

**Symbols of Faith:**

*The Evolution of Christian Imagery from Antiquity to the Modern Era*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the evolution of the Greek letter Chi ( $\chi$ ) as a symbol of Christ and its connection to Christian and pre-Christian traditions, with a focus on its integration into the development of the cross as the central Christian emblem. Beginning with Chi's pre-Christian significance in ancient Greek philosophy, particularly in Plato's *Timaeus*, where it represents the cosmic intersection of the celestial equator and ecliptic, the study explores how early Christians adopted this symbol to articulate theological truths. The Chi, often combined with Rho to form the Christogram Chi-Rho ( $\chi\rho$ ), became a cornerstone of early Christian iconography, symbolizing Christ's name and cosmic sovereignty.

The paper further traces the transition from abstract Christograms to the physical cross as a symbol of atonement and redemption, emphasizing Constantine's pivotal role in popularizing the Chi-Rho after the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. Variants of the cross, including T-shaped and X-shaped designs, are explored alongside their theological and cultural significance. Modern interpretations of Chi, such as its use in abbreviations like "*Xmas*" and "*Xtian*," reflect its enduring relevance while highlighting misconceptions and cultural shifts.

This study also critiques the veneration of icons while advocating for the preservation of art and symbol as cultural heritage. By tracing the journey of Chi ( $\chi$ ) and the cross from antiquity to the present, the paper underscores their theological importance and their role in bridging historical, cultural, and denominational divides, offering insights into the adaptability and enduring significance of Christian symbols in a pluralistic world.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A Purpose of the Study**

The development of Christian symbols, particularly the Chi (*X*) and the cross, offers a rich lens through which to understand the interplay between theology, philosophy, and cultural adaptation. This study aims to trace the origins and evolution of these symbols, demonstrating their theological significance and enduring relevance across centuries. By examining the historical and spiritual contexts in which these symbols emerged and evolved, this paper seeks to illuminate their role in shaping Christian identity and bridging diverse traditions.<sup>1</sup> A more comprehensive collection of symbols and crosses, including examples discussed throughout the paper, can be found in Appendices A and B.

### **B Scope and Methodology**

This study focuses on the adoption of Christian symbols from their pre-Christian roots to their adaptation in early Christianity and their subsequent evolution into modern expressions. It will explore the philosophical and cultural milieus that influenced their meanings and uses, paying special attention to how these symbols reflect the theological priorities of various Christian traditions. Sources include primary texts, such as early Christian writings, and secondary analyses from theological, historical, and cultural studies.<sup>2</sup>

### **C Theological Perspective**

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<sup>1</sup> James Hall, *The Cross in Christian Art and History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 15–17.

<sup>2</sup> Robin Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 42–45.

The study maintains a balanced perspective, rejecting the veneration of icons while upholding the preservation of art as cultural and spiritual heritage. It acknowledges the profound impact of symbols in conveying theological truths and fostering unity within Christianity, without necessitating their worship or excessive exaltation. This approach underscores the capacity of symbols like Chi (*X*) and the cross to communicate profound truths while respecting diverse theological stances.<sup>3</sup>

## II. PRE-CHRISTIAN SYMBOLISM OF CHI (*X*)

### A Chi in Ancient Greek Philosophy

Plato's *Timaeus* provides a foundation for understanding the Chi-shaped "world soul" as a cosmic design. In this philosophical context, Chi symbolizes the intersection of the celestial equator and the ecliptic, linking metaphysical order to the observable cosmos. Rahner's concept of the "heavenly cross" expands on this idea, interpreting Chi as a sign of divine harmony within the universe.<sup>4</sup>

### B Chi in Pagan Cosmology

Latura's interpretation posits that the Milky Way and Zodiacal Light represent Plato's "visible god," a celestial phenomenon imbued with spiritual significance in pagan beliefs. This cosmic imagery, reframed by Christian theologians, demonstrates how pre-Christian cosmological symbols were adapted to communicate Christian truths.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Steven Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 89–91.

<sup>4</sup> Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5 (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), 49–50.

<sup>5</sup> George Latura, "Plato's Visible God and the Milky Way," *Journal of Cosmology* 14 (2011): 477.

