

REMINISCENCES  
FROM A PROVINCE IN CIVIL CONFLICT



# *Reminiscences*

*from a province  
in civil conflict*

a personal experience

by

Dr. Roddy Evans

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## REMINISCENCES FROM A PROVINCE IN CIVIL CONFLICT

SOME OF US seeking answers to the causes of thirty years of civil war in Northern Ireland were led down some strange and unexpected pathways. A brief history of that journey is recorded in a previous publication *'Where I sensed the Breath of God' – A footnote in Anglo-Irish history*.

Many of the incidents involving some of those searching for the Christian answer were humorous and all were memorable. The stories that follow are not recounted in chronological order but an effort has been made to gather together related events, so, hopefully, the reader will be able to follow the thread throughout.





## THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FATHER CHRISTOPHER McCARTHY, C.Ss.R., served in India, Australia and Sri Lanka as a Redemptorist priest and was a member of the staff of Villa Nova University, Philadelphia. He will be long remembered as the much-loved Director of the Men's Confraternity at Clonard Monastery, West Belfast. He was a man with a deep Christian faith, a love for people and a happy sense of humour. In the closing years of his life, he returned to Belfast with a vocation to bridge the age-old community divisions in Northern Ireland and in this endeavour, he took parties of Irish Catholics and Protestants to America and Canada.

### **Irish Northern Aid**

Earlier, while serving at Villa Nova University, Father McCarthy had established a link with Irish Northern Aid, known as NORAID, which was a group of Americans who supplied money and material, over a number of years, to the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland. Father McCarthy felt that the church should try and bring its influence to bear on this group, so on one of the visits to America, he arranged for his party to have an evening with NORAID in Philadelphia, which turned out to be an eventful occasion. Father McCarthy's friend, who was the principal arranger of the meeting, was aghast when he arrived dressed in a new grey suit. "Father," she remonstrated, "you look like an old Protestant Minister!" In her eyes, priests always dressed in black.

At the close of the meeting, which took place in the Holiday Inn Hotel, the visitors were due to be accommodated for the night with NORAID families. All were catered for save four of the visitors, so Father McCarthy made an appeal to the audience and a Mr. Danaher, who had heckled from the back row throughout the evening, raised his hand and said "Sure, I'll take all four." On arrival at his home, Mr. Danaher went straight upstairs for a consultation with his wife who was in bed. All was fixed up, the visitors stayed and were first entertained to late-night refreshments. Also present was the local Sheriff.

The following morning, as Mrs. Danaher was making coffee for breakfast, one of her guests asked her what a large pile of clothing was

doing stacked on the sitting room floor. “Oh, those are for the prisoners in Long Kesh Prison in Northern Ireland” she replied. When she was asked how the clothes were to be transported there, she said that Teddy Gleason (the President of the Longshoremen of America) had arranged it. She added that they used to send them by *Aer Lingus* (the Irish State airline) but a gun was discovered in one of the parcels, so that route was closed down!

A short time later, at a State Department meeting in Washington with officials from the Irish, British and European Desks, one of the officials said to a member of Father McCarthy’s group, “We have received good reports of your visit to Philadelphia. Should you not maintain a presence there?”

### **The Charismatics**

Father McCarthy had a keen interest in the Charismatic Movement and wanted to meet with the spiritual director, Bishop McKinley of Grand Rapids. Before leaving Ireland, Father McCarthy had written to the Bishop and sent various messages expressing the desire to meet up with him while visiting America. However, as the Bishop did not reply, the Father inferred from this that the Bishop did not want to see him: he had long held the view that Bishops did not want to be seen saying ‘no’ to a request, so they simply didn’t reply. However, although the non-communication from the Bishop seemed ominous, while he was in Richmond, Virginia, Father McCarthy decided to make the long journey north to try to see the Bishop, risking a rebuff.

Arriving in Grand Rapids early on a Sunday morning, Father McCarthy took his three travelling companions with him to Mass in the Cathedral. As they left after the service, there was the Bishop standing at the door, waiting for them. It turned out that during the Mass, someone had told the Bishop that there was a ‘Protestant Minister’ at the service, probably because Father McCarthy was wearing his grey suit! As they met, the Father introduced himself, to which the Bishop exclaimed, “I’ve been trying to reach you all over America!” Then he added, “You and your three companions must be guests in my house. It’s my housekeeper’s day off but we can surely find something for lunch in the kitchen.”

As they sat eating lunch prepared by the Bishop, Father McCarthy broached a subject which was very dear to his heart: he suggested to the Bishop that Moral Re-Armament and the Charismatic Movement would be a perfect

complement to each other. However, the Bishop swiftly replied, “Everyone is trying to use the Charismatic Movement.” Father McCarthy, instantly sensing the situation, back-pedalled furiously. One of his companions later described it as “being like the reverse thrust of a jet plane coming in to land” to which Father McCarthy added, “Yes, I distinctly heard the death rattle!”

The Propellor Club in Grand Rapids is a very exclusive club for top businessmen. However, Father McCarthy had had an invitation to visit the club that afternoon, so he invited the Bishop to accompany him. It was the first time the Bishop had been inside the club’s premises, as no one had ever invited him. The following day, Bishop McKinley escorted the Father and his companions to meet up with the Charismatic Movement at its world headquarters in Ann Arbor. This turned out to be an encounter which didn’t seem to appeal to Father McCarthy.

### **The British Minister at the UN**

At the end of the group’s visit to America, they were entertained one evening by the British Minister accredited to the United Nations in New York. The Minister and his wife graciously received Father McCarthy and his companions in their beautiful apartment on Park Avenue and during the evening, Father McCarthy had a long conversation with the Minister, both of them sitting together on a sofa.

### **From Brooklyn to Belfast**

A good friend, both in America and Ireland, over the years of conflict in Northern Ireland, was Fred Small, a black Longshoremens’ leader from the Brooklyn waterfront in New York. On one occasion, Teddy Gleason, who was of Irish ancestry, decided to have a meeting of all of his Longshoremen in Dublin, as it was as cheap to fly there as it was to fly to Miami. When we heard of this visit, Eric Turpin, a close and longstanding friend of Fred Small, drove down to Dublin with me, to invite Fred to spend three days with us in Belfast, instead of going on the ‘booze up’ in Limerick, which the other delegates were planning after their conference. It was dark by the time we drove north again with Fred sitting beside the driver, who at the border was asked by a soldier for his driving licence. Suddenly, the soldier saw a set of white teeth in the black space beside the driver! He jumped back in alarm and angrily asked, “Who’s

that?” Fortunately, we had a photo of Fred, which had appeared in that morning’s *Irish Times* with a story about the Longshoremen’s conference in Dublin. When this was shown to the soldier, it satisfied him that we were respectable and he waved us on our way! In Belfast, we introduced Fred to a wide cross-section of people and he endured several bomb blasts in the city. Incidentally, before leaving Dublin, we had advised Fred to leave his handgun with the luggage that would later be taken down to Limerick, as it would be distinctly dangerous for it to be discovered in his possession in Belfast.

### **Limerick, the Longshoremen and ‘friends’**

After his brief visit to Belfast, Eric and I drove Fred Small down to Limerick airport, where he was due to meet up with the rest of the party as they prepared to fly home to New York on a chartered plane. Teddy Gleason had arranged for all his Longshoremen to be put up at a brand new hotel close to the airport, the Clare Inn, which had not yet been officially opened, so there were no other guests staying there. As we entered the crowded lobby of the hotel, I recognised several people whom I knew were members of the IRA Army Council: such well-known figures as Joe Cahill, David O’Connell and Sean Keenan. The latter had previously met Eric in Derry and he came over and asked him, “What are you doing here?” so Eric swiftly introduced him to Fred. When Sean went back to join his colleagues, we saw them conferring; then he came over to us again and asked Eric where he was living now. Eric told him he lived in Belfast – but was going to Canada the following week, a spontaneous but true reply! I think they suspected we might be British intelligence agents. However, having Fred Small with us seemed to confirm our *bona fides* and they shortly made off from the hotel by car.

Before saying our farewells, we asked Fred to go around the corner of the hotel and check that the car had gone, just in case they might be waiting for us. When we got the all clear, we departed and sped off to Killarney for a few days of golf, to recover from the shock! Later, when visiting New York, Eric met up with Fred again, who told Eric that he had actually been relieved to return to the relative safety of the Brooklyn Mafia! He added, “You know, Eric, I learned more about race relations in those days in Belfast than I did in all my years in the United States. I thought prejudice was about colour.”

