

Justices Ask Whether Left's Wokeness Should Be the Only Religion Allowed in Public Schools

Over the past 60 years, public schools have been scrubbed of religion, stripped bare in the name of the name of the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution, which bars favoring one religion over others. Now the void is being filled by social justice ideology, the left's religion by another name.

Why should traditional religion be discriminated against, while teachers and coaches are allowed to proselytize their woke belief system, displaying Gay Pride symbols and BLM slogans in the classroom? Are children any less at risk of coercion or indoctrination by these ideas presented by authority figures whom they're eager to please?

That's the inflammatory context for a high school football coach's appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, which was heard Monday. Joseph Kennedy, who coached for the Bremerton School District in Washington state, customarily took a knee and prayed quietly on the 50-yard line after games. Occasionally, some players and attendees joined him, though he didn't call for them to participate.

Bremerton officials told him praying within sight of students violated the Establishment Clause and asked him to go across campus and pray in the janitor's office. Kennedy refused, arguing that would send a message that prayer is bad and must be hidden. The refusal cost him his job.

Kennedy's lawyer told the justices on Monday that the firing violated the coach's right to freely practice his religion.

Clarence Thomas asked whether Kennedy would have been fired had he taken a knee to protest racism. Samuel Alito queried whether a coach taking a knee to protest the invasion of Ukraine, or climate change, or another political issue would have been fired.

If the reason for the firing is religion, Alito said, that's unconstitutional discrimination.

Much of the back and forth was over whether the coach's barely audible prayer amounted to government speech, which can be regulated. Probably not. He was praying after the game, when his duties were over, and his words were barely audible even to people close by.

Bremerton School District's lawyer also tried to argue that students might feel compelled to join in the prayer because the coach is an authority figure and can determine who gets the most playing time. The case could turn on that, though the facts again seem to undermine the argument. Kennedy coached JV football, and both players who expressed personal reluctance to pray became captains of the JV team, nonetheless.

Monday's oral argument signals the Court is poised to welcome more religion in public life, including public schools. The question several justices posed again and again is, why should religion be singled out for disfavored treatment, compared to other ideas?

Some areas of Maine are so thinly populated that towns can't afford public high schools. Instead, the state of Maine offers tuition assistance for families in these rural areas to send their children to the private schools of their choice. The hitch is, state law says they must choose a secular school, not a religious one. Parents sued, challenging the religious school exclusion.

If schools that teach religion are ineligible for state money, Alito asked, are schools that teach critical race theory also

ineligible? The lawyer for Maine's school system stammered and confessed he didn't know.

Alito's question was on the mark. The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, the most powerful teachers unions, promote a curriculum that stresses transgenderism, white guilt, the 1619 Project and other progressive ideologies. But these unions want no part of traditional religion. They know religion is the kiss of death for their anti-family values agenda. The unions weighed in with a joint brief to the Court against coach Kennedy.

The educational bureaucrats are fast making public schools into temples of progressivism. Fortunately, the Court appears on the verge of striking a fairer balance, protecting the rights of teachers who practice traditional religion and the rights of students to be taught by them. Parents should be glad.

—

COPYRIGHT 2022 CREATORS.COM

Pixnio

Correction: The third paragraph originally referred to Joseph Kennedy as Robert Kennedy. We apologize for the error.