

The Misinterpretation of Emperor Constantine's Vision and Its Consequences

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Emperor Constantine's victory against Maxentius in 312 AD is commonly understood as the first battle under the banner of Christianity and seen as a major shift from its status as a persecuted religion of outlaws to the established power that would reign for over a millennia in the world. But is this really the case?

Emperor Constantine had a vision of a cross in the sky. This was interpreted by his advisors as a divine sign of good fortune in coming battle. The cross as a symbol of power in battle originated here. Until then, the cross and more so, the letter "p," standing for *pax* or "peace," were symbols for Christianity.

In still earlier times, the fish was the secret symbol for Christians. In the Greek language, *ichthys* was the word for fish. Each letter was the beginning of this message: *Iesous Christos theou yios soter*, "Jesus Christ, son of God, Savior."

Until Constantine, bloodshed was not caused by Christians. The idea to shed blood in the name of Christ, in the sense to harm others, was alien and not supported by its founder — quite the contrary. As a result of its way of life, this religion of persecuted outlaws eventually brought the Roman Empire to its knees. It did so without military power but through devotion to Christ and by filling the cup of indemnity until finally released. This was perhaps the most honorable victory in Christian history.



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The Vikings and the adaptation of Constantine's conquest

When Reverend Moon travelled through Europe in 2005 (then banned from the Schengen Area), he strongly addressed the Viking mentality of Europeans. At that time, I did not get it, because by my understanding, the Viking age was between 800 to 1000 AD. However, this applied only to the well-known Viking raids that occurred in Western Europe mainly from Norway. In the eastern part of Europe, Vikings travelled as traders and settlers along the rivers, particularly in Russia, until they met Muslim communities on the shores of the Mediterranean. According to the most prevalent theory, the name of the *Rus* ' people is derived from an Old Norse term for "the men who row."



Viking expeditions (blue line): depicting the immense breadth of their voyages through most of Europe, the Mediterranean Sea, Northern Africa, Asia Minor, the Arctic and North America (source: Wikipedia).

The term “Viking” may have a wider meaning as well, standing for Indo-Europeans who were driven out of Asia by the Mongolian tribes and eventually settled in Europe. Their gods, namely Odin, Thor, and Freyja (the latter two still evident in the weekdays Thursday and Friday; Odin stands for Wednesday as still understood in Scandinavia) replaced the Greek gods of Zeus, Hera and Poseidon. They easily adapted the concept of conquest introduced by Constantine as illustrated in Charlemagne’s struggle with the Northern tribes. One of the reasons he failed in his mission was because he adopted “Viking” methods in the Christianization of these tribes — those who became the first to follow Martin Luther centuries later.

Already earlier, under Charles Martel, the grandfather of Charlemagne, the Muslims were fought under a banner carrying the cross when they reached their northernmost expansion in France. Had Christianity stood firm to the example of their founder and their forefathers of the Roman Empire, Islam could have been peacefully subjugated at that time just as the mighty Roman Empire had been won over. Instead, the Crusades marked the end of an improved European cultural era and were the beginning of the impoverished and degraded culture of the dark Middle Ages which lasted until the eve of the Reformation.

Christianity was overthrown from within by the power of kings, popes and their greed using Christianity as their sword and shield. Perfecting the Viking shipbuilding technology, the European dynasties brought large areas of the world under submission, using military might with the cross hoisted atop their sails.



*A replica of the Santa Maria, the largest of Columbus’s three ships in his first voyage of 1492
The cross is depicted on each mast*

However, there were minority groups within the Church that kept the original spirit of Christianity alive and it is thanks to their sacrifice and diligence that Christianity could remain alive. Monks like Ignatius of Loyola, Benedikt of Nursia, Francis of Assisi, later, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and great women, such as Hildegard of Bingen, made sure that God could continue to use Christianity during the darkest of ages.

The recovery of the original Christian spirit

It was with the end of World War II that Christian ethics employed by the United States enabled Europe to recover by showing mercy

and magnanimity to enemies, offering support to devastated Germany. From here, the era of *Pax Europa* was born which lasts until today within the borders of the European Union.

In bringing down communism, Rev. Moon employed the same strategy as that of the early Christians, ending the era of bloody world wars by reintroducing the principles of restoration through indemnity and carrying the cross, but this time without dying by it, thanks be to God.

In his foresight, Rev. Moon introduced the philosophy of *headwing* thought two years before the actual fall of communism, an idea that was inscribed at the entrance of *The Washington Times* (but which, in my view, did not implement it). His understanding that liberalism is not always wrong and conservatism not always right was and is an important realization to address today's problems of democratic societies. He understood that after the fall of communism, the greed of capitalists would remain as an unchallenged threat which needed to be addressed.

Constantine's mistaken view in the post-Cold War era

The "trap of Constantine" remained strong and America fell for it, resulting in the unfolding of the greatest disaster after the peaceful end of the Cold War. What a pity.

The first Iraq war (1990-91 Gulf War) as well as the 2003 invasion of Iraq were huge mistakes. Rev. Moon repeatedly lamented this situation and expressed his disapproval convincingly in his peace messages. We witness today that violence does not bring peace, neither in Iraq nor in Afghanistan. Instead this war is now reaching the doorsteps of our homes. Even in Iceland, people fear the danger of a terrorist attack, whether by radical Muslims or their European counterparts as was the case with the 2011 Norway attacks. It may lead to results corresponding to what occurred during and after the Crusades in Europe.

Had the early Christians not accepted the vision of Constantine but remained faithful to their own upbringing and accomplishment during their first 400 years, wars and conflicts as we came to know them would not have come to pass and the accomplishment of the mission of True Parents would have been quick, swift and smooth.

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Painting at top: *Detail from "The Vision of the Cross," painted between 1520 and 1524 by assistants of the Italian renaissance artist Raphael.*