Blown on the wind

Two controversial announcements were made within days of each other last month. Bob Dylan won the Nobel Prize for Literature and the Vatican declared that the ashes of the dead were not to be scattered. Burial is still the church’s preferred option, but if cremation takes place, ashes must be placed in a cemetery or other ‘sacred place’.

Dylan won the prize for giving ‘new poetic expression within the great American song tradition’. The Vatican was widely perceived to be insisting on a tradition that had already been overtaken by events. The BBC’s religious affairs correspondent Martin Bashir pointed out that half of Britain’s cemeteries are expected to run out of space in the next 20 years.

At the heart of the question, as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s instruction Ad resurgendum cum Christo points out, is the question of resurrection. The bereaved who stand at the graveside experience the same wrenching sense of loss, and face the same imponderable and often tormenting questions about the next life, as those who choose cremation. They may also struggle, especially when a child dies, with the unanswerable question of why. The church has a rich teaching to offer but it might also have something to learn from the way in which people have developed ways of expressing their loss and longing. In scattering the ashes of those who have died they might not be giving in to erroneous ideas, as the Vatican suspects, but are reflecting the theological understanding that the whole of creation is to be caught up in the resurrection of the dead at the end of time. All places are sacred.

When it announced its instruction on scattering ashes, the CDF was asked about the many fragments of bones which are scattered around the world, venerated as relics of saints. What of that tradition, once commonplace in the church? A Vatican theological adviser was reported to have said that going to all the countries that have a hand of someone might start a war among the faithful. Tradition, it seems, can find new expression, as Dylan might have observed.

Death – is it a sting?

Terry Wogan professed to have lost his faith. His memorial service took place in Westminster Abbey. The BBC commented on the religious nature of the event. Its correspondent, Mark Lawson, remarked that in death the Church ‘captured’ your body.

There is a dissociation between, on the one hand, the loss of faith of individuals and, on the other, the role of the church in still being regarded by friends and relatives as the custodian of the last rites. In most cases the church seems happy to oblige. Some clergy however are less than enthralled to appear as the undertaker’s colleague.

Some Catholic clergy are unhappy that in recent years the solemnity of the Requiem Mass has been re-interpreted as a ‘celebration of the life’ of the deceased. They may be discomfited that the main anxiety seems to be that someone should provide a eulogy. Technically this is against the rules. This does not seem to prevent it in the case of well-known public figures. The average person now expects as much.

A more urgent issue is the escalating cost of funerals. Citizens Advice Scotland is quoted as estimating the average cost of a burial plot excluding the undertaker’s fees as £1,373, an increase of nearly ten per cent in a year. They vary from £694 in the Western Isles to £2,785 in East Dunbartonshire. The cost of a full funeral is said to be almost £4,000, double what it was ten years ago.

The Scottish Government is to host a conference on funeral poverty on 16th November, appropriately enough the month of remembrance. Social security powers, including funeral payments, will be devolved to Holyrood next year. Representatives of the Church Funeral Poverty Committee from the Scottish Working Group on Funeral Poverty have met with Communities Secretary Angela Constance.

The Catholic Church, of course, does not charge for religious rites. The family will usually give an offering. The funeral director will make a small donation. In some parishes there is still the custom of an extra service the night before, a hangover from the time of all night wakes. Where the family is non-practising some priests are happy to go to the funeral parlour or simply be in attendance at the graveside or crematorium.

It is important to avoid a return to ‘pauper’s funerals’. It is also essential that the church does not encourage mourners to take on unnecessary debt by making the funeral an event they cannot afford. A possible solution would be, as happens sometimes with the great and the good, to have the funeral rites after the death. This could be followed by a Memorial Service in church, including Requiem Mass if desired, at a time suitable to all.

This would fit in with the recent news that in a Catholic parish the laity are being trained to conduct funeral rites without the priest. It is to be hoped that they are not being taught simply to recite the same prayers as the clergy. In the present circumstances where death itself is being viewed in different ways we need a more imaginative approach to funerals.

(See Notebook page 14)
The future of the Catholic press

Florence Boyle

A Catholic laywoman reports on a meeting of last month’s Glasgow Newman Circle which discussed the issues raised by the sale of the Scottish Catholic Observer, led by journalist Kevin McKenna.

Kevin McKenna began his career as a journalist over thirty years ago with the Scottish Catholic Observer (SCO), and it was clear, from his talk to the Newman Association, that it is a time in his life he looks back at with great affection. Now a columnist for a national newspaper, McKenna remains an enthusiast for the idea that there is room in the current media marketplace for a Christian/Catholic voice.

He had a warning for the Catholic community: if you sit back and watch the SCO fold you’ll regret it. He came too, with suggestions and ideas for a way forward; a business proposition that he is convinced could save the SCO (or something like it); a new model to ensure a continuing, and in his view much needed, non-secular voice in Scottish civic life.

The SCO has chronicled, and been part of, Catholic life in Scotland since 1885, a constant presence in the porches of parishes and, for a large part of its history, the paper of record for Catholic community events. The paper is now up for sale. Circulation has fallen from 25,000 to the current level of 6,000. There are now only two working journalists and the back office has all but gone.

How has it come to this? The story of the SCO’s demise has many strands to it. On the face of it, a captive audience of 150,000, a gap in the market and historically low set up costs should be a recipe for success. There is no single reason or single group which can be blamed for the current parlous state but McKenna identified at least a few of the culprits. The paper is owned by the Catholic Herald group and, in McKenna’s view, run by a group of patrician figures who have demonstrated little interest in Scottish Catholic life or any enthusiasm for developing the paper.

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Thank you to all those who contributed to this edition of Open House.

Open House, which was founded in Dundee in 1990, is an independent journal of comment and debate on faith issues in Scotland. It is rooted in the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and committed to the dialogue which began at the Council - within the Catholic Church, in other churches, and with all those committed to issues of justice and peace.

www.openhousescotland.co.uk

Cover photograph of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Dennistoun by Dominic Cullen.
Catholic Church had long ago advocated the view, articulated in *Rerum Novarum*, that workers had a right to unionise. Opposition crumbled and the journalists won the day.

In terms of financial management the evidence is that the SCO was regarded as little more than a cash cow. When times were good revenues were sucked to the centre, and little was done to invest or develop the paper. Now that times are bad its current owners seem determined to realise a profit, or as McKenna described it ‘one last bonanza’ from the SCO’s last remaining asset, its office; a prime piece of real estate in Glasgow city centre.

As well as the owners, the hierarchy and clergy must, according to McKenna, share part of the blame. A constant carping when the editorial line did not fit with their view of the world. A stream of low level criticism about the coverage of ‘important’ local events which had not been covered sufficiently well or had not enough column inches devoted to them, eventually dulled the edge of the paper’s editorial independence.

Much more significant than the complaining was the none-too-subtle arm-twisting which came the editor’s way when controversial events, which merited substantial coverage, were either reported in such a way as to tow the, often anodyne, Church line or were not covered at all for fear that the paper’s primary distribution channel, those church porches again, would be withdrawn. In recent times that could be seen to apply to the coverage of the controversies centred on Cardinal O’Brien, and the child sex abuse scandal.

McKenna admitted that neither of these events received the coverage they should have in the SCO. Not for the first time the institutional Church refused to recognise the value of a critical friend and the field was left open to the mainstream media, far less sympathetic and much less informed.

Notwithstanding these challenges to the SCO, the Archdiocese of Glasgow added another, more direct threat to the SCO’s revenue base, with the launch, thirty years ago, of its monthly archdiocesan newspaper *Flourish*. Subsidised by parishes, *Flourish* nevertheless competes for the same advertising market as the SCO but does so from a more assured revenue base.

To McKenna’s list of those who bear responsibility I would add another – the Catholic community itself. While a loyal core continued to buy a copy from the back of the church those of us who regarded the SCO as no more than a glorified parish newsletter said nothing, didn’t press for anything more substantial and stopped buying it, or turned to alternative publications like *Open House*. The founders of *Open House*, a small group of lay Catholics, were very clear that they saw themselves as complimenting, rather than competing with, existing publications. The first edition of December 1990 took the view that the Scottish Catholic community was well served by its weekly newspapers, which communicated news from around the church. *Open House* sought to provide something its founders perceived as missing – regular comment, opinion and reflection outwith the pressures and restrictions of a weekly publication.

Today, coverage of religious affairs in Scotland is cursory. What coverage there is, is often sourced in the SCO and when that goes there must be a question mark over the extent and depth of future coverage.

What now? McKenna, the optimist, sees this as an opportunity. In the often quoted modern, open and diverse Scotland there seems to be little room for a Christian perspective or anything which argues against the prevailing secular narrative. The trend line for religious adherence is still heading south but even now, over half of Scotland’s population identify themselves as Christian and a steady 16 per cent identify themselves as Catholic. That, McKenna argues, is the gap in the market which something new could fill.

His solution? Something new, funded with the help of sympathetic benefactors, a more co-operative model to involve other Christian voices, who he insists would leap at the chance to have a publication like the SCO. Or it could be it a co-operative model or crowd-funded from within the Christian community. Ideas worth exploring? Probably, especially in an era when setting up a publication has never been easier. More importantly if we are serious as a community about bearing Christian witness it’s surely our responsibility to explore these possibilities?

