

Religious Neutrality - Secularist Politicians Who Reject Labels Based on Religion

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?

Sociologists and politicians and historians always misuse religious labels. They use them to their own advantage. The labels are applied in a loaded way. For that reason, a religion like Catholicism which is polytheistic gets labelled monotheistic. Mahayana Buddhism is claimed to be Buddhism when in fact it is not. Protestantism is a declaration for the true Christian doctrines principles and doctrines that Catholicism has altered, ignored or replaced. It claims to be a reformation of a Church that refused to give up its man-made errors and thus parts of the Church had to reform and just leave the rest to its errors. Mormonism is often labeled Protestant though it does not claim to be a reformation but to be the restoration of Christianity meaning it alone is the Christian Church. Calling it Protestant insults its official status that it is not Protestant and not reformed but the return of Christianity which had vanished for years during the reign of fake Christianity. It insults Protestants who believe in historic Christianity and the creeds by lumping them together with superstitious cultists who think God is a magic man and being black can be a sin. Calling every group that claims to be Christian Christian denies the fact that it is only Jesus and his immediate appointed speakers who have the right to decide what a Christian is. It is loaded and leads to confusion about what real Christians are. It is lazy. For example, if Jesus banned the notion that baptism makes you a member of the Church then it follows that any religion such as Catholicism or Eastern Orthodox or Lutheran is only outwardly Christian and is not entitled to be called Christianity at all. They think baptism makes Christians and on that notion they base everything so they are not Christian if they are wrong. If Jesus banned idolatry and did not want anybody to worship him as God then the Catholic, Orthodox and Reformed faiths are manmade and not Christian for they worship him. Major if not universal apostasy diseases most religions. Ahmadiyyah are painted as Muslim by politicians and the media but they are not for they deny the core Islamic teaching that there is no prophet since Muhammad. Sadly this sect is made out to be representative of Islam as a religion of peace. The point is there is a reason why things to do with religion are labelled as they are. Sometimes it is about ideology and propaganda and other times it is just media laziness.

Religion might call itself the family of God or the kingdom of God or something else ethereal but it lives and functions like a society and societies impact on society which involves politics. Religion is a social entity and cannot avoid doing something to politics. It cannot live in a non-politics vacuum.

Politicians may say that when they go into government chambers they leave their faith and religion at the door. They do this because they want to be neutral and avoid a pro-religion bias.

The assumption is that if a religion says it has a spiritual role to play in the whole of life it is wrong. The religion is not to be taken seriously enough to be allowed to influence state policy.

State secularism is based on the state being neutral regarding specifically religious claims. The state can only let itself listen to religion if religion is appealing to science and evidence and reason to put something forward. The state only listens to religion when it is not speaking as religion. When religion speaks, it has to be on a concern placed where secularism and religion overlap. For example, euthanasia.

Many claim that secularism cannot achieve neutrality regarding religion - state secularism and religious neutrality are in direct conflict. They contradict each other.

Is this true? An essential of secularism is the edict that specifically religious ideas must be excluded from the public square, from political matters. That does conflict with religion that claims the right to control the state. But that is a good thing.

Secularism also contradicts religion that requires its followers to put God first. Secularism requires that the followers NOT do this in political and government affairs.

Apart from these two things, the secular state can be neutral.

Some say that secularism is an ideology. They say it is a belief form based around the foundational doctrine that religious people must be excluded from any role in the public square. This is not true. What it requires is that religious people be included as long as they can be trusted to keep their religious views and prejudices out of legal and social and public policy.

It is the religious views it has a problem with. What if a new religion appeared that said God wants people sacrificed to him when they are 60 years of age? That this might not happen is not the point. The principle is the point. Secularism sees religion as dangerous when it is based on heeding authority instead of trying to work things out scientifically through thinking for yourself.

It is argued that members of religions are disqualified in the public and political sphere because they lack neutrality. It might be said that secularists have the same problem - they are not really neutral either. To this it is said that instead of either being suppressed, just let them battle it out democratically. This should make it possible for a state to have both non-secular principles and secular principles. The rationale is that whether you are religious or secular you are not neutral.

The disagreements among religious people are stark. The disagreements among secular people are minimal. Remember that. If perfect neutrality is not possible then that is not an argument against secularism but an argument for it. Its a matter of case closed, when it gets the chance a religion will put nonsense into the law to force it on its own members and that of other faiths.

In Northern Ireland, outrageous bigots can be elected into public office just because the electorate is swayed by the religious label they profess. Religious labels and political ones are often intertwined.

We conclude that the politician should drop the religious label when she or he functions as a politician. A secular state will and should make that a requirement.

Secularism and the religious label

Religion and politics like people to be labelled with a label that -

*makes out they are affiliated to a religious or political system

*makes non-members aware of the existence of the religion or political party. It is free advertising.

