Disturbing reflections

The McLellan report on safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Scotland offers a disturbing reflection of an institution which has failed to carry through its own safeguarding procedures and is scarred by a culture of secrecy and cover-up. There is no doubt, the report says, that abuse of the most serious kind has taken place within the church; but despite this, and despite statements about change, it finds that the church has failed to embed agreed safeguarding procedures within its structures. Behind the ordered façade is a flawed institution. Images of filing cabinets with unread procedures and unanswered reports of abuse come to mind.

The report locates its work in the context of heightened awareness of abuse across a range of institutions from the BBC to local authorities. Professor Alexis Jay, who gave evidence to the McLellan commission and chaired the independent inquiry into sexual abuse in Rotherham, observed that senior managers there greatly underestimated the scale and seriousness of what was happening. That is no longer possible.

One of the issues addressed by the McLellan report is the lack of clarity about who is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the church’s safeguarding procedures are observed. It flags up the complexity of the relationship between religious congregations and the diocesan structure of the church, which it says was a complicating factor in establishing responsibility for abuse reported at Fort Augustus. It also points out that not all Scottish bishops agree that the Scottish Bishops’ Conference has the authority to lay down procedures to be followed in every diocese, where local bishops exercise their own authority. People outside the church and many Catholic themselves may not understand or accept the distinction/separation between diocesan structures and the relative independence of religious orders but the bishops are given and have to accept ultimate responsibility.

It was not within the remit of the commission to investigate or adjudicate on current or historical allegations of abuse, but it did draw on the experience of survivors to help identify what aspects of the church’s approach to safeguarding helped or hindered them. Their voices and their accounts of the impact of abuse anchor the report in what Pope Benedict has called ‘wounds that run deep’ within the church. The examples of abuse given in the McLellan report suggest that it has been associated more with residential care than parishes. Residential care has had a crisis of its own well beyond the churches. Not only has its general standards of care proved no longer acceptable but it has become too expensive and is a shadow of its former self. The church should be able to support the best efforts of the past without these being completely trashed by the difficulties or deficiencies which have emerged in the present. With the bishops’ commitment to act on all of McLellan’s recommendations, that picture might become clearer over time.

Parishes without priests

In a letter on Pastoral Provision, Archbishop Tartaglia anticipates a strategy for the next three years that will include ‘finding suitable priests from wherever’. In essence this means from Nigeria. Nigeria is described as the most religious country in Africa. Religion in both its Christian and Muslim variety is flourishing. Few can forget the effort, inspired by the Holy Ghost Fathers, the Marist Brothers and the Killeshandra Sisters, to set up the Catholic State of Biafra. This was only frustrated, at horrendous cost, by the Killeshandra Sisters, to set up the Catholic State of Biafra. This was only frustrated, at horrendous cost, by the difficulties or deficiencies which have emerged in the present. With the bishops’ commitment to act on all of McLellan’s recommendations, that picture might become clearer over time.

The Catholic Church in Nigeria harbours ideas of ‘reverse mission’. Priests who benefited from the ‘black baby’ contributions of less correct days are now able to return something. They know Scotland through the greatest of West African evangelists, the Dundee mill girl, Mary Slessor whose grave there bears only the word ‘Ma’. According to Life and Work the Church of Scotland already has over 100 ministers in parishes who come from other countries, not all of course from Nigeria.

Although Archbishop Tartaglia speaks of priests from overseas providing pastoral care it can be assumed that his priority is to provide Sunday Mass. This was not the priority of the missionaries who went to Africa. They set up schools and dispensaries and battled cultural obstacles to progress. They were never enough to provide Sunday Mass. Still today in most of the Catholic world regular Sunday Mass is exceptional. This is the case even in Europe and is happening now in Scotland. It is a minority so habituated to Sunday Mass who today expect to find a priest at a convenient time in a place not too far from them.

In articles and correspondence in Open House there has emerged an opinion that there are enough informed and committed lay people able to run their own parish without a resident priest. This is the bullet the bishops have to bite. What was the point of that dogmatic defence of Catholic schools if they could not provide a generation able at least to manage a local church. Any bishop who has the courage to grasp this nettle will realise that he can, like the rest of the world, get by with few priests. An easy experiment would be to let the parish priest have his well-deserved summer holiday and see how his parishioners manage without him for a couple of weeks.
The path to the McLellan review

Last month the McLellan Report, a review of current safeguarding policies, procedures and practices within the Catholic Church in Scotland was published. Here, a distinguished child psychologist, one of the advisors to the Catholic bishops on safeguarding, retraces the path that led to the McLellan review. Next month she will reflect on the review and its recommendations to the church.

On Tuesday 18th August the McLellan Report was presented to the media and, within two hours, Glasgow’s Archbishop Philip Tartaglia, President of the Scottish Catholic Bishops Conference, apologised during Mass on behalf of the Church to those who had suffered at the hands of anyone in the Church. Many have already read the report. However, some reflection on how we reached this point may be helpful in understanding the remit given to Rev. Andrew McLellan, a former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. How did the presence of sexual abuse creep into the Catholic psyche in Scotland over recent years?

On 20th Nov. 1994, just days before Archbishop Thomas Winning of Glasgow was made a Cardinal, Catholics woke up to Scotland on Sunday’s front page with the startling headline ‘I wouldn’t shop paedophile priest says Winning’. He was clear that if an allegation of sex abuse was made against a priest it was the family of the child who should involve the police or social services and held to this opinion at that time. I was asked to meet with the Bishops Conference to discuss how they could handle this difficult situation.

I suggested they call experts in all the relevant professions to form a working party with the remit to give future guidance. The first meeting was held on 3rd February 1995 and there were nine of us, with Bishop John Mone as liaison with the Bishops Conference. We had 14 full group meetings, including two weekends. We also worked in small groups, each group working on a particular aspect of the report we were to produce for the bishops.

During this period, two other events took place. First, I was invited with three priests from the media office to attend a first screening of the film Priest in the Glasgow Film Theatre on 9th March 1995. The film concentrated on aspects of priests’ sexuality but highlighted the dilemma when a young teenage girl disclosed sexual abuse by her father. This occurred in the confessional box, but outwith the sacrament. Later that year, a remarkable article appeared in the 1995 August-September issue of Priests & People, entitled ‘Facing Up to Child Abuse’. Among other relevant issues it highlighted the problem for priests hearing from a parishioner of possible sex
The film and the article both highlighted at that time a situation which priests had not been trained to deal with; most professionals were in the same boat.

abuse of a child - how do they deal with this knowledge, especially if the person sharing this information thought it was given in confidence? The film and the article both highlighted at that time a situation which priests had not been trained to deal with; most professionals were in the same boat.

Prior to the completion of the report, members of the working party in small groups visited each diocese to meet groups of priests. We reported on work done to date and listened to their views and concerns. The working party submitted their final report to the Bishops Conference on 1st February 1996. It was very prescriptive, outlining the responsibilities each bishop had in his diocese, especially in relation to linking with external agencies and working in tandem with the law of the land. Prior to the bishops’ response to our document, a conference was arranged in Paisley diocese entitled ‘Child Sexual Abuse : A Church Response’. One of the four speakers was Bishop Mone who had visited almost all of his parishes during the period of the preparation of the working party’s report and had made it clear that he would not protect anyone who had abused a child. He was warmly applauded for his stance.

The film and the article both highlighted at that time a situation which priests had not been trained to deal with; most professionals were in the same boat.

The bishops accepted our report. Each set about appointing advisers within his own diocese. However there was a delay in putting into operation one of our main recommendations: that a National Child Protection Advisor be appointed. When it came to seeking advice the bishops were more used to working with personnel within their own diocese. Eventually I was asked to take up the position from Easter 1997. As I was Director of the Notre Dame Centre I accepted the role on a temporary and part-time basis. I worked with all the other advisors and where appropriate met with the bishops to relay any concerns or recommendations the diocesan advisors wanted them to deal with. I worked in this capacity until the end of May 1999. Prior to that, three of us, with Bishop Mone, were privileged to take part in the Consultation of Episcopal Committees on Child Sexual Abuse. This was held in Dundrum, Ireland (18–21 May 1998) and gave us insight into how twelve other countries were dealing with the problem. It is worth saying at this point that they were impressed by our system of diocesan advisors.

During the next few years the advisors continued their diocesan work as well as meeting to create a document containing guidelines to be adhered to in the Catholic Church throughout Scotland. It outlined clear guidelines for good practice for paid staff and volunteers who work with children and young people in a church context. It was entitled Keeping Children Safe. An updated edition was produced in 2003 in line with new guidelines produced by the then Scottish Executive, outlined in the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003.

