

RECOVERING  
THE SCANDAL  
OF THE CROSS

*Atonement in New Testament  
& Contemporary Contexts*



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# RESTORING GOD'S HONOR

Understanding the Gospel  
through other culture's eyes

## Japanese Justice Perspective

A Japanese church leader was having a difficult time with a missionary's standard explanation on why **Yeshua had to die**. The missionary had explained that Yeshua died to pay the penalty for our sins required by God, but the Japanese church leader said **“to be honest, I don't find the that explanation satisfactory”**

## Japanese Justice Perspective

A tragic accident provided the missionary with his first clues as to why the common penal substitution explanation of atonement, so clear and logical to Western missionaries, had not satisfied this Japanese church leader. A young man from the congregation was driving a company truck and accidentally hit and killed two women walking by the side of the road. **The police and court demonstrated more concern for the relationships and the people's responses than to written codes.** They handled the case in a way markedly different from the American legal processes. The young man immediately confessed that the accident was his fault because he was going too fast. The judge put him in custody but released him to attend the funerals of the two women who had been killed. **The judge attended the funerals also and carefully observed** not only how the young man behaved but how the families responded to him. In the meantime the police carefully investigated and exonerated the young man. They said he could not have been going as fast as he reported, and they discovered that the company truck had a steering defect. The young man was let out of jail to do public service for the rest of the year and then he was fully released and rehabilitated.

## Japanese Justice Perspective

Later, the missionary was discussing the concept of justice in Japan with a small group of Japanese colleagues. When he asked them, **“What is justice?”** They discussed among themselves and answered, **“Justice is what the judge says it is.”** The missionary observed that **in the West the image of justice is a blindfolded goddess impartially weighing someone's guilt or innocence based on evidence and a set of standard law.** In contrast, the Japanese image is of a male judge with his eyes wide open, observing the situation so that he can do whatever will **best preserve human relationships**... Japanese criminals are imprisoned as a shameful act of exclusion from society. The lengths of the sentences are measured according to the enormity of their social scandal. The idea of criminals serving time and paying their debts to justice are concepts that sound quite strange to the Japanese culture.

SHAME  (Focus on the self)	GUILT  (Focus on the act)
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*Nature of Fault*

Failure to meet self-expectations	Offense against legal expectations
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*Internal Reaction*

Embarrassment/Disgrace	Condemnation/Remorse
Self-depreciation	Self-accusation
Fear of abandonment	Fear of punishment
Resentment	Anger
Self-isolation ("rage")	Self-justification
Alienation	Hostility

### *Social Reaction*

Ridicule & exclude	Blame & hold responsible
Disgrace & hold in contempt	Accuse & condemn
Disapprove & reproach	Punish & retaliate

### *Remedy*

Identification & communication	Propitiation through restitution or penalty
Love banishes shame	Justification banishes guilt

# Anselm of Canterbury

According to Anselm of Canterbury, **it was not God's anger that required appeasement, but that His honor needed to be restored.**

In his essay "*Why did God become Human?*", he observed that in order for honor to be restored, **restitution must be initiated by those responsible for shaming the dishonored party.** This means reparations must be made from the human side, a virtual impossibility due to the depth and reach of sin. Only Christ, divine and human, could accomplish the restoration of God's honor and thus repair the breach between God and humanity.

# God's Justice

You shall **not pervert the justice** due to your poor in their lawsuits. Keep far from a false charge, and **do not kill the innocent and those in the right**, for I will not acquit the guilty. You shall take no bribe, **for a bribe blinds the officials**, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

Exodus 23:6-8

# American Justice



Everyone dies

Do you want to an honorable death or a shameful death?

Who are you looking to for honor