

## Waving the flag

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Yesterday was Saint George's Day. As the feast day of the patron saint of England, it was a day for patriotic celebration. And yet most English people weren't celebrating. To be honest, neither was I. I wasn't even terribly aware of the fact that it was St George's day, until I saw some St George's cross flags hanging outside the windows of some homes while I was jogging early in the morning. Regrettably, my first instinct was to assume that the occupants of those houses might be far-right wing extremists, possibly members of an unsavoury political party or a xenophobic gang. Then it occurred to me that perhaps they were good folks and they were simply expressing their nationalistic pride. Perhaps they were even religious, and they would be celebrating the feast day by visiting their church to pray for God's blessing on the country they love and by which they are loved.

Just seeing the flag evoked such a varied emotional response.



Apart from the fact that I'm only a quarter English (with another quarter being of Welsh origin and a half coming from Poland) I do live in London, which (the last time I checked) was in England. One of my best friends told me that "you are where you are brewed" and regardless of your parental origin, if you grew up in England you should consider yourself English. Interestingly, many folks "brewed" in England, unlike their proudly outspoken neighbours in Scotland or Wales, would rather consider themselves British rather than English. There's a certain apprehension towards admitting to one's nationality.

Folks around the whole world, it seems, take their national holidays very seriously, and are very proud to say from where they come. Maybe it's part of the English psyche to be understated – part of the stiff-upper-lip mentality that doesn't allow oneself to boast, preferring to blend in with everyone else – that leads English people to forego their exclusive Englishness in preference to emphasising their more inclusive Britishness. Then again, maybe not.

In London, where many can trace their ancestry away from these pastures green, it may be challenging for

those who are English, or have English origin, to clearly identify themselves as English in juxtaposition to a cosmopolitan diversity. After all, what does it mean to be English? Other nationalities or ethnicities or religions have specific cultural traditions, ways of doing things, that identify themselves as being a part of that group. When comparing with “the other” an English person might struggle to discover what it is about themselves that makes them unique. I believe, we are commanded to “love your neighbour as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18) to force ourselves to discover our neighbours and, by loving them, we also discover ourselves. However, perhaps this process is revealing the insecurities that discovering oneself can lead to. There is something of an identity crisis: English people don’t know who they are, or are insecure in who they are.

I don’t want to propose a solution to the question of what it means to be English. I’ll allow someone who’s more English than me to do that, perhaps a historian. What I will propose, however, is that if we allow ourselves to ask the question of identity more deeply – exploring who we are and the origin of our identity - we can discover God. This discovery can then lead us to a new identity that transcends all the man-made boundaries that tend to divide, affirming an identity as a global, universal citizen of a kingdom not currently present.



Last Sunday I had a meal at the home of a couple who have recently joined our Unificationist community. Invited to attend the Foundation Day blessing ceremonies, this couple participated in the [5 steps of the blessing](https://sites.google.com/a/europeanoffice.net/educational-study-material/blessing-education-1/5-steps) [sites.google.com/a/europeanoffice.net/educational-study-material/blessing-education-1/5-steps] and now regularly attend our Sunday morning worship services in Bromley. As I approached their home, I noticed 2 flags hanging in their windows: the red and white Cheon Il Guk flag and the blue and gold FFWPU flag. This couple had been guided to do this by the tribal messiah couple educating them. I was moved to see this bold statement of identity displayed in public for all to see.

These flags express identity. They say that we belong to a federation of families committed to creating world peace and unification. They say that we attend True Parents and pledge to inherit the way of true love by fulfilling the 8 points of the family pledge. They say that we are building a nation, the nation of heaven on earth and in heaven, by two becoming one. We have a sovereign, we are the citizens, and we’re claiming the territory: wherever we live is the location of God’s kingdom, Cheon Il Guk.