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Religious Diversity in Great Britain

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Abstract

This study examines religion from all sides, in Great Britain. It involves three chapters organized in the following way :

The first chapter copes the religion in Britain by detailing the difinition of religion and its historical background.

The second chapter shed the light to the main contemprrory religions groups in Britain ; christian churches includes Church of England, Scotland, free Churches, and the Roman Catholic Church. Then it deals with Non-Chrisian Churches like : Jewish Community, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Furthermore, there are other religions such as :

East Asian, Iranian religion...ect.

The third chapter presents the impact of religious diversity on the british society. And how Britain became tolerant toward foreign religious.

Acknowledgement

-I would like to thank my supervisor for the valuable advice that she has given to me in the writing of this dissertation .

-I would like also to thank all teachers who teach me during these five years.

-My deepest thanks goes for my family members for their understanding and support.

-I express my profound gratitude to the jury members.

Dedications

In the name of ALLAH the beneficent and the most merciful.

I dedicate this humble work to my parents specially my mother who grant me the love and the compassion and provided me help and support.

To the person who shares me the sweetness and pitter of university life's : Zhor

And also to who support and gave me the hand of the aid to accomplish this work : Hammam

To all my friends :Amina, Imane,Saliha,Ikrame,Hanine and Karima.

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General Introduction

Many countries are portrayed by a number of religions and convictions which are the main source of culture in society. So what is meant by religion ?

Religion is set of beliefs and duties which related the human being by god. And also it considered as a way of life that influencing family relationship, decisions, life choice and style of peoples that transmitted between generations.

Britain is one of the most religiously diverse populations in the European Union. Britain is multi faith society in which every one have the freedom of worship and practice their religion. Although , christianity is the main religion in United Kingdom, there are also large communities of Bahai'is, Buddhists, jains and Zoroastrians. Thus, this work is titled "Religious Diversity in Great Britain" with a research question "What is the impact of religious diversity on the British society ?"

The choice of these topic is derived from our interest to know the historical background, the most dominant religions in Britain and how this multi faith society accept and tolerate toward this religious diversity.

This present work examines religion from all sides, in Britain. This work is divided into three chapters ; the first chapter involves with the definition of religion. There are four groups : Abrahamic, Indian, East Asian and Iranian religion. Concerning the Abrahamic religion, which contains three main groups : Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Then, we tackle with the Indian Religion that hold the most important religions in India such as : Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism. After that, we undertake with the Iranian religions that divided into many branches are : Zoroastrianism, Zurvanism, Mandaeanism, Babism, Bahai'i faith, Yarsani, and Khurramites. The historical background of religions in Britain witness several changes with each king. Under the reign of Henry VII, the

relationship between the Roman Catholicism and the state was at bracking point when Henry wanted to divorce his wife and marry his mistress but the pope refused. Therefore theEnglish Reformation began in Enland .Under the reign of Mary, "Bloody Mary" the catholic queen saw a bloody epoch because she want to restored the Roman Catholic faith during her reign by using persecution. The reign of Elizabeth observed a period of change particularlly in religion through passed a series of acts such as : the act of uniformity.

The second chapter will examine the main Christians, and Non-Christians Churches. Britain, historically is christian society ;most christians belong to the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Free Churches, the Roman Catholicism and also there are other religions such as : Taoism, Jainism, and Bahai'i faith.

The impact of religious diversity on the british society is the final chapter's concern. This chapter will demonstrate how United Kingdom influenced by the spread of different religions. It shows the effect of multi faith in many aspects such as : law, education, literature, sience,etc.

Finally, the general conclusion will give a brief summary of what we have seen in this dissertation

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Introduction

The number of religions around the world are unknown. There are religions which appeared but remained unknown until after they disappeared. The religions which survive, are those which adapt themselves to the different aspect of societies like : Christianity. And others which originates from the mixutre of two or more religions.

Difinition of Religion

History of humanity has seen the birth of different religions, beliefs and worships that aim to explain the origin of life, or the universe.

The word "religion" is originally from the Latin "religio". It is set of beliefs, dogmas which define the relationship between human beings and God. Such religions are difined elements specific to its community such as : festivals, prayers, sacrifices, holy books and holy places. most religions developed from the irreproachable history of people, a prophet or a wise-man who taught idiological and spiritual life. (religious tolerance.org)

Religions spread world-wide. Each religion is specifically concerned by a region where it appeared but it is not limited to this region because it spread in other foriegn countries. According to comparative religion there are four categories of religions : Abrahamic Religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam), Indian Religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism), East Asian Religions (Taoism) and Iranian Religions (Zoroastrism, Babism, Zurvanism, Yarsan, Mandaism and Khuramists).

I-Abrahamic Religions :

The word Abrahamic refers to the prophet Abraham (Huges 31). The Abrahamic religions form an important group of religions. In this group there are three religions :

Christianity, Judaism and Islam. In 2008, the adherents to Abrahamic Religions may be estimated at 3.8 billions, it means more than half of population of the world. (Naidoo 233)

1-Christianity : is a monotheistic religion which is the most spread in the world. The number of christians is estimated between 1.5 billion .

The christianity splits in different groups the most dominants are : Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants. Almost all christians believe in the trinity, which teaches the unity of father, son, and Holy spirit. (wikipedia)

1-a.Catholic faith : is the faith of christianity who recognize the Pope as the authority. The number of catholics is estimated to 1.115 billion. So a lot of churches belong to catholic faith as the Roman Catholic Church.

1-b.Orthodox faith : The number of orthodox believers is about 300 million. Orthodox believe that god is lonely but has three faces, that the original sin exists and it will be followed for giveness. Moreover they believe in resurrection and incarnation. (wikipedia)

1-c.Protestant faith : is the faith which resulted from catholicism after reform in the 16th century. It is divided into many denominations such as : Lutheran, Methodist, and Baptist churches. Protestant believe on the Bible. The number of protestants is estimated around 800 million believers. The origin of Christianity goes back to Judaism, sot hey share some principles. Both of them belive in one and unique God, trust in Christ, practice prayers and have holy books.

The religion began with the coming of christ. Marie was a pious and pure woman. The miracle started when an angel came to Marie and told her that she would give birth to a child. Jesus birth was a real miracle because he was neither a result of a marriage nor of human intercourse. He delivered his message to his people by accomplishing some

miracles : resurrected dead, cured people from fever, leprosy, blindness, deafness and paralysis. The holy book of christians is the "Bible", it contains a list of principles, these principles are considered as god's word.

