

BOOK REVIEW

Kathryn O’Sullivan (ed), *Minority Religions under Irish Law: Islam in national and International Context* (Brill 2019), ISBN 978-90-04-39823-8, 254p.

Dr Norah Burns, University of Limerick

There has been increased attention in recent years on the legal protections, or lack thereof, afforded to religious minorities. As acknowledged by Dr Kathryn O’Sullivan, the editor of this text, with the increasing flow of human migration, in particular in the twentieth century from Muslim countries to Western, usually Christian majority countries, there has been an increasing focus on the protections afforded to religious minorities. This edited collection is a very useful overview of both the international and Irish protections for religious minorities. The book includes chapters written by academics from a variety of backgrounds, which allows the text to look at the topic of minority religions under Irish law from a variety of perspectives. The text is divided into three parts and follows a logical structure which includes nine chapters of insightful commentary on the protection of religious minorities in both an international and Irish context, as well as in a variety of settings. Dr O’Sullivan is a lecturer in the School of Law at the University of Limerick and has a strong record in the areas of family property law and succession law. In recent years she has undertaken research on law and religion in Ireland. In 2017, Dr O’Sullivan organised the Minority Religions under Irish Law Symposium: Islam in National and International Context in the School of Law at UL. This symposium was very well received and included experts from the US, Canada and Europe, many of whom have chapters in this edited collection.

Part 1 of this book looks at accommodating minority religions from both international and national perspectives and includes two chapters. The first chapter written by M. Christian Green, a Senior Fellow and Research Director on Law, Religion, and Human Rights at Emory University, focuses on international human rights law and global trends. Professor Green suggests that there is an ‘emerging consensus’ on the importance of minorities and in particular religious minorities. Her chapter begins by looking at the emergence and development of freedom of religion or belief and then examines the rights of other minority groups as group rights. Green provides a detailed insight into legal, political and governmental initiatives in a number of countries, which have been aimed at managing minority religions either directly or indirectly. Green’s chapter provides an excellent conclusion in offering ‘overarching and transnational’ themes in religion and law, which might be influencing factors behind these developments in individual countries. The second chapter in this section is written by Dr Eoin Daly and focuses on the accommodation of religious minorities in Ireland by looking at the constitutional framework in this State. Dr Daly is a lecturer at the National University of Ireland, Galway and is the author of *Religion, Law and the Irish State* (Clarus Press 2012). In his chapter, Dr Daly argues that the Irish Constitutional framework concerning religion is marked by indeterminacy rather than coherence. He also comments on how the Irish Constitution can be seen to appeal to opposing principles with regard to the relation between State and religion, and how this can lead to somewhat unpredictable results for religious minorities in case law.

Part 2 looks specifically at the Muslim community in Ireland and Islam and Irish law. This section looks at a variety of different areas, from the history and demographics of the Muslim community in Ireland, the accommodation of Islam in the Irish workplace, the recognition of Muslim marriage ceremonies in Ireland, overseas marriage and divorce in Islamic form

and Islamic finance in Irish law. The five chapters in part 2 provide a detailed insight and analysis into very specific areas of law as they relate to the Muslim community in Ireland. Part 2 includes chapters by: Dr James Carr, a Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Limerick; Claire Hogan, a barrister with a mixed public and civil law practice; Dr Susan Leahy and Dr Kathryn O'Sullivan, both Lecturers in the School of Law at the University of Limerick; Dr Maire Ní Shúilleabháin, Assistant Professor in Law at University College Dublin and Dr Edana Richardson, Lecturer in Law at the University of Maynooth. Part 2 of this book offers a depth of analysis that will be both enjoyable for the seasoned law and religion scholar to delve into, as well as being accessible to a reader who is interested in learning more about how the law in Ireland relates to Ireland's largest non-Christian minority religious group. This section will also be of interest to practitioners given the practical insights offered on issues related to employment law, family law and finance.

Part 3 includes two chapters that focus on international perspectives on Sharia Councils: Regulation and Governance. Dr Amin Al-Astewani discusses the legal framework for regulating Sharia Councils in the UK and considers if this framework would provide a potential model for Ireland. Dr Al-Astewani is a Lecturer in Law at Lancaster University Law School and has advised the UK Board of Sharia Councils on the legal status of Islamic Tribunals. His chapter begins by looking at the broad approach towards the accommodation of religious tribunals in both the UK and Ireland, before then turning to the current regulatory model for governing Sharia Councils in England. The final chapter written by Samia Bano looks at the usefulness of the 'Parity Governance Model' in Muslim Family Law Debates. Dr Bano is a Senior Lecturer at SOAS, University of London, School of Law and has published widely on Muslim women and Sharia Councils. Her chapter focuses on the potential for institutional reform of Sharia Councils and offers insightful prospective analysis.

Minority Religions under Irish Law: Islam in National and International Context is a thought-provoking and illuminating insight into the protection of religious minorities — specifically in relation to the Muslim community in Ireland. Dr O'Sullivan and her fellow authors have put together a series of chapters that provide an excellent comparative analysis of the law as it relates to religious minorities in a variety of countries and contexts. The text is of a very high calibre, but is also accessible and provides a very timely discussion of an evolving area of law.