## AUSTRALIA

FATHER McCARTHY HAD EARLIER served as a Redemptorist priest in Australia, so it was fitting that he should pay a return visit to that country. The pretext was an invitation to attend an MRA conference in Perth in 1979, to which he went with three friends from Belfast: Joan Tapsfield, a retired English civil servant, Billy Childs, a crane driver from the Port of Belfast who was an Orangeman and a member of the Black Preceptory, and Eric Turpin, a scientist and Anglican from the Republic of Ireland. While attending the conference, Father McCarthy and his three friends were interviewed on a popular Sunday television programme, as the producers were eager to have the views of such a diverse group on what was happening in Northern Ireland.

### **Meeting with a Catholic Bishop**

From Perth, the group went on to Adelaide, Melbourne and Canberra, meeting a wide cross-section of people. While in Canberra, they met with a Catholic Bishop and during the course of this meeting, Eric roundly ticked off Father McCarthy for being 'too hard' on Billy Childs, the Orangeman. The following morning, Eric was struck down with a serious middle ear infection, probably caught while swimming. It made him very dizzy and sick and prevented him travelling on with the group to Sydney, Brisbane and Toowoomba. He didn't catch up with the others until a week later, as they were all leaving from Sydney to fly home to Belfast.

At Schipol airport, while waiting for a connecting flight, Eric apologised to Father McCarthy for 'putting him down' in front of his own Bishop, during that meeting in Canberra. Father McCarthy's response was that he had been going to raise it with Eric the next day and insist on an apology, which if he had not received from Eric, he would have flown straight back to Belfast. Indeed, he had already enquired about a suitable flight. However, the culprit had not turned up, so Father McCarthy felt he should put it aside until Eric had recovered his health. Later, Father McCarthy commented that MRA must be very important to God for Him to have done that to Eric. Strangely, the experience brought the two men closer together and developed a complete trust between them.

## THE SWISS JURA

AT A TIME WHEN the Jura region of Switzerland was experiencing serious ethnic conflict, Father McCarthy visited the MRA international conference centre at Caux, accompanied by Billy and Mima Childs. Billy was a crane operator at the port of Belfast and was an Orangeman and a member of the Black Preceptory and Mima was a teacher.

During the conference, Father McCarthy and the Childs were invited to spend some days in the Jura, to meet people from both the north and south of the region. At that point, the French speaking people in the north of the canton felt discriminated against, being made to feel second class citizens by the German speaking people of the south. Political agitation was growing and violent incidents were increasing.

One afternoon, at an hotel in the north, Father McCarthy and the Childs met with some of the French separatists. These men and women were anxious to hear about the situation in Northern Ireland. Billy and Mima, speaking as Protestants, presented their view of how good things had been under a Protestant government. Then Father McCarthy, realising how one sided their presentation had been, decided that he had to risk his relationship with his companions and began by asking Billy, "Is the Orange Order not fundamentally anti-Catholic?" He then told the French speaking folk of the discrimination and injustice the Catholics in Northern Ireland had suffered under the same Protestant government.

Not a word was spoken during the long drive back to the conference centre at Caux – complete silence reigned. The following day, Billy and Mima did not appear: however, the day after that, the Childs came to Father McCarthy and said they wished to speak at the conference with him. It was a telling and moving occasion and Mima Childs ended what she said by quoting some lines of the poet W.B. Yeats:

*'Out of Ireland have we come,  
Great hatred, little room,  
Marred us from the start.  
I carry from my mother's womb  
A fanatic heart.'*

## SOUTHERN RHODESIA

**S**HORTLY BEFORE Southern Rhodesia became Zimbabwe and when Ian Smith was Prime Minister, Tommy Elwood and I were invited to attend an MRA conference at the University of Rhodesia in the capital, then known as Salisbury. While there, Tommy stayed with a man he knew in Belfast who had made his home in Rhodesia and had established a small plastics factory there. He was one of many who had emigrated from Northern Ireland during the period of UDI declared by Ian Smith in 1961. I was kindly put up by a relative who was head of the government's Department of Public Works.

### **UDA or IRA?**

The conference opened with a well-attended public meeting in the University. Speaking from the platform, Tommy announced that on the evening before he had left Belfast, a leader of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) had approached him at a meeting of the local Tenants Association. This man had asked Tommy to convey a message to the Rhodesian Prime Minister that '20,000 UDA men stood ready to support him, should their help be needed.' Even before Tommy had left Salisbury, this report had already been circulated in Belfast but unfortunately for Tommy, the Rhodesian journalist had mis-quoted him as having offered the Rhodesian government '20,000 IRA men.' Tommy was in deep water when he got back home and it took many communications between Belfast and Salisbury before the mistake was acknowledged and retracted. Naturally, the consequences for Tommy if this matter had not been corrected would have been dire indeed.

### **Ian Smith**

The Prime Minister and his wife gave a reception at Government House as part of the conferences programme, at which Tommy arrived suitably dressed for the occasion, sporting a pair of Union Jack socks, which he proudly showed off to Ian Smith, while declaring that his people in Belfast were 'more British than the British', a sentiment to which Ian Smith heartily concurred. Tommy then posed for a photo, with Mr. and Mrs. Smith on either side of him: a trophy to take home to Belfast!

### **The Victoria Falls and the MP's brother**

Some of the delegates to the conference then travelled north to Victoria Falls, a town situated on the banks of those most famous falls. On the morning after their arrival, all the visitors went to view the falls, except Tommy and myself, as he had in mind to visit Cyril Forrest, who owned a Craft Village close by. Cyril had a brother George who had been a unionist Member of Parliament for Mid Tyrone at Westminster and had a reputation of never having spoken during all his time in the House of Commons. Tommy met up with Cyril and it was a happy meeting of kindred spirits and a swapping of many stories. Then Cyril put a car and driver at Tommy's disposal, to see the local sights, one of which, of course, was the Victoria Falls – which occupied Tommy's attention for all of ten minutes.

After lunch and a short siesta, Tommy set out again for the Craft Village, intent on purchasing copper and brass souvenirs for all his friends in Belfast, hoping that his efforts of companionship with Cyril earlier in the day would pay off with good discounts on the goods purchased! On this occasion, he left me outside, while the serious business was conducted within. On the journey back to the hotel, Tommy called into every souvenir shop they passed on his own and it occurred to me that Tommy was probably checking up to see whether or not his friend Cyril had given him a decent discount!

### **Bulawayo and the Senator**

The final visit in Rhodesia was to the southern city of Bulawayo, where the party were the guests of a surgeon, Senator John Strong, a member of Ian Smith's Rhodesia Front Party. It was a weekend visit and the Senator took his visitors on the Saturday to the Matopos National Park, where there was a fine statue of Cecil Rhodes, the founder of Rhodesia. I wondered how long that statue would remain there when the transfer of power from white to black Rhodesia took place. It seemed to me, on my brief visit to the country, that the change over would not be long in coming. The white ruling class, on the other hand, did not appear to believe that such a change would ever happen – clearly, they were living in a most unreal world.



### **The train driver**

The following Sunday morning, the Senator and his wife invited Tommy to their home. As Tommy arrived, the Senator told him that he had taken the liberty of inviting the Rhodesia Front Member of Parliament for Bulawayo to come and meet him. This man was Paddy Shields, a train driver, originally from Larne in Northern Ireland. When they met, Tommy and Paddy spent some time guardedly weighing each other up: Tommy had immediately recognised Paddy as a Larne Catholic and Paddy saw Tommy as an Orangeman from East Belfast. However, it soon became clear to them both that as far as Rhodesia was concerned, they were on the same side, keen supporters of Ian Smith and UDI. From then on, it was a happy two-hour exchange of views and gossip.

### **The Rhodesian Irish Association**

As the party broke up, Paddy said to Tommy, "I'll send a car to your hotel at seven this evening, to bring you to my home to meet our Irish Association here in Bulawayo." As soon as Tommy entered Paddy's sitting room, he realised it was a room full of southern Irish Catholics. However, once again, as far as Rhodesia was concerned, the issue was white and black, not Catholic and Protestant, so it was a happy evening. At about midnight, Paddy took Tommy to visit the Bulawayo railway marshalling yard, which was full of monster 225 ton locomotives, with their cow guards on the front. These were the engines that hauled the trains loaded with copper ore from mines in Lusaka in Zambia, then down through Biet Bridge to South Africa.