### III. EARLY CHRISTIAN ADOPTION OF CHI (X)

#### A Chi as an Abbreviation of Christ

The Chi (*X*) served as an abbreviation for Christ, originating from the Greek word *Χριστός* (Christ). This symbol was incorporated into Christograms such as the Chi-Rho (☩), which became a prominent emblem of early Christian identity. Constantine famously adopted the Chi-Rho after his vision before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, further solidifying its role as a symbol of divine power and victory.<sup>6</sup>

#### B Justin Martyr's Theological Interpretation

Justin Martyr interpreted Chi within Plato's *Timaeus* as a prefiguration of the cross. This connection bridged Greek philosophical ideas with Christian theology. Similarly, early Christian writings like the *Didache* refer to the “*sign of extension in heaven*,” a phrase some interpret as an allusion to the cross and its cosmic significance.<sup>7</sup>

#### C Transition to the Cross as a Central Symbol

Over time, Chi (*X*) transitioned from a cosmic and abstract symbol to the cross as a physical and theological representation. This shift reflected Christianity's growing focus on the crucifixion and its redemptive power. The cross came to symbolize not only Christ's sacrifice but also His victory over death and sin.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Robin Jensen, *The Cross: History, Art, and Controversy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 27–29.

<sup>7</sup> Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, trans. Leslie William Barnard (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1997), 55–58.

<sup>8</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 46–49.

## **IV. THE CROSS AND ITS VARIANTS IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION**

### **A Evolution of the Cross**

In early Christianity, there was reluctance to use the cross openly due to its shameful association with crucifixion, a method of execution reserved for the lowest criminals. However, over time, the cross evolved into a central symbol of Christian faith. Variants such as the T-shaped (Tau Cross) and X-shaped crosses emerged, reflecting both theological meanings and historical contexts.<sup>9</sup>

### **B Chi-Rho and Constantine's Vision**

Constantine's adoption of the Chi-Rho symbol after his vision before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge marked a turning point in Christian iconography. The Chi-Rho was prominently displayed on the labarum, Constantine's military standard, symbolizing divine authority and victory. This association greatly influenced the use of the cross in Christian art and liturgy.<sup>10</sup>

### **C Regional Variants**

As Christianity spread, regional adaptations of the cross emerged, including the Greek Cross, Latin Cross, and Celtic Cross. Each variant carried distinct theological and cultural connotations, enriching the diversity of Christian symbolism. These forms reflected the integration of local traditions and artistic expressions into the broader Christian narrative.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Robin Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 120–122.

<sup>10</sup> Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 1.28–31.

<sup>11</sup> James Hall, *The Cross in Christian Art and History*, 52–55.

## V. MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE SYMBOLISM

### A Expansion of Christograms

During the medieval and Renaissance periods, the use of Christograms such as the Chi-Rho expanded significantly. These symbols appeared in illuminated manuscripts and religious art, often integrated with celestial themes and cosmology, reinforcing the idea of Christ's cosmic significance.<sup>12</sup>

### B Theological Interpretations of Chi (X) and the Cross

In this era, the cross was increasingly interpreted as a symbol of atonement and victory, representing both Christ's sacrifice and triumph over death. Meanwhile, the Chi (X) continued to influence theological discourse, symbolizing the divine intersection of heaven and earth.<sup>13</sup>

## VI. MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY USAGE OF CHI (X) AND THE CROSS

### A Chi in Abbreviations

The use of Chi (X) in modern English often appears in abbreviations like "*Xmas*" for Christmas, which is commonly misunderstood as secularizing the holiday. Instead, the "X" represents the Chi in *Χριστός* (Christ), retaining its religious significance. Similarly, "*Xtian*" is an academic and informal shorthand for Christian, preserving the symbolic connection to Christ.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Michelle P. Brown, *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 1994), 60–62.

<sup>13</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1 75–78.

<sup>14</sup> David Crumm, "*Xmas Isn't Secular: The Real Meaning of the X*," *Read the Spirit* (December 2009): 18–20.

