

*Guidelines for Constructive Secularism*

Church and state being combined is a bad combination. Let the state be independent of religion. In a conflict of loyalty, if you are torn between loyalty to state law and Church law you must be loyal to the former at the expense of the second.

It is simply false that the secular methodology protects the rights of the state and the Church equally. It mainly protects the rights of the secular state. If religion gets rights or at least permission this is only a side-effect.

Learn the principles of secularism and promote them. Concentrate on enlightening the politically active religionists. The indispensable principles are down below.

1 Secularism merely requires that the state must not favour or help any religious view, that there be no state religion. The state will not take sides in religious matters. This is to safeguard religious freedom - i.e. to avoid one religion exercising control over those who do not believe in it. Secular means without religion. The secularist is unable to take account of a person's religious beliefs - that leads to inequality. And the religious do not take account of the non-religious person's beliefs. For example, atheists will not be allowed to become popes even if they believe they should. Beliefs do not have rights. Secularism is not exactly the same as separation of Church and state. Church and state can be separate but the state may still be religious.

2 Secularism is a method not a belief. We should really speak of it as legal secularism. The "religion" of secularism must not be favoured in the secular state.

3 Secularism requires that religion get no exemptions from obeying the law. This is the principle of one law for all people.

4 Secularism is against stopping freedom of expression on religious grounds. For example, you don't ban black masses just because Catholics object to them.

5 Secularism is when the state acts as if it has no religious preferences.

6 The state must not fund the promotion of religion in schools. The parents and the Church should have their own self-funded system for evangelising.

7 Secularism forbids the state to compel the people to belong to religion or any specific religion and allows people the freedom to convert from one religion to another.

8 Freedom of speech matters more than religious taboos about what we are allowed to say and not to say.

9 Secularism is the only way to be fair to all.

10 There is an adage, "Although there is much immorality/evil that is not punished by the law, there is none that is encouraged or approved by the law." This needs to be based on the fact that you cannot punish everything. If the state starts endorsing religious morality that complicates things and breaks the adage. Secularism is a fundamental human right. Thus religion that denies that is fundamentally trouble.

[\*The Oxford Handbook of Secularism\*](#)

[\*How to be Secular\*](#)

[\*The Secular Outlook\*](#)

[\*The Necessity of Secularism\*](#)

[\*Rethinking Secularism\*](#)