

CHRISTMAS SECULARIZED; HANUKKAH SACRALIZED

From McDonalds to the local mall, Christmas is represented not by a nativity scene but by Christmas trees, snowflakes, reindeer and other secular symbols. Meanwhile, Hanukkah is (properly) represented by menorahs and the Star of David. Herewith are some examples.

- The Christmas selection for 1-800-flowers.com has no religious items but features a Star of David Charm Necklace for Hanukkah
- The Christmas selection for FTD.com has all secular items but sells Star Shaped Hanukkah Cookies
- Hallmark's "Holiday Gifts" selection has no religious items for Christmas but sells a Silver Menorah Candleholder
- Bloomingdale's has a "Chanukah" Gift Card set but no Christmas Gift Card set
- Studiodaedre.com sells a "Chanukah Menorah" but no religious items for Christmas
- AltaVista.com explains the secular meaning of Christmas but offers a religious interpretation of Hanukkah
- Yahoo.com lists six religions under "Religious Holidays" but only one of them has an "Opposing Views" category—Christianity

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"It is one thing to partially secularize a religious holiday, quite another to obliterate its religious roots. It is also disturbing to witness the secularization of the nation's majority religion while simultaneously recognizing the sacred roots of minority religions. All people of faith, regardless of their numbers, have a right to see their religion

accurately represented. Just as Jews would not put up with nativity sets and dreidels adorning the public square, Christians should not put up with menorahs and Christmas trees dotting the landscape. The problem is not commercialization: if that were true, Hanukkah would also be secularized. No, the fault for this inequity rests with those whose anti-Christian agenda is relentless, as well as with their supine subjects.”

“FAITH-BASED” PROGRAMS RIGHT MOVE BY BUSH

President-elect George W. Bush will meet today with an array of religious leaders to discuss his plans for promoting “faith-based” social service programs. Catholic League president William Donohue took the occasion to explain why the league supports this move:

“There is nothing new about ‘faith-based’ social service organizations; they have been operative in the U.S. since the nineteenth century. What is new is the overwhelming empirical evidence that shows how efficacious these programs are in meeting the needs of the dispossessed. Whether the problem is drug addiction, literacy, empowerment for the homeless, attending to the needs of women in distress, or any other malady, the data demonstrate that secular government programs pale in significance to the achievements registered by ‘faith-based’ initiatives. And that is why the Catholic League applauds the interest that George W. Bush has shown in encouraging these programs.

“Given the results of ‘faith-based’ programs, it is hard to

believe they remain controversial. Now it could be argued that those who oppose these programs are the enemy of the poor. More than likely, however, it is the single-minded determination to scrub society clean of any public expression of religion that motivates this crowd. But it must also be said that those who object to what Bush wants to do would rather see the poor ill-served by secular programs before they would ever support successful 'faith-based' initiatives. This proves how shallow is their interest in ameliorating the conditions of the needy.

"No institution has done more to improve the life chances of the dispossessed than the Catholic Church, and this is especially true of Catholic schools in the inner cities. That is why the time is ripe for a new partnership between church and state, one that allows 'faith-based' programs to breathe freely without being suffocated by secular extremists. Accordingly, we hope Bush turns a deaf ear to those who resist change and are stuck in the social mud of the 1960s."

MULTICULTURAL CLUB USED TO ASSAULT CHRISTMAS

The Catholic League has fielded many complaints regarding the extent to which Christmas is being downplayed in the nation's public schools. A textbook example is New Britton Elementary School in Fishers, Indiana.

