

# Ep 39: The war on Christmas

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(Emma Park, EP): You're listening to the National Secular Society podcast hosted by Emma Park.

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It's nearly Christmas time, albeit sadly, a rather unusual Christmas.

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The old English word for Christmas is 'yule' - a name which derives according to the Oxford

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English dictionary, from the Norse 'jol' or something like that - a heathen festival lasting 12 days.

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In Europe, we have been reveling and feasting in the darkest month of the year for millennia. It

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was the roman emperor Constantine who in 336 A.D. decided to graft a celebration of Jesus' birthday,

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or at least his official birthday, on to the Roman celebration of the birthday of Sol Invictus - the

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unconquered son. This festival took place on the 25th of December just after the winter solstice

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and the mid-winter festival of the Saturnalia. The Saturnalia, like the celebration of Christmas all

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through the middle ages by many accounts, was a raucous, boozy and debauched affair.

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By the time we get to the 17th century, Christmas had become so wild, at least in

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England, that in December 1644 an ordinance was passed by the puritan-minded Parliament

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that lambasted the sins of our forefathers who "have turned this feast pretending the memory of

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Christ into an extreme forgetfulness of him by giving liberty to carnal and sensual delights"

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In Victorian England, Christmas was redefined again as a family event

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thanks not least to the publication of Charles Dickens' heart-warming novella, 'A Christmas Carol'.

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Fast forward to the 21st century and you might have thought that Christmas was nothing more

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than a clever advertising strategy combined with an opportunity for family arguments, although

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the culture of letting oneself go at the office party may suggest a return to our ancient roots.

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Rumours of a so-called war on Christmas have been circulating in America for over 100 years.

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According to David Kyle Johnson, an academic at King's College Pennsylvania, in the 1920s the

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industrialist Henry Ford alleged that the Jews were the ones waging a war on Christmas while

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in 1959, the far-right conspiratorial John Birch society alleged that it was the communists who

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were trying to take the Christ out of Christmas. More recently, the religious right have regularly

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made allegations of the war on Christmas in the 21st century. Donald Trump most recently claimed to

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have made 'Merry Christmas' acceptable again under his presidency. In Britain these days we often take

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our cue from the U.S. - trends which start over there from fashions and films to ideologies and even

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conspiracy theories will have their reverberations on this side of the pond. So, has anyone in the U.K.

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claimed in recent years that there is a war on Christmas? Do any christian groups over here

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feel threatened by the way Christmas is celebrated or not celebrated by the rest of us?

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To answer these questions, I'm now joined by Alastair Lichten, Head of Education at the NSS.

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Alastair, hello. (Alastair Lichten, Al): Hi Emma. Thanks for having me again. (EP): In December 2017, you wrote a blog post

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examining the claim by some religious groups and individuals that there was a war on Christmas in

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the U.K. First of all, as far as you're concerned has there ever been a war on Christmas over here?

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(AL): Well, I've been fascinated by the war on Christmas narrative or myth for a long time.

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I think even when I was a kid there was a Beano Christmas special - so going back quite a way - where

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the Bash Street Kids put on a nativity play because the head teachers were complaining

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that schools don't do the real meaning of Christmas anymore. I became very interested

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in this when writing my master's degree thesis  
on persecution narratives on the U.S.  
Christian right.

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I should say this is predominantly  
an American cultural war, um, export

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but there are domestic versions of the war  
on Christmas across the Anglosphere and  
even beyond.

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In this country and across Christian majority  
and formerly uh, Christian majority countries  
of course

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the only people who've ever tried to ban  
Christmas have been Puritans and their co-  
religionists,

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upset at the more secular aspects. There are  
parts of the world where, this Christmas,  
Christians and

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other religious minorities will be dealing  
with genuine persecution and of course this  
year many

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people's Christmases, secular or religious,  
will be disrupted, often deeply, painfully so

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by covid but that's not what the war on  
Christmas myth is really about. (EP): If we look  
at the first two

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decades of the 21st century, what were the  
main instants in the U.K. in which certain  
Christian

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groups alleged that there was a war on  
Christmas and what was their response to this  
alleged war?