## THE MIDDLE EAST

**I**N THE MID 1970s, when living with friends in Belfast, I was invited to join a small group visiting the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. The countries visited included Iran, Turkey, The Lebanon, Cyprus and Greece. In each of these states, the subject that most interested the Presidents, Prime Ministers and political leaders the group met was the events then happening in Northern Ireland. Since I lived there, I was constantly being asked to explain, as best I could, what was taking place and why.

Two of these encounters can serve as examples of how keen was the interest in Northern Ireland. Ferhat Abbas was the long-serving Prime Minister of the Parliament in Iran. No sooner had the party sat down in his office and he learnt that there was a representative from Northern Ireland present, he immediately asked for an account of the situation and the rest of the time with him was devoted to a discussion on the subject. Sadly, only a short time later Ferhat Abbas became one of the first victims of the Ayatollah Khomeini revolution.

In Cyprus, the head of the Turkish community, Rauf Denktash, invited the party to lunch with him and once again, the subject discussed over the meal was Northern Ireland. As the meal concluded, Dr. Denktash asked me to dinner that evening to meet with his whole executive, so we could continue the talk on the same subject.

## IRELAND AND THE ANGLO-IRISH ASCENDANCY

FATHER McCARTHY once remarked to four of his Church of Ireland friends, Bill and Muriel Porter, Eric Turpin and myself, “You say things about the behaviour of your church in the history of Ireland but you have never said them publicly.” Seeing this as a challenge to which we should respond, the four of us decided to issue a press statement outlining the unacknowledged history of the Ascendancy Church. In our document, we linked what we wanted to say to a statement that had recently been issued by the Role of the Church Committee of the Church of Ireland, which in part stated, ‘Given penitence, honesty, realism and a determination to face radical change, there is still time for the churches, governments and others to make a positive contribution to the creation of a society for which we all long.’

### **The Bishop’s wife**

Before issuing the statement, we decided that we ought to consult with our Bishop, the Rt. Rev. George Quin, at the Belfast home of a widow, Mrs Ellie McDermott. Bishop Quin, then Bishop of Down and Dromore, came with his wife, Dr. Quin. She opened the conversation by recounting an episode that puzzled her, concerning her son, a student at The Queen’s University, Belfast, who on the previous day in college had been accused of being a ‘souper’. Dr. Quin, born and brought up in Northern Ireland, did not know much Irish history; her husband the Bishop, however, who grew up in Southern Ireland, was well aware of what the expression ‘souper’ meant. In 19th century Ireland, at the time of the Potato Famine, Protestant evangelical preachers were believed to have offered food in soup kitchens to starving people in exchange for renouncing their Catholic faith and becoming Protestants. Since the surname Quin is spelled in two ways: Quin (one n) as a Protestant name and Quinn (two ns) as a Catholic name, it was assumed that since the son spelt his name with only one n, his ancestors must have taken the soup and been converted.

### **The Bishop and history**

This conversation led Bishop Quin to enquire if the present meeting had to do with history. Receiving a reply in the affirmative, he was then presented

with the document, which he read with mounting disapproval. When he had finished, he laid it on the coffee table with the advice, "Under no circumstances should this be published. It will do more harm than good. We are not responsible for the deeds of our forefathers. We must forget the past: we are all to blame and we must look to the future." The rest of the morning was spent in lively conversation and before leaving, the Bishop was asked to pray for everyone present, which he did, including in his prayer, "... we are not responsible for the past." He seemed greatly relieved when we told him that we planned to visit The Most Revd. Dr. George Otto Simms, then Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, to consult him before making our statement public.

### **The Archbishop and his wife**

On arrival at the Archbishop's home, it soon became clear that Bishop Quin had already notified Dr. Simms about what was afoot. He glanced briefly at the document then handed it to his wife, Mrs. Mercy Simms, for her considered opinion. She was a distinguished historian and scholar and she read the statement through carefully, queried one small point, was satisfied with the answer, then said forcefully, "This statement should have been issued years ago and it should have been done officially by the church." Then she asked rhetorically, "Why is it necessary? Because our attitudes are still the same and given the opportunity, we would do the same things all over again." She advised us, "You must issue this publicly and you should do it on the opening day of the General Synod – that pagan jamboree!"

As it happened, a few days before the General Synod of the Church of Ireland was to be held in Dublin, there was an MRA conference at the Westminster Theatre in London, on the subject of the British Commonwealth. We decided that this would be an appropriate occasion, as members of the Church of Ireland, to issue the statement to the media. So, on behalf of all four of us, two of us read it from the platform of the London conference. It would not be far from the truth to say that very few, if any, at that conference would have understood the significance of what was being said. However, no sooner had the statement been issued to the press, than BBC Radio Ulster phoned the theatre from Belfast, seeking an interview with one of the authors. The daily newspapers in Ireland carried

reports the following day, including *The Irish Times*, which placed it in the centre of their page devoted to the opening of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland in Dublin, which took place that day. The statement we made follows:

### **The Statement**

“The Role of the Church Committee of the Church of Ireland issued an important statement in February 1977. It ends with the words ‘Given penitence, honesty, realism and a determination to face radical change, there is still time for the Churches, Governments and others to make a positive contribution to the creation of a society for which we all long.’

In 1691, William of Orange concluded the war in Ireland with the Treaty of Limerick. He granted terms that were generous for the age. They included giving Catholics the same rights they had under Charles II and also permitted the defeated Irish to hold lands under certain conditions.

In 1692 the Parliament that met in Dublin refused to ratify the Treaty. In 1695 they set up Penal Laws with the aim of removing land and power from Catholics.

The Protestant Ascendancy that ruled the Dublin Parliament was the Ascendancy of the Church of Ireland. So the Penal Laws were to some extent applied to Presbyterians also. They, like Catholics, could not hold office under the Crown. They, like Catholics, were forced to pay tithes to help finance the Church of Ireland.

For these and other reasons Presbyterians migrated in tens of thousands to the United States. In the War of Independence they, through their sense of grievance, helped form the backbone of Washington’s army.

But what we, as members of the Ascendancy Church, did to the Catholics was infamous beyond belief. As the Chief Justice of

the day said ‘The law does not suppose any such persons to exist as an Irish Roman Catholic.’

By our studied and deliberate degradation of a proud and cultured people, we reduced them to a poverty stricken peasantry bereft of their natural leaders. We hounded their priests and denied them all possibility of education. We therefore set in train events that led eventually and inevitably to the starvation of the Famine years from 1845 onwards. This meant migration by the hundred thousand to the United States.

We are deeply sorry for these and many other such deeds, not in the spirit of breast-beating, but in honesty and penitence. We know that we must realistically face them if we are ever to be trusted in the future.

We know of many other situations in the world where an honest and penitent facing of the facts, instead of excusing ourselves, could lead to ‘the creation of a society for which we all long.’ It is to this end that we sign this document.

Each of us has lived in the North of Ireland for a number of years; was born in the South of Ireland; is a confirmed member of the Church of Ireland; is a graduate of Trinity College Dublin; believes we cannot expect our leaders to do and say what we are not prepared to do and say ourselves.”

Signed:

James Roderick Evans, F.R.C.S.I.

William Arthur Porter, B.A.

Samuel Eric Turpin, M.Sc.

Elizabeth Muriel Porter, B.A.

## THE POPE'S VISIT TO IRELAND

**I**N 1979, POPE JOHN PAUL II made an historic visit to Ireland, the first made by any Pope in history. As is referred to in our Statement, after the Battle of Aughrim in 1691, King William III offered Irish Catholics the free exercise of their religion, half the churches in Ireland and a moiety of their ancient possessions. But the Parliament in Dublin, at that time controlled by the Protestant Ascendancy, reversed the King's promise, so all the old churches were retained by the Protestants.

### **Two Protestant Cathedrals**

To this day, the Anglican Church of Ireland still owns both ancient Cathedrals in Dublin, while the Irish Catholic Church has to make do with a Pro Cathedral in a side street. The same four friends as in the previous story, all of whom were graduates of Trinity College, Dublin, felt that the visit of the Pope to Ireland would be an appropriate moment for the Church of Ireland to give back one of the Cathedrals to their fellow Catholic countrymen. We discussed this with Father McCarthy, who suggested that the most significant Cathedral would be the oldest, Christ Church, so we agreed to make enquiries to see if the Church of Ireland would consider returning this Cathedral to the Catholic Church.

