

ACLU'S PROBLEM WITH GOD

The summer of 2000 was not a good one for the ACLU. On at least three occasions, the ACLU demonstrated once again that it has a problem with God. Consider the following.

When a new law took effect in Virginia on July 1 requiring public schools to begin each day with a minute of silence, the ACLU screamed foul play. Under the new law, student would be allowed to "meditate, pray or engage in other silent activity." The ACLU chapter in Virginia wasted no time suing, claiming that the law is an unconstitutional violation of separation of church and state.

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, described the anti-religious bias that colors the ACLU's thinking on this subject:

"Kent Willis, the executive director of the ACLU's office in Virginia, has said that 'A true minute-of-silence law that did not mention prayer and had no religious intent would be constitutional. Every student who has ever attended public schools knows that they can pray to themselves.' Willis suggests that somehow the government, in its benevolence, is allowing students to pray to themselves, when in fact no means has yet been found to monitor private thought. The founder of the ACLU was even more explicit.

"In 1978, I interviewed Roger Baldwin, the founder of the ACLU. I asked him 'Whose rights are being infringed upon if there is a silent prayer voluntarily said by a student?' He said 'they've tried to get around it even further than you by calling it meditation'; to which I replied, 'what's wrong with that?' His answer had an Orwellian ring to it: 'I suppose you can get away with that but it's a subterfuge, because the implication is that you're meditating about *the hereafter or God or something.*' (My emphasis.) I answered, saying 'Well,

what's wrong with that? Doesn't a person have the right to do that? Or to meditate about popcorn for that matter?'

"Baldwin was an honest man. His objection to meditation in the schools was based on his deep-seated fear that young boys and girls might actually be meditating about the hereafter or God. And that is the real reason why the ACLU is opposed to the minute of silence law in Virginia: they sincerely believe that a free society is at risk if it allows the prospect of school kids meditating in the classroom. Now if the ACLU knew in advance that the kids were meditating on how best to put condoms on a cucumber in a sex ed class, all their fears would be allayed."

Another issue that drove the ACLU crazy was the decision by the Colorado Board of Education that urged schools to post the words, "In God We Trust." The motto has been on U.S. currency since the 19th century, but this means nothing to the ACLU. Sue Armstrong, the executive director of the Colorado chapter of the Union, said she would wait until a school posts the dreaded words before suing.

"Choose Life." These dreaded words are now allowed to appear on license plates in New Orleans. When the ACLU learned of this constitutional crisis, it veered right off the road. Joe Cook of the Louisiana chapter posted a warning sign, saying, "This license plate entangles the state with religion." Now had the license plate said what the ACLU stands for, namely "Choose Death," that would have been just dandy.

The ACLU's problem is not with the constitution. It's with God.