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(AL): These are, I think, too numerous and  
more importantly, far, far too trivial to go, go  
into all

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of them but the sorts of things that people in  
the U.K. uh, some people in the U.K have got  
upset about, are things like

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um Christmas adverts featuring non-  
traditional families or visibly non-Christian  
participants.

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Christmas messages from companies or  
institutions being too secular or daring to use  
religious

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symbols but not in an approved way. I  
believe Greg's one year did a sausage roll  
thing with uh

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with Jesus as the baby in the manger that got  
some, certain people very upset. Schools and  
workplaces

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are often accused of banning Christmas if  
they change or alter or even cancel particular

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seasonal activities. There's a persistent  
myth that offices are banning Christmas  
parties.

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The Equality and Human Rights Commission  
even looked into this and found no evidence.

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Shops are often criticized for not selling religious enough versions of particular items such

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as advent calendars or Christmas cards when the reality is that shops are commercial enterprises

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that respond to demand and very religious advent calendars versus an advent calendar with a Disney

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cartoon character on it or Marvel or something else popular tend to actually just do better.

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We have often sort of moral panics in this country about a supposed lack of religious

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literacy when actually what, what's happening is people are not having such unified religious

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ideas and there are often particular Christmas seasonal variants of those types of stories.

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(EP): Are there any particular incidents which you would pick out as

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illustrating this war on Christmas allegation? (AL): I think the most famous example of this actually

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comes from 1997 - so going back quite a bit - but it has had an enduring legacy, is the Winterval

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story. Uh, for those of you who, who may not be uh, familiar with it this is going back quite a way -

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in 1997 Birmingham city council had an idea to try and capitalize on the tourism potential of the

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number of cultural events taking place really from October through to, uh, through to January.

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Of these, Christmas was by far the biggest but they also had Guy Fawkes Night, Diwali ,

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Hanukkah and various other events and so the city council put together a brochure called Winterval

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drawing attention to all of the things going on during this time period. Actually, you know, quite

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a quite a good idea if you want to get people coming into the city centre and spending money

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but the Daily Mail and certain other sources presented this as a loony lefty council banning

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Christmas and replacing it with politically correct Winterval and that myth is continuous so

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every year you will read on twitter and even hear in Parliament, that some local counsellors quote

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'banned Christmas' and replaced it with Winterval. The Daily Mail repeat this story from time to

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time even though they themselves were forced to print a correction admitting that they'd

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misrepresented the story.

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(EP): Why is the media so interested in these sorts of stories do you think?

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(AL): Well, certain sections of the media are very interested in stories where, you know, political

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correctness is disrupting traditional British ways of doing things and they look actively for

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examples of things that can be used to bolster that narrative. The media also are

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very interested in human interest stories and seasonal human interest stories and

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something can be very interesting and be shared around a lot and that can be quite divorced from

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how true or how accurate the story is and this is again, the war on Christmas stories are kind

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of a seasonal variant of stories we see elsewhere throughout the year often when an individual makes

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a complaint about an institution and they're able to get their story out there,

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the institution may just not want to engage in the media thing so you get only one version of story

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out there. At the NSS, we kind of call these stories um 'fired-for-praying-at-work-stories' because the

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joke being that, you know, no one actually is ever fired from their job for praying - it just doesn't

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really happen but there's often many stories about that and it's because you, you see there's been

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a press release of one side of the story and the institution involved just doesn't want to comment

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on it and so in certain sections of media these stories continue and are shared and in the

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situations when they tend to go to, if they were to go to employment tribunal, the true story tends

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to come out but that's much later and there's just less interest in that. (EP): Are you at the NSS ever

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asked to comment on these media stories?

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(AL): Yes and we often need to decide how to respond. Sometimes if we do respond to a story that's not really that big an issue, it can risk giving it credence.