With this in view, an interview was sought with John Briggs, head of the Representative Church Body, which is the business headquarters of the Church of Ireland. Mr. Briggs undertook to raise the issue with the Standing Committee of the Church and said he would notify us of the decision of this influential body. In due course, the reply was an unequivocal 'no', best summed up with the two words 'vehemently opposed'. In a letter published in the Church of Ireland weekly *Gazette*, one of the Trinity graduates wrote, "The return of Christ Church Cathedral, apart from being an act of Christian restitution, would have the additional non-spiritual merit of considerable financial saving. The upkeep of two Cathedrals so near to each other in the same city is a heavy burden to bear."

### **Canon Baker and Westminster Abbey**

At the time of the Pope's visit to Ireland, the Rev. John Austin Baker was Rector of St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, a Canon of Westminster Abbey and the Anglican Chaplain to the Speaker of the British House of Commons. As he watched the Pope's visit to Ireland unfold, he felt moved to make a response, so the following Sunday he preached a sermon in the Abbey in which he expressed his shame at what his country England had done in Ireland over the centuries. Although he was not in the habit of doing so, he decided on this occasion to issue the sermon to the press and the media, so it was widely reported in newspapers across Ireland.

### **St. Margaret's Church**

Canon Baker followed this initiative by arranging a series of monthly lunchtime meetings in St. Margaret's church, at which he invited well-known historians to give lectures on Irish history and Anglo-Irish relations. Then, in response to an invitation from Father McCarthy, who had earlier travelled to London to meet him, Canon Baker was the guest preacher at Clonard Church in Belfast, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and a very large congregation turned out to hear him. This was the first of many such visits that the Canon paid to Belfast and he also visited Dublin, where he was interviewed on RTE television. During these Belfast visits, he met and conferred with politicians from across the political spectrum and with church leaders from all the different denominations.

### **Consecration of the Bishop**

When Canon Baker was consecrated Bishop of Salisbury, he invited Father McCarthy to be his guest at Westminster Abbey for the ceremony. Father McCarthy accepted and took several members of the Bible Study group from Clonard Monastery along with him. When he arrived at the Abbey, by chance Father McCarthy found himself sitting under the statue of Viscount Castlereagh, 2nd Marquis of Londonderry, the Irish-born British Foreign Secretary who in 1815 helped to secure peace in Europe at the Congress of Vienna. However, Lord Castlereagh was also one of the principal architects of the Act of Union in 1800 and gained gruesome



notoriety as the Chief Secretary of Ireland, in the bloody suppression the 1798 Rebellion. Some lines by Percy Shelley reflect this reputation:

*I met Murder on the way –  
He had a face like Castlereagh,  
Very smooth he looked and grim,  
Seven bloodhounds followed him*

The magnificent pageantry of the ceremony was perfection and as the Bishop and priests processed through the Abbey to take their places before the Archbishop of Canterbury, Father McCarthy leaned over and whispered to a friend sitting beside him, “We will have some job re-consecrating that lot, when the time comes!”

### **Clonard and the Anglican authorities**

As Bishop of Salisbury, John Austin Baker was again invited to preach in Clonard Church. However, on this occasion, the authorities in Church House in Westminster expressed serious misgivings, as they feared that the presence of an English Bishop in Belfast might provoke riots by the extreme Protestant elements. The Archbishop of Canterbury had apparently experienced serious disturbances when on a recent overseas visit and they naturally did not want such a thing to be repeated. However, some of us from Belfast accompanied the Bishop to Church House and assured the authorities that the Rev. Ian Paisley would never dare to enter the Catholic Falls Road in West Belfast to provoke a riot, as it would certainly not be safe for him to do so. This satisfied the authorities and the visit duly took place. Bishop Baker was also the first Anglican Bishop to preach in the Catholic Cathedral in Armagh, at the invitation of Cardinal Tomas O’Fiaich.

## MORE BELFAST EVENTS

### **The Bishop and the UDA**

ON ONE OF HIS VISITS to Belfast, Bishop Baker and Mrs. Baker were guests in the home Dr. and Mrs. George Dallas. George Dallas was a Presbyterian chest specialist, who had a touch with two of the leaders of the Ulster Defence Association, the largest Protestant paramilitary organisation in Northern Ireland. Dr. Dallas invited these two men, Andy Tyrrie and John McMichael to meet Bishop Baker and his wife. In the course of the evening, Mrs. Dallas and Mrs. Baker retired to the kitchen to prepare refreshments. When it came time to serve the supper, the two ladies entered the sitting room nervously and served 'at arms length', as it were. In their minds, these men were two un-convicted murderers! When the guests had departed, the Bishop took the ladies to task over their behaviour towards their guests, telling them, "I have seldom seen two more disapproving women than you two."

### **Belfast's Short Strand**

During a previous visit to Northern Ireland, while he was still a Canon, John Austin Baker paid a visit to the Short Strand housing estate in Belfast. At that time, this was a 'no go' area; it is a small Catholic estate, surrounded on all sides by Protestants and has a history of discrimination, since the Sirocco factory is just across the main road and no Catholic workers could get jobs in this large engineering company. Consequently, the Short Strand was largely controlled by the IRA.

The purpose of Canon Baker's visit was to keep a promise he had earlier made to a Catholic woman who lived there. Her husband, a talented artist, was on the 'blanket protest' in prison, where the prisoners were smearing their cells with excrement and refusing to wear prison clothes. This was in protest against the British government that had refused to recognise them as political prisoners. Earlier, the prisoner's wife had heard that Canon Baker was sympathetic to the prisoner's cause and together with Liz Curtis, an English writer then living in Belfast, she had visited Westminster to meet the Canon, at that time Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons. On that occasion, he told his visitors that he would do what he

could and assured the woman that he would visit her home when he next came to Belfast.

Father McCarthy arranged the visit to the Short Strand through contact with the local priest. A young man was sent to Clonard to accompany the Canon and his driver into the housing estate. Later, Father McCarthy with an infectious smile, commented to the Canon, "Think of that, you had a real live terrorist with you in the car!" As the car drew up at the woman's house, another man appeared at the end of the street. Clearly, a close watch was being kept on the strangers in the street and at the end of the visit, the same young man accompanied the car out of the area and back to Clonard.

In the course of the Canon's visit, the women took him upstairs to see the water leaking from the roof down her bedroom walls. Since then, the estate has been entirely rebuilt and indeed, has won a European prize for the excellence of its design and amenities.

### **The 'Thursday ladies'**

When in Belfast, every Thursday lunchtime Father McCarthy would meet with a group of elderly Protestant ladies in a house off the Malone Road. These ladies always looked forward to their chats with the Catholic priest, whom they came to respect and love. One Thursday morning, in what he thought would be a 'treat' for the ladies, Father McCarthy brought along a Cistercian monk, Father Aidan Cusack, who gave a talk on the beatification of a devout nun, Sister Gabriela, who had devoted her life to the reconciliation between different Christian denominations and churches. Little did the two Catholic priests realise that the creation of saints by the Holy Father was not a matter that would have a particular appeal to Protestants! Thankfully, the esteem in which those elderly ladies held Father McCarthy was in no way lessened by this incident. In fact, Father McCarthy took two of them with him as part of a group he later led, on a visit to the Holy Land.

## INTERESTING PEOPLE

### **Rev. Desmond Parsons**

**T**HE REV. DESMOND PARSONS, who was Rector of All Saint's Church, Dulwich, was another frequent visitor to Clonard. On one occasion, when he was on a visit to the home of Tom Hartley on the Glen Road, a British army Saracen drew up outside the house. Tom was a leading Sinn Féin Belfast City Councillor and a close confidant of the Sinn Féin President, Gerry Adams. Tom turned to his guest and said, "I'm afraid you are in trouble: in this area, the army don't listen to explanations." Undaunted, Rev. Desmond Parsons, a cousin of the Irish peer the Earl of Rosse, said good bye to Tom, went out into the street and in his usual disarming manner, spoke to the soldiers and went on his way.

On another occasion, I accompanied Rev. Desmond Parsons on a visit to the Rev. Samuel Hutchinson, the Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and I will always remember Rev. Hutchinson's opening remarks on that visit. He told us that at his previous appointment as Minister of a Presbyterian Church in Portadown, whenever he crossed the bridge over the River Bann while on his church duties, he remember the 1641 rebellion, in which the Catholic insurgents had thrown Protestant men, women and children into the river to drown. The Rev. Hutchinson continued, "We Protestants in Northern Ireland are like the Jews in Israel and the Afrikaaners in South Africa – we are on our own."

### **Cardinal Franz Joseph König of Vienna**

Eric Turpin, a devout Anglican who was born in Stradbally, in the Republic of Ireland, has been a resident of Belfast for many years. He graduated with a Masters Degree in Science from Trinity College, Dublin and began his early career as a research chemist in industry in Belfast. He describes here in his own words an incident in his life that moved him very deeply.

