

Ep 18: Remembrance Day | Clerical Abuse

Video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vG8uFzesJOQ>

0:00:02.210,0:00:07.710
Hello and welcome to the National Secular society podcast. I'm Emma Park (EP)

0:00:07.710,0:00:11.730
and this week I'll be joined by Chris Sloggett (CS) and Megan Manson (MM) to talk about

0:00:11.730,0:00:15.929
the place of Remembrance Sunday in modern Britain. In particular we will

0:00:15.929,0:00:19.199
discuss whether the Church of England should still be entitled to play a

0:00:19.199,0:00:24.689
leading role in the ceremony. Or, if not, what should be done instead. Next I'll be

0:00:24.689,0:00:28.500
joined by Keith Porteus Wood, the President and former Executive Director

0:00:28.500,0:00:33.809
of the NSS. Keith will be giving us an update on the NSS activities elsewhere

0:00:33.809,0:00:37.620
in Europe and in the UN. He will be focusing on the child abuse scandals

0:00:37.620,0:00:41.309
that continue to afflict the Catholic Church around the world as well as the

0:00:41.309,0:00:43.566
Church of England.

0:00:43.566,0:00:51.089
In his memorable poem "Dulce et Decorum est" the World War I

0:00:51.089,0:00:56.459
poet, Wilfred Owen, described the horrors of trench warfare and how he witnessed

0:00:56.459,0:01:01.469
the shocking death of one of his comrades in a gas attack. The Latin title

0:01:01.469,0:01:06.119
of the poem is taken from lines by Horace that exalted patriotism in the Roman

0:01:06.119,0:01:12.200
Empire and means "it is a fine and proper thing to die for your fatherland".

0:01:12.200,0:01:17.070
Owen use these words ironically to question the morality of the country

0:01:17.070,0:01:22.079
that had sent him and his comrades out to suffer and die. "If you had seen the

0:01:22.079,0:01:27.539
man who was drowning in poisonous gas", Owen says, "My friend you would not tell

0:01:27.539,0:01:32.939
with such high zest to young men ardent for some desperate glory, the old lie

0:01:32.939,0:01:39.659
dulce et decorum est pro patria mori". Owen himself died in combat a week

0:01:39.659,0:01:44.640
before Armistice Day on the 11th of November 1918. His poetry and death have

0:01:44.640,0:01:49.049
become symbols of the appalling waste of life in the 'war to end all wars', a

0:01:49.049,0:01:53.670
conflict that was both unnecessary and

that paved the way for the even more
0:01:53.670,0:01:59.520
barbaric atrocities of World War II. The
UK commemorates the two World Wars and

0:01:59.520,0:02:04.229
subsequent conflicts on Remembrance Day
itself - through a two-minute silence - and

0:02:04.229,0:02:09.029
at greater length on Remembrance Sunday
the second Sunday in November.

0:02:09.029,0:02:14.040
(EP) Megan let's focus on the national
ceremony of Remembrance held at

0:02:14.040,0:02:18.269
the Cenotaph in Whitehall on
Remembrance Sunday. What in the NSS's

0:02:18.269,0:02:18.760
view is wrong with having a service of
remembrance led by the C of E as part of

0:02:18.760,0:02:19.260
this ceremony?

0:02:19.260,0:02:27.600
(MM) Well the problem we have
is that this should be a national event

0:02:27.600,0:02:32.480
that holds deep significance for all
people, of all faiths and none, in the UK.

0:02:32.480,0:02:38.640
And the ceremonies include exclusively
Christian rituals and hymns, and a bishop

0:02:38.640,0:02:41.670
leads a procession with a cross borne at
the front

0:02:41.670,0:02:47.840
and the bishop also leads in Christian
prayers. The order of service at the

0:02:47.849,0:02:53.840
Cenotaph was introduced in 1921 and it

really hasn't changed since. And so the
0:02:53.849,0:02:57.840
issue we have is that the
prominence of religion at what should be

0:02:57.840,0:03:01.560
a very inclusive event and particularly
the prominence of the Church of England

0:03:01.560,0:03:02.600
dominating it.

