

OPEN HOUSE

Reflecting faith issues in Scotland
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Reflections on the
referendum

Global justice and the
role of business

Saints of the Islands:
St Donnan of Eigg

The referendum

Last month *Open House* described as ‘well founded’ a suspicion that the higher the turnout in the referendum the higher would be the Yes vote. The suspicion was ill founded and the opposite proved to be true: the higher the turnout the higher the No vote. The two highest turnouts were East Dumbarton (Bishopbriggs) and East Renfrewshire (Newton Mearns). Both voted No. The two lowest turnouts were Glasgow and Dundee. Both voted Yes.

This must temper somewhat the euphoria surrounding the turnout, the highest since universal franchise in 1922. It is claimed this was the result of the disenfranchised making their voices heard. Yet in areas associated with poverty, like Glasgow, 25% did not vote. In Dundee 21% failed to turn out. In the country as a whole one in ten people failed to take part in what was described as a once in a lifetime opportunity.

The record turnout was more likely the response to a rogue poll that put the Yes campaign in the lead only two weeks before polling day. This appears to have galvanised the No vote. People who had got out of the habit of voting or who had given up on political parties suddenly thought the result might affect them. The two issues headlined were pensions and the NHS: the issues

which most concern the over 55s. They were identified as the age group which voted No.

Open House's August editorial proved nearer the mark. The status quo (remaining part of the UK) was threatened, not by the SNP machine but by a combination of two minorities - nationalists and socialists. That they amount to 45% is, in UK terms, remarkable. Equally remarkable is the fact that over two million people living in Scotland are now described as middle class. West Dumbartonshire, which contains some of the most deprived communities in Scotland, had a turnout of over 80% and a Yes vote. Better off Labour voters joined those with little to lose in the hope that social justice might better be served in an independent Scotland.

Are these statistics relevant to ‘normal’ political issues? We won't have to wait long to find out. The Tories and Liberals face a vote of confidence in May 2015 and the Nationalists a year later. Will the UK Government hold on to the two million votes in a General Election? Will the Scottish Government get 45% of the vote to keep them in power in Holyrood? And then, being Scottish and British, in 2017 what will we say when we are asked if we think we are also European?

It's good to talk

If a week is a long time in politics, the church is usually perceived as dealing in centuries. Not so in the diocese of Killaloe in Ireland, where the bishop issued a pastoral letter in August inviting men to consider becoming deacons and in September put the invitation on hold. Bishop Kieran O'Reilly was responding to concerns raised by many in the diocese who pointed out that women, already carrying out much of the pastoral work that deacons would do, could not apply for ordination to the diaconate.

In a note to be read at all masses in the diocese about the reaction to his pastoral letter, Bishop O'Reilly said he had listened carefully to the dialogue it had prompted and believed that the level of engagement which had emerged was a sign of energy and commitment. He wants the dialogue to continue for the benefit of the church and the mission entrusted to it, and will not now proceed with the introduction of the permanent diaconate at this time.

The bishop speaks in his pastoral letter of the mission given to all through baptism, which is reflected in the diocesan pastoral plan. At its heart is lay involvement

and training. By opting to listen and encourage dialogue, the bishop is acknowledging the new reality of the church in his diocese, where over half the priests are over 66.

He is supported by a recent document from Rome. The International Theological Commission, whose president is Cardinal Müller, Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a report in June which referred to the ‘caricature’ of an active hierarchy and a passive laity. In its 40 page report, *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church*, the commission explored the meaning of *sensus fidei* – that believers have an innate ability to recognise what the faith is. Bishops, they acknowledge, may not always have it entirely right.

The commission recommends that bishops listen to priests and people and consult them through the structures established by the Second Vatican Council, which include parish and diocesan councils. They say that ‘Humble listening at all levels and proper consultation of those concerned are integral aspects of a living and lively church’ (n 126).

See www.killaloediocese.ie

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

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

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Cover: Saltire over the Scottish Parliament building, Holyrood.
Photo by Dominic Cullen

BRIAN FITZPATRICK

The people have spoken

A No supporter reflects that fellow Scots were prepared to engage with difficult issues while politicians on both sides failed to shed light on the challenges facing Scotland.

I ‘stayed up for Portillo’ in 1997. Fast forward to 2014 and we stayed up until Edinburgh’s results. We cheered but there was no champagne, still less dancing. Moreover, while next day I felt vindicated, I didn’t feel the euphoria nor the bonhomie of that May Friday morning of 1997 (when we still were dancing at 5am).

I felt relief but I knew too that my sense of ‘battle o’er and victory won’ meant that for many others a lifetime’s dreams and aspirations had been dashed. I knew no Tories in ’97 and still care little for their upset but I know many Yes supporters. After a bruising campaign when, at times, our politics got very ugly indeed I was more aware of a need for some national healing and reconciliation than triumph.

Yet, save for celebrating the remarkable 85% turnout, I depart from the claims made, mostly by Yes supporters (and politely acceded to by some No politicians), that Scotland’s referendum experience was a wonder to behold and a marvellous democratic event. We certainly saw an uglier sub-strata of Scottish life and politics, evidenced in the closing weeks of the campaign and reaching its ugliest heights in the scenes played out in Glasgow’s George Square on the Friday evening. Passing on the evening of polling day, I had already seen the square filling up with drunk, but unmenacing, Saltire-bedecked young Nats evidently more focussed on getting out the vodka than getting out the vote. I remain unconvinced how much the participants next day were Yes mobs or No mobs instead of plain yobs. But it was part of a pattern.

Earlier, an organised crowd had demonstrated outside BBC Scotland against alleged bias in the public broadcaster’s reporting. In scenes akin to Moscow, the names of ‘offending’ journalists were held aloft on placards. Mr Salmond, disgracefully, pronounced this demonstration ‘glorious’. Calls with menaces were made to the likes of the principal of St Andrew’s, for daring to raise her concerns at the effects of secession on her establishment. Business leaders spoke of hints by Ministers as to the need to vote ‘the right way’. With Nationalist stalwarts threatening a ‘day of reckoning’ robust politicking began to seem a bit more like ugly demagoguery. I am glad to see the back of such anti-democratic antics. They disfigured and shamed our politics.

I was more impressed at the readiness of my fellow Scots, throughout a hard fought campaign of claim and counter-claim, to engage with difficult issues. Arriving at my station after the second Salmond v Darling debate, three separate groups were discussing not the usual commuter pleasantries but currency union.

But was much light shed on key issues midst months of campaigning?

An odd feature of the Yes campaign was to claim that everything would change for the better post-Independence but nothing would change post-Independence. Worried about the Queen, the Pound, your passport, border controls, a Central Bank, your pension? No worries, no change. Trident a worry? Well, does ‘don’t ask – don’t tell’, suit you?

Mr Salmond latched onto remarks by the former Chancellor that an

I was never likely to vote Yes but as the campaign unfolded it became increasingly difficult to identify a Scottish problem to which secession was the obvious solution.

independent Scotland might 'use the pound' while abbreviating Darling: Scotland, he said, might equally use 'the rouble or dollar'. I was never likely to vote Yes but as the campaign unfolded it became increasingly difficult to identify a Scottish problem to which secession was the obvious solution.

Any suggestions of moving to a progressive, social democratic welfare State also seemed checked by the demand that we should vote Yes so as to join the ranks of 'the wealthiest countries in the world'. Evidently, once we offloaded those pesky English and Welsh eating up our surfeit of resources.

The surprise wasn't that Salmond was ready to so recklessly speak of 'Sterlingisation' but that the levels of his recklessness managed to go substantially unchecked. Bluster nearly won the day. Only already committed No voters seem to have been following the currency debate – more damage likely was done to No by a generalised feeling that Scotland somehow, yet again, was being bullied or treated unfairly.

For many, it was obvious that, on the detail of almost all of the key consequences of a Yes vote, the Nationalists simply refused to engage. On EU accession, anyone raising doubts from Europe was a 'bully'. Salmond moved from claiming automatic accession to insisting a resources-poor Europe would rush to admit rich Scotland. Sterling currency union? The Governor, and three potential UK Chancellors (plus the Permanent Secretary at the Treasury) were just another five bullies who quickly would come to heel after Yes. A Central Bank? We didn't need one. Businesses threatened by uncertainty and concerns on trade barriers? 'Business for Scotland' popped up Potemkin-like to mouth the opposite. All would be well. Scots making awkward contrary points

were pilloried on social media in the language of 'Traitor, Quisling and collaborator'.

Lack of detail meant that discussions on health occurred only through the lens of hospitals and the NHS and mostly in the context of a late scare story on NHS privatisation; education hardly featured at all. Climate change? What climate change? While East Glasgow was a key political battleground, I remain ignorant of one campaign event that looked to the problems of inter-generational poverty, ill-health and absent choices which found Independence to be the answer.

And what of Scots Catholics? Was the referendum a welcome coming-of-age for the Scottish Church? True, we were spared the presence of Keith Patrick O'Brien – our most prominent Catholic Nat to date. Instead, Sir Tom Devine joined others in announcing support for Yes. *The Herald* played host to a full page ad for Yes supporting Catholic clerics, religious and lay folk. All well and good in itself, though still pandering to the myth of a 'Catholic vote'. Our Bishops, save for sending us their general best wishes, rightly kept silent. The main conclusion I draw is that the Catholic vote was no longer viewed as an issue in itself. Perhaps that represents progress though irrelevance seems an equal, if harsher, conclusion. After the dust settled, St Giles hosted the 'national service of reconciliation'. Some things never change.

