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Detail from Caravaggio's 'Doubting Thomas'.

A SCOTTISH RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE OF COMMENT, OPINION AND REFLECTION

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EDITORIAL

Easter Rising

Catholics have long argued about how to compute the 40 days of Lent since there are 46 between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. A favourite ploy has been to discount the Sundays or, as in Ireland, take time off around *Paddy's Day*. The correct answer apparently is to see the days before the First Sunday in Lent as preparation. 40 days from the First Sunday in Lent brings one to Maundy Thursday. This allows the *Triduum* to be celebrated in its own right.

> *Easter is an invitation to rise above ourselves.*

The 1969 Missal states that the services of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil (the Triduum) are to be celebrated as one continuous piece. After 40 years the evening mass of the Last Supper and the night celebration of the Resurrection remain poorly attended. Crowds come only to the afternoon Commemoration of the Passion - specifically the kissing of the cross. And priests are able to keep people in the church for the whole of the revised liturgy (including communion - one of the less fortunate additions in the Missal) only by relocating the central act of venerating the cross until after the service has finished.

There is little sense of climax around the main liturgical event of the year which is the rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in Baptism and Confirmation and the receiving of others into full communion in the church during the Easter Vigil. Parish behaviour remains highly individualistic. There is little sense of solidarity with those joining or returning to the church at the end of Lent.

The eggs of the future church in Scotland remain firmly in the basket of the first communion of children. Despite the statistics, and the evidence of our eyes, hope remains strong in 'our young people'. Interestingly this hope did not extend itself to a welcome to the thousands of young Catholics, fellow European citizens, who suddenly arrived in our midst, to say nothing of the families of Catholic African and Indian refugees and asylum seekers. We will breed our way out of the present crisis by ourselves, thank you very much! No need by us for the convert figures of the blind beggar, the woman at the well living with her sixth partner, the man brought back from the dead whom we heard about in Lent in the great catechetical stories of John's Gospel.

Contrary to the fears of our ageing bachelor leadership the crisis of faith has less to do with drugs and sex and rock 'n roll among the younger and more to do with the eating and drinking and wanting to be nice 'n happy among older people. We call it secularisation. For the first Christians it was the Roman Empire. Easter is precisely an invitation to rise above ourselves.

Happy Easter

WILLY SLAVIN

Rev Leith Fisher 1941 - 2009

I first met Leith in 1970 when he had a full-time appointment as Church of Scotland Minister to Calton Youth Club in the East End of Glasgow. He lived with Nonie and their growing family in a large apartment overlooking Glasgow Green. Each Thursday at lunchtime the flat was the venue for 'the soup group', a gathering of up and coming young ministers which included two later Moderators, John Miller and David Lunan. I had just been appointed to St Michael's Parkhead with pastoral responsibility for Glasgow's last junior secondary school, St Mary's, Calton, by that time relocated to 'enemy' territory in Bridgeton. I was graciously invited to join the group and returned the compliment by having the ministers visit the school, something which generated many stories that Leith was always fond of retelling. But I do remember that though we clerics thought of ourselves then as at the cutting edge the women and children were still confined to the kitchen!

Leith went on later to distinguished ministries in Falkirk and in Wellington in University Avenue in Glasgow while serving on a range of General Assembly committees. He published a series of gospel commentaries with incisive social reflections and wrote hymns, several of which are included in the current C of S Hymnary. Restricted as I was by conventional Catholicism I was struck by the buccaneering spirit he brought to Easter morning services in Kelvingrove Park. Though he once told me that his most frightening religious experience was listening to the preachers out in the Western Isles while holidaying with Nonie's family. They were committed members of the Iona Community.

When he retired in 2006 to Clydebank in view of his home town of Greenock I was delighted when he agreed to write for Open House from the Reformed tradition. He was a daily cyclist and in August last year while doing a charity run in Arran he was seriously injured in an accident where a companion was killed. He was at her funeral in a wheel chair and was soon up and about again, complaining only that he wasn't back on his bike yet. His sudden death from other causes was all the more shocking. At his funeral I recognised a group of men, parishioners of St Alphonsus in the Barras, who had been members of Calton Youth Club and who had retained fond memories of 'Leafie'. They told me those were the best years of their lives, a tribute to console Nonie and the family.
Requiescat in pace

DAN BAIRD

Lefebvrism in Context

Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre

In Brian Moore's 1995 novel *The Statement*, set in postwar France, the fugitive war criminal Pierre Brossard - based on Paul Touvier, a former officer in Vichy's *Milice* - tells his wife he intends to go to church. 'What are you talking about?' she demands. 'You don't go to Mass now because you can't stand to see black people kneeling beside you… you can't stand it when the priest faces you and prays in French instead of turning his back and mumbling in Latin…' Brossard replies, 'Well, that's true enough. These left-wing priests have ruined the beauty of the Mass, they're ruining our religion.'

The novel interestingly highlights the link between self-styled 'Traditionalist' Catholics in France - where half the world's Lefebvrists live - and extreme right-wing politics there. The persistence of that link in the Lefebvrist Society of St Pius X (SSPX) has been underlined by Bishop Richard Williamson's denial of the Holocaust. A right-wing Catholic or *integriste* tradition, viscerally anti-Semitic, connects the Dreyfus Affair, Action Française, the wartime Vichy regime, the SSPX and Jean-Marie Le Pen's racist National Front. Le Pen, admired by Lefebvre, was convicted by a German court in 1999 of 'minimizing the Holocaust' for remarks similar to Williamson's. Another Lefebvrist bishop, Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, is a patron of the extreme right-wing Union des Nations de l'Europe Chrétienne, which is supported by the National Front.

In September 1976 Pope Paul VI, attempting to avert schism, granted a personal audience to Archbishop Lefebvre, whom he described as the greatest cross of his Pontificate. Their meeting solved nothing. The Archbishop, suspended a *divinis* from July that year, continued to refuse obedience: he would still say the Tridentine Mass, he wanted the right to train priests 'as before the Council' and, crucially, he would not give a written assurance that he accepted the Second Vatican Council and its documents.

He objected to more than the Council's decree on the liturgy. He wrote: '… we refuse and have always refused to follow the Rome of neo-modernist and neo-Protestant tendencies which clearly manifested themselves in the Second Vatican Council and after the Council in all the reforms which issued from it.' His position was shared by the SSPX, which he had founded, and whose four bishops - ordained illegally by him in 1988 - have now had their excommunication lifted by Pope Benedict XVI.

Lefebvre rejected the Council as radically flawed. It had, he maintained, adopted the principles of the French Revolution: 'liberty' in the doctrine of religious freedom, 'equality' in the doctrine of collegiality, and 'fraternity' in ecumenism. He said, 'From this adulterous union between the Church and the Revolution can come only bastards.' Reflecting on Lefebvre's behaviour, Pope Paul saw him, in Peter Hebblethwaite's words, as representative of 'that tenacious French Right-wing, born of Action Française, which saw the modern world in all its forms … as exclusively hostile.'

What Yves Congar OP wrote of Action Francaise applies to *integrisme* in general. He described it as: 'sticking disparaging labels on one's opponents, while never admitting that one might be in error oneself; gathering everything that one detests under an umbrella term which arouses unqualified emotional repulsion; insisting that one is right, while sometimes displaying a pettifogging spirit in so doing; being convinced that there is a wicked plot, that a 'Judaeo-Masonic' or communist conspiracy has infiltrated the Church, is working inside it, and is fomenting internal subversion'. Action Française, which is echoed in Lefebvrism, originated in the Dreyfus Affair.

In 1894 a Jewish captain, Alfred Dreyfus, was wrongly accused of treason, convicted, degraded from the French Army, and transported for life. The resultant controversy saw an outbreak of virulent anti - Semitism. Catholics - notably the Assumptionist Order and its newspaper *La Croix* - were prominent in denouncing Dreyfus and the 'Jewish syndicate' who campaigned for his release. In 1898 Colonel Henry, who had forged evidence against Dreyfus, admitted the forgery and committed suicide. A fund was opened for the support of Henry's wife, and hundreds of priests were among those who contributed to it. The messages accompanying their gifts included 'Down with all Republicans … yids, huguenots, freemasons, and all those who are judaized like them', 'From a priest convinced of the perversity of the Jews' and - grimly foreshadowing the Holocaust - 'For a bedside rug made of the skins of Jews in order to tread on them every morning and evening'.