0:03:02.600,0:03:06.510
(EP) Going back to this point
that the service of Remembrance was

0:03:06.510,0:03:12.140
introduced in 1921 at the Cenotaph. The
name 'Cenotaph' actually comes not from the

0:03:12.140,0:03:16.900
Christian tradition at all but from an
ancient Greek word meaning "empty tomb".
So,

0:03:16.919,0:03:20.430
Megan who designed the one in Whitehall
and did they intend it to be

0:03:20.430,0:03:22.239
specifically a Christian Monument?

0:03:22.239,0:03:24.900
(MM) well this is the really ironic thing is that

0:03:24.900,0:03:29.940
it was designed specifically to be
non-religious. Because the war dead were

0:03:29.940,0:03:35.010
from such a diverse array of people from
different backgrounds and beliefs. And the

0:03:35.010,0:03:40.060
Church of England had wanted originally
to put a Christian cross on the top or

0:03:40.080,0:03:46.220
put Christian inscriptions on it. The
Government wisely said no. So having

0:03:46.229,0:03:49.769
religious rituals taking place at the
Centotaph really does take something away

0:03:49.769,0:03:55.889
from the original vision of the
architect who was a Edwin Lutyens.

0:03:55.889,0:04:01.319
Which was to have a secular monument
that could truly represent all. I think if

0:04:01.319,0:04:06.510
he were to see how Christian the
ceremonies at the Centotaph are today I

0:04:06.510,0:04:10.560
think he'd be disappointed to say the
least. (EP) How does the Church of England

0:04:10.560,0:04:15.900
then justify its ongoing role or how
would it do so if pressed? I think the

0:04:15.900,0:04:19.109
Church of England's response would
probably be that because it is our

0:04:19.109,0:04:23.849
established Church or, to put it another
way, our State religion, it naturally

0:04:23.849,0:04:27.229
falls upon them to lead services such as
this.

0:04:27.229,0:04:31.070
The church is also fond of claiming that
it's able to represent all people of all

0:04:31.070,0:04:35.389
faiths and beliefs in its capacity as
the established church and this would

0:04:35.389,0:04:40.490
include its high profile role at
Remembrance Sunday. (EP) And what's the
NSS's

0:04:40.490,0:04:44.900

response to the C of E's position? (MM) Well
naturally we challenge the very

0:04:44.900,0:04:48.770
legitimacy of the Church of England as
the established church. We don't think

0:04:48.770,0:04:52.910
there should be any established religion
or belief because this gives an obvious

0:04:52.910,0:04:58.100
unfair privilege to the institutions of
that particular faith. And moreover, the

0:04:58.100,0:05:01.910
Church of England increasingly
represents a dwindling minority group.

0:05:01.910,0:05:07.310
The latest British social attitudes
survey found that just 12% of Brits

0:05:07.310,0:05:12.560
identified as C of E. And according to the C of
E's own statistics published just last

0:05:12.560,0:05:18.590
month only 1.5 % of the population
attended church in an average week in

0:05:18.590,0:05:23.960
October last year. And, furthermore, we
know that over half the population has

0:05:23.960,0:05:29.240
no religion at all so for these reasons
we think there's no way the C of E can be

0:05:29.240,0:05:33.800
truly representative of the majority of
people in this country. And it's for

0:05:33.800,0:05:36.889
these same reasons we object to the
Church of England's dominance at the

0:05:36.889,0:05:40.310
services at the Centotaph. It's giving an
unfair spotlight to the Church of

0:05:40.310,0:05:44.419

England and it fails to represent us as a nation of diverse believers and

0:05:44.419,0:05:49.310

non-believers alike. (EP) And what about future generations? Chris, as a former

0:05:49.310,0:05:54.669

history teacher, do you think that having the C of E leading the Remembrance service

0:05:54.669,0:06:02.449

might be alienating to today's students? (CS) Yes I think it can be. When so few young

0:06:02.449,0:06:05.840

people are Anglican, there's the risk that they're just tuning out of Anglican

0:06:05.840,0:06:10.400

services. So this isn't just about representation, it's also about ensuring

0:06:10.400,0:06:14.710

people continue to remember what happened during the World Wars and since.

0:06:14.710,0:06:18.440

And Remembrance can mean a lot of different things to different people.

