

**Unity in Diversity: Representations of Religious Minorities in the
Literature of Interfaith Scotland**

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ABSTRACT

Interfaith Scotland (IFS) represents a substantial number of religious bodies in Scotland and the representation of non-Christian religious minorities is fundamental to the interfaith movement. In a country in which religious minorities make up a tiny fraction of the population, in comparison with England and other European countries, narratives of diversity have become more prominent in the public sphere. Interfaith Scotland has depended on the world religions paradigm to promote its version of religious pluralism as embodied in its structure and represented in its literature, reinforcing the equivalency and paramount importance of the 'major traditions', while groups which do not fit neatly into one of these traditions have no representation on the organisation's governing board. On the other hand, the world religions approach means that religious groups like the Scottish Pagan Federation are re-made according to that mould in Interfaith literature, with stress on an overarching intellectualised tradition constructed from disparate sources. This closely parallels the processes out of which the world religions paradigm arose in the 19th century with the construction of 'Hinduism', 'Buddhism' and other world religions as discrete intellectualised traditions.

KEYWORDS

Interfaith; Religious Minorities; Pagan Federation; Scotland; Religion in the public sphere

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Introduction

This article presents data from and analysis of the publicly available literature of Scotland's nationwide interfaith association – Interfaith Scotland (IFS) – and its construction of the relationship between religious pluralism and Scottish national identity. I contend that these representations can be classed as a highly structured and limited form of religious pluralism fitting the world religions paradigm and that this is not only rendered compatible with but promotes a form of civic-cultural and secular nationalism.¹ However, this article will focus on the way that representations of religious minorities have been fundamental to the interfaith movement in Scotland and how much their representation of religious minorities has been moulded to a version of the world religions paradigm (WRP).

The broader theme of the relationship between religious pluralism and national identity is identifiable through their means of representing different groups within the Scottish public sphere. The literature of Interfaith Scotland can be analysed according to their representations of Christians and Christianity, Scottish politics and governance, Scottish culture and wider national identity as well as the increasing 'non-religious' population. This article will focus on a category which can be regarded as fundamental to 'interfaith' in Scotland, religious minorities who are crucial to re-imagining Scotland as religiously plural rather than through its historically Christian identity. Interfaith Scotland's representation of religious minorities will be analysed through their use of three core concepts of 'religion', 'ethnicity' and 'nationality'.²

I argue that their construction of 'religion'³ renders the different religious communities equivalent and equal in status in as much as they conform to a particular view of religions as universalistic, global, intellectual, textual traditions concerned with promoting ethics for the good of wider society. This somewhat abstract and global view of religions renders them compatible with the at once wider and limited identity and authority of the secular Scottish nation and attempts to secure them an influential place within this framework. Nonetheless, this relatively aloof construction of 'religion' is also dependent on

¹ For a more detailed explanation of the relationship between Interfaith Scotland and nationalism see Sutherland (2017b) and for a defence of the use of 'nationalism' as a broad classification for national politics see Sutherland (2017a).

² This article is based on a chapter of my doctoral thesis (Sutherland 2018). The thesis overall was concerned with the broader theme of the Interfaith movement's representation of religious pluralism and national identity, but each chapter addressed their representations of sections of the Scottish population. The chapter on which this is based addressed representations of Scottish religious minorities.

³ In this article my usage of categories such as 'religions', 'religious traditions' or 'faiths' should generally be taken to follow the emic understanding of Interfaith Scotland and other parties involved from their constituent members to the Scottish Government. Though I do hold that crafting scholarly definitions of these terms can be useful (see Sutherland 2017c), doing so was not deemed necessary for the purposes of this study.

the world religions paradigm which reifies religions into a handful of broader religious traditions which can be represented on equal terms as well as collaborate in contributing to national life through their shared ethical concerns. The position of religious communities within the organisation has been largely dictated by the extent to which they fit into one of these broader world religions.

On the other hand, the relationship of Interfaith to 'ethnicity' is rather more complex. They are certainly strong supporters of ethnic and cultural diversity, but their representations of cultural diversity are different from their representations of religious diversity. Their representations of cultural diversity are much more general and diffuse without the emphasis on the reification of groups which characterises their representations of religious diversity. This is possibly because reinforcing distinctive contingent and bounded cultures might sit uncomfortably with their emphasis on universalism, particularly in relation to religion.

Nonetheless, the ethnic associations of many religious groups mean that ethnicity inevitably become part and parcel of their representation in the literature. Furthermore, the different ethnic and cultural associations of different religious groups mean that some fit the universalistic construction of 'religion' mentioned above more comfortably than others. Along with the use of Scottish symbolism to emphasise shared membership of the nation, the use of the cultural cache of particular religions has become a large part of the aesthetics of the interfaith movement. Before examining the representation of Scottish religious minorities in the literature of Interfaith Scotland it is necessary to introduce the organisation itself and provide a brief historical overview of the development out of the local and international interfaith movement.

The Global and Local Roots of Interfaith Scotland

The foundations of the global interfaith movement are usually traced to the 1893 Chicago Parliament of World Religions (Brodeur 2005, 43-44) which also helped to popularise the world religions discourse: that the religions of the world could be classified by an identifiable group of universalistic and philosophically informed traditions (Masuzawa 2005). As we shall see this discourse has been fundamental to the means of representing and integrating religious minorities into Scottish public space. Nonetheless, within Scotland, the interfaith movement had more humble and pragmatic beginnings. The first interfaith group in the country was a small local group, Glasgow Sharing of Faiths (GSF), which was established in the late 1960s by a Kent-born nurse and former Church of Scotland missionary to Pakistan, Stella Reekie. Reekie worked with immigrants to the city who were primarily from South Asian backgrounds due to her knowledge of Urdu. Reekie was at first primarily concerned with the provision of social services; GSF emerged primarily as an outgrowth of this, and Reekie's desire to relate her own personal religious convictions to those of the migrants (see Adamson, J., Ramsay, K. and Craig 1984).

Since then a plethora of local interfaith groups sprang up in the other cities and regions of Scotland including Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Inverness, East Renfrewshire and Fife (see <http://www.interfaithscotland.org/interfaith-groups/> last accessed 29/7/2018). The first overarching 'national' framework to emerge was at the United Kingdom level with the foundation of the Interfaith Network for the United Kingdom in 1987 (see (IFNUK 2007, 6). The organisation that is now Interfaith Scotland was founded in 1999 by Sister Isabel Smyth OBE, SND, a Roman Catholic nun who had worked with Stella Reekie in Glasgow and was also a former RE teacher and student of Ninian Smart at Lancaster.

