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TRUE HEROISM

Over six hundred years ago Austria and Switzerland were at war – Austria seeking to keep her neighbour firmly under her control and Switzerland seeking to free herself from Austrian oppression and tyranny. In this war, Switzerland's hills and mountain-passes constituted an advantage and made success a possibility.

On 9 July, 1386, at Sempach, a decisive battle was fought. The Austrians, in the plain, had formed a solid infantry line in close order, equipped with spears and shields. The Swiss charged in wedge form, hoping to break through Austria's line, but time and again they were beaten back. The result was pitiful, leaving many Swiss soldiers dead on the plain, and the Austrian army was still intact without any loss of life.

At last Switzerland's valiant leader, Arnold von Winkelried, of Interwalden, addressed the Swiss soldiers, and said: "I will open a passage into the line; protect, dear countrymen and confederates, my wife and my children."

After uttering those noble words, von Winkelried rushed towards the Austrian soldiers and their spears, impaling himself upon as many as he could gather in his arms, and, mortally and fatally wounded, he bore many of them down to the ground.

A breach had been made in the enemy's battalion of troops. The Swiss poured through the gap their brave leader had made, and, as a result, the Austrians were thrown into complete disarray and, encased in their heavy, cumbersome armour, they were swiftly overwhelmed and at the mercy of the Swiss soldiers. In the fierce battle which followed, Leopold, Duke of Austria, was killed, and his soldiers were defeated and routed.

Thus died Arnold von Winkelried, one of Switzerland's greatest men. His heroic act is still remembered to this day by his grateful countrymen.

This is a beautiful illustration of the Gospel of our salvation.

Like the Swiss, we were threatened by an enemy - in our case this was Satan, the enemy of our souls (1 Pet. 5:8). He had brought us into an awful state of sin and misery, so that we were brought low, "ready to perish" (Isa. 27:13). It was then, when all seemed lost, that God in His great mercy and grace, raised up for us the Lord Jesus Christ, "a leader and commander to the people" (Isa. 55:4 cf. Heb. 2:10). He came to save us; and He died to save us (Rom. 5:8). At the place called Calvary, He gathered, as it were, every spear turned against us, suffering each to enter His sinless body and soul (Isa. 53:5,6; Jn. 19:34; 1 Pet. 3:18). When on the cross, He cried, "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30), He obtained the victory for us and secured our deliverance and freedom (1 Cor. 15:57 cf. Col. 2:15). It was by dying for us that He opened up a way into God's presence, into His grace and, ultimately, into His glory (Jn. 14:6; Heb. 10:19,20). This is why, trusting in Him as Saviour and Lord, we still remember Him, with heartfelt gratitude and with the greatest affection (1 Cor. 11:24,25).

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

The devastating bombings in Sri Lanka in April took on a fresh significance for us as we met together for our Missionary Weekend on 18/19 May. We were very privileged to welcome as our speakers Pastor Jeyakanth and Pastor Jonathan Northern who were representing the Lanka Evangelical Fellowship of Churches. Both these men had recently returned from a pastoral visit to some of the Sri Lankan churches which had suffered great loss in these bombings.

Pastor Jeyakanth, the founder of LEFC, was our speaker at the Saturday afternoon meeting, which was led by Pastor Green. We heard with great interest of the remarkable work of God in Jeyakanth's life, bringing him to faith in Jesus Christ, having been raised in a Hindu family; and then protecting him on numerous occasions when threats were made on his life because he was now a Christian. Following this testimony, Jeyakanth directed our thoughts to

Acts chapter 12 and Peter's miraculous release from prison. We were reminded not only of God's sovereign care over the lives of his children, but we were also cautioned over praying without faith.

To close the meeting, Gary Donaldson, who is the secretary of Care Sri Lanka (the charitable arm of the LEFC) gave us a very interesting and informative PowerPoint presentation of the work among some of the very needy believers in Sri Lanka. Refreshments followed this meeting and we enjoyed fellowship with a number of visitors who had joined us over the weekend.

We were much blessed on the Lord's Day through the ministry of Pastor Jonathan Northern. In the morning we were encouraged as we considered Revelation chapter 6 and the assured victory of Christ at the end of time; while the evening sermon was a very challenging Gospel message.

At an After-Church Fellowship, Mr Northern, who has recently visited Siberia, spoke of the plight of the churches there. It was a blessed weekend, and one which challenged us to continue in prayer for our brothers and sisters in Christ who suffer great persecution for the sake of the Gospel.

Although some church members were away on holiday, Saturday 15 June saw over 60 of us, with ages ranging from over 90 years down to 36 days, gathered at Glebe Hall, Winterbourne Earls, for our annual Fellowship Tea. We are so grateful for a lovely spread of delicious eats and for the quiz of over 100 questions, which showed that our knowledge of the Scriptures "could be better" (as Pastor Green remarked!). We are grateful also to Pastor Green for reminding us of all the good things that the Lord has laid up for them that fear Him (Psalm 31:19) and to the Lord for giving us a dry afternoon (not what was forecast!) so the children and young people could let off steam outdoors, while older friends enjoyed fellowship with one another inside the Hall.

