

# CHRISTMAS WARS ESCALATE: CHRISTIANS FIGHT BACK

Never before have more Christians fought back in an effort to reclaim Christmas.

For example, in 2003, a Glenview, Illinois firehouse was told it could not display Christmas decorations. In 2004, they won approval. In 2003, an 8-year-old boy from Plano, Texas was forbidden from giving his friends candy canes in school. In 2004, he was allowed. In 2003, a crèche in Cranston, Rhode Island triggered a lawsuit. In 2004, it was erected without controversy.

In 2004, Christians organized to protest the exclusion of nativity scenes from the same South Florida malls that allow menorahs. When a school in New Jersey banned the singing of Christmas songs, local residents staged their own “protest” concert. When four atheists protested the display of a nativity scene in Milford, Connecticut, 200 pro-crèche supporters greeted them.

Atheists in Reynoldsburg, Ohio lost in their effort to stop the display of a nativity scene. Residents of a lower East Side housing project in New York City successfully protested a ban on Christmas lights. When Christmas songs were banned from school buses in a Chicago suburb, parents began their meeting with school officials by singing “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.” They won. Singing “Silent Night” was first banned from a concert in the schools of Egg Harbor, New Jersey. The ruling was then reversed.

Stafford township in New Jersey initially balked on displaying a crèche, but later reversed its decision. Residents of Pasco County, Florida revolted when Christmas trees were banned. The decision was reversed. Taxpayers in Mustang, Oklahoma were so

angry at the banning of a nativity play in a school that they killed a school bond bid. And in Fairfield, Connecticut, nativity scenes were allowed to be displayed for three days, but only if they were monitored around the clock. Nello Ceccarelli, who is 89, agreed to do just that.

In addition to these battles, the Catholic League was critical of the newly created holiday, Chrismukkah. The purpose of this holiday is to jointly celebrate Christmas and Hanukkah, the target audience being Christians and Jews who have married. We are pleased to note that at the request of the New York Board of Rabbis, we issued a joint statement criticizing Chrismukkah for diluting the significance of both Christmas and Hanukkah.

The cultural fascists who waged war on Christmas never expected such a backlash. Hope they got the message.

---

## SNUBBING MEL

It will be a miracle of sorts if Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" gets an Oscar.

The Passion was one of 49 films deemed eligible for a foreign-language Golden Globe, but it came up short in December: it was not among the nominees voted on by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association.

Here is what William Donohue had to say about the snub: "Mel Gibson releases the most significant blockbuster movie of the year, but it's not good enough to make the cut for a Golden Globe. That's because his film promotes Christianity, and the Hollywood crowd will have none of it. The only movies they like to make about Christianity these days are ones that demean it."

We couldn't help but notice that one movie that did make the cut in the foreign-language category was "The Motorcycle Diaries," a film that shamelessly lies about the notorious Cuban communist, Che Guevara. According to A.O. Scott of the *New York Times*, the film views Guevara "as a quasi-holy figure" who turns away "from the corruptions of the world toward a higher purpose." This may explain why Jack Mathews of the *New York Daily News* says that director Walter Salles "comes close at times to posing Guevara as a Christ figure."

In other words, because Mel gives us a faithful rendition of Christ's Passion, he is shunned by the Hollywood elite for doing so. But a movie that whitewashes a ruthless tyrant gets the nod.

---

## JEW AND HOLLYWOOD

**William A. Donohue**

Ever since Rabbi Shmuley Boteach and I squared off against each other on the December 8 edition of MSNBC's "Scarborough Country," there has been considerable chatter over my comment, "Hollywood is controlled by secular Jews who hate Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular."

Context is always important, so let's take a look at it. Just before I spoke, Boteach mocked "The Passion of the Christ," saying, "It really should win the World Wrestling Federation Oscar for best movie. It's a guy for two hours being kicked, beaten, his blood gushing everywhere. It's just a diabolical, criminal, violent mess." Thanks, Shmuley, for being so sensitive about that "guy."

In the same segment that I made this remark, I also said the

following: "You have got secular Jews. You have got embittered ex-Catholics, including a lot of ex-Catholic priests who hate the Catholic Church, wacko Protestants in the same group..." Later in the debate, I said, "There are secularists from every ethnic and religious stock," and when people talk about Hollywood, they are "talking mostly about secular Jews."

In short, I did not single out secular Jews as some have said. Nonetheless, I do regret using the verb "controlled," and that is because it suggests that there is some kind of cabal among secular Jews. That's nonsense. But is there a segment of the secular Jewish community that is anti-Catholic? Absolutely.

The day after our debate, Boteach was kind enough to have me on his radio show to mix it up again. During the course of that conversation, I admitted that there was a segment of the Catholic community that is anti-Semitic. I then asked him if he would agree that there is a segment of the secular Jewish community that is anti-Catholic, and he denied it without equivocation. That's also nonsense.

