

# A New Agenda

<https://sites.google.com/site/gordonburtmathsocsci/home/5-what-s-new/a-new-agenda>

*A New Agenda* seeks to explore all aspects of society using all the academic disciplines paying special attention to values ... with special interest in modelling ... not disinterested in practice ... and aspiring to high academic standards.

## Commentary, June 2014

## No. 5

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	Community Minister Eric Pickles; Prime Minister David Cameron; Secularist AC Grayling	

‘OUR exceptional values are threatened’ is the theme of this month’s *Commentary*. Hillary Clinton ends her book with a call ‘to unleash the creativity, potential and opportunity that makes America exceptional’. Responding to a concern that the attack on bin Laden would irreparably wound Pakistani national honour, Hillary asked ‘What about our national honour?’ ... In the UK: ‘all schools must teach British values’; and David Cameron notes ‘our religion is now the most persecuted religion around the world’. ... On the Normandy beaches: D-Day commemoration - is Putin thinking of his father fighting in the siege of Leningrad and rescuing his mother from the pile of corpses? With 1914 in mind, Lewis Fry Richardson motivated his arms race model with an imagined statement by the Defence Minister of Jedsland: ‘*our beloved land, our pacific intentions, the menaces by which we are surrounded and our duty*’. These various events are surveyed in Part 1. Part 2 provides an analysis of the European Parliament elections of 2014 which saw the fall of established parties and the rise of nationalist right-wing parties essentially claiming that ‘OUR exceptional values are threatened’ - Marie Le Pen’s Front Nationale in France, Nigel Farage’s UK Independence Party, etc. Part 3 revisits the question ‘Is Britain a

Christian country?’ (see *May Commentary*) and provides an extended seven-page analysis of the system of ideas in play - a system of ideas in which a central thought is ‘OUR exceptional values are threatened’.

## 1 ‘OUR exceptional values are threatened’

### *American exceptionalism and 9/11*

‘The position of the Americans is therefore quite exceptional ...’ Alexis de Toqueville (1835/1840)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy\\_in\\_America](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_in_America); [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_exceptionalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_exceptionalism)

The concept of American exceptionalism is almost two hundred years old and Hillary Clinton invokes it in her book with a call ‘to unleash the creativity, potential and opportunity that makes America exceptional’. She refers to ‘the goodness of our people and the greatness of our nation’.

Responding to a concern that the attack on bin Laden would irreparably wound Pakistani national honour, Hillary asked ‘What about our national honour? ... What about our losses? What about going after a man who killed three thousand innocent people?’. ‘September 11, 2001 is indelibly etched in my mind, just as it is for every American ... During the 2008 campaign both Senator Obama and I criticised the Bush Administration for taking its eye off the ball in Afghanistan and losing focus on the hunt for bin Laden. After the election we agreed that aggressively going after al-Qaeda was crucial to our national security and that there should be a renewed effort to find bin Laden and bring him to justice.’

Clinton, H. R. (2014) *Hard Choices*. Simon & Schuster.

The Times (2014) Hillary Clinton [extracts from the book]. Times 2. Tuesday June 10, pp. 1-4.; Wednesday June 11, pp. 1-4.

### *Is American exceptionalism exceptional?*

However American exceptionalism is not exceptional in the sense that people and nations quite often think of themselves as exceptional. For example some people and nations may feel that the dominance of American culture is a threat to their own exceptionalism. Similarly many voters in the recent European elections expressed a feeling that ‘Europe’ was a threat to their national exceptionalism.

### *‘All schools must teach what it is to be British’*

‘All children will be taught British values of liberty and tolerance from September after a series of reports revealed yesterday how strict Islamic ideology had been imposed on schools. Michael Gove, the education secretary, pledged to act as an investigation by Ofsted found evidence that several Birmingham schools had been targeted by Muslims in an organised campaign to alter their ‘character and ethos’.’