"The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." Isaiah 52:10

LADIES' COFFEE MORNING

It was in February last year that the first Ladies' Coffee Morning was held. Since then we have regularly met on the first Wednesday of the month, from 10.30am until midday.

The main meeting room at Grove House is set up like a cosy café with attractive tablecloths, casual tables, and toys supplied for the children – all very informal and welcoming. Cakes and hot drinks are served throughout the morning. The room is usually buzzing with happy chatter and the noise of children playing. Christian literature and text-boards are prominently on display and a noticeboard outside invites those passing in the street.

We have had up to eight visitors on occasions and several of our 'regulars' express how much they enjoy the mornings and that the date is in their diary every month. We are delighted and encouraged that the time is so pleasant for them but our aim in holding these coffee mornings is to tell of the love of the Saviour by personal testimony and to invite folk to our church services.

Recently, we introduced a short Christian message during the morning, and these have been appreciated and well-received. We would be pleased if more ladies from Emmanuel could come along and possibly bring friends and neighbours too. Our prayer is that many of these ladies will hear and respond to the Gospel.

Please remember these coffee mornings in your prayers and pray that the Lord will give us freedom and courage to speak of the Lord and of what He has done in our lives.

THE LAND OF THE REFORMATION

At the time of Reformation in the 16th century Germany was a country of very important religious advancement, but today, sadly, it is a country offering little encouragement to Bible-believing Christians. There are eighty million people living in Germany today. Nearly 60% of them have a connection with either the

Protestant or Catholic Church. However, sadly, the membership of both of these Churches is rapidly declining.

The Protestant Church in Germany expects to lose 33% of its members by 2030. The most alarming fact is that only 3.4% of members attend a service of worship. A further sad feature is that those who attend a Protestant Church will hear only liberal theology taught. The higher criticism is very extensively preached in the Protestant Churches. There was an attempt on the part of conservative pastors and laymen in the 1960s to bring back the Protestant Churches to faith in the Bible as God's inspired revelation. But this attempted reform was completely unsuccessful. In the last few years attempts by Bible-believing Christians to get back to the Bible as God's inspired revelation have, in the Protestant Churches, failed completely.

In Germany today Bible-believing Christians are in the position that they have to look for an independent Church if they want to receive true, sound God-honouring preaching to feed their soul. The number of people attending Baptist, Methodist and charismatic Churches probably amounts to some 750,000. However, the problem in this situation is that such independent churches are Arminian in their theology and contemporary in their worship-style. Only a small number of German-Russian Churches and also some Brethren Churches are fairly conservative in their mode of worship. However, these Churches tend to be theologically Arminian, with no knowledge of covenant theology. In this situation it is very difficult for Christians with Reformed and Puritan convictions to find a Church where they can feel at home among like-minded brethren.

In the last fifteen years the situation has improved somewhat. But small publishing companies have started printing in German the Reformed works of Spurgeon, Lloyd-Jones, J C Ryle and some of the Puritans. The Churches are not necessarily Reformed in doctrine. It depends on the local situation how much the Reformed theology and principles of worship are adhered to.

In Germany now there are America-based organisations, which host large Christian conferences with Reformed speakers. But it is obvious that this movement is mainly driven by the so-called American "new Calvinist"

movement. The larger conferences are dominated by modern worship styles of worship. The young people who attend show great interest in Reformed theology, but no wish to follow the serious Reformed worship of the past. There appears to be too much worldliness in such conferences.

However, in some places in Germany it is possible to find a Reformed church. These are Reformed Baptist or Reformed Presbyterian. But these churches are only very small - perhaps 10-50 people in attendance. These congregations have been started by groups from other countries. They have very little contact with one another and they amount to no more than around twenty-five such churches in the whole of Germany.

With the help of Reformed Christians in the Netherlands some years ago a Reformation Society was found. Its aim was to promote Reformed and Puritan theology. The name of it is Reformation-Gesellschaft-Heidelberg (RGH, www.reformationsgesellschaft.de). The society produces give-away brochures. During the Reformation jubilee 5,000 brochures (100 pages) were distributed which contained excerpts from Luther's writings. These quotations from Luther taught the doctrine of the Bondage of the Will and the freedom of the Christian.

The society also printed 12,000 copies of the little book "Can We Know God?" The author of this is Maurice Roberts. Nearly half of these booklets have now been distributed. In the current year, which is the Jubilee of the Synod of Dort, the text of the Canons of Dort has been published and are available free to those who want them.

This year (2019) a decision was taken to start a substantial publishing work. This decision was taken because some of the small existing publishing houses in Germany may go out of business in a few years. Currently several works of the Puritans are being translated. Also, a book by Daniel Wilson on the subject of the Sabbath Day is due to be published. However, resources are small and the number of workers on the project is few.

