

SECULAR THOUGHTS ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religions to be covered in Religious Education

The state has no right to order that any particular religion be covered. Let the school in collaboration with the students and the parents make the decision.

Time

If a religion says God comes first, it follows that the religion matters the most and should get the most time space. Religion must permeate the other classes as well were possible. For example, history should always include the history of Israel and Jesus for Christians. Biology should stay away from evolution. Geography should focus on Rome and the Holy Land.

If religion is nonsense, the child is wasting her time by learning it when she could be learning something else.

Teaching about religion without indoctrinating

Schools are not the only thing that teaches. Sadly much of what passes for information about religion is loaded. It is inadvertently teaching religious doctrine! The Church can't ask scholars to accept it as a monotheistic religion. That is asking them to accept the mystery of the Trinity which to non-Christians is three Gods that we pretend are one. The Church cannot ask us to accept that it is Christianity when Christ means a political warrior king appointed by God so Jesus was not a Christ of any sort never mind the Christ. The Church cannot ask us to hold that the pope really is the xxx pope since Peter. That is a controversial matter. The Church cannot ask secularists to believe it loves sinners and hates sins when in fact it is people not sins that are the problem.

While it is okay for children to be taught about religion in the state schools, it is abusive for the schools to be used to indoctrinate them for at a young age they are so impressionable and prey to bad habits and piety can be a disease that can never be cured. It is against their right to liberty. The end result will be a kind of hypnosis not real faith. Faith faith develops and is not the result of brainwashing.

There is no liberty without correct information – just a false liberty that is really exploitation in disguise. It is different to teach children facts for facts are true and religion is just superstition, fraud, conjecture and blind faith.

Atheism or at least secularism that tells people to pray if they want to but not to allow their lives or thinking to be dictated to by any god or religion, however, should be spread in the public schools for it is right. Religion should not be for it is wrong and does a lot of harm and is an extra excuse for bigotry. School is for teaching facts. Classes must be available for those who want to study atheism and/or the case against religion in depth.

But surely even if atheism is true you don't want people accepting it because they were conditioned?

There are many different views within every religion and many different religions. For any group to run your school, results in that group making sure that your children hear only one side of the story. I mean, for example, that they are only told the positive things about Christianity and Jesus Christ. The other side is pushed aside and dishonestly hidden. The dubious arguments against Christianity might get a mention and are used to convey the impression that all arguments against it are flawed when the opposite is the case. No religion that controls schools then has any right to call itself honest. Schools are for instilling an honest grasp of and allegiance to facts so the use of schools to indoctrinate has got to stop and to be made illegal. If religion wants to run schools it should not be using them to propagate its faith. It should have Sunday Schools which are optional instead. Ideally, children should be able to go to a different Sunday school every week to learn about and from different religions instead of their parents'. The Church will protest that this makes out one religion to be as good as another. But that is not the point. The point is that when each individual has to decide for themselves what religion they are going to join they should have all the freedom and help they need to make an informed decision. What is the point of having the right religion if you do not freely choose it but are manipulated by the priests and society to join or stay in it?

How can religious education be fair? Should humanism always be on a religious education syllabus?

Humanism is not a system or religion. There is nothing stopping a beggar or a king or an atheist or a pope from getting some things right. Humanism is about accepting human wisdom wherever it is found. Humanism refuses to stop searching and keep learning. The syllabus does not need to mention humanism. All it needs to do is explore why some people think a

religious doctrine or practice is beneficial and why some don't. Being left to make up your own mind is crucial.

Religion rides on the back of spiritual laziness

The problem of people using the knowledge they got but not developing it or thinking about it is a huge one. Religion thrives on this form of laziness. There is a degradation in living on knowledge drummed into you that you did not make your own by thinking, discovering, developing and communicating. Those who want schools to be reformed fear that atheists and humanists want an atheist or humanist ideology to take over the religious one. But the proper approach is for critical thinking and evaluation to take the place of indoctrination so that students can make their own informed choices. Religion hates this suggestion when it should prefer people to base their lives on information and evidence and careful thought instead of on faith. Religion cares about what you think not how you think and many other systems are just as bad. This has to stop. It shows religion does not truly respect its adherents for it treats them as, "Don't learn how to think but come to us and we will look after you." That is arrogant and patronising. It is often tragic as well you look at the blood-stained pages of religious history.

