

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 11 July 2022

Tomorrow (12 July) marks the anniversary of the birth of the 19th century Scottish preacher and philanthropist, Thomas Guthrie.

Let me introduce the man to you. Briefly:

Thomas Guthrie was born on July 12, 1803 to a prosperous merchant and his devout wife. He entered the University of Edinburgh at age 12, devoured the physical sciences, and graduated at 16. He followed his inclinations toward theological studies, and in 1830 assumed the pastorate of a small congregation of farmers and weavers in Arbirlot, Scotland. He started with a rush, forming cottage prayer meetings, Sunday schools, and a parish library. His preaching was relentless, warm, and well received.

'After seven years, Guthrie was made minister of Old Greyfriars Church in Edinburgh, then of St. John's Church in Edinburgh's slums ... His best-known program was the "Ragged Schools" [which provided free schooling and spiritual instruction for poor and destitute children] ...

'His funeral procession wound through a crowd of 30,000 spectators which included 230 children from the original "Ragged School" ...

(Robert J. Morgan, 'On This Day', article for 12 July.)

I was interested to note that Mr Guthrie's sons later reported: "I owe more to the writings of your father", was the remark to us lately of the honoured evangelist, Mr. D. L. Moody, "than to those of any other man".

(Thomas Guthrie and Sons, 'Autobiography and Memoir', Volume 2, footnote to page 250.)

The following is a sample of quotations from some of those 'writings':

'He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness' (Heb. 12. 10).

'The more the diamond is cut the brighter it sparkles; and in what seems hard dealing, their God has no end in view but to perfect His people's graces'.

(Thomas Guthrie, 'Man and the Gospel', page 21).

'By Him all things consist' (Col. 1. 17).

'Every object in nature is impressed with His footprints ... Nor is there an object—be it pebble or pearl, weed or rose, the flower-spangled sward beneath, or the star-spangled sky above, not a worm or an angel, a drop of water or a boundless ocean—in which intelligence may not discern, and piety adore, the providence of Him who took our nature that He might save our souls'.

(Thomas Guthrie, 'Christ and the Inheritance of the Saints', page 303).

'While I was speaking in prayer ... Gabriel ... informed me, " ... At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come"' (Dan 9. 21-23).

'By prayer, God's children can reckon on immediate assistance.

'Prayer flies where the eagle never flew; and rises on wings broader and stronger than an angel's. It travels further and faster than light. Rising from the heart of a believer, it shoots away beyond that starry sky, and, reaching the throne, enters into the ear of God.

So soon, indeed, as the heart begins to work on earth, it moves the hand of God in heaven; and, ere the prayer has left the lips of faith, Jesus has presented it to his Father, and secured its answer'.

(Thomas Guthrie, 'The Gospel in Ezekiel', page 433).

Do it now.

'It is not a safe thing to leave a generous feeling to the cooling influences of a cold world. If you intend to do a mean thing, wait till tomorrow; if you are to do a noble thing, do it now—now!

(Thomas Guthrie, quoted by John Bate in 'A Cyclopædia of Illustrations of Moral and Religious Truths', page 60).

'Preach the word' (2 Tim. 4. 2).

(1) 'I set myself vigorously to study how to illustrate the great truths of the gospel, so that there should be no sleepers in the church, no wandering eyes; but everywhere an eager attention.

'To convert my hearers was not within my power; but to command their attention, to awaken their interest, to touch their feelings and instruct their minds, was—and I determined to do it'.

(Thomas Guthrie and Sons, 'Autobiography and Memoir', Volume 1, page 160.)