Maurice Roberts was the main speaker at a Reformation Conference in the RGH in Siegen (North Westphalia). It was an encouragement to hear the

gospel fully preached in all its glory and power. Many of those who attended longed for preaching of this kind to be heard in Germany. However, those who belonged to local evangelical churches were not interested to attend these meetings where Puritan teaching was given. But Christians who held Puritan views of theology came from a distance to attend these meetings.

May the Lord raise up more witnesses and more Churches in all parts of Germany where Reformed theology is preached. And may God restore to us a longing for more holiness in our worship services and in our personal lives. May He put a stop to the destructive trend of meaningless contemporary worship music.

We are aware that the situation in the UK is much the same. So our wish and prayer is that God may revive His work in Germany and also in Britain. Our hope and prayer is that the Lord may turn this glimpse of morning light into the radiant brightness of full summer day.

Dr Sebastain Merk

THE CITIES OF REFUGE

Malcolm H. Watts

In the ancient Jewish economy, six “cities of refuge” were set apart and given rights of asylum, and they were intended to afford shelter and protection for any who, unintentionally or accidentally, caused the death of someone else.

It was early stated as a law, “whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed” (Genesis 9:6) and this made way for the slain man’s “next-of-kin” to take vengeance for blood shed: hence, such a one was known as “the avenger of blood.” He was meant, of course, to be a righteous avenger of murder, but even though the death was through accident, without premeditation, the dead man’s nearest relative might still believe it to be his duty to pursue the person responsible and to take vengeance upon him as a man-slayer.

God, in His mercy, provided six cities of refuge – three on either side of the river Jordan – to afford shelter and safety for the man responsible for involuntary homicide (See: Num. 35:6-25; Deut. 19:1-7; Josh. 20:1-19). The ways to these cities were to be kept in good order, that nothing might retard any man's flight to them; wherever possible, hills were levelled and streams were bridged; and sign-posts were provided at turns in the road and at cross-roads, with the inscription upon them, "Miklat", "Miklat" – "Refuge."

Besides being of great practical use, these cities were intended to be *pictures of the coming Christ and His salvation*, for *Hebrews 6:18 teaches us that it is to the Lord Jesus Christ that we have "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us."* Dr Thomas Manton, the Puritan, wrote: "Christ is a believer's City of Refuge, or the alone sanctuary for distressed souls." It is in this connection that the names of those six cities, supplied in Joshua 20, are so very interesting, each reminding us of a feature or characteristic of our blessed Saviour.

(1) Kedesh: Jesus Christ Our Sanctuary.

Kedesh was in Galilee, in Mount Naphtali, beautifully situated on a lofty ridge and surrounded by a well-watered plain. According to Hebraists, the name, *Kadhash*, signifies to be "pure, bright, or holy"; "to be consecrated and sanctified to a sacred use", while *Kedesh*, the noun, means "a consecrated place, a sanctuary."

Anciently, the tabernacle or temple was called a sanctuary (Josh. 24:26; 2 Chron. 20:8), and not only because these were sanctified places but also because, at their brazen altars, they offered right of asylum to those whose lives were in serious danger. Like Adonijah and Joab, such might flee thither and "(catch) hold of the horns of the altar" (I Kgs. 1:50; 2:28), those brass projections at the altar's four corners, used for tying or binding the sacrifice (Exod. 27:2; Ps. 118:27), the catching hold of which signified their appeal for mercy, available to men through the blood of sacrifice (cf. Lk. 18:10,13).

God in Christ is our sanctuary (Isa. 8:14 cf. Ezek.11:16; 37:26,27). He is the holy One of God (Ps. 16:10; Acts 3:14; Heb. 7:26), and also our one and only Refuge (Ps. 57:1; 91:2; Isa. 32,1,2). "*The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe*" (Prov. 18:10). Once faith is placed in Him and in His sacrifice for sin, we are safe – and safe for evermore: "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...*" (Rom.

8:1) *“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth...”* (Rev. 14:13)

(2) Shechem: Jesus Christ Our Helper.

An important town in central Palestine, Shechem was situated in the hill country of Ephraim, near Mt. Gerezim. The verb, *Shakham*, means “to bend, as of a shoulder bearing a burden”; the noun, *Shechem*, means “shoulder” or “back”, which carries a burden.

Christ is the great Burden-bearer. He once bore the weight of our sins and sorrows, in order to remove them (Isa. 53:4-6; Jn. 1:29); and, even now, in loving sympathy, and in order to comfort, He bears the burden of our troubles and distresses (Ps. 55:22; Isa. 63:9a; 1 Pet. 5:7).

As Israel’s High Priest carried the names of the twelve tribes upon his shoulders (Exod. 28:9,12), so Christ, our High Priest, bears the names of all His people before God in heaven, ever living to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25; 9:24).