"This is the story of my last visit, several years ago, to the MRA world conference at Caux, Switzerland, which I attended for ten days, along with some English delegates.

The usual conference procedure was that a main meeting was held in the mornings, where people from a number of different

countries told of their experiences. In the afternoon, there would be a series of smaller meetings, usually of different national groups. As the morning meetings were held in a variety of languages, translation was provided, while at the afternoon meetings, there was only one language – something of a blessing for an old chap like me! So, on one afternoon I decided to go to the English meeting, where I found I was the only Irish person there.

Part of the focus of that particular gathering was to prepare for the following day's main meeting, at which Cardinal König from Vienna would be the principal guest. The question was posed: what story or experience did the English present at Caux have that might be of interest to the Cardinal? Now, I had worked for several years in England and I knew how stilted and formal such meetings could sometimes be, whereas since those years in England, I had been living in Belfast, where meetings were more informal and even disorganised! I was hoping, that afternoon at Caux, that someone might say, "Have you anything to contribute from Ireland, Eric?" But nobody asked me.

When the meeting ended, I went for a walk up the hill with a Scottish friend and suddenly I began to weep uncontrollably. This was something I had never experience before or since. I could neither explain nor understand it. It was just a great sense of hopelessness and isolation from God and man. I returned to my room, washed my face and tried to look respectable, as I was to have a meal that evening with two men from Zimbabwe and another friend from Scotland who had lived in that country. As I was walking towards the table, a lady who had been at the afternoon meeting and was part French, stopped me and said, "Eric, we never asked you what you thought." With that, I burst into tears again and had to hurry back to my room once more, to tidy up.

Eventually, I returned to the dining room and joined the table with the two Zimbabweans and the Scot, and to my amazement, another person was sitting at the table, Cardinal König. He had just arrived at Caux and as was the custom on such occasions, a special table had been arranged for him to meet various interesting people. However, he had come to the dining room rather earlier than expected and had chosen to sit at the table where he saw two Africans.

I was able to tell the Cardinal our experiences in Ireland and what I was learning about the relations with Presbyterians and Catholics and of our visits to America. Then I told him of my experience of weeping after the meeting that afternoon. He seemed interested in all this and later I heard he had commented he was glad to see the Holy Spirit had not left the house. Some days later, as the Cardinal was leaving the conference, I asked him how on earth he had chosen to sit at that particular table, on that first night. In reply, he pointed to the sky.

It was, however, all of six months before the reason for my weeping came clear to me. I had felt that England would never understand the position in Ireland or acknowledge the part she had played in it all.

Since that event in Caux, I corresponded with Cardinal König and he wrote that he hoped to come someday to Ireland. However, sadly, he recently died in Vienna, at the age of 98.”

### **A conversation**

On an occasion when Father McCarthy and Eric Turpin were travelling by car on a visit to Dublin from Belfast, they engaged in an interesting conversation. Eric described how, when he was a student at Trinity College, Dublin, he had gone to a friend's room to hear Archdeacon Gordon Hannon, who had come down from Belfast, speak about Moral Re-Armament, which he was responsible for in that city. Eric was struck with the breadth of vision of the talk and in particular, when the Archdeacon

suggested that the students might one day find themselves ‘responsible for the west coast of America.’ As Eric said to Father McCarthy, at that point in his life, he didn’t even know that America had a west coast! He recalled thinking that here was a man who had taken on the task of remaking the world in Christ’s image and he said to himself, “I must go to Belfast and find out more about this.” Father McCarthy asked, “What, then, was the difference of approach in the MRA folk in Dublin?” to which Eric replied, “We were largely concerned with the necessary task of perfecting our souls but hadn’t considered the equally needed challenge to remake the world.” Later, Eric spent several years working as a research chemist in Belfast.

### **Paddy Lynn: ‘soul surgeon’**

This is an account, in his own words, by Jim Lynn, a watchmaker who was for many years a technician in the engineering laboratory at The Queen’s University, Belfast, of the funeral day of his much loved brother Paddy.

While Thursday 5th April 2001 was perhaps just an uneventful day to most people, it was for me the start of a day tinged with sadness. It was the day I would bury my brother Paddy in Birmingham. Paddy was my older brother. In his younger days he worked in the logging camps in the far reaches of Canada. He then joined the merchant navy and travelled the world. When he returned to Belfast, he worked on building sites and finally got a job with the gas department of the Belfast City Council, where he worked until it closed down. Paddy and his wife Mary had four children, one boy and three girls, who all married and Paddy and Mary have a number of grandchildren. That entire branch of the Lynn family is now permanently settled in Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham.

During last November, Paddy was feeling unwell and went to see his G.P., who referred him for a check-up in hospital. The results of the test were not good and he was diagnosed with cancer and given just six weeks to live. Paddy survived Christmas and St.Patrick’s Day but the disease was taking its toll and he died on Friday 30th March.

All these thoughts were going through my mind as my daughter Bronagh and I left the house at 7.10 a.m. to catch the 8.20 a.m. flight to Birmingham. I had in my pocket a number of Mass cards, Sympathy cards and letters to give to Mary, who had rung me the previous night to see if I would say a few words about Paddy, which she felt he would have liked. The Parish Priest had agreed that this would be the right thing to do. I decided that what I would say would not require any notes but I would speak from the heart of what my brother Paddy, through the Spirit of God, had achieved, for in effect, Paddy was a very simple man who had been used in a mighty way while he was in Belfast.

Little did I know that he had continued to be very active in Bible/Prayer groups after he moved to Sutton Coldfield. What a surprise was in store for me, and it all started when the plane touched down at Birmingham airport. I walked out to the waiting area where I was to be met: there was no one there. "Never mind," I said to myself, "I'll wait awhile." Then a man came towards me – black suit, black shoes, black shirt and black tie, like someone out of an Al Capone movie! He called out, "Hi, Jim, my name's Bob and I'm here to collect you." We shook hands and we walked to his car, a blue Ford Mondeo. I said to myself, "Thank you, God" and off we went.

I listened quietly as Bob spoke to me in the car. "I'm married to one of Paddy's daughters and he has had a powerful impact on me. Over the years I have grown to love him for his kindness, his encouragement and his deep faith, which gradually rubbed off on me. Paddy changed my life and I am a very happy and contented man."

As we drove past a car plant, Bob said, "I work there and I have a pal who works beside me who was in all kinds of trouble and couldn't seem to get his head above water and was about to throw in the towel. I said to him that I'd like him to



meet my friend, Paddy Lynn, and have a talk with him. Today, that man is back on his feet and is completely changed, a new man, after his talk with Paddy.” Then Bob said to me, “Whatever Paddy had, it works – I’ve seen it!”

We arrived at Mary’s house and outside, there were about twenty wreaths. I looked in amazement and said to myself, “Who would send Paddy all these wreaths?” There were two with green, white and orange flowers and I thought, “Who sent these?” So I asked Mary and she told me that a number of friends in the Bible and Prayer groups which Paddy took part in had come up with the thought, after he died, that because he was Irish, it would be right and fitting to send him a wreath made up of his national colours. I said to Mary, “Paddy would be proud of that.”

The time was now 10.35 a.m. and the undertaker arrived to take us and all the flowers to the church. Paddy had been brought to the church the previous night, as is one of our customs and as we walked in I got my second surprise: there was approximately 200 people in the congregation, all friends of Paddy, to attend Mass and say goodbye to him. A friend from Manchester had told me earlier that I would be lucky to see even 20 people at a funeral during a weekday, so the size of the congregation was a lovely sight. But the best was to be kept to the last.

When the bell rang for the Mass to begin, the organ started to play and three priests, led by the altar servers, walked down the centre aisle and up to the altar, to begin the concelebrated Mass for Paddy Lynn. A concelebrated mass for my brother Paddy! What an honour. I asked myself, “What has Paddy done to warrant this wonderful gift of our church to one of its sons?” This Mass, this celebration of the Holy Eucharist, was in total harmony with the whole congregation. After the Gospel, the Parish priest, Father Carrick, who was the main

celebrant, rose to speak. His theme was ‘Paddy Lynn and his work.’ I was the proudest man in that congregation!

Father Carrick spoke of Paddy with such warmth: his opening sentence was, “Paddy was a very ordinary man, with an extraordinary gift – the Gift of the Holy Spirit. He was a man whose prayer life was outstanding and he had a great love of the Holy Spirit. Everyone Paddy met, he changed their lives. I had the privilege of speaking with him many times and he was always a great help to me.”