Sectarianism is fostered by faith schools

Faith schools are often said to be the best schools. Usually this is said because most pupils go on to do well in life. Imagine a school is a Catholic one. Are the pupils working harder BECAUSE they are encouraged in an us versus them mentality? It is a fact that in a sectarian society, pupils of one religion's school will try to do well so that they can have a superior rank in society and surpass the pupils of other religions. Protestant schools in Ireland tried to encourage Protestants to become middle class and keep Catholics downtrod.

Faith schools tend to welcome children of a particular faith. They are given priority. Some schools tolerate children of other faiths. Others dismiss them. The excuse is that the school has an ethos to uphold. The ethos refers to the religious spirituality of the school. A Catholic school even when teaches maths does it as an act of honour to a God who has supposedly revealed himself in the Church. So though it does not look religious all the time it is in attitude. Despite the fact that schools can have an ethos that is not based on any specific religious understanding, the ethos is used as an excuse for discriminating against children and giving a fake welcome to children of other faiths or none. If some religions have more dangers and errors than another, it follows that their schools cannot be all equally good in terms of their religious ethos. There is subliminal indoctrination going on when the school has a religious ethos. A loyal Muslim cannot send her child to a Catholic school. Yet the school and the priest will lie to her that she can.

State schools must not be allowed to mistreat children by segregating children of one religion from the children of another during religion classes. That is not about building true cohesion.

Separating children in order to teach them different religious doctrines (we are not thinking so much of ethical teachings) is just saying, "Our religion is good which is why we teach it and not the other one. Therefore the other one is bad." Children see that as saying the other children are bad.

It is worse when each religion has a state school from which it excludes members of other faiths. That is giving the message: It's bad for you to associate with them. Even though you could all be put in one school - and each religion can have religion classes of its own just for its own members - it is not right that you should be in the same school as them.

If you claim that the religious education is not about indoctrinating but putting forward the religion for the consideration of the children, it remains true you are treating the other faith as bad.

The role religion plays in blocking cohesion between different religious communities must be acknowledged. For example, the Catholics will frown on the person making a new religion though he or she has inadequate reasons for believing in her or his own. Such a Catholic would be asked to leave a Catholic school.

If children learn sectarianism at home, the segregation at school will only be taken as evidence that what they have learned is right.

Value free education?

The Church says there is no such thing as a value-neutral education. True. The Church knows that students need to see the value of hard and honest work. There is no need to go further than that. What has religion as such got to do with it?

It is impossible to deliver an education that does not represent values. These values may be religious or secular. Schools teaching secular values are neutral on the religion question and therefore promote greater unity in the state. We know that

children at school must be taught how to think not what to think. Secularists and religious alike agree that children must be helped develop an honest character so that they will not steal or hurt others by lies. We can pass on values without religion.

Religious people when they do real good, are living their human values. They pretend that these are religious values.

To teach a child philosophy that helps the child form healthy relationships and integrate well into society and respect the law is far better than teaching a child religion. Philosophy is not about instilling dogma but about helping people to realise things. Philosophy is really about reminding us about what we can know and what we don't know. Our system is philosophy not dogma.

You cannot let your child be manipulated by religion even for a peaceful life. It's the child that matters and not just a peaceful life. The child will know that he or she is not being respected and one that is brought up right will not consent to being used.

Religion makes morality too strict. If you bite your nails in front of other people you are doing wrong against them and disgusting them. But if you are on your own you can do this without censure. Say God exists. He will not approve of your wrongs which makes wrong far more wrong. In addition to hurting a person you have hurt him too. Religion makes morality tighter. Just be ordinary. You don't need a tighter morality. It is bad enough to worry about people and doing right by them than to worry about God as well! That God wants to be worried about indicates that he is strict. Don't forget that a morality with too many rules is not a morality at all.

Is there a right to have Faith Schools funded by the State?

