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Hindu chaplain prays, Christian chaplain told 'go away'

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By Gordon James Klingenschmitt

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I personally sat in the Senate gallery, witnessing history when a Hindu chaplain prayed to "earth" and "sky" and "spirits" on the floor of the U.S. Senate Thursday. Rajan Zed's prayer was hailed by sponsoring Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., as "free speech" allowed by the First Amendment. No senators seemed to notice, nor did any object, while Zed committed the sin of idolatry, right there in public, violating the first of God's Ten Commandments with full government permission.

Sure, a Hindu prayer (to millions of false gods) may be "legal" by American law, but it still violates God's law: "I am the Lord Thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Imagine the surprise of idolaters on judgment day, arguing to the most-high God that He shouldn't be angry, "because idolatry was perfectly legal according to American law." Perhaps that day God will remind them of Paul's warning to the Corinthians, "Idolaters ... will not inherit the kingdom of heaven."

Since I was in Washington, I personally visited the Senate office of Sen. Reid, and asked if he'd sponsor me as a former Navy chaplain for equal access, to pray "in Jesus name" on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

Sen. Reid's staff admitted sponsoring the Hindu chaplain from Nevada but wouldn't sponsor me to pray "in Jesus name" because I'm from New York. So I visited the office of my senator

from New York.

But Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton's staff also turned me away. They wouldn't sponsor me to pray "in Jesus name" on the floor of the Senate, claiming that Senate Chaplain Barry Black's prayers are good enough. Chaplain Black is a Seventh-day Adventist who frequently prays "non-sectarian" prayers on the Senate floor, so apparently Sen. Clinton's staff didn't need any Pentecostal chaplains who pray "in Jesus name." Declining to sponsor me, Sen. Clinton's office referred me to Chaplain Black.

Chaplain Black likewise declined my request, and apparently knew I was coming. "How did you get in here?" his staffer asked me, "because we told security not to let you in."

When I pointed to the sign above Chaplain Black's door that says "Welcome, please come in," the staffer explained that he already knew who I was and likely wouldn't talk to me, since his personal calendar is booked with appointments until 2009. "But you can fax your concerns to Chaplain Black at 202-224-9686," they said, or leave him a voice message at 202-224-2510.

(Column continues below)

In his former job as chief of Navy chaplains from 2001-2003, Chaplain Black upheld his predecessor's 1998 memo pressuring Navy chaplains to pray "non-sectarian" prayers, and supported his successor's public opposition to legislation last year, to let military chaplains pray "in Jesus name" in public. Thank God Congress agreed with 85 percent of Americans (and apparently disagreed with Chaplain Black) by rescinding the bad Navy policy, restoring the rights of Navy chaplains to pray publicly "in Jesus name," even in uniform.

So all three offices turned me away, denying equal access for Jesus, but welcoming Hinduism, in the name of tolerance for all faiths, except mine.

Who can pray "in Jesus name" in the U.S. Senate today? Not Ante and Katherine Pavkovic, nor their daughter Christan Sugar, who were arrested and jailed for praying Christian prayers aloud in the Senate gallery that same day.

I watched the Hindu chaplain stand to pray, and everybody stood to their feet. I heard the Pavkovic family pray simultaneously with the Hindu chaplain: "Lord Jesus, have mercy on our nation for allowing this abomination, this idolatry, for violating the First Commandment 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' God forgive our nation, in Jesus name, Amen."

Had the Pavkovic family simply said "Amen" to the Hindu prayer, or prayed a Hindu "ohm" meditation, they'd have been viewed as supportive, not disruptive, and wouldn't have been arrested. But since the content of their prayer voiced opposition to Hinduism, so they were arrested and jailed as "disrupters," *arrested for the content of their prayer*, nothing else. I applaud

their spiritual courage, perhaps the only people present who feared God's law more than man's law.

"The Senate was already being disturbed before we arrived," Ante told me after he was released from jail. "The sin of Hindu idolatry was greatly disrupting the sanctity of the Senate. We only prayed to preserve the covenant our nation has with the most-high God, who established our Republic, in Jesus name."

Perhaps Sen. Reid and Sen. Clinton will soon introduce legislation to change our national motto to "in gods we trust" or sing "gods bless America." But they're out of step with the Founding Fathers, including George Washington, who prayed:

"Help me thoroughly to examine myself concerning my knowledge, faith and repentance. Increase my faith and direct me to the true object Jesus Christ the way, the truth and the life. Bless, O Lord, all the people of this land, from the highest to the lowest, *particularly those whom thou has appointed to rule over us in church and state ...* for the sake of thy dear son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen."

I pray we'd elect government leaders that might allow someone like George Washington to pray on the floor of the U.S. Senate, but I suspect they'd turn him away, that is, if they wouldn't just throw him in jail.

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Gordon James Klingenschmitt is a former Navy chaplain who sacrificed his career to help change national policy, allowing military chaplains to publicly pray "in Jesus' name" – even in uniform. He continues his fight to be reinstated. Klingenschmitt is available to speak and can be reached [via e-mail](#). He encourages readers to sign [his petition to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates](#).

