

# OPEN HOUSE

Reflecting faith issues in Scotland

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Conference report on  
the role of lay people

Kierkegaard: a voice  
for today's church

Christmas books,  
music, reflections

# Archives in the balance

It is now more than eight months since the Blairs Museum Trust unexpectedly announced that 'Columba House, an early 19th-century townhouse in Edinburgh, which has been home to the Scottish Catholic Archives for over 50 years, is to close to researchers and members of the public from Monday 8 April 2013 until further notice'.

Then, on 12 November the Scottish Catholic Archives website suddenly sprang to life and displayed the message 'Readers are welcome to consult our resources at our research centre, Columba House in Edinburgh.' The initial reaction was elation but on closer inspection it appeared that very little had changed in a regime which allowed mould to erupt over a large number of documents a year ago and led to the draconian closure of the facility.

The one million 'Historic Archives' are now safely ensconced at Aberdeen University's Special Collections but the location of the remaining two million dating from the restoration of the hierarchy in 1878 had historians scratching their heads. There was no sign of an experienced and qualified archivist and keeper to oversee the now scattered Scottish Catholic Archives - some in Aberdeen on a 30 year loan, some in Glasgow, some in Edinburgh, others in the Scots Colleges at Salamanca and Rome. Without this overarching expertise, the operation to conserve and make available to historians the highly important material is going to be held under very uneven archival standards. A year ago there were two professionally qualified archivists in post and today there are none.

In April this year the Trust commented on the outbreak of mould in the Scottish Catholic Archives in Edinburgh: 'We have emphasised for some time that Columba House was not fit for purpose. The latest reports confirm this'. This marked the end of a five year struggle by historians to prevent the collection being split up and leaving Edinburgh - or so it seemed.

What was not apparent was that, in their eagerness to move the archives north, the trustees had mounted a sustained but

uninformed campaign against 16 Drummond Place, based on what they stated was the inadequacy of its accommodation and susceptibility to water ingress.

Judging what has emerged from a Freedom of Information request, Aberdeen University's professional conservators were well aware that mould is not caused by water ingress but by excess precipitation in the external atmosphere (exacerbated by climate change) which can only be combatted through monitoring of air circulation and moisture. This requires vigilance on a daily basis. But the Blairs Museum Trust reduced the two full time professionally-qualified archival staff to a part-time curator, opening the building only once or twice a week from November 2012.

By mid-December, under this skeleton regime, the growth of mould was clearly visible. A conservator from Aberdeen University was called in to compile a report on what had become the rampant white bloom on many books and documents. A tragic miscalculation on the part of the Trust appeared to be in danger of putting the records of 800 years of Scottish Catholic history at risk.

Fortunately, by the middle of February a survey had been completed which drew on the records of environmental monitoring carried out between April 2008 and June 2011 by the previous keeper. The archives were declared safe for transfer to a new clean, dry, cool environment. In early March it was confirmed that the mould was not toxic so standard cleaning methods could be used. Although it was not possible to remove the spores completely, provided that the right conditions were maintained, they would remain dormant in their new home at Aberdeen University Library.

Now the spotlight is turned on Columba House once again and the need to match the professional standards which the conservators at Aberdeen so ably demonstrated. Otherwise the danger is that the Scottish Catholic Archives will be subjected to a two-tier service - excellence at Aberdeen and uncertainty in Edinburgh. Will the same mistake be repeated and mould erupt once again?

# The saltire and the cross

Church and state are seeking our views as never before. Next year's referendum invites us to join the debate about Scotland's future, while the Vatican's welcome but clunky consultation on family life will, we are told, make no difference to church teaching. We are not used to consultation in the Catholic Church. But in the light of plummeting numbers, including a projected 45 diocesan priests in 20 years' time compared with 285 in 1977, the Archdiocese of Glasgow has indicated that parish councils are to help plan the way ahead.

A coalition of churches chose St Andrew's Day to bring together the saltire and the cross when they launched a year of prayer in the run up to the referendum. Popular belief has it that the shape of the saltire flag appeared in the clouds at the battle of Athelstaneford, marking victory for the Picts over invading Angles. But, more interestingly, it is a link to the creation of modern

Europe. The battle of Athelstaneford is re-told in such a way that it recalls the crucial Battle of Milvian Bridge outside Rome when the Emperor Constantine faced his rival Maxentius. Looking into the sky, Constantine saw a vision of the cross, which inspired him to victory and led, the following year, to the Edict of Milan by which Christianity and other religions were legalised and worship of a god other than the Emperor was no longer punishable by death. Constantine helped lay the foundations of modern Europe and, unlike St Andrew, who never visited Scotland in his lifetime, accompanied his father, the Roman Emperor and General Constantius, to what is Scotland today, during his campaign against the Picts in 305 AD/CE. It's worth visiting the Chapel of St Anthony the Eremite at Murthly, just outside Perth, to see the magnificent painting by Alexander Christie of 'The Vision of Constantine' (1846).

- 3 Conference report  
*Mary Cullen*
- 6 Bringing Jesus to birth  
*Mary Ross*
- 7 Walking with Christ along an unmarked road  
*Ron Ferguson*
- 9 Journey of faith  
*Parish lecture series*
- 11 Advent reflection  
*Joseph Chalmers*
- 12 The way we live  
*Julian Bath*
- 14 Notebook
- 16 Letters
- 17 Living Spirit
- 18 Christmas books, music, film
- 23 Obituary
- 24 Moments in time

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.

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Cover image: Giovanni Bellini, *Virgin and Child*, ©CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection.

MARY CULLEN

# Sharing the garden: collaborative ministry and the role of lay people

Speakers from three Christian traditions reflected on the history and theology that shape their understanding of ministry at last month's sellout *Open House* conference.

Receptive ecumenism is a process of ecclesiastical learning which asks what we can learn with integrity from other traditions. Professor Paul Murray and his colleagues at the University of Durham have developed the concept as a way of enabling Christian traditions to become more than they currently are by learning from or receiving each other's gifts.<sup>1</sup> November's *Open House* conference provided a glimpse of the rich possibilities of such an approach.

Three distinguished speakers considered the role of lay people in church governance against a backdrop of falling church membership and ordinations. Are we in the business of managing decline, asked Anglican priest and theologian David Jasper, or can we turn the process into a visionary one where the sharp division between lay and ordained is blurred but reviewed with theological and spiritual clarity? The future of the church is not going to be like the past in its governance; this means a radical review of what we actually mean by terms like priest, minister and laity. He recalled Newman's insight that in order to remain the same, we have to be prepared to change.

Dr Helen Costigane, a religious sister who teaches canon law at

Heythrop College, University of London, opened the conversation with an account of the Catholic Church's teaching on the role of lay people in church governance. The 1983 Code of Canon Law, sometimes described as the final document of the Second Vatican Council, gives legal expression to the conciliar vision of lay participation in the life and mission of the Church.



*Dr Helen Costigane.*

Vatican II opened up many avenues for lay people which, arguably, have not yet been fully realised. Although the Council did not develop a single ecclesiology of the laity, several themes emerged, including the

fundamental equality of all Christ's faithful by reason of baptism. The Council spoke of the gifts of the faithful, from which arises the right and duty to use them in the Church and the world. Those in authority are to discern and encourage gifts so that all can co-operate in the Church's mission.

The Code lists rights and duties which belong to all the faithful, including the right to a theological education. A lay person can be appointed parish co-ordinator, diocesan chancellor, financial manager or tribunal judge and can serve on parish finance committees. Lay people 'of good standing' may be consulted on the appointment of bishops. In the USA, an estimated 25% of diocesan chancellors and 80% of lay ecclesial ministers are women. But take-up varies widely.

Why, Helen asked, is there not greater participation of lay people? Finance is a key issue with voluntary income falling as congregations dwindle and financial markets remain volatile.

Another issue is attitudes to leadership. Imagine your parish priest were a dog, Helen said: how would he react if you wanted to enter his garden? He might bite; let you in if you remember who's in charge; allow you to cut the grass but keep an eye on you; invite you to look after the garden because you're more competent; or invite you, in the spirit of collaborative leadership, to share the garden. There is evidence that some parishes, despite canon law requirements, do not have a finance committee and some parish councils simply rubber stamp parish priests' decisions. Helen pointed to evidence that consultative processes can be used effectively if decision making is understood as a process and not a one off event. Is the question whether lay people should make

decisions, or is it about *quality* of consultation?

Like all law, canon law requires interpretation. Canon 129 states that 'those in sacred orders are, in accordance with the provisions of law, capable of the power of governance... This power is called the power of jurisdiction'. But it adds that 'lay members of Christ's faithful can co-operate in the exercise of this same power in accordance with the law'. Some would say that the power of



*Speakers (left to right) Helen Costigane, Sheilagh Kesting, chairperson Jim McManus and David Jasper.*

jurisdiction is bound up with the power of orders, and lay people should not be admitted to certain roles (keep out of the garden). Others might speak of collaboration, but with grudging admission of lay people. Others would see the power of orders and jurisdiction as separate, and argue that lay people can exercise it when canonically commissioned to do so. Others would go even further and say that canonical mission simply appoints the person to a specific role and area of ministry, the qualification for which is based not on a distinction between lay and ordained, but on professional competency.

Helen made three suggestions. That lay involvement should not just happen because someone is a lay person, but because they are 'competent, informed, reflective and articulate, rooted in the life and tradition of the Church'. That we should revisit and reword Canon 129.

And that we should look again at our history: correspondence with St Cyprian in the 3rd century indicates lay people participating in election of bishops, appointment of clergy, conciliar decision making and reconciliation of the lapsed.

### Scottish Episcopal Church

In response, David Jasper, Professor of Literature and Theology at the University of Glasgow and Anglican priest for nearly 40 years, set out the canons of the Scottish Episcopal Church which have given lay people an active role in governance at all levels for many years, and highlighted some of the challenges the church now faces.

The vestry, a largely elected lay body, governs the local congregation. Clergy are bound to consult lay people on any significant changes they want to introduce. Dioceses are governed by a Synod which consists of bishop,

clergy and lay people, who have a voice in the election of bishops. Recent changes in charity law, which increase the power of representative lay governance, have introduced tension between the Canonical Church and the Charitable Body. Church management has become increasingly complex, requiring skilled staff to reconcile the business and mission of the church.

David pointed out that the wording of ordination is ambiguous as to the role and function of the priest, whose calling includes *leading* people in prayer and worship. He recalled that the Reformation roots of the Anglican Communion, of which the Scottish Episcopal Church is a member, include translations of the Bible into English, precisely to undermine the authority of the priestly, sacerdotal power of the Church. Today, in some places, the Reserved Sacrament may be consecrated once a month by a visiting priest and the rest of the time the

liturgy is conducted by lay people. This has prompted discussion on the meaning of the 'priesthood of all believers' and its implications for our understanding of ordained clergy.

