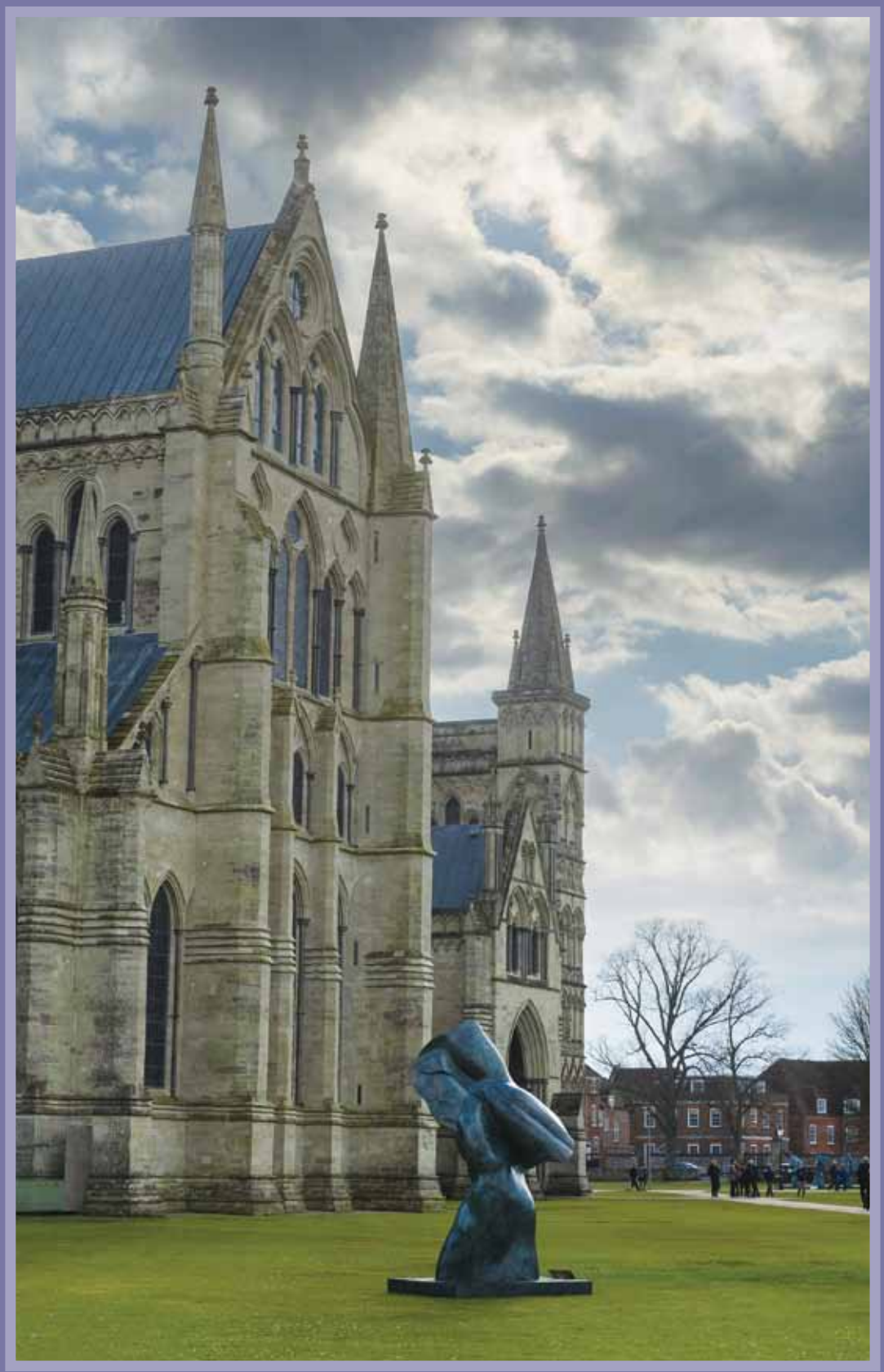
PERSPECTIVES

WOOLF INSTITUTE studying relations between Jews Christians & Muslims



Celebrating 15 years

1998 2013

WINTER 2013/14

IN THIS ISSUE **FAITH AND NARRATIVES**

WOOLF INSTITUTE studying relations between Jews Christians & Muslims

Perspectives
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Editorial Board
Carolina Gonzalez-Carvajal, *Guest Editor*
Alice Sandham, Trisha Kessler, *Editors*
Emma Harris, Ciara Thomas,
Editorial Assistants

Submissions
We welcome readers' responses and contributions. Please get in touch using the details below.

Contact
Perspectives
Woolf Institute
Wesley House
Jesus Lane
Cambridge CB5 8BJ
United Kingdom
Tel: + 44 (0) 1223 743 075
perspectives@woolf.cam.ac.uk
www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/resources/perspectives.asp

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From the Editor

Being Guest Editor for the Faith and Narratives edition of *Perspectives* has been an illuminating journey, one which has challenged me to view the encounter of faith with narratives in ways I had not expected. As a writer I am fascinated by the way narratives give meaning to events and experiences, creating a developing, continuing story. Engaging with the work of the Woolf Institute led me to consider this theme within the context of faith and religious communities.

For this issue, I have explored notions of faith within the work of four writers whose fiction comes from Jewish, Christian and Muslim perspectives. I hope that I have asked some questions which may open up a greater discussion about the representations of faith in fiction. This issue also asks the reader to think about the role of narratives within a larger framework of a national discourse with an article by Tariq Modood, examining the impact of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain 15 years on. This edition also marks 15 years since the Woolf Institute began its work as the Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations in 1998. During this time, the Institute, through its academic research and public education, has broadened our understanding of the encounter between faith and wider society, a theme explored in Robert McCorquodale's piece on the role of faith narratives in human rights discourses and activism. In Corinne Squire's article about HIV and narratives we also gain an insight into how faith narratives help those with HIV re-image themselves through their own stories. Not all narratives nurture well-being and Ed Kessler's article reminds us of the space within which narratives can be contested and complex. In our culture section, we are taken on a different narrative journey to a place where the encounter with art can create a space for meditation and spiritual experience. Helaine Blumenfeld's recent exhibition at Salisbury Cathedral reminds us that experiencing spirituality through art has always been a form of prayer, a point of intersection between time and eternity. Shaping narratives through language and art brings us to Trisha Kessler's interview with Edmund de Waal, who as both a potter and a writer sends stories out to the world to be engaged with.

This edition offers an insight into the richness and diversity of the encounter between faith and narratives, a story that the Woolf Institute is uniquely qualified to explore. I hope you will join me in congratulating the Woolf Institute on their many achievements and wishing them the best as they embrace new challenges in the future.

Carolina Gonzalez-Carvajal, **Guest Editor**

PERSPECTIVES

Editorial

News

Features

Culture

Art

Book Shelf

Shaping Narratives

Book Review

Noticeboard

From the Director

It seems remarkable that 15 years have passed since the six inaugural students arrived in Cambridge to take part in the world's first Master's Degree in the study of Jewish-Christian Relations. Since then, the Woolf Institute has established itself as a global leader in the study of relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Our work continues, in the last few months we have signed two agreements with Cambridge University that will benefit the Woolf Institute for many years to come: firstly, an academic agreement with St Edmund's College to foster joint academic activities; secondly, an agreement with the Cambridge Commonwealth, European and International Trust to establish the Woolf Institute Cambridge PhD Scholarships.

Yet, as much as we wish to celebrate, there is much more that remains to be done. For many years I have reflected on Martin Luther King Jnr's phrase 'the fierce urgency of now', which encapsulates our motivation for striving to deliver robust scholarly study in order to better understand our society, and thus inform and shape a more tolerant, positive and collective future together.

This edition of *Perspectives* combines feature articles and interviews, as well as notices about past and forthcoming events. *Perspectives* epitomises our desire to combine theology with social sciences and the humanities.

A special thank you to our editorial team and to you, the reader, for your interest, and for your support.

Dr Edward Kessler MBE
Founding Director

Celebrating 15 years

1998 2013

DIARY

Woolf Institute at the Foreign Office

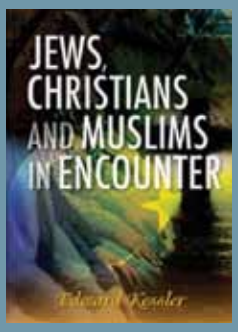
The Woolf Institute recently delivered a series of ground-breaking courses and seminars for the Foreign Office, helping British diplomats to understand the importance of religion in shaping foreign policy. The series included contributions from Foreign Office Minister Baroness Warsi and H.E. Archbishop Vincent Nichols.

Training at the FCO continues, with further courses addressing questions of religion and belief. On the basis of this work, Deputy Director, Dr Shana Cohen, led a workshop on Religion and Tolerance for EU diplomats at the EU's European External Action Service.

New Publication from Dr Edward Kessler

This summer SCM Press published Dr Edward Kessler's latest volume: *Jews, Christians and Muslims in Encounter.* Described as 'a fascinating window onto the developing world of Abrahamic Faith studies', this volume explores the current and historical relationships that exist between the faith-traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, pointing towards the need for 'all three communities to remember the past for the sake of their common future'.

To order a copy please contact: Tina.Steiner@woolf.cam.ac.uk



Cardinal Koch and Lord Sacks visit Woolf Institute

Earlier this year the Woolf Institute was delighted to welcome Lord Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, and Cardinal Kurt Koch, Head of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, to offer a day of lectures organised by the Woolf Institute in conjunction with the Cardinal Bea Centre for Judaic Studies, Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. This day of events followed on from Lord Sacks' private audience with His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, facilitated by the Woolf Institute's Director, Dr Edward Kessler, and Father Philipp Renczes of the Cardinal Bea Centre.

After offering an informal seminar to students of the Cambridge Theological Federation, Cardinal Koch gave an open lecture at Westminster College entitled: *Trust as the Basic Attitude in a Culture of Humanity.* This was followed by an evening lecture in which Lord Jonathan Sacks addressed the theme of *Trust and Trustworthiness* with a response by Lord Rowan Williams.

Due to the dramatic resignation of Pope Benedict XVI, the Cardinal and the former Chief Rabbi gave separate rather than complementary lectures, as Cardinal Koch had to return to Rome to join the Papal Conclave. Nonetheless, the two speakers had the opportunity to meet privately between their engagements.

To read or watch the lectures please see: http://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/resources/audio-visual.asp

Lord Sacks, Dr Kessler and Cardinal Koch at Westminster College, Cambridge

PLUS at the Woolf Institute

On the 21st April 2013, the Centre for Public Education at the Woolf Institute was excited to host the pilot event of PLUS (People Like Us). PLUS developed in response to the many exciting initiatives that encourage community learning and engagement (*Limmud, Greenbelt, Living Islam* to name but a few). The project aims to develop this framework as the basis for an alternative model of interfaith dialogue for all faiths and none.

For more information please see: http://www.people-like-us.org.uk/

Woolf Institute at the Festival of Ideas 2013

The Woolf Institute recently held a panel event as part of the University of Cambridge 2013 Festival of Ideas, including prominent faith representatives Rt Revd Richard Harries (former Bishop of Oxford), Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg (New North London Synagogue) and Professor Maleiha Malik (King's College London).

Addressing the theme: *From the margins to the mainstream – religions and beliefs in narratives of Britishness,* this panel explored how religious beliefs are currently represented in ideas of Britain and Britishness, and discussed approaches to inclusive narratives for the future.

2013 marked the sixth anniversary of the Festival of Ideas, an annual celebration of the arts, humanities and social sciences by the University of Cambridge public engagement team.

Retirement of Chief Rabbi

This September Lord Jonathan Sacks retired as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth. The Woolf Institute would like to thank him for his longstanding support and congratulate him on 22 years of inspired leadership and contribution to the field of interfaith relations.

Edward and Trisha Kessler with Lord and Lady Sacks at a special tribute dinner in London marking his retirement

Morocco: from World War Two to Independence

The Woolf Institute, together with the Centre of Islamic Studies, The British-Moroccan Society and the British Council, Morocco, recently held its first Morocco Research Workshop, entitled: *Morocco: from World War Two to Independence.* Exploring themes such as the Moroccan-Jewish experience during the wartime period and the response of Moroccan nationalists, the workshop was the first in a series of conferences intended to further academic relations between Britain and Morocco.

Woolf Institute Visiting Fellow, Professor Susan Miller, contributed to the conference which was held at the University of Cambridge in May 2013. The conference will lead to a special issue with the *Journal of North African Studies.*

Faith in Social Action Workshop

The Centre for Public Education recently undertook a project with Cambridgeshire County Council examining the role of faith-based organisations in social action. Gathering representatives from across Cambridgeshire, the project used focus groups to share examples of best practice and discuss barriers to multi-faith (including no faith) social action. Participants included: Romsey Mill, Age UK, Winter Comfort and the Cambridge and Ely Foodbanks. The project then culminated in a vibrant one-day training course addressing faith and social action in Cambridgeshire, based at Cambridgeshire County Council. Discussions continue with both the County Council and community groups and organisations.

Celebrating 15 years of Research, Teaching and Dialogue

By Dr Emma Harris, Academic Coordinator

As the Woolf Institute celebrates its 15th anniversary, it is the perfect opportunity to review its educational achievements and look to new endeavours.

Over the years, the Woolf Institute has welcomed over 2000 students from all over the world either as residential or 'virtual' students. The list of countries reads like the index of an atlas: Argentina, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Macedonia, the Maldives, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories, Poland, Qatar, the Republic of Ireland, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Past participants have included police officers, educators, medical practitioners, human rights officers, lawyers, religious and community leaders, film directors, and journalists.

The Woolf Institute ventured successfully through the Masters pathway, beginning in 1998 with the *MA in Jewish-Christian Relations* under the auspices of Anglia Ruskin University and then, commencing in 2006, with the *MSt in The Study of Jewish-Christian Relations* in collaboration with the University of Cambridge Faculty of Divinity and the Institute of Continuing Education.

In an exciting development, the Woolf Institute, together with the Cambridge Commonwealth, European and International Trust (formerly Cambridge Commonwealth Trust and Cambridge Overseas Trust), will co-fund doctoral students at the University of Cambridge through the *Woolf Institute Cambridge Scholarships*. Selected from applicants in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, the students will focus their research in the multi-disciplinary study of relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims.

From Michaelmas 2014, the Woolf Institute will contribute to the taught modules on the *MPhil in Middle Eastern Studies (Specialisation: Muslim-Jewish Relations)* which is offered by the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (FAMES) at the University of Cambridge. Dr Shana Cohen, Deputy Director, and Dr Esther-Miriam Wagner, Junior Research Fellow, will teach on two papers in Muslim-Jewish Relations that will cover topics ranging from comparative religious texts to contemporary rights of religious minorities.

Woolf Institute academics will act as advisers and consultants on the Doctorate in Professional Studies (DProf) offered by the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University. The Doctorate in Professional Studies is designed for the professional development of expert practitioners within their organisational context. Their research will focus on a project developed within the framework of interfaith relations.

Our extensive experience of distance learning has enabled us to expand our course offerings within a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). It began with the pioneering course *Muslims and Jews: The Historical and Contemporary Encounter*. This success led to the introduction of the current course *Bridging the Great Divide: the Jewish-Muslim Encounter* and a growing collaboration with the American University in Washington. Another live course, *Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Europe: Modern Challenges*, focuses on the relationships between Jews, Christians and Muslims and their impact in modern Europe.

Most recently, the Institute has begun to offer short courses. These provide participants with the unique opportunity to engage with interfaith studies in their own time and at their own pace. Current and forthcoming short courses include:

- *Jewish-Christian Relations in the English Novel*
- *Shakespeare and the Jewish-Christian Encounter: Beyond the Merchant of Venice*
- *Is Interfaith Dialogue Important?*
- *Diversity in End of Life Care*
- *Evaluation for Faith-based and Community Organisations*.

Woolf Institute courses continue to appeal to those interested in history, cultural, ethnic and faith identities. Nelson Mandela once said, 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'. We hope to inspire you for many years to come.

For further details of our online short courses please see: http://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/courses/
For information on other courses and scholarship opportunities please see page 42.

Commission on Multi-Faith Britain:
Community, Diversity and the Public Good

The Woolf Institute recently convened a Commission on Multi-Faith Britain. The Commission, which met for the first time on the 30th September, is chaired by Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss and seeks to:

a) consider the place and role of religion, belief and conviction in contemporary Britain and the significance of emerging trends,

b) examine how concepts of Britishness may be inclusive of a wide range of faith traditions and beliefs, and may influence self-understanding and a sense of identity in different traditions and communities;

c) explore how shared understandings of the public good may contribute to greater social cohesion and cross-community action;

d) make recommendations for public life and policy.

The Commission will continue to meet over a period of two years and will include national and local level public hearings and the publication of two reports: an interim report in late spring/early summer of 2014 to contribute to pre-election debates and manifesto commitments; and a final report in late spring/early summer of 2015 to contribute to debates around the policy and the legislative programme of the new Government following the 2015 general election.

The Woolf Institute would like to thank the Open Society Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for their support in funding this Commission.

For further information please contact Mohammed Aziz: maa74@cam.ac.uk

Membership of the Commission

Chair
Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss

Patrons
Lord Bhikhu Parekh
(also member of Commission)
Sir Iqbal Sacranie
Lord Rowan Williams
Lord Harry Woolf

Convenor
Dr Edward Kessler

Advisory Group
(also members of Commission)
Dr Shana Cohen
Lord Richard Harries
Prof Tariq Modood

Members
Bishop Dr Joe Aldred
Dr Ian Bradley
Andrew Copson
Shaunaka Rishi Das
Prof Gwen Griffith-Dickson
Mark Hammond
Dr Jagbir Jhutti-Johal
Prof Francesca Klug
Prof Maleiha Malik
Imam Ibrahim Mogra
Brian Pearce
Canon Dr Angus Ritchie
Rabbi Dr Norman Solomon
Revd Dr Robert Tosh

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Intelligent Trust: Placing Trust and Mistrust in Interfaith Europe

The Woolf Institute has received a grant of €350,000 to pursue a major research project over 3 years from a European foundation. *Intelligent Trust* seeks to understand the process of placing trust and mistrust in the context of contemporary economic and social pressures in multi-faith Europe, including arguments about multiculturalism and immigration.