Priests tell parents that they have the right to demand religious run schools that indoctrinate their children. This is rubbish. Even if children have a right to a religious education, it does not follow that this should take place in schools. There is no reason why children can't be given a totally secular education and go to Sunday school or something.

The priests see themselves as parents of the souls - they supposedly remove sins and open Heaven to the children. They should be honest and say it's their own rights over the spiritual children they have fathered they are worried about. But in a world that scorns the undiluted Christian faith they do not dare.

The priests are trying to manipulate the parents so that the Church will have the opportunity to inflict its faith on the children.

The Vatican stated in 2009 that teaching children about religion in a neutral way was a violation of the rights of children. It whined that this led to relativism, confusion and violated the children's right to be taught which religion was true - the Roman Catholic faith, surprise, surprise! The Vatican actually does believe religion should be taught in a non-evangelistic way - it considers Catholicism to be the only exception. And the Vatican claims to be trying to love God with all its heart and mind which clearly shows that the rights of children are not its true concern. It doesn't want to moan that the neutral teaching of religion is against God's rights for it knows nobody really cares.

If Catholics are given the right to use schools to promote their religion, dangerous religions such as scientology and Islam will expect to do the same. Catholics insisting on the right to indoctrinate children are simply showing no concern for the children.

Faith Schools - Indoctrination Factories?

Religion should not be taught to children in a way that seeks an unfair advantage.

Religion cannot force others to listen to its message except through the school system. Even parents cannot force a child to hear the gospel even if they try.

Faith schools lead to problems. Pentecostal faith schools damage children by making them believe God the Holy Spirit speaks through them and makes them speak in unknown languages. It urges that responsibility be handed over to God instead of yourself. Scientology schools will teach them that a dose of science fiction is true. Rastafarian Schools promote the taking of cannabis as a holy rite. Islamist Extremist schools will urge pupils to hate and to murder "outsiders".

Most Catholics today would agree, despite Church teaching, that faith in God and in the Church is only opinion not knowledge. Those that are consistent will see that schools are about imparting knowledge so it would be inappropriate for schools to be in any way religious.

Should religiously funded schools be forced to employ people against their ethos?

A teacher of religion can be secretly an Atheist. There is no reason to think that that person necessarily has to do things or say things that undermine the ethos.

Teachers and principals have been fired because they were living in a relationship against the rules of the Church eg a cohabiting couple. It is hard to reconcile this with the Church teaching that, "We are all sinners but we must urge others not to sin". The sinner who teaches in a Catholic school is not urging the pupils to sin merely by his showing bad example. It is up to each individual to have the sense not to do things just because other people do them.

Are faith schools better?

Some studies show that faith schools are better than non-religious schools.

But these studies cannot speak about all faith schools and all non-religious schools. It is hard to believe that a Mormon or Seventh-Day Adventist school which opposes science and truth could really be a good school. So what faith are we talking about? It is dishonest for people to say faith schools are the best when they actually mean say Catholic schools or Presbyterian schools.

The studies do not consider other variables. Faith schools might seem to be better than non-religious schools if the believers have more money and more support than the non-believers. It is money not faith that is making them better.

If faith schools are ever better than secular schools, the reason is not because they are faith schools. Being a faith school in itself does not indicate that it must be necessarily better. Even in faith schools, going to classes intended to put the faith into the child to be optional for the child. Religion cannot force people to listen to its message except through controlling schools - bear that in mind.

Many faith schools teach a watery form of religion that is pretty close to secularism. These schools are really almost faith schools in name only.

Faith schools shouldn't be better than secular schools. If they are, is it because the teachers and parent committees are too aware of the flaws of the faith school system and are over-compensating in other areas? If you run a school that wastes time teaching superstition you may feel that you should maximise the effectiveness of teaching other subjects to make up for this.

Faith schools promote superstition and by separating children of one faith from another you are tacitly endorsing sectarianism and fear and division. If faith schools exceed secular schools then this is in spite of their inherent badness and not because of it. Faith schools separate children according to a religious label from other children bearing a different one thus implying, "This school is good because we are us and we are not them. We are holy and have the best religion. That is why we need a school with our religion's ethos."

Can a secular nation judge what a faith school is?

The state that recognises a school as a state school is saying the religion running it is really a religion.