The political label and the religious label can sometimes be one and the same thing. Some religions are just out and out politics. Sometimes the two labels are separate. In that case, the political label can be stronger than the religious one. If a child of Leninists in a communist state was called a Leninist that is the label more than any other that will mean something to the child later on.

Now to the religious label. As the label is public, it is going to have an impact on public affairs.

Religion and spiritual/religious faith causes wars. It needs the labels to start the process. There are more wars however about religious labels and because of how people are labelled in terms of religion and faith than there are wars of religion. If there are no labels with which to create an us versus them mentality which is intended to lead to war then religion will give you some! You can use religion to label if there is nothing else.

It is religion that labels people. The state often goes along with this. The state labelling you in accordance with a religion's criteria is a repudiation of justice and the fundamental right we all have to a secular state. The state that labels your baby as Catholic when you get it baptised but pays no heed when you call it a Jedi Knight is discriminating. It is favouring one religion over another. The state must encourage you to self-identify. Then if it considers your label, it is only using it because you do and making no judgment on whether you are really entitled to the label.

Religion is remarkably easy to spot but very hard to define. Secularism may struggle to learn where religion begins and where religion ends. Yet it needs to try and know in order to take care that religion does not get privileges that non-religion doesn't have.

Secularism is not a religion. Some say that it denies that one can know what religious doctrines are true which they see as a religious truth-claim. But even if the secularist does believe a particular religion is true, it does not give him the right to favour that religion in politics and discriminate against others. Secularism is definitely not a religion.

When a person who is not an official member of a religion takes its label the secular state will not consider the label justified. What if the person claims to be Muslim and commits crimes in the name of this faith? The state will punish him and warn that he is not an example of a Muslim. In other words, the state is accepting the religious doctrine about how a person becomes a member and merits or obtains the right to be considered a member. Evangelical Christianity says that you must have a born again experience to be a Christian and baptism is no good. Catholics however say you need to be baptised. Mormons say you need their baptism and the Catholic baptism is ineffectual and invalid. Muslims, Mormons and some other religions claim that all babies are born into their religion and are led away from it say into Catholicism by those

who look after them. For the state to label the children say Catholic, for example, because they are baptised in a Catholic Church is therefore a violation of secularism. We see then that the secular state cannot and will not take sides in such disputes and refuse to recognise anybody's religious label. The state must abandon consideration for religious labels. People are not to be objectified with a religion label but seen as human beings and treated on that level.

The state may record how people label themselves but this information must not be considered in state policy.

The secular state needs to repudiate religious influence. For example, if most people in a country call themselves Christian, the secular state will not say it is a Christian country. There are other religions and people of no-religion. It might say it is largely a Christian country. But the problem is the state is judging what makes a Christian a Christian. This is a theological/religious matter and a controversial one. Anybody can claim the label just as the Pope can claim to be a Satanist.

Some Catholics reject a large amount of Catholic teaching and morality. They say they are Catholic believers for they accept the core doctrines of the faith. If the state accepts this claim, the state is acting the theologian deciding what the core beliefs of a religion are. And you see Catholics who think the Mass is superstitious nonsense claiming to believe the core doctrines. Yet officially the Mass is a core doctrine. Some Catholics say that the core teaching is simply love and it is fine if you are sceptical about the resurrection of Jesus. And does it make sense to say that the core doctrine is love when other core doctrines such as Hell and the notion that God wrote the evil Bible contradict that? People pick what teachings they want to call core and ignore the nasty doctrines. That is not an honest approach and is against the core doctrine of honesty! One allegedly core Catholic doctrine is that we all have human dignity. The liberals love to think it is a core idea. But is it? The Catholic system is about giving priests and popes higher dignity than the poor. The pope is infallible and the individual Christian isn't. That is not dignity and that is not equality. Sure a religion that has good teachings at its core should be abandoned if it has many teachings that contradict that core? Instead of being in such a religion, it is better to depart and form a purified version. A religion having good teachings that it works to violate will only corrupt you. It is deliberately corrupt - the worst kind of corruption.

A religion that claims the right to stick a label on you even if you join another religion cannot expect the state to label people as it does. Why? The right assumes the religion really has the right in justice, that it has a moral right, to define you in other words, that it is the true religion. If you decided to label all the Debenhams's customers in 2013 as members of say the True Church of Abraham that is only in your head. Nobody and especially the state should pay any attention. If a religion claims that you belong to it forever once you are initiated into it this claim is nonsense unless it really has been founded by an infallible God.

Those who carry a particular religious label may talk about religious freedom and then when it comes to a referendum or electing a president, they will largely use their vote to destroy the rights of those their religion or labelling system looks down upon. Politicians who do not renounce the label and who identify with it are enablers and catalysts for those kind of attitudes.

We conclude that politicians should ignore religious labels and those who label themselves. All need to drop the labels to be equal before the law.