

RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGE, EXAMPLES OF THE INEQUALITIES IT CAUSES

What is religion?

Religion comes from a word meaning to bind. Religion is when people are bound together by doctrine. Since nobody is perfect, you can be a disobedient member of a religion. But to claim to be a member of a religion when you believe you know that it is false is to render the term hypocrite meaningless. If belief is not an essential ingredient of a religion then nothing is. Christians, for example, who condemn the teaching of Jesus are not Christians at all.

There is organised religion. There is also unorganised religion.

Those who say, "We are not into religion but are spiritual," are forming unorganised religion. This is true if they understand what spiritual means. There are people who do not believe in spirits who use the term. Spirituality means getting a sense of meaning in life from belief in the supernatural and the more emphasis that is put on the supernatural the more spiritual the person is.

Treatments such as Reiki and Reflexology claim to be beyond scientific verification at this time in history. They talk about invisible mysterious and occult energy. These treatments are really organised religion. The state must not give the practitioners any public funding or state support.

When Religion Seeks Special Privileges

Religion has no right to any special privileges.

A religion often claims to have the truth. If it really does, then clearly the state must use its principles when making laws. What if a Catholic state allows contraception though it is against the Catholic faith? The state might argue that the Catholic principle of freedom of conscience must be taken into account. It overrides the obligation to ban contraception. You have to weigh the rules for not all rules are equally important in every circumstance. But this argument is dishonest and foolish. The state cannot ban every evil so it has to be selective in what it bans. It may legalise contraception if contraception doesn't do that much harm. If it is as bad as the Church says then it has to be banned pure and simple. The state cannot worry too much about freedom of conscience - for example, can it let animals be cruelly bled to death to satisfy certain religious requirements? If freedom of conscience is being considered, then it is not respectful to the conscience of the Catholic majority to allow contraception. Also, do you respect the conscience of the Catholics that they have or the conscience they should have as Catholics? The two are not necessarily the same. For example, some Catholics agree with abortion. Catholics however should not agree with it. To respect the conscience of rebel religionists in preference to the doctrine-makers and authorities of that religion is not to respect the religion. Its the converse.

Religion must not get funding from the state to fund purely religious initiatives. A religious adoption agency may be funded as long as it keeps religion out of it and considers only the application of humanitarian principles. That is one example. It is being funded as a service provider not as a religion. It has no right to discriminate against same-sex couples by refusing to place children with them. But the state should not fund say the Catholic Church plan to give out free Catholic catechisms.

If a religion gets funding as a religion then it follows that in terms of equality you can invent a religion tomorrow and be entitled to funding. One religion cannot be treated as any different from another regardless of how old a religion is or what size it is.

Many religions today that claim to be supportive of democracy say the state and religion must have a relationship described as follows. The state must do a different job from religion but not a separate job.

The state is to punish violations of civil law not religious law. It is to enforce civil law but not religious law.

Church and state must be different and distinct and separate

Religion often thinks its should say what it wants and tries to impose silence on those who disagree with it.

The secularist allows a religion to say what it wants. The secularist does not give the religion a monopoly on freedom of speech. It gets no special privileges.

Much religion gets special treatment in the UK.

The Church of England gets special treatment in the eyes of British Law. For example, the bishops in the House of Lords have the power to stop laws coming in even if the people want them. They will stop them just because they contradict the Christian faith.

The monarch cannot be a Catholic.

The non-religious taxpayer funds religious schools along with the religious.

Religious conscientious objectors will not have to fight in war but atheistic or humanistic conscientious objectors may be forced to.

Plays and books that offend religious belief should be banned.

Students are forced to worship together in state schools.

Religion may get a generalised special position or specialised positions in certain aspects. On what basis is any special position given? Tradition? Just because something has been done a certain way for years does not mean it should be carried on. It is unjust to use tradition as an excuse for favouring one religion over another. Is it the size of the religion? Then why does the Church of England keeps its position thought it is not the largest religion in England anymore?

Equality means that the religious person be treated the same as anybody else under the law. To avoid religious privilege, look at people as individuals. This blocks them from using personal rights as an excuse for empowering the religious group.