From this hatred was born Action Française, founded in 1899 by the journalist and notorious anti-Semite Charles Maurras. Himself an unbeliever, Maurras saw Catholicism as an essential part of the French nation. His movement, which enjoyed widespread Catholic - including clerical - support, has been seen by political scientists as the first to contain all the elements of fascism. These were: authoritarianism, mass fervour in the cause of national integration, anti-Socialism, pursuit of cultural purity, and hatred of what it saw as an intractable and unassimilable minority - the Jews. Maurras supported the collaborationist Vichy regime and its anti-Semitic programme, and Lefebvre praised Vichy for its 'Catholic order'. In his viciously anti-Semitic articles, Maurras denounced leading Jews living in hiding, including a banker who was subsequently kidnapped and killed by the Milice. Sentenced to life imprisonment in 1945, Maurras shouted to the judges, 'This is the revenge of Dreyfus'.

Michael Walsh has observed that Lefebvre had personal experience of Action Française, as a student at the French College in Rome when it was strongly influenced by Maurras' *integriste* movement. Lefebvre's enthusiasm for 'Catholic order' was shown again in his postwar support for right-wing regimes, including those of Augusto Pinochet in Chile and Jorge Videla in Argentina. He praised Videla's government as 'an orderly government which has principles, which has authority, which is starting to tidy things up'. When democracy was restored in Argentina, Videla was put on trial for this tidying - up, which consisted of large-scale human rights abuses and crimes against humanity, including widespread torture and murder.

Paul Touvier, on whom Brian Moore based his character Pierre Brossard, came from a family that supported Action Française. He joined the *Milice* in 1943 and was involved in the deportation and murder of Jews. After the war he was sheltered in various religious houses and was eventually arrested in 1989 in the Nice priory of the SSPX. Throughout his trial, a priest of the SSPX sat beside him, and after his death in prison a requiem Mass was said for him at an SSPX church in Paris. While the Catholic Church in France has publicly apologised for wartime failure in its 'responsibility towards the Jewish people', the SSPX remains, according to human rights researchers, 'mired in anti-Semitism'.

The Lefebvrists are not 'Traditional' Catholics, fond of the Latin liturgy and disinclined to change. They despise the reforms of Vatican II and see in Rome's overtures to them the capitulation of the postconciliar Church. In Lefebvrism, Catholics can see ugly features of our own past: political authoritarianism, an obsession with order at the expense of social justice, anti-Semitism, and a sour triumphalism. That we have disowned and discarded these is shown in the Church's endorsement of Christian Democracy, in postwar Catholic social teaching and in the documents of Vatican II. The SSPX derives from, and continues, a shameful tradition. Bishop Williamson's Holocaust statements constitute a warning: to re-admit the Lefebvrists to the Church would be a scandal.

Contributors to Open House

James McGarry; Retired Doctor, Reviewer, Author.

Paul Fitzpatrick; Lecturer in Theology and Philosophy in Scunthorpe, Reviewer and Writer.

Dan Baird; Retired Teacher, Writer, Reviewer and Secretary of the Glasgow Newman.

Linden Bicket; Graduate in History, Currently a PhD student in the Scottish History Dept Glasgow University.

Jimmy Kelly; Retired Teacher, Reviewer, Freelance Writer.

John O'Connor OP; Writer, Reviewer, Parish Priest in Glasgow.

Professor Ian Willock; Retired Law Faculty Dundee Univesity, An Editor of Open House.

Willy Slavin; Writer, Reviewer, Parish Priest, An Editor of Open House.

John Cooney; Historian, Writer, Journalist.

Bernard Aspinwall; Historian and Author of many books.

It is confirmed that the opinions and ideas expressed by all our Contributors are their own and not accepted as those of Open House.

L'Arche Glasgow Project

L'Arche is an international federation of more than 130 communities of people with and without learning disabilities who are committed to sharing life in a community of faith.

Whereas almost all L'Arche communities are residentially based, the vision for the Glasgow community is that it shall be created through **work**. In an exciting and innovative partnership with Wellington Church of Scotland, L'Arche Glasgow will be responsible for a day provision, training, and supported employment project based in the church's long-established 'Crypt'.

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For more information contact glasgow@larche.com.

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MARIE LOUISE COCHRANE

Family Working Full Time in the Church

When Pope John Paul II came to Scotland I was an impressionable teenager. I really took to heart the call I heard him make, for young people to take our part in being the Church and in changing the world. I became a committed and active catholic adult with a Masters degree in Religious Studies, missionary experience in Latin America and formation in spiritual direction.

It wasn't until I was married with children, working and had several roles in parish life that, together with my husband, I considered the possibility that we as a married couple, might be called to offer our gifts and skills in the church on a more full time basis.

We prayed about it. We dialogued with our Parish Priest. We spent a year in Australia exploring community life and gaining experience of living alongside a priest in a parish. We returned with a vision. We felt our calling was to work together as a couple in a parish where there was no longer a resident parish priest. We would offer our skills as lay people to other lay people, within the church, working together with a priest. We approached our Bishop who was positive about the idea. Unfortunately there was no priest in our diocese that time in a position to explore this with us. We waited for God to show us what to do next.

During this time, friends of ours had come to live in a disused presbytery in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. They mentioned our vision to the Bishop at that time Ambrose Griffiths (now retired). He had a parish house which was about to become vacant and at risk of vandalism. It couldn't be rented out because it was attached to the church and used for meetings etc.

Bishop Ambrose spoke to the outgoing priest who was enthusiastic about the prospect of a family becoming resident. He in turn spoke to the parish council who were cautiously interested. We met with them and put a proposal to them about living and working in the parish. We proposed that in return for one of us receiving the minimum wage for 16 hours a week, some bills and accommodation, we could both be available to work in the parish more or less full time.

The Parish Council voted in favour of the proposal. Before we met with parish council I spoke with the new parish priest to check how he felt about the idea, explaining that as we would be working together, he would need to be in favour of it or it wouldn't work. His response at that time was that if the parish wanted it he was quite happy.

We had a three year contract. There was no structure in place for this project. We put together the proposal. Diocesan Finance administered the details in an ad hoc way. The Diocesan Council did consider a working party to look at employment of lay people and their supervision but this was never developed. We arranged our own pastoral supervision. We borrowed a missionary model of observation for three months followed by suggestions to the parish council as to what our role might be.

We met monthly with our Parish priest. We reported to the Parish council regularly. We used the gifts that we had to develop work in areas where we saw a need: with children and families, liturgical events, community building, social events, ecumenical links and faith formation work to complement other activities already established in the parish.

We were invited to speak to the *Newman Society.* We were interviewed by *The Tablet* and there was some correspondence about the model we were attempting to live out. A number of people were interested and enthusiastic about the idea of what we were doing.

The reality was that despite our parish priest and ourselves doing the best we could, we never really developed the working relationship which we would have hoped for. By the end of the second year it had become clear that our vision was not his vision for the parish. Despite our best efforts our parish priest did not value what we were doing. We felt that ultimately we could not go much further without a common vision.

Our prayer at that time was that if this was indeed the work that God wanted us to do, that He would send us a priest who shared a vision more similar to our own. Such a priest appeared turned up at our door one night and before our contract came to an end we had been offered a house and role in a cluster of parishes. My husband took up a one year post as Community Development Worker connected with one of the parish centres, and we moved to the new community. The aim was for us both to take on more pastoral roles at the end of the year. The details were not all ironed out as Bishop Ambrose retired and a new bishop was appointed.

Over the course of a year we met with two priests responsible for 5 parishes, working out roles and responsibilities. Our priest had kept the new bishop informed of these developments but when the contract went to the Trustees of the Diocese for approval it was rejected. A letter was sent to our priest who then had to inform us.

The reason stated for rejecting the proposal was that as we had requested a five year contract, it would entitle us to employment rights which the diocese was not in a position to administer. Certainly there was no infrastructure to deal with any possible issues that could arise. We left the diocese shortly after that.

Since returning to Edinburgh we have struggled to find how God wishes us to serve in the Church. My husband is involved in our local parish.

At this present time I find myself using my gifts and skills more fruitfully in the wider community. I hope to have the grace to respond positively should the time ever come to serve more fully within the Church.

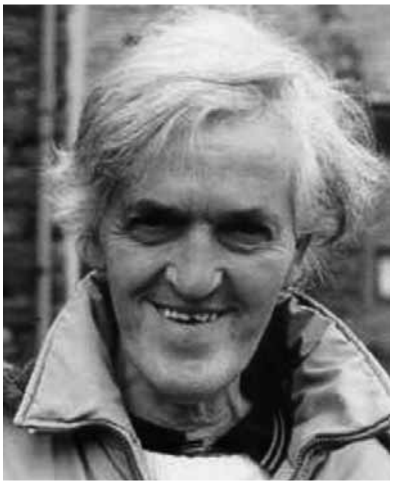
Linden Bicket

'In Greenfields Kirk':
George Mackay Brown's Religious Perspective

Since the publication of Maggie Fergusson's Saltire Award-winning biography: *George Mackay Brown: The Life* (2006), interest in, and speculation about this Orcadian writer's life has grown considerably. While, during his lifetime, Mackay Brown's work was praised by critics, used in secondary school curriculum and won a number of its own prestigious prizes, it is in the wake of a compassionate and revealing biography that the writer himself has now become canonised as one of Scotland's 'literary greats'. But what of the faith that imbues his work, and makes sacramental the lives of farmers, fishermen, and croft-wives? Perhaps it is time to re-consider canonicity in George Mackay Brown's writing and shift focus from literary status to ecclesiastical content.

