

## Religious Indoctrination of Children

### What Everyone Else is Saying

**Path 2-4.** These are some examples of what influential public figures are stating about religious indoctrination. Jerry Falwell was a controversial advocate for religion. He was known to discriminate against abortion, feminism, homosexuality, and even segregation. He believed God would protect us if we followed his word. He had many “faith-based stands that gained Falwell a great deal of polemic notoriety from both enemies and friends (Fairchild, 2009).”

**Path 5-6.** This “instilled vehemence” according to Richard Dawkins (2006) can be seen as worse than any kind of physical abuse from such institutions as it poses long term mental damage and restricts one’s core morals and values. Can threatening a young child with condemnation and the doctrine of hell really be viewed as moral action?

Dawkins, a strong advocate for science and devoted atheist is a firm believer in science and evolution. Not to enter into the long dispute of creationism versus evolution, we see the latter as allowing for the most common sense approach in aiding learning in schools.

### Our Proposition... Against Religious Indoctrination

**Path 11.** It can be defined as: “inoculating ideas, attitudes, cognitive strategies and socialization,” of a particular doctrine among an anticipated congregation. If you’re still not convinced of what can be seen as irrational bigotry, remember that the key lies in that the indoctrinated person is expected NOT to question such beliefs but rather adopt them as faith. By instilling this in schools among children from an early age they provide the perfect cohort. When children begin school they are eager and easily molded to a particular given convention and to abide by school ethos.

**Path 12.** Yet religious indoctrination remains an issue that permeates throughout the vast majority of primary schools. There are 90% of schools being run by the Catholic Church patronage. Currently by law 2½ hours of religious education is required in primary schools per week and 2 hours post primary (Hayeys, 2011).

**Path 18.** The Irish minister for education Ruaidri Quinn outlines this as taking up valuable class time (particularly in preparation for religious sacraments confession, communion and confirmation), which could be used elsewhere in support of an already overloaded curriculum.

**Path 19-20.** Israel is an example of a country that the religious indoctrination of children is very common. A recent article that discusses the racist attempt to segregate housing for people of Ethiopian decent in Kiryat Malakhi argues that it is the education that is given to Jewish youth is part of the reason for these racist's actions in Israel. Because of their religion they were taught to see people as unequal. An example that stood out most to me in the article was that an ultra-orthodox man would not do anything to stop a bully from spitting on an eight-year-old girl.

**Path 21.** The link to the YouTube video shows how in some regions children are encouraged to hold rifles at a very young age and the video also questions why organizations like the UN have not stepped in yet to help children. The religious indoctrination of these children and the twisted control terrorists organization have on the education system show no future for peace in these countries; if they are constantly taught that violence will lead to paradise in the afterlife.

**Path 23.** This study is based on an exceptionally large database of psychological autopsies, comprising of all suicides that occurred during one year in Finland from 1987 to 1988. It investigated the relationship of religiosity in suicide victims taking into consideration, socio-demographic characteristics, history of suicide attempts, suicide methods, religious affiliation,

and recorded psychiatric diagnoses of the religious victims which were compared to those of the nonreligious victims. It was found that religiosity had become an additional psychological burden, e. g., as severe guilt feelings, which precipitated suicide.

**Path 24-25.** Elderly ill individuals who experienced a religious struggle with their illness were shown to be at an increased risk of death through a longitudinal cohort study from 1996-1997 (Pargament et al. 2001).

**Path 26-27.** Extrinsic religious orientation and negative religious coping (e.g., avoiding difficulties through religious activities, blaming God for difficulties) has been associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms; as has adolescents who are subjected negative interactions and experiences as a direct result of religious affiliation or by a member of the same religious organization.

**Path 29-30.** The family's religious environment can function as a stepping stone or a stumbling block for children's development. Research concludes that family arguments about religion are deleterious for children. Religion can serve as a wedge that fosters division and conflict, and undermine a children's development.

#### In Support of Indoctrination

**Path 34-42.** The religious indoctrination of children can provide them with an understanding of moral values. Milton Rokeach researched the effects that religion can have on moral values and found that certain values are in fact, distinctively related to religion (Christenson, 1976). Thus, many believe that religion is the backbone of moral education.

Religious indoctrination has been found to create positive standards of action. It encourages the tolerance and overall respect of others. Values derived from religion have been shown to produce a positive relationship with issues of social compassion (Christenson, 1976).

An association also exists between religion and pro-social values and behavior (Benson and Donahue, 2010). Children are more likely to avoid wrong doings, such as engaging in delinquent behaviors and using drugs and alcohol, and develop a healthy sense of responsibility from these values. In addition, religious values have been found to deter children from early sexual activity. Evidently, these values promote a child's physical, emotional, and physical health and well being (Bridges and Moore, 2002).

Overall, the moral values derived from religious indoctrination have positive affects not only for children themselves, but for those around them. If not for the religious indoctrination of children, where else would children get an adequate understanding of values? Parents, peers, and society are not always a constant and reliable source for children to look to for guidance, but religious indoctrination is.

**Path 44.** A four-year project conducted by the National Study of Youth & Religion at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's sociology department called "Religion and American Adolescent Delinquency, Risk Behaviors and Constructive Social Activities" identifies a positive correlation between religious indoctrination and pro-social behavior in youth (Smith & Faris, 2002).

**Path 45-46.** The graph represents just one example of their findings, depicting a negative trend between increased attendance in religious services and the likelihood of children being involved in fighting. Other areas examined in the study produced similar results. These areas included: marijuana use, likelihood of drunkenness, drug usage, smoking, stealing, hitting a teacher, or being suspended from school. In nearly all cases, a child was less likely to take part in antisocial activity if he/she was exposed to higher levels of indoctrination. The study

identified a positive correlation between religious indoctrination and positive behaviors in children like exercise or volunteering.

**Path 47-48.** Nevertheless, the study is strong in that it surveys a large sample-size and provides tests for both positive and negative correlations in antisocial and pro-social behavior. While the graphical representations are taken from a potentially biased source (Smith & Faris, 2002), the study is conducted by a university sociology department which strengthens the authority of the study and therefore could potentially compete seriously with the perspective that religious indoctrination harms, not helps, children.

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