Mario Cuomo's observation that politicians 'campaign in poetry' (while governing in prose) had been up-ended by a desultory No campaign which failed to articulate a positive case for the Union. Truth be told, most political campaigning is negative. Asking 'Should Scotland be an independent country?' called for a negative response. Campaigning by committee is a disaster in waiting, doing so by committee requiring all-party consensus just increases its likely scale.

It was only in the dog days of the campaign that Gordon Brown ignited the debate by a series of tub-thumping Labour speeches to audiences of mostly traditional Labour voters. As the further devolution of powers and the forthcoming Westminster and Scottish Parliament elections loom, with the risks of the still disgruntled pressing for Neverendum, unity round the flag will

not wash. Much better attention will be needed from Unionists to articulating, expounding and making real those benefits. Brown, with a demand for solidarity over nationalism, applied an intellectual plaster to Labour's positive arguments for the Union but more is needed – not least in West of Scotland working class seats. His intervention also highlighted the personnel problems afflicting Scottish Labour: Team A being drafted in to address the perceived shortcomings of Team B (Holyrood). The near total absence of Labour MSPs from campaigning positions cannot be ignored in the longer term.

And the legacy? At 8pm on polling day, while touring his constituency, Mr Salmond claimed that '99 per cent of Scotland' would be 'perfectly happy' with the outcome of the referendum. Did he expect he would be among that unhappy 1%, now inflated to 45% (though actually around 36%). In a temper tantrum after the results, Salmond erroneously attributed the rebuff to the old and the 'conned', or stupid, by which he meant us – the majority of Scots. Having insisted that the referendum would answer the independence question for a lifetime, he speculated that a future Nationalist administration might just move directly to an independence vote – the politician rejected by the electorate moves to sack the electorate. Cooler heads prevailed and his most likely successor soon was to the fore in the media. As the First Minister disappeared from public view, Ms Sturgeon conceded defeat.

So, as he departs Bute House, our First Minister might wryly reflect on unintended consequences. His lifetime's work was given over to the unravelling of a Union foisted on an unwilling Scotland by a corrupt landowning elite. Securing the referendum summarised the achievements of the Salmond administrations. Courtesy of the 2014 referendum, our history will tell us, that earlier Union, (one secured by realpolitik, bribery and harsh economic necessities), some 300 years after the 'parcel of rogues' had their wicked way, instead was democratically affirmed by over two million Scots, in a 85% poll, giving their support for Scotland in the United Kingdom. Solidarity forever!

Brian Fitzpatrick is an advocate and former Labour MSP.

DUNCAN MACLAREN

A dream deferred

A long time supporter of Scottish independence who returned to Scotland to campaign for a Yes vote finds signs of hope for the future.

On learning the result of the referendum campaign, I was struck numb. To a certain extent, the whole country was. It reminded me of the aftermath of the devolution referendum of 1979 when Labour MP George Cunningham's 40% rule scuppered the creation of a Scottish Parliament for a generation – despite the establishment of a 'Scottish Assembly' being his party's own, reluctant policy. In that campaign, Gordon Brown whom I, as then SNP Press Officer, met in the Calton Studios in Edinburgh on a weekly basis to exchange notes, was confident of a win. I pointed out to him that trade unionists had come to SNP HQ for assistance in delivering Yes leaflets in the sprawling Edinburgh housing estates because Brian Wilson's Labour for No campaign had influenced large sections of his own party.

As my more recent numbness wore off and as I read the reactions and saw the 'vow' from the three Unionist party leaders for more powers unravelling, I realised this was not the same as 1979. For a start, the Yes campaign inspired a huge non-party political section of the Scottish public into action. What the social media, young people, the Radical Independence campaign, National Collective, trade unionists, pro-independence entrepreneurs, Labour for Yes, Women for Yes and the other groups have formed is a mass movement for deep constitutional change. It has become akin to the Catalan movement for independence which is much more rooted in civil society and the

grassroots than formal political parties and uses peaceful and imaginative means of putting across their case. This new movement will also find new ways of campaigning which will engage the Scottish people. I think MPs are in for a shock and they had better extend their surgery hours. These new activists also have a formidable party machine in the SNP (with the Greens, the Scottish Socialists and the non-aligned) to form around to take their activism into the political institutions.

Secondly, after the 1979 referendum, the SNP members bickered among themselves and threw out key activists who had formed the more left wing faction, the 79 Group, in response to the major votes for devolution coming largely from the poorer members of society as well as a desire to formulate more coherent policies to combat endemic poverty. Those activists included Alex Salmond who, along with the other members, was rehabilitated and a more left-wing stance came about through debate. The result is a Scottish Parliament which keeps the NHS under public control, provides free bus passes for the over-sixties so that they can form their own networks of solidarity in parts of Scotland they could never afford to visit and free university tuition to continue the Scottish democratic intellect tradition.

Far from unravelling, the SNP saw its membership tripling after referendum day, making it the largest party in Scotland and

replacing the Liberal Democrats as the UK's third biggest party. Instead of a blame game among politicians, Alex Salmond calmly passed the baton of leadership on to (probably) Nicola Sturgeon and there is a consensus around negotiating the new powers from the Lord Kelvin's Commission with the British parties. This is in stark contrast to the looming civil war in who will take over from the hapless Johann Lamont as Scottish Labour leader and Margaret Curran's lament about the poorer areas of Glasgow, Dundee and West Dunbartonshire no longer being voting fodder to a Labour Party which will carry forward George Osborne's austerity cuts and give fewer powers to the Scottish Parliament than the Tories. The 'Big Yin', Billy Connolly, in favour of the No vote, has now said that if the Unionist parties did not deliver on their pledges, 'there would be hell to pay'.

Thirdly, while pensioners voted overwhelmingly against, despite what the Scottish Parliament has provided for them, those at the other end of the age spectrum, the 16-17 year olds, voted over 70% for independence. They could see that option was the one that provided most hope for our small, social-democratic country to prosper rather than for them to take the high road to London to find a job or end up in another continent, far from home and family. As my godson, Michael, wrote to me, 'the dream is not over. After a few days, I realised again that the chance may not be as far away as first seemed'.

Lastly, considering the threats from Project Fear, as the No campaign became known, it was an astonishing feat that 45% of the population voted Yes when, during my lifetime, the level of support for independence has hovered around 26%. All the media bar one Sunday newspaper were against, the BBC even breaking its charter of impartiality to contribute to a No vote. All major UK parties, many businesses and the Establishment in general preached Armageddon if Scotland voted Yes. It is also amazing that all the Scottish Parliamentary constituencies of Glasgow, our largest city and normally a Labour heartland, voted Yes to independence. Many of the poorest registered to vote for the first time and they were not doing so to be content with the status quo.

In post-referendum Scotland, there are still two hundred nuclear warheads within a short distance of Scotland's major population centres, 200,000 children in poverty, a figure which will rise no matter who wins the next Westminster elections, and food banks springing up all over the place as families find it difficult to feed themselves. Addressing those kind of issues as well as Scotland's democratic deficit are what inspires this fresh generation of activists for a new Scotland. They will analyse all the minutiae that emerge from the 'vow' from the triumvirate of Cameron, Clegg and Miliband as well as Lord Smith's Scotland Devolution Commission and will not be content with Lazarus-like crumbs. They have found what people power can do and will tell the Better Together campaign that a victory based on deceit is pyrrhic and if the deception continues those responsible will suffer consequently at the ballot box. No, the dream is not over. It has only been deferred.

Duncan MacLaren is an Adjunct Professor at the Catholic University of Australia.

FLORENCE BOYLE

#indyref

Open House's treasurer looks at the role of social media in the referendum campaign.

At one of the innumerable referendum meetings held across the country, Glasgow journalist Kevin McKenna identified social media as one of the sources he sought out to inform himself about the issues. He was not alone. As the polls closed Yes Scotland had 106,000 Twitter followers. The No Campaign had 42,000. In the 24 hours between the opening of the polls at 7.00 am on 18th September and 7.00 am on result day, 2.6m tweets about the Scottish independence referendum (#indyref) were sent around the world. The Twitter heat map showed the geographical hotspots. The UK was the obvious top of the list but across America, Europe, Australia, South East Asia and South America the Twittersphere lit up as users passed comment, asked questions, created alliances and, for a small minority, hurled abuse. Commentators acknowledge that the independence referendum was the first Scottish political campaign where social media made an impact.

For those who struggle with email and internet searches Twitter is a different world, with its own language, customs and conventions. First, a run through for the uninitiated. Twitter is an online forum where users (or groups of users) establish an identity. It can be your own name or an alias. You can, if you want, be passive and follow the debate without comment or you can contribute (called tweeting) to any of the online

debates (using 140 characters or less) and start to follow those whose opinions have caught your attention. The Twitter world is one in which you follow and are in turn followed. For some it becomes a competition to gather as many followers as possible, especially where there is a commercial imperative. The Twitter top 10 in terms of numbers of followers is dominated by pop stars and footballers which reflects the predominant Twitter demographic. Katy Perry (ask a teenager who she is) has the largest number of followers on Twitter (57m), Barak Obama has 46m and Pope Francis has 4.5m. Note to the Vatican, whoever writes the Pope's tweets needs some practice; frankly the contributions read like they come from a pre-prepared pile of bon mots and lack any of the spontaneity (and humour) we have come to associate with Pope Francis.