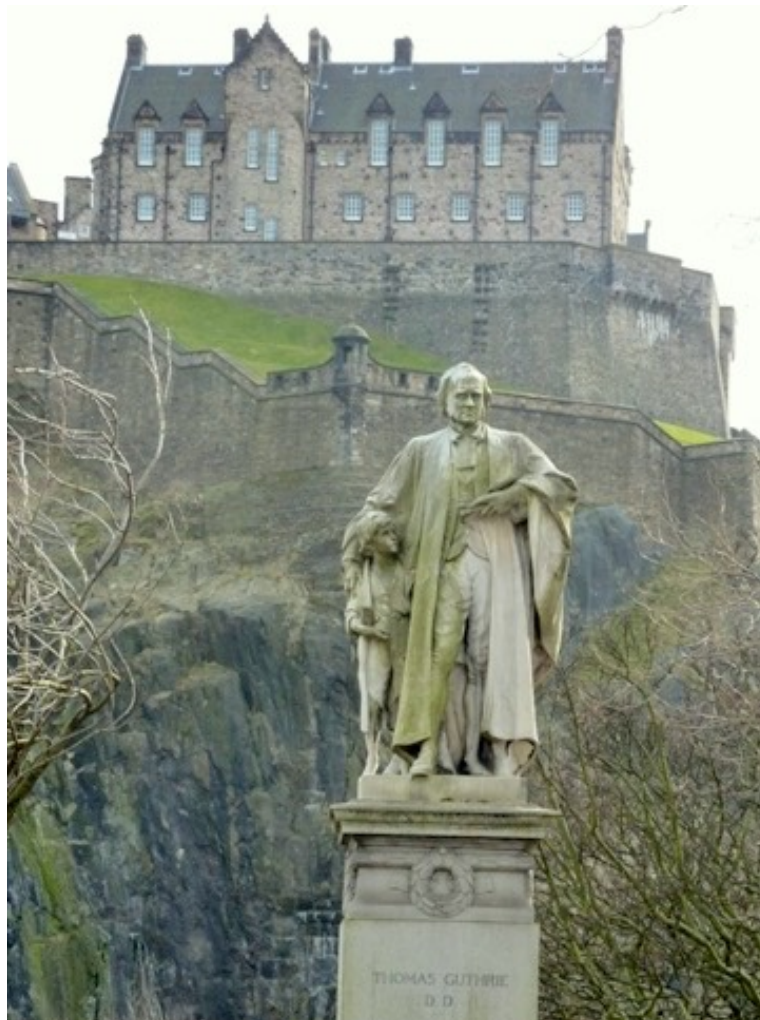
(2) 'His primary aim was to declare what he believed to be "all the counsel of God" [Acts 20. 27] ... he emphatically disapproved any attempt to square Scripture with the supposed requirements of a doctrinal system.

"John", to quote from one of his discourses, "uses a very broad expression. 'Jesus Christ,' he says, '... is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world' [1 John 2. 2]. 'The whole world'—'Ah!', some would say, 'that is dangerous language'. It is God's language: John speaking as he was moved by the Holy Ghost.

'It throws a zone of mercy around the world. Perish the hand that would narrow it by a hair's breadth!" (Thomas Guthrie and Sons, *'Autobiography and Memoir'*, Volume 2, page 194.)

You will find a further quotation from one of Mr Guthrie's writings in the main Musings below.

A Portland stone statue of Mr Guthrie stands in Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh, Scotland.



The statue, which is overseen by the wall of Edinburgh Castle, depicts Mr Guthrie characteristically holding a Bible in his left hand, with his right hand resting protectively on the shoulder of a 'ragged child'.

(For those interested, further information about Thomas Guthrie can be obtained readily from the following:

<https://archive.org/details/autobiographyth06guthgoog> (Volume 1 of 'Autobiography and Memoir');
<https://archive.org/details/autobiographyth02guthgoog> (Volume 2 of 'Autobiography and Memoir');
<https://raggedtheology.blogspot.com/2014/07/guthrie-and-gospel-in-ezekiel.html>; and
<https://banneroftruth.org.uk/resources/articles/2013/thomas-guthrie-preacher-and-philanthropist/>.
Many of Mr Guthrie's writings can be accessed direct at <http://www.newble.co.uk/guthrie/literature.html>.)

This week's main 'Musings' follow below.

(i) Scripture

Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and ... she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.

Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

... Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

And when He had so said, He shewed unto them His hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

John 20. 11-20 (*King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

‘Moses said unto the Lord, “O my Lord, I am not eloquent ... I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue”. And the Lord said unto him, “Who hath made man’s mouth? ... have not I the Lord?” (Exod. 4. 10-11).

Stephen Paxson (1808-1881), was born with a speech impediment and was later nicknamed, ‘Stuttering Stephen’. Because of his stutter, he never attended school. He was also crippled and lame throughout his life. Mr Paxson was converted in his thirties and became a Sunday-school missionary.

(i) ‘He organized 1,314 Sunday-schools where no Sunday-school had before existed, containing 83,405 scholars and teachers, besides encouraging and aided 1,747 other Sunday-schools with 131,260 scholars and teachers’.

(B. P. Drury [Stephen Paxson’s daughter], ‘*A Fruitful Life: A Narrative of the Experiences and Missionary Labors of Stephen Paxson*’, page 185.)

(ii) Stephen Paxson has been called ‘the most important single influence in evangelizing the American frontier’.

(Wesley R. Willis, ‘*200 Years—And Still Counting: Past, Present and Future of the Sunday School*’, page 49).

‘The shekel of the sanctuary’.