He quoted Cardinal Newman that the laity should be consulted 'because the body of the faithful is one of the witnesses to the fact of the tradition of revealed doctrine, and because the consensus through Christendom is the voice of the Infallible Church'. The same spirit, David said, can be found in an early ecumenical publication of the Joint Liturgy Group of 1965. *The Renewal of Worship* affirms that the private prayers of church members ought to be a preparation for and continuance of the prayers of the community, not something done for them by priest and minister, but something which *they are doing*. What the laity do in their lives of prayer is fundamental to the life of the Church as a whole. Without it there is no church.

He noted that today lay people often take funerals and make house visits and may have more pastoral experience than some priests; they are redefining the nature of church. It will not be long, he thought, before the slightly patronising idea that lay people can be entrusted with pastoral responsibilities for the care of souls might be turned around.

The issue is not just one of increased levels of lay participation. The Episcopal Church today, he suggested, is living on borrowed time, with perhaps ten years left financially. It suffers from 'delusions of relevance', its public debates often irrelevant to many. We can move the deckchairs around until the money runs out; or we can take a radical view of what we actually mean by terms like priest, minister and laity.

## Church of Scotland

Very Rev Sheilagh Kesting, the first woman minister to become Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, focussed on the gifts of the church community. She stressed the Church of Scotland's emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. We are

all the people of God, *laos*. Differences emerge in our approaches to governance.

She recalled that the Church of Scotland's history was ridden with strife about patronage. The right of the congregation to call a minister is paramount and it is also responsible for electing elders from among its numbers. During the Reformation period, leaders from within the congregation were chosen to look after the spiritual needs of the people along with the minister, and were ordained by him for this purpose. The role of elder evolved to curb the power of the clergy, and together they form the Kirk Session.

Today elders are the trustees of the congregation, each congregation being a separate charity. Sheilagh shared the view of Marjory Maclean, who spoke of the many gifts to be found in the church. She wanted to free up the way they are used - ordination is for leaders, whose function is 'steering of the church and structuring of her means'. Others should be appointed to tasks like visiting the old and frail, ensuring the church is welcoming, and handling property and money.

At regional level there is the Presbytery, with equal numbers of clergy and ministers. Elders can be elected Moderator of the Presbytery in recognition that the role of moderating is one of chairing - a gift that may be given to an elder. The same applies to the General Assembly, the highest decision making body, where there are equal numbers of clergy and elders, and where elders can be elected Moderator. The first to be elected Moderator was a woman, Alison Elliot.

The Church of Scotland has had women elders since 1966 and women ministers since 1968. The decision was taken on theological grounds, drawing on the doctrine of creation that we are made in the image of God, male and female; on the community of Christ in which divisions of gender no longer apply; and on the stories of the women who surrounded Jesus. Sheilagh recalled that when Mary Lusk made history by petitioning the General

Assembly to become a minister in 1963, she did so on the basis that she felt called by God to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, and asked the Church to test her call. God can call whoever God chooses.

The diaconate began in 1887 as an order for women (deaconesses), who served the church full time in a supportive role to the minister. Today the diaconate is open to women and men. Their calling is still to serve the church in whatever capacity they are needed and, as members of the Kirk Session, they have a role to play in governance. They serve as chaplains, social workers, community workers and parish assistants.

Sheilagh concluded that lay people, in theory at least, have a significant role in the Church. There is a growing emphasis on identifying gifts and using them appropriately so that only those gifted in leadership and discerning the gifts of others are involved in governance at all levels. As the number of parish ministers is set to reach a critical point in 10-15 years' time, the role of elders and deacons, she suggested, will become increasingly significant.

Discussion throughout the day reflected a deep desire for change in the Catholic Church. Helen Costigane offered a final reflection of what had been said.

We must make best use of talents: how do we identify them and empower people? We must keep looking at structures of formation: are they appropriate? What models of leadership are we using? Are lay people plugging gaps or undertaking roles in their own right? Catholics have much to learn about consultation and communication from the Episcopal Church and the Church of Scotland. We need to ask if our structures are still fit for purpose.

*For the full text of speakers' talks go to [www.openhousescotland.co.uk](http://www.openhousescotland.co.uk)*

<sup>1</sup> Paul D Murray (ed) *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning* OUP 2010

MARY ROSS

# Bringing Jesus to birth

A distinguished psychologist and former clinical director of the Notre Dame Centre in Glasgow reflects on Giovanni Bellini's beautiful painting of the Virgin and Child in the Burrell Collection, which appears on the front of this month's *Open House*.

I was immediately struck by the image of Jesus at play in the safety of his mother's arms. Mary's right hand lies gently on the balustrade while her left hand has a firm grip on her son ensuring that he does not topple. Feeling securely held, Jesus is fully occupied in play. With his right hand he dangles a fine thread at the end of which is a small bunch of flowers. No doubt Mary prepared this plaything for him. Jesus experiments with his 'toy', using it to connect him to his mother. The connection between mother and child is almost palpable, each lost in the moment.

Play is the medium through which children expand their curiosity, their physical and social skills. They do not need expensive toys, but rather the opportunity and encouragement to play with any safe material available. Here in the West we often provide more than is wise in the way of toys for our children, especially at Christmas time. Manufacturers use TV adverts to ensure that children use pester-power on their parents. Parents, grandparents, dotting aunts and uncles often spend more than they can afford. Parents don't want their children to be singled out from the rest of their peer group if they haven't got the latest items. This often results in a spiralling debt problem. In a way the simplicity of this portrayal of Jesus by Bellini illustrates that playthings need not be over elaborate nor cause families to go into debt. Perhaps we can all learn from Mary!

Looking now to Mary, we see a young pensive mother. I wonder what is going on in her head. She appears quietly reflective which makes me wonder if she is thinking ahead, imagining what her boy will become and silently praying that he will have a peaceful life. Mary was rearing her child in turbulent times with little security, given Roman domination. Our TV screens are filled with heartbreaking images of mothers in Syria and in the camps to which they have fled. They cry in despair for their children - what future will they have? Will they have a future at all? It is hard to imagine the emotional suffering a mother goes through as she faces the effect that personal, family, national or world tragedy may have on her child's future.

As we contemplate Bellini's work, it is hard not to wonder where Joseph is. Perhaps he is busy in his carpentry workshop. Many fathers in the past would have been in a similar position, missing out in so much of their child's early years. Yet when the Westminster government introduced the right of fathers to have paternity leave, a recent survey indicated that many took only a fraction of the time available to them. Various reasons were put forward to explain the results, such as difficulty with financial loss. Now the same government is proposing that after two weeks for the mother to recover from giving birth, a further fifty weeks can be shared by mother and father as their respective situations

demand. It will be interesting to see how this works out in practice. An important point not mentioned in this proposal is the fact that many women are rearing children on their own. The reasons are numerous. Not all women are as fortunate as Mary who had Joseph standing by her.

I work with other retired psychologists in a walk-in centre for parents. *Parentsetc* is situated in Partick and draws parents from a wide geographical area, thanks to an excellent transport system. Over 80% of the mothers who come to share their concerns are rearing their children on their own. Life is particularly difficult when their sons are reaching their teenage years. Mary would have understood the dilemma this situation creates; she had to cope with all the anxiety she experienced when Jesus went missing for three days. We can only imagine what Mary really said to Jesus when she found him teaching in the temple! Many are the concerns expressed by the parents who come to meet with us - drink, drugs, sexual activity, unemployment. Many of these mothers don't have a Joseph to help them with these worries. Some mothers cannot keep their babies or young children. Foster carers or adopters step in to raise them. They and the birth mothers need much support to cope with the emotions that arise from these situations.

Bellini's painting can be viewed as quite bold in that Jesus is completely naked. This may unnerve some

because in many paintings of Jesus in his infancy and at the end of his life, his nakedness is covered. We say we believe that Jesus came into our world taking on human form. None of us was born wearing a nappy! Mary does not look abashed here, nor should we. If we are abashed we lend grist to the mill of those who say our church is obsessed by sex. In these trying times for our church in Scotland we should not want to rub even more salt in the wounds.

We all owe so much to our mothers who 'housed' us within their wombs for nine months, suffered the pangs of birth to bring us forth into this world and nourished us at the breast or by the bottle. This intimacy provided the grounding for forging an attachment bond which, where possible, can be shared with the father. This is the foundation stone of strong emotional and social ties which later in life enable us to do as Mary did - bring Christ into the life of others. Whether we are male or female, young or old, rich or poor, we can approach Christmas asking ourselves how we can bring Jesus to birth in our world. We can pledge ourselves to be there for the mothers who are struggling to raise their children. The Christmas story is one of generous maternal love.

*Dr Mary Ross SND was awarded an MBE for her services to children and families in Glasgow.*

## Next edition

We are taking a break in January and the next edition of Open House will be in February 2014. The copy deadline for letters, articles and reviews is 31st January. We wish all our readers and contributors a very joyful Christmas.

## Kierkegaard bicentenary

RON FERGUSON

# Walking with Christ along an unmapped road

A Church of Scotland minister and author considers the life and times of the great philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, who was born 200 years ago.

The misshapen man was ridiculed in his own lifetime, yet he is now regarded as one of the most influential philosophers of the modern era. He was a devoted Christian, but he spent a good part of his life satirising the Christian Church in excoriating prose. He continually praised the virtues of marriage, yet he couldn't bring himself to marry Regine, the young woman he loved.

His name is Søren Kierkegaard, and the Church still doesn't quite know what to do with him, 200 years after his birth in Copenhagen. The bicentenary hasn't exactly been the talk of the ecclesiastical steamie. More's the pity. We could do with him now.

The youngest of a family of seven, Søren had a very strange upbringing. His father, Michael, a peasant who became a very successful businessman, sent him to Latin school and demanded that he come third in his class. Søren managed to do just that. A man full of guilt, Michael believed that he had committed an unforgivable sin and that God would punish him by making him outlive all of his children. After five of his siblings had died, Søren was astonished when his father

died. Kierkegaard's first book was called *Papers from One Surviving*.

Why do I like the strange, maverick Kierkegaard so much? He gets to the heart of things, in unconventional ways. He says, for instance, that human beings cannot be free until they have come to terms with their own mortality. He argues that it's important to face up to your own death, in order to really live; to live life sharply and passionately and fiercely - not in the past, not in the future, but in the present existential moment, which is all that we really have.

His personal dread was not of physical death, but of living a phoney half-life; he talked about the tragedy of a man 'who woke up one day and discovered he was dead'. His aim was to live each day with clear and accountable choices. As a young man he wrote in his journal:

*What I really lack is to be clear in my mind what I am to do, not what I am to know, except in so far as a certain understanding must precede every action. The thing is to understand myself, to see what God really wishes me to do; the thing is to find a truth which is true for me, to find the*

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idea for which I can live and die. What would be the use of discovering so-called objective truth, of working through all the systems of philosophy and of being able, if required, to review them all to show up the inconsistencies within each system... what good would it do me to be able to explain the meaning of Christianity if it had no deeper significance for me and for my life...that is what my soul longs after, as the African desert thirsts for water.

