

# Faith & Citizenship

THE ONYX LINK FOUNDATION  
PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND WALES INTERFAITH  
CONFERENCE 1ST MAY 2019: FROM OUR SHARED  
VALUES TO OUR SHARED CITIZENSHIP



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## **Contents**

Foreword	06
Participants CV's	08
Summary of events	14
From Our Shared Values to Our Shared Citizenship - Dr Abdalla Mohamed	16
Christian Perspective of Citizenship – Reverend Canon Dr Mark Dimond	24
A Jewish Perspective on Faith and Citizenship - Rabbi Ben Abrahamson	35
Faith and Citizenship: A Muslim Perspective - Sheikh Mohamed Toulba	64
Reconceptualising Citizenship in the Changing World - Vivian Bartlett	76
How a person's faith or morality may shape their conduct to be good citizens in society - Lord Singh of Wimbledon and Hardeep Singh	99
Faith And Citizenship a Sikh Perspective - Cllr Neeta Baicher	114
Introducing Hinduism in the context of moral values and good citizenship - Dr Sibani Roy	117

A Buddhist perspective on Citizenship - Ngakpa Samten and Naljorma Dri'mèd	131
Wiccan Tradition and Thoughts About Citizenship - Priestess Jemma-Jane Thompson	138

## Foreword

In May 2018, the OLF held its first *Wales Interfaith Conference* on 'Getting Together upon our Shared Values' held in Cardiff. Our main objective was to facilitate the documentation of faith perspectives on the theme of the conference: One Humanity, Morality, and Earth our Home, that may advance a formulation of an Interfaith Worldview (faith communities in the UK are 67% of the population).

Representatives of seven world religions in Wales addressed the conference and signed a declaration of their unified perspective on the theme. Our second objective was to invest this unified vision in improving community relations and inspire community activities across Wales. This vision would allow people to have ownership of and commitment to living in harmony and peace and advancing active national and global citizenship.

In May 2019, the OLF devoted their second conference to the topic "Faith and Citizenship: From our shared values to our shared citizenship" to advance the following objectives:

1. To facilitate the documentation of a moral perspective of Citizenship based on our shared values.
2. To form a vision for investing shared citizenship in improving our community relations, our relationship with the state, and our relationship with the environment.

The conference may facilitate the above objectives from two perspectives:

1. How can the concepts of citizenship from the state perspective (justice, democracy, and liberty) may be redefined/reformed upon our shared values to facilitate peaceful coexistence, equality, and engagement for all communities across Wales?
2. How may a person's faith or morality shape their conduct to be a 'good citizen' in state and society?

In seeking to achieve these objectives we invited eight faith experts representing major world religions to address the conference with their perspectives of faith and citizenship.

We also adopted an intensive audience participative approach in our plenary discussion with the emphasis on developing solutions rather than gathering opinions.

To make this conference a success in achieving its objectives, we implemented the OLF quality assurance measures and the intensive feedback from both speakers and audience of our previous conference.

The challenges now for all of us is to embrace the new ideas and approaches so eloquently anticipated during this conference.

To watch the conferences, please visit our website [www.onyxlinkfoundation.org](http://www.onyxlinkfoundation.org)

## **Participants CV's**

The following were participants of the conference, held at the Coldra Court Hotel by Celtic Manor, Newport. Here are their short CVs.

### **Dr Abdalla Mohamed OBE The Onyx Link Foundation, Chair Muslim faith**

Dr Abdalla Mohamed is a Muslim Scholar, former lecturer in the University of Khartoum, Ph.D. in psychology. He has been teaching Islamic knowledge and practicing Islamic Jurisprudence, Islamic counselling, and religious advice for Muslim communities in England and Wales for over 25 years.



His efforts and contributions to community relations in Wales have been acknowledged with an OBE from H.M Queen Elizabeth II in 2008. In 2019 the efforts of the Onyx Link Foundation in interfaith relations in Wales was acknowledged by H.M Queen Elizabeth II, who invited Dr Abdalla to a reception at Buckingham Palace to celebrate the work of UK faith and belief groups in local communities.



**Reverend Canon Dr Mark Dimond – Newport Cathedral - Christian faith**

Reverend Canon Dr Mark Dimond was working as a priest at Newport Cathedral. He had been in Anglican ministry for eight years, and before that he was an historian and worked in the business world, mainly in Europe.

Before coming to Newport, he was the Chaplain to the Archbishop of Wales. He is interested in the art of interfaith dialogue and set up the South Cardiff Interfaith Network, a group practising interfaith dialogue on the ground.

**Rabbi Ben Abrahamson – Keynote Speaker - Jewish faith**

Rabbi Ben Abrahamson is the director of the Al Sadiqin Institute, an association of Muslim and Rabbinic scholars dedicated to researching the common heritage of Islam and Judaism.



His research explores the historical framework for relations between devout believers of the Abrahamic tradition. Research that can directly applied to citizenship in the modern age.

He is actively involved in religious diplomacy as a speaker for the Inter-Parliamentary Coalition for Global Ethics, established to promote the implementation of the United

Nations' resolutions on the Culture of Peace. Ben has been recognized as a visiting scholar to ISAM (The Turkish National Islamic Research Centre).

### **Sheikh Mohamed Toulba – Muslim faith**

Sheikh Mohamed Toulba is a Muslim scholar. He graduated at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt and taught Islamic Studies in English at Al-Azhar Secondary institute. He has more than 20 years of experience as an Imam and religious teacher at Cardiff South Wales Islamic Centre, and Brighton Mosque & Muslim Community Centre.



### **Mr Hardeep Singh – Sikh faith**

Mr Hardeep Singh is Deputy-Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations and Assistant Editor of *The Sikh Messenger*.





### **Cllr Neeta Baicher JP – Sikh faith**

Neeta qualified with a Diploma in Social Work in 1995 and has a bachelor's degree in Public Administration. She also has a Post Graduate Certificate in Counselling Skills.

Her previous roles include working in Child and Family teams as a Social Worker and as a full-time Senior Practitioner. She now works independently and serves as a Justice of Peace, Community Councillor and Vice Chair of Newport Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) and was a former chair of Monmouth SACRE.

Her work involves dealing with Equality & Diversity issues, which includes training and working to empower women and conducting assessments in other languages (Hindi & Punjabi) for Social Services. Neeta was the Deputy Chair of *British Association of Social Workers* (BASW) from 2016 to 2018 and has been the Director of BASW on the UK Council and Chair of BASW Cymru since 2018.

### **Mr Vivian Bartlett - Bahá'í faith**

Born in Cardiff, Viv Bartlett began searching for answers to life's problems after a tragedy struck, when his 14-year-old younger brother accidentally electrocuted himself. Finding answers in religion, he became a member of the Bahá'í Faith.



Later he travelled the world as an engineer in the merchant navy, married and gained a B. Ed Honours degree as a mature student. He then taught in secondary education whilst serving the Bahá'í community and was elected to the first Bahá'í Council for Wales.

Viv has authored three books, with a fourth in process. He has travelled extensively lecturing on the Bahá'í Faith. Viv serves as a Bahá'í representative on the Interfaith Council for Wales. His beloved wife, Rita, died of cancer, prior to which they parented three children and were foster carers.

### **Dr Sibani Roy – Hindu faith**

Dr Sibani Roy was born in a Hindu family in India. Her late Physician and Sanskrit Scholar father taught her Sanskrit slokas from early childhood. Now Dr Roy has doctorate degrees in Medical Ethics and Religious studies, promotes multi-faith beliefs as apart of promoting community cohesion and social integration globally.



Dr Roy is the Founder/Chair of Networking for World's Awareness of Multicultural Integration. She is the Hindu Chaplain at Bangor University and is associated with Inter-Faith groups in Bangor, Wrexham, and Berwyn Prison.



### **Naljorma Dri'mèd Khandro & Ngakpa Samten Dorje – Buddhist faith**

Naljorma Dri'mèd Khandro is a German born Feldenkrais Teacher and Buddhist practitioner. Her partner Ngakpa Samten Dorje is a British born retired Intensive Care Nurse and also a Buddhist

Practitioner.

They are an ordained couple within the Aro gTér Lineage of Nyingma Buddhism and are trustees for the Aro gTér Charity 'Sang-ngak-chö-dzong'.

### **High Priestess Jemma Jane Thompson – Wicca faith**



Jemma has been a student of Paganism, the occult and folklore for over 20 years. After an initial interest in gypsy magic and traditional folklore and divination, she was initiated as a Priestess within the Alexandrian Tradition of Wicca in late 2000, where she continued to study witchcraft in various forms.

After a lengthy break to focus on her family life, Jemma returned to active priesthood in 2010, and is now High Priestess of two Covens - The Mirror of Hathor in South Wales, and the Coven of the Rising Star in Glastonbury.

## Summary of the conference events

The OLF had the honour of their conference being opened by the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip Jane Hutt AM. She praised and supported the work of the OLF on interfaith relations and asserted the commitment of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) to work with faith communities and the Wales Interfaith Forum that was established by WAG in 2001.

The conference was also greeted by the guests of honour, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Gwent Andrew Tuggey CBE Representative of H.M. Queen Elizabeth II and Deputy Lord Mayor of Newport Phil Hourahine.

Dr Abdalla Mohamed OBE, presented the vision of the OLF on moral-based approaches for engagement of the government with citizens on matters of freedom & liberty, securing peace & justice, and engaging people in the democratic process.

Faith representatives addressed the conference on their perspectives of citizenship and the notion of a 'good citizen' on grounds of faith principles of morality.

The conference closed with the faith representatives agreeing to sign the following declaration:

*"We, the faith leaders and communities meeting at the 'Wales Interfaith Conference' in Newport, 1st May 2019, on Faith & Citizenship: From our Shared Values to our Shared Citizenship, agree on the following:*

*World religions and beliefs have a deep concern for maintaining the wellbeing of both the family and society upon their time-honoured moral values.*

*Hence, citizenship, from a faith perspective, may be modelled with the family system. The faith-based values underpinning family bonds, family order, and commitment to family responsibility, may be extended to strengthening community relations, maintaining social order, and observing civic responsibility.*

*A 'good follower of one's faith', i.e., one who adheres to the values that underpin the wellbeing of family and society, is indeed a 'good citizen'. Such a person will respect the rights of fellow humans, treat the other as oneself, maintain peaceful coexistence with all people, observe the civic responsibility, and advance the 'common good'.*

*Our agreement on the above will ensure our civic responsibility and pave the way for our wilful collaboration in the 'common good' including community engagement, participation in the democratic process, and caring for the environment".*

# From Our Shared Values to Our Shared Citizenship

**Dr Abdalla Mohamed OBE**

Chair

Onyx Link Foundation

## **Introduction**

The research department of the OLF conducted a theoretical survey on citizenship as a concept and its implementation in the relationship between the state and people. Here are the most important conclusions of this survey:

Citizenship is a partnership between the State and the Citizens; but the definitions of the partners, their duties, and responsibilities are not yet common knowledge. *Throughout history, citizenship has maintained strong ethical links to justice, democracy, and liberty<sup>1</sup>*, which are, in part, established upon and maintained by the constitution and law of the state. Therefore, the state has the responsibility of educating citizens about the law.

This may raise a parallel question about the basis of people's commitment to be "good citizens". The OLF assumes that besides observing the constitution and law of the state, the person's conduct as a good citizen depends mainly on their moral values. Hence, there is a lot to clarify regarding the second partner: members of the society and their role in this partnership.

The state requires members of the society to be law-abiding citizens. The law, as the guardian of equity and safety, demark

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.citizen.org.uk/what-is-citizenship.html>

the line between harmful/unethical conduct and the useful/ethical in human interaction. For example, The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children. Similarly, in many worldviews, the Law is considered the threshold of morality. However, the cost of enforcing the law, by the Ministry of Justice, upon the minority of people who break the law in England and Wales weigh so heavily on public spending (in 2017-18 over £6.5 billions)<sup>2</sup>.

This paper may contribute to the above debate by tackling the following question:

How the concepts of citizenship from the state perspective (justice, democracy, and liberty) may be redefined/reformed to facilitate peaceful coexistence, equality, and engagement for all communities across Wales in advancing the common good and the civic duty? In other words, it addresses the question of how our shared values may facilitate the role of the government in maintaining an active relationship with citizens. This role will be discussed with regards to the overlapping tasks of securing liberty, peace and safety, and representation.

## **Definition of Citizenship**

Social perspective: citizenship is largely the sense of belonging to a social unit, a social order, and homeland as well as the active participation in the process of living. Historically, growth of human societies comprised the integration of the family or social unit into clans, tribal societies, and nations. Humans are unique in their ability to alter their environment with the conscious purpose of

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<sup>2</sup> Budget 2018 (PDF). London: HM Treasury. 2018. pp. 23–24.

utilising its resources to meet the challenges and opportunities of living. Much of this ability is related to human intelligence, social order, and communication. Keepers of the social order and coordination of living developed from the father/mother figure of the family to clan/tribal leadership, to political leadership in a form of national ruling or government. However, society passes through well-defined stages during its economic development comprising nomadic hunting and gathering, rural agrarian, urban, commercial, industrial, and post-industrial societies<sup>3</sup>.

- a) In the Modern State perspective, citizenship refers to participation in a system for representing, communicating, and legitimating the relationship between the governed/ citizens and the government<sup>4</sup>. This process of authorization cannot be done by a widely held assembly of all citizens; therefore, it involves a system of representation. To be a citizen is to be designated as someone who can participate in these kinds of mechanisms, whether as a voter or a representative or both.

## **Our Shared Values**

A snapshot of religious affiliations throughout England and Wales in 2011 shows that 68% of the population identified themselves as followers of religion. In our interfaith conference 2018, seven faith leaders, whose followers are more than 67% of the population in England and Wales, have

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<sup>3</sup> Jacobs, Garry and Asokan, N., "Towards a Comprehensive Theory of Social Development". In: Human Choice, World Academy of Art & Science, USA, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Bertherton, L. (2014). Resurrecting Democracy, Faith, Citizenship, and the Politics of a Common Life. P4. Cambridge University Press.

signed the following declaration on their shared values regarding: one humanity, morality, and caring for earth – our home.

1. *Humanity is one; therefore, we have a strong hold on equality and worth. We respect our differences and acknowledge that diversity in faith, race, gender, or culture enriches our oneness and strengthens our community relations.*
2. *We agree that morality arises from doing good to others and refraining from causing harm. This is a foundation upon which we can build good community relations through respect and love.*
3. *Earth is our only home. This necessitates our togetherness in peaceful co-existence. It is incumbent upon us to maintain the balanced system of our home in which we live and thrive. Therefore, it is our responsibility to keep our living in harmony with the dynamics of all the planet's components to maintain it as a suitable place for us and our future generations.*
4. *Our agreement on the above will surely pave the way for our collaboration in community activities that improve the quality of our environment and community relations.*

## **Securing Liberty**

Normally both **Liberty** and **Freedom** are considered synonyms with a subtle but crucial difference. The term “**liberty**” is a form of “**freedom**” mostly used by humans in their social and political systems and defined as *the state of being free within society from oppressive restrictions imposed by authority on one's way of life, behaviour, or political views.*

However, **freedom** is defined in Cambridge Dictionary as *the condition or right of being able or allowed to do, say, think, etc. whatever you want to, without being controlled or limited, i.e., the lack of restraint or barriers to thoughts and action.* In the social context, “**freedom**” at its best may be the power to think, learn, believe, and decide what one's wants but not necessarily to freely act upon all of that! There is no absolute freedom, neither for a component in a physical system, an animal in an ecosystem, nor a person in a social or a political system. This may be the reason why another form of freedom – liberty - is widely used in social and political systems. “**Liberty**” in the social context may be the power to act and express oneself according to one's will in keeping with one's moral principles, civic responsibility & duty, and affiliation to a greater whole whether that be a society or a philosophical belief system. In this sense, liberty may be the art of navigating peacefully in the society and doing what one's want without causing harm to anyone or compromising their rights and the social fabric. While the feeling of being free may be intoxicating and inducing selfishness, the sense of being liberal in the society is likely to induce respect, caring, and sharing.

## **Securing Peace & Safety**

The concept of justice in its broadest context, includes on one hand **the philosophical discussion** *of that which is just* upon many differing viewpoints and perspectives including the concepts of **moral correctness** based on **ethics, rationality, religion, equity, fairness, and law**. On the other hand, justice regards **the attainment** *of that which is just*, which is important for both government and citizens.

However, attaining peace and safety through the legal justice system is very complicated and costive. Wilful law abiding requires awareness of the “spirit” of the law that gives it not

just respect but sanctity. When one obeys the *letter* of the law but not the *spirit*, one is obeying the literal interpretation of the words (the "letter") of the law, but not necessarily the intent of those who wrote the law. It is common that intentionally following the letter of the law but not the spirit may be accomplished through exploiting technicalities, loopholes, and ambiguous language, a practice that unfortunately spoils both the respect and sanctity of the law.

The spirit of the law here may not be related only to the intention of those who wrote it but the virtuous consequences of abiding by it. The principles of justice that secure peace and safety runs through many aspects of philosophy, all religious teachings, and most of the cultural heritage of societies. Perhaps through education and awareness raising of the moral basis of the law, people (both law practitioners and public) may learn about the roots of the law in their moral principles and have ownership of both the *spirit and letter* of the law. This might be the way forward to attaining peace and safety through ethics and morals that the majority if not all our society hold upon. The OLF interfaith conference 2018 reached a consensus on the values shared by faith communities regarding *one humanity, morality, and caring for earth*, which are enough for us to develop a culture of community safety and peaceful coexistence specially if these values are included in education of future generations.

Throughout human history, communities have been concerned with the type of person that children become. The role of adults, especially parents, in children's moral development has been central to parenting<sup>5</sup>. The family and the school are very important factors in children moral

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<sup>5</sup> Berkowitz, M. W. & Grych, J. H (1998). Fostering Goodness: Teaching Parents to Facilitate Children's Moral Development. *Journal of Moral Education* 27(3):371-391.

conduct formation. Since learning good behaviour is best by example, it needs role models in family, community, and political leadership.

## **Democracy**

Political engagement may be defined as a functional affiliation to a social unit, a social order, homeland, and a government, which largely overlaps with the definition of citizenship. It involves connecting thoughts regarding the common good and recognising its importunate and relevance to oneself, which leads to ownership of that good. Such political engagement is a necessary precursor for forming a vibrant civic culture. To have a foundation for this culture we, individuals, and society, need to go back to basics: to the roots of our society. That functional attachment to the family – our social unit is still here, up, and running.

## **Our family and community relations are moral based political relations**

Serene Jones, Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School wrote: “To do politics is to reflect upon and determine the shape of our shared existence and the nature of our ongoing interactions. Talking politics means telling the story of our life together—a story that includes an account of our greatest frustrations and failures as well as our grandest aspirations and hopes. Similarly, our “political” relationships are not just those we have with elected officials or co-warriors. They also include our interactions with our children and our lovers, and with the person next door. Insofar as each of these is part of our shared life, they are all deeply political relations”<sup>6</sup>. This,

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<sup>6</sup> Jones, S. (2007). What Do We Desire? The Future of Faith and Citizenship. Issue Title: Faith and Citizenship in Turbulent Times. A publication of Yale Divinity School.

in my opinion, is what it means to be one community, and one humanity. Let not the comfort zones in our homes desensitise us from feeling and enjoying the comfort zones of our cities and countries. The wonderful planning for our family life around the dining table or in the living room to manage the budget, education for children, and our leisure time and holidays is typical to the democratic process at all levels, from electing our representatives, who participate in the bigger planning for the Welsh family and the British family, to achieving what we hope for our bigger home – our country. Let us, UK citizens, follow the example of the most senior citizen of all of us, Her Majesty the Queen, the embodiment of our constitution, when she says on our behalf: ‘My Government’. Let us experience that homey feeling of owning this country - our bigger home, our nation, and our government and actively engage in our home affairs.

# **Christian Perspective of Citizenship**

**Reverend Canon Dr Mark Dimond**

Newport Cathedral, Representative of the Church in Wales

## **The Christian Faith**

The Christian faith is about sharing in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus is believed to be the Son of God, Saviour of the world. He was a human being, like us, but without sin, and helped transform people's lives, especially offering forgiveness and healing to many he met. The heart of Jesus's message was the twin commandment to love God and to love our neighbour.

Jesus's greatest act was giving his life for us by dying on the cross and then being raised again. By his crucifixion he secured for us the promise of salvation or being with God eternally. After Jesus ascended to heaven, he bequeathed to us the Holy Spirit so that we could share in his divinity and proclaim it to others. By Jesus coming to us he revealed the mystery of the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus also established the Church, through one of his disciples, Peter. The Four Gospels in the Bible – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – bear witness to the life and works of Jesus. Together with the other books in the Bible, they constitute the Word of God. Christians believe that Jesus will come to us again at the end of time and Christians will share in his resurrection, and all things will be reconciled in Christ.

Churches recognise sacraments, which are sacred rituals that help us to see the reality of salvation and work in us so that we may be transformed. The Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches acknowledge seven sacraments – baptism,

confirmation, the Eucharist, marriage, ordination, reconciliation (confession) and anointing – while others, like the Anglican Communion, consider baptism and the Eucharist to be formal sacraments.

Baptism is the ritual for initiation into the Christian community and involves the pouring of water on candidates. The water represents the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. Therefore, in this act, we are spiritually born and cleansed. We recover the humanity that God first intended.<sup>7</sup> And that humanity abounds in love amid the pains and sufferings of the world. This does not mean that we will not sin again, because we will, but we can feed on the spiritual supply given to us at baptism to return to our true selves. By our baptism we are continually engaged in what could be termed as a conversation with Jesus, seeking reconciliation in him. We are also committed to seek reconciliation with others, because our lives are interwoven with them, and theirs with God.

The Eucharist, or Holy Communion, is a service of worship and an important reminder of Jesus always being with us. Jesus, in one of his final acts with his disciples, invited them to supper at which he shared bread and wine with them, in an act of love and hospitality. This is given greater meaning because the Last Supper is linked to the crucifixion of Jesus, a day later, where his flesh was torn, and his blood was shed. The bread and wine are therefore synonymous with his body and blood. The Eucharist equates to God giving Himself to us, and we respond by offering our thanksgiving. Like at baptism, the Holy Spirit is at work at the Eucharist, because the Holy Spirit is invoked over the gifts of bread and wine. When Christians receive communion together, the body of the

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<sup>7</sup> Rowan Williams, *Being Christian*, (SPCK, 2014), p.3.

Church is renewed and revived, and we hope to see the world in a new and fruitful way and act out our lives accordingly.