The expression ‘after (‘according to’) the shekel of the sanctuary’ occurs no less than twenty-five times through Exod. 30. 13 to Numb. 18. 16.

The simple lesson? Everything was to be assessed at its the true value—namely, according to the value which God (and not man) set on it.

By way of example, consider the words of the Lord Jesus concerning the ‘certain poor widow’ who threw two ‘mites’ (‘λεπτά’) into the Temple treasury: ‘This poor widow has cast in more than all those who have cast into the treasury; for they all cast in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty cast in all that she had’ (Mark 12. 43-44).

‘The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us’ (Deut. 29. 29).

‘We must frankly admit that some things are hidden from our eyes.

‘We really do not understand, for instance, the relationships between time and eternity, nor do we have much of an idea how the God who inhabits eternity discloses Himself to us in our finite, space/time history. It is revealed that He does ... but we do not know how. We do not know how God can be both personal and sovereign/transcendent; we do not know how the one God can be triune.

Yet ... when we admit — indeed, insist — that there are mysteries about these matters, we do not admit they are nonsensical or self-contradictory. Rather, we are saying that we do not know enough, and we admit our ignorance. *What God has not disclosed of Himself we cannot know*’.

(D. A. Carson, ‘*For the Love of God, Volume 1*’, devotional for 24 June.)

The Risen Lord revealing Himself in John 20.

The Risen Lord made Himself known by (i) the sound of His voice (John 20. 16) and (ii) the sight of His hands and side (John 20. 20; cf. vv. 27-28).

'Cast me not away from your presence; and do not take your Holy Spirit from me' (Psa. 51. 11).

'Old Testament Israel had mediators who stood between God and His people.

'To empower the Old Testament mediators, the Holy Spirit gave special administrative ability to carry out the management of the nation and military skills which enabled them to defeat the theocracy's enemies [e.g., Num. 11. 17-25; Deut. 34. 9; Judg. 3. 10; 6. 34; 11. 29; 1 Sam. 10. 6-10; 1 Sam. 16. 1-14].

'King David, no doubt, had this special ministry of the Spirit in mind with his prayer of repentance in Psalm 51.

'He was not afraid of losing his salvation when he prayed, "do not take your Holy Spirit from me", but rather was concerned that God would remove this spiritual wisdom and administrative skill from him [cf. 1 Sam. 16. 13].

David had earlier seen such a tragedy in the life of Saul when that king of Israel lost the anointing of the Holy Spirit [1 Sam. 16. 14]. David was, thus, pleading with God not to remove His hand of guidance'.

(J. MacArthur Jr, 'The MacArthur Study Bible: New King James Edition', page 788.)

'But I say to you, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"' (Matt. 5. 44).

'The best way to destroy an enemy is to turn him into a friend.'

'Paul, who in this regard (as in so many others) reproduces the teaching of Jesus, sums it up by saying, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12. 21).

'He reinforces it by quoting from Prov. 25. 21-22: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head".

(F. F. Bruce, 'The Hard Sayings of Jesus', page 73.)

'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons' (Acts 1. 7).

'We should be prepared as though Christ were coming this very moment and prepare as though He may not come for yet another millennium'.

(Hank Hanegraaff, the Foreword to B. J. Oropeza, '99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return', page 9.)

'Not only in word, but also in power' (1 Thess. 1. 5).

'Some preachers ought to put more fire into their sermons or more sermons into the fire'.

(Vance Havner, quoted by C. C. Thomas, 'Practical Wisdom for Pastors', page 79.)

'Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better' (Phil. 1. 23).

'As regards the sleep of the soul, it is a miserable doctrine that comes from Satan acting on man's reason ...

'The Lord tells the thief he shall not wait till the kingdom, but that he should that day be with Him in paradise. Was he to be fast asleep, knowing nothing of Him, or anything else? It is monstrous! We are "absent from the body, and present with the Lord", but if that means being fast asleep, we might as well be at the other end of the universe!'

(J. N. Darby, 'The Courts Above', Pilgrim Portions, Forty-Seventh Week.)

Secret backsliding.

'Great falls seldom happen to a saint, without a previous course of secret backsliding ... Men fall in private, long before they fall in public. The tree falls with a great crash, but the secret decay which accounts for it, is often not discovered until it is down on the ground'.

(J. C. Ryle, 'Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of Saint Matthew', page 377.)

'I will sanctify my great name' (Ezek. 36. 23).

'Two methods of glorifying His name are open to God ...

