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The FURROW

A JOURNAL FOR THE
CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Catherine Swift
European Pilgrimage
Walks

Gerard Madden
The Industrial Rosary
Crusade

Niamh NicGhabhann
Art for Catholic Ireland:
The Irish Ecclesiological
Society

Meins G.S. Coetsier
Towards a Theology of
Prison Ministry

Jayne Guiney
Spirituality in Catholic
Primary Schools

Amalee Meehan
Derek A. Laffan
Difficult Times for
Catholic Students in
Second Level Schools?

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Ó CHÓFRA CHUALLAUGHT CHOLM CILLE

in eagar ag/edited by Tracey Ní Mhaonaigh

Eagrán ceiliúrtha de *Irisleabhar Mhá Nuad* atá anseo in ómós do Naomh Colm Cille – pátrún Chuallacht Cholm Cille – a rugadh 1500 bliain ó shin. Tá ábhar (cuid de as Gaeilge, cuid eile as Béarla) a scríobhadh faoi Cholm Cille, agus/nó in ómós dó, agus a cuireadh i gcló thar na blianta san *Irisleabhar* bailithe le chéile anseo. Chomh maith leis na píosaí seo, faightear dánta comórtha le Tadhg Ó Dúshláine agus iad curtha ar fáil go dátheangach aige.

This is a special commemorative edition of *Irisleabhar Mhá Nuad* to mark the 1500th anniversary of the birth of Colm Cille, the patron of *Cuallacht Cholm Cille*. It includes essays and poems (some in Irish and some in English) published over the years in the *Irisleabhar* which were written about, or in honour of, Colm Cille. The collection also includes poems written by Tadhg Ó Dúshláine to mark the occasion.

Cuir glaoch ar Roinn na Nua-Ghaeilge, Ollscoil Mhá Nuad (01 708 3666) nó ríomhphost chuig nua.ghaeilge@mu.ie más spéis leat an leabhar a cheannach (€20 + €3 p&p ach €17 + €3 má luann tú go bhfaca tú an fógra in *The Furrow*)

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CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

**The Editor and Staff of *The Furrow* wish readers
everywhere the blessings of the feast**

The Furrow

A pastoral monthly founded 1950.

The motif on the cover of *The Furrow* is from Jeremiah 4:3, which reads in the Vulgate:

Novate vobis novale
Et nolite serere super spinas.
Yours to drive a new furrow,
Nor sow any longer among the briers.

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Editor's Note

This edition of the *Furrow* presents a selection of the vibrant and innovative papers given at a two-day ‘*Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Catholicism in Ireland and Beyond*’ conference that took place on July 22 and 23, 2021. This inaugural online conference was organised by the Irish Institute for Catholic Studies (IICS) which is based in Mary Immaculate College. The articles published here were chosen and edited by the conference organizers Dr Patricia Kieran, Director of the IICS and Dr Ian Hickey, the Acting Director. The event scaffolded an interdisciplinary discussion of Catholicism across the Humanities and Education as it aimed to bring together scholars across a wide range of disciplines and perspectives. Scholars explored the complex and contested nature of Catholicism, both past and present, its legacy and impact on culture, theology, society and tradition both nationally and internationally. As an interdisciplinary organisation, the Irish Institute for Catholic Studies welcomed papers from scholars with expertise in architecture, cultural studies, ecumenism, education, environmental studies, gender studies, history, law, literature, media, musicology, philosophy, politics, sociology, theology, pastoral studies and visual art.

The six articles published here represent a small sample of the outstanding papers presented at the conference, most of which are currently available for viewing on the IICS YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCduX-xNyqh4UzbsN0dOHt8w>. The selected articles explore pilgrimage routes, the rosary crusade, the devotional infrastructure of the Catholic Church as well as engaging with contemporary issues such as prison ministry, education and the issue of faith-based bullying in schools.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish readers, contributors and friends of the *Furrow* a blessed Christmas and New Year

European Pilgrimage Walks – a personal perspective.

Catherine Swift

*Sét no tiag, téiti Crist; crích i mbéo, bíth cen tríst
Tréodaé rom-ain airm i n-an; Athair, Macc, Spirit Glán
Tiagait liumm – láthair ndil; ar cech caingen, aingil gil
Ar cech caingin, ata-teoch; narom-tairre, ním o neoch*

The path I walk – Christ walks it. May the land in which I am be without sorrow.
May the Trinity protect me wherever I stay, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Bright angels walk with me in every matter – dear presence !
In every matter I pray to them that no one’s venom may reach me.

This is the first verse of an Old Irish poem surviving in a fifteenth-century manuscript in the British Museum. It is followed by a note: *Coimgi Coluim Cille ann sin i a gabail ac loigi ocus hic ergi ocus ag dul for sed ocus is adamra*: ‘There is the protection of Colum Cille. And it is to be said at lying and on rising, and when going on a journey, and it is a wonder’.¹

Colum Cille famously left Ireland and founded the monastery of Iona on a small island in the middle of the Hebridean sea-lanes. Our scanty evidence suggests he left Ireland in 563; that Iona was founded relatively quickly and that he died there in 597 after a career which, at various stages, involved journeys ranging from the Irish midlands to the north of the Great Glen in Scotland. His obit in the *Annals of Inisfallen* describes his life abroad as a pilgrimage: ‘Repose of Colum Cille on Sunday night on the 9th June in the 35th year of his *peregrinatio*’ a word translated by the editor as exile.

1 Carney, James. “Three Old Irish accentual poems”. *Ériu* 22, (1971): 23-29. I have reworded Carney’s translation slightly.

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In early Irish penitentials, exile is evoked relatively rarely as a form of redemption and is reserved for the most serious of sins such as homicide by clerics. A short text entitled *Tres canones hibernici* has more references than most; they expand the possible occasions for exile as penance to include theft from a saint's shrine, theft from a church housing a Gospel book and wounding of a bishop or a member of his household.² On the whole, however, exile and pilgrimage are not found often in the Irish penitentials and the frequent reference to *peregrinatio perennis* or perpetual pilgrimage among the few examples seems close to the thinking of John Cassian. He argued that true monks should abandon their kinsfolk and live amongst strangers so as to focus the desires of their heart entirely on Christ.³

In the *Annals of Ulster*, there are various references to *peregrinatio* or *peregrini* (those who undertook *peregrinatio*). These include travellers killed by Munstermen (714); a king of Connacht who gave up his sword for a clerical staff and travelled to Iona (787); the leader of the community of Bangor who travelled to Rome and died there as an *apostolicus doctor* (929); the leader of Aghaboe who died on pilgrimage in Armagh (1004) and two aristocratic women who did likewise, including the daughter of Brian Boru (1063 and 1073 respectively). Since Brian was in his early seventies when he died at Clontarf in 1014, it seems probable that his daughter was living in retirement in Armagh for some time before she died. These examples can be supplemented by entries referring to those going on their *ailithre*. This is the Irish word for pilgrimage, created from a compound of *aile* and *tír*: 'another territory'. Those on *ailithre* could include a royal married couple such as Laidgnén mac Maelain, king of the Gailenga and his queen who died in Rome in 1051. Pilgrimage in early Ireland, therefore, often meant a life spent apart from one's kin in a church settlement rather than referring to the journey itself in the way that it is commonly used today.

A gloss in a vernacular law tract on the pledging of goods links the lay population explicitly with pilgrimage. *Bretha im Fuillemna Gell* states that a man who has pledged perpetual chastity is not entitled to pledge the weapons which he once used. This individual is then further specified as belonging to the category of *áthlaíoch frist-tongat dia pecthaib .i. dul in n-ailithre* – 'ex-laymen who renounce their sins, that is, those who go on pilgrimage'. Furthermore, it was not appropriate that such a person should live in a fortified settlement or *dún*: instead, he should live in a simple

2 See Bieler, Ludwig. *The Irish penitentials*. (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1966), 86, 98, 114, 120, 182, 228, 267.

3 Ramsey, Boniface, ed. *John Cassian: The Conferences*. (New Jersey : Paulist Press, 1997) 826-827 (XXIV 2).

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house constructed by churchmen.⁴ Again, the focus is on a static lifestyle of renunciation and prayer rather than on the particular experience of a journey.

THE CAMINO

The understanding of pilgrimage in *modern* Europe is very different, shaped in part by the phenomenal popularity of the Camino de Santiago de Compostela. First referenced in the mid tenth century, this was initially developed through the provision of local hospices during the reign of Sancho the Great of Navarre. By 1120, the vast number of travellers involved astonished Islamic ambassadors travelling to the court at Léon.⁵ By the later nineteenth century, the pilgrimage had fallen in popularity but in 1879, Cardinal Payá announced the discovery of the apostle's bones behind the cathedral's main altar and the festivities around the 25th July (the festival of St James), once again began to attract national and indeed international crowds. In the 1930s and 40s, the Falangists formally re-established the symbolic association between the cult of St James and the institutions of the Spanish state and in the Holy Year of 1948, over half a million pilgrims visited the shrine. These mainly arrived by bus and truck but included over a hundred members of the Spanish University Union (SEU) who undertook a thirty-three-day march carrying tents from Roncesvalles.

This symbolically began a new focus on the traverse of northern Spain as one of the great routes of western Europe rather than simply concentrating on celebrations in Santiago itself. In 1962, the government declared the entire route to be a national patronate under the auspices of the Directorate-General of Fine Arts and in 1965, certificates for those who had travelled at least three hundred kilometres on foot began to be issued. By the 1980s, travellers were numbered in millions and in 1988, the intergovernmental Council of Europe designated it the first European Cultural Itinerary.⁶

Though initially the majority had travelled frugally, seeking shelter either in religious-run hostels or in refuges built by local government, a whole infrastructure of hotels, luggage-bearers and guides has now grown up so that the journey can be undertaken with whatever degree of comfort is deemed preferable. At the same

4 Etchingam, Colmán *Church organisation AD 650-1000*. (Maynooth: Laigin Publications, 1999), 388 quoting Daniel Binchy, ed, *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1979), 570:10-12.

5 Sumption, Jonathan *The Age of Pilgrimage: the medieval journey to God* (New Jersey: Hidden Spring, 2003), 162-4.

6 Pack, Sasha D., "Revival of the Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela: The Politics of Religious, National, and European Patrimony, 1879-1988", *Journal of Modern History* 82.2 (2010), 335-367.

time, it is clear that there is still a strongly Catholic ethos among many of those who undertake it and group pilgrimages are often organised by Catholic youth groups, parishes, monastic leaders and others. It is difficult to quantify whether a high percentage of pilgrims are undertaking it for religious reasons. In 2014 a study disseminated 470 questionnaires in an attempt to answer this question. Interestingly, in terms of the study's methodology, the questionnaires were only distributed to those staying in the cheaper hostels and among Catholic priests attending to the spiritual needs of participants. The sample included people of over forty different nationalities with an average age of 32 (an age which may well reflect the decision to focus on less comfortable facilities). The conclusions derived from this study were that the majority of pilgrims were not particularly interested in 'traditional religiosity' but that the strongest discernible motivation was a more secular, more individualistic and less defined interest in spiritual growth. Another strong factor was the seeking of what was seen as a valuable experience which tested personal limits and allowed for adventures.⁷

OTHER ROUTES

Motivations for the creation and promotion of long-distance modern pilgrimage routes elsewhere can also be identified. The route to Santiago as a European Cultural Itinerary has now been supplemented by a growing list of *other* European cultural routeways which are designed to illustrate the values of human rights, cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and mutual exchanges across borders. At the time of writing, these number forty-five of which at least ten are designed around Christian themes. A tenth-century account of a trip across France, Switzerland and Italy to Rome was adopted by the Council in 1994 under the title *Via Francigena* while in Scandinavia, the St Olavsleden includes, amongst others, the route taken by the early eleventh-century saint from Selånger on the Swedish coast to Nidaros Cathedral in Norway. The Cyril and Methodius routes are a similar grouping running through Slavonic Europe which celebrate the travels of the ninth-century Byzantine churchmen whose missions were endorsed by Rome. There are also routes celebrating Cluniac and Cistercian monasteries, Romanesque architecture, St Martin of Tours and the Reformation.

The tourist and recreational potential of such routes means that additional routes are being created and endorsed by regional

7 Lluís Oviedo, Scarlett de Courcier and Miguel Farlas, "Rise of Pilgrims on the "Camino" to Santiago: Sign of Change or Religious Revival?" *Review of Religious Research* 56, No. 3 (September 2014), 433-442.

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authorities. The modern *Via Domitia*, for example, which traverses Provence from Arles across the Alpine pass of Susa to Vercelli was created as a result of a modern twinning between the two towns, despite the adopted name of an ancient Roman road. Still others are the result of research by individual scholars as in the routeway between Dunkeld and Iona in Scotland, which was identified and walked by a group led by Dr Simon Taylor of Glasgow and Dr Pamela O'Neill of Sydney in 2017.⁸

MY EXPERIENCE

I myself have walked a number of these routes, both those identified as 'pilgrimage' routes and those with purely secular descriptions such as the two-week Coast to Coast walk across Britain, designed by the Cumbrian hill-walker Geoffrey Wainwright. With the exception of the Dunkeld-Iona route, I have walked them on my own, which in itself provides a rather different experience from that involved in walking with a pilgrim group. I carry a tent while at the same time enjoying an income which allows me to use other forms of accommodation when camping grounds are not available. On many routes, I have used the Lightfoot Guides produced by Pilgrimage Publications and these provide detailed maps of route ways arranged day by day, together with a short list of available accommodations ranked in price order including those which are offered by religious or local authority institutions. Intermittently, these guides include short paragraphs on cultural sights and the history of a specific locality.

The *formative* experience which turned me into a long-term pilgrim walker, was a two-month walk along the Via Francigena from Canterbury through France and Switzerland to the Italian border in 2010. My motivations when I began undoubtedly belonged to a nexus of inchoate thoughts which could be included under the rubric of adventure-seeking and testing of physical abilities. At the same time, it was also an escape from pressures and personal disappointments and as I travelled, I met others with similar experiences. There were relatively few of us on the road and, perhaps because of that, my memories now are still filled with their stories and I wonder what happened subsequently in their lives. At the end of two months, I decided retrospectively that I had, in fact, experienced a religious pilgrimage. Since then, my experience has been mixed, with some walks proving inspirational and others less so.

8 O'Neill, Pamela, "A possible early medieval route across Scotland" in *Germano-Celtica: A Festschrift for Brian Taylor eds Anders Ahlqvist and Pamela O'Neill* (Sydney: the Celtic Studies Foundation, University of Sydney, 2017), 211-225.

Key to my sense of having become a pilgrim enroute are my recollections of those offering hospitality. Authority for the Via Francigena is largely devolved but the archbishopric of Reims plays an over-arching role and, in many areas, accommodation is offered by a variety of religious institutions. It is important to note there are also municipal hostels and camping sites as well as family households who offer rooms to passing pilgrims from explicitly humanist motives. Religious-run shelters included Benedictine and other monasteries, Catholic schools, guest rooms of parish priests, lofts of parish centres, ex-seminaries, convents and retirement homes for priests. In most cases, they offered a bed in what was often a communal dormitory, although in some cases it was simple mattresses on the floor and on one occasion, where I begged shelter from an institution which had not advertised availability, it was bare floorboards and a sink.

It was my first time meeting so many people who had vowed themselves to religious life in such a wide variety of ways and in an environment where our conversation was largely confined to shared life experiences and attitudes. For the most part, they were rather older than I and the encounters were inspiring and, occasionally, very sad. In one instance, women from three separate congregations had come together in their old age to live in community and Mass was said by a priest suffering from Parkinsons disease who had to be assisted in holding the chalice. In another, I met the sisters of the Confraternité de St Bernard who run a hostel for the partners of those held in the high-security prison which is part of the Clairvaux complex today. It was they who first explained to me that St Malachy is not only important in an Irish context but is revered throughout the Cistercian world as the embodiment of St Bernard's ideal bishop and they brought me to a holy well just outside Clairvaux which still bears his name. There was also a monastic guest master whose experience of meeting pilgrims had given him a new sense of energy and self-worth; a parish priest who wanted to be a missionary in South America; an abbot who was defending the ancient independence of his house from local diocesan rule and a local cleric, in a high mountain village in Switzerland, who was deeply frustrated with the rules governing the shooting of wolves.