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Often the media will come to us because they're trying to, you know, gen up a controversy and they

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say "oh, are you upset about this?" and so why would we be upset about this? because, you know, the war on

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Christmas is quite an asymmetrical war - it's only the side that are complaining about, you

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know, complaining about it that are very angry at it - there's not actually any any really side trying

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to push to uh, to secularize or, or push to make Christmas less um, less uh, quote, unquote, 'special' .

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(EP): In other words, it's not really a war on Christmas, it's a war by Christians on their idea or on

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the myth of the war on Christmas rather than um an actual thing that really exists -

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bit like a war father Christmas perhaps? (AL): Yes and interesting, research can often show that these

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cultural war issues can be quite asymmetrical so there can be issues where one side are very

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worked up about it but most other people just don't care. The uh, political scientist Rob Forder -

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I was reading their research recently on uh cultural wars in America and Britain and it's the

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reactionary right tend to want to fight cultural wars and the progressive, the more sort of liberal side

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don't actually like fighting these cultural wars and don't get worked up about them but

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in the long run, we actually tend to move in the more pluralistic, uh, progressive direction anyway.

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You, when you read a war on Christmas story, these tend to be..... they're a very specific genre of

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fake or exaggerated news but the media literacy skills needed are very transferable and I think

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that schools looking to cover topics such as fake news should really look at this area for great examples.

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(EP): Um, on a similar topic, as you pointed out in your blog going back to December 2016,

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ten MPs signed a rather singular early day motion that was tabled by Jim Shannon of the

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DUP and, and this motion proposed and I quote that 'this house reaffirms the right of every person in

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this country to use the phrase Happy Christmas and encourages communities to remember and celebrate

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the real reason for Christmas, which is the birth of Christ and to take the opportunity to enjoy

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time with loved ones as we as a nation celebrate together'. To me, this seems odd in a number of ways.

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To state only two of them - firstly, um because I don't seem to recall that anyone in the UK has

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ever been prevented from wishing anyone else a Happy Christmas, secondly because for reasons that

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I've already mentioned, it's far from clear that in fact the birth of Christ is the real reason

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for our celebration at Christmas even if it is the reason for the name Christmas.

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Alastair, in 2016 looking back to this motion, did it seem odd at the time?

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(AL): Well, Jim Shannon of the DUP who elsewhere has gone on record criticizing virtue signaling

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introduces early day motions around Christmas every year. To be fair, many MPs introduce early

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day motions around Christmas or or other cultural events recognizing and recognizing their, their

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importance to many people is perfectly routine but these particular motions to varying degrees

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seek to claim Christian exclusivity over Christmas - they talk about, that we should affirm the real

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reason for Christmas and that is coming from a position of privilege because your reason for

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Christmas and someone else's don't need to be the same and this is reflecting that there is a

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cultural anxiety among some Christians that what they perceive as the correct, right way of doing

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lots of things including recognizing Christmas is no longer the dominant or singular cultural

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approach to that issue and they feel quite anxious about that, so they want to reaffirm that we should

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be celebrating the 'real' or their real reason for the season.

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(EP): Alastair, you mentioned briefly um, schools.... Now there have been a few examples of the war on Christmas myth reaching schools. Um, in your

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experience, to what extent has this been an issue in schools? (AL): A lot of these cultural war issues even

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if they are, you know, one-sided cultural wars often play out in schools. A lot of our work

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throughout the year involves supporting parents, teachers and pupils who are dealing with

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inappropriate religious imposition in schools. Things like collective worship or evangelism in

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schools all have seasonal variations and kind of a Christmas theme often around this time of year.

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So, every year we get contacted by parents and people in schools concerned about the evangelical

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'Operation Christmas child' or 'Samaritan's Purse' initiative though of course less and less schools

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are participating in this. We discussed this way back in episode 16 of the podcast and I think

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it might be easier for me just to link to that in the show notes rather than going into detail.

