

CONFRONTING THE CHRISTMAS CENSORS

William A. Donohue

John Gibson, who anchors the Fox News Channel's "The Big Story," has written a splendid book about the culture wars over Christmas. It is aptly titled, *The War on Christmas: How the Liberal Plot to Ban the Sacred Christian Holiday Is Worse Than You Thought*.

Gibson recounts a series of anti-Christmas cases that have evolved over the past few years, and provides first-hand responses from the offenders. Friendship trees have replaced Christmas trees; holiday parades are in and Christmas parades are out; winter parties are all the rage and Christmas parties are yesterday's news; "Happy Holidays" is the preferred greeting and "Merry Christmas" is verboten.

Those who think that this is a blue-state phenomenon where mostly liberals live are wrong: it's all over. Small towns and big towns, southern cities and northern ones, Christian-dominated neighborhoods and multi-religious communities—all have been hit by the anti-Christian fever. But if, as Gibson's subtitle indicates, this is the work of liberals, then why is it that the crusade to kill Christmas is ubiquitous?

If it were the product of anti-Christian bigots alone (and they have surely played a big role), then why would Christians not only put up with it, why would some of them actively promote it? After all, there aren't enough anti-Christian bigots to pull this off by themselves. Christians are 85 percent of the population, so it must be that a fair number of them have joined the war on Christmas.

The problem with these Christians is that too many of them have drunk from the well of multiculturalism, namely, the

pernicious idea that all cultures are equally valid. Add to this the invidious effects of what Christina Hoff Summers and Sally Satel call “therapism”—the touchy-feely world where everyone must be made to feel good about himself—and the result is a collapse of nerve.

Here’s how it works. Take the friendship tree. When a parent asked the school principal why the Christmas tree has been renamed, he was told, “Oh, we’re trying to make sure we don’t offend people.” Not really. It’s a sure bet that many Christians were offended by this generic tree, but who cares about them? What makes this all the more bizarre is the fact that 96 percent of Americans celebrate Christmas.

Plano, Texas is home to some of the biggest Christmas censors on earth. “Jesus Is the Reason” pencils and “Legend of the Candy Cane” pens were confiscated because of their “religious” message. Saying “Merry Christmas” and writing “Merry Christmas” on greeting cards were punishable offenses. Red and green were banned at the “winter party” in favor of the “white only” policy: students were ordered to bring white napkins, white paper plates and cups and white cakes and cupcakes. Too bad someone didn’t sue the school for promoting racism.

Gibson correctly notes that, in effect, Christians “were being asked to celebrate something they didn’t celebrate—winter—as if they were pagans in the Roman Empire.” Protesting students were told by their teacher that to allow “Merry Christmas” would “offend someone.” The assumption is that Jews, Muslim and others are all raging bigots who go bonkers every December. But this is nonsense.

To be sure, there are bigots. Consider Florence Roisman, a left-wing professor of law at Indiana University. Roisman, and two students, all of whom are Jewish, objected to a Christmas tree on the campus. And they succeeded in getting it removed. The offense? The tree was labeled “exclusionary” because it didn’t represent them.

What to do about all this? Gibson quotes my response as follows: "If a Catholic is offended by a Star of David, or a crescent and star, wouldn't the right corrective be to educate the Catholic and get him out of his dim-wittedness and bigotry?" Instead, we reward the bigots.

Too often, school administrators lack the courage to challenge organizations like the ACLU. Gibson gets it right when he says that "the tactics and strategies of the ACLU in its war on Christmas are the very definition of bullying, and to avoid costly and time-consuming litigation from the ACLU, school boards and local governments frequently submit to ACLU demands that far exceed the limitations on religious observance on government property that is actually required by law."

The Catholic League, I am proud to say, was one of the first organizations to directly confront the Christmas censors. Now we are joined by many other groups, most of whom are Protestant.

You can help, too. Let the censors know what you think, contact us and get your family and friends to do the same. And don't be afraid to say "Merry Christmas." Speaking of which, we at the Catholic League wish all of you a Blessed and Merry Christmas.