

The Cross Of Christ - Stott, John R.

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PREFACE

".. it would be most unseemly to feign a cool detachment as we contemplate Christ's cross .. for we are involved. Our sins put Him there. So, far from offering us flattery, the cross undermines our self-righteousness."

I. APPROACHING THE CROSS

THE CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS

The Christians choice of a cross as the symbol of their faith is the more surprising when we remember the horror with which crucifixion was regarded in the ancient world.

The perspective of Jesus .. by age 12 Jesus felt an inward compulsion to occupy himself with his Father's affairs. He knew he had a mission. His Father sent him into the world for purpose.

The same apostle who in confessing Jesus' divine Messianism had received a revelation from the Father (Mt 16:17), had been deceived by the devil to deny the necessity of the cross.

He saw his death as the culmination of centuries of Jewish rejection of God's message, and foretold that God's judgement would bring Jewish national privilege to an end. Jesus both clearly foresaw and repeatedly foretold his coming death. It was the hour of his destiny.

The apostles' emphasis ..Although the apostles attributed the death of Jesus to human wickedness, they declared that it is also due to a divine purpose. ... that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures .. that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures .. (I Cor 15:3-4)

Why Did Christ Die?

One of the fascinating features of the Gospel writer's accounts of the trial of Jesus is this blending of the legal and moral factors. They all indicate that in both Jewish and Roman courts a certain legal procedure was followed. The prisoner was arrested, charged, and cross-examined, and witnesses were called. The judge then reached a verdict and pronounced the sentence. Yet the evangelists also make it clear that the prisoner was not guilty of the charges laid, that the witnesses were false, and that the sentence of death was a gross miscarriage of justice. Further, the reason was the presence of personal, moral factors which influenced the course of the law.

The Roman soldiers and Pilate .. If we had to rely exclusively of the Gospels, we would not have known what happened. The Prisoner was first publicly humiliated by being stripped naked. He was then laid on his back on the ground, while his hands either nailed or roped to the horizontal wooden cross beam, and his feet to the vertical pole. The cross was then hoisted to an upright position and dropped into a socket which had been dug for it in the ground. Usually a peg or rudimentary seat was provided to take some of the weight of the victim's body and prevent it from being torn loose. But there he would hang, helplessly exposed to intense physical pain, public ridicule, daytime heat and

night time cold. The torture would last several days.

In the investigation by Pilate .. Pilate was convinced of Jesus' innocence. Three times he declared publicly that he could find no ground for charging him. Pilate ingeniously attempted to avoid having to come down clearly on one side or another. He wanted to avoid sentencing Jesus (because of his personal conviction of his innocence) and at the same time avoid exonerating him (because he desired to maintain peace and favor with the Jewish leaders). He tried four evasions>

- 1) .. hearing that Jesus was a Galilean, and therefore under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod .. hoping to transfer the responsibility of decision
- 2) .. he tried half measures .. He hoped the crowd would be satisfied with half measures .. with less than the supreme punishment .. it was despicable .. if Jesus was innocent, He should have been released, not flogged first.
- 3) .. tried to do the right thing for the wrong reason .. hoping the crowd would chose him for release in response to the Passover amnesty .. then he could release him as an act of clemency instead of as an act of justice .. it was an astute idea, but inherently shameful .. and the people thwarted it
- 4) .. he tried to protest his own innocence

His conscience was drowned by the loud voices of rationalization. He compromised because he was a coward.

The Jewish people and their priests .. The very same crowds, it seems, who had given Jesus a tumultuous welcome into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, were within five days screaming for his blood. .. They cared more for regulations than for persons, he had said, more for ceremonial cleansing than for moral purity, more for laws than love. .. Their contest with Jesus was essentially an authority struggle. .. However outwardly respectable the priests' political and theological arguments may have appeared, it was envy which led them to hand over Jesus to Pilate to be destroyed.

The same evil passion influences our own contemporary attitudes to Jesus. He is still, as C.S. Lewis called him, 'a transcendental interferer'. We resent his intrusion into our privacy, his demand for our homage, his expectation of our obedience. Why can't he mind his own business, we ask petulantly, and leave us alone? To which he instantly replies, we are his business and that he will never leave us alone. So we too perceive him as a threatening rival, who disturbs our peace, upsets our *status quo*, undermines our authority and diminishes our self-respect. We too want to get rid of him.

Their sins and ours .. It is essential to keep together two complimentary ways of looking at the cross. On the human level, Judas gave him up to the priests, who gave him up to Pilate, who gave him up to the soldiers, who crucified him. but on the divine level, The Father gave him up, and gave himself up, to die for us.

LOOKING BELOW THE SURFACE

An initial construction .. *Christ died for us*. In addition to being necessary and voluntary, his death was altruistic and beneficial. He undertook it for our sake, not for his own, and he believed that through it he would secure for us a good which could be secured in no other way. *Christ died for us that he might bring us to God* (I Pet 3:18). The

beneficial purpose of his death focuses down on our reconciliation. *Christ died for our sins* .. Our sins were the obstacle preventing us from receiving the gift he wanted to give us. He dealt with them or took them away by his death. *Christ died for our death*. The link between Christ's death and our sins is not merely that of consequence but of penalty (he endured in his innocent person the penalty our sins had deserved). Throughout scripture, his death, both physical and spiritual, is seen as a divine judgement on human disobedience. (re. Jesus' confrontation with death at the tomb of Lazarus .. it was a foreign body .. he resisted it .. he could not come to terms with it) .. Jesus Christ, who being sinless had no need to die, died for our death, the death our sins had deserved.