He underwent a conversion experience. Here is what he wrote in his journal:

May 19th. Half-past ten in the morning. There is an indescribable joy which glows through us as unaccountably as the Apostle's outburst is unexpected: 'Rejoice, and again I say, Rejoice' - not a joy over this or that, but full jubilation with hearts and souls and voices: I rejoice over my joy, in, by, at, on, through, of and with my joy - a heavenly refrain which suddenly breaks in upon ordinary song, a joy which cools and refreshes like a breeze, a breath of air from the trade wind which blows from the plains of Mamre to the everlasting habitations.

For Kierkegaard, faith was a journey of trust, not of certainty. Kierkegaard's Christianity is about making a decision of heart and mind, about walking with Christ along an unmapped road. Christianity could not be established conclusively by the methods of reason or science. Its truth was subjective, requiring a leap of faith; one could grow into belief by taking part in the practices of Christian faith. At the same time, he argued that reason itself was buttressed by basic assumptions that could not be established within the framework of reason.

After the breakup of his engagement to the lovely Regine, Søren went to Germany to study. He poured his life into his work. In the year 1843 alone he produced six books. He attacked grand systems of thought which claimed to answer all questions.

What makes Kierkegaard so far ahead of his time as a philosopher was his understanding of the nature of

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Kierkegaard argued that primitive Christianity had been a spiritual revolution that had challenged the status quo, and had been an offence to all complacency.

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truth. He argued that there are a lot of things we simply cannot know. As human beings, we all have a partial view of reality, shaped by our upbringing and our experiences. So, in his many books, Kierkegaard deliberately speaks with different voices. He writes under different names, and speaks obliquely through the characters he creates.

He had thought of being ordained, but instead he turned his intellectual fire-power on the church of his day. He felt the Church had sold out on the gospel, and wasn't serious about living out the message of Jesus.

Kierkegaard argued that primitive Christianity had been a spiritual revolution that had challenged the status quo, and had been an offence to all complacency. He saw the Church of his day as a symbol of self-satisfied smugness, and in his latter years he attacked what he called 'Christendom' for preaching a domesticated, easy gospel - what Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a twentieth century prophet, was to call 'cheap grace'.

In 1855, Kierkegaard, who was ridiculed in his own lifetime and regarded as a failure, collapsed in the street, paralysed. He had been distributing a pamphlet attacking the Danish Lutheran Church for selling out the gospel. A month and a half later he died at the age of 42, in love with Regine till the very end.

He had left instructions that the Church should not organise his funeral, but his wishes were ignored. His elder brother Peter, a bishop, gave the eulogy at the service. A number of divinity students who 'got' Kierkegaard rioted at his funeral in

protest. His wish that his tombstone epitaph should read only 'The Individual' was ignored.

It is at this point, though, that I part company with Kierkegaard. It seems to me that it is not enough to be a lonely individual. Not even Jesus did that; one of his first acts was to call disciples to him, and to form a community. Jesus knew that individual decision was necessary, but that the individual was also part of a community of faith.

Søren Kierkegaard wasn't honoured in his own lifetime. Works like *Either/Or*, *The Sickness Unto Death*, *Fear and Trembling*, and *The Concluding Scientific Postscript* were destined to become classics, but in his lifetime the eccentric poetic prophet was a figure of fun in Copenhagen. He was caricatured in the local newspapers.

It was not until about 30 years after his death that the genius of Søren Kierkegaard was acknowledged. His 25 books were translated into every major European language, and his ideas still carry weight today. He influenced 20th century continental philosophers, especially Jean-Paul Sartre, and is regarded as 'Father of Existentialism'. He is also recognised as one of Denmark's greatest writers.

A statue to Kierkegaard was erected in Copenhagen's main square, something which would have made him laugh.

So his work lives on. He continues to address us in his awkward way from beyond the grave, seeking to undermine what we think are our certainties, and asking us to make a leap of faith into that transcendent, yet earthly, realm of 'blessed unrest'.

*A former Leader of the Iona Community and minister of St Magnus Cathedral, Ron Ferguson is an award-winning journalist and author. His latest book about his friend George Mackay Brown's journey from Presbyterianism to Catholicism, George Mackay Brown: The Wound and the Gift, shortlisted for a Saltire Award, is now out in paperback. He lives with his wife Cristine near Stromness, Orkney.*

PARISH LECTURE SERIES

# A journey of faith

Academic Anthony Allison recounts the journey that led him from West Belfast to work in Catholic-Muslim relations, and argues for an open, thinking faith.

Anthony began by asking how many of his audience had faced social or institutional discrimination. Had they been spat upon, threatened, or had family members shot by paramilitary organisations? He had experienced all of this, growing up as a Catholic in Belfast at the time of 'The Troubles'. But we are not the prisoners of our political-cultural and social settings, he argued - we can choose to reach out to 'the other' in reconciliation. His journey began in the ecumenical context, learning more about the Christian 'other'.

In 1993, an academic named Hillyard studied Irish experience of UK legislation and coined the term 'suspect community': this refers to a community that is supposedly fully part of a nation state, yet is simultaneously subject to 'extra-judicial' or 'special-judicial' powers. For the suspect community this can mean stop and search orders, periods of internment without charge, and the seizure of property or goods without due explanation. At the height of the conflict in Northern Ireland, Protestants and Catholics, Irish and Northern Irish, Unionists and Nationalists, terrorists and human rights activists were all tarred with the same brush. A recent update of an article by Pantazis and Pemberton (2009) draws parallels with Muslims in the UK today. They are stereotyped as the contemporary suspect community by a state that demands loyalty from all its citizens while simultaneously subjecting a particular segment of its population to 'exceptional judicial powers'. This serves to alienate people and exacerbate problems.

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Historically, within the Northern Irish context, effective justice was lacking. The signing of the Ulster Covenant in 1912 sought to keep Ulster Protestant.

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Anthony considered the importance of what he called 'thinking faith' which always involves an element of uncertainty because we simply do not know how 'the other' will respond. And this is the key characteristic of thinking faith - it is fundamentally applicable to that which is animate, that is, responsive. Accordingly, it is applicable not only to humans but also to institutions and, at its most fundamental, to God. For example, institutions are constituted by people who interpret and implement policies and procedures and we have 'faith' they will do so effectively. Thus, we hope for effective medical care from the NHS, effective teaching in schools, effective justice from the judiciary.

Historically, within the Northern Irish context, effective justice was lacking. The signing of the Ulster Covenant in 1912 sought to keep Ulster Protestant and enacted what was, in essence, an apartheid state in which the Protestant community monopolised industry, commerce, education, and the judiciary to secure the safe status of their communities. Its legacy can be seen in the Northern Irish Civil Rights movement some 60 years later. The law at the time was one property, one vote.

One Protestant man might own ten properties and have ten votes, and rent his properties out to Catholic families with four or five people of eligible voting age - who were unable to vote. The Civil Rights movement marched under the banner of 'one man, one vote'.

As a result, many Northern Irish Catholics stopped having faith in institutions at all. Entire communities closed up and created no-go areas. Parts of Northern Ireland became semi-autonomous enclaves governed by non-elected republican paramilitaries. Such fracturing of society happens when people have no faith in institutions or each other. The Protestant community in Northern Ireland at the signing of the Ulster Covenant had no faith in the Catholic community; they were an industrialised minority in a largely Catholic non-industrialised country (this was before the partition of Ireland). Peter Robinson, First Minister of Northern Ireland and Leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, stated recently that 'Unionism has historically had a siege mentality. When we were being besieged it was the right response. But when we are in a constitutionally safe and stable position it poses a threat to our future development.'<sup>1</sup>

Faith, Anthony argued, needs grounding. His faith is grounded in the gospels and example of Christ; in kingdom values that make no distinction between Jew and gentile, and in which the first will be last and the last will be first. We exist in the tension between the 'now' and the 'not yet'; faith is characterized by a tension in relation to the way things are and the way things

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could or should be. It is a tension between being part of tradition and simultaneously forging new horizons. Such thinking, he argues, should characterize our relationship with, and knowledge of, God.

An essential part of this is open receptivity. The Psalmist says, 'Be still and know that I am God' (Ps 46:10). Such stillness involves simply 'being'. This 'being' involves humble openness to God. This is also an essential concept in Islam, the idea of 'submission', submitting to God's will. The very word 'Islam' means 'submission'. Anthony reflected on what he saw as two of the most disconcerting passages in the New Testament. In Matthew (7:21-23) we learn that not everyone who calls Jesus 'Lord' will enter the kingdom; on the contrary, Jesus will tell them 'I never knew you'. In Revelation (3:20) we are presented with an image of Jesus standing outside the door knocking, waiting for a response - an inversion of the gospel where we are told that if we only ask, God will answer (Luke 11:9). Jesus is here knocking at the hardness of our hearts. Hence the need for open receptivity.

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One starts to claim to know with certainty that which is beyond certain knowledge. One starts to say that this is God's will, this is what God is. One begins to monopolise God.

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Believers are part of the world, while called to be different. But we can be tempted to conform. We might reduce our faith to empirical standards in order to gain credibility. Or we might maintain that scientific empiricism has nothing to say to us and where it contradicts biblical witness, the latter must win. Or we might begin to judge others via an empirical standard and run the risk of dealing with people as objects. These are all reflective of a

reduction of reason to the empirical and run the risk of 'open faith' becoming 'closed faith'. One starts to claim to know with certainty that which is beyond certain knowledge. One starts to say *this* is God's will, *this* is what God is. One begins to monopolize God.

The Church had a 'closed faith' regarding Islam for much of the last 1400 years and only changed with the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). It was a landmark for Catholic engagement with other religions. Its purpose was, in the words of Pope John XXIII, 'to enlarge the scope of love... with clarity of thought and magnanimity of heart.' In *Gaudium et Spes*, The Pastoral Constitution on the Church and the Modern World, we are told that:

*Since Christ died for everyone, and since all in fact are called to one and the same destiny, which is the divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery. (GS 22)*

Thus the particularity of the Christ event has universal salvific consequences. Additionally:

*The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, first among whom are the Muslims: they profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, who will judge humanity on the last day. (Lumen Gentium 16)*

*Nostra Aetate*, The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, highlights commonalities between Islam and Catholicism: honoring of the Virgin Mary; judgment day; eternal rewards; resurrection of the dead and worship of God 'by way of prayer, almsgiving and fasting.' These last three also constitute three of the five pillars of Islam, the five basic rituals that are obligatory for all Muslims. The first pillar, the *shahadah*, the Muslim profession of faith, reads, 'There is no god but God and Muhammad is His Messenger'. This can only be partially affirmed by the Church. Similarly, the Church could not affirm the fifth pillar concerning pilgrimage to Mecca - the Hajj. The criteria of discernment concerning what

the Church can and cannot affirm concerning Islam is Christ Himself. Another Vatican II document (*Dei Verbum*) states:

*The most intimate truth thus revealed about God and human salvation shines forth for us in Christ, who is himself both the mediator and the sum total of revelation. (DV 2)*

And importantly:

*The Christian dispensation, therefore, since it is the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord, Jesus Christ. (DV 4)*

Thus, Christ is the 'sum total of revelation' and, as such, 'no new public revelation' is expected after him. And yet the foundations of Islam rest on the claim that Muhammad received divine revelation and is a prophet. How does this sit then with the statement that the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, first among whom are Muslims?