'In Egypt, for instance, He was glorified in the high-handed destruction of His enemies; and glorified also in the same land by the high-handed salvation of His people. In the one case He proved how strong His arm was to smite, and in the other how strong it was to save ...

'Since there are two ways open to God, by either of which He may sanctify His great name, He might, therefore, at the Fall, have vindicated His justice by swift and unsparing vengeance, by destroying the whole human family.

'What unsparing vengeance did He execute on the fallen angels! Of these there was no wreck or remnant saved. Not one escaped. No ark floated on the waters, to which, like Noah's dove, a flying angel, pursued by wrath, might turn his weary wing.

'Can it be doubted, that the measure meted out to fallen angels, God might have meted out to fallen men?—sanctifying His great name in our ruin rather than in our redemption'.

(Thomas Guthrie, '*The Gospel in Ezekiel*', pages 143-145).

God acting for Himself and for His 'name'.

Testimonies from seven men:

(i) *Joshua*: 'The Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?' (Josh. 7. 9; cf. Exod. 32. 11-12).

(ii) *Samuel*: 'The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people'. (1 Sam. 12. 22).

(iii) *The Psalmist*: 'He saved them for His name's sake, that He might make His mighty power to be known' (Psa. 106. 8).

(iv) *Isaiah*: 'For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and ... cut thee not off' (Isa. 48. 9; cf. v. 11).

(v) *Jeremiah*: 'O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for Thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee' (Jer. 14. 7; cf. v. 21).

(vi) *Ezekiel*: 'I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out', (Ezek. 20. 14; cf. vv. 9, 22, 44); 'Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake' (Ezek. 36. 22).

(vii) *Daniel*: 'O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God: for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name' (Dan 9. 19).

The believer's assurance and the character of God.

1. 'The certainty of our salvation rests on the character of God ...

'God knew what we should be, how weak and frail and changeable, before He ... brought us to Himself. Speaking after the manner of men, we might say He counted the cost. He computed whether His resources were sufficient to secure us from our foes, keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy [Jude 24]. He foreknew how much forbearance, pity, consolation, and tenderness, we should require. And yet it pleased Him to make us His people.

'He cannot, therefore, now run back from His purpose; otherwise, it would seem that difficulties had arisen which either He had not anticipated, or was not so well able to combat as He had thought. What an absurd suggestion! In the former case there would be a slur on His omniscience; on the other, upon His omnipotence'.

(F. B. Meyer, '*Our Daily Homily: Volume II*', page 12.)

2. 'There was a little Scottish lady who worked hard taking in washing in order to send her son to the university.

'When he came home for vacation, his mind was filled with doubts about God from the liberal teaching he had received. He did not want his mother to know about the change in his thinking.

'She kept telling him how wonderful it was of God to save her and how she knew she was saved. Finally, he could not listen to more of her talk and said, "Mother, you do not seem to realize how small you are in this universe. If you lost your soul, God would not miss it at all. It would not amount to anything".

'She did not reply right away but kept putting dinner on the table.

'Finally, she said, "I've been thinking about what you said. You are right. My little soul does not amount to much; I would not lose much and God would not lose much. But if He does not save me, He will lose more than I will. He promised that if I would trust Jesus, He would save me. If He breaks His word, He will lose His reputation and mar His character".

(J Vernon McGee, '*Through the Bible Commentary: Exodus Chapters 1-18*', page 27.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Learning a new language.

1. Ten-year-old Edward was having trouble learning Welsh.

To encourage him, his teacher Mrs Griffiths, said to him, 'Don't despair, Edward. You'll know you're beginning to get there when you start dreaming in Welsh'.

Three days later, Edward ran into class all excited. 'Mrs Griffiths', he called out, 'It's happened. I had a dream last night and everyone was talking in Welsh!'

'That is marvellous', responded Mrs Griffiths, 'What were they saying?'

'I have no idea', Edward replied, '*I couldn't understand a word anyone said*'.

2. A visitor from Switzerland was driving through the highlands of Scotland.

Needing directions, he pulled in alongside Angus and Douglas, two locals who were enjoying a quiet walk.

'Entschuldigung, koennen Sie Deutsch sprechen?' the young driver asked.

Angus and Douglas stared blank at him.

'Excusez-moi, parlez vous Francais?' the visitor tried.

Angus and Douglas continued to stare.

'Parli Italiano?'

But no response.

'Hablan ustedes Espanol?'

Still nothing.

Frustrated, the Swiss visitor drove off.

Turning to Douglas, Angus said, 'Maybe we should learn a foreign language'.

'What'd that be for?' asked Douglas. 'The laddie in the car ken aboot four languages, and *it didnae do him any good*'.