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devotees of western-styled progress; they are not people who isolate themselves in a “little West” with all the comforts of the consumer society in the midst of a poverty-stricken “mission field”. They are pilgrims on the way to “the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” ([Heb. 11:10](#)), people whose life-style sets an example of Christian stewardship.

There is an urgent need today for models of mission fully adapted to a situation characterized by a yawning chasm between rich and poor. Their models of evangelism and service built on the affluence of the West condone this situation and condemn the indigenous churches to permanent dependence. In the long term, therefore, they are inimical to mission. The challenge both to Christians in the West and Christians in the underdeveloped countries is to create models of mission centered in a prophetic lifestyle, models which will point to Jesus Christ as the Lord over the totality of life, to the universality of the Church, and to the interdependence of men in the world.

Over twenty years ago Max Warren claimed that “partnership [p. 245](#) is an idea whose time has not yet full come”¹². The question today is whether partnership will have to survive again for twenty years as an idea, or whether the Church is ready to put it into practice for the sake of the Gospel now—at last.

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The Place of the Cross in the Evangelistic Message

by DR. J. B. A. KESSLER

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TWENTY-FIVE years ago the cross occupied a central place in the evangelistic message of the great majority of the Evangelical churches in Latin America, but the writer of this article has doubts about whether this is really so today. Not only is the cross missing from many evangelistic sermons, tracts and modern choruses, but the concepts which underlie the New Testament teaching on the cross seem to be receiving less and less attention. This change can be ascribed to three factors: first the emphasis placed by Liberation Theology on the Kingdom of God rather than on conversion; second the emphasis of the Charismatic movement on the Spirit and third the growing influence of secularism which finds the message of the Cross to be both offensive and inexplicable. Liberation theology has undoubtedly helped the churches to a deeper understanding of their duty towards the world and the Charismatic movement has given them a new appreciation of the spiritual gifts and resources at their disposal for this task, but the question remains whether the churches twenty-five years ago were wrong in giving the Cross such a central place, or

¹² *Partnership: The Study of an Idea* (London; SGM Press Ltd., 1956), p. 11.

whether today these same churches are in danger of missing out an essential element from their message.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The difficulty the modern mind has with the cross is nothing new. In spite of the fact that our Lord explained to His disciples three times that “He had to go to Jerusalem and there to suffer much from the elders, chief priests and doctors of the law; to be put to death and to be raised on the third day” ([Matthew 16:21](#), [17:22–23](#), & [20:17–19](#)) “they understood nothing of all this; they did not grasp what He was talking about; its meaning was concealed from them” ([Luke 18:34](#)). It is very significant, therefore, that [p. 247](#) when they came to write the Gospels they not only gave a disproportionate amount of space to the crucifixion and the events immediately surrounding it but they gave the Cross a key place in our Lord’s own thoughts about His mission. The statement “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” ([Mark 10:45](#)) is paralleled by a similar passage in Matthew and is supported by the words recorded in [Luke 12:50](#) “I have a baptism to undergo and what constraint I am under until the ordeal is over” in which our Lord is undoubtedly referring to His crucifixion. In [John 12:27](#) our Lord says “Father save me from this hour. No, it was for this that I came to this hour. Father glorify thy Name” and the context (see [John 12:23–24](#)) makes it clear that the hour referred to could only be the Cross.

Paul in his evangelistic work struck the same wall of incomprehension “We proclaim Christ—yes, Christ nailed to the cross, and though this is a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Greeks” ... “I resolved that while I was with you I would think of nothing but Jesus Christ—Christ nailed to the cross” ([1 Corinthians 1:23](#) & [2:2](#)). With one exception, all of Paul’s evangelistic messages recorded in the Acts give an important place to the Cross. The exception is his discourse on the Areopagus (see [Acts 17:22–23](#)) and some commentators ascribe his determination on arriving in Corinth shortly afterwards to think of nothing but Jesus Christ—Christ nailed to the cross—to the relative failure of his preaching in Athens. Be that as it may when Paul gives a summary of the message he received and which it was his task to hand on he writes “First and foremost, I handed on to you the facts which had been imparted to me: that Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the Scriptures ...” ([1 Corinthians 15:3](#)).

