

Greg Garrison

Christmas in America is X-mas.

Once again, December has rolled around, and folks around the land prepare for the holiday season. They get a tree (or unpack an artificial one), dust off their ornaments, and send out Christmas cards.

The holiday that dominates the landscape is not, however, Christmas. Rather, it is X-mas, the bold American creation that reduces grandeur to a level almost unworthy of mention.

Christmas is a distinct holiday. Whether everyone likes it or not, Christmas has a distinct meaning, reflected in its very name.

One need only give a cursory look to the word Christmas, and its meaning is self-evident. The first half of the word is Christ, a word with undeniable meaning in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

It means the Messiah, the Savior, the Way, the Truth, the Life. Christ Jesus was, according to himself, the Son of God, and if what he said was true, only he could bridge the gap between man and God.

This should have an enormous impact on the way people view Christmas. It is not a meaningless, safe, or sedate holiday, but one that declares itself to be the very source of Truth. By its very name, it calls for change. It calls for a radical decision to accept or reject the one whose birthday is celebrated.

We are celebrating the most fascinating birthday in history. This day is a commemoration of a baby born with the distinct purpose of dying, one whose cradle existed so that his grave might.

Contrast this with the holiday celebrated today. Contrast the very word Christmas with the word X-mas. The latter is far more fitting with our culture. We do not celebrate Christmas. We do not celebrate Jesus or his birth. We do not celebrate a dirty manger, but an overblown culture.

No, we celebrate X-mas.

Our holiday is not about God, but whatever we choose individually. It is about X,

a variable which is replaced by whatever false Gods we worship, especially the grand Baal of old, money.

Our holiday is driven by money and the exchange thereof, the Great American Party which ravishes the land and leaves our souls empty.

We talk about holiday cheer and the brotherhood of man, and at the same time, we focus our attention on what we're getting or what we're giving, not on the gift of love and self-sacrifice that was given two thousand years ago.

When all is gone and the gifts have gotten old, we are no better off. The cultural orgy leaves us only hungry for more and still thirsty for the water that quenches eternally.

When we call on X, this is inevitable. X is everything and nothing, and in the end, it will do us no good. A variable which is defined by us will always be empty.

An answer that is contingent upon our wills can never last. This points to a need for an absolute which is pre-existing, self-sufficient, and unchanging. A true answer must already exist—all we can do is discover it.

Is X the answer, or is Christ?

Chris Edmonston

Am I a racist?

Am I a racist? I have often pondered this question, and every time I have given the proper amount of mind power to come up with an appropriate and correct answer, I have left the exercise disappointed in myself. To put it simply, the latter half of my life has been dedicated to "finding" me. A part of the "me" that I wish to cultivate is one that cannot and will not tolerate bigotry.

The day I decided to change is one that I won't ever forget. I had many "black" friends and several friends who were Asian. And yet, despite our friendships, I had never really thought about the equal departure that we (as friends) were making.

When you decide to have friends of different races, cultures, or creeds, you, as a human, are making a departure: a departure from human history and tradition. We are a racist species. We huddle around those who are like ourselves. All are afraid of the other in some capacity. This fear is bred due to a lack of understanding. Paradoxically, we cannot understand unless we take a stand in the face of our own fear.

How did I feel when confronted one day in May of 1990? I felt afraid. My girlfriend, my sister, and I decided to go to the water park back home. One moment still haunts me as I looked around to discover that we were the only "white" people in the pool. A group of children from an all black church was there that day as well and they were swimming all around us.

Never before had the tables been turned on me in such a dramatic way. I was scared. Scared only because they were different from me. I am embarrassed to admit this, and I have since tried each day not only to stamp this memory out, but to make sure I am never scared that way again. Was I a racist that day? I felt like one.

This feeling has left me with a bitter taste. I realized that no child is born afraid. We are not born racist. Rather, we learn it through fear. Racism is above all, I believe, a fear. Can't a child, who for some reason learns to fear differences and different people, be taught to appreciate them?

When I came to Davidson, I worked with the Love of Learning program. The experience I had during my two months with the program taught me to appreciate the African-American tradition in this nation.

