

## Holiday Season, 1999

Hey, guess what? I'm drowning in finals at NMU. (At least I'm writing them rather than taking them this time around.) At any rate, I don't have a single coherent topic this year, so here are some assorted bullets.

**THE MILLENNIUM.** This holiday season marks the final holiday season of the millennium. There. I've said it; it's official. Now, I know some of you smartmouths are going to say "But 2001 is the true start of the millennium!" Yeah, yeah. You may think you're clever, but little do you realize that I'm the guy who pouted around the house for a week because his parents couldn't understand that 1981 was the true start of the decade rather than 1980. The fact is, I've grown weary of the battle. I'm jumping on the bandwagon. If any of you wisenheimers ask what the first year of the first millennium was, I'll say 0. Sure, you may say there was no year 0, but really, were you there?

**NEW YEAR FESTIVITIES.** A recent poll indicates that a lot of people will be staying home and taking it easy this New Year. So many people want to avoid the crowds this year that, ironically, the crowds may be somewhat smaller. Additionally, many people are so afraid of Y2K that they don't want to go more than a couple of miles away lest they find themselves stranded without reservations and credit cards. Who knew that "party like it's 1999" would actually mean "rent a video and make microwave popcorn?"

**THE END OF DAYS.** Ever since I was a little boy, I've heard that 1999 would be the Year of the Beast, that the Antichrist would make his appearance at that time and gather a lot of followers. The Jews, so I was told, would eagerly accept the Antichrist since they are so desperate for the Messiah to arrive that they will be easily swayed. My observation at the time was that the Jews have been more particular than the Christians in choosing a Messiah in the past; thus, I see no reason why they should be less discerning now. When I was in grad school, I would imagine that the Antichrist did indeed come, and that the final battle did indeed occur, and that I did indeed go to hell. Hell, grad school, who can tell the difference anyway?

**THE NORTHERN APOCALYPSE.** There's another great battle for control going on right here. You see, like most of the nation, the UP experienced an unseasonably warm autumn due to tropical fronts. Winter has been delayed a bit. I imagine most of the country is enjoying this extended Indian summer, but I was looking forward to a real honest-to-goodness UP winter! However, my faith is not shaken. If Lucifer is embodied in La Niña, then Lake Superior has to be the Almighty. My money is on Superior. Christmas will be white.

**A CAPPELLA NEWS.** I've shied away from the traditional Christmas focus of the letter this year simply because there are a decent number of people on my list that do not celebrate Christmas. To my knowledge, they all celebrate New Year, though, and, since this is a special New Year, I've focused the letter on this event. However, there is one bit of Christmas news I really should share. Those of you who did or do follow the a cappella scene will recognize the name Mervyn Warren. Mervyn was one of two members added to the Oakwood College Quartet when they decided to become a sextet and adopt the name Take 6. Take 6, from the late 1980's to the present-day, has been considered the definitive Christian a cappella group. Mervyn left the group in the early 1990's, shortly before Take 6 released *He is Christmas*, so that he is not featured on this album. Fortunately for all of us, he was involved in a new Christmas album of the season. Mervyn did a number of the orchestrations for *Mr. Hankey's Christmas Classics*, the Christmas album produced by the creators of *South Park*. I cannot tell you what tracks he orchestrated because this letter has a wide readership; I need to keep it G-rated. Once Mervyn dedicated songs to a man risen from the grave; now he dedicates songs to a being risen from ... well, if you don't already know where Mr. Hankey rises from, ask your friendly neighborhood ten-year-old. Don't interpret this as a negative review, however; my carousel proudly contains both of these fine Christmas CD's. I relate this story merely as a response to the sighs of my friends in the clergy. Hear that, gang? The ministry doesn't pay like crap after all. Crap pays a lot better!

Have a great holiday season, and enjoy the rest of the last of the years beginning with 1!

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