

Seminar

Justice and Suffering

[A Brief Summary]

29 October 2008

Presented to
The Edith Murphy Foundation

by

Markfield Institute of Higher Education

Justice and Suffering Seminar

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Introduction

This seminar was sponsored by Edith Murphy Foundation and invites perspectives from Jewish, Islamic, Christian and Secularist backgrounds including chaplains, clergy/imams and academics on the issue of justice and suffering.

The aim is to discuss the issues of justice and suffering that they may have thought about, encountered sufferers or even experienced over the years.

The brief included a scenario of a man having lost his entire family in a house fire a month earlier, he was the only survivor and subsequent suffered in various ways such as psychologically, emotionally, physically and spiritually – questioning his faith in God and searching to make sense of his existence. [See Appendix A].

The conference included presentations from Jewish, Islamic, Christian and Humanist perspectives followed by discussions groups which will focus on four main themes, these; natural disasters, victims of crime and cruelty, illness and disability and institutional injustice.

Presentations on Suffering and Justice from various perspectives

Presentations were made by Professor Bernard Moss (Christian and academic), Imam Shahid Raza (Islamic), Dr Allan Hayes (Secular Humanist) and Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton (Jewish). [See Appendix B]

Professor Moss presented an inclusive perspective of the common journey of humanity, which merged spiritual and religious journey for some people and it was not seen as two separate concepts. The main theme being the paradoxical struggle in the search for meaning and the impact of the individual's worldview upon this. The search for meaning was expanded to include the search to try to understand, a search to try to make sense of experiences; spiritual, religious and human and yet the impossibility of ever be able to understand these experiences.

Spirituality was briefly discussed and referred to those who do not necessarily have a religious point of view, who may not belong to a faith community or have a sense of God have used spirituality to expressed as having something that 'makes them tick' These people were able to relate to spirituality and therefore part of common humanity.

The world view is noted as helping 'us' to make sense of the world in which we are placed, it is influenced by the 'labels' that individuals give themselves such as we're Muslims, we're Christian, we're Jewish, we are humanists' and so forth.

Professor Moss introduced questions such as why is this happening to me?

To conclude, the focus was on common humanity and within this the overall spirituality of what it means to be human and spirituality is broader and seen as asking questions of meaning and purpose – to try and seek meaning, to try and seek purpose in what's happening.

Imam Shahid Raza focused on providing a brief concept of justice in Islam from a personal point of view and explored some ideas about suffering, presenting a compromise between justice and suffering of in the light of Islamic teaching.

In Islamic worldview, justice has various meanings most importantly it is placing things in their rightful places, it means giving others equal treatment also denotes a moral virtue, a personal value for individuals. Justice to create a state of equality and equal bearance in the distribution of rights and responsibility which may or may not be identical as creating equality does not essentially mean creating identical equality as sometimes justice is achieved through inequality for example, positive

discrimination such as distribution of wealth and such as equal opportunities in employment.

Justice is one of the moral and spiritual teachings as mentioned in the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him, pbuh) as shown in surah *An Nahl* (surah 16) Allah says 'Verily God commands justice and fair due.'

A further example is from the the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in *hadith kudsi*, Allah (swt) says 'Oh my slaves I have forbidden injustice for Myself and forbade it for you so avoid being unjust to one another' (quoted in *Sahih Muslim*).

Suffering is recognised as a feature of life, to attempt to describe it would limit it as it appears in endless forms in human life and animal life. A great deal of suffering is associated with physical pain however suffering also encompasses mental, emotional, moral and material pain. Imam Raza referred to his experience and exposure to suffering of the community as Head Imam at Leicester Central Mosque and has seen the suffering of the elderly, of parents, of young professionals who have had to experience issues of abortion, marriage breakdown, disintegration of their homes.

Suffering was further explained through that of global events such as wars and unrest in the Middle East, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, Asian Subcontinent as seen on television and especially the suffering of people from all faiths background sufferings after 9/11, 7/7 and the recent earthquakes in the world.

The primary question here is who causes this suffering?

