Christian symbolism

Christian symbolism is the use of symbols, including archetypes, acts, artwork or events, by Christianity. It invests objects or actions with an inner meaning expressing Christian ideas.

The symbolism of the early Church was characterized by being understood by initiates only,[1] while after the legalization of Christianity in the Roman Empire during the 4th-century more recognizable symbols entered in use. Christianity has borrowed from the common stock of significant symbols known to most periods and to all regions of the world.[2]

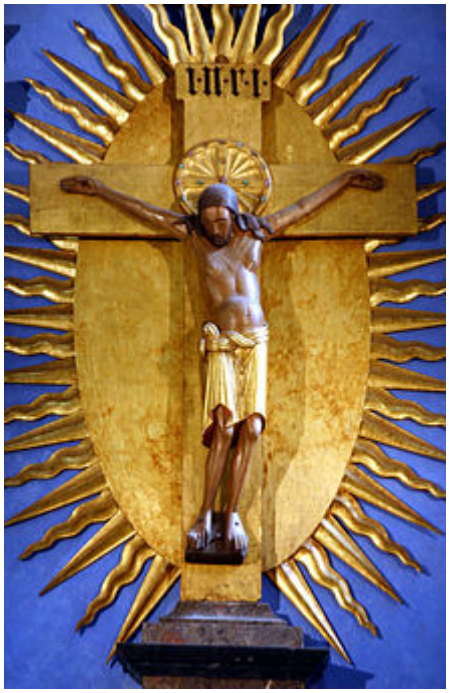
Christianity has not generally practiced Aniconism, or the avoidance or prohibition of types of images, even if the early Jewish Christians sects, as well as some modern denominations, preferred to some extent not to use figures in their symbols, by invoking the Decalogue's prohibition of idolatry.

Contents

Early Christian symbols

Cross and crucifix ✝✚

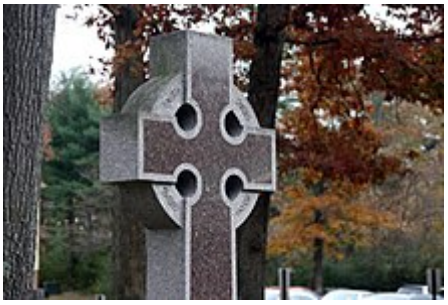
The shape of the cross, as represented by the letter T, came to be used as a "seal" or symbol of Early Christianity by the 2nd century.[3] At the end of the 2nd century, it is mentioned in the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix, rejecting the claim by detractors that Christians worship the cross.[4] The cross (crucifix, Greek *stauros*) in this period was represented by the letter T. Clement of Alexandria in the early 3rd century calls it τὸ κυριακὸν σημεῖον ("the Lord's sign") he repeats the idea, current as early as the Epistle of Barnabas, that the number 318 (in Greek numerals, TIH) in Genesis 14:14 (https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Genesis+14:14–14:14&version=nrsv) was a foreshadowing (a "type") of the cross (T, an upright with crossbar, standing for 300) and of Jesus (IH, the first two letters of his name ΙΗΣΟΥΣ, standing for 18).[5]



The Crucifix, a cross with *corpus*, a symbol used in the Catholic Church, Lutheranism, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and Anglicanism, in contrast with some other Protestant denominations, which use only a bare cross.

Clement's contemporary Tertullian also rejects the accusation that Christians are *crucis religiosi* (i.e. "adorers of the gibbet"), and returns the accusation by likening the worship of pagan idols to the worship of poles or stakes.[6] In his book *De Corona*, written in 204, Tertullian tells how it was already a tradition for Christians to trace repeatedly on their foreheads the sign of the cross.[7]

While early Christians used the T-shape to represent the cross in writing and gesture, the use of the Greek cross and Latin cross, i.e. crosses with intersecting beams, appears in Christian art towards the end of Late Antiquity. An early example of the cruciform halo, used to identify Christ in paintings, is found in the *Miracles of the Loaves and Fishes* mosaic of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna (dated c. 504).



20th-21st century Celtic cross with inscribed symbolism

Instances of the St Thomas cross, a Greek cross with clover leaf edges, popular in southern India,[8] date to about the 6th century.

The Patriarchal cross, a Latin cross with an additional horizontal bar, first appears in the 10th century.

Early use of a globus cruciger on a solidus minted by Leontios (r. 695–698); on the obverse, a stepped cross in the shape of a Iota Eta monogram.

