

CHRISTMAS COPS ON THE BEAT; BIZARRE TACTICS USED

Just as the sun sets in the morning, we know that every December the anti-Christmas folks swing into high gear. And as evidenced by the articles in this issue of *Catalyst*, 2009 was no exception. Save, perhaps, for one thing: the tactics this time around were noted for their novelty.

Nothing gained the Catholic League more publicity this past Christmas season than our criticism of PETA's (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) campaign to exploit the religious holiday for profit. It featured an almost totally nude *Playboy* pinup "dressed" with Catholic symbols. Bill Donohue debated a PETA spokeswoman on CNN, making swift dispatch of her arguments.

Atheist organizations were up to their old tricks of seeking to criminalize Christmas by suing municipalities. Because of the bad economy, all it took were a few threats to scare budget-weary officials from challenging the intimidators in court. The anti-Christmas foes know this, and shamelessly exploited it to their advantage.

Dumb is the only way we can characterize some of what happened. By erecting a lighted Loch Ness Monster in lieu of a manger scene in Howard County, Indiana, officials got blasted from all sides. In some cases, school districts had policies in place that were sensible, but were never invoked. Hence, some of the silliest decisions were made, like changing the Christmas tree to the "Giving Tree."

More bizarre tactics included gay-themed Christmas plays and the banning of secular symbols like Frosty the Snowman and candy canes. Over and over again, we heard the refrain that censoring Christmas was being done to protect non-Christians

(from what we still don't know). It is one thing to complain about the effects of second-hand smoke, quite another to sound the alarms over the effects of second-hand Christmas cheer.

The White House had fewer ornaments and wreaths than usual, a fact that was nicely explained by First Lady Michelle Obama: this was done intentionally, she said, to show compassion for those who were hurting at Christmastime. We don't understand the logic, but neither do we understand why an ornament featuring the genocidal maniac Mao Zedong was hung from one of the White House Christmas trees.

Perhaps bizarre is too kind a word to describe such events. In any case, if there was one hero, it was Colorado's Larimer County Sheriff who advised all the Christmas cops to simply "Lighten Up. Just say 'Merry Christmas'" and "Wishing You a Loud and Politically Incorrect 'Merry Christmas.'" Touché.

TRILOGY SERIES NIXED

We previously reported in *Catalyst* that New Line Cinema has not shown much interest in making any more movie versions of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy; his first book in the series, *The Golden Compass*, hit the big screen in 2007, and was the subject of a vigorous Catholic League protest. At the end of 2009, our dream came true: there will be no movie made of either *The Subtle Knife* or *The Amber Spyglass*.

In December 2007, the Catholic League launched a boycott of the film version of *The Golden Compass*. We did so in the hope that Christian parents would keep their children away from the film and thus not be inclined to buy *His Dark Materials* as a Christmas gift; the trilogy of pro-atheist books is aimed at

young people. We also wanted to discourage the possibility that producers would make a movie of the second book of the trilogy. Now Pullman, an English atheist, has confirmed our victory: there will be no sequel.

Pullman was widely quoted in Britain taking aim at Bill Donohue for his alleged “triumphalism.” Donohue responded by saying, “The accusation is accurate. I am positively gloating.” In Wales, Donohue was quoted as saying, “I knew if we could hurt box office receipts here, it might put the brakes on the next movie.” Pullman shot back, labeling Donohue’s boasting as “disgusting.”

This is a big victory for Christians, especially Catholics. And it is especially sweet for the Catholic League.

ABORTION NEWS IS MORE GOOD THAN BAD

As we mark the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, there is good news and bad news on abortion. The good news is that more Americans identify with the pro-life message than ever before; the bad news is that their president and his administration do not. First the bad news.

Barack Obama is not only the most radical champion of abortion rights this nation has ever seen, he has no equal anywhere in the world. To be exact, he stands alone in his determination to deny medical treatment to a baby born alive as a result of a botched abortion. Just as disconcerting, those who work for him are equally passionate about the subject: they want no time line or restrictions on abortion. They even defend abortion as health care, expecting an unsupportive public to

pay for it.

By contrast, the public increasingly rejects this “everything goes” mentality. Indeed, the gap between what Washington wants, and what the American people want, has never been so wide. Time, it seems, is on the side of pro-lifers, even if it means that our side will not get all that it wants. Consider the data.