The research will consist of a one-year pilot study in Tottenham (North London) and surrounding areas, followed by comparative research in Paris, Berlin, and Rome. Dr Shana Cohen, Co-Principal Investigator, explains: 'we chose four cities to compare the influence of external factors and origin of the particular communities. By making comparisons, we can understand how the culture (including the different combinations of factors external and internal to faith communities) affects behaviour (i.e. trusting or not individuals of different faiths)'.

The Woolf Institute welcomes Vice-President of the Arab Parliament

Qatar UK 2013

The Woolf Institute is delighted to announce that Professor Aisha Yousef Al-Mannai, Director of the Mohammed Bin Hamad Center for Muslim Contribution to Civilization, Qatar Foundation, will deliver the Second DICID-Woolf Lecture, which this year takes place in Cambridge on the 19th of November. The theme is *My Experience in Religious Studies and Challenges of Contemporary Dialogue* and will form part of the 2013 Qatar-UK Cultural Exchange Programme and Inter Faith Week 2013.

For further information please see:
www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/events
Or contact Claire Curran
cc640@cam.ac.uk

Education Project

The Centre for Public Education is delighted to announce a new transatlantic project examining religious education. Initiated by Woolf Institute alumna Laurie Hogen, this project seeks to provide high quality professional development for religious education teachers in both the UK and US through identifying, securing and then disseminating examples of best practice. The project will include a visit from US teachers to UK schools, a collaborative transatlantic symposium and a national conference based at the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge.

For further information please contact Alice Sandham: at375@cam.ac.uk

Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge

Faith in Fiction

By Carolina Gonzalez-Carvajal

Carolina Gonzalez-Carvajal grew up in England and Spain. She studied at Jesus College, Cambridge and the University of California, Los Angeles. After working in Los Angeles and Dallas as a lawyer in the areas of international business and trade, she moved back to England. She has a Master's degree in Creative Writing from Royal Holloway College and is currently working on her second novel.

Germán Póo-Caamaño on Flickr.

A writer friend recently sent me an article from *The Guardian* that asked the question: where did all the Christian writers go? I decided to try to answer this in a broader context and set myself a simple brief. I would interview four novelists writing from a Jewish, Christian and Muslim perspective and ask them to consider the relationship between faith and their own writing. But first, I had to find the authors. I approached a number of novelists who declined to talk about their faith and its impact on their literature. One writer I spoke with suggested that while faith might well be relevant, it is often avoided, as including it in your literature might mean career suicide: 'Unless you are a great and dead Russian novelist, claiming you are a Christian novelist just makes you sound slightly mad, potentially boring, and bossily judgemental: not a good look'. There has long been an awkward relationship between fiction and faith in this country. In 1928, Virginia Woolf wrote about TS Eliot's conversion to a friend: 'He has become an Anglo-Catholic, believes in God and immortality, and goes to church. I was really shocked. A corpse would seem to me more credible than he is. I mean, there's something obscene in a living person sitting by the fire and believing in God'. Even in the nineteenth century, Charles Dickens chose to have his retelling of the Gospel narratives published after his death. In a letter to a reader, he voiced his concern about asserting his faith in his novels: 'I have always striven in my writings to express veneration for the life and lessons of Our Saviour; because I feel it;… But I have never made proclamation of this from the housetops'.

For this piece, I spoke with four writers. Three established writers: Naomi Alderman, Rhidian Brook and Na'ima B. Robert and one first-time novelist, Elisabeth Gifford. I posed the same questions to all four writers: Naomi Alderman by email, Rhidian Brook and Elisabeth Gifford in person, and Na'ima B. Robert via Skype from her home in Cairo. Each of them has made a personal journey within their faiths.

Naomi Alderman was brought up in an Orthodox Jewish family, in a community which provided the backdrop for her first novel, *Disobedience*. Her most recent novel, *The Liars' Gospel*, puts the lives of Miryam (Mary), Iehuda of Qeriot (Judas), Caiaphas and Bar-Avo (Barabbas) at the centre of the story of Yehoshuah (Jesus), a year after his death.

Rhidian Brook is Welsh and came to Christianity after a period of illness in his twenties. His latest book, *The Aftermath*, follows Colonel Lewis Morgan as he tries to rebuild his relationship with his wife and oversee the rebuilding of Hamburg after the war, while sharing a home with the enemy.

Na'ima B. Robert defines herself as: 'Muslim, Black, mixed-race, Southern African, Western, revert and woman all in

one'. She is descended from Scottish Highlanders on her father's side and the Zulu people on her mother's side, although she was born in Leeds and grew up in Zimbabwe. She reverted to Islam in her early twenties. She has written extensively about her decision to embrace Islam and wear the niqab. Her latest young adult novel, *Black Sheep* is set in South London and explores a love story between a young girl and a boy who is trying to free himself from his affiliation with gangs.

Elisabeth Gifford is the daughter of a Church of England minister and comes from a family with faith at its heart – her sister is ordained and her brother-in-law is David Ison, the current Dean of St Paul's. Her first novel, *Secrets of the Sea House* has been described as 'an epic, sweeping tale of hope and redemption', a novel that explores 'how we heal ourselves with the stories we tell'. Set on the wild and remote island of Harris in the Western Hebrides, it follows a young couple who discover the skeleton of a mermaid child and are drawn back to the secrets of its long dead owner, the Reverend Alexander Ferguson.

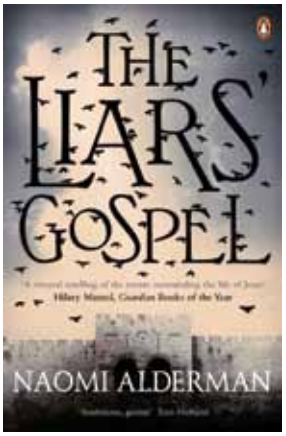
Firstly, I wondered if the writer's experience of coming to faith changed the way that they incorporated faith into their work? Alderman and Gifford grew up in religious households and both agreed that this experience had shaped their literary worldview. 'All novelists have personal reasons for being interested in the topics that they write about', Naomi Alderman told me. In her earlier novel *Disobedience*, Alderman had shocked her Jewish critics with a tale of a prodigal lesbian daughter returning to Hendon. However, her latest book, *The Liars' Gospel*, which takes a secular perspective of Jesus, is suffused with the language of Jewish ritual and practice. Growing up in a Jewish household, she felt she was well prepared to tell this story, as she didn't come to Jesus with a 'childhood idea of who he was or what he meant' and her Judaism offered a particular contextual understanding of the historical period and its values. It is interesting that her novels, which sit more strongly in a historical tradition than a theological tradition, can still unintentionally incite controversy. Some of which may only be the result of a misplaced apostrophe; it is notable that many of the critics of the book refer to the novel as The *Liar's* Gospel, as if Yehoshuah/Jesus is the liar, rather her intended title The *Liars'* Gospel. With the apostrophe correctly placed, it is clear that her intent is to focus on the narratives that people tell to support their lives and beliefs rather than the figure at its centre.

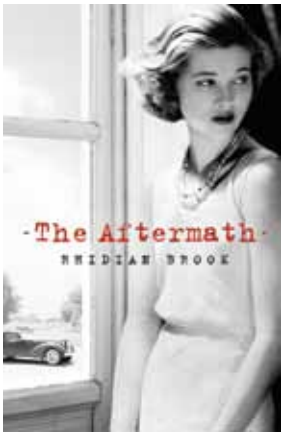
For Elisabeth Gifford, her upbringing as the daughter of a minister was at the centre of her desire to write. Growing up in a succession of parishes, from council estates to wealthy villages, she said experiencing people from different backgrounds was 'a gift' for any writer. Like Alderman, she credits her religious childhood for creating a particular experience of the English language. In Gifford's case, she recalls rifling through her father's study and finding 'the liturgy, the King James Bible, lots of sermons, dialectics', texts that undoubtedly enhanced her experience of language and its power. However, the more important aspect of her religious upbringing was:

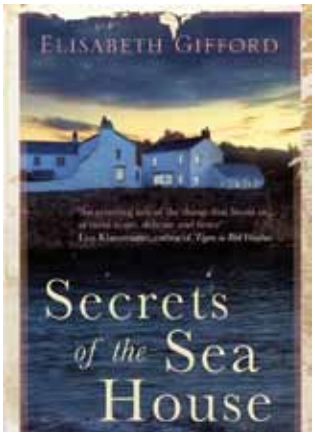
> 'I noticed that my parents had a sense of narrative, that they were choosing their life because of something that you couldn't see but that was important, that they believed enough in to act on. It had a romance and an integrity that inspired my creativity. Although at the time these advantages didn't always seem so apparent… When I was a teenager and dabbling in poetry, my mother pointed out that a lot of people who grew up in vicarages ended up as writers, but that seemed a poor recompense at the time for years of social humiliation at school for a general lack of coolness'.

Contrastingly, both Rhidian Brook and Na'ima B. Robert came to their faith as adults and present a narrative of their lives framed by their discovery of faith. Would it have changed their writing if they had grown up in their respective faiths? Yes, according to Na'ima B. Robert who told me that it was only after her reversion and the birth of her son that she was prompted to write. Wanting to replicate the love of story and language that her father had instilled in her as a child, she struggled to find books for her son that weren't as dry and colourless as the faith books in her local library:

> 'There were very few books from Islamic publishers and whether it was because of the quality of illustration or the story itself, these books didn't have







the same appeal. I didn't want my son to feel that the gorgeous books were all about other things and that when he read about people in his own faith the books had to be dry and didactic'.

Rhidian Brook also reflected that it was after his 'dramatic conversion' that he became compelled to write fiction. Brook's first novel, *The Testimony of Taliesin Jones,* was a rite of passage story about the spiritual awakening of a boy searching for meaning against the background of a family breakdown. It was penned during his two year convalescence from illness. His second book also stemmed from his own spiritual awakening but it was family history that prompted him to write his latest book: *The Aftermath*. This fictionalised account of his grandfather's requisitioning of a house in Hamburg in the aftermath of the Second World War, was, by his own admission, 'less overtly about faith'. However, he says faith has still informed its writing:

'A few friends have asked why I have to give them the 'Jesus bit'… In the first two novels I was unashamed about doing so. If you are a writer it isn't about saying 'I am a Christian', you are trying to create something good… a true way to tell your story. And just because *The Aftermath* isn't as overt, doesn't mean that the themes of reconciliation and redemption aren't central to the story'.

From my conversation with Elisabeth and Rhidian, it appeared that religion in fiction had become almost taboo: a subject that had to be explained or qualified in order to be included. For Alderman, however, an enduring curiosity about religion and its texts proved to be an inspiration, as she has previously written:

'The shopping mall doesn't cut it as a replacement for synagogue, the beach holiday is no hajj, the TV doesn't give us the guidance of an inspiring sermon. So I think that there's an interest now in going back to look at those old faith systems in a more mature way. Not treating them as untouchable eternal truths, but as tools, things we can remix and re-evaluate. Which is where novelists come in, saying, "you've always thought about the story this way, but how about taking it that way? . . . but if we just rewrite it a little bit, we can turn it into something really inspiring and spiritual". I love this. It's a blow against the kind of blinkered fundamentalism I grew up with, as well as a genuinely spiritual journey in text'.

Although Alderman is clearly ready to engage with writing as a spiritual enterprise, she has also famously commented that storytelling is a 'lying art'. If this is the case, how do authors engage with scripture? Within *The Liars' Gospel* there appears to be one answer: the liars' of the title. The unreliability of Alderman's narrators could be seen to powerfully capture the human tendency to look at the world and strongly desire our way of looking to be reinforced. This keen awareness of subjectivity, Alderman suggested, was inspired by reading the New Testament itself. 'The gospels are stories told by people for particular reasons. We can trace these reasons and how they influence the things they concentrated on... Each of their portrayals of Jesus supports their beliefs and ideas'.

Ethan Hickerson on Flickr

Approaching scripture in this way undoubtedly influenced the way Alderman wrote her novel, but does it invite readers to reappraise scripture through a similar lens? Alderman commented: 'I think I can leave it to the reader to make the imaginative leap to how that translates to the gospels and other faith texts'.

'Remember, storytelling was the first choice for Jesus'

For Rhidian Brook, the idea of literature as a 'lying art' is exaggerated but he does acknowledge that the issue of subjectivity in fiction is unlikely to go away: 'If I'm telling a story, I have to distract you and never let you look away. I may be spinning a yarn but it's complicated. What is true in literature? Facts don't make a true picture and history is anything but a story'. He uses the example of his history teacher's publication of historical texts: 'The idea that he is doing something factual and therefore, it is more true than what I am doing in my novels is delusional'.

For Elisabeth Gifford, the writer has to earn the reader's trust, a storytelling mission consistent with her Christian faith: 'Remember, storytelling was the first choice for Jesus. It has the ability to both look back and interpret what has happened to us but also to look forward to the choices we want to make and thus imagine a future: two movements that mirror faith and hope'.

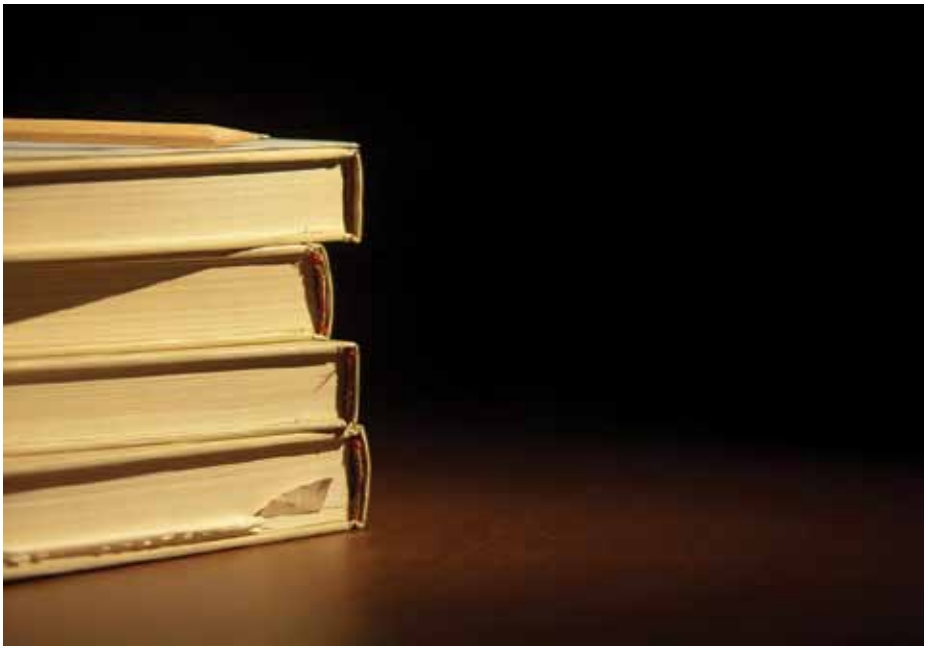
For Na'ima B. Robert, however, her role as a writer must always be true to her faith and the people she writes for. When she started writing young adult fiction she tells me, there was no one offering teens the sort of book that they could relate to. She talks about young Muslim girls reading *Twilight* and thinking that this is 'not their world'. Her aim has been to write books that uphold cultural values but at the same time reflect the realities of the world they speak to. Her first young adult novel, *From Somalia, with Love*, grew out of an encounter with a

Somali girls' youth group. It was difficult for her to balance the interests of the traditional Somali community who felt it was shameful for her to include a character who was angry with her parents. Finally, she felt she walked a fine line but stayed true to her readers. However, there are other occasions when her faith has tempered the way she tells her story. In her latest book, *Black Sheep*, she made a conscious decision not to make the story too sexualised or to have her characters swear, even though the characters are part of a London street gang and their real life contemporaries would have done both:

> 'I can't say that I write in an uninhibited way, as I am a Muslim. My son's going to read it and look at my scarves, my niqab, and say: 'you wrote this'. For me it is a moral choice. And I know that this is something that in literary circles is not acceptable. It may be alright for someone to write in a way that glorifies violence, but as a person of faith it isn't alright for me. At the end of my career, I would like to be a force for good. I know it sounds cheesy. But it's not just a fun story; I want to write something beneficial'.

When I asked Rhidian Brook to sum up his experiences for me, he remarked: 'Put yourself into writing and if you have faith, it will come to be part of that writing: you can't compartmentalise'.

It seems to me that representations of faith are present in novels but the nature and extent of its presence depends on individual novelists; whether a writer has a faith-based childhood or comes to faith later in life, great writers have always wrestled with questions of faith and the cultural heritage of religion. Writers inevitably draw from the narratives of their lives and whether they choose to whisper or choose to shout, or even step far away from a belief system they have grown up with, it will always be part of that individual's narrative and the narratives they offer to their readers.



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Author's biographies

Naomi Alderman grew up in London and attended Oxford University and UEA. In 2006, she won the *Orange Award* for New Writers. In 2007, she was named *Sunday Times Young Writer of the Year*, and one of *Waterstones' 25 Writers for the Future*. Her first novel, *Disobedience*, was published in ten languages; like her second novel, *The Lessons*, it was read on BBC Radio 4's *Book at Bedtime*. Penguin published her third novel, *The Liars' Gospel*, in August 2012. In 2013 she was named one of *Granta's Best of Young British Novelists* in their once-a-decade list.

Rhidian Brook is originally from Wales. He worked as a copywriter in London until he was struck down by a post-viral condition and was unable to work for two years. This was the spur that started his literary career. He has since written three novels: *The Testimony of Taliesin Jones*, *Jesus and the Adman* and *The Aftermath*. His first novel has been made into a film starring Jonathan Pryce. He has written for television, including *Silent Witness* and has also written the feature film *Africa United*. He is a regular contributor to *Thought for the Day* and his new novel, *The Aftermath*, was recently published in the UK and has been translated into 23 languages.