A review of the Petrine and Johannean writings would lead to basically the same conclusion, namely, that together with the resurrection, the cross forms the core of the evangelistic message of the apostolic church. What excuse can there be then for not giving the cross a central place in today’s preaching? It is said that until fairly recently people were accustomed to thinking in sacrificial terms, but of late the language in which the message of the cross has traditionally been presented has become meaningless except to a group of insiders. The fact, alluded to above, that [p. 248](#) the message of the cross has always struck a barrier of incomprehension, weakens but does not invalidate this argument. The present day hesitancy in presenting the message of the cross is indeed partly due to problems of language. The fact, however, that the cross formed such a key element of the apostolic message should be an indication to us that something basic was at stake, and if this is so it must be possible to re-express it in terms which are understandable today.

THE CROSS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. The Lamb in the Exodus story ([Exodus 12:21–27](#) & 46)

Both John (see [John 19:36](#)) and Paul (see [1 Corinthians 5:7-8](#)) indicate that there is a relation between the pascal lamb and our Lord in His death. Just as on that dread night, “not a house in Egypt was without its dead” ([Exodus 12:30](#)), but all the Israelites who had painted their doorposts with blood were safe, so at the cross, the world and its prince were judged ([John 12:31](#)), but every repentant sinner continues to be saved. In Egypt the distinction was between the Egyptian and the Israelite who might be living beside him, but at the cross the distinction is between the sinner who is forgiven and his sin which is condemned (see [Romans 8:3](#)).

2. The Bronze Serpent ([Numbers 21:4-9](#))

Our Lord himself uses this strange story to illustrate His coming crucifixion (see [John 3:14-15](#)). The Israelites who had been bitten by snakes would have died long before being able to present a sacrifice for sin at the tabernacle in accordance with all the stipulations of the law and so the Lord granted them an emergency measure. All who looked to the serpent of bronze were healed of the snake poison and no doubt afterwards presented the required sacrifice. In the same way, because of our inability to repent adequately before the Lord, we should all have died, had not God provided His crucified Son as an emergency measure, so that all who look to Him in faith are healed and can bring forth due fruits of repentance.

3. The servant of God who feels himself abandoned ([Psalm 22:1](#))

Jesus went to his “hour” in the belief that His Father would support him there (see [John 16:32](#)). Possibly His agony in Gethsemane was due to an intuition that even His Father was [p. 249](#) going to abandon Him. Be that as it may, our Lord quoted the bitter reproach of the Psalmist on the cross, showing that He had fallen under God’s judgment as had the rest of humanity.

4. The suffering servant of God ([53:4-10](#))

This passage is quoted more often in the New Testament than any other from the Old Testament, and the Lord Himself applied it to His coming passion (see [Luke 22:37](#)). It is emphasized that the Servant is not suffering for his own sins, but that God was laying on Him the sins of us all, in order that the death of the Servant might be our healing and vindication. It is important to note that in the whole of the passage the writer is making a distinction between the Servant and the rest of the people, so as to make clear that the Servant was doing something for us which we would never have done for ourselves.

5. The New Covenant ([Jeremiah 31:31-34](#))

Jeremiah prophesies a new birth which will consist of the Law being written on the will and of a personal knowledge of God. It is important to notice that this new knowledge and relation to God will come about as a result of the forgiveness of sins, “for I will forgive their wrongdoing and remember their sin no more”.

The testimony of the Old Testament can be summarized as follows; the sacrifices prescribed by the law could not assure forgiveness of sins unless these sacrifices were an expression of sincere repentance (see [Psalm 51:16&19](#)). However, the whole history of the Old Testament showed that man is not capable of producing sincere repentance. Through this pessimism however there sounds a note of hope, because God will cleanse His people and will then be able to put His Spirit in them (see [Ezekiel 36:25-27](#)).