Mackay Brown's childhood in Stromness, Orkney, in the '20s and '30s, was not particularly religious. Neither he, nor any of his five siblings were baptised, although the Brown family did attend one of five Presbyterian churches in the town. His reception into the Catholic Church in 1961 (he was born in 1921) was the end result of several years of hesitation and consideration. He admitted in an article for *The Tablet* in 1982, that, 'it was literature that broke down my last defences.' Citing the beauty of Christ's parables as evidence of the divine, and praising the writings of Hopkins (on whom he did postgraduate work at Edinburgh University) and John Henry Newman, it was art - particularly that with a sacramental perspective - that drew him into the fold. The richness of Catholicism's Eucharistic imagery appealed to him. For Mackay Brown, the planting of a seed deep underground and the resulting harvest of corn is symbolic of Christ's death and resurrection, with the resulting product - bread - becoming the body of Christ. The occupations of crofters are thus firmly established as sacred ones, as are the lives of Orkney's fishermen, who enact the same livelihoods as the Apostles, and nourish the community with the sea's glittering harvests.

For the writer, the necessary sacrifice he reads into the harvesting of corn and catch of fish reaches its apotheosis in the figure of St. Magnus, Orkney's patron saint. The story of Magnus's martyrdom appears in *Orkneyinga Saga*, an Icelandic text of the twelfth century, and it was to inspire Mackay Brown throughout his creative career. Magnus was the cousin of Haakon, with whom he shared the Earldom of Orkney in the early 1100s. *Orkneyinga Saga* tells us that they got on well early on in life, but soon had rival armies that trampled over Orkney, causing disharmony, bloodshed and misrule. A peace treaty was called on the island of Egilsay on Easter Monday in 1117, but Magnus was cheated, as Haakon brought eight ships instead of the agreed two. Magnus offered himself as a sacrifice and was killed, and thereafter several miracles took place. Magnus's nephew Rognvald Kolson, himself made a saint, commissioned the building of the magnificent St. Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall, described as 'the wonder and glory of all the north.' Mackay Brown's novel *Magnus*, as well as his play *The Loom of Light*, and the chamber opera he collaborated on with Peter Maxwell Davies, *The Martyrdom of St. Magnus*, are only a handful of the many varied ways that the writer re-worked the saint's hagiography. Magnus's story appears in Brown's poetry and short stories too, and soon became a personal inspiration as well as a creative one. In his autobiography, *For the Islands I Sing*, Brown writes:



George Mackay Brown

> The Orcadians, if they thought about Magus Erlendson, considered him to be a queer fish, one of those medieval figures, clustered about with mortifications and miracles, that have no place in our enlightened progressive society. For me, Magnus was at one a solid convincing flesh- and-blood man, from whom pure spirit flashed from time to time - and never more brightly than at the hour of his death by an axe-stroke, in Egilsay island on Easter Monday, 1117.

But it is not only St. Magnus who appears throughout Mackay Brown's work as an inspirational sacred force. Although she appears in a lesser variety of genres, Our Lady is also present in this writer's literary landscape. Typically, Mackay Brown's sacramental perspective shapes his vision of the mother of God, so that she becomes almost inextricable from the stars in the night sky, or the seas. Her iconography is pervasive and entirely appropriate to Orcadian scenery. In 'Our Lady of the Waves', monks gather together in veneration and sing:

> Blessed Lady, since midnight
> We have done three things
> We have bent hooks.
> We have patched a sail.
> We have sharpened knives.
> Yet the little silver brothers are afraid.
> Bid them come to our net.
> Show them round our fire, our fine round plates.
> *Per Dominum Christum nostrum*
> Look mildly on our hungers.

It is no accident that in this poem, the 'twenty brothers of Eynhallow' have carved a figure of Our Lady from 'red stone' - the same material from which St. Magnus Cathedral is built. In Mackay Brown's writing, harmony, pattern, and clear pure images are constantly at work, engaging with one another and swarming together.

This is not to say that all the characters of 'Hamnavoe' (Mackay Brown's name for Stromness) are devout or pious: far from it. His hard-drinking fishermen are often atheist or spiritually agnostic. The life -

denying effects of Calvinism, as the writer saw it, are sometimes sharply presented. However, there are those with special insight. In his children's book *Pictures in the Cave*, the laird's unusually sympathetic and kindly factor cries: 'Look at the free clouds up there. Look at the sun and the huge blue sea. They're God's handiworks, and He wants us to enjoy them. That's what I'm going to do anyway - I'll worship out here in 'greenfields kirk'.' It is hoped that with the re-release of several of Brown's collections of short stories and novels, that we might begin to see a resurgence of interest in his 'greenfields kirk', and that his sacramental perspective may be reviewed more fully.

Maggie Fergusson's *George Mackay Brown: The Life* is out now in paperback, and several of Brown's collections of short stories and novels have recently been released in new editions by Polygon.

JOHN COONEY

Crisis in Ireland

Apart from the euphoria of the Irish rugby team winning the 'grand slam' in the Six Nations championship for the first time since 1948, the past six months has inflicted severe damage on three pillars that only a year ago were trumpeted as contributing to Ireland's recent phenomenal success. This trinity embraced the Republic's booming economy, the peace process in Northern Ireland and early signs of green-shoots growing in a revitalised Catholic Church.

However, this idyllic landscape has been shattered by the combined effects of the collapse of the Republic's economy and international credit rating; the murder by dissident IRA republicans of two British soldiers and a police constable in Northern Ireland, and the revelations that a senior bishop had continued to put children at risk from clerical sexual abuse by not implementing agreed protection procedures which he solemnly declared he was enforcing.

Of these three pillars, the bleakest is the economy which remains clouded under a fog of 'toxic' debt. Last autumn the Irish Government bailed out the Bank of Ireland and Allied Irish Bank, and nationalised the 'rogue' commercial Anglo-Irish Bank. A deflationary Budget in December failed to prevent a flight of multinational companies to less costly locations. Smaller indigenous companies operating out of the Euro-zone have become less competitive in Britain because of the effective devaluation of sterling in recent months. By the end of March unemployment had soared to 11 per cent and is forecast to top 500,000 by year end.

So bad has the situation become that April 7 was designated as the date for an emergency Budget. Taoiseach Brian Cowen has pronounced a five year hardship sentence on the nation as the minimum sentence for achieving economic recovery by 2013. The combined effect of the collapse of revenue from property taxes and falls in income tax yield, plus rising welfare pay-outs, have left the Exchequer with a ?16 billion hole in its finances, irrespective of global economic conditions. It will mean a 10 per cent drop in living standards. Further spending cuts, taxation increases and borrowings are inevitable.

In the midst of this economic 'dark night of the soul', we were cruelly reminded that the shadow of the gunman has not vanished from what Churchill once described as 'the dreary steeples of Antrim and Tyrone'. The March murders in Counties Antrim and Armagh by the so-called Real IRA and the Continuity IRA of two British soldiers and Constable Stephen Carroll, a Catholic, reawakened fears of a slide back to the dark decades of sectarian violence.

However, the killings have united a fractured society which does not want to go back to the divided society it was in the late 1960s when 'The Troubles' first broke out. The denunciation of the dissident republicans as 'traitors' by the Stormont power-sharing administration's Deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness, a former Provisional IRA commander, calmed the Protestant community and consolidated trust between Sinn Fein and its senior Democratic Unionist Party led by Peter Robinson.

Concerning times for Taoiseach Brian Cowen (above)

(below) First Minister Peter Robinson (left), pictured with Chief Constable Hugh Orde (centre) and Martin McGuinness, Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.

Notably different, too, from the 1960s is how Catholic and Protestant Church leaders and their congregations have stood shoulder to shoulder, as did the London and Dublin Governments, in their determination to preserve the peace. However, the threat remains from 300 dissident republicans identified by Sir Hugh Orde, the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, as being 'very dangerous, like any cornered animal in its death throes.'

The third sorrowful pillar has been Mother Church. Just before Christmas the bishop of Cloyne in County Cork was censured by the Church's own independent National Board for Safeguarding Children for not implementing statutory and church guidelines for the protection of children from clerical sexual abuse. An internal investigation conducted by the board's chief executive, Ian Elliott, a Presbyterian, found that the bishop's procedures were ‘inadequate and in some respects dangerous’ by putting children at risk of harm.

