

Pastor Sailer's Page

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THE SIGN OF THE FISH

It's popping up all over...on atheists' billboards (and it makes me mad).

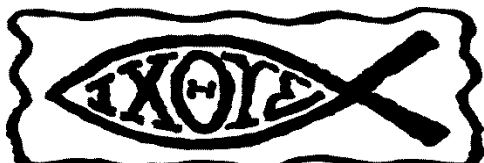
“**A**re you an atheist? Agnostic? Humanist? Want to meet others like you?” That’s what the blue and white billboards say around Sioux Falls. They have been funded by an organization called the Sioux Falls Atheists.

Apparently, this group has a considerable pool of potential members. A 2013 Gallup poll of 174,699 adults in South Dakota found that 46% are very religious, 33% are moderately religious, and 22% are non-religious. The Sioux Falls Atheists group calculates this “non” group would then number 26,900 adults in Sioux Falls alone. Yes, they have quite the demographic to draw from.

I don’t necessarily recommend browsing their Web site, but if you do, you’ll see this motto prominently displayed: “Persistence and determination are omnipotent.” They claim to be free thinkers. Reason and evolution are highly touted.

They are such free thinkers that they have taken the Christian fish symbol and have given it legs, a symbol, for them, of the pre-eminence of Darwin and the theory of evolution. Apparently, you can be a free-thinker as long as your thinking does not involve faith in God and Jesus as Savior. Thus, they mock a Christian symbol by having it sprout legs and adapting for their own use, “worshipping” science and reason instead. That’s what makes me mad.

What does the Christian fish symbol mean? The fish symbol is nearly as old as Christianity itself. In fact, it was the most common representation of Jesus Christ from the second through the fourth centuries.



Why was the fish meaningful to Christians? The Biblical account of Christ’s earthly life relates an interesting event which followed His resurrection. In John 21:9-13, the resurrected Jesus served a meal of fish and bread to His disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Fish was a common food shared in the community meals of the early Christians.

To those early Christians, the fish symbol became a continuing reminder of their continuing fellowship with their living Lord. To them, He was more than a morale booster and model to emulate. He was a living, present reality!

The living faith of the early Christians soon brought organized opposition from the unbelieving world. Frequently, Christians were forced to worship secretly. The fish symbol served them well in difficult times, because it generally would go unnoticed by a foe of Christianity when Christians used it to communicate. Placed outside a Christian’s home, this symbol would announce, silently, that the worship of Jesus and the celebration of His Supper would be observed there that night.

Soon, Christians began to attach meaning to the word *fish* itself. The Greek letters for *ichthus* (fish) became an acronym: **ΙΧΘΥΣ** -- "Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Σωτήρ", (Iēsous Christos, Theou Yios, Sōtēr), which translates into English as "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior." Christians picked these titles because they gave the Christian response to the question, “Who is Jesus?”

Hmmm. Maybe instead of getting mad when I see the blasphemous, re-stylized fish symbol used by atheists, I should see it as an opportunity to witness, as in “Say, that symbol there, what does it mean? Let me tell you what the symbol of the fish alone – without the legs – is all about!”

The atheists, unwittingly, have opened a door for us! They may want to use their free-thinking minds to re-think their use and abuse of a Christian symbol. But until they do, let’s boldly tell others – even atheists -- about Jesus Christ, Son of God, and [our/their] Savior.