## **B Cultural Adaptations of the Cross**

In contemporary culture, the cross has been widely integrated into art, jewelry, and public symbols, transcending its purely religious connotations. Additionally, ecumenical symbols incorporating elements of both the Chi (*X*) and the cross emphasize unity among diverse Christian traditions, showcasing the adaptability of these symbols in modern contexts.<sup>15</sup>

## **C Theological Relevance Today**

Today, the Chi (*X*) and the cross continue to serve as bridges between historical symbolism and contemporary faith practices. They provide a means of connecting believers with the historical foundations of Christianity while resonating with modern audiences seeking spiritual meaning in a pluralistic world.<sup>16</sup>

# **VII. SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVES ON CHI AND THE CROSS**

## **A Historical Studies**

Rahner (1971) and Grigg (1977) have explored the Chi (*X*) as a cosmic cross, delving into its metaphysical and theological implications. Latura critiques celestial interpretations of Chi, offering alternative perspectives that ground the symbol in observable phenomena and historical contexts.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Steven Fine, *Art and the Cross in Modern Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 122–124.

<sup>16</sup> Robin Jensen, *The Cross: History, Art, and Controversy*, 100–103.

<sup>17</sup> Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5, 47–49.



## **B Theological Reflections**

Justin Martyr's legacy in interpreting Greek philosophy through a Christian lens continues to influence modern theological approaches. Contemporary theologians integrate the Chi (*X*) with the cross, emphasizing its dual role as a cosmic and redemptive symbol that bridges diverse philosophical and religious traditions.<sup>18</sup>

# **VIII. THEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS**

## **A Balancing Preservation and Non-Veneration**

The Chi (*X*) and the cross highlight the importance of rejecting icon veneration while recognizing their value as theological statements. By preserving these symbols, Christianity affirms their historical and cultural significance without compromising doctrinal principles.<sup>19</sup>

## **B Chi and the Cross as Unifying Symbols**

These symbols play a vital role in fostering ecumenical dialogue, bridging denominational divides, and emphasizing shared beliefs across Christian traditions. Their adaptability reflects their enduring theological relevance.<sup>20</sup>

## **C Reflection on Symbolism in a Pluralistic World**

In a world increasingly characterized by cultural diversity, adapting ancient symbols like the Chi (*X*) and the cross ensures their resonance with modern audiences.

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<sup>18</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 78–80.

<sup>19</sup> Robin Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 200–202.

<sup>20</sup> Michelle P. Brown, *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts*, 65–67.

This adaptability underscores their power to communicate timeless truths in ever-changing contexts.<sup>21</sup>

## **IX. CONCLUSION**

### **A Summary of Findings**

The evolution of Chi (*X*) and the cross as symbols of faith demonstrates their capacity to bridge pre-Christian and Christian thought. These symbols highlight the interplay between theology, philosophy, and cultural adaptation, underscoring their enduring significance in both historical and contemporary contexts.<sup>22</sup>

### **B Relevance for Modern Christianity**

Today, Chi (*X*) and the cross remain central to worship, art, and cultural identity within Christianity. Their profound theological meanings continue to inspire faith and provide a sense of continuity with the traditions of the early Church.<sup>23</sup>

### **C Future Directions**

Future scholarship could explore the celestial symbolism inherent in these ancient symbols, particularly their metaphysical and theological implications. Such studies would deepen our understanding of their role in the cosmic and spiritual narratives of Christianity.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> David Crumm, “*Adapting Ancient Symbols for Modern Faith*,” *Read the Spirit* (March 2020): 22–25.

<sup>22</sup> Robin Jensen, *The Cross: History, Art, and Controversy*, 150–152.

<sup>23</sup> James Hall, *The Cross in Christian Art and History*, 200–202.

<sup>24</sup> Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5, 60–62.

## APPENDIX A: CHRISTAGRAMS: THE NOMINA SACRA

The Nomina Sacra is a system of abbreviations used in early Christian manuscripts to denote sacred names and titles, particularly in the New Testament. These abbreviations were used to honor and highlight the sacredness of specific words. The presence of the titlo, a horizontal line placed above the letters (e.g.,  $\overline{\text{I}\Sigma}$  found in  $\text{P. Oxy. 2}$ ), representing  $\text{I}\text{H}\Sigma\text{OY}\Sigma$  (Iēsous-Jesus), was essential, as it clearly indicated that the letters beneath it were shorthand for a sacred name or term, marking the term as significant and sacred. The practice of using Nomina Sacra was widespread in early Christian texts and plays a key role in the history of Christian manuscript traditions. Here are some of the most notable abbreviations in this system:

### 1. $\text{A}\Omega$ (Alpha and Omega)

The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, symbolizing God as the beginning and the end (Revelation 1:8, 21:6, 22:13). First used in Christian art and manuscripts in the 2nd century CE, emphasizing God's eternal nature and sovereignty.