The Church's answer is that Islam, through searching reason, has come to know of God's existence. The ability to know of God's existence through the

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Christians and Muslims do worship the same God. The issue for contemporary discourse is how they understand that God.

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faculty of reason has a long history and is quoted in *Dei Verbum* 6. Thus, for the Church, the essential difference between Christianity and non-Christian religions (including Islam) is as follows: non-Christian religions are reflective of humanity's search for and ascent towards Gods whereas Christianity involves not humanity's *ascent* to God, but rather God's *descent* to humanity. This position is untenable to Muslims for it robs them of the revelatory significance of Muhammad and the Qur'an.

Nonetheless, *Nostra Aetate* is of momentous significance for the Church's position regarding Islam. It specifically identified areas of commonality and pinpointed areas of convergence for dialogue which are more fully explored in the 1981 *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*. Most significantly it put to rest a 1400 year debate. Christians and Muslims *do* worship the same God. The issue for contemporary discourse is how they *understand* that God. And open, thinking faith is an essential part of that discourse: it acknowledges that none of us have exhaustive knowledge of God. The great 13th-century Sufi philosopher Ibn Arabi said:

*Do not praise your own faith so exclusively that you disbelieve all the rest; if you do this you will miss much good. Nay, you will fail to realise the real truth of the matter. God the omnipresent and omniscient cannot be confined to any one creed, for He says in the Quran: 'Wheresoever ye turn, there is the face of Allah.'*

<sup>1</sup><http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-24586529>, 18th October 2013, 2103.

*Dr Anthony Allison is lead researcher of 'Faith and Belief Scotland' a project of the Scottish government and the University of Edinburgh. (See Notebook page 14). His talk was one of a series in Immaculate Conception Hall, Maryhill, Glasgow, to mark the end of the Year of Faith.*

## Advent reflection

JOSEPH CHALMERS

# Listening for God

Mary obviously holds a prominent place in the Catholic Church. This is so much so that some people who do not belong to the Church think that Catholics worship Mary and put her on a par with God. Catholics are not entirely innocent in this mistaken notion and sometimes do give the wrong impression.

Mary always points us towards Christ, her Son. In Advent we wait with Mary for the coming of her Son. We are told in Luke's Gospel (2, 19) that Mary remembered and thought deeply about the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. When Joseph and Mary took the baby to the Temple in Jerusalem, both of them marveled at what was said about him by Simeon (Lk. 2, 33). Finally Mary kept everything in her heart that the young Jesus said when she and Joseph found him in the Temple after they thought that he was lost (Lk. 2, 51). In all these instances Mary (and to a certain extent Joseph) is presented to us as a model of one who thinks deeply about everything that happens in order to discover what it is that God is saying. The lives of Mary and Joseph had definitely taken a turn that they could never have envisaged and they were trying to respond to what they believed God was asking of them although they could not be sure of anything.

Hopefully we find our churches to be sacred spaces where the communication with God is encouraged but God is not confined to places of worship. When we enter a church we may be more ready and willing to listen to what God has to say. However God speaks in many different ways and uses many forms. Often when we try to pray, we can be very distracted and we can think that God has nothing to say to us but in fact God will communicate with us outside the times we dedicate to prayer.

In order to receive what God wants to give us we must remain on God's wavelength throughout the day. Our prayer is an encounter with God, no matter what it feels like. It is this daily meeting with God that tunes us in and makes us sensitive to what God is saying throughout the day. All great sportsmen and women practice a lot; without the arduous practice they would soon lose their touch that makes them that bit special. Without prayer a Christian begins to lose touch with the source of all life and it becomes more and more difficult to remain open to whatever God desires to communicate.

Mary and Joseph were prayerful people. Of course like all good Jews they said the set prayers but more than that they listened to God in the ordinary everyday events of daily life. Listening to God took them on a journey with lots of twists and turns. They were open to hearing God's voice in the events that swirled around them as well as in the humble actions and words of the lowly shepherds who visited the crib. If we are open to hearing what God is saying to us in everything that happens and in the people we come across, both low and high, we might make mistakes, we might not understand, and others may not understand us but the journey will certainly be interesting.

This Advent and Christmas do not assume you already know what God's will is. Listen to what is happening all around you. Like Mary, ponder deeply and allow God to surprise you.

*Joseph Chalmers is a Carmelite priest with extensive experience of retreats and spiritual direction. He is the author of a number of books on Carmelite spirituality, Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina.*

JULIAN BATH

# The way we live

A retired physician explores links between lifestyle choices and health and finds release from service to self and fullness of life in God.

You're standing at your front door waving goodbye to friends. It was a good evening and your dinner party a success. You had feared the worst but it turned out for the best. First the decisions, then the doubts and thirdly the hard work, but now you relax feeling pleased with yourself. So you retire to bed at peace with the world.

What was the recipe for this happy evening? Pleasant people, gracious hospitality and delicious food. Yes, but perhaps the good feeling you had was due to relief of tension and pleasant surprise at enjoying something you thought was going to be an ordeal. You felt empowered by the experience. Trouble is the glow will fade until your next venture.

Ah, you say, the effort and risk are not worth it so why not enjoy the pleasure ready-made? Just go out for a meal. But going for expected pleasures can leave only the pain of joy departed - no surprise, no learning and no sense of gain. What if active self-promotion, essential for survival in more primitive times, still stimulates the immune systems which protect our health and life?

Pleasure and good feeling can arise in the course of simply being alive and doing things for their own sake. Have your dinner party without worrying about the outcome. High points will come and if you are tempted to 'put on the style' let it be in celebration of life not self. Better to engage naturally than compete.

Happiness comes as part of happening experience. Even in hardship, we have elevation of mood, sometimes sublime.

What about making your dinner a buffet to raise funds for the benefit of others? This is a more complicated issue

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## Life demands we maintain a strong love for ourselves.

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as what starts as good works for one's neighbour can become an exercise in self-love. We do things for the sake of others, become conscious of success which we then want for ourselves. Life demands we maintain a strong love for ourselves.

So, four different scenarios for living: actively competing, self-indulgence, living for the moment and doing works of charity. How may they affect health?

We live in an increasingly competitive world. Winners do well and live long lives. Success improves well-being, wins awards and medals but can engender aggression, destroy marriages and break up families. Competing passes by vocation and weakens public service. The successful risk the adrenaline based stimulus of excitement and premature

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The Registrar General's figures for mortality in the UK show the 'haves' live appreciably longer than the 'have-nots'. The higher incidence of unhealthy lifestyles among those of social classes four and five does not fully account for their shorter life span.

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death from heart failure.

We know inferior status shortens lives. The Registrar General's figures for mortality in the U.K. show the 'haves' live appreciably longer than the 'have-nots'. The higher incidence of unhealthy lifestyles among those of social classes four and five does not fully account for their shorter life span. As a group, film actors who win Oscars live longer than those nominated but passed over. Competition as an ethos is divisive; we endure the success of our friends and enjoy their failures.

The second option, escaping to self-indulgence, has its risks. Smoking causes lung cancer. This is attributed to inhaling smoke into the lungs but smoking leads to cancers elsewhere. Surprisingly, some lifelong heavy smokers escape cancer. So is smoking as an adjunct to active life compatible with health but harmful as an addiction? Alcohol, too, a potent cause of addiction, is implicated in many cancers.

The constant promotion of eating combined with the gratification of fast food has brought an epidemic of obesity, and diet, too, contributes to many of the common cancers. While quantity and type of food are relevant, so, too may be the compulsion to reactivate pleasure centres in the brain established by the particular foods chosen. We end up 'living to eat' our special culinary 'fixes'.

It is known that prolonged immunosuppressive treatment risks later cancers. Going for the same pleasure repeatedly to avoid the pain of withdrawal as happens in the dependence of an addiction will weaken the competence of immunity which a priori is activated by pain and its threat. Persistent self-indulgence of the order now practiced by many in our

society seems very likely to increase the cancer risk through this mechanism. The same reasoning applies to the incidence of arterial disease, arthritis and infections which impinge on health in later years.

What about the third option for living, 'seize the day'? We have the means of regulating this experience now, so living for the day is another expression of self-love. The fourth option, works of charity, helps others materially but can reinforce our self-esteem at the expense of those who receive.

As one counselling service put it, 'We all need to feel empowered'. How to get empowerment to those with no worldly success? In Japan you are successful if you do your best in whatever way you can for those above you - parents, teachers, bosses and finally emperor. No competing is allowed in school or workplace, yet theirs is a successful society with longevity for all.

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The more self-aware and individualistic culture of the western world requires a more potent ethos.

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The more self-aware and individualistic culture of the western world requires a more potent ethos. We know all worldly success is limited in that we are subject to the failing vigour of advancing age and uncertain health. The knowledge is sufficiently alarming for some to want euthanasia or assisted suicide made legal. They cannot love the self that fails them and life is impossible without love.

Perhaps we are not sufficiently aware of the universal force of creation? Under the direction of love the void has been transformed into matter and energy leading to life. The uncertainty factor in the laws of particle physics allows for options, and the directions taken have favoured the development of human beings, the *Anthropomorphic Principle*. This force still operates in our created world and we experience its working in new species and the continuing uniqueness of individuals.

We experience the world through our senses and are equipped with reason and will plus the biological instinct for life which, perforce, we love above all else. If we can switch from loving life which is transient to living the source of life which is God then we share in God's Being. Accepting this turns us towards our faith with its message of Christ's love and its power to release us from service to self through a change in our inner attitude of mind.

Alliance to self restricts our lives to worldly ambition and carries a health risk. Alliance to God lets us embrace each day without the fear, excitement or

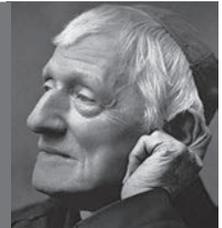
depression of doing it all for ourselves but with the confidence and serenity of service to the most powerful love there is.

