

THE NICENE CREED

Dr. Allen Churchill

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St. George's Anglican Church, Ottawa, Ontario

On the article: And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all world (aeons), Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.....

Introduction

Bishop Wilberforce and Thomas Carlyle were talking one day about the deep things of life, and Carlyle said: “My lord, have you a creed?” “Yes, the bishop replied, and the older I grow, the firmer that creed becomes under my feet. There is only one thing that staggers me”. “What is that?” Carlyle asked, “The slow progress that that creed seems to make in the world”, was the bishop's answer. After a moment of silence Carlyle responded: “Yes, my lord, but if you have a creed, you can afford to wait.”

All of us have a creed, whether we think we do or not. All of us need a creed, so long as it is credible and will do us good and not harm. In the early '90's I was in Kazakhstan, preaching in the prisons. The superintendent of one prison, near Karaganda, asked me what I had for a creed, and he said “Mine is to be kind.” I personally am happy with such a creed (so long as it doesn't have to stop there) and so long as kindness is defined by Jesus of Nazareth and is obtained through his cross. The prisoners in Russia and Kazakhstan, however, were kept in check and under guard by huge Alsatian dogs that patrolled the precincts. Here kindness and savagery were somehow blended in some obscure way.

Most of us here today come from churches that are familiar with one or other kind of Christian creed or confession. Those of you who are Anglican will know both the Creed and the 39 Articles (1563). Lutherans will know the Creed and the Augsburg Confession (1536). Presbyterians will know the

Creed and the Westminster Confession (1646). Those of us who are members of the United Church of Canada will know the Creed and the Twenty Articles of Faith (1925).

I mention these mainly to point out that most of us find that creeds are not enough. We are here in this series of talks focusing on the Nicene Creed. There were historical and theological reasons why the Nicene Creed came into existence. In English, the Nicene Creed consists of some 220 words. The confessions and articles are much more verbose. Articles and Confessions of faith are both more comprehensive and required.

Nevertheless, creeds have a legitimacy. The Nicene Creed is a brief formal summary of Christian doctrine. It is based on Scripture, and is set within the context of the historic life of the church. A creed bears an authenticity and authority. It is an outline of the basic elements of the church's faith. It provides and reminds the church of the necessary elements of her understanding of the revelation of God. The creed is a commentary on Scripture, meant to unify the church and to encourage the church to undertake her worship and evangelical ministry with greater and more accurate zeal.

The Nicene Creed is a servant of Scripture. Scripture gives us the substance and focus of our Creed. On the issue of who the Son of God is, we can only find this out through the text of Scripture witnessed to by the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ reveals himself as the one He is.

The formulation of the Nicene Creed was hastened by Arius, an Alexandrian presbyter, who forced the church to wrestle with its faith in Jesus Christ by focusing on the transcendence and uniqueness of God. In a letter to Bishop Alexander of Alexandria Arius declared the faith which he had learned from his forefathers and even from Alexander himself: "We acknowledge one God, alone ingenerate, alone everlasting, alone without beginning, Governor and Provider of all, unalterable and unchangeable, just and good, God of the law and prophets and the New Testament." Along with other Christians, Arius held that God is unique and transcendent, and no other being can share His nature with Him. Hence any other being must be less than God. Creator and

creature are radically different. The Son, Word, and Logos have the nature of a creature. God alone is Creator.

The Christian church had always spoken of Jesus Christ as if He were God, but also as Lord and Saviour, the Word of God, Son of God, Son of Man, prophet and priest and king. That is, the disciples knew the reality of God through Jesus Christ. Arius changed the question from what does Jesus Christ mean for us to who Jesus Christ is? Is Jesus Christ really God, or is he a creature? Arius' own answer to this question was as clear as his question. The Son of God or the Word is a creature. The noblest of all creation, the most perfect of all creatures, the firstborn of all creation, but still a creature. The Son of God came into existence by the will of the Father. There was a time when the Son of God did not exist! There could never be a time when God did not exist.

Obviously, Arius had to be answered. All subsequent Christians should be grateful for the clarity with which Arius put the question, even if we do not agree with his answer.

We can't know the answer to the question as to who Jesus Christ is to us and for us until we ask the question in what sense is He God? What is the relationship of Jesus Christ to the Creator? Who is He in Himself? The New Testament had already come to an answer.

