

Canada Christian College

THE PARADIGM OF THE CROSS IN THE EARLY CHURCH AND TODAY

... come, take up the cross, and follow me.

*Faith of our fathers! holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death!*

Essay Assignment for Church History I

Fall Semester 2005

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December 2005

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All Biblical quotations are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

The Paradigm of the Cross in the Early Church and Today

... come, take up the cross, and follow me. (Matt. 10:21)

Introduction

The word “paradigm” comes from a Greek word meaning “to show side-by-side” and refers to a model, pattern, or prototype. In this study, the “Cross” does not refer to the physical wooden object, nor even to the physical aspects of Jesus' suffering on the Cross; it refers to the aspects of Christ's nature that were expressed in His suffering during His betrayal, trial, and crucifixion—in His disposition, attitudes, and motivations. In these we find the paradigm, model, or prototype that God purposes us to follow.

Under this *portmanteau* term [*paradigm*] I gather the several ways that Jesus' death functions as inspiring and exemplary for Christian behaviour, as descriptive of, and criterion for, Christian existence, indeed as the crucial event by which Christian ethical effort, discipleship, and consequent sufferings are defined and given their significance.¹

The Paradigm of the Cross in the Teaching and Experience of the New Testament Church

After the Lord impressed me through various experiences with the importance of the Cross as a paradigm,² my resulting intensive study of this theme in the New Testament revealed that, of the approximately 100 references in the New

1. L.W. Hurtado, “Jesus' Death as Paradigmatic in the New Testament”
[www.http://www.ex.ac.uk/~mahigton/Hurtado.rtf](http://www.ex.ac.uk/~mahigton/Hurtado.rtf).

2. For accounts of these experiences, request *Conformed to His Death=Life!* from the author.

Testament to our becoming like Jesus, over 80% of such passages have a specific reference to the suffering and death of Jesus. Following are comments of other authors regarding the importance of the Cross as a paradigm in the New Testament:

The basic thesis that I shall seek to advance here is that, when considered collectively, the various paradigmatic functions of Jesus' death are referred to impressively widely in the New Testament. In fact, I contend that the New Testament treatments of Jesus' death as paradigmatic offer powerful resources for Christian self-understanding and ethical effort. The New Testament references to Jesus' death as paradigmatic make heavy intellectual and behavioural demands, but are ignored at great risk to the theological integrity and the efficacy of the endeavour of Christians.³

In His death Jesus taught us how to live. We often look at His dying moments and observe that His death illustrates the seriousness of sin and the need for a Savior to pay the price for our iniquity. We recognize that by His substitutionary death, He died in our place . . . Christ died not only for us, but also as an example to us. He died to show us how to live.⁴

In his well-known book *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "When Christ calls a man, He bids Him come and die." With that, the German theologian, preacher and martyr (he was executed by the Nazis in 1945) has succinctly and profoundly identified the very heart and core of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. The Master Himself put it this way, "If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me," (Luke 9:23) . . . Jesus was saying, "Just as I must die, so must you."⁵

The apostle Paul had a passionate desire to be conformed to the paradigm of the Cross:

3. L. W. Hurtado.

4. John MacArthur, "Christ Humbled, Christ Exalted: Jesus' Death Shows Us How to Live", www.BibleBB.com.

5. Dennis Conner, "Death and Christian Discipleship", www.yadkinvillechurchofchrist.org/articles2.html.

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made *conformable unto his death*; . . . (Phil. 3:10 KJV) [emphases mine]

In many of the metaphors used in the New Testament to describe the Christian life, we see the Cross as a paradigm. Four of these are summarized below:

(a) Slave/Servant

Paul often calls himself a “bond-slave of Jesus Christ”. Jesus emphasizes that we must be servants/slaves like Him and that the paradigm of the Cross is the ultimate form of service:

. . . Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be **slave** [*doulos*] of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:42-45)

(b) Athlete

In several scriptures, the paradigm of the Cross is shown by the extreme discipline and sacrifice made by Olympic runners:

Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (1 Cor. 9: 24b-27)

Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, . . . Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Heb. 12:1-3)

(c) Prisoner

Several times, Paul calls himself the “prisoner of the Lord”. Further, note the meaning given of the verbs “compel” and “reconciled” in the following verse:

For Christ's love compels (*sunecho*, “*captivates/arrests*) us
We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (2 Cor. 5: 14a, 20)

Note also that the word for “reconciled” means “to be totally changed or transformed towards”. (I pray that I will be so bound as a prisoner to His love that I can effectively pass on to others His command to be reconciled, i.e., changed to the paradigm of the Cross.)