Indeed, He draws near to us when we are in any trouble and He supports us under every burden, enabling us to say, *“The Lord is my helper”* (Heb. 13:6);

“He is our help” (Ps. 33:20); *“I was brought low, and he helped me (116:6); “I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth”* (121:1,2).

(3) Hebron: Jesus Christ Our Friend.

Hebron was a city in the hill country of Judah, about 20 miles south of Jerusalem. The Lexicons tell us that the verb, *Hhabhar*, means “to be bound together, to be associated”, while the noun, *Hebbron*, means “fellowship” or “friendly association.”

Christ is our Hebron. He is *“the friend of sinners”* (Matt. 11:19). How amazing is that! The Lord of glory condescends to be the sinner’s friend (Ps. 8:4), and for them He has ever felt affection and concern (Prov. 8:22-31, especially the last verse), and, in the fulness of time, He came into the world to save them (Lk. 19:10), expressing great love for them in dying for them (Jn. 15:13), and

then rising from the dead, to bring to them the Gospel (Mk. 16:15), and then to receive and welcome all who turn to Him in repentance and faith (Jn. 6:37).

Christ is also *the friend of His believing people*. As the Scripture says, “*there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother*” (Prov. 18:24), and thrice happy are those who can say, “*He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved and this is my friend*” (Song. of Sol. 5:16). He is the Friend always at hand when we need Him (Heb. 13:5), drawing near to give us His support and deliverance (2 Tim. 4:16,17), answering our every prayer and fulfilling His every promise (Jn. 14:13,14), guiding us safely through life (Jn. 10:27,28), and then receiving us in death into His everlasting kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11).

(4) Bezer: Jesus Christ Our Fortress.

Bezer was a Reubenite city, east of the Jordan and in the wilderness. Its name derives from the Hebrew verb, *Batsar*, meaning “to separate, to fortify as of walls”, and the noun is *Betser*, “a stronghold, a fortress.”

In Christ alone is safety and security from the attacks of Satan and his fiery darts of temptation (Lk. 22:31,32; Eph. 6:16), from all the evils and troubles of this world (Jn. 16:33; 17:15), and from the corruptions within our own hearts (Jn:8:36; Rom. 7:14-25).

At such times as we are afflicted, distressed, lonely, cast down, wearied, despondent, ready to fall and to fail, “the Lord is at hand” (Phil. 4:5) and, as David so rightly says, born of his own personal experience, He is “the rock that is higher than I” (Ps. 61:2). Dr John Morison comments thus on these words: “the Psalmist directs His prayer to God, as one conscious that he must sink without his aid, but at the same time fully persuaded that with God on his side, he shall be lifted high above all his enemies: and shall stand for ever secure as on some mighty and inaccessible fortress.”

“I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust” (Ps. 91:2).

(5) Ramoth: Jesus Christ Our King.

Ramoth, the same as Ramoth-Gilead and Ramoth-Mizpeh, located in the territory of Gad, east of the Jordan. Ramoth seems to be derived from the Hebrew word *ra’am*, “to be high, to be exalted”, and from *ramoth*, the plural noun, which means “heights.”

The Scriptures declare Christ to be our Ramoth: “Thou hast ascended on high...” (Ps. 68:18); “I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth” (Ps. 89:27); “he shall be exalted and extolled...” (Isa. 52:13); “Jesus...by the right hand of God exalted...” (Acts 2:33); “him hath God exalted...” (5:31); “he ascended up on high...” (Eph. 4:18); “God also hath highly exalted him...” (Phil. 2:9); and “(Christ) is...made higher than the heavens” (Heb. 7:26).

By the Father’s appointment, Jesus Christ, the God-man, has been raised to greater height and glory than any other; and, on high, he has a name, a dignity, and an authority over heaven, earth and hell, and it is His to subdue His people to Himself, cause them to obey His Law, direct and control their lives, pardon their many sins, grant them both temporal and spiritual supplies, watch over them and deliver them from all evil, care for them in all life’s changes, and bring them at last from the kingdom of grace to the kingdom of glory.

He is more than “a fortress”, delivering from evil: He is “a King”, bestowing upon us all manner of good.

His people’s greatest privilege is to be numbered among those over whom He so graciously reigns. He will manifest Himself to them. His charge is always to be there for them, and so He will never, ever, give them up. *“The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing”* (Zeph. 3:17).

(6) Golan: Jesus Christ Our Happiness.

Golan was a northern city, in Manasseh’s territory of Bashan. The name is meaningful. It is thought to be derived from the Hebrew *gul*, a verb signifying “to go round” or “to turn in a circle”: the noun, *Golan*, means “a circuit.” It appears to denote “joy”, since the whirling motion indicates a joyful feeling of felt happiness.