The end of that particular walk for me was the summit of the Col du Grand St Bernard in a pilgrim hostel where only those who had walked or skied to the pass might stay. The hostel had been first established by the tenth-century St Bernard de Menthon as a house of canons who provided a warm refuge for travellers traversing the Alps. Today, it has links with Catholic communities in Tibet and, in addition to providing accommodation for pilgrims, it offers

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summer retreats to French teenagers and provides personnel to run some of the local churches in the valleys below. Visitors can watch old films of the younger canons being buried in snow to provide avalanche training for the Great St. Bernard dogs which are still bred locally. In another film, the canons are depicted emerging in a long line from under a low doorway while wearing cassocks and on skis. In the little museum beside the hostel there are Roman plaques discovered through excavation of the site which commemorate the prayers of much earlier travellers as well as dedicatory pillars to the Roman god Jupiter. In addition, on the northern side of the pass, there is an enormous bronze statue of a cow which was apparently worshipped locally when Julius Caesar brought his armies north. In the immediate vicinity of the large lake marking the pass, one comes across worn steps cut into the living rock. Although these cannot be dated archaeologically, walking across them gives one an awesome sense of treading in the paths of vast numbers of unknown ancestors.

Ireland, too, has ancient pilgrim paths which are currently being developed for new recreational and cultural purposes. In July 2021, Sport Ireland launched a 115 km pilgrim walking route entitled *St Declan's Way*, linking Cashel in County Tipperary with Ardmore in County Waterford. This was officially launched by the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys, on September 29th 2021. It was greeted in one tweet by the statement "After almost a decade of struggle... we finally have a pilgrim path in Ireland to rival the Camino. Congratulations to all involved."

I walked the Way in August 2021 and I would like to add my congratulations to those who have so imaginatively built on the early work of Canon Power, Professor of Archaeology in UCC, who also recorded local memories of the way in 1905. It is now an extremely well-marked and beautiful route and there is great enthusiasm locally for its potential to generate increased tourism in the region. At this very early stage, it has, as yet, to acquire the type of supportive infrastructure of hostels and shelters characterising European routes such as the Camino. In an Irish environment, my own hope would be that these would also include places to dry clothes and access to hot evening meals. Even without these, I have no doubt that, like me, those who walk *St Declan's Way* will return to their normal lives with a sense of increased contentment and wellbeing as well, on occasion, with an enhanced sense of faith. In the final words of the Old Irish poem cited above:

Fírmaith fecht – fó don fét / fiado find foraim sét

A truly good journey! Well does the fair Lord show us a course, a path.

Prayer for the Environment

God our Father,
Your Son Jesus took images from
plant and animal life
to teach us about your Kingdom in heaven
and His mission of mercy in history.
With the help of the Holy Spirit,
who hovered over the cosmos at creation,
may we appreciate the beauty
and diversity of nature,
act temperately to protect the environment
and to prudently
preserve the resources of the earth,
promoting peace and justice among peoples
all over the planet.
May the intercession of Mary,
mother of the church, and inspiration of Saint Francis,
impel us to collaborate
inter-religiously and work with all who wish
for a cleaner and better world,
for the common good and glory of God.

(Fr Kevin O’Gorman SMA)

Devotional Catholicism in the workplace in 1950s Ireland: the case of the Industrial Rosary Crusade

Gerard Madden

The Marian Year, 1954, which was called by Pope Pius XII to commemorate the centenary of the promulgation of the dogma of the Blessed Virgin Mary, witnessed a notable increase of Marian devotion across the Catholic world. This was the case in Ireland as in other countries, and the year was a watershed moment in Marian devotion in a period in which the Catholic Church's influence over state and society in independent Ireland was itself at its height. This was visible at the centre of Marian devotion in Ireland, Knock Shrine. The Mayo shrine was, in James S. Donnelly's words, 'both the beneficiary and a leading promoter of the extraordinary Marian piety which gripped the Catholic laity and clergy of Ireland in the early 1950s'. It witnessed a strong revival in attendance from pilgrims from 1949 onwards, and in the 1953 season alone attracted 250,000 pilgrims. It was finally accorded Vatican recognition in 1954 after decades of efforts by the Archdiocese of Tuam and the lay leaders of the Knock Shrine Society, cementing its status as the 'Irish Lourdes'.¹ 1954 also saw Ireland host the Rosary Rallies of the Mayo-born Irish-American Rosary priest, Fr Patrick Peyton, and his Family Rosary Crusade, which attracted large attendances in dioceses across Ireland that year from Belfast to Loughrea. His rally in Knock attracted 18,000 pilgrims, with an additional 30,000 in Galway and 20,000 in Sligo. As Síle de Cléir notes, Peyton's 'new promotion of the Rosary, building on what was already a substantial base, was to ensure the devotion's continued popularity

1 James S. Donnelly, 'Knock Shrine and the Marian Year of 1954' in John Cunningham and Niall Ó Ciosáin, *Culture and Society in Ireland Since 1750: Essays in Honour of Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh* (Dublin, 2015), pp. 322-323.

Gerard Madden PhD is a founding member of the Irish Centre for the Histories of Labour and Class. He has published articles in *Saothar: Journal of the Irish Labour History Society*, *Irish Historical Studies* and *Contemporary British History*.

DEVOTIONAL CATHOLICISM IN THE WORKPLACE

– up to the 1970s and 1980s'.² This increased focus on Marian devotion was also visible in workplace environments. The impact of the Marian Year on labour cultures across Ireland was instanced by the construction of statues of the Blessed Virgin in factories around the country. To give one example of a workplace where the author of this article has a family connection, a Marian Shrine was constructed in Dubarry's shoe factory in Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, which was fundraised by workers in the factory's branch of the Irish Shoe and Leather-Workers' Union and is still extant in the factory's new location on the other side of the town.³

THE INDUSTRIAL ROSARY CRUSADE

This article will discuss one aspect of how devotional Catholicism impacted on trade unionism in Ireland by examining the Industrial Rosary Crusade, an important and remarkably understudied organisation active in 1950s Ireland which sought to promote the communal recitation of the rosary among workers in industrial and workplace settings across Ireland, including in the Guinness Brewery, Dublin, Jacob's Biscuits, Dundalk, Shannon Airport and other workplaces. The crusade serves as an important case study which shines significant light on how working-class Irish Catholics practiced their faith in the 1950s, and how devotional Catholicism expressed itself in workplace environments. It will discuss the role of the Dublin Dominican Fr Gabriel Harty, who was the moving force in the Crusade's growth. The article will also situate the Industrial Rosary Crusade within the increase of clerical interest in the Irish trade union movement in the immediate post-war period and how the rosary crusade related to contemporary Catholic concerns about communism during the Cold War. James S. Donnelly has traced how Marian devotion interweaved with Catholic anti-communism, the former influenced by 'the growing cult of Our Lady of Fatima and by the anti-Communist messages associated with the apparitions there in 1917'. Given the concerns of leading clergymen such as Archbishop John Charles McQuaid of Dublin that liberal and secular – and potentially socialist and communist – ideologies could gain influence within Ireland's labour movement, it is unsurprising that the Crusade's output was particularly anti-communist. This reflected the wider Marian anti-communism of the period, as instanced by the anti-communist sermons given by clergy at Knock Shrine, and the Crusade's literature and the rhetoric of its clerical promoters during

2 Sile de Cléir, *Popular Catholicism in 20th-century Ireland: locality, identity and culture* (London, 2017), p. 90.

3 *Connacht Tribune*, 3 September 2009.

pilgrimages was evinced by a strong anti-communism aimed at a working-class audience.⁴

The Industrial Rosary Crusade was strongly associated with the Irish Dominican Order and with a charismatic young Dominican preacher, Gabriel Harty. While not the Crusade's founder, Harty became the crucial figure involved in it and was inextricably associated with its public activities. Born in Dublin in 1921, Harty entered the seminary in Clonliffe College, Dublin and on 26 May 1945 was ordained to the priesthood in the seminary chapel by Archbishop McQuaid. His perusal of *The Inner Life of the Very Reverend Père Lacordaire*, O.P., by Fr Bernard Chocarne, O.P., revived his interest in the Dominican Order, and prompted him to approach Archbishop McQuaid regarding a vocation to the Order. A year later, Fr Gabriel, 'a lapsed secular', received the habit at St Mary's Priory, Cork, on 14 September 1949, and his particular interest in Marian devotion which would define his priestly ministry was evident from this time. After his first profession on 15 September 1950, he was assigned to St Mary's Priory, Tallaght, where he studied philosophy for one year and theology for another. Due to his interest in Mary and the Rosary, Harty was assigned to Collegio San Clemente, Rome, in 1952, in order to attend the Institute of Spirituality at the Pontifical International Athenæum of the Dominican Order, the Angelicum. There, he obtained a diploma, consulted theological treatises on the Rosary and its representation in art, and travelled to Lourdes to prepare for the work of preaching the Rosary on his return to Ireland. Almost immediately after his solemn profession on 15 September 1953 at the Dominican Priory in Tallaght, Fr Gabriel was appointed assistant to Fr Gabriel Keenan, O.P., Director of the Rosary Crusade. Fr Harty was more proactive than his older predecessor and the different temperaments of the two would become visible during their work on the Rosary Crusade, with Harty, who soon learned to drive on his return to Ireland, travelling extensively across the country to promote it.⁵

The Industrial Rosary Crusade attracted support from other Marian organisations, and with the Legion of Mary supporting Harty's efforts it expanded significantly. By 1958 an office was established at 48 Parnell Square for its effective organisation. Under Harty's tutelage, and emulating Patrick Peyton's role in the Family Rosary Crusade, the Industrial Rosary Crusade fostered the recitation of the rosary in numerous factory and workplace centres across Ireland, not just in large urban centres but also in

4 Donnelly, 'Knock Shrine and the Marian Year of 1954', pp. 323-324.

5 Luuk Dominiek Janssen OP, 'Fr Gabriel Harty', <https://dominicans.ie/fr-gabriel-harty-o-p/>, accessed 4 October 2021.

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smaller towns. It also organised numerous pilgrimages for factory workers, as instanced by the 1957 pilgrimage by workers in Urney Chocolate Factory in Tallaght, Co Dublin, to the national Marian Shrine in Knock, Co. Mayo, which was part of a wider wave of Marian pilgrimage to Knock in this period.⁶

The *Rosary Letter*, the group's main periodical, is an important example of Catholic devotional literature from the period aimed at trade unionists and contains extensive information on workplace rosary rallies across Ireland as a whole. The publication was one example of the tensions between Harty and Keenan, as Harty found the Crusade's early literature uninspiring and uninviting and Fr Keenan found it difficult to engage with the idea of a newsletter. Fr Gabriel took charge of publishing the periodical and the first issue of the *Rosary Letter* appeared on 25 March 1954. At its height, *The Rosary Letter* enjoyed a circulation of 100,000 and was dispatched on a vast international basis.⁷

The periodical retained a strong anti-communist stance throughout the period, which was indicative of the sentiments within Catholicism and wider Irish society at the time and reflected the wider anti-communist aspect of Marian devotion as discussed above. Father Harty's own public statements warned about the threat of communists to Irish society in a manner which was hyperbolic, given the weakness of the Irish communist movement in the period. Inaugurating the Crusade among workers in Irish Tanners Ltd in Portlaw, Waterford in 1957, Harty told the workforce that there were seven to eight hundred active communists in Dublin alone and that they were trying to involve themselves in the trade union movement and the industrial sphere.⁸ This was certainly an exaggeration of the membership of the Communist Party of Ireland - then known as the Irish Workers' League - which was significantly smaller than the number offered by Harty, who asserted that the Rosary Crusade was a way which 'the Mother of God should prepare an army of men and women to fight against the enemies of the Church'.⁹

This rhetoric was reflected in the *Letter* itself, which regularly included claims about communist growth and infiltration similar to those made by Harty. A 1955 issue of the *Letter*, for instance, warned that 'here, in this island fortress of the faith the spectre of Communism lurks as it does in London, Paris or Berlin' and went on to assert that the Communist Party of Ireland had 500 card-holding members and was able to mobilise up to 750 people

6 Donnelly, 'Knock Shrine and the Marian Year of 1954', pp. 331-332; *Drogheda Argus*, 22 June 1957.

7 Janssen OP, 'Fr Gabriel Harty'.

8 *Catholic Standard*, 3 May 1957.

9 *Ibid*, 4 June 1954.

at election time. It went on to dramatically claim that ‘there was a house in the centre of Dublin that once had a picture of the Sacred Heart with a red lamp before it. The red lamp is still there, but the picture has been replaced by one of STALIN!’. The *Letter* also emphasised the need for responsible trade unionism; while it concluded by urging workers to consecrate themselves to the Sacred Heart of Mary and reciting the rosary every day, it asserted that ‘taking up the cross of an honest day’s work’ was ‘the penance Our Lady especially wants’.¹⁰

This argument by the *Rosary Crusade* – that trade unionists should be diligent workers and should approach trade unionism in a responsible manner, eschewing recklessness and radicalism – was indicative of the broader approach of the Catholic Church towards trade unionism in this period, reflecting Catholic Social Teaching as articulated in Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* and subsequent encyclicals. The rosary rallies were encouraged by Archbishop John Charles McQuaid of Dublin whose interest in the Crusade is unsurprising within the wider context of the Church’s increased attentiveness to trade union developments in the early Cold War years. There was a significant increase in trade union density in Ireland during the early Cold War, prompted by the relative health of the economy in the immediate post-war years, and this was paralleled by a sharp increase in strikes, both official and unofficial, across the country. The Catholic hierarchy took a keen interest in this noted increase in trade union involvement and the movement’s internal politics, and individual bishops, notably John Charles McQuaid – but also key ones elsewhere, such as Bishop Michael Browne of Galway and Bishop Cornelius Lucey of Cork – played important roles mediating industrial disputes in their diocese. In particular, McQuaid’s notable role in successfully mediating a transport strike in 1951 won him significant praise from CIÉ, transport workers and the public, as the trade union section of his archives extensively attests.¹¹ The founding by the Irish Jesuit Order in 1951 of the *Catholic Workers College*, a Dublin-based educational institution which sought to educate trade unionists in a framework shaped by Catholic social teaching, was but the most prominent example of the growth of Catholic workers’ education in the period motivated by the labour movement’s expansion.¹²

While clergymen certainly expressed support for the Crusade

10 Copy of the *Rosary Letter*, c. 1955.

11 Gerard Madden, ‘“We here in Ireland are not outside this struggle”: the Irish Catholic Church, anti-communism and the Cold War, 1945-1965’ (PhD, Dublin, 2018).

12 Aidan Seery and Liam McKenna, ‘The Catholic Workers’ College Dublin: a personal history’, *Saothar: journal of the Irish Labour History Society*, vol. 39, no. 1 (2015), pp. 45-53.

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and its role in encouraging devotional Catholicism among the working class, others had *concerns* about its reverence. Writing in *The Furrow*, then nearing the end of its first decade of publication, Father Joseph Cunnane, a teacher in St. Jarlath's College who later became Archbishop of Tuam, argued that 'the Industrial Rosary Crusade can help our urban population, provided it keeps its ideals high and does not allow the Rosary to degenerate, as it so easily can in Ireland, into a mere formality to be gone through before closing-time, as mechanical as the work man's putting on his coat or the office-girl her lipstick; provided it is kept clear that only a man or girl who has done an honest day's work can with a clear conscience kneel down at the end of the day to offer a Rosary'.¹³ Despite these concerns, the Rosary Crusade succeeded in promoting the rosary amongst working-class people across Ireland.