The last supper in the upper room .. teaches *the centrality of his death* .. the bread did not stand for his living body, as he reclined at the table, but his body as it was shortly to be given for them in death .. similarly the wine, that was shortly to be poured out. "The Lord's Supper" is the only regular commemorative act authorized by him, does not dramatize his birth or his life, neither his words or his works, but only his death. .. clearly indicating the central significance He attached to his death. (If the cross is not central to our religion, ours is not the religion of Jesus)

the purpose of his death .. the divinely appointed sacrifice by which the new covenant with its promise of forgiveness will be ratified. He died in order to bring his people into a new covenant relationship with God.

the need to personally appropriate his death .. the scene was not that of one an actor on the stage, with a dozen in the audience .. it involved them .. they took part. They were not just spectators of this drama of the cross; they were participants in it

The cross enforces three truths - about ourselves, about God and about Jesus Christ.

First .. sin must be extremely horrible ,, nothing reveal the gravity of sin like the cross. It's impossible to face the cross with integrity and not feel ashamed of ourselves.

Secondly .. God's love must be wonderful beyond comprehension. Because he loved us, He came after us in Christ. He pursued us even to the desolate anguish of the cross, where he bore our sin, guilt, judgement and death. It takes a hard and stony heart to remain unmoved by love like that.

Thirdly .. Christ's salvation must be a free gift. He purchased it for us at the high price of his own life-blood. So what is there left for us to pay? Nothing!

II. THE HEART OF THE CROSS

THE PROBLEM OF FORGIVENESS

It is when our perception of God and man, or of holiness and sin, are askew that our understanding of the atonement is bound to be askew also. .. Carnegie Simpson, "Forgiveness is to man the plainest of duties; to God it is the profoundest of problems." .. The problem of forgiveness is constituted by the inevitable collision between divine perfection and human rebellion, between God as he is and us as we are. .. On the cross divine mercy and justice were equally expressed and eternally reconciled. God's holy love

was satisfied.

The gravity of sin .. The NT uses five main ... most common is *harmatia*; depicts the missing of a target, failure to attain a goal ... *adikia*; unrighteousness or iniquity ... *poneria*; vicious or degenerate kind of evil (*adikia* & *poneria* speak of an inward corruption or perversion of character) ... more active are *parabasis* / *paraptoma*; trespass or transgression, the stepping over a known boundary ... and *anomia*; lawlessness, the disregard or violation of a known law. In each case an objective criterion is implied, either a standard we fail to reach or a line we deliberately cross.

The emphasis of scripture is on the godless self-centeredness of sin. We have rejected the position of dependence which our createdness inevitably involves, and made a bid for independence. Worse still, we have dared to proclaim our self-dependence, our autonomy, which is to claim the position occupied by God alone. Sin is not a regrettable lapse from conventional standards; its essence is hostility to God (Rom 8:7), issuing in active rebellion against him. "Sin is defiance, arrogance, the desire to be equal with God, .. the constitution of the autonomous reason, morality, and culture."

Perhaps it is a deep seated reluctance to face up to the gravity of sin which has led to its omission from the vocabulary of many of our contemporaries. One acute observer of the human condition, who has noticed its disappearance of the word, is the American psychiatrist Karl Menninger. He has written about it in his book, "Whatever Became Of Sin?" Describing the malaise of western society, its general mood of gloom and doom, he adds that one misses any mention of sin. It was a word once in everyone's mind, but is now rarely, if ever heard. Does that mean that no sin is involved in all of our troubles ..? Has no-one committed any sin? Where, indeed did sin go? What became of it? ... many sins have become crimes, so that the responsibility for dealing with them has passed from the church to the state, from priest to policeman ... others have dissipated into sicknesses, so that in their case punishment has been replaced by treatment ... another convenient device is called collective irresponsibility, which has enabled us to transfer the blame for some of our deviant behavior from ourselves as individuals to society as a whole or to one of its many groupings.

Menninger pleads not only for the reinstatement of the word sin, but for a recognition of the reality which the word expresses. Sin can not be dismissed as merely a cultural taboo or a social blunder. It must be taken seriously. He takes preachers to task for soft peddling it .. "The clergyman cannot minimize sin and maintain his proper role in our culture". Sin is an implicitly aggressive quality .. a ruthless, a hurting, a breaking away from god and from the rest of humanity, a partial alienation, or act of rebellion ... Sin has a willful, defiant or disloyal quality: someone is defied or offended or hurt. To ignore this would be dishonest. To confess it would enable us to do something about it. Moreover the reinstatement of sin would lead inevitably to the "revival" of reassertion of personal responsibility. In fact, the usefulness of reviving sin is that responsibility would be revived with it.

Human moral responsibility ... Is it fair to blame human beings for their misconduct? Are we really responsible for our actions? Are we not more often victims of other agencies than free agencies ourselves, and so more sinned against than sinning? A whole gamut of scapegoats is ready at hand - our genes, our chemistry (a temporary hormonal imbalance) our inherited temper and temperament, our parents' failures during our early

childhood, our upbringing, our educational and social environment. Together these seem to constitute an infallible alibi.

Perhaps no more comprehensive attempt has been made to undermine the traditional concept of personal responsibility than B.F. Skinner's, "Beyond Freedom and Dignity". ... his main thesis is that "vast changes in human behavior could be secured by changes in the human environment. Man could be programmed to behave properly> What stands in the way then? Answer: the concept of autonomous man, his supposed freedom (in that he held responsible for his actions) and his supposed dignity (in that he is given credit for his supposed achievements). Man must have the courage to create a social environment or culture which adequately 'shapes and maintains the behavior of those who live in it'.