Some will argue that the SCO was the right vehicle for the times and maybe that time has come to an end, but McKenna is right to remind us that we often don’t value what we have until it has gone.

*Florence Boyle is a specialist in IT who works in the healthcare industry and is treasurer of Open House.*
On October 4th, 1936, Oswald Mosley’s Black Shirts marched on London’s East End with the intention of breaking the spirit of the Jewish community through intimidation.

In 2016, eighty years on, the UN had cause to criticise UK politicians for encouraging a rise in hate crime based on racism during the so-called Brexit campaign.

A cause for despair that eight decades have failed to change society? There is no question that a River Styx oozing racism and hostility towards Muslims and Jews seeps through some parts of British society.

But we cannot forget that 100,000 people signed a petition against Mosley's march and thousands more united on Cable Street to battle against the Fascists, bringing together all facets of society to defeat the Blackshirts. And we can take heart from today’s strength and growth of Scotland’s interfaith movement.

Although some voices of insularity and intolerance are in the ascendancy, as Nicola Sturgeon reminded us at the Third Annual Peace and Unity Conference held in Glasgow’s City Chambers recently, neither the First Minister nor those who met and mingled at the conference could feel discouraged. Think of the positives: the major role that faith groups have played in welcoming Syrian refugees to Scotland; the inclusive and open attitude that is promoting a celebration of diversity; the progress that the interfaith movement is making.

Scotland has by no means a perfect record in terms of inclusiveness, either with regards to race or religion – but two recent events suggest that we are moving in the right direction. As well as the Peace and Unity Conference, there were lectures, delivered in the Trades House of Glasgow, under the auspices of the Scottish Ahul Bayt Society (SABS) in collaboration with the Church of Scotland Presbytery of Glasgow Ecumenical Relations and Interfaith Matters Committee, the Scottish Catholic Bishops’ Committee for Interreligious Dialogue, and the Scottish Episcopal Church’s Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths.

This was SABS theological forum’s inaugural lecture event, entitled ‘Christians and the Muhammadan Covenants’. The keynote speakers were Dr Anthony Allison of the Bishops’ Committee for Inter-Religious Dialogue, and Shaykh Sayed Ali Abbas Razawi, Director General of SABS.

Despite our shared history – our shared prophets – today’s technology makes it too easy to be misled by myths and misinformation. Dr Allison blamed what he called the ‘Google Bubble’, a distorting echo chamber in which people’s own views are reinforced (search engines make assumptions and feed us a far from balanced diet). This, said Dr Allison, clearly affects our religious literacy, and both Muslims and Christians suffer from it. We too often believe the insidious memes spread about each other’s faiths, but reassuringly, Dr Allison believes the bubble can be burst.

The process can be as simple as dialogue and discussion, which both Dr Allison and Sheykh Sayed Razawi encouraged. Sheykh Razawi, however, wanted us to go further and focus on the distinct difference between a covenant and a contract. A covenant is morally binding, offering freedom with responsibilities. A contract contains the element of gain and can be cancelled. A covenant, said Sheykh Razawi, is a moral obligation on people to look after each other. It was this that Mohammed offered to Christians.

He explained that the Prophet Mohammed told his followers ‘And if they transgress, forgive them. Don’t take retribution’ (such a familiar thought for Christians). And the Prophet also encouraged diversity – Muslims were told to take care of the people of other faiths. Sheykh Razawi warned that the danger in compelling people to conform to a belief system is that compulsion leads to extremism.

We all, Sheykh Razawi said, have covenants within our religions. With contracts, someone has to compromise. With covenants, ‘you will try to find solutions’. Generously, he suggested that this caring diversity is what he sees ‘being built in Scotland’ – a situation said he does not see elsewhere in the world.

That same complimentary tone was adopted towards Scotland at the
Third Annual Peace and Unity Conference, organised by Ahl Al-Bait Society Scotland in collaboration with other faith and community groups. Azzam Mohamad, director of Ahl Al-Bait Society, told us not to ‘walk away without making new connections’. We didn’t.

But Dr Mohammed Shomali gave us further food for thought: ‘Many people think diversity is a threat because their idea of their own identity is based on what they are not, rather than what they are’.

I chatted with a Hindu – a charming man who said he had come to Scotland in the 1960s to work on the buses during the period when people in the Sub Continent were recruited for a range of jobs here. In time he set up his own business. He was justly proud of his contribution to Scottish society. At the event in the Trades House, I spoke with teenage Muslims whose accents were undeniably Scottish and they were happy to celebrate both their faith and their Scottishness. As indigenous Scots, perhaps we need to take a leaf out of their book and be proud to be Catholic or Presbyterian or Free Church, and of our contribution to a diverse nation, which Dr Shomali reminded us will become still more diverse.

‘Identity is based on the positive things we possess and are proud of, but we have to open a space for others,’ Dr Shomali said. We will be ‘inclusive’ when we stop trying to remove the differences. In the manner of St Paul, he reminded us that the body’s organs are all different but can’t function on their own. ‘We all have to function together’.

He offered the image of human as robot – ‘mass produced human beings’ – contrasted with his vision of the beauty of diversity. ‘People should feel confident and secure,’ Dr Shomali insisted. ‘What is destructive is to be forced to assimilate’. And one of the ‘beautiful things about Scotland’, he asserted, is that people are open to unity in diversity. He told a fable of a man trying to cross a clear stretch of water. His horse wouldn’t move, but when a passing sage muddied the water, the horse crossed the stream. Why? The sage explained that when the water was clear, the horse could only admire its reflection. Muddy water allowed it to move forward. ‘We have to stop looking at ourselves. We have to change from being the centre of the world and move to the centre of the world’. Dr Anthony Allison had quoted Hans Küng, the Swiss Catholic priest, theologian, and President of the Foundation for a Global Ethic. Küng said, ‘No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions. No dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundation of the religions’.

At the Peace and Unity Conference, Professor Saied Reza Ameli, Dean of Faculty of World Studies at Tehran University reminded us that minority discrimination can cause majority discrimination. ‘If a minority is insecure, larger society will feel insecure’.

The professor added ‘Justice is the main source of peace’ – an echo of Pope Paul VI, who said ‘If you want peace, work for justice’. So much in common: surely we can burst the Google bubble together.

Marian Pallister is Just Faith Coordinator, Justice & Peace Commissioner, and SCIAF Ambassador for the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles.

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The chapel on the Clyde

As St Andrew’s Cathedral in Glasgow celebrates its bi-centenary next month, an Open House contributor and local historian looks back at its place in the story of Catholicism in Scotland.

The opening of St. Andrew's chapel in Clyde Street on 21st December 1816 was recorded briefly by The Glasgow Herald. Six lines in the issue of Monday, 26th December were sufficient to cover the event. ‘Divine service was performed yesterday for the first time in that elegant structure the Roman Catholic Chapel, Clyde St. The Rev Mr. Scott officiated. – The chapel was crowded, and the whole was conducted with the greatest decorum and propriety.’ If brief, at least the report was respectful of the dignity of the occasion.

By the time of the opening of St. Andrew’s, Mr. Scott had been in Glasgow for 11 years, having succeeded John Farquharson in 1805. Andrew Scott was ordained a priest by Bishop Hay in Aberdeen in 1775. He was a native of Chapelton in the Enzie District of Banffshire, an area which had remained true to the old faith through the Reformation period and subsequently. He served as priest in the mission of Dee Castle and then at Huntly before being appointed to the mission at Glasgow in 1805. This was to be his mission field as priest and bishop until his ‘retiral’ to Greenock in 1834.

The number of Catholics in Glasgow had been very low for many years. In the 1780s, when Bishop John Geddes (another native of the Enzie) was supporting the Glasgow Catholics by regular, probably monthly, visits from Edinburgh, the numbers gathering in the house belonging to the Misses Fletcher in the Drygate were recorded briefly by The Glasgow Herald (from the Innes Review, 1955). By the time Mr Scott came to Glasgow, however, the numbers had much increased. When the Calton Chapel was opened in 1797, Mr Farquharson had a congregation of 200, and this is estimated to have grown to 1000 by the year 1800 (see James Walsh’s History of the Catholic Church in Scotland). Within a few years, the Catholic community numbered 2-3,000, according to the Catholic Directory. It was at this point that Andrew Scott determined to build a proper chapel for his congregation.

His decision was not without its opponents. Some conceived of the plan as ‘a piece of inconsiderate rashness, which would result in nought else but the disgrace and ruin of its author’. Some trade reverses seemed to give weight to these objections, but they turned out to be temporary blips. But, as the Catholic Directory had it, ‘Backed by a generous people, he completed the edifice’.