CONCLUSION

The Industrial Rosary Crusade remained active into the late 60s, before declining from then onwards. Its dissipation was related to the broader decline of lay Catholic groups in the period, as well as Fr Gabriel Harty's appointment as superior of St Saviour's Priory, Waterford and later election as prior of St Mary's Priory, Cork, an office to which he felt unsuited and from which he resigned in 1969. The following year, the Irish hierarchy appointed him the National Spiritual Director of the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima, an American lay Catholic group which had been active in Ireland since the 1950s. However, in the wake of Vatican II the Apostolate of the Rosary found it more difficult to operate, paralleling the same factors which had similarly led to the dissipation of the Industrial Rosary Crusade.¹⁴ By studying groups such as the Industrial Rosary Crusade, we can uncover the role Marian Devotion played in the working lives of ordinary Catholics in 1950s Ireland, deepening our understanding of how Catholicism shaped their everyday lives and the ways in which religiosity intersects with class, and uncovering novel new perspectives on the everyday Catholicism of ordinary Catholics in mid-twentieth century Ireland. This article also underlines the impact of the Marian Year in increasing the growth of Marian devotion in Ireland, and how Marianism intersected with both contemporary Catholic anxieties about industrial unrest in Ireland and the threat of communism during the early Cold War.

13 Joseph Cunnane, 'The doctrinal content of Irish Marian piety', *The Furrow*, vol, 10, no. 2 (Feb., 1959), pp. 89-103.

14 Janssen OP, 'Fr Gabriel Harty'.

Art for Catholic Ireland: The Irish Ecclesiological Society

Niamh NicGhabhann

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Irish built environment was transformed by ecclesiastical architectural expansion. Building types ranged from churches and cathedrals to monasteries, convents, and sites of education, healthcare, leisure, and reform. While this architectural activity was evident across denominations, Irish Catholics invested their time, capacity, and resources in building to an extraordinary degree.¹ An initial phase of building can be observed in the early decades of the nineteenth century, particularly after the achievement of Catholic Emancipation in 1829, while the latter half of the century was dedicated to expansion and the expression of a magnificent and

1 Presbyterian churches, Quaker meeting houses, synagogues and mosques are considered by P. Larmour, D. M. Butler and K. James-Chakraborty in sections of the chapter, 'Ecclesiastical Architecture', in 'Architecture 1600–2000', ed. by R. Loeber, H. Campbell, L. Hurley, J. Montague and E. Rowley, *Art and Architecture of Ireland*, 4 (Dublin and New Haven, CT, Dublin and London, 2014), pp. 287–328, at pp. 317–23. Short bibliographies are provided for each section. Jeanne Sheehy provides an overview of Catholic building during this period in J. Sheehy, 'Irish Church Building: Popery, Puginism and the Protestant Ascendancy', in *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*, ed. by C. Brooks and A. Saint (Manchester, 1995), pp. 133–50, at p. 134. A close study of the work of one architect in Dublin is provided in B. Grimes, *Majestic Shrines and Graceful Sanctuaries: The Church Architecture of Patrick Byrne, 1783–1864* (Dublin, 2009).

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triumphant architectural identity.² This architectural expansion was led by multiple individuals and organisations, including parochial and diocesan structures, religious orders, and lay organisations associated with the church. As Sarah Roddy has demonstrated via her ‘Visible Divinity’ project, and as Brendan Grimes has shown via his analysis of church-building in Dublin, the funding and management of these projects was organised by these diverse agents, at local level, rather than reflecting a central organising system.³ This relatively dispersed framework for development is reflected in the stylistic *diversity* evident in the churches and cathedrals across the country. Choices regarding style often reflected the tastes, preferences, and experiences of individual religious personnel involved, with architects also playing an important role in mediating contemporary ideas about religious aesthetics.⁴

Church building practices were also informed by local circumstances such as the level of available funding, the available site, the architect employed, and more general concerns and principles, such as liturgical requirements, canon law, and texts of long-standing significance like Carlo Borromeo’s 1577 manual on the design, organisation and layout of church buildings.⁵ Specific affiliations with particular religious orders could also play a role in

- 2 Catholic architectural activity in the latter half of the nineteenth century are explored in A. Wilson, ‘The Building of St Colman’s Cathedral, Cobh’, *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, 7 (2004), 233–65. A. Wilson, ‘The Material and Visual Culture of the Construction of Irish Catholic Identity: St. Colman’s Cathedral, Queenstown, County Cork’, in *Material Religion in Modern Britain: The Spirit of Things*, ed. by L. Matthews-Jones and T. Willem-Jones (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 37–55. and N. NicGhabhann, ‘“A Development of Practical Catholic Emancipation:” Laying the Foundations for the Roman Catholic Urban Landscape, 1850–1900’, *Urban History*, 46 (2019), pp. 44–61.
- 3 The large-scale fundraising programmes for Roman Catholic devotional infrastructure (churches, schools, convents and other related buildings) were the subject of the ‘Visible Divinity: Money and Irish Catholicism, 1850–1921’ project led by Dr Sarah Roddy at the University of Manchester: <http://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FN002105%2F1> (accessed 28 October 2021); B. Grimes, ‘Funding a Roman Catholic Church in Nineteenth-Century Ireland’, *Architectural History*, 40 (1997), pp. 222–40.
- 4 Cardinal Paul Cullen’s views and preferences in relation to architecture are explored in J. Montague, ‘Paul Cullen, J.J. McCarthy and Holy Cross Church, Clonliffe: The Politics and Iconography of architectural Style’, in *Cardinal Paul Cullen and his World*, ed. by D. Keogh and A. McDonnell (Dublin, 2011), pp. 260–76, and E. Kane, ‘Paul Cullen and the Visual Arts’, in the same volume, pp. 99–114.
- 5 Brendan Grimes describes Borromeo’s 1577 *Instructiones Fabricae Et Supellectilium Ecclesiasticarum* as the ‘most important document on church planning published since the Counter-Reformation’ and while no evidence has been found that it was used directly as a guide in the planning of Dublin churches, they ‘conform to his advice in most respects’, reflecting its influence as ‘an agreed architectural language’. B. Grimes, ‘The architecture of Dublin’s neo-classical Roman Catholic temples, 1803–62’, Doctoral thesis, Dublin, National College of Art and Design, 2005, p. 181–182.

determining architectural decision-making, for example the Gesù in Rome was an important model for the churches of the Jesuit order. Notwithstanding the level of architectural activity, and the associated investment in church decoration, sculpture, furnishings and artwork, *decision-making* appears to have remained at a local, project-by-project level, rather than being informed by official or centralised guidelines.

However, despite this relatively dispersed framework for development, groups were developed in order to inform Roman Catholic aesthetic decisions. The Irish Ecclesiological Society was founded with this explicit aim in 1849. A short history of the Society was published in *The Irish Monthly* in 1859, noting that it lasted only for seven years.⁶ However, despite its short tenure, it is significant as an example of a centralised attempt to guide Irish Catholic aesthetic and design decisions. It is also of interest for what it reveals about Irish engagement in broader networks of religious art, in its attempt to create a corollary to established institutions elsewhere, and as an example of the Roman Catholic church in Ireland taking part in a much broader transnational discourses around religious art and architecture.

The account published in *The Irish Monthly*, written by Rev. Matthew Russell (a nephew of Dr Charles Russell), records that the idea for the Society was first suggested by architect James Joseph McCarthy.⁷ The distinctly Puginian tone evident throughout the Society reflects the influence of Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin on McCarthy. Russell noted that the curate of Glendalough, Rev. John Gowen, with McCarthy, had ‘many a talk about the sad state in which many of our churches were at that time’, and that ‘these conversations led on to the project of a special organisation for the improvement of such matters in Ireland’.⁸ This assessment of the poor state of ecclesiastical architecture by the mid-century was quite widely shared – in the *Dublin Builder*, for example, an 1859 article on the ‘Progress of Ecclesiastical Architecture’, noted that ‘few countries in the wide circle of European civilisation were more deficient in the character of their edifices until very recently’.⁹ As Jeanne Sheehy pointed out, McCarthy’s involvement as the only architect in such a well-connected Society advanced his career significantly.¹⁰

6 ‘The Irish Ecclesiological Society’, *The Irish Monthly*, 1896, Vol. 24 (275), pp. 275-277.

7 *Ibid.*, pg. 275.

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Dublin Builder*, August 1, 1859

10 J. Sheehy, *J.J. McCarthy and the Gothic Revival in Ireland* (Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1977), pg. 9.

In order to ensure that the Irish clergy would have ‘confidence in its teaching and its work’, Charles Russell, President of Maynooth College, was approached to act as President. The full title of the organisation was ‘The Irish Ecclesiological Society, under the patronage of Our Blessed Lady and St. Laurence, Archbishop of Dublin, for promoting the study of Christian Art and Antiquities, and for encouraging the practice of Ecclesiastical Architecture in Ireland’. The patrons were an influential and well-connected group, and included the Irish Archbishops, as well as the Rev. Nicholas Wiseman, leading antiquarians like Count de Montalembert from France, leading English Catholics like Lord Shrewsbury, activist figures such as Charles Gavan Duffy, and Bartholomew Woodlock, who succeeded Newman as rector of the Catholic University.¹¹

There was a significant emphasis on the study of ‘Catholic antiquities’ in the rationale outlined for the Society, reflecting the influence of the Cambridge Camden Society, and the engagement of individuals such as Montalembert, who was active in Irish antiquarian circles.¹² Indeed, the establishment of the Irish Ecclesiological Society was rather fulsomely noted by that institution in their own publication, *The Ecclesiologist*, in 1850, in which the name of the new Irish society was described as a ‘unconscious homage’ to the Anglican body. The foundation of the Irish Society was seen as a positive step, ‘saving our position as members of the Church of England’, as ‘no Christian-minded man can fail rejoicing to see decencies of external religion cared for in a portion of the Universal Church from which they have been so long exiled’.¹³

The Objects of the Irish Ecclesiological Society included the provision of guidance on the construction of new buildings or the refurbishment and decoration of existing structures, as well as reading ‘papers on all subjects relative to Christian Art, whether Architecture, Painting, Sculpture, Church Music, Stained Glass, Church Furniture &c. ,’ and the exhibition of sketches, drawings, engravings, or models. Objects III and IV were aimed at raising the level of general awareness about Catholic art and communicating to clergymen about the principles of proper church design. The Society also aimed to provide priests with architectural plans and templates, should they not be able to commission their own. Finally, the Society aimed to support the foundation of Altar Societies, which would promote the appropriate decoration and

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., pg. 276. Montalembert was part of a network of Irish antiquarians, and dedicated a volume of his *Monks of the West* to Edwin Richard Windham Wyndham-Quin, the third earl of Dunraven.

13 ‘The Irish Ecclesiological Society’, *The Ecclesiologist*, No. 76 (1850), pg. 322.

maintenance of churches.¹⁴ J.J. McCarthy's 1851 published paper, 'suggestions on the arrangement and characteristics of parish churches', provided clear guidance to the clergy on the use of medieval styles, and the Gothic as the most appropriate for church building, strongly reflective of Pugin's own publications.¹⁵

Although the organisation was relatively short-lived, *The Irish Monthly* recorded that 'an excellent authority has stated that the enlightened and zealous efforts of the Ecclesiological Society were among the chief causes of that magnificent movement which within the last sixty years has covered Ireland with stately churches and other religious edifices in some measure befitting the worship of God'.¹⁶ The *demise* of the Society is described as being due to the increasingly busy work schedule of McCarthy, who appears to have played a central role throughout. The activities of the Society are reflected in a range of sources, including their own publications, newspaper reports, and in *Battersby's Registry*, which provides detailed accounts of meetings. These activities included, for example, liaising with silk manufacturers in Dublin on order to address a regret of the Dr. Derry, Bishop of Clonfert 'at the want of a native manufacture in the construction of articles connected with the Catholic church, and emblematic of the saving truths of the Catholic faith'.¹⁷ This did, it appears, lead to some success, as a report in 1852 on the 'Manufacture Movement' in the *Freeman's Journal* mentioned the exhibition of a set of 'Irish manufactured silk vestments', made for the Very Rev. Dr Moriarty, president of All-Hallows College, 'woven in Ireland, according to a design by Pugin, in strict accordance with the style adopted by the Irish Ecclesiological Society', with a resolution to present them to Cardinal Paul Cullen for inspection.¹⁸

The idea of church building and decoration as an economic stimulus, supporting Irish industries and employing Irish people, was increasingly promoted throughout the second half of the century, countering criticism about the expense of such projects in the midst of economic hardship. However, as both Lisa Godson and Caroline McGee have demonstrated, goods such as vestments, church plate and devotional objects as well as stained glass and mosaic work from England, France, Belgium, and Germany, remained extremely popular in church decorative

14 The 'objects' of the Society are listed in full in 'The Irish Ecclesiological Society', pp. 276-277.

15 J.J. McCarthy, *Suggestions on the arrangement and characteristics of parish churches* (Dublin, 1851)

16 *Ibid.*, pg. 277.

17 'Irish Ecclesiological Society', *Irish Examiner*, 12 February, 1851.

18 'Manufacture Movement', *Freeman's Journal*, 14 May 1852.

schemes, reflecting the limited impact of the Society overall.¹⁹ The publications of the Irish Ecclesiological Society provide a clear statement of what this group wanted to promote as appropriate Roman Catholic aesthetics, from church architecture to domestic devotional objects. These various sources produced by, or associated with, the Society are rich in description and detail, providing an insight into the intellectual and ideological contexts for the aesthetic values being promoted and advanced.

In the first *Address* of the Society, published in the *Nation* newspaper as well as in pamphlet form, Ecclesiology is defined carefully in opposition to antiquarianism, with the former being described as a practical, engaged activity focused on using art and design as part of spiritual life, and the latter as ‘insipid’, and as ‘dealing with materiality only’.²⁰ A lack of discernment is at the centre of this disparagement of antiquarian ideals, with the *Address* claiming that everything from the ‘Etruscan vase, the stone celt, the cromlech, the pyramids, the Egyptian mummy, the saint’s shrine, the cave-temples of India, and the soaring ministers of western Christendom’ were of equal value in the eyes of the ‘virtuoso’ sitting in his museum. By *contrast*, the work of Ecclesiology is defined as the study and promotion of art that will be a ‘material expression of the faith and hope and moral sentiments of Christendom’.²¹ Irish antiquities were presented at meetings, including one crozier which matches the description of the O’Dea Crozier, presented by Dr Ryan, bishop of Limerick.²²

This reflects an important *counter-current* to the popular antiquarian discourse of the period, typified by organisations such as the Kilkenny Archaeological Society which aimed to examine antiquities in a secular environment.²³ This countermovement, as reflected in the Society’s publication, insisted on the specifically Catholic meaning of objects, buildings and histories. The influence of McCarthy, and by extension, Pugin, is overwhelming evident in the *Address*, particularly in relation to its treatment of classical architectural styles. According to the Society, the ‘revival of classical learning’ during the previous three centuries can be seen

19 L. Godson, ‘Charting the Material Culture of the “Devotional Revolution”’: The Advertising Register of the Irish Catholic Directory, 1837–96’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Section C: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature*, 116 (2015), pp. 265–94; C. McGee, Art industry, religion and cultural identity in Ireland, 1850–1922, Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College Dublin (2016).

20 *The Address of the Irish Ecclesiological Society* (Dublin, 1849).

21 *Ibid.*

22 ‘Irish Ecclesiological Society’, *Irish Examiner*, 12 February, 1851. An image of the O’Dea Crozier, now in the Hunt Museum collection, can be seen at <https://www.huntmuseum.com/collection/o-dea-crozier/> (accessed 28 October 2021).

23 The tensions between explicitly religious and antiquarian-secular interpretations of aspects of Irish heritage are explored in N. NicGhabhann, *Medieval ecclesiastical building in Ireland, 1789–1915: building on the past* (Dublin, 2015).

as a kind of ‘imperialism in the arts which destroyed their energy and originality’, and to attempt to create a Christian art in this idiom would be to ‘express Christian and living conceptions in the effete forms of a disinterred heathenism’.²⁴ These statements reflect the Society’s clear aim to establish medieval revival styles such as Gothic as the *preference* for church-building projects in Ireland.