"We are automata, able to do nothing but react mechanically to our genes, our environment or even God's grace. We are personal beings created by God for himself ... Moreover, what God has given us is not to be regarded as a static endowment. Our character can be refined. Our behavior can change. Our convictions can mature. Our gifts can be cultivated .. We are indeed free to be different ..."

Our responsibility before God is an inalienable aspect of our human dignity. Its final expression will be on the day of judgement.

Responsibility is not an attribute, it is the 'substance' of human existence. ... if responsibility be eliminated the whole meaning of human existence disappears.

Man never sins purely out of weakness, but always also in fact that he "lets himself go ' in weakness.

True and false guilt .. Guilt is the logical deduction from the premises of sin and responsibility.

Paul divides the human race into three major sections, and shows how each knows something of its moral duty, but has deliberately suppressed its knowledge in order to pursue its own sinful course. (Jhn 3:19)

Christians have often been criticized (not the least evangelical Christians) for continuously harping on sin, for becoming obsessed with it in our own lives and, particularly in our evangelism, for trying to induce in others a sense of guilt. Nietzsche, for example, bitterly complained that Christianity needs sickness .. Making sick is the true hidden objective of the Churches whole system of salvation procedures ... One is not 'converted' to Christianity - one must be sufficiently sick for it.

The humiliation of penitence is necessary before the joy of reconciliation. A guilty conscience is a great blessing, but only if it drives us to come home.

Superficial remedies are always due to a faulty diagnosis. Those who prescribe them have fallen victim to the deceiving spirit of modernity which denies the gravity of sin.

(Dr Hobart Mowrer, Research Professor of Psychology - Univ. of Ill.) .. rejected the notion the 'psychoneurosis implies no moral responsibility'.. "Just so long as we deny the reality of sin, we cut ourselves off .. from the possibility of radical redemption [recovery]. Just so long as a person lives under the shadow of real, unacknowledged, and unexpiated guilt, he cannot .. 'accept himself' .. He will continue to hate himself and to suffer the inevitable consequences of self hatred. But the moment he .. begins to accept his guilt and his sinfulness, the possibility of radical reformation opens up, and with this ... a new freedom of self respect and peace."

Harvey Cox, "On Not Leaving It To The Snake"; 'Eve's sin .. was no so much her

disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit as her feeble surrender of responsibility which preceded it .." ... apathy is the key form a sin in today's world ... for Adam and Eve, apathy meant letting the snake tell them what to do .. It meant abdicating .. the exercise of dominion and control of the world ..

... diminished responsibility always entails diminished humanity ...

The Humanitarian theory removes from punishment the concept of desert. But the concept of desert is the only connecting link between punishment and justice. It is only as deserved or undeserved that a sentence can be just or unjust

Gods holiness and wrath ... That God is holy is foundational to biblical religion. So is the corollary that sin is incompatible with his holiness.

Closely related to God's holiness is his wrath, which is in fact his holy reaction to evil.

God's wrath is his antagonism to evil ... just as *charis* stands for the gracious personal activity of God himself, so *ogre* stands for his equally personal hostility to evil.

God's wrath is his 'personal divine revulsion to evil' and his 'personal vigorous opposition' to it. Human anger is usually arbitrary and uninhibited; divine anger is always principled and controlled. Our anger tends to be a spasmodic outburst, aroused by pique and seeking revenge

Sin cannot approach God and God cannot tolerate sin. Several metaphors illustrate this .. *height* > Ps 97:9; 9:2 .. *distance* > Jos 3:4 ... *light & fire* > ... *vomiting* > God's rejection of evil is as decisive as the human body's rejection of poison .. vomiting is probably the body's most violent reactions .. God cannot tolerate or digest sin and hypocrisy.

All five metaphors illustrate the utter incompatibility of divine holiness and human sin. Height and distance, light, fire, and vomiting all say that God cannot be in the presence of sin, and that if it approaches him too closely it is repudiated or consumed.

Yet these notions are foreign to modern man. The kind of God who appeals to most people today would be easygoing in his tolerance of our offenses. He would be gentle, kind, accommodating, and would have no violent reactions. Even in the church .. the vision of the majesty of God is lost.

... where the idea of the wrath of God is ignored, there also will be no understanding of the central conception of the Gospel ..

All inadequate doctrines of the atonement are due to inadequate doctrines of God and man. If we bring God down to our level and raise ourselves to his, then of course we see no need for a radical salvation, let alone for a radical atonement to secure it. When on the other hand, we have glimpsed the blinding glory of the holiness of God, and have been so convicted of our sin by the Holy Spirit that we tremble before God and acknowledge what we are, namely 'hell-deserving sinners', then and only then does the necessity of the cross appear so obvious that we are astonished we never saw it before.

The essential background of the cross is a balanced understanding of the gravity of sin and the majesty of God. If we diminish either, we thereby diminish the cross.

... forgiveness is for God the profoundest of problems ... nothing superficially seems simpler than forgiveness, whereas nothing we look deeply is more mysterious or more difficult ...

SATISFACTION FOR SIN

No two words in the theological vocabulary of the cross arouse more criticism than

'satisfaction' and 'substitution'.

Satisfying the devil .. The notion that it was the devil who made the cross necessary was widespread in the early church. .. though Jesus and the apostles did speak of the cross as the means of the devil's overthrow ... some early Fathers were extremely injudicious in the ways in which they represented both the devil's power and how the cross deprived him of it.

Three mistakes .. they credited the devil with more power than he had; though portraying him as liar, rebel, robber, and usurper, they spoke as if he acquired certain rights over man which God himself was under obligation to satisfy honorably ... they tended to think of the cross as a divine transaction with the devil; it was the ransom price demanded by him for the release of his captives, and paid to him in settlement of his rights ... this transaction was represented in terms of a deception

Satisfying the Law .. Another way of explaining the moral necessity of the divine satisfaction at the cross has been to exalt the law.