The chapel was built in the neo-gothic style which was being revived at that time by the architect, James Gillespie Graham. This style was to become more popular as the 19th century progressed, notably in the work of Augustus Welby Pugin and his sons. When built, St. Andrew’s was regarded by commentators as ‘the most commodious Catholic Church in Britain’ (A Tale of Two Cathedrals by Mario Conti). Neither St. Andrew’s nor St. Mary’s in Edinburgh (completed by the same architect in 1814) were built as cathedrals. They were elevated to that dignity with the restoration of the catholic hierarchy in 1878. However, the design of St. Andrew’s suggests that Andrew Scott may have modeled his church on the medieval cathedral of St. Mungo.

Archbishop Mario Conti, in his booklet, reveals some interesting similarities between the two churches. Both are gothic-style buildings; in pacing the two churches, he found that St Andrew’s is some feet broader than St Mungo’s, which, however, is greater in height. He also indicates that ‘if we were to reduce the comparison to the chancel of St Mungo’s you would discover that the number of bays at St. Andrew’s is the same, namely five, and the columns dividing them too similar not to have been copied by James Gillespie (Graham)’. This raises the question whether Andrew Scott had some prescience about the future role of his simple chapel in Clyde Street.

The bi-centenary of St. Andrew’s provides an appropriate opportunity to recognise the debt that the church in Glasgow owes to Andrew Scott. He worked single-handed in Glasgow until 1821, when he was joined by John Murdoch, who was to become his assistant bishop and successor in 1832. In 1828, Andrew Scott was ordained Bishop of Erythrae, assistant to Bishop McDonald in the new western district with the right of succession. The district extended from Wigtown to the Western Highlands and Islands, although initially Bishop Scott was based in Glasgow and covered the area around Glasgow (what today we would know as the West of Scotland). On Bishop McDonald’s death in 1832, he had responsibility for the whole of the district. Initially, he oversaw the establishment of missions in Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, Dunbartonshire and Wigtownshire. In 1834, he moved to Greenock (supposedly to retire), with Bishop Murdoch taking responsibility for the Glasgow area. This arrangement allowed Bishop Scott to undertake work in the Highlands, where he built chapels in North Morar, Glangarry, Glencoe, Morven and South Uist. He died in Greenock in 1846 and was buried in the crypt of St. Mary’s Church in the Calton, Glasgow. He is regarded as the second apostle of the West of Scotland. The Catholic Directory of 1848 said of him ‘He was one of those few men who appear from time to time, as if God had sent them in his mercy to achieve great things for his glory’.

Michael Martin is a retired social work manager.

(See Notebook page 14)
Throughout the Year of Mercy Pope Francis has been encouraging us to re-engage in scripture. At the start of the year, his letter *Misericordiae Vultus* gave us a ‘panorama’ of mercy in the bible, enabling us to see how God’s mercy was at the heart of the Old Testament. (Incidentally we find mercy mentioned there in 290 verses compared with the New Testament’s 70). The Pope also outlined his own top ten mercy-scenes for Jesus in the New Testament. At the year’s milestone, the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, I outlined the Gospel portraits of the Crucifixion and mercy from the cross. Now, as the year comes to its climax with the feast of Christ the King, it seems appropriate to reflect on mercy from the tomb. It is a happy coincidence that this feast also occurs in November, the month when we particularly remember our friends who have died and reflect on our own survival and judgement after death.

In working around the concept of mercy from the tomb I find myself arguing on two levels: firstly, my Catholic upbringing makes me want to ‘merit’ God’s mercy. Grace, the free gift of God’s loving forgiveness, seems to let me off too easily. But I must learn to accept the gift. Christ died and was raised *for us*. Good works can then follow, out of gratitude. But God owes me nothing: all is grace. And secondly, I need to sort out the fact that there are more ways of expressing the mystery of the resurrection than our familiar Gospel stories: and that even in these stories there are several contradictions in the dramatic form they use about the Resurrection. Such adult anxieties can delay my full appreciation of mercy from the tomb. In that scriptural mixture I need of course to realise the distinction between truth and its formulation.

If you’re like me, you may tend to focus on these Gospel stories of Christ’s resurrection. But, before any of these are written for their various communities, St Paul, writing around 57 AD, tells us of the creed which he ‘received’ after his conversion probably in the mid-30s: that ‘Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day, that he appeared to Cephas and The Twelve, and then to more than 500 at one time and then to James and then to all the apostles’. Paul adds to this early Creed, ‘and last of all to me’. Obviously something momentous happened when God raised Jesus, and this happening changed a frightened disillusioned minority into energetic world-wide missionaries and martyrs. But we are not told how God did this. Perhaps some of us would like to have had the record of a camcorder placed at the tomb. As Sydney Carter said in his song, ‘Your holy hearsay is not evidence. Give me the Good News in the present tense!’ Just give me the simple facts! That’s just what Paul ‘received’: Jesus died, was raised and appeared. But the ‘mechanics’ of this event go beyond the measurements of science. We don’t know how God ‘did it’. Somehow the dead Jesus was transformed into a living real presence that broke through the limitations of space and time. Our New Testament respects the mystery at the heart of this mysterious transformation and approaches the mysterious event in four ways: direct progression; exaltation; simple affirmation; and finally narratives.

**Direct progression:** the Letter to the Hebrews simply says, ‘He has passed through the greater, the more perfect tent, not made by human hands, that is, not of this created order; and he has entered the sanctuary once and for all’ (Heb.9.10-11). It sees Jesus as the high priest of mercy going straight from the cross to the heavenly temple of God’s presence. No empty tomb or earthly appearances. Just direct progression.

**Exaltation** language: we find this when Paul, writing around 49 AD, quotes a very early hymn: ‘He was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. And for this God exalted him high … so that all beings
in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld.... should acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord” (Philippians 2:8-11). No details yet of how God did this. Just ‘God raised him high’.

Affirmation language: writing to the Corinthians around 55 AD Paul simply states the essential kerygma: ‘He was crucified in weakness but lives by the power of God’ (2 Cor. 13:4). Paul affirms the fact of resurrection again in his letter to the Romans: ‘Christ both died and came to life again: so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living’ (Romans 14:9).

These three styles of writing of course proclaim the fact of resurrection. But the Gospels do more: they give us dramatic descriptions involving an empty tomb (in Mark and Matthew) and also actual appearances of the risen Jesus (in Luke-Acts and John).

Resurrection narratives
It is only after Paul and Peter are dead that we get the four Gospels, each one using a narrative literary style to proclaim Christ’s resurrection. Of course none of the evangelists was present as observer. So, we should not be surprised if they differ in the way they use their dramatic narratives to convey the event. Mark says the women ran away terrified and told no-one; but Matthew says the women were filled with great joy and ran quickly to tell the disciples their good news (Matt. 28.8).

Adult questions may arise about which gospel is more historically accurate. Vatican II’s document on scripture gives three helpful points for guidance: firstly, truth can be expressed in a variety of literary forms, one of which is the narrative or drama form. Stories and dramas can tell truths in their own powerful ways. Second, regarding historicity, Dei Verbum says that we must take as historically accurate those events described in the ministry of Jesus. The resurrection narratives go beyond the period of Jesus’ ministry when they express the truth and the mystery of God’s merciful transformation in Jesus by describing the resurrection in narrative form. Thirdly, Dei Verbum links historicity to matters which are necessary for our salvation: so whether there was only one ‘young man dressed in white’ at the tomb (Mark) or ‘an angel of the Lord’ (Matthew), or ‘two men in dazzling clothes’ (Luke) doesn’t really affect our salvation and need not worry us. The first Gospel, Mark, (written for a Roman community which was tempted to run away due to severe persecution), describes the effect of an empty tomb on the women: they ran away. Moral for Mark’s church? Don’t you do the same! Jesus has gone through a horrible death to show God’s mercy. God put his seal on the sacrifice of Jesus by raising him from the dead. The resurrection is God’s guarantee of mercy from the tomb. Accept it, don’t run away.

On the other hand, Matthew, we may recall, was written for a mixed community of converted Jews and Gentiles. Arguments surely arose then as they do today. This Gospel’s drama-styled account of the resurrection is laced with apologetics. Pilate appoints guards at the tomb, so the apostles could not have stolen the body. The tomb is sealed and Rome keeps watch. But God puts his own merciful seal on the sacrifice of Jesus by raising him from the dead. No argument. This resurrection event is God’s guarantee of mercy from the tomb. So, ‘Go and tell this to all nations!’ (Matt.28.18-20).

Luke tells us of the dismissal given to the ‘idle tale’ of the women when they ran from the empty tomb to tell ‘the eleven and all the rest’ their exciting news. Peter had to go and check for himself and then he ‘went home’ (Lk 24.10-12). Luke, writing in the late 70’s or 80’s, goes beyond an empty tomb: he gives an actual appearance on the road to Emmaus.

As our November thoughts focus more directly on our deceased friends and relatives, and on our own mortality, I reflect in hope that my own passage through death can be shrouded in that merciful love which flowed from the crucifixion-resurrection victory we now celebrate at the end of the Year of Mercy with the feast of Christ the King. This November it may be useful to recall the words of Pope Benedict in one of his Easter homilies:

‘I arose and now I am still with you,’ Christ says to each one of us. ‘My hand upholds you. Wherever you may fall, you will always fall into my hands. I am present even at the door of death. Where no one can accompany you further, and where you can bring nothing, even there I am waiting for you, and for you I will change darkness into light.’