In a Gallup poll last May, a slight majority of Americans, 51 percent, identified themselves as pro-life. This was a first: never before have most Americans chosen the pro-life label. A few months later, Gallup was showing a 47-46 percent split, with our side slightly ahead. In between the May and August polls, a *New York Times*/CBS News survey last June showed that 36 percent of Americans said abortion should be generally available; 41 percent said it should be legal but under stricter limits than it is now; and 21 percent said it should not be permitted.

Why would more Americans identify themselves as pro-life at a time when they recently elected a pro-abortion extremist as president? First, Obama was not elected because of his position on abortion (only 60 percent, according to a Pew survey, even know what his position is): he was elected because the bottom fell out of the financial markets on Republican watch. Second, it just may be that his extremism on the subject repels many Americans.

The *New York Times*/CBS News poll is revealing: by combining the 41 percent who want tighter restrictions with the 21 percent who are opposed to abortion under all circumstances, we have a decisive 62 percent who cannot support *Roe v. Wade*. It's actually higher than that: recall that the survey reported that 36 percent said abortion should be “generally” available, meaning, of course, that even in this group there are those who want some restrictions. To put it differently, abortion-on-demand, which is what *Roe* sanctions, is supported

by very few Americans.

Who are the greatest proponents of abortion? As the Pew survey disclosed, they are overwhelmingly people who either take religion lightly or are non-believers. Conversely, the more seriously one takes his religion, the more likely he is to be pro-life. This makes intuitive sense, but how do we explain the fact that young people are more likely to be pro-life than middle-aged persons?

Of those aged 18-29, only 52 percent say abortion should be legal, as compared to 58 percent among those 30-49 and 56 percent among those aged 50-64; only 45 percent of seniors favor the legalization of abortion.

Could it be that young people are more conservative than we might have thought? Not really.

Young people, as compared to middle-aged and older Americans, are much more likely to be in favor of gay marriage; they have been taught since kindergarten that yesterday's blacks are today's gays. But whereas middle-aged Americans have gotten used to a culture of death, today's youth have seen too many graphic pictures of babies developing in their mother's wombs. And they have too many friends who are still living with the psychological fallout that accompanies abortion.

Regarding this latter point, the Pew survey showed that the majority of Americans *in all categories*—including those who are the most rabidly pro-abortion—say it is good to reduce the number of abortions. But why? Why would it be a good idea to reduce the incidence of a medical procedure—one that is entirely legal—when it does not result in the maiming or killing of an innocent human being? Hangnails are a problem for some, but no one goes around saying it would be a good idea not to cut them off.

The following incident, which occurred in December, is instructive.

"A 29-year-old homeless woman has given birth to a *baby* girl after, police said, she was befriended by a Maryland woman who held her captive for several days and tried to cut the *baby* from her womb," reported the Associated Press. Officer Michelle Reedy, spokesperson for Prince George's County police, commented on how the would-be *baby* killer behaved: "She bound the victim's hands and proceeded to try to cut the victim's abdomen to try to get the *baby* out. They believe she wanted the victim's *baby*."

Baby. Not fetus. Not clump of cells. Lots of young people can figure it out. Maybe they should tutor the White House.

PETA BARES CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN

It would be hard to find an organization in the United States which treats animals more unethically than People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). In 2008, as demonstrated by the Center for Consumer Freedom, PETA killed 95 percent of the adoptable pets in its care. Indeed, it killed an average of six pets a day in 2008 at its headquarters in Norfolk, Virginia, while placing only seven a day in adoptive homes. Between 1998 and 2008, PETA killed a total of 21,339 cats and dogs. To top it all off, despite a budget of \$32 million, PETA does not operate an adoption shelter.

Around Thanksgiving, PETA launched a Christmas campaign that exploited Christian symbols. The ads featured *Playboy* starlet Joanna Krupa: before Thanksgiving the ad showed a side angle of her naked from the waist up holding a dog and a rosary; she was adorned with angel wings and a halo. The inscription below read, "*Be an angel for Animals: ALWAYS ADOPT. NEVER BUY.*"

In December, PETA bared Krupa on another billboard in Los Angeles. Only this time, Krupa appeared as an angel holding a carefully-placed crucifix. Again, the target of the ad was pet stores.

The fact is that dogs and cats are a lot safer in pet stores than they are in the hands of PETA employees. Moreover, pet stores don't rip off Christian iconography and engage in cheap irreligious scams.

PETA is a fraud. It also has a long and disgraceful record of exploiting Christian and Jewish themes and symbols to hawk its ugly services. Those who support this organization sorely need a reality check. They also need to take a course in Ethics 101.