What added to the public outrage was the celebrity status of the 72 year old Bishop of Cloyne - John Magee, whose face was recognised by Catholics around the world as the secretary to three Popes, Paul VI, John Paul I and John Paul II. Indeed, Pope John Paul II promoted Magee as Master of Papal ceremonies, a position which he held when the Polish Pontiff made his historic visit to Scotland in 1982; and five years later he appointed Magee Bishop of Cloyne.

When the controversy broke in the media, Magee repeatedly refused to resign and insisted instead that he was now introducing correct procedures and would oversee their full implementation. This arrogance persisted in defiance of a Government call for him to consider his position. When this failed, the Government ordered a State Commission, which is currently completing its investigation into abuse in the archdiocese of Dublin, to also probe child protection practices in Cloyne. Magee’s position was further weakened when Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin and Bishop Willie Walsh of Killaloe expressed publicly their lack of confidence in Magee by inviting him to act in the best interest of children.

Yet, just when Magee appeared to be totally isolated, a life-line was given to him by the support offered by Cardinal Sean Brady and two other archbishops, all three of whom said he should stay in office to correct his mistakes and cooperate with the State investigation. The strength of negative public and media reaction to this plunged the Irish Church into its biggest crisis since Brendan Comiskey stepped down as Bishop of Ferns in April 2002.

This furore led to the holding on January 23 at Maynooth of an emergency summit of the Irish bishops including Magee. At the end of a stormy eight hour meeting, the bishops reprimanded the beleagured Magee when they acknowledged that victims ‘have once again had their wounds of abuse opened by Church failure.’ The word ‘wounds’ was exactly the one used by Pope Benedict in October 2006 when he personally admonished all the Irish Bishops to pursue the ‘urgent task to rebuild confidence and trust where these have been damaged.’

In a frantic effort ‘to restore confidence and credibility in the Irish Church’s commitment to safeguarding children’, the bishops adopted Cardinal Brady’s proposal that ‘every Bishop, every Religious Congregation and every Missionary Society must implement all statutory guidelines in this area, as well as the agreed policy of the Bishops’ Conference, Conference of Religious of Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union.’

Bishop Magee left Maynooth knowing his ecclesiastical goose was cooked. On February 4 he requested Pope Benedict to appoint an Apostolic Administrator. On March 7 Pope Benedict divested Magee of his jurisdiction of the Cloyne diocese and put the Metropolitan Archbishop of Cashel, Dermot Clifford, in charge as Apostolic Administrator. Although Magee retains the nominal title of Bishop of Cloyne, this is a papal figleaf to minimise the extent of the fall of a churchman who once enjoyed the trusted companionship of three Popes. He awaits his destiny with the State Investigation. The bell tolled for him on January 23, the Night of the Episcopal Long-knives.

Mysterious, therefore, are the ways of Rome. But we are left praying to the Almighty for sustained peace in Northern Ireland and economic redemption in the Republic.

JAMES KELLY

The Gonzaga Lectures 2009 *Part 1*

Were there chandeliers in St Aloysius College Hall, members of the audience would undoubtedly have been hanging from them at the first of this year’s Gonzaga Lectures. Inevitably, such is the appeal of this annual event, that it had to be transferred to St Aloysius Church halfway through the course.

The title of this year’s series,, ‘Challenge and Consolation: Faith and Politics in the 21st Century’, possibly recalled to the irreverent the well-known question as to how many members of a certain religious order it takes to change a light bulb. The answer is first to form a committee called ‘Crusade Against Darkness’.

However nebulous the title may have been, there was nothing vague in Dr Professor Mona Siddiqi’s lecture on ‘An Islamic Perspective on Pope Benedict’s book - ‘Jesus of Nazareth’. Indeed, she paid the audience the enormous compliment of assuming that they were possibly a final year Honours theology class.

Her lecture pivoted on Pope Benedict’s use of the phrase ‘a search for the Face of God’ an expression with a particular resonance for Islam, even in how the Moslem tries to direct himself to Mecca in his daily acts of communication with God. She pointed out that this expression was deeply rooted in the Old Testament, God having hidden His face 26 times in the Bible, 12 times alone in the Psalms. Moses specifically asked to see the Face but could not cope with the situation. One Islamic scholar was able to do so 100 times. The Shiite sect, however, if I understood her correctly, found that not merely could God not be seen but that he could not even be imagined. The Sunni sect believes that it can only be seen in the next life. Again, if I understood her correctly, in Islam, God is hidden only to those who do not come to seek him.

Some of our perceptions of Islam have been remarkably limited until recently, possibly for some simply knowing that an Asian with a green turban was entitled to the title Haj, as a pilgrim to Mecca. Events like 7/11 alerted us to a mindset which, ironically, recalls the early mediaeval Crusader mentality. Insights were provided by Professor Sidddiq into what might be called mainstream Islam. Insights like God, for instance as being considered as Allah the Merciful, awaiting for people to ask for mercy - He is referred to as Allah the Merciful 57 times in the Koran - were particularly helpful.

What became clear, and it was perhaps the most significant element in her lecture, was the enormous difficulty of bridging the gap. The concept of Jesus as fully Man and fully God was demonstrated as being completely alien to Islamic theology. The Trinity is not accepted. The pivotal

Christian point of the Crucifixion has no relevance at all to Islam. What came through was the enormous challenge presented to us by Islam, a challenge similar to that presented by the late Joseph Moran , an authority on Japanese culture, shortly before his death, with regard to the Japanese culture.' Go ye and teach all nations' is not as easy as it might have once sounded Perhaps it is time to put more effort into it than perpetuating celibacy or the Latin Mass.

The second lecture, by Fr Nicholas King, SJ was on 'Women, Sex, Slavery and St Paul'. He did not say '… all is seared with trade, bleared and smeared ', the quotation, of course, being from another Jesuit speculating on why we cannot see God's grandeur. His lecture, however, showed the applicability of it to St Paul, 'trade' being our glazed-eyed familiarity with occasional well-worn phrases in his Epistles in Sunday readings, and consequently frequent bafflement by the rest.

Fr King carefully dissected the obscurity covering so much of St Paul's blazing commitment to Christ, and which creates so much misunderstanding. A major obstacle is the epistolary framework ,the letters being for particular occasions and circumstances, and therefore leaving us trying to make sense out of one side of a telephone conversation. Despite this, what comes through clearly is Paul's conviction that Jesus is all that matters, that when believers are together Jesus is there, hence the image of the body, and that the Gentiles belong to the flock.

Dr. Siddiqi

Fr Nicholas King, SJ

Another layer of difficulty is that we can sometimes never be quite sure what particular circumstance brought about the letter in the first place, Paul's insistence on women being veiled being a classic example. Fr King pointed out that the equality of men and women as workers for Christ is very clearly attested to in Romans 16. The note on his own translation comments that this section is never read in church but it does contain a long list of his associates who work hard for the Lord, in which there is undoubtedly gender equality. On the surface, the omission of this list may well be because, like the lists of Who begat Whom, it lacks narrative drive, and yet these do make occasional appearances. Fr King did not speculate on this inconsistency.

Paul's perceived dislike of women, some apparently feel, is because he may have been unmarried , a position which is so strongly counter to human experience, not to say sense, as to be baffling. Charitably, Fr King merely pointed out that as a rabbi in training in his youth, Paul would have had to be married, and also his indignation at the suggestion that he was not entitled to travel as a married man.

A basic layer of difficulty in the Epistles is, of course simply difficulty. In his New Testament version of Second Corinthians 8-11, Fr King points out in one place that 'The translation of the last sentence is, frankly, anyone's guess.' There are other places where an entirely meaningful translation is barely possible.

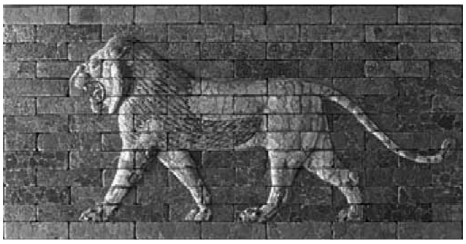
Again, there is subtlety as a difficulty. Fr King showed that a careful look at St Paul in Colossians on slavery is not producing what he called 'rampant hierarchy', but a subtle word-play on slave - lord and the Lord. Was an attack on slavery as a major institution of his civilisation possible? Fr King reminded us that slavery is still a feature of life in some African countries, and wondered what our grandchildren will find to accuse us of. Again, he did not speculate, but left the audience to wonder. Some might have wondered, like some Third World cardinals, why the present version of the priesthood means that we deny the Eucharist to so many. All would have wondered, after Fr King's superb lecture, about what we miss by not getting as much as we might from St Paul.