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Inappropriate evangelism in schools and RE being misused to promote particular religious views can

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have unique Christmas versions. A lot of issues we see in schools come down to this: some Christians

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seek to use the popularity of the cultural and secular aspects of Christmas to promote

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the religious aspects, to which, which to them are very important and that's totally understandable

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and fine in society but people who want to promote religion in schools can also try to

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take advantage of this in an inappropriate way. So, using pupils enthusiasm for the

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inclusive cultural and secular aspects of the holiday to promote the religious aspects in a way



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that can be very alienating and conversely when schools try and lean into those secular aspects,

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for example, instead of a traditional nativity play, having a concert of more secular, inclusive

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Christmas songs, they can find themselves accused of banning Christmas suddenly. (EP): In December 2018, the

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BBC reported that Lady Lumley's school in Pickering, North Yorkshire had threatened to ban celebrations

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of Christmas because, and again I quote, 'Christmas is a day celebrating the birth of Jesus and should

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be a time of goodwill to all yet it can be a very stressful, expensive, argumentative and lonely time'

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Well I'm sure certainly no one would argue with that, um but the school then told pupils that they

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had to write to their RE teacher to consider the true meaning of Christmas and persuade her

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to change her mind. Some parents were annoyed but others supported this move as a way of compelling

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pupils to reflect on the real meaning of Christmas but Alastair what's your view about this? do you

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think it could be productive? Do we all need to think a bit more about what Christmas really means?

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(AL): It's an interesting story and it looks like a savvy RE teacher has exploited the media's hunger

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for these type of war on Christmas stories to get publicity and to start a conversation

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and on the one hand, I'm quite tempted to say well done them for bringing a lesson alive in that way.

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I'm sure this will filter through the myth-making machine and some people actually believe that

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Christmas was banned at a particular school - that's often how urban legends start - it's interesting

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that we've seen in other areas that fake news can start of being driven by

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satirical news stories. I think there's an unfortunate obnoxiousness there as well and

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the unwarranted assumption that there is a quote 'real meaning' of Christmas and that the purpose of

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RE is to teach that real meaning rather than to explore the different meanings that people may

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or may not apply. (EP): Just playing devil's advocate for one minute - I mean although it's true that there

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are other parallels to Christmas and Christmas was sort of grafted on to a previous Roman festival,

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I mean, Christmas has been Christian for a long time and, you know, it may be difficult to disagree

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with certain aspects of the Christmas message such as good will, peace - that sort of thing..... (AL): Of course,

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Christmas has many different meanings to different people and this is part of what we've been

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discussing of some people's discomfort at the meaning that they assign to it which can be

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very, very important and, and deeply felt that other people feel very differently.

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Many people assign a very important religious uh, reason to Christmas as a, the real

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reason for Christmas is, is this very clear religious aspect or this

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culturally uh, Christian aspect and for other people it's a purely secular cultural holiday.

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The important thing I think is as a society we need to come to terms with other people having

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different meanings and values but we can still as a society come together over shared values,

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we can still allow space for different people to express that in different ways. (EP): And we can still

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think that peace and goodwill to all men is quite a nice idea. (AL): Yeah.

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(EP): Now that was 2018. As far as I'm aware, in the UK at any rate, there hasn't been so much discussion of this alleged war on Christmas

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since then, so in the last couple of years, and this year the royal mail's Christmas stamps

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feature, according to its website, nativity scenes depicted in the stained glass windows of Anglican

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churches across the country. This is hardly a sign surely that the Christ is being taken out

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of Christmas. Does this suggest that the whole idea of a war on Christmas, in the UK anyway, has simply died?

