
THE CROSS: A UNIVERSAL SYMBOL OF CHRISTIANITY AND ITS SIGNIFICANT TO THE CHRISTIANS.

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ABSTRACT

Every religion and ideology has its visual symbol which illustrates a significant feature of its history or believes. Christianity then is no exception in having a visual symbol. Cross is an instrument for execution consisting of an upright beam left permanently in the ground surmounted by a cross- beam, Which might also be attached a little below the top of the upright .The condemned prisoner himself carried the platinum to the place of execution , where he was stripped naked. , his arms were bound to the cross beam and his legs left suspended until he died of thirst or starvation. crucifixion was unknown in Israel during Old Testament times , it was normally used by the Persia. from where the Greeks and Romans adopted it .The work or the paper will feature, the importance of the symbol .though it was initially associated with the accused person , The paper will as well look into the facts that surrounded Jesus crucifixion ,for instance the medical knowledge was not very advanced at that time ;even that , the disciples were ignorant, which it was said that resurrection was claimed instead of resuscitation from the dead ;Though, the cross was initially rejected or avoided due to its direct association with the execution of a common criminal.

INTRODUCTION

David Noels (1922,) in his work, explained crucifixion as the act of railing or bridging a living victim or sometimes a dead person to a cross or stake or a tree. According to Roman law, crucifixion was reserved for slaves and non-Roman citizens for particularly grave crimes, David Noel further explained that Roman must have taken over the practice from the Greek, for instance the criminal were normally or a times fastened to a flat board for public display ,torture or execution ,this form of punishment closely resembled crucifixion whenever the victims were nailed to the planks. Dannny Mncan is of opined that death is universal experience of human kind ,and that Jesus crucifixion on the cross is classic, probably most popular and detailed eye witness account of an ancient execution by crucifixion that we have available to us . In other words, the cross of Christ , make us to understand that crucifixion seems to have invented by barbarians on the edge of the know world and taken over from them by both Greeks and Roman and that it is probably the most cruel method of execution over practiced, for deliberately delayed death until maximum torture which included a flogging beforehand .The victims carried the cross or at least at transverse beam to the place of execution , where they were stripe and nailed on a small; wooden peg in the upright beam. The feet or heels of the victims were bound or nailed to the upright stake. As crucifixion damaged no vital organ death could come slowly, sometimes after several days of citron pain. Roman frequently employed the

sadistically cruel and utterly shameful death by crucifixion to uphold civil authority and preserve law and order against troublesome animals, slave and rebels in Palestine. Crucifixion was a public reminder of Jewish servitude to a foreign power.

THE SIGN AND SYMBOL OF THE CROSS

Sign translates in Hebrew "OTH" in the use of the term in the Bible one must underline its poetic value as a means to know the existence and character of an unseen reality, and its function as a memorial of a past event as well as a pledge or guarantee for the future. In the case of pacts, contracts, promises and so on, the sign is the pledge or guarantee that is seen and can be verified that certain terms were agreed to and at the same time the pledge remains on as a reminder to the contracting parties of the pact that has been entered into, for example the rainbow was the sign of the covenant of God with Noah (Genesis 9;16) Circumcision is the sign, memorial and pledge of the covenant of God with Abraham (Genesis 17;11) The Sabbath is the sign of the covenant with the Israelites (Exodus 13;13) Rehab asks and obtains a sign which is the pledge and guarantee of her safety when the Israelites capture the city of Jericho (Joshua 2; 12). Furthermore, Every religion and ideology has its visual symbol, which illustrates a significant feature of its history or beliefs. John Stott (1986) has this to say that ancient Judaism avoided visual signs and symbol for fear of infringing the second commandment which prohibits the manufacture of images. But modern Judaism now employs the so called shield or star of David a hexagram formed by combining two equilateral triangles. If speak of God's covenant with David and that messiah would descend from him and many more. It is of interest that, this same sign CROSS is recorded of Constantine the first Emperor of Roman Emperor become a Christian, because of the sign that on the eve of vital battle, he had a vision of a cross spanning the sky and was told that this sign would bring victory to Constantine. Constantine troop dispal the sign and the battle was won. Whatever the truth of this sign, and the New Testament writes were far from seeing the cross as a symbol. Christianity would have chosen any symbol, but instead, the chosen symbol came to be a simple cross. According to John Stott declared that its two bars were already a cosmic symbol from remote antiquity of its axis between heaven and earth. The crucifix that is a cross to which is a cross to which a figure of Christ is attached cross does not appear to have been used before the sixth century. John Stott made it cleared that one of the person involved in painting, engraving the cross as a pictorial symbol from the second century was Tertullian, the North African Lawyer theological who flourished about A. D. 200. It is rather that the symbol of the Christian church should be a cross. We are so used to this that its strangers escape as in the early church. A cross was the last thing that any normal person would have been proud of, since it was simply a means of executing criminals and people thought of it as they would today of gallows or the electric chair, worse than this, it was a type of execution, so degrading and horrible that it might not be employed to kill a Roman citizens, crucifixion was the typical death of a slave; yet, chosen by the early Christians as their symbol; for the whole life for the whole life of the church depends on the death and risen life of Jesus Christ. Anderson U.D.(1969) said that the theory was first

