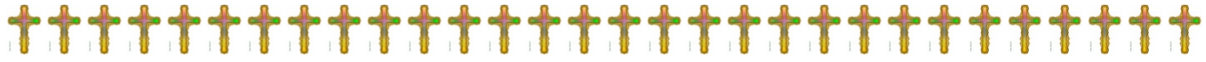


Frederick William Dame

THE MEANINGFUL CROSS AND CRUCIFIXION

(AN EASTER ESSAY, 2016)



A SHORT, ETYMOLOGICAL HISTORY

A *cross* is the form that occurs when one takes two beams or lines and places the short beam or line at a right angle or diagonally over the longer beam or line.

The word **cross** has its etymological origin in the Indo-European stem **kreu-k-**, the meaning of which is *to curve, to buckle under pressure, to warp, to curve*. In Latin it appears as **crux**, meaning *round stake, pole, post or beam with a crossbar or crossbeam*, a martyr stake on which criminals were nailed and executed. It is cognate with Sanskrit *krúñcati*, meaning *it curves*.¹

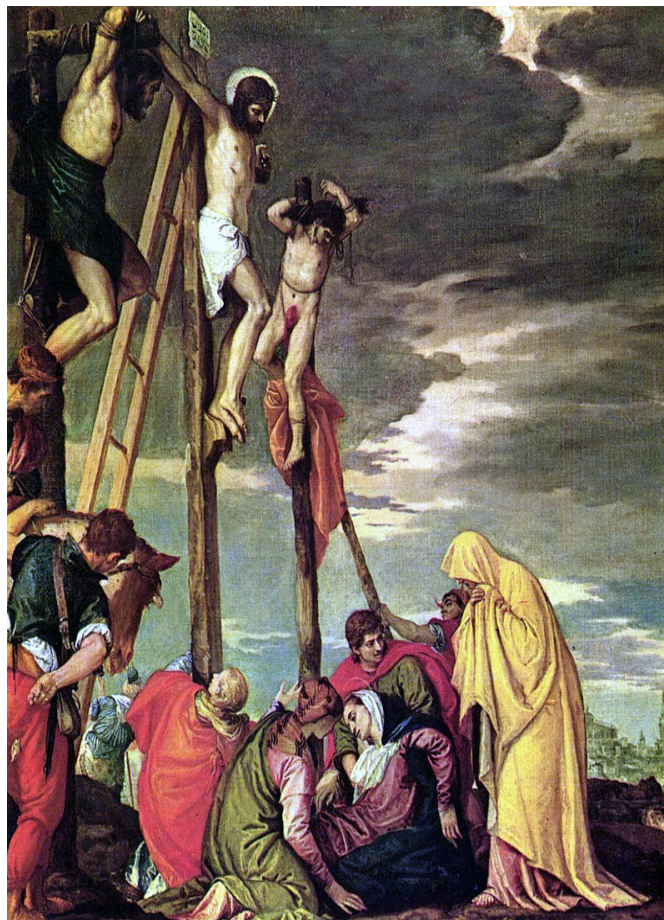
In the process of Christianization, the cross received the carried-over sense of undergoing pain upon a stake and became the terminology of the Christians with the formulation *The Cross of Christ*. This appears in Old High German (8th century) as *krūzi*; Middle High German (12th – 14th centuries) as *kriuz(e)*; in Anglo-Saxon (9th – 12 centuries) as *krūci*, *krūzi*; in Middle North German (c.1050 – c.1350) in the Middle Ages as *krūze*; and in Middle English (11th – 16th centuries) as *croiz*, *crois*, and *crouch*. It appears in Old Irish (7th – 10th centuries) as *crois*; in Old French (9th – 14th centuries) as *croiz* and *crois* which became completely obsolete after approximately 1450.

The work *Ancrene Riwe*, also *Ancrene Wisse*, meaning *Guide for Anchoresse*, is an anonymous monastic manual for anchoresses (similar to nuns) written sometime in the 13th century. Therein appears the word in the verb form *to cross*

¹ Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Volume I, A: Francke Verlag, Tübingen and Basel: 2005, **(s)kreu-k-**, p. 938.

(crossen), to make the sign of the cross.² Soon the term came to mean *the pain and sorrows of Christ* in the form of the *Sign of the Cross*, as well as the German word formation *Kruzifix*, both becoming symbols of the Sorrows of Christ. Beginning in the fourth century and lasting into modern times the Cross venerates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and symbolizes redemption from sins in all of its various aspects.

