

CHRISTMAS, AMERICA'S MOST POPULAR HOLIDAY, IS UNDER VICIOUS ATTACK

Anthony J. Sacco, Sr. © Copyright November 2007

PINE BLUFFS — It should come as no surprise to anyone following developments in today's secular society that there's a concerted attempt to ban Christmas from the American scene. And it's not a new movement, either. Who's behind it? The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and its like-minded allies, at least some federal courts staffed by liberal judges, and even, to some extent, the federal government's Justice Department.

Attempting to remove Christmas from the public forum has become almost a full time job for the ACLU, America's leading censor of religious liberty, and others of its ilk. While denying that there's any prior restraint on public celebrations, "the ACLU is constantly in court fighting 'unacceptable' public Christmas celebrations from the previous year or planning to attack next season's festivities," says Bill O'Reilly of the O'Reilly Factor. They work ". . . relentlessly all year toward their ultimate goal of eliminating virtually every public mention of Christ or Christianity from the country's most popular holiday."¹ And it *is* the country's most popular holiday, according to a *Fox News* opinion poll² which found that 95% of Americans celebrate it.

But the primarily Christian connection to Christmas provides ACLU lawyers with a target-rich setting. Each Christmas season, they and other ACLU activists travel the highways and byways hunting for . . . "public nativity scenes, religious ornaments and

¹ Bill O'Reilly, *Banning Christmas in America*; 2006.

displays, Christmas carols, public prayers, biblical references, or any other 'offensive' form of free expression that violates their bizarre interpretation of the establishment clause of our Constitution, otherwise known as the doctrine of 'separation of church and state,' says O'Reilly.³

Why? Because, according to O'Reilly, "the ACLU's efforts are part of a larger mission to erase from America's national public memory our heritage of faith and religious freedom."⁴

Some federal courts have also become part of the attack on our Nation's favorite holiday. According to an article on the Catholic Exchange's website,⁵ a sharply divided panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit recently ruled that it is constitutionally permissible for New York City public schools [the largest school system in the nation, with over a million kids enrolled in its twelve hundred schools] to ban displays of Christian nativity scenes during Christmas, while permitting displays of the Jewish menorah and the Islamic star and crescent during Hanukkah and Ramadan.

This trend has been apparent for some time, and not just in the United States. In November 1998, the City Council in the English midlands city of Birmingham drew a firestorm of criticism when it attempted to rename the Christmas holiday "Winterval."⁶ Although a spokesman denied that doing so would detract from the celebration of

² Fox News Opinion Dynamics poll, 2005.

³ For an in-depth discussion of recent erroneous interpretation of the establishment clause, otherwise known as the Doctrine of Separation of Church and State, see Anthony J. Sacco, *Separation of Church and State; A History of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment in America, including its Recent Interpretation*; 2004, by going to www.saccoservices.com and clicking on Essays and Short Stories.

⁴ O'Reilly, *Banning Christmas in America*; 2006.

⁵ Appeals Court Allows Schools to Ban Nativity Scene While Allowing Menorah and Islamic Crescent, <http://catholicexchange.com>. February 2, 2006.

⁶ *Really Taking Christ out of Christmas*; By Catholic News Service (CNS), November 11, 1998.

Christmas, a representative of the Catholic Church told the *Catholic Times* newspaper in response, that Christmas had already become too secular. "Christmas is one of the major festivals of the Christian year and so the challenge to Christians is to reflect that," Tom Horwood of the London-based Catholic Media Office said.

And Anglican Bishop, Mark Santor called the idea of Winterval "madness." "No doubt it was a well-meaning attempt not to offend, not to exclude, not to say anything at all," he remarked.

A leading member of England's Muslim community, Majid Katme, coordinator of the London-based Islamic Concern Organization, seems to have had a grasp of the issue. "This is supposed to be a Christian country," he said. "They [Christians] should have the right follow their own traditions. We need to understand the true meaning of the festival [of Christmas], why it is celebrated and what it means. Muslims have their own celebrations, and I wouldn't make them more general so that everyone else can join in, so I don't see why Christians should."

