

V The Victory of the Cross.

John 12: 20-32.

within a short 20 years or so it will be 2000  
years since Christ died on a cross on a hillside out-  
side Jerusalem. Over many centuries the Christ. Church  
has claimed that the death of X<sup>t</sup>. has brought  
countless victories for his followers and for  
the human race as a whole - and that these vic-  
tories will continue and increase until that  
day when all enemies and <sup>opponents</sup> ~~foes~~ of Christ and  
his Kingdom will have been conquered and  
subdued and when Christ will reign supreme  
in the restored Kingdom of his Father.

Before we accept such a claim I feel it  
is imperative for the sake of truth to ask  
ourselves which victories ~~of~~ of the Cross  
can we as X<sup>t</sup>ians truthfully claim to have  
been those won by X<sup>t</sup>. dying on Golgotha?  
We must be very careful not to take any  
claim at face value and to build our  
life and beliefs on false grounds or un-  
substantiated ~~claims~~ <sup>hopes</sup>! So let us look at  
what has been proven and found true:  
1) millions of X<sup>t</sup>ians have been inspired  
and strengthened throughout the centuries by  
X<sup>t</sup>'s prayer of forgiveness for his enemies  
uttered in his dying moments on the Cross as  
a tremendous challenge to follow his example

2.  
and not to allow hatred or bitterness to  
corrode their lives <sup>or</sup> to seek revenge <sup>against their relationships</sup>.  
They learnt the marvellous truth of love  
being stronger than hate

2) Millions of Christians have gained a deeper  
insight of X<sup>t</sup>'s criteria for acceptance of  
people into the citizenship of God's Kingdom  
through his assurance to the murderer on the  
Cross: "To-day you shall be with me in  
Paradise" For in these words X<sup>t</sup>. reveals <sup>to us</sup>  
the glorious truth that <sup>entrance into his X<sup>d</sup>'s is not</sup> ~~not~~ not  
determined by dogmatic beliefs, liturgical  
practices, church structures & forms of church  
government, longstanding service in the church  
- but in issue by an act of grace & acceptance  
on God's part

3) Millions of Christians have been encouraged to  
know in view of Peter's betrayal & re-acceptance  
into the circle of the disciples that despite  
our human failure, our cowardly betrayals,  
X<sup>t</sup>. is always ready to accept & welcome us  
back into the fellowship of his Kingdom  
if we are sincere in our repentance &  
confession

4) Millions of X<sup>t</sup>s have learnt that, the  
real test, ~~is~~ in the eyes of Christ, of our  
support for the suffering, the rejected, the oppressed

3.  
was not in words or pronouncements but in  
concrete actions of solidarity & identification with  
such people & communities

5) Millions of Christians have learnt that in a con-  
front between the forces of truth and falsehood,  
deception & deceit might <sup>temporarily</sup> gain the initial victories,  
but that eventually truth triumphs and stands  
secure. And this assurance have given thousands  
of Christians the strength and courage to stand &  
struggle for righteousness & truth in the certain  
knowledge that just as Christ was convicted  
and crucified on the strength of false accusations,  
He triumphed (through his resurrection) to prove  
conclusively that falsehood & deceit in whatever  
form will be exposed and destroyed!

**NB** But it is also true that in the case of millions  
of people and the cross of Christ has not brought  
victory of any kind and that it could be  
said that up till now it has suffered seven  
defeat at the hands of human selfishness &  
greed. E.g.

1) Millions of people who nominally profess  
to be followers of Christ and who have accepted  
church membership, understand and accept, very  
little <sup>of</sup> about the truth about the victory of  
the Cross. and experience

2) Millions of people are born, live and die who are totally indifferent to the message and meaning of the Cross and its triumphant outcome - Or if not indifferent they are highly sceptical or reject it out and out. To them the message of the Gospel, the suffering and death of Jesus has no meaning, ~~shows their cold~~

3) Despite the convincing proof of the triumph of the Cross in the lives of so many Christians, we are faced with the fact that after nearly 2000 years of proclamation of the Gospel and its challenging, transforming message, ~~hated and~~ vengeance still remain more effective than love and forgiveness in so many human relationships; violence still is more easily accepted, practised and justified than non-violence, dishonesty and deceit still being more successfully practised than honesty and truth, justice still being regularly violated than sought and defended. In other words: a predominant <sup>part</sup> ~~sector~~ of the human race still subscribe to spiritual and moral values which are in ~~direct~~ <sup>stark</sup> contradiction to the message and standards proclaimed and practised by Christ - and in that sense therefore the meaning of Christ's suffering and death has not yet succeeded in

successfully challenging the injustice, the inhumanity, the hypocrisy, of so many human ~~traditions~~ <sup>relations</sup> & ~~past~~ practices of political & econ. systems, of social evils.

Let us therefore not bluff ourselves when we talk about the victory of the Cross. Some of the most ~~meaningful~~ <sup>powerful and influential</sup> spheres of the life of man and society have either not been challenged by us as Christians or if so, have not even deigned to respond to such a challenge. In that sense the victory of the Cross is still a distant dream.

This brings us to our final question: Will the message of Christ's suffering & death eventually triumph? Will Christ's claim that He is King, that His Kingdom will eventually prevail, be vindicated? If so, when and how?

I have no doubt for a single moment that the triumph of the Cross is assured; I have no doubt whatsoever that Christ's claim of Himself and His Kingdom will one day be fully and visibly realised. I know that I cannot prove this by rational argument alone - I know that it ~~partly~~ <sup>largely</sup> rests on faith

6.  
But I also know that without our willing-  
ness as disciples of Christ to accept this  
challenge, to love this faith and to ac-  
~~cept~~ present this to the world the triumph  
of the Cross