The organisation was initially formed as the Scottish Inter Faith Council and launched in St Mungo's Museum of Religious Life and Art in Glasgow by the first Presiding Officer (Speaker) of the new Scottish Parliament, Trish Goddard MSP (IFNUK 2007, 21, Interview with Sister Isabel Smyth OBE, SND 20/6/16). That the Scottish Inter Faith Council was established in the same year as the Scottish Parliament was no accident and it was founded to a large extent to respond to this post-devolutionary context. The Scottish Inter Faith Council changed its name to Interfaith Scotland in 2012 when it became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) (IFS September 2012, 2).

The Literature of Interfaith Scotland

The sources for this article are Interfaith Scotland's increasingly large body of publicly available literature. This literature consists primarily of their extensive newsletter which discusses interfaith events occurring across Scotland by incorporating the accounts provided by activists from local interfaith groups (see <http://www.interfaithscotland.org/resources/newsletters/> last accessed 7/9/17, Dr Maureen Sier Personal Communication 18/11/15). The newsletter provides a limited but vital insight into the Scottish interfaith movement across the country and the very act of framing this coverage to an imagined national community and presumed national interfaith audience is significant.

The other key sources of evidence are documents which are produced to educate members of the public and in some cases government workers, hospital staff and patients about the religions of the world and which provide us with an insight into the interfaith view of religion. These documents include most notably: *A Guide to the Faith Communities of Scotland* (n.d.), *Values in Harmony* (2011) and *Belief in Dialogue* (2011, produced with the Scottish Government), (see <http://www.interfaithscotland.org/resources/publications/> last accessed 05/10/2015). These textual sources are supplemented by interviews with the founder of the organisation Sister Isabel Smyth, the current Director Dr Maureen Sier, and the Interfaith Officer of the Scottish Pagan Federation John MacIntyre.

Religious Pluralism and the Demographics of Scotland

Constructing relationships between groups belonging to completely different religious traditions is crucial to the interfaith movement, as distinct from

Christian ecumenicism. It is their *sine qua non*. In Scotland this has depended on the involvement of non-Christian religious minorities. Thus, in a sense the category of 'religious minorities' or 'other faiths' form the most significant social category upon which they are dependent, aside from the category of 'religion' or 'faith' itself. To ensure that established actors in Scotland such as the government, charities and the churches could develop an interfaith relationship it had to be ensured that religious minorities had institutional means through which this could be achieved, and interfaith groups have been a crucial means of achieving these goals.

Scotland has undeniably become a more diverse society over time and the espousal of religious pluralism is partially a reflection of that, but it is also as much a normative as a descriptive position. Scotland can still be viewed as an ethnically, culturally, and to an extent, religiously homogenous population compared to many other western nations, including England. However, in common with other European nations, the demographic and cultural monopoly of established forms of Christianity has been steadily declining. According to the 2011 census, 54% of Scots identified as 'Christian' and only 32% identified with the national church – the Church of Scotland – a decrease of 11% since the previous census in 2001. Identification with the label 'non-religious' has risen by 9% since 2001 to 37%, overtaking identification with the Church of Scotland. This erosion of Christian monopoly has not been matched by a corresponding diversification of religious identity; the religious minority population is still quite low overall at just under 3%. This includes Scottish Muslims as the largest minority group at 1.4%, Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs at 0.6% taken together, and the Jewish population and smaller minority groups making up the remainder

(<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities/DataGrid/Religion/RelPopMig> last accessed 11/4/16, National Records of Scotland 2013, 3).

Christians may no longer form an overwhelming majority but rather the vast bulk of the population is split between 'Christian' and 'non-religious' affiliation. Most 'non-religious' Scots are likely to have been former Christians or have recent Christian ancestry. Furthermore, figures from the census also demonstrate that the Scottish population is relatively ethnically homogenous, with only around 4% of the population being classified as an ethnic minority (National Records of Scotland 2013, 2, see Bond 2017). That being said, it should also be acknowledged that this is not as simple as it might appear because the numbers of religious minorities are considerably higher in the major cities of the central belt: Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee. In Glasgow, religious minorities make up 7% of the population compared to 1% in Na hEileanan an Iar (the Western Isles) (<http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/ods-visualiser/#view=religionChart&selectedWafers=0> last accessed 11/4/16).

The central belt is home to the vast majority of the population of the country and forms the dominant perspective within it as the centre of politics, business and media. Religious diversity is a greater part of the lived experience of people living in that region. Central belt Scots are more likely to be a member of a minority and non-Christian forms of religion may be far more visible there than some of the traditionalist Protestant sects which exist in parts of rural

Scotland. This discussion is especially complex because it rests on contingent social categories (e.g. 'religion') which dictate which groups are considered majority and minority and within which framework (i.e. it is dependent on the 'national' framework itself). In short, 'homogeneity' and 'diversity' are socially constructed and relative. Former assertions of the nation's 'Christian' or 'Protestant' identity were also made at times when minority groups were present in the country, even if demographically marginal. These demographic factors do not change the fact that religious and ethnic diversity have become significant to public life in the country.

Unsurprisingly, religious minorities have much greater representation within Interfaith Scotland than they do in the population at large. This is because the organisation aims to provide a forum for dialogue between religious groups and claims to represent the different religious communities of the nation. The organisation provides a means for minority groups to build on Interfaith Scotland's relationship with the government, but it is also a means through which the government and the major Christian churches can engage with minority groups institutionally. These goals, when placed against the demographics of contemporary Scotland, have meant that they are particularly dependent on both institutionalised religious groups and on broader religious categories over and above more local or specific categories and over and above individuals.

The Membership of Interfaith Scotland

The organisation's membership is not composed of individuals but of institutionalised groups which must possess a constitution and charitable status (Dr Maureen Sier, personal communication, 18/11/15). Most of these are religious groups, but most major local interfaith groups and several religious education and charitable groups are also members. Individual groups self-represent at many events, notably members' dialogue meetings but as far as the governance of the organisation and overall representations of religion are concerned, the emphasis is on broader world religious traditions.