The Times (2014) All schools must teach what it is to be British. Tuesday June 10, p. 1

‘You wanted a sentence on British values. I would say freedom, tolerance, respect for the rule of law, belief in personal social responsibility, and respect for British institutions. Those are the things that I would hope would be inculcated into the curriculum.’

The Times (2014) No mention of a man who doesn’t share British values. [Report of comments by David Cameron] Wednesday June 11, p. 4.

*On the Normandy beaches: D-Day commemoration ... Leningrad*

‘The Prince and Mr Putin are both due to attend an event commemorating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day landings ... Vladimir Putin yesterday launched a withering attack on the Prince of Wales ... The Prince’s comparison of Mr Putin to Hitler is a particularly stinging one with Russia quick to point out that about 26 million Soviet citizens lost their lives fighting the Nazis.’

The Sunday Telegraph (2014) Now Putin hits back at Charles. May 25, pp. 1, 8.

Putin will also have had in mind the siege of Leningrad and his father returning from the front lines for a short break, seeing a pile of corpses outside his apartment, recognising his wife’s shoes, finding his wife was still alive and nursing her back to health ... eight years later in 1952 their son Vladimir was born.

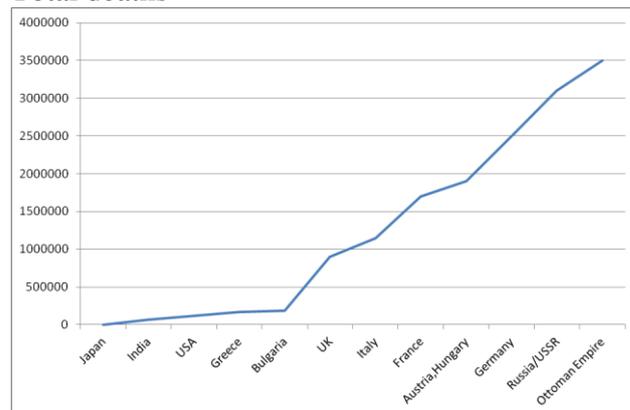
The Times (2014) Hillary Clinton [extracts from the book]. Times 2. Wednesday June 11, p. 2.

*The casualties of two world wars*

Figures 1 and 2 present the casualty figures in World War I and World War II for selected countries. These are total figures combine military and civilian deaths from all causes. Estimates are extremely difficult to make and vary greatly.

Figure 1 World War I casualties

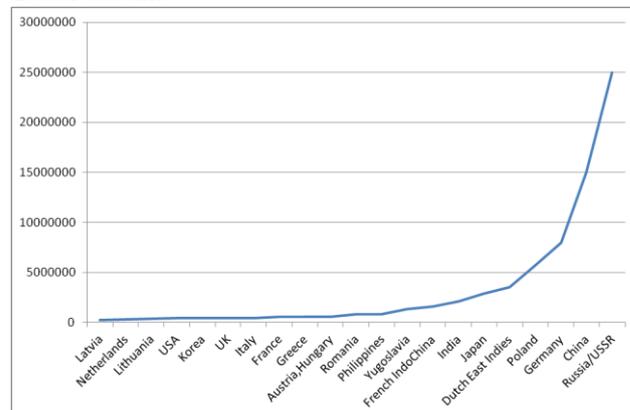
Total deaths



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_War\\_I\\_casualties](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I_casualties)

Figure 2 World War II casualties

Total deaths



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_War\\_II\\_casualties](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II_casualties)

*The Defence Minister of Jededland: ‘our beloved land, our pacific intentions, the menaces by which we are surrounded and our duty’ (Lewis Fry Richardson)*

Richardson’s model of the arms race was initially published in 1919 in the aftermath of his work for the Friends Ambulance Unit in the First World War. He motivated his model as follows:

‘Permit me to discuss a generalized public speech, fictitious but typical ... The Defence Minister of Jededland, when introducing his [defence expenditure] estimates, said:  
‘The intentions of our country are entirely pacific. ... Yet when we consider the state of unrest in the world at large and the menaces by which we are surrounded, we should be failing in our duty as a government if we did not take adequate steps to increase the defences of our beloved land.’  
... We have now to translate that into mathematics ...’

