

Satanic ‘Snaketivity’ and 6 Other Rapid Attacks on Christmas

As the December holidays approach, emotions over Christmas, public creches, “Happy Holidays” and all the trimmings can run high. This year, Religion News Service is keeping you up to date on the “War on Christmas,” with dispatches from the battleground formerly known as the month of December.

‘Snaketivity’: And you thought ‘Zombie Nativity’ was bad (Dec. 3)

A group of Michigan Satanists (nota bene: NOT Santaists) have announced their intention to stage their own “live nativity,”—with snakes.

Their slithering display is intended as a counterpoint to another live nativity—this one with homo sapiens—sponsored by Republican presidential candidate (and evangelical Christian) Ted Cruz. Both will be staged on the lawn in front of the Michigan state capitol in Lansing.

The point? Not to proselytize for Satan, but for religious liberty, the Satanists say. “We refuse to allow one religious perspective (to) dominate the discourse,” a leader of the Satanists said in a press release.

There seems to be a run on alternative nativities this far ahead of Christmas. A pair of young Arizonans—an atheist and a Catholic—are launching a “Zombie Nativity” toy featuring a holy family with exposed brains.

No 'Christmas' trees in New Hampshire (Dec. 2)

A Marlboro, N.H. man was told he had to remove the word 'Christmas' from fliers he was sending home with local schoolchildren to remind them and their parents of the town's annual tree lighting ceremony.

John F. Fletcher, an American Legion member who also plays Santa at the ceremony, said he used Wite-Out to cover 'Christmas' on each of 250 fliers, which the school district then sent home with students.

"Our School District celebrates the religious freedom that our students enjoy," a press release issued by the local school district says. "However, the Establishment Clause of our Constitution forbids a public school district from aiding, promoting or endorsing a particular religion or religious activity."

But Charles Haynes, vice-president of the Newseum Institute and its Religious Freedom Center, says the school district has erred too far on the side of caution. Using the word "Christmas" is not an establishment of religion, he says, but just a description.

"This is an example of how poorly some school leaders are educated about the First Amendment," he wrote to RNS in an email. "Absurd overreactions like this give 'separation of church and state' a bad name. I expect to see this on many fundraising letters in the coming months!"

Bill of Rights Nativity (Dec. 1)

The Freedom From Religion Foundation, which describes itself as a First Amendment watchdog group and frequently challenges public displays of religion, is marking the 20th anniversary

of its secular seasonal display in Wisconsin's state capitol.

Fletcher isn't backing down. "It's easier to offend the majority, so you don't offend the minority," he said. "That's what it comes down to."

Featuring three cartoon Founding Fathers and the Statue of Liberty gathered around a manger holding – you guessed it – the Bill of Rights – the display reads, "Happy Winter Solstice. At this Season of the Winter Solstice, we honor reason and the Bill of Rights (adopted Dec. 15, 1791)."

A smaller sign reads, "Thou shalt not steal, please." In previous years, FFRF "nativities" have included images of Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, Emma Goldman, Mark Twain and Thomas Jefferson. FFRF sets up its secular nativity in response to a nativity set up in the capitol's rotunda by a Christian group each year.

Red signs for Jesus

Some Tennessee pastors hope to turn lawns red with brightly-colored signs that proclaim their reason for the season: "Christmas is all about JESUS."

"We have let Satan dethrone Jesus Christ," one of the pastors, James Shepherd, told the Clarksville, Tenn. Leaf-Chronicle. "There has already been a great response to these signs, but it hasn't been a flood. Our goal is for every home to have one."

The pastors hope to put at least 100 of the free signs in each of Tennessee's 95 counties.

Catholic League comes down on

Cosmopolitan

The Catholic League—watchdog of anti-Catholicism—has some choice words for the December issue of Cosmopolitan magazine and they aren't "Merry Christmas."

In a press release, Catholic League president Bill Donohue takes issue with the magazine's cover story, "Sex Wish List," which he describes as exploiting both Christmas and Hanukkah. Top of Donohue's naughty list (and Cosmo's, for that matter) is the suggestion to "Have Yourself a Merry Little Xxx-mas," an activity that involves a hand-held vibratory device, and "Light His Menorah," which includes a candle, some hot wax and a man's bare chest. That sounds Ho Ho Hot—literally.

"Cosmopolitan was once a women's magazine, but in the 1970s it decided to become a soft-porn publication," Donohue explains. "Helen Gurley Brown bet that the fastest way for women to achieve equality with men was for the gals to mimic the most debased male traits. She succeeded. What women won remains a mystery. No matter, up until now the magazine at least stayed away from trashing Christian and Jewish holidays. That it can't resist doing so these days tells us just how low it has become."

Yes, Virginia, there ARE religious Christmas stamps at the post office

The rumor that United State Postal Service will not sell religious-themed holiday Christmas stamps next year is just that—a rumor.

It seems that since September, a story has been floating around on social media claiming that someone went to buy the religiously-themed Christmas stamps the post office has offered for years and was told by the clerk to stock up—after 2015 the USPS would only issue secular holiday stamps. And

who's to blame? President Barack Obama.

The story is a rumor on all fronts. USPS spokesman Mark Saunders said the post office does have religious-y Christmas stamps for sale and has no plans to eliminate them. However, he said there would be no new religious stamps this Christmas because there is such a huge backlog of older ones—a half-billion of them.

“That’s more than twice sold during a typical [h]oliday season,” Saunders said.

The late Christopher Hitchens is still kicking Christmas around

Uber-atheist Christopher Hitchens died in 2011, but he is still publishing books and still fighting religion, including Christianity, according to the New York Times.

In his review of Hitchens’ new book, “And Yet,” Dwight Garner, a Times’ book critic, says of Hitchens, “He liked Thanksgiving, which made immigrants like himself (he was born in England) feel welcome. He disliked Christmas almost entirely.”

“And Yet” is collection of previously-published essays by Hitchens, whose most famous—and infamous—book is 2007’s “God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything.” It includes two anti-Christmas/anti-Christian essays, according to Garner.

A quote from one of those essays goes like this: “There are millions of well-appointed buildings all across the United States, most of them tax-exempt and some of them receiving state subventions, where anyone can go at any time and celebrate miraculous births and pregnant virgins all day and all night if they so desire. These places are known as ‘churches,’ and they can also force passers-by to look at the displays and billboards they erect and to give ear to the

bells that they ring. In addition, they can count on numberless radio and TV stations to beam their stuff all through the ether. If this is not sufficient, then god damn them. God damn them everyone."

Don't tell Tiny Tim.