The students at New Britton are being treated to a multicultural understanding of the holiday season. A school memo dated December 13 describes celebrations already begun and those to come. Here it is:

"We are learning about Holidays Around the World this week. We started the week by talking about how we celebrate in Fishers. We talked about Santa Claus and the reindeer, stockings, cookies, lights and trees. Tuesday we talked about the traditions in Mexico. We made piñatas and poinsettias. We tasted tamales and learned about La Posadas. Wednesday we will discuss Germany and its traditions of the Christmas tree and gingerbread. We will read stories, taste gingerbread cookies, sing and do activities. Thursday we will talk about Scandinavian countries and how they celebrate. We will make Star Boy hats and St. Lucia wreaths. Friday, we will learn about Hannakah [sic]. We will hear stories, sing songs and make the Menorah [sic], the star [sic] of David and dreidels. On Monday the 18th we will do activities and read stories about elves. On the 19th we will do activities and stories about the Grinch."

Catholic League president William Donohue remarked as follows:

"Multiculturalism 2000 means instructing kids on the secular meaning of Christmas and the religious meaning of Hanukkah. They can talk about reindeers but not about Jesus. They can take pride in the religious roots of other cultures, but not their own. And they call this 'diversity.'

"Today the students at New Britton Elementary are learning about the Grinch. But why bother? They've already mastered this lesson many times over."

RELIGIOUS NECKTIES BRANDED

THREAT TO FREEDOM

Bus drivers in Vancouver, Washington have been warned that they are forbidden from wearing hats, vests or neckties that depict religious themes during the Christmas season. Their employer, C-TRAN, issued the following criteria for such apparel: "They are appropriate for work in a public agency. They do not contain offensive or controversial messages or pictures. They do not depict religious themes."

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, was happy that a league member brought this issue to his attention:

"We called the Human Resources Department of C-TRAN asking for a fax of the law that required them to ban apparel that depicted religious themes. They sent us the relevant section of the Constitution of the State of Washington that speaks to religious freedom and circled the operative sentence: 'No public money or property shall be appropriated for or applied to any religious worship, exercise or instruction, or the support of any religious establishment.'

"Now either the bureaucrats at C-TRAN are dishonest or they're just plain dumb. No public funds are involved in the decision of a bus driver to purchase his own tie with a picture of a nativity scene on it, and they know it. That is why C-TRAN stands alone in Washington on this issue.

"We called officials at Pierce Transit of Tacoma; SKAT system of Skagit County; Metro Transit of Seattle; Leavenworth; Longview; Mercer Island; and Port Angeles. None of them has such an absurd rule and indeed they offered that they have 'no problem' with any employee who wears a hat, vest or tie that depicts a religious theme.

"We are contacting the head of the transit union in Vancouver asking him to protest this act of censorship. One way would be to ask bus drivers to wear a scarf with a religious theme

emblazoned on it and then see what happens. Another way would be to meet the bullies in court.”

CHRISTMAS TREE CENSORED IN EUGENE, OREGON

The city manager of Eugene, Oregon, Jim Johnson, has issued a directive banning Christmas trees from public places. Johnson argues that the tree is a religious symbol and therefore cannot be placed on public property. The ban was issued after “a number of non-Christians” complained.

In his memo of November 20 to all city employees, Johnson said that while it could be contended that the Christmas tree is a “holiday” or “seasonal” decoration, “it is just as clearly a decoration associated with a religious holiday or tradition.” He justified the ban as a way of “practicing diversity.” After firefighters protested, Johnson offered a compromise that would allow Christmas trees in fire stations on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. However, Johnson also said that if one person objects, the tree must be removed.

Catholic League president William Donohue stated the league’s position today:

“In 1989, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *County of Allegheny v. ACLU* that ‘The Christmas tree, unlike the menorah, is not itself a religious symbol.’ Indeed, it allowed a menorah to be erected outside the Pittsburgh City-Council Building precisely because it was surrounded by a secular symbol, namely a Christmas tree (by contrast, a Nativity scene standing by itself was not allowed). In making this decision, the high court cited the *Lynch v. Donnelly* ruling of 1984 that

'validated the crèche'; that decision said a crèche was legal because it was surrounded by such secular symbols as a Christmas tree.

"It is undeniably true that banning Christmas trees is a grand act of censorship having nothing to do with the U.S. Constitution. Not surprisingly, the censors at Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the ACLU and the Interfaith Alliance are backing the ban. That a gag order is supported by these groups demonstrates their decided preference for intolerance and contempt for true diversity."

