

Texas Baptist Forum: Fish-shaped 'Chrismon' points to hope

December 11, 2008

Hope & Christmas

During Advent, it is appropriate to use the fish symbol as a Chrismon on our church's Chrismon tree, since the fish was one of the most important symbols of Christ to the early Christians. The birth and life of Jesus was the fulfillment of the hope the Old Testament prophets proclaimed hundreds of years before Christ's birth. Jesus—Emmanuel—was born into a world in disarray, a world and its people in need of a Savior.

It probably is safe to say the world has always been, and is even to this day, in disarray. When our lives are burdened with heavy loads, sometimes all we have to cling to is hope. When Jesus paid the supreme sacrifice to save us from our sins, our Creator kept hope alive forever.

As long as we have hope, we have nothing to fear. For God is with us and will provide ways for our needs to be met. When it is time for us to depart God's kingdom on earth, God has prepared a wonderful, eternal home for us. From cradle to grave and even beyond, Jesus is the Hope we can trust.

Christ-like hope was born on Christmas Day about 2,000 years ago. Hope and love always trump fear. Two byproducts of hope and love are joy and peace. The fish Chrismon reminds us that hope is with us always.

Paul L. Whiteley Sr.

Louisville, Ky.

New holy day

We need a new holy day that looks to the future and celebrates the Second Coming of Christ.

Present holidays are associated with pagan days or commercialized, leaving Christ out of the picture.

A holiday that celebrates the Second Coming but reflects on the past events of Christ in the Bible would be specifically Christian. Who but Christians would celebrate the Second Coming of Christ?

Maybe the last day of the year, Dec. 31, would be appropriate, since we are in the last days. The state does not have to bless this holiday. Christians just need to rejoice in celebration of the future return of Christ. It also could add to a worldwide evangelism awareness.

Michael Corzine

Farmersville

First thought of the day

For nearly 23 years, I have served as a pastor of six churches, beginning in Oklahoma and now in Texas. For some time, I had developed a pattern in the ministry that kept me busy with “ministry-stuff.” Oh, to be sure, I remained quite busy doing this and that—this hospital visit and another one. I worked diligently in the office, preparing Sunday school lessons, Bible studies and sermons. I thought the amount of time was good and sufficient.

What I have realized, however, is through all of that, I was so busy I forgot to be God’s child. Over the past few months, God has refocused my heart

and thoughts. I noticed what had been missing one morning while on the way home from taking my daughter to school. I suddenly caught myself excited about getting back home to spend my time with the Father in his word and in prayer. I soon began to make even better use of my time with the Father.

I have even been awakened with the first thought of the day, “Get up and spend time with your Father.”

I can’t recall the last time my first thought of the day was on the Father, and my time with him has enabled me to truly forgive others.

When was the last time you awoke with God being first on your mind? Do it because he is God.

Bill Adams

Temple

Chaplains & free speech

I have no idea what the Secular Coalition for America is on about with [this commission](#) on “religious accommodation” within the Defense Department. In 22 years in the Air Force, my husband and I have seen chaplains accommodate even the weirdest of “religions,” often upsetting the Christian community on base by sharing the chapel facilities with pagan groups.

My husband is serving in Afghanistan with NATO. He is the chaplain for the NATO compound.

The chapel has been turned over to the Muslims to use because it was not large enough for the Christian group, and the Muslims needed somewhere

to worship. The Christians are using the theater, and it is a hassle to move the equipment in and out each week. I'm telling you, military chaplains care very much about accommodating people of different faith groups, and they are sensitive to those with no faith.

It will be a very bad day for our military and our nation if chaplains are not allowed free speech and free exercise because a few people don't like the way the chaplains do their very difficult job of being soldiers and religious leaders.

Jean Whitmore

Okinawa, Japan

Graceless behavior

Georgia Southern Baptists revealed continuing and misplaced devotion to the Southern Baptist Convention's camouflaged creed that attempts to hide behind something called the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message ([Dec. 1](#)).

The abrupt dismissal of the First Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga., for having a woman pastor is yet another obvious illumination that doctrine—as devised, interpreted and administered by judgmental Christians—continues to be more important than grace and the obvious intent of Jesus as seen in his relationships with women.

The folly of pretended tenets that include priesthood of believers and independent churches is revealed as hypocrisy when state conventions, led by masculine devotees of self-importance, castigate a body of believers and find them guilty of negating the intended and forced coercion of all churches to the creed they continue to deny.

Southern Baptists have begun the slow decay of influence and

effectiveness. For as long as this type of graceless behavior exists, the downward direction will continue.

Edward Clark

Danville, Ky.

What do you think? We value letters because we affirm the priesthood of all believers. Send letters to Editor Marv Knox by mail: P.O. Box 660267, Dallas 75266-0267; or by e-mail: marvknox@baptiststandard.com. Due to space considerations, limit letters to 250 words.