The term **crucifixion** means *the act of placing one on a cross*. The word comes from *crucifixiōnem*, the Late Latin (3rd – 6th centuries) nominative of *crucifixiō*, from *crucifigere*, meaning *to crucify*. The Indo-European word stem is **dhīgw-** in Latin *figere*, meaning *to fasten, to fix*.³



Calvary, an oil on canvas painting executed between 1580 and 1588 by Paolo Caliari, also known as Paolo Veronese (1528 – 1588), an Italian Renaissance painter who worked in Venice. He is famous for his large paintings of historical and religious occurrences. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus#/media/File:Paolo_Veronese_010.jpg, accessed 3 March 2016.

² Refer to Cate Gunn, *Ancrene Wisse, From Pastoral Literature to Vernacular Spirituality*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff: 2008, passim.

³ Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Volume I, A: Francke Verlag, Tübingen and Basel: 2005, **dhēigu-** p. 243.

THE ORIGIN OF CRUCIFIXION

The origin of crucifixion can be traced back to ancient Persia. Later the punishment was adopted by the Greeks and Romans. It is considered to be one of the most inhumane, dishonourable, and excruciating forms of execution in antiquity. To crucify means to have the hands and feet of a criminal bound and or nailed to a cross, or to hang the corpse or the head on a stake. It is considered to be a capital punishment that was displayed to the public for the simple purpose of humiliation and the striking of fear in a ruler's subjects. Such references are made in the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 21:23.⁴

"the body must not remain hanging from the tree overnight. You must bury the body that same day, for anyone who is hung is cursed in the sight of God. In this way, you will prevent the defilement of the land the LORD your God is giving you as your special possession."

In First Samuel 31:9-10 we read:

"So they cut off Saul's head and stripped off his armor. Then they proclaimed the good news of Saul's death in their pagan temple and to the people throughout the land of Philistia."

This punishment resulted in the deaths of many people, even though they might not have been criminals, but simply opponents of the ruling king or queen. Various accounts of this form of punishment can be traced back to the ancient civilizations of the Persians, the Assyrians, the Scythians, the Germans, the Britons, the Celts, the Carthaginians, and the Romans.

Normally considered to be a slave punishment, also the worst of the criminals were the ones who were crucified together with the traitors, the slaves, and captives from wars. The victims were left hanging in all kinds of weather and were eaten by insects and birds and when the crucified body was decomposed enough; wild animals would feed on the remains as they fell from the cross.

⁴ Consult <http://www.biblestudytools.com/nlt/> from which all references to verses in the Bible in this essay are New Living Testament Translations.

The Romans called crucifixion *broken legs* because the victim's legs were broken to hasten their death.⁵ The Roman-Hebrew historian and scholar Josephus (Titus Flavius Josephus, 37-c. 100), born Joseph ben Matityahu in his work *War* called crucifixion "the most wretched of deaths."⁶ He also records that many victims survived after hanging some days on the cross.⁷

Through the years, the types and shapes of the crosses that were used varied depending on the type of crucifixion. The basic cross structures were/are as follows:

- the *crux simplex*, an upright pole or a tree trunk.
- the *crux commissa*, a vertical beam with a small seating horizontal attachment and a horizontal beam at the top.
- the *crux decussate*, a cross in the form of an X, also called Saint Andrew's Cross, or saltire.
- the *crux immissa*, also called the Latin Cross, as well as the Passion Cross and the *crux capitata*. This cross has a vertical beam that is longer than its horizontal beam placed somewhat above the middle point of the vertical beam. The Western Churches use this as their Christian Cross.

Historically, it was Alexander the Great (356 BC-323 BC) who popularized crucifixion as he made it common during his rule between 332-323 BC. But it was the Roman Empire that limited the execution of humans via crucifixion to people who had been found to have committed treason, slaves who were rebellious, violent offenders of Roman law, and the enemies of the Roman Empire. Taking into consideration the Biblical accounts of crucifixion, we find that the actual procedure of crucifixion was not used continuously in the Old Testament. This is primarily due to the fact that the Jewish people did not see crucifixion as a justified form of punishment. Rather, they looked at it as the most horrible form of death that could be used against any criminal, felon, or even the worst of enemies.

⁵ Cicero, *Philippicae* XIII 12(27). See also the gospel according to Saint John 19:32: "So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus."

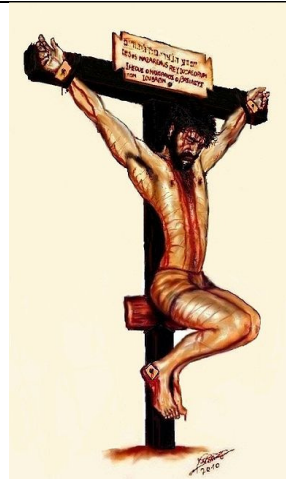
⁶ Josephus, *Jewish Wars* VII, 23 at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2850/2850-h/2850-h.htm>, accessed 3 March 2016.

⁷ Josephus, *The Life of Flavius Josephus* at <http://sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/autobiog.htm>, paragraph 75, accessed 3 March 2016.