There are two vital sources of inspiration other than the sacraments that help to guide us to God. The first is reading the Bible. It is not one book, but comprises a set of books, written centuries apart but eventually amalgamated into one volume because they represent writings inspired by God. They vary from proverbs to parables, legal instructions to prophetic insights. When we read the Bible, we might be changed by what we read, giving us refreshing perspectives on life. It is a 'living communication' from God.<sup>8</sup> Reading passages from one of the four Gospels is particularly important for Christians, because we put ourselves directly in the scenes of Jesus and we ask ourselves who we are in those scenes. At the Eucharist service, when a passage from a Gospel is read, the importance of *hearing* the Gospel is pronounced. As Christians we hope to develop the art of listening.

The other important source is the act of prayer. As we pray, we become more human, because we get to the source of who we are. Jesus prayed a lot, getting away from it all to reenergise. When we pray, we allow Jesus to work in us, which is why being silent and emptying ourselves can often be the best way to achieve this. Jesus recommended prayer, and left us the Lord's Prayer, whose first line is 'Our Father, who art in heaven.' On the one side, prayer is about asking for the forgiveness of sins; on the other, it is about accepting the love of God, and directing this love towards others, whoever they are.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.33.

## The Concept of Citizenship

The question of the link between faith and citizenship emerged in the New Testament of the Bible, strikingly in both Jesus Christ's reference to the coin in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 22.15-22), where he says 'give therefore the emperor's the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's', as well as in the person of St Paul, an early follower of Jesus, who continuously reminded us that he was both a Christian and a Roman citizen. Some early recognition is given therefore to secular authority having a place in conjunction with God's Kingdom. The question is where the parameters of the two realms lie, and what overlaps there might be.

Paul sets up some parameters, in arguing that we ought to 'be subject to the governing authorities', and to pay our taxes. By doing so, some argue, the Roman authorities might turn a blind eye to Christians who could surreptitiously worship behind closed doors, paying lip service to the 'pax Romana'. But then Paul might not have meant this cynically. Paul goes on to say, why should not secular authority have been divinely inspired as well? (Romans 13.2). In the proposition that we can be 'good citizens' in the world, there is a powerful hint in scripture that we can both be 'good' in faith and play at 'citizens' at the same time. They do not just co-exist; they can inter-relate.

In the fifth century, St Augustine wrote about this in his *City of God*. Despite caricatures portraying Augustine envisaging two distinct realms, it was not all black-and-white thinking of the City of God or the Earthly City. They are not mutually exclusive. Augustine saw the two in tandem, in a kind of checks-and-balances approach.<sup>9</sup> Augustine saw the Earthly or

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<sup>9</sup> David Ferguson, *Church, State and Civil Society* (Cambridge, 2004), p.27.

Temporal City as deficient in that it was always having to compromise, whereas in the City of God the faithful could keep to principles. Inevitably there would be tensions between the two.

In the medieval ages, this coordination of the temporal and spiritual continued to strengthen, especially after the theologian Thomas Aquinas viewed the possibility of the common good being realised. However, such a close relationship came a cropper. For instance, while the Church would alert the political authorities to the plight of the poor, it could equally resort to an unbecoming hostility, marked by the launch of the Crusades. This enmeshing of the civil and religious reached a nadir in the seventeenth century as Protestant forces clashed with Catholic ones in central Europe. The civil and religious contaminated each other, creating 'bad citizens. What could be worse than violence? Martin Luther, the reformist Protestant, saw this coming. He had advocated a return to the notion of 'Zweireichelehre', a two kingdoms doctrine, so that God's Kingdom could not be compromised.

However, the dawn of democracy from the eighteenth century onwards saw a different challenge to, and even provided an opportunity for the relationship between faith and citizenship. The freedom of the individual in the public sphere became the new *Zeitgeist*. The Church retained some influence, but had its power greatly reduced, becoming a third-party rather than a fulcrum of power. It was now about rights of individuals to express themselves freely, as long as they were not perceived to be a threat to fellow individuals. The emphasis was on the 'rights of citizens', set on a plinth in the French Revolution, though less so on 'good citizens. This did not mean that the good of society would be relegated, for as the political philosopher John Locke pointed out, truth

could emerge from dialogue and conversation from a great array of influencers.<sup>10</sup>

As St Paul might have pointed out, if secular authorities could be divinely inspired, then who was to say that good works could not come from beyond the gates of the faith communities? This was affirmed to some degree much later in the Catholic encyclical *Gaudium et Spes* of 1965, which recognised God's spirit at work in all walks of life.<sup>11</sup> God's work was not limited to church buildings.

In contemporary society, the Christian church remains an influencer and a beacon in society, but not a national decision-maker. Its zenith of influence might be seen in the representation of the Lords Spiritual in the House of Lords, made up of Anglican Bishops, who can be seen as representing faith in general and advocate 'the common good'. The Church would probably advocate that democracy is the best means of earthly organisation to promote this common good, partly because there is still greater scope within democracy to create a genuine civil society. The Church has a role to play in helping to shape policy that conforms to ethical standards: there are a whole host of issues that the Church attempts to shape: euthanasia, foodbanks, climate change, nuclear weapons policy, universal credit, to name but a few. Even in the Church in Wales, which is disestablished from the State, bishops speak out, when necessary, despite not having political representation in the National Assembly.

Bishops and other church leaders can be seen as good citizens because they are contributing towards the shaping of national policy, without necessarily submitting to everything the State

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<sup>10</sup> David Ferguson, *Church, State and Civil Society* (Cambridge, 2004), p.49.

<sup>11</sup> David Ferguson, *Church, State and Civil Society* (Cambridge, 2004), p.131.

proposes. They are active, even critical citizens relating to the secular realm, not passive ones disregarding it. They reflect the Council of Europe's view of citizenship, that of 'a responsibility to participate in the cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs of the community together with others'.<sup>12</sup>

To a considerable degree the Church fits into liberal society's balancing act, understood by the political philosopher John Rawls, where competing viewpoints are offered and ultimately arbitrated by the State.<sup>13</sup> The Church is merely one player amidst many, where the overriding picture is a multidimensional framework. Some argue that the Church should make its point more weightily to ensure that moral standards are kept, especially because there is so much compromise in policy formation.

### **Christians in Civil Society**

There is another level of understanding in the relationship between faith and citizenship, less so to do with public policy, as set out above, which bishops tackle, and which often grab the headlines. At another level we see the influence of Christian individuals as persons in their own right, in their own localities. Jesus Christ was as much a personality bearing extraordinary gifts, setting an example to his disciples and to followers ever since, on what it meant to be 'good' as individuals. Rowan Williams calls this 'the language of character and virtue'.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Frank Turner, SJ, 'A Theology of European Citizenship: A Catholic Approach', in Jesuit European Social Centre, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Linda Hogan, 'Introduction' in Nigel Biggar, Linda Hogan (eds.) in *Religious Voices in Public Places* (Oxford, 2009), p.60.

<sup>14</sup> Rowan Williams, *Faith in the Public Square* (London, 2012), p.266.

Many of the stories and parables of the Gospels feature aspects of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit – wisdom, understanding, counsel, courage, knowledge, humility, Godly fear, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, generosity, and self-control. Jesus related these to individuals, and to small groups in the main, though sometimes to larger audiences such as the delivery of the Beatitudes on a hilltop or to the five thousand when turning two fish and five loaves into a plenteous meal. Jesus talked about projecting goodness through people down a street or in a neighbourhood. Jesus further understood that isolated individuals are not happy people; only by relating to others, giving of ourselves, can we reach our full potential.

This is the basis of the Christian view of the ‘common good’. Some argue, like Rawls, that the common good can only be created beyond politics and the legislative process.<sup>15</sup> While the State creates the parameters within which society can operate, creating its conditions if you like, it cannot enforce a mode of behaviour other than ensuring the general rule of tolerance that John Locke once asserted. The State’s attempt to create model citizenship failed a number of years ago, in the form of the ‘Big Society’, partly because the State was seen as imposing on the freedom of space of civil society. This does not lessen the need for an espousal of good conduct. The State can set an example in behaviour, but it cannot impose it. And the State does not always set the right tone, though on occasion superlative moral behaviour in the likes of Václav Havel and Nelson Mandela reverberate downwards through society and outwards around the globe. Yet these are few and far between in a world currently rocked by populist tendencies.

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Sedgwick, ‘The Public Presence of Religion in England’ in Peter Scott, William T.Cavanagh (eds.), *Political Theology* (Oxford, 2007), p.245.

The Church is often at its most effective at local level when contributing towards society because what the Church proclaims and promotes locally can also be mirrored and effected locally. This could be assumed for all faiths working in the community. There is a sense in which the spiritual and secular realms are closer together, working more harmoniously, vividly, and really. As Rowan Williams points out, such contributions work well where the ‘ecclesial dimension is never lost’,<sup>16</sup> which can be lost amid the compromising central hubbub of political power.

Individual members of the Church, with their differing and myriad gifts, invested by Christ, can have an immediate impact on the local scene, and can work in tandem with others. Jesus Christ was about love and relationships: all the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit cannot be dissociated from relationships. Social theory commentators might describe these gifts as being part of ‘social capital’, where social networks have value, because good knowledge and vital information can be shared. This, however, misses the point of the Christian relay of gifts to others: they are unconditionally given in themselves, irrespective of their outcome.

There are two possible ways of looking at Christians acting as ‘good citizens’. In his book, *After Virtue*, Alasdair Macintyre argues, along Aristotelian lines, that the best approach of a good person is in *living in* the virtues for their own sake. By doing so people are more likely to be happy and social stability is more likely to be achieved. While the Christian tradition does not lean on Aristotle’s human construct of a good person, the power of living virtuously is surely a commendable one. Christians would, rather, lean on the divine attributes of the Holy Spirit in their behaviour. As previously mentioned, people have been conditioned since

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<sup>16</sup> Sedgwick, op.cit., p.256.

the Enlightenment to think in terms of 'human rights' (a good thing) but not in terms of 'ethical virtues' (a very good thing). The former is an external freedom, but the latter is an internal one. Jesus Christ set great store by the latter.

The second aspect of good Christian citizenship is based on the fourteenth-century theologian Thomas Aquinas who viewed human beings as living for purpose in their lives. We are goal-directed peoples. Jesus claimed this, for he greatly emphasised mission, regularly sending out disciples to evangelise, or even using parables to demonstrate wise business models. This is because love is an active force, bringing about good towards others. Love is in our actions. It could all be part of what one commentator calls 'responsibility-driven citizenship'.<sup>17</sup> And if good works are directed in aid of the poor, then so much the better.

In conclusion, good citizenship is best practiced as a bottom-up initiative. A recent instance of this in practice is the establishment of Citizens UK, which canvasses local initiatives that bring some benefit to a significant number of people that might not otherwise have been captured by politicians at the centre. Good citizenship is not limited to the hierarchical art of 'ruling and being ruled'.<sup>18</sup> It is rather in the space in between, in how we rule ourselves, at the local level, where the opportunity lies. The State cannot make people happy; only people can make people happy. A good citizen ought not need to be a kind of State-sponsored model 'good citizen', which is at best patronising and at worst evokes fascist models of the 'ideal man'. Rather, the goal ought to be to encourage flourishing individuals in a rich setting of social encounter. A practical outcome of goodness might be in the

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<sup>17</sup> Turner, *op.cit.*

<sup>18</sup> Shirley Williams, 'The Citizen and the Modern World' in (David Alton, ed.) *Citizen 21: Citizenship in the New Millennium* (London, 2001), p.62.

example of Night-shelter, where virtues such as generosity, compassion and humility are played out, whose goal is to lessen the distance between rich and poor. Combine this in an interfaith setting, assuming that faiths of all types support such ventures, then the potential for practising good citizenship is amplified, and it catches on across town.

# **A Jewish Perspective on Faith and Citizenship**

## **Rabbi Ben Abrahamson**

Director of the Al Sadiqin Institute: An association of Muslim and Rabbinic scholars dedicated to researching the common heritage of Islam and Judaism

### **Introduction**

I wish to dedicate this presentation to Sheikh Abu Groom<sup>19</sup>, whom I have known for several years. I have had the honor and the privilege to benefit from his learning and his wisdom.

When I first heard about the Onyx Foundation, which was formed several years ago, I was impressed by the word “Onyx”. I didn't know quite why they chose the term. There's a tradition in Judaism that when Moses was a little child in Pharaoh's court that he knocked the crown off the Pharaoh's head. Pharaoh was all upset. What's going to happen? Is this little child Moses going to take over his kingdom? So, he wanted to test him. He put some jewels in front of him and some coals to see if this child was very wise. So, what did Moses do? He stuck his hand out towards the jewels, but an angel came and pushed his hands towards the coals so Pharaoh wouldn't suspect him of wanting to take over his kingdom. This tradition is brought in Islamic tradition as well. The jewel that Moses was attracted to was the Onyx Stone. It was the stone that contains all colors. This was the stone that Moses was attracted to because indeed he was reaching out to people of all colors and all kinds.

The Al-Sadiqin Institute is an association of Muslim and Rabbinic scholars worldwide. It does historical work

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<sup>19</sup> Sheikh Abu Groom is the Research and Quality Director at The Onyx Link Foundation.

concerning the legal, judicial, and historical connections between Islam and Judaism. I could be talking about Islamic and Jewish connections in faith and citizenship. But I wanted to focus specifically on the Jewish perspective. First, I will go over what happened in the ancient Hebrew Republic and then I will talk about what's happened here in the United Kingdom.

## **Institutions founded in Scripture**

The terms important to Faith and Citizenship are discussed in the Bible: Nation, Citizen, Coexistence, Equality, Faith, Law and Morality. For example, in scripture, the concept of nationhood first finds expression in Genesis 10, where seventy of Noah's children are enumerated. There, nations are defined by their family, their language, and their land.<sup>20</sup> These three factors determine nationality even today: there is *Jus sanguinis*, where either the father or mother must normally be a citizen, and *Jus soli*, in which a child born in a country's territory acquires that country's nationality. With *Naturalization* citizenship can be acquired by adoption of the language, laws, and culture of a country. So, we see today that the institutions which exist around us today have their foundations in Scripture.

## **Nation**

To understand the concept of citizenship, it is necessary to understand the scriptural concept of nationhood. A nation is a community of people that differs from other communities, it is not global; in the Torah the concept of being global and homogeneous is not a good thing. We read about the Tower of Babel, where "the entire earth was of one language and uniform words... And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves

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<sup>20</sup> Genesis 10:31

a city [at Babel] and a tower with its top in the heavens [to make war with God], and let us make ourselves a name..."<sup>21</sup> The idea is if you lose distinction, if everybody is the same, you begin to think you know everything and there's nothing else to learn. It's only when you see differences and there is something beyond yourself, that you are challenged to realize that you may not know everything. If everything becomes homogeneous, this is followed by pride, and then rebellion against God.

As a defense against this, the nation is placed as the highest in a hierarchy of associations and contractual obligations: the foundation being husband and wife,<sup>22</sup> then the family,<sup>23</sup> the tribe,<sup>24</sup> the community,<sup>25</sup> economic guilds,<sup>26</sup> with the nation pulling it all together.<sup>27</sup> Each level represents a federation of smaller units towards a common goal; thus, a nation is a group of people that come together for a common goal.

## **Natural Law**

In the Torah, the concept of a common goal was defined by the commandments. The first time the word commandment is used in the Bible is in the book of Genesis when Adam was commanded not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden.

In Genesis 2:16, a contract was made with Adam to tend the Garden (this world), which was binding on all humanity. From that verse, seven principles are deduced, which are the

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<sup>21</sup> Genesis 11:1,4

<sup>22</sup> Genesis 2:24

<sup>23</sup> Deuteronomy 11:19

<sup>24</sup> Numbers 36:1-13

<sup>25</sup> Ex 21:28-36 and Ex 22:4-5

<sup>26</sup> Deuteronomy 19:14

<sup>27</sup> Exodus 19:3-6

basis of Noachide teachings, and are basically seven of the Ten Commandments, sometimes referred to as Natural law:<sup>28</sup>

1. Believing in the One and Only God (Single ultimate Cause of all things, source of all reason)
2. Respect and submission to God (the prohibition of blasphemy)
3. The protection of life (the prohibition of murder)
4. Protecting the concept of the family (the prohibition of adultery)
5. The protection of property (the prohibition of theft)
6. Freedom to enjoy must be limited by moral and social considerations (the prohibition of eating meat from a living animal)
7. Ensuring justice (the foundation of the courts that provide justice)

This is the minimum requirement of what is meant when the Torah talks about a nation. This is the basic law from God, which in Hebrew is called *Deen*, in Arabic, *Din*. *Deen* and *Din* are the dividing line between civilized Nations and Lawless Nations, between civilization and barbarism.

Some think the Torah describes only religious law, differentiating between one religious group and another. Actually, from the Torah point of view, *Deen* is the hallmark of a Civilized Nation. It's the basic difference between people who are keeping the minimum requirement of civilization and those who disregard it.<sup>29</sup> For example, those who believe murder is permitted, or property has no meaning, etc., is to

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<sup>28</sup> The three not included are "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt.", "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy", and "Honour thy father and thy mother." which is understood as an obligation to keep the traditions of the ancestors.

<sup>29</sup> Meiri, Beit Habechirah, Avodah Zarah

reject these principles and to become a rogue, outlaw nation. *Deen* is thus the measure between civilization and the lack thereof.

In Judaism, this is also the minimum requirement for the believer to be guaranteed a portion in the hereafter,<sup>30</sup> sometimes referred to as salvation. A person who keeps the seven laws, whatever their religious practice or customs, has a portion in the world to come.

We believe there is no *Deen*, no basic law which is acceptable before God, other than these principles. So, in this context, these seven laws are simultaneously the minimum requirement that a person needs to be an acceptable citizen and an acceptable believer.

### **National Contracts**

Just as the citizen has an obligation, the nation also has an obligation. At the level of nation, you have national contracts or covenants, *Brit* in Hebrew, *Sha'aria* in Arabic. This describes a way of life. When the Torah was given, Moses went to Mount Sinai to receive the tablets. Moses wrote this down and passed this on to the Children of Israel. We are taught at that time; God spoke in seventy languages corresponding to the seventy nations of the world. This is understood from a verse in Deuteronomy, "The Lord came from Sinai and Shone forth from Seir (in Jordan) to them; He appeared from Mount Paran (in Arabia) and came with some holy myriads [Prophets]; from His right hand was a fiery Law [Contract] for them."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Mishneh Torah, Melachim uMilchamot 8:11

<sup>31</sup> Deuteronomy 33:2

The words that are used here, *ba*, *zorach*, *hofia*, these correspond to words in Hebrew, Latin, and Arabic.<sup>32</sup> God spoke simultaneously in all the languages of the world in order to demonstrate that all mankind has a portion of His revelation. Indeed, the question is posed: why was the Torah given in the middle of the desert? It was to show that it is not owned by anyone. There's no one person that can say the word of God belongs to him. It belongs to, and speaks to, all of humankind.

Rabbi Benamozegh,<sup>33</sup> whose school of thought forms the basis of the Al Sadiqin organization, discussed the narrative of the Generations of Noah and the revelation of Torah. Differences among people and nations are natural and good, and no nation is better than another. Indeed, as taught in the Jewish tradition, the non-Jew who studies the seven basic commandments can reach the level of the Jewish High Priest. We can all attain the highest level because there are multiple divine covenants going on at the same time.

The Talmud explains the national contract of the nation of Israel and was centered around the symbolic institution of the Temple and the preservation and the transmission of the Torah for the benefit of all mankind.

But national contracts don't only apply to the Children of Israel. The national contract of Rome, at least as envisioned by the rabbis, was to establish markets, to improve hygiene, to establish an economic system for the benefit of mankind. This was a divine task for them. The national contract of Persia, according to the rabbis, was to facilitate cultural

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<sup>32</sup> Sifrei Devarim §343

<sup>33</sup> Rabbi Elijah Benamozegh (1822-1900), Italian rabbi and a noted Kabbalist, highly respected in his day as one of Italy's most eminent Jewish scholars. His major work is *Israel and Humanity* (1863)

commerce, quell rebellions, and establish effective administration for the benefit of all mankind.<sup>34</sup> Every nation had an identity, a direction, something that was pulling them all together. This national contract was such that everyone who was part of the nation felt they were there for a reason.

## **National Perspective**

There are limits to the extent that one nation can understand another nation. For example, the Torah gives us only minimal criterion for judging a non-Jewish Prophet. In Deuteronomy, the basic requirement for a prophet sent to the Children of Israel is that he must teach what Moses taught. But beyond this, the Torah also teaches that there were thousands of prophets sent to other nations, about whom the children of Israel know little or nothing. Rabbi Benamozegh uses this teaching to provide the context for a verse in the New Testament, “The [Greek] thinkers and philosophers whom God has in every age sent among them, to recall them to the sacred truth, will one day be their reproof.”<sup>35</sup> This means that leaders who were not even similar to prophets to the children of Israel could very well be prophets to the nations of the world.

The national contract gives the nation an identity and perspective, not unlike how a corporation or guild can have its own identity independent of its members. While not everyone in a nation may share this identity, like employees in a large corporation, they must still be willing to contribute a portion of their time and energies towards it, as long as it satisfies their needs. Today “branding” and “image” are superficial examples of the need the nation should be fulfilling

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<sup>34</sup> Talmud, Avodah Zara 2a

<sup>35</sup> Romans 1:19-20; Acts 17:23, 28

in terms of giving citizens a sense of belonging, purpose and meaning in life.

## Six Types of Citizens

The idea of nations in the Torah framework is not a One World, homogeneous society, where there are no needs except that of the citizen and the world, and nothing in between. Instead, you have a concentric set of groups with their own identity and needs, the smallest the husband and wife, family, the tribe, the community, the economic guild, then the nation. International law is governed exclusively by the civil law (the laws of Noah), and answerable to God.

At the base of all this, you have citizens.

The jurisdiction of the ancient Hebrew Republic included:<sup>36</sup>

- The Children of Israel, *bnei yisrael*, *eizrach*
- The Naturalized Alien, *ger tzedek*
- The Foreign Resident, *ger toshav*
- Those under King's jurisdiction
- Foreigners, *nochri*
- Rogues and outlaws, *akum*

The first two names are usually called by the term Jew, Israel, or the Children of Israel. The other four terms are usually called non-Jews or gentiles. These terms have been the source of confusion. They are often used loosely and incorrectly when describing the views of Rabbinic Judaism. Sometimes laws affecting *akum* (rouges and outlaws) are applied to *ger toshav* (foreign resident) and the reverse. This causes major teachings to be misunderstood.

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<sup>36</sup> Mishnah Torah, Avadim

The following is a discussion of these citizens in detail:

To become a native-born citizen of the Hebrew Republic was based on family, a person born of a Jewish mother was automatically part of the Jewish Nation.<sup>37</sup> This means they are obligated to keep the national contract based on Torah.