The decision of the Society to make prints available for people to display in their homes provides another insight into the connections and ideals of the Society. At a meeting in 1851, a letter to the Society from the ‘celebrated Christian painter’ Frederick Overbeck was read, together with a report on the Dusseldorf Christian Art-Union, from which the Irish Society would procure the prints. The Irish Ecclesiological Society aimed to become the ‘Irish branch’ of the Union, which provided specimens of its engravings by ‘both ancient and modern artists’. The Dusseldorf Christian Art-Union was clearly considered a reputable institution, with high artistic standards, as an article in the *Irish Examiner* of 1850 described it as being ‘truly admirable’ and ‘widely celebrated’, providing ‘good service to Irish Catholicity’.²⁵ According to this report, access to the Dusseldorf Union would introduce ‘Catholic art into ‘our schools and homes – into the cabins of the poor, that they may dignify them, and into the abodes of the opulent, that they may grace them’, and that ‘though small, and of positively unequalled cheapness’, the prints were described as being ‘in the purest taste and of the most delicate finish’.²⁶ The provision of reproductions of the ‘rarest trophies of ancient and modern Christian art’ was described as a ‘service to popular taste and religious feeling, which none but the most thoughtless stupidity or the most Utilitarianism could despise’.²⁷

Art works from Germany and Italy, and from the Nazarene school in particular, were defined as being entirely different to the ‘London trash’ and ‘Parisian daubs’ which, according to the author, adorned too many homes.²⁸ As Cordula Grewe has outlined in her work on the Nazarene movement, this characterisation of these different schools of painting in the Irish press reflects current debates on religious painting across Europe.²⁹

24 Ibid.

25 *Irish Examiner*; 23 October 1850.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Grewe outlines the extent to which French art was associated with modernist formal invention during the nineteenth century, whereas German art (and particularly that of the Nazarenes, was associated with a conceptual, symbolic approach, concerned with the ‘inner life’ of the image. Cordula Grewe, *Painting the sacred in the age of Romanticism*, (Farnham, 2009).

The Society wished to provide access instead to the ‘solemn and pure creation of the oldest Christian Art’, as opposed to a ‘motley bazaar of modern attitudinising, fashionable fripperies, sensual vulgarities, and corrupt sentimentality’. This investment, in order to support and encourage religious feeling, was justified in the face of the ‘stern pressure of constant poverty, the rough shocks of intermittent famine’ and ‘the awful visitations of periodic pestilence’.³⁰

This rich descriptive article provides an insight into the values that were being ascribed to visual art and to aesthetics, with an *emphasis* on a sense purity and connection to a Christian tradition, as opposed to modern innovation or sentimentality. Cheapness is seen here as a virtue, presenting the visual image as something to be used and engaged with as part of a religious life, as opposed to a material, luxury object to be displayed. This emphasis on the semiotic content of the image, at the expense (and even opposed to) the hand-made quality of the artwork itself, reflects a positive approach to mass production and reproduction. It is interesting to note that George Francis Mulvany, keeper of the Royal Hibernian Academy between 1845-64, published an open letter to Russell as chair of the Society in response to the enthusiastic alliance with the Nazarene School, urging him instead to consider supporting a native Irish school of religious art.³¹ While the letter reiterated the significance of the artists identified by the Society as being of particular importance, such as Giotto and Cimabue, Mulvany suggested that Catholic leaders could engage with ‘Irish talent, Irish mind, and manual power’ as far as possible in the decoration of churches, reflecting the importance of the Church as a patron of the arts and of architecture during this period.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, although the Irish Ecclesiological Society was relatively short-lived, it does provide an interesting insight into the different influences and ideals that were being promoted as most appropriate for Irish Catholic churches and homes. The alliances with specific national traditions and ideas around Irish manufacture reflect the extent to which the church had to position its expansion carefully, particularly in the context of economic scarcity. It also reflects a national church looking for an *aesthetic* tradition to be part of following the rupture of the Reformation – one which was ancient, and which was embedded in an idea of the European Middle Ages, as opposed to the interest in the Celtic Revival which

³⁰ *Irish Examiner*, 23 October 1850.

³¹ ‘The Ecclesiological Society’, *Nation*, 1 December, 1849.

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emerged later in the century. Finally, it reflects the significance of ‘material religion’ in promoting devotion and adherence among congregations and citizens. As Lucinda Matthews-Jones and Timothy Willem-Jones have argued, material elements such as prints, vestments, or other decorative elements of religion should not be viewed as merely decorative or as ‘end-products’, but rather as objects that play an ‘active, constitutive role’ in ‘constructing identities, social relations, and hierarchies of power’.³² Objects, they write, are both ‘shaped by people and culture’, but also have ‘the potential to shape and condition people’. The attention paid by the Irish Ecclesiological Society to the role and agency of material encounters, objects, and experiences in both the domestic sphere and the space of the church, reflects the importance of material religion in shaping Catholic culture in Ireland by the middle of the nineteenth century.

32 Lucinda Matthews-Jones and Timothy Willem Jones (eds.), *Material religion in modern Britain: the spirit of things* (Basingstoke, 2015), pg. 2.

Joining the Dots. This communication problem effectively means that we are able to continue to live our lives as normal – even if that normality is increasingly interrupted by peculiar weather events. The vast majority of us aren’t yet being forced to ‘join the dots’ and link what we see around us in terms of the weather patterns, the floods and the forest fires to climate change.

– LORNA GOLD, *Climate Generation* (Dublin: Veritas) p. 98.

Towards a Theology of Prison Ministry

Meins G.S. Coetsier

The Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wilde once said that prison walls are ‘built with bricks of shame’.¹ In ‘The Ballad of Reading Gaol,’² Wilde, who was a prisoner himself for two years, speaks about the pain felt by prisoners, as well as ‘the heart of stone’³ which forms inside them as they shut down inwardly: ‘[T]hough I was a soul in pain, My pain I could not feel.’⁴ This pain can lead to the most pressing problem for prisoners including self-alienation, the capitulation to self-hate, and pervasive feelings of meaninglessness.⁵ Indeed, this is the lived reality for so many people held in prisons today. Prison ministry operates within this very difficult world and my research, from within the German prison system, explores these existential challenges and attempts to find an answer to them. My research developed from my own work, in two German prisons (Justizvollzugsanstalten Fulda and Hünfeld), where I have served as prison chaplain for the Catholic Diocese of Fulda, for six years. In my work I have constantly attempted to maintain a creative tension between academic theory and theological praxis as I work ‘Towards a Theology of Prison Ministry’.⁶

1 Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis: The Ballad of Reading Gaol and Other Writings* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 2020 [1999]), 135. The Irish poet and playwright Wilde was incarcerated from 1895 till 1897.

2 Wilde, *De Profundis*, 117-138.

3 *Ibid.*, 137

4 *Ibid.*, 118.

5 Cf. Dennis W. Pierce, *Prison Ministry: Hope behind the Wall* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013 [2006]), 81.

6 See Meins G.S. Coetsier, *Towards a Theology of Prison Ministry*; Ph.D. Dissertation, Trinity College Dublin, School of Religion, Loyola Institute, 2021 [<http://www.tara.tcd.ie/handle/2262/96469>].

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Among Karl Rahner's four thousand books and articles,⁷ there is a relatively small and unnoticed piece that he wrote on 'The Prison Pastorate'.⁸ This short essay, which initially served as a lecture to prison pastors, was eventually published in 1966 in Volume 3 of Rahner's collected works *Mission and Grace*.⁹ In this lecture-meditation, Rahner states that we must 'read the words of Christ, his incredible, provocative, thrilling words'¹⁰ in Matthew 25: 34-40: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was in prison, and you came to see me."¹¹

In view of this Scripture passage, Rahner argues that 'in the prisoners entrusted to our pastoral care we find Christ our Lord; and in these prisoners we find ourselves, what we see in them being the concealed truth of our own situation.'¹²

Rahner's theological emphasis on Matthew 25 and his central scriptural meditation provides universal insights for contemporary pastoral care, while simultaneously confronting us with the immanent and concrete limitations of his views on prison ministry. In the contemporary world prison ministry deals increasingly with the existential needs, pain, and suffering in prisoners' lives. My research argues that Karl Rahner's views on prison ministry, although deeply valuable and of significance both in their own right and within the context of his theological writings, are *not* adequate to deal with the more complex needs and demands of prison ministry in the twenty-first century.

A central part of my argument is that significant pastoral aspects of prison ministry have been disregarded by Rahner. This is because 'The Prison Pastorate' does not take the suffering and world-view of prisoners into account. Moreover, Rahner's Christian focus and rather priest-centred approach lacks the kind of creativity, encounter and resources for group work and community building

7 For Texts in the original German see *Karl Rahner Sämtliche Werke*. Herausgeber: Karl-Rahner-Stiftung unter Leitung von Karl Lehmann, Johann Baptist Metz, Albert Raffelt, Herbert Vorgrimler (†) und Andreas R. Batlogg SJ. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1995-2018.

8 The English quotations [abbreviated MG] from Karl Rahner's writings are taken from: "The prison pastorate," in: *Mission and Grace: Essays in Pastoral Theology*, Volume 3, tr. Cecily Hastings (London and Melbourne: Sheed and Ward, 1966), 74-97.

9 Ibid.

10 *MG*, 3: 77. *SW*, 16: 215. *SG*, 449.

11 Ibid.

12 *MG*, 3: 89. *SW*, 16: 221. *SG*, 457: Wir finden in den Gefangenen uns selbst, indem wir in ihnen unsere eigene verborgene Situation erblicken.

which is needed in the secular prison populations of today.¹³ Consequently, I am convinced that a more contemporary approach to prison ministry, and one which is not based exclusively on Matthew 25, is required. Indeed, a greater pastoral appreciation of the traumas, conflicts and suffering experienced by prisoners, prison pastors, prison staff and, indeed, people in the wider world, is needed. The subjective world of the prisoner needs to be addressed in an effort to engage with his/her innate human desire for meaning and fulfilment. Consequently, my research claims that a theology of prison ministry must be based on *empowerment*. This empowerment can be found through a creative and meaning-centred response to the suffering of prisoners as illustrated in the lives of Viktor E. Frankl,¹⁴ Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn¹⁵ and Etty Hillesum.¹⁶

Interestingly, no extensive study of Rahner's theology of the prison pastorate has been carried out prior to my own research. I argue that it is necessary to place Rahner's understanding of pastoral ministry in *dialogue* with a praxis-based approach informed by those involved in pastoral ministry in correctional facilities. This praxis-based approach can help to provide a

13 Julia Martínez-Ariño and Anne-Laure Zwillig (eds.), *Religion and Prison: An Overview of Contemporary Europe: A Contemporary Overview, Boundaries of Religious Freedom: Regulating Religion in Diverse Societies*, Volume 7 (Cham: Springer Nature, 2020). Andrew Coyle et al., *Imprisonment Worldwide: The Current Situation and An Alternative Future* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2016). John D. Wooldredge and Paula Smith (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Prisons and Imprisonment*, Oxford handbooks in criminology and criminal justice (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018). Yvonne Jewkes and Helen Johnston, *Prison Readings* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006). Coretta Phillips, *The Multicultural Prison: Ethnicity, Masculinity, and Social Relations among Prisoners* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012).

14 Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (New York, NY: Beacon Press, [1959] 1985); *Trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen: Ein Psychologe erlebt das Konzentrationslager* (München: Kösel-Verlag, [1977] 2016);.

15 For a detailed account of Solzhenitsyn's life and experiences as a prisoner in the Soviet Gulag camp system see Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago Volume 1-3: An Experiment in Literary Investigation* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2007 [1973, 1985]). The original Russian manuscript was written between 1958 and 1968 and first published in 1973.

16 For Etty Hillesum's writings see *Het Werk* (Amsterdam: Balans, [1986] 2012). Meins G.S. Coetsier & Klaas A.D. Smelik (eds.), *Etty Hillesum: The Complete Works 1941-1943, Bilingual, Annotated and Unabridged*, Vol. 1 & 2 (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2014). See also Meins G.S. Coetsier, *Etty Hillesum and the Flow of Presence: A Voegelinian Analysis* (Eric Voegelin Institute Series in Political Philosophy, Studies in Religion and Politics) (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2008); *The Existential Philosophy of Etty Hillesum: An Analysis of her Diaries and Letters* (Supplements to the Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy, 22) (Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 2014).

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theological foundation for further scholarly analysis of this timely and imperative subject.¹⁷

CONTEMPORARY PRISON TERMINOLOGY

Language is key in understanding both Rahner's writings and the contemporary area of pastoral ministry in prisons. The proliferation of terms such as 'prison pastorate,' or 'prison ministry' and 'prison chaplaincy', can often confuse since terms can be used in a variety of ways to mean very different things. In clarifying the usage and meaning of terms, it is important to mention that the words pastor, pastoral and pastorate are mainly used in relation to Rahner's theological understanding of the 'Prison PASTORATE'. As Rahner uses the term, a pastor, is an 'ordained priest', a 'man' and a 'leader' of a Catholic congregation. He is a person who gives advice and counsel, and maintains a careful watch over the spiritual needs of his people. Pastors are required to act like shepherds by caring for the flock, and a key part of this care includes teaching (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1; 1 Pet. 5:2). However, in my research the terms chaplaincy and chaplain are used in a more inclusive, modern institutional sense. Often the term chaplain refers to a cleric, for instance, a minister, priest, pastor, rabbi, or imam as well as a lay representative of a religious tradition, who is attached to a secular institution such as a prison, hospital or military unit. Further, the word chaplain refers to female and male representatives of the Christian faith as well as to people of other religions or philosophical traditions. In recent times, many lay people have received professional training in prison chaplaincy. When it comes to the English word 'minister', it is important to remember that it is derived from the Latin word *minister* which means servant and attendant. Minister is a broader term than chaplain as it represents people who are authorised to perform certain functions such as leading services, for instance weddings, baptisms or funerals, while also providing spiritual guidance to the community. Therefore, a German prison minister, who visits the inmates on a weekly basis may not necessarily

17 As far as I am aware, Rahner's contribution "Gefängniseseelsorge" ("The prison pastorate") has been occasionally referred to but has not been studied or analysed in detail. See the works of: Billy Farrell, "The Pastoral Care of Prisoners," *The Furrow* Vol. 30, No. 3 (Mar., 1979): 168-173 [with a reference to Rahner on p. 173]; Wolfgang Hartmann, *Existenzielle Verantwortungsethik: eine moraltheologische Denkform als Ansatz in den theologisch-ethischen Entwürfen von Karl Rahner und Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005) [with a reference to Rahner's *Gefängniseseelsorge* on p. 258]; Paul Eppe, *Karl Rahner zwischen Philosophie und Theologie* (Münster: LIT Verlag 2008) [with a reference to Rahner's *Gefängniseseelsorge* on p. 189]; Andrew Skotnicki, *The Last Judgment: Christian Ethics in a Legal Culture* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016) [with a reference to Rahner's "The Prison Pastorate" on p. 6].

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be the official chaplain of that prison. Each term has a different emphasis. Roughly speaking, the term ‘chaplain’ usually refers to a specific role and position within an institution, while ‘minister’ has connotations of a performative role in leading religious services, while ‘pastor’ refers to the leading of the flock.

REVERSING THE EFFECTS OF INCARCERATION

My research to date has developed a practical approach to the existential frustration encountered by those in prison, combined with an analysis of how this may be addressed by engaging prisoners in a search for meaning. This is done through combining Rahner’s pastoral theology with the timeless insights of Frankl, Hillesum, and Solzhenitsyn. The consequence of this is a theology of empowerment that supports both chaplains and inmates by confronting the oppression and pain of incarceration while also seeking to reverse its effects. A key point in my argument is that Rahner has limited his anthropology in ‘The Prison Pastorate’ by considering *only* how prison pastors themselves might find God in prison.¹⁸ Rahner makes an important decision to strengthen prison pastors so that they will see the value and meaning of such a challenging ministry. It is important to note that due to his specific focus and the limited time-frame of the original lecture where he first presented his insights,¹⁹ Rahner neglected to develop a clear argument for the empowerment of those incarcerated in prison systems. My own research seeks to address this gap and argues that theologians need to focus both on the prisoners and the pastors. Crucially, it is important for pastors to think about how prison ministry can be made more fruitful and beneficial for the prisoners entrusted to their care. Reality is seriously different, especially when viewed through the lens of a prisoner’s eyes and experiences. This was something Rahner’s theology bypassed from the outset. Moreover, unless we can help prisoners to make ‘larger sense’ out of this ‘apparently senseless suffering’,²⁰ as Frankl puts it, our ministry to the incarcerated will be empty and fruitless.