The holy book of Christians is the Bible, it contains a list of principles, these principles are considered as God's words. Though the divergence of the different groups of Christianity, they all agree on the existence of one God who took different faces : the father, the son and the holy spirit, and the Bible is sacred.

2- Judaism : It is a monotheistic religion. And it is the oldest Abrahamic religion known. The number of Jewish was estimated to 13.2 million in 2006. Judaism is split into trends :

2-a.Orthodox Judaism : is the faith practiced by those people who are faithful to the "Torah". It is divided into two main groups Modern Orthodox Judaism and Dati Leumi. Orthodox Jewish consider them selves as the true Jewish in the contrary of other Judaic groups.

2-b.Progressive Judaism : This branch of judaisam that its members believe in equality, modernity, pluralism and social justice. There are four progressive groups : Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist and Liberal judaism.

Jewish believe in the god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses the prophet recieved the Torah in the Mount Sinai. This religion was firstly transmitted orally, then it had been written in the Hebrew bible which is also known as "Torah". It consists on beliefs, instructions and rituals. It also comprises poetry and narration about the history of Jewish.

Both of Judaism trends although they are old or new, they have similar beliefs ; God liberated children of Israel from slavery, and guided them outside Egypt.

"I am the LORD thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me". (www.themystica.com)

They also believe that children of Israel are the chosen people, powers are all aggregated in the creator of universe who is unique and without parallel.(wikipedia)

3-Islam : Is a monotheist religion. It appeared in the Arabian peninsula and now it is the professed faith of North Africa, the middle east and part of Asia. It is an Arabic word which means submission and allegiance. It is the second dominant religion in the world. It regroups 1.82 billion of believers. It had been taught 07th century A.D by the prophet "Mohamed". The followers of this religion are called Muslims. It is derived into four major trends :(Esposito 297)

3-a.Sunni : It is the most spread movement, it represents 80% of the Muslims population.It is divided into different schools, the major ones are : Hanafism founded by "Al Imam Abu Hanifa", Malekism founded by "Al Imam Malik Ibn Anas", Shafeism founded by "Al Shafi'i" and the last one is Hanbalism founded by "Ibn Hanbal".

3-b.Shia : constitute 15% of Muslims. It is divided in different branches, the three majors are : Isma'ilism, Twelever Shi'ism and Zaidism (Esposito 75).

3-c.Kharijism : is a group which appears as a result of the dispute between "Ali" and "Mu'awiya".

3-d.Sufism : is a spiritual and a mystic movement. It has a Sunni's root. It appears in 08th century.

Muhammad is considered as the last prophet of monotheism, but this is rejected by the Christian and the Jewish. Less than twenty years after his death, the different divine revelations delivered by Muhammad were gathered in a sacred book named Koran.

The sacred book of Muslims is "Koran". Koran is the first book written in Arabic (O'connor 27). It was transmitted by god through his arch angel messenger Gabriel "Jibril", then it was transmitted orally by the prophet Muhammad to his people. Koran is divided into one hundred and fourteen chapters. Koran contains the behaviour that Muslim must have towards himself, the others and god. It is not the only source that Muslims depend on it, there is also "Hadiths", were an oral tradition which described Mohammad actions and customs ; which is considered as explanation, clarifications and additions to Koran (Esposito 76).

To be a good Muslims, there are five acts to do called the five pillars of Islam : 'Al Tawhid' and 'Al Chahada' is to testify that it exists one and god 'Allah' and that Muhammad is his servant and messenger. 'Salawat' means the practice of daily prayers. 'Al Zakat' consists on the generosity upon poor. 'Al Sawm' is to fast during the month of 'Ramadan'. And the last one is 'Al Hadj' is pilgrimage to Mecca.

A Muslim must believe in god, his angels, sacred books, messengers, the existence of the last judgement, and destiny. Those beliefs are called the six pillars of faith. Muslim should also believe in hell and paradise.

II-Indian Religion :

The most important religions in India are : Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism. India counts 905 million Hindus, 18 million Sikhs, 7.5 million Buddhists, and more than 3 million jains.

1-Hinduism : Is actually the third religion practiced in the world. It originated from the Hindu civilization. It is the result of an ancient oral tradition. The things which distinguish Hinduism from the other religions is that it has neither a prophet nor a dogma. Hinduism has different movements :

- "Devi Sarasvati" is the goddess of knowledge, arts and sciences.

- "Brahmanism" is the new form of the Vedic religion, it is divided into branches :

1-a. Vishnism : is the cult of god or one of his avatars. Its holy books are Bhagavata Purana also called Shrimad-bhagavatam and the Bhagavad-gita (wikipedia).

1-b. Shivaism : is specific to the adoration of Shiva.

1-c. Shaktism : is derived from the word Shakti which means the energy. It is divided into two branches : Shakti and Devi.

There are a lot of texts which dated from the old India, these are the majors : Vedas, the Tantras, the Puranas and the Epics.

2-Buddhism : Had appeared in India in the 5th century B.C. Then it disappeared in the 12th century because it had been assimilated in Hinduism and during the Muslims conquest of India. The number of its believers is 350 million. It exists a lot of trends (www.buddhanet.net)

2-a. Theravâda : is the dominant one in southern and southern eastern Asia it is supposed to be the heir of the original doctrine of Buddha.

2-b. Mahāyāna : had appeared in the christian era in north India, then it spread later in India and far east.

2-c. Vajrayāna : had some similarities with Hinduism and specifically with Shivaism, it is practiced in Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan Western and Northern China, Northern India, Mongolia and Japan.

2-d. Tibet : is a kind proper to Tibet it is divided into four major schools Nyingma, Kagyapa, Sakya and Gelugpa.

Buddhism originated from the taught of Siddhartha Gautama. He is considered as the historical Buddha. He was named Gautama and called Sakya Muni which means wise man of Sakya. Buddha and those who follow him have a precise course of action, this course of action is choice of life. The precepts are listed below :

I undertake the precept to refrain from harming living creatures , I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not freely given, I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct, I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech, I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicants which lead to loss of mindfulness. (www.experiencefestival.com)

Concerning the precept“ I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct”, it was replaced by “celibacy vows”, and three precepts are added : *“To refrain from eating at the wrong time (only eat from sunrise to noon),to refrain from dancing and playing music, wearing jewelry and cosmetics, attending shows and other performances, and to refrain from using high or luxurious seats and bedding.”* (www.experiencefestival.com).

