

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 19 June 2023.

Greetings.

This week's 'normal' Musings are set out below.

I fully understand if you wish to jump straight to these.

Alternatively, if you have a few moments free, you may prefer to read on and, with me, note that today, 19th June, marks the anniversary of the date in AD 325 when the so-called 'First Ecumenical ('Worldwide', that is) Council' of the Christian Church opened at Nicaea in present-day Turkey.

It was that Council which formulated and adopted the original 'Nicene Creed'.

I cannot pretend to be a particularly great fan of Creeds but I suspect that the early Creeds (including that formulated at Nicaea) played a beneficial part in upholding and promoting the fundamentals of the Christian faith through the many centuries prior to Johann Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, before which time very few believers had access to copies of the scriptures for themselves.

I hardly need to point out that no Christian, if asked by a friend what the Bible teaches, is going to read aloud from the opening of Genesis 1 through to the close of Revelation 22! Instead, he or she is likely to offer a *concise summary* of what he or she believes that the Bible teaches.

And this is precisely what the historic Christian Creeds attempted to do for the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith (such as the nature of the one true God), while, at the same time, safeguarding those doctrines against false teaching.

The Council at Nicaea was convened by the Roman Emperor, Constantine I, against the background of a most serious heresy concerning the person of our Lord Jesus. The chief exponent of this heresy at the time, the Alexandrian priest and presbyter, Arius: (i) taught that the Lord Jesus was a creature, having a beginning and, thereby, (ii) denied the biblical truth of the Holy Trinity.

The original Nicene Creed was framed around the doctrine of *the Holy Trinity*:

'We believe in one God, the Father, almighty ... And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God ... And in the Holy Spirit'.

But, for obvious reasons, the Creed focused particularly on the full deity of our Lord:

'Begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father'.

(The Creed was later expanded by the so-called Second Ecumenical Council in AD 381 at Constantinople – now Istanbul – largely to amplify what Christians believe about the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit.)

The following are a few quotations about the doctrine of *the Holy Trinity* which I have culled from my personal notes:

**1.** 'I learn from the scriptures that there is one living God, fully revealed to us in Christ, and known through Him as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the unity of the Godhead, but revealed ..., as habitually expressed amongst Christians, three persons in one God, or Trinity in Unity ...

'Not that I have the least pretension to fathom this divine mystery where all are God, all one God, God all three; yet the Father is revealed, the Son reveals, the Holy Ghost quickens and makes known ... I affirm that *the only full revelation of the one true God is the revelation of Him in the Trinity*'.

(J. N. Darby: '*What do I learn from Scripture?*' Collected Writings, Volume 23, page 127; '*A few words on the Trinity*', Collected Writings, Volume 32, page 63.)

**2.** 'The word "Trinity" itself never appears in the New Testament. To see in its absence a possible objection to the doctrine, would be as illogical as to deny that theological knowledge is to be found in the New Testament since the word 'theology' is nowhere used'.

(F. F. Bruce and W.J. Martin, '*The Deity of Christ*', page 4.)

**3.** 'While the doctrine of the Trinity is a central fact of Christian faith, it is also beyond human comprehension and has no parallel in human experience. It is best defined as holding that, while God is one, He exists as three persons ...

'The doctrine of the unity of the Godhead makes clear that they are *not three separate gods*, like three separate human beings such as Peter, James, and John. Accordingly, the true Christian faith is not tritheism, a belief in three Gods. On the other hand, the Trinity must *not* be explained as *three modes of existence*, that is, one God manifesting Himself in three ways'.

(L. S. Chafer and J. F. Walvoord, '*Major Bible Themes*', page 40.)

**4.** 'The revelation itself was made not in word but in deed. It was made in the incarnation of God the Son, and the outpouring of God the Holy Spirit ... *It was in the coming of the Son of God in the likeness of sinful flesh to offer Himself a sacrifice for sin; and in the coming of the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, that the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead was once for all revealed to men.*

'Those who knew God the Father (who loved them and gave His own Son to die for them) and the Lord Jesus Christ (who loved them and delivered Himself up an offering and sacrifice for them) and the Spirit of Grace (who loved them and dwelt within them a power not themselves) knew the Triune God and could not think or speak of God otherwise than as triune'.