In Islam, Imam Raza explained that all suffering comes from Allah, as shown in the Qur'an, surah *At-Taghabun* (surah 64) "no kind of suffering, no kind of calamities occur except by the leave of Allah."

This raised the next questions, why does Allah allow suffering?

Allah is so kind, merciful, beneficent so why does He allow suffering?

Imam Raza recognised this question being of interested to people from different faiths for hundreds of years and it continues to exist as one of the main stumbling block for those of faith and perhaps it has lead many people to lose their faith in God.

He explores several statements regarding the issue of suffering and Allah such as people claiming Allah hates evil but He is powerless to prevent it; others have claimed that perhaps God is capable of removing suffering but He doesn't know when and where suffering will take place.

Imam Raza rejected both of these statements and referred to the Holy Qur'an, where Allah is almighty, powerful, all strong and all capable and Allah is all knowing, all seeing, all hearing, the owner and controller of everything, therefore He is powerful and has knowledge of all that happens.

Others have expressed views such as God is good but there are other evil gods who frustrate His goodness and spread corruption on the earth; some might think Shaitan is a counter god, who God, Allah, must constantly battles. Imam Raza rejected the ideal of multiple gods in Islam and refers to the Qur'an where more than a hundred times it refers to God is the One, He is *waahid*.

So the question remains, why does Allah allows these manifestations of suffering? Natural or man made. But why it is this being allowed?

The Islamic view is that Allah causes suffering to greater good and the affliction of pain on his servants in order to mould them into the type of people He want them to be. Suffering was also considered as an opportunity to be able to grow and develop qualities such as compassion, humility and steadfastness. This also causes people to turn to Allah for help and it differentiates the true believers from the false one and through remembrance an individual maintains a spiritual link with his creator which enables people to remain religious. Humans tend to only remember Allah when in distressed and not necessarily during prosperous times and Imam Raza quoted the example from Qur'an, of a ship, as Qur'an says "your Lord is He that makes the ship go smoothly through the sea for you that you may see His grace for He is the most merciful to you". So Allah causes suffering so that we, as humans, keep remembering Him and in this way the spiritual link with our creator may be preserved..

There is another aspect to consider regarding suffering, that it is seen as a means for purification of the soul, as stated by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) "by the one in whose hands is my soul, that is God, no believer is stricken with fatigue, exhaustion, worry,

grief but God will forgive him for some of his sins as a mercy thereby even a thorn which pricks him mean consequently the person will not be punished for these sins in the hereafter and will be entered into paradise.” In this context it is seen as a heavenly mercy as afflictions and pain creates an opportunity for the believers to earn good deeds through loyalty to God.

An alternative view being the most obvious that suffering may be a punishment also particularly for those individuals who act in evil as stated in the Qur’an regarding pharaoh “when at length they provoked us, we exacts retribution upon them and we drowned them all and we made them a people of the past and an example of the later ages.”

Suffering can also be considered as a test, trial for believers by God. The Qur’an speaks “do men think they will be left alone on saying we believer and they will not be put to the test” as illustrated by the test upon Prophet Ibrahim in the sacrifice of his son, Ismael.

Therefore suffering may be due to various reasons such as remembrance of Allah, for a better good unknown to us, purification of the soul, as punishment and a test, trial for the believers.

To conclude, Imam Raza stated the following “I have no hesitation in saying we may not be able to offer entirely satisfying answer to the mystery of suffering on all occasions on the basis of interpretation available of our religious text.”

Dr Allan Hayes provided a brief introduction to the humanist approach and highlighted two basis principles:

1. Commitment to the welfare of people and the necessity to see others as a person. The need to have others accept and have trust that we will do this.
2. A methodology based on ideas, social structure and religions being human constructs and some of the things for which “we” are ourselves responsible.

Dr Hayes discussed the seminar brief with reference to the statement regarding secular thinkers may not encounter specific problem with suffering apart from the fact that it is bad as do not believe in a good God, suffering may seem as a random part of life. As humanists, God or God given goals and rules are not believed. Nevertheless, humanist do value justice and are concerned with the problem of justice between people, of justice and government, justice of government to other parts of the world with which they interact and so on.