*Postscript: the exceptional values of Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS)*

‘Rather than fight simply as a branch of al-Qaeda (“the base” in Arabic), as it did before 2011, it has aimed to control territory, dispensing its own brand of justice and imposing its own moral code: no smoking, football, music, or unveiled women, for example. And it imposes taxes in the parts of Syria and Iraq it has conquered. In other words, it is creating a proto-state on the ungoverned territory straddling the borderlands between Syria and Iraq.’

<http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21604230-extreme-islamist-group-seeks-create-caliphate-and-spread-jihad-across>

The ISIS’s goals are to create an Islamic state stretching from Egypt to Iraq, with the immediate introduction of Sharia law in conquered territory, including beheadings and amputations. It carries out the process of securing territory through ruthless sectarian attacks. Once an area has been captured, the black and white flag of the ISIS flies aloft.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/06/11/who-are-the-islamic-state-of-iraq-in-syria-isis\\_n\\_5486039.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/06/11/who-are-the-islamic-state-of-iraq-in-syria-isis_n_5486039.html)

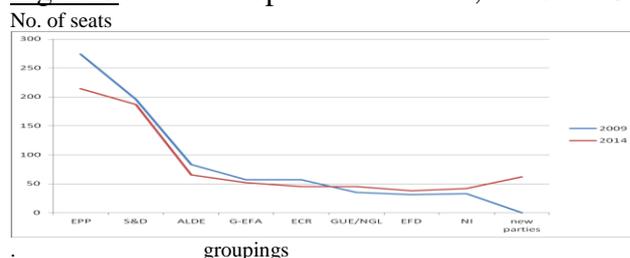
## 2 European Parliament elections, 2014 ... right-wing nationalism

The European Parliament elections of 2014 saw gains by nationalist right-wing parties essentially claiming that ‘OUR exceptional values are threatened’ ...

... the centre-right European People’s Party (EPP) remained the largest grouping despite losing 60 seats. The other established groupings also lost seats: the social-democrat S&D lost 9; the liberal democrat ALDE lost 18; The Greens (GEFA) lost 5; and ECR (which includes the UK Conservatives) lost 12. Most of the gains – 62 seats – were made by new parties. Various non-affiliated parties (NI) gained 9 extra seats. The leftist GUE/NGL gained 10 and the right-wing Eurosceptic EFD 7. See Figure 3.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European\\_Parliament\\_election,\\_2014](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Parliament_election,_2014)

**Figure 3** European Parliament, seats in 2009 and 2014



The most dramatic result was in France where Marie Le Pen's Front Nationale came first, gaining 21 extra seats. In Italy Beppe Grillo's new Five Star Movement won 17 seats, difficult to characterise it is environmental and Eurosceptic. In the UK Nigel Farage's UK Independence Party gained 12 extra seats. In Germany the new *Alternative für Deutschland* gained 7 extra seats. Thus the four largest countries saw major gains by Eurosceptic parties – or in the case of AfD at least against the Euro.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National\\_Front\\_\(France\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Front_(France))  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five\\_Star\\_Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Star_Movement)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UK\\_Independence\\_Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UK_Independence_Party)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternative\\_for\\_Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternative_for_Germany)

Other rightist eurosceptic, far right or neo-Nazi parties who made gains were:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law\\_and\\_Justice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_and_Justice) ECR antifed mild eurosceptic  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congress\\_of\\_the\\_New\\_Right](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congress_of_the_New_Right) eurosceptic  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulgaria\\_Without\\_Censorship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulgaria_Without_Censorship) eurosceptic  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danish\\_People%27s\\_Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danish_People%27s_Party) eurosceptic  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sweden\\_Democrats](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sweden_Democrats) far right  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom\\_Party\\_of\\_Austria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_Party_of_Austria) far right  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden\\_Dawn\\_\(political\\_party\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Dawn_(political_party)) neo-Nazi  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jobbik> neo-Nazi