As I listened to these words, I recalled a time when in a church in Birmingham, Paddy was praying and a woman came and sat in the same pew. She was crying and the next moment she started pouring out all her troubles to Paddy. He listened quietly, and with his usual confidence that God would deal with the situation, he talked with the woman on a one to one basis. They ended their meeting with a prayer and the woman walked out of the church totally unburdened and in a more peaceful state of mind. Paddy, with his simplicity and childlike confidence that the Holy Spirit could deal with all problems, was a soul surgeon; he was a man who believed and knew that each of us, as men and women, could be better than we were, if we let ourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Father Carrick then touched on the most important experience that changed Paddy’s life. I know that what I am going to write now is true. Father Carrick is only the fifth person to know this very personal story and I am fortunate to be one of the other four. Father Carrick continued, “One Saturday afternoon, Paddy was on his way home, tired out and feeling hopeless. Half way home he was that tired of everything, he felt he needed to rest. He managed to lift himself up and went into the Blessed Oliver Plunkett Church in Lenadoon, now known as Saint Oliver Plunkett. Paddy, in his own words, didn’t go in to pray, just to sit down. There was no one else in

the church and he sat in the back pew. He had nothing more to offer. At that moment he felt a presence approaching which embraced him with love and a voice within him saying, 'I have work for you.' Paddy made his way home in a better frame of mind but didn't mention what had happened to anyone.

Later on, in the church service for Paddy, which lasted for 1 hour and 15 minutes, I was asked to speak. I continued Paddy's story from where Father Carrick finished and I would like to write it down now. At that time, Paddy and I were in the 1st Division of Clonard Monastery's Men's Confraternity that met on a Monday night. After the meeting we would go down to Clonard Hall to a prayer meeting which was held there every week. Father Christy McCarthy, Director of the Confraternity, was also there. After the prayers one evening, Father McCarthy called Paddy over and asked him this question, "How would you see the next step, Paddy, for the situation here?" Now, why he picked Paddy, I will never know. But Paddy's answer was, "We need to form a Bible group for everyone." Father Christy agreed completely and so the Clonard Bible Study Group was formed and it met in the Monastery every Thursday evening from then on.

Father Christy was the first person Paddy told of his experience in the Saint Oliver Plunkett church. After a long talk, Father Christy asked Paddy to meet his great friend, Father Aidan Cusack, a Cistercian monk who was visiting Belfast at the time and to tell him about his experience. Here in Paddy's own simple words, which he shared with me later, was what he told Father Aidan, "My experience was like standing on a beach on a very hot day and a gentle breeze would approach you, touch you and pass on to the next person. My whole life has been changed and I now know of God's love for us."

In effect, Paddy's experience was a gift of the Holy Spirit and in the years that were to follow, this was to bear great fruit.

The Clonard Bible Study grew in numbers, so much so that at a meeting one evening there was an Englishman present, Mr. Leslie Fox, who along with Father Christy and Paddy was responsible for the start of the Week of prayer for Christian unity at Clonard. The first preacher was another Englishman, the now retired Anglican Bishop of Salisbury, John Austin Baker and the church was packed to the doors. The years that followed saw the Rev. Desmond Parsons, of All Saints', Dulwich and Canon Donald Alchin, of Canterbury, follow in the Bishop's footsteps as preachers at the Week of prayer for Christian unity at Clonard. Other prayer groups sprang up in Hollywood and Glengormley and both Father Christy and Paddy would travel anywhere when the opportunity and need arose. Father Christy's favourite saying to Paddy was, "We will await the Holy Spirit's guidance", before both would move forward together.

Father Carrick, that day in Birmingham, went on to speak of the Bible and Prayer groups in the extended area around Sutton Coldfield that Paddy had attended, at which he was a great source of strength and inspiration. Proof of this was given to me when Paddy's son-in-law Brian was driving me back to the airport. He spoke of Paddy with great respect and told me that about four weeks before Paddy died, he asked Brian to take him around to his beloved Bible and Prayer groups. Brian was delighted to oblige. They went through the back entrance of each hall where the meetings were being held and when it was mentioned that a special friend had arrived to see them, there was a great cheer and clapping and a lot of tears, in honour of Paddy. What a wonderful, wonderful moment it must have been, for Paddy to see the seed he had sown taking root so strongly. Brian commented, "It was incredible to witness."

Paddy and Father Christy, who had gone to his reward before him, were both soul surgeons. Father Carrick spoke of Paddy

with such affection and of the effect he had had in the whole community. He finished by saying once again how each person Paddy came in touch with was changed. "I used to seek him out to talk to and after Mass each morning, Paddy would come into the sacristy and we'd enjoy each others company, often discussing the reading together." After the blessing, the congregation, led by the three priests who had concelebrated Mass, together with Paddy's immediate family, carried Paddy to his final resting place in the cemetery close by.

I would like to finish by saying two things. In reading this, you will have noted that I have used the term 'soul surgery' in speaking of Paddy's work. Roddy Evans, who was one of Paddy's great friends here in Ireland, lent me a book recently, which was written in 1940 by H.A. Walters M.A., entitled 'Soul Surgery'. It is an old-fashioned book with a message for this new century. I would just like to quote from it, from page 17: 'And if a man would act upon every other man, he can do best by acting one at a time, upon those beside him.' That was the soul surgery Paddy was immersed in.

From that experience he had all those years ago of the Holy Spirit changing his life in Saint Oliver Plunkett Church in Belfast, Paddy planted the seed to which he was called when that voice within said, 'I have work for you.' My brother Paddy was a man of no malice, a prince among men. May his soul and the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.

### **Senator Dr. Martin Mansergh**

A good friend of 25 years, Dr. Martin Mansergh comes from an old, landed Anglo-Irish family. He was educated at King's College, Canterbury in England, and later studied history at Oxford University. His late father, Nicholas Mansergh, was Emeritus Professor of Commonwealth History at Cambridge University and a well-known historical writer.

Our first meeting with Martin Mansergh came about in a rather unusual fashion. Bill and Muriel Porter lived in a large house in Dalkey, Co. Dublin,

where the Porters had lived for 200 years. They occupied a wing of the house themselves and the rest of the house was converted into comfortable furnished apartments for renting. A lady living in one of these apartments needed a new electrical appliance and saw one advertised for sale in a local newspaper. When Muriel and her tenant called on the lady selling it, the tenant, to her surprise, discovered that the lady was an old school friend, now Mrs. Mansergh.

Some time later, Bill and Muriel Porter arranged a tea party for the Manserghs to meet some of their Belfast friends, including myself. Martin Mansergh arrived for tea, having just left the office of Charles Haughey, then the Prime Minister, who had called Martin in to seek his advice on whether or not Ireland should continue to support Mrs. Thatcher and the Falklands war, at the point where the Argentinean warship, the *Belgrano*, had been sunk by a British submarine. At that meeting, the important decision was taken to withdraw the Irish government's support for the British Prime Minister and the war.

We have maintained the friendship since then, during which time Dr. Mansergh has served three Irish Prime Ministers as the special advisor on Northern Ireland, over a period of more than twenty years. He recently retired from this post in order to run for the Seanad Eireann, to which he was duly elected as Senator with special responsibility for agriculture.

Interestingly, he first went into public service as a result of action taken by Garret Fitzgerald, when he became Foreign Minister. Apparently, Fitzgerald discovered that there were no Protestants in the Irish civil service at that time, so he asked one of his officials why this should be. The reply was that there was a requirement for fluency in the Irish language for all civil service posts. Fitzgerald immediately gave orders to scrap this requirement for those educated outside the Republic and Dr. Mansergh was one of the first Protestants to benefit.

### **Dr. George Dallas**

When Dr. George Dallas died on the 9th December 1997, his widow Ruth asked me to say a few words at his funeral service, a request I was honoured to fulfil. George and I had qualified as medical doctors at about the same time, he from The Queen's University, Belfast, and I from Trinity College,

Dublin. We had known each other from our student days, then throughout our medical careers and into our retirement from practice. I am Church of Ireland and George was Presbyterian. In my talk at his funeral, I expressed a wish that George's profound writings on the nature of the conflict in Northern Ireland, which had been published in various magazines and periodicals over some years, should now be collected together and published in a single work. Father Gerry Reynolds, who had attended the funeral service, wholeheartedly supported this idea.

Initially, I asked an English friend, Ivan Poulton, to gather the papers together from various sources and then pass them on to another Englishman, a student of history and journalist, Alan Faunce, hoping that he would be able to edit them and produce a booklet. However, after studying the material, Alan decided that it would be more appropriate for an Irishman who understood the complexities of the political situation in Northern Ireland better than he did, to complete the exercise.