When all arguments cease, the mercy from the victorious Christ’s tomb is there for the acceptance. That is a judgement which is mine to make.

Dr Noel Donnelly is a consultant in adult faith development in the Archdiocese of Glasgow.

November 2016 | OPEN HOUSE | 9
When a religious order reaches a milestone – especially 800 years since its foundation as in the case of the Order of Preachers or Dominicans – it is usual for the members to take a hard, long look at themselves. That look of discernment will usually cover the order’s charism, its spirituality, its mission and, closely related to it, its numbers, which usually result in experiencing a fall in vocations in Western countries and a rise in parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Often, most of the discussion is taken up by the question of numbers as they are closely linked to the carrying out whatever an order’s mission is. Not in the case of the Dominicans, who have made renewal of the order an art form over the centuries. In a global congress held in September in the Dominican priory of San Esteban in Salamanca, all branches of the Dominican family met to examine their commitment to human rights as a way of renewing their mission in the contemporary world.

Two hundred friars, sisters, lay people, including representatives of the youth movement, contemplative nuns and priest associates listened intently to an array of speakers, including Brother Bruno Cadoré, Master of the Order and the Australian human rights lawyer, Frank Brennan SJ. They discussed what they were hearing from the contributions in the group work and then synthesised what had been discerned in a series of commitments at the end.

Echoing the words of the 1971 Roman synod (‘action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel’), they concluded that the mission of justice and peace was constitutive to the Dominican ‘holy preaching’ and should be embraced as an integral part of our Dominican charism. Catholic Social Teaching and the defence of human rights should be integrated into all aspects of formation of the Dominican family, including, of course, of the laity. A study of Laudato Si’ was recommended as a means to teach an integral ecology that combines the wellbeing of human persons with the wellbeing of all creation. This very much reflects the view of Pope Francis, especially his call to young Christians in DoCat to become ambassadors of the Gospel by learning and living out the social teaching of the Church. Dominican friars and sisters are often found in universities and institutions of learning given St Dominic’s insistence on study as a route to the discovery of truth. Dominican theologians, both medieval and modern, are legion but is the order using this intellectual treasury to serve humanity? The Salamanca Process, already agreed at a previous General Chapter, calls for a synergy between the Dominican intellectual and apostolic life by directing study and research towards addressing the challenges the world faces. It was decided to promulgate this more with a view to all Dominicans involved in research or intellectual endeavour adopting it and ensuring it contributed to the ‘transformation of the world’.

There were calls to improve communication and structural networks that would enable collaboration at all levels of our mission and to help the Dominican family to work together to address the root causes of injustice. In the past, there had been difficulties in friars, sisters and lay Dominicans working together. Those difficulties had to be worked on and overcome. There are successful examples where this has been the case such as the legal and pastoral centre that was set up on the Mexican side of the US-Mexican border to assist the many would-be migrants who were often summarily returned to Mexico having illegally entered the States. This Dominican project of friars, sisters and lay people (who were lawyers) assisted in a pastoral, legal and practical sense the migrants who were often left penniless and traumatised after their American adventure.

At the global level, there was a call for a strengthening of the Dominican presence at the United Nations in Geneva, New York, Vienna and Nairobi. It was thought that Dominican work and action at the grassroots level could bring the voices and stories of those whose human rights are abused to the notice of the highest levels of the UN, humanising the situations by putting names and faces to those who suffer. To cite one example from outside the Dominican family, Caritas Internationalis, through its international capillary network and UN delegate in New York, brought Archbishop Odama of Gulu diocese in Uganda to address the Security Council on the human sufferings he and other religious leaders witnessed on a daily basis as
a result of the horrific war between the Lord’s Resistance Army and the Ugandan military. His briefing on the conflict culminated in a UN resolution (1653) and the beginning of peace talks between the two parties that led to an albeit fragile ceasefire which is still in place.

The Salamanca congress realised that some members of the family work in missions which are dangerous and difficult and care has to be taken not to endanger them. We had amongst us a sister from Iraq and a friar from Vietnam who corrected me when I asked if it was true there were 80,000 Lay Dominicans in his country by saying with a smile ‘No, there are 120,000’! The friar and sister bore testament to how fraught their situations are. Showing solidarity to them, as the Edinburgh Lay Dominicans do, in their fundraising and awareness-raising activities of the Dominican sisters in Iraq is one example from Scotland. On the other hand, there was strong support for those who take prophetic stands against sinful structures of power that oppress people and violate the whole of creation. This would be in the tradition of the Order as witnessed by, for example, the 16th century friar, Bartomé de las Casas who became known as the ‘Protector of the Indians’ during the Spanish invasion of Latin America, or Francisco de Vitoria OP, recognised as the father of international law, who had lived and died in the very priory where we were meeting. We were all aware that this could so easily remain as a wish list. This is why this agenda will be brought into the Congress on Mission to be held in January 2017 in the Angelicum in Rome, being the conclusion to the discernment process of the year of Jubilee. The Salamanca statement concluded, ‘As we embark on this new stage of our history, we ask forgiveness for our many omissions, attitudes and actions against human rights. We believe that the Spirit who has inspired us in these common understandings and reflections at this time will empower us to shape a new future’. It is a future where Lay Dominicans must transform the fruits of their contemplation much more into action alongside friars and sisters in the field of human rights as the focus of their preaching which will ultimately, hopefully, lead to the transformation of the world.

Duncan MacLaren is a co-founding member of Glasgow Lay Dominicans and a member of the International Dominican Justice and Peace Commission.

Programme for Autumn Term 2016

Wednesday 16th November 2016
“Listening for the Echo” : the role of Instruction and Reception in Newman’s thought
Fr. Jim Lawlor, Parish Priest, Glasgow

Wednesday 14th December 2016
“Going where we do not know! The growth in Christianity towards the mystery of its doctrine”
Jeff Bagnall, former Lecturer in Religious Education.

Book Stall
There will be an opportunity for those who wish to buy books on topics of interest from a small stall provided for our meetings by the One World Christian bookshop.

Meetings are held in Mayfield Salisbury Parish Church,
18 West Mayfield, Edinburgh DH9 1RQ
7.30pm – 9.30pm

All are warmly invited to attend. We ask for a small donation to cover our expenses. For further information please contact lyncronin@btinternet.com
The conference, entitled Scottish Catholic Architecture and Material Culture, brought together scholars and researchers to present a series of twelve short papers which explored aspects of the buildings and furnishings of the Catholic Church in Scotland across five centuries. The journey began with a focus on the fool who peers out from a late medieval painting of the crucifixion in St Marnoch’s Church in Fowlis, and ended with the significance of visual and spatial aspects of three modern pilgrimage sites. Along the way the conference came alive with a spirited discussion of the merits and shortcomings of Gillespie, Kidd & Coia’s controversial modernist churches.

Professor Michael Bath opened the day with a fascinating account of the role of fools and jesters in mediaeval art. He discussed the iconography of the crowded crucifixion scene at Fowlis in Perthshire, which depicts the moment when Jesus’ side was pierced by a soldier’s lance, and out flowed blood and water. Flanked by the crucified thieves, Jesus hangs on the cross above his mother and his closest companions, surrounded by soldiers and spectators. Peering out from among them is the face of a fool or jester, looking straight at the viewer, who recalls the text of Psalm 53: ‘Fools say in their hearts there is no God…’ This is set alongside the declaration of the centurion who said, ‘Truly this was the son of God’ (Mark 39), and the testimony of John given ‘so that you also may believe’ (John 19.34). The fool challenges us to reflect on what we believe about Jesus.

The next paper was from Elizabeth Swarbrick, who considered the significance of the absence of naves in many Scottish collegiate churches. Collegiate churches were served by a college of canons and usually founded by powerful families. One of their purposes was to pray for the souls of deceased family members. Elizabeth challenged the common perception that they were no more than expanded family chapels which had space for colleges of clergy to sing and pray for their benefactors but had no naves, therefore no space, for local laity to join the worship. She found evidence that naves had in fact been planned for most collegiate churches, or had been demolished over time, and she argued that the presence of holy water stoups, baptismal fonts, and decorative elements which would have been visible from the nave indicated that the churches had been in public use.

Rory Lamb’s paper highlighted the significance of King David’s chapel royal at St Monan’s in the context of medieval pilgrimages and he gave a vivid account of the crossing from North Berwick to Earlsferry on the way to St Andrews that was taken by thousands of pilgrims.

Dr Penny Dransart then considered the spiritual and intellectual legacy of the Leslie family of Fetternear, who are often remembered for their military adventures. Bishop John Leslie (1527-1596) traced the family history back to Hungary at the time of Queen Margaret of Scotland. William Aloysius Leslie (1641-1704) was a Jesuit who influenced the development of Fetternear as an important centre of recusancy in Scotland. It was once the site of the summer palace of the medieval bishops of Aberdeen. William Aloysius wrote an account of the family which honoured its military and ecclesiastical members. His niece Elizabeth, known as Lady Betty Leslie, became a highly esteemed member of the Ursuline Order.

