



Written by [James Heiser](#) on August 28, 2009

Students Sent Home for Anti-Islamic Shirts

When students show up at school wearing shirts emblazoned with the words, “Islam is of the Devil” it is not too hard to anticipate the course of events that will quickly follow.

According to FoxNews.com, “A handful of students were sent home from Florida schools this week after showing up in shirts proclaiming that ‘Islam is of the Devil,’ part of a fiery church campaign to ‘expose’ Islam as a religion of violence. Three high schoolers were forced to leave Tuesday for wearing the shirts made by the Dove World Outreach Center in Gainesville, Fla., where school officials say [they] violated the district’s dress codes. A middle schooler was also asked to change clothes because of the shirt, which got a 10-year-old fifth grader sent packing on Monday, when the incidents began.”



Offering up what might seem to many readers to be textbook example of doublespeak, the school district staff attorney Tom Wittmer told the *Gainesville Sun*: “Students have a right of free speech, and we have allowed students to come to school wearing clothes with messages.... But this message is a divisive message that is likely to offend students. Principals, I feel reasonably, have deemed that a violation of the dress code.” But the whole *point* of the right to free speech is the right to express one’s beliefs — especially when it comes to one’s political or religious views. A “right” which vanishes every time someone may be “offended” is not a right at all.

The Fox report continues: “Muslim advocates have pressed the church to remove the sign and say the anti-Islam message should not be accepted when ‘schools are supposed to be teaching tolerance for others,’ the *Gainesville Sun* reported. ‘It’s pretty offensive, isn’t it?’ said Saeed R. Khan, president of the Muslim Association of North Central Florida. ‘Particularly in a school setting where you are trying to create an atmosphere where people are supposed to respect each other and live with each other, where we have people of every ethnicity and every religion,’ he told the paper.”

The actions of “Muslim advocates” lay bare the character of what is actually going on: It is precisely the theological position of the church, and the liberty of the church to express her teaching, which is at issue in the controversy.

The purpose of schools is not to be devoted to such nebulous concepts as “teaching tolerance” or “create an atmosphere.” Of course, one might just as easily turn the argument around and ask: “Where is the tolerance for the religious views of these students? Where is the atmosphere of respect for the teachings of their church?” But obviously toleration and respect are only supposed to go one way.

Perhaps rather than obsessing on the nebulous notions of tolerance and respect, students would benefit



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from learning a little about the history— the *real* history— of Islam? Teach students the history of the Battle of Tours (732), the brutal mistreatment of Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land at the hands of Moslems that led the West to conduct the First Crusade, the Battle of Acre (1191), the Fall of Constantinople (1453), the hundreds of years it took for Spaniards to win their freedom from Moorish domination, the Siege (1529) and Battle (1683) of Vienna, or, more recently, the Armenian Genocide which began in 1915. Then students would not only have a much better understanding of Islam, but they would have an understanding very different from the politically correct view.



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