The Celtic cross, now often characterized by the presence of the outline of a circle upon which a cross, stylized in a pre-Medieval Celtic fashion, appears superimposed. The Celtic cross bears strong resemblance to the Christian cross; however, the Celtic cross motif predates Christianity by at least 3,000 years. It appears in the form of heavily sculpted, vertically oriented, ancient monoliths which survive in the present day, in various locations on the island of Ireland. A few of the ancient monuments were evidently relocated to stand in some of Ireland's earliest churchyards, probably between 400 CE and 600 CE, as Christianity was popularized throughout much of the island. The heavily-worn stone sculptures likely owe their continued survival to their sheer size and solid rock construction, which coordinate in scale, and in composition, with Ireland's ancient megalith arrangements.

Unlike the Christian cross iconography associated with the shape of a crucifix (commonly used for torture and execution of criminals and captured enemy prisoners-of-war, by the pre-Christian Roman Empire), the Celtic cross' design origins are not clear. The Celtic cross has nevertheless been repeated in statuary, as a dominant feature of the anthropogenic Irish landscape, for

at least 5,000 years. The Celtic cross and the Christian cross are similar enough in shape, that the former was easily adopted by Irish Catholic culture, following the Christianization of Ireland. The Celtic cross is accurately described as an ancient symbol of cultural significance in pre-Christian, Druidic Ireland. It also is used as a symbolic icon of the interpretation of Christianity, unique to Irish culture in that pre-Christian Celtic tradition and Irish Druidic iconography are hybridized with Christian traditions and iconography (much like the Shamrock; a low-growing, daintily foliaged, dense ground cover plant, which is held as a timeless symbol of Ireland itself; and, which is also symbolic on Ireland, of the Christian Holy Trinity, due to the Shamrock's typical trifoliar leaf structure).

Although the cross was used as a symbol by early Christians, the crucifix, i.e. depictions of the crucifixion scene, were rare prior to the 5th century; some engraved gems thought to be 2nd or 3rd century have survived, but the subject does not appear in the art of the Catacombs of Rome.[9] The purported discovery of the True Cross by Constantine's mother, Helena, and the development of Golgotha as a site for pilgrimage led to a change of attitude. It was probably in Palestine that the image developed, and many of the earliest depictions are on the Monza ampullae, small metal flasks for holy oil, that were pilgrim's souvenirs from the Holy Land, as well as 5th century ivory reliefs from Italy.[10]

In the early medieval period, the plain cross became depicted as the crux gemmata, covered with jewels, as many real early medieval processional crosses in goldsmith work were. The first depictions of crucifixion displaying suffering are believed to have arisen in Byzantine art,[11] where the "S"-shaped slumped body type was developed. Early Western examples include the Gero Cross and the reverse of the Cross of Lothair, both from the end of the 10th century.

Marie-Madeleine Davy (1977) described in great detail Romanesque Symbolism as it developed in the Middle Ages in Western Europe.[12]

Ichthys

An Ichthys from ancient Ephesus

Among the symbols employed by the early Christians, that of the fish seems to have ranked first in importance. Its popularity among Christians was due principally to the famous acrostic consisting of the initial letters of five Greek words forming the word for fish (Ichthus), which words briefly but clearly described the character of Christ and the claim to worship of believers: "**Ἰ**ησοῦς **Χ**ριστὸς **Θ**εοῦ **Υ**ἱὸς **Σ**ωτήρ", (Iēsous Christos Theou Huios Sōtēr), meaning, *Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour*.[13] This explanation is given among others by Augustine in his Civitate Dei,[14] where he also notes that the generating sentence "Ἰησοῦς Χρειστὸς [sic] Θεοῦ Υἱὸς Σωτήρ" has 27 letters, i.e. 3 x 3 x 3, which in that age indicated power.

Alpha and Omega ΑΩ

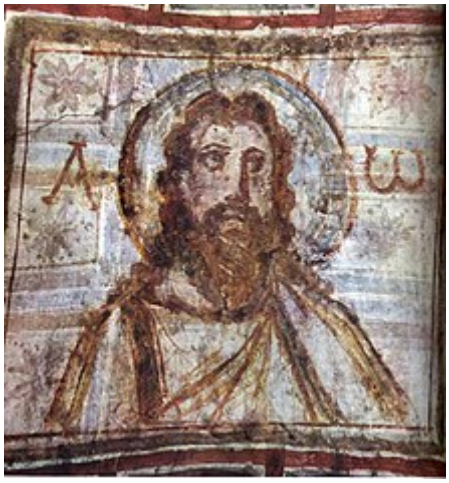
The use since the earliest Christianity of the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet, alpha (**α** or **Α**) and omega (**ω** or **Ω**), derives from the statement said by Jesus (or God) himself "I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" (Revelation 22:13, also 1:8 and 21:6).

