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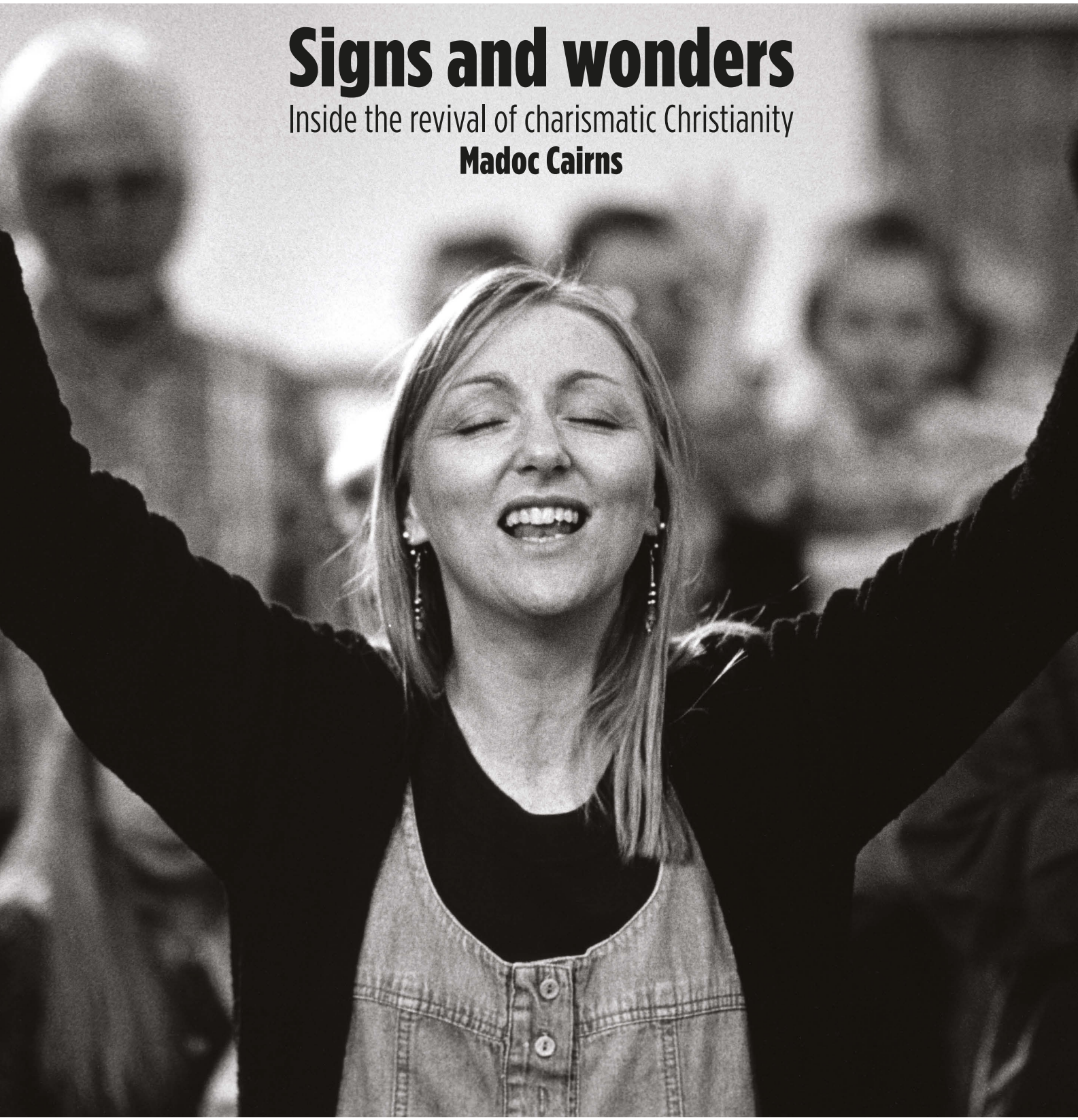


Signs and wonders

Inside the revival of charismatic Christianity

Madoc Cairns

THE TABLET
THE INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY
FOUNDED IN 1840

FRANCIS IN CANADA

EVERY CULTURE DESERVES RESPECT

The encounters between Pope Francis and First Nation representatives in Canada were among the most moving of his papacy. He clearly felt deeply and personally the violations of human dignity inflicted on the Indigenous tribes of North America by white colonial settlers. At the behest of the Canadian authorities, many children had been taken away from their families, separated from their culture and language and converted – that is to say, coerced – into Christianity. Some of them were abused, psychologically, physically and sexually.

Something similar was happening the length and breadth of the American continent, north and south, reflecting an unthinking consensus among European colonialists that already existing customs and beliefs had no value, and could and should be overwritten by their cultures and prejudices. Jesuit missionaries were among the few who rejected this approach. That automatic assumption of cultural superiority was untenable, Francis said last week, and the Church repented of it and asked forgiveness.

The Pope's remarks should trigger a wider reflection. It is as easy in the age of the internet and social media as it was in the era of colonial expansion for Westerners to assume their civilisations are normative – that by which others, past and present, should be judged. The only criteria valid for such judgements are those explicit or implicit in the gospels, the Sermon on the Mount in particular. It is from such motives that the Governor General of India, a devout Evangelical Christian, banned the burning of widows, *sati* or *suttee*, in the 1830s; similar motives led other colonial rulers to strive to wipe out slavery, cannibalism or execution of prisoners by torture, wherever they encountered such practices. Needless to say, with hindsight their moral outrage has to be regarded as highly selective. Christians often colluded in offences committed by white settlers – as in the case of Canadian Indigenous tribes. It did not seem to be barbaric to stop a child using his native language on pain of corporal punishment, but it was.

Wherever the gospel seed is newly planted, the human community already exists and has learned to express itself. Those expressions deserve deep respect, and should not be superseded in the name of Christianity, except where Christianity itself seems clearly to demand it, and then with prudence and caution. The Gospel is offered as a gift, not imposed by conquest. And "Christianity" should not be confused with the culture of Western Christians, or with assumptions over-confidently drawn from Scripture, such as the criminalisation of homosexuality.

The key phrase is "critical distance", critical in the sense of "just right, not too far and not too near", but also in the sense of a willingness to criticise cultural assumptions; and distance, that is to say from a position outside the ruling establishment or dominant culture, but close enough to scrutinise it and free enough to speak against it. That is a formidable task for church leaders, ordained and lay. It requires a great effort of discernment, a skill not readily acquired. Yet if those leaders do not already live by the Gospel, their interventions will be easily dismissed. That is why Pope Francis' apology in Canada was so telling.

ENGLAND WOMEN'S EURO 2022 VICTORY

LOVING FOOTBALL FOR FOOTBALL'S SAKE

Is football good for you? The high-minded Victorian founders of many of the world-famous British association football clubs certainly thought so. Football was partly a spin-off from Catholic and Protestant youth clubs, not just to keep young men off the streets but also because it was believed to be character-building. Football prowess was seen as next to godliness. Today, the professional game has largely surrendered to Mammon.

The men's game, that is. Fans of the England women's team – that is to say, virtually the whole nation – were in ecstasy at its victory over Germany at Wembley in the Euro 2022 final after extra time last Sunday. Some part of the delight may be because women are seen to play football for love of the game, not for love of money, and this victory seemed purer and less tainted. The England players were rewarded with substantial bonuses and even more substantial offers of commercial sponsorship. Nevertheless the life of a professional female player is considerably less lucrative then her male equivalent.

The ancient Greeks were not wrong to regard sport as a key element in the moral education of youth, and each of the classical virtues, justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude, were necessary for sporting excellence, especially in team sports. As they push themselves to their limits, sportsmen and -women still aspire to be the best version of themselves that is attainable, a *telos* that Aristotle would have admired.

The winning England women's team have kicked into touch any notion that this "manly" ethos only applies to men, or that sporting success is somehow "unwomanly". But it was this very idea that in 1921 led the football authorities to ban English football clubs from using their grounds for women's football, a ban only lifted in the 1970s. Up to the 1920s the women's game had enjoyed considerable popularity, not least in wartime, when the menfolk were away fighting. The postwar misogyny reflected a fear that women had invaded spaces traditionally reserved for men, and they needed to be put back in their place. It also reflected a particular view of women, who were, or ought to be made to be, different from men. The culture of some women's sport still bears the marks of that, though top-class female football requires exactly the same skill set as male football, as the game at Wembley amply demonstrated.

The men's professional game is still steeped in a macho culture that demeans, among others, the wives and girlfriends ("Wags") of top players, making them mere objects of prurient celebrity gossip in the tabloid press. The contrast with the joy, dignity and composure of the England women's team is stark. They have revived the national love of football for football's sake. When football was becoming greedier and uglier, they have made "the beautiful game" beautiful again.

20 The fire that struck Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris in 2019 is the subject of a new film

CONTENTS

6 AUGUST 2022 // VOL 276 NO. 9464

COLUMN

Christopher Howse's Notebook
'These days we tend not to be so anxious about offering sacrifice to idols. Perhaps we should be' / 7

FEATURES

NEWS

REGULARS

ARTS / PAGE 18

BOOKS / PAGE 21

COVER PHOTO: ALAMY, MIKE ABRAHAMS

PHOTO: ALAMY/INCAMERASTOCK

The Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane by Giovanni Bellini, c.1465

To the edge of time and space

A day spent exploring the links between liturgy, theology and the arts included a visit to the National Gallery in London and ended with Mass followed by a memorable concert in the Jesuit church in Farm Street / **By HILARY DAVIES**

HOW ARE liturgy and place connected? What do the creative arts bring to our understanding of these two, and what inspiration do the arts in their turn draw from their interconnectedness? Over three bright summer days earlier this month, I joined a gathering including students, scholars, musicians, poets, theologians, artists, choreographers and priests which met at a variety of venues across central London to reflect on exactly these questions.

The conference was organised by the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University and the University of Notre Dame's London Global Gateway, in association with *The Tablet* and the Jesuit church at Farm Street. Both Durham and Notre Dame are well known for their innovative approach to interdisciplinary Catholic enquiry, but they are not alone in this field.

It is a trend that has grown in recent decades. Departments of theology, literature and the arts have sprouted in universities across the English-speaking world – a notion unthinkable 40 years ago. Online projects such as the ambitious Visual Commentary on Scripture project run by King's College London, are springing up, while art galleries in Britain and in Europe are creating joint projects with churches and cathedrals. The list goes on and on.

Let's look for a moment at the word, "liturgy". The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition runs: "Liturgy (from the Greek) = *leit*: public, of the people + *urgia*: that works". So liturgy is a public place where the work of the people can happen. The creation, the participation in and the reception of a sacramental event, in this context the Mass, occurs both inside and outside time and space. All this makes liturgy an immensely rich locus for the imagination to inhabit. The unique space of the liturgy has always allowed artists in the widest sense both to enter into and to open out from it to create works that enrich our own understanding.

IN ALL THIS there is something distinctive in what Catholic practice and tradition brings to such interrogations. And before we go any further, remember that tradition means "a handing across", not the dead hand of "nothing shall change". This truth was amply demonstrated by the wealth of subject matter and media in which the conference examined the twin concepts of "liturgy" and "place". These ranged from the ideas of the ninth-century Irish/Carolingian theologian, John Scotus Eriugena, about our relationship with God and the cosmos; through the performance in the great staircase of the National Gallery by the dancer and choreographer, Abby Marchesseault; and to indigenous influences on local church architecture in central Mexico. And we considered too how art in the Catholic tradition has attended to the "displaced", the homeless, refugees, and to the "more-than-human" world.

It was no coincidence that several papers turned to the painter, poet and, some would argue, artist-theologian, David Jones. Rowan Williams compared the "archaeological" imagination of Jones the poet and the novelist Alan Garner. Both Jones in his long poem, "The Anathemata", itself structured around the Mass, and Garner in his fiction collapse layers of place and time; they each use myth, folklore, history, geology and archaeology to lead us, often quite literally, into a realm that

speaks meaning from every object, person and movement. Jasmine Hunter Evans, from the Open University, gave a close "reading" of Jones' 1951 painting, *The Paschal Lamb*, showing how the artist intertwines Roman Empire and Roman Church, Welsh landscape and classical ruin, with the overarching image of the sacrificial lamb to create a space that shimmers with meaning.

The theme of the resonance of place was taken up by the art historian Paul Hills: he chose four paintings by Giovanni Bellini on permanent display in the National Gallery to show how the artist links the inner space of the spiritual journey and the outer space of the world within the formal space of the painting. In *The Agony in the Garden* the eye, and the soul, travel around the fixed centre of Christ on his knees looking towards the heavenly chalice, and away from the bitter earthly one that he must soon drink. Around him swirls a restless landscape of hill, river and quarry, through which Judas and the soldiers approach; Peter, James and John lie exhausted on the ground "because of grief" (Luke 22:45).

In Bellini's work, the drama of the liturgy plays itself out in a symbolic setting that nevertheless carries the familiar outline of Tuscan hill towns on the horizon. It was a stroke of genius on the organisers' part to include a visit to the adjoining National Gallery to see these paintings for ourselves, in rooms packed with Londoners and tourists, an occasion that was a metaphor for the accessibility of liturgy to everyone.

In Bellini's work, the drama of the liturgy plays itself out in the familiar outlines of Tuscan hill towns

This accessibility was again exemplified when at the end of the first day the conference shifted from Notre Dame's London campus near Trafalgar Square to the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Farm Street, Mayfair. We attended the six o'clock evening Mass alongside regular members of the congregation; it was followed by a performance of Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*.

The biographical story behind this piece is well known: how Messiaen, as a prisoner of war in Stalag VIII-A in Görlitz, Germany, composed it and then organised its first performance in January 1941. It is one of the groundbreaking compositions of the twentieth century. The quartet for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano enacts the end of time on several levels. Conceived in the apocalypse of the Second World War, it takes as its starting point lines from the Book of Revelation, chapter 10: "And the angel ... sware by him that liveth for ever and ever ... that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished" (Authorised Version).

Messiaen knows that the end which Revelation brings is always already present in the liturgy of the Mass. Moreover, he embeds the notion of timelessness within the structure of his music by using the isorhythmic techniques of late medieval composition. In so doing, he breaks apart the metric systems so familiar to us from the Renaissance onwards, so that musically we are also hearing "the end of time". The quartet has eight movements, a number that is one of the symbols of eternity. But of course Messiaen's ultimate aim is to give expression to the ineffable: as the violin ascends into silence in the final bars, liturgy and place have become one in a piece of music that has carried us to the edge of time and space, into the presence of God.

The riches offered by this interdisciplinary meeting are set to reverberate in all manner of creative ways in the minds of those who were lucky enough to take part. I for one can't wait for the next time.

Hilary Davies is a poet, critic and translator. She gave a talk on the places that had influenced her journey of faith and read poems from her collections during the conference.

The honest sinner on the brink of faith

Even his friends concede that the curmudgeonly poet and librarian born 100 years ago this week was deeply flawed, but few twentieth-century writers were more honest and wise about the human condition / **By FRANCIS BOWN**

PHILIP LARKIN was not a handsome man. But he was an intensely attractive man. He possessed that magnetism which occasionally attaches itself to genius. I first encountered his poetry at school. Our headmaster was a distant member of the Larkin family, and somehow that made the verse even more fascinating. My teachers showed me how he took the coal dust of ordinary, everyday words and produced diamonds of intense luminosity. He was my hero and I supposed, even when I knew I was going to a parish in Hull, that I would only be able to worship him from afar.

And then he was there: sitting in my clergy house in the Avenues, holding a large G and T and fiddling with his antique hearing aid in a vain attempt to stop its whistling. We were going out for a lunch arranged by a mutual friend. At first my petit bourgeois sensibility was offended by his conversation. Respectable people in those days did not talk in front of a priest with a vocabulary so full of swear words, even if they were famous for remarks about what "your mum and dad" did to you. That initial silliness I put aside, and soon we were hurtling along in two cars towards a country pub. I say "hurtling" because I had the greatest difficulty in keeping up in my little Nissan, Philip's attitude to blind corners suggesting a greater reliance on divine protection than I could muster.

I had accepted one of the sillier myths about Dr Larkin – that he could not stand having his photograph taken – and therefore dissuaded one member of our quartet from using his camera during our outing. Thus was lost a remarkable picture, which surely would have been awarded the caption, "Philip Larkin with the novelist A.N. Wilson, the architectural historian Gavin Stamp and an unknown clergyman".

My church was a converted Methodist chapel on a busy road in the centre of Hull. Its aesthetic and historical importance to the Diocese of York may be judged by the way it was treated after I was finally driven out of Anglicanism by the ordination of women: it was closed down and put up for sale. But I had filled it with shrines, a domed tabernacle and the only permanent Exposition throne for miles around. It was a bastion of unreformed Anglo-Catholicism, where the rite was The English Missal (a translation of the Tridentine Roman Missal into Cranmerian English) and the nave and sanctuary were as full of incense as my people's respiratory abilities would allow.

Philip came to Evensong and Benediction. I did not know he had been, for I was of the old school which held that the officiating priest should not look directly at the congregation unless he was preaching. And, to Philip's certain approval, it was not my custom to have a sermon at the evening service. But shortly afterwards I received a brief note from him which I have treasured ever since. "I bow my head at what you do and raise it again at the manner in which you do it." By those words I measured the kindness of the man.

We shared an ambivalent attitude to the town in which we lived. Foolishly, I once told a journalist – off the record, I thought – my feeble "joke" about Hull. It was, I told him, the armpit of England: not only rightly placed geographically but also damp, smelly and – except to fetishists – deeply uninteresting. He repeated this in his article and named me as its author, causing me much trouble with my bishop. Philip said much worse. But both of us came to respect and grow fond of the eastern cul-de-sac for the sturdiness of its people – "A cut-price crowd, urban yet simple."

