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No Religious Affiliation – Pluralized

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Legitimising Religion in Public

Interreligious Dialogue and the Established Church in England

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Abstract

The English context for interreligious dialogue is shaped by the presence of an established church which is inclusive, geographically spread, and engages with the state. This article will trace the ways in which the presence of an established church, and the particular model of church-state settlement, provide a context to legitimise particular types of interreligious activity. The social role of religion, the representative function of religion, and religion as an inclusive category, will be highlighted as key elements in the role of religion in English public life and in how interreligious organisations have developed. This observation is analytically useful as it assists an understanding of how and why interreligious dialogue and other activity has at various points become significant for the state's governance of religious diversity, how success is understood and managed, and what non-engagement with interreligious activity might indicate.

Keywords

interreligious – dialogue – England – establishment

1 Introduction

In this paper I will argue that the existence of an established church (the Church of England[1]) legitimises religion in public life and has thus shaped the nature of interreligious dialogue activity in England.[2] Three specific features – the social role of religion, the representative function of religion, and religion as an inclusive category – will be highlighted as key for the role of religion in public life and in how interreligious organisations have developed. Although there are clearly ways in which the Church of England has been significant in interreligious activity, the claim pursued here is not that the Church of England has intentionally shaped interreligious activity but the much more banal claim that the mere presence of an established church, and the particular model of church-state settlement, provides a context to legitimise particular types of interreligious activity. Despite being a seemingly banal claim, it is nonetheless analytically useful as it assists an understanding of how and why interreligious activity has – at various points – become significant for the state's governance of religious diversity, how success is understood and managed, and what non-engagement with interreligious activity might indicate.

I will use the term *interreligious dialogue* to refer to contact between groups or individuals of different religious traditions where there is a formal and organised dimension. There are a variety of ways to delineate the different forms and types of dialogue, and a variety of issues which influence the form and outcome.[3] Informal and demotic interreligious dialogue occurs in local neighbourhoods and can have a significant impact on the lived experience of religiously diverse neighbourhoods. Discussed elsewhere,[4] this activity can be supported, and even instigated, by more formal interreligious dialogue but is a separate and more individual, informal activity. Formal dialogue is limited in

1 The established church in England, the Church of England, is the mother church of the worldwide Anglican communion.

2 The UK has four constituent administrative regions – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The four regions share some government through Parliament but there is also devolved administration for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The UK, Britain and Great Britain are sometimes seen as synonymous with England. This is possibly because of scale – England has a population of over 54 million which makes up over 80% of the population of the UK. However, there is considerable diversity concerning religion between the regions. This article focusses on religion in England and it is important to note that this is not representative of the UK as a whole.

3 It should be noted that the words interfaith (also presented as inter faith or inter-faith) and interreligious (also presented as inter religious or inter-religious) are used somewhat interchangeably, with 'interfaith' being most commonly used in the UK context.

4 Prideaux, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue*.

time and space, often conducted by representatives or leaders, and is outcome-orientated. Although the significance of informal dialogue is increasingly visible in policy and practice, and is increasingly supported by formal dialogue organisations, it is the *formal* dialogue organisations which are easiest to trace and will be focussed on for much of this discussion.

2 Religion in England

In order to account for the relationship between the established church and interreligious dialogue, it is first necessary to trace some of the contours of the history of religion in England. The development of the modern nation state in England has been significantly affected by a dynamic relationship with the dominant church (Roman Catholic and then Church of England). Indeed, Christianity in England has a history which exceeds that of the political state. As Hastings notes:

> When England gained a unifying monarchy and became a single state in the ninth and tenth centuries, the archbishopric of Canterbury and the church had already been functioning as a unifying factor for two centuries.[5]

The separation from Rome began in the reign of Henry VIII, with the Act of Supremacy passed in November 1534 marking the separation in law of the church in England from the church in Rome. After the brief reign of Edward VI in which this separation was consolidated, and then the equally brief reign of Mary where there was a reversion to Catholicism, the long and stable reign of Elizabeth I was the period in which the discrete Church of England was consolidated and took root in the common consciousness.[6] The Second Act of Supremacy and the Act of Uniformity of 1559 were "a delicate operation to balance a variety of forces ranging from the conservatives to the returned Protestant exiles",[7] and provided a legal framework for the Church of England. It is important to highlight that the Church of England has always been a broad church encompassing a range of positions from the liberal to the conservative and the Catholic to the Evangelical. The inclusiveness of the Church of England

5 Hastings, *A History of English Christianity,* p. 10.
6 Rosman, *The Evolution of English Churches*, p. 54.
7 Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II* (Vol 1), p. 31.

has been an important feature of its development and identity. Nevertheless, it could not include everyone.