Other parties making gains were:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TOP\\_09](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TOP_09) centre right  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ANO\\_2011](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ANO_2011) libdem  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union,\\_Progress\\_and\\_Democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union,_Progress_and_Democracy) lib  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_Democratic\\_Party\\_\(Romania\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Democratic_Party_(Romania)) socdem  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Other\\_Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Other_Europe) left  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Left\\_\(Spain\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Left_(Spain)) left  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podemos\\_\(Spanish\\_political\\_party\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podemos_(Spanish_political_party)) left  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SYRIZA> left  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinn\\_F%C3%A9in](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinn_F%C3%A9in) left  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth\\_Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_Party) green  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green\\_Party\\_\(Sweden\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Party_(Sweden)) green

**Table 1** National parties gaining two extra seats or more and their groupings

.	EPP right	S&D left	ALDE libdem	G-EFA green	ECR right	GUE/NGL left	EFD right	NI	new
Germany		SPD 4							AfD 7
France								FN 21	
UK		Lab 7					UKIP 12		
Italy		PD 10				AE 3			M5S 17
Spain						IP 4		UPD 3	Podemus 5, C2
Poland					PiS 4				KNP 4
Romania	PMP 2	PSD.. 5							
Belgium				NVA 3					
Czech	TOP 4		ANO 4						
Greece						Syriza 5			XA3, Potami 2
Hungary		DK 2						Jobbik 3	
Portugal									MPT 2
Sweden				MP 2					SD 2
Austria								FPO 2	
Bulgaria									BBT 2
Denmark								DF2	
Ireland						SF 3			

Note: no parties in the following countries changed by more than one seat: Netherlands, Finland, Slovakia, Croatia, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, Cyprus, Estonia, Luxemburg, Malta

Note:

In most states the voting took place on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> May but in other countries the voting took place on the previous Thursday, Friday or Saturday.

The number of states has risen from 9 in 1979 to 12 in 1989 to 15 in 1999 to 25 in 2004 to 27 in 2009 and 28 in 2014.

The number of seats has risen from 410 in 1979 to 518 in 1989 to 626 in 1999 to 736 in 2009 and 751 in 2014.

Turnout has fallen from 61.2% in 1979 to 56.7% in 1994 to 49.5% in 1999 to 43% in 2009 and 43.1% in 2014.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European\\_Parliament\\_election,\\_2014](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Parliament_election,_2014)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European\\_Parliament\\_election,\\_2009](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Parliament_election,_2009)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections\\_to\\_the\\_European\\_Parliament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_to_the_European_Parliament)

### **3 Is the UK Christian? - the system of ideas in play; the individual viewpoints**

Last month's *Commentary* contained a brief discussion of the debate which followed UK Prime Minister David Cameron's statement that the UK is a Christian country. I now wish to take a more extended look at the debate. My aim is to identify the system of ideas in play.

The course of the debate

Who contributes?

The system of ideas in play

The self-nation-religion value triangle

Positive values

A set of different groups and different views

Consensus

Distinctiveness (exceptionalism)

Positive tension

Superiority and intolerance ... and their repudiation

Feeling threatened

Response: defensiveness or assertiveness?

Reciprocated criticism: alleged defects of the other viewpoint

Reciprocated action

Individual viewpoints

Community Minister Eric Pickles

Prime Minister David Cameron

Secularist AC Grayling

#### **The course of the debate**

Just before Easter, UK Prime Minister David Cameron referred in the *Church Times* to his endorsement of Community Minister Eric Pickles' remark that Britain is 'a Christian country'. This provoked a letter to the Daily Telegraph from 55 public figures arguing that David Cameron's statement was 'fuelling sectarian division'. A national debate followed with contributions from the present and past Archbishops of Canterbury, from Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg and from leading secularist A C Grayling.