ONLY A CLERICAL IDIOT would claim Philip as a Christian – even if the rector of the parish church from which he was buried, ignoring his express wish that there be no address by a clergyman at his funeral, tried to do exactly that. We know well enough his expressed view that religion was a "vast moth-eaten musical brocade/Created to pretend we never die".

Yet even in those words I sense what I saw in him in the flesh: a desperate yearning for meaning and an intense fear of death and extinction. I believe that his searing honesty about the human condition and about life's cruel disappointments left him teetering on the edge of faith. He read the entire Bible from front to back – in the King James version, of course – and pronounced himself astonished that anyone could believe its contents. But even that astonishment was shot through

Philip Larkin: 'I bow my head at what you do and raise it again at the manner in which you do it'

PHOTO: ALAMY/PA

with sadness. And that startling final line of "An Arundel Tomb" still brings my tears: "What will survive of us is love."

Some holier-than-thou prigs want to "cancel" Philip for views he expressed privately, which were once commonplace but are now found shocking. He was certainly to the right of *The Daily Telegraph* in political and cultural matters. Would that he were still with us to turn his mordant wit upon these dull creatures! Instead I can direct the Christians among them to the words of St Paul to the Corinthians: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels", and remind them of St John's admonition: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

Philip was not a perfect human being. Like the rest of us, he struggled with desires and urges which the best of him might have wished to purge. But the Prologue to St John's Gospel comes to my mind: "In the beginning was the Word." Those of us who follow that Word know that He is "full of grace and *truth*".

Philip's use of words in his poetry served truth and made truth accessible to all those who read his masterpieces. The world would be a lesser place had there been no Philip Larkin. All goodness comes from God. I therefore conclude that this great poet was a blessing from God. In his despair and longing I believe he came as close to his Creator as was possible for him. I trust that he is now in Heaven – I hope with a large G and T.

Francis Bown is the former vicar of St Stephen's, Sculcoates, Hull.

These days we tend not to be so anxious about offering sacrifice to idols. Perhaps we should be

SOME CURIOUS questions came in the post to St Augustine in the last years of the fourth century from a Catholic senator in the southern part of what we call Tunisia. I only came across them because I was looking for something else. They entertained me, but answering them must have been a tricky chore for the bishop, since the problems posed sound on the scrupulous side, and scrupulous people find a way of picking holes in the soundest advice.

"Is it permissible," asked Senator Publicola, "for a Christian knowingly to eat wheat from a threshing floor from which an offering has been made to a demon?" What about a Christian who builds a wall round his property; is he "guilty of murder if people use it to fight and kill enemies from"? So he goes on, under 18 main headings, about hiring a litter in which a pagan has been doing something sacrilegious, or staving off death by starvation by eating meat set before an idol in a deserted temple.

Augustine knew better than to say: "Don't be silly." He openly conceded that "no matter how I write what I regard as most certain, if I do not persuade you, you will undoubtedly be more uncertain". As for wheat on a threshing floor, no one should offer it to idols, but Christians need not worry about the remainder that hasn't been offered. "We don't hesitate to breathe air into which we know smoke has risen from all the altars and incense of demons," he counters. "Nor do we abstain from using the light of the sun because sacrilegious people are forever offering sacrifices to it."

You need not worry, he wrote, about building a wall in case people use it for armed conflict. "After all, is a Christian guilty if his bull kills someone by goring him?" Augustine asks. "Should we fear to make a window in case someone throws himself out of it?" (No.)

These days, we tend not to be so anxious about offering sacrifice to idols. Perhaps we should be. But a fairly eminent Catholic journalist not so many years ago decided to stop writing for the Murdoch press, so wicked was it. I'd have thought the press was better for Catholics working there, preferably at the clean end of the threshing floor, where fewer demons lurk.

After all, Cardinal Manning had no qualms about working energetically on the Royal Commission into the Housing of the Working Classes, in 1884, and questioning the Duke of Westminster as a witness about his notorious slum properties. The cardinal sat with the Prince of Wales (seen cheating at illegal baccarat in the intervals of his affair with Daisy Brooke) and Sir Charles Dilke, who, if Virginia Crawford's evidence in a divorce case was to be believed, was constantly hopping from the committee room into her bed. And I don't think the cardinal would have minded taking a Hansom cab (the Victorian equivalent of the fourth-century litter) recently vacated by his adulterous collaborators.

In his classic *Augustine the Bishop*, Frits van der Meer (1904-94) finds what counted in Dutch terms as high humour in calling Augustine in this exchange of letters a Probabilist. The joke is that, in the 1650s, Pascal and Jansenist-inclined controversialists denounced those they saw as lax moralists (who argued like Augustine in his letter to Publicola) as Probabilists, while appealing for their more rigid rules to St Augustine.

ON 28 AUGUST, normally the Feast of St Augustine, the Pope is going to the tomb of St Celestine V in L'Aquila. Celestine resigned as pope in 1294. Pope Benedict visited his tomb before he resigned. I wonder if Pope Francis will resign on that day. This year, Augustine's feast is subsumed into the Day of the Lord, Sunday. Better the day …

AN ONLINE boon and blessing is the site called Bible Gateway which has all sorts of translations. If you look up the Psalms in a Latin Vulgate version, it also kindly gives you the Authorised Version (King James' committee's work) opposite, so that you can tell what it means. But no one seems to have informed Bible Gateway that the Psalms are numbered differently in the Greek/Latin versions and in the Hebrew/Authorised versions. So, look up the Vulgate Psalm 23, "Domini est terra, et plenitudo eius," and you find opposite it, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want," which is indeed numbered 23 in the AV but is a different psalm. Send for a new algorithm.

Christopher Howse is an assistant editor of The Daily Telegraph.

It's time to talk

In his Angelus message last Sunday, Pope Francis prayed that the suffering and battered Ukrainian people might be freed from the scourge of war, adding "The only reasonable thing to do [is] to stop and negotiate." A former Irish diplomat considers what concrete steps could be taken towards peace / **By PHILIP McDONAGH**

PHOTO: ALAMY/REUTERS, UMIT BEKTAS

Russian and Ukrainian delegates in Istanbul negotiate a deal to export grain from Ukrainian ports

CAN THERE BE an opening to what I would call a "rational dialogue" about the war in Ukraine? I realise that many would hesitate to answer, arguing that our first obligation is to distinguish between perpetrator and victim and to align ourselves with the victim. I understand that perspective. However, there are many different actors in a situation like this and many forces in play. A rational dialogue is the opposite of a sundering of all relationships.

I recall Pope Francis, when he addressed the Council of Europe in 2014, saying: "If [conflict] paralyses us, we lose perspective, our horizons shrink, and we grasp only a part of reality. When we fail to move forward in a situation of conflict, we lose our sense of the profound unity of reality, we halt history …"

The Pope has said the war makes him "suffer and weep, thinking of the suffering of the Ukrainian people and in particular of the weakest, the elderly and children". He has also called for a real and decisive focus on negotiation. If we hope for a ceasefire, an end to the horror and destruction, the opening of negotiations, a reawakening of moral generosity, and future reconciliation, we must look for starting points for a rational dialogue.

Just over a week ago, under the auspices of the United Nations, Russia and Ukraine signed an agreement on the export of grain. Other actors confirmed that they are not blocking Russian agricultural exports. Constructive relationships rarely wholly vanish even in the middle of an appalling crisis. The channels of communication established to discuss food exports and other humanitarian issues could be adapted to develop confidence-building measures and to "image" future negotiations. The agreement on grain shows that Nato, the European Union, the United States and other parties as well, as Russia and Ukraine, have ongoing responsibilities towards the rest of the world. Peacemaking is not in the hands of Moscow and Kyiv alone. We should not pretend that it is.

A rational dialogue, building on the grain agreement, could look at the present breakdown in relationships in a historical perspective. In the 1970s, the Helsinki Final Act was a turning point. At the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) – a process, not a one-off event – the leaders of states in Western and Eastern Europe as well as the United States and Canada pledged to "cooperate in the interest of mankind". A CSCE-style "security community" based on dialogue across a broad agenda and habits of trust is not the same as a paradigm of regional security based on deterrence and mutually-assured destruction, such as we now have. Finding a new balance between differing paradigms of security, and promoting disarmament, is an essential project in every region of the world.

PRINCIPLE IX of the Helsinki Final Act obliges participating states to develop their cooperation "in all fields … to improve the wellbeing of peoples", taking into account "the interest of all in the narrowing of differences in the levels of economic development". This foundational principle brings the European and global agendas together. The weakening of the economic dimension of the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) connects to the sequence of events in Ukraine in 2014 and the balances implicit in the Minsk Agreements, designed to end the conflict in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

Part of the significance of these agreements is economic. In the preceding years, there was a discussion within the EU of emerging risks in its relationships with Moscow and Kyiv. One question at issue was whether to present Ukraine with a binary choice between Nato and the EU on the one hand, and relations with Moscow on the other. Had we given ourselves more time in 2013 to work out a nuanced approach – or had the Minsk agreements become operative in subsequent years – much of the traditional interchange between eastern Ukraine and Russia would still be taking place with the approval of all sides. A hypothesis deserving of rational dialogue is that an economic "zero-sum game" in Eastern Europe might still be avoided.

Many on the Western side attribute Moscow's stance on Minsk to the pursuit of a post-Soviet "sphere of influence", to a fear of democracy, or even to some theological vision. But Russia's deepest political motivations and priorities could be framed differently and possibly would be framed differently in the context of a real dialogue. Russia and Ukraine have connections, including family connections, that go back hundreds of years. Russia can rightly aspire to a reconciled relationship with its nearest neighbour much as the members of the EU aspire to reconciled relationships among themselves. The Eurasian Economic Union, a project of the middle of last decade, attempted, for all its weaknesses, to give expression to an EU-style vision for parts of the post-Soviet space.

In 1991, the principle of the territorial integrity of states – recognised in the Helsinki Final Act (Principle IV) – was interpreted in a particular way when Western countries, invoking another principle they had signed up to, the equal rights of peoples and their right to self-determination (Principle VIII), recognised all parts of the Soviet and Yugoslav federations as independent states. There were potential sources of future conflict and obvious

areas of interdependence among the new states that ought to have been acknowledged and addressed at the time. As part of a rational dialogue, we might illuminate current options by asking what compromises would have been found had the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes (Principle V, Helsinki Final Act) been brought into play.

A "rational dialogue" could also borrow ideas from the Irish experience to support Ukraine in its relations with Russia. In the UN Security Council debate on the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, Ireland's foreign minister pointed out that Ireland will never pose a military threat to Britain. The appropriate military assurances that near neighbours can give to one another is another topic for rational dialogue. Ireland has been prepared to leave open for the future the question of re-unifying territory and is glad to preserve the common travel area across our two islands along with many other special arrangements.

Making the most of imperfect political arrangements for the sake of friendship and peace is another topic for rational dialogue. The British and Irish governments have encouraged innovative forms of political and cultural pluralism in Northern Ireland – pluralism, for example, in the sphere of language policy, such as seems to have disappeared from the radar in Ukrainian-Russian relations. Perhaps the most important lesson from Northern Ireland is that it is never the wrong time to start working for peace – even with those who are involved in illegitimate violence.

Economic sanctions emerged as part of the so-called diplomatic "toolbox" a century ago. Western powers actively explored the use of starvation as a weapon in 1918 and 1919 in the hope of reversing the Russian revolution. The naval blockade of Petrograd was based on this premise. A generation later, Germany issued orders for the siege of Leningrad that allowed for the possibility that the entire population would die of starvation. Among those who did die was President Putin's elder brother. Against the background of twentieth-century history, what chord is struck in the hearts of Russian people when Western politicians speak of degrading Russia for generations to come through the deployment of the so-called economic weapon?

PRINCIPLE II of the Helsinki Final Act requires participating states to "refrain from any acts constituting a threat of force or direct or indirect use of force against another participating State …" This is not an easy subject, but I believe there is scope for a rational dialogue, breaking new ground, on the ethics and jurisprudence of economic and financial sanctions and the application of that principle. We might begin with case studies on Iraq in the 1990s and the current famine in Afghanistan.

Pope Benedict XVI spoke more than once of "uncovering the sources of creation". If I were a political leader in today's Europe, I would look to the horizon of 2025 and the fiftieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. I would pray for the courage to believe, in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's words, that "something new can be born that is not discernible in the alternatives of the present". In 2025, "something new" could mean an initiative under the Finnish chairmanship of the OSCE to frame a long-term, multi-layered diplomatic process that would address the most consequential global issues from the perspective of Europe as a whole. If I were the British prime minister, I would call to mind Murmansk and the Arctic convoys.

On the best estimate, 27 million citizens of the Soviet Union gave their lives for the allies to win the war. The Queen has shaken hands with Martin McGuinness. What would it take for a British monarch to travel to Murmansk or St Petersburg to shake hands with the President of the Russian Federation?

Philip McDonagh is Director of the Centre for Religion, Human Values, and International Relations at Dublin City University. As an Irish diplomat, he served as Head of Mission in India, the Holy See and Russia. He opened the National Justice and Peace Network conference at Swanwick last month with an address on the theme, "Towards a Civilisation of Hope".

As pews empty across the West, Pentecostal, spirit-filled churches and worship groups are flourishing. Their members experience an intensity of feeling that trumps reason and language. A psychologist and former believer has written about his time as a youthful member of an Evangelical church – and the sense of loss that still haunts him / **By MADOC CAIRNS**

When ecstasy breaks loose

PHOTO: ALAMY, HOMER SYKES

Pentecostal Evangelicals at a church in west London

"**WORDS MAKE** things happen," Matthew McNaught tells me. "It's something we don't think about enough." Words set the world in motion; they call it to a halt. The process of articulation language involves – taking the inert and unseen and making it tangible, gifting it form – is for sociologists the foundation of the self. And for Christians, words are "hierophanic", sites of divine self-revelation; places where a prophet opens their mouth, and God speaks.

In *Immanuel*, winner of the inaugural Fitzcarraldo Editions Essay Prize, McNaught examines two points where prophecy entered his life and left it altered. One was Immanuel, the Evangelical church of his childhood in the southern English city of Winchester – informal, enthusiastic, middle-class. The other was the Synagogue, Church of All Nations (Scoan), the followers of celebrity Nigerian pastor T.B. Joshua – glossy, ecstatic, cultish, thoroughly, even extravagantly, Nigerian. But somehow, friends of his from Immanuel had joined. Following their journeys to enlisting as Scoan disciples – and the experiences of abuse and manipulation that drove them out again – McNaught realises the two churches were bound together more tightly than he had imagined.

Somewhere between Immanuel and Scoan, McNaught went on another journey: from Evangelicalism to atheism to an abiding uncertainty about his own belief in God. *Immanuel* is "quite deliberately", he tells me, "an agnostic book". "Most books produced about religion are either attacking it in a new atheist kind of vein or defending it, apologetics … I wanted to write a book where the ontological questions were put to one side." He says he wanted "to create and maintain a space" where you can ask not whether religion is true, "but how it feels from the inside".

HOW RELIGION feels – and how believers navigate the fissures between private passion and public indifference – is the tension at the heart of McNaught's book. It's a tension *Immanuel* handles with unusual delicacy and care. A working psychologist, McNaught witnessed attempts by his field to work out rational, systematic explanations of mental illness: well meant, he recalls, but quixotic. Human beings are formed by the formless; our experiences exceed our vocabulary. They might exceed our current systems of rationality too – McNaught won't be drawn on the question – but spirit-driven Evangelicals and cutting-edge psychologists are, oddly enough, in agreement. Emotions really matter.

Some Christian Churches have a testy relationship with emotion. Emotions, and the turbulent interior lives emotions emerge from and subside into, are shifty, mutable, recalcitrant: inherently corrosive of authority, demanding and evading articulation. In *Enthusiasm*, his famous study of ecstatic religious movements, the Catholic priest-polemicist Ronald Knox described how intense emotion tends to displace all human authority – even reason itself – with "direct intercession from the divine". It invariably ends badly, Knox thought: firestorms that blow up and blow over, leaving chaos behind.

Yet spirit-driven "charismatic" Christianity is thriving in contemporary Britain. Immanuel was one such community. It was a "cosy middle-class church in Winchester", McNaught says. He attended Bible study, played bass in services, sang hymns when Immanuel baptised newcomers in the River Itchen.

"Most of my memories of it were fond," McNaught says. He shared a conversation he had with another child of the group some years ago: "I was saying to him – what was it about Immanuel that we don't have now, and that we miss so much?" And he said, 'community'."

"And that's it," he says, laughing. "We have an impoverished vocabulary when it comes to talking about collective experiences – like community." Other experiences, too. "I wanted to nail speaking in tongues." Music is important to McNaught, and maybe, he accepts, because it can communicate without interpretation; feel without speech, talk without words. "I'm trying to name experiences," McNaught adds, "that aren't usually named."

At one level, that's some of the unconventional aspects of Immanuel: tongues, being slain in the spirit, an ardent belief in spiritual revival. At another, it's the mundane reality of fellowship: when an Immanuelite knocked on another's door, he remembers, they'd nearly always be welcomed in. But the nostalgia has an edge: "had Immanuel not been in some ways a genuinely solid and healthy community, the book wouldn't have done what it did."

In the gospel of Matthew, the disciples ask Jesus why they failed to drive a demon out of a boy. Christ remonstrates with them. You're the problem here, he says. You lack faith. "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'move from here to

there,' and it will move." He gives a warning, makes a promise: "Nothing will be impossible for you."

On first reading, it's intoxicating: a universe without limits, words that work wonders. Read it again, and the promise looks like a paradox. A faith that moves mountains has received a divine sanction so direct, so explicit, that the word "faith" barely applies. Faith fulfilled is faith overcome. Miracles are their own apologists.