With new legislation coming into being, the bishops decided to appoint May Dunsmuir to the position of a new role - National Director of Child Protection. She was eminently qualified to undertake this role and took up the post on 8th Dec. 2003. Unfortunately, it was to be a short reign. She had quickly set about examining the way each diocese was implementing the necessary procedures and practices.

The film and the article both highlighted at that time a situation which priests had not been trained to deal with; most professionals were in the same boat.
Throughout my time on the reference group there have been some difficult discussions as to the supremacy of civil/canon law in certain situations. I suspect there will always be some difficulties in this area.

Now we are fortunate in having a new National Safeguarding Coordinator in Tina Campbell, who took up her post on 1st Dec. 2013 (see an article by Tina Campbell on safeguarding in Open House May 2103). She will be responsible for helping us all deal with the recommendations of the McLellan report.

Mention is made above of Scottish legislation, as that governs practice in all organisations, including Churches. Throughout my time on the reference group there have been some difficult discussions as to the supremacy of civil/canon law in certain situations. I suspect there will always be some difficulties in this area. Also, much has been made of the need to eliminate any cover-up of serious misdemeanours. What we need to understand is the fact that our church is an institution and as such has a natural tendency to close ranks when its credibility is questioned. Whistle-blowers are rarely popular in any institution. At the Paisley Diocesan conference in 1996, Bishop Mone said ‘It is time that we end this cloak of secrecy which surrounds the tragedy where children, the most vulnerable in our society, are the victims’.

The above has covered a period of 21 years. In the Tablet of 15th August this year, Brian Morton entitled his article about the forthcoming McLellan Report ‘A day of reckoning dawns’. Could we rather look forward to a coming of age for our Church, a new age where openness and transparency are developed and trusted?

Dr Mary Ross is a Sister of Notre Dame and former Director of the Notre Dame family Centre in Glasgow. She was awarded the MBE for her services to children and families.
The church does not have a mission - rather, God’s mission has a church1 said Richard Bevans SVD in his keynote speech to the 2015 Leadership Conference of Women Religious in the United States. Amidst concern about the falling numbers of priests and debates and about parish closures it is well to remind ourselves what ‘church’ is about. Our priority in addressing ‘crises’ such as priest shortages in Edinburgh and beyond must be to ask: what is the ‘mission’ of our church and what ‘vision’ of church can achieve this mission? Pope Francis’ Evangelii Gaudium has been inspirational because he writes eloquently, clearly and at length about the gospel-inspired mission of the faith community and the way forward in fulfilling this. For him, the prayerful, sharing, caring, welcoming, parish is the ‘base’ faith community from which this mission flows – outwards, beyond parish into society, into the world. The mission starts within families and workplaces and spreads widely. The parish faith community recognises, confronts and seeks ways to alleviate suffering, inequality and injustice and their harmful consequences. It aims to understand and counter those contemporary ideologies and institutions which perpetuate these evils. This is its mission. 

Pope Francis’ starting point is the faith community – the parish. His ‘guidelines’ encourage the whole church in the process of evangelisation and give his view of how a missionary parish operates in the world. He makes it clear that every baptised member of the community, lay and clerical, has her/his role. He ‘dreams of a missionary option …a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelisation of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation’. In Laudato Si’ he illustrates that care for our earth is an inseparable component of mission.

Undoubtedly the Holy Spirit is inspiring us as we face the challenges in Scotland and beyond. The evidence is there, including in the pages of Open House, where contributors have been sharing their ideas on how to confront these challenges. Willy Slavin (April 2014) makes it clear that mission is the priority. He points out that in many parts of the world the availability of Sunday mass is not the norm and writes of a church ‘beyond the clergy’ and ‘beyond the Eucharist’. Henry McLaughlin (April 2015) describes a thriving catholic diocese in southern Mexico where most people do not have access to a weekly Eucharist. There are married deacons and lay ministers who administer some sacraments. A two way, non stop synod took place between 1995 and 1999 between the diocesan offices and 2,500 mostly rural Indian communities.

Hope for the Future of the Church (April 2015) is a report of a meeting in Edinburgh where, in a prayerful atmosphere, attenders’ views of the characteristics of life-giving parishes were shared and the need to integrate the laity into decision making processes was emphasised. The way forward was seen as the formation of (more) small faith based communities.

In Reflecting on the way ahead for St Andrews and Edinburgh, Michael Fallon (May 2015) points out that what the church needs very much at this time is a) leadership that outlines a clear vision, b) engages in the widest consultation possible, c) announces a strategy and a time-line, and, d) at every stage, is clearly communicating to everyone what is happening and what is the next stage. The creation of the vision must be the result of collaboration between the hierarchy and laity.

Given a vision, no one model of church is appropriate for every parish or cluster of parishes. But we do need to reassess what is on offer now.
build. ‘Can our models show courage and security of faith in God?’ J F Isaacs (March 2014) describes ‘a concept parish’ where there is no parish priest. A parish minister, female or male has duties similar to a present day deacon and is assisted by parish council including a finance committee. There is a parish team of religious and lay members who carry out most of the pastoral duties of a group of parishes. Peregrinator, in *Priesthood in the 21st Century* (April 2015) reported. Fr. Mark observed that several years and are still working to travel a long journey in the last decades in parishes and dioceses throughout the UK.

The Holy Spirit is indeed actively at work guiding the faithful towards a new vision of church. What appears to be lacking at the moment in some parts of Scotland – or is hidden – are active local groups of the faithful, lay and clergy, confident that God is listening to their prayers for change, listening and talking together to find ways to undertake the painstaking task of achieving our vision. Obstacles to participation in such groups include lack of time, lack of opportunities to communicate with the hierarchy, feelings of inadequacy, powerlessness and frustration. There is an argument for umbrella groups, such as ACTA and Edinburgh’s Vigil Group ‘en-couraging’ small groups, facilitating the sharing of ideas. We need to be firmly, prayerfully, patiently and confidently committed to undertake this ongoing and long term endeavour for our church.

‘Imagine what the structure of the church would be like if we recognised that it is mission that needs to be first, and not the church.’

Stephen Bevans


Ahilya Noone is a retired medical epidemiologist living in Glasgow.
Nation and culture in the renewal of Scottish Catholicism

This is the second of two articles on Catholics and the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence by a senior lecturer in sociology. Here he considers the alignment of younger Catholics with the independence movement.

At a book signing event on 23rd March 2015 the former First Minister Alex Salmond remarked to audience members that future studies would show that Scotland’s Catholics voted Yes in the 2014 Referendum while Protestants voted No. This prediction, however, had already been empirically established in October 2014 by the Scottish Referendum Study which, on the basis of a sample of 4,849 voters, had found that 58% of Catholics voted for independence, while only 41% of Church of Scotland members had voted for independence (with 54% of those of ‘no religion’ having voted in favour of independence). When presenting these figures, Professor Ailsa Henderson remarked that they were unsurprising and ‘very much confirming what we know from previous findings’. Similarly, when reviewing the 2012 Scottish Social Attitudes data, sociologist Michael Rosie (2013) observed that ‘Catholics were actually the religious sub-group most likely to support an independent Scotland in 1999. This remains true in 2012’.

If sociological research tells us that Catholics are leading the pro-

independence movement among Scotland’s population, this support for independence among Catholics is unsurprisingly accompanied by a decisive shift from the Labour Party to the SNP. In the twelve years from 1999 to 2011, Scottish Catholics have moved from being as likely as any other social group to vote SNP to positively preferring to vote SNP. The 2007 Scottish Election Study, for example, found that 30% of Catholics voted for the SNP, while the 2011 Scottish Election Study found that 43% of Catholics voted for the SNP.

However, while the Scottish Referendum Study’s finding of a 17% difference in how Catholics and Protestants voted in the referendum seems pretty clear-cut, answering the question whether this difference is due to being Catholic or being Protestant is not straightforward as variables such as class, age, ancestry and cultural identity are all likely to come into play. If 59% of Protestants voted against independence, for example, it has to be borne in mind that Scotland’s Presbyterians are disproportionately older than the general population. ‘While 40% of those aged over 65 say they are Church of Scotland, only 10% of those in their 30s, and just 5% of those aged 18-29 do so’ (Rosie 2013). So it is likely that many Protestants voted against independence because this segment of the population is disproportionately older than the general population, rather than because they are Protestants.

We also find that: ‘In contrast [to Scotland’s Presbyterians] the age profile of Catholicism, which has resisted secularisation more successfully, lies much closer to that of the general population’ (Rosie 2013), so that the strong alignment between Catholics and independence is not because Catholics happen to be younger than Presbyterians.