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(AL): I think it's important to recognize that this particular myth will wax and wane in popularity,

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sometimes driven by specific examples that attract more attention and sometimes driven by

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background cultural issues. On the issue of stamps, for years the royal mail have had a semi-official

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policy of alternating between secular and religious designs in their Christmas cards

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so what that means is one year some religious groups get upset at the secularization of

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christmas stamps and demand that the the royal mail make them more religious next year which

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they were already planning on doing and then the next year these groups typically get upset that

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religious stamps don't tend to sell as well as the secular ones. Interestingly, the royal mail have now

0:20:15.840,0:20:21.280

decided to go with more religiously themed stamps for two years in a row and there is a

0:20:21.280,0:20:27.440

big suggestion that this is a result of one-sided lobbying on the issue. Of course you have to feel

0:20:27.440,0:20:32.320

a little sorry for whoever is in the press department of the royal mail and every two years

0:20:32.320,0:20:37.280

they have to deal with a barrage of complaints and questions about why they are trying to

0:20:37.280,0:20:42.960

secularize Christmas but it does go show that some groups really care about these things and are

0:20:43.520,0:20:51.040

actively looking for a cultural war. Um, a little aside on stamps uh - a little Easter egg if you will -

0:20:51.040,0:20:56.240

the audience may be interested in a story from Australia where the Satanic Temple uh perhaps

0:20:56.240,0:21:01.840

tongue-in-cheek is claiming religious persecution after their Christmas stamp design was rejected.

0:21:02.720,0:21:14.800

(EP): Just going back to my first question again, do you think that aside from a few Christian minorities, the public and the media in general have lost interest in the war on Christmas

0:21:14.800,0:21:19.520

in the last couple of years in particular and if so, is that because of the specific political

0:21:19.520,0:21:27.360

circumstances we've seen in 2019 and 2020?  
(AL): I think that could well be part of it, a very important part.

0:21:27.360,0:21:33.120  
The sort of fake news, very shareable fake news stories which make up the war on Christmas myth -

0:21:33.120,0:21:38.800  
the people who maybe in previous years were sharing those fake news stories may simply be sharing uh

0:21:38.800,0:21:44.320  
fake news stories on different topics. The people getting very upset about this stuff may just

0:21:44.320,0:21:49.040  
be getting more obsessed about it online and it just not breaking into the media but I believe

0:21:49.040,0:21:56.320  
the most important factor is external events so the prime time for the war on Christmas myth

0:21:56.320,0:22:02.960  
is late November to early December uh, that's when there's typically a lull in serious news

0:22:02.960,0:22:07.440  
but last year we had a general election in December so there wasn't that news lull

0:22:07.440,0:22:13.760  
and then this year, I mean, the covid crisis and its impact on all of our lives is filling any

0:22:13.760,0:22:20.880  
potential news vacuum with both serious and with human interest news stories. Also, many workplaces

0:22:20.880,0:22:25.840

will not be having Christmas parties this year for a very practical, sensible reason of covid.

0:22:26.480,0:22:32.240  
Many schools may be canceling Christmas activities for again the practical sensible reasons and it's

0:22:32.240,0:22:37.920  
harder to spin those into a conspiracy theory about Christmas being banned. (EP): What about in the

0:22:37.920,0:22:43.369  
U.S.? Are certain Christians still fighting the good fight against the war on Christmas?

0:22:43.369,0:22:49.520  
(AL): I think this will always be a predominantly American cultural obsession and well, you know, our cousins across

0:22:49.520,0:22:55.040  
the pond are more than welcome to it. I don't think anyone ever went broke selling persecution

0:22:55.040,0:23:02.400  
fantasies to American Christians. Uh, listeners are welcome to search for 'war on Christmas' on twitter

0:23:02.400,0:23:06.422  
for approximately 10 million examples.

