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LIBERAL DOUBLE STANDARDS ON THE FIRST AMENDMENT

President Ronald Reagan's proposal for a constitutional amendment to allow voluntary school prayer has touched off a raft of emotional editorials from the liberals. They are shouting "First Amendment" from the housetops, but their inconsistency in bending the First Amendment to suit their ideological goals speaks even louder.

For the past six months, "censorship" has been the most fashionable liberal slogan on TV and radio talk shows and in metropolitan newspapers. We are told it is un-American and a First Amendment violation to censor any textbook or school reading material, no matter how pornographic, profane, blasphemous, or offensive to the students' religious or moral values or ethnic self-respect.

Yet, in the liberal scheme of things, censorship of prayer is acceptable. It has even been elevated to a virtue and wrapped in the mantle of the First Amendment.

The First Amendment reads clearly: "Congress shall make no law respecting an estalishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press..." The purpose of that Amendment was to prevent the federal government from setting up an established church, as many other countries had at that time. Some Western democracies still do have a government-established and government-supported church, notably Great Britain and Sweden.

Nobody could seriously argue today that there is any danger of Congress' establishing an Episcopal or Lutheran or Baptist or any other sectarian church in America.

The problem is that the U.S. Supreme Court, in a series of convoluted decisions over the last 20 years, has interpreted (redefined is a better word) the First Amendment to achieve results that were never intended, are unwanted by the American people, and are inconsistent with each other. Those inconsistencies are warmly applauded by the liberals.

The liberal argument against prayer in schools obviously cannot be a fear that the recitation of the Lord's Prayer will "establish" a sectarian church in the schools. Essentially, the liberals' argument is that the free speech of teachers and students who want to talk to God (which is what prayer is) must be strictly and absolutely prohibited

so that atheists will not be annoyed or embarrassed by having to listen to the recitation of the prayers they don't agree with.

The liberals who argue for the censorship of prayers in public schools then turn around and argue just the opposite when the issue is textbooks, lectures, and school materials that offend the religious and moral values of churchgoing Americans.

When the issue is classroom obscenity, profanity, immorality, evolution, secular humanism or feminism, the liberals are ostentatious and self-righteous in waving the First Amendment to justify "anything goes" in the schools. The liberals tell the churchgoing pupils and their parents, "Too bad for your religious values; you will be forced to read the books and listen to the teachers. And, if you are so foolish as to object to our anti-religious teaching in the schools, we will attack you in the media and ridicule you and your children in front of your peers."

When parents and pupils complain that explicit classroom teaching about how to perform every kind of sex act, and about how to get contraceptives and procure abortions, is offensive to their religious and moral values, the liberals reply, "Too bad for you. You will be forced to listen and conform; we don't care how much you are embarrassed or isolated by teacher tactics or peer pressure."

The psychological intimdation by which immature children are forced to particpate in classroom discussions of teenage "sexual activity" (fornication) are far more hurtful to the religion and morals of the good child than a moment of voluntary prayer could ever hurt the atheist child. In fact, as Ronald Reagan said, no child was ever harmed by having to listen to a prayer.

The liberals insist that the First Amendment requires the good child to shut up and endure his embarrassment while classroom discussions include profane, blasphemous or obscene books; attacks on moral standards and on the child's belief that God created the world; and descriptive classroom discussions of fornication, homosexuality, contraceptives, and abortions as though they were normal and acceptable practices. It's time that we expose the double standard of the liberals who promote such anti-religious classroom authoritarianism, but who want to censor with a vengeance any child who dares to speak the name of God in prayer.