

# Derek Holloway, A Podsnap For the Present Age

by Hugh Fitzgerald



[Here is the story](#), in the only version acceptable to the British media, the one that malevolently misrepresents the truth of the matter:

*Parents should be banned from pulling their children out of religious education classes because they are preventing students from learning about Islam, the Church of England has warned.*

*Derek Holloway, the Church's lead on religious education (RE) policy, said that those with "fundamentalist" religious beliefs are "**exploiting**" laws which give them the right to withdraw children from the lessons, **in order to stop them from learning about the Muslim faith.***

*He said that parents are using a "dubious interpretation of*

human right legislation” to pull students out of the classes, warning that such actions create a “dangerous” precedent.

Mr Holloway, who taught at comprehensive schools in Essex and Wiltshire before taking up his current post in the C of E’s education office, said **that the right to withdraw children from RE lessons risks being hijacked by those who want to “incite religious hatred.”**

**Youngsters must learn about other religions and world views so that they know how to get along with people from different backgrounds and beliefs,** Mr Holloway said.

**RE lessons, along with other school subjects, can help efforts to combat extremism and foster better community relations,** he added.

Writing in a blog on the Church of England’s Facebook page, he said: “Sadly, and dangerously, the right of withdrawal from RE is now being **exploited** by a range of ‘interest groups’ often using a dubious interpretation of human rights legislation.

**“The right of withdrawal from RE now gives comfort to those who are breaking the law and seeking to incite religious hatred”.**

The Church believes the right for parents to withdraw children from RE should be repealed and a national statement of a child’s entitlement to RE lessons should be drawn up.

Mr Holloway said that the right to withdraw students from RE lessons “perpetuates the myth” that the classes are in some way linked to collective worship, when in fact they contribute to a **“broad and balanced curriculum” by teaching children about a range of faiths and beliefs.**

“Through RE teacher social media forums and feedback from our RE advisers, I am aware that some parents have sought to

*exploit the right to withdraw children from RE lessons," Mr Holloway told the Press Association.*

*"This is seemingly because they do not want their children exposed to other faiths and world views, in particular Islam.*

*"We are concerned that this is denying those pupils the opportunity to develop the skills they need to 'live well together' as adults."*

*This also puts schools in an "impossible position" as they have to show Ofsted inspectors they are preparing pupils for life in modern Britain, Mr Holloway warned.*

*"Anecdotally, there have also been some cases in different parts of the country of parents with fundamentalist religious beliefs also taking a similar course," he said.*

*"This is not confined to any one particular religion or area of the country. "*

*"The Church of England is far from alone in this view and we support the broad consensus across the sector – both from teachers and RE advisers – that the right of withdrawal from RE is being exploited by a minority and should now be reviewed."...*

It's not hard to read between the lines here. What some parents object to is not education but miseducation. That is not the same thing, *pace* the egregious Mr. Holloway, as "inciting religious hatred." His contempt for them is clear; they won't get with the program. But these parents are not fools, nor indifferent to what their children are being taught. If they were indifferent, they would not go to the trouble (and risk the media's mocking coverage, not to mention Mr. Holloway's malignity) of pulling their children out of RE, as is their right. And it is because they are not fools that they are appalled at how Islam is being presented, and that is

why they are taking their children out of RE classes, which for Mr. Holloway constitutes “inciting religious hatred.”

What exercises them is that the Islam presented in the RE classes is a sanitized version, the one favored by Karen Armstrong, CAIR, John Esposito, and Mr. Holloway himself. They are not trying “to stop [their children] from learning about the Muslim faith.” They are trying to prevent their children – young,, impressionable – from being lied to about “the Muslim faith.” And this business of “youngsters” who “must learn about other religions...so that they know how to get along with people from different backgrounds and beliefs” necessarily requires imposing a misleading account of Islam, for if the unappetizing truth about the texts and teachings of Islam were conveyed, these students would recoil in horror. And then how would they “get along with” Muslims which is apparently the whole point of the RE classes? But should that, in any case, be the goal? Is that what schools are now supposed to do – hide the truth about Islam for the greater good of industrial-strength why-can't-we-all-get-alongness? If teachers, themselves under terrific pressure to conform to the party line on Islam, convey falsehoods, delaying the day when these Infidel children will be able to make sense of Muslim attitudes and behavior, that's no reason for the parents, who still have some control (that is, they can remove their children from these RE classes), not to exercise it. Why should the parents play along with this feelgood farce to please the derek-holloways of this world?

