

# The Changing Scene and the Unchanging Word

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*"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever."—Isa. 40:8.*

## More About Kagawa



Dr. Machen

IN THE last number of THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN, I was telling you something about the book entitled "Meditations on the Cross" by the well-known Japanese writer, Kagawa. I called attention to the strong anti-docrinal bias of the book, its evolutionary view of human history and its apparently low view of the person of Christ.

But it would hardly be fair to discuss that book without dealing with the subject that gives it its title, and so I want to say a few words now regarding Kagawa's view of "the Cross."

### The Two Views of the Cross

I think the views that are being held today about the Cross of Christ may be put into two great classes.

In the first place, there are the views of those who look upon the Cross of Christ as a thing done once for all, and by Christ and Christ only.

In the second place, there are the views of those who look upon the Cross of Christ as the supreme manifestation of a great principle and as a cross which we too must bear.

The former way is the way in which the Bible looks at it; the latter is the way in which it is looked at by Modernism.

According to the Modernist way of looking at it, the Christian preacher must say to his fellow-men: "Christ walked in the way of the Cross; He made Himself one with God's redemptive love; you too must walk in that same way of the Cross; you too must suffer redemptively for your fellow-men; and if you do that, if you thus

make the Cross a fact in your experience, you will be saved."

According to the Bible, the Christian preacher must say to his fellow-men: "You and I are under the just condemnation of God's law; nothing that we can do can save us, not our service, not our love; Christ's death alone can redeem us from the awful curse; simply accept what He has done, and live."

### Kagawa's View of the Cross

In this alternative between the Bible and Modernism, the central trend of Kagawa's message stands with Modernism and against the Bible.

I know there are passages in his book in which that might seem not to be the case. When he speaks about the Apostle Paul, for example, he says that according to Paul's view of the Cross Paul receives and Christ gives (p. 67). He even hints perhaps—though I confess that here as at many places I am not clear about his meaning—he even hints, I say, that if Paul's "interpretation of the Cross" does not appeal to us that may be because we have not as profound an understanding of the justice of God and the grace of Christ as Paul had (p. 71). He says, moreover, that while Paul's view of the Cross and Christ's view are different they are not contradictory (pp. 75, 78).

But what a very small trickle of Christian truth, at best, that is amid the torrent of error that rushes through the whole book! In this book the great central truth that runs through the Bible is treated as an idiosyncrasy of one of the Biblical writers, Paul, and is placed in rather sharp contrast with "the Cross in the Mind of Christ."

The book contains various passages, indeed, in which the language of substitution is used. Christ's death accord-

ing to Kagawa was redemptive. "He wanted to make amends to God for human sin" (p. 59). "Splendid!" you might be tempted to say. Ah, but the trouble is that according to Kagawa while Christ's death was redemptive, our death or our self-sacrifice is redemptive too:

"Christ was executed and we too must bear responsibility. And, moreover, we too must die for the sins of the whole of humanity. Christ's death was not a mere death. He had to undergo punishment for the crimes of the human race. Since Christ underwent that punishment, if I also undergo that punishment, I come back to life with a feeling like that of the Resurrection" (p. 71).

Kagawa thinks, indeed, that in these words he is presenting Paul's view, rather than his own view. But it is clear that at this point he is in full sympathy with what—very strangely—he holds Paul's view to be. In the whole book, the real uniqueness of Christ's death upon the Cross is—to put the thing in the very mildest possible way—hopelessly obscured.

### The Heart of the Gospel Missed

No doubt according to Kagawa Christ was supreme in this great universal business of bearing the sins of the world. But I do not think we can say, when we take the book as a whole, that there is in the book any real recognition of the fact that He stood alone. And that being so the real heart of the gospel is missed.

It is a far cry from Kagawa's speculations about the blood (pp. 205-210) and from Kagawa's central notion that our suffering is redemptive as Christ's was to the words of the old hymn:

Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears for ever flow,  
All for sin could not atone;  
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

That old hymn, not Kagawa, is in accord with the Word of God.