The humanist approach rather than accept suffering as random encourages the act of study of the causes of suffering in all of its form; physical, mental, social, spiritual and its alleviation; to reduce the randomness as far as possible to predictable order and effect such as learning to predict earthquakes. Yet the humanist approach encourages justice and alleviation of suffering. They believe that part of being human is based on shared commitment and responsibility, introduced in upbringing and the evolution of the concept of humanity through biological selection and social patterns and idea about society and humanity.

Humanists are concerned when an absolute idea, “an all or nothing” government gets in the way of achieving an aim, perhaps not complete aims but partial aims that help us on the way to humanity.

The concept of God concerns humanists as it plays a strong role in human history and in the lives of people. However, humanists will defend everyone’s right to have their own belief and are sensitive to the importance of religion whilst viewing the concept of God as a human construct which will be subject to change of human interpretation.

Dr Hayes considers the concept of God in the seminar briefing and sees God as an independent agent, raising a questions; is the agent responsible? The agent is seen as having free will, the ability to select and punish people for sins of their society, punish individuals for the sins of others, for not believing in him and causing afflictions such as blindness so that his power may be laid manifest. Finally humbling people into believing in him and refusing to explain himself. This sort of God presents a big problem for humanists, it is a God who is the source of suffering as well as comfort.

In reference to the seminar brief, the man who lost his entire family in a fire and his feelings of anguish of his loss, as well as the anguish at the loss of his faith in his God, as he is presumed to be a believer and his deep need to make sense of his existence. There is various aspects to consider, his sense of punishment for some sin, or humbling as it makes him dependent or will he regain his faith and the comfort from his faith that he may see his family again. In this situation, all of us, regardless of our religious belief are moved, as is the sense of common humanity. It may be the restoration of his faith, which has always supported him and now connects him to his community is the way forward. However the starting point highlighted by Dr Hayes is gentle compassion which must be the basis for chaplaincy.

Dr Hayes concluded regarding chaplaincy, which was seen as an emergency service or at least a terminal service and the need for it to be seen as part of society of people who offer care. The reference to society included the wider and caring elements of society where people can rely on care for themselves and who are not ashamed to ask for and accept care when they need it.

Dr Michael Hilton's presentation focused on the practical ideas within Judaism, and he referred to the Genesis and Deuteronomy regarding the suffering and justice. In particular he referred to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, presenting the theology relating to God's judgement being based on the actions of the city/communities rather than individual action. It was through the intervention of Abraham, who presented alternatives points of view in his debate with God, in Genesis 18:

'Then the men set out from there, and they looked towards Sodom; and Abraham went with them to set them on their way. The Lord said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall become a great and might nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteous and justice; so that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what he promised him.' Then the Lord said.' How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin! I must go down and see whether they have done

altogether according the outcry that has come to me, if not, I will know.’

So the men turned from there and went towards Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the Lord. Then Abraham came near and said, ‘Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?’ And the lord said, ‘If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake’. Abraham answered, ‘Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?’ And he said, ‘I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.’ Again he spoke to him, ‘Suppose forty are found there.’ He answered, ‘For the sake of forty I will not do it.’ Then he said, ‘Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak. Suppose thirty are found there.’ He answered, ‘I will not do it, if I find thirty there.’ He said, ‘Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord, Suppose twenty are found there.’ He answered, ‘For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it.’ Then he said, ‘Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak just once more. Suppose ten are found there.’ He answered, ‘For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.’ And the Lord went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.’

This insight shows Abraham as a knowledgeable individual who already has a sense of individual and presents this to God, who accepts it up to a point hence the number of good people being reduced from fifty to ten, though on this occasion, Abraham was unable to find the ten people and yet the shift had been made from the actions of the whole community to the actions of the individual, as seen in the following extract in Deuteronomy, Meditation and the issue of reward and punishment as national terms.

'13 If you will only heed his every commandment that I am commanding you today – loving the Lord your God, and serving him with all your heart and with all your soul – then he will give the rain

for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil; and he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you will eat your fill. Take care or you will be seduced into turning away, serving others gods and worshipping them, of heavens, so that there will be no rain and the land will yield no fruit; then you will perish quickly from the good land that you Lord is giving you.'