In order to consolidate the position of the Church of England, and to defend the nation against the perceived political and religious threat of the growth of non-conformity, the continuing presence of Roman Catholicism and the return of the previously expelled Jewish community,[8] legislation was passed in the 17th century to prevent those outside the Church of England having political power in England. Although the 1689 Toleration Act gave Nonconformists, but not Roman Catholics or those of other faiths, the right to freedom of worship, the 1661 Corporation Act and 1673 Test Act had excluded from civil or military office all those not taking the sacrament according to Anglican rites. Non-conformity grew in its organised forms during the seventeenth and eighteenth century. However, until the 1828 Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, as Hylson-Smith argues, "membership of the established state church was a prerequisite for full citizenship under the British constitution".[9] It was only in the nineteenth century that those outside the Church of England began to have a significant voice in society and government.[10]

The nineteenth century saw some changes as a result of emancipation, but the most significant changes regarding religion took place in the second half of the 20th century. In the aftermath of the second world war the churches slipped into a period of "ecclesiastical social conservatism",[11] with a moral austerity and conservativism visible in culture which "seemed to belie the spread of plenty and innovative consumer goods".[12] Since the 1960s there have been three significant factors which have impacted religion in English public life: the growth of religious diversity, the rise of non-religion, and the changing nature of governance and government interventions and engagements with religion. These three factors together have shaped the development of a new strand of religious activity in England – interreligious dialogue and other activity.

A variety of immigration histories, linked to the Commonwealth (the grouping of territories formally part of the British Empire) and to the growing need for industrial labour following the second world war, lead to an increasingly diverse religious landscape from the 1960s onwards. Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs from the Indian subcontinent and Pentecostal Christians from the Caribbean

8 The Jews were expelled from England in 1290 under the reign of Edward I. They returned starting in and throughout the mid-seventeenth century.

9 Hylson-Smith, *The Churches of England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II* (Vol 2), p. 255.

10 The 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act opened the way for full Catholic involvement in the affairs of the country, as did the 1830 Jewish Emancipation Act for the Jewish community.

11 Hastings, *A History of English Christianity,* p. 423.

12 Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth Century Britain*, p. 178.

had a particular impact. Communities, though small, have continued to grow with the Muslim community increasing in numbers (3% in the 2001 census, 5% in the 2011 census[13]).

Although the 2011 census for England and Wales showed that the majority religious identification was still Christian, it also showed decline across all those identifying as Christian (72% in 2001 to 59% in 2011[14]). Though some other religions have shown growth, the biggest growth between 2001 and 2011 was in those specifying *no religion* (15% to 25%).[15] This does not indicate a decline in formal Christian belonging so much as it shows that it continuously seems to become more acceptable to identify as non-religious. That 72% identified as Christian in 2001 is therefore itself anomalous with residual attachment and national identity playing a significant part in this response.[16] *Church of England* is often seen as a default response to the question "what is your religion?" simply because of the ubiquity and social and cultural role of the Church, however, attendance and membership of the Church of England has been in marked decline for some time. It is claimed that between 1960 and 1985 the size of the Church of England was effectively halved.[17] Field notes a fairly constant decline since the eighteenth century, from 94% in 1769 to 77% in 1840, to 64% in 1914 and 55% in 1939.[18] The Church's own measures show marked decline, with electoral roll membership falling from 15% in the late 1920s to 2% of the adult population in 2015.[19]