Source:
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/8a/Marsyas_hanging_Louvre_Ma542.jpg/174px-Marsyas_hanging_Louvre_Ma542.jpg,
 accessed 3 March 2016.

The figure is Marsyas, a Phrygian river god, hanging on the tree as he is going to be flayed by Apollo. This is a marble, Roman copy of the 1st – 2nd century after a Hellenistic original. Found in Rome, Italy.



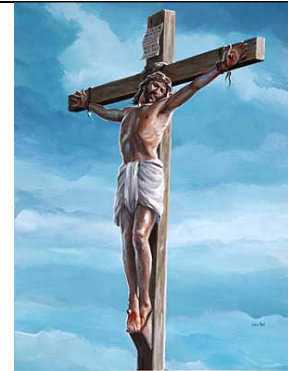
Source:
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/e/e5/Crux_Commissa.jpg/385px-Crux_Commissa.jpg,
 accessed 3 March 2016.

This cross is called the Cross of Tau because this form resembles the Greek letter T. It is also called the Saint Anthony cross. Saint Anthony of Egypt (c. 251-356) wore a tau-form cross on his cloak. The Tau Cross is most often used as a reference to the Franciscan Order. Upon learning that the Pope Innocent III (1160/1161-1216, Pope from 1198) spoke of the Tau symbol, Saint Francis of Assisi (1181/1182-1226) adopted this cross as his personal coat of arms. It is nowadays a symbol of the Franciscan Order.



Source:
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/13/Martyrdom_of_andrew.jpg/120px-Martyrdom_of_andrew.jpg,
 accessed 3 March 2016.

According to writings dated in the fourth century, this cross is named after the Apostle Andrew (first half of the first century) who was crucified on this type of cross and died as a martyr. This diagonal cross is the attribute of Saint Andrew. He is the patron saint of Ukraine, Romania, and Russia. Saint Andrew's Cross resembles the Greek letter chi (X) and is also a symbol for Christ.



Source:
<http://www.nccg.org/cruximmissa.jpg>, accessed 3 March 2016.

This cross can be dated in the fourth century.

Most of the groundplans of Romanic and Gothic church architecture have this type of cross. The transept and the nave meet and cross at the altar. The result is a division into quarters that separates the choir and the altar place from the lay people.

The symbolism of this cross is that it unifies heaven and earth. The vertical portion symbolizes the godly and the horizontal beam symbolizes humanity. The point at which they meet is the bonding of heaven and earth, that is, humanity and the divine.

Once during the observance of the Jewish holiday of the *Feast of the Tabernacles (Sukkot)*, Alexander Jannaeus (c. 127 BC-c.76 BC, ruled from c. 103 BC), the King and High Priest of Judea, during his officiating as the High Priest (*Kohen Gadol*) refused to perform the water libation properly.⁸ He did not pour the water on the altar, but on his feet. Those in attendance were shocked and threw lemons that they carried with them as part of the Sukkot activities at Jannaeus. The people rioted and Jannaeus' soldiers massacred approximately 6000 Pharisees in the Jerusalem Temple courtyard.⁹ This killing was the beginning of the six-year Judean Civil War (c. 93-87 BC).

Jannaeus, who was more concerned with conquest than with religious responsibilities, also ordered the crucifixion of 800 rebels (Pharisees) as a result of the Judean Civil War despite the popular view that crucifixion was a horrible punishment. The post-Hasmonean and Maccabean king Jannaeus crucified 800 rebels that he had ordered brought to Jerusalem. It is reported that the king had the throats of the rebels' wives and their children slit before the rebels' eyes, while he lunched with his court and concubines.¹⁰

In the New Testament, crucifixion was used by the Roman Empire not just to punish rebels and law-breakers, but also to exert power and show authority over the Empire's subjects. Thus, crucifixion was not only used as a form of execution, but also as a method to implant fear of and respect for the governing body.

It cannot be denied that this turning point of the popularity of this form of execution happened when Jesus of Nazareth was crucified. Jesus Christ is the main and fundamental figure of Christianity. His crucifixion has brought about the

⁸ The Feast of the Tabernacles celebrates the exodus of the Israelites from captivity in Egypt and the harvest time of the first settling in the Promised Land. A libation was a common ritual in antiquity. It is a pouring of water, oil, or wine as an offering to a god or spirit in a ceremony held in memory of the dead. Some cultures today still observe this kind of ritual.

⁹ The Hasmonean Dynasty ruled in Judea between 140 and 116 BC. At different times in Hebrew history the Pharisees were a political party, a social movement, and an intellectual school of philosophy in Judea, particularly during the time of Second Temple Judaism. After the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70, the Pharisaic beliefs formed the foundation, i.e., the liturgical-ritualistic basis of Rabbinic Judaism.