Here we might find a difficult theology as God rewards and punishment based on the behaviour of the people and referred to as perhaps Old Testament theology. However, if the focus is redirected to today in environmental terms, it is known to be true that the use of earth's resources can sustain life and the misuse of them has affected the planet as can be seen by climate change. Hence the above text can be understood in modern times.

Dr Hilton talked about the early Jewish tradition of teaching by rabbis and hence it was based on individual interpretation and individualism as people were able to ask questions directly such as why am I suffering?

One of the answers the rabbis gave was that God punishes those that he loves. In other words, people came to accept that its not just people who do wrong that suffer but righteous suffer as well which is similar to a view held by many Muslims. Another view by Jewish people, which is similar to Muslims, is that suffering in this world will lead to escaping punishment in the Hereafter and hence a reason why God chastises those he loves as seen in the quote 'Happy is the person you punish, O God, and teach him out of your Torah' (Psalms 94:12).

Dr Hilton introduced two rabbinic stories to explain suffering with particular focus on the chaplaincy work; of visiting people who are unwell. The three

characters in these stories lived in Palestine in the third century of the Christian Era:

‘Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba fell ill and Rabbi Yohanan went to visit him. He said to him: “Are your sufferings welcome to you ?” He replied: “Neither they nor their reward.: He said to him: “Give me your hand.” He gave him his hand and he raised it.’

The important theme of this story was the sense of equality between patient and visitor. Here the Jewish idea of chaplaincy is displayed, the meeting of people as colleagues, as friends, as equals and this perspective is reflective of the humanist approach in that he may not have had the answer why there was suffering what he attempted to help and alleviate the suffering through the action of lifting of the hand and the offer of practical help.

The second story focuses Rabbi Hanini visit to Rabbi Yohanan, who is unwell:

“Are your sufferings welcome to you?” He replied: “Neither they nor their reward.” He said to him: “Give me your hand.” He gave him his hand and he raised him. Why could not Rabbi Yohanan raise himself? So far it’s the same but then he goes on , why didn’t Rabbi Yohanan raise himself and “They replied: The prisoner cannot free himself from jail”.

Here professionals, such as chaplains, need help and support during illness and challenges in life and the need to recognise and provide this to them.

Dr Hilton noted in the last sixty years, it has been impossible to disentangle justice and suffering in the Jewish tradition from the question of destruction of the Jews of Europe in the Nazi era. Destruction of six million Jews prevented some of the old theologies from saying God punishes the guilty and million of children died as they couldn’t all have been guilty and new theologies had to be formulated which were summarised by Alice Eckardt’s article *Suffering: Challenge to Faith, Challenge to God*.

The idea of suffering seen as redemption and bringing the sufferer closer to the Messiah. Dr Hilton focuses on the holocaust experience for Jews, some such as Rabbi Ignos Mayban looked at the positive values of the event as it created an opportunity for traditional attitudes to be reviewed and simulated modern dialogue as it allows Christians, Muslims, Humanists to meet as equals. However not all survivors see the holocaust experiences in such light and

Albert Friedlander denied there was any meaning to be found in their suffering whereas for some the message of the suffering was a duty to protest against others suffering and hence the question is 'not where was God in the holocaust, but where were the men and women in the holocaust, why did nobody put a stop to it'

The holocaust is reflective of the survivor role of the scenario presented at the seminar, of a man whose family died in a house fire – this man is a survivor first and foremost, Dr Hilton pointed out the mixed emotions this man would be having including anger and guilt, rather than thinking he is righteous and God has judged and punished the guilty, he is more likely to feel guilty for surviving, a natural human feeling. Dr Hilton highlighted the types of questions that may arise for this man; what has he survived for? How is the meaning of his life?

Auschwitz survivor and therapist, Viktor Frankl wrote *Man's search for Meaning* and devoted his life to finding meaning from the holocaust experience. Dr Hilton personal view to the above questions are, that its 'often a feeling of hope that makes a difference, a simple re-assurance that sun can come out behind the clouds and the bad times can have an end.