(d) Follower

Of the several Greek words that are translated as “follow” in the New Testament, *akoloutheo* is the most common, occurring about 90 times. It means “*to follow; follow as a disciple; imitate.*”⁶ Note Spiros Zodhiates’ explanation of its meaning and implications:

The first thing in following Jesus is a cleaving to Him in believing trust and obedience. Those cleaving to Him must also follow His leading and ***act according to His example*** Hence constant stress is laid by the Lord Jesus upon the need of ***self-denial and fellowship of the Cross***. . . . , ***sharing in His sufferings not only inwardly, but outwardly if necessary . . . a life resembling His and a self denying sharing of His cross***⁷ [emphases mine]

6. Zondervan, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1972), 12.

7. Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Iowa Falls IA: World Bible Publishers, Inc., 1994), 112.

Paul, Stephen, along with others in the New Testament, faced persecution and responded with the same attitudes and forgiveness and sacrificial love Jesus demonstrated in His death.

The foregoing is merely an introduction to the concept of the Cross as a paradigm; for an extensive coverage of the importance and relevance of this concept, readers can request from the author print copies or email attachments of *Conformed to His Death=Life!*⁸

From all the scriptures mentioned so far, we can conclude that the fundamental requirement of those of us who are truly Christian disciples is the willingness to lay down our lives—physically or otherwise—for the Lord and to suffer if necessary in doing so. Along with that, we must diligently search out and determine to apply such a total commitment to every aspect of our life—to seek to love every one with the same quality of sacrificial love that Jesus did in His passion, even to love our enemies so deeply that we would die for them.

We have many Christian groups who seek to have a “New Testament” church and seek to follow certain patterns mentioned in the New Testament about principles and practices of church worship and organization. However, unless as much emphasis is placed on following the paradigm of the Cross as it is found in the New Testament, all the effort to look like a “New Testament” church will accomplish only an appearance of the kind of church that the Lord intended and is doomed to fail in accomplishing the purposes of God.

8 . Contact details are given on the cover page.

Following the paradigm of the Cross includes the same motives as the Lord had in His willingness to sacrifice everything. If we have unselfish motives of completely offering ourselves to the Lord with a desire to serve and love Him, we will find ways to express the Cross in all our relationships in our daily lives without necessarily experiencing martyrdom. This commitment must be a daily prayer, with a seeking the Lord about how it applies to the way we love everyone—a willingness to lay down our lives completely to the Lord that He might love them through us.

The Paradigm of the Cross in the Lives of Early Christian Martyrs

Ignatius of Antioch (A.D. 35-107) was an example of a martyr who followed the paradigm of the Cross in a literal, physical manner and also in his Christ-like attitude:

. . . his purpose is to be an imitator of the passion of . . . Jesus Christ. As he faces the ultimate sacrifice, Ignatius believes that he begins to be a disciple. . . And the reason why Ignatius is willing to face death with such courage is that he will thereby become a witness.⁹

The same dedication to express the paradigm of the Cross was expressed by Polycarp in his statement “Grant me nothing more than to be poured out as an offering to God”¹⁰ and also by these words that he prayed out loud just before he was burned alive:

9. Justo L. Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity Volume 1* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1984), 43.

10. M. Collins and M.A. Price, *The Story of Christianity* (London: DK Publishing, 1999), 44

Lord Sovereign God . . . I thank you that you have deemed me worthy of this moment, so that, jointly with your martyrs, I may have a share in the cup of Christ. . . . For this . . . I bless you. Amen.¹¹

Noteworthy, also, are the words of Felicitas, who declared just before her execution that she would not abandon her faith: “while I live, I shall defeat you; and if you kill me, in my death I shall defeat you all the more.”¹²

For those who “lapsed” during persecution, the attitude of the church in discussing their restoration was that denying Christ was a serious sin and that the norm for a committed Christian was to be a “confessor” by accepting torture and death rather than worship idols or deny Christ.