To become naturalized citizen, the court must be convinced of the person's sincerity on these points, finalized by circumcision, immersion in a pool of water or *mikveh*, and, when the Temple was standing, sacrifice:

- Renounce all allegiance to foreign National Contract.
- Uphold the common and particular laws of the nation.
- Uphold the territorial possessions of the nation.
- Uphold the other citizens of the nation.
- Uphold the national contract of the nation (symbolized by circumcision, immersion, and sacrifice)

This is all based on a passage in Ruth when she said she would become part of the Jewish people.<sup>38</sup>

To become a foreign resident, this acceptance must be made in the presence of three judges

- Accept the sovereignty of the court.
- Uphold universal civil law.<sup>39</sup>
- Uphold the other citizens of the nation.
- Disclose allegiance to foreign national contract.

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<sup>37</sup> Deuteronomy 7:3-4

<sup>38</sup> Ruth 1:16

<sup>39</sup> The "Law of Noah", Mishneh Torah, Sefer Shoftim, Melachim uMilchamot 8:10

This is the most important part of this presentation. The foreign resident included people who wanted to live in the nation of Israel, but they weren't part of the Children of Israel, and they didn't want to be part of the culture. They had to accept the sovereignty of the court and be part of the judicial system, this is because it is not possible to have peace in civil society unless you have a single judicial system.<sup>40</sup>

This was the signature characteristic of the Constitution of Medina, a contract creating a single nation of Muslims and Jews in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. It worked because the Muslim and Jewish people had an integrated legal system. The Jewish people had their legal system, the Muslims had their legal system. The system was integrated by appeal to Muhammad (pbuh) for all cases that fell between legal systems.

For both the naturalized citizen and the foreign resident, there were anti-discrimination laws:

- You shall not wrong him in speech (harassment)<sup>41</sup>
- You shall not oppress him in money dealing<sup>42</sup>
- You shall not oppress him due to race, religion, or national origin<sup>43</sup>

Indeed, the dignity of the naturalized alien and the foreign resident must be preserved.<sup>44</sup> Not merely tolerated, they have the right to live in a dignified way.

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<sup>40</sup> Exod 12:48-49

<sup>41</sup> Isaiah. 49:26

<sup>42</sup> Deuteronomy 24:14-15, Sifrei

<sup>43</sup> Exodus 22:20

<sup>44</sup> see Leviticus 25:39, Mishneh Torah Sefer Kinyan Avadim 1:7

## National Contract & Social Contract

Society was structured around a national contract as embodied in the Torah (guidance) and a social contract as embodied in *mishpat* (civil law, the “Law of Noah”).

- The Children of Israel: bound by Torah & *Mishpat*
- The Naturalized Alien (convert to Judaism): bound by Torah & *Mishpat*
- The Foreign Resident: bound by *Mishpat* & Foreign Law
- Those under King’s jurisdiction: bound by *Mishpat*
- Foreigners: bound by Foreign Law
- Rogues and outlaws: resisting all law

This is based on the use of the word Torah and *mishpat* in these two verses: "There shall be one law (Torah) for the native and for the stranger (*Ger tzedek*) who resides in your midst." (Exodus 12:49) "One law (*mishpat*) shall be exacted for you, resident (*Ger toshav*) and citizen alike, for I am the Lord, your God." (Leviticus 24:22)

The children of Israel and the people who became naturalized followed Torah, which means guidance. They would also follow *mishpat*, which means the minimum civil law, or secular law as it is called today. The foreign resident would only have to follow the civil law, in addition to whatever foreign law he declared, for example Greek or Roman law. Those who were under the king's jurisdiction, they only had to follow the civil law. Foreigners followed foreign law. And of course, rogues and outlaws didn't follow any law.

## The National Contract for the Children of Israel

Given that there were different citizens following different, yet interconnected legal systems in one nation, how did the national contract apply to each of them? For the Children of Israel and naturalized aliens, the national contract applied to them directly. It centered around the symbolic institution of the Temple and the preservation and transmission of Torah for the benefit of all mankind.

However, foreign residents, because they declared allegiance to a national contract of a foreign nation, are not obligated to participate in the national contract of Israel. They have complete freedom to practice their culture, traditions, and religion within the scope of civil law.

The Torah provides protection to the foreign resident, such that lack of participation in the national contract must be legally defined in such a way that it cannot detract from the Torah's commandment<sup>45</sup> with regard to respect and honor (*derech erez*), to charity (*gamilat hasadim*), and to making a living, a foreign resident (*ger toshav*) is to be treated as the citizen (Israel),<sup>46</sup>

In addition, if the foreign resident wanted to participate in the national culture, they can. They can even be given authority to participate and contribute to the culture, for instance, the Samaritans are an example of a community that lived within a community. They lived within the larger Hebrew republic. They had their own court system, their own law. And this was all sanctioned by the government of Israel at that time. When it was determined that their law for example concerning eating milk and meat were the same as Jews, they were

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<sup>45</sup> Deuteronomy 14:21

<sup>46</sup> Mishneh Torah Sefer Shoftim Melachim uMilchamot 10:12

certified as completely satisfying and contributing to the greater culture.<sup>47</sup> The foreign resident could play a dual role, contributing to their own identity and contributing to the identity of the nation.

## **The National Contract for Other Nations**

Rabbi Yaakov Anatoli (1194-1256) explained that when the children of Noah, that is, the other 70 nations of the world, created nations, they used the model of uniting a people based on a national contract. They created their own systems. According to Rabbi Anatoli, even what we see today is derived from these original commandments that were given to Adam. Civil laws which have nothing to do with the children of Israel, for instance stopping at a red light, have as its very root a commandment from God. This gives it a fuller, less arbitrary meaning.

## **Social Contract**

In addition to the national contract, citizens have a responsibility based on a social control, which is ultimately based on *mishpat*. Every citizen has to be involved with every other citizen as well. The Torah teaches if your brother becomes destitute, others must help him, and the definition of “brother” includes all six types of citizens.

“If your brother becomes destitute and his hand falters beside you, you shall support him [whether] a convert or a resident, so that he can live with you.” (Leviticus 25:35)

The social contract is defined by the Seven Laws of Noah, the minimal standard of a civilized nation, embodied in *mishpat*

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<sup>47</sup> Talmud, Kuthim, 61b

(civil law). This includes two aspects: providing for their needs and restricting actions that disturb civil society. A civil magistrate is appointed to enforce these obligations.

In practice, the magistrate rarely enforces the national contract, meaning religious law, because enforcement is left to God. The magistrate often enforces the social contract because lack of enforcement leads to civil disorder. The seventh law is establishing courts of justice, with enforcement, so that all citizens can count on a just society.

### **Rights of the Citizens**

Citizens have the right to choose if they wish to commit themselves to the national contract, support the national contract, or live by a foreign one. This allows the citizen a large measure of freedom in determining culture and lifestyle. In addition, the Torah gives citizens assurances of a number of other basic rights:

- Thou shalt not do him wrong (Leviticus 19:33)
- Thou shalt not oppress. (Deuteronomy 24:14)
- The wages of a hired servant shall not abide with [the employer] all night. (Leviticus 19:13)
- Do not lend to him or borrow from him on interest (Gerim 61a)
- We do not settle him on the frontier (Gerim 61a)
- Or in an unhealthy district (Gerim 61a)
- Provide scope for his occupation. (Deuteronomy 10:18)

These are based on the following Torah verses, among others: “And He loveth the stranger (*ger toshav*), in giving him food and raiment” (Deuteronomy 10:18) and “With thee he (*ger toshav*) shall dwell in thy midst, in a place which he shall

choose in one of thy gates, thou shalt no wrong him.”  
(Deuteronomy 23:17)

Foreign Residents, because they have committed to a foreign contract, have a unique right to be judged by their own courts. They have a right to be judged by their peers and are entitled to same protection under the law as national courts. Maimonides puts it this way, “The Jewish court is obligated to appoint judges for these Foreign Residents (*ger toshav*) to judge them according to these statutes... If the court sees fit to appoint the judges from the foreign residents themselves, they may.”<sup>48</sup>

### **Enforcement of Law**

It was explained previously that in the ancient Hebrew republic the citizen who keeps the Seven Laws of Noah is a practical approximation for a believer, similarly the justice system implemented by the Hebrew republic was approximates justice, it is not divine justice.

In this legal system, a citizen is said to be bound to two jurisdictions, a heavenly court and earthly court. The role of the heavenly court is assumed to be universal, “There is not a single commandment in the Torah whose reward is stated alongside it, which is not dependent on the resurrection of the dead.” (Chullin 142a)

This distinction is key to understanding the difference between the Roman (Western) concept of law and the Oriental (Eastern) concept of law.

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<sup>48</sup> Mishneh Torah Sefer Shoftim Melachim uMilchamot 10:11

In Roman civil law and its derivatives, a law only has meaning insofar as it is enforced by the sovereign. There is no concept of law as guidance. A modern example would be if the police say they will only give tickets for going 10km over the speed limit. This effectively makes a posted speed limit of 90kmh to be 100kmh.

In the Oriental (Eastern) concept of law, God is the sovereign. Enforcement is done by God who sees all and knows our hearts. While technically this is a theocracy, the word theocracy has been given a bad name because it is confused with Western style enforcement. There are visions of minions of religious police monitoring compliance with "God's law". However, this is mistaken, since neither the Torah nor the Qur'an spend anything more than a few words discussing enforcement of law.

The Oriental (Eastern) concept of law is guidance. Ideally it is a rich reservoir of information from which to draw on to decide how to act appropriately in any given situation. Enforcement is done by God who sees all and knows our hearts.

However, in a real world, there are unbelievers, hypocrites and criminals who would take advantage of this situation. So, the earthly sovereign is empowered to enforce a subset of these laws, being limited to those laws which allow the proper functioning of a just and civil society.

This also explains another feature about "punishments" described in the Torah (and Qur'an). Some punishments, especially Capital punishments, seem so severe that if enforced in the Western style it would cause a collapse of the judicial system. In the heavenly court all laws are judged by God who sees all and knows all and does this, and for one who is receptive to this, these laws provide moral guidance. The

physical earthly court, however, was to do the minimum that was required to assure civil peace and society should function properly. The requirements for conviction depended on accountability, intention, prior warning, witness to the act, character of witnesses, etc. These requirements were expected to be as strict as necessary to reduce the sentences of lesser crimes to the minimum needed to allow the proper functioning of a just and civil society.

## **Balance of Powers**

The ideal balance of power in the Bible was represented in the persons of the prophet and the king. The prophet anointed the king, thus giving him an authority, which could be removed.

- The King represented the wants and needs of the population.
- The Prophet represented the moral rights and obligations to God.

There was a balance of powers between the king and the prophet. The king represented the needs and wants of the people, the prophet represented the moral rights and obligations towards God. The king was anointed or put into Power by the prophet, and the prophet could take the power back. But only the king could enforce any of the laws, the king could raise an army by taxes. The prophet could do neither.

In the Hebrew Republic, the powers of the prophet were given to the Sanhedrin. The make-up of the council includes a president - *nasi*, chancellor - *av beis din*, and sixty-nine general members who all sit in the form of a semi-circle when in session. Decisions are made by majority vote. The constitution of seventy-one is to preclude the possibility of a tie. Members of the Sanhedrin are not elected, nor is their

position permanent. Any scholar, at any time, may gain a place on the legislature by proving a greater level of scholarship in Jewish law than a current member of the legislature.

The king was suggested by the people and approved by the Sanhedrin. The King could be tried by the Sanhedrin. The King appointed ministers and they functioned as a legislature. They enacted legislation that could be overturned by the Sanhedrin. Only the king and his ministers were authorized to raise an army and collect taxes. They were responsible for all public works and social welfare services. The Sanhedrin was responsible for the institution of the Temple, administrating the boundaries of Jerusalem, and administration of the pilgrimages.

### **The Limits of Legislation**

There is a Torah principle that the court cannot make a decree that the people won't follow: "We do not impose on the community a hardship which the majority cannot endure." (Talmud, Baba Bathra 60a) and "for we should not impose a restriction upon the community unless the majority of the community will be able to stand it." (Talmud, Baba Kama 79b)

In practice this means that the Hebrew Republic would:

1. Abstain from enacting a law that would oppose the king or the will of the people (essentially a veto), and
2. Would modify existing laws in their particulars (for example requiring advance warning, explicitly witnessing of the crime, etc.) effectively limiting enforcement to match the minimal needs of civil society.

## **Granting Religious Tolerance for Religious Reasons**

Coming to the topic of England and Europe, Eric Nelson of Harvard University makes a wonderful presentation on this.<sup>49</sup> He says we've often been taught that in the last 200 years we went from being a very theological, religious people, to being like Isaac Newton - more metaphysical, wondering about how the world is put together, and then finally in the last hundred years becoming rational.

Nothing, Dr. Nelson says, could be further from the truth.

Eric Nelson explains that freedom of religion and human rights in general were promoted by deeply religious people for deeply religious reasons, stating: "many, if not most, of our most fundamental commitments emerged out of a deeply theologized context, explicitly justified in the first instance on the basis of religious claims."

"Separation of Church and State" was a view attributed to Thomas Lüber (1524-1583) known as Erastus. A lot of people think that Erastus endorsed the absolute separation of church and state and the implied sidelining of the Church by relegating all authority to the State. Reid Barbour, professor of English & Comparative Literature says: "The genuinely held views of Thomas Erastus should not be confused with the popular conception that often replaces careful study: Erastus took it for granted that a society whose civil magistracy would handle all forms of coercion would nonetheless, even accordingly, be operating under the aegis of a single, unified religion."

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<sup>49</sup> "The Religious Origins of Religious Tolerance", Eric Nelson, 2011, Published by the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

Erastus described a system where the civil magistrate should handle all forms of enforcement required for civil society, acting on behalf of public interest and the Church as a moral and guiding authority. This enforcement should be done in a minimal way. Erastus based his views on the ancient Hebrew republic.

### **John Selden: that spiritual labour might in no way be stifled**

John Selden was one of the principal architects of the English government, before during and after the English Civil War. He was called 'the glory of the English nation' by Hugo Grotius, and 'the chief of learned men reputed in this land' by John Milton.



He constructed the English government according to an ideal. It was to cherish and support the external worship of God, to encourage the Church in its role in providing moral guidance, to regulate our lives in a manner required for civil society, to establish general peace and tranquility, that spiritual labor might best be exerted and encouraged and in no way stifled.

His writings clearly show from where he was drawing his vision:

1618 History of Tithes - Tithes were not paid to the Priests, Levites or poor, but were collected and distributed by the king.

1635 The Enclosed Ocean - The ability of ancient Israel to have a border in the Mediterranean.

1640 The Law of Nature and Nations According to the Hebrews - The nature of Citizens in the Hebrew Republic.

The English Civil War (1642–1651)

1644 Civil year and Calendar of the Jewish Republic - The role of the legislature in determining religious holidays.

1646 The Jewish Law of Marriage and Divorce - Showing the contractual nature of marriage.

1650 The Sanhedrin and the Government of the Ancient Hebrews - Selden's attempt to recommend a system of government with maximum freedom for religious expression.

Reid Barbour describes John Selden's role as one of the principle architects of English government: "[John Selden's] experiments in the regulation of religious societies agreed with Calvin's commonplace assertion that 'civil government is designed, as long as we live in this world, to cherish and support the external worship of God, to preserve the pure doctrine of religion, to defend the constitution of the Church, to regulate our lives in a manner requisite for the society of men, to form our manners to civil justice, to promote our concord with each other, and to establish general peace and tranquility... that spiritual labour might best be exerted and encouraged [and in no way stifled]... the societies that [Selden] studied towards the end of his life became more emphatically comprehensive in their religious orientation; the farther he moved from investigating early British pagan, early British Christian, Greco-Roman, and 'Syrian' cultures towards his final Judaic studies, the more the absolute integrity of religion in the society under scrutiny became crucial."

This was the context for the justification of religious tolerance and human rights in general. Before the English Civil War, there was a great revival of religious fervor. This included outspoken religious groups such as the Puritans, the Quakers, the Ranters, the Seekers. There were militants and extremists

advocating violence, one tried to blow up Parliament. There were spiritualists advocating fantastic and unrealistic solutions to unite the commonwealth. John Selden felt the example of the Foreign Resident in the ancient Hebrew republic was ideal. They had complete freedom to practice their religion, even develop it as a community, within the framework of other communities doing the same, all citizens bound together by mishpat (civil law). Religious freedom was to be provided because the Bible said so. In other words, deeply religious people granted religious freedom for deeply religious reasons.

### **Judeo-Christian Heritage**

In the 1600s, the leading political theorists rejected the secularism of the pagan Greeks and Romans, as well as the Humanism of Renaissance political thought, and recommended that the best foundation would be derived from concepts of the ancient Hebrew republic. Christian Hebraist Henry Ainsworth declared, 1611: "One must consult Hebrew doctors of the ancients sort, and some later of best esteemed for learning" if one wishes "to give light to the ordinances of Moses touching the external practice of them in the commonwealth of Israel, which the Rabbines did record, and without whose help, many of those legal rites (especially in Exodus and Leviticus) will not easily be understood."

The concept of the "Law of Noah" appeared to be universal enough to bind all mankind. Unlike other political systems which justified themselves on pragmatism or human nature, this new approach was based in the first instance on an attempt to approximate measures attributed to God. Embodying the best, fairest, and most just that the people could envision, these measures were removed from the noise of consensus, personal preference, and vested interest - factors that were bringing England to the brink of Civil War.

John Selden created a system which was rooted in the Bible to create a commonwealth that would provide freedom for its deeply religious subjects. This method of drawing political theories from the Torah, the Bible and Rabbinic writings would become known as the Judeo-Christian heritage. There weren't any Jews involved in the Judeo-Christian heritage. It was established by Christians who read the Torah, Maimonides, Josephus, and other rabbinic works to both structure a society, and to encourage religious expression. Perhaps it is worth mentioning here that this effort paralleled and was in some ways inspired by the Ottoman Empire at the same time.

John Selden specifically chose the model of the Hebrew republic, with these modifications:

- England had no special national contract because God did not make a special covenant with the people of England or set up a priesthood for them.
- All citizens to be considered "foreign residents" with complete religious freedom within civil law.
- Parliament should be the executor of all law, even religious law.
- Parliament would exist in two houses to embody 1) the wishes and needs of the people and 2) their obligation to higher standards

The state was to draw morality from scriptural values, the government was supposed to enforce the minimum amount to keep civil peace and to encourage religious expression.

### **Tale of Two Cities**

In England, John Selden designed a government with two sets of parliaments, a House of Commons and a House of Lords

based on the balance of power between king and prophet. One body was to reflect the needs, wants and desires of the people, and another body was intended to provide moral limitations and direction. When legislation passed between these two houses, it could be counted on to be well-founded.

A hundred years later, France faced a similar crisis. But rather than say one should look to their religious heritage and grant religious freedom for religious reasons, they declared a separation of Church and State completely, and anyone who did not give primacy to the state was at risk of losing their head. Historians later dubbed this a Reign of Terror.

What happened in England and what happened in France were completely different. France had a complete separation of church and state, but instead of a balance of power, the church was completely dis-empowered, and it ended in a reign of terror. England was able to put society back together again, able to give freedom to Calvinists, Protestants, Presbyterians, and others. It took a while - things didn't go so smoothly all the time - but a resilient and dynamic structure had been founded which dealt with their issues, and indeed many of the same issues that we face today.

### **Humanism is a religion**

What's happened since John Selden's day? We don't have many Quakers, Ranters, Seekers and other enthusiastic visionaries now. In the last century, different kinds of religion have developed, no less fervent. Moral systems have been created which guide people's lives and help them make decisions about whether they should or should not do something. Secular Humanism and various forms of Atheism have become a well-developed competing set of moral values, so they effectively function as a religion.

According to the early founders of Western governments, Adam was given seven of the ten commandments with the first commandment concerning the garden of Eden. To them, Adam represented all of humanity. These basic laws were the God-given foundation of all civilized human behavior. This was not just tenet of faith, but a requirement that underpinned the ability of the government to be moral, just and free from corruption. From their point of view, even if one doesn't believe in God, one must behave as if these standard measures were given by God, that is, they must be removed from the noise of consensus, personal preference, and vested interest.

John Selden expressed it this way: "I cannot fancy to myself what the law of nature means, but the law of God. How should I know, I ought not to steal, I ought not to commit adultery, unless somebody had told me so. 'This is not because I think I ought not to do them, nor because you think I ought not; if so, our minds might change: whence then comes the restraint? From a higher power, nothing else can bind. I cannot bind myself, for I may untie myself again; nor an equal cannot bind me, for we may untie one another. It must be a superior, even God Almighty."

### **Man-made religious systems and the Hebraists**

Secular Humanism and atheism, by not disclosing themselves as new religious systems, now claim primacy in all legal decisions of moral import, something not originally intended by the Hebraists. Thus, the governments set up by the early political theorists like John Selden have not handled the incursions of these man-made religions well.

Law cannot be divorced from moral judgment calls, so the new invented "morality" under humanism is either derived democratically by polls and referendums, or by legal

decisions in the high court. The former has often yielded unsatisfactory results because the public tends to be fickle and potentially swayed by special interest groups. The latter is problematic because of the dual roles of the high court, which is at once the highest court of appeals and arbiter of some of the most controversial issues.

### **Conclusion (for Muslims)**

Western civil law, in particular the English system, is actually based on the *Deen* of Noah. This has a connection with the *Deen* of Islam.

- The law-abiding citizen should not feel threatened by any other citizen who abides by a different *sha'aria*.
- *Deen* is a pragmatic approximation of the minimal requirement for a believer, a proper citizen. While it may not fulfill the requirements for a faith community, a proper citizen is deserving of respect and dignity.
- Aberrations in this system -- such as when the religions of Christianity, Atheism or Humanism exceed the mandate of the magistrate to enforce -- are all open to public debate, and one can expect and demand a fair dialogue.

### **Conclusion (for Europeans)**

The conclusion for Europeans is that Islamic *Deen* is what Muslims refer to when they say there is no religion acceptable before God except for Islam. The word for religion used there is *Deen*. Observing this *Deen* doesn't mean that one has to make a pilgrimage to Mecca or to keep Ramadan. The word *Deen* means basic submission to God, and this in turn is the basic measure of civil behavior. It is the difference between

nations who respect law and lawless nations, between civilization and barbarism.

- This concept is not all that different from the western tradition of Basic or Natural Law.
- It is the obligation of every civilized human being to work that all mankind should measure up to this minimum standard.
- When Islamic *Deen* becomes blurred with Islamic *Shari'a* (basic law blurred with detailed law), this can result in difficult confrontations. When a Muslim denies dignity to a non-Muslim citizen, this is a violation of state principles and parallels a similar violation of Islamic principles.