Trending themes and hot debates are identified on Twitter by the use of the # (hashtag) symbol and so #indyref became Twitter shorthand for the independence referendum and a way of indexing comments so they were searchable by users. The limit of 140 characters is challenging and Twitter is peppered with truncated words (vowels omitted) and acronyms. If you can send a comprehensible txt msg you can create a tweet and if you don't understand the acronyms you can look them up in Google.

One of the favourite Twitterers

during the referendum campaign, on both sides of the debate, was Angry Salmond, the alter ego of the SNP Leader who acquired 22,000 followers with his irreverent 'inside' view of the campaign. Many prominent television, newspaper journalists and public figures are on Twitter and proffer off the cuff analysis, indiscreet comment and banter with their followers that few outside the Twittersphere would witness.

As well as Twitter, online blogs proliferated as groups and individuals sought to influence the debate, move opinion or just have a rant. Even with the plethora of phone-ins and emails that dominate newspapers and radio programmes, mainstream media (or MSM in twitter) is far less interactive. One of the key talking points during the referendum debate centred on accusations of perceived media bias against the Yes campaign. Journalists used Twitter to explain some of the pressures they faced from editors wedded to a particular editorial line and reminded everyone about the dangers of shooting the messenger.

During the last televised debate between the two leaders of the campaign Twitter emerged as an important complementary commentary channel to live television. The political think tank Demos estimated that 250,000 tweets were sent during the course of the debate mostly from the Central Belt but it was clear from the analysis that the rest of the UK were watching and monitoring the debate on Twitter.

For a proportion of young users social media is their primary source of news and views, unmediated by mainstream media (MSM). Social media is where they discover the scoops research the background and find out the detail the MSM cannot/will not publish; dangerous maybe, in terms of how authoritative and truthful the information but also reflective of a lack of faith in traditional institutions. Yet many of the mainstream media channels also use social media as another means of distribution where

they still apply traditional reporting conventions.

The Yes campaign was the predominant presence on social media and generated the most buzz. A number of umbrella groups like Women for Independence (14k), Radical Independence (19k) Labour for Indy (9k) worked through Twitter to organise, energise and inform. The No campaign were there but in a less organised form. Better Together was the most visible presence of the No side of the argument but generally the No side had less of a presence and a narrower range of voices.

No discussion of social media and the referendum campaign would be complete without some mention of the cybernats, a group of social media savvy nationalists who, it is alleged, use online forums to intimidate and abuse. Undoubtedly they are there (on both sides), but it is akin to walking dark streets at night, there are places you

simply would not go. While 140 characters generate inventiveness and wit in some, the challenge seems beyond others.

What starts off as being subversive and revolutionary often becomes part of the norm and this looks like what may happen with some of the more prominent social media forums that have emerged from the referendum debate. The prominent online blog Bella Caledonia is now looking for funding to improve and increase its output to provide a challenge to mainstream sources. Time will tell whether this will be successful.

Last word goes to the Twitter contributor who summed up the conduct of the campaign: 'No bombs, no bullets, one egg'.

Florence Boyle worked in the financial sector.

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Promoting open discussion and greater understanding in today's Church

TOWARDS A DIGNITY-BASED APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

Duncan MacLaren

Former Executive Director of SCIAF and Secretary
General of Caritas Internationalis, now an Adjunct
Professor of the Australian Catholic University.

**THURSDAY 30th OCTOBER
at 7.30pm**

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GLASGOW G3 6RE

Admission: Non-Members: three pounds (includes refreshments)
Any enquiries, email to: danbaird981@gmail.com

ALISTAIR DUTTON

Taking care of business

The new director of SCIAF, the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, explains why development agencies like SCIAF offer economic and social analyses of poverty and encourage their supporters to campaign for long term change.

Something is wrong with our economy. The prevailing idea of progress has come to mean economic growth. In this setting big business has increased its economic and political influence while the vast majority of the world's poorest people have been left behind. All too often people and wellbeing are secondary to wealth creation and consumption.

Through our work with people in developing countries, SCIAF knows the positive impact business can have on poor communities; creating vital jobs, stimulating local economies, providing goods and services to people who need them, and generating tax revenue.

However, businesses can also have negative impacts. In our new report, *Taking Care of Business*, we explore the detrimental effect some companies have on people living in poverty and the planet. In Colombia, for instance, the land and livelihoods of poor Afro-Colombian communities are being threatened by foreign mining companies who've been given huge swathes of land by the government.

The social teaching of the Catholic Church offers a valuable perspective on the economy and business. As Pope Paul IV reflected in *Populorum Progressio*, 'Development cannot be limited to mere economic growth... it has to promote the good of every man and of the whole man'. Human beings cannot be seen merely as economic units. Instead we must shift the focus away from economic growth for its own sake towards an economy which puts human dignity and well-being at its heart.

Pope Benedict XVI built on these ideas of authentic human development and human dignity in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*. Coming after the sharp economic downturn of 2008, it offered a fresh perspective on the crisis, reminding us that the economy and business activity does not exist in a vacuum. Pope Benedict suggests that markets are not morally self-sufficient; rather, since the economy operates within society – and is influenced by social and political factors – it must be governed by an ethical framework.

This lack of an ethical framework guiding today's economy is causing significant problems. Pope Benedict writes, 'Once profit becomes the exclusive goal, if it is produced by improper means and without the common good as its ultimate end, it risks destroying wealth and creating poverty.'

In *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis also argues that 'Growth in justice requires more than economic growth... it requires decisions, programmes, mechanisms and processes specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor which goes beyond a simple welfare mentality'.

SCIAF has an important role to play in Scotland in articulating the moral case for action to help people living in poverty when we lobby governments and big business. We do this because it is the right thing to do, even if campaigning for such change is a long term endeavour and offers few quick fixes.



Alistair Dutton.

In highlighting the struggle of communities in Colombia and others like them, we are first and foremost giving a voice to the people we work with and helping them influence decisions that affect their lives. We also make sure their voices are heard by key decision-makers in Scotland, the UK, Europe and further afield so the interests of the poor are not forgotten.

The importance of this has been captured by Americo Mosquera, a legal representative of one of our partners in Colombia that campaign on land rights: 'SCIAF has helped us to have a political impact, which is what we need, at the national and international level; showing all the problems we are facing in the territory regarding the mining... The work of SCIAF is a way of raising awareness of the situation we face.'

Reports and analysis from

organisations like SCIAF highlight problems to politicians and powerful stakeholders which in turn can help build international pressure to change an unjust situation. This is vital. It also reminds offending governments or businesses that their actions are being watched. In 2007 a SCIAF report and campaign highlighted copper mining in Zambia and the tiny royalties the government was receiving from a subsidiary of a UK-listed company. The report brought the issue to the attention of shareholders in Scotland, civil society in Zambia and the companies involved. We believe this helped to provide some space for the Zambian Government, who subsequently put new royalty arrangements into place which generated a substantial increase in tax income which it committed to spending on health and education.

In the case of Colombia, the UK is the second largest inward investor with £4billion of bilateral trade and investment planned by 2020. The UK Government therefore has real potential to influence the situation on the ground and the behaviour of British companies working there. The regulations made here guide UK businesses working overseas and can therefore have important repercussions for people living in poverty in Colombia and around the world. That is why our new report calls for increased corporate

transparency by making all large businesses report their social, environmental and human rights impacts and risks.

Closer to home, SCIAF's lobbying work can also make a difference. While the Scottish Government may not make the regulatory decisions that govern UK businesses, it can encourage good business practice with those with whom it deals. Scotland currently spends around £9billion a year buying goods and services for the public sector. That's a lot of purchasing power. It is important that public contracts go to companies that behave in an ethical and environmentally responsible way, respect human rights, adhere to high labour standards and pay their taxes. Doing so could have a real impact on people living beyond our borders.

The backing of hundreds of thousands of Scots in parishes and schools across the country means that government ministers will pay attention to the issues we raise in our reports and campaigns. Last year, over 2,500 supporters joined us in calling for the Scottish Government to make sure its public procurement was carried out ethically and sustainably. The Government's subsequent Procurement Reform Act responded to our demands, asking public bodies to state their policy on fair and ethical trade. This is an important start and we will continue to

work with the Scottish Government to ensure that accompanying guidance to the Act helps public bodies make ethically and environmentally sound procurement choices.

We also work in solidarity with other organisations that share our goals, which range from Justice and Peace Scotland to the international Caritas and CIDSE networks of Catholic development charities. This has been used to great effect with campaigns such as *Make Poverty History* and the *Enough Food for Everyone... IF*, leading to the cancellation of unjust international debts, increased spending on aid and commitments to tackle tax dodging.

The most pressing element of a more moral marketplace is the recognition of and adherence to people's human rights. These are most clearly laid out in the United Nations' Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. We therefore need the Scottish and UK governments, European Union, and other governments around the world such as Colombia to introduce regulatory frameworks to make sure this happens. We also need businesses to take the Guiding Principles seriously and live up to them.

Much progress has been made in encouraging businesses to behave ethically and sustainably, but more is needed. Grounded in the teachings of the Church, and with the backing of people across Scotland, we will continue to strive to create a more just world, so that all people can fulfil their potential and live with dignity.

Alistair Dutton was Humanitarian Director of Caritas International, the global confederation of Catholic aid agencies and interim Director of the Sphere Project, which sets standards for humanitarian aid delivery.

SCIAF's report, Taking Care of Business, is at www.sciaf.org.uk



*Colombian boy at a massacre memorial service.
Photo courtesy of Val Morgan, SCIAF*

HONOR HANIA

St Donnan of Eigg

A recent visit to Eigg by a librarian with an interest in Scottish saints sparked an investigation into the role played by St Donnan in bringing Christianity to Scotland.