If not age, then, is there perhaps a class-based explanation of the relation between Catholics and support for independence? Is it because Catholics are more working class, for example, in light of the long-established finding that ‘support for a Scottish parliament has been higher in working-class than in middle-class groups in every survey that has ever asked the question’ (Brown et al. 1996, p. 153)?
From the ‘poor relation’ to blood relatives

If there are macro sociological forces that have brought Catholics into alignment with nationalism there are developments within Catholicism itself that are in alignment with the rise of Scottish nationalism. A younger generation has been more or less coerced into re-contextualising their Catholicism as a result of inheriting the insights of Vatican II, as well as clerical decline and an economic situation of affluence. If we are seeing the entry into politics of Scotland’s Catholics on the basis of more than simply their class identity i.e. on the basis of their full selves or integral dasein (i.e. Heideggerian being-in-the-world), then there is a social and ecclesial basis for the development of a more self-aware and distinct Scottish Catholicism.

To recognise these alignments is also to recognise the range of forces that were previously aligned against not only the development of Scottish nationalism but the development of a Scottish Catholicism among an older generation. Hence, while it would not be unfair to argue the Catholicism of my elderly informants is more or less alienated from the current signs of the times, this is judging them in relation to a new social, geo-political, economic and ecclesial context, and the more balanced representation is that my elderly informants were deeply integrated with a set of social and ecclesial conditions which have passed (Open House August 2015). An older de-nationalised generation of Catholics, then, were more or less coerced into a constitutional quietism thanks to the theological universalism they received from a de-nationalised clergy and a church hierarchy full of the baleful influence of clericalism and supernaturalism and a political situation of an imperial Britishness and an economic situation of ‘scarcity.’

However, if, as I argued, an older generation could be fairly described as alienated from the present historical moment, the 2014 Referendum process was a politicking and consciousness-raising event in a way that the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) has so far failed to be a conscientisation event for the Church in Scotland. Hence, if a ‘blood relative’ of this generation’s failure to engage with, far less align with, Scottish nationalism in their capacity as Catholics was their inability to engage with and renew Scottish Catholicism, this signals what needs to be done by younger generations. Just as an older generation of Catholics have a stateless Christianity that fails to see the nation as one of the necessary media of its incarnation and an older generation of clergy and laity’s pre-Vatican II understanding of Catholicism meant they played no part in the work of re-thinking their Catholicism free of an inherited supernaturalism and clericalism, it thereby falls to younger generations to effect the pressing task facing Scottish Catholicism, which is to re-make the broken relationship between culture/nation and Catholicism into a new relation that may be described as ‘blood relatives.’ If the best guarantee of future success for the Church is to re-make this link, then the modelling of an integral Scottish Catholicism is to all intents and purposes the task of younger generations who are being more or less coerced by the historical and political and ecclesial conditions into retrieving an earlier pre-British conception and practice of Scottish sovereignty, as well as exercising new leadership in the work of imagining a post-Conciliar Scottish Catholicism.

The Renewal of Parish, Deanery & Diocesan Self-Consciousness

My research echoes and describes a shift to pro-independence views among Catholics which only sociologists seem aware of, while Catholics themselves are not, so that Scottish Catholicism seems to lack self-awareness. Furthermore, and in line with arguments articulated in Open House by Fr. Mike Fallon (May 2015) and Mike Mineter (April 2015), I propose that my research also highlights how the current call for renewal and re-organisation in the archdiocese of St. Andrews and Edinburgh highlights the fact that my own parish, deanery and archdiocese has little consciousness of itself and for good reason. Its members are not in possession of a plan of action that they are charged with implementing in their parishes and deaneries, so that there cannot be a developed self-consciousness or the renewal of Scottish Catholicism.

This process of renewal and re-imagining is allied to the post-Vatican II awareness that Christian faith is called to be in a relationship to public and political life, and if Christian faith is...
called upon to be in relationship to the social world, the only question is what relationship should that be. We can say it is not to be one of subservience where faith is dominated by the State or dominated by the Nation, while it also cannot be one of indifference or benign neglect, but one of tension or equality and mutual recognition. This renewal then cannot take refuge in clericalism, or an inherited geo-political subjugation; nor in an unthinking Britishness at a constitutional level or traditional allegiance to the Labour Party at a political level; nor take refuge in a theological universalism that refuses the exigencies of thinking and participating and leading the particular national context. I propose, then, that there must be an alignment between Scottish Catholicism and Scottish Nationalism at the level of discourse and self-awareness if the nation is to be retrieved for the Catholic imagination, and with the important proviso that this development does not necessarily mean identifying Catholicism with political nationalism, but rather creating a fully-contextualised Scottish Catholicism that Yes and No voters can be part of.

Conclusion

Catholicism has a dual or two-storey vision of human being which has a purely natural and a purely supernatural beatitude and which must be brought into relationship with each other, and so what is always required is what is always required in order to be Catholic: an embrace of the secular and the social and the historical and the national as its proper media. The Catholic understanding whereby grace perfects nature means these two realms (on the one hand nation and culture and on the other hand the ecclesial community of the church) cannot be confused or mixed together as if they can be one thing; but neither can they be strangers or not in relationship to each other. In effecting this renewal, Catholic writers, artists and ‘producers of culture’ must reflect on the political practice of Catholics and how their shift in political allegiance signals the need to articulate a re-balancing where a renewed imagining of Scottish Catholicism is as ambitious for itself as the pro-independence parties and electorate are ambitious for Scotland. It must provide a vision of a Scottish Catholicism that is architecturally and artistically and aesthetically ambitious for itself.

Dr Paul Gilfillan is a senior lecturer in sociology at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh.


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The daily show

A Scot who has lived in the US for many years reflects on the end of one of America’s most famous satirical shows and the rise of Republican candidate Donald Trump.

The perfect juxtaposition - Jon Stewart concluded 16 years of *The Daily Show*, his satirical ‘fake news’ programme on cable television’s Comedy Central, on Thursday, August 6, the same night the Republican Party held its first presidential candidates’ debate for the November 2016 election on its symbiotic propaganda outlet Fox News. Jon and most of his long list of ‘reporters’ had started out in theatrical stand-up comedy. This included Stephen Colbert, who earlier this year called it a day on his and Jon’s spin-off show, *The Colbert Report* (where he dropped the final t’s, for a satirical swipe at the right-wing anti-French Iraq War days of promoting the substitution of ‘freedom fries’ for ‘French fries’). Both were aimed at a young adult late night audience, but attracted people of all ages, and became the best intelligent television political commentary in the country. While Jon played the part of a regular network news anchor, except for the comedy and satirical content of his show, Stephen invented the part of a clueless right wing blowhard oblivious to satire, modelled on the rhetoric of partisan rant-and-hate radio’s Rush Limbaugh and Fox’s Bill O’Reilly.

Jon’s genius was to realise that satire was not enough, when the network and cable TV news programmes failed to do their job of providing the public with comprehensive and independent reporting and analysis of national and international issues. His first awakening was the 2000 presidential election, when the Republican majority on the U.S. Supreme Court anointed George W. Bush president, in the most outrageous act of ‘judicial activism’ in the history of the republic, theretofore one of the Republican Party’s favourite criticisms of the judicial branch of government. Most of the media at the time, unlike Jon, refused to recognise a political coup.

His second chapter was the disastrous wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, when few TV journalists refused to join the fakery of jingoistic cheerleading, and the supposed paper of record, *The New York Times*, acted as a conduit for the real president, the execrable proponent of ‘rendition’ and ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ (‘torture’ to the rest of the world), Vice-President Dick Cheney, who led the country into war on the fraudulent basis of the non-existent nuclear ‘weapons of mass destruction’.

The third was in 2008, the financial system’s self-destruction, only for the perpetrators’ banks to be rescued by the federal government, and almost no one held to account for their criminal behaviour, but rewarded with free rein to continue business as usual, multi-million bonuses and all. The contrast with what has just happened in Greece, a hostile takeover by Germany on behalf of German banks, is remarkable but largely un-remarked upon, while few bring up the uncomfortable truth that Goldman Sachs, king of Wall Street, helped previous Greek governments hide the true extent of their debts by the same kind of financial shenanigans that led to the 2008 fiasco.

Finally, the December 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut and the June 2015 Charleston, South Carolina massacres-by-gun highlighted the dysfunction of a political system unable to protect its citizens’ elementary right to safety and security, sacrificed on behalf of the gun industry and their lobbying arm the NRA (National Rifle Association), in the face of majority public support for gun control. The Republican majority on the U.S. Supreme Court aided and abetted this lunacy in 2010 by inventing an ‘individual’ right to bear arms, contrary to the plain ‘collective’ meaning of the second amendment to the U.S. Constitution, an ‘individual’ right unrecognised by the Court for the previous two centuries.

