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# Seminary Self-Defense for “Besieged Liberals?”

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Religion New Service reports that Chicago Theological Seminary is offering an “online self-defense course” for members of the United Church of Christ who face criticism when conservatives accuse them of “not believing the Bible.”

From RNS release, published by The Christian Century:

*A seminary is conducting an online self-defense course for United Church of Christ members besieged by conservative reactions to their denomination’s liberal social positions on gay rights and other issues. A six-week course offered by Chicago Theological Seminary, a UCC-affiliated institution, helps those accosted for “not believing in the Bible,” said a UCC statement promoting the class. The course—“Biblical and Theological Self-Defense for the United Church of Christ”—began March 27 and is being taught by Susan Thistlethwaite, president of the seminary.*

*In attending numerous denominational meetings and conferences throughout the country, Thistlethwaite said she hears UCC members “saying that they feel as if they are under attack and they feel ill-equipped when someone says, ‘Why do you go to that gay church?’ or claims that the UCC’s social and theological positions are ‘against the Bible.’”*

*“We need to help our people come to their own defense,” she said. “There are many who feel like they don’t know how to respond when attacked from a place of biblical literalism.”*

The RNS article explains that the UCC was the first American denomination to ordain openly-gay ministers and among the first to recognize same-sex marriage.

According to a release from the UCC, the course will cover material “ranging from the theoretical, including basic introductions to theology, Christology and ethics, to the ultra-practical, such as how best to respond to verbal attacks against your church or your personal beliefs.”

This is, by any measure, an interesting development. The UCC has adopted positions that are directly at odds with the Bible, and then has to offer its members an on-line booster shot in order to help them deal with the criticism that they have adopted liberal positions that are directly at odds with the Bible. I don’t think this is going to be a winning strategy.

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