Staurogram ⳩

The **Staurogram** ⳩ (from the Greek σταυρός, i.e. *cross*), also **Monogrammatic Cross** or *Tau-Rho* symbol, is composed by a tau (**T**) superimposed on a rho (**P**). The Staurogram was first used to abbreviate the Greek word for cross in very early New Testament manuscripts such as P66, P45 and P75, almost like a nomen sacrum, and may visually have represented Jesus on the cross.[15]

Ephrem the Syrian in the 4th-century explained these two united letters stating that the tau refers to the cross, and the rho refers to the Greek word "help" (Βοήθια [sic]; proper spelling: Βοήθεια) which has the numerological value in Greek of 100 as the letter rho has. In such a way the symbol expresses the idea that the Cross saves.[15] The two letters tau and rho can also be found separately as symbols on early Christian ossuaries.[16]

The Monogrammatic Cross was later seen also as a variation of the Chi Rho symbol, and it spread over Western Europe in the 5th and 6th centuries.[17]



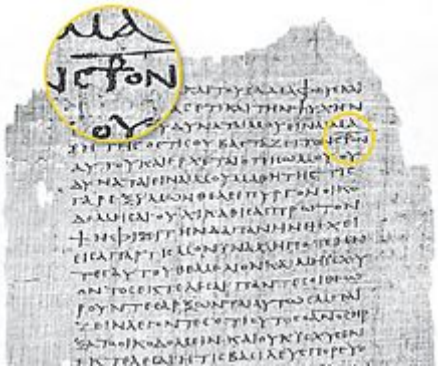
Jesus depicted with the alpha and omega letters in the catacombs of Rome from the 4th century

Chi Rho ☧

The **Chi Rho** is formed by superimposing the first two (capital) letters chi and rho (**XP**) of the Greek word "**XP**ΙΣΤΟΣ" =*Christ* in such a way to produce the monogram. Widespread in ancient Christianity, it was the symbol used by the Roman emperor Constantine I as vexillum (named Labarum).

IH Monogram

The first two letters of the name of Jesus in Greek, iota (**I**) and eta (**H**), sometime superimposed one on the other, or the numeric value 18 of IH in Greek, was a well known and very early way to represent Christ.[18] This symbol was already explained in the Epistle of Barnabas and by Clement of Alexandria. For other christograms such as IHS, see Article Christogram.



A staurogram used as τρ-ligature part of the spelling of the word *σταυρον* (as c̄(τρ)ον) in Luke 14:27 (https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+14:27) (Papyrus Bodmer XIV-XV, 2nd century)

IX Monogram ⯐

An early form of the monogram of Christ, found in early Christian ossuaries in Palestinia, was formed by superimposing the first (capital) letters of the Greek words for Jesus and Christ, i.e. iota **I** and chi **X**, so that this monogram means "Jesus Christ".[16]:166 Another more complicated explanation of this monogram was given by Irenaeus[19] and Pachomius: because the numeric value of iota is 10 and the chi is the initial of the word "Christ" (Greek: ΧΡΕΙΣΤΟΣ [sic]; proper spelling: ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ) which has 8 letters, these early fathers calculate 888 ((10*8)*10)+((10*8)+8) which was a number already known to represent Jesus, being the sum of the value of the letters of the name "Jesus" (ΙΗΣΟΥΣ) (10+8+200+70+400+200).[16]:169–170

The Chi-Rho symbol ☧, Catacombs of San Callisto, Rome

Other Christian symbols

The Good Shepherd

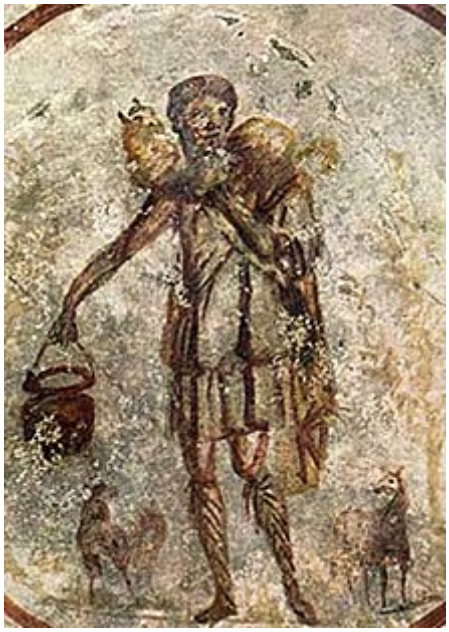
The image of the Good Shepherd, often with a sheep on his shoulders, is the most common of the symbolic representations of Christ found in the Catacombs of Rome, and it is related to the Parable of the Lost Sheep. Initially it was also understood as a symbol like others used in Early Christian art. By about the 5th century the figure more often took on the appearance of the conventional depiction of Christ, as it had developed by this time, and was given a halo and rich robes.

