

FOR THE WANT OF A BUTTON

Song 2:15, *“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.”*

There is an old nursery rhyme, “For the want of a nail” (extended here a bit) ... "For want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for want of the shoe, the horse was lost; for want of the horse, the rider was lost; for want of a rider, the message was lost; for want of the message, the battle was lost; for want of the battle, the war was lost; for want of a victory, a Kingdom was lost. All for want of a nail.”

It’s “the little foxes, that spoil the vines...” As in that verse and as that old nursery rhyme both agree that many times the smallest things, when neglected, have huge consequences.

On 25 July 2000, Air France Flight 4590, an SST Concorde, crashed in Gonesse, France, killing all 100 passengers and nine crew members on board the flight, and four people on the ground. It was the only fatal incident involving Concorde.

According to the official investigation conducted by the French accident investigation bureau (BEA), the crash was caused by a narrow titanium strip (about 18 inches long) that fell and landed on the tarmac of the runway from a DC-10 that had taken off minutes earlier. This small metal fragment punctured a tire on the Concorde's left main wheel bogie during takeoff.

The tire exploded, a piece of rubber hit the fuel tank, and while the fuel tank was not punctured, the impact caused a shock-wave which caused one of the fuel valves in the wing to burst open. This caused a major fuel leak from the tank, which then ignited due to sparking electrical landing gear wiring severed by another piece of the same tire.

The crew shut down engine number 2 in response to a fire warning, and with engine number 1 surging and producing little power, the aircraft was unable to gain height or speed. The aircraft entered a rapid pitch-up then a violent descent, rolling left and crashing tail-low into a hotel in Gonesse.

On 10 April 2003, Air France and British Airways simultaneously announced that they would retire Concorde later that year. They cited low passenger numbers following the 25th of July 2000 crash.

A small 18-inch piece of metal brought about the demise of an SST and ultimately of an entire industry. *“It’s the little foxes that spoil the vine.”*

One of the most illustrative events of history that also confirms that it's "the little foxes, that spoil the vines" phenomena is the story of Napoleon and his Grande Armée. In 1812, Napoleon invaded Russia with about 600,000 men and over 50,000 horses. By the time the army crossed into Poland in early December, less than 100,000 exhausted, tattered soldiers remained of the 600,000 proud soldiers who crossed the Nieman five months before.

Napoleon committed a grave error by leading his Grande Armée—likely the largest European armed force ever assembled to that point—across the Niemen River into Russia. Although it never lost a pitched battle there, the Grande Armée was almost completely wiped out within six months by freezing temperatures.

One of the main reasons that Napoleon's troops succumbed to the cold was caused by the design of their uniforms. True, they were not heavy enough for the cruel Russian winter but the fact that those uniforms were clasped together with buttons and those buttons were made of tin. Tin in severe cold goes through a transformation which causes deterioration. This has been called "tin pest" and has also been called tin disease, tin blight or tin leprosy. Tin, in cold temperatures, will eventually crumble.

Napoleon's soldiers' clothing began to lose the buttons and as a consequence they were unable to keep their already lightweight uniforms closed which allowed the bitter cold to penetrate and the body heat to escape. This "little fox" will and did bring down an army. It could be said that Napoleon's army was lost for the want of a button.

Without having to list them all in detail, it is important to note that our doctrinal "clothing" is clasped by major "buttons" that must remain buttoned else the church be exposed to "every wind of doctrine" of which we are warned, "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." It is therefore vital that those doctrinal buttons continue to permit our covering to remain intact that we might withstand the cold winds of error and obtain the promise, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

Jesus once warned a people, "Pray that your flight be not in winter." The spiritual climate of our services is to be fraught with Holy Ghost fire so that like Paul who when a serpent came from the cold and latched itself onto his hand there is a fervent fire of prayer, praise and, above all, preaching with which the serpent can be detached!

Our survival as a movement depends much on not allowing the spiritual elements of error, distraction and politics to corrode and eventually cause to crumble the prime fasteners of our faith—primarily those of the identity of God, the holiness of God and the doctrine of God. It must constantly be before our consciousness that our covering, Jesus Christ and His

righteousness, to remain in place must be fastened about us securely all the while fastened by the buttons of our faith least at any time, we “let them slip.”

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;”

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

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