Each of the member groups are classified into one of the 'founding' traditions: the Bahá'í Faith⁴, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism, or else are classed as 'associate members'. Each of the members classed by one of the founding traditions elect a representative to the governing board of the organisation alongside its Director – Dr Maureen Sier, a Bahá'í, and representatives of women of faith and local interfaith groups (Dr Maureen Sier, personal communication, 18/11/15). The board is always chaired by one of the founding representatives which is a separate role from the Director, which during the period of research for my thesis was held by the Buddhist representative Larry Blance (now taken by the Jewish representative Alan Kay). Thus, there are two tiers of membership including the individual groups such as the Giffnock and Newlands Synagogue and Scottish Jews as

⁴ Please note that the term 'Bahá'í Faith' is used here because this is the recognised emic term both for the broader tradition and the trans-national institutionalised Bahá'í religion, this is why the term is usually capitalized to distinguish it from notions of personal 'faith'.

a single religious community with their representative (see <http://www.interfaithscotland.org/about-us/> last accessed 29/7/18).

This two-tiered structure was adopted to ensure that different denominations or religious bodies could be represented without groups belonging to any particular tradition or traditions dominating. All of the recognised traditions are granted equal representation on the board regardless of how many individual congregations or organisations join IFS and regardless of their numeracy in the population at large. In Scotland, Christians are not only demographically dominant but there are many more, large, well established Christian groups or denominations than there are groups belonging to other traditions. There was a concern even among many Christians themselves that the sheer number of different Christian groups would drown out the voices of the religious minority groups with whom they sought to engage in dialogue.⁵

The structure of Interfaith Scotland is two-tiered in another sense though because some religious groups do not have the same level of representation. The associate members of the organisation are not directly represented on the board and include several religious groups: the Pagan Federation Scotland, the Brahma Kumaris – Scotland, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (colloquially known as the ‘Moonies’ from their founder the Revd. Sun Myung Moon), the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (or the Mormon church) and the Scottish Unitarian Association (<http://www.interfaithscotland.org/about-us/associate-members/> last accessed 7/9/17). This system was adopted in 2012 when the organisation changed from being the Scottish Inter Faith Council to become Interfaith Scotland. This system was adopted to resolve a long-standing issue, the application for membership of the Pagan Federation, who had been applying for membership for ten years. Their initial application had been shocking because it was not one of the six or seven world religions:

[T]here was a request for membership from the Pagan Federation ...but that was a great shock because people hadn't thought about you know Paganism, had we realised that there might be groups which called themselves 'religion' that weren't members of six or seven major world traditions? (Interview with Sister Isabel Smyth OBE, SND, 20/6/16)

There was however, also genuine anxiety that Interfaith Scotland might be denying a 'bona fide' religion access to dialogue. During the process the Pagan representatives had been able to demonstrate their sincerity and commitment to the prescribed interfaith values (ACTS, n.d., 16). Both the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church had objected to their membership and raised the concern that some of the other minority communities would object to their presence which proved unfounded. Indeed, the Pagans were strongly supported by the Buddhist and Hindu representatives. The latter were apparently intrigued by the existence of a

⁵ As Smyth and other interfaith activists have acknowledged (ACTS, n.d., 16)

Western form of polytheism (Interview with John MacIntyre 30/10/16). For most of that time the Pagan Federation had been granted observer status until the adoption of two-tiered membership in 2012 (Interview with Sister Isabel Smyth OBE, SND, 20/6/16). These are some of the ways that Interfaith Scotland structures and limits representations of religious pluralism, but their stress on particular characteristics of religions in their depictions of them are also important.

'Religion' in the Literature of Interfaith Scotland

Characteristics of 'religions', as represented in the literature of Interfaith Scotland can be summarised as: 1) substantive, 2) *sui generis* or possessing a distinct essence, 3) sacred – or intrinsically of deep personal and social significance, 4) institutional, 5) intellectual or philosophical, 6) ethical, 7) textual and 8) universal - accurately represented as a handful of broader 'world' or 'universal' traditions. These are characteristics which can be deduced both from their rationale for inclusion of groups in the organisation and the ways in which religions are represented in the literature.

'Religions' for Interfaith Scotland can also be differentiated by so-called substantive characteristics such as belief in deities or reincarnation. The overviews of the religious traditions represented in texts such as *A Guide to the Faith Communities of Scotland* (henceforth the *Guide*) are described in terms of belief in a God or gods, with the partial exception of Buddhism. The fact that many forms of Buddhism do not centre on creative or controlling deities is recognised⁶ but nonetheless the centrality of belief in reincarnation, Buddha nature and the personal search for enlightenment are asserted, which depend on both belief and 'supernatural' elements to identify religions as religions (IFS, n.d., 6-7).

Religions are also regarded as *sui generis* – religions are depicted as distinctive, independent and beneficial forces within society. Religions not only portrayed as having much in common but are clearly distinguished from other groups in society, including organised non-religious groups such as the Humanist Society Scotland (HSS), who under the language of the 2010 Equality Act are classed under the category of 'belief', rendered legally equivalent to 'religion'⁷. Interfaith Scotland has worked closely with the HSS through joint membership of the Scottish Government's working group on religion and belief relations since 2008 and active participation in a series of 'Common Ground' conferences on dialogue between religious and non-religious groups since 2013 (IFS Spring 2014, 23⁸). They collaborated on the 2011 document *Belief in Dialogue* produced under the name of the Scottish

⁶ Indeed, one could make a case that the role of deities or superhuman agents in Buddhist traditions, especially in folk practices has been overlooked in favour of a western influenced 'rationalised' Buddhism.

⁷ *The Equality Act (2010)* Part II, Chapter 1.10.2. quoted and referenced in (The University of Edinburgh 2014: p6), The Scottish Government 2011, 45.

⁸ The first conference was held at the Roman Catholic Conforti Institute in Coatbridge with which Smyth is affiliated, selected proceedings and reflections on the conference were provided by The Xaverian Missionaries of the United Kingdom and the United States (2013)

Government (The Scottish Government 2011, 51). Furthermore, they have even represented Humanism as one of the traditions afforded a section in some of their educational documents such as *Values in Harmony* (henceforth *Values*, SIFC 2011, 45-49) and *Reflections of Life* (henceforth *Reflections*, NHS Scotland 2011, 7) produced for the Scottish NHS.

Despite the increasing inclusion and collaboration between Interfaith and the HSS, an organisation which is avowedly committed to a materialist and naturalist worldview, both parties appear to implicitly define 'religion' in substantive terms. Humanism is never referred to as a 'religion' and when they are represented in documents such as *Values* the terms 'worldview', 'life-stance' and the term 'belief' are used. The latter category is now protected in UK law as equivalent to religion through the 2010 Human Rights Act (see The University of Edinburgh 2014, 6; The Scottish Government 2011, 45). The view of religions as unique, somewhat equivalent to ('non-religious') 'beliefs' but nonetheless having particularly shared characteristics was expressed by Sister Smyth:

I don't believe that faith communities can't talk to themselves... religions have their own questions and their own conversations (Interview with Sister Isabel Smyth OBE, SND, 20/6/16).