### 2. $\text{X}$ (Chi)

A Greek letter representing Christ, used in early Christian symbolism and associated with the cosmic intersection in Plato's *Timaeus*. Its Christian usage began in the 1st century AD, as an abbreviation for  $\text{X}\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$  (Christ).


### 3. $\text{XP}$ (Chi-Rho)

This Christogram combines the Greek letters  $\text{X}$  (Chi) and  $\text{P}$  (Rho) from  $\text{X}\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$  (Christ). The  $\text{X}$  is the first letter, and  $\text{P}$  comes from the second letter of the word "Christ." The  $\text{XP}$  abbreviation was used to represent Christ and is one of the most famous Christograms in Christian history.

**Note:** The Chi-Rho symbol also appears in another form as  $\text{P}$ , where a cross is added to the  $\text{P}$  (Rho), signifying Christ's crucifixion and victory over death. Both versions were used interchangeably in Christian iconography, with the  $\text{P}$  form gaining popularity after the vision of Constantine before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in AD 312.

### 4. $\text{IC XC NIKA}$

A Christogram that combines the Greek letters  $\text{IC}$  (for  $\text{I}\eta\sigma\omega\upsilon\varsigma$  - Jesus) and  $\text{XC}$  (for  $\text{X}\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$  - Christ), representing the full name Jesus Christ. The titlo is placed above the  $\text{I}$ ,  $\text{C}$ ,  $\text{X}$ , and  $\text{C}$  in manuscripts to indicate they are abbreviations of  $\text{I}\text{H}\Sigma\text{OY}\Sigma \text{X}\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ .  $\text{NIKA}$  ( $\nu\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$ ) means "conquers" and signifies Christ's victory over death. This iconographic form became prominent in Byzantine art from the 6th century AD and continues to be a significant symbol of Christ's cosmic victory in Eastern Orthodox theology. The orthographical use of the lunate sigma is employed instead of the standard sigma in this abbreviation.

5. **ΙΧΘΥΣ (Ichthys) or ΙΧΘΥC** 

The Greek word **ΙΧΘΥΣ** (Ichthys), meaning “fish,” was used by early Christians as an acrostic representing “**Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ Υἱὸς Σωτὴρ**” (Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior). This symbol was widely used by early Christians as a secret sign of identification during times of persecution.

**Earliest known use:** The **Ichthys symbol** and acrostic date back to at least the **2nd century CE**, appearing in early Christian art and inscriptions. It became a well-known Christian symbol during the period of persecution by the Roman Empire.

6. **ΙΧ (Iota-Chi)**

This is a Christogram combining the Greek letters I (Iota) from Ἰησοῦς (Jesus) and X (Chi) from Χριστός (Christ). In manuscripts, the titlo is placed above the letters I and X to indicate that they are abbreviations for the full names of Jesus and Christ. The IX Christogram is commonly seen in early Christian texts and iconography, emphasizing the unity of Jesus as both the Messiah and the Savior.

**Earliest known use:** Found in early Christian manuscripts like P66 (c. 2nd century AD).

7. **ΙΗΣ (Iota-Eta-Sigma)**

This abbreviation represents **ΙΗΣΟΥΣ** (Jesus) and is derived from the first three letters of the Greek name. The letters I (Iota), H (Eta), and Σ (Sigma) are taken from the initial part of the name. IHS became widely used in Christian liturgical contexts and is commonly seen in religious symbols and inscriptions. While IHS is not a typical Nomina Sacra abbreviation that uses only the first and last letters, it still functions as a shorthand for **ΙΗΣΟΥΣ** (Jesus) and is often accompanied by the titlo to signify its sacred nature. **Earliest known use:** Appears in Christian manuscripts by the 6th century AD.