Alasdair Roberts stayed in the north east with an account of the Forbes and Mortimer families and the story of the transformation of Craigievar Castle in Aberdeenshire. This was followed by a paper from Jennifer Strtak on the Order of the Thistle and the reintroduction of Catholicism in late 17th century Scotland.

Three papers followed which were linked by a focus on the Falkland estate in Fife. Dr Deborah Mays spoke of the work of John Kinross, who was given the task of restoring Falkland Palace and chapel when the estate, once home to the Stuart kings, was purchased by Patrick Crichton Stuart, the third Marquis of Bute, in 1887. He had converted to Catholicism in 1868. Dr Mays highlighted Kinross’ meticulous approach to conservation, his careful analysis of fabric and content, and...
his use of local materials and expert craftsmen.

The theme was taken up by Dr Peter Burman whose paper looked at the church architecture of Reginald Fairlie (1883-1952), who also worked at Falkland. He was a scholar and Arts and Crafts architect with an interest in textiles and design, who was deeply concerned with standards of renovation and craftsmanship. Examples of his work can be seen around Scotland, from the restoration of St Salvador’s Chapel and the Rectory of All Saints Episcopal Church in St Andrews to the war memorial at Auchtermuchty and the memorial garden in Blaigowrie.

Marietta Crichton Stuart added a very personal dimension to the story of Falkland with a fascinating account of her family’s impact on the estate. She, too, spoke of the work of John Kinross and that of Robert Weir Schultz, and of the costs and challenges of renovating old buildings which continued across three generations – her father Michael’s, her grandfather Ninian, and his father, Patrick, the third Marquis. The chapel at Falkland became the parish church in 1905, and today is still the centre of a thriving parish community linked to Glenrothes and Leslie.

The final three papers of the day looked at the architecture of the 20th century and the construction of contemporary pilgrimages sites. James Robertson began with a consideration of the architectural practice of Gillespie, Kidd & Coia which carried out almost 50 commissions for the Catholic Church in Scotland. He looked at the way in which light was used in five of them – St Anne’s, Dennistoun, a Coia church of 1933; the Archbishop of Glasgow’s oratory at 19 Park Circus, Glasgow, now the boardroom of SCIAF; whose headquarters are in the building; the Catholic chaplaincy at Glasgow University; St Margaret’s Church in Castlemilk; St Margaret’s Church in Clydebank; and St Columba’s in East Kilbride, competed in 1979. The innovative and varied ways in which the buildings were lit contributed significantly to their impact and testified to the creativity of the partnership.

Leon Robertson followed with a paper provocatively titled ‘The cold and leaky masterpieces of Gillespie, Kidd & Coia: modernist churches in Scotland’. It began with a reminder of the context in which they were commissioned: the changing demographics of postwar Scotland and the Catholic Church’s willingness to experiment with church building. The award winning architecture was of the finest quality, but was modernism, he asked, the right response? Might not the church have needed more of an architectural anchor in troubled times as tradition was slipping away and church practice was changing?

The short life of many of the churches bore witness to the contested modernist style which was associated with openness to structural innovation. The egalitarian use of concrete and the monumental, brutalist constructions of the 1950s and 60s had their own stark beauty, but their usability was notoriously poor, with leaky roofs and cold interiors. The church’s radical response, suggested Leon, was not matched by the level of building supervision.

The final paper of the day was given by Dr Robert Proctor who looked behind the scenes at the construction of pilgrimage sites at Dunfermline, Whithorn and Carfin, all of which were initiated by clergy, although widely understood to be popular expressions of lay piety. All three sites in different ways shared a common nostalgia for a medieval Catholic past with a focus on ruins, caves and continuity of devotion. Even Carfin, which had no ruins, once had plans for a grand Gothic style church and forecourt, and the story of its creation by out of work miners was artfully reflected in the design of the stonework, which was made to look roughly hewn. In trying to create a preconceived image of a sacred landscape, he suggested, the site was in fact made sacred by the devotion of those who flocked to pray there.

In the discussion which followed, the controversial work of Gillespie, Kidd & Coia provoked strong feelings, especially the creation of St Peter’s seminary at Kilmahew, Cardross, now a ruin (see Open House April 2016). One member of the audience suggested that it was an example of what can go wrong when architects are not properly briefed and do not understand the purpose of the building they are commissioned to design.

It was a stimulating conference, held in the Lauriston Jesuit Centre adjacent to the parish church, which emphasised the relevance of scholarly work to a much wider audience than the academy. Plans were mentioned to publish the papers in future editions of the Innes Review, the journal of the Scottish Catholic Historical Association. This would be a fitting way to share the breadth of scholarship that was gathered by the conference and the fascinating insights it brought to light, which illuminate the architecture and the material culture all around us.

Mary Cullen is the editor of Open House.
**NOTEBOOK**

**Scottish and Irish radicals**

Willy Slavin reports on a symposium held in Bishopbriggs on the legacy of Thomas Muir.

Last year was the 250th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Muir (1765-1799), the Scottish radical and almost exact contemporary of Robert Burns (1759-1796). He lived in Huntershill, Bishopbriggs and the local Friends of Thomas Muir has instituted an annual festival of events in his honour.

Muir was an Advocate who was sympathetic to the American and French revolutions. He corresponded with the English-born revolutionary Thomas Paine. This resulted in him being transported to Botany Bay from where he escaped to Paris where he was greeted as a hero but succumbed to wounds inflicted by a British man o’war. He is commemorated by the prominent obelisk on Calton Hill, Edinburgh together with four other ‘Political Martyrs’.

This year’s symposium, held at Bishopbriggs Academy, was on the connection between Scots and Irish radicals. Muir was hopeful of creating, after the manner of the United Irishmen, a group of United Scotsmen who would get the support of the French against the Unionist establishment. Keynote speaker at the symposium was Open House contributor Gerry Carruthers who spoke about the radical Scottish priest Alexander Geddes (1737-1802) – not to be confused with his cousin Bishop John Geddes, the friend of Burns.

Any thought that this might be uncomfortable fare for a non-denominational audience was dispelled when the Sixth Form put on an enactment of the Declaration of Arbroath with a pupil donning a mitre and affecting a French accent to convey the response to the Declaration by Pope John XXII. The school coat of arms contains a bishop’s mitre. Muir was an Evangelical who cut his political teeth by fighting for the right of congregations to choose their own minister.

The home of his friend, the ‘Radical Laird’ John McFarlan, is now the Schoenstatt Retreat Centre, Milton of Campsie. Huntershill House is about to become a care home.

This year’s Festival ends with the book launch of Thomas Muir of Huntershill in Kelvin Hall, Glasgow where the guest speaker is Sir Tom Devine. Tickets for this event on 15th December 2016 are free but must be booked via RobertBurnsStudies@glasgow.ac.uk. The book may be pre-ordered through the website www.thomasmuir.co.uk. The book is subtitled ‘Essays for the twenty first century’ and has a contribution from Sir Tom himself, as well as contributions from Former First Minister Alex Salmond, leading Scottish academics, including Gerry Carruthers and Rhona Brown of Glasgow University, and Paris-based researcher Thomas Lemoine.

The book argues that Muir’s significance lies in the way he used his trial as a platform to promote the logic of ‘an equal representation of the People in the House of the People’, which was fully reported at the time in newspapers and in several published accounts of the trial proceedings.

For some historians Muir represents a sour note in the triumphant story of the Scottish Enlightenment, while others have dismissed him as a failure in his own time, with little consequence for future generations. The book is a reflection of the year-long commemoration of the 250th anniversary of Muir’s birth. It includes a range of essays which cover different aspects of Muir’s ideas and campaigns, as well as significant new research which provides fresh insight into his life.

**Boost for Scanlan**

Scanlan’s 18th century seminary in the Braes of Glenlivet is to share in a £2.34 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund which has been awarded to the Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership.

The grant is aimed at protecting the spectacular beauty of the area and helping to sustain fragile local communities.

Money is to be spent on conservation at Scanlan and making it safe for visitors.

As Open House reported in September, Scanlan celebrated the 300th anniversary of its founding as a secret seminary where boys were taught in penal times before being sent for ordination to one of the Scots colleges abroad.

**Lay led funerals**

News that the Diocese of Galloway has followed the practice of dioceses south of the border in seeking to train lay people to conduct funeral services made front page news in the Scottish press last month.

The parish of St Brides in West Kilbride invited parishioners to indicate interest in this ministry, and pointed out that all over the world, lay men and women have been conducting funerals for years. As the number of parishes in Scotland covered by one priest grows, the parish bulletin pointed out that it will become more
and more necessary for lay people to share work currently undertaken by priests. So far five people have come forward from the parish to undertake training, which is taking place at diocesan level.

Journalists clearly see this is as newsworthy, and many parishioners may find it strange. But as Open House reported in November 2012, when the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the first Catholic diocese in the UK to commission lay people to conduct funeral services, evaluated its first three months, the response of parishioners was overwhelmingly positive.