Time after time, Jon Stewart did the job of highlighting these issues, and taking to task the ‘mainstream media’ for neglecting them or acting as cheerleaders for government misconduct in war. He recognised and described the principal cause of the dysfunction, the debasing and degrading of government and public service, except for the military and the police, as fostered and promoted by the Republican Party. But he also berated the weaknesses of the Democratic Party in not standing up to all the craziness, and not forcefully defending the proper role of government to regulate private business for the public good.

Then came the latest manifestation of the debasement and dysfunction – the current 17 Republican candidates for President, led by ‘the Donald’ Trump. Jon recognised that his own show would go out in a blaze of glory with the gift of the Trump performance, which looks more like Stephen Colbert playing the arrogant and clueless buffoon. Donald Trump however wants his audience to take him seriously and elect him their candidate for president, on the basis that he shares their prejudices and political opinions, and unlike Stephen is not fooling them or being satirical. Jon only had to run the clips of Trump playing the buffoon, with bombastic, narcissistic, frequently racist balderdash. For years, Jon had lived off Trump’s antics, such as fomenting the falsehood of President Obama not being born in the U.S., and thus

MICHAEL L. O’NEILL

Letter from America

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playing to the racist element in the Republican base. Now the culmination came with his candidacy for President, and his lead in the Republican polls.

Of course, the joke might be on the Republican Party, the country and the world, if Trump becomes president. If so it will be the fruit of the past 40 years of Republican right wing extremism – the preferential option for the rich and obscene economic inequality; undermining democracy by removing any barriers to plutocracy and the buying of elections and elected officials; impoverishment of the working class and denial of workers’ rights to organise and bargain collectively; increase of hunger and penury; fomenting racism and the demonising of poor undocumented immigrants from Mexico and the U.S’s client military and oligarchic states in Central America; gerrymandering election districts and preventing people from voting.

Trump is without shame in playing to the basest of ‘the base’ of the party, and since he is much more experienced on television than the other 16 Republican candidates, from his decades long career as a flamboyant real estate developer and salesman in the TV capital of the country, New York City, and almost a decade of being a ‘reality show’ MC, he is much more effective as a TV performer playing down to people’s hates and fears, the cultivated common currency of today’s Republican Party.

Even if he does not win the Republican nomination, he will almost certainly run as an independent. In either case, any political party which nominates a Trump for president, deserves to go the way of the Whigs. I stated that comparison weeks ago, before I heard it the other day on the lips of a former Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate. The fact that such a possibility exists is to me the definitive indictment of the Republican Party and what they have inflicted on the country over the past four decades. Like the British Labour Party, the American Democratic Party, while it didn’t create the phenomenon, has failed to serve the country by not, forcefully and consistently, standing up for its own principles of social and economic justice, and defending its own people and their institutions while vigorously opposing the Republicans. Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, and a few others on TV like Bill Moyers, did their best to educate the electorate and warn them of the dangers. Now we’ll have to see if enough people vote to prevent them.


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(Parish hall is behind the church in Milton Street)

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The lecture will be given by the distinguished scholar and Francis Hutcheson Chair of Scottish History at the University of Glasgow, Gerard Carruthers, followed by a light lunch and glass of wine.

St Peters and St Pauls is situated a short distance from Dundee city centre and is readily accessible from all major routes and points of access.

Tickets, including lunch, cost £10. To book your place simply complete the tear-off slip below and send it to Mary Cullen at 66 Cardross Rd, Dumbarton G82 4JQ, or email editor@openhousescotland.co.uk to request a ticket. Please don’t send any money – payment can be made at the door.

Name ____________________________________________________________

Address __________________________________________________________

email ____________________________________________________________

I would like ____________ tickets for the Open House lecture on 24th October

Religion and the ’fifteen rising

This month marks the 300th anniversary of the 1715 Jacobite rebellion in Scotland. A writer and historian who lives in the north west Highlands looks at some of the leading figures and their religious loyalties.

So much attention has been lavished on the last Jacobite rising of 1745 that the ’Fifteen has come to be seen as a non-event. True, there was only one battle (at Sheriffmuir outside Dunblane) with no great body count. The larger army raised on behalf of King James VIII of Scotland failed to defeat a government force under the Duke of Argyll. When James arrived from France in the coldest winter of the century all talk was of how to make terms with the Elector of Hanover - crowned as George I. Feverish with ague and failing to inspire his followers, James Stuart sailed from Montrose five weeks later.

Jacobite leaders like the Earl of Mar lacked military experience, but there was one battle-hardened soldier among them. Shortly before, this Alexander Gordon of Auchintoul had been a major-general for Tsar Peter the Great when Sweden lost the decisive battle of Poltava. At Sheriffmuir, Gordon (who kept his Gaelic through the Russian years) commanded the central front line of the western clans. As the left wings of both armies fell back, the Highland charge carried all before it.

Turning from warfare to religion, it is worth pointing out that Gordon remained staunchly Catholic in a climate of hostile Russian Orthodoxy. He died in his eighties at Auchintoul, a Scots Jesuit at his bedside.

Charles II struggled to keep religious strife within bounds, including an attempt to kill him and his convert brother – and heir - James Duke of York. Charles was privately received into the Catholic Church on his death bed. James II and VII, briefly popular on account of the assassination plot, succeeded without opposition. His short reign and the events which brought William of Orangeto power are too well known to rehearse here. Less familiar is James’ wife Mary of Modena. Her biographer Carola Oman gave a pathetic summary at the point when Mary Beatrice was crowned alongside her husband: ‘She was not yet twenty-seven and in the past eleven years she had been pregnant eight times, and had borne three daughters and a son, but she was still childless. There had been an enervating gap of five years between the births of her last two children, and after that nothing but two wretched miscarriages, both attended by unusual suffering.’

The Old Pretender’s mother is mainly remembered for a warming-pan story. Whigs put it about that the dreaded male heir was smuggled into her bed although the room was packed with witnesses, the birth fully documented. James Francis Edward Stuart, Prince of Wales, was baptised the next day in presence of his godmother the Dowager Queen. The godfather was Pope Innocent XI.

Healthy at first, the baby was soon in the hands of doctors who banned milk in favour of a cherry concoction backed by medicines. The child declined further and the experts were forced to accept a wet nurse. Mary’s first-born died of ‘convulsions’: now epilepsy threatened again. She sent to the Scots Benedictine monastery of St James at Würzburg in Germany and a monk brought her a relic of St Macarius the founding abbot. His bones had recently been discovered and a cult of miraculous cures surrounded them. A fragment was placed in bandages round the royal infant’s head and he returned to perfect health. In adult life (a long one) he never went without the relic.

Relics hold little appeal for readers of Open House, and to describe Mary of Modena as devout (which she truly was) makes her seem dull. She was anything but. Courtiers at Louis XIV’s Versailles found the ageing James hard work, but Mary was a beauty who laughed readily. She had excellent command of English and French and loved to ride and dance. Against a background of aristocratic amours by others at the court, however, she was a devoted wife and had the joy of another child. Princess Louise Mary was also very popular with the French.
The Stuart palace at St Germain-en-Laye was a good home for the young man who came to Scotland. When James II and VII died in 1701 he was recognised as the rightful king by Louis XIV so long as he remained a Catholic. There was never any doubt about that. In contrast Prince Charles Edward visited London four years after Culloden and, with a medal struck for emphasis, ‘made a solemn abjuration of the Romish religion’.

It was believed by the French that *les montagnards d’Ecosse sont presque tous catholiques royaux*. Historian Allan Macinnes takes a different view, finding that of twenty-six clans which ‘came out’ in 1715 only six were Catholic. One might argue that the Glengarry MacDonalds who fought so well at Killecranky were much more numerous and significant than, say, the Grants of neighbouring Glenmoriston. When the Clannranald chief was killed at Sheriffmuir his followers were rallied with *Builean an-diugh, tiuream am-màireach, a Chlann Dòmhnaill! ’Revenge today and mourning tomorrow, Clan Donald!’ Presbyterian ministers warned the General Assembly of an ‘encease of popery’, with stronger Jacobite commitment among Highlanders.

Highland Catholics were influential beyond their numbers, but there is no reason to doubt that a majority of those who took up arms in the Stuart cause were Episcopalians. The Stewarts of Appin and Camerons of Lochiel were among the clans whose clergy refused loyalty to the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. However Buchan in the North-east Lowlands was the bastion of Protestantism under bishops. That goes back to the Aberdeen Doctors, three in city churches and three university professors whose theology surpassed what was available elsewhere. Bishop Patrick Forbes’ academic reforms produced clergymen who were pious as well as learned. Divinity courses aside, they supported the Divine Right of Stuart kings. These included a royal martyr in the person of Charles I, executed by Cromwell’s republicans.