propounded by Venturi at the end of eighteenth century said that Jesus was certainly nailed to the cross but he did not really die, that, what happened was that pain and loss of blood caused him to swoon and appeared to be dead. Do not gospels themselves recorded that Pilate was surprised that he was DEAD ALREADY(Mark15;44.)

Medically, the medical knowledge was not very advanced at that time. So Jesus was taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb, in the mistaken belief that life was extinct, then the cool restfulness of Joseph Aramathea's sepulcher so far revived him that he was eventually able to emerge from the grave but his ignorant disciples could not accept this as a mere resuscitation and proclaimed it as a resurrection from death. Now objection to Venturiri original suggestion, the 4th gospel is emphatic that the steps were taken to make certain that Jesus was dead. that surely it was confirmed and it must have been the reason for the spear thrust in his side. Now of the fact, that Jesus was crucified, there would seem to be virtually no room for denial or debate; to doubt this would be to question the historicity of Jesus himself. The cross has become such a symbol of heroic self sacrifice, and such a focal point of religion devotion, that it is difficult to realize, and the closet modern parallel would be a gallows or hangman, noose, there was nothing either or romantic or mystical about crucifixion in the Roman empire it was an all too common form of execution.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CROSS TO CHRISTIANS

First and foremost, the symbol marks the purpose of the coming of Christ (1tim;1:15) this is faithful saying and worth of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came to save sinners we should not forget that it is an echo of the savior declaration when he was on earth. The son of man came not to be ministered into but to minister and to give his life as a ransom and emphasized in the hearing of men and women that Jesus our leader came to die, because he came to deal with sin.

Secondly, the cross is the pledge of the return of Christ and the reunion of loved ones who have gone before (1 thessa;4:4to16) the first coming of our Lord Jesus and its purpose is the ground of our hope that its purpose will be realized. To the denial of the personal coming of the Lord Jesus Christ the answer is the cross. The cross is the pledge of the returned of Christ. Thirdly, the cross is the secret of our Christian life, it is the secret our own personal life the letter "I" is the representative of the self life also even in the word Sin, it will not complete if the letter is not inclusive, which has been the cause of all enmity in the human heart toward God and source of all the weakness of human service of God, ever since the fall of man and it has to be dealt with by crossing it, to make it cross that is additional (EMMANUEL)God is with us)we should not forget that Apostle Paul declared that it is not self crucifixion, we are crucified with Christ, and that is a fact of God on which our faith is to rest for continuous deliverance and victory. The old saints were found of motts and symbol of their favorites symbols was a picture of the face of Christ with lighted candle before it and the motto "MAY I WASTE SO I SHOW THE FACE OF CHRIST" I am crucified with Christ, Christ lived in me while the second secret, cross

is the secret of life for other in the service, death worked in this but life in us in us as Paul apostle put it . also the cross makes it possible the gifts of the spirit ,the work of Christ in his atonement , sacrifice on Calvary always and Pentecost are inseparable, Calvary always sending man back to God , the man who stop at Calvary arrest the plan of God , one can never know the power of protector unless the power of the cross is working in you ;the cross is the source of all victory and is fivefold victory and these can be seen in (1 cor.15 17,Gal.2;20col.5;24)The cross also creating the obligation for holiness, Moreover, the cross spring forth Christian zeal and give us assurance of immortality so cross find us out by where we are by nature and placed us where we shall be by grace the cross begins with life and take unto life abundantly, that is forever .Finally, we may conclude by borrowing from the work of Peter cousins who has this to say that the death of Christ throughout the history of the cross of Christ it has brought us fellowship with God and given strength to the Christians whenever the church or Christian forget this fact this result has been weakness and decay.

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