8. **ΙΣ (Iota-Sigma)**

This abbreviation stands for **ΙΗΣΟΥΣ** (Jesus). The I represents the first letter of the name, and the Σ represents the last letter. The ΙΣ abbreviation is used in early Christian texts as a shorthand for Jesus, indicating the sacredness of the name.

**Earliest known use:** Found in manuscripts like P45 (circa 3rd century AD).

9. **ΚΣ (Kappa-Sigma)**

Abbreviates **ΚΥΡΙΟΣ** (Lord). K (Kappa) is the first letter, and Σ (Sigma) is the last letter. This abbreviation is used in early Christian manuscripts to denote the Lord, specifically referring to Jesus Christ in a divine context.

**Earliest known use:** Appears in early Christian papyri and inscriptions, dating back to the 2nd century AD.

10. **ΠΣ (Pi-Sigma)**

This abbreviation represents **ΠΝΕΥΜΑ** (Spirit). The Π (Pi) is the first letter, and Σ (Sigma) is the last letter, referring to the Holy Spirit.

**Earliest known use:** Found in Christian texts from the 4th century AD.

11. **ΘΣ (Theta-Sigma)**

Used to abbreviate **ΘΕΟΣ** (God). The Θ (Theta) represents the first letter of the word “God,” and Σ (Sigma) represents the last. This abbreviation signifies the divine nature of God.

**Earliest known use:** Found in Christian manuscripts from the 3rd century AD.

## 12. Xmas

n abbreviation for “*Christmas*,” where *X* represents Chi (*X*), the first letter of ‘Christ’ in Greek. First recorded usage dates to the 16th century AD in English writings, notably in *The Christmasse Booke* (1551), where “*Xmas*” was used as a shorthand for “*Christmas*.” The use of X as an abbreviation for Christ has roots in early Christian manuscripts, where Chi was commonly employed to represent Christ’s name.

**Earliest known use: 16th century AD.**

## 13. Xtian

An academic and informal shorthand for “*Christian*,” preserving the symbolic connection to Christ through the Greek letter Chi (*X*). First documented in English usage in the 17th century AD, particularly in scholarly and clerical contexts. The term became common in theological writings, such as Richard Baxter’s *Christian Directory* (1673), where it was used as an abbreviation while maintaining the Christian symbolism of Christ.

**Earliest known use: 17th century AD.**

## APPENDIX B: CROSSES

The cross stands as the most central and iconic symbol of the Christian faith, representing both the sacrifice and the victory of Jesus Christ. Over the centuries, the cross has evolved into numerous forms, each carrying its own theological, cultural, and historical significance. From the Greek Cross with its equal arms to the Patriarchal Cross symbolizing ecclesiastical authority, each variation has played a role in expressing different aspects of Christ's work and the Christian faith.

Early Christian reluctance to openly display the cross, due to its association with Roman execution, eventually gave way to the cross becoming the preeminent symbol of Christian identity, redemption, and hope. The adoption of different cross forms, including the Celtic Cross, Latin Cross, and Russian Orthodox Cross, reflects regional and doctrinal diversities within Christianity, while still underscoring the common theological foundation of Christ's atoning death and resurrection.

This appendix highlights various crosses used in Christian tradition, examining their origins, meanings, and uses across different periods, from early Christianity through the medieval period to their contemporary significance in both religious and secular contexts.

### 1. Celtic Cross ()

- A cross with a circle, representing eternity and the integration of Celtic culture into Christianity. First appeared in the 8th century AD as part of Christian missionary efforts in the British Isles.

### 2. Greek Cross ()

- A cross with arms of equal length, symbolizing balance and unity in Christian tradition. Found in early Christian art and architecture from the 4th century AD, especially in Eastern Orthodox contexts.

### 3. Iron Cross ()

- Originating from the Christian Teutonic Order of knights in the late 12th century AD, the Iron Cross later became a military emblem. While its original use symbolized faith, protection, and chivalry under God, it was secularized in the 19th century as a German military decoration.

#### 4. Latin Cross ()

- The most common Christian cross, symbolizing the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. First widely depicted in the 4th century AD following Constantine's promotion of Christianity.

#### 5. Maltese Cross ()

- A cross with eight points, symbolizing the eight Beatitudes and the virtues of a Christian knight. First associated with the Knights Hospitaller during the 11th century AD and later with the Order of Malta, it represents Christian service and sacrifice.