The equivocation between religion and belief has attempted to protect all Scots classified by the 'religion' and 'non-religion' binary but has also reinforced this distinction as well. The government's desire to represent and promote good relations between all groups classified by this binary has been echoed and even facilitated by the interfaith movement. Nonetheless, Interfaith Scotland's classification of religions does not merely reflect substantive features such as supernatural doctrines but other defining characteristics. Both religion and its equivalent category of 'belief' are constructed as being 'sacred', they form the core of identity as supreme personal and social significance, despite the fact that many people may not regard these social identities as most significant to them. This was clarified in *Belief in Dialogue* as:

To be protected, a person must belong to a religion that has a clear structure and belief system...A philosophical belief must satisfy various criteria, including that it is a belief about a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour – so, for example, humanism. (The Scottish Government 2011, 45)

It is notable that a range of beliefs, practices, actors and groups have been almost completely ignored never mind not included in the interfaith literature. Much of the phenomena which could be classified as 'New Age', 'holistic' or 'alternative spirituality' has been entirely ignored by the Scottish interfaith movement. It is unlikely that this is conscious but rather a result of the internalisation of the construction of 'religions' as discrete traditions which form the core of personal and communal identity. This is in spite of the fact that a range of 'supernatural' beliefs and practices rooted in 'supernatural' claims can be found among the broader population which may not be integral

to personal identity or be rooted in a discrete tradition. This could include a range of phenomena such as tarot, dowsing, astrology, aromatherapy, reiki and innumerable other things (see Sutcliffe 2006).

The few references to alternative beliefs and practices which I came across in the literature do not undermine IFS' approach to religion, rather they affirm it in other respects. *Reflections* for example did contain a section for so called 'believers not belongers' (following Grace Davie's work) but it is notable that these groups are represented through a selection of texts which were depicted as of fundamental personal significance (NHS Scotland 2011, 11). In another case from the newsletter, Aberdeen Inter Faith Group were visited by a member of the alternative Findhorn community located near Elgin, who led them through a ritual called a 'Harmonic Temple' which was derived from combining rituals from four different religious traditions (SIFC March 2012, 6). This is revealing because while this practice combines elements of different religious traditions, it also reinforces distinctive religious traditions as sources of authoritative spirituality. In many respects, the representatives of alternative movements and interfaith activists appear to be united in their view of the importance of global religions.

As mentioned, the literature reinforces a view of 'religion' as intrinsically of profound personal and communal significance to adherents. It is unlikely that alternative practices or stances are absent because of deliberate intent but because both interfaith activists, with their strong link to 'traditional' religious communities and alternative practitioners view these as completely distinctive phenomena. Indeed, these practices may be combined with a range of different religious identifications especially if it is not the basis of a strong social and personal identity. Interfaith Scotland's construction of 'religion' as 'sacred' or of 'ultimate concern' can be linked to their agenda to highlight the importance of religion to Scottish public life as per their core goals:

- To provide a forum for different religions in dialogue with one another on matters of religious, national and civic importance
 - To support a wider interfaith dialogue with other religion and belief groups
 - To support educational activities in connection with interfaith dialogue
 - To encourage civic engagement by religious communities in Scotland and to support religious equality.
- (www.interfaithscotland.org/about-us 10/8/15)

Religions are represented as needing specific representation and recognition, bringing particular benefits (as we shall discuss) but also with particular needs. This was strongly asserted by a statement made by Scottish religious leaders regarding the future position of 'religion' under any future Scottish constitutional arrangement:

The faiths which people hold contribute (to) the creation of a society rooted in compassion and justice... Scotland's religious diversity is something to be celebrated and something to be

engaged with....the unique contribution of people of faith must be respected and enabled to flourish.....faiths have each come to contribute their own wisdom and perspectives to a society, which is at once a product of its heritage but also is increasingly diverse, interrelated, multicultural and multi-faith. (IFS Summer 2014, 6-7)

This is further represented, for example, by the ‘concerns of the community’ portion of each chapter of the *Guide* which outline everything from concerns over religious methods of slaughter or dietary requirements to the right to religious education (e.g. IFS, n.d., 15). This has led to the need to depict religious communities as concrete phenomena in themselves linked to identifiable communities. This agenda is shared by the Scottish Government with its expressed desire to relate to different forms of community which can be represented but which also tends to represent them in essentialist terms as fundamentally equivalent and deeply significant.

Within the interfaith literature this attitude is very clear. For example, Iain Stewart from Edinburgh Inter Faith Association (EIFA) was recorded in the newsletter as providing a talk for primary school pupils on ‘The Common Threads of World Religions’ introducing them to ‘the similarities and foundations that bond all belief systems together’ (IFS Spring 2013, 9). A World Religions Day has also been celebrated in Dumfries since 2011 which has involved readings from different religious texts and which has aimed to ‘foster the establishment of inter faith understanding and harmony by emphasising the common denominators underlying all religions’ (SIFC February 2011, 4) and ‘followers of every religion are encouraged to acknowledge the similarities between different faiths’ and ‘the fundamental oneness of faith’ (IFS Spring 2015, 25).

Inherently the organisation empowers institutions and their leadership through its structure. It is an organisation which is composed of other organisations with their own institutional structures and leadership. While the Director and some of the other staff of Interfaith Scotland remain separate from the member-groups (www.interfaithscotland.org/about-us/staff last accessed 4/10/15), the governing board is made up of representatives appointed and approved by the various member-groups. While many of the events organised by Interfaith Scotland and especially those organised by local groups are open to the public and therefore individuals with different perspectives and agendas, the organisation is dependent largely on religious institutions and leadership.

This institutional focus is particularly evident through Interfaith Scotland’s close relationship with the Scottish Religious Leaders Forum (RLF) whose meetings are routinely covered in the newsletter. The RLF was set up by the leaders of the three major Christian churches in Scotland (Church of Scotland, the Scottish Roman Catholic Church and the Scottish Episcopal Church) in 2002. It was established in the wake of 9/11 to maintain regular contact between the leaders of different religious groups in Scotland and to represent religion positively to the media and public (ACTS, n.d., 17-19; SIFC August

2009, 11). Interfaith Scotland also performs a crucial administrative function for the RLF, acting as their secretariat (Maureen Sier, personal communication, 18/11/15). This is another means by which they have helped to cement the role of institutional religious leadership in the public representation of religious pluralism and in national interfaith relations.