Don't we already know exactly what is going to be taught about Islam in these RE courses? Of course we do. There will be, first of all, the bland declaration that Islam means “peace” and we should, boys and girls, all remember that, given that so many bigots and Islamophobes try to convince us that Islam preaches violence. Then it's on to the Five Pillars: Shehada (the declaration of faith), Salat (the five daily prayers), Sawm (the fasting at Ramadan), Zakat (charitable giving) and

Hajj (the pilgrimage every Muslim who can afford it should make to Mecca once in his life). So you see: Muslims are just like Christians and Jews, with your fastings, your prayers, your pilgrimages, your charitable giving. Not really much of a difference. And what fun to learn those exotic words. Or try on a hijab. Or prostrate yourself in pretend prayer, “just to see what it feels like to be a Muslim.”

Who in the classroom, what student, will know enough to ask the right questions? Who will ask about what is said in those daily prayers, and whether it is true – Mr. Holloway, what about it? – that seventeen times a day, in those prayers, Muslims curse the Kuffar as they recite the al-Fatiha, the opening verse of the Qur’an? Or is this something Mr. Holloway doesn’t think people need to know about – it just complicates matters. Indeed it does. Nor will anyone ask why the Zakat is given only to fellow Muslims, while non-Muslims practice omnidirectional charity?

And what else will be par for the predictable mini-course on Islam? At least two verses from the Qur’an will without fail make their deceptive appearance.. The first, 5:32, appears to denounce killing. That’s why it has been such a favorite for Barack Obama, George Bush, Pope Francis, and so many others determined to see Islam in its most favorable light. But 5:32 is modified and *fatally vitiated by the verse that immediately follows, 5:33*, that contains a list of *methods of killing* those who “wage war against Allah and his messenger” or “spread mischief in the land.” However, it is only 5:32 that the students will learn about, and be told, yet again, that this verse proves the “peacefulness” of Islam.

Then students will learn about Qur’an 2:256: “There should be no compulsion in religion.” This sounds good. But what teacher is going to say, in today’s atmosphere of groupthink and with the thought police patrolling the offices of Ofsted, that “you must understand that the verse does not mean quite what you think.” Instead, they will be told to tell their pupils that

**“one Muslim scholar has rightly said that 2:256 is a “charter of freedom of conscience unparalleled in the religious annals of mankind.”** Who among the students will know enough, who among the teachers will both know enough and be brave enough, to mention that despite the words of 2:256 (which some scholars claim is one of the “abrogated” verses), it does not mean what it appears to mean, for at least two reasons? First, because the punishment for apostasy in Islam is death. For Muhammad said in a hadith (Bukhari 9.84.57): “Whoever changed (from) his Islamic religion, then kill him.” It’s a punishment that’s meted out even today, by both governments and Muslim vigilantes. The threat of death keeps some, perhaps many, from leaving Islam, and certainly constitutes “compulsion in religion.” Christians and Jews under Islam face another kind of compulsion. They are given the choice of conversion or death or, if they want to remain Christians and Jews, they must submit to a host of disabilities, including, most significantly, the onerous Jizyah, or capitation tax. Over time, many Christians and Jews must have converted to Islam in order to free themselves from the Jizyah and other burdens, which means they, too, whether or not they convert, must endure “compulsion in religion.”

We can predict exactly what further evasions and untruths will constitute this RE unit on Islam. And we can also predict all the things about Islam that won’t, that can’t, be said, if the goal of making everybody “get along” is to be achieved.

