A Theological Analysis of the Christ’s Cross Symbol Accordance with the Bible and It’s Usage Based on John 19:17-25

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Abstract: There are three main indicators in this research: the definition of the cross of Christ based on the Greek language; the cause of change of it in Christianity; and the usage of it which is incompatible with the Bible especially that derived from paganism. The results are: (1) Some experts stated that the word “cross” in the Bible originated from the word ‘stauros’ and ‘xulon.’ These words have similar meaning that is a stud instead of cross; (2) Experts stated that the cross is a religious symbol that existed before the Christianity appeared. The symbol of the cross is not used by the early church. Until to the 3rd century, Constantine, sun worshiper, brought symbol of the cross for Christianity as his stated vow; (3) The usage of the symbol of the cross is incompatible with the Bible, especially that derived from paganism is something that is not very relevant because the cross is not a tool that is charged to Christ. The result of this research by using a questionnaire that was shared to 40 members of Rawamangun Church in Jakarta, where this questionnaire consisted of 24 statements, yielded a data that can be concluded that the respondents have a good understanding in answering the indicators.

Keywords: Cross, Staurus, and Xulon

Introduction

Since all men have sinned, no one is worthy to receive the joy of living with God in the kingdom of heaven, and the reward of sin itself is eternal death (Romans 6:23). Man must fulfill the consequences of sin, but Christ has taken the place through death on the cross.

“The death of Christ occurred in the first century, sometime in the year 30 AD. Crucifixion is one form of cruel execution. The essence of the crucifixion is not death itself, but suffering at death.

Widyamartaya explains how the shape of the cross consisting of the Patibulum is a crossbar that weighs between 50-60 kg and its length is about 1.5 meters with a hole in the middle. The convicted is forced to bring his or her own patibulum to the place of execution. The place of execution is usually very strategic for easy viewing of passers-by. In this place has been designed vertical pole (stipes), whose edges are made smaller so that the patibulum is easily inserted into it. The hands of the prisoner were tied apart on the patibulum laid on his shoulder. The rope is wrapped around the right hand, around the arm, encircling the chest, then continuing to the left arm, tying the left hand; The end of the rope is tied to the left ankle, so he is forced to walk bent, not free and caused laughter of the audience who witnessed it (A. Widyamartaya, 1990, p. 39)

As Christians who profess followers of Christ, it is imperative to always look at the sacrifice Jesus has made to save people through the cross, but is the use of the cruciform cross at this time in accordance with the cross where Jesus has been nailed? Several views emerged when looking back at the original language of the cross in the Bible and historical evidence.

The term used for the word of the cross is taken from the Greek (στάupos) Staurus, derived from the verb (σταυpω) or often translated crucifixion. “Staurus is a stake, but it is horrible enough to imagine it as a method of torture” (Cutner, 1950, p. 111-12). So is it true that Jesus received torture on two crossed logs? The description of the procession of Jesus’ execution according to the literal translation of the Greek Bible is that Jesus died on an erect or stake post and not on two beams. The two words used to describe Jesus’ crucifixion process are “Staurus” and “Xulon” which are literally translated as stakes or erect pillars and never have any other meaning and the word the cross does not appear in Bible translation
until the Roman Empire adopts the Cross of the people a pagan (Ramond E. Brown, 1992, p. 78)

Encyclopedia Britannica declares that the penalty of using the cross has taken place since 519 BC when Darius I, the Persian king was crucified by 3000 of his political opponents in Babylon and still continued during the Roman reign to punish the criminals (Crucifixion, April 13, 2007). By the Romans the cross was used as the most cruel means of punishment against the slaves and the foreigners (especially the colonized) who rebelled. It is said that Jewish law dictates that idolaters, blasphemers and rebels are stoned and hung on a pole. They are left to die horribly because they are seen as being cursed by God. In order not to defile, his corpse was immediately buried (Deut. 21:23). “Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree” (Gal. 3:13).