I then approached Father Reynolds for his advice and he asked Ruth Dallas and myself to come and see him at Clonard, where he made it clear to us that the writings needed a brief biography of George himself, to give a setting to his written articles. As we knew that Father Reynolds had considerable experience with the press and publishing world, we respected his views. As the person who had known George the longest, the lot fell on me to undertake this task, which I did willingly, although I was only too aware of my limitations as a writer! Thankfully, Father Reynolds gave me great assistance in getting the draft into good English. I then consulted an old friend and neighbour, David Hammond, the well-known film producer, broadcaster and writer, as to whom I should approach as a printer and publisher and he recommended Robert South, the Managing Director of Nicholson & Bass, as 'the best in the business'.

However, a difficulty arose when I came to try to make contact with Robert South, as I discovered that Father Reynolds was on the point of leaving for a pilgrimage in Spain and David Hammond was at his holiday cottage in Co. Donegal. Providentially, I happened to pass by David's house and saw that in fact, he was at home. He had had to return from Donegal with his favourite dog, Patsy, which had collapsed from old age and had to be put down by the vet. So I was a mourner at the graveside as Patsy was

lovingly laid to rest in the garden. We then adjourned to the house, where David consoled himself with the help of a bottle of Bushmills. Thankfully, he decided not to drive back to Donegal that night and I arranged to take him and Father Reynolds to see Robert South next morning. We were able, there and then, to decide on layout and design, type font and colour of paper, etc., and Father Reynolds produced an inspired title, 'The Second Conversion of Dr. George Dallas', with the Presbyterian symbol, the 'Burning Bush' and motto *'Ardens sed Virens'* on the front cover.

In due course, the booklet was printed and Mrs. Ruth Dallas made arrangements for it to be launched at Church House, the headquarters of the Presbyterian Church in downtown Belfast. However, two days before publication, a crisis suddenly arose: a person named in the text raised an objection to being so named, because of a potentially dangerous security risk. Robert South and his staff then 'pulled out all the stops' and worked long hours to remove two pages from seventy copies and replace them with two amended pages, all of which was accomplished just an hour before the launching, which thankfully went ahead as planned.

Dr. Martin Mansergh came up especially by train from Dublin to express his appreciation for Dr. George Dallas, whom 14 years earlier, he had introduced as a northern Protestant, to address the New Ireland Forum at Dublin Castle. Tom Hartley, a Sinn Féin Belfast City Councillor, also spoke at the book launch, as did Father Gerry Reynolds. The booklet was published privately, in a print of 500 copies, which were all sold and a smaller re-print ordered.

My only regret is that I overlooked including in this booklet an article which Dr. Dallas wrote for *The Tablet* weekly magazine in April 1982, which I have now included in the Appendix of this booklet. George Dallas and I shared these thirty years together and besides his friendship, I owe him whatever understanding I have acquired of the historical significances that underlie those dramatic years in Anglo-Irish affairs.

### **'Where I sensed the Breath of God'**

The Redemptorists at Clonard Monastery, Belfast, have a long history of reaching out to non-Catholics. Father Christy McCarthy C.Ss.R. returned to Belfast as the conflict in Northern Ireland intensified. His friend, Father



Alex Reid wrote of him, “This was to be the last, and many would say, the most glorious chapter in the story of his missionary enterprises, because he was now braving the pain and difficulties of a crippling illness and at the same time, breaking new paths across the dangerous lines of prejudice and misunderstanding that so divide the people of Northern Ireland.”

Father McCarthy was a very good friend to me, a proud stiff-necked Anglican. He died in 1983, and some years later, as a tribute to his memory, I resolved to write an account of those last years of his life, as I personally witnessed the boundless enthusiasm of this remarkable priest, who showed so much care and respect towards every individual he met. As soon as you met him, you knew that here was a true man of God.

When I had prepared a draft booklet, I showed it to Father Gerry Reynolds at Clonard and he encouraged me to publish it. As it happened, at this point, Father Reynolds was taking a sabbatical year away from the Monastery to travel throughout Europe. I needed his advice and inspiration for a title for the booklet and I was fortunate in locating him at a retreat in Hertfordshire, England. I spoke to him on the phone but he said he had no thoughts at that point about a title. However, a few days later, I received a letter from him, with the perfect title, ‘Where I sensed the Breath of God’ to which was added, ‘A footnote in Anglo-Irish history’.

I then contacted my friend David Hammond, whose initial reaction was that the title was too long for a booklet but he suggested I show it to his friend, Ralph Dobson, a brilliant calligrapher and book designer. In no time, he had produced a superb front cover and he and I and David visited Robert South of Nicholson & Bass. The three of them then had all the details swiftly arranged. Dr. Martin Mansergh kindly agreed to write a foreword, in which he paid special tribute to the role Clonard had played in achieving an end to the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Recently, I received a phone call from an American history professor, Ronald Wells, attached to Calvin College, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, who asked if he could come and see me. I invited my close friend, Jim Lynn, to meet him with me, so that together we might independently assess the purpose of the American professor’s visit. It turned out that Ronald Wells had written an article for a periodical about the award of the

*Pax Christi* International Peace Prize to Clonard Monastery and Fitzroy Presbyterian Church in Belfast.

Professor Wells emphasised in his article that this was the first time that the prestigious *Pax Christi* Peace Prize had been awarded to any person or institution in Ireland. Father Christopher McCarthy had established the link between Clonard and Fitzroy and its Minister, Rev. Ken Newell, more than twenty years earlier and Professor Wells has been commissioned to write up this unique relationship; his book on the subject is presently at the publishers.

## APPENDIX

### ‘Whither Northern Ireland Protestants?’ by George Dallas

When I think of Irish Protestantism, I think mainly of the North and of the Scottish element in us, and the historic past of Presbyterianism. We are what our history has made us. Dr Stewart in *The Narrow Ground* has pointed to the blurring of the distinction, once thought to be so clear, between planter and Gael. With perhaps 30 per cent of Irish blood in us and a large Highland element, and with most of the lowland Scots coming from the south-west which was formerly Gaelic-speaking (and still partly so in the 17th century), it can be said that perhaps 70 per cent of our ancestry at one time spoke Gaelic – very different from the reliable Protestant Anglo-Saxon garrison visualised by the organisers of the King James plantation. But the end-result was the same.

Our relationship with England, and later Britain, has always been unusual. Dr Miller’s book, *Queen’s Rebels*, goes far to help understanding of what is really a conditional loyalty. Seventeenth-century Scots had a kind of ‘contractarian’ philosophy. There was no such thing as blind loyalty, but if they had obligations to the King or the government, equally the King or the government had obligations to them. So we can oppose authority when it steps out of line and we see nothing illogical in being prepared to fight the British government (if and when necessary) while still being loyal to it. And nothing has changed in our view of our own obligations. Nobody has told us we are no longer the garrison. In maintaining the Northern Ireland border, we are defending the frontier of the United Kingdom and we like to feel that our efforts are appreciated.

In the early days of the Ulster settlement the greatest problem facing England and the Anglo-Irish ascendancy which ruled on its behalf in Ireland, was Presbyterianism. By the 18th century the Catholics were no longer a problem, and the danger of their helping Spain or France in a war against England had faded. But the Presbyterians, with a sense of being the one true church and a determination to establish themselves as such, at least in the areas where they had settled, were a potential rival establishment and a threat to be taken very seriously. Unlike today, they then had an independence of mind and spirit, and the various civil and religious

disabilities, with the harsh treatment of tenant farmers by the landlords, combined to produce large-scale emigration to America. They went with a hatred of their oppressors which made them Washington's most determined soldiers in America's war against England. We hated England, but continued to serve her because our fear of the Catholics and contempt for them overruled even our own interest. Wolfe Tone, founder of the United Irishmen, aimed to reconcile Catholics and Dissenters, 'the two great sects whose mutual animosities have been the radical weakness of their country,' and unite them against the common enemy.