Royalist piety is pleasingly represented by Alexander 4th Lord Forbes of Pitsligo. As a young man in France he met Fénelon and the Quietist Madame Guyon. Quietism was a form of mysticism which emphasised divine grace and passive prayer. Pitsligo was almost unique in playing an important part in both major Jacobite risings. When he rode into Edinburgh after Prestonpans ‘it seemed as if Religion, Virtue and Justice were entering the Camp under the appearance of this venerable old man...’ Another French mystic affected the Buchan gentry. Antoinette Bourignon’s *Lux Mundi* was translated by the Episcopal clergyman George Garden and – world-wide - had its greatest popularity in North-east Scotland. The Pretender (or claimant) was 27 when he returned to mainland Europe. Excluded from France by treaty, he received a royal welcome in the papal territory of Avignon. The Pope of the time was Clement XI. It may be noted in passing that three years before this his Bull *Unigenitus* had condemned the teachings of Cornelius Jansen. Quietist in a different way, Jesuits described Jansenism as Calvinism with the Mass. Persisting in France, it divided Lowland and Highland priests in Scotland. Lowlanders were condemned as Jansenists partly because they led more comfortable lives. At Avignon James was joined by several hundred Jacobite exiles, many of them Protestants. He participated in all ceremonies at the church of St Didier, holding candles in processions, but the Archbishop of Avignon felt that the presence of so many Anglicans was harmful to faith. Catholics were warned not to eat with heretics on feast days. There were many feast days during the ten months of James’ stay but very little money for men who arrived in worn uniforms. Most moved on. Finally James and his reduced court accepted French government pressure to cross over into Italy.

There is a medical postscript to all this. Six months after James reached Avignon his doctor in Scotland arrived to bleed him *pour ses hémorroides*. Mary of Modena sent Martin Guérin, a leading Paris surgeon whose hand was ‘swift and skilful’. James was actually suffering from a fistula. The *Gazette de Hollande* which circulated news from major centres reported on the post operative wound: *La playe du Roi poussait trop vite les chairs: on luy a appliqué le camphre pour bruler trop d’excrescence*. Readers all over Europe were assured that *le Prétendant* would be able to ride a horse again in six weeks. Recovery took longer as ague (an associated symptom) returned. The church bells of Avignon were silenced to aid the royal convalescence.

Once again he could adequately represent Mary of Modena’s favourite title for her son, *Chevalier de St Georges*. His no doubt painful ride south from Peterhead and through Aberdeen incognito comes to mind. Fifteen miles more brought him to a mansion near Stonehaven where he took to bed with ague. A deputation represented the Episcopal clergy of Aberdeen followed him to Fetteresso House and delivered a loyal address to their king. His reply was disappointingly brief. Scotland’s historians have missed this aspect of failure in the ‘Fifteen, but there can be little doubt that James’ concealed health problem tied in with the cancelled coronation at Scone.

Alasdair Roberts is a retired lecturer from Aberdeen University’s School of Education.
The church and gay issues

PAUL MATHESON

Christian churches and same-gender love

An equality and diversity officer considers recent reports which suggest changing attitudes among Christians to gay and lesbian relationships.

‘If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will, who am I to judge?’ said Pope Francis on the plane from Rio two years ago. Since then, interesting developments have occurred in the relationship between Christian Churches and same-gender love.

On 8th June 2015 in a post on his own website, Baptist minister Tony Campolo, one of the most influential evangelical Christians in the USA, reversed his position on gay marriage. Tony now urges full inclusion of gay couples into the life of the Church. He has this to say:

‘I have done my best to preach the Gospel, care for the poor and oppressed, and earnestly motivate others to do the same. Because of my open concern for social justice, in recent years I have been asked the same question over and over again: Are you ready to fully accept into the Church those gay Christian couples who have made a lifetime commitment to one another?

‘What is the point of marriage in the first place? For some Christians, in a tradition that traces back to St. Augustine, the sole purpose of marriage is procreation. Others of us, however, recognise a more spiritual dimension of marriage, which is of supreme importance. We believe that God intends married partners to help actualise in each other the “fruits of the spirit”, which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, often citing the Apostle Paul’s comparison of marriage to Christ’s sanctifying relationship with the Church. This doesn’t mean that unmarried people cannot achieve the highest levels of spiritual actualisation – our Savior himself was single, after all – but only that the institution of marriage should always be primarily about spiritual growth.

‘One reason I am changing my position on this issue is that, through my wife Peggy, I have come to know so many gay Christian couples whose relationships work in much the same way as our own. Our friendships with these couples have helped me understand how important it is for the exclusion and disapproval of their unions by the Christian community to end. We in the Church should actively support such families. Furthermore, we should be doing all we can to reach, comfort and include all those precious children of God who have been wrongly led to believe that they are mistakes or just not good enough for God, simply because they are not ‘straight’.

‘As a social scientist, I have concluded that sexual orientation is almost never a choice and I have seen how damaging it can be to try to “cure” someone from being gay. As a Christian, my responsibility is not to condemn or reject gay people, but rather to love and embrace them, and to endeavor to draw them into the fellowship of the Church. When we sing the old invitation hymn, “Just As I Am”, I want us to mean it, and I want my gay and lesbian brothers and sisters to know it is true for them too.

‘I am old enough to remember when we in the Church made strong biblical cases for keeping women out of teaching roles in the Church, and when divorced and remarried people often were excluded from fellowship altogether on the basis of scripture. Not long before that, some Christians even made biblical cases supporting slavery. Many of those people were sincere believers, but most of us now agree that they were wrong. I am afraid we are making the same kind of mistake again, which is why I am speaking out. I hope what I have written here will help my fellow Christians to lovingly welcome all of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters into the Church.’

(The full version of Tony’s piece can be found at http://tonycampolo.org/)

A year ago, a practicing Catholic was appointed as the new chief executive of Stonewall, Britain’s largest and most influential gay rights organisation. Ruth Hunt grew up in Wales and Birmingham. She studied at Oxford University, where she was president of the Students’ Union. She joined Stonewall in 2005 as a senior policy officer, later becoming deputy chief executive and finally chief executive. At Stonewall she has been heavily involved in its campaigns to secure equal marriage, give lesbians access to fertility treatment and end homophobic bullying in schools.

Ruth spoke in July this year at the national conference of Quest (the national network for lesbian, gay and bisexual Catholics - http://questcatholic.org.uk/). She spoke about her personal journey as a Catholic, and about the increased emphasis Stonewall is now putting on working together with faith groups, giving some specific examples, such as Stonewall’s extensive work with schools, including Catholic schools, on training to cope with homophobic bullying.

Ruth described having been ‘out’ as gay from an early age, including at Oxford, and throughout her professional career. Her Catholic faith has been a more private part of her life. As Ruth put it in her interview with the Guardian (31st May 2015): ‘It’s been harder for me to come out as a Catholic than it was to come out as a lesbian – easily. At least I had the backing of a community when I came out as a lesbian.’ Ruth sees that faith can still be a real barrier to gay people being able to exercise their rights. ‘It is doing significant damage to people’s mental
health – we have to do something about it,’ she says. But she sees too that ‘there are also many faith leaders who are gay and many faith leaders who are distressed by the constant exclusion of LGBT people from their communities and parishes’.

The Tablet editorial on 30th July 2015 (‘Gospels must point way on gay issues’) writes of ‘those European church leaders who want to welcome homosexual Catholics into the community of the Church, and oppose disparagement of their relationships. It is plain that Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster is among them. He has signalled that the model he has established at Farm Street, the Jesuit Church in London, of twice-monthly Masses mainly attended by gays and lesbians is one he favours for other parishes in Westminster diocese and by implication, elsewhere in England and Wales’. The editorial goes on to say that: ‘Gay marriage is something of a distraction in this debate. Treating gays and lesbians with equal dignity and respect does not depend on being for or against gay marriage. Cardinal Nichols is a good example of that position, as is Pope Francis himself’.

At the Open Church conference held in London on 10th-11th April 2015, the Christian evangelical singer-songwriter Vicky Beeching shared her view that ‘there is often a lack of love in the sexuality debate because ‘love is impossible without understanding.’ Vicky spoke of her own journey, from committing her life to Jesus as a child, through years as a successful Christian musician and songwriter who tried to suppress, then hide, her sexual orientation until she became ill.