0:23:06.422,0:23:14.560  
(EP): To people, to people who um, don't see it from, from the very christian perspective these, these allegations might seem trivial or unfounded but

0:23:14.560,0:23:18.560  
is there a deeper reason why some christians - individuals or groups - might want to keep

0:23:18.560,0:23:26.320  
harping on this particular myth? (AL): It's important to recognize that the war on Christmas narrative

0:23:26.320,0:23:32.560  
almost, it's almost not about Christmas. Christmas is almost the wrapping, if you will. The narrative,

0:23:32.560,0:23:38.400  
it's reflective of some Christian's uneasiness at losing their dominant cultural position

0:23:39.520,0:23:44.640  
and if we look at those Christians who to some extent or another buy into this myth and those

0:23:44.640,0:23:50.160  
who don't really pay much attention to it or think it's a bit silly, we see a division between those

0:23:50.160,0:23:56.800  
Christians who are comfortable in an increasingly secular and diverse society and those who aren't,

0:23:56.800,0:23:59.680  
and that's a big divide among many religious groups.

0:24:00.320,0:24:04.960  
We see cultural anxieties such as this play out in other minority religious groups,

0:24:05.520,0:24:10.000  
the difference being that they don't have, at least within the wider society - they might within their

0:24:10.000,0:24:15.840  
group - that history of cultural dominance, so it may be anxieties about assimilation.

0:24:15.840,0:24:21.920

So some Hindu groups may be concerned Diwali is becoming more of a cultural rather than religious

0:24:22.480,0:24:28.720  
event in the UK while others would see this as a successful example of integration. There can

0:24:28.720,0:24:34.560  
be anxiety over loss of dominance that's felt by some reactionary adherents in the face of what

0:24:34.560,0:24:40.640  
they perceive as liberalization. I'm not really aware of anything directly analogous to the war

0:24:40.640,0:24:46.160  
on Christmas myth in other religions but if anyone in the audience has examples, I'll be fascinated

0:24:46.160,0:24:52.160  
to hear them. (EP): What do you think is the best way for secularists and for, you know, mainstream Christians

0:24:52.160,0:24:58.400  
themselves who are not interested in, in this myth to respond to such stories?

0:24:58.400,0:25:06.640  
(AL): To an extent, there is a legitimate question of whether we need to address it. Uh, we could simply see it as a bizarre

0:25:06.640,0:25:12.400  
seasonal tradition whose cultural relevance might well uh wax or wane.

0:25:13.520,0:25:18.400  
There are people out there desperately looking for the smallest thing they can use to spin

0:25:18.400,0:25:23.040

into the war on Christmas narrative and we don't need to be mirroring that by looking

0:25:23.040,0:25:30.240

for every example of that to expose it but the dark underside and the way that this persecution

0:25:30.240,0:25:35.840

fantasy is used to advance claims of religious privilege is something that we should address

0:25:35.840,0:25:40.720

and I think the war on Christmas and addressing that can be quite a useful way. I've already

0:25:40.720,0:25:47.200

used the example of, it can be a way to address fake news claims uh, by exploring it in schools.

0:25:47.840,0:25:54.400

I think there are a couple of different ways that we can challenge this myth. The first

0:25:54.400,0:26:01.120

approach which I see a lot on online is humour - you can point out the absurdity of these claims and

0:26:01.120,0:26:06.880

satirize them. The second approach would be akin to something that I think the psychologist

0:26:06.880,0:26:12.480

Philippa Perry has called fact tennis - when you relentlessly address the facts of the claims,

0:26:12.480,0:26:17.920

you drill into the evidence and you point out step by step the reality behind these stories

0:26:19.040,0:26:26.000

but both approaches can work in some ways but be very ineffective in others. So, humour is obviously

0:26:26.000,0:26:33.200

a very powerful tool but if we understand that the war on Christmas myth is about Christian anxieties,

0:26:33.200,0:26:36.720

uh, some christian's anxieties about losing their dominant culture position,

0:26:37.280,0:26:42.000

then we can see that maybe being the butt of the joke isn't the best way to reach those people

0:26:42.560,0:26:47.440

and similarly logic and facts when divorced from empathy and understanding

0:26:48.080,0:26:53.520

are not very effective at changing people's minds. So, if you engage in this fact tennis of batting

0:26:53.520,0:26:59.440

back every example with the facts about that, that can actually just harden people's positions

0:26:59.440,0:27:03.600

but because people have bought into this idea of the war on Christmas on an emotional level,

0:27:04.480,0:27:10.000

even if you successfully demonstrate that one example isn't true, they might just feel that

0:27:10.000,0:27:14.880

oh there's got to be something there and maybe all the examples I've got if I look into them

0:27:14.880,0:27:20.080

in detail - some of them don't really add up but I'm sure there's got to be something real there.

