

Christmas Carols and Unity Theology:

Have we Finally Found Our Sacred Cow?

By Richard Mekdeci

Ahh Christmas time. Whatever feelings, memories and emotions this holiday evokes, you can be sure that they are indelibly tied to the music of the season.

You can't avoid it really. Unless you turn off your radio and television, stay home, shop online, and don't go to church, you're most likely going to hear Jingle Bell Rock or Silent Night several times between now and Christmas day. It is truly impossible to separate the music from the season.

The music of this Holiday season is basically divided into two categories: the "Sacred" and the "Secular". The secular are the fun, more universal, non-religious songs like White Christmas, Jingle Bells, Rudolph, Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree, Santa Claus Is Coming to Town etc.

The Sacred carols are of course the Noels, the hymns that are about the religion of Christmas - the birth of the savior, the nativity story, God's reconciliation with man. These are songs like Silent Night, O Come All Ye Faithful, Joy To the World, O Holy Night etc.

You know the ones. You may sing them every year in your church and notice that there are some terms and language you have not heard all year until now. You'll sing of Jesus as King of Israel, God's only son, the Savior of the world, THE Christ child. God is the Father, Jesus is Lord - all terminology that generally does not find its way into your average Unity or New Thought sermons and music throughout the year. As a result, this strange convergence takes place. There is that twinge of singing words you really don't believe are true, overlaid onto the comfort and joy of singing the familiar songs we've grown up with.

Where do we draw the line? Or do we?

We have basically three choices:

- 1) Bite the bullet and sing the songs as-is - "comfort and joy" trumping accurate languaging.
- 2) Change the words to beloved songs to better match what we believe, evoking rolling eyes and cries of "blasphemy" from some congregants.
- 3) Find new and different songs to sing all together from our growing New Thought library.

Surprisingly, I've found after questioning several Unity ministers and ministerial students that #1 was the most preferable. #3 came in second with #2 actually being the least desirable.

Could it be that Unity has finally found its Sacred Cow?

Is it our responsibility to sing and speak words that accurately reflect our evolving view of God and Jesus? Or, can we see the whole Christmas story as myth and these songs as the "folk songs" that preserve these stories for us. The songs don't have to reflect our current theology if we preface them with the understanding that they are a representation of the roots from which our current theology stems.

Fortunately, whatever choice you make, we have you covered.

If you are a traditionalist (#1), Unity's Wings of Song hymnal has a great selection of traditional carols. Some have been softened and verses added or altered slightly to reflect our theology of the time (70s/80s).

For you who want to throw out the baby AND the bathwater (#3), there are now hundreds of songs available in 11 songbooks where you can find songs especially for this season (www.unityworldwideministries.org) and thousands single downloads (www.empowerma.com) and a new Online Choral Library (www.heartwindmusic.com)

And for you optimists who believe you can salvage the beauty of our traditional songs and still maintain some congruence with our beliefs, see the article "Eleven Christmas Carols With Suggested Alternate Lyrics" a document with 11 traditional Christmas songs with altered word suggestions to be more in alignment with our New Thought beliefs.

Are you a 1, a 2 or a 3 when it comes to traditional Christmas music?