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Five years after 9/11, the ACLU considers Christians the terrorists

By **Alan Sears**

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Joe Cook has long since apologized for what he said last summer.

Although he *is* director of the Louisiana chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, and strenuously opposed to anything resembling prayer in public schools or God in public life, he says he wasn't speaking for the ACLU – or, curiously, even for himself – when he said what he said.

He said it about some teachers, students, and school board members in Tangipahoa Parish who, on infrequent occasions, have offered public, “sectarian” prayers in their classrooms, at school banquets, or to open board meetings.

“They [the Christians] have always crossed the line of separation of church and government,” Cook said. “They believe they answer to a higher power, in my opinion... which is the kind of thinking you had with the people who flew airplanes in the buildings in this country.”

While his comment didn't draw the media attention that Mel Gibson gets for cursing a cop's ethnic heritage, five years after 9/11, it is still arguably the most succinct and candid expression of what is transparently the ACLU's guiding philosophy. The ACLU, after all, has spent most of the last 100 years working to silence Christian voices and curtail Christian influence in every arena of public life.

Taken at face value, Cook's statement equates a teacher praying for, say, a student's ailing mother, or her pupils' performance on a standardized test, with the determination of radical Muslim terrorists to destroy as many innocent lives as possible. A child saying grace over lunch or a teen praying for the team's injured player is really no different from a terrorist praising Allah for the privilege of slitting a flight attendant's throat.

Because, Cook said, people who really believe in God are often the people who find fulfillment in destroying other people.

No, no, no, he says, now. That's not what he meant.

“Our message in the Tangipahoa schools case and elsewhere is simple,” he says. “Religious freedom thrives best when government stays out of religion.”

But, of course, what the ACLU really wants is for religion to stay out of government. That's why its attorneys have spent years pressuring California courts to remove the cross on Mount Soledad. The cross, which for half a century has honored American war dead on government property in San Diego, enjoys enormous popular support in the community. But it's a thorn in the side of the ACLU's philosophy of government-sponsored atheism.

In Las Cruces, New Mexico, the ACLU is actually waging war on the very name of the community: “*cruces*,”

you see, means “crosses,” and we all know what those Spanish priests must have meant by *that*. No telling how many unwitting travelers, bound for Albuquerque, have found themselves mysteriously compelled to embrace Christianity, just glancing at the “Now Entering ...” sign. Better we just call the place “Las,” and get it over with.

But, of course, where does that stop? Los Angeles (“The Angels”)? San Francisco (“Saint Francis”)? What are we going to do about the Jefferson Memorial, where the government has etched in stone the Declaration of Independence proclamation that Americans have been “endowed *by their Creator* with certain Inalienable Rights?”

And so it goes, as the ACLU picks and chooses its battles. The group is demanding a Virginia Wiccan’s right to offer public prayers, even as it sues to stop a Virginia Christian from doing the same thing. In Bridgeport, West Virginia, it objects to a picture of Jesus that has been hanging in a high school hallway for decades. So far, a Great Awakening hasn’t broken out on campus, and students aren’t crowding in to genuflect before the Galilean. But depictions of divinity are the definition of danger, to the ACLU.

Why? For 2,000 years, Jesus Christ has been recognized as history’s most profound and compelling advocate of forgiveness, self-sacrifice, and moral self-discipline. He urged his followers to respect the government, honor its leaders, and put the needs of others before their own. Which of these principles is the ACLU afraid the Bridgeport teens or their teachers will emulate?

What if the picture was of George Washington or Abraham Lincoln? Wouldn’t most students understand that the school was saluting these presidents’ wise and courageous leadership? Would we really have to order the paintings removed, lest some youngster think he was being encouraged to own slaves or vote Republican?

Ironically, the very virulence of ACLU hostility underscores the importance of the man they would minimize. The group has shown little concern about public expressions of other faiths, post- 9/11. Yet just saying “Merry Christmas” sends them into fits.

A few weeks ago, the Bridgeport case came to a *de facto* end when a thief broke into the school one night, cut the picture of Jesus from its frame, and carried it off into the night.

The ACLU presumably had nothing to do with the theft. But one has to wonder if their sympathies aren’t with the thief.

After all, they’ve been trying to cut Jesus out of the picture for years.

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