Vicky urged Christians to move away from a culture of certainty and to embrace mystery like the mystics of the early church. She reminded Christians of Jesus’ habit in the New Testament of not giving clear answers and the apostle Peter’s bewilderment when he discovered that what he had considered ‘unclean’ no longer was.

Paul Matheson is an equality and diversity officer for the police and a regular reviewer for Open House.

NOTEBOOK

Europe’s shame

The Scottish Refugee Council is asking us to contact our MPs to call on David Cameron to create routes to safety for refugees.

The call came days after at least two hundred people died in an attempt to cross the Mediterranean from Libya and another 70 people were found dead in the back of a lorry in Hungary. The Council points out that desperate people are forced to make these journeys because there are no safe and legal routes to reach safety or re-unite with family members in Europe.

The UK Government’s response, it says, is to build higher fences and insist that Britain can’t take any more people. They point to government ministers’ use of language, which changes the word ‘refugee’ – an internationally recognised term for people in need of protection – to the more nebulous term ‘migrant’, which is frequently exchanged with ‘economic migrant’.

The German government has announced that it will accept 800,000 refugees this year. The Refugee Council says Germany is showing true leadership in this crisis and offering a glimmer of hope that the plight of so many desperate people will be addressed.

See www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk

Day of Prayer

Pope Francis has adopted the practice of the Orthodox Church by instituting an annual World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, which was celebrated for the first time in the Catholic Church on 1st September.

Announcing the establishment of the new day of prayer, the pope said that it will offer individuals and communities an opportunity to affirm their vocation as stewards of creation, thank God for the handwork entrusted to our care, and implore God’s help for the protection of creation and pardon for sins committed against the world.

He added that it will also bear witness to growing Roman Catholic communion with the Orthodox. We live at a time, he said, when all Christians are faced with the same challenges to which we must all respond together in order to be ‘more credible and effective’.

Francis hopes the day will become a significant occasion for prayer, reflection, conversion and the adoption of new lifestyles. He also expressed the hope that it would involve other churches and be celebrated in union with similar initiatives of the World Council of Churches.

Moving statues

The Irish Times reported last month that apparitions of the Virgin Mary at the grotto in Mount Melleray, Co. Waterford, 30 years ago were being marked with prayers and processions. The apparitions took place over a nine-day period when four local people claimed to receive messages about the need for change in the world.

A statue of Mary in Ballinspittle, Co. Cork, was also claimed to have moved a few weeks earlier in July 1985. This had sparked a huge
attendance and was followed by reports of moving statues in dozens of locations across Ireland.

Among those who visited Ballinspittle in 1985 was former Irish government minister Dr Conor Cruise O’Brien. He is reported to have stared silently at the lighted statue for some time before declaring that as far as he could see it is was a perfectly genuine statue and was as motionless as you would expect a statue to be.

The Irish Times carried photos from its archives of people gazing intently at the statue in Ballinspittle and praying the rosary at the Mount Mellaray grotto.

The past, as they say, is another country and perhaps nowhere more than in Ireland.

Open House lecture

The Open House lecture in Dundee next month promises to be a fitting celebration of the hopes of the small group who put together the first edition in the city, which was published in December 1990. 250 editions later, in June of this year, one of Open House’s founders and current chair of the board, Jim McManus, traced its origins to the Second Vatican Council’s vision of a reformed church which uses the talent of all in the service of the Kingdom of God.

The lecture will be given by Professor Gerry Carruthers of Glasgow University, who is a great friend and supporter of Open House. He will speak on ‘Key Moments in Scottish History: the Catholic Response’. There will be an opportunity to meet him and other subscribers over lunch and a glass of wine. You can also meet members of the board and editorial team, and take a look at some of the issues Open House has covered in the last 25 years.

Places are limited so book your ticket now – see the advert on page 12.

We look forward to thanking you for all your support.

Guide to Sunday readings

The Second Vatican Council asked for the riches of Scripture to be more fully opened up to the faithful. The result was the Lectionary of 1969, revised in 1981, which added an Old Testament reading and a responsorial psalm at every Sunday and Feast Day Mass and expanded the one-year lectionary into a three-year cycle with each year based on one of the synoptic gospels.

At the same time the church strongly emphasised the presence of Christ in the readings. The General Instruction on the Roman Missal says that ‘When the Sacred Scriptures are read in Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his own Word, proclaims the Gospel.

Catholics have had to learn how to listen and absorb the readings – not always an easy process.

Now Bishop Maurice Taylor, who was Bishop of Galloway from 1981 to 2004 and a member of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy for ten years, has stepped in with a set of background notes which are subtitled Help for the puzzled and the patient at Sunday Mass. For readers unspecialised in Scripture, he describes the origins and purposes of the books of the bible in order to help them hear God speaking at Mass.

For information on how to get a copy of Bishop Taylor’s book, What are they talking about? Background notes for the Readings and Collects of Sunday Mass, see the review on page 21.

LETTERS

The Editor of Open House
email: editor@openhousescotland.co.uk

All correspondence, including email, must give full postal address and telephone number.

Synod on the family

Father Jim Lawlor is absolutely spot on with his analysis of what must be the way forward for the church at the forthcoming Synod on the Family in Rome in October (Open House June 2015). The doctrines of the early councils of the church where forged with lay realpolitik as much as clerical theological contemplation. Indeed we will continue to distance many disenchanted laity if we are not relevant to the world as it is, warts and all, today. Theology is dynamic - not static - and must always connect faith to life. We must stay true to the spirit of Jesus, but simultaneously develop our faith to take account of present, albeit complex and painful realities.

The church can stay comfy and careerist or make a genuine reality of the Christian Life today. Either keep re-arranging the deck chairs until the boat sinks or take to the lifeboats with a determined crew and passengers working as a team to Save Our Souls.

George Sim, Glasgow

Models of church

Several articles in the July/August edition of Open House brought home to me the complexities with which the church is struggling today. According to Arthur McCaffrey (Boston) the Vigil Parish Movement in Boston illustrated that ‘lay men and women are perfectly capable of running a parish’. Certainly, to keep their parish open for a period of 10 years, must have taken great perseverance, devotion, faith and trust and evokes admiration. On the other hand, in his article...
‘Learning from the past’ Fr. Mike Fallon ‘simplifies’ the vocation of the priest as presiding at the Liturgy of the Eucharist and at the Liturgy of Healing. Finally in the review of the film The Priest’s Children there is the big question of the seal of confession and the writer states that ‘no Christian church could or should survive without a ritual of reconciliation’.

Another model comes to mind. I spent 16 years as a missionary in Nigeria, in the diocese of Oyo. First of all there was no daily Mass unless you lived in the parish of the main mission, usually in the town. For people living in the outstations in the country villages, Sunday Mass was not experienced weekly, either. The priest went out to these missions and spent a week or two there administering to the people before moving on to the next mission. He could be away from the main mission for a period of a month or more. In the absence of the priest, the local people, led by the catechist, kept the faith alive. (Of course things may be different there today. I am talking about between mid-1950 and early 1970).

REAL discussions, in which the laity can participate, are not, to my knowledge, encouraged by the clergy or the hierarchy. I think this must change so that the laity moves into the future with confidence in themselves as baptised Christians, and in the part they can play in a future church. Some questions need to be raised.

What a parish? Have we moved too far away from the model of the early church? What can we learn from the Breaking of Bread of the early church? So many of the trappings of clericalism do not come from or mirror the simplicity of the personality of Christ and his teachings. How important is the role of the priest and do we value his role? Do we really understand the role of the priest? Above all, how could the Liturgy of Healing be replaced given the sacred seal it has always enclosed in its ritual? I add a quote from the review of The Priest’s Children where the writer says, ‘It is worth noting that it is unknown even for those who have left the priesthood to have revealed anything they heard in confession’. To me that is a moving and powerful statement.

Sister Julia P. McLoughlin, Glasgow

Thank you

Since early in the current editorship, Open House has adopted the style of presentation of a full page photograph on the front cover. The photographer has been almost exclusively Dominic Cullen. He has given us a series of striking images which have enhanced the magazine’s appearance. The quality of the photos fairly reflects the quality of the magazine as a whole. Long may his art flourish, to our advantage!

Michael Martin, Glasgow

Thank you for the excellent article by Paul L Younger on Pope Francis’ Laudato Si’. It is the best article I have read on the encyclical and I look forward to his reflection on the spirituality behind it.

It made me turn with deeper appreciation to the back page of Open House and Tim Rhead’s Moments in Time, which have been bringing us a quiet appreciation of God’s creation every month. Thank you Tim!

Edward Gallagher, Glasgow

Do you have a point of view on anything you have read in this month’s edition of Open House? Share your thoughts with a letter. The deadline for contributions to the October edition is Friday 26th September.

