

Tags: women

Ep 63: Christian education challenged in court – a Northern Ireland case

Posted: Tue, 21st Dec 2021

A ground-breaking case on the right to a pluralistic education in Northern Ireland is currently being considered by the High Court.

A father of a seven-year-old girl at a primary school in Belfast has brought judicial review proceedings against the school and the Department of Education. He argues that the school's collective worship and Religious Education provisions are narrowly Christian, being effectively designed to indoctrinate children and denying their right to a pluralistic education, in which no one worldview is privileged over others. The case was heard by the High Court of Northern Ireland on 22-23 November.

In this episode, [Darragh Mackin](#), solicitor for the applicants, discusses the case with [Emma Park](#). Darragh is a partner at Phoenix Law, a firm of solicitors in Belfast that specialises in human rights. He describes how the girl's family, who are non-religious, discovered her praying late into the night. This led them to investigate the way that her school was imposing Christianity on young children through religious assemblies and RE lessons.

Darragh outlines the main issues in the case and the human rights principles involved. He explains how Christianity is embedded into the legal framework governing education in Northern Ireland. He also argues that proselytising religious instruction can reinforce the divisions at the heart of the region's historic troubles, and that it is therefore all the more important to ensure that children are brought up with open minds.

Follow-up

- [Christianity being 'wrongly promoted and privileged in the classroom', court hears – Irish News](#)
- [Laws requiring exclusively Christian RE to face court challenge in NI](#)
- [Bill to replace worship with inclusive assemblies heads to Commons](#)

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Ep 59: The advancement of religion

Posted: Tue, 19th Oct 2021

Should organisations be entitled to tax breaks and other privileges solely on the basis that they 'advance religion'?

Under the Charities Act 2011, any organisation can register as a charity if one of its purposes – or even its only purpose – is '[the advancement of religion](#)'. But should this be enough to entitle an organisation to public funding, along with the reputational boost that comes from being a charity? What counts as a 'religion' anyway, and why does it exclude non-religious worldviews such as humanism? And what happens if the ideology espoused by that religion conflicts with widely shared values, or the law?

In this episode, [Emma Park](#) discusses these questions with [Megan Manson](#), Head of Policy and Research at the National Secular Society, and co-author of the 2019 report, [For the public benefit? The case for removing 'the advancement of religion' as a charitable purpose](#).

Megan also gives an update on charities recently brought to light by the NSS whose only or main charitable purpose is the advancement of religion. Some of these have openly advocated unpalatable views, from [extremism and jihad](#) to [misogyny](#) to [gay conversion therapy](#).

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[Ep 58: Reforming marriage law](#)

Posted: Tue, 5th Oct 2021

What's wrong with marriage law in England and Wales, and how can it be made fit for purpose in the twenty-first century?

In January, the Law Commission completed a consultation on the [reform of weddings law](#). They are due to publish the results at the end of the year. In this episode, [Emma Park](#) is joined by three guests, who together discuss some of the main problems with the laws surrounding marriages and their consequences in England and Wales, and the ways in which they need to be reformed. These problems include the law's current focus on buildings and the assumption that a wedding ceremony (registry office aside) should involve some sort of religion or belief. Another important topic is the extent to which unregistered religious marriages in minority communities are exploited to give one party an unfair advantage.

[Russell Sandberg](#), Professor of Law at Cardiff University, has recently published a book entitled [Religion and Marriage Law: The Need for Reform](#). See his [blog post on marriage law](#).

[Pragna Patel](#) is the founder of Southall Black Sisters, a non-for-profit, secular and inclusive organisation that supports the rights of Asian and African-Caribbean women in Britain. See her blog post on '[Shariafication by stealth](#)'.

[Philip Spicksley](#) is an independent celebrant and Chair of the Wedding Celebrancy Commission, as well as President of the Association of Independent Celebrants.

The NSS campaigns for legally binding [weddings to be equally open to all](#), regardless of religion or sexual orientation.

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Women Leaving Islam: the rights of those who leave religion must be protected - Opinion Out Loud Ep 008

Posted: Tue, 1st Jun 2021

The film *Women Leaving Islam* shows the risks facing those who stand up for the fundamental right to leave religion and the ongoing neglect of minorities within minorities in public life, says Helen Nicholls.

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