

It's a Christmas Tree

A few days ago, a debate boiled over in Boston when the city's Web site referred to a giant tree erected on Boston Common as a "holiday tree." Such a name drew instant response from Christians, including the Rev. Jerry Falwell, whose law group, the Liberty Counsel, threatened to file a lawsuit if the tree wasn't rechristened with Christmas.

"The Boston Christmas tree situation is symbolic of what's happening ... around the country," said Matthew Staver, president and general counsel of Liberty Counsel. "Government officials, either because of misinformation, or private retailers, for politically correct reasons, are trying to secularize Christmas. To rename a Christmas tree as a holiday tree is as offensive as renaming a Jewish menorah a candlestick."

The Nova Scotia logger who cut down the 48-foot tree for Boston also was indignant. Donnie Hatt, the logger, said he would not have donated the tree if he had known of the name change. "I'd have cut it down and put it through the chipper," he said. "If they decide it should be a holiday tree, I'll tell them to send it back. If it was a holiday tree, you might as well put it up at Easter."

Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino said he would refer to the white spruce as a Christmas tree. The city has since restored the name to Christmas tree on its Web site.

Later, Speaker J. Dennis Hastert in the U.S. House of Representatives told federal officials that the lighted, decorated tree on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol – known in recent years as the "Holiday Tree" – should be renamed the Capitol Christmas Tree. "The speaker believes a Christmas tree is a Christmas tree, and it is as simple as that," said Ron Bonjean, spokesman for the Illinois Republican. The Capitol tree, which is traditionally overshadowed by the White House's National Christmas Tree, was renamed a holiday tree several years ago, although no one seems to know exactly when the name was changed or by whom.

The Christmas tree episode is part of a growing trend to remove references to God and Christ from public conversation. But the Christmas tree debate – and its positive result – is proof that Christians should stand up and speak up in defense of their faith. Otherwise, wholesale changes in our traditions can occur.

Somehow, Bing Crosby's hit song, *I'm Dreaming of a White Holiday*, doesn't have the same appeal or meaning.

--Beecher Hunter