- “Jesus Christ is God over all” (Romans 9:5).
- “In Him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell” (Colossians 1:19).
- “In Him all the fulness of deity dwells bodily” (Colossians 2:9).
- “Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession...” (Titus 2: 13-14).
- “To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1).
- “Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all

things and through whom we exist” (1 Corinthians 8:6).

- “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels as he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they...but to the Son He says: Your throne, O God, is forever and ever” (Hebrews 1:1ff, 8).
- “For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son that all should honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent Him.” (John 5: 21-23).
- “Jesus said; Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58; cf. Exodus 3:14).

The latter is a pivotal text in this matter.

The Calling of the Council

What precipitated the calling of the council that produced the Nicene Creed? Arius was an attractive spokesman for his theology. His theology was rational and appealing.

But Arius's theology immediately aroused controversy in the church. Alexander, Arius's bishop at Alexandria, vigorously opposed him and suspended him from office. Arius was an attractive spokesman for his views. His theology was rational and appealing. He safeguarded one truth that the church was determined to maintain. That is, the monarchy or sole rule of God. The church abhorred polytheism, but by making the Son or Word a demigod, Arius opened the way to the polytheism he sought to avoid.

The controversy became so intense it aroused the concern of Constantine, the emperor, who himself had only recently acknowledged the Christian faith, which he hoped would unite not divide the empire. From May to July 325 AD, an ecumenical council sponsored by Constantine and Nicene bishops met in Nicaea. There were three theological positions represented:

- (1) the strong Arian view, under Eusebius of Nicomedia;
- (2) the middle view, under Eusebius of Caesarea; and
- (3) the third position, advocated by Alexander who opposed Arius' theology.

The issue over Arius had been festering for some time. What initiated proceedings? Two things in particular. both had to do with the exegesis of Scripture.

The first was a refusal to recognize the significance of the passages of Scripture I have just quoted. One might describe this as a form of “voluntary blindness”. People will misread a text no matter how clear it may be.

The second is a somewhat remarkable issue. The Arian controversy broke out over the exegesis of an Old Testament text found in Proverbs 8: 22-31 (J. Pelican: The Christian Tradition I p.193ff). According to the emperor Constantine, it came when Bishop Alexander called upon several presbyters, especially Arius, to give an account of their opinions about a certain passage in the divine law, presumably Proverbs 8:22f. The terminology of this passage is certainly prominent in the few surviving documents of Arianism. In his letter to Eusebius, Arius wrote, quoting Proverbs 8:22-23: “Before the Logos or Son was begotten or created or ordained or established, he did not exist.” In the confession which he and his colleagues addressed to Alexander, he quoted the same verbs in asserting that the Son had been “begotten timelessly by the Father and created before the ages and established.” In his account of Arian doctrine, Hilary said that “they maintain that [Christ] is a creature, because of what is written in Proverbs 8:22.” Of all the Arian arguments which, according to Hilary, threatened shipwreck to the orthodox faith, this passage was “the greatest billow in the storm they raise, the big

wave of the whirling tempest.”

The Greek text (LXX) of Proverbs 8:22 begins: “The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old.” This is the text used by the Arians (see the RSV). The Arians used the Septuagint, “the Lord created me”, as one of their main proof texts for their thesis that Christ was a created being. The Hebrew verb is QANA. Its translation is “to possess”. However the Hebrew verb should be translated, the noun (wisdom or Christ) is inseparable from God, and was with God from all eternity. Moreover the New Testament clearly declares that the Word was God (John 1:1). Before Abraham was, I am (John 8:58). At any rate, Pelikan (p. 200) states: “The Arian doctrine of Christ as creature collided with the tradition of describing him as God. But the Arian use of titles (Logos, Son of God) which together had come to summarize the central meaning of that tradition, made the collision between the two quite ambiguous. In fact, it is misleading to speak of the two as though Arianism and orthodoxy were such obvious alternatives throughout the controversy. For while the tradition of describing Christ as God was indeed the basic doctrinal and liturgical issue at stake in the controversy from the beginning, it was only in the course of the debate that the proper formula for that tradition, together with the implications of any such formula, became evident.

