

[No. 28.]

ON

THE TRUE MEANING  
OF THE  
CROSS OF CHRIST.

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WE hear much said respecting the Cross of Christ, the Religion of the Cross, and Christ Crucified, and much depends on the manner in which these expressions are understood. If understood in their truly evangelical sense, and the divine truths, hence resulting, practised accordingly, no subject of practical Christianity can be of greater importance, and none more calculated to edify the soul in righteousness and holiness than the *doctrine of the cross*. It shall, therefore, be the object of this Tract to place this subject in its proper light, and to shew the reader the true sense in which the Cross of Christ, the religion of the Cross, and Christ Crucified are mentioned in the Scriptures.

Prior to the commencement of Christianity the cross was only known as an object to which the greatest suffering and ignominy were attached. As an instrument of punishment, it was in general use amongst the eastern nations, and also among the Greeks and Romans. The greatest crimes were thus expiated by the most excruciating torments that cruelty could devise, or that vengeance could inflict. So great were the torments caused by this dreadful punishment, that Cicero has declared, "that the mind, even at the thought of suffer-

ings and agonies so intense, is filled with horror." But, let us examine first, what is said in the Scriptures respecting punishments in general, and specifically the punishment of *hanging on wood*, or *the cross*.

There were several kinds of capital punishment among the Jews, the principal of which were *Stoning*; (Lev. xx. 2.) *Hanging on wood, or the cross*; (Josh. viii. 29.) and *Burning*. (Lev. xxi. 9.) These different kinds of capital punishment were employed according to the nature of the crime for which the unhappy sufferer was put to death. Those crimes which arose more especially from transgressing and violating the divine truth of God's Word were punished by *stoning*; those crimes which were more directly opposed to the divine goodness, were punished by *hanging on the cross*; and those which involved profanation, were punished with *burning*. Thus, when the divine truths of the Holy Word are properly discerned, it will be seen, that every sin has its own punishment, and that it will be found impossible to escape the punishment of any sin we commit, so long as it is indulged and practised; since sin carries with it its own punishment, which is certain to overtake the sinner, if not immediately in its most direful form, yet its infliction and penalties will assuredly overtake him. It is very erroneous to suppose that the punishment inherent in all evil acts, does not immediately follow the sinful deed, or the sinful design and affection, when cherished with a view to perpetration, so soon as circumstances permit. There are sinful acts of the spirit as well as of the body; these latter are only visible to the world, but the former are visible to God, *who looketh not on the outward appearance, but on the heart*. (1 Sam. xvi. 7.) So soon as any known evil is indulged in thought, and harboured in the spirit with any degree of complacency or delight *it defleth a man*, and maketh him guilty in the sight of God, and consequently tends to destroy the life of heaven in the soul,