

Exposing Deliberate Dishonesty by the Navy Spokesman

(Line by line rebuttal by Chaplain Klingenschmitt, of five recent articles in WorldNetDaily Stars & Stripes, Washington Times, Washington Post, Navy Times, 5-10 Jan 06)

“Navy officials said they made no policy changes since the start of his fast, and disputed charges that he would have been dismissed if not for his public protest.” (Stars & Stripes, 8 Jan 06)

For nine months, they were telling me I'd be kicked out, but as soon I declared my fast on 20 Dec 05, I was on national TV the next day, and the day after that they gave me a brand-new, three-year contract, as the Washington Post confirmed today.

“Navy officials said it is not a change in policy, and Klingenschmitt was not given a blanket order not to wear his uniform in public.” (Stars & Stripes, 8 Jan 06)

Yet the 16 Dec 05 letter posted on my web-site from my Commanding Officer blanketly states, “I direct you not to wear your uniform for this appearance or for any other media appearance without my express prior permission.”

“Officials also said that Klingenschmitt all along has been an active-duty sailor in good standing, with no disciplinary action pending, and has not received any punishment for language used in public forums.” (Stars & Stripes, 8 Jan 06)

Yet even the Navy spokesman acknowledged I was punished for one sermon three times in writing: I received a written letter of instruction, a downgraded fitness report, and a negative letter of recommendation telling a Navy board to terminate my career, stating “Chaplain Klingenschmitt over-emphasized his own faith system” in my sermons and prayers (despite leading my “best in Navy” community service programs). These documents are Appendices D, E, and G at www.persuade.tv

“The Navy maintains that chaplains are allowed to pray in the name of all deities -- including Jesus Christ -- during chapel services.” (Washington Times, 8 Jan 06)

If I can pray in Jesus name during chapel services, why was I punished for preaching Jesus Christ in the pulpit, in the chapel, during an optionally attended memorial service, and leading the congregation in a Christian prayer for salvation?

“However, at other public events, sensitivity to the needs of all those present is encouraged and chaplains may decline an invitation to pray if not able to do so for conscience reasons.”
(Washington Times, 8 Jan 06)

Smoking Gun Proof the Navy still characterizes the name of Jesus as “insensitive” and recommends we “exclude ourselves” if we claim any right to pray “in Jesus name” during public ceremonies. I will not exclude myself, and I won’t be excluded either.

“The policy hasn't changed,” he said. “That's the way it's always been.” (Washington Times, 8 Jan 06)

Wrong again. The policy did change, in 1998. Since the American Revolution chaplains have been allowed to pray according to their bishop’s faith, and never excluded by faith. Since 1860 federal law has allowed chaplains PUBLIC worship (in all settings) according to the manner and forms of our own church. But only in 1998 did Chief of Navy Chaplains establish a new (illegal) policy that if you pray “in Jesus name” then you “ought to exclude yourself from participation in public events as the prayer giver.” The only new thing is religious discrimination. It hasn’t always been that way.

“Lt. William Marks, a Navy spokesman, said yesterday there never were restrictions against Lt. Klingenschmitt and he is not sure why the chaplain considered himself victorious.” (Washington Times, 8 Jan 06)

For nine months, they were telling me I'd be kicked out for praying “in Jesus name,” but as soon I declared my fast, I was on national TV the next day, and the day after that they gave me a brand-new, three-year contract. (I’d say that’s a victory.)

“Lt. Marks also said the chaplain was reprimanded for the 2004 sermon because the sermon's content was “inappropriate” for a funeral, not because he mentioned Jesus.” (Washington Times, 8 Jan 06)

So now he acknowledges I was punished for my sermons? Then why did Lt Marks lie to Stars & Stripes, saying on 8 Jan 06 that Chaplain Klingenschmitt “has not received any punishment for language used in public forums?” And it’s foolish to say I wasn’t punished for mentioning Jesus, when my punishment was for “non-inclusive” preaching that Jesus Christ is the way to heaven! Is Lt Marks now the judge and jury of what “inappropriate” sermons can’t be preached in the chapel? The service was optionally-

attended, advertised as a “Christian memorial service,” honoring the Christian faith of the deceased. Shall Lt Marks deprive my Sailor of a Christian burial?