Elisabeth Gifford studied French Literature and World Religions at Leeds University. She has written articles for *The Times* and *The Independent* and has published poems in *Cinnamon Press* and *The Oxford Magazine*. Her biography, *The House of Hope*, examines the life of Dr Joyce Hill who opened a rescue centre for abandoned babies in China. She has a Diploma in Creative Writing from Oxford OUDCE and a Master's degree in Creative Writing from Royal Holloway College. Her first novel, *Secrets of the Sea House*, has recently been published by Corvus.

Na'ima B. Robert is an author and magazine publisher. She was born in Leeds and grew up in Zimbabwe. After gaining a first-class degree from the University of London, she began writing fiction when her eldest child was a toddler. Her frank and honest autobiographical celebration of her adopted Muslim faith, *From My Sisters' Lips*, was published by Transworld Publishers to much acclaim. Her books include the teen novels, *From Somalia, with Love* and *Boy vs. Girl* and children's books such as *Going to Mecca* and *Ramadan Moon*. She is founder and Editor-in-Chief of *SISTERS*, a magazine for Muslim women. Her latest work, *Black Sheep*, is a teen novel that explores gang life in London.

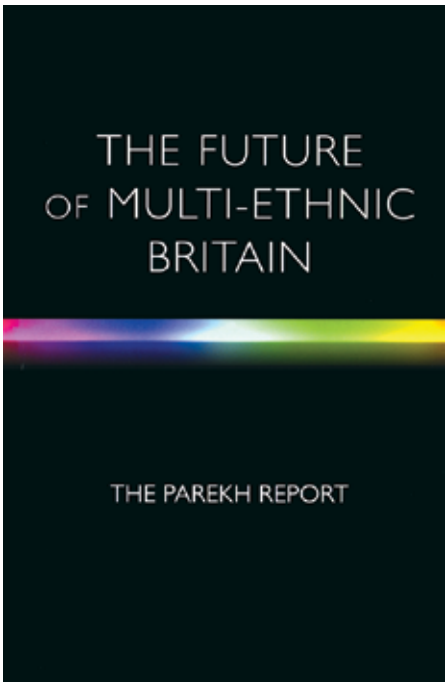
The Parekh Report:

Rethinking the National Story

By Professor Tariq Modood

Professor Tariq Modood was the principal researcher on the *Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities* at the Policy Studies Institute. Since 1998 he has been a Professor of Sociology, Politics & Public Policy and is the founding Director of the Centre for the Study of Ethnicity & Citizenship at the University of Bristol. His work has increasingly focused on Muslims in the West, specifically on British Muslim identity and its relation to the theory and politics of secular multiculturalism. He co-founded the international journal, *Ethnicities*, and was Adviser to the *Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*. His latest book is *Multiculturalism* (Second Edition, 2013).

The Parekh Report was the concluding report of the Runnymede Trust's two-year, 23-member *Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*. It was heralded by many as the most comprehensive review of British identity and race relations since Labour came to power and followed on from the Macpherson report's publication one year earlier. However, due to its conclusion that the term Britishness sometimes carried 'unspoken racial connotations', it met a significant level of controversy and tabloid condemnation. Nonetheless, the report went on to become the basis for much of the debate on multiculturalism in the UK. Fifteen years on from the Commission's commencement, key contributor, Professor Tariq Modood, reflects on both its contentious reception and its eventual success.



The *Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (CMEB) had a number of unusual features for a national commission. It was created by an independent race relations think-tank, *The Runnymede Trust*, and while it was launched by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, it was wholly independent of the government and included no members of the judiciary or representatives of the government. Of its 23 members (not all of whom served the full term), over a third were non-white and nearly a third were academics (CMEB, 2000: 366–371). Besides its distinguished chair it included prominent public intellectuals and race equality professionals such as Professor Stuart Hall, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, and Trevor Phillips.

Looking through my folder of press-cuttings from the time of the launch of the CMEB report in 2000, I am reminded of some very angry headlines:

A NATIONAL OUTRAGE! THE GANG OF 23 WHO ARE TRYING TO DO DOWN BRITAIN (*Sunday Mercury*, October 15, 2000, George Tyndale)

RACISM SLUR ON THE WORD 'BRITISH' (*Daily Mail*, London, October 11, 2000, Steve Doughty)

BRITISH IS RACIST, SAYS PEER TRYING TO REWRITE OUR HISTORY (*Daily Mail*, London, October 10, 2000, Jonathan Irwin; David Hughes)

CURSE OF THE BRITISH-BASHERS (*The Sun*, October 11, 2000).

These damning headlines were accompanied by scathing attacks on members of the Commission, individually as well as collectively, and were soon joined by broadsheet articles and editorials, including *The Guardian*, a natural ally, arguing that Britain was more tolerant and inclusive than most countries, including those of continental Europe and the USA. The then Home Secretary, it was reported:

> 'was appalled when he read part of the document suggesting that the term British had racial connotations and was no longer appropriate in a multicultural society. He ripped up a speech prepared for the launch of the document yesterday and instead delivered a strong attack on the part which he believed lacked intellectual rigour. "Unlike the Runnymede Trust, I firmly believe that there is a future for Britain and a future

for Britishness", Mr Straw declared. "I am proud to be British and of what I believe to be the best of British values"' (**PROUD TO BE BRITISH STRAW RAPS RACE REPORT**, *The Times*, 12 October, 2000, Richard Ford).

Yet the previous day, an article had been published in *The Guardian* by the chair of the CMEB, in which he argued:

> 'The report recognises that, while cherishing cultural diversity, Britain must remain a cohesive society with a shared national culture. That culture is based on shared values, including such procedural values as tolerance, mutual respect, dialogue and peaceful resolution of differences, as well as such basic ethical norms as respect for human dignity, equal worth of all and equal life chances.
>
> The common national culture includes shared symbols and a shared view of national identity, and these are best evolved through a democratic dialogue between our various communities. The report sees Britain both as a national community with a clear sense of collective purpose and direction and also made up of different communities interacting with each other within a shared moral framework' (Parekh, 2000b).

So, what exactly had we said? The whole row was focused on three pages – out of a nearly four hundred page report – the final section of Chapter 3, entitled, *The Future of Britishness*. The main points of this angry reaction can be summarised as follows:

- that the CMEB were saying 'British' was racist
- that the CMEB were saying the days of a country called 'Britain' were over
- that the CMEB wanted to rename Britain as 'community of communities'

Consequently, the respondents suggested, CMEB was insulting British/White people and seemed unaware that many ethnic minorities were proud to be British and that Britain was becoming a multicultural society. Furthermore, the CMEB was represented as unpatriotic, out of touch with ethnic minorities and offensive to the minorities and majority alike.

A crowd celebrating the Diamond Jubilee

At this point, I suppose it is fair to ask, what did I, as one of a small team of drafters of Part 1 of the report, think this passage was doing? My view was that the Commission had an over-arching message, which was then qualified in certain ways. The over-arching message was that the rethinking and political action needed to make Britain more inclusive had to continue. Furthermore, if the country was to progress towards an inclusive, non-racial, multicultural Britishness, this rethinking had to focus on British identity itself. Our argument was that the inequalities and exclusions associated with racism, including material inequalities and disadvantages, could not be countered by merely materialist strategies but required 'rethinking the national story', our collective identity, in a plural way. A qualifying message was that there could be no complacency about the importance of anti-racism, which needed more political will, if Britishness was to be made inclusive *in fact* and not just in rhetoric. Another qualifying message was that old-fashioned, monistic, assimilationist, majoritarian nationalism was past its usefulness and had to be replaced by a new, plural kind of national identity. This was sometimes expressed as recognising the emergence of a post-national space without boundaries, and while this was not my chosen way of expressing the point, I recognised that it was so for some members of the Commission (and of course beyond it) and was unlikely to be taken the wrong way as long as it was harnessed to the dominant message. I thought the report's text had achieved this because I – naively – thought that a reader would read the report from the beginning and the chapter as a whole, and would, therefore, see the centrality of what I have called the over-arching message. Of course the critics of the report, especially in the right-wing press, did not read the report in that way but rather, they fixated on some ill-chosen and ambiguous phrases – indeed, rephrased them to make them even worse – and so were able to give this part of the report almost exactly the opposite meaning to the one it was written to convey. Much of the media coverage was hysterical and one-sided, informed as it clearly was by a hostile political agenda informed by a chauvinistic, right-wing nationalism and specifically by wanting to avenge New Labour Government's acceptance the previous year of the Macpherson Report's charge that the London Metropolitan Police was 'institutionally racist' (Parekh, 2000: 6).

Moreover, when one looks closely at the really hostile coverage, it seems that it was not based on independent readings of the report but on repeating one poisonous misreading in *The Telegraph* (Richardson 2000). Yet, the fact that even sympathetic commentators, such as *The Guardian* and the New Labour Home Secretary took us to be saying what our critics implied, retrospectively suggests that our text suffered from certain weaknesses and fatal ambiguities (Parekh, 2001b: 7).

Having focused on what we said and how we said it, I think we cannot also ignore who said it. Bhikhu Parekh has pointed out that white Scottish authors had published books with titles such as *The Day Britain Died* and *The Breakup of Britain,* without generating anything like the response to the CMEB and without being taken to task for what could easily be taken to be unpatriotic language. He goes on:

> '…the fact that there were so many high profile black and Asian intellectuals gave the impression that the Commission and its report had a distinctly minority orientation. This imposed intangible and subtle limits on what the report should and should not say – limits which it could transgress, as indeed it did, only at its peril' (Parekh, 2001b: 7).

It has rightly been said that the negative press reaction provoked by the CMEB report:

> 'demonstrates that the public sphere is highly racialised and patrolled by a powerful conservative press, instinctively hostile to any intellectual position that problematises national identity through the lens of race and ethnicity or promotes positive discrimination' (McLaughlin and Neal, 2007: 924).

Undoubtedly, the reception of the CMEB report was a catastrophe for the multiculturalist cause it espoused. However, what is interesting is that on this specific point of controversy, if we look only a few years forward we see that what was deemed by the press and politicians to be unacceptable has come

Children play at the Notting Hill Carnival

to be thought of as necessary, even relatively uncontroversial, amongst senior politicians.

To see this, consider what British Prime Ministers had been saying about British national identity in the years up to the CMEB report. In the 1970s and 1980s, Mrs Thatcher wanted 'to keep fundamental British characteristics' (Thatcher, 1999) and in the 1990s, John Major hoped that 'fifty years from now Britain will survive…. un-amendable in all of its essentials' (Major, 1993). New Labour had a very different view of Britain, for them it was not so much about a thousand years of history as it was for John Major, but it was a country on the move, 'a young country', as Tony Blair described it. In such rhetoric and that of 'cool Britannia', New Labour were signalling a brand that foregrounded changing lifestyles, urban multiculture, the creative arts and youth culture and the ethnic minority dimension within them. Jack Straw had spoken about Britishness having become more inclusive and multi-ethnic, and Robin Cook, a senior Cabinet figure, in a highly publicised speech, referred to chicken tikka masala as the nation's favourite dish. The CMEB was aware of how New Labour were recognising the growing multiculturalising of the national identity. The Commission, however, was not content for senior politicians to merely acknowledge this, as we thought this led to the complacent view that the process could be left to itself, that no action or political leadership was necessary. We wanted to challenge that complacency and passivity, what we referred to as 'multicultural drift'.

'positive action must be taken to build a shared identity'

This challenge, as we have seen, was not appreciated, to put it mildly. Nevertheless, soon afterwards, Cabinet members started expressing exactly the view that had been lambasted; or to put it more precisely, which was not sufficiently identified because of the lambasting. In 2001 John Denham argued that Britishness, as it existed, was insufficient, hence 'positive action must be taken to *build* a shared vision and identity…' (Denham, 2001) and in 2007, Jack Straw himself said that it was necessary 'to *develop* an *inclusive* British story which reflects the past, takes a hard look at where we are now and *creates* a potent vision… to make sense of our shared future…' (Straw, 2007). Note the active verbs: 'build', 'develop', 'creates' – exactly the view that had motivated the CMEB. Moreover, and somewhat surprisingly, in this same period of time, senior Conservatives have started

to express the same view. The current Education Secretary, Michael Gove, has said 'Britishness is about a mongrel identity' (Gove, 2009, 2010). This used an expression that a Tory MP had previously tried to make out was an insulting inference of Robin Cook's suggestion that the British were not a race (BBC, 2001). Even while some Conservatives speak derisively of multiculturalism, Pauline Neville-Jones, a figure regarded to be on the right of the Conservative Party, led a review group which argued 'we need to rebuild Britishness in ways which… allow us to understand the contributions which all traditions, whether primarily ethnic or national, have made and are making to our collective identity' (CPNISG, 2007a: 23). A Leverhulme project that took interviews from Cabinet Ministers and Shadow Cabinet Ministers during 2007–08 did not find a uniformity of views on this matter but found considerable cross-party agreement that British national identity had to be opened up to include minorities and that politicians and the state had a role to play in this process (Uberoi and Modood, forthcoming 2013).

With Ed Miliband declaring at the Labour Party Conference in September 2012 that 'One Nation' is to be his master-concept, one might fear a return to some form of assimilationism or majoritarianism. While that cannot be ruled out in practice, it is unlikely. In a later speech he celebrated diversity and the contribution of migrants and the second generation (like him and his brother, David), and made glowing references to the 2012 London Olympics opening ceremony. He celebrated the success of Team GB, including Somali born, Mo Farah, and mixed race, Jessica Ennis, while emphasising that laissez-faire was the mistake of the past and integration is something that has to be worked at (Miliband, 2012). Indeed, the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in London in July 2012 was an excellent expression of a multicultural Britishness that New Labour tried to articulate without ever quite succeeding. Its positive reception in the British media – including by some of the same papers that had previously lambasted the CMEB – shows how far we have advanced (Katwala, 2012). An Australian political theorist opined that the Britain displayed at the Olympics meant that '[many] countries are [now] looking to Britain as an example of a dynamic multicultural society united by a generous patriotism' (Soutphommasane, 2012). Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, the left-wing journalist and a member of the CMEB, who returned her MBE as a protest against the Iraq War, wrote:

> 'these two weeks have been a watershed of true significance. There has been a visceral reaction among black and Asian Britons to what we have seen. For some, it has been perhaps the first time they have really felt a part of this country. For others, the promise of tolerance and integration has come true' (Alibhai-Brown, 2012).

So, my optimistic 'then-and-now' conclusion is that despite the ferocious attack on the CMEB report and the relentless anti-multiculturalist rhetoric of the last decade, some progress is being made by the standard of multiculturalism. Hence it seems that the detailed academic analysis which concluded 'the erasure of the Parekh Report as a progressive intellectual imaginary through which to make sense of the multitude of complex dilemmas facing twenty-first century Britain is all but complete' (McLaughlin and Neal, 2007: 927) may yet prove to be premature in relation to the report's understanding of the need to pluralise Britishness. Not an easy task and one, as we have seen, which will be experienced by some as threatening, but it does seem to be a process that some British politicians and publics have embarked upon. Moreover, if we look beyond the symbolic, at what has happened to 'state multiculturalism' or multiculturalist policies, it will be seen that contrary to what some academic commentators say, we do not have a 'retreat' or a 'return to assimilation'. There have been a number of new policies in relation to community cohesion, security, immigration and naturalisation, which considered by themselves may not be particularly multiculturalist but have to be seen in a larger context. The multiculturalist agenda of New Labour's first term (1997–2001) has seen no reversal during its later terms but rather a steady advance on a number of fronts such as the outlawing of religious discrimination and incitement to religious hatred, the expansion of state-funded Christian and non-Christian schools, public funding to develop Muslim community infrastructure and the inclusion of Muslim organisations in various spheres of governance (Meer and Modood, 2009; O'Toole, DeHanas and Modood, 2012). Hence this process is best understood as a civic rebalancing of multiculturalism, a correction of any view that multiculturalism is not about the pluralisation of national citizenship (Modood, 2013). The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government is not so committed to this on-going civic multiculturalism and have an anti-multiculturalist rhetoric but it is noticeable that they too have not reversed any major multiculturalist policies.

Mo Farah celebrating at the 2012 Olympics

Further reading

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Human Rights Narratives:

Words, Faith and Action

By Professor Robert McCorquodale

Professor Robert McCorquodale is the Director of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law in London. He is also Professor of International Law and Human Rights, and former Head of the School of Law, University of Nottingham. His research and teaching interests are in the areas of public international law and human rights law. He has published widely on these areas, and has provided advice to governments, corporations, international organisations and non-governmental organisations concerning international law and human rights issues, including advising on the drafting of new constitutions and conducting human rights training courses. Here Professor McCorquodale reflects on the influence of faith and narratives on understandings of human rights and their impact on international law.

Martin Luther King Jr. at the Lincoln Memorial, 1963

'I have a dream, that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character'.

These words were spoken by Reverend Martin Luther King on the 28th August, 1963, as part of a movement to support the civil rights process in the United States. Such words are powerful motivational messages for social change. His dreams were shared by others and enormous changes have happened since those words were spoken. Children of former slaves and children of former slave-owners do sit down together in the United States, and there is a black President. Apartheid has been overcome peacefully. The Berlin Wall has come down. Many authoritarian and military rulers in Eastern Europe, in the Americas, in Asia and in the Arab world have been removed, though others still remain. We see pictures of people seeking to overcome oppressive rule, often at great cost in terms of life and loss to them and their loved ones. Time and again they use the words 'right' and 'freedom' as part of their reasons for their actions.

During these changes, religion and human rights are often seen as competing and contradictory narratives. Indeed, some religious leaders have been vocal in demanding actions, in helping propel social movements and in proclaiming the need to respect human rights, and yet others have resisted the expansion of human rights protections, through their actions and inactions, occasionally in order to preserve their own positions, authority or power.