Despite this decline in active membership, the extent to which the Church of England has retained its central place in the life of the nation can be seen in the public roles it retains today. The monarch is Defender of the Faith, Head of the Church of England, and therefore has to be an Anglican. Although Prince Charles (the heir apparent) in a 1994 television interview expressed a desire to be known as *defender of faith*, rather than *defender of the faith* should he become King, this has not had a significant impact on public discourse. Anglican Bishops and the two Anglican Archbishops are the only religious representatives to have seats in the House of Lords.[20] Royal and civil events, such as Remembrance Day, are usually Anglican in character though increasingly,

13 Office for National Statistics, *Full Story*.
14 Office for National Statistics, *Full Story*.
15 Office for National Statistics, *Full Story*.
16 Voas/Bruce, *Research Note*.
17 Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p. 603.
18 Field, *Has the Church of England Lost the English People?* p. 84.
19 Field, *Has the Church of England Lost the English People?* p. 85.
20 There are Lords of other faiths and denominations, but their seats are not protected for members of their faith community.

as Sophie Gilliat-Ray[21] demonstrated in her study of the Faith Zone of the Millennium Dome, they are expected to have a multi-faith element, rather than a necessarily Christian or Anglican flavour. The common law of blasphemous libel only applied to the teachings of Christianity as recognised by the Church of England until it was abolished in 2008.[22] A significant number of schools were originally Church of England schools and the Church of England claims that approximately one million children currently attend a Church of England school.[23] Architecturally many cities, towns and villages have Anglican churches as their most significant landmarks. It is also the case that, despite the Enabling Act of 1919 which removed parliament as the key regulator of the Church of England, and gave General Synod much wider powers to change liturgy and doctrine, the government still has some remaining power over the Church of England, involvement in the selection of bishops being perhaps the most obvious example.[24]

Clearly, the Church of England continues to be more than nominally a state church. Although "[f]ormal connections between Church and State guaranteed by the constitution remained curiously intact and visible – but hollowed out",[25] the complete separation of church and state which is apparent in France and the USA is alien to the English experience. Monsma and Soper define the situation as that of "partial establishment" and argue that this model "sustains a cultural assumption that religion has a public function to perform and it is therefore appropriate for the state and church to cooperate in achieving common goals".[26] This assumption has led to a general acceptance of religion playing a role in public life, being involved in the provision of welfare services, and working with the state. To this extent, the continued existence of an established Church despite the growth of religious diversity and non-religion legitimises religion in public life in England and thus provides a context for supporting interreligious dialogue.

21 Gilliat-Ray, *The Throuble with 'Inclusion'*.
22 As was highlighted in 1989/90 during the *Satanic Verses* affair, see Webster, *The Fiction of Unity in Ethnic Politics*, p. 22.
23 Church of England, *Church Schools and Academics*.
24 Bogdanor, *The Monarchy and the Constitution,* p. 224.
25 Taylor, *After Secularism,* p. 44.
26 Monsma/Soper, *The Challenge of Pluralism*, p. 121.

3 Religion and the State in England

This evolving landscape for religion has led to a change in how religion and the state engage with one another. The creation of the Inner Cities Religious Council (ICRC) in 1992 was the first point at which the state sought to engage structurally with *religions* as opposed to the Church of England. The creation of the ICRC was influenced and supported by the Church of England, with the Archbishop of Canterbury being involved in its development. The ICRC was a representative group and was not concerned with relations between religions but with the relationship between the state and people from diverse communities. Indeed, it has been argued that the formation of the ICRC was a direct response to the concerns arising from the inner city disturbances of the 1980s, in which race rather than religion was a significant factor.[27] The ICRC was the first clear example of multi-religious engagement with the state and provided a model for further developments.

From 1997 on the opportunities presented by New Labour[28] for engagement with religious communities developed significantly as policy and political priorities around religion developed.[29] The New Labour project gained power by consensus building and a careful balancing of the rights and responsibilities of the individual and the state.[30] Religion, whether through the personal conviction of New Labour politicians or because of its resources and location, became part of this consensus building. The policy imperatives for engagement were concerned primarily with "societal order, socio-cultural empowerment and social service provision"[31] and provided the opportunity for religious groups to make strategic use of these policy imperatives to further their own activities and interests. Particular problematic events for the New Labour government, including the 2001 urban disturbances and the 2005 London bombings, provided momentum for the policy window and challenged the accepted representative structures for religions. Interreligious organisations and activity were a key feature of this period, resulting in a proliferation of new organisations and greater access to funding.