Can I tell you the one about the Minister, the Priest and the Rabbi? Actually my story also includes the Sikh Ghani, the Buddhist Monk, the Tibetan Lama, the Hindu priest and the Baha'i - that's me - amongst others! *Alan Forsyth* [sic]. (SIFC August 2009, 11)

The remaining features of Interfaith Scotland's representation of 'religion' closely fit the world religions paradigm, namely that the 'religions' are largely limited to a handful of universalistic, world-spanning traditions with large numbers of adherents and which are depicted as fundamentally equivalent to one another (Masuzawa 2005, 2-3; Cotter and Robertson 2016, 2). The world religions paradigm emphasises these broader religious identities over and above particular groupings or communities which can be identified under these religious umbrellas (Masuzawa 2005, 9-10). The emphasis on broader, trans-local traditions has in turn led to an emphasis on more abstract, intellectual and textual elements of these traditions and an attempt to portray religious groups through easily explicable common denominators (Cox 2007, 88; Cotter and Robertson 2016, 9-10). Scholars of religion have pointed to the fact that 'world religions' are constructed according to a particular Abrahamic, Christian or even specifically liberal Protestant mould (King 1999, 92; Harvey 2013, 2-3) which brings to the fore the elements which are most recognisable to these traditions such as theological and ethical doctrines and codified scriptures, even when these elements did not historically have the same significance (Cotter and Robertson 2016, 7-8).

It is notable that while Interfaith Scotland has a range of different congregations and denominations as members, these are organised according to their world tradition. Most members are classified into one of the following traditions: Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh. Those groups which could not comfortably fit into one of these traditions were afforded a secondary status as 'associate members', while groups recognised as adherents of one of the 'founding' traditions were allocated a single shared representative according to that identification. The religious groups have not been represented directly, nor have they have been represented according to their demographic share of the Scots population. If either of these means of representing 'religions' were utilised the organisation would be overwhelmingly dominated by Christians, which would defeat the purpose of a national interfaith body. In relation to religious minorities, this entails that they are recognised according to their perceived global importance: as J.Z. Smith noted, these entities were large and powerful enough to be taken seriously as equivalents, potential rivals or allies of Christendom (Smith 1993, 294-296; King 1999, 62).

This world religions schema is replicated in Interfaith Scotland's educational documents, which also provide sections for each of these world religions which attempt to convey their essential core features. Notably some of the associate members such as the Pagan and Brahma Kumari communities have been represented but these are largely and successfully moulded by the world religions paradigm (IFS, n.d., 20-23; SIFC 2011, 67-73; NHS Scotland 2011, 7). Interfaith Scotland reinforce and disseminate a view of religions as fundamentally composed of intellectual and ethical traditions.

'Religions' are represented as bodies of doctrines, prescribed practices and teachings which individuals adhere to, rather than as communities formed by family background or other social processes. This is exemplified in many of their educational documents, such as *Values* which uses a variety of textual or scriptural quotes to demonstrate the conformity of each tradition to a common system of values centred on the golden rule: 'do unto others what you would have them do to you' (SIFC 2011, 6-7). Textual sources are relied upon as equivalent means of demonstrating the core features of the 'faith' and the primary ones by which adherents can gain an understanding of it and its meaning. This was most dramatically demonstrated by the representation of Paganism within this same document which reifies Paganism as a single, global and even ahistorical tradition supported by textual sources as diverse as Babylonian proverbs, classic philosophers and contemporary Pagan authors such as Starhawk (SIFC 2011, 69).

Arguably, part of the reason for the emphasis on texts is that they are easy to access, replicate, transport and appropriate for different occasions in comparison with the intangible features of a specific community. It is also comparatively easy to slot the representation of religious minorities into a pre-existing Christian structure well established within Scottish society. One common practice at civic events has been the interfaith service, obviously modelled on Christian services, during which quotations from diverse scriptural sources are read out, for example at an Aberdeen interfaith service where (unnamed) Hindu scriptures were quoted alongside the Bible and Qur'an (IFS September 2012, 13).

Nonetheless it is still the case that this scriptural focus more closely fits some religious groups than others. For example, the practice of 'scriptural reasoning' among local groups, which involves comparing different scriptural sources to find common teachings has been largely confined to the Abrahamic religions though, notably, there has been an expressed desire to extend this practice to other faiths and even to non-religious texts (SIFC February 2011, 12; IFS Summer 2014, 11). While this means of representing religions help to include religious minorities in civic life in many regions, it also means that traditions can be represented without the presence of its representatives. When Skye Faiths Together held a 'vigil for the planet' in Somerled Square in Portree, quotations were read out to represent the environmentalism embedded in all religions which included Daoist and Cherokee sources alongside the religious groups in Interfaith Scotland. It cannot be demonstrated beyond doubt, but it is unlikely that representatives of

all or most of the traditions invoked were present at the vigil (SIFC March 2010, 3).

This form of representation fits into nationalism scholar Ernest Gellner's conception of 'context-free' communication being an essential feature of modernisation. By this Gellner meant that communication could be replicated in highly varied contexts and replicated by almost anyone by conveying communication in a literate and technical form without the need for the more intimate, subtle kinds of communication embedded in specific contexts (Gellner 1983, 52-61). This can aid in the description of Interfaith Scotland which represent themselves as providing a kind of technical expertise in representing the interests, needs and features of religions in easily understandable and accommodatable forms. They are in many ways public technicians of faith, bridging different religious communities with the Scottish public and government through their mastery of the means of communicating 'religions'. In this manner, religions are represented as relatable, coherent bodies of knowledge rather than cultural aggregates with particular ethno-cultural and geographic roots.