Immanuel was, McNaught discovered as an adult, a "restorationist" community, convinced that the pristine spirit of the Early Church, mildewed by corruption and dogmatism for thousands of years, was making a return. As McNaught's childhood faith matured into adolescent doubt, he began to long for that kind of certitude. Like many young Christians – like many adult believers – the gap between private fervour and public insouciance troubled him. Unlike most believers, he expected that gap to be closed, definitively – and soon.

JANUARY, 1994: a small church by Toronto Airport hosts a visiting preacher from Kansas. At the church's regular Sunday service, the preacher stands up, thanks the congregation for receiving him and preaches on the day's gospel message, as he has hundreds of times before.

By the end of his sermon, hundreds of attendees are on the floor, "slain by the spirit": crying, laughing, speaking in tongues. At the next service, the visitor preaches again, and again ecstasy breaks loose. By the end of the year, the event has a new title – "the Toronto Blessing" – and old names: pentecost, healing, revelation, revival.

Toronto marked the beginning of what some Immanuelites hoped would be a new pentecost, a global revival, a path out from the ignominy of secularism. But for McNaught, it marked the end of the road. His pastor's refusal of cancer treatment in favour of healing by prayer was a grim coda to his devout youth. His parents, open sceptics of revival, left Immanuel and, like many of his friends, remain Christians, albeit "reasonable, middle-of-the-road" ones. Entering the world of university – and then adult life, living and working for three years in Syria – McNaught left faith behind.

But it still haunted him. There are "places secular language can't reach", he tells me: places religious words still touch. Words like "blessing". Like "grace". Those words – and the good they encapsulated, somehow preserved – nagged at him for years. "Love and bewilderment" led him into writing: love for the people, and the community, and the strange, dull, wonderful things they did together. Bewilderment over what that led to. Bewilderment that so much of what he had lost went beyond words.

Enthusiasts, wrote Ronald Knox, pursue and practise "inward experiences of peace and joy". Such states are everywhere in religious belief – think about Pascal's tears of joy, Hopkins' "a zest, an edge, an ecstasy" – but not everywhere discussed. As experiences, they're hard to articulate, to find words for. McNaught thinks there's a hidden population of ex-Evangelicals in our culture, "wounded, yearning and don't really talk about the experiences they'd had". He hopes they'll see something of themselves in *Immanuel*. He hopes that it's a book people can, and will, talk about in church.

"The whole thing's a bit of an excuse to write about playing bass in a worship band," McNaught adds, but the self-deprecation doesn't quite stick: earlier he'd told me that "the sound of singing in tongues was one of the things he really wanted to nail" writing *Immanuel*. And the section on singing in tongues is an eerily beautiful part of the book, in which McNaught catches the friction and the awe of spirituality in stubbornly unspiritual settings; lime-cordial communion, glossolalia in a sports hall, messages from God, streamable online.

"Be eager to prophesy," Paul says in 1 Corinthians, ranking prophets above any other vocation. Historians and theologians agree that prophecy played a vital role in the first Christian communities; oracles of God's will, sign interpreters, in ecstatic and continual communion with the divine. As the Church grew – maturing and becoming more "reasonable", in the eyes of mainstream Christians such as Ronald Knox; ossifying, in restorationist eyes – prophecy retreated. Their authority eroded by hierarchs and theologians, supplanted by dogma, prophets were confined to Christianity's ragged outer edges. Revelation was refined to the past tense; prophecy lingered, rather than lived, whispering through century upon century in the dreams of old men, the wanderings of saints: the visions of women.

FOR KNOX'S Enthusiast, that won't ever be enough. "He has before his eyes a picture of the Early Church," Knox writes, "visibly penetrated with supernatural influences; and nothing less will serve him for a model." McNaught's summary of revivalism from Wesley to the present is pithier. "What if we didn't have to wait?" For some of McNaught's friends from Immanuel, that elusive promise, that search for certainty, took them to travel halfway around the world, living for years as disciples of a self-proclaimed prophet: praying for him, working for him, being abused by him. "Blessed are the pure in heart," Jesus tells his followers in Matthew 5, "for they will see God."

"Just because something actually happened," McNaught says to me, a little regretfully, "doesn't mean it sounds plausible." Scoan was like that, he adds. Factual, but not credible. The movement's founder, T.B. Joshua, is said to have spent 15 months in his mother's womb; age 24, he was commissioned to preach and teach the Gospel in a vision. According to his thousands of followers – and Joshua himself – he spoke with God.

Accused of criminal negligence and political interference, Joshua's fame blossomed. Scoan, "Nigeria's biggest tourist attraction", drew

CONTINUED ON **PAGE 12**

CONTINUED FROM **PAGE 11**

international visitors in their thousands. Politicians, pastors, Christians from the West like McNaught's friends from Immanuel: all called him pastor, apostle, preacher, healer. Most often, they called him prophet.

A pastor who predicted the death of Michael Jackson, or who claimed to cast out "water demons" on DVD recorded services, sounds exotic and so is easily exoticised; attributed, with varying degrees of prejudice, to foreign cultures and developing nations. T.B. Joshua's Western disciples can be parsed in this light, too. But McNaught discovered that – for all that Nigerian folklore that pervaded Joshua's ministry – Scoan and Immanuel were, at one level, deeply attuned. T.B. Joshua's international followers weren't listening for a new voice, but for one they knew well. In Joshua's unpolished aspect, his homespun wisdom, his grand, visionary reports, they heard the first, faint, drops of a latter rain.

"T.B. Joshua, sitting on an office chair in the courtyard, would speak the words that God had given him." Sitting with Joshua, in the shade of Scoan's enormous satellite dish, McNaught's friends would make exacting notes of what the prophet said. In order to do so, disciples had to match Joshua's irregular sleeping schedule, and be ready at any time to catch God's words as they fell from human lips.

Those words were eloquent and insightful; surprisingly so, coming from a man without formal education. The significance of those words was surprising, too. They were, as McNaught's friends related to him years later, placed on the same level as Scripture. That alarmed Joshua's critics – and alienated otherwise sympathetic evangelicals – but it made sense to McNaught's friends.

Devout in a way McNaught never was, his friends shared something of his secret doubts, his desire for certainty. And even as Joshua's speeches skirted the outer limits of credulity, even transgressed basic elements of historic Christianity, they returned to the promises Immanuel had made them. If God spoke to us once – shaped revelation from human mouths and lips – why would he stop? If God asked something of you, how could you refuse?

ALL SCRIPTURE was prophecy, once. The Word of God is composed of words from God, however we define it: indwelling and inspiration, the visible traces of a movement invisible, incalculable, divine. Hierophany. McNaught tells me it was his original starting point for the book, "examining the objects and places through which we access the divine". And that's a project he approaches "from a position of ambivalence". Scoan proved to be closer to a cult than a church; Joshua, for all his charisma and near-supernatural acuity, a manic, sexually abusive control freak.

Immanuel is careful of the beliefs involved, cagey about their ultimate truth or falsehood. Revelation, prophecy, speaking with God; maligned and misunderstood, there's no Christianity without it. And there's the paradox for the mature, "orthodox" Christian. "What right have we to assume," as Ronald Knox wrote, "that the man who lays credit to heavenly illumination must be a fraud?" "The older I'd got, the less I'd felt my journey away from church as an uncomplicated liberation," McNaught reflects.

In his Letter to the Ephesians, St Paul gives prophecy his blessing – but also a purpose. God sent prophets for the same reason he grants every other spiritual gift: "to equip his people for works of service". To "bear with each other in love". And although devotional pyrotechnics, then and now, fire his imagination, it's the community he found in Immanuel that sticks in McNaught's mind. The atomisation and loneliness of modern life weighs especially heavily on the young: for McNaught, now 35, it's a depressing contrast to the mutual love and support he saw as a child. As an agnostic adult, he can't look at Christianity with the eyes of faith any more. But he can see what he's lost.

It took six years to write *Immanuel*. Between winning the prestigious avant-garde publisher Fitzcarraldo's essay prize and final publication last month, McNaught reworked the text several times over, travelled to Nigeria to investigate Scoan first-hand and became a father. The experience – or experiences – have given him "a new respect for structure and dogma", he says, laughing. Structurelessness can be a prison; freedom from ideology "mask an ideology that's all the more insidious for being unnamed".

Charismatic Catholicism is a post-Vatican Council success story supported by Pope Francis

And "my thinking about individual psychology", McNaught tells me, "changed writing the book." A decade of experience in the field – he worked in an inpatient psychiatric ward during university – left him sceptical of the status quo in the treatment of mental illness. The model of "cordoned-off self-contained psyches" was wearing thin. "We're built out of the bonds we have with others." That reflects some of the newer ideas in cognitive psychology – and some of the older ideas in Christian theology. From Christ, writes Paul in Ephesians, "the whole body" of believers, "joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work".

"As a culture we're very good," McNaught adds, "at talking about casting off bonds and less good at talking about what happens when you have none." He quotes "The Silken Tent", a Robert Frost poem: "… the soul … is loosely bound / By countless silken ties of love and thought." It was a lack of those ties – or being "cut off from them" – that made Scoan so powerful, and so dangerous. People with no ties drift; people with only one bond can find it pulls constructively tight.

T.B. Joshua, mired in accusations of financial misconduct and sexual abuse – a crisis he responded to by releasing pre-recorded exorcisms of his accusers, part miracle work, part blackmail – died in June 2021. His bizarre life concluded in an unexpected and unexplained death. Immured in a mausoleum of bright white marble, Joshua lives on in a battered but surviving Scoan, in the pain he caused dozens of victims, and in the promises he held out to millions: of healing and certainty, prophecy and power.

IN 2019, McNaught watched in amazement as an American Evangelical preacher exorcised some of the very specific – and very Nigerian – water demons T.B. Joshua claimed to expose. Her name was Paula White. She was the personal chaplain to President Donald Trump.

At the end of *Enthusiasm,* Ronald Knox notes his subject's recent, precipitate and – he thought – irreversible decline. Knox didn't live to discover how badly he'd missed the mark. In the eyes of historians yet unborn, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries might well be known not for the death of God – but for the new life of the Spirit.

As pews empty across the West, "Wild Christianity" is discreetly flourishing. Pentecostal, spirit-filled churches and worship groups pullulate from megachurches to living rooms. Charismatic Catholicism is a post-Vatican Council success story, counting millions of adherents, defended and supported by Pope Francis himself. And every morning Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, an establishment man to his Winchester-and-Oxford-educated fingertips, puts his breakfast aside for a moment, tilts his head skywards, opens his mouth and speaks in a language no living human knows.

All this sounds strange. But revealed religion is almost by definition strange, out of place; in but not of the world, standing at a slight angle to the universe. That oddity is important, McNaught thinks: "An alertness to and attending to the world in a different way, in a way that is open to the transcendent and divine in the most mundane of things." It's something, he says, religion shares with poetry.

All religious life ends in defeat. Faith, fickle, waxes and wanes. Churches rise and fall. Revival fades to habit, shades to doubt. Decline is inbuilt, predestined. Revelation turns to memory; prophecy to voice; the language of angels to the tongues of men.

Speaking to McNaught, reading *Immanuel*, it's striking how much of that tragic vision he inherits from his Christian upbringing. And how much hope. Even as he mourns the church of his childhood, laments Scoan and asks how – if ever – we can escape atomisation without falling for something worse, McNaught doesn't despair.

Recovery remains possible, in writing if not in life. We return to the beginning, training our ears, sharpening our eyes. Love and bewilderment; the lightness of speech, the weight of God. Gone, but not destroyed. Forgotten, but never lost. You just need to find the words.

Immanuel is published by Fitzcarraldo Editions at £12.99 (Tablet price £11.69).

diary@thetablet.co.uk

Cannonball moment

LAST SUNDAY, 31 July, was the Feast Day of St Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. It was also the final day of the "Ignatian Year", marking 500 years since Iñigo López y Loyola, invalided out of his budding military career by a stray cannonball, experienced a transformative religious conversion. For the past 12 months, Jesuits and their friends have been asked to look for a "cannonball moment" of their own.

Iñigo's cannonball took him from the Basque country of his birth, and the worldly life of a minor nobleman, to Rome, to religious vows, into the heart of the Counter-Reformation – and, eventually, to sainthood. Where might such a "cannonball moment" take us today? Damian Howard, the engaging provincial of the British Jesuits, posed the question to a Farm Street congregation. He'd already provoked a vivid answer. Earlier, members of the society and their guests had watched a new film about the deaths of the martyrs of El Salvador. On a dark night in 1989, six Jesuits working at the Central American University – along with the wife and child of a caretaker – were executed in cold blood. The army's culpability was an open secret – but nothing could be proved until a cleaner at the university

came forward as a witness. *What Lucia Saw* told the story of what happened next – with an accuracy and immediacy that astonished Cafod veterans Clare Dixon and Julian Filochowski, who introduced the film.

Rarely had we seen a more visceral reminder of the power and the perils of Christian discipleship. Fr Howard recalled John Rawls' description of Ignatius as "mad" – "precisely because he ordered his life to the single overriding good of God's love". Decisive action for peace, justice and human dignity sometimes requires that wholehearted devotion, Howard said. "Mad or not, give me Ignatius any day."

THE EXCLUSIVE *Tablet* pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi in October is being led by one of the most experienced editors in academic publishing. If you have a respectable library of theology titles, it will almost certainly include books commissioned and knocked into shape by Natalie Watson.

Before getting into publishing, she taught church history to Anglican ordinands at Cuddesdon; she currently steers *The Pastoral Review* into harbour four times a year as its production editor. Pilgrims travelling to Italy in October with Watson and McCabe Pilgrimages will discover some of the secrets of publishing as well as of Christianity's holiest sites.

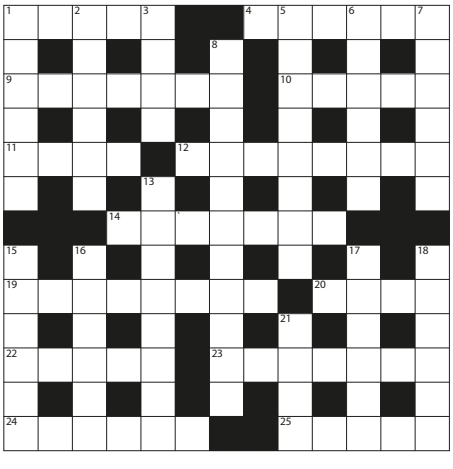
Watson has travelled all over Europe, and knows Turkey especially well. "Spending so much time walking around the New Rome (Constantinople) made me want to discover the old one," she tells us.

"Having grown up as a German Lutheran, I discovered in Rome what it means to belong to a worldwide Church. I love going to places where the great saints actually lived and walked and struggled, and there is always another church to visit for anyone who is travelling with me."

Email info@mccabe-travel.co.uk for more details. The booking deadline is 15 August.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 817 Enigma



Across

1 She makes the Spanish surround the English (5)
4 I may add that what one finds on a cellphone leads to a conclusion (6)
9 Dessert made by a boffin (7)
10 The words of the song make Cyril look ridiculous (5)
11 One of those in Yorkshire starts the day with a beer (4)
12 Lost footing when the saint fell (8)
14 Because of strong liquor, I trip on board ship (7)
19 The choir going around Ireland is loud. That's ghastly! (8)
20 A quiet altercation on the ship (4)
22 Rascal cuts the top off a sensible shoe (5)
23 Vengeance seems in turmoil (7)
24 It's most sensible to have a terribly neat ship (6)
25 Horrible street in an old negative (5)

Down

1 Take me back to the corporate group whose spirit I personify (6)
2 I hear a composer helps to carry a suitcase, for example (6)
3 One could get an English elevator in a car (4)
5 Lo, my path goes round many fields of study (8)
6 In a sinister manner, I leer at the heartless lady (6)
7 Determine to throw the police into the river (6)
8 Sane critics of the Church (11)
13 Revelations come too early on an aircraft's wings (8)
15 The chapter on minerals provides boring jobs (6)
16 Physically force the mythical creature to make a stage appearance (6)
17 Believes that tea causes corrosion (6)
18 Devious cleverness over a filthy house with bends (6)
21 Put an end to all the prayers! (4)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 6 August The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY. Email: thetablet@thetablet.co.uk, with Crossword in the subject field. Please include your full name, telephone number and email address, and a mailing address. Three books – on Augustine, Christianity and Thomas Aquinas – from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random.

We are processing entries but there may be a delay in notifying winners and sending out prizes. Please keep entering.

SUDOKU | Hard

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

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

Solution to the 16 July puzzle

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

Solution to the 16 July crossword No. 814

Across: 7 Thomas; 8 Glance; 10 Lateran; 11 Myrrh; 12 Mars; 13 Swans; 17 Broom; 18 Nene; 22 Grieg; 23 Ivanhoe; 24 Toledo; 25 Cannon.
Down: 1 Ptolemy; 2 Pottery; 3 Harry; 4 Clement; 5 Indri; 6 Jedha; 9 Snowdonia; 14 Tragedy; 15 Bethany; 16 Gehenna; 19 Agate; 20 Villa; 21 Cavan.

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.

One kind only

● I am increasingly dismayed by the reluctance of our hierarchy to restore Communion under both kinds, which is still banned because of the Covid epidemic. To ignore Jesus' request, "Take this, all of you, and drink from it", requires convincing justification. Otherwise the laity will continue to be deprived of the opportunity of entering fully into the liturgy of the Mass.

I can only assume that their lordships feel they are doing us a favour by being ultra-cautious about the dangers of Covid. But it is now widely recognised that Covid is an airborne, not a contagious, disease; hence reception from the cup poses no threat to either minister or communicant. Parishioners are fully capable of deciding for themselves what risks, if any, they might be taking.

The Anglican Church restored the full eucharistic service many months ago. Our bishops don't even trust their parish priests to make sensible local decisions.