The Lord’s people know a peculiar joy, described as “the joy of the Lord” (Neh. 8:10): that is, the joy of which He is the object (Ps. 43:4 Isa. 61:10; Hab. 3:17,18). In particular, God, revealed in Jesus Christ, is the believer’s joy (Phil. 3:3; 4:4; 1 Pet. 1:8).

Joy fills the heart when we first view Him presented in the Gospel (Ps. 89:15; Lk. 2:10,11; Jn. 20:19,20). He is glorious in His divine person (Heb. 1:3);

wonderful in His constitution as the God-man (Jn. 1:14); lovely in His title of Saviour (1 Jn. 4:14); precious in His vicarious life and death (Matt. 20:28; 2 Cor. 5:21); sufficient in His overflowing fulness (Col. 1:19); delightful in His spiritual beauty (Ps. 45:1,2); and invaluable in His gift of eternal life (Jn. 17:2).

Once we trust in Christ as our refuge, we know a happiness which can never be lost or taken from us: *“The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: and they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away”* (Isa. 35:10).

It is for ever true: *“He is my refuge....my God; in Him will I trust”* (Ps. 91:2).

PICTURES OF CHRIST

Professor John Murray (1898-1975)

Born in Sutherland, Scotland in 1898, John Murray was educated at Dornoch Academy and, after service in France in World War I, at the University of Glasgow. A decision to prepare for the Christian ministry took him to Princeton Theological Seminary for three years in 1924. Thereafter, while studying in Edinburgh, he was invited by Caspar Wistar Hodge, Professor of systematic Theology at Princeton, to join him as assistant in 1929. He thus entered directly into the succession of the Hodges and Warfield. On account of the struggle then taking place between historic Christianity and Liberalism in the Presbyterian church in the USA, Princeton Seminary was passing through the greatest upheaval in its history and the outcome was that in 1930 Murray followed Gresham Machen, O.T. Allis and R.D. Wilson to the newly-formed Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Here he was to teach systematic theology to successive generations of Students until his retirement in 1966. The following article is reprinted from the Reformed Herald, February, 1961.

The question of the propriety of pictorial representations of the Saviour is one that merits examination. It must be granted that the worship of Christ is central in our holy faith, and the thought of the Saviour must in every instance be

accompanied with that reverence which belongs to his worship. We cannot think of him without the apprehension of the majesty that is his. If we do not entertain the sense of his majesty, then we are guilty of impiety and we dishonour him.

It will also be granted that the only purpose that could properly be served by a pictorial representation is that it would convey to us some thought or lesson representing him, consonant with truth and promotive of worship. Hence the question is inescapable: is a pictorial representation a legitimate way of conveying truth regarding him and of contributing to the worship which this truth should evoke?

We are all aware of the influence exerted on the mind and heart by pictures. Pictures are powerful media of communication. How suggestive they are for good or for evil and all the more so when accompanied by the comment of the spoken or written word! It is futile, therefore, to deny the influence exerted upon mind and heart by a picture of Christ. And if such is legitimate, the influence exerted should be one constraining to worship and adoration. To claim any lower aim as that served by a picture of the Saviour would be contradiction of the place which he must occupy in thought, affection, and honour.

The plea for the propriety of pictures of Christ is based on the fact that he was truly man, that he had a human body, that he was visible in his human nature to the physical senses, and that a picture assists us to take in the stupendous reality of his incarnation, in a word, that he was made in the likeness of men and was found in fashion as a man.

Our Lord had a true body. He could have been photographed. A portrait could have been made of him and, if a good portrait, it would have reproduced his likeness.

Without doubt the disciples in the days of his flesh had a vivid mental image of Jesus' appearance and they could not but have retained that recollection to the end of their days. They could never have entertained the thought of him as he had sojourned with them without something of that mental image and they

could not have entertained it without adoration and worship. The very features which they remembered would have been part and parcel of their conception of him and reminiscent of what he had been to them in his humiliation and in the glory of his resurrection appearance. Much more might be said regarding the significance for the disciples of Jesus' physical features.

Jesus is also glorified in the body and that body is visible. It will also become visible to us at his glorious appearing when "he will be seen the second time without sin by those who look for him unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

What then are we to say of pictures of Christ?

First of all, it must be said that we have no data whatsoever on the basis of which to make a pictorial representation; we have no descriptions of his physical features which would enable even the most accomplished artist to make an approximate portrait.

In view of the profound influence exerted by a picture, especially on the minds of young people, we should perceive the peril involved in a portrayal for which there is *no warrant*, a portrayal which is the creation of *pure imagination*. It may help to point up the folly to ask: what would be the reaction of a disciple, who had actually seen the Lord in the days of his flesh, to a portrait which would be the work of imagination on the part of one who had never seen the Saviour? We can readily detect what his recoil would be.

No impression we have of Jesus should be created without the proper revelatory data, and every impression, every thought, should evoke worship. Hence, since we possess no revelatory data for a picture or portrait in the proper sense of the term, we are precluded from making one or using any that have been made.