Being a good citizen in an approximation of being a believer. *Deen* is connected to the Judeo-Christian concept of Laws of Noah. Only when this *Deen* becomes blurred with *Shari'a*, which is basic law together with detailed law, does conflict erupt.

### **Conclusion (for Jews)**

The conclusion for Jews is this: The Judeo-Christian heritage, as envisioned by John Selden, restricted the role of the government to enforce only the minimum amount of laws that would ensure civil order, and left room for deeply religious communities such as the Quakers, Seekers and Ranters. One of the first communities to benefit from this was the Jews, whom Cromwell invited back into England.

- The Judeo-Christian heritage made room for deeply religious communities, such as the Quakers, Seekers, Ranters and Jews.

- Jews obtained freedom to create and develop their own society.
- Jews were able to form their own society, communities and even courts, on condition their participation is voluntary, and within limits is recognized as binding arbitration.
- And where there was common ground, Jews were eventually able to participate in English culture, tradition, and heritage as equal citizens.

The Jews obtained freedom to create and develop their society in the commonwealth, they were able to form their own community and courts. Their courts had authority as a form of binding arbitration. There was common ground even to the point where the Jews were able to participate in English culture, tradition, and heritage. Today, Jews must work for the same rights for all their fellow citizens, especially those with whom they share so much. They must find ways to eliminate misunderstandings and foster clarity.

### **Conclusions for UK Citizens**

All citizens and residents of the United Kingdom would benefit by remembering the scriptural roots of the balance of powers between court, parliament, and religious institutions. Religion is not meant to be subservient to secular law and is not meant to be trumped by public opinion, referendum, or judicial activism. Freedom of religion is meaningless if government fiat can trump values that Abrahamic religions hold dear. We are meant to live within concentric circles of marriage, family, tribe, community, guild, with the nation pulling these groups together, not bypassing all identity and belonging and, say, handing out pamphlets to children in the park informing them that they have rights outside of the family and need not listen to their parents.

Abrahamic religions hold by the above-mentioned concentric circles. We do not believe in individual and state, but buffers between the individual and state - husband and wife, family, community, tribe, and guild, and then, and only then, and lastly, the state.

It should be unthinkable to police, say, schoolchildren's views of alternative relationships, or force children to attend classes in school that describe alternative relationships in ways that the family disagrees with. Peaceful families and communities need not be imposed upon, need not have "thought police" monitoring them and imposing upon them.

The family, tribe, community, and guild can be relied upon to guide their people, with the state functioning in a back-seat position, policing only to preserve the common good and not to impose values. This is the basic assumption of the scriptural roots of modern political scientists as brought down by Christian Hebraists, this is what avoided civil war in the United Kingdom and prevented the reign of terror in neighboring France. We ignore this heritage at our peril.

# Faith and Citizenship: A Muslim Perspective

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## Introduction

The central sense of citizenship as *peaceful coexistence* is also central to the purpose of creation and the Message of Islam. Allow us to explore this in a couple of questions: **How God views humans?**

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used the term '*children*' to describe God's relationship with people: '**All people are the children of God; and the most beloved to Him is *the most beneficial to them***'<sup>50</sup>. He, Glory Be to Him, has created people out of love and extended His kindness and mercy to all of them regardless of faith: "*God is indeed kind and merciful with all people*"<sup>51</sup>.

He favoured them with unconditional dignity, honour, shelter, and good sustenance: "*Indeed, we have honoured the children of Adam, and carried them over land and sea, and provided them with good sustenance, and favoured them above most of Our creation*"<sup>52</sup>. For that reason, God has given a personal message to every human being to preserve their lives and their God-given dignity & honour.

God has engrained this message in the natural disposition of the person. He said: "*Do they seek other than the Religion of*

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<sup>50</sup> Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir Imam Altabarani, Albazzar, Ibn Alshihab

<sup>51</sup> 2:143

<sup>52</sup> 17:70

*Allah - while all creatures in the heavens and on earth have Accepted Islam (submission to His will), willing or unwilling, and to Him shall they all be brought back*<sup>53</sup>. From this perspective, all people are Muslims, i.e., God has bestowed everyone with a natural tendency to live in peace, preserve their lives and honour, and to avoid dangers and inconvenience. Therefore, spiritual, and wise people who reflect will certainly discover their personal message and become beacons of guidance for their communities.

God has mentioned ways of attaining enlightenment in many verses, e.g. *“On the earth are signs for those who are endowed with inner certainty (about the Truth). Just as [there are signs thereof] within your own selves: can you not, then, see”*<sup>54</sup>.

### **Why then, has God sent Prophets and Messengers to people?**

It is not about reward and punishment, or heaven and hell. The textual answer is to enlighten those who were able to discover their own truth with the absolute Truth. Moreover, to give guidance and reminders to all people of their personal message to protect their lives and attain safety and happiness by appreciating and preserving their own God-given dignity and honour and to avoid harming and hurting others.

He revealed to prophet Muhammad (PBUH): *“So remind. You are only a reminder. You have no control over them”*<sup>55</sup>. He, Glory be to Him, intended for them all the goodness. Therefore, His guidance comprises the best peaceful and beneficial ways of living and interacting with people and nature that brings happiness, i.e., *peaceful coexistence*.

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<sup>53</sup> 3:83

<sup>54</sup> 51:20-21

<sup>55</sup> 88:21-22

He said to people after He gave them earth as home: *“None the less, there shall most certainly come unto you guidance from Me: and the one who follows My guidance will not go astray, and neither will be unhappy”*<sup>56</sup>. This guidance is Islam: the way of peace and happiness.

Islam is the religion of God with which He sent all His prophets and enlightened great spiritual leaders: *“Indeed, religion to God is Islam”*<sup>57</sup>, meaning that all the religions delivered by God’s Messengers (peace be upon them) convey one Message of morality and good conduct - and this is the all-embracing Islam. Therefore, the terms Islam is not confined to the sealing or final message, nor the term Muslim is confined to its followers.

It is time for those who became Muslims by following the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to acknowledge that his message is not unprecedented. God, Glory be to Him, Has sent him as Mercy for all people. In his own words, he (PBUH) was sent **“to complete and perfect moral character”** that previous messengers of God came with. He also emphasized that **“All prophets belong to the same Lord – their mothers are different, but their religion is one”**<sup>58</sup>.

He, Glory be to Him, Has sent them with moral character and appointed them role models for people to know and love one another and form virtuous societies that live in peace and happiness. Therefore, the essence of the religion is mercy, and its purpose is morality, fostering peaceful coexistence, love, and happiness.

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<sup>56</sup> 20:123

<sup>57</sup> 3:19

<sup>58</sup> Muslim

## The Concept of Citizenship

From a Muslim perspective, citizenship may be defined as the belonging of someone to a society upon a social contract/covenant that ensures peaceful coexistence of all members of the society and clarifies their rights and duties in sharing the land that provides the means of living for them.

*Citizenship is the civic sense of Islam: Religion (Arabic: Deen) is good interaction out of love and upon moral principles with humans, all creation, and nature, i.e., the code of duties and interactions of people in relation to their town, city, or local area. In this sense, worship or religiousness is achieving morality in character and excellence in conduct with humans and nature. Collaboration of all people in forming and maintaining such a virtuous society is also a religious requirement: God said: "...help one another in furthering virtue and God-consciousness (that fosters peace and good conduct), and do not help one another in furthering evil and enmity"<sup>59</sup>.*

Prophetic practice of citizenship: Madinah charter: Preservation of the human's freedom, safety, and dignity is a personal message from God to every human being and mandatory upon them. At any point in time, if a person's dignity, rights, or freedom is violated in their homeland, they have to migrate to where their God-given dignity is appreciated and preserved. God Almighty said: *"Surely those whom the angels take (in death) while they wrong themselves, (the angels) would ask: In what were you engaged? They would say: We were oppressed in the land. They (angels) would say: Was not Allah's earth spacious that you could have migrated therein?"*<sup>60</sup> Therefore, preserving one's dignity and rights has priority over attachment to one's homeland. This was the

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<sup>59</sup> 5:2

<sup>60</sup> 4:97

reason for the first migration of the Prophet's followers to Abyssinia seeking refuge in the Christian kingdom of Axum under king *Negasi* in 615 CE, and later his migration with them from Makkah to Madinah in 622 CE. As for those who migrate to a safe land, they have to fulfil the covenant of being citizens in that land and be loyal to it, respect the law and social norms, and participate fully in civic responsibilities. God said: "*O You who believe*<sup>61</sup>, fulfil your covenants"<sup>62</sup>; and prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "**Muslims should keep up their promises and agreements**"<sup>63</sup>.

After the migration of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to Medina, he established his community as an example for humanity. It was established upon a covenant (*Dhimmah*) of respect, equality, and peaceful co-existence between his followers and all the tribes and ethnicities with whom they lived and interacted, regardless of faith differences<sup>64</sup>. This was an example society constituted upon equality in belonging, civil rights, freedom of faith, and peaceful coexistence.

The followers of the Prophet (PBUH) were committed to this covenant as a religious duty since God will hold to accountability those who do not keep to it. As for the people who co-inhabit with them – as happened in Medina - their commitment to this covenant is based upon their wilful acceptance to live with them as citizens with equal rights and responsibilities according to the terms of that charter. Thereafter, he (PBUH) declared his allegiance and belonging

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<sup>61</sup> This is the group name, in Arabic: *alladhina aamano*, of the people to whom Prophet Muhammad is sent in contract to the people of Moses: '*alladhina Hadoo'*, and the people of Jesus: *Alnasaara*; see verses: 2:62, 5:69, and 22:17.

<sup>62</sup> 5:1

<sup>63</sup> Abu Dawod and Ibn Habban.

<sup>64</sup> Biography of the Prophet (PBUH) by Ibn Ishaq

to such a community and clarified to his followers that peaceful coexistence is a religious duty in his words **'Whomsoever oppresses, degrades, abuses, or defrauds a Dhimmi (an affiliate to this covenant/a citizen) I shall be his opponent on the Day of Judgement'**<sup>65</sup>.

He (PBUH) practiced direct consultation with his community on the matters of safety and wellbeing upon God's guidance: *"...and whose rule [in all matters of common concern] is consultation among themselves"*<sup>66</sup>. Therefore, the concepts of Justice, Equality, and Democracy in Islam are the matrix for establishing a virtuous society that lives in peaceful coexistence. However, when oppression ends, there should be no migration as the Prophet (PBUH) told the people of Makkah after removing its unjust rulers from power: **"There should be no migration after liberation"**<sup>67</sup>.

Freedom, in such a society, which is formed upon morality, respect, and good interaction is essential for a person's social and religious affiliations, personal and communal commitments, moral responsibility, and legal accountability. The concept of freedom in Islam is expressed in a way that preserves the safety, peace, and rights of others. God said: *"Let there be no compulsion in Deen (= faith and interaction)"*<sup>68</sup>. In this sense, no one shall be harmed or offended. Moral principles bring about positive intentions and lead to beneficial interactions with one another and with nature. Therefore, the threshold of morality is avoidance of harm that paves the way to maintaining peaceful co-existence and the balance of nature: Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: **"There should be neither harming—of anyone—nor**

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<sup>65</sup> Sunan Abi Dawod

<sup>66</sup> 42:38

<sup>67</sup> Bukhari & Muslim

<sup>68</sup> 2:256

**nurturing harm in the heart and continuing to act upon it**<sup>69</sup>.

**A ‘Good Citizen’ is indeed Muslim:** Islam is a code for peaceful coexistence, which is not an ideology or merely a claim, rather a way of life. It is not actualised merely by performing rituals and acts of worship such as prayer or fasting, nor by dresses and appearances, rather by morality and good conduct. Prayer and fasting are means that elevate human interaction from immorality and ill conduct to *Ihsaan* which is perfection of conduct upon high moral principles.

The way of attaining *Ihsaan* is clarified in the Prophet (PBUH) words **“*Ihsaan* is to worship Allah as though you see Him; if you were not able to see Him, be certain that He is watching over you”**. Such awareness of Allah would surely lead to perfection of the acts of worship that include interactions with all creation of Allah. Therefore, if the purpose behind worship is not achieved, the act of worship will be useless; the Prophet (PBUH) said: **“many are those who fast yet gain nothing except hunger and thirst”**<sup>70</sup>.

Islam is the religion of compassion and beautiful human interaction, exemplified by the conduct of the person who has faith in God and follow His guidance. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) defined the Muslim as the person from whose tongue and hand people are safe, and the Mu’min (person of faith) as the one whom people trust with their lives and possessions<sup>71</sup>. Preservation of animal and plant life is an act of benevolence in Islam. However, the sanctity of human life is greater than that of the Holy Ka’bah in Makkah. In Islam, saving the life of a person is as virtuous as saving the lives of all humans and

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<sup>69</sup> (Ibn Maajah, ad—Daaraqutnee, Maalik, and others)

<sup>70</sup> Sunan Tirmithi

<sup>71</sup> Bukhari, Muslim, An-Nasai

taking the life of one person is as atrocious as taking the lives of all human beings.

Equality: Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has been sent to lead by example in perfecting moral character and virtuous conduct and treating people with dignity and respect regardless of faith, colour, or race. He (PBUH) has declared to his followers and all humanity: **‘There is no virtue for an Arab over a non-Arab, neither for a white over a black, nor for a black over a white except by piety’**<sup>72</sup>. Virtue is through piety, and its place is the heart’. Therefore, knowing the noblest and most virtuous is beyond people’s judgement - only God Has such knowledge. **‘All creation are the children of God; and the most beloved to Him is the most beneficial to them’**<sup>73</sup>.

However, this clear and plain view of citizenship based on the practice of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), suffered deviations throughout the history of Muslims in the form of theocracy that hijacked the religious system as well as toxic interpretations and juristic verdicts that poisoned the foundation of morality and peaceful coexistence laid by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In the following section theocracy and the roots of toxic texts will be challenged.

## **Islamic State?**

Theocracy from a Muslim perspective is a political doctrine that calls for the formation of a religious state that forces the ordering of government and society in accordance with Shariah Laws. Theocracy in this context seeks power and control based upon the belief that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a political leader who established a state after his

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72 Musnad Ahmad

73 Al-Mu’jam Al-Kabir, Imam Altabarani

migration to Madinah. Advocates of this doctrine also seek evidence from the practice of his companions especially the four *Califs* who succeeded him, even though guidance for all his flowers should be only from him!

These advocates maintain that the Prophet (PBUH) established such a state during his life. The Document of Madinah, issued by the prophet as a covenant for social inclusion and peaceful co-existence, was considered to be a 'constitution for his state', and his judicial arbitration (*Hukm*) among his companions is considered as '*ruling his state by what Allah Has revealed*'.

Political leadership, on one hand, is established through human choice, according to a constitution and its authority within the state borders for managing people's affairs. Ordering of government and civil rights within society is regulated by state laws, the acceptance of which is a requirement for citizenship. Religious leadership of God's Prophets and Messengers on the other hand, is not their personal choice or that of their people, rather it is commissioned by God in order to deliver His message of morality and good conduct to people, and not to have control over them or to establish a state. The following is a typical example of how a religious system is formed and how it works:

God Has sent His Messenger Muhammad (PBUH) for all people to perfect moral character and good conduct. He appointed him as the teacher of this message and informed him that he has no control over anyone. His Lord instructed him to invite all people to His Grace with wisdom and beautiful preaching. Like all Messengers, his obligation is one – to convey with clarity the Message of God. God Has directed him not to compel anyone to believe. Moreover, He Has given

people the choice to believe or to disbelieve in His Message. So, no one can limit this God-given choice.

Therefore, freedom of choice and lack of compulsion are fundamental principles of religion: *"There is no compulsion in religion"*. In contrast to citizenship, religiosity is a wilful commitment to follow the guidance of God as instructed by His prophets and messengers to the best of one's ability, as truthfulness and sincerity are basic requirements of faith. Therefore, after having faith in God and His messenger, there will be no room for hypocrisy because people have full rights to withdraw their faith in God and His message without liability to the Messenger or anyone else.

This was the role of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his practice: a religious leader. Whomsoever imposes control over people - political or religious - in the name of his religion has nothing to do with him since he (PBUH) is the paradigm of implementing his message.

The belief that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a political leader has paved way to the claim that he (PBUH) implemented the Law that Allah revealed for ruling (Hukm) his state! To support this claim of Ruling (Hukm) in the political sense by evidence from the Holy Quran, advocates of theocracy made a serious corruption of the sense of *Hukm, that means judgement*, in the closing statements of the following Quranic verses: 5:44 (*Those who do not rule according to what God revealed are indeed the unbelievers*); 5:45 (*Those who do not rule according to what God revealed are the evildoers*); and 5:47 (*Those who do not rule according to what God revealed are ones who abandoned the Guidance*).

These verses outlined the consequences in the hereafter of rejecting *"judgement by what Allah has revealed"*, **not** *"governing by what Allah has revealed"* has been used by all

the factions that advocate theocracy. In fact, the warning in these verses regards the consequences of rejecting the following of God guidance regarding arbitration and judgment in the verse *“By your Lord, (O Muhammad), they will not believe until they call you to arbitrate in their disputes, and then find within themselves no resentment regarding your judgement and submit themselves completely (to your guidance)”* (4:65).

The Quranic phrase: “ruling (Hukm) by what Allah Has revealed” is confined to the juristic and judicial senses. The Quran never uses the term Hukm in the political sense, rather the terms *Malaka*, *Yamliku* for *to reign*, *Mulk* for *monarchy*, and *Malik* for *King* are used. An example of the juristic sense of Hukm is in the words of Moses (PBUH): *“I fled from you (Pharaoh and his people) when I feared you. But now my Lord has endowed me with Hukm and has made me one of [His] message-bearers”* [26:21]. Moses (PBUH) was never a king or a political ruler. Therefore, the word Hukm in this context refers to the Law and ethical principles that God has ordained for His vicegerents on earth, to populate it and observe moral conduct that qualifies them for the bliss of the hereafter.

The scope of citizenship embraces all people in a country regardless of their faith and ethnicity. Peaceful coexistence between people includes relationships and interactions. In family and community relationships, the highest value of bonding is love, and the lowest is respect. While in human interactions, the highest value is altruism or preferring the other over yourself (*Eethar* in Arabic), followed by loving for the other what you love for yourself (the Golden Rule), and the lowest is equity or the value of being just. The Law, be it God’s law or man-made, is meant to safeguard justice, which is only the baseline of Moral “grounds” where virtuous societies thrive. Therefore, observing the Shariah Law that

theocrats regard as the utmost goal of religiosity is in fact simply the threshold of morality!

# **Reconceptualising Citizenship in The Changing World**

**Vivian Bartlett**

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## **An Appreciation Of The Work of the Onyx link Foundation**

Over the many years I have been a Bahá'í Faith representative serving on the Interfaith Council for Wales and the Interfaith Forum, it is only recently I have come in contact with the work of the Onyx Link Foundation and its members. I am truly impressed by the work they have undertaken, which focuses on reforming world views to the effect that an informed citizenship is better able to bond together with love and a shared moral compass.

As equally important as are the objectives of the Foundation is their spirit of humility, openness and, indeed, love, that draws a range of protagonists in society into their work. This cannot help but underpin their sincere desire for social cohesion and the well-being of the community. I am, therefore, very thankful for this opportunity to represent the Bahá'í Faith at this Interfaith Conference dedicated to 'Faith and Citizenship'.

## **Introduction**

Much of what will be read in this paper is drawn from the Teachings and insights of the Bahá'í Faith. It may be challenging reading for some who have a mind-set, a worldview of trying to fit everything into their 'box' of existing religions or atheism. Although there are many understandings that are consonant with the ancient religions

and even of secular society, the Bahá'í Faith offers new and necessary concepts on citizenship for a world that has now shrunk to the size of a 'global village' in comparison with the world to which came past Prophets, Messengers of God or Divine Educators.

Underpinning these opening thoughts is the Bahá'í claim that God, or whatever is regarded as a Transcendent Higher Power, has sent to humanity in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century not just one, but two of His Messengers – the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'ís call all Messengers of God 'Manifestations of God' as They manifest to humanity His qualities and attributes. Indeed, a central Bahá'í Teaching emphasises the equality and essential oneness of all the Manifestations of God: These attributes of God are not and have never been vouchsafed specially unto certain Prophets and withheld from others. Nay, all the Prophets of God, His well-favoured, His holy, and chosen Messengers, are, without exception, the bearers of His names, and the embodiments of His attributes.<sup>74</sup>

It was decadent, superstitious, and fanatical Persia that received the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Following in the footsteps of all those who rejected previous Visitations of the Divine, the religious leaders of Persia mercilessly persecuted the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and all Their followers. History records 20,000 souls who, rather than recant their new-found Faith under threat of death, chose to sacrifice their earthly life as martyrs.

The Báb's name means the Gate, Who, not only was the bearer of a new 'Book' but was the herald of Bahá'u'lláh Who claimed to be the Promised One expected by all religions. After 6 years of revealing 500,000 verses, the Báb, in 1850 at the age of 31, was publicly executed by a firing squad of 250 soldiers in

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74 Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitab-i-Iqán, p. 67

Tabriz, Persia. Bahá'u'lláh was subjected to an array of horrors over a 40-year period culminating in a decree by the Ottoman authorities to perpetual incarceration in the prison city of Akka, Palestine. He ascended in 1892 at the age of 75. Bahá'u'lláh's name means 'The Glory of God'.

The Bahá'í Faith is the latest of the world's great religions and is now the second most widespread on the planet.<sup>75</sup> Bahá'u'lláh revealed the equivalent of 100 volumes wherein are contained interpretations of past scriptures and prophecies, laws, exhortations, mystical treatise, prayers, tablets to kings and rulers, poems, and the like. God is praised and glorified throughout as the One, Single, Incomparable Essence completely unknowable to His creation. He explains that as 'there can be no tie of direct intercourse to bind the one true God with His creation... the contingent and the Absolute, He hath ordained that in every age and dispensation a pure and stainless Soul (the Manifestations of God) be made manifest in the kingdoms of earth and heaven.'<sup>76</sup>

Bahá'u'lláh's pivotal principles are the Oneness of Humanity, the Oneness of Religion, and the Oneness of God. The objective God has ordained for this age is defined 'as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of the world (which) is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith.'<sup>77</sup>

### **Citizenship Based on Transformation**

From the inception of His Revelation Bahá'u'lláh placed great emphasis on transformation of character, which, when considered, every previous Manifestation of God also did. The

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75 Encyclopaedia Britannica 1992

76 Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'lláh, p. 66

77 Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 62

underlying reason for which a Messenger of God appears, Bahá'u'lláh tells us, is, 'To educate the souls (and to) refine the character of every living man.'<sup>78</sup> This is at the heart of good citizenship whether of the past or present. Bahá'u'lláh writes: ...is not the object of every Revelation to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall manifest itself both outwardly and inwardly, that shall affect both its inner life and external conditions? For if the character of mankind be not changed, the futility of God's universal Manifestations would be apparent.<sup>79</sup>

Central to transformation is the 'Golden Rule' taught by all the major religions. I have taken from Zoroastrianism a representative example of this theme: 'That nature (human nature) only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self.'<sup>80</sup> There are many commonalities, or repetitions in all scriptures that address the cultivation of personal virtues for transformation of character as well as moral duties for the betterment of society. Amongst these virtues and duties are love for all, trustworthiness, honesty, kindness, wisdom, purity, humility, forgiveness, patience, mercy, compassion, and obedience (to the will of God). On this point an old, wise man told me when I was young, that all the Great Educators taught the same thing but just sat under different trees to do so.