¹⁰ <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1144-alexander-jannaeus-jonathan>, accessed 5 March 2016.

comprehension of just how horrible the process is. It did not just result in death but also in a form of humiliation because a person who was to be crucified had to carry the weight of the cross in a parade-like procession while the people in the community watched. After the crucifixion the people being executed were left on display for the community to see and become impressed with this act of crime deterrence. The Roman Empire, or any power, hoped to set an example to the community by imposing fear.

Constantine the Great (*Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus Augustus*, 272-337, Roman Emperor from 306) abolished crucifixion as a form of penal execution for high crimes. This happened because Constantine the Great, believed to be the first Christian Emperor, began an active role in Christianity with the issuance of the *Edict of Milan* in 313, which decriminalized being a Christian, decreed the official toleration of Christianity with other religions, and ordered that Sunday and feasts in memory of Christian martyrs be recognized as days of worship and celebration.¹¹ The abolition of crucifixion is recorded to have been decreed in 337 out of veneration for Jesus Christ. To this day, crucifixion is identified with Christianity and the death of Jesus Christ.

IMPORTANT BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO THE CROSS

The first biblical reference to the cross is in the book of Numbers 21:5-9 of the Old Testament (New Living Translation):

5 and they began to speak against God and Moses. “Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness?” they complained. “There is nothing to eat here and nothing to drink. And we hate this horrible manna!”

6 So the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people, and many were bitten and died.

¹¹ The *Edict of Milan* was co-authored and co-issued by Licinius (*Gaius Valerius Licinianus Licinius Augustus* c. 263-325), Constantine's rival as emperor. Constantine defeated Licinius at the Battle of Chrysopolis (324). Constantine had Licinius executed the next year. See also <http://www.religionfacts.com/conversion-of-constantine>, accessed 5 March 2016.

7 Then the people came to Moses and cried out, “We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take away the snakes.” So Moses prayed for the people.

8 Then the LORD told him, “Make a replica of a poisonous snake and attach it to a pole. All who are bitten will live if they simply look at it!”

9 So Moses made a snake out of bronze and attached it to a pole. Then anyone who was bitten by a snake could look at the bronze snake and be healed!

The aforementioned verses pertain to the wonderful story of the Cross as told in the Old Testament. The serpent represents the sins of men. It is the emblem of the curse (death) that was bestowed upon humanity when Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit of the tree of life and knowledge. The bronze serpent, on the other hand, signifies the judgment of God. The pole is the Cross. The serpent that was told to Moses to be put up on a pole alludes to Jesus being sentenced and nailed on the cross. At the same time, this story is more than just a simple prophecy. It is a direct, symbolical presentation of the events that transpired in the New Testament concerning the Cross and the Crucifixion of Jesus. We only have to look at the crucified Jesus, believe, and become healed from our sins.

The New Testament has sixteen references to the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. They are:

[Matthew 27:35](#) After they had nailed him to the cross, the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice.

[Matthew 27:37](#) A sign was fastened above Jesus’ head, announcing the charge against him. It read: “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”

[Matthew 27:54](#) The Roman officer and the other soldiers at the crucifixion were terrified by the earthquake and all that had happened. They said, “This man truly was the Son of God!”

[Mark 15:24](#) Then the soldiers nailed him to the cross. They divided his clothes and threw dice to decide who would get each piece.

[Mark 15:25](#) It was nine o’clock in the morning when they crucified him.

[Luke 23:33](#) When they came to a place called The Skull (Golgotha), they nailed him to the cross. And the criminals were also crucified—one on his right and one on his left.

[Luke 23:38](#) A sign was fastened above him with these words: “This is the King of the Jews.”

[Luke 23:47](#) When the Roman officer overseeing the execution saw what had happened, he worshiped God and said, “Surely this man was innocent. ”

[John 19:17](#) Carrying the cross by himself, he went to the place called Place of the Skull. (Golgotha).

[John 19:18](#) There they nailed him to the cross. Two others were crucified with him, one on either side, with Jesus between them.

[John 19:19](#) And Pilate posted a sign on the cross that read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”

[John 19:32-33](#) So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they didn’t break his legs.

[John 19:23](#) When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they divided his clothes among the four of them. They also took his robe, but it was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

[John 20:25](#) They told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he replied, “I won’t believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.”

[1 Corinthians 2:2](#) For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified.

[Galatians 2:20](#) My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Thus, the Cross is most apparent in the New Testament with many apostles referring to the Cross in their teachings. It is imperative to note that the Cross in the New Testament does not only speak of the crucifixion of Jesus, but also transcends into the reference to the burdens, struggles, and problems of the people. In the Gospel of Saint Mark 8:34, a different understanding of the Cross is presented:

Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me.