A further aspect of the paradigm of the Cross was the trust that Jesus had in God for the results of His obedient suffering, which included the work that the Cross would accomplish in His Church. Likewise, early Christian martyrs trusted God for their reward in heaven and for the wonderful results their martyrdom had as a witness to non-Christians. Tertullian had declared that “the blood of the martyr was a seed, for the more it was spilled the greater the number of Christians.”¹³

The ancient church knew nothing of “evangelistic services” or “revivals” . . . most converts were made by anonymous Christians whose witness led others to their faith. The most dramatic form taken by such witness was obviously that of suffering unto death, . . .¹⁴

For though we are beheaded, and crucified, and exposed to beasts and chains and fire and all other forms of torture, it is plain that .

11. Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity*, 44, quoted from *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 14.

12. Gonzales, 46.

13. Gonzales, 86.

14. Gonzales, 99.

. . . the more things of this kind which happen to us the more are there others who become believers and truly religious through the name of Jesus¹⁵

There is another cause why God permits persecutions to be carried out against us, that the people of God may be increased.¹⁶

From these last quotes, we see in the lives of the martyrs reflections of Jesus' total unselfishness in suffering and dying for our salvation. Further, some of the stories of the martyrs show their loving and obedient attitude towards God and their forgiveness and love of their persecutors.

It has already been noted that martyrdom is not necessarily an expression of the Cross; motives are an important aspect of Jesus' example of love in His suffering. Note Paul's words: "If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing." (1 Cor. 13:3) Our actions often reveal our real motives, but we need the Holy Spirit to reveal our hidden motives—often hidden to ourselves. If we truly want to follow the paradigm of the Cross we must be willing to have these motives exposed and dealt with.

The Paradigm of the Cross Versus Other Paradigms in Early Heresies

Jessie Penn-Lewis sought to understand and teach the centrality of the Cross as a focus to counter some of the problems that developed during the Welsh Revival:

15. Owen Collins, *The Oral History of Christianity* (London: HarperCollins, 1998), 28-29.

16. Collins and Price, *The Story of Christianity*, 54.

It is because we Christians get away from the “fixed point” of the Cross that we wander into all kinds of cul-de-sac places, where we lose the balance and right perspective of truth.¹⁷

All heresies and errors in Christendom have been largely caused by Satan's attempt to lead us away from a focus on the Person of Jesus Christ and His Cross and lead us into some type of sinful thinking or action. Satan seems especially active in blinding us to the paradigmatic aspects of the Cross and thus to keep us from truly becoming like Christ. This activity and purpose of Satan can be seen in the heresies of the early Church.

(a) Gnosticism and Marcion

Many Christian Gnostics believed that Jesus did not die on the cross, but rather only created the illusion he was being crucified. Marcion, like the Gnostics, taught that the death of Christ on the Cross was only a hallucination, since Jesus did not have a physical body.¹⁸ In the Gnostic view, it is Christ's teachings that are relevant, not his suffering and death.

. . . they [Gnostics] tended to denigrate the physical humanity of Jesus, and orthodox teachers such as Irenaeus by the end of the second century wanted to insist very strongly on the humanity of Jesus as an example for his followers, so it was very important to insist on Jesus as really suffering and dying on the cross because Christians were being called upon at that time to suffer and die as witnesses, as martyrs to their faith. And if with some Gnostics you could denigrate the physical suffering of Jesus, you might call into question that obligation to stand and to bear witness for the faith.¹⁹

17. Jessie Penn-Lewis, *The Centrality of the Cross* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 2000), 9.

18. B.A. Robinson, “Gnostic Leaders Interaction Between Gnostic and Pauline Christianity”, Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, www.religioustolerance.org/gnostic3.htm

19. Elaine H. Pagels, “Gnostics and Other Heretics”, WGBH Educational Foundation, www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/story/heretics.html

A clear definition of a paradigm that Christian Gnostics sought to emulate is difficult to determine. Gnostics saw Jesus as a teacher of secrets; accordingly, they, too, became teachers, sharing with others their secret knowledge. They focused on man's spiritual origin and destiny, rather on how Jesus lived His human life; their paradigm for their lives thus would have been a vague concept of their “real” identity as spirits, rather than a model of how they were to live out the nature of Jesus in their bodies, which they considered to be only evil. Their paradigms would have been varied, but did not necessarily include the significant aspects of Jesus’ nature, nor even what we would consider moral. Further, because Gnosticism grew out of Greek philosophy, they inherited the paradigms that were expressed by the Greek gods.