Secondly, pictures of Christ are in principle a violation of the second commandment. A picture of Christ, if it serves any useful purpose, must evoke some thought or feeling respecting him and, in view of what he is, this thought

or feeling will be worshipful. We cannot avoid making the picture a medium of worship.

Since the materials for this medium of worship are not derived from the only revelation we possess respecting Jesus, namely, Scripture, the worship is constrained by a creation of the human mind that has no revelatory warrant. This is will-worship. For the principle of the second commandment is that *we are to worship God only in ways prescribed and authorized by him. It is a grievous sin to have worship constrained by a human figment, and that is what a picture of the Saviour involves.*

Thirdly, the second commandment forbids bowing down to an image or likeness of anything in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. A picture of the Saviour purports to be a representation or likeness of him who is now in heaven or, at least, of him when he sojourned upon the earth. It is plainly forbidden, therefore, to bow down in worship before such a representation or likeness.

This exposes the iniquity involved in the practice of exhibiting pictorial representations of the Saviour in places of worship. When we worship before a picture of our Lord, whether it be in the form of a mural, or on canvas, or in stained glass, we are doing what the second commandment expressly forbids. This is rendered all the more apparent when we bear in mind that the only reason why a picture of him should be exhibited in a place is the supposition that it contributes to the worship of him who is our Lord. The practice only demonstrates how insensitive we readily become to the commandments of God and to the inroads of idolatry.

May the Churches of Christ be awake to the deceptive expedients by which the arch-enemy ever seeks to corrupt the worship of the Saviour.

In summary, what is at stake in this question is the unique place which Jesus Christ as the God-man occupies in our faith and worship and the unique place which the Scripture occupies as the only revelation, the only medium of communication, respecting Him whom we worship as Lord and Saviour. The

incarnate Word and the written Word are correlative. We dare not use other media of impression or of sentiment but those of his institution and prescription. Every thought and impression of him should evoke worship. We worship him with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God. To use a likeness of Christ as an aid to worship is forbidden by the second commandment as much in his case as in that of the Father and Spirit.

MEN ONLY SHOULD LEAD IN PUBLIC PRAYER

Malcolm H. Watts

The Scripture makes very clear that it is our duty to meet together for prayer; but while all should join in such praying, I believe Scripture teaches that **it is the responsibility of the men present to lead the congregation in prayer.** In this connection, the following points are relevant and should be considered:

Ancient Patriarchal Practice

Public prayer began in the time of Enosh, Adam's grandson. At that time, there was an alarming increase in wickedness and the godly decided to meet together for the purpose of presenting their united petitions to the God of grace. 'Then', we are told, 'began men to call upon the name of the Lord' (Gen. 4:26). While it is true that the word 'men' is not in the original Hebrew, the immediate context mentions a believing father and son, which appears to suggest that they managed and directed these public prayers. Be that as it may, it is plainly taught elsewhere that congregational prayer was conducted by men.

At this point, we might profitably consider the other public occasions when people 'called on the name of God'. In every single case, men - *not* women - were involved. At Bethel, for example, 'Abraham' assembled his extended household and, after erecting an altar, '*he*...called upon the name of the Lord' (Gen. 12:8; 14:14. See other instances of this in 13:4 and 21:33). Later, Isaac did just as Abraham had done before him. Gathering his servants before the altar in Beersheba, we read that '*he*...called upon the name of the Lord' (26:25).

From the beginning, therefore, it was only the men who prayed audibly in public assemblies.

Jewish Rites and Ceremonies

When the ceremonial law was introduced, two rites symbolized the presentation of prayer: the offering up of incense and of sacrifice. This much is made clear by David when he says, 'Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice' (Ps. 141:2; See also: Rev. 5:8; 8:3,4; Ps. 51:17). Now publicly, these rites were performed by men.

The **incense**, consisting of four fragrant ingredients, was originally offered by Aaron, the High Priest. On the Day of Atonement, he alone officiated with incense at the golden altar (Lev. 16:12,13). The law also required 'Aaron' to 'burn thereon sweet incense every morning' and 'at even' (Exod. 30:7,8). However, in the light of subsequent events, it is clear that this service did not belong exclusively to him, for the lower priests were allowed to share in this ministry. Remember what is written of Zacharias, father of the Baptist. 'According to the custom of the priest's office', we read, 'his lot was to burn incense'; and 'the whole multitude...were praying without, at the time of the incense' (Lk. 1:9,10). While this must be granted, it is important to observe that the prerogative belonged only to *Aaron's male descendants*.

As far as the **sacrifices** are concerned, we know that, generally speaking, they were offered by *the same persons* (i.e. Aaron and the other priests: Lev. 16:9,10; Exod. 29:38-44) but even when this duty was performed by others - as it sometimes was, both before and after the institution of the priesthood - those made responsible for it were *all men*, whether Noah, Jacob, Samuel, or the 'young men' who, at Sinai, 'offered offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings' (Gen. 8:20; 31:54; 1 Sam. 9:13; Exod. 24:5).