We already know – see above – that 2:256 and 5:32 will be deliberately misinterpreted. We know that the students will not be told about the cursing of the Kuffars during the daily prayers, or that the zakat is to be given only to fellow Muslims. And we also know that no RE teacher will be allowed to quote even one of those many verses in the Qur’an that denounce the Unbelievers (Miscreants, Kuffar, Infidels) and exclusively praise Muslims. What teacher would dare to mention the Qur’an’s description of Infidels as “the vilest of

creatures”(98:6) or of the Muslims as “the best of peoples” (3:110)? What student, whether six or sixteen, would know enough to ask in class about these verses? Or even if he (or she) did know, given the fear of being considered a “bigot” or an “Islamophobe,” would any student dare ask such a question? And how would the teacher, well aware of what is the party line on Islam, answer in response?

Would the students be taught that in the Qur’an Muslims are told not to take Jews and Christians as friends “for they are friends only with each other”? No, of course not. That would only make it more difficult to engage in why-can’t-we-all-get-alongness. The more unpleasant the truth, the more likely it will not be told. Will students be told about 9:5, the Verse of the Sword? Or about the more than one hundred verses in the Qur’an that exhort “violent Jihad”? And won’t that word “Jihad” be glossed in true karen-armstrong style, for these innocent students, as having “for its primary meaning” the Jihad of internal spiritual struggle, rather than the “lesser Jihad” of waging war, with sword and scimitar, against the Infidels? Of course they will be told about how Muhammad himself, returning home from a military campaign, said he was returning from the Lesser to the Greater Jihad. What student would know enough to ask “But doesn’t that come from a hadith found in one of the less trustworthy collections”? And further ask: “Don’t most Islamic authorities agree that the most important Jihad is the ‘struggle,’ ordinarily using violence, to remove all obstacles to the spread, and then to the dominance, of Islam?” It is the impossibility of this kind of question being raised, much less answered, that makes parents want to pluck their children out of these units on Islam, rather than have them endure so much nonsense, so much evasion, so many lies.

There is, however, something the parents involved – the ones who are being vilified by Mr. Holloway as know-nothing inciters of hatred – might do along with, or perhaps before,

withdrawing their students from RE classes. They might bring to the attention of the public what the RE unit on Islam conveys or omits, to let them know exactly what these parents find objectionable. They could hold a press conference, passing out copies of a collective letter they have sent to Mr. Holloway, as a sober response to his name-calling, a letter which should contain a detailed list of what they find disturbing in what is being taught about Islam in RE classes, and explaining exactly why they feel compelled to withdraw their children which, they need to insist, has nothing to do with “inciting hatred” and everything to do with the campaign of disinformation in the schools.

What would such a letter contain? It would request a review, by an independent authority, of what it is that Mr. Holloway and his ilk are presenting in the RE unit on Islam. There would be a list of questions. Why are the Five Pillars given, but no mention made of the cursing of Kuffars in the daily prayers, or discussion of why Zakat is given only to fellow Muslims. Why do the teachers quote 5:32 but not 5:33, to make it appear that Islam condemns killing of the innocent when there are dozens of verses calling for killing the Kuffar? Why are the students told about 2:256 (“there is no compulsion in religion”) without any mention of the punishment – death – for any Muslim who changes his religion, nor any mention of what Jews and Christians must endure if they wish to continue to practice their religion, both of which constitute obvious forms of “compulsion”?

They can ask Mr. Holloway to explain why the RE unit on Islam leaves out all mention of the 109 Qur’anic verses about violent Jihad. In fact, he should be asked how “Jihad” itself is presented to the students, what they are told about it being mainly an “internal spiritual struggle” and not a “struggle” to overcome obstacles to the spread, and dominance, of Islam that must continue until the entire world is ruled by Muslims, and the Sharia imposed everywhere. And while we’re at



it, what are they told about the significance, and contents, of the Sharia?

Their letter should ask Mr. Holloway to explain why there is no mention in the Islam unit of RE about Muhammad as a slave-owner. Nor is there any mention of his marriage to little Aisha, consummated when she was nine years old. Is it because both bits of information would disturb the non-Muslim students? Place Muhammad, and hence Islam, in a bad light? Of course. But how else can one understand either the long history of slavery and of child marriage in Islam, without reference to the behavior of Muhammad, for Muslims the Perfect Man and Model of Conduct?