The Cross, as presented here signifies all the experiences of people's lives that brought about humiliation, degradation, suffering, and trials. It speaks of the circumstances in life that challenge pride, expose the weaknesses, and reveal the contents of one's heart. These variables are the ones that Jesus carried on the Cross with Him. He carried the sin of the world, the shame, the pride, the humiliation, and the degradation of men. In this context, the Cross is used to signify such circumstances encountered in life. Moreover, the Gospel of Saint John 3:16 provides another different perspective of the Cross:

"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

This passage speaks of the salvation of men from sin through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. When Jesus died on the Cross, humanity was given an opportunity to be redeemed provided that people accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. This is clearly expressed in Galatians 2:20:

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

THE MEANING OF THE CROSS FOR CHRISTIANITY

The Cross is important to those of the Christian faith. More than the crucifixion of Jesus, the Cross is the revelation of the personality of God that revolves around love and justice. The Cross is the symbolism of God's love for humankind which

includes believers and sinners. His judgment is perfect justice. Therefore, it is necessary for Christians to understand the extent of God's love through the appreciation and the comprehension of the significance of the Cross.

During the early years of Christianity, the cross was used to depict a horrible and gruesome punishment for people. It was a public execution. In contemporary Christianity, on the other hand, the Cross signifies atonement and the forgiveness of sins. The Cross is the embodiment of the love God has for His people that He gave His only begotten Son to save the world from all its transgressions. It is the representation that Jesus triumphed over sin and the curse of death. Jesus conquered death on the Cross, giving people the hope of eternal life in heaven and a new life. Every time that Christians refer to the Cross, they are remembering the sacrifices of Jesus so that the sins of men can be forgiven. People are reminded that the Cross is the ultimate act of God to enable the reconciliation of men and God through Jesus Christ. It is where God's love for humans and His wrath for sins meet. Without the Cross, there will be no salvation and there will be no redemption of sinners.

In addition, the Cross is also symbolic of a place of healing for Christians. Because Jesus was nailed onto the Cross, the wounds of Jesus become the reflection of the healing of the wounds that are caused by sin. The wounds of emotional problems such as depression, guilt, and anger, among others, can be healed upon looking at the Cross of Jesus. The Cross also offers comfort in times of tragedy, trials and sufferings. Isaiah 53:4-5 states that:

Yet it was our weaknesses He carried; it was our sorrows that weighed Him down. And we thought His troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for His own sins!

But He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.

In this regard, it can be seen that the Cross of Jesus provides healing and comfort. However, this must not be taken literally. Clearly, the healing and the comfort provided by the Cross of Jesus are acquired through faith. It is through faith

that Christians reach for the Cross of Jesus for healing and comfort. Hebrews 11:1 reveals that:

Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.

The Cross is the faith of Christians being put into action. Christians believe that Jesus died for mankind's sins and transgressions. The Cross, then, signifies the redemption that God is offering for mankind to avoid the punishment and divine judgment. The Cross is the symbol of healing. The blood and wounds of Jesus as the result of being nailed to the Cross provide healing and comfort to those who believe in Jesus Christ.

CHRISTIANITY OUTLAWS CRUCIFIXION

It has been stated above that Constantine the Great abolished crucifixion as a form of punishment and execution in reverence to the death of Jesus Christ. Although there are some contentions regarding the main reason why Constantine the Great abolished crucifixion, there is only one clear explanation for it. The abolishment was a humane act. It can be said that Jesus Christ died on the Cross in a matter of several hours. However, there were situations wherein people who were nailed on the cross suffered long, excruciating days waiting for death to come.

The abolition of crucifixion can be considered as a bold move for Constantine the Great as this form of execution had been utilized by many empires and rulers in various parts of the world and even became popularized throughout the Roman Empire. The Jews were the main proponents and active supporters of the abolition because the punishment was deemed inhumane and horrible. As a result of the abolition, crucifixion was replaced with execution by hanging. This is characterized by a less painful and faster death. A person to be executed no longer had to suffer for days. Execution by hanging was almost instantaneous and in the opinions of many, more humane.

Today, crucifixion is only a reminder of the foundation of Christianity. In some countries such as the Philippines, the Roman Catholic devotees re-enact the crucifixion of Jesus during the Holy Week. This re-enactment is not limited to an actual person being pseudo-crucified on the Cross, but also includes the procession and the Stations of the Cross.¹² During Holy Week, Roman Catholic devotees can be seen beating themselves with sharpened chains, crowned with branches, and carrying a cross as a way of asking for forgiveness of sins and to commemorate the suffering of Jesus Christ that led to the salvation of men.

Re-Introduction of Crucifixion by Muslims

The Koran Sura 5:33 states that:

“The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be imprisoned; this shall be as a disgrace for them in this world, and in the hereafter they shall have a grievous chastisement.”