There are names associated with the early Christian church in Scotland with which most people are familiar - Ninian, Kentigern, and Columba for example. They are well known and their contribution recognised and renowned. However, there are a number of other individuals who, though less prominent, were instrumental in planting the seeds of the Christian faith on the mainland and islands of Scotland. One of these was St Donnan – or Donan - an Irish monk of the 6th/7th centuries. A glance at some of the place names associated with him demonstrates the extent of his travels and influence: Kildonan on Uist; Kildonan in Kintyre; the parish of Kildonan, Sutherland; and Eilean Donan castle near Loch Alsh on the west coast, amongst others. However he is most closely associated with Eigg, one of the islands known as the Small Isles on Scotland's west coast, where he is reputed to be buried.

It is not known where and when Donnan was born, but it is presumed he was Irish. The *Martyrology of Donegal* refers to him as *coming from Erin*¹. He is thought to have travelled to Scotland in the late 6th century accompanied by a

group of companions. It is probable he spent some time working in the south west of Scotland: there are place names linked to him in Ayrshire, Arran and Kintyre. He then made his way northwards heading for Iona, where Columba was based.

There is a tale that while on Iona, Donnan asked Columba to become his *Anam Cara*, his soul friend or confessor. Columba refused on the grounds that he did not want to

become the soul friend of someone who was destined for red martyrdom. Red martyrdom meant death for the faith; white martyrdom referred to someone who lived a life of asceticism, solitude and penance. The entry in the *Martyrology of Oengus* the Culdee states:

*Tis this Donnán that went to Colum cille to get him for a soulfriend, and Colum cille said to him, 'I will only be soulfriend,' quoth he, 'to folk of whit martyrdom. I will not be (thy) soulfriend, for thou and the whole of thy community with thee will go to red martyrdom'. And this was fulfilled.*²

From Iona, Donnan then travelled north. For many years, his missionary work took place among the Picts of northern Scotland and he appears to have travelled extensively in Sutherland and Caithness. His *muinntir* - his community – is thought at this time to have been established around the area of the Strath of Kildonan in Sutherland. Then he seems to have moved westwards. There are foundations bearing his name near Ullapool, Loch Alsh, Skye and Uist. From there it is assumed



The ancient graveyard and church of Kildonan, Eigg, on the east of the island.

he travelled to Eigg which was to be his last home.

On Eigg he set up his *muinntir* on a fertile slope on the east of the island, facing the mainland. It is estimated that in this community he had over 50 companions.

However, the establishment of the monastery on Eigg was not welcomed by the Queen of Moidart who was the ruler of the island. Several reasons have been advanced for her hostility – possibly she did not approve of the new religion, she may have resented the influence of the monks, or, as suggested by a note in the *Martyrology of Oengus* (quoted below), they may well have appropriated her grazing rights. Whatever the reason, in 617, as legend has it, she ordered the islanders to kill the monks. Newly converted to Christianity, they refused, so she then sent her own warriors to the island. According to one account, when they arrived, it was a Sunday and Donnan and his community were at Mass. Donnan asked the warriors to wait until the liturgy had finished, and as they left the church he and the rest of the monks were beheaded one by one. They were then burnt.

*Donnan then went with his people to the Hebrides; and they took up their abode there, in a place where the sheep of the Queen of the country were kept. This was told to the Queen. Let them all be killed, said she. That would not be a religious act, said her people. But they were murderously assailed. At that time the cleric was at Mass. Let us have respite till Mass is ended, said Donnan. Thou shalt have it, said they. And when it was over they were slain, every one of them*³

Another account has them being marched to the refectory which was then set on fire.

Whatever the manner of their death, Donnan and the names of his companions are listed in the

Martyrology of Tallaght.⁴ Their entry reads:

Donnani Ega cum suis id est LII. Hi sunt Aedani, Tarloga, Mairic, Congaile, Lonain, MacLasre, Iobain, Ernain, Ernini, Baethini, Rotain, Andrlog, Carillog, Rotain, Fergusain, Rectaire, Connidi, Endae, MacLoga, Guretii, Luncti, Corani, Baetani, Colmain, Ternlugi, Luggedo, Luctai, Gracind, Cucalini, Cobrain, Conmind, Cummini, Baltiani, Senaig, Demmain, Cummeni, Tarlugi, Finani, Findchain, Findchon, Cronani, Modomma, Cronain, Ciarian, Colmain, Naummi, Demmani, Ernini, Ailchon, Donnani.

In the *Martyrology of Oengus*, the entry for 17th April states:

*At the feast of Peter the Deacon, who advanced to victorious martyrdom, with his followers, a fair assembly, Donnan of chilly Eigg.*⁵

It is said that the islanders buried the saint's ashes and bones in a mound which was for a long time known as *Cnoc Dhonnain*. Despite the tragedy, however, the monastery Donnan founded seems to have remained functioning; the *Annals of Ulster* notes that one *Oan*, abbot of *Eig* died over a hundred years later in 725⁶.

Recent excavations carried out on Eigg have revealed evidence of the oval enclosure of Donnan's 7th century monastic settlement. Today the site is occupied by the ruins of a 16th century church and graveyard.

The current Catholic Church, built at Cleadale on the west of the island, is called St. Donnan's, and is served from St Marys, Arisaig. Erected in 1910 it had fallen into disrepair before being restored and rededicated in 2012.

In addition to this church on Eigg, there are, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*⁷, at least ten other churches named after St Donnan in Scotland. He was

canonised by Leo VIII in 1898. His feast is 17th April, the date of his death. A song of the Hebrides commemorates him:

'Early gives the sun greeting to Donnan,
Early sings the bird the greatness of Donnan,
Early grows the grass on the grave of Donnan,
The warm eye of Christ on the grave,
The stars of the heavens on the grave.
No harm, no harm to Donnan's dust.'⁸

Honor Hania is a librarian at Glasgow University whose responsibilities include Celtic and Gaelic studies.

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STEPHEN KELLY AND STEPHEN SMYTH

Pilgrimage for peace across Scotland

‘Oneness-Dream’ is an international male voice a cappella singing group whose members follow the spiritual teachings of Sri Chinmoy (1931-2007), the renowned Indian spiritual master, composer, artist and athlete. The group came to Scotland from 6th -14th Sept 2014 as part of an ongoing ‘world pilgrimage’ for peace.

Pilgrimage is a familiar practice in many religious traditions. It involves a journey which is both physical (to a place) and spiritual (to deeper faith, understanding and insight). Meeting with other people on the road helps to deepen each other’s experience and reflection. Pilgrims seek to be spiritually transformed, to return home refreshed and inspired. The Oneness-Dream Scotland Pilgrimage very much lived up to these expectations.

Stephen Kelly (Adarsha) has been a disciple of Sri Chinmoy and a member of Oneness-Dream for many years. He felt it was time for the group to come to Scotland, to visit some of our ‘sacred sites’ and to share their message of peace and harmony. He approached Stephen Smyth, an old friend with many ecumenical and interfaith connections, to help in the planning of the trip. Stephen (Smyth) liked the idea and had the pleasure of travelling with the group on the pilgrimage.

The group consisted of 13 singers and a team of four technical support staff. They came from ten different nations. Other disciples and friends joined the party at various points.

The Oneness-Dream repertoire is drawn from the thousands of

devotional songs composed by Sri Chinmoy. Most of these are in his native Bengali, but many are in English. Some are based on Gospel verses. They sing in unison in a traditional Indian style. The style is meditative and deeply spiritual.

We had prepared an ambitious programme, involving 15 ‘events’ and travelling over 1,000 miles through some of Scotland’s most beautiful scenery. The weather was stunning, showing the countryside and venues at their magnificent best. Equally, the welcome we received at every venue showed Scotland’s people and religious traditions at their most open and engaging best.

Our first event, on Sunday 7th Sept, was at the Hindu Mandir in Glasgow. The Mandir celebrations were for ‘Ganesh Puja’, one of the most important days in the Hindu calendar. The group sang for 30 minutes and were warmly received and appreciated. Later that day the group sang in Gorbals Parish Church (Church of Scotland) who run several choirs, some of whose members came to support the event.

The following day was very ambitious. We left early to travel first to Whithorn where the group sang in the Visitors Centre and the crypt of the medieval ruins; then

on to the Isle of Whithorn, a possible site for Ninian’s first monastery. There they sang in the ruins of the 14th century St Ninian’s chapel. Mid-afternoon found us in Samye Ling, the Buddhist monastery in Eskdalemuir: an increasingly popular and remarkable piece of Tibet in the Southern Uplands. That evening the group visited the extraordinary Rosslyn Chapel (Scottish Episcopal Church) outside Edinburgh. This was their only ‘concert’ of the pilgrimage, singing to an audience of 50 people and helping to raise funds for Rosslyn. By this time the group was beginning to appreciate something of the ancient Christian and the contemporary multi-faith nature of Scottish society - as well as the beauty of our countryside. The evening finished with very welcome dinner in the house of a family of disciples in Edinburgh.

On Tuesday 9, Oneness-Dream offered a ‘garland of song’ around Glasgow. They began in St Mungo’s Cathedral (Church of Scotland), followed by St Andrew’s Cathedral (Roman Catholic) and St Ninian’s (Scottish Episcopal Church) singing for 20-30 minutes in each. They finished in the Hidden Gardens where a yellow Sri Chinmoy rose has been flourishing

for many years. Each venue offered important insights into history and tradition as well as how to overcome division and work together for the common good.

