

## Labelling the child - the child and the religious label

Putting a religious label on the child is the least justifiable of all the labels you might put on a child. It is an attempt to unduly influence or force a religious label on the child for life. Nobody can ultimately control the religious identity of their children and nobody has the right to. A child is not public property and a label tries to get it treated as if it is.

The popes have occasionally refused to condemn violence against religious minorities if they felt that to say nothing was best for those carrying the Catholic label. Other leaders have done something similar so they can look like global peacemakers but at the same time they are looking out ultimately for their own people. That is an outrage if the "own people" are only label carriers. What about the children that have to be allowed to die for the sake of the label that others carry?

Labelling the child as say Catholic is used as an excuse for putting her or him in a Catholic school even though putting people of all religions in a school promotes integration and acceptance and tolerance.

Not all will agree with the child being labelled at all.

Not all will agree that the label put on the child is warranted. Christians hold that if Mormons call their children Christian this is wrong for Mormonism is a perversion of Christianity and is not Christian.

Labelling a child as an adherent of any religion is as nonsensical as labelling the budgie a Catholic because its owners are Catholic.

Putting the child through the initiation ceremonies of baptism and confirmation is often only making her go through the motions and encouraging her to be dishonest when she can't make a free and rational decision to believe and especially if she has made a decision that religion is just superstitious nonsense. Only a believer who has thought it through and made a genuinely free choice should be considered to be an adherent of the religion she or he joins.

Labels can create pressure on the child to stay in the religion and think of himself as an adherent. Christians are dedicated to Christianity by baptism and confirmation at their baptism. They are told they are obligated to stay Christian forever. Some bullies say that once you are Christian, you should not be taken seriously if you convert to something else for "Once Christian always Christian".

If the child can be defined under one label why not another? Why not describe the child of terrorist parents as affiliated with their terrorist group?

It is startling how people can say things like, "Religion is the biggest cause of wars on the planet" and "The last thing we need is a new religion appearing!" and then stick a religious label on their child.

Telling a young child there is a higher authority than their parents leaves them open to manipulation by anyone who can convince them they know the will of that authority. Given how contradictory and open to interpretation religious texts are, this has historically proven simple to do even with adults.

*Should We Label Children Based on the Religious Beliefs of their Parents?*

Religion should not make it obligatory for its members to pass on the faith to their children. It is none of the religion's business.

Even if parents have the right to encourage you to believe, it does not follow that it is their business what you believe.

Labelling instead of letting the young be free to chose, leaves to them feeling unconnected to their religion. They cannot take ownership of the religion or its beliefs. Sometimes sectarians hate their own religion and take it out on other ones.

Labelling a child say a Catholic, insults faiths that say all children are born into their faith or religion until the parents turn them into something else. In Islam, you don't convert but revert. The Muslims reason that we have an innate faith in God and sense that there is a holy book and prophet even if we don't know the details. We have enough to make us Muslim by birth even if our society is wholly Christian. It does not matter if some Muslims don't know enough about their faith to be offended. They are still being insulted.

Some say that it makes more sense to say that a baby is born into a religion such as Islam than to say it can be put through a ceremony that puts it into the religion. If the religion or label is natural then the ceremony contradicts this. They say that neither position makes sense but a child becoming a religious member by birth is not as foolish as saying the child needs to be changed by a ceremony into a religious member.

Labels are often based on assumptions. Primarily, this is usually an assumption of faith - a belief in the divine, whether the child has come to the decision that they believe in God or not. These assumptions also carve the world up in simplistic categories and ignore plural religious identities and the increasing number of interfaith families whose members are adherents of diverse faiths and none.

To talk about a Christian child or a Muslim child, is putting the religious structure before faith. It is putting what you want the child to be thought as before what the child wants to be. The child has not and cannot make an informed choice. It will be harder for her or him . Such a label is at best meaningless or at worst abusive. Adults impose belonging to the religion on the child.