Because of my experience, though, I briefly forgot about racism, making the ill-advised assumption that everyone thought like me. In my mind, everyone was as open to differences and as willing to experience the "new" as I was. I have since found out that I was wrong. I was one of only six or seven "white" people working with a group of overachieving "black" students. I was completely immersed in an alternative culture. Since then, I have come to realize that far too few of my race have ever made an effort to understand or experience like I had.

Am I a racist? I know I am not the best writer in the world. I know I will never be a fast runner. And now after many trying moments and struggles, I know that I am not an overt racist. And yet I live in a society where black-on-black violence is a lead story on the news every night. On MTV, I hear Snoop Dog and Dr. Dre rapping about the virtues of gangsta life and the power of their weapons. Try as I might to resist, I believe this "conditioning" has affected the way that I feel and how I act. I know that these are not accurate representations of African-American culture, but they prey on the fear that I was raised with. No one in my life ever told me to fear "blacks." It was an unwritten rule. And now, I am trying to stamp this legacy out of my life. This is a battle I intend to win, and one that I believe, we as a species, should all begin to fight.



For God's sake, make a difference and touch somebody

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their beliefs, they have more reason to be happy than anyone).

If Christmas is special, then it has to be able to touch me, move me, forever. I've had enough of momentary highs. If Christmas isn't the kind of thing that can really add to my life, well, then I don't have time for it. I've got lots of exams and papers and quite frankly I don't have time to ride any roller coasters. Smelling the roses is nice, but if they don't change me, well, what good are

they? What good does it do to see George Bailey and Charlie Brown year after year after year and never live your life any differently?

My money is on the depressed folk. I think they see something. I think they see how life is and see how it should be and the discrepancy is everything. The discrepancy is crappy conversations, professional friendships, materialist living, relieving roller coaster, and a lot of coldness with no real joy or fulfillment.

Except I don't totally agree. The de-

pressed folk think it has to go that way, no real hope for any warmth, but I say it can go different.

The up-side is: we can all make Christmas a significant event. We could use a little Christmas, a little togetherness. So, if what I've said makes sense, if you see yourself nodding here or there try your hardest to make it worthwhile. Don't go along in the same, scared, untrusting, and worn out paths. Try to reach out, expose yourself, take risks. Let Christmas make a difference. For God's sake, touch somebody.

Caroling invades your sanctity

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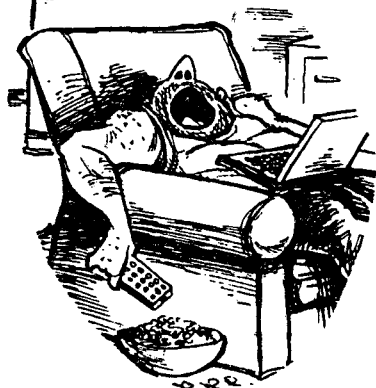
business what Christmas means to me; but since personal diaries are now public domain, we'll forge ahead.

Every year, despite what has happened to me, whether it has been a good year or a bad one, I am always impressed by Christmas. I am fascinated by the fact that people voluntarily, once a year, transform their homes into the epitome of gauche—a showcase for the World of Gaudy Abodes.

But that is all part of the season, as is caroling. Only with caroling, they come to your home. At least the blinking lights and big plastic reindeer are on someone else's property. Caroling, however, invades your sanctity, your sanity even. How do you respond to a large group of strange people singing off-key at your doorstep? Give money? Pull out the rifle?

I just laugh and give them cocoa. I am impressed by the spirit of Christmas, to be a bit of a cliché. People giving one another gifts simply because of the time. Families who barely have enough money to provide Christmas for themselves giving to the Salvation Army collectors that stand tirelessly on street corners in those ridiculous outfits. The volunteers in homeless shelters and in hospitals. It is hard to believe so many suicides occur during this time. Things may be bleak, but consider the hopelessly tacky houses dotting the neighborhoods.

If you look at one long enough—if you look at those motionless reindeer and the sleigh they pull, with the blinking colors reflecting off their plastic pelts and the big smile on the face of the man who leads them—you can see it all move, just a little, and that, of course, is your business.



Take a nap during your break.

The Davidsonian. We may not be funny, but we think we are.