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TABLET



The Catholic imagination

Fifty storytellers, scientists, philosophers, theologians,
musicians, filmmakers and architects
who are shaping the modern world

RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM

THE WEST IS FAILING MINORITY FAITHFUL

The failure to take the denial of religious freedom seriously is a black mark against Western secularism, which has repeatedly failed to adjust its priorities in the face of an increasingly alarming reality. The groundbreaking report by Aid to the Church in Need, *Religious Freedom in the World 2018*, identifies 38 countries – including India and China – where intolerance of religious minorities is severe enough to be described as “persecution”. And the situation is steadily worsening in at least half of them.

Often the culprits are governments, or official bodies acting on their behalf, responding to – and often fomenting for their own purposes – a rise in extreme nationalism. They seek to exclude, and even to demonise, members of minority faith communities on the grounds that they do not belong. Many such countries rely heavily on trade with the West, and often also on development aid amounting to many billions of dollars. Yet the West has been happy to turn a blind eye. In an effort to challenge this indifference, an international campaign has been launched to mark one day a year as Red Wednesday, red being the colour of martyrdom: this year, it was the Wednesday of the week just gone. Rallies and processions were accompanied by the illumination in red of iconic public buildings and similar visible symbols, in countries ranging from Philippines to Italy, Britain and Ireland included.

Western secularism has a blind spot which affects the way public institutions act. Religion is dismissed as a matter of opinion, and therefore not regarded as

deserving of protection; the discrimination and persecution the West cares most about, such as over sexuality or race, concern attributes which are deemed immutable. Yet of all the standard components of ethnicity – such as race, language, culture and national identity – it is religious belief that often matters most to the individuals concerned, for it is that which gives meaning to their lives.

This failure may be what prompted the British government’s cowardly reaction – largely attributed to the prime minister in person – to the plight of Asia Bibi. A government official explained that she had not been offered political asylum in Britain on her release from prison in Pakistan, because of a fear of provoking social unrest – presumably among British Muslims of Pakistani origin. There was no evidence for this, and even if there was, the lack of principle behind such an approach is breathtaking.

Does Britain no longer stand for anything in the world? Asia Bibi is a Pakistani Catholic who had been condemned to death for blasphemy, until the Supreme Court overturned her conviction as unsound. But there should not be such a law, nor should Britain befriend or assist any country that has one. It is sometimes spuriously argued that if the West put more of its weight behind the defence of persecuted Christians in the developing world, those Christians might be branded as Western agents. But that is no more than an excuse for inaction. Britain does not need excuses. It needs strong political conviction leading to action. For freedom of religion, including freedom of conscience, lies at the root of all other freedoms.

EU
WITHDRAWAL

SECOND BREXIT REFERENDUM TO BREAK STALEMATE

The increasing focus on Facebook – the subject of hearings this week before an international committee of inquiry in London – is beginning to overshadow the debate on Brexit. Substantial funds were spent on pro-Brexit advertising through the Facebook platform prior to the 2016 referendum, some of which was alleged to be unlawful and some of which may have been financed from or by Russia.

To a degree this is water under the bridge, because the government has now negotiated a withdrawal agreement which must stand or fall on its merits, regardless of how it arose. But one way of guaranteeing for certain that the decision to leave the EU is genuinely “the will of the people” is to ask the electorate to confirm its 2016 decision by another referendum, and to do so with far more care taken to avoid unlawful manipulation. A ban on all Facebook advertising by either side should be an essential condition.

Even if the government refuses to countenance a second referendum at this stage, parliament might demand one. With the withdrawal agreement heading towards a “meaningful vote” in the House of Commons in less than two weeks, there is an increasing prospect of a constitutional gridlock developing. It looks very likely that the deal that Theresa May negotiated will be defeated. It looks no less likely that parliament will block the “no deal”

scenario, under which the United Kingdom would leave the EU with no alternative arrangements in place at all. The EU has said the May deal is its final offer. The time limit under the Article 50 leaving process is due to expire on March 29. Hence either this government or another one, or parliament itself, will have to find a different way forward while asking the EU to agree an extension of the deadline. And the EU is unlikely to do so except to allow another referendum.

It need not have happened like this. Given declared Labour policy of reluctant support for Brexit, Mrs May could have negotiated the withdrawal deal with cross-party consent. Even if the Democratic Unionists – on whom she depends for her majority – did not like the outcome, Labour MPs would have made up for the loss of their votes, as well as compensated for any mutiny by the more extreme backbench Brexiteers. The second referendum possibility would hardly have been mentioned, whereas now it is heading to the top of the list of available options. And a parliamentary consensus would mean that misgivings about the validity of the first referendum would have remained marginal, whatever Facebook’s exact role turns out to have been. The papers seized from an American businessman last week by the Serjeant-at-Arms of the House of Commons, on a Speaker’s Warrant, may hold the key.



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Fifty minds that matter

Who do you think is the living Catholic doing the most to change the way we imagine ourselves and understand the world? Here is our selection of 50 men and women who are making waves and recalibrating disciplines, and adding some Catholic salt to the contemporary cultural soup

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Born 1977, Enugu, Nigeria. Writer. Adichie grew up in an Igbo family in the university town of Nsukka, in Enugu State. Her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, begins with a nod to Chinua Achebe: “Things began to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to Communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the *étagère*.”

When Adichie was young, she wished she could be a priest. “The priest would sweep in in his long soutane, and you cleared the way because Father was coming. I wanted that! I wanted the power. But it was a beautiful kind of power ... I had dangerous ideas as a child.”

Margaret Archer

Born 1943, Sheffield. Sociologist. At school, Archer horrified her teachers by choosing the LSE over Oxbridge. They needn’t have worried. Always showing a striking independence of mind, she became a leading light of the critical realist tradition. She was elected as the first woman President of the International Sociological Association. In 2014 she was named President of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. “Often I find the problem of good-ness to be more difficult than the problem of evil.”

Benedict XVI

Born 1927, Marktl, Bavaria, Germany. Priest and theologian. As Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Joseph Ratzinger was known as *der Panzerkardinal*. But theologians know another side to him. He emerged as an academic rockstar in the 1950s, and he is still publishing: a collection of new sermons came

■ **James Alison**

Born 1959, London. Priest and theologian. In *Faith Beyond Resentment: Fragments Catholic and Gay* Alison describes his family background as “conservative middle-class English evangelical Protestant”. Like his father, Michael Alison, Conservative MP and Margaret Thatcher’s Parliamentary Private Secretary, he was educated at Eton and Oxford.

He became a Catholic at the age of 18 and a Dominican four years later in 1981. He wrote his dissertation under the supervision of the Jesuit faculty in Belo

out this year. He once lamented: “I know of people who immediately make dogma of every comment the Holy Father makes over breakfast.”

Enzo Bianchi

Born 1943, Castel Boglione, Monferrato, Italy. Lay monk and writer. In 1965, Bianchi moved to an abandoned farmhouse in Bose, a small village in sight of the Italian Alps. In 1968, he was joined by three others, including a pastor of the Swiss Reformed Church, establishing an ecumenical monastic community.

Bose has become an important place of prayer, of scholarship, of encounter and of dialogue, and Bianchi, still prior of the community, although never ordained himself, has reinvigorated the possibilities of the religious life.

Mario Botta

Born 1943, Mendrisio, Switzerland. Architect. Botta has been designing buildings since he was 16. His output since then has included a number of churches as well as a synagogue. “Architectural design, like every other form of human

Horizonte, Brazil. He left the Dominicans in 1995 but remains a priest.

Alison lives in Madrid, but travels the world as a speaker and retreat giver, returning, as he has wryly observed, to the mendicant vocation of an original Dominican, itinerantly preaching and begging for money.

His theology flows from two deep springs: Aquinas – which Alison learned from his Dominican teachers Herbert McCabe and Fergus Kerr – and the French

anthropologist and literary theorist René Girard. Alison is known for his firm but patient insistence on truthfulness in matters gay as an ordinary part of basic

Christianity, and for his pastoral outreach in the same sphere.

He himself insists his theology is mainstream, “moderately conservative”. Stanley

Hauerwas has called his work “frighteningly profound”; his books, Rowan Williams says, “leave you with a feeling that perhaps it’s time you became a Christian”.



expression, must come to terms with the hopes and needs underscoring people’s lives.”

Rémi Brague

Born 1947, Paris. Historian of religion and philosophy. Professor emeritus of Medieval and Arabic Philosophy at the University of Paris, Brague challenges many of the presuppositions invoked by those engaged in dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims. Here’s Brague’s succinct formulation of the key differences: “The religion of Israel is a history that led to a book; Christianity is a history recounted in a book; Islam is a book that led to a history.”

Celia Deane-Drummond

Born 1956, Aldershot. Theologian. The inaugural director of the Center for Theology, Science, and Human Flourishing at the University of Notre Dame, Deane-Drummond is returning to the UK next year to be the inaugural director of the *Laudato Si’* Institute (LSI), being established by the Jesuits at Campion Hall, Oxford.

Deane-Drummond is doing vital work in bringing science

and theology into direct and mutually challenging conversation. Her current work on the relationship between humans and animals is disturbing and exciting in equal measure.

Eamon Duffy

Born 1947, Dundalk, Ireland. Historian. Duffy’s seminal *The Stripping of the Altars* (1992) made a devastating assault on perceptions of the Catholic Church in the Reformation era. No one-hit wonder, Duffy is a reliably sound and challenging voice within and without the academy. “If your theology cannot face the truth, then it’s not itself telling the truth.”

Eugene Fama

Born 1939, Boston, Massachusetts. Economist. Nobel Prize-winning economist Eugene “Gene” Fama, the son of a truck driver, is best known for his groundbreaking “efficient markets hypothesis”. This holds that the prices of stocks and other assets rapidly adjust to all available information, which makes markets pretty hard to beat and stock-picking a futile exercise.

John Finnis

Born 1940, Adelaide, Australia. Legal philosopher. An atheist in his teens, Finnis was received into the Catholic Church at St Aloysius Church in 1962, at the end of his first academic term in Oxford.

One of the world's foremost thinkers on the philosophy of natural law, Finnis, with the late Germain Grisez, wrote an open letter to Pope Francis correcting doctrinal errors that he believes *Amoris Laetitia* appears to encourage. Judge Neil Gorsuch, Donald Trump's choice to fill a vacancy on the US Supreme Court, is a protégé.

Ephigenia W. Gachiri

Born 1944 in Kiambu, Kenya. Religious sister and activist. A renowned educator and activist, Gachiri has dedicated her life to the fight against the practice of female genital mutilation. She joined the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1965.

Riccardo Giacconi

Born 1931, Genoa, Italy. Physicist. Nobel Prize-winning astrophysicist, specialising in X-ray astronomy.

Fabrice Hadjadj

Born 1971, Nanterre, France. Writer and philosopher. Born to Jewish parents of Tunisian heritage, in his teens he was an atheist and anarchist, before converting to Catholicism. Currently teaches philosophy and literature in Toulon. He is married to the actress Siffreine Michel.

Antony Gormley

Born 1950, London. Sculptor. Gormley was the youngest of seven children of a German mother and a devout Catholic Irish father, who chose his initials, "AMDG". At Ampleforth, he was taught for a time by the sculptor and engraver John Bunting, who introduced him to the work of Epstein, Moore and Eric Gill. His distinctive self-modelled sculptures – thought-provoking about man's presence on the Earth and search beyond it – carry Catholic sensibilities deep into the public sphere.

Gustavo Gutiérrez

Born 1928, Lima, Peru. Priest

and theologian.

Known as the father of liberation theology, Gutiérrez studied medicine before becoming a priest. His seminal book *A Theology of Liberation* might never have been condemned but did start what he describes as "20 years of dialogue" with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). The thaw in relations with Rome began when he co-authored a book with the German theologian Gerhard Müller, later head of the CDF. On his ninetieth birthday, earlier this year, Pope Francis thanked him for his service "to the Church and humanity and your preferential love for the poor".

Anselm Grün

Born 1945, Hollstadt, Germany. Priest and spiritual writer. Grün joined the Benedictine novitiate directly from school. The author of around 300 spirituality books, the former Cellarer of Münsterschwarzach Abbey is a much-loved public figure in Germany. "Wonder is the beginning of all philosophy. I marvel, therefore I think."

Tomáš Halík

Born 1948, Prague, Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic). Priest and philosopher. A close associate of the late Václav Havel, with an impressive publication record and a clutch of prizes, Mgr Halík is also simply a priest who ministers to Prague's academic community as parish priest of St Salvator's in the Old Town. "Doubt isn't the enemy of faith but her sister. Unchecked doubt leads to militant secularism, but unchecked faith leads to religious fundamentalism."

Elizabeth A. Johnson

Born 1941, New York City. Religious sister and theologian. Like Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Johnson's theology encompasses the whole of Creation; like Teilhard, that has earned her some scrutiny. Professor emerita at Fordham, her long and distinguished research career reflects a strongly inclusive, interdisciplinary and transnational outlook.

"Since the reign of God is



Pope Francis

Born 1936, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Priest.

Since the conclave of March 2013 decided that Jorge Mario Bergoglio would not be returning to Buenos Aires, this most provocative and enigmatic of popes has electrified the Church and intrigued the world.

especially attentive to the needy and outcast, then solidarity with the poor encompasses the Earth and its distressed creatures."

Emmanuel Katongole

Born 1960 in the village of Malube, Uganda. Priest and theologian. His *The Sacrifice of Africa: A Political Theology for Africa* is considered a masterpiece in re-imagining new ways of studying African history and the crisis of the state and religion as narratives of reversal.

Claudia Lee Hae-in

Born 1945, in Yang-gu, Gangwon province, South Korea. Religious sister and poet. At the outbreak of the Korean War 1950, Claudia's father was abducted to North Korea while the remaining family members fled to Busan, in South Korea. She became a member of the Olivetan Benedictine Sisters of Busan in 1964 and published her first collection of poetry, *The Land of Dandelions*, in 1976. She is one of Korea's most celebrated living poets.

Amin Maalouf

Born 1949, Beirut, Lebanon. Writer. A former journalist, the Jesuit-educated Maalouf writes sweeping but serious historical novels as well as narrative non-fiction.

His *Le rocher de Tanios* won the Prix Goncourt in 1993, and he is the first Lebanese member of the Académie Française. "You can't say history teaches us this or that; it gives us more questions than

Francis – the top-down decentraliser, the champion of the peripheries who draws the world's attention to the personality at the centre, the blunt speaker who leaves exasperated critics demanding tidiness and clarity – has triggered a creative commotion.

But no one can doubt the excitement and tension generated by the defining documents of his papacy: *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato Si'*, *Amoris Laetitia* and *Gaudete et Exultate*. Perhaps his enemies in the Church grasp the "revolution of tenderness", as Jean Vanier has characterised this papacy, more than his friends: and that is why they are determined to destroy him.

answers, and many answers to every question."

Alasdair MacIntyre

Born 1929, Glasgow. Philosopher. MacIntyre became a Catholic in his fifties as the result of a critical engagement with Aquinas. An ex-Marxist and former atheist, the controversial-in-the-best-sense neo-Thomist continues to draw from both Marx and Aristotle in his moral and political philosophy.

"Someone who thinks that he can speak about God without being drawn into speaking to and with him must have misunderstood who and what God is."

Laurenti Magesa

Born 1946, Tanzania. Priest and theologian. In his compelling and influential *What is Not Sacred?* Magesa argues that traditional African religious culture remains vibrant and visible today, and has much to offer Christianity.

Terrence Malick

Born 1943, Ottawa, Illinois. Film director and writer. The reclusive 75-year-old filmmaker behind *Badlands*, *The Thin Red Line* and *The Tree of Life* spent his boyhood mostly in Waco and Bartlesville, Oklahoma. His grandparents were Assyrian Christians. "Malick seems to me to be working through the central questions – faith and doubt, morality, the possibility of eternity – in film after film,"

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John Haldane

Born London, 1954. Philosopher.



Haldane grew up “in a quiet and well-ordered home in the west end of Glasgow”; as an undergraduate in

London, he originally trained as an artist. That was before he found his way to Aquinas and wrote books in such areas as metaphysics, the history of philosophy, and moral and social philosophy. He is unusual these days: a serious academic philosopher who is equally at home

in the broadsheets. An analytical Thomist (he coined the term), he holds the J. Newton Rayzor Sr. Distinguished Chair in Philosophy at Baylor University in Texas and is Professor of Philosophy at St Andrews; he is also Chair of the Royal Institute of Philosophy.

“Certainly in the last two centuries there have been important developments in moral philosophy that were not avowedly religious [...] but of itself this does not challenge the claim that the core ideas originated in a Judaeo-Christian understanding of human nature.”

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

writes Michael Symmons Roberts. “And at their best he makes films that feel – like the best poems do too – exploratory, not just the outworking of an idea. *To the Wonder* made a big impact on me in recent years. Malick is a major artist working on what still counts as the world’s biggest stage – the movies.”

Mary John Mananzan

Born 1937, Dagupan, Pangasinan, Philippines. Religious sister and theologian. A former student of Rahner, Mananzan is a formidable intellectual and political influence in her home country and beyond. “If something you find compatible becomes incompatible, you’re making artificial contradictions. That I am a nun and that I am the head of a militant women’s organisation? Well I am! So what’s the problem?”

Jean-Luc Marion

Born 1946, Meudon, Hauts-de-Seine, France. Philosopher and theologian. An interdisciplinary heavyweight in the best French tradition, Marion occupies his friend Cardinal Lustiger’s old seat in the Académie Française. His most recent book, *Brève apologie pour un moment catholique*, is a resounding defence of Catholics in the public square.

“We live with love as if we knew what it was about. But as soon as we try to define it, or at least approach it with concepts, it draws away from us.”

Mario J. Molina

Born 1943, Mexico City. Chemist. A joint winner of the Nobel

Prize in Chemistry in 1995 for his discovery of how chlorofluorocarbon gases, or CFCs, deplete the ozone layer.

Rafael Moneo

Born 1937, Tudela, Navarre, Spain. Architect. His prize-winning buildings include the Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels, Los Angeles, opened in 2002, the third-largest cathedral in the world, built of earth-coloured concrete and alabaster. Gregory Peck is interred in the sumptuous crypt along with a number of bishops and archbishops.

