

AIR FORCE ATTACKED BY RELIGIOUS FOES

The U.S. Air Force recently suspended a class at Vandenberg Air Force Base after complaints that it violates church and state separation. The following is Bill Donohue's letter to Gen. Edward A. Rice, Jr., the Commander of Air Education and Training:

I have a three-fold interest in writing to you about the decision to suspend the "Christian Just War Theory" class at Vandenberg AFB: (a) I am the president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization (b) I am a former college professor (c) I am a veteran of the U.S. Air Force.

The decision to suspend the course is not only wrongheaded, it represents capitulation to political pressure emanating from the foes of religious liberty. For several years, I 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. The goal of these pressure 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.

As one who has written several books on this subject, I can testify that there is absolutely nothing in the Constitution of the United States that disqualifies a presentation of St. Augustine's "just war theory," and related biblical references. In fact, the First Amendment protects freedom of speech, as well as religious liberty. "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?

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.