Dove

The dove as a Christian symbol is of very frequent occurrence in ancient ecclesiastical art.[20] According to Matthew 3:16 (https://www.esv.org/Matthew+3:16), during the Baptism of Jesus the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and came to rest on Jesus. For this reason the dove became a symbol of the Holy Spirit and in general it occurs frequently in connection with early representations of baptism. It signifies also the Christian soul, not the human soul as such, but as indwelt by the Holy Spirit; especially, therefore, as freed from the toils of the flesh and entered into rest and glory.[2] The Peristerium or *Eucharistic dove* was often used in the past, and sometime still used in Eastern Christianity, as Church tabernacle.

A IX Monogram from a 4th century Sarcophagus from Constantinople

However the more ancient explanation of the dove as a Christian symbol refers to it as a symbol of Christ: Irenaeus[21] in the 2nd century explains that the number 801 is both the numerological value of the sum in Greek of the letters of the word "dove" (Greek: περιστερά) and the sum of the values of the letters Alpha and Omega, which refers to Christ. In the Bible story of Noah and the Flood, after the flood a dove returns to Noah bringing an olive branch as a sign that the water had receded, and this scene recalled to the Church Fathers Christ who brings salvation through the cross. This biblical scene led to interpreting the dove also as a symbol of peace.



A 3rd-century painting of the Good Shepherd in the Catacomb of Callixtus.

Peacock

Ancient Greeks believed that the flesh of peafowl did not decay after death, and so it became a symbol of immortality. This symbolism was adopted by early Christianity, and thus many early Christian paintings and mosaics show the peacock. The peacock is still used in the Easter season especially in the east.[22] The "eyes" in the peacock's tail feathers symbolise the all-seeing God and - in some interpretations - the Church. A peacock drinking from a vase is used as a symbol of a Christian believer drinking from the waters of eternal life. The peacock can also symbolise the cosmos if one interprets its tail with its many "eyes" as the vault of heaven dotted by the sun, moon, and stars. By adoption of old Persian and Babylonian symbolism, in which the peacock was associated with Paradise and the Tree of Life, the bird is again associated with immortality. In Christian iconography the peacock is often depicted next to the Tree of Life.

A dove with an olive branch, Catacombs of Domitilla, Rome

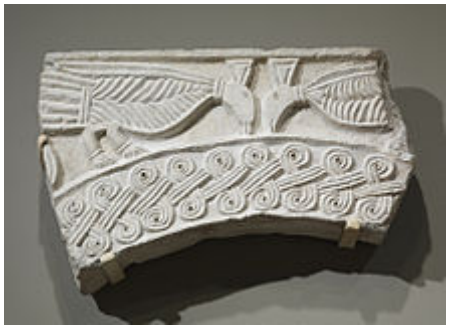
Pelican

In medieval Europe, the pelican was thought to be particularly attentive to her young, to the point of providing her own blood by wounding her own breast when no other food was available. As a result, the pelican became a symbol of the Passion of Jesus and of the Eucharist since about the 12th century.[23]

Anchor ⚓

Christians adopted the anchor as a symbol of hope in future existence because the anchor was regarded in ancient times as a symbol of safety. For Christians, Christ is the unfailing hope of all who believe in him: Saint Peter, Saint Paul, and several of the early Church Fathers speak in this sense. The Epistle to the Hebrews 6:19-20 for the first time connects the idea of hope with the symbol of the anchor.[24]

A fragment of inscription discovered in the catacomb of St. Domitilla contains the anchor, and dates from the end of the 1st century. During the 2nd and 3rd centuries the anchor occurs frequently in the epitaphs of the catacombs. The most common form of anchor found in early Christian images was that in which one extremity terminates in a ring adjoining the cross-bar while the other ends in two curved branches or an arrowhead; There are, however, many deviations from this form.[24] In general the anchor can symbolize hope, steadfastness, calm and composure.[25]



Two peacocks, symbolizing paradise and immortality, on a fragment from an eighth century ciborium from a church in Italy

A pelican vulning itself.

Shamrock ☘

St. Patrick depicted with shamrock in detail of stained glass window in St. Benin's Church, Wicklow, Ireland

Traditionally, the shamrock is said to have been used by Saint Patrick to illustrate the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity when Christianising Ireland in the 5th century.