Toni Morrison

Born 1931, Lorain, Ohio. Writer. Born Chloe Wofford, the name “Toni” comes from Morrison’s patron saint, Anthony of Padua. The multi-best-selling Nobel laureate is professor emerita at Princeton, where she founded the Princeton Atelier to develop promising artists across the disciplines. “We don’t need any more writers as solitary heroes. We need a heroic writers movement – assertive, militant, pugnacious.”

Herta Müller

Born 1953, Nitchidorf, Romania. Müller grew up a German-speaking Catholic in the multi-ethnic, polyglot region of Banat in west-central Romania. Her fiction is rooted the violence, oppression and absurdity experienced by minorities under Nicolae Ceausescu’s regime. Razor-sharp and uncompromising, her unique capacity for observation has gained her worldwide recognition. She was awarded

the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2009. “I do not understand the world. I do not understand. That is why I write, because I do not understand.”

Les Murray

Born 1938, Nahiab, New South Wales. Poet.

A staunch opponent of liberalism, modernism and literary snobbery, Murray combines down-home conservative values with a vast and lively erudition. This Catholic convert with Calvinist roots is widely considered one of the great living anglophone poets. “Everybody’s got a few magical things in their lives. They can talk about them as if they were rational and logical, but in fact their heart is poetry.”

Micheal O’Siadhail

Born 1947, Dublin. Poet. The first three of O’Siadhail’s 17 poetry collections were in Irish. His latest book, *The Five Quintets*, recalls T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*: “In Christian terms [Eliot] somehow missed out on the Resurrection. He gets the selflessness, he gets the sacrifice, he has the fire ... But he is not quite into the paradise of absolute celebration and joy.”

José Antonio Pagola

Born 1937, San Sebastián, Spain. Priest and biblical scholar. Pagola’s *Jesus: An Historical Approximation* is the most talked-about religious book to have been published in post-Franco Spain.

The Basque scholar argues that Jesus’ core message was to present the reign of God as one of compassion.

This was a radical departure from the emphasis on the wrath of God that had inspired the prophets of Israel. Widely acclaimed, the book has also met with opposition from Spain’s bishops.

John Polanyi

Born 1929, Berlin. His father was Jewish but converted to Catholicism; his family migrated to Britain when John was four years old, and he studied at Manchester University. He received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1986 for his contribution to the field of chemical-reaction dynamics.

Paolo Portoghesi

Born 1931, Rome. Architect. Influential church architect, theorist and historian who argues that there is no dialectical opposition between the old and the new, or between tradition and modernity, but only convergence and continuity.

Adélia Prado

Born 1935, Divinópolis, Minas Gerais, Brazil. Poet. Her poetry was “discovered” in 1976, when, at the age of 40, a small collection of her poems was passed along to Brazil’s great modernist, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, who announced in a newspaper column that St Francis was dictating verses to a housewife in Minas Gerais. Her literary career was launched.

Andrea Riccardi

Born 1950, Rome. Historian, politician and activist. The founder of the Community of Sant’Egidio, an international Catholic lay organisation dedicated to peacemaking, service to the poor, and evangelisation, which celebrated its fiftieth anniversary this year. One of its signature acts was to broker an international peace deal in Mozambique in 1992. Riccardi was minister for international cooperation and integration policies under Italian prime minister Mario Monti.

“Our churches have to become warmly human, they have to be real communities, not closed in on themselves.”

David Adams Richards

Born 1950, Newcastle, New Brunswick. Writer and member of the Canadian senate. Richards’ novels are a brilliant evocation of his native region, the Miramichi River valley in New Brunswick, transformed into a larger human canvas of sin and redemption. His intricate treatment of ravaged consciences, political hubris, inhuman orthodoxies, and a person’s aching into holiness, knows no comparable contemporary.

“Faith is an inherent condition. We all have it. We all use it. We all need it. The idea that *only* those who say they have faith actually have it is an absurdity.”



■ **James MacMillan**

Born 1959, Kilwinning, Ayrshire, Scotland. Composer. One of the world's leading living classical musicians, owes it all to his grandfather – a coal miner who played the euphonium in the colliery band and introduced the young MacMillan to music-making.

“Many of the leading figures of modern music – Schoenberg, for example – are profoundly religious. It's almost as though there's something inherent in the art of music that has to be an acknowledgement of the sacred.”

Not for nothing, says MacMillan, is music sometimes referred to as

the most spiritual of the arts. He takes it a stage further: “Spirituality and music are so deeply entwined that to dispute the link is to negate the art form.”

He's known as a conservative Catholic – more of a natural follower of Benedict, for whose UK visit in 2010 he composed several pieces of music – than of Francis; but he prefers to call himself an “ordinary Catholic”.

For MacMillan, Catholicism is not about sides or factions – “it's much more profound than that” – and though he has been an excoriating critic of the banality of much post-Vatican II church music, he now finds the so-called “liturgy wars” wearing. “I can't be bothered with any of that any more,” he said.

One of his proudest achievements is the festival he founded in the town where he was born, the Cumnock Tryst.

theologian, humanitarian.

In 1964, Vanier, a rising young academic in France and in his native Canada, invited two men with mental disabilities to live with him in a tumbledown cottage in a village in northern France.

From these small beginnings grew L'Arche, an international organisation in which men and women with mental disabilities live in family-sized houses with “normal” assistants.

L'Arche communities are of all faiths and none, united in the belief that those who are apparently strong have much to learn from those who are weak.

Vanier has written numerous books, and has, until recently, travelled the world giving talks and retreats. Those who have heard him speak attest to his almost palpable holiness.

■ **Jacek Salij**

Born 1942, Budy, Wołyn, Poland. Priest and theologian. Thomist philosopher, Dominican preacher, translator, writer and publicist; a prominent dissident priest during the Solidarity period.

Soskice, who converted at 20 after a thunderbolt moment, is one of the UK's most eloquent, engaging and irresistible theologians. Professor of Philosophical Theology at Cambridge, her work also includes Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations, science and religion, and history of biblical studies.

“It was as if I'd fallen secretly in love, which perhaps I had. I was simply aware that the world was profoundly ordered to the Good.”

■ **Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza**

Born 1938, Cenad, Romania. Theologian. A pioneer of feminist theology. Her teaching and research focus on questions of biblical and theological epistemology, hermeneutics, rhetoric, and the politics of interpretation, as well as on issues of theological education, radical equality and democracy.

■ **Martin Scorsese**

Born 1942, New York City. Film-maker. As a boy, Scorsese wanted to imitate his mentor John Principe by seeking ordination. Thankfully for the film world, the seminary expelled him. *Silence* (2016), 25 years in the making, is only the latest product of a long, theologically-infused career.

■ **Bruce Springsteen**

Born 1949, Long Branch, New Jersey. Musician. New Jersey's most famous export, Springsteen is not only a performer: he's a poet, an analyst and a thoroughgoing perfectionist. Andrew Greeley called him a “Catholic Meistersinger”. He explores his relationship to the Church in his memoir *Born to Run*. “You can't live inside your work; your work has got to live inside you.”

■ **David Tracy**

Born 1939, New York City. Priest and theologian. Hailed as one of the most original theologians in recent decades for his work in hermeneutics and theological method in a pluralistic context. The author of enduring classics, *Blessed Rage for Order* (1975) and *The Analogical*

Imagination (1980), he contributed a lively essay to the catalogue of the Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition *Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination*.

Tracy was described by Andrew Bolton, the curator of the exhibition, as “the J. D. Salinger of the theological world”.

■ **Jean Vanier**

Born 1928, Geneva, Switzerland. Philosopher,

■ **Gene Wolfe**

Born 1931, New York City. Writer. Possibly the most critically acclaimed science fiction and fantasy author of our time, he is most famous for *The Book of the New Sun*, described by one critic as “a tetralogy of couth, intelligence, and suavity that is also written in VistaVision with Dolby Sound. Imagine a Star Wars-style space opera penned by G.K. Chesterton in the throes of a religious conversion.”

■ **Charles Taylor**

Born 1931, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Philosopher. Taylor's Catholicism was shaped by his family and his reading of French theologians such as Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac, introduced to him by Dominicans he knew as a young man. From Montreal, and his first studies at McGill University, Taylor went to Oxford, studying under Isaiah Berlin and Elizabeth Anscombe, and later becoming a professor of social and political theory, as well as a fellow of All Souls. He then returned to McGill, spending the rest of his academic life there as a professor of political science and philosophy.

In 2007 he published to acclaim *A Secular Age*, in which he took to task secularisation theories, first shaped by Max Weber, which hold that religion diminishes in influence as

modernity, shaped by science and technology, flourishes. Instead, Taylor argues, religion does not shrink but diversifies. Belief and unbelief are lived experiences sitting alongside one another.

“I am comfortable now in a world where people are seeking,” Taylor told *The Tablet* in 2014. “We could

not reconstruct the old unanimous society if we wanted to, but this too is a world where the Gospel can flourish.”

The age in which we live, Taylor argues, is far from a comfortable unbelief, and the atomisation of

society so often pessimistically described by philosophers and sociologists is overdue.

“People are parts of social webs,” he says, “with overlapping connections. To a great extent, we have a social life with hundreds of overlapping circles.”



The bestsellers which first made Shakespeare's name were not his plays but his poems, including a daring allegory lamenting the dissolution of the monasteries / By CLARE ASQUITH

Shakespeare's secret history

WHAT IS IT about the Tudors? With yet another blockbuster hitting the cinema screens soon – *Mary Queen of Scots* – the English appetite for Tudor novels, films, plays, histories, seems endless. Ben Elton's BBC2 series, *Upstart Crow*, sends up our obsession with the period while plunging viewers ever more deeply into our Sunday-night comfort zone of jerkins, rapiers, taverns, bawdy wenches and gut-spilling executions.

Regularly featured in this familiar Tudor line-up, alongside Catholic plots and Puritan rants, is Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, the backdrop to C.J. Sansom's best-selling *Shardlake* series, and the subject of influential works by Hilary Mantel and Diarmaid MacCulloch. In the language of *1066 and All That*, this vast property transfer is generally viewed as "A Good Thing" – a piece of national housekeeping overseen by the brisk Thomas Cromwell, whose efficient minions put the decayed monastic estate out of its misery and transferred the assets to more responsible owners. One of the finest of this year's batch of Tudor novels, however, takes a very different view.

Victoria Glendinning's *The Butcher's Daughter* traces the dissolution's impact on the community of Shaftesbury Abbey, a thriving foundation whose abbess courageously resists closure. Like Mantel's *Cromwell*, Elton's *Shakespeare* and Sansom's *Shardlake*, Glendinning's resilient heroine, Agnes Peppin, is not religious – an anomaly for the period, but an obvious prerequisite for modern readers. As a novice at Shaftesbury Abbey, however, Agnes acknowledges true religious sensibility when she sees it. Two old nuns "are the incarnation of the Rule of Stability. I have never known such joyous women".

WHEN THE community is dissolved she writes: "That weak wailing will echo among the stars until the Day of Judgment. Faith, fortitude, dignity, lost and gone with everything else." In a shocking twist, her sympathetic, practical mentor, Sister Mary Amor, hangs herself. For Agnes this is martyrdom, not suicide – Sister Mary was surely "a witness to a great wrong".

Shame overwhelms Agnes herself – she regrets bitterly that on the day the abbey was yielded up she failed to stab the mercenary commissioner with the "small sharp knife at

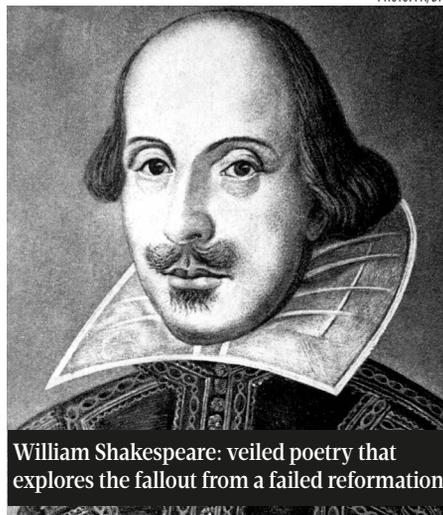


PHOTO: PA/DPA

William Shakespeare: veiled poetry that explores the fallout from a failed reformation

my belt". A traveller brings news that the same tragedy is being repeated right across the country: his words haunt her. "Madam", he said, "you must understand. Our land is strewn with ruins." He began to sob and could not stop.

THE DRIVING force behind the desecration is what Glendinning calls opportunism, embodied in the callous landowners who browbeat the abbess and her nuns into submission and seize the assets of the great abbey for themselves. Her novel dramatises the terrible loss to society in the harsh winter that follows. "In former days, people looked to the Abbey for everything and found it – shelter, medicines, food, fuel." Under the opportunists, charity ceases.

Until the introduction of the welfare state and the decline in religious belief in the second half of the twentieth century, it was natural for the English to express horror at all this. Furious reformers even stood up in Henry VIII's parliament to denounce the dissolution. The new churchmen hoped to redeploy the infrastructure for the good of the nation: but within five years not just the land and treasure, but the libraries, hostels, hospitals, almshouses – the national heritage and welfare system – had all vanished.

The many distinguished Anglican protesters at the dissolution included Elizabeth

I's historian William Camden, the seventeenth-century antiquarian William Dugdale, Samuel Coleridge, Jane Austen, and the early nineteenth-century radical William Cobbett, whose *History of the Protestant Reformation* remains the most powerful of the many indictments of what many called the "rape" of England: "Nothing has ever yet come", he wrote, "to supply the place of what was then destroyed."

One particular sixteenth-century writer, who writes in the same tones of indignation and grief as Cobbett, uses Glendinning's term for the perpetrators in his "Lucrece", an allegorical poem about the wreckage of England. They are opportunists. "Oh Opportunity", begins one agonised passage, "Thy guilt is great ... thou mak'st the vestal violate her oath ... Thou plantest scandal and displacest laud ... The poor, lame, blind, halt, creep, cry out for thee, / But they ne'er meet with Opportunity."

Strikingly, the poet also chooses the image of a violated woman, innocent but overwhelmed by shame at her own submission, as his emblematic victim of the takeover. After her rape, belatedly, like Mary Amor, Lucrece kills herself; a mirror throughout of the soul of England, her dead body is compared to "a late-sacked island". Appalled onlookers deny that she is a suicide: she is a witness to a great wrong, and they vow to avenge her.

THE WRITER OF this long, barely read poem, is William Shakespeare. Had it been anyone else, the allegory might have been picked up by modern scholars, and would have led to the detection of similar allegories behind similarly neglected narrative poems written in the 1590s by his contemporaries. But the unshakeable mantra is that Shakespeare never wrote allegory. As a result, his oddly rambling poems remain all but unknown.

Editors of the poems are at a loss to explain why exactly Shakespeare wrote them, or why these, not the plays, were the runaway bestsellers that first made his name. But if we read them with the portrait of a ravaged country in mind, they become the most moving

examples of a school of carefully veiled poetry that flourished at the end of Elizabeth I's reign, exploring the fallout of what, to most thinking people of the period, looked like a failed reformation.

Who were Lucrece's avengers? Scholars acknowledge that Shakespeare pays homage at several points to

the Earl of Essex – in fact, his single reference to a living contemporary is to Essex, towards the end of Henry V. And the man to whom he dedicated those bestselling poems was Essex's closest friend, the young Earl of Southampton.

These are usually seen as slightly disappointing patrons: Essex was an ambitious favourite whose populist power bid led him to the block, and Southampton was his extrav-

Within five years, not just the land and treasure, but the libraries, hospitals, and almshouses had all vanished

ILLUSTRATION: CATHERINE PAIN

agantly foppish follower. But recent studies reveal that Essex's wide appeal was the result of qualities rare among Tudor politicians – integrity, humanity, tolerance, statesmanship. Where Elizabeth's regime had become a byword for corruption, Essex offered hope: political reform, an assured Scottish succession and an end to religious intolerance.

Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece", written in the early 1590s, passionately promote the manifesto of this rising star. Under the veil of allegory, they voice the grievances of the late Elizabethan opposition, and climax in a damning analysis of the causes and development of the English Reformation. The final scenario is daring: a charismatic leader denounces the tyranny that destroyed Lucrece, and unites the mourners in a rousing call for regime change.

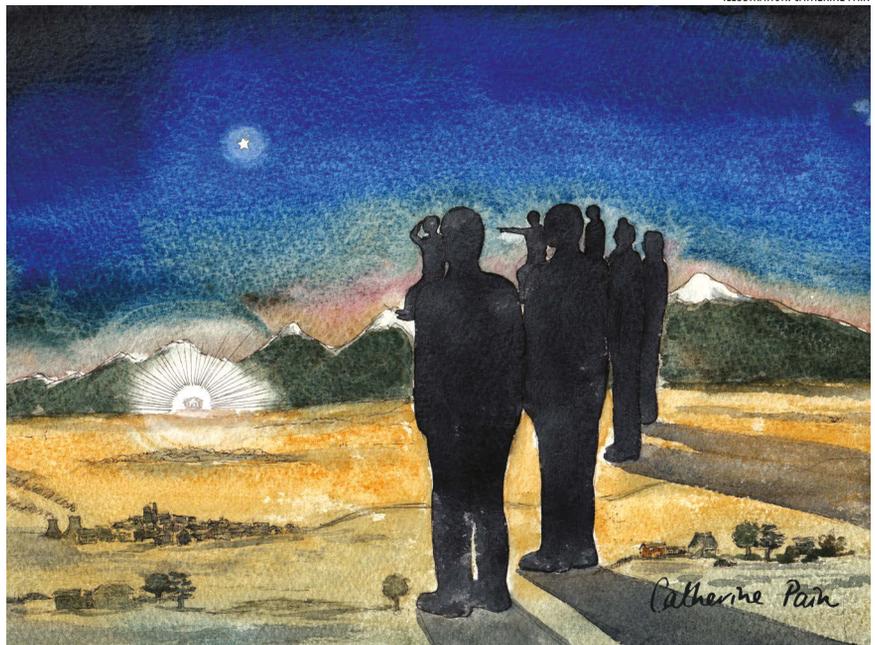
PETER LAKE IS one of the current historians who wonder why literary scholars fail to pursue the covert political levels in Shakespeare's work. My first book, *Shadowplay*, built on a persistent but marginalised line of scholarship, claiming that, in response to censorship, a sophisticated political commentary, some of it intended for the court, underlies Shakespeare's plays, and indeed the plays and poems of most of his contemporaries. But the whole concept of a politically or, worse, religiously committed Shakespeare remains anathema to literary scholars. It is only outside academic circles, in the world of popular culture, that changes are afoot in the way we view these writers and their background.

