

A SYMBOL OF SHAME

The symbol of the cross is a pagan symbol that is well-known throughout Christianity. It is worshipped by Roman Catholics and the majority of Protestant believers. The cross is revered and held in high esteem. Scarcely no worship can be engaged in without the congregations standing or kneeling in veneration before it. A large number of religious denominations cannot even say prayer without making the sign of the cross.

The truth, however, is that the cross is a symbol associated with superstitions, witchcraft, and demons. The cross has become an ornament that is believed by many to possess magical attributes. It is regarded as a charm against evil and sickness and to some, insures good fortune. We find in the legendary fables of witchcraft that if a person was menaced by witches and confronted them with the image of the cross, they would shriek away in terror. In the tales of the vampire, a silver cross will make the vampire cower away in fright.

In the middle ages, there were amulets attributed to the mother of Constantine, Saint Helena. These amulets were marked with the cross and it was believed they were able to produce an effect as a potent medicine against the nervous disease, epilepsy. These amulets were suspended from the individuals neck, much like the crucifix is by today's mainstream Christians.

This booklet will not focus on the pagan history of the symbol of the cross but on what the Scriptures say about the cross. The present day superstitious beliefs in the cross took root with the founders of Roman Catholicism, Greek Orthodox and in more recent centuries, the faiths of the Lutheran, Anglican and other churches. These churches justify their worship of the cross partially based on a portion of Galatians 6:14 which states: ***"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...."*** The rest of the verse states: ***"... by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."*** It is suggested by many of these churches that Paul was encouraging the adoration of the cross that Jesus died upon, however, Jesus taught his followers the observance of God's Ten Words (or Commandments) which forbids image veneration. Paul was not suggesting the glorifying of the cross that Jesus died upon, but in the crucifixion and death of him who endured to the end. Paul and all of Jesus' followers are crucified to the sins of the world because of the cross (or death) of the Christ. Those who are baptized and follow Jesus are new creatures and the carnal world is crucified to them.

Another verse related to our discussion is Colossians 1:20: ***"And having made peace through the blood of his cross."*** This verse is also interpreted by various churches to mean that Christians should glory in the cross. Jesus willed himself to fulfilling God's Will without blemish. Through the sufferance in the body of his flesh and by his death on the cross, we can be reconciled to God. Read all of the verses from verses 18 to 22. The cross is not a symbol of life and holiness but is an object of shame and death. Jesus, being a man of flesh, could have denied his sonship to God, but he willed himself to the full unity with the Father, through his death in the flesh.

Now read Luke 9:23: ***"... let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."*** This verse describes the self-renunciation of the person from worldliness by having the will to follow the Christ, despite knowing it will be a daily struggle to deny the traditionalism of this world and in adhering to the unpopular fundamentals of Jesus'

teachings which is similarly conveyed in I Corinthians 1:18: ***“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”***

Hebrews 12:2: ***“... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame...”*** This verse states that Jesus endured the suffering and shame of the cross for the joy that would come from having overcome the sin of this world and being rewarded with life eternal from the Father.

In what way do any of the preceding verses give the impression that Christians should engage in adoration of the symbol of the cross? The answer is in no way are Christians expected to worship the symbol of the cross in any form. The verses speak to the suffering, shame and death that the cross represents. We glory in the strength and will Jesus demonstrated to have endured the pain and suffering of one of the most gruesome types of punishment invented by man, all to save his fellow man and fulfill God's Will to the utmost. Through Jesus' self-sacrifice, he blotted out those hand written ordinances and statutes (ie. The Mosaic Laws) that were against us and reconciled mankind unto God through his blood (Colossians 2:14). To clarify, Luke 9:23 refers to the Christian's mission of daily self-renunciation, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts.

As to I Corinthians 1:18, it relates to the preaching of a Saviour who is crucified and resurrected which is evidence of the power of a Creator to those who believe in the Christ. I Corinthians 1:17, 18: ***“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”*** For Christians to be followers of Jesus in truth and righteousness, each one of us must “take up the cross” which means to deny oneself of the world's perversity, desires of the flesh and to be prepared to suffer persecution and scorn for the finisher of our faith, Jesus of Nazareth, the first-fruit of the resurrection of eternal life.

In summary, we have shown that well-known scriptures mentioning the cross do not encourage us to venerate the symbol of the cross. In addition, as Christians, we should be upholding the Ten Words spoken and written by God which explicitly tells us not to worship any thing but He that created us. Exodus 20:3 to 5a: ***“Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God...”***