What I intend to explore in this article is to demonstrate that there is a considerable amount of common structure and understandings in the narratives, even if the tone and language may differ, at least in relation to the Christian faith. I do this from the standpoint of an international human rights lawyer, who is a Christian and who seeks to use knowledge in a practical way with the aim of increasing the protection of human rights in the daily lives of people around the world. Thus I hope to show that much of the legal and social dialogue of human rights is grounded in Biblical material and that the contemporary narratives of human rights are consistent with Christ's words and actions.

Law

Since Martin Luther King's speech, laws have been agreed at national and international levels to protect human rights and freedoms. International agreements, such as the *International Covenant on Economic, Social*

and Cultural Rights (1966), the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966), and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), as well as regional agreements, including the *European Convention on Human Rights*, place legal obligations on governments to protect the human rights of all those in their jurisdiction. These human rights include the right to freedom from torture, the right to freedom of expression, the right to conscience and religion, the right to health, the right to education, the right to cultural expression, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to self-determination, the right to equality, and the right to freedom from discrimination.

Indeed, an extraordinary fact is that every single country in the world – of nearly 200 countries – has accepted that it has international legal obligations to protect human rights. While most countries, sadly, do not comply with all their obligations, and there is often weak enforcement, no government in the world today proclaims that it can legally abuse human rights. The language of 'human rights' is found in international discussions between heads of governments and between leaders of opposing forces in civil wars, as well as in international trade and investment debates.

Words

The use of the term 'human rights' is relatively new, at least in the context of enabling an individual to bring a claim against an authority. However, the notion of the liberty of humans from oppression can be found in, for example, ancient Greek philosophy, and ancient Chinese and Indian practice. A more contemporary writer has offered four characteristics of a human right:

> 'First, it must be possessed by all human beings, as well as only by human beings. Second, because it is the same right that all human beings possess, it must be possessed equally by all human beings. Third, because human rights are possessed by all human beings, we can rule out as possible candidates any of those rights which one might have in virtue of occupying any particular status or relationship, such as that of parent, president or promisee. And fourth, if there are human rights, they have the additional characteristic of being assertable, in a manner of speaking, "against the whole world"'. [1]

The international community has confirmed the essence of these characteristics in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) when it proclaimed the '*inherent* dignity and... the *equal* and *inalienable* rights of *all members* of the human family'. The *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966) provides that 'the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family... derive from the inherent dignity of the human person'.

There can be a problem with the abuse of the term 'human rights'. It has been used in situations where there is no aspect of human dignity, such as a 'right to a car' or 'a right to a TV', neither of which are human rights. It can be a divisive term in some contexts, and its use without understanding can diminish the chances of peaceful resolution to conflicts. So an informed use of the term 'human rights' is essential.

One key aspect of a human right is that it is about a relationship between a person and another person or body with power. That power is usually political power but it can be economic power, social power, cultural power or any other form of relationship we encounter in our daily lives. As Václav Havel noted: '[t]he exercise of power is determined by thousands of interactions between the world of the powerful and that of the powerless, all the more so because these worlds are never divided by a sharp line: everyone has a small part of himself in both'. [2]

The special aspect of that relationship that is expressed by human rights is that the relationship is viewed from the perspective of the one without power. There is a form of duty that is owed to the person without power and they have a worth that should be respected. This perspective is different from the action by a person in authority assisting another through an act of charity or because of their own responsibilities, or simply not acting and leaving an area of liberty to those without power. Indeed, as has been noted in terms of black Americans today:

> '[F]or the historically disempowered, the conferring of rights is symbolic of all the denied aspects of their humanity: rights imply a respect that places one in referential range of self and others, that elevates one's status from human body to social being... 'Rights' feels new in the mouths of most black people. It is still deliciously empowering to say. It is the magic wand of inclusion and exclusion, of power and no power. The concept of rights, both positive and negative, is the maker of citizenship, our relation to others'. [3]

It is in these contexts of powers, justice and of relations to others, that the narrative of human rights have been shaped and debated.

Eleanor Roosevelt and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

Faith

Christian philosophy was important in the development of the concept of human rights into law with Christians active in the protection of human dignity through law. Understandably, the Christian Bible does not use the term 'human rights' in the technical sense of a legal entitlement of an individual to bring a claim against another, who has a duty to uphold the entitlement. Nonetheless, the Bible is replete with references to justice and to righteousness, in which notions of human rights can be seen.

'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another'

The Hebrew word *mishpat*, which means justice or justice and righteousness, is often used to refer to an entitlement to justice. For example, 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor' (Zechariah 7: 9–10). This injunction not to deprive others of their rights is repeated elsewhere and is particularly directed at the need to protect or uphold the rights of widows, orphans, the poor and foreigners. These doctrines were of such nature largely because these groups were the powerless in that society, who were often the subject of oppression, and so needed to be helped by God's people. There is a responsibility to God to help and to protect the oppressed, as those who oppress others are to be held accountable to God for their treatment.

Similarly, the Greek words *dikaios* and *dikaiosyne* are used in the New Testament to refer to the need for justice or distributive justice, and to be righteous requires that justice for all must be given. As well as the concept of justice requiring the protection of human rights, the concept of loving one's neighbours is a key element of Christian teaching. In one of the first actions of Christ's ministry, he read from the book of Isaiah (61:1–2): 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour' (Luke 4: 18–19).

This statement of mission by Christ is consistent with his teaching about the greatest commandments. When he was asked which is the greatest commandment he replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments' (Matthew 22: 39). When Christ is asked 'who is my neighbour?', he responded by telling the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25–37). In this parable, a man walking from Jerusalem to Jericho was attacked by a group of robbers who beat him, stripped him and left him to die. A priest, who was walking the same road, saw the man and passed on the other side of the road. A Levite did the same. Then, a foreigner, a man from Samaria, came along and took pity on the man. He poured oil on his wounds, bandaged them and put the man on his donkey. He then took the wounded man to an inn and paid the inn-keeper to look after the man until the Samaritan returned. At the end of the parable, Christ then asks which of the people in the parable was the neighbour. The questioner answers that it was the one who had mercy on the man. At which answer Christ says: 'Go and do likewise'.

Christ's teaching is that there can be no limit to the concept of neighbour. As Wolterstorff notes:

> 'The commandment to love one another is grounded on this common sharing in the image of God – on the fact that my fellow human being is, in Isaiah's words, of my 'own flesh and blood'.... Every human being is, in this deep sense, my neighbour. Indeed, says Calvin, Jesus' purpose in the parable of the Good Samaritan was to teach "that the word *neighbour* extends indiscriminately to every man, because the whole human race is united by a sacred bond of fellowship"'.[4]

Further, all humans are created in the image of God. So a consistency can be seen between Christian concepts of loving one's neighbour and all of humanity created in the image of God.[5]

Therefore, there can be discerned within the Bible a strong conceptual basis for human rights. While the discourse is not exactly in human rights terms as we understand it today, the concepts dealt with create, as the Latin American bishops have affirmed, a 'gospel of human rights'.[6] It is also consistent with the international legal concept that human rights are universal and inalienable, and based on an understanding of requirements of human dignity.

Action

What emerges from a consideration of this Biblical discourse is that Christ is committed to helping the oppressed. But this commitment is not mere words; it is a commitment to uphold and protect human rights by action. It is putting Christian faith into action to help those in need that is required to love one's neighbour as oneself. Indeed, the people who God will consider at final judgment to be the righteous are those who fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, received strangers, clothed the naked, cared for the sick and visited the prisoners (Matthew 25: 31–46). Thus a Christian's responsibilities to protect human rights are not limited to just a few political or civil rights but include a full range of social and economic rights, such as the right to access to health care, and to act without discrimination. While the focus of Christian thought has been overwhelmingly on Christian responsibilities, in fact rights and responsibilities are closely linked. Almost all human rights in international law are not absolute. Because they are exercised within the context of societies, they are limited both by the rights of others and by the general interests of society. Yet the human right is still the priority and not the responsibility.

Further, the Christian Churches, as institutions, have a responsibility to take action against violations of human rights whenever they occur. There is a responsibility to resist oppression, whether it is political, economic, social or religious. The action taken might include making public statements, using their moral authority in societies and motivating their members where human rights are an issue. It could be said to be a harmony in the rejection of the absolute power and sovereignty of governments found in both international human rights law and in Christianity. It is surely a challenge to Christians (and followers of other faiths) that the Church, its leaders and members, have too often acted as oppressors by their actions of discrimination and abuse of power, and misused the emancipatory narrative of human rights.

It is also possible to see Christian concepts as influencing the legal protection of human rights. For example, international law protects the right to an adequate standard of living, which could be part of the Christian concept of righteousness in which there should be provision of food to the hungry, clothes to the naked, etc.; and that rights are to be protected at all times, even in wartime, is consistent with Christian thought. In fact, national courts have used Christian ideas in reaching conclusions on law, such as the determination of the extent of liability of manufacturers to consumers based on the question 'who in law is my neighbour?'.

On this understanding of the narrative of Christian thought, it is clear that the responsibility of Christians to take action to help others is consistent with the general human rights discourse concerning the protection of human rights. The protection of human rights is at the core of righteousness, is part of a Christian's responsibility to God and is an aspect of putting faith into action to love one's neighbours. As Drew Morphew has stated:

> '[H]uman rights have become possibly *the* pressing global issue of our time. This alone makes it imperative for thinking Christians to grapple with it. More profoundly, the struggle for human rights has to do with what it means to be fully human, with how and to what extent the human race can reach its potential and destiny. Any area of thought or endeavour that deals with man in his essence must be the concern of those who are committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ, for he came to seek and to save the same humanity'.[7]

The Good Samaritan by Paula Modersohn-Becker

Indeed, I would argue that it is vital that Christians and the institutions of the Christian churches understand this responsibility if they are to play a positive role in the education, clarification and dialogue of human rights.

Conclusions

While it is clear that care needs to be taken in the use of human rights language, human rights can be a unifying narrative, which can assist in a universal clarification of God's word and about Christ's social justice mission. It can give a voice to the powerless. Laws can be used to assist in putting words into clear obligations, as long as this law is a law that upholds human rights. Otherwise, as Martin Luther King noted, an unjust law is 'a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law... [and] any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust'.[8]

Finally, while the general narrative of human rights in international law does not resolve all social and moral issues, it does offer a basis for an interfaith dialogue. A human rights narrative acknowledges that there are greater interests to serve than our own self-interests, including our own religion's self-interests. It can be a means of building hope and restoring a sense of community, with a foundation of care for the oppressed and acting from the perspective of the oppressed. It offers parameters for making judgments about human relationships and about the nature of being human because it is saying that, at the deepest level, all humans have equal worth. This, after all, is one area where the major faiths can be united: a shared belief in seeking true justice and in upholding the dignity and worth of the human person.

Endnotes

1 R. Wasserstrom, 'Rights, Human Rights and Racial Discrimination' in J. Rachels (ed) *Moral Problems* (1979), p.12.

2 V. Havel, *Disturbing the Peace* (1990), p.182.

3 P. Williams, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (1991), p.164.

4 N. Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (1983), p.78 – his emphasis.

5 See D. Tutu, 'The First Word: To be Free' in J Witte and F Alexander (eds) *Christianity and Human Rights* (2010).

6 Final Document of the Fourth General Conference of Latin American Bishops 1992 in Santo Domingo, published in *Santo Domingo Conclusions* (1993).

7 D. Morphew, *Christians for Human Rights* (1991), p.1 – his emphasis.

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Morality tales:

Narrative strategies for living with HIV

By Dr Corinne Squire

Members of the Bambanani Group and their paintings: *Our Hopes and Dreams*

Dr Corinne Squire is Co-Director of the Centre for Narrative Research and Professor in Social Sciences, University of East London, UK. She is the author of *Living with HIV and ARVs* and *HIV in South Africa: Talking about the Big Thing*, and the editor of *Doing Narrative Research, What is Narrative Research?* and *Culture in Psychology*.

The importance of stories

Okay! In the first place I am glad that I know of my HIV positive status because now I know what to do. Then my husband… I told him. At first, he could not accept it… I then continued talking about it every day. I used to chat about it, so that it would sink into him that I am HIV positive... Truly, eventually he accepted it.... Then he asked about the baby. I said the baby will be tested at nine months, I then explained. Truly when I was told [about] the baby, I was very happy, because I was happy to save my baby. AZT [antiretroviral medication] helped me, my baby was tested negative. That made me a very happy person.

Linda*[1]*, Cape Town, 2001

For people living with HIV, like people living with other chronic illnesses, telling stories about how the illness came to affect them, how they are dealing with it, how they are going to live with it in the future, and what it all means, can be very important. HIV is a potentially fatal condition. Antiretroviral treatment is effective but difficult, and leaves some HIV symptoms untouched. HIV stigmatisation and discrimination still profoundly impact on how people view and live with the virus (UNAIDS, 2012). In these circumstances, narrating stories about diagnosis, coming to terms with the virus, getting treatment, living healthily, disclosing one's status, and educating others, can be very helpful. Such stories may be told to yourself, to those close to you, and to the wider community.

The pictures illustrating this article provide examples of some visual 'stories' of living with HIV, produced by the Bambanani Women's Group from Cape Town, South Africa, in association with the artist Jane Solomon and REPSSI (Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative). These 'body maps' tell tales of the women's lives and bodies before diagnosis, how they envisage the virus and the drug treatment within their bodies, and the resources they draw on to live positively with HIV positive status. The visual and oral storytelling associated with the images has been valuable for them, the women say. The group has also facilitated body mapping workshops for people living with HIV in Canada, Tanzania and Zambia, demonstrating the power of such processes across different economic and social contexts (Bambanani Women's Group, 2011).

1 All participants chose their own pseudonyms.

Because HIV is intimately tied to morally-judged sexual behaviours, HIV stories are also linked to morality. Because of HIV's associations with sexual wrongdoing, and because illness generally may be understood as punishment for sin, the virus is sometimes equated, by religious people, with spiritual failing. More generally, an HIV story is always a morality tale about oneself as an ethical person. It may deal in sin, possession, blame, exculpation and forgiveness. However, it can also be a way to reframe yourself as an ethical agent, rather than as a transgressive subject excommunicated from faith.

> *I don't think of myself as having HIV because I am still alright. There is no difference… my health is still good… The thing that really helped was the support groups. It really, really helped us because you feel free when you are there… you become very happy and forget… when you get home it is then that you remember that you have HIV… today I am not ready, I am not yet free… I am not open yet to stand up and say I have HIV. I am still getting there, you understand?… But I feel alright, most importantly I thank God. God said these things before, he said there will be these incurable diseases, so I believe in God truly. What he talked about, is happening today. So that is something else that inspired me, because God mentioned this before, he said they will happen, they are happening today, unto people, they would not fall in steep places, so I believe in that.*
>
> ***Linda, Cape Town, 2001***

Group member with her body map

Linda was a black South African woman in her 30s, unemployed, and living in very resource-constrained circumstances. She volunteered to talk to me and my research assistant, Lumka Daniel, in a township near Cape Town. In her initial answer to the question, 'What helps you?' she told us that knowing about HIV allows her to 'know what to do': to take her medication, to rely on her support group, to trust in her faith in God. This answer was given, in broadly similar ways, by many of the 37 women and men in the study. Some mentioned, in addition, the helpfulness of family members, friends, and radio and television programmes. Most acknowledged faith as an important factor, whether they belonged to denominations familiar in Europe, such as Catholicism or Methodism, were members of African evangelical Protestant churches, held traditional African beliefs, engaged with faith through their own private beliefs and prayer, or some combination of these. For those with more political backgrounds, faith had less of a role (Squire, 2007).

However, Linda is also doing something else. She is putting *herself* in the foreground of this picture. She is the one who 'knows what to do', who brought her husband to understand what being HIV positive means. She is the one who is struggling to be open and free, who 'feel(s) alright' and who 'thank(s) God'. She does this through her story.

Researching HIV 'morality tales'

My interest in people's story strategies for addressing HIV came from working for several years as a volunteer with HIV support groups in the USA. In these groups, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the diversity of people affected by the epidemic – gay men, current or ex-intravenous drug users and their partners, current and ex-sex workers and their partners, all from a variety of class and ethnic backgrounds – was very much in evidence, as was the range of people's life strategies. Across this

diversity, though, my research evidenced the presence and importance of HIV 'morality tales'. As people often do when they encounter serious, life-threatening events, HIV support group members frequently told stories of rediscovering religious institutions, of the power of prayer, of finding spirituality, or simply of re-evaluating the ethics of their lives. These stories were important aspects of how they lived with HIV. They were often stories that they told to other people, and to themselves, in order to help them live with the condition.

In my research, I never ask people to tell stories, but they often do. These can be short stories about particular events, or longer stories, like Linda's, about coming to terms with HIV. They may be extended narratives of lives lived with HIV for many years, or entire life stories. They may also be co-constructed stories, put together in interaction with me and with other imagined audiences in participants' heads, or, as with Linda, with supportive others – in her case, with a support group for pregnant HIV positive women. Studying people's strategies for living HIV positive lives by analysing these stories has proved very fruitful. The approach requires me to focus on how stories develop over long interviews, layered with repetitions, contradictions and omissions. It is a route that allows the complexities and the creativity of people's strategies for living with HIV to come into view.

HIV is a condition with a large 'psychosocial' aspect, which makes personal narratives about it central to how it is experienced and dealt with. The virus is transmitted by social actions with psychological meanings. These actions are judged in different ways across societies, but the judgements are frequently negative. Stigma often attaches to HIV itself as a fatal or disabling, transmissible, 'dirty' disease. Moralising judgements about HIV positive people pronounce them ignorant, feckless, scrounging, or criminally negligent. Such negative assessments may combine with the labelling of HIV positive people as sinful or socially transgressive because they are gay men, sex workers, drug users, or women (or less commonly,

Body map II

men) who have had sex outside marriage. Being judged negatively can have deleterious consequences both personally and socially: it can lead to depression, isolation, and refusal of testing and treatment.