Display 1 below lists the thirty or so letters and opinion pieces and news items which appeared in the *The Times* on this issue over the following two weeks. Contributors are identified by their initials: ‘DC’ for David Cameron, etc. The opinion of each contributor is indicated in brackets: thus KH (DC+, DT-) indicates that KH is positive about David Cameron’s views and negative about the views of the signatories to the Daily Telegraph letter. Most of the letters explicitly referred to David Cameron with just a few referring to the Daily Telegraph letter, Nick Clegg or A C Grayling – and only two referring to other previous letter writers.

## Display 1      The course of the debate

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- April 5?: Eric Pickles’ speech at a Conservative spring forum in London  
<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/apr/06/eric-pickles-britain-christian-nation-atheists>
- April 9 David Cameron’s speech at a reception for prominent Christians at Downing Street  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/easter-reception-at-downing-street-2014>
- April 16 \* David Cameron’s article in the Church Times – ‘DC’  
<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2014/17-april/comment/opinion/my-faith-in-the-church-of-england>
- April 20 \* Letter to Daily Telegraph from 55 public figures – ‘DT’  
 . [News in Daily Telegraph about the letter]  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10777270/David-Cameron-fuelling-sectarian-division-by-bringing-God-into-politics.html>;  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/letters/10777417/David-Cameron-fosters-division-by-calling-Britain-a-Christian-country.html>;
- April 21 News p.4 about the letter in Daily Telegraph
- April 22 News p.10 Gary Streeter, chair of cross-party Christians, supports DC  
 . Letters: KH (DC+, DT-); KN (DCm); BK (DCm); BH (DC+); EK (DCm)
- April 23 Opinion p.25: Alice Thomson (DC+, DT-) favours wishy-washiness  
 . Letters: NS (DC-); AJ (DC+); DN (EK-, BKm); TH (DCm, DTm)
- April 24 Letter: CE (DCm); SM (DC-)
- April 25 News: \*Justin Welby (DC+); \*Nick Clegg wants CofE disestablished, ‘NC’; David Cameron (NC-); Gary Streeter (NC-); Nick Baines (NC-)  
 . Editorial: (DC+) supports the established church  
 . Letter: GC (DC+); RE (AJ-)
- April 26 \*Opinion: AC Grayling, one of the 55 signatories to the DT letter  
 . Letter: AA (NC-)
- April 28 News: Tim Farron (DC-); \*Rowan Williams (DCm); ICM poll  
 . Letters: DW (ACG-); AM (ACG-)
- April 30 Letters: WC, PM, JF, CG (ACG-); JT (ACG+)
- 

## **Who contributes?**

Contributors to *The Times* are a highly selected group of people. In particular the contributions to this debate seemed to be highly selective. Possibly none of the twenty-two letter writers were women and there was only one woman non-letter contributor – Alice Thomson. There appeared to be a predominance of Christians, with the Church of England seeming to be dominant. There were a few secularists and three members of the Jewish community. Most of the surnames appeared to be English. All the contributions were from England – none from the rest of the UK. Despite the selective nature of the contributors, there was an interesting portrayal of a diversity of opinion on this issue. The diversity of opinion in the UK population as a whole is likely to be even greater.

## The system of ideas in play

We now turn our attention to the system of ideas in play

### *The self-nation-religion value triangle*

Perhaps the simplest system of ideas is the positive cluster: a set of objects is referred to; a set of relationships between the objects is specified; and each of the objects is said to be good. We are particularly interested in the case where the cluster contains the self. Table 2 presents an example involving Britain, Christian and self. I imagine that this represents David Cameron's ideas and also many of those involved in the debate.

Table 2 A positive cluster around the self

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statement	type of statement
I am British.	self-attribute statement
I am Christian.	self-attribute statement
Britain is Christian.	attribute relationship statement
Britain is good.	attribute-value statement
Christian is good.	attribute-value statement
[I am good.]	self-value statement

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### *Positive values*

The debate also indicates why Christianity is regarded as good: it is good because it has good attributes. Table 3 presents this logic and Table 4 lists the various attributes which were regarded as good.