Secularism may struggle to learn where religion begins and where religion ends. Yet it seems to many that it may need to try and know in order to take care that religion does not get privileges that non-religion doesn't have. Many argue that the state judging what is a religion and what isn't, opens the door for religious people to get favourable treatment under the law if the state regards them as comprising a real religion. The state assessing what is a religion will drag the state into theology and superstition. When members of one faith are recognised as a religion by the state and members of another are not, that is unfair and a violation of secularism. This principle forbids faith schools.

School is for teaching facts not faith and certainly not religious faith

School is for teaching established facts. Religion does not depend on established facts. It is not interested in scientific verification. Therefore religion should not be taught in school. Science comes first. Science stresses experimentation and questioning and getting the facts while religion opposes this approach though it pretends it does not. Science will help us not airy fairy tales. If you want to teach something in a school you should be able to prove its truth.

Even if the Virgin Mary appeared to you right now and said the Roman Catholic Church was the true Church you could not take her word for it for it might be a demon instead. Even the Church says that most revelations said to be from Heaven are dubious. What you would have to do first is make sure that the Catholic Church is the only right religion and not only that but the best. But, that is impossible for all religions make the same claim and sound convincing when you hear their side.

To claim to be right in religion is sheer arrogance and wilful blindness. What is happening is the religionists make assumptions and they bend everything to fit them which is a barrier to understanding and sincere respect for other people.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

“If the law starts forbidding religion to recruit children in school and through school then the fundamentalists will get stronger in power for they will gain more followers who fear that the secular world is trying to phase religious faith out.”

The fundamentalists themselves often are too cowardly to go out and fight for their beliefs. It is only a vocal minority that do the ranting and the interfering with politics. If we place enough temptation in the way of the fundamentalist, the fundamentalist will soften up.

The state should provide education against fundamentalist propaganda.

The argument if correct proves that moderate religion turns extremist when it meets suppression of any kind. The only answer would be to keep religion out of schools and work out a plan for handling or preventing the turning to extremism. Schools might have to debunk fundamentalism.

It is odd that Pope Francis who encourages fear of the Devil and sees his work everywhere is not classed as a fundamentalist. A person can be fundamentalist in one thing but not another. Too often people are called fundamentalist in an effort to discredit them. Is it really up to the state to decide who is a religious fundamentalist? No that is a religious matter.

“Parents have the obligation to raise their children according to their own religious faith.”

They do not. At best they might have the right to decide but there is no obligation.

“Parents have the right to raise their children according to their own religious faith.”

It depends. Do parents have the right to teach their children that the Battle of Hastings never happened and was a lie? No. Yet religion claims the right to put belief before fact in history and science. There is no need to raise children in your beliefs and when rights depend on needs the parents cannot have the right. A parent just needs to make suggestions and show by good example what the right thing to do is.

Another problem is this. Faith schools lead to segregation and sectarianism. If these schools vanish, faith will be taught in the home. This would seem to be even worse than teachers promoting the faith because the parents will often teach the faith poorly or in a bigoted way. This will have its dangers. People need to make up their own minds regarding this matter.

"No country has the right to ban children being raised as members of a religion".

Every country has the right to take steps that at least don't encourage religion or its propagation. Indeed, it is a nation's duty to be neutral.

And the notion that a child of six or seven is a Muslim or a Catholic is absurd. It is a lie and dehumanises. Labels dehumanise. That is what they want to do and that is what would happen anyway as a result of them. They cut both ways. It is bad enough to do that to an adult but a child?

CONCLUSION

Religion must not be taught in a recruiting or indoctrinating fashion in schools funded by the state.

Religious indoctrination of children is child-abuse even when the indoctrination seems on the face of it to be pretty harmless. When a child is indoctrinated to accept as true a religion that says her or his parents will go to Hell if they die unrepentant for cohabiting then that is a clear proof that the child is being abused. Nobody has the right to do that to a child and criminal proceedings must be considered against the clergy whose teachings are responsible.

The statutes typically demand that self-esteem be facilitated in schools and educational establishments. Thus it makes no sense for schools to be Christian or Jewish or Islamic. It is against the law for they are about God not self-esteem.