#### 6. Patriarchal Cross ()

- A cross consisting of a vertical bar with two horizontal bars, one near the top and another further down. This cross is often associated with the Eastern Orthodox Church and represents the authority of Christ. It is also used to signify the patriarchal office in Eastern Orthodoxy. Its use dates back to the 4th century AD, with its prominence increasing in the Byzantine Empire and continuing to symbolize ecclesiastical authority within Eastern Christian traditions.

#### 7. Russian Orthodox Cross ()

- A cross with three horizontal bars: the topmost bar represents the inscription placed above Christ on the cross, the middle bar represents the place where Christ's hands were nailed, and the bottom bar represents the footrest (or "*stipe*") during the crucifixion. This cross became distinctive in Eastern Christianity after the 4th century AD and is widely used in the Russian Orthodox Church and other Eastern Orthodox Churches. It signifies Christ's sacrifice, the victory over death, and the salvation He offers, symbolizing Christ's redemptive work.

#### 8. St. Peter's Cross (Inverted Cross) ()

- A cross traditionally associated with St. Peter, who was crucified upside down around 64 AD during the reign of Emperor Nero. According to tradition, Peter did not consider himself worthy to die in the same manner as Jesus and requested to be crucified in this reversed position. The Inverted Cross symbolizes humility and martyrdom, reflecting Peter's unworthiness and devotion to Christ. Initially a symbol of the apostle's sacrifice, the cross has been controversially adopted in various contexts, particularly in the 20th century, where it has been associated with the rejection of authority or anti-Christian beliefs, especially in secular and pop culture.

## 9. Staurogram (Ⲯ)

- Also called the Monogrammatic Cross or Tau-Rho symbol, it is composed of a tau (T) superimposed on a rho (P). First used in the late 2nd to early 3rd century AD and appears in very early New Testament manuscripts such as *P66*, *P45*, and *P75*. It was used to abbreviate the Greek word for “cross” (σταυρός) and may visually represent Jesus on the cross, functioning almost like a *nomen sacrum*.<sup>25</sup>

## 10. Templar Cross (⦿)

- A red cross on a white background, representing the Knights Templar, a Christian military order founded in AD 1118 during the Crusades. The Templar Cross symbolized faith, protection, and service to Christ, specifically in the Holy Land. The order’s mission was to protect Christian pilgrims and defend Christian territories. While similar in shape to the Teutonic Cross, it is distinguished by its red color and its association with the Templars’ unique mission. The Templar Cross became an enduring symbol of medieval chivalry and the Crusades.

## 11. Teutonic Order Cross (⦿)

- A black cross on a white background, representing the Teutonic Knights, a Christian military order founded in AD 1190 during the Crusades. Although similar in shape to the Templar Cross, which featured a red cross, the Teutonic Knights chose black to symbolize their distinct mission. Originally formed to protect pilgrims in the Holy Land, the Teutonic Knights later focused on military campaigns in the Baltic, particularly in the Christianization of pagan peoples. Over time, the Teutonic Cross became associated with their unique military and religious identity, distinguishing it from the Templar Cross. The Teutonic Cross later influenced the design of the Iron Cross as a military symbol.

## 12. T-shaped Cross (⊥)

- A representation of the cross in early Christian tradition, reflecting its association with crucifixion. Likely used as a symbol in the 2nd century AD, it reflects the T-shaped structure of Roman execution devices. The T-shaped cross later became associated with St. Anthony of Egypt (4th century AD), who adopted it as a personal emblem of faith. This connection led to its alternate name, Anthony’s Cross, in the context of Christian monasticism.

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<sup>25</sup> Larry W. Hurtado, “The Staurogram in Early Christian Manuscripts: The Earliest Visual Reference to the Crucified Jesus?” in *New Testament Manuscripts: Their Texts and Their World*, ed. Thomas J. Kraus (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 207–26, <https://hdl.handle.net/1842/1204>.



### 13. X-shaped Cross

- Often linked to St. Andrew, this cross represents variations in the depiction of Christ's crucifixion. Tradition attributes its use to St. Andrew's martyrdom in the 1st century AD, though its symbolic adoption occurred in later centuries.

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