That afternoon we travelled to Kilmartin, near Oban. In the surrounding countryside there are over 600 sites of historical interest dating back to about 10,000 BC. The group sang in Kilmartin church (Church of Scotland), in the lapidary in the graveyard and beside the Nether Largie standing stones in the valley below. It was humbling to consider such a long history of human life and the search for meaning.

The following morning we were on the early boat from Oban to Mull on our way to Iona. The morning was beautiful, the sea placid and the sky immense. The day just kept getting better. On Iona, Oneness-Dream sang for 30 minutes in the abbey, where a group of about 40 people enjoyed the unexpected experience.

Members of the Iona Community then met with the group to share stories of their history, spirituality and social action. Afterwards, the group sang for 10 minutes in St Oran's chapel and had about 90 minutes to enjoy the island before heading back to the ferry. The journey back across Mull and onwards to Fort William was a time of quiet and appreciative reflection.



Preparing to sing at Pluscarden.

Thursday 11th was the only day with no commitments. There was time to simply enjoy being tourists. Some of the more athletic members of the group took the opportunity to climb Ben Nevis: setting off in the very early morning and getting back in time for lunch. We then journeyed up along Loch Ness (no, we didn't see Nessie...) and stayed the night in Inverness.

Friday morning found us in Pluscarden Abbey where the community welcomed us warmly and generously and allowed the group to sing and record in the chapel. The subsequent conversations about singing, spirituality and community were very rich. We then travelled up to the Findhorn Foundation and sang in the community hall at the end of lunch. A group of the residents responded by singing some Taizé

chants for Oneness-Dream.

Friday evening brought the final 'event' of the pilgrimage: a 45 minute meditative song cycle for a group of disciples and friends in the Sri Chinmoy Centre on Edinburgh's Royal Mile. It was a fitting and convivial conclusion to a deep, varied and transformational week.

The whole pilgrimage turned out to be a series of highlights with different individuals responding more deeply to different places. The landscape, the history, the venues and the people all played their part in making the experience so rich. The overall response from the singers was hugely positive. The deep spirituality of the group and the meditative offering of their devotional songs were much

appreciated by their various 'audiences'. We are sure that all who were part of this innovative pilgrimage experience came away touched, uplifted and enriched.

Recordings and photographs from the trip will soon be available on the Oneness-Dream website at www.onenessdream.org.

Stephen Kelly (Adarsha) is a disciple of Sri Chinmoy and works in a senior position in the arts in Glasgow.

Stephen Smyth is a Marist Brother and recently retired as General Secretary of ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland).

They have been friends for almost 50 years, following different spiritual paths. They both grew up in Drumchapel, Glasgow, and met at a city centre youth drama group.

NOEL DONNELLY

The Francis effect in the pews

An adult education specialist who has been leading discussions on Pope Francis' letter *Evangelii Gaudium* reports on how it has been received.

It is almost a year since Pope Francis issued his long letter of encouragement to the church, *Evangelii Gaudium*, (The Joy of the Gospel) at the end of the Year of Faith. I have been leading sessions on this with various groups where the enthusiastic reaction has been: 'This is pure dead brilliant! We mustn't let it gather dust and die!'

The groups of adults who came to discussion sessions on *Evangelii Gaudium* consisted of 'ordinary' parishioners, few of whom would be accustomed to getting hold of a Roman text and reading its 300 long paragraphs. In practice, while this is not ideal, I took the liberty of copying key passages from each chapter and offering them for discussion during four 90-minute sessions, supporting them with pictures and symbols. Every session began and ended with prayer. People took away these summaries and prayers and reflected on them at home before sharing insights when we next met. These key texts and some of the reactions of the participants which follow may be useful for us in maintaining the dynamism of the Pope's exhortation.

The church's mission

Our first session was on the first chapter, *Transformation in the Church's Mission*. Five areas were outstanding in stimulating our reflections:

Participants warmed to this hopeful text: 'There is a need for a pastoral and missionary conversion, which cannot leave things as they presently are (25) ... and a renewal of ecclesiastical

structures to enable them to become more mission-oriented'(27).

They were happily astonished to hear that Pope Francis also considers 'a conversion of the papacy to help make this ministry more faithful to the meaning which Jesus Christ wished to give it and to the present needs of evangelization. The hope that the Episcopal Conferences might contribute to the concrete realisation of the collegial spirit has not been fully realised.(32) A sound decentralisation is necessary' (16).

References to the 'openness' needed for the renewal of evangelisation was warmly received. 'A sign of God's openness is that our church doors should always be open so that those who seek God will not find a closed door; nor should the doors of the sacraments be closed for simply any reason'.

There was much discussion on the particular openness for receiving the Eucharist. 'The Eucharist is not a prize

'I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church concerned with being at the centre and then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures'.

for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak (47). I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church concerned with being at the centre and then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: 'Give them something to eat (Mk 6:37)' (49).

We were fired up by Francis' fighting words: 'the life of the Church often turns into a museum piece or something which is the property of a select few. In some, this spiritual worldliness lurks behind a fascination with social and political gain, or pride in their ability to manage practical affairs, or an obsession with programmes of self-help and self-realization. It can also translate into a concern to be seen, into a social life full of appearances, meetings, dinners and receptions. It can also lead to a business mentality, caught up with management, statistics, plans and evaluations whose principal beneficiary is not God's people but the Church as an institution. Closed and elite groups are formed, and little effort is made to go forth and seek out those who are distant or the immense multitudes who thirst for Christ. Evangelical fervour is replaced by the empty pleasure of complacency and self-indulgence' (95).

Commitment today

Our second session explored chapter two, *Challenges to Commitment Today*. There were five areas which particularly impressed the groups, 'Just as the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say "thou shalt not" to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless' (53).

In stark contrast was Francis' challenge to private revelations and popular piety. 'At times greater emphasis is placed on the outward expressions and traditions of some groups, or on alleged private revelations which would replace all else, than on the impulse of Christian piety. There is a kind of Christianity made up of devotions reflecting an individual and sentimental faith life. Some people promote these expressions while not being in the least concerned with the advancement of society or the formation of the laity, and in certain cases they do so in order to obtain economic benefits or some power over others' (70).

The group reflected on the temptations to pastoral workers, either to sloth or burn-out. 'Many lay people fear that they may be asked to undertake some apostolic work yet they seek to avoid any responsibility that may take away from their free time. For example, it has become very difficult today to find trained parish catechists. Something similar is also happening with priests who are obsessed with protecting their free time. This is frequently due to the fact that people feel an overbearing need to guard their personal freedom, as

though the task of evangelisation was a dangerous poison rather than a joyful response to God's love which summons us to mission and makes us fulfilled and productive (81). A tomb psychology develops and slowly transforms Christians into mummies in a museum' (83). We reflected on how to sharpen up and stimulate our motivation.

The Pope's words on the maleness of the ordained priesthood caused much discussion. 'The reservation of the priesthood to males, as a sign of Christ the Spouse who gives himself in the Eucharist, is not a question open to discussion, but it can prove especially divisive if sacramental power is too closely identified with power in general. It must be remembered that when we speak of sacramental power we are in the realm of function, not that of dignity or holiness. Ministerial priesthood is one means employed by Jesus for the service of his people, yet our great dignity derives from baptism, which is accessible to all. The configuration of the priest to Christ the head does not imply an exaltation which would set him above others. In the Church, functions do not favour the superiority of some vis-à-vis the others. Indeed, a woman, Mary, is more important than the bishops. Even when the function of ministerial priesthood is considered 'hierarchical', it must be remembered that it is totally ordered to the holiness of Christ's members. Its key and axis is not power understood as domination, but the power to administer the sacrament of the Eucharist; this is the origin of its authority, which is always one of service to God's people. This presents a great challenge for pastors and theologians, who are in a position to recognize more fully what this entails with regard to the possible role of women in decision-making in different areas of the Church's life' (104). Group comments could be summarised as 'Well, yes, but....'

'A clear awareness of the responsibility of the laity does not appear in all places. In some cases, it is

because lay persons have not been given the formation needed to take on important responsibilities. In others it is because room has not been made for them to speak and to act, due to an excessive clericalism which keeps them away from decision-making' (102).

Proclaiming the gospel

Our third session was on chapter three, *The Proclamation of the Gospel*. The groups had strong opinions on the sermons they experienced. Three texts in particular stimulated comment:

The content of the sermon: 'A preaching which would be purely moralistic or doctrinaire, or one which turns into a lecture on biblical exegesis, detracts from a heart-to-heart communication. (142) The preacher needs to keep his ear to the people ... while paying attention to actual people, to using their signs and symbols, to answering the questions they ask' (154).

The language of the sermon: 'Preachers often use words learned during their studies which are not part of the ordinary language of their hearers. These are words that are suitable in theology or catechesis, but whose meaning is incomprehensible to the majority of Christians. The greatest risk for a preacher is that he becomes so accustomed to his own language that he thinks that everyone else naturally understands and uses it' (158).

The length of the sermon: 'The homily should be brief and avoid taking on the semblance of a lecture. If the homily goes on too long, it will affect two characteristic elements of the liturgical celebration: its balance and its rhythm' (138). Some participants commented that they were experiencing a 15-20 minute sermon followed by a four minute Eucharistic Prayer!

The social dimension

Our final session was on chapter four, *The Social Dimension of Evangelisation*.

'It is no longer possible to claim that religion should be restricted to the

private sphere and that it exists only to prepare souls for heaven' (182).

'I want to say, with regret, that the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care' (200).