It has to be remembered that Constantine the Great had made all the efforts he could exert in order to ensure the abolition of crucifixion on the grounds of its inhuman form of execution and punishment. However, it is also clear that the sharia law as supported by the teachings of the Koran has reintroduced the utilization of crucifixion as a form of punishment for severe acts of violations of Islamic law. Although the sharia law is not in accordance with the democratic laws of the Western Countries such as the United States of America, and European democratic republics, approximately 73 Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran, and Iraq, use the sharia law to prevent crimes and to set examples.

The reintroduction and continued use of crucifixion by some of the Muslim countries must be considered as continuance of a policy out of the past. Even in this present day where republican democracy and human rights are being supported all

¹² <http://thecompleteobamatimeline.com/uploads/3/4/8/7/34872825/easter2013.pdf>, accessed 6 March 2016. The essay vividly presents the fourteen Stations of the Cross.

over the world, the numbers of victims of Islamic crucifixion are growing in number. The Islamic State in Syria (ISIS) published a penal code in January 2015 that included crucifixion as a punishment for murder and stealing.¹³ Already in 2014 ISIS was crucifying people in Syria and in Islamic State in Sirte, Libya, crucifixion is being used as punishment for their opponents¹⁴ Real circumstances pertaining to crucifixion are being reported not just in newspapers but as well in television broadcasts worldwide. CNN has reported incidents in Mosul, Iraq in which children have been decapitated and their heads impaled on stakes.¹⁵ It was stated that the act was committed by the members of the ISIS terrorist group who believe that the enemies of the ISIS are the enemies of Allah and should be punished with crucifixion. In addition, it does not matter whether the victim is an adult or a young child. Moreover, crucifixion is still an important part of Iran's criminal code.¹⁶ In 2009, Hamas in Gaza reinstated the crucifixions of Christians in its penal code.¹⁷ Crucifixion is also used as punishment in Saudi-Arabia, Sudan, and the Ivory Coast.¹⁸

These actions are clear indications of the attempts to revive punishments that the world has deemed barbaric and outdated. This is not to be oblivious to the other acts of amputation for certain crimes. But then again, it cannot be helped but question the authenticity and the reasoning behind the act. To some radical movements, the crucifixion of the enemies of Allah and Islam is justified. To some Muslims and non-Muslims, the act is of great concern and should not be permitted.

¹³ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-publishes-penal-code-listing-amputation-crucifixion-and-stoning-as-punishments-and-vows-to-9994878.html>, accessed 7 March 2016.

¹⁴ <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/04/30/islamic-extremists-now-crucifying-people-in-syria-and-tweeting-out-the-pictures.html> and <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35325072>, respectively, accessed 7 March 2016.

¹⁵ http://www.catholic.org/news/international/middle_east/story.php?id=56481, accessed 7 March 2016.

¹⁶ http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1108208, accessed 7 March 2016.

¹⁷ <http://www.newsmax.com/International/Hamas-bombs-Gaza-Israel/2009/01/09/id/327583/>, accessed 7 March 2016.

¹⁸ <http://www.news.com.au/breaking-news/saudi-beheads-and-nails-murderers-body-to-cross/story-e6frfku0-1225882510806>; <http://www.omgfacts.com/news/7814/Crucifixion-is-still-a-form-of-death-penalty-in-Sudan-and-Iran>; <http://www.webcitation.org/query?url=http://barnabasfund.org/US/News/News-analysis/Brothers-crucified-by-Quattara-forces-in-Ivory-Coast.html&date=2011-07-02>, all accessed 7 March 2016.

Crucifying someone is just a form of nonsense killing and cannot be justified. This is due to the fact that the world, as people know it, is all about human rights, the preservation of life, democracy, and equality regardless of religion, race, political affiliation, and color of the skin. In addition, there are also other forms of crime deterrents that can be utilized in order to ensure and keep the peace and unity in a country. Violence is not the solution to a problem and a mistake cannot be corrected by another mistake. To address the issue can be scary as there are various beliefs surrounding various religions.

THE MUSLIM FEAR OF THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST

One of the teachings of Islam is that Jesus Christ was never crucified. The belief of the Muslims is that Jesus was taken to the heavens by God before the crucifixion. This is clearly in opposition of the beliefs of the Christian faith based on the Bible. The teaching of Islam regarding the non-crucifixion of Jesus can be found in the Koran, Sura 4:157-158:

That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah", but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not:- Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is exalted in power, wise..."