Maureen Knight, the archdiocese’s advisor for adult faith formation, said there had been no major negative reactions. Those who wanted to have a funeral Mass may have had to wait, due to the number of priests available, but she described the response of those less connected with the church as ‘amazing’. She saw the role of the new funeral ministers as another important development in lay ministry, which already includes ministers of the Eucharist, bereavement groups, and preparing people for the sacraments.

The key to the new approach, she suggested was to ‘join the dots’.

In Liverpool, the lay volunteers undertook a two day course in the stages of grief, the practicalities of the Order of Christian Funerals, and the theology and spirituality of the funeral rites.

Religion and politics

Journalist Martin Bashir has returned from a spell working in the US to become the BBC’s religious affairs correspondent. In a Radio 4’s ‘From our home correspondent’ last month, he reflected on the very different approaches to religion and politics taken by politicians in the two countries. In the US, where church and state are firmly separated, politicians of all kinds declare their Christian credentials, whatever their practice might be. In Britain, where the Queen is Head of the Church of England, Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair’s press officer, famously told the American publication Vanity Fair that ‘we don’t do God’ on this side of the Atlantic.

Bashir observed that the two positions seem to be converging. Despite falling church attendances in the UK, it seems it is increasingly acceptable, he observed, for British politicians to ‘do God’ today. The reason? He suggests it comes from a new emphasis on the need for authenticity. Many people will follow this observation with interest.

Scottish Catholic Historical Association

The Scottish Catholic Historical Association, which organised the conference on architecture and material culture reported on page 12, is the principal body for the advancement of education in and study of the part played by the Catholic Church and the Catholic community in the life of the Scottish nation.

It was founded in 1950 by a group of laity, academics and clerics, and now has over 200 members around the world, all interested in the history of the Catholic Church in Scotland. It is engaged in research of ecclesiastical, cultural, liturgical, literary and political history, ranging from Celtic times to the present day.

Members receive two issues of the Innes Review (The Journal of Scottish Catholic History) every year. It has been published continually since 1950 and contains articles and book reviews on a wide range of issues from the earliest times to the present day. Members can also access electronic archives of the Innes Review via Edinburgh University Press and receive copies of the association’s newsletter twice a year. Evening seminars are held regularly in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and support is given to young scholars through the Bernard Aspinwall Postgraduate Research Prize.

If you are interested in taking out membership, see the association’s website at http://www.scha.scot

Bishop John Mone

Many Open House readers will have fond memories of Bishop John Mone, who died last month, aged 87. He was Bishop of Paisley for 16 years until his retirement in 2004.

Bishop Mone was President of SCIAF for many years, where he offered great support and encouragement to SCIAF staff and supporters. He also encouraged young people to develop their understanding of global citizenship.

He was president of the Justice and Peace Commission, and will be remembered for his outspoken criticism of the Dungavel detention centre, which was widely reported in the Scottish press.

A fuller tribute to Bishop Mone will appear in the next edition of Open House.

+ BETWEEN TWO CATHEDRALS+

Symposium at the Eyre Hall,
Clyde Street, Glasgow

Glasgow Mediaeval Trust invite you to join this discussion about the Spine of Glasgow, from St Mungo’s to St Andrew’s at the Clyde where later this month there will be a celebration of the bicentenary of its opening 1816.

Archbishop Emeritus Mario Conti will chair the Symposium

Thursday 24 November 2016

Speakers presenting papers include Dr Richard Fawcett, Professor Steve Driscoll, Professor John Hume, Dr James Macaulay, Fergus Sutherland and Nick Hayes.

Symposium runs from 9.45am - 4.00pm.
Tickets are £20.00

More information https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/between-two-cathedrals-tickets-28601772672

November 2016 | OPEN HOUSE | 15
LETTERS

The Editor of Open House email: editor@openhousescotland.co.uk
All correspondence, including email, must give full postal address and telephone number.

Book review


As he suggests, it fills gaps in the story of Scottish Catholicism and raises interesting questions that deserve to be answered. It is perhaps another example of a growing confidence among the Catholic community in Scotland to explore their history and its intellectual and contribution to the social and political life of the country.

I for one am hoping it may appear in my Christmas stocking.

Edward Gallagher
Glasgow

Peacebuilding

It was John F Kennedy who described peace as a daily, weekly and monthly process which gradually changes opinions. I was reminded of this when I read the excellent account of Pat Gaffney’s visit to Scotland in October’s edition of *Open House*. Pat Gaffney, in her commitment to peace, has always reminded us of the constant challenge of living non-violently and of the enormous consequences for the poor when we choose to maintain an arsenal of nuclear weapons. Trident is much more than a political issue for Scotland.

Pat Gaffney’s commitment came to mind when I read of the death of John Aislie, long time activist with Scottish CND, who also had an indefatigable commitment to peacebuilding, in season and out of season. John Aislie was one of those who helped CND support the Yes Scotland campaign as a strategy for British nuclear disarmament. John never wavered in his commitment to nuclear disarmament and was willing, like Pat Gaffney, to develop new ways of thinking. He inspired many people by his constant dedication to the work of peacebuilding, and will be sadly missed.

Mary Sweeney
Glasgow

New skin for the old ceremony

While attending a workshop at the recent SNP conference sponsored by Christians for Independence, I began thinking of the theology that is underpinning what is happening in Scotland presently. Or more correctly, the lack of it.

From the Scottish Parliament being reconvened in 1997 to the present, Scotland has changed a lot. We have seen the ever broadening powers of devolution, two referenda, increasing equalities awareness and legislation, the slower change in land ownership, the rise in electronic media – to name but a few of these changes. Many of these changes have been to the good. But where is the Christian agenda in all of this?

Your view on independence or not is beside the point. The point is that our country has changed. We live in a post Christian country. And yet the secular humanism that has replaced it has as much depth to it as Christianity had in the general population before it. Indeed it has a nasty side to it. I believe there is now a concerted effort in the state and media to make Christianity peripheral to social and political discourse, and to reduce it to a very personal faith. The threat to Catholic schools is growing out of this.

The usual response to threats from the (Catholic) Church is evidenced in the Section 28 campaign. A narrow, reduced religion focused on conservative approaches to sexuality. Religious approaches that are out of date and irrelevant to anybody under the age of 35, as evidenced in the pews every Sunday.

And yet, today, there has never been a greater outpouring of activism and writing. Christians are burrowing away on issues such as racism, refugees and asylum seekers; euthanasia and assisted suicide; land ownership in Scotland; poverty and benefits; peace (Trident); housing and homelessness; nationalism and patriotism; emerging churches; music and worship.

How does this burrowing away break surface and become holistic? I do not think that we need a Kairos document in Scotland (yet) but we really do need a theology for a new Scotland.

Can I suggest that *Open House* may be a forum for engendering this discussion through relevant articles and letters in the coming months of 2017? Maybe we can see if there is a head of steam that will take this further.

Frank McCachy
Glasgow
Of all the elements of the Christmas story in the history of salvation, the description of the coming of the Magi is perhaps the most inexplicable. The journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem for the census and the ensuing lack of accommodation can be understood within the demands of an occupying power. The shepherds, never the highest ranked in Bethlehem society, hearing of a new-born babe born in abject poverty respond as do the poor for their own, by supplying some of the basic needs of life. But why would three scholars, (or kings or wise men) set out on a journey of hundreds of miles, on the basis of some astronomical conjecture? It is those circumstances and that journey of the Magi which is the subject of this book.

Johannes Bergmann is the nom-de-plume for Stephen James Masty, who brings his own background, learning and experiences to present a scenario which gives a plausible background to the story. He had said of himself ‘I’ve spent my life working chiefly in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India and quite a bit of Africa and the Caribbean, working among Christians, Muslims and Hindus who come from ancient and traditional societies and who know where their cultural strength lies’. It is from his personal knowledge of these cultures that he brings a scenario that seeks to interpret the meaning of Christ revealing himself to all peoples.

For those unfamiliar with the historical context, the prologue is essential reading. In this, the author not only brings to mind the tortuous history of trade, of empires and of cultures, but also what little exists of the account in scripture, tradition and other legends. At the time in question, a ‘cold war’ exists between Rome with its satellites and the Persian empire; the trade routes bring silk from China to Europe and lapis lazuli from Afghanistan to Egypt. But these historic trade routes also brought an awareness of language, of religious traditions and of the cultures and of knowledge, of mathematics, of scientific understanding and in particular of astronomy. Knowledge was precious, to be nurtured and shared, a ripe field for true academics. The recorded scriptures give little mention to the Magi but as the author tells us an Alexandrine document from 500 AD puts Melchior as the oldest and a Persian scholar, Caspar as the youngest and a scholar from South Asia, while Balthazar was identified as an African or African sage.

It is around these circumstances and traditions that Johannes Bergmann/Stephen Masty weaves his story. Described as a novel it is written not with the intent of giving a semi-factual account but rather of giving a version that is more intended to give a pause for reflection on this aspect of the Christ child’s revelation to the world. Melchior is the astronomer, academic and aristocrat, Caspar is his bright student and protégée while Balthazar is cast as an exiled east-African king, of great physique, presence and bravado. Caspar spots a strange star that has not previously been seen on the astronomical charts and as the author conjectures, he has Caspar saying ‘We saw the signal; we prepared the experiment, we mounted the expedition and crossed half the earth to Jerusalem and back’.