Dr Hilton concluded by reflecting on the Jewish answer in the face of death being the 'the duty of the Jew is to chose life, in the face of despair, we are told live on, in the face of disaster, we are told to bring relief and through suffering this is how meaning can emerge according to our tradition'.

Conclusion of Groups

This was chaired by Revd Mark Burleigh, Leicester General Hospital Chaplain.

Revd Burleigh noted it was good day and for groups to see things differently by sharing and being able to learn from each other. Groups were invited to provide a three minute summary of their conclusions to the seminar attendees.

Group 1: Natural Disasters

We understand we should do what we can to alleviate suffering from others, all faith/non faith.

The group stated they “should try” and that its not always know why certain events happen such as natural disasters though sometimes we do know such events such as knowledge regarding the tectonic plates but other times we don’t. The group felt they might know the physical description of suffering. We should try to alleviate suffering.

Question by Revd Burleigh, does being a believer help in disaster? The Group answered yes, it does people who believe seemed to cope better in a smoother manner and that non believers do good not just believers.

People of faith are helped/challenged in their suffering, humanists have “faith in values” and sufferers should be helped.

Group 2: Victims of Crime and Cruelty

Religious support for religious community and emotional reactions can be curbed by personal space. We have a responsibility to the perpetrators of crimes in correcting behaviour. Faith communities should support as perpetrator is also a victim, however here was a feeling that excuses for perpetrators were made and that victims of crimes are not focused on, rather the perpetrators.

The elders of society have a role in society, in its restorative nature.

The group felt we have a responsibility to the perpetrators and the victims and there is a need for restorative justice.

Group 3: Illness and Disability

Disability should not be stigmatised, there is a need to care for the carers of these groups. A need to look out for all groups within society.

The group discussion considered the issue of care empowering the treatment of all with dignity and the use of active listening, to seek knowledge and guidance for self and others. The group felt the individual's role was to convey hope and joy and to help uplift those who are suffering – coined as 'value added theology' and 'value added treatment'.

Group 4: Institutional Injustice

The group felt that institutional should reflect equality not inequality and justice could be interpreted as equality.

Questions were raised such as who has the right as to what is institutional injustice? For example white males are not the victims.

The group noted that victims of injustice should be empowered to speak for themselves and they would need awareness of rights and rules, also there was a responsibility of self and self harm – we have a responsibility to defend ourselves and others.

There was a need for coalition, of universal rights and we should be looking out for the needs of others and speak out and seek help.

During the discussion several questions were raised. How do we move forward in the community? Not in places of work, how do we go about making changes? Institutions is ineffective to deal with justice, not possible in current model. Society and community is institution therefore there will be injustice. Where do you get safe space to raise concerns? *Khalifah* had open air discussions and therefore it wasn't stopped or restricted, hence everyone could attend and listen. Others stated that there are different types of influences and Islamic punishment for murder and rapists. Absence and ignorance of knowledge has lead to the difference between faith and

communities. Some other suggested that Conferences such as these are preaching to the converted, people who need these do not come. Secondly, I would like an operative handbook for working in multifaith chaplaincy (for practising and non practising), advise on how to deal with tricky situations and issues. Something to reference.

Appendix A

Justice and Suffering

(Workshop outline)

Context

This workshop intends to bring together a variety of thinkers from Jewish, Islamic, Christian and secularist backgrounds, including chaplains, clergy/Imams as well as academics. The aim is to discuss the issues of 'justice' and 'suffering' that they may have thought about, or encountered a sufferer, or even experienced over the years.

At its crudest, the relationship between the two is depicted by some religious thinkers as two sides of the same coin. Suffering is there as punishment, and by punishing justice is carried out. The Old Testament thought seems to support suffering as a punishment for sin, which may be either the sin of the individual or of the society in which he/she lives.

The Christian New Testament describes how a strict co-relation between sin and suffering is denied by Jesus (Luke 13:1 – 5). When Jesus was asked whether the affliction of a man born blind was due to his own sin or that of his parents, he replied, 'Neither; it was in order that God's power should be made manifest.' (John9:3). In his own suffering he taught his disciples to see God's realisation of purposes.

