

## Away with Christmas!

Houston Hodges, for Writer's Corner, WLRH Radio Huntsville, AL USA

When I get to be in charge, I'm going to abolish Christmas. Gone, forbidden, scrubbed, erased from the calendar and the TV schedule. That day will have a new name; it's going to be called "December 25." No more 24/7 sappy, syrupy songs that celebrate how jolly snow is, and how elves and reindeer love to frolic. No more repainting the world red and green. No more insistence that people will love you more if you spend more money on them. When the cash register bell outrang the jingle bells, that's when it crossed the line and started needing abolishing.

Christmas was a good idea, once, and then it got out of hand, over the top, expanded and exaggerated so much that it was no longer recognizable. Personally I think the idea peaked about two generations after the death of the original generous Turkish bishop called Saint Nikolas, who died in 346 AD, and went downhill after that. "Peace on earth, good will to everyone" was once something with meaning, until it was printed in gold too many time in too many places.

Oh, it will still be possible to celebrate the birth of Jesus, or of any other significant person who brought a lot of revelation and inspiration to the earth. I will send every person on earth a little sticker for their calendar, with "Celebrate Special Day When God Intervened in History" on it, and they can stick that on any day of the year. After all, scholars can't tell us the actual day of Jesus' birth and know that we borrowed Dec. 25 from the Roman Saturnalia..

On "Special Day" you'll be able to greet people with any salutation you want to use, or send them letters or cards about what it means to you. If you want to sing songs on that day you can, and they can be about Jesus or Santa Claus or Mohammed or Moses, you can wish people a happy Hanukkah or an extra-

special Eid or a fröhliche Weihnachten and you can eat turkey or tacos and give a present to someone you love on that day. There won't be any lines at the post office, the office parties will be spread out throughout the year, and the airlines will be able to cart you to grandma's house any time you want to go, thus evening out the travel schedule and reducing congestion. Think how nice it would be to be surprised to see someone with brightly wrapped presents under their arm on, say, August 16, and you could smile at them and ask, "Is this your day of loving celebration?" And if they said, "Yes," you could congratulate them and you could smile at one another and have a nice warm feeling all day long.

Think what a difference it will make if people can have fruitcakes any time of the year that they want them - there would be less danger that all the fruitcakes would be collected together at one place and form a traffic hazard!

This whole idea is based on the wild and irrational thought that it would be better to greet people with sincerity and integrity than to shovel out meaningless repetitions of worn-out clichés. I'm going to turn my attention to Thanksgiving next.

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Despite this strong opinion, Houston Hodges celebrates Christmas regularly at the Big Cove Presbyterian Church, where he is parish associate.