

Richard Dawkins: 'Children Need Protection From Religion'

Richard Dawkins has said that children need to be protected from "religious indoctrination" by their parents.

The prominent atheist claimed that being brought up in a religious household prevents young people from being "properly educated."

Professor Dawkins, a well-known evolutionary biologist, has previously caused outrage by remarking that teaching a child orthodox Christian beliefs about life after death is tantamount to "child abuse."

Indoctrination

Speaking to the *Irish Times*, Dawkins said: "Children do need to be protected so that they can have a proper education and not be indoctrinated into whatever religion their parents happen to have been brought up in."

He said there is a "balancing act" between the rights of the parent and the child and that "the balance has swung too far towards parents."

The atheist's comments were met with criticism from a senior correspondent at *The Week Magazine*.

'Credit'

Michael Brendan Dougherty, who was raised as a Roman Catholic, argued that Dawkins should give children "more credit."

He said: "Notice the language he uses: force, indoctrinate.

And the implication that religious kids cannot think for themselves.”

“A child notices and then does exactly what Richard Dawkins fears indoctrinated kids won’t do: She asks questions,” he continued.

Intuition

He said that: “Children know instantly the sincerity of their parent’s convictions. They know intuitively what is really important to them.”

Dougherty asked, “What would Richard Dawkins expect religious parents to do?”

He concluded: “The only way to satisfy him, of course, would be to renounce religion entirely, to become an evasive hypocrite, to diminish religion’s importance in your life to that of a hobby.”

Parenting law

Last year a sweeping new law which could have criminalized parents for raising children according to their religious beliefs was dropped, in a move welcomed by *The Christian Institute*.

Authoritative media reports suggested that the Serious Crime Bill would include a law carrying a maximum prison sentence of 10 years for anyone who deliberately harmed a child’s “physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioral development.”

Many warned that such a law would be wide open to misuse against parents for trivial matters.

Simon Calvert, spokesman for *The Christian Institute*,

commented: "We are very pleased that the Government saw sense and backed away from this dangerous parenting law.