given us this tremendous gift without having some purpose in mind. What is that purpose? The Bible itself gives us the answer. God has a plan in mind, and it is only as we begin to understand what God's plan is, that we can move in the same direction. Anything else would be the utmost futility. In Ephesians 4:12-13 we read that God's intention *"...was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints, the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the full and accurate knowledge of the Son of God; that we might arrive at really mature manhood -- the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection -- the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, and the completeness found in Him".*

The whole record of Scripture, these verses say, all that God has done in human history, in its physical and moral dimensions exists so that we might become a mature man or woman, so that we may fulfil our destiny *in* Jesus Christ.

First, we are to come to "the knowledge of the Son of God". There is no possibility of reaching maturity, as God intended us to achieve, if there is not the accurate knowledge of the Son of God, personally and experientially. That is paramount. Faith is always the operative word. Faith is always the way by which we actually can experience all that God has made available to us through His revelation.

The apostle Paul is careful to make clear that it isn't just my faith or your faith but our faith AND most importantly Christ's faith which brings us to this knowledge. Unless we are in touch with other saints we can't possibly develop as we ought to as a Christian. We move to maturity as we share the truth of God's Word with each other. Every Christian fellowship has its strengths and weaknesses and we need each other, to the end that we all want to grow in the proper knowledge of the Son of God. This is a major reason why the Bible was written. In the essentials it is all about Jesus Christ, from Genesis to Revelation, in symbol, in story, in marvellous prophetic vision, in simple narrative account, in history, in poetry, in everything.

We don't come to a mature knowledge of the Son of God without learning, without a gradual, deepening understanding of the written word. It is disturbing to watch a devaluation of the Scriptures taking place. Of course, we ought not engage in bibliolatry. But, we should not allow in our collective worship services to see the Scriptures displaced to a minor role or to become lazy in our personal and proper devotion for the written Word as it witnesses to the incarnate word.

God's word is the word written, the word preached and the word incarnate. We come to know Jesus the incarnate word through the preached word and through the written revelation in the pages of the Scriptures, illuminated by the Holy Spirit. We can't separate that threefold form. This is **not** an either/or issue.

We need to understand the lives of the men and women of faith throughout the Bible in order to see how GOD works in specific situations. Our reading should be theocentric. What an encouragement this revelation and message is to us! We need to understand the prophets in order to see the whole picture to the end and to have the certainty that God is working all things out. We need to begin to know God's thoughts and ways which are higher than ours. We need to know the Gospels in order to see the perfect life of Jesus Christ. We need to know the Epistles in order to see more deeply the great insights about Jesus we learn in the Gospels. As Paul wrote to Timothy, "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Scriptures are not about human orthodox thinking regarding God, but about God's thoughts regarding men. God is the starting point.

May we never neglect that precious gift, the Word of God, as it reveals our Creator's thoughts, and the marvellous plan of redemption in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the God-man. □