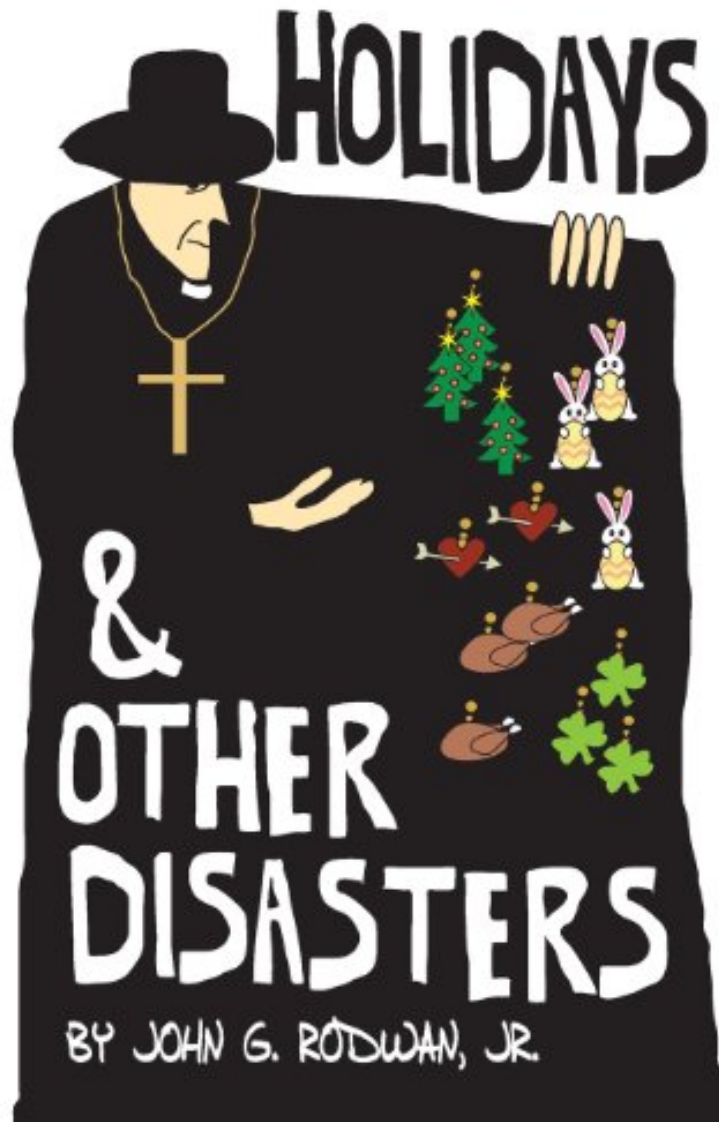


## Holidays and Other Disasters

*John G. Rodwan Jr.*

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**John G. Rodwan Jr. : Holidays and Other Disasters** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Holidays and Other Disasters:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fantastically funnyBy grm1984Deeply cynical but deeply entertaining and, at times, laugh out loud funny. The author does tend to go off on tangents, but the writing is solid and he always returns to his point eventually. Some of the chapters were stronger than others. The chapter about Christmas was probably the best. Not recommended for people who prefer to live in a fantasy world of greeting card slogans and

holiday songs. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. It started out good, but then it just got boring and irrelevant. By Sapphire It's OK, but it didn't meet my expectations. It started out good, but then it just got boring and irrelevant. It didn't seem to really address the 'religion' issue at all during the second half of the book. 6 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Only read if you're a total misanthrope. By blue violent I received this book from LibraryThing Early Reviewers. Although that did influence me to actually finish the book, it didn't influence this review. I found *Holidays and Other Disasters* to be a series of justifications by Rodwan for celebrating holidays that are hip enough for some pretentious and hypocritical atheist to celebrate while attempting to maintain their hardcore anti-theist persona. This was definitely not a critical or even remotely objective discourse on why Rodwan himself or other atheists should choose to or choose not to celebrate certain holidays from an atheist point of view. Although that is what I anticipated from this book, I may have enjoyed a book of anecdotes and factoids related to the holidays discussed if Rodwan himself didn't come across as completely grating by way of inconsistently applied, yet intense, fascism. He's okay with celebrating Halloween, despite its pagan roots, because he's from Detroit and his dad was really into Halloween decorations, but anyone who wants to erect a Christmas tree (whether they are celebrating the birth of Jesus, some vague familial tradition, or unadulterated materialism) is obviously brainlessly contributing in the worst way to the downfall of mankind by promoting superstition. These contrary ideas, plus things like his own personal dedication to celebrating the French holiday surrounding Beaujolais nouveau (which is about the new wine season) just added up to someone who, in my opinion, thought himself above anything common, but who is more than willing to celebrate anything he could come up with a pseudo-intellectual validation for. He's not opposed to religious holidays, he's opposed to being thought of as one of what he sees as "those idiots who celebrate religious holidays." I found it more of a promotion of how to be a raging, hypocritical bigot with a superiority complex. Besides all that, this book is barely even about the holidays it claims to be about. It's about Salman Rushdie, baseball, Rodwan's OCD approach to moving and music fandom. Fully misleading title. It's the John G. Rodwan compendium of how to be an anal cynic. Sadly, I can almost see the point of the rare argument he does make against celebrating certain religious holidays (not that I entirely agree, but not all of his points were worth dismissing outright), if only he didn't sound so sanctimonious whilst making them. Rodwan even notes that he's stopped attending holiday events because people get tired of hearing his anti-holiday spiels at such (Really?? I can't imagine why.). His friends and family are fortunate he's decided to stop attending, I found his rhetoric tiring after a few hours of reading and \*I\* wasn't even assuming an annual revisiting of this book as they would with his party attendance. Overall, it is a book with some mildly interesting history about some of the minor holidays, but not really worth sifting through the smugness and vitriol of the author to glean those bits. If you think it might color my opinion, I'm essentially an atheist (strong agnostic if you are super nitpicky about that kind of thing), Rodwan isn't just a non-believer though, he's very \*anti-theist\*. He's the one putting up atheist signs next to Christmas trees at courthouses. Rodwan, make your points without all the anger and intolerant attitude and maybe readers would get something valuable from your point of view instead of focusing on your vile tone.

"*Holidays and Other Disasters*" considers the major U.S. holidays—Easter, Christmas, Opening Day, etc.—from an atheist's perspective. It examines explicitly religious holidays, those that have a definite if not always acknowledged religious thrust (Valentine's Day, Thanksgiving) and secular holidays that had religious elements added on (like Labor Day) by way of personal stories, usually the author's own. Where other people have especially revealing holiday stories, as is the case with Jack Johnson (the first black heavyweight champion) and the Fourth of July, novelist Salman Rushdie and Valentine's Day or labor leader Eugene V. Debs and Labor Day, Rodwan tells theirs. Of course, holidays aren't about religion alone, and *Holidays and Other Disasters* doesn't look narrowly at them as pageants of piety. Rather, the book considers the various issues holidays raise, including race and class, and discusses other forms of expressive activity, such as literature, music and sports, along with religion and holiday rituals.