“There are almost 1,000 chaplains, and we cannot find one with the same problems he has had,” he said. (Washington Times, 8 Jan 06)

Can’t find ONE? Congressman Walter B. Jones has complaints from 160 Chaplains on his desk! Over 50 of these are suing the Navy! And you can’t find ONE? Did it ever occur to you, that you’ve already kicked them all out, and frightened the rest into conformity or silence? (And you’re defending this? Remember your oath...)

“Navy officials also said Lt. Klingenschmitt has not been formally punished, and there are no plans to take him off active duty.” (Washington Times, 8 Jan 06)

Then why does my negative fitness report (downgraded for my sermon) remain in my official record today? How will I get promoted in three years? When I’m passed over for promotion, won’t I be stripped of my uniform yet again? They still plan to fire me.

“But a spokesman for the Navy maintained that the chaplain, Lt. Gordon James Klingenschmitt, had been tilting at windmills all along. The Navy has no regulation against praying to Jesus and “has always encouraged every chaplain to pray according to his own individual faith during worship services,” said the spokesman, Lt. William Marks.” (Washington Post, 10 Jan 06)

No regulation against praying to Jesus? The 1998 Chief of Navy Chaplain policy memo (Appendix N at www.persuade.tv) is enforced more strictly than any regulation I’ve seen! Why does Chief of Navy Chaplains still tell us we “ought to exclude ourselves from participation in public events as the prayer giver” if we pray “in Jesus name?” Why did Chief of Navy Chaplain tell me in writing that if I pray publicly “in Jesus name” then I’m “denigrating other faiths” (Appendix Z) when I advocate for their freedom too?

“Marks, the Navy spokesman, said “nothing has changed” in Navy policy. He said chaplains are free to pray as they wish in any military chapel or worship service.”(Washington Post, 10 Jan 06)

We are not free. Evangelical chaplains are routinely punished for their chapel sermons with bad fitness reports, bad duty assignments, and passed over for promotion. 65 Chaplains are suing, most no longer in uniform, many punished in writing for sermons.

“But in other settings that are essentially secular in nature, such as a retirement or memorial ceremony attended by personnel of many faiths, “we ask -- ask -- that they be inclusive” and offer nonsectarian prayers, he said. “If a chaplain can't do that, he doesn't have to. We won't force him to,” Marks said.” (Washington Post, 10 Jan 06)

IT IS STRICTLY ENFORCED BY DEFAMATION. The Chaplain School Director defamed me to my Commanding Officer and called me an “immature chaplain” for claiming an academic right to pray in Jesus name in all settings. That defamation, and the defamation against scores of other evangelical chaplains, is common practice, and remains our punishment, guaranteeing we cannot get promoted. If it's only a “suggestion” and it's not “policy” then why is it so strictly enforced?

EVEN SUGGESTING “PRAYER CONTENT” VIOLATES THE CONSTITUTION:

1991 Supreme Court Majority, Lee vs. Weisman states,

The government may not establish an official or civic religion as a means of avoiding the establishment of a religion with more specific creeds...The State's role did not end with the decision to include a prayer and with the choice of clergyman. Principal Lee provided Rabbi Gutterman with a copy of the 'Guidelines for Civic Occasions' and advised him that his prayers should be nonsectarian. Through these means, the principal directed and controlled the content of the prayers. Even if the only sanction for ignoring the instructions were that the rabbi would not be invited back, we think no religious representative who valued his or her continued reputation and effectiveness in the community would incur the State's displeasure in this regard. It is a cornerstone principle of our Establishment Clause jurisprudence that it is no part of the business of government to compose official prayers for any group of the American people to recite as a part of a religious program carried on by government, Engel v. Vitale, (1962), and that is what the school officials attempted to do.