It is easy to mock our fondness for Tudor escapism, but it may have generated a new golden age of sixteenth-century fiction and cinema. Promisingly, the latest film about Mary Queen of Scots is based on a groundbreaking biography by John Guy, a leading scholar who is still doing much to dismantle many of the old Tudor myths.

VICTORIA GLENDINNING has rightly overturned the current convention that the dissolution was a regrettable but necessary act. Publishers and directors are beginning to capitalise on the dramatic potential of an alternative, revisionist version of the English Reformation that has been sidelined and even buried for centuries.

If the picture Cobbett painted of the tragic national impact of a monumental act of injustice does indeed enter mainstream for the first time, then the works of Shakespeare, a defining element in the way we English see ourselves and our own history, may at last yield up his forgotten commentary on the unfolding drama of his own times.

Clare Asquith, the Countess of Oxford and Asquith, is the author of *Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare*. Her latest book, *Shakespeare and the Resistance: The Earl of Southampton, the Essex Rebellion, and the Poems that Challenged Tudor Tyranny* is published this week by Public Affairs at £21.99 (Tablet price, £19.79).



In the first of our reflections for Advent, **Thomas McCarthy OP** reminds us that our vision is only possible because we sit on the shoulders of giants

In the course of excavation work in ancient basilicas, archaeologists exercise patience, allied to a calm sense of hope. At first, only a glimmer of what lies beneath may be possible; then, with painstaking work, early baptisteries or a relic of post-baptismal catechesis in the form of a fresco may be revealed.

The tenacity of scientific research and the keen desire to reveal history's treasures, joined to the intrepid hope that what is unearthed will inspire, drive the search forward.

Karl Rahner observed that "the past can only be preserved in its purity by someone who accepts responsibility for the future". The task of being "missionary disciples" – in Pope Francis' resonant phrase – is one we are capable of, not least because of the valuable legacy of the witness of those who have gone before us along this path.

John of Salisbury put it like this: "We are sitting on the shoulders of giants. We see more, and things that are more distant, than they did, not because our sight is superior or because we are taller, but because they raise us up, and by their great stature add to ours."

That valuable legacy also includes the remarkable course of Christian theology and instruction found in Paul's letters. Paul is not in the least interested in any of the biographical details of Jesus' childhood, apart from noting his descent from David "according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3). His teaching has a specific focus: "Being found in human form ... he became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him ..." (Philippians 2:8). The gateway to a new manner of living was opened for humanity by the sacrifice of Calvary. All other particulars of Jesus' life are irrelevant to Paul's purpose as preacher and catechist.

Other writers of course did share stories of Jesus' childhood years, right back to infancy. Some of these were judged too fanciful to be taken seriously or merit entry into the Church's sacred library of books; others were admitted, among them Luke's narrative theology. His text presents a genealogy of Jesus and tells of Mary learning she was to be the mother of him who would be "great".

Those who are dedicated to the welfare of children seek to provide an environment and climate that will enable each and every one of them to grow and learn in safety, perhaps becoming as amazing as the boy from Nazareth who went missing in a big city and was later found engaging Temple scholars in Jerusalem with wisdom far beyond his years.

A child's growth to maturity involves getting to know themselves and the world about them. The hope is that each will be enabled to grow in the bosom of his or her own family.

The strength and will to care for all who are vulnerable, children and adults, comes, in a disciple's *credo*, from what Newman termed "a higher gift than grace". That gift from above turns out to be the one who is our childhood's pattern. God among us, God vulnerable in this world of flesh.

He it was who, as an adult under arrest, freed our minds and hearts to honour once more and respect all life, our own and that of each of God's children. The sacrifice of Calvary, that fatal yet life-giving culmination of the Bethlehem event, inaugurated a saving pathway for all who would set out on the journey.

Thomas McCarthy OP is a Dominican priest of the Irish Province and Prior of San Clemente, Rome.

Could the Pope's 'care for Creation' encyclical be helping to stiffen the resolve of the man charged by Theresa May with saving the planet? The politician engaged with the crisis facing both the environment and society in his recent Theos lecture – and saluted Francis for his insight / By JAMES ROBERTS

The new face of Michael Gove

MICHAEL GOVE is a changed man. It may not be entirely obvious to political commentators, and if his wife, the journalist Sarah Vine, has noticed, she's not making a big thing of it. But it became evident to me last week when he delivered the 2018 Theos lecture. His choice of subject – "When will there be a harvest for the world?" – was fitting for a politician who returned to the Cabinet six months ago as secretary of state for environment, food and rural affairs speaking at the annual beano of a highly respected Christian think-tank. And what – or who – sparked this unexpected conversion? In part, at least, none other than Pope Francis.

It is dangerous to put human beings into neat categories, protean politicians in particular. But as a rough guide we could say there are those who work in a "both ... and" sort of way, and there are the "either ... or" types. Margaret Thatcher – who was never afraid of confrontation – belonged in the latter camp; the more naturally emollient David Cameron was made for the "both ... and" variety of politics, which is where he ended up. It's hard to imagine Mrs Thatcher leading a coalition government.

Mr Gove, in his previously most visible incarnation, as education secretary in the coalition government between 2010 and 2014, was an "either ... or" man through and through. He relished his battles with the "the Blob", as he would call his opponents in the educational establishment, but in the end



there was so much blood on the carpet that Cameron had to move him. Two years later Gove nailed his colours to the Brexit mast, thereby playing a part in the demise of Cameron that the Leave vote precipitated. He ran for the Tory party leadership but conceded to Theresa May who last year – to his surprise – invited him to be environment secretary. He was back in the Cabinet, but if he saw this job as a stepping stone to greater things he kept the plan well hidden, mastering his new brief with characteristic diligence. And so a papal encyclical on "the care for creation" – *Laudato Si'* – found its way to his bedside table. He spent nearly half of his lecture last Thursday discussing it.

Gove's lecture was characterised above all by inclusivity. He did take a swipe at the contemporary tendency to believe the phrase "That offends me" counts as an argument – though the swipe was delivered so elegantly that professional victims may not have noticed. "Dissent, scepticism, challenge, even when offensive to some, are essential to keeping our politics healthy," he pointed out, with relative mildness. But he went on to name check Gordon Brown, Frank Field and the Prophet Muhammad, among others, as people who have brought something to the table in current debates about the environment. Pride of place, though, in terms of environmental prophets, went to Francis, who in *Laudato Si'* has, Gove told his audience, written "one of the most comprehensive and thoughtful expositions of Christian thinking on the environment". Francis was praised for defending the Earth – which needs defending given that it is – and

here Gove approved of Francis' arresting image – beginning to look more and more "like an immense rubbish heap".

Pope Francis was saluted for the idea in the encyclical that the way forward for humanity is to help *both* the poor *and* the planet simultaneously. "Pope Francis makes the point that we are not faced with two separate crises afflicting the environment and society. Rather, the world is facing a single complex crisis. The solution, he believes, must be to combat poverty and restore dignity to the underprivileged *at the same time* [Gove's emphasis] as protecting nature."

"**THAT INSIGHT** – I believe – is fundamental," Gove went on. Pope Francis' "both ... and" strategy clearly had an immense appeal for Gove. And in the later part of his lecture he spelled it out most explicitly. He referred to the book, *The Wizard and the Prophet: Two remarkable scientists and their conflicting visions of the future of our planet*, by the "brilliant American writer", Charles Mann. Mann discusses the achievements of two little-known but influential American scientists, William Vogt and Norman Borlaug. The philosophy of Vogt – "the Prophet" – was all about properly valuing Creation: nature's precious resources needed protection from man's rapacity. Borlaug – "the Wizard" – on the other hand believed that humanity can use reason to find solutions to the daunting problems of feeding the hungry.

Borlaug's work on increasing crop yields is credited with saving a billion lives in the developing world. So – do we acknowledge our dependence on nature or seek to assert mastery over it? "Faced with these two powerful and contending visions," Gove argued, "the wisest way forward rests in harnessing the best of both ... the *via media* I think we should follow is not a splitting down the middle of these arguments, but a radical fusion ... If as Christians we believe Creation is a gift we must preserve," he concluded, "then we also believe creativity is a gift we must use to the full."

WHAT DOES ALL this tell us about the state of mind of Cabinet member Michael Gove at this critical point in the history of the nation? As well as being blessed with a razor-sharp intellect we know he carries a stiletto up his sleeve – as was revealed when he turned on Boris Johnson on the morning his Oxford chum was to launch his Tory party leadership campaign. "There is a very deep pit reserved in Hell for such as he," one Johnson ally

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Yes, boring people, Christianity did itself co-opt the winter solstice, observed by pagans

tweeted at the time. Last week Gove might well have brought Mrs May down by quitting the Cabinet. But he seems to have decided that his future – and the country's – was best served by his staying. The moment was not ripe for bringing down the prime minister. But that moment may come before long.

The last time Gove put himself forward for the Conservative Party leadership, before conceding to Mrs May, he spoke of glamour and charisma. "I did almost everything not to be a candidate for the leadership of this party," he said in 2016. "I was so very reluctant because I know my limitations. Whatever charisma is, I don't have it ... whatever glamour may be, I don't think anyone could ever associate me with it."

But Gove knows that celebrity endorsements can be toxic, as Hillary Clinton discovered. And this month in Texas, Hollywood favourite Beto O'Rourke lost to the charmless and unloved Ted Cruz. As for charisma, Gove knows it doesn't cut the mustard with the wised-up UK electorate, and on the rare occasions voters have fallen for it, most have come to regret it.

This is not faux humility, and it is not unappealing. Gove really does agonise about issues and motives, including his own. There is no reason why this trait should not accompany an implacable ambition to one day reach the top of the greasy pole Gove has slid down more than once, though never fatally.

I SAW MICHAEL GOVE in 2010 during the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Britain. He was just starting out as education secretary and the Pope was delivering an outdoor address on education to a group of young people at St Mary's University, Twickenham. Lord (Chris) Patten, who had overseen the arrangements for the visit, and Michael Gove were sitting directly in front of me. At the end of the address Patten got up to leave. Gove stayed in his seat. Patten turned and gestured to Gove to follow. Gove scuttled after him, as if Patten was the boss. Today Patten is doing good work in the House of Lords. Gove is one of a handful of men and women who hold the future of the country in their hands.

Some voices from both sides of the debate are characterising Theresa May's current Brexit deal as a capitulation to Brussels. She is trying to sell it as an "either ... or" option – this deal or nothing. At the moment the odds seem to be heavily stacked against her pushing it through Parliament. Perhaps the time is right, then, for a Brexiteer who has lately discovered the merits of "both ... and" instead of "either ... or" solutions. It could be that Gove will deliver the stiletto at just the right moment, and then – with judicious compromises and accommodations but no Chequers-style fudges – somehow pull a Brexit the majority can live with out of the bag. And if he does, Pope Francis could take more than a little share of the credit.

A transcript of Michael Gove's lecture is available on the Theos website at www.theosthinktank.co.uk



NEIL MACGREGOR, known as the David Attenborough of Things since his *History of the World in 100 Objects* and specifically of Religious Things since his *Living with the Gods*, said in an interview that the popularity of Christmas is indeed proof that Christianity still infuses the culture. All that giving and goodwill.

True up to a point. But the problem with secular society appropriating a Christian festival is that it ends up spoiling it. And yes, boring people, Christianity did itself co-opt the winter solstice, observed by pagans, as the time to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord, though the date of 25 December was never the focal point of pagan festivities, including the Roman festival of Saturnalia.

Anyway, the problem about the secular Christmas is that its celebration negates the whole point of the Christian one. It starts too early and finishes too early. By starting too early, with celebrations from the latter part of November, it rides roughshod over Advent, which is meant to start now. And by finishing on 2 January it imposes a penitential regime – heard of the Dry January abomination? – right in the middle of the Christmas festivities which carry on to a crescendo with the Epiphany.

There is only so much we can do about it. I mean, am I actually going to boycott parties on the basis they should properly happen between the evening of the 24 December and 6 January? I am not. But we can at least, on Christian turf, preserve the idea of Advent. That means, folks, not having Christmas school fairs, but Advent fairs – like they used to in Germany. And it means not having full-on Christmas carol concerts but Advent carol services: rather less "Hark the Herald", a bit more "O Come, O Come Emmanuel". (Mind you, a few years back, I heard two women disconsolately remark as they left one Advent service that there were no proper carols.) It's being counter-cultural. But that's what we do.

And at the other end of the season, I need hardly say that we carry on in full festive mode right through to Epiphany, with a particularly good party on Twelfth Night, the vigil of the

Epiphany. Some of us will carry on in festive mode right until Candlemas. Anyway ... the next bona fide opportunities for celebration are St Lucy's Day – an opportunity for going the whole Scandinavian hog, with saffron buns – and St Nicholas' Day, complete with presents in children's shoes in the morning. God knows, when Christians want to celebrate, we can always find an excuse.

A BIT DISPIRITING, isn't it, that the way officialdom discourages young people from hanging around in stations is by playing classical music to them. Last night, at Hammersmith tube station, I heard the haunting sound of Schubert's "Ave Maria", which I used to sing once. Now it's being used as crowd clearance. Wouldn't happen anywhere else in Europe, I fancy.

CAN'T MAKE it to Santiago de Compostela to see the Pórtico de la Gloria of the cathedral, the one with rather brilliant monsters on the pillars devouring the lost souls? No problem. Try South Kensington in London instead. The second gallery of the Cast Courts at the Victoria and Albert Museum has opened after a decade of refurbishment and the treasures include that portico. It was one of the earliest acquisitions of the cast collection.

When the museum's first curator, John Charles Robinson, visited Santiago, he was bowled over by the portal and insisted South Kensington should have a replica so that lots more people could see it. And so a cast was made and taken from Galicia to London, where it now sits a few steps away from Trajan's Column and within a few feet of some terrific Celtic crosses including a reproduction of the Ruthwell Cross, with the "Dream of the Rood" inscribed around it.

Of course these things are not seen in their proper settings and there's a riot of competing pieces, but isn't it apt that things that are objects of pilgrimage should themselves go on pilgrimage to meet the people? In a way it's one of the functions of religious art.



Melanie McDonagh is senior writer for the London Evening Standard.

JAMES O'BRIEN



Shock jock for the truth

The outspoken radio host talks to **Peter Stanford** about the clerical abuse scandal – and explains why he is holding on to his faith

FOR GENERATIONS of Catholics, an Ampleforth education was seen not just as the best money could buy, but also a priceless gift to their children that would set them up for their future life. That is why the parents of award-winning radio phone-in host and sometime *Newsnight* presenter James O'Brien sent him there at 13. His dad, Jim, a journalist with *The Daily Telegraph*, had left school at 15 and, O'Brien suggests, saw making sacrifices to send his boy to Ampleforth “as a way of giving me the golden ticket he never had”.

And, in many ways, he was proved right. At 46, O'Brien has risen to the top, starting out with shifts at the *Daily Express* and then becoming a “showbiz” editor on what we used to call Fleet Street before switching to broadcasting. He has been presenting a live phone-in show since 2003 on LBC, where – since the station went nationwide four years ago – his weekday morning slot now attracts an audience of one million.

High-profile phone-ins are usually associated in the public mind with an overtly conservative/populist/controversialist outlook

on the world. Among others on the LBC roster are Nigel Farage and Nick Ferrari, but O'Brien is, in the words of the *New Statesman*, “the shock jock that liberals love”. His principled takedowns of pompous politicians and dogmatic callers regularly go viral on social media, so much so that an irritated *Sun* editorial labelled him a “leftie propagandist”.

It is a tag he doesn't like. “I believe in a commonwealth, a society that has a stable economy and rules in place to make sure the poorest people in that society don't suffer unduly,” he says. “And that means redistribution of wealth, which you can cast as left-wing, but I'd call it decent and fair, and Christian.”

WE ARE MEANT to be talking about his new book. *How To Be Right ... in a world gone wrong* has shot straight into the pre-Christmas bestsellers' chart, but it is Ampleforth that is uppermost in his mind. “My personal journey,” he tells me, in private gentler and more hesitant than his public persona, “was informed very much by going to Ampleforth. The discovery I made there that men of the cloth

could be deeply, deeply flawed was very difficult.”

He recalls, in particular, “a couple of the monks who were so profoundly unpleasant that they shook everything up for me. I'd only ever attended Catholic schools before that [he was raised in Kidderminster, in Worcestershire] and I'd never really questioned it. But these monks had not only scholastic authority but also divine authority. That is what we were told, that they had been chosen by God to be monks.”

It was a claim that the teenaged O'Brien struggled to reconcile with the monks' behaviour. Even at that age, he was evidently one for probing what was presented to him as fact when it didn't ring true – a trait nurtured by his “wonderful” parents, who had adopted him and his sister when they were babies.

He left Ampleforth at 18 – “under a cloud” and slightly earlier than planned after being caught smoking cannabis, something that, he says, broke his parents' hearts. Its immediate legacy was a decade where he was “furiously anti-religion and furiously irreligious. I realise now it was because of the Ampleforth experience, rather than any sense of enlightenment, or conversion. It was because I couldn't disassociate the Church from the men at the school.”

Falling in love with fellow journalist Lucy

McDonald prompted a rethink. "I wanted us to get married in a Catholic church, and then I had a crisis of conscience. 'You can't,' I told myself, 'You're a hypocrite!'"

The timely intervention of two nuns who were listeners to his show put him straight. "They had written in and asked if I wanted to meet up for a cup of tea because I had obviously been sharing some of my soul-searching on the radio. I hadn't been to church for a long time, but they took me to meet their parish priest in west London. Together they made me realise that it was the people who had put me off, not the faith or the actual religion. It was the start of the journey back."

NOT ALL OF IT has been smooth. After their church wedding (Lucy was an Anglican), the couple had two daughters, Elizabeth and Sophia, and the question of Baptism came up. "My dad, who is not with us anymore, was very adamant about Baptism, and I was still a little bit, 'Shall I, or shan't I?'" Again fate intervened. "I had started going to church again and then we moved to Chiswick. There was a lovely parish priest there who spoke to me in such a human way about everything that finally I got rid of the last vestiges of the authoritarianism of Ampleforth."

Unlike many other public figures who either keep schtum about being churchgoers – "we don't do God," as Alastair Campbell famously said of his boss, Prime Minister Tony Blair, in 2003 – or insist that it is a private matter (the current occupant of 10 Downing Street, a vicar's daughter, among them), O'Brien has never been one to hide his light under a bushel. "I do describe myself as a Christian," he wrote in a recent tweet to his 400,000 followers. "You're welcome to mock!"

