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DECEMBER 12, 2003

Those Enlightened French

A commission in France has recommended that Muslim students not be allowed to wear headscarves or other "conspicuous" religious signs in school because they violate the country's secular traditions, [reports the BBC](#).

Such a ban, if approved by President Jacques Chirac, also would outlaw Jewish kippas, or skullcaps, and large Christian crosses.

Chirac has said that France feels under attack by the display of such signs of "religious proselytism" which run "totally contrary to its secular tradition."

01:52 AM

DECEMBER 11, 2003

Bad Basketball

A flier promoting a YMCA basketball camp cannot be handed out by teachers in a California school because text on it mentions the organization's "Christian principles," [reports the Bakersfield Californian](#).

Officials in the Panama-Buena Vista Union School district in Bakersfield have forbidden fliers for a basketball camp for 4- to 12-year-olds because they include the sentence, "To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build spirit, mind and body for all."

The ban surfaced following complaints from a parent that a Salvation Army poster hanging at the school asking for clothing donations was an illegal promotion of a Christian organization at a state school. Following the complaint, school officials started monitoring material in the schools closer.

02:19 AM

DECEMBER 05, 2003

Sanity Prevails (Barely)

Producers of a charity musical in California were so worried about a

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Scott Norvell

lawsuit on church-state grounds that they changed the words "God bless America" to "I Love the U.S.A." in a benefit show put on by a group of kiddies, [reports the Ventura County Star](#).

Directors of the Cinemagic show benefiting the Pleasant Valley schools changed the language because the show was due to be performed at a local high school. The school district had nothing to do with the show other than providing a venue and receiving the proceeds for its band and chorus programs.

Only after parents raised hell was the language reverted to its original state. "It was a misguided attempt to be politically correct, and it has been rectified," said School board President Ron Speakman.

01:20 AM

DECEMBER 04, 2003

Art Attack

A library in Connecticut banned several paintings from an art show on its premises because the works in question included images of Jesus in religious settings, [reports the Record-Journal](#).

The Meriden Public Library rejected works by local artist Mary Morley because they "portray a particular message," said library director Marcia Trotta. The art in question pictured the Crucifixion, Jesus carrying the cross and the Nativity.

Because the library is a taxpayer-funded public space, Trotta said, it can't endorse the tenets of one faith over another.

02:55 AM

NOVEMBER 25, 2003

Sanity Prevails

A federal judge has ruled that officials in Florida may not prevent a local church from participating in an annual holiday light display, [reports the Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel](#).

Officials in Broward County violated church members' First Amendment rights when they forbade the Calvary Chapel from putting up a display for the popular Holiday Festival of Lights.

The judge took made the novel argument that it is unconstitutional to discriminate on the basis of viewpoint.

The display will feature a cross and the words: "Calvary Chapel Says Jesus is the Reason for the Season" to minimize the possibility that anyone would mistake it for a government-sponsored message.

02:48 AM

NOVEMBER 18, 2003

Colorado Craziness

The owners of an A&W restaurant in Colorado have been ordered to remove Bible scriptures from the portable sign in front of their restaurant because the phrases offended some folks in the community, [reports the Summit Daily News](#).

Donna Drebenstedt, who owns and operates the restaurant with her husband Reuben Drebenstedt, a Messianic Jewish pastor, were ordered to remove the language by officials at A&W corporate headquarters in Kentucky. The Drebenstedts own the building and the land, but they pay the A&W Corp. for the right to use the brand name and products.

They removed the Bible quotes, but continue to offer pamphlets and publications with information about Jewish Messianic Christianity inside remain available for customers.

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04:24 AM

OCTOBER 28, 2003

The Ever-Present Calendar Conundrum

School officials in Sarasota County, Fla. are pushing a new all-secular holiday calendar for district schools in order to avoid appearing insensitive to people of certain faiths, [reports the Sarasota Herald-Tribune](#).

Because of the diversity of faiths in the community, recognizing the holy days of all religions would put the school system in a bind so school officials have opted to get rid of em all.

The latest to go is the traditional Good Friday holiday. Earlier, the school calendar changed the name of the Christmas vacation to "winter break."

05:48 AM

OCTOBER 06, 2003

(S)He's Back

God has returned to Sparks, Nev., [reports the AP](#).

Mayor Tony Armstrong has purchased new signs with the words "God Bless America" on them and put them back up around city hall.

This, about a week after city attorney Chet Adams ordered staff to cut the word "God" from the signs (which had been up since shortly after 9/11) because they might violate tenets about separation of church and state.