The real reason why disobedience of God's moral law brings condemnation is not that God is their prisoner, but that he is their creator.

Satisfying God's honor and justice .. If we are to be forgiven, we must repay what we owe> Yet we are incapable of doing this, either for ourselves or for other people. Our present obedience and good works cannot make satisfaction for our sins, since these are required of us anyway. So we cannot save ourselves. Nor can any other human being save us, since one who is a sinner cannot justify another sinner.

... there is no one who can make this satisfaction except God himself .. but no one ought to make it except man ... It is needful that the very person who is to make this satisfaction be perfect God and perfect man, since no-one can do it except one who is truly God, and no one ought to do it except one who is truly man ..

.. three things had to go together in our justification: on God's part 'his great mercy and grace', and on Christ's part 'the satisfaction of god's justice', and on our part 'true and lively faith'.

God's law was satisfied by Christ's perfect obedience in his life, and God's justice by his perfect sacrifice for sin, bearing its penalty in his death.

God satisfying himself .. God always acts according to his name. Although he doesn't always treat us according to our works, he always does according to his name, that is, in a manner consistent with his revealed nature. (Ez 20:44) *You will know that I am the Lord, when I deal with you for my name's sake and not according to your evil ways and your corrupt practices, O house of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord.*

(Jer 14:1-7) .. *Although our sins testify against us, O Lord, do something for the sake of your name'* .. ie; although we cannot appeal to you to act on the ground of who we are, we can and do on the ground of who you are.

The holy love of God .. in the cross of Christ, God's justice and love are simultaneously revealed..

THE SELF-SUBSTITUTION OF GOD

It is altogether an error .. to suppose that God acts at one time according to one of his attributes, and at another time according to another. He acts in conformity with all of them at all times .. As for the divine justice and the divine mercy in particular, the end of his (Christ's) work was not to bring them into harmony, as if they had been at variance with one another, but jointly manifest and glorify them in the redemption of sinners. It is a case of *combined action*, and not of *counteraction*, on the part of these attributes, that is exhibited on the cross.

Sacrifice in the Old Testament .. The interpretation of Christ's death as a sacrifice is imbedded in every important type of the New Testament teaching. Sacrificial vocabulary and idioms are widespread.

There seems to have been two basic and complimentary notions of sacrifice in God's Old Testament revelation, each being associated with particular offerings. First, the sense humans beings have of belonging to God by right, and second, their sense of alienation from God because of their sin and guilt.

The notion of substitution is that one person take the place of another, especially in order to bear his pain and so save him from it.

By laying his hands on the animal. the offerer was certainly identifying himself with and solemnly designating the victim as standing for him. .. having taken his place the substitute animal was killed in recognition that the penalty for sin was death, its blood (symbolizing that the death had been accomplished) was sprinkled, and the offerer's life was spared. (Lev 17:11) .. three important affirmations about blood in this text ... First, it is the symbol of life ... Second, it makes atonement .. the text according to its plain and obvious import teaches the vicarious nature of the rite of sacrifice. Life was given for life, the life of the victim for the life of the offerer, indeed the life of the innocent victim for the life of the sinful offerer. ... Thirdly, blood was given by God .. to make atonement for yourselves on the altar. So we're to think of the sacrificial system as God given, not man made, and of the individual sacrifices not as a human device to placate God but as a means of atonement provided by God himself.

The Passover and 'sin-bearing' .. The message must have been clear to the Israelites; it is equally clear to us who see the fulfillment of the Passover in the sacrifice of Christ. First, the Judge and the Saviour are the same person. It was God who 'passed through' Egypt to judge the firstborn and who 'passed over' the Israelite's homes to protect them. We must never characterize the Father as Judge and the Son as Saviour. It is the one and the same God who through Christ saves us from himself. Secondly, salvation was (and is) by substitution. Thirdly, the lamb's blood had to be sprinkled after it was shed. There had to be an individual appropriation of the divine provision. God had to see the blood before he would save the family. Fourthly, each family rescued by God was thereby purchased for God. Their whole life now belonged to him.

[re. the issue of sin bearing] .. there is a fundamental difference between 'penitent substitution' (in which the substitute offers what we could not offer) and 'penal substitution' (in which he bears what we could not bear).

Dr J I Packer's definition of the later, "It is the notion that Jesus Christ our Lord, moved by a love that was determined to do every thing necessary to save us, endured and exhausted the destructive divine judgement for which we were otherwise inescapably destined, and so won forgiveness, adoption and glory. To affirm penal substitution is to say that believers are in debt to Christ specifically

for this, and that this is the mainspring of all their joy, peace, and praise both now and for eternity."

It is clear from the Old Testament usage that to 'bear sin' means neither to sympathize with sinners, nor to identify with their pain, nor to express their penitence, nor to be persecuted on account of human sinfulness, nor even to suffer the consequences of sin in personal or social terms, but specifically to endure its penal consequences, to undergo its penalty.

Who is the substitute? .. The possibility of substitution rests on the identity of the substitute.

We must not speak of God punishing Jesus or of Jesus persuading God, for to do so is to set them over against each other as if they acted independently of each other or were even in conflict with each other. WE must never make Christ the object of God's punishment or God the objects of Christ's persuasion, for both God and Christ were subjects not objects, taking the initiative together to save sinners.

God in Christ .. The cross was an act simultaneously of punishment and amnesty, severity and grace, justice and mercy.

The concept of substitution may be said, then, to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties which belong to man alone.