Note the Naval Chaplain School is also a government-run school. Their illegal mandatory prayer lectures are posted as Appendix J at www.persuade.tv . Lt Marks advocates continued “suggestion” of prayer content, abuse of rank, and violating the Constitution. Does he disagree with the Supreme Court?

“No one ever, ever told him he couldn't pray in uniform,” Navy spokesman Lt. William Marks said. (Navy Times, 10 Jan 06)

Heavens no, they only “suggested” it, then punished me for disobeying their enforced “suggestion.” But when a two-star Admiral who sits on your promotion board makes a written “suggestion” about censoring your prayers, it's not really a suggestion, is it?

“Klingenschmitt requested the letter after, he said, he was told he could not appear in uniform on news programs to promote his belief that the Navy is imposing on his right to say evangelical prayers in services meant for sailors of all faiths.” (Navy Times, 10 Jan 06)

The 16 Dec 05 letter from my Commanding Officer explicitly states, “I direct you not to wear your uniform for this appearance or for any other media appearance without my express prior permission.” That included forbidding praying in Jesus name on camera.

“The order did not direct that you ‘may not wear [your] uniform in public if [you] talk about religion or if TV cameras may be present,’” Crow wrote in a letter dated Jan. 6, citing a letter from Klingenschmitt. (Navy Times, 10 Jan 06)

Actually it did. Read it again: “I direct you not to wear your uniform for this appearance or for any other media appearance without my express prior permission.”

“‘Media appearances’ ... meant interviews, press conferences, press availabilities, and similar events ... where you deliberately engage with the press to express your personal views.” (Navy Times, 10 Jan 06)

If that’s what he meant, it’s not what he said. Is praying in Jesus name expressing my personal religious views? Then I was forbidden to do so during “any other media appearance,” period, until 6 Jan when clarification allowed me to worship on camera.

“Klingenschmitt said the 11 a.m. gathering Jan. 7, for which he sent out press releases to the media, did not constitute a “press conference.” He said in the press release that it was a “bona fide public worship service.” After offering communion, Klingenschmitt took off his Navy uniform jacket in the middle of the sidewalk, exchanged it for a priest’s collar and then took questions from the media.” (Navy Times, 10 Jan 06)

That’s how I was told to do it. The 6 Jan clarification letter let me worship in uniform, but not take media interviews unless I wore civilian clothes. So I changed clothes.

“In his original complaint, Klingenschmitt said his contract wasn’t renewed with the Navy because his command disagreed with the way he conducted services.” (Navy Times, 10 Jan 06)

For nine months, they were telling me I'd be kicked out, (because of my sermons and prayers), but as soon I declared my fast, I was on national TV the next day, and the day after that they gave me a brand-new, three-year contract.

“Marks said Klingenschmitt was never disciplined for the way he conducted his services” (Navy Times, 10 Jan 06)

Why did Lt Marks lie to the Navy Times? He plainly admitted to the Washington Times on 8 Jan 06 (two days earlier): “Lt. Marks also said the chaplain was reprimanded for the 2004 sermon because the sermon's content was ‘inappropriate’ for a funeral.”

He knew I was punished for that one sermon, three times in writing. The documents are Appendices D, E, and G at www.persuade.tv : a letter of instruction, a downgraded fitness report (still in my record today), and a negative recommendation to end my career (despite winning the “best in Navy” community service program).

“His contract was not held up.” (Navy Times, 10 Jan 06)

My contract was held up! I should've been eligible in April, my continuation letter was prepared in June, but my contract wasn't renewed until December, two days after my hunger strike began. Why the 7-9 month delay? (Hint, they're still investigating...)