The Act of Union of 1800 was the culmination of a series of evil policies and actions. To my mind it was the supreme evil of Irish history, concentrating all the evil intent of centuries. It was preceded by the most vindictive punishment of Protestant dissidents, and the deliberate fostering of the anti-Catholic Orange movement and its mythology to counteract the rational appeal of the United Irishmen. It was then carried through against the wishes of all the people of Ireland by wholesale corruption. The Act of Union closed the door effectively and forever to any possibility of a unity of hearts in Ireland. Everything that has happened since has had the mark of inevitability; it could not have happened otherwise. Division has intensified and will continue to do so. Catholics were to be a permanent minority in Britain. Protestants went into the Union hating England, and that hatred was manipulated and re-directed against the Catholics. Aided by further bribery, all the Protestant elements were to see that their interests were linked with those of England – the landowners, the growing commercial classes, the industrial workers, the Presbyterian Church. The outstanding grievances of the farmers made them an exception for a time, making possible a revival of liberalism in the mid-19th century, almost wiped out after 1886 by the apparent threat of Home Rule. A courageous, rearguard action led by the Revd J. B. Armour of Ballymoney succeeded for a generation, against the prevailing trend, in keeping a considerable area not only liberal but in favour of Irish unity. Of this almost nothing survives.

### **A prophet**

Any Protestant, like Armour, who stepped out of line could expect punishment of which ostracism was the least. My own understanding of my community, and indeed of myself, owes much to two books written in the

1930s by W. S. Armour, *Facing the Irish Question* and *Ulster, Ireland, Britain*. While writing a biography of his father he felt compelled to examine the reasons for the ostracism he suffered. A saintly man was treated as if he was a devil. He identified an inner core of the ascendancy which ruled Ireland, and traced it, with continuity of personnel, from Norman times to the present. He also found it to be linked to a similar inner core of ascendancy in England, so that all its actions in every generation have ultimately served the interests of England. Throughout the centuries this inner core kept a firm grip on the Protestant garrison, and the punishment meted out for deviation was if anything more severe than that given to Catholics – who were expected to be rebels and did not count anyway. Originally consisting of Anglo-Irish landowners, it widened in the late 19th century to include commercial and industrial interests and top professional people, and Presbyterians and other denominations as well as Anglicans. In recent times we have known it as the ‘faceless men’ who have made decisions on such matters as the siting of industry, and the placing of the New University in Coleraine instead of Derry. Measures like these have ensured the maintenance of the population balance at two Protestants to one Catholic since the Northern Ireland state was set up, in spite of the much higher Catholic birth rate. In fact, injustice may be said to have been built into the state and to have been essential for its survival.

To me Armour’s books contained another key thought. The terrible treatment of Catholics over the centuries may have killed the body, but had failed to kill the soul of their community. He implies that what had been done to the Protestant community had killed its soul. But it is interesting that back in 1938 he should have been writing about repentance. ‘What has been remarkable from the beginning is the determination that the original wrongs must never be righted. One might have supposed that in 750 years there would have been a place for repentance, some effort to drop the load of centuries of guilt. But this was and is the unpardonable sin, and indeed, has amounted to high treason, if anybody either in Britain or Ireland has made any effort to right the wrong.’

We face an impossible situation. Canon Austin Baker in a discussion paper describes it as a long-term impasse, ‘... a fatal legacy which England has bequeathed to the people of this island. Theologically it bears the distinguishing mark of true evil, namely that there is no right answer to the

problem it poses. There is no rational step forward which is not open to fatal objections.' With remarkable humility he accepts fully England's responsibility for creating the situation and the hard-line attitudes of both sides. His answer to insoluble evil is to acknowledge its existence and its peculiar power, and the defeat of all of us, Loyalists, Republicans, England, in the face of it. The acknowledgement of defeat is in itself creative for a community. 'In theology we call it the need for redemption, the fact that we cannot save ourselves.' Repentance for sin, acceptance of God's forgiveness, redemption, restitution and atonement for wrongs done, all these are part of the experiences of Christians on the personal level, and today leaders of thought are emphasising again their application at community and national level. Canon Baker's humble and disarming plea for the repentance of his country in all its dealings with Ireland must find a similar response from the Irish Protestants. The most profound repentance is called for and notwithstanding the fact that history may have made it almost impossible for us, the effort must be made. Over the centuries we have willingly been the tools, the dupes, the catspaws of England in her wrong policies. Like jackals we have relished the pickings. And now when most English want nothing more to do with Ireland, we want to perpetuate the wrongs. Our guilt, unfaced, destroys our souls and our characters, but thankfully, with communities as with individuals, there is an answer.

For some of us it has helped greatly to meet in a bible study group with Catholics from the 'grass roots'. All are people who have suffered from the discrimination and harassment caused by the unjust society we have created, and instead of being bitter as we expect (and almost demand) we found in them qualities of generosity, graciousness and forgiveness which we knew, in spite of all our supposed advantages as Protestants, we did not have. In addition a few of them met us also with a dead-straight honesty that demanded change.

Having begun to understand more about what we needed to repent for, and a little about repentance itself, I began to think of what repentance must mean for our community in relation to Ireland. Surely it must mean a humble and glad acceptance of ourselves as fully Irish people, as we were always meant to be, not Irish and British as well, or any other formula that allows us to go on feeling superior. Unless *our* community finds this kind of repentance and learns to care for all the people of Ireland, there will always

be violence in this country. No amount of 'being nice to each other' will ever do it. It must be done without any demand whatever that others reciprocate. Without repentance *we* perpetuate violence. Are we the ones who should be in Long Kesh?

### **Crisis of Identity**

Northern Protestants now increasingly face a crisis of identity. What are we anyway? Many continue to cling rather desperately for as long as they can to their sense of being British, but if we are honest we know we have to rethink the whole matter. We see ourselves faced with the position that Britain has used us and now wishes to abandon us, but the truth that we will ultimately have to face is that we never were British in the first place. There has never been any real consensus with the English in what we feel about ourselves, or even with those Scots who have fully accepted a British identity. Our sense of Britishness dates mainly from the Victorian era, which saw a profound emotional tie-up between evangelical Protestantism, the royal family and the British Empire, with whose growing power and prestige people felt proud to be associated. In the 18th century we had been Irish, albeit Protestant Irish.

Some claim to find the answer in a Northern Ireland identity, but it is difficult to see how this can ever satisfy the thing in the human heart that needs to identify with something. The state is not economically viable. It has never had the marks of nationhood. The distinctive cultural features we once had we have long since rejected because we associate them with the Catholics, and anything they do we are almost in honour bound not to do. Sooner or later we will be forced to look at a further aspect of the truth, which is that, not only have we never been British, but all along, whether we like it or not, we have been Irish. Acceptance of this truth will be the truest form of repentance for the past, which will have the power to unloose a totally new level of creativity among all the people of Ireland. Its rejection will result in continued floundering, in endless violence and in despair.

My own tendency as a Northern Protestant and Presbyterian, who remembers past history, is to say that others are more to blame than we are – the Southern Protestants, the Church of Ireland, the upper classes, the English. Leaving aside the awfulness of our present attitudes and actions, we can never say that others have been worse than us, for we all share the same

spirit of superiority, self-righteousness and arrogance. This spirit is worldwide but seems to be intensified in us by an ill-understood Protestantism, which by-passes justification by faith and the operation of God's grace and assumes we are inherently better. The wrongs committed in this spirit are invariably worse than those committed from a frustrated sense of justice. Peace and justice will never be established in Ireland unless we repent.

Repentance therefore is the hope. But we have to live every day with the thought of our repentance and search for its fullest meaning and implications. For me repentance leads to the sense that I and my community must become Irish. For another the awareness of being Irish might itself be synonymous with repentance, for there is no place in it for the pride of being superior. And when we Protestants are wholly prepared to live as Irish in Ireland we may begin to find the compassion to understand our Catholic fellow-countrymen. We must be willing to learn from those who we thought could never teach us anything. And we must be willing to seek their help. It may be that those who can help us most are not necessarily the most liberal or the most ecumenical, or those who are most ready to talk to us, but rather those in whom the flame of Irish nationhood burns brightest, those who hold, so far as is now possible, to the vision of Tone. One is so often astounded at the love shown by the people who suffer most, and nowhere is this more marked than in Catholics living in the ghetto areas of Northern Ireland. I have a deep personal sense of gratitude for some of these people who have a compassion for our community, and an understanding of how history has made us what we are, far beyond our understanding of ourselves.

Is there any way forward, even any future at all for us, politically? Unionism as we have known it is finished, having lost its base. 'Ulsterism' is sterile and non-viable. To one like myself, who is passionately interested in the survival of Protestantism and the Protestant community in Ireland, the only way is to find a place in a free, independent Ireland where we can exercise care and responsibility for the whole. This involves an enormous risk, the risk of ceasing to exist as a community, but the risk must be taken. We are constantly presented with the false alternatives of intensified confrontation or surrender. I have tried to outline a better way.

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