



Canadian Christian School Ordered Not to Teach “Offensive” Scriptures

A publicly funded Christian school in Alberta, Canada, has been ordered by the school board with which it is affiliated to refrain from teaching “any scripture that could be considered offensive to particular individuals,” especially homosexual, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons.



Cornerstone Christian Academy (CCA) is a K-12 institution in the tiny town of Kingman (population: 103), 38 miles southeast of the provincial capital of Edmonton. According to the [National Post](#), “Alberta funnels public funding into ‘alternative schools’ like CCA, which emphasize a particular language, culture, religion or subject. Each alternative school is offered through an Alberta school board. In CCA’s case, this involves a Master Agreement between the school and the BRSD [Battle River School Division], under which the board agreed not to meddle in the ‘essential nature’ of the school’s programming.”

But meddle it did. Earlier this year, BRSD chairwoman Laurie Skori e-mailed CCA chairwoman Deanna Margel, asking Margel to remove two things from the school’s handbook and statement of faith. First, she requested the deletion of I Corinthians 6:9, 10, which reads, in part: “Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” (Did some greedy, drunken swindler complain about it?) Then, just to make her opinion of CCA perfectly clear, she asked Margel to strike the word *quality* from the statement “CCA offers quality educational programming.”

Margel told the *Post* that CCA complied with Skori’s initial requests. “The specific reference and the word quality were not a big issue,” she said. “Out of respect of the relationship we’ve had with them, we can say ‘okay, this isn’t the key point here.’”

As usual, however, giving the forces of political correctness an inch did not satisfy them, and so the BRSD board decided to take a mile. Skori sent Margel another e-mail, this time informing her that the board’s “lawyer indicated that any scripture that could be considered offensive to particular individuals should not be read or studied in school.” And which scriptures would those be? Skori clarified it in a follow-up e-mail, listing one example: “any teachings that denigrate or vilify someone’s sexual orientation.”

“That’s a completely different directive, and it was shocking. Absolutely shocking,” Margel told the



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Post.

“BRSD spokesperson Diane Hutchinson said the board felt compelled to make the request after protections for gender and sexual minorities were added to the Alberta Human Rights Act in late 2015,” wrote the paper.

Shortly after the e-mail exchange, CCA sought legal counsel from the Justice Center for Constitutional Freedom (JCCF), an organization whose “mission,” according to its [website](#), “is to defend the constitutional freedoms of Canadians through litigation and education.”

JCCF sent an [eight-page letter](#) to the BRSD board, arguing that the board’s demands of CCA are illegal under both Canadian law and international human-rights treaties to which Canada is a signatory. It noted not only that the Canadian Supreme Court “has held that offensiveness is not sufficient to justify a restriction on expression” but also that “neither the School Act nor the Alberta Human Rights Act” — both of which Skori had cited as justification for the board’s actions — “prohibit expression that ‘could be considered offensive to particular individuals.’” JCCF observed that “such a prohibition is entirely unrealistic” because “nearly anything, and almost everything, could be considered offensive by someone.”

“Ms. Skori and other trustees enjoy the legal right to send their own kids to various schools that align with the parents’ beliefs and convictions. But these trustees have no right to impose their own ideology on schools they disagree with,” JCCF president John Carpay said in a [statement](#).

“The government’s duty of neutrality, required by the Supreme Court of Canada, means that a school board cannot dictate whether verses in the Torah, Koran, New Testament or Guru Granth Sahib are acceptable,” he added.

Margel told the *Post* she got an e-mail “reaffirming the board’s position” within eight hours of the JCCF letter’s dispatch. “How can you come to that conclusion in less than eight hours?” she asked rhetorically.

Last Thursday, the BRSD board held a public meeting at which “the board was planning to update the public that the academy had agreed to refrain from using the [I Corinthians] scripture,” reported the [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation \(CBC\)](#). “But instead, board chair Laurie Skori spoke about Cornerstone’s chairwoman taking issue publicly with the request.” She complained about the “public spectacle” that had been created, saying the board is “now at the center of a firestorm.”

“Hate mail is flowing, misinformation and fear-mongering are widespread,” Skori asserted. “The Cornerstone society has compromised our reputation, risked our safety and broken our trust.”

Margel, however, told the *Post* that “the reason for taking this to media attention was we felt that we were not being heard. We were totally being shut out of having a conversation.” The board had made its decision and did not appear willing to reconsider it despite JCCF’s well-argued missive. What else was CCA to do but expose these actions in hopes of bringing public pressure to bear on the situation? (Litigation was — and is — a possibility, but that too would make the matter public.)

The board insists that it is not trying to interfere with the school’s teachings, yet Skori’s e-mail specifically stated that certain Bible verses were not to be taught, and Hutchinson said that while the board isn’t going to ban any specific verses, “the question really will be, are we able to find the place where we can agree on where the boundaries are, and will [CCA] be able to live within them?” In other words, the board may not directly state which verses are prohibited, but it will make clear which sins



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are no longer to be identified as such, thereby declaring contrary verses off-limits.

The BRSD and CCA boards are scheduled to meet again to discuss the matter before June 27. Both sides want to bring the issue to a conclusion by the end of the month. If they are unable to reconcile their differences, CCA will have to look for a new school board. If it cannot find a board willing to accept the school, CCA will have the choice of either shutting down or going private.

Of course, public funding is the ultimate cause of the school's woes. After all, when the state is paying the piper, it gets to call the tune — and these days, the tune is not "Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy" but "Anything Goes."

Margel told the BRSD board that "we need every single word [of Scripture] to challenge us, to call us to greater understanding." Absent public money, CCA would be free — at least for now — to teach "every single word" in the Bible without compromise. The school was private from its founding in 1986 until 2009, so it surely could survive without taxpayer funding again. A return to private funding might also "challenge" the CCA board, parents, and students to gain a "greater understanding" of Philippians 4:19: "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus."



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