Together with Melchior’s niece the party joins a caravan to make the dangerous journey over dry desert scrub, overcoming raiding bandits and reaching Jerusalem with the unavoidable invitation to the tense palace of Herod and finally onwards to see the child in Bethlehem. Their brief existence with Mary and Joseph is one of provocation and thought for those who wish to reflect.

Until we are able to unpick for ourselves the meaning of such an encounter that brings prior legends from various scriptures and places it in that contemporary pre-Christian culture, this remains a fanciful story. The great achievement of the book is to be thought provoking as well as informative and entertaining. If some of the characters and incidents met on the way reflect our own age, it is perhaps because human nature changes so little over the years despite the technological advances and philosophies with which we now live.

This is very much a recommended read for the pre-Christmas season and beyond.

Peter Boylan
This book claims to be a ‘profound and moving journey into the heart of Christianity’. It certainly is an unusual synthesis of travel writing based on extensive recent personal experience and biblical history covering a wide range of sources with archaeology and theology thrown in for good measure. The author is an American writer and journalist who admits he has lost his early faith but finds ‘Christianity deeply and resonantly interesting’. His approach is amusing in places, erudite without being heavy and sceptical but never cynical. The people he meets, mostly at random, on his travels to well researched often difficult to access places in Asia and Europe more than merit the term ‘weird and wonderful’ offering the author varying degrees of welcome, empathy, knowledge, interest and belief. His overarching and consistent mission is seeking out the story, or more usually stories, behind the conflicting and confusing locations of ‘bones that shine like fire’.

The book itself consists of twelve chapters mirroring the title. That is where any simplicity and predictability begins and ends. The chapters are of considerably unequal length and some cover more than one apostle. Paul and Jesus himself merit long chapters. The author’s stated quest is to ‘explore lives about which little is known and even less can be historically verified’. In his search for tombs he visits over 50 churches in various states of repair and in some surprising locations far off any well-trodden tourist path. He tackles the enduring problems with names, duplicating and changing, with care exploring context, language and alterations in understanding over time. Similarly his attitude to ‘relics’, somewhat ungraciously called ‘the bone trade’ during the Mediaeval Ages because of its link with pilgrim tourism, is cautious and based on extensive research. He also records his surprise at finding the occasional church which does not advertise its reliquary.

For the reader, like your reviewer, primarily looking for knowledge about individual disciples, some chapters are more informative than others. The longest chapter is devoted to Thomas. James, son of Zebedee, receives only four pages at the very end. The travelling, including dissecting the people met en route, takes up a considerable part of certain chapters. Perhaps this is part of the author’s strategy to unsettle the reader who does not know what is coming next. The writing style is also very varied including language which ranges from simple and straightforward to obtuse and incomprehensible. Most chapters begin with the voyage of discovery which can be long or short. Each chapter ends somewhat abruptly with no summary. The book does start with an excellent ‘Author’s Note’ but there is no introduction or conclusion. Overall it is undoubtedly an unusual and challenging book on a number of levels. For the scholar the lengthy bibliography will be appreciated. For the historian and theologian there is much to reflect upon and digest. The comment that ‘in the gospel of Matthew Jesus is both the fulfilment and embodiment of Israel’ adds a contemporary note of potential division if not outright conflict. The aside that ‘Acts is the path to bewildernent’ may strike a chord with some but certainly not with my Minister currently preaching on this Book.

For once this reviewer is uncertain about whether to recommend this book or not. In terms of my objective, the outcome was overall disappointing. However it may well be that I was being overly optimistic. As the author indicates it is a struggle to ‘explore twelve lives about which little is known and even less can be historically verified’. While starting off from the basis that their story is the story of Christianity he argues that they ‘as a group sink from sight within the New Testament’. As almost a final definitive comment he concludes that ‘history does not record a single member of the twelve with the possible exception of Peter as having any impact on early Christianity’.

Nevertheless the evidence he produces or perhaps more accurately fails to find and his various journeys are stimulating and constantly interesting. The book is a challenge to believers but also presents a dramatic guide to early Christianity amplified with links to works of art, the ever increasing impact of archaeology and the enduring attraction of local tradition. For the reader who enjoys idiosyncratic travel writing especially to ‘new’ and unusual places, which in today’s ever smaller world is no small achievement in itself, this book will be read avidly.

Regardless of motive perhaps this book’s eclectic readership can unite in paying tribute to the inspiring words of a Kyrgyz lady who said goodbye to the author with these words:

May God let you find him
May God straighten your road
May God allow the rain to come down softly
May God bring us together again.

Dan Gunn
Conclave.

Robert Harris
Hutchison, 2016.

The Pope has died. A Papal Conclave will take place to fill the vacant throne – the Sede Vacante. The world will know nothing about what takes place until the black or the white smoke rises.

Around 118 cardinals will be locked in the Sistine Chapel. Conclave comes from the Latin con clavis – with a key – and the cardinals will not emerge until the apostolic successor to St Peter has been chosen.

Having set this scene, Robert Harris plunges thrillingly into the personalities, the ambitious, the rivals, the outsiders as well as those who fear the enormity of the role. He also racks up the tension by shutting out the world with no computers or phones, and telling the story exclusively through the eyes of the Italian Cardinal Lomeli, the Dean of the College of Cardinals whose duty it is to manage the election.

Harris tends to specialise in thrillers based on real events, for example An Officer and a Spy about the Dreyfus affair, Pompeii about the eruption and Enigma about the codebreakers of Bletchley Park.

Although he lists the works and the authors from whom he has drawn, this may be the first written fictional account of the papal election. There has been one on screen, however, the Italian film comedy/drama Habemus Papam (2012) where an elderly French cardinal is chosen, panics and disappears into Rome. His colleagues have to stay locked up till he is traced and end up playing volleyball in the Vatican gardens. The Young Pope, with Jude Law as the first American pope, is also about to open as a TV series. With these rivals, Harris has to be tense and original throughout as he writes about the oldest and most secretive of elections. As always, he does not fail as he narrates in detail the procedures, the secrets, the many ballots and the personalities of the 72 hours of the conclave.

The cardinals are housed and fed in a luxurious hostel in the Vatican and conveyed daily, after Mass, in their robes, sashes and birettas, to the Sistine Chapel where all they will do is vote by ballot. The results are announced, identifying some early favourites, and the papers are then all burned. Any speeches, canvassing or plotting are confined to meal times or evenings and there is plenty of that as they break up and dine together largely on national lines. There are so many Italian cardinals that they need three tables of eight. Two are early favourites, as there has not been an Italian pope for a long time, along with a black African and a powerful Canadian cardinal.

There are 118 cardinals and Lomeli knows most of them, but is a little unsure of those from distant lands. By coincidence, almost on the day of publication of this book, Pope Francis created 17 new cardinals, several from little known peripheral corners of the globe; so fiction can soon become fact.

There is an exciting succession of ballots with support swinging back and forward and the occasional surprising emergence of some new and unexpected candidates.

Halfway through, everything suddenly changes. The other half of the world’s population is represented by the silent Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, who prepare and serve their Eminences with their real scallopini and make their beds when their rooms are vacant. The sisters suddenly begin to play an important part in the rest of the proceedings. (Perhaps a little nudge from the author towards thoughts of sexual equality!) In any event it leads the ever thorough Lomeli to investigate the mysterious early history of some of the contenders with dramatic results.

Outside of the voting, the story then becomes more tense and gripping and some of the characters more intriguing. At one stage Lomeli thinks that the conclave is becoming troubled, unstable and fragile and capable of heading off in any direction. His colleagues the cardinals eventually prove him wrong and when the white smoke finally goes up, there are two surprises, one of which, in true and consistent Harris style, simply takes the breath away.

Because of the subject and its history and procedure, the author cleverly employs the three dramaticunities of time, place and action in this well researched, exciting novel which is difficult to put down. Only one minor quibble – none of the cardinals is Scottish; it is fiction after all!

Lewis Cameron
FILM

Sour Grapes (2016)

Directors: Reuben Atlas, Jerry Rothwell
Stars: Laurent Ponsot, Jay McInerney, Jeffrey Levy.

In the early 2000s, New York wine auctions found themselves a new star: a young English speaking Chinese from Indonesia, Rudy Kurniawan. He was rich enough to play the old trick – buy dear, sell dearer. These were the years of the dotcom bubble when buyers had what they called ‘f*ck it money’, i.e. so much of the stuff that they didn’t mind gambling some of it on the best of wine. One of the Koch brothers bought $4.2m worth of rare vintages from Kurniawan.

However one of the growers of a rare Burgundy was perplexed that the bottles he sold for hundreds of euros in Paris fetched thousands of dollars in New York. He was even more concerned when he was sent the brochure. It advertised wines that were supposed to be his for years before he produced any. He traced the bottles back to Kurniawan. Around the same time the billionaire David Koch became doubtful that his most expensive buys from Kurniawan had really once been owned by George Washington and the like.