'Doubly poor are those women who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment and violence, since they are frequently less able to defend their rights. Even so, we constantly witness among them impressive examples of daily heroism in defending and protecting their vulnerable families' (212).

'I ask God to give us more politicians capable of sincere and effective dialogue aimed at healing the deepest roots – and not simply the appearances – of the evils in our world! Politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good' (205).

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

More than 2,000 pastoral workers from around the world gathered in Rome last month to explore *Evangelii Gaudium*, which Pope Francis has referred to as the programme for his papacy. Bishops, priests, catechists and pastoral workers explored the letter in depth with the help of international speakers.

JIM MCMILLAN

Ecce Homo

A man who is concerned about modern constructs of masculinity takes up some of the issues raised by Dermot Lamb's article on men's spirituality in last month's Open House.

I read Dermot Lamb's piece ('Men weep too' Sept 14) with interest. There is clearly something seriously worrying about the construct of masculinity in Western post-industrial countries. From the overcrowded women's refuges here in Scotland to Syria, Iraq, Ukraine and a dozen other conflicts around the globe, it seems the boys are not doing very well in learning to live together. Indeed, in learning to live.

I smiled when I read Dermot refer to the 'church' and 'we'. What do we mean when we say 'church'? Who is this 'we' he refers to? It seems there is an assumption that there is a 'church' and a 'we' between whom there is potential for dialogue. I fail to see where this dyad exists. Even if we could locate it, would dialogue be possible? The church does not enter into dialogue but prefers to speak didactically. The problem today is that no one is listening. Even the remnant is becoming threadbare.

The Catholic Church is of course managed and run by men. Our disastrous recent history demonstrates the sorry state of masculinity within that particular coterie. Apart from the scandals, one only has to attend the average parish Mass on Sunday to hear what is being said about life generally. It would be a surprise, no a shock, if any were to raise issues like family violence and oppression. Increasingly we are served up

anodyne nonsense posing as preaching. To suggest that the Church, in the person of the clerics, might bring something to the discourse on masculinity would be bordering on the bizarre.

Essentially, the formal Church here in Scotland seems to me to have got lost in the mists of time and lost its way. Out of touch not only with 'the faithful' but with the Gospel.

Then there is 'we'. Who is this 'we'? I do not see any men or men's groups capable of entering into a dialogue with the wider Church (where there are few men in the pews). Does the average man make a connection between the Gospel and himself AS A MAN?

Dermot's reference to 12 Step Groups fails to see within them the necessary condition for 'conversion' which is to discover one's need for 'salvation'. The first of the 12 Steps says 'We admitted we were powerless...and our lives had become unmanageable'. Very few men see their masculinity as something to be recovered from. Not masculinity *per se*, for God does not make rubbish. Rather the construct of masculinity as experienced in modern society. Indeed throughout history men have found reason to slaughter each other. It seems that if there is not an obvious cause for conflict men will invent one.

Since the earliest times, the Church developed an apparent

loathing for everything to do with ‘the flesh’ seeing it as at odds with God and the life of the Spirit. Ignatius Loyola understood that we can only know God through the created world and provided a programme (inherited by the 12 Steppers incidentally! The pattern of the 12 Step programme has a remarkable similarity to the Spiritual Exercises). Who is going to come along to church and say, ‘My name is Joe and I’m a man’? Who in the church would be in a position to help Joe find his way out of such a malaise? Who would even know what he was talking about?

Richard Rohr in his lovely wee book ‘Adam’s Return’ makes the point that boys do not become men by the passage of time when they achieve 18 or 21 years of age. No, every culture had processes through which boys made the transition to manhood. In today’s post-industrial societies we have lost those rites of passage. Indeed it is questionable whether older men, who were not brought into adulthood ritually themselves, have the resources or ability to help boys transition into adult men. It seems to me that groups who have tried to begin the process of ‘men’s work’ have struggled to find a language within which the discourse can take place. This is perhaps because we do not have a narrative with which to frame the question far less the

answer. There have been valiant attempts by men over the past few decades to wrestle with this conundrum. Within the Catholic tradition Rohr is perhaps the most creative and is a significant voice within the wider discourse.

The problem, it seems to me, lies in not having the language with which to engage in the dialogue. Where do we find such language? There is a substantial literature on this question. Is it possible to convene men around such questioning?

Then of course there is Jesus. What are we to make of Him and His assuming the role of victim? I mean, what kind of man is this who can’t even stand up for himself or assert himself over against his detractors? Is He the kind of man I would be willing to become? The forgiving victim? How do we view Jesus offering no resistance to the authorities? Do we see him as being emasculated, less of a man? The divide between him and the heroes of our times seems unbridgeable. The sixth Step of the 12 Steps is, ‘We became entirely ready to have these defects of character removed’.

Sexism and the sinister reality of masculinity have roots in sex. It is interesting that men will talk about sex in the changing room at the sports club

or in the canteen or the pub. But never in the Church, so negatively preoccupied by sex, but which cannot engage meaningfully with the subject. What do men think they are doing when having sex? By that I mean, what meaning do they ascribe to their sex lives? Language such as ‘conquest’ is often used in describing the sexual activity of men. Men talk of ‘scoring’ or ‘getting’ when referring to sex. The underlying tone is of **getting** or **taking** or **being given** sex. How would the notion of surrender or self gift sit with men? Do you think of the sex you have as sacramental? What does that mean? Difficult in a Church that has historically viewed sex as almost a necessary evil.

Yes indeed, men weep too, but it is the burden of carrying this disfigured version of ourselves that is breaking our backs and our spirits. The challenge is enormous but we must not rely on the Church or the disfigured men who run it to come up with any answers. As always they will catch up with the *Zeitgeist* when the conversation has moved on and will find themselves, again, talking to themselves.

Jim McMillan is a retired social worker.

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NOTEBOOK

John Durkan lecture

The work of historian Dr John Durkan will be celebrated in a public lecture to mark the centenary of his birth at the University of Glasgow on 27th October.

The lecture, which will be given by Professor Sir Tom Devine, takes place in the Sir Charles Wilson Building lecture theatre at 1 University Ave and begins at 5pm. If you would like to attend, send an email to Arlene.burns@glasgow.ac.uk

Dr John Durkan (1914-2006) was a Glasgow schoolteacher who built up an international reputation for his work on Scottish cultural, intellectual and ecclesiastical history. He was a founding member of the Scottish Catholic Historical Association in 1950 and contributed to the Association's journal *The Innes Review*. He wrote extensively on educational development in Scotland, including the formation and early years of the University of Glasgow.

The challenge of citizenship

Professor Werner Jeanrond will return to Glasgow later this month to deliver a lecture on citizenship. Professor Jeanrond, who was Professor of Divinity at Glasgow University from 2008 - 2012, is currently Master of St Benet's Hall, University of Oxford.

The lecture, which is entitled *The Challenge of good citizenship today: Memory, Hope and the Crisis of Trust* will be given on Thursday 23rd October in the Sir Charles Wilson Building Lecture Theatre at 6pm.

The Stevenson Lectures in Citizenship, which are open to all, were established in 1921 by a bequest to the University

from Sir Daniel Macaulay Stevenson (1851 – 1944) a Glasgow-born engineer, politician and philanthropist.

One World week

One World Week, a charity which promotes awareness of global justice issues every October, has chosen the theme of 'living differently' for the focus of this year's week which runs from 19th – 26th October.

'Living differently' recognises that we all need to make changes to secure a fairer life for everyone, whilst protecting the planet's resources for future generations. People are invited to organise events in their local communities which promote active citizenship through sourcing food differently, reducing wastefulness and using money ethically to support the changes people would like to see.

The One World Week website offers resources, ideas and suggestions about working across faith communities. See www.oneworldweek.org

Jings Crivvens

The Sunday Post is celebrating its 100th birthday. The couthy 'family' newspaper was the creation of Dundee firm DC Thomson and helped put the third of Dundee's three Js – jam, jute and journalism - on the map.

The Thomson family made their fortune in international shipping and branched out into publishing with the purchase of the Dundee Courier and Argus in 1866. David Coupar Thomson took responsibility for the family's growing publishing interests and in 1905 D C Thomson and Company was set up. The Sunday Post was created to provide news of the war effort in 1914

as a special edition of the existing Saturday Post. Hundreds of DC Thomson employees were at the front and many sent back eye witness accounts. David Thomson motored to France with his chauffeur and reported on the conflict. The newspaper continued after the war with the first edition of the new Sunday Post published in January 1919.

The famous comic characters created by Dudley D Watkins – Oor Wullie and the Broons – appeared in the new fun section in 1936 and their annuals became part of Christmas for generations of Scottish children. Hen and Joe Broon enlisted when World War Two broke out.

By the 1980s an estimated six out of ten adults in the country read the Sunday Post. At its peak it was named by the Guinness Book of Records as the most read paper in the world in its circulation area, with sales of more than 1.7 million in a country of five million people. Today its sales are closer to 200,000.

The Post came out for No in the independence referendum. The historian Tom Nairn famously said that Scotland will be free when the last minister is strangled with the last copy of the Sunday Post. The numbers of both may be in decline but freedom, some would say, is as far away as ever.

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LETTERS

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Referendum bias

I am taken aback at your editorials in the August and September editions. As someone who has been out in the schemes campaigning for a No vote I find these

editorials far from my reality. I have never come across a Yes campaigner and no Yes campaigner has even been round my scheme.

