

Hijacking Christmas

Christmas is the greatest holiday in the year, celebrating the birth of the greatest Person who ever lived. Yet, every year, there are numerous high profile attacks on Christmas as the celebration of the Birth of Jesus Christ. There are also many insidious attempts to hijack Christmas. One such attempt is seen in the many e-mails circulating concerning the real meaning and origin of *"The Twelve Days of Christmas."*

What is the Source?

According to this widely circulated email: *"from 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics. It has two levels of meaning: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of the church. Each element in the carol is a code word for a religious reality which the children could remember."*

Bloody Mary

The problem with this theory is that it's premise is false. Roman Catholics were not persecuted for their faith. They were not forbidden to practice their faith openly. The dates chosen are most interesting. 1558, is the year when Bloody Mary died and the Catholic persecution of Protestants in England came to an end. Mary Tudor was well called *"Bloody Mary"* because she repudiated the religious freedoms which her brother, King Edward VI, had instituted. Mary passed laws providing for Protestant *"heretics"* to be tried in church courts and handed over to civilian authorities for execution.

Martyred for the Faith

Hundreds of church leaders, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, and the most prominent Protestant bishops, such as Hugh Latimer and Nicolas Ridley, were torturously burned at the stake. Bible translators like John Rogers, and hundreds of other Protestants, were condemned to be burned at the stake by the Catholic inquisitors. Mary even had her sixteen-year-old cousin, Protestant Lady Jane Grey, beheaded for refusing to renounce her Protestant Faith.

A Legacy of Liberty

The fact of history is that religious persecution in England did not begin in 1558. It ended with the death of Bloody Mary in that year. When Mary Tudor died 17 November, 1558, and her half sister, the Protestant Elizabeth I, came to the throne, religious freedom was established.

Inverting Reality

The legend being circulated through the Internet declaring that there was no religious freedom for Roman Catholics in England between 1558 and 1829, is ludicrous. The underlying meaning of the Twelve Days of Christmas is no doubt true. However the reason suggested in this email is false. There is nothing in the underlying meaning of the Twelve Days of Christmas that Protestants do not accept and which Roman Catholics could not openly celebrate during Christmas, or any time of the year, in England.

The Message of the Twelve Days of Christmas

Protestants in England also worshipped Jesus Christ, believed in the Old and New Testaments, held to faith, hope and love, believed in the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the five books of the Law, the six days of Creation, the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit, the eight Beatitudes, the nine Fruit of the Holy Spirit, The Ten Commandments, the eleven faithful Disciples, and the twelve points of The Apostles Creed. There was nothing distinctly Roman Catholic about those beliefs and there is nothing which Protestants would disagree with in the message of the Twelve Days of Christmas.

Dangerous Deception

A half-truth is more dangerous than a lie. "***Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!***"
Isaiah 6:20

Hypocrisy

For those who banned the Bible, burned Bible translators, persecuted Protestants and suppressed religious freedom, to dare to accuse the Protestants who introduced religious freedom of the kind of intolerance which they themselves practiced is abhorrent.

Bearing False Witness

To further suggest that Protestant Christians reject the Bible for which they were willing to give their lives, and the teachings which they faithfully sought to apply to everyday life, is bearing false witness against one's neighbour.

Responding to Disinformation

Please pass on this response to anyone who forwards you the disinformation about Roman Catholics in England *"not being permitted to practice their faith openly between 1558 and 1829."*

A Season of Generosity

It is appropriate that the greatest holiday on calendars worldwide celebrates the birth of the greatest Person who ever lived. All charities and Missions report that this is the best time of the year for donations. It is quite appropriate that so many good acts of charity, good neighbourliness, friendship and generosity are expressed during the Christmas season to family, friends, to neighbours and to strangers.

The Reason for the Season

The official birthday of the King of kings and the Lord of lords is a good reason to celebrate. It is time to put Christ back into xmas. Jesus is the reason for the season. Wise men still seek Him.

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