CHRISTIAN BIGOTRY: “The Difference Between Religious Liberty and Christian Privilege”

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"RELIGIOUS LIBERTY" MEANS RELIGIOUS LIBERTY FOR EVERYONE. IT DOESN'T MEAN RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGE FOR CHRISTIANITY OVER EVERY OTHER GROUP.

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ESSAY: Madison S. Hughes / “Religious Privilege: A Nonconscious Ideology”

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By Madison S. Hughes (07.19.2012)

Religious Privilege: A Nonconscious Ideology

History is paved with the pervasiveness of religious privilege, and in contemporary United States the zeitgeist of religious privilege, especially Christian privilege, is at an historical zenith. Religious privilege has so saturated our society that it is the status quo. To pronounce discontent with this implicit entitlement would be the equivalent of a flailing fish expressing oneself on the bank of the River Styx. A mere mention of the existence of religious privilege ignites a cry of war on “religious freedom” from those of the privileged religious right. Religious privilege is pandemic, and its correlative problems, which range from group divisiveness to genocidal death, are plethoric. In a constitutionally secular society like the United States the privileging of any specific ideology is a threat to its democratic principles, and a trail littered with the crumbs of religious privilege ultimately leads to a theocracy not a democracy. Religious privilege is pervasive and problematic. The first step of problem solving is to identify the problem that the privileging of religion represents, which is that the privileging of any ideology in a democratic society undermines the bedrock of democracy itself. This paper will take the axiomatical first step of problem solving, the ability to identify the problem, and consider a few of the spectres haunting our secular society.

In a predominantly nonreflective consumer culture, of which one may easily argue we are part, it is intellectually undemanding to understand how the existence of religious privilege, and its negative corollary impact, escapes “folks.” In Lewis Schlosser’s 2003 article “Christian Privilege: Breaking a Sacred Taboo,” published in the Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, he explains:

One possible explanation for the existence of Christian privilege is the notion of a “nonconscious ideology” (Bem & Bem, 1970, p. 89). Bem and Bem first defined the concept of a nonconscious ideology to describe how implicit beliefs and attitudes are used to maintain the status quo in terms of gender inequality. They used the analogy of a fish and its environment to illustrate their concept of nonconscious ideology. A fish does not know its environment is wet, because that is all it knows and all it has ever experienced. The fish has no idea that anything else exists besides water because it has never had to think about any other possibilities. (Schlosser 47)

The nonreflective folks that constitute the majority of contemporary society are too busy chasing the shiny objects of their next desires to reflect long enough to recognize the nonconscious ideology of religious privilege, for most folk have no idea that anything else exists; however, some salient spectres are not so translucent.

Religious Privilege may be used as a defense to circumvent one’s civic “duty” to country. Richard Dawkins addresses this in his “Undeserved Respect” section of his book The God Delusion:

By far the easiest grounds for gaining conscientious objector status in wartime are religious. You can be a brilliant moral philosopher with a prizewinning doctoral thesis expounding the evils of war, and still be given a hard time by a draft board evaluating your claim to be a
Interestingly, it is worth noting that the Republican politician, Richard Milhoues Nixon was a Quaker. Although he never saw combat, he did serve in the United States Navy, and did not claim conscientious objector status, but as a Quaker he well could have. Had he done so, this would not have disqualifed him from later becoming the 37th President of the United States, and as Commander-in-Chief of the United States Military sending 21,041 non-conscientious objectors to their ultimate deaths in Vietnam (Wiener). Religious privilege is not limited only to those threatened by death on the battlefield, no, it is also reserved for those whose health is threatened here in the Community Colleges of California.

There are various fee waiver programs available to college students. One such program offered in California is the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver Program (BOG). This is primarily awarded to those that can prove a financial need based on low-income—not religious privilege. “For eligible California residents, the Board of Governors (BOG) Fee Waiver permits enrollment [tuition] fees to be waived” (BOG). Another fee waiver program available to California Community Colleges students is the Health Fee waiver. “However, provisions in the Education Code . . . exempt students from the health fee who depend exclusively upon prayer for healing in accordance with the teachings of a bona fide religious sect, denomination, or organization” [emphasis added] (Bruckman). To be clear, a struggling college student, in whatever dire circumstance they may be bound, may live with constant hunger pangs wondering from where the next meal is going to come, but because they do not depend exclusively upon prayer for healing must pay a Health Fee. However, this struggling college student’s wealthy classmate, who is not burdened with such unfortunate circumstance, that claims depend exclusively upon prayer for healing would have his/her Health Fee waived. This is pure, in-your-face religious privilege, and if one were to demand a revocation of such blatant injustice the reactive cry of a ‘war on religious freedom’ would be as predictable as Roman Catholic Bill O’Reilly’s annual cry of the “war on Christmas” coupled with his simultaneous silence on the pandemic of predator priests raping children.

