



He is arisen, the God in Man, who strove
Through the long ages with his bestial past.
He is arisen, and through the gates of love,
Hath entered to his heritage at last.

And Death, the shadow that his footsteps fled,
In terror of the asphodel and tomb,
Is robbed of all his panoply of dread,
And garbed in glory of the lily's bloom.

Oh, long had earth been a Gethsemane,
Oh, long had man worn red crown of pain,
And many a soul had fared to Calvary
Bearing its cross of wretchedness and shame

No more, no more, into the voiceless dark
Sinks he to rest, fearing the dreamless night.
For Christ is risen, and the immortal spark
Of God in him hath kindled heavenly light.

The Origin of the Cross

The origin of the cross as a symbol is shrouded in the dim mists of almost prehistoric antiquity. Centuries before the Gallic and Cymric Celts swarmed over England, centuries before the lowly Nazarene began promulgating his doctrines, centuries before the beginning of the Old Testament history, the cross was an important factor in the lives of men. It forms part of the lore of the most ancient of religions. Never is a great excavation made but that many variations of the cross forms are exhumed and under circumstances which prove that they have been religious symbols.

There are many evidences to prove that prior to the time of Christ the Cross was with the Jews a sign of salvation. The brazen serpent was Moses instructed the people of Israel to mark their doorposts with the blood of the sacrificial lamb he told them to make the mark in the form of a cross. The sign of the cross is frequently found on ancient Jewish monuments near Persepolis.

What became of the true cross is one of the greatest miracles of all time. It is true that there are in many Old and New World cathedrals bits of wood purporting to be part of the true cross. In some cases, notably that which concerns the fragment of the tablet placed over the cross by Pilate's order, and which is now in the ancient church of Santa Croce at Rome, their authenticity seems fairly well established; but so minute are the fragments that, according to one ancient writer, if all were collected and put together they would only make a block of wood about twenty inches long, eight inches wide and three inches thick.

It was three centuries after the crucifixion of Christ before the cross was found. Its discovery was due to the devout Helena, wife of the Emperor Constantine, who abolished crucifixion and to whom the Chris-

tian religion owes the original adoption of the cross as a symbol. Over the spot where the cross was discovered a chapel was erected and the sacred wood was retained by Helena in Jerusalem and deposited under the great church or basilica erected by Constantine over the place of crucifixion and burial. For three hundred peaceful years the cross remained in the custody of the Bishop of Jerusalem. Every Easter it was exhibited to the pilgrims who thronged the Holy City. Then came three hundred years of comparative obscurity, from which the cross emerged to become the center of upheavals that convulsed the entire civilized world, arrayed the West against the East, and caused the spilling of oceans of blood—the wars of the Crusades.

The story of the valiant crusaders and their series of attempts to rescue the holy wood from Moslem hands is well known. After a series of vicissitudes, victory finally perched on the banners of the Saracens, who, under the great Saladin, defeated the Christians at Hattin, in a battle of frightful carnage. On that day, the 5th of July, 1187, the cross was lost to the Christians. It was never again recovered. Richard the Lion Hearted and many other warriors went to the rescue, but to no avail. Finally the cross disappeared. Of its fate nothing is known. For hundreds of years a search was maintained, but without success. It is generally believed that the superstitious Moslems, fearing the powers of the cross, destroyed it in order to prevent its possible recapture by the Christians. This, in brief, is all that is known of the history of the true cross itself.

After the crucifixion over three centuries elapsed before the cross as a symbol in any form became a part of the church observance, and seven centuries passed before the crucifix was finally adopted. This prolonged delay proceeded from two main

causes. The early Christians had not fully eradicated the old prejudices against the cross, and they thought the scene of the crucifixion too sacred to be pictured in images.

Prior to the fourth century the holiest of Christian symbols was the monogram of Christ. It was woven into all ecclesiastical vestments and formed a prominent feature of other decorations. About the year 393 the first crucifix was introduced into the church. It was made of dark red wood and at the intersection of the two parts bore the figure of the lamb, the objection to the using of the actual figure of Christ being still strong.

Somewhat later came the Greek crucifix, one of the most beautiful of all the forms, and which many contemporary divines contend would form a more fitting part of church ceremonials than the one in common use. This Greek cross was meant to typify the triumph over death, but in such a manner as to divest as far as possible the entire subject of its gruesome and morbid aspect. It blossomed with flowers of gold and silver and was richly studded with gems. In 692, during the reign of Justinian, the Council of Trullo was held. The object of the famous conference was to devise a means by which to circumvent the mysticism and symbolism that were threatening to undermine the Christian religion and deprive it of its true meaning. It was pointed out that the signs and symbols used in the service were becoming more and more important than the things they stood for, and that to the ignorant mind the story of the life and sufferings of Christ began to be only a sort of myth, an allegory. It was resolved to substitute the actual human figure of the crucified Christ for that of the symbolic lamb. This act resulted in the creation of the orthodox crucifix of to-day.

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