So, to determine the contemporary relevance of Rahner’s theology on ‘The Prison Pastorate’, as well as to move towards a more contemporary theology of prison ministry, three main objectives must be met. *Firstly*, it is important to review and critique Rahner’s theology of prison ministry. *Secondly*, areas where this theology fails to meet contemporary pastoral challenges

18 *MG*, 3: 74. *SW*, 16: 214. *SG*, 447.

19 *Ibid.* On Tuesday, 23 June 1959, Rahner lectured at a summer meeting of prison ministers (*Tagung von Gefängnisseelsorgern*) in Innsbruck.

20 Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, 11.

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should be identified. *Finally*, in response to this, it is important to develop an empowering theology of prison ministry. In attempting to develop a theology of prison ministry, the situation faced by prisoners today in the German prison system and the suffering likely to be experienced by them, was an important and ever-present background and framework for my research.

It is important to appreciate the richness of Rahner's theological thinking and his anthropology, while acknowledging his influences on *Gaudium et Spes*. By reading and interpreting Rahner's writing of 'The Prison Pastorate' in the light of chaplains working professionally in prisons in the German-speaking world, it is possible to identify the limitations in Rahner's reflections on this topic. Indeed, through an examination of prisoners' perspectives based on their real-life experiences of imprisonment, in the works of Frankl, Hillesum and Solzhenitsyn it is possible to identify the *complex* needs and challenges likely to be felt by prisoners as well as possible responses. I argue that while Rahner's work is valuable and of significance on its own terms, it is limited when confronted with the complicated development of rapidly changing secular European communities. Therefore, while developing a theology of prison ministry, it is necessary to go *beyond* Rahner's position, by developing a more ecumenical, interreligious and less sacramental perspective. In doing this it is also important to appreciate that Rahner's writing is of deep contemporary significance and despite its limitations, continues to be of notable value. Therefore, my research attempts to develop and enhance Rahner's views with a lively pastoral theology that aims to strengthen and empower people in prisons through the adoption of a meaning-centred approach that acknowledges the role of prisoners as contributors in their own right to the process of rehabilitation. Using the pastoral principles of love, faith, and humour, that are found in the examination of Frankl, Hillesum, and Solzhenitsyn's work, as well as the spiritual dimension of art in all its forms, my research seeks to outline a theology that prioritises the cultivation of healing and hope in a way that respects and defends the dignity of each prisoner.

THEOLOGY OF EMPOWERMENT

In order to support a more contemporary and pastoral approach to prison ministry that is better able to meet the needs of prisoners today, it is important to focus on key elements such as dignity, meaning, transformation, liberation, creativity, hope, and community. A core aspect of a theology of empowerment focuses on gathering 'two or three' people in 'my name' (Matt 18:20) and experiencing the power and uplifting energy of the One who says: 'I

am among them'. This more community-based dimension of prison ministry is not addressed at all by Rahner in 'The Prison Pastorate'. However, for those with experience of providing pastoral care in a prison setting, this community aspect is essential. Thus, while accepting and greatly valuing the profound insights in Rahner's understanding of Matthew 25, a theology of empowerment moves beyond Rahner in the spirit of Matthew 18:20 in its appreciation that 'where two or three gather in my name, there am I among them'.

This theology of empowerment offers a framework of understanding and entails facing pastoral ministry in prison with spiritual confidence and social skill, with self-esteem and passion. For the incarcerated, participating in empowering activities is also an unrestricted way of dealing with the possibility of becoming a *different* person from the one who was sentenced to jail. Prison ministry thus becomes a mirror of Christian hope in the sense that providing pastoral care in a prison setting demands more than humans can do with their own abilities. Only with the help of God whose 'power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine' (Eph 3:20), can we hope to work together with prisoners and others in the prison community to empower prisoners to find meaning and hope in life. Empowering theology begins where Scripture ends: 'Be mindful of prisoners as if sharing their imprisonment, and of the ill-treated as of yourselves, for you also are in the body' (Heb 13:3). An empowering prison ministry echoes the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's poem 'By Powers of Good' that he wrote and sent out from jail in early 1945.

The old year still would try our hearts to torment,
of evil times we still do bear the weight;
O Lord, do grant our souls, now terror-stricken,
salvation for which you did us create.

[...]

By powers of good so wondrously protected,
we wait with confidence, befall what may.
God is with us at night and in the morning
and oh, most certainly on each new day.²¹

21 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, DBW Vol. 8. *Widerstand und Ergebung*, eds. Christian Gremmels, Eberhard Bethge, and Renate Bethge with Ilse Tödt (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998), 607-608; DBWE Vol. 8. *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 548-550.

A Poet in Exile to Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Queen among queens, fair flower of womankind,
Gentleness itself to soothe God's wrathful claim,
tree of radiance, patroness, fast friend of our hallowed band,
that our ancient conceit be forgiven us, make now a timely prayer.

The Lord of the spheres takes delight in His child unstained
whom Christ chose without rival to hold him as nurse on her
knee;
I picture in her the Spirit repose and take his ease.
My prop is she when life crushes me, the one to speak up in my
case.

A beacon I see her to guide those who faint in the way;
lithe stem is she unblemished from green shoot to bloom;
though shrill be my protest when menaced by sickness or pain,
to the folds of her mantle I turn for shelter and shield.

If I sit by the campfire among blades sharp and swift to the draw
where an enemy's vengeance can readily find its hour,
or I sail aboard warfleets through wave-break and tide-rip and
dread,
my succour is she in their havoc; not one do I fear.

Though hemmed in by demons from the depths of dark Acheron
and beguiled by this devious world every day that dawns,
though greed like a lightning bolt drive me to lie in my teeth,
the mild modest Lady brings to nothing their hoard of ruse.

The Lord of the dew-washed creation has chosen this Maid
to speak a reprieve for us all when we call on her name;
day by day we look for her favour till death be our fate
and till Christ in his limber draughtnet take the souls of us all.

(?Aodh Buí Mac Cruitín, c 1680 – 1755)

The Gaelic original of this poem was found in a manuscript in the Maynooth library by Donncha Ó Floinn, sometime professor

A POET IN EXILE TO OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP

of Irish. It is rich in the spirituality of post-Tridentine or Baroque Europe. Its Marian devotion reflects the cult of Mary, Help of Christians, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and Mary full of grace, even the Mediatrix of all grace. In its wider context, the fifth verse is based on the world, the flesh and the devil as in the Letter of John.

The first stanza clearly shows the author to see himself as a member of the poetic caste, whose tradition it was to add a verse of praise of Mary to each of their eulogies, just as he is well aware of their traditional reputation for arrogance. Culturally, the haunting preoccupation with final salvation is matched by the dramatic vigour of the Baroque imagination.

Though unattributed in the manuscript, this Munster composition fits no author so well as the Clare poet Aodh Bui Mac Cruitín, for the imaginative sweep mirrors admirably the latter's adventurous career; educated by his uncle, also Aodh Mac Cruitín and professional poet; turn by turn, literary man in the Dublin of Dean Swift, exile on the high seas and officer in the Irish Brigade, scholar in the circle of the Irish College in Paris and finally clandestine schoolmaster back in his native Clare. Few historical figures encapsulate so well the intellectual life of penal Ireland.

(Original text in : *Ó Doibhlin, Manuail de Litriocht na Gaeilge*, vol. iii, p.188-189)

Teachers' Perspectives on Spirituality in Catholic Primary Schools

Jayne Guiney

Spirituality is notoriously difficult to define. Although it is a complex and contested concept, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) stresses that every child has a *right* to spiritual development.¹ In Ireland, this right is also recognised in the 1998 Education Act² and the 1999 Primary School Curriculum.³ While there are multiple understandings of what spirituality entails, when it comes to education, there is a lack of detailed and specific guidance for teachers on how they might support students' spiritual development. In addition, there is a gap in both scholarly literature and policy documents regarding teachers' roles and responsibilities in this domain. While some policy documents speak of nurturing the spirituality of the child, it is not entirely evident what this might mean. My own professional background as a primary school teacher, entrusted with the task of developing children's spirituality in the classroom, prompted me to investigate this topic. I was also fascinated about how other primary school teachers understood spirituality and whether they saw themselves as having a significant role in fostering children's spirituality. This prompted me to carry out sustained research into teachers' perceptions of the spirituality of the child. This article outlines the findings of that research.

People interpret spirituality in various ways. For some it is a search for meaning or purpose.⁴ Others see it as a quest for

- 1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Accessed 19th October 2021. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/crc.pdf>
- 2 Government of Ireland, "Education Act 1998. Accessed 19th October 2021. <http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/1998/a5198.pdf2>
- 3 National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Primary School Curriculum. Accessed 9th January 2021. <http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum>
- 4 Hans Morten Haugen, 'It is time for a general comment on children's spiritual Development'. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 23 no.3 (2018): 306-322.

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belonging to oneself, or a search for connection to others, the environment or to something transcendent.⁵ Elsewhere, spirituality is described as an experience of wonder and awe.⁶ As a result of its elusive nature, attempts to define spirituality have sometimes contributed to the notion that it is a vague, indefinable term. Recently, spirituality and the spiritual development of children has played an increasingly important role in both international and Irish educational policy documents. Some people who call themselves spiritual but not religious, emphasise that spirituality is distinct from religion. In the Irish educational system where spirituality was traditionally conceptualised as a subset of religion, there have been calls for change to the existing educational status quo.⁷ This changing landscape led me to research teachers' understandings of spirituality in Catholic primary schools as well as their lived experience of developing the spirituality of children in their professional care. My research, which was undertaken in 2018, was also concerned with the *plurality* of spiritual expressions present in contemporary Irish classrooms. I was also interested in whether school ethos impacted upon diverse understandings of spirituality and approaches to children's spiritual development. Due to the Catholic denominational patronage of the majority of primary schools in Ireland, the research focused on the perceptions of teachers in Catholic primary schools in the Munster region.

CONTEXT

According to the Education Act, the school is responsible for the promotion of the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students while also providing health education for them, in consultation with their parents.⁸ As the Board of Management are accountable to the patron, all school functions should be carried out in a manner which upholds the characteristic spirit of the school, stemming from the 'cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions', of the school, in accordance with its ethos. As Ireland becomes increasingly belief diverse, with one in ten people self-describing as non-religious,⁹ teachers experience real challenges when tasked with fostering

5 John Fisher 'The four domains model: Connecting spirituality, health and wellbeing'. *Religions* 2 (2011): 17–28. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel2010017>

6 Sturla Sagberg, 'Taking a children's rights perspective on children's spirituality'. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 22, no.1 (2017): 24-35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1364436X.2016.1276050>

7 Josh Grajczonek, "Interrogating the spiritual as constructed in belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia," *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 37, no.1 (2012): 152-160.

8 Government of Ireland, Education Act 1998.

9 CSO 2016.

the spiritual development of children, since spirituality is often conceptualised as being an integral aspect of religious education. This is of particular significance when the deep-rooted place of religion in education in Ireland is considered.

In Ireland, in order to understand the complexity of spirituality in primary schools, the historical position of religion in education must be explored. Indeed, children's access to spiritual development is often perceived as being synonymous with and dependent upon, their access to religious education. Over the past two hundred years, the changing role of religious instruction in the denominational system of national schools has developed.¹⁰ This raises questions about the spiritual development of children who are withdrawn by their parents or guardians from religious education under Rule 69 of national schools. At the time of the study, 96% of primary schools in Ireland were operating under denominational patronage, with 90% of schools operating under Roman Catholic patronage.¹¹ Lack of school choice for religious minorities or non-religious parents in Ireland has resulted in international criticism from bodies such as the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.¹² As part of their role in the child's holistic development, primary teachers are tasked with nurturing the spirituality of the child in the context of their school's patronage and ethos. Indeed, issues surrounding the patronage of schools in Ireland¹³ present a complex set of challenges to teachers in primary schools, when considered alongside the inextricable links between spiritually and religion.¹⁴

Curriculum documents require teachers to be sensitive to the spiritual domain of the child and to align with the requirements for schools presented in the Education Act so that the child's spirituality should be supported in a manner that is cognisant of

10 Patrician Kieran and Anne Hession, *Children, Catholicism and Religious Education*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2005).

11 Department of Education and Skills, "Looking at our Schools: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools," Accessed 17th January 2019. <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports/Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Primary-Schools.pdf>

12 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, "Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination – Ireland," Accessed 2nd December, <http://daccessods.un.org/TMP/453855.246305466.html>

13 John Coolahan, Caroline Hussey and Fionnula Kilfeather, "The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector", Accessed 31st October 2018, <http://www.education.ie/en/PressEvents/Conferences/Patronage-and-Pluralism-in-the-Primary-Sector/The-Forum-on-Patronage-and-Pluralism-in-the-Primary-Sector-Report-of-the-Forums-Advisory-Group.pdf>

14 Amalee Meehan and Daniel O'Connell "The 'Deeper Magic of Life' — a Catholic response to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism," *The Furrow* 63, no.6 (2012): 286-294.

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON SPIRITUALITY

the ethos of the school.¹⁵ As Irish society continues to change, the conflation of religion and spirituality in educational discourse in an overwhelmingly denominational school system, creates many challenges for teachers. Indeed, policy requirements often fail to reflect the new demographic and the social changes in Irish society where increasing numbers of children come from non-religious or from minority belief worldviews. In this context, teachers may experience uncertainty about how to address and nurture the spiritual needs of children in their classrooms, where some children may also be withdrawn from religious education. Although Article 44 of the 1937 Constitution affords parents the right to have their child 'opt-out' of religious education,¹⁶ it is widely recognised that locating the spiritual development of children within the curricular area of religious education *alone*, is problematic, as it fails to reflect the changing landscape of Irish society as well as the holistic nature of a child's spiritual development which extends beyond any one curricular area.

TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCE

As my research was concerned with the lived experience of primary school teachers and their perceptions of spirituality, a *qualitative* study was undertaken. For the purpose of the research, a case study approach was adopted in order to focus on a particular phenomenon, in a particular location. My study focused on primary school teachers in schools operating under Catholic patronage in the Munster region. In alignment with the case study approach, semi structured interviews were used as the main means of data collection. Semi-structured interviews were chosen in order to explore teachers' lived experience in a highly detailed manner.¹⁷ Ethical integrity underpinned all aspects of the research process. Participants engaged in pre and post interviews due to the centrality of the human person within the study. The questions posed to the research participants emerged from a systematic review of the literature and interview transcripts were analysed in an inductive and thematic manner.¹⁸

15 Government of Ireland, "Education Act" 1998.

16 Government of Ireland, "Constitution of Ireland," Accessed 18th October 2021 : https://www.constitution.ie/Documents/Bhunreacht_na_hEireann_web.pdf

17 Dine Wahyuni "The research design maze: Understanding paradigms, cases, methods and methodologies", *Jamar* 10 no.1 (2012): 69-80.

18 Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using thematic analysis in psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no.2 (2006): 77-101, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

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PARTICIPANTS

Using a blend of purposive and convenience sampling,¹⁹ six teachers, four female and two male, who worked in Catholic primary schools in Munster, were recruited for the purpose of the study. This ratio was representative of the gender ratio of primary school teachers at the time the study was conducted. This small sample size was impacted by the limited time available in the research field and the researcher's focus on schools operating under Catholic denominational patronage. At the time when the research was undertaken, 98% of schools in the county where the research was undertaken, were Catholic schools. Teachers in both urban and rural settings participated in the study

SPIRITUALITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

Each teacher was interviewed and at the beginning of each interview, participants were asked to outline their understanding of the term spirituality. The research showed that participants viewed spirituality as involving relationships. These relationships were either with the self, with others, with the environment, with the Transcendent or a combination of all four. Half of the participants mentioned these 'self-others-environment-Transcendent' categories which form part of a model for spiritual wellbeing.²⁰ Further, there were links between how the scholarly literature described the spirituality of the child and how the teachers I was interviewing perceived it.²¹ The teachers saw authentic, considerate relationships as being central to the spiritual development of the child and they discussed values and beliefs. One teacher said "I think that's where self-identity and self-awareness would come into it for me. You would be teaching it (spirituality) almost incidentally. You wouldn't call it spirituality, but that's what it is. From what I can see, you are helping to build that - their morals and their values and beliefs".