Linda took great care to protect herself from negative judgements by positioning herself as knowledgeable and responsible. In her narrative, knowing her HIV status made her a morally valuable person. She narrated herself as an HIV positive subject who was also a good wife, open with her husband; a good mother, protecting her baby; a socially integrated member of the HIV-aware community, preparing to educate others; and a Christian, guided by her faith to accept and understand HIV.

In studying narratives of living with HIV, I define narratives in a broad sense, to include any sequence or movement of symbols that builds meaning. Of course, 'narratives' defined in this way will to some extent be specific to their social and historical contexts. We won't always be able to understand each other's stories. However, narratives about the self have a feature in common, across all these contexts. Such stories, because they are socially situated, are also always *morally* situated. They respond to the demand we all live with, to give an account of ourselves as subjects within the social order, acting as that order requires. In narrating ourselves, we narrate what we have done, wish we had not done, and should have done; and what we plan and desire to do (Butler, 2005; Squire, 2012).

Socio-moral positioning is very apparent in the stories that my research participants tell about living with HIV. This positioning happens, whether or not the narrators situate themselves as religious. For some narrators who wonder how they have offended God, or why God has deserted them, religious positionings can make their narratives more difficult. Penelope, for instance, a woman in her mid-fifties, an African migrant, described how her difficulties had initially alienated her from faith. She had been forced to stay in England after her HIV diagnosis in order to access treatment unavailable in her own country. She could not leave the country to see her daughter without forfeiting her asylum claim. She was still funding her daughter's care and education from the minimal income she received as an asylum seeker, which was itself inadequate for the healthy food she needed or for transport to HIV clinics and support groups. She was also unable to leave the country when her son fell ill and died:

> *I used to pray every day that I'll be able to see my children again but when my son died I said I wasn't going to pray anymore… I was so angry… and I stopped praying… and I said to myself, 'I can't compete with God'… I don't know if God is punishing me for something I've done, I don't know, things are so difficult for me, things are so hard for me, I don't know if I'll be able to see my daughter again.*
> ***Penelope, London, 2011***

However, for most interviewees who take up explicitly faith-based positions, these positions offer additional ethical resources. Linda, for example, borrowed the moral weight of her Christian faith to tell her story of 'speaking out' about HIV, and to proclaim her commitment to telling more people about what HIV is and how to live with it. Even Penelope later returned to prayer and church. She described how going to church, followed by meeting friends and having food with them, was now the highlight of her week. This pleasure was moral, as well as social. For in these situations, Penelope's HIV status was 'normal', shared with her friends, and within the church. She was just one of many within a community of faith:

> *At least I like going to the church, it's full of fun, we sing and dance… I really like to go there, I look forward to it every Sunday … then at times after church we go to my friend's house, wait for the other friends and then maybe they will come to my house, yeah, it keeps me going (laughs).*
> ***Penelope, London, 2011***

Given the freight of transgressive meanings attached to HIV, it is perhaps not surprising that an important narrative strategy for people living with HIV is to explicitly narrate their stories, for themselves and others, as moral subjects. They re-moralise themselves in the stories they are creating about this

Body map III

relatively new, previously pathologised condition, with which people are only now starting, world-wide, to live long-term. If they do this from a faith-based position, they can position themselves especially powerfully as ethical agents of HIV belief and action.

Changing faith stories

Faith organisations, religious leaders, popular religious media and perhaps most of all, personal beliefs, have always played a powerful role in the HIV pandemic. In South Africa, as elsewhere, this role has shifted over the course of the epidemic, in many churches, mosques and synagogues, and among traditional spiritual healers. Discourses of sin, possession and punishment, condemnations of condoms, and emphasis on the power of prayer or spiritual healing in place of western medication, have weakened. Currently, the collaborative approach of many religious institutions promotes HIV testing, talks about condoms and views medicine and prayer,

and to some extent, traditional and western medicine, as working together. This shift seems to have happened across religions and denominations. It may relate partly to increased HIV education and awareness, but also to greater treatment availability, to a prevalence of HIV in congregations sometimes so high it cannot be ignored, and to religious leaders affected by HIV, either themselves or in their families.

Some faith communities or individuals are still opposed to conventional medical approaches to the pandemic. In 2011, three people were reported to have died in the UK because they took the advice of pastors from evangelical Christian churches in London that serve African communities, to stop antiretrovirals and pray for a cure. Claims from traditional healers in South Africa still sometimes suggest that traditional medicine is all that is needed to stop the epidemic.

However, these difficulties were not reported by participants in my recent studies. In my 2011 UK research, several participants, all of them relatively new African migrants, mentioned being open about their statuses with their pastors and other congregation members, and one had spoken to the whole congregation about it. Something similar was reported by my South African interviewees in 2012, who seemed able to be much more open about HIV in religious institutions than interviewees a decade previously. For many, HIV had become integrated into spiritual life and duty, not an excommunicated part of them: a big change. Lusi, for example, a woman in her mid-30s, narrated how her family's approach could be understood through their faith. Belief no longer led them to reject but to include her:

> ***Lusi:*** *My family helps me a lot, by talking about it and by giving me strength that I am going to be okay and giving me hope.*
> ***Interviewer:*** *So how… why do you think your family reacted so well? Because some families don't react so well…*
> ***Lusi:*** *Most of my family, they are religious. They are people that have Jesus, so they do understand a lot of things… They support me like this.*
> ***Lusi, Cape Town, 2012***

Genres of religious narrative: the conversion story

Beyond these stories of how faith and faith institutions form part of the moral world of HIV citizenship, I am interested in the cultural genres of stories on which research participants draw. In storying their attempts to come to terms with their HIV status, for example, many interviewees draw on something like a 'conversion' genre. They describe initial ignorance or even rejection of HIV, followed by a struggle to discover and then confront their HIV status. The stories often culminate in a transformative conversion moment marked by interviewees saying something like, 'then, I believed', or, as with Linda's husband, 'truly, eventually he accepted it'. For women who, like Linda, receive antiretroviral treatment during pregnancy, this moment of transformation is often revisited through the salvational event of their baby testing negative.

The stories may also move to a kind of HIV witnessing, aimed at converting others to an accepting, knowledgeable and hence ethical life with HIV. The speaker's own telling of their status to others is frequently the first step in this testimony, as for Linda with her husband. Linda's story becomes explicitly entwined with Christian discourse at the end, when she seems to be evoking Isaiah's promises of protection of the faithful and the punishment of the wicked. But personal transgression is shifted here from people who are HIV positive, often seen as sinning at this time, to people who fail to understand and come to terms with HIV, while grace accrues to those who accept and witness about their status. This kind of story was also often told with no explicit religious content, still deploying a 'conversion' structure that moved from ignorance and conflict to acceptance and witnessing.

Unexpectedly, this move towards testimony was also strong in the 2011 stories of people living with HIV in the UK. It was unlikely that these interviewees had become more embedded in religious and spiritual narratives than in previous years. What seems more to be the case, is that the current invisibilising of HIV in the UK, in an era of successful treatment, cuts in HIV services, and the 'othering' of the epidemic as 'African', renders self-narration as a moral HIV positive citizen, ready to speak out about the epidemic, increasingly salient.

Conclusion

My work and that of many others suggests strongly the importance of faith narratives, as well as faith institutions, in supporting – and sometimes, impeding – HIV positive people's contemporary lives. *Particular* faiths do not seem to have necessary relations of antagonism or support to the epidemic. These relations tend to change with time, to depend on specific faith leaders, congregants and national contexts, and to be quite heterogeneous. They may be articulated differently across a faith community; they may also be developed syncretically. In my interview studies, I have, though, found many times that a specific, culturally prevalent, 'conversion narrative' structure gives shape and meaning to interviewees' stories. Moreover, even when people's stories of living with HIV have little religious content or structure, they are frequently, perhaps unavoidably, framed with a kind of secular religiosity, as morality tales. This framing turns out to be, for most research participants, a strongly significant means of positioning themselves as moral agents, not transgressors. It enables them to story themselves as people who know how life with HIV, and life in general, should be lived, and who want to spread this understanding, this grace, to others.

Further reading

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Contested Narratives of Revelation:

Pluralist and Ambiguous Approaches

By Dr Edward Kessler

Dr Edward Kessler is a leading thinker in interfaith relations, primarily contemporary Judaism, and Jewish-Christian and Jewish-Muslim Relations. He is Founder and Executive Director of the Woolf Institute and Fellow of St Edmund's College, Cambridge.

Jesus Solana on Flickr

Bibles in translation

In Jewish, Christian and Muslim Scripture, God speaks and so his people would do well to listen and obey. The focus of revelation is God. It is God who calls forth creation by speaking his word (Genesis 1). It is God who reveals his will on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34), who, Christians teach, speaks his final word in his son, Jesus (John 1) and who, Muslims believe, speaks to Mohammed from his first revelation in 610 CE onwards, when he was ordered to recite and teach 'mankind what was not known' (Surah 96). Since there is a great emphasis on the word of God in all three faiths, it is hardly surprising that sacred narratives are so important to Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Looking at another's sacred narratives may help us to see those paradoxes that we often fail to locate in our own. It may also teach us the importance of interpretation. For example, in talking with Muslims, Jews and Christians, interlocutors may refer to:

> 'There is no compulsion in religion; truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error; therefore, whoever disbelieves in the Shaitan [Satan] and believes in Allah he indeed has laid hold on the firmest handle, which shall not break off, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing' (Surah 2: 256).

Less helpfully (at least, at first glance), is:

> 'And whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers' (Surah 3: 85).

How might these verses be interpreted? One reader might say that if the first were revealed before the second, the second would abrogate its meaning. Alternatively, another reader could suggest that not being compelled into the truth does not make falsehood acceptable. Finally, another reader might make the case that *islam* is used in the lower-case sense of 'submission to God', and that, for example, a Christian (or Jew) is submissive to God within his Christian (or Jewish) faith, just as a Muslim is within hers. This very process of discussing contested narratives is vital, offering insight into our own faith as well as others. We also come to realise that serious differences, intra-faith as well as interfaith, are seriously held.

Of course, narratives have a history; and a compromised history at that. It is impossible to read the Passion narratives of the Gospels without recognising the antisemitic uses to which past readings of them have been put. When Matthew wrote: 'And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"' (27: 25), how are we to read them from our perspective, not his? Or Psalm 137, which begins famously with, 'By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept, when we remembered Zion' but few are familiar with the final verse, which reads, 'happy is the one who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks'. Sometimes, then, we have to deal with (meaning, in practice: overcome) long-held readings that have been death-dealing, not life-giving.

For Jews, the Rabbinic Bible, *Mikraot Gedolot*, with its commentaries spanning the centuries ranged around the biblical text, suggests a way forward. A narrative consisting of different possible meanings stands in marked contrast to the single 'authentic' meaning backed by clerical or scholarly authority. It is a form of exegetical pluralism:

> 'In the School of Rabbi Ishmael it is taught: "See, My word is like fire, an oracle of the Eternal, and like a hammer that shatters a rock" (Jeremiah 23: 29). Just as a hammer divides into several sparks so too every scriptural verse yields several meanings' (Sanhedrin 34a).

Muslim commentators also offer multiple interpretations and scholars have long

noticed the use of familiar hermeneutical principles, such as 'Scripture explains Scripture', (or, as expressed by Muslim commentators, 'one verse (*ayat*) clarifies another'). *Tafsir*, derived from the root *fassara* (to explain, to expound) possesses similar features to *midrash*, a Hebrew term for asking, searching, inquiring and interpreting.

Classical Christian exegesis, illustrated by the fourth-century church father, Ephrem the Syrian, contains similar attributes:

> 'The facets of God's word are more numerous than the facets of those who learn from it. God depicted His word with many beauties, so that each of those who learn from it can examine that aspect of it which he likes. And God had hidden within His word all sorts of treasures, so that each of us can be enriched by it from whatever aspect he meditates on' (Commentary on the Diatessaron 1:18).

Thus, narratives, even when contested, have plural meanings, as one midrash states, 'the Torah can be interpreted in forty nine ways' (Pesikta Rabbati 14: 20). The existence of exegetical pluralism promotes breadth and plurality of viewpoint.

Jewish, Christian and Muslim exegetical traditions also provide a means by which to deal with texts which run contrary to what we regard as the fundamental values of our tradition, or which may be read as a license for violence or bigotry.

'when human life is at stake the narrative needs reinterpretation'

This approach is based on a shared hermeneutical principle: humanity should live by the commandments and not die by their observance. The rabbis coined the term *pikuah nefesh*, referring to the duty to preserve life as taking precedence over the commandment: simply put, when human life is at stake the narrative needs reinterpretation.

Of course, exegetical pluralism may result in an uncomfortable tension or ambiguity owing to the presence of a number of interpretations arising out of a single passage. A narrative of ambiguity is demonstrated by the following translations of Job 13:15, which describe Job's feelings as God allows him to suffer:

- Behold, He will slay me; I have no hope (Revised Standard Version).
- Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him (King James Version).

The reason for the difference between the RSV and KJV is the result of a variation in the read and spoken versions. The Masoretic vocalisation (spoken reading) indicates that Job has hope while the consonantal text (written text) offers the view that Job has no hope. The Mishnah acknowledges the ambiguous meaning of the biblical text and recognises that both translations are possible: 'the matter is undecided – do I trust in Him or not trust?' (Sotah 5: 5). The contradiction is meaningful as it expresses the tension of one who is torn between hope and doubt: the very tension that inhabits our mind when we read contested biblical narratives today. Job pronounces two words, which signify simultaneously hope and hopelessness.

We can apply a hermeneutic of ambiguity elsewhere. For example, many conversations about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict brim with emotion and passion. Israel is controversial because it cannot be viewed simply as a geographical and political entity whose emergence is like the establishment of any new state. Political, social, cultural and religious concerns all have a role, making this a complex as well as a sensitive topic. It is not even easy to choose the appropriate words in discussions. Are we to use the term 'Holy Land', perhaps with a qualifier such as 'Christian', or, alternatively, 'the Promised Land'? Or must we seek ostensibly more neutral terms such as 'Israel and Palestine'? Should we refer to 'Jerusalem', to 'Yerushalayim', or to 'Al-Quds'? Is it 'Hebron' or 'Al-Khalil? 'Nablus' or 'Shechem'?

The point is that one term should not exclude the other. Although one is left with unresolved ambiguity and even contradiction, multiple narratives can be liberating because they indicate that the plain, obvious and literal interpretation is not the final meaning of the text. Indeed, more than one interpretation of a contested narrative is not simply acceptable but welcome.

Contested Narratives about Jesus: hostile and shared approaches

One of the most obvious contested narratives between Christians and Jews is that of Jesus of Nazareth. And yet one of the most certain facts about Jesus was that he was a Jew. He was a child of Jewish parents, brought up in a Jewish home and reared among Jewish traditions. Throughout his life, Jesus lived among Jews and his followers were Jews. No other Jew in history has rivalled Jesus in the magnitude of his influence. The words and deeds of Jesus the Jew have been, and are, an inspiration to (literally) billions of men and women. His death marked a turning point in the history of the world. In his name a great religion was founded and Christians have gone forth carrying his message to the remotest corners of the earth; Muslims revere him as a Prophet.

Strange, is it not, that narratives about this outstanding Jew have been given little attention by Jews. Yet, this is true. For almost two thousand years, Jesus was ignored because Christians came to cherish beliefs about Jesus' life, which no Jew could hold. When the Church persecuted Jews, sometimes in an effort to convert them, Jewish indifference turned to hostility. It is a sad fact of history that the followers of this great Jew have brought much suffering upon the Jewish people, so that for centuries it was very hard for any Jew even to think of Jesus without difficulty. Up until recently, most Jews have chosen not to think of him at all.

However, changes have taken place in the last half-century, epitomised by Jewish New Testament scholars Géza Vermes and Amy-Jill Levine who have researched

4th century mural of Jesus from the catacomb of Commodilla. Earlier Christian art in Rome portrayed Jesus as Orpheus, young, beardless and in a short tunic. This is one of the first images of Jesus as being of identifiably Jewish appearance, with a full beard and long hair, a style not usually worn by Romans.

and written about Jesus. Although Jesus narratives remain contested and the traditional Jewish attitude of indifference to Jesus has not by any means disappeared, the signs are encouraging. There is an increased awareness that many of his teachings are shared. As it states in the Gospels: 'What commandment is the first of all?' he was asked. Jesus answered as any good Jew would have answered: 'the first is: Hear O Israel the Lord our God, the Lord is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might. The second is this: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these' (Mark 12: 28–31).

Jews will recognise in Jesus' answer the Shema, a Jewish declaration of faith, which is recited at every Jewish service, day and night (Deuteronomy 6: 4–9). The famous command of Leviticus 19:18 is also a fundamental precept of Judaism. Jesus' words demonstrate a shared narrative, which allows for both Jewish and Christian interpretation. Thus we read, according to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church:

'Christians can and ought to admit that the Jewish reading of the Bible is a possible one, in continuity with the Jewish Sacred Scriptures from the Second Temple Period, a reading analogous to the Christian reading which developed in parallel fashion. Both readings are bound up with the vision of their respective faiths, of which the readings are the result and expression. Consequently, both are irreducible. On the practical level of exegesis, Christians can, nonetheless, learn much from Jewish exegesis practised for more than two thousand years, and, in fact, they have learned much in the course of history. For their part, it is to be hoped that Jews themselves can derive profit from Christian exegetical research' (The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible, 2001, para 22).

Of course, there remains areas of contention, not least the significance of the death of Jesus which cannot be the same for the Jew as for the Christian. For the Christian, it is the supreme example of self-sacrifice; the willing sacrifice of his life by the Son of God that the world might be redeemed from sin. For the Jew, the significance of Jesus must be in his life rather than his death.

