

Here We Go: Politician Wants to Strip Christian Weddings of Legal Status

Christian weddings should be stripped of their legal status, a justice minister has said.

Liberal Democrat Simon Hughes proposes that only secular, state-recognized ceremonies should have legal recognition in the U.K., a system adopted in France.

In practice, his proposals would mean that in order for a Christian couple to have their marriage recognized, they would need to have a secular ceremony in addition to a church wedding.

The French system is based on *laïcité*—a concept that separates state and religion—and Hughes says marriages on the British side of the channel should be subjected to the same principles.

Speaking at the Liberal Democrat spring conference, he said, “We should do what the Belgians do and the French do.

“It can be done even in the same building on the same day, but you would have a ceremony by which the state recognizes the marriage, the wedding, and then the faith community has the ceremony which gives that the authority.”

He explained, however, that there would need to be a clear distinction between the religious and state elements.

But the proposals could be “fiercely opposed by clergy as an attempt to marginalize religion,” one journalist says.

Hughes claims, however, that his proposals would not “trespass on people’s faith.”

Before he became a justice minister, Hughes says he had always supported the “disestablishment of the Church of England.”

Writing for the Liberal Democrat Voice website last May, he explained how “he really wants a separation between church and state.”

He said, “I believe that heterosexual, gay, lesbian, transgender and non-gendered people should all be able to have the choice of an identical sort of civil partnership or of a civil marriage or union.

“This should be separate from Christian or other faith marriages.”

The way of “reconciling the two is for us first to separate completely in law the recognition of relationships by the state from marriages conducted by churches” and other “faith groups,” Hughes said..