The following quote shows that Gnostics did not reflect the love and humility of Jesus towards those who did not agree with them:

. . . each group believed that it alone held the truth, and despised all other Gnostics and all other religions, which were but shadows of the truth.²⁰

Although we would defend orthodoxy when it comes to the person of Christ as He lived our His life in Israel 2000 years ago, we find we are actually much like the Gnostics when we face what in reality we believe about the Christ Who we say lives within us. Like the Gnostics, we intellectually believe that Christ lives in us, but in reality this “Christ” is more of a teaching and concept rather than the

20. Collins and Price, *The Story of Christianity*, 42

nature of Christ that we see defined by the paradigm of the Cross. Often this Christ in us is a vague spiritual entity rather than the Jesus Who lived out the Cross in real physical terms. At the centre of our being is often a collection of teachings and our dedication to them, rather than a risen Lord, Who lives out in us the paradigm of the Cross with resurrection power. The teachings that we so passionately defend may be entirely orthodox and scriptural, but if we live with a dependence on our orthodoxy in our teachings about Jesus, rather than actually living dependently on the Person of Christ, Whose nature we see in the paradigm of the Cross, we are living out a version of Gnosticism.

(b) Arianism

Arians denied the deity of Christ, deeming it was blasphemy to worship Him as God. However, it is vital that, to focus on Jesus as a paradigm, one must worship Him in the perfection of His love and other attributes shown through His humanity. When anyone does not fully worship Jesus as God, he or she automatically worships other gods—as the Greeks worshiped their gods or as many today worship human “stars”—and in the process become like these paradigms of behaviour and attitudes. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that many Arians expressed the opposite of the paradigm of the Cross; they dealt with their enemies using physical force rather than loving them and being willing to die for them. Arians seemed so committed in convincing others of their heresy that they did not seem to be concerned at all if they were following the paradigm of the Cross:

After the death of Constantine the Great, the Arians found means to ingratiate themselves into the favor of the emperor Constantinus, his son and successor in the east; and hence a persecution was raised against the orthodox bishops and clergy. . . .

In Egypt and Libya, thirty bishops were martyred, and many other Christians cruelly tormented; and, in A.D. 386, George, the Arian bishop of Alexandria, under the authority of the emperor, began a persecution in that city and its environs, and carried it on with the most infernal severity.

The persecutions now raged in such a manner that the clergy were driven from Alexandria, their churches were shut, and the severities practiced by the Arian heretics were as great as those that had been practiced by the pagan idolaters. If a man, accused of being a Christian, made his escape, then his whole family were massacred, and his effects confiscated.²¹

Again, we defend orthodoxy when it comes to the deity of Christ, but when we face what in reality we believe about the Christ within us, we find we are actually much like the Arians. Although, we can prove from Scripture the deity of Jesus, we find it hard to accept that deity truly resides within us. We accept that some of the attributes of the humanity of Jesus have become resident in us, but we seem to find it extremely difficult to truly accept that the divine glory of God actually lives within us. It seems commonly believed that the indwelling Spirit of God is able to give us some help and to guarantee that we will enter heaven when we die, but it seems to the majority of Evangelicals that Christ is only human within us, lacking the power of a deity to change us or to heal us physically or mentally.

Further, considering how the Arians deemed it blasphemy to worship Jesus, we can passionately preach the validity of worshiping Jesus, but spend so little time

21. John Fox, *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, www.freegrace.net/library/Fox_Martyrs/fox103.html (edited version by W.B.Forbush)

doing so, that we end up not daily giving time to focus on the aspects of Jesus' nature that He showed forth in His passion. We become what we worship and the fruit of our lives often does not indicate that Jesus is the main focus of our worship.

