

Christian Bus Driver Upset With Atheist Ad

A Christian bus driver from southern England refused to ferry passengers on a bus prominently displaying the ad: "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life."

Jan. 16, 2009 – A London-based ad campaign targeting the sides of hundreds of buses in England with, "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life," hit a snag this week when the promotion reached Southampton, the southern England port city home of bus driver Ron Heather.

The 62-year-old Heather told supervisors at First Bus that the atheist ad was at odds with his Christian faith, according to daily *The Guardian*. Though the bus company said it would accommodate him and attempt to find buses without the ads for him to drive, Heather told the paper that he was willing to surrender his job on principle if ads continue beyond February.

"When I first saw the bus last Saturday I was shocked," Heather told *The Guardian*. "I'd heard about this silly campaign in London, but I had no idea it was coming to Southampton."

A bus company spokesman said First Bus takes no position on legal advertisements placed on its vehicles, but he said the company recognizes the strength of Heather's feelings, the *Guardian* reported.

Organized by the British Humanist Association and quickly backed by best-selling atheist author Richard Dawkins, the ad campaign was conceived by a 28-year-old comedy writer in London who wanted to counter religious ads on the side of London's buses that allegedly claim non-Christians spend an eternity in hell.

The ads began appearing earlier this month and are scheduled to continue through the end of February, costing its mostly atheistic supporters nearly a quarter of a million dollars.

Stephen Green, head of the campaign group Christian Voice, was among the 150 who complained to the British Advertising Standards Authority immediately after the ads first appeared in London.

"It is given as a statement of fact and that means it must be capable of substantiation if it is not to break the rules," he told *The Guardian*. "There is plenty of evidence for God, from people's personal experience, to the complexity, interdependence, beauty and design of the natural world."

Before Christmas, a similar initiative launched in the U.S. in which an atheist organization kicked off an ad campaign in Washington, D.C., that suggested believing in humanism is a better alternative for Christmas enthusiasts than believing in God.

The ads read, "Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness' sake." They began appearing in November on buses in the nation's capital and ran through December. Sponsored by the American Humanist Association (AHA) the ads were a play on the lyrics from the famous Christmas song: "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town."

Referring to the alleged attack on Christmas, Mathew D. Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel, in November called AHA "the ultimate 'grinch'" to "suggest there is no God during a holiday where millions of people around the world celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ."

"Christmas is a time of joy and hope, not a time for hate," Staver said.

Earlier last year, humanist ads also popped up outside New York City and Philadelphia. They read: "Don't believe in God?

You are not alone.”

Tim Wildmon, president of the American Family Association, took issue with the notion humanists promote that good can be derived from some place other than God.

“It’s a stupid ad,” Wildmon said of the AHA’s campaign in November, according to the Associated Press. “How do we define ‘good’ if we don’t believe in God? God in His Word, the Bible, tells us what’s good and bad and right and wrong. If we are each ourselves defining what’s good, it’s going to be a crazy world.”

“Why believe in God?” Staver asked. “Because Santa is not the only one coming to town.”