The essence of the atonement is substitution, at least two important inferences follow, the first theological and the second personal. [First] The person and the work of Christ belong together. If he was not who the Apostles say he was, then he could not do what they say he did. The incarnation is indispensable to the atonement. [Second] re. the necessity of God in Christ substituting himself for us .. there was no other way by which God's holy love could be satisfied and rebellious beings could be saved. As we stand before the cross, we begin to gain a clear view of both God and ourselves, especially in relation to each other. Instead of inflicting upon us the judgement we deserved, God in Christ endured it in our place. Hell is the only alternative. This is the 'scandal'. the stumbling block of the cross. For our proud hearts rebel against it. We cannot bear to acknowledge either the seriousness of our sin and guilt or our utter indebtedness to the cross. Surely, we say, there must be something we can do, or at least contribute, in order to make amends? If not, we often give the impression that we would rather suffer our own punishment than the humiliation of seeing God through Christ bear it in our place.

The proud human heart is revealed. We insist on paying for what we have done. We cannot stand the humiliation of acknowledging our bankruptcy and allowing somebody else to pay for us. The notion that this somebody else should be God himself is just too much to take. We would rather perish than repent, rather lose ourselves than humble ourselves.

Only the gospel demands such an abject self-humbling on our part, for it alone teaches divine substitution as the only way of salvation.

All other forms of religion - not to mention philosophy - deal with the problem of guilt

apart from the intervention of God, and therefore come to a "cheap" conclusion.

III. THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE CROSS

THE SALVATION OF SINNERS

The heart of the cross is Christ. It leads us now to turn from the event to its consequences, from what happened on the cross to what was achieved by it.

The NT gives three main answers .. summed up in three words, salvation, revelation, and conquest. What God in Christ has done through the cross is to rescue us, disclose himself and overcome evil.

When Christ died and was raised from death, a new day dawned, a new age began. ...the day of salvation (II Cor 6:2). ... the salvation of Christ is illustrated by terms like, propitiation, redemption, justification, reconciliation.

As for the imagery, propitiation introduces us to rituals at a shrine, redemption to transactions in a market place, justification to proceedings in a court of law, and reconciliation to experiences in a family or home.

Propitiation .. wrath and propitiation (the placating of wrath) go together.

His anger is neither mysterious nor irrational. It is never unpredictable, but always predictable, because it is provoked by evil and evil alone. The wrath of God is his steady , unrelenting, unremitting, uncompromising antagonism to evil in all its forms and manifestations. In short, God's anger is poles apart from ours. What provokes our anger (injured vanity) never provokes his; what provokes his anger (evil) seldom provokes ours.

this is clear in the OT, in which the sacrifices were recognized not as human works but as divine gifts. They did not make God gracious; they were provided by a gracious God in order that he might act graciously towards his sinful people. ("I have given to you .." Lev 17:11) It cannot be emphasized too strongly that God's love is the source, not the consequence, of the atonement. What propitiation changed was his dealing with us. The distinction is between a change of feeling and a change of treatment ... God's feeling toward us never needed to be changed .. but his treatment of us, his practical relation to us - that had to change.

Redemption .. redemption focuses on the plight of sinners from which they were ransomed by the cross. (Ot examples of redemption - Lv 25:25-28; Ru 3-4; Jer 32:6-8; Lv 27; Ex 13:13; 24:20; Nu 18:14-17; Ex 30:12-16; Nu 3:40-51; Ex 21:28-32; Lv 25:47-55. In all these cases of redemption there was a decisive and costly intervention. Somebody paid the price necessary to free property from mortgage, animals from slaughter, and persons from slavery, even death.

Redemption always involved the payment of a price ... a redemption without a price paid is as anomalous a transaction as a sale without money passing.

Christ's blood was his life first given for us and then to us.

Blood shed stands for the bringing to an end of life in the flesh .. it is a witness to physical death, not evidence of spiritual survival. To drink Christ's blood, therefore,

describes not participation in his life but appropriation of the benefits of his life laid down.

The redemption image not only emphasizes the plight from which and the price with which we were ransomed, but also draws attention to the person of the redeemer who has proprietary rights over his purchase. Thus Jesus' lordship over both church and Christian is attributed to his having bought us with his own blood. If the church was worth his blood, is it not worth our labor? The privilege of serving it is established by the preciousness of the price paid for its purchase.

Justification .. justification takes us to the lawcourt. For justification is the opposite of condemnation (Ro 5:18), and both are verdicts of a judge who pronounces the accused either guilty or not guilty. Forgiveness remits our debts and cancels our liability to punishment; justification bestows on us a righteous standing before God.

[re. salvation by grace] There is no co-operation here between God and us, only a choice between two mutually exclusive ways, his and ours.

Grace and faith belong indissolubly to one another, since faith's only function is to receive what grace freely offers.

Reconciliation .. The fourth image of salvation, which illustrates the achievement of the cross, is reconciliation. .. its the most personal .. leaving behind the temple precincts, the slave market, and the lawcourts; we are now in our own home with out family and friends. .. to reconcile means to restore a relationship, to renew a friendship. So an original relationship is presupposed which, having been broken, has been recovered by Christ.

... reconciliation is the opposite of alienation ... alienation encapsulates the modern mood ..

... biblical reconciliation begins with reconciliation to God and continues with a reconciled community in christ.

(Ro 5:9-11) .. to be reconciled and to be justified are parallels. The two states are not identical however. Justification is our legal standing before our Judge in the court; reconciliation is our personal relationship with our Father in the home.

Two other NT terms confirm the emphasis that reconciliation is peace with God, namely 'adoption' and 'access'.