3-Sikhism : is a monotheistic religion founded in Northern India by "Guru Nanak" in the 15th century (Teece 04). The word Sikh is derived from the word Sanskrit which means disciple or student. The majority of sikhs live in Penjab. Sikhs preach fraternity,tolerance and aim finally to unify themselves to god. Sikhs can avoid reincarnation by beig honest and putting an end to vices such as (alcohol, tobacco and games of chance) (www.khalistan.net). They believe in one and supreme god. Sikh believe in : Karma and reincarnation (Mayled 18), justice and truth, peace and love,eyhnic and gender equality (Binglian 06).

Guru Gobind Singh Ji said :*"It is right to use force as a last resort when all other peaceful means fail."*(www.khalistan.net)

Sikhs should be generous with poor people, read holy book, and accomplish voluntary and useful task. They reject pessimism and encourage optimism and hope. They neither believe in prophet, nor in paradise and hell (wikipedia).

4-Jainism : Its origin go back to the antiquity (Mardia 01), is a faith which arose in India as apposed to violence. It became an important religion in the 6th century B.C. It is founded upon a humble and modest life and the respect of any form of life. The believers are called Jains. The word Jain means 'the person who is a spiritual victor'. They are two groups in Jain in India : Svetambara and Digambara.

4-a.The Svetambaras : Are jains who wear white clothes, they refrain all sort of pleasures in order to reach a religious and spiritual aim. They also believe that women are as capable as men to avoid the reincarnation cycle. (wikipedia)

4-b.Digambara : Is at the opposite of Svetambara.It is divided into two major sects Bisapantha and Terapanth.

The number of its believers is limited to 6 million. The majority of those who follow jainism live in Maharashtra. The major principles of jains is Ahimsa which means to respect life, and avoid any form of violence. (Jains 292) They also refused to thievery it means that the use of information to commit a thievery, to rise prizes, to cheat is considered as thievery.They reject impurity, so all immoral acts and relations are forbidden, they have to live humbly and modesty. They believe that every thing is endless, and the existence of earth, hell and paradise.

III-East Asia Religions

These religions are also considered as philosophies. It can be divided into two branches Theist and Atheist is the major and well known one in this branch.

1-Taoism : Is a philosophy and at the same time a chinese religion (Kirkland 01). Its holy books had been written approximattly in the century, they took the names of Dao Da Jing, Zhuangzi and Liezi.

1-a.Dao Da Jing : Is a short book, it is supposed to be the work of "Lao-tzi", but its interpretation is ever changing through centuries.

1-b.Zhuangzi : Is the name of the book and also of its author, it is a direct, pleasant and full of philosophical themes.

1-c.Liezi : It is a taoist text attributed to Lie Yukou. Most Liezi chapters are named after famous figures in chinese mythology and history (Wikipedia).

IV-Iranian Religions

Are religions which appeated in Iran, and it divided into many branches are :

1-Zoroastrism : Also called Mazdeism is a monotheistic religion. Its go dis named Ahura Mazda. He is considred as the only god respensible of initial chaos, cretor of sky, water, fire and air. (Rose 11) It was founded a millenium B.C in Kurdistan and it became the official religion of persians.

Zoroastrism was firstly transmitted orally. Then when an alphabet was developped al the holy texes were written. But the full version of texts do not exit because the manuscript has been damaged in the invasion of "Alexander the Great" then, in the Arab invasion. It still exists one hundered pages.The number of those holy texts is seventeen. The zoroastrists believe that their god neither need a prophet nor to be worshipped. So

zorathoustra forbids Persian rituals and sacrifices to worship gods. He think that every action has a reaction to future events. The Zoroastrits believe in a judgment of soul, an eternal life after death, heaven and death (skjaer 01).

2-Zurvanism : Is one of zoroastrism school. It is founded upon the thought of Zarathoustra. Zorvanism is a philosophical doctrine. It is said that Zurvan the primitive god had not a son, so he did sacrifices during a millenium. But he did obtain it,so he was conviced of the failure of these sacrifices later became a father, and gave to his son the name of his name was Ahura Mazda.But he also had an other son whose name is Angra Mainyu.

So the zervanists had a pessimistic vision of the world. So they considred woman as evil because women went to meet Angra Mainyu.Ahura Mazda feared that women requestd to have sexual relations with pious men, so he created the god Narsai to attract women and to prevent them from the evil god (wikipedia).

3-Mandaeism : Is a dualist religion, it grew up in the first millennium A.D.It is said that it exists approximatly 60.000 to 70.000 in the world, majority of them lived in Iraq, until the American War in Iraq. In 2007 their number in Iraq was estimated between 5000 to 7000 belivers.

They believed in John the baptist and neglect jesus whom they considered as a false prophet. In the existence of two opposed worlds, the high world which is governed by the god of light and the low world which represents disorder and darkness (Wikipedia).

4-Babism : It is a religious movement that emerged in Persia in 1844, by a young trader Siyyid "Ali-Mohammad" called the Bab. The Bab declared many times that ha was sent by god and that he was Al-Mahdi firstly it seems that it was just a branch of Islam because it possesses its own prophet holy books and laws, the Babis considered that their faith is an

Abrahamic religion. The Bab established some law to follow ; they carry arms only when it is necessary, to print holy books, not to be cruel with animals and not to smash child. (Mc Eoin 08)

5-Baha'i Faith : Is the youngest religion founded by the Persian Mirza Husayn Ali in 1863. He was also called "*Baha'u'llah*"(Miller 248). Baha'is reached approximately 07 million in the year 2007. They believe in the unity of god, unity of religion and the unity of humanity. They believe in a unique god which exist forever. They accept all world wide religions the most important in Baha'i holy books is *Kitab-i-Aqdas*. Baha'is believe that "Baha'u'llah" is a messenger sent by God (Miller 143).

Baha'u'llah said : "*Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth.*" (www.upliftingwords.org).

6-Yarsan : Is religion situated in west Iran. It was established by *Sultan Sahak* in 14th century. It was trend of Yazdanism. Yarsani are most of time considered as Muslims because they took some of muslims costoms and beliefs. Their number is about 1.000.000 yarsani (wikipedia).

They believe in : The existence of two worlds : the inner world and the outer world, The existence of god who takes multiple appearances :Ali and Jesus and also they believe in The reincarnanation so in this context yarsani said : "*Men! Do not fear the punishment of death! The death of man is like the dive which the duck makes.*" (www.wikinoah.org)

7-Khurramites : Is a religious and a political movement which appears in the begining of nine century. It was founded by Sunpadh. It is a mixture of Shia Islam and Zoroadtrianism. It was a result of the excution of Abu Muslim. Khurramites believe that Abu Muslim will resurrect as tge "messiah" (wikipedia).