27 Taylor, *After Secularism*.

28 The term 'New Labour' refers to the period of the British Labour Party from the mid-1990s to 2010 which included the period in government from 1997 and 2010 under Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

29 Prideaux/Dawson, *Interfaith Activity*.

30 Levitas, *The Inclusive Society?* p. 2.

31 Prideaux/Dawson, *Interfaith Activity,* p. 365.

The religion policy window has remained open into the current Conservative government period[32] but has been accompanied by an apparent shift back to engagement with the Church of England as the principle interlocutor for religions. This has been especially visible in the Near Neighbours scheme, the primary contemporary government funding stream for religious organisations in England, which is administered through the Church Urban Fund of the Church of England.[33] It is in this changing religious and governmental context that the new role of interreligious dialogue organisations has become prominent, shaped by the historical and contemporary context, legitimised in public by the existence of an established church, by the growth of religious diversity, and by the specific concerns of government about the management and governance of religious diversity.

4 Interreligious Dialogue in England

Pearce identifies the earliest interreligious organisation in the UK as dating from 1927 with the World Congress of Faiths meeting in London in 1936.[34] As religious diversity grew in England, so too did the number and range of interreligious organisations. Accounts of the settlement of Muslim communities illustrate the way in which interreligious working grew out of attempts by churches to support new religious groups. Christian congregations, motivated by a desire to offer hospitality to the stranger, provided practical assistance to recent immigrants with everything from basic needs such as housing to the provision of facilities for Friday prayers.[35] Continuing dialogue motivated by a desire to secure "good community relations and interreligious understanding"[36] was initiated by local churches in areas with a large Muslim population. In the early 1970s the British Council of Churches established an advisory group for the presence of Islam in Britain that published guidelines for relations with Muslim neighbours. Other developments included The Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations. By the mid-1980s, there was an abundance of interreligious organisations in the UK, and specifically in England.

32 The year 2010 saw the defeat of the Labour and the formation of a coalition government of Liberal Democrats and Conservatives. This was followed by the election of a Conservative government in 2015, and their re-election in 2019.

33 Dawson, *The Fiction of Unity in Ethnic Politics*, p. 147.

34 Pearce, *The Inter Faith Network*.

35 Siddiqui, *Muslims and Interfaith Dialogue in Britain*, p. 14.

36 Siddiqui, *Muslims and Interfaith Dialogue in Britain*, p. 15.

The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFNUK) was founded in 1987 and is significant because of its national role, its promotion of interreligious activity and its active work with governmental organisations. One commentator has stated that

> the inception and development of the Inter Faith Network for the UK has provided a major catalyst in the transformation of inter-faith initiatives from what were, historically, relatively marginal initiatives into a central feature of the contemporary religious landscape of England and the UK.[37]

Although covering the whole of the UK, the majority of constituent groups are in England. The IFNUK membership includes over 100 local groups, and over 30 national or regional groups. There are 30 National Faith Community Representative Bodies and 12 Educational and Academic Bodies.[38] The variety within these groups is extensive, the local interreligious groups including dialogue groups with individual memberships and a focus on encounter and engagement, alongside more formal organisations with a representative function "called forth"[39] by the needs of local government.[40] National or regional groups include organisations such as Interfaith Scotland, Council of Christians and Jews, and the International Association for Religious Freedom. Religions represented through National Faith Community Representative Bodies include minority groups such as Zoroastrians and Unitarians, and multiple groups from each of the major religions, for instance six Muslim bodies. As Weller argues: "the state cannot have dialogue with a 'community', but only with bodies that present themselves, and/or that the state regards as constituting organised representation of that community".[41]

As such, the IFNUK is important in creating an avenue for groups to be visibly represented and engaged with a wider faith sector. The IFNUK provides a common source of support and information for these groups and articulates its mission as: "Working with faith communities, inter faith organisations, educators and others to increase understanding and cooperation between people of different faiths and to widen public awareness of the distinctive religious traditions in the UK."[42]

37 Weller, *How Participation Changes Things*, p. 114.
38 Inter Faith Network UK, *IFN Member List*.
39 Weller, *How Participation changes Things.*
40 Prideaux/Dawson, *Interfaith Activity*.
41 Weller, *How Participation changes Things*, p. 75.
42 Interfaith Network UK, *Mission, Vision, and Values*.