Contested Narratives: a final word

Whether we are discussing the meaning of a sacred text or the significance of a holy figure, accepting that there can exist, alongside one another, different approaches is, in my view, critically important. Every religion raises questions and offers different answers. For example, there is no single definition of Judaism that is acceptable to all Jews. Some maintain that Judaism is solely a religion; others that it is a culture, still others emphasise nationhood and attachment with the Land of Israel. And just as there is disagreement about the definition of Judaism, so there is rarely a single agreed Jewish view of any topic.

One common rabbinic teaching is to have more than one right answer to a question. The Talmud sometimes concludes a discussion with the word *teyku* (let the problem stand). This was because the rabbis were unable to choose one from a number of answers to a problem, so they decided it was better to accept that there could be more than one answer than choose the wrong one.

The ability to allow for conflicting positions is a feature of Judaism. It is generally posited that the opposite of truth is falsehood: a Jew might suggest that the opposite of one truth may well be another more profound truth. In my brief investigation of contested narratives, I simply hope that the reader will be more willing to ask questions, offer multiple approaches and accept that there may be more than one answer.

Further reading

Forward, F. *Jesus: A Short Biography.* (Oneworld: 1998).

Kessler, E. *Jews, Christians and Muslims.* (SCM: 2013).

Magonet, J. *Talking to the Other: Jewish Interfaith Dialogue with Christians and Muslims.* (IB Tauris: 2003).

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Messenger of the Spirit:

Sculpture and Narrative at Salisbury Cathedral

Constable's iconic picture, *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows,* was saved for the nation earlier this year. Capturing the magisterial beauty of the Cathedral within the context of its rural landscape and a turbulent sky, this work contains for many a moment of spiritual awe. It was this sense of encounter in art and the presence of the divine that lay at the heart of Salisbury Cathedral's recent exhibition: *The Messenger of the Spirit* by Helaine Blumenfeld. Including monumental sculptures from across her career, the exhibition was situated both in and outside the Cathedral buildings, inspiring and intriguing many. Here we invite you to read thoughts and reflections by two authors; the Revd Dame Sarah Mullally, Canon Treasurer of Salisbury Cathedral, who saw the exhibition inhabit the Cathedral and witnessed the responses of those who worshipped, visited and worked amongst it, and artist and lecturer Alan Caine, who invites us to walk with him through the exhibition and engage with the complex imagery of the sculptures themselves.

Constable's *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows*

Cathedral and Sculpture in Collaboration

By the Revd Dame Sarah Mullally Canon Treasurer

The Revd Dame Sarah Mullally is Canon Treasurer of Salisbury Cathedral, one of 3 residentiary canons who, with the Dean, are the senior members of the Cathedral body. In 2005, she became a Dame Commander of the British Empire in recognition of her contribution to nursing and midwifery.

From the moment the lorries, sculptures on-board, began to enter the Cathedral Close, people started to engage with the 20 extraordinary pieces which make up *The Messenger of the Spirit.*

Salisbury Cathedral was built over 750 years ago; it rises out of the water meadows towards the heavens but holds its place as part of the Close and wider city. It was built in a way which sought to say something about God without using words. The architect used light, stone, glass, symbols, colour and space to say something about the sacred and so it is fitting that Helaine Blumenfeld, whose pieces seek to do the same, brought this exhibition to the Cathedral and the Close. The Cathedral and Helaine Blumenfeld recognise that the spiritual incorporates a search for meaning and purpose, which may include a relationship with an ultimate other such as God, but above all it takes us beyond ourselves.

In a world which is filled with what Josef Pieper calls 'visual noise' we find ourselves bombarded by images and information, and in a society which demands us to keep moving, we so often fail to abide and find a place to reflect on things of beauty and the sacred. Both the Cathedral and the exhibition offered an invitation to stop and abide.

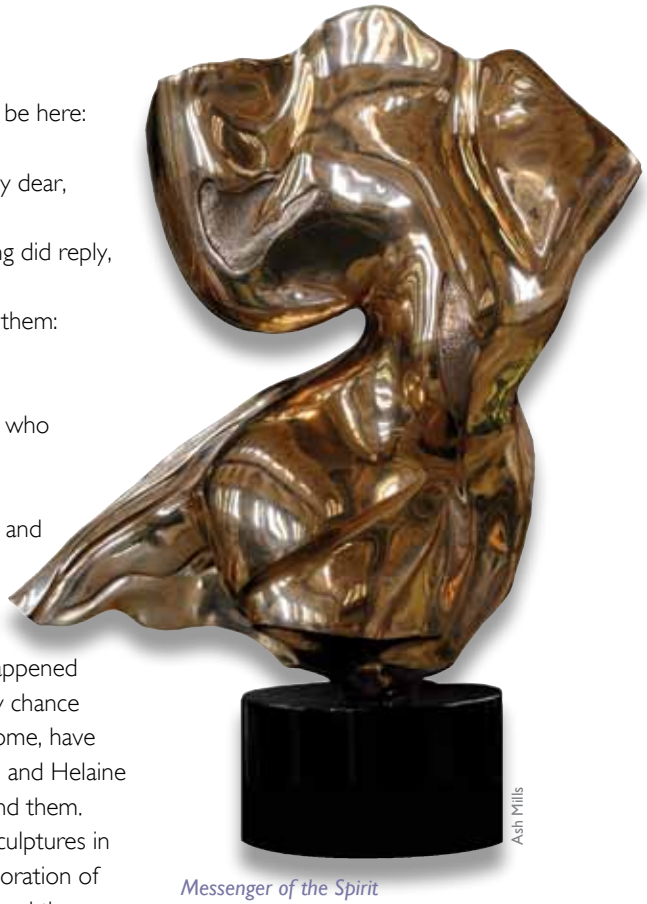
Helaine writes: 'When people come into Salisbury Cathedral, they enter prepared for a spiritual experience. They leave their everyday thoughts outside and are open to receiving an experience, not necessarily religious, but rather being open to the notion that art is a form of revelation. As the title suggests, art can be the bearer of this message'.

Abiding is about dwelling more consciously upon something and it is here that we encounter the possibility of the sacred, the transcendent and God. For me, this sense of abiding with art rang an echo of the sentiment of the poem *Love (III)* by George Herbert:

'Love bade me welcome: yet my soul
drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me
grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
if I lack'd anything.

A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:
love said, You shall be he.
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?
Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them:
let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, who
bore the blame?
My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and
taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat'.

Many visitors, whether they happened to encounter the exhibition by chance or whether they planned to come, have been moved by the sculptures and Helaine Blumenfeld's motivations behind them. Children interacted with the sculptures in the Close with a sense of exploration of the unknown, they played around them and ran up to them exclaiming without prompting, 'It's an angel!'. You could see visitors stopping, looking and abiding with the thoughts that the pieces inspired.



Messenger of the Spirit

Taking Risks is a piece which came about as Helaine changed her style and approach to sculpture, the transparency of the marble reflecting the risks you sometimes have to take to achieve change. After listening to Helaine speak about this piece, one of the audience was moved to tell me how Helaine's reflection resonated with the decisions she was taking in her life and gave her courage.

The sculpture, *Messenger of the Spirit*, was inspired by the role of Angels as messengers of God. Angels appear in most religions and faiths and they seem to connect with those of no faith. Angels give us a way of expressing our longings for beings that are more powerful than ourselves. They help us understand our place in the world, our relationship with other people and with God. Within the narrative of Christian scripture, Angels appear when the human mind struggles to comprehend. As such, the sculptures have provided a focus for our preaching in the Cathedral, and they have provided that focus to abide in a number of evening mediations, which have occurred during the time the sculptures were present.

Helaine Blumenfeld suggests that art is there to remind us of our spirituality – to look and in doing so, we are moved – *The Messenger of the Spirit* has successfully done this.

Faith Narratives: Encountering the Spiritual through Art

Alan Caine

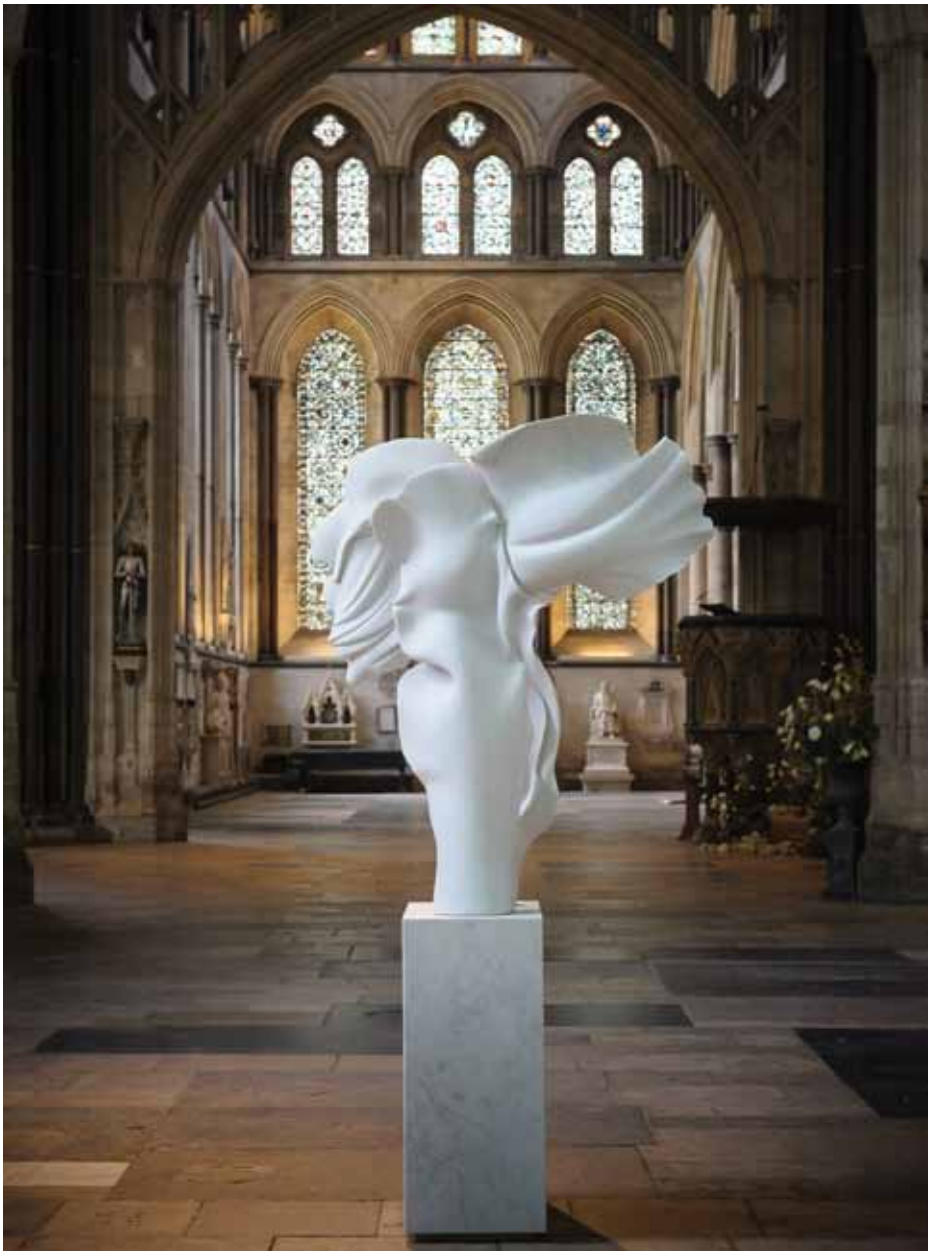
Alan Caine is a painter and a teacher. For 30 years, he was responsible for art in the University of Leicester's adult education programme. He was one of the founders of the Richard Attenborough Centre for Disability and the Arts.

When the sculptor Rodin presents us with his monumental sculpture, *The Thinker*, we immediately discern a solid human image, embodying aspects of thought and contemplation which seem to involve his whole being. When Michelangelo takes on the biblical story of David and Goliath, well-known to most viewers, the mixture of scale, white marble, virility, tension and tradition hover in the background while we encounter this clear and monumental human presence.

But when Henry Moore presents a massive, bronze, reclining figure with marks and shapes which suggest the female form, which are more 'earth' than 'flesh', we are in a different territory. There is no particular story to be embodied nor is there a simple human form to represent a clear thought. We need to respond to a variety of signals before the puzzlement recedes. Landscape, earth, mother earth: all come to mind.

Take another step away from direct representation and meet Helaine Blumenfeld's sculptures. They include strong elements which speak of the human figure; but there is no clear body; no clear head; no features. They are presences, not figures. A title may help: *Espirit, Mysteries, Creation* or *Messenger of the Spirit*, but none of these names turns immediately into a visual illustration. Harnessed to the marble or bronze images, we catch sensuous elements which speak of movement, grace, flesh. There are tense shapes and flowing shapes – and we discern in most of these works the presence of a figure, though we cannot quite detect its borders and attributes. As we move around the sculpture, our first response seems almost to be erased: a graceful flow of metal or marble is overcome by tense, chiselled marks or by a dangerous sharp edge. But still, in almost all of these sculptures, the sense of the human body – and the spirit which inhabits it – seems indelible. This is the language of the eye; not a translation of familiar images into representational objects. This process is, of course, very familiar in music. Although

Ash Mills



Angels: Harmony

occasional twitters of forests or thunder of battle contribute sounds, most musical structures do not 'illustrate'. They only evoke, using the logic of sound and how it can play upon the mind, the body and the soul.

The Messenger of the Spirit is the title of a recent exhibition of sculpture by Helaine Blumenfeld at Salisbury Cathedral. Twenty sculptures were exhibited in the nave, the cloister and on the lawns, inviting visitors and worshippers to encounter them – perhaps as a form of revelation. Her first major retrospective exhibition, they represent a career spanning more than four decades.

The materials are white marble and cast bronze, which at times is given a golden finish and at other times painted to achieve darker 'metallic' tones. The shapes are smooth and often intricate, with little evidence of the earthier qualities associated with Henry Moore. The presence of elements which suggest figures is evident in all of these works, but they are never imitations of the anatomy of human bodies, and their corporeal impact varies from view to view as they are encountered.

So what is their story? No receptive eye could miss the sheer poise and gracious bearing of these finely tuned images, which usually suggest feminine presences, often angelic – with wings. From the green lawn, where some of the largest sculptures stood under the graceful reign of the Cathedral's steeple, visitors moved indoors to the long nave, unbroken from end to end. Aisle windows allowed clear light into their space and fine modern stained glass created a deep blue darkness at the east end. Between the arches separating the nave and the aisle, a dozen horizontal sarcophagi, including stone knights resting on the lids of their tombs, are part of the cathedral's furniture. Two of the sculptor's strong and delicate white marble images, like angelic presences, filled empty spaces. One was named *Angel I* and the other *Il Vento*. A strange and wonderful contrast between the solid mortal knights and the flickering vertical grace of these sculptures occurs. Just as music can re-order the atmosphere of the architecture it inhabits, art can transfigure the space in which it is placed.

Perhaps the most arresting image within the Cathedral was *Angels: Harmony*, placed in the centre of the south transept. A two-piece sculpture with similar figures, life-size, standing back to back, it can be read as a single presence with clear, outspread wings. In white marble, its strong outline, robust grace and the impression of winged movement, creates the sensation of a miraculous presence against the delicate arched grandeur of the building. Upon careful scrutiny, we find that a toughness about these figures is created by tension in the shapes and a physicality in the 'wings' which refuse to be pretty. The sense of awe increased as we moved back and forth, from close-up to distance. The dynamic harmony of two separate figures which created a unity when viewed together was profound.

The fact that the sculptor's background is Jewish rather than Christian adds an extra dimension to the impression that each of the works is very much 'at home' in this place. Angels abound in many religious traditions. Greek and Roman artists present them, and the very Roman-looking angels which can be found in early Christian art continue to be repeated to this day. In the Old Testament, Jacob wrestles with an angel, and Abraham meets three men at the door of his tent, not realising that they are, in fact, angels who

will reward him and his wife with a child in old age. The angel or messenger is not necessarily winged and religious literature and art from many traditions, including Islam, offer variations on the theme. But for the moment it may be sufficient to remember that the angel as divine messenger, often winged, is a recurring theme in religious traditions, in art and in the consciousness of a wide range people. Even 'pop' culture seems to have embraced the idea of the angelic messenger as comforter.

There is a core of intensity in most of this work, so we are unlikely to use the word 'charming' in spite of the seductive delight of flowing white marble. Although there are no direct images of any actual *thing* or any *being* on earth, she has enlisted human drama, partially transfigured into a language parallel to music. Not 'man' or 'mankind' or 'nature' but 'spirit' in the wide and ambiguous fullness of its meanings: this is what matters. Flesh and bone are never absent but do not dominate.

On the lawn, next to the North porch stood a white marble presence. *Mysteries* is slightly larger than life. It appeared, from some views to be a massive figure, perhaps even a winged angel. This stone seems to contain a figure, although it almost eludes us. As we explored the surface, we found ourselves hovering between what appears to be cloth stretched over flesh and bone, reflecting the weight of mortality and an almost certain sense that the possibility of winged flight is present. On its solid circular marble plinth, this sculpture seems to exude a sort of aching humanity and also a sense of wonder. Not far away, a three-piece bronze group called *The Space Within* offers separate shapes which must be standing figures. It is clear that they are human presences, though their forms do not in any exact way imitate our anatomy. We sense a conversation among these bronze shapes, each with a different 'stance', each with a 'body' which leans and bends in a different way – although none have either legs or heads or hands or feet. There is grace; also the peculiarity of individual beings or presences; there is mortality, and there is monumentality. *Mysteries* is both awesome and troublesome, while the *Space Within* looks as if a race of tall and graceful figures had found their way into this space and were profoundly connected with each other. The placement of sculptures on the lawn, easily available to casual passers-by including children and dog-walkers, was an important dimension of the exhibition. The backdrop of the Cathedral and its splendid spire, built at the height of the gothic period, embodies a sense of the divine much broader than the language of any single architect. These new presences entered this space. Possessing some of the qualities of mystery and elegance which mark the building, there was a kinship of spirit, but they clearly did not belong to the same era.