PAUL FITZPATRICK

Babylon: Myth and Reality

Babylon is not an alien and exotic other: it is part of 'our' story - we who make up the contemporary western world. The history of ancient Babylon has constantly been appropriated by outsiders in their own efforts at self-understanding. The aim of this thought-provoking exhibition at the British Museum is to untangle the reality of ancient Babylon from the myths surrounding it, by exploring not only the archaeology of the ancient and cosmopolitan city of Babylon, but also the wealth of later art and myth which 'Babylon' has engendered.

The power of Babylon reached its zenith during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 BCE), and his imperial capital, situated on the Euphrates in what is now central Iraq, was an impressive achievement. Babylon's Hanging Gardens (and possibly the city walls themselves) were regarded as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Described by Herodotus and by later classical authors, its layout nevertheless remained unknown through much of later history until modern archaeology uncovered its network of monumental buildings and public spaces. The large workforce required to bring this about included foreigners captured in the campaigns to assert control over the Levant (including the kingdom of Judah). Its city gates were elaborately decorated with blue-glazed bricks, showing bulls, dragons and lions, picked out in relief by specially moulded bricks glazed in yellow and ochre. Nebuchadnezzar restored the ancient temple of Marduk, lavishing it with gold, silver and gemstones, and with images of sphinxes and other composite animals. He completed the ziggurat E–temen-anki, the 'Foundation Platform of Heaven and Earth', a giant tower made up of multiple storeys like a stepped pyramid, with a flat top, whose scale and long period of construction surely informed the Biblical myth of the Tower of Babel. Builders of monumental structures customarily left inscriptions embodied in the brickwork, recording the name of the god for whom the work was done and the identity of the builder, sometimes also with historical accounts of campaigns and information about the circumstances leading up to the building work. Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions presented him as the archetypal Babylonian monarch, wise, pious, just and strong.



Lion, glazed brick panel, from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (now in The Louvre).

This judgement has not been shared by outsiders. The process of re-interpretation began almost immediately within the Hebrew Bible. While from a Babylonian perspective the significance of the kingdom of Judah was minimal - it was a rebellious border state in an area contested with its longstanding rival, Egypt - the theme of the Babylonian exile has long played a central part in the narratives of Jewish identity. This biblical rhetoric of exile in Babylon was later reworked in various Christian versions and continues to this day to have powerful political resonances, most obviously in the Zionist and Rastafarian movements. The Book of Revelation identified 'Babylon' with Rome, since when the name has become associated with a set of characteristics - vice and idolatry - rather than a real city. Babylon became a cipher for imperial Rome, and Revelation re-interpreted the curses heaped on Babylon to prophecy Rome's downfall. Its composite beasts were influenced by those in the Book of Daniel, which was itself informed by Babylonian thinking. The use of numerology and the references to the signs of the zodiac also suggest Babylonian influence. The fiery furnace appeared early in the art of the catacombs, a symbol of triumph over death. An image new to the Book of Revelation was that of the whore of Babylon. The woman and the beast on which she sits represented Babylon understood both as Rome and more broadly as earthly luxury, corruption and sin. The seven heads of the beast referred to Rome's seven hills and the golden cup to Jeremiah's critique of Babylon.

Since then, Babylon has been consistently presented in western art and culture as a symbol of wickedness and sin, largely due to the strength of the Biblical narratives. This evaluation raises questions about the accuracy of the biblical perspective as well as its gender bias. While the Greeks admired, Jews and Christians condemned. That sense of loss, expressed so poignantly in Psalm 137 - How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land? - has been repeated so often in so many different contexts and has set the tone for understanding Babylon. Despite the ideological perspectives, the Biblical books of 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Daniel, when carefully examined, contain much detailed historical information about the period. Many Biblical stories have been strongly influenced by Babylonian themes: the story of the Flood, the Tower of Babel and the Daniel cycle of stories, in which the interpretation of dreams plays such an important part, as in Belshazzar's feast. Ezekiel was one of the exiles, a significant figure in the development of biblical prophecy and apocalyptic literature. In Deutero-Isaiah, the Persian king Cyrus who conquered Babylon and who enabled the Judaeans to return to their homeland is notably described as the messiah, offering the possibility of a more positive reading. Many of the Judaeans, indeed, chose not to return to Judaea. And the Pentecost story can be read as the undoing of the confusion of Babel.

The Tower of Babel is a particularly evocative image: its stark pessimism about the folly of human ambition, the confusion of languages and the scattering of cultures has remained powerful. Why did representations of particular themes become popular at particular times? While the Tower of Babel has been represented in Christian art from the 11th century, its sudden popularity in the 16th century, through Brueghel and other artists of the Northern Renaissance, has been linked to the confusion in Christianity associated with the Protestant Reformation. A strong iconographical tradition modelled the tower on the Colosseum and borrowed from Josephus the identification of Nimrod as the architect of the tower and the tower's actual destruction. Babel has remained a compelling metaphor for contemporary competing discourses, political, religious, economic and moral, where confusion reigns, and where individuals and groups struggle to assert their identities in relation to that of others. Anne Desmet is one contemporary artist who has returned to the Babel theme. 'The biblical account of the Babel tower is very moving and relevant to the 21st century in that it evokes a sense of the intense, grandiose, timeless beauty of mankind's most ambitious constructions - the vulnerable yet aspirational qualities of towers and, by extension, the ambition and fragility of human dreams'. She and others have pointedly represented the tower of Babel in a post-September 11 world. In the contemporary babble where the possibility of understanding the other is 'lost in translation' - because the other is at root incomprehensible - whose story do we hear, and whose version of events should we listen to?

There are other Babylons too: Babylon the centre of learning, especially in mathematics (its sexagesimal number system is still in use today to measure time and the division of the periphery of the circle into 360°) and in astronomy (the observations of equinoxes and solstices and the establishment of the signs of the zodiac). Its Jewish scholars later produced the Babylonian Talmud. A contemporary application is the babblefish, an internet translation tool, following an idea from the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. And there is the political Babylon: the imperial grandeur of ancient Babylon was reinvented as a state icon by Saddam Hussein. Mythic Babylon then encountered the modern war on terror, and the ancient sites became an American military camp, with predictably damaging consequences for archaeological investigation.

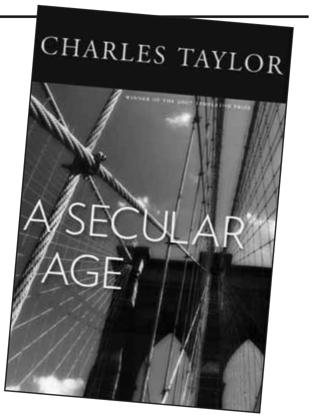
And so the exhibition ends on a contemporary note. While little attention is paid to the later role of Babylon in Judaism or Islam, the exhibition highlights the continuing power of ancient religious and political myths, and encourages further reflection on the dangers of thinking in terms of sharp cultural dichotomies.

Book Reviews

JOHN D O'CONNOR OP

A Secular Age

by Charles Taylor, (Harvard University Press, 2007) 874 pp., £29.95



To give an adequate summary of the thought of the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor (b. 1931) in a short article is an impossible task. Taylor's work is very wide - ranging, with important papers in the social sciences, ethics, the philosophy of knowledge and of language, in addition to extended studies of the life and work of the philosopher Hegel (*Hegel*, 1979), the origins of modern understandings of the self (*Sources of the Self*, 1989) and, most recently, the development of modern secularism and the encounter of religion with modernity (*A Secular Age*, 2007).

Despite the breadth of Taylor's work, certain important features recur. I will outline some of these, paying particular attention to Taylor's most recent book, *A Secular Age*, which arose out of Taylor's 1999 Edinburgh Gifford Lectures. The title of Taylor's forthcoming Gifford Lecture at the University of Glasgow, 'The Necessity of Secularist Régimes', suggests that Taylor will continue his exploration of the topics of the earlier Gifford Lectures.

Perhaps the overriding theme in Taylor's work is that we tend to have certain assumptions, but these largely unquestioned beliefs have histories, stories of their development and the contexts from which they have emerged. This suggests that former generations did not share some of the beliefs we now take for granted, which in turn raises important questions we need to ask ourselves: Are our own assumptions merely products of our age? Have we cut ourselves off from the wisdom and insights of our forebears?

Where some philosophers and historians of thought tend to give clear answers to such questions, it is part of Taylor's approach to resist this temptation. An example is his examination of modern secularism and the decline of religious belief. Taylor does not claim to be indifferent on this matter; he is a professing Catholic: 'I believe in God because I sense something which I want to describe as God's love and affirmation of the world, and human being. I see this refracted in the lives of exceptional people, whom I'll call for short saints, as well as hearing faint echoes in my own prayer life.'