To suggest that No voters are only

interested in themselves is utter rubbish. It was a Labour government who slashed child poverty and raised pensioners out of poverty, the SNP have done nothing in this regard. They wouldn't even vote for a living

wage and most of their MPs didn't even bother turning up for the bedroom tax vote in Westminster! John Swinney is quoted as saying he wouldn't let Osborne off the hook when Labour in Scotland urged him to help with the effects of the bedroom tax. Nationalism by its very nature is divisive. Even Pope Francis warns about the dangers of separation, yet August's editorial is suggesting that Catalonia break from Spain, a disturbing prospect. Will the Northern League in Italy be next, because they want to share their wealth – I think not!

Then to link subsidiarity in Catholic Social Teaching to a Yes vote and imply that even being part of the EU is questionable under this heading is just dangerous. In this world of today we should be joining together whenever we have the opportunity, not breaking apart. And then to patronise the reader by adding 'let's take time for a bit of prayer'...what is a BIT of prayer?

Florence Boyle, in her message from the treasurer, is asking for more subscriptions. I couldn't in all seriousness invite anyone I know to read this journal which takes such a prominent bias on an editorial. My husband and myself are seriously reconsidering our subscription to *Open House*.

Mary and Andy Glen, AIRDRIE

Referendum opportunity

For many voters the referendum on independence for Scotland was about democracy, subsidiarity and justice. Voting Yes was a vote for a more democratic government in Scotland and one that is just. Subsidiarity requires decision making at the most appropriate level by those who are affected by the outcomes. Catholic Social Teaching emphasises justice and the preferential option for the poor, as Pope Francis has emphasised in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Democracy involves creating

structures which enable all the people of God to express their views and for these to be heard and responded to justly.

Lumen Gentium (§40, 41) spells out clearly the role of the followers of Christ – all of them. There is too the 'Sensus Fidelium' – 'the entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief' (§5). 'Subsidiarity' is addressed (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* §26) in its call for councils of the church, at every level, which address the apostolic work of the Church in all areas. Such councils are not widely present.

Then there are the teachings of Catholic Social Justice including the preferential option for the poor. Many, probably most, Catholic congregations are aware and active in this area, and aware too of their political responsibility in this regard. This was a factor many considered in making a decision on how to vote in the recent referendum.

So there is much for all of us to think about besides the political difficulties which will arise as a result of the referendum vote. Could this be an opportunity for us to look also at the way our Church functions? And perhaps raise our voices, albeit gently and courteously?.

Ahilya Noone, GLASGOW

Francis de Sales

Thank you to Mary Hardy for pointing out the importance for today of St Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life*. It sustained Catholics at a time when they had only rare access to Mass. They had to retreat into their own 'little oratory'. The only surprise was that she thought his advice against games of chance was a bit dated. The average Main Street today is being filled up with betting shops.

A Smith, FIFE

LIVING SPIRIT



The primary reason for evangelizing is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love of him. What kind of love

would not feel the need to speak of the beloved ... to make him known. If we do not feel an intense desire to share this love, we need to pray insistently that he will once more touch our hearts. Standing before him with open hearts, letting him look at us, we see that gaze of love which Nathaniel glimpsed on the day when Jesus said to him: 'I saw you under the fig tree'. (Jn.1.48) How good it is to stand before a crucifix, or on our knees before the Blessed Sacrament and simply to be in his presence! How much good it does us when he once more touches our lives and impels us to share his new life! What then happens is that 'we speak of what we have seen and heard!' (1 Jn. 1:3). The best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading it with the heart. If we approach it in this way, its beauty will amaze and constantly excite us... We need to recover a contemplative spirit which can help us to realise ever anew that we have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life.

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Art. 264. CTS, 2013

Late have I loved you, Beauty so ancient and so new,
Late have I loved you!
Lo, you were within,
but I outside, seeking there for you,
and upon the shapely things you have made
I rushed headlong,
I misshapen.
You were with me, but I was not with you.
They held me back from you,
those things which would have no being,
were they not in you.
You called, shouted, broke through my deafness:
you flared, blazed, banished my blindness;
you lavished your fragrance, I gasped, and
now I pant for you;
I tasted you, and I hunger and thirst,
You touched me, and I burned for your
peace.

St Augustine. Translated by Maria Boulding, from The Heart's time by Janet Morley, SPCK London 2013.

Send your comment in a letter to the editor by Friday
31st October for inclusion in November's edition of
Open House. editor@openhousescotland.co.uk

BOOKS

A Prayer Journal

Flannery O'Connor

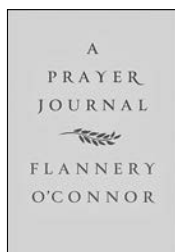
Farrar, Strauss & Giroux 2013

(USA)

As a recent Kindle convert I have been guiltily appalled by the speed with which I dumped all my previously held Luddite principles and righteous talk about the physical reality of 'THE BOOK'.

The ease with which I now pick up the slim, light little machine and tap to turn the page is only occasionally blighted by the passing thought that the beautiful book may finally disappear thanks to this very ease. But then another thought occurs (and was recently echoed on *Newsnight*). Namely, that it is the mass produced paperback that's in most danger. The fine hardback volume will always have its place, and may indeed be reborn as the truly valued work of art it once was.

The people most likely to be 'pit out' by this development, as the recent *Newsnight* item highlighted, are the billionaire publishers and their celebrity authors who have been causing a bit of a stink about the colossus that is Amazon wrecking their market. There are no points to be had by defending Amazon but the giants of popular publishing have blood on their fly leaves too. JK Rowling having done for



literature what *Downton Abbey* has done for repertory theatre.

At the other end of the literary and artisan market place is the newly published (end of last year in the US) *A Prayer Journal* by Flannery O'Connor. If you are not familiar with this quiet, late woman of letters change that now. Start with anything. Her short stories are what she is best known for: 'A Good Man is Hard to Find'; 'Everything That Rises Must Converge'. Novels less so, but *Wise Blood* belongs in the canon of southern American literature, and she with the big names of its patriarchy: Faulkner, Twain and Williams.

In her early twenties, which was also the age at which I discovered her, she kept a prayer diary. Brought up Catholic in the deep south of the 1930s and 40s, her sheltered home life and the ravages of segregation created a split in her developing mind that is evident in the early writings of an emerging woman, talent and Christian. Faith was something she clung to through, and sometimes despite, her intellect, recognising as she did so that there comes a point where rationale will not do. On speculating about the nature of any possible 'heaven' she remarks:

'But I do not mean to be clever although I do mean to be clever on 2nd thought and like to be clever & want to be considered so'.

For a young woman who wanted to believe and also wanted to be considered clever this brought consolation as well as a smile of self-recognition. The extraordinary thing about this volume is that the faith struggles and questions of a 22 year old

who was hardly in the world yet can be absorbed by minds 30 years older and more as simple commentary on what it means to keep believing in 'this life that seems so treacherous, so disappointing'.

Flannery O'Connor died at the age of 39 and there may be something in her early experience of the disease that would kill her that informed these profoundly interior and reflective musings. But there is nothing of the sickly girl about her or her writing. This is more Toni Morrison than Elizabeth Barratt Browning. And at times a little Billie Holiday:

'Am I trying to shock with God? Am I trying to push Him in there violently, feet foremost? Maybe that's all right. Maybe if I'm doing it it's all right?'

There isn't a Kindle version of this book and if you buy it you will understand why. The publishers have inspiringly reprinted her original handwritten notes. Half of the book is a faithful facsimile of her journal. This really is one of those times when there just isn't a substitute for holding the thing, feeling its pages between your fingers and letting your eyes roam across the handwritten words. It's the opposite of the instant purchase download. Elegant, tangible, visually and emotionally piercing, it is an objet d'art as well as a reading joy and may be among a new breed of publication about which the compliment will be 'not available on Kindle'.

She was to writing about the inner life what Billie Holiday was to the blues.

Lynn Jolly

FILM

Hannah Arendt (2013)

Directed by: Margarethe von Trotta

Starring: Barbara Sukowa, Axel Milberg, Janet McTeer.

Hannah Arendt was a student and lover of Martin Heidegger, the most famous philosopher of the 20th century. In 1933 the Catholic Heidegger, in order to succeed Husserl as Rector of Freiburg University, joined

the Nazi party. The Jewish Arendt fled first to France and then to the USA where she became the first woman to be appointed as a lecturer at Princeton. The year before she died in 1975 she gave the Gifford Lectures in the University of Aberdeen on the moral nature of thinking.

The film shows flashbacks to her affair with Heidegger but the main action focuses on her





Arendt and Heidegger had a complex relationship, which ended only with Arendt's death in 1975.

decision in 1962 to report for the *New Yorker* magazine the trial in Jerusalem of Adolf Eichmann who had been kidnapped in Argentina by the Israelis. The legendary editor, William Shawn, was apprehensive that her writing might prove to be too academic. In fact her articles caused a sensation. Arendt, as a New York socialite, could not get over the fact that the man credited with organising the Holocaust appeared to be completely insignificant. She coined the phrase - the banality of evil - with which she has ever since been associated. Gita Sereny made a similar point in her study of Franz Stangl, the Kommandant at Treblinka. Joel Cang, reporting for *The Times* on the trial of Rudolf Hoss who ran Auschwitz, wrote 'he was the complete denial of any criminal type theory'.

The film makes clear that this take on the trial went down badly in Israel which had intended to portray Eichmann as an evil monster. It was also taken as a betrayal of the German Jewish establishment in New York. Mary McCarthy was one of the few literary figures who stood up for her. In the 2009 documentary *Defamation*, Yoav Shamir says that in Manhattan they are quicker to detect anti-semitism than in Israel. Arendt went further. If such an insignificant figure as Eichmann had been so effective he must have had help. And that help would have come not only from Germans but also from Jews.

