

421 What think ye of Christ?

In last week's Reflection we considered the prayer lifted by a Christian pastor at the inauguration of the new American President, which was addressed only to "O God", in other words, to a God with no Name. This prayer thus ignored the fact that Almighty God has revealed Himself in His holy written Word to be God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is His 3-fold, Trinitarian nature and these are His Names by which He should be addressed in prayer.

The reason for this no-Name approach was to enable members of any God-believing Faith in the United States, whatever their beliefs about God might be, to agree with the inauguration prayer. In the context of the occasion with its emphasis on national unity, that reasoning is understandable, but there is no escaping the fact that Almighty God was thereby deeply dishonoured. The need for Unity and Peace triumphed over the need for ultimate, divine Truth – as is so often the case these days. In the pastor's silence about the Key Figure of the Lord Jesus Christ, those telling words come to mind – "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter ... And Peter went out and wept bitterly" (from Luke 22.61-62).

The underlying message of this prayer is that any belief about God is as good as - as true as - any other notion. This approach means that what each of us may happen to believe about God is far less important than our need to hold unifying attitudes of peace and mutual respect on all sides: "everyone to his own"; we each follow our chosen path, from the many available, slowly up the mountain until we have all reached God at the top.

As we well know, according to the Holy Bible that many-paths approach is utterly false! - (three prime examples to keep at our finger-tips being John 14.6 / Acts 4.12 / I Timothy 2.5). In these increasingly wild days, God's Truth itself is at stake, perhaps as never before. It all comes down to the Person and Work of Jesus Christ: is He true, or is He false? We have Jesus' own question to the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ?" (Matthew 22.41-42, KJV); that 5-word question remains at the heart of all human existence, and eternal destinies depend on the answers that are given.

"Ah, but you would say that wouldn't you? – you're a Christian" comes the reply! But we don't believe the truth of the Bible because it suits us (often its contents don't suit us). We believe the truth of the Bible

because its underlying truth-claiming credentials are immensely strong, and far, far stronger than the truth-claiming credentials of any rival Faiths of today such as Atheism or Islam. (It is useful to remember that since Eden and the Flood, all mankind knew the basic facts about the one true God. That knowledge then became distorted over time because of sin, and was duly scattered abroad after Babel; therein lie the origins of rival Faiths now challenging Judeo-Christianity over ultimate Truth).

At the heart of the Bible's truth-credentials is Jesus Himself, His life, ministry, death and resurrection (egs., John 2.18-22; 10.18 / Acts 1.3; 4.20 / I Corinthians 15.12-20). The Bible rejecters have tried down the ages to dispose of Jesus' resurrection with numerous far-fetched explanations; praise God, this simply cannot be done.

Our further grounds for confidence in the truth of the Holy Bible as "God's Word written", (as in Article XX of the 39 Articles), spring from our personal daily experience over the years, as Jesus Himself knew all too well as He rebuffed the tempter, "It is written ... It is written ... It is written" (Psalm 119.105 / Matthew 4.4,7,10).

Jesus, as "the way, the truth and the life ... a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence ... a chief cornerstone" (John 14.6 / Isaiah 8.14; Romans 9.33; I Peter 2.6-8), inevitably brings division, not unity, as happened in Gospel days too. There is no point in denying this, and if a nation is of Protestant Christian heritage, such as Britain or the USA, then let it behave as such without apology.

We are living in times when Jesus' words about "men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" are starting to ring all too true (Luke 24.26). Man's instinctive long-term efforts, to be rid of God or to alter Him to fit in with man's notions, are being horribly exposed by this pandemic, just as the Lord God intends.

The message for us is familiar and clear. We have ample grounds for accepting that the Holy Bible really is "God's Word written". That means that our prayers are to be addressed to the God of the Bible, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; and our witness is to focus on that simple little question, "What think ye of Christ?".

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