Now consider what the *New York Times* said about "The Passion" on June 24: "Significantly, in the movie industry, which tends to be liberal and secular in outlook, as well as disproportionately Jewish, few people interviewed about 'The Passion' said they had actually seen the movie." Is this not a softer way of saying what I said, at least in part?

The "Today Show," *Newsweek* magazine, the *Los Angeles Times* and other media outlets have all reported on the Hollywood animus against "The Passion." As one Oscar-campaign veteran put it, "a lot of older Academy voters, who are largely Jewish, refuse to even see this movie." Tom O'Neil, who is one of the most prominent students of the Oscars, recently described what happened when the Mel Gibson film was being considered by the experts: "At this religious movie, there was more cussing and swearing by Oscar voters than has ever been seen in an Academy screening before." This says it all.

The point is that no one seriously disputes the fact that Hollywood is a heavily secular Jewish community. And while some may want to defend Hollywood against the charge that it is anti-Christian in general and anti-Catholic in particular, those who do so carry a heavy burden. It is not for nothing that Hollywood has been turning out one Christian-bashing film after another for the past few decades.

Indeed, a report released on December 16 by the Parents Television Council shows that Hollywood has a real problem with religion. The study of CBS, NBC, ABC, Fox, WB, UPN and Pax contained 2,344 treatments of religion constituting 2,385 hours of primetime television. L. Brent Bozell, the president of the organization, concluded that "anti-Catholic bigotry" was "rampant" on network shows.

It is not without significance that while this controversy has been brewing, I have been labeled "a neocon plant inside the Catholic right" by a right-wing Catholic publication. Indeed, simply because I have publicly acknowledged the debt I owe to several key Jewish intellectuals, I have essentially been tagged "the tool of the Jews."

Now it is not likely that someone who is "the tool of the Jews" is also someone who wants to foment problems between Christians and Jews. That both charges are patently false will be denied by no one save those with an agenda.

Finally, it is important to mention that the *Forward*, a Jewish weekly, published an editorial last summer saying that it is merely a "sociological observation" to note that "Jews run Hollywood." The newspaper quite rightly said that to say "the Jews run Hollywood" is an entirely different matter, one that smacks of anti-Semitism.

The *Forward* gets it just right. Now if only my critics would learn how vital it is to make critical distinctions.

---

# HATING CHRISTMAS IS NOW CHIC

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on some disturbing responses to Christmas:

“In San Francisco, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a band of characters the *Los Angeles Times* affectionately calls a group of ‘queer nuns,’ has been bashing Christmas all month. In Minneapolis, gay-themed Christmas bashing has been happening at the Hennepin Center for the Arts and the Brave New Workshop. To understand why this is going on, consider what one New Hampshire non-Christian said when asked about Christmas celebrations in the schools: ‘It’s offensive to those who don’t celebrate it.’ Better yet is Phil Goodstein, a Denver historian who recently labeled the nativity scene ‘utterly obnoxious.’ Julie Wells, also of Denver, confesses that ‘I wish they had kidnapped the Baby Jesus when they kidnapped Rudolph,’ adding that she fantasizes about ‘driving a Chevy Blazer’ over a crèche. And both atheist Christopher Hitchens (always the contrarian), and Dallas Cowboy fullback Darian Barnes, boasted over the weekend how much they ‘hate Christmas.’

“One of the most offensive incidents this Christmas season occurred recently in Plainfield, Illinois, outside of Chicago. At Central School, a song called ‘I Hate This Holiday’ was listed in the holiday concert program. The song, which is really a parody from the choral ‘Frosty’s First Adventure,’ was taken by school bus driver Carmen Brown as a real slap in the face at Christians; she called for a boycott of the concert. In stepped Linda DiLeo, the school’s principal. She, too, thought the song was meant to offend, but nonetheless justified it: ‘We have Jewish children, we have children who celebrated Ramadan a couple of weeks ago. We take into account

that we aren't all celebrating the same holiday and try to put on programs that everyone can celebrate.'

"In other words, DiLeo thinks it is necessary to bash Christians at Christmastime because Jews and Muslims don't celebrate Christmas. This is rank bigotry—against all three religious groups—and that is why we are making a formal complaint to the Illinois State Board of Education."

---

## NOT ALL HOLIDAY CARDS ARE CREATED EQUAL

The following is a comparative analysis of current holiday greeting cards:

### Hallmark

Of the 104 Christmas cards, nine are religious; one mentions Jesus and none features a nativity scene. In its "Humor" category, three have mild scatological references and one has sexual overtones. Of the 5 Hanukkah cards, four feature menorahs; even the one "Humor" card has a menorah. Of the 6 Kwanzaa cards, all are respectful and none is humorous.