The Arians refused to be silenced. A regional council held at Antioch early in 325 and drawing on an epistle of Alexander, disseminated a lengthy statement of “the faith” in Christ as divine and anathematized those who say, think or preach that the Son of God is a creature or has come into being or has been made and is not truly begotten, or that there was a time when he did not exist. This statement of faith described Christ as one who is beyond verbal description in words (i.e., ineffable) that there was never any time beyond which he did not exist. Examples of Arian theology were quoted, but it did not mention Arius by name. It affirmed the orthodox faith concerning Father and Son with the formula: “These we teach, these we preach, these are the apostolic dogmas of the church.”

Later in 325, this creed was elaborated and promulgated throughout the church at Nicaea. After much debate the council took an Eastern creed and

added four phrases that Arius could not repeat without abandoning his view of Jesus Christ. The council then added a paragraph of anathemas that condemned some of Arius's specific teaching. The Creed regarding Jesus Christ, now adopted at Nicaea included

- (1) from the essence [substance, being, reality] of the Father;
- (2) true God from true God;
- (3) begotten not created;
- (4) of the same essence [being or reality] as the Father.

The anathemas included the following: “but those who say once he was not, or he was not before his generation, or he came to be out of nothing, or who assert that he, the Son of God, is a different hypostasis or *ousia*, or that he is a creature, or changeable, or mutable, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes them”.

The crucial phrase is “of the same essence [substance, being, reality] as the Father.” The council wanted to make unmistakably clear that the Son or Lord was truly God. Later Athanasius, Alexander's great successor and the great theologian of Nicene theology, would come to see that this meant that the being of the Son is identical to the being of the Father.

Many of the church did not like the phrase “of the same substance [essence] as the Father” because it was not biblical language. For fifty years Nicenean theology was vigorously debated. The church sought many substitutes for the phrase. For example: like the Father; like the Father in all things; exact image of the Godhead; of like substance with the Father; like the Father according to the Scriptures; etc. The church eventually came to a consensus on the phrase “of the same substance as the Father” (at the first council of Constantinople in 381). Athanasius saw clearly the implication of Arian theology for the Christian faith, and he underscored the theological significance of the Nicene Creed. Arius dared to say that the word is not very God. He is called God, yet he is not very God, but only in name. Athanasius understood that if the Word or Son is a creature, then his knowledge of God is of the same order as our knowledge of God. As the firstborn of all creatures he may know more about God than any other creatures, but his

knowledge is still that of a creature. Furthermore, if the Son is a creature then he cannot have the value of God for us, nor can he unite us with God.

The great leap of Christian faith is the fact that in Jesus Christ we are encountered by God himself. In Jesus Christ the divine presence is focused for us, and in the light of this revelation all other revelations of God are identified and understood. Christians are people for whom God is defined by Jesus Christ.

In modern parlance some will say that Jesus is like God. But this is a doorway to Arianism. To say that Jesus is like God assumes that we already know who God is and therefore can judge whether or not Jesus is like God. Further, we can then assess that Jesus is like God. Jesus then becomes only one of many mediators of the divine presence. The Christian claim is that this Jesus whom we know from his life among us is the embodiment of God himself, the focused presence of the living God. This faith must be validated in our experience. It helps us to deal with the facts of experience. It puts the facts together in a coherent whole.

To quote surprisingly from Paul Tillich: “The significance of the Nicæan Creed is this. The most serious Christian heresy was overcome. Christ is not one of many half-gods; he is not a hero. He is God himself appearing in divine essence within the historical person. It meant a definite denial of paganism. For Arianism to have won the day, Christianity would have rendered Christianity only one of many possible religions.” The first Christian doctrine that the church settled in an ecumenical council and that has subsequently received approval in the life of the church through the centuries dealt with the deity of Jesus Christ. The church made clear at Nicæa what it was convinced had always been the faith of Christian people. That is, in Jesus Christ human beings are confronted by God! Most of us who appreciate a creed (including the Nicæan Creed) do so because we do not subscribe only to the church of “personal opinion”. The creed gives us and nurtures us within the church of faith, both as individuals and as a community.

