Articles by A. Strang

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Whose Image is This? (Sept 1958)

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In answering a question about giving tribute to Caesar, our Lord drew an illustration from a penny. “Whose is this image and superscription?” “Caesar’s.” “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s” (Matt. 22:15-22). This solves the problem of paying tribute to an earthly monarch who has claims upon us; we must render tribute to whom tribute is due (Rom.l3:6-7). However, our Lord completed His remarks thus: “And unto God the things that are God’s.” This expresses God’s claim over all mankind, for by CREATION, we bear HIS image, and should therefore surrender ourselves to Him.

In creating this world, with its many forms of life, with the mysteries of geology, and with the might of the atom, God has demonstrated His power and wisdom. For centuries, man has endeavoured to penetrate these secrets, but with all his discoveries in zoology, geology, physics, and chemistry, he has only touched the fringe of knowledge. And of all the wonders of creation, man is the greatest.

God said, “Let there be light: and there was light.” “Let the earth bring forth the living creature … and it was so” (Gen.l:3,24). In the creation of man, however, a consultation took place: “Let us make man in Our image …so God created man in His own image” (Gen. 1:26-27). This made man superior to all the other created beings on earth, and conferred on him the greatest dignity that unfallen man could have received.

Man's likeness to God was seen in the dominion which man had over the other created beings, who were all named by Adam. Like God, Adam was a ruler: he was superior and sovereign; he had all things put under him — although now, because of sin, "We see not yet all things put under Him" (Heb. 2:8). Endowed with a body, soul, and spirit; endued with power from the Lord; and engraved with the image of God, Adam was elevated to have dominion over God's creation. How tragic that in spite of these wonderful privileges and honours, man should have fallen by sinful disobedience!

In the INCARNATION, we see a-gain a wonderful image of God. Wonderful as it is that man was made in the likeness of the Creator, it is infinitely more wonderful that the Creator was made in the likeness of the creature. This is what took place when the Word was made flesh (John 1:14). He was in the form of God (Phil. 2:6). He was with God and he was God (John 1:1). Yet, we find that He took the form of a servant; He was made in the likeness of men; and found in fashion as a man (Phil. 2:7-8). What marvellous mystery: God was manifested in the flesh! (1 Tim. 3:16). As a babe, He was born in Bethlehem; as a boy, He was brought up at Nazareth; as a man He lived and ministered in Palestine.

"Thou wouldst like sinful man be made

In everything but sin,

That we as like Thee might become,

As we unlike have been."

Jesus was a real man, a perfect man, a pure man; a man that always pleased the Father in thought, word, and deed. He was certainly human, for He spoke of His body,

His hands, His side, His blood. As a man He walked, He talked, He ate, He drank, He rested, He sympathized, and He succoured. His enemies had to say of Him, “Never man spake like this Man!” (John 7:46). He was so like other men in appearance that His identity was sometimes mistaken: He was taken by Mary for a gardener (John 20:15;, and by Cleopas for a stranger (Lk. 24:18). He was kissed by Judas to distinguish Him from the other disciples (Matt. 26:48-49). He was indeed a man, but a perfect man; He was God’s Man, and God’s perfect image (Heb. 1:3).

By CONFORMATION to Christ in His moral glories, we exhibit His beauties to the world. The Lord Jesus Christ, the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15), has gone back to Heaven. Since His return to glory, He has left His Church on earth as a witness till He returns. As His disciples, we should seek to emulate, to obey, and to represent Him. We should endeavour to manifest His glories — in other words to become like Him Who is the image of God.

Paul’s great desire for the Galatian saints was that Christ might be formed in them (Gal. 4:19). In contemplating the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, we become “changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18). Every child of God should aim to show daily something of the beauty of Christ, so that others looking on may know Whose we are and whom we serve (Acts 27:23). We should become like Him in His walk — a holy, humble, honest walk; also in His works — good and godly works; and in His words — gracious and tender words, never displeasing to His Father, for He knew what to say, when to say it, and how to say it.

In the TRANSFORMATION which will yet take place in all of the Lord’s people, we shall indeed be like Him; this will be the consummation of all our hope, when the perfect image of God will finally be seen in us too. We know that Christ shall appear and we shall see Him. And when we see Him, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). When we shall be caught up, we shall be changed to be like Him entirely and eternally. Never more shall our mortal bodies be subject to sin, decay, and death; we shall be kept eternally by Him, for Him, and like Him. What a glorious change, when we who have borne the image of the earthy shall also bear the image of the heavenly (1 Cor. 15:49). Praise His name!