The low, dense, tangled, growing habit of shamrock plants creates a short, but expansive, mat of soft green stems and leaves. The tangled mats of vegetation are formed as the densely-packed sprouting stems meander, twist, and curve around one another, seeking space where the leaves may unfold and remain exposed to sunlight.

Shamrocks do not demand nutrient-dense soil, and which can withstand temporary, sudden, environmental moisture and temperature extremes. Shamrocks thrive where dappled, indirect, or partially screened sunlight, lasts for many hours of the day; however, shamrocks can survive a broad range of lighting conditions. Shamrocks can tolerate full exposure, to bright, hot Sunlight which would scorch many other temperate climate plants, so long as they are partially shaded for a couple of hours, at some point between dawn and dusk. They may also grow in full shade, such as under trees at woodland edges; though they do not grow in dark, or 'deep,' shade.

The environmental conditions, to which shamrocks are best suited, include a thin veil of cloud cover; sporadic instances, of momentary exposure to bright sunlight, throughout the day; mild daylight warmth; mildly cool nights; and consistent, gentle, light rainfall. Soil richness and pH may vary without much effect on the plant's health.

The temperature-mitigating effects of the Atlantic Ocean are significant along the European continental shelf. Tropical waters, displaced by North-North-Easterly-moving currents above the Doldrums, enter the North Atlantic Current. The NAC pushes the warm waters North, towards the Irish Sea. Consequently, the temperatures on Ireland are not only buffered from extreme ranges

by the surrounding ocean; Ireland is warmed, slightly, by displaced Tropical waters, as well as subject to frequent, often gentle, rainfall.

Ireland's temperate climate, features mild summers, and seasonal, extreme, weather events are infrequent during winter. The mild, naturally irrigated, Irish climate is thus conducive to the growth and reproduction of shamrock plants. The common presence of peat bogs on Ireland acidifies stormwater. Runoff is enabled by Ireland's rolling hills, as it's channeled through the crevices of natural topographical rises, and flows, drawn by the force of gravity, down geological dips, into streams and lowland fields. The stormwater runoff near peat bogs causes the soil in the surrounding areas to have low in pH value; though tolerance of acidic soils allows shamrocks to thrive where plants requiring neutral soil cannot grow.

The Burren region of Ireland is a plateau-like area of exposed bedrock (and thus, sparse vegetation) higher above sea-level than many other of the island's regions; and illustrates the close proximity of solid bedrock to the island's soil surfaces. Soil depth is nearly inconsequential for the hardy shamrock, as the growth habit of shamrock plant roots mirrors that of shamrock stems: fine, laterally wandering, tangled roots, reach through mere centimeters of topsoil to meet the low water and nutrient demands of the shamrock stems and leaves.

The shamrock is so commonly seen growing on the island of Ireland, the very hue of the plant's chlorophyll is a symbol of Ireland itself - both in terms of the appearance of physical island; and as a representation the Irish culture, shaped by a long, historical accumulation, and integration, of diverse domestic and foreign influences. The low, dense, tangled, growing habit of shamrock plants creates a short, but expansive, mat of green, which colors the fields, hills, and forest edges of Ireland; hence the nickname, the Emerald Isle.

The Christianization, of the previously Celtic Druidic island culture, began in the 4th century, CE. Christianization continued to dramatically influence, and change, Irish cultural practices and schools of thought, through the 6th century, CE - whereupon the Holy Roman Empire's assimilative dominion over Ireland, beyond the Pale, was essentially total. It is said that St. Patrick, born in Britain, in a Roman Imperial settlement, to parents loyal to the Empire, spread Christianity throughout Ireland.

A common myth is that St. Patrick used the shamrock - a small plant with compound leaves, typically composed of three (3), heart-shaped leaflets; and, a very familiar sight to the Irish - to illustrate the tripartite form of the Christian deity. Unlike many other tripartite mythologies, such as the native Irish Morrigan mythology, Christianity is a monotheistic religion. The common triple-leaflet, compound-leaved shamrock- which exhibits only one compound-triplet leaf per stem- could easily be used to illustrate the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, described as being a single God; comparable to each of the three leaflets, which, together, form one shamrock.

