

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 2 September 2024

Greetings,

Last Tuesday was the anniversary of the home call of 75-year-old Isabella Liliias Trotter (gifted water-colour artist and missionary to Muslims in Algeria) on 27 August 1928.

Here are just a few quotations from the pen of Liliias Trotter:

(i) 'Who is among you that ... walks in darkness, and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God' (Isa. 50. 10).

'Believe in the darkness what you have seen in the light'.

(Written on 1 August 1901. Source: <https://liliastrotter.com/quotes/>.)

(ii) 'Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field' (Job 5. 23).

'The very things that are obstacles—stumbling-blocks in the way—may, when the chastening of God (of which the context tells) has had its way, be taken as help instead of hindrances. We may take our very impediments into partnership in the work of our sanctification. Praise be to His Name'.

(Written on 13 March 1910. Source: B. A. F. Pigott, 'I. Liliias Trotter', page 137.)

(iii) 'When the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour' (Mark 15. 33).

'The world's salvation was not wrought out by the three years in which He went about doing good, but in the three hours of darkness in which He hung, stripped and nailed'.

(Written on 27 October 1924. Source: <https://liliastrotter.com/quotes/>.)

(iv) 'He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross' (Phil. 2. 8).

'Man's natural thought of death is that of a dreary ending in decay and dissolution. And from his standpoint he is right: death as the punishment of sin is an ending. But far other is God's thought in the redemption of the world. He takes the very thing that came in with the curse, and makes it the path of glory. Death becomes a beginning instead of an ending, for it becomes the means of liberating a fresh life ...

"'The death of the Cross"— death's triumph hour— that was the point where God's gate opened; and to that gate we come again and again'.

(Liliias Trotter, 'Parables of the Cross', page 5.)

(v) 'These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full (John 15. 11).

'He didn't promise us ease and comfort – but He did promise joy which we may have in the midst of any weight or heaviness which may be ours to bear'.

(Written from her deathbed on 17 July 1928. Source, L. Arrington, 'Many Beautiful Things' ...

... accessed at <https://blogs.bible.org/many-beautiful-things-movie-a-world-class-artist-chooses-between-celebrity-success-and-a-hidden-life-of-missions-service/>.)

(vi) 'Looking to Jesus' (Heb. 12. 2).

'Satan knows well the power of concentration, if a soul is likely to get under the sway of the inspiration, "this one thing I do," he will turn all his energies to bring in side-interests that will shatter the gathering intensity ... It is easy to find out whether our lives are focused, and if so, where the focus lies. Where do our thoughts settle when consciousness comes back in the morning? Where do they swing back when the pressure is off during the day? Does this test not give the clue? ... Turn full your soul's vision to Jesus, and look and look at Him, and a strange dimness will come over all that is apart from Him'.

(Liliias Trotter, 'Focussed: A Story and a Song'. This poem inspired Helen Lemmel to pen, in 1922, the well-known hymn, 'O soul, are you weary and troubled?'—the refrain of which reads:

*'Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace'.)*

For those interested, a well-produced, accurate and spiritually-profitable documentary film of her life story has been produced, titled 'Many Beautiful Things'.

I set out below the Musings for this week.

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(i) Scripture.

Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

And He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Ephesians 2. 11-19 (*English Standard Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

The books of Genesis and Revelation compared and contrasted.

(i) 'In the book of Genesis, Satan's doom is prophesied; in the book of the Revelation, Satan's doom is realized.

(ii) 'There is no devil in the first two chapters of God's word or in the last two chapters of God's word ...

(iii) 'In Genesis we see the creation of the heavens and the earth; in Revelation we see the creation of the new heavens and the new earth.

(iv) 'In Genesis we see the first Adam reigning on earth; in Revelation we see Jesus, the last Adam, reigning in glory.

(v) 'In Genesis we see an earthly bride brought to the first Adam; in Revelation we see a heavenly bride brought to the Lord Jesus Christ, the last Adam.

(vi) 'In Genesis we see the beginning of death and the curse; in Revelation the Saviour brings us to a state where there is no more death and no more curse.

(vii) 'In the book of Genesis man is driven from God's face in sin; in Revelation we see God's face in glory.

(viii) 'In Genesis Satan appears on earth for the first time; in Revelation he appears on earth for the last time'.

(Adrian Rogers, 'Unveiling the End Times', page 2.)

'The gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God' (Mark 1. 1).

Jesus is revealed as the 'Son of God' (i) at the 'rending' of the heavens at His physical baptism (Mark 1. 10–11) and (ii) at the 'rending' of the veil at His metaphorical 'baptism' (Mark 10. 38–39) in His passion (Mark 15. 38–39).

'It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us' (Rom. 8. 34).