Kuiper states in The Church History that Emperor Constantine was a king of disbelievers who turned into the Christian community. In his power as king, he also wants what is in the Church to be in accordance with his wishes, this includes the sign of the cross (cross) as a symbol of Christian religion, which is basically a sign of the previous religion of Apollo or sun worship which he used as the royal seal and the seal of a coin until a king steps down from his throne. Plus the dream he received where it strengthens himself to use the cross bar cross symbol. In his dream he sees a cross bar crossed by the sun and its light. The symbol appeared in his dream a few hours after he prayed to the Christian God, because of the weakness of his army against the Maxentius forces (Kuiper, 2010, p. 29).

Limitations of Research Problems

In order for the writing of this paper is not deviant and floating from the original purpose and make it easier for authors to obtain the necessary data, the authors set the boundaries as follows:

1. What is the definition of the cross based on the Greek language that is the original language of the New Testament contrary to the current cross symbol?
2. What is the cause of the change of the cross of Christ in the world of Christianity?
3. Can the true church and God's people use a symbol that is inconsistent with the Bible even more so from paganism?

Research Objectives

Based on the identification of the issues that have been raised, then the objectives that are to be achieved in this research in detail is to know:

1. To know the definition of the cross based on the Greek language that is the original language of the New Testament Bible and whether it is contrary to the current cross symbol.
2. To know the cause of the change of the cross of Christ in the world of Christianity.
3. To give an understanding to the church and God's true people about the use of symbols that are inconsistent with the Bible and especially derived from disbelief.

Background of the Book of John

The Gospel of John is a fairly complex gospel. In this Gospel, there are many Jewish thought patterns. Although in this book many ways of interpretation of the Jewish rabbis are found, but we find also that the author of this book when opposed to religion and Jewish characters. In addition, this Gospel is enriched with the Greek (Hellenistic) mindset,
especially the Gnostic school of thought. Much of the material from the Greek culture and gnostic minds are found in it.

Tenney reiterates the reinforcement of John the son of Zebedee, who wrote this book in John 21: 22-23 because he was a disciple who lived long enough to die, of James, who was killed in 41 AD. The Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament, tell the story of Jesus’ life. But only the Gospel of John is claimed to be an eyewitness to the title of the disciple whom Jesus loved. “This is the disciple who testifies of these things and writes these things, and we know that they are true testimony” (John 21:24).

During this writing, John and every Jew were connected to a new Christian sect that was being humiliated and also expelled from the synagogue, their families and the lineage. That time was the most difficult time, where the Jewish persecution of Christians so escaped after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 (Barlett, 2003, p. 114-6). As some Christians began to lose their focus, this Gospel provided a new clue, hope and inspiration.

Context of John 19:17-25

The Book of John 19: 17-25 contains the ongoing reign of Jesus. When the condemnation of Jesus was established, then came the night, Pilate handed Jesus over to the Jews. When Jesus was released to the Jews, Jesus had to walk out to the place of the skull or in Hebrew called Golgotha hill, taking the cross with Him. When he arrived, Jesus was crucified there with two men stationed on his right and left. Pilate made a mark on the cross of Jesus by making the writings of Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews in three languages: Latin, Hebrew, and Greek. Seeing that the plastered writing clearly crucified Jesus, the Jews and the Priests protested to Pilate because they did not feel that the crucified was their king. Because Pilate knew Jesus had said that he was the King of the Jews, he insisted on keeping the title on the cross of Jesus. After the Roman soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took Jesus' clothes and divided them into four parts for each part of the soldier and his cloak they took. Because his garment is not seam, from top to bottom only one piece, they do not divide it, but take lots for the cloak. So what is written in the passage of Scripture “Let us not divide it into pieces, but let us cast lots to determine who gets it.” Thus it may be fulfilled that is written in the Scripture: “They divide my garments among them and they cast lots upon My cloak. “So the soldiers did. After that stands near the cross of Jesus, Mary his mother, and his brother, Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene.