Not surprisingly, Taylor asks hard questions of the modern secular *zeitgeist*, as in the opening paragraph of the first chapter of *A Secular Age*, a question to which the rest of the book is a response: 'Why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say, 1500 in our Western Society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable?' In asking such questions Taylor is challenging modern unbelief to question its own assumptions, its own historical conditioning. In this way he is an eloquent defender of belief, but not of the kind to give the unquestioning opponent of modernity much comfort. For Taylor the supposedly golden days of religious observance exacted their own price: 'The spiritual costs of various kinds of forced conformity: hypocrisy, spiritual stultification, inner revolt against the Gospel, the confusion of faith and power, and even worse.'

A constraint on all questions and answers is that one cannot step outside of one's own history, one's historical conditioning. The person who challenges his age is also a product of that age. This is a form of what is sometimes called 'the hermeneutic circle', and throughout his work Taylor asserts that the hermeneutic circle affects all aspects of our understanding, including what might seem at first glance immune to this, namely, our self-understanding.

This position is most eloquently expounded in what is often considered Taylor's most important book, *Sources of the Self*, but receives its most concise expression in papers such as 'Self-Interpreting animals'. We are, Taylor asserts, beings who not only interpret ourselves, but whose self- interpretations shape what is interpreted, ourselves. We have the hermeneutic circle because we cannot fully 'step outside' of ourselves to interpret ourselves, since our interpretations make up part of what we wish to analyse. This applies even to feelings. In encountering my feelings, I think about them and talk about them, and in that way I link them with my personal narrative, my values and my presuppositions. In so doing, I shape to some extent the feelings through my interpretation of them, and do so in a way that is limited by the range of my own ideas and experiences. Thus even in self-interpreting I am a product of my age.

This may seem to have little to do with modern secularism, but in *A Secular Age* Taylor shows otherwise. The same issues regarding interpretation operate in modern secularism. Summarising the sweep of Taylor's historical and intellectual analysis in a few sentences is to do serious injustice to its richness and subtlety, but there are some clear contours. The story goes along these lines: In certain key respects the Middle Ages and, to a lesser extent, the Renaissance, upheld the distinction between the sacred and the profane. With the Reformation came a serious challenge to this, shown most clearly perhaps in the rethinking of the theology of priesthood and the devaluing of certain places as 'sacred spaces'. This also led to what Taylor refers to as a new dignity accorded to 'ordinary human flourishing', a newly found sacredness in ordinary activities, such as business and trade, sexual relations between husband and wife, the rearing of children and housekeeping.

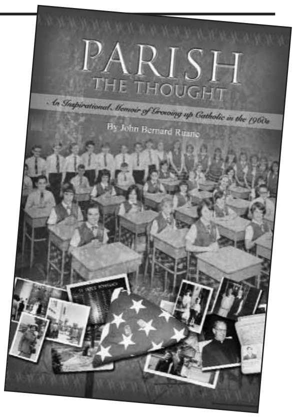
With this rejection of the sacred as a separate realm came, however, unintended consequences. A certain homogenisation in values was introduced, which, combined with the development of modern science, led to what the sociologist Max Weber famously called 'the disenchantment of the world'. A disenchanted world is a world without inherent value, the term being generally applied to understandings of the world where a certain conception of the sciences reigns, where what is real is what is amenable to measurement and quantification.

For Taylor this is unacceptable. The merit of modern scientific method is that it is supposed to be able to achieve comprehensive descriptions and explanations of the world, but the result is the very opposite of this in certain key respects, namely, the discounting of a great part of what is most important in our lives. On such conceptions of the sciences our commitments and values are basically projections of our emotions onto the world or mere by-products of brain states. When the reality of values and commitments are rejected, the self becomes separated from the world, 'buffered', in Taylor's terms. We begin to interpret ourselves in the light of this, and the influence of modern scientific conceptions becomes subtly pervasive, even if not reflected upon. This is manifested in the widespread disconnection from community and living traditions, shown most clearly in the atomism of modern life, with its extolling of the solitary self-determining individual.

Another central element to Taylor's challenge to modern secularism is to point out that such conceptions of the sciences attempt an analysis of the world that attempts to rise above the limitations of historical context, and so try to use scientific method to overcome the constraints imposed by the hermeneutic circle. This is, however, what science, with its own historically conditioned assumptions and priorities, cannot do. Much of *A Secular Age* is taken up with presenting historical narratives to support Taylor's theoretical position, showing the historical situatedness of scientific and other ideas that modernity takes for granted. Taylor is not thereby showing that the religious perspective is the correct one, but the more subtle position that we should not assume the intrinsic superiority of the disenchanted worldview. There is a legitimate plurality of ways we can know the world, and part of Taylor's task is to show how they interact, complement and challenge each other.

This task takes Taylor over 800 pages in *A Secular Age*. Individual paragraphs are fairly easily comprehensible to the non-specialist, but repetition and the lack of clear structure not infrequently obscure the contours of Taylor's multi-stranded argument. Yet *A Secular Age* is an important book, a powerful defence of conceptions of the world we overlook at our peril, a model of careful argument, and a painstakingly detailed account of the complex story of how we have arrived at our present situation.

BERNARD ASPINWALL



Parish the Thought:

An Inspirational Memoir of Growing Up Catholic in the 1960s

by John Bernard Ruane,
(New York & London: Pocket Books, 2008) £11.95

This is a book many readers should have written about their comparable Scottish experiences during the same period. It is a son's very personal, family memoir, touching and sensitive of an Irish migrant couple who raised five children in a Chicago suburb. Migrating from a poor farm near Balinasloe, Galway, Ruane's father struggles to establish himself in postwar America, bar tendering, playing hurling or the drums in a dance band while working for the Chicago Water Board. Introduced to his future wife though the Irish network, he settles down to a solid if modest married life. They live within a blue collar ethnic neighbourhood where significantly given Chicago's massive black population, a non-white face never appears. Irish, Italian and Lithuanians surface as neighbours, teachers, firemen, policemen and nurses.

Family pleasures are many and primary while holidays are few as the growing family move to the new developing suburbs. Family, personal relationships and the overwhelming cementing power of love runs through the book. Everything revolves around family, church and school: Confession, Communion and Confirmation repel worldly intrusion into that Catholic world.

The new suburban church begun in 1953 is cleared of debt by the severe unfeeling cleric, Fr Griffin. Aloof and impersonal like a grace dispensing machine, the priest is obsessed with money at every turn. He reminded me of the 1950s Preston priest with a similar preoccupation , known as Canon 'Bob a Job' Wickwar. Like postwar Scotland, parishes were expanding. At an early age Ruane found Mass boring as the priest turned his back on the people and spoke in incomprehensible Latin. Remarkably the great Christian festivals Easter and Christmas pass unnoticed in the book. Only the infectious enthusiasm of a beautiful Italian lady teacher and later a guitar playing curate relieves the tedium. Altar serving subsequently gave him status, interest and attachment to the faith. The impression is of inner city ethnic and family loyalty moved to the suburbs.

Few seem to venture out of the ethnic Catholic ghetto. One high school boy who goes to the University of Michigan returns as a long haired radical and is frowned on. Not a single book is recorded in the memoir, a devastating comment on the Catholic education of the day. Family television watching was a highlight of domestic bliss. Not a single visit to any of Chicago's fabulous galleries or museums is mentioned: downtown must have been where hobgoblins lived! A close knit family of five children with loving, sacrificing parents nonetheless instils the vital values. Caring relationships rather then intellectual rumination are the key to their lives.

Politics barely appears except when Ruane's beautiful, inspiring Italian teacher is fired for being arrested at a peace demonstration by the Catholic educators. Or again in 1968 when his police relatives are savaged by urinating, razor-shoed, brick throwing yobs. during the Democratic convention. His father had served in army during the Korean War: that reinforced his commitment to the country that gave him opportunities denied him in poverty stricken Ireland. Patriotism for him, his neighbours and his parish was in the blood stream. During the Vietnam War, the brass name plates of those serving or killed displayed in the church. He delivers papers to numerous houses marked by stars for those sons serving or dead in that awful searing conflict. Blacks and blue collar workers' sons rather than the comfortable draft free Ivy League intelligentsia had, as President John Kennedy said to 'pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and the success of liberty'. They bore the burden and paid any price. That moral angst captures his ambivalence.

His sexual awakening with Catholic guilt, embarrassment and gaucheness is well recounted. In particular the nun who disarms his bullying school friends by remarking 'She's cute' on his first crush. It is indicative of a newly emerging more relaxed, less buttoned up Church. Vatican II and the introduction of English rekindle his religious interest as his days as an altar boy end. Not all his Catholic teachers were so wonderful. Daydreaming in his American history class one day as his dreadful woman teacher drones on, he is asked 'What are the Minute Men?' In his reverie he replies 'Your first three husbands, ma'am'.