Tabernacle, Temple, and Synagogue

In their various places of worship, *the Jews were accustomed to having men offer up prayers on their behalf*. This was true of the Tabernacle where, in the court, the High Priest sought pardon for 'all the iniquities of the children of

Israel' while (according to Jewish authorities) the people remained prostrate and in silent humiliation (Lev. 16:21).

On a more regular basis, similar intercession was probably made when 'the priests, Aaron's sons', offered Israel's daily 'sacrifice' (Exod. 29:38-42). Not that this was confined to the official priesthood. In his office of intercessor, Moses also spoke with God at 'the door of the tabernacle' and, although at a distance, 'all the people rose up and worshipped' (Exod. 33:9-11).

However, there is not the slightest evidence to suggest that a woman ever performed this duty. The case of Hannah (1 Sam. 1) can hardly be cited, for she was not at a public meeting, neither was there a congregation present. Besides, we are expressly told that 'she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard' (v13).

Much the same could be said of the **Temple**, only there men like David, Solomon, and Jehoshaphat occasionally led in prayer (1 Chron. 29:10-19; 2 Chron. 6:12-42; 20:5-13). Among the lesser known men who did so, mention should be made of Mattaniah, 'the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer', and the other brethren named along with him, Bakbukiah and Abda (Neh. 11:17).

In the **Synagogue** (which was a divine institution, Lev. 23:3), prayers were not always said by the 'chief ruler' or 'messenger', but by any man in the congregation who was called upon to pray. As for the women, Dr Kaufmann Kohler informs us that 'they attended the service, but could take no part in the common service' (Hastings' Dictionary of the Apostolic Church). This is of considerable importance for our purpose because synagogue worship exerted a profound influence on the worship of the early Christian Church. There is every good reason for believing that this particular practice was carried over into Christian worship services.

Special Meetings for Prayer

God often called his people together for solemn prayer. One such assembly was convened in the prophet Joel's day. It was to include everyone (even young children), but the people were only to offer prayer through their

representatives, '*the priests, the ministers of the Lord*'. Told to stand in the open court 'between the porch and the altar' (i.e. facing the Holy of Holies, with the congregation behind them) these men made humble and penitent supplication, saying, 'Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach...' (Joel 2:15-17). On another occasion, when the temple was being rebuilt, we read that the people of Bethel, recognising their need of God's favour, sent some of their number to 'pray before the Lord'. Prominent among these intercessors were '*Sherezzer and Regem-melech*' and, in connection with our present study, it is surely significant that they were accompanied by '*their men*' (Zech. 7:2).

Life in the Early Christian Church

The first recorded public prayer of the Christian church is recorded in Acts, chapter 1. Looking back for a moment to verse 14, we gather that although women were present, they do not appear to have engaged in audible prayer. '*These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women...*' (v. 14). Now who exactly is intended by 'these'? Clearly the brethren named in the previous verse: Peter, James, John, Andrew, and so on. 'These all continued...in prayer...'

So what about the women? Did they also speak in prayer? The order of words in the Greek (more or less the same as in our Authorised Version) strongly suggests that they did not. Had the order been, 'These all, with the women, continued with one accord in prayer', the verse might have lent some authority to the practice; but as it stands, it appears that the men led the company in prayer while the women silently prayed with them.

As for the prayer recorded in verses 24 and 25, we believe Peter was probably responsible for it. A vital matter was being considered (the election of someone to replace Judas), and since Peter had already taken the initiative in addressing those assembled (v. 15ff), it is likely that he was also their spokesman in this solemn prayer (vv. 24-26).

There are other examples of corporate prayer in the book of Acts, but the references are too general to assist us in our present enquiries (4:23ff; 12:5). In Acts, chapter 13, however, we are told that, in the church at Antioch, a number of *men* (five are actually named) 'ministered to the Lord and fasted'

(vv. 1,2). The former word ('ministered') suggests that they were engaged in Divine service, while the latter word ('fasted') is usually mentioned in association with prayer (e.g. 13:3; 14:23; 1 Sam. 7:5,6; Dan. 9:3; Matt. 17:21). We conclude that here, as elsewhere, it was the custom for men to lead in public prayer.

The Teaching of the Apostles

As with all matters relating to church practice, the teaching of the New Testament epistles is of paramount importance. What do the apostles say about women taking an audible part in public prayer?

In 1 Corinthians, chapter 11, and verse 5, Paul anticipates that women will be present at public worship, participating in the congregational prayer and prophecy (this latter term often denotes praise, as in 1 Sam. 10:5 and 1 Chron. 25:1-3). However, it is crystal clear from remarks made later on in this epistle that he did not approve of women praying aloud.