PETER KEMMIS-BETTY
BARNES, SOUTH-WEST LONDON

Assistant Pope

● Only the Pope can decide how his successor is elected. Would it, perhaps, be helpful to him and to the Church if at this stage, when, understandably, he speaks with increasing frequency of his retirement, he were to ask the College of Cardinals to elect a Coadjutor-Bishop of Rome to help him, or, indeed, were to make such an appointment himself? Old age teaches us all that it is not enough to continue struggling to help others; we need to accept help for ourselves.

Such a figure could ensure that Pope Francis is spared for longer to continue the saving mission of Vatican II. And eventually, through coadjutorial right of succession, the new Pope would hit the ground running. This could only be for the good of the Church.

(MGR) BASIL LOFTUS
HELMSDALE, SUTHERLAND

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

Sell the Vatican and save the climate

TTHE SCIENTISTS are now virtually unanimous. Unless we can reduce carbon emissions by 45 per cent by 2030, we have no hope of zero by 2050. If we fail we will bequeath climate horror to our children. You would have thought people would be beside themselves with concern, but they are mostly not. Witness the absence of this issue from the current debate for the leadership of the Conservative Party.

Yet most people are not stupid nor irresponsible and if they care about anything it is their children's future. How are we to explain it? The sages, not least the gospels, have been telling us that material goods are an alternative god since the year dot. We're fixated. St Benedict, most humane and mildest of legislators, is almost manic on the abbot regularly inspecting the brethren's mattresses lest anybody should be hiding some treasured possession.

We have little time left. But the Covid vaccines were developed in one year instead of 10 because huge amounts of money were poured into the research. We don't have to despair. Research is going forward in key areas such as desalination and gas from grass (hoarse laughter from cynics but the first facility is being built near Reading. If this can be brought off, it will make energy cheap, sustainable and largely free of international markets.) Vast amounts of money are needed. Public awareness needs to be aroused on a grand scale.

In this uniquely challenging time, the Church should sell the Vatican. Partly because it would raise gargantuan sums. Think how much Elon Musk or Branson would pay to give people breakfast in the Sistine Chapel. But also because it would be such a vivid sign that the Church is not an art gallery but concerned only with salvation, in both this world and the next. The Church could conduct its business from a few high-rises in Birmingham, and the Pope could contact the faithful directly through Zoom and Twitter.

Mad idea? But then searing droughts and floods, large parts of the world too hot to live in, much of our most fertile land going under water, including considerable chunks of the UK, hundreds of millions of refugees, and widespread shortages of food and water – it doesn't sound all that sane an idea either.

THOMAS JACKSON
WHITWORTH, LANCASHIRE

Tory integrity

● Hilary Andrews (Letters, 23 July) notes that the word "integrity" has been bandied about in the Conservative leadership election. Jesus showed that keeping rules is not proof of integrity, nor breaking them of itself a proof of its absence. We can be grateful that manifesto promises made by all major parties eventually led to a referendum with a clear outcome ratified by parliamentary votes and an election result for Boris Johnson to carry it through as Prime Minister against treacherous currents in a tide of opposition both in the UK and in the EU. What would our democratic tradition have meant otherwise?

FRANK JURKSAITIS
LONDON SE13

● I agree with your editorial "The moral outlook is bleak" (30 July). The Conservative Party leadership campaign has morphed into an acrimonious blue-on-blue affair. The tough talk on immigration is deplorable; refugees are seen as unwelcome visitors who must be dealt with in a cruel fashion. This populist right-wing rhetoric is not conducive to meaningful debate and I shudder for the country if this trajectory continues without the checks and balances of a once-civilised party.

JUDITH A. DANIELS
GREAT YARMOUTH, NORFOLK

● The postbag of 23 July is a typical example of *The Tablet*'s obsession with the sins of the Conservative Party. Not that I criticise free speech, but it brings the obligations of balance and fairmindedness. If the editor never receives letters with the opposite point of view, I would suggest he must be worried at the one-sidedness of his journal, neglecting the views of large numbers of right-wing voters.

GERALD ROBERTS
BUXTED, EAST SUSSEX

Latin Mass

● The apostolic letter *Traditionis Custodes*, promulgated by Pope Francis in July 2021, was designed to restrict and perhaps eventually eliminate the older form of the Mass.

Now that a year has passed, it is opportune to review its impact. The listings provided by the Latin Mass Society allow this to be done.

Taking England and Wales as a whole, the number of Latin Masses has actually increased. The summer 2022 edition of *Mass of Ages* lists 63 Masses, on a typical Sunday, compared with 57 a year before. While provision in most dioceses has

LETTERS

remained broadly unchanged, there are six dioceses where the number of Sunday Masses has increased. Only in Clifton, where there are no longer any Latin Masses on Sundays, has there has been a significant reduction.

While the increase from 57 to 63 may be regarded as small, it is surely not the result that Pope Francis intended. It is widely reported that the numbers attending those Masses also continue to increase. It is reasonable to conclude that, at least in England and Wales, *Traditionis Custodes* has failed in its objectives.

PAUL WADDINGTON,
HEMINGBROUGH,
NORTH YORKSHIRE

● John D. Rogers (Letters, 16 July) hopes he is not being schismatic in yearning for acceptance of the Tridentine Mass in the modern Catholic Church. His quest for such acceptance is not made easy by the general image of Tridentine proponents as being orthodox, reactionary, anti-modernity, in many cases opposed to the current papacy to the extent of electing their own popes and bishops, and in general being the sort of people determined to take the fun out of Sunday.

While, like him, I served Mass in Latin as a boy, my tenuous faith is not enhanced or enriched by some sixteenth-century teaching from the Council of Trent.

RODNEY DEVITT
DUBLIN

Mortal sin

● Joseph Bevan's assertion that "most Catholics habitually receive Communion in a state of mortal sin" (Letters, 30 July) must be questioned. How does he know? I seem to remember, from my Penny Catechism schooldays, that a sin is "mortal" if it meets three conditions: grave matter, full consent, full knowledge. Has this changed? I was also taught that such sin is extremely rare.

JOHN MERRIGAN
EAST MOLESEY, SURREY

● Joseph Bevan seems to take a dim view of his fellow church-going Catholics. He would be wise to heed the words of Jesus: "Do not judge and you will not be judged, because the judgements you give are the judgements you will get." (Matthew 7:1-2.)

(FR) JOHN DANFORD
LEIGHTON BUZZARD,
BEDFORDSHIRE

Beach liturgy

● It has been reported that Fr Mattia Bernasconi, of Milan, has been censured by his diocese after celebrating the Eucharist for a group of young people at a beach at Crotone in southern Italy. He used as the altar an inflatable mattress floating on the sea.

I am pretty sure that the liturgy he led was reverent and heartfelt, despite its unusual location. Furthermore, I can guarantee that the young people who took part will never forget that Eucharist; and that they will have appreciated a priest engaging with them in a familiar and joyful environment, where they are comfortable.

I have been a teacher and children's catechist for over 30 years and in my experience the Catholic Church too often expects people to come to church rather than taking church out to them, where they are.

And after all, Jesus spent a lot of time in and around the seaside.

ANNE DOBBING
GUTCHER, YELL, SHETLAND

Girls' football

● I enjoyed Adrian Chiles' parable ("The age of enlightenment", 23 July), and have also enjoyed the Euros. He set me wondering how a group of 11-year-olds would react if their teacher told them that the person coming in to say Mass for them was "a girl"? I imagine it would be with shrugs much like his football team did. Women priests won't solve all the problems about ministry; like the young footballer, they will probably be no better nor worse than the rest of them. But that surely is the point of the parable too.

(PROF.) BILL SHEILS
YORK

Rights court

● Your editorial "UK needs European Court of Human Rights" (23 July) prompts the reflection that the Church needs a lay-led court of human rights. Free from the taint of clericalism, it would have stopped the abuse crisis much earlier. It would also solve the problem of married priests and the vexed question of divorce.

EDWIN RANKIN
BOLTON, GREATER MANCHESTER

The power of art

● I think Madoc Cairns (column, 30 July) underestimates the power art has to inspire. It can bring joy and healing to the sick in mind and body. When we feel at our farthest from God, a poem by Francis Thompson can remind us that God's love is a "many-splendoured thing", a description that can be applied to many works of art.

TERESA BUTLER
HATFIELD, HERTFORDSHIRE

THE LIVING SPIRIT

AND LITURGICAL CALENDAR

God is there in these moments of rest and can give us, in a single instant, exactly what we need. Then the rest of the day can take its course, under the same effort and strain, perhaps, but in peace. And when night comes and you look back over the day and see how fragmentary everything has been and how much you planned that has gone undone and all the reasons you have to be embarrassed and ashamed: just take everything, exactly as it is, put it in God's hands and leave it with him. Then you will be able to rest in him – really rest – and start the next day, as a new life.

ST BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS (EDITH STEIN)
FROM *EDITH STEIN: ESSENTIAL WRITINGS*, EDITED BY JOHN SULLIVAN OCD (ORBIS BOOKS, 2002)

On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: "Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you."

POPE FRANCIS
FROM *EVANGELII GAUDIUM* (CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY, 2013)

A sacrament is an event when Christ meets us and we meet him. When you come to think of it, the present moment can be a meeting point between God and us. It is only "now", in the present moment, that we meet him, here and now. Some people spend a lot of time looking back on their lives, others spend time daydreaming about the future, but the important moment is "now". In any present moment we can meet God. At any moment we can just think about God and send a quick message up to him. It may be a fleeting thought or a word spoken. For instance, I can just say "I am trying to love you", or "please help me", or "I am sorry about this or that". The present moment is always precious. Like a sacrament, it is a meeting point between God and ourselves.

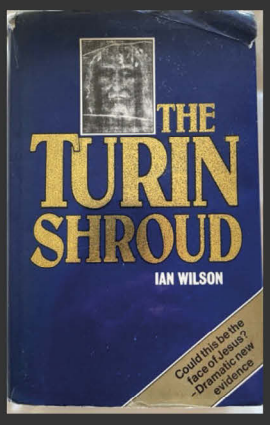
BASIL HUME
FROM *BASIL IN BLUNDERLAND* (DARTON, LONGMAN & TODD, 1997)

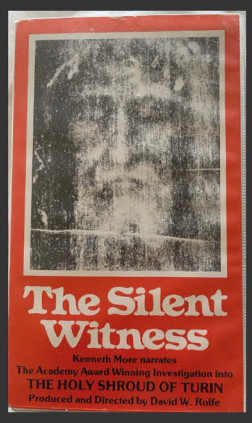
CALENDAR

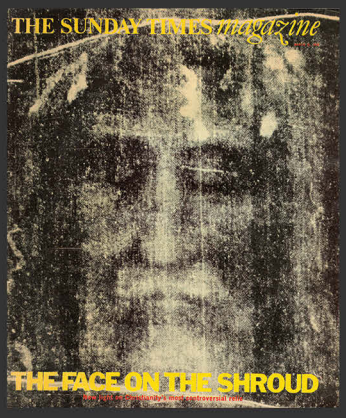
Sunday 7 August:
Nineteenth Sunday of the Year (Year C)
Monday 8 August:
St Dominic, Priest
Tuesday 9 August:
St Teresa Benedicta of The Cross, Virgin & Martyr, Patron of Europe
Wednesday 10 August:
St Lawrence, Deacon & Martyr
Thursday 11 August:
St Clare, Virgin
Friday 12 August:
Feria or St Jane Frances de Chantal, Religious
Saturday 13 August:
Feria or Sts Pontian, Pope, and Hippolytus, Priest, Martyrs
Sunday 14 August:
The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

✦✦✦

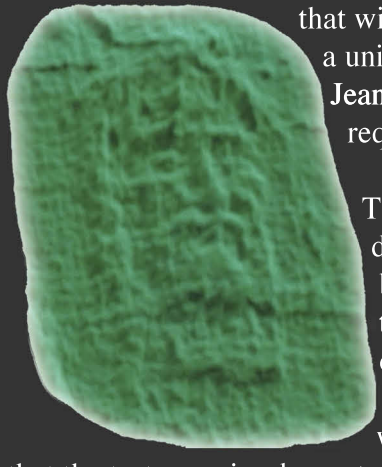
For the calendar for the Missal of 1962 go to **www.lms.org.uk**







In 1978 best-selling books, Bafta-winning films and prestigious cover stories reported impressive new scientific and historical research into the Shroud. The image on the cloth not only revealed unknown details of Roman crucifixion but was also encoded with 3D data so that with newly developed NASA technology a unique 3D image could be rendered by a simple scan. Only the face at that time. Pope **Jean Paul decided that the time had come to submit the cloth to a new C14 test that only** required a small fragment of material.



The British Museum was appointed to supervise. Their representative, Dr. Michael Tite, determined five protocols to be observed to ensure an accurate dating. The whole affair became a hornets nest of competing interests as seven C14 labs vied to be chosen for the task and the Pontifical Science Academy in Rome went head to head with its Turin counterpart. Rome lost and withdrew. Turin allowed the test to proceed without Tite's protocols in place. Why, when this happened, did Tite and the British Museum not then withdraw? It seems likely that so much was now at stake for labs and individuals alike that the test was simply unstoppable. If Rome made such a decision, which it could have done, it would look like it had lost confidence in the Shroud which it certainly had not.

The Intention

CARBON 14 TEST PROTOCOLS

29 September 1986

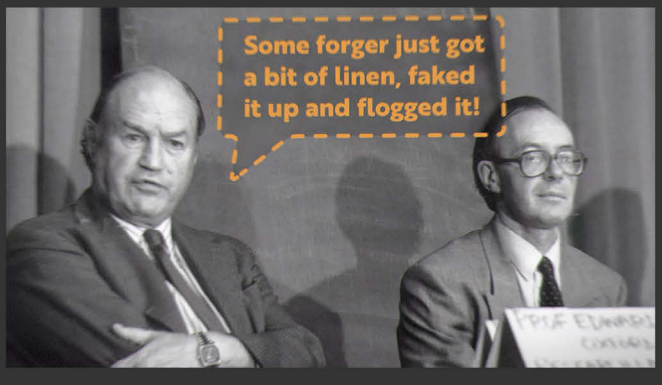
1 Multiple sample areas
2 Simultaneous comprehensive examination
3 Seven C14 labs would participate
4 Blind tests
5 No conferring between the laboratories

The Reality

CARBON 14 TEST PROTOCOLS

29 September 1986

1 Multiple sample areas
2 Simultaneous comprehensive examination
3 Seven C14 labs would participate
4 Blind tests
5 No conferring between the laboratories

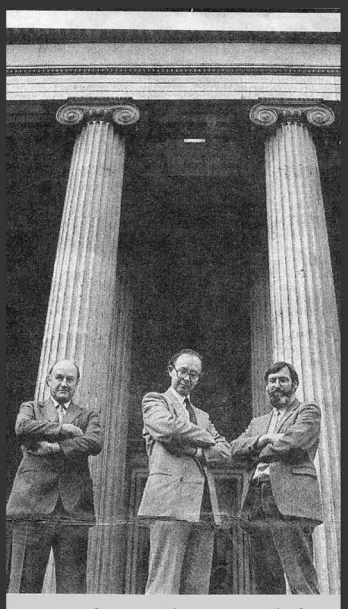


Prof. Edward Hall
Oxford Radiocarbon Unit

Dr. Michael Tite
British Museum

At the Press Conference a journalist asked what the image was and you can see the reply. Two months after this event Hall retired and Tite replaced him.

Shroud in positive and negative



Turin Shroud is a Fake!..

...says British Museum. "Some medieval forger just faked it up and flogged it!"

L-R, Prof. Edward Hall, Oxford; Dr. Michael Tite, British Museum; Dr.Geoff Hodges, Oxford.

The following day the presss announcement was re-staged on the steps of the British Museum. It was so authoratitive and damning that general interest in the Shroud - secular and devotional - largely collapsed from this moment forward.

The British Society for the Turin Shroud reported all this in its Newsletter but found that, despite this dramatic reversal, research did not stop and, over three decades since, ever more countervailing evidence has been submitted for publication. Much of it peer-reviewed and running counter to any presumption that the anouncement on the left would be the last word.

In additon, thanks to the Freedom of Information Act, we now know a lot more about what was going on behind the scenes once the single C14 sample was divided between the three chosen labs and their much delayed final announcement of the result. This disclosure revealed discrepancies between the measurements obtained by the laboratories and the published results.

The single sample taken from a corner of the cloth was divided and one piece each was given to Oxford, Zurich and Arizona laboratories. The corners are where the Shroud was clutched for the countless exhibitions of the cloth down the centuries. It is not surprising they got worn and needed careful repair. The amount of repaired material in each sample is graphically illustrated by the progressive way the C14 age decreases the further the piece came from the corner.

For a limited time, Tablet readers can take a look for themselves at just how much we now know about this remarkable cloth and also learn of the behind the scenes machinations that bedevilled the C14 test and the manner of its announcement.

We are just a decade or so away from the 2000th. anivesary of the event that gave birth to Christianity - the Resurrection of Jesus. It may take that long to overcome the opprobrium that damning verdict gave to the simple piece of cloth that may well have recorded that event in the most graphic detail.

David Rolfe, Editor, BSTS Newsletter 2017-2022 and producer/director of the new film "Who Can He Be?" now streaming world-wide at whocanhebe.com.

To view the BSTS Newsletters past and present go to bstsnewsletter.com, select "Member's Area" and enter the code: 47030. Thank you.

BSTS

BRITISH SOCIETY FOR THE TURIN SHROUD

The sound of the sisters

Medieval music-making by women thrived behind the closed doors of the convent. Now, that once-lost work of the nuns is being unlocked, as **Alexandra Coghlan** finds out

THERE'S A line in *Alice in Wonderland* that musician and historian Laurie Stras often ponders. "What is the use of a book without pictures?" it asks. For Stras, what that says to her is: "What good is research without actually hearing the music?"