Imagine then, a much better world populated by people earnestly trying to put into effect these directives, directives that come through the Manifestations of God from a Higher Power. Could we not conclude that those terrible events recorded in history even up to the present day, would, at the

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78 Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 39

79 Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitab-i-Iqan*, pp. 153-154

80 *Dadistan-i Dinik*, 94:5

very least, have been reduced to insignificance if not non-existence, had people been obedient to those counsels of virtue? A highly vaunted materialistic civilization is prone to emphasise the negative effects of what it associates with religion. This is like blaming a well-made violin when played ignorantly, for the terrible noise that comes from it. But, to be fair in our judgement about the Revelations that have flowed through the Manifestations of God (the violin if you like), we also have to register the tremendous good that has come humanity's way when communities have been faithful to the directives of the Manifestations. It is stressed in the Bahá'í Writings that the primary impulse in advancing civilization has always come from religion.

The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquillity of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God. Religion bestoweth upon man the most precious of all gifts, offereth the cup of prosperity, imparteth eternal life, and showereth imperishable benefits upon mankind.<sup>81</sup> And 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of Bahá'u'lláh and perfect exemplar of His Teachings stated: Only by improving spiritually as well as materially can we make any real progress and become perfect beings. It was in order to bring this spiritual life and light into the world that all the great Teachers have appeared. They came so that the Sun of Truth might be manifested, and shine in the hearts of men, and that through its wondrous power men might attain unto Everlasting Light.<sup>82</sup>

A study of history related to the civilizing influence of religion notes marvellous advances made after the coming of Moses, Buddha, Christ, Muhammad indeed of every Divine Educator. It is with this knowledge that Bahá'u'lláh states that religion

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81 Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 129-130

82 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, p. 68

is one, it is 'the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future.'<sup>83</sup>

## **Progressive Revelation & Citizenship**

However, we may ask that if the past Manifestations of God emphasised the need to reform one's character and gave Teachings, now embedded in the Sacred Scriptures of the world's religions, why the repetition? A part answer is based upon the fact that only until very recently, in the long history of humanity's evolution, all parts of the world have become interconnected. Huge physical barriers such as oceans, mountain ranges, deserts and the like have kept the mass of humanity apart. Therefore, God in His justice and wisdom has sent His Messengers to all parts of the world so that no population has been deprived of Divine Guidance.

We only know the names of some of the Manifestations such as Krishna, Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Christ and Muhammad, the two recent Ones being the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. And Bahá'u'lláh states that more Manifestations will come in the future. Many other Manifestations have appeared before the earliest recoding of these Chosen Ones of which no records exist. Bahá'u'lláh, responding to a question regarding past Prophets of which no record exists wrote: Know thou that the absence of any reference to them is no proof that they did not actually exist. That no records concerning them are now available, should be attributed to their extreme remoteness, as well as to the vast changes which the earth hath undergone since their time.<sup>84</sup>

We may further ask does humanity still need a repetition of the essential spiritual Teachings to transform citizenship

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83 Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 136

84 *ibid*, p. 172

from 'leaden' to 'golden' behaviour? It may be surmised, that all the followers of the existing religions have to do is to adhere to their spiritual teachings to transform, thereby producing good, law-abiding citizens for today. But we must be honest here, for a correct analysis of the condition of humanity, to be able to answer this question. Out of all the adherents of the great ancient religions there are only a small number, in comparison to their masses, that try to faithfully follow the precepts of their scriptures. The fact that we are holding a conference on what is the basis for good citizenship highlights the point that there is total confusion of how to achieve this.

Further, we have the right to ask that after centuries and in some cases millennia of influence since the inception of the ancient religions why are we now at a time when religion has lost its purifying influence over human nature. Writing in the 1930's, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi, noted society's degeneracy: The recrudescence of religious intolerance, of racial animosity, and of patriotic arrogance; the increasing evidences of selfishness, of suspicion, of fear and of fraud; the spread of terrorism, of lawlessness, of drunkenness and of crime; the unquenchable thirst for, and the feverish pursuit after, earthly vanities, riches and pleasures; the weakening of family solidarity; the laxity in parental control; the lapse into luxurious indulgence; the irresponsible attitude towards marriage and the consequent rising tide of divorce; the degeneracy of art and music, the infection of literature, and the corruption of the press; the extension of the influence and activities of those "prophets of decadence" who advocate companionate marriage, who preach the philosophy of nudism, who call modesty an intellectual fiction, who refuse to regard the procreation of children as the sacred and primary purpose of marriage, who denounce religion as an opiate of the people, who would, if given free rein, lead back the human race to barbarism, chaos,

and ultimate extinction -- these appear as the outstanding characteristics of a decadent society, a society that must either be reborn or perish.<sup>85</sup> Much could be added to the list of aberrant behaviour as each generation moves further and further away from a connection with essential scriptural spiritual counsels.

The Bahá'í answer to these questions is not that the ancient religions have failed in the spiritual education of their followers. No, far from it. Bahá'í Teachings offer the concept that religion is progressive – it needs to be updated to meet the needs of changing social conditions as well as to re-energise the eternal spiritual counsels. And for such a profound progression to occur a new Manifestation of God is sent for this purpose. Although the spiritual teachings of the past are eternal and can be considered the Holy of Holies, nonetheless, the force that they contained has gradually diminished so as to be virtually ineffective for the necessary transformation of the masses.

In effect, the ancient spiritual scriptures have done their work for the age in which they appeared and produced an advanced civilization made of transformed citizens, in comparison to that which existed before. To understand the natural process of the renewal of religion Bahá'ís offer an analogy: Just as the rays emanating from one sun in past days has done its work, giving life and causing growth in the physical world, so too have the past Manifestations been the rays of light emanating from the One God causing the growth of spiritual, intellectual and societal potential in the world of humanity.

Bahá'u'lláh then, offers an understanding of religion that is two-fold. One is that it re-energises/renews the essential spiritual counsels of all past Manifestations – we have covered

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85 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 187-188

this above. The other is to address the needs that gradually arise during the intervening years between each Manifestation of God. Social conditions do not stand still but are ever changing. Religion then, in a world that is constantly changing is not meant to be understood as a static, once and for all time revelation from our Maker. Each Revelation progressively builds upon the previous One. Not only is the inner life addressed by the Manifestations but also what needs to be transformed of the external behaviours and conditions of society. Those that have advocated exclusivity and finality for their particular Revelation have, indeed, done much harm to the good name of 'religion' and consequently good citizenship.

An understanding required for good citizenship is not only based upon acquiring virtues, essential as they are, but following the laws and guidance that pertain to the most up to date Revelation from God to humanity. Another analogy underpinning the concept of 'progressive revelation' is that it is similar to a child growing up being taught by a variety of teachers. Teachers adjust their lessons to the growing capacities of children. We would consider it inappropriate to expect a five-year old child, who is just learning to count, to be given a lesson on trigonometry.

As humanity's capacities have evolved over the ages affecting the development of social conditions, it has warranted an incremental input of guidance from Divine Educators, the Manifestations of God. This concept is a fundamental principle of the Bahá'í Faith without which it would be difficult to appreciate the laws, counsels, exhortations and the like that flow from Bahá'u'lláh. Each Religion therefore is not seen as 'frozen in time' and the only way to God, but as stages in the education of humanity to meet humanity's growing capacities and changed social conditions that occur from one Manifestation of God to another.

We are now entering the mature phase of the human race's evolution requiring teachings that enable it to further progress not only spiritually but also materially. So important is this point related to humanity's evolving capacities to its stage of maturity that the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi, wrote: This idea of the coming of age of mankind constitutes the central core of the Bahá'í Teachings and is the most distinguishing feature of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. A proper understanding of this concept gives the key to an adequate appreciation of the tremendous claim made by the Author of the Faith, both with regard to His own station, and to the incomparable greatness of His Dispensation.<sup>86</sup>

Revelation, according to Bahá'u'lláh, consists of the abrogation of laws that no longer serve the needs of society, the inclusion of laws and ordinances alongside the eternal teachings to meet the new needs of each age. Therefore, Bahá'u'lláh affirms: There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly Source, and are the subjects of one God. The difference between the ordinances under which they abide should be attributed to the varying requirements and exigencies of the age in which they were revealed.<sup>87</sup>

### **Transition To the World Citizenship**

With this point in mind, who would question, with confidence, that the world has desperately needed a fresh outpouring of guidance from God? Unprecedented have been the social changes since the appearance of Muhammad some 1400 years ago, the previous Manifestation of God prior the coming of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. At the time

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86 12 October 1936 to an individual believer found in The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 194

87 Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 218

Bahá'u'lláh came, science and technology had developed to such a degree that marvellous inventions for travelling the world were becoming available for the masses to be brought into contact with 'others'. Prior to this time, 'others' were considered strange, foreigners, not to be trusted; some sections of humanity were considered sub-human or not even human at all. At this crucial juncture, from the ancient world to the modern one, Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed: 'It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.'<sup>88</sup>

Since the revelation of these profoundly significant words humanity still resists considering itself as 'world citizens'. And therein lies the heart of the problem bedeviling good, moral citizenship. In a world that has shrunk to the size of a 'global village' humanity continues to act individually and organise itself collectively as if it is still in ancient times and, it must be noted, with catastrophic consequences. The call from God, raised over 150 years ago, is to the unity of the human race but it remains strangely disunited. The Bahá'í Scriptures are replete with metaphors that emphasise humanity's oneness. For instance: 'The Great Being saith: O well-beloved ones! The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.'<sup>89</sup>

The reason for directing humanity to oneness is so as its unity can be achieved. Bahá'u'lláh writes: The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. He Who is the Day Star of Truth beareth Me

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88 Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Baha'u'llah*, p. 167

89 Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 217

witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth. The one true God, He Who knoweth all things, Himself testifieth to the truth of these words.<sup>90</sup>

The oneness of humankind, as a fundamental principle of the Bahá'í Faith, is much more than just a plea for universal goodwill and brotherhood. It is, as Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, explains: no mere outburst of ignorant emotionalism or an expression of vague and pious hope. Its appeal is not to be merely identified with a reawakening of the spirit of brotherhood and good-will among men, nor does it aim solely at the fostering of harmonious cooperation among individual peoples and nations.

Its implications are deeper, its claims greater than any which the Prophets of old were allowed to advance. Its message is applicable not only to the individual but concerns itself primarily with the nature of those essential relationships that must bind all the states and nations as members of one human family. It does not constitute merely the enunciation of an ideal but stands inseparably associated with an institution adequate to embody its truth, demonstrate its validity, and perpetuate its influence. It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced.

It constitutes a challenge, at once bold and universal, to outworn shibboleths of national creeds -- creeds that have had their day and which must, in the ordinary course of events as shaped and controlled by Providence, give way to a new gospel, fundamentally different from, and infinitely superior to, what the world has already conceived. It calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world -- a world organically unified in all the

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90 *ibid*, p. 287

essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units.<sup>91</sup>

When the principle of progressive revelation is understood, it will be a cause of thankfulness to our loving Father Who has not left humanity directionless and comfortless in the light of the biggest challenge ever to face the human race. In the absence, however, of the application of this new direction – the unity of humanity and the reconstruction of the world around this principle – humanity has experienced suffering on such a large scale unequalled to that which it has suffered in the past.

Instead of unity the dominance of colonialism, instead of unity the horrors of nationalism in the first World War, instead of unity the racist, murderous aggression of Nazism of the second World War, instead of unity daily terrorism from those who are totally ignorant of the oneness and progressiveness of religion. All these catastrophes, and many others, cannot but brutalise human nature, sap its confidence in hope for a better world, drain its courage to take the step necessary for institutions necessary for the governance of the world, impels the masses to atheism with the words of Nietzsche on their lips that 'God is Dead'. How then, can a noble, moral, law-abiding citizen surface from such a swamp of world dreadfulness? The law of 'unity' has been decreed by our most wise, loving Creator; how then can this be ignored with impunity?

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91 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 43

## Justice & Citizenship

Let us now look at ‘justice, democracy and liberty’ in the light of Bahá’u’lláh’s teaching directing humanity to a universal application of His laws related to unity.

Bahá’u’lláh declares that ‘The best beloved of all things’ in the sight of God ‘is Justice...’<sup>92</sup> It is of huge importance for good, moral citizenship to understand that ‘justice’ is loved by God above all other qualities. He further states that ‘By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour.’<sup>93</sup> Those whose lives are governed by acting on the principle of justice, who are not corrupted by the existing emphasis on expediency and compromise in the organisation and governance of human affairs, are bringing a great light to a dark, unjust world. Those who do not hold to the principle of justice in their private and public lives contribute to what Bahá’u’lláh describes as ‘the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny.’<sup>94</sup>

But Bahá’u’lláh takes the importance of justice further by stating it has a purpose. Here are his words: ‘The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men.’<sup>95</sup> By inverting this statement, it becomes clear that if there is disunity on planet earth it is because of the absence of justice. So, let us examine a few causes of injustice of great magnitude in a world that is dying for unity.

The disparity between those who are wealthy almost beyond imagination and those who struggle to make ends meet in all

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92 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Arabic Hidden Words*, No2

93 *ibid*

94 Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 67

95 Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 66-67

countries coupled with those whose daily experience is grinding poverty. Where is the justice in this? The opulence of some countries existing side by side with others that experience the return of famine time and time again. Where is the justice in this? The subjugation of females and lack of equal opportunities perpetuated by ongoing male dominance in many areas of the world. Where is the justice in this? The corruption by those in authority, especially in the political domain, who put self-interest first, while the masses suffer the consequences of this tyranny. Where is the justice in this? The religious bigotry that extols the saving grace as only belonging to one of the existing religions, giving rise to fundamentalism and terrorism. Where is the Justice in this? The extortionate amount of money spent on nefarious engines of war to 'guarantee' peace, strips not only the soul of tranquillity and hope for the future but also revenue that could be spent on human necessities, such as healthcare and education for all. Where is the justice in this? The experience of huge swathes of humanity downtrodden with poverty, starvation, or the horrors of civil warfare in their own countries without seeking, as many do, succour or asylum as fleeing refugees to other countries. Where is the justice in this? The impossibility to unite a country when party politics, which polarise its populations causing great unrest and increasing militant reactions, is considered a necessary part of democracy? Where is the justice in this? When souls experience gnawing anxieties, mental health problems, agony, torture or gruesome death of family members and friends from any of the above causes how is it possible to stay quiet and for them not to raise their voices in repulsion of the existing injustices? How then, can good, moral citizenship survive in today's world with all this soul-destroying, demoralising disunity?

Indeed, we could ask, how can the human race itself survive in this unjust world when, for the most part, its leaders are

totally out of touch with the call of Bahá'u'lláh to regard the world as one country? On this point Shoghi Effendi, wrote: How pathetic indeed are the efforts of those leaders of human institutions who, in utter disregard of the spirit of the age, are striving to adjust national processes, suited to the ancient days of self-contained nations, to an age which must either achieve the unity of the world, as adumbrated by Bahá'u'lláh, or perish.<sup>96</sup>

## **Democracy & Citizenship**

There is an emerging international consensus on the core characteristics of good governance, especially in relation to formal government. These characteristics include democracy, the rule of law, accountability, transparency, and participation by civil society.<sup>97</sup>

The main question to be asked in a world that requires mature responses previously unexperienced in the history of humanity is, why are institutions, especially of governance, not firmly committed to the principle of 'justice'? Without justice how is it possible to release the potentialities inherent in the peoples of the world for their well-being and the betterment of society? With this in mind, one cannot separate good citizenship from good governance.

A rapidly maturing human race requires: ... of those in authority to win the confidence, respect, and genuine support of those whose actions they seek to govern; to consult openly and to the fullest extent possible with all whose interests are affected by decisions being arrived at; to assess in an objective manner both the real needs and the aspirations of

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96 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 36

97 Baha'i International Community, 1998 Feb 18, *Valuing Spirituality in Development*

the communities they serve; to benefit from scientific and moral advancement in order to make appropriate use of the community's resources, including the energies of its members. No single principle of effective authority is so important as giving priority to building and maintaining unity among the members of a society and the members of its administrative institutions.<sup>98</sup>

A culture, 'democratic in spirit and method'<sup>99</sup> is essential. However, '...the ideology of partisanship that has everywhere boldly assumed democracy's name...'<sup>100</sup> is not, even though it has accomplished much in the past. Democracy now finds itself '...mired in... cynicism, apathy, and corruption...'<sup>101</sup> creating an atmosphere that militates against good citizenship. Education of all peoples in the election process, to be able to discriminate between those standing for office who are committed to serving, not just the interests of their own tribe, locality, or nation, but the whole of humanity is essential. Only when such leaders are elected will it become possible to integrate the diversity of humanity for its well-being.

In effect this education is an inherent part of transforming to the stage of becoming world citizens. Much like each cell and organ of the human body works in cooperation and reciprocity for its health, so too will the elected governors of society eventually consider themselves responsible for the welfare of all peoples not just their own constituents. In a counsel to Queen Victoria Bahá'u'lláh directs the governors of humanity: O ye the elected representatives of the people in

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98 Baha'i International Community, 1995 Mar 03, The Prosperity of Humankind

99 ibid

100 ibid

101 ibid

every land! Take ye counsel together, and let your concern be only for that which profiteth mankind and bettereth the condition thereof, if ye be of them that scan heedfully.<sup>102</sup>

## **Liberty & Citizenship**

The increased liberty of the mass of humanity is a relatively modern experience. History records various ways that the masses were subjugated, their freedom curtailed by slavery, serfdom, and the like. Liberty, throughout the ages, or the lack of it, has always been linked with some system of governance which, for the most part, has been the lot of kings. Brian Lepard, Professor of Law at Nebraska University, notes: Passages from almost all the scriptures condemn despotism and impose duties on leaders to behave fairly and with justice towards the people over whom they exercise leadership. These passages insist that leaders must act as trustees of God or some higher moral authority for the benefit of their people and not pursue their own selfish interests.<sup>103</sup>

Bahá'u'lláh, as God's latest Manifestation, has revealed many counsels and directives on liberty and governance that are essential for the development of good citizenship. It is impossible in these few pages to cover all His works on this subject; however, a few pertinent points will be mentioned. True liberty revolves around knowing what will help or harm the individual and the community. As this is such a far-reaching concern it requires the guidance from our Maker, Who knows perfectly well how humanity should function. After all, He did make us. Bahá'u'lláh notes: Consider the pettiness of men's minds. They ask for that which injureth them and cast away the thing that profiteth them. They are, indeed, of those that are far astray. We find

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102 Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 90

103 Brian D Lepard. *Hope for a Global Ethic*

some men desiring liberty and priding themselves therein. Such men are in the depths of ignorance.<sup>104</sup>

One of the laws of Bahá'u'lláh, along with Muhammad, is that drinking of alcohol is forbidden. It is common knowledge that alcohol, a deadly poison, in many ways injures the lives of millions of individuals and thousands of communities. The list of its injurious effects is extensive, ranging from children and women who are abused by drunk or alcoholic men, to a substantial drain on the economy of every country. Yet people who are disconnected from the admonitions of Muhammad and Bahá'u'lláh consider it an imposition on their freedom that alcohol is interdicted. Good citizenship is seriously damaged when alcohol is on the scene.

Increasingly the masses are demanding the freedom to do whatever they want and those who are more discerning add 'as long as no one is harmed.' Such people, however, are ignorant of what unrestrained liberty leads to. Bahá'u'lláh warns: Liberty must, in the end, lead to sedition, whose flames none can quench. Thus, warneth you He Who is the Reckoner, the All-Knowing. Know ye that the embodiment of liberty and its symbol is the animal. That which beseemeth man is submission unto such restraints as will protect him from his own ignorance, and guard him against the harm of the mischief-maker. Liberty causeth man to overstep the bounds of propriety, and to infringe on the dignity of his station. It debaseth him to the level of extreme depravity and wickedness.<sup>105</sup>

As stated at the beginning of this paper, the overall aim of every Manifestation of God is the transformation of humanity's character. This should not just be understood as

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104 Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, p. 63

105 *ibid*

moving from badness to goodness. No, the implications of transformation are mysterious to say the least. A few insights related to personal potential when transformation occurs are beginning to surface, such as: An ongoing sense of well-being and happiness is experienced, intellectual capacity beyond natal capacity is greatly increased, creativity flourishes, relationships avoid superficiality and become deeper. All these benefits are not gathered by those who do not submit to the laws and ordinances of the Manifestations of God. Bahá'u'lláh declares: The liberty that profiteth you is to be found nowhere except in complete servitude unto God, the Eternal Truth. Whoso hath tasted of its sweetness will refuse to barter it for all the dominion of earth and heaven.<sup>106</sup>

How can good, moral citizenship grow and be influential, especially to ongoing generations, if there is a hollowness in the heart that is bereft of the benefits of transformation? Such citizens, mostly unconscious of the negative effect on themselves and the community, are immersed in materialism, which prioritises material needs and wants over spiritual development. Unfortunately, the leaders in society, those who are in authority for the most part, whether political, religious, academic and the like, have not understood the influential role they have in society in attracting humanity to the counsels of Bahá'u'lláh, the Manifestation of God for this day. Bahá'u'lláh writes: If the learned and worldly-wise men of this age were to allow mankind to inhale the fragrance of fellowship and love, every understanding heart would apprehend the meaning of true liberty and discover the secret of undisturbed peace and absolute composure.<sup>107</sup>

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106 *ibid.* p. 64

107 Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 162

## **Conclusion**

Good citizenship produces, at a basic level, law-abiding individuals. However, this is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve when those in authority do not provide an example of morality and the upholding of justice as a principle underpinning the creation of unity in the community whether local, national, or international.

