

Trustees of the Barry Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses (Appellant) v BXB (Respondent)

Case ID: 2021/0089

Case summary

Issue

Did the Court of Appeal wrongly find the appellant, part of the Jehovah's Witness organisation, to be vicariously liable for a rape committed by one of their elders?

Facts

In 1990, the respondent, Mrs B, was raped by an elder of the Barry Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, Mark Sewell, at his home, after they had been out evangelising together. Mr Sewell was convicted of raping Mrs B, and of indecently assaulting two other people, in 2014.

In 2017, Mrs B brought a claim for damages against the worldwide governing body of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Watchtower and Bible Tract Society of Pennsylvania, and the appellant, the Trustees of the Congregation. She claimed that they were responsible in law (or, "vicariously liable") for the rape, because of the nature of their relationship with Mr Sewell and because of the connection between that relationship and the commission of the rape.

Both the High Court and the Court of Appeal found in Mrs B's favour. The appellant now appeals to the Supreme Court.

Judgment appealed

[\[2021\] EWCA 356](#)

Parties

Appellant(s)

Trustees of Barry Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses

Respondent(s)

BXB

Appeal

Justices

Lord Reed, Lord Hodge, Lord Briggs, Lord Burrows, Lord Stephens

Hearing start date

13 February 2023

Hearing finish date

14 February 2023

Watch hearing

13 February 2023 [Morning session](#) [Afternoon session](#)

14 February 2023 [Morning session](#)

Judgment details

Judgment date

26 April 2023

Neutral citation

[2023] UKSC 15

Reporting restrictions

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THE COURT ORDERED that no one shall publish or reveal the name or address of the Respondent or publish or reveal any information which would be likely to lead to the identification of the Respondent or of any member of her family in connection with these proceedings.