LIVING SPIRIT

The Holy One is Mystery, Mystery is the Holy One... God is beyond rules and regulations that restrict freedom, beyond dogmas and doctrine that instil fear... Just as the vast majority of the universe is beyond our capacity to see or touch directly, so is the divine. But like dark energy and dark matter, we can see signs of God’s presence all over the cosmos. Just as dark matter works as an unseen gravitational force to hold galaxies together, so Mystery’s presence draws us to the heart of a Holy Darkness... But the work of Mystery manifests in another way as well. Just as dark energy is an antigravitational force that expands the universe, so will the Holy One cause us to move out of our place of comfort and into space that is uncharted and unknown.

In his poem ‘The Dark Night’, John of the Cross offers insights about living in mystery.

One dark night, fired with love’s urgent longings -ah, the sheer grace!-
I went out unseen, my house being now all stilled.

... All of us are fired with love’s urgent longings because we are part of the original flame that brought all life into being. Our urgency comes from the awareness of the conditions that lie around us and within us. The mystic’s poem is not only for the specially-called, the select, the ones we label ‘holy’. The dark night is about us, an expression of our identity.

From Radical Amazement by Judy Cannato. Sorin Books, Notre Dame, Indiana 2006

May the name of the Lord be blessed, both now and forevermore, from the rising of the sun to its setting, praised be the name of the Lord.

Psalm 112
The Aging Mind

Patrick Rabbit: an owner’s manual
Routledge 2015

Rabbit is a psychologist whose career was spent at the universities of Oxford and Manchester researching the effects of aging. Now that he himself is in his 70s he is able in this ‘owner’s manual’ not only to sum up the current state of research into aging but to illustrate it with his own experience and that of his peers.

He quickly states his conclusion that changes attributed to age are much more determined by what has already happened to us than by how long we have lived. That’s why an academic like him from a privileged background is, even when classed as old-old, is doing better than the yet to retire janitor. Ian Deary who worked with the 1950s Scottish ‘Qualifying Examination’ results has demonstrated that those with higher IQs had lost less brain power 60 years later than those with lower IQs. Change is not due to age alone. The losses we observe in vision, hearing and gait are the result of changes attributed to age.

Rabbit has some interesting observations: post menopausal women are more helpful with child rearing than are still risk taking older men. Couples are happier than singles but married men are happier than married women! Names are hard to remember because they are arbitrary sounds which are not often used. This affects younger people too but it is only the older who are embarrassed by it. Falls are caused by diminishing peripheral vision. As the brain shrinks all our senses suffer loss. Rabbit does not believe the optimism of eternal youth that is often hyped in the media to counter inevitable loss.

Rabbit reveals himself to be a fan of the determinist Daniel Dennet and misreads completely the Book of Job. He recommends ‘mindfulness’ training but wouldn’t know what to do with the recent UK research that says going to church can head off depression, something that is taken for granted in the USA. The book should be read by anyone who believes in a fixed retirement age, whether after 30 years’ service for police officers, or 65 going on 67 for Joe Public or 75 for the clergy. What are sometimes described as ‘bad chemicals’ in the brain are no respecters of numbers.

Penelope Fitzgerald – A Life
Hermione Lee, Chatto & Windus 2013


For some years I had been intrigued by occasional references to the novels of Penelope Fitzgerald (1916-2000) but it was only a few months ago that I pursued my interest further and got round to reading three of them (combined in the Everyman’s Library edition) – and I was not disappointed! She has an almost stellar reputation in the literary world (‘one of the most remarkable English writers of the last century’, etc.), but most of my well-read friends seem scarcely to have heard of her. It is not that her writings are difficult, or detached from everyday realities: far from it they are written with supreme craft, and they explore the ups and downs of relationships with warmth, sensitivity and a gentle charm. In a world where novels now

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sometimes stretch to almost inordinate length hers are amazingly brief (the Everyman’s Library volume runs to only 470 pages – for three novels!) but the scope and depth of the content are such that somehow one does not feel shortened.

The plots are not complicated but Fitzgerald’s narrative skill compels interest and attention. Her style is characterised by a gentle warmth and sensitivity (she has a particular empathy with the vulnerable, and, as has been said, ‘tragicomic failure’ is a consistent theme), an enigmatic, almost oblique reticence and a tantalising quality of depth; the reader is not bombarded with detail, but is gradually made aware of what is significant and of the rich, well-researched background and context out of which Fitzgerald writes. This is true both of the novels that reflect aspects of her own life experience (such as The Bookshop – she ran a bookshop in Suffolk for several years, and Offshore with which she won the Booker Prize in 1979) and of those books that have more of a historical flavour (such as The Gate of Angels, set in Cambridge in the early 20th century, and The Blue Flower, set in Germany in the mid-19th century and focusing on the Romantic German poet–philosopher Novalis, regarded by most critics as her outstanding philosopher Novalis, regarded by most critics as her outstanding thesis.

Penelope Fitzgerald’s own life is itself fascinating. Both her grandfathers were evangelical Church of England bishops, her father was EV Knox (‘Evoe’ – a highly respected editor of the periodical Punch), her three uncles were an atheist mathematician and cryptographer, an Anglo-Catholic priest whose whole career was spent in what would now be called ‘priority areas’, and Monsignor Ronald Knox, a productive writer, Roman Catholic ‘convert’ and chaplain to Oxford University. Her second work The Brothers Knox, told their story and she completed two other well-received biographies – of the stained-glass artist Edward Burne-Jones, her first published book, written when she was 58, and the little-known poet Charlotte Mew.

She was educated at private school (Wycombe Abbey) and Oxford, where she received a ‘congratulatory first’ in English. So her intellectual and academic credentials were impeccable, but, while her background was cultured, well-connected and privileged, the family was not particularly well-off. And her own career has, with justification, been described as ‘chequered’: she started work at the BBC but after her marriage to Desmond Fitzgerald, whose career at the bar failed - perhaps owing to post-war trauma, and the arrival of her three children, life was a struggle, even ‘haphazard’, as one reviewer has put it. Teaching in a London ‘posh crammer’, the Suffolk bookshop, having for financial reasons to resort to living in a house-boat on the Thames, a spell in a centre for homeless people and social housing, generally straitened circumstances – until, in that stage of her life that most would regard as ‘retirement’, her career as a novelist took off.

Hermione Lee’s biography – Penelope Fitzgerald – A Life is to be thoroughly recommended as a great read. It gives both an excellent introduction to her subject’s books and traces with insight, perception and sensitivity the course of her fascinating and eventful life. The relative modesty (A Life) of the sub-title indicates that this does not claim to be the definitive account: it is essentially a literary biography. Just as Penelope Fitzgerald’s own style has a quality of reticence, even mystery, so Lee’s biography intriguingly, for readers like me, may leave a range of questions unanswered. She attributes these acknowledged ‘gaps and silences’ to Fitzgerald’s own diffidence concerning such matters, a legacy of suppressed feelings going back to her upbringing. But one is still left wondering about these under-explored dimensions of Fitzgerald’s life – relating, for example, to the paradoxical combination of her apparent unworldliness and street wisdom, her spirituality, and her relationships, both with her husband and her own children. What made her tick? What really lay behind her ‘faithfulness’ to Desmond after his life fell apart? What did she ‘believe’ or, at least, how is her continued church-going to be related to the themes and content of her writing? I look forward to enjoying those of Fitzgerald’s novels that I have not yet read and to the possibility of a further biography which is able to consider some of these aspects more fully.

Norman Shanks

Get it together: Why we deserve better politics

Zoe Williams, Hutchinson, London

The electorate has found a new post-election appetite for politics, well at least some of them; activism is back in fashion with the young and an increasing number of women are stepping forward to agitate about the issues that matter to them. The recent uninspiring general election has been more interesting in its aftermath. The turmoil which has engulfed the losing parties still fills newspaper columns, months after the event. Membership
in many of the losing parties has gone on increasing as people sign up determined to try and do something about a government that little over a third of the electorate chose.

At least until the summer is over, the political agenda will be dominated by leadership and style, personality politics not real politics. This is a book about real politics, the issues that have some of us ranting. It is about the fundamental issues health, education, the financial crisis and how we better organise the world we live in.

Zoe Williams a Guardian columnist is firmly positioned on the left and attempts to unpick the big issues in this well-researched forthright book, full of references and anecdotes, which raise questions about the fundamentals. Williams starts with the increasingly familiar story of people who work full time and yet cannot guarantee that they earn enough to pay for the necessities of life: the working poor. This is not, she argues, evidence of a state that is lean, flexible and successful but one which is failing in its primary duty to protect its citizens. It is difficult to see the counter argument when she states that ‘if you a have a full-time job and still worry about shelter, food and warmth, then there is something wrong with your employer, your housing market, your food supply, your utilities ownership structure, or most likely all four’.