Julian Jans

The Space Within

Perhaps the most intriguing part of the exhibition's story is this: again and again viewers have agreed that these sculptures seemed completely 'at home' within the Cathedral, the cloister and the lawns. This is by no means inevitable. When churches and cathedrals have invited artists to show their work, very often an aisle turns into a small gallery, and for the time being the exhibition takes over – interrupts for a purpose – the rhythm of architectural space. I have seen overtly 'pious' work neutralise or destroy the rhythmic peace of a place. But what was stunning here, at Salisbury with Helaine Blumenfeld's work, is that these works were not made specifically for such a space, and its overt content in no way 'fits the bill' for such a location. And yet, in spirit, the mixture succeeds, and many of us were particularly moved by the interaction of this art and this architecture.

The fact that these works were so utterly at home in Salisbury Cathedral reflects, I believe the essential spirituality of the artist's vision throughout the years. This spirit is not a matter of being or not being *religious* or *pious*. It is about finding and using marks, shapes, materials; about the pursuit of ideas and visions which may be scarcely understood, but matter. Painters and sculptors are often closer to musicians than to storytellers. To illustrate is not enough. Even conventional images such as the Madonna and Child, can convey thoughts as far apart as an image of domestic charm, a gracious and revered mother and child or a riveting sense of holiness caught in a frozen icon image. Deep spiritual statement is much more than a story which can be read at a glance. What seems to have happened here is that the spirit of the exhibition was somehow in harmony with what mattered to the Cathedral builders – a thought which may be humbling to the artist and which the viewer could experience.

To view the sculptures, or for more information on the work of Helaine Blumenfeld, please see: http://www.helaineblumenfeld.com

The Book Shelf

The Most Reverend Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

In each edition of *Perspectives* a guest shares their favourite and most formative books. We hope this inspires us all to widen our reading, thinking and knowledge.

Justin Welby is the 105th and current Archbishop of Canterbury and senior Bishop in the Church of England. Born in London in 1956, his father's family were German Jewish immigrants who moved to England to escape antisemitism in the late 19th century. For 11 years he worked in the oil industry, becoming group treasurer of a large British exploration and production company. In 1989, after sensing a call from God, Archbishop Justin stood down from industry to train for ordination. For 20 years, his ministry has blended deep devotion to his parish communities with Church work around the world, especially in areas of conflict. An expert on the politics and history of Kenya and Nigeria, he has lectured on reconciliation at the US State Department.

I would like to begin by congratulating the Woolf Institute on its 15th anniversary and expressing my thanks for the invitation to contribute to the special edition of *Perspectives* in this way. It is a tribute to Lord Woolf, Dr Edward Kessler and all those involved that the Institute has developed in such an extraordinary way over the years. I appreciate especially the involvement of my office at Lambeth Palace and the Woolf Institute in helping to convene the Lambeth Jewish Forum, which has produced a number of useful resources for Jewish-Christian dialogue and mutual understanding.

My first book off the shelf would be Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. This novel, first published in 1958, is an unsentimental and hard-hitting account of post-colonial life in Nigeria, a country that I have been privileged to get to know over many years. I was honoured to have been asked to take Dr Achebe's funeral recently in Nigeria. Even though I was not able to get to his home town of Ogidi, where the funeral took place, I was represented there and hear that it was an extraordinarily powerful occasion. This is a testimony to a man who was willing to write out of a deep sympathy combined with a willingness to speak out fearlessly.

From a rather different time and place, and maybe the most romanticised of Charles Dickens' novels, *Oliver Twist* is nevertheless also a hard-hitting critique of that author's own social context. What I particularly appreciate in *Oliver Twist* is Dickens' capacity, through melodrama and description, to shape a Christian world view and ethic. Here is another book that demonstrates the power of story-telling for engaging the reader in social change.

As we celebrate Benjamin Britten's centenary, I have been reflecting on his *War Requiem*, written for the consecration of the new Coventry Cathedral in 1962, where more recently I have worked as director of the Cathedral's Centre for International Reconciliation. That extraordinary piece weaves together the Latin Mass for the dead with nine poems by the great poet of the First World War, Wilfred Owen. A fascinating book which explores the complexity of that poet's interaction with war is *Wilfred Owen: A New Biography* by Dominic Hibberd. There is a tension in Owen's poetry, as there is in Britten's music, which surrounds it in the Requiem. The tension is between an appreciation, even admiration, of the sacrifice that comes with war and an utter refusal, especially in the later poetry, to sentimentalise.

Staying with poetry, RS Thomas' *Collected Poems* bring the implications of human suffering firmly into the realm of personal belief. The power of Thomas' poetry for me is that it represents a continual challenge to the faithfulness of God, yet from a position of faith. RS Thomas, a Welsh priest who never gave up practising his ministry, nevertheless persists in coming back to a sense of God's absence,

'…such a fast
God, always before us and
leaving as we arrive'

He is unafraid. We might think of Thomas as a modern-day Psalmist, one who has mastered that type of prayer we call *lament*. Lament is the tireless tackling of God with those concerns for we hold God ultimately responsible. Such fierce conversation inspires me, helping to build transparency, intimacy and trust.

Lastly, I would commend to readers a favourite book on the Bible: *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation* by Richard B. Hays, Dean of Duke Divinity School. If Thomas' poetry is honest engagement with God from the heart, here is honest engagement with God from the head. Hays addresses how to read Scripture well. This includes how we use Scripture to shape our ethics – how we live into the story and how we apply its principles today. It is not an easy read because it is deeply challenging to my assumptions, convictions and comforts. But as you will have gathered already from the reading list above, I thrive on challenge. I'm not sure I could have found a way to accept my current role otherwise.

Shaping Narratives with Edmund de Waal

In conversation with Trisha Kessler

Watching Edmund de Waal throw pots is a meditative experience. Each small lump of porcelain, handled with trust, moulded and shaped with (slight) pressure, taken off the wheel, placed alongside others, similar but different, each unique. As we sat by his wheel, watched by his adoring dog, he answered my questions with thought, reflection and a gentle smile. Edmund is not just a potter but a shaper of narratives with his enormously successful book, *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, a compelling history of the Ephrussi family as told through the fate of a collection of Japanese ornaments, his *netsuke*. If you haven't read it, do so. Edmund is a shaper of both narrative and form and I find it hard to distinguish between the potter and the writer. He sends objects and stories out into the world to be encountered and engaged with.

Trisha: Edmund, in your book, *The Hare with Amber Eyes,* the reader enters a family history in all its richness, vulnerability and desperation. At what point did you realise that your family held such diverse narratives?

Edmund: I grew up in an Anglican world, moving from Nottingham to Lincoln, where my mother taught at a theological college and then to Canterbury, where my father became the Dean. And as much as we were very much part of a British establishment, there was always a slight sense of oddness about it right from the beginning – partly with a father with a European name and a strong accent, as well as being visited by elderly relatives from different parts of Europe. I remember the moment my father's portrait was hung alongside these very conventional portraits of the Deans of Canterbury in their robes. This portrait of my father, painted by his cousin, Marie-Louise von Motesiczky, an impressionist painter, felt different. I also remember his very public stance on the rise of the National Front in the 70's and being struck at how strong his reaction was to the resurgence of far-right racism. He didn't articulate our sense of being different but he didn't hide it either. And then I had two very different sets of grandparents. My mother's father was an Anglican vicar from the Welsh borders, an Edwardian figure who was a Parish Priest for 66 years, extraordinary; he died in his 90's. And then my grandmother and grandfather in Tunbridge Wells but not of Tunbridge Wells. So an interesting mixture.

Trisha: I am interested in how and *when* family stories are told and why they often skip a generation.

Edmund: I find it very interesting, generationally, where stories get placed. And I don't think this is happenstance at all. There is an emotional logic about this and I think it is very rare that a person doesn't tell *someone* something. It does happen that there is a synapse of energy between people, sometimes outside the family and often across generations, and the experience that I have had over the last few years, listening to lots of people who begin to tell me their stories, is that it falls into two profoundly different camps. Those who belatedly realise that someone was trying to tell them something but at that moment in their life they were not able to listen to it. This can be very upsetting and complicated later on in life, when they realise the story has been lost. There are also those for whom, almost by osmosis, they pick something up which they try and shape into their lives.

Edmund de Waal in his studio

Trisha: Tell us a little about the challenges you faced in trying to shape your family narratives.

Edmund: There is nothing more complex than trying to negotiate a family narrative – on all kinds of levels. Where does something start and where does something finish? Also, at any point in a family story you are listening not just in mono but in stereo; you are hearing all the cadences of everyone else's reactions to that person. So immediately you are trying to tune into a story which you know is a contingent story but has different implications. So what do you do with the *narrative*, to use your word, of such complexity? Well you can spend your life trying to write it down, or you can find a coherent form which allows you to put some things down and pick other things up, and let people know that is what you are doing. So you are not trying to say: 'this is the authoritative biography of my grandmother', which would be a bogus thing to do. It is an intriguing thing.

And then you have the after-effects. Writing a family story can be very powerful and very negative. It doesn't bring closure. Indeed, it brings a lot of unresolved things to the surface. People write family stories at risk. Writing a family story can make you feel that you are making an emotional land-grab for collective memories and claiming some kind of ownership over the family. It can imply that because you have chosen to write the family story, someone else hasn't written the family story. It is all powerful, powerful stuff.

Trisha: With all this in mind, do you have any regrets in having written the book?

Edmund: No, it has brought with it a lot of complexity but if I hadn't written it I would still be living with a series of very strongly unresolved emotional and fragmentary stories, so no. I am very glad I spent those years writing it. It has brought with it wonderful things and hard work as well.

Trisha: Do you think that it has steered you on a different path? Was it a moment of intersection in your life?

Edmund: Well, you are sitting here and I am making pots and so in one way, on one level, absolutely not; my life revolves completely around making things and will continue to do so. In another sense, of course, yes. It suggested to me that there are things that I care about, to do with memory and exile, what objects really mean and I can express both, through the things I make and write, and that both are legitimate. So basically I discovered I can write and can work in a different medium.

Trisha: Thinking about shaping narratives with words, in a way ceramics also tell their own stories, they hold their own biographies. Can you tell us about your forthcoming exhibition: *On White – Porcelain Stories from the Fitzwilliam*?

Edmund: It is a collection that I know well from studying in Cambridge and having spent lots of time in a much-loved collection. There are things there that I adore and what I am interested in doing is allowing a few things more space, bringing some unexpected things together and allowing some unexpected stories about porcelain to emerge. It's a sort of exercise in rearrangement.

Trisha: Guide me through how you think someone will access and engage with *Porcelain Stories*?

Edmund: Everyone knows that china comes from China but then perhaps do not realise that for a thousand years this material has been in transit, coming across in huge quantities, often facing perilous journeys across the silk route, huge cargoes to be used both for tremendously luxurious display and everyday life. Who would have thought that porcelain from China would inspire all these extraordinary attempts at imitation around Europe? That people would send great ideas and drawings back to China to get them fabricated? With porcelain you have a history of movement, journeys in all directions. How you visibly display this history and inspire people to write about it is kind of complicated. Yet it has the makings of a huge generational force for interaction and the thing is to try things out, perhaps even to fail honourably. To begin with, I will take the objects out of their comfort zone and put them into new places.

Trisha: Are there some particular favourite pieces that you love?

Edmund: There are some fantastic pieces; some yellow ground Ming dynasty dishes that seem to look almost banal, but when you look at their proportions you see that they are the most beautiful things in the world. They are exquisite. And in their form, they do something with great austerity, perfectly. There are lots and lots of white pots that I love. All the whites are different, of course, and part of the point of this exhibition is to show the whites in their great magnificent difference, so that's a joy.

Trisha: I am interested in how you position and house your pots. It seems to me that giving your pots protection, a safe space, is very important to you.

Edmund: I am concerned with the concept of protecting things, a sort of obsessional idea about putting objects in the world and the impossibility of keeping things together and, of course, that is also true of people. To me there is a really strong connection between the almost anthropic nature of the world, things dissipate, they fall apart, get lost and this desire to find them, restore them, bring them back together again. I suppose the ridiculousness of the years it took to write that book is also present in my work, which is the madness of making things out of porcelain which is so fragile, bringing them together into an installation, naming them and then putting them out into the world. It makes any other art form look substantive. It is a ridiculous thing to do; put them on a shelf, how is that going to survive? It's a sort of bet on people.

Trisha: And this idea of space and silence, allowing something to be and with thought, could you expand on this?

Edmund: When I was writing my book, I came up against different types of silence, there was this personal withholding of things from the people I love, who didn't

want me to go on this journey; which is an interesting silence to meet. It needed a lot of thinking through; what's going on when someone doesn't want to tell you something? How do you deal with that, how do you respect it? There are also the silences, we all know, where other people have silenced members of the family or have made spaces, silenced parts of the record, bits of archives. The effacing of families in history is another kind of silence, a profound silence. There is also a sort of spatial thing about silence, both my Grandmother and Great Uncle found the space in which to be. I don't want to romanticise this, it has got nothing to do with upbeat stuff, they found a difficult kind of space in Japan and Tunbridge Wells, they didn't choose it. So I am trying to work out what sort of space to put around objects, it has got to be dynamic, some push and pull; the housing of the object has got to be in conversation with the space it inhabits. That is the exercise, making things, finding the space in which to put it and the spaces around it.

Trisha: The ideas of silence and space seem a world away from that of movement and noise, the life of refugees in exile, which brings me to your Grandmother Elisabeth de Waal's book, *The Exiles Return,* recently published by Persephone. This book, about the act of returning, engages with the complexity of the picking up of old threads and the beginnings of new stories. What compelled you to have Elizabeth's book published, apart from that it tells a very interesting story?

Edmund: To be honest it was quite difficult and I thought very hard about it. Here is a woman, a writer, who never managed to get anything published in her life. When you read the book, you can see it is the sort of thing an English publisher would not have published in the 1950's, writing about Jewish refugees, I mean who is going to publish that? So there was this lovely feeling that you could bring something of value into the light but it is also bitter sweet… because I know how much she would have adored having seen it published, and the experience of being excited and praised, she would have enjoyed the whole process! As you know all the royalties are going to the Refugee Council… that I really liked.

Yourself, you: currently on display in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Trisha: Has this book and your book inspired many to write to you about their own experiences of exile?

Edmund: Over the last few years I have received an extraordinary correspondence from thousands of people who want to connect with me, and very many of them deal with lots of jagged bits of memory, unresolved bits of their lives. I have also encountered a lot of anger in these fractured life stories.

Trisha: At the moment a lot of your work is in galleries and museums. Are you hoping to find different places for your work, such as your installation in the pavement at the University of Cambridge?

Edmund: My installation, *A Local History*, outside the Alison Richard Building, was very definitely trying to find a way of having public art. I am just starting a really interesting project with an architect in Central London, which is to make a series of pieces that I hope you will find by chance near Victoria. I love the idea of people on their way to the station or somewhere else, finding something which is fragile, something you might want to return to, or bring someone to see it, but isn't signposted. What I really want to do is have something in the world without signs, the idea being that you can unexpectedly find things in the world.

Trisha: What are you working on at the moment?

Edmund: It is an installation called *Atemwende* for the Gagosian Gallery, New York. It is constructed around Paul Celan's essay, *The Meridian*, which is this amazing journey into breath and what happens at the turn of the breath and the possibility of seeing with enormous clarity and complexity at the same moment. It is a whole series of work around my readings of Celan and I love him. He is a painful troubled person, with such beauty, incredible beauty.

Trisha: Edmund, you strike me as a deeply contemplative person. What do you think about when you sit at the wheel?

Edmund: Oh, all kinds of things. Objects and words are so close to each other, I hear and see my pots as words, I put them down and see them as stories.

As I walk up a busy South London high street, I experience a sense of well-being about the world and wonder for just a moment how much more we have yet to hear from Edmund de Waal.

Edmund de Waal's exhibition *On White – Porcelain Stories from the Fitzwilliam* will be on display from Tue 29 October 2013 to Sun 23 February 2014 in Galleries 33, 26 & 28 of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Book Review

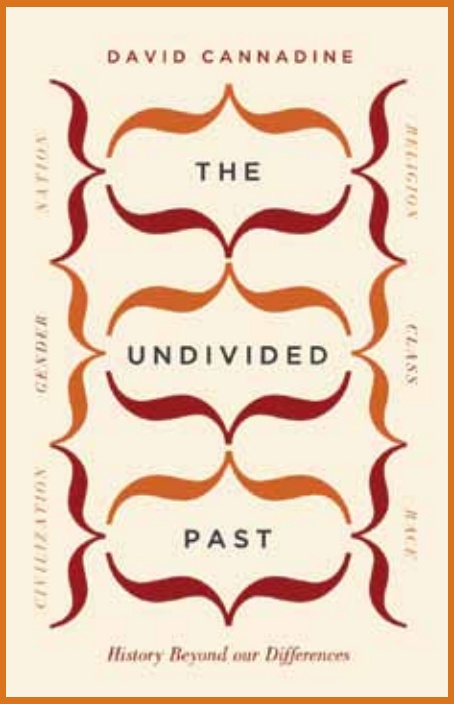
The Undivided Past: History Beyond Our Differences

David Cannadine

Described by *The New Yorker* as an 'impassioned and erudite critique of historical thinking', *The Undivided Past*, written by the renowned historian David Cannadine, argues that much of the writing of history has been driven by a fatal desire to dramatise differences – to create an 'us versus them'. Here Eugenio Biagini, Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at the University of Cambridge, reviews the book for *Perspectives*.