Understanding the Cross of Christ

“The cross as an instrument of punishment probably comes from Persia, the Crucifixion was also practiced by the Phoenicians and Carthaginians” (Goetz, Ed., 1988). The cross as a means of torture and death sentence was later used by the Romans. The cross is used to hang or nail the body of the damned. The punishment will be allowed to suffer thirst and pain, even the disturbance of wild animal prey. The crucifixion is a slow procession of the death penalty (Widyamartaya, 38). Hanged on the wood, and bringing yourself the wooden beam that will be worn to the convict is the starting point of the suffering of the prisoner. It is also what Jesus Christ felt when He had to die to atone for the sins of mankind so that men would not receive eternal death.

Since the atonement took place on the cross, many followers of Christ use the cross symbol in everyday life as well as in worship. The current controversy is that whether the cross that the human use of today is the same as the cross imposed on Christ. Although the Bible does not specifically describe Jesus’ death device, but a deeper understanding will be obtained by looking at the original language of the cross in the Bible.

Definition of the Cross According to the New Testament Language
The tool used to execute Jesus Christ is called the cross by most Christians. This word is taken from the Latin crux.

Stauros

The Greek word translated cross in many modern translations of the Bible is *stauros*. ("Thayers", n.d.) "In classical Greek, this word means a straight pole, or a fence pole. Later the word was also used for punishment poles with cross bars. The Imperial Bible Dictionary recognizes this, the Greek word for the cross, (*stauros*), which precisely means a pole, a straight pole, or a fence post, upon which something can be hung, or which can be used to plow or fence a piece of land. Even among the Romans, the crux (origin of the word cross) seems at first to be a straight piece of wood (Fairbairn, Ed., 1874).

J. D. Parsons in the book The Non-Christian Cross said, There is no one single sentence in the New Testament writings, which in its original language (Greek) show evidence of direct and even indirect, that the *stauros* used in the crucifixion of Jesus was not *stauros* or crucifix in general today. The type of punishment on the gallows already existed for a long time, and it was also imposed on Jesus, so the author used the word *stauros* for Him (J. D. Parsons, 2015).

Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that it consists of two pieces of wood nailed to form a cross but a piece of wood. Very misleading on the part of academics to translate the word *stauros* as a cross when translating Church documents in the Greek language into the vernacular, and strengthen the action by placing a crossword in the dictionaries of common as the meaning of *stauros* without carefully explains that the cross altogether not the main meaning of the word in the days of the Apostles (E. W. Bullinger, 1974).

John, who was a disciple of Jesus directly saw the crucifixion of the Messiah had left an authentic picture of the event. In John 19: 17-25 says “While carrying his cross, he went out to a place called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew: Golgotha. The cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalena. In the original language John uses the word *stauros* as a cross, “καὶ ἔκτεθη εἰς τὸν λεγόμενον Κρανίον τὸν Ιησοῦν ἀνείπουσαν ἐν τῷ ἔδαφῳ Κυβαρίῳ, συνεδριάζοντες δὲ ἐκ τῆς θυσίας ἔπηκεν τὸ σταυρὸν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ τῇ μητρί, καὶ τῇ μητρί τίτλου της μητρί, τῷ τιτλῷ τῆς Μαρίας τῆς τῆς Μαγδαληνῆς” (Liddell&Scott, 1968). Seeing these translations, when the word of the cross is replaced by the stake, then the result is as follows: and carrying piles of His, He went out to a place called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew: Golgotha. And near the stake of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. That verse sounds better than using the word cross.

Xulon

It should be noted that the Bible also uses the word *xulon* to declare the instrument of Jesus' death. A Greek-English Lexicon, by Liddell and Scott, gives the following words *Xulon*: "Wood cut and ready to use, firewood, wood for buildings, a piece of wood, logs, blocks, milestones, short peduncles, Wood, poles where criminals are nailed from living wood, trees.” (Liddell & Scott, 1968).

There are 5 *Xulon* references contained in the New Testament of Acts. 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Galatians 3:13; And I Peter. 2:24. There is an interesting point about the verse because there is a difference in the translation of the word *xulon* which is really far from what should be translated according to the original language of the Bible (Greek), and this can be proven by comparing some of the following translations:

- Acts 5: 30
  - “Allah nenek moyang kita telah membangkitkan Yesus, yang kamu gantungkan pada kayu salib,”(Terjemahan Baru)
  - “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree” (New King James Version).
- “And the God of our fathers did raise up Jesus, whom ye slew, having hanged upon a tree” (Young’s Literal Translation).