SELF

According to the research participants, a relationship to the *self* refers to self-awareness, self-identity and mental health and wellbeing. As a result of this understanding, participants Cian and Caroline (not their real names) link the spiritual development of the

19 Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie, *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003)

20 John Fisher "The four domains model: Connecting spirituality, health and wellbeing," *Religions* 2 (2011): 17–28, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel2010017>

21 David Hay and Rebecca Nye, *The spirit of the child (Rev. ed.)*, (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006).

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON SPIRITUALITY

child to the Social, Personal Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. Megan defines spirituality as “that voice deep within you”, which facilitates present-moment awareness. The theme of wellbeing emerged from discussions with all participants as they spoke about their understanding of spirituality. A positive relationship with the self was identified as essential for positive mental health and wellbeing. Aine said “When I think of spirituality, I would think of the child as a person, valued, respected, treated equally... [Spirituality means] that the children are respected and valued in the classroom”. Yet, four of the six participants expressed a degree of *uncertainty* regarding the perceived links between spirituality and wellbeing. One participant Cian, grounded his understanding of spirituality deeply in his Catholic faith, and he feared that an individualised conceptualisation of spirituality was insufficient. “It [spirituality as being purely individual] doesn’t actually deal with anything for you... I think mindfulness has a very positive impact on your mental health but again, you need something to fall back on.”

OTHERS

Interpersonal relationships were identified across all the interviews as imperative for a meaningful, spiritual life. Developing the child’s sense of what Steven called “the wider connectedness of it all” and the teacher’s awareness of this, emerged as essential for nourishing the spiritual domain of the child. The participants again highlighted SPHE lessons, as well as religious education lessons, as appropriate opportunities for spiritual development. Ella stated that for her, spirituality in the classroom was “teaching the children to be good, to be kind”. Cian believed that it is membership of a faith community that enables the child’s spirituality to flourish. He said “Everyone has their individuality, and they see spirituality differently, but if you break the link between school and that community through religion, you’re not really at anything with it”. However, only one third of the participants explicitly highlighted the need for spirituality to be grounded in religion.

For Megan, raising the child’s awareness of their membership of a global community, as well as a faith community, increased their spirituality. Through opportunities to be “in tune with the world around them” the teacher can facilitate the child’s spiritual development. When praying, Megan reminds the children, “It’s not just about you and your feelings. It’s about everything around you, you have to protect it and be keepers of the earth”. The findings of this small-scale study reveal that a relationship with others is the conceptualisation which emerged most consistently when

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teachers defined spirituality and outlined opportunities for spiritual development in the primary school classroom.

THE TRANSCENDENT

While all participants mentioned spirituality as being related to religion in some sense, only four of the six participants mentioned relationship with God or transcendent relationships, in other words a relationship beyond the physical world and a concern with an ultimate reality as being significant.²² Two participants spoke explicitly of personal relationships with God when describing their lived experiences of spirituality in the primary school classroom. Half of the participants believed that spirituality was concerned with that which is mysterious and beyond the human realm. Cian called this “something more” while for Ella “It’s belief in a higher being. A belief that there is a purpose to why we are here. A belief that there is something greater than ourselves, a oneness with that spiritual being, whoever he or she may be”.

INFLUENTIAL FACTORS

When exploring what influenced participants’ understanding of spirituality, as well as their classroom practice in nurturing the spirituality of children, research findings highlighted that factors such as teachers’ own families, their personal faith and individual educational experience were key. As they attended to nurturing the child’s spirituality in the classroom, the research showed the interconnectedness and entanglement of teachers own relationships, experiences and identity with their professional practice in the classroom. For Steven, supporting children’s spiritual development is “personal, but it’s also learned experience, life experience and reflection on that. Also, I suppose with teacher training, you become more aware of how to deliver that to a child”. Caroline says that her spirituality is the “sum total” of her relationships and experiences while Áine spoke of her role as a parent, alongside her strong faith, as being influential. She stated that she wants children in her classroom to feel “nourished and cherished” while “always being conscious of children that I feel might be at risk or a little vulnerable”. Áine was also “acutely aware of mental health issues” and was conscious of supporting the spirituality of children in her class who were “struggling or anxious”.

The research findings from the six interviews showed that teachers experience multiple *challenges* as they attend to the

22 Ronald Rolheiser, *Seeking spirituality: guidelines for a Christian spirituality for the twenty-first century*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2012).

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children's diverse spiritual needs while negotiating educational and curricular policy requirements, school ethos and children's diverse backgrounds and spiritual expressions in a culturally responsive and respectful manner. Further, the teachers in the sample group had a sense of ambivalence and concern when it came to supporting the development of the child's spirituality, as they were also simultaneously navigating their own identity, beliefs, and values which, in turn informed their teaching practices and philosophies.²³ Against this backdrop, it is unsurprising that the research concluded that teachers experience a strong sense of uncertainty when it comes to fostering the child's spirituality in the primary school.

UNCERTAINTY

The results of this small-scale study suggest that there is both ambiguity and ambivalence present in educational discourse on spirituality in Ireland. This impacts significantly on the manner in which spirituality is approached in Catholic primary school classrooms. Two thirds of the teachers in the small-scale study expressed discomfort and lack of confidence when discussing the plurality of spiritual expressions present in their classrooms. Teachers were also conscious of avoiding "indoctrination" or the "imposition" of beliefs when attempting to address children's spirituality. Cian believed that "it's up to us to show [the children] the morals and then [they] make up their own mind". He also expressed the need to "step back" from his personal beliefs at times. The research literature in this area suggests that when teachers experience uncertainty about their own role, it can restrict the spiritual development of the child through an avoidance of existential conversations and explorations.²⁴ Such uncertainty was highlighted by two-thirds of the teachers in the study.

Further, teachers were concerned about the "business/busyness" of classroom life and the temporal restrictions placed on them by external forces such as policy requirements. Cian said "We don't have the time. It's just everything is so loaded. Like the curriculum is overloaded ... It is the last thing that is done because there's no real urgency in a way, where there is a deadline with other projects ... The accountability is different. The accountability is your own ethics". Despite being aware of the child's rights to spiritual development, an over-crowded curriculum impacted

23 Parker J. Palmer, *The courage to teach: exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998).

24 Brendan Hyde, "Weaving the threads of meaning: a characteristic of children's spirituality and its implications for religious education," *British Journal of Religious Education* 30, no.3 (2008): 235-245.

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negatively on teachers' capacity to develop the spirituality of the child. Indeed, there appeared to be a conflict of interest as teachers spoke of their multiple responsibilities in the classroom. Ella noted that 'Until they start to change the system at secondary [level], we have to make sure our kids are ready for that. It's all very well taking time from the curriculum for mindfulness or SPHE or all different types of activities that promote the holistic child and we do that very much in primary schools, but parents want them to be ready for secondary school! So, there's no point in saying that we did mindfulness instead of Irish grammar'. The research findings pointed to the very real challenges in attending to the diverse beliefs of children in contemporary primary schools, while *also* upholding the ethos of the school as required by the Education Act.

It is important to stress that all of the teachers participating in the research agreed that the space for spirituality should *not* be confined to any one particular subject area. In the interviews, it was evident that spirituality was important to all of the teachers and that they value its contribution to school life and to the life of the child. Yet the research also highlighted the lack of guidance available to teachers regarding their role in fostering the spiritual development of children. Caroline stated that spirituality is "interconnected. It transcends everything" while Steven's believed that "it's not just within the curriculum. It transgresses all aspects of school life". For these teachers, spirituality is an element of their professional practice which permeates the curriculum, ethos, identity, and classroom atmosphere, yet it goes beyond all of those elements too.

SPIRITUALITY AND EDUCATION IN IRELAND

This study set out to identify a small group of primary school teachers' perceptions of spirituality and their role in the spiritual development of the children in their professional care. The research concluded that there were both similarities and differences in the way a small group of primary school teachers understood spirituality. All of the research participants conceptualised spirituality in terms of relationships under the three main categories of relationships to self, others and the Transcendent. Further, the study found that teachers' understandings of spirituality were influenced by their families, educational experience, personal relationships, and life experiences. Despite being aware of the child's right to spiritual development, the research concluded that much of the teaching of spirituality is *not* explicitly identified and labelled as such in schools and, can often be seen as incidental. Teachers experience a degree of uncertainty regarding spiritual development in Catholic

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schools, particularly where a plurality of spiritual expressions exists. The historically embedded position of religion in education in Ireland has resulted in a conflation of religious education and spiritual development in discourse which has contributed to this uncertainty, particularly in an ever-changing, increasingly diverse Ireland. This research recommends that clearer guidance be given to teachers so that they can attend to every child's right to spiritual development. The spiritual development of the child should not be subsumed into generic policy documents, where it is mentioned in passing in relation to other curricular areas or educational issues. Rather, children's spirituality is of such importance that it should have an explicit and stand-alone focus in the policy context. This research reveals that teachers face uncertainty with regard to the spiritual development of the child and there is teacher uncertainty about what educational activity constitutes spiritual development, particularly in classrooms where pluralistic expressions of spirituality are present. Teachers need further guidance and support, not only in relation to the spiritual development of the child, but on the spirituality of the teacher within initial teacher education programmes and through continued professional development opportunities. While there may be confusion and conflation around diverse understandings of spirituality, the research found that there is also a need for further research on spirituality and education in Ireland. Interestingly, in Ireland there is very little existing research on the spirituality of the teacher and this needs to be addressed since teachers are key in addressing the child's right to spiritual development in primary schools.

Fear. Fear is a God given emotion that alerts us to possible dangers while energising us either to flee or fight. But we have to be careful not to let fear get out of control in such a way that instead of enhancing the quality of our lives, it diminishes it. Over the years I have found that two things help me to keep my realistic fears in check, firstly, trust in the providence of God, and secondly, the gift of a God-granted courage.

– PAT COLLINS, CM, *Freedom from Evil Spirits* (Dublin: Columba Press) p. 54.

Difficult Times for Catholic Students in Second Level Schools? The voices of RE teachers

Amalee Meehan and Derek A. Laffan

INTRODUCTION

Many readers might remember Frank O'Connor's hapless Jackie and the fear and trembling with which he approaches his first confession. It's hard to fathom how much things have changed in Catholic identity and practice since O'Connor's short story was published in 1951. Census data indicates that the Catholic population has fallen by approximately 17% over the last five decades. At the same time, the proportion of those with no religion continues to rise. In 2016, 9.8% of the population identified as non-religious, up from 0.04% in 1961. A recent study on religious affiliation among 16 to 29 year-olds in Ireland indicated that 58% of this age group identify as Christian, 1% Muslim, 3% other religions, and 39% as non-religious. Furthermore, 26% of young people in this age group say they never attend a religious service.¹ International patterns in Western, once Christian-majority nations, echo this trend towards no-religion.² On the other hand, it seems that religious identity among second-level students is still a feature:

- 1 Bullivant, S. (2018). *Europe's Young Adults and Religion: Findings from the European Social Survey (2014-16) to inform the 2018 Synod of Bishops*. London: Benedict XVI Centre for Religion and Society, St Mary's University, and Institut Catholique de Paris.
- 2 Pew Research Center. (2019). *Religion's Relationship to Happiness, Civic Engagement and Health Around the World*. <http://www.pewforum.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2019/01/Wellbeing-report-1-25-19-FULL-REPORT-FOR-WEB.pdf>

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the most recent *My World Survey* in 2019 found that 91% of this age group identifies with some religion.³

This article arose out of a research project funded by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, which investigated views and experiences of teachers and minority belief students of Religious Education (RE) in second level schools in Ireland. Conducted by the National Anti-Bullying Centre (ABC) at Dublin City University, it explored questions such as: to what extent are teachers prepared for a religiously pluralistic environment; how inclusive is RE; and most importantly for the ABC, in this landscape can a young person's religious identity or practice make them more or less vulnerable to bullying?

The research specifically focused on giving voice to RE teachers in order to understand their views and experiences. Findings indicate that some teachers are concerned about the experiences of 'religious students', especially practising Catholics. This echoes the growing field of research which suggests that in a rapidly secularising society, those who continue to practice any faith, especially the once-majority faith, are vulnerable to bullying.⁴

SECOND LEVEL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: THE CONTEXT

Over the last two decades, the Council of Europe has looked increasingly to RE as a means of promoting intercultural understanding and respect for diverse beliefs. More recently, the Council's recommendations go beyond just teaching about religion. They promote the development of attitudes such as sensitivity and respect for religious and non-religious traditions, as well as competencies such as religious literacy and understanding. According to the Council, such attitudes and competencies are necessary for intercultural living, and RE has an important contribution to make in this regard. Findings from a number of research projects across Europe agree that young people regard highly the place of RE and want a safe space to learn and talk about their own and others' religions, beliefs and truth claims in schools.⁵

3 Dooley, B., O'Connor, C., Fitzgerald, A. and O'Reilly, A. (2019). *My World Survey 2: The National Study of Youth Mental Health in Ireland*. Retrieved from http://www.myworldsurvey.ie/content/docs/My_World_Survey_2.pdf

4 Schihalejev, O., Kuusisto, A., Vikdahl, L. & Kallioniemi, A. (2020). "Religion and children's perceptions of bullying in multicultural schools in Estonia, Finland and Sweden", *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 41:3, 371-384; Moulin, D. (2016). "Reported Experiences of Anti-Christian Prejudice among Christian Adolescents in England", *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 31 (2): 223-238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2016.1152679>

5 National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. (2017) *Background Paper and Brief for the Review of Junior Cycle Religious Education*. Dublin: NCCA.

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Up until the Education Act of 1998, the Irish state was effectively prohibited from involvement in second level RE. As a result, denominational school patrons filled the gap, leading to a system of denominational confessional RE (religious instruction). The Education Act (1998) removed this prohibition. State certified and examined syllabi for Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate RE quickly followed. Thus, the once dominant denominational and confessional tradition has given way to an approach led by the state, designed to be inclusive of students of all faith and none.

The reform of Junior Cycle in 2015, as outlined in the *Framework for Junior Cycle*, ushered in a specification for Junior Cycle RE. This specification has been implemented incrementally in schools since 2019. Under the provisions of the *Framework* and the specification, RE continues as a state-certified subject. Like its predecessor, the Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus (JCRES) of 2000, this specification is intended for all students, whatever their religious faith or worldview. It exposes students to a broad range of religious traditions and to the non-religious interpretation of life. It does not ‘provide religious instruction in any particular religious or faith tradition’.⁶

SCHOOL PATRONAGE AND RE

The school patron has a legal right and responsibility to uphold the characteristic spirit of the school,⁷ where RE can be one among many expressions of that characteristic spirit. This gives school patrons the right and responsibility to influence the approach to RE in their schools, in accordance with school ethos. In *broad* terms, patronage of second level schools falls into three sectors:

- ▶ *Voluntary secondary schools*, usually denominational but also including recent, non-religious patrons such as Educate Together. Schools with a Christian ethos fall into this category – just short of 50% of second level schools (see Table 1).
- ▶ *Schools and Community Colleges* managed on behalf of the state by local Educational and Training Boards (ETBs). ETBs, formerly Vocational Education Committees (VECs), are subcommittees of the Department of Education and Skills (DES). These schools are usually multi-denominational.
- ▶ *Community and Comprehensive schools*, usually resulting from an amalgamation of schools. In these cases, the state (through the DES) and another body (usually a religious

6 Department of Education and Skills. (2018) Circular Letter 0062/2018. Dublin: Department of Education and Skills, p.2. https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0062_2018.pdf

7 Government of Ireland. (1998). Education Act, 1998. Dublin, Ireland: Irish Statute Book.

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congregation or local bishop who had been patron of an amalgamating school) act as co-patrons. These are also usually multi-denominational.