Another challenge to good citizenship is that all the lesser loyalties to nation, language, culture, and the like, that are prioritised over the needs of a world shrunk to a 'global village', is a major factor in civil unrest and aggression. Love of humanity and the equitable reorganisation of human affairs for the well-being and progress of the entire human race is essential for the application of justice. Peoples and communities of all nations are becoming increasingly ungovernable as they experience injustices and the inadequacies and dire consequences of their own limited world views/mind-set at a time when total transformation for its survival is needed.

Bahá'u'lláh's principle of the 'oneness of mankind' can be understood as the catalyst that is disturbing the lamentably defective existing order. Not only do individuals have to be committed to 'oneness' and universal justice as an aspect of transformation of character but also the community along with society's institutions. The goal is to become 'world citizens'. For such a fundamental change in thinking and acting, the three protagonists in society – the individual, the community, and institutions - would benefit from the insights and guidance of Bahá'u'lláh as God's latest Manifestation. His counsels re-energise/renew the eternal verities expressed by all of God's Chosen Ones, empowering commitment to moral and ethical development necessary for good citizenship. Progressive revelation not only pertains to the renewal of the

spirit of transformation but also to meet the needs of a changed world, a world that must now unite or perish. It is the method, Bahá'u'lláh states, God uses to '...carry forward an ever-advancing civilization'<sup>108</sup>

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108 Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 129

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# **How a person's faith or morality may shape their conduct to be good citizens in society**

## **Lord Singh of Wimbledon and Hardeep Singh**

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### **Summary**

This contribution aims to tackle the question posed at the interfaith conference organised by the Onyx link foundation on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019 in Newport, Wales. It is our intention to develop on the themes explored within the initial presentation given by our Deputy-Director (Hardeep Singh) on the relevance of Sikh teaching in today's multicultural society and how these values align with 'good citizenship'.

We will explore the role of religion in society more widely, particularly in how we should be helping our children become responsible citizens in a fast-changing world. In a society dominated by social media and 'screen time' in its various guises, millennials are growing up in an environment with a different set of opportunities and challenges as compared to previous generations – this must be considered.

The question in hand, '*how a person's faith or morality may shape their conduct to be good citizens in society*', is an important one and one which must take into consideration the social and technological changes in our time. Interfaith groups must grasp the nettle of having difficult conversations.

We will reflect on these elements whilst discussing the relevance of Sikh teachings in today's multicultural and multifaith society.

## **Introduction**

In the Sikh view, education is all about preparing our children to make a positive contribution to the well-being of the world around. While we rightly teach our children to be literate and numerate, we seem to place less emphasis on other equally important aspects which are the essence of religion, namely right wrong and responsibility.

Sikhism promotes the equality of all of humanity and rejects the notion that one group is inferior or superior to another. There is no concept of 'chosen' people in Sikhism. The question is how we inculcate these teachings and promote equality for all of our future generations as part of their moral framework as responsible citizens, but also being true to their faith. The answer lies in how we educate our children and future generations about these egalitarian teachings, and develop this beyond mere words, but actions.

Many believe that this responsibility lies with parents; others assume it lies with the school. In the Sikh view it's the responsibility of both parents and teachers to help children to grow up to be considerate and responsible members of society. Unfortunately, it sometimes slips between the two, and children are left to develop their own sense of right and wrong, guided by TV to soaps and so-called comedies, in which infidelity is seen as something of a giggle, that ignores the hurt that transient, adult relationships, can cause to children.

A simple glance at continually escalating crime or family breakdown, or a glance at the record of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in

which more people were killed by their fellow humans than in the rest of recorded history put together, reminds us that we have a long way to go in learning to live with each other in a responsible way. And the first few years of this century haven't been much better.

Until very recent times, we could all grow up in the comfort and security of a religion that we shared with those that lived around us. It was common and patriotic (it still is for some), to go into raptures about *our* way of life compared with the inferior ways of foreigners. Many believed that even God acknowledged our natural superiority and was always on our side. And schools, in the teaching of literature and history often contributed to the promotion of false ideas of superiority and difference.

Remember the famous words of John of Gaunt in Shakespeare's *Richard II*, which we learnt at school.

*This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,  
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
This other Eden, demi-paradise,  
This fortress built by nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war*

*This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea  
Which serves it in the office of a wall  
Or a moat defensive to a house  
Against the envy of less happier lands  
And more!*

We learnt to criticise the literary style, the use of figurative language. We never thought to criticise the xenophobic insularity of its general sentiment. Nor did the possibility occur to us that other nations might have had different

explanations of God's purpose in isolating the British. It's important to understand that this sort of thinking was common to most nations and cultures. Many in India even argued that to leave the shores of the subcontinent would pollute them for ever.

In the past, we could strengthen our sense of cohesion and identity, including religious identity, by misrepresenting the ways and beliefs of others, or describing them in disparaging terms. Here in Britain, the dictionary definition of heathen is 'those who are not Christian, Jew or Muslim'. The words, 'kafir' and 'gentile' aren't dissimilar. The question is where would that leave adherents of Sikhism, Hinduism, Jainism or Buddhism? Interfaith groups must step up and open the discussion about this 'othering'. In places like Afghanistan and the tribal regions of Pakistan this 'othering' – has resulted in Sikhs and Hindus being murdered for their beliefs. They are seeking refuge in the West.<sup>109</sup> Christianity faces extinction in the Middle East<sup>110</sup>, and Muslims are persecuted in Burma<sup>111</sup> and China.<sup>112</sup>

There are of course difficult conversations to be held in the interfaith context. In today's age of social media virtue-signalling – it can be treacherous to grasp the nettle of these difficult subjects. In order for us to foster a more cohesive society, it is important to recognise how doctrinal interpretation can and is manipulated by religious zealots, weaponised, and used to harm fellow human beings in the name of God. Those who choose to call themselves 'faith

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109 <https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/sikh-and-hindu-refugees-fleeing-afghan-persecution-arrive-in-surrey>

110 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/02/persecution-driving-christians-out-of-middle-east-report>

111 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-41566561>

112 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-45474279>

leaders' have a moral responsibility to face up to this reality and take steps to urgently address it. They must stand up against those who peddle a hate filled narrative – and this is by no means an easy task. It takes courage to stand up to bullies.

Today, politicians and many religious leaders still talk about the three monotheistic faiths Christianity, Judaism and Islam, ignoring the fact that that Sikh scriptures, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, begin with the words 'there is but one God'. It is not only nations and world religions that behave with a reluctance to see the good in others. We all do it. A decade or so ago, our Director Lord Singh met someone from the Department for Education (DfE) who reminded him of his very first contribution to Radio 4's 'Thought for the Day' broadcast, some 20 years ago. At the time, he was working with a large civil engineering contractor in their London office, on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of an 8-storey building. The broadcast referred to was about our Director's end of day work experience whilst working as an engineer.

His role at the time was a 'home civil engineer' and above him in the hierarchy were 'international civil engineers' who saw themselves as superior group with stickers of Seychelles, Hong Kong or other exotic places on their briefcases. At the end of the day 'home civil engineers' would head to the lift and as the lift door opened, those inside, the superior people from the 8<sup>th</sup> floor, would stick their stomachs out a little to give the impression that the lift was fuller than it was. Undeterred, they would barge in, and the 8<sup>th</sup> floor stomachs would grudgingly recede. We were now all civil engineers, working for the same company.

When the lift reached the floors below inhabited by the lowest of the low, the Department of Health and Social Security, those in the lift would mutter 'cripples, why can't they walk down a

few flights of stairs?’ As the lift door opened, both sets of engineers would stick out our stomachs to deter this lower form of life entering *their* lift.

Undeterred, these civil servants and bureaucrats, who did nothing but drink tea all day long, would get into the lift. Grudgingly, they would all pull back our stomachs and we all went down to the ground floor, where we got out, all differences forgotten, until the next day.

In Britain today, we see the same sort of behaviour when we get on a train, or a bus. Those inside become ‘us’, and like the Poles and other newcomers to the European Union (EU), look on those outside, in a less than friendly way. Some of these attitudes and behaviours became more apparent in the run up and after the Brexit referendum vote, leading to unpleasant incidents and hatred towards the ‘other’. An example which stands out, is the case of a Muslim doctor Dr M. Ali Abbasi who tweeted about a Sikh colleague who in an incident of post-Brexit xenophobia – ‘Last night a Sikh radiographer colleague of mine was told by a patient "shouldn't you be on a plane back to Pakistan? we voted you out".<sup>113</sup> The latter highlights an egregious combination of hatred and ignorance. In another case in which cards with the words ‘Leave the EU, no more Polish vermin’ had been posted through the letter boxes of Polish families and distributed outside primary schools in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire.<sup>114</sup>

These examples illustrate how ‘othering’, and the choice to focus on differences rather than our common and shared humanity, has consequences to the social fabric of society and demonstrates how it erodes social cohesion. Be it the polarisation over whether or not you believe in Brexit or not,

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113 <https://twitter.com/drmaliabbasi/status/746987198914887680>

114 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-36656348>

hate crime towards minority groups, violent extremism - the worst manifestation of which we saw in terror attacks like New Zealand<sup>115</sup> and the Manchester Arena bombing<sup>116</sup>, escalating knife crime and family breakdown, as well as a lack of compassion to those less fortunate than us in society – we must all acknowledge values and beliefs drive behaviours. It goes without saying that ‘good’ citizenship based on adherence to the law of the land, along with positive civic engagement is important, as is adherence to our respective faith traditions.

Citizenship can help an individual understand and respect the norms of society and thus enhance his or her opportunities in life. Skills in citizenship, often help an individual's material progress and standing in society. The teachings of our great religious leaders on the other hand, frequently challenge social norms. However, religious teachings have nothing to do with conformity, or, equally importantly, individual or material advancement. They are about improvement of society as a whole. Religion takes us away from obsession with self, to active concern for others.

It is here, that religion and Sikhism as an example helps address these societal challenges. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism famously said, ‘there is no Hindu, there is no Muslim’,<sup>117</sup> pointing to the common humanity of mankind and that God is not interested in our different labels, but in our morals and behaviours and how we treat others including the less fortunate in society. Religion bases its teachings on what it sees as fundamental truths that unlike the law of the land do not change with time and place. It goes without saying that

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115 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-47578798>

116 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/manchester-arena-explosion>

117 <http://pluralism.org/religions/sikhism/introduction-to-sikhism/guru-nanak/>

our values and beliefs give us a moral compass and help us make important judgements in our day to day living – these core values influence everyday decisions and interactions with others in society – our neighbours, our employers, our family, or the average person on the street.

This extends to our responsibility as citizens of democracy – so from a faith perspective, perhaps, we should honestly ask ourselves if teachings of our faith traditions are consistent with say equality for women, and respect for those of beliefs other than our own. Does our faith help address societal inequalities like encouraging us to look after the sick, help the environment, the hungry and impoverished?

Sikhism has a principle of *daswand*, which mean a proportion of a Sikh's earnings go to charitable causes (not dissimilar to tithing), and we have the institution of *langar* or free kitchen where anyone of any background is able to get a free vegetarian meal entirely prepared by volunteers in a gurdwara anywhere in the world. Thanks to Michael Palin's travelogue *Himalayan*<sup>118</sup> it was fascinating to learn that the kitchen at one of Sikhism's most significant shrines the Golden Temple in Amritsar or *Harmandir Sahib*, produces about 50,000 meals each weekday with double that on weekends. It is also encouraging to see Sikhs around the world taking part in a scheme to plant a million new trees as a 'gift to the entire planet'<sup>119</sup> to help reverse environmental decline as part of the celebrations marking 550 years since the birth of Guru Nanak.

In the *Japji* prayer Guru Nanak says: 'Air the guru; Water, the father; and Earth, the great mother.' Honor all of life, he

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118 <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0379115/>

119 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/05/sikhs-sikhism-guru-nanak-550-anniversary-tree-planting>

reminds us, for life honors us with its gifts. Sikhism teaches us that we have a responsibility to care for not only the environment – but also the less fortunate and stressed the importance of supporting our fellow human beings. Khalsa Aid, a Sikh charity based in the UK which marks its 20th anniversary this year, has recently been helping victims of ISIS in Syria, as well as Rohingya refugees fleeing Burma. This is faith in action. However, we must constantly question whether we are truly living values in accordance with our faith – rather than paying mere lip service to foundational principles, and thereby acting as hypocrites, who selectively promote sanctimonious claptrap when it suits us – or when people are watching, and it’s convenient for our public profile.

The search for unity at the expense of others, in a milder form is seen with conflict between rival football supporters, but all too easily, it can lead to active hatred of whole communities. A constant reminder of this descent to evil, is Auschwitz in Poland, where Jews were blamed for all the ills in Europe and murdered. In 1984, the then Indian government committed a genocide of Sikhs across India, including the Delhi anti-Sikh pogroms or Sikh Kristallnacht,<sup>120</sup> where tyres were put around children and they were set on fire with gasoline, husbands, sons, and fathers hacked to death, and their wives, sisters and daughters raped on mass in front of them. Thirty-five years on there has been little justice for the victims and their families, and to this day there remains a ‘widow’s colony’ in Delhi. The sobering conclusion is that our human family has only a thin veneer of civilisation that differentiates us from those we call savages; a veneer that is all too easily shed at times when we are persuaded to see others as lesser beings.

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120 <http://nsouk.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/kristallnacht.pdf>

Goulding in his book 'Lord of the Flies', about a group of children marooned on a remote island, puts forward a thesis that without moral and ethical guidance, children, and by implication, adults, gravitate to less civilised behaviour. It is a disturbing view that unfortunately, has the ring of truth.

It's not only so on fictional islands, or other countries. We see such behaviour in this country, in for example, the murder of an old lady for the few coins in her handbag, or in the recent murders of teenagers in London and Manchester and in appalling crimes against children. There was also the murder of a father on a train over a dispute in a carriage in a train going from Guildford to London.

The reality of human nature, and the evidence is all around us, is that we humans do not come with preloaded software of right, wrong and responsibility. Decent responsible behavior has to be taught and learnt. We cannot have a better society without better people. We cannot have better people without responsible teaching. The question is, who should do the teaching?

It is important to differentiate between two levels of behaviour. The first is behaviour that keeps us out of trouble. For the small child it's not throwing food about, or not kicking aunts and uncles in the shins. For adults it's being reasonably polite to those around us and complying with those in authority and the rules and laws of society.

Is religion necessary for teaching behaviour at this level? Of course not. No more than it's necessary to involve religion in teaching a dog to stand on its hind legs, or a dolphin to perform tricks. Sanction or reward are sufficient motivators in themselves. In many ways, the teaching of citizenship to help children understand and appreciate the society in which they live, falls into this category. It's important for children to

learn about national institutions, democracy, the media, ethnic identity and the consequences of bullying and racism. These teachings of citizenship, or conforming behaviour, are not however the same as the teachings of religion.

Conforming behaviour, or the social norms of society are constantly changing. For example, unlike the law in this country, the law of the land in France prohibits the wearing of the hijab for Muslim girls and the turban for Sikh boys, in state schools. Citizenship education in French schools would support such a policy. The reality, however, is that the prohibition is bound to harm integration, and hurt self-esteem by forcing children to have one identity at school and another at home. State policy in France is at odds with both common sense and the ethical imperative for its citizens to understand and respect different ways of life. It is a policy that has rightly been condemned by the Catholic Church, and others.

There was a time in Britain in the 60's, where accommodation ads in shop windows often had the words 'no blacks or coloureds', perfectly legal at the time. Citizenship teaching at the time would not have criticised such behaviour.

It is reassuring to believe the changes brought about since then, were all due to enlightened thinking but studying the literature of the time, it is apparent that it was more a fear of social unrest that led to anti-discriminatory legislation.

Guru Nanak the founder of the Sikh faith, taught, where self exists there is no God, where God exists there is no self. Or as a Christian theologian put it, it's the 'I' in the middle of 'sin', that makes it sin. Religion then, is fundamentally different from civics or citizenship in that far from conforming, it has its own standards and frequently challenges existing social norms in looking to deeper universal truths.

Let's look then at how we can make ours a more cohesive and caring society. Voluntary effort and increasingly government and other statutory effort are becoming more alert to social ills in our society. But in focussing on problems, rather than more holistically on causes, we sometime tend to look through the wrong end of the telescope and seek to treat spots and sores of social maladies, rather than look further to underlying causes.

To illustrate with examples. If problems resulting from drug abuse take up too much police time, the call is legalising their use and free police time, rather than question why the use of drugs has risen so dramatically. The huge rise in child and teenage pregnancies is met with a call to issue condoms in schools. Surprise, surprise, the rise in teenage pregnancies has increased almost in direct proportion to contraceptive education. Increasing alcohol abuse? Let's extend or abolish licensing hours to spread the incidence of drunken or loutish behaviour. Result a rise in binge drinking. Too many people ending up in prison? Let's build more prisons. Extend this thinking, of looking to the wrong end of a problem, to the behaviour of little junior who greets visitors to the house by kicking them in the shins. Solution: issue said visitors with shin pads as they enter the front door!

The reality is, today's society is one that seeks happiness in consumer goods, drink or drugs or in pampering ourselves 'because we're worth it' or making money through exporting the means of killing to distant lands in the name of a defence industry, clearly needs a bit of ethical uplift. Taking examples from Sikh teachings, which may well have resonance with other faiths – we see other religions as different paths to a truer understanding of God; like paths up a mountain. We can start from different points, but still reach the same goal. Nor are the paths mutually exclusive. They frequently merge in

ways that give us a heightened understanding of our own faith.

Take for example the Sikh teaching 'There is an inner-light in all; and that light is God.' Exactly the same sentiment is conveyed in the line of the Christian hymn 'to all life Thou givest, to both great and small; in all life thou livest the true life of all'. It is important to remember that that a major benefit of our study of other religions is that it gives us a wider view of religion and a new and fuller perspective on our own beliefs. We learn that different religions are not barriers between people, but gateways to a greater understanding and enrichment of life.

Far from accepting the status quo on social practices, Guru Nanak was boldly critical of divisive practices such as the caste system or superstitious, dietary customs, and taboos on eating with, or socialising with those of other faiths. He and his successor Gurus taught the oneness of our human family and in this, emphasised the dignity and complete equality of women, teachings wholly at odds with the practices of the day.

Religion puts today's obsession with the material in balanced perspective. Guru Nanak did not condemn material comfort but taught the importance of a life of balance between the material and the spiritual dimensions of life. There is the story Dunning Chand, a rich merchant who used to put another flag outside his house every time he made a million rupees. And there were lots and lots of flags outside his house. He went to Guru Nanak and said, 'I've made it in this world, will you help me get the same sort of success in the hereafter?' Guru Nanak said that's easy, take this needle with you when you die. It will guarantee your passage to heaven. Dunning Chand rushed home excitedly to his wife and told her about the needle. She laughed aloud and said how can you take

anything with you when you die? And then the penny dropped, and the foolish miser began giving away his wealth to the poor.

Another story illustrates the foolishness of the opposite extreme. Guru Nanak once met some hermits who had left their homes and were now living in the mountain wilderness in search of a greater understanding of God. They asked the Guru, 'how goes the world below? Guru Nanak was angry in his reply and said the world is suffering and how can it be otherwise when those with knowledge and understanding desert it in such a selfish way. The Guru reminded them of the importance of meeting our social obligations, including the need to stand up against injustice.

Today there's not much wilderness left, but it is all too easy to spend our life in a virtual wilderness, surfing the internet for hours on end, or in front of television, or, in other pursuits that leave us little time for those around us. Herein lies the concern for millennials within the social media framework – this is today's wilderness, and a form of escapism, which in large quantities, can remove us from nurturing parents and developing positive and loving relationships with our friends and families. If we are to inculcate values of good citizenship and faith – 'screen time' is an obstacle in our path to responsible parenting, and we must be cognisant of the pitfalls of addictions beyond merely drugs and alcohol. How we overcome these modern issues, is important when navigating through the challenge of teaching and passing wisdom to our future generations, and further our aim in teaching responsible living.

Religion reminds us of the need for balance in life. Sikhism, for example, requires us to live in three dimensions at one and the same time. *Naam japna*, *kirt karna* and *wand chakhna*. *Naam japna* is meditating on God or reflecting on our

direction in life in a way that allows us to distinguish between the trivial, which so often obsesses us, and the real priorities of life. *Kirt karna* is earning by honest effort, and *wand chakhna* is the sharing of our good fortune with the needy, a common and important teaching of all our great religions.

## **Conclusion**

On a concluding note, we should continue to emphasise that one of the greatest gains in our study of the actual teachings of our different religions, is the discovery that they are not all that different. Our different religions are in essence, overlapping circles of belief and ethical guidance, in which the area of overlap is far greater than the smaller areas of difference. Sikhs believe that in that area of overlap lie common values of tolerance, justice, and compassion.

These are values that make us more considerate and responsible human beings; Values that should be the essence of both British identity and wider human aspiration; values central to our different religions that are the key to both to personal happiness, and the wellbeing of wider society.

## **<sup>121</sup>Faith & Citizenship: A Sikh Perspective**

### **Cllr Neeta Baicher**

Works independently and serves as a Justice of Peace, Community Councillor and Vice Chair of Newport Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) for a number of years and former chair of Monmouth SACRE.

Thank you for your kind invitation.

We are living in interesting times; and it is progressively becoming acceptable to talk about faith and citizenship. Interfaith helps to maintain cordial relationships, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence for all mankind.

### **Faith**

Being a follower of Guru Nanak - the first Guru of the Sikhs - and his teachings, it is incompetent on me not to distinguish or recognise the caste system that was epidemic during the time of the first and later Gurus. For all of them, Idol worship, rituals, or superstitions were considered ineffective and treated with disdain in the belief of one supreme lord and the Master *Wahe Guru*: Almighty God. In fact, the first words of the holy scriptures of the Sikhs, the Guru Granth Sahib starts with: One Almighty God. Nanak believed in practical living and rendering service to humanity and rendering humility and tolerance towards all. Sikhs have a duty at the risk of their own lives to save others from danger and oppression and to stand for their own beliefs.

As Sikh's of Guru Nanak, and a follower of the nine Gurus of the Sikhs who succeeded him, we support people of all faiths. We stand alongside with every human's right to be safe, to live

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<sup>121</sup> A Video Message to the Conference

in grace and dignity, and to worship regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or religious affirmations. The Sikh community has made its presence and contributions globally. Sikhs have contributed and will continue to work towards equality in each of the countries they call home.

## **Citizenship**

Although early migration of the British dates back to 1900, they migrated in large numbers to the UK in the 50's and 60's from Punjab, Northwest State of India and from East Africa in 1972.

Maharajah Duleep Singh was the last ruler of the Sikh kingdom of Punjab. He was dethroned and exiled to Britain after the Anglo Sikh war. His daughter, Sophia Duleep Singh became a prominent suffragette and pioneer of women's rights, demonstrating importance of Sikh beliefs and wider citizenship.