- Galatians 3:13
  - “Kristus telah menebus kita dari kutuk hukum Taurat dengan jalan menjadi kutuk karena kita, sebab ada tertulis: Terkutuklah orang yang digantung pada kayu salib” (TB).
  - “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” (NKJV).
  - “Christ did redeem us from the curse of the law, having become for us a curse, for it hath been written, ‘Cursed is every one who is hanging on a tree’” (YLT)

- I Peter 2:24
  - “Ia sendiri telah memikul dosa kita di dalam tubuh-Nya di kayu salib.” (TB)
  - “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” (NKJV)
  - “Who our sins himself did bear in his body, upon the tree.” (YLT)

From the verses above, the English translator uses the word Tree instead of Cross. So the translation of the word *xulon* into the cross is wrong, because there is no one in the original Greek language that implies two pieces of wood. Cutner states that “scholars have realized this error but are unable to challenge the traditional translation error. In the eighteenth century some Anglican bishops had suggested to remove the cross symbol, but they were ignored. There is no symbol of the cross in Christianity before the middle of the fifth century.” (Cutner, 1940, p. 17)

In the Old Testament there is a verse explaining the context of *xulon*. “If a man commits a sin worthy of death, then he is put to death, and then hangeth him upon a stake, and let his body be left overnight on the pillar...” (Deuteronomy 21:22, 23). In the original language of the old covenant (Hebrew) the word translated as pole is “חַּץעֵ֗ה” (*hā-'êṣ*, “Haes”, n.d) and the word when translated in LXX becomes *xulon*, “ean de geniētai en tīvi amartiāa creama thanatou kai apothanὲ kai kremasὲ te auton epi xulon. .” (“LXX”, n.d) and the KJV translation also translates the word *hā-'êṣ* as a tree instead of cross.

The image of the tree or wood as a sign of salvation is indeed spread in many places in the Old Testament (Genesis 6: 14-16; 18: 1; Exodus 4: 2-5; 14:16; 17: 5-6). The most obvious, however, to examine is the idea listed in Genesis 2: 9, “The LORD God caused the trees to grow forth, which is attractive and good for the fruit to eat; And the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”

“The tree of life symbolizes the eternity of God; while the tree of knowledge symbolizes the human desire to have at once mastered the moral norms of good and evil.” (Drane, 1996, p. 96.) It is this tree of knowledge that plunges the first man into death. In this connection Christian theologians reflect that as the tree of knowledge plunged Adam and mankind into sin, the tree of the cross was used by Christ as a means of restoring humanity’s intimate relationship with God. If the tree of Adam carries death, on the contrary the tree of Christ brings life. Thus, even though man has been poisoned by the fruit of the tree of knowledge, but is healed again by the Tree of Life Christ, the New Adam (Revelation 2: 7, 22: 2). (Schmidt, 1953)

In other words, what the evangelists describe with the word *stauros* is completely different from what is now called the cross. It is therefore fitting that the New World Translation of Scripture uses the phrase “torture pole” in Matthew 27: 40-42 and other verses where the word *stauros* appears. Similarly, the Complete Jewish Bible uses the phrase “pole of execution.”

Causes of Change the Cross ff Christ’s Cross in Christianity

The cross is worshiped not only by the visitors of the church who profess to follow the Bible, but also by those who have not followed the Bible and whose worship precedes the worship of the Christian churches. Many religious papers acknowledge that the use of crosses in various shapes and shapes begins with the age of human civilization that has been very long
past. For example, hieroglyphs and ancient Egyptian images of their gods often feature crosses in the form of a T with a circle at the top. It is called the ansate cross, or in the form of a handle, and is thought to be the symbol of life. Later, this cross shape was adopted and widely used by the Coptic Church and other churches.