The Paradigm of the Cross Versus the Paradigms of the “Imperial Church” Under Constantine

Note how the following quotations detail how clearly many Christians in the fourth century accepted the paradigms of the structure and activities of the Roman Empire as their paradigms for church and social life rather than accepting the paradigm of the Cross:

Emperors and bishops worked hand in hand, as the church, benefiting from the patronage of Christian emperors, was increasingly modeled along imperial lines.²²

After Constantine's conversion, Christian worship began to be influenced by imperial protocol. . . . Officiating ministers, who until then had worn everyday clothes, began dressings in more luxurious garments. Likewise, a number of gestures indicating respect, which were normally made before the emperor, now became part of Christian worship.²³

. . . one of the theological issues that caused some concern for earlier Christians was how it was possible for a rich person to be saved. But now, beginning with Constantine, riches and pomp came to be seen as signs of divine favor. . . . the persecuted church became the church of the powerful, But the net result of those buildings [ornate churches], and of the liturgy that evolved to fit them, was the development of a clerical aristocracy, similar to the imperial aristocracy, and often as far from the common people as were the great officers of the Empire. The church imitated the uses of the Empire, not only in its liturgy, but also in its social structure.²⁴

22. Collins and Price, *The Story of Christianity*, 42

23. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 125.

24. Gonzalez, 134.

In an earlier section, it was related how evangelism took place in the early church; common people spread the gospel by their witness, and the greatest witness was martyrdom. However, after Constantine, multitudes were attracted into the churches by pomp and ceremony and easy acceptance; no longer would they have to prove their willingness to die for Jesus. After emperors became nominal Christians, it was common practice for them to force conversion by the sword in conquered lands. Any attempt to make sure candidates were truly committed to follow the paradigm of the Cross was no longer made.

Previously, persecution strongly challenged Christians to be committed personally to following the paradigm of the Cross by facing the real possibility of torture and execution. Those who “lapsed” were not accepted at communion. In a time when it was popular to be a Christian, there was no need to make such a commitment to be like Jesus, and many Christians automatically accepted the paradigms of pagan Romans for their personal lives and for their corporate church life.

What I refer to as the paradigms of the Roman Empire, Alexander Hislop in his book *The Two Babylons* demonstrates to be essentially “Mystery Babylon” (Rev. 17); and thus the system or paradigm that the Roman church adopted was really the pagan religion of ancient Babylon:

It has been known all along that Popery was baptised Paganism;
but God is now making it manifest that the Paganism which Rome has

baptised is, in all its essential elements, *the very Paganism* which prevailed in the ancient literal Babylon.²⁵

This interpretation of the “Imperial Church” seems extreme; and, no doubt, there is much evidence that there have been those in the Roman Church from earliest times that have lived out the paradigm of the Cross much more than other paradigms found in this denomination. All denominations need to reflect on how much of the paradigms that their members actually follow are really that of the Cross and need to be willing to have exposed and to repent of other paradigms that originated in pagan cultures or have much in common with the humanism and materialism of modern society. Further, it is clear that there have been those in every denomination who truly seek to follow Christ as an example and thus accept the paradigm of the Cross much as the early Christian martyrs did.

In times of easy Christianity, as now in Canada, we find that our Evangelical churches have gradually adopted paradigms for church activity and for personal lives that are not in line with the paradigm of the Cross. Without the foundational commitment to lay down our lives for Christ, there is very little emphasis on applying such a standard to aspects of our experiences and relationships.

Much like the Church under Constantine, we maintain an orthodox view of theology when it comes to doctrine about God and Jesus, but our lives show a “Christ” that is largely a life-style of our North American humanism. This humanism, along with Gnosticism and Arianism are present with us now in subtle

25. Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons or Papal Worship* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1959), 2

but destructive forms and have blinded us in various ways from totally accepting the paradigm of the Cross as our only model and have robbed us from the faith to believe that this paradigm can be lived out in a full manner in our lives.

The Paradigm of the Cross and Monasticism

(a) Before Constantine

Before the time of Constantine, the most common reason many Christians left society and lived in solitude in the desert was to flee persecution. In some cases, leaders were perfectly ready to lay down their lives, but believed that the church needed them for their leadership. In many cases, however, there were those who were not ready to face torture and execution, but chose a life of solitude rather than deny their faith in Christ. There were aspects of monasticism that required sacrifice, discipline, and self-denial, and thus expressed the paradigm of the Cross. However, in prolonged solitude and self-inflicted suffering, love for others—a central aspect of Jesus' sufferings—was totally missing.