Publications cover a range of topics including local interreligious projects, religion and citizenship, and cooperation with local governments. The range of bodies these publications have been published with is equally broad, including the Citizenship Foundation, the Inner City Religious Council, the Commission for Racial Equality, and the Association of Chief Police Officers. IFNUK has also been a partner in the publication of documents by other bodies, including the Local Government Association and the Home Office.[43]

This range of partners and publications, particularly during the New Labour years, is indicative of the extent to which the religion policy window created a space for the IFNUK to become a particularly valuable partner for government, with the benefits this created for the work of the IFNUK in supporting and developing interreligious dialogue. The IFNUK covers the whole country, includes a wide range of theologically diverse member groups and creates a platform for representation of different religious groups. In many senses this is comparable to the role of the Church of England – a broad and inclusive church which is geographically spread across the country with a clearly representative structure. This is not to claim a direct relationship between the two entities but instead to note those features which make a religious organisation a useful partner for the government. In a context where problem events and more long-term social and economic challenges were largely focussed on religions other than Christianity, the IFNUK provided a representative group and specialist insight which was valuable to the governmental organisations with which the IFNUK partnered, especially during the New Labour years. This pattern of interreligious developments in response to problem events is noted across European contexts from Finland[44] to Spain.[45] Attempts by New Labour to work with single faith organisations were in some cases dramatically unsuccessful. The Muslim Council of Britain, for example, was initially supported by New Labour in the late 1990s but became problematic following the London bombings of 2005. New Labour switched to working with organisations that had a visible anti-extremism agenda (such as Quilliam) but these organisations did not have a strong bond to local communities.[46] In this context, interreligious groups and a national representative body in the IFNUK provided a valuable partner for government.

Key to the engagement between state and religion is representation, and this is also the key to the role of interreligious organisations and to their

43 Interfaith Network UK, *Publications*.

44 Martikainen, *Managing Religious Diversity*.

45 Griera, *Public Policies, Interfaith Associations, and Religious Minorities*.

46 Jones, *New Labour and the Re-Making of British Islam*.

activity. As within the field of dialogue, representation can be significant in negotiating religion in the public sphere, where public bodies may seek to consult or communicate with a religious leader or representative,[47] or may demand that religions have representative structures with which the state can interact.[48] Within the Church of England this is relatively straightforward with clear representative and leadership structures such as the parish and diocese, and Bishops and Vicars who have community as well as devotional roles within their community and their locality. Within other religious communities there is much less clarity, for instance Imams are often not expected to have a role beyond their devotional and educational duties in the mosque, and mosque committee members take a much greater role as community representatives.[49] In Christian and Muslim communities there is concern about how these leaders relate to the entire community, for example how women are represented by a largely male representative elite,[50] or how having a single representative continues the "fiction of unity" in ethnic minority communities.[51] There is also often a lack of awareness about the leadership structures within religions or of the different branches within communities. This makes inviting participants to formal dialogue difficult and has implications for how information is disseminated from dialogue to a community. In this context, IFNUK and local interreligious bodies provide a representative structure which can be broad-based and where religions themselves negotiate authenticity and validity – however, as was seen over the issue of Pagan membership of IFNUK, these negotiation processes sometimes entail controversy.[52]

The IFNUK was not the only interreligious organisation which gained particular visibility during the New Labour period. The proliferation of specific national organisations, all with the aim of facilitating dialogue and cooperation between religion(s) and state, is indicative of the extent to which both religions and the state were attempting to make sense of the religious and policy environment for representation and activity. These new organisations represented a professionalisation of the faith-based sector, akin to that seen in the Community and Voluntary Sector. Examples include FaithRegenUK, a

47 Gilliat-Ray, *The Trouble with 'Inclusion,'* pp. 469–470; Knott/McLoughlin/Prideaux, *The Feasibility of a Faith Forum*, p. 31.