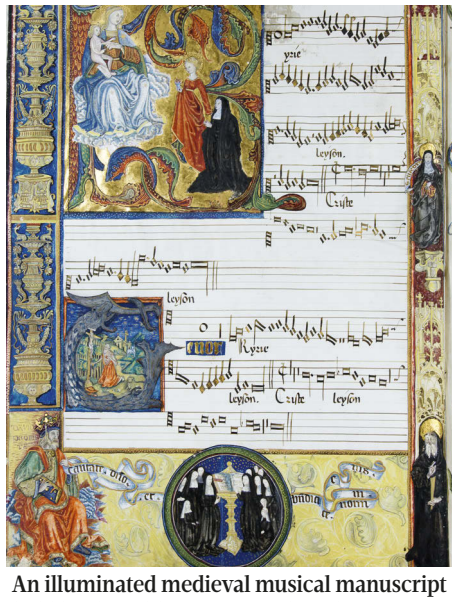
Stras leads a double life: as well as being professor of music at both Southampton and Huddersfield universities, she's also a professional performer – director, since 2000, of award-winning vocal ensemble Musica Secreta. The group has an unusual remit, focusing on historical music written by and for women from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. Often, their music is being heard and recorded for the first time in living memory.

While male instrumentalists have occasionally joined Musica Secreta (which Stras admits changes the atmosphere of the ensemble), the group is generally made up of women – and that's a natural extension of the communities of nuns who were the original composers and performers of so much of this repertoire. This theme of female communities and relationships is at the heart of the ensemble's latest recording project – *Mother Sister Daughter* – Stras tells me, from her book-lined, cat-filled office, when we meet over Zoom.

"I felt very strongly that I wanted this album to reflect the relationships between women that existed within the convents, but also to explore how women learned to be women during this period. It occurred to me that, while there were instruction books written for this purpose, on a day-to-day basis it was the liturgy that fulfilled this function."

On the disc's cover is a richly gilded and painted panel of the Virgin Mary and Elizabeth spinning, while the infants Christ and John the Baptist play at their feet. It's a gentle image celebrating female intimacy and domesticity – the networks of affection, support and influence Stras describes. But it's not quite that simple.

"We find undercurrents of female experience in the liturgy," Stras explains. "But often these were cut out after the Council of Trent. Stories of the saints are slimmed down and sanitised to shape an increasingly precise ideal of holy womanhood. My colleague Marianne Gillion has identified it with the Virgin and Mary Magdalene, but we also see it in someone like Catherine of Bologna. Pre-Trent we hear about her life, her musicality, her specific gifts. But afterwards she becomes this monochrome saint – it's like her humanity is taken away. It's a mirror of women's lives during this time; their power and their roles narrow as the century goes along. Seventeenth-century women were far more confined in terms of what they were able to do and who they were able to be."



An illuminated medieval musical manuscript held by the Biblioteca Capitolare di Verona

IN MANY WAYS the recording feels like an act of resistance to this process, an insistence on the particular, the individual female experience. Nowhere do we see this more clearly than in the three liturgical sequences that dominate the disc: the two anonymous "Vespers of St Clare" and the "Vespers of St Lucy".

"I feel like once a year the sisters got a chance to tell one another their origin story. The "Vespers of St Clare" recounts the life of the saint and her sister Agnes, their deaths and the formation of the order. So by the end of the two days of the Office, the women are actually singing about themselves as a community, and about Clare as their leader.

"When I'm presenting the 'Vespers of St Lucy' on stage I often make the joke that it's the only conversation in the liturgy that would pass the Bechdel test! Lucy goes to St Agatha to ask her to cure her mother's haemorrhagic illness – something that sounds a lot like symptoms of perimenopause. But St Agatha tells her: 'No, you can do it yourself. You are a holy woman.' They are discussing experiences that the women in the convent could absolutely relate to."

Just as Musica Secreta's 2017 recording *Lucrezia Borgia's Daughter* (focusing on music Stras identified as composed by Leonora d'Este, daughter of the famous Borgia matriarch) used a particular historical figure as a prism for its repertoire, so Stras here puts another historical woman in the spotlight. Virginia Galilei, otherwise known as Sr Maria Celeste, was the illegitimate daughter of Galileo Galilei and an important part of Florence's San Matteo convent community.

Virginia's story has already been lovingly told in Dava Sobel's book *Galileo's Daughter*, but Stras and Musica Secreta here add a soundtrack to that narrative, giving us a tantalising glimpse into the sonic world of a talented musician who ended her days as choirmistress of the convent, organising music for the daily Office, teaching chant to the sisters and writing to her father to request music for the three resident organists.

But if researching this music sees Stras as a historian, "obliged to leave gaps" where sources lost over time or destroyed in floods create them, then performing it sees her as a musician – "And, as Bruce Haynes pointed out, as a musician you absolutely can't leave gaps!" The result is performances that involve creativity alongside detective work, a fusion of informed speculation and meticulous research.

The "Vespers of St Clare", for example, sits strikingly, unusually high in its original key – painstakingly transcribed and edited by Stras from a manuscript once owned by San Matteo that is "literally falling to pieces", and which for that reason she had never been allowed to actually handle. Faced with a choice between leaving them where they are or transposing them, Stras has preserved the original pitch. The result shimmers and glints – a brilliant sonority Stras imagines would have supplied "jewel-like" moments of brilliance when heard in their original context.

And then there are works by Leonora d'Este – pieces Stras didn't include in the earlier recording. "There were some that we just couldn't work out – the '*Virgo Maria speciosissima*' was one, just full of weirdness. Firstly there's a very high ostinato voice which we have played on a treble viol. That seemed the only solution, because to sing it would be

CONTINUED ON **PAGE 19**

THEATRE

Summer fun

A natural double bill of updates

MARK LAWSON

Jack Absolute Flies Again; Much Ado About Nothing
NATIONAL THEATRE, LONDON

PHOTO: BRINKHOFF-MOEGENBURG

Caroline Quentin as Mrs Malaprop in Jack Absolute Flies Again

EXCEPT FOR Covid delays and rescheduling, the National's two latest shows would have run years apart. But, accidentally thrown together, *Jack Absolute Flies Again* (Olivier) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (Lyttelton) make a logical and lovely summer double bill.

Both are modernisations of classic texts, updated to the middle of the twentieth century. Richard Bean and Oliver Chris move Sheridan's 1775 comedy *The Rivals* to July 1940, during the Battle of Britain. Director Simon Godwin has shifted Shakespeare's 1600 drama of reluctant lovers to 1930s Italy in the Mussolini era, the original city setting becoming The Messina, a resort hotel.

These renovations overlap – both Somerset country house and Sicilian hotel are being used to billet soldiers – but the original texts contain striking similarities. Both feature men pretending to be someone else to trick a woman into a relationship. And Sheridan's Mrs Malaprop, comically substituting one word for another ("pinnacle" becoming "pineapple") seems clearly heir to Dogberry, in *Much Ado*, who, having apprehended suspects, reports that he has "comprehended two auspicious persons".

These echoes may be emphasised by the fact that Emily Burns, the "dramaturg" (responsible for the textual revisions) on *Much Ado About Nothing*, directs *Jack Absolute Flies Again*. She lands every verbal and visual gag in a script that, in fast-coming laughs and farcical set pieces, resembles Bean's *One Man, Two Guvnors*, an adaptation of a Goldoni comedy of similar vintage to *The Rivals*.

In this twist on the Sheridan, Jack Absolute is an RAF pilot, played with laddish swagger by Laurie Davidson, and his father Sir Anthony an army major general, given remarkably sustained choler and holler by Peter Forbes. The yokel from the original, Bob Acres, becomes an Australian airman, his lines boomeranging with Oz slang.

Caroline Quentin, laden with new tongue-slips, many of which wouldn't have got past the Georgian censor, is an inventively slapstick Mrs Malaprop, even doing the splits while singing. Natalie Simpson's spirited Lydia has social and sexual views that advertise the twenty-first-century spin of the script and Kerry Howard as Lucy the maid has fun with postmodern jokes.

DOWNSTAIRS in the Lyttelton, *Much Ado About Nothing* neatly fits relocation to an hotel. Dogberry and his fellow officers of the watch become the security department, with David Fynn's bombastic, dyspraxic Dogberry and Olivia Forrest's Georgina (transitioned from George) Seacole genuinely funny as Shakespeare's clowns rarely are. In the crucial overhearing scenes, Godwin's staging makes brilliant use as hiding places of a hammock, a lilo and a gelato cart. The fake funeral for Hero is staged with full Italian Catholic gravity.

But, though Katherine Parkinson and John Heffernan are fun enough, their Beatrice and Benedick lack the depth and darkness of a play in which love and hate are achieved through deceit. Exams often ask if the disputing couple were lovers in the past, but the text leaves little doubt. When Beatrice complains that she once gave Benedick "a double heart to his single one", that second organ can be taken (and played) as a female pubic reference. No longer a "maid" (she calls herself a "woman"), Beatrice is unable to marry (only a renewed union with Benedick could redeem her), giving a despair to their dealings that Simon Russell Beale and Zoe Wanamaker deeply mined in Nicholas Hytner's 2007 National production.

But the ultimate test of any *Much Ado* is the audience response when Beatrice, asked what Benedick can do to win back her two hearts, says: "Kill Claudio." It's an astonishing moment where Shakespeare abandons distinctions between comedy and tragedy. When Wanamaker chillingly gave an appalled Russell Beale his contract, the auditorium was silent with surprise. Parkinson, who has a naturally ironic voice, wins a big laugh for what seems a larky dare.

However, after a troubled spell during which it has been hard heartily to recommend two productions from one season, this pair provides such high pleasure that the enjoyably cross-illumination of the plays might even be sold as a joint ticket.

CONTINUED FROM **PAGE 18**

exhausting and probably quite unpleasant to listen to! Then there are the inner parts, full of dissonance, and unexpected phrase lengths and endings too. This music just doesn't obey the rule of sixteenth-century counterpoint. It could be inexperience – this could be an exercise set by a teacher for a student – or it could be genius. Whichever it is, we love it."

After spending so many years researching the enclosed, confined lives of convent women, Stras and her singers found themselves unexpectedly confined when Covid struck, derailing the original recording session and preventing the musicians from performing together. Stuck at home and missing her own sister, Stras found herself drawn to the poem "Half-Sister" by Esther Morgan. "It just leapt out at me," she says. "There was something about it that just made me think of how nuns have felt about their relatives on the outside."

The poem prompted Stras to commission the group's first new work from a living composer – the Dubai-based Joanna Marsh. Combining Morgan's poem with a seventeenth-century Italian sonnet about a girl taking the veil, *The Veiled Sisters* marries the textures and techniques of Renaissance polyphony with a contemporary choral spirit to create a work that struck a chord with Stras and the rest of the group. "The producer and I repeatedly burst into tears when we were recording it," she says. "Joanna is very good at contracting the sonic world and cocooning you in this enclosed space. Then suddenly there are these great blazes – high and low – which jolt you emotionally and just open everything out."

Enclosure and release; song and silence; calm without and a blaze within: the tensions and contradictions Marsh captures so vividly are the fabric of convent life itself – the patterns we see mirrored across centuries in the lives and music Stras and Musica Secreta uncover in a project poised at the junction of history and art.

Mother Sister Daughter is available to stream now on Spotify.

EXHIBITION

The Word through a lens

Images from a monastic darkroom

MADOC CAIRNS

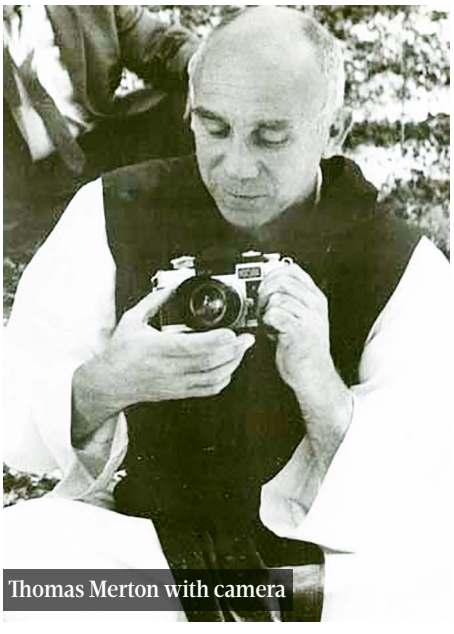
Thomas Merton: A Photographic Exhibition
UNIVERSITY CHURCH, OXFORD

THE IMAGE is the enemy. It's a far from unheard of view within Christianity, especially on the ascetic fringes of Mother Church. Even Thomas Merton – monk-*littérateur* and spiritual celebrity – subscribed to it. Spirituality is a bid to escape the image, to unpick the dense, rusted layers of falsehood that we accrue from early childhood, forming themselves into a hard, unfeeling carapace.

Images separate us from each other, Merton thought: they split us from our own selves. They keep the ego in, and God out. "Strip your soul of images," he wrote in *New Seeds of Contemplation*, "and let Christ form himself in you."

Photography, a lifelong passion, seemed to clash with his monastic vocation. The cloister and the camera are antonyms, if not enemies. In his later years, however – flush from his success as a spiritual writer, dissatisfied with the apolitical aridity of his order, interested in Eastern religions, Zen Buddhism above all – Merton picked up a camera once again. In the fields and forests surrounding his monastery, he looked through the lenses, and saw God.

PHOTO: © UNIVERSITY CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN, OXFORD



Thomas Merton with camera

A new exhibition at the University Church Oxford (to 15 September) gives a taste of the work that ensued. A simple wooden wheel, orphaned and unattached, stands silhouetted against a post. Two fences intersect; one splinters and breaks, the other persisting to the very edge of our sight. Grass moves, invisibly touched by sun and wind. Silent pictures speak of movement; objects point to their unseen, photographist subject. Nature speaks of grace.

Merton, an introductory panel tells us, called his photography "serious work". The explanation is redundant beside the images: taken with evident, almost neurotic care, they're religiously precise. Indelibly religious in tone, too. Concerned with edges and limits, the centre is sometimes hard to define: superficially stiff, superficial composition conceals a deeper loneliness, a silence within silence.

Zen, with an emphasis on the cultivation of inner detachment, renewed Merton's thoughts on the image: it's an omniscient presence here. Unarranged, the non-human world – natural and artificial – opens a door to elsewhere. Image and mystery can coexist; the cloister and the photograph can work in friendship, if not in unison. In one image, a thicket of sticks and branches gives way to a blank, shadowed gap, mid-plank. It looks like it could go on forever – or that it already has.

Camerawork as contemplation, in the theological sense, is an arresting innovation on Merton's part. Unfortunately, though, the exhibit makes too much and too little of this. A small number of images are presented, oversized, with selections from Merton's writings beneath. It's left unclear where words connect with image beyond a necessarily inchoate thematisation; more is obscured than explained.

Incomplete as it is, the exhibit is intriguing for more reasons than novelty. The impersonality of the image – the way selfhood impresses itself upon art like fingerprints on wax, present as after-image, as loss – presented the youthful Merton with a problem. In maturity, it presented him with an opportunity. The lens is a mirror, showing us what we want to see, presenting finite images as authentic truth. It can also, Merton realised, be a window; taking us out of ourselves, into somewhere new, strange, beautiful. The way out is the way through.

CINEMA

Burning soul

A seat-of-pants disaster thriller

ISABELLE GREY

Notre-Dame on Fire
DIRECTOR: JEAN-JACQUES ANNAUD

AS THE 6 P.M. Easter Monday Mass at Notre-Dame de Paris was beginning on 15 April 2019, an unseen fire was breaking out in the cathedral's roof space. The security guard in charge of monitoring the fire alarm, who had only started in his job that morning, confused the nave and sacristy attics, which meant it was initially dismissed as a false alarm. So the first report of smoke rising from the 850-year-old building reached the fire service via social media; and then emergency fire trucks became stuck in gridlocked traffic, so for a while only one vehicle was able to get through. For two of the six young crew members on board, this would be their first fire.

Director Jean-Jacques Annaud (*Name of the Rose*, *Seven Years in Tibet*) has taken these dramatic events and, using awe-inspiring reconstructions and a largely unfamiliar cast of actors, made a seat-of-the-pants disaster thriller that feels like an eye-witness documentary.

Annaud begins by weaving together what's at stake. Notre-Dame is a place of worship, an ancient monument, an international tourist attraction, a workplace, part of France's national identity, and a treasure house. "She is my star and I love her," the director has said. "I tell the story of the tragic hours during which she nearly died."

And, with fire sequences shot on studio sets intercut with CGI and contemporary footage, he creates a worthy antagonist for the star of his film. Silently billowing smoke gives way to flames that burn at more than 2,200 degrees. Fiery embers and molten lead rain down from the roof, which belches clouds of sulphurous smoke, all watched impassively by stone and wooden gargoyles. Scaffolding eventually melts, causing the collapsing spire to perforate the interior vault. When the fire threatens the belfries, the fear is that the weight of the falling bells will bring down the entire façade. A heroic "suicide squad" volunteers to climb and crawl its way into the best position to quench the deadly flames while its commander, Général Gontier (Samuel Labarthe), waits anxiously on the ground, unhappy at risking lives for stones.

The race against time extends to the cathedral's distraught custodians. Notre-Dame guards treasured relics – the Holy Crown of Thorns, a vial of his blood, a piece of the True Cross and one of the Crucifixion nails – but the general manager, Laurent Prades (Mickaël Chirinian), who has the key and codes to the safe, has to race from the other side of Paris, with almost no battery power left on his phone. When he finally arrives, he panics and cannot remember the code.