Chapter 14 contains Paul's directions concerning the exercise of miraculous spiritual gifts, particularly tongues-speaking. He states that tongues-speaking could assume the form of a prayer; and if it did, it was imperative for that utterance to be interpreted (or translated), because otherwise the prayer would be of no benefit to the people present. To Paul, it was essential that a speaker should be understood by the whole church. He therefore resolves that his own public praying will involve both the spirit and the mind. 'What is it then?', he says, 'I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also' (v. 15). This is the context in which the apostle writes the following: *'Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak'* (v. 34).

The speaking intended is public speaking, such as takes place in a time of open-prayer. Women are not permitted to engage in this, because 'they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law' (v. 34b). What exactly does that mean? It means that we should regard speaking in a service as an *act of authority*, the exercise of which on the part of women is contrary to that subordinate position assigned to them in the Old Testament (Gen. 3:16).

Thus far we have dealt with the more negative side of the question. It is time now to consider a scripture which clearly and unmistakably assigns the duty to Christian men. 'I will therefore that *(the) men* pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting' (1 Tim. 2:8).

Here, the apostle is giving directions about the conduct of public worship and, more particularly, about praying in public. He begins by stressing the importance of such prayer (2:1a - the phrase 'first of all' might be rendered 'most important of all'); then, he proceeds to mention the various kinds of prayer (v. 1b), the general scope of prayer (vv. 1c, 2a), the real purpose of prayer (vv. 2b-4), and, finally, the grounds on which such prayer is offered (vv. 5-7). This leads him to indicate the persons who should do the praying in a Christian meeting - '*(the) men*' (v. 8).

Quite evidently, Paul is referring here to the male members of the congregation. He puts this beyond doubt by the prefixing of a definite article (in the Greek), by using a word which designates only males (*andras* - not, as in verses 1,4, & 5, *anthropous*, which is a generic word comprising both sexes i.e. human beings), and then by marking a contrast with '*the women*' in verse 9 ('In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel...'). In the church, only the prayers of the men should be heard. The women should assume a quieter and more becoming role.

An Appeal to Christian Men

It is common for the apostle to request prayer from the various churches (e.g. Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3), but when more specific, he asks for the prayers of the 'brethren'. Writing to the Romans, he says: 'Now I beseech you, *brethren*,...that *ye strive together with me in your prayers* to God for me' (15:30). Again, in his letters to the Thessalonians, he directs appeals to the same group: '*Brethren*', he says, '*pray for us*'; and again, 'Finally, *brethren, pray for us*...' (1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1). This is best accounted for by the fact that, when the churches held their prayer-meetings, it was the 'brethren' present who lifted up their voices in solemn but fervent intercession.

Christian women are often richly endowed with spiritual gifts. In the church, they fulfil a vital function and there can be no doubt that they render a truly

invaluable service. This accords with what we read in the Word of God (e.g. Acts 9:36; 16:15; Rom. 16:1-2,3,6,12; Phil. 4:3; Titus 2:3-5). The Lord has been pleased to bless his work through their prayers, whether offered in private devotions or along with other women (as in Lk. 2:36,37, Zech. 12:10-14, and Acts 16:13). Their attendance at church prayer-meetings is, I believe, essential to the continued supply of the Spirit and the greater prosperity of Christ's kingdom. However, in the presence of men, they should offer silent prayer within the sanctuaries of their own hearts. The brethren should pray with audible voice, leading the congregation to the Throne of Grace.

EPILOGUE

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Ephesians 1 v 7

Many people and even churchgoers think that the Lord Jesus came into this world to show us that God loves all mankind and purely to set us a good example of how to live. They even think that the teaching of the cross is that our sins are forgiven and that all who follow Christ's example will go to heaven. This is not what Scripture teaches, that Jesus actually came to be our Saviour. It falls far short of that!

In Romans 3:23 we read that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Every single person will have to stand before an offended, righteous, omniscient God to face judgment for every single sin of omission and commission. The unconverted can never satisfy this righteous God and His wrath will fall on them for all eternity. Eternity is not long enough to atone for their sins.

As Christians we rejoice that God has provided a way whereby we can be saved. His only begotten Son became our Saviour. Not just an example but a Saviour. His sacrifice did not involve any violation of God's holiness and satisfied the justice of God. God the Son took upon Himself our human nature, perfect in every respect yet without sin. Upon him, God the Father, poured out the wrath that our sins deserved. Our sins were imputed to Christ and Christ's righteousness was imputed to us. Before the Judge of all the world we will stand but we will stand clothed in Christ's righteousness. He had to shed his blood in order to redeem us. There was no other way. Because our Lord died, we have forgiveness for our sins, and peace with God.

Faith in the Lord Jesus means trusting entirely in Him for our salvation, not just as an example but as a Saviour. If He had not come to this world, this would not have been possible, and we would have died in our sins. How grateful we should be to our Saviour who loved us and gave Himself for us!

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