(B. B. Warfield, '*Trinity*', The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 1915, Volume 5, page 3015.)

**5.** 'A friend of mine, who is a minister in Canada, told me that a Jehovah Witness came to his door one day, and when the pastor came out he said to him: "You're a preacher aren't you?" He replied, "I am".

He said: "Explain the Trinity". He replied: "*If I could do that it would be a quartet*".

(Ian Paisley, '*Precious and glorious views of Christ*' in '*Expository Sermons*', page 134.) [This quotation appeared previously in the Monday Musings for 13 September 2021.]

**6.** 'Unity in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, where one makes three, and three make but one: *this is bad arithmetic, but good divinity* ...

"He was numbered among transgressors"—He who was numbered among the persons of the Trinity'.

(Thomas Watson: '*The Christian's Charter*', Chapter 10, page 60; '*Christ's Humiliation in His Incarnation*', A Body of Divinity, page 197).

For those who wish to dig a little deeper, I attach, separately, a concise set of notes entitled 'The Holy Trinity'. These notes (a) are reprinted, with permission, from '*Behold your God*', Volume 1, published by Precious Seed Publications in 2011 and (b) were circulated previously with the Monday Musings for 9 November 2020.

As I said earlier, today's main Musings follow below.

Happy reading,

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

---

### **(i) Scripture.**

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw Him they worshipped Him, but some doubted.

And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age'.

Matthew 28. 16-20 (*English Standard Version*)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

2 Corinthians 13. 14 (*English Standard Version*)

### **(ii) Food for thought.**

### ***Mistaken notions which people entertained about the Lord Jesus.***

'We read of misconceptions about:

'(i) Who He was. People in general 'supposed' that He was 'the son of Joseph' (Luke 3. 23). How wrong they were; God was His only Father (Luke 3. 22). Mary Magdalene supposed that He was 'the gardener' (John 20. 15). How wrong she was; He was the risen 'Lord' (John 20. 18).

'(ii) Where He was. Mary and Joseph supposed that He was 'in the company' (Luke 2. 44). How wrong they were; He was in His Father's house and about His Father's business (Luke 2. 49).

'(iii) What He was. In the darkness and storm, the disciples supposed He was 'a spirit' (Matt. 14. 26). How wrong they were; He was the Word become *flesh* (John 1. 14).

'(iv) How He would react to rejection. James and John supposed that He would authorise them to destroy a Samaritan village which had refused to receive Him (Luke 9. 54). How wrong they were; He rebuked them and passed on to another village (Luke 9. 55-56).

'(v) What He had come to do. The two on the road to Emmaus had supposed that He 'should have redeemed Israel' (Luke 24. 21). How wrong they were; He had come, not to deliver Israel from the Roman yoke, but men from the punishment due to their sins (Luke 24. 47).

'(vi) Why He suffered. The nation supposed that He suffered on account of His own sins (Isa. 53. 4). How wrong they were; He 'was wounded for our transgressions' (Isa. 53. 5). Praise Him!

(*'Day by Day: Christ Foreshadowed'* (Precious Seed Publications), page 300.)

### ***Christ and Peter in Mark 14.***

'Christ was witnessing (Mark 14. 62) while Peter was denying (Mark 14. 68-70); but Christ had been praying while Peter had been sleeping (Mark 14. 32-41)'.

(J. N. Darby, '*Brief Thoughts on Philipians*', Collected writings, Volume 17, pages 401-402.)

### ***'Bought with a price' (1 Cor. 6. 20).***

'My husband ... had been to a local shopping centre, and in the window of a gift and card shop he saw this sign: "We make Easter easy!"

'I guess that meant they were offering one-stop shopping for all the eggs, flowers, cards, and bunnies you might need, but ... Easter cost the greatest price that has ever been paid in the history of the universe.