These small moments of comedy and farce not only relieve the almost unbearable tension, but remind one of the human frailty that the cathedral exists to embrace. When a state-of-the-art robotic vehicle inside the nave drenches a fourteenth-century statue, the stone Madonna appears to shed a tear.

Outside, as it grows dark, a crowd with lighted candles has gathered to sing and pray. Prayers are answered. Total disaster is averted, and the first light of dawn feels like a miracle.

·OUR REVIEWERS·

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Loth to die unjustly

In 1678, a band of perjurers spread terror of a Catholic plot to kill the king

MATHEW LYONS

Hoax: The Popish Plot that Never Was
VICTOR STATER
(YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 336 PP, £20)

PHOTO: ALAMY/HERA VINTAGE

Titus Oates in the pillory for perjury

AS DAYLIGHT faded on the rainy afternoon of Thursday 17 October 1678, three men discovered a body face-down in a ditch at the foot of Primrose Hill, then beyond the northern limit of London. The body was that of Sir Edmund Godfrey, a magistrate who had been missing since the previous weekend. His hat and periwig were caught on bushes at the edge of the ditch; his sword was beneath him. Some eight inches of its blade protruded from his back.

The jury at the inquest that followed wrestled with the possibility of suicide; it remains the most likely explanation. But the deceased's brothers claimed he had been murdered by Catholics. In this, they were riding a rising wave of anti-Catholic hysteria: for some weeks two men, Titus Oates and Israel Tonge, had been peddling stories of a vast Catholic conspiracy. Godfrey had been the magistrate who took their depositions. For many, his death proved the truth of the accusations. The House of Commons set up a committee to investigate both the murder and the conspiracy. The dogs were out and running.

BOTH OATES and Tonge were serial failures. Indeed, Oates – an unprepossessing man with a voice "like a flawed pipe organ" – had already packed an impressive list of ignominies into his 27 years, having been ejected from one public school, two Cambridge colleges, one parish living, and a naval chaplaincy before professing to convert to Catholicism. He was quickly expelled from both the English College in Valladolid and the Jesuit college at St Omer in Flanders and had returned to England broke and further embittered. The conspiracy – better known as the Popish Plot – was largely his work.

It was, as Victor Stater says in *Hoax,* his gripping new account of the affair, "one of the most preposterous – and consequential – conspiracy theories of all time". Seventeen Catholics would die traitors' deaths on the scaffold on the basis of Oates' sworn testimony. Many more died, directly and indirectly, as a result of the two-year frenzy of hate he unleashed. What then did Oates allege? His complete list of accusations ran to 81 points: Catholics had been behind the killing of Charles I, for instance, and the Great Fire of London. Their plans included the assassination of Charles II, either by poison, by dagger, or by shooting with silver bullets. Louis XIV of France would conquer and re-Catholicise England.

There was no evidence for any of this beyond the word of Oates and those of a few other fantasists – conmen, criminals, malcontents – who came forward in his wake. But what they spoke to was every Protestant paranoia about Catholicism made flesh. That's why the plot was so readily believed: it told Protestants what they already knew to be true. "Nothing can seem strange that is testified against them," said a judge of the defendants in one of the treason trials that followed. Protestations of innocence were merely further evidence of Catholic perfidy. Belief in the conspiracy was an article of faith: the plot, said one privy councillor, "must be handled as if it were true, whether it were so or not".

No one was safe. Indeed, the primary targets of those who used the plot for political ends were Charles' Catholic brother James, the heir to the throne, and his Catholic queen, Catherine of Braganza. The nascent Whig faction, led by the diminutive Earl of Shaftesbury, wanted to exclude James from the succession and compel Charles to divorce. Perhaps Charles might find a Protestant wife and produce a legitimate heir; if not, his illegitimate son, the Protestant Duke of Monmouth, was waiting in the wings.

Stater is cynical about Shaftesbury's motives, in particular. "Let him cry as loud as he pleases against Popery," Shaftesbury said of a rival. "I will cry a note louder." The viciousness of politics in an age of far from absolute monarchy is compellingly handled; "I would have lived with more ease in a powder mill," an official later recalled. But at the heart of the book, as they must be, are accounts of the treason trials the conspiracy spawned. The drama of each is sharply realised, small tragedies of dignity and malice in the greater tragedy of the narrative. It is hard not to be moved by the courage of the accused, fighting for their lives for a brief few hours in the arena of the courts; their voices are vivid still, more than 300 years later. "I am not afraid of death," said Thomas Whitbread, head of the English Jesuits. "But I should be very loth to die unjustly."

WE LIVE, as Stater notes, in an age of conspiracy theories. Reading *Hoax* one is constantly reminded how vulnerable even powerful institutions are to the determinedly dishonest – perhaps particularly to those who justify their dishonesty to themselves as being for a greater cause – and how readily rationality recedes before the irrational when deep-rooted beliefs are brought into play. Might *Hoax*, as well as being a first-rate piece of history, help alert us to any latter-day Oates and Shaftesburys among us now?

Saint and martyr

REBECCCA FRASER

Henrietta Maria: Conspirator, Warrior, Phoenix Queen
LEANDA DE LISLE
(CHATTO & WINDUS, 496 PP, £25)

HENRIETTA MARIA, *Conspirator, Warrior, Phoenix Queen* shows sympathy for an unpopular royal figure Leanda de Lisle believes deserves reconsideration.

As one of the chief obstacles in the path to parliamentary democracy, Henrietta Maria has generally been treated with disdain by historians. But de Lisle reframes the queen in far more positive terms, as an enlightening cultural influence. And she reminds us that "many of those who fought hardest for 'liberty' against Charles I denied it to the slaves they shipped from Africa to the Americas".

Henrietta Maria emerges as a progressive young woman. She embraced Platonic ideals which put women centre stage at a brutal time, and her message of the value of the female perspective spread far beyond the court.

The queen was also a shrewd political operator. She begged her weak but obstinate husband to compromise with Parliament before the Civil War, even trying to persuade Charles to accept Triennial Parliaments. Far from being a Catholic fanatic, she would have liked the English equivalent of her father's Edict of Nantes which granted freedom of religion for Huguenots. Nevertheless, her Catholicism meant she could always be described as part of the Popish threat. As the revolutionary situation degenerated, the rumour the queen was about to be arrested for treason marked the opening moves of what became the English Civil War.

A patron of the theatre, Henrietta Maria made it fashionable for women to attend performances. De Lisle reappraises her love of luxury goods, arguing that she was a "17th century influencer", a big business role supporting

ALAMY, GRANGER HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE

Henrietta Maria by Van Dyck

a network of traders in London. As news came that the queen was about to flee London at the beginning of 1642, thousands of tradeswomen petitioned Parliament against her going.

The book opens with an account of Henrietta Maria's birth, which took place in public. Arriving in England the shy teenager with teeth that stuck out like cannons was not treated well by her husband Charles I, though they would grow close.

Marie de Medici's confessor had assured the Pope that this marriage could still kickstart the reconversion of the Stuart Kingdom. But far from being receptive to his new bride's Catholicism, Charles I sacked her attendants for being too French, and steps were taken to restrict Henrietta Maria's Catholic influence. It was the excuse for an onslaught on Catholics. Breaking his marriage treaty promises, Charles I reimposed the penal laws against Catholics – Masses were prohibited in people's homes, they were forbidden to travel five miles from home and fined for refusing to attend Protestant services.

DE LISLE adds a vital new dimension to the queen's story by locating her firmly in the complicated French background as the daughter of one of France's most remarkable kings, Henri IV. She proudly compared herself to him during the English Civil War for her daring exploits, laughingly calling herself the "Generalissima", in touching letters to Charles I.

In France, where she would sit out the Republic, Henrietta Maria would be regarded as a "great queen, even a martyr and saint". Unfortunately, she was not the right person to take forward the English monarchy's delicate relationship with the House of Commons, which equated Protestantism with freedom. She had refused to be crowned queen, because she swore to her priest she would not take part in any protestant ritual. But she was just a 15-year-old pawn in a system of alliances where it suited James I to ally with France.

Henrietta Maria left her homeland with contradictory instructions from her mother: to "embrace only the interests of the English nation" and forget those of France, but to protect persecuted English Catholics, and "not forget the other poor English people" whom she must gently prepare "to part from error". As de Lisle asks, how could she be both a good queen of Protestant England and a good Catholic?

SPEED READING

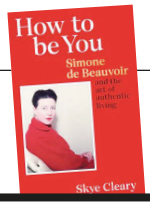
JAMES MORAN
picks debut novels

This summer sees the publication of three accomplished works by first-time novelists.

Rachael McGill's debut, *Fair Trade Heroin* (Dedalus, £9.99; *Tablet* price, £9), is set between present-day London and mid-1990s Afghanistan, a country which is being taken over by the Taliban for the first time. McGill tells the story of an idealistic aid-worker (a heroine with an interest in heroin) and her teenage daughter, as hidden family secrets are suddenly revealed. McGill is particularly good at pointing to the inhumanity of the British asylum system, and the way that an apparently amorphous mass of Afghan and Pakistani refugees actually consists of a wide range of classes, customs and cultures.

James Cahill's *Tiepolo Blue* (Sceptre, £14.99; *Tablet* price, £13.49) is another well-wrought novel, with a rather abrupt conclusion, telling the story of a traditionalist professor of art history discovering a life beyond academia. The main character, a don named Don, abandons his Cambridge college in the 1990s and heads for London, where he discovers a hitherto unknown gay world. Cahill is a talented stylist and delivers the tale with panache.

Best of all is Joanna Quinn's *The Whalebone Theatre* (Fig Tree, £14.99; *Tablet* price, £13.49), which is part family-saga and part spy-thriller. Quinn sets her story largely in Dorset from 1919 to 1945, telling of three somewhat neglected children inhabiting a grand but crumbling estate. Quinn develops her cast of richly drawn characters quite brilliantly, showing us how her central trio grow to adulthood and how they encounter the brutalities of the Second World War. This is enormously ambitious and utterly compelling.



RECENTLY PUBLISHED **How to be You: Simone de Beauvoir and the art of authentic living** / SKYE CLEARY
EBURY, 18.99; TABLET PRICE £17.09 / The great French writer can teach us to free ourselves of fears and stereotypes

Familiar and unforeseen

D.J. TAYLOR

A New Suffolk Garland
ELIZABETH BURKE, DAN FRANKLIN ET AL
(BOYDELL PRESS, 288 PP, £20)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £18 • TEL 020 7799 4064

PHOTO: ALAMY, RICHARD BOWDEN

Orford Ness lighthouse and outbuildings, Suffolk

CASE-HARDENED reviewers usually demand two things from an anthology: the familiar and the unexpected side-by-side. And so, confronted with this handsome publication, sponsored by the Festival of Suffolk and dedicated to Her Majesty the Queen, I straightaway sat down and compiled a list of what I expected to find in it. This included M.R. James, *The Pickwick Papers*, an extract from Penelope Fitzgerald's *The Bookshop*, one of W.G. Sebald's mournful peregrinations about the place, George Ewart Evans on local folklore and perhaps some mention of the county's more exotic myths and legends.

Happily all these were well to the fore: several pages of James's Aldeburgh-set "O Whistle and I'll Come to you My Lad"; Sebald in the Southwold Sailors' Reading Room, where he leafs lugubriously through the log of a patrol ship that was anchored off the pier during the Great War, and a no-holds-barred description of "Black Shuck", the terrible East Anglian ghost dog, who appeared so pyrotechnically at Blythburgh church in August 1577 that the scorch marks on the north door are visible to this day.

As for the unforeseen, I was particularly struck by Roger Deakin's account of wild-swimming in the Waveney, where he came face-to-face with an otter, and Simon Loftus reflecting on Gardner's *Historical Account of Dunwich, Blithburgh, Southwold*, published in 1754, which, as he notes, seems to echo the work of Sir Thomas Browne, writing in a previous century, while simultaneously looking forward to Sebald.

ABOVE NEARLY everything assembled here, including some top-class illustrations, hangs the scent of psychogeography, that is the eerie Suffolk landscape intruding to the point where it becomes a tangible presence in the narrative. This is especially true of the crime novel extracts by, among others, P.D. James, Patricia Highsmith and Ruth Rendell, whose participants, you infer, are behaving in the way they do because of where they are. As ever, it is the place's fault.

At once historically inclined and thoroughly up-to-date (the lyrics to "Castle on the Hill", Ed Sheeran's paean to Framlingham and a scene from Richard Curtis' *Yesterday*), *A New Suffolk Garland* is also a cornucopia of recent social history. If there is space for Griff Rhys Jones on sailing the Butley River and Craig Brown (who also contributes the introduction) on Orford, then hats off to the compilers for encouraging Donny Cole to remember Lowestoft fish market in the 1950s and Mayuri Patel to write about life behind the counter of her Ipswich corner shop.

Secrets and dreams

SUZI FEAY

The House of Fortune
JESSIE BURTON
(PICADOR, 416 PP, £16.99)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £15.29 • TEL 020 7799 4064

THE NATURE of the mysterious miniaturist, whose tiny carved dolls gifted to the Brandt family of Amsterdam seemed to predict future joys and calamities, was left hanging at the conclusion of Jessie Burton's bestselling debut. It was almost as if the author didn't know how to tie up her own loose ends. Though two standalone novels followed (*The Muse* and *The Confession*), perhaps Burton always intended to return to the Dutch Golden Age with its tulips, tall houses and canals. It's now 1705, 18 years after the action of *The Miniaturist*, and the focus has switched to the next generation.

The first book dealt with the ill-starred marriage of 18-year-old Nella Oortman to the older businessman Johannes Brandt. The innocent young bride came to the grand mansion on the Herengracht to find it full of secrets, mostly of the sexual kind. She learnt that Johannes was unlikely ever to consummate the marriage; meanwhile his upright sister Marin was having an affair with his business partner, Otto, a former slave. Thea, the child of that union, is now coming of age and it's time to find a suitor who will overlook the family's decline and the bride's skin tone. With both Johannes and Marin now dead, can Thea ever find happiness, or is she fated just like aunt Nella?

NOVEL of the WEEK

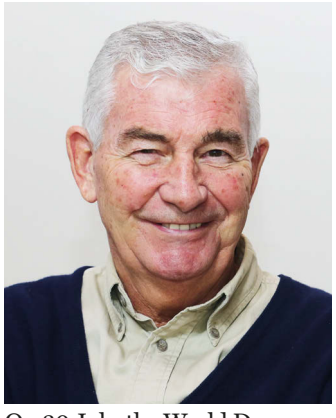
Here as in the former novel, Burton maintains a relaxed attitude to narrative contrivance, seeming to think that if a device is worth using once, it's worth using four times. Thea is as fond of listening at doors and peeping through keyholes as a way of gleaning information as her aunt used to be. No one goes to church or thinks of God much; but perhaps because Burton has conjured her world so well, with its ruffs and velvets, oil paintings, candlelit interiors and sumptuous feasts, the characters' lack of period sensibilities is easier to overlook.

Some historical details feel strange, though. Why has Johannes left the house to Otto, rather than his widow? Wouldn't this materialistic yet moralistic society be shocked at an unrelated man and woman living together? Otto and Nella don't even seem to like each other as they squabble over Thea's marital prospects. And why the miniaturist bothers consort with this unremarkable crew remains opaque. Burton, a supremely confident writer, rides roughshod over such quibbles with a tale that hurtles relentlessly forward. One trope has been dropped, thankfully; whereas pets in *The Miniaturist* were regularly dispatched for dramatic emphasis, here at least the delightful cat Lucas lives to mouse another day.

NEWS BRIEFING

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

PHOTO: CNS, BOB ROLLER



On 30 July, the World Day Against Human Trafficking, a Columban missionary in the **Philippines**, Fr Shay Cullen (pictured), whose Preda Foundation supports child victims of exploitation, called for more centres with professional therapeutic healing and empowerment programmes rather than current temporary shelters.

In **Brazil**, the Auxiliary Bishop of Porto Alegre and member of the Bishops' commission for fighting trafficking, Bishop Adilson Pedro Busin, produced a video for the day that underlined that human trafficking is present in Brazil in the form of slave labour, begging, and trafficking for sexual and organ exploitation. This year, 1,000 people have been rescued from slave labour.

France's Constitutional Council has rejected objections by the country's three main Christian Churches to its "separation law", which tightens state control over religions to fight against militant Islamists. The Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Churches objected especially to a new rule that all religions must renew their status with a local prefect every five years. Among the documents they must produce are accounts listing where their income is from, an issue usually linked to mosques funded from abroad. The Constitutional Council rejected the Churches' complaint, saying it saw no problem for them.

An "alliance" between young Christians from **Lebanese** parishes and small agricultural producers, Christian and Muslim, is providing new jobs and fresh food amidst the country's economic crisis. On 23 July, the first weekly community market was inaugurated in the town of Rayfoun, under the auspices of the Centre for Integral Development of the Maronite Patriarchate. Patriarch Bechara Boutros Raï attended, along with local politicians.

More cash, fewer faithful

The **German** Church's income from church tax continued to rise in 2021 even though at the same time 359,338 Catholics officially left the Church, and so no longer had to pay the country's compulsory church tax of between 8 and 9 per cent of their net income tax. The statistics published by the bishops' conference show that 6.73 billion euros was taken in – the second highest sum on record, achieved largely by property investments. Leaders of the Synodal Pathway have made no suggestions that the German Church would be better off as a Church without the compulsory tax.

Indonesia's Ministry of Education has withdrawn a text used in schools after the Catholic Bishops' Conference pointed out a doctrinal error. The 2021 text was being used for juniors studying Citizenship Education, Religion and "Pancasila", the charter of the five principles that is the basis of the nation. The offending text stated that, "the two religions, Protestantism and Catholicism, have the same God, the Holy Trinity, Our Lady and Jesus Christ". The Ministry of Education said a new text will be made available once the Catholic and Protestant Churches have been consulted.