The historical background

In early British history, the archaeological discoveries suggest different types of pagan belief. Some Christian impact had achieved England before A.D. 400 and during the Roman occupation but they were not far reaching (Oakland 236).

Ireland was changed over to Christianity around A.D. 432 fundamentally by St Patrick, who brought the faith from Rome (Thackwell 21). His adherents and others spread Christianity to Wales, Scotland and Northern England making religious centers. In addition, Oakland in his book *British Civilization* states: “In 596-97 the Anglo Saxons of Southern England were converted to Christianity by St Augustine and other monks, who had been sent from Rome by Pope Gregory” (Oakland 236).

English conversion was empowered by Anglo-Saxon lords, who felt that various leveled examples of the Christian church would bolster their illustrious authority. The church additionally gave instruction administrators, through whom the rulers could control their kingdoms more effectively. The association between the church and the state thusly established at an early stage in English history.

Southern English Christianity depend on the convictions and practices of the church of Rome. In spite of the fact that the faith of Ireland, Wales, Scotland and Northern England was additionally established on Roman tenets, it had a more Celtic identification. Conflicts and division definitely emerged between the two branches of Christianity, however these were in the long run determined at the meeting of Whitby in 663, where all the houses of worship consented to accept the Roman Catholic form of worship (Oakland 237).

The church depend on a chain of command of monks, priests, bishops, archbishops. Christianity turn into a focal power in the public eye and some portion of administration, government and law. But it was blamed for worldliness and materialism. Monarchs kept their

dependability to Rome and the Pope in other worldly matters, some with more conviction than others (wikipedia).

By the sixteenth century the relationship between Rome and England was at breaking point, and the first establishment of the Anglican church was initiated by king Henry VII. Anglicanism is the Protestant religious Reformation that happened in England under king Henry VII. It was rather caused by political reasons. The Tudor King Henry wanted to annul his marriage with Catherine of Aragon in order to marry his adoration, Anne Bolen, he hoped that she would give him a son to follow him on the throne, but the pope refused ; so king declared the separation of the English church from Rome. And the English Reformation began in England (Thackwell 69).

After the refusal of the pope, the king convinced the diocesan to make him leader of the Church of England in 1531. He also forced the English Church to become free. In this way, the English Church it became Anglican (wikipedia). In this way, King Henry became a powerful one. He held two powers : he was the chief of the country and the Head of the English Church. But the king had to get rid of catholic opposition ; it was quoted

“There is a common misconception that Henry became a Protestant. In fact Henry was a catholic until the day he died ; indeed ; to begin with the Pope was pleased with his attacks on the Lutheran Movement that he named him fidei defensor” (O’Farrell 145).

By the Act of Supremacy in 1534, Henry was declared Head of the English Church ; there for he got the right to reform the religion of his subjects, Henry had passed many Acts which gave rights to decide on religious matters, on his subjects and on state affairs as well. Henry made England a supreme state. The king got the help from the Archbishop Cranmer ; who played a big role in developing and spreading Protestantism in England (Niemeyer 35). Moreover, John and Lurbe mention in their book *Civilization Britanique* :

“Under the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553) the Church of England became a full-fledged protestant church” (John, Lurbe 175).

Mary, the catholic little girl of Cathrine of Aragon, became queen when Edward died in 1553. She attempted to restore the Roman Catholic faith during her reign (1553-1558) but did not succeed because she utilized a strategy of mistreatment and persecution which earned her the epithet “Bloody Mary” (Ayasch, Hillion 40). The majority of English men out to be completely estranged from catholicism, which was seen as remote or foreign religion, to be a catholic was to be “Un-English” or “Anti-English”. (John, Lurbe 175)

Under the rule of Elizabeth (1558-1603), sister of Mary she re-establish the Anglican church and to guaranteed security in England by located a serene response to the issue of the English Reformation. (Mc Dowall 72)

Elizabeth passed the Act of Supremacy in 1559, which made her a supreme Governor of both the state and the church. The Act contained a final declaration of religious settlement, a second re-establishment of the Anglican Church of her father and an end to any religious relation with Rome. As it was mentioned :

In 1559, Elizabeth's first parliament, a thoroughly protestant body repealed the hersey laws of Queen Mary's reign and enacted a new act of supremacy, which establish the monarch as the supreme governor of the Church of England. Official of state and church were required to take an oath of allegiance to the Queen as head of church (Birdsall.viault, op. cit).

She worked very hard to avoid the religious division between Catholics and Protestants. She did not want to replace catholicism, but she intended to put England in position of power.

In 1552, the Act of Uniformity the first Prayer Book which was written by the Protestants under Edward VI was not enough for the new doctrine ; so the Act of Uniformity introduced more modifications to be used by the Protestant Anglican Church as it is quoted :

The Act of Uniformity, also adopted in 1559, endorsed a modified version of the 1533 book of Common Prayer and decreed its use in the country's churches Mathew Parker (1504-1575), a protestant scholar, became Archbishop of Canterbury, and catholic bishops were removed from office (Birds.viault,op.cit).

The Act of Uniformity aimed at establishing the unity in matters of religion. It also helped the Elizabethan power to face all the religious problems.

However, in the sixteenth and seventeenth many Protestant felt that their church had no different from Rome, therefore some of them created their own religious organizations. Initially called Dissenters then later known as Nonconformists and today are members of the Free churches. The conflicts between Protestant and Catholics continued during the seventeenth century. They culminated in the civil war between the mainly Protestant Parliamentarians and the largely Catholic Royalists, which led to the protectorate of Oliver Cromwell (Mc Dowall 92).

After the death of Cromwell, some minority religions still suffered. The Roman Catholic Church, Nonconformists and jews experienced discrimination and exclusion for three hundred years. After Reformation they were rejected from universities, the House of Commons and public positions until nineteenth century most limitations and restrictions were expelled from them. Meanwhile, the Church of England set its prevailing position in 1688 when the protestant William III succeeded James II, the last Catholic English King. By

the end of the nineteenth century christian and non christian were spread through Britain (Mc Dowall 94).

In 20th century, immigrants have included further religious differences. The Evangelical movement keeps on developing as a branch of christianity and is described by a close relationship between them and god, christ and the holy spirit. The development of Fundamentalists faith “enthusiastic” christian houses of worship and around five hundred cults or religious movement play an important role to increase the number of people to be active in their religious life (Oakland 238).

In the world, there are a lot of religions. There are religions spread around the world, and others limited in their region that appeared on it. Christianity remain one of the main religions that spread widely around the world, and it became the largest religion in the united kingdom.

