

**MEDIA AND POWER**

## Liberal newspapers wage war on Christmas

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After New Year's Eve celebrations, the balance of fatalities and the injured are counted. But also the articles published against celebrating Christmas. The 'war on Christmas' has by now become a fad of the Anglo-Saxon left, at least in the last decade, and is reflected in the line-up of its biggest and most influential newspapers, such as the *Guardian*, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. These are not just newspapers that still have a

high profile in their countries, even if they are suffering from reader hemorrhage. They are also 'agenda-setters', newspapers that other newsrooms across the Western world look to for inspiration. Certain trends promoted in their pages are inevitably reflected in the choices made by their European and American counterparts and, in a cascade, end up conditioning public opinion (especially the already secular and progressive one, but also part of the Catholic one).

**So the *Guardian* decides to frame Christmas** in the fight against climate change. And concludes that celebrating the birth of Jesus by giving presents or eating with relatives is definitely bad for the environment. As Britain's leading left-wing newspaper headlines, at least in the UK on Christmas Day, per capita CO2 emissions increase 23-fold. Lapidary judgement from the first words: "This carnival of consumerism has a price". In terms of emissions: The emissions generated by each adult for all the travel, gifts, energy, decorations, food, drink and waste associated with the climax of the annual carnival of consumerism amount to 513kg of CO2 equivalent (CO2e), according to the analysis. The average daily emissions of a UK adult are around 22kg of CO2e'. This is around 23 times what is emitted in a single day during the rest of the year. Christmas is 'heating up' and the scientific community is cursing it in the name of sustainability. The *Guardian* points out that 'gifts are the biggest contributor to the total, accounting for 93 per cent of emissions'. Conclusion: woe betide Christmas gift-giving, according to Catholics Against Climate Change, for whom the true spirit of Christmas is poverty, not gift-giving.

**If there is a Green Grinch** (of environmentalism) in the pages of the British newspaper, it is nothing new. Ten years ago, an editorial by David Bry, also published on Christmas Eve 2014, caused a stir. The title says it all: **It is time for a real war on Christmas**. The premise is chilling to anyone with even a shred of faith: "Christmas - and every other holiday - is simply a date on the calendar, an arbitrary point in time, especially when the fluctuations of the Earth's rotation and the lunar cycle are taken into account. The 25th of December is a day that, according to our society, should be cheerful and joyful, full of tradition and nostalgia. It is the day of stockings and cookies, sweaters and eggnog, elves, time travel and red-nosed reindeer. Ho ho ho! We are told to be happy. We are supposed to be happy. It is the season of merriment, after all. But the reality of the holidays rarely lives up to our expectations. Does it ever? Is it possible? No, it can't." So Christmas not only accelerates climate change, it also generates psychological frustration. And it is just another date on the calendar, so why not get rid of it?

**Also *The Washington Post* is taking the challenge seriously** this year, and on its 24

December [op-ed page](#) offers a manual on how to survive the stress of Christmas, by Sydney Page. The thesis? Better to celebrate alone, away from relatives, in order to "devote some time to your own personal well-being". In the lengthy article, *They love their family, but just want to spend Christmas alone*, Page interviews ordinary people as well as psychologists and other experts in the field, and concludes: "Studies have shown that practicing solitude has several psychological benefits, including inspiring creativity and promoting calm. Page interviews three people who have chosen to 'celebrate and enjoy their holiday solitude'.

**This approach to Christmas**, seen almost as a difficult day to survive, starts from an assumption of absolute distance from Christianity. And it is an attitude that is not only taken for granted by the Washington newspaper, but is deliberately pursued. Six years ago, on Christmas Eve 2018, it published the editorial: *Please don't wish me a Merry Christmas (it's rude and alienating to expect me to follow your religion)*. A typical 'War on Christmas' editorial, written in the name of misguided tolerance towards atheists and followers of other religions. Hence: Christmas is bad for the climate, it breeds alienation and frustration, it is better not to give presents, it is better to celebrate alone, and it is better not even to wish on the day. But the *New York Times* goes even further. The New York newspaper, still considered 'the most influential in the world' (despite falling sales), wants to ask directly whether 'things have turned out the way Christians tell us they have'.

**On this Christmas Eve, the New York Times** has decided to [question the virginity of Our Lady](#). How? By interviewing Elaine Pagels, professor of the history of religions at Princeton University, who loves nothing more than to dust off and give new historical 'dignity' to the theory that Jesus was born of rape by a Roman soldier called 'Panther'. In her long interview, Pagels affirms and denies, declares her respect for and attraction to Christianity, but then questions its very foundations. In the end, the reader is left more confused than before. And that is precisely the aim of the new atheism: never to deny, but to confuse. And in the meantime: do not celebrate. Because it is pointless to celebrate something that may not be true or worth celebrating.