'The soul hath a sufficient answer against condemnation, in Christ's death and resurrection, full enough, though it should stop there. Yea, therein can faith triumph, though it went no further, for it can show a full satisfaction given in His death, and that accepted by God for us ...

'But then, let it go on, to consider Jesus "sitting at God's right hand" and "making intercession" for us ... So that His death is but the ground and foundation of our faith and the lowest step of this ladder; but these other are the top ...

'Faith, upon these wings, may not only fly above the gun-shot of all accusations and condemners, but even clean out of their sight, and so far above all such thoughts and fears, as it may reach to a security that sins ... "shall be remembered no more" ...

(Thomas Goodwin, 'Christ Set Forth', 1653, pages 117-118.)

The Risen Lord and the apostles.

The Lord both (i) 'worked' with His apostles (Mark 16. 14, 20; cf. 2 Cor. 6. 1) and (ii) 'preached' through them (Eph. 2. 17; cf. 2 Cor. 5. 20).

Stephen: 'he fell asleep' (Acts 7. 60).

1.

Asleep! asleep! when soft and low
The patient watchers come and go,
Their loving vigil keeping;
When from the dear eyes fades the light,
When pales the flush so strangely bright,
And the glad spirit takes its flight,
We speak of death as "sleeping".

Or when, as dies the orb of day,
The aged Christian sinks away,
And the lone mourner weepeth;
When thus the pilgrim goes to rest,
With meek hands folded on his breast,
And his last sigh a prayer confessed—
We say of such, "He sleepeth".

But when amidst a shower of stones,
And mingled curses, shrieks, and groans,
The death-chill slowly creepeth;
When falls at length the dying head,
And streams the life-blood dark and red,
A thousand voices cry, "He's dead":
But who shall say, "He sleepeth"?

"He fell asleep". A pen divine
Hath writ that epitaph of thine;
And though the days are hoary,
Yet beautiful thy rest appears—
Unsullied by the lapse of years—
And still we read, with thankful tears,
The tale of grace and glory'.

(Lucy A. Bennett, 'Songs for Silent Hours', quoted in 'A Library of Religious Poetry', 1881, edited by P. Schaff and A Gilman, page 857. Miss Bennett wrote the well-known hymn, 'O teach me what it meaneth'.)

2. 'When death, king of terrors (Job 18. 14) to the guilty, becomes stingless (1 Cor. 15. 55) and harmless to the forgiven, he gets from them a new name corresponding to his new nature.

'Death has several Christian names. Sometimes it is called "Sleep" (1 Cor. 15. 6, 20; 1 Thess. 4. 13-15), sometimes "Departure" (2 Tim. 4. 6) ... The appellations are various, but they all indicate that, from the viewpoint of them that are "in Christ Jesus", advancing death seems more a friend than a foe'.

(William Arnot, 'Roots and Fruits of the Christian Life', page 214.)

3.

'Christ did not send,
But came Himself to save;
The ransom price He did not lend,
But gave.
Christ died, the shepherd for the sheep;
We only fall asleep'.

(A. E. Hamilton, 'He Giveth Songs', page 65.)

4. 'This metaphorical use of the word "sleep" is appropriate because of the similarity in appearance between a sleeping body and a dead body; restfulness and peace normally characterize both. The object of the metaphor is to suggest that as the sleeper does not cease to exist while his body sleeps, so the dead person continues to exist despite his absence from the region in which those who remain can communicate with him, and that, as sleep is known to be temporary, so the death of the body will be found to be. Sleep has its waking, death will have its resurrection ... The body alone is in view ...

'When the physical frame of the Christian, "the earthly house of our tabernacle" (2 Cor. 5. 1), is dissolved and returns to the dust, the spiritual part of his highly complex being, the seat of personality, departs to be with Christ (Phil. 1. 23). And since that state in which the believer, absent from the body, is at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5. 6-9), is described as "very far better" than the present state of joy in

communion with God and of happy activity in His service ... it is evident that the word “sleep”, where applied to the departed Christian, is not intended to convey the idea that the spirit is unconscious.

(C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine, 'The Epistles to the Thessalonians', Thomas Nelson, 1997, page 98.)

5. See 'Go on, smile' below.

Four examples of small but very necessary human links in important divinely-forged chains.

Consider the following unnamed, lesser characters in scripture who each relayed a piece of critical information, by means of which he or she performed an essential role in the outworking of God's purpose:

(i) The man at Shechem who **acquainted Joseph** with the whereabouts of his brothers (Gen. 37. 15-17).

(ii) Nabal's young servant, who **acquainted Abigail** with Nabal's insulting behaviour towards David (1 Sam. 25. 14-17).

