

RELIGIOUS CLEANSERS ON THE MARCH

Those whose goal in life is to cleanse American society of all traces of religious expression are on the march again. Suburban Philadelphia is the site of a battle over the display of the Ten Commandments. The ACLU maintains that a Ten Commandments plaque on the façade of a Chester County courthouse is an unconstitutional imposition of religion. Others say it is nothing more than a historical relic worth preserving. Interestingly, the U.S. Supreme Court building contains a frieze with a likeness of Moses carrying the commandments. In any event, a federal appeals court is weighing a decision.

On the other side of the state, outside Pittsburgh, a public school teacher is testing an 1895 law that bars teachers from wearing religious symbols or garb in the classroom. Religious cleansers from Americans United for Separation of Church and State like the law and want the Protestant teacher punished. The law was originally written to stop Catholic priests and nuns from teaching in the public schools.

Cadets at Virginia Military Institute (VMI) have been barred from saying a voluntary, nondenominational prayer before they eat. Americans United was delighted by the federal appeals court decision. The judges ruled that because VMI emphasizes discipline, there was nothing voluntary about the prayer. Talk about a Catch 22! What would a military academy be like if it didn't insist on discipline?

Two Southern California parks are fighting over the right to keep a large cross on public property. As a tribute to veterans, a large cross was erected in 1934 above the Mojave National Preserve. In another tribute to war vets, Mount Soledad Park has long been home to a 43-foot cross. The ACLU

wants them both removed. The former battle has been waging since 2001; the latter since 1991.

None of these issues has anything to do with liberty. They have to do with religious cleansing. Scared to death of religion, they want state censorship of religious expression. That they are as phony as they are maniacal should be clear to everyone.