*Now I want  
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,  
And my ending is despair,  
Unless I be relieved by prayer,  
Which pierces so that it assaults  
Mercy itself and frees all faults.  
From The Tempest, Act V*

*Julian Bath was a Consultant Physician and Chest Specialist for almost 30 years and made seven pilgrimages to Lourdes as accompanying doctor.*

## Newman Association 2013-2014 New venue: Ogilvie Centre

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Promoting open discussion and greater understanding in today's Church

# RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN LATIN AMERICA

A talk by

**LIAM KANE**

Lecturer in Modern European Languages  
and Adult Education, University of Glasgow

THURSDAY 30th JANUARY 2014

at 7.30pm

Ogilvie Centre  
St Aloysius' Church, Rose Street  
GLASGOW G3 6RE

Admission: Non-Members: three pounds (includes refreshments)  
Any enquiries, email to: danbaird98@yahoo.com

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# NOTEBOOK

## While shepherds watched

Pat Gaffney, General Secretary of Pax Christi, found seeds of hope in a recent visit to Israel Palestine. In a lecture at Roehampton University in London last month, she said the purpose of the visit by Pax Christi, which aims to build peace through reconciliation, nonviolence and training for peacemakers, was to build closer links with Israeli based peace and human rights groups, and renew contact with Palestinian friends and voluntary organisations. Among the geography of occupation - with its checkpoints, illegal settlements, roads and walls, she and her colleagues were inspired by the witness of peacemakers.

In the village of Neve Shalom equal numbers of Jewish Israeli and Palestinian Arab families live together, and run a school where all pupils are taught in Hebrew and Arabic with a Jewish and Palestinian Arab teacher in each class. Founded in the 1970s through the vision of a Dominican priest, the community lives in a spirit of dialogue, respect and co-existence.

In Bethany, they found Comboni Sisters had been cut off from their medical outreach to the West Bank by the separation wall. Two of the sisters moved out of their community to an apartment on the Palestinian side. It is only two minutes away from their sisters as the crow flies, but takes many hours a week to reach by public transport.

In Jerusalem they met Israeli peace organisations, *New Profile* and *Women in Black*. *New Profile* offers support to young people and their families, ranging from counselling to legal support through tribunals and prison. *Women in Black* hold a weekly vigil in West Jerusalem, calling for peace and an end to occupation.

They visited the community of Wadi Abu Hindi who live a vulnerable existence in the West Bank under Israeli military control. In the Jordan valley, land has gradually been taken by Israeli occupation. They found a settlement

that had been reduced to rubble, but came across two young shepherds who had stayed behind to look after their sheep - a biblical scene of faithfulness and trust in the face of terrible odds.

For a full account of the visit, and information about Pax Christi's work in opposing militarisation, go to [www.paxchristi.org.uk](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk)

## Scotland's referendum

The Scottish Women's Convention has organised an event to explore questions raised by next year's independence referendum on Saturday 25th January from 10am - 2pm in the Menzies Hotel, 27 Washington St, Glasgow. Speakers include Margaret Curran MP of *Better Together* and Nicola Sturgeon MSP of *Yes Scotland*, and there will be an opportunity to ask questions of a panel of representatives from both campaigns. Entry is free, and lunch will be served. To register call 0141 339 4797 or email [info@scottishwomensconvention.org](mailto:info@scottishwomensconvention.org)

## Thoughts for today

Ian Fraser - theologian, Church of Scotland minister and member of the Iona Community - has written many books in his long and distinguished career. He was warden of Scottish Churches House in Dunblane, Executive Secretary of the World Council of Churches, and Head of the Department of Mission at Selly Oak, Birmingham. He is a member of the *Open House* board.

Between 1948 and 1960, with his wife Margaret, he developed work in Rosyth on the basis that ordained ministry exists to enable the definitive ministry of the whole people of God. Ian wrote an account of the work, which was published as a little book entitled *Bible, Congregation and Community*. Over 50 years later, the Drummond Trust asked Ian if he would provide an updated introduction for a new edition. They believe that the book is relevant for today, and should be made available to as many people as possible.

Money from sales of the book will go to the Iona Community's work with asylum seekers in Glasgow. To get a copy for £3.99 (including post and package) contact Sally Beaumont at flat 3, 47 Partickhill Rd, Glasgow G11 5AB [sallybeaumont@btopenworld.com](mailto:sallybeaumont@btopenworld.com); or Mike Minter at 9 East Parkside, Edinburgh EH 16 5XJ [mike.minter@gmail.com](mailto:mike.minter@gmail.com)

## Faith and belief Scotland

*Faith and Belief Scotland*, a project of the Scottish government and the University of Edinburgh, is charting issues of faith and belief in contemporary Scotland. If you live in Scotland, it would like your views on the role of religion and belief in today's society. Fill in a questionnaire at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/faithandbeliefscotland> and you could win £50 of Amazon vouchers.

The survey is part of a research project which aims to create an online interactive 'Faith and Belief' map of the demographic spread of faith and belief in contemporary Scottish society. It will help identify the needs of equality and diversity officers in local authorities in relation to changing faith and belief demographics, and provide an illustrative sampling of narrative self understanding of people of faith and belief in Scottish society today.

The research findings will be published in a report at the University of Edinburgh in collaboration with The Equality Unit of the Scottish Government.

## Courageous conversations

A Call to Action (ACTA), the movement for change in the Catholic Church which began with a letter to *The Tablet* last year, held its second national conference in October. (See a report of its first national conference in *Open House* August 2013).

Around 250 people from every diocese in England and Wales, some

of them diocesan representatives to the newly formed National Delegate Council, gathered to consider their next steps. They were welcomed by Jean Riordan, chair of the National Steering Group and the formal business of the day included adoption of an interim constitution and a workshop on ACTA's values.

Three distinguished speakers invited reflection on the nature of discipleship. Professor John Sullivan, in an opening address entitled *Ecclesial Citizens not Sheep*, warned that a climate of fear and lack of consultation made a mature church impossible. Misunderstanding of the true nature of authority and obedience - properly understood as 'deep listening' - undermines the church as a credible community and creates an unhealthy climate for communication. ACTA is working for open, honest and courageous conversations between laity, clergy, bishops and religious which promote more mature discipleship.

Professor Ursula King posed the question of the church in dialogue with women. She found signs of women being able to share in positions of responsibility and decision making in the changing church signalled by Pope Francis' first six months.

Philosopher Gerry Hughes SJ invited people to consider where they are now, and acknowledged that for many the answer would be in a state of distress and dissatisfaction. He took heart from the exhortation of Pope Francis for the church to find new roads, for a church that is able to step outside itself. He suggested that before we move forward we need to consider how the unhealthy climate in the church arose. The main stumbling block, he said, was anxiety bordering on fear: a reaction to the emerging challenges of liberalism, democracy, biblical scholarship and the new sciences, rooted in the 19th century and not confined to the Catholic Church. It was a reaction born out of fear for the faith. Until we can listen fully to this fear, he suggested, attempts at dialogue are in danger of floundering and the challenge for

ACTA is to discern how and when to foster courageous conversations.

For a full conference report and more news of ACTA, visit [www.acalltoaction.org.uk](http://www.acalltoaction.org.uk)

### Unique texts go online

The Vatican Apostolic Library and the Bodleian Libraries of the University of Oxford have joined forces to digitalise and make available some of the most important and unique Bibles in the world, as well as biblical texts from their collections. The digitalised texts can be accessed at <http://bav.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>.

The initiative is the first step of an important four year collaborative project for the publication of digital content on the internet. A committee of academics and experts from around the world has selected for digitalisation a part of the collection of manuscripts in Hebrew and Greek, as well as incunabula (early printed work) from the Bodleian and Vatican Apostolic Libraries. The selection process has taken into account both the requirements of scholars and practical needs. Restorers from both libraries have collaborated with conservators to ascertain not only the value of the contents, but also the conditions of preservations of the works.

### Prisoners week 2013

The theme of this year's Prisoners' Week Scotland, an initiative of the Scottish churches held annually in the third week of November, was *Time to Change*. Fr Brian Gowans, president of the International Commission of Prison Pastoral Care and chaplaincy advisor to the Scottish Prison Service, received a letter of support from the Vatican. In it, Pope Francis encouraged prisoners, their families and prison staff to 'regard every person as another Christ, worthy of love and a source of love'.

### Thank you

Thank you to all who have supported *Open House* with subscriptions and donations in 2013, and those who signed up in recent months. Without you there would be no *Open House*.

Thank you too, to all those who have written letters, articles and reviews, keeping alive our commitment to the dialogue that began with Vatican II which continues in our open invitation to share comment and debate on faith issues in Scotland.

We know that many people pass on their copy of *Open House* to someone else. If just half our subscribers found one more person to take out a subscription, we would be in good shape for the future. So please consider making use of the special offer insert in this month's magazine and give someone the gift of five copies for a tenner. If you hurry, they will receive this edition, with its beautiful cover image of the Virgin and Child, before Christmas.

## Last minute gift

Looking for a last minute gift that will provide stimulating reading on faith issues in Scotland well into 2014?

For just £10 you can send someone **five issues** of *Open House*, delivered to their home. If you hurry we will send this month's edition in time for Christmas, with four more editions starting in February next year.

Just fill in the slip that comes with this edition and send it, with a cheque made out to *Open House*, to Mary Cullen, editor of *Open House*, at 66 Cardross Rd, Dumbarton G82 4JQ.

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# LETTERS

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

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

## Open House conference

I would like to thank the editor and the board of *Open House* for organising the excellent conference on 'The Role of the Laity in Governance' on 16th November in Glasgow. It showed great insight on the part of the board. The enthusiastic group of participants who filled all the available places in the hall was evidence of the deep longing on the part of all the baptised to be able to fulfil their priestly, prophetic and kingly (governance) roles within the church.

In her entertaining presentation, the Canon Lawyer Dr Helen Costigane pointed to the limited role that women have in the church, and to the fact that Canon Law (129, paras 1 & 2) appears to say that there is no role for the laity in governance. Somehow she managed to appear optimistic! It was good to have the ecumenical perspective from Professor David Jasper (Episcopal Church) and the Very Rev Sheila Kesting (Church of Scotland) on the role of women and especially of the laity in their church. In both of these the laity and women are able to participate more fully in the spiritual life of their faith. Nonetheless, it is clear that it remains difficult for this to be exercised, even in these more permissive congregations, for reasons which include pre-existing biases among some members and financial pressures on churches. Professor Jasper's quote from Blessed John Henry Newman is

particularly apt in our situation. 'In order to remain the same we have to be prepared to change'.

Most encouraging were the earnest and heartfelt contributions from the audience. We do live in a very hopeful time. Pope Francis clearly believes in listening and consulting with all the members of the church. Whatever the obstacles we must all, clergy and laity, continue to talk with and listen to each other. My hope is that there can be an opportunity for these ongoing conversations as we continue to encourage and support each other.

**Ahilya Noone**  
GLASGOW

Enjoyable and stimulating - but above all hopeful and encouraging - are the terms I would use to describe the *Open House* conference on church governance. I went with the expectation of finding out how other Christian traditions dealt with this difficult topic, and the possibilities existing within Catholicism. And I did.