Introduction

Britain has a tradition of freedom of worship. Its religious history has been mainly christian. Christianity is the dominant religion, but there are also non-christian faiths, such as Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism. Most Christians belong to the Church of England.

I-Christian churches in Britain

In United Kingdom, Christianity is the central religion and it is represented by the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Scotland and the Free Churches.

1-The church of England

As the gospel spread through the Roman Empire, so the christians found their way to the British Isles.

The church of England, established according to the laws of realm under the queen Elizabeth, which implies its lawful position in state.

All the state ceremonies are religious ceremonies which must be performed by the church of England.

The ruler of the state is the head of the church ; all Pastors must swear loyalty to the crown, and the Archbishops, Bishops, and Senior members are designated by the sovereign on the exhortation of the Prime Minister, and Parliament has a voice in its association and customs.

Be that as it may, it is not a state church, since it receives no money from the state, apart from pay rates for non-clerical positions and lend a hand with church school (wikipedia). There for the church has a unique association with the state, although there persist in calls for cutting there relationship, so it may have self-rule over its particular undertaking (www.church.of.english.org).

The church of England occupies a very peculiar position in the christian world ; because it tends on episcopal hierarchy. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and with twenty four bishops choosed according to their supremacy and priority in the church, they sit in the House of Lords.

The church is splits into two provinces of Canterbury and York, each under the control of ecclesiastical oversees "Archbishop" (Nihill 05). The Archbishop called the Prime Minister of all England ; is the senior of the two and expert leader of the church, he leads the Lambeth Conference which happens at regular intervals (every ten years) and accumulates delegates from all the christian churches in the world. He doesn't the same power as the Pope ; he can't impose decision in the church, because his job is temporary ; he could resign from his office, while popes until they depart there life at the helm.

In addition, the two provinces are subdivided into 44 bishopric, each under the control of a bishop. But in the cathedral towns, the dioceses are divided into some 13.000 parishes, for instance : Chichester, Lincoln, Durham, and Salisbury.

The church of England contains a huge members in congregation, but it is hard to determine this membership because the church does not have sufficient registers of members. Normally, membership supposed when a person (usually ababy) is baptized into the church. Whereas, only 40% of English population have been baptized. In addition, Oakland states in his book *British Civilazation* : "*This membership may be confirmed at "confirmation" at age of foorteen or fifteen. It is estimated that only a fifth if those baptized are confirmed and that 1.8 million people are members of the church.*" (Oakland 242)

At the weekend, the English people went to the chrch in order to make their prayers, the church of England considered the seond largest christian faith after the Roman Catholicism in terms of regular weekly (www.the-guardian.com). But members keep on declining gradually

as does the number of priests when they took their retirement. However, numerous different britons may ostensibly recognize themselves with the church, despite the fact that they are not members.

At the present day, the church of England occupies a lot of people from middle-and upper class. There is strife inside the church between traditionalists, who need more connected with new forms and attract more adventorous to draw in a contemprrory gathering.

Normally, the main role of the church is ti fight in justice in society and to shed the light in social and political problems, this drove it into struggle with the traditionalists governement (conservative) which led to have notoriety among politicians and lost its popularity among them. So, it had a tendency to avoid such issues in the past and has been described as “the Conservative Party at Prayer” because of its safe, establishment image (Oakland 244).

2-The church of Scotland

In the centuries that followed, Scotland faced many diverse events and clashes in its historical growth, in order to fin dits identity as a nation.

The church of Scotland is the second established church in Britain. It was elevated by the honorability and the gentry But unlike the church of England whose creation came from a dicion of English King.

The reformation in Scotland began in 1560 by John Knox. He was well-known for his vigorous disagreement debates with, Mary, the catholic queen who returned from France and attempted to keep on the faithful to Roman system. In addition, he was against the episcopal rule and he think that the English church not differ far from the Roman Catholicism. By the end of the 16th century, the church takes its position as the official national church in Scotland which has independence from all parliamentary supervision.

The General Assembly is the supreme body of the church, which meets under the presidency of a Moderator who has the authority to make laws determining how the church operates during the period of his office, he serves only for one year.

Church members contains ministers and elders, they under the Presbyterian Model ; all of them are equal in status, and helping to lead worship. In Scottish churches worship is for every body, apart from age, nationality, status or ability. Therefore, the central of the church is love of God and charity by expressing their love of God to those who live with them, by following the examples of Jesus Christ (wikipedia).

3-The Roman Catholic Church

In Britain, Roman Catholicism or Roman Catholic Church is the major Christian church, it is considered as one of the previous religious establishments in the world, because it draws its history to Jesus Christ and the Apostles. Furthermore, John Oakland claims in his book : *“There are seven Roman Catholic provinces in Great Britain (four in England, two in Scotland, one in Wales), each under the supervision of an archbishop ; 29 dioceses each under the control of a bishop ; and over 3.000 parishes.”*(Oakland 246).

The leader of this congregation is the pope, is considered as the vicar of Christ ; the office of the pope is known as the papacy. (wikipedia)

Today, Catholicism is widely spread throughout Britain. Catholics represent about half of all Christians. Its enrollment is focused on the urban working class, settlers of Irish descent, a few famous upper-class families and some middle class people (Oakland 246).

Roman Catholicism beliefs do not vary from other branches of Christianity. All three major branches grasp to the doctrine of the Trinity (worshipping God as he has revealed himself as father, son and Holy Spirit), the divinity of Jesus Christ, and so on. But among the

catholics there are some distinctive among them like : the concept of purgatory, the authority of the pope,etc.

4-Free Churches

The Free Churches contains the Nonconformist Protestant, which are not established churches like England and Scotland. Some of these churches was founded when a number of congregations separated from the church of England after reformation and other departed later. They allow both men and women to become ministers (www.britannica.com).

Most of these churches centred in Northern England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and the majority of their membership derived from the working class. The major of these churches today are : The Methodists, The Baptists, The United Reformed Church and The Salvation Army (www.britannia.com).

4-a.The Methodists Church : It is considered as the major of the free church with approximately 80 million believers. Its origins go back to John Wesley. It was established in 1784, these movement spread throughout Britain and beyond. In 1795 the movement declared its separation from the Anglican church officially.

4-b.The Baptists : Its group related to protestant christianity which formed in the 17th century. It is divided into group of churches. On the one hand there are churches of England and Wales which belong to the Baptist Union of Great Britain. This association counts 140 000 believers. On the other hand there is the Baptist Union of Scotland which counts 14000 members.

4-c.The United Reformed Church : Formed in 1972, like other christians defined by doctrine, which they believed that Jesus christ is the soul head of the church.