Table 1. Number of post primary schools by sector 2019/2020⁸

School Type	Frequency	Percentage
Voluntary Secondary Christian	354	49%
Voluntary Secondary Secular	19	2.6%
Voluntary Secondary (An Fóras Patrúnachta)	6	0.8%
Vocational (ETB)	246	34%
Community and Comprehensive	96	13%
Total	723	100%

In recent years, the Department of Education and Skills has made clear that in Community and ETB second-level schools, RE at Junior Cycle is *not* a mandatory subject. Schools ‘have discretion to determine if they provide the subject at all or if it is to be mandatory or optional in any particular class group or year.’⁹ Further, the more formative/confessional approach to RE as a subject is explicitly dealt with. Where ‘religious instruction and worship in accordance with the rites and practices of a particular denomination’ is offered in ETB schools or community schools and colleges:

- ▶ It must *not* be associated in any degree with the NCCA developed syllabus/specification.
- ▶ It must *not* be provided in timetabled class periods.
- ▶ A newly required *opt-in* by parents for their children is necessary.¹⁰

RE IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Irish Catholic Bishops are committed to RE in their schools and, since the JCRES of 2000, to developments in state-sponsored RE. They recognise the need for RE that opens students to different religious perspectives. ‘Everyone is asked to bring their beliefs and values, their very selves, into the religious education classroom and to open their mind and heart to the deepest meaning of life’.¹¹

8 See <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Key-Statistics/key-statistics-2019-2020.pdf>; <https://www.educatetogether.ie/schools/find-a-school>; <http://www.foras.ie/en/scoileanna>; <https://www.schoolsdays.ie/secondary-schools-in-ireland/Church-of-Ireland>

9 DES (2018) p.2.

10 DES (2018) p.3.

11 Byrne, Gareth. (2021). Investigating the Spiritual and Religious Dimension of Life with Young People in Catholic Second-Level Schools in Ireland. *Review of Religious Education and Theology*, 1: 2-17. See p. 8-9.

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The Irish Catholic Bishops' response to the *Framework for Junior Cycle* (2015) upholds RE as a manifestation of school ethos. It explains the importance of RE in a holistic education, the need for a realistic understanding of the needs of young people and 'the continuing willingness of the Catholic faith community to put its best resources at the disposal of the young'.¹²

The *Framework* and specification inform the broad guidelines from the Irish Catholic Bishops on Junior Cycle Religious Education in the Catholic School.¹³

METHODOLOGY

The research was completed in 2019 and involved an online survey of 214 RE teachers. This online survey was issued to all second-level schools in the Republic of Ireland and circulated to RE teachers through school principals. Participants came from a cross-section of second-level schools in Ireland, with schools from all three patronage sectors represented. Findings revealed that 80% of participants identified as female and 20% as male, reflecting the overall gender gap in the teaching profession in Ireland. The majority identified as: Roman Catholic (85%); Church of Ireland 2%; multiple religious beliefs 5% and 4% no religion. Religious beliefs were described by 66% of participants as being very important to them.

WHAT THE RE TEACHERS SAID

When it came to the place and purpose of RE on the curriculum, 67% of participants felt that it should be a state-examined subject in second-level schools. With its subject matter extending to all world religions and the non-religious worldviews, teachers felt that RE *is* inclusive of all students and agreed that all beliefs should be respected and accommodated in the subject area. There was considerable variation in how teachers described their main goal in teaching RE. Approximately one third of respondents listed a *single* main goal such as 'exam results', or 'acceptance and tolerance of other faiths and none'. The remainder offered compound responses, containing *more* than one goal, such as those outlined in *Figure 1* below. These intersecting goals are not at odds with each other; rather they reflect teachers' perceptions of the multidimensional aims of second level RE.

12 Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference. (2017). *Religious Education and the Framework for Junior Cycle*. Dublin, Ireland: Veritas, p.5.

13 Council for Catechetics of the Irish Episcopal Conference. (2019) *Junior Cycle Religious Education in the Catholic School*. Dublin: Veritas. https://www.religiouseducation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/JC-Religious-Ed-Cat-School_WEB.pdf.

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Figure 1

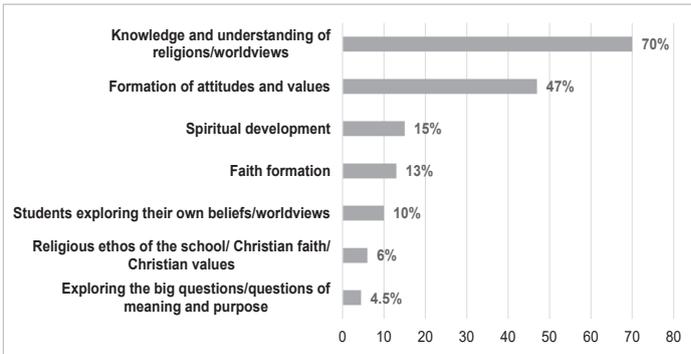
Compound teacher descriptions of their main goal in teaching RE



Consistent across all three sectors, 70% of responses highlighted knowledge and understanding of religions and worldviews as a main goal of teaching RE. Formation of attitudes and values was a main goal of approximately half of teachers, with tolerance, respect and acceptance the most commonly cited. Interestingly, only 13% of responses referred to faith formation; this was well below the proportion of schools with a Christian ethos participating in this study (57%). Less frequently cited goals included: spiritual development; students exploring their own beliefs and worldviews; the religious ethos of the school; the Christian faith; appreciation of Christian values and exploring the big questions of meaning and purpose (see *Figure 2*).

Figure 2.

Percentage of the reported main goals of teaching RE among teachers.



PREPAREDNESS FOR TEACHING MINORITY FAITH AND NON-RELIGIOUS PUPILS

The vast majority of participants (83%) said that they emphasise the diversity of religious and non-religious views in most classes or in every class. Interestingly, whereas students were interested in learning about world religions, morality, and social issues, some teachers said that it was getting harder to motivate their students to study *Catholic* RE.

When assessing their *preparedness* for teaching minority faith pupils, an average of 11% felt they were not prepared (see *Table 3*). This figure fell to 9% when it came to teaching non-religious students (see *Table 4*). Across sectors, the majority felt ‘somewhat’ prepared to teach minority and non-religious students, suggesting a need for ongoing, quality Continuing Professional Development for teachers in this area.

Table 3.

Preparedness for teaching minority faith students by school type

	Very prepared	Somewhat prepared	Not prepared
Voluntary Secondary School	40 (33%)	65 (54%)	15 (13%)
ETB School or Community College	21 (35%)	33 (55%)	6 (10%)
Community or Comprehensive School	17 (55%)	11 (35%)	3 (10%)

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Table 4.

Preparedness for teaching non-religious students by school type

	Very prepared	Somewhat prepared	Not prepared
Voluntary Secondary School	50 (42%)	59 (49%)	11 (9%)
ETB School or Community College	26 (43%)	31 (51%)	4 (7%)
Community or Comprehensive School	19 (61%)	9 (29%)	3 (10%)

RELIGIOUS/BELIEF -BASED BULLYING

For 88% of respondents, religious-based bullying either was not an issue in their schools, or they were not aware of it. However, a number of teachers expressed concern. One stated “There can be hostility from non-religious students towards students who express faith at times.” Another said that “Strong beliefs by students can be ridiculed”. Teachers singled out Christians as the most vulnerable group: “expressing religious-based convictions can lead to low-level bullying by staff members ... e.g. expressing anti-abortion views”. Another commented “I suspect Christians get the greatest flak today. There is a general intolerance of the Christian worldview which needs [to be] addressed”. Whereas this phenomenon may be new to Ireland, this concern echoes similar findings from other secularised nations such as Australia, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Estonia, where Christianity once held a dominant role in society and education.

Comments such as “many students profess no active faith. Few students express active participation in their faith” are interesting in the context of the *My World Survey*, which found that 91% of this age group identify as religious. It seems that young people *identify* as religious at some level, but may find it difficult to appear so. As one teacher suggested: “holding a religious worldview can be a lonely experience in modern Ireland”.

NEGATIVE STEREOTYPING

When it comes to negative stereotyping of students, teachers are most concerned about those who identify as Catholic (12%) and least concerned about negative stereotyping of those who identify as atheist (2%). Of the respondents who explained their answers, 50% voiced concern about anti-religious sentiment/behaviour such as “the lazy way that Muslims can be categorised as terrorists, and Catholics as paedophiles or supportive of such behaviour”.

33% of those who voiced concern singled out Catholicism and Catholics with comments such as:

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- ▶ “A Catholic student is more likely to be ridiculed or laughed at for their faith position so they tend to be silenced by the prevailing trend towards a secular humanist worldview”.
- ▶ “It is now seen as archaic to hold Catholic values among the student body”.
- ▶ “It is socially acceptable in Ireland to insult and belittle Catholics and Catholicism”.

FROM THE OPEN FORUM

One aim of this study was to give RE teachers an opportunity to raise what they feel are the dominant opportunities and/or concerns for inclusive RE today. Therefore, the survey ended with an open-forum style question: ‘The purpose of this survey is to assist in providing guidelines for inclusive RE . . . please add your voice here.’ Of the 214 teachers who filled in the survey, 118 chose to participate in this open forum. *Three* main themes emerged from the data.

- 1) The most dominant theme was the *importance* of RE as a subject on the curriculum. The rationale for this was twofold: it can prepare young people to live in a global society and it contributes to the spiritual and moral development of students.
- 2) Some respondents (15%) were concerned about *Catholic* school ethos and the effects of eroding Catholic ethos. They spoke of “having to apologise for being Catholic” and “having to justify a Catholic ethos”. Teachers talked about the negative view of faith schools and how they are portrayed in the Irish media and depicted in Irish society. They felt that this does them a disservice and that faith schools have an important role to play in a truly plural society. Also, teachers reported that the secular and non-religious agenda can often be promoted instead of one that is fully inclusive.
- 3) A third theme (14% of respondents) was that students of faith are vulnerable to *bullying*. Some suggested that the negative view of faith and faith schools contributes to this effect. Practicing Catholics are the most vulnerable group of second level school students to emerge from the open forum. Teachers see evidence of pressure to be or to identify as a non-believer. Further, they perceived those who profess a non-religious or atheist worldview as the least vulnerable group of students.

CONCLUSION

Overall, teachers are positive about the provision of RE in second-level schools and agree that it should continue to be provided.

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The variety of goals they articulate when they speak of their main goal in teaching RE, reflect the broad aims of second level RE and the enlarging view of its role and relevance across Europe. Some goals are more dominant than others. For instance, a minority of 13% of responses refers to the role of RE in *faith formation*, and this is well below the proportion of schools with a Christian ethos participating in the study (57%). This may be of significance to patron bodies. Further, teachers' views on the place and purpose of RE are interesting in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Research during this period indicates that many people seem to be asking questions like: What is really important? What gives us meaning and purpose? Where should we root our values?¹⁴ Although young people value RE and want a safe space to learn and talk about their own and others' religions, beliefs and truth claims in schools, opportunities for them to talk about religion or faith outside the classroom are limited. RE should be significant in allowing young people to engage with the spiritual and religious questions they may not be addressing elsewhere. The teachers' concerns around the vulnerability of religious students reflect the growing field of international research in this area. For instance, Ipgrave identified that when an atheist cool sweeps the school, adolescents can consider religious participation as 'abnormal', with adverse consequences for young people who practice.¹⁵ In these settings, religious adolescents risk ridicule and social exclusion. Similarly, an international research project undertaken with 14-16 year olds found that some religiously-committed students feel vulnerable in the classroom.¹⁶ Ipgrave concludes that when students feel forced to conceal or deny their religious identity, both personal and communal (school community) wellbeing are compromised. It seems that students who practice a religion can experience problems in school. In this context, some teachers had specific concerns about students who were practising Catholics. However, if this is an issue of wider society, it is evident that it cannot be left to schools to deal with alone.

14 Byrne, G., & Sweetman, B. (2020, June 23). Rite and reason: Local church building crucial to identity. *Irish Times*, p. 14. Online version: Coronavirus in church: 2020 vision on the meaning of faith in our lives. Retrieved from <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/coronavirus-in-church-2020-vision-on-the-meaning-of-faith-in-our-lives-1.4285471>

15 Ipgrave, J. (2012). "Relationships between local patterns of religious practice and young people's attitudes to the religiosity of their peers", *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 33 (3): 261-274, DOI: 10.1080/13617672.2012.732805

16 Weisse, W. (2011). "Reflections on the REDCo Project." *British Journal of Religious Education*, 33 (2): 111-125.

Homilies for January (C)

Dermot McCarthy

Second Sunday of Christmas

January 2

Eccles 24:1-2, 8-12. Ps 147. Eph 1:3-6, 15-18. Jn 1: 1-18

The human condition favours looking forward and looking back over living in the moment. At the start of a new calendar year we are regaled with reviews of the past year on TV and in print media. At the same time, we are urged to make resolutions so that the New Year will be better, happier, slimmer.

Underlying these New Year rituals is our deep desire that the journey through life should be purposeful, producing progress for us as individuals and for humanity. Since the Age of Enlightenment, the western world has been driven by the conviction that progress is possible through human ingenuity and energy. For decades, we have come to expect that each generation will enjoy better living conditions and longer life expectancy than its parents. It is a systemic shock, with deep cultural and political consequences, to realise that this may no longer be the case. The rise of populism, nativism and a more virulent xenophobia can be traced to dashed expectations of continued material progress. Climate anxiety has wrought a more profound sense of foreboding among many young people, with pessimism driving out thoughts of family and children.

Whatever about progress, the onward march of time brings change. Pope Francis has pointed out that we live not in an epoch of change, but a change of epoch. All the more reason, then, that we should savour these last days of Christmas, rejoicing in the light that darkness cannot overpower. In the great hymn with which John's Gospel opens, we are brought right back to the beginning, to the Word through whom all things came to be, to the Word made flesh, by whose grace and truth God has been made known to us.

At the start of this New Year, we seek to walk in this light. We seek to discern by its illumination what we are called to be, as disciples, as a Church, and as a human family, sharing the wonder of creation in which - despite everything - Wisdom has pitched her

Rev Dermot McCarthy is a Permanent Deacon in Westland Row Parish, Archdiocese of Dublin.

tent. With Pope Francis, we are blessed to be able to say that the future, this New Year, has a name: and its name is *hope*. We pray that the eyes of our mind may indeed be enlightened so that we can see what hope our calling as Christians holds for us. It is the Spirit of Wisdom and perception of what has been revealed that gives us the strength and courage to say ‘I’ll go on’.

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

January 9

Is 40:1-5, 9-11. Ps. 103. Tit 2:11-14, 3:4-7. Lk 3: 15-16, 21-22.

Luke uses his account of the Baptism in the Jordan to express the identity of Jesus: the Holy Spirit descends and a voice from heaven proclaims that Jesus is the Son, the Beloved, on whom the Father’s favour rests.

The celebration of our own baptism affirms our identity as children of God: the outward actions effect an inward transformation. The pouring of water conveys the generosity with which the Spirit is sent to engulf us with new life.

It could be argued that the routine celebration of infant baptism weakens our appreciation of the *transformative* nature of the sacrament. There can be little doubt, however, that parents have a deep and instinctive awareness that Baptism connects their child, not just with a cultural tradition, but with the very source of life and love. The birth of a child awakens our sense of the transcendent; the celebration of baptism affirms the presence of God in the life of the family, as well as initiating the newly baptised into the community of faith. The challenge for faith communities is to foster that spark of the Divine in the lives of our families, and to accompany them to see the unfolding story of God’s presence.

We are also challenged to view one another through the prism of the radical equality brought about by baptism. The positions and roles which we may acquire can obscure the fact that we are all undeserving recipients of God’s grace, showered on us without distinction with the waters of baptism. All the baptised are called to contribute to the building up of the Kingdom through the variety and richness of their talents, vocations and ministries.