This is as much a call to arms for the disaffected and apathetic as it is a critique of where we are now. The political agenda will be the political agenda will be dominated by leadership and style, personality politics not real politics. This is a book about real politics, the issues that have some of us ranting. It is about the fundamental issues health, education, the financial crisis and how we better organise the world we live in.

What are they talking about?

Maurice Taylor, Decani Books 2015

Maurice Taylor was the Catholic Bishop of Galloway from 1981-2004. He studied at the Scots College in Rome, and was ordained in 1950. From 1965-1974 he was rector of the Scots College, Valladolid, Spain. He represented Scotland on the Episcopal Board of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) and was its chairman from 1997-2002. He is vice-president of Progressio, an international development charity working for justice and the eradication of poverty, and has travelled extensively in South America.

The introduction to What are they talking about? provides some background information about the books of the Old and New Testaments, but the main part of the book consists of notes for each Sunday of the three year Lectionary cycle (and also for the solemnities and feasts which can occur on Sundays). Each entry begins with a sentence summing up the prayer intention of the collect, and this is followed by a few lines on the content and context of the first reading. The psalm response follows, and there is a brief overview of the psalm verses. Notes on the second reading are provided next, and then observations and background notes about the Gospel passage. The average entry for each Sunday is about a page in length.

As Bishop Taylor points out, the way the readings are proclaimed one after the other at Mass means that it is not humanly possible for the listener to retain more than just a few bits and pieces of what they hear. So the purpose of his book is to offer ordinary people the opportunity to anticipate what they are going to hear in the collect and Scripture readings on any given Sunday, and so, with that modest preparation, be enabled to listen with more understanding and retain more easily some of the ‘richer fare’ provided for as at ‘the table of God’s word’ as asked for in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council.

The book is clearly laid out and Bishop Taylor’s style is informal and very readable. It will prove immensely useful to individual worshippers, and also to readers; it is ideal for reading on a week-by-week basis. The foundational knowledge of Scripture it provides can add enormously to the experience of the Liturgy of the Word, so that we can really hear God speaking to us, God’s people, every time Mass is celebrated.

The easiest way to obtain a copy of the book is online at www.bishopmauricetaylor.org.uk and the cost is £10.

Nicola Lawrence

Reviewers

Florence Boyle is Open House treasurer.
Lewis Cameron is a retired sheriff.
Nicola Lawrence is a church musician with an interest in liturgy.
Norman Shanks is a Church of Scotland Minister and former leader of the Iona Community.
Willy Slavin is a retired parish priest.
EXHIBITION

Les Univers de Jean Cocteau
Menton, France.

Menton is a beautiful old town on the Cote d’Azur between Monaco and the Italian border, sheltered by the Alpes Maritimes which rise steeply from the Mediterranean. It was once a favourite wintering spot for the English. There is a Westminster and a Balmoral Hotel as well as an Avenue Edward V11. Nowadays, however, no English voices can be heard and the Daily Mail is nowhere to be seen.

There are plaques on many walls commemorating Resistance heroes but, like other towns along this coast, the greatest heroes are the painters who came south for the light, the sun and the colours. Antibes has the Musee Picasso, Cagnes its Renoir house and Vence the Matisse chapel. Menton has not one but two Cocteau Museums.

Jean Cocteau came to Menton in 1955 and called it ‘The Pearl of France’. Perhaps being a poet, a playwright, a film maker and sculptor as well as a painter, two museums do not come as a surprise. Both museums sit in the old town at the water’s edge. The small original one is the Bastion which is exactly what it is - a square keep with turrets on the harbour wall. The building dates from the 17th century and became a Cocteau museum in 1966, three years after the artist’s death and a new exhibition of his work is on display each year. Currently the theme is ‘Monsters and Myths’. There are paintings, drawings and sculptures of the Sphinx, the Unicorn, the Faun and the Centaur that fascinated him, and in some, his imagination gives birth to hybrids, figures which are a cross between human beings and plants or objects.

The new museum stands close by on the seafront, opened as recently as 2011 and dedicated to Le Prince des Poetes. It has a highly distinctive white and black shape and a facade described as like a fierce set of teeth with its black pillars sprawling like a giant spider over the building. Here also there is a fresh display of his work each year with greater space to do justice to the complexity and variety of his output and activities. The first pleasure on entering the building is its very cool and bright white interior in contrast to the 34 degrees heat outside. It offers exhibition space on two levels and the current and almost permanent one in the principal space is Les Univers de Jean Cocteau and in particular the collection Severin Wunderman. The latter was a Belgian, later an American billionaire who was fascinated by and acquired a huge collection of the artist’s work which he finally donated to the city of Menton. The museum was principally constructed to help accommodate this vast
collection and marry it to the existing one in the Bastion with fresh hangings each year.

The different universes soon become apparent as his poems not only appear on the walls among the paintings but you actually hear recordings from directly above of the poet himself reciting them. Many of his paintings echo his poems where characters exist between two worlds, a physical presence in one and a mental presence in another. These parallel worlds, often life and death, are the theme of many of his paintings and poems.

A further universe is concerned with spirituality. Cocteau famously said about himself ‘It is excruciating to be an unbeliever with a spirit that is deeply religious’. Like his friend Matisse, he was commissioned by many churches for murals and stained glass windows, not just in the local church of St Peter in Villefranche where he covered the walls with frescoes of St Peter’s life and death, but as far away as the church of Notre Dame in central London where he depicts the Annunciation and the Assumption. Many of his religious pictures and drawings are on display.

Many regular French cinemagoers, particularly in Paris in the 1940’s and 50’s would have had little idea that Cocteau was a painter and poet and would have been familiar only with his work as a film director. I know, because I was one of them! He started as a playwright, then a screenwriter and finally a successful director. Cocteau made no secret of his homosexuality and his partner for over 20 years until his death in 1963 was Jean Marais, one of France’s leading actors. He was cast by Cocteau in two of his most famous and popular films, Orphee and Beauty and the Beast. This cinematic universe is also on prominent display as long extracts from both films are shown in a continuous loop on giant screens in both museums.

The theme of the artist’s final universe is love. Having explored in many of his paintings, poems and films the Platonic concept of love and friendship, he moves on to the erotic. There is a small gallery off the lower floor of the new museum, restricted to adults, which contains this work. With his well known and admitted preference, it is not difficult to guess the cast and content of these originally private paintings.

The two busy museums, in their supremely picturesque setting, are able to reveal all of the facets of the multiple genius of Jean Cocteau. In addition, visitors can also see in the centre of town his detailed and witty murals around the walls of the Registry Office where all couples must be first married according to French law. Had this complex artist been alive today, it is likely that he too might have stood in ceremony before these murals in his beloved Menton.

Lewis Cameron
Moments in time

We leave the station at Carnoustie and head east along the Angus Coastal Path. The sun is shining and there is a gentle breeze blowing from the sparkling North Sea. When the path turns inland, we make our way down to the sandy beach and round a rocky headland. Terns are flying past and eider ducks swimming in the sea. Cormorants are perched on some off-shore rocks and oyster-catchers are feeding in rock pools. The sea shore is a place where nature reigns and human influence is less evident.

Around the headland, we come to the old village of West Haven, which consists of a line of cottages with gardens and sheds the other side of a lane just above the beach. We cross the railway on a foot-crossing, keeping a look-out for fast-moving trains on the main line to Aberdeen. The path now takes us along a quiet road to a farm and a large house hidden by trees. The gates are padlocked and a notice informs us that this is Liz McColgan's Health Club, which I recall went bankrupt some time ago. Swallows are swooping past and perching on telegraph wires at the farm. A signpost to Craigmill Den directs us up a tree-lined glen along a grassy path, which winds past the site of an old mill.

We retrace our steps to the coastal path, which takes us through fields of growing crops to the village of East Haven. At the entrance to the village, there are bottles of juice and biscuits for walkers and cyclists with an honesty box for contributions. As there is no shop, cafe or pub, this is very welcome, and the community even looks after the spotless toilets at the car-park. East Haven is a small collection of houses, which since the 14th century was a fishing community. It looks a very healthy place to live but in 1849 the village was decimated by scarlet fever and cholera. The Information Board tells us that the Queen and her sister used to be brought here in the 1930's from Glamis Castle to play on the beach. The coastal dunes are the only Scottish site for a rare plant; we see plenty of other flowers, but we shall have to pay another visit to find the greater yellow rattle!

Tim Rhead

Tim Rhead is a pastoral assistant in the Episcopal Church.

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