The absurdity of the situation is clear when occupants of the White house can use taxpayer dollars to celebrate Christmas, but similar celebrations in public institutions by ordinary citizens are prohibited.

The ACLU does not have the field all to itself. Its efforts have not gone unopposed. In 1994, the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF), based in Scottsdale, AZ, was launched by Dr. James Dobson, recently deceased D. James Kennedy, the late Dr. Bill Wright and the late Larry Burkett. Its mission? To defend the right to hear and speak the Truth through strategy training, funding, and litigation.

Heading up the ADF is Alan Sears, formerly a highly regarded U.S. Justice Department prosecutor who also served as executive director of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography under former President Ronald Reagan. Sears launched the ADF's Christmas project in 2003, seeking to eliminate confusion regarding our rights to publicly celebrate Christmas, to protect those rights from the ACLU and its allies, and to reverse the gains anti-Christian groups have made in the three decades-long war against Christmas and faith. It has vigorously implemented that project since, reminding government officials, business leaders, and public school administrators that it's okay to say "Merry Christmas," even in the public square.

"The ACLU and its allies have convinced countless Americans, including public officials and even many Christians, that [they] cannot use Christian language, history or symbols in public, especially in public schools or on public property. That's why the battle for Christmas is so important," he said. "The truth is that the Supreme Court has never ruled that public schools must ban appropriate religious expression, including the singing of religious Christmas carols or even nativity scenes."

The ADF has had significant successes. Its National Legal Educational Materials effort resulted in distribution of packets on the legality of Christmas religious expression to 11,000 school districts and national educational organizations in 2005, reaching 68,000 schools in 27 states. Not stopping there, it launched its National Legal Education Media campaign, reaching out to the public through mass media, with appearances on ABC's World News Tonight, Fox News, CNN's Lou Dobbs Tonight, the O'Reilly Factor, Hannity & Colmes, and numerous talk radio venues. But perhaps its most effective

tactic has been its National Legal Resource/Action Blitz, which is designed to equip people across the country to oppose, challenge and prevail against instances of blatant religious discrimination. In many places, this involves recruiting and training lawyers to challenge ACLU-inspired school officials' actions in court.

"The thrill of Christmas lies not in the objects, nor even in the senses it arouses," said Father Thomas J. Mc Sweeney, a former director of the Christophers, an organization rooted in Judea-Christian service to God and humanity. "Rather it is within the heart if it's open; in the eyes, if they are lifted up; in the ears if they are intensely alert."

Thinking back over all my Christmases, beginning from the time I was three or four years old, the happy memories and the disappointing, sad or painful ones, I understand that they all helped make me who I am. So has the very *first* one. My favorite carol is a reminder of that milestone in human history:

"O holy night,
The stars are brightly shining.
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth.
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn."

So, for that "thrill of hope" to be felt and experienced by *all* each Christmas season, we must unite and fight to preserve Christmas against those misguided zealots who seek to remove it from the public square. Alan Sears, again: "Please continue to publicly proclaim the message of Christmas in your community. Remember, It's okay to say Merry Christmas."

To help the ADF in its fight to preserve Christmas, send your tax-deductible

contribution to Alan E. Sears, President, CEO and General Counsel, Alliance Defense Fund, 15333 N. Pima Road, Suite 165, Scottsdale, AZ 85260. To learn more about what they do, visit their website @ www.aliancedefensefund.org.

*Anthony J. Sacco, Sr. a writer, author of two novels — *The China Connection*, and *Little Sister Lost* — a biography, *Echoes in the Wind*, and a licensed private investigator, holds degrees from Loyola College and the University of Maryland Law School. His articles have appeared in the *Washington Times*, *Baltimore Sun*, *Voices for the Unborn*, the *Catholic Review*, *WREN Magazine* and the *Wyoming Catholic Register*. E-mail him at www.anthonysacco@hotmail.com and visit his website at www.saccoservices.com.*