Comments on the Nicæan Creed (K. Barth (Church Dogmatics, I.1.423ff):

(1) “We believe in the one Lord Jesus Christ.” Each word in the Creed is significant. There is “one” Lord. There are not multiple Lords. We are not polytheists, as in the case of Hindus (eg. Ex. 15:11; Acts 19:26). We believe in one “Lord”. In relation to us he bears authority and power. He has a claim on us and exercises control over us. He commands and rules. He does not do so accidentally and provisionally, nor partially and restrictively, like other lords. His lordship is not derivative nor is it grounded in a higher lordship. His lordship is final, full, and free. As K. Barth puts it: “It is a self-grounded lordship” (Dogmatics I. 1. p. 423). It is Jesus Christ who is Lord. Only Jesus is Lord. Jesus also means “Saviour”. Jesus is both Lord and Saviour (2 Corinthians 4:5). It is this that we believe, as the Holy Spirit moves within us (1 Corinthians 12: 3). Only Jesus is Saviour. Only Jesus is Christ, i.e. Messiah. I.e. Only Jesus is the fulfillment of the promised Jewish anointed redeemer. Only Jesus breaks in upon us with the unique and incomparable thrust of revelation, i.e. of eternal truth and reality itself. Only God by the means of Jesus and the Holy Spirit can reveal himself to us. Jesus is the blessed and only sovereign (1 Timothy 6:15). He is unique!

(2) “We believe in Jesus Christ as the only-begotten Son of God.” The phrase “only”-begotten emphasizes the oneness, i.e. The exclusiveness and uniqueness of the revelation and reconciliation undertaken in Jesus Christ. Moreover, to believe in Him as “the” Son of God is to know no other Son of God alongside Him. “begotten” is distinct from “born”. As the Son of God, Jesus Christ is the only-begotten of the Father (John 1:18).

(3) “We believe in Jesus Christ as the begotten of the Father before all time.” This is said of Jesus Christ as the one who reveals God and also of God who acts on us and for us in time and space. That is, in history. The “pre-existent” “one is the one who exists for us and who thereby testifies of His love for us! “Begotten of the Father before all time” means that Jesus Christ came into being in an event within the created world, though from divine sources rather than from time itself. “Before all time” doesn’t exclude time, but rather includes it as history itself. This is the time and history of revelation and new life. God is the Lord of our history. The Son of God is the pre-existent one

who exists for us now.

(4) “We believe in Jesus Christ as light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made.” This is not easily explained. Yet we must try.

“God of God”. This at very least is a way of saying that God is not externally created, but rather self-existing, i.e. antecedently as creator, provider and saviour. Again, the Son is not the Father, but both are God. Both are to be understood uniquely and singularly. In this clause we have the true and decisive Trinitarian definition of Christ’s deity. Two things are stated.

First, that in God’s essence and work we have to distinguish light and light, God and God, to distinguish them in the same way that in the created world we have to distinguish a source of light and a light that emanates from it, or a light that kindles and a light that is kindled, or father and son, or speaker and a word spoken.

Second, in God’s essence and work we have to understand this distinction as a distinction in God himself, not as though God were on one side and a creature was on the other side. What is found is the one God that is equally on both sides of being and acting, e.g. in being the revelation and acting out the revelation. In other words we need to distinguish between two modes of being, one being antecedent and the other being current. The church Fathers were fond of using the metaphor of light, whereby the light of the Son of God derived from the light of the Father. The Father and Son are distinct, but both are light. Both Father and Son bear equal witness in the revelation of God which is unique light in the world.

“Very God” means a real, true, or genuine God. Both Father and Son are very God in the truest or fullest sense. Moreover, “of” means a grounding in or proceeding from. It unavoidably gives rise to the idea of two autonomous beings in a specific relation of dependence to one another. God the Son is not a half or partial god or in any way inferior to God the Father. God the Son is fully and completely God, distinct from, yet undivided from the Father. The ancient Arians held that Jesus could be called “god” but not true God. The Nicene Creed affirmed that Jesus Christ is as divine as God the

Father!