### Yahoo

There are 31 categories of Christmas cards, one of which is "Religious." There are 7 e-cards dubbed "Risqué" that are replete with sexual gags. In the "Rude" category, there are 17 scatologically oriented cards. All of the 12 Hanukkah cards are respectful, most of which have a menorah or Star of David. All of the 24 Kwanzaa cards are respectful.

## American Greetings

Among its e-cards, there are over 200 Christmas cards listed among several categories. There are 119 “Merry Christmas” cards, 39 “Religious” cards and 18 “Rude” cards (most feature flatulence and urine jokes). The 35 “Happy Hanukkah” cards and the 9 “Family” Hanukkah cards are evenly split between secular and religious. Of the 14 “Funny” Hanukkah cards, all are respectful. There were no disrespectful Kwanzaa cards among the 24 listed. Among American Greetings’ Create and Print cards, there is no “Rude” section for Hanukkah or Kwanzaa, just for Christmas (some of which include oral sex jokes).

Catholic League president William Donohue concludes: “Not to include any disrespectful holiday cards for Jews and African Americans does violence to the multicultural virtue of inclusion. How did this happen?”

---

## **RASH OF VANDALIZED NATIVITY SCENES**

Catholic League president William Donohue today discussed the latest wave of vandalized nativity scenes:

“On December 10, we issued a news release documenting 16 instances of nativity scenes that were vandalized nation wide. Since then, there have been 24 more reported incidents that have come to our attention. Here is where they occurred: Grand Rapids, Michigan; Costa Mesa, California; Santa Cruz, California; Anchorage, Alaska; Hanover, Pennsylvania; Lansdale, Pennsylvania; Knoxville, Tennessee; Charlotte, North Carolina; Epping, New Hampshire; Tiverton, Massachusetts;



Neenah, Wisconsin; Morningside, Iowa; Diamondhead, Mississippi; Maplewood, Minnesota; Baxter County, Arkansas; Murrieta, California; Grand Traverse County, Michigan; Plainfield, New Jersey (2 crèches were vandalized); Volusia County, Florida; Eau Claire, Wisconsin; Princeton, Indiana; Whitman, Massachusetts; Norwalk, Connecticut.

“So what’s going on? The vandals in Norwalk, Connecticut gave us an idea. Not only did they thrash a nativity scene, they wrote profanity and drew satanic symbols on one of the figures. This isn’t the act of some crazy drunks—it is the act of hate-filled persons.

“To think that the raging culture wars aren’t integral to this phenomenon is nonsense. Our hope is that the guilty get the book thrown at them.”

---

## **NATIVITY SCENES VANDALIZED NATIONWIDE**

Below is a list of vandalized nativity scenes this Christmas season:

- Vandals damaged a life-size nativity scene in Merced, California.
- Baby Jesus was stolen from a McKinney, Texas family’s yard.
- Over a dozen statues were stolen from a nativity scene in Pasco County, Florida, and three of the inflatable snowmen were slashed.
- A nativity scene was stolen from the yard of a Pataskala, New Jersey family.
- A family from Whitehall, Michigan also had its entire

nativity scene stolen.

- In Camillus, New York, a 75-pound nativity scene was stolen from a church.
- The nativity scene in Chicago's Daley Plaza was vandalized and baby Jesus was taken, even though the statue was locked down.
- Baby Jesus was also stolen from the Metcalf Mortuary in St. George, Utah.
- A church in Fairmount, New York had its nativity scene stolen.
- The baby Jesus was stolen from a large nativity scene in the historic Hancock Cemetery next to Quincy City Hall, Massachusetts.
- The Mountaineer Inn in Asheville, North Carolina had its nativity stolen by vandals.
- A family from Lockport, Illinois had its nativity scene stolen.
- A handmade nativity scene was destroyed by vandals on the property of a family in Lincoln, Nebraska.
- A nativity scene set inside Plexiglas was smashed to pieces in Mineola, New York.
- A front-yard nativity scene was damaged in Farmington, Illinois.
- Students at Taylor University in Indiana went on a rampage, vandalizing several Christmas decorations, including the nativity scene, and started a bonfire.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"This is the worst we've seen, and most nativity scenes have yet to be erected. It speaks to a problem that deserves a public discussion."

---

# LET'S HAVE A PARTY—BUT NOT A CHRISTMAS ONE

Catholic League president William Donohue today addressed what's been happening to Christmas parties in the workplace:

"For decades, employees at *Time* magazine had a Christmas party and looked forward to receiving a Christmas bonus. But starting three years ago, the party was banned and so were the Christmas bonuses. This is not to say that bonuses are no longer given—they are—it's just that the dreaded 'C-word' is no longer associated with them. This is progress.

"The mayor of Somerville, Massachusetts recently apologized for calling the city's Christmas party a Christmas party. It's now a Holiday party.