48 Ferrari, *The Secularity of the State*.

49 McLoughlin, *Mosques and the Public Space*, p. 1048.

50 Ali, *Muslim Women and the Politics of Ethnicity and Culture*; Burlet and Reid, *A Gendered Uprising*.

51 Werbner, *The Fiction of Unity in Ethnic Politics*.

52 Dawson, *Religious Diversity and the Shifting Sands of Political Prioritization*.

Muslim-led organisation founded in 2001 (now the Faith Regen Foundation[53]) that focuses on reducing social exclusion. Secondly, the Faith Based Regeneration Network (FbRN) is not an organisation itself but a network of existing organisations with a board made up of representatives of nine faiths. Originally funded through the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Special Grants Programme and by the Church Urban Fund, it was established in 2002 and focusses on faith-based social action.[54] These two organisations demonstrate the growing capacity during the New Labour years of a developing faith-sector to respond to policy agendas on the policy maker's own terms. They also, essential for this current discussion, are multifaith and to some extent create the space for interreligious dialogue. The range of organisations and initiatives which are multifaith and support, encourage, facilitate or respond to interreligious dialogue are diverse, numerous and often exist for relatively short periods of time. Their diversity is both a mark of the complexity of the situation and also of the ways in which dialogue is responsive, particular and local.[55] As will be clear already, the lines between different organisational types are not always clear.

A key point for the New Labour religion policy window and interreligious dialogue was the publication of the *Face to Face and Side by Side* report[56] which provided an important statement of how religion, and specifically engagement between religions, and between religion and the state, was construed as a significant element in UK public life by the New Labour government, which was reaching the end of its last term of office. The two streams of urban regeneration and community cohesion, prominent throughout this period, come together in this report which attempts to produce a coherent account of the state of multifaith work in the UK. The executive summary of the report summarises the aim of the report as

> to create more local opportunities both for face to face dialogue which supports a greater understanding of shared values as well as an appreciation of distinctiveness; and for side by side collaborative social action where people come together and share their time, energy and skills to improve their local neighbourhood.[57]

53 Faith Regen Foundation, *About Us*.
54 Faith Based Regeneration Network, *About FBRN*.
55 Prideaux/Dawson, *Interfaith Activity and the Governance of Religious Diversity in the United Kingdom*.
56 Department for Communities and Local Government, *Face to Face and Side by Side*.
57 Department for Communities and Local Government, *Face to Face and Side by Side*, p. 8.

The face to face element more clearly addresses the concerns of community cohesion and preventing violent extremism through interreligious dialogue. The "side by side collaborative action" element more clearly relates to the regeneration projects led by multifaith groups. The language of social capital is evident here and appears to have driven much of the New Labour rhetoric surrounding religions with its clear connotations of the communitarian philosophy which is considered to have been a lynch pin of New Labour ideology. There is also a focus on social action or on what religious groups can do for their local communities – the usefulness of religion.

The face to face and side by side dimensions make a useful link between the process of dialogue and the work of social action. The report describes face to face dialogue as leading to "people developing a better understanding of one another, including celebrating the values held in common as well as acknowledging distinctiveness". This is contrasted with side by side collaborative action which "involves people working together to achieve real and positive change within their local community".[58] However, the report does not suggest a strategy for including those into the dialogue who might think that working with people of other faiths is against their religious teachings. Nor does it deal with issues which humanists, atheists and secularists might raise about the privileging of religion. A more nuanced objection to the report is the assumption that forging dialogue is not a religiously loaded exercise. Indeed, the history of the interreligious movement makes it clear that for those involved in dialogue, it is an activity based on a particular religious position, often though not always pluralist in its theological understanding of religious diversity. It could be asked what place the government has in supporting a specific religious activity and in doing so whether they are further alienating those who observe this as the privileging of a western, Christian, liberal approach to religious diversity. Again, underlying the report and the version of dialogue presented is a model of religion, and of religious engagement with the state, which draws on a specific religious heritage – liberal and inclusive, willing to work with the state, representatives and those concerned with welfare and cohesion as much as spiritual ends.