Elemental symbols

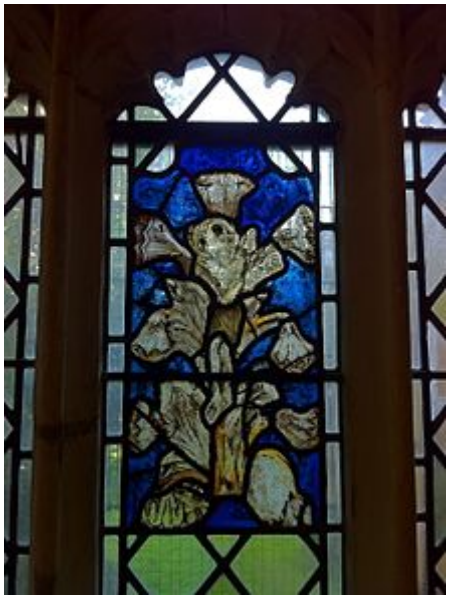
Elemental symbols were widely used by the early Church. Water has specific symbolic significance for Christians. Outside of baptism, water may represent cleansing or purity. Fire, especially in the form of a candle flame, represents both the Holy Spirit and light. The sources of these symbols derive from the Bible; for example from the *tongues of fire* that symbolized the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and from Jesus' description of his followers as *the light of the world*; or *God is a consuming fire* found in Hebrews 12 (https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Hebrews+12–12&version=nrsv).[26]

Lily crucifix

A lily crucifix is a rare symbol of Anglican churches in England. It depicts Christ crucified on a lily, or holding such a plant. The symbolism may be from the medieval belief that the Annunciation of Christ and his crucifixion occurred on the same day of the year, March 25.[27]

There are few depictions of a lily crucifix in England. One of the most notable is a painting on a wall above the altar at All Saint's Church, Godshill, Isle of Wight. Other examples include:

- An alabaster example on a tomb in St Mary's Church, Nottingham.
- The Lady Chapel of St Helen's, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, has a wall painting.
- Five examples are in glass as at Holy Trinity Church, Long Melford.
- At All Saints, Great Glemham, Suffolk, the image is on the base of a font.
- At St Mary, Binham, Norfolk, an image in a bench end may be a lily crucifix.
- In Tong, Shropshire, St Bartholomew's Church choir stall No. 8 depicts a lily crucifix.
- The Church of St John the Baptist, Wellington includes a lily crucifix in the carving of the centre mullion of the east window of the Lady chapel.[28]



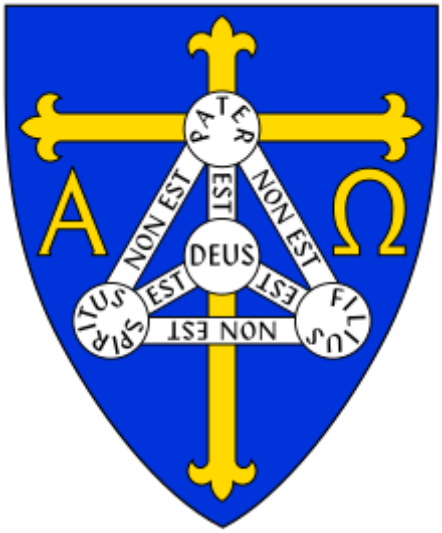
Lily Crucifix at Holy Trinity Church, Long Melford, Suffolk

Tomb paintings

Christians from the very beginning adorned their catacombs with paintings of Christ, of the saints, of scenes from the Bible and allegorical groups. The catacombs are the cradle of all Christian art.[29] Early Christians accepted the art of their time and used it, as well as a poor and persecuted community could, to express their religious ideas.[29] The use of deep, sometimes labyrinthine, catacombs for ritual burials are a product of the poverty of early Christian communities: the unusual, multileveled, burial chambers were, at surface-level, small plots of land used as entrances to the tiered catacombs below, by early Christians unable to afford large areas of land, nor the corresponding taxes sometimes levied on real estate, by regional authorities.

From the second half of the 1st century to the time of Constantine the Great they buried their dead and celebrated their rites in these underground chambers. The Christian tombs were ornamented with indifferent or symbolic designs—palms, peacocks, with the chi-rho monogram, with bas-reliefs of Christ as the Good Shepherd, or seated between figures of saints, and sometimes with elaborate scenes from the New Testament.[29]

Other Christian symbols include the dove (symbolic of the Holy Spirit), the sacrificial lamb (symbolic of Christ's sacrifice), the vine (symbolizing the necessary connectedness of the Christian with Christ) and many others. These all derive from the writings found in the New Testament.[26] Other decorations that were common included garlands, ribands, stars landscapes, which had symbolic meanings, as well.[29]



The coat of arms of the Anglican diocese of Trinidad contains several Christian visual symbols

Symbols of Christian Churches

Sacraments

Some of the oldest symbols within the Christian Church are the sacraments, the number of which vary between denominations. Always included are Eucharist and baptism. The others which may or may not be included are ordination, unction, confirmation, penance and marriage. They are together commonly described as *an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace* or, as in Catholic theology, "outward signs and media of grace."[30]

