

Cost price: 1 Peter 1.13-25

I am very grateful to Michael Pye (Robin's Dad) for coming to the rescue with today's TFTD!

In this letter, penned by Silvanus for Peter, the passage marked for today says that we were “redeemed, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish” (2:18-19). This brings up the whole discourse of redemption and atonement, propitiation, price and cost, which we need to think about, this day and every day.

The idea “as of a lamb without spot or blemish” is not very easy for some of us, because we don’t “do” animal sacrifice these days. Alas many animals are killed (far too many), but we don’t now expect killing an animal to achieve some kind of religious result. So where do all the symbols and metaphors about Christ’s sacrifice lead us? How are we to understand it?

Something that was pointed out to me many years ago is that there is no “doctrine of the atonement” in the historic creeds. It was quite some time before the Church Fathers and the Church Doctors got around to that. The huge struggles with Platonic philosophy that led to the creeds were more about the nature of Christ, than about his “work”. In particular, the idea of God paying a price to the devil as a ransom is a very secondary story that never achieved doctrinal status.

Now that doesn’t mean there was, or is, no *cost*. Even if we don’t take easily to the metaphor of a sacrificial lamb, the centrality of the crucifixion is completely obvious. That was indeed the cost of our redemption.

The phrase “the cost of discipleship” was coined by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who himself paid the ultimate price with an indescribably painful death as, probably, did Peter.

These terrible events are part of a continuum. If it were not for the evil deeds of human beings, there would be no such cost. But the fact that Jesus (and many of his disciples) faced up to that cost opens the door to the vision of redemption...

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