Table 3 Positive values

---

Christianity has a set A of attributes. The attributes in set A are good. So Christianity is good.
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Table 4 Good attributes

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tolerance, peace, love, forgiveness (KH)
compassion, tolerance, equal opportunity, forgiveness, social and pastoral care (BK)
good ethical behaviour: love your neighbour, love the stranger
membership of a religious community
coming together of people with like minds ... prayer, quiz nights, care for the elderly (BH)
provide a welcome for newcomers; do all the unpaid charitable work that makes this laws and mores in all places available to all ... times of significance in their lives
authority, citizenship, art and literature
acceptance of social conventions and laws that facilitate communal life
decent moral behaviour
country a civilised place to live in
property rights
laws for tax, driving, marriage, residency
crime: fraud, theft, assault, murder, rape

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*A set of different views*

The contributors referred to their own beliefs and also to the beliefs of others, collectively indicating a diversity of views – see Figure 4.

Figure 4 A map of the viewpoints mentioned in the debate

religion  
three faiths  
Christianity  
Church of England; Baptists; US and Uganda evangelicals

universalism

Hellenism

secularism  
atheists

French revolution; Stalinist Russia

*Consensus*

At the same time as acknowledging that there was a set of different views, some of the contributions emphasised that there was agreement between the different views in relation to core values.

Table 5 Consensus about core values

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all faiths preach peace, love and forgiveness.  
in the Torah, but can subscribe without religious affiliation  
consistent general approach - Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, secular  
I have been to nearly 70 countries ... laws similar irrespective of religion

---

*Distinctiveness ... exceptionalism*

Other contributions noted the distinctiveness of each view.

Table 6 Distinctiveness of each view

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our laws and mores are largely C.  
tolerance is a particular aspect of CofE (part of C).  
institutionally better placed than others  
proven track record of social and pastoral care  
the advantage of an early start  
historical and cultural basis of the nation  
every place has a parish and a parish church  
Judaism, benefits: seven-day week (including a day of rest) ... the abhorrence of servitude ... love thy neighbour ...  
the sanctity of life

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*Positive tension*

Ed Kessler of the Woolf Institute in Cambridge suggested that the UK is Christian and multi-faith with a (generally) positive tension between the two – and that this was a gift of being British.

<http://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/people/profile.asp?ItemID=51>

### *Intolerance, superiority and monopoly of truth ... and their repudiation*

Some contributions acknowledged the existence in others of intolerance, feelings of superiority and belief about having a monopoly of truth – but repudiated these ideas.

Table 7          Repudiation of intolerance, superiority and monopoly of truth

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Intolerance of some is due perhaps to a lack of faith in a forgiving God.  
I as Christian do not feel superior to non-Christian.  
Community should not think it has a monopoly of the truth.

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### *Feeling threatened*

Just a few contributions indicated they feel threatened. One idea was that Christianity was being marginalised by secularisation. One person was critical of David Cameron for damaging and failing to protect Christianity – suggesting that his support of Christianity was hypocritical – done only to fend off UKIP.

Table 8          Feeling threatened

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Christianity is becoming marginalised; a tsunami of secularisation  
If the secularists prevail ... parishes will be broken up ...  
... who will do all the unpaid charitable work that makes this country a civilised place to live in?  
... currently done by parishes and other faith communities ...  
... will secularists take over the burden?

David Cameron has done nothing to protect the rights of Christians in the workplace.  
He has crushed the traditional Christian understanding of marriage and the family.  
He is worried about UKIP.

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### *Response: defensiveness or assertiveness?*

Some contributions called for a more assertive response – rather than a defensive one.

Table 9          Defensiveness or assertiveness

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Defensiveness: moan about becoming marginalised; take cover in cosy, inward-looking clubs of fellow-believers;

Assertiveness: stand up for; stop being ashamed; be more confident about our status; be proud to be; preach; be more evangelical about a faith that compels us to get out there and make a difference to people's lives; humbly engage with not-C; practice our faith 'out there'; not what we say but how we act and what we achieve (gospel imperative, Matthew vii 20); Britain should do more to embrace Christian values.

