

# Kristol's Christmas Present

by Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.

**C**hristmas has become our most contentious holiday, partly because it's so public, with trees, carols, movies, etc. As for Christians who want to celebrate this season the way their parents did, they are yearly reminded of how culturally marginal their faith has become.

The media treat people who celebrate Christmas as a tiny minority, like Buddhists. They used to say: Put Christ back in Christmas. Now they would have to say, put Christmas back into the Holiday Season. And when the dread word Christmas is used, it is always in conjunction with Kwanza or the Winter Solstice.

In large cities, we can't say "Merry Christmas" without seeming to make a political statement. Ah, the holiday spirit. It's become the season to offend Christians, to drum them out of public life, and to see how far they can be pushed before they explode. Last year, it was the season for *Time* to tell us that Jesus Christ was a humanitarian but nothing more.

This year, the *New York Times* treated us to a special "holiday" issue of its Sunday Magazine featuring an article on the birth of Jesus, and all the events that surrounded it. It's a great story, the article said, but a fake one, of course.

Wasn't the *Wall Street Journal* an exception? Didn't it run a pro-Christian right article on the op-ed page by Irving Kristol? It's true he extolled the legitimacy of the Christian right (courts have unfairly attacked public religious displays, etc.). But you had to make it to the

end of the piece before you got to the real point.

As an aside, notice that the neoconservatives reject the phrase "Christian right" in favor of "conservative Christian." Paleos, on the other hand, understand that there is little about the decadent and statist present that is worth conserving, and that any movement worthy of our praise should regard the term "right" as a badge of honor. Thus the phrase "Christian right" is fine by us.

Let's look at the real meaning and purpose of Kristol's "defense" of Christian political activism. In the early part of the essay, he points out that most of the issues that inspire the Christian right (abortion, pornography, and school prayer) were once controlled by local option. If a community wanted things a certain way, they were done that way. Minority interests had to live with it, and social peace prevailed.

Then the decisions were centralized in the federal courts, so that no community could ban pornography or abortion or permit prayer. The Christians who object, he writes, are "the defendants in this culture war we are living through, not the aggressors." So far, so good.

Then other shoe drops—as it usually does in the *Journal's* editorial pages—about two thirds of the way through Kristol's piece. It is here when he details the alleged problems with the Christian right. First, it lets the issue of abortion "dominate" its agenda. Second, it wants creationism taught in biology class. And third, it doesn't discriminate "among the pornographic, the bawdy, and the erotic."

Unlike Mr. Kristol, I'm not going to presume to have all the answers to the creation vs. evolution

debate. But I do know that there are plenty of serious people who doubt the official evolution story. Anyone even faintly familiar with the debate knows this is not simply a question of science vs. theology. Besides, the activists who campaign against high school biology texts are not campaigning against science. They object to having secular humanism taught to their kids under the guise of science.

As for porn, it's not the Christian right that can't distinguish between Boticelli and *Hustler*. It's the left that tells us both are forms of expression, ergo art, and that there is no essential difference. Recall that they called the Mapplethorpe exhibit a wonderful display of artistic virtuosity when it included pictures so indescribably grotesque that no major media outlets have yet described them, let alone reproduced them.

Look at any left-wing journal of opinion, or the sculptures littering the city halls of major cities, and it's clear that it's the left, not the right, that confuses art with trash. Dip into the debate on evolution and it's clear that it's the left that uses science to advance a particular view of God, namely that He doesn't exist. But not in Mr. Kristol's mind. His supposed defense of Christian political activists includes painting them as anti-science fanatics who would ban *Sports Illustrated*.

In making these criticisms, of course, Mr. Kristol is working from, and even endorsing, the stereotype promoted by the liberal media, as when the *Washington Post* said that evangelicals are poor, uneducated, and easy to lead. Moreover, there's a more fundamental problem at work in Mr. Kristol's essay.

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The one reason Mr. Kristol provides for liking the Christian right is that its members oppose the centralization of government decision making. But on the very issues on which these people are presently active, he offers friendly advice that the issues be dropped. Why doesn't this make him a political ally of the left?

Having misidentified the problem as the Christian right, as opposed to the central state that gave rise to it, and having chastised activists for caring too much about core issues, Mr. Kristol refuses to offer any real way out of the present dilemma. The Christian Coalition, mostly under neocon influence, has made the terrible decision to demand national legislation to advance its sell-out view of morality. But that's not what Mr. Kristol is addressing. His complaint is with the rank and file activists on the local level.

These are the people who get involved in school boards and city councils. Their primary interest is in creating a decent community in which to raise their kids. The activists in Montgomery are less concerned with what kids in Pittsburgh are taught in school. They rightly view curriculum as the business of local parents.

The same is true of the bulk of anti-abortion activists. The contingent that would like to see the UN ban abortion worldwide is relatively small and not even vaguely right-wing. Rank and file activists are mostly consumed with keeping the abortionists out of their community, and, when they're there, picketing them and trying to prevent women from paying these ghouls to abort their children.

But Mr. Kristol tells us that "religious conservatives have to face the fact that America is not going to become a 21st century version of 'Our Town.'" Maybe, but we won't find out until we stop the central state from taxing our families, regulating our businesses, poisoning our individual cultures, and imposing alien values on our communities.

To do that requires activism, not with *Journal*-imposed constraints. The worst mistake these activists could make is to be as "mature, politically and intellectually," as Mr. Kristol demands. That is code for gutting their program of any ideas and politics that upset the neocons.

The key is Mr. Kristol's emphasis on getting "leadership" to guide the Christian right through the culture wars. Just who would that leadership be, Irving?

Contrary to Mr. Kristol's implication, the real vision of the Christian right is self-government, not the imposition of a centralized theocratic regime. He knows it, and it's what bothers him the most. The long-term goal of the neocons in this area has been to complete their takeover of Christian political activism, shifting it from a paleo to a social democratic outlook. Such a takeover can only be averted by understanding the real purpose of the "defenses" of the Christian right offered by the *Wall Street Journal*.

Only the left once whipped up hysteria based on half truths and untruths about the faith of the mass of the American people. The surprise isn't that the king of the neocons would agree with the left; it's that he'd try to pass it off as a defense, on the eve of Christmas. ■

# Militarism vs. Freedom

by Greg Pavlik

**T**he year 1900 was one of those grand moments when American politics was clear and to the point. The war against Spain had brought the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico under American control. In 1899, the Senate voted to ratify the treaty by which Spain formally relinquished its holdings to the United States. Unlike today, dissent was loud and angry. Intellectual opposition to U.S. imperialism had catapulted into the spotlight with the support of figures like Mark Twain and Yale sociologist William Graham Sumner, who perhaps best expressed the anti-imperialists views with regard to the war. Said Sumner: "The question of imperialism... is the question whether we are going to give the lie to the origin of our own national existence by establishing a colonial system of the old Spanish type, even if we have to sacrifice our existing civil and political system to do it."

The anti-imperialist, anti-militarist movement had its political voice as well. William Jennings Bryan, Democratic candidate for president—and his running mate, Adlai Stevenson—sought to make imperialism the principle issue of the election. The Democratic Party platform declared: "We oppose militarism. It means conquest abroad and intimidation and oppression at home. It means the strong arm which has ever been fatal to free institutions. It is what millions of our citizens have fled from Europe."

The Democrats were right: there is no room for a free polity and a free market in a garrison state. Their platform reflected a central truth of the Anglo-American liber-

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