According to The Catholic Encyclopedia, “the primitive shape of the cross seems to resemble what is called the gamma crosses (crux gammata), better known by its Sanskrit name, swastika, among Orientalists (archaeologists of the East) and prehistoric archeology students.” (Ernest H., 1967) Is used extensively among Hindus in India and Buddhism throughout Asia and is still seen in the decorations and ornaments in these areas.

Walker says in The Christ Conspiracy “Early Christians even rejected the cross for being kafir. Jesus sculptures originally did not depict him on the cross, but in the good Shepherd's guise that brought the sheep.” (Archarya S., 1999, p. 278) Churchward says,” Basically the cross is a sign of astronomy. Cross with the same long arm used by the alchemist to shows the same day and night time, and is an equinox sign.” (Churchward, 1992)

It is not known exactly when the cross was adopted as a Christian symbol. Vine's Expository of New Testament Word states, “By the middle of the 3rd century CE, churches have abandoned, or ridiculed, certain doctrines of the Christian faith. To raise the prestige of an apostate church system, unbelievers are accepted in the church without being converted by faith, most are permitted to keep their pagan marks and symbols,” (Vine, 1963, p. 255) including the cross bar emblem.

Some authors point to the statement of Constantine, a worshiper of the sun god, that in 312 BC in one of his military campaigns he dreamed of a cross visible to the sun with his Latin motto “hoc signo vince” (with this mark, conquered). Sometime later, the Christian sign was on the banners, shields, and armaments of his troops. Constantine was converted to Christianity, though he was only baptized 25 years later when he was near death. His motives are questioned by some. “He acts as if converting Christianity into something he thinks is most likely to be accepted by his people as a universal (Catholic) religion, not that he is converted to the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.” (Kuiper, 2010)

Since then, crosses in various shapes and shapes began to be used. For example, The Illustrated Bible Dictionary states that the so-called cross of St. Anthony “is shaped like a capital letter T, which in the opinion of some people is taken from the symbol of the god (Babylonian) god of Tamuz, the letters tau.” There is also the cross of St. Andreas, in the form of the letter X, and a common cross with two wooden blades and whose wooden lowered. This general form of the cross, called the Latin cross, is erroneous and traditionally regarded as the cross which Jesus died. (M. G. Easton, 1897)

Mrs. White in writing says Moses was asked to lift the insolent serpent on the stake, and made the announcement that anyone who saw him would live. And all who see, it is alive. Their health soon recovered. . . This symbol is lifted on a pole, and those who look over it, can heal. Thus, Jesus is made similar to sinful flesh. The same healing, the message of giving life is now heard. It refers to the Savior who is lifted up on the shameful pole. Those who have been bitten by the old serpent, the devil, are required to see and live. (White, 1955, p. 222)

Usage of the Cross in Christianity

Paul did not introduce a symbol or statue into their worship, instead he instructed his fellow Christians to flee from idolatry and from any other practice that came from pagan worship (1 Corinthians 10:14). The commentary of the New Catholic Encyclopedia is interesting, “The symbol of Christ's atoning death on Golgotha does not appear in the art form of the first centuries of Christianity. Early Christians, being influenced by the ban on carved statues of the Old Testament, are reluctant to describe even the tools of God's Suffering.” (Rubinstein, 486) History of the Christian Church says first century Christians never used the cross and the objects that depict the cross were never used. (J. F. Hurst, 2015, p. 366)

Using a cross in worship is tantamount to using a statue in worship, a practice condemned in the Bible (Exodus 20: 2-5; Deuteronomy 4:25, 26). The apostle John correctly states the true teachings of Christianity when he warns his Christian colleagues, “Guard
yourselves against the idols.” (1 John 5:21) This they obey even if it means they must face death in the Roman arena.

True Christians do not use the cross in worship. One important reason is that Jesus Christ did not die on the cross. Because the Greek word used in redemption is an upright pole (stauros and xulon), not a cross (cross). There is no evidence that for 300 years after Christ's death a Christian claimed to use a cross in worship. (Before the reign of Constantine).