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### *Reciprocated criticism: alleged defects of the other viewpoint*

In an earlier debate, novelist Ian McEwan had made an explicit claim for the superiority of secularism: 'the secular mind is better equipped than religion to reach reasoned and compassionate judgments'. This was followed by 'Oliver Kamm's

assertion that secular values, not religion, have made us a tolerant society'. Various letters followed. In reply Tony Harrop made a useful point about the appropriate methodology for the comparative evaluation of the social outcomes of different belief systems:

'Oliver Kamm contrasts slaveowner Thomas Jefferson's secular values with freedom fighter Jephthah's rash promise. Comparing the best secular values with the worst religious ones doesn't do justice to either. To compare the outcome of secular values with religious ones, it would be better to compare either best with best or worst with worst.'

The Times (2014) Secular values, religion and a tolerant society. Ian McEwan, Oliver Kamm, Tony Harrop. March 28; March 29; April 1, p. 27.

Tony Harrop's comments indicate that the value of the outcomes of any belief system has a statistical distribution. So to compare the value of different belief systems we need to apply the methodology for comparing statistical distributions.

There was a reciprocation of criticism – alleged defects of the other viewpoint – see Table 10.

Table 10 Reciprocated criticism: alleged defects of the other viewpoint

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Christianity (alleged defects)

April 1: Jephthah (TH)

April 26: Crusades, Inquisition, wars of religion, persecution ... punishment for non-Christians; enforced attendance, tithes and adherence to doctrine

From explain and justify to enforce, suppress Greek-Roman culture ... persecution of Giordano Bruno and Galileo. A C Grayling.

Christianity (response to alleged defects)

Comments imply a return to the Inquisition, compulsory churchgoing and tithes – but this is not so. Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, April 25.

Secularism (alleged defects)

Aggressively secular anti-religious Stalinist or Maoist communism (HR, April 1).

Ancient Greece or Rome, defects: total subjugation of women, slavery, gladiatorial contests, mass crucifixion (30,000 at Carthage), massacre of the whole island of Melos, condemnation of Socrates ... Caligula, Nero. [Cicero, perhaps] (DW, April 28)

Ancient Rome defects: Nero, Marcus Aurelius

Atheistic regimes of revolutionary France and Stalinist Russia (PM, April 29)

'Louis XVI at the guillotine, the trademark of France's atheistic revolutionaries' (Cartoon, April 29)

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## Individual viewpoints

### Community Minister Eric Pickles

'Community minister Eric Pickles told delegates at the Conservative spring forum in London that non-believers should not be able to impose "politically correct intolerance" on others.

"I've stopped an attempt by militant atheists to ban councils having prayers at the start of meetings if they wish," said Pickles. "Heaven forbid. We're a Christian nation. We have an established church. Get over it. And don't impose your politically correct intolerance on others."

Pickles also said that the government had backed British values by stopping Whitehall from "appeasing extremism", whether it came from the English Defence League, militant Islamists or "the thuggish hard left". "They're all as bad as each other," he said.'

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/apr/06/eric-pickles-britain-christian-nation-atheists>

Eric Pickles' remarks exhibit the self-nation-religion value triangle: he and his government back British values and regard Britain as a Christian nation. Our distinctiveness is that we have an established church. He notes a set of groups with different values: atheists, the English Defence League, Islamists and the left. These groups have subgroups which have bad characteristics: their views are 'politically correct', extremist or hard; they are intolerant; and their actions militant or thuggish, seeking to impose their views. In response Whitehall had been appeasing, but now he and his government no longer did this and were stopping the activities of the extremists.