There are various scenarios that can be taken from the Koran's teaching on the crucifixion of Jesus. Firstly, Jesus was able to survive the execution. Secondly, someone else had been crucified in place of Jesus. Thirdly, the execution of Jesus did not transpire. Yet, this teaching is not in accordance with the historical accounts found in the Bible especially in the four gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John which describe that a proper burial was afforded to Jesus as agreed by Pontius Pilate (?? BC – c. 37), the Roman Governor of Judea between 26 and 36. In addition, there were guards who were assigned to the tomb of Jesus so as to ensure that the disciples of Jesus would not steal the body to falsify a resurrection. More importantly, when Jesus died on the Cross, the soldiers pierced the side of Jesus to ensure His death.

Moreover, the claim that another person was crucified in place of the real Jesus Christ can be rooted to the non-biblical *Gospel of Barnabas* (sometime in the 16th century) to which most Muslim apologists refer.¹⁹ The heretical *Gospel of Barnabas* is a written document that speaks of the transformation of Judas to the likeness of Christ. Hence, it was Judas who had been crucified and not Jesus. It also claims that Jesus predicted the arrival of Muhammad as a prophet, that Muhammad is the Messiah and that the Messiah is an Arab, and that Jesus is not the Son of God. However, there is a unanimous agreement by various scholars that this document is only one of the many medieval forgeries. As a matter of fact, there are no pieces of evidence and historical accounts that can support the claim of any Muslim apologist concerning a different person who was crucified other than Jesus or any other claims the *Gospel of Barnabas* makes. Therefore, the *Gospel of Barnabas* does not contain any form of truth in it. The other claim that crucifixion did not happen is also one of the main assertions of Muslim apologists. According to their arguments, crucifixion did not occur and that the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are erroneous and contain nothing but false accounts of the life of Jesus. However, there are sources other than the New Testament and the four gospels that can prove the occurrence of the crucifixion of Jesus. For example, there is evidence in the Jewish Talmud where it says,

"On the eve of the Passover Yeshu (The Munich manuscript adds the Nasorean) was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practised sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.' But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the Passover.... Do you suppose that he was one for whom a defence could be made? Was he not a Mesith (enticer), concerning whom Scripture says, Neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him (Deuteronomy 13:9) With Yeshu however it was different, for he was connected with the government (or royalty, i.e., influential). Our Rabbis taught: Yeshu had five disciples, Matthai, Nakai, Nezer, Buni, and Todah."²⁰

¹⁹ Jan Joosten, *The Gospel of Barnabas and the Diatessaron* in the *Harvard Theological Review*, 95 (1), pp. 73–96.

²⁰ <http://www.skeptically.org/bible/id4.html>, *The Talmud*, Sanhedrin 43a, accessed 7 March 2016.

There is the following historical evidence from Roman sources:

- "Christ ... was executed at the hands of the procurator Pontius Pilate."²¹
- "(Christ was) the man who was crucified in Palestine."²²

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ invokes fear in Muslims. The reason is that Jesus Christ is goodness and love, while Islam is evil and hate. Therefore, Jesus Christ and belief in Him is a holy competition against unholy Muhammad and Islam. Christ said that Hell existed. Muhammad proved the existence of Hell. However it was a living Hell of his own creation.

With Jesus Christ there is no necessity to say *May peace be upon him* or *May Allāh honor him and grant him peace* every time his name is stated. With Muhammad it is different. Shortly before his death Muhammad said, "I have been made victorious with terror (cast in the hearts of the enemy)".²³ Evidently Muslims feel that Muhammad was evil and they hope that at least after his death, he will receive peace. Jesus Christ's victory is in giving everlasting life through His Crucifixion on the Cross! Jesus Christ is Peace; the Peace granted by God, who is surely not a moon god named Allah.

Muhammad stated that Muslims can commit as many sins as they want, if by so doing, Islam is advanced. Allah will provide Muslims with immediate forgiveness. Jesus Christ states that because He has been crucified on the

²¹ Cornelius Tacitus, *Annals*, xv, 44. Consult: P.E. Easterling, E. J. Kenney (general editors), *The Cambridge History of Latin Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1982, reprinted 1996, at http://caio.ueberalles.net/cicero/monografia/The_Cambridge_History_of_Classical_Literature-Kenney_and_Clausen.pdf, p. 892, accessed 7 March 2016.

Stephen Dando-Collins *The Great Fire of Rome The Fall of the Emperor Nero and His City*, Da Capo Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts: 2010, pp. 1-4

Allen Brent, *A political history of early Christianity*, T&T Clark International, London: 2009, pp. 32-34.

Robert Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence*, Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan: 2000, pp. 39 - 53.

²² Lucian of Samosata (c. 115-c. 200) in Graig A. Evans, *The Historical Jesus, Critical Concepts in Religious Studies*, Routledge, London: 2004, pp. 386-387.

²³ From the *Hadith* according to Bukhari, 4.52.220.