The first Sikh gurdwara was established in Putney and later moved to Shepherds Bush in London in 1930. In 1990, migrants from Afghanistan came to UK after persecutions in their home country and very quickly contributed to the economy of Great Britain. More recently, Sikh's in UK have shown immense courage and citizenship by starting a charity called Khalsa Aid. Volunteers from the charity have demonstrated significant impact on the various manmade and natural disasters in helping displace people of Myanmar and people caught in Syria war; just to name a few. Khalsa Aid is now recognised as an international aid agency. Much has been elaborated by Mr Singh in his presentation.

## **Interfaith values and Sikh education in schools**

As a SACRE member for several years, it is my experience that teaching of interfaith values and citizenship in school, is very important. It encourages lateral thinking among all our youth and lays the foundation for future based on shared experiences of culture, religion, and challenges in life for betterment of society. It encourages to be better informed about the world around you. Follow rules, laws and respect the rights and the property of others.

## **Fundamental and new principles of the Sikh faith**

The main founding principles are: Naam Japo, Kirat Karō, Vaṇḍ Chakkō, literal translation: Pray to the all-mighty God; Do good and honest deeds for work, earning, and progress; Share your earnings with the helpless and the hapless. Principles imbedded: Sikh means disciples or teacher; Equality of all human beings; Do selfless service to the communities; Strive for justice, prosperity of all; Honest living and honest working; Charity and sharing with the less fortunate; Respect for all faiths and preach love and the service to all humanity.

# **Introducing Hinduism in the context of moral values and good citizenship**

**Dr Sibani Roy**

Dr Roy is the Founder/Chair of Networking for World's Awareness of Multicultural Integration. She is the Hindu Chaplain at Bangor University and is associated with Inter-Faith groups in Bangor, Wrexham, and Berwyn Prison

## **Introduction**

In today's socio-political situation of hatred, intolerance, and law disobedience, we are constantly asking questions about why there is this insurgence of a world-wide wave of violence and what can we do to bring peace and harmony in this society, particularly how could we direct the younger generations onto the correct path of following moral values and becoming good citizens. I am proud to say that Hinduism has answers to those questions.

Hinduism is practiced by the majority of Indians and neighbouring small country Nepal. In fact, Hinduism is the state religion of Nepal whereas India is a secular state.

Hinduism is said to be the world's oldest religion without a founder. The date of its origin is unknown; however, according to many historians, it could have been originated over 5 thousand years ago. Hinduism is revealed knowledge to seers, which has been orally passed down through generations and eventually recorded. Therefore, it can be argued that Hinduism is more of a philosophy and a way of life than a religion. The oldest scriptures are called Vedas, which suggests a commitment to, or respect for, an ideal way of life known as Dharma. Hindu Dharma, otherwise known as Sanatan (Eternal) Dharma, clearly defines the conducts and

duties of a person and directs one to lead a virtuous and ethical life, which is doing one's duty to the family, the community, the country, and the environment. In effect it includes everything that is essential in life, as well as a way to bring the world of humans and nature to exist and prosper together in harmony.

A Hindu believes in following his/her moral obligations to the family, community and the whole of society and respecting all creatures (Atman) and the environment, as everything is created by one creator (Brahman).

Another tenet of Hinduism is Karma or deeds and the effects of karma in one's life. *'As you sow, so you reap'*. As Hindus believe in rebirth, the effect of karma becomes the deciding factor in how one will be reborn in the next birth. That is another reason why a Hindu intends to lead a virtuous life and ultimately to become a good citizen.

Hinduism is ancient and its teaching (through Scriptures) is vast. It would take one's whole life to fully acquaint oneself with Hindu thought and philosophy. However, I am making an honest and bold effort to introduce the teachings of our Scriptures and how they have been influencing Hindu lives from ancient times till today. I am very pleased to admit that even today, the majority of Hindus have been successfully maintaining the teachings of moral values as prescribed in Scriptures, ultimately making them good citizens in their countries and wherever they live.

### **What the Scriptures say**

Hindu philosophy originates from the Vedic philosophy said to be Divine knowledge revealed by God to Rishis (Sages) with detailed guidance to the followers to lead righteous life. This, in effect, constitutes Hindu Customs which are being

observed in the Household of the Majority of Hindus in their homelands and in their host countries where they immigrate to. The Vedic Tradition is a complete philosophy for the foundation and direction for one's existence. The Vedic path consists of ten general rules of moral conduct. There are five for inner purity, called the *yamas*, which include *satya* or truthfulness, *ahimsa* or non-injury to others and treating all beings with respect, *asteya* or no cheating or stealing, *brahmacharya* or celibacy, and *aparighara* or no unnecessarily selfish accumulation of resources for one's own purpose.

The five rules of conduct for external purification are the *niyamas* - such as *shaucha* or cleanliness and purity of mind and body, *tapas* or austerity and perseverance, *swadhyaya* or study of the *Vedas* and self-analysis, and *santosh* or contentment, as well as *Ishwara-pranidhana*, or acceptance of the Supreme.

There are also ten qualities that are the basis of dharmic (righteous) life. These are dhriti (firmness or fortitude), kshama (forgiveness), dama (self-control), asteya (refraining from stealing or dishonesty), shauch (purity), indriya nigraha (control over the senses), dhih (intellect), vidya (knowledge), satyam (truth) and akrodhah (absence of anger).

It also clearly explains duties of individuals through four stages of life. In a Hindu life there are four main goals, as indicated by the four ashramas of life, such as *brahmacharya* (the student's life), the *grihasta* or the householder stage of life, the *vanaprastha* or retired stage of life in which we take our spiritual goals more seriously, and then the renounced or *sannyasa* stage of life in which our spiritual purpose is the main focus.

Amongst these stages we focus first on *Dharma*, which is to develop ourselves morally and spiritually; then *Artha*, which is to develop a career or trade and prosper materially; then *Kama*, to enjoy and work out our basic material desires as is appropriate for our particular stage of life; and then retire from all that and focus on *Moksha*. These four goals are collectively known as *chaturvarga*.

The fourth goal parallels the fourth stage of life, representing the end to which all Hindu life aspires. An important idea that developed in classical Hinduism is that dharma refers especially to a person's responsibility regarding class (*varna*) and stage of life (*ashrama*). This is called *varnashramadharma*. In Hindu history the highest class, the Brahmins, adhered to this doctrine. The class system is a model or ideal of social order that first occurs in the oldest Hindu text, the Rig Veda and the present-day caste (jati) system may be rooted in this. The four classes are: *Brahmans* or *Brahmins* - the intellectuals and the priestly class who perform religious rituals, *Kshatriya* (nobles or warriors) - who traditionally had power, *Vaishyas* (commoners or merchants) - ordinary people who produce, farm, trade and earn a living artists, musicians, and clerks *Shudras* (workers) - who traditionally served the higher classes.

People in the top three classes are known as 'twice born' because they have been born from the womb and secondly through initiation in which boys receive a sacred thread as a symbol of their high status. Although usually considered an initiation for males it must be noted that there are examples of exceptions to this rule, where females receive this initiation. The twice born traditionally could go through four stages of life or ashramas.

The ashrama system is as follows: *Brahmacarya* - 'celibate student' stage in which males learned the Veda *grihastha* -

'householder' in which the twice born male can experience the human purposes (purushartha) of responsibility, wealth, and sexual pleasure. *Vanaprastha* - 'hermit' or 'wilderness dweller' in which the twice born male retires from life in the world to take up pilgrimage and religious observances along with his wife. *Samnyasa* - 'renunciation' in which the twice born gives up the world, takes on a saffron robe or, in some sects, goes naked, with a bowl and a staff to seek *moksha* (liberation) or develop devotion.

Correct action in accordance with dharma is also understood as service to humanity and to God.

## Hindu Ethics

Ethics are explained in Hindu philosophy as something that cannot be imposed, but something that is realized and voluntarily lived up to by practicing Hindus. For example, the sacred text [Apastamba](#)<sup>122</sup> explained it thus: "virtue and vice do not go about saying - here we are!; neither the Gods, Gandharvas, nor ancestors can convince us - this is right, this is wrong; virtue is an elusive concept, it demands careful and sustained reflection by every man and woman before it can become part of one's life".

Ethics that constitute a *dharmic* life - that is a moral, ethical, virtuous life - evolve in [vedas](#) and [upanishads](#). Ethical subjects and questions are debated by various schools of Hinduism, quite extensively, in numerous texts on what right conduct is, when, how and why. Over time, new virtues were

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<sup>122</sup> Āpastamba Dharmasūtra is a Sanskrit text and one of the oldest Dharma-related texts of Hinduism that have survived into the modern age from the 1st-millennium BCE, see: Patrick Olivelle (2006). *Between the Empires: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE*. Oxford University Press, p. 178 with note 28.

conceptualized and added by ancient Hindu scholars, some replaced, others merged. For example, [Manusamhita](#) initially listed ten virtues necessary for a human being to live a *dharmic* life: Dhriti (courage), Kshama (forgiveness), Dama (temperance), Asteya (Non-covetousness/Non-stealing), Saucha (inner purity), Indriyani-graha (control of senses), dhi (reflective prudence), vidya (wisdom) satyam (truthfulness) and akrodha (freedom from anger).

In later verses, this list was reduced to five virtues by the same scholar, by merging and creating a broader concept. The shorter list of virtues became: Ahimsa (Non-violence), Dama (self-restraint), Asteya (Non-covetousness/Non-stealing), Saucha (inner purity) and Satyam (truthfulness).

The Persian historian [Al Biruni](#) who visited India and lived there for 16 years in the early 11th century, described the concept of ethics and virtuous behaviour among Hindus of his times. Of ethical mandates among Hindus, a literal translation of his Persian language manuscript includes (1) A man shall not kill; (2) nor lie; (3) nor steal; (4) nor whore; (5) nor hoard up treasures. These correspond to five [Yamas](#) of ancient Hindu ethics: [Ahimsa](#) (non-violence), [Satya](#) (truth, non-falsehood), [Asteya](#) (non-stealing), [Brahmacharya](#) (celibacy if unmarried and non-cheating on one's partner if married), and [Aparigraha](#) (non-possessiveness).

In addition to these five negative things to abstain from, Hindu ethics also recommends five positive things to strive for as [Niyamas](#): [Sauca](#) (purity in body, speech and mind), [Santosha](#) (contentment, acceptance of circumstances with optimism), [Tapas](#) (perseverance, meditation, austerity), [Swadhyaya](#) (lifelong learning) and [Pranidhan](#) (right attitude, contemplation). An ethical life in Hinduism is essential for a liberated life, one without craving, one that is content, attained through knowledge and by abstaining from evil.

## **A Hindu as a Citizen**

From the above illustration of the ethics and moral principles in the teachings of Hinduism, it is fair to conclude that a practicing Hindu is indeed a good citizen. Such a person would respect others, protect their property, and be helpful and considerate of their wellbeing. He would respect the views of others and share his/her views with them in good manners. Surely this person would extend this good interaction with nature and the environment and never damage it in anyway.

A practicing Hindu is a hard worker, well mannered, and always willing to learn. Hindu minorities are used to living under laws and patterns that are dictated by their wider societies, but just following those patterns does not make people good citizens. To be law abiding is the minimum requirement of citizenship, but to be a good person, one needs to have values, principles, and ethics that encourage virtues and wilful participation in the common good.

An important aspect of being a good citizen is to consider people as your own family. All around us, we can see there are people in need of our help. We should lend our helping hand not only to poor people but also pregnant women, elders, and sick people. Our small actions can make a big difference. If you have been blessed with a sound mind and body, it is your moral responsibility to be kind and helpful for children, the aged, the disabled and those who are less fortunate.

Another important requirement of a good citizen is to have an active participation in community. We can do this in many ways. When elections come, we can exercise our voting right and vote for the most deserving candidate. We may also participate in neighbourhood meetings for deciding about the

maintenance of the streets and other matters and put forth our point of view. Be proactive and take initiative when you see problems in your community. One good citizen can be an enormous force.

Volunteering is necessary for good community relations and for peaceful coexistence. One may volunteer to do good deeds such as tutoring at schools, visiting nursing homes, working at elections, helping disaster relief agencies, donating to hospitals, or cleaning up a park or nature reserve.

If you live in an area where neighbours do not know each other, start a new tradition. Have a block party or a get-together event. Get to know the name of your postman, garbage pick-up workers and show an interest in people you meet on a regular basis. As adults, we also have obligations to contribute to the society and make our corner of the world a better place.

To live in harmony, we should constantly be aware that other people have similar rights like we do. Respect is one of the most important bases when living in a society. We all have freedom, but it is restricted by the law and norms of the society. We cannot consider a killer or a thief a good citizen as they have violated that restriction.

Hinduism, as a way of life, has succeeded in refining the social conduct of people as well as their legal justice system. For example, *The Spirit of Hindu Law*<sup>123</sup> book is an introduction to traditional Hindu law and jurisprudence uses the Hindu moral principles and tradition as the spirit of law. This book emphasizes the principles of the household, the family, and everyday relationships as additional social sources of the law.

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<sup>123</sup> Donald R. Davis, Jr (2013): *The Spirit of Hindu Law*. Cambridge University Press.

It combines investigation of key themes from Sanskrit legal texts with discussion of Hindu theology and ethics, as well as thorough examination of broader comparative issues in law and religion.

### **Role of Women in Hindu Tradition**

Though Varnashrama is meant for male only, but women have a respectful place in the society as daughter, wife, mother, and a member in the community. Many women were well known for their knowledge and talents and made a mark in history. However, a young woman is known by her father's identity, a married woman by her husband's identity, and widows by their elder son's identity. Nevertheless, women followed prescribed roles and mutual respect and lead happy and content lives without feelings of being neglected or subdued. It has been the Hindu custom to have one wife, but if the wife could not produce an heir, the husband could take another wife with consent of his first wife and live together harmoniously.

### **Hinduism and Environment**

Hindus have respect for animals, plants, and all living beings as they are all creatures created by Brahman. Hindus also respect and protect the environment which is perceived as the provider and proctor of lives. It is also customary in Hinduism to keep the environment clean, as a Hindu believes in purity inner and outer.

### **Hinduism in today's social context**

From ancient to modern era, Hindus have been peace loving, law abiding people and followers of the customs prescribed in Scriptures. However, due to continuous change of socio-economical-political changes, a Hindu's life has to change. For

example, we cannot expect a female who is the only bread winner in the family to always portray a devoted wife's role or a full-time carer for elderly members in the family, so changes are happening.

## **Reformers**

Moreover, there have been reformers from time to time such as: B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956): Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, also known as Babasaheb Ambedkar, was an Indian jurist, economist, politician, and social reformer who inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement and campaigned against social discrimination towards the untouchables.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833): Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one of the founders of the Brahmo Sabha, the precursor of the Brahmo Samaj, a social-religious reform movement in the Indian subcontinent. He was given the title of Raja by Akbar II, the Mughal emperor.

Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1836-1886) and his disciple Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902): Ramakrishna is considered an important figure in the Bengali Renaissance of 19th–20th century. Several organisations have been established in his name. The Ramakrishna Math and Mission is the main organisation founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1897. The Mission conducts extensive work in healthcare, disaster relief, rural management, tribal welfare, elementary and higher education. The movement is considered as one of the revitalisation movements of India. Amiya Sen writes that Vivekananda's "social service gospel" stemmed from direct inspiration from Ramakrishna and rests substantially on the "liminal quality" of the master's message.

Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884) was an Indian Bengali philosopher and social reformer. Born a Hindu, he became a

member of the Brahmo Samaj in 1856 but founded his own breakaway "Brahmo Samaj of India" in 1866 while the Brahmo Samaj remained under the leadership of Debendranath Tagore. He also modified Hindu custom befitting for change of time also to eliminate some ill practices developed during Medieval period like Satidafha (burning a widow alive so the devoted widow can join her departed husband).

### **Government of India as a Reformer**

Besides individual reformers Indian Government itself has taken active roles in reforming Hinduism for example abolishing the caste system and dowry system soon after Independence from British rule. These practices still exist in Hindu society, though the Government of India officially abolished them, but it might take centuries or several generations to abolish them from society.

### **Common myths about Hinduism**

It is a common belief in Western Society that all Hindus are vegetarians/vegans and do not drink alcohol. No, Hindus can be both vegetarian and non-vegetarians and can drink alcohol if they choose to. However, Hindus do not eat beef as cows are said to be sacred animals.

### **Conclusion**

Hinduism is also more correctly called by its Sanskrit name: Sanatana-Dharma. This, essentially, means to follow one's eternal duty, which is to search for and understand one's spiritual identity, and then to learn to live according to those eternal and spiritual characteristics, especially by one's own spiritual realizations. This is also the purpose and mission of

the Vedic philosophy and culture, and a Hindu's ultimate duty in human life.

Hinduism can best be defined as a way of life based on the teachings of ancient sages and scriptures, such as the [Vedas and Upanishads](#) (Vedanta or end of Vedas). Main tenets of a Hindu life is following Dharma which is behaviours that are considered to be in accord with cosmic law and order, the order that makes life and universe possible, and includes duties, rights, laws, conduct, virtues and right way of living. By following the rules of Dharma, one becomes a good offspring, a good scholar, a good husband, a son and above all a good law abiding, dutiful citizen.

From the above illustration of the ethics and moral principles in the teachings of Hinduism, it is fair to conclude that a practicing Hindu is indeed a good citizen. In other words, to be law abiding is the minimum requirement of citizenship, but to be a good person, one needs to have values, principles, and ethics that encourage virtues and wilful participation in the common good. The majority of Hindus, in today's world, have been successfully maintaining the teachings of moral values as prescribed in Scriptures, ultimately making them good citizens in their countries and wherever they live.

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## **A Buddhist perspective on Citizenship**

### **Ngakpa Samten and Naljorma Dri'mèd**

They are an ordained couple within the Aro gTér Lineage of Nyingma Buddhism and are trustees for the Aro gTér Charity 'Sang-ngak-chö-dzong'

*"Family environments which exemplify kindness, openness and an enthusiasm for life, are needed for there to be peace and harmony in the world. For these qualities to exist as examples for children, men and women need greater respect and appreciation for each other. The Aro gTér provides insight and methodology which are directly applicable to this need."*

Ngak'chang Rinpoche & Khandro Déchen, Lineage holders of the Aro gTér

This paper is written by an ordained practitioner-couple of the Aro gTér Lineage of Nyingma Tibetan Buddhism. Such practitioners do not renounce and withdraw from everyday life, but rather engage with it in all its diversity as citizens. This is not a modern view but is rooted in the original form of Buddhism brought to Tibet from India in the 9th century.

The aim of this non-celibate approach is to embrace life in all its complexity transforming difficulties into understanding and compassionate activity. The view of this Lineage is that everyone is beginninglessly enlightened.

### **What is citizenship**

Citizenship is a somewhat bulky and theoretical concept which has historically been quite changeable. The role of citizenship has never been fixed or static, but constantly changes within each society. As a bond, citizenship extends

beyond basic kinship ties to unite people of different ethnic and social backgrounds.

Currently this concept of citizenship needs to move beyond nations and groups as the interconnectedness of our social, economic, environmental communication systems require a much broader perspective of the term. Hence the birth of the Global Citizen.

Which could be defined thusly:

- A Global Citizen adopts an international perspective rooted in the values of tolerance and understanding and makes a positive contribution to society.
- A Global Citizen values and affirms the cultures of others, whilst appreciating and understanding their own. They can then understand their perspective in relation to the cultures, religions, and economic, social, and political conditions of other countries; enabling them to communicate and live harmoniously with those of different viewpoints and perspectives.
- A Global Citizen carries a sense of responsibility for others and for our planet.

### **Buddhist practice and citizenship**

The methods of Buddhism hold, as a core intention, the impetus to be kinder, more aware, and ready to take appropriate action, when needed, to benefit others. As such all Buddhist practices promote the values of being a Global Citizen outlined above.

The outer forms of Buddhism have always adapted in order to be relevant to the culture where it is practised. Otherwise, there could be the danger that its methods just become an

exotic pastime unable to bring its core values of 'Kindness and Awareness' into being.

This capacity to adapt, and the lack of a rigid dogma of definition, is why Buddhism is able to offer differing styles in each country in which it is practised. In this way, it is possibly unique in the manner in which it works with diverse methodologies. Buddhism is therefore able to exist in harmony with differing viewpoints and perspectives.

The non-monastic, non-celibate form of Buddhism translates well to the West in its emphasis on integration with daily life, careers, marriage, and families. It provides teachings on practice in every moment, romantic relationship, and the arts.

### **Citizenship starts with individuals**

From this perspective the concept of citizenship comes down to individuals and their relationships. This begins with one's relationship to oneself and from there, expands to family, community, and environment.

All forms of Buddhist practice start with getting to know oneself better in order to reveal habitual patterning and self-protective strategies. Practitioners learn how much the constant flow of thoughts, concepts, definitions, and emotions affect everyday interactions. They become transparent to themselves and discover a moment of choice between an emotional trigger and an emotional response. Once this space is discovered practitioners are no longer at the mercy of automatic responses and naturally become kinder human beings, discovering their true nature. This discovery shows there is a choice about how to interact with each other and how to engage with life circumstances. Conceptual definitions about character and personality, emotion,

personal interaction, lifestyle, style of dress, political opinion  
– no longer dictate actions.

This analysis and discovery mean that the egocentric view of the universe with others as peripheral entities dissolves. Understanding arises at a fundamental, experiential level that its existence is inseparable from the wellbeing of everyone and everything, everywhere. This view is expansive and enables practitioners to respond in a more open and creative manner to the challenges facing humankind.

### **Falling in love and healthy relationships**

Fortuitously everyone has the capability to experience one of the most expansive and uplifting states possible – Love. When people fall in love their self-protective strategies fade away as they strive to make their beloved happy. The world becomes a happier and more delightful place, and everyone seems more open.

Loving couples create a family environment where kindness, openness and zest for life are present, producing the possibility of raising happy and healthy children. The wholesome family environment then expands to encompass all of humanity. A wholesome human environment enables individuals to respond harmoniously to the challenges of their time with creative vigour.

Throughout all time, happy families start with two people falling in love. Naturally, they are hundred percent sure that their love is so strong, that it will last forever. Somewhere deep within, love is recognised to be their true nature. A relationship which is grounded in joy, mutual respect and love, sparkles with inspiration. The couple enthusiastically engage in courtship, deepening the attraction to the other by displaying their warmth, kindness and humour and placing

the other's happiness first. Once this becomes reciprocal, bonds are formed, strengthened, and deepened. As self-protective behaviours fade away, they cherish their beloved and the relationship. When this becomes the basis of the relationship, new ways of being become possible.