(iii) Naaman's little maid servant, who **acquainted Naaman's wife** with the miracle-working power of Elisha (2 Kings 5. 3).

(iv) Paul's nephew, who **acquainted the apostle and the Roman authorities** about the Jews' plot to kill Paul (Acts 23. 16-22).

'To know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge' (Eph. 3. 19).

'O Lord, Thy love's unbounded,
So sweet, so full, so free;
My soul is all transported
Whene'er I think of Thee!

'Yet Lord, alas! what weakness
Within myself I find:
No infant's changing pleasure
Is like my wandering mind.

'Still sweet 'tis to discover,
If clouds have dimmed my sight,
When passed, eternal Lover,
Towards me, as e'er, Thou'rt bright.

'Oh guard my soul, then, Jesus,
Abiding still with Thee;
And, if I wander, teach me
Soon back to Thee to flee'.

(J. N. Darby: 1845)

'Whatever Adam called every living creature, that was its name' (Gen. 2. 19).

'Naming is an act of dominion—an expression of the commandment given to Adam: “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Gen. 1. 28).

Parents name their children, a founder names her company, a craftsman names his product. All have the authority to name, and this authority is an expression of rule. The named doesn't get to choose its own name.

Likewise, Adam had a God-given delegated authority over the rest of creation, and with that authority came the extraordinary privilege to name what came before him—extraordinary in the sense that the Maker delegated His own right to name His creation to mankind.

'Only one creature was named by God—Adam himself—a mark of his own submission to his Maker'.

(H. Turner, 'Naming Creatures', accessed at [https://www.plough.com/en/topics/justice/environment/naming-creatures.](https://www.plough.com/en/topics/justice/environment/naming-creatures))

'When Saul saw David go out against the Philistine, he said to Abner ..., "Enquire whose son the stripling is"' (1 Sam. 17. 55-56).

At the end of 1 Samuel 16, David already appears in Saul's court to play soothing music; yet after David's fight with Goliath, Saul must still find out who the young man is.

Sceptical scholarship insists the problem cannot be resolved, and therefore infers that there is plenty of nonhistorical material here. Yet:

(a) There is no particular reason why Saul should have made special inquiries into the background of just one more musician in the royal court, no matter how soothing he was. Saul may not have been motivated to find out until after the events in chapter 17.

(b) More probably, the events in 1 Sam. 17 may have taken place before those in 1 Sam. 16. 14–23. Hebrew verbs do not convey time distinctions the way English verbs do, and it has been shown that there is no reason why we could not translate 1 Sam. 17. 1, “Now the Philistines had gathered ...” etc., establishing important background for the relationship between Saul and David that occupies the attention of the succeeding chapters’.

(D. A. Carson, ‘For the Love of God’, Volume 1, meditation for 25 August.)

‘With full conviction’ (1 Thess. 1. 5 ESV).

‘It has well been said that *an opinion is something that you hold*, but *a conviction is something that holds you* ... Convictions are the compasses of life—they keep us moving in the right direction. They are the foundation stones that help us to stand firm when everything around us is shaking and changing’.

(W. Wiersbe, ‘God isn’t in a hurry’, page 107.)

“‘I know the plans I have for you”, declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”” (Jer. 29. 11 NIV).

‘The problem with so many people taking this verse personally is that it wasn’t a promise made to each of us but to the people of God when they were in exile. The Lord had sent Jeremiah to speak words of encouragement and truth to His people. He wanted them to know ... they had reason to hope. However, they still had to settle down in Babylon (Jer. 29. 5-7) and wait more than seventy years until God brought them back to their promised land.

‘They were not expecting that verse 11 would mean they would instantly go to their promised land. In context, they knew they were settling into a place that wasn’t meant for them forever.

‘This verse ... should not be treated like a horoscope or a fortune cookie’.

(B. Kiser, ‘But God Can: How to Stop Striving’, page 74—slightly adapted.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Two *genuine* quotations related loosely to ‘sleep’—see the fifth ‘**Food for thought**’ musing, on page 2 above.

1.

Jonah 1. 6 (Greek Old Testament).

‘The shipmaster came to him, and said to him, “Why are you snoring (‘*ρηγχεις*’)? Rise up, and call upon your God”’.

2.

‘Richard Gawton: This zealous Puritan was Minister of Snoring in Norfolk, and afterwards in the city of Norwich’.

(B. Brook, ‘The Lives of the Puritans’, 1813, Volume 2, page 241. I ought, perhaps, explain that ‘Great Snoring’ and ‘Little Snoring’ are two rural villages in Norfolk, England. I gather that the origin of the name ‘Snoring’ lies in the settlement of ‘Snear’ (meaning ‘swift’, ‘bright’ or ‘alert’) which can be traced back to the Saxon invasions from AD 450.)