

We Didn't Vote For Your God: The Importance of Secularism



Secularism is the belief that religion should not be involved with the ordinary social and political activities of a country. This concept should be the standard in the modern Western world, and yet, religion continues to interfere with politics more than most people even realise. Being religious is an important choice in anyone's life, but its also a personal one, and one that we should all be entitled to.

People are free to use their religion to justify their own stances, but when it comes to politics and enforcing legislation and laws, religion shouldn't have a seat at the table. When politicians use their religion to justify political stances and decisions, they are imposing their faith on people of a different religion or people who aren't at all religious, and yet the line between religion and state is still being blurred across the West.

Religion in UK Politics: A Nation of Many (and None)



In the UK, Christianity is by far the most dominant religion, although it accounts for less than half of the population at only 46.2%. Meanwhile, non-religious people make up around 37.2% and the other religions make up the other 17%. Over the decades and generations, there has not only been a gradual decline of Christians and religious people, but also a decline in the 'devoutness' of UK Christians, with a growing number of those identifying as Christian not attending church service regularly or at all and a more moderate approach to Christianity as opposed to in the US. With a growing number of Brits turning to different religions or not being religious at all, representation in government should reflect the pluralism of modern Britain, not just of one religion or denomination, and yet it fails to do so even today.

The government's unelected chamber, the House of Lords ensures that the Church of England remains entangled with the state. The Lords has around 832 members with 26 reserved seats for "Lords Spiritual", who are bishops who have voting rights on national legislation, affecting the whole of the UK. The whole of the Lords chamber is unelected, and supposedly consisting of specialists in certain topics, who can offer valuable counsel on legislation, but what exactly do these bishops offer? They are unelected, and not only do they only represent one religion, they only represent one of its denominations, and yet still they are free to influence laws affecting the entire, religiously diverse population.

This presents the UK with a democratic deficit as the Church of England sits on a pedestal among all the other beliefs and is free to influence biased policy in favour of their beliefs, from education to moral issues such as abortion, gay marriage and assisted dying, the latter which they have consistently opposed. There is nothing wrong with Bishops sharing the gospel in their churches, but it becomes a problem when they are 26 of them in Parliament opposing important legislation that affects all of us, purely because of their religious view, which doesn't align with the majority of us.

What We Can Learn from America

“There’s Nothing More Loving Than a Judgmental Christian”



The religious landscape in America is slightly different with 62% identifying as Christians, 29% as non-religious and only 6% as one of the other religions, although Christianity is dominant in both countries, its hold is a lot stronger in the US, however like in the UK, traditional religious affiliation has been declining with around 80% of seniors identify as religious and only 46% of young people.

There has never been any doubt that Christianity is still important in US politics, as Presidents end their speeches with “God Bless America”, “In God We Trust” is in the national motto, and every congressional session opens with a prayer. However in recent years, the dangerous Christian Nationalism rhetoric has been rising in the states, promoting a cruel hostility towards any other faith, and worsened the divisive nature of the states. Political candidate’s religiosity is still seen as a political asset, and atheists are still unelectable in many states. This year, Zohran Mamdani made history by becoming the first Muslim NYC mayor, but faced immense backlash, and numerous billionaires spent millions trying to stop him from becoming mayor.



The root problem with the US stems back to the First Amendment, which states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”. This was often hailed as a good thing, creating a “wall of separation between Church and State”, ensuring secularism, but it is now working to do the exact opposite. The problem is that these two clauses often contradict with each other, as protecting someone’s “free exercise” of religion can end up undermining the separation of church and state, for example when businesses refuse service to LGBTQ+ people for “religious reasons”, or when public officials and schools have tried to insert prayer, Bible readings, or creationism into public spaces, on the basis that they’re simply exercising religious freedom. Religion is also now increasingly affecting politics, as in 2022, when *Roe vs Wade*, the constitutional right to abortion was overturned, and numerous states have either banned or harshly regulated abortion access. The reasoning for many pro-lifers wanting to ban abortion was their belief that life begins at conception, and God creates everyone’s soul, so by aborting a fetus, it would be aborting one of God’s children, and they use this reasoning, stemming from their personal religious belief to dictate a law that affects millions.

We’ve already seen the damaging effects of a lack of secularism in the US, and if the UK doesn’t want to end up as a polarised state like the US, where religion is blatantly at the forefront of politics, it needs to take major steps in becoming a truly secular state by drawing a proper line between religion and politics.

The Path Forward



Secularism isn’t about silencing faith, it’s about protecting everyone by ensuring the freedom of all religions and belief through the state remaining neutral. Unlike the US, where the Christian nationalism has created a hostility towards other faiths and atheism, secularism promotes fairness, which is particularly important in a country like the UK with a growing number of people from other religions and non-religious people. The UK government should work to remove bishops from the Lords and revoke the monarchy’s role as “Defender of the Faith”, to avoid giving one religion privilege over another, or any at all. Furthermore, there should be regulations in place to ensure that politicians keep their religious faith out of political decisions, because we vote for people not for their Gods