Access (prosagoge), another blessing of reconciliation, denotes active communion with God .. it is a Trinitarian experience, in that we have access to the Father through the Son by the Spirit (Eph 2:17-18).

Reconciliation has a horizontal as well as a vertical plane .. (Eph 2:11-22).

"Reconciliation presupposes enmity between two parties. To put it still more exactly: reconciliation, real reconciliation, an objective act of reconciliation, presupposes enmity on both sides; that is man is the enemy of God and that God is the enemy of man. .. our enmity towards God is seen in our restlessness, ranging from frivolity to open renunciation and hatred of God, while his enmity to us is his wrath."

"The work of reconciliation, in the sense of the NT, is a work which is finished, and which we must conceive to be finished, before the gospel is preached .. Reconciliation .. is not something which is being done, it is something which is done."

For our sake God actually made the sinless Christ to be sin with our sins. The God

who refused to reckon our sins to us reckoned them to Christ instead. Indeed, his personal sinlessness uniquely qualified him to bear our sins in our place.

"Justification means this miracle: that Christ takes our place and we take his."

[being reconciled, we are the ambassadors of the reconciliation] .. this ministry is in two stages. It begins as a proclamation that God was in Christ reconciling and that he made Christ to be sin for us. It continues with an appeal to people to be reconciled to God, that is, avail yourselves of the offered terms of reconciliation with God. We must keep these distinct. God finished the work of reconciliation at the cross, yet it still is necessary to sinners to repent and believe and so be reconciled to God. It is not enough to expound a thoroughly orthodox doctrine of reconciliation if we never beg people to come to Christ. The rule should be 'no appeal without a proclamation, and no proclamation without an appeal'.

In issuing this appeal, we are Christ's ambassadors'.

THE REVELATION OF GOD

The achievement of Christ's cross must be seen in terms of revelation as well as salvation. Through what God did there for the world, he was also speaking to the world. Just as people disclose their character in their actions, so God has showed himself to us in the death of his Son.

The glory of God .. According to John's Gospel, Jesus referred to his death as a 'glorification', the event through which he and his Father would be supremely 'glorified' or manifested.

.. in the death of Christ, God has given us a clear, public demonstration of both his justice and his love.

The justice of God .. Men of moral sensitivity have always been perplexed by the seeming injustice of God's providence.

.. Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, was 'to demonstrate his justice'.

The love of God .. God's love also seems to be incompatible with the prevailing injustices in the world .. how can the many horrors in the world be reconciled with a God of love? .. why does he allow them?

The cross however demonstrates God's own love for us .. He gave His son .. to die .. for us.

The value of a love gift is assessed both by what it costs the giver and by the degree to which the recipient may be held to deserve it.

The wisdom and the power of God .. the main theme of I Cor 1:17-2:5 .. contrasted with wisdom and power of the world. The gospel of the cross will never be a popular message, because it humbles the pride of our intellect and character.

THE CONQUEST OF EVIL

It is impossible to read the NT without being impressed by the atmosphere of joyful confidence which pervades it, and which stands out in relief against the rather jejune religions that often pass for Christianity today. There was no defeatism about the early Christians; they spoke rather of victory.

Here .. a further a motif in the achievement of Christ's cross .. the cross secured the conquest of evil.

John Eadie:

"Our redemption is a work at once of price and of power - of expiation and of conquest. On the cross was the purchase made, and on the cross was the victory gained. The blood which wipes out the sentence against us was there shed, and the death which was the death-blow of Satan's kingdom was there endured."

The victory of Christ .. What the NT affirms, in its own uninhibited way, is that at the cross Jesus disarmed and triumphed over the devil, and all the 'principalities and powers' at his command.

How did God through Christ win the victory over him? The conquest is depicted in Scripture as unfolding in six stages, although the decisive defeat of Satan took place at the cross. **Stage one** is *the conquest predicted*. .. first given by God himself in the Garden of Eden as part of his judgement on the serpent (Gen 3:15) .. the woman's seed is identified as the Messiah, through whom God's rule of righteousness will be established and the rule of evil eradicated. Every OT text that declares God's present rule or his future rule over the nations .. may be understood as a further prophecy of the ultimate crushing of Satan.

The second stage was *the conquest begun* in the ministry of Jesus. .., Satan made different attempts to get rid of Him .. Herod's murder of children .. the wilderness temptation .. the crowds resolve to force him into a politico-military kingship .. Peter's contradiction of the necessity of the cross .. Judas' betrayal. But Jesus was determined .. announced that through him God's kingdom had come upon that very generation .. mighty works were visible evidence of it.

The third and decisive stage, *the conquest achieved* \, at the cross. Jesus, referring to the "prince of this world", added that his time was come (i.e. to launch his last offensive). But by His death he destroyed him who held the power of death (Hb 2:14-15) (Col 2:13-15).

Paul .. two different aspects of the saving work .. forgiveness of sins and the cosmic overthrow of the principalities and powers (re. Col 2). ..

Three verbs to portray their defeat .. the first, means he stripped them either of their weapons and so disarmed them or of their dignity and might and so degraded them; secondly, he made a public spectacle of them; thirdly, triumphing over them by the cross.

He overcame the devil by totally resisting his temptations .. he persevered in the path of obedience .. the devil could gain no hold on him, and had to concede defeat.

The victory of Christ, predicted immediately after the fall and begun during the ministry, was decisively won at the cross. its remaining three stages were the outworking of this.

Fourthly .. the resurrection was *the conquest confirmed and announced*. We are not to regard the cross a defeat and the resurrection as victory. .. the cross was the victory won and the resurrection the victory endorsed, proclaimed and demonstrated. It was impossible for death to keep hold on Jesus, for death had already been defeated.

