



# **Christmas in the Crosshairs: Two Thousand Years of Denouncing and Defending the World's Most Celebrated Holiday**

*Gerry Bowler*

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An Anglican priest hands out brass knuckles to his congregation, preparing to battle anti-Christmas fanatics. Fascists insist that the Winter Solstice is the real Christmas, while Communists stage atheist musicals outside of churches on Christmas Eve. Activists vandalize shops that start touting the holiday in October and anti-consumerists sing parody carols in shopping malls. Is there a war on Christmas? As Gerry Bowler demonstrates in *Christmas in the Crosshairs*, there is and always has been a war, or several wars, on Christmas.

A cherished global phenomenon, Christmas is the biggest single event on the planet. For Christians it is the second-most sacred date on the calendar, but it also engages billions of people who are caught up in its commercialism, music, sentiment, travel, and frenetic busyness. Since its controversial invention in the Roman Empire, Christmas has struggled with paganism, popular culture, and fierce Christian opposition; faced abolition in Scotland and New England; and braved neglect and near-death in the 1700s, only to be miraculously reinvented in the 1800s. The twentieth century saw it banned by Bolsheviks and twisted by Nazis. Since then, special interest groups of every stripe have used the holiday's massive popularity to draw attention to their causes.

*Christmas in the Crosshairs* tells the story of the tug-of-war over Christmas, replete with cross-dressing priests, ranting Puritans, and atheist witches. In this eye-opening history of Christmas and its opponents from the beginning up to the present day, Bowler gives us a shocking, and richly entertaining, new look at the tradition we thought we knew so well.

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