As noted earlier, in the new Conservative period a different engagement with religion began to emerge. IFNUK still works with the government, receives funding from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and publishes guidance on issues such as responding to violence with partners including Home Office and the police. However, there is significantly less policy and activity from interreligious work supported by the government – the

58 Department for Communities and Local Government, *Face to Face and Side by Side,* p. 17.

Face to Face and Side by Side report had by 2012 been "largely folded out of the narrative of faith and policy".[59]

The Near Neighbours scheme, established in 2012, is indicative not only of the way how the Church of England has again become more central to state engagement with religion, but also of the shifts in perception about how the state views the significance of engagement with religion and the support of engagement between religions. Dinham noted as early as 2012 that

> there is a shift represented in Near Neighbours from a broadly owned and distributed multi-faith paradigm in which many traditions, and none, have a stake, to one in which the Church of England gatekeeps a primary funding stream and is revalorised as 'national church'.[60]

As Dinham[61] notes the public account of the organisation, he specifically identifies how it would capitalise on the parish system of the Church of England through the Church Urban Fund – the administrative organisation for Near Neighbours which is the Church of England's social action charity. Although Near Neighbours is a separate scheme, its embeddedness in the Church of England is notable and demonstrates a shift in policy engagement.

Therefore, the shift in the religion policy window has seen a move from the multifaith paradigm, itself modelled on a familiar form of religion seen in the established Church, to a more explicit engagement with the Church of England as the organisation which creates the conditions for engagement with religion. I have endeavoured to show that this is a not a straightforward swap. Instead, the multifaith paradigm of the religion policy window rested on a model of religion which was shaped by the existence of an established Church, and the particular way that church has developed over time. Interreligious dialogue in the UK has been significantly shaped not only by the state's support for and engagement with it but also by the Anglican model of Protestantism.

5 Conclusion: Legitimising Religion in Public

In England there is the historical and cultural expectation that religion has a part to play in public life. Despite the growth of religious diversity and non-religion, the Church of England is closely linked to national identity and is

59 Dinham, *The Multi-faith Paradigm in Policy and Practice*, p. 584.
60 Dinham, *The Multi-faith Paradigm in Policy and Practice*, p. 586.
61 Dinham, *The Multi-faith Paradigm in Policy and Practice*, p. 584.

visible in various areas of public and private life. This legitimising of religion in public life has been extended to interreligious organisations that have been called into being by the state or have developed from within religious traditions. Visible in the expectations surrounding these organisations are various features which I have claimed are shaped by the historically embedded model of the Church of England. Most prominent of these features are the expectations that religion has a social role to play in society, that religion is an inclusive category, and that religions can represent the religious. Interreligious dialogue organisations have been shown to pursue different goals to satisfy these three broad features. These features are not necessarily claimed to be directly related to the model provided by the Church of England but instead to be, at least in part, responses to the particular set of expectations in public life.

This article has developed the somewhat banal argument that the nature of its establishment has shaped the content and form of interreligious dialogue in England. To some extent this feels self-evident, but upon closer examination, and looking at other European comparators, this is not necessarily the case. The significance of the observation is two-fold. Firstly, in terms of social policy the recognition of these establishment patterns should support a reflection on how interreligious dialogue is engaged with as a tool of governance or representation – raising questions about whether expectations are realistic and inclusive. Most notably it needs to be asked who is not included in interreligious dialogue, and associated representative and other activity, and whether the particular model of religion is to blame for this exclusion. Secondly, this otherwise banal observation raises questions about some core concepts, most notably secularisation. The way in which religion influences the private sphere and the extent to which this can be seen as a result of the development of a particular form of Protestant theology which infuses interreligious dialogue but fundamentally disempowers religion has to be questioned. Lastly, it should be noted that this article has focused entirely on the experience of England. The other three regions of the United Kingdom have different religious histories and different church-state relations. Mapping the impact of this variation on the form of interreligious dialogue in the regions would open up new opportunities to identify the ways in which church-state settlements shape the nature of interreligious dialogue.

Biography

Melanie Prideaux is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Leeds. Her main research interests and areas of publication are religion and

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