But more than that, I very quickly realised there was an energy and excitement in the conference room, born of the opportunity to express to a receptive and responsive audience not just our frustrations, but also our ideas and our hopes for the future. Such an opportunity is not very often available, and this I think was a real gift given to us by the Open House team. That many people travelled quite a long distance to come is evidence of a need and a desire for participation

and discussion of this kind. My hope is that not only can we take forward the issues raised by the topic of the day, but that such a forum can be provided in the future on this and other topics.

**Honor Hania**  
CLYDEBANK

Thank you to *Open House* for organising the conference on lay people in church governance. It was good to hear from other traditions and I found myself reflecting on how much Catholics have to learn from others about valuing and making use of the gifts of lay people. The current crisis in vocations and the demands of charity law may force the Church to reconsider its practice.

**Edward Gallagher**  
GLASGOW

## Music in the liturgy

I was very interested to read the detailed and thoughtful responses to my article in the October edition of *Open House*.

The suggestion that my article proposed a 'return to Gregorian chant and Renaissance polyphony' is misleading on several counts. Since the restoration of the Scottish hierarchy in 1878, there has not been a widespread tradition of Gregorian chant nor Renaissance polyphony in ordinary parishes. Without going into the historical and demographic reasons for this, by most accounts the pre-conciliar norm was a Low Mass with

(vernacular) hymns. In the majority of instances and especially during the Mass Proper, use of the Church's musical books would be an entirely new departure.

The correspondents are right to fear imposition, prescription and compulsion in liturgical music - an outcome which would neither be feasible nor permanent. Following Pius X/Lorenzo Perosi's 1903 encyclical, *Tra le sollecitudini*, this approach - *de haut en bas* - was tried and largely failed. Where I might disagree is in the correspondents' basic, if unspoken, premise that we currently live in an age of liturgical plurality. Without casting aspersions on the sincere work of committed individuals, I can write from my own experience in three Scottish dioceses that I have never heard a single line of chant, Latin or Greek in any parish except St Columba's, Glasgow where I currently serve. In instances where this may have been possible and even desirable, the inclusion of any such repertoire was often opposed on ideological grounds by (Latin rite) clerics. In many areas, there is at present a de facto ban on the chant idiom and the Latin language. A culture of plurality would signal an improvement.

The letter from Brazil raised interesting questions about the place of inculturation in the liturgy. Having never visited Latin America I cannot make any comment on the success or

otherwise of particular initiatives there. Suffice to say that I would not dispute the place of adapted indigenous forms in non-Western cultures. In Scotland, however, we often witness a rather phoney and tokenistic form of inculturation, which conjures up an image of Celtic Christianity more akin to *Braveheart* than that of the towering and scholarly Celtic saints. One almost gets the impression that the Synod of Whitby never took place. The reality is that Celtic missionaries were active throughout Europe in the centuries after Columba. Their magnificent Celtic tradition fed into our 'Roman' Catholicism as much as that of any other culture. As such, our Latin rite is not a foreign imposition but the fulfilment of our shared progress.

**Paul Livingston**  
GLASGOW

### **Ian Willock**

I would like to thank Jim McManus for his informative and sympathetic obituary of Ian Willock in last month's *Open House*. He captured the character and integrity of a man who touched many lives and to whom *Open House* readers owe a great debt of gratitude.

**Eamonn Cullen**  
DUMBARTON

## **LIVING SPIRIT**



Some years ago I gave a conference on 'Preparing for Christmas'.... I tried to invite people beyond a merely sentimental understanding of

Christmas as 'waiting for the baby Jesus' to an adult understanding of God in Christ .... Jesus identified his own message with what he called the coming of the 'reign of God' whereas we have often settled for the sweet coming of a baby who asks little of us in terms of surrender, encounter, mutuality or any studying of the Scriptures or the actual teaching of Jesus... The Word of God, however, confronts, converts, and consoles us-in that order. The suffering, injustice and devastation on this planet are too great to settle for any infantile gospel or any infantile Jesus... It is to this adult and cosmic Christ that we are saying, 'Come Lord Jesus'.

*Fr. Richard Rohr: Preparing for Christmas: St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati. Ohio*

O Immanuel, you are our king and judge, the One whom the people await and their Saviour. O come and save us Lord, our God.

*Antiphon for 23rd December taken from Daily Prayer from the Divine Office: Collins 1974.*

Christ is born in us, through our unselfish kindness, gracious help, generous patience, understanding acceptance, compassionate care, and many other ordinary loving gestures.

*Joyce Rupp, Welcome the Light: Daily Devotions for Advent. Creative Communications for the Parish. MO63026-2942*

Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.

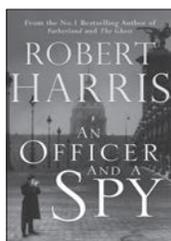
*Luke 2:14*

# CHRISTMAS BOOKS

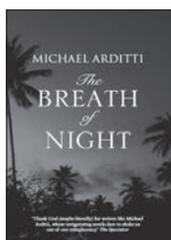
Our reviewers suggest ideas for books and Christmas reading that will nourish body and the soul.

## Three novels

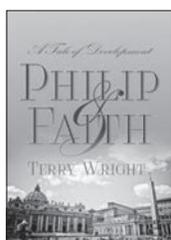
**Robert Harris : An Officer and a Spy** (Hutchinson, 2013)



**Michael Arditti : The Breath of Night** (Arcadia, 2013).



**Terry Wright : Philip and Faith: A Tale of Development** (New Generation, 2012)



The late Professor James F. McMillan wrote that the Dreyfus Affair 'not only killed the Ralliement [of French Catholics to the Republic] but confronted the Third Republic with a crisis that rocked the regime to its foundations'. Robert Harris, in *An Officer and a Spy*, his novel based on the Affair, has written an excellent political thriller as well as a moving story of a quest for justice.

In 1894 a French military document discovered by a cleaner in a wastebasket in the German embassy in Paris showed French Military Intelligence that there was a spy in the Army. Captain Alfred Dreyfus, the only Jewish officer on the General Staff, was identified from his handwriting as the spy. Convicted of treason by a court-martial - but maintaining his innocence - Dreyfus was publicly humiliated in front of 20,000 spectators calling 'Death to the Jew!' and sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil's Island.

Afterwards, the brilliant and ambitious Georges Picquart, the French Army's youngest colonel, took charge of the intelligence unit that had identified Dreyfus as the spy. He re-investigated the case when he discovered that secrets were still being passed to the Germans and found that Dreyfus was innocent and that the spy was, in fact, a dissolute French officer called Esterhazy. Picquart's efforts to clear Dreyfus and have Esterhazy convicted were subverted by colleagues and blocked by senior officers and politicians.

When Picquart persisted, he was first posted to North Africa - where an attempt was made to have him killed - and later imprisoned and dismissed from the Army. An ensuing public campaign and controversy divided French opinion with - broadly speaking - the Catholic and Nationalist press condemning Dreyfus, while liberals and the Left sought his release. Dreyfus was eventually freed and reinstated, but anti-Semitism and the hatreds unleashed by the affair scarred French public life for generations.

*An Officer and a Spy* tells this story, from Picquart's point of view, in what is a classic thriller - with suspense, blackmail, trials, retrials, forgery and unexplained sudden deaths. More, though, it gives a chilling picture of how institutions under threat suppress the truth and sacrifice the innocent.

Injustice is a theme, too, of Michael Arditti's novel *The Breath of Night*. Arditti, acknowledging the influence of Graham Greene and describing himself as 'a very idiosyncratic, liberal Anglican', is unfashionably concerned with the place of religion in modern life. In *The Breath of Night* Philip Seward, a young man whose fiancée has recently died in a car crash, is sent and financed by her family to investigate the mission and murder of her great-uncle Julian Tremayne, an English priest, in the Philippines. Philip is given a collection of the priest's letters to the family from the Philippines and extracts from these form, with the

account of the young man's investigation, a double narrative, showing how the two men come to see what has been called 'one of the most unequal societies in the world'.

The letters, covering the period from 1971 to 1989, show the development of Julian's understanding. After an elementary language course - in which he is taught the Tagalog for 'disrespecting one's elders, illegal foraging and lustful thoughts' - he is sent to a parish where he at first sees his parishioners as fiesta-loving and 'exotic'. A warning note is struck, though, when the foremost local landowner, congratulating him on a sermon, talks 'as though the parish were his private domain'. Julian soon learns that that is precisely how the landowners view the Church, as an ally and an instrument in regulating a society characterised by violent oppression, grinding poverty and economic and sexual exploitation.

The double narrative technique - showing Julian's increasing radicalisation and Philip's growing understanding of both the priest and the society he served - enhances this relevant, well-written and disturbing novel.

In contrast, Terry Wright's *Philip and Faith: A Tale of Development*, deals with the less dramatic world of academic theology. Wright, formerly a Professor of English Literature, has previously written studies of the relationship of literature and religion.

In this - his second - novel, Anglican teenagers Philip and Faith are precociously involved in the study of theology, meeting at a sixth-form biblical conference and becoming friends. Their friendship wanes, to revive in later life. Philip, an academic, marries Rachel, a Catholic music student whose family think him 'rather snobbish' - he won't go drinking with her brothers - and decides 'to follow Newman into the Catholic Church', while Faith marries a clergyman and becomes at first a RE teacher and then an Anglican priest.

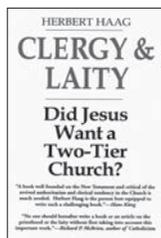
The novel gives a sympathetic account of the lives of the couples and there are interesting and intelligent discussions of the changes - the 'development' of the title - in both the Anglican and Catholic Churches since Vatican II.

Dan Baird

## Clergy & Laity: Did Jesus want a Two-tier Church?

Herbert Haag: *Burns & Oates, 1997*

Herbert Haag, former president of the Catholic Bible Association of Germany, is the author of several short, scholarly works that address controversial subjects with Germanic directness and bluntness. In this book, Haag explores the scriptural evidence to see if there is any indication that Jesus wished to create a Church in which there was a superior, clerical class, consisting of those in orders, charged with the duty of leading, teaching and laying down the law, and another, lay class, whose task it was to be led, taught and obey. He finds no evidence to support the foundation of such a Church. There was, in fact, no distinction of rank in the Church we find in the NT, where Paul and other authors refer to Church members as 'brother' and 'sister' (Acts 15, 7), (Rom 16, 1) and the Church itself is referred to as the 'brotherhood throughout the world' (1 Pt 5, 9). There were, Haag accepts, different ministries established in the Church by the beginning of the second century, such as bishops, priests and deacons, but no distinction of rank, no developed hierarchy. Power resided in the community and office holders in the Church were elected by the local community (Heb 15, 1); ministry was conceived in purely functional terms with bishops etc. performing a role on behalf of the brethren. With scholarly precision, Haag charts the various statements and manoeuvres by means of which a shift took place from

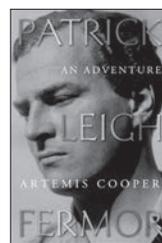


ministry as function to the notion of ministry, and in particular priesthood, as resulting from changes to the person ordained. His most radical conclusion is that ministries, including that of bishop, were creations of the Church and the Church is free to maintain them, change them or abolish them as conditions suggest.

