

THE OLD CROSS AND THE NEW

A. W. Tozer, Editor of the "Alliance Weekly"

All unannounced and mostly undetected there has come in modern times a new cross into popular evangelical circles. It is like the old cross, but different: the likenesses are superficial; the differences, fundamental.

From this new cross has sprung a new philosophy of the Christian life; and from that new philosophy has come a new evangelical technique—a new type of meeting and a new kind of preaching. This new evangelism employs the same language as the old, but its content is not the same and its emphasis not as before.

The old cross would have no truce with the world. For Adam's proud flesh it meant the end of the journey. It carried into effect the sentence imposed by the law of Sinai.

The new cross is not opposed to the human race; rather, it is a friendly pal, and if understood aright, it is the source of oceans of good clean fun and innocent enjoyment. It lets Adam live without interference. His life motivation is unchanged; he still lives for his own pleasure, only now he takes delight in singing choruses and watching religious movies instead of singing bawdy songs and drinking hard liquor. The accent is still on enjoyment, though the fun is now on a higher plane morally, if not intellectually.

The new cross encourages a new and entirely different evangelistic approach. The evangelist does not demand abnegation of the old life before a new life can be received. He preaches not contrasts but similarities.

He seeks to key into public interest by showing that Christianity makes no unpleasant demands; rather, it offers the same thing the world does, only on a higher level. Whatever the sin-mad world happens to be clamoring after at the moment is cleverly shown to be the very thing the Gospel offers, only the religious product is better.

The new cross does not slay the sinner, it redirects him. It gears him into a cleaner and jollier way of living and saves his self respect. To the self-assertive it says, "Come and assert yourself for Christ." To the egotist it says, "Come and do your boasting in the Lord." To the thrill seeker it says, "Come and enjoy the thrill of Christian fellowship." The Christian message is slanted in the direction of the current vogue in order to make it acceptable to the public.

The philosophy back of this kind of thing may be sincere, but its sincerity does not save it from being false. It is false because it is blind. It misses completely the whole meaning of the cross.

The old cross is a symbol of death. It stands for the abrupt, violent end of a human being. The man in Roman times who took up his cross and started down the road had already said goodbye to his friends. He was not coming back. He was not going out to have his life redirected; he was going out to have it ended.

The cross made no compromise, modified nothing, spared nothing; it slew all of the man, completely and for good. It did not try to keep on good terms with its victim. It struck cruel and hard, and when it had finished its work, the man was no more.

The race of Adam is under death sentence. There is no commutation, and no escape. God cannot approve any of the fruits of sin, however innocent they may appear or beautiful to the eyes of men. God salvages the individual

by liquidating him, and then raising him again to newness of life.

The evangelism which draws parallels between the ways of God and the ways of men is false to the Bible and cruel to the souls of its hearers. The faith of Christ does not parallel the world, it intersects it. In coming to Christ we do not bring our old life up onto a higher plane; we leave it at the cross. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die.

We who preach the Gospel must not think of ourselves as public relations agents sent to establish good will between Christ and the world. We must not imagine ourselves commissioned to make Christ acceptable to big business, the press, or the world of sports, or modern education. We are not diplomats but prophets, and our message is not a compromise but an ultimatum.

God offers life, but not an improved old life. The life He offers is life out of death. It stands always on the far side of the cross. Whoever would possess it must pass under the rod. He must repudiate himself and concur in God's just sentence against him.

What does this mean to the individual, the condemned man who would find life in Christ Jesus? How can this theology be translated into life? Simply, he must repent and believe. He must forsake his sins and then go on to forsake himself.

Let him cover nothing, defend nothing, excuse nothing. Let him not seek to make terms with God, but let him bow his head before the stroke of God's stern displeasure and acknowledge himself worthy to die.

Having done this let him gaze with simple trust upon the risen Saviour, and from Him will come life and rebirth and cleansing and power. The cross that ended the earthly life of Jesus now puts an end to the sinner; and the power that raised Christ from the dead now raises him to a new life along with Christ.

To any who may object to this or count it merely a narrow and private view of truth, let me say: God has set His hallmark of approval upon this message from Paul's day to the present.

Whether stated in these exact words or not, this has been the content of all preaching that has brought life and power to the world through the centuries. The mystics, the reformers, the revivalists have put their emphasis here, and signs and wonders and mighty operations of the Holy Ghost gave witness to God's approval.

Dare we, the heirs of such a legacy of power, tamper with the truth? Dare we with our stubby pencils erase the lines of the blueprint or alter the pattern shown us in the Mount? May God forbid. Let us preach the old cross and we shall know the old power.

Let us often look at Brainerd in the woods of America pouring out his very soul before God for the perishing heathen without whose salvation nothing could make him happy. Prayer — secret, fervent, believing prayer — lies at the root of all personal godliness. A competent knowledge of the language where a missionary lives, a mild and winning temper, a heart given up to God in closet religion—these, these are the attainments which, more than all knowledge, or all other gifts, will fit us to become the instruments of God in the great work of human redemption.

SECRET OF GUIDANCE

"I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee" (Ps. 32:8-9).

The true secret of guidance is found in constant communing with God through His Word and in prayer. He says: "I will guide thee with mine eye." This implies a yieldedness and an obedience to Him in everything and, besides, opens the wondrous life in union with Christ which is expressed by the word fellowship. The soul that thus walks with God tries to hide nothing from Him and has nothing that is not counted His, and in every step depends upon His direction and control. Just as the soul openly tells God all its secrets, so God begins to reveal His secrets to that soul.

Abraham had such fellowship with God that God said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing that I do?" and then revealed His purposes to him. Thus will God guide and help every one who perpetually seeks His face.

When, however, we fail in our communion with God, He has to employ another method. This latter method is not His highest will. It may be termed the method of compulsion, while God's chosen way is the method of communion. He says, "Be not as the horse or the mule whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." Often God's children are like unbroken horses. There is lack of obedience and rebellion against any control. Then He has to put on bit and bridle and use this method to save us from the disastrous consequences of self-will. He permits trials and loss to check us, He uses disappointment and weakness to hold us in. Sorrow and suffering, bereavement and loss, are all permitted to come that we may not fail of the grace of God, nor fail to learn the lessons that He desires to teach.

Paul, when he was Saul, kicked hard against the goads till he gave over the fight at last, and even when an apostle, he had to have a thorn in the flesh, at least for a time.

God's children will have sorrows and sufferings enough if they spend their lives in communion with God, and outpour them for the good of their fellowmen. They may be spared many unnecessary trials if they fully yield to Him and walk the pathway of humility and love.

May He enable us to walk in the ways "which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10).—Heart and Life.

"WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?"

CHILDHOOD—Too young to think—so parents believe!

YOUTH—Too happy to think—time enough!

MANHOOD—Too busy to think—more money first!

MATURITY—Too anxious to think—worry over work!

DECLINING YEARS—Too aged to think—fixed habits!

AS DEATH APPROACHES—Too ill to think—weak and suffering!

DEATH—Too late to think—the spirit has flown!

ETERNITY—Forever to think—God's judgment day!—Biblical Missions.