“Begotten, not made” is a decisive phrase. It is a selection of vocabulary that distinguishes between being born on the one hand and being begotten on the other. To be born is to be created. To be begotten is to be brought forth from a source which is real and unique in God himself. It denotes the bringing forth of God from God. Creating denotes only the bringing forth of the creature by God. Creatures only can be made, not begotten. Only the divine can be begotten eternally of the Father. Ancient Arians, 17th century Subordinationists, and current liberal churches (on the way to becoming Unitarians) need to be understood and addressed with the help of the Creed.

“Of one substance [essence]” is obviously a safeguard against the Arian understanding of Jesus Christ as a “demi-god from below” or as a superman who is like God but, being only like him is ultimately or different from him. It underlines and accentuates the “begotten not made”. It places Jesus Christ on the side of the creator in contrast to every creature, even the highest. But “of one essence” is also a safeguard against the idea that Jesus Christ is a “demi-god from above”. Also “of one essence” is a safeguard against the differentiation or multiplication of God’s essence through the distinction in modes of being. ie. it is a safeguard against polytheism.

“By whom all things were made”. Here is an almost literal quotation from John 1:3, 10. Here also is a reminder of the pre-existence of Jesus. That is, the Christ-child in the manger was originally the creator of the universe.

Barth’s Conclusions:

- (1) God is one.
- (2) The Nicene Creed is to remind the church and all Christians of the understanding and importance of the richness of the Trinity.
- (3) The Nicene Creed is a touchstone of genuine Christian faith, though not a complete expression of it.
- (4) The Nicene Creed is helpful for worship, evangelism, and teaching.
- (5) It pushes us to the study of Scripture.

The Scandal of Particularity: (Geddes MacGregor, The Nicene Creed: Illuminated By Modern Thought, 1980, p.28ff)

Our haste to accommodate the latest theological fashions too often results in a subtle dilution of the biblical scandal of particularity. This doesn't always involve the rejection of traditional language, but often means the change of definition of traditional language. I have noticed churches that have endorsed historic Christian language on their bulletin boards, all the while affirming quite modernistic teaching from the pulpit.

The orthodox Christian claim, grounded in the Nicene Creed, is not that there is no one else entirely like him; there is no one else entirely like you or me either. It is, rather, that there is no other one who is both wholly divine and wholly human. This is what the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the Creed is obviously meant to mean. He is the one Lord Jesus Christ, begotten of his Father before all worlds, very God of very God, being of one substance with the Father. The uniqueness attributed to Jesus is not merely the uniqueness of a messiah. What he claims is an affinity with God that is unique. The creed recognizes in Jesus the presence of the divine being at its (His) source. And the Creed is grounded in Scripture.

The full concept of the uniqueness of Jesus is indeed a scandal. It is a stumbling block. An offence in people's eyes. I have been aware of the hesitation of some thoughtful persons who are open to accepting Jesus as a highly moral man and an exquisite teacher of moral thought (as per Arius), but who find the incarnation of Jesus as the unique Son of God to be irrational and unacceptable. Yet contemporary thought might encourage the use of a different model in which we may talk of dimensions of being interpenetrating each other as do energy and mass. The dimensional model may not improve the intellectual surprise, but it can make the surprise more intelligible and therefore easier to appreciate and perhaps accept. What we are unable to accept is that Jesus is merely a God-like creature. "The divine light shone in Christ in its fullness. It shone as never before on earth." (MacGregor, p.47) (Or potentially anywhere else!)

"Twentieth century science is filled with the unexpected, such as tunneling

effects created when electrons penetrate barriers that are accounted impenetrable, waves of electrons perceived before they are generated, and particles (tachyons) that travel faster than light. That whole spectrum of the unexpected paves the way for taking a new view and making a much more serious estimate of the significance of the notion of the Incarnation of God in time. In contrast to the world of the older physics which was a world of facts, the world of contemporary science is much more a world of potentialities.” (MacGregor, p. 47)

A Creed in a Secular Age: (comments from Charles Taylor: A Secular Age, 2007).

Many converts to Christianity do so mainly for personal reasons, but also because of the glorious past of Christendom. They were persuaded that the deepest sources of European culture were in Christianity, and that this culture must lose force and depth to the extent that moderns departed from it.

Vaclav Havel described his experience of coming to Christian faith as standing at the very “edge of the infinite”. He was flooded with a sense of ultimate happiness and harmony with the world and with himself. He would even say that he was somehow “struck by love”, though he didn’t precisely know for whom or what.