Once commitment is established, there is the danger that courtship becomes neglected. There is nothing wrong with commitment – apart from misusing it as an insurance policy, safety net or security blanket. Courtship behaviour is initially vital in terms of securing the other – but once the other has been secured there is less impetus to continue courtship. At this point romance can begin to ebb – and it becomes less natural to display courtship behaviour. Trust and respect may become eroded. Then the couple may cease to be on their best behaviour – or cease to apologise when lapsing into disrespectful or inconsiderate behaviour.

Within the Aro gTér teachings is a practice that enables couples to stay in love forever. This is poetically named “Entering the Heart of the Sun and Moon” and deals with ‘Vajra Romance’ – romance as a Buddhist practice. It is a teaching that is aimed specifically at heterosexual Buddhist practitioner couples, but its principles of respect and appreciation can be applied to all relationships.

The main emphasis of the practice of ‘Vajra Romance’ in terms of continuing to experience love and appreciation, is simple: maintain courtship behaviour, continue to be open and kind, and maintain both trust and respect. This is a method that is naturally available to anyone who is in love, whether they are Buddhist or not. ‘Vajra Romance’ engages this aspect of natural insight that sparkles through being in love.

Courtship is where the best of human behaviour is displayed. Such behaviour is a true depiction of the best of humanity. As

humanity is made up of individuals, there is no choice other than to become the best version of oneself.

Fortunately, in the initial phase of romance being the best is fuelled by romantic energy which overrides selfishness and closed-mindedness. 'Vajra Romance' is the practice of continuing to preserve this energy of romance – continuing to become increasingly kind and open.

As kindness and openness continue to deepen and grow, they cannot be contained and inevitably spill into other human associations – in terms of warmth, humanity, and intuition. This fundamental appreciation for life ripples outwards into every aspect of reality, encouraging a responsibility for individuals to engage in activities for the benefit of themselves, their beloved and their children, expanding ever outwards to include everyone and everything, everywhere. Hence loving couples expand into loving families, which expand into wholesome human relationships upholding the best of the principles of Global Citizenship.

## **Summary**

Citizenship is an active decision. Individuals choose how to relate to the world. With open awareness and active appreciation citizens become naturally kinder creating well-balanced families, which inspire communities and nations and from that form a basis for a more equitable world. From this perspective everyone is responsible for their actions, there is no one to blame, only action to be taken – not just for humanity but also for the many other inhabitants of this planet. As such a Global Citizen needs the spirit of a warrior, as explained by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche: *“Warrior’ (...) does not refer to making war on others. Aggression is the source of our problems, not the solution. Here the word ‘warrior’ is*

*taken from the Tibetan 'pawo', which literally means, 'one who is brave.'"*

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# **Wiccan Tradition and Thoughts About Citizenship**

**Priestess Jemma-Jane Thompson**

High Priestess of two Covens - The Mirror of Hathor in South  
Wales, and the Coven of the Rising Star in Glastonbury

## **Introduction**

This paper is written as a contribution to the Onyx Link Foundation conference 2019 on Faith and Citizenship: From our Shared Values to our Shared Citizenship. It contains a brief overview of the history of Witchcraft/Paganism in the UK, Witchcraft/Wicca Today, Wiccan Morality and Ethics, the role of pagan ritual in the community, and thoughts on citizenship.

## **A brief overview of the history of Witchcraft/Paganism in the UK**

Paganism is an umbrella term, usually used to define a polytheistic, earth-based religion or ethos. This term can be used to cover a vast array of paths, often followed by Indigenous peoples such as Native Americans and Ancient Celts, as well as more historically mainstream religions such as those of ancient Samaria, Greece, Egypt, and Rome. Earth based religions played a crucial part in a world before the harnessing of gas and electricity, where the very survival of the people depended on the success of their crops, the health of their animals, and the effect of weather and seasons. The turning of the wheel of the year would have a great impact on the way the people lived. From spring to autumn, it was imperative that people worked with the earth to ensure a healthy crop and plentiful harvest, and through the winter, it

was necessary for communities to come together through the cold, dark months to keep up morale and help each other.

The use of ritual was a large part of this. Certain rituals would be performed at each turning of the wheel of the year, to encourage the earth to do as the people needed. The two natural sources of light, the Sun, and the Moon, were revered as symbolic of the Father God and the Mother Goddess. The Sun – dynamic, warming, active, was the perfect example of masculine energy, Yang if you will, and the Moon – gentle, passive, ever changing through her feminine cycles, waxing, and waning, was all things mysterious and feminine, Yin.

In a world without artificial light, the light of both were crucial to the wellbeing of the people and the land. The idea of a Mother Goddess may seem alien to those who have been raised in a primarily patriarchal religion, but in the most ancient times, the mother was worshipped first. With no knowledge of biology or modern sciences, to see a woman grow round with child and produce new life, seemingly on her own, left no doubt to the people that, if there were a creative force, it would be female.

Beautiful examples of stone-age Goddess figurines have been found, e.g. The Venus of Willendorf, (pictured right) circa 30,000BC, showing a heavy Mother figure with bountiful breasts, large thighs and rounded, fertile stomach. A far cry from standard modern ideas of what a beautiful woman should look like.



With the rise of Christianity in the UK, from the 1<sup>st</sup> Century onwards, the people of the cities began to convert to the Roman church, and patriarchal worship became increasingly popular. As the Church gained ground, so Christian places of

worship were built on the sites where the old gods were worshipped, and it was primarily those who lived further outside of 'civilisation' who still followed the old religion. The country dwellers were heathens or pagans, both words meaning those who lived in the open countryside. These people would still gather and worship the old gods, and as the Church grew in strength and popularity, these people would become the outcasts, the uneducated.

The folk remedies passed from grandmother to mother to daughter, the charms bestowed by the smiths, the village wise woman who would act as both midwife and cunning woman – these were fast becoming replaced with priests and modern medicine. The worship of the Old Gods, the practice of magic (often healing with herbs), the making of amulets, the forging and blessing of charms, countless folk traditions, these were all seen as Witchcraft.

It is worth looking at the etymology of the word Witch – scholars have found it hard to agree on one source, but here are some examples taken from Wikipedia<sup>124</sup>: Grimm brothers, authors of *Deutsches Wörterbuch*<sup>125</sup> connect the *Ingvaemonic* word \*wikkōn with Gothic *weihs* that means "sacred" (*Proto-Indo European* (PIE) \*weik- "to separate, to divide", probably via early Germanic practices of cleromancy<sup>126</sup> such as those reported by the Roman historian Tacitus.

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<sup>124</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witch\\_\(word\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witch_(word))

<sup>125</sup> Grimm, Jacob and Grimm, Wilhelm (1854): *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. Publisher Leipzig S. Hirzel.

<sup>126</sup> Cleromancy is a form of sortition, casting of lots, in which an outcome is determined by means that normally would be considered random, such as the rolling of dice, but are sometimes believed to reveal the will of God, or other supernatural entities.

Grimm also considers *\*weik-* "to curve, bend" (which became *wicken* "hop, dance") and *\*weg'h-* "to move" (in a sense of "to make mysterious gestures").

R. Lühr<sup>127</sup> connects *wigol* "prophetic, mantic", *wīglian* "to practice divination" (Middle Low German *wichelen* "bewitch", *wicker* "soothsayer") and suggests Proto-Germanic *\*wigōn*, geminated to *\*wikkōn*. The basic form would then be the feminine, *wicce* < *\*wikkæ* < *\*wikkōn* with palatalization due to the preceding *i* and the following *\*æ* < *\*ōn* in early [Ingvaemonic](#). The palatal *-cc-* /*tʃ*/ in *wicca* would then be analogous to the feminine.

An alternative possibility is to derive the palatal /*tʃ*/ directly from the verb *wiccian* < *\*wikkija*.<sup>[5]</sup> Lühr conversely favours derivation of this verb from the noun. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language<sup>128</sup> connects PIE *\*weg'-* "rouse" (English *wake*), and offers the Proto-Germanic reconstruction *\*wikkjaz* "one who wakes the dead".

With the rise of the witch hunts throughout Europe and colonial North America, it became dangerous to practice the rituals and traditions of the old religion, and so those who continued the ancient practices, had to do so in secret. In the space of around 300 years (1450-1750) it's been estimated that as many as 100,000 men, women, and children were executed for witchcraft; the majority of these were women. (see Tracy Borman<sup>129</sup>).

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<sup>127</sup> R. Lühr (1988): *Expressivität und Lautgesetz im Germanischen*, Heidelberg), p. 354

<sup>128</sup> The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language 4th Edition, online (2000): *witch* and *\*weg-*. Accessed 3 May 2006.

<sup>129</sup> Borman, T. (2016). *Shakespeare's Macbeth and King James's witch hunts*. Pub. Historyextra (online).

The hunting and executions of witches in Great Britain was abolished by the Witchcraft Act which was passed by the Parliament of the Kingdom of Great Britain in 1735. This law made it a crime for a person to claim that any human being had magical powers or was guilty of practising witchcraft. It is argued that this law meant that witchcraft was "no longer to be considered a criminal act, but rather an offence against the country's newly enlightened state"<sup>130</sup>. The Witchcraft Act of 1735 was still in force well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, until it was repealed in 1951 with the Fraudulent Mediums Act.

### **Witchcraft/Wicca Today**

It was shortly before the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century that an English gentleman by the name of Gerald Gardner (1884-1964) began openly practising Witchcraft. He had been initiated into the New Forest Coven in 1939, where he was allowed to copy from their Book of Shadows and learn the practises that they, along with others, had kept secret and underground for so many years. He was intent on reviving the faith that they practised, which he believed to be a survival of a pre-Christian witch cult. He supplemented the coven's rituals with ideas borrowed from ceremonial magic, freemasonry, Aleister Crowley's work and various occult writings, and went public.

People who practise modern day Wicca, such as me, are the fruit of this revival. Gerald Gardner, and a little later, Alex Sanders, were figureheads in bringing Wicca to the masses, and making it accessible to those who wished to return to the old faith.

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<sup>130</sup> Davies, Owen (1999). *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736-1951*. Manchester University Press. pp. 1–2. ISBN 978-0-7190-5656-7.

Neopaganism has become increasingly popular across the world since the 60s. When Gardner, and then Sanders, introduced Wicca (British Traditional Witchcraft) into the wider world, they fanned an ember which has ignited across the globe. Not every modern pagan becomes an initiate of Wicca as taught by Gardner and Sanders, but those who do are the Priesthood of a Mystery Tradition that is taught under oath, by properly prepared Priests/Priestesses, usually within a coven environment.

The role of the priesthood, as well as performing rituals of worship and devotion, is to work with the natural energies of the universe to craft spells, often for the greater good, and sometimes upon request. This may be done through various ways, e.g., “sympathetic magic” – making changes on a microcosmic scale with the intent that the changes be reflected in the macrocosm. We believe that everything is sacred, and everything is connected – therefore it is possible for that which we create on the astral, to be made manifest on the material plane, through the raising of energy, and the focusing of will and intent. This is explained nicely by Aleister Crowley<sup>131</sup>, who describes magic as: “the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will”.

There is no thought of absolute good or absolute evil, as Witchcraft is a practise based on the Natural World, and in the Natural World, all aspects are necessary. New growth cannot happen without the clearing away of the old. Day and night, life, and death, male and female are all equal and must coexist for balance and polarity to be maintained. Maintaining this balance requires an acknowledgment and understanding of the energies that make the universe balance. Without the idea of a Heaven or Hell, of the thought of being punished or

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<sup>131</sup> Crowley, Aleister. *Magick*, Book 4. p. 127. Published by Red Wheel Weiser Conari

rewarded in an afterlife, a Wiccan must take responsibility for his/her actions in this life and take into account the consequences.

The majority of pagans hold a belief that there is a karmic backlash to everything we do – therefore, although it is said that “a witch who can’t hex can’t heal”, those who follow the path of the Priesthood will rarely craft a hex/curse, as ultimately, the utilisation of negative energy will beget more negative energy, so although a witch may perform “black” magic or “white” magic, shadow work is not taken lightly.

In many places where witchcraft is still practised under various guises, the village “wiseman/wise woman” will often be called on for counsel, as a respected member of the community. As it is in the UK, people will come to a member of the Priesthood for help, be it in the form of divination (cards, trancework, vision questing etc.), the clearing of negative energies from a particular space, or rites of passage, e.g., handfasting’s (a wedding ceremony), death midwifery (the aiding of a soul to pass), a naming ceremony/ blessing, or a requiem. For a person to assume these responsibilities, it is vital that they conduct themselves with wisdom and integrity.

The Charge of The Goddess is spoken by the High Priestess in Circle, during the Drawing Down of the Moon – a ritual during which the essence of the Goddess is channelled into the High Priestess. It’s often referred to by modern Wiccans for guidance. Below is a version as written by Doreen Valiente<sup>132</sup>. I have printed parts I believe to be of particular relevance in bold.

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<sup>132</sup> Doreen Edith Dominy Valiente (4 January 1922 – 1 September 1999) was an English Wiccan who was responsible for writing much of the early religious liturgy within the tradition of Gardnerian Wicca. An author and poet, she also published five books dealing with Wicca and related esoteric subjects.

*Whenever ye have need of anything,  
once in the month and better it be when the moon is full,  
then shall ye assemble in some secret place,  
and adore the spirit of me,  
who am Queen of all witches.*

*There shall ye assemble,  
ye who are fain to learn all sorcery,  
yet have not won its deepest secrets;  
to these will I teach all things that are as yet unknown.*

*And ye shall be free from slavery;  
and as a sign that ye be truly free,  
you shall be naked in your rites;  
and ye shall dance, sing, feast, make music and love,  
all in my praise.  
For mine is the ecstasy of the spirit,  
and mine also is joy on earth;*

***for my law is love unto all beings.***

*Keep pure your highest ideals;  
strive ever towards them,  
let nothing stop you or turn you aside.  
For mine is the secret door which  
opens upon the Land of Youth,  
and mine is the cup of the wine of life,  
and the Cauldron of Cerridwen,  
which is the Holy Vessel of Immortality.  
I am the gracious Goddess,  
who gives the gift of joy unto the heart of man.*

*Upon earth,  
I give the knowledge of the spirit eternal;  
and beyond death,  
I give peace, and freedom,  
and reunion with those who have gone before.*

***Nor do I demand sacrifice.  
for behold, I am the mother of all living,  
and my love is poured out upon the Earth.***

*I am the beauty of the green earth,  
and the white moon among the stars,  
and the mystery of the waters,  
and the desire of the heart of man.*

*Call unto thy soul, arise, and come unto me.  
For I am the soul of Nature,  
who gives life to the Universe?  
From me all things proceed,  
and unto me all things must return.  
and before my face, beloved of gods and of men,  
let thine innermost divine self be enfolded,  
in the rapture of the infinite.*

*Let my worship be within the heart that rejoicest,  
for behold, all acts of love and pleasure are my rituals.  
**Therefore, let there be beauty and strength,  
power and compassion, honour, and humility,  
mirth and reverence within you.***

*And thou who thinketh to seek for me,  
know thy seeking and yearning shall avail thee not,  
unless thou knoweth the mystery;  
that if that which thou seekest thou findest not within thee,  
thou wilt never find it without thee.*

*For behold, I have been with thee from the beginning;  
and I am that which is attained at the end of desire.*

## **Wiccan Morality and Ethics**

As can be seen in the Charge above, we are given a definite model of how to behave. The balance of honour and humility, of power and compassion, mirth, and reverence, show us how to achieve a healthy harmony within ourselves and in the way we treat others. We are told not to make sacrifice, as the Goddess is the mother of all living. That is profound. When we see God, however you choose to view Him/Her/Them as the father/mother of ALL LIVING, we are faced with the reality that we are all connected. Not just pagans, not just humans. Not just our family, or our community, but ALL living. That encompasses the world, right down to the grass on the ground and the insect sitting on it. At the very least, this encourages us to respect our fellow man.

If one is to take it further, one should do everything within one's power to cause the least possible harm in the lives we lead. Many who practise Wicca will try to abide by the Wiccan Rede "*...Eight words the Wiccan Rede fulfil; and if it harms none, do what you will*". This is both simple, and complex. It's down to the individual how far they choose to take it. For me, personally, it means embracing a vegan lifestyle, trying to minimise my own personal impact on the environment, and thinking hard about the consequences of each action I take. Human error will always be a factor, but we can try.

In our modern world, it is far too easy to become unaware of our connections with the world around us. We live in a world of locked doors, where even the people sharing a household fail to connect all too often, relying on friendships through a window of technology held in the palm of their hand, or lost in the latest Netflix series. It's not unusual for people on a

street to not know their neighbours, to not share anything more than a passing “hello”.

The technological revolution has achieved incredible things, and can be used as an immense tool for good, connecting people in ways we never thought possible – but what have we lost? You may have formed close friendships with people thousands of miles away, who you will probably never meet face to face – but do you know your neighbours? Does your local community/your street band together to care for the sick, to get each other through the rough times? It happens – but not as a matter of course. Not as often as it should. People are often left to deal with their problems alone, and if we see someone in need, it is so easy to feel pity for them, along with a sense of relief that it isn’t happening to us – it is not OUR problem.

We are self-sufficient. We buy our groceries from a shop, prepare meals for ourselves and our families, with leftovers that go in the bin, while a family down the street starves. Large supermarket chains throw their unsold goods into a skip while they’re still edible, and “skip surfing” is a crime. Thankfully, this is beginning to change, with more and more leftover food being given to charities for the needy or to foodbanks. How has it come to this though? When did we become so self-reliant that it became ok to focus on our own wellbeing to the detriment of other people, we share this space with? To the detriment of the environment?

There is, however, a global shift occurring. The beginning of what some might call the age of Aquarius. People are beginning to see and to understand that things **MUST** change, and this can only happen by people working together. When people come together with one purpose in mind, it is a powerful thing. There is a reason that witches tend to work together in covens rather than alone. Yes, there is the comfort

and companionship that comes with working in a group, but there is also something that we call the “group mind”. The members of a coven support and look out for each other. The group is only as strong as its weakest link. To perform the rituals and rites of magic, each person involved must be focused, in harmony with the other members of the circle.

External baggage is left at the door. We step away from the mundane and stand together as witches. We raise energy together and focus on the outcome we wish to achieve. All of that energy must be directed towards the exact same goal, or there is no point. The power raised misses its mark, and the spell will not work. Because of this, when in circle, we meet our fellow coveners with “perfect love and perfect trust”. There is no room in circle for ego. For this reason, many covens choose to work “skyclad” (naked). This is nothing to do with sexuality or aesthetics, it’s because when we stand naked before the Gods and each other, we stand as equals.

Any social status held outside of circle is irrelevant. Should there be any issues between coveners, they are brought before the High Priest and High Priestess, who will aim to address the matter with respect and understanding. In other traditions, a similar role is played by the group’s Elders. Each member of the coven will be appreciated for his/her own gifts and talents. The pagan community is without a figurehead. There is no one person in charge, it is up to the leaders of each group to govern their coven/group as they see fit. Due respect is given to those who have achieved a higher degree of learning or experience, but each person’s journey is their own and is respected as such.

### **The role of pagan ritual in the community**

In the ancient world, few people read. It was the job of the temple priests and priestesses, the storytellers, and the Bards,

to pass the stories of the Gods, along with fables of morality, myths and legends, on to the common people. Theatre as we know it today, originated in the old Temples, where the Priests and Priestesses would perform stories of the Gods to the people. In Wales today you can find the Mabinogi – a beautiful collection of stories from Welsh mythology telling tales of the old Welsh deities. These stories would have been carried from hearth to hearth and sung or told to the people of the villages.

Neopagans tend to celebrate 8 Sabbats - major festivals – throughout the year. These include the Solstices, the Equinoxes, Beltane and Samhain (the beginning of the light and dark halves of the year) Candlemas, and the harvests. The role of the sun played a huge part in the survival of pagan communities of old, and the people would gather to celebrate these festivals. These were more than a celebration though – they were people coming together, with group mind, to light fires to encourage the Sun to come back after the dark half of the year, to leap through the fields on brooms, encouraging the corn to grow high and strong, or to dance around the Maypole, weaving ribbons of white and red, to bless the fruitful union of male and female in the spring, when they needed the livestock to mate. The people shared in the bounty of the land and shared what they had in times of hunger. People worked together to plant and to harvest. Were people only looking out for themselves, this could never have been achieved.

### **Thoughts on citizenship**

It's been said that it takes a village to raise a child. This runs so much deeper – it takes a village to raise a community. To support those who need it, to celebrate each other's triumphs and to comfort each other's grief. THIS is what we need to be doing. We no longer, in the modern world, need to work

together in the fields to ensure our survival, but we DO still need each other. Antisocial behaviour happens because young people are the 'problem' of their own families, who probably need support of their own. Hate crime happens because we are isolated in our own worlds to the point that people different to us become "them" and not "us". We see rubbish in the streets and step over it rather than putting it in the bin because it is not our rubbish – but it is. It is rubbish on our streets; therefore, it is ours.

When we begin to see the world, and our communities as belonging to us, rather than something that just exists around us, we are forced to start taking responsibility for it, and for the people in it. When we see the world as a living, breathing thing, with all of its inhabitants being our brethren, then "their" problems become "our" problems, and we can begin to work together to make changes and live in a safer, more harmonious world.

The people we elect to govern us, are there as leaders – figureheads of our community. The police are there to SERVE us. Why, then, are these people thought of as "them" and not "us"? Why do we say "the" government" and not "our" government? There is now, more than ever, an urgent call for people to work together, for every voice to be valid, and for those who lead us, to be part of us. A figurehead is nothing without a body, and a body will not operate without a central nervous system, which in turn, will not operate without communication from the head to the body, and vice versa. If one foot is broken, the other foot carries the weight of the body while the first foot heals, and the mind chooses a way of allowing the body to function as best it can while the healing takes place. The body of our community is broken, and the only way we can fix it, is for the separate parts to work together and allow the healing to begin. So Mote it Be.

We would like to thank the special guests, participants, and audience for making this conference possible.

Peace and Love

The OLF has devoted its second Wales Interfaith Conference 2019 to the title “Faith and Citizenship: From our shared values to our shared citizenship” to facilitate the documentation of a moral perspective of Citizenship and to form a vision for investing this shared citizenship in improving our relationships with the members of our communities, our state, and with the environment.

This book includes the contributions of eight faith leaders on their faith perspectives on citizenship. Moreover, their contributions included brief illustrations of the tenets of their faiths.

The Onyx Link Foundation recommends this book for the teachers of world religions and those of citizenship education. Moreover, it is good for both policy makers and community leaders of multifaith and multicultural societies who promote a culture of respect and peaceful coexistence. If you are interested in understanding the beliefs and faith practices of over 80% of the world population, you will enjoy reading this book.

