



Air Force Reviewing All Ethics Courses for Christian Themes

The Air Force appears to be on an intense crusade to sanitize religious content from its training courses. As reported by The New American, in late July the Air Force suspended a course entitled “Christian Just War Theory” after a group of missile launch officers complained to the Military Religious Freedom Foundation that the ethics course included the Bible and other Christian-themed material. Barely three weeks after the original incident, another Air Force instructor forwarded Power Point slides from a second class to the secularist watchdog group, complaining about that course’s Christian content.



[CNN](#) reported that in a lesson “designed to teach the Air Force’s core values to ROTC cadets, Christian beliefs such as the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Golden Rule are used as examples of ethical values...” According to CNN, an ROTC instructor brought his complaint to the Military Religious Freedom Foundation after seeing a report on the original complaint brought by the missile officers. “I felt extremely uncomfortable briefing some of these slides, deleted them, and added what I felt were more relevant examples,” the anonymous ROTC instructor wrote in an e-mail to the secularist group.

Like the “Just War Theory” material, the ROTC course was produced by the Air Force’s [Air Education and Training Command](#). AETC spokesman David Smith said that the group is now reviewing all “training materials that address morals, ethics, core values, and related character development issues to ensure appropriate and balanced use of all religious and secular source material.” He emphasized that the Air Force is committed to teaching ethics to its officers and personnel “in a religiously neutral way that assures we comply with the Constitution’s Establishment Clause.”

Smith claimed that the Air Force was completely unaware that the missile class, which had been taught by chaplains at California’s Vandenberg Air Force Base, contained the religious emphasis until officials were contacted by [TruthOut.org](#), the online news site that originally reported the story.

The [Air Force Times](#) reported that the ROTC “ethics briefing,” entitled “Core Values and the Air Force Member,” included “references to the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments as examples of ethical values. Two additional slides list the New Testament teachings of Jesus known as the Beatitudes, and seven of the commandments, including ‘Have no other gods before Me.’” According to the report, the 22-slide presentation also cited the Golden Rule as “an example of ethical values. One of the slides points out that the Golden Rule — ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you’—is found in five of the world’s major religions.”

The Military Religious Freedom Foundation’s Mikey Weinstein pointed to the ROTC material as a



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on August 22, 2011

“further example of how wretched this fundamentalist Christian tsunami is and how pervasive it is” in the military.

As reported by *The New American*, the [Power Point presentation](#) included in the “Christian Just War Theory” training was similarly offensive to Weinstein’s secular sensibilities. It began with the question, “Can a person of faith fight in a war?” and included images of American military leaders such as General George Washington, Colonel Joshua Chamberlain, and General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson as examples of soldiers whose faith motivated them to fight.

The presentation also included abundant biblical examples as justification for military conflict, and quoted WWII German rocket scientist Wernher von Braun, who recalled that he and his colleagues surrendered their technology to the United States because they “felt that only by surrendering such a weapon to people who are guided by the Bible could such an assurance to the world be best secured.”

While Weinstein claimed that his group was “blown away by what we saw on the slide presentation,” and demanded that the Air Force stop the training immediately, another group, the [Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights](#), contacted Air Force leadership insisting that the training be reinstated. In a letter to the AETC commander, General Edward Rice, the Catholic League’s Bill Donohue argued that “there is absolutely nothing in the Constitution of the United States that disqualifies a presentation of St. Augustine’s ‘just war theory,’” referring to the presentation’s inclusion of material from the ancient Christian saint.

Donohue explained that just war theory “is taught at state institutions all across the nation — explicitly citing Augustine’s contribution — and never has it been an issue. Moreover, biblical passages are often cited when referencing the work of Rev. Martin Luther King. Should we similarly censor them?”

He noted that for years he and the Catholic League have “stood by the United States Air Force Academy leadership in their attempt to stave off assaults by Mikey Weinstein’s Military Religious Freedom Foundation, and others.” He noted that the goal of such groups “is to censor the public expression of religion on the campuses of military academies, and at military installations, in general. They are doing so under the guise of constitutional concerns.”

Concluded Donohue:

I have read the materials used in the class, and can assure you that no one — save an anti-religious zealot — would find fault with them. I therefore urge you to stand fast against these bullies and do what is academically right and constitutionally protected: reinstate the class.

Photo: United States Air Force Academy Cadet Chapel, exterior (top) and interior (bottom).



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