

CHRISTMAS – GOING, GOING....GONE?

By Don Feder

Christmas music of the future: “Have Yourself A Merry Little Holiday,” “I’m Dreaming of a White Holiday,” “I’ll Be Home For Holiday.”

Christmas is being purged from our culture at an ever-accelerating pace.

Christmas parades have been replaced by Winterfests. Schools frown on Christmas decorations. Cities and towns have rechristened the municipal Christmas tree a “community tree.” You’d have an easier time setting up a nativity scene in Saudi Arabia than in most public parks. And sales clerks wish us a “Happy Holiday!” -- as if we all celebrated something called “holiday.”

Bill O’Reilly, host of *The O’Reilly Factor*, charges “There is an anti-Christian bias in this country, and it is more on display at Christmas season than any other time.”

Says Bill Donahue, president of the Catholic League For Religious And Civil Rights, “This is only the beginning of the Christmas season and already the anti-Christmas crusade is in high gear.”

Overdrive would be more like it.

To begin with, there are the stores that avoid the dreaded C-word in their advertising, and won’t allow their sales personnel to wish shoppers a Merry – well, you know. The latter include Target (which, with an extra measure of bad cheer, has also banished Salvation Army kettles from its premises), Costco, BJ’s, Wall-Mart, Sears/K-Mart and Kohl’s.

When a Wall-Mart shopper complained, someone in its Customer Service department sent her the following demented e-mail:

“The majority of the world still has practices other than ‘christmas’ (*sic.*) which is an ancient tradition that *has its roots in Siberian shamanism*”

Say what? O’ Little Town of Irkutsk?

The author of “A Child’s Christmas at The Home of Shirley MacLaine” continued: “The colors associated with ‘christmas,’ red and white, are actually a representation of the amanita muscaria mushroom. Santa is also borrowed from the Caucuses, mistletoe from the Celts, yule log from the Goths, the time from the Visigoths and the tree from the worship of Baal.” And the partridge from the pear tree?

After the Catholic League inquired if it was store policy to intentionally denigrate Christianity in this way, the customer service clown reportedly was fired. (He should have been sent to the frozen tundra, for further research on Siberian shamanism.)

At the Lowe’s store in Austin, Texas, a banner announces “Now Here! Fresh Cut Holiday Trees,” with the same in Spanish. “O Holiday Tree, O Holiday Tree. How PC Are Thy Branches.”

Then there are all of the public institutions that are bah-humbugging it up during this joyous season.

- Boston Mayor Thomas Menino and the city’s parks’ commissioner decided that starting this year, they would refer to Boston’s Christmas tree as a “Holiday tree.” After the donor in Nova Scotia threatened to repossess the tree and run it through a chipper, the city abandoned that dumb idea.
- Last year, the mayor of nearby Somerville, Mass. publicly apologized after a press release misidentified the municipality’s holiday party as a “Christmas party.”
- Also in 2004, the town council of Kensington, MD. voted to end its 33-year tradition of having Santa Claus at their annual tree lighting. All because two families said the presence of the jolly old elf would make them (oh no!) “uncomfortable” – in another triumph for sensitivity tyranny.
- Lest you think the foregoing is a blue-state phenomenon, a Kansas newspaper ran a correction for referring to the “Community Tree” at Wichita’s Winterfest as a Christmas tree. Rockin’ around the Community Tree?
- Denver rejected a Christian-themed float in the city’s “holiday parade” (which violated its rule against “direct religious themes” –

wouldn't want to connect religion to "the season") while welcoming German folk dancers, Chinese lion dancers and gay Native Americans. Perhaps the local church which sought to participate should have said its float was a tribute to Siberian shamanism. Then, it probably would have led the procession.

- Across the country, school districts have ordered secular-themed only decorations, forbade teachers from reading Christmas stories or allowing the distribution of Christmas cards and purged Christmas carols from their holiday programs. Last year, the South Orange/Maplewood New Jersey school district went a step further, banning the playing of instrumental music like "Silent Night" by school bands. Apparently, not just words – but also melodies – are sins against inclusiveness.
- In perhaps the unkindest cut of all, according to WorldNetDaily.com, Christianity was notably absent from the White House 2004 Christmas celebration. The White House website proclaimed the holiday the "Season of Song and Melody." The site noted the White House was decorated with "delightful vignettes illustrating the best-loved songs of the season," among them "I saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus," and "Frosty the Snowman." Not one was a hymn or a traditional Christmas carol.
- At the lighting of the National Christmas Tree (yes, it's still that, and not a "holiday tree" or "community tree," as yet), the president recently reelected with a groundswell of support from evangelical Christians observed, "At Christmas time, we celebrate *good tidings*, first announced 2,000 years ago, and still a source of great joy to our world." And what would those tidings be, Mr. President – gas prices down, the administration's approval ratings up? When the president who once said Jesus was his "favorite philosopher" can't connect the birth of his Savior to the holiday, you know Christmas is in serious trouble.

And so it is. Each year, Christmas recedes further from view. This notwithstanding that, according to a recent Newsweek survey, 85% of this nation is Christian. (On a percentage-of-population basis, America is more Christian than Israel is Jewish -- more Christian than India is Hindu.)

A FOX News poll informs us that 96 % of the American people celebrate Christmas – which means a lot of non-Christians are decking the

halls too. So the above de-Santa-zation process is all for 4% of the population?

Not even. Many who don't celebrate Christmas have no objection to Christmas trees, carols, manglers in parks, Santas in parades or the lady at the cash register saying "Merry Christmas." I should know; I'm one of them.

When I was in grade school, back in the '50s, we sang Christmas carols and made Christmas ornaments. And, guess what – I wasn't emotionally scarred for life.

What's the big deal? I'm a Jew who lives in an overwhelmingly Christian nation. (Are Christians who live in Israel offended when someone wishes them a Happy Hanukah?) Christmas has been celebrated on these shores -- in one form or another -- since the earliest settlements.

Christmas is part of the fabric of America – from Washington's first Christmas message to the Continental Army (1776), to the famous 1897 New York Sun editorial ("Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus"), to the 1947 classic "Miracle on 34th. Street," to the American troops who celebrated Christmas in the Pacific and on the battlefields of Europe during World War II, and latter in the jungles of Vietnam .

Will Americans serving in Iraq have holiday trees, sing "Frosty The Snowman," or take part in the rituals of Siberian Shamanism on Christmas eve? Will they eagerly await seasonal presents from home, or enjoy a holiday dinner on December 25th.

Ironically, American Christians stationed in a Moslem country may feel more Christmas spirit than the folks they're guarding back home.

There's a war over there, and a war over here. The secularist assault on Christmas (unwittingly aided by the perpetually aggrieved and sensitivity-whipped) is one front in the war on America's Judeo-Christian heritage.

Other battle zones include Ten Commandments monuments, God in the Pledge of Allegiance, stigmatizing the Boy Scouts, advances of the culture of death, and attempts to impose homosexual marriage by judicial fiat (thus undoing the morality of both Sinai and Bethlehem).

The militantly secularist Anti-Defamation League was shocked by the results of a poll it recently commissioned, indicating that 64% of Americans believe “religion is under attack” in this nation. (Among evangelical and charismatic Christians, that figure is 80%.)

That’s because religion is under attack in America. From now through December 25th, they’ll be take-no-prisoner, hand-to-hand combat in school corridors, public parks, parades and retail establishments.

Incoming, Santa!