## Patrick Leigh Fermor, An Adventure

Artemis Cooper: *John Murray, 2013*

If you have a taste for fast-moving biography of a handsome, dashing Englishman with some Irish roots, universally known as 'Paddy', whose life was one long



adventure, then this is the book for you. Paddy Leigh Fermor became a popular travel writer whose books covered his jaunts in Greece, Romania, France, the Caribbean and various monasteries. One of the attractions of this biography is its account of the young life of this bold spirit which led to his later occupation as travel writer with a penchant for purple prose. Following a haphazard education which saw him expelled from more than one minor public school, at the age of nineteen Paddy concocted a plan to walk across Europe. He was lucky to have the support of his well-connected parents who were able to ensure that he had funds awaiting at various destinations along the way and armed him with introductions to a range of semi-aristocratic acquaintances. Paddy who had a gift for friendship as well as being young and fit had a whale of a time, charming his hosts, living well most of the time and reading voraciously as he travelled; he was also prepared to rough it on occasion, spending a fair number of nights out of doors. Two of the countries he stopped off in were Romania and Greece, learning the languages of both countries and familiarising himself with their

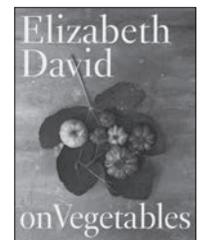
history and customs. When war broke out Paddy was appointed as a British secret agent to Crete during the German occupation of the island, where he was able to pass himself off as a shepherd and showed remarkable bravery. It was there that there took place the episode for which he is best remembered, when he conceived and, with the help of the Cretan resistance, executed a plan to capture the German General Kreipe, a caper later turned into a book entitled *Ill Met by Moonlight*, and a film of the same name. The book bowls along at a great pace and it is a pleasure to make the acquaintance of such a daring, free spirit.

Joe Fitzpatrick

## Elizabeth David on Vegetables

Compiled by Jill Norman: *Quadrille Publishing, 2013*

There is no shortage of 'in-time-for-Christmas' cook books in the shops featuring the usual celebrity chefs and bakers, but if you are buying for an honest cook who has an instinct for quality without pretension (or 'drizzle!'), this is the perfect gift. It is a compilation of the many vegetable dishes found in David's prolific writings, but the carnivore readers of *Open House* have no need to panic. This is not a worthy tome for the veggie, bean and leeks brigade but rather a genuine exploration of wonderful and accessible vegetables in soups, pastas, breads, 'mains', all of which can be beautifully complemented by meat and fish. Mind you, as an unapologetic meat eater, I found the simplicity of the *Salsa alla Marinara* quite exquisite, the test being that it comes to mind whenever I am really hungry. The recipes are not presented in list form but in the form of a commentary that draws the reader into the joy of preparing and sharing good food.



The book is beautifully presented, reflecting the quality, colour, taste and imagination of David's lifelong work. At intervals there are excerpts from her essays and articles, my favourite being 'The Great English Aphrodisiac', a commentary on *The History and Social Influence of the Potato* by Redcliffe Salaman; honestly, it is quite fascinating and I guarantee it will renew your respect for the simple spud. Bon Appetit!

Eileen Fitzpatrick

## Seven Gothic Tales

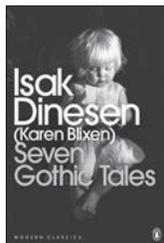
Isak Dinesen: Penguin Modern Classic, 2002

Isak Dinesen is the pseudonym of Karen Blixen, the Danish writer perhaps better known for the film adaptations of her later work *Out of Africa* and *Babette's Feast*. However, she first found fame with *Seven Gothic Tales*, an exquisite collection of mythic romance and dark deeds.

Each can be read separately but the structure revolves around the central story *The Deluge at Nordeney*. Here with a descriptive gift worthy of her training as a painter, and a profound psychological acuity, she delivers the semi-apocalyptic tale of the great flood that hit the West coast of Holstein in Northern Germany.

As the water rises, a group of disparate travellers are trapped in a hay loft. Facing the end, each is called upon to give a completely candid account of their life (now that's what I call real horror !!) It falls to the mysterious Cardinal Hamilcar von Sehestedt to offer the admonishment that captures the essence of Blixen's life and work, *By thy mask I shall know thee*. Discloser in concealment, surely the essence of the Gothic genre.

Credited with anticipating the modern novel she avoids overt moralizing but in the closing tales there is a vague



outline of intent. Recognizable in the poignancy of the ballerina Fransine who rises in the middle of night to dance alone; here we sense the personification of a truly independent spirit. As the conventional world inevitably moves to persecute what it cannot possess the true nature of the *Deluge* is exposed.

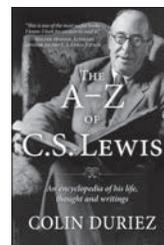
Jim Hart

## The A-Z of C.S.Lewis

Colin Duriez: Lion, 2013

To those of you who are falling on this review with anticipation I have to make a confession: I have never been a fan of the venerable Oxbridge don. Even as a child his Narnia books, complex allegories involving talking lions and imagined kingdoms accessed via the back of a wardrobe, didn't cut it with me. I much preferred the all too human interactions and risk-taking behaviour of Enid Blyton's pre-pubescent delinquents. I wasn't completely averse to a talking animal. Black Beauty's fine turn of phrase made a big impression, for example. But even then, before I knew the words for it, I found something prosaic, literal and strangely maudlin in the character of Aslan, conversational big cat, leader of Narnia, and God-metaphor in the fertile imagination of C.S.Lewis. Later I found his theology, represented in such works as *The Screwtape Letters*, to be similarly unappealing.

I came therefore to this 'Encyclopedia of his life, thought and writings' with some work to do. Thankfully the author of this book has made it easy. Colin Duriez has done something as strange as his subject. To reduce a human life, especially one as rich and fruitful as this, to an alphabetical list of everything and everyone it ever owned, said, visited, wrote, loved, hated, ate, drank, made up or lived in, is to pay it a great



discourtesy. Fan or not, I found myself feeling quite defensive of and sorry for Lewis, who, in this compilation, appears as nothing more than the subject of an odd kind of fetish.

'Meaning and imagination' are listed for definition (not their dictionary definitions which you can find in ... well ..... a dictionary) but what they meant to Lewis. In Lewisland. They are preceded by 'mazers' which apparently were historic drinking bowls used at a feast of Old Narnians. You get the idea. I don't know how I'd feel about having the love of my life (in Lewis's case, Joy Gresham) described next to 'Griffle': the chief of a band of dwarves in 'The Last Battle', but I can't imagine I'd feel the relationship had been done justice. Perhaps justice is not what Duriez has set out to do.

As history would have it Lewis died on the same day as John F Kennedy and his passing was understandably eclipsed by events in the United States. This too was possibly an injustice as his contribution to English literature, and to the place of imagination, whether or not to one's taste, has been significant. An encyclopaedia might be fun and it might be handy (should you suddenly find yourself in need of a fact about C.S. Lewis), and, for the devotees, it might be a nice stocking-filler. It does little service to the writer or Christian he was and even the Narnia tales are a better read.

Lynn Jolly

## Arts editor

We are delighted that Lynn Jolly will be arts editor at *Open House* from February 2014. Lynn will be responsible for book, film and music reviews and plans to expand coverage of the arts. Contact her at [ljwolly@virginmedia.com](mailto:ljwolly@virginmedia.com). The deadline for the next (February) edition is the last Friday in January.

## FILM

### **Philomena (2013)**

*Director: Stephen Frears*

*Starring: Judi Dench and Steve Coogan*

At the beginning of this year President Putin enacted a law banning the adoption of Russian children by American citizens. Many would be amazed at the scale of the business, about 60,000 children in the last 20 years. Some celebrities want “rainbow families”. Madonna claimed to have been “humiliated” when she went back to Malawi for a second child. Putin said poorer countries should focus on improving their orphanages.

Orphanages are a Victorian invention. Previously children could simply be abandoned to fate. Neither then nor since, in the UK or overseas, have orphanages been for orphans. Most children were left in institutions because it was recognised that they might at least be given a bed and food and maybe even a bit of free schooling. For the managers it was a bonus if new parents could be found to adopt a child. Money might have entered into the equation or more likely into the pockets of middle men.

The British Empire had an asset - lands elsewhere full of opportunity: Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Thousands of children were shipped overseas by Quarriers, Bernardo's and other famous names. Some of these had Associations of former residents who used to return to show what they had made of their new lives. Orphanages in the west have since disappeared because of the recognition of children's rights. Adoption has become so intrusive that abandoned youngsters face serial carers with profoundly unsatisfactory results.

*Philomena* is unusual in raising the

question of the rights of the mother which remain vexed. She was a mother who signed away her child but unsurprisingly lived with the thought of him every day and wondered if he ever thought of her. By chance she meets Martin Sixsmith, a disgraced New Labour spin doctor trying to rehabilitate his career. Judi Dench and Steve Coogan make a marvellous pair in a road style movie that takes them to America in search of the boy.

Critics have commented that the film is ‘based’ on true events. The film itself is more coy saying that it was ‘inspired’ by a real story. Martin Sixsmith's book has been ‘sexed up’ (by BBC Films?). This takes the form of bookending the story with an introduction which bases the events in a Magdalene laundry. Among the liberties Peter Mullan took in *The Magdalen Sisters* he didn't confuse them with orphanages (*Open House* 123). Laundries were used in progressive European countries in an effort to head off the demand for female prisons. The latest Inquiry has determined that in Ireland the average stay in a Magdalene was seven months. Orphanages were elsewhere.

The closing bookend is a completely fictional account of Sixsmith breaking into the convent parlour and raging at the old nun who had been in charge of the orphanage. She died some ten years before Sixsmith became involved. According to her surviving sisters she had been active in reuniting families. As you would expect, of course. But visceral anti-Catholicism has always found a soft target in Irish women



*Steve Coogan who, with Jeff Pope, wrote the screenplay, pictured with Dame Judy Dench.*

especially nuns who, it is presumed, won't answer back. Ireland has never really been forgiven in England for being the first country to leave the Empire. How stupid the Irish are is still fair comment. Eire didn't have the Dominions. Only rich Irish Americans and an army of unpaid labour in the religious. Research has long indicated that the next best thing to being looked after by your own parents is by a stable group of women.

*Open House* readers might reflect on why such a lovely story as *Philomena* wouldn't have made it to the big screen without the presence of wicked witches. There are also two interesting subtexts for the more discerning. One is class - Oxford cynic versus Irish granny. Upper class upbringing could be brutal and is recorded in profitable memoirs. The poor give their stories freely to newspapers. The second fits in well with the ongoing trial of the former News International journalists. In the film the commissioning editor, a woman, is perfectly prepared to hold the journalist to ransom for the sake of the ‘human interest’. Ironically, Steve Coogan, the self-confessed former altar boy (oh no, not another!) is a member of *Hacked Off*, the group against personal intrusion by journalists.