CATHOLIC REPORTER UNJUSTLY FIRED IN MAINE

We recently came to the defense of Larry Grard, a former newspaper reporter for Maine's *Morning Sentinel*, because of his recent termination.

For almost two decades, Grard worked at the *Morning Sentinel* and was fired because he e-mailed a letter (using his own personal e-mail account) to the head of an advocacy group, much to the disapproval of his boss Bill Thompson.

To be specific, Grard, who is Catholic, was unhappy with the angry comments made by Trevor Thomas of the Human Rights Campaign following November's election results. Having just lost in his bid to secure same-sex marriage in Maine, Thomas blamed hatred of gays for the loss. Grard wrote back, blaming

Thomas' side for generating hate. That was all he did.

Interestingly, Grard's wife, Lisa, who writes a bimonthly cooking column for the newspaper, was subsequently fired. It was suddenly decided that her work was "no longer a good fit." It sounded like reprisal to us.

As a Catholic, Grard has a right to hold, express and defend the teachings of the Catholic Church with impunity. While the First Amendment does not apply to private organizations, the fact remains that if Grard can be fired for something like this, then the rights of all reporters are in jeopardy. This explains why the Portland Newspaper Guild is standing squarely behind him. So is the Catholic League. We put Grard and his wife in contact with law firms that may want to sue Mr. Thompson and his newspapers.

RAUNCHY CHRISTMAS PLAYS ABOUND

For whatever reason, there were more raunchy Christmas plays this year than ever before. Not surprisingly, many were gay-themed, most were confined to the east and west coasts, and all were loved by art critics. The plays ran the gamut from the irreverent to the extremely vulgar.

New York City is a natural home for such fare. Naked performers were seen in "Naked Holidays NYC '09" and "Filthy Lucre: A Burlesque Christmas Carol"; the latter is the work of the anti-Catholic homosexual Christopher Durang. Gays also flocked to see "The Gayest Christmas Pageant Ever!" and "Santa Claus is Coming Out." Those who wished to see baby Jesus

electrocuted went to see “Hot Babes in Toyland,” while those who wanted to see a fetal rabbit morph into baby Jesus attended “A Very Sandwich Christmas.”

“XMAS!” was hosted by Columbia University; the play depicts the Virgin Mary begging for sex. “The Eight: Reindeer Monologues” was performed in Philadelphia and features a discussion of Santa raping Vixen.

On the west coast, “How the Drag Queen Stole Christmas” was shown in Oakland, and Seattle was home to “Ham for the Holidays: Lard Potion No. 9,” a play that sparkles with a “teeny-tiny Sequin Gay Men’s Chorus.” Also in Seattle was “It Came from Under the Tree!: A Pickled Puppet Christmas Special” that features nudity and a Michael Jackson character who envies Santa’s way with children.

Playing on both coasts was Mimi Infurst’s “Madonna’s Christmas Celebration,” one that features a sexual deviant dressed in drag as the Blessed Virgin: he/she talks about the difficulty of having sex with God, and that he/she coined the phrase “Oh, my God” while having sex with him.

For some reason, we could not find a single play disrespecting Ramadan. Cowardice, of course, is a trademark of sissies.

ATHEISTS LAUNCH GRINCH CAMPAIGNS

The Christmas season is a lonely time of year for those who believe in nothing. Most, however, manage to get by without having to lash out at believers. But not the Freedom from

Religion Foundation. In 2008, this group took its campaign to Olympia, Washington, and this past year, the religion haters took their show on the road to Springfield, Illinois. Here is what their sign said:

There are no gods / No devils / no angels / No heaven or hell. / There is only our natural world. / Religion is but / Myth and superstition / That hardens hearts / And enslaves minds.

By contrast the American Humanist Association's campaign was not anti-religion; it was simply pro-atheism. Nonetheless, its timing was clearly designed to compete with Christmas. It said, "No God...No Problem!"

It is not clear how many believers, if any, would be persuaded to change their minds and start to believe in nothing. It seems more likely that these anti-Christmas campaigns were directed at fellow atheists: they functioned as a collective psychological massage.

We suggested that they stop at the nearest saloon for a few pints—it's cheaper and promises to be the best feel-good exercise imaginable. But here's the hitch: it wouldn't offend anyone.

YELLOW JOURNALISM: WASH POST / NYT

On November 24, John Kelly of the *Washington Post* distorted what Bill Donohue said in 2008 about the American Humanist Association (AHA). On December 2, Ian Urbina of the *New York*

Times compounded the problem by plagiarizing from Kelly.

