

3 Responses to the 11 Days of Anti-Christmas

You've heard of the 12 days of Christmas. Now welcome to the 11 days of anti-Christmas. *Religion News Service* has compiled its favorite eleven anti-Christmas cards. Some are generic, such as "Happy Seasonal Depression Month!" Some are political, such as a picture of Hillary Clinton in a Santa costume with the words, "I sent you an email to say Merry Christmas! But it was mysteriously deleted."

But some are confrontational toward our faith, such as one picturing a nativity scene with the words, "The Naivety." And a card with these words from W. C. Fields: "Prayers may bring solace to the saps, the lazy and ignorant. But to the enlightened, they're the same as asking Santa Claus to bring you something nice for Christmas." I am certain Mr. Fields feels differently today.

Why is Christmas more an object of ridicule than ever?

The decline in spirituality at Christmas coincides with a rise in secularism in our culture. As Charles Taylor observes in his seminal work, *A Secular Age*, in the pre-modern world it was impossible not to believe. Religion provided the only explanation for the world and the moral standards necessary for living in it. In the modern age, it became possible not to believe as science provided alternative explanations for the world and our place in it.

For many today, it is impossible to believe. The postmodern denial of objective truth has robbed the church of our moral authority. To the contrary, we are often seen as homophobic, prejudiced and harmful to society. And so a holy day about the birth of Christ has become a holiday in which to mock those who still believe in Him.

Here's the irony: secularism (from "secular," Latin for "age" or "the world") is self-defeating. The less we believe that the world has intrinsic worth bestowed by its Creator, the less we care about what happens to the world. In this sense, secularism is a cancer that kills its patient and thus itself.

The humanitarian tragedy unfolding in Aleppo, the Russian hacking scandal, the effects of a changing climate—none of these really matters to us today unless it affects us directly. If our culture still had a biblical worldview, we would know that every person and every place on earth matters intensely to our Father and should matter just as much to his children.

In this secular age, what are we to do?

One: We can give in. We can shift our beliefs to align with those of our culture, defining success by status. But while marketers give the people what they want, Christians are called to give them what they need. And all people need to repent of themselves and their sin and turn to Christ as their Lord. Otherwise, when they step from time into eternity, they will discover they traded temporary popularity for eternal separation from God.

Two: We can give up. We can retreat from the world into Christian enclaves of collective affirmation and security. But this violates the very message of Christmas: that the Son of God would become one of us that we might be one with Him. A faith that does not engage the world is not biblical Christianity (Matt. 28:18–20).

Three: We can go on. We can ask Jesus to use our influence in making His presence real to our culture. We can trust that no matter how dark the day, Christ is still the light of the world (John 8:12). As Nick Pitts noted in yesterday's *Daily Briefing*, "We don't fight for victory; we live in victory."

Which option will the world say you chose today? {eo}