4-d.The Salvation Army : It is a movement established in Britain in 1865. The number of its worshipper exceeds 55.000 members and 1000 places of worships. It does good work in the social area such as helping homeless and poor people (Hillion, Ayasch 46).

II) Non- Christian Churches

The immigration play an important role in the growth of religion in Britain. The immigrants brought with them their religions. The main Non-christians groups are : The Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs.

1-Judaism : It seems that there are no proofs about the presence of jewish groups before the eleventh century. But Theodore the archbishop of Canterbury (669-690 AD) affirmed in his book "Liber Poenitentialis" that Jewish were living in England at that time.

The Settelement of Jewish happened during the reign of William I (1066-1087). In 1085, William deported a lot of jewish from Rouen, to London, Norway, Cambridge and Northampton. The jewish community in Britain was initially formed by Ashkenzin and the Sephardic.

1-a.The Ashkenzim : Are settlers coming from Germany and Central Europe in the 18th century (Endelman 42). The Ashkenazi must obey their spiritual leader called Chief Rabbi. Their number is estimated to 260.000 (www.themystica.com).

1-b.The Sephardic : Are people from Spain, Portugal led by their spiritual leader called Haham (Endelman 42).

The majority of Sephardic Synagogues in Britain associated in London. There are about 18000 Sephardic Jews and 350 synagogues. There are four kind of synagogues :

1-Central Orthodox Synagogues : They regroup the United Synagogues and The Federation of Synagogues which belong to Ashkenazi. In addition the spanish and the portuguese synagogues which belong to the Sephardic (Endelman 177).

2-Progressive Synagogues : They gather movement for Reform Judaism and Liberal Judaism (Punney 38).

3-Orthodox Synagogues : They are mainly located in London, Salford and Gateshead. They are about a 100 synagogues and 45.500 members in U.K.

4-Conservative Synagogues (Masorti) : The assembly of Masorti Synagogues. The main masorti community is the New North London which counts 2400 members (wikipedia).

2-Islam : The majority of Muslims come from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, The Arab contries, Malaysia and Africa (Haddad 21).

Through immigration, the muslims community grows, the number of Muslims is estimated to 3.3 million. The majority of them located in Cardiff, Edinburgh, and mostly in London (www.gatestoneinstitute.org).

The number of mosques and prayer center sis very high, so most towns and cities have their own mosques. Mosques are places of instruction and education of muslims.

The first mosque founded in Britain in Woking in 1889 (Jacobson 30) was Shah Jahan Mosque located in south-west of London. There are other important mosque ;Baitul Futuh in London, Markazi Masjid in Dewsbury, Manchester Central Mosque, Al-Rahma Mosque in Liverpool, Birmingham Central Mosque, East London Mosque, Finsbury Park Mosque in London, London Central Mosque, London Markaz, Medina Mosque in Sheffield (wekipedia).

Muslims are represented by organization the most important are : The Muslim Council of Britain, The Islamic Society of Britain, UK Islamic Sharia Council, UK Islamic Mission, The Muslim Youth Helpline, The Islamic Foundation, The Association of Muslims Lawyers (www.wilkinsonline.org).

3-Buddhism

The first appearance of Buddhism in U.K began when scriptures were translated (www.bbc.co.uk). In 1907 the buddhist society of Great Britain and Ireland was established. Then in 1924 the London buddhist society was founded, it was the first effective organization. Another fact which contribute to the spread of Buddhism is the chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950. The number of adherents to Buddhism is a result of conversion. People chose to follow Buddhism because they are inspired by books. The number of Buddhist is estimated around 151816. There are seven major monastries :

1) Wat Buddha Padipa Temple : It was the first buddhist temple founded in England in Wimbledon, London.

2) Amaravati Buddhist Monastery : In 1979, Ajahn Sumedho founded this monastery at Hertford Shire. It is occasionally open to visitors.

3) Jamyang Buddhist Centre : It is a Tibetan organization founded in London under the guidance of Gashe Tashi Tsering.

4) Kagyu Samye Ling Tibetan Centre : In 1967, it was founded in Dumfries Shire. Now it is led by Dr Akong Tulku Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe Losal.

5) Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey : In 1972, an English woman founded it in Northumberland. It is training centre open to lay guests.

6) Aruna Ratanagiri : It is a monastery founded in Northumber land, England.

7) Chithwst Buddhist Monastery : Ajahn Chah founded this monastery in 1979. It is located in Chithurst an West Sussex (www.bbc.uk).

5-Hinduism

The majority of hindus came from the Indian subcontinent and most of them are located in London, but they also live in Brent and Harrow, Southall, Homslow, Hendon, and Wembley. There are over 40000 Hindus living in Leicester and 558.342 in England and Wales.

There are approximatly 150 temples, the most largest temples : The Hindu Temple at Neasden, The Swaminarayan Temple in Neasden, The Bhaktivedanta Manor Temple near Watford, The Balaji Temple in Birmingham, The Sanatan Mandir in Leiceste, the Vishwa Hindu Mandir in Southall, the Murugan Temple in Manor Park and the Gujarat Hindu Society Krishna Temple in Presto,etc.(wikipedia)

6-Sikhism :

The first settler to Britain was Maharjah Duleep Singh who was the last ruler of the Sikh Kingdom. Through the early arrival of the Maharajah to England, the first temple was founded in 1911, at Putney in London. In 1950s sikhs migrated from Punjab to Britain in order to find jobs in British Industry (wikipedia)

III-Other Religions :

In Great Britain there are other religions,the most famous are :

1-Taoism : Was one of the strongest religions but after the communist revolution the number of its members always in decreased. Their number in England and Wales is estimated to 3500.

2-Jainism : Jains migrated from India and East Africa to Britain and British colonies. In 1990's, the number of Jains estimated to 25.000 members. The majority of jains live in London and in Leicester. There are other communities in Coventry, Luton, Manchester, Northampton and Wellingborough. Today there are about 30.000 jains.

Svetambara Jain temples are founded in London, Leicester, and recently at Potters Bar. New Digambara Temple opens near London.

3-Bahai'i Faith : Bahaism in Britain goes back to the 19th century. The first Baha'i in Britain was probably a woman called Marion Miller in 1895. Mariam Thornburgh-Cropper was more important than Marion Miller. She was the founder of the English Baha i community. In 1922 and 1923 a Baha'i Spiritual Assembly and National spiritual Assembly for Great were founded. Now adays there are about 6000 Baha'is in the U.K (wikipedia).