0:06:18.440,0:06:22.159

Some people are obviously very very keen to keep the focus on the sacrifices that

0:06:22.159,0:06:25.400

were made by the soldiers and saying "Thank you". Some people may want to shift

0:06:25.400,0:06:30.110

slightly more towards thinking about how we can avoid such slaughter in the

0:06:30.110,0:06:36.830

future, and I think that the point is that what unites these

0:06:36.830,0:06:42.020

positions is that you want to remember what happened. And if we remember what

0:06:42.020,0:06:47.230

happened then we may just need to update the service, to make it, just frankly, more relevant.

0:06:47.230,0:06:52.370

(EP) Megan what is the NSS doing to update or change the Remembrance Day

0:06:52.370,0:06:52.870

ceremony to a secular one, and how much progress has it made so far?

0:06:52.870,0:07:01.370

(MM) This has mainly been a campaign of awareness-raising. So what we're really asking is

0:07:01.370,0:07:05.350

for people to critically examine the role of the church in Remembrance Sunday.

0:07:05.350,0:07:10.520

We want people to ask - "Why do we give this increasingly irrelevant and divisive

0:07:10.520,0:07:19.010

institution the centre stage for an occasion of national importance?" And what would be a better way of representing the fallen of other faiths and no faith

0:07:19.010,0:07:24.080

equally? The answer so far has simply been to include more representatives of

0:07:24.080,0:07:28.040

religion and belief groups in the proceedings. Last year I believe for the

0:07:28.040,0:07:32.960

first time they even included a humanist representative. But that leads us to ask

0:07:32.960,0:07:37.940

ourselves - is this truly what representation means? Do most people who

0:07:37.940,0:07:42.650

have no belief really feel that

humanists represent them? For many people

0:07:42.650,0:07:47.150

religion and belief is a very personal matter and even those who are not religious

0:07:47.150,0:07:51.380

don't necessarily feel that their designated leaders honestly represent them.

0:07:51.380,0:07:56.150

(EP) So perhaps there's a problem then with having representatives of

0:07:56.150,0:08:00.470

particular religious groups and even non-religious ones at all? Chris what do

0:08:00.470,0:08:03.800

you think?

(CS) Yes we're wary of the multi-faithist

0:08:03.800,0:08:08.990

approach to changing the ceremony. It's similar to the approach to the House of

0:08:08.990,0:08:13.130

Lords which some religious apologists advance. People say that we should

0:08:13.130,0:08:16.639

bring in more representatives of different religious groups. And that that

0:08:16.639,0:08:19.820

will make things more representative. But really what you're doing is just

0:08:19.820,0:08:23.760

appointing a new class of elites and Remembrance really should be for all citizens.

0:08:23.760,0:08:28.940

(EP) So how can a Remembrance ceremony be conducted in a way that does include all citizens?

0:08:28.940,0:08:32.690

Meghan, is there anything we can learn from other

0:08:32.690,0:08:35.117

countries that still mark Remembrance Day?

0:08:35.117,0:08:42.020

(MM) Definitely. You look at countries that have have far more strict separation of Church and State than we

0:08:42.020,0:08:45.800

do so, for example, like France. These countries demonstrate again and again

0:08:45.800,0:08:50.720

that it's possible to have a deeply meaningful and poignant Remembrance

0:08:50.720,0:08:54.670

service. So it's kind of

ironic that to get an idea of how we can

0:08:54.670,0:08:58.120

better represent people in our own nation, we'd probably do well to look at

0:08:58.120,0:08:59.991

examples from other nations.

0:08:59.991,0:09:04.000

(EP) Finally what can NSS members do if they feel strongly about this issue?

0:09:04.000,0:09:07.930

(MM) Well, like so many issues, this all relates to the

0:09:07.930,0:09:11.230

established status of the Church of England. As long as we have an

0:09:11.230,0:09:15.370

established church that church is going to be put at the centre of many national

0:09:15.370,0:09:19.900

events like Remembrance Day. And the key to ending this privilege is

0:09:19.900,0:09:24.460

disestablishment. So I would first and foremost encourage listeners to support

0:09:24.460,0:09:28.839
our disestablishment campaign. You can sign our petition for disestablishment

0:09:28.839,0:09:33.190
on our website. And if you feel particularly strongly about this

0:09:33.190,0:09:37.029
specific issue of Remembrance Day, you can write to your MP asking them to

0:09:37.029,0:09:40.500
raise the issue of making it more inclusive to the Ministers responsible.

