

# Ep 18: Remembrance Day | Clerical Abuse

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

0:00:02.210,0:00:07.710	poet, Wilfred Owen, described the horrors of trench warfare and how he witnessed
Hello and welcome to the National Secular society podcast. I'm Emma Park (EP)	
0:00:07.710,0:00:11.730	0:00:56.459,0:01:01.469
and this week I'll be joined by Chris Sloggett (CS) and Megan Manson (MM) to talk about	the shocking death of one of his comrades in a gas attack. The Latin title
0:00:11.730,0:00:15.929	0:01:01.469,0:01:06.119
the place of Remembrance Sunday in modern Britain. In particular we will	of the poem is taken from lines by Horace that exalted patriotism in the Roman
0:00:15.929,0:00:19.199	0:01:06.119,0:01:12.200
discuss whether the Church of England should still be entitled to play a	Empire and means "it is a fine and proper thing to die for your fatherland".
0:00:19.199,0:00:24.689	0:01:12.200,0:01:17.070
leading role in the ceremony. Or, if not, what should be done instead. Next I'll be	Owen use these words ironically to question the morality of the country
0:00:24.689,0:00:28.500	0:01:17.070,0:01:22.079
joined by Keith Porteus Wood, the President and former Executive Director	that had sent him and his comrades out to suffer and die. "If you had seen the
0:00:28.500,0:00:33.809	0:01:22.079,0:01:27.539
of the NSS. Keith will be giving us an update on the NSS activities elsewhere	man who was drowning in poisonous gas", Owen says, "My friend you would not tell
0:00:33.809,0:00:37.620	0:01:27.539,0:01:32.939
in Europe and in the UN. He will be focusing on the child abuse scandals	with such high zest to young men ardent for some desperate glory, the old lie
0:00:37.620,0:00:41.309	0:01:32.939,0:01:39.659
that continue to afflict the Catholic Church around the world as well as the	dulce et decorum est pro patria mori". Owen himself died in combat a week
0:00:41.309,0:00:43.566	0:01:39.659,0:01:44.640
Church of England.	before Armistice Day on the 11th of November 1918. His poetry and death have
0:00:43.566,0:00:51.089	0:01:44.640,0:01:49.049
In his memorable poem "Dulce et Decorum est" the World War I	become symbols of the appalling waste of life in the 'war to end all wars', a
0:00:51.089,0:00:56.459	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?

0:11:32.271,0:11:35.340

(KPW) We work on clerical abuse because of its

0:11:35.340,0:11:40.800

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?

0:17:06.900,0:17:14.100

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

0:17:14.100,0:17:22.170

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

0:17:22.170,0:17:29.550

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

0:17:29.550,0:17:36.710

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

0:17:43.800,0:17:50.309

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

0:17:50.309,0:17:59.309

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

0:18:25.320,0:18:36.360

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

0:19:02.429,0:19:09.120

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

0:19:09.120,0:19:15.070

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

0:19:22.810,0:19:29.710

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

0:19:29.710,0:19:36.760

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.

0:19:48.680,0:19:52.181

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  
Britain today, why not become a member of the NSS? Full details are on our website

0:31:19.850,0:31:26.030  
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0:31:26.030,0:31:29.450  
find more episodes on the website along with further information about the

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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