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Symbols... Language of the Soul

Ann Baur
Iowa State College

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Symbols...

Language of the Soul

by Ann Baur
Experimental Foods Junior

At Thanksgiving we are reminded that no man has ever created anything. Our "feast" is a symbol of gratitude. All art is an expression of man's desire to understand himself. Hidden within contemporary designs are these basic symbols.

THE CROSS

The cross is one of the oldest and most universal of all Christian symbols. It is, of course, the perfect symbol of Christ's sacrifice upon the cross. More than 400 shapes of the cross are in existence. The most common is the Latin cross, which has a larger upright than crossbar. Tradition says Christ was crucified on the Latin cross.

GOD THE FATHER

Of the many symbols for God the Father, the most outstanding is the hand of God. A hand extending from a cloud was the original symbol, but now artists often picture a cloud with rays of light extending beneath, an indication of our dim knowledge of God.
The all-seeing eye, a very stern symbol of God the Father, originated in the 16th century. In Great Britain it was placed behind the pulpit during long sermons to make the preached word and the omniscience of God impressive.

Another symbol, not quite so well known, is the six pointed star of God the Creator.

GOD THE SON

From the initials of the Greek acrostic phrase, meaning “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior,” the Greek word for fish, “Ichthus,” is obtained. Thus the fish was one of the earliest symbols used for the Savior. Persecuted Christians sought protection by this symbol from Roman police.

“The Lamb of God” is a symbolic title originating centuries ago. The symbol appears in two forms. In one, the Lamb is lying upon the Book of Seven Seals, in the other the Lamb is carrying the Banner of Victory. Sometimes the Lamb is shown reclining and holding a banner called the Resurrection banner, symbolizing Christ’s victory over death. This is perhaps the greatest of all Christian symbols used to represent the Son of God.

Two lighted candles on the altar, one on each side of the cross, proclaims Christ’s words, “I am the light of the world” and symbolize His twofold nature – human and divine.

Sacred monograms are included with the symbols of the Savior. The Alpha and Omega appearing on altars and on pulpit hangings mean more than just the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. They stand for Jesus Christ, “the same yesterday and today and forever,” (Rev. 22:13) meaning Christ is everything from beginning to end.

The most accepted explanation of the symbol IHS or IHC is that the letters come from the Greek word IHCOYC, meaning Jesus. When the IHS is written on a Cross, the letters signify “In has salus,” in this Cross is salvation.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

A descending dove is the most familiar symbol of the Holy Spirit. The dove is pictured with a three-rayed nimbus about its head. Based on the account of the baptism of Christ, this symbol was one of the earliest forms used to represent the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes a flame, or seven flames, represent the Holy Spirit as on the day of Pentecost when “tongues of fire” rested upon the followers of Christ and “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:3-4)

HOLY TRINITY

The Holy Trinity is symbolized by a triangle, each side representing a “person” of the godhead – one the Father, one the Son and one the Holy Spirit.