0:09:40.500,0:09:45.670
(EP):Chris anything to add?
(CS) Well I suppose people listening and you

0:09:45.670,0:09:48.940
know NSS supporters and members will probably have a range of views about

0:09:48.940,0:09:53.800
what a Remembrance service might include, and hopefully this

0:09:53.800,0:09:58.330
discussion will just prompt some various thoughts on on that subject. It's

0:09:58.330,0:10:02.200
also just worth you know as Communications Officer it'd be remiss of me not to just

0:10:02.200,0:10:06.580
put a little plug in for a really good blog that's on our website by the

0:10:06.580,0:10:11.440
historian Dan Snow. Written a few years ago, and his argument was similar to the

0:10:11.440,0:10:14.260
one I was advancing earlier. Actually he was essentially saying that

0:10:14.260,0:10:18.760
it's very important to remember what

happened but then the service needs to

0:10:18.760,0:10:23.700
be updated to make sure the Remembrance is passed on through the generations.

0:10:23.700,0:10:28.440
(EP) Megan and Chris thanks very much. (CS and MM) Thank you!

0:10:30.410,0:10:36.780
(EP) While the NSS's focus is on secularism in the UK, it also takes an interest in

0:10:36.780,0:10:40.560
international campaigns to support secularism and challenge religious

0:10:40.560,0:10:45.030
privilege. One area where this is particularly important is in

0:10:45.030,0:10:49.530
international efforts to tackle child abuse in the Catholic Church and other

0:10:49.530,0:10:54.750
denominations of Christianity. Clerical abuse in the Catholic Church has become

0:10:54.750,0:10:59.460
a scandal around the world. I'm joined now by Keith Porteus Wood, the President of

0:10:59.460,0:11:05.390
the NSS, to tell us more. Keith, just to be clear, what do we mean by clerical abuse?

0:11:05.390,0:11:16.010
(KPW) Clerical abuse is the abuse of minors and vulnerable adults by clerics and

0:11:16.010,0:11:23.490
those in contact with children and vulnerable adults, by virtue of them

0:11:23.490,0:11:25.901
being connected with the church.

0:11:25.901,0:11:32.271

(EP) why has the NSS become involved in the issue of child abuse by the Christian clergy?

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(KPW) We work on clerical abuse because of its

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enormous scale and because of the religious bodies' going to huge lengths

0:11:40.800,0:11:50.400

to hide it. We're motivated by aiming to protect survivors and victims - they

0:11:50.400,0:11:57.170

prefer to be called survivors often - we aim to encourage proper compensation and

0:11:57.170,0:12:02.970

rehabilitation for the victims and survivors and above all to bring alleged

0:12:02.970,0:12:11.730

perpetrators to justice. Because of the huge power and immense wealth of

0:12:11.730,0:12:16.200

religious organisations, they can get away with a great deal and we seek to

0:12:16.200,0:12:24.090

expose this. Not many other people do. We don't restrict our work on clerical

0:12:24.090,0:12:30.360

review abuse to the Roman Catholic Church however. But because of the

0:12:30.360,0:12:35.310

scale of the known abuse both nationally and internationally in Roman

0:12:35.310,0:12:40.800

Catholic Church it's an obvious focus. (EP) You've been following the progress that

0:12:40.800,0:12:46.560

the Catholic Church has made, or failed to make, to eradicate child abuse by its

0:12:46.560,0:12:51.260

clergy. Could you give us an update on the most important developments in recent months?