We are embarked on a Synodal pathway to become the Church we are called to be through processes of listening, dialogue and community discernment. In that process, each and every baptised person is called to participate and contribute. Will we look to each other with the feeling of expectancy of those who gathered on the banks of the Jordan at the baptism of Jesus?

In his prayer for the intercession of Mary during the Covid pandemic, Pope Francis prayed that we might return to joy and to feasting, as in Cana of Galilee, after this time of trial. The wedding feast in Cana is presented by John as the first of the signs worked by Jesus, to let his glory be seen and so confirm the faith of the disciples he had called to follow him.

The account is full of rich symbolism; the water for the Jewish rituals of purification is transformed into an abundance of the richest wine, just as wine will be transformed into a continuing source of nourishment for the followers of Jesus. Jesus refers to his mother as ‘Woman’, telling her his hour has not come yet, as he will refer to her again when his hour has come, on Calvary. The human need of the bridal party to be spared the embarrassment of running out of wine is transformed into an occasion for advancing Jesus’ mission through a demonstration of divine power.

The story demonstrates that there is no contradiction between human need and the life of the Kingdom; feasting, family and tradition are all vehicles for expressing the good life. It also demonstrates that the love of God and the gifts of the Spirit surpass our expectations: the best wine is kept till last. We can break through the barriers of convention and limited capacity when we open ourselves to enable God to work in us, through the gifts of the Spirit which we have received.

At the wedding party, they had run out of wine. What in our lives, and in our time, has run out? We are rapidly running out of time to avert a climate disaster brought about by how we live. In many parts of the world, we have run out of patience with each other, and want to suppress voices and views with which we disagree. Even in the Church, we appear to be running out of the spirit of communion which enables us to see the gifts of the Spirit at work in others, while recognising our own brokenness. Perhaps we have run out of energy, or hope, in the face of continuing scandals and disappointment.

Today’s Gospel gives us the beguilingly simple answer: ‘do whatever he tells you’. And how are we to hear the equivalent of the instructions Jesus gave to the servants at the wedding feast? By praying for conversion, by careful reading and reflection on Scripture, by dialogue and discernment, so that we may join the disciples who set off from Cana, full of faith.

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 23

Neh 8:2-6, 8-10. Ps 18. 1 Cor 12:12-30. Lk 1:1-4, 4: 14-21

Luke wants his hearers to realise how well founded is the faith of the followers of Jesus. The sure foundation is the identity of Jesus, filled with the Spirit and anointed to be the One to bring liberation and healing. That amazing proclamation by Jesus in the synagogue in Nazara is addressed to us *today*, as we listen to the Gospel.

How are we to receive it? Are we as moved as those who gathered to listen to Ezra while he proclaimed the Law? Are we moved to tears as they were? Do we need to be urged to celebrate in joyful feasting the mercy of God revealed to us by the gift of the Son of God?

Maybe our sense of excitement has been dulled by the extent to which the liberating presence of Jesus has been obscured in our own experience. Disappointment at institutional failings, routines of conformity in place of charismatic leadership, a blunting of the radical message as time has produced institutional accommodation – maybe these require us to listen afresh to the bold claim by which Jesus calls for our allegiance.

Or it may be that we understand that claim all too well. Maybe we know that if we are indeed parts of Christ's body, then our individual gifts and talents are required for the mission into which we have been baptised? Maybe the call to liberation and healing demands more of us than we're prepared to give? Rowan Williams has pointed out that 'where the Master goes is very frequently not where we would have thought of going, or would have wanted to go'.

If we open ourselves to listen as Luke intended, we will hear Jesus telling us that our mission, and his, is to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind, new sight. We may feel inadequate to the task. We may realise that, as for Jesus, the mission requires us to carry the cross.

Perhaps the tears of the crowd gathered to listen to Ezra are a necessary preparation for us to embrace with joy the invitation to fulfil today, in the body of Christ, the stirring prophecy of Isaiah.

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 30

Jer 1:4-5, 17-19. Ps 70. 1 Cor 12:31-13: 13. Lk 4:21-30

Speaking truth to power is never easy. It's not easy to go against the tide of popular opinion, either. The instinct to tone down the message, to preserve the quiet life, can be overwhelming. However,

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that is not the way of truth. It is not the role to which prophets are called, an honourable role which Jesus continued and fulfilled. What outraged the neighbours in Nazareth listening to Jesus was not so much the breath-taking claim he made, as his challenging their sense of entitlement; that, metaphorically, others would eat their lunch.

The searing truth is that grace and love are true *gift*, not earned or held as an inheritance. Jesus' invitation is extended to all who have the openness of heart to receive it. There is an irony in the fact that such inclusiveness can challenge our religious identity - how is the call to repentance and conversion of heart to be heard if it is so challenging as to seem offensive?

The answer may be in the spirit of love with which the prophetic voice is raised. St Vincent de Paul warned his followers that it was only for their love that the poor would forgive their gifts of bread. It is the love that is ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes that enables heart to speak to heart. It is the love expressed most powerfully in the self-sacrifice of Jesus. It is the love that enables our actions to reflect our words, and so to be prophets in our own time.

But maybe we are not the principal prophets of our time - we preachers and presiders and functionaries. After all, it was not among the religious establishment that Jesus looked for companions and collaborators. The jazz singer Gregory Porter has put it well: 'They will be surprised when they hear him say, take me to the alley, take me to the afflicted ones ... Let them hear me say, come to my table, rest here in my garden'.

It is from the margins of our world and of our Church that the prophetic voice is raised. The challenge to us, as to the people of Nazareth, is to hear it so that it resonates in our soul.

New Books

Mine Own Familiar Friend: The Relationship between Gerard Hopkins and Robert Bridges. William Robert Adamson. Peter Lang, Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, New York, Wien, 2021. ISBN 978-1-80079-485-6.

‘Faults of taste’. ‘Rude shocks’. ‘Artistic wantonness’. ‘Definite faults of style’. ‘Repellent’. ‘Obstructive’. ‘Hideous’. Thus Robert Bridges, Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom, in his 1918 ‘Preface to Notes’, writing about his friend, Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose literary executor he was and whose poems he was finally bringing to publication, some twenty-eight years after the latter’s death. One will ask, as does this book, was Bridges a friend or an enemy?

The author, William Adamson, a specialist in English literature of the nineteenth century, states that his aim is to ‘peg an outline of [the] relationship’ between these two very different men. In fact, though it is a short work, Dr. Adamson does much more. His scope reaches beyond the biographical to include a variety of topics of abiding scholarly interest on which Hopkins and Bridges came together. These are dealt with competently and with admirable clarity, in readable and engaging prose.

As one learns in Chapter One, Hopkins and Bridges became firm friends around 1864 at Oxford, when both men were active in High Anglican circles. A certain estrangement set in with Hopkins’s conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1868 and his entry into the Society of Jesus two years later, but their friendship survived. In 1877, when Hopkins had come into his maturity – ‘The Wreck of the Deutschland’ had been written and some of his breathtaking nature sonnets were close to completion – the two friends began to exchange their poems for comment and criticism. Upon Hopkins’s early death in 1889, most of his surviving papers, including drafts and final versions of most of his poems, were passed on to Bridges by the Dublin Jesuits. Unlike the greatly more talented Hopkins, Bridges, who lived on until 1930, was to receive considerable public recognition as a poet.

A fixed point of reference, to which this book often returns, is *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, Bridges’s 1918 edition of his friend’s work. The long delay of publication is taken as evidence of ill-spirited unwillingness on the part of Bridges. The ‘Preface to Notes’, from which I quoted above, and which came to dominate the initial reception of Hopkins’s poetry, is taken as evidence of Bridges’s uncomprehending disapproval of Hopkins. These charges are developed with verve, citing relevant scholarship. Even so, this reader was not always convinced by the result.

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Dr. Adamson's accentuation of the biographical contrast between the two friends brings out very well how their life-choices placed them differently in English Victorian society. Quite rightly, the privileged life led by Robert Bridges as a gentleman of letters of private means is correlated with his conventionality and conservatism, his pedantic fixation on proprieties of language and his weaknesses as a poet. Gerard Manley Hopkins was an outsider, and open to surprising perceptions hidden from others. Though not a Communist, he could empathise with Communist concerns for economic justice. Though not free of colonial prejudice, he could empathise to some extent with the desire for independence of the 'disloyal' Irish. On the margins, even within the Society of Jesus, Hopkins was a man in love with God, who burnt himself out doing justice to the presences and absences of his Beloved in his busy priestly life. This great poet had few readers in his day, none of whom can be said to have understood him. As Adamson shows, this incomprehension, on the part of Bridges, at least, stems from a commitment to Victorian diction and what was thought to be the moral force of literary tradition, which made Hopkins's verse experiments seem wrong-headed and even dangerous. To grateful readers of today, starved for spiritual nourishment as many are, Hopkins's poetry seems fresh with inspiration, while Bridges is hardly read at all.

The author's presentation of his material is refreshingly confrontational. The supposed services rendered by Bridges to Hopkins and his poetry are put to the test and found wanting. In Chapter Two, evidence is collated to show that the long delay in publishing Hopkins's poems was not due to a genuine concern of Bridges for his friend, but to his own self-regard. Chapter Three deals excellently with the astonishing 'Preface to Notes'. Bridges's smearing of Hopkins is comprehensively refuted with well-chosen examples. Though there seems to be nothing new here, the yield for the reader is generous, as the author goes quite extensively into the views on prosody and tradition which informed Bridges's judgment.

Chapters Four and Five offer at times impressive close readings of Hopkins's wonderful last sonnet 'To RB' and of Bridges's prefatory poem in his 1918 edition. Here, the author takes his point of departure from Norman White, whose 1992 'literary biography' interpreted Bridges's sonnet as a belated reply to 'To RB'. A robust consideration of the arguments of White and others largely upholds White's position, but with the proviso that Bridges's poem be taken as an insincere pastiche. The author concludes by referring Bridges's phrase 'upon the yellow sands' to Shakespeare's 'The Tempest', claiming that it reveals the 'subliminal intention' behind the 1918 edition: Bridges is said to play the lordly Prospero to Hopkins's hapless, dependent Ariel. An original interpretation such as this is surely to be welcomed. However, the denigration of the character of Bridges to which it leads does not convince. I will return to this below.

Chapters Six and Seven consider the literary criticism of Hopkins and Bridges, first of other writers, then of each other. These two chapters seem to me to be both the core and the high point of the book. Not only do they provide the best illustrations of what Hopkins and Bridges imagined the

nature and purpose of literature to be, and thus of what divided the two poets in their understanding of the craft they shared, they bring vividly to mind what a delightful literary critic Hopkins was. Further, the author is willing to focus at length on individual poems and even individual lines while drawing on an impressive knowledge base, which, indeed, is a strength of this book throughout.

The penultimate chapter considers the differing approaches to language of the two poets. This is followed by a summarizing conclusion and brief chronologies in table form of the lives of the two friends. The chapter on language seems to me to be out of place; what it has to say is anticipated earlier, especially in Chapter Three, and could have been said there. The chronologies are sketchy and do not relate well to the preceding chapters, but may be of general use to the less well-informed reader. Footnotes for in-text references, a full bibliography and a thorough index complete this generally well-conceived work of scholarship.

As was mentioned, Dr. Adamson's approach is confrontational. Rhetorically, Hopkins and Bridges are pitted against each other. This surely reflects the genesis of the book, which, as the author explains, originated in a number of short lectures and disputations at the Gerard Manley Hopkins Festival, Newbridge, Co. Kildare. The result is a refreshing read, clear and direct, hard-hitting where Bridges is concerned, which does not lack for depth or quality of argument. The writing stimulates the reader to independent thought, which is a valuable educational quality one does not often find in comparable works.

Was Bridges a friend or an enemy to Gerard Hopkins? Certainly, neither the hostile picture drawn in the 'Preface to Notes' nor the interference to the text of individual poems can be ignored. Adamson stops short of attributing to Bridges a conscious malignity. He concludes merely that his preparation of the 1918 edition documents the exaggerated belief of the Poet Laureate in his own rightness, which prevented the singular achievement of Hopkins from coming into its own.

It is worth noting, however, that not only Hopkins suffered from Bridges's arguably poor judgment and his textual spoliations. Another victim was Rabindranath Tagore, whose 'Gitanali' was almost completely rewritten by Bridges for his 1916 anthology, 'The Spirit of Man'. Tagore, unhappy at the Poet Laureate slashing away at his poem, attempted a protest, but he was brought to compliance by W. B. Yeats, whom Bridges had enlisted as his bully boy. Editorial imperiousness may be more common, and perhaps more justifiable, than we like to think. Also, in the confrontation between originality and tradition, the terrain is not clearly drawn. The role of literature in public space would need to be considered in greater depth, which lies outside the present remit.

At least once, in the reference to Hall Caine's 1882 anthology, 'Sonnets of Three Generations', evidence which would speak in favour of Bridges is omitted. In discussing Caine's rejection of the five sonnets Hopkins had submitted, Dr. Adamson does not consider the response of Bridges. As Catherine Phillips states in her biography of the Poet Laureate, when Bridges heard that Caine had rejected Hopkins's work, he withdrew his own submission in a show of solidarity. Bridges may well have been less

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riven by professional jealousy and more keen to see Hopkins in print than is here suggested.

The present reader was struck by a number of elements in the book which could be construed more positively for Bridges. One in particular deserves mention, a quotation from Hopkins's *Retreat Notes* from 1883, which records his prayer that his poems not 'harm [him] through the enmity and imprudence of man'. It would seem that Hopkins to some extent shared Bridges's view that his poems were potentially dangerous. Dr. Adamson suggests that the enmity and imprudence Hopkins feared was then embodied by Bridges. Against that, however, there is Bridges's clear recognition of the great beauty in Hopkins's work, which Adamson variously attests. One may add Bridges's extreme sensitivity to suffering, which was one of the reasons for his abandonment of the practice of medicine, and his remark in a letter to Hopkins's sister, Kate, that Gerard's poems would reveal to the world the latter's mental illness. It was perhaps an intolerable thought to Bridges that his friend's poems, his very soul in words, should be laid open to the unloving judgment of wider humanity. Motivated by thoughts such as these, Bridges's 1918 edition, framed by a warning preface, may have been an appropriate answer to Hopkins's prayer.

To this reader, it seems that Robert Bridges was indeed a true friend to Gerard Hopkins. However ponderous and awkward he might seem, however uncomprehending, he was acting out of love.

Otto von Guericke University, Magdeburg.

EAMON KIERNAN.

Another Day for Music. As the years go by, more and more of them, you can't help being a bit more aware of the destiny that's waiting for all of us. But what has long cheered me is the memory of a great line spoken by a great man when he reached a significant milestone. We can become too preoccupied by the attempt to preserve ourselves from death or from natural decline. On his eightieth birthday the composer Stravinsky was asked in an interview what it felt like to be eighty. The great man looked puzzled. 'I don't know what you mean: he said, 'It's just another day for music.' Another day for music. And even for the vast majority of us who will never compose anything the music of each day can be sensed in many forms – a child's laughter, a robin on a winter branch, a good joke. The music is all around us if we take time to be aware of it, and don't waste our time worrying about the destiny we inherited at birth.

– DENIS TUOHY, *Streets and Secret Places* (Dublin: Messenger Publications) p. 48.

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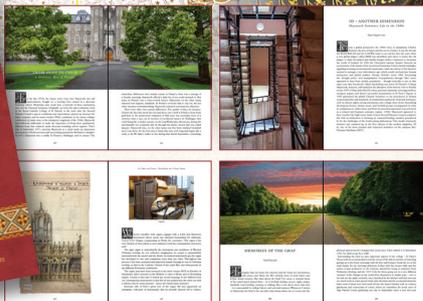
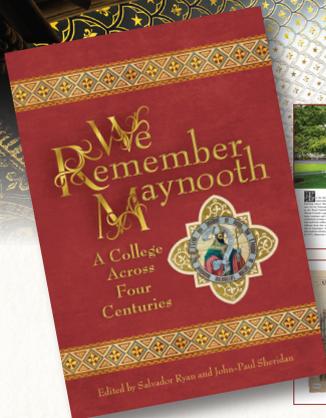
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