Interfaith Scotland reinforces a view of religions as not only ethical but as fundamentally so, that preaching common values is the core of religion. The stress on religions as ethical often involves acknowledgement of a violent streak within religions but which can be firmly separated from the predominant socially beneficial construction of religion. This usually involves pointing to religious charity work to combat negative stereotypes about religion, particularly regarding Islam. It is a means of defending and promoting the role of religious groups within the public sphere against exclusionary forms of secularism by highlighting the intrinsically beneficial influence:

With the suggestion that there is no place for religion apart from the privacy of home and place of worship...Would advocates of a secular Scotland want...Church Action on Poverty or Islamic Relief to stop caring? (IFS Summer 2013, 12)

It can be interpreted as helping to promote good behaviour which can also be translated into good citizenship, public spiritedness and integration but it is also a means of defending different religions against the negative baggage of the category. Their common reliance on the category of 'religion' means that all can potentially suffer from the negative image of religion and its associations with violence, intolerance and terrorism. The fact that the Muslim community particularly suffers from these associations means that much interfaith outreach is related to improving the public image of Islam: Muslim volunteers have frequently been involved in interfaith visits to schools (e.g. IFS Spring 2014, 15). Another example of this would be the Fife based Muslim women's group Jewels of Islam, whose engagement with the public to combat assumptions about Muslim women as oppressed has frequently been reported in the newsletter (IFS Summer 2013, 6; IFS Spring 2015, 25). The Islamic sections of Interfaith Scotland's educational documents have also provided evidence from the Qur'an and Hadith to demonstrate the equality of the sexes within Islam (e.g. SIFC 2011, 53).

The traditions presented in documents like *Values*, are represented primarily as ancient or established traditions with clear narratives and core attributes but which need to be represented and accommodated at the local and national level. The equivalence of the religious traditions is emphasised in documents such as the *Guide* by the use of equivalent headings: basic beliefs, customs and practices, places of worship, main festivals, food and diet and concerns of the community. The religions are presented as discrete, well bounded and unified traditions throughout the literature despite the fact there is considerable internal diversity and mutability. It should be borne in mind that all of these documents are compiled under the authority of the relevant communities who to a large extent have been shaped according to world religions categories beforehand (IFS Spring 2015, 16; SIFC 2011, 6), such as the construction of the world religions of Hinduism and Buddhism in the 19th century, for example (see King 1999; Masuzawa 2005).

The construction of Hinduism as a singular tradition has been argued by scholars such as Richard King to be a large extent a 19th century project but the sense of Hinduism as a singular religion is strongly reinforced in the interfaith literature. Despite the vast internal diversity of practice and theology it is presented by the *Guide* as a religion with a common monotheistic or monistic set of doctrines (IFS, n.d., 10). This has been echoed by the participation of members of the Hindu community at interfaith events, for example a Hindu priest providing a lecture on the 'essence' of Hinduism (IFS Summer 2014). Despite the evidence that many members of religious minorities have internalised the essentialised view of their own traditions, this does not mean that their representations can never be discordant because religions may be presented as coherent and self-contained, but the boundaries constructed around them are often arbitrary, porous and difficult to police (Sutcliffe 2016, 26).

In the *Guide* for example, the Buddhist section emphasises the non-theistic character of Buddhism and the Buddha (IFS, n.d., 6-7), while the Hindu section claims the Buddha is an incarnation of God along with the prophets and founders of many traditions (IFS, n.d., 10-11) in sharp contrast to the Islamic section which emphasises the unique oneness of Allah (IFS, n.d., 12). The difficulty of neatly separating out religious traditions can be obscured by their establishment and continuous reification, which nonetheless sits alongside the fact that many religions make some kind of claim to the prophets or traditions of the others, most evidently among the Abrahamic religions.

Within the literature 'religions' can also be reproduced as traditions through texts, tenets and even visually or performatively through reproduction of core symbols, artistic traditions or festivals which can potentially be reproduced anywhere by anyone. Though it should be stressed that there is a significant degree to which this is tempered by the institutional approach to religion mentioned above, this institutional representation is still defined by broader

world traditions. Nonetheless, this strategic essentialism⁹ has been useful for diasporic religious communities in gaining acceptance through emphasis on the most relatable and usually most universal features of long, complex and varied traditions which could only ever be approached somewhat selectively. Nonetheless, the lack of concrete information about specific communities or congregations in many of Interfaith Scotland's educational documents, aside from contact details and occasional photography, can be striking. The emphasis on the universalism of religious traditions is revealed by the fact that the *Guide* does not, for example, discuss the ethnic character of Judaism, nor do the Hindu or Sikh sections even mention India. It is perhaps more striking though that a document entitled *A Guide to the Faith Communities of Scotland* contains no information about specific communities in Scotland. It is revealing that a mastery of essentialised characteristics of world religions is deemed sufficient to understand religious groups in Scotland.

Nevertheless, I would argue that this approach does not undermine the shared national identity which is emphasised elsewhere, but rather makes it significantly easier to combine religious identities with other kinds of identities which are more limited. In comparison, nations or national governments make modest territorial claims to authority which cannot compete with the reach of the world faiths. Notably, the foreword to *Values* was written by the then SNP Minister for Community Safety Fergus Ewing and the document's introduction specifically critiqued 'mosaic multiculturalism', the notion that different cultures or religions could lead largely parallel lives or remain fundamentally separate. Integration (if not assimilation) into a common society through emphasis on the shared values of the religious and belief traditions is strongly urged (SIFC 2011, 5-8). This society or common life referenced throughout the literature is at times implicitly but often explicitly identified with Scotland, though by doing so Scottish national identity is remade as diverse and plural.

Despite the degree to which different religious traditions have successfully been rendered into this Protestant-influenced mould defined by sacred texts, beliefs, doctrines, unified identity and universalism, some religious groups fit this mould more clearly than others. Arguably, aside from Christianity, it is Islam and the Bahá'í Faith which fit it most closely. Islam and the Bahá'í Faith are founded on claims to represent the culmination of divine revelation to humankind through scriptures and are widespread, transnational and trans-ethnic. Islam is the second largest religious tradition in the world after Christianity and is the majority religion in countries as distinct as the Gambia and Indonesia. The Bahá'í commitment to world government, pacifism and their recognition of the prophets or founding figures from most of the 'world religions', has meant that in many respects it closely matches contemporary interfaith sensibilities. Its comparative modernity, founded in mid-19th century Iran, means that much of its authoritative sources were produced during the consolidation of modern liberal or pluralist discourse on religion. In *Values* for example, the Bahá'í section can offer clear condemnation of fanaticism, ideas

⁹ This kind of strategic essentialism was identified by Gayatri Spivak, referenced in Eide 2010, 76.

of balance between religion and science and a degree of religious relativism (SIFC 2011, 15, 18).