Escalating Islamist terrorism in **Burkina Faso** has left a Catholic diocese devastated. Attacks have forced parishes and schools to close, leaving priests unable to minister to 95 per cent of Catholics in rural areas. A report on the eastern Diocese of Fada N'Gourma, requested by Aid to the Church in Need, said that robberies, kidnappings and murders have all intensified. Terrorists have attacked five of the diocese's 16 parishes, which then had to close. In seven others, ministry is restricted now to the vicinity of the church.

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari and his government must take the blame for the country's security crisis, according to Bishop Oliver Dashe Doeme of Maiduguri diocese. He reported that attacks on communities by militant groups are spiralling, killing thousands this year, but "the government has lost its grip on the situation". At least 20 priests have been kidnapped in Nigeria in 2022, five in the first week of July alone, according to Vatican News. Three have been killed.

PHOTO: ALAMY/REUTERS, SOE ZEYA TUN

Myanmar's army announced on 25 July that it had executed four democracy activists, accused of helping to carry out "terror acts". The judicial executions are the first to take place in the country since 1990. Former MP Phyo Zeya Thaw, a former politician from Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, and activist Kyaw Min Yu, also known as Ko Jimmy (pictured), were among the four. Last week, Pax Christi International wrote to Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, Archbishop of Yangon, expressing solidarity with, and continuing prayers for, the people of Myanmar.

The Bishop of Baoding in **China**'s Hebei province has published a pastoral letter, urging clergy to register with the government-sanctioned Catholic Patriotic Association. The letter has imposed "unprecedented pressure on the clergy" and created "great confusion in the communities," local sources said. Bishop Francis An Shuxin said anyone who does not accept the order could be denied the sacraments.

The **Vatican** has called for the urgent phasing-out of fossil fuels to help combat climate change. Cardinal Michael Czerny, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, called for the "just transition" of affected workers into "environmentally sound" alternatives. "The proposed Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty holds great promise," he said.

Rights defenders in **Sri Lanka** have condemned a police raid on a remote parish church, allegedly to search for a Catholic priest who has been a key figure in anti-government protests. Police on 27 July raided the church at Ratnapura, in Sabaragamuwa Province, south-central Sri Lanka, searching for Fr Amila Jeewantha Peiris.

The acting head of the leading archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church in **India** has reportedly agreed to step down. During Archbishop Antony Kariyil's three-year tenure, a long-simmering and bitter liturgical controversy has dominated the Eastern Church, with many congregations resisting the "unified" liturgy that Pope Francis encouraged the Church to adopt. Archbishop Kariyil continued to give dispensations for alternatives to this unified rite.

Compiled by **James Roberts** and **Ellen Teague**.

PHOTO: EUROPASS

NEWS

·QUOTE OF THE WEEK·

“Several single men had bought the babies of Ukrainian surrogate mothers.”

Zdenek Kapitan, Office for the International Protection of Children in the Czech Republic (see page 26)

CANADA / ROME / Pope says he has the will to keep travelling but ‘we’ll have to see what the leg says’

Francis reflects on his future as he flies home

PHOTO: CNS, PAUL HARING

Pope Francis and journalists on the flight from Iqaluit, Nunavut, to Rome on Friday 29 July

JAMES ROBERTS

IN THE 40-MINUTE news conference that the Pope held on his return flight to Rome from Canada on 29 July, Francis talked about his own future, as well as the remarkable journey he had just completed.

Earlier that day, the last stop on his “penitential pilgrimage” had taken him to the town of Iqaluit in Nunavut, built on permafrost 200 miles from the Arctic Circle. There he apologised again to survivors of Canada’s residential schools, the majority Catholic-run and government-funded, and said it was his hope to “shed light on what happened and move beyond that dark past.”

The “evil” system, aimed at forcibly assimilating Indigenous children into Christian culture, had pulled children from their parents and grandparents, Francis told several thousand people outside Nakasuk School in Iqaluit, speaking in his native Spanish, with translation to English and Inuktitut.

On the plane, an Indigenous reporter asked why Francis did not use the word genocide while in Canada. “It’s true, I didn’t use the word because it didn’t come to my mind, but I described the genocide and asked for forgiveness for this activity that is genocidal. For example, I condemned this too: taking away children, changing culture, changing mentality, changing traditions, changing a race, let’s put it that way, an entire culture. Yes, genocide is a technical word. I didn’t use it because it didn’t come to my mind, but I described it … yes, it’s genocide. You can all stay calm about this. You can report that I said that it was genocide.”

On the impact of his health issues on his foreign travels – the acute pain in his knee meant he needed a wheelchair throughout his visit – Francis said: “This trip was a bit of a test” to see how much he could handle and how much of what was considered a standard part of a papal trip was really necessary. “Perhaps we will have to change the style a bit, reduce a bit,” he said.

But Francis said he still hopes to visit Kyiv – “we’ll see what’s possible” – as well as Kazakhstan in September for an interreligious meeting. “I have all the good will” to keep travelling, the Pope said, “but we’ll have to see what the leg says.” He said he wants to reschedule his postponed ecumenical trip to South Sudan with Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury and the Revd Iain Greenshields, moderator of the Church of Scotland.

On the possibility of his retiring, Francis said: “The door is open. It is one of the normal options, but up to now I haven’t knocked on that door.

“I haven’t felt like I needed to consider this possibility, but that doesn’t mean that the day after tomorrow I won’t start thinking about it. Stepping aside would not be a catastrophe. You can change popes, no problem.”

Another Canadian reporter asked Francis about the “Doctrine of Discovery,” papal teachings rooted in the fifteenth century that blessed the efforts of explorers to colonise and claim the lands of any people who were not Christian. Pope Francis said it always has been a temptation for colonisers to think they were superior to the people whose land they were colonising.

“This is the problem of every colonialism, even today,” he said, pointing to modern forms of “ideological colonialism”, which use requests for foreign assistance to force poorer countries to adopt policies that go against values that their people hold dear.

On Sunday 31 July, after the Angelus, the Pope said he would say more about his visit during Wednesday’s General Audience.

Pope recalls grandmothers’ ‘lyrical accents’ at Lac St Anne

ON TUESDAY 26 July, the second full day of his Canadian journey, Pope Francis joined 10,000 pilgrims for the Feast of Sts Joachim and Anne, parents of the Virgin Mary, at Lac Ste Anne in Alberta, *writes James Roberts*.

He was following in the footsteps of the tens of thousands of devotees, notably Cree, Sioux, Métis, Blackfoot, Dene and others, who since the 1880s have made the journey, sometimes in search of healing and notably to honour the grandmother of Jesus.

Like most of the 40,000 pilgrims each year, Francis paused at a statue of St Anne on his way to the water. He then stopped to pray facing east, then south, then west. Finally, facing north and overlooking the lake, he blessed the water, before being pushed in his wheelchair to the water’s edge.

Indigenous people similarly face the four directions of the compass in prayer to recall the “omnipresence” of the Creator. “Immersed in creation,” Francis said, “we can also sense another beat: the maternal heartbeat of the earth”. “Just as the hearts of babies in the womb beat in harmony with those of their mothers, so in order to grow as people, we need to harmonise our own rhythms of life with those of creation, which gives us life.”

“Lord, as the people on the shores of Galilee were not afraid to cry out to you with their needs, so we come to you this evening, with any pain we bear within us,” the Pope prayed, adding: “We bring to you … the wounds of the violence suffered by our Indigenous brothers and sisters … In this blessed place, where harmony and peace reign, we present to you the … terrible effects of colonisation, the indelible pain of so many families, grandparents and children.” He pointed out that faith is transmitted “in the language of mothers, in the sweetly lyrical accents of grandmothers”, before adding: “Part of the painful legacy we now confront stems from the fact that Indigenous grandmothers were prevented from passing on the faith in their own language and culture.”

UKRAINE / GERMANY / Pope urges belligerents to 'stop and negotiate'

Gallagher defends Vatican neutrality

CHRISTA PONGRATZ-LIPPITT and JONATHAN LUXMOORE

THE VATICAN's chief aim in the Ukraine conflict was to work towards peace and possibly to act as a mediator between the two warring sides, Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Secretary of State for Relations with States emphasised in the German Catholic podcast *Himmelklar* on 26 July.

Asked why the Vatican had remained strictly neutral and not sided with Ukrainian victims and why the Pope had not named Russia the aggressor, Gallagher explained that the Holy See never entered into alliances. "If you form an alliance with someone, you enter an alliance against someone. The Holy See has a universal mission. It is not that we do not see who the aggressor is and who the victim. One cannot simply speak of good and evil. Things are not that simple. Our approach is work towards peace – and possibly act as mediator."

PHOTO: CNS, PAUL HARING

Archbishop Paul Gallagher

The Vatican was not, however, neutral in its reaction to the suffering in the Ukraine, Gallagher pointed out. It was "neutral but not ethically indifferent". It had offered Kyiv the greatest support and the most intensive contacts it could. "I can understand that people always want one to take sides in a conflict – but that has never helped anyone in the course of history. The Vatican has offered to help and especially to help Ukraine – but we must reserve a certain amount of openness on all sides as far as ecumenical and political dialogue is concerned. The aim must always be peace."

Speaking after the Angelus on Sunday, Pope Francis said that even during his Canadian trip, he never stopped praying for the Ukrainian people, "asking God to deliver them from the scourge of war". "If one looked at reality objectively," he went on, "considering the damage that each day of war brings to that population but also to the entire world, the only reasonable thing to do would be to stop and negotiate."

Meanwhile the Red Cross said it had not yet been granted access to a prison where 53 Ukrainian prisoners of war were killed and 75 wounded in a missile attack. Russia claimed Ukraine's military used US-supplied precision rocket launchers to target the prison in Olenivka, controlled by the Moscow-backed Donetsk People's Republic. Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, head of Ukraine's Catholic Church, called the attack on the prison, that held many Azov Brigade prisoners who surrendered at Mariupol, an act of mass murder by the Russians.

Babies born to Ukrainian surrogate mothers sold illegally

THE CZECH Republic is investigating the sale of at least 30 babies born in Prague to Ukrainian surrogate mothers and sold to clients from abroad for €60,000 to €70,000 each according to the Vienna Institute for Medical Anthropology and Bioethics (Imabe), *writes Christa Pongratz-Lippitt*.

Together with colleagues from Ukraine, Great Britain and Sweden, members of the Czech National Centre against Organised Crime are investigating the sale of the babies.

The investigations are concentrating on the Feskov Human Reproduction Group with branches in Kharkov, Kyiv and Prague which recruits low-income Ukrainian women as surrogate mothers. The babies are born in Prague as surrogate motherhood is free from restrictions in the Czech Republic. In Ukraine it is restricted to married couples or infertile women.

Several single men had bought the babies according to the director of the Office for International Legal Protection of Children in the Czech Republic, Zdenek Kapitan.

According to Imabe, six members of the Feskov Reproduction Group are believed to have earned €1.2 million from child trafficking.

Kenya's bishops guide election campaign to home stretch

THE EFFORTS of Kenya's Catholic bishops to ensure peaceful, free and credible elections are seemingly bearing fruit, with the campaigns for the 9 August polls remaining largely peaceful, *writes Fredrick Nzwili*.

The campaigns entered the home stretch this week, with the bishops continuing to issue their weekly statements known as the Bishops' Voice. In the election period, the bishops' pastoral statements have been addressing key concerns including peace, unity, choice of leaders, rising cost of living and hate speech.

"We need to jealously guard our peace now, during and after the elections are announced. We have proven once more we can be true custodians of our country," said Archbishop Martin Kivuva Musonde, the chairman of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops in the 22 July Bishops' Voice.

In the August polls, Kenyans will be electing a president and a deputy, 337 national assembly members and 67 of the Senate, 47 county governors and more than 2,000 members of county assemblies.

Of the four presidential candidates, the former Prime Minister, Raila Amolo Odinga, 77, and the current vice president, William Ruto, 55, are the front-runners.

Affordable Care rules opposed

UNITED STATES. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops is strongly opposing a new set of proposed federal government regulations that seek to enforce a controversial section of the Affordable Care Act regarding discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, *writes Michael Sean Winters*.

All US hospitals, including Catholic facilities, would be covered by the new regulations.

The regulations, proposed by the federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), "mandate health-care workers to perform life-altering surgeries to remove perfectly healthy body parts", the US bishops said.

"Assurances that HHS will honour religious freedom laws offer little comfort when HHS is actively fighting court rulings that declared HHS violated religious freedom laws the last time it tried to impose such a mandate. This is a violation of religious freedom and bad medicine."

FRANCE

Notre-Dame deadline is tight but 'will be met'

THE GENERAL in charge of restoring Notre-Dame de Paris cathedral says its target date of reopening in 2024 is "a tense, rigorous and complicated objective" but still plans to finish it in time, *writes Tom Heneghan*. "We will fight to win this battle and to be able to open for worship in 2024," General Jean-Louis Georgelin said. "On this date, Notre-Dame will be completely cleaned, to the point that visitors will have a visual shock when entering."

Georgelin has promised the cathedral, which almost collapsed in the April 2019 blaze, would be ready for a Te Deum ceremony on 15 April 2024. President Emmanuel Macron wants France's most-visited monument open in time for the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics.

Apart from restoring the destroyed roof, workers will clean centuries of dirt and smoke from the walls and columns inside, so visitors used to seeing a dark interior will see the original limestone as bright as new. "The world is watching the cathedral's progress and I do not want to join the cohort of those who do not succeed," Georgelin told *Le Figaro*.

PORTUGAL

Patriarch under pressure for not reporting abuse

THE PATRIARCH of Lisbon, Manuel Clemente, is under pressure for having failed to report a case of sexual abuse by a priest, *writes Filipe Avillez*.

The incident reportedly took place during the tenure of the previous Patriarch, José Policarpo. The accused was removed from his parish and placed as chaplain at a hospital. But he continued to have contact with young and vulnerable children through a private, non-canonical institution he founded and helped manage.

When Clemente became Patriarch, he met the victim, who asked him not to pursue the matter canonically or criminally but to try and ensure the priest would not abuse again. The accusation against the Patriarch is that he failed to report the matter to the authorities, although the diocese did not then have guidelines requiring this.

VIEW FROM GUELPH

Michael W. Higgins

A **POPE** came to Canada. Again. John Paul II alighted on Canadian shores three times – 1984, 1987, and 2002 – but no visit has been as electrifying, polarising and turbulent as Pope Francis' recent pastoral "pilgrimage of penance".

Swept up in a whirligig of conflicting narratives, political point-scoring, failed expectations, a soured Canadian public, anxious Catholics, and far from neutral nationwide media coverage, it seems a mite outrageous to say that it was a success, but it was precisely that.

In honouring his pledge in Rome last spring to the Indigenous representatives that had travelled to ask him for an apology for the dreadful legacy of Church-administered residential schools for Indigenous children, Francis knew this was going to be a journey of pain. But, in spite of his physical impairment, he was resolved to come, offer apology, connect with Indigenous communities on their land, and offer a way forward to meaningful and credible truth and reconciliation.

The situation is fraught. The aftershocks of the residential school system – intact for over a century – have grown in intensity; the Catholic Church, which ran 60 per cent of the schools on behalf of the federal government, has faced an onslaught of criticism regarding its failed stewardship; and the "discovery" of some 200 unmarked graves at the Kamloops Indian Residential School, which had been under the aegis of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate unleashed a torrent of rage.

THE CANADIAN Conference of Catholic Bishops has not handled this file well, in sharp contrast to some individual bishops, such as Don Bolen of Regina and Michael Miller of Vancouver. As a consequence, Francis' visit was always going to be something of a repair operation.

In his address at Vespers in the Cathedral-Basilica of Notre Dame de Québec, Francis adroitly acknowledged the special significance of such Québec-born thinkers as Charles Taylor and Bernard Lonergan, with a generous nod to St François de Montmorency Laval, the first Catholic bishop of Canada and a seminary-builder (an institution whose best-before date has long expired) par excellence, in the process paying subtle tribute to the role that his two Canadian cardinals have played in preparation for this trip: Marc Ouellet and Michael Czerny, both Quebeckers, one by birth and the other by early formation.

In quoting Taylor on secularisation, Francis noted that it represents a challenge for our pastoral imagination, "an occasion for restructuring the spiritual life in new forms and new ways of existing". In applying this bold exercise in pastoral imagination to the Canadian context, indeed the New World context, Francis is calling for nothing less than a spiritual revolution. How do we address the corrosive effects of colonisation, the deliberate and systematic effort to eradicate the cultures and spiritualities of the First Peoples, the appalling record of Euro-centric hegemony with its presumed civilisational superiority, in a way that moves beyond theory, exhortatory rhetoric, and deft political manoeuvring?

Theologian Frederick Bauerschmidt concisely encapsulates the options: "Christians must take as their model not Sepúlveda [the Spanish Renaissance humanist], who justified the conversion by conquest of the Americas, but the martyred Trappist monks of Tibhirine, who died because they would not abandon their Muslim neighbours." The option, in other words, is either aggressive proselytisation or authentic witness. For centuries, we chose the former and the consequences are clear. Francis repeatedly calls for the recognition of the special genius of the Indigenous peoples, their harmony with Creation, the richness of their languages, which we ruthlessly suppressed, and the paramount need to move through truth to reconciliation and forgiveness.

FOR ME the most telling and effective moments that spoke to the pastoral instincts of this pope were his kissing of the hand of an elder and his return of a pair of child's moccasins to a former chief as he had promised when first he received them last spring in Rome. Tactile moments; moments of embrace; gestures of connection. For sure, the political squabbling and ecclesial debates in the background often moved to the foreground, but Francis relished the personal encounter over the ideological jostling and political posturing. And, of course, once freed from script and protocol, he spoke his mind freely on the plane back to Rome, conceding that indeed what happened to the Indigenous peoples *was* genocide, and that the controverted "Doctrine of Discovery" reflects a colonial mentality that must be repudiated.