The rite is seen as a symbol of the spiritual change or event that takes place. In the Eucharist, the bread and wine are symbolic of the body and shed blood of Jesus, and in Catholic theology, become the *actual* Body of Christ and Blood of Christ through Transubstantiation.[30]

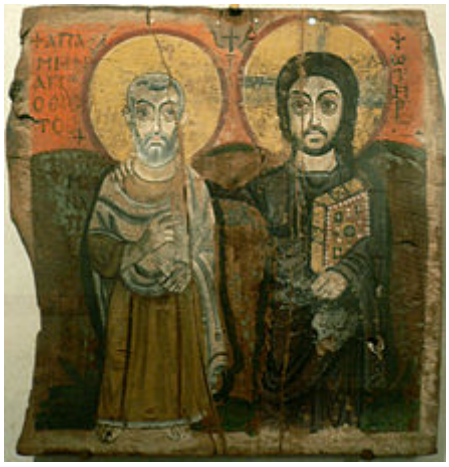
The rite of baptism is symbolic of the cleansing of the sinner by God, and, especially where baptism is by immersion, of the spiritual death and resurrection of the baptized person. Opinion differs as to the symbolic nature of the sacraments, with some Protestant denominations considering them entirely symbolic, and Catholics, Orthodox, Lutherans, and some Reformed Christians believing that the outward rites truly do, by the power of God, act as media of grace.[30]

Baptism in early Christian art.

Icons

The tomb paintings of the early Christians led to the development of icons. An icon is an image, picture, or representation; it is likeness that has symbolic meaning for an object by signifying or representing it, or by analogy, as in semiotics. The use of icons, however, was never without opposition. It was recorded that, "there is no century between the fourth and the eighth in which there is not some evidence of opposition to images even within the Church.[31] Nonetheless, popular favor for icons guaranteed their continued existence, while no systematic apologia for or against icons, or doctrinal authorization or condemnation of icons yet existed.

Though significant in the history of religious doctrine, the Byzantine controversy over images is not seen as of primary importance in Byzantine history. "Few historians still hold it to have been the greatest issue of the period..."[32]



Christ and Saint Menas, 6th-century Coptic icon, Louvre

The Byzantine Iconoclasm began when images were banned by Emperor Leo III the Isaurian sometime between 726 and 730. Under his son Constantine V, a council forbidding image veneration was held at Hieria near Constantinople in 754. Image veneration was later reinstated by the Empress Regent Irene, under whom another council was held reversing the decisions of the previous iconoclast council and taking its title as Seventh Ecumenical Council. The council anathematized all who held to iconoclasm, i.e. those who held that veneration of images constitutes idolatry. Then the ban was enforced again by Leo V in 815. And finally icon veneration was decisively restored by Empress Regent Theodora.

Today icons are used particularly among Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Assyrian and Eastern Catholic Churches.

See also

- *Arma Christi*
- Bestiary
- Christian demonology
- Christian flag
- Coats of arms of the Holy See and Vatican City

- Cross and Crown
- Flag of the Vatican City
- Holy Spirit in Christian art
- Icon
- Jesus, King of the Jews
- Lamb of God
- Nordic Cross flag
- Peace symbols
- Religious symbolism
- Saint symbolism
- Sator Square
- Shield of the Trinity
- Trefoil
- Triquetra
- *Wordless Book*

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2. Herbert Thurston (1913). "Symbolism" (https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_(1913)/Symbolism). In Herbermann, Charles (ed.). *Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company.
3. "The cross as a Christian symbol or 'seal' came into use at least as early as the second century (see "Apost. Const." iii. 17; Epistle of Barnabas, xi.-xii.; Justin, "Apologia," i. 55-60; "Dial. cum Tryph." 85-97); and the marking of a cross upon the forehead and the chest was regarded as a talisman against the powers of demons (Tertullian, "De Corona," iii.; Cyprian, "Testimonies," xi. 21-22; Lactantius, "Divinæ Institutiones," iv. 27, and elsewhere). The Christian Fathers had to defend themselves, as early as the second century, against the charge of being worshipers of the cross, as may be learned from Tertullian, "Apologia," xii., xvii., and Minucius Felix, "Octavius," xxix. Christians used to swear by the power of the cross. CROSS: (http://jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=899&letter=C), Jewish Encyclopaedia.
4. "Crosses, moreover, we neither worship nor wish for.1815 You, indeed, who consecrate gods of wood, adore wooden crosses perhaps as parts of your gods. For your very standards, as well as your banners; and flags of your camp, what else are they but crosses glided and adorned? Your victorious trophies not only imitate the appearance of a simple cross, but also that of a man affixed to it. We assuredly see the sign of a cross,1816 naturally, in the ship when it is carried along with swelling sails, when it glides forward with expanded oars; and when the military yoke is lifted up, it is the sign of a cross; and when a man adores God with a pure mind, with hands outstretched. Thus the sign of the cross either is sustained by a natural reason, or your own religion is formed with respect to it." *Cruces etiam nec colimus, nec optamus. Vos plane qui ligneos deos consecratis, cruces ligneas, ut deorum vestrorum partes, forsitan adoratis. (0332B) Nam et signa ipsa et cantabra et vexilla castrorum, quid aliud quam inauratae cruces sunt et ornatae? Tropaea vestra victricia, non tantum simplicis crucis faciem, verum et affixi hominis imitantur. Signum sane crucis naturaliter visimus in navi, quum velis tumentibus vehitur, quum expansis palmulis labitur; et quum erigitur iugum, crucis signum est, et quum homo, porrectis manibus, Deum pura mente veneratur. Ita signo crucis aut ratio naturalis innititur, aut vestra religio formatur.* (Octavius of Minucius Felix (http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-04/anf04-34.htm#P5713_906729), chapter 29)
5. Stromata, book VI, chapter XI (http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-stromata-book6.html)