"F— CHRISTMAS" T-SHIRTS NOW ON SALE

A store in Berkeley, California, Bear Basics, is selling T-shirts that say "F— Christmas"; the shirt bears the full name of the obscenity.

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, today explained the league's response to this matter:

"The manager of Bear Basics, Sandie Handschoh, was not available when I called yesterday, but I did speak to three of the store's employees, including Mark who handles the store's inventory. Without identifying who I was, I said I wanted to buy three 'F— Christmas' T-shirts and three 'F— Hanukkah' T-shirts. When I was told that they didn't carry any 'F— Hanukkah' T-shirts, I responded that this struck me as discriminatory. Continuing to press the issue, I was told that no one would make such a shirt, thus verifying what I instinctively knew to be true.

“Interestingly, I was also told that Bear Basics carries T-shirts that say ‘F– Halloween’ and ‘F– Valentine’s Day.’ Being Irish, I took special note of their St. Patrick’s Day line of T-shirts that read, ‘F– Me, I’m Irish.’ I then asked if they had any ‘F– the Jews’ or ‘F– the Gays’ T-shirts and learned that they did not. Just the Irish.

“Berkeley is not America but it is a leading indicator of what passes as politically correct. Among other things, it tells us that there is a market for those whose hatred of Jesus Christ is unparalleled in American history. Meanwhile, civil libertarians and other professed guardians of liberty are running around municipal buildings looking to see if there are crucifixes hanging from Christmas trees or kids singing ‘Silent Night’ in the lobby. And I wouldn’t be surprised to learn that some of them are running around sporting their new ‘F– Christmas’ T-shirts.”

SALON.COM SLUGS CATHOLICS ONCE AGAIN

For the past year, the online magazine, *Salon.com*, has published several articles attacking one aspect of Catholicism or another. Most of its attacks are centered on the Church’s teachings on sexuality. Its latest foray occurred on December 13 when it published a statement allegedly written by a 15 year-old girl charging that her Catholic school is anti-gay. The piece, “Teens, sex and God,” accuses the Catholic Church of hating gays and contributing to “intolerant attitudes” that “contribute greatly to teen depression and suicide.”

Catholic League president William Donohue remarked as follows:

"A review of *Salon's* articles on religion demonstrate an hostility to Catholicism that is unique in its coverage of other religions. For example, on November 22, in a story on a young woman who decided to become a nun, it was said, 'The Catholic Church is hardly the center for the young, brilliant and inspired these days.' Makes us wonder whether the author had mistaken the Church for *Salon*. No matter, now we have a broadside against the Church for its alleged anti-homosexual teachings. Indeed, we learn that Catholic teens pick up on the idea of 'If Jesus hates fags, religious leaders (e.g., Jerry Falwell) hate fags, then I can hate fags too.' Now couldn't the author have found at least one Catholic leader who 'hates fags' instead of citing the Baptist Jerry Falwell? Probably not.

"*Salon's* fascination with sex is jaded at best. Today it has two pieces, one on teens who perform oral sex on each other and the other on a woman who bit off a man's testicle. It is not surprising that with this kind of journalism *Salon* is going belly up. On December 11, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote, '*Salon.com's* stock has tanked,' explaining that what saved it from going under is the round of layoffs it experienced last summer. With its stock now in the penny-stock range, it is only a matter of time before *Salon* declares bankruptcy. That it is already morally bankrupt is beyond dispute."

"60 MINUTES" DRAWS ON BIGOT TO SLAM CHURCH

On December 10, the CBS show, "60 Minutes," did a segment on the merger of Catholic hospitals with secular healthcare institutions. The focus of the piece was the unavailability

of contraceptive services and abortions at these facilities. Morley Safer conducted interviews with several persons, including Frances Kissling of Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC). Kissling was quoted as saying, "It's not like the old days. Doctors are no longer gods. Now we have bishops who are gods."