“In public events, which are not divine services, chaplains of all faiths are asked to pray in a manner that does not exclude others...” Marks said. “The key different is that these events or ceremonies are command-sponsored or command-hosted, and are not of a religious nature, but may include religious elements such as invocations or benedictions.” (Navy Times, 10 Jan 06)

Prayer is always religious. Prayer is always worship. I cannot pray to the government's god, lest I commit idolatry, and I refuse to exclude myself, and I refuse to be excluded. Rather I insist on equal opportunity, as Navy Regulations Article 1164 proves religious discrimination violates core Navy values. How long shall I endure discrimination, by those who claim to include all faiths? The best way to include all faiths is to take turns expressing diversity, never enforce conformity to one civic religion of pluralism.

Pluralism is the opposite of diversity. Diversity says we can pray to many gods, taking turns. Pluralism forces conformity to one false civic god, excluding those who can't pray “government-sanitized” prayers.

“Marks said chaplains are asked to make sure their remarks are appropriate, and they are free to decline to speak.” (Navy Times, 10 Jan 06)

Is the “J” word now deemed “inappropriate” by the U.S. Government? Has Lt Marks become the judge and jury over Jesus Christ? Shall he continue to hide those Admirals who exclude me for praying “in Jesus name” in future events? They STILL defend their illegal policy of discriminatory exclusion. CONGRESS PLEASE STOP THE MADNESS.

NATIONAL NEWS EDITORS, PLEASE INVITE THE ADMIRALS TO COME OUT AND ANSWER THE PRESS. I respectfully invite them to defend their religious discrimination before the press. I invite any of them to debate me on this, and I'll give exclusive interviews to any national public media that invites them to come out, starting with the Chief of Navy Chaplains. Please invite him to defend Appendices N and Z in block 4 of my web-site: www.persuade.tv

“No disciplinary action has been taken against Klingenschmitt, Marks said, and the chaplain returned to Naval Station Norfolk Monday.” (Navy Times, 10 Jan 06)

No comment. (Yet).

“Klingenschmitt is free to counsel soldiers, but isn't conducting sermons.” (Navy Times, 10 Jan)

After being punished for my sermons on ship, I've now been removed from the preaching rotation on shore.

“We want to investigate all of his complaints,” Marks said. “We want to make sure everything was handled correctly.” (Navy Times, 10 Jan 06)

You've got to be kidding. The Navy's been “investigating” my complaint since April, and has yet to issue ONE single ruling or finding of fact. Why is the Navy judge taking so long? What's become of my due process rights?

CONGRESS PLEASE HELP. THE INJUSTICE IS UNBEARABLE. THEIR LACK OF INTEGRITY IS OBVIOUS BY THEIR BACK-PEDDALING AND LIES TO NATIONAL MEDIA. WHO WILL INSIST THEY TELL THE TRUTH? WHEN WILL THEY START?

“You'll hear [Klingenschmitt] say the Navy won't let him pray in Jesus' name in uniform, but that's simply not true,” Marks told WND. “That's a misleading statement.” (WorldNetDaily, 5 Jan 06)

The Chief of Navy Chaplains Rear Admiral Lou Iasiello (who sits on my promotion boards) told me in writing that if I pray publicly “in Jesus name” that I'm “denigrating other faiths” and therefore I “ought to exclude myself from participation in public events as the prayer giver.” Read Appendices Z and N at www.persuade.tv.

Marks says the Navy actually encourages chaplains to pray “according to their individual faiths in voluntary divine services” – the distinction being that “divine services” are optional events such as a Sunday morning Mass or weekly Bible study. These services are different from non-voluntary “command settings,” such as a change-of-command ceremony, where a chaplain might give an invocation or benediction. It is the latter type of event for which the Navy advises its chaplains to pray in an “inclusive” way. “These are official military events that are *not* of a religious nature,” Marks noted. “A command-sponsored event is not a 'divine service.' In those instances, we ask that chaplains be inclusive.” (WorldNetDaily, 5 Jan 06)

They want me to pray a non-religious prayer? How? There’s no such thing as a secular prayer. Prayer is an act of worship, a communication to Almighty God. And my prayers have ALWAYS been inclusive, since I end my prayers saying “WE pray to you Almighty God, and I pray in Jesus name, Amen.” Think about that.