**Norman Barry**

# CHRISTMAS MUSIC

From 16th January to 2nd February 2014, Glasgow will once again host the *Celtic Connections* music festival, now in its 21st year. Two acts to look out for are *Rant* and *Salt House*, performing on the 22nd and 24th January respectively. Both groups have recently released CD recordings of exceptional quality: here are reviews of both albums.

## RANT: Rant

Make Believe Records, MBR4CD

*Rant* are four of Scotland's finest fiddle players, all well-known as soloists: two from the Shetland Islands (sisters Bethany and Jenna Reid), one from Inverness (Sarah-Jane Summers) and one from the Black Isle (Lauren MacColl). As a fiddle quartet, they create an elegant chamber-folk sound, of vibrant richness and evocative, austere beauty. The album contains traditional tunes from the Scottish Highlands and Shetland and from 18th century Scottish Baroque fiddler Niel Gow. It also contains some fine compositions from Lauren MacColl, Jenna Reid and others. On the gatefold-packaging of the CD there are beautiful interior and exterior photographs of the 15th century Cromarty East Church, Black Isle, where this album was so atmospherically recorded. Indeed, the church is almost a fifth instrument.

This is pure fiddle music, with no other accompaniment. Because of the inventive creativity of the four fiddlers, no additional instruments are needed. The arrangements are thoughtful and highly-crafted, from the delicate pizzicato opening of the sweet Cape Breton tune *Jordan*

*Taylor's*, to the majestic rendition of Niel Gow's *Miss Ferguson of Raith*, all 4 fiddles in unison at first, before diverting into different interlacing melodies. The *Tuning Prelude* bagpipe-tune set has the supporting fiddles creating phrases to evoke the base drone and sympathetic drones of the pipes. For the Gaelic song melody *Tha m'fhearann saidhbhir*, the fiddles recreate the call-and-response tradition of Gaelic song, with one emulating the lead vocal and the other three replying. There's a splendid arrangement of Karen Tweed's *Back Home At Onsbacken* - the joyous, soaring arpeggio accompaniment is like something from an Aaron Copland ballet.

This fine album will appeal to those who appreciate Scottish traditional music performed with classical finesse and with an occasional Nordic touch. This is dignified, deep and profound music, intricately arranged and consummately played. [www.rantfiddles.com](http://www.rantfiddles.com)



## SALT HOUSE: Lay Your Dark Low

Make Believe Records, MBR5CD

This album is steeped in the dark magic of traditional ballads, with their folktale landscapes and stark images. *Lay Your Dark Low* offers a richly autumnal musical palette and a sweet melancholy tone that fits the season of All Hallows, when the

northern world is on the cusp between autumn and winter.

*Salt House* is a Scottish 'super-group' of four folk musicians who are already well-known as individual performers: Siobhan Miller (vocals, harmonium), Ewan MacPherson (guitar, banjo, mandolin, vocals), Lauren MacColl (viola, fiddle) and Euan Burton (double-bass). For *Salt House's* debut album, they've composed some imaginatively original songs, and given startling freshness to traditional material.

The original songs include Ewan MacPherson's composition *Strong Dark Souls*, which uses beautiful looping arpeggios on viola and guitar, to haunting effect.

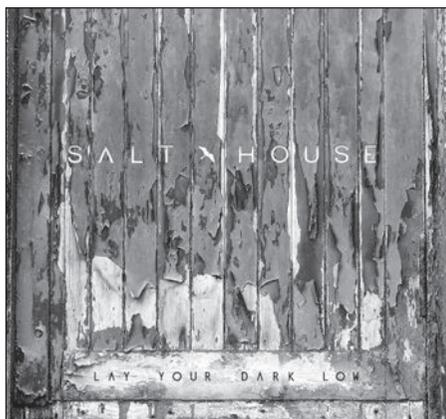
Euan Burton's deceptively-simple composition *Setting Sun* is uplifting with its exhilarating, percussive double-bass, intense viola and passionate vocal. The deep mahogany texture of the viola/double-bass duo has the impact of a string quartet.

*Salt House's* reworking of traditional material is even more impressive. *She's Like The Swallow* is a traditional ballad of seduction and sexual betrayal. The fiddle/double-bass accompaniment is superbly atmospheric: drawn-out notes creating and sustaining an ominous sense of impending tragedy, like watching spirits foreknowing and grieving for the heartbreak to come.

*Katie Cruel* is an 18th century American folk song of likely Scottish origin. Here, both American and Scottish versions are combined into a powerful narrative with strong emotional depth and plangent musical resonance. The song paints a Dickensian portrait of youth recollected in old age. Siobhan Miller's finely-nuanced vocal sings 'When I first came to town, They bought me drinks a-plenty. Now they've changed their tune, They bring me bottles empty'. The fiddle acts like a weeping angel overhead,

commenting on the song with long anguished notes and poignant counter-tunes.

An earthy double-bass and Nordic fiddle sound give the traditional song *Little Birdie* a hard-to-place Northern European quality. The song reproaches the bird and yet loves it for reminding us that our time is brief. This song, indeed this whole album, recalls Saint Bede's description of a human life as being like the flight of a bird through a torchlit mead-hall - full of bright colour, sound and aroma - then back into the infinite dark. [www.salthousemusic.com](http://www.salthousemusic.com)



Paul Matheson

### Reviewers

**Eileen Fitzpatrick** is a retired head teacher who enjoys baking and cooking.

**Dan Baird** is a retired teacher and secretary of the Glasgow circle of the Newman Association.

**Joe Fitzpatrick** is a theologian and author.

**Norman Barry** is the pen name of a well known and long time reviewer for *Open House*.

**Paul Matheson** is an equality & diversity advisor for the police, and a music reviewer.

**Jim Hart** is a househusband and member of the *Oenier* spirituality group.

**Lynn Jolly** works with special needs persons in the criminal justice system.

## Requiescat

### Bernard Aspinwall

Bernard Aspinwall, who died, aged 75, on 16th October, was a prolific author and historian widely known for his work on the re-emergence of the Catholic Church in Scotland before and after the 1878 restoration of the hierarchy. Born in Preston and educated at the Jesuit-run Preston Catholic College, he studied at Manchester University and won a Fulbright scholarship to Indiana University. He began his career as a lecturer in American history at the University of Glasgow in 1965, an association that was to last for almost 50 years. Colleagues at the university's Centre for Open Studies were among many friends and admirers who paid tribute to his work there as a popular and highly respected tutor. He was one of the first to recruit foreign students to the university.

He was also senior research fellow at the University of Strathclyde from 1995 to 2002, and travelled and lectured widely in the USA.

With James Armstrong and others he was part of the Renewal Movement in Scotland following the Second Vatican Council and reported regularly on the contribution of leading theologians who spoke at packed events in Glasgow. Although active in his local parish, he was critical of the Scottish bishops at the time who failed to see the point of Vatican II.

His publications, many of them reflecting his lifelong interest in the relationship between Scotland and the USA, were marked by thorough and meticulous research. For *Portable Utopia, Glasgow and the United States 1820-1920*, published in 1984, he gathered a massive amount of data on the exchange of ideas between Scotland and the USA. His friend Fr Willy Slavin said: 'As one of many recipients of Bernard's voluminous emails, I can vouch for his meticulous attention to anything that was not supported by chapter and verse. He took everyone and everything seriously. He was a genial host and

more interested in promoting a discussion than proving a point. It is hard to think of a subject to which he would not have some information to contribute'.

Bernard published in many journals across Europe, America and the UK, including the *Immes Review*, the journal of the Scottish Catholic Historical Association, *New Blackfriars*, and the *Heythrop Journal*. He was generous with his scholarship and was a well known speaker at Scottish history events and gatherings. He was one of a number of historians, including Owen Dudley Edwards and Professor Tom Devine, who marked the 450th anniversary of the Reformation in Scotland with a series of lectures at the Laurieston Jesuit Centre in Edinburgh in 2010.

Earlier this year, despite poor health, he contributed an *Open House* feature on the life and work of Patrick MacGill, author of *Children of the Dead End*, who chronicled the brutal conditions of Scottish industrial life in the early 20th century. In him, Bernard saw a precursor of modern Catholicism. His was a pilgrim church, he said, rather than a settled, comfortable, clericalised institution. Such ideas made MacGill, in Bernard's eyes, 'a most dangerous man'. It is a measure of his concern for the people he met in the course of his work that Bernard kept in contact with MacGill's family in the USA.

For those outside the academic ivory tower it was hard to understand why Glasgow University was unable to honour him with a professorship. Right up to his final illness he was driving up on winter nights from West Kilbride to lecture to handfuls of students in adult education. Preston North End always remained important to him as did his prized model railway collection. He had an enormous library of books and papers of which it is to be hoped the recently re-trieved Scottish Catholic Archives will be able to make use.

At Bernard's requiem Mass, Fr Joe Boland spoke movingly of his faith. He leaves behind his wife Jo, his children Judith, Mark and Timothy from his first marriage to Kathleen, his stepdaughter Julie and grandchildren Emma, Adam and Luke.

# Moments in time



We leave the Oak Tree Inn in Balmaha and walk along the road which leads to Rowardennan.

The harbour on our left consists of a network of gangways, some of which are flooded after the recent heavy rain. Despite this, a man and an alsatian dog are wading through the water on their way back to the shore. The old wooden vessel, which is the Loch Lomond mail-boat, is moored here; several days a week it delivers the post to the three inhabited islands on the loch. On the other side of the road, the larch trees look resplendent in their yellow autumn garb, on the lower slope of the Conic Hill which overlooks Balmaha.

The road turns inland but we continue alongside the loch. Suddenly, a sparrow-hawk swoops past along the line of trees just above the water, hoping to surprise an unwary bird. We come to a West Highland Way sign at the foot of some stone steps leading up the wooded hillside. We climb steeply, passing a variety of trees, mainly oak and birch, but near the top we find a few Scots pines,

Britain's only large native conifer, their irregular shape very distinctive compared to most of the introduced firs. A recent public survey revealed that the Scots pine is Scotland's favourite plant.

We encounter some unusual rocks; round pebbles embedded in what looks like cement; this is puddingstone, a form of conglomerate made of sandstone. The top of the hill, known as Craigie Fort, is on the Highland Boundary Fault, which forms the geological division between the Highland and the Lowlands and stretches from the Clyde to Aberdeenshire. There should be a stunning view from here over Loch Lomond, but today it is misty and we can just make out the water on three sides. However, the mist does create a special atmosphere on this ancient hilltop, as just a short distance away we see the magical island of Inchcailloch with its steep summit facing us, covered in the bronze coloured oak woodland of late autumn.

**Tim Rhead**

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

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