He hired a private investigator who called in the FBI. Kurniawan was arrested and sentenced to ten years in jail for fraud. The conviction left unresolved two mysteries. The first was how Kurniawan could fake thousands of bottles since he was working on his own. Counterfeit labels, corks etc. were found in his luxury apartment. It was reckoned that at most he faked ten per cent of the thousands of bottles he dealt with. Accordingly, the FBI destroyed ten per cent of his cellar and raised millions selling the rest. This upset some connoisseurs since they couldn’t be sure a genuine 90% had re-entered the market.

This was the second mystery. Some dealers appeared not to care too much whether what they had was real or fake. They claimed the collectors expected to be cheated from time to time. Anyway the wine tasters couldn’t agree among themselves what was the best and what was the worst. It was like the art scene, notoriously prone to scams. Apparently when, for example, Picasso fakes appeared, the master was tested with a genuine one and asked to pronounce it a fake or not. He said it was a fake. When told it was genuine he replied: I often paint fakes. Wine ‘connoisseurs’ didn’t care to be embarrassed by their mistakes.

As a lesson in vanity and greed this documentary is hard to beat. Wine, of course, has a special place in the Catholic Church. To ensure that the wine that was used at the Eucharist was genuine certain firms offered a guarantee of authenticity to the Church. Now more is needed since most congregations have access to the chalice. Fortunately wine has
become generally more popular so the parish can order from the local supermarket. Rather than worry about genuineness some priests prefer to support Fair Trade produce.

After his first sermon St Peter was accused of being drunk when of course he was inebriated by the Spirit. Being drunk is still, regrettably, associated with being Scottish. The inclusion of alcohol in the elements of the Eucharist validates the sanctity of wine. The reluctance of some clergy to share the chalice or communicants to taste from it should lead to a feeling of sour grapes in the congregation.

Rudy Kurniawan – The first and only person to be convicted for wine counterfeiting fraud in the United States.

MUSIC

Fetch!

Ewan MacPherson

Shoogle Records,

SHOOGLE16017

Multi-instrumentalist Ewan MacPherson is a prominent figure on the Scottish music scene: he is currently a member of acid-croft band Shooglenifty and he’s a founder-member of three highly-regarded bands (Salt House, Fribo, RoughCoastAudio).

This is a collection of new instrumental folk music composed by Ewan, and he performs it on an impressive array of instruments (mandolin, mandola, banjo, jaw harp, 6 & 12-string guitars, harmonium). He is joined by some excellent guest musicians: Aaron Jones (bouzouki, cittern), Alasdair White (fiddle), Ben Farmer (melodeon, accordion), Callum Convoy (bodhran), Chris Wright (cittern, octave mandolin), Fin Moore (Border pipes, small pipes), Hannah Read (fiddle), Lauren MacColl (viola), Magnus Lundmark (percussion), Sarah Hoy (fiddle), and Sigrid Moldestad (Hardanger fiddle).

Over the last 20 years Ewan’s musical travels have led him across Britain, Ireland, Scandinavia and Europe, absorbing the rich diversity of musical cultures. On this album he performs some cracking tunes in the Scandinavian, Scottish, Irish, Greek and Balkan styles. Describing what led to this album, Ewan says: ‘My forebears hail from all over the British Isles and music is in my bones. I have a genuine love for it, along with a mongrel’s freedom which allows me to jump headlong into new cultures and get involved, learning many of the nuances in traditional styles from the generous musicians I have met. Fetch! is the culmination of all those experiences’.

What makes Ewan’s compositions so engaging is their culturally-mellifluous, chameleon quality. For example, Saltus starts with a jaw harp introduction and an Australian vibe, but then transforms itself thrillingly into a Scandinavian Hardanger fiddle tune, leaping from the world’s South to the North. Ranarim’s Welcome to Scotland/ Icy North Gutter Experiment flickers between Scottish and Scandinavian...
styles. And the album’s glorious opening track *Brutus the Husky/ MacColl*’s starts off stylistically in Greece/Macedonia only to shape-shift astonishingly into a Scottish style: like a Syrian asylum-seeker journeying through Eastern Europe, absorbing the generous hospitality of the noble Greek people, before finally finding himself safe in Scotland and proudly Scottish. www.ewanmacpherson.com.

**Jazz at Berlin**
**Philharmonic VI – Celtic Roots**

*Various artists*

**ACT Music, 9836-2 ACT**

The concert series ‘Jazz at Berlin Philharmonic’ aims to reflect developments in jazz. Each one-off concert takes a different theme, assembles a fresh configuration of musicians, and is recorded on disc. The 6th concert/disc – ‘Celtic Roots’ – showcases the influence of Scottish and Irish music on jazz. Following the waves of 19th century emigration from Scotland and Ireland, elements of Scottish and Irish music were present in the origins of American country music and the blues, especially in the southern states of the US.

The musicians performing here are Scottish and Scandinavian folk musicians *au fait* with American jazz/blues, plus an American bluesman *au fait* with Scottish and Irish traditional music. The fabulous line-up includes American blues singer/guitarist Eric Bibb, Aly Bain (fiddle), Fraser Fifield (saxophone, whistle, bagpipes), Knut Reiersrud (guitars, lap steel, harmonica), Ale Möller (mandola, trumpet, shawm, flutes, dulcimer, harmonium), Tuva Syvertsen (vocals, Hardanger fiddle), Olle Linder (double-bass, percussion). The Scandinavians add a further layer of musical complexity by bringing traditional Scandinavian elements into the mix of Scottish/Irish/jazz/blues.

Eric Bibb and Ale Möller’s arrangement of *Mole In the Ground* (a traditional mountain banjo song from North Carolina, where many Scots settled) counterpoints the soulful optimism of Bibb’s smoky voice and finger-picking guitar, with the yearning beauty of the traditional Scottish melody *Da Silver Bow*, carried on plangent fiddle and sweetly plaintive saxophone. *In The Pines* is an example of fatalistic Scottish folksong refracted beyond recognition by the rich musical culture of the American South, transforming into the American Gothic of traditional bluegrass ballads. The fear and grief in Eric Bibb’s bluesy, anguish vocal is spine-tingling.

*Lament for the Children* re-interprets Pàdraig Mór MacCrimmon’s 17th century Scottish piobaireachd as a modern jazz improvisation, with the saxophone replacing the bagpipes, to haunting effect. *St. James Infirmary* is another traditional American ballad of Scottish origin. Here it is spliced with a whirling-dervish rendition of the traditional Irish jig *Farewell to Ireland*, with hypnotic Berber-sounding percussion and the wild skirl of Scottish bagpipes. You can hear the Berlin crowd’s enthusiastic appreciation throughout. I agree with them! www.actmusic.com.

**Paul Matheson**

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**Reviewers**

**Norman Barry** is the long time film reviewer of Open House.

**Peter Boylan** is a former headteacher who founded and edited the Catholic Education Journal ‘Networking; Catholic Education Today’ now in its eighteenth year of publication. He was appointed a KSG in 2011 and now lives in retirement in the West Highlands.

**Lewis Cameron** is a retired sheriff.

**Dan Gunn** is an elder of the Church of Scotland and former Head of Operations at the Scottish Prison Service.

**Paul Matheson** is a music reviewer and an equality and diversity officer with the police.
Moments in time

Ardmore Point is a peninsula which juts out into the Clyde between Cardross and Helensburgh. We park at the end of the public road and walk along a pleasant track, lined with low trees and bushes, on the east side of the peninsula. On our right is a field grazed by cattle and on the left the mud exposed by the retreating tide. This is an excellent place to watch birds and in the distance we see curlews and oystercatchers. We meet three bird-watchers admiring the bright red rose-hips in the hedgerow and help ourselves to brambles, which taste good after the recent spell of dry weather.

The path opens out to a grassy sward surrounded by gorse bushes, some of which are still in flower, with views of the mysterious mansion house, half concealed by trees in the centre of the peninsula. Ahead, we look across the Clyde to Port Glasgow and the line of hills beyond. A strange looking ship is docked there; we decide that it is probably a cable-layer. We see a few redshanks on the shore and a cormorant fishing in the sea, but there is no sign of the seals, which are sometimes hereabouts.

The coast is now very rocky and the path winds its way round the point through a dense gorse thicket. Now we can see down the estuary past Gourock to the mountains of Cowal and the Rosneath Peninsula. The upturned hull of the old sugar-boat lies out in the Firth and various vessels are making their way to or from the nearby naval base at Faslane. The sun is shining and the sea is unusually calm as the breeze is from the east. We spot a pair of eider ducks then a head pops out of the water; it is a seal. It dives for a long time before surfacing again. Two fairly unusual birds appear; red-throated divers, which breed in the Highlands and Islands, in their grey and white winter plumage.

The path now turns north with views of Helensburgh and the Gareloch. A West Highland train rumbles along the far side of the muddy bay, as we make our way through an attractive strip of woodland on the sheltered side of the peninsula, to return to our starting point at the isthmus after a most enjoyable and varied walk.

Tim Rhead
Tim Rhead is a pastoral assistant in the Episcopal Church.

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