"ProGroup diversity specialists advise that one way around the 'December Dilemma' is to 'keep holidays inclusive and informative.' So they suggest, 'try using seasonal themes rather than a holiday one.' Good idea—holiday themes remind people of Christmas.

"Simm Lieberman Associates bluntly advises, 'make sure your Holiday party isn't a Christmas party in disguise.' Off with the red and green!

"The Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding is not too understanding of Christmas this year, and that is why it wants a 'Seasonal' or 'Winter' party and a 'Seasonal' or 'Holiday' exchange.

"Matt Cherry of the Institute of Humanist Studies also favors 'Holiday' parties over Christmas parties and advocates secret 'Snowflakes' instead of secret 'Santas.'

"An AP story says corporations are 'barring religious music

from cubicles' and are calling their Christmas parties 'end of the year' parties.

"If you're looking for an explanation for all this, consider what Arlene Vernon of HrxInc says: employers need to be 'sensitive to the fact that holidays don't make everyone happy.' If she had any guts, she'd advocate banning Christmas altogether, but that may affect her profits."

---

## CENSORING CHRISTMAS IN THE WORKPLACE

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on attempts to censor Christmas in the workplace:

"The University of Alabama's Office of Cultural Diversity recommends that all nativity scenes should be banned because they are 'religion-centered.' The menorah, which is a Jewish religious symbol, is 'fine' because it is really a 'secular' symbol. Employees are also instructed to 'avoid confronting others from different religions about their beliefs.' Failure to do so may result in 'unintentional oppression or hostilities.' They actually said this.

"An attorney at Strauss & Troy in Cincinnati warns that 'if the workplace is permeated with religious symbols—presumably of another religion—to the extent that the employee feels intimidated, ridiculed or insulted, he or she could make the claim that the company has allowed or created a hostile environment.' The bottom line: the bigot is not the problem.

"Penelope Trunk, a columnist for a Virginia weekly, titled a recent piece, 'Skipping Christmas: Erase Holiday from the

Office.’ She says that ‘acting as if everyone has the ‘holiday spirit’ squelches the spirit of workplace diversity.’ She also objects that as a Jew she is forced to ‘take a holiday’ on Christmas. Why the anger? ‘No stores are open. There’s nothing on TV. Most restaurants are closed. It’s a boring day, a good day to be at work.’ Talk about oppression! Perhaps her boss could give her the keys to the office that day.

“What bothers these cultural fascists is traditional morality. For example, consider what the nation’s top labor law firm, San Francisco’s Littler Mendelson, said on December 10: ‘Renewed interest in moral values—as evidenced by the recent presidential election—and increased religious activity in the workplace can lead to clashes during the holiday season.’

“This may explain why New York’s Bar Building is featuring a menorah in the lobby but no Christmas decorations. But there is a big bundle of twigs shaped like a diamond with a red sash made out of what looks like pantyhose. No wonder those who work there call it a ‘Blair Witch Christmas.’ All this is courtesy of the high priests of tolerance.”

---

## THE POLITICS OF INCLUSION AT CHRISTMASTIME

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke out today about the politics of inclusion at Christmastime:

“Students at Spring Grove Elementary School in McHenry County, Illinois recently managed to sing holiday songs without ever mentioning Christ or the Christmas story. In another Illinois community, students in the Woodland District schools were forbidden from singing ‘Jingle Bells,’ never mind ‘Silent

Night.’ But lucky for them, they are now allowed to listen to Christmas songs on the school bus (a ban was invoked after one student complained, but was later reversed when parents protested).

“Freedom Elementary School is located in East Manatee, Florida. Its students used to be able to enjoy nativity scenes every year, but now even snowmen have been banished from display. Moreover, at their ‘winter concert,’ only songs about patriotism have been given the OK. In another Southwest Florida school, Braden Middle School, new guidelines forbid ‘celebrating’ the holidays—they can only be ‘recognized.’ Anthony DiBello, the school’s principal, proudly announced that ‘you won’t see any Christmas trees around here.’ As he brilliantly observed, ‘we keep it generic.’

“Students at CASY Country Day charter school in Scottsdale, Arizona have been told that songs like ‘Joy to the World’ are taboo. According to Diane Spero, the school’s music teacher, ‘we don’t do religious songs at all.’ Ruth Argabright, a music specialist in the Mesa Unified School District, says that ‘we’ve tried to be more inclusive as our world opens to us.’

“Schools all across the country are celebrating National Inclusive Schools Week this week. But if anything should be banned from the schools, it is this invidious application of inclusion. It is one thing to be sensitive to students from diverse backgrounds, quite another to use the concept of inclusion as a weapon to censor true diversity.

“The greatest enemy of diversity today is the politicization of inclusion, and no group has been more abused by this notion than Christians.”