6. *Apology*., chapter xvi. (http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0301.htm) Tertullian uses *crux* "cross", *palus* "pole" and *stipes* "stake" interchangeably for rhetoric effect: "Then, if any of you think we render superstitious adoration to the cross, in that adoration he is sharer with us. If you offer homage to a piece of wood at all, it matters little what it is like when the substance is the same: it is of no consequence the form, if you have the very body of the god. And yet how far does the Athenian Pallas differ from the stock of the cross, or the Pharian Ceres as she is put up uncarved to sale, a mere rough stake and piece of shapeless wood? Every stake fixed in an upright position is a portion of the cross; we render our adoration, if you will have it so, to a god entire and complete. We have shown before that your deities are derived from shapes modelled from the cross." *Sed et qui crucis nos religiosos putat, consecraneus noster erit. Cum lignum aliquod propitiatur, viderit habitus, dum materiae qualitas eadem sit; viderit forma, dum id ipsum dei corpus sit. Et tamen quanto distinguitur a crucis stipite Pallas Attica, et Ceres Pharia, quae sine effigie rudi palo et informi ligno prostat? Pars crucis est omne robur, quod erecta statione defigitur; nos, si forte, integrum et totum deum colimus. Diximus originem deorum vestrorum a plastis de cruce induci.*
7. "At every forward step and movement, at every going in and out, when we put on our clothes and shoes, when we bathe, when we sit at table, when we light the lamps, on couch, on seat, in all the ordinary actions of daily life, we trace upon the forehead the sign" (*De Corona*, chapter 3 (http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.iv.vi.iii.html))
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External links

- Symbols in Christian Art and Architecture (http://www.planetgast.net/symbols/) Comprehensive general listing.
- Christian Symbols Net (http://www.christiansymbols.net) Very comprehensive site, complete with search engine.
- Christian Symbols and Glossary (http://www.gocek.org/christiansymbols/) (keyword searchable, includes symbols of saints)
- ReligionFacts.com: Christian Symbols (http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/symbols.htm) Basic Christian symbols A to T, types of crosses, number symbolism and color symbolism.
- Color Symbolism in The Bible (http://www.ridingthebeast.com/articles/colors/) An in depth study on symbolic color occurrence in The Bible.
- Christian Symbol Wood Carvings (https://web.archive.org/web/20051026173201/http://www.kwu.edu/campuslife/woodcarvings.htm) Forty symbols at Kansas Wesleyan University
- Old Christian Symbols from book by Rudolf Koch (http://catholic-resources.org/Art/Koch-ChristianSymbols.htm)
- Christian Symbols, Origins and Meanings (https://web.archive.org/web/20051022004442/http://www.goldclipart.com/products/crestsymbols.htm)
- Tree of Jesse Directory by Malcolm Low. (http://homepage.ntlworld.com/m.low1)
- Chrismon Templates (https://web.archive.org/web/20150813222713/http://ezartsncrafts.com/christiansymbols.html) Symbol outlines that can be used to create Christian themed projects
- Christian Symbols and Variations of Crosses - Images and Meanings (https://web.archive.org/web/20160318033820/http://lutheransonline.com/servlet/CpsServlet/dbpage%3Dcge%26gid%3D20052995655655607101111555%26pg%3D20053040942236960101111555)
- PreachingSymbols.com (http://www.preachingsymbols.com/) Ways Christian Symbols are used in worship