Religion, nation, class, gender, race and notions of 'civilisation'. These are for Cannadine, 'the most resonant forms of human solidarity', forms which have shaped man's experience 'across the centuries and around the world'. This book is a reflection on such concepts and notions, and how they have been interpreted and fought over. They have been used to erect barriers between human beings, to such an extent that thinkers as different as Karl Marx and Clifford Geertz have argued that conflict between groups 'is what makes the world go round'. By contrast, Cannadine makes here 'a case for a broader, more ecumenical, and even more optimistic view of human identities and relations – a view that not only accepts difference and conflict based on clashing sectional interests, but also recognises affinities and discerns conversations across these allegedly impermeable boundaries of identity'. This is, of course, quintessentially the historian's responsibility, as Cannadine has brilliantly argued in some of his older works, but here addresses questions which are not of method, but of substance.

Each chapter explores the common ground between different and historically



antagonistic traditions. Religion is the first – a sign of the extent to which the secularisation paradigm of the 20th century now feels obsolete. Cannadine argues that, while black and white, 'Manichean' perceptions of identities and values are found in all major religions (including Buddhism, as recently illustrated by the Thai monk Wirathu), the precepts of what constitutes a good life in this world are similar across different religions. From here to viewing some form of humanism as an antidote to the dogmatic 'Word', the step is short: 'Whatever the claims of political or scriptural authorities to the contrary, the intuitive apprehension of a common humanity transcending religious differences, has always moderated the extravagant and invariably overstated claims of faith on individuals'. This is true, except that much in the faiths about which Cannadine writes is about toleration and compassion for human fallibility and love counteracting judgement. The trouble begins when a church (or a religious majority) and the state become one and the state lends its arm to empowering clerics (not 'religion') to enforce their 'orthodoxy'. That this has often happened is no wonder, because religion is a great social and moral power, one which, if it does not 'move mountains', can at least mobilise millions to do so: hence the state's interest in claiming religion as one of its mainstays.

A similar tendency to generalise, perhaps unduly, from a certain liberal understanding of a concept characterises many of the other chapters. About 'nations', for example, Cannadine stresses the extent to which the development of such identities owed much to the transnational and internationalist activities and aspirations of wide cross-sections of successful societies in different ages. True. However, something also ought to be said about the role of patriotism in raising the perspective of ordinary people above the narrow horizons of individual, family and local life. For such raising creates an imagined nation-wide 'us' and makes a crucial contribution to sustaining a social cooperation that is based on principles other than self-interest. If this is so, then the main question is not how much nations owe to one another – though it is true that 'civilisation' flourishes when nations trade and communicate within some wide common market. Instead, the question is surely how we define the 'us' that matters, whether this is done through some arbitrary ethnic criteria, or through the endorsement of a shared legal and constitutional tradition, one that in principle can welcome new citizens, as exemplified by the ancient Roman Empire and, nowadays, the United States.

The chapter on class sheds further light on the problem behind excessively stressing the ecumenical dimension and the flaws of dogmatism. It is true that,

Waving over the Berlin Wall

when contrasted with Marx and Engels' views about the allegedly inescapable Armageddon of a 'class' clash, any person of good will and common sense ought to consider the greater complexity of most social entities. However, class struggle, like national consciousness, had the important function of mobilising people for common goals which transcended the narrow and specific local grievances involved, for example, in a particular strike or lock-out, and indeed in the election of one parliamentary deputy instead of another. It had the function of creating a vision which, in competition with others, sustained a constructive, dynamic, complex sense of the 'common good', to be negotiated continuously and therefore truly inclusive. Nowadays, as 'class' has been discredited and often replaced by more pluralist, subjective and volatile forms of collective identity, such as gender, the risk is the apathy of the masses and the short-termism and cynicism of the politicians, who, like pedlars and salesmen, are primarily interested in selling their political 'product' to distracted and unorganised 'consumers'. In this respect, class struggle – whether or not there is any substance behind any particular notion of 'class' – is important for a healthy democracy, as old-fashioned liberals like Luigi Einaudi and Ralf Dahrendorf used to preach.

This is the dimension that is missing from Cannadine's otherwise thought-provoking and enlightening analysis – namely the extent to which each of the concepts surveyed in this book contributes to human progress and liberty not only when its precepts are toned down and made more ecumenical, but especially when they are not, provided that each group – in trying to establish its particular vision – does not have the power to overcome the others. While the resulting contest may be one between dogmatists, it is a competition for the souls of the wider population. They do not consist of 'true believers', but of people who may be persuaded to consider favourably one or the other idea, or a number of them together, when a good case can be made. And one does not need to be either sceptical or ecumenical to accept the view that competition is healthy for a society as much as for the soul, in the economic sphere as much as in many others.

The Undivided Past: History Beyond Our Differences is published by Allen Lane, ISBN 978-1-846-14132-4.

Civil Rights demonstrators

WOOLF INSTITUTE PROFILES

Sughra Ahmed

This spring Sughra Ahmed joined the Woolf Institute as Programmes Manager in the Centre for Public Education, where she has responsibility for the design and delivery of research and training on issues such as faith and belief, integration and cohesion. Previously she worked as a Research Fellow in the Policy Research Centre where she explored the migratory and settlement experiences of first generation Muslim women and men in the UK. Sughra also worked with a number of organisations to consider the issues young people face whilst growing up in the UK and the impact of this on wider British communities. She has published a number of papers and a key report, *Seen and Not Heard: Voices of Young British Muslims*. Sughra is active in interfaith work both locally and nationally, working with organisations to help build stronger and more effective relationships across faiths and beliefs.

Sughra is a Trustee of the Inter Faith Network UK, the Islamic Society of Britain and an advisor to FaithxChange, which is concerned with young people of faith who are engaged in civil society. She has a BA (Hons) in English Language and Literature and an MA in Islamic Studies; she is a qualified Chaplain and holds a Diploma in Islamic Jurisprudence. She contributes to debates in the media both locally and nationally.

Gorazd Andrejč

This summer Gorazd Andrejč joined the Woolf Institute as a Junior Research Fellow. Gorazd is a CJCR Alumnus who recently completed his Doctorate in the Philosophy of Religion at the University of Exeter. His Doctorate examined the question of the relation between felt experience which Christians often take as religious, and the belief in God. His other research interests include philosophical aspects of interfaith relations, especially those between Jews, Christians and Muslims in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. His research as a JRF will engage with varieties of interfaith encounter in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mohammed Aziz

Last autumn Mohammed Aziz joined the Woolf Institute as Director of the Centre for Public Education. In his previous work Mohammed was the founding CEO of the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism and the British Muslim Research Centre, and the founding Director of FaithWise Ltd. He subsequently worked for 8 years in central government as Advisor and Senior Advisor to senior civil servants and ministers in race and religion. He has held various public appointment positions, including Commissioner at the Commission for Racial Equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the TUC's Commission on Vulnerable Employment. He has also been a Chair of the European Network Against Racism and is currently a Vice-Chair of the Equality & Diversity Forum. Mohammed is a Research Associate at the Centre of Islamic Studies, Cambridge and a Nohoudh Scholar/PhD Candidate at SOAS, London.

Matthew Teather

Matthew Teather joined the Woolf Institute as Development Officer in September 2012. After completing a BSc (Hons) degree at Lincoln University in Behavioural Science, Matthew began his career in business. Matthew then took a change of direction in life, and spent 6 months volunteering as a Special Educational Needs Coordinator in Walsall. He then spent a year volunteering in South-East Asia for a charitable home for the blind. There, Matthew put his skills and experience of sales and management to good use, working as Head of the Fundraising Department.

Returning to the UK in 2008, Matthew then worked for The Outward Bound Trust as Head of Corporate Partnerships – liaising closely with both the Duke of York and the Duke of Edinburgh's offices. Matthew left that position to take a short term Games-time contract with the London 2012 Olympics in the role of Group Leader for the International Federation Services.

Esther-Miriam Wagner

This September Esther-Miriam Wagner joined the Woolf Institute from her role as Research Associate at the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit, Cambridge University Library. She completed her doctorate on Judaeo-Arabic letters at the University of Cambridge. Her main research interests include Judaeo-Arabic, sociolinguistics, Yiddish, and Jewish-Muslim relations in Egypt and Muslim Spain as reflected in the Genizah sources. As part of her work at the Woolf Institute she is working with Deputy Director, Shana Cohen to develop a series of interdisciplinary panels. These panels explore historical and contemporary dimensions of Muslim-Jewish Relations and are intended to showcase original research.

For more information about Junior Research Fellowships or the forthcoming panel series please contact the Deputy Director, Dr Shana Cohen: sc736@cam.ac.uk.

WOOLF INSTITUTE RESOURCES

MSt DISSERTATIONS

The following MSt dissertations are now available to borrow from the Woolf Institute. A full list can be found in the Cambridge Theological Federation Library Catalogue: http://affint-newton.lib.cam.ac.uk.

To borrow a dissertation please contact the Office Manager: Tina.Steiner@woolf.cam.ac.uk, +44 (0)1223 741 048.

RECENTLY SUBMITTED

Imagined Others: A Critical Examination of the Representation of Jews in Medieval Scandinavia.

A Critical Analysis of Christian Perceptions of the Temple in Seventeenth-Century England.

To What Extent do Jewish and Christian Burial Practices, in Lower Egypt in the Greco-Roman Period, Exhibit Commonalities in Ritual Practices?

Jewish Marriage and Inheritance Cases before Eighteenth-Century English Courts. A Critical Analysis.

The Texts of Leviticus from the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Septuagint. A Critical Analysis in Light of Purported 2nd-Century Rabbinic Concerns.

A Critical Analysis of the Portrayal of Jewish-Christian Relations in Current Catholic Religious Education Resources for English Secondary Schools.

Judicial Conception of 'Religion'. A Critical Analysis of the UK Court of Appeal and Supreme Court Judgements in R (On The Application of E) V Governing Body of JFS (The *JFS* Case).

A Critical Analysis of Post-Shoah Dialogue between James Parkes and Victor Gollancz.

A Critical Analysis of the Depiction of Judaism and Anti-Judaism in Holocaust Literature Recommended to 12–16 Year-Olds in the Irish School System by The Holocaust Education Trust, Ireland.

A Critical Comparison of the concept of Repentance in Soloveitchik and Barth.

To What Extent does the Later Augustine Provide a Corrective to Recent Scholarship on Augustine and the Jews?

A Critical Analysis of the Significance of Amy Levy for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations.

A Critical Analysis of the Significance of Religious Identity in Arab-Israeli Literature in Hebrew, with Special Reference to the Novels of Anton Shammas and Sayed Kashua.

A Critical Analysis of Healing Procedures as a Reflection of Early Rabbinic Perceptions of, and Interaction with, the Christian 'Other'.

VISITING FELLOWS

Professor Susan Miller

Professor Susan Miller joined the Woolf Institute for Easter Term 2013. Susan is an historian of North African and Mediterranean history, with a special interest in Jewish history. She has taught at Wellesley College, Brandeis University, and from 1990 until 2008, at Harvard University, where she led the Programme in North African Studies. Susan Miller is currently a Professor of History at UC Davis. Whilst at the Woolf, Professor Miller hosted the first Morocco Research Workshop, entitled *Morocco: From World War Two to Independence*. This is part of a new initiative to foster academic links between Britain and Morocco and is leading to a special issue with the Journal of North African Studies.

Professor Sébastien Morlet

Professor Sébastien Morlet will join the Woolf Institute as a Visiting Fellow for Lent Term 2014. A Maître de conférences (Assistant Professor) at the Université Paris-Sorbonne, Morlet is a Classicist and a Patrologist in the Department of Greek. His work examines Christian polemics against Judaism (1st – 6th century CE), with a special interest in the work of Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260 / 340), a major witness, and protagonist, of the ancient Jewish-Christian debate. During his time at the Woolf Institute Professor Sébastien Morlet will preside over a two-day conference examining *Ancient and Medieval Disputations between Jews and Christians: Rhetoric & Reality* from the 2–3 April at Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge.

ONLINE RESOURCES

The Woolf Institute is proud to offer a wide range of online audio visual recordings of lectures, interviews, and course sessions. Please visit the website to watch and listen again: http://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/resources/audio-visual.asp

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Dr Edward Kessler: *Jewish-Christian Relations in Light of Vatican II*
- Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks: *Trust and Trustworthiness,* with a response from Lord Rowan Williams
- Cardinal Kurt Koch: *Trust as the Basic Attitude in a Culture of Humanity*
- Professor Akbar Ahmed: *Islam in America*

WOOLF INSTITUTE COURSES

Bridging the Great Divide: the Jewish-Muslim Encounter

An e-learning programme:
13 January – 27 April 2014

This fifteen-week course is taught in partnership with the School of International Service at the American University in Washington.

Taught at undergraduate level and committed to the highest levels of scholarly integrity, the course explores the history, culture and theology of Muslims and Jews, reflecting both on similarities and differences as well as the major challenges.

The course fee for Woolf Institute students is £450. Bursaries are available. The deadline for the submission of applications is 15 November 2013. Late applicants should contact Dr Emma Harris directly.

Jews, Christians and Muslims in Europe: Modern Challenges

An e-learning programme:
1 September – 12 December 2014

This three-part course focuses on the relationship between and impact of Jews, Christians and Muslims in Europe today, their history, culture and issues of citizenship. Students will be encouraged to address challenging questions, some easier to answer than others, through set readings and online discussions.

The course is taught at a final-year undergraduate level. You will work with fellow students and receive feedback from Woolf Institute tutors. On completion of the course you will be awarded a Woolf Institute Certificate of Completion.

The course fee is £350. Bursaries are available. The deadline for the submission of applications is 4 August 2013.

MPhil in Middle Eastern Studies (Specialization: Muslim-Jewish Relations)

The Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (FAMES), University of Cambridge, is delighted to announce the launch of a course in Muslim-Jewish Relations within the MPhil in Middle Eastern Studies. The MPhil will consist of three modules each assessed by an examination or a 5,000-word essay, and a 15,000-word dissertation.

Applicants are required to apply to the University by the published application deadline (See FAMES website: www.ames.cam.ac.uk).

Depending on the number and quality of the applicants, the Woolf Institute will offer one bursary (£9,000) or two bursaries (£4,500 each) to contribute to the fees. If applying for a bursary, submit your application by 3 December 2013.

Woolf Institute Cambridge Scholarships

PhD Scholarships for students interested in Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations.

In partnership with the Cambridge Commonwealth, European and International Trust, the Woolf Institute has established the Woolf Institute Cambridge Scholarships. Each scholarship will cover the full cost of studying for a PhD at the University of Cambridge, and will be tenable at any of the thirty-one Cambridge Colleges.

Applicants are required to apply to the University by the published scholarship application deadline (3 December 2013). Applicants are encouraged to contact the Woolf Institute prior to submitting their application to discuss whether their research proposal is relevant to the Institute's focus.

Doctorate in Professional Studies

In June 2013, the Woolf Institute announced that it had signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Middlesex University to work together in the provision of the Middlesex University Doctorate in Professional Studies for senior level practitioners in areas of mutual interest.

Students will be selected from amongst the applicants whose research is relevant to the focus of the Woolf Institute – the multi-disciplinary study of relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims. Applicants are required to apply to Middlesex University.

For further information: www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/courses
Contact Dr Emma Harris, Academic Coordinator: eth22@cam.ac.uk

Highlights

Muslim-Jewish Relations Panel Series

The Woolf Institute and the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Cambridge, are delighted to announce a series of open panel events examining themes in Muslim-Jewish Relations. Held at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, these events will explore historical and contemporary dimensions of Muslim-Jewish Relations and are intended to showcase original research.

Themes will include:

- The World of Commerce and Trade
- Exploring Identity
- Cultural Interactions

15th Anniversary Dinner

Celebrating 15 years of the Woolf Institute

14 November, St James's Palace.

Assessing the Impact of Interfaith Activities Series

This year the Woolf Institute will launch a major three part lecture series examining the impact and future of interfaith activities in the UK. Speakers will include: Harriet Crabtree, Toby Howarth and Ray Gaston.

For further information please see the calendar or: www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/events

Calendar

WOOLF INSTITUTE
OPEN LECTURES

ALL WELCOME

My Experience in Religious Studies and Challenges of Contemporary Dialogue
DICID-Woolf Lecture
Prof Aisha Al-Mannai (DICID)
19 November, 17.30, Garden Room, St Edmund's College, Cambridge.

Assessing the Impact of Interfaith Activities
Part I of Series
Harriet Crabtree (Interfaith Network), Paul Weller (University of Derby).
10 December, 17.00, Wesley House, Cambridge.

Exploring Identity
Muslim-Jewish Relations Panel Series
Shana Cohen (Woolf Institute), Uradyn Bulag (University of Cambridge) and Oskar Verkaaik (University of Amsterdam).
25 February, 17.00, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Cambridge.

Assessing the Impact of Interfaith Activities
Part II of Series
Toby Howarth (Secretary for Inter-Religious Relations for the Church of England), Adam Dinham (Goldsmiths, University of London).
4 March, 17.00, Wesley House, Cambridge.

Teaching Our Own and Other Faiths in Schools: International Issues in Religious Education
Conference and Symposium aiming to identify and share international good practice in teaching RE with a view of identifying, securing and then disseminating high quality professional development for schools and teachers in both the US and UK.
20–22 March, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge.

Ancient and Medieval Disputations between Jews and Christians: Rhetoric & Reality
Conference with Woolf Institute Visiting Fellow Sébastien Morlet
2–3 April, Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge.

Assessing the Impact of Interfaith Activities
Part III of Series
Ray Gaston (The Queen's Foundation), Dilwar Hussain (New Horizons).
29 April, 17.00, Wesley House, Cambridge.

Cultural Interactions
Muslim-Jewish Relations Panel Series
Yaron Peleg (University of Cambridge), Michael Rand (University of Cambridge), Charlotta Salmi (Queen Mary, University of London).
13 May, 17.00, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Cambridge.

Woolf Institute
Wesley House
Jesus Lane
Cambridge CB5 8BJ
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1223 741 048

Reg Charity No. 1069589

www.woolf.cam.ac.uk
enquiries@woolf.cam.ac.uk

For full event details please see: www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/events or scan the QR code with your mobile