



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Further evidence of the anti-Christian bias in public life in UK



BBC newsreader Fiona Bruce

British Airways has asked a Christian member of staff to conceal her cross necklace because it contravenes the company's uniform policy. Not every believer in Christ considers the cross to be a true symbol of Christianity, and this editor is one of them, but it must be acknowledged that most people generally do. Opposition to its display may be fairly interpreted therefore as a manifestation of opposition to the religion of Christ.

Crosses have become something of a fashion accessory for some celebrities, but not everyone is happy to see them on display.

Heathrow check-in worker Nadia Eweida is on unpaid leave after refusing to cover up her cross necklace.

"I believe that it is a very important issue on the matter of expressing Christianity and employees having their say in the way they express their faith," she said.

British Airways says all jewellery and religious symbols on chains must be worn under the uniform. But it makes an exception for Sikh turbans and Muslim hijabs because they cannot be covered up.

The airline says: "British Airways does recognise that uniformed employees may wish to wear jewellery including religious symbols. These items can be worn, underneath the uniform."

Airline British Midland has the same uniform policy, which it says is based not on religion but on the kind of image the company wants to present

It is not the first time the cross has been subject to scrutiny in recent weeks.

The BBC admitted it had a discussion about newsreader Fiona Bruce's cross necklace in the context of a wider debate about impartiality and religious dress, though it insists there is no ban.

Meanwhile a row over Muslim veils is still rumbling on, as a support teacher in Yorkshire fights suspension for wearing a veil in lessons.

While many Christians work happily for firms that do not allow crosses to be worn, some feel the action taken by British Airways is symptomatic of a backlash against the Christian faith, at a time of heightened sensitivity about religious apparel.

The Rev Brian Allenby, national director of Christians at Work which promotes Christianity in the workplace, says displaying the cross is an important part of some Christians' faith.

"I think I think it's petty-minded for British Airways to ask her to conceal the cross. My view is as long as they treat everybody the same, that's not a problem," he said.

"For some Christians it will be very important.

"I suppose it's a bit like the issue with the Muslim veil. Some Muslim women wear it and some don't."



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

David Cannings, chairman of Christians in Politics, which encourages people in public office to make their faith part of their work, said religious imagery was becoming marginalised.

“We think such ostentatious expressions of faith are starting to be pushed into the background in an attempt to treat people equally and I think there’s a danger that faith will be pushed into the background at the same time.

“The debate is ‘Is that what we want?’ and I don’t think we’ve answered the question.

“There’s a danger we end up like in France where there’s an absolute bar on any expression of faith in public society.”

Christian traditions in the UK are deep-rooted and should not be pushed away completely, he said.

“We would be left with a character-less culture where the only expressions of faith are those required by other faiths.”

And he said there was a danger the seeds of division would be sown if some faiths were not allowed the same expression as others.