'And yet — miracle of miracles — for us, Easter is free. It cost us nothing; it cost God everything. We did not deserve God's ultimate sacrifice, but God paid it out of His vast storehouse of unconditional love ... It is our complicity in sin that brings Him there; it is our sin that He bears away from us like the scapegoat going into the wilderness'.

(Fleming Rutledge, '*The Undoing of Death*', page 9.)

### ***'Authority': Pilate or Jesus?***

'In his account of the passion, the fourth evangelist portrays Jesus, not as a victim of circumstance, but as one who was in control of His destiny ...

'During the Roman trial, when Pilate said to him, 'Don't you realize I have power ('authority') either to free you or to crucify you?' (John 19. 10), Jesus replied, 'You would have no power ('authority') over me if it were not given to you from above' (John 19. 11) ...

'He had the authority to lay down His life and to take it up again, because it was what He had been commanded to do by His Father (John 10. 18)'.

(C. G. Kruse, '*John: an Introduction and Commentary*', IVP, page 235.)

### ***'All things'.***

The Lord Jesus once created all 'things' (Col. 1. 16), now He holds together 'all things' (Col. 1. 17) and one day, He will reconcile 'all things' to Himself (Col. 1. 20) and head up 'all things' in Himself (Eph. 1. 10).

### ***'Surely': two divine certainties.***

(i) The Lord's first recorded utterance to man was, 'Thou shalt surely die' (Gen. 2. 17).

(ii) The Lord's last recorded utterance to man was, 'Surely I come quickly' (Rev. 22. 20).

### ***Two marvels of the gospel.***

'The incarnation is one marvel and mystery and glory of the gospel; the cross is the other ... *The Word made flesh! The Holy One made sin!*'

(Anonymous, '*A Full Christ for Empty Sinners*', *The Christian's Friend*, 1875, page 159.)

### ***'Saving faith'.***

'Saving faith may be defined as a voluntary turning from all hope and grounds based on self-merit, and assuming an attitude of expectancy toward God, trusting Him to do a perfect saving work based only on the merit of Christ'.

(Lewis Sperry Chafer, 'True Evangelism', pages 55-56).

**'Consider'.**

(i) 'Consider yourself and your teaching' (1 Tim. 4. 16).

(ii) 'Consider one another to provoke to love and to good works' (Heb. 10. 24).

(iii) 'Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself' (Heb. 12. 3).

**'As we have opportunity, let us do good to all' (Gal. 6. 10).**

'I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again'.

(Attributed to Stephen Grellet (1773-1855) among many others.)

**Fifty verses and fifty chapters.**

'God describes the Creation of the whole universe in about 50 verses; for the Tabernacle, He takes 50 chapters!'

(J. B. Nicholson Jr, 'You're Not Board Yet, I Hope!' Taste and See, Uplook Ministries, 5 January 2022.)

**(iii) Go on, smile.**

Two 'watery' smiles.

**1.** A Welshman, a Scotsman and an Englishman were shipwrecked together on a small island.

They knew that the nearest shore was six miles away.

The Welshman tried to swim to the shore but, after one mile, he could swim no farther and he drowned.

The Scotsman managed to swim two miles before he had no strength left and he too drowned.

The Englishman swam well for three miles but, beginning to feel tired, he decided to play safe so *he turned around and swam back.*

**2.** Rhys Evans took up fishing. One Saturday in November, he sat out in light rain all day without catching a single fish.

On his way home, Rhys stopped at the local fishmongers and asked the fishmonger to choose three nice trout and to throw them at him before he bought them!

'Why on earth', the fishmonger asked, 'do you want me to throw them at you?'

'Simple', Rhys explained with a slight smile, 'because I want to be able to tell my wife honestly that I caught them'.

'Alright, then', the fishmonger responded, 'but, if I was you, I'd buy salmon instead'.

Rhys scratched his head. 'Why should I do that?' he asked.

'Because', the fishmonger explained, 'your wife came in earlier today and said that, if you came by, *I should get you to take the salmon because that's what she fancies for supper tonight*'.