Some of the other founding traditions have a more complex relationship with this understanding of 'religion'. Both Sikhism and Judaism are monotheistic and textual traditions, but they are also overwhelmingly confined to a particular ethnic group and not only do not proselytise but largely do not encourage conversion. Nonetheless this does not mean that they are lacking in universalistic features which have been accentuated in the interfaith literature, as exemplified by this statement from Rabbi Mark Solomon:

All men and women, of every colour and creed, of every race and nation, are our brothers and sisters...Like brothers and sisters, we should feel a sense of common identity...For God, who created us, cares for all of us; therefore we should care equally for one another. (IFS Spring 2015, 8)

Similarly, references to the Jewish educational organisation Limmud have referred to the practice of Judaism as a 'journey' and at an interfaith gathering organised by Limmud members of other religious groups were invited to discuss their own 'faith journeys' (IFS Spring 2013, 7). This can be viewed as part of a historical process where non-Christian religious groups have adapted themselves to the category of 'religion' determined mostly by western Protestant Christians. In some cases, members of minority groups have been able to represent themselves as exemplifying these norms more than the Christian groups which determined it.

The interfaith movement with its Christian origins, and the religious pluralism becoming increasingly significant within the public life of formerly Christian nations such as Scotland, provide more recent and acute examples of these processes. As King argued, the monistic Vedanta tradition within Hinduism, with its claims to absorb many paths to the divine, could be presented as more universalistic and certainly more pluralistic than the liberal Protestantism with which it was forced to compete through the selective presentation of texts and traditions (King 1999, 93-98, 103-107).

Arguably, the pluralist universalism associated with the Hindu and Bahá'í traditions in the literature perhaps exemplify the interfaith ethos because they accept and integrate but do not attempt to assimilate other traditions without remainder. The ethnic or at least non-proselytising character of some religious traditions such as Judaism and Sikhism can also be represented not as exclusivity but as exemplary of this pluralism. This was exemplified by a reference in the *Guide* to the fact that Judaism does not seek converts, believing that non-Jews should follow their own path (SIFC 2011, 62). This has also been echoed by the Pagan section of *Values* which emphasises that Pagans view attempts at conversion as rude and disrespectful (SIFC 2011, 21).

The universalistic category of 'religion' as promoted by Interfaith Scotland can be used by religious minority groups to secure a protected status within

diasporic conditions in a country in which they have relatively low numbers. The category can be employed to protect against the potential threat of assimilation and equate specific community concerns such as regarding methods of animal slaughter or dietary requirements with broader questions such as the place of 'religion' in contemporary Scotland or the universal ethical and philosophical insights of global traditions. As these issues feed into debates between and among the Christian and non-religious sections of Scottish society and wider debates such as religious schooling, they can make alliances with larger groups through the category of 'religion'. The interfaith movement and the very categories it depends upon may have firmly Christian roots and require a degree of adaptation from minority groups but members of these groups can demonstrate agency in their use, especially delegitimising attempts at assimilation or conversion. However, despite the emphasis on universalism within the literature of Interfaith Scotland the category of 'ethnicity' is still significant in the representation of religious minorities within that literature.

'Ethnicity' in the Literature of Interfaith Scotland

Despite this degree of conformity to a common type, the differences between some of these communities cannot be overlooked. The fact that most religious minority communities are the product of comparatively recent immigration and are primarily made up of ethnic minorities, does mean that ethnicity is part and parcel of representations of certain religious minorities. Certainly, Interfaith Scotland have involved themselves in anti-racism campaigns and since 2012 have been tasked by the Scottish Government with coordinating the nationwide commemorations of National Holocaust Memorial Day on the 27th of January (IFS Spring 2014, 17). They have also worked extensively with refugees and refugee charities. The Scottish Refugee Council President John Wilkes provided the opening lecture at the Interfaith Scotland AGM which I attended in November 2015 and they have also recently appointed a refugee officer (<http://www.interfaithscotland.org/about-us/staff/> last accessed 4/6/17). The roots of the interfaith movement in Scotland lie with Stella Reekie's work with immigrants to Glasgow in the 1960s and '70s and the involvement of the Scottish churches in interfaith began with their internal divisions working on racial and ethnic diversity.

As one would expect they represent cultural diversity and ethnic heritage positively, which includes the strong ties between the Hindu and Sikh communities and Indian culture (e.g. SIFC March 2012, 2; IFS Spring 2013, 10). These form a strong part of the symbolism and aesthetics of interfaith which are often combined or coexist with the use of Scottish cultural symbolism. Multicultural events at the local level are frequently mentioned in the literature or are incorporated into interfaith events through displays of art, dance, music or food which represent cultural diversity. These representations of culture are usually described in national or geographical terms e.g. 'Chinese', 'Indian', 'Arabian', 'African' (e.g. SIFC February 2011, 3, 8) etc. These representations are not discussed in terms of communities, institutions or traditions as with 'religions'. Certainly, Interfaith Scotland is organised around the category of 'faith' or 'religion' and common 'nationality' rather than

'ethnicity' or 'culture' so this is perhaps unsurprising, but the difference in emphasis is notable nonetheless.

To a large extent this is a generalised 'diversity' which fits into the common national framework alongside representations of religious pluralism. Yet this representation contrasts quite sharply with the reification of 'religions' and emphasis on broader traditions over generalised variety. 'Religions' may be represented in somewhat abstract, intellectual and appropriable terms but they are nonetheless used to categorise distinct communities and agents as well as bound to institutional representation. To some extent the particular ethnic associations of religions are downplayed in favour of abstract universalistic traditions which fit into a religiously plural nation. This is best exemplified by the *Guide* which provides general summaries of world traditions rather than information about the specific congregations; their descriptions of Judaism and Hinduism do not mention the ethnic identity of Jews or India respectively, or even Scotland much for that matter. Nonetheless the links between 'ethnic' and 'religious' identities are in some cases so strong that they are inevitably replicated in the literature, which also demonstrates that the ways in which groups are shaped according to 'religion' or other categories is only ever partial and incomplete. Furthermore, these communities themselves do help to determine how they are represented in as much as both their representatives and those of their collaborators construct 'religion' in a particular manner for strategic reasons.

Despite its universalism, internationalism and increasing internal diversity within Scotland, the link between the majority of the Scottish Muslim population and South Asia, particularly Pakistan, is clear with the membership of the East of Scotland Pakistan Association (<http://www.interfaithscotland.org/about-us/members/> last accessed 29/7/2018) and the inclusion of Pakistani Muslim music and art forms in various events (e.g. IFS Spring 2015, 7). Displays of South Asian culture are associated with representations of the Sikh and Hindu communities whose members are overwhelmingly of Indian origins. The Jewish community is also a product of earlier periods of immigration, largely from Eastern Europe, as exemplified by an evening hosted at the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation in which Jewish and more recent stories of immigration were discussed and celebrated, accompanied by traditional Jewish food and music (IFS Summer 2014, 13). Similarly, events discussing Sikh immigration and Muslim immigrants and refugees have been recorded in the newsletter (IFS September 2012, 17; SIFC March 2012, 2).

