



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 14, 2012

Atheists Use Times Square Billboard for Anti-Christmas Pitch

A group called American Atheists has posted a [high-profile billboard in New York City's Times Square](#) depicting Christianity as a "myth," apparently mocking Jesus Christ on the cross. The group, which first launched its [Christmas "myth" campaign in 2010](#), ramped up its campaign with a giant sign that features an image of Santa Claus, an equally large picture portraying a suffering Jesus on the cross, along with the phrase, "Keep the Merry — Dump the Myth!"

David Silverman, president of the atheist club, claimed in a press release that his group thinks "a large population of Christians are actually 'atheists' who feel trapped in their family's religion." He declared that "you do not have to lie and call yourself Christian in order to have a festive holiday season. You can be merry without the myth, and indeed, you should."

Silverman justified the latest controversial sign by stating that his club was trying to "encourage people to be honest with themselves and their families this year. If you don't believe in God, tell your family — honesty is the greatest gift, and they deserve it."

The anti-Christmas billboard campaign the atheist group came up with last year, which debuted on the New Jersey side of the Lincoln Tunnel, was nearly as offensive to many Christians, with pictures of Jesus, Santa Claus, the Greek god Poseidon, and a Satan-like figure in a business suit, along with the slogan: "37 Million Americans know myths when they see them," followed by, "What myths do you see?"

That billboard received almost universally negative response, with the comments of one mainline pastor from New Jersey summing up the public perception. The minister told the [Christian Post](#) that not only was the sign "ignorant and vulgar," but it demonstrated a lack of understanding on the part of the



 **american atheists** atheists.org



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American Atheists about the meaning of the term “myth” in relation to classical literature.

“Jesus is different,” said the pastor, who wished to remain anonymous. “Only the most dense and simple-minded person would put him in the same category as the other three. Clearly, even those who lack a personal commitment to Jesus recognize that there was in fact some historical figure by this name — religious leader and teacher — around 2,000 years ago,” the pastor said.

Atheist Silverman told [Fox News](#) that his group’s billboard this year was funded in part by a private donor who gave them \$25,000 for the project. He said the billboard will be posted on Times Square until January 10 of next year. “We chose Times Square because it is a place where people go to shop and be festive, which has nothing to do with religion,” Silverman said.

The Catholic League, which each year counters the atheist signs with Christian truth, said that this year’s effort by the American Atheists stepped over the line of civility.

“This is vile,” said the Catholic League’s Bill Donahue of the Times Square billboard. “When you depict Jesus on the cross with a crown of thorns, this is exploitative. We as Christians never harass, intimidate or insult atheists. But they can’t seem to say, ‘We simply disagree with you.’ They have to insult us.”

Last March the American Atheists were blocked from putting up a similarly offensive billboard in a Hasidic Jewish neighborhood in New York City after the owner of the residential building atop which the sign was to have been erected changed his mind. Silverman said he suspected Orthodox rabbis in the area persuaded the landlord to back out of allowing the sign, which was to have ridiculed Judeo-Christian values with the following slogan in both Hebrew and English: “You know it’s a myth — and you have a choice.”

Said the less-than-upbeat atheist leader about the landlord’s decision: “It has been very disconcerting to see that the traditional victims of religious bigotry have become the purveyors of religious bigotry.”

While the property owner apparently had no comment about the conflict, a local rabbi, David Niederman, was quoted by [NBC News](#) as accurately describing the rejected billboard as “a disgrace.... The name of God is very holy to us and to the whole world.”



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