Preacher's Pen   *by Gene McCoy*

Culture War
Boycotting "Christmas"

I have decided to boycott the culture war being waged over the greeting, "Merry Christmas." Despite the campaigns being led by prominent Christian and conservative organizations, I have decided there are battles more worthy of my energies and attention.

It isn't that I am unaware of or lack concern about the obvious and overt cultural campaign in which Christianity is the enemy that must be silenced, marginalized, and driven out of the public square. I am just as upset as anyone, and am probably a more vociferous proponent of Christian values and Biblical truth than most of those who are expending a lot of energy in fighting the war over the greeting, "Merry Christmas."

The Bible nowhere instructs us on celebrating the birth of Jesus and never employs the term "Christmas." We cannot identify a date certain for Jesus' birth. Just about everything connected with the holiday is based in tradition, much of it born in religion we roundly reject as spurious. Yet some Christians expend a lot of energy and devote a lot of ink to protest this indicator that our Judeo-Christian culture is slipping away into apparent oblivion.

While I share this concern, and although I can understand how this issue is a piece of the larger picture that portrays the growing secularization of society, I'm not convinced that this is a mountain on which I am prepared to die. Nor am I satisfied that this battle will result in the victory we desire.

Consider the fact that the words, "Merry Christmas" do not have the significance many assert. Asked what those words mean, one respondent said, "they put me in a 'give don't receive' spirit." Another said, "It means 'have a happy holiday.'" Yet another said the greeting means, "Be happy. Forget about your problems and concentrate on your blessings." The greeting apparently doesn't have the spiritual impact assumed by many crusaders.

What is the value of the victory won by those who persuade, cajole, and pressure retailers to employ the magic words, "Merry Christmas?" So you flexed your marketing muscles by boycotting their stores or products. Did any of those retailers or manufacturers confess the name of Jesus as Lord? How many did you baptize into Christ as a result of your campaign? Would we be satisfied we had fulfilled our mission on Earth if we succeeded in getting every business to employ the word "Christmas" in their advertising? Or if retailers required their clerks to greet every customer with a cheery, "Merry Christmas?"

Don't misunderstand. Expressing yourself by boycotting retailers that you perceive to be opposing Christianity is certainly acceptable and understandable. But don't limit your Christian testimony to protesting and punishing those businesses.

Consider the reversal in our cultural decline should Christians give as much attention to actively evangelizing the culture as they do to opposing its behavior that is only natural for secularists.

How different it is to boycott businesses, products, and concerns that promote behaviors that are immoral and destructive to society in blatant rebellion to God's expressed will. Our energies and efforts will be better spent in those contexts. Bypass the symptom and address the sin.