Islam's attitude to suffering and justice broadly differs from the Jewish and Christian attitudes. In general the Quran emphasises that the sufferings people experience are caused or permitted by God. In many cases, notably where men have refused to believe the message brought by the Prophets, God causes people to suffer as retribution for their action. But the problem arose that if that is the retribution for their action, then how one can explain the suffering of children and animals? It is also seen as training or discipline (7:94). When a messenger is sent to a community, God

also sends hardship in the hope that they will humbly acknowledge his existence and follow his command.

The story of Moses and his encounter with al-Khidr illustrates the difficulties of working on human faculties alone (18:65 – 82). The moral of the story seems to be clear, that no human being, no matter how pious - or even a prophet - is in a position to discover the purpose of God by use of his intellect. The Islamic teaching emphasises patience, and that people must continue to trust God and to believe that God is good, even if it does not appear that way.

Secular thinkers may not encounter a specific problem with suffering (apart from the fact that it is bad) as they do not believe in a good God. Suffering may be seen as a random part of life.

Imagine the following scenario. A man is suffering because a month ago his entire family died in a house fire. He is the only survivor. Since that day he has suffered constantly without respite, spending his days thinking about his family and the pain that they have gone through, and sobbing periodically. His nights are a constant nightmare and he is unable to sleep. He is living without solace and healing and this is driving him to despair. He is losing his faith in God, and God is becoming almost irrelevant. He is looking for relief and wants to make sense of his existence.

The following questions arise:

- What difference would it make to the man if he did not believe in any God?
- How should one understand, given the theological position highlighted earlier, and intervene in a meaningful way that will help this man to come out of his predicament?
- How does the man's faith in a good God, or absence of faith, affect the intervention?
- Is the outlook of the carer relevant to how he is supported?

- How should the pastoral carer utilise the various sources – his/her confessional traditions, other religious traditions and human and social services experiences?
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- In dealing with such crucial issues, how can a chaplain express his/her judgment in relation to theological/religious vis-à-vis psychological/secular claims?
- Which dimension has a priority: theology or ministry, theory or technique?

Questions to consider

- 1) What religious resources shape a chaplain's own approaches to pastoral care of suffering and justice?
- 2) How and in what role might experience shape or inform theological reflection?
- 3) What approaches should religious leaders and communities adopt to relate to and in supporting sufferers of injustice in a secular environment?
- 4) What role one should assign to the secular government in relation to the faith community's approach and secular aspects of justice and suffering, especially in chaplaincy?

The **purpose** of this workshop is firstly to discuss the religious understanding of suffering and explore how a secular/humanist view approaches such issues, and secondly, to provide some guidance on such crucial issues. The workshop discussion will be published either on the website or in print.

Venue and Date. The venue will be at the Markfield Institute of Higher Education. and will take place on Wednesday the 29th October 2008.

The MIHE will bear all costs of the day workshop for a maximum number of 35 people including the Advisory Board Members.

Dr Atullah Siddiqui

Appendix B

1) **Professor Bernard Moss** is Professor Social Work, Education and Spirituality, he is the Director of the Centre for Spirituality and Health at Staffordshire University and author of *Religion and Spirituality* and recently guest editor for *The International Journal of Illness, Crisis and Loss* for a special issue on Spirituality.

2) **Imam Shahid Raza (OBE)** is the President of the World Islamic Mission and Head Imam of the Leicester Central Mosque, Secretary General of *Shari'ah* Council UK and Head of Imam and Mosques Council. He is also the founder member of MINAB (Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board).

3) **Dr Allan Hayes** is President of the Leicester Secular Society; Trustee of British Humanist Association; Trustee of Sea of Faith Network; Member of Leicester Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education and Member of Leicester Agreed Syllabus Conference.

4) **Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton** has been involved in dialogue for many years. He has served as community Rabbi since 1987, currently at Coikhai Hatchend Jewish Community in the London borough of Harrow. Rabbi Hilton has written a book called "Christian Effect on Jewish Life" and recently have been researching the history of the ceremony of Barmitsva.