

Faith vs. Science

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Despite the constant accusations from the Religious Right that Christians are under attack in America, it is not true. Christians can worship every day, every hour of the week, if they choose. They can gather anywhere to teach their particular brand of religion—except in government-supported institutions and facilities. They can disagree with each other, and start new churches at the first hint of a theological difference. The Constitution protects their right to do so.

They may deck the halls of their property, inside and out, with all the trappings of their beliefs, broadcast their particular brand of religion, and solicit funds twenty-four hours a day. They may publish and publicly air their views, and openly disparage other Christians, faiths, and nonbelievers. The Constitution protects their right to do so.

The vast majority of our legislators, community leaders, and citizens identify themselves as Christians, yet our Constitution demands equal protections for the rights of all citizens—not just Christian fundamentalists.

Christianity is not under attack; our Constitution is. A case in point is the Bush Administration's faith-based drug and rehab program which allows churches and religious institutions to receive federal dollars—and openly discriminate in their hiring—even though both practices are unconstitutional.

The Christian "Right" is now attempting to undermine the Constitution further by suing for the right to teach "Intelligent Design" (Creationism) as science in public schools.

One can only imagine the deafening howl that would arise from this same group if other religions sought to teach the fundamentals of their faith in our public schools. And howl they should, because our Constitution forbids it.

There is—and always has been—room in our society for coexisting religious institutions and public schools. There is—and always has been—room in our minds to accommodate matters of faith and of science. Anyone who believes in both the medicinal power of an aspirin and the spiritual power of prayer illustrates this point. Taking an aspirin to relieve pain is evidence of faith in science; praying that the aspirin will work is evidence of faith in the power of prayer.

Our beliefs vary widely. Some believe that relying on aspirin is evidence that we have no faith in God and prayer. Some believe in science and the power of the aspirin, but see prayer as a superstitious waste of time. Still others see aspirin as evidence of God's wisdom imparted through scientists—and an answer to our prayers.

There are few absolutes regarding faith, two of which are obvious to all: 1) we all have it, and 2) we place it in whatever we choose. Governments may attempt to dictate how and when we may exercise our faith, but they cannot dictate what we believe in our hearts and minds.

Both science and faith are subject to change. What scientists call "absolute objective truth," or scientific proof, is often disproved with further research, and what one accepts as "absolute spiritual truth" may change radically and instantly, with some life-altering experience.

Two quotes attributed to Jesus come to mind with regard to separation of church and state, and maintaining a democracy. The first is: “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s, and unto God that which is God’s” (Matthew 22:21). Schools are clearly “Caesar’s,” and supported by taxes—which was the topic of this text.

Then, in Mark 9:38-40, we learn that John wanted to stop someone who was performing miracles in Jesus’ name, because that person wasn’t part of their little group. To this, Jesus responded, “Don’t try to stop him... Whoever is not against us is for us.”

No one is against Christians teaching their various slants on the Scriptures, as long as they do not erode Constitutional freedoms. Should these Christian “victims” succeed, they will have undermined their own rights as well—a point they apparently fail to see. Who is to say that the tide will not eventually turn in favor of another religious order, forcing these Christians to live in a theocracy not of their choosing.

Just as faith in aspirin and faith in prayer can coexist, science and religion must coexist. We do not go to church to buy aspirin, or to the pharmacy for religious training. Until recently, these two “markets” existed for the benefit of all. Now, some religionistic pharmacists dispense their brand of morality instead of, or along with the pharmaceuticals, and their counterparts in the classrooms hypocritically have changed the name of religion to science so they can infiltrate public schools.

No, Christianity is not being attacked; it is those who believe their faith trumps everyone else’s *and* the Constitution who are attacking democracy.