0:12:51.260,0:12:56.640

(KPW) Well the last year has been a dreadful one for the Catholic

0:12:56.640,0:13:04.410

Church. The Pope was publicly humiliated in Ireland by its Prime Minister for

0:13:04.410,0:13:11.250

offering no concrete action on clerical abuse. Francis just reiterated another

0:13:11.250,0:13:15.870

weary and meaningless apology. And earlier this month he was also

0:13:15.870,0:13:22.170

personally criticised by the independent inquiry on sexual abuse in England and

0:13:22.170,0:13:30.500

Wales for the Vatican's failure to assist in that inquiry. Despite

0:13:30.500,0:13:38.040

criticisms by the UN twice for the Vatican's failure to assist similar

0:13:38.040,0:13:44.790

inquiries. Two further significant events this year have been that two Cardinals

0:13:44.790,0:13:50.610

became convicts. They were convicted of criminal offences relating to clerical

0:13:50.610,0:13:57.450

abuse - that was Cardinal Pell in Australia for abuse and Cardinal Barbara

0:13:57.450,0:14:03.780

in France for failure to disclose abuse. Both have appealed. In this year alone

0:14:03.780,0:14:11.070

appalling outcomes have been publicised

of inquiries in Germany France and also
0:14:11.070,0:14:17.520
here in England and Wales. That inquiry
found, for example, that wholesale abuse
0:14:17.520,0:14:22.589
had occurred in open sight in a
prestigious Roman Catholic School in
0:14:22.589,0:14:28.950
Ealing, West London for 60 continuous
years. The inquiry concluded that, and I
0:14:28.950,0:14:33.420
quote, "Children could have been saved
from the abuse if the Church had not
0:14:33.420,0:14:40.140
been so determined to protect its own
reputation above all else." Unquote. This
0:14:40.140,0:14:45.180
was a direct criticism of the personal
actions of the Cardinal Archbishop of
0:14:45.180,0:14:49.130
Westminster, Vincent Nichols, who is the
most senior cleric
0:14:49.130,0:14:54.350
in England in Wales. And I've just heard
that news is emerging from the Scottish
0:14:54.350,0:15:01.660
inquiry of widespread shocking abuse
there. This is all in residential schools
0:15:01.660,0:15:05.662
which unfortunately was the sole focus
of the inquiry there.
0:15:05.662,0:15:07.140
(EP) Do you think the inquiry should have also
focused on non residential schools?
0:15:07.140,0:15:18.880
(KPW) Yes and as the England and Wales one
did even more widely in the internet and
institutionally abuse, sexual abuse of

0:15:18.880,0:15:31.070
all kinds and it goes much far further than
schools. And the opening shots of
the next abuse crisis have already been
0:15:31.070,0:15:37.160
fired this year - the abuse of nuns
worldwide. Are we going to see more about
0:15:37.160,0:15:42.020
that crisis in the near future? I'm sure
we will and similarly abuse in the
0:15:42.020,0:15:49.040
developing world. It's not unknown for
recalcitrant and incorrigible priests
0:15:49.040,0:15:56.060
who have been abusing habitually in the
Western world to be sent to the
0:15:56.060,0:16:05.851
developing world where they're not out
of harm's way but where they, their activities
will not attract publicity.
0:16:05.851,0:16:15.790
(EP) How has the NSS is campaign against
clerical abuse developed over the years and
how much success have you had so far?
0:16:15.790,0:16:24.740
(KPW) Our campaign, Emma, was born out of
the growing revelations about Roman Catholic
0:16:24.740,0:16:30.740
abuse on a spectacular scale initially
in Ireland and in the United States where
0:16:30.740,0:16:35.570
with the Church was doing everything it
could to cover up and avoid paying
0:16:35.570,0:16:48.620
compensation. Sadly such revelations almost
no longer are news. Our "light bulb" moment
was
was the realization that the Vatican and
0:16:48.620,0:16:53.420
Europe's last absolute monarchy and

smallest state had ratified the UN

0:16:53.420,0:16:59.270

Convention for the rights of the child under its diplomatic nom de plume of the

0:16:59.270,0:17:02.680

Holy See and that it was woefully in breach of its Convention obligations.

0:17:02.680,0:17:06.900

(EP) Just to clarify - what are the most important of those obligations?

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(KPW) It's a long convention with many articles but the tenor of it,

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as you would expect, was that member states have the obligation to do their

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absolute utmost to work in the best interests of children. And also

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there is an administrative requirement which is that they must report on their

0:17:36.710,0:17:43.800

success and challenges in following the Convention every five years and submit

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this to the UN Committee for the Rights of the Child. The Vatican, or the Holy See,

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had failed to do this and was something like 14 years overdue with that. Which

0:17:59.309,0:18:07.500

prevented the Committee from examining the Holy See's record in this respect

0:18:07.500,0:18:17.790

which was widely known to be appalling. (EP) And when you realized that the Holy See was in such breach of its Convention obligations, how did this help your

0:18:17.790,0:18:18.290

campaign?