Child rape is considered such a vile act that even among prisoners child rapists are often segregated from the general population for protection of their lives. However, child rape is no so reviled when committed by a Catholic Priest. In fact, religious privilege acts a refuge for the priesthood with total disregard to their victims. In his book, God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything, Christopher Hitchens implicitly addresses how we, as a nonconscious ideological society, euphemistically allow religious privilege to label Catholic Priests guilty of child rape instead as child abusers:

Again, how shall we reckon the harm done by dirty old men and hysterical spinsters, appointed as clerical guardians to supervise the innocent in orphanages and schools? The Roman Catholic Church in particular is having to answer this question in the most painful of ways, by calculating the monetary value of child abuse in terms of compensation. Billions of dollars have already been awarded, but there is no price put on the generations of boys and girls who were introduced to sex in the most alarming and disgusting ways by those whom they and their parents trusted. “Child abuse” is really a silly and pathetic euphemism for what has been going on: we are talking about the systematic rape and torture of children, positively aided and abetted by a hierarchy which knowingly moved the grossest offenders to parishes where they would be safer. (Hitchens 227)

The fourth estate of our nonconscious ideological society extends its religious privilege not only euphemistically, but quantitatively as well. Recently, this was evident in the national media’s asymmetrical coverage of the “child abuse” verdicts of former Penn State college football coach Jerry Sandusky and U.S. Catholic Priest Monsignor William Lynn.

On Friday, June 22, 2012, Jerry Sandusky, now a household name to many, was convicted of 45 counts of child sexual molestation. A July 16, 2012 Google search of “Jerry Sandusky verdict” yielded a News results total of 9,780, and “Coach Jerry Sandusky verdict” yielded 30,100 News results. A three-fold increase in News results was realized when Jerry Sandusky’s secular title “Coach” was added. Hold that thought.

On that same day, within hours of each other, in a landmark clergy-abuse trial Monsignor William Lynn, a name not even recognized by most fundamental Catholics, was convicted of child endangerment making him the first U.S. church official branded a felon for covering up abuse claims. A July 16, 2012 Google search of “William Lynn verdict” yielded a News results total of 1,540, and “Monsignor William Lynn verdict” yielded 1,440 News results. Not only did the overall News results decline, but also noticeable was that the News results total decreased when William Lynn’s “religious” title “Monsignor” was prefixed to his name.

Religious privilege is cancerous to a secular society. The nonconscious ideology of religious privilege has no place in a democracy, and absolutely no place in a secular society. We have shown how religious privilege can rear its ugly head anywhere from the highest office in the land to the battlefields on which our parents, spouses, and siblings give their lives. Currently, out of undeserved and unjustified “respect” for religious privilege, we are giving credence to the concept of superstition trumping science in the form of prayer for healing to exempt students from paying a health fee in our institutions of higher learning. Finally, and most disturbingly, history has shown that the pandemic of Catholic Priests raping our innocent children reassure religious privilege regarding persecution and prosecution for the heinous serial child rape crimes for which they have committed, and will no doubt continue to commit. Religious privileges must be identified, and not allowed to become a nonconscious ideology.

Works Cited


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All posts tagged "Christian privilege". Red Pill8 months ago. Hillary Clinton and George Washington University blame it all on “Christian privilege”. Hillary Clinton's blame tour rolls on: Christian privilege cost her the election. More Posts. Join our youtube channel. Christian privilege is a set of advantages that benefit Christians, but not people who practice other religions or no religion at all. It shows up in many places throughout the world, especially Western countries. While there are some places where Christians are persecuted for their faith, here in the United States, Christianity is treated as the norm. Americans often cite “freedom of religion” as a reason to be proud of our country. But the truth is, only Christians are free to practice their faith openly – and everyone else is systematically oppressed for doing so. Does Having Privilege Mean Christians Are Bad People? If you’re a Christian, you might be skeptical about the idea of
having privilege, and there's a reason for that.