

Syncretic Use Of The Cross

A pagan symbol cannot be 'Christianized'

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Even today in this secular Western world, the most common good luck charm is the cross or crucifix. Not only many in mainstream Christianity wear them but some professional athletes, actors, actresses, even idolized music stars such as Madonna, have been seen wearing the cross as either a necklace or bracelet, or may be even tattooed on their bodies.

Simply by way of illustrating the foolishness of human reasoning, I ask this, "If Jesus was executed today, by what method would it be?" Would it be murder by electrocution? By lethal injection? Earlier in the 20th century someone with a shotgun may have executed Jesus, or a hangman's noose would have been used. What if He lived during the time of the French Revolution. Would His head been lopped off by a guillotine? Perhaps had He lived during the Catholic Spanish Inquisition He would have been tortured to death by the rack. These are all grotesque and horrible images of various methods of execution; they are terrifying and shameful ways to die.

It may be that if Christ had been slaughtered with the use of one of these instruments, mainstream Christianity would be wearing it around their necks, or hanging on their Bibles, or fastening to the tops of their churches. How foolish would a guillotine look mounted on the obelisk of a church roof.

Please turn with me to John 19, verse 19. These questions served to expose the foolishness of human reasoning regarding how I think it should worship the Lord and Savior. Obviously there has to be another reason why mainstream Christianity so willingly promotes the tool used to viciously murder our Savior.

Is there anything wrong with members of God's church wearing a cross? Is it not just an innocent symbol of religion? Let us look at the truth regarding the cross symbol.

John 19:19 Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. [In the Greek that word is *stauroo*.] And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

I wanted you to see the word cross used there and what the original Greek word was.

We know that He was murdered by what the Greeks called *stauroo*, and according to the *New Bible Dictionary*, *stauroo* means primarily an upright stake or beam or secondly a stake used as an instrument for punishment and execution. This is common knowledge and easily verified by many historical writings and the commentators agree as well. The study of word origins shows that *stauroo* is a stake or pole as well. There is no way of changing that meaning to anything else, but that.

This Greek word was used in literature in reference to pieces of wood of various shapes, including those with cross pieces. Many references admit that no one knows exactly what the *stauroo* or stake or cross that Jesus was crucified on actually looked like. It was most likely just a stake.

So from where did the present cross “T” symbol for Christianity come? Does Jesus Christ approve of its display? Let us look briefly at some historical facts having to do with the cross.

The cross was used centuries before Christ. For example, in the British museum there is a statue of the Assyrian king Samsi-Vul, who was the son of Shalmaneser, and around his neck is almost perfect Maltese cross, and on an accompanying figure, that of Ashurbanipal, is a similar cross. The ancient Greek goddess Diana is pictured with a cross over her head, in much the same way the virgin Mary is represented by many medieval artists. Bacchus the Greek god of wine is often pictured wearing a head dress adorned with crosses. The Egyptians used cross symbols in abundance as did the Hindus. Different type of crosses were used in Mexico centuries before the Spaniards ever arrived, which means their origins were most likely prior to the time of Christ.

The cross has always been a major symbol of pagan religions. There is rarely commentary out there that will not admit that, it is just such common knowledge.

Crucifixion of live criminals did not occur in the Old Testament, there are no examples given of death in that way. History shows that the Phoenician and Carthaginians practiced crucifixion, and later of course the Romans used it extensively. But it was primarily used for slaves and those of the lowest level of criminals.

The surprising thing is that Christian use of the cross did not begin until the time of Constantine, three centuries after Christ, as the 11th addition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* plainly states. Archaeologists have not found any Christian use of the symbol before that time and according to W. E. Vine, and his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* under the article "Cross," he says;

The shape of a ladder [referring to the cross] had its origin in ancient Chaldea and was used as a symbol of the god Tammuz. Being in the shape of a mystic *tau* ["T" with a cross on top] this was the initial of his name, in that country and in the adjacent lands including Egypt. By the middle of the third century AD, the churches had either departed from or had transvested certain doctrines of the Christian faith. In order to increase the prestige of the apostate Ecclesiastical system, pagans were received into the churches apart from regeneration by faith, and were permitted largely to retain their pagan signs and symbols.

It was not until Christianity became paganized that the cross came to be thought of as a Christian symbol. It was in 431 AD that crosses in churches and chambers were introduced, while the use of crosses on steeples, that is, obelisks or phallic symbols, did not come until about 586 AD. In the sixth century the crucifix image was introduced, and its worship sanctioned by the church of Rome.

People in mainstream Christianity may still argue that it is okay to Christianize the pagan cross. So what is wrong with the cross being used as a

symbol of our union with Christ, not simply in virtue of our following His example, but in virtue of what He has done for us and in us? In His substitutionary death for us on the stake, we died in Him, and our old man is crucified with Him, that by His indwelling Spirit we might walk in newness of life abiding in Him and walking in the truth as He did.

Turn with me please to John 18. The synchronizing of pagan symbols with God's truth does not offer a true witness of God's way of life because it is a symbol that is borrowed from paganism, therefore using it is a breaking of the ninth commandment, "You shall not bear false witness." Using the cross is advocating a lie.

John 18:37 Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are you a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

So we could surmise from that that a person who uses a cross may not hear His voice. It is that serious.

In Romans 1:18-20 Paul emphasizes things involving God's existence and attributes are *clearly* seen. Unrighteous human beings suppress the truth. The things God wants human beings to know are willingly ignored and stifled through the addition of beliefs and traditions that conceal the truth. The truth is still there, hidden behind a veil of lies that most people never attempt to remove. This thought process is called syncretism which is the combination of different forms of belief or practice, and in a popular usage it is mostly applied to religion.

Those who synchronize beliefs do not bother to logically combine the thoughts and principles, nor do they show any care for unity or agreement of these human reasonings. Without regard to propriety or integrity, they will often attach one belief or practice to their religion. Often people do the same thing with humanly devised graven images of angels that they place on their lapels, or on their Bibles. With both cases, crosses and angels, idolatry is committed because they are symbols used to misrepresent God's true religion.

Crosses have been added to Christianity without Christ's approval. So who is the real author of this syncretism of the pagan cross symbol with Christianity? Constantine may have been one of the physical promoters of it, but demonic forces are no doubt ecstatic that their symbol of the pagan god Tammuz has been stamped on to syncretized mainstream Christianity.

The apostles did not trust in the old rugged cross as a virtuous symbol, but as the accursed tree, a device of death and shame. Instead, their faith is in what was accomplished on the cross, and through this faith they grew to know the forgiveness of sin, thanks to Christ's sacrifice.

Hebrew 12:1-2 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

It was in this sense that the apostles preached about the cross and glorified it. Paul wrote in

I Corinthians 1:17-18 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

The message of the cross, not the cross itself, is the power of God. Such references to the cross never referred to a piece of wood that people might wear around their neck. The message of the apostles was concerning the One who hung and died on the cross, and when they spoke the cross they were speaking of Christ's crucifixion and what it meant for humanity.

Three times in the book of Acts they refer to it as merely and vaguely a tree. There is absolutely no evidence that God's true church ever used the cross symbol for any purpose whatsoever. Nowhere does the Bible command its use. It certainly would if God expected Christians do use it.

The important thing is Christ's sacrifice for us, and what He is doing now, not the exact shape of the wood on which Christ died is what is important. But the mere fact that the traditional cross figures so prominently in pagan religious customs should give us pause for thought. Why reduce the glory of the Savior to something so temporary, so fragile and so pagan? Therefore a true witness represents the love of God the Father, and the love of Jesus Christ in deed and in truth.