



## The War on Christmas: Lincoln Chafee's Holy Day Tree

I'm not sure why ex-Senator and current Rhode Island Governor Lincoln Chafee keeps getting elected, but I'm quite sure he offends me. I truly can't stand seeing his face, and you don't have to ask why. You see, that's the way offensiveness is: It's completely subjective and not constrained by rhyme or reason.



Along with a lot of other people, however, I now certainly have one very logical reason to chafe at Chafee: His [decision](#) to call the 17-foot-tall blue spruce Christmas tree in his state capitol's rotunda a "holiday tree" despite opposition from residents and lawmakers. This, mind you, is something even the Obama administration doesn't dare; all its trees are called what they are.

Of course, the funny thing about all these "holiday" trees is that they always seem to appear at Christmastime. But perhaps Chafee will erect a couple on Memorial Day and Labor Day.

One reason he won't — at this time — is because what we're witnessing are half-measures by people who don't yet dare try to wipe Christianity away completely. It's as how some now want to replace the chronological designations B.C. and A.D. with B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) and C.E. If they could cut to the chase, they might just take a leaf out of Maximilien Robespierre's and the other French revolutionaries' book and change the calendar (in the French Republic, 1789 became "year 1 of Liberty") and maybe even the days of the week so as to eliminate Sundays. For now, however, they'll still have to tolerate our remaining remnants of Christendom.

As for me, I'd like to resurrect tradition, so I'll point out that "holiday" is actually a contraction of "Holy Day." And guess what? We can — and we should — now thank ol' Lincoln for the Christmas present of the beautiful capitol rotunda Holy Day tree.

Seriously.

Could you imagine how it would make militant atheist heads explode if the result of their effort to replace "Christmas" with "holiday" was the replacement of "holiday" with "Holy Day"? Now that would be delicious irony.

If anyone finds this offensive, you'll get nothing but literary coal from me. And it's interesting how we've allowed the atheists to frame this debate. Somehow we're supposed to worry about offending people with our traditions, as if there can be such a thing as a land without traditions or offended people. What I mean is, almost everything offends someone and almost everyone is offended by something. Moreover, sure, some people feign offense upon hearing the name "Christmas" in the same way that the display of any Christian symbols seems to offend Saudi Arabians. I say "feign" because, you see, they're not really offended.



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They just don't happen to like what you're doing.

But saying as much would make them seem like what they are: intolerant. And currently lacking the power of 1789 French revolutionaries or today's Saudi government, they can't be honest about their feelings. So instead they scream "I'm offended!" — thus using a ploy that makes their victims seem the intolerant ones.

But accepting the secularists' use of "offended" as a synonym for "upset," let's note the multitude of ways in which they give offense. Why, for instance, should schoolchildren be exposed to multiculturalism, feminism, environmentalism, and evolution when some are offended by such things? Oh, these beliefs are good for society, you militant atheists say?

You're not paying attention.

What's implied in your persistent whining is that if someone feels offended by a symbol or sentiment, that *alone* is enough reason to purge it from the public square.

If this seems unrealistic, it is. A civilization must and will establish social codes, norms, and traditions, and they will inevitably offend some portion of the population. Clearly, offensiveness, just like any other subjective *feeling*, cannot serve as an objective yardstick for society.

As for the goodness of beliefs, it should be the yardstick. But everyone considers his beliefs beneficial, so how do we proceed? Well, mature people don't use misdirection tactics such as the [Offensiveness Ploy](#). They ask with honest hearts, what is good?

At this point, the atheists may fall back on the separation-of-church-and-state argument — both the legal and the "moral" one. As for the former, four points must be made. First, the phrase "separation of church and state" is nowhere to be found in the Constitution's Establishment Clause. Second, displaying symbols of faith is hardly the establishment of religion. Third, the extra-constitutional separation principle was meant as a one-way filtration system: to keep government out of religion, not religion out of government. And, lastly, the Establishment Clause was supposed to apply only to the states, which is why the First Amendment specifies that "*Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion... [Emphasis added.]*" But what's far more interesting — and usually ignored — is the moral separation argument.

Legal principles are based on nothing but air without moral foundation, and what masquerades as such is provided here by the assumption that, somehow, religious ideas deserve a special place away from the table. But the reality is quite the opposite. I'll explain.

Here's what I would say to militant atheists: If the religious ideas and symbols in question really are handed down by God, the creator of the Universe, don't we have an obligation to infuse our public square with them? This is where the atheists will say something to the effect of, "Well, you may believe these things are the will of your sky fairy, but they really are just man-made."

And that is where they lose the debate. For if these ideas are man-made just like secular ones, why discriminate against them? Why say that man-made ideas we happen to call secular may be in the public domain, but man-made ideas we happen to call religious may not be? If they're all man-made, wherein lies the difference?

This brings us to the reality of the matter.

It's a distraction to talk about offensive ideas and inoffensive ones.



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It's also a distraction to talk about secular ideas and religious ones.

These are secondary distinctions *at best*.

At the end of the day, there are only two kinds of ideas that matter: true ideas and untrue ideas.

And a sane civilization tries its utmost to determine Truth and put it into action.

As for action, don't forget to wish Lincoln Chafee and his minions Happy Holy Days. It will certainly put a smile on somebody's face.



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