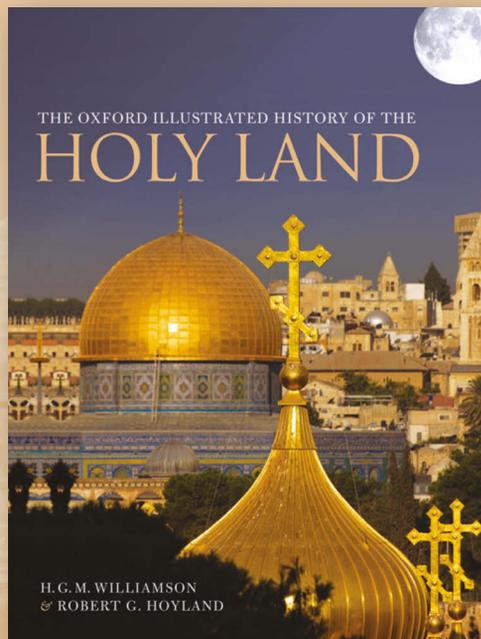
Both the language of religion – "soul" and "conscience" crop up regularly in *How To Be Right ...* – and churchgoing are, he says, just part of who he is and how he sees the world. Among the chapters in the book are ones examining "Islam and Islamism" and religiously-inspired homophobia. The point O'Brien is making in both is that inaccurate or bigoted views about faith should not go unchallenged in a world awash with "fake news" and prejudice trading as gospel.

SO HE TAKES to task callers claiming divine support for their viewpoints with his own detailed knowledge of what the Qur'an and the New Testament actually say. "It robs them of one of their more insidious weapons, that they say it because God said it. My approach is, 'Let's have a look at exactly what God said about this!'"

Which requires knowledge. He is, he says, a reader of the Gospels. "Winning arguments," though, "is something I learnt at school, with monks who were citing the Bible as an authority for things I didn't think were fair. Homosexuality was one of the earliest examples. It was so anathema in my days at Ampleforth, and so denigrated, so I wrote for the school mag I edited about what Jesus did or didn't say about it." He was summoned by

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

From the ORIGINS OF ISRAEL to the fall of the OTTOMAN EMPIRE



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

the acting head. "We had an argument about the Gospels. His frustration was palpable. He banned the whole magazine."

This long-ago story has a happy ending. "Cardinal Hume came back as guest of honour for 'exhibition' weekend," O'Brien recalls, "and he was instrumental in making sure my magazine was unbanned. He seemed a good egg." So another who reinforced his faith?

O'Brien replies that he prefers to talk of hope rather than faith. "The parting of the Red Sea for Moses, or the loaves and fishes and feeding the 5,000 aren't bridges I would be prepared to die on ... But you take whatever bridge you can find. And, for me, religion has always been a very bounteous source of goodness and guidance."

THERE IS also, he admits, a "slightly cynical" side to being out of the closet about religion. "It freaks people out because too many public figures in this country conflate being Christian with right-wing politics. People associate being Catholic with Jacob Rees-Mogg, Ann Widdecombe and Iain Duncan Smith, who justify their own bigotry with their faith. So that is why I made a decision a few years ago to stand up and say, 'I go to church'."

But, recently, he says, it has been every other week rather than every Sunday. The reason? Back to Ampleforth. In August, when the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse published a report about the "appalling" abuse inflicted at Ampleforth over decades on children as young as seven, O'Brien tackled the subject in his phone-in show with callers who had been victims of sexual abuse. He drew on his memories of being there and was left in tears at the suffering inflicted on children.

"I didn't become aware of the full extent of what went on at Ampleforth until I read that report," says O'Brien. "I knew who some of the unnamed monks mentioned in it are, some of the ones who are only given code-names because no charges were ever brought. And it makes my skin crawl to think about what they were up to under our noses."

WHAT ANGERS HIM most is the cover-up. "It is too often about protecting the guilty and not thinking about the victims. All institutions do it, from schools to companies to universities. But if you are going to expect any institution to behave differently, it would be a religious one. Yet in many ways the Church has been among the worst offenders, from the Vatican down."

His horror will resonate with many Catholics, as will how he is going forward. "What I say is that I will not allow those in charge of this collusion and cover-up, who are not representative of anything except their own foul deeds, to deprive me of the comfort of prayer, and from reading the Gospels. I won't let them take that off me, but it can be quite hard to hold on to it."

How To Be Right ... in a world gone wrong by James O'Brien is published by WH Allen at £12.99 (Tablet price, £11.69).

A seasoned Westminster figure sensed 'there may be a gnu' lurking in the Commons



"We've become like an emerging economy country where when the Prime Minister coughs the currency wobbles."

So said my friend the seasoned politico-financial journalist on Thursday 22 November as we took a bite to eat while waiting for Mrs May to make her statement in the House of Commons on the "Political Declaration setting out the framework for the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom".

The company that employs my friend has instant, constant and global reach. His remark made me think that the multiple, molten uncertainties in which we have lived since the referendum of June 2016 have left the whole country living in a kind of floating exchange rate not just with Europe and the rest of the world but within the UK too. It certainly feels like that as I write this on the Sunday morning when the European Council "endorsed" both the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration.

By the time you read this it is possible, but unlikely, that Mrs May will be facing a confidence vote of her own MPs if the number of letters to the chairman of the Conservative Party's 1922 Committee has reached 48. If not, the concentration will henceforth fall upon the UK's internal political market and the build up to the "meaningful vote" now expected in the House of Commons on 11 December.

The outcome is unreadable. The parliamentary arithmetic looks immensely difficult for the Prime Minister. Her party is fractured as, in a lesser degree, is her Cabinet. The Democratic Unionist Party, upon whose votes she relies for her working parliamentary majority, are adamantly against the Northern Ireland "backstop". Their support is normally crucial to Mrs May's ability to command the House of Commons.

Can the PM bring a cohort of Labour MPs to her side? A seasoned Westminster figure told me he sensed "there may be a gnu" lurking in the Commons chamber. What did he mean? A de facto government of national unity that would not speak its

own name but would come together just for this and then melt away.

Nobody knows. What is certain is that 11 December will be a great parliamentary occasion – the Commons fulfilling its classic function as the "grand inquest of the nation", to use the venerable term. Whatever the outcome, a deep line will have been scored across a page of British history.

The Commons Procedure Committee, chaired by the Conservative MP Charles Walker, has produced a set of options for how the government's motion and the amendments to it might be crafted. In my view, every part of the spectrum of opinion on Brexit should feel that it has had its moment in the House of Commons, for Europe is a powerful generator of grievance politics.

As Parliament girds itself for the moment – and the House of Commons chamber is the right place for our great national showdowns – thoughts have flickered back to the key vote on the principle of "Brentry". It took place on 28 October 1971, after a six-day debate on the deal secured by the Heath Government. Roy Jenkins led 68 fellow Labour MPs into the lobby in support of the government and in defiance of the Labour Whip, to give Ted Heath a majority of 112.

Heath said, with reason, this was the greatest moment of his political life. He did not show his emotion in public; in private, just occasionally, he did. After the vote he went back to Number 10 with his closest associates. He sat them down and took to his clavichord to play the First Prelude from Book 1 of J.S. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Then the celebrations began.

If Mrs May wins the most important vote of her premiership (and I think she just might), what sound will resonate through Number 10 that night? She has a taste for Abba. How about "Waterloo"? Another victory won in Brussels and its environs.



Peter Hennessy is Attle Professor of Contemporary British History at Queen Mary University of London and an independent crossbench peer.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

50 years ago

THE TABLET • 30 NOVEMBER 1968

“East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet,” said Kipling, but miracles happen in the Christian Church. Can the Eastern Orthodox and the Catholics unite? Centuries of misunderstanding divide them, but after the three encounters between Pope Paul and Patriarch Athenagoras, spiritual leader of the Orthodox, hope springs that the answer may be “yes”.

Miss Helle Georgiadis, honorary secretary of the

Society of St John Chrysostom, will be talking about this next Monday at the Van Zuyt Centre, in Arlington Road, London ... Her talk starts at 8.15, and there will be time for questions and discussion afterwards. For those who only know the Latin West, the spirit of Orthodoxy often proves elusive: Miss Georgiadis is well able to be a guide between the two, for she is one of those who have made the unusual spiritual journey from the Orthodox to the Catholic Church.

100 years ago

THE TABLET • 30 NOVEMBER 1918

The great work for the unification of catechetical instruction throughout the Catholic world is to be postponed for the present. A good deal has already been done. Fr Roderick McKeachen, D.D., an American priest who has specialised for many years in this branch of study and work, has been busy at the Vatican for some time now, laying foundations, collecting and co-ordinating texts of practically all existing catechisms, and generally preparing the ground.

But the project which the Holy Father has in mind goes far beyond the preparation of just one common, simple “catechism”, or text. It is “catechetical teaching” that is in question, and that, when extended to cover all that can be covered by the term, forms as big a subject as the codification of canon law – in some ways bigger. The ground, then, having been prepared, it has been thought wise to postpone for the present the carrying into action of the scheme.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD

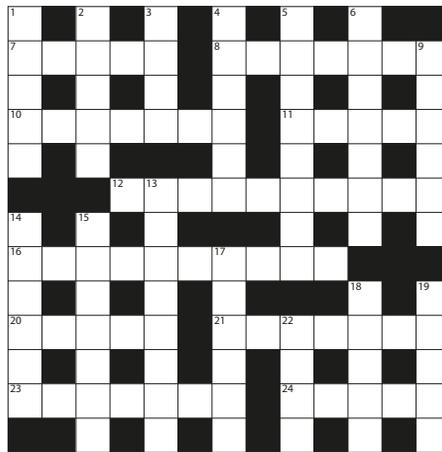
No. 636 | Alanus

Across

- 7 One of the gifts presented in the Bethlehem stable (5)
- 8 The -----, name by which Mendelssohn's Fourth Symphony is known (7)
- 10 A shelf supporting panels or designs behind an altar (7)
- 11 Goethe character who sold his soul to the devil (5)
- 12 The particularly special veneration due to the Blessed Virgin Mary (10)
- 16 Venetian painter of the Rococo era specialising in landscapes (10)
- 20 Arthur -----, English composer of *Prayer to St Francis* and *The Infant Jesus in the Tabernacle* (5)
- 21 State in Canada whose largest city is Calgary (7)
- 23 The printed reports of debates in Parliament (7)
- 24 See 4 Down (5)

Down

- 1 Name of an album by tenor Andrea Bocelli, meaning “love” (5)



- 2 William Powell -----, very successful Victorian painter of *Derby Day* and *The Railway Station* (5)
- 3 In the O.T., King of Israel and husband of Jezebel (4)
- 4 & 24 Acr: Statement of belief in the Mass named after the Council of 325 (6,5)
- 5 One of many Wordsworth saw all at once (8)
- 6 Codes or set ways of performing ceremonies (7)
- 9 Prophet who advised and rebuked King David (6)

SUDOKU | Beginner

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| | | | | | | | | |

- 13 In the style of an Irish poet and Nobel Prize (1923) winner (8)
- 14 Mother of King Jehoshaphat in the O.T. (6)
- 15 Genus of animals including the spiny anteater (7)
- 17 *Christe ----- nos*, (Christ graciously hear us) Litany of Loreto response (6)
- 18 *Peer Gynt* composer whose works include *Ave Maris Stella* (5)
- 19 Composer who ordered his Symphony No. 44 to be played at his own funeral (5)
- 22 Johann Christian -----, composer of much church music, R.C. convert, died London 1782 (4)

Please send your answers to:

Crossword Competition 1 December
 The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY.
 Please include your full name, telephone number and email address, and a mailing address. Three books – on Paul, Theology and Christian Ethics – from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random on Friday 14 December.

● The answers to this week's puzzles and the crossword winner's name will appear in the 22/29 December Christmas double issue.

Solution to the 10 November crossword No. 633

Across: 1 Baltic; 5 Chant; 8 Plain; 9 Pancras; 10 Laird; 11 Pastiche; 13 Knell; 14 Epoch; 19 Cabochon; 21 Gulf; 23 Initial; 24 Avila; 25 Siren; 26 Trench. **Down:** 2 Arabian; 3 Tuna; 4 Cephas; 5 Cenotaph; 6 Auric; 7 Tasked; 8 Palm; 12 Election; 15 Cluniac; 16 Scrips; 17 Job Lot; 18 Offa; 20 Briar; 22 Bare.

Winner: Dr Gregory Porilo, of Tooting, south-west London.

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| 7 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 6 | 8 |
| 8 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 9 |
| 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 7 |
| 3 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| 6 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 8 | 3 |

Each 3x3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9.

Solution to the 10 November puzzle

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LETTERS

• THE EDITOR OF THE TABLET •

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All correspondence, including email, must give a full postal address and contact telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to shorten letters.

Celebret opens doors

● Your report (News briefing from Britain and Ireland, 24 November) on the issuing of identity cards for priests to replace the traditional celebret indicates that the wording will be in English. The only times I have been asked for a celebret is in other countries. May I suggest that the wording also be available in Latin, to facilitate use abroad? Or will clergy still have to apply for a Latin document?

The old system seemed to work well – one could always verify a priest through a search in the *Catholic Directory* and a simple Latin letter was easily obtained. These days, when all dioceses plead poverty, it is a wonder that money has been found for a commercially produced scheme. I trust the salesperson for the cards got a good bonus for selling this to the poor bishops.

(FR) JAMES CASSIDY

DAVENTRY, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

● Years ago in Florence I went to a library and asked to see the *Codex Amiatinus*. They asked for identification, but a British passport did not impress them. Better was a document from Manchester University's John Rylands Library, but the clincher was a celebret in Latin, signed with a seal and calling for a blessing for anyone who assisted me in celebrating Mass while on holiday. Two men carried in the *Codex Amiatinus* and I spent hours drooling over this wonderful manuscript from the Anglo-Saxon renaissance.

JOHN P. MARMION

UPTON, WILTSHIRE

System of violence

● The elephant in the room of abuse in the Church is violence. My experience is that much of the sexual abuse was just another symptom ("Smiles that mask dark secrets", 24 November). At 12 I was sent 2,000 miles to boarding school in South Africa. As a well-brought-up child from a loving home I was stunned by the vicious punishment meted out

by the brothers for the slightest thing, usually a hard slap across the head or being hit by the metallic edge of an 18-inch ruler. On occasion, I also received a dozen lashes with a leather cane, like many others.

This fomented a culture of violence among the boarders. There was seldom a week that passed where some of the younger boys like me were not slapped across the face or humiliated, especially if you had some academic prowess.

There was some mild sexual abuse, which the boys called "interfering"; but my view is that it was merely an extension of the violence from terrible

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

Can we resolve divisions over Brexit?

THE JUXTAPOSITION OF your two editorials on Brexit and the First World War (17 November) reawoke in me the shame I've felt being English in the face of Brexit. Yes, we have to pray that those who died in the First World War did not die in vain. I'd say also for those like my great uncle Johnny. I'm now 70 and I remember Johnny when I was a child. Johnny lost half his face in the war and lived in a sort of seclusion with his sister, great aunt Katy, who lost her man in that same war.

But then there was my dad in the Second World War. He died 30 years before my mother, I think because of ill health resulting from his experience fighting and being a prisoner of war.

I value my time in Brussels, working alongside the EU institutions that Robert Schuman, Jean Monnet et al. constructed to forestall future war. We have to do more than pray, but act for peace where we can.

I was there to lobby for change. But those who I worked for considered it worth lobbying the EU in order to get just relations with Africa. We English don't think it worth lobbying, hence Brexit.

MARGARET CLARK SND
LIVERPOOL

THE OUTCOME OF THE referendum was a narrow one, to leave by 52 per cent to 48 per cent. Does not the agreement arrived at between the UK and EU after over two years of negotiation show a careful, and unifying, respect for that specific outcome?

One side, the Leavers, get what they voted

for, namely departure from the EU, and other measures too. But the agreement keeps the UK much closer to Europe than they wish it to be – to the extent that some Brexiteers consider the deal a betrayal.

Yet, while it respects the outcome of the referendum – which democratically it should – does not the agreement keep the UK very close to the EU in most important respects, not least trade and cooperation in the key processes? Our cooperation with the EU remains very close, such as no Remainer could have dreamt of.

In other words, is not this agreement respectful of the people's vote to leave, as it should be, yet gives more consideration to the wishes of those who voted remain than they most likely ever expected. Is it not a unifying outcome?

In the interests of stability and unity, should not parliament now show respect for it and vote for it?

MICHAEL KNOWLES
CONGLETON, CHESHIRE

ONE OF THE CURIOUS features of Brexit is that three of its most zealous advocates are Bill Cash, Iain Duncan Smith and Jacob Rees-Mogg – all, I believe, practising Roman Catholics. In view of 400 years of our post-Reformation history, I have always thought that British Catholics should enjoy an instinctive cultural sympathy with continental Europe. What a shame this trio is so hostile to the EU.

PATRICK BENNETT
PYRFORD, SURREY

men who had us at their mercy. And, yes, it has had an impact on me.

To this day, 60 years later, I am unable to stand up for myself, although I will fight fiercely for others. Something is broken in me; a successful, well-liked man with a loving family, who believes that nothing I do will ever really work out well, and who pathetically still longs for someone to stand up for me.

This hope is the legacy of the power without responsibility which the Church has handed to its clergy. I think there are many men who will be able to identify with my experience.

The only thing left untouched is my love for Jesus Christ.

NAME AND ADDRESS WITHHELD

Gentle hand of God

● We recently visited some friends in a town where a typhoon had caused extensive landslides and many deaths. The biggest loss was when more than 30 people ran into a five-storey concrete government building for safety, and the whole mountainside slid away, bringing the structure down on top of them. The local people were in shock and mourning.

Where nature's fury had done its worst, the gentle hand of

God was there in its wake. Only a few days had passed and most of the townsfolk were helping to find the dead and cleaning up the town. The men dug, the women brought them food and water. There were Novena prayers in the homes of the dead attended by many and there was worship and praise, thanksgiving and prayers for mercy, for their loved ones. As they pulled together, the mercy of God soothed the weariness of their hearts.

STEPHEN A. CLARK
MANILA, PHILIPPINES

Canon law reform

● How disappointing that Clifford Longley should find it difficult to put flesh on the bones of clericalism (Column, 17 November). If he has been wined and dined in presbytery kitchens he might recognise that priests are often jealous of their territory and limit access as far as possible on grounds of security and confidentiality.