0:27:20.960,0:27:26.480

I think shifting the narrative is important and getting people to think critically so rather than

0:27:27.360,0:27:31.440

simply going in with facts, or simply going and making fun out of someone, you know, if

0:27:31.440,0:27:36.160

you see someone sharing this war on Christmas myth um, ask questions - say, you know

0:27:36.800,0:27:43.760

"have you ever personally seen someone be told off for saying Merry Christmas? Oh you seem

0:27:43.760,0:27:48.800

offended that this company has decided to do a very secular Christmas ad. Why do you think they

0:27:48.800,0:27:54.240

made that advertising choice? Why do you think the newspaper chose to frame that story in that way?"

0:27:54.240,0:27:59.200

etc., etc. and that plays into the media literacy I was talking about earlier. (EP): Is it possible

0:27:59.200,0:28:03.360

simply to ignore those who suggest there is a war on Christmas on the grounds that they're

0:28:03.360,0:28:11.280

a very small minority and ultimately most people just don't care? (AL): Yes and we can see Christmas as

0:28:11.280,0:28:16.640

actually a great secular success story and that narrative could be an advantage.

0:28:16.640,0:28:22.080

Why buy into a bitter divisive narrative? Doesn't that really go against the spirit of Christmas?

0:28:22.800,0:28:29.280

(EP): Talking of the spirit of Christmas, in, in a non-narrowly christian sense of course

0:28:29.280,0:28:35.120

these days in the UK and in many other western societies, the winter holiday season as we've

0:28:35.120,0:28:40.480

already discussed features numerous different festivals celebrated by people who come from

0:28:40.480,0:28:45.840

different cultural religious backgrounds, you know, we've got Hanukkah, we've got Diwali and sometimes

0:28:45.840,0:28:52.080

depending on the year, we've got Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Adha. Given this huge diversity in our society today,

0:28:52.720,0:28:58.320

is there an advantage maybe to just generally wishing people Happy Holidays or Seasons Greetings

0:28:59.440,0:29:04.640

on the basis that these wishes are more inclusive or is it still okay to say Merry Christmas?

0:29:09.200,0:29:16.160

(AL): I think well, either Happy Holidays or Seasons Greetings might strike some British ears as, as

0:29:16.160,0:29:21.680  
artificial or Americanisms. Uh, I think  
that the vast majority of Britons of

0:29:21.680,0:29:28.960  
of any faith or none actually do a pretty  
fine job of muddling through these cultural  
issues.

0:29:29.680,0:29:37.920  
Our nation's decreasing religiosity and  
increasing diversity is a massive cultural  
change

0:29:37.920,0:29:46.880  
and that change can cause anxieties in  
some people, that change can lead in, in some  
cases to

0:29:46.880,0:29:54.480  
very nasty manifestations but equally that  
change is just absorbed by people in their  
lives and if

0:29:54.480,0:30:00.880  
we can break down these artificial barriers  
and ignore those who want to enforce them,  
then you can

0:30:00.880,0:30:07.600  
wish your friends, you know, Happy  
Hanukkah, Eid Mubarak, Diwali wishes or  
Merry Christmas and no

0:30:07.600,0:30:14.400  
one's really getting to mind. (EP) Or all of the  
above (AL): Exactly. (EP): Alastair Lichten,  
thank you very much.

0:30:15.120,0:30:18.720  
And looking forward to December, from  
me and everyone at the National Secular

0:30:18.720,0:30:24.800  
Society, Merry Christmas, Glad Jul and  
io Saternalia and warmest wishes for 2021.

0:30:32.800,0:30:37.200  
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