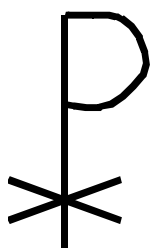


The Compound Symbols

Chi-Rho



Meditations

Chi-Rho

Chi Rho, we say, yet strangely you have to look for the Chi. It's the Rho that dominates, the Rho that we see first. The second letter, the secondary letter.

And yet the Rho is founded on the Chi. The cross seems to determine where the Rho springs from – X indeed marks the spot for once. It is the secondary that leaps to the eye, but the primary, the Cross, is still in control.

For some of us, that is how we came to faith. It was the secondary things that caught our eye, caught our attention. Someone's behaviour. Someone's honesty. A charity, a support group. Or maybe music, or drama, or literature with a Christian theme. Something totally secondary, but it led us to the Cross.

By grace we are saved; through faith. And our salvation is sure; nothing can ever again come between us and Jesus. So why do we need morality, worship, services, charitable works, why do we need anything more? Surely all these things are secondary to the great certainty we have in Christ.

Indeed they are. And like the secondary Rho, they can catch someone's eye, and lead them to the Cross.

Christos

You know, it's strange how people hate translation. You would think, wouldn't you, that people would want to understand the words they hear, the words they use, but they don't. People don't care whether they understand the words, as long as they've heard them before. People prefer a familiar wrong to a new right. Like Christ. The way it's used nowadays, you'd think it was a name, a surname. First Name: Jesus. Last Name: Christ. Occupation: Preacher. Age: 33 And so on. But it isn't a name.

Christos is a title. It shouldn't simply be left untranslated, like Jesus or Mary or John; it should be translated: Anointed.

Anointed. How would we interpret that in our terms? Formally appointed to the highest office? Chosen by God for the greatest of duties? There's probably a better way of putting it, but it's probably not worth worrying about. Just think how angry people would be if our Bibles and worship books started writing 'Anointed Jesus' instead of 'Jesus Christ'! Think of the accusations of heresy, of corrupting the name of Christ – even though it isn't a name – of destroying our Christian heritage!

No. Leave it as it is. People hate understanding, it challenges too much. Leave people with the familiar, the safe, the misleading, the wrong. After all, that's why the mob crucified Jesus.

Prayers

A Few More Thoughts

I don't know when the chi-rho symbol came into use, but it is certainly very early. It is of course the first letters of Christ in Greek – ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ – either the first two, Chi and Rho in Greek, or according to some authorities the first three Chi, Rho and Iota. Whether that is its real origin is more doubtful. Some authorities claim that it is, and that the symbol is therefore unambiguously Christian; others claim to identify it on prechristian coins and inscriptions, and that it had a (lost) significance in other religions. The trouble is that around this time it was common in inscriptions and coins to contract words and join

letters together just for artistic reasons, to improve the layout, so a form like the chi-rho could often arise randomly.

Cross-Circle

Meditations



Dedication

Let us dedicate this place to God. Let us mark out its boundary with crosses, going clockwise as is customary. Finally let us mark the centre of our area with a cross.

This place is now dedicated to God. It is fitting to worship here.

We worship God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Our worship is over. What should we do now? Undedicate this place? How can we take back from God what is his own? No. Instead we mark out its boundary with crosses, but going anticlockwise; for we are no longer dedicating the area inside. Now we are dedicating the area outside the boundary. Thus inside and outside become one, and the crosses break down the divide.

But we do not mark the centre of the outside with a cross. There is a Cross there already.

Thy Kingdom Come

Prayers

A Few More Thoughts

The cross-circle seems to derive from several different sources: Eastern icons of Christ reigning on the Cross; Celtic imagery of debatable origin, but perhaps relating to Christ ruling the world (with possibly just a trace of an ancient Sun symbol?); Euskadi grave symbols asserting perhaps that the dead person is in Christ's tribe – has been adopted into the family of Christ; the addition of a cross to the standard halo by mediæval painters to mark out Christ specially.

Sometimes the cross arms meet the circle; sometimes they cross it; sometimes they stop short. It doesn't seem to matter.

The basic message, then is of Christ the King, in various aspects of kingship: throne, realm, people, specialness.

IHS



Meditations

The Name of Jesus

In the Name of Jesus. Do everything in the Name of Jesus. I wonder what that really means? People get very het up about the name, counting the number of times it is used in a service, even invoking it over and over again, like a pagan mantra.

As if the sequence of sounds, or the sequence of letters is powerful in itself. But that can't be right, surely? If you'd wandered into Nazareth in, say, AD10 and asked for Jesus no one would have understood you. If you'd stood in the street and shouted 'Jesus!' no one would have come out of the carpenter's shop. You'd have had to shout 'Yeshwa!' or 'Yeshuwa!' or something like that. We can't even be sure exactly how it was pronounced – but it was certainly nothing like Jesus!

