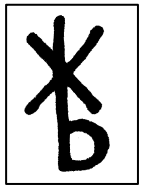


EARLY CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS BASED ON SOME OF THESE TERMS

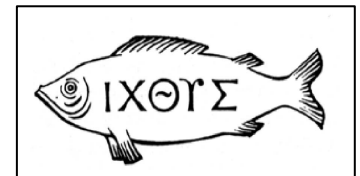


The “**Chi-Rho**”: a popular monogram/symbol from the first two letters of the Greek word ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ (*Christos*, “Christ”). Turned upside down (*X-b*), it became for medieval monks, a way to invoke the Lord’s blessing on each page of their hand-written manuscripts (XB = “*Christus benedicat*,” May Christ bless [this work])



The **ICHTHYS** (the fish): especially in times of Roman persecution, when public identification as a Christian could lead to death, the Greek word for “fish” led some Christians to use a symbol that identified Christians to each other (but that would make no sense to the Romans), in the form of an ingenious acronym for the first words of their mini-confession of faith:

ΙΗΣΟΥΣ	<i>Iésous</i>	Jesus
ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ	<i>Christos</i>	Christ
ΘΕΟΥ	<i>Theou</i>	Of God
ΥΙΟΣ	<i>Huios</i>	Son
ΣΩΤΗΡ	<i>Sôtêr</i>	Saviour



“Jesus Christ [is] the Son of God, [the] Saviour!”

Even today, many Christians continue to put ICHTHYS-fish stickers or decals on their cars, as a public witness to their faith.



The **IHS**: Based on the first three Greek letters of the name of Jesus (*iota-eta-sigma*); sometimes it has been interpreted as the initials of the Latin “*In hoc signo*” (“Through this sign” [you shall conquer], the vision of the Empire Constantine that led him to convert to Christianity), or the English phrase “I have suffered”. Another form, frequently seen, has a Roman letter C in place of the S—this is based on the C-shaped version of the letter *sigma* (the so-called “lunar sigma”) in the earliest Biblical Greek manuscripts (e.g. *ihsous*).



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The “Jesus Monogram”:

In many early Greek manuscripts, the names “Jesus” and “Christ” were abbreviated simply as IC and XC (see above for the use of C for S in Greek). In most Greek (and some Russian) icons, these two abbreviations are found on either side of Jesus’ head, to identify him.

These two abbreviations were also used in other forms, such as the symbol below, which says “Jesus Christ has conquered/triumphed!”



Some traditional Greek icons will also mark the cross-shape halo around Jesus’ head with the three Greek letters “ο ω ν” (*omicron, omega, nu*), which together form the title “The One who is” (Greek: ὁ ων, alluding to God’s revelation of His Name, YHWH to Moses at Mount Sinai; in a sense, this is a *Greek* form of the Sacred Name, demonstrating that the same God is in Jesus who first revealed Himself to the Israelites).

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