SOME ASPECTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TESTIMONY

1. The three Parables of losing and finding ([Luke 15:1-32](#))

At first sight the wonderful story of the Prodigal Son appears to contradict what has been said above. The son brings forth sincere repentance and the father forgives him without the need of any sacrifice. It needs to be remembered, however, that the story is of a son who knew the way home and that it was addressed to people who felt assured that they also knew the way home (see verse 2). Our Lord's disciples, who in this respect were more realistic, were extremely conscious of the fact that they did [p.250](#) not know the way home (see [John 6:68](#) & [14:5](#)). In the three parables our Lord challenged his listeners to repent, but those to whom these stories were directed failed to do so, and once again confirmed what had become apparent in the Old Testament, namely that without God's aid man can not truly repent.

Another important aspect of this teaching is the difference between the first two parables and the last one. In the first two parables the one who has lost something goes out to search for that which is missing, but in the third parable the father makes no move towards the distant country, in spite of the fact that he is aware of where his son is staying and what he is doing (see verse [30](#)). The reason is that had the father done so, the elder son with reason would have accused his father of unjust favouritism. In the same way God cannot pass over the sins of some (see [Isaiah 59:1-2](#)) because that would be an injustice to others, including Himself. The answer of the Gospel to this problem is to place all of us in the "distant country" so that God could show mercy to all mankind ([Romans 11:32](#) & [3:23-24](#)).

2. The Multiplication of the Bread and of the Fishes ([John 6:1-11](#) & [51-54](#))

The discourse our Lord gave after this miracle is related to the Holy Communion and in turn the Holy Communion is closely related to His death. This miracle must then illustrate some aspect of His passion. Just as the boy offered his lunch and our Lord broke it to the blessing of thousands, so in His turn our Lord offered Himself to His Father and was broken for the blessing of the whole world. To the modern mind it seems inconceivable that one could have given His life for the world, just as it is inconceivable that one lunch could have satisfied thousands. Many of the problems which arise for the modern mind in connection with the cross stem from the fact that we have always regarded the resurrection as a great miracle, but not realized that the cross is an equally great, if not greater, miracle. The fact that every illustration of the cross given in the Bible is in itself a miracle should have alerted us to this.

3. Paul's key passage on the cross ([2 Corinthians 5:15-15](#) & [21](#))

"Once we have reached the conclusion that one man died for all, and therefore all mankind has died" (verse [15](#)). In a few words Paul does not explain, but does state, the miracle that occurred at [p.251](#) the cross. God accepted the death of His Son given for all people as the death of all people. The consequence of sin was death, but as in God's eyes all people died with His Son on the cross the consequence of sin has been borne. Nowhere do the apostles try to explain this but they do proclaim it repeatedly. As someone looks to the crucified One with faith, a point of agreement, and therefore of reconciliation, is established between God and himself. With sin out of the way, in principle for all of mankind, God can with perfect justice pour out His grace on the sinner who has agreed with the solution God has put forward (see [Romans 3:35-36](#)). With this grace the sinner can in turn produce both the repentance and the obedience that the Gospel requires.

Paul then continues his argument with these words: “His purpose in dying for all was that men, while still in life, should cease to live for themselves, and should live for Him who for their sake died and was raised to life”. Liberation theology rightly emphasizes the need for those who confess Christ to allow themselves to be crucified with Christ in their identification with the poor, but Paul bases this need of allowing ourselves to be crucified with Christ on what God has already done for us at the cross. To urge people to crucify themselves with Christ prior to an acceptance of the miracle performed for us by God at the cross, is in effect asking them to produce the repentance God requires and, as the Old Testament has shown, this is something that is beyond us.

