

"Making a Big Deal"

On June 10th in 1555, a young gentleman named Thomas Haukes was burned at the stake in Coggeshall, Essex, by order of the ruling church. What was his crime? He refused to have his infant child baptized (Christened) in the State Church.

Now many today would say to this man; "To what avail was it to make such a big deal out of that anyway? After all, you could agree to go along with it just for the sake of peace, it really wouldn't make any difference to the child and it could choose to be truly baptized later in life."

The only result of such a stubborn and divisive course would be that he would needlessly lose his life and the powers that be would no doubt seize the child and Christen it anyway and his family would be left orphans. What would be gained?

What is more, there were others who took such stands as well, so many indeed that a whole group of people in Europe became known as 'Anabaptists', in other words 'against baptism' because they refused to baptize their infant children. People also died for being 're-baptized' in the proper way as adults. Many went to various cruel deaths.

Does TRUTH matter? I ask you, does it REALLY matter?

Pilate asked Jesus, "What is Truth?" and then he walked away before the Lord of Truth could reply. Today it seems we have countless people both in the world and in the church that seem to feel that truth no longer matters or that it is different for each person.

The only two great sins of today seem to be **1. Stating that there is indeed any Absolute Authority in the world, and 2. Standing up for truth that goes contrary to the ideas of the majority and so making a fuss.**

The idea is just drift along, don't make waves, don't be a schismatic, after all, why make a big deal out of such a little thing? They even tend to put God in with them as they say things like, "I don't think God is that narrow minded that He cares about such a little thing." Or "Jesus loves us so much, He is not going to be nit-picky about what we do. He wouldn't keep us out of heaven for such a little thing!"

Are there really any 'little things' in the sight of God? Uzzah only touched the Ark. He was just trying to be helpful, wasn't he? He died. Was God fussy? Nadab and Abihu only took fire from a different source; everything else was OK, wasn't it? Fire was fire, wasn't it? They died!

I want to bring your thoughts to a scene fairly common in the first century AD. A young lady is standing with a group of soldiers in front of a statue of the Caesar. Before her is

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a small fire where people could sprinkle incense as an act of homage and worship. The soldiers are offering her an open box of incense, urging that she just take a little and sprinkle it on the fire. If she does, she will be released.

Perhaps a family member also is urging her with tears to please co-operate. Why loose her life for such a little thing? She knows the kind of fate that awaits her if she refuses -- burned alive, eaten by beasts or something else to equally delight the onlookers. But she won't do it!

Why? Why is she so foolish? After all, even if it is a 'sin', she could always ask forgiveness later, couldn't she? Why should she die in her youth for such a little thing? She went to her death, and thousands did likewise. Why? Was it just making a big deal out of something that really didn't matter?

You know, people always honor dead prophets, don't they? And yet what about the one that is condemning their course at the present? "We know Moses was a prophet, but who is this guy? Who does he think he is?"

It is the same with martyrs; we all admire those who stood for truth in the past and paid for their faith with their very blood. But what about those who stand up for the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy in our midst? What about those who have the audacity to interrupt or speak out, or pass out a paper regarding errors being foisted off on the people in the church?

Do we admire and seek to emulate them? Or rather, do we get together in little groups and grumble about this person disturbing the peace and making a big deal out of nothing? Are we as glad when we see them stripped of office and disfellowshipped -- just as glad as the Bishops were in the middle ages as they saw the smoke arising around those who dared to rebuke them for their false teachings?

Again I bring us back to Thomas Haukes, was he silly to loose his life for such a moot point as when a person should be baptized? After all, the Bible does not say, "Thou shalt not baptize your infant children", does it? (Always remember that error nearly always begins by adding to the Word of God and ends by detracting from it!)

I believe it does matter, friends. I believe God does care about such 'little things' as Bible Truth. I don't believe the martyrs died for nothing. I am going to tell you one reason why in the rest of the story about Thomas Haukes. I quote from Foxes Book of Martyrs Vol. VII, pp. 114, 115.

" A little before his death, certain there were of his familiar acquaintance and friends, who frequented his company more familiarly, who seemed not a little to be confirmed both by the example of his constancy, and by his talk; yet notwithstanding, the same again, being feared with the sharpness of the punishment which he was going to, privily **desired that in the midst of the flame he would show them some token**, if he could, whereby they might be the more certain, whether the pain of such burning were so great

that a man might not therein keep his mind quiet and patient, which thing, he promised them to do; and so, secretly between them, it was agreed that if the rage of the pain were tolerable and might be suffered, **then he should lift up his hands above his head toward heaven, before he gave up the ghost.**

" Not long after, when the hour was come, Thomas Haukes was led away to the place appointed for the slaughter; . . . at length after his fervent prayers first made and poured out unto God, the fire was set unto him. In the which, when he continued long, and when his speech was taken away by violence of the flame, his skin also drawn together, and his fingers consumed with the fire, so that now all men thought certainly he had been gone, suddenly, and contrary to all expectation, **the blessed servant of God, being mindful of his promise afore made, reached up his hands, burning on a light fire, which was marvelous to behold, over his head to the living God, and with great rejoicing, as it seemed, struck or clapped them three times together.** At the sight whereof there followed such applause and outcry of the people, and especially of them which understood the matter, that the like hath not commonly been heard, and you would have thought heaven and earth to have come together. And so the blessed martyr of Christ, straightway sinking down into the fire, gave up his spirit, A. D. 1555, June 10."

Did the little thing he died for matter to God? Evidently it surely did as the Lord sustained him in the fury of the flames so that he could leave this mute testimony to those who would follow, that grace sufficient was given to him by Jesus who walked the fiery pathway with the witnesses to His truth, showing Himself their ever-living Saviour.

Grace is promised to those who stand for right, "But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." Luke 12:9

"Now he just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Heb 10:38

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