0:18:18.290,0:18:25.320

(KPW) Well this meant that we could go to the UN Human Rights Council and

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point out as we did on several occasions that the Holy See was very much in

0:18:36.360,0:18:43.170

breach of its Convention obligations. In fact we cited several articles, not just

0:18:43.170,0:18:49.230

the one about reporting, which the Vatican was in breach of. And shortly

0:18:49.230,0:18:55.740

afterwards , Geoffrey Robertson QC wrote a magnificent book called "The Case of the

0:18:55.740,0:19:02.429

Pope" which cited these same articles, pretty well, that he in his great

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international experience also thought that the Holy See was in breach of. So we

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then were able to give evidence to the committee for the rights of the

0:19:15.070,0:19:22.810

child when the Vatican crumbled and produced its report. And as a result of

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that, the Committee produced an extremely critical report running to something

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like 70 paragraphs which drew international publicity on a massive scale. So that was a huge second victory

0:19:36.760,0:19:40.876

scale. So that was a huge second victory really.

0:19:40.876,0:19:48.680

(EP) You mentioned that the Vatican is a sovereign state under the name of the Holy See.

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Does this cause and problems Holy See does this cause any problems for campaigners on the clerical abuse issue?

0:19:52.181,0:19:53.400

(KPW) I mentioned Geoffrey Robertson

0:19:53.400,0:19:59.890

earlier, the illustrious international lawyer with close links to the United

0:19:59.890,0:20:09.300

Nations. He actually maintains under the Montevideo convention that the Vatican doesn't actually qualify as being a

0:20:09.300,0:20:17.320

nation for reasons of tax. I'm not going to comment about that but I will say

0:20:17.320,0:20:24.190

that it has become a state in a sense because a lot of other nations have

0:20:24.190,0:20:29.350

recognized it. So it's become a de facto state ,albeit that there are debates

0:20:29.350,0:20:42.220

about the very strange nature that it is, not just its size but the nature of the population and various elements.

other elements in its origin it was very

0:20:42.220,0:20:48.600

Much through the Lateran treaty and Mussolini played a part in it somewhere.

0:20:48.600,0:20:56.980

But the more practical issue for us being a sovereign state is that it is

0:20:56.980,0:21:04.680

able to have documents held secretly to which no one else has access. And this is

0:21:04.680,0:21:12.880

rather taken advantage of because Pope's have said all material relating to

0:21:12.880,0:21:19.930

clerical abuse must be sent to the Vatican. And therefore it's out of reach

0:21:19.930,0:21:24.669

of, for example, the European west's arrest warrants and that

0:21:24.669,0:21:34.299

kind of similar procedures for discovery and so the the Vatican often

0:21:34.299,0:21:41.799

uses diplomatic immunity to evade providing information for inquiries and

0:21:41.799,0:21:51.190

courts and in cases of abuse, and even for providing personnel to take part in

0:21:51.190,0:21:56.350

in trials and we've seen all of these. And it is a major problem and it's a

0:21:56.350,0:22:02.169

problem that for which it's been very much criticised by the UN and indeed by

0:22:02.169,0:22:11.679

the independent inquiry in England and Wales . So we need to challenge that at

0:22:11.679,0:22:15.613

every opportunity and it is it is a significant problem.

0:22:15.613,0:22:17.440

(EP) Do you ever see the Catholic Church changing its ways?

0:22:17.440,0:22:24.440

(KPW) Well I'll let your listeners draw their own conclusions from what I'm about to say.

0:22:24.440,0:22:36.340
The Pope's record on confronting abuse is abysmal. It's just repeated meaningless apologies and initiatives

0:22:36.340,0:22:43.389
designed to catch the headlines but fail in practice. Under his watch, the Vatican

0:22:43.389,0:22:49.629
completely rejected the UN Committee's for the Rights of the Child's criticisms

0:22:49.629,0:22:56.739
and suggestions. He even refuses to direct the worldwide Church to bring

0:22:56.739,0:23:03.879
suspected perpetrators to justice and compensate victims. And these victims'

0:23:03.879,0:23:11.649
lives have been absolutely ruined by the abuse. Moving closer to home the Cardinal

0:23:11.649,0:23:16.450
Archbishop of Westminster, Vincent Nichols' record, is no better.