Cross, humans will receive salvation. Jesus Christ and the Crucifixion surpass Muhammad's and Islam's doctrine of forgiveness because.²⁴

1. At no place in the Koran or in the propaganda of Muhammad is there a solution for the original sin. The Crucifixion and the Cross provide the only solution for the original sin. (Romans 5:12; 17-19; 6:23).
2. At no place in the Koran or in the propaganda of Muhammad is there a solution for daily sin. The Crucifixion and the Cross provide the only solution for daily sin. (1 John 1: 7-9; 2:1),
3. At no place in the Koran or in the propaganda of Muhammad is there a solution for the curse of the law. The Crucifixion and the Cross provide the only solution for the curse of the law (Galatians 3:10, 13).
4. At no place in the Koran or in the propaganda of Muhammad is there satisfaction for God's justice. The Crucifixion and the Cross provide the only satisfaction for God's justice. (Exodus 34:6-7), (2 Corinthians 5:19, 21).
5. At no place in the Koran or in the propaganda of Muhammad is there provision for the revelation of Love of God. The Crucifixion and the Cross provide the only provision for the revelation of the Love of God (Romans 5:8), (John 3:16).
6. At no place in the Koran or in the propaganda of Muhammad is there fulfillment of the pre-Islamic sacrifices. The Crucifixion and the Cross provide the only fulfillment of the Old Testament Sacrifices. (Leviticus 17:11), (Hebrews 9:22; 10:4-7; 12-14), (John 1:9; 10:11), Ephesians 1:7), (Micah 5:2), (Colossians 1:16; 2:9), (Revelations 1:5), (Mark 4:39-40).
7. At no place in the Koran or in the propaganda of Muhammad is there a way to overcome the power of Satan. The Crucifixion and the Cross provide the only way to overcome the power of Satan (Colossians 2:13-15).
8. At no place in the Koran or in the propaganda of Muhammad is there a declaration of the Wisdom of God. The Crucifixion and the Cross provide the only declaration of the Wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:12).

²⁴ <http://www.arabicbible.com/for-muslims/269-the-historic-truth-about-crucifixion/1800-the-relevance-and-importance-of-the-crucifixion.html>, accessed 7 March 2016. This site provides a very detailed presentation of these eleven reasons,

9. At no place in the Koran or in the propaganda of Muhammad is there presented the accomplishment of the determined purpose of God. The Crucifixion and the Cross provide the only presentation of the accomplishment of the determined purpose of God (Acts 2:22-24; 26-28).
10. At no place in the Koran or in the propaganda of Muhammad is there the assurance of the resurrection of the believers. The Crucifixion and the Cross provide the only assurance of the resurrection of the believers. (1Corinthians. 15:16-22, 52).
11. At almost every place in the Koran and in the propaganda of Muhammad is there presentation of the evil of the human heart although Muhammad contends that only non-believers in Islam are evil. The Crucifixion and the Cross reveal the evil of the Human heart. (Romans 3:12-18).

It cannot be denied that the Muslim's fear of the crucified Christ can be founded not only on the divine promise of salvation through Jesus Christ, but also on the historical sources and pieces of evidence to prove that crucifixion did take place. This historically documented event is a big blow to the propaganda of Islam. The crucifixion did take place. Thus the core of Christian faith cannot be broken asunder. Because Jesus Christ was crucified the teachings of Islam must surely be questioned to their core and proven false.

QUINTESSENCE

Muhammad and the Quran do not present the historical facts. This proves that Muhammad was not a true prophet. He was a false prophet. A true prophet would have stated historical truths. The word of God is the truth. Allah is not God!

For Christians, crucifixion signifies the salvation of men and the act of the forgiving God who gave up his only begotten son to give people the chance to reconcile with God and have an eternal life through Jesus Christ. Islam does not believe in the crucifixion of Jesus and argues that it is non-existent. The Koran supports the utilization of crucifixion as a form of punishment for severe acts of violations of Islamic laws. This is a direct opposition to the Christian faith that

abolished crucifixion as a form of punishment due to its inhumane nature. This is the continuity of the ungodly still crucifying the godly!

Undeniably, crucifixion has a long history as it relates to the Cross of Jesus, the beliefs of Christians, the dogma of Islam, and the beliefs of the Muslims. The application of this corporal punishment in ancient times to the present time is covered with controversies. Therefore, there is a need to understand its significance in order to ensure the preservation of the context in which crucifixion existed and was abolished.

Christians have the responsibility of heralding the crucifixion and glorifying the resurrection. The significance of the Cross and the Crucifixion is that Jesus Christ is the Light of the World.

“I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”

The Gospel of Saint Mark, 8:12



Source: http://rasica.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/621408_481251185241810_1419012167_o.jpg and <https://rasica.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/cristo-de-la-concordia-14.jpg> via http://jesus628.rssing.com/chan-4249757/all_p3.html, accessed 7 March 2016.



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