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research that has been done on Theological Analysis of the Cross of Christ according to the Bible and its Usage Based on John 19: 17-25, the authors will make conclusions in theoretical research.

   A. Crucifixion and crucifixion are the tools and concepts of punishment that have existed since ancient times, especially in Persian times. The cross is also a punishment that the Romans subjected to Christ, so that he died to atone for the sins of a human being who would receive salvation in him. But now there is a gap with regard to the cross imposed on Christ based on the biblical view and the cross in modern-day Christianity.
   B. The Bible does not clearly explain the instruments of Jesus’ death, but we can understand the concept of the cross imposed on Christ through the original language of the Bible. The word of the cross in the Bible describes different versions of the understanding of the cross in modern times. The word stauros in all the original languages of the Bible, especially the New Testament, is often translated as the word cross or cross (in English). Actually the meaning of the word stauros is an upright post, vertical pole, pole execution, pile, and fence pole.
   C. Aside from the word stauros, the New Testament Bible also uses the original word xulon to describe the instrument worn to Jesus. A false understanding of translating the word as a cross. The literal meaning of the word Xulon is: a beam, a pole, or a tree. All of the xulon words of the Bible, translated as a tree are not cross by ancient and literal Bible translations (Acts 5:30, 13:29, 10:39, Galatians 3:13, and I Peter 2:24). Moreover, the concept of xulon also exists in the Old Testament, where the word hā-'ēṣ used in Deuteronomy 21:22, 23 has parallel translations of xulon, tree, and a pole.

2. Causes of Change the symbol of the Cross of Christ in Christianity
   A. The cross is worshiped, not only by the visitors of the church who profess to follow the Bible, but also by those who have not followed the Bible and whose worship precedes the worship of the Christian churches. Many religious papers, especially pagan religions, recognize that the use of crosses in various shapes and forms begins with the age of human civilization that has long since passed before cynicism emerges.
   B. Mid-3rd century AD There was a dark time in Christianity where the church had abandoned and mocked the doctrine of true faith. To improve popularity and search for many members, the church received many unbelievers into Christianity without needing to learn the truth and they were allowed to stick to their pagan culture including cross bars.
   C. Constantine was the forerunner of the cross-cross in Christianity. Although he was in Christianity, his heart was still tied to the Apollo religion. The cross is the symbol of the god Apollo, he so enjoys, when he converted to Christianity, Constantine ordered that the cross of the cross be included in Christianity.

3. The Church's Position and God's People in the Unbiblical Use of Symbols, especially from Unbelief.
   A. First-century Christians never used cross bars and objects that describe them were never used.
   B. Using cross bars in worship is tantamount to using a statue in worship, and it is a practice condemned in the Bible (Exodus 20: 2-5; Deuteronomy 4:25, 26).
C. True Christians do not use cross bars personally or in worship. One important reason is that Jesus Christ did not die on a crossbar. Because the Greek word used in redemption is an upright pole (stauros and xulon), not a cross (cross). There is no evidence that for 300 years after Christ's death a Christian claimed to use a cross in the worship service.

Suggestion

Through the results of research and conclusions that the authors have shown, the authors provide some important recommendations in the form of advice to the readers:

1. The members of the congregation and the readers should read more and study the Bible, which is the Word of God and the original language of the Bible as well as the historical encyclopedia containing the knowledge of Jesus and His sacrifice on the upright pole to atone for the sins of the man who acknowledged Him.

2. The members of the congregation and the readers must also state the position to not merely follow the cross culture of the Cross in modern times, but dare to abandon the use of cross bars and also the symbols that are inconsistent with the Bible rather than deriving from personal and religious disbelief.

3. The members of the congregation and the readers should dare to say the right thing as truth and what is wrong not to do. It means that members of the church must also dare to declare the misuse of cross bars in Christianity to followers of Christ who do not yet understand this truth.

4. In order to avoid confrontation with others, the writer also advises all readers to better not use at all about the symbol of Jesus’ death, for the essence of it is salvation and not his own instrument of death.

Bibliography