0:23:16.450,0:23:22.840
He was singled out recently by the England and Wales Abuse Inquiry for the most harsh criticism.

0:23:22.840,0:23:28.120
(EP) What happens if the Catholic Church doesn't change, what can secularists do then?

0:23:28.120,0:23:33.580
(KPW) Well we have to a degree tried to work with some of the more

0:23:33.580,0:23:37.620
positive people in the church to train to challenge this heartless

0:23:37.620,0:23:43.890
intransigence. And some baby steps have been made, but we really can't rely on

0:23:43.890,0:23:48.659

the Church's goodwill which, in any case, is in very short supply. The greatest

0:23:48.659,0:23:56.340
driver of change will have to be forced on the Church from legislative changes

0:23:56.340,0:24:01.520
such as introduction of manager reporting of institutional abuse and

0:24:01.520,0:24:12.120
similarly by changes in the courts - to force more cooperation from the Catholic

0:24:12.120,0:24:14.740
Church and we're actively working on both fronts.

0:24:14.740,0:24:19.500
(EP) Turning now to the Church of England, how far have there been similar

0:24:19.500,0:24:23.511
abuse scandals and what are the latest developments?

0:24:23.511,0:24:33.000
(KPW) Well the Anglican Church was a further segment of the inquiry hearings of the independent Child Sexual

0:24:33.000,0:24:40.529
Abuse Inquiry. And in July the Archbishop of Canterbury said after a toe-curlingly

0:24:40.529,0:24:45.630
dreadful week, he was quote emphatically enshamed unquote of the

0:24:45.630,0:24:51.090
Church with regard to saving and "that I hope God will forgive us". And so while

0:24:51.090,0:24:55.860
the scale of abuse is smaller than in the Roman Catholic Church there are the

0:24:55.860,0:25:05.250
same problems of endemic institutional cover-up by the clerical and lay hierarchy.

Similarly the compounding of victims'

0:25:05.250,0:25:10.159

abuse by disingenuous denials and evading paying appropriate compensation.

0:25:10.159,0:25:16.169

(EP) What about in other Christian denominations and in other religions in

0:25:16.169,0:25:21.929

the UK? Is there evidence of abuse there? (KPW) Emma I'm glad you asked that because

0:25:21.929,0:25:28.919

it's so often overlooked and we were among others who told the independent

0:25:28.919,0:25:34.260

inquiry that we'd seen enough evidence to make a convincing case that such

0:25:34.260,0:25:38.909

abuse was likely to be a significant problem in other denominations such as

0:25:38.909,0:25:45.840

Jehovah's Witness plus Islam, Judaism and other minority religions. And I'm pleased

0:25:45.840,0:25:51.150

to say that the independent inquiry has recently announced an inquiry

0:25:51.150,0:25:55.257

into these aspects albeit we fear on a rather modest scale.

0:25:55.257,0:26:00.940

(EP) Clearly abuse doesn't just happen in religious organisations. But do they seem to be especially prone to it and if so why?

0:26:00.940,0:26:06.840

(KPW) There's hardly a Western nation that

0:26:06.840,0:26:15.240

hasn't acknowledged a widespread problem of clerical abuse. The independent inquiry

0:26:15.240,0:26:20.820

actually asked me that very same question that you have. And a summary

0:26:20.820,0:26:28.530

of my answer is the the spiritual power of those in authority over children in

0:26:28.530,0:26:34.980

often remote or isolated, secretive institution, the huge influence of

0:26:34.980,0:26:40.260

clerics over the police and local authorities and parents to disbelieve

0:26:40.260,0:26:46.050

complainants, and the need to protect institutions from scandal at any cost.

0:26:46.050,0:26:53.850

All this serves to allow abuse to continue unabated for a long time but it

0:26:53.850,0:27:00.720

also serves as a magnet for potential abusers to join such institutions. (EP) What's

0:27:00.720,0:27:04.890

the future outlook for the existence of the abuse of minors within the Church of

0:27:04.890,0:27:05.390

England and other religious organisations in the UK and abroad?