Finally in verse [21](#) Paul summarizes and repeats his argument: “Christ was innocent of sin and yet for our sake God made Him one with the sinfulness of men”. In the Old Testament sin has the triple meaning of missing the mark ([Numbers 14:40](#)), exceeding limits ([Genesis 20:6](#) and [Leviticus 4:2](#)) and rebellion ([Job 34:37](#) with [Isaiah 1:2](#) & [4](#)) and in our Lord’s passion we see these three elements. Even His disciples felt that He had failed in His mission and missed the mark. The Jewish leaders handed Him over to the Romans because they felt He had exceeded all limits by declaring Himself to be One with the Father, and the Romans executed Him as a rebel. The fact that the Father allowed His beloved Son to be identified with our sin to such an extent that His enemies and even His contemporaries thought that He had been executed as a sinner, proves both how serious sin is for God and the unbelievable depth of His love for us. [p. 252](#)

WHY THEN MUST WE PLACE THE CROSS AT THE CENTRE OF OUR MESSAGE?

First, because our Lord said “I shall draw all men to myself when I am lifted up from the earth” ([John 12:32](#)). The world may be repelled by the cross, but it is also strongly attracted. A message without the cross is a message without one of the strongest drawing powers the gospel has.

Second, because the cross is the solution which God has set forth for sin. A message without the cross must degenerate into some system of salvation by works, which is the danger for Liberation theology and many other theologies as well.

Third, because without the cross there could be no Spirit in the New Testament sense (see [John 7:39](#)). The Holy Spirit without the cross becomes little more than a kind of magical force to help us out of our difficulties. This is a danger in certain parts of the Charismatic or Pentecostal movements.

Fourth, because as Luther pointed out, it is at the cross that God’s heart becomes visible as the God for others, full of love for His creation.

Fifth, because it is at the cross that God’s power is released and the accuser of the brethren is silenced ([Revelation 12:10–11](#)).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PLACE THE CROSS AT THE CENTRE OF OUR MESSAGE?

It certainly does not mean that every evangelistic message must contain an exposition of the theory of the atonement. The present reaction against the message of the cross is in part due to an overemphasis in the past on the mechanism of the atonement. It does mean that except in those cases where we know our listeners to have heard and understood it already, every evangelistic message will contain a clear statement of what God did at the cross in overcoming sin, the root cause of both our personal and our structural miseries.

Beyond that it means that in our approach both to our personal and to world problems, we shall take that which God did, and that which we could never have done for ourselves, as our starting point. The testimony to what God did, is doing and will yet do, will form a vital part of our programmes, because we know that there lie the vital springs of power. We shall not despise small and apparently insignificant things, because we know from the cross that God can use such things to revolutionize the status quo. We p. 253 shall not allow ourselves to be polarized or trapped into either/or situations, because we know from the cross that God can and has broken out of seemingly hopeless deadlocks with solutions that assuredly would never have occurred to man—to Him be the glory for ever and ever.

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The Economic Gospel of Jesus

by VISHAL MANGALWADI

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INTRODUCTION

KALICHARAN LIVES in a village 10 km. from Chhatarpur, M.P., India. He comes from the lowest caste—Basore. Traditionally his family wove baskets from bamboo stolen from the jungles, and earned Re. 1 or Rs. 2 per day. But since the nationalisation of forests, he has had to buy bamboo poles at the rate of Rs. 75 per hundred from the Government. Since he did not have enough working capital he took loans from the money lenders to buy the bamboo in order to carry on the business. But it did not work. Often bamboo was not available at the Government store. Even when it was available the margin of profit was extremely small, not worth the labour. In frustration he gave up the business. Because he could not see his children starving, he used the working capital which he had borrowed, to feed his children. He had no land, no jewellery, no furniture, no utensils that he could sell to pay back the debt. When the interest kept on increasing and the abuse and harassment by the money lender became intolerable he quietly fled from his village to Delhi and started working as a labourer in the better off colonies. He promised his wife that he would save money and come back every six months to return the loan and to look after her and the children. Meanwhile she could work in the fields as a labourer when work was available, and at other times beg or borrow.

Kalicharan has been faithful in returning home twice a year. But the money that he brings back is barely enough to pay the interest of the money lenders. His wife and children continue to exist in hope. She does not complain about the fact that her p. 255 children cannot go to school (even though the education is free) or that they wear rags and have no soap with which to wash. She does not even complain that they eat only dry chapaties, made out of *kodon* and *basara* (a kind of grass seed) twice a day. But she does