

SCHOOL SUPPLIES & CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

School supplies and Christmas decorations dominated the shelves of a well-known department store I wandered last week.

Educational essentials are an expected part of Autumn, as young 'uns make their way back to the classroom, clutching crayons, books and bagged lunches. Some things just don't change.

But some things do -- and Christmas decorations in September, is one of those shifting realities. The marketing possibilities are endless; angels singing songs scribbled in Hilroy notebooks, teacher statuettes bowing before the

Christ-child nestled in a manger or shepherds bearing backpacks bee-lining for the stable.

Though some bemoan the increasing commercialization of Christmas, I say, "Bring it on". The natural evolution of great things is to increase in scope and popularity.

The internet morphed from idea-stage to world-wide phenomena since its humble beginnings in 1969. Cell phones continue to shrink in size and increase in popularity; it is not uncommon to glimpse a Guatemalan peasant pausing from back-breaking labor to chat with a friend. Politicians and movie stars relish upsurges in media coverage.

Likewise, Jesus, the hope of the nations is a welcome and growing antidote to the despair dominating our newscasts. Every season and celebration would be enhanced by His presence.

Jesus belongs in Canada Day, when the lyrics of our anthem ring from coast to coast: "God keep our land, glorious and free..." And God responds via the message of Christmas saying, "I am ever pleased to bring glory and freedom to willing individuals of every generation."

Though I take great pleasure in chomping chocolate ears off Easter bunnies, there is far more to the occasion. It's the inseparable Siamese sibling of Christmas. The latter highlights the beginning of Jesus' earthly sojourn, the other, His victorious completion.

Valentine's Day pulsates with passion. But what better illustration of extraordinary love than a Savior who left the comfort and glory of Heaven to pursue no less than you and I?

Birthdays celebrate individual lives and accomplishments. The yuletide message likewise resounds with strategic love. It has been said, "If you were the



only person on Earth, Christ would have still come and died for you.” Hallmark may be wise to design a new line of cards announcing Happy Birthday *and* Merry Christmas.

Jesus even belongs in Halloween, that twisted occasion centering on fear and darkness. He came to bring light to the world and deliver from fear; need I say more.

Now I’m not so naïve as to believe the manager of the store I was in had a secret agenda to advance the Christmas message. The bottom line in a business environment is financial profit. However, it is not beyond God to use even the wrong motives of man to further His Kingdom.

And so I say, let the message of Christmas resound. It’s a twelve-month-of-the-year kind of a story.

May virgin-themed decorative balls hang over racks of cupid-cards. Let bowing shepherds be found among Canada Day memorabilia. May angels glow among Halloween masks and wise men bearing gifts rest on shelves laden with statues of fallen soldiers.

Perhaps it’s time to simply recognize that the person of Jesus is not easily confined to our boxes of preconceived notions. He longs to be involved in every aspect of life and will do nearly anything to remind of such. He burst out of December years ago and is methodically working His way backwards toward New Years; one month, one occasion at a time.

Thank God for store managers who unwittingly remind us of Jesus’ Lordship over all. Schools of theology exist in all shapes and sizes -- some even look like department stores.