(b) After Constantine

Whatever Constantine's motives for adopting the Christian faith, the result was a decline in Christian commitment. The stalwart believers Diocletian killed were replaced by mixed multitudes of half-converted pagans. Once Christians had laid down their lives for the truth; now they slaughtered each other to secure the prizes of the church. . . . The hermit often fled, then, not so much from the world as from the world in the church. His protest of a corrupt institution led him into the dangers of a pronounced individualism.²⁶

26. Bruce L. Shelly, *Church History in Plain Language* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982) 133.

Monasticism was the answer of many to these very difficult questions:

When the church joins the powers of the world, when luxury and ostentation take hold of Christian altars, when the whole of society is intent on turning the narrow path into a wide avenue, how is one to resist the enormous temptations of the times? How is one to witness to the Crucified Lord, to the One who had nowhere to lay his head, at a time when many leaders of the church live in costly homes, and when the ultimate witness of martyrdom is no longer possible? How to overcome Satan, who is constantly tempting the faithful with the new honors that society offers?²⁷

For many, therefore, the pursuit of Christ-likeness led many to live in extreme asceticism and solitude:

Those that fled into the desert found the ascetic way an acceptable substitute for the spiritual heroism required during the days of persecution. . . . They transformed the spirit of martyrdom into the final full commitment to God and the ascetic imitation of Christ . . . the monks assumed a three-fold vow: poverty, chastity and obedience.²⁸

Those that chose monasticism refused to accept the paradigms of the state church and found in monasticism some aspects of the paradigm of the Cross. However, in examining the motives and fruit found in reports of this monasticism, many missed some of the vital aspects of the paradigm of the Cross, as mentioned above.

Later, when monasteries were incorporated into the lives of local churches, we see sacrificial service for others and Christ's love for the poor being parts of the life of a monastery; some practical applications of the paradigm of the Cross could be followed right within a society filled with other paradigms. Basil the Great, as a bishop, showed the courage to follow the Cross in his reply to threats of

27. Gonzales, 136-7

28. Shelly, *Church History in Plain Language*, 134.

confiscation of his goods, with exile, torture, and even death. He was not asked to deny His faith in Christ; he was asked merely to remain subdued and not speak out against Arianism during a visit from the Emperor:

All that I have that you can confiscate are these rags and a few books. Nor can you exile me, for wherever you send me, I shall be God's guest, As to tortures you should know that my body is already dead in Christ. And death would be a great boon to me, leading me sooner to God.

When he was told that no one had ever spoken like thus, Basil answered, "Perhaps that is because you have never met a true bishop."²⁹

Monasticism, as such, is not an option for most modern Christians to escape the worldliness and humanism in the Church. However, some forms of communal living prove to be effective to live out simpler, less materialistic lives, to work out sacrificial love with others, and to minister to those with severe problems. Each local church needs to first of all accept the vital need to give priority to learn to follow the Cross as a paradigm and to be set free from the influence of all other paradigms. Following that, it is necessary to search out all the ways such a paradigm can be applied to our individual and corporate lives as Christians in our present society.

Many modern Christians escape from the "world" or mainline established churches by joining or forming a kind of Christian "ghetto" or exclusive group. The challenge for us is to be truly like Jesus, Who lived out the paradigm of the Cross in the middle of a society filled with those dedicated to other paradigms.

29. Gonzales, 185.

Conclusion

Some day the whole world will be full of the glory of the Lord. Consider that this glory is none other than glory of the paradigm of the Cross—the glory of the “Lamb as having been slain”—manifested in every human being. The whole world will come to this glorious state by means of Jesus working through the “overcomers” (Rev. 2:26). Those of us who have conquered all the enemies that tend to keep us from a total commitment to and expression of the paradigm of the Cross will be the ones who help Christ bring the same paradigm to be the norm for the whole world. Our preparation now is to overcome all obstacles so that His glory fill our whole lives—for those that do will have the privilege to help lead the world into the same expression of His glory—the glory of the Cross. As we learn from Church history what hindered the expression of the paradigm of the Cross, we then can recognize these enemies and learn to overcome them. Those that fully have overcome these enemies encourage others to overcome them also and look forward to the Day when the glory of the paradigm of the Cross will fill the Church and then fill the whole world.

Therefore, since **we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses**, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Heb. 12: 1-3)

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. (Hab. 2:14)

But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. (John 12:32-33)

***... COME, TAKE UP THE CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME.* (Matt. 10:21)**

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