

washingtonpost.com

Congress's Bullying Pulpit

Advertisement

By Sally Quinn

Sunday, December 23, 2007; B07

As a child, I went to a small school in rural Alabama near an Army post where my father was stationed. It was a very Christian town, and our teacher was "born again."

This was decades ago, but I remember clearly how she used to tell us that we must accept Jesus Christ as our personal savior. Then she would ask for hands to see who had. By age 11 I had become a nonbeliever. My father was in the Army and had fought in World War II and Korea; I concluded quickly that no loving God could have allowed those atrocities to be committed.

But we had all seen our teacher, when crossed, call an unlucky member of our class up to the front of the room, make the student lie down on her desk and be paddled. The humiliation was worse than the pain. So, when she called on us to admit that we had accepted Jesus as our savior, I dutifully raised my hand.

Thank goodness, those days are over, you might be thinking. Nothing like that could happen in this country today.

Well, think again. It happened this month, right here in Washington.

On Dec. 11, H.R. 847 was passed in the House of Representatives. Just listen to what our lawmakers have resolved:

"Whereas Christmas, a holiday of great significance to Americans," it begins, "is celebrated annually by Christians throughout the United States. . . ." It goes on to state, among other things, that "Christianity [is] the religion of over three-fourths of the American population," that "American Christians observe Christmas, the holiday celebrating the birth of their savior, Jesus Christ," and that "Christmas is celebrated as a recognition of God's redemption, mercy, and Grace."

"Now, therefore be it Resolved, that the House of Representatives . . . expresses continued support for Christians in the United States . . . acknowledges and supports the role played by Christians and Christianity in the founding of the United States . . . rejects bigotry and persecution directed against Christians, both in the United States and worldwide; and expresses its deepest respect to American Christians."

For brevity, I have omitted the resolution's references to Christianity around the world.

This resolution passed with 195 Democratic yeas, 177 Republican yeas and nine Democratic nays. No Republicans voted against it. Ten House members voted "present." Forty were not there, including the bill's sponsor, Rep. Steve King of Iowa.

Among those voting for the resolution was a Jewish member of Congress who has asked me not to print his name. He was outraged and appalled by the bill, he told me. But he was also afraid. He thought it would hurt him with his mostly Christian constituency if he voted against it. He told some of his colleagues about his anguish. They advised him not to be stupid. It would be better for him politically if he voted for it.

It's possible that the 10 who voted "present" also had problems with the bill but decided it was safer not to vote against it. One could also assume that some of those who were absent were not there so as not to

have to deal with the problem.

Earlier this year the House also passed resolutions honoring Islamic and Indian holidays but nothing that so equated a single faith with America and Americans.

How could this happen, in what will soon be 2008, in a pluralistic, multicultural, multireligious society, a society based on the concepts of religious freedom and separation of church and state? What were they thinking?

This resolution was as anti-American as anything Congress has ever passed. It disenfranchised and marginalized millions and millions of men and women, reducing them to second-class citizens.

How about this next time around: "Whereas all holidays have great significance to some Americans, be it resolved that the House of Representatives expresses its deepest respect to Americans of all faiths and non-faith alike."

The writer is a co-moderator, with Jon Meacham, of On Faith, an online conversation on religion at <http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith>.

Post a Comment

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Login](#) | [Register](#)

Submit

Comments that include profanity or personal attacks or other inappropriate comments or material will be removed from the site. Additionally, entries that are unsigned or contain "signatures" by someone other than the actual author will be removed. Finally, we will take steps to block users who violate any of our posting standards, terms of use or privacy policies or any other policies governing this site. Please review the [full rules](#) governing commentaries and discussions. You are fully responsible for the content that you post.

© 2007 The Washington Post Company

Ads by Google

[Find The Perfect Religion](#)

Which religion is the best for you? Find out with the religion test.

QuizRocket.com/religion-test

[Meet Christian Singles](#)

Find Your Christian Soulmate Online View Profiles 100% Free. Join Now!

www.ChristianLifestyle.com

[Expelled – Ben Stein](#)

Why is Big Science suppressing the evidence of Intelligent Design?

www.Expelledthemovie.com