

# THE OFFENCE OF THE CROSS CEASING

*Thomas Scott, 1824*

Leave out the holy character of God, the holy excellence of his law, the holy condemnation to which transgressors are doomed, the holy loveliness of the Saviour's character, the holy nature of redemption, the holy tendency of Christ's doctrine, and the holy tempers and conduct of all true believers: then dress up a scheme of religion of this unholy sort: represent mankind as in a pitiable condition, rather through misfortune than by crime: speak much of Christ's bleeding love to them, of his agonies in the garden and on the cross; without shewing the need or the nature of the satisfaction for sin: speak of his present glory, and of his compassion for poor sinners; of the freeness with which he dispenses pardons; of the privileges which believers enjoy here, and of the happiness and glory reserved for them hereafter: clog this with nothing about regeneration and sanctification, or represent holiness as somewhat else than conformity to the holy character and law of God: and you make up a plausible gospel, calculated to humour the pride, soothe the consciences, engage the hearts, and raise the affections of natural men, who love nobody but themselves. And now no wonder if this gospel (which has nothing in it affronting, offensive, or unpalatable, but is perfectly suited to the carnal unhumiliated sinner, and helps him to quiet his conscience, dismiss his fears, and encourage his hopes,) incur no opposition among ignorant persons, who inquire not into the reason of things; meet with a hearty welcome, and make numbers of supposed converts, who live and die as full as they can hold of joy and confidence, without any fears or conflicts.

Its success perhaps may cause it to be cried up as 'the only way of preaching for usefulness:' while all discourse concerning the being, authority, and perfections of God; concerning the law; concerning the evil of sin; and concerning relative duties; is considered as only 'hindering usefulness:' and they only are thought to preach the gospel in simplicity, as they ought to do who preach in this manner. What wonder if, when all the offensive part is left out, the gospel gives no offence? What wonder if, when it is made suitable to carnal minds, carnal minds fall in love with it? What wonder if, when it is evidently calculated to fill the unrenewed mind with false confidence and joy, it has this effect? What wonder if, when the true character of God is unknown, and a false character of him is framed in the fancy,—a God all love and no justice, very fond of *such* believers, as his favourites,—they have very warm affections towards him? What wonder if, when these persons are of one mind, and admire and extol each other as the only favourites of heaven, they seem to be full of love to one another? It is not Christ's holy image in them that they love, but their own image: and again I observe, *Similis simili gaudet* [*like loves like*].

The doctrines of the gospel would give no offence except to a few deep thinkers, were it not that, when properly stated, they imply the affronting truth, that every person, by sinning against a holy God, and breaking a righteous law, is justly deserving of eternal damnation, be his character in society ever so moral and respectable; and that we are all polluted and abominable, contrary to God, and loathsome through sin. Suppress this representation, and there is nothing affronting in any remaining doctrine, or offensive to any person, save to the reasoner, who, seeing so much done without any adequate cause, may scornfully exclaim, *Cui bono?* [*What purpose is all this to answer?*] —The bulk of mankind however belong not to the reasoning class, and will ever be ready to adopt any sentiments their teacher may inculcate, which do not alarm their fears, affront their pride, or call them to mortify their lusts: much more such as

quiet their fears, soothe their pride, leave their corruptions untouched, and find them an excuse for not subduing them. And, though an outward reformation may generally be necessary; yet for the sake of a quiet conscience, sanguine hopes, and self-complacency, we all know how far men will proceed in this way.

I would not give needless offence. Let this matter be weighed according to its importance. Let the word of God be examined impartially. I cannot but avow my fears that Satan has propagated much of this false religion, among many widely different classes of religious professors; and it shines so brightly in the eyes of numbers, who 'take all for gold that glitters,' that, unless the fallacy be detected, it bids fair to be the prevailing religion in many places.—So far however as I can judge, no persons in the world express more acrimony against that sort of religion which strips the sinner of every plea, leaves him self-condemned and self-loathing, as a transgressor of a righteous law, and a rebel against a holy God, at the footstool of sovereign grace; which shews the sinner the absolute need there was of the death of Christ, the real nature of his satisfaction, the necessity of a total change of heart and life; and demonstrates that all true converts love the holy character and law of God, and are sincerely holy in all manner of conversation: no persons, I say, are more virulent haters, and more resolute opposers, of these views of religion, than those who are so full of the other affections, and of that sort of religion above described: which too plainly shews how things are with them.