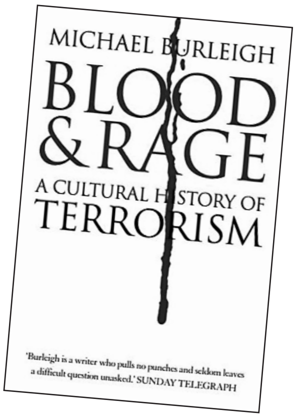
The prolonged suffering and death of his mother from breast cancer was a devastating blow. His father struggled with his devotion and his massive surgical bills. Amid these trials the unfeeling parish priest refuses to allow Ruane to graduate until his outstanding $35 bill paid. Only a personal intervention of his dying mother and her guarantee to pay the money as soon a possible alters his mind. It smacks of the old moral rigidities of pre-Vatican II and the death of Christian humanity. She dies shortly afterwards in 1975 while his father dies heart-broken the following year.

The remainder of the book is a disappointment. It rapidly passes over his disenchantment with, God, the church and much else. Almost predictably his absence from any parish coincides with his burgeoning newspaper career and the age group, 18-25 He marries in church but does not practice for some years. He then returns after realising the power of God's love, strengthened in family bonds with his successful and settled brothers and sisters. Although an uncle had been the head of an American religious order, the family did not produce a priest or nun but fifteen grandchildren, a revealing point about a shift within Catholicism. But the larger cultural shift from Sixties radicalism to Fundamentalist zeal among the intelligentsia passes him by or at least is unmentioned in the book. In that 'safe' process he is able to override the innumerable clerical abuse scandals and emphasise the need to find a pastor with leadership qualities to find a home within the faith. The active priests he mentions at the close are significantly drawn from Ireland, a continuation of the old ethnic link. The dearth of native born American clergy is well documented by their reliance on African, Latin-American or Filipino recruits. Whether that dependency is desirable or can continue is debatable.

The book is an honest enjoyable read. It is no *Catcher in the Rye* for Catholics, more a paean for his beloved parents and his kinfolk, ethnic heritage and America's liberating faith in the individual and his divine potential. Some readers might be challenged to compare Ruane's experience with their own in the same period. The boom years of the postwar Scottish church and that confident sense of triumphalism were similar: the proliferation of high schools and university entrants, the numerous Coia churches, the adjustments and the persistence of ethnic links, the disenchantment and the sense of loss - and gain. Above all we might observe the salami slicing of a cohesive British culture into a somewhat questionable British form of multiculturalism. The book gives rise to reflection. Start the word processors now!

JAMES MCGARRY

Blood & Rage: *A Cultural History of Terrorism*


MICHAEL BURLEIGH
BLOOD & RAGE
A CULTURAL HISTORY OF TERRORISM
'Burleigh is a writer who pulls no punches and seldom leaves a difficult question unasked.' SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

by Michael Burleigh,
(Harper Press) £9.99

This is a monumental work of scholarship which in about five hundred pages puts on record the major revolutions of the past two centuries. Its purpose is to help readers to understand the oppressions which provoked revolutions, so that the motives and hopes of the revolutionaries are recorded and defined, as far as that difficult task can be achieved. The writing is masterly and opinionative; the style graphic and compressed. The overwhelming effect of the book is to demonstrate that humanity is capable of inhumanity on an enormous scale, and of unbearable savagery. This makes the book unreadable in the ordinary sense of reading, but ensures that it will serve as a great work of reference as we seek to learn lessons from the past so that the present threat from Islamist terrorism may be best endured and contained until its scorching flame subsides, as previous violent revolutionary movements have done.

Michael Burleigh uses colours for his chapter titles: Green for the Fenians, Red for Russian nihilists, Black for anarchists of more recent times, he tries to learn the lessons from each, as part of the process of setting out what every state in the world has to do to cope with what he calls *World Rage: Islamist Terrorism*. He identifies some of its characteristics, the story of victim-hood, the assumed purity of the oppressed, the encouragement of mass hysteria, all facilitated by the instant communications that are the reality and bane of our time. He points out that every revolutionary movement has encouraged criminality, none more so than the present one, on an unprecedented scale. It is inevitable that counter-terrorist efforts will have limited success, and terrible human failings, but since resistance is necessary to evil, there is no choice.

Film Review

Ian D. Willock

Gran Torino

Directed by and starring Clint Eastwood

CLINT EASTWOOD
GRAN TORINO

Gran Torino has won fame chiefly for Clint Eastwood both directing and playing the leading role - at 78! It raises the question whether any faults can be traced back to this audacity. Was he making it up as he went along? However, our readers will be more interested in the ethnic conflicts which the film explores and, in particular, in the frank account of one kind of relationship between priest and parishioner.

Clint Eastwood plays disgruntled Korean War vet Walt Kowalski

Clint Eastwood plays Walt Kowalski, an American of Polish descent, whose adult life began fighting amid atrocities in Korea. After a lifetime working in car-manufacturing in Michigan his life is falling apart - his job is behind him, he is estranged from his two sons and their families, his neighbourhood is degenerating with the arrival of immigrants, ironically Koreans, and his wife has just died.

The film narrates how this surly retiree, who sits on his veranda under the Stars and Stripes with only his dog for company, daring his neighbours to trespass on his grass, is transformed by acts of kindness by the Koreans next door. The family are assailed by a criminal gang, their cousins, who pick on Theo, a simple isolated young man. Walt befriends him, yet berates him for not standing up for himself, and finds him a job. The film concludes with Walt's discovery that he has lung cancer. He contrives to be killed by the gang, but in the presence of the police. So we are assured they are heading for at least life imprisonment, if not death, and the lad is freed from his persecutors.

The film begins and ends with a funeral mass, his wife's and Walt's own. It is as if we are being reminded we have just one life, and should make the best of it, whatever that may be. This framework brings Walt in touch with a 27 year old priest (a rarity surely these days) who he lacerates as 'an over-educated virgin'. It turns out that Walt only attended Church to please his wife. The priest was carrying out her last request to persuade him to make a confession in preparation for his own death. The priest's persistence succeeds eventually when Walt recognises his illness. He makes a rather routine confession of the kind of sins he would have mentioned in his schooldays.

Christopher Carley and Clint Eastwood in a scene from Gran Torino

The wrangling between priest and reluctant parishioner reminds us that not all funerals are the reverent occasions in which everyone is united in remembering the deceased and wishing them well. Separate clumps of black - clad people putting off going into Church until the last minute gives a warning of trouble to come after the cremation or burial when liquor encourages old scores to be settled. The priest may get caught up in these squabbles beforehand when arrangements have to be made and what is to be said about the dead settled.

And what of the *Gran Torino* of the title? We seldom see it. Much more could have been made, one feels, of its symbolic role in Walt's life. Was his wife jealous of it? Walt ensures that Theo receives it before his death. Life must go on.

YOUR LETTERS

Dear Editors...

Dear Editors,

Dr. Malecki's article was very interesting but I want just to mention the quotation on the buses and to suggest an addition to the first part of it so that it would read: 'There's probably no God. Absolute nothingness could easily turn itself into something. Couldn't it?' Thank you for the interesting articles.

Annie McQuade, Saltcoats.

Dear Editors,

With reference to Maeve McGlynn's piece in the February issue - the sublime music she speaks of to me at least makes the mass more of an opera than anything else - something one listens to rather than takes part in. She probably knows that some firms play this sort of music outside their shops to keep teenagers from congregating outside - it is anathema to them! We do not have an organ in our church - we are so lucky to have a family trio of father with guitar, daughter with flute and small son with violin. They play mostly Taizé hymns in which we all join. I mentioned this to a fellow Catholic recently and was taken aback when she said she would travel miles to escape Taizé verse and as for playing a guitar at Mass! Why does Rome not forbid such horrors she said!

With regard to small children at Mass, surely it is the only time in the week when the local Church meets to worship together. Some congregations have an attached hall where mothers take their children during the sermon. We have not. Personally I am not in favour of this because it means mothers (or fathers) not hearing the sermon.

Why are our Churches not open for private prayer during the week? The answer always is that they could be vandalised. My answer is that an occasional vandalisation would be worth it. When I visit a neighbouring town I always visit the local Episcopalian Church which is always open despite the fact that on my visits over the years there has never been anyone there. When I was a small boy my mother told me I should never pass a Church without 'popping in' and over a long life I always have.