Both type events are technically “public” since members of the public can attend base church services if they so choose. So, Marks contends, Klingenschmitt's statement that he cannot pray in Jesus name in public is not truthful. (WorldNetDaily, 5 Jan 06)

The obvious fact remains, they still want me to pray differently in one setting than I do in the other setting. They want to confine Jesus to the chapel, or exclude me from saying his name outside the church! The government still wants to sanitize my prayers!

Marks also questioned the appropriateness of a 2004 memorial service sermon for which Klingenschmitt was reprimanded in which he gave an invitation to embrace Christianity. “This was not a religious service,” Marks said. “It was a simple memorial ceremony.” (WorldNetDaily, 5 Jan 06)

Lt Marks wasn’t there. It was optionally-attended, in the Chapel, we sang hymns, read scripture, and I preached a sermon. It was advertised as a “Christian memorial service” not a “Simple” memorial service. It honored the Christian faith of the deceased, not the secular Navy. The ship also held TWO secular memorials onboard, not including the Christian memorial service in the chapel. I led the deceased Sailor to Christ preaching the same sermon I later preached at his memorial. He deserved a Christian burial.

A fellow Navy chaplain, Lt. Cmdr. Alan Wilmot, also disagrees with Klingenschmitt's interpretation of prayer policies. “I have never been counseled in how I pray, and I think it's grossly inaccurate to say we're not allowed to pray in Jesus' name,” Wilmot told WND. (WorldNetDaily, 5 Jan 06)

Yet LCDR Wilmot's own superior, the Chief of Navy Chaplains, has written a policy memo that applies "to all chaplains Navy-wide" that says if we pray "in Jesus name" then we "ought to exclude ourselves from participation."

Wilmot says he uses two kinds of prayers in his official duties, formal and informal. Referring to the informal prayers, Wilmot said, "I pray in Jesus' name every Sunday" during regular church services. Added Wilmot: "When we're talking about a Bible study or a worship service, realistically speaking there are no limitations at all." (WorldNetDaily, 5 Jan 06)

And yet I was punished for quoting the Bible at a chapel worship service.

"I think praying more inclusively is actually evangelical," he said. "As an evangelical, I want people who are not Christian to accept Christ as savior. In order for that to happen, I need to be able to build a relationship with them, to develop a relationship so they would actually listen to what I have to say. ... So I don't want to highlight a difference between us that would push them away" by ending a prayer in Jesus' name. (WorldNetDaily, 5 Jan 06)

LCDR Wilmot believes the name of Jesus is too offensive to speak in public. Why doesn't he also remove the cross from his uniform, and stop offending people with it?

"When I end a formal prayer with 'in Your most holy name we pray,' does Jesus not know who I'm talking to?" asked Wilmot. (WorldNetDaily, 5 Jan 06)

Jesus said, "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" Luke 9:26. And "out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks."

Klingenschmitt says if that type of prayer represents Wilmot's "conscience," he believes he should be free to pray that way. "But why does the government not allow me the same freedom of conscience?" he asks. Wilmot also mentioned on larger ships the chaplain says a prayer at 10 p.m. over the PA system: "It's not a voluntary audience," he said, so those prayers should be more generic. (WorldNetDaily, 5 Jan 06)

Should Be? Or Must Be? There's a big difference. "Should" means it's optional, and I can ignore the suggestion, for it's MY discretion. "Must" means I'm permitted no discretion, like when I was punished in writing, so it's no longer a suggestion, it's enforced as mandatory policy. The discretion is no longer mine, it's the government's discretion, and they violate the First Amendment to establish an official civic religion.

Klingenschmitt interprets the evening ship-wide prayer as “public worship,” so he believes a chaplain should be able to pray according to his own faith traditions. “Can I pray in Jesus' name on the ship's microphone?” asked Klingenschmitt. “If I cannot, then they're censoring my prayers. My proposal is to share the prayer with diverse faiths. The way to include all faiths is to take turns, not to censor the prayer-giver by enforcing the commanding officer's religion on all the sailors.” Klingenschmitt says his reference to the commanding officer's religion refers to the “generic, government, civic religion, which is the official religion of the Navy.”