Arendt faced two problems. First, like her, the majority of well off German Jews (65%) had bought their way out. Secondly who had spoken up for the less well off? Most of those who were killed lived in lands to the East which the Nazis wanted to take over (90% of Polish Jews died). Arendt tried to bring to these questions the mind of a philosopher. From Heidegger, whose doctoral thesis was on John Duns Scotus (Arendt's was on St Augustine), she had taken the need to reflect not on (wo)man in the abstract but on the actions of individual women and men.

The film tries to give some sense of her thinking on the human condition by having the actress, Barbara Sukowa, read some of her lectures to students. Arendt was grappling not only with the conformity of the masses under totalitarian regimes but also with how ordinary people go along with the status quo. It was after reading Arendt that the psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted the notorious experiment in which he was able to use his authority to persuade his students to give real electric shocks to other students, allegedly for reasons of research.

We find it difficult to understand how modern Israelis can allow the killing of 2,000 poor Arabs in a month. But in the last decade our own government has unleashed terror on hundreds of thousands of Iraqis without much protest from us. Arendt's point is that there are no evil monsters. There are only people like ourselves who are too frightened of losing what we have to make a stand against the status quo. Her reflection on the human condition is that it is marked by thoughtlessness, especially with respect to the effects of our actions on others. That is as true of the wealthy banker who accepts a salary one hundred times greater than his cleaner as it is of the common thief who steals from his neighbour's purse.

Norman Barry

Reviewers

Lynn Jolly is arts editor of *Open House*.

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

The legacy of Rev Dr Ian Paisley 1926-2014

Ian Paisley's declining political power and influence were well documented. His declining health widely known, if less reported. When news came of his death, official responses were, on the whole, sensitive and articulate.

Deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness, commented, 'past history shows we were political opponents but on this day, I think I can say without fear of contradiction that I have lost a friend.' Unofficial social media responses were somewhat more diffuse. To some he was a hero: a preacher, protestor, and prophet, with the courage to say what needed to be said, and do what needed to be done. To others, he was a sectarian bigot who inflamed tensions and acted as a consistent obstacle on the road to peace. However, one rarely reads a bad obituary.

Paisley's political and social contributions to Northern Ireland (and beyond) in the latter half of the 20th century were, for better or worse, undeniable. When I grew up in Belfast, he was a figure that loomed large on the horizon. His voice, instantly recognisable. His historic political intransigence, becoming a characteristic hallmark and caricature of a certain type of unionism. His contributions were often categorised as predictably negative. Indeed, such was his reputation that John Hume, SDLP politician, once asked him that if the word 'no' was removed from the English language, would he be speechless. Paisley famously quipped, 'No, I wouldn't.'

His political and religious career has been, and will continue to be, dissected. All that I can offer are

some personal reflections as a Northern Irish Catholic with an acute awareness of the suffering experienced on all sides. For me, his vehemence against religious and political difference seemed to exacerbate tensions in Northern Ireland at the very times when a word of calm – particularly from a community leader – would have been pertinent. It *could* have saved lives. At a loyalist rally in 1968, following attacks on Catholic homes, Paisley famously commented that those ‘Catholic homes caught fire because they were loaded with petrol bombs; Catholic churches were attacked and burned because they were arsenals and priests handed out sub-machine guns to parishioners.’ On the death of Pope John XXIII, a man recently put forward by Jewish organisations for recognition as a ‘Righteous among the Nations’ for his efforts to save Jews during World War II, Paisley commented that ‘this Romish man of sin is now in hell!’ His infamous ‘Anti-Christ’ denunciation of Pope John Paul II’s address to the European Parliament (an institution he considered a precursor to the coming of the antichrist) in October 1988 demonstrated comparable sentiments.

He opposed the Northern Irish civil rights movement, played a strong hand in stoking temperatures during the 1974 power sharing executive which eventually led to its downfall, protested outside the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, and persistently flicked the on/off switch when it came to making the devolved government work in the early 2000s. It seemed to be his way or the highway. It was only following the 2006 St Andrew’s Agreement that Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness were elected as First and Deputy First Minister respectively – more popularly known as the ‘chuckle brothers.’

Reflecting on the death of Ian Paisley, I find myself torn between an awareness of what he was and an appreciation of what he became. In some respects, Paisley became the ultimate caricature of political and religious intransigence and I often wondered if he actually became trapped by some of the boundaries he had created, both personally and politically. The sentiment here is well expressed by an instance in which Gandhi was once asked by a wily journalist what would he do if he ever met Hitler (and I’m *not* here comparing Paisley to Hitler but rather emphasising the sentiment). Gandhi’s response was that he would tell Hitler that God loves him. The thinking here was that by offering a different response from that which was expected, he would open up ‘space’ for the other to respond differently. I often wondered how much ‘space’ Paisley left himself to act differently. A career built on ‘no’ leaves few avenues for development. It should be noted that when he eventually did act differently, having been First Minister for just over a year, Paisley was eventually forced out in 2008 from the political party he had established, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). For some of his supporters, the sight of him laughing with his ‘chuckle brother’, Martin McGuinness, was a bridge too far. He had lost the support of his party and rattled his supporters. Having built a career and constituency based on a ‘no’ consensus, Paisley’s eventual ‘yes’ marked the end of his political and religious career. He arguably became a victim of his own intransigence.

Without doubt, however, Paisley represented a genuine sector of the Northern Irish electorate. This was also an electorate that he helped shape and form over the course of a half-century long political and religious career. This symbiotic

relationship must not be forgotten. Northern Ireland is not a ‘post-conflict’ society. It is a ‘post-settlement’ society. Conflict, unfortunately, persists. And yet *it is only* a ‘post-settlement’ society because of Paisley’s eventual willingness to engage in power sharing. This is as much a part of his legacy as his historic firebranding anticatholicism. Which aspect of his legacy the people of Northern Ireland choose to remember is not yet clear; the annals of history will likely decide. However, my hope is that it will be both. And that in remembering both, we will remember that change is possible. That transition from even the most entrenched positions is possible. But that opening up ‘space’ for the other also involves opening up ‘space’ for oneself (or one’s community) to act differently – and this can come at price. For without ‘space’ to act differently, we are destined to perpetuate the status quo. Paisley, for all his faults, eventually provided the ‘space’ for change. And while I’m grateful to him for this, I’m less grateful for the numerous historical opportunities he had to contribute a word of calm, at times of heightened tensions, but did the contrary. Such times were opportunities for change – however incremental – and yet he often chose to exacerbate the situation. As such, while grateful for what he eventually did, I’m equally haunted by the question: why couldn’t he have done it sooner?

Anthony Allison

Dr Anthony Allison (Twitter: @antallison1) is an academic specialising in Christian-Muslim relations and Religion and Society at the University of Edinburgh.

Moments in time



We leave the busy main thoroughfare and walk along a quiet side road past a short row of

stone houses. Soon we are on what feels like a country lane with fields of grazing cattle on our left and a steep rocky hillside on the right. The centre of Edinburgh is less than three miles away but there are no habitations in sight; the city is completely concealed by Blackford Hill. The larger Braid Hills to the south contain not only the usual golf courses but a working farm further up the hill. The ancient keep of Liberton Tower stands on the horizon, a reminder of times past.

The lane takes us beside the Braid Burn, heading west past an old quarry, now used as a Roads depot by Edinburgh City Council. Here the road turns into a rough track lined by small trees and bushes, already showing signs of autumn. Horses are feeding in the sloping fields where a path climbs up the wooded Howe Dean to the Braid Hills. We make a short detour to inspect some rocks with scratch marks, which in 1840, the geologist

Louis Agassiz first identified as evidence of erosion by ice. Blackford Hill has almost perpendicular sides, with gorse bushes growing on ledges. At the base, there is a thicket of blackthorn; someone is hidden in the centre picking sloes; a prickly task. We help ourselves to some brambles while blackbirds and thrushes are feeding on hawthorn berries.

The path goes under a footbridge and enters a thick wood. This is the Hermitage of Braid, where nearly fifty years ago I used to exercise my landlady's dogs. The path crosses and re-crosses the burn, where we glimpse a grey wagtail; sometimes there are dippers here. We climb a slope to reach a lawn in front of a small mansion house, Hermitage House built in 1785, which is now used as a Visitor Centre by Edinburgh City Council countryside rangers. Surrounded by stately trees, this fine house retains the feel of the period when it was the centre of a small estate, well outside the boundary of Edinburgh.

Tim Rhead

Tim Rhead is a pastoral assistant in the Episcopal Church.

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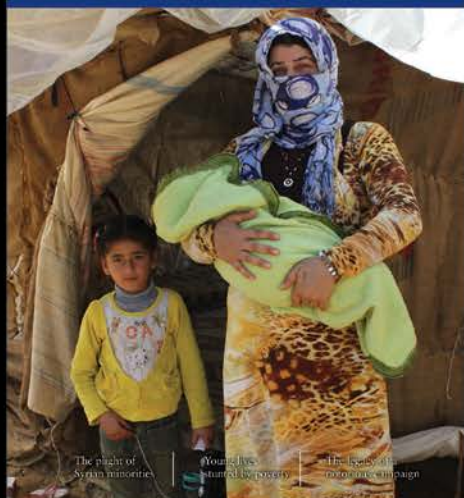
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