Others described their experience not as struck but rather “surprised by love”. Or as a “contemplative grasp of a life-changing fullness”. It is a paradigm change not in this case of science, but one that affects the central issues of our lives, that disrupts the existing established order politically, culturally, and intellectually. It changes a person. It makes one subordinate, to a better self.

Evelyn Waugh, some 80 years ago, said: “It seems to me that in the present state of European history the essential issue is no longer between Catholicism and Protestantism, but between Christianity and Chaos....Civilization has not in itself the power of survival. It came into being through Christianity, and without it has no significance or power to command allegiance...it is no

longer possible...to accept the benefits of civilization and at the same time deny the supernatural basis on which it rests.”

What I want to suggest is that there must be a clear connection between our creedal statements and our experience of a love that will not let us go. We must not lose the ability or desire to feel or think deeply about anything.

The mind and the heart must work together as a powerful amalgam, to bring about a transformation by a radical participation in God’s love, as lived in and through the church, and as lived out in the world. In love we must know, love, and serve God as revealed in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. The mind understands the flatness of modern civilization, and the heart loves civilization despite its flatness...”

The Creed, especially the Nicene Creed, must be dynamically engaged in the churches and in individual believers to help create a faith that is written into the hearts of Christians today and illumine their minds with a vision of what it means for personal salvation and the destiny of mankind. (MacGregor: The Nicene Creed, p.vii).

Conclusions

I want now to conclude with a brief reference to the influence of “presuppositions” on biblical interpretation and the selection of theological ideas and vocabulary in our creeds in general and the Nicene Creed in particular. I mentioned previously how some theologians and ministers have begun to use orthodox language, for e.g. in advertising on church bulletin boards and in articles in denominational journals on the one hand and on the other hand making words mean something else from the pulpit or in discussions. The precedent in this can be found in the allegorical interpretations of Scripture in the Middle Ages.

When Coleridge who was given to inventing neologisms, (ie. coined new words such as “*humanism*”) he was referring specifically to those who denied “the divinity of Christ”. But now *humanism* has a wide variety of meanings and isn’t always used today in such a narrow sense (See

MacGregor, p. 34). And again today, “cool” and “hot” can be used to mean one and the same thing. The point I am trying to make here is that even the “plain meaning of Scripture” to which the Reformers came is not so plain, either then or now. “The Scripture wars” would seem to prove my point. Evangelicals are often by no means unified. The exception was my experience with the Billy Graham Mission of 1998. A decade earlier than that, representatives of various evangelical ministers in the Ottawa area declined to co-operate. It reminded me of the first Lausanne Convention when well-known world evangelical leaders hesitated to sit on the same platform with one another. I am not sure whether anyone on those two occasions thought of consulting the Nicene Creed, or if they did, whether it would have made any difference. Yet as I reflect on these significant events and their results, it was in the main the recommendation coming from a number of quarters that we be guided by what we in fact had in common and not by what separated us, that brought us together in common cause. It was the substance of the Nicene Creed that led us to follow St. Paul who thanked the Christians at Philippi for their fellowship in the gospel (Phil.1:5).

The Unitarian, or modern Arian, has his presuppositions. The evangelical has his presuppositions too. The Unitarian takes control of her faith. The evangelical surrenders herself to her one Lord. The Unitarian’s faith is largely influenced by subjective ideas and myths. The difference is that the evangelical’s faith is informed and controlled by eyewitness testimony (Luke 1:1-4; 1 John 4:1-4; 2 Peter 1:16). Such testimony, working together under the impact of the Holy Spirit, brings a person to a glorious and effective personal faith. The evangelical enjoys a warm subjective relationship with Christ, a subjective relationship grounded in the objective historical and theological truth of the Bible. “What some modern scholars have sometimes failed to take seriously is the possibility (indeed likelihood) that the presuppositions of the ancients about religion might have been more enlightened and more methodologically useful than the ones biblical scholars today are generally trained to have. (MacGregor, p.35)

Let us remember that the “uniqueness of Jesus” needs to be qualified by the uniqueness of the uniqueness of Jesus. In other words, that Jesus Christ is very God of very God. No one can be more than this!