Introduction

Since the Second World War, British society has changed in different way, and religious is a major exemple. Trough its historical dominance religious diversity in Great Britain influenced the british society in many aspects such as law, schools, arts, scienc,etc.

1-Tolerance toward religions :

According to many peoples and countries, freedom of religions is considered to be a central human right, therefor the House of Lords would make religious discrimination an unlawful act. Particularly, to those Non conformists who were disagree with differ in thought with differ in thought with the church of England. They have the right to own their places of worship and practiced their belief like the church of England.

As it is the case in Northern Irland were religious discrimination in work place is illigal under *Fair Employment Acts*.

Foreign religions faced a lot of persecution, but jews and sikhs are protected by law called Race Discrimination Laws. In addition many muslims suffer from different forms of discrimination ; it can be an insult, a refusal to a job or to education in a certain school or universities.

When Muslims are noticed by the way they dress up such as : wearing the veil for Muslims women, they are provoked by people.

The Islamophobia commission which based in London and it call for justice for all peoples without regarding their recial. It play an important role for accuses the media for being responsible of stereotyping Muslims.

Britain accepted a number of foreign religions, brought by immigrants. So this stimulates the growth of religious communities such as Muslims, Hindu and Sikh community (plato.stanford.edu).

2-Ethnic and Religious Discrimination :

Generally speaking, religious discrimination refers to the distinction of people on their religious connection, and their personal belief. And it is considered as the prejudicial consideration.

Religious Discrimination is a dilemma that is amplified widely in the British society through refugees, migrants, asylum-seekers from different religious backgrounds have supplementary in UK (administrateur Som Man-en). Most of those immigrants are Sikhs and Hindus and they suffer because of the hostility and behaviour of people toward them.

Muslims think that discrimination has increased these later years because they experience unemployment, poor working conditions, and because of verbal insults caricatures and unfair media coverage. They are frequently persecuted in comparison to other religious groups. And this fact covers all the aspects of life. It is the same case for Sikhs and Hindus.

This persecution is not limited to Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus. It also touches Jewish, Christian, and Black Christian community. For instances : Christians are persecuted but, it is occasional, pagans and followers of new religious movements are described by the media as child abusers, Buddhists prevent to use the church hall, Catholics are verbally aggressed, and Hindu people received abusive call.

The British Parliament passed acts in order to fight discrimination :

2-a.Alien Immigration Act of 1905

This act refers to present migration manages and gave the home secretary in general liability regarding immigration and nationality matters.

“It provided asylum for people fleeing religious or political persecution. Anti-Semitic elements wanted a stop or severe restrictions on Jewish immigration to Britain, but were completely defeated.”(www.experience festival.com)

2-b.Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 : Chapter 1

Is an act of the Parliament of United Kingdom, which make an transgression in England and Wales only (great Britain-law) and provoking hatred against a person on the grounds of their religion. The Chapter 1 states that ; "Hatred against persons on religious grounds."

In the Public Order Act (c.64) is amended in accordance with the Schedule to this Act, which creates offences involves stirring up hatred against persons on religious grounds."

"Racial and religious hatred offences" : powers of arrest in section 24 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (c.60) (arrest without warrant by persons other than constables) after subsection (4) add_ "

Also, this chapter deals with " Meaning of religious hatred in 29 A" :In this part "religious hatred" means hatred against a group of persons defined by reference to religious belief or lack of religious belief " (www.lawexplores.com)

2-3.Equality Act 2006 : it combines all of the equality enactments within Great Britain and provide comparable protections across all equality strands. The chapter three involves states many aspects that stated below :

"(1) A person ("A") discriminates against other ("B") for the purposes of this part if on grounds of the religion or belief of B or any person except A (whether or not it is also A's religion or belief) A treats B less favorably than he treats others (in cases where there is no material difference in the relevant circumstances)".

("3") A person ("A") discriminates against another ("B") for the purposes of this part if A applies to B a provision, criterion or practice.

(a) Which he applies or would apply equally to persons not of B's religion or belief, (b) which puts persons of B's religion or belief at a disadvantage compared to some or all others (where there is no material difference in the relevant circumstances).

(c) which puts B at a disadvantage compared to some or all persons who are not of his religion or belief (where there is no material difference in the relevant circumstances), and

(d) which A cannot reasonably justify by reference to matters other than B's religion or belief" (www.lawexplores.com).

Religion and Law :

In Britain, Christianity is the established religion. Most of people from middle class and public offices are members to the church. But the question : does the christianity effect positively on the british society ?

Alvin J. Schmidt, says about the profound role of christianity on the developement of Western Civilization :

"No other religion, philosophy, teaching, nation, movement—whatever—has so changed the world for the better as Christianity has done. Its shortcomings, clearly conceded by this author, are nevertheless heavily outweighed by its benefits to all mankind" (Schmidt 9).

He also writes about christianity regarding the effect on liberty and justice :

“The liberty and justice that are enjoyed by humans in Western societies and in some non-Western countries are increasingly seen as the products of a benevolent, secular government that is the provider of all things. There seems to be no awareness that the liberties and rights that are currently operative in free societies of the West are to a great degree the result of Christianity’s influence (Schmidt 248).

Thus, the historical dominance of christianity in England led to occupied a large institutions even in law, therefore the church is required by law to spread Bible in all places of worship, and the state has no right to interfere in such decision. In addition, Bishops still sit in the House of Lords and Britain is the only country that allows clerics discuss and interfere in its legislations. (www.vexen.co.uk)

In the past the state was not responsible for the expence of the church but from 1977, it gave an amount of money for the maintain and renovation of historic churches.

The Human Right Act 1998 aimed to give freedom to people concerning religion, beliefs and taught, and make religious discrimination illegal work.

The Racial and Religious Act 2006 grants more protection for believers. (wikipedia)

Religion and work :

The Race Relation Act 1976 was amended in 2000, in order to make the discrimination in work unlawful.

Law forbade an employer to use discrimination between employers or against them because of their religions.

Education and Religion :

Educaion is significant part of British society. In Britain, education is compulsory for all children between (5-16).

Britain imposed a religious education to pupils studying in public school. It voted the education reform act which made religion education obligatory in pupils' curriculum in order to let the pupils to discover the diversity of religious and non-religious world views through the historical development of religions and world views. (humanism.org.uk)

Daily prayers were done in the school. Those prayers were mainly Christian, but there were exceptions for those who belonged to other religions.

Some schools are under the control of Muslims, so pupils receive an Islamic education.