Wilmot rejects the idea there is an official policy from the Navy restricting prayers at public events, calling the letter cited by Klingenschmitt on [his website](#) as “nothing but an advisory” that chaplains pray in an inclusive way at formal events. (WorldNetDaily, 5 Jan 06)

If it's nothing but an advisory, why is it strictly enforced? Why did the Chaplain School Director defame me to my C.O., and my C.O. tell a Navy board to end my career, in writing, stating “Chaplain Klingenschmitt overemphasized his own faith system” in his sermons and prayers? And why does Chief of Navy Chaplains defend this?

He says he wishes there were a specific order that would specify a consequence for any chaplain that does pray in Jesus' name in a command setting. “There isn't any official Navy policy that says that,” the chaplain said, “and I frankly think there should be.” (WorldNetDaily, 5 Jan 06)

Chaplain Wilmot calls for government punishment of my prayers, and of other chaplains who don't pray the way he does. Chief of Navy Chaplains will promote him quickly. Watch and see.

“I can think of no reason why adding the formula 'in the name of Jesus, Amen' is necessary in a command prayer. ... There's a real virtue to being sensitive to other people's feeling when we're in a command setting.” (WorldNetDaily, 5 Jan 06)

There's far more virtue in refusing to compromise your conscience, risking your career, but remaining true to Jesus Christ. And true sensitivity advocates for their freedom too.

The controversial memorial-service sermon Klingenschmitt preached, Wilmot contends, falls into a gray area but is more of a “command setting.” Because a Navy crew is expected to attend such a service, it turns into a de facto involuntary event, he said, so discretion should be used. (WorldNetDaily, 5 Jan 06)

The crew wasn't pressured to attend, they were invited to a “Christian memorial service” that honored the faith of the deceased. And I used my discretion. My discretion told me to preach Jesus Christ, and honor the faith of the deceased, not the faith of the crowd.

Wilmot agreed with Marks on the issue of wearing a uniform when expressing a private opinion. "None of us are allowed to wear a uniform when we're addressing specifically religious and political issues," he said. (WorldNetDaily, 5 Jan 06)

You can't wear a uniform when talking about Jesus Christ? Is praying in Jesus name (or claiming a right to under federal law and proper Navy regulations) forbidden in uniform, as too religious, and too controversial? If true, Chaplain Wilmot should never discuss religion in uniform, nor appeal unlawful policies using his chain of command. Ironically, he wore his uniform while giving interviews to WorldNetDaily, and expressing his religious views, as an official spokesman for Chief of Navy Chaplains, who also wears HIS uniform when writing prayer policy, to force his civic faith on the rest of us.

Wilmot said he believes Bush signing an executive order to clarify the Navy policy is "totally unnecessary." (WorldNetDaily, 5 Jan 06)

He's entitled to his opinion, but over 90% of Americans in the WND poll agreed with Chaplain Klingenschmitt, and less than 10% agreed with the Navy. The Navy spokesmen have clearly lost touch with the American people they claim to serve.

The Navy spokesmen would be well-advised to align their statements with the White House spokesman, Mr. Scott McClellan, who recently clarified the White House position, and committed to future action by the President:

WND asked McClellan: "Does the president believe that the Navy should engage in this suppression of the First Amendment's guarantee of the free exercise of religion?"

Responded the spokesman: "Well, the president believes strongly in the free exercise of religion. And he believes that it's important that our military personnel be able to freely express themselves. ... And we value the contributions of our military chaplains to our men and women in uniform, and we're committed to safeguarding the ability of people to freely express their religious views."

WND pressed on the executive order issue, asking if Bush would sign one guaranteeing chaplains' religious freedom.

"Let me make clear," McClellan said. "I'm not talking about any specific matter, but I'm talking about the principles and what we're committed to doing."