On holiday in a very different part of this 'Sceptred Isle' there was no Catholic community within miles so I attended Mass in the local Episcopalian Church. The service was in every way the same as in any Catholic Church but I was overwhelmed at the 'Kiss of Peace'. People came up to me from all over the Church to greet me as a stranger - I was very moved and I thought of Christ's words on meeting strangers. They greeted each other just as warmly. My experience in some Catholic Churches has been very different. One person said she considered the Kiss of Peace an infringement of privacy. Another that she came to Mass to say her prayers and to be left alone. In passing I heard that Rome has forbidden the priest to come down from the alter to pass on the Kiss of Peace. Whether this is true or not our congregation was delighted when a visiting African Priest not only came down from the altar but spent time greeting almost the whole congregation! Letter writers to Catholic papers have complained that the Kiss of Peace 'breaks up' the Mass - to me it is the opposite especially as the idea of the one loaf being broken and distributed is not possible in a large community.

I want to be reminded firstly that our Sunday Mass is the local community at prayer with the emphasis on community - from the very young to the very old – private prayer is for other times and places. Secondly, the style of hymn and music should suit the local congregation not laid down by those living in a very different milieu. Why is it assumed that the majority if they hear enough will like Mozart or plain chant or Latin! We do not have anyone in our community who studied Latin at school! One of the dangers of having a completely different musical style of worship has contributed to the dissociation of Sunday from daily life and its life styles. Christianity is to be lived in the world of today and its daily work.

A final word to Maeve - we are being urged to walk if distance to shop (or Church) is under two miles. Perhaps Maeve should remind other members of her community of this? Some of us are going to have to give up our cars so it may come to this willy-nilly! Our priest lives fifteen miles away - we give him a dispensation or should it be an indulgence?

Tom Conway (Rural Scotland)

Dear Editors,

Being retired it is so very easy to read and re- read 'Open House' and to do so again should one wish to write a letter.

In doing this one more time for the March issue I believe that I have detected a common theme. From Dr Wojciech Malecki, Sr L.M Cecily, Peter Grainger Banyard SJ, and Patrick Reilly all were centring on the spoken and written word.

Father Banyard and Professor Reilly especially with the latter's article being indeed headed as 'Faith in Art'.

It was this which set me off almost to count the individual references to the - word - the written and the spoken.

Nowhere were the arts in totality addressed.

But the climax of having 'Faith in Art' conflated to the written word in verse! No offence to Yeats of course; he did have a brother didn't he? A magnificent 'Jack' of the painting arts!

Recently, I read an article by Dr James McMillan in a Scottish Catholic newspaper where he emphasised the increased values of the liturgy when being set to music.

In a similar vein the artist Peter Howson has been commissioned to paint a mural in a Glasgow Church. Painting as an essential element for and in faith. Yes verse, poetry, these are of course important but to understand and feel - Faith in art, then the

human being will universally respond to a much greater degree when faced with a painting and especially when listening to music.
Verse and poetry too can illicit such emotional responses, by via oratory, but that requires an essential upgrading in education and literacy.

Patrick Reilly writes about Nietzsche; within and after that Philosopher there were others who understood words, but not by words alone.

Adorno - a Musical Director.

That master of language - Ludwig Wittegenstein brought up with Brahms and Mahler; not forgetting his brother Paul.

Faith in Art, of course yes, but faith in all the Arts, Faith supported and expanded by all the arts.

Tom Reilly

Dear Editors,

I read Ian Willock's review of the film 'Doubt' in the March issue with growing bewilderment. Subjectivity and interpretation are the stuff of art (one person's miracle of tone and light being another's burst paint tin, and all that) however your reviewer and I appear to have seen different films. He saw the nuns eat in 'gloomy silence'. I saw an admittedly starchy attempt to cling to tradition lightened by some moments of compassion, as when Sister Aloysius silently guides the blind sister's hand to her fork. He saw the priests sharing 'hilarious stories'. I saw three rather sad, lonely men filling the air with smoke, alcohol fumes and the kind of tales that women never emerge from well.

About some things we agree. Sister Aloysius is scary. Short on humour and big on discipline she dislikes, as your reviewer points out, ball point pens. She also hates music and sentimentality. She has a tongue that could dice carrots and is sparing with her condolences. In short she's no fun. Father Flynn, by contrast, is lots of fun. He seems to actually like people. He's particularly good with the kids, playing basketball and holding discussion groups. His problem is that Sister Aloysius has met him before. Not literally, but her experience as a woman, a religious sister and a teacher tells her that Father Flynn is up to no good and all the plausible affability in the world will not distract her from this 'knowledge'. Problem? No evidence. A child's discarded shirt and a little too much squeezing of young shoulders doesn't add up to much. But she knows. And he knows she knows. Your reviewer describes this tension as being played out in a 'crescendo of implausible bawling'. I saw two first class actors bring to life the psychological drama of some fine writing. But again, you see it as you see it.

What is less arguable is the intention of the writer. Your reviewer thinks more should have been made of the fact that the Council was sitting while all this was going on. But the Council is everywhere here. Someone keeps opening Sister's office window and, irascibly, she keeps closing it. Physically and theologically she's terrified that 'the fresh air' will bring with it an icy backlash. Was she wrong? Father Flynn feels constrained by a church out of step with its people. Is it their good or his own advancement that motivates him? Sister Aloysius may be uncertain enough of her religious faith to want to resist change but she is clearly on firmer ground in the arena of human behaviour, and fearless in her challenge.

Nun and priest are, as your reviewer describes them, 'warring figures'. But they are not moral equals. She's not above being economical with the truth. She is above the exploitation of the vulnerable. He's not a dislikeable man. He's a predator. Her most telling line is not the justification about needing to 'move away from God' in order to address wrong doing. It's the one that comes later: 'His resignation was his confession.' An innocent man would not have run; and the shadow of another boy, blond and beautiful, who recoils whenever the priest comes near and blanches as he shows him his overly long but very clean fingernails, flits constantly around the backdrop of the film. Sister Aloysius may indeed be wrong, but about the victim not the perpetrator.

The sexual abuse of young boys by those who have charge of them was not, and is not, a fantasy. We know more than we did in 1964. If the instincts of certain sisters had been heard over the arrogance of the hierarchy we might have known it then.

Lynn Jolly

Dear Editors,

Thank you for Jennifer Stark's thoughtful article *Hunting the heretics: where are they in today's church?* In it she highlights Bishop Richard Williamson's tasteless remarks about women and how these have been ignored while his Holocaust denial has caused a furore. She goes on to say: 'What is not clear is how far the bishops and theologians who have condemned Williamson's views on the Holocaust are aware of this aspect of his theology …'

This reminded me of a back-door invitation I received in 2005 to the launch of *The Gift of Scripture* at the Clyde Street offices of the Archdiocese of Glasgow. Aptly overlooking the proceedings was a picture of St Jerome who wrote: *'To be ignorant of the Scriptures is to be ignorant of Christ'* and who gave us the Latin Vulgate. Indeed the church's debt to Jerome is mentioned in the Foreword of the publication.

This prompted me to ask, at the plenary session, whether the bishop and theologians present that day were aware of the sainted Jerome's rampant misogyny and indeed of the sexism of other Church Fathers.

Far be it from me to criticise the theological brilliance of these men and their influence on the development of doctrine and training of our clergy but I remain concerned about the 'selective' theology of the magisterium as highlighted by Jennifer Stark and L'Affaire Williamson.

The excuse sometimes given is that the Fathers of the church had the limited knowledge of their times; unlike Richard Williamson who should know better. Nevertheless, the modern church has built on this patristic tradition. Jerome was not ignorant of the Scriptures but he seems to have been ignorant of the Spirit of Christ.

Ann MacKay

THE NECESSITY OF SECULARIST REGIMES

Lecture by
Professor Charles Taylor
McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

THURSDAY, 21 MAY 2009
at 18.00
in Sir Charles Wilson Lecture Theatre,
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Free admission but required to register for this lecture by contacting:

Angela Hair
Email: A.Hair@admin.gla.ac.uk
Tel: 0141 330 3593

A Review, by John O'Connor OP, of professor's Taylor's most recent book **'A Secular Age'** *(Harvard Press)* is in this Issue of Open House.

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CONTACTING OPEN HOUSE.
Please contact any of the following team with articles news, reviews and letters.

IAN WILLOCK i.d.willock@dundee.ac.uk
WILLY SLAVIN willyslavin@googlemail.com • **MICHAEL TURNBULL** corbie41@hotmail.com
JAMES ARMSTRONG armstrj567@aol.com
Address: 26 Torridon Ave., Glasgow G41 5AU. *Publisher (contact Publisher on any issue re Open House)*

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EDITORIAL BOARD
Jim McManus; Rev. Ian Fraser; Michael O'Donnell; Elizabeth Kearney; Maeve McGlynn; Jennifer Stark; John Cooney.

Design & Layout: Iain MacPherson Design, Glasgow.
Email: zen20211@zen.co.uk