### **Prime Minister David Cameron**

Just before Easter on April 9<sup>th</sup>, UK Prime Minister David Cameron held his Easter reception at Downing Street for prominent Christians across our country. His opening speech and his article a week later in the *Church Times* can be accessed through the following two links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/easter-reception-at-downing-street-2014>

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2014/17-april/comment/opinion/my-faith-in-the-church-of-england>

David Cameron's remarks exhibit the self-nation-religion value triangle: he is proud to be a Christian and proud Britain a Christian country. He associates this with the positive values of being looked after spiritually; pastoral care across the country; being loving, thoughtful and kind in times of adversity. He singles out three points.  
.1 He wants to expand the role of faith and faith organisations in our country and make it easier for them. His concept of the Big Society includes service provision by organisations run by faith groups and Christians – it is what churches have been doing and what Jesus did – and he want to see more of it and wants to remove blockages for organisations.

.2 On the international stage the UK has a leading role and he is proud to have maintained the aid budget. A particular concern is that 'our religion is now the most persecuted religion around the world' and we should stand up against the persecution of Christians and of non-Christians.

.3 He thinks there is a need for more evangelism: to be unashamed and clear; to get out there and change people's lives and make a difference – to improve the spiritual, physical and moral state of our country. He wants to make the world a better place. All faiths and all parties can join in outlawing modern slavery. The government's welfare policies are controversial but he hopes there is agreement about fundamentals. Churches and political institutions can get bogged down in bureaucracy, talk, policies, programmes, plans, statistics, figures, measures, etc.

His article in the *Church Times* contains many of the same ideas. In addition he takes note of the reaction to his widely reported remarks at the Downing Street reception. He disagrees with the idea that one doesn't talk about religion in a secular age, arguing that we need to be confident about our status as a Christian country. However being confident does not imply doing down or passing judgment on others. The UK does provide space for others. Moreover Christian values are shared by all. Although faith is neither necessary nor sufficient, faith can help some. Faith is powerful in tough times and supports a philanthropic heritage. He acknowledges that he is rather vague about the Church of England and rather likes its wooliness.

## Secularist AC Grayling

AC Grayling was one of the signatories to the letter in the Daily Telegraph and he also wrote an opinion piece in *The Times* (April 26, page 1). The key points in the latter are listed below.

- 1 The word 'Christian' is sometimes used to refer to good qualities: magnanimous, liberal, tolerant, forgiving, considerate, generous and kind.
- 2 Christianity was the dominant outlook in the British Isles from 6<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 3 In the 18<sup>th</sup> century a more ambiguous attitude increased amongst educated minds.
- 4 UK is a highly pluralistic society, with many faiths and none, with the 'nones' net contributors to our society in major ways ... and do not deserve to be overlooked.
- 5 It is not true that people in the UK are a nation of believers in the dogmas, doctrines and legends of Christianity.
- 6 Christianity has no monopoly on good qualities.
- 7 Christianity has often exhibited the opposite of good qualities in the past.
- 8 'Being' Christian was enforced for many centuries.  
[In contrast to early Christianity when 'apologetics' were used to explain and justify Christianity to a sceptical world. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apologetics>.]
- 9 Since the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Britain and its empire was run by graduates of the ancient universities where the main studies were the classics.
- 10 'Christian' values and ideas are largely ancient Greek and Roman secular values and ideas.
- 11 Christianity attempted to suppress these ideas and inquiry.
- 12 Christianity provides little instruction – beyond a few bland generalisations about being nice – for dealing with life's complexities.
- 13 There was little learning worth the name in the early years of Christianity.

One set of points (1, 6, 10) relate to good qualities. These are listed; they are associated with Christianity; Christianity has no monopoly on them; and they originate from ancient Greece and Rome.

One set of points (7, 8, 11, 12, 13) is critical of Christianity. It has exhibited bad qualities; it was enforced; it suppressed other ideas; it provides a limited account of good qualities; and it provided little learning in its early years.

Another set of points (2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 13) provides an account of the cultural history of Britain – from early Christianity, to its maximum power, to the enlightenment and then in points (4, 5) to the pluralistic society of the present day.

AC Grayling agrees with David Cameron on points 1 and 2 but feels that the description of Britain as a Christian nation is deeply misleading.

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Gordon Burt

<https://sites.google.com/site/gordonburtmathsocsci/home/5-what-s-new/a-new-agenda>