Kelly wrote a piece about the AHA's new holiday ads promoting atheism. In referencing a previous ad campaign, he said it received "a bunch of publicity." Then he wrote the following: "The head of the Catholic League linked secular humanists in with such figures as Jeffrey Dahmer and Hitler."

Here is what Urbina wrote in his piece on the same subject: "The head of the Catholic League linked secular humanists to figures like Hitler and the serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer."

In November 2008, Donohue debated Jesse Galef of the AHA on the Fox News Channel. After Galef spoke, host Heather Nauret said the following: "All right. You know, Bill, they have their First Amendment rights. They've got to say what they want." Here is how Donohue replied: "Right. That's right. They shouldn't be profoundly ignorant, though. Sociology 101 says that morality has always been grounded in religion. They are trying to say 'No, it is grounded in individuals.' Well, Jeffrey Dahmer had a conscience, too, Heather. And you know what? He destroyed his victims and then ate them. We saw what happened with militant secularism in the 20th century. Over 150 million dead because of this man's philosophy—Pol Pot, Hitler, Mao and Stalin."

To say, as Kelly and Urbina did, that Donohue made his comment about the AHA's

CHRISTMAS CENSORS STRIKE

AGAIN

Leading up to Christmas, we issued a news release noting how the anti-Christmas band was revving its engine.

- The menorah in a Nashville park was okay by the ACLU, but the crèche in Clarksville, Tennessee was not. Why? The City of Clarksville paid \$200 for the animals used in the nativity scene.

- A woman from Manchester, Massachusetts was told she could not have a live nativity scene outside her church. Why? The church sits on the town common.

- A life-sized crèche had adorned the Chambersburg, Pennsylvania public square for about 50 years, but there wasn't one this past Christmas: the decision to censor it was made after Carl Silverman decided he wanted a sign, "Celebrating Solstice—Honoring Atheist War Veterans" to accompany the manger.

- Leesburg, Virginia traditionally displayed a crèche, menorah and Christmas tree, but this year they were banned. Eventually county officials overturned the ban.

- Inside the Capitol in Olympia, Washington, all holiday displays were nixed.

- A nativity scene had been on display on the grounds of the Manitowoc County Courthouse in Wisconsin since World War II, but this year there was none.

Our favorite, though, hailed from West Chester, Pennsylvania. Under new rules, four displays were allowed in front of the Court House for a limited period of time, provided they were "content-neutral" in terms of their message. But symbols—religious or secular—are by their very nature content-specific, thus making the request positively oxymoronic.

But there was some good news to report. In Patchogue, Long Island, they reverted back to calling their Christmas Boat Parade exactly that, shunning last year's choice of a Holiday Boat Parade. And because the president hired Janet Napolitano, there was a Christmas tree in Arizona's Capitol once again, not a generic holiday tree. Kudos were especially in place for Colorado's Larimer County Sheriff, Jim Alderden, who not only allowed crèches and menorahs, he sold shirts reading, "Lighten Up. Just say 'Merry Christmas'" and "Wishing You a Loud and Politically Incorrect 'Merry Christmas.'"

OBAMAS WOULD LIKE TO NEUTER CHRISTMAS

In the December 7 issue of the *New York Times*, there was a story about White House social secretary Desirée Rogers. In it, reporter Sheryl Gay Stolberg wrote: "When former social secretaries gave a luncheon to welcome Ms. Rogers earlier this year, one participant said, she surprised them by suggesting the Obamas were planning a 'non-religious Christmas....'"

This same participant said that "the Obamas did not intend to put the manger scene on display" (this was confirmed by the White House). Indeed, as Stolberg wrote, "there had been internal discussions about making Christmas more inclusive and whether to display the crèche."

Unlike almost all Americans—including atheists—the Obamas do not give their children Christmas gifts. We know this because the president boasted about it in 2008 to *People* magazine. So it should have come as no big surprise that the president and

the first lady would like to neuter Christmas in the White House. That's their natural step—to ban the public display of Christian symbols. Have any doubts? This past April, Georgetown University was ordered to put a drape over the name of Jesus as a condition for the president speaking there.

If the Obamas want to deprive their children of celebrating Christmas, that is their business. It is the business of the public to hold them accountable for the way they celebrate Christmas in the White House. We know one thing for sure: no other administration ever entertained internal discussions on whether to display a nativity scene in the White House.