0:27:05.390,0:27:19.080

(KPW) The best hope is for more and more publicity and for a reduction of deference, which I think

0:27:19.080,0:27:26.280

is happening. And the introduction of the safeguarding measures in law and

0:27:26.280,0:27:30.690

I think these would all help to some degree. However, we won't know for decades

0:27:30.690,0:27:38.580

because shockingly it takes over 30 years on average for an abuse victim to

0:27:38.580,0:27:48.570
claim. A major concern is the
necessary cultural improvement in church

0:27:48.570,0:27:55.740
hierarchies, in particular has been
glacial. And that there's almost none in

0:27:55.740,0:28:02.260
the smaller denominations
and minority religions

0:28:02.260,0:28:08.169
It therefore falls to governments to
rapidly legislate - to introduce

0:28:08.169,0:28:13.960
mandatory reporting where it isn't there
as it isn't in the UK - and to remove

0:28:13.960,0:28:19.030
obstacles such as time bars to criminal
and civil prosecutions of suspected

0:28:19.030,0:28:26.200
perpetrators. And none of this will
happen without sustained pressure from

0:28:26.200,0:28:31.200
inquiries and survivors and victims and
campaigners such as ourselves and

0:28:31.200,0:28:36.490
"Mandate Now", which is a marvelous
organisation, pressing for mandatory

0:28:36.490,0:28:42.400
reporting. And for the Vatican to follow
its treaty obligations under the UN
Convention.

0:28:42.400,0:28:48.400
(EP) So what can NSS members who
feel strongly about this issue do to support the
NSS's campaign?

0:28:48.400,0:29:01.000
(KPW) Where members do become aware of
abuse and particularly in clerical situations and
particularly if it appears not to being

0:29:01.000,0:29:07.780
appropriately dealt with, they're
welcome to contact us and we will seek

0:29:07.780,0:29:16.360
to step in. But also on a more practical
level I think, and with widespread

0:29:16.360,0:29:25.530
benefit, will be to write to their MPs to
support the introduction of mandatory

0:29:25.530,0:29:31.870
reporting of institutional abuse. It's
important that we say institutional

0:29:31.870,0:29:38.530
abuse because there is criticism of
a kind of 'tell everybody snitching on

0:29:38.530,0:29:45.280
everybody' kind of provision which would
I think be, would go down very badly in

0:29:45.280,0:29:52.510
British law. As it happens, there is a
requirement
already in Northern Ireland that goes

0:29:52.510,0:29:59.110
back to the Troubles to report any
criminal offence committed by anyone

0:29:59.110,0:30:04.840
else that is observed but that was based
really in an extreme time and I don't

0:30:04.840,0:30:11.049
know how much it is followed in practice.
However, there is widespread acceptance

0:30:11.049,0:30:16.670
that an obligation
to report abuse in institutional

0:30:16.670,0:30:22.900
situations such as schools and religious
situations and I would add to that

0:30:22.900,0:30:29.690

sports scenarios is something that the (countries of) England and Wales and Scotland are

0:30:29.690,0:30:35.390
behind much of the rest of the world in having so far failed to do and put in

0:30:35.390,0:30:41.300
that legislation and so I invite anyone who has been touched by what I have said to

0:30:41.300,0:30:47.690
write to their MP asking for mandatory reporting of abuse in institutional

0:30:47.690,0:30:52.220
situations to be brought into UK law as soon as possible

0:30:52.220,0:30:57.010
and that's what the independent inquiry has been asked time and time again to do.

0:30:57.010,0:31:04.076
Keith Porteous Wood, thank you very much. (KPW) Pleasure.

0:31:04.076,0:31:06.170
(EP) That was Episode 18 of the

0:31:06.170,0:31:10.940
National Secular Society podcast hosted by Emma Park. If you would like to help

0:31:10.940,0:31:15.290
us challenge religious privilege and support freedom of and from religion in

0:31:15.290,0:31:19.850
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0:31:26.030,0:31:29.450
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0:31:29.450,0:31:33.790
topics discussed. Thanks for listening.

0:31:33.950,0:31:36.010

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