Fifthly, *the conquest extended* as the church goes out on its mission, in the power of the Spirit, to preach Christ crucified as Lord and to summon people to repent and

believe in him. In every true conversion there is a turning not only from sin to Christ, but from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the power of God ... Every Christian conversion involves a power encounter in which the devil is obliged to relax his hold on somebody's life and the superior power of Christ is demonstrated.

Sixthly, we are looking forward to the *conquest consummated* at the Parousia (rapture). The interim between the two advents is to be filled with the church's mission.

.. the death and resurrection of Jesus belong together in the NT, and that one is seldom mentioned without the other.

re: the relation between Jesus' death and resurrection:

"There can be no salvation from sin unless there is a living saviour: this explains the emphasis laid by the apostle on the resurrection> But the living One can be a saviour only because he has died: this explains the emphasis laid on the cross. The Christian believes in a living Lord, or he could not believe at all; but he believes in a living Lord who died an atoning death, for no other can hold the faith of a soul under the doom of sin."

The gospel includes the death and the resurrection of Jesus, since nothing would have been accomplished by his death if he had not raised from it. Yet the gospel emphasizes the cross, since it was there that the victory was accomplished. The resurrection did not achieve our deliverance from sin and death, but has brought us an assurance of both.

Entering into Christ's victory ... For Christians as for Christ, life spells conflict; ... it should also spell victory.

The victory of the Christian consists of entering into the victory of Christ and enjoying the benefits. .. it's not quite as simple as that however, for though the devil has been defeated, he has not yet conceded defeat. This is the reason for the tension we feel in both our theology and our experience. On the one hand we are alive, seated and reigning with Christ, as we have just seen, with even the principalities and powers of evil placed by God under his feet; on the other hand we are warned that these same spiritual forces have set themselves in opposition to us, so that we have no hope of standing against them unless we are strong in the Lord's strength and clad in his armor.

Many Christians choose one or the other of these positions or oscillate steadily between them. Some are triumphalists, who see only the decisive victory of Christ and overlook the apostolic warnings against the powers of darkness. Others are defeatists, who only see the fearsome malice of the devil and overlook the victory over him which Christ has already won. The tension is part of the Christian dilemma between the 'already' and the 'not yet'.

Another way of approaching this tension is to consider the implications of the verb *katargeo*, .. often translated as destroy .. means to make ineffective or inactive .. and is used of unproductive land or trees (still there, but barren). When this verb is applied to the devil, and to our fallen nature and to death, we know that these have not yet been completely destroyed. For the devil is still very active, our fallen nature continues to assert itself, and death will go on claiming us until Christ comes. It is not, then, that they have ceased to exist, but that their power has been broken. They have not been abolished, but they have been overthrown.

(I John 3:8) .. lit. to undo .. to do away with the works of the devil. He came to confront and defeat the devil, and so undo the damage he had done. So the four works of

the devil from which christ frees us, on which the NT writers concentrate, are the law, the flesh, the world, and death.

First, .. no longer under the tyranny of the law .. that enslaved .. that in condemning our disobedience brought us under it's curse or judgement.

Secondly, .. no longer under the tyranny of the flesh .. our fallen nature .. what we were by birth, inheritance, and upbringing .. before Christ renewed us; what we were in Adam, characterized by self-centeredness and a catalogue of other outworkings ..

Thirdly, .. no longer under the tyranny of this world .. that as the flesh is the foothold that the devil had within us, the world is the means through which he exerts pressure upon us from without.

Fourthly, .. no longer under the tyranny of death .. christ is able to set free those who all their lives have been held in slavery by their fear of death .. because by his own death he has destroyed (deprived of power) him who holds the power of death - that is the devil (Heb 2:14).

The Book Of Revelation .. No other Nt book bears a stronger testimony to Christ's victory than the book of Revelation .. more than half the occurrences of the 'victory' word group (nikao, to overcome and nike, victory) are to be found in this book.

IV. LIVING UNDER THE CROSS

THE COMMUNITY OF CELEBRATION

The purpose of Christ's self giving on the cross was not to just save isolated individuals .. but to create a new community whose members would belong to him .. this would be nothing less than a renewed and reunited humanity .. it would incorporate Jew and gentile on equal terms .. in fact including representatives from every nation. The community of Christ is the community of the cross. Having been brought into being by the cross, it continues to live by and under the cross. Our perspective and our behavior are now governed by the cross. It is not just a badge which identifies us, and the banner under which we march, it is the compass which gives us our bearings in a disoriented world. It revolutionizes our attitude to god, to ourselves, and to other people both in and out of the Church

A New Relationship .. several characteristics

First, .. boldness (parresia), which means an outspokenness, frankness, plainness of speech .. both in our witness to the world and in our prayers to God. This freedom of access and this outspokenness of address to God in prayer are not incompatible with humility, for they are due entirely to Christ' merit.

Second, .. love ..

Third, .. joy ..

These are not purely private experiences .. they are to distinguish our public worship .. singing is virtually a unique feature of Christian worship. Paul expresses this sense of joyful exhilaration by alluding to the best know Jewish feast: "Christ our Passover" .. therefore let us keep the Festival .. (ICor 5:7).

Christ's Sacrifice and Ours

Five ways .. what we do at the Lord's supper is related to the self sacrifice of Christ on

the cross. **First**, we *remember* his sacrifice .. (I Cor 11:24-25). **Second**, we *partake* of its benefits, . this goes beyond commemoration to communion (koinonia) .. (I Cor 10:16). **Third**, we *proclaim* his sacrifice .. (I Cor 11:26). **Fourth**, we *attribute our unity* to his sacrifice .. we come together to celebrate .. (I Cor 11:20). **Fifthly**, we *give thanks* for his sacrifice, and in the token of our thanksgiving offer ourselves as living sacrifices to his service .. (Rom 12:1).

SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND SELF-GIVING

The cross revolutionizes our attitude to ourselves as well as to God. .. of how we should regard ourselves .. it calls us both to self-denial and self-affirmation.

Self Denial .. "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." Our cross then, is not an irritable husband or a cantankerous wife. It is instead the symbol of death to self.

To deny ourselves is behave towards ourselves as Peter did toward Jesus .. the verb (aparneomai) - to disown, repudiate, to turn your back on. Self denial is not denying to ourselves certain luxuries .. though it may include those things .. it is the disowning, renouncing our supposed right to our own way. It is to turn away from the idolatry of self-centeredness.

Paul, in his letters, refers to three different deaths and resurrections .. **first**, death to sin and subsequent life to God; **second**, death to self .. something we must deliberately do to our-selves, through the power of the Spirit; **third**, the carrying about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our bodies (II Cor 4:9-10).

The first is legal, the second is moral, the third is physical.

Self-affirmation .. along with Jesus' explicit call to self-denial is his implicit call to self-affirmation (which is not at all the same as self-love)

Firstly .. Consider His teaching about people .. he spoke of the value of people in God's sight.

Secondly .. There was also His attitude to people .. he despised nobody and disowned nobody .. he went out of his way to honor those whom the world dishonored.

Third .. we must remember His mission and death for people .. he had come to serve, not be served.

Spheres of Service .. We know in theory the paradoxical principle that suffering is the path to glory .. but we are reluctant to apply this principle to mission, as the Bible does. Douglas Webster, "Mission sooner or later leads into passion. In Biblical categories .. the servant must suffer .. Every form of missions leads to some form of the cross. The very shape of mission is cruciform. We can understand mission only in terms of the cross .."

The cross lies at the heart of every mission. For the cross-cultural missionary it may mean costly individual and family sacrifices, the renunciation of economic security and professional promotion ... repenting of pride and prejudice of supposed cultural superiority, and the modesty (and sometimes frustration) of serving under national leadership.

The cross calls us to a much more radical and costly kind of evangelism than most churches have begun to consider, let alone experience.

LOVING OUR ENEMIES

To live under the cross means that every aspect of the Christian community's life is shaped and colored by it. .. it also directs our conduct in relation to others, including our enemies.

Conciliation and discipline .. the instruction to live at peace with everyone is qualified by the two conditions .. if it is possible and as far as it depends on you (Ro 12:18).

Peace-making is to modeled after our heavenly Father .. this makes it quite different from appeasement. Peace which God secures is never cheap .. it is always costly (Col 1:20).

Honesty .. may uncover unsuspected faults .. which necessitate the acknowledgement without resorting to face saving subterfuges. If we are to blame their will be the humility of apologizing, the deeper humiliation of making restitution where this is possible. If we haven't done the wrong, there may be the risk of bearing the embarrassment of reproofing or rebuking the other person, risking forfeiting of his or her friendship. Although the followers of Jesus never have the right to refuse forgiveness, let alone take revenge, we are not permitted to cheapen forgiveness by offering it prematurely when there has been no repentance.

The incentive to peace-making is love, but it degenerates into appeasement whenever justice is ignored.

Parental love doesn't eliminate discipline (Hb 12:5-8). Genuine love gets angry too. Justice without mercy is too strict, and mercy without justice is too lenient.

The NT clearly instructs us about discipline, on the one hand it is necessary for the church's holiness, and on the other its constructive purpose, namely, if possible, to win over and restore the offending member. The object of discipline was not to humiliate, let alone alienate, but rather to reclaim. Jesus laid down a procedure which would develop by stages. **First** .. a private, one to one confrontation with the offender. If there is refusal, **secondly** several other are to be involved to establish the rebuke. If there is yet a refusal, **thirdly** .. the church is to be told .. so that he may have a chance to repent. If obstinance persists, excommunication is the last resort (Mt 18:15-17).

The Christian's Attitude Toward Evil .. (Ro 12:9,14 - 13:7) .. evil is to be hated. When love is sincere, it is without hypocrisy .. it is morally discerning. Compromise with evil is incompatible with love.

Evil is not to be repaid .. do not take revenge (Ro 12:17,19). Revenge and retaliation are forbidden to the people of God. Instead, what we to do what is right.

Evil is to be overcome .. it is one thing to hate evil and another to refuse to repay it; but better still is to conquer or overcome it. We are to wish good to people by blessing them .. to do good by serving them. To heap coals of fire . a figure of speech for causing and acute sense of shame .. not in order to hurt or humiliate .. but to bring to repentance.

SUFFERING AND GLORY

First, according to the bible, suffering is an alien intrusion into God's good world, and will have no part in his new universe. It is a satanic and destructive onslaught against the Creator. The book of Job makes that clear. So does Jesus as he describes an infirm woman as being "bound by Satan", his rebuking of disease as he rebuked

demons, and Paul's reference to his thorn in his flesh as being a messenger of Satan and Peter's portrayal of Jesus' ministry as healing all who were under the power of the devil. Whatever may be said about the good that God can bring out of suffering, we must not forget that it is good out of evil.

Second, suffering is often due to sin .. not only original sin, but contemporary sin. Sometimes suffering is due the sin of others .. or it can be the consequence of our own sin.

Thirdly, suffering is due to our human sensitivity to pain .. physical or emotional. But these give valuable warning signals, necessary for personal and social survival. (It serves as a warning or indicator that something is wrong)

Fourthly, suffering is due to the kind of environment in which God has placed us.