His critics got what they wanted. But on his terms. The "pilgrimage of penance" would not be compromised. The personal encounter would be prioritised, the deepest empathy assured, reverencing the "other" an imperative.

Now ... over to the Canadian bishops.

Michael W. Higgins is a Distinguished Professor Emeritus, and a Senior Fellow at Massey College, University of Toronto. He is currently writing a book on Pope Francis.

NEWS BRIEFING

FROM BRITAIN AND IRELAND

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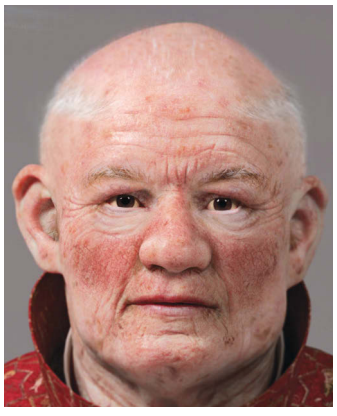

Abbot John of Wheathampstead (pictured, facial reconstruction), one of the most influential Benedictine Abbots of the fifteenth century, has been laid to rest at St Albans Cathedral, alongside his royal compatriot, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. Unknown for 480 years, his grave was discovered during excavation work in 2017. Last weekend his remains were placed in a zinc ossuary.

Sr Aelred Timmins RSM has received an honorary doctorate from Edinburgh University for her work over the past 50 years supporting the city's homeless and vulnerable. Born in Kilkenny, Sr Aelred has worked in the city since the 1970s, and in 1993 she founded the Homeless Project at St Catherine's Mercy Centre, which now helps more than 200 people daily.

Remembering Hiroshima

Pax Christi England and Wales is marking the anniversaries of the use of **nuclear weapons** on two Japanese cities in 1945. It will have a stall outside Westminster Cathedral from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on 6 August to mark the dropping of an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and on 9 August to mark the bombing of Nagasaki.

The **Jesuit Refugee Service** UK is facing a shortage of volunteer hosts at a time when many placements are ending. It also warns that many more refugees will be at risk of street homelessness because local authority accommodation, introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic, is being withdrawn.

Representatives from **Justice and Peace Scotland** and the Church of Scotland's Faith Action Team took part in a protest outside the Scottish Parliament last week, following the publication of a report on drug deaths. "Too few are able to access the help they need to recover from addiction," said Justice and Peace Scotland, which has joined Scotland's initiative on drug-related deaths and calls for the Scottish government to do more to tackle addiction.

The Catholic Union has received a reply from the Government to its proposal of a united household tax. The Treasury rejected the idea, arguing that a system of individual taxation "provides everyone with absolute confidentiality for their personal tax affairs".

PHOTO: ALAMY, STEVEN MAY

Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon (pictured), last week announced a further relaxation of **Covid restrictions** for places of worship, reducing social distancing from two metres to one metre for priests or other people leading an act of worship, and for choirs.

Abortion clinic buffer protest

The Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh has launched "free2pray", a campaign against proposed **abortion clinic** buffer zones in Scotland, saying they would restrict public prayer. The proposed Abortion Services Safe Access Zones Bill would ban behaviour "seeking to influence or persuade a person concerning their access to abortion services" within 150 metres of abortion providers.

Parents of **Archie Battersbee** Hollie Dance and Paul Battersbee lost an appeal on Monday against the withdrawal of his life-support treatment in hospital. The Court of Appeal ruled that Archie's ventilator could be switched off by Barts Health NHS Trust. But it granted a delay of one day while the parents applied to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Bishop of Killaloe, Fintan Monahan, has urged Irish road users to "act responsibly" and to see road safety as a moral issue following a spike in fatal **traffic accidents**. Some 95 people have been killed on roads in Ireland so far this year and 673 were seriously injured.

Family members of nine people killed in three car bomb attacks in the Co Derry village of **Claudy** in July 1972 are suing the Catholic Church. A 2010 report by the Police Ombudsman said the late Fr James Chesney was implicated in the bombings, and that police in Northern Ireland, the "State" and the Catholic Church covered up his suspected role in the atrocity.

Compiled by **Ruth Gledhill**.

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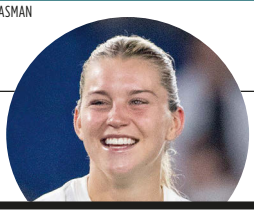


PERSON IN THE NEWS

Alessia Russo, England and Manchester United footballer and former pupil at St Simon Stock Catholic School in Maidstone, after the Euro 2022 win over Germany: "Last night it came home."

LAMBETH CONFERENCE / Welby says he doesn't want to spend week talking about sex

Anglican Communion split over same-sex unions

PATRICK HUDSON

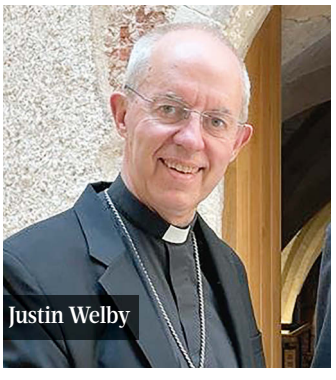
THE ARCHBISHOP of Canterbury urged Anglican bishops to "look outwards" in an address to the Lambeth Conference last week, as the bishops of the Anglican Communion met amid growing controversy.

Archbishop Justin Welby told the conference at the University of Kent that "the distractions and realities of our fallen world – the fears, apprehensions, pressures and burdens we carry" threaten to obscure "the great and freely given love of God in Jesus Christ".

This followed a turbulent start to the first conference since 2008, amid disputes over Anglican teaching on same-sex marriage. These centred on a "Call on Human Dignity" published last week as one of 10 draft statements for bishops to discuss, that reasserted the Anglican prohibition of same-sex marriage.

Following protests, the drafting group issued a revised document

PHOTO: CNS/CHURCH OF SCOTLAND



Justin Welby

on Tuesday 26 July, which instead noted that "many provinces continue to affirm that same-gender marriage is not permissible", while others "have blessed and welcomed same-sex union / marriage after careful theological reflection and a process of reception".

The conference's organisers have emphasised other issues under discussion, including care for the environment. Archbishop Welby told a reception on Thursday that he "didn't want to spend the whole week talking about sex". At the conference's multilingual opening service in Canterbury Cathedral on Sunday 31 July, the Bishop of Lesotho, Vicentia Kgabe, preached that Christ's example "is not self-centred nor inward-looking".

Several bishops declined to receive Communion at the service, maintaining that they were "out of communion" with bishops who support a change in Anglican teaching on same-sex marriage. Earlier in the week, bishops from the US Episcopal Church had joined a march across the campus arranged by the university's LGBTQ staff network.

On Monday 1 August, after the first "Lambeth Calls" discussion in which bishops considered a statement on evangelisation, Archbishop Welby announced that electronic votes on each statement would cease. Instead, bishops will discuss the calls in small groups and give verbal feedback. Calls judged to have received clear assent will progress.

Heatwave was a 'wake-up call'

A SENIOR Catholic bishop has called for more urgent action on the climate crisis, in the wake of this summer's record temperatures, *writes Ellen Teague*.

Bishop of Salford John Arnold, the episcopal link for the Catholic bishops of England and Wales on the environment, speaking after the UK recorded temperatures above 40°C for the first time, said: "I know that we're jogging along, showing an interest in climate change – but jogging is not enough; we've got to start sprinting at this stage to make sure we're caring for our common home."

He described the recent heatwave as a "wake-up call", saying: "We've witnessed temperatures never before reached here in the UK, and here in our own diocese temperatures also saw record highs, as some parishes nudged 40 degrees and firefighters battled flames in nearby communities."

But as temperatures subsided, Bishop Arnold warned that the threat has not gone away. "This is not going to just peak and then we'll hear no more of it," he said, "it's going to get gradually worse." He agreed with environmental campaigners that human activity is warming the globe, "and we're not reacting quickly enough to avoid the damage or to even begin to repair the damage we've done".

Bishop Arnold, who attended the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Glasgow last November, added: "We've already been told that some of the damage is irreparable, so we've got to think and we've got to act."

He thanked parishes and schools already working to live more sustainably and campaign for environmental justice. Bishop Arnold invited involvement in the second diocesan Walk for Creation on Sunday 2 October.

On 15 July, he joined some 40 students from secondary schools in the Diocese of Salford at the diocesan Laudato Si' Centre to share ideas and solutions to the environmental challenges. The youth environment summit celebrated the Guardians of Creation project, a nationwide initiative piloted in Salford Diocese aiming to lead the Church in England and Wales in sustainability.

'Shocking' levels of child poverty in Salford Diocese

CARITAS Salford is calling for urgent action following new figures from Loughborough University that show almost 250,000 children in Salford Diocese living in poverty, *writes Ellen Teague*. The charity, which is launching its summer appeal by sharing the shocking extent of child poverty in each of the local authority areas covered by the geography of the diocese, is urging government to take immediate action.

The figures show 228,855 children are living in poverty across the diocese. Patrick O'Dowd, director of Caritas Salford, said: "As we go through the most severe period of price rises for 40 years, more families than ever will need help, especially [with] the planned energy price hike this autumn."

CROAGH PATRICK PILGRIMAGE / Confessions and Masses on summit, but Archbishop Duffy admits to 'sustained decline'

Irish Church 'on difficult, twisting path'

SARAH MAC DONALD

SUNDAY SAW a return of the traditional Croagh Patrick pilgrimage for the first time since 2019 after it was postponed for two years over concerns about the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

While organisers said the numbers participating were not yet back to pre-pandemic levels, they were pleased with the large turnout which was aided by good weather. Speaking about Reek Sunday, Archbishop of Tuam Francis Duffy told *The Tablet*: "A day like today means a lot to people who have come here over the years and to people who are new to it. It can be a very moving experience. For some this is a very deep pilgrimage. Mountains, especially one like this majestic mountain, raise our minds. When you are up there, you see things

slightly differently – there is a great bird's-eye view of the beautiful landscape."

The pilgrimage is traditionally held on the last Sunday of July. Mass was celebrated on Sunday morning on the summit of the 764m mountain every hour from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. for pilgrims. Confessions were also heard. As part of Reek Sunday 2022, a new version of "St Patrick's Confession" was offered to pilgrims. In this updated version, the word "confession" has been changed to "testimony" to reflect more accurately what St Patrick meant in writing it.

Speaking more generally about current trends in the Irish Church, Archbishop Duffy acknowledged they are "dramatically downwards with no turning point in sight". In an assessment of the current challenges facing the Church in Ireland, Archbishop Duffy warned that there are "no quick-fix solutions or approaches". Instead, he explained, "we journey together on a path that will have many twists and turns and will not always be easy."

Addressing parishioners in St Mary's Church in Westport on the eve of Reek Sunday, when thousands of pilgrims climb Croagh Patrick in honour of the "Apostle to the Irish", the archbishop said that the one certainty was the "ongoing and sustained decline both in the numbers who practise and in the numbers of those who answer the Lord's call to priesthood and religious life".

Speaking to *The Tablet* at the foot of Croagh Patrick on Reek Sunday, Archbishop Duffy said there was a "significant decline" in vocations throughout Ireland. "Last year there were 26 students in Maynooth. Thirty years ago there could have been 500 in the country. It is a 95 per cent drop bit by bit over the years. It is startlingly low at the moment and that tells a tale for the future. I think it is important that we prepare for that."

Primate protests at advertisement ban

THE HEAD of the Irish Church has written to Northern Ireland's Equality Commission over a newspaper's refusal to publish a paid advertisement containing the bishops of Northern Ireland's statement in advance of the Assembly elections in May, *writes Sarah Mac Donald*.

Archbishop Eamon Martin said the *Belfast Telegraph*'s refusal to carry the advertisement raised fundamental questions about the equal access of religious groups and people of faith to such commercial services.

In his letter to Dr Evelyn Collins, chief executive of the Equality Commission NI, Archbishop Martin said the issues he was raising "are of fundamental importance to equality of treatment and respect for religious freedom". He said the advertisement contained the established and widely publicised position of the Catholic Church on a range of issues. However, despite accepting full payment for the requested statement to be published as an advertisement, the newspaper subsequently refused to publish it unless the bishops made changes to their comments on abortion.

"When we refused to make the requested changes to our religious opinion, to accommodate the opinion of the editor, our payment was returned," Archbishop Martin explained. He added that another newspaper, *The Irish News*, did accept and publish the advertisement, without amendment.

Archbishop Martin told Dr Collins that the bishops believe it would be helpful for all parties, and for other faith groups who may wish to seek a similar commercial service in the future, to get clarification and advice from the Equality Commission about the situation that has arisen. The *Belfast Telegraph* reportedly claimed that "the suggested edits did not alter the Church's core anti-abortion message".

Hundreds bid priest farewell

THE FUNERAL of popular Hexham and Newcastle priest Fr Dermott Donnelly, who died unexpectedly last month, attracted hundreds of well-wishers last week, *writes Madoc Cairns*. Fr Donnelly, who was 55 at his sudden death from illness at the beginning of July, was laid to rest in a service at St Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle, on 29 July.

Fr Donnelly, ordained in 1992, had served for 30 years as a priest in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, where he specialised in youth ministry. At the time of his death on Friday 8 July, he was the director of youth services for the diocese and the founder of the youth ministry team.

As part of his work with youth ministry he helped to establish the Emmaus Youth Village in Consett, and was a founding member of the Catholic Youth Ministry Federation of England and Wales. In 2017, on his Silver Jubilee, Fr Donnelly founded the Significance charity, an organisation aiming to provide grants to young people to help them realise their own worth and significance.

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Victorian values

ROSE PRINCE

TRESTLE TABLES, marquees, giant carrots and fruit scones – these are the mainstays of our glorious tradition of country shows. Inside, members of the Women's Institute display their achievements: pots of jam and chutney, maybe a quiche – and there are always the coffee and walnut cakes and the stolid Dundees. Yet the prize to win is always for the best Victoria sandwich sponge.

Having had the terrifying honour of being occasionally invited to join the WI's judging panels, I feared this category most. Not because it is difficult – you are looking for the lightest, evenly baked, vanilla-pungent cake, filled with good strawberry jam. But choose the lightest cake and you may find that in among the crumb is an old enemy (of mine), margarine, now known as "spread". I do not like its composition – hydrogenated plant fat containing unhealthy fatty acids – and I hate its lack of flavour more.

Give me a sponge made with butter and I'll give you a rosette – but some WI cake experts would disagree. If marg achieves weightlessness, so be it, say many. I understand, and now that butter is so much more expensive, I can't argue.

Last weekend it was my challenge to make a multi-storey Victoria sandwich filled with jam and buttercream, draped all over with strawberries, for my granddaughter's christening party. The desire to show off was high – my butter sponges are always a little heavy even

Give me a sponge made with butter and I'll give you a rosette – but some Women's Institute cake experts would disagree

though I have experimented with different butter (Lurpak being the best) – and they are still a little crusty and dense. I want bubbles and softness with butter flavour.

I found the answer in a charming blog written by the Daisy Cake Company which advises on cake business start-ups. A recipe for light and fluffy sponge reveals the secret: a low oven temperature. It is a revelation, because I had always baked cakes by the rule that they won't work unless the oven is at 165°C or more. The blog advises 150°C (fan oven). It works. My plan to show off backfires, however, as I transport the tall cake from London to Oxford, bouncing over at least 300 traffic humps. Pride etc.

PERFECT VICTORIA SANDWICH SPONGE
You will need two 20cm/6inch round shallow cake tins, buttered; bases lined with baking parchment.

2 whole large eggs – weigh them (shells on), then weigh out exactly the same measure in caster sugar, butter and sifted self-raising flour
1/2 tsp baking powder
2 tbsp whole milk
Seeds from half a vanilla pod
or **1 tsp** of vanilla extract
To fill, strawberry jam

Preheat oven to 150°C. Beat the milk with eggs and vanilla and set aside. Put caster sugar and butter in a stand mixer and beat until three shades lighter in colour. Scrape down sides occasionally for an even mix. Beating at high speed, add the egg mix very slowly until one-third incorporated. Add 1 dessertspoon of the flour to prevent curdling. Repeat with the remaining two parts of the egg mix. Fold in remaining flour with a knife, using a figure of eight motion so as not to pop the bubbles in the batter. Divide cake batter between the tins, smooth the surface, make a "well" in the centre of the mixture to ensure a flat surface to the finished sponge. Bake for 30-45 minutes – do not open oven for the first 25 minutes. Press to see if cake is springy. Turn out on to a cooling rack, cool, then fill with jam and dust the top with caster sugar.

Glimpses of Eden

JONATHAN TULLOCH

I SLIPPED into the evening woods and followed a path up through the beeches. No ordinary walkway, this was a pad, as badger paths are called, and it soon led me to the sett. I hadn't been here for weeks and was eager to know if the badger clan had survived the heatwave. Earthworms are a badger's main source of food, but during dry times the worms enter a torpid state known as estivation, in which they tunnel deep into the soil and tie themselves into knots. Unable to access their staple diet, badgers can starve.

Taking up my usual place underneath a friendly sycamore above the sett, I waited anxiously. Would the group show? Slowly, an hour of stillness passed. An owl called;

beyond the woods the sun began to set. Suddenly, a familiar nose appeared at one of the sett's openings. A sound of sniffing rang out. It was the sow scenting the air for danger. Comfortably downwind, I knew she wouldn't find me. A stripey head soon followed the nose and the rest of the sow emerged. Then, in a moment of great joy, I watched as her three cubs gambolled out beside her. They'd survived because of the sow's incredible nose. She'd clearly been able to sniff out enough wasp, bee and rat nests to enable her litter to survive the worm dearth.

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