Religious Education developing the knowledge of individuals about religions and faith which form part of contemporary society and promote him to understand main aspects of tolerance and respect that can live with him in his life. (www.teachment.gov.uk)

Education and Religion represent two of the dominant associations in the society, each one has been shown to have huge effects on the individuals. (www.nd.edu)

Religion and Literature :

Religion can be considered as a set of beliefs, institutions and ideas, or a lived practice contains behaviours and rituals of individuals and communities. Religion is concerned with the matter of the duty which man owes to this world. And also, it is concerned, with the questions what, whence, whither. (www.english.artsci.edu)

Literature represents the culture and tradition of a language or a people. Literature reveals widely when we read, and interpret what the author says or writes by examining the words that he or she chooses in his or her work. Each author is influenced by his society; he or she writes about the main events and experiences that are happening during this period and writes also about his feelings and emotions that spring from his heart in order to describe someone

is very closer . In this way, literature open the door to a new world of experience and give insight to all world's societies (classiclit.about.com).

Literature has the same essential relationship with religion. It's also look for explanation, justification and interpretation. Both of them accept the strength of the humane motions of love, curiosity and fear, sot hey make a costant appeal to life.

Religion and Literature shares the same great themes : sin, punishment, love the passion, justice and the relation of men with each other. Religion play an important role for given literature avast materials through it sacred books which provide materials for great literature. For exemple : The translation of the Bible into Gothic bu Ulphilas, Luther's translation of the Bible, this not only preserved Bible but also helped to spread anf form great literatures in modern life, which make the english speech more pure and more intellectual by these translation (classiclit.about.com).

Artists, writers over centuries have been influenced bu the Bible. The Bible concidered as the main source of inspiration for many of Britain's greatest works of literature. The establishments of English theatre were laid by medieval plays based on bibical events. The authors used the Bible's words and phrase in order to enrich his language and to facilitate the connection between him or her and the audience (www.crossref-it.info)

Conclusion

In the last chapter, the impact of religious diversity on the British society revealed very widly through a series of acts that aim to make religious discrimination unlawful in order to guaranteed the human right, and security for the foreign religions.

Religious Diversity and is viewed a negative influence through discrimination and unlawful treatments by the main difficulties that faced immigrants to get job or to enter universities, etc. But it is also play an important role to affect positively, due to its influence in literature; through the inspiration of writer's from the holy books in order to enrich their language. In education by making religious education obligatory in curriculum in order to open the door of curiosity to know the most dominant religions in the world.

General Conclusion

Through the rejection and the exclusion that foreign religions face at their appearance, they succeed to survive and to adapt the British society which was firstly monopolised by Christianity. Those religions are affected by British way of life and at the same time they affected the British society. So laws grant for believers of the different community security and human right through a series of acts that passed through the Parliament.

Nowadays the different faiths coexist in Britain and religious diversity is accepted by people. But it still exists discrimination in some areas.

Even through the differences of religions in matters of traditions, number of Gods, beliefs and practice of faith, they all aim to obtain equality, freedom, unity, tolerance and to propagate their faith and enlarge their number of believers.

But sometimes the way religions viewed are negatively affected by events for example the image of Islam is altered by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.



Britain Map

(www.denverlibrary.org)



Church of England

(www.en.wikipedia)



Church of Scotland

([www.en. wikipedia. Org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org))

Dogma: is a set of principles led down by an authority incontrovertibly true.

Zaidism: is a Shi'a madhhab (sect, school) named after the Imam Zayd ibn Ali.

Ali: was the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad who ruled over the Islamic Caliphate from 656 to 661. Sunni Muslims consider Ali the fourth and final of the Rashidun, while Shi'a Muslims regard Ali as the first Imam.

Twelver Shi'ism: is the largest branch of Shi'i (Shi'a) Islam. They believe in twelve divinely ordained leaders, known as the Twelve Imams.

Modern Orthodox Judaism: is a movement within Orthodox Judaism that attempts to synthesize traditional observance and values with the secular, modern world.

Dati Leumi: also called Religious Zionist Movement. It is an ideology that combines Zionism and religious Judaism, basing Zionism on the principles of Torah.

Conservative Judaism: is a modern stream of Judaism that arose out of intellectual currents in Germany in the mid-19th century and took institutional form in the United States in the early 1900s.

Reform Judaism: is one of the two forms of Progressive Judaism found in the United Kingdom. Reform Judaism is both historically earlier and more traditionalist than Liberal Judaism.

Reconstructionist Judaism: is a modern American-based Jewish movement based on the ideas of Mordecai Kaplan (1881-1983). The movement views Judaism as a progressively evolving civilization.

Mount Sinai: is the name of mountain in the Sinai Peninsula, the highest mountain of Egypt. It is the traditional location of the Biblical Mount Sinai.

Avatars: a manifestation of a deity or released soul in bodily form on earth (an incarnate divine teacher).

Bhagavata Purana: is one of the "Maha" Puranic texts of Hindu Literature, and is Sanskrit for "the Book of God".

Bhagavad-Gita: is an important Sanskrit Hindu scripture. It is also considered as one of the most important religious classics of the world.

Shiva: a god associated with the powers of reproduction and dissolution.

Shakti: the female principle of divine energy, especially when personified as the supreme deity.

Devi: is the supreme goddess, often identified with Paravati and Shakti.

The Sakya: is one of four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

Guru Nanak: is the central figure in Sikhism, and is the first of the ten Sikh Gurus.

Karma: is the sum of a person's actions in this and previous states of existence.

Reincarnation: is the rebirth of a soul in another body.

Bisapantha: is sub-sect of the Digambara sect of Jainism.

Terapanth: a sect of the Digambara tradition, that introduced several reforms in 1664 A.D, but worship idols.

Maharashtra: is a state located on the western coast of India. It is India's third largest state by area and second largest by population.

Lao-tzu: is a Chinese philosopher traditionally regarded as the founder of Taoism and author of the Taote-Ching, his most sacred scripture.

Zarathoustra: was an ancient Iranian prophet and religious poet. The hymns attributed to him, the Gathas, are at the liturgical core of Zoroastrianism.

John the Baptist: was a Jewish mission preacher and a major religious figure who led a movement of baptism at the Jordan River in expectation of a divine apocalypse that would restore occupied Israel.

Mirza Husayn Ali: the founder of the Baha'i Faith. He claimed to be the prophetic fulfilment of Babism.

Gelugpa : is a school of Buddhism founded by Tsongkhapa (1357-1419), a philosopher and religious leader.

Siyyid 'Ali-Mohammad' : born on October 20, 1819, in Shiraz to a middle-class merchant of the city. He is a descendant from Muhammad through Imam Husayn through both his parents.

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