Why, Mr. Holloway may be asked in the Open Letter, is there no explanation of Muslim punishment for blasphemy (such as, most obviously, the killing of Theo van Gogh, or the Charlie Hebdo massacre) by reference to how Muhammad regarded those who mocked him – Asma bint Marwan, Abu 'Afak, Ka'b bin al-Ashraf are the best known of those blasphemers – and whom he had killed. Why does the RE course, the letter should also ask, not mention anything about Muhammad's many military campaigns? Why not a word about Muhammad's taking part in the decapitation of between 600 and 900 prisoners of the Banu Qurayza? Why no mention of what happened to the inoffensive Jewish farmers of the Khaybar Oasis, nor about the torture that was inflicted on a Khaybar Jew, Kinana, to get him to produce treasure he supposedly had hidden – "Torture him until you extract what he has" was Muhammad's command. These are rhetorical questions; we all know the answer. Still, it will be useful to make Derek Holloway squirm, as he attempts to justify the omission of practically everything of importance in the RE coverage of Muhammad and of Islam.

The Open Letter to Mr. Holloway should contain copious citations, both to Qur'anic verses and to hadith, to support every claim. Derek Holloway now must either confirm the truth and relevance of these passages, or pretend that they

shouldn't really matter because they are not "helpful" which is true. They are not "helpful" if the goal is only to teach students to "get along" rather than to convey the truth, however distasteful it may be, about many aspects of Islam. In either case, it is not the truth-telling parents, but the evasive Holloway, who comes away looking bad.

As for Holloway's charge that these parents who withdraw their children are giving "comfort to those" who are "seeking to incite religious hatred," by way of rebuttal the parents' letter should list what really does incite religious hatred – to wit, many verses in the Qur'an, many stories in the Hadith collections. The parents' letter will have already noted that the Qur'an tells Muslims not to take Jews and Christians as friends (5:51), that they are called in the Qur'an the "vilest of creatures," (98:6), and that repeatedly there are calls to "strike terror" in the hearts of Infidels or to kill them. And just to be sure that Mr. Holloway does not minimize the matter, quote just a handful of the most telling Qur'anic verses which Mr. Holloway will have to explain or attempt to explain away. Here are four:

Quran (2:191-193) –

***"And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out. And Al-Fitnah [disbelief or unrest] is worse than killing... but if they desist, then lo! Allah is forgiving and merciful. And fight them until there is no more Fitnah[disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allah] and worship is for Allah alone..***

Quran (3:151) – *"Soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers, for that they joined companions with Allah."*

Quran (5:33) – *"The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite*

*sides or they should be imprisoned; this shall be as a disgrace for them in this world, and in the hereafter they shall have a grievous chastisement."*

*Quran (8:12) – "I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them."*

How about that for "inciting religious hatred"? How do those compare with dissatisfied parents pulling their children out of classes that they believe are merely exercises in pro-Islam propaganda? Would Mr. Holloway concede that the "religious hatred" he claims to find encouraged by the behavior of those long-suffering parents is, in fact, to be found all over the Qur'an?

Perhaps the egregious Mr. Holloway will concede that the parents have a point, that perhaps some aspects of Islam are scanted in the RE unit on Islam and need to be addressed, and perhaps what is presented is far too rosy. But I doubt that anything will move him toward something like the truth. On Islam, he's purely a Podsnap:

*"...Mr Podsnap settled that whatever he put behind him he put out of existence. There was a dignified conclusiveness—not to add a grand convenience—in this way of getting rid of disagreeables which had done much towards establishing Mr Podsnap in his lofty place in Mr Podsnap's satisfaction. 'I don't want to know about it; I don't choose to discuss it; I don't admit it!' Mr Podsnap had even acquired a peculiar flourish of his right arm in often clearing the world of its most difficult problems, by sweeping them behind him (and consequently sheer away) with those words and a flushed face. For they affronted him."*

That's Derek Holloway, a Podsnap for the present age, dismissing disagreeables. And that's why the parents are performing a service by removing their children from these

propaganda classes, and they could perform an even bigger one by bringing to the British public's attention what's in, and what's kept out, of these staggeringly meretricious courses.

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