The Buddhist and Bahá'í communities are both made up of converts and ethnic diasporas from East and South Asia, and Iran respectively. The Director of Interfaith Scotland, Dr Maureen Sier, is a Scottish convert to the Bahá'í Faith and the former convenor of the board (elected from among the representatives of the seven 'founding' traditions), Larry Blance is a Scottish convert to the Tibetan Buddhist traditions. The Scottish Buddhist Vihara (from the Theravada form of Buddhism) are not members of Interfaith Scotland but have friendly relations (their leader the Venerable Rewatha frequently attends the Religious Leaders Forum meetings), are reported in the newsletter and

are tied to the Sri Lankan community (e.g. IFS September 2012, 6). The Tibetan Kagyu Samyé Dzong is bound up with representations of Tibetan culture but is composed of both ethnic Tibetans and converts, while the western Triratna (formerly Friends of the Western Buddhist Order) is also a member of the organisation.

Despite these representations of 'ethnicity' or 'ethnic' heritage in the literature in relation to 'religion', the latter and the former are nonetheless reinforced as distinctive categories. The links between them are acknowledged but it is 'religion' which is the paramount category which involves stressing the most universalistic features of these traditions. This also has implications for the integration of religious groups into a common national identity because the universal, intellectual and ethical character of religions do not disrupt the nation as the basis of political life but can inform and contribute to it. Interfaith Scotland certainly constructs and reinforces Scottish national identity as plural and tolerant but reinforces a common sense of national belonging nonetheless. Representations of cultural diversity and ethnic heritage, especially through their ties to religion, is part of this pluralism but tends to be reinforced as discrete or institutionalised. Elements of diverse ethnic heritages are sometimes used almost as symbols of pluralism and diversity itself and as symbols of religions perhaps to make the abstract, intangible and intellectual traditions into which they been rendered more tangible and vivid. Religions on the other hand are reified but – seemingly because they are re-made as systems of thought and belief or teachings – as traditions rather than as discrete communities.

Conclusion

Representing religious minorities has been crucial to the Scottish interfaith movement because incorporating and facilitating cooperation among different religions is fundamental to the aims and self-understanding of the movement. It has also been crucial because while Scotland has grown more religiously diverse and pluralism has become an important part of public discourse, this diversity is quite limited in comparison with many countries. Christians form the overwhelming majority of Scots who affiliate with a religious tradition (as commonly understood) and the decline of Christian affiliation has largely led to the growth of 'non-religious' identification rather than conversion to minority religious groups. Promoting the visibility and representation of religious minorities has been crucial to remaking the nation as plural rather than homogenous and Interfaith Scotland (IFS) has played a significant role in this process.

Within Interfaith Scotland itself, there has been a concerted effort to ensure that the religions are represented equally regardless of their share of the Scots population. This has been achieved through equal representation of groups belonging to different religious traditions on the board as well as equal space and representation within the documents produced by the organisation. In doing so they have been dependent on the category of 'religion', particularly in the form of the 'world religions paradigm' (WRP) with its emphasis on broader traditions rather than specific communities as well as on

their global rather than local significance. The category of 'religion' renders these groups equivalent but also differentiates them from other social identities such as 'non-religious' groups like the Humanists (also rendered both distinct and equivalent in UK equality legislation). Their emphasis on the category of 'religion' also differentiates 'religious' identification from those cast as more contingent such as national and ethnic identity (thereby also rendering them non-competitive and potentially combinable in different forms).

The 'religions' are constructed as world-spanning, universalistic, intellectual and textual traditions with strong ethical teachings to impart and which are represented in Scotland by particular communities, institutions, leadership and membership. Drawing attention to their common concern with ethics has also been used to defend their right to contribute to the Scottish public sphere as an inherently beneficial influence. The representation of religious minorities through the Scottish interfaith movement also fits into pre-existing public debates about the place of 'religion' (namely Christianity) within contemporary Scottish politics and public life. This approach to 'religion' within the interfaith movement is also the result of broader and longer historical processes whereby 'world religions' have been identified and shaped as equivalent to Christianity through stress on intellectual, ethical and universalistic features and on broader tradition over specific communities.

This process is one which has shaped the perception of many members of these communities themselves, but it has also been embraced for strategic reasons. This is because in a diasporic context it allows for greater representation, greater equality and an ability to voice and legitimise the concerns and interests of those communities regarding practices such as methods of slaughter or circumcision which might otherwise be viewed as alien. It can be used as a means of highlighting prejudice against the community and to de-legitimise attempts at assimilation.

This emphasis on universalistic world religions though has had its limits. Those religious groups which did not fit into one of the recognised 'traditions' such as the Scottish Pagan Federation were not granted an equal status and had difficulty joining the organisation in the first place. Though it should be noted, that when represented in the literature, Paganism has similarly been cast as a timeless, global, intellectual and ethical tradition. Furthermore, recasting even many of the 'world' traditions according to this mould has only ever been partially successful. Some descriptions of the traditions might avoid the strong ethnic, cultural or geographical roots of particular communities but these have been impossible to avoid completely (and it is unlikely that the extent to which they have been downplayed has been conscious). It should be stressed that IFS is also interested in promoting cultural diversity in a positive light and in promoting the rights of immigrants and refugees.

The religious traditions which already had marked universalistic tendencies and were already thoroughly trans-national, trans-ethnic and trans-cultural such as Islam and the Bahá'í Faith were easier to represent in this manner. Other communities such as the Sikh, Hindu and Jewish communities have been unavoidably bound up with representations of their cultural heritage. The

fact remains that most religious minority groups are the products of immigration and overlap considerably with ethnic and cultural minority groups regardless of the stress on universalism. The strong attachment of Buddhist communities to different parts of Asia even with converts and the strong roots of most Muslim communities in a South Asian heritage shared with Sikh and Hindu communities have been unavoidable. Representations of cultural diversity have become significant parts of the aesthetics of interfaith, often combined with representations of Scottish cultural identity. IFS have however represented cultural diversity in very general terms in a manner which avoids reifying groups in sharp contrast to their representations of religion. This is most likely because this could undermine their stress on the universalism rather than the contingency of religions.

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