And do you remember the seven sons of Sceva, who cast out devils in the Name of Jesus – or rather, tried to? But the devils cast out them – naked, bleeding and running terrified down the street! No, obviously just speaking the name Jesus isn't the point.

But what is? What is? Because it matters. The Gospels, Acts, Paul's letters, all through the New Testament the Name of Jesus matters.

I remember my grandmother. She had a stroke, a couple of years before she died, and she couldn't write or speak. My father had to sign for her pension, her war widows pension, her consents for treatment, and so on and so on – sometimes it seemed never ending. But he was signing in her name – what right had he to do it? Well, he knew her, just as we know Jesus. And he knew her well enough to know what she wanted, and anyway she could understand, sometimes, and nod or smile or frown or shake her head. He knew what she wanted – as we ought to know what Jesus wants. And she lived with us, we were close to her, day in, day out. And above all, my father, we all loved her. Those were the things that gave my father the right to sign in my grandmother's name. Maybe there's a clue there?

Jesus Hominum Salvator

Jesus saviour of mankind – sorry, humankind. Of course, Jesus means 'God saves', so in a sense I suppose it's a tautology. Jesus is the saviour, God is the saviour of all mankind – but there's just two people that I need to think about.

The first is me. I mean, why me? Not – why did I need a saviour – I know that well enough – too well, but why save me? It certainly wasn't for my good qualities, or if it was, they are too deeply hidden to have shown themselves yet! Was it really, as Calvin and Augustine thought, just random? That God decided to ignore justice for a few randomly chosen individuals that he wanted to save – for no reason? Or did I choose – did the Spirit bring me to the brink of decision, and then let me choose freely – and does it for everyone? Or will everyone be saved, and I'm just lucky enough to have found out? Why me?

And the second? Well, the second is Jesus himself. Jesus saved himself – if Jesus saved all mankind, and Jesus was man, as he was, then Jesus saved Jesus. How could he do that? How could he – Jesus, Son of God, how could he need a saviour? It wasn't for his bad qualities – hardly! And it can't have been random, I mean, it can't just have happened by accident. Jesus chose to need a saviour, chose to put himself in danger, chose to take the same danger that we have no choice but to face.

I don't know how much choice I had, or have. I don't know who will be saved or not. But I do know this: Jesus at least had a choice. And he chose me, us, all mankind

In His Steps

Jesus saviour. There was a thing on the news a few weeks back, of a fire at a block of flats. People were trapped well up, the third or fourth floor, something like that. The firemen got a ladder up to them, I mean, one of those mechanical platform things, up against a window. The fireman broke the glass, well, smashed out the whole window, frame and all, and got inside to help the people out. Once they were all clear, the fireman came out himself, last.

In his steps. It sounds as though Jesus is in front of us, leading the way, and we're hurrying to keep up, frightened of missing the path, or of dropping too far behind.

I wonder. I wonder if we can follow him when he's actually behind us, alongside us, far below us. Are the steps footsteps, footprints, marks we can follow safely and easily? Or steps of the ladder he has already set up for us, which he is holding, steadying for us to climb safely? Or are we part of his body, and when he steps forward, we necessarily step forward too – are his feet our feet? Are his steps our steps?

Maybe In His Steps, properly understood, is what we mean by doing everything in the Name of Jesus.

Prayers

The Name of Jesus (1)

In your name, Lord we pray.
In your name written in light and dark,
In your name written in water,
In your name written in leaf, stem and seed,
In your name written in sun and star,
In your name written in the fluttering feather,
In your name written in every tooth, hair, heart and hide,
In your name written where everyone can read it,
Lord, we pray.

In His Steps(1)

Lord Jesus
We ask you to lead, so that we may follow your steps.
So that others may follow us, and so follow you
We ask you to walk alongside us, sharing the road with us
So that when we walk alongside others, they may share the road with you
We ask you to follow behind, to protect us
So that when we back up others, they too are under your protection.

The Name of Jesus (2)

Glory to the Lamb that was slain,
Whose blood was shed for the whole world
Whose body is broken for the whole world.
And at whose name every knee in heaven and earth and in the realm of death is bowed
Whatever name it is they know you by.

In Another Name

Lord Jesus,
In that name I come before you
In that name I bow before you
In that name I give you glory
In another name my neighbour comes before you
In another name my neighbour bows before you
In another name my neighbour gives you glory
Teach us both to hear that the two names are one name
In which we both pray.

A Few More Thoughts

There should be a stroke through the crossbar of the H, because this is actually an abbreviation. It isn't English or Latin, either; it is Greek. It is simply the standard abbreviation in mediæval Greek for Jesus – IHSOYS – the first two letters and the last, with a mark of abbreviation.

That being said, the common interpretations as standing for Iesus Hominum Salvator – Jesus Saviour of human beings (not men nowadays, since the feminists insist on their lie that man implies male) and as standing for In His Steps both have a truth of their own, which complements and expands the original meaning.

Some Final Thoughts

This is the second set of Christian symbols, the three commonly used which are obviously compound – built from other symbols.