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"For many years now, '60 Minutes' has worked hard to discredit the Roman Catholic Church. But rarely has it shown its anti-Catholic bias more than in its piece on 'God, Women and Medicine.' By drawing on perhaps the most notorious anti-Catholic bigot in the nation, Frances Kissling, '60 Minutes' exposed its true colors.

"'I spent twenty years looking for a government that I could overthrow without being thrown in jail,' Kissling once said. 'I finally found one in the Catholic church' [sic]. Moreover, her anti-Catholicism is so blatant that on two occasions the bishops have expressly denounced Catholics for a Free Choice for fraudulently posing as a Catholic group. And this is the 'expert' that Morley Safer repairs to for commentary. It is on the order of asking those blacks who voted for George Wallace what they think about civil rights and then airing their self-hating views as representative of African American thought. The only difference being that Kissling is getting paid around a quarter of a million dollars by the Ford Foundation and their ilk for the doing the bidding of Catholic-bashing elites.

"We will ask our members, and all those who are opposed to bigotry, to write to the producer of '60 Minutes,' Don Hewitt, stating their objections to this remarkable segment."

DENVER AIRPORT OFFICIALS BOW TO CENSORS

Officials at Denver International Airport (DIA) have decided that the Mass schedule for Catholic passengers cannot be announced on its public address system. The ban comes in the wake of several months of deliberation: one person had previously complained that it was improper to announce the schedule of Masses on Sunday and holy days of obligation on the public address system; religious services are held in the airport's chapel.

Jews and Muslims have opted not to use the public address system to announce the time of their services. More important, they do not object to the system being used to announce the schedule of Masses. The only group that supported the ban was the local chapter of the ACLU.

On December 5, DIA made public its new rule, which reads as follows: "The airport's interfaith chapel is open 24 hours for quiet meditation on terminal level 6 southeast. For scheduled service information, please dial 2036 on a white paging telephone."

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, expressed the league's thoughts on this matter:

"DIA officials have delivered a 'compromise' which compromises no one's rights save Catholics: since it was only Catholic services that were being announced, the decision to neuter this information by going with a generic substitute is both cowardly and offensive. In effect, lawyers for the airport are saying that they would rather issue a gag order before ever confronting the censors at the ACLU.

“DIA authorities want us to believe that their decision followed ‘months of legal research, weighing of public opinion and exhaustive internal discussion.’ Yet what they produced suggests that it is their commitment to principle that is really exhausted.”

CHRISTMAS WARS CONTINUE IN SCHOOLS AND PARKS

Every December controversies rage over the placement of religious symbols in public schools and on public property. This year is no exception as lobbying efforts to cleanse the schools and parks of any religious symbolism are being waged by activist organizations that want to further secularize society. Such organizations include the ACLU, ADL, People for the American Way and Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

For example, the ACLU is currently challenging the erection of nativity scenes in Lincoln, Nebraska; Lexington, Massachusetts; Lafayette, Indiana and elsewhere. They have also protested, with success, the term “Christmas break” in Newton County, Georgia—school authorities switched the name to “semester break” so as to avoid a lawsuit. The ADL has taken a different approach, electing to publish a pamphlet on “The December Dilemma: Guidelines for Public Schools During the December Holidays.”

Catholic League president William Donohue explained the league’s response:

“The Catholic League is opposed to the use of government funds to pay for the placement of religious symbols on public

property, but it is not opposed to the erection of such symbols in the schools or in parks if it is done voluntarily and with private funding. For example, for the past several years the Catholic League has secured a permit from New York City that allows us to put a nativity scene in Central Park; Jews erect a menorah and Muslims place a Crescent and Star. This constitutes government accommodation, not sponsorship.

“We continue to object to those who profess a rank hostility to the public expression of religious liberty. That is why we provided a response to the ADL’s statement, ‘The December Dilemma,’ on our website: it is called ‘The December Celebration’ and is found at catholicleague.org.”