He makes the most ludicrous assertion that “Catholic priests do not like being treated as special ... they like to explain themselves to anyone who will listen”. What rubbish. He also muddies the waters of serious debate about clericalism by implying that it is somehow relevant to priestly involvement in the sexual abuse scandal.

He characterises diocesan curia as “humble foot soldiers

doing their best on a difficult wicket”. A more apt analogy might be that these curial officials are undecided what the game is and what, if any, rules should be applied. Canon law in relation to parish governance urgently needs to be reformed for a post-clerical Church.

FRANK CAMPBELL
SOUTHAMPTON

Youthful illusions

● Fr William Joseph (Letters, 17 November) makes a cogent point when he urges that we “do what St Augustine and St Thomas did ... They took the contemporary understanding of the world and projected on to it Christian values.”

I would caution, however, against any certainty that the oft-agonised-about “young people” are automatically alienated by “a spirituality from the Middle Ages” and will automatically return if various aspects of contemporary western culture are adopted by the Church. One need only look at the various Protestant denominations which have embraced the “reasonableness” Fr Joseph lauds to see that this is not a magic formula for refilling the pews. Indeed, the “culture of modern science and instant communications” is one characterised also by superficiality, quick-fix solutions, loneliness and mimetic jealousy. Young people

are suffering record rates of mental illness and alienation. The secular western world has in many respects failed them.

While the Church needs to engage with the modern world, it needs to also remember that it is always going to be at odds with that world, always going to be a countercultural force.

SEAMUS SWEENEY
CLONMEL, IRELAND

Arms and the man

● Your report (News Briefing from Britain and Ireland, 24 November) that the Diocese of Nottingham has apologised after Fr Frank Daly’s Remembrance Day homily against the arms trade may be misleading. Although some people were offended, probably as many have stated their agreement with him. Second, the diocese has apologised to anyone who was offended, but that should not be taken as offering any support to the UK’s involvement in selling arms to countries with dubious human rights’ records.

(MGR) JOHN HADLEY
LEICESTER

Fighting for peace

● Those who defend the peaceful intentions of conscientious objectors should remember that the outcome of the world wars was far from certain. My grandfather was a

man of peace yet he joined the army at the start of the first war. In the second my father served in the Royal Navy. They felt that their country needed defending and were not prepared to let other men do the fighting while they promoted peace at home.

CAROL KELLAS
SOUTH CROYDON, SURREY

Shortage of priests

● When I read the headline “Catholic peer says Church may soon welcome women priests”, (News from Britain and Ireland, 3 November) I said “why not”. It would begin to solve the problem for parishes with no local priest and hospitals short of a chaplain.

MURIEL CONFUE
IPSWICH, SUFFOLK

Robots are the future

● In view of the Church’s inability to consider that any baptised person could be called by God to ordained ministry, is the future the Mass being offered by a team of robots operated from a bishop-station miles away?

ANN LARDEUR
CHALDON, SURREY

Correction: The photograph of the monk on the front cover of the 15 September issue was taken by Richard McCambly OCSO of St Joseph Abbey, Spencer, Massachusetts.

THE LIVING SPIRIT

AND LITURGICAL CALENDAR

[The] Advent we keep is not a poetic make-believe, or a nostalgic historical pageant, or even an exercise in remembering our roots, although this might have value. The coming of God in Christ still continues, and will be consummated in a coming and a gift beyond the stretch of our hope. We are an Advent people. The season of Advent celebrates in symbolic form a reality of our own lives and of all men’s destiny with God, because he who came in weakness in Bethlehem is he who will come again.

SISTER MARIA BOULDING
FROM *THE COMING OF GOD* (CANTERBURY PRESS, 2001)

A PRAYER FOR ADVENT
Almighty God,
give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness and put upon us the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility;
that in the last day when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who liveth and reigneth with you and the Holy Ghost now and for ever. Amen.
THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER



Advent wakes us up to the fact that people can experience extraordinary joy even in a very depraved sort of world, and they can bear witness to Christ even before a corrupt society. In a world like ours, which so evidently needs social transformation, how can we fail to ask Christians to make the justice of Christianity incarnate in their homes and in their lives? How can we not ask them to become new men and women who are agents of change?

ST OSCAR ROMERO
FROM *A PROPHETIC BISHOP SPEAKS TO HIS PEOPLE: THE COMPLETE HOMILIES VOL. 4* (CONVIVIUM PRESS, 2015)

◆ CALENDAR ◆

Sunday 2 December:
First Sunday of Advent (Year C)
Monday 3 December:
St Francis Xavier, Priest
Tuesday 4 December:
Advent feria or St John Damascene,
Priest and Doctor
Wednesday 5 December:
Advent feria
Thursday 6 December:
Advent feria or St Nicholas, Bishop
Friday 7 December:
St Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor
Saturday 8 December:
The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Sunday 9 December:
Second Sunday of Advent



For the Extraordinary Form calendar go to www.lms.org.uk

THE CANE by Mark Ravenhill, Royal Court Theatre, London (opens 6 December) • TIDES, directed by Tupaq Felber (in cinemas 7 December)

TEES VALLEY YOUTH ORCHESTRA, Newcastle Cathedral (8 December) • BOILLY: SCENES OF PARISIAN LIFE, National Gallery, London (opens 28 February)

St Catherine with a Lily by the rediscovered Florentine painter Plautilla Nelli



A woman's work

Florence at last honours its female artists

By JOANNA MOORHEAD

FLORENCE'S Museo di San Marco, until recently a Dominican monastery, houses the most extraordinary art: everywhere you turn there's a stunning Fra Angelico, or some art piece referencing the life of the fascinating monk-ruler Savonarola, or a fresco detailing a story from the Gospels.

In the Refettorio Piccolo, or small refectory, the visitors flock towards a *Last Supper* painted in 1480 by Domenico Ghirlandaio. It is a magnificent work; but most people don't notice the painting immediately to its right – and so they miss one of the most exciting contemporary twists of the Renaissance city's rich and colourful story.

The painting is called *Lamentation with Saints*, and it has been dated 1550-60. By then Fra Angelico and Savonarola, both of whom lived in this monastery, were long dead; but the painter of this piece was in residence, and working hard. The painting is large and colourful: in the background are the domes and rooftops of Jerusalem, and the recently vacated crucifix of Golgotha. In the foreground, the body taken down from that cross is blue-tinged and bloody from the gash to its side. It is surrounded by women: two Marys, and two other women. Their eyes are reddened, their tears fall: the Virgin is holding a palm to her breast as though she can hardly bear the grief.

IT IS FAIR to say the artist understood women's feelings very well – because she was herself a woman. Plautilla Nelli (1524-88) was the most significant female artist of Renaissance Florence, but only now, 430 years after her death, is she being rediscovered by the city of her birth.

She was the daughter of a textile merchant. Today a street in the San Lorenzo district of Florence is still named after her family – Via del Canto dei Nelli – and she was related to Bartolomea di Stefano Nelli, the mother of the philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli, who died when Plautilla was still a child.

She was not always Plautilla: her birth name was Pulisena, but she took a new name when, at 14, she entered the Dominican convent of Santa Caterina da Siena in the Piazza San Marco. Her sister, Petronilla, was also a nun there, and both women were well educated: Petronilla wrote a biography of Savonarola, the reformer who led the Florentine Republic from 1494 until his execution in 1498.

Plautilla's talents, though, lay in art; behind the convent walls, she was a prodigious painter. In 1568, she was sufficiently well established for the art historian Giorgio Vasari to write about her in his *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*. But in the centuries that followed, Nelli's work disappeared from view. That is until 2005, when an American art historian and philanthropist called Jane Fortune chanced upon a book about her on a visit to Florence, and decided to find out more about the obscure artist/nun who seemed to be an example of what had already seemed to her to be sorely lacking from Renaissance history: the evidence of women artists.

Fortune decided to go on the trail of Nelli, and the first painting she was able to locate by her was the *Lamentation of the Saints* which, then as now, was in the Museo di San Marco. It was, however, faded and lacklustre: desperately in need of restoration, which the wealthy Fortune decided to pay for. It was to be the start of a passion project that has seen many more examples of Nelli's work restored: sadly Fortune died in September, a few weeks

DIGITAL
ARTS

Oh Wonder – All We Do In this moving short film, the band Oh Wonder ask artists and filmmakers what it means to be human www.tinyurl.com/tabletdigitalarts

before the unveiling of the latest piece, a *Crucifixion* that hangs in the Museum of the Cenacolo of Andrea del Sarto.

The *Crucifixion* joined two other large-scale pieces by Nelli on the museum walls: it hangs there between her *Saint Dominic receives the Rosary*, and *St Catherine in stigmata*. Across the room are two much smaller paintings that reveal much about how skilful an artist she was: another *St Catherine*, this time in profile and with a tear running down her cheek, her head swathed in the folds of her cream veil; and her *Painted Madonna*, which shows a serene and thoughtful Virgin Mary, with long, elegant fingers holding on to a piece of white cloth.

Fortune lived to see much of her ambition achieved. But the greatest prize of all is still ahead: because Nelli's most significant piece of work is a huge, seven metres by five metres, *Last Supper*, and its scale means it is taking longer to restore. It is due to be completed by October 2019, and will hang in the Museo di Santa Maria Novella in the city.

THE PAINTING is significant in lots of ways, not least the fact that Nelli chose to paint it at all because, for Renaissance artists, the Last Supper was the subject par excellence, and only painters who considered themselves on the map even attempted it. Nelli was clearly regarded as important and accomplished enough to create this work. It is unusual in that it is signed by her, and her name is followed by a request: *Orate Pro Pictora*; "Pray for the Paintress".

Rosella Lari, the restorer who has already been working on it for more than a year, says the painting reveals plenty of clues about its creator, as paintings always do. Nelli was a woman who paid attention to detail, and who perhaps liked to look after others. Her *Lamentation* – on which Lari worked too – also has elements that hint at it being the work of a woman rather than a man. The dead Christ is propped on a white stone, which looks almost like a pillow and hints at a need to care for him. Even more telling, in the background there's a solitary female figure gathering herbs. It's a symbol, says Lari, that life goes on.

"Even in the midst of death, life continues," writes Lari in *Invisible Women: Forgotten Artists of Florence*, edited by Jane Fortune. "She is gathering food to eat, and it is not by chance that Plautilla Nelli chose the gatherer to be a woman. After all, women guarantee the continuity of life ..." In modern Florence, that continuity is being played out with new discoveries that are revealing the role women played in what was probably the most important moment in art history.

For more information on Plautilla Nelli and other women artists of the Renaissance, visit advancingwomenartists.org

THEATRE

Playing with time

Postmodern Jane Austen and an improbable coincidence

MARK LAWSON

The Watsons

CHICHESTER FESTIVAL THEATRE

Dealing With Clair

ORANGE TREE THEATRE, RICHMOND

FRUSTRATINGLY, Jane Austen completed only seven novels, leaving two unfinished. *Sanditon* (1817) was stalled by the most common authorial interruption – death – but the other sawn-off story, *The Watsons* (1805), stopped for unclear reasons after 18,000 words, taking Emma Watson, youngest daughter of an impoverished and unwell clergyman, to the brink of betrothal to Lord Osborne, an awkward aristocrat.

Attempting to clarify the abandonment, Laura Wade's play *The Watsons* also sketches possible endings. Wade's *Home, I'm Darling*, which transfers to the West End from the National in January, has a spectacular coup in which a woman sitting in a 1950s kitchen takes a laptop out of her drawer, for reasons plausibly explained. In a similar chronological disruption, Miss Watson encounters a maid in eighteenth-century clothes but with an iPhone in her pocket.

The backwards traveller is Laura, a playwright trying to complete Emma's story. This collision of classical literature with postmodernism will irritate some as tricky, but Wade's purpose is serious. The split-time conceit allows her to be clear about who wrote which bits, an important protocol, for me, in finishings of works by others. And, when Laura gathers the 16 characters in the library, like Poirot with his suspects, to tell them their beyond-Austen storylines, they argue back in ways that raise big questions, common to democracy and theology, about control and freedom.

As in *Home, I'm Darling*, Wade's plotting and dialogue are nimble and witty. Grace Molony's Emma hilariously shows, in face and voice, how Laura's futuristic feminist values hit her like a terrible medical diagnosis. Joe Bannister's Lord Osborne counter-intuitively makes an agonised inability to speak fluently into captivating acting. Louise Ford's Laura, perhaps channelling the new Doctor Who, strikingly portrays a woman out of time who must calculate how to use her superior historical knowledge.

A thirtieth anniversary revival of Martin Crimp's *Dealing With Clair* is a startling example of how plays can be changed by context. Because the title character is an estate agent who vanishes after showing a client round a house, the play was considered by some in 1988 to be too distastefully close to the case of Suzy Lamplugh, presumed to have been murdered in similar circumstances two years earlier.

DISTANCE SHOULD have freed the 2018 production from this distraction, except that, improbably, its opening coincided with police announcing that they were searching a Midlands garden after a tip-off Ms Lamplugh was buried there. So potentially controversial topicality loomed again.

However, Richard Twyman's tight production of an updated text – the London house Clair was selling for £190,000 in the original, is now going for £750,000 – makes clear that Crimp was in no way opportunistic using a news story. The vulnerability of young women, in professions where they may be encouraged to seem friendly to men, is sensitively depicted.

And, as in Crimp's later successes (*Attempts on her Life* and *The Treatment*), his key concern is words. The play turns on a series of deadly puns, including "dealing with" and "owning", applicable to places or people. Clair's fate is revealed – tensely, in every sense – by a shift from "lives" to "lived". Co-producers English Touring Theatre must surely strike deals for the show's further life.

PHOTO: THE OTHER RICHARD



Tom Mothersdale and Hara Yannas in Martin Crimp's *Dealing with Clair*

CINEMA

Forbidden love

A taboo that tears a trio apart

ANTHONY QUINN

Disobedience

DIRECTOR: SEBASTIAN LELIO

A SUBTLETY AS FINE and brittle as bone china distinguishes this drama of thwarted love among the faithful. It's the work of Chilean director Sebastián Lelio, adapting from Naomi Alderman's novel for his English-language debut. Rachel Weisz stars as Ronit, an expat photographer in New York who is convulsed by news from home. Her widowed father, chief rabbi of an orthodox community in north London, has died suddenly.

Ronit's reappearance, while the family sit shiva, is unexpected, and somewhat unwelcome: having flown the coop years ago she was unreconciled with her father to the last. The newspaper obituary claims he left no children, but here she is, a living revenant. Her coolly distant relatives greet her with the traditional "May you live a long life" (translation: please drop dead).

Her homecoming is met with notable ambivalence by her old friends Dovid (Alessandro Nivola), the late rabbi's protégé, and Esti (Rachel McAdams). And there's another shock for her – the two are now married. Hiding real hurt behind her watchful



Rachel Weisz and Rachel McAdams

eyes, Ronit tries to fit in, but the ghost of her bohemian exile in New York persists. Dovid and Esti's married life, meanwhile – strict observance, a joyless routine of weekly sex – indicates how conservative they have become. Yet what Lelio and co-writer Rebecca Lenkiewicz suggest, implicitly, is the deep connection that once linked these three people, and the scandal that tore them apart: it transpires that Ronit fled not just her faith, but a forbidden romance – with Esti.

Lelio has form with women's stories. His best film, *Gloria* (2013), bravely addressed

the near-taboo subject of an older woman's sexual fulfilment and made of it something, well, glorious. His Oscar-winning film of last year, *A Fantastic Woman*, examined the plight of a transgender woman coping with the death of her much older boyfriend. *Disobedience* also deals in social ostracism, though located within the narrow circle of orthodox Judaism its interest feels rather more niche.

On the other hand, it features a sex scene that will probably appeal to cinemagoers of every faith and none. Again, its implications are subtly limned in scenes of Esti and Dovid at work, the former teaching *Othello* at school, the latter leading a discussion of the "Song of Songs" in scripture class.

What is admirable here is the even-handedness of the characterisation. Dovid might have been a domestic tyrant, but Nivola's performance instead offers a troubled man reaching for nobility of spirit. His formal address to the synagogue is a great scene of tension as he realises what "freedom to choose" actually means. McAdams, pale as a martyr, starts out quietly before she senses self-determination. Weisz's arc goes in the opposite direction, beginning in forthright confrontation, then a slow diminuendo as the marriage story takes over; but she has a face you never tire of looking at.

Shot in dowdy winter tones, *Disobedience* perhaps needed a little more wildness and energy: it lacks the emotional punch of *Gloria*, and the knight's-move oddity of *A Fantastic Woman*. It has a good heart, though, and sometimes that's good enough.

TELEVISION

Ulster unplugged

Stunning adaptation so easy on the eye

LUCY LETHBRIDGE

Death and Nightingales

BBC2

I'VE BEEN to rural northern Ireland a few times and reckon it must be one of the most beautiful places on Earth – well, certainly the bits of the Earth I've visited. Sea, rock, mountains, prickly yellow gorse and dry stone walls, all mossy stone, emerald green and azure blue. So I tuned into the first episode (28 November) of the BBC's dramatisation of Eugene McCabe's acclaimed novel *Death and Nightingales*, set in Fermanagh in the Ulster of the 1880s, with keen anticipation: whatever its merits as drama, it would surely give us some dreamy landscape shots.

And indeed it does, its cameras lingering over a lovely, hazy, haymaking farming world where every field gives long views over a sea studded with wooded islands. Even the desolate quarry from which Protestant landowner Billy Winters makes his money is lit seductively as if permanently in moonlight. And if the spotlessly clean and taupe-coloured rooms

PHOTO: NIGHT FLIGHT PICTURES, TEDDY CAVENDISH



Ann Skelly and Jamie Dornan

of Winters' house, Cloncula, owe rather more to the aesthetics of the twenty-first-century National Trust than to the smoke-stained anaglypta and drapery more likely in 1885, they are very easy on the eye too.

This is a stunning dramatic adaptation of McCabe's atmospheric novel. I was quite bowled over by it. The American of this episode's title ("The Grey American") somewhat slantingly refers to Liam Ward, the charismatic quarry labourer (recently returned from a period in the States) who is so attractive to Winters' stepdaughter, Beth (played with astonishing assurance by 21-year-old Ann Skelly). The greyness seems to me more of a mysterious, half-lit ambiguity. The characters slide in and out of focus; they sometimes do

unexpected and inconsistent things; they defy neat conclusions: this builds a very satisfying dramatic suspense.

