

# *December, 2018 Newsletter of the Lake Superior Freethinkers*

George Erickson, editor - [tundracub@mediacombb.net](mailto:tundracub@mediacombb.net)

**First Sunday - Radisson Hotel**

**9:00 AM Social – 9:30 Breakfast - 10:00 Presentation**

**Free and open to the public.**

Jan Resberg, Chair/President 715-919-0513

Sue Anderson, Social Director 218-728-1361

## **Program**



Dr. Rogier Gregoire will speak on "In Search of Cohesiveness"

Dr. Gregoire holds an E.D.D. from Harvard Graduate School of Education, where he specialized in curriculum design and development. He has been the principal contributor to several published works, including *Man a Course of Study*.

## **All decked out for Christmas!**



*"Keep Christmas your way and let me keep it in mine."*

*Charles Dickens*

This holiday season, the Internet and the cable news channels have been filled with talk of the “War on Christmas” that was apparently started by atheist cabals a few years ago. However, it actually began with the “paragon of virtue” Bill O’Reilly and others who fear the secularization of their favorite tradition. And it is being secularized, almost from the moment when Christmas became a federal holiday in 1870 did it start to become less and less of a religious celebration...

In fact, the traditions that we understand to be Christmas traditions are almost entirely nonreligious, thanks in large part to the famous poem that starts “Twas the night before Christmas...” and the Charles Dickens book, “A Christmas Carol.”

December 25th has become less and less about Jesus and more and more about caring for family, friends and strangers. And exchanging gifts, of course.... By doing that, you will be winning the war on Christmas... *Chris Morse*

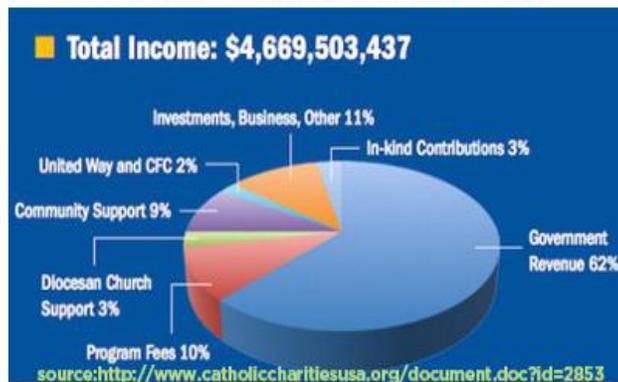
**“I want Planned Parenthood to be funded like Catholic charities, by individuals who believe in Planned Parenthood’s mission.”**

**-- Bill O’Reilly, 09/11/12**



**Memo to O’Reilly:**

**In 2010 Catholic Charities USA received 62% of its revenue from taxpayer money.**



# Banning Christmas in the Name of Religion

By Jim Hume

It wasn't the Grinch who tried to steal Christmas, it was the Christians.  
Good Christians, too, firm in their faith and determined to rid  
the world of the evils of mince pies and merry making.

Oliver Cromwell gets most of the historic blame for the 1640s official shutdown of activities designed to bring Christmas joy to the masses, but the real villain was the English parliament that solemnly enacted the law banning all Christmas celebrations.

Cromwell was certainly in favor. Having had a "religious experience" as a young man, he supported all measures to move mankind closer to godliness as he and other Puritans perceived godliness. When, shortly after the Christmas ban became law, he assumed the role of dictator (he preferred Lord Protector), embraced the ban and enforced it.

It was a no-joy law and, in some ways, frighteningly similar to today's Taliban version of what is holy. Women were banned from wearing makeup or colorful clothes and squads from Cromwell's army roamed the streets searching for violators. They would give a woman an on-site face scrub if they judged her makeup overdone. The dress code for women was Taliban-Puritan strict: A long black dress covering neck to toes, a white apron with her hair bunched up behind a large white headscarf or black hat.

Men were expected to wear black, keep their hair short and go straight home from work to lead the family in prayer and Bible reading. To make the route home easy, Cromwell ordered many taverns shut and closed all theatres.

The roving patrols stayed alert on Christmas Day seeking the smell of a goose being cooked or mince pies being baked. Fines could be imposed and the goose and pies confiscated. The enforcers kept their eyes open for sprigs of holly and other ungodly decorations, and their ears open for anyone cussing the new laws. Swearing was punishable by immediate fine with repeated offences resulting in jail.

To make sure the populace understood that the banning of Christmas (and Easter and Whitsun celebrations) was only part of a grand plan to bring the nation closer to God, Sundays were proclaimed to be special days, and one day in every month was designated a fast day. Women observed doing "unnecessary" work on a Sunday could be placed in the stocks; boys caught kicking a ball around or engaging in any other sporting activity could be whipped on the spot; and just going for a walk unless it was to church could result in a fine.

The clampdown on Christmas, while shocking when it came, was not unexpected. The festival that had morphed over the centuries from pagan bacchanal to Christian celebration had grown wild. By the late 1500s, Christmas was being described as the time when "more mischief is committed than in all the year beside ... what dicing, carding, what eating and drinking, what banqueting and feasting is then used ... to the great dishonor of God and the impoverishing of the realm."

Debauchery had become the way of Christmas and Lord Protector Cromwell -- who wasn't above a little banquet-style celebration himself in the privacy of his home -- strongly supported any move to curb public festivities. Any opportunity for him to spin his anti-Catholic paranoia was to be seized. After all, he argued, good Christian Protestants should never celebrate a Christ-mass with Catholic mass overtones. They even tried to cultivate a new name: Christmas-tide.

The Puritan ban on Christmas lasted a quarter century, with shopkeepers fined for closing their stores on Dec. 25. It wasn't until 1660, with Charles II back on the throne, that Christmas was reinstated. To make sure people understood Cromwellian laws were as dead as the enforcer, the King had Cromwell's body exhumed, the corpse decapitated and the Lord Protector's head hung on a spike in Westminster Hall.

By then Puritans, who years earlier had fled England to start building the United States of America, were establishing old beliefs in the new land. After their second Christmas in America, they ruled "whosoever shall be found observing any such day as Christmas or the like, either by forbearing of labor, feasting or in any other way ... shall pay for every such offence five shillings as a fine."

The ban lasted 22 years, but Christmas Day didn't become an official holiday in Boston until 1856. Scotland took even longer. It was 1958 before Christmas was declared an official holiday north of the River Tweed, ending the 400-year-old ban promoted by firebrand preacher John Knox in the late 1500s.

The Scots hadn't chafed under their Christmas ban. They just moved the celebrations back a week and called it Hogmanay. Then, 51 years ago, realizing English workers got two year-end holidays to their one, they graciously agreed Christmas could again be celebrated.



"SAY, WHAT'S ALL THIS RELIGIOUS STUFF DOING ON THESE CHRISTMAS CARDS?"