It would have been easy to sling about some crude distinctions: to make the Catholics merry, easy-going, penitent sinners and the Protestants dour and repressed. But this production does not quite do this. Winters is black-clad and melancholy and may or may not be informing for the British stationed up at the castle, but he is played with great sensitivity by Matthew Rhys.

He surprises us; just as we think we have him nailed as the demon of the piece, we meet a man who also gives generously to beggars and enjoys an evening of light-ent at a music hall (Beth refuses to accompany him, saying she prefers to read about "death and nightingales" in Keats). He is affable to the Catholic bishop who comes to tea (though he hums "Rule Britannia" behind his back) despite the fact that he calls his wife "a treacherous slut of Rome" when he finds out that Beth is not his daughter. He might turn out to be an unrepentantly nasty piece of work – but then so might Liam (handsome Jamie Dornan doing irresistible inscrutability all too convincingly) and so might Beth, damaged but driven by desire for vengeance. Or none of them. Or something altogether more complicated and interesting altogether. I can't wait to find out.

Divine discontent and longing

PENELOPE LIVELY

Eternal Boy

MATTHEW DENNISON

(HEAD OF ZEUS, 272 PP, £18.99)

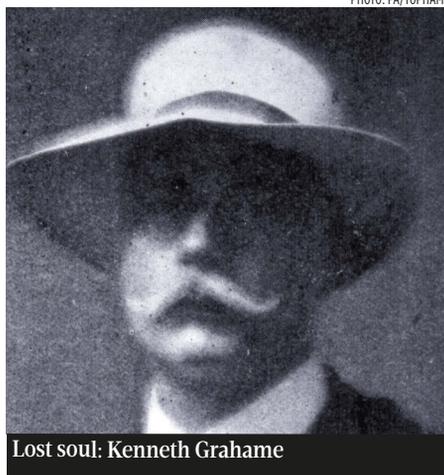
TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £17.09 • TEL 020 7799 4064

I DOUBT IF many of today's children are addicted to *The Wind in the Willows*, or read it at all. For my generation it was mandatory; my own 1929 edition has been read to bits, almost literally, the spine missing, pages loose. Grahame died in 1932, so although this, his last book, was published back in 1908, it had pretty well acquired classic status by the Twenties and Thirties, though it had not been acclaimed initially – many reviews were negative. The po-faced *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer found that “as a contribution to natural history the work is negligible”. Oh, for heaven's sake!

But the book caught on, its sentiments much in accord with a particular mindset of the day, and it remains enshrined within the canon. I remember with relish Alan Bennett's National Theatre production of 1990, with a deliciously camp Badger, whose interest in visiting young field mice seemed a touch dubious.

Grahame was already an established literary figure by the time of the book's publication, known for *The Golden Days* and *Dream Days*, collections of stories and essays reflecting an idealised view of childhood, which also struck a chord with attitudes of the day, and very much represent Grahame's own outlook. Matthew Dennison's excellent biography is nicely titled. His convincing perception of Grahame is that of a man who never really grew up, who remained persuaded that childhood was the richest and most rewarding period of life, the rest an anticlimax. Needless to say, this did not lead to a well-grounded personality and it is something of a surprise to read of his successful career as secretary of the Bank of England, until he packed that in when in his fifties, to spend the last decades

PHOTO: PA/TOPHAMS



Lost soul: Kenneth Grahame

of his life in a kind of inertia, failing to write anything more. That inertia was compounded by Grahame's response to the suicide of his son, while he was an undergraduate at Oxford. This unfortunate boy – always called Mouse, which can't have helped – was born with sight in one eye only, and grew up overweight and a social misfit, the only offspring of Grahame's somewhat disastrous marriage to Elspeth Thomson when both were in their thirties. She had pursued him, remorselessly; he had given in, half inclined towards marriage, half not. Inevitably, he turned out to be not particularly keen on sex; even the conception of Mouse seems an achievement.

MATTHEW DENNISON quotes extensively from the couple's letters to each other, which make for uncomfortable reading. Grahame writes always in a mawkish combination of ersatz cockney and baby talk, quite excruciating to the twenty-first-century ear. Maybe this affectation was less offensive at the time, but it still seems to indicate a retarded approach to a relationship, some sort of inability to be straightforward. And, indeed, the marriage appears to have got increasingly colder, with Grahame retreating into sanctuaries of his own that he created wherever they lived. And Elspeth sounds extremely tiresome, bossy and opinionated.

He had had misfortune all along, poor Grahame. His mother died at 27, after the birth of her fourth child. His father withdrew into melancholia, going to live in France, abandoning his children to the care of uncles; he never contacted them again. The uncle-in-chief frustrated Grahame's desperate desire to go to university, to Oxford, and set him up as a clerk at the Bank of England at the age of 16. Way back in Grahame's childhood, there had been a brief idyllic interlude at his grandmother's home in Cookham Dean, the source probably of his lifelong cult of childhood. It was that which perhaps also prompted a book that, while entirely Edwardian in language and vision, has acquired an abiding status for its setting, its characters, its mythology. One has to excuse that disturbing Piper at the Gates chapter, which expressed Grahame's bizarre belief in some sort of rural pagan god, and which had me both exasperated and bewildered as a child reader.

SPEED READING



MARCUS TANNER

hears the guns fall silent

The “war to end all wars” was nothing of the kind – as Europe would discover. For the Armenians, moreover, November 1918 brought only fresh suffering. Convinced that France would sponsor a homeland in Cilicia, now south-east Turkey, thousands of them joined a would-be army, the Légion d’Orient, which fought its way into Cilicia only to be abandoned by its French sponsors. The Turks reconquered Cilicia, slaughtering those Armenians who had not fled. In *The Armenian Legionnaires: Sacrifice and Betrayal in World War I* (I. B. Tauris, £25; *Tablet* price £22.50) Susan Paul Pattie retells a tale of naivety, heroism and imperial perfidy.

Britons meanwhile rejoiced. As the guns fell silent at 11 a.m. on 11 November, the roar of the crowd in London was likened to the sound of an ocean wave crashing on to the shore, as Guy Cuthbertson writes in *Peace at Last: A Portrait of Armistice Day, 11 November 1918* (Yale University Press, £18.99; *Tablet* price £17.10). Even in the sleepest towns, “pandemonium broke out”. Besides the exuberance in the streets, churches were packed. It was “arguably the last day in English history when the Church of England was truly a national church”.

Allan Mallinson's *Fight to the Finish: The First World War – Month by Month* (Bantam Press, £25; *Tablet* price £22.50) recalls that this was a fight to the last round – the possibility of defeat only reared its head in Germany that October. By then, as Churchill later reflected, “too much blood had been spilt”.

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BOOKS

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The twentieth-century Christ

An absorbing account of the life of Gandhi, public and private

SIMON SCOTT PLUMMER

Gandhi: The Years that Changed the World 1914-1948

RAMACHANDRA GUHA

(ALLEN LANE, 1,152 PP, £40)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £36 • TEL 020 7799 4064

THIS BIOGRAPHY marks the completion of a mighty trilogy on the life and posthumous influence of Gandhi by one of the leading historians of modern India. Occupying him for more than 20 years, the project first produced *India after Gandhi*, then *Gandhi before India*, and finally the present book, dealing with the period when the Mahatma, having returned to the country of his birth, became one of the greatest figures of the twentieth century.

Why add to the huge corpus of works on Gandhi? In his preface, Ramachandra Guha writes that each generation of Indians – he was born in 1958 – needs to reassess the life of their most famous son. He has been able to go well beyond the 90-odd volumes of Gandhi's *Collected Works* from his time in India to find what other people thought about the Mahatma, in particular through consulting the papers collected by his secretary after his murder.

The result is an absorbing and impressively detailed account of the devotion which Gandhi inspired and the forces with which he had to contend, whether they were British (Churchill and Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy from 1936-43, were especially hostile) or Muslim (under Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan). Then there were fellow Hindus who rejected his belief in *ahimsa* (non-violence) or B.R. Ambedkar, an untouchable who questioned his opposition to the caste system. The image conveyed by the last years of Gandhi's life, blighted by the slaughter of over one million people which accompanied Partition, is of a frail old man battling almost single-handedly against communal mayhem. He would soon fall prey to a Hindu extremist, Nathuram Vinayak Godse, who hated his victim's philosophy of non-violence and his irenic attitude towards Muslims.

It is sometimes forgotten that Gandhi was middle-aged and famous when he landed in Bombay in 1915 after more than 20 years as a lawyer and human-rights activist in South Africa. There he had developed *satyagraha*, or truth-force, the deliberate violation of laws

Gandhi discusses the Karachi Congress of 1931

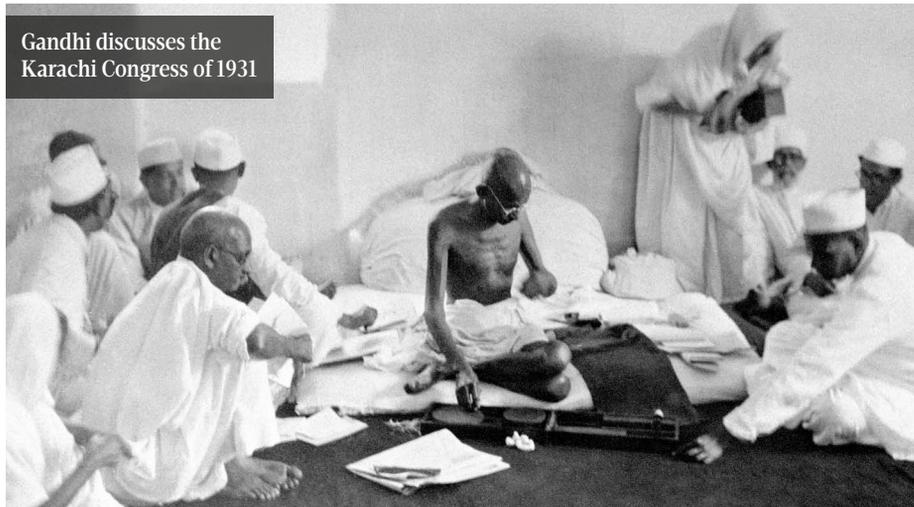


PHOTO: PA ARCHIVE

considered unjust, the most notable manifestation the march from Natal into Transvaal in 1913, and had paid for it with multiple prison sentences. Then, he had campaigned for an Indian diaspora of around 150,000. Now he would seek to represent the interests of 300 million Indians under British rule.

By the simplicity of his life, his encouragement of hand-spinning and weaving (to promote *swadeshi*, or self-reliance), above all by his extensive travels in rural areas, he turned the Indian National Congress into a mass movement for the attainment of *swaraj*, or self-rule. In 1930 he led his famous march to the sea at Dandi in Gujarat, in protest at the salt tax. Other instruments of persuasion were the *hartal*, or closing of shops, and Gandhi's personal fasts, the longest, in 1933, lasting three weeks. As in South Africa, he was frequently jailed.

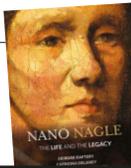
INDIA ATTAINED the independence he sought but in a form which he deplored. He wanted Congress to represent people of whatever religious belief and took up the cause, dear to Indian Muslims, of protecting the Ottoman Caliphate, before it was abolished in 1924 by Kemal Atatürk. Jinnah, however, objected to the strident nature of that campaign and to Congress' decision to withdraw cooperation with British rule. Those differences would sharpen to the point where, in order to avoid domination by what Jinnah termed a "Hindu raj", the Muslim League would advocate the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan.

Aside from his public campaigns, Gandhi's personal life makes for fascinating reading:

his patriarchal attitude towards his wife, Kasturba; his difficult relationship with their eldest son, Harilal; his intense feelings for Saraladevi, niece of Tagore, with whom he once contemplated a "spiritual marriage"; his forswearing of sex save for procreation, to preserve "the vital fluid", and his testing of that chastity by sharing a bed with his great-niece, Manu; his grief at the death of his secretary, Mahadev Desai, which left him like "a bird without wings".

THIS IS a comprehensive portrait of a great human being who combined a self-sacrificing determination to end colonial rule with a fondness for the British people. He was quirky, sometimes naive, always courageous. Above all, his openness to others makes his contemporaries, notably Jinnah, look narrow-minded. Guha recalls a tribute from a Muslim League official in Tamil Nadu: "Mahatma Gandhi was the twentieth-century Christ, and he died for us Muslims."

Seventy years after his martyrdom, the sub-continent remains divided and India has turned its back on many of his ideals. But Guha reminds us that its immediate effect was to reconcile Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister, and his Home Minister, Vithalbhai Patel, and to stop major communal riots in India for over a decade. Then there is the wider inspiration which *satyagraha* has imparted to figures as diverse as Martin Luther King, Lech Walesa, Václav Havel, Desmond Tutu and Aung San Suu Kyi. Gandhi's legacy is one which no other twentieth-century figure can match.



RECENTLY
PUBLISHED

Nano Nagle: The Life and the Legacy / DEIRDRE RAFFERTY / IRISH ACADEMIC PRESS, £22.99; TABLET PRICE £20.69 / A biography of the founder of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and pioneer of Catholic education in Ireland www.tinyurl.com/tabletbooks

Housing for health

TIMOTHY CONNOR

Living with Buildings and Walking with Ghosts

IAIN SINCLAIR

(WELLCOME COLLECTION, 224 PP, £14.99)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £13.49 • TEL 020 7799 4064

THE WELLCOME Collection's current exhibition focuses on the ways in which architects, planners and designers have attempted to influence our feelings of individual well-being, self-esteem and physical health, and their wider impact on communities and society. Presented under the malignant shadow of the Grenfell Tower fire, it explores the idealisms, European as well as English, that influenced such developments. For the moment, the story ends with, first, neglect, then tragedy (or "the market").

Living with Buildings and Walking with Ghosts: On Health and Architecture is written to accompany that exhibition. Sinclair is a brilliant writer with a unique insight into the auras of buildings, particularly London buildings. Much of this book is taken up with his forays into London from his Hackney base, with Hawksmoor's "iconic" Christ Church, Spitalfields – at one moment the haunt of the dispossessed and ill, at the next a venue for *Strictly Come Dancing* – providing opening and closing meditations. Besides this church Sinclair examines housing experiments such



PHOTO: ANDRÉ P. MEYER-VITALI

Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation, Marseille

as the City's Golden Lane Estate development and the Unité d'Habitation in Marseille. There are brief excursions to Mexico and the isle of Harris, as well as to the site of the Royal Military Hospital at Netley near Southampton, demolished in 1966.

In so far as the book has shape it is determined by memoir. Sinclair's wide circle of friends, artists, writers and commentators provide incident, travelling towards them offers narrative and their illnesses feature vividly. Only incidentally does the "dialogue between health and architecture" surface, most directly, perhaps, in his account of an example of the impact of developments at Golden Lane. Even when the subject is the various incarnations of the Modern Movement's avowed belief in its mission to provide a newly healthy environment as, for

example, at the Unité, that issue is not the central concern. The exhibition itself advertises Tecton's Finsbury Health Centre completed in 1938 as a symbol of that intention. It was a building of new materials, full of light and clean lines that epitomised the movement's optimism. Sinclair refers to "that brief post-war, welfare state moment when the ideal of improved health by better design, better materials, more sunshine ... seemed achievable", but this emblem of the interaction of health care and community is omitted from the book. Hospitals feature little in this account that lacks the biting urgency with which he skewered the desolation to be found in the ring of Victorian asylums around London in *London Orbital*.

Whether at the level of a single phrase – satellite dishes as "the plague buboes of poverty" – or in his ear for cadence – at an underground car park "waiting chauffeurs vape" – or in his sensitive eye for incongruity – "the badged performer leading a party of Ripper tourists outside a façade of a Jack London dormitory staffed by nuns" – Sinclair's touch is as powerful and disconcerting as ever. If this suggests that the whole of this book is less than the sum of its sometimes glittering parts, that may be because, while aware that he had been "invited to comment on the relationship between the built environment and the health of those who lived in them", Sinclair does not quite locate what he calls his "sickness vocation". Even at the very end it is the poignancy of his friends' suffering that lingers, while the contribution that buildings, let alone architecture, make to it remains in the background.

This septic isle

CHRISTOPHER BRAY

Middle England

JONATHAN COE

(VIKING, 432 PP, £16.99)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £15.30 • TEL 020 7799 4064

JONATHAN COE made his name with *What A Carve Up!*, a gothic state-of-the-nation novel that took the Thatcher settlement to violent comic task. A quarter of a century on, Coe is taking the country's temperature again – and finding it hot with anger and cold with fear. No prizes for guessing that a book called *Middle England* isolates Brexit as our national disease. Prizes aplenty, though, for summarising its drift. *Middle England*, many of whose characters we first met in Coe's *The Rotters' Club* and *The Closed Circle*, is more densely populated than

London. There's Ben Trotter who, sickened by the Smoke's hyper-capitalism, has skipped town for an old mill on the River Severn, the better to look after his newly nationalistic dad, Colin. There's Ben's sister, Lois, whose marriage is falling apart, and whose daughter, Sophie, is none too happy with her Leave-voting boyfriend, Ian. There's Coriander, a right-on art history student who is both Sophie's pupil and the daughter of Ben's old schoolmate, the Leftist political commentator Doug. All these – and sundry other – characters' stories are interwoven into a tapestry of this septic isle.

Middle England opens with Gordon Brown's horrific 2010 election campaign, and moves on through the coalition, the Olympic opening ceremony (which Coe thinks was as culturally unifying as Vaughan Williams and Morecambe and Wise), Ed Miliband's bacon sarnie, the murder of Jo Cox, to that momentous referendum. The detail is astonishing. Did you know that during the 2011 riots the looters were encouraged to

target mega-chains and leave small independents alone? Coe does – and in an afterword he tells you how he knows. Yet the book never feels researched. Those real-life incidents are dramatised with his customary narrative muscle. Where the novel does go awry is in its tone. It rarely raises a smile. There's a farcical sex scene involving a wardrobe, a scented candle and some Viagra that's right out of

Tom Sharpe or – Coe's hero – David Nobbs. Alas, like one of the characters involved, it never rises to the occasion.

A comic writer Coe remains though, and for all its anger and animosity, the novel ends, as comedies must, with relationships sorted and even a baby on the way. Whether, amid all the doom and gloom, you find this cheering is more down to you than it is to Coe. At one point in *The Closed Circle*, Ben Trotter wonders whether he is trying to make the autobiographical novel he is working on appear more significant than it is "by sticking a whole lot of politics in". Clapping *Middle England* shut, you can't help feeling he was right to worry.



NEWS BRIEFING

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

Schools offer free 'fire' places

The Diocese of Sacramento, in **California**, has announced that it will offer free schooling at any of its more than three dozen schools to students displaced by the bush fire that devastated whole towns in the region.

The offer includes tuition, free lunches and uniforms, and will last until the end of the school year in June. Tuition at a Catholic school in the region costs from \$5,000 (£3,900) to \$6,000 (£4,700) per year.

The fire left some 85 people dead, with 249 still listed as missing. Firefighters finally contained the blaze on Sunday, but only after it had scorched more than 19,000 buildings and 153,336 acres according to authorities. It was the worst wild fire in Californian history.



Taiwan voted last weekend to restrict marriage to one man and one woman in an advisory referendum. The vote challenged a May 2017 Constitutional Court ruling on same sex unions, which called for legislation within two years to allow gay marriage.

The government announced the referendum after protests by Catholics and others. Although the ballot is only advisory, it has frustrated lawmakers and LGBT campaigners (above) who hoped their island would be the first place in Asia to let same-sex couples share child custody and insurance benefits.

Archbishop John Hung Shan-chuan of Taipei said before the referendum: "We do not

discriminate against gays and are willing to protect their rights, but we cannot support same-sex marriage and same-sex union". He urged the faithful to "feel free to choose with faith and conscience".

The Catholic Church in **Cameroon's** anglophone southwest region, where separatists are waging an insurgency, has blamed the army for killing Fr Cosmos Omboto Ondari. The 33-year-old Kenyan Mill Hill missionary was shot on 21 November outside St Martin of Tours Church in Kembong, where he was parish priest. He died immediately.

"Eyewitnesses said he was killed by government soldiers who were firing at random from a passing vehicle," reported Bishop Andrew Nkea Fuanya of Mamfe, whose diocese covers Kembong. Fr Ondari is the second Catholic priest killed in the English-speaking region this year.

Migrants offered refuge

As large groups of Central Americans continue to move through **Mexico** towards the United States, the House of the Pilgrim at the Mexico City Basilica has opened its doors.

More than 900 Central American migrants took refuge in the House, which is normally used to host pilgrims taking part in the annual pilgrimage to the shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe. In the first days of November, 6,000 Central Americans arrived in Mexico City and were temporarily sheltered at a sports stadium in the east of the city. The group has now continued north and is in the border city of Tijuana.

Human remains found underneath the Holy See's embassy to **Italy** belong to a man and not to Emanuela Orlandi, the daughter of a Vatican employee who went missing in 1983.

The office of Rome's public prosecutor said that tests on the bones revealed they came from a male skeleton. Other sources involved in the investigation told the Turin-based *La Stampa* newspaper that the bones are at least 100 years old.



Last Sunday's annual **World Day of the Poor**, which Pope Francis established in 2017, was celebrated by the Church globally, under the theme, "Hear the cry of the poor."

The Pope celebrated Mass at St Peter's to mark the day and afterwards joined about 1,500 homeless people for lunch in Paul VI Hall (pictured above). The menu included lasagne, chicken pieces, mashed potatoes and tiramisu, provided by Rome's Hilton Hotel.

The Archdiocese of Berlin in Germany also hosted a banquet for the city's homeless and vulnerable people in St Hedwig's Cathedral. Archbishop Heiner Koch of Berlin welcomed 300 guests and 140 helpers from local parishes.

Four Catholic bishops have joined environmental organisations in demonstrating against coal-fired power plants in The Philippines on the island of **Negros**. They oppose the construction of a new coal-fired project in the city of San Carlos. Bishops of the dioceses of San Carlos, Bacolod, Kabankalan, and Dumaguete want their region declared coal-free.

Bishop bans priest from demo

India's Syro-Malabar Church has tried to ban a priest from demonstrating against the bailing of a bishop accused of raping a nun over a two-year period.

Fr Augustine Vattoly is among those calling for the continued detention of Bishop Franco Mulakkal of Jalandhar, who was freed on bail following his arrest in September. The demonstrators have accused him of intimidating witnesses.

Fr Vattoly says he received a

letter from Bishop Jacob Mananathodath of Palghat in Kerala, and ahead of a 14 November demonstration. The letter said: "I hereby strongly prohibit you from organising and attending" the protest. It also warned him that "disobedience will incur ecclesiastical actions".

Protests have broken out in Araucania, in the south of **Chile**, after a Mapuche youth, Camilo Catrillanca, was killed by a police officer on 14 November.

The Mapuche hold territorial claims in both Chile and Argentina and say they have been mistreated by Chilean authorities. Following the young man's death, the auxiliary Bishop of Santiago, Cristián Roncagliolo, participated in a Day of Prayer with the Mapuche pastoral group in the Chilean capital, Santiago.



The Congolese Catholic Bishops' Conference says it will help people to take part in general election scheduled for 23 December in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**.

Meeting last week in the capital, Kinshasa, the bishops said they would do their best to ensure a credible election, despite a clampdown on public demonstrations by opposition parties, lack of press freedom and concerns over plans to use electronic electoral machines.

The widely-respected Martin Fayulu will lead a coalition against Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, a former interior minister and the candidate of the ruling coalition. President Joseph Kabila (above) said in August that he would step down after 17 years in office.

Compiled by **James Roberts**

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“Missionising the Jews was not foreseen and not necessary for the simple reason that they already knew the ‘unknown God’”

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, writing in Herder Korrespondenz, rejects accusations he had advocated missionising Jews (see page 27)

ROME / Pope determined that the scandal needs to be addressed as ‘one Church’

Francis plans centralised response to abuse

CHRISTOPHER LAMB / in Rome

THE VATICAN has released details about the unprecedented 21-24 February 2019 global gathering of bishops on child protection, called by Pope Francis. Rome’s approach till now has been haphazard and inconsistent, and Francis is aiming for a collective, centralised, coordinated response to preventing abuse in the Church.

The Pope has asked clerical sexual abuse victims and his child protection commission to help prepare for the meeting, which will be attended by 180 participants, the vast majority of them presidents of bishops’ conferences from across the world.

Francis has also drafted in two women to assist with the preparations, Dr Gabriella Gambino and Dr Linda Ghisoni, who are both senior female Vatican officials with impressive legal expertise.

On the organising committee are two of the Church’s most credible anti-abuse experts. Charles Scicluna, the Archbishop of Malta, is a long-time church prosecutor who is now the Pope’s point man in handling abuse cases. Joining him is Fr Hans Zollner, the Jesuit priest who runs the Centre for Child Protection at the Pontifical



Anti-abuse expert Charles Scicluna, Archbishop of Malta

Gregorian University in Rome. They will be assisted by the Cardinal Archbishop of Chicago, Blase Cupich, and the Cardinal Archbishop of Bombay, Oswald Gracias.

The Archbishop of Boston, Cardinal Seán O’Malley, will be attending the summit and the Pontifical Commission for Minors, of which he is president, is involved in the preparation.

The appointments reveal a bid to end piecemeal, localised responses. A close analysis of the scandals shows a disturbingly similar trend of how the world’s bishops have handled abusive priests, which generally include a mix of denial, obfuscation and a

focus on institutional protection ahead of care for victims.

Francis is adamant that this scandal needs to be addressed as “one Church” and not by a single bishops’ conference. “The Holy Father is convinced that the scourge, the ‘sacrilege’ as he has said numerous times, of abuse is a problem that does not pertain to a single country, and certainly not only to western countries,” Fr Zollner said. “It requires a firm and universal response, within specific contexts and cultures.”

Greg Burke, the director of the Holy See Press Office, said last week that the February gathering, which will include male and female religious superiors and the leaders of Vatican departments, shows the Pope has “made the protection of minors a fundamental priority for the Church”.

Nevertheless, relations between the Vatican and the United States are strained over how to handle the issue with the American bishops, who are facing a raft of state inquiries and investigations, and want to show the world they have taken action to solve the problem.

As a result, the Holy See’s order to the US hierarchy not to vote on new bishop accountability measures until after the February

meeting went down badly. It was seen in many quarters as Rome blocking legitimate attempts by the US to get a grip of the crisis.

The summit is likely to pave the way for a new framework of episcopal accountability. The Pope’s choice of Cardinal Cupich to sit on the organising committee suggests Rome supports his idea of a “metropolitan model” of holding bishops to account. This would mean that misconduct claims against diocesan leaders be handled by the local archbishop, known as the metropolitan.

Archbishop Scicluna has argued that changes to canon law could be made to give “a stronger role for the metropolitan bishops” and “a bigger role for the victims in canonical penal processes”.

The involvement of Cardinal Cupich, who has also argued bishops could be held accountable by lay commissions (an idea less popular in Rome), ensures involvement of a key Francis US ally in the summit.

With more than a dozen state inquiries into clerical abuse and a US Justice Department probe in Pennsylvania following this summer’s Grand Jury report, the US Church and its bishops are under intense national scrutiny.

GERMANY

State and Church urged to join forces on safeguarding

AT AN EXPERTS’ meeting in Cologne entitled “The Catholic Church on the way to sustainable prevention of sexualised violence”, Johannes-Wilhelm Rörig, the German government’s commissioner for dealing with the sexual abuse of minors, urged closer cooperation between Church and state, writes Christa Pongratz-Lippitt. Speaking to German radio station Deutschlandfunk

before the 23 November meeting, Mr Rörig said it was now quite obvious that bishops in a number of German dioceses were “dynamically pressing ahead” with their efforts to establish full transparency. This showed their good will, he said. It was now essential to persuade religious orders to do the same.

The federal government and the federal states should “at least

in part” be involved in the appraisal of the abuse of minors in the Catholic and other Churches as the state bore the responsibility for all children including those in the Churches’ care, Mr Rörig told the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper.

“It would be an important historical step if the criteria and standards for a comprehensive appraisal and an independent clarification [of sexual abuse] could be developed jointly and its implementation regulated by contract. In concrete terms that would mean that Church and state could communicate on the standards of a continuous and respectful participation of the persons affected

in the appraisal procedures,” Mr Rörig emphasised at the meeting.

Bishop Stephan Ackermann, who is responsible for abuse affairs in the bishops’ conference, welcomed Mr Rörig’s suggestion. “Joint discussions are under way and we hope to seal the cooperation in the coming year,” he said.

The head of the German Conference of the Superiors of Religious Orders (DOK), Sr Katharina Kluitmann, also welcomed Mr Rörig’s suggestion. “Without the appraisal of abuse, prevention of abuse is left hanging in the air,” she said.

The meeting was hosted by the German bishops’ conference, DOK, and by Mr Rörig.

MYANMAR

Cardinal Bo elected to lead Asian bishops

CARDINAL Charles Maung Bo has been elected president of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) as from 1 January 2019, *writes James Roberts*.

The FABC voted to appoint the Archbishop of Yangon at a meeting of its central committee in Bangkok last week.

The Myanmar cardinal replaces Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay, who ends his second term as head of FABC on 31 December.

Born on 29 October 1948 in Monhla, a village in the Archdiocese of Mandalay, Bo was ordained as a Salesian priest in Lashio, in Shan State, on 9 April 1976.

He was apostolic administrator in Lashio from 1985 to 1986 and apostolic prefect from 1986 to 1990. When the prefecture was elevated to the status of a diocese in 1990, he was made its first bishop.

On 13 March 1996, Pope John Paul II appointed him Bishop of Patheingyi, Ayeyarwady. On 24 May 2003, he became Archbishop of Yangon.

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BRAZIL / Christian evangelicals take precedence in president-elect's new team

Bolsonaro names his 'Bible, beef and bullet' ministers

FRANCIS McDONAGH

MINISTERIAL appointments by the Brazil's president-elect, Jair Bolsonaro (inset), reflect the range of conservative and Christian evangelical ideologies in his support base.

The economy will be in the hands of a team of "Chicago boys", disciples of the free-market theorist Milton Friedman, led by Paulo Guedes, a "super-minister". He will head a ministry combining what are currently the separate ministries of Finance, Planning, Industry and Foreign Trade. Mr Guedes, who taught economics in Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship, is expected to focus on reducing the public deficit and privatising Brazil's extensive range of public enterprises.

A different form of conservative ideology is represented by Mr Bolsonaro's foreign minister-designate, Ernesto Araújo. He has argued that Donald Trump is the saviour of Western Christian civilisation from internationalism, and that Brazil should return to its Western roots in defining its foreign policy. Mr Araújo has also inveighed against the left's "criminalisation" of "the family, private property, sex and reproduction, belief in God, red meat, oil or any cheap and efficient source of energy".



The future education minister, Ricardo Vélez Rodríguez, has complained that the current educational system seeks to "demolish society's traditional values as regards the preservation of life, the family, religion, citizenship – in short, patriotism".

As Minister of Health, Mr Bolsonaro has appointed the paediatrician and landowner Luiz Henrique Mandetta. One of the problems Mr Mandetta will face is the departure of the 8,000 Cuban doctors working in Brazil under an agreement between Havana and former president Dilma Rousseff. Havana cancelled the programme after Mr Bolsonaro criticised the qualifications of the Cuban doctors and

the fact that part of their salary went to the Cuban government. Their departure will leave many remote rural communities without a doctor, as Brazilian doctors have been reluctant to work in such areas.

The Minister of Agriculture will be the landowner and politician Tereza Cristina, who put forward the so-called "poison law", which relaxed controls on pesticides. Both she and Mr Mandetta are members of the congressional "Bible, beef and bullet brigade", the bloc formed by Pentecostal politicians known for its resistance to environmental measures and land reform.

FRANCE

Bishop convicted in abuse cover-up

A COURT in Orleans has handed down an eight-month suspended sentence to the city's former bishop, André Fort, for not denouncing a paedophile priest who was sentenced by the same court to two years in prison for the sexual abuse of ten boys in 1993, *writes Tom Heneghan*. Fort, 83, is the second French bishop convicted for non-denunciation. The first, Pierre Pican of Bayeux, was given a three-month suspended sentence in 2001.

Fort did not attend the trial, pleading health problems. The Orleans prosecutor had sought a mandatory one-year prison sentence, saying that the court should give "an electro-

shock" to the Catholic Church in France.

The Orleans priest Pierre de Castelet, now 69, was sentenced to three years imprisonment, with one suspended.

In the Diocese of Strasbourg, Fr Robert Bonan, 60, was arrested for several cases of aggravated rape after a three-month police inquiry. The prosecutor gave no details of the abuse besides the fact that Fr Bonan met his victims through his pastoral work.

Strasbourg Archbishop Luc Ravel told journalists that he knew nothing of the case and had agreed to publicise it, so that any further victims could speak up.

■ **BELGIUM'S** bishops published their first annual report, which provides some interesting statistics but falls short of an exhaustive survey of Catholicism in the country, *writes Tom Heneghan*.

The report cited surveys

showing that 53 per cent of the population identifies as Catholic and that 9.4 per cent attend Mass regularly. The Church does not keep its own statistics for the Catholic population. But it did record the number of hosts distributed on one Sunday in

2016, the base year for the statistics, which showed that 2.5 per cent of all Catholics took Communion that day.

On average, Belgium has one parish for every 3,000 believers. In neighbouring France, one parish services 5,000 Catholics.

ROME

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI affirms dialogue with Jews

POPE EMERITUS Benedict XVI has emphatically rejected accusations that, in an article published in *Communio* in September, he had spoken out in favour of missionising the Jews and called Jewish-Christian dialogue into question, writes *Christa Pongratz-Lippitt*.

“Any such assertion is plain and simply wrong,” he states in an article entitled “Correction” and signed “Joseph Ratzinger – Benedikt XVI” in the December issue of the prestigious German theological monthly, *Herder Korrespondenz*.

He was advocating dialogue and not mission as “Judaism and Christianity stand for two ways of interpreting Scripture”, he explains. For Christians God’s promises to Israel were the hope of the Church and whoever believed that was in no way calling the foundation of Jewish-Christian dialogue into question.

Christ’s mandate “to make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19) was universal – with one exception, namely the Jews, he accepted. “Missionising the Jews was not foreseen and not necessary for the simple reason that they already knew the ‘unknown God’. As far as Israel was and is concerned, not mission but dialogue on whether Jesus of Nazareth is ‘the Son of God, the Logos’ for whom ... the whole of humankind is waiting” is appropriate.

AUSTRALIA

Aboriginal suicides rising

THE CATHOLIC body that addresses the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is trying to find new ways to support rural and regional communities to prevent suicide by Indigenous youth, writes *Mark Brolly*.

The national youth councillor of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC), Sabrina-Ann Stevens, said after the council’s recent assembly in Perth that the suicide rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is more than twice that of non-Indigenous Australians.

“There are a lot of young people taking their lives and they are getting younger and younger,” Ms Stevens said.

VIEW FROM ROME

Christopher Lamb



THE POPE started the week with a Monday morning meeting with the leaders of Vatican departments, an event which comes ahead of the publishing of a new mission statement for the Roman Curia. For almost six years, Francis and his council of nine advisers (the so-called C9) have been working on an updated apostolic constitution for the Curia, which will build on *Pastor Bonus*, published 30 years ago by John Paul II. What the new constitution hopes to achieve, according to various sources, is a slimmed-down, mission-focused Vatican that will have serving the Pope and the bishops as its central focus. The hope is that “curial empires”, where prefects run their dicasteries as their private fiefdoms and tell bishops how to govern their dioceses, will be no more. Instead, the Vatican will become a coordinating hub for the universal Church, distilling and sharing the work of the bishops’ conferences from across the world.

Cardinal Óscar Rodríguez Maradiaga, the linchpin of the C9, says the Roman Curia can no longer be a filter between bishops and the Pope and must work to ensure “open and full communication”. The new constitution, he told an Italian news site, *La Voce e Il Tempo*, last week, is due to be issued by Easter 2019, after approval by episcopal conferences.

But reforming the Curia, as the 81-year-old Jesuit Pope is often quoted as having said, is a bit like cleaning the sphinx of Egypt with a toothbrush. One of the difficulties will be in slimming down the staff – the Vatican employs 4,500, many of them lay people – and bringing in new blood with the right skills. While no details of Francis’ meeting with the curial leaders on Monday have been officially released, the word in Rome is that the management of human resources was top of the agenda. Two reports were presented: one from Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, president of the Governatorato, the body which runs the Vatican City State, and one from Cardinal Giovanni Becciu, prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, who until the summer had served as *sostituto*, the equivalent of the papal chief of staff.

Under discussion was the need to reduce costs and staff headcount: no one is going to be fired but neither will staff be replaced after retirement. The Pope also wants transparent and clear recruitment processes and greater pastoral and spiritual care for those who work in the Vatican. A number of departments, such as the Secretariat of State and the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, have already embraced the Pope’s vision and now place a heavy emphasis on service and working with local bishops. There is still a long way to go, however, and

don’t expect the reform to be completed in Francis’ pontificate. The new constitution will lay down the foundations for future pontificates to build on.

ANYONE LOOKING to future papal elections should note that the Cardinal Archbishop of Yangon, Charles Maung Bo, has been chosen to lead the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences. The 70-year-old Myanmar prelate, a Salesian, was elected by his peers from the continental episcopal body, which includes 19 Asian bishops’ conferences along with eight associate groupings of bishops. Bo will take over from the Cardinal Archbishop of Bombay, Oswald Gracias, 73, one of the most respected figures in the Asian church, and a member of the C9.

As well as showing that he can command the respect – and the votes – of his peers, the cardinal has impressed in Rome with his handling of the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar. Bo has balanced compassion for the appallingly badly treated Rohingya Muslims with cautious support for the embattled Aung San Suu Kyi, while keeping channels of dialogue open with the Burmese military. It was an approach followed by Francis during the first ever papal trip to Myanmar earlier this year. Amiable, energetic and pastorally savvy, the cardinal impressed during the recent youth synod where, as one of the president-delegates, he moderated debates and led bishops in prayer.

Bo’s new role will give him greater visibility at a time when there is an increasing focus on the Church in Asia, particularly following the Holy See’s agreement with the communist regime in Beijing. It’s worth remembering that Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio had been elected by his peers in Latin America to draft the 2007 *Aparecida* document and had also impressed when stepping in to act as relator at the September 2001 general synod in Rome.

ON THE International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Filomena Lamberti read out a letter from the Pope on the Italian state broadcaster, Rai One. Lamberti, 58, has been severely disfigured since her now ex-husband threw acid on her face six years ago. She had been asleep in bed at the time of the attack, the culmination of a troubled 35-year marriage which had included bouts of violence at the hands of her husband.

“I ask your forgiveness,” Francis had written, explaining he was asking forgiveness on behalf of a humanity that has forgotten how to do so. He went on: “I pray that the courage which has given you a unique beauty, will become a slap in the face of indifference.”

NEWS BRIEFING

FROM BRITAIN AND IRELAND



Heythrop flats plan

The former site of **Heythrop College** (above) in London could be transformed into a luxury retirement village if the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea approves plans for a proposed £600-million development this week.

Flats in the development on Kensington Square in London will cost up to £3,000 a week to rent, and will include access to on-site nursing, a spa, a yoga studio, cinema and wine room, as well as gardens designed by Chelsea Flower Show winner Andy Sturgeon. The Jesuits sold the property to developer Johnny Sandelson in 2017 for a figure reportedly in excess of £100 million. The college closed at the end of the 2017-18 academic year.

Hundreds of thousands of theology books formerly housed at the college library, including books dating back to the college's foundation in what is now Belgium in 1614, are now

available to readers at Senate House Library at the University of London.

Ged Clapson, Catholic journalist and former communications officer for the British Jesuits, has died age 63. Mr Clapson, who was diagnosed with terminal cancer last year, began his career at the BBC before moving to London to work with Cafod in the 1990s. He worked for the Catholic Communications Centre in London, and provided media training to seminarians in England and Wales before working full time for the Jesuits.

A Scottish branch of the international peace movement **Pax Christi** was launched in Coatbridge last weekend. Pax Christi Scotland was established early in 2018 and has been functioning under the aegis of Justice and Peace Scotland since then. The event at the Conforti Centre in Coatbridge saw it emerge as an autonomous arm of the Pax Christi movement.

George Weigel, a senior fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington DC and author of *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, is to speak at St Dominic's Priory, Belsize Park, London, on Wednesday on "Democracy and its Discontents: Catholicism and Public Life in Turbulent Times".

Row over accused priests' rites

The Association of Catholic Priests in **Ireland** has raised concerns over the Church authorities' handling of funerals for priests accused of abuse at its annual meeting this month.

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) has published guidelines on the conduct of funerals of clerics against whom allegations have been made.

However, according to the ACP, some dioceses and religious orders are operating their own guidelines. The ACP said that one diocese's guidelines included a directive that funerals take place in a private chapel, that no death notice be published, that the deceased priest be referred to by his Christian name throughout the funeral rites, and not be buried in his vestments. The funeral Mass is not to be concelebrated and no vestments are to be worn by priests attending the funeral.

The Catholic Church in Ireland is facing its "gravest crisis in centuries", **the Bishop of Ossory** warned a conference for laity and priests in his diocese at St Kieran's College Kilkenny last weekend. Bishop Dermot Farrell told delegates that he wanted to create a culture where laity are encouraged and empowered for ministry.

"We have fallen off a cliff edge

in regard to vocations to the priesthood," said Bishop Farrell. "We cannot remedy this by clericalising good lay people. Crisis demands creativity. This time of reduced numbers may well afford us an opportunity to be creative and to reimagine the institutional church."



Environment secretary **Michael Gove** (above) paid tribute to Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, in a lecture in London this week.

"The encyclical is remarkable for the depth of thought which goes into addressing the twin challenges of climate and social justice," said Mr Gove, who gave the annual address for the religious think tank Theos. He added that the encyclical contained "critical lessons" and warned: "Never have we treated our common home as badly as we have in the last 200 years". (See *James Roberts*, pages 10-11.)

Compiled by **Liz Dodd**

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PERSON IN
THE NEWS

Bishop Terence Drainey, launching CSAN's report on the housing crisis: "For Christians, a crisis is an opportunity. It nudges us to renew our mission ... and to learn to love with fewer conditions."

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM / Report warns of 'significant' global increase in persecution

Violence against faith minorities escalating

RUTH GLEDHILL and ELLEN TEAGUE

MILLIONS OF people around the world live in constant danger because of their faith, a report by the charity Aid to the Church in Need warned this week.

In its survey of religious freedom, launched in London at the House of Lords, the charity said there had been "significant religious freedom violations" in 38 countries in the past two years, and the situation for minority faith groups has deteriorated further. Especially serious decline was noted in China and India. In many other countries – including North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Eritrea – the situation is already serious.

The report described how "aggressive nationalism" is now so bad it can be described as "ultra-nationalism", involving violent and systematic intimidation of religious minorities where they are branded as disloyal aliens and a threat to the state. It illustrated how many faith minorities exist behind a "curtain of

indifference", their sufferings largely ignored by a "religiously illiterate West", as the issue of religious freedom is eclipsed by issues of gender, sexuality and race.

It warned that many violations are a result of action by authoritarian regimes, a trend that the report's editor in chief, John Pontifex, said was set to continue.

During the launch at the House of Lords Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, an Ahmadi Muslim who is the prime minister's special envoy on freedom of religion and belief and whose own faith community has suffered much persecution especially in Pakistan, acknowledged: "The report ... makes for grim reading. We would rather we weren't here to see a report like this being produced."

He said he had travelled to countries where religious persecution is all too common. "I get great strength from my own faith because it inspires me to do that much more. When I talk to persecuted minorities their request is simple – to be a citizen of their country."

A number of speakers from the floor challenged Lord Ahmad over the case of Asia Bibi, a Catholic woman who has been seeking asylum in the UK after her death sentence for blasphemy in Pakistan was overturned.

Among them was Rehman Chishti, the Conservative MP who is the prime minister's trade envoy to Pakistan and who resigned earlier this month as the party's junior vice-chairman, citing the Brexit draft agreement and the handling of the Bibi case. He said at the event that the Pakistani government cannot legally stop Bibi leaving Pakistan, and he called on the British government to put into practice the high regard it claims to have for British values and offer her asylum. Lord Ahmad insisted the British government is doing all it can to ensure the safety of Bibi.

The launch of the Religious Freedom in the World Report came as landmarks in countries around the world were bathed in red light to highlight the persecution of faith groups on "Red Wednesday". In Ireland churches in Armagh, Galway, Waterford and Cobh took part, as well as Knock Basilica. In London a torchlit procession was due to take place on 28 November from Parliament Square to Westminster Cathedral.

GENDER IDENTITY / 'All people are loved by God,' affirm bishops

Church defends tweet sent in solidarity with transgender people

THE CHURCH in England and Wales has been forced to defend a tweet it published on Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) last week that said: "All people are loved by God and valued in their inherent God-given dignity," writes Liz Dodd.

In the tweet sent by @catholicEW, the official Twitter account for the Church in England and Wales, the Bishops' Conference said: "We pray for all people who are ill at ease with their gender, seek to change it, suffer for it and have been persecuted, and also killed."

It ended the message with the hashtag #TDOR, the official tag for Remembrance Day tweets. The annual observation commemorates trans people who have died as a result of transphobia.

The bishops' tweet was liked 3.4k times, more than any other from the bishops that week, but it provoked complaints.

Fr Marcus Holden, parish priest of St Bede's Church in Clapham Park, south-west London,

said: "Transgender Remembrance Day is part of an 'ideological colonisation' which Catholics cannot support. I'm surprised to see this here."

In a response seen by *The Tablet* the Bishops' Conference said that the purpose of the tweet was not to promote transgenderism but to promote prayer. It said the views of the Church on gender ideology were well known, and pointed out that it had in a previous statement said it was "deeply concerned that this ideology of gender is creating confusion".

The statement noted that the Church was also committed to the pastoral care of "people who do not accept their biological sex".

"Through listening to them we seek to understand their experience more deeply and want to accompany them with compassion, emphasising that they are loved by God and valued in their inherent God-given dignity," the statement said.

The TDOR website lists 310 victims of fatal transphobic violence in 2018.



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JESUITS
in Britain 

OVERSEAS AID / Former Progressio head Christine Allen to lead charity in the spring

Cafod director appointment provokes controversy

LIZ DODD and RUTH GLEDHILL

CAFOD, THE international development charity, has appointed Christine Allen, former director of Progressio, as its new head.

Ms Allen, currently director of policy and public affairs at Christian Aid, will replace Chris Bain in the spring. Mr Bain has delayed his retirement until then, although a Mass of thanksgiving to mark his retirement is planned for 5 December at St George's Cathedral, Westminster.

The appointment follows a lengthy recruitment process. While Mr Bain's resignation was announced in May, a spokesman for Cafod told *The Tablet* in mid October that it still had "no timescale" for the appointment.

At Christian Aid, where she has been since 2012, Ms Allen lobbied political and private sector leaders on issues such as taxation and climate, held leadership roles on global and UK bodies, and has been involved in supporting trusts, foundations and donor initiatives.

Before that she was Progressio's executive director for 11 years and prior to that was head of public



Christine Allen

affairs at the National Housing Federation. Her career began as a field worker with the Justice and Peace Commission in the Archdiocese of Liverpool, and she also had a period working as Cafod's campaigns coordinator.

Ms Allen said that the appointment "feels like coming home". "I am immensely proud of Cafod, its work and its role in the global Catholic family," she said.

As head of Progressio, Ms Allen oversaw the evolution of the charity's stance on HIV prevention, which included condoning the use of condoms to tackle the HIV pandemic. "In certain circumstances,"

the charity said in 2011, "the use of condoms is a life-saving option."

The charity came under fire during her tenure for changing its name from the Catholic Institute for International Relations. John Smeaton, chief executive of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, complained that under Ms Allen, Progressio "has a simply appalling record".

Responding to complaints about the appointment, Cafod's board told the *Catholic Herald*: "Christine Allen has been asked her views as part of Cafod's due diligence process and has satisfied the trustees that she will uphold Catholic teaching and values."

The board subsequently wrote a letter of complaint to the newspaper, objecting that it had portrayed its comments as "defending" its choice.

Bishop John Arnold, Cafod's chair of trustees, wrote: "Quite the opposite. Cafod's trustees fully endorse Christine Allen's appointment, which has been greeted with joy by Cafod staff and supporters." Sarah Teather, head of the Jesuit Refugee Service, called the appointment "cracking news".

EUROPE

Church leaders from all Ireland meet to discuss Brexit

CHURCH LEADERS in Ireland called on politicians to "weigh their words carefully" as initial negotiations for the UK to leave the EU drew to a close, writes Sarah Mac Donald.

Representatives of the Catholic, Methodist, Church of Ireland and Presbyterian Churches from the island of Ireland met at the Presbyterian Assembly Buildings in Belfast last week to discuss how to respond to the challenges posed by Brexit.

A joint statement issued after the meeting warned it was important to acknowledge the legitimate aspirations of those who voted to leave the EU and those who voted to remain.

They prayed that inevitable Brexit tensions would not be allowed to undermine the quality of relationships and mutual understanding that enabled them to work together for the common good.

Relationships between the people of Ireland, North and South, and between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom, have "improved and deepened immeasurably" over the past 30 years, they said.

This atmosphere of mutual respect had been the positive background against which many significant developments had taken place including ceasefires, political accommodation, increased connectedness and rising prosperity for many.

"Regardless of the outcome of this process, as peoples and communities who share this island, we will remain closely related and will have to both get along together and work together in this changing and somewhat uncertain world that lies ahead," they pledged.

Bishop Noel Treanor of Down and Connor told the meeting: "Churches share a responsibility with society to recognise and to promote an appreciation of the public good that is the European project."

Scottish diocese turns to parishioners for help with 'dire' finances

THE BISHOP of Argyll and the Isles has called on parishes to help resolve the diocese's "dire and perilous" financial situation, writes Brian Morton.

In a letter and leaflet distributed last week, Bishop Brian McGee said that the diocese had been obliged to draw on capital to address a deficit of £90,000 in the accounts.

While individual parishes were doing well, the cost of running a very scattered diocese was very high. Income across the diocese was audited as £207,883, while projected costs for the year were estimated as £296,118, leaving a substantial shortfall for 2019.

Bishop McGee said: "We have

more churches per head of population than any other diocese, which are often battered by the inclement weather, and our priests have more ground to cover."

Additional costs specific to Argyll and the Isles include ferry



journeys and flights, but the diocese is also supporting sick or retired priests, two student priests, as well as making a contribution to the Scottish Bishops' Conference.

From 1 December, the diocesan levy for each parish was set to increase, but the situation could be rectified if each family were able to contribute an additional £1 per week.

"We felt it was essential that our parishioners were made aware of the financial situation we find ourselves in," said Bishop McGee. "It's their money that goes into the collection each week and these documents will clearly outline where the money is spent."

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THE TABLET

Political mincemeat

ROSE PRINCE

STIRRING TOGETHER the fruity and aromatic ingredients that will be this year's mincemeat, I am aware that it also has hidden among its glossy depths an uninvited ingredient. Mincemeat could be a metaphor for the part geo-politics plays in food: the currants, raisins, brown sugar and spices represent the whirl of the global market; the tangy gratings of apple embody the long struggle borne by British orchardists against cheaper imports. And then there is the beef suet. Out of tune with moves to make cows the scapegoat for global warming, as great wasters of water and polluters of the atmosphere, many question their future existence. Who knew a mince pie could contain such a hotchpotch of trouble? Perhaps only the brandy is innocent ...

This Advent, these matters seem to be coming to a head. The drop in the pound has put the price of food, especially imported food, up. Whichever way we emerge from Brexit, it is unlikely that prices will drop for many years. Those golden sultanas and other vine fruits, dried in the warm winds of the blessed Mediterranean and used in British Christmas cooking for centuries, will once again be expensive luxuries. When the trade deals are renegotiated, not just with Europe but other supplying nations, too – the USA, China – who knows how viable a mince pie, even a Christmas pudding, will be for the home cook?

As for the real “meat” in the pie, the



The best present this Christmas would be for those that govern us, and the food industry, to reform their ways

beef suet, I intend always to use it. It adds to the pool of fruity flavours in a way no vegetable oil-based equivalent can. Vegetable oils, usually the product of seeds from non-eco-friendly crops like palms and rapeseed, are themselves ecologically problematic. It is right to say that there is a problem with the high numbers of cattle being farmed on the planet and the consequences of their meat being the mainstay of fast food.

Recently an academic suggested that beef should be subject to tax – paid by those who consume it. This idea fails on every level. It would be better to convince those who eat beef to choose to pay more and eat only premium meat: from cattle

which are fed on grass in an eco-responsible way and not wastefully fed on cereals. Shoving a tax on all beef would punish consumers who want to participate in a more ethical approach. Were it to happen at the same time as the anticipated revolution in the UK's trade dealings, it would doubly penalise consumers and farmers.

The best present any of us could have this Christmas would be for those that govern us, and the food industry, to reform their ways – and to stop piling the costs of their mistakes onto revellers.

HEDGEROW MINCEMEAT
MAKES 4 JARS

- 2 British apples, peeled, cored and grated
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 2 tbsps. rosehip syrup
- 225g beef suet
- 100g candied citrus peel
- 120g currants
- 225g sultanas
- 450g dark brown sugar
- 4 tbsps. damson or sloe gin

Mix all the ingredients together, making a good wish as you stir, then spoon into jars, seal and store. For a rich shortcrust pastry that rolls out beautifully thin, use a ratio of 375g plain flour to 250g butter, with about 75ml water. Makes 24 small pies.

Glimpses of Eden

JONATHAN TULLOCH

“GANNETS”, the man with the telescope announced. Standing on the crumbling mud cliffs, trying to keep my footing in the gale, I searched the vast grey of sea and sky. We visit Holy Island every summer but have never been here in November before. “Pair diving at twelve o'clock,” the expert continued. “In the offing.” Then I saw them. The birds flashed like phosphorous as they plunged into the wild North Sea, half a mile away. Gannets are dazzling animals. Bobbing in a little fishing boat last June, I remember seeing how their white heads are



suffused with a warm yellow glow, and their blue eyes ringed with a dark, Cleopatra eyeliner. But they are at their most striking when seen from a distance on grey, dank

days, when their scintillatingly white plumage sparks like a rocket. Northern gannets grow up to a metre long, with their black-tipped wingspan stretching almost double the size. Diving after fish, they can hit the sea at upwards of sixty miles an hour. More than two-thirds of the world's Northern gannet population live in